

# TOWARD A RECONCILIATION OF RETAIL AND CITY? THE FRENCH CASE

**Philippe Dugot**

Université De Toulouse Ii – Le Mirail Lisst-Cieu France

dugot@univ-tlse2.fr

**Brice Navereau**

Université De Toulouse Ii – Le Mirail Lisst-Cieu France

navereau@univ-tlse2.fr

## **ABSTRACT**

After fifty non-stop years of creating monofunctional shopping centres in the french suburbs, last concepts reveal new links between consumption, retail and city. Through embellishment strategies, proximity revival and sustainable urban development orders, we can sign the different actors answers. Even if these dynamics has evolved a lot with the increase in mobility and the new way of life, it still remains effective in terms of quality products and services that meet current society needs. All these concepts seem to rethink regional planning and modern urbanity. But are these urban projects really able to reconcile retail, city and urbanity?

**KEYS WORDS:** Retail – France – Modernization – Sustainable Urban Development – Proximity – Urban Governance

## HACIA UNA RECONCILIACIÓN ENTRE EL COMERCIO Y LA CIUDAD? EL CASO FRANCÉS

## **RESUMEN**

Después de cincuenta años ininterrumpidos del establecimiento de las grandes superficies mono-funcionales en las periferias de las ciudades francesas, las nuevas formulas comerciales renacimiento los enlaces entre consumo, comercio y urbano. Las estrategias de embellecimiento, la rehabilitación de la proximidad, y el desarrollo sostenible se unen para nuevos enlaces urbanísticos y sociales. Aunque, el consumo ha evolucionado mucho a causa de la movilidad y de los modos de vida, de acuerdo con las exigencias de la sociedad actual, la demanda se está moviendo hasta una mayor calidad de los productos y de servicios. Todos estos conceptos parecen a repensar la ordenación del territorio y de la ciudad. Sin embargo, estos proyectos urbanos son realmente capaces de conciliar el comercio, la ciudad y la urbanidad?

**PALABRAS CLAVES:** Comercio Minorista – Francia – Modernización – Desarrollo Urbano Sostenible – Proximidad – Gobernanza Urbana

It may seem surprising or even provocative to evoke reconciliation between retail and the city as the chemistry between the two is often seen as an essential factor in French urbanity. Yet the intense modernization of the commercial retail of French cities, from the smallest to largest, has left legacy important consequences, landscaping for example. This is especially true in urban peripheries where monofunctional retail polarities totalize nearly 70% of consumer spending. This is not an exaggeration to talk of divorce.

In recent years, this fordist legacy is called in question. New spaces of consumption taking place. This development is the result of changes in national and European legislative environment that tries to take note of the environmental consequences of consumerism or more prosaically, the large energy dependence of the continent (more than 50%). We can mention the SPRITE project (Separating the intensity of Transport from economic growth). It illustrates the desire or necessity for renewal mode of production and consumption. In terms of urban planning, this translates into incentives for urban compactness, functional diversity and changes to transport modes other than automobile. But these commercial innovations also reflect new requirements of a consumer more responsible and more personalized in a society of “hyperconsumerism”.<sup>1</sup> It is on this latter aspect that we would first like to emphasize.

Besides a brief presentation about commercial modernization forms occurred during the late fifty years, the objective of this paper is to show how retailing contributes to renewal the social living and the whole city. It allows to highlight the main current research questions asked by geographers, planners, developers and policies actors through the relationships between the city and retailing activities nowadays, especially in new retail planning concepts managed by public and private actors (performers and decision makers). Are those last urban projects able to reconcile retail, city and urbanity?

