

SHOPPING CENTRE AS A NON-CITY IN THE CITY

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Abstract

Shopping centres constitute an important point on the city life map. Due to a wide range of offered services and diversified attractions, shopping is often not the only reason why people decide to spend their time there. A created form, atmosphere along with a great diversity of functions made us call them cities within the city. Nevertheless, can the space that is tailored to consumer's expectations aspire to become the real urban area? The concept of non-places by a French anthropologist, Marc Augé, is crucial while struggling to answer the question.

Streszczenie

Centra handlowe są ważnym punktem na mapie miejskiego życia. Szeroka oferta usług i bogactwo atrakcji powodują, że coraz częściej powodem do ich odwiedzania nie są już tylko zakupy. Ich wykreowana forma, nastrój wraz z różnorodnością funkcji sprawia, że zwykliśmy nazywać je miastami w mieście. Czy jednak przestrzeń skrojona na miarę oczekiwań konsumpcyjnego odbiorcy może pretendować do miana prawdziwej przestrzeni miejskiej? W poszukiwaniu odpowiedzi na to pytanie koncepcja nie-miejsc francuskiego antropologa Marca Augé zajmuje szczególne miejsce.

Keywords: Shopping centres, Public space, Marc Augé, Non-places.

1. INTRODUCTION

Who is not visiting shopping centres nowadays? Patterned after American shopping malls, they have dominated the area of our cities for over ten years. In Poland, Galeria Mokotów, founded in 2000 in Warsaw, was the first 3rd generation commercial centre, where a self-service grocery is no longer the most important factor, but becomes one of many elements of the rich space program, including gastronomy and services [6, 4]. According to the Marketbeat's report, in the middle of 2014 in Poland there were almost 400 shopping centres of the total area of 9,07 million m² [8]. Within only one decade, they have become an essential element of urban space in Poland. The phenomenon is visible both in big cities and in smaller towns of less than 50,000 residents. Initially, their appearance was perceived as a civilization leap, a way of reducing a backlog after the Polish People's Republic times, and as an attempt to reach the

advanced part of Europe. Still in some smaller cities shopping centres constitute a symbol of modernity and innovation. Their success and popularity resulted, though, in the decay of a truly urban manner of using urban space [4], and in the demise of trade in the historical parts of the city .

A French anthropologist, *Marc Augé*, analyses and explains the problem in his book "Non-Places" (Non-lieux), published in Polish in 2011. The book had had its premiere in 1992, but it became famous and popular, for a much wider audience than the anthropological environment, once it was translated into English in 1995. Although the book by the world-famous anthropologist is considered a classic, and a concept of non-places is effectively embedded in the Western intellectual awareness, Polish readers, especially architects and urbanists, so-called "creators of places", still seem inspired by the publication that provides answers for contemporary challenges.

The book, 20 years after its premiere, is not as fresh as it used to be before. Actually, as it has been put in the Polish foreword by professor *Burszta*: “The subject is – as I dare to state – widely known and quite hackneyed...”. Nevertheless, one needs to take into consideration that the majority of changes occurring in Polish cities are considerably delayed once compared to the developed part of Europe. 25 years of the free market economy still makes us a very young consumer society, as opposed to the countries of the old Union, where since the 60s supermarkets have been highly successful.

2. IDENTITY PLACES AND NON-PLACES

Augé attempts to explain the idea of non-places as a phenomenon associated with the appearance of supermodernity. “Supermodernity – as *Augé* claims – which stems simultaneously from the three figures of excess: overabundance of events, spatial overabundance and the individualization of references, naturally finds its full expression in non-places” [1]. These are the acceleration of history, a change of scale, fast means of

transport and a problem of individual’s loneliness in space that made the author introduce a term, which seems difficult and sometimes even impossible to be studied in terms of an anthropological place. An identity place, juxtaposed by *Augé* with a non-place, is strongly settled in a specific space and time, with the entire burden of its tradition and history. An anthropological place establishes special relations with its residents, often creating a sense of community: “As an anthropological places create the organically social, so non-places create solitary contractuality.”[1] This image of a place that can be described and studied anthropologically as well as sociologically is juxtaposed by *Augé* with non-relational, non-identity places, which could be simply referred to as places of flow. Amidst those the author enumerates among others airports, train stations, hotel chains, hypermarkets, petrol stations, and motorways. User’s attitude towards non-places, apart from a specific spatial figure, is a substantial element defining non-places. “Alone, but one of many, the user of a non-place is in contractual relations with it (or with the powers that govern it)” [1]. A chance to make an agreement enables the user to

