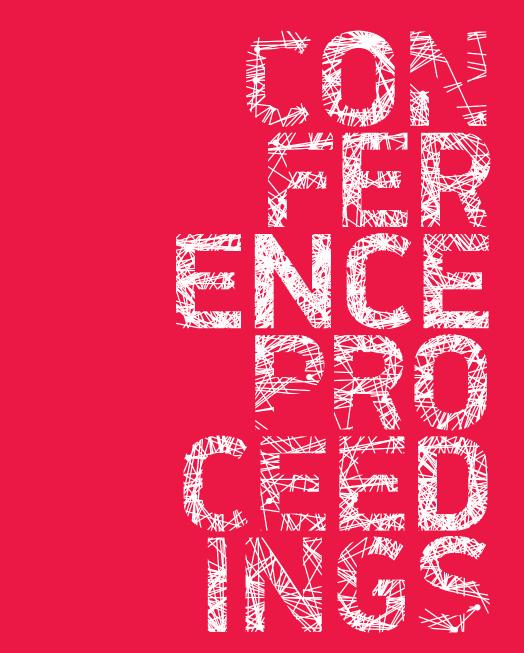


# **3**RD INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC CONFERENCE ON PLACES AND TECHNOLOGIES

EDITORS EVA VANIŠTA LAZAREVIĆ MILENA VUKMIROVIĆ ALEKSANDRA KRSTIĆ-FURUNDŽIĆ AND ALEKSANDRA ĐUKIĆ



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# PLACES AND TECHNOLOGIES 2016

# CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS OF THE $\mathbf{3}^{\text{RD}}$ international academic conference on places and technologies

# EDITORS:

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KEEPING UP WITH TECHNOLOGIES TO CREATE COGNITIVE CITY BY HIGHLIGHTING ITS SAFETY, SUSTAINABILITY, EFFICIENCY, IMAGEABILITY AND LIVEABILITY

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# THE IMAGE OF THE CITY VS. SEMI-PUBLIC SPACES OF SHOPPING MALLS: CASE STUDY OF BELGRADE

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# ABSTRACT

In shopping malls, which lately have become one of the basic characteristics of cities, behavior and interactions are defined by the primary purpose of this space - consumption. Potential interactions are reduced to temporary, superficial formal communication. Simulation of city streets with shops and small squares, where cafés are covered by the roof of the shopping mall, takes over the role which downtown had, until recently. This paper is presenting in which ways shopping malls may simulate the city center to legitimize itself as a public space. How do shopping "cities" transform relationship of internal and external, public and private space? The paper aims to explore the ways in which the inner space of these centers dictates behavior of visitors and shape the way they spend their free time. What is the new image of the city that these centers create? It examines the issue of sustainability of architectural objects in addition to its primary function; at the same time can have a strong position in the communication, representing the tools of communication and carries the meaning in the service of consumption, marketing, promotion and spectacle. The role of cultural space of the mall, as a quasi-space is explored with the case study method of two dominant shopping malls in Belgrade. The study refers to dominant phenomena in architecture, which is the result of the influence of classic consumption power. The goal of the paper is to access important issue of different representation of an architectural experience in reality in relation to the experience of architecture through the mass media.

Keywords: shopping mall, identity, marketing, semi-public space, Belgrade

# INTRODUCTION

During the last decade, as a visual sign of giving place the production process before the consumer amenities, shopping centers are starting to dominate the center of cities and suburbs. Victor Gruen as the architect of the first shopping mall proposed *mall* as a basic unit of urban planning, where the mall becomes a multi-purpose city center. He identifies shopping as a part of a larger network of human activity, arguing that the selling would be better if the commercial activities were integrated into the cultural as well as entertaining activities. Gruen saw designing of shopping malls as a way of producing new urban centers or, as he called them "shopping towns." He was encouraging designers to program a shopping mall, in which many activities

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would be included, cultural, artistic, as well as social events. He called this social integration of commercial activities "architecture of the environment."