## **DIVORCE BETWEEN RETAIL AND CITY OR THE HEAVY HERITAGE OF MODERNIZATION IN THE RETAIL ORGANIZATION**

In a first time, the modernization of the retail organization appears like a good thing for several reasons: first, retail in France was extraordinary atomized compared

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<sup>1</sup> LIPOVETSKY G. (2006). Le bonheur paradoxal. Essai sur la société d’hyperconsommation, Gallimard, coll. « Essais », 2006.

with other northern European country, Great Britain or Germany for exemple. In 1963 we count 63 self- service stores for one million inhabitants in France but 173 in Great-Britain and 558 in Germany. John Ardagh, british journalist, in his book *The new french revolution*, published in 1968, write with a little malice that if Napoleon the first had said that “England was a nation of shopkeeper”, the judgment was more founded, in the sixties, for France than in England! Second reason and consequence of the previous point, margins of the retail sector was very important with a lake of concurrence.

The arrival of Leclerc, Carrefour, Auchan, etc. in the fifties and the sixties, was a saluteconomic revolution for the consumer: lower prices and more goods. This evolution was varied on its economic forms. If we only focalize on supermarkets and hypermarkets, few statistics show that the arrival of the big retail firms was a revolution: the first supermarket was created in France in 1957 and the first hypermarket was created in 1963; it was a Carrefour. In 1970, France had 3 000 supermarkets and 300 hypermarkets, in the biggest towns first and in middle and small cities rapidly. Today there are more of 5 700 supermarkets and 1 300 hypermarkets; we must speak also of the hard discount with 3 500 plants. The part of the big retailers is crushing especially in food trade.

This economic evolution is not so original and, with another chronology, we find it in the other European countries, before or in the same time in North Europe, more recently in the Mediterranean Europe. One of the original aspects of France in Europe was in the spatial form of retail modernization. It is reflected first by a deep rewrite of its territorial location. It is evident in rural areas: half of French municipalities no longer have any business! The polarization is also sensitive in the cities. If the downtown have been affected by this change, accounting for more than an average of 20 to 30% of sales in medium and great urban centers, the drain was especially important in the centers of neighborhoods, suburbs and peripheral centralities village settlements.

This new “urban commerce” in peripheral raises important issues. Born of the interplay of private investors and dedicated solely to the business function, the first consequence is an excessive use of ground because in origin, numerous hypermarkets or supermarkets became established in the fields. They are involved in urban sprawl. They participate in these new urban areas to the increase of urban zoning. This kind of area is only given over to an economic objective, retail trade. We can see in theses retail zones

that there are no residences or inhabitants in these places except some areas of individual houses and low human density. There are no other activities to except warehouses, wholesales or services for cars. This is because their monofunctional nature does not allow the deployment of differentiated practices in one place and at the same time, these polarities cannot be considered on this date and for most of them, as centralities. Between urbanism in "shoe boxes" and garish advertising, made in a total anarchy as land opportunities, these polarities are largely responsible in this "ugly France" shaping large portions of "junkspace". It is a paradox for a country where tourism based on national heritage and a certain lifestyle, is important. All this does not seem very compatible with the installation of a true urbanity, used here like an expression of what the town is, a place of trade but an agora too and lot of types of exchanges between citizens.

We can consider that there is a polycentric organization there. Compared with the monocentric model, this polycentric organization is not so negative from the point of view of displacements. Unfortunately, these centers are imperfect, as we saw it, because they are monofunctional. Number of displacements stays of radial type with a progress of random movements. This geography of a more polarized retail trade is accompanied by inflation of mobility<sup>2</sup>. Aggravating circumstance, these peripheral polarities, which capture frequently more of 60-70% of sales in smaller towns and regional cities, are on a drip of "automobility" with accessibility problems for the older portion of the inhabitants and more poor population. If the hypermarket was built under the concept of "everything under one roof", and also of "everyone", in reality, the "archipellisation" of the retail is also involved in the process of urban segregation.

