

CURRENT SUBURBANISATION TRENDS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND SPATIAL TRANSFORMATION OF RETAIL

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Abstract

Current suburbanisation trends in the Czech Republic and spatial transformation of retail

The main topic of the article is commercial suburbanisation in the Czech Republic on the example of changes in retail. In the first part it is described the mechanism of suburbanisation, its causes, forms and social, economic and ecological consequences. In the next part we deal with the transition of retail, its spatial dimension with special regard to suburbanisation process. Spatial changes in retail on the example of Olomouc and their causes and consequences are described.

Key words

suburbanisation, retail, Czech Republic, Olomouc

1. Introduction

Suburbanisation and its research belong to the hottest topics in human geography, sociology, urbanism and also in economy in the most of developed countries. It belongs to the most important processes changing marginal parts and hinterlands of towns and cities. Suburbanisation presents complex transformation process of the city (Matlovič 2001), which does not include only changes in population distribution in the city region (van den Berg et al. 1982), but also other structural, morphological and functional changes and characteristics.

Suburbanisation is understood as a spatial overspill of a city beyond its limits into the open landscape and new activities. The location of new activities is focused in the territory of metropolitan area outside of compactly built-up area. In case of majority of post-communist cities it can be within the administrative borders of the city (the concept of "over bounded city"). Many of originally suburban localities can be "swallowed up" by expansion of compact city. Suburbanisation has its morphological, functional and socio-demographic dimensions. Next table shows position of suburbanization within the internal urban structures and other transformation processes.

Tab. 1: Types of processes in the internal urban structure

	morphological	functional	socio-demographic
Transformation processes	suburbanization gentrification revitalization intensification urban decay	suburbanization commercialization de-industrialization demilitarization socialization functional fragmentation	suburbanization gentrification segregation separation socio-economic decay

Source: Matlovič 2001.

Suburbanization belongs to the complex transformation processes and to the most visible changes on the face of cities. It has two main functional forms: residential and commercial suburbanisation and also two main morphological forms: regulated suburbanization (sometimes called "smart growth") and unregulated suburbanization (called "urban sprawl").

Suburbanization is a very complex and conditioned process. The overview of main factors leading to different morphologic types of suburbanization is described in some studies, for example on the comparison of USA and Germany (Ptáček 2002). Commercial suburbanization, especially retail suburbanization in the form of "smart growth" is possible only thanks to the regional coordination and regulation of human activities in the form of spatial and urban planning.

2. Suburbanization in the Czech Republic

Suburbanisation is not a new phenomenon in the Czech Republic. Residential suburbanisation was developing already in the interwar period, namely along railway lines leading out of cities (Ryšavý et al. 1994b). Ouředníček (2002) actually discerns three historical phases of suburbanisation – primary, taking place in the medieval period, classical, connected with the development of settlement roughly from the beginning of 20th century, and contemporary (post-modern and post-industrial), which features in settlement systems in the developed western countries,

particularly in the U.S.A., and is linked to terms like exurbia, technohub, or edge cities.

The process of suburbanisation was forcibly interrupted in the Czech lands in the socialist period. A certain compensation process of the so-called seasonal suburbanisation is mentioned for the socialist period, characteristic of the seasonal use of second housing by the urban population. Also Gremlica (2002) considers the excessive expansion of objects of second housing, particularly cottages, as a certain form of "urban sprawl". He points to the inconsideration in vast housing estate construction at the margins of compact towns and cities and underlines their poor linkage to the settlement core. This is important in the context of environmental and ecological impacts on suburban landscape, but cannot be treated as an example of suburbanisation, the less of urban sprawl.

The anticipated ascent of suburbanisation as a "remedial" process in the distribution of population (Hampl 1999) almost did not occur in the early 1990s. In residential suburbanisation this was caused particularly by a sharp drop in real income of individuals, contrasted by a steep rise of real property prices. Suburbanisation of services, namely of retail and warehousing, escalates in the same period. The construction of hypermarkets, warehouses, and factory buildings is the most apparent feature of current suburbanisation in the Czech Republic.

