

# **6<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN RETAILING AND SERVICES SCIENCE**

**EIRASS**

July, 1999

Porto Rico

## **THE RETAILING DESIGN IN A PROCESS OF URBAN USE SUBSTITUTION**

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### **1. PRESENTATION**

This article discusses the unplanned retailing development which happens spontaneously in the city and the architecture of transition that takes part of this process and tries to analysing the impact in the dynamics and image of the city.

Compared to the planned retailing development, the tradicional centers suffer the lack of many facilities like: parking, different entrances for consumers and deliveries, space to enlarge the buildings, joint administration, planned tenant mix, and so on.

Due to this precarious condition , planned retailing centers like Shopping Malls have been stealing the vitality of the traditioanl centers which started facing a strong process of urban deterioration and contributing for a negative image of the cities and worse quality of urban life.

The lack of bibliography about this subject, mainly in Brazil, led us to developed a field research made by the undergrade students of the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of São Paulo University.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This research was developed with the collaboration of an undergrade student in a program of scholarships for scientific begginners ( Camila Faccione Mendes) , with the material prepared by the students of the discipline AUP-250 during the years 1995/1996/1997 at the Faculty of Architecture of SãoPaulo University.

Three points were considered important to be analysed in this work:

- The existent land use found in the different levels of urban : local, regional, central and specialized centers in order to identify the tenant mix in a city like São Paulo. This effort gave us some important elements to rediscuss questions about hierarchy of urban centers and some old concepts included in the urban legislations .
- The second point is related to the exterior architecture including typologies, façades, window shops, entrances, advertisings, etc. Other aspects also considered were : parking, sidewalk use and the urban furniture.
- Finally the tird aspect analysed the influence of urban legislation, the market and the pre-existent architecture to define the new use of the building in the process of urban use substitution.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to start by trying to explain what is understood by unplanned retailing and the transition architecture.

## **2. THE UNPLANNED RETAILING DEVELOPMENT AND THE TRANSITION ARCHITECTURE CONCEPT**

The unplanned retailing center considered is retailing developmentt that appears spontaneously in the city throughtout the emergence of commercial buildings, build or not built on this purpose. This process can be identify as the born of the urban centers ( cities)

The planned retailing development means the center thought and planned to be a retailing center as happened in the new towns policies, in the process of european reconstruction after wars period, and even in many renewal urban movements. In all of these process were tryed to reproduce , in a planned way, the logic of the tertiary space, spontaneously built. However , many facilities and services were added to improve their performace in terms of consumers care.

Concerning buildings, it is also possible to diferenciaded the buildings that were designed for retailing and services use, and those which were adapted or tranformed to receive the new use.

According to GUY (1994) , the tradition established in the first retailng american studies, unplanned retaling development is considered only the process of urban land susbtitution, including buildings, without paying attention to the spontaneous begginig of the urban centers.

With the emergence of Shopping Malls, ( shopping centers) which are planned retailing undertakings not only in terms of the design of the building but also concerning management, one new concept was born.

The great importance , dimension and diversity that these retailing undertakings have assumed, gave them the status of a true urban centers, managed with the intention to maintain the bussines vitality. Nowadays, this concept was being borrowed to the traditional urban centres revitalization studies. (Vargas,1999)

Shopping Malls, as mentioned above, are puttig together two dimension of the planned retailing development, the urban and the building scale.

In the scope of this work, it will be analysed just the unplanned retailing development and transition architecture observed in the urban land susbtitution process.

In fact, the commercial buildings which maintain the physical characteristics and use of their original design are the exceptions.

In this way what it is seeing in the unplanned retailing development is a trully transition architecture.

Obviously, this transition is a result of the intrinsical character of the commerce itself: changes, transformation, dynamics and movement. This is true even in the planned retailing as Shopping Malls, always in a changing process trying to follow the demands of the market.

### **3.URBAN CENTERS HIERACHY**

Traditionally, and based in many theories about urban centers hierarchy ( Berry, 1967,1970; Dalmaso, 1976; Geiger, 1967; Prost, 1965; Rochefort, 1976), which the precursor was Walter Christaller ( Berry, 1667), with his hexagonal model, the urban centers started being classified according their catchment área, quantity and variety of goods and services. Great number of researchers developed many theories about this matter.

In general terms, these centers were identified, and defined, and lately designed to attend the needs for different markets.

A traditional hierachy could be easily established:

### **local center ( Neighborhood center).**

This center should attend the daily needs of the neighborhood residents and being settled in a walking distance. The main services and stores should be : grosseries, butcheries, vegetables and fruits shops, pharmacies and so one.

### **regional center ( community centers)**

Expected to offer a higher quantity and variety of services and goods, not just for residents but workers, entrepreneurs, visitors . The offer of these kind of services and goods, not used every day, justified longer displacement for shopping. Therefore, the necessary sales amount to make business viable asked for a bigger catchment area, which should included many local centers.

