

SOCIAL PLURALISM IN THE POSTSOCIALIST CITY: DIVERGING
CONSUMER GROUPS IN THE CONSUMPTION LANDSCAPE OF STARA
ZAGORA, BULGARIA

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Introduction

The restructuring and increasing interconnectedness of the global economy over the last few decades result in the creation of distinct new urban spaces (Knox 1991). Closely tied to these global economic changes, the dual political and economic transition of South-East Europe (SEE) since 1989 allows for the emergence of many new urban spaces in the post-socialist city. These emerging geographies have profound physical, cultural, and socio-spatial changes on the urban landscape.

The everyday politics of retail consumption and the negotiation of new and old urban spaces are a socio-spatial practice visible through consumption related (im)mobility, retail consumption patterns, and shopping habits of city residents. Additionally, our understanding of urban morphology and the production, reproduction, and transformation of cities (Pred 1984) is also reinforced by individual attitudes, opinions, and actions that actively work to produce, reproduce, and transform the city. In this article, I show how individual consumer attitudes, opinions, and actions (i.e. (im)mobility) shift in relation to new and old places of retail consumption to argue that A) there is increasing social pluralism of consumer groups in the postsocialist city visible through everyday time-space geographies and B) urban residents actively work to support, produce, and reproduce changes in the built urban environment of SEE cities, specifically for the context of the postsocialist city of Stara Zagora, Bulgaria. Throughout this article, I primarily frame social pluralism or social diversity as a class based issue rather than an ethnic, minority, gendered, or other social issue.

This article is structured as follows: First, I provide an overview of my research site and methods. Second, I briefly review urban consumption theory and then link it with postmodern urban theory to outline how I deploy these concepts in this article. Third, I discuss the changing retail landscape of the postsocialist city to further contextualize postsocialist urban consumption. Next, drawing from the established theory, I present

the empirical findings of this project by outlining different general profiles of urban consumers, such as *The Urban Victor*, *The Urban Loser*, and *The New PostSocialist Shopper*, and connect these general groups of consumers to larger urban trends in the postsocialist city to illustrate the increasing social diversity and socio-spatial segregation as well as consumer agency in re-creating the postsocialist city.

Research Site and Methodology

The location of Stara Zagora is in central Bulgaria at the foot of the Sredna Gora Mountains. Starting in 1944, at the end of World War II, the socialist government took control over Bulgaria and Stara Zagora, which had dramatic physical and social effects on the city. The socialist era of the city experienced rapid urbanization and industrialization. This is most evident by the widespread communist style pre-fabricated bloc apartments that comprise the overwhelming majority of Stara Zagora's housing stock, much of which are reaching the end of their intended lifespan and are falling into a state of disrepair and obsolescence. Another mark of this era is the large industrial quarter in the southern portion of Stara Zagora.

The urban form of Stara Zagora is similar to the generic model of the socialist city established by Hamilton (1979). This serves as only a rough model of Stara Zagora's spatial structure and, like Sofia, different districts and land types "are neither quite concentric, nor contiguously defined... rather [they are] closely intertwined with historic and new neighborhoods forming an intricate patchwork intermixed with industrial zones and open spaces" (Hirt and Stanilov 2007). Yet, the city has several distinct zones that are useful to outline for understanding the spatial structure of Stara Zagora: 1) the Central Business District (CBD) comprised of both the pre-communist capitalist city center and the communist city center with mixed land use; 2) The Compact City – a mix of historic housing and communist bloc housing along with a small-scale retail; 3) Housing Estates – communist era modern bloc housing estates and micro-districts; 4) Low-density residential

– mostly single family homes on the edges of the city; 5) Industrial quarter (Figure 1, Page 49). Further, for Stara Zagora's various consumption regimes (discussed in more detail below), supermarkets are almost always decentralized and located on the urban fringe of the city; local shops are located throughout the city and mostly carry staple and household goods (with the exception being the city center); and the city center is host to the now privatized GUM, fresh produce market, and higher end small-scale retail (boutiques) as well as many cafes, bars, and restaurants.

The empirical data for this article are primarily based on 180 questionnaire surveys and participant observations conducted in the field. Fieldwork was conducted in the city of Stara Zagora, Bulgaria over two months during the summer of 2007. Stara Zagora provides the context for urban change in a non-capital and lower tiered postsocialist city in the SEE. The combination of the two research methods allows for a more qualitative and dynamic understanding of the physical and socio-spatial changes present in the city and an understanding of how individual attitudes and actions actively support urban change. By collecting written comments and qualitative data on changing individual consumption habits and connecting them to various consumption regimes in the post-socialist city, I am able to outline the pluralism of urban 'postmodern consumers' manifesting themselves in the postsocialist urban context.

I collected the data presented here via a section in the questionnaire survey that asked research participants to provide written comments about relevant issues they would like to openly address. I used the qualitative data in combination with more quantitative data provided by each individual surveyed. In the written comments section of the survey, participants were able to express themselves however they felt appropriate. This method provided a means of collecting relevant data unattainable by an otherwise restrictive questionnaire survey and due to a language barrier that I had to negotiate while in the field. Most of the 180 people surveyed opted not to leave comments. A hired translator translated all comments given by research participants from Bulgarian into English after I completed my fieldwork. Of those participants that did write comments, their comments were all generally positive about the changes in their consumption habits. This may mean that this method did not prove conducive for capturing negative attitudes and it is unknown if no comment means a negative comment.