Commercial suburbanisation initiated in the form of construction of retail and warehousing facilities. With the arrival of important foreign investors the construction of production plants becomes more frequent, particularly in the newly designated industrial zones at smaller or middle-scale towns. With investments into strategic services a rise in the construction of suburban administrative buildings is expected. Contrary to the development in the new industrial zones, abandoned factory areas often with ecological burdens – the so-called "brownfields" – arise close to city centres (Jackson J. B. 2004).

3. Economic, environmental and social costs of urban sprawl

Suburbanisation in the form of urban sprawl (or scattered growth) involves many activities in the suburban zone. Spatial segregation of functions and activities leads to enormous rise of private cars driving and induces also costs for technical infrastructure. About the negative impacts of urban sprawl in the USA and possible lessons learned we can find studies in Pucher (1998,1999). As an alternative the concept of "smart growth" is offered which involves regulative and planning process into the new developments of housing, retail and other services (www.smartgrowth.org). Many people think that sprawl (or scattered growth) is an inevitable result of an economic system that demands lower costs and efficiency. But this is a myth: **sprawl development costs more than careful planning and development**. Sprawl is cheaper for developers than careful planning because they can pass much of the cost on to taxpayers. The real cost of sprawl is dispersed through a range of other costs that we, as citizens and consumers, have to pay. We can speak about the **economic, environmental, and social** costs of sprawl:

Economic Costs

- Scattered development is a burden on local governments because it forces them to provide new infrastructure (schools, roads, police and fire service, gas lines, water and sewer facilities) to serve a dispersed population. In contrast, smart growth development clusters new homes together so

services can be provided efficiently. Smart growth development also reinvests in areas where infrastructure already exists.

- Each new unit in a poorly-planned development demands more resources than are received in taxes, and the burden of those costs are passed on to residents in the form of higher taxes.
- Sprawl development forces commuters to travel longer distances to work and to the store, which means families spend more money on cars, fuel, and maintenance and less time together. Smart growth provides a convenient mixture of homes, offices and stores in each community and provides people with the choice of walking, biking or taking the bus to their destination.

Environmental Costs

- When large plots of land are paved, rainwater cannot soak into the ground. Instead of being filtered and returned to our streams and rivers, the polluted water washes directly into our waterways. Scattered development increases impervious (or paved) surfaces because it requires an increase in roads and larger parking lots. As a consequence, we have more pollutant runoff in our waterways.
- Longer driving distances and car trips in poorly-planned communities cause an increase in driving and therefore more air pollution. By clustering development and providing opportunities to walk, bike, take transit, or drive shorter distances, smart growth minimizes air pollution from cars.
- Scattered development destroys cherished farmland, parks and wildlife habitats. Smart growth clusters development so that farmland and natural areas can coexist with development.

Social Costs

- Poorly-planned development gives us no option but to drive to every destination. The resulting traffic congestion takes time away from the important things in life, such as work or spending time with family or friends. The average American driver spends 443 hours per year behind the wheel.
- Increased driving and traffic means an increase in auto fatality rates.
- The absence of a town centre and the absence of a sense of location or "place" result in a lack of community solidarity, decreased civic engagement, and a decreased quality of life.
- Not having pedestrian and bicycle friendly routes decreases the opportunity for exercise. Without alternatives, people are more likely to drive everywhere instead of biking or walking to work, to do errands, or for recreation.
- An increase in sprawl development places pressure on already crowded schools in suburban districts.
(www.smartergrowth.net/issues/landuse/sprawl/costofsprawl.htm).

4. Retail transformation in the Czech Republic

We can divide retail transition in the Czech Republic into two fundamental periods: atomisation (1), taking place in the beginning of transformation period (1st half of the 1990s) and internationalisation (2), taking place since the 2nd half of the 1990s to present. The first period is characterised by decentralisation and de-concentration of retail network, on the other hand in the second period takes part substantial spatial-organisational concentration of retail. From spatial point of view on the

peripheries of cities and towns started to emerge new functional areas of retail and other similar services, which create nuclei of future suburban secondary cores. Following the West-European pattern, retail transformation into the location of suburban cores substantially contributes to transformation of monocentric socialist city into its current polycentric composition (Szczyrba 2005a).

