Vilnius' long way in forming a modern city-centre

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In the year 1991 Lithuania achieved its independence from the former Soviet Union. Since that time a profound social and economic process of change has occurred there, which can be seen particularly in the capital Vilnius. In the context of a long-term field research (since 1994) a whole number of different factors were analysed in order to be able to reliably explain changes in the operating structures and above all the spatial location patterns of retail trade during the past ten years[1]. The following article wants to describe which contextual effects are responsible for the fact that Vilnius still has many problems in forming a modern city-centre[2].

The development since the beginning of the 1990s, *i.e.* the post-socialist changes in the location patterns of urban retail trade in the major cities in all East Central and Eastern European states (Standl, 1998) has been essentially determined by (*a*) changes in the operating structure and (*b*) by a complex of spatial factors.

The two bundles of factors can be subdivided in each case into three single aspects (Fig. 1), with the **three factors influencing the operating structure of retail trade**:

• the process and the result of the change of ownership structures in retail trade, caused both by privatisation measures and by creating new outlets;

• the transition of real estate and land market;

• the general economic (internal as well as external) basic conditions, under which the denationalised and the newly established enterprises must work, and which thus influence the progress of retail trade.

The **three spatial determinants**, which are directly responsible for the change of the location patterns of retail trade and for the change of the function-spatial organisation of the city centre, are as follows:

• the structure and function of the existing buildings and their possible use for retail trade, especially in traditional shopping-streets;

• the competition with other locations of the retail trade inside and outside the city boundaries;

• the range of the private use or appropriation of public space by the ambulatory or informal retail trade in the form of kiosks and market stands.

These groups of factors in each case are effective (temporally as well as regionally) on that which can be measured by the indicators.

CHANGES IN THE OPERATING STRUCTURE OF RETAIL TRADE

One of the most important and most extensive aspects of the transition to market economy (as in all countries of East Central and Eastern Europe) consisted in profound changes in the operating structure of retail trade. Due to a drastic political turn, *e.g.*, through fast denationalisation of what had been state property and by re-arranging the principles of private property, a free sales market was established in Lithuania, too.

Factor I: The transition of ownership structures in retail trade

The transition of ownership structures in retail trade rapidly improved around the supply of goods and services, since the start of market-economy each government tried to satisfy the demand for consumer goods as fast as possible, particularly during the initial phase of the economic change. In order

[1] The author would like to thank Dr. Dovilė Krupickaitė very much for her great help during the field-works in the central part of Vilnius.

[2] To gain an overview on the numerous geographic publications concerning the post-socialist development of the cities and the nature of the cities in East Central and Eastern Europe in the last ten years of the 20th century, see the selected bibliography in Heineberg 2000, pp. 246 and 274, and the main trends stated by Stadelbauer 2002.

