

THE RELATION BETWEEN RETAIL ACTIVITY TRANSFORMATION AND SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY: A CASE STUDY OF BAHÇELİEVLER 7TH STREET, ANKARA / TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

Retailing and urban planning literature discusses the negative impact of shopping center developments on social sustainability of traditional shopping spaces, in particular of main street shopping areas. This study will analyze one of the main street shopping areas in Ankara, 7th Street in Bahçelievler. First, it will explore the transformation of this main street and the impact of this transformation on social sustainability. Second, it will describe the characteristics of the case study area and present a detailed land use analysis and brand classification (local, national, international) of existing retail facilities. The study aims to assess the level of social sustainability under the scope of shopping space transformation. This approach will be helpful to investigate the shift in qualifications of shopping spaces in relation to urban controversies, contrasts and challenges, the impact of shopping centers on communal life, and the relationship between local trade areas and social sustainability. Additionally, the study will offer guidelines for urban design and policies for urban revitalization in traditional shopping spaces.

INTRODUCTION

Fast paced growth of the number of shopping centers has an impact on allocation of retailing activities in cities. The literature investigates the fact that shopping centers have a negative impact on traditional shopping spaces and city centers (Southworth, 2005; Teller, 2008). Most stores selling national and international brands, located at city centers have moved to emerging shopping centers, leaving most city centers deprived, which puts an economic strain on most local retailers located at city centers. After the 1990s, there have not been any comprehensive plans and projects to promote shopping street vitality and viability in Ankara, and public spaces with this potential are often ignored. The amount of shopping center leasable area per 1000 people is the highest in Ankara in the country¹, mostly due to 1) its socio-economic structure, which is mainly composed of public officials and university students, creating a relatively stable economic system, convenient for shopping center

¹ Soysal Shopping Center Catalogue, 2008

investments, and 2) the encouragement of shopping center construction by the Greater Municipality of Ankara. However, as major traditional shopping spaces, main street shopping areas are the most important public spaces representing urban identity and enrichment of the urban culture, which is equally important for sustaining urban social activity.

Traditional shopping spaces, in particular, main street shopping areas, have been integrated with various public spaces. On the other hand, contemporary shopping spaces, shopping centers, are regarded as the focus of a consumer society that aims to satisfy its materialistic needs. Shopping centers vary by site size, range of commercial and social facilities, and economic value of the investment. This variation has a negative impact on sense of community and locality. The assessment of this differentiation as it cannot be assessed by quality will: 1) offer an awareness of increasing viability and vitality of main streets in the city centers, 2) eliminate the possible negative impact of the new retail spaces, shopping centers, and 3) provide policies to promote the social sustainability of city centers within the framework of urban revitalization. In Turkey, urban revitalization projects are undertaken by municipalities. However, in most cases, free market regulations are in effect. For this reason, some deprived areas in metropolitan cities cease to be revitalized and left obsolete.

The aim of this study is to investigate the differences of social qualifications in traditional and contemporary shopping spaces, and to offer policies by assessing the impact of this differentiation on traditional shopping spaces. The major goal, therefore, is to analyze the characteristics of transformation of a traditional shopping space, an important main street shopping area, 7th Street in Bahçelievler, Ankara in relation to the issues of social sustainability. First, the literature on the relationship between social sustainability and shopping centers will be reviewed. Next, with the help of the case study area, the land use will be depicted in detail and the retailer brands in the area will be classified. Finally, possible main street shopping area design principles and urban revitalization policies will be discussed.

SHOPPING CENTERS VERSUS MAIN STREET SHOPPING AREAS

Shopping and retail activities are indispensable social and economic activities that enhance the vitality and viability of urban public life. Initially, these activities took place at central places of metropolises, called agora or forum. In time, the activities are diversified and blended in the urban pattern (Biol, 2005). The transformation of shopping spaces peaked in the 20th century (Alzubaidi et al., 1997). City centers integrated with urban public space lost its importance with the economic restructuring of the 1980s. Its impact on consumers and retailers has been vast. Shopping centers have become important agglomerations of retailing units as they offer convenience to consumers, retailers and manufacturers (Leo and Phillipe, 2002). Consumers are able to find all types of shopping goods and services on their daily commuting trips and are also able to utilize other activities, such as entertainment, culture, etc. Comparison-shopping, in other words, the opportunity to compare

goods and services at one location is another convenience that shopping centers offer in fast-paced urban living. Most retailers benefit from the high volume of pedestrian areas and manufacturers from the more organized sale of their goods.