By collecting these specific comments in combination with the data provided elsewhere on the survey and in relation to various consumption regimes, I am able to outline various social profiles and time-space dioramas illustrating the pluralism of urban postmodern consumers manifesting themselves in the postsocialist urban context (see Table 1 near the end of the article). Postsocialist transformations have created winners, the Urban Victor, and losers, the Urban Loser, as well as other types of assorted urban shoppers that illustrate the increasing social diversity and the socio-spatial segregation of the postsocialist city. Names presented in this article are fictitious to protect the identity of individuals and because they do not represent one single person, but rather groups of people identified by consumption patterns and habits.

I present several consumer profiles by using several time-space dioramas (Hagerstrand 1970) to help illustrate the diverging consumption and mobility patterns of consumer groups in the postsocialist city. The basic diorama places time on the y-axis and space (either home or various places of consumption) on the x-axis and z-axis (see Figure 2, Page 49). Time is not specific. Rather, time represents a rough period of time covering several weeks or one's typical shopping patterns over the course of a couple weeks or a month. Space illustrates the ideas of each of the various consumption regimes. The paths presented in each diorama are also general models of time-space paths. They are not calculated aggregates of field data that quantitatively illustrate time-space paths for the studied population of Stara Zagora. Rather, they are qualitative paths that represent findings from field observations and field data collection. Therefore, they may exaggerate certain patterns to highlight the changes and the diversity in consumption time-space paths among different consumer groups in the postsocialist city. While these models serve to outline the major consumption patterns, they fail to illustrate the necessary meta-data of time-space paths, such as the typical demographic data for each group or the mode of access to each location. However, this background data is discussed and contextualized as each profile is explained in the text.

Urban Consumption Theory

Consumption in its most common form is the acquisition and use of goods. More specifically, consumption is "the selection,

purchase, use, maintenance, repair and disposal of any product or service" (Campbell 1995 in Miles and Paddison 1998: 815). In the past, consumption was considered a by-product of production, relegating it as a collective form in which all of society mechanically participated. Labelled as 'public consumption,' this is largely a thread of Marxist social theory and modernism (Clarke and Bradford 1998).

With the cultural turn in the social sciences, notions of consumption shifted to become a cultural and social act based on 'private consumption' habits of the individual and viewed consumption as a social experience and social process. Consumption during this stage became an act independent of production (Miller et al. 1998, Jackson and Thrift 1995), separating consumption and production.

The present academic debate in urban consumption theory states that the distinctions between public and private notions of consumption are blurred and porous, as are the relationships between producer and consumer. This implies that consumption is a private act with cultural and social meaning as well as an essential duty or public act that connects individual people, individual needs and wants, and their private experiences to a greater mass consumer society (Miller et al. 1998; Jayne 2006a; Clarke and Bradford 1998).

Overall, the coming together of public and private consumption in a fluid relationship helps to conceptually understand how researchers can approach urban consumption (Clarke and Bradford 1998) because the analysis of consumption uncovers active human processes in urban environments (Jayne 2006a; Miller 1995). Thinking of consumption as a process no longer means that consumption only exists at the point of purchase. Instead, it allows us to think of consumption in terms of how we shop, why we shop, the experience of places of consumption, the objects we consume, and what we do with the objects after the point of purchase (Jayne 2006a; Miller et al. 1998; Jackson and Thrift 1995). For example, if we focus on how people shop, the idea of process allows us to incorporate ideas of mobility to and from places of consumption. Furthermore, placing these processes on a time-line allows us to study changes in consumption-related mobility over time (such as socialist to postsocialist).

Consumption also links individual experience with the urban environment (Miles and Paddison 1998), helping to form the dialectic relationship between the built environment and social processes in the city.

Knox (1991: 184) argues that the everyday activity of consumption is "among the most powerful and pervasive processes within the socio-spatial dialectic," between the changing built environment and changing social processes that produce, reproduce, and transform the built environment.

Postmodern Urbanism

Postmodernism, as a theoretical approach to the city, combined with consumption theory, accentuates notions of consumption as a porous relationship and it intensifies the links between private consumption, public consumption, and emerging spaces of consumption that are centered on both the experience of consumption (private) as well as the utility of consumption (public).

However, the postmodern perspective must be contextualized as an approach to understanding urban spatial and social processes occurring in the advanced stages of capitalism. In this manner, postmodern urbanism helps to understand urban change within an era of global economic restructuring characterized by the increasing interconnectedness of places, increased international competition and flexibility of global capital, the hyper-mobility of capital, and neoliberalism. Urban spaces, in a postmodern perspective, shift from being places of production to places of consumption, which are further consumable by the experience of the spectacle of urban space (Zukin 1991). Thus, in the advanced stages of capitalism, as McCracken (1998) argues, consumption activities are a fundamental aspect of cities, urban life, and aids in the creation of an overall mass consumer society and, as Miles (1998) and Jayne (2006b) argue, everyday and individual meaning is found in emerging consumption spaces and consumption habits.

