

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

In Poland, shopping malls have become an inseparable element of modern agglomerations and large cities. They derive from the tradition of former town marketplaces, round which trade was developed and the life of local community flew. Similarly to them, modern shopping malls are becoming important centres of social life, serving for commercial, entertainment, recreational, cultural, educational, integration and socialising purposes [Kochaniec 2011, p. 238]. Their comprehensive trade offer makes it possible to shop, cafés are a place for meeting friends, cinemas, discos, bowling alleys ensure entertainment, and playgrounds for children provide a response for the needs of the youngest visitors. Exhibitions and concerts provide an opportunity to have contact with arts. More and more often municipal offices and public utility establishments are located at shopping malls, as well as places of religious worship. The most recent investments are becoming elements of municipal infrastructure even more, as they integrate within their space office and hotel spaces and residential premises. Entertainment parks, theme parks, galleries or theatres constitute an inseparable part of new shopping malls, and development of the entertainment and cultural, and commercial offer is one of the ways of competing with the traditional city centre and developing e-trade, as it offers experiences that are unavailable in the virtual worlds and constitute an additional incentive to go out. In this way, they have become a place where entire families spend their free time.

Shopping malls in the Silesian Voivodeship have a significant impact on smaller settlement units located in the outer areas of agglomerations. It consists mainly in changes related to social, economic, as well as functional and spatial spheres. Research conducted in 2011 directly among residents, entrepreneurs and local authorities made it possible to identify consequences of the functioning of shopping malls in the Silesian Voivodeship, and to verify initial hypotheses.

Their social impact refers mainly to inhabitants of small towns and rural areas influenced by agglomerations. By providing a comprehensive, attractive and modern commercial, service and entertainment offer, shopping malls have become a commonly visited and used place. Residents of the outer metropolitan zone assess shopping malls in a rather positive way. They choose to shop in these facilities due to a wide selection of products offered “under one roof”, low prices and convenient opening hours. Furthermore, they indicate the possibility to do shopping for a longer period of time; for 1/3 of them, an important selection factor is the possibility to shop on Saturdays and Sundays; every 4th of the surveyed values the possibility of paying with debit/credit card; and for every 5th respondent, the free-of-charge parking and

convenient access to the shopping mall is what counts. Negative opinions on shopping centres are more often expressed by males, as well as by people aged 50-64, who declare sufficient and difficult financial situation. What surveyed residents of the Silesian Voivodeship do not like about shopping malls is: queues at the cash desks, crowd, lack of information about products and erroneous prices. More than 1/3 of the surveyed purchase unnecessary items on impulse, waste too much time for shopping; for 1/5 of the respondents, the products at shopping malls happen to be past the expiration date, and prices on products are marked in a poorly legible manner. For many residents, large-format commercial facilities are overwhelmingly big, noisy, and disindividualising. Elderly people see many more disadvantages of such establishments as they offer a manner of operation which is very different when compared to the traditional district stores.

Modern shopping malls in the Silesian Voivodeship dispose of a wide offer of services (hairdresser, dry cleaner, cosmetics, gastronomy), as well as of recreation (cinema, billiard, fitness). Less than half of the surveyed use services offered in shopping malls; more often these are males, young people, who are professionally active and who declare good or sufficient financial situation. More than 92% of the surveyed inhabitants of the Silesian Voivodeship go to the shopping malls to do shopping, and for 2% of them it is a way of spending free time. The offer of services and recreation facilities of the shopping malls constitute an additional element of their attractiveness, but is of no significance for most of the buyers. According to research, respondents most often come to a shopping mall with their family, and every fifth of the surveyed comes alone.

A broad commercial, service, and recreational offer of shopping centres satisfies the needs of various purchaser groups. Most persons in the group of those who go to a shopping mall with friends are female, young people, aged up to 34, with a car. Owning one's own car is a factor that determines to a certain degree the place of shopping by respondents. Shopping malls that dispose of large, free-of-charge parking, are adapted to service customers coming by cars. This rule is confirmed by the survey in which 2/3 of respondents comes to a shopping mall with their own car, every fifth – by municipal means of transport, every tenth – on foot (according to all-Poland survey, 63% of customers come to a shopping mall by their own car, 36% – by bus or another means of public transport). The conducted research confirms that these facilities are of great significance for the inhabitants of the Silesian Voivodeship, who declare that they shop at malls due to their comprehensive offer, attractive special prices, discounts, competitive prices and high availability (shopping on Saturdays, Sundays, long opening hours). Respondents use the entire offer of shopping malls, usually the commercial and service one, a little bit more rarely the recreation and entertainment offer. The services they mention the most often are cash dispensers, catering services, hairdressers, as well as banks and dry cleaners. More and more often they benefit from the offer of a city centre, marketplace or district retail chain,

which results in better functioning of local commercial enterprises, service providers and catering establishments.

According to expert's forecasts, in 2050 new consumption patterns will be adopted. General grocery stores will be located throughout the city and shopping malls will disappear from the outskirts. Weekly markets of fruits and vegetables will become more common. Specialist shops will be possible to find in city centres, while a significant part of the household goods market will be available on the Internet. Logistics will be improved – mails will be delivered only by electronic means, transport of goods will develop, and the use of cars will decrease. Agricultural land will be used to produce not only food, but also resources and energy. Meat production will decrease, vegetarian diet will become more popular and people will eat small quantities of meat [*Miasta energii...* 2010]. Therefore, the time for the development of shopping malls, mass consumption, culture, entertainment is probably limited, according to the opinions and forecasts presented by sociologists, urban planners and economists. Shopping centres built until now in the Silesian Voivodeship have changed market and competition conditions in small towns and rural areas, especially in the outer economic area.