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<sup>2</sup> MOATI P. (2011). La nouvelle révolution commerciale, Odile Jacob. This kind of spatial development is one of the facts responsible of the increase of mobility. We can take the example of Toulouse. In this urban area of more than one million inhabitants, we can observe the increasing mobility. If we read mobility of inhabitants, any modes of transport taken, tendency is clear. This mobility is by car: sixty eight percent in 2004 (last study) for only 48% in 1978. If we take only the suburbs, the part of the car is greater with 74%. Motives linked to purchases take a big part in this expansion of mobility. Since 1978, if the motives linked to the work and to the school are rising of 35 % and 66 %, those linked to purchases are rising of 91 %. Today, if 29 % of displacements for purchases are walked on foot, 62 % are motorized. It is less than for going to the work with 77% but more than for going to school (37%). This rising difference between school and purchase means the rising difference of the territorial location between both. Elementary and secondary schools, greatly public, present a spatial distribution under demographic distribution. During the last years we can observe a certain parallelism between both. For the retail no: we see a rising spatial polarization of the retail areas and streets, with only car accessibility.

Without breaking, the ties have weakened and the relationship is made less complicit between retail and city<sup>3</sup>. It's not surprising that in a debate organized by the Southern Centre for Architecture and the city, the main question was if "Retail is it still the city today? ". <sup>4</sup>It's not surprising that in another debate, which goes beyond the relationship between retail trade and the city, a colleague asked if we "can still live in town?", noting the tendency of French citizens to flee the city for the suburbs<sup>5</sup>.

The crisis between retail and city is deep in France. Social damage, urban and environmental issues are numerous. The landscapes of the city entrances are far from the ideal image of an old country. For some years there may be a reconfiguration of the relationship between retail and the city. Some even speak of reconciliation. Three trends are at work.

### **THREE FACTORS OF RENEWAL IN THE COUPLE FORMED BY THE CITY AND THE RETAIL**

#### *Embellishment strategies and enhance consumption*

Cities are reinvesting by new forms of retails since a few years. This reconciliation takes various new ways at the same time and concerns all urban spaces. At first, it becomes a reality by an important architectural enhancement. The context of "shoe boxes" retail urbanism is not disappearing, even if an important urban requalification process is on its way. Nevertheless, we can observe a "cosmetic" upgrade of that the existing peripheral commercial polarities which try to adapt their activities. The "Valorpark" Label has been developed in this direction. This movement has appeared in last commercial investments, which try to melt leisure, tourism and the basic consumption. We can talk of "fun shopping" or retailtainment, concept in several urban renewal programs like "Bercy village" in Paris or Odysseum shopping center in the Montpellier suburbs. Now, consumption becomes a hobby. The segmentation of the offer is a good sign of this tendency, we can also see threw "branding architecture", the emergence of stores dedicated to producing a tag. Urban competition is legitimate this thinking and action way. "Brand outlet villages", descendants of the first factory outlet

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<sup>3</sup> Gasnier (A.) – Dir., 2010, Commerce et ville ou commerce sans la ville ? Entre logiques entrepreneuriales et politiques territoriales de développement durable. Presses Universitaires de Rennes, Collection Espace et territoires, 298 pages.

<sup>4</sup> CMAV, Toulouse, 12 avril 2011

<sup>5</sup> Marie-Christine Jaillet, Café géographique, 25 avril 2012.

centers, is an other example of this retail current. All these strategies are seen as regional development<sup>6</sup>. Several generations of this commercial equipments share areas. Valley Village, Val d'Europe, Roubaix and recents "villages" of Honfleur and Nailloux, south of Toulouse, are among the latest generation of this type of commercial equipment. Sometimes deployed in the periphery (Nailloux for example), this economic development strategy can also enroll in a large-scale urban regeneration as in Roubaix where the installation of several retail centers reclassified a large portion of the city center<sup>7</sup>. Retail is also mobilized as part of economic and reboot in terms of animation to assist the urban integration of the popular neighborhoods of the rest of the city<sup>8</sup>. We think about the case of a hypermarket "Carrefour" which became a local store in the southern districts at Le Mans (connected by tram). This scaling movement can be seen as the return of proximity, approved by large majority retail actors.

