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# EPHEMERALITY IN PUBLIC ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIORS: THE RETAIL DESIGN IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

**Edona Arifi Sadiku[1], Elena Nikoljski Panevski[2]**

*[1]American University of Europe – FON, Republic of North Macedonia*
*[2]Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, North Macedonia*
*Faculty of Design and Technologies of Furniture and Interior - Skopje*
*Email: edona.arifi@gmail.com; nikoljski@fdtme.ukim.edu.mk*

## ABSTRACT

The Republic of North Macedonia during this last half of a century has undergone major internal and external influences that have affected architecture and design. When it comes to public interiors, they not only reflect architectural trends but also adapt to contemporary changes and continuously evolve. Changes in retail design occur in the architectural basis, in the way of functioning, and in the interior design, including the type of furniture, including materialization, form, location, and appearance. Shops have also changed the external appearance of the facade, shop window, and type. The changes are a consequence of major economic, political, and sociological changes in the country. However, in recent decades, globalism and world trends have had a greater impact. After the terrible earthquake in Skopje and the reconstruction of the city, the transition to capitalism The terrible earthquake in Skopje and the subsequent reconstruction have further emphasized and applied the transition to capitalism. emphasized and applied. There is also a stronger exchange of trade with Europe, which results in new influences on architecture and retail design (design for commercial premises). Consequently, the direction of changes in architecture and interior design is oriented from the 2WW style through modernism until today's contemporary retail design style. This research will use the method of triangulation-a qualitative method, field research, measurement and drawing, the method of comparison, and the method of simulation. Through comparative and qualitative tables, it will be concluded that there are changes in the atmosphere of shops in the Republic of North Macedonia, which indicate rapid transitions from one type to another-this gives us a direction towards defining retail interiors in the RNM as ephemeral-often changing, short-lived, and transient.

**Keywords:** public architecture, public interior, retail design, ephemeral architecture.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The research topic of this paper is the developments in our country, which have also influenced architectural and interior public changes. Globally, retail interiors are evolving; this study examines these changes and their ephemeral manifestations. The purpose and importance of this research results in defining the development of retail interiors, a study that has not been done so far in the RNM.

In addition to the theoretical part, from a philosophical and ontological aspect for analyzing the phenomena with their occurrence and movement, the factual social and economic aspects of the RNM, from 1963 to 2024, are researched. The manifestations are investigated, which, according to the conclusion, jointly acted to make public interiors undergo four different periods of development: Period 1 occupies the time frame from 1963 to 1970, the period with domestic shops with artisanal service and sales activities, in the process of restructuring the interiors towards the West after the earthquake and the Western influence of the architecture of Kenzo Tange, which reinforces the already begun modernism; Period 2 is within the time frame from 1971 to 1991, when modern architecture is

intensively developed and interior design is especially nurtured, a period when Yugoslav brands are spreading in addition to older shops; Period 3 is within the time frame from 1991 to 2004, it explores and explains the shops after the independence of the state and privatization, when citizens approach the interior with their private possibilities and knowledge. In this period, the effort of processing public interiors is obvious; Period 4 is within the time frame from 2005 to 2024, a period when changes occur in the standard of buying and consumption, when modern standards of consumption and contemporary architecture and interior design emerge from globalism.

The research is based on an architectural analysis of existing stores from P1 to P4, analyzing planimetry, area, functional and zonal division of use for furniture for salespeople and for customers, type of furniture with materialization, and floor and ceiling with lighting elements. Through qualitative tables and comparison, it is concluded on visible and physical changes in the current stores as a case study.

From a phenomenological perspective, it is concluded that there have been rapid changes in retail design in stores from 1963 to the present, moving from one type of store to another, with changes in location, type of shopping center, interior design style, and the introduction of new content in retail public design.

This research contributes to the disclosure of the developmental processes that have affected retail design. The definition of the four periods as a result of field observation in addition to theory, ontology, and state processes is among the first research of this kind. The comparison of qualities in retail design and the conclusion of the phenomenon of ephemerality is also among the first research on this topic in RNM.

### 1.1. Research purpose

The aim of this multidisciplinary research is to reveal the development processes in the Republic of N. Macedonia, confirming the emergence of ephemeral retail interiors-temporary and short-lived. The dynamic changes in retail design in the RNM, initiated by the transition and globalism, have contributed to the transition of retail interiors from one type to another. The emergence of multiple typologies of retail stores defines influential factors of this phenomenon, which is framed from 1963 to 2024. The short-lived nature of these typologies of stores and retail interiors and their transformation is associated with the emergence of the phenomenon of ephemerality.

The phenomenon of ephemerality in architecture explains its short-term and frequent changeability. It has been studied by architects and theorists such as Robert Kronenburg, Bryan Chappel, Ghalia Boustani, and many others. In addition to describing temporary architecture, they also describe elements that compose an ephemeral interior, used as elements of research in this paper. The research process includes state development from 1963 to 2024, internationalism and globalism, architectural analyses in case studies, and defining the development of retail interiors.

### 1.2. Research methods

This paper uses methodological triangulation-a theoretical and analytical method. Through the theoretical method, the phenomenological dimension in architecture and influence is explained. Through historical analysis of economic and social topics, the development of the state in the RNM is explained.

Through the analytical method, an architectural simulation of retail interiors from real stores is performed as a case study. The architectural analysis includes a technical drawing of the store base with real retail furniture, interior design, and advertising. Using ArchiCAD (ArchiCAD 21), a realistic current simulation of the store interior is drawn. On-site measurement of the space in the stores is performed with a laser instrument (Bosch 2019), while the photography is done with a mobile phone.

The theoretical method defines a development process and influential internal and external impact factors that have contributed to retail design developing in different phases and styles, which also show changes in retail culture in the RSM, in the time frame 1963-2024. The architectural simulation shows a real state of retail interiors, which, as a parallel analogy, confirms changes in retail design with parallel development processes of social and economic topics.