Changes in the Czech retail are also very good visible when looking at development of TOP 10 retail companies internal structure. Also TOP 50 of Czech retail companies documents increasing concentration and internationalisation of Czech retail. While some years ago there were among the biggest retail companies also some domestic ones, the reality today is totally different. There is no single Czech subject among TOP 10 retail companies. Czech subjects substantially loose their positions in favour of international retail companies.

Other significant feature of ongoing transformation (in connection with commercial suburbanisation) is formation of network structure of the Czech retail. It consists of network of specialised large scale shops (supermarkets, hypermarkets, discounts shops, shopping centres, etc.). The transformation period is possible to interpret as interference of particular shopping networks. During certain time period is accelerated development of a particular retail chain. Operational and spatial concentration of retail network is starting with transition into two basic diffusion processes: settlement hierarchical and spatial diffusion. We can divide particular sub-stages of retail development in the Czech Republic as follows:

1. dynamic development of supermarkets network, 1995→,
2. dynamic development of discounts network, 1997→,
3. dynamic development of hypermarkets network, 1998→,
4. dynamic development of shopping centres network, 1998→.

Presently there are in the territory of the Czech Republic more than 200 hypermarkets and more than 50 large shopping centres, majority of them is concentrated in Prague and other big cities. Many of them serve as "regional shopping centres" in suburban localities having the size of several tens of thousands of square meters of retail area (Centrum Černý Most in Prague, Olympia in Brno, Avion Shopping Park in Brno and in Ostrava and many others). New shopping centres are still being constructed and developers carry out new shopping zones, retail parks also in smaller and less important towns. Together with other changes they reflect fast changes in retail behaviour of Czech population in the period of economic and social transformation of the country after 1989 (Szczyrba 2005b).

5. City of Olomouc: illustration of ongoing changes in retail in connection with the process of commercial suburbanisation

Until recently the retail network in Olomouc has been strongly atomised. The main feature has been small share of large scale shops and minimal presence of foreign retail companies. Retail has been concentrated mostly into the historical centre, where has remained some department stores from the period before 1989. First specialised large scale shop of some foreign retail chain has been opened in 1996 (hobby market bauMax), but it was not located in suburban area as usual in case of majority of large scale shops. Later on we can observe location of large scale retail formats explicitly into this segment of urban structure of Olomouc (Tab. 2).

First commercial suburban location in Olomouc was a locality named “Horní lán” on the south-east margin of the city, next to the motorway in direction to Brno. Here was opened the first hypermarket on the territory of Olomouc (named “Terno”). This was the only start of internationalisation of urban and regional retail network. In comparison to other big cities in the country the dynamic in Olomouc has been lagging behind. The time delay in confrontation to other comparable cities in the Czech Republic was about two to three years. That is why last years have been logical outcome of higher construction activities of multinational retail chains, narrowing existing gap in the relevant retail offer on the Czech market. From geographical point of view we can observe the phenomena of retail network as spatial diffusion in direction west to east, rather than settlement-hierarchical diffusion¹. Not only in “Horní lán”, but also in other (for retail) key localities in the city have been opened large scale shops of multinational retail chains (Tab. 2, Fig. 1). Presently there are five hypermarkets in Olomouc (Terno, Globus, Kaufland, Carrefour, and Hypernova), three hobby markets (OBI, bauMax, Hornbach) and many supermarkets, discount shops and other specialised large-scale shops.

Tab. 2: Development of modern large-scale shops on the territory of Olomouc.