### THE PROXIMITY REVIVAL

If the emergence of discount stores and supermarkets devices in the three decades following the Second World War<sup>9</sup>, causing the quick fading of traditional forms of spatial proximity, it is now the trend following by most distributors and consumption practices<sup>10</sup>. Now, the "near is beautiful". This movement impose it is self as the proximity as the best concept to follow. Its place is between environmental benefits, a soft accessibility, security and rehabilitation of "immaterial heritage" emerge as the main concept which recreates the virtues of the compact European city. Indeed this sort of retail is the vector of the "Cittaslow" movement which aim to relive city centers and suburbs. This revival takes place through small size shops, new generation of groceries stores (like Monop '(modern and urban version of the variety stores) or mini market

<sup>6</sup> Dugot (Ph.), Commerce et aménagement du territoire. Quelques éléments pour un rapprochement, Pouvoirs locaux, n° 65, II/2005, p. 29-36.

<sup>7</sup> Lamy (C.), 2009, Les magasins d'usine et villages de marques. Temples du shopping touristique, Espaces. Tourisme et loisirs, n° 269, 2009. Lamy (C.), 2009, Des centres de magasins d'usine aux villages de marques : 25 ans de développement en France et des perspectives de croissance, in Dans les Tuyaux. Guide des projets en immobilier commercial, Conseil National des Centres Commerciaux.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. l'action de l'EPARECA, Etablissement public national d'aménagement et de restructuration des espaces commerciaux et artisanaux.

<sup>9</sup> It means a singular economic growth period in France usually called "Trente glorieuses"

<sup>10</sup> Gasnier (A.), 2009, « Les temps de mobilité des consommateurs au coeur des nouvelles logiques d'implantation de l'offre commerciale », Espace, populations, sociétés, « Les temporalités des populations », Numéro 2007-2/3, p.243-254.

“Carrefour City”). But this proximity also mobilizes different stores previously under other location strategy: the maxi-discount like the Germans “Lidl”, “Aldi”, or French “Leader Price”, or supermarkets like Super U, Intermarché, Carrefour Market reinvest the urban intermediate gaps and farthest suburban areas. In this context, proximity is not calculated on distance but through car access time reducing the catchment area. In this mobility society, this kind of stores located themselves in multimodal connections. In Paris, the Saint-Lazare railway station has now approximately 10 000 m<sup>2</sup> distributed about 50 signs. There is the same dynamic in the airports where the profitability square meter cost is three to four times higher than in the city centers. On smaller scales, tram or metro stations appear as points of “transit” for commercial offer. E-commerce (third commercial revolution?), M-commerce (mobile phone), the “robot stores” and other automated convenience stores create new sort of proximity. According to Benchmark Group, the total turnover of e-commerce in France is up 31% between 2009 and 2010. Also, this process of multifunctional practices is found in the assertion of urban projects which combine private and public investments. There is sometimes a fragile sewing between commercial polarities and rest of the city with enhanced connectivity through efficient public transport. We can take as example, the St. Herblain Atlantis commercial area in inner suburb of the Nantes, or the “Portes de Guipavas” at Brest linked by the future tram.

The expanding of “drive in” reveals the tendency for consumers to play between distances and time. Commuters order from home or at work and collect their purchases on the way back home. In parallel of the local store structural changes, a large majority of consumers request new circuits of supply, certified “organic”, “ethical”, “fair”, or not, as they supposed to be better products, in terms of production and distribution. The process of “concentration - specialization - intensification” of the agricultural production set up from the 1950 to 1960 favored the emergence of mass-market retailing. This dynamic incited the producers to constantly decrease their production costs (DURAND G., 2007).<sup>11</sup>New trade circuits in rural and suburban areas (Direct farm sales, markets, tours and indirect sales to a merchant retailer) put down intermediates takings.

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<sup>11</sup> Durand (G.), 2007, *La vente directe en Bretagne : phénomène marginal ou nouvelle manière d'exercer le métier d'agriculteur*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 210 p.