### **city Center ( Central Business District, downtown)**

This center has as its catchment area the whole city and sometimes , as the case of São Paulo, the catment area overpass the country borders. Only big markets can justify the offer and the existence of specialized and rare services and goods.

### **specialized Center**

These centers, firstly, not considered in this hierarchy., offer just one set od similar goods. In the USA they started as streets to serve drivers( GUY,1994) In São Paulo city, we can see many streets that are specialized in selling just similar goods. (eletronics equipments, furnitures, building materials, and so on)

## **4.URBAN USE IN THE CENTERS STUDIED**

In the local centers, it is still possible to observe the strong presence of the residencial use, mixed with the retailing and services ones. (tab,1)

Besides the high quantity of food stores, it needs to highlight the presence of great quantity of stores called **bazar**, which sell all kind of cheap small goods (convenience shopping) which try to attend the eventual needs of the residents.

We can say that the local centers work to answer the urgent needs of the residents. Normally the residents pay higher prices compared to supermarkets.

The stores offering products and services for cars , and even gas stations started to be included in the local centers mixing due the fact that, in São Paulo, cars are considered a basic need for great portion of the population., The rent video shops and lottery shops are other kind of services also included in local center.

**TABLE 1- URBAN USES OF LOCAL CENTERS**

URBAN USES	LOCAL CENTERS			
	I %	II %	III %	IV %
HOUSES	21,7	54,0	53,5	9,4
FOOD	17,5	16,0	8,2	13,2
GROSSERY	8,6		4,8	3,7
BUTCHERY	4,3		4,9	3,7
DROGSTORE	4,3			7,5
BEATY PARLOUR	4,3			
INSTITUTIONS		5,6	3,0	3,6
PARKING			1,6	
CLOTHES				5,6
SHOES				3,8
OFFICES			3,2	
CONSTRUCION MATERIALS	4,3		1,6	
CAR EQUIPMENST	13,0	8,8		13,2
BAZAR	13,4			11,3
BANKS				1,8
NO USE	4,3	4,4	1,4	7,5
OTHER	4,3	11,2	17,8	15,7
TOTAL	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

SOURCE: Field research  
OBS. % related to built area

Concerning regional centers, the residential use is also strongly present, although the building typologies are different. That is, the neighborhood are more verticalized with higher demographic density rates with explain the diversity of stores.

The food stores and services as well the car equipments stores are also found here . Nevertheless, the so called “Bazar” gives place to an enourmous variety of stores. This means, it is not any more, one store ofering many different sort of goods. There are many shops selling all kind of products. The scale is incresead.

**TABLE 2- URBAN USES OF REGIONAL CENTERS****REGIONAL CENTERS**

URBAN USES	<b>I</b> %	<b>II</b> %	<b>III</b> %	<b>IV</b> %	<b>V</b> %	<b>VI</b> %	<b>VII</b> %
HOUSES	37,1	2,0	60,0	43,30	33,62	16,45	
FOOD	12,4	20,0	2,6	23,30	10,61	14,21	15,29
DRUGSTORE	1,7	3,0					3,52
BEAUTY PARLOUR	0,9						
PHOTOS AND GLASSES	2,3	3,0				5,80	
OFFICES	6,4						
PARKING	0,9	10,0			3,53		
CONSTRUC. MATERIALS	1,7			21,60	11,50	5,80	
CAR EQUIPMENTS	3,8		1,3	11,80	8,84	10,65	
CD's	0,3						
STATIONARY	2,9	4,0					
CLOTHES	16,2	5,0				5,80	25,88
SHOES							15,29
BAZAR		10,0				7,10	11,76
BRANK		5,0			2,65		3,52
LEISURE		4,0					
INSTITUTIONS			14,3		2,65	7,33	
SMALL SHOPPING MALLS		2,0	3,6				12,94
NO USE	3,8	10,0				9,40	
OTHES	9,70	22,00	18,30		26,60	17,50	11,76
TOTAL	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

SOURCE; Field research  
OBS. % related to built area

In the central área the residential use is very reduced , whereas the food stores and services maintain almost the same rates. Nevertheless these services are now pointed mainly to the workers and to the passer-by (restaurants, fastfood, cafés), not for residents. The center presents great diversity of goods and services with emphasis in clothes sector and included specialized and rare articles.

**TABLE 3- URBAN USES OF THE CITY CENTER**

AREAS OF THE CITY CENTER

URBAN USES	I %	II %	III %	IV %
HOUSES				2,45
FOOD	7,30	1,44	11,70	7,97
CLOTHES		59,36	16,30	3,06
SHOES	6,92	7,24	13,80	8,58
LEATHER ARTICLES	0,76			1,84
SPORTS				6,12
GIFTS			0,90	33,64
BOOKS AND STATIONARY			7,00	1,84
CD's		1,44	2,30	
PHOTOS AND GLASSES			3,50	4,29
BANKS	1,53		8,80	1,84
PARKING	0,76	2,89		0,61
DRUGSTORE	1,53			0,61
ELETRONIC DOMESTIC EQUIPMENTS	0,76	1,44	2,00	
TEXILES	70,00			1,84
WHATCH SERVICES			1,30	
NO USE				5,52
OTHER	10,40	26,20	32,40	19,80
TOTAL	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

SOURCE: Field research  
OBS. % related to built area

The specialized center, as the name already show, is a kind of retailing development that offer, basically similar goods. Most of these centers have a linear shape following the flow of impotant streets. Most of them suffer strong influence from the neighborhood.<sup>2</sup>

Generally speaking, the profile of the neiborhood, mainly related to the local and specialized centers interferes on the meaning of daily needs, on the quality of the

<sup>2</sup> In São Paulo, we have a different urban legislation for this corridors.

services and good offered as well in the image of the store and its interior design.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, the size of the land and the building typology (pre-existent architecture), the location of the building related to the block (corner, middle), the sort of district and street, highly interfere in the choice of the business to be settled.

## 5. TRANSITION ARCHITECTURE TO COMMERCIAL USE

In central areas as well in regional centers, the quantity of planned retailing buildings are more significant, concerning the first purpose of the design. What is possible to verify is the difficulty to receive the new use properly, and face the new demands of the society. (fig.1) In local centers, mainly the more recent urbanized areas, the retailing development emerges in a planned way (small retailing centers) (fig.2).

Two are the main typology of the buildings for retailing and service uses in the oldest area of São Paulo city. Two stories dwellings in which the ground floor is used for retailing and services activities and the first floor for residential use or services activities (fig.3); tall buildings where the ground floor the first and second floors are used for retailing and services uses and even for storage, and the highest floors for apartments or offices. (Fig. 4)

### pre-existent architecture

In the process of urban use substitution is easy to notice a strange situation. In the old buildings, which preserve the features of the residential use: quantities of balconies and big windows mark the retailing façade. (fig. 5)

Moreover, the floors for retailing activities were designed in modules, trying to follow the building structure, without any concerns about the needs of different activities to be developed.

Another interesting observation is related to the dimension of the rooms height in the ground floor as an exigence of building code. This extra space in the façade, incentive the emergence of many advertisements. (fig 5)

Although small, the great quantity of advertisements promote an uncomfortable visual sensation.

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<sup>3</sup> It is necessary to say that in a country like Brazil or even in a city like São Paulo, where different kinds of technologies and standard of living coexist, different sorts of business can be found.. To know more about this discussion see: Santos (1978)



Otherwise, big buildings give opportunity to other kind of business: restaurants, banks, real state agencies, even located in centers considered as local level.

This big buildings also contribute to the emergence of whosale or out-let stores. Sales direct frmm the industry with large space for display . (fig.6)

Many old indusrial buildings are being occupied for retailing activites (fig 7) while some retailing buildings are been used for religious activities. ( fig.8)

The same need for large buit areas happen with the furniture sector, because of the huge size of the products. It is necessary large space for storage and display. In some european countries like Neitherlands ( Borchert, 1988) and England (Howard, 1988), the restrictions to the out of city retailing undertakings not include stores which sold goods like furniture, do-it-yourself, home equipmets)

In some street because of the size of the houses, mainly with big spaces inside the block the furniture stores originated a specialized center. (fig. 9)

The pre- existent architecture as well the size of the land parcel can make easier old houses being transformed in show-rooms ( fig 10). The long façade, can help to create big window shops and parking for delivery and consumers.

Not only the size of thebuilding, but even its location in the corner can help the divulgation of the business ( fig 11). The corner is the crossing point of all kind of routes, pedestrians and cars flows. Many studies make references to the corner shop as a special kind of retailing store ( Guy, 1994).

### **façades**

Related to the façades, the planned retailing architecture in the tall buildings use to included some elements to protect the pedestrian from sun and rain, although as an ogligation of building codes. ( fig.12) However, in many cases, this function is made by some other improvised elements , without following any rules.(fig 13)

The transition architecture of two stories buildings the façades present strong collors trying to reinforce their presences. This proceeding is necessary to change the residential image of the building and make it closer to the retailing image that consumers use to have. ( fig 14)

On the other hand, this same rule it is not true in places where the retailing and services uses are forbidden by urban laws. Although the retailing activitiy could happen, they try to hide the activiies. In this case, the sort of business chosen do not need any identification, throughout the façade.