Name of the shop	Year of opening	Location	Selling area in m ²	Retail format
bauMax	1996	inner city	4 000	hobbymarket
Terno**	1997	periphery	3 000	small hypermarket
OBI**	1999	periphery	7 000	hobbymarket
Makro	1999	neighbouring municipality (Velká Bystřice)	10 000	cash & carry market (large hypermarket)
Globus*	2000	periphery	15 000	large hypermarket
Kaufland	2001	inner city	3 500	small hypermarket
OC Haná**	2002	periphery	11 500	shopping centre (Tesco) ***
Olympia	2004	neighbouring municipality (Velký Týnec)	30 000	shopping centre (Hypernova)
Olomouc City*	2005	periphery	24 500	shopping centre (Globus)
Asko, GigaSport, Electro World **	2005	periphery	16 000	specialised large-scale shops
Hornbach	2007	inner city	10 000	hobbymarket

Explanations: * - complex of the shopping centre Olomouc City
 ** - large-scale shops at Horní lán
 ***- until 2005 Carrefour

¹ Olomouc is the fifth largest city in the Czech Republic (Prague – 1,2 mil. inh., Brno – 370 thous. inh., Ostrava – 310 thous. inh., Plzeň – 160 thous. inh. and Olomouc 100 thous. inh.) being also an important regional centre in the framework of administrative (regional capital).

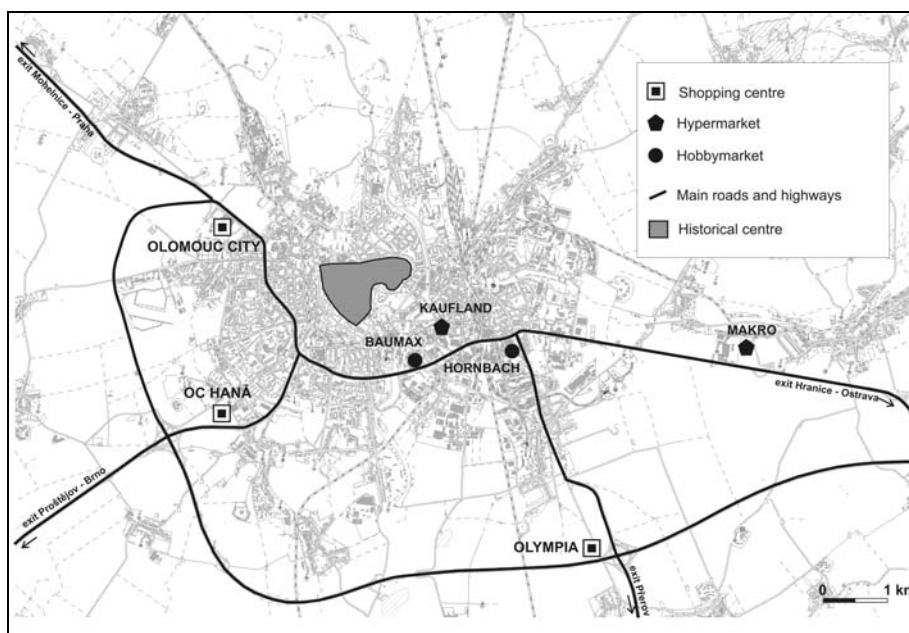


Fig. 1: Distribution of the relevant retail offer on the territory of Olomouc and its hinterland – hypermarkets and shopping centres (year 2007).



Fig. 2: Olomouc: suburban locality „Horní lán“. The field on the left side of the aerial picture is already built-up with new retail activities.

Source: <http://www.tkdevelopment.cz/index.php?file=projekty.php&secpage=hanaolomouc&lang=cz>.

Since 2002 Olomouc is in the group of cities where the concept of regional shopping centre is valid, concretely **Shopping centre Haná** (OC Haná). This shopping centre

is located on the periphery of the city in locality "Horní lán" and it consists of large hypermarket Tesco (earlier Carrefour) and tens of specialised shops. The entire selling area is about 12 000 m². In 2004 has been opened on the territory of the neighbouring municipality new regional shopping centre **Olympia**, which final selling area is 30 000 m². Also here is located central hypermarket (Ahold – Hypernova). In August 2005 it has been put into the operation third concept of regional shopping centre, named **Olomouc City**, which has enlarged existing capacity of the hypermarket Globus at marginal location "Pražská" to next 25 000 m² (reaching all together 40 000 m²). It consists of multicinema with seven halls, cafés, restaurants and other tens of shops in the shopping gallery. This project is the largest among shopping centres in central Moravia.