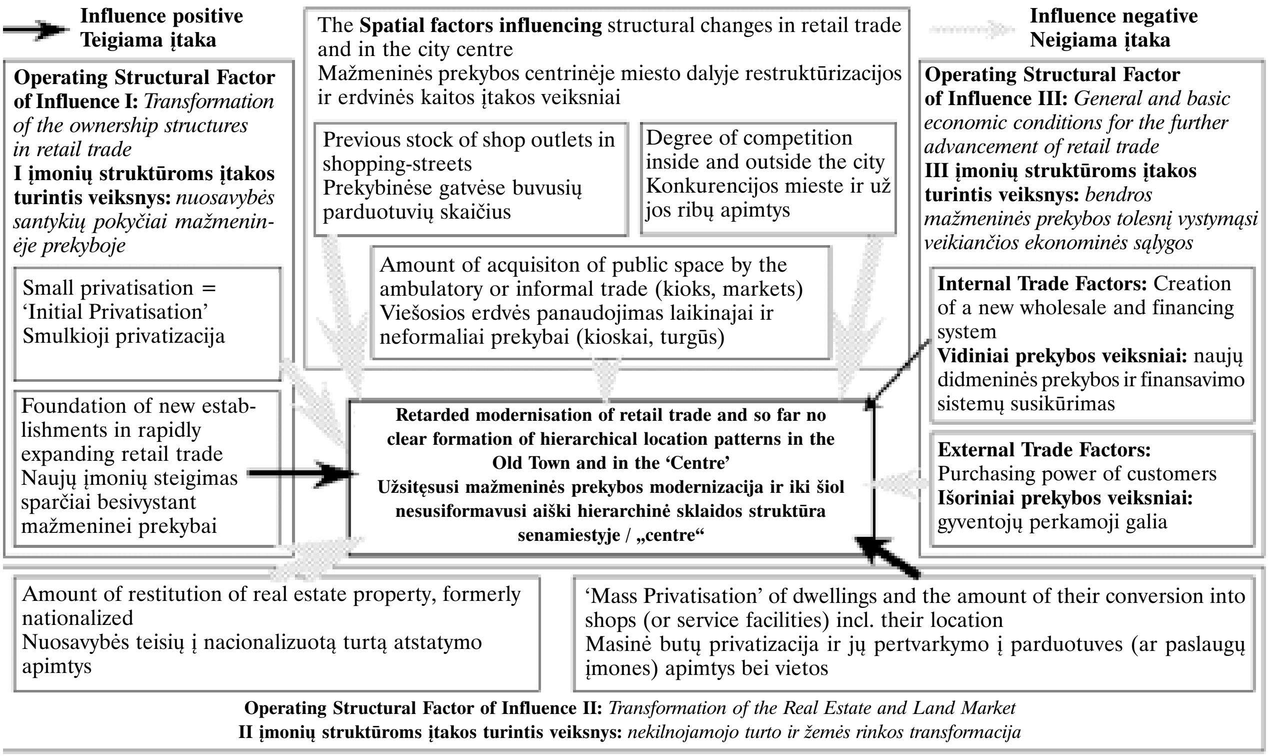

Fig. 1. Factors that influenced the process of modernisation of retail trade and of the Vilnius city centre during the 1990s
1 pav. Veiksniai, turintys įtakos mažmeninės prekybos įmonių struktūrai bei erdvinei kaitai Vilniaus centre 1990-aisiais

to accomplish this quickly, the legal and proper transition of the formerly state-owned or co-operative trading organisations was introduced as part of *Small Privatisation,* which in Lithuania was called Initial Privatisation. Moreover, the new establishment of private trade businesses was again permitted by the legislature. Both measures inevitably had a great influence on the development of retail trade. In Lithuania, small enterprises were almost exclusively sold in public auctions during this first stage of privatisation, and – very important for the further changes in the urban structure – the vested title of the business premises (thus the shop in the retail trade) changed immediately to the new owner. The outcome was that the new owners had, after the acquisition of the property, also the option of resale. As a result, they could speculate in the increase in value of their business premises. This did not apply, however, to the larger enterprises, *e.g.*, department stores, which were only partially denationalised in Lithuania in this Initial Privatisation through the assignment of staff shares.

In the way described above, 524 enterprises (including kiosks) were denationalised in Vilnius. The largest part of the procedure was already finished by the end of 1993. Altogether, it can be stated that a relatively fast practical conversion of the legal defaults took place. Generally, the costs of the privatisation (carried through by the municipality) were not too high, and their financing was likewise no great problem. The use of 'investment cheques' (*i.e.* private portion rights of national property, given out free of charge by the state) made the acquisition of enterprises comparatively lucrative and inexpensive. The further Lithuanian characteristic that was practised extensively consisted in the fact that it was possible for the persons employed by larger enterprises (like department stores) to acquire a kind of durable protection against dismissal after they had exchanged their 'investment cheques' for business shares. The state thereby kept larger property portions of this new joint-stock company for itself for the time being. Only at the end of the 1990s these enterprises were fully denationalised during the second stage of privatisation, carried out by the newly created National Property Fund. **In general, Initial Privatisation led to a delayed process of the restructuring of retail trade in the city-centre of Vilnius**!