The case studies included in this paper are 8 selected stores, out of a total of 43 observed examples. The 8 stores were selected that most satisfy with information such as preservation of original interior

elements, availability of historical information, availability of architectural measurements, representation of each identified retail typology, and representation of different periods of historical development. The measurements, drawings, and classification of four retail types are not phenomenology; they are architectural analysis. The interpretation that these typological changes express the phenomenon of ephemerality is the phenomenological dimension.

The architectural analysis is conducted using defined analytical categories, including spatial organization, circulation, furniture systems, materialization, lighting, visual merchandising, stylistic features, and atmospheric qualities. These categories are systematically compared across all case studies to identify qualities and differences and establish retail typologies that correspond to different historical periods. This allows for a systematic comparative analysis, which involves architectural typology, comparative historical analysis, and phenomenological interpretation.

The case studies are not presented as isolated descriptions. They are analyzed comparatively to identify recurring architectural features that define each retail typology. The typologies are then interpreted in relation to the historical development of RNM and the concept of ephemerality.

## 2. IMPACT FACTORS FOR INITIATING CHANGE

Phenomenologically based research is the understanding of how events occur spontaneously, in terms of description based on real evidence. The process encompasses a wide range of theoretical and applied factors that influence the occurrence of phenomena. Phenomena occurring in one place may be similar to phenomena in another, but each city/state experiences and processes differently, by its society.

The research so far verifies changes in the internal affairs of the country, with parallel external indications and problems. The table below explains the factors that influenced the emergence of the phenomenon in public interiors. The table identifies the events that contributed to the public retail interiors changing in a short period of time. At the same time, the events in the table define time periods of changes in public interiors. These time divisions help to confirm the identification of real retail interiors with their style, furniture, window displays, signs, and formats in our region.

***Table 1.*** *Qualitative table of events in the region of Macedonia from 1963 to 2024, defining time periods according to different influences.*

| YEAR | INTERNAL EVENTS | EXTERNAL INFLUENCES | TIME PERIODS |
|---|---|---|---|
| Before 1963 | People's Republic of Macedonia | Industrialism<br>Transition | Post World War II architecture |
| 1963-1991 | 1963-1991 Socialist Republic of Macedonia<br>Earthquake and reconstruction under modernism | Europeanization<br>Trade with countries in Europe | Post World War II architecture – **P1** (1963-1970) |
| | | | Modern architecture and interior – **P2** (1971-1991) |
| 1991-2019 | Republic of Macedonia | World standards of trade, globalization | Postmodern architecture and interiors – **P3** (1992-2004) |
| 2019-2024 | Republic of North Macedonia | Modern world standards of trade, globalization, digitalization | Modern architecture and interiors – **P4** (2005-2024) |

The table shows the events in the country that affect changes in the development of public interiors. In field research, the differences point to four periods, which contribute to the formation of different formats of shopping centers and stores in our country.

In addition to the main influencing factors, the development of the economy plays a key role. The development of the economy, in addition to internal affairs, also depends on world trends. Today's world economy aims at international consumerism and consumption with global standards. In addition to the above-mentioned changes in Macedonia, the economy is based on constant stagnation. Industrialism and transition are processes that are experienced in Macedonia under inappropriate circumstances and

conditions of development. The stability of the standard of living has been disrupted by the country's frequent major shifts, which contributed to chaotic conditions that pass incompletely.

Economic growth was observed between 1968 and 1989, especially in the area of trade. This growth was halted by the division of the SFRY, especially in Macedonia. The privatization process, the Greek embargo in 1992, the interethnic conflict in 2001, and the constant inappropriate policies contributed to the Republic of Macedonia being the poorest country in the SFRY. After independence, despite the very low economic development, citizens devoted themselves to independent ways of survival, including opening private shops throughout the cities. This is confirmed by Table 2, when from 1989 to 1996 the number of opened shops grew from 9957 to 23101 shops.

**Т-01: Број на продавници, продажен простор, прирачен магацин и број на работници**
**T-01: Number of stores, sales area, at-hand storage space and number of employees**

| | Број на продавници Number of stores | Продажен простор во м² Sales area in m² | Прирачен магацин во м² At-hand storage space in m² | Број на вработени во продавниците Number of employees in stores | Просечен продажен простор во м² Average sales area in m² | | Просечен број на работници во продавниците Average number of employees per store |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | по продавница per store | по продавач per seller | |
| 1 976 | 6 173 | 464 573 | 114 726 | 17 814 | 75 | 26 | 3 |
| 1 978 | 6 861 | 511 350 | 125 363 | 20 400 | 74 | 25 | 3 |
| 1 980 | 6 986 | 552 107 | 149 169 | 21 093 | 79 | 26 | 3 |
| 1 982 | 7 364 | 603 702 | 194 356 | 23 740 | 82 | 25 | 3 |
| 1 984 | 7 505 | 670 590 | 181 729 | 24 467 | 89 | 27 | 3 |
| 1 986 | 7 995 | 697 111 | 181 906 | 26 532 | 87 | 26 | 3 |
| 1 989 | 9 957 | 764 874 | 191 891 | 27 806 | 77 | 28 | 3 |
| 1 996 | 23 101 | 893 179 | 131 384 | 30 839 | 38 | 28 | 1 |
| 2 003 | 24 276 | 1 233 505 | 159 066 | 32 537 | 51 | 38 | 1 |
| 2 008 | 22332* | 1 367 063 | 188 364 | 32 021 | 61 | 43 | 1 |
| 2 016 | 18 250 | 1 213 895 | 243 166 | 41 057 | 67 | 30 | 2 |

* не се вклучени аптеките
* excluding pharmacies

Activate Windows
Go to PC settings to activate Windows.

