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Shopping Mall In The City Context How Can The Shopping Mall Positively Contribute To The Development Of The City Core?

Abstract

Recent years in Poland are characterized by the increasing number of new shopping malls, which have changed the cityscapes and, in many cases, relocated the functional city centers to the peripheries. Shopping malls adopted the idea of a city with its pedestrian street structure, shopping and leisure attitudes, converting the public space into a market product. The author is convinced, that, however alien and too expansive, the shopping malls can contribute to the development of the city core areas. There are several conditions, which should be fulfilled, but in general, there are possibilities to strengthen the city image, contribute to its diversity, respond to the functional needs of the city for space improvement and economic growth. These preconditions allow to state, that the shopping mall located in the core of the city, regarding the spatial and historic city context, can contribute to enrichment of the city and create a “positive shoppingscape”.

Keywords: Shopping mall, city context, façade design, density, market



FIG.1.Szczecin- Poland. Galeria Kaskada shopping mall. The new designed corner of the previous, burned restaurant building as a sign of the shopping mall. Source: author



FIG. 2 Milan-Italy. Passage of Vittorio Emanuele II as a historic model of the shopping mall. Source: author

1 Shopping malls – the problem of inner-city location

Shopping mall is a functional structure invented in the 19th century in Paris and Milan (Fig. 2), where the first covered passages with shops and cafés has been arranged. The idea was to protect shoppers against weather conditions and to use the courtyard spaces within the densely built city cores in a more effective way. This model of a city space has given an incentive to plan a new type of buildings in the form of covered shopping areas, which mimics the city itself, with its shops services and entertainment facilities. The initial idea of the covered spaces for shopping origins from the Austrian architect Victor Gruen (former name Grünbaum¹) from Vienna, who planned in 1959 the first pedestrian shopping mall in USA – designed as a commercial centre for the city of Kalamazoo, Michigan. His inspiration was Vienna's old city with its narrow shopping streets. He was a very successful architect and managed to build

¹ Victor David Gruen, born Viktor David Grünbaum (July 18, 1903 - February 14, 1980)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victor_Gruen

in his career over 50 shopping malls in the USA. The success of this multifunction building type spread out in the USA so much they can be counted now in thousands. This idea has been also transferred back to European cities, like it is in the case of many European ideas, which transferred to the USA matured there and came back to Europe as American products. New tendency in the USA is to cluster shopping malls in the suburbs² in a form of shopping cities. A new urban paradigm is just emerging. Can we expect this idea to come to Europe soon?

The fundamental threat concerning shopping malls is their strong competitiveness against the existing traditional shops in the cities. Due to their well organized retail system, creation of protected and consumer-friendly inner space, full range of different shops and quality assurance, the shopping malls can offer not only selling goods, but also a possibility to spend leisure time in interesting, clean and protected spaces. Shopping malls managed to retail goods in much better way than ordinary shops – providing security, weather control and selection of best shopping brands and selected goods. It's not surprising many citizens prefer to go to shopping malls, not only for shopping, but also to spend free time, just “to see and to be seen” – to see and meet other people and to show themselves justifying their presence. This sociological side effect has already been a subject of scientific research, as well as a theme of movies. Shopping malls are creating a new shoppingscape that can be considered not only in the overall perceptual way, but also as sociological and psychological phenomenon.

There has been a long discussion among urban planners, architects, sociologists and politicians concerning the problem of shopping mall location within the urban development and the city planning. If there is an allowance to build a new shopping centre at all, where should it be located: outside or inside the city centre? There are many contributions to this problem, a lot of already built and functioning shopping centers and their impact on the city structures have been described. All this cases deliver knowledge about this issue, but despite of numerous experiences the location problem cannot be solved so easily. In those cases, where the city centre is not too attractive or hardly accessible by car or public transportation, the shopping mall placed in the city outskirts can successfully compete with the city centre. On the other hand the inner-city locations can even strengthen the city core by attracting people to come to the centre and walk around – both in the shopping centre and in the city itself. It is to remind that European cities with their vast market squares have been first of all the trading centers. One of the favorite recent examples of the shopping mall placed in a very centre of the city is the Arkaden Passage (Fig. 3), the

