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Architecture of Consumption. Case Study Sarajevo

Introduction

Present Sarajevo is experiencing embodiments of post-socialist and post-war transitions to a neo-liberal policy which advocates free-market economy, privatisation and foreign capital inflows. A major representative of these embodiments is retail centres whose number has significantly increased during the past decade (Nurković, 2012). Some of these structures have drawn attention with their attractiveness, appeal, and dominance leading to much ink being spilled in the press about the controversy of these new developments. Yet the justification of a shopping mall construction boom in the city of 291,422 people (Census, 2013) and the highest country unemployment rate in Europe of 43.5% (Trading Economics, 2014), is argued in this paper with the special focus on three major retail agglomerations in the city centre: BBI centre, the ICSC European Shopping Centre Awards winner 2011 (Photo 1), Al Shiddi Sarajevo City Centre (Photo 2) and ALTA shopping centre (Photo 3). These retail and business centres were built over the course of last four years and occupy an area of 116,500 m² in total.

In the context of malls and market-places R. Shields states that “Every epoch has its cathedrals, monuments to the era that come to signify or embody the cultural *Weltanschauung*” (Shields, 1992). Whether or not we perceive them as spatial representatives of the ideology of contemporary capitalism, it is to be considered how this rapid construction boom challenges sustainability and the long-term use potential (Zagora, Samic, 2014). Providing an answer to what differentiates these case examples and still attracts customers regardless to the socioeconomic situation in the country is part of this research. Shopping experience in opposite to actual buying is being defined and motivation in regards to hedonic and utilitarian shopping values (Babin, Dardin, Griffin, 1994) are being clarified. One might argue why the nearby Importanne centre has also not been taking into consideration, but the larger part of Importanne is residential which is a factor influencing the visiting frequency and motivation. Another reason is its shopping area being about three times smaller than ALTA’s which has the lowest square footage amongst the selected ones.

Figure 1

**City map outlining the historical and cultural centre with marked locations:
1 - BBI, 2 - Al Shiddi and 3 - ALTA**



Source: www.skyscraper.city edited by author.

Photo 1
BBI centre



Source: www.deling.biz

Photo 2
Al Shiddi Sarajevo City Centre



Source: www.skyscraper.city

Photo 3
ALTA shopping centre



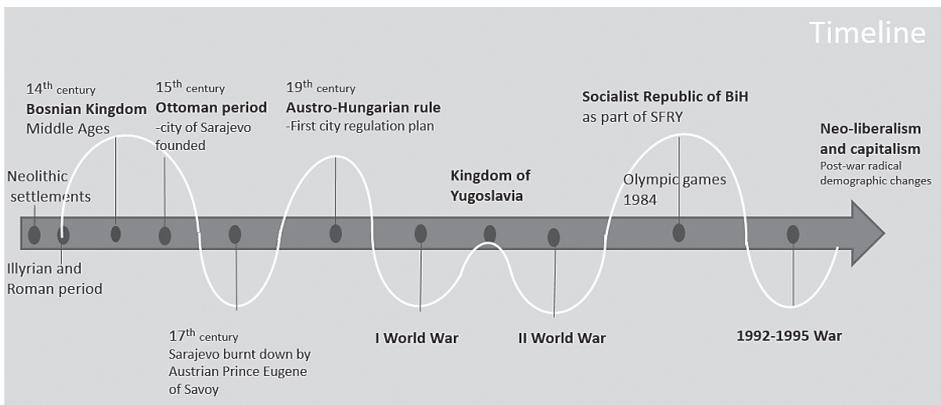
Source: www.alta.ba

Understanding the background: a history of inconsistency

Due to its geographical location throughout centuries Sarajevo has been a place of diverse cultural and religious alternations as well as trading interactions. A city that prides itself for its multinational and multicultural character where a mosque, a synagogue, a catholic and orthodox church can be found in less than 500 m radius. The shape of the valley conditioned the longitudinal expansion of the city leaving physical traces of each epoch in an almost chronological order from the city core in the east along river Miljacka to the west. Yet the frequent alternation of regimes has produced a turbulent social, cultural, urban and economic inconsistency. The shift in cause and consequence between inconsistency and diversity has had a major impact in the urban development and architectural features of the city. A history timeline representing important causes affecting the urban and socioeconomic development forms a sinusoid-like wave of peak points and declines of Sarajevo's urban evolution (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Schematic timeline of important events which influenced urban and socioeconomic development. Waves above the line represent times of prosperity, waves below represent stagnation or destruction



Source: Author.