Further, when the "hypermobility of capital" in a postmodern era touches down in cities, it spatially re-organizes urban space as well as urban social and cultural practices (Knox 1996) into new everyday geographies. The spatial re-organization and the close relationship of this 'hyper-capital' to mass consumption, "results in a sort of 'global metropolitanism' that is rooted in the materialistic culture-ideology of consumerism" (ibid: 116). This is significant because postmodernism creates a postmodern consumer that is recognizable by a growing variety of social classes evident by the "spending power and patterns of consumption"

of diversifying consumer sub-groups (Knox 1991: 184; see also Smith 1987) and is associated with the emerging pluralism in different types of places of consumption in the postmodern city.

For this project, I draw upon these ideas of urban consumption and the postmodern city to address urban and social change in the post-socialist city. Nagy (2001) states that for the postsocialist urban context, the period of transformation after 1989 – as the region began integration into the global economy – was a major catalyst for the restructure of retail and urban space in the cities of the region. In short, postsocialist transformations opened the doors for postmodernism and the hyper-mobility of capital. In addition, political and economic transformations in the region shifted concepts of consumption from public – a state sanctioned activity of the masses – to private – based on consumerism, individual choice, personal preference, increased range of goods and behaviors, and the experience of shopping. However, in the context of postsocialist transformations, Nagy (*ibid*) argues that it is only a rough form of private consumerism because private consumption is highly dependent on the consumer's *ability* to access various locations of consumption and the *ability* to access is uneven among different social groups in society.

Postsocialist Urban Consumption and the Changing Retail Landscape

Recent postsocialist urbanization trends – such as integration into the free-market, neoliberalisms, decentralized planning processes (bottom-up), and the processes of privatization – serve to place consumption at the center of postsocialist urban social life. Neoliberal urban planning policy and privatization are both recently apparent on the landscape of Eastern European cities (Dingsdale 1999). A prime example of this change and hyper-capital on the postsocialist landscape is the “hypermarket” (or “big-box store”), a large-scale private retail store usually owned by foreign capital. These new urban forms of retail and locales of consumption exhibit the strongest spatial expression of postsocialist transformation on the urban landscape in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) (Kreja 2006). Therefore, the presence of hypermarkets reveals how political and economic transition and the incorporation of global capital in the CEE (allowable by the transformation of the region into the free-market) alters the spatial form of the

postsocialist city. This section outlines the changing retail landscape of CEE from the socialist era to the present.

Retail shopping during the socialist era was of a low priority compared to more productive sectors of the centrally planned economy, such as industry and housing. Therefore, retail had limited space in the urban fabric of the socialist city. Three main forms of retail shopping existed, all largely state or cooperative owned: the GUM (“Grad Universal Magazine,” or City Department Store), in-company stores, and a limited number of less central retail stores in or near micro-district/housing estate neighborhoods. The GUM was usually located in the city center and contained the highest level of goods. Meanwhile, in-company stores provided the highest turnover of retail. All the while, retail outlets elsewhere in the urban landscape, such as in select housing estates or transit nodes, were few in number and contained limited and inferior goods. Due to the low priority of retail during the socialist era, retail outlets in housing estates were not constructed until the final phase or they were completely neglected (Kok 2007).

The collapse of socialism in 1989 brought about immediate changes to the retail landscape of socialist cities. There is a general lineage of three major forms of retail that developed after 1989, culminating in the present situation of foreign hypermarket stores that are places of consumption for both retail goods and leisure time (Kreja 2006; Rudolph and Brade 2005). Shortly after the fall of communism, informal small-scale retail developed in the form of street vendors, with items displayed on the ground, table or foldout bed, and kiosk vendors to provide basic goods that were in demand but no longer supplied by the collapsed state system. These vendor types located on sidewalks, streets, and walking paths throughout the city – selling whatever goods they could sell, wherever they could sell them. With time, small scale vending began to organize into formal shopping areas (although still similar to informal kiosks) as agglomerations of kiosks with more permanent infrastructure – such as indoor markets (Kreja 2006). Similarly, small-scale retail and local shops moved into the first floors of apartment blocs or old industrial spaces of the city (Riley 1997). Finally, the present stage is the introduction of large-scale formal retail – the hypermarket. Hypermarkets are usually enterprises from abroad that locate on the urban fringe or as large projects in the Central Business District (CBD) of the largest cities in

the CEE (Kreja 2006; Garb and Dybicz 2006; Novak and Sýkora 2007; Kok 2007).

For this project, I use the retail landscape of the postsocialist city, specifically the retail landscape of Stara Zagora, as a point of entry into understanding postsocialist urban transformations through ideas of urban consumption. I discuss different individual attitudes, opinions, and actions in relation to different consumption regimes located in the city. By the term consumption regime, I principally mean the typology of the different urban retail spaces outlined above (i.e. hypermarkets, local shops, and city center). However, this term also reflects the pluralism of urban consumption spaces in a postmodern city that have different meanings and operate in different ways for one's various daily consumption habits and needs. Time of day, perceptions of the quality and price of goods, cultural norms, and the experience of consumption all influence urban consumption practices and consumption (im)mobility in the city.

