



Retail development in Turkey: An account after two decades of shopping malls in the urban scene

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Abstract

The social, economic and environmental impacts of large-scale retail outlets on existing retail and urban systems have been extensively discussed in the planning literature. This article documents the last two decades of transformation in Turkey’s retail sector, which have been characterized by a more organized development of the sector than traditionally existed. We begin our analysis with the late 1980s and early 1990s, when more-liberal and outward-looking policies began to emerge in Turkish economic policy. Changes in the economy and related legislation prepared a base for the subsequent transformations of that decade, culminating, especially in large cities, in the development of shopping malls as alternative retail spaces to traditional markets and stores on a shopping street. We believe that the Turkish case reveals specific aspects of resistance, adaptation and change, and thus needs a detailed account. After providing a general picture of retailing and its transformation in Turkey, we provide empirical evidence from Ankara, the capital city, through which all important dynamics of retailing are exemplified. To this end, we ask the following questions: What are the evolving processes behind the existing location patterns of shopping centres in Ankara? What is the extent of the change in definition of the new public realm? How do street retailers survive? Who are the actors and what are their approaches towards retail planning in Turkey? The answers to these questions may provide implications for urban policy and retail planning in Turkey. The case may also be interesting for countries experiencing similar patterns of change and development, that is, where the globalization process in retailing and consumption-related sites began later than in other countries and observed fast-paced development.

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Keywords: Retail development; Shopping centers; Resilience; Urban policy

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1. Introduction

The social, economic and environmental impacts of large-scale retail outlets on existing retail and urban systems have been extensively discussed in the planning literature (Guy, 1998; Knox, 2008; Ozuduru, Varol, & Ercoskun, 2014; Southworth, 2005; Teller, 2008). Despite the relatively late influence of global economic trends in Turkey (beginning in the late 1990s), foreign investment penetrated the country's retail sector quite quickly. This development attracted the attention of scholars regarding various aspects of Turkish retailing, and the subject has generated a growing literature (see, for example, Erkip, Kizilgun, & Mugan Akinci, 2013; Erkip, Kizilgun, & Mugan Akinci, 2014; Erkip, 2003, 2005; Ozuduru & Varol, 2011; Ozuduru et al., 2014; Tokatli & Boyaci, 1998). This article documents the last two decades of transformation in Turkey's retail sector, which have been characterized by a more organized development of the sector than traditionally existed. Although many aspects of this transformation have been explored, here we present a more thorough analysis of the specific periods of retail development, each of which experienced a different kind of change. In this study, we explore this topic using various theoretical perspectives on urban retailing.

We begin our analysis with the late 1980s and early 1990s, when more liberal and more outward-looking policies began to emerge in Turkish economic policy. Changes in the economy and related legislation prepared a base for the subsequent transformations of that decade, culminating, especially in large cities, in the development of shopping malls as alternative retail spaces to traditional markets and stores on a shopping

street. Global cultural influences and mass media also made consumption in shopping malls more desirable for Turkish citizens. Further, improved economic conditions and credit options provided Turkish people with the opportunity to purchase globally branded products. Similar to the situation in many other countries, these modern and organized retailers threatened the livelihood of small-scale, traditional shop owners. However, some small retailers viewed the changes as an opportunity to modernize and develop strategies to make themselves more resilient. We believe that the Turkish case reveals specific aspects of resistance, adaptation and change, and thus needs a detailed account. The resilience concept in relation to urban systems has evolved in many ways, and in this paper, we discuss the strategies of both small- and large-scale retailers (i.e. traditional retailers and shopping mall developers) during the past decades in relation to urban development. The resilience level of a city's retailing sector can be increased by new urban policies, and their major objectives should be specifically set out so as to integrate traditional retailers into the urban scene and increase city centres' vitality and viability. Traditional retailers are the pillars of urban life in city centres; with the current influx of new shopping centres, older retailers can become more resilient by adopting new marketing strategies in the ever-changing, dynamic retail market. These malls should be able to re-invent themselves and remain in the markets.

The period of shopping mall development that began in the late 1980s in Turkey continues today, with increasing competition between new shopping malls causing the decay of first-generation malls, as expected. An unexpected outcome of this trend, however, is the

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