The trading circumstances in Bosnia and Herzegovina altered throughout time, yet certainly relied on the advantage of location - being positioned at the threshold of clashing civilisations of East and West. The first settlements around Sarajevo developed during the Neolithic period, followed by Illyrians that were later overrun by Roman colonies. The medieval ages in Bosnia and Herzegovina are marked by strong

trading connections with merchants from Republic of Ragusa (today's Dubrovnik), having the Charter of Ban Kulin, a trade agreement between the Banate¹ of Bosnia and Ragusans written in 1189, as the oldest written state document. During the 14th century the Bosnian Kingdom, ruled by king Tvrtko I, became the most powerful country in the Balkans. Yet the city of Sarajevo was founded in the 15th century under the rule of Ottoman Empire.

In that period, the commercial and residential districts were clearly distinguished as Čaršija and *Mahala*. In Sarajevo, the *Mahalas* were amphitheatrically spread over the hillsides allowing unobstructed view on *Baščaršija*² - the business centre (Photo 4) to all residents (Grabrijan, Neidhardt, 1957). *Baščaršija* was formed by numerous narrow streets filled with small shops of various craftsmanships where goods were both manufactured and sold. The first *soi-disant* retail centres in Sarajevo appeared in form of a closed market space called *Bezistan* (Photo 5).

The Ottomans also introduced an interesting aspect of economic sustainability – the *Waqf* which is a religious endowment that commissioned construction of many sacred, public and commercial buildings (Zagora, Samic, 2014). After the fall under the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the 19th century, architecture in Sarajevo showcased western European features through buildings of Neoclassicism, Neo-Renaissance, Secession and even Moorish Revival. Most representative display of these features can be found in the commercial streets Maršala Tita (Photo 6) and Ferhadija which connects to Baščaršija, outlining a clear historical transition. The district of Marijin Dvor (Photo 7), which at the time formed the outskirts of the city, now represents its administrative and commercial centre and the home of ALTA and Al Shiddi shopping centres.

Having hosted the triggering event of World War I - the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, followed by multiple shifts of regimes during the *Interbellum* period and another World War, Sarajevo experienced a long period of construction stagnation, destructions, economic and social turbulence. Until it finally reached its prosperous highlight during the Socialist era by hosting the Winter Olympic Games in 1984. The period within boundaries of SFR Yugoslavia in Sarajevo is symbolised by modernism architecture, construction of new residential, social, cultural and sport facilities under the veil of “brotherhood and unity³.” It is important to notice that all major investments were financed by the state. Construction of consumption buildings exclusively was very rare and occurred in form of a representative city landmark, like the department store “Sarajka”, the location of today's BBI centre (Photo 8).

¹ Banate of Bosnia – *Banovina Bosna* was an independent medieval state within most of the boundaries of today's BiH as well as parts of Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro.

² Baščaršija is the old market place and the historical and cultural centre of Sarajevo. The name derives from the Turkish language formed by the words “baš” which means “head,” “main,” “primary” and the word “çarşı” which stands for “bazaar,” “market.”

³ “brotherhood and unity” - is the slogan of the communist party in former SFR Yugoslavia

Major capitalistic changes that occurred after the war 1992-1995 created their own landmarks.

The potential of Marijin Dvor as a city centre was of major interest to Juraj Neidhardt in the 1950s and 1960s. As a renowned architect who worked closely with Le Corbusier as well as author of multiple buildings in Marijin Dvor, he emphasised the importance of evolving this district into an administrative, commercial and overall cultural centre (Photo 9) by producing many model propositions (Grabrijan, Neidhart, 1957). Professionals today agree that Marijin Dvor has not lived up to its potential and that commercial function has prevailed over any other.

Consumption architecture remains of the Ottoman period

Photo 4

A street in Bascarsija



Source: www.skyscrapercity.com

Photo 5

The interior of Bezistan



Source: www.skyscrapercity.com

Districts created during the Austro-Hungarian period, today's commercial centres

Photo 6

Maršala Tita Street



Source: www.skyscrapercity.com

Photo 7

Marijin Dvor



Source: www.skyscrapercity.com

Sarajevo during former SFR Yugoslavia

Photo 8

Old “Sarajka” department store



Source: www.skyscrapercity.com

Photo 9

Skenderija - commerce, culture and sports centre



Source: www.skyscrapercity.com

This short historical and graphical introduction was necessary to present how constant cultural and political alternations have raised the need of each era to leave a footprint that glorifies its period. In accordance with this I would agree with Zagora's statement that contemporary capitalism in Sarajevo produces shopping centres as representative spaces of its ideology (Zagora, Samic, 2014). Its impact within Sarajevo's socioeconomically unstable society is yet to be argued in this paper.

Assessing user acceptance level of the selected shopping centres

This research relies on a considerable amount of literature concerning consumption in general, statistics, consumer psychographics, types of retail agglomerations, attractiveness to consumers, hedonic and utilitarian shopping orientations (Babin et al., 1994; Kim; 2006; Guido, 2006; Teller et al., 2008) as well as studies targeting Sarajevo's architecture during transitional periods and the impact on its consumer practices (Grabrijan, Neidhardt, 1957; Gul, Omicevic, 2013; Zagora, Samic, 2014). Yet none of the literature mentioned above questioned the influence of huge imposed inner city retail agglomerations on a society struggling with unemployment and grey economy. The complexity of the circumstances and possible influences demand a more extensive research in order to provide accurate answers. By shedding a light on the actual issue and creating a theory of imposed capitalistic “social space,” over public interest this research aims to provide a basis for further extensive studies.

Valuable information has been collected through a survey with around 200 participants. This empirical approach was necessary in order to provide general public standpoint. The survey was conducted through an online questionnaire targeting spe-

cifically citizens of Sarajevo and focusing on three major shopping malls in the city centre constructed in the past four years: BBI, ALTA and Al Shiddi.

The online character of the survey reassures more objectivity of results since an in-vivo environment at the malls might be influenced by the participant's current shopping experience. The questions are constructed to determine the frequency of the consumers' visits, the motivation and character of activities as well as to ascertain whether a shopping mall in the given area presents the best usage of the space.

Survey findings on visiting behaviour and acceptance

Demographic results show age of respondents to vary from 19 to 60, while the majority is female with 74%. In regards to visiting frequency survey results show most common answer to be "once or twice a month", while the highest percentage in motivation is "shopping for wants", "browsing and window shopping" and "leisure, food and drinks consumption". It is important to notice that the character of these motivations is hedonic. It is also important to distinguish between motivation and actual act of procurement. The motive can be associated with the consumer's perception of the created environment, yet it is not a confirmation if actual buying occurred. A more accurate result would be obtained if questions about the frequency and amount of buying would have been proposed. In this case an in-vivo survey at the shopping centre would be more preferable since participants would have evidence of procurement with them. This can be subject for future research on income-to-spending ratio of consumers at shopping malls in BiH, which is not of further relevance in this present context.

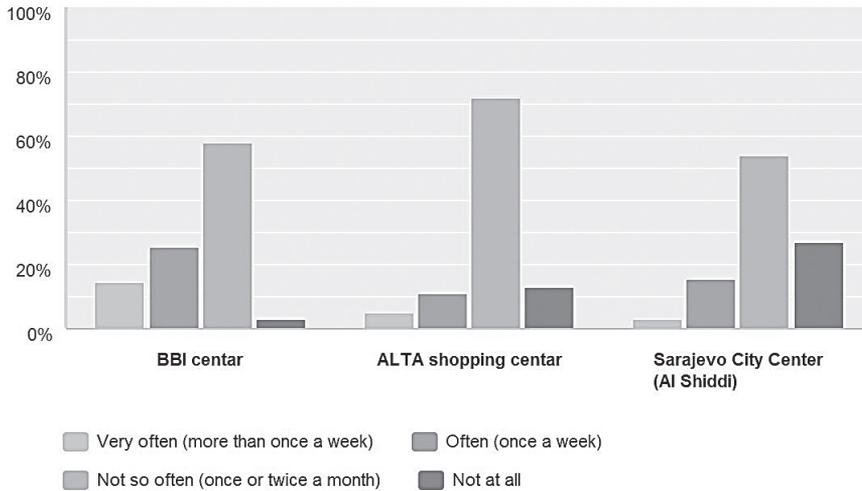
"Shopping for needs" is among the least common motive for visit. It is important to notice that supermarkets are either placed underground, being more secluded or not present at all as it is the case with Al Shiddi. This seclusion of products that might remind of existential needs helps us determine the intentional character of the above-mentioned created agglomerations.

When asked whether the shopping centres provide the most adequate use of the location majority of participants answered NO with 56% for ALTA and 62% for Al Shiddi, but a clear YES with 73% for BBI centre. In this case it is important to notice that BBI is constructed in the place of former "Sarajka" which could have been a sub-conscious factor influencing respondent's opinion although interestingly both times the constructions were preceded with petitions voting against them and in favour of creating a city square. This could provide a basis for possible research on lack of urban public spaces in Sarajevo.

The majority that answered NO to the previous question and minority in case of BBI, proposed "public space/city square" and "space of culture/art" as the most adequate uses of location.

Chart 1

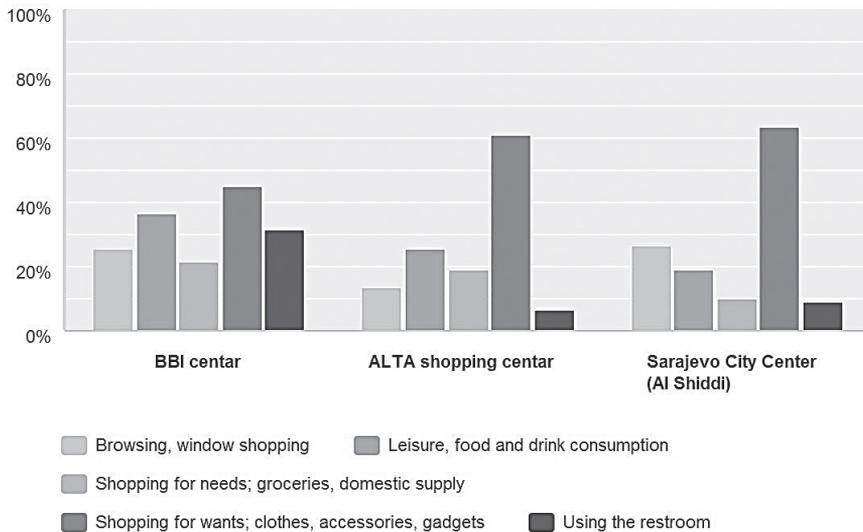
User visiting frequency of BBI, ALTA and AL SHIDDI centres



Source: Author’s findings - survey results.

Chart 2

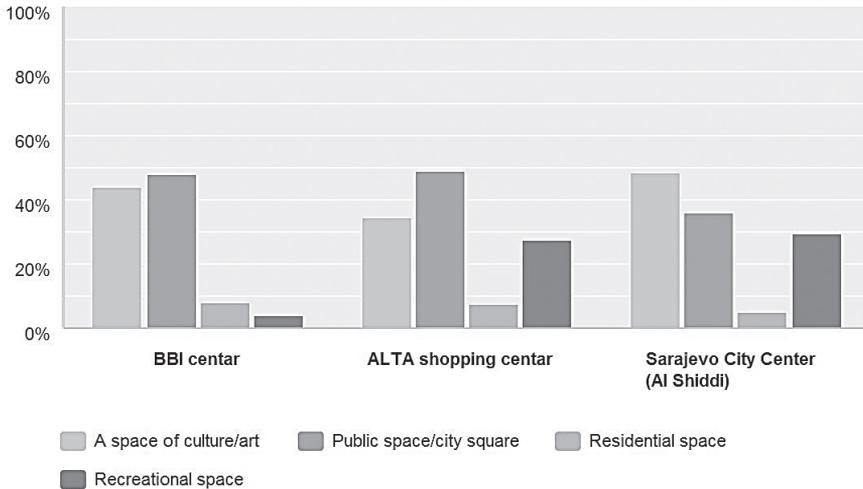
User visiting motivation for BBI, ALTA and AL SHIDDI centres



Source: Author’s findings - survey results.

Chart 3

User vote on alternative usage of BBI, ALTA and AL SHIDDI locations



Source: Author's findings - survey results.

Global to local – a general overview

Shopping in general has long not been just a social activity but has become a form of entertainment and mass distraction. The actual act of procurement of product is not closely fulfilling as the satisfaction of the whole experience. In marketing literature two important “shopping values” are being distinguished as hedonic and utilitarian (Babin et al., 1994). Numerous publications have defined these two aspects, analysed and dealt with in the context of motivation, consumer profiling, demographics and type of retail agglomeration (Babin et al., 1994; Kim, 2006; Teller et al., 2008; Guido, 2006). In general, hedonic shoppers are seeking entertainment, fun and sensory stimulation, while utilitarians are more rational and find joy in fulfilment of predefined tasks and efficiency (Babin, 1994; Teller, 2008). Agglomeration characteristics that differentiate attractiveness to either hedonist or utilitarian have never been strictly defined but argued about. In this context, Teller differentiates typology of agglomeration effects where accumulation and enrichment effects are considered more attractive to hedonists and rationalisation, accessibility, parking spaces, etc. attract more utilitarians (Teller et al., 2008).

An important trend in retailing noticed by Teller represents “the shift of market share from evolved (i.e. shopping streets or retail clusters in town centres) to created retail agglomerations (i.e. shopping centres or malls)” (Teller et al., 2008, p. 58). Evidence of this trend can easily be found in Sarajevo when comparing the content of

today's Baščaršija or Ferhadija Street to the newly developed shopping centres (Gul, Omicevic, 2013). The fact that this transition in Sarajevo's case includes inner city locations of the created agglomerations is even more peculiar and steers the direction of focus to the character of the retail centres.

Contemporary retail centre developers have mastered market analysis, psychographics of consumers, instruments of space design, stimulation of moods - all in favour of retail profit. Inspirational ideas have even been found in show business using various techniques and allusions in order to create a convincing environment where the actual consumption process is being mystified (Goss, 1993). By that taking advantage of "man's almost infinite appetite for distraction" in A. Huxley's words.

The inner city location of our case examples presented a major advantage for the developers. Factor affecting attractiveness of an agglomeration and pursuing consumers to come such as marketing, accessibility, targeting variety of tenants, price-quality ratio issues (Teller, Elms, 2010) seem not to have been as difficult of a task as justification and sustainability of imposed consumption functionality. The proposed locations have been rated as inadequate in fulfilment of function by eighty percent of people questioned. The most common response for adequate purpose of location was "a public space, city square" and "a space of culture/art." Yet the respondents do show shopping for wants and leisure as top motivations for visit, which proves a successful development strategy, in sense of capitalistic over public interest.

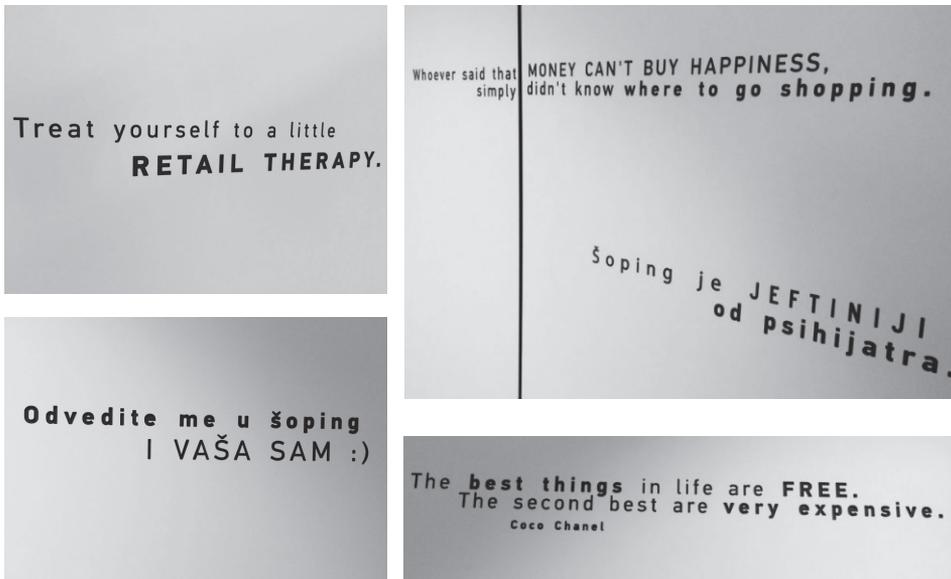
Taking in account all factors together with the survey results we can confirm that the structure, design and content of the shopping mall trio in Sarajevo's centre produce a hedonistic ambience which sets them apart from all other shopping centres in the city. The buildings are not only appealing, they are dominant. Their content exceeds, in SCC even seizes to provide, shopping for needs, like supermarket or grocery shops. Although these are profitable places, their presence might remind the common user about existential and material reasons for consumption hence challenge the artificial feel-good ambience of the shopping centre.

The hedonic character is being imposed not only through special design and content but also through emphasising shopping importance. The glorification of shopping exceeds subliminal messages and marketing. It is more dominant and authoritative through direct inscriptions as in the case of Sarajevo's Al Shiddi City Centre. All consumers regardless of age or sex are exposed to messages along the interior walls of the building supposedly advocating shopping in a jocular manner. The disregard of potential psychological hazard over time could lead to promotion of decadence and cultural decay. The writings have drawn attention of the media as well as reactions of psychologist and psychotherapist who warned about the "chauvinist and insulting content" ("reklamne poruke SCC-a" 2014). Considering that the stereotypical shopper is female (Survey results, Goss, 1993; Telle, 2008) "given the exploitation of women's social insecurities by the commodity aesthetic" (Goss, 1993) messages such

as “Odvedi me u šoping i tvoja sam” meaning “Take me shopping and I am yours” justify such warnings (Figure 3).

Figure 3

**Inscriptions along the interior walls of Al Shiddi Sarajevo City Centre.
The inscriptions in Bosnian say: “Shopping is cheaper than a psychiatrist”
and “Take me shopping and I am yours”**



Source: www.radiosarajevo.ba

Conclusion

The inner city location of our three selected consumption temples certainly was a bull’s-eye market for investors due to its diverse demographics and higher density of population (Kim, 2006). Even though our survey as well as former petitions show a general public dissatisfaction with the consumption character of the locations, a policy advocating foreign investment over the interest of masses has prevailed.

As Goss states, shopping centres “like the ideal benign civic government” (Goss, 1993, p. 26) produce an almost perfect, relatively democratic public space. An ideal environment, accessible to nearly everyone providing high level maintenance and protection from vandalism. In short, the mere opposite of Sarajevo’s reality today. The dominant and representative shopping centres create an illusion of prosperity and wealth. Accordingly, the results of our conducted survey show how seclusion or

removal of content associated with existential needs (supermarkets or grocery stores) can support a more hedonic appearance hence promote a *bon vivant* lifestyle.

“Perception is perhaps even more important than reality. In business that is as dependent as film or theatre on appearances, the illusion of safety is as vital, or even more so, than its reality.” (Hazel, 1992, as cited in Goss, 1993, p. 27).

We can conclude that the hedonic orientation is not recognised but rather imposed as a lifestyle and ideology by gentrifying important inner city locations of public socialising potential as well as carefully addressing the shopping centre’s structure and content. Rintamäki characterises hedonist shoppers as *homo ludens* who strive for emotional entertainment while scarifying stress and negative emotions (Rintamäki et al., 2006; Teller et al., 2008). As Goss states, the shopper is driven by a *“simultaneous desire and self-contempt, yet constantly alternating between assertion and denial of identity”* (Goss, 1993).

The answer to the hypothesis is that citizens of Sarajevo have succumbed to an ideology of capitalism which imposes *pseudo-social* spaces in gentrified locations. Retail centres are private investments whose primary goal can never be anything else but profit otherwise they wouldn’t be sustainable. Perceiving them as quality public space stimulates the increase of such construction. Finally this paper points out a concern about the impact of transition from actual socialisation to ostensible socialisation where browsing replaces recreation, formal and predictable conversations replace natural human interaction and shopping is glorified as virtue.

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Summary

Two decades after a devastating war, Sarajevo has evolved into a city highly influenced by free market capitalism. Despite having the highest country unemployment rate in Europe of 43.5% (Trading Economics, 2014), frequent public demonstrations and an overall social dissatisfaction, there is a noticeable increase in construction of retail centres. Since 2009 three major shopping malls, around 116,500 m² in total, have been constructed in the city centre apart from numerous more previously built along the city. Given the mentioned conditions one would assume that there can be only a small percentage of possible users for these spaces. Interestingly the shopping centres are never empty. The present study aims to contribute to research to what differentiates these inner city hedonic temples of consumption from other shopping malls and analyse if socioeconomic standards affect and/or alter usage and behaviour in them. The hypothesis is that such modern structures having a high consumption lifestyle appearance, thus stimulating the pursuit for one, provide a sense of global equality and an ostensible stability to Sarajevo citizens. Apart from detailed review of existing literature, valuable information was collected through an online questionnaire targeting exclusively citizens of Sarajevo. In conclusion, the results answer to whether and how construction of consumption architecture meets the interests and needs of citizens living in a socioeconomically unstable country.

Key words: Sarajevo, shopping centres, unemployment, consumption, hedonic.

JEL codes: D12

Architektura konsumpcji. Studium przypadku – Sarajevo

Streszczenie

W ciągu dwóch dziesięcioleci po wyniszczającej wojnie Sarajevo przekształciło się w miasto, na które w dużym stopniu wpłynął kapitalizm wolnorynkowy. Pomimo najwyższego spośród krajów Europy wskaźnika bezrobocia w wysokości 43,5% (Trading Economics, 2014), częstych demonstracji publicznych i ogólnego niezadowolenia społecznego występuje zauważalny rozwój budownictwa ośrodków detalicznych. Od 2009 r. w centrum miasta wybudowano trzy duże galerie handlowe o łącznej powierzchni ok. 116 500 m² (obok licznych, wybudowanych wcześniej wzdłuż ciągów miejskich). Mając na względzie wspomniane warunki, można zakładać, że istnieje tylko niewielki odsetek ewentualnych użytkowników tych powierzchni. Co ciekawe, ośrodki handlowe nigdy nie są puste. Przeprowadzone badanie ma na celu określenie, co odróżnia te śródmiejskie hedonistyczne świątynie konsumpcji od innych galerii handlowych, i przeanalizowanie czy normy społeczno-ekonomiczne wpływają i/lub zmieniają korzystanie z nich i zachowania w nich. Postawiono hipotezę, że takie nowoczesne struktury, mające wygląd charakterystyczny dla stylu życia o wysokiej konsumpcji, stanowiące w ten sposób bodźce do dążenia do takiego stylu życia, stwarzają poczucie globalnej równości i pozornej stabilności dla mieszkańców Sarajewa. Obok analizy istniejącej literatury cenne informacje zebrano w trakcie przeprowadzonej w trybie on-line ankiety skierowanej wyłącznie do mieszkańców miasta. Wyniki badań stanowią odpowiedź na pytanie, czy i jak konstrukcja architektury konsumpcji zaspokaja zainteresowania i potrzeby mieszkańców żyjących w niestabilnym społecznie i gospodarczo kraju.

Słowa kluczowe: Sarajevo, ośrodki handlowe, bezrobocie, konsumpcja, hedonistyczny.

Kody JEL: D12

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