For example, the CBD contains at least two separate consumption regimes. One is the movement of people during the day who access the city center to purchase produce at the central market. The second is the Balkan social tradition of the evening promenade in the city center where very few market or retail purchases are made, but people consume the urban 'spectacle' of the CBD. This example of various city center consumption regimes also demonstrates that, at times, consumption regimes can be formal, such as the purchase of produce, or informal, the social consumption of the 'spectacle' of urban space. Different consumption regimes, in combination with the specific consumer attitudes toward the consumption regimes, shapes the way people produce the city and it affects consumer (im)mobility in the city, which actively produces, reproduces, and transforms the city.

Social Pluralism and the Postsocialist City

Using consumer profiles, this section shows individual consumer attitudes, opinions, and actions (i.e. (im)mobility) in relation to various consumption regimes to illustrate A) the increasing social pluralism of consumer groups in the postsocialist city visible through everyday time-space geographies and B) how urban residents actively work to support, sustain, produce, and reproduce changes in the built urban environments of SEE cities.

As a starting point, I return to the situation of shopping in the socialist era. Shopping was highly centralized both in terms of store locations and administration. Shopping in this time was largely conducted in state operated stores in the GUM in the city center, the central market, company stores, or some nodal stores with inferior goods. This pattern can be recognized by the profile I call The Socialist Shopper (see Figure 2, Page 49). Since the collapse of the Bulgarian socialist state system in 1989, consumption patterns have begun to take several new forms and I present them below in the form of consumer profiles. Together, these profiles outline increasing trends of class based social pluralism in the postsocialist city.

The Urban Victor

A small subset of the urban residents in the postsocialist city is the Urban Victor. This group of urban residents is middle class or higher. In the economic turmoil of the early years immediately following 1989, these residents managed to succeed and are classified as the economic winners. Research shows that those who held higher positions during the socialist era readily moved into higher economic positions (Gerber 2000; Atkinson and Micklewright 1992), but some entrepreneurs successfully made it through the early years of transition. Like the Urban Driver (see below, and Figure 5, Page 50), the Urban Victor is able to shop at all three major scales of retail consumption (i.e. hypermarket, city center, and local shops). Yet, they are most likely to shop at specialty stores in the CBD on a regular basis and they also drive to de-central places of retail consumption, such as hypermarkets, for much of their shopping (Figure 3, Page 50). Unlike the Urban Driver and Urban Loser (again, see below, and Figure 4, Page 50), there is less of a need for them to walk to local shops further out from the CBD. In other collections of urban literature, the Urban Victor consumer profile is often framed as an urban gentrifier, or one who is able to access higher end consumption spaces and marginalizes or pushes out other groups in the area. In contrast, the Urban Driver, at times, has the ability to shop in places of specialized retail, but struggles to do so because they are of a lower class.

The Urban Loser

The increase in the number of specialty and high-end shops in the center of city greatly influences the consumption and shopping patterns of many center city

residents, especially the elderly and those with lower incomes (Nagy 2001). The groups of people most affected by this process are The Urban Losers (Figure 4, Page 50). The rise of specialty shops pushes out “lower order services providing for ‘local’ people” (ibid: 343). While the center of the city was once the main area of consumption and retail activity for the urban resident during the socialist era, the center of the city no longer serves the daily needs for many urban residents who live in the center of the city.

Georgie, a 68-year-old male who lives in the center of Stara Zagora and who accesses most of his places of consumption via walking, states that, “There have been more opportunities for shopping over the last ten years.” When asked why his shopping patterns have changed the most in the last ten years, he responded that he mainly shops in new types of stores. As a consequence of the changes, he walks more and uses public transportation less. Although he is not using a private automobile, this case shows that city transportation infrastructure is declining in its role in facilitating mobility, shopping is more accessible at the local level, or that aging populations have more disposable time that affects their time-space patterns. However, because Georgie lives in the center of the city, the reason he is shopping in new types of stores and walking more may be because stores in the CBD are now of a specialized sort and no longer support his daily needs or everyday consumption habits.

As Nagy (2001) argues, those in the city center and elderly who are greatly affected by specialized retail in the city center are one of the biggest groups of losers of the changes to the retail landscape in postsocialist cities. Georgie must adapt with a ‘new shopping technique’ by seeking out local shops that support his daily consumption needs. However, since Georgie lives in the CBD, these local shops are not necessarily in his neighborhood of the city center (the local shops in his neighborhood are all specialty stores). Therefore, as Georgie stated, there have been more opportunities for shopping in the last ten years. However, in some of these places Georgie cannot actually make a purchase due to his lack of ability to pay. Further, the places he *can* make a purchase in are further away from the CBD.

The Urban Loser appears elsewhere in the urban fabric, not just in the city center. One example is Malina, a pensioner who lives in the Kazanski neighborhood of Stara Zagora (refer to Figure 1, Page 49, for neighborhood

locations). She states that she is “a retired person now, so [she] shops less.” This speaks to the fact that she is on a fixed income that is around 130 Leva per month (\$105 USD). Compared to her shopping patterns prior to 1989, Malina shopped more in the city center, but now she can no longer afford to shop in the new specialty shops and she rarely shops in the CBD. On the other hand, she walks on a daily basis to her local store for both staple and fresh food items and occasionally visits a hypermarket, again, mostly to purchase necessary food items. Although she does not live in the city center, Malina is an Urban Loser like Georgie.