2 Wall A., 2008. The shopping center as an urban innovator? [in:] Multiple City, Jovis, Berlin

shopping mall designed by Renzo Piano, a renowned architect, for ECE Projektmanagement in the reconstructed district of East Berlin - Potsdamer Platz. Arkaden Passage synergically combines shopping function with place for work (offices) and entertainment. Such synergy is also visible in several shopping mall locations in Polish cities, like Wrocław, where Galeria Dominikańska shopping mall has been located in the walking distance to the medieval city centre and marvelous Market Square. Similarly Galeria Krakowska in Kraków (Fig. 4), which has been located at the main railway station, creates the entrance to the historic city centre, being on the World Heritage List, and in the synergic way cooperates with it. Finally Szczecin, where Galeria Kaskada shopping mall is filling the large building gap in the core of the city, closing a long term reconstruction after the WWII demolition (Fig. 5). In these examples, the shopping malls have become important parts of the cities emphasizing their identities and contributing to strengthen the city cores. Such locations also positively influence the city authorities and estate owners, push them to modernize the neighboring structures, to adjust, rebrand and modernize the shopping offer in the city.

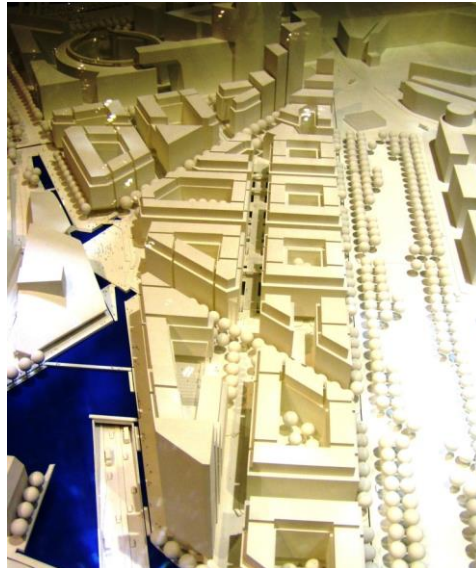


FIG. 3. Berlin-Germany. Model of the Potsdamer Platz with the Arkaden Passage shopping mall in the middle of office buildings. Source: author



FIG. 4. Kraków-Poland. Galeria Krakowska shopping mall creating a new cutting edge between the old town and the main railway station. Source: author

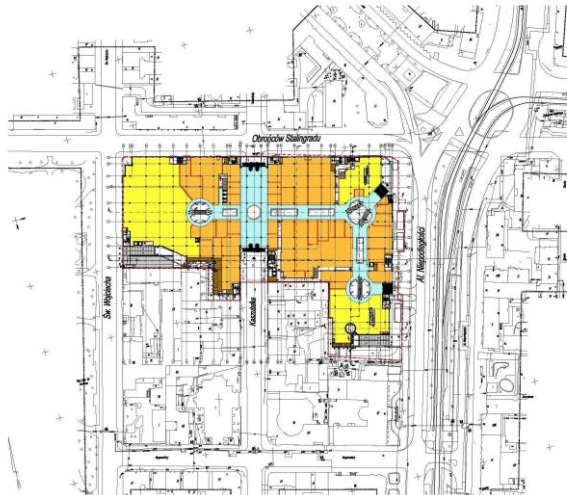


Fig. 5. Szczecin-Poland. Galeria Kaskada shopping mall is filling two inner city blocks. Source: author

2 Shopping malls in the city core

The possible locations of shopping malls in the centre and in the outskirts of a city can differ a lot due to accessibility, size, district, catchment area. Not less important is their historic context and impact on the surroundings. Locations in the countryside are much more simple and less costly than in the city core. But the centrally located malls have much greater catchment area and turnover. They are also much more complicated to realize, due to the impact on neighboring structures and lots. From the urban planning point of view, locations in the outskirts contribute to the negative effect of urban sprawl, spoiling the functional structure of cities, while the locations in city cores can strengthen the city by upgrading the life quality, district image, density and compactness of a city.