Presence of the square and city streets representing a symbol of the real city content is what reminds us of Gruens idea in every shopping mall. Shopping centers have encouraged the development of suburbs and became some kind of community centers; moreover, they have become a part of the American way of life causing changes in our daily lives and habits. Creating place for public, political, cultural and recreational events, and above all, places of leisure and socialization, they have become more than a "commercial city," but an alternative center of the city. In postmodern times former role of the square completely disappeared. To understand why, we should oppose city square as a meeting point with the modern shopping centers as a new "gathering point."

# SHOPPING MALL IS TAKING OVER MAIN CONTENT OF THE CITY

An increasing number of activities related to the traditional contents from the city center, such as work, play, shopping, recreation, public protests,<sup>3</sup> culture, entertainment, health and education services are transferred to the "mall."<sup>4</sup>These activities include even tourism, which was previously related exclusively to landmarks of urban city. The mall is a physical frame - the shell for the content, which is changing according to the capacity and content that is needed. The mall is no longer just a shopping center, but it becomes a city center itself. With evolution of the shopping center, the mall space becomes a meeting place and place of leisure activities, which is justifiably touted as social place<sup>5</sup>. Although commercial functions continue to dominate, the designers of shopping malls are starting to create spaces for a variety of clients such as sports and athletic clubs, banks, offices, medical centers, hotels, and even a ski resort (Dubai, "Mall of the Emirates"<sup>6</sup>). Malls are becoming the place of growth for cultural institutions such as libraries," museums<sup>8</sup>, theaters, cinemas or civil services as a branch of the city government, post office<sup>9</sup> etc. However, this undeniable social vibrancy can be interpreted as a significantly limited one: although malls have become gathering places and held parties and shows, some of them even adopted churches, offices, administration, libraries and schools. But "unlike the bazaar, the mall is neither public place, nor a free market."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Srećko Horvat. Znakovi postmodernog grada: prilog semiologiji urbanizma. (Zagreb: Naklada Jesenski i Turk, 2007): pp. 124.
<sup>3</sup>The owners are rigorous when it comes to this situation and respond to it by calling the police to disperse people from the shopping mall (private property, which is presented as part of social life).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>Shopping centre or shopping center, shopping mall, or just mall, are synonyms. Shopping center in USA popularly is called shopping mall (Ritzer, 1999.), the term is used for to indoor, air conditioned and insured sales area mall (Underhill, 2005) <sup>5</sup>Besides shopping, numerous services and catering, mall offer a culture, entertainment, theme parks, aquariums, recreational facilities and more. For example, Mall of America, Bloomington, Minnesota, was built in 1992 with an area of 390 000 square meters. Annually attracts more visitors than Disney World, Graceland and Grand Canyon together (Underhill, 2005.)<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>Latest trend in the Emirates, which once again confirms the interweaving of these sectors, is merging of hotels and shopping centers (eg. *The Sofitel City Centre Mall*, then *Kempinski Mall of the Emirates-* which, in addition to a shopping mall is connected with the indoor ski Resorts), which is not common in other parts of the world. It only confirms the intertwining of trade (retail) and tourism. Seemingly similar concept was accompanied by Zira, a complex composed of Zira hotel and shopping center in Belgrade, although it is essentially not the same approach, nor the business of the same size. Source: Стратегија развоја трговине Београда, 3 рат, pp. 199.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>In 2001 King County Library System, one of the largest circulating library in the United States, opened a library in the mall Crossroads Mall in east King County, after the owner contacted and offered space. After that, trend was adopted by other shopping centers across America.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>One of the first museum inside shopping center in the United States is the Hungarian Museum of cultural heritage in "The Galleria" in Erieview Mall, Cleveland, Ohio. Museum, under the sponsorship of the Hungarian Association for the Protection of Cultural Heritage was opened March 15, 2003. There are also museums such as the Museum of rock-n-roll at a shopping complex in Barcelona (2011), the first museum of ice in the shopping mall in Istanbul (2010), Museum of pop-culture in a shopping mall in Phoenix (2011) and others.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>One of the shops in the shopping center Ušće is post office.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>William S. Kowinski. The Malling of America. Travels in the United States of Shopping. (USA: Xlibris Corporation, 2002): pp. 432.

# **CHARACTERISTICS OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

A general phenomenon<sup>11</sup> is that the numerous contents of the center are disappearing along with the opening of the new shopping center. The shopping mall is primarily a non-place.<sup>12</sup> Marc Augé, who defined this term, indicates that the super modernity is producing non-places, which are transit and anonymous spaces that allow the fast flow of a larger number of individuals. Since they are deprived of identity, history and meaning as a social construct, non-spaces are not anthropological places. With transition of functions, which are primarily intended for an open public space into pseudo premises of the malls, purpose of the square is lost. The streets and the squares of the shopping mall have been designed to create the impression that these are public spaces. However, it is a privately owned space with movement restrictions and controlled behavior of consumers, with selective access and video surveillance. The privatization of public space with the appearance of so-called *semi-public space*, spaces that are only seemingly public is the general trend in modern society.

#### **MARKETING TRICKS**

The advertising message aims to be detected, understood and remembered. Mechanism of persuasion is one of the most important instruments and tools that advertising message uses. Slogans advertising the mall should awaken the public experience of the shopping center as an urban center, the center of social life, entertainment, recreation, and not just shopping experience. The obvious examples in Belgrade are slogans: "Ušće shopping center - the new center of the city", "Delta City", "Stadion shopping mall - two passions in one place" (football stadium on the roof of the shopping center). Shopping centers become "a new city centers", where is "the best party in town." With organization of special happenings that are related to certain events throughout the year, such as Easter, New Year's Eve and Christmas, visitors are enabled to feel the spirit of these events like nowhere else in the city.

In this paper the way of how shopping malls in Belgrade are presented to consumers will be explored with the case study method of two dominant shopping malls in Belgradeon samples taken from their websites.

# **Example of shopping mall Delta City**

The value system that promotes randomly selected parts of the narrative program of this shopping mall is the focus of this analysis. On the web site of Delta City in the "About Us"<sup>13</sup> section, there are a few topics that are being explored:

"Since its opening, this first real shopping mall in Serbia has been the main destination of choice for all those who would like to switch the busy city streets with pleasure."<sup>14</sup>

It seems useful, relaxing and healthy to switch the busy city streets with pleasure. However, this shopping mall is situated in the middle of busy streets and crowds, and numerous activities and facilities offer just a replacement for the hustle and bustle of the city inside the cloistered shopping center. Shopping centers are becoming increasingly similar to traditional city centers and their owners cease being mere traders and become builders of new, controlled urban areas, which take precedence over the streets of the city center because they provide a higher order, cleanliness and safety, as well as an ideal climate without frost, rain and heat. Maybe for

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>Борис Костуранов. "Отворено о јавним просторима – чији су јавни простори". *Отворено о јавним просторима*, pp. 42. <sup>12</sup>The author (Marc Augé) defines the non-space of the city as a space that unlike the city can not be identified either as with identity, not as a relational, not as historical space. Non-space are the places of alienation, spaces that occur as a result of post industrial and networked information society.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>http://www.deltacity.rs/info/about\_us.38.html

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someone sitting on a bench in an artificial reality of a shopping center is nothing more unnatural than sitting on a park bench.

"Many shops, a multiplex cinema, a big children's playground, cafés and restaurants - all this together makes your shopping, dining and socializing a top fun experience. This is why the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) announced Delta City as the best shopping mall in Europe, out of 41 competing shopping malls from 19 countries."<sup>15</sup>

We meet with the untruth: Delta City has incorrectly presented their award. The award, which has been assigned, was shared with four shopping malls in Europe which received the identical reward for "new development" in 2009 ICSC<sup>16</sup> in the category of medium-sized centers. A total of 19 shopping centers in Europe received ICSC award in different categories of awards in 2009.