Occurring in parallel to the privatisation process, naturally ***numerous new retail trade establishments*** were founded. With the help of extensive liberalisation of trade laws at the time when Lithuania still belonged to the Soviet Union, the socialistic government tried previously in the years 1989 and 1990 to initiate economic impulses. Particularly through the permission of founding new private enterprises, a market-system should be created, which should compete against the stagnated and ineffective state monopoly. A part of these legislative measures consisted in reforming the existing businesses. While the opening of a newly established commercial enterprise with ownership of the business premises was still hardly possible in the years 1991 and 1992, due to the fact that privatisation had not fully occurred yet and too few business premises were available in a good state, a proper establishment boom in the retail trade in the city--centre of the Lithuanian capital came finally in the period of 1993 to 1997. However, since these new establishments usually consisted of small firms, the increase of the sales area per retail business was modest (around 65%). Only the food-sector created larger outlets such as supermarkets etc., which were built up mainly outside of the city-centre (see below). The latest boom in creating new retail trade outlets in the central part of Vilnius could be observed since the year 2000.

The new laws – in theory – also made it possible for prospective foreign investors to create new commercial mechanisms. But this was retarded in Lithuania due to the insufficient decartelization between private property and state property with larger business enterprises, and also due to a not very good investment climate for international capital at the beginning of the transition process. And up till now, it is also not yet permitted for non-citizens to acquire property of land in Lithuania. Foreign investors are therefore still primarily dependent on the establishment of joint ventures.

As a consequence, a combination of the privatisation process and of the new establishments in retail trade resulted in a mixture of different possession and property structures. By the middle of the 1990s, the portion of enterprises which were still (at least partly) in the state property in Vilnius was approximately at a level of 10%. At the time mentioned, approximately 30% of the existing businesses had already been opened before 1991. This is a clear indication of the relatively high location persistence of the shops in Vilnius and a comparatively low fluctuation rate, or – negatively expressed – a clear pointer to the fact that a profound structural change had, up to then, not yet taken place there.

Internationally operating retail trading chains based in Western or Central Europe, which in particular resemble the appearance of the main shopping streets in the city of Budapest, are represented in the Lithuanian capital only to a very small extent. The same applies to the outskirt towns of the Polish, Czech and Hungarian metropolies where, since the middle of the 1990s, self-service department stores or shopping centres have already settled (see below). In Lithuania, which has a comparatively small sales market, the prospects of a fast economic success from international investments in the retail trade were much smaller than in the neighbouring countries bordering directly east. Only since the end of the 1990s, an increase in the internationalisation of trade can be observed in the city-centre of Vilnius, when numerous Lithuanian businessmen signed franchise-contracts and thus specialised in the exclusive sales of imported branded articles in their own outlets.

The fact that the privatisation was mostly steered endogenously does not mean that no chains operating locally or even country-wide could be established. One particularly successful case of such a Lithuanian enterprise, 'Vilniaus Prekyba', was developed by some young university graduates whose company today dominates the food trade not only in the capital but in all Lithuania and is recently trying to expand into Latvia and Estonia as well. The initially chosen discounter-shop concept and also the main design of the companies' logo were copied from the German 'ALDI'-chain. In mid 1990s the firm was step by step and extremely successfully diversified by the establishment of modern supermarkets, by self-service department stores, and recently even by shopping-centres.

It is very important to mention that **a considerable part** (nearly 40% in the middle of the 1990s) **of retailers are operating in the centre of Vilnius their own shops,** *i.e.* that they don't have to pay rent for their outlets. In the following section, therefore, it must be clarified from which the comparatively high portion of the business and real estate owners results.

Factor II: The Transition of the Real Estate and Land Market

The principles of the legal treatment of former nationalised real estate (the ways of denationalisation of – during Soviet time – expropriated buildings) were of crucial importance for the structural changes in retail trade. In Lithuania, only those who had up-to-date Lithuanian nationality and a permanent residence in the country could lay appropriate claims on regaining illegitimately lost titles. Furthermore, the Lithuanian version planned for extensive exceptions as well as requirements for return by national compensation payments. As a result, up to the year 1998, **only 145 residential buildings were returned to their former owners in Vilnius.** In most cases, only different kinds of churches could gain beneficience from such kind of restitution of property rights.

