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Resumen

Traditional urban settlements had in their centres the heart of their live. The square, or the main square to be exact, used to be place for celebrations, festivities and cerimonies as well as for trading.

Before the founding of the marketplace as an architectural typology, the empty space of the square and the ground floors of its buildings were a large trading structure that evolved in time to what we now call commercial centres.

Today, city centres are not only getting old but they are also getting empty. Empty of peolpe and, sometimes, empty of live. Globalization and all its economic, cultural and social effects has been responsible for deep changes in the urban structures of our cities.

Consumption is leading the daylife of every city and the criteria of mass production is being responsible for the transformation of old commercial buildings typologies. The traditional small market, the bazaar or the souq, are loosing their importance in the heart of the city. They are becoming obsolete. In our cities of today, we are seeing new shapes, new large typologies becoming the centre of people attention. The shopping mall era is now a reallity.

Large buildings, with thousands of square metres, are emerging among the urban structure corrupting the scale of the places and changing their architectural identity.

Because of their dimension, the new shopping malls are now getting to the outside of the city limits. Small commercial cities are growing up with their own and strange identity mixing up different architectural languages and compromising the value of simple urban values such as the street or the square.

It is a fact that, today, besides the cities where we all live, we also have satellite cities around them, where we all go for shopping or just to have fun. It looks like the old city centre, as we knew it, went to the outside... first they changed the urban landscape where they born, now they are creating new ones competing with the cities from where they came from.

This papper tries to bring to discussion the problem of these large commercial structures that are emmerging around our cities and their ironical effects on places where we live.