***Figure 1.*** *Number of stores, sales area, warehouse space, and number of employees.*

In Table 1, as a consequence of the comprehensive changes in the country, a direct indication of the initiation of changes in internal sales interiors is observed. Based on field research, the following is a classification of types and formats of interiors, divided into four typologies, based on time, location, and current events:

- Period 1 (1963-1970) - As part of Yugoslavia, at this time shopping was organized at green markets and old bazaars. Bazaars, as urban structures with Ottoman origins and centuries-old existence, showed the traditional side of buying and selling in every city, especially Skopje, Bitola, Tetovo, etc. The shops in the old bazaars, in addition to the urban structure and application of craftsmanship, preserve the historical spirit and craftsmanship, although in a much lower percentage. At this time, in addition to the former small private shops with craftsmanship, services, and sales, Yugoslav brands began to appear, active in department stores and old bazaars. Modern architecture expanded intensively with rapid dynamics after the earthquake in Skopje (1963).

- Period 2 (1971-1991) – In this period, modern buildings are emphasized, especially with the construction of the City Shopping Center. In addition to the old bazaars, shops are spread throughout public buildings on the ground floor and department stores. Industrialism is expanding; new shops are opened for sale only in addition to the artisan shops in the bazaar, while Yugoslav brands are presented with newly decorated interior stores. Yugoslav brands with their stores are spreading throughout the new shopping centers and in the old bazaars.

- Period 3 (1992-2004) – In the period after the independence of the Republic of Macedonia, despite the severe economic and political stagnation and prohibited trade routes and the embargo from Greece, new open shopping centers are being built in several cities of the country. The difficult conditions encourage citizens to orient themselves towards opening various stores everywhere in the cities without planning. Expert support is noted in the composition of public postmodern interiors. Foreign investments, which were necessary for improving the economy in Macedonia, brought the modern format of closed shopping centers, or "shopping malls".

- Period 4 (2005-2024) – this period marks a modern global architecture of commercial buildings with world standards: large enclosed volumes with internal galleries and halls and shops with windows

facing the halls. The interior of the shops is modern and holistic, a consequence of global companies, spread through chain stores.

The above-mentioned divisions in the period indicate comprehensive changes and phases of development. By defining indicators of change, the development of retail interiors is also defined. This research also shows ways in which state development acts in the formation of retail interiors.

### 2.1. Ephemeral architecture and interior

After industrial expansion and globalization, ephemeral architecture has gained great attention in the applied world. Technological development and digitalization, the global economy, and massive industry have created rapid and dynamic changes. Changes in architecture are explained by the phenomenon of ephemerality, which gives architecture an additional dimension, that of transience. Modern trends and the development of technology always bring architecture into temptation: trying innovations and keeping up with novelties and needs.

The term "ephemera" comes from the Greek language, which, when translated, means “lasting only one day”, that is, “epi” – upon, over and “hemera” – day (Chappel, 2004, p. 11). In a book written under deep analysis, Chappell talks about the impermanence side of architecture, evidence of a phenomenon in architecture based on time. Otherwise, according to him, the definition would be "a type of object designed to be distinguished by its impermanence and its physical departure from the location.” (Chappel, 2004, p. 4).

Following Robert Kronenburg and his books on ephemeral types of objects (Kronenburg 1998, 2003, 2006), authors have explored a wide range of uses of the term "ephemerality" in architecture and design. Galia Boustani explores the new short-lived so-called pop-up shops, which are built for a short existence/sale and quickly leave the site after completing their purpose (Bustani 2020, Bustani 2023). Consequently, the ephemeral phenomenon describes attributes in architecture and design as follows: short-termness, changeability, and transience.

### 2.2. The phenomenon of ephemerality and retail design

Public buildings are spaces for work and socialization, aesthetically arranged and prone to frequent changes. Due to the wide industrial expansion, massive production, and easy distribution, the culture of retailing is changing. The dynamics have a significant evolution that affects the different kinds of stores, including frequent store reorganisations and organisational changes. Ways to document the rapid development specifically in public interiors are framed by defining the constituent elements of retail interiors.

A distinct field of design has emerged as a result of the tremendous effort to produce stunning retail interiors: retail design. The term “science of shopping” was used by the author Underhill in 1997, who explained the ways of shopping and the environment in which shopping is done by listing characteristics and clarifications (Underhill, 2009, p. 4). Among the wide range of researchers, Christiaans and other authors describe retail design as “experience design” (Christiaans et al., 2012, pp. 1893-1902).

The strategic thinking and management of large retail companies, with the aspiration for greater economic benefits, have initiated frequent changes in retail interiors. In addition to the fact that the phenomenon of ephemerality possesses the attributes of short-termity, transience, and changeability, in addition to the ephemeral architecture of objects with a short-term purpose, this paper analyzes the attributes of ephemerality in retail interiors in more depth and specifically.

Author Lynn, defining retail design, identifies the constituent elements of retail design, with the following elements: Store brand or identity, retail sector: food (catering), fashion (wardrobe), home sector, leisure and recreation, store location (department store, high street retail, shopping malls, peripheral retail content, showrooms and retail parks, additional content in transport facilities, virtual shopping), sales environment/environment (sustainable retail, materialization, lighting, climate and sounds), methods and organization of space (principles of store organization, advertising, service and auxiliary space), design details (store facade, interior architecture or interior, fixed and freestanding elements) (Lynne, 2020).

Several authors have defined the constituent elements of shopping malls and retail design (Boustani, 2020, p. 44; Juan et al., 2021; Daucé and Rieunier, 2020). Based on these data and research in a real application dimension, the elements of interior retail design would be as follows, as in Table 2.

***Table 2.*** *Elements of interior retail design. Source: doctoral dissertation of author Erifi Sadiku.*

| | |
|---|---|
| FRONT FACADE | Fully or partially glazed |
| DISPLAY WINDOW | Completely separated (enclosed) from the store space, furniture separated from the store, not separated from the store |
| ZONALLY DIVISIONED SPACES BY DESIGN | Window display space, product display space (wall-mounted, freestanding sales furniture, cash register), salesperson space (cashier, warehouse), customer space (paths) |
| SALE FURNITURE AND ORGANIZATION | Sales furniture is divided into: G shelves, flex systems, smart systems, pole systems and freestanding systems. |
| PATHS (movement) | Free space for customer communication |
| MARKETING AND BRAND MANAGEMENT | Brand creation, brand advertising |
| MUSIC AND SMELL | Thematic selection of music and presence of scent |
| CONTENT AND CHANGES | Thematic change of product content, seasonal, holidays, trendy, organized events |
| INTERIOR ARRANGEMENT | Style, interior design (furniture, walls, materialization, lighting) |

Defining the elements reveals the components of retail interiors. When defining them, a case study analysis follows, in which, through the analysis of the component elements of the interior, a comparison and changes in public interiors in P1, P2, P3, and P4 are concluded.