They coexist with the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)<sup>12</sup>, organizations of new practices of consumption within a value system which try to combine quality and local products. These alternative forms of distribution clearly promote a development model not based on competition among territories but on territorial enhancement production.

This return marks positive values which included each aspirations and rationalization of way of life and the expansion of free time. So, "Fun shopping" and proximity have never been so close but so distant too. The improved accessibility to local stores allows more time to spend in the shopping centers. However, it remains complicated to satisfy all the consumers. Their different incomes, lifestyles and the social values given to the purchase may seem remote.

The capacity of proximity to reengage the social mix<sup>13</sup> is here in doubt. In opposition to the hypermarket with large catchment area, the local store would promote "potential preventions of the self-segregation"<sup>14</sup>, as well as in upper class neighborhood and in most popular ones. As J-C Chamboredon and M. Lemaire noted in 1970<sup>15</sup>, giving the proximity the best virtues in modeling urban space, amplify the social distance. Observation of the more classics practices is then enough to show how the relationship between the spaces remains anchored in the mentality and linked even further by the practices. They reveal the most intense socio-spatial differences. Far from "the village in the town" of Young and Willmott<sup>16</sup>, it remains to verify the positive effects of this kind of sustainable development.

## THE LEITMOTIF OF SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

No project planning can be achieved without the sanctification of sustainable development. The term is engraved on the principal pieces of legislation, following many

<sup>12</sup> In France, the CSA named Association pour le Maintien de l'Agriculture Paysanne (AMAP)

<sup>13</sup> Navereau (B.), 2011, *Le commerce alimentaire de proximité dans le centre-ville des grandes agglomérations, l'exemple de Toulouse et de Saragosse*, Thèse de doctorat, Université de Toulouse II-Le Mirail, dir. R.Marconis, 560p.

<sup>14</sup> Peron (R.), 2001, « Le près et le proche », *Les Annales de recherche urbaine*, n°90, pp.46-57.

<sup>15</sup> Chamboredon (J-C.), Lemaire (M.), 1970, « Proximité spatiale, distance sociale : les grands ensembles et leur peuplement », *Revue Française de Sociologie*, XI, n°1, pp. 3-33.

<sup>16</sup> Young (M.) et Willmott (P.), 1983, *Le village dans la ville*, traduit de l'anglais par Gottman (A.) avec la collaboration de D'Hellencourt (B.), Centre Georges Pompidou / CCI, 255p.



European directives<sup>17</sup>. Sustainable development is an obligatory step for any new commercial program<sup>18</sup>. In a saturated market, the new shopping centers or extensions to existing centers must be HEQ "high environmental quality".

Several certifications have been developed in France. From 1996 exists the "Association HQE", grouping property developers and building industry. This association is state-approved. There is thus the standard AFNOR (2005), "NF Tertiary Buildings - HQE" for among other commercial buildings. It is issued by CERTIVEA, a subsidiary of Scientific and Technical Centre (CSTB).<sup>19</sup>In this certification are taken into consideration consumption of energy, water treatment, materials used for buildings, etc. HQE Certifications issued by Certivea are of only 652,415 sqm for 36 plants. We can illustrate this trend by various fairly typical examples of current achievements. The project "Portes de Gascogne" in Toulouse area is a vast shopping center should open in the periphery. It offers, according to its promoters, many environmental qualities with lots of greenery, the use of natural light, the use of noble materials, recycling waste water and parking. In parallel, this mall is presented as a "place to live" than a center of consumption.