But what happened to the illegitimately expropriated real estate after gaining independence from the Soviet Union? All the non-governmental buildings underwent the so-called ***Mass Privatisation.*** In the course of this privatisation process the past tenants were shifted into a legal situation under which the already mentioned 'Investment Cheques' could be used in order to acquire new dwellings comparatively inexpensively and move thus into private flats. After privatisation, the new owners were then allowed to decide completely and without reservation on the form of their future use. A retention of the dwelling function was not really prescribed. Of course, the premises could promptly be rented or leased or even resold. This form of mass privatisation of former state property was accomplished in Lithuania quickly and consistently. As a result, a rapidly growing real estate market arose. In Vilnius, only the buildings that for the time being were not to be denationalised still remained in property of the municipality. Usually it concerned uninhabited and also otherwise unused houses, most of them located the Old Town of Vilnius. Their structural condition was one of extreme disrepair. However, since they often stood under protection as historical monuments, they could not be torn down. Still, at the beginning of 1996 nearly 120 buildings were unused and in disrepair in the Old Town, (*i.e.* usually without windows, doors or a waterproof roof). In the meantime, a large number could be renovated (partly by using foreign loans) under supervision of the municipality and sold afterwards to investors.

The way of transition to the property market led in particular to the fact that in the centre of Vilnius numerous ground-floor dwellings or other building parts (such as cellars and storerooms) were converted into shops, pubs, restaurants or other kinds of service use. In the year 1996, each fifth retail business was opened in an outlet which had previously served only living purposes. The most obvious characteristic of this conversion of ground-floor dwellings and cellars is the stairs which were built from the sidewalks as entrances to the new retail outlets. This (in principle) positive impulse for the restructuring of the downtown retail trade in the capital of Lithuania had not, in this form, been planned or intended on the part of the municipality, however. And for the development of the city--centre, the conversion from dwellings often caused extremely negative effects concerning the purposes of trade and the service industry in that area, because hardly any owners had made location analyses as to the decision to open such a new outlet. Thus **new businesses often opened in unfavourable locations,** with a low frequency of customers. This partially unreflective procedure **hampered to a considerable degree the creation of an hierarchical location pattern of retail trade in the city-centre of Vilnius!**

Factor III: General basic economic conditions for the advancement of retail trade after privatisation or after establishment of new enterprises

The privatisation or the starting of an enterprise were always connected with the retailers' hope for the long-term economic success of the investment. But the general condition of retail trade is also otherwise affected by a large number of different economic variables and imponderables, which can generally be arranged into two categories: First of all into the aspects that are derived from the conditions and the ***changes of structures existing internally in the trading business*** (procurement of wares and dealing with goods before the sales), and secondly in the determinants that lead to changes in the sales market and that can be called ***external commercial factors*** (*e.g.,* the consumer habits and the purchasing power potential of the customers).

The liberalisation of the mercantile laws led to a more or less intensive deregulation of the post-socialist commercial situation in Lithuania. It came simultaneously with the independence from the Soviet Union and led to a complete reversal of the former trade routes, with a very fast 'Westernisation'. Eventually all three Baltic States until 1994/95 raised a rather high protective tariff for imported goods, whose goal was to increase the competitive power of the native food and consumer-goods industry and to achieve additional fiscal value absorption, particularly for imported luxury wares. These temporarily limited measures were of great importance for the respective state budgets in the first years after 1991, because only by the end of 1993 Lithuania was able to introduce a new tax system and, among other things, a Value Added Tax.

Parallel to the creation of international business connections, new wholesale structures had to be developed, since with the privatisation of trade the former state enterprises were functionless and therefore usually rapidly dissolved. In order to obtain goods in the time after the change to market economy, many retailers were forced to develop individual delivery arrangements with foreign suppliers in 'the West'. Many dealers travelled therefore as individuals or in small groups at trade fairs abroad, often to Germany or to big markets like that in Istanbul (Turkey), in order to make contacts and buy wares directly, which were then imported with the return journey. This very cumbersome procedure was extremely nerve-racking due to the many border controls placed on the retailers. However, it continued, because the profit margin for them was largest for such imported goods. Only gradually came about the establishment of one mostly locally or regionally operating wholesale-system, which was able to participate in a clear specialisation. Dealers who could use the initially existing institutional or administrative chaos intelligently for their own business purposes were able within a short time to accumulate a small fortune. These generally led first to company-related adjustment and restructuring measures. Thus, **not least from the new private wholesale businesses, numerous retail chains came out**; an example is the famous company 'Vilniaus Prekyba'.