The Urban Driver

Like the Urban Loser, the Urban Driver is being pushed out of central places of consumption because the types of stores present no longer fit their daily consumption needs (Figure 5, Page 50). However, the Urban Driver is not as destitute as the Urban Loser. They are less likely to be pensioners or on the lowest social rungs, but are more likely to be part of a burgeoning middle class strata which allows them the privilege of a private automobile, which in turn allows them the privilege of accessing de-central places of consumption such as hypermarkets on the urban fringe. Yet, they are also advantaged enough to also afford occasional specialty or higher end items in the CBD. Therefore, the Urban Driver is able to access all three major typologies of retail consumption. But unlike the Urban Victor, the Urban Driver is not fully able to participate in central city consumption of retail goods because they are of a lower class.

Desislava, a female pensioner between the ages of 56 and 65 who also lives in the city center and often walks to more local places of consumption says, “I am satisfied with the improved level of service.” Desislava is also primarily shopping in new types of stores, which is a combination of local shops further out of the CBD and specialty stores in the CBD. However, the main aspect classifying her as an Urban Driver is the fact that she uses her own car to make low frequency trips to the hypermarket on the urban fringe. The local shops sustain her everyday needs between less frequent trips to the hypermarket. Desislava’s comment about the improved level of service speaks to consumption practices at all scales of shopping in a capitalist era, which is in contrast to the socialist style of retail consumption practices where customer service was a lower priority

for store operators. Improved service, daily needs, quality and price of goods all act as factors influencing various consumption regimes that pull Desislava to one of the three main consumption regimes for her daily shopping. Overall, her mode of transportation to places of shopping has most changed because she uses a car more, therefore she uses a bus less, which further stresses the decline of city transport and the increase in the role of the private automobile and de-central places of consumption in CEE cities.

The New Postsocialist Shopper

The profile of The New Postsocialist Shopper comprises the largest number of consumers in the postsocialist city (see Figure 2, Page 49). They form the majority of the urban population and mostly live in the large bloc housing estates and surrounding neighborhoods that make up most of the urban space of postsocialist cities outside of the CBD. Generally of a working class or low to middle class, some may – but most do not – have access to their own automobile or they only have one car in their household limiting their ability to use it. According to The New The Postsocialist Shopper, various consumption regimes have strong and varied effects that operate differently for different aspects of one's daily consumption habits. In a postsocialist era, the New Postsocialist Shopper must develop 'new shopping techniques' to navigate a morphing urban landscape.

Sneshanka, a 56-65 year-old female from the neighborhood of Kazanski, states, "I like the many ways we do shopping now better than when did ten years ago [sic]." It appears that Sneshanka does not have an automobile of her own, as she walks to the hypermarket on a weekly basis from her flat in a nearby housing bloc. She utilizes a city bus when she shops for produce at the market in the city center almost everyday, but she does not visit the specialty shops. Her comments show how attitudes and opinions actively change consumption practices in the urban landscape because she shops at a hypermarket more and more and she expresses her happiness for this style of shopping. Yet, she still negotiates between two main consumption regimes – the central market for fresh produce only and the hypermarket for other goods. If in the near future the hypermarket is able to provide comparable prices or quality of produce as the central market then the reliance on city center consumption will decline.

Similar to Sneshanka, Kamelia, a 36-45 year-old female government employee from the Zhelznik neighborhood negotiates between different consumption regimes split between the central market in the city center and new places of consumption outside of the CBD. Kamelia declares, "Shopping in the center is mainly for vegetables – they are fresher, cheaper, [and of a] greater variety." She travels by city bus to the city center on a monthly basis to access said produce in the central market; however she visits her local shop on a daily basis. Meanwhile, Kamelia accesses the hypermarket on a monthly basis via her personal car to acquire merchandise other than fresh produce. These two shoppers only use the CBD for produce. These two cases show how the center of the city operates as a consumption regime for produce shopping and that it maintains its dominance for this portion of retail consumption practices, but they also illustrate how the center of the city is declining outside the context of produce consumption.

At the same time, Riana from the Kazanski neighborhood says, "Billa and Evropa [two hypermarkets], outside town, is very positive and people welcome it. Saves time and money to younger generations [sic]." This statement illustrates how city residents welcome the consumption regime of the hypermarkets outside of the city center and how hypermarkets actively pull to increase the spatial extent of everyday geographies. At the same time, the comments show how city residents positively view these establishments which actively aid in producing, reproducing, and transforming the city in a de-central manner. However, this process is not finished, as one resident stated, "I hope our goods will soon reach EU standards," demonstrating that the postsocialist city, in urban form and socio-spatial processes, is still undergoing transformation.

