

REVITALIZATION OF KÜTAHYA'S CBD IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

Kütahya has been the cradle of many cultures throughout the history. Especially, its population grew after the Turkish occupation and the city expanded beyond the walls of the city. Traditional life characteristics and traditional production stiles survived till now such as ceramics, textile, leather, carpets and handicrafts. Thus, the old CBD continue to preservative the business vitality together with religious, social and civil architecture examples and its conservative people. So, preservation of urban structure and buildings of CBD is the subject of this paper due to its potential for future development.

A survey was conducted to the owners of the business on the main street, which has a potential for pedestration. According to the results, the pedestration of the main street will create possibilities for the development of tourism, trade, handcraft, cafe shops, restaurants, hotels and pensions.

Therefore, the preservation project of CBD and pedestration of the main street will provide the opportunity for the renovation of the historical buildings, increase demand for their use for different functions which will increase the vitality of the old CBD. Furthermore, the project will also nurture the vitality of the community and to encourage existing residents to remain in the area, thereby preventing it from becoming a declined business center. Thus, the results of the study can be useful for policy makers, urban planners and investors.

1. INTRODUCTION

The worldwide transformation of city centers, especially in the developed countries, was and is also the experience of Kütahya. The city has been transformed from a settlement with a modest population of 68.000 to a city with 160.000.residents today; a result of intensive internal migration and rapid urbanization which has also led to a significant spatial change, especially in the last twenty years.

As a result of expansion of the city in the periphery and multi-center development, the old CBD started to decline. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to explain strategies to revitalize the old CBD.

Historic CBDs have historic architectural settings and townscapes with an economic value due to their aesthetic attributes and scarcity. There are several approaches to the revitalization of declining CBDs, which is a common problem (Frieden and Sagalyn, 1989; Porter, 1995; Tiesdale et al., 1996). In the United States, the Main Street Program and the Business Improvement Districts are successful programs in inner city revitalization (Keister, 1990; Robertson, 2004). The Main Street Program is a compressive program focused on local opportunities in four areas; economic restructuring, organization, promotion and design. This program has been implemented in hundreds of cities.

Based on a national survey of 57 small cities, Robertson (1999) found the Main Street Approach to be the most successful of 16 downtown development strategies evaluated. Although the application of the Main Street Approach started with small cities, in the mid-1990's the program was expanded to include neighborhood commercial districts in large cities (i.e. Baltimore, Boston, San Antonio, San Diego) Today 43 states host Main Street programs (Robertson, 2004).

In Europe, City Center Management Schemes is being used to solve some of the problems facing city centers. Although each city has its own particular approach and constitutes a unique case that does not allow generalizations, the most developed City Center Management Schemes are the British Town center Management Schemes. Public private partnerships play an

important role in the success of schemes (Balsas, 2000).

The present paper deals with the revitalization of the old CBD of Kütahya, which is a problem in many cities in Turkey. The organization of the paper is as follows: Background of Kütahya is explained in the second section. The third section describes the revitalization of the main street of Kütahya. Final section is devoted to a conclusion and suggestions for further research.



Figure 1. Map of Kütahya

2. BACKGROUND OF KÜTAHYA

The most ancient settlements in Kütahya date back to the Chalcolithic Period as proved by excavation. There was a settlement in the area during Hittite, Phrygian, Cimmerian, and Lydian Period. During the Lydian period “Route of Kings” was established connecting the Aegean Region to the Black Sea Region (Yurt Ans., 1982).

During the Roman period Kütahya became an important centre of Christian world and a bishopric was established. After the division of the Roman Empire in 395, Kütahya became an important commercial and religious center on the İstanbul-İznik-Afyon-Konya route. The Byzantine rulers constructed the castle with a double citadel on Hisar Hill where the surrounding planes could be controlled (Eruzun, 1987).

The castle of the city is the unique monument, which survives from the Byzantine Period. In the book of “Asia Minor” Texier talked about the wall paintings and decorations of a ruin of a church in the citadel and a cave where the Byzantine rulers were buried. But today there exist no trace of those buildings. The Byzantine settlement stayed only in the castle (Tanyeli).

The northeast section of the city, which was surrounded by the citadel walls, was divided into two sections and an inner castle was obtained. In the inner castle section the settled population were mainly composed of christians. But outside the castle many Turkish districts were established (Tanyeli).

During the Ottoman period Kütahya was ruled as a city in the state of “Anadolu Beylerbeyliği” but between the years of 1451 to 1831 Kütahya was became a city of “Hüdavendigâr Province” at 1842. At that period Kütahya became an important center in production of tiles. Besides, during the period of both Yavuz Sultan Selim and Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Kütahya became an important and a safe meeting place and stop for the Ottoman army (Eruzun, 1987).

When the city of Kütahya was a province and was the commercial center of the surrounding towns and settlements, it was a rich city and population was growing but when the city lost its governmental authority and the population started to decline towards the middle of XIXth. Century, the rise and/ or decline of population effected the development of the city of Kütahya (Aktüre, 1975). The main street during this time (Germiyan Street) is chosen as the study area of the paper (Figure 1-2).

3. REVITALIZATION OF CBD OF KÜTAHYA

Conservation Plan of Kütahya was prepared between 1980-1982 and approved in 1987 by the Minister of Culture. Germiyan Street was proposed as one of the important streets to be restore and revitalize by the Minister of Culture (Figure 3).

According to the conservation Plan, water system, electrical system and telephone systems were renewed and pavement of street was changed. Necessary installations were made to protect fire. At the same time, buildings were painted.



Figure 2. Location of the Germiyan Street in Kütahya

However, some of the buildings started to disappear since no other action was taken until 2000. Thus, in order to preserve the buildings, the cultural department of the city prepared “A Restitution and Restoration Project” for the Germiyan Street by using the funds of the city government. The project was prepared by the Eskişehir University and approved in 2002.



Figure 3. Elevations of Part of the Germiyan Street

According to this project 8 buildings were restored. New functions were given to these buildings such as cultural art center, a restaurant which will serve traditional kitchen, gift shop, and shop of embroideries, art gallery, cafe and guest house. As a result of this restoration, although housing continue to be the main function of the street, business activities started to develop in the northern part of the street (Figure 4-5-6).



Figure 4. View from the Germiyan Street

Other buildings of the street are still empty. The traffic of the street and pedestrian flow are low density. The most important reason of this situation is the lack of connection of this street to the Cumhuriyet avenue which the main business axis of the city.



Figure 6. View from the Germiyan Street

4. CONCLUSION

In this study, revitalization of Germiyan Street of Kütahya was investigated. The result of this paper is similar to the existing empirical studies of the determinants of inner-city housing renovation, which yielded mostly