



The Relation between Retail Activity Transformation and Social Sustainability: A Case Study of Bahcelievler 7th Street, Ankara/Turkey

Özge YALÇINER ERCOŞKUN, Dr., Research Assistant
Gazi University, Department of City&Regional Planning, Turkey
ozgeyal@gazi.edu.tr

Burcu ÖZUDURU, Research Assistant
Gazi University, Department of City&Regional Planning, Turkey
bozuduru@gazi.edu.tr

The fast paced growth of shopping center supply transforms the urban retailing systems, attracting local retailers from shopping streets of city centers, and leaving retail spaces at city centers obsolete. This situation puts a strain both on the social sustainability of a community and economic vitality of local retailers. The literature presents evidence on the fact that shopping centers has an impact on shopping streets and city centers but the nature of this impact has remained unexplored. In Ankara, Turkey, the problem is more tangible because the city accommodates the highest retail supply per capita in the country, and in contrast, the local government denies acknowledging any problems, does not offer any urban programs, projects or policies to promote the vitality and viability of the city centers. Instead, the number and size of shopping center projects increase. As a result, shopping streets, as one of the most invaluable public spaces, representing the urban identity of a city, degrade.

Today, shopping centers, varying by site size, range of commercial and social activities, and economic value of the investment, are regarded as the focus of the consumer society that aims to satisfy its needs. The aim of this paper is to investigate the social and economic differences of shopping streets and shopping centers, and offer programs, projects and policies by assessing the impact of this retail activity transformation on shopping streets and city centers. The assessment of this transformation, as it cannot be identified by quality, will: 1) offer an awareness to increase viability and vitality of city centers, 2) minimize the possible negative impact of the new retail structure, and 3) provide policies to promote the social sustainability of city centers within the framework of urban revitalization.

Within this framework, the retailing structure of Bahcelievler 7th Street, a major, popular shopping street in Ankara, which was the subject of a referendum for pedestrianisation, will be analyzed. First, a detailed commercial land use of the street will be recorded. Then, local, national and international retail chains will be classified and scored. Next, with the scope of social sustainability, economic, social and physical controversies, contrasts and challenges that this street is facing will be identified. The findings will be useful to verify the need to promote shopping streets and social sustainability to eliminate the impact of shopping centers on communal life and economic vitality of city centers. The study will offer urban programs, projects and policies for the sustainability of shopping streets, which can also be tailored for other shopping streets.

KEY WORDS: Social sustainability, shopping streets, city centers, urban revitalization.