Profile	Where they Live	Demographic	Where they shop now	Changes in Consumption Related Mobility
Urban Loser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Center • Compact City 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pensioner • Lower-Income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not in the City Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking More • Public Transit Less • Little to no use of Automobile
Urban Victor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Center • Compact City 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young to Middle Age • Middle to High Income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly City Center • All three Retail Typologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking in CBD • More use of Automobile
Urban Driver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Center • Compact City 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young to Middle Age • Middle to High Income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largely at Hypermarkets and Local Shops • Some Shopping in City Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More use of Automobile
New Postsocialist Shopper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socialist Era Bloc Housing • Low-Density Housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young to Middle Age • Low to Middle Income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hypermarkets and Local Shops • Produce in City Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More use of Automobile • Public Transit use to City Center

Table 1

Conclusion

The retail landscape allows a point of entry into understanding changes in urban consumption and socio-spatial changes of everyday life in the postsocialist city. The consumer profiles I present in this article help to qualitatively understand individual attitudes of changing consumption habits and patterns in postsocialist cities; the role of individual shoppers in actively producing, reproducing, and transforming the city; the creation of emerging urban spaces in the postsocialist city; and the creation of new (and diverging) social groups in the city. This article exposes, via time-space geographies of consumption related mobility, urban diversity as class inequality of various consumer groups, which is increasing in a postsocialist era.

This article states that since 1989, urban planning policy in the SEE became both neoliberal and de-central. The dynamics of the free-market and as 'hyper-capital' settles upon the urban fabric play a large role in creating new urban spaces and new social groups, yet little is being done by other forces, factors, or agents to manage this development in such a way that is does not result in a dual city or city with social exclusion between various social groups. In fact, new local policy makers and local urban planners (de-central) script a neoliberal agenda into local urban and land use policy. This is evident by the willingness of local planners to bring in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) or 'hyper-capital,' exemplified in the retail landscape as the hypermarket, by adapting policy to readily receive this investment (for more detail on this in a postsocialist urban context see Kok 2007 and Stanilov 2008; more generally see the pool of literature on the 'entrepreneurial city'). To this end, local governments are doing little to deal with the growing class based social inequality, but rather, they support it in this context. This article demonstrates how urban residents are not solely victims of these urbanization processes, but that they play an active voice in the dialectic relationship between the built environment and social process once the free-market forces are set into motion and hyper-capital touches down. Stara Zagora, one among many lower tiered postsocialist cities, is not immune from this malady.

Diversity, framed as class inequality, leads to social exclusion, socio-spatial segregation, and dual cities, which all undermine the richness of urban life. Overall, the data presented in this article illuminates and exposes the class inequalities manifesting

themselves in the postsocialist city through the lens of the urban consumption landscape. I hope this information will lead to more understanding of this social pluralism and urban planning policy in the postsocialist city that is conscious of class-based inequalities to help ensure the future vitality of urban life and urban culture that brings people together.

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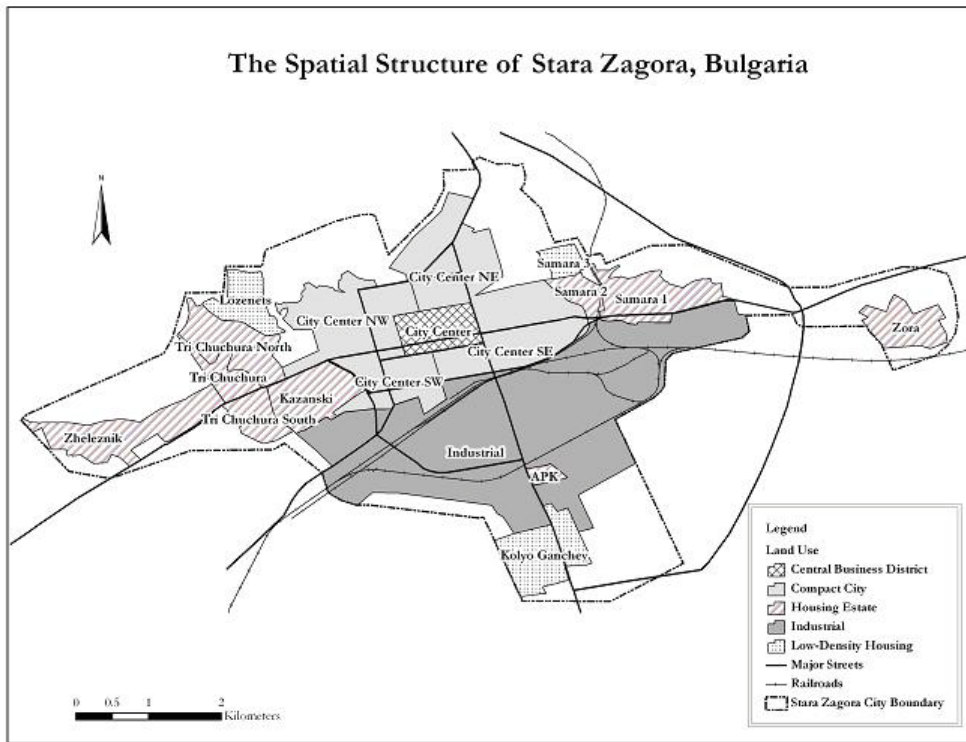