## 3. CASE STUDY

### 3.1. Stores in P1

The constituent elements of a retail store help define changes in public design over the given time period from 1963 to 2024. This research describes a given number of real functional stores, opened at times designated as P1, P2, P3, or P4. The following is a table of two example stores opened in P1.

Descriptive characteristics of example stores in P1:

- Smaller shops in terms of square footage, sales activity, and crafts;
- Different layout of the shops, a consequence of centuries-old morphological changes in the old bazaar. They have expanded or merged with each other (from the field analysis);
- In addition to sales, craft activities are also carried out. Crafts are carried out in the shop space and in other private locations;
- The shops taken as an example in P1 have the same layout from the 60s and are functional today with the same purpose;
- Public sales furniture is created based on the basic needs of the seller, most often produced by local craftsmen in vernacular materialization. The interior for work and sales was realized by the seller, under their taste, possibilities, and conditions;
- Style and construction with Ottoman origin, upgraded under the spirit of the Western style, noted in the interiors and in the front facade. Materials such as wood, glass, and metal are used: wooden shelves, small chests of drawers, walls covered with wooden paneling, wooden work, and sales tables. Usually glass for the need for display space. Ceilings with white painted ribbed sheet metal, with paneling, etc. The floor is made of wooden planks and ceramic tiles, made earlier or more recently. Ambient lighting with neon follows;
- The furniture was constantly added and changed, and a lack of uniformity is noticeable;
- The facades and shop windows are similar, from the materialization of wood and glass.




***Figure 2.*** *Architectural analyses of two stores from P1. Source: by the author.*

### 3.1.1. Window and sign-in stores from P1

Throughout the field research, the stores in P1 have three window typologies:
- flat window;
- window pulled out and
- window pulled in.

The front facade is derived from the Ottoman style, structured in wood and plain glass. It is found on protectors from excessive solar radiation or security protection at night on glass surfaces: metal blinds that are lowered down, metal mesh or sheet metal, "wooden shutters", fabric blinds that are lowered and gather above the window, etc.

The sign aims to inform customers about the type of store and the services provided. In the two stores mentioned, for example, the sign informing about the services in the store is difficult to see for the consumer. It is presented through foil letters and glued to the glass surface at the window or in the door.

### 3.2. Shops in P2

The example stores in P2 cover the period from 1971 to 1991. During this period, public design changed drastically, characterized by a rapid transition from small, service shops without decorated interiors to a serious tendency towards decorated public interiors in the spirit of modernism. The major differences are observed in the bazaars, which, as the oldest trading locations, due to the rapid changes resulting from industrialism, are beginning to change their interiors to modernism.

The following is a figure of two example stores opened in P2.

Descriptive characteristics of sample stores in P2:
- The interior of the shops is influenced by modern architecture;
- Craftsmanship is decreasing. One shop has only a sales function, and the second also has a service activity;
- The furniture is pre-designed and designed in accordance with the function, work, needs, and dimensions of the space;
- The materialization of the furniture is made of wood, metal (iron, aluminum), and ordinary 4 mm glass, built over wooden frames in tables that display products. The wooden furniture appears painted with paint (example 1 with blue paint) and with transparent varnish (example 2);
- The window of shop 1 has been changed from an old bazaar window with wood and glass to a flat window of aluminum and glass. Shop 2 in GTC is completely transparent with 6 mm glass, and the glass door hangs in a metal aluminum frame with a mechanical opening;
- The furniture is made by local craftsmen, durable and functional to this day.

Store number 2 still exists with the same function, while store 1, immediately after field measurements, research, and analysis, changed its interior and is still active.