Together with large scale shops development in Olomouc we can observe fundamental change in shopping behaviour of inhabitants of the city and its surroundings. This has emerged relatively very soon. It has been confirmed already as a result of the first researches of shopping behaviour taking part in 2003 (Szczyrba 2004). Majority of respondents has been already shopping in one of the large scale shops (discount, supermarket, or hypermarket) and on the other hand the share of costumers shopping in a smaller scale shops has decreased and is in correlation with the situation in whole the country.

Shopping activities are more often moved out from the traditional shopping zones (city centre) into the suburban localities. It is demonstrated also in Tab. 3, documenting basic parameters of buying streams into the shopping centre Haná (research from 2005, 336 respondents).

Tab. 3: Basic parameters of buying streams into the shopping centre OC Haná Olomouc (N = 336).

Distance	share (in %)
0 – 10 km	65,4
11 – 20 km	18,1
21 – 50 km	10,0
51 – 100 km	5,0
101 and more km	1,5
Average distance : 16,4 km	
Time accessibility	
0 – 30 min	86,8
31 – 60 min	10,3
61 – 120 min	1,9
121 and more min	1,0
Average time: 22,7 min	

Source: Department of Geography UP, Olomouc, 2005; own calculations.

6. Conclusion

Commercial suburbanisation belongs to the most obvious changes in the internal spatial, morphological and functional structure of post-communist cities. It is changing substantially land-use patterns and it is leading to new, sometimes unexpected or underrated consequences. It also leads to the change of originally centripetal, monocentric structure of the city into polycentric, centrifugal one. As described in the theoretical framework, these new patterns have also economic, environmental and social costs. It is not possible to stop this process, but it is possible to use sophisticated methods for regulation of this new development, especially tools of urban and regional planning to avoid the most dangerous problems. It is necessary to eliminate disadvantages of city centres and keep them

as lively parts which are attractive for living, shopping, spare time activities and to avoid American experience of "commercial blight".

On the example of Olomouc we have described that the changes in shopping behaviour are very rapid and that they bring many negative externalities. This problem is not only problem of Olomouc, but it can be generalised for other post-communist cities on transition to market economy. Municipalities are able to react on these rapid changes only with substantial delay, which can be in some cases fatal (traffic problems, commercial blight in the city centre). It is necessary to hinder and avoid mistake already made once in the West.

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SODOBNI TRENDI SUBURBANIZACIJE NA OBMOČJU ČEŠKE IN PROSTORSKE SPREMEMBE TRGOVINE

Povzetek

Proces suburbanizacije predstavlja enega od najpomembnejših procesov v mestih v deželah tranzicije. Odraža se v spremembi morfologije, funkcij in sociodemografske strukture. V tem smislu bi lahko govorili tudi o sonaravnem širjenju suburbanih struktur, ki mu nasproti stoji stihijsko razpršeno širjenje suburbanih območij. Prostorska neskladja, ki izvirajo iz sodobnih procesov suburbanizacije na območju Češke so predmet sodobnega preučevanja planerjev, urbanistov in geografov. V ospredju so predvsem ekonomski, ekološki in socialni učinki. V prispevku so v prvem delu prikazane nekatere ključne posledice suburbanizacije na območju Češke. V nadaljevanju je prikazan razvoj trgovine na območju Češke od leta 1989 naprej, s posebnim poudarkom na obdobje druge polovice 90. let 20. stoletja. Na primeru Olomouca so prikazane spremembe v nakupovalnih navadah, ki so posledica selitve nakupovalnih središč v suburbanizirana območja, kot tudi spremembe mreže nakupovalnih centrov.

