

# **The Impact of commercial activity on the form and structure of the city - the case of Portuguese medium-sized cities**

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The present document aims to sum up the first year of research in the on-going doctoral thesis, which dwells on the balance between commercial activity and city realm. Both these entities have lately witnessed new stages of evolution, which reflect themselves in changing variables and patterns. Initially, commerce was considered as an after-the-fact consequence of the urban form and structure pre-existence, but because it has the ability to change and adapt more rapidly than the city, as well as having large economic and social power, the flow of influence can be inverted. The research tends then to know whether the two entities are convergent or divergent in their patterns and what overlaps in their dichotomies, bearing in mind that, although evolving separately, they must have to some degree common variables that can be assessed for further understanding the urban realm, finding solutions for regulating and balancing estimated forms of distribution, proposing integrated political and technical mechanisms, and ultimately strengthening the use of commerce to reshape urban spaces.

Aware that medium-sized cities are now at the core of a network-base territory, are synonyms of equilibrium, sustainability and innovation, and places of opportunity and (inter)national projection, the literature review focuses on four distinct points of view: city's, commerce's (three fronts: traditional retail, new commercial formats and web-based), citizen's and planner's (merging the above and finding research tools). The "thesis" that substantiates the research is then proposed. The last point presents the early makings of a working methodology, which presently is being developed.

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