Figure 1

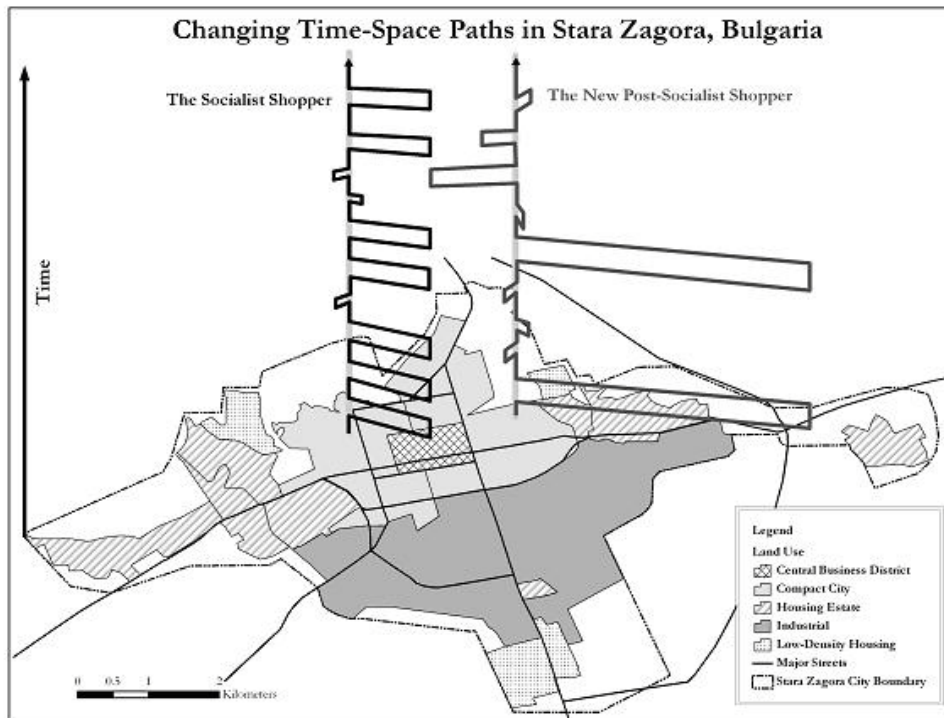


Figure 2

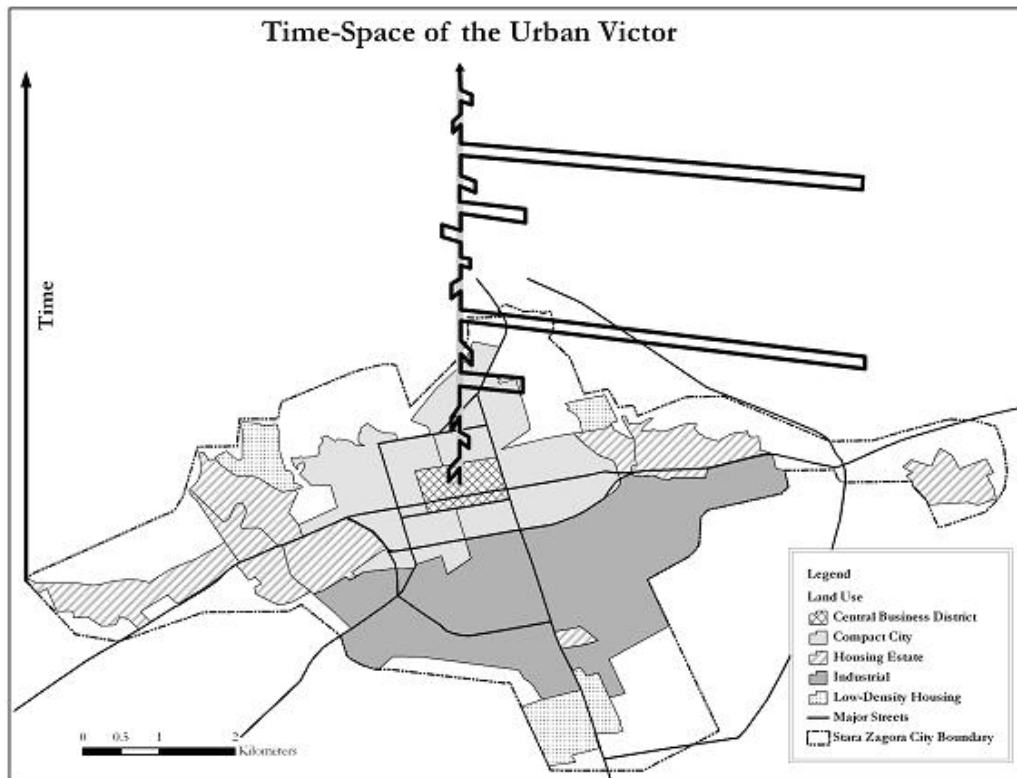