On the other hand, this convenience comes with a price: The importance of locality and sense of community fades and the traditional urban spaces, city and neighborhood centers degrade. In this section, the reasons for the transformation in shopping spaces, the impact of shopping centers on urban social life and the relationship of social sustainability with local trade areas will be discussed, hence the characteristics of traditional shopping spaces and purposefully designed shopping centers will be clearly identified.

Transformation of Traditional Shopping Spaces

The transformation of traditional shopping spaces changes consumption needs and lifestyle of a community. When their evolution processes are considered, traditional shopping spaces have evolved in time and are not specifically designed or located at central areas (Ogden and Ogden, 2004), they just happen to be there. Teller (2008) mentions the spontaneity and independent store characteristics of these spaces, located naturally at the most convenient and accessible places in cities, city centers. Main street shopping areas are such spaces, and are at the same time close to many employment centers and are the transportation hubs of cities. In addition to shopping, other cultural and social facilities, such as museums, libraries, cultural centers, movie theaters, etc. are located on these streets. These streets are functionally and physically integrated with open public spaces (parks, public squares, sidewalks, etc.) serving various purposes. The variety of goods and services sold at main street shopping areas are diverse, specialized, and somewhat personal, thus these streets have a lot of loyal customers living in the area (Leo and Phillippe, 2002). These spaces encourage social relations, importance of locality, sense of community and place, therefore are assets for a community.

The major characteristics of main street shopping areas are that they are occupied by local, independent storeowners. Southworth (2005) describes main street shopping areas as walkable areas, lined with low-rise buildings with retail facilities on their ground floors, interlinked with the urban environment where public service facilities are located and social activities took place. He also mentions that sense of life at these spaces is encouraged with these activities and urban spaces invite people. Shopping centers are also grounded in the concept of main street shopping (Southworth, 2005) and have evolved into commercial strips and strip malls, with their small parking spaces, consumption oriented, conveniently located commercial facilities matching the transforming lifestyles. Additionally, they are also designed for a single purpose: Consumption. Other activities, such as entertainment and cultural activities, have followed the act of consumption.

The emergence of shopping centers in Turkey is much later than the United States and many European countries. When the retail market was saturated with shopping centers in the US in the 1980s, in Europe new shopping malls at the outer skirts of cities were emerging. In Turkey, however, this process began after mid-1980s with the restructuring of the economy, in particular retailing

and wholesale sectors, with neo-liberal policies, and peaked even much later; in the second half of the 2000s (Tokatli and Boyaci, 1999).

The Relation of Social Sustainability with Local Trade Areas

The concept of sustainability is composed of three topics: social, economical and ecological. For an effective sustainability policy and program, all of these three topics should be enhanced and the other two should complement each one. For example, if the economic health of an urban system is investigated, the quality of labor should be increased. It is beneficial for people to contribute to the economy to enhance the economy of the city. This is interlinked to the urban pattern. If people live where they work or the city offers an effective mass transportation system, then environmental utility increases and dependency on fossil fuel decreases, which also diminishes the emissions related to private vehicle use. The literature presents a number of studies on economic and ecological sustainability but there is little evidence to investigate social sustainability.

The Brundtland report (1987) prepared by World Commission on Environment and Development suggests that in order to have powerful and dynamic communities, the most fundamental needs of people should be satisfied and traditions as well as related activities should be enhanced. The fast-paced development of technology, consequent restructuring of economy and social relations threaten the idea of a society with a strong social and cultural background, rather this approach encourages individualism. In social terms, sustainability appears where community spirit is adopted, equal, diverse, integrated, democratic relations and high quality of life is preferred. For this reason, in order to pursue a social sustainable system, distribution and opportunities for health, education, justice, gender equality, political responsibilities and participation should be encouraged (Assefa and Frostell, 2007)

Traditional shopping spaces are such spaces. Sensitive, public utility oriented diverse communities are the future of a socially sustainable community (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). In order to encourage social sustainability at traditional shopping spaces, local and independent trade facilities should be kept at their locations and be supported with special projects and programmes. Additionally, diversity of retail facilities and other entertainment and cultural activities should be proposed. Main streets are not only physical entities. In contrast they are the end-products of a social living. Health, education, social services, recreation, cultural facilities, etc. are also vital parts of it.