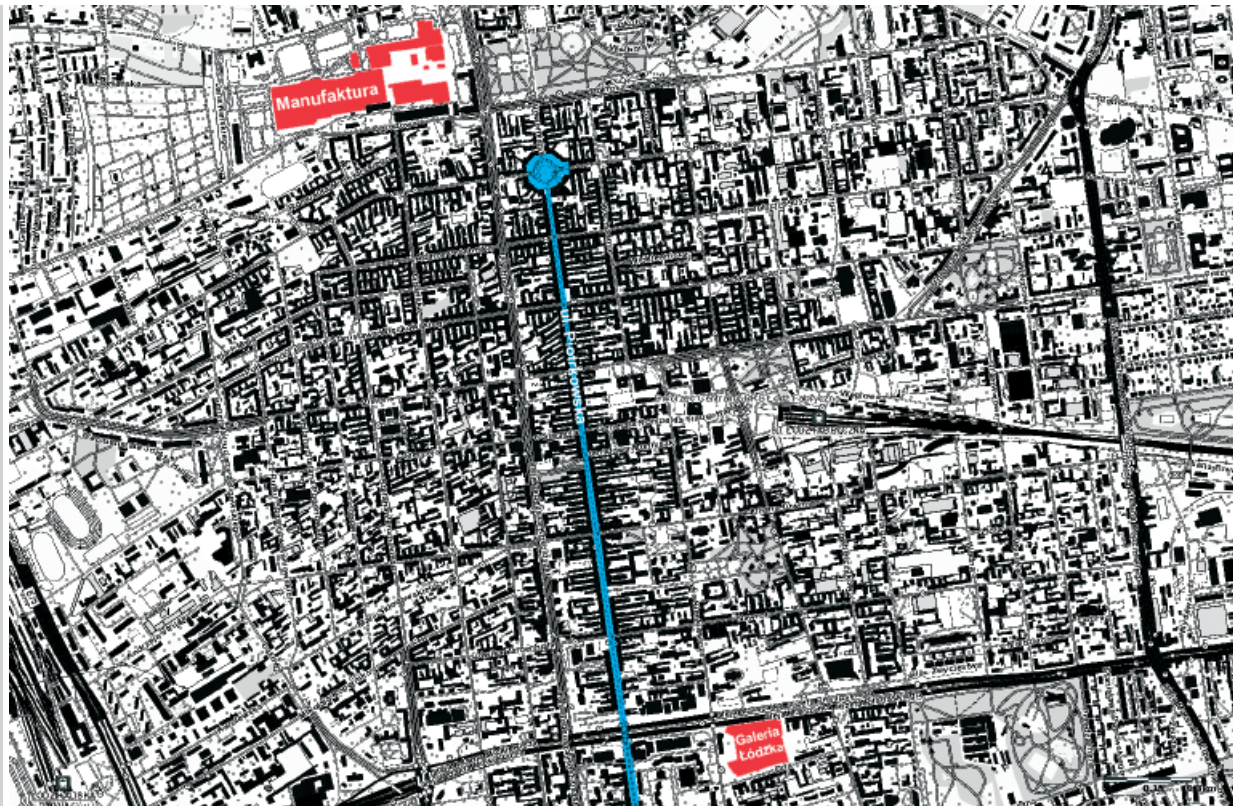


Figure 1.

Manufaktura shopping centre on the northern part of the city centre in Łódź and Galeria Łódzka shopping centre to the south, on the background of the spatial structure of the city. Piotrkowska Street was marked in blue, Prepared by the author, based on: <http://mapy.geoportal.gov.pl/imap/> Accessed 15/12/2014

achieve the goal that has no association with a particular place. He or she acts solely on the basis of a certain pattern, managed by the system of signs and texts. Therefore, we appear in non-places mostly because we have to rather than we are willing to. This attitude in space “(...) creates neither singular identity nor relations, only solitude, and similitude” [1].

3. SHOPPING CENTRE AND PUBLIC SPACE

Thus, how to perceive a shopping centre, having a supermarket – perfectly matching the idea of a non-place – as its contemporary ancestor? The functional pattern of a majority of contemporary commercial buildings such as commercial and entertainment centres or sales centres, still can be to some extent identified with the one seen in supermarkets. The mechanism of locating functions and programmes is almost always similar. The superiority of marketing rights results in typical solutions in shaping the space aimed at a mass recipient. Nonetheless, contrary to supermarkets, where people become impersonal users acting on the basis of particular instructions and tips, shopping centres have given their clients an offer for spending their leisure time, while becoming a place of meetings with friends and family walks, free from the solely commercial dimension.

The French scholar, while defining a non-place, states that it never occurs in its pure form. “Place and non-place are rather like opposed polarities – the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed (...)” [1]. This statement aptly describes relations that frequently appear between a new shopping centre and a historical city centre. New commercial places try to imitate identity places to attract clients, creating at the same time only a poor substitute for the street experience. Meanwhile “old places”, which will never be fully abandoned, remain excluded and become just a memory of the former glory. The two biggest shopping centres in Łódź, and Piotrkowska Street, which used to be the most important commercial street in the city, prove the phenomenon. The size of Manufaktura and Galeria Łódzka, along with their extensive functional programme and no transparent relations with the public space system did rapidly destroy trade at Piotrkowska Street, which was mostly reborn in the form of second-hand shops, banks and mobile network customer service centres.

A scale of Manufaktura shopping and entertainment centre is perfectly reflected in a number of establishments working on the area of the ancient Izrael

Poznański’s factories. Nowadays, Manufaktura consists of 308 service entities, out of which 249 are situated in the large-format commercial building, and the remaining 49 constitute a mainly gastronomical offer for the Manufaktura Square – an over 3-hectar, public-access area, providing a place for entertainment actions and organised events. A similar number of premises could be located at Piotrkowska Street, from the Freedom Square to the junction of Piłsudski Avenue, which equals exactly 2 kilometres of a big city commercial street. Nevertheless, unlike the historical representation of the city, the shopping centre provides 3,500 parking spaces for its clients, which justifies why it is visited more frequently.

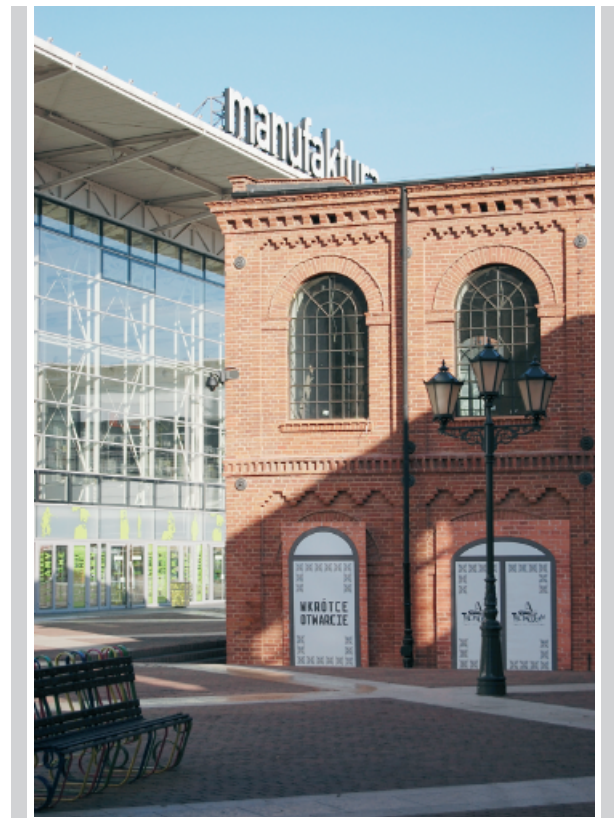


Figure 2.
Manufaktura – a commercial and entertainment centre in Łódź, a large-format building in the area of ancient cotton mills of I. Poznański, photograph: the author

Galeria Łódzka, which was open a few years before Manufaktura did, is a building of a different architectural form. Although its programme offer, consisting of 170 service points, is not the smallest one, the building of a compact structure, and the scale that could be compared to a small quarter in Łódź, may



Figure 3.
Manufaktura shopping centre in Łódź – a weaving department from 19th for a space of the Museum of Art in Łódź ms²,
photograph: the author

influence the city centre of Łódź in a positive manner. Notwithstanding, no transparent associations with the historical structure of the city and a considerable spatial barrier, namely Piłsudski Avenue, make us notice a strong competition between the two crucial commercial centres, instead of their symbiotic co-existence. The shopping centre, managed and planned as one entity, providing its tenants an attractive offer's diversification, leaves the traditional trade at Piotrkowska Street behind since the latter does not dispose of adequate tools.

Places and non-places compete and intermingle with each other. "The possibility of non-places is never absent from any place" [1]. While attracting our attention, shopping centres become similar to relational places. Long arcades of shops, imitating a frontage with benches, lamps, fountains, of a more or less sophisticated style, resemble a stage scenery rather than architecture (Fig. 7). Shaped and equipped as a big city street, in many cases were



Figure 4.
Piotrkowska Street in Łódź – the longest commercial street in Europe. The view of the Piłsudski Avenue junction, on the horizon, on the right – Galeria Łódzka shopping centre, photograph: the author



Figure 5.
Galeria Łódzka shopping centre – entrance to the building from the Piłsudski Avenue and Sienkiewicz Street junction, photograph: the author



Figure 6.
Galeria Łódzka shopping centre – entrance to the building from Piłsudski Avenue, photograph: the author

capable of attracting users of the public urban space. This phenomenon has been curiously developed in Arabic countries – of hot climate. In such places, an air-conditioned place is more friendly and for this reason is treated as the “natural” one. In Poland, the process of commercial centres imitating the city is also visible. This is particularly noticeable in smaller cities, where public space’s resources are rather meagre, and both their offer and quality cannot compete with the shopping centre’s splendour, where one is able to reach almost any form of social life – from shopping to cultural activity.



Figure 7.
Villagio shopping mall, Doha in Qatar – an example of a shopping centre whose interior imitates the public area of a big city. Source: <http://www.asergeev.com/pictures/archives/2011/913/jpeg/19.jpg> Accessed 17/12/2014

This takes place in an artificial and closed world, turned away from the city, where, instead of authentic relations and places, we will face a commercial space, deprived of any individual features, that is reigned by the rules based on the consumer society’s needs. The space whose “content” boils down to event space and food court can be hardly called the urban public space, especially once its character might be determined only with such an oxymoron as “private public space.” In this context, one should pay a particular attention to the quality of the “traditional” public space. Caring about its esthetics and high standards ought to remain the key element of the city’s spatial policy. Sieradz, in Łódź Voivodeship, constitutes a good example of such practice.

In the city, there is about 27,000 m² of a modern commercial area, located mainly in shopping centres and built in 3 years, which provided about 30% of premises for rent in the Staromiejski Square, while the remaining ones are mostly banks. Building 3 extensive commercial centres resulted also in a higher number of retail area m² per capita in Sieradz than in

Warsaw [5]. A coherent programme of the Sieradz Old Town’s renovation made the city’s residents actively take advantage of the public space, which received its fresh value thanks to numerous seasonal points of gastronomy.



Figure 8, 9.
Galeria Sieradzka shopping centre on the top and Kościuszko Street in Sieradz on the bottom – pictures taken on the same day and the same daytime prove that city life in a “traditional space” did not decay although; photograph: the author, July 2014

4. ARCADES – A CITY WITHIN THE CITY

The open space of public access constitutes an immanent feature of the city, which integrates its tissue. Streets, squares, and parks create the stage of city life. It might be said they build the frames of experiencing the city. In addition, these are the places of citizens’ meetings, and the space where they meet the city [3], along with its rich commercial offer.

Trade as a city-forming factor was perfectly used in Parisian arcades. Although the rule of their functioning was similar – “(...) attract crowds and keep them by tempting them with attractions” [2] – arcades were not turning away from the city. Quite the reverse, they used to create a system of passages, offering new

connection possibilities within the urban tissue, at the same time taking advantage of this solution. In the 19th century, arcades used to constitute essential centres of cultural and social life in the French capital. The urban lifestyle from the 19th century, with a flâneur [7] as its main character, was dated back to those unusual, bustling and roofed arcades, not only providing an opportunity to go shopping, but also to contemplate the urban uproar.

Today, in shopping centres, instead of the space of luxury trade, where “(...) art enters the service of the merchant” [2], we mostly see an extravagant market, closed to the world outside.



Figure 10.
The Grand-Cerf Arcade as an element that enriches and completes the system of urban area in Paris, prepared by the author, based on: <http://maps.google.com/> Accessed 18/12/2014



Figure 11.
Interior of The Grand-Cerf Arcade in Paris, Source: <https://soundlandscapes.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/0111.jpg> Accessed 18/12/2014

5. REVITALISATION – EXPOSING THE ROOTS OF THE CITY

Non-places, while becoming an immanent element of our reality, recall an obvious yearning for the real idea of a place – according to *Augé* – enrooted both in history and identity. This is the fundamental strategy of any revitalisation programmes. The revival of the Wertheim department store in Wrocław (today: the Renoma Shopping Centre, Fig. 12) is an adequate example of such practice. The extension of the historical part from the 30. was conducted with the contemporary language of architecture. A creative continuation of the historical buildings contributed to the erection of a building of a brand new quality. Its size is perfectly suitable for the city centre buildings of Wrocław. Thanks to high quality, architecture and a well-thought out scale, Renoma has accelerated the process of restoring the traditional trade at Świdnicka Street. It has also had its impact on creating the small Czysty Square from the side of Podwale Street, increasing at the same time the quality of public space in the entire vicinity. Lack of traditional trade in the form of shops, accessible directly from the public space, constitutes a disadvantage appearing in almost every investment of this kind. As far as Renoma in Wrocław is concerned, it is the Czysty Square that creates the perfect place for this form of trade. Meanwhile, instead of “live” shopping windows on the building’s ground floor, we observe blind glazed bulkheads, gradually adapted for an advertising space.



Figure 12.
Renoma Shopping Centre in Wrocław – an example of successful fitting a commercial building into urban infrastructure, photograph: Danuta Bator



Figure 13.
Renoma Shopping Centre in Wrocław – an example of successful fitting a commercial building into urban infrastructure, photograph: the author



Figure 15.
One of the corners of Feest-en Kultuurpaleis. The tower of the ancient city hall in the background. Photograph: the author



Figure 14.
Commercial-service complex Feest- en Kultuurpaleis in Ostenda, Belgium – combination of apartments, shopping centre and traditional trade within one investment. Source: <http://www.arch-teco-ap.eu/nl/projects/17/17/400> Accessed 22/12/2014

library, and even a casino, this time was adapted for a commercial building. The scope of the investment, apart from the city hall, concerned neighbouring residential buildings, as well. Thus, the Feest-en Kultuurpaleis complex encompassed the entire urban quarter. The programme of the complete objectives is diversified but not vast. It consists of only 17 shops and over ten apartments on the second and third floor. What seems significant, within the same investment some premises function as traditional shops, accessible directly from the street. The new object, successfully placed into the previous structure, has completed and enriched the existing offer of Kapellestraat.

A Belgium example from Ostenda is a similar activity, restoring life to the ancient city structures. Within one investment, in the direct vicinity of an important commercial street, Kapellestraat, there is one complex with an offer programme including apartments, next to trade and services. The former city hall, which in its tumultuous past used to serve as a museum,

6. CONCLUSION

In his analysis, *Augé* tries not to judge non-places. He presents them as a peculiar phenomenon, a mark of time, a new and not entirely explored field of studies. Therefore, for the sociologist defined non-placed should not be explicitly pejorative, but for a person who studies the existing and already built environment, spatial consequences ensuing from the presence of non-places are clearly visible. Possibly, this is a result of the scale given to non-places. Not only does it consider the investment scope as such, but it also refers to the environment influenced by the area of non-places. Thus, revitalisation activities, aiming at respecting *genius loci* and enrooting a new building in the tradition and identity of a place, ought to take into consideration also a size and number of new elements, apart from the quality of conducting activities. Placing a building of an extensive functional programme, straying significantly off the local circumstances, in the urban structure of the city results in transferring the main points of city life. An easy access to the shopping centre, offering spacious car parks makes residents change their usual routes. Traditional streets – places of random meetings and walks – become the space of the flow. The definitional public space changes its location, moving from the open space to buildings. Hence, the integration of the new commercial structures with the already existing pattern of public space, consisting mainly in the shopping centre becoming more open to its surrounding in order to complete and extend the traditional commercial street by its rich offer, instead of competing against it, seems particularly essential.

According to *Augé*: “What is significant in the experience of non-place is its power of attraction, inversely proportional to territorial attraction, to the gravitational pull of place and tradition”. This statement reflects the way large, suburban shopping centres, built on so-called *cruda radice* (previously undeveloped sites), work. In this case, a considerable scale and no references to the place’s context leave no great hopes for building an urban space which would be managed by its users and with whom they could identify. Hence, what would be the future of big shopping centres, unknown for the local city structure? It is possible that some of them will share the fate of several American malls, which, unable to follow the market’s needs and customers’ expectations, are dying and turning into extensive and dangerous vacant buildings. Maybe coming back from non-places to places is possible thanks to the process redefining commercial buildings?

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