

ENGLISH ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with the specification of bazaars and the bazaar economy. Bazaar [*bāzār*] is a Persian word for marketplace, also used in Turkish- *çarşı* [čarši]. Like the Arabic term souk سوق [súq], bazaar is both the concrete trading place, where many people meet and interact but like the English word *market* or the French *le marché* is also understood as a more abstract notion of buying and selling in the sense of demand and supply and it involves small shopping stalls, modern shopping and business avenues and shopping malls as well. Bazaar can refer to a single shopping unit or a street in the frame of the marketplace or outside its boundaries or to the whole business complex. The marketplace has symbolic and social importance indicative of its urban centrality. The souk is seen as one of the quintessential oriental spaces. Clifford Geertz and his own studies of Moroccan and Indonesian rural markets inspired many economic anthropologists to examine the structure of marketplaces in the developing world as products of *informational scarcity*.

The bazaar economy was defined in Clifford Geertz' extremely influential anthropological study on the bazaar economy in Sefrou (1978), a quite small town in Morocco with about 600 shops. Geertz was the first to emphasise the important difference between firm-centered and bazaar elements in the urban economy. In his classical study from Modjokuto in Indonesia shows in the transition from traditional to modern the change from small-scale peddling in the market place to large-scale merchandising in Western-type firms. The older traditional bazaar type gives way to the later modern firm type. The bazaar suffers from a lack of information and settled standards. The fundamental attribute of a bazaar is the *scarcity* and *mal-distribution* of information. In order to avert informational insecurity and price-signal noise, bazaars exhibit small enterprises, an extreme division of labor, which gives rise to occupational types and localization of markets and trade, heterogeneity of products and inhomogenous goods, intensive rather than extensive price bargaining, fragmentation of person-to-person transactions, low levels of capitalization, and a reliance on personal contract and stable „clientship“. Bazaar lacks much collective organization of any sort. The bazaar's peculiarities are less bizarre, whilst its norms and practices are treated as more than epiphenomenal aberrations. Two most important search procedures are *clientelization* and *bargaining*. Bargaining is the most noted characteristic of oriental bazaars. In the bazaar, information problems related to goods prevail, leading to bargaining over quality and quantity, sellers enjoying competitive advantage over buyers, and reduced price competition.

Clientelization represents the system-level deficiencies of the bazaar as communication network. It is the tendency for repetitive purchasers to establish continuing relationships with particular sellers. The relations are competitive relations, not dependency ones.

The thesis is based on the field research that took place in several periods (2009-2011) in the Syrian capital Damascus (before the contemporary political conflict) and afterwards in Dubai where was the aim of the fieldwork to compare two different market forms: bazaar, the typical market present in the Arab societies of Northern Africa and Middle East and the common retail markets existing in modern industrial societies, such as the „mall“ (shopping center). Developing countries have witnessed the rapid spread of supermarkets and malls, squeezing the market share of traditional small-scale grocery stores and food markets. In the bazaar are not well defined and formalized standards of measure and weight and traded goods are often not homogenous. Bargaining and clientelization are the most peculiar market institutions. In the case of the bazaar, the price dynamics prove that bargaining and clientelization may be effective communicative mechanisms for coordinating information among market participants. On the contrary, in the mall, standards of measure and weight are formalized and well defined, traded goods are homogenous and price information is public. The mall is characterized by posted price mechanism and impersonal transactions. In supermarkets prices for various commodities have been clearly established and labelled in advance. No matter how differently the bazaar and the mall seem to operate, they display a lot of similarities in common. I analyse the particular characteristics and functions of both institutions and explore the bazaar and the mall from many different aspects- such as historical, architectural, gender, safety or functional in order to show the necessity of their coexistence for the contemporary society and culture of the Middle East.

The term bazaar or souk has a number of related but distinct meanings: as an element in the social life of cities the bazaar could be identified as the more powerful merchants and entrepreneurs and the people who worked for them; institutionally the urban bazaar could be a collection of craft guilds; it could act as a credit information system, as a central business district, as a religious and recreation centre. The bazaar itself, with its multifunctional character, has many uses and represents a rich economic base: a mix of trade, services, industries, tourism, and even accommodation. To understand the bazaar one needs to look at it from following points of view: as a patterned flow of economic goods and services; as a set of economic mechanisms to regulate that flow; as a social and cultural system within which those

mechanisms are embedded. The traditional bazaar or souk is an economic institution, a communication network and a way of life, a general mode of commercial activity reaching into many aspects of the Arab society and Syrian in particular. Any bazaar is a major public forum, attracting diverse people who exchange information, rumor, family affairs, and opinions about economic conditions and political disputes. The souk of Damascus, with its many small-scale business enterprises managed by owner-managers, and family consortia run on informal lines, remains the centre of private sector economy of the Syrian capital. Damascus is still at the crossroads of many trade and pilgrim routes, although modern political boundaries and international disputes complicate trade. As a specific place for trade is the souk situated in downtown, in the labyrinth of covered alleys, the old city centre= al-madina(arab.). Most bazaars in the Middle East and North Africa tend to be grouped around some central point, a principal mosque or a citadel, around which was a concentric zonation of product types. The bazaar served as the cradle of the traditional urban culture. A place to meet and to trade, a place of social and professional integration for all the component elements of the city's population, the souks are the link between city and countryside, as well as between the city and foreign lands both near and far. Bazaar is an economic system and a social mechanism for the production and exchange of goods and services. In the bazaars of the Middle East must be seen some specialities in business making in connection with islamic character of the society. The final chapter of this thesis marginally presents an ethnographic documentation of life and work conditions of migrant workers in souks in Dubai and in the *Camel Market* in Lisaili. The ethnographic material is based on fieldwork carried out during 6 months (October 2012- March 2013). The main line of this partial research revolves around how migrants working in Dubai markets activate and utilize traditional social capital, symbiotic economic networks and family and kinship nesting as survival mechanisms. The Camel Market is a unique coexistence of many ethnic groups in an isolated space and thus can be interpreted as an example of total institution in Erving Goffman's view.