BAHÇELİEVLER 7TH STREET

The case study of this paper is one of the main street shopping areas of Ankara, 7th Street in Bahçelievler, located approximately 3 km to the west of the city center. The area is surrounded by a major intercity highway, Konya highway, and an urban park, Atatürk Forest Farm on the west and major boulevards Fevzi Çakmak Boulevard on the east, Bahriye Üçok Boulevard on the north and Akdeniz Boulevard on the south. The National Library is also located on the

south of the street (Figure 1). The street is only 2 km away from a famous ship-like shopping center named Armada. 7th Street is selected as a study area due to its popularity as a shopping and entertainment street. The street was the subject of a pedestrianization debate for sustaining the vitality and viability of the area. An analysis of this area will offer a better understanding of what appears to be a cutting-edge retail main street phenomenon and will be helpful to identify the changes in retail systems in relation to social sustainability.



Figure 1. 7th Street, Bahçelievler, Ankara (Google Earth)

The History of Bahçelievler

Bahçelievler was developed as a housing cooperative by Hermann Jansen in 1936. Row houses are located on the north and semi-detached houses are located on the south of the area. Two-floor garden houses, a school and a marketplace were planned at the center. It was designed for state officials in the after 1945. The construction was completed in 1938 (Yalçınkaya, 2007). After the dismissal of the cooperative in 1950, and fast-paced development of Ankara toward the area, some homeowners requested density increment, thus transformation of their houses into multi-story buildings with larger floor areas, which would be beneficial to earn rent. This request has altered the 'low density, spacious garden' qualification of the area (Tekeli and İlkin, 1984). The area had experienced density increase without provision of the necessary infrastructure, which caused a lot of urban problems. Today, primary attraction facilities of the street are clothing, gift shops and a wide range of cafe and bars. Accessibility to the area is a challenge, along with traffic congestion and inadequate parking.

Land Use and Retail Store Tenant Analysis

The site survey findings show that there are 400 residential and 188 commercial units with office spaces on the street. The commercial units are composed of eateries (24%), perfume, gift and jewellery shops (22%), clothing (18%) and banks (13%) (Figure 2).

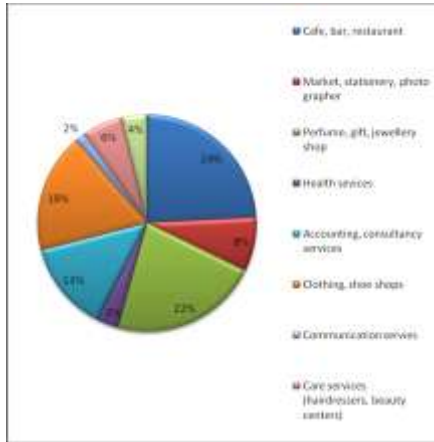


Figure 2. Retail Store Tenant Characteristics of 7th Street

42 buildings located along the street have four or less floors. Ground floors are mostly occupied by eateries, which is the most common store type. There are 17 cafes, 2 of them are patisseries and 3 of them are famous global coffee shop chains known as hotspots for social interaction. There are 6 bars and most of them have multi-floors. National and global brands are found here more than local ones. Some national chain cafes (Özsüt, Café Crown, Mado, etc.) and international ones (Tchibo, Starbucks etc.) have gained popularity. 20 eateries, 10 supermarkets, 27 clothing shops, 11 gift shops and an eclectic mix of flower and perfume shops are located on this street. Majority of the customers are either students or state officials employed in the public institutions surrounding the area. Upper floors are occupied by office spaces, such as health centers, veterinary, hair transplant centers and thermal resorts, which contribute to the street’s vitality. Beauty centers and banks are the other complementary commercial facilities located on the street. The area is also occupied by a lot of offices located at the upper floors.

Retail Store Brand Classification

In this section, retail store brands are analyzed to understand the retailing structure and the circumstances of local shopkeepers. 124 (66%) local, 44 (23%) national and 19 (11%) international brands are located on the street. Local brands constitute the majority of the area (Table 1, Figure 3).