"Living up to this award, this city in a small package makes its 'citizens' happier every day with new offers. That's why Delta City is more than just a shopping mall. It's a lifestyle"<sup>17</sup>

Delta City calls consumers "citizens" because, following the example of Western countries, Belgrade citizens have succumbed to the trend of visiting shopping malls in the all-day "trips". Reproducing the city within its walls shopping center states that experience of the city is safer and cleaner in the climate-controlled and safe conditions, then on the real streets outside<sup>19</sup> Thus, the city is slowly distorting into the interior spaces, simulating in the manipulative and seductive way urban, fantastic and vital space. The disappearance of public space, the emergence of pseudo-public spaces with limited access occurs simultaneously with the aggression of commercial culture and emergence of cultural spectacle. "The difference between the public and pseudo-public space is that the pseudo-public space represents a privatized public sphere. It, however, seems like a public sphere, but the rules of the game are defined in a way that there are not many "public potentials."<sup>20</sup> Among the first, notion of pseudo-public space was introduced by Mike Davis, explaining them as a special kind of public space where the admission and behavior of people are strongly constrained by a strong security system. Davis, explaining the fear of the crowds, said "the designers of malls and pseudo-public space attack the crowd by homogenizing it. They set up architectural and semiotic barriers to filter out 'undesirables'. They enclose the mass that remains, directing its circulation with behaviorist ferocity. It is lured by visual stimuli of all kinds, dulled by muzak<sup>21</sup>, sometimes even scented by invisible aromatizers.<sup>#22</sup> Davis presents an image of the total detention, which is the result of the city planning besieged with the security measures. Unlike the public space in the mall there are no dark, unsafe narrow streets. Significant development strategy is the development of shopping centers in the form of public spaces, but this creates only an illusion of "openness". Shopping centers are largely private, closed and guarded premises: pseudo-public spaces.

# Example of shopping mall Ušće

The opening of the shopping center Ušće was accompanied by a marketing slogan: *The new city center*. In this sentence, as a basic text element of the campaign, a tendency to promote a specific cultural landscape clearly identifies. The consumer society, through diverse forms of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>ICSC European Shopping Centre Awards 2009

<sup>17</sup> http://www.deltacity.rs/info/about\_us.38.html

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>Starting a day in the coffee shop, then going window-shopping, and if they get hungry they have restaurants, choosing from the traditional Serbian food to Thai food, and after that they can even spend a night at the cinema or bowling alley. And all this in one place – shopping mall.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Margaret Crawford. "The World in a Shopping Mall" u M. Sorkin (Ur.), *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*(3-30). New York: Hill and Wang, 1992.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>Srećko Horvat. Znakovi postmodernog grada: prilog semiologiji urbanizma. (Zagreb: Naklada Jesenski i Turk, 2007): pp. 139.
<sup>21</sup>Muzak is recorded music that is played quietly and continuously in public places, such as airports, hotels, and shops, to

make people feel relaxed

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup>Mike Davis, "Fortress L.A." City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles. New York: Vintage Books, 1992, pp. 180

shops and multifunctional complex, developed concept of the *city inside a city*. Similar to the natural surroundings of the historical center, the "new" cities are now surrounded by the built urban structures.

"Shopping is the ultimate pleasure and UŠĆE Shopping Center, the new city center - a favorite destination that offers all the best in one place. "23

Shopping malls as closed boxes mimic the city center with minimal participation in the immediate surrounding area. The fact is that each of them is trying to keep their customers as long as possible, and, for this reason, music is playing in the parking lot, there are restaurants, bars and other leisure and entertainment opportunities. Almost all newest shopping malls have kindergartens where immediately after arrival customers can leave children and enjoy shopping undisturbed (Horvat connects that to the phenomenon of total space, especially important for the quality of today's postmodern construction).<sup>24</sup>

"Here you can spend your free time with your loved one, family or friends while shopping or relaxing and socializing – choose by yourself. While you are shopping, professional animators take care of the children in the children's playroom where children can socialize and meet with their peers. After a superb shopping, you can freshen up in one of the cozy cafes or restaurants and enjoy various dishes and outstanding service."<sup>25</sup>

The idea of the shopping center is compressing and intensifying public space by placing all necessary facilities under one roof, while those in the city are at a much greater distance. The mall is incorporating more and more of the city inside its walls. In this way, having access to all the necessary facilities, the need of the purchaser to return to everyday life is reduced, and shopping becomes recreational activity, and shopping mall a shelter.<sup>26</sup>