The shopping malls are expensive investments of a big scale, therefore those planned for the city core areas can contribute to the city development. There are several conditions which must be met in these circumstances, but in general the results should strengthen the city, emphasize its individuality, diversity, historic and spatial context, and respond to the functional needs of city improvement and growth. These preconditions allow to state that the shopping centre (mall) in the core of the city, regarding the city context, can contribute to enrichment of the city and to create a positive shoppingscape. This statement is of course very general and excludes wrong examples of the inner-city shopping malls, which spoiled the city structure and infected its image with clumpy buildings.

The functional scheme of the shopping mall is similar to the streetscape, however reversed, when analyzed as a separate object. Shopping malls are functioning only in the inside, with a few entrances, therefore the outer facades of the shopping mall are not important, except of the main entrances, which ought to manifest "the promise of paradise" located inside the mall. For the developer the outer walls of a shopping mall are mere support for the advertisements of what one can expect inside.

Shopping mall, being a pedestrian facility, should be planned in connection to the pedestrian street system of the inner-city, places, parks or other public urban spaces. This precondition gives better symbiotic opportunities between the city and the shopping mall. The experience has shown, that the sites near the public transportation stops, railway stations or placed even within their structures (like in Leipzig, Berlin-Lehrter Bahnhof or Kraków main station) make both public space and shopping mall passages to be used in a better way. In these cases shopping malls are becoming a part of the city infrastructure.

3 Façades belong to the public realm

Shopping malls located in the city core need to have outer façade which will belong much more to the public realm than to the mall itself. This is the main task of an architect, to build façades, the outer skin of the shopping mall in a proper, attractive, but not aggressive way. From the functional point of view outer façades, as it was mentioned above, are not necessary for a shopping mall in the city core. But they are extremely important for the city. This is a kind of conflict of interest between the investors and city authorities. This conflict should always be solved in the win-win procedure. Façades should be decent but regarding the context and the impact they have on the surroundings. In some cases the shopping mall take advantage of the location, where the structure is hidden behind other buildings, also historic ones. Here are the examples: the mentioned above Arkaden Passage in Berlin, Golden Terraces in Warsaw (Fig.6) hidden between the office buildings and marked only by the unusual roofing, Thier Gallery in Dortmund placed in-between the city block where a brewery had been sited formerly, Ettlinger Tor in Karlsruhe (Fig.7) similarly incorporated in the existing urban block structure. In those cases the outer façades, hidden behind the other functions, practically do not exist. A situation where the mall façades are subject of urban exposition is much more challenging for an architect.



FIG. 6. Warsaw-Poland. Golden Terraces shopping mall hidden behind the office buildings. Source: author



FIG. 7. Karlsruhe-Germany. Ettlinger Tor shopping mall subordinated to the strong urban composition of the city. Source: author

ECE shopping malls in Kraków, Wrocław and Szczecin are good illustrations of it. In this case the façade design belonged to the master plans done by the city authorities in co-operation with the investor's architects and demanded a lot of attention during the planning process. Quite often outer façades became a kind of compromise between the parties involved in planning and building. In these circumstances architects with their ideas play an important, decisive role, but in many cases have to defend their solutions against all other parties: builders, investors, municipal officers and public.