Table 1. An Analysis of Brands in the Street

Floors	Local	National	International
Ground Floor	97	34	19
Upper Floors	34	21	10
Multi-story	7	11	9
Total	124	44	20

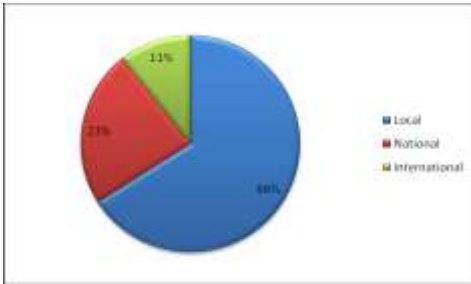


Figure 3. Distribution of stores selling local, national and international brands

This study provides further evidence to support recent discussions of the dislocation of the ‘local’ and the ‘global/local interplay of contemporary capitalist restructuring processes’ (Hankins, 2002). The fact that global stores, which embody a very global system of production and consumption, are present on main streets such as 7th Street offers cloning such as virtually indistinguishable from one another. The main streets are getting replaced by a monochrome strip of global and national chains that means its retail heart could easily be mistaken for dozens of other town centers across the country (Simms et al., 2005). Fortunately local brands are still dominant in the street and constitute 2/3 of the retail facilities (Figure 4 and 5).

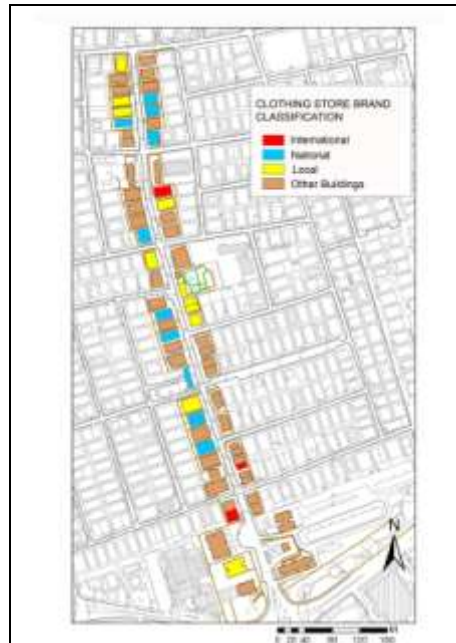


Figure 4. Distribution of clothing stores selling local, national and international brands in the street

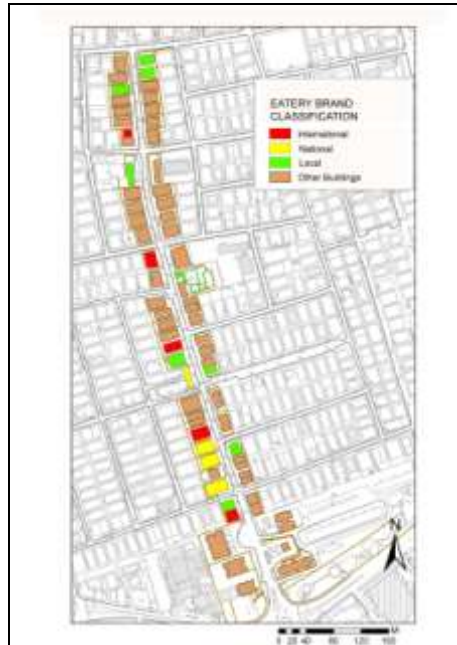


Figure 5. Distribution of eateries due to local, national and international brands in the street

Another element of retail spatiality is in the changing locations of retail establishments. Retail firms associated with the physical built environment, may choose their locations according to customer preferences, rents etc. The number of shops in the street was 149 in 2000, which has increased to 173 in 2008 and 188 in 2009 (Table 3). Not only number but also types of the shops have changed. Some retailer types have decreased and some of them have increased (Table 3).

Table 3. The Change in Retailing Structure of 7th street for Selected Years (Eke, Özdemir and Erol, 2000, Temel, 2008, Aydın, 2009)

FACILITIES	2000		2008		2009	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Cafe, bar, restaurant	4	2.7	38	22.0	45	23.9
Market, stationery, photo shops	25	16.8	11	6.4	15	8.0
Perfume, gift, jewelery shop	31	20.8	39	22.5	41	21.8
Health services	12	8.1	6	3.5	6	3.2
Accounting, consultancy services	24	16.1	24	13.9	25	13.3
Clothing, shoe shops	37	24.8	32	18.5	33	17.6
Communication services	4	2.7	3	1.7	3	1.6
Hairdressers and beauty centers	5	3.4	10	5.8	11	5.9
Hardware shops	1	0.7	1	0.6	1	0.5

Furniture shops	5	3.4	8	4.6	7	3.7
Wedding halls	1	0.7	1	0.6	1	0.5
Total	149	100.0	173	100.0	188	100.0

The number of cafes, bars and restaurants has increased 10 times from 2000 to 2008. This trend continues in 2009. The number of supermarkets, stationery and photo shops has decreased from 2000 to 2008. The number of perfume and gift shops has also increased. Health centers and clothing are decreasing. The number of care services such as beauty centers has doubled. This ten-year period is an indication of a growing and changing retailing structure of 7th Street, which has very high property and building values.