# SHOPPING MALL AS CITY CENTRE

The interior of the shopping centers are organized as the urban matrix, with streets and squares. The various events, exhibitions, performances, promotions, concerts etc. are organized on the streets of the shopping malls from time to time. The interior is furnished in a way that it resembles the urban space: benches are placed along the promenade, nature elements are deployed throughout the mall. To create the illusion of the urban environment and public space (outside of which there is no other public space) everything is arranged so that the corridors of the shopping center are converted into a pedestrian zone, street, square, park, public space. On the site of Delta City is written:

"In its dazzling modern interior, filled with palm trees and bathing in light, many visitors find enjoyment on working days, weekends and holidays, seven days a week, from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m."  $^{27}$ 

Plants<sup>28</sup> are here to refresh interior as a reminiscent of nature, while on the other hand, the nature in an unnatural environment "the presence of nature, albeit tamed in a garden setting, naturalizes consumption, and mitigates the alienation inherent in commodity production and consumption."<sup>29</sup>

<sup>23</sup> http://www.usceshoppingcenter.com/en/page/1/about-us

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Srečko Horvat. Znakovi postmodernog grada: prilog semiologiji urbanizma. (Zagreb: Naklada Jesenski i Turk, 2007): pp. 128
<sup>25</sup>http://www.usceshoppingcenter.com/en/page/1/about-us

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Margaret Crawford. "The World in a Shopping Mall" u M. Sorkin (Ur.), *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City* and the End of Public Space(3-30). New York: Hill and Wang, 1992: pp. 22.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup>http://www.usceshoppingcenter.com/en/page/1/about-us

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup>In order to create a more natural environment in large shopping malls, designers are building spacious gardens with all the characteristics of real. Goss (1993: 44) gives an example of Tyson's Corner in Virginia, whose administration has selected 29 large palm trees that were excavated in Florida and kept for 18 months in the shade in order to acclimatize to the conditions inside, before they are placed in the interior of the shopping center.

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Shopping centers become the center of social, economic and cultural life. All events that are common for public space - gathering in front of the cinema, on the corner, a former walk from shop to shop in shopping streets –it all takes place on private land: the corridors of the shopping center.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Shopping mall, formed as an artificial center inside vast American urban sprawls, structurally does not correspond to European cities. There is a good reason that closed shopping malls are successfully replacing open public spaces in cold climate countries, like Canada. South European countries, nevertheless, are still resisting American thrust and artificial forms of consumerism. However, there was an additional transition shift in Serbia, and after that adopted American principle of false concentrated people gathering expanded to shopping malls instead of public squares.

The recent economic decline in Serbia extinguishes glow of consumerism from few decades ago. Only the largest and strongest shopping malls survive, while small local malls formed inside former department stores are shutting down. Former local shopping centers like *Siti pasaž*, *Staklenac, Stari Merkator, Čumićevo Sokače, Robna kuća Beograd* are an example of former glory and carriers of consumerism in Belgrade in 70's of last century. Central axis of false consumerism in the era of global economy crisis in above-mentionedtwo shopping malls in Belgrade are low and middle category of consumer goods originated from Asian countries. Although, as a reaction to that, new shopping streets of high-class consumerism and elite are formed. For example, Kralja Petra street in Belgrade is intended for a small percent of wealthy people in Serbia.

By simulating the city, malls are adopting the criteria of the city in the marketing and becoming legitimized through it, falsely declaring itself as a public space. Squares and streets in these pseudo-public spaces are presented as symbols of the real city facilities. What was once a public square, a gathering place for citizens and collective cohesion - today is the shopping center, the pseudo-public space in which private interests completely overshadow any public office, and citizens are welcome as long as they adhere to established (consumerist) forms. Shopping center causes a certain structure, behavior, actions and attitude of consumers and it defines aspects of the purchase. In this sense, the consumer expects certain homogeneity of the population. Purchases are motivated by qualitative factors combined with the implementation of free time, and the feeling of comfort and satisfaction. The malls are trying to imitate urban centers, to retain customers as long as possible, but are minimally involved in the vicinity. But imitation of physical context leads us to the negligence of new layers of culture, new needs, new constructions, and sensibility, even to the negation of any developed and transformed identity.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup>Jon Goss. "The "Magic of the Mall": An Analysis of Form, Function, and Meaning in the Contemporary Retail Built Environment", Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Vol. 83, No. 1. (Mar., 1993), pp. 18-47., pp. 36

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