Beyond the few shopping centers, the imperative of sustainable development is sometimes considered a more ambitious approach, because leaving the monofunctional approach. In Greater Lyon, we can evoke the example of the "Carré de soie". This is an extensive program of reclassification of a district which is a collaboration between a promoter (ALTAREA COGEDIM) and the Urban Community of Lyon. The aim is to regenerate a former industrial area by developing jointly a shopping center, leisure as well as housing. The center is connected by a network bus, tram and metro to the rest of the city. Another example of a desire to develop mixed use is the district named "Cartoucherie" in Toulouse, a sustainable ecological district project on a former industrial site. This is to revive with the city, partly idealized, more mixed urban neighborhoods and

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<sup>17</sup> Young (M.) et Willmott (P.), 1983, *Le village dans la ville*, traduit de l'anglais par Gottman (A.) avec la collaboration de D'Hellencourt (B.), Centre Georges Pompidou / CCI, 255p.

<sup>18</sup> Without the objective of completeness, we can mention in the treaty of Amsterdam (1997), incorporation of the principle of sustainable development as its overall objective of the European Union or at the french level the law n° 2000-1208 du 13 décembre 2000 named "Solidarité et renouvellement urbain".

<sup>19</sup> Des équivalents existent à l'étranger. Signalons pour l'Europe le BREEAM Green Leaf au Royaume-Uni ou le label suisse MINERGIE.

the short distances and with the objective of a sustainable urban production. A retail trade to the size of the neighborhood has its place with the desire to reduce the mobility factor for purchases.

In all these cases, we find systematically the principles of functional mix, social mix, urban compactness, reconstruction of the city over the city and a “non-automobility”. Revival of downtown, more discourse around urban compactness, rejection of a questionable aesthetic functionalism, systematic environmental issues, sometimes expressed in terms of legislative and regulatory injunctions are factors of a urban renewal business investment.

### **A NEW SUSTAINABLE RETAIL OR THE TRADITIONAL RENEWAL OF CAPITAL?**

But it also requires caution even deconstruction. All these developments of retail ultimately evade many urban issues linked to the sustainable city because they are not included in its multifunctional complexity. They are at first entrepreneurial strategies for renewal of the commercial offer in order to perpetuate the activity. This reinvestment of retail in the city is also accompanied by various negative effects. The realities of business reinvestment in French cities question the urban functioning in the context of misuse of sustainable development and an exaggeration of the virtues of local shops.

In sustainable development discourse often prevails over the reality of measurable impacts. If you believe the developers of new shopping centers, energy consumption would be half that. Admit. But is that urban planning and urban sustainable development? The so-called urban projects are often just a little more refined script of the act of buying seen as the ultimate goal. As for shopping centers HQE, the difference with the traditional shopping centers is-it so great? What happens when this kind of center stay in a mono-functional position? What are these realizations if they are only points in the city? We can also wonder about the real depth of these environmental certifications. Is it not just marketing? Is it not a form of “town branding” treated with “green business”?

Finally, besides the new retail plants, what about the rest of the city? Theses realizations are they not only urban G-string? Key issues are ignored like the configuration of the urban and flows that animate it. It is with reason that some people talk about

these malls of a "cosmetic façade as long as there 2000 cars will come"<sup>20</sup>. Finally, many of these plants are only increasing a large commercial offer. We can note the differential in the rate of progression between the retail sales areas and the level of consumption: if the level of consumption only increases by 14% between 1992 and 2004, the retail park increases by 44%. The movement is not dried up: for 2015 it is planned 66 shopping centers and the renovation/expansion of 56 is expected, for a total of 2.3 million additional square meters<sup>21</sup>. This frenzy of trading investors, anxious to occupy market share, may result in the medium term by many shopping wastelands.

As for the highlighting of the proximity, we must not forget that this redeployment carries various consequences not always positive. What about the issue of urban freight? What about very discriminating socio-spatial logic? The development of retail proximity particularly affects urban districts concerned by process of gentrification (in French we said also "boboifiés"). Retail is heavily involved in the emergence of a "neo-liberal city" where urban production is increasingly beholden to private capital with privatization of public spaces, existing or created by neo-commercial investments. What about the rest of the city? What about the permanency of urban sprawl and commercial polarities in the suburbs? The problem of a not sustainable retail development in the peripheral areas stays like one of the most important stake of the French urbanism.