The presence of global chain stores, unprecedented in firm size and scope that can afford the dramatic increase in rents is evidence of the changing dynamics of retail capital. The shop rents vary between 4000 TL to 44000 TL. The maximum two rents in the street are 24000 and 44000 TL. Restaurants and fast-food spaces boom but there is inadequate space for ventilation of the kitchens and gardens for customers. The shop owners do not want to hire their shops to clothing. The profit of clothing is rather low and they often cannot afford the rent. Instead of this, the owners prefer corporate or chain brands. As does, municipalities are not involved with such free market regulations and owners rule the tenant structure of the street, which, in turn is the major issue of the urban revitalization processes.

The name of the shops are in foreign language mainly in English. The name of 90 shops are in English. The use of Turkish brand name is 50%, half of the number of total shops in the streets (Çolak, 2008) which is important for locality and identity.

Social Sustainability in 7th Street

A map in the GIS environment was prepared according to the site survey in the street. The problems, potentials, vitality of the street life and some paths are mapped (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Social Sustainability Map of the street

Retail facilities that generate low pedestrian traffic are located at the entrance of the street, next to the National Library. This is due to the existing high rise buildings and the distance of their facades and entrances to the street. The gas station is in proximity to residential areas, which is not preferable for the safety of the residents. The park, which provides a vivid space for public interaction is not easily accessible due to the location of its entrance. The town square offers another opportunity for social interaction on the south of the street. However, this area is used as a parking space, which causes its deterioration. The middle part of the street is the liveliest part due to the fact that the retail facilities are diverse. Cafes, bars and restaurants are clustered at this part. Mixed use buildings, enclosed bazaars and supermarkets, along with a bus stop and a flower shop create a vital area. The northern part of the street also hosts cafes and bars, clothing shops, which brings vitality as well. It is a habit of young people to drive by the street (from south to north) or gather to chat at the front of various cafes and bars on the street.

CONCLUSION

The increasing number of shopping centers in the 1980s had an impact on traditional shopping spaces, in particular on main shopping streets. This paper presents recent changes and existing condition in one of the main shopping streets in 7th Street, Bahçelievler, Ankara by analyzing its land use and retail store tenant classification. The findings indicate that the local characteristics of the area is sustained by the local brands and the number and variety of open and public spaces increase the level of social sustainability in the area. Such positive attributes are helpful to maintain a healthy social and economic structure in the area. On the other hand, the retail variety has changed drastically and the number of eateries is the highest compared to other types of retailing facilities, which is in fact a clustering. The vitality and viability of the street survive with the clustering of a particular type of retail facility.

The findings of this paper suggest that sustainability of traditional shopping spaces is possible when specific policies and programs are offered. For example, the UK planning policy recommends a special plan and program, 'town centers first' and 'sequential approach' policies to preserve the development balance of retail areas. Such policies will offer more sustainable urban environments, in particular main street shopping areas, which will promote the health and diversity of communities. Particularly, in Turkey, the municipalities, as doers, should be more in charge of the regulations of main streets. Similar to many world examples, private- public partnerships can be established for effective development of main street revitalization programs. For a main street program to be successful, it should embrace some design guidelines, such as:

Strategic: Public improvements, business recruitment or promotional events can revitalize main street.

Simple: Successful revitalization programs begin with simple activities that demonstrate that new things are happening. As public confidence in the main street grows, the street is able to tackle increasingly complex problems and more ambitious projects.

Helpful: That means convincing residents and business owners of the rewards they will reap by investing time and money in main street.

Collaborative: Both the public and private sectors must work together to achieve common goals of main street's revitalization.

Identifying: Every main street has unique qualities like traditional buildings in human scale that give people a sense of belonging. These local assets must be capitalized.

Qualitative: From storefront designs to promotional campaigns or educational programs, efforts should be given on quality.

Transitive: Transition in attitude and practice and improving the physical appearance of the main street will help shift public perceptions and practices to support and sustain the revitalization process.

Practical: Small projects which have visible results pave the way for larger ones and regular activities creates confidence in the main street program and greater levels of participation.

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