4 Shopping malls in Szczecin

The city of Szczecin (former Stettin), with approximately 400 thousand inhabitants, is a historic harbor city on the Odra River estuary, located 60 km from the Baltic Sea coast and 150 km away from Berlin. It is a large city most remote from the centre of Poland and located closely to the German border established after the WWII. As a previous German city, it was heavily destroyed during the WWII by air raids of the allies and war front strikes. The city was rebuilt in the 1960s and 1970s in the communist modernity. The 1980s and 1990s were marked by attempts to bring back the historic shape of the city with its street lines and rich architectural forms. The city

of Szczecin became a model of a town containing moments of agglomeration and dispersal, mainly due to political reasons and location close to the German border. The shopping malls are here a quite new development. Several malls has been erected in the city outskirts, but their influence on the core of the city was not significant. The first attempt to locate a shopping mall in the city core took place in the late 1990s by Norwegian and American companies which wanted to put a shopping mall with multiplex cinema inside of the 19th century city blocks at the first pedestrian street in the city. This interesting project failed, but shortly after that a new shopping mall emerged in the area of the traditional local fruit market area (Carrefour). It was a standardized construction with the big store and adjacent small boutiques in two levels and double-storey car park above the ground. As a result of an architectural competition and land selling auction organized by the Municipality, another shopping mall in a free area in the city centre was designed. The mall called Galaxy was completed in 2003. It fulfilled the dreams of Szczecin inhabitants about the “real shopping mall” with the world-known brands, multiplex cinema and rich interior space devoted for public. Galaxy became for a certain period a real new city centre. Since 2000 a German developer, ECE Projektmanagement from Hamburg, was intending to locate a new shopping mall in the city centre. ECE finally succeeded to open the new Galeria Kaskada shopping mall in 2011 (Fig. 8).



FIG. 8. Szczecin-Poland. The significant corner of the Galeria Kaskada. Source: author

5 Galeria Kaskada shopping mall in Szczecin in the city context

From among the presented cases of shopping malls the author would like to choose Galeria Kaskada in Szczecin and focus on the results of his personal experience in designing and building it.

5.1 Location

This is the site in the core of the city, adjacent to the medieval district. It covers some major parts of two blocks which were defined and filled with tenement houses in the 1880s and 1890s. The reason to allot this very area for a shopping mall was a very bad condition of it, on one hand, and location in the city centre on the pedestrian crossroads, on the other hand.

5.2 History

The space was degenerated because of political decisions undertaken after the WWII not to reconstruct those parts of the city which were composed of tenement houses from the 19th century thus allowing their “technical death” and demolition.

It has to be mentioned, that the tendencies in urban planning in the 1970s in Poland and particularly in Szczecin resulted in erection of several 11 floor blocks of flats in the close vicinity to the described area; they were to emphasize the central character of the site by adding a new scale to the mostly modest 5-6 floor buildings in the surroundings. The urban plans in the 1970s were streaming to erase the 19th century tenant housing in Szczecin and to build new, modern blocks with open plan, according to the Athens Charter guidelines. This plan to modernize the city centre was not fully realized, and as a result we had the mixed structure of „open-dense” type. The structure of this type is also available in the urban context of planned Galeria Kaskada. It was erected exactly in the place where a building named “Kaskada”, housing several restaurants and clubs, so characteristic for Szczecin, had burned totally down in 1982 taking 16 lives. For over 20 years the site was free waiting for a new development in the city core. The investment turned out not so easy. There were many circumstances of political and economic background which hampered the development, but finally in 2011, after 9 years of planning and negotiations and 2 years of constructing, the new shopping mall filled the gaps in the city structure.