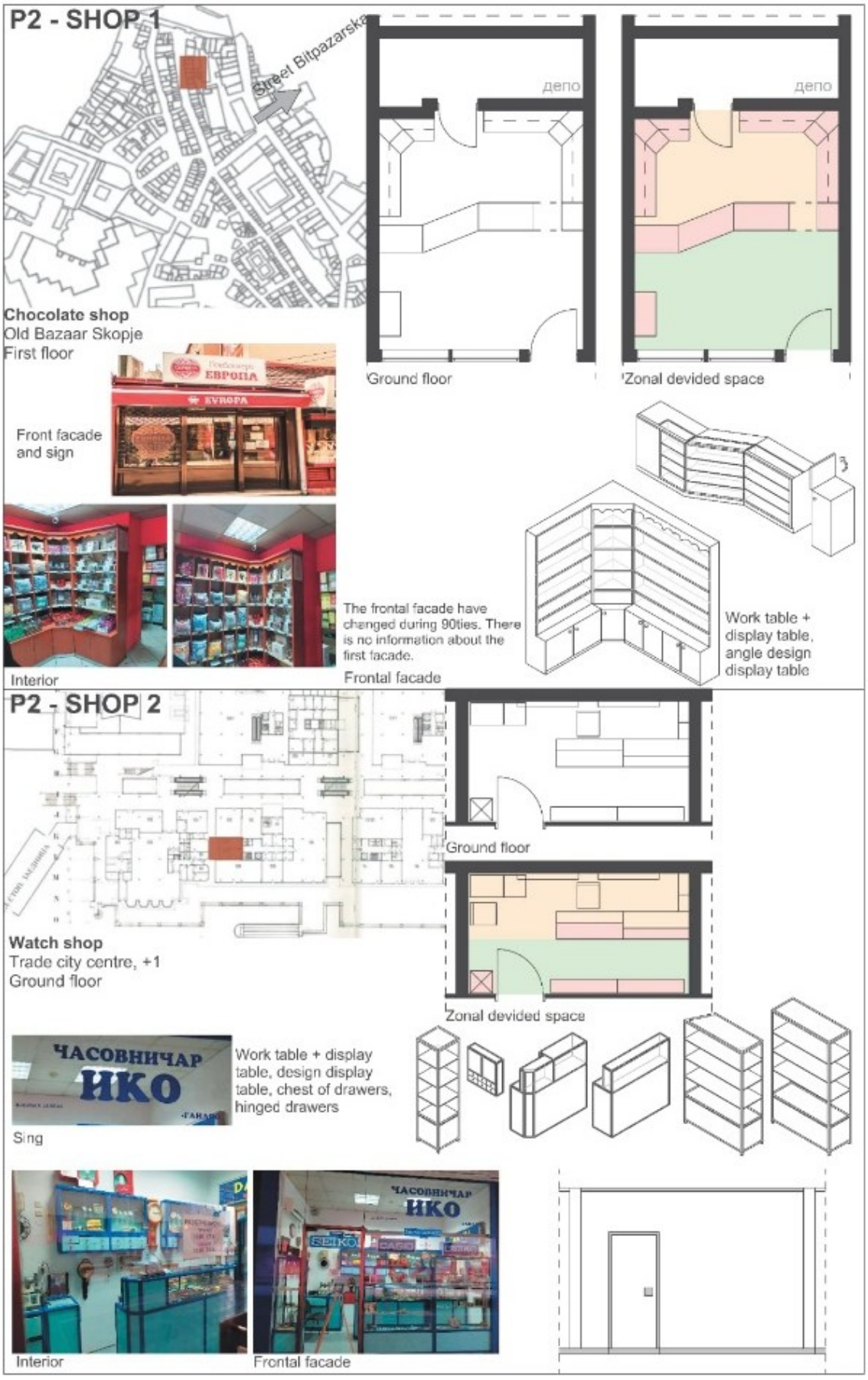



***Figure 3**. Architectural analyses of two stores from P2. Source: by the author.*

### 3.2.1. Window and sign-in stores from P2

The sign in the shops, for example, is a simple sign for informing about the type of shop and the name. It is noticeable in the form of glued foil letters in the shop window, above the glass surface. In shop 1, a special logo and sign design are noticeable. Through this type of shop, the advertising and brand of a shop begin to appear.

The front facades in both examples are flat, while the shop window is realized from the inside with separate display cases, similar to the furniture of the entire shop, with a clear tendency towards holism.

### 3.3. Shops in P3

The independence of the Republic of Macedonia brought difficult economic conditions and a chaotic situation in the country. During this period, a large number of private shops were opened as one of the simple ways of survival. Private shops were opened everywhere in the cities without any provision or planning from the state. Unlike in 1989, when there were 9957 shops (excluding pharmacies) with an area of 764,874 m² + warehouse space, in 1996 a total of 23101 shops (excluding pharmacies) with an area of 893,179 m² + warehouse space were registered (see table 2).

The wide expansion of stores contributes positively to public interiors. Professional progress is seen in the development of public retail interiors. However, interiors are divided into interiors with higher investment and interiors with lower investment.

The following is a figure of two example stores from P3.

Descriptive characteristics of example stores in P3:

- Of the above-mentioned stores, one is located in the city center, adapted into an old building with a former function as a house in the center, while the second store is in a shopping center;
- In store 2, the function is sales, and the furniture is made for displaying jewelry. Public furniture has a serious tendency towards holism;
- The style of the interior design is postmodernism and neoclassicism, realized by a professional. The furniture is mainly made of wood, in lacquer color, with a glazed part in the tables where products are displayed. The walls are partially covered with wood. The same texture and color of wood are used in the furniture and walls;
- The window of store 1 has a smaller glazed area, with a wall, door, and window. Example 2 is completely transparent in a shopping center;
- The ceiling is lowered, and the floor is with ceramic tiles or laminate;
- The lighting in both stores, for example, is ambient with neon. There is a tendency to harmonize the lighting elements with the overall interior design;
- The stores have kept as an example their interior, realized in the 90s, which represents a unique public sales design realized by domestic craftsmen.




***Figure 4.*** *Architectural analyses of two stores from P3. Source: by the author.*

### 3.3.1. Window and sign-in store from P3

The effort put into designing the store's name and logo is obvious. The work done by an expert in logo design is noticeable. The signs are presented to us in various forms: glued foil letters on the glass surface of the facade, a plastic volume element with the logo and name of the store and built-in lighting, metal letters engraved in a marble slab, a flat metal plate with a gold color and the name of the store, established in the interior, etc. The graphic design shows the presence of awareness of the sellers about the importance of advertising in the sales process.

### 3.4. Shops in P4

The stores in P4 represent a modern type of store. Modern stores are a consequence of globalism, the international culture of buying and selling that has undoubtedly expanded massively in the Republic of Macedonia in the last decade.

Contemporary retail design encompasses multiple disciplines: physical store, retail store design (transdisciplinary design), functional layout, aesthetics, appropriate atmosphere, lighting, and visual marketing (Quartier, 2016). Modern store formats represent an international dimension, surviving as a consequence of massive industrial expansion, digitalization, and consumerism. Two examples of contemporary stores follow.

Descriptive characteristics of example stores in P4:

- The stores represent modern formats of trade, located in an older format of a shopping center (example 1) and a new format of a closed shopping center (example 2);
- The sellers in these stores perform exclusively sales activities;
- There is a difference in the level of investment in interior design. The interiors have attributes of minimalism, industrialism, holism, maximum transparency, and luxury aesthetics;
- The furniture in modern stores is intended exclusively for sales. Designing specific furniture for specific products. All types of products have a specific place for display, in a special type of public furniture;
- The windows are glazed and transparent;
- The atmosphere in the stores is designed to be holistic. Store 2 was designed by a professional, and store 1 was organized by the owners;
- Materialization: different types of glass, wood and wood products (chipboard, MDF), granite, marble, metal (iron, aluminum), decorative elements, and greenery;
- Interiors are often changeable and innovative for greater attraction. For each holiday, season, new collection, and discount, there is a change in the position of furniture, a change in furniture, the introduction of new products, and new advertisements and sales programs;
- A special arrangement of the window is noted, with special lighting elements for emphasis in the window;
- The above examples of stores are actively functioning; one is a private store while the other is a local home store.