Figure 3

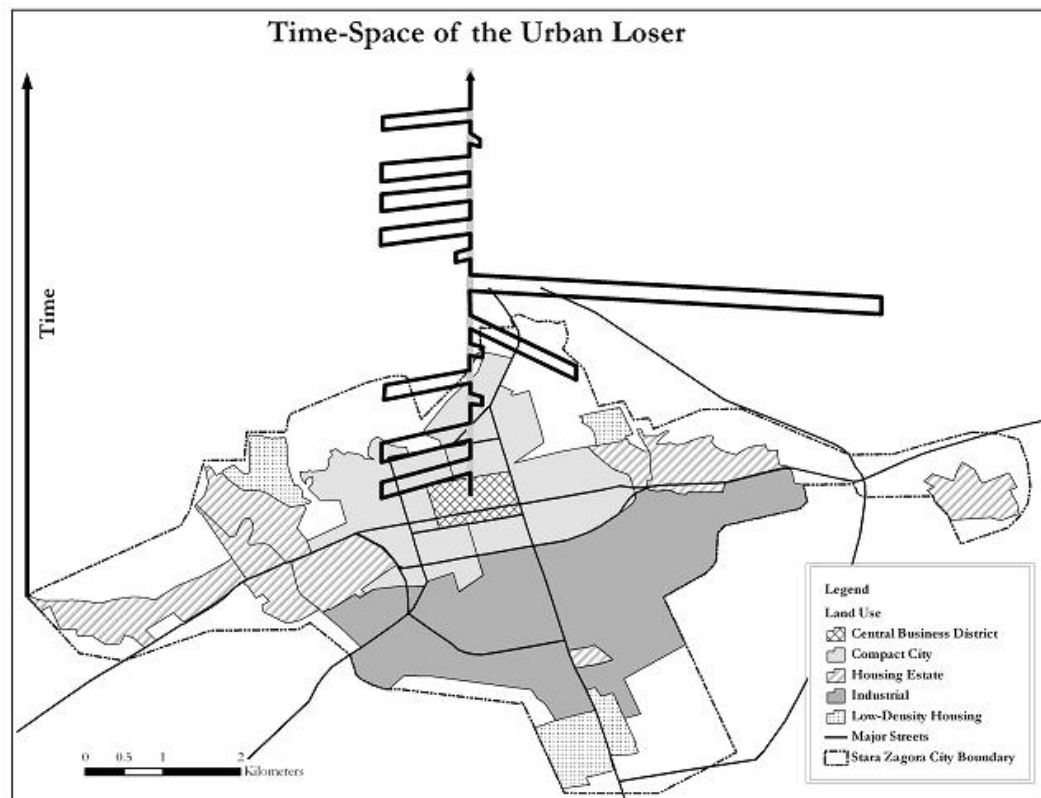


Figure 4

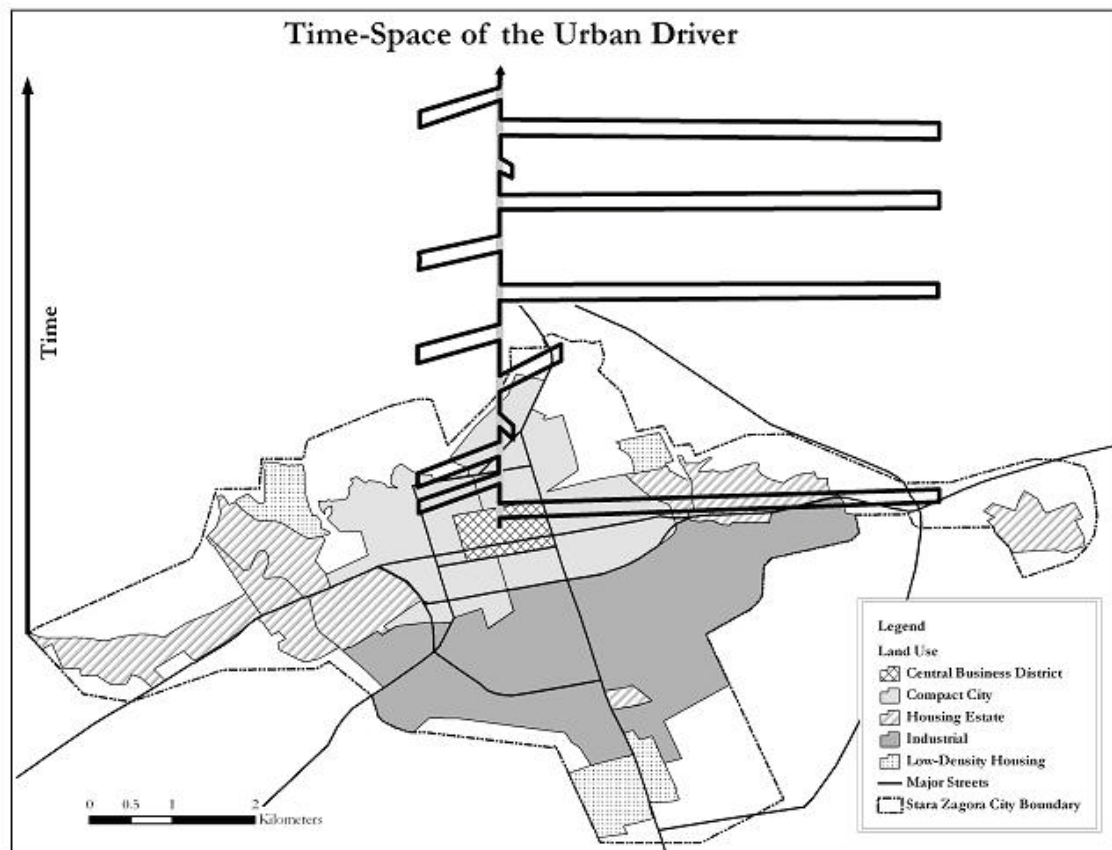


Figure 5