All this leads to one final question: retail planning can be left in the hands of the private sector alone? The action of private actors in the construction of urban commerce is not new. Since the medieval urban renewal, the "hausmannisation" in the XIX<sup>e</sup>C or implantation of the peripheral polarities by large retailers in the 60s, retail trade enterprises were among the driving forces of the construction of the city. The inventiveness, innovation and investment capabilities remain the prerogative of private actors. Conversely, the terms of government action does not necessarily reflect a great insight on the matter. We can remember that the actual situation follow the incapacity of the public governance to include the modernization of the retail sector in a global urbanism. It's a French paradox because our country has developed a specific governance named "urbanisme commercial" (perhaps we can translate that by retail

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<sup>20</sup> Francois Bellanger, *Le Monde*, October 29, 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Madry (P.), *Le commerce est entré dans sa bulle*, communication au colloque « Commerce et Discontinuités », Arras, 23-25 mars 2011 (à paraître).

urbanism or retail planning?) since 1973. One of its originality is to obliged firm to ask a special authorization for opening a commercial establishment of more 300 square meters, with planning permission<sup>22</sup>. But this considerable number of laws and regulations never take the problem of the urbanism but was preoccupied by the protection of the smallest retail firms. This regulation was also taking on the town level like a tool for control competition by the firms previously present. Because of Europe and the policy of free competition, this juridical arsenal is condemned to evolve. The past months view lot of debates for the suppression of the law of retail planning. In these discussions, the urban planning issues are more and more present. But if the diagnosis is made, there is no law yet<sup>23</sup>.

Must we therefore renounce any action? We must never forget that companies are primarily concerned about their turnover. Moreover their investments question the entire city with its diversity and complexity. They can for example facilitate the process of socio-spatial segregation which queries the "living together" and finally an entire model of society. Maybe the consumers should be the main agents of change? Some analysts are betting on the rise of "consom'acteurs" and other "locavores" (consumers who prefers local supplies) or "green consumers". But consumption practices indicate that the citizen quickly fades behind the "homo-consommatus". The sum of individual rationality –of companies or consumers - is far from a guarantee of effective and sustainable city year. There must be public regulation and geographers must participate in this project.

For geographers, it is no longer sufficient to simply describe the changes from one sector but to measure the implications of the mutations on the town in conjunction with changes in consumption practices. This involves developing a critical approach

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<sup>22</sup> This level has evolved over time from 1 500 to 300 sq.

<sup>23</sup> Several official reports are interesting to read : Rochefort (R.), 2008, *Un commerce pour la ville*, Rapport au Ministre du Logement et de la ville, février 2008, 83 p ; Charié (J-P.), 2009, *Avec le commerce mieux vivre ensemble*, Ministère de l'Economie, de l'Industrie et de l'Emploi, mars 2009, 158 p. ; Piron (M.), 2010, *Rapport d'information sur l'urbanisme commercial en Allemagne, un exemple intéressant de volontarisme politique*, Commission des Affaires européennes, 19 mai 2010, 61 p. ; Ollier (P.), Gaubert (J.), 2010, *Rapport sur la mise en application de la loi n° 2008-776 du 4 août 2008 de modernisation de l'économie*, Commission des Affaires économiques, Assemblée nationale, 18 février 2010, 85 p.

to sustainable development too often manipulated. Logically, this means leaving of sectorial approaches.

Trade must be systematically studied as one element among others of urban complexity. Studying the retail means taking into account housing, transport, the flow of people and goods and other economic activities. Geographers, at the junction between humanities and social sciences, by integrating the spatial dimension and also being a little better equipped to consider the environmental dimensions, must find their place in the challenge of a sustainable urban trade or more precisely a retail business in a sustainable city. Besides the urban issues, geographers must also participate in understanding the rules of supplying at the scale of the city and stores.

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