Besides the collored façade, all kind of advertisings ( identification of the store, promotion, sales) are added, contributing to increase the visual pollution. We

really believe that in general the consumers are not able to identify any kind of information. ( fig.15)

Other aspects that amplify the chaos is the use of sidewalks to display the products, and the presence of the street peddler ( vendors) where the pedestrian flow is high. ( fig 16)

As a heritage of the residential use, the existence of fences for safety does not permit to approximate the consumers to the windowshops .

Another characteristic very important of the two stories buildings , is the shape of windows in the first floor that works as a strong determinant of the façade drawings.(fig, 14) To transform the first floor as a window shop extension it is necessary a deep changes, almost never done.

When the public target belongs to the high income class, the sobriety is always a rule. ( fig.17)

In some other important street the the big size of the land parcel and also of the house help to transform the building as a whole in an advertising of the business. ( fig.17)

### **exterior space**

The lack of inside space, for many reasons ( use changes, sales techniques) leads the retailers to appropriate the sidewalks as an extension of the sales area. (fig.1, fig.3)

This situation makes the use of sidewalks uncomfortable for pedestrian and contribute to the deterioration of the urban quality of life. ( fig.15) (fig.19) ( fig 19<sup>a</sup>).

The stores that are located in specialized centers present another way to display the goods. They do not have any concern to attract the consumer throughout a good lay-out.

If we consider in this reading of sidewalks other urban furnitures, like news paper tent, boxes for garbage, public phones, street illumination, we are in front of a complete chaos. (fig. 15) (fig. 19).

Another difficult situation are car parkings. In past time, the urban legislation obliged to built on the limits of the parcel of land, without any space in front of the building. This obligation tried to maintain the coherence of the urban design in the city center. ( Vargas, 1993).

In this way, all the old architecture does not offer any possibility to park the car in front of the store.

## 6. CONCLUDING COMMENTS.

Related to the hierarchy concept based in the quantity and variety of goods and services offered, the analysis of the urban uses leads us to question, firstly, the concept of daily (basic) needs, diversified and specialized. In a consumption society where wishes are transformed in necessities it is difficult to define clearly, what are basic needs for local centers.

Moreover, the daily needs, (bread, meat, milk and so on) could be stored at home and have changed the consumers habits.

New processes like just in time delivery, also change the need of space for storage inside stores. Moreover, small shops could also generate high levels of consumer flows. Therefore, the existent definition included in the urban legislation that make relation between the category of a center and store size is obsolete. Some small store together can generate a significant impact in areas where they are settled.

**Then the first suggestion is to revise the concept about retailing and services activities in the scope of the urban legislation.**

In the unplanned retailing development where most of the retailers are small and independent, the need of calling the attention of consumers throughout high quantity of signs in the façade could be partially explained by the high cost of other kind of media.

In local centers, because of the type of products offered, it is easy to believe that the intensity of advertising elements in the façade, is just to help consumers to identify the shop, but many times not reached.

On the other hand, some examples could let us be optimistic concerning façade restoration, and image improvement. (fig.20) (fig. 21)

**Finally, the cultural heritage of the retail image is strong and reflects the social and cultural values of the independent retailers, instead of the consumers wishes, (Lochhead, 1998).**

In São Paulo, some areas as 25 de Março street, demonstrate an enormous influence of the Arabian Bazaar, concerning the way to display the goods. (fig 19 and 22)

According to Davidson (1988), the marketing concept, introduced in the philosophy of the big American industries since 1950, had a delayed acceptance in the retailing field, and received a restricted attention till the eighties. **To Brazilian retailers, apart of big companies, the conservatism is the general rule.**

**The buildings ownership ( many owners, heritages, long commitments), mainly in old areas is also an obstacle to absorb changes .**

This situation has a negative influence over the image of the city and its urban quality of life . The visual pollution and the difficulty to walk in the sidewalks add other bad effects of this existent chaos.

**Otherwise, we can not forget that the retailing image of dynamism and vitality is expressed, in part, by the intensity of signs, cars and people, and goods and sounds.**( fig. 23)

The planned retailing development is the place reserved for the big retailers that has famous brand in the market and use to sell industrialized and standardized goods . The unplanned retailing development offers a higher variety of products, different retailers profile, different window shops style and surprises and uncertainties. Then , according to Guy ( 1994) **the unplanned areas could be very interesting and attractive.**

This is a situation that started to be happen in the central area of São Paulo City. ( Gazeta mercantil, 1998)

**Any way, it is necessary to improve the quality of these places and diminish the visual pollution.**

More than a legislation, that already exist, **it is necessary to find a way to make the retailers aware** about the lack of turnover that comes from the use of these poor advertisements, treatment given to the façade, the way of organizing the interior space and the sidewalks appropriation.

**Make these spaces more attractive and create better ambience for shopping could be a good strategy for face the high competition of the big companies.**

It is good to see that the increasing competition between all kind of business are making the independent retailers more and more aware about the importance of a good design. ( Vargas 1995, 1998).

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