The transition process would, however, very soon be coming to a probable halt, even if the market to a large extent had not changed for the positive. The question of the future prosperity of retail business and its lasting economic success depended therefore to a large extent on how the market proceeded to be dominated by customer behaviour, particularly because of the multiplicity of new businesses. A pronounced competitive situation in retail trade developed very quickly, and the entrepreneurs had to react.

Above all, after the Russian Rouble was replaced by the Lithuanian 'Talonas' (in May 1992) and one year later by a new national currency (the Lit) the shops filled almost overnight with Western goods, and the long lines waiting in front of the stores at opening time became a thing of the past. But the currency reform involved a massive destruction of savings. As a positive consequence of those measures (in 1992 and 1993), the previously extremely high inflation rates could be lowered by over 1000% during the beginning of the 1990s down to below 5% at the end of the decade, despite the raising of the prices of imported raw materials (oil and natural gas) and also an increase in the cost of national and private services (fees, rents). The majority of the population in Lithuania, however, suffered strong losses in purchasing power, which could only partly be balanced by rising wages and salaries. Even if one takes into account the fact that the average earnings in the capital are about 20–25% higher than the respective national average during the last years, it was still possible for only very few households to acquire financial reserves through savings to buy commercial products, over and above the cost of daily need. The majority of the population could therefore not regularly afford imported goods, particularly since a very broad mass of economic "losers" (particularly in the case of the older employees and pensioners) still face the relatively small social group of the 'New Rich', who could arrange for the transition process to be very positive for themselves.

As in other Eastern European countries, still many urban households supply themselves with fresh fruits and vegetables – like in socialist times – by cultivating their own allotment gardens on the outskirts of town (as a sort of subsistence economy) or they are depending on relatives living in rural areas. However, there is also a steadily growing socio-economic mid-ranged layer, the 'Yuppies', a group of mostly well-educated urban people, who were able to occupy the key positions in the re-created private service sector (banks, insurance companies, law offices, etc.). Due to their relatively good income situation, this group of 20 to 35 year-olds, living in single- or double-income households (mostly without children), represents the most important buyer potential for the retail trade in the city, not to forget those persons who are involved in the – still existing – black economy.

Even as the locally and regionally existing potential purchasing power is to a large extent limited, limitations can also be attributed to the spatial immobility of broad social groups. This is true despite an increase of individual traffic in the 1990s. Because of the fact the extreme price increases for fuels, the private use of motor vehicles is still an expensive luxury; besides, the tariffs for the use of public means of transport were drastically raised. Therefore economically not so well-placed persons cannot participate in visiting the centre of the capital in such a way as before, when (during the time of socialism) the local public transport system, the railways or even the air traffic were subsidised. The rising prices of transportation also had similarly grave consequences for the inhabitants of the rural areas, because for them, purchasing transportation into the nearest (large) city likewise became increasingly expensive. *Vice versa*, this development has consequently limited much more than before the range of goods offered by the retail trade in Vilnius. All these disadvantages in the city retail trade – due to the transition process mentioned – can be compensated for, at least partially, as soon as an international clientele arrives in the form of wealthy foreign businessmen or rich tourists, in order to animate the local sales market with their purchasing power. But – unlike in Tallinn – their number in Vilnius, although on a rise recently, is still limited (Standl, 2000). Thus, **the retail trade in the city of Vilnius still depends mainly on the local and regional demand.** Nevertheless, an increasing dominance of clothing and shoe stores (the so-called 'Textilisation') can clearly be observed and the number of perfumeries and drugstores also rose significantly.

Food shops, however, were appreciably displaced out of the city centres. Besides, in the meantime, numerous bars, taverns and restaurants in the Old Town of Vilnius owe their existence almost exclusively to young locals (mainly students) and foreign tourists or businessmen.

SPATIAL INFLUENCES ON CHANGES IN LOCATION STRUCTURES OF RETAIL TRADE IN THE CITY AND ON CHANGES OF THE CITY CENTRE

Below, a substantial location pattern of retail trade developed so far within the city limits (see pattern in Fig. 2) and their developing conditions will be analysed.

First, ***the structure and function of the existing buildings and their potential use for retail trade*** will be examined. There is no need to stress how much the post-socialist revitalisation of Central and Eastern European city centres is facilitated and accelerated by a qualitatively good stock of (previously existing) business premises, expressed by a quantitative concentration in traditional shopping streets. In particular, the historical development concerning the urban scheme and architecture in Vilnius since the end of the 19th century created substantial bases for the recent development of retail trade. The Vilnius' core (city centre) exhibits an architectural dualism of the medieval Old Town, on the one hand, and the more recently developed so-called 'Centre' (around Gediminas Prospect), on the other hand. This substantial difference is the result of the economic development between 1870 and the beginning of World War I and of the destructive effects resulting from World War II and the post-war period.

In Vilnius, the urban development plan of the year 1875 determined all structural activities up to World War II. The most important zone of the urban extension was thus today's Gediminas Prospect, which was structurally transformed from the cathedral (west of the medieval castle) outward as a grand avenue heading dead-straight to the Northwest (see Fig. 2). This area kept a clear administrative and cultural representative function which was assigned by the planners, and became thus the new urban centre, only without a higher concentration of retail trade outlets.

The Old Town was hardly changed in a structural regard and remained to the core today as a total ensemble essentially based on the baroque style. The so-called German Quarter in the Old Town suffered substantial damage in and after World War II. It was inhabited mostly by Jews who fell victim to the Holocaust. After the end of the war the Soviets destroyed this historic quarter to a large extent, and it became an area of residences and businesses built in an extremely functional style. The Old Town in Vilnius degenerated still further in a social and economic sense after the war. Due to the purposeful relocation of socially weak and homeless people into the houses formerly inhabited by Jews and Polish people as well as the conscious neglect of the (profane and sacred) buildings which were expropriated, there occurred a rapid degradation in the quality of the housing. Besides this, the use of the Old Town was, to a large extent, lost to the retail trade.

In order to work against the lack of sales areas and businesses, at the end of the 1970s and beginning of 1980s, a new socialist trade and service centre was established on the northern bank of the Neris River, beyond the city centre. In addition, among other things, the two hotels, Lietuva and Turistas, as well as a second department store were established (see Fig. 2).

A second, likewise very important spatial factor, which is determining the change of the retail trade structures in the city to a considerable degree, is ***the competition with other retail trade locations inside and outside the city***. The doctrine of Soviet urban architecture (following the standardised planning ideology of socialism) neglected not only the historical, bourgeoise city centre between 1945 and 1990, but formed new, highly monotonous satellite cities in the suburbs, built in the slab method as large housing areas. They had usually been established as pure living and sleep settlements. At the same time, however, each of these settlement satellites should, depending on their total capacity and the number of inhabitants, have received one or more central service and supply centres.

Regarding the quantitative and qualitative equipment of the new ribbon developments with grocer's shops or general stores, the situation in Vilnius was quite good, compared to Riga or Tallinn. This diversity in the supply level can be justified essentially by the fact that the demand figures for the planning of the supplying centres oriented themselves, among other things, according to the total urban situation. And it is also very important to mention that these suburban (huge concrete building) settlements in the capital of Lithuanian SSR were determined in location not least due to the hilly landscape, a topography with intensive relief. Therefore, the new suburbs were widely spread over the Western, Northern and Eastern periphery of the town, from where the distance to the city-centre was too long and time-consuming. That is why the planners inevitably had to pay more attention to the appropriate fulfilment of the development concept of those new settlements. The large new suburban

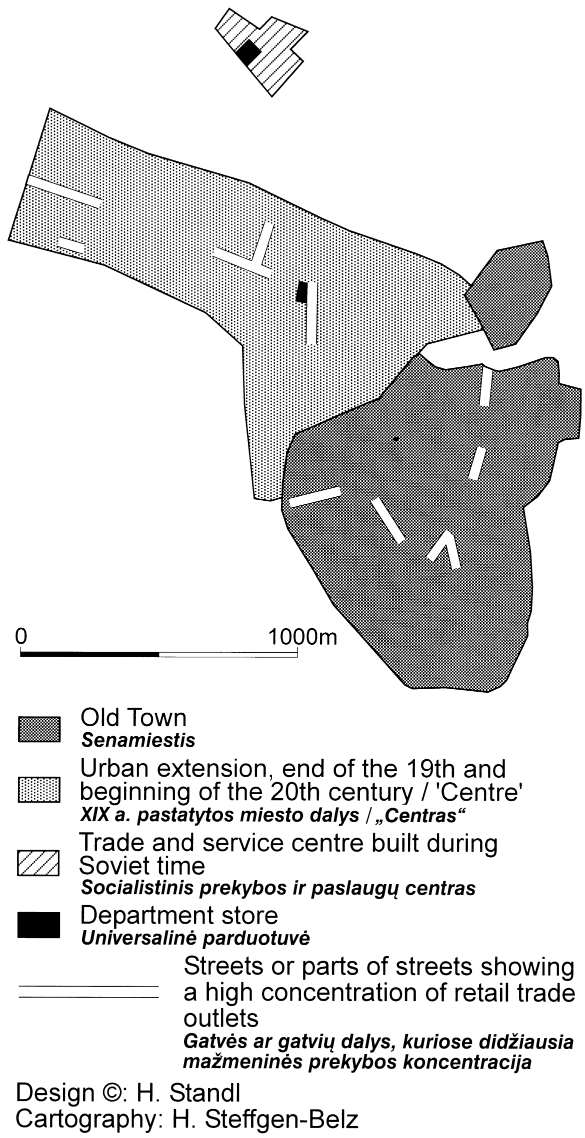

Fig. 2. Location scheme of retail trade in the central part of Vilnius, 2002
2 pav. Mažmeninės prekybos išsidėstymo schema Vilniaus centre 2002 m.

housing blocks in Vilnius were mainly settled by people from the rural regions of the Republic.

The supermarkets established already in Soviet times in the suburban settlements were denationalised during the transition process by single privatisation of enterprises. They were sold away gradually, and not all at the same time, during a period of approximately two and a half years (beginning with 1992 and running to the end of 1994). Foreign prospective customers had thereby – as previously mentioned – no direct right of access. The taking-off market leader, the chain 'Vilniaus Prekyba', was able to buy many of these privatised supermarkets in Vilnius. From this favourable starting point, this company could not only in the meantime develop a multiplicity of discount grocery branches in all quarters of Vilnius, but in addition in all of Lithuania. By the end of the 1990s the firm's structure was supplemented by the establishment of small as well as larger self-service department stores. Some of them were established on fallow lands of former industrial or wholesale trade areas. One of the latest to be built is a large-dimensioned central storage depot with a supermarket attached ('Maxima Depot') at the Southwest outskirts of the city, which has a direct motorway connection. In 2002, the chain opened the first shopping-centre ('Akropolis') in Lithuania (including a multiplex cinema) in the northern part of the capital. But also a French businessman was able to open new supermarkets (starting already in the early 1990s), now well known as 'IKI'. On the northern part of Kalvarijų Street, a rather high number of shops offering household goods, electronic equipment and building materials are concentrated in an area formerly used for military purposes (a tank barrack) by the Soviet Army. Thus, **the competitive situation for retail trade in the city of Vilnius, especially between the central part (including the Old Town), on the one hand, and the suburbia on the other is substantially high**, regarding the recently fast growing number of huge outlets and their sales areas outside the city centre.

As the third and last spatial factor of influence for the change of the city centre and the retail trade located there, ***the range of the private use and/or appropriation of public space by the establishment of kiosks and informal markets*** must be examined. In particular, during the first phase of the transition of the economic and social system, in many large cities in Southeast and Eastern Europe it often came to the illegal occupation of public spaces (*e.g.*, green belts, sidewalks, and underpasses) by ambulatory or semi-stationary trade (see references). About twelve kilometres west of the city centre of Vilnius directly on the 'green meadow' there developed a big open air market for textiles and industrial goods of all types, mainly imported from Turkey, Belarus and Poland, including falsifications of well known international trade-marks like Adidas or Nike. In the beginning of the so-called Gariūnai Market (in the early 1990s), it was designed also for commercial customers (as part of a wholesale system). But very soon the market drew in private clients also from far outside the city limits of Vilnius. The buyers usually come from the rural regions of Lithuania, and in addition from Latvia and till the middle of the 1990s also from Estonia. The economic advantage of the dealers in Gariūnai Market is the fact that they need to pay no value added tax (VAT) in contrast to the formal retail trade, and their operating cost is also minimal, because they sell their goods out of the luggage boot of their cars. They can partially pass on this cost advantage to their customers. Even if the Gariūnai Market lies relatively far outside of the urban centre, nevertheless thousands of inhabitants come from Vilnius daily, and particularly on weekends, in order to buy goods more inexpensively than in the city centre, so that a substantial competition arose for the local retail trade. **The city-centre definitely suffers from this huge informal Gariūnai Market,** and from the economic-geographical point of view this market should be closed down as soon possible. A very high – but not calculable – part of the local and regional purchasing power is lost for the formal economy. But is seems that the economic position of the Gariūnai Market is more stable than ever. New fixed shelters for traders and customers are just under construction. Recently, approximately 6000 ambulatory traders were counted there on a Saturday morning.

THE RESULT: VILNIUS' LONG WAY IN FORMING A MODERN CITY-CENTRE

The post-socialist development of the city centre of Vilnius is characterised by a very low speed towards a western-like (modern) spatial hierarchy of location patterns in retail trade (see Fig. 2). The process of the restructuring of retail trade in Vilnius is in particular retarded because of the somewhat inconsequential privatisation measures as well as due to the missing restitution of property rights concerning real estate. A low stock level in shops in (more of less not) existing traditional shopping streets (in the Old Town and in Gediminas Prospect) at the beginning of the transition to market economy, a strongly characterised competition with the relatively numerous suburban supermarkets and (recently appearing) shopping-centres as well as the existence of the Gariūnai Market have so far prevented a recognisable hierarchy of the retail trade locations in the city in the capital of Lithuania. These locations are still limited to a few sections of streets in the Old Town (in Pilies, Didžioji, Vokiečių and Trakų streets) and the range of the 'Centre' (around the department store in Gediminas Prospect, including Vilniaus street). Hopefully, the efforts to strengthen the city-centre by establishing new shopping-malls in and near Gediminas Prospect, including the reconstruction of this main street-axis and by building an underground parking (under the Municipality Square) will succeed. On the other hand, it is counter-productive to shift the municipality-administration from here to a new place outside of the 'Centre'. This kind of sub-urbanisation of working-places will lead furthermore to an urban blight and is – from a geographical point of view – not very reasonable.

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ILGAS MODERNAUS MIESTO CENTRO VILNIUJE FORMAVIMOSI KELIAS

S a n t r a u k a

Per praėjusį dešimetį Lietuvoje įvykę giluminiai socialiniai ir ūkio pokyčiai ypač raiškiai atsispindi prekybiniuose sostinės centruose. Ilgalaikiais lauko tyrimais Vilniaus, Rygos ir Talino miestų centrinėse dalyse nustatyta, kad pasiūlos ir pirmiausia mažmeninės prekybos išsidėstymo struktūrų pokyčius vykstant vadinamajai sistemos transformacijai (iš socialistinio planinio į laisvos rinkos ūkį) galima paaiškinti tik išskyrus keletą skirtingų veiksnių kompleksų. Didmiesčių centrų mažmeninėje prekyboje naujai atsirandančias ūkininkavimo formas bei besiformuojančias sklaidos struktūras dažniausiai lemia du – ***įmonių struktūros*** ir ***erdviniai*** **–** veiksnių kompleksai, kurių kiekvieną galima padalyti į dvi dalis pagal atskirus aspektus (1 pav.). Straipsnyje teigiama, kad dėl šių veiksnių tarpusavio ryšių Vilniaus centre (rajone apie Gedimino prospektą) ir senamiestyje hierarchinė mažmeninės prekybos struktūra formuojasi labai pamažu ir iki šiol nėra visiškai susiformavusi.