5.3 Context

In the vicinity of Galeria Kaskada there are historic buildings protected by law: a bank in the neoclassical palace building with sculptural decoration and plastered façades, and a paediatric hospital in the neo-Gothic building with dark brick façade, quite different in its architectural appearance. The character of the neighborhood is also determined by the neo-baroque tenement houses forming the street lines of 19th century street system. There is also the neo-gothic church with brick façades and high tower nearby. The adjacent bank building have a nice iron fence. The motive of this fence has been adopted to form the enclosures of the Galeria Kaskada area. Both new and old fences are now creating a united entity, smoothly combining the old building with the new one. Some other buildings of lower architectural and cityscape value were also located on the building lot, and they had to be removed. One of them was the seat of Pleciuga Puppet Theatre. The theatre will be removed to a new, modern building in other location, in order to make more space for the Galeria Kaskada shopping mall. This is one of the win-win transformation examples, where all the parties have managed to realize their goals. The surroundings of the Galeria Kaskada shopping mall are different in style and form, and they have different functions, mainly as public buildings – this is a typical situation for the city core locations.



FIG. 9. Szczecin-Poland. The silhouette of the Galeria Kaskada shopping mall in the city context. Source: author

5.4 Archaeology

One should be aware, that the remains of the past can be found underground in any location within the core of historic cities. The level of the lowest parts of the shopping

mall is much deeper than the one of the 19th century tenement houses. Therefore the archaeological finds are to be expected. The historic and archaeological studies of the area should anticipate the planning process. In the case of Galeria Kaskada the historic survey was done and it was discovered, that below the basements of the 19th century housing, destroyed during the air raids in the 1940s, there were layers with the 17th century defensive constructions. The excavations confirmed this findings. An over 200 m long wall of the previous moat was excavated. To let it stay in the site would mean to resign from the basement shopping area. After long negotiations with the City Conservation office the parties agreed to expose a part of this wall in the basement of the building. A special exposition was designed and incorporated to the complex, with drawings and explanations showing the context of the 17th century city fortifications.

5.5 The Master Plan

The existing rich architectural surroundings constituted the base for the Master Plan prepared by the Municipality. In the Master Plan passed in 2001, a lot of limits and obligations for the planning were prescribed in order to secure the compliance with the urban and architectural context of the site. The building features, like its scale, height of its particular parts, building lines, colors and applied materials were defined, however leaving the architectural style and overall form of the shopping mall to the invention of architects. To achieve the consonance with the Master Plan a lot of drawings and discussions both with the investors and the municipal authorities were carried out. The final design of Galeria Kaskada was strictly incorporated to the urban block structure of the city and deeply interwoven into the formal urban and architectural context, meeting at the same time the investors demands on space dimensions and internal order of the building.

The Master Plan allowed to build a shopping mall 18,5 m high with a 25 m high landmark in the corner in order to continue the 19th century city scheme where all block corners looking to the city squares had to be accentuated by local landmarks.

The most important issue in creating the architectural form of Galeria Kaskada was the silhouette of the complex which had to refer to the existing surroundings, as well as the façade with its appropriate details.

5.6 Silhouette

The silhouette of Galeria Kaskada was designed according to the prescriptions of the Master Plan (Fig. 9). The building over the ground level is following the building lines.

Below the ground level the footprint takes 100% of the building lot. The heights are also limited to the figures given by the Master Plan. Only the roof volumes can reach over these heights, which was used for the skylights and car-park entrances in the roof.

5.7 Façades

The shapes, colors and details of the façades refer to those ones from the surroundings, but not in the direct way. These elements are transformed and express the contemporary language of architecture. It was important to form the façades in the way the huge shopping mall of 100 000 m² of total surface would become a part of the city and not an isolated, alien building dominating in the neighborhood. One of the most important decisions was to refer directly to the architecture of the previous Kaskada building. The corner location allowed to create a dominant part 25 m high being a reminiscence of the previous building. This concept was appreciated by the inhabitants making the revival of the previous Kaskada almost real, however in a new and larger dimension. The corner has been designed in a colorful way, which let the building to be quite unique and perceived more positively. The glazed corner has become an architectural brand of the whole complex. The strong impact of the corner façade, justified by the historic context, is followed by other parts of the façades, which are regular, simple and plain. Only the façades in the Niepodległości Alley, which have as a background some the historic buildings, needed more detailed approach. The vertical accents and breaks in the street line help to merge the new architecture with the historic context of one of the most important streets in the city of Szczecin.