***Figure 5.*** *Architectural analyses of two stores from P4. Source: by the author.*

### 3.4.1. Window and signs-in stores P4

The main attribute of these modern stores is maximum transparency. The front facade with the main entrance and the shop window represents the first impression of the brand, at the same time being a delicate and main detail of a store. In addition to fully or partially transparent front facades, the shop window is designed inside, which is integrated into the front facade at its parapets or is a separate part of the front facade. In P4, two variants of shop windows are found: separate dressers or showcases for the shop window (example 2) and a separate space for the shop window that can be seen from the outside and inside (example 1).

## 4. CONGLOMERATE OF RESULTS

This research takes into account the analysis of 8 case study stores, their layout, zoning, area, interior, window, front facade, and online sales.

The qualitative table shows data on all stores opened in four specified periods. The table shows the differences and development in the time period from 1963 to 2024.

***Table 3.*** *Qualitative table of changes and developments in sample stores 1963-2024. Source: by author*

| **P 1** | **Area (net) m²** | **Display window** | **Furniture** | **Materialization** | **Floor** | **Ceiling** | **Lighting** | **Music** | **Scent** | **sign** | **Online sale** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | 5.7 m² | flat | Table, shelves, chair | Wood, metal | Ceramic plates | White facade | General lighting, neon | no | no | yes | no |
| **2** | 8.7 m² | Pulled out | Table, chair, chest of drawers | Wood, glass | Ceramic plates | White facade | General lighting, neon | no | no | yes | no |
| **P 2** | **Area (net) m²** | **Display window** | **Furniture** | **Materialization** | **Floor** | **Ceiling** | **Lighting** | **Music** | **Scent** | **sign** | **Online sale** |
| **1** | 15.8 m² | Flat glass and aluminium | Cupboards with open and closed shelves, table | Wood (plywood), glass | White Ceramic plates | Lowered ceiling | General lighting, neon, light panels | no | no | yes | No<br>Yes for a website |
| **2** | 8.8 m² | Flat glass and aluminium | Tables, chests of drawers, hanging closed shelves | Wood, glass, metal | Ceramic plates | Lowered ceiling | General lighting, light panels, neon in the shop window | no | no | yes | no |
| **P 3** | **Area (net) m²** | **Display window** | **Furniture** | **Materialization** | **Floor** | **Ceiling** | **Lighting** | **Music** | **Scent** | **sign** | **Online sale** |
| **1** | 14.6 m² | Wall, door and window with parapet | Walls with a white facade. Designed furniture with a large L | Wood, glass, metal reinforcement. | Ceramic plates. | A lowered wooden element with built-in neon lighting matches | Neon hanging. | no | no | yes | no |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | table and shelves on three sides. Tendency towards holism. | | | the interior. | | | | | |
| **2** | 15.7 $m^2$ | Fully glazed / transparent with aluminium door frame | Designed interior, wooden and glass shelves. Same look and table with glass display section. Partially wood-clad walls. | Wood, glass. | Ceramic plates | Lowered designed ceiling. | neon and spot. ambient and accent lighting. | yes | no | yes | Social networks. |
| **P 4** | **Area (net) $m^2$** | **Display window** | **Furniture** | **Materialization** | **Floor** | **Ceiling** | **Lighting** | **Music** | **Scent** | **sign** | **Online sale** |
| **1** | 23.1 $m^2$ | Partially glazed, decorated with arcades, special dressers for the window display from the inside. | Wooden chests of drawers rounded with marble, finished with glass. White and black marble in furniture | White painted wood, white marble, black marble, mirrors. | Decorated floor, marble and white ceramic tiles. | Lowered ceiling with unevennes s. Hanging chandelier and spotlight. | Lowered ceiling with a chandelier in the middle and spotlights througho ut the store and in the window. | yes | yes | yes | Website, online ordering, social media. |
| **2** | 16.5 $m^2$ | Fully glazed facade, with a small aluminium door frame. | The window is transparent. Metal shelves and hangers for goods, a wardrobe in the corner. A wooden cash register with drawers, a stool. | Wood, metal, glass. | Laminate | The ceiling is made of black painted sheet metal. | Spot above the shop window. Ambient and accent lighting. | yes | no | yes | Social networks |

The above table shows the growth of the area of the stores. The growth of the depots is also shown (Figure 1). The interiors are changing, from necessary furniture for the basic purpose and function in a store, the transition to modernism, then neoclassicism and today the contemporary style. The shop windows from the not completely transparent and Ottoman style, pass into the modernist style, completely glazed. The materialization in the furniture expands the palette, newly made types of glass are used, several types of metal and wood, marble and granite are added. The interiors have a strong effort towards holism. The floors are increasingly materialized with ceramic glossy plates, with large

dimensions and maximum reflection. The ceiling is lowered or arranged, with various lighting elements, which are ambient in P1 with the development of several types of lighting elements in P4.

The use of websites and TV channels for advertising begins in stores in P2. Modern stores from P4 massively use social networks and their own websites for online sales. The Covid-19 pandemic has initiated online sales worldwide.

Industrial expansion is clearly increasing consumerism, changing the culture of sales, the style of architecture and the interiors of retail spaces, and under the indications of globalism, introducing a special discipline of retail design.

### 4.1. Components that initiated changes in retail public interiors

Based on the above examples, it is concluded that there are dynamic changes in public retail interiors through components described below.