The effects of the creation of modern forms of trade are, to the largest extent, perceived by entrepreneurs conducting commercial and service activity in small towns and rural areas. Negative consequences comprise a decrease in the turnover of companies and, thus, the deterioration of the economic situation, the collapse of businesses, reduced the number of customers and increasing competition. Among entrepreneurs declaring a considerable decline in revenues and a deterioration of economic situation, the largest group is composed of entities conducting activity in the outer zone of the Upper Silesian Agglomeration and in the region influenced by Rybnik. Entrepreneurs admit that they were forced to reduce prices of offered goods and services, enrich or change the offered assortment or modify opening hours of their enterprises. As far as severe changes in the company are concerned, they mention the necessity to dismiss employees. It is therefore possible to state that shopping malls in the Silesian Voivodeship have a negative impact on the development of regions located in the outer metropolitan zones, they constitute a destimulant in relation to the development of small towns and rural areas influenced by them and they cause bankruptcy of small enterprises, their financial drain and loss of customers. Competition of shopping malls is one of the main factors making it difficult to conduct business activity, especially for entrepreneurs with trade profile. This is also pointed out as one of the barriers for development of entrepreneurship in and outside a localities.

As regards the opportunities of development in or outside a given locality, pessimist moods are dominating. Entrepreneurs conducting non-commercial activity notice more positive aspects of the development of large-area trade and shopping malls. Supporters of statutory limitations of competition in trade are prevailing over opponents, however the highest number of people neither agrees, nor disagrees which such a solution or are indifferent about it.

The hypothesis “Shopping malls located in the outer metropolitan zones cause more negative than positive boosts to the development” is confirmed in the results of the surveys conducted among the entrepreneurs. A hypothesis about washing-out the city-forming functions by shopping malls has been partially confirmed. A shopping mall located in the outer metropolitan zone may change the functional structure of the area. Over time, the number of small trade establishments may be reduced due to the loss of a significant part of the customers. Among positive boosts to the development related to the construction of shopping malls, the respondents enumerated the creation of new jobs in both retail and service sectors (57.1% of answers). In most cases jobs were created outside the analysed communes, as shopping malls were built in large cities and that is where the inhabitants of smaller localities were hired.

In the case of the development of commercial facilities in the territory of the analysed communes, respondents mentioned also advantages in the form of increased budget revenue in the form of rent for lease and property tax (e.g. Imielin, Chełm Śląski, Orzesze, Pszczyna, Wodzisław Śląski, Żywiec). It was also stated that an investor using an area for commercial activity operates effectively, achieves return on invested capital in a short period of time and, thus, is a low-risk, *i.e.* desired, business entity for the commune.

In the territory of small towns and rural communes, progressive and diversified transformations of the structure of trade can be observed, as a result of changes in the consumer behaviour. The intensity of modifications depends on the size of a given commune and its proximity to a metropolitan area. In rural communes, functional and spatial transformations related to the retail sector take place at a slower pace (much more considerable changes concern residential areas), while in small and medium-sized towns they result mainly from the expansion of grocery supermarket chains. Despite of restrictions in terms of the diffusion of consumer behaviour trends from metropolises to their outer areas, transformations seem to be inevitable. Modern commerce techniques, such as online sales and group purchases, eliminate barriers associated with distance or economies of scale and make it possible also for residents of the outer metropolitan zone to participate in the entire commercial and service offer. Secondly, there are more positive aspects connected with the development of the retail use than those which may have a negative impact. It is thought that the location of shopping malls and supermarkets is beneficial both for the commune (revenues from local taxes and charges, new jobs) and for individual customers (more comfortable shopping, wider range of products, possibility to enjoy ways of spending leisure time, which were not available before). Negative changes, consisting mainly in the liquidation of small shops, are considered to be a natural consequence of market gambling. The sector of trade and services is, from the point of view of local authorities, the main factor in the development. While trying to attract an external investors, local governments focused mainly on manufacturing companies (small and medium-sized towns) or on entrepreneurs from the sector of tourism and recreation,

as well as on housing investors (rural communes). As a consequence, there are also no instruments aimed at protecting local retailers. According to the representatives of local authorities, the proximity of a metropolis generates more positive than negative developmental effects. The location in an the outer metropolitan zone is treated as an opportunity thanks to, above all, the availability of urban facilities (*e.g.* specialist medical services, higher education, culture) and labour market, which contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of people living in rural communes and small towns. Moreover, another opportunity is the possibility to bring in new residents thanks to an attractive offer in terms of single-family housing.

At the stage of the irrepressible process of suburbanisation of rural areas surrounding large urban agglomerations and structural changes in towns, it is difficult to conclusively assess the consequences of the operation of shopping malls in the outer economic areas in the Silesian Voivodeship. Opinions of residents are positive and indicate many benefits, while the point of view of entrepreneurs is rather negative, as they mention many threats and barriers to the development of business activity. The position of local authorities depends on the location in relation to a large urban centre and the intensity of interconnections. The impact of shopping malls on small towns and rural areas located in the outer economic area is, in terms of time and form, a dynamic process which requires further systematic research.