With no doubt closing a part of Kaszubska Street, which is an element of the chessboard urban structure (Fig. 10), was one of the most challenging problems to be solved. To design the closing elevation in a way preserving the street-line – how this can be done? The glazed inclined façades has been applied in order not to reflect too much sunlight and to show the transparency of the barrier. The final shape of the building was the result of several interventions due to exchange of materials, detailing and new marketing ideas. However, the building cost was the main issue: there were limits that could not be trespassed. Even during the building phase, some major changes in the outlook of elevations have been done. In the last moment some important front façade elements, like the leading colors (orange and light green) or remote controlled shadings, have been added.



FIG. 10. Szczecin-Poland. The enclosure of the Kaszubska Street passage. Source: author

5.8 Footprint and interior design

The compositional layout of Galeria Kaskada is shown on the scheme. It takes major parts of two blocks and a part of the street, which has been transformed into a pedestrian passage. The roofed part of the street belongs to the shopping mall, but on the other hand also to the city structure, marking its building lines and full accessibility. In the basement level, ground floor level and the 1-st floor level the shops and restaurants are located. The upper levels are taken by the car park, while offices and fitness centre are in the glazed corner. The internal passages are marked with three rotundas, where the vertical transportation has been placed. The main passage has a natural light coming from the skylights in the roof. The three-storey passage with pastel painting, bright floors, glazed balustrades, bright lightening and the rhythm of inclined pillars is bringing a dignity to the shopping interior. Galeria Kaskada has become not only the big shop, but first of all a public space of new type – safe, warm, beautiful, airy, roomy. All technical arrangements are hidden behind the shopping spaces. The commodities are supplied by the roofed road leading to the delivery docks in the basement of the building where is enough space for 5 long trucks and 5 smaller delivery cars to upload and turn back. The fire sprinkler system and nine fireproof staircases with direct outside exits protect the mall against fire. The car entrance and exit are placed on the different sides of the building, making the in-house parking, on three upper levels of the building with 1500 parking places, comfortable and safe.

The Galeria Kaskada shopping mall has strengthen the core character of the city, making the centre more dense and intensively used.

5.9 Awards

It's worth mentioning, that Galeria Kaskada won the following awards:

- Cij Awards Poland 2011 – Best shopping mall in Poland
- CEE Retail Awards 2011 – Best shopping mall in Eastern Europe
- CEE Retail Awards 2011 – Design of the Year
- Economy Award of the Szczecin City Mayor „Busola Biznesu 2011” – Investment of the Year
- PRCH Retail Awards 2012 – New Shopping Mall of the Year
- Business Competition of the Marshall of West Pomerania – Nomination in the category: Investment of the Year 2012

6 Conclusions

A shopping mall in the city core, through regarding the city context, can contribute to enrichment and improvement of central areas of the town and to create a positive shoppingscape. Due to much more valuable location than in the outskirts, the investors should be aware of their obligations to the public and contribute financially to the improvement of the surroundings of the planned investment. Integrated planning of city infrastructure and shopping mall should be a norm in such cases. The urban transformation process, marked in many European cities by retreat of the industry from the city centers, can be realized more smoothly, if the shopping mall investors collaborate with the municipal authorities and undertake common ventures and private-public partnerships (PPP). Therefore the historic context is so important for the inner city location of shopping malls, meaning things that already do not exist on the site (f.e. former industrial lot), as well as the cityscape context (composition taking into account the existing cityscape of the surroundings). The functionality of the whole city can be improved, when the roofed passages of the shopping mall are becoming parts of the pedestrian zone system of the city. The problem with a scale of the contemporary shopping malls should be solved by adjusting the size of the malls to the local situation, appropriate façade and building structure articulation, details of the façades, modest architectural forms interwoven in the architectural language of the local context.

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