Historical and traditional component in addition to public design-The Old Skopje Bazaar is regionally among the oldest trading locations. The crafts developed in this area were irreplaceable. From the field observation it is concluded that the shops have a smaller area compared to shops from other periods. Their front facades are facing the street of the bazaar, facades made of wood and glass with Ottoman-style origins. The interiors are concentrated on the purpose of the shop and the crafts, without special attention and investment in aesthetics. The largest material used in the interiors is wood-interior walls lined with wood, floor with wooden boards, later replaced with ceramic tiles; wooden worktops with a small area for displaying products, glazed with ordinary glass. The ceiling is again with wooden boards or with white-painted sheet metal.

Cultural and economic components in addition to public design-in the Macedonian region, due to frequent political changes, destabilization, and stagnation occurring, which are most reflected in economic development. The transition from a Yugoslav state to an independent state, name change, and interethnic conflicts created enormous economic stagnation and social trauma [Petkovska 2019:64]. Despite the weak economic development, retail stores are developing dynamically. Factors of change occur quickly, although under chaotic conditions, retail interiors reflect and change with every internal and external indication. Under the influence of Ottoman architecture in the bazaars, the Ottoman style is evident in the interiors of retail stores (P1). During modernization (1970s), architecture transitions to modern commercial buildings and stores with maximum transparency. Yugoslav chain stores emphasize modernism in the interiors, when stores appear aesthetically decorated in a modern and retro style (P2). In the 1990s, independent private efforts by sellers towards the decoration of public interiors (P3) appeared in private shops. Classicism, neoclassicism, and postmodern styles of interior decoration were observed. Interiors differed in greater and lesser investment in decoration. Marketing also began in this period. Modern store formats are influenced by international standards, reached in the RSM by foreign investments, which completely changed the culture of buying and selling

Architectural component in addition to public design-treats the space for an appropriate function. In the example of the shops, the basics of space utilization by buyers, sellers, and furniture are analyzed-green color with a defined space for buyers, orange color for a defined space for sellers, and pink color with a defined space for furniture (Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5). In P1, the space is used more by the seller, despite the fact that the shops at that time also performed a service activity. With a space divided in half for buyers and sellers, it is seen in P2, while the space begins to be used more for furniture and buyers in P3 and especially P4. The space used for the seller is minimal, while for additional goods there is a depot in the back of the shop. The shops are aesthetically arranged with a larger number and types of furniture for displaying the products for sale.

Brand and store management in addition to public design—the retail design of modern stores does not exist without brand and store management by professionals, especially chain stores. The brand represents the unique name of an industrial company, which in collaboration with the sales manager and the interior architect fits a special store (Bustani 2021, 2020).

The architect, the brand, and the store manager are missing in P1. They appear in some stores in P2, mainly Yugoslav chain stores. In P3, advertising of the service appears on television channels in some stores and on accessibility on websites. In this period, in stores with a larger investment, an architect appears who designs special furniture for a particular store, which furniture is made by domestic craftsmen.

Modern stores in P4, originating from global chain stores, are the same everywhere in the world, with their products and physical appearance of the store. The furniture in these stores is designed by foreign architects, and the furniture is reassembled under the same regulations for each store around the world. Domestic chain stores and private stores make a great effort to follow the same global steps, which create new trends and are necessarily followed. Experts are involved in the process.

The component of aesthetics, technology, and digitalization in addition to public design–from industrialism and global spread, massive competition is reached. In addition to the brand that insists on identification and unification, marketing affects informing and imposing in human consciousness, and aesthetics in architecture is among the most important dimensions in creating a "theatrical" store.

Aesthetics in retail design, which can also be interpreted as hyperrealism, is treated by several authors. Baudrillard describes hyperrealism as a process of "disnification", which can be understood as culture being transformed into economic capital, especially emphasized in tourism and retail design (Harris, 2004) (Baudrillard, 2020). In addition to nostalgia, young people are deeply immersed in the digital world as opposed to real socialization. English as a world language and digital platforms are rapidly spreading new trends, creating addictions among the younger generations and a desire to follow them.

The development of technology acts to increase the real aesthetics in stores. It allows for the creation of diversity and hierarchy of furniture, elements, and products in the store. Possibilities of processing with different techniques of materials are closely linked to the processing of excellent furniture, with well-processed materials and techniques. Wide possibilities act in diversity, creating greater aesthetics and attraction for people, in addition to the architectural functional component. Improving the type of glass acts in a wider application of glass in addition to the massive window and in furniture, creating high transparency. The application of metal in minimal dimensions allows for minimalism. The shiny surfaces of the furniture and the floor increase the reflection. The use of several types of lighting elements, separated above each exhibited piece of furniture, for luxurious aesthetics follows. Aesthetics is beauty that creates attraction and desire in the buyer to participate. In this case, the purchase increases, with it the economic benefits.

### 4.2. Ephemeral retail interiors

The phenomenon of ephemerality explains the dynamic nature of architecture in addition to global changes, characterizing it with attributes of changeability, transience, and short-termism. Interior design over a period of six decades shows transformations in design, chaotic changes without appropriate processes, and interrupted ongoing processes. From a social perspective, by reviewing state authors and comparing with world literature, it can be concluded that RSM is passing into cultural backwardness (the theory of William Ogburn) (Ogburn, 1964) when material conditions (economy, technology) change faster than cultural beliefs or social institutions, creating tensions and instability. Consequently, Western development with their media, consumerism, and liberal politics is implemented before the state with its institutions and cultural identity is ready to absorb them. Natural evolution in our country occurs with constant problems that interrupt the appropriate direction of movement.

Public interiors have gone through several development phases over six decades; these phases, along with architecture and interior design, are closely related. The following is a figure showing the development of public interiors over the period 1963-2024, showing indicators and results.

