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Fall and Revival of City Centre Retailing: Planning an Urban Function in Leicester, Britain

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the changing structure and spatial forms of retailing activities in the city centre after the World War II. To reveal economic and social changes behind the declining business of small corner shops and rise of large shopping malls, the studies was extended to three topics:

- economic, social and environmental problems of city centres;
- structural and organisational transformation of the retail sector and the spatial consequences of that;
- central and local governmental attitudes towards the processes mentioned above in terms of town planning and retailing.

The topics are discussed in the main sections of the paper, with strong emphasis on the changes of retailing in the city centre.

To represent the local effects of the nation-wide structural changes, retailing and city centre development policies, I studied the example of Leicester in details. The city is located in the East Midlands inhabited by 280.000 people. The retail sector of the city serves not only of residents but a wider region (about 540.000 consumers) recently. It must be considered as a typical regional and service centre: the City Centre has been the main focus of shopping trips in Leicestershire since the medieval market was established. The core of the city was suffering from depopulation, decay of old buildings and fall of economic activities such as manufacturing, wholesale and certain types of retailing after the World War II as other British cities did. Local plans for saving city centre retailing and providing sufficient shopping facilities reflected the priorities of central governmental policies. The city has been a pilot area for the observation and analysis of the effects of retail developments (such as the Fosse Park) since the late 1970s.

On the other hand, the colourful land use structure and the peculiar social structure of Leicester resulted in some specific features of the retailing sector and forced local planners to consider the customs and needs of immigrant communities. The *sources* of the analysis included secondary ones (of which case studies provided information to compare Leicester to other British cities), official statistics (population census, Census of Distribution, local statistics of retailing) and official publications of the British government between 1960 and 1996. The Leicester City Council provided shopping and land use surveys, structure plans and action plans that targeted the city centre. Beyond the analysis of the texts and data, I collected „soft" information from the officials of the City Council and some of the shopkeepers.[1]

Before setting up the hypothesis, it is necessary to define the *space* that I extended the analysis onto. In many respects, the *city centre* is a difficult area to be defined. In functional terms, it could be identified as the CBD in Burgess's concentric model: it is characterised by a high concentration of retailing and service activities and the dominance of commercial use of the buildings (particularly, on the ground floor level). In many cases, CBD functions are not continuous in space; they are interrupted by industrial and residential units. These are potential sites for the expanding business activities.

It is even more difficult to define the city centre as an object to historical and geographical analysis. The node of trading activities (the CBD) was shifting and expanding in time and space. This process produced a heterogeneous area in functional and physical terms. It is composed of medieval, 19th century and modern (post-war) buildings. This mixture of functions and problems challenged urban planners. They faced the problem of decaying historical dwellings and the needs of the actors of the local economy for a modern city centre after the World War II. Since I am going to analyse the development of city centre retailing in the post-war period, I had to consider not only the present CBD, but also the elements of the historical town centre in its vicinity.

Leicester was an adequate object to my research for its colourful land-use structure. The main shopping area is bordered by residential buildings of lower rank on the West and industrial estates on the North and Northeast. The western part is still a problematic territory for town planners. Since it links a valuable zone including Roman and medieval remains to the main shopping area, physicalconditions must be improved to attract tourists and encourage multi-purpose trips.

The term of *city centre* is part of the terminology of town planning as well. The *Town and Country Planning Act* (1947) empowered local authorities to obtain land through compulsory purchase and designate certain parts of cities as “comprehensive development areas”. The document of *“Redevelopment of Central Areas”* that was prepared in the same year, contained a guidance to re-plan city centres dividing them into well-defined, specialist zones of shopping, offices education, etc. The paper (that distinct land for shopping, cultural services, housing and offices) described the functional characteristics of the city centre, but the boundary was not clearly defined. It was the duty of local town planners.

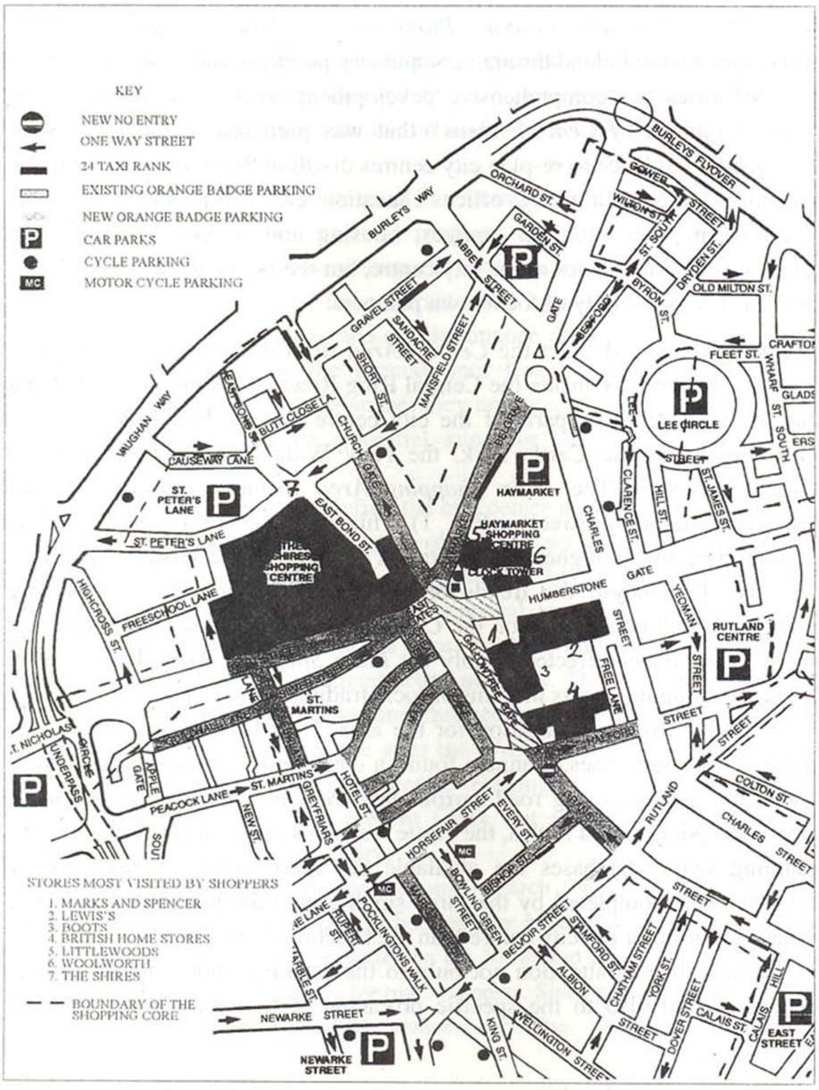
Local planners distinct the *Central Area* from the rest of Leicester that includes the territory inside the Central Ring Road, and some small districts that are considered as parts of the city centre due to their functions (the surroundings of the Castle Park, the New Walk and the London Road shopping centre). The *Main Shopping Area* includes the primary and secondary shopping streets. (Fig. 1) This part of the *Central Area* is characterised by the highest concentration of retailing and leisure services in the city. To analyse the trends of population, economic and land use changes, I shall concentrate on the *Central Area as a whole*. Since changes in the *retail sector* effected mainly the *Main Shopping Area*, I focused on the main shopping streets in terms of local trading.

To find a working definition for the area, I used the approach of town planners. In most cases, planners found a clear limit for the centre of their town: the innermost ring road surrounding the core. It often has historical roots incorporating old routes, the castle walls and ditch sites. Since they are planning units, databases are available for these areas (in the case of Leicester it is completed by the three small areas) discussed above. It is a wider definition of the city centre than the functional one.

We have to pay attention not only to the retailing and planning actions shaping it, but also to the specific problems of the inner areas, such as

Figure 1

Pedestrian routes and the most visited stores in the main sopping area



office, shop and housing decay and demographic trends similar to those of the *inner cities*[2]. The latter can not be clearly separated from the residential parts of the city centre. For this reason, and because of the important role of the inner city population as the consumers of the shops in the city centre, I must refer to some problems and development plans related to the inner city in the next chapter.

I focused on the *period between the early 1950s and the mid-1990s* in the paper. The scale and structure of the consumption and organisation of the retailing sector was changing considerably in this stage and the process led to the emergence of new spatial forms of retailing, such as out-of-town shopping malls[3], hypermarkets[4] and shopping precincts. Since the development of city centre retailing was influenced by planning paradigms (such as idea of precincts and neighbourhood centres) and practical approaches of local planners (pedestrianisation, traffic planning, physical renewal of town centres), such factors also must be considered the at the periodisation of our stage.

The first stage of city centre retailing included the years of prosperity from the late 1950s until the mid-1970s. This period was characterised by increasing demand for durable goods and a fairly stable level of purchase of convenience goods. Town planners prepared major clearance schemes for city centres that resulted in changing land use pattern such as the expansion of commercial (office and retailing) use.

Between the mid-1970s and mid-1980s deconcentration of urban population and retailing was accelerated. The latter was associated with the increasing scale of retail units. The central governmental attitude towards town centres was controversial and local authorities had to face with the decay of retailing activities in the inner areas of cities including city centres.

As a consequence of political movements, governmental policies considered the interests of inner city poor and the future of the "High Street" as a focus of community life *from the late 1980s*. Local planners were encouraged to carry on the city centre improvement and pedestrianisation schemes. Construction of major out-of-town shopping centres was controlled and limited. The process was associated by the new wave of building city centre shopping centres and stimulated by increasing private investments in the sector.

The periodisation is corresponding with local and central governmental policies that followed the fluctuation of the demand and retail investments. The changes in the retail sector were determined by widespread process such as the structural and organisational changes of the retail sector, deconcentration of the urban population and transformation of shopping behaviour.

2 Population trends

Population trends of Leicester were changing in line with the national ones. The city experienced a considerable growth in the number of inhabitants in the post-war years. The process stopped and reversed in the first half of the 1960s. It was a result of the emigration of urban population to the suburbs: the inner city suffered 1,4% population loss in favour of the suburbs (in Greater Leicester, the number of inhabitants increased by 7115) in the 1960s.[5] This process dominated population trends in next decades as well. The number of residents was falling in inner Leicester in the 1970s and the process was accelerated by the increasing housing prices in the 1980s (2,9% population loss). Town planners expected constant decrease in the inner area of Leicester and slight growth (about 1%) in the surrounding suburban belt.

