

## THE IMPACT OF SHOPPING CENTRES ON THE RESTRUCTURING IN THE POST-SOCIALIST CITIES WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS ON PODGORICA

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**Abstract.** *This paper considers transformation of urban form of post-socialistic cities arising from the transition from socialism to capitalism. The structural transformation resulted in creation of polycentric cities, deindustrialization and revitalisation of suburban zones and led to emerging of commercial developments as a manifestation of activity of new urban players. The emergence of shopping centres marks the beginning of consumerism in the consumer society that has formerly been exclusively oriented to industrial production. The effects of this phenomenon on the urban tissue are similar in all cities of Central and East Europe. Likewise, in Podgorica, such effects reflected in restructuring of previously known urban structure, inducing creation of new town districts to the full extent. The purpose of this study is to reassess the existing and introduce new mechanisms of urban policy of the post-socialistic cities, with a particular focus on Podgorica, thus enabling facilitation of legal frameworks and an institutional approach to the further process.*

**Key words:** *post-socialist city, polycentricism, suburbanisation, shopping centre*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

From the aspect of changes in state and society, the post-socialist period assumed transition from socialist to capitalist system, where such process was used as a temporary label to be applied until the system had safely achieved some familiar type of society (Pickvance, 2005). The transition also involved some very radical and uncontrolled transformations carried out within a narrow time-frame, often leading to anarchy and ad hoc measures, which in turn produced a negative impact on society. In terms of urban changes, this period entailed a deconstruction of then known urban matrix of a socialist city.

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In literature, a transition is defined as a complex reform process referring to five major macro-problem levels (political, economic, social, cultural and environmental). Here, a spatial level features as a separate problem that is observed for causality, meaning within each of these five circles the space transformation stands out as a cause and/or effect, and most frequently as both (Pušić, 2001).

The post-socialism brought gradual adoption of capitalism postulates and globalisation, which assumed orientation towards the West. An inflow of foreign capital, market internationalization and consumption-based economy are only some of the characteristics of this period.

The overall impact of the completed processes manifested in the chaotic patterns of the post-socialist urban development, with rigid structure of former socialist cities being softened by relatively small yet numerous interferences of private investors.

A combined effect of the post-socialist processes induced deep structural transformations leading from monocentric to polycentric spatial structures, from compact cities to the increasing urban peripheries, from high-density city centres with institutional and residential functions to exclusively commercial-business city districts, from former industrial complexes to Brownfield sites that new urban players find attractive (Stanilov, 2007).

## 2. FROM SOCIALISM TO TRANSITION

The period of socialism was marked by an order in which the space transformation was intrinsically linked to the state and its influence. It was the state that influenced the development of space morphology at all levels. Transformation of urban form is just one among numerous consequences of restructuring of the social system. Although established in a short, still critical time frame, the spatial development patterns had produced long-term effects on future development of the transition cities.

The period of socialism records development of infrastructure but only such infrastructure that responded to the industrial needs. Given that housing settlements cantered around the factories, a place of residence was only secondary to the place of work.

While absence of commercial developments was typical of periphery, department stores dominated central city zones, without disturbing a traditional commercial function of the old city centre. The department stores occupied an open plan and flexible space, structured by areas and department. Most socialist countries did not allow private businesses or tolerated it to a small extent. In such setting, social goals often prevailed over the logic of profit making.

In early 90s of the last century, a systemic transformation took place, when moving towards capitalism gave rise to the idea of establishing a system similar to the developed western societies.

Nevertheless, the post-socialist transformation did not take the preferred turn as it proved to be a demanding process in every aspect. The changes came at several levels, in particular at political, economic and urban level.

Reorganization of urban space of a post-socialist city involves restructuring of the existing and forming of new urban zones which leads to completely new urban formats.

The inherited socialist principles are often in conflict with the principles of the capitalist social and economic system, thus leading to reshaping of the existing urban structures. The most visible effects are often concentrated at the attractive central areas of the city as well as at the suburban locations. Key transformations in the spatial matrix

of former socialist cities included commercialization and expansion of urban tissue, radical transformation of the outer urban zones as well as the conversion of the suburban zone. Indeed, under the deindustrialization process, the suburban zones emerged as zones of new possibilities, with their previous structures undergoing a complete transformation due to the huge interest of the private investors.

At the same time, central zones of the city mainly focus on business as well as on tourist-oriented facilities, while retaining the purposes of central and cultural functions.

Urban changes of the post-socialist city saw their spatial articulation through the emergence of shopping centres. Development of this space takes the shape of primarily economic but also political and social restructuring, the consequences of which can be seen in everyday life of inhabitants of the city and its wider environment.

### 3. SHOPPING CENTER IN A POST-SOCIALIST CITY

The first large shopping centres appeared in Central Europe in the mid-90s. Major retail chains put forth their whole strength first in the capitals of Central Europe, with a three-year delayed emergence of the shopping centres in the "secondary" cities. The investment decisions were made at the moment when the reversal of the existing commercial sector and purchasing power of population were attributed to the economic transformation.

The shopping centres became a place where citizens could feel the changes spawned by the consumerist culture and social stratification, becoming a symbol of transformation. High aspirations to western society and trends thereof give rise to consumerism in the consumer society that was formerly exclusively oriented to the industrial production. The shopping centres create a concept of leisure shopping, placing the consumers into a hyper-real environment which itself nourishes contradictions in the perception of real and imaginary, true and false (Ritzer, 2005).

Notwithstanding their lifetime is as predictably shorter compared to residential and business facilities, the shopping centres represent a key factor in terms of investments in the commercial sector. When concentrated in suburban areas instead in central zones, the shopping centres strongly affect the traffic flows and stimulate residential suburbanisation. Hence, at this time, the dramatic transformations of urban space and physical structure unfolded in the peripheral urban tissue, reflecting the notion that the converted commercial sector relies on the use of vehicles. This because of the fact that shopping centres are accommodated in large buildings and as such are oriented to urban transit zones, fringe areas and suburban areas. These transformations of urban structure bring huge change to the post-socialist cities in Europe, where traditional centre was generally regarded as the centre of commercial activities.

The foregoing led to re-urbanisation of certain parts of the central zone, the crisis of big socialist complexes and emergence of a new low-density residential ring.

According to literature (Dinić, 2015), trends in positioning of large commercial buildings in the period beyond the year of 2000 have important implications for urban tissue:

1. Presence of commercial facilities in the city centre decreases and fades in importance;
2. A significant part of commercial function shifts from the city to the shopping centres on the periphery with no direct links to the traditional city core;
3. Reorientation of consumers to large shopping centres directly affected small retail shops in other city districts as well. A number of small retail shops sees a rapid drop;

4. Large supermarkets and hypermarkets with a dominant road access replace former day-to-day supply stores with easy pedestrian access;
5. After the period of their expansion on the periphery, the shopping centres shift back to the city centre locations.

In addition to high demand for products and services which directed the unprecedented success of the shopping centres in the post-socialist countries (Central and Eastern Europe), there are two distinctive reasons behind this phenomenon.

The first is seen as a pure psychological effect of an unconstrained exposure of the sensory deprived citizens of former socialist countries to the vast assortment of goods, which were then presented in a brand new environment.

The second factor of this phenomenon, which at the same time explains a favourable position of shopping centres in the city matrix, is a very lenient system of urban planning that actually facilitated development of commercial programs. Quite the opposite, city authorities in Western Europe imposed constraints that affected implementation of such projects.

It cannot be said with certainty if the newly formed residential complexes around the shopping centres will be transformed into the edge cities over the time, but without any doubt, they had acted as a dominant factor in the urban changes of the post-socialist cities in the last five to ten years.

### **3.1. Shopping centres in the Central and Eastern Europe countries**

In the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the transition posed demand for new office space of foreign investors, which needed to comply with the foreign market standards. Accordingly, such new office space occupied the prime locations in the central zones of the cities. Although a small office space suited the requirements at the beginning, the changes came with the expansion of those companies that required larger office space, but now focused on the locations beyond the city core, still well connected to the infrastructure.

In the mid 90-s, the retail market followed the already developed business market, with evident similarities in the patterns of distribution of the foreign investments. Hence, an increasing number of shopping centres can be observed either in the city core or on the urban peripheries, the image of which is thus changing in line with the global consumption trends.

In the last 10 years, most urban areas in the Central and Eastern Europe welcomed several new shopping centres in the central zones. However, the prevailing part of the retail development took place precisely on the urban periphery. The shopping centre buildings often served as nodal points for future residential area growth, as they appeared in the sparsely populated areas, near the main roads, often because of the increased intensity of the individual traffic in cities.

Commercial suburbanisation has left visible traces on the suburban zone, by far more obvious when compared to the effects it had on the residential suburbanisation. This phenomenon can be easily explained given that central zones of the city offer a limited space for construction of a large-size business or shopping centre buildings. For that reason, the investors directed their orientation to two categories of locations. One category comprises the locations that are close to major roads and road intersections. The other category refers to the locations near the subway stations and underground transport terminals. However, the consequences of such development of commercial facilities affect the central zones and traditional city centres where manufacturing shops are closing, as they are

unable to compete with the large retail chains. Therefore, traditional centres are becoming less attractive in terms of meeting the needs of a contemporary consumer.

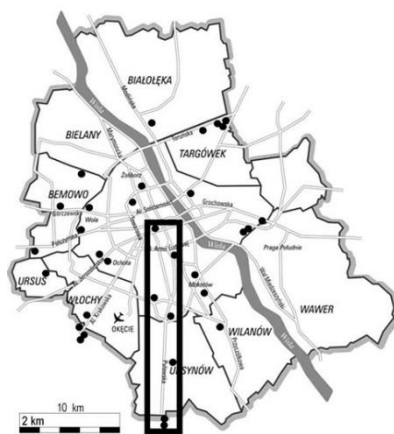
The foregoing considerations served as a basis for determining the key factors of impact of shopping centres on the post-socialist city development, which refer to several elements:

- establishing new principles of urban development, market globalisation and internationalisation;
- intensive migrations from city cores into suburban areas;
- spatial stratification - place of residence depends on economic standing;
- city polycentrism - old urban core and newly formed suburban centre created as a consequence of the emergence of shopping centres;
- shopping centres as a place for socialisation and social activities;
- urban policy of new players, which uses plans to illegally facilitate construction of new shopping centres.

### 3.1.1. Warsaw

Among the cities of Eastern Europe, Warsaw can certainly serve as an example to illustrate the changes concerned. With reference to the emergence of the shopping centres area, the changes in urban structure of the city are best illustrated by the example of Marszalkowska and Pulawska corridor (Fig. 1), which extends from the city centre to the border with a satellite town Piaseczno. The shopping centres built along this corridor (Europlex, Galeria Mokotow, Geant Ursynow) introduced changes into the city structure in terms of both generation of new facilities in their vicinity and transformation of the existing facilities. This transformation of the central city structure from socialist to market-oriented space may be regarded as a symbol of the changes. Moreover, the shopping centres located on urban periphery symbolically mark the direction of the shift from one system to the other - the transformation from an industrial to post-industrial zone of the post-socialist city, thus contributing to urban dispersion. Remodelling of the Mokotow district centre shows an example of urban transformation from a non-profit, public use open space to the enclosed and privately owned commercial space and as such represents the best illustration of global changes induced by the transition from the socialist to capitalist society (Dinić, 2015).

Nevertheless, the resulting changes have stirred discontent as the so called "rural urbanisation" leads to creation of an urban landscape filled with incompatible buildings constructed with either too small or too large gaps in between.



**Fig. 1** Modern shopping centres in Warsaw (dots) and commercial corridor Pulawska/ Marszalkowska (square). (Source: Kreja, K.: Spatial imprints of urban consumption: largescale retail development in Warsaw, in: Tsenkova, S.; Nedović-Budić, Z.: The urban mosaic of post-socialist Europe: space, institutions and policy, pp. 259., Physica-Verlag HD, New York, 2006.)

### *3.1.2. Ljubljana*

Another example of the impact of the transition commercial patterns on the spatial changes can be observed in Ljubljana. The increased number of new commercial developments and change in the manner of use of the urban land has risen directly from the transition. Four large shopping centres (BTC, Rudnik, Interspar, Mercator) were built on the city periphery, close to the main roads and major transport routes. One of the first shopping centres appeared on the site of a former warehouse, with each successive shopping centre built on the sites of former factories or on the unused industrial land.

### *3.1.3. Budapest*

Budapest certainly does not fall behind the post-socialist transformation trends and can serve as an example for consideration of the emergence of shopping centres in the city structure.

One of the earliest commercial facilities of this kind, Csavargyári Épület, was established in an old screw factory. Evidently, the deindustrialisation process caused by commercial development follows the well-established pattern.

The first completely new commercial facility of this kind was Duna Plaza, also established near the industrial zone, primarily due to the extremely good transport connections, but also in line with a tendency to convert the overall surroundings into the commercial centre.

Ever since, the number of shopping centres in the area of Budapest has increased, especially on former industrial sites. An important role in the expansion of commercial development is naturally attributed to foreign investments. It is interesting to note that almost 500 000 m<sup>2</sup> of new space allocated to commercial purposes was built only between 1990 and 1999, out of which 75% within the city limits and the rest in the surrounding areas (Tosics, 2005).

### *3.1.4. Prague*

Commercial development had significant impact on the transformation of suburban zone of Prague. While residential developments were scattered throughout the suburban area, commercial developments concentrate in complexes built close to major highways and important transport routes. Location-wise, another important factor was the existence and proximity of metro lines. Two shopping centres - Tesco and Globus, being among first of the kind in the Czech market, one on the western and the other on the eastern edge of the city were both located close to the highway and metro stations. Up to 1989, most commercial developments (nearly 50%) were concentrated in the city centre (Sykora, 1999). However, during and after the transition, large proportion of the commercial function shifted to suburban zone.

The spatial distribution of commercial developments in Prague is likely to be transformed by an ever-increasing decentralisation resulting from the post-socialist city development.

### *3.1.5. Belgrade*

In the transition period, the urban tissue of Belgrade was exposed to intensive transformations due to the vast available space, developed infrastructure and just minor commercial development. The interest of private investors and market pressure to focus

on commercial construction led to the emergence of shopping centres and hypermarkets. One such example can be seen in the case of the shopping centre “Ušće” that was built on the unoccupied land within the residential block, near the existing city landmark of Belgrade - office building PC “Ušće”. Consequently, the shopping centre affected the higher frequency of mobility in the direction of Novi Beograd, making this part of the city a more attractive zone in terms of social activity rather than just an inert residential-type tissue.

Notwithstanding an evident functional diversity of the suburban zone of Belgrade, this commercial development failed to establish a suitable spatial framework for a residential centre.

### 3.2. Shopping centres in Podgorica

In case of Podgorica, being among representatives of cities under the post-socialist regime, an entirely predictable modification of urban matrix is observed. Given the response to the emerging trends of globalisation and consumerism, in addition to the housing construction there is an evident presence of a substantial commercial construction and shopping centres in particular. The constructed shopping centres have led to restructuring of the previously known urban structure or fully encouraged emergence of new city districts.

In 2008, following the period of building boom and privatisation, a completely new facility emerged in the city once familiar with only small businesses in the commercial sector - the first shopping centre “Delta City” (Fig. 2). The shopping centre with a total floor area of 24 000m<sup>2</sup> was built on the land area of 46 000m<sup>2</sup>, near the main road to the coast. All world brands targeting middle-class consumers brought together in one place, within the commercial building facility. This completely new shopping environment has suited even the social life of those visitors with no interest in shopping.

This novelty, however, yielded the unpredictable large-scale effects. Although it was expected for certain portion of social life to shift from the old city core to a newly established facility, still it was unlikely to have the city morphology fully transformed. Consequently, a change takes place - the housing and living density decreases in central zones and increases in peripheral zones.

The suburbanisation process induced by construction of the shopping centre “Delta City” in Podgorica, on the site of the old furniture factory “Marko Radović” has also entailed the transformation of a former industrial zone. In that way, the transition-related space renovation and treatment of industrial heritage occur at the same place. Private investment projects are implemented on the site of factories and near the new commercial developments in the form of residential-business programs. In the specific case of Podgorica, a number of districts have been formed in response to the shopping centre construction and concentration of a social class discerned as a primary and consumption-oriented. Therefore, the choice of residence location is affected by economic standing, which leads to socio-spatial stratification (Šarović, 2016).

Since that time, on the site of the same factory one more shopping centre was built in 2016. The shopping centre “City Mall” (Fig. 3) is a two-storey building connected with an eight-storey business tower covering an area of 8000 m<sup>2</sup>.



**Fig. 2** Shopping centre “Delta City” in Podgorica  
(Source:<https://waytomonte.com/rs/p-657-delta-city>)

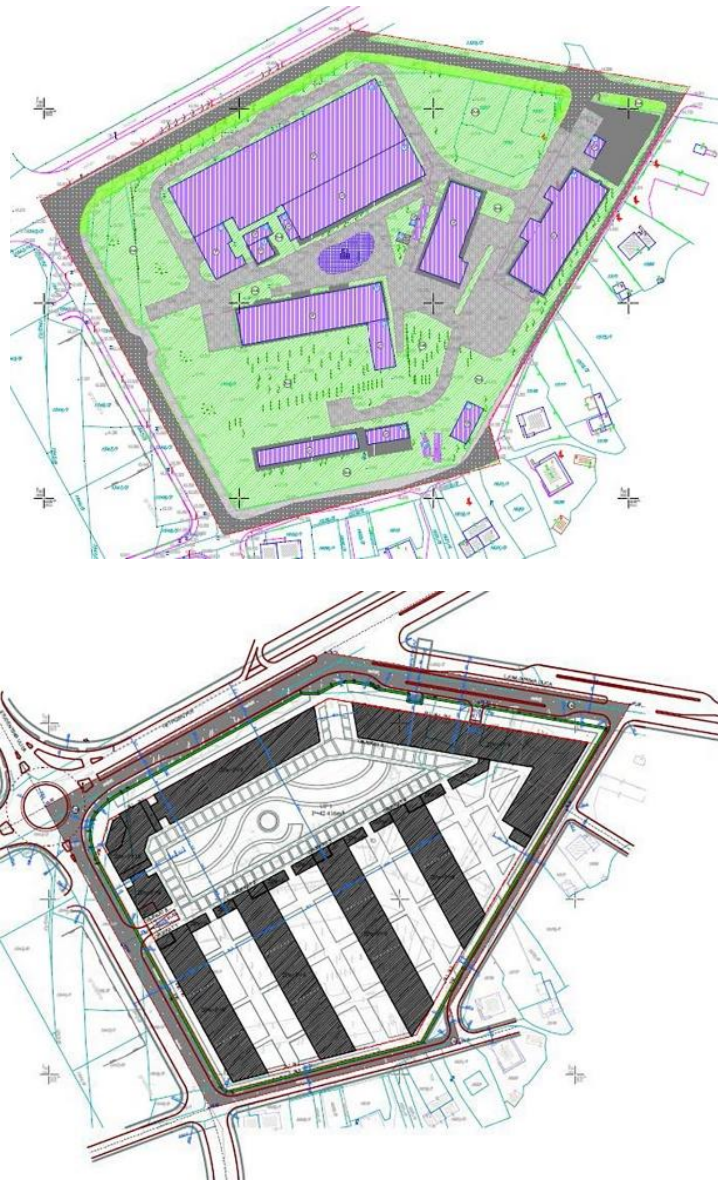


**Fig. 3** Shopping centre “City Mall” in Podgorica  
(Source:<http://celebic.com/referenca/city-mall-i-biznis-kula/>)

Moreover, construction of commercial facilities has generated new residential-business developments in the adjacent area. "City Kwart" was the first such development (construction period 2006-2016) built on the place of a previous heavy-machine factory "Radoje Dakić". Detailed Urban Plan "Radoje Dakić" from 2012. provided for construction of total gross area of 572 424 m<sup>2</sup>. Before this Plan was developed, 110 964 m<sup>2</sup> of mainly residential-business buildings had been constructed at the level of the scope of the Plan. Other developments provided for in the Detailed Urban Plan included areas intended for educational, health and cultural purposes, the construction of which is still pending.

On the site of the tobacco factory "Duvanski kombinat" (Fig. 4), within the same suburban zone of the town, there is an ongoing construction of another residential-business complex "Central Point" of total gross area of 145 000 m<sup>2</sup> and also a mixed-use complex "Master Quart" (Fig. 5) with total planned gross area of 86 272 m<sup>2</sup>.





**Fig. 4** DUP “Duvanski kombinat” – existing and planned condition  
(Source:[http://podgorica.me/db\\_files/Urbanizam/PlanskaDokumentacija/2012/IzmjDopUPDuvanski/8.namena-post.sta-model.pdf](http://podgorica.me/db_files/Urbanizam/PlanskaDokumentacija/2012/IzmjDopUPDuvanski/8.namena-post.sta-model.pdf);  
[http://podgorica.me/db\\_files/Urbanizam/PlanskaDokumentacija/2012/IzmjDopUPDuvanski/17.plan\\_parcelacije\\_regulacije\\_i\\_utu-model.pdf](http://podgorica.me/db_files/Urbanizam/PlanskaDokumentacija/2012/IzmjDopUPDuvanski/17.plan_parcelacije_regulacije_i_utu-model.pdf))

The phenomenon created by shopping centres in the post-socialist cities arises from an easy way of obtaining the preferred locations due to a large amount of capital owned by retail

chains compared to the local government revenues. Furthermore, the leverage of massive commercial facilities over the socialist commercial systems is above all seen in the wide range of choice, i.e. more diversified offer. It is interesting to note that while Western-European retail chains face hard times on their own ground due to their oversaturation, the same commercial facilities see a boom in the changing West-oriented region. The effects of such processes under the pressure of aspirations of private investors and free market in Podgorica (Fig. 4) also affect the traditional city centre that gradually fades in importance. With a large number of business and commercial offices being closed, the city area is becoming associated with epithets of vacant and insufficiently attractive.



**Fig. 5** “Central Point” – under construction  
(Source: personal collection)



**Fig. 6** “Master Quart” – under construction  
(Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Odos3utXmTI>)

Construction of the shopping centre in the former industrial zone has facilitated creation of a completely new visual identity and generated new developments, which contribute to formation of a polycentric city (Fig 5 and 6). The market pressure coupled with the endeavours of private stakeholders had it share in neglecting the construction of buildings intended for core functions in this zone. An evident absence of educational and health institutions in the city zone with ever growing population has been recognised as a problem. There is also an issue of insufficient infrastructure, being greatly manifested through the traffic congestions near one of the main roads that connect Podgorica to the coast.

The unbalanced participation of stakeholders in the development process of the post-socialist Podgorica produces negative effects on future development of the town, such as those seen in the uncontrolled construction and insufficiently specified urban policy frameworks.



**Fig. 7** Orthophoto of industrial area of Podgorica from 2003.  
(Source: google maps/Podgorica)



**Fig. 8** Orthophoto of postindustrial area of Podgorica from 2019.  
(Source: google maps/Podgorica)

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The identified patterns of economic and social restructuring during transition period have deeply marked all social and spatial rules and regulations of that period.

The transition has yielded different outcomes - while some countries underwent successful adjustment, others experienced a mix of the old and the new institutional system, cultural norms and physical planning,

The shopping centres are one of the manifestations of such period. More specifically, the shopping centres stand as representatives of modifications in the urban matrix of the post-socialist cities of Central and Eastern Europe.

Based on the previously considered, a conclusion can be drawn that the spatial morphology of cities changes, with transformation from a monocentric to a polycentric city and the emerging conflict with the existing urban fabric manifested in the diminishing importance of a traditional centre.

The research confirmed that the emergence of shopping centres has emphasized the importance of formation of a residential settlement in the suburban formats, at the same time indicating the social stratification of the population as a consequence of these changes.

It is important to mention the challenges of urban policy, which records an evident lag behind the Western-European trends due to the uncompleted transition processes. This led to a high presence of illegal construction and also construction of programs that are not included in the plans, which explains a great number of shopping centres in some post-socialist cities.

Most certainly, the transition process in Podgorica has been marked by the shopping centre construction, which itself has entailed numerous transformations in both spatial and social structures. Urban landscape underwent modification in compliance with the already established patterns of the post-socialist city development. In urban matrix of Podgorica, this manifested through a polycentric city model as well as through commercialisation and revitalisation of the suburban area owing to the shopping centre as a place for socialisation.

Taking into account the experience of other cities that underwent similar socio-political processes, it is reasonable to expect that similar scenario of saturation and shifting of shopping centres into city cores will also unfold in Podgorica.

Further researches should be focused on reassessment of the existing and introduction of new mechanisms of urban policy. New principles and strategies are expected to provide an elaborated response to the future course of still uncompleted transition processes and to create legal frameworks and an institutional approach to the further process.

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## UTICAJ TRŽNOG CENTRA NA RESTRUKTURIRANJE POSTSOCIJALISTIČKOG GRADA SA OSVRTOM NA PODGORICU

*Rad se bavi transformacijom urbane forme postsocijalističkih gradova nastalom usled tranzicije iz socijalističkog u kapitalističko društveno uređenje. Kao rezultat strukturne transformacije dolazi do generisanja policentričnih gradova, deindustrijalizacije i revitalizacije suburbanih zona, kao i pojave komercijalnih sadržaja usled djelovanja novih urbanih aktera. Pojava tržnih centara označava pojavu konzumerizma u potrošačkom društvu koje je do tada bilo koncentrisano isključivo na industrijsku proizvodnju. Njihov uticaj na urbano tkivo sličan je u svim gradovima Centralne i Istočne Evrope, bez izuzetka Podgorice u kojoj dovodi do restrukturiranja do tada poznate urbane strukture, odnosno u potpunosti podstiče nastanak novih gradskih celina. Cilj rada je preispitivanje postojećih i postavljanje novih mehanizama urbane politike postsocijalističkih gradova, sa posebnim osvrtom na Podgoricu, koji bi olakšali pravne okvire i institucionalni pristup daljem procesu.*

**Ključne reči:** *postsocijalistički grad, policentričnost, suburbanizacija, tržni centar*