
City and retail trade : a relation revisiting through the concept of deterritorialization

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Abstract

This communication reviews the problematic of the relation between city and retail trade. For over a century, town planning constantly insisted on the link between these two notions. Nevertheless, this relation is coming under scrutiny because of a decoupling phenomenon between the evolution of the trade surface versus the evolution of the territories consumption.

Our research works from the hypothesis that the decoupling is the result of a process of "deterritorialization" of trade, meaning that the trade activities are part of large integrated companies or conglomerates following the same example than global firms developing new strategies based on global values. As a result, the trade installation in a given territory is emancipated from the national, regional or local constraints.

In terms of the french régulation theory, the changes of the accumulation process for trade defines a new economic space tending to separate itself from the political sphere and its regulations by the territories.

Our analysis is based on a systematic reflection about the founding hypotheses linking city and trade as an obvious "fait accompli". The hypotheses are challenged by a study based on observations of two disjunction phenomenoms between the evolution of trade levels and the evolution of trade infrastructure within cities. The question of commercial vacancy is examined in details. In the end, a new proposal is presented to revisit the connection between city and trade through the concept of "deterritorialization".

Keywords: Retail trade, deterritorialization, economic base theory, residential economy, global firms, commercial vacancy

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