The age structure of the population was also changing: after the baby-boom, proportion of elderly was increasing constantly as a consequence of the increasing life-expectancy and long-term downward trend in birth rate of white population. In Leicester, an increasing number of Asian and West Indian immigrants modified the process significantly. Their proportion of the population has exceeded 26% recently. The newcomers were mostly young (younger than 40 years old) and the number of their children is higher than the national average. The rate of immigration was decreasing in the

1980s and demographic characteristics of these families were getting closer to that of white families. Although, a lot of members of ethnic groups are suburbanites now (in Leicester, about one-third of the Asian immigrants), ethnic groups are still over-represented in the *inner cities* that are characterised by high unemployment rates, poor housing conditions (in old terraced houses), relatively low incomes and favourable demographic composition (high proportion of children and young adults between the age of 25 and 44 years).

The trends sketched above re-shaped the social structure of Leicester's inner city. Spatial distribution of local population could be followed in the national population census. Unfortunately, census wards do not resemble with the Central Area. It is incorporated into Castle and Wycliffe, St. Margaret (1961) and Abbey (1971, 1981, and 1991) wards. Castle and Wycliffe suffered a substantial population loss that resulted in an increasing number of vacant dwellings in the 1960s and 1970s.[6] Residents of the Castle area are mostly white and the proportion of elderly was increasing after the war. Abbey and Wycliffe are characterised by rising number and proportion (30% or over) of fairly young immigrants. The latter is inhabited by families of low income and the ratio of single-parent households is the highest among the wards.[7]

The process of population loss was even faster in the Central Area from the late 1950s on. It was encouraged by the slum clearance programs of the local authority that proposed land use changes to extend office and shop floorspace at the expense of residential function. Until 1971, 355.000 m^2 office development was carried out in the city of which over 300.000 m^2 occurred on central location. It was concentrated on the northern and north-eastern part of the Central Area.

Population trends outlined above effected city centre retailing directly. *Ethnic groups* represented a specific segment of the retail market as consumers of city centre department stores and small specialist shops of their own residential areas. Large food stores and the retail market have important supplementary role in the supply of immigrant communities. The majority (about 60%) of immigrant families does the weekly shopping in the main shopping area. Many of the immigrants are involved in trading (food, clothing, and jewellery) as shopkeepers as well (*Hill*, 1987) .

The other important element of the population of population change in the city centre and the surrounding wards is the increasing number of small households of young and elderly singles or couples without children (in Abbey and Castle wards). Decreasing size of households could be followed in the population census since 1961[8], like in most of the British cities. This trend contributed to the decline of purchase power in the city centre that was stimulated by the emigration of white middle class families and invasion of poor immigrants as well (*Davies*, 1984).

The new trends in the employment of the population had also effected local consumption. The number of employees in manufacturing fell by 20% between 1961 and 1987 although, it is still above the national average. The process has started in the city centre where the industrial employment dropped by 10% between 1950 and 1964 and the process was going on in the 1970s as a result of the decentralisation of industrial activities. In the meantime, proportion of services was rising up to 60% of which 10,2 % was employed in retailing in 1987. As in most of West European cities, proportion of white-collar workers was rising and the employment of women was also increasing in the offices (*White*, 1989). Replacement of workplaces in manufacturing by services resulted in significant changes in the composition of daily commuters moving to the city centre. Since employees often link their daily path to work with shopping, retailers and caterers had to adopt their activities to such needs.[9] Increasing number of specialist shops, restaurants and supermarkets also serve the needs of commuting white-collar employees.

3 Rising income and changing shopping behaviour

Household incomes were rising in the post-war years. The progress was not broken until the mid-1970s. The purchase power rose by 28% in the 1960s and the trend was maintained by the inflation in the 1970s. Household incomes were increasing much slower in the 1980s (12,3%) as a result of the oil crisis and the economic recession. Demand for convenience goods[10] was stabilised in the 1960s. Shops selling durable goods were exposed to the income changes to farther extent: consumption was rising by 20% in the 1960s but only 14,5% in the 1980s (in the case of convenience goods, it was 10,2% and 14,0%).

The process and the increasing rents in the Central Area resulted in structural changes in city centre retailing: the floorspace and number of shops selling convenience goods was declining sharply in the city centre from the late 1960s. The proportion of durable goods in the gross turnover of shops and retail floorspace was increasing in the area. At the same time, new elements of the retail hierarchy (suburban superstores and shopping malls) gained increasing share on the market of convenience goods that also involved changes in the city centre.

After the World War II, households were equipped by durable goods such as refrigerator, TV set, washing machine (1960s), telephone, freezer (1970s) and video (1980s), (*Price, Blair*, 1989). Rising incomes involved a significant increase in *car ownership,* as well that led to dramatic structural and spatial changes in the retail sector. Although, Leicester is lagged behind the average of British cities in this term recently, car provision was improved in the post-war decades notably. Number of motorcars was increasing quickly from 0,12/household (1951) up to 0,3/ household until the mid-1960s. The trend encouraged planners to estimate the saturation level of car ownership 1,2 car/household in 1995. The process was slower from the late 1970s, and the estimation seemed to be too optimistic. According to the 1991 census, 32% of households had no access to car in Greater Leicester and this proportion is even higher (45%) in the inner area[11]. Proportion of households without car is the highest in Wycliffe

Ward. Although, car-ownership was over-estimated, local authorities had to face the lacking balance between land uses as traffic generators and the available traffic accommodation (road and parking capacities) from the mid-1960s.

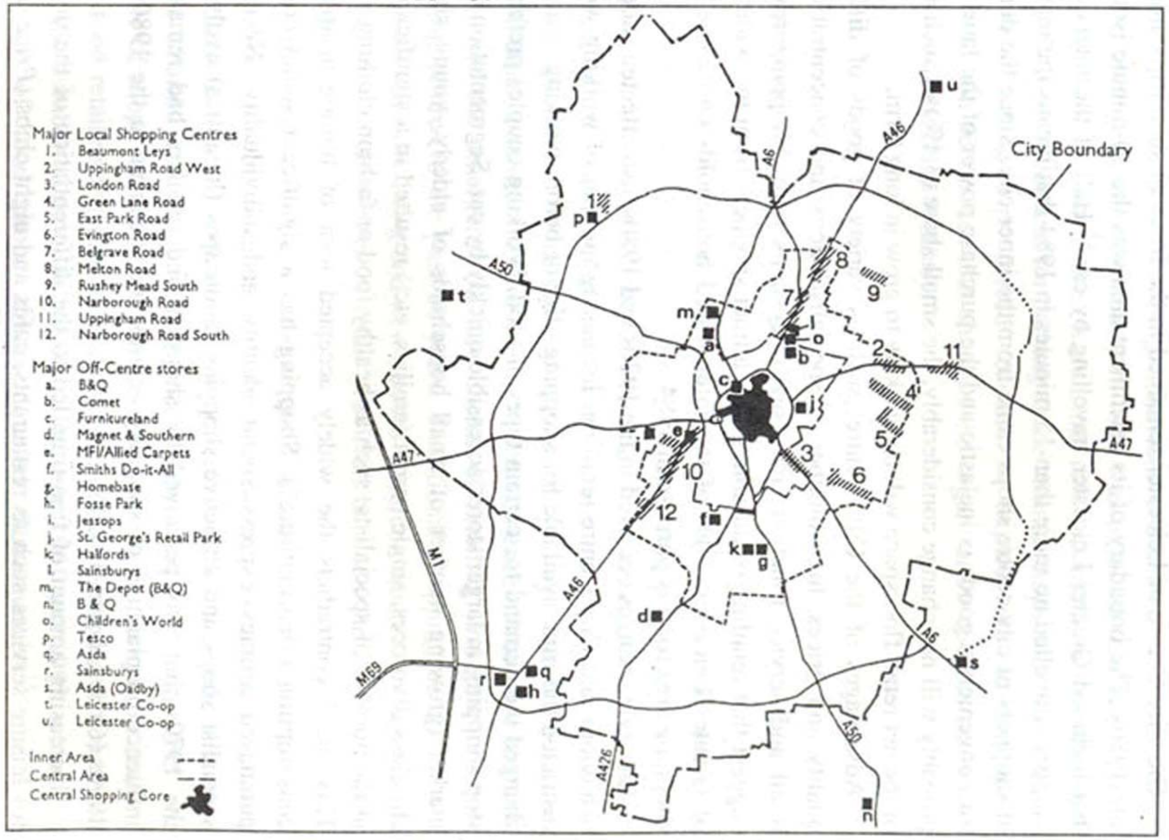
The *Central Area* was effected by increasing car ownership in an other way as well: the decentralisation and increasing mobility of the population involved the emergence of new forms of retailing and new patterns of shopping trips in Leicester. Out-of town shopping centres and superstores appeared on the edge of the city that changed the traditional shopping hierarchy. (Fig. 2) City centre has lost its dominance on the market of convenience goods and the mix of shops and activities has also been changed since the mid-1960s. The process was accelerated by the increasing difficulties in the accessibility of the area furthermore, pollution and dangerous traffic situations. There were attempts to relieve the city centre through the formation of the one-way system, pedestrianisation, and construction of controlled parking sites.

The rising number of car owners involved increasing commuter movements as well[12]. City centre concentrated an increasing number of workplaces, shops and service facilities, as a result of the post-war developments. The area became the destination of short-term (shopping) and long-term (daily commuting) movements of car-owners. Since the car was available less times for women, use of the car was restricted to certain period (non-working hours) of the day that effected the frequency and timing of shopping trips.

In parallel with the decentralisation of the population and workplaces resulted in the rising number of cars, increasing mobility and deconcentration of shopping facilities, changes in *shopping behaviour* were also significant. Less frequent (made 2 or 3 times a week) multi-purpose trips combining shopping, recreation and personal business became general as a result of increasing car-ownership (*Dawson*, 1980). Such routes were directed to higher hierarchical levels of retailing and services and they were longer than traditional walk-to-shop distances.

Figure 2.

Shopping facilities in Leicester, 1992



The City Centre of Leicester remained in the focus of such trips until the late 1980s. The boundary of its catchment area was the 30-minute isochron that included Greater Leicester travelling by car.[13] Half of the interviewed shoppers travelled no more than 15 minutes in 1984 that means the majority of shoppers of city centre shops came from the inner city. Since the demand for convenience goods is inelastic and the purchase power of the latter area probably will not change considerably, the small share (3,4%) of such shops of the net retail floorspace will be unlikely to grow in long term.

Advantages of the City Centre, such as variety of goods of different quality and prices, high number of specialist shops and concentration of retail and service functions may save the shops here. Shopping reviews suggest that retailing of durable goods attract shoppers from the wider area of Greater Leicester: 70% of the interviewed households chose the main shopping area for this purpose in 1984.

Lifestyle changes occurred in the 1970s and 1980s also effected shopping behaviour and City Centre retailing. Increasing number of working women restricted the time available for shopping after or before working hours and changed the demand for certain types of food. Working couples prefer one-stop shopping in larger stores accessible quickly by car. Segmentation of the market (growing number of small households of elderly, young singles, childless divorcees, single parent families, etc.) resulted in a significant rise in the number of specialists, such as healthy food or fashion clothing shops. This trend contradicts the widely accepted idea of homogenisation of consumption ("mall-culture"). Shopping has a significant social content: purchased articles express social identity and individuality. Needs for specialist shops and attractive shopping landscapes (localities) evolved in the 1970s that was perceived by shoppers and retailers had remarkable influence on planning of shopping centres and precincts in the 1980s and 1990s (*Crewe, Lowe*, 1995).

Increasing amount of free time led to the differentiation of the demand for leisure services such as restaurants, cafés and night-clubs (*Price, Blair*, 1989). Lifestyle changes strengthened the specialisation of the city centre shops and hastened the erosion of retailing of convenience goods in the City

Centre. The changes in shopping behaviour challenged retailers. Longer opening hours and more flexibility in time was required (e.g. for weekend shopping trips). Furthermore, increasing role of motorcar in shopping involved growing demand for parking space around shops and stores. Multi-purpose shopping trips forced retailers to exploit the advantages of agglomeration economies that changed the organisation and the traditional hierarchy of the retail industry.

4 Changing structure of retailing

The changes occurred within the city centre are bound up to with broader processes that have significant impact on shopping provision throughout Britain. Such alterations are responses to the radical changes in the structure of retail industry and significant shifts in the pattern of retailing and shopping. The history of the sector was characterised by a fall in the number of retail units, a substantial increase in the market share of the large multiple groups and the emergence of new forms of retailing and new types of shopping centres in the past 30 years. Traditional shopping centres in the inner area were declining and new centres were constructed on the edge of cities increasing disparities in retail provision between the outer and inner city areas.

The dramatic fall in the number of retail outlets characterised the sector in Leicester as well from the late 1950s. Convenience goods have been particularly associated with the decline of corner shops and specialist food traders (mainly grocers and greengrocers). Between 1961 and 1995, the number of shops fell by 51%[14]. In the group of grocers, provision dealers, other food retailers together with the variety/department/general household stores the number of shops fell by 71% between 1961 and 1995, whilst the floorspace of food shops almost doubled. Supermarkets[15] and later hypermarkets[16] and superstores[17] became the destinations of food shopping trips. Unfortunately, there was no annual data available about large scale multiple investments in Leicester. At national level, the number of supermarkets rose from 367 (1961) over 700 by 1980 of which 400 was run by 6 major chains (*Price, Blair,* 1989).

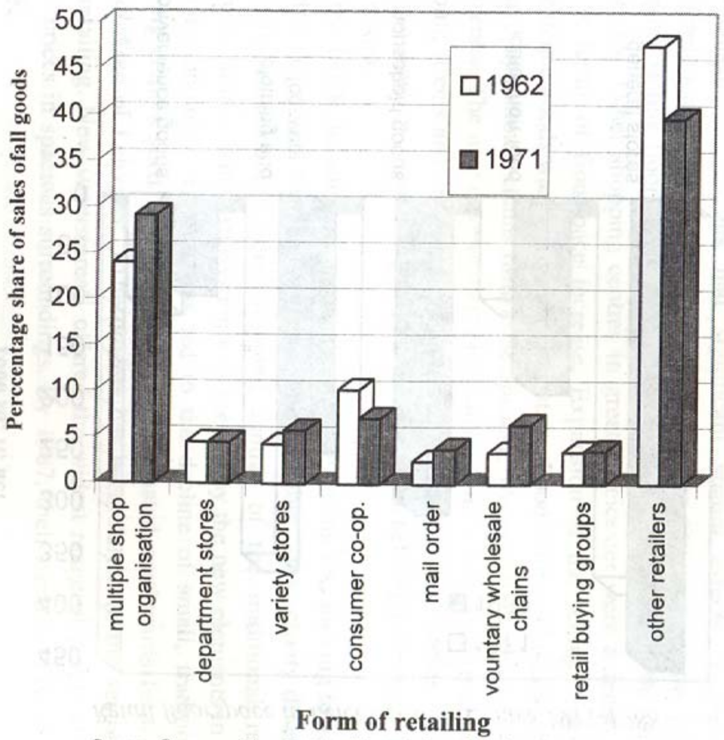
At the same time, net floorspace of shops was increasing in the city. Independents[18] were suffering from increasing rents and a great loss from the early 1960s while the proportion of multiple chains in the retail floorspace and the turnover was rising. The latter increased from 25% up to 42% between 1957 and 1975 in Leicester. In the meantime, their share in the selling floorspace rose by 25%.

The basis of the expansion of multiple companies was the extension of their distributive system integrating wholesaling, transportation and retail activities. Such steps were stimulated by increasing labour costs and rents (on central locations), mass production of retail goods, and the agglomeration of population and purchase power. To compete with multiple corporations, small organisations established voluntary groups for wholesaling (such as the Spar group) from the 1970s to achieve bulk buying economies. Despite such efforts, trends towards larger scale were present in the sector in the whole period: the top five convenience goods retailers[19] had nation-wide representation and 51% share of the market at the beginning of the 1980s. Multiple chains also rationalised their organisations: smaller outlets were closed and new ones were planned at larger scale. Co-operatives also recorded proportional decline. Most of the old corner shops faded and new forms and scales of retailing evolved. (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4)

Deregulation process introduced by the Tory governments contributed to the multiple companies to build up or expand their chains and set up the control over supply in the 1980s. Economic policy of the central government accelerated the circuits of capital that resulted in shrinking profit for the producers in favour of retailing capital. Exchange relations became as important as production ones. Corporate capital was gaining stronger control over suppliers and consumers (through advertisement campaigns).

Figure 3

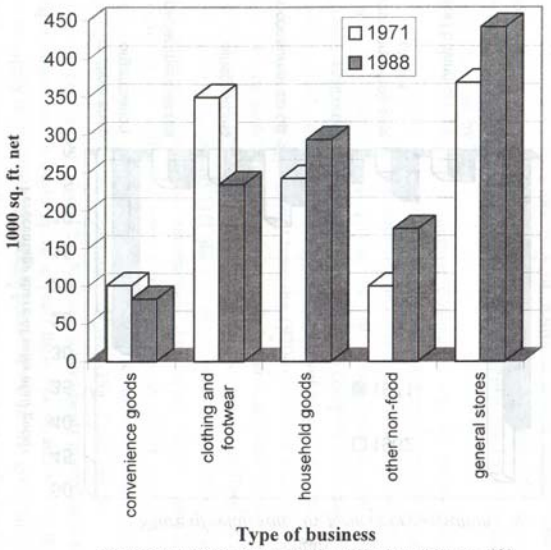
Share of retail sales by form of organisation



Source: Commercial and industrial statistics of England & Wales, London, 1974

Figure 4

Retail floorspace in Leicester City Centre 1971-1988



Source: Census of Distribution, 1971, and City Counsil Survey, 1988

The process resulted in an increasing share of retailing and related services in the price of goods (*Marsden, Wrigley*, 1995). The neo-conservative policy favoured multiples investing in large, capital-intensive projects and accelerated the decline of small shops and the traditional shopping hierarchy.

Organisational changes had significant spatial effects. Large-scale department stores were opened by multiples in the city centre in the 1960s. The gross selling floorspace was doubled in the Central Area by the end of the decade. Other shopping centres in greater Leicester were extended by 65% in terms of floorspace increase. Expansion of the selling space of convenience goods was dominant in this stage. Food stores and mixed shops operated by national chains (*Marks & Spencer, Woolworth*) appeared in the City Centre. The new developments had changed the character of traditional shopping streets and the pattern of shopping behaviour: large stores became the main magnets of shopping trips. The process accelerated the decline of small shops.

In the 1970s, location of multiple retail investments was moving towards the edge of the city where cheap land was available. This activity diverted the financial resources from shopping centres of the traditional retail hierarchy. In fact, a new subsystem was formed by the new elements in the shopping hierarchy. The process led to the decline of small, traditional shopping centres such as the district centres situated northwards form the *Central Area* of Leicester[20]. The process has been started in the sector of food retailing. New superstores[21] offered the widest range of goods at the lowest prices in spacious surroundings. By 1987, their number was 457 in the UK.

City centre shopping facilities were effected in two ways. On the one hand, there was a dramatic shift in investments between 1971 and 1991: 120000 m^2 development was implemented in the city outside the Central Area and slightly more than 45000 m^2 was added to the existing selling floorspace in the city centre. On the other hand, there was only scarce development in the sector of convenience goods; retail capital was invested in the extension of selling space of durable goods. The new out-of-town developments were successful: proportion of the turnover and selling floorspace was much larger in the new stores than in the city centre, particularly, in the case of convenience goods. (There was only small difference in the case of durable goods in favour of the new centres on the edges.)[22] Large-scale hypermarket and superstore developments outside the Central Area did not effect city centre shopping severely: the trend of declining food retailing was present in the centre from the late 1960s. Its viability was endangered by the construction of *out-of-town regional shopping centres* that offered a wide range of convenience and durable goods. The large scale of such centres and the generous car park provision attracted multiples and small specialist shops that provided as high level of supply as city centre shops did. Their catchment area covered a whole region as that of the *Fosse Park*, a regional shopping centre on the south-eastern edge of Leicester attracting shoppers from the whole area of Greater Leicester.

The new elements resulted by the structural and organisational changes of the sector formed a new shopping hierarchy that challenged traditional concentrations of shops (neighbourhood, district centres in the Inner Area and the main shopping area in the city centre). Such changes accelerated the undesired decay of traditional shopping centres that could be stopped or slowed down only by the intervention of local authorities. In the case of the city centre, diversity of shops and services was highly appreciated by the segmented groups of consumers, but town planners had to interfere even here. Retail and transportation policies, slum clearance programs, face-lifting of old buildings of historical value, improvement of the townscape (paving, setting up street furniture, etc.) must have been reviewed and shopping centre schemes were put into this context in the next decade.

5 Town planning and retail policies at national level

"Retail policy is a mechanism for overriding and modifying the generation of such activities where it is against the public interest."[23] Through such interventions, private investments are directed to places where a new land use pattern would be beneficial to private capital and the general public. The process must be cost effective that may deprive the status of certain social groups. At the same time, retail policy may result in under-utilisation of existing capacities (such as inner city shopping centres) that must be remedied at the expense of local governments and local people. In this way, retail policy was closely related to the problem of city centre development and town planning regulations. The other contradiction of retail policy is the extent that public interests should be considered to, at the expense of cost-effectiveness (the emphasis might be on the first factor as well). Such problems involved inconsistency in national town planning principals, retail legislation and governmental guidance focused on inner city problems.

Since the World War II, self-contained shopping centres became the framework of organising and developing new shops in Western Europe. The British approach is considered as a specific one that is different form continental policies in respect of constraints that were established to channel resources into the central area of cities. The policy resulted in a fairly concentrated pattern of retailing. This spatial structure is a product of changing economic philosophies and social changes that influenced central governmental policies.

The 1947 *Town and Country planning Act* introduced the concept of *Comprehensive Development Areas* and empowered local authorities to obtain land through compulsory purchase and designate such localities. The Act inspired local leaders to plan well-defined functional areas segregating specialist zones for shopping, offices public services etc. In 1954, wartime licences for new buildings were abolished. The 1957 *Town Planning Act* involved extensive slum clearance programs that provided clear sites for new, zoned developments (mainly for offices, shops, traffic areas). Local authorities purchased private estates and demolished decaying houses. As a consequence, they had to take the burden of compulsory re-housing of the removed population.

Slum clearance programs involved the redevelopment of deteriorating parts of city centres as well. The process changed the built environment and function of the cleared and re-built sites significantly. Extensive office, shopping and transportation developments occurred on these places. In Leicester, 270 acres of land was acquired by the local authority between 1952 and 1972. 33 acres of that were reserved for commercial and office development and a new civic centre. Sites for the Central Ring Road, a coach station, the Lee Circle car park and space for warehousing were separated.

The Acts had a major impact on city centre development: private investments were increasing and shifting to commercial property that was inspired by the rising household incomes, as well. Retail developments were directed to the main shopping area and district centres. The re-development of city centres had accelerated the decline of small businesses. Planning blight transformed shopping streets by rising rents. Until the early 1960s, emphasis was put on the redevelopment of city centres and there was no governmental policy formulated to manage urban sprawl and its effect of the retail network.

In the 1960s, comprehensive development plans were prepared for city centres. The idea of precincts (applied in Coventry, Plymouth and the New Towns successfully) was adapted for shopping and an extensive pedestrianisation process has been started. Such local actions were inspired by the *Town Centre Approach to Renewal* program initiated by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government and Ministry of Transportation providing technical devices for town centre development.

The 1968 *Town and Country Planning Act* obliged planning authorities to prepare *structure plans* for a whole region and local authorities had to fit their own structure plans into that under the supervision of the Secretary of State for the Environment. The Act provides that so far as shopping is concerned, this plan was to be able

- to set out general proposals relating to the hierarchy of centres, creation of new centres, development of district centres and relief congestion on town centre,
- to deal with the quantity of floorspace at significant stages and its distribution,
- to lay out a broad criteria and policies for the location of new development and development control in relation to conservation and conversion,
- to deal with the implementation such as the assembly of sites by local authorities and the scope for private development.

The legislative framework to make strategic plans at regional basis, including the construction of regional shopping centres was ready. The hierarchical view of the governmental approach supposed the existence of the co-ordination of municipal decisions that was lacking. (Matthews, 1995) Furthermore, structure plans made for 20 years were not adequate to control the rapid changes in the retail sector. Considerable inertia had been imposed on the shopping development process since major schemes had taken several years to secure approval (in the case of Brent Cross, London as long as 10 years).

The 1968 Act encouraged local authorities to desire and support the development of modern shopping facilities corresponding with the needs of local population, but stressing the need for examining the economic viability of the proposals to avoid over-provision. At this time, number supermarkets and superstores were increasing and shopping centre schemes were implemented only on central locations. Integration of new schemes into the existing hierarchy was suggested and improvement of car parking conditions was encouraged. The Act dealt with the problem of shopping centres in terms of needs of the population living in the *region*. The Department of Environment gave guidelines for the *standards of amenities* in shopping centres. The development of public transportation was also encouraged to make the centres accessible to a wide spectrum of the population.

Although, the number of new, planned shopping centres was increasing in the 1970s, but joint actions of local authorities were hindered by bureaucratic inertia. The central government supported retail developments that improved the supply of new suburbs but suggested the integration of new shopping centres into the existing hierarchy in the 1971 report[24]. Traffic calming (not exclusion!) and the extension of the existing pedestrian routes were also suggested as devices for saving the role of the city centre in retailing. At the same time, the scale of shopping schemes in city centre was increasing and there was an increasing pressure on the government to approve schemes for out-of-town shopping developments (*Bennison, Davies,* 1980) .

Local authorities remained hostile towards to suburban retail centres although, there were exceptions such as potential outlying service centres for expanding residential areas. The reasons for that were disturbing the tranquillity of the countryside and the emergence of two distinct social systems of shopping: one for poor and elderly in inner cities and one for middle class and wealthy families in the suburbs. All applications for new developments over 45.500m^2 floorspace must have been sent to the DOE, a collective body of professional planners for approval. Most of such plans were rejected forcing the developers to construct new facilities on central locations.

In 1977, improvement programmes were initiated by the central government that included the protection of town centres (*Development Control Policy Note 13*). Large scale stores had to be carefully planned, fitting into the existing patterns, helping the revitalisation of inner cities, avoiding over-provision under the control of local authorities. At the same time, governmental attitude became more flexible towards out-of town developments, there were more schemes of such sort approved than in the 1960s. Ad hoc handling of the changing retail sector and lack of co-ordination between the controlling bodies made ambiguous inner city retail policy of the government in this period.

In the first half of the 1980s, there was a significant increase in investments in the retail sector. The boom of speculative plans was increasingly concentrated on the edge of cities. In 1987, 60% of the investments was located on out-of –town sites (at national level). Discussion about the impact of such developments was revived in the mid-1980s. The purpose of retail policy of the central government was to assist market forces in the early 1980s. The emphasis shifted from local control towards allocation of land use via the operations of the market. Retailers of the “High Street”[25] were arguing for more control to avoid the deprivation of the city centre.

The *1986 guidance* proposed a detailed analysis of shopping provision to be done by local authorities. Using a clear set of regional criteria, a regional balance between district centres and large stores was to be maintained under the control of the central government. The guidance suggested the consideration of the interests of car owners and permission of large, modern foodstores in the vicinity of existing shopping areas. It also stressed the need for the revival of the central shopping area. Improvement of the physical environment, re-design of car parks and covered shopping malls, pedestrianisation and encouraging the development of services for shoppers (such as catering and amusement facilities) was suggested to local authorities, to enable the main shopping area and other traditional shopping centres to compete with modern forms of retailing more effectively. The guidance suggested that it is not the role of land use planning to regulate competition between retailers and retail methods and suggested local planners to avoid preserving existing commercial interests. This contradiction allowed local planners to follow their own ideas and local needs.

Despite the contradictions of town planning policy, officials paid more attention to the declining inner areas including city centres, from the mid-1980s. The Secretary of State for the Environment rejected a series of shopping centre schemes that were supposed to effect the vitality of inner cities severely or planned in the Green Belt or in the open countryside. (Leicester was also involved: in 1986, an application for a 12500m^2 out-of-town scheme was turned down.) The Secretary required local planning authorities to notify him each proposal for major retail development. The deficiency of planning mechanism for dealing with large-scale projects and the need for intervention to save the city centre viability was recognised by governmental officials however, town planners criticised central governmental policy. The reason for that was the elimination of responsibility of local planners in favour of the London administration without setting up the central administrative framework for the assessment of shopping development proposals. Furthermore, there were no clear criteria of assessment and methods to predict the effects of new schemes were also lacking.

The *National Planning Policies Guidance* (1988) also dealt with the problem of city centre retailing. Governmental support shifted to improving city centre vitality and viability. The guidance introduced a new approach towards retail development: new schemes had to be considered first in city centres, then on the edge of traditional inner city shopping centres and only as last resort on out-of-town sites. The latter had to provide a choice of means of transport. Local authorities were required to work out a parking strategy in the city centre to encourage shoppers to visit there. The guidance represented a considerable shift towards the recognition of the effect of shopping centre developments, the role of city centre in the local community life and the need for its preservation. National policies had local content that considered needs and peculiarities of local shoppers and retailers.

In July 1993, a revised version of retail planning policy guidance was published with a broader application containing planning aspects of retail development in town centres. It suggested the mixed use of the areas such as business, housing and leisure and rose issues about new forms of retailing. Local authorities were urged to appoint a city centre manager and work out a car parking strategy encouraging shoppers, not commuters. The 1993 and 1996 revision set up more obstacles for out-of town developments to protect the viability and quality of the city centre. According to local planners of Leicester, governmental proposals from 1988 met their views and aims in terms of retail planning policies, for they considered the needs of a wider spectrum of urban population and the City Centre as the focus of community life.

6 A local response: planning of city centre retailing in Leicester

6.1 Transportation policy

Until the early 1960s, city centres were accessible to car owners in Britain. The number and average speed of cars were increasing that raised the issues of congestion, pollution and safety. The 1963 Buchanan Report was the first “no” to motorcars in the post-war era.

The first concept of traffic control was presented by *Alker Tripp* in 1938[26]. He suggested the classification of roads (arterial, sub-arterial and local roads) to ease the congestion. He proposed the separation of transport modes to increase the safety of pedestrians. This way of traffic organisation included the pedestrianisation of shopping streets and construction of shopping arcades and precincts. *A. Tripp’s* proposal included construction of radial and ring roads to improve the accessibility of city centres as well.

His ideas were growing influential and they were put into practice after the World War II, when new land use plans were prepared for cities. The precinct idea appeared in New Towns, in the neighbourhood centres of public housing estates and in the centres of heavily bombed cities. Town planners as *Abercrombie, Adshead, Gibson* and *T. Sharp* followed Tripp’s ideas in their past-war plans.

Since the Tripp’s concept involved extensive road building and widening, planners and developers had to face the resistance of retailers. The latter wanted to avoid the diversion of traffic from the main shopping area and losing their shops along the transformed ring roads and bypasses. They protested against the stricter traffic control in the city centre as well. Town planners and traffic engineers experienced similar difficulties in the adaptation of the concept at re-shaping the built environment in Germany and other European cities. Local interest groups slowed down the process of traffic control (*Monheim,* 1985).

The *Buchanan Report*[27] was a turning point in planning urban traffic. It discussed the conflict of needs for accessibility and urban environment. This first critical approach towards motorization and town planning had significant practical impact. It was sensitive to conservation of the built environment and pedestrian movements and suggested the complete seclusion of vehicles from main shopping areas (*P. Hall-M. Hass-Klau*, 1983). To realise it, it was necessary to construct arterial ring roads. The 1967 *Road Traffic Regulation Act* permitted the conversion of highways. The joining of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government and Ministry of Transport was a further step towards the integration of traffic engineering into town planning. Transportation was considered as a function of land use that reflected the effect of the report (*M. Hass-Klau*, 1988).

The environmental crisis resulted in more critical attitude towards motorcar. Further restrictions for the traffic (such as the introduction of 30 miles/hour speed limit) were implemented by local authorities to save the built environment. Britain did less for traffic calming and pedestrianisation compared to other European cities in the 1970s and 1980s. The reason for this was that British spent less on motorcar than French or Germans and the number of accidents was also smaller (*P. Hall*, 1993). Pedestrianisation was often linked to housing improvement programs in the inner cities. Conversion of the roads in the city centre was sporadic until the late 1980s. British planners initiated more pedestrianisation schemes from 1988 following the German examples. The process resulted in contiguous shopping areas in the city centre with the complete seclusion of motorcars.

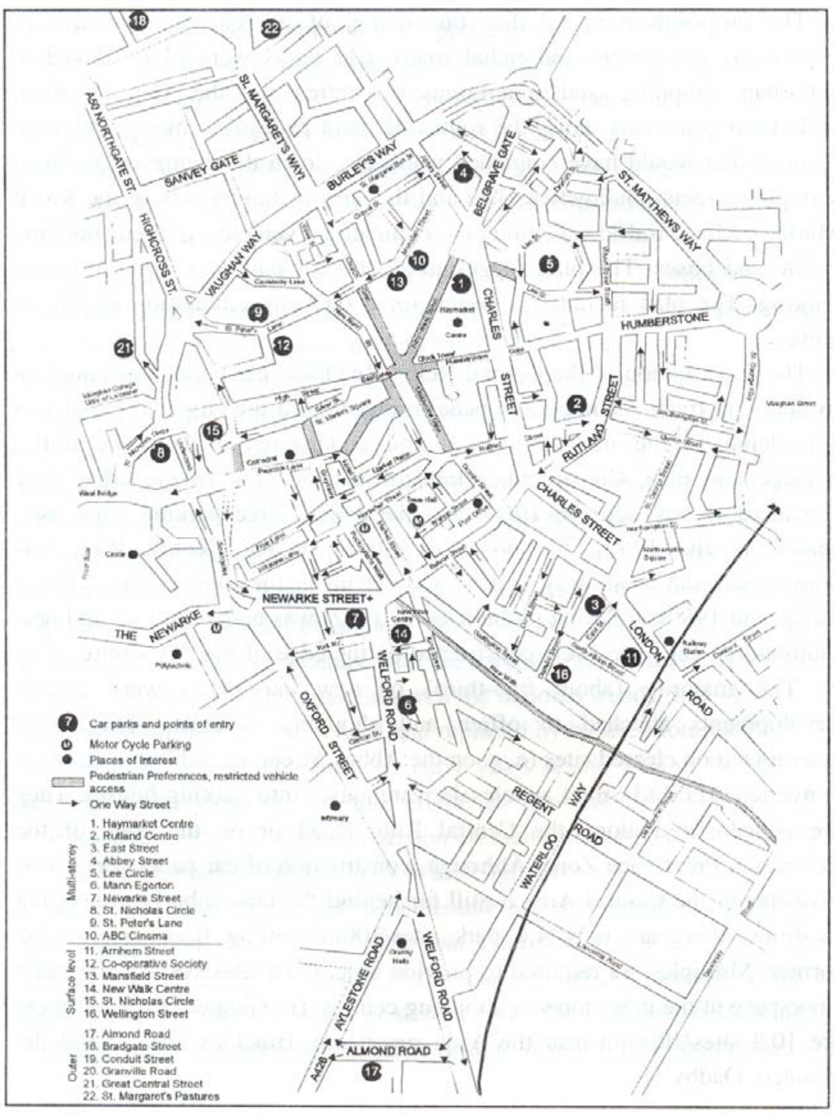
Town planners in Leicester followed the national trends. In 1949, tramcar transportation service was ceased and replaced by buses. Motorcars had free access to the city centre until the early years of the 1960s. The first “no waiting” restrictions came into effect in the Granby Street in 1959. Congestion resulted in critical situation on main roads in the peak hours and increasing number of vacant shops in the High Street. (Fig. 1)

The *Buchanan Report* had considerable effect on local traffic planning and management: in 1964, a *Traffic and Transportation Plan* was prepared for Leicester. The main purpose of the plan was saving historic values and local identity. It was a computer design plan (the first one in Britain) that followed American methods of traffic design. A new type of comprehensive land use and traffic survey was carried out in the city: residents were interviewed about their travel habits.

The proposals included the construction of interchange car parks to relieve the city centre and radial roads. Car parks were to be linked to suburban shopping and entertainment centres. In the Central Area, pedestrian conveyors along the routes of main pedestrian movement were planned that would have contained walkways down the centre of the main shopping streets (Gallowtree Gate and the surrounding streets of the Retail Market). Motor traffic was limited to commercial vehicles, limited shopping traffic and buses. The plan suggested 22,500 car park sites for short-term parking. The plan included a sketch for a one-way circulation system as well.

The construction of the Central Relief Road and car parks was going on in line with traffic calming and pedestrianisation in the city centre that was considered as the most congested and endangered area in the traffic management plan. Constructions transformed the view of the urban core considerably between the 1960s and the 1990s. Free parking sites were ceased in the 1960s, the northern section of the Central Ring was constructed and a one-way system was set up in the Central Area. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Ring (completed in 1992) was being built up and new multi-storey car parks were constructed on the edge of the city centre. (Fig. 5) The majority (about two-third) of new car parks were private developments attached to office and shopping schemes. They were constructed on cleared sites (e. g. on the Abbey Street) or old buildings were converted (Halford Street, wholesale warehouse) into parking houses. They are concentrated along the Central Ring Road or on the edge of the Pedestrian Preference Zone. Although, construction of car parks was a vast investment, the Central Area is still far behind the new suburban shopping facilities: there are only 4,4 park sites/100m^2 selling floorspace in the former. Multiples are required to provide at least 10 sites/100 square meter floorspace at the new stores or shopping centres. (In Greater Leicester, there are 10,3 sites/100sqm near the Asda superstore, Hinckley and 10,2 at the Woolco, Oadby.)

Figure 5.
Car Park Provision in the Central Area of Leicester



Despite the increasing number of private cars, *public transportation* was not abandoned in Leicester. The local public transportation company operated by the city until its re-privatisation in the early 1980s was considered one of the most successful enterprises of this kind in the country. Although, the number of passengers was declining like in other British cities, its role remained significant in the accessibility of the city centre. About 40% of the visitors of the city centre use public transportation recently. It is important for women, because family car is usually not available in the opening hours for them.[28] Furthermore, immigrant families with low income, having no car use this device for their shopping and combined trips to the city centre. For this reason, public transportation became part of local social policy that makes accessible a wide range of goods and services to disadvantaged sections of the urban population.

Local transportation policy encouraged the use of public transportation. Private cars were prohibited on an expanding area from 1977 but buses were allowed to pass through most of the main shopping streets. Buses were preferred by planners to carry on the pedestrianisation process. The first element of the pedestrian shopping area was the Gallowtree Gate from 1971. Until 1990, there were new streets added: Eastgates (Clock Tower) in 1977; Belgrave Gate, Haymarket and Church Gate in 1985; Cank Street and Cheapside in 1986, and Market Street in 1988. It was piecemeal development, there was no contiguous, safe area for walking shoppers.[29] (Fig. 1)

In 1990, traffic restrictions were extended on new streets[30] and an adjacent pedestrian zone was formed. In 1996, traffic restrictions were extended on all weekdays. At the same time, the city council adopted a Transportation Choice Strategy in 1990, to improve and extend public transportation. The other condition that encouraged pedestrianisation was the completion of the Central Ring Road that eliminated the traffic that had crossed the city centre before.

Until the late 1980s, traffic was increasingly controlled in the city centre that probably diverted consumers from the main shopping area, particularly, from shops selling convenience goods. Pedestrianisation was carried on in relation to the completion of the central relief road that resulted in piecemeal retail development. Adjacent pedestrian zone was formed only in the 1990s as a result of changing attitude towards the city centre.

The need for preservation of historical values and the functions of the city centre as the focus of community life was stressed in the local plans from the 1960s on, but it was realised in the City Centre Action Programme between 1987 and 1995. Objections of retailers and car owners and the shift of retail investments towards the suburbs slowed down the process of pedestrianisation and traffic control that might enhance the townscape and save city centre retailing in long term.

6.2 The 1952 General Plan

The 1952 plan had to deal with a number of decaying houses, expanding manufacturing, increasing needs for road building and improvement of the environment (i. e. need for more open green space). Substantial population growth was predicted and the city centre was considered insufficient for the expanding town. The 1952 structure plan proposed the transformation of the area into a modern shopping, business and administrative centre. Dwellings and industrial estates were considered as inconsistent uses of central locations. Small shops satisfying daily needs were also undesired and to be replaced by small local shopping centres. Redevelopment of industrial and residential areas as offices, public buildings and shops of higher standards was suggested. The greatest increase was proposed retailing (50%) on distinct areas of the city centre. (Fig. 8)

Planners had to consider the presence of industrial and wholesale activities, as well. They suggested the permission of limited expansion of light industry and warehouses. The former was to be concentrated along the new Ring Road and the latter was to be extended towards the eastern part of the Central Area. Regarding the population growth rate and increasing car ownership, urban sprawl and a substantial growth of vehicular traffic was predicted. To improve the accessibility of shopping facilities and offices in the city centre, construction of a central relief road was proposed in this plan first time. (One section, the widened Charles Street was ready in 1952.) Building of such a spacious road involved substantial land acquisition by the local authorities and clearance of dwellings that was supported by thegovernment (see the 1947 and 1957 housing acts). Construction of the central relief road facilitated the limitation of vehicular traffic in the city centre, and the first steps towards a one-way system were done. Building of multi-storey car parks had been started by the local government (Lee Circle). The accessibility of the city centre was improved by the unified public transportation system: special bus lines linked the suburbs and the inner city with the main shopping area.

In the 1960s, proposed changes had been started: slum clearance programs involved the transformation of land use on the northern and north-eastern parts of the Central Area: obsolescent dwellings were replaced by modern, multi-storey office buildings. As a result of the deconcentration of industrial activities, the area occupied by such activities was shrinking (by 25%) in the 1960s. The number of shops was declining as a result of increasing rents particularly, in the sector of convenience goods. Large-scale stores occupied Gallowtree Gate, the main axis of the shopping area.

Increasing demand for convenience and durable goods and the improvement of the physical conditions of the city centre involved substantial rise in the needs for retail floorspace. Although, number of shops was declining, their average selling space was growing and there was an increasing pressure on local authorities to carry on re-development programs to promote the expansion of retail functions. Large-scale shopping centre schemes offered a new, planned framework for such extensions without destroying the fabric of the traditional shopping hierarchy.

6.3 The first generation of shopping centre schemes in Leicester: the Haymarket development

Two distinct groups of major shopping centre schemes exist in Britain by location: city centre schemes and out-of town developments. The former type of shopping centres was evaluated as a progressive change of shopping streets after the World War II. The first schemes of this sort were constructed in the provincial towns in the late 1960s. The Midlands region became extremely well supplied by the end of the 1970s (*Bennison, Davies*, 1980).

The new model of post-war shopping centre developments was American. The primary role of downtown retailers was challenged by large suburban malls in the 1950s. Suburbanites spared time by not travelling to the downtown, they preferred out-of town malls. The downward spiral of city centre retailing and social and physical consequences of the process encouraged British planners to construct shopping centres on central locations, incorporating certain elements of the mall culture such as weather protection/climate control, idealised image of streetscape, elimination of disorder and traffic, that resulted in a pleasant and safe environment and predictable mix of goods and services provided by outlets of large national chains and small specialist shops). The carefully planned environment is co-ordinated by a single management organisation that means uniform opening hours and quality of shopping conditions (*Dawson,* 1980).

In Britain, property development companies, multiple retail groups, local authorities and interest groups (retailers, conservationists, etc.) participated in the construction of city centre shopping malls. The motivation of such developments was the increasing purchase power and changing shopping behaviour. The role of political and environmental factors was also important: developers constructed purpose-built shopping centres that were marked in the long-term plans by local authorities[31] for face lifting of city centres. The role of local government as a developer was increasing in the 1970s (*Bennison, Davies*, 1980).

The number of new schemes was decreasing in the 1970 however, their scale was growing. The average floorspace of the outlets inside was increasing as well. Most of the centres were enclosed[32] that resulted in complete isolation of the shoppers from the rest of the shopping street. The inner space was dominated by the retail function, but offices and entertainment facilities were also included at limited scale. Service and car park facilities were situated underground or at roof-top, in lack of available land.

The physical structure of new shopping centres was introverted, their effect on the environment of the main shopping was not considered. The prevailing layout of such centres was a multi-storey, single mall usually of a rectangular shape following the precinct idea), without a focal area for rest or entertainment facilities. The building material was concrete and the attached multi-storey car park destroyed the townscape. Brick was often used for covering the facade to make the building more friendly-looking.

The most successful centres are the large enclosed ones. Proportion of retail outlets is high and that of service units is low. They are well served by transportation facilities (buses and car park sites). The main factor of their success is the presence of the main “magnets”, large stores operated by multiple companies (*Hillier Parker*, 1979).

The *Haymarket Centre* in the hart of the main shopping area of Leicester is a product of this stage. The centre was built in the 1960s (finished in 1971) as a single mall to house specialist shops and multiple outlets. It is considered as a fairly small development (13300m^2). The structure of the Haymarket area includes shops grouped along shopping arcades and a large pedestrian concourse. An entertainment centre was planned on the upper floor and an underground service area was provided with 467 car park sites. The development was a joint venture of the City Council and a private developer.[33]

The area had been in poor conditions before the redevelopment that was part of the local structure plan. It was constructed as a concrete fortification where shops were linked to the rest of the shopping area by long and monotonous corridors. The necessity of the recent refurbishment was proved by the shoppers' rather poor opinion about the environment revealed in the 1988 shopping survey.

The impact of the centre was not revolutionary. The number of specialist shops and service outlets was small and the site was dominated by the outlets of multiples. The presence of the latter probably accelerated the decline of small businesses in the city centre but did not turn the trends. In the early 1970s, the centre enhanced the physical environment of the main shopping area and strengthened its position as a nodal point in the hierarchy of the retail sector.

The spatial pattern of shopping was effected by the new centre. The majority (more than 70%) of local population purchased durable goods in the city centre in the 1970s. Two of the most visited stores were located in the Haymarket Centre (Littlewoods, Woolworth). The shopping mall was constructed at the end of the Gallowtree Gate (considered as the main shopping street in the 1970s) and nearby the Clock Tower that became a focal point for the shopping area in the 1970s. In this way, Leicester's first shopping centre supported the shift of the gravity centre of the main shopping area northwards.[34]

Environmental deficiencies were emphasised as weaknesses of new shopping centre schemes. Architects criticised them for the poor standards of construction, their bulky size and boring facades throughout Britain. Historical townscapes were often destroyed by their masses. (Although, there were successful smaller schemes carried out e.g. in Salisbury and York.) The environmental effect was not favourable on the periphery of the main shopping area either: the process accelerated the blight of secondary shopping streets and the decline of small shops (*Bennison, Davies*, 1980).

In Leicester, the new centre was marked in the *modernist master plan* prepared for the city centre at the beginning of the 1970s. The re-designed pedestrian area of the Clock Tower was the planned centre of the intensive pedestrian circulation with stepped walkways around. The buildings in its vicinity were to be used for shopping and entertainment (upper floors). The central role of the Gallowtree Gate was to be maintained. The street was to be filled up with kiosks, flowerbeds and seats. In long term, an elevated covered walkway with moving floor and frequent pedestrian bridges to department stores on both sides were planned. The secondary centre of shopping was to be formed in the High Street. The Retail Market (under a permanent roof) was planned to be one of the foci of the main shopping area and linked to the Town Hall Square by shopping arcades. (Fig. 1) The latter was considered inadequate in size and construction for the proposed civic centre. The main shopping area was to be dominated by high rise towers linked by pedestrian routes and shopping arcades to the market and the main shopping streets.

Planners did not seek for preserving the historical shopping core. Their purpose was to create a safe and pleasant environment and provide sufficient space for new office and shopping developments. The Haymarket Centre's bulky size was not to disturb the view of the planned high rise towers, it was fitted in the plan of a new and modern city centre. It was a potential focus of shopping trips linked to the other destinations of pedestrian routes. The idea of the main, extended shopping area rested on department stores as the most dynamic forms of retailing and the increasing purchase power that provided growing demand for the goods sold in the stores.

The Haymarket development was criticised by planners for the blight of secondary shopping streets. This effect of the new centre was more significant in the years of depression of retailing, in the late 1970s and early 1990s. The centre had an unfavourable impact on the liveliness of the city centre as well: it was closed in the evening and the whole area became „dead" in the heart of the city. Such unfavourable effects were experienced in the 1970s and supported the shift of planning philosophy towards preferring smaller scales and saving historical and aesthetic values of the city centre in the 1980s.

6.4 Controversial approaches towards retail planning: the 1970s and 1980s

As a consequence of the depression of the late 1970s, demand for durable goods was declining. The growth rate of population was moderated, and local authorities had to consider two characteristic trends: increasing deconcentration of inhabitants and rising proportion of ethnic minorities in the inner cities.

The *City Centre* suffered from heavy job losses in the 1970s as a result of the decentralisation. Master plans prepared for the area were dominated by smaller schemes that served the whole population, such as the improvement of the environment of the market, subsequent extensions of the pedestrianised area and face lifting of historical buildings in shopping streets. Transformation of land use was also encouraged. Industrial use of land was shrinking and factories were re-used for service purposes. Local government intended to stabilise such trends and consolidate the urban form in the 1970s and 1980s (even by rising the residential density) that was a complete reversal of the expansive plans of the 1950s and 1960s.

The *1971 Structure Plan* for Leicester proposed saving the primary role of the city centre in the shopping hierarchy as the centre of retailing of durable goods. "Proposals for shopping development elsewhere must have been reviewed in the light of the effect on the potential of the city centre to fulfil its primary role."[35] Attractiveness of the city centre was to be increased through environmental improvements (see the proposals of the master plan for the city centre). The idea of forming shopping precincts dominated the proposal that included the main shopping street, the Haymarket Centre and the Market Place as primary centres of retailing. The 1971 plan considered the process of population growth and urban sprawl as well. Shopping facilities for new suburbs were planned as extensions of existing centres or additional facilities in locations with good private and public transport access.

The plan suggested a substantial increase in shopping floorspace in the central area (78000m^2 until 1991). It was a slight over-estimation of the future growth rate. Since the plan was prepared before the trends towards decentralisation of bulky food and non-food goods occurred, it would not allow for the expansion of floorspace that has happened in suburban centres. As a consequence, retail planning policy shifted from the original (1971) proposals to more flexible attitude towards suburban developments. The new stores provided mainly convenience goods and could not compete with the city centre on the market of durable goods.

The *1976 Structure Plan Written Statement* proposed *new suburban shopping facilities* to meet areas of need for convenience goods in the north-east, north-west and south-west of Leicester. This need has been matched with the development of the Co-op superstore at Thurmaston, the Tesco store at Beaumont Leys and the Asda store at South Braunstone. (Fig.4) The reason for permitting such schemes was the increasing demand of suburban population for convenience goods as a result of the urban sprawl. New large-scale developments eliminated the deficiencies in food provision of the population. They were carried out by the largest national chains (Sainsbury, Tesco, Asda) that have been increasing their share on the market of convenience goods significantly since the late 1960s. The stores operated bus services that corresponded with the 1971 Structure Plan proposals. *Deconcentration* of shopping facilities resulted in *declining share of the city centre* on the market of convenience goods: superstores were closed on the main shopping area (e.g. the Tesco supermarket in the Lee Circle) and new ones were opened in the suburbs.

Since the attitude of the central government became more flexible towards the out-of town schemes in the 1980s, new large- scale covered centres were built on the periphery of cities along arterial roads throughout Britain. They included multiple outlets and specialist shops selling convenience and durable goods. Variety of goods and services and the generous provision of car parking facilities diverted the demand of suburbanites from traditional inner city shopping centres. Local planners predicted an increasing demand for durable goods.[36] They considered American shopping malls as great commercial success. The downward spiral of retailing in the downtown as a result of sprawl of shopping facilities and the high costs of bringing this function back to the city centre inspired the planners to rely on planning control over developments on peripheral locations.

In Leicester, the only major *out-of-town shopping centre scheme* (London and Edinburgh Trust Scheme, the *Fosse Park*) was carried out at the junction of the A46 arterial road and the Inner Ring, in the vicinity of the M1 Road. The new centre became extremely popular among retail investors: national and international chains occupied the area, but proportion of small specialist shops of the selling floorspace remained low. It became the main rival of the main shopping area as well. Shoppers preferred it for the good accessibility and the generous car park provision (96% of the contributors used motorcar in 1994) that made the Fosse Park the largest magnet of *food shopping*. Since the importance of combined shopping trips was increasing, the new out-of-town centre increased its share on the market of *durable goods* as well but the primacy of the *main shopping area* was not endangered severely in segment of the market. Other regional shopping centres such as City Centre of Nottingham, Loughborough, Hinckley and Belgrave Road also had considerable part in the non-food shopping trips. Local planners had consider their attraction in planning shopping facilities.

The development resulted in a considerable loss for a group of *city centre retailers*. The Marks & Spencer's (the most visited store in the city centre in the early 1980s) suffered a substantial (about 20%) loss of turnover after the opening of the Fosse Park. The company suspended the plans of the extension of the floorspace on the Lewis's site. Secondary shopping streets (outside the central core) were also effected: the floorspace for selling comparison goods decreased by 23% between 1984 and 1992. The impact of the shopping centre on the central area has been estimated as much as 10% recently.[37]

To stop the decline of retail turnover in the city centre, local authorities objected each application for the extension of the Fosse Park in the 1990s. The actions of local planners and the boom in retail investments in the 1980s weakened the impact of the Fosse Park. As a consequence, the number of vacant shops was decreasing in the city centre.

6.5 Actions for preserving the city centre

New developments on the periphery of the city (such as the Fosse Park scheme) and its consequences challenged local planners. Preservation of the city centre and its retail function was emphasised in local plans in the 1980s already. Governmental policies towards housing, country and town planning and retailing were criticised by local planners in the late 1980s because major out-of-town shopping centre developments reinforced the decentralisation process and involved social issues such as the increasing differences between the supply of white suburbanites and disadvantaged social groups (immigrants, elderly and poor households).

In the 1980s, local authorities supported suburban developments of private developers (the Fosse Park had been approved by the local authorities as well) and they spent considerable amount of public money on saving the City Centre from the consequences of such decisions. To improve the *access to the city centre* shops and stores, *local public transportation* system was re-organised and an extensive pedestrianisation was initiated in the Clock Tower area and the main shopping streets between 1985 and 1993. Such steps resulted in a spatially continuous pedestrian shopping precinct.

Small scale retail development schemes were carried out in the 1980s as well. They were redevelopment and infill schemes[38] improve the built environment. They were related to traffic regulations, increasing capacities of car park sites[39] and pedestrianisation. The St. Martin's speciality shopping precinct built in the second half of the 1980s provided smaller units for specialist shops, crafts, boutiques and tourist shops. Such schemes have been carried out permanently in the city centre since the 1960s as a result of the redevelopment of obsolescent buildings. The new precinct was made a focal point of shopping trips in the city centre extending the main shopping area from the surroundings of the Gallowtree Gate westwards, to the Market Street. (Fig. 1)

At the end of the 1980s, the coincidence of changing governmental policies and investment boom in the retail sector, there was an increasing interest in the future of the main shopping area. The *City Centre Action*

Programme (1987-1995) in Leicester targeted the revival of the city centre functions. The plan included pedestrianisation, a new purpose-built shopping centre, covered market, frontage refurbishment, more attractive and better parking facilities, new housing in the Central Area, establishment of speciality and festival shopping areas, organisation of exhibitions and cultural events, promotion of speciality shopping and development of leisure and catering services. The Haymarket Centre had been bought by a consortium led by Arlington Securities in 1988 that intended to invest in the improvement of the internal and external appearance. The transaction was inspired by the increasing uncertainty of the future of out-of-town developments and it was encouraged by local authorities as well, because the planned renovation met their purposes.[40]

As a result of the program, retail floorspace increased by over 45000 m^2(1988/1992) in the City Centre. Proportion of durable goods was growing further. The program proposed an extension of the pedestrian area and the complete exclusion of vehicles (even the buses) from the Clock Tower area. The result was a quality open space that links the southern and northern parts of the main shopping area. The actions for the renewal of the environment of the Haymarket centre, increasing support for small restaurants and cafés were initiated to sustain the viability of the city centre. Retaining the residential function of the centre was also stimulated through conversations (i.e. “living over the shop” programs). To encourage the transformation, the City Council used compulsory purchase orders and grants for residential schemes. To gain sufficient space for the extension of shopping and residential area and satisfy the increasing demand for modern office floorspace, local authority initiated a renovation program of industrial and old office buildings as well.

The most important step towards improving shopping conditions in the city centre was the implementation of the *Shires scheme*. It was a redevelopment scheme in the vicinity of the Clock Tower area. The modern mall was opened in 1992, on 45000m^2 floorspace with a substantial car park provision (i.e. 1000 sites on the top floor). Since then, it has been extended by 48000 sq. ft. and car park facilities were also enhanced (by 900 sites). It was undoubtedly the largest scheme since the World War II that has taken up a lot of new retail growth in the City Centre and its success provided a new focus for the central shopping core. (Fig. 1)

The implementation of the scheme was started in the years of prosperity of the retail sector. Additional developments were planned such as the redevelopment of Lewis' Place in the vicinity of the Haymarket centre[41], refurbishment of the Retail Market and construction of a shopping precinct between the latter and the Shires. Such combination of shopping developments and their location at the focal points of the main shopping area resulted in an extension of the central core with the Shires in its focus. The streets linking planned nodes were "filled up" by shops, restaurants and cafés. As a result of the developments, the number of shops has not declined since 1992 that is a significant deviation from the national trends.

The success of the Shires rested on the presence of multiples such as the Debenhams and House of Fraser that occupied almost 60 % of the floorspace. Number of smaller shops specialised mainly for fashion goods are housed in the centre as well. The mix of goods and different types of shops attract the majority of shoppers.

Conditions of shopping centre developments changed in the 1980s. Improvement programs for inner cities were initiated by the central government and more attention was paid to the future of the main shopping area. There was a political indication behind the policy change that coincided with the aims of local programmes: to save the city centre as a focus of community life and improve shopping facilities for the population of inner cities. The prosperity of the sector provided private capital resources for the schemes in the late 1980s.

The *indirect effect* of the developments was an increase in private investments outside the planned centres. Both multiple companies and local speciality shopkeepers (selling durable gods) may be considered as winners of the process occurred in the 1980s and 1990s. Multiples considered town centre as the most desirable place for their outlets, because the new schemes accommodated small businesses that have important complementary role attracting specialised demand. But many of the independent retailers were effected by the developments badly. The *gravity centre* of the main shopping area shifted northwards that had negative micro-regional impact on the secondary shopping streets of the southern shopping area (i.e. the Granby Street and its surrounding). This part of the city witnessed a growing number of vacancies and increasing role of services.[42] (Fig. 1)

Results of shopping surveys made in 1984 and 1995 proved a considerable improvement of *the image of the main shopping area*. Particularly, *a wide range of goods*, good *accessibility*, *safety,* high quality of the *layout* and the extension of the *covered shopping facilities* were highly appreciated. The Shires became the most visited place in the city centre (it is a primary aim in 42% of the cases). Other developments such as St. Martin shopping precinct (21%) and the Retail Market (18%) also must be considered successful according to the shoppers and retailers as well.

The empirical results proved that the *pattern of shopping trips* inside the city centre is *dependent on household incomes and ethnicity*. The Shires is in the centre of white middle-class shoppers' trips. The City Centre is attractive for the majority of young people with no regard to ethnicity or incomes. The Retail Market is also a popular destination, but the proportion of Asians and elderly is higher. The Haymarket centre is specialised for the demand of lower income groups, particularly, for ethnic minorities. Multiple outlets, such as Sainsbury's and the C&A are in the focus of shopping trips. Such division of shoppers and their movements was formed by the new developments. The lower prices of the Haymarket centre or the Retail Market that are favourable for households with lower income is a result of the competition reinforced by the Shires scheme. The main shopping centre became more colourful, offering more durable and specialised goods for each group of shoppers.

7 Final findings

Deconcentration of urban population and economic activities involved a dispersal of services satisfying the needs of residents throughout Europe. Increasing rents and congestion of the central areas of cities inspired investors to move their plants to the periphery of cities. Deconcentration of consumer services (including retailing) and manufacturing has been started in the 1960s and such activities were followed by producer services in the 1980s and 1990s. Business services, institutions of public services of higher order remained in city centres and so did the restaurants and speciality shops. The process of dispersal of urban population and services was particularly advanced in Belgium, the Netherlands and in the western *lands* of Germany.

As a result of the suburbanisation process, shopping centres on peripheral sites were constructed in the 1970s throughout the western part of the Continent. The process was supported by the developments of national chains that had an increasing share on the retail market and formed strategies at international scale in the 1980s to answer the challenge of the Single Market. The impact of organisational concentration, spatial dispersal of shopping centres and increasing scale of stores involved the decline of corner shops and decline of city centre functions until the late 1980s. The increasing role of international chains raised the issue of local identity in this period: European cities feared of losing it and the problem was associated with the spiral decline of inner cities that effected the viability of the city centre as well. Extensive pedestrianisation and re-development schemes (widely using the precinct idea) were implemented throughout Europe particularly, in Germany. Town planning turned towards small scale schemes in inner cities and city centres but American-type shopping malls and out-of-town food stores remained in regional plans.

The *British case* has always been considered as a particular one. Although, organisational changes occurred just like on the Continent, new forms of retailing were present on the market to less extent. Furthermore, British retail companies established less outlets and branches in Europe than Germans, French or Dutch organisations did. Britain represented a different way of control over the expansion of large retail companies, as well: *spatial consequences* of the developments have always been *highly considered*.

The peak of planning control over the sprawl of retail stores was in 1968 in Britain. The planning act set up a framework for planning retail provision at larger scale for an entire region. The planners' purpose was to save the existing shopping hierarchy in behalf of the residents of inner cities *and* provide sufficient supply of convenience goods for the suburbanites. Such attitude resulted in a fairly compact spatial form of retailing compared to Germany, the Netherlands or Belgium: the majority of new stores remained in the inner area of cities and construction of new shopping malls was allowed only on central sites.

The *reversal of* this policy occurred in the 1980s: the Tory government limited the activity of county planning bodies and at last, the organisations were dissolved. As a consequence, the only adequate level for planning regional shopping centres in the framework of regional structure plans was deceased. Central governmental control was taken over retail developments and the entire planning process in the 1980s. *Direct intervention* was known in Europe in the case of building out-of-town shopping centres (see Jacques Chirac's steps against the construction of shopping malls in France in the 1980s). The British control was rather strict compared to other countries of Europe and the decision-making process was slow and bureaucratic. In this way, the relatively small number of large scale peripheral developments was implemented.

There was an increasing need for *renewal programs of city centres* as a consequence of the urban sprawl, financial difficulties of local authorities and lack of planning control over retailing at regional and county level (e.g. *Fosse Park* development). The high number of disapproved schemes and the increasing demand for durable goods turned the investors towards city centres again in the late 1980s. Local planners received financial support for the revitalisation programs in the way the Tory planning policy allowed it: private capital was used not only for gaining profit and stimulate economic growth of cities but also for the benefit of the residents. *Improvement schemes of inner cities* supported by the central government (as a consequence of the social unrest of urban poor) also contributed to the enhancement of city centre retailing.

The decline of city centre retailing endangered community life and the supply of disadvantaged social groups of inner cities. The decay of traditional shopping streets might involve the fall of other functions of the city centre in favour of out-of-locations. The problems were recognised and remedied by the re-invention of *retail planning*, successful *renewal schemes* and *co-operation of settlements* in large scale developments in Britain. To avoid harming public welfare, spatial consequences of decisions of enterprises and multiple companies must be considered and integrated into long-term planning proposals by local leaders. Lack of co-ordination and planning strategies may involve urban decay, fading identity, losing sense of community, and social unrest. This is a lesson that the East European countries should learn from: there is a need for long-term planning at local and regional level, as well.

Notes

[1] I interviewed six retailers on the declining Granby Street and five in the High Street, that is considered to be increasingly prosperous.

[2] The term "inner city" is used as the area between city centre and the suburbs. In functional terms, it could be identified as the "transition zone" of Burgess's concentric model.

[3] It is defined as a shopping centre situated outside the built-up area of the city, providing most of the goods and services available in the main shopping area in the city centre. It includes at least one department store and the whole retail floorspace takes at least 400 000sqft with substantial car parking facilities.

[4] Hypermarkets are self-service shops of more than 10 000sqft floorspace selling food predominantly.

[5] Without considering the boundary change in 1966 that resulted in 15500 rise in the number of inhabitants in Leicester.

[6] Population density was (and still is) extremely high in Wycliffe.

[7] In 1991, the proportion of households having no car was 72,4% in this ward.
[8] Particularly, in Castle Ward.
[9] According to the shopping survey prepared by the City Council in 1992, 29% of the interviewed city centre shoppers did their weekly shopping on their way home from their workplace.
[10] Convenience goods are sold by grocers and provision dealers and other food retailers. Durable goods are provided by clothing and footwear shops, household shops, other non-food retailers and general stores. Nomenclature of the 1971 Census of Distribution was used.
[11] The national average was 61% in 1991.
[12] In the 1970s, number of city centre commuters increased by 11% in Leicester.
[13] Source: Shopping Survey of Leicester City Council, 1988.
[14] The source of data was the Census of Distribution, 1961 and the Shopping Survey of Leicester City Council, 1992.
[15] Their number increased from 367 up to 7000 between 1961 and 1980 in the UK. They are self-service stores selling convenience goods.
[16] Their selling technique and range of goods sold is similar to that of supermarkets but their floorspace is over 10.000 sq. m.
[17] Superstores are large retail units with at least 2500 m^2 of selling area, situated outside conventional commercial centres. Food and non-food goods are sold by self-service and extensive car park facilities are provided.
[18] Retail enterprises having less than 10 branches
[19] Sainsbury, Tesco, Dee Corporation, Argyll (Fine Fare/Lo Cost/Safeway), Asda
[20] ST. Matthew's East/Humberside Road, St. Matthew's Wes/Belgrade Gate, Blackfriars/Highcross Street: the vacancy rate far exceeds the city average. Physical and social environment is being eroded.
[21] Superstores are single level, self-service stores offering of food and non-food merchandise with at least 25.000 sq. ft. sales area and supported by car parking.
[22] The source of the data is the City of Leicester Local Planning Papers by J. Dean city planning officer, Nov. 1992
[23] *Retailing in Inner Cities*. National Economic Development Council, Economic Development Committee for the Distributive Trades, 1981.
[24] „The Future Pattern of shopping", prepared by the National Economic Development Office in 1971.
[25] The expression is used as a synonym of the main shopping area.
[26] A. H. Tripp 1938: Road Traffic and its Control. London: Edward Arnold
[27] „Traffic in Towns", 1963
[28] Source: Shopping Survey, Leicester City Council, 1992.
[29] The first step of pedestrianisation was always a temporary traffic exclusion between 7.30 a.m. to 6.00. p.m. From Monday to Saturday that was followed by full time restrictions with exceptions (buses, taxi, loading vehicles) and as a final step, banning all vehicles.
[30] In 1990, Belvoir Street, High Street, Carts lane, Guildhall Lane, Silver street, in 1991, Horsefair Street, Halford Street, Granby Street, Bishop Street, Market Place, Market Place South and Market Place Approach, in 1993, Charles Street and Loseby Lane were added.
[31] They were redevelopment schemes in local plans. The land was acquired by the local

authority using its right for compulsory purchase. Vast areas transformed in this way like the Victoria Shopping Centre in Nottingham, Eldon Square in Newcastle-upon-Tyne or the Haymarket Centre in Leicester.

[32] In the 1960s and 1970s, many of them were planned as shopping precincts. Although, the precinct has never been defined, it was widely used by urban and traffic planners after the World War II.

[33] Taylor Woodrow Property Devp. Ltd.

[34] Source of data: Shopping Survey, Leicester City Council 1984

[35] Shopping Survey, Leiceseter City Councli, 1988 Part 2.2.

[36] They were right: there was a bom in the demand for durable goods in the second half of the 1980s.

[37] An estimation by J. Dean, City Council of Leicester, 1992.

[38] Royal Hotel/Sun Alliance in the Horsefair Street, 12-18 Belgrave Gate and 53-57 Church Gate, in fill development with car parking, Picture House, in Granby Street, an infill development, Furnitureland, Church Gate, a retail warehouse.

[39] Car park tariffs were the lowest among the regional shopping centre in the East Midlands Region and the car park supply was exceeded only by the level of the car park provision in Nottingham.

[40] Central Governmental policies shifted towards a more rigid and stricter control over such developments from the late 1980s.

[41] In the original plan, the new development and the Haymarket Centre were to be linked by a covered shopping arcade. The plan was abolished because of the declining demand and retail investments in the 1970s.

[42] This phenomenon is considered as a symptom of decline of shopping streets.

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