COMMERCIAL SUBURBANIZATION OF NITRA CITY 
(CASE STUDY ČERMÁŇ DISTRICT)

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Abstract: Social-economic transformation of Nitra city is significantly influenced by the process of commercial suburbanization. Main localization factors affecting progress of this process within the observed area are the very good traffic accessibility with good connection to the highway R1, large industrial buildings in this area as well as large available land for commercial purposes. The analysis of the development of commercial suburbanization in Čermáň district was based on comparison of the amount of commercial objects in 1998 and 2017. Commercial suburbanization marked an increase in 76 objects (starting with 11 in 1998 to 87 in 2017). The basis for this analysis was field research that provided data for real number of objects. Additionally, comparison of aerial photographs identified the growth of areas used for commercial purposes in the analyzed period as well as circumstances affecting localization of individual objects. Based on the research, it is foreseeable that the process of commercial suburbanization will continue to record steep increase in the number of objects. The presumption is associated with continuous thickening of the built-up area, with the revitalization of abandoned buildings as well as with significant change in the function of fertile agricultural land.

Key Words: Nitra city, city district Čermáň, commercial suburbanization, commercial objects

INTRODUCTION

Many scientific papers are focused on research of cities as they are complex objects of geographic studies. Large scale of economic, social and cultural processes happen in cities. Cities can be seen as centers of social changes, cultural transformation and economic innovation (Slavík and Grac 2009). Currently, a remarkable increase in business activities that bring new commercial purposes such as retail and wholesale areas, logistic zones, production areas, warehouses and administrative buildings to originally agricultural cities can be observed in Slovakia. These processes similarly to other cities in Slovakia also in Nitra lead to transformation of social-economic structure of Nitra city. They appear mainly in peripheral urban areas with well-built transport infrastructure, close links to the R1 highway, plenty of relatively cheap uncultivated plots, existing industrial buildings, and family homes with original residential functions. Due to the significant development of the analyzed process, there is a significant change in the function of the fertile agricultural land, the thickening of the built-up area, the revitalization of abandoned buildings used in the past especially for industrial production, but also the change of the original residential function to the detriment of the commercial one. Newly localized objects have positive as well as negative impacts. The positive consequences are e.g. new employment opportunities and better access to diverse services. On the contrary, the negative consequences are the significant increase in the traffic congestion, the increase in emissions from motor vehicles, the advertising smog and the aesthetic changes due to the construction of new commercial buildings.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

There have been significant changes in the suburban areas since the mid of 20th century. While in the 1950s suburban areas were perceived as "no-fit, homogeneous night-time communities" (Gober 1989), a number of industrial and service entities have been deployed in recent decades (Hahn 2014). Today, this process is known as commercial suburbanization. According to Champion
(2001) commercial suburbanization is linked to industry, retail, administration as well as high tech business decentralization. Ouředníček (2002) includes to the commercial suburbanization also the spatial extension of business functions linked to the central traffic lines. According to Sedláková (2005), transport accessibility is the basic localization premise of commercial objects. Ouředníček et al. (2008) argue that commercial suburbanization is part of a suburbanization process that includes the transfer of commercial activities (trade, production, storage, entertainment and administration) from the core of the city to their rural areas. The process of commercial suburbanization also refers to the non-residential suburbanization, including the transfer of non-commercial functions, schools, offices and museums. The number of authors dealing with and analyzing commercial suburbanization process in Slovakia is gradually growing, e.g. Sedláková (2005), Danielová (2008), Masný and Dubcová (2010), Šveda and Križan (2012), Repaská and Masárová (2014), Midler and Dubcová (2016).

The aim of this paper is to analyze development and forms of the process of commercial suburbanization in the territory of the city district Čermáň in the period of 1998 and 2017. The number of commercial objects in 1998 was based on the data from the publication Nitra-detailed atlas. It was compiled by a field survey of the Department of Geography and Regional Development in Nitra. The status of commercial objects in 2017 was analyzed during actual field research. The comparison of aerial photos between 1991 and 2017 brought data showing the increase in areas used for commercial purposes. Due to data privacy and personal data protection, information about individual businesses and their operations from www.finstat.sk web portal are delivered in intervals.

The standard geographic methods such as analysis, synthesis, comparative method, mathematical-statistical and cartographic method were applied to process the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All rural districts of the Nitra city including city district Čermáň show significant impact of commercial suburbanization process. Commercial objects are located in the observed district along the main traffic line Cabajská ulica. Cabajská ulica connects the Čermáň city district to the R1 highway. Čermáň city district is also directly connected to the town Šaľa (Nitra region). Development of commercial suburbanization in this area is remarkably affected by good traffic availability and a direct connection of the R1 highway to the capital city Bratislava as well as the county town Banská Bystrica (Banská Bystrica region). Besides the well-developed traffic infrastructure, the city district disposes of available land used for agricultural purposes, existing large-scale industrial centers as well as large built-up areas of family houses.

Beginnings of the commercial suburbanization process in Nitra district Čermáň are observed already in the beginning of the post war period when Czechoslovak Automobile Company (ČSAD) and state-owned factory Western Slovak butchery were based in Čermáň city district. Commercial objects remain this way until the transformation period that significantly affected all industrial areas in Slovakia. Looking at ČSAD, transformation process lead to a split into passenger transport and freight in 1993. Hence, Freight Nitra is established (NAD Nitra). Former Western Slovak butchery undergone similar but more complex transformation process. Company ended its activities in 1993 and Schärdinger-Milex plc. was established instead. It was renamed to AGROMILK plc. later. Due to small domestic milk demand, the operations closed. AGRO TAMI has dominated the industrial zone since 2008. Further important commercial objects in the city district are TAURIS SIESTA ltd. (headquarters are in Rimavská Sobota), Bramac – roofing systems ltd. (headquarters are in Ivanka pri Nitre), LEMUS and Aika. Only Bramac and LEMUS exist today. However, Aika transferred its operations to the city district Old Town.

Commercial objects in Čermáň city district grew by 76 entities between 1998 and 2017 (11 in 1998, 87 in 2017). They are mainly located along the traffic line (road II/562) and they use large industrial area established by Western Slovak butchery. 41 objects were located on its premises in 2017. The most significant entity is AGRO TAMI ltd. focused on milk processing. AGRO TAMI ltd. employed the most employees 2017 (more than 200 employees) in the area. Dominant entity is PHARMAGAL-BIO ltd. that covers with its premises the largest area. Though the large plot coverage it has only around 20 employees. The highest number of operations are micro-organizations with less
than 10 employees. On the one hand, they are located in already existing premises. On the other hand, they rearrange already existing premises for rent.

Industrial zone left by the former Czechoslovak State Automobile Company is facing significant suburbanization process. However, the dominant entity is Freight Nitra in this industrial zone. Although, it does not use as large areas as the former Czechoslovak State Automobile Company. As a consequence, it rents the majority of the area to other objects. 6 commercial objects were located in this zone (incl. Freight Nitra) in 2017. Existing buildings are used for industrial production (production of metal constructions and its parts – SANZELL, ltd., lighting production – SEC ltd., production of mining machines and building construction – Menzi MUCK Slovakia, ltd.) as well as construction entity (STAVEX Nitra ltd.) and wholesale store (HEDONIA ltd.).

Relatively large area was used by BRAMAC with headquarters in Ivanka pri Nitre in the past. Although the area is relatively large, only 3 objects are located there (HRIADEĽ ltd., Ing. Miroslav Sádovský STAVEBNÁ FIRMA SÁDOVSKÝ and AUTO-DUMI ltd.). The largest part of the zone belongs to HRIADEĽ ltd. specialized in wholesale of agricultural machines and accessories with more than 50 employees.

Čermáň’s suburbanization process does not develop at the cost of agricultural land. The spread of commercial zones increased by 5.7 ha (57.9 ha in 1998, 63.6 ha in 2017). Growth of the commercial zone was marked mainly in the Southwestern zone of the Čermáň that was dedicated to residential buildings. Due to good accessibility of the R1 highway some private entities moved their operations to this area. Consequently, it lead to the transformation from residential to industrial function. Similar
transformation processes were observed along the Dolnočermánska Street where new entities were established in the family houses. However, here residential function remains.

Development of commercial suburbanization brings with remarkable changes in functional use of the area. Whereas the areas were used by mono-industrial commercial zones in the past (Figure 1), poly-industrial zones prevail today (Figure 2). Single-industrial zone is only the area used by the company Roads Nitra focusing on bitumen production. This zone is isolated from the city built-up-area and from other commercial zones.

There is a strong differentiation process between 1998 and 2017 based on the industrial specialization of the commercial objects between 1998 and 2017. Individual branches were represented in relatively balanced portion in 1998 (Figure 1). However, in 2017 (Figure 2) wholesale dominates (23 objects). The most important wholesale commercial subject was company MED – ART ltd. (more than 250 employees). It is specialized in pharmaceutical wholesale business. Other significant wholesale companies in the district are MPL building materials, Vaillant – MORA and Hriadel with 50–99 employees. Further entities have less than 10 employees.

Additionally, intensively represented is also the building industry (13 objects), the industrial production (13 objects) and the retail business (12 objects) (Figure 3). Companies focused on road and highway construction dominate the construction industry. Moreover, construction of residential and commercial buildings play an important role in the construction industry. STAVEX Nitra plc. is one of the most powerful companies in this area with 200–249 employees. Branch industrial
production is dominated by SEC ltd. with 200–249 employees. All retail shops have less than 10 employees.

On the contrary to other rural city districts, Čermáň city district is dominated by service and maintenance of motor vehicles (4 objects). Car dealers are rather rare (5 objects: AUTO-DUMI, PP CARS, ŠKODA MOTO JAS, Car spare parts TF).

Figure 3 Objects of commercial suburbanization in city district Čermáň in 2017

CONCLUSION

Commercial suburbanization is present in all major cities of Slovakia. However, their intensity and form of expression significantly differ. Capital city and the county town Košice (Košice region) follow a similar suburbanization process as other Western European cities. Many entities in these areas transfer their premises outside of the city centers in form of wholesale, sports and relax centers. Smaller but administratively significant cities observe the process of commercial suburbanization in the peripheral parts along major traffic lines, such as Nitra city. Commercial objects are localized mainly along main traffic roads in large industrial zone. Centers are built on “green field” or they occupy family houses with former residential function. Suburbanization boom in Nitra was significantly influenced by the construction of the R1 highway that connects Nitra city with the capital city Bratislava as well as with the county town Banská Bystrica (Banská Bystrica region). Moreover, the large number of built and unused industrial buildings as well as a large number of inexpensive family houses played an important role.

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REFERENCES