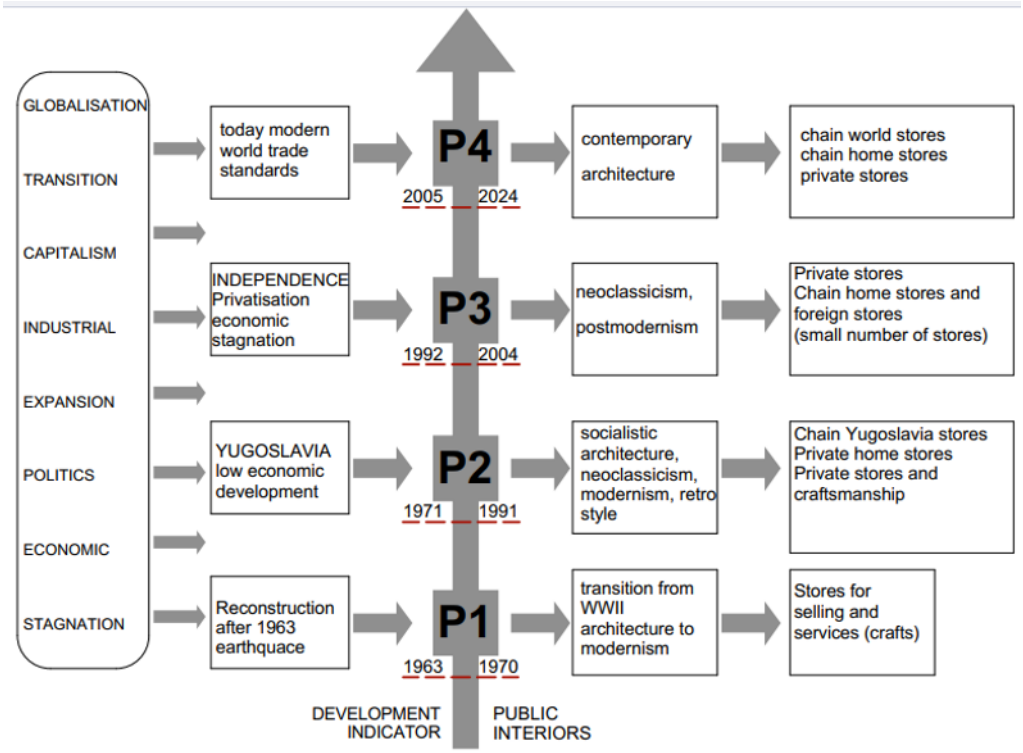



***Figure 6.*** *Key indicators of development and change in public interiors 1963-2024. Source: doctoral dissertation by author Arifi Sadiku.*

Figure 6 shows the results of the research. The table, viewed from left to right, shows the comprehensive indicators that contributed to changing events in the country, which events manifest themselves in the styles of architecture and interior design and the emergence of new formats of public interiors.

From the above, retail interiors in the RNM can be interpreted as ephemeral due to economic, social, cultural, and political changes, which in the process of globalization and internationalization show an active transition. The process of change is obvious and leads to the manifestation of phenomena. The phenomenon of ephemerality in architecture, which implies short-term, changeable, and transient, in the public context in interior design proves rapid transitions in different architectural styles, changes in types of stores along with their interior and window displays, changes in the process of buying and selling, changes in the level of investment, changes in technological processing, the introduction of new standards in store management and branding, and digitalization.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper aims to define the development of public retail interiors in the region of the Republic of N. Macedonia in the time frame from 1963 to 2024 and the emergence of a phenomenon. The method of researching the development and changes is phenomenological and architectural, by defining public retail interiors as ephemeral due to constant dynamic changes.

This research identifies and classifies the evolution of retail interiors in North Macedonia into four architectural typologies, demonstrating that shifts in retail design correspond to major socio-economic transitions. Through measured architectural documentation, comparative analysis, and phenomenological interpretation, the study argues that the repeated replacement of retail typologies constitutes an architectural manifestation of ephemerality.

From the above, it is concluded that there are impact factors that contributed to public interiors being very dynamic. It is concluded that there are specific reasons for the occurrence of rapid, imposed changes in order to keep up with comprehensive global trends. In addition to historical, economic, and social analyses and defining development processes, 8 specific stores, opened in different periods, are

researched. The stores experienced changes in area, public furniture, interior design methods, architectural style, and the introduction of new trendy content.

By analyzing the type of furniture, style, materialization, and real application, the conclusion is real and tangible. Despite the phenomenological method of research and the qualitative method of comparison, it is concluded that rapid imposed changes in public retail design have not been sufficiently experienced, analyzed, and developed. Retail design has experienced several unfinished processes in our region. In the modern and contemporary world, when consumerism in the period of digitalization moves uncontrollably, retail design inevitably changes, with short-term changes and acceptance of new challenges of the trend. The short-term nature of public retail, often changing and innovative formats, leads to ephemeral design.

Research based on the occurrence of phenomena contributes to the disclosure of manifestations and the understanding of the directions of development. The paper aims to define the process of changes in public architecture and interior design, specifically focusing on retail spaces in the RSM, and to identify the rapid applications of ephemeral design in public interiors. Further desirable studies in this area would be the consequences of the uncontrolled construction of a large number of shopping centers in our region and their function in the absence of sufficient demand, as well as the endless uncontrolled global consumption.

Retail design in North Macedonia evolved through successive societal transformations. Architectural reconstruction made it possible to identify recurring spatial characteristics that were not apparent from historical documentation alone. Because retail spaces respond rapidly to political, economic, and cultural change, they exhibit a degree of ephemerality that is much greater than many other architectural typologies.

The scientific contribution of this research lies in establishing the first architectural typology of retail interiors in North Macedonia based on measured case studies and comparative architectural analysis. The research demonstrates how successive socio-economic transformations generated four distinct retail typologies and interprets these rapid architectural transitions through the theoretical concept of ephemerality. By integrating historical analysis, architectural documentation, and phenomenological interpretation, the study proposes a methodological framework for understanding retail interiors as indicators of broader social and economic change.

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**Author's address**

Dr Erona Arifi Sadiku, PhD, assistant professor.
American University of Europe – FON,
Faculty of Design and Multimedia,
Bulevar Kiro Gligorov 3,
1000 Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia.

Dr Elena Nikoljski Panevski, PhD, full professor.
University Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje,
Faculty of Design and Technologies of Furniture and Interioer – Skopje,
16ta Makedonska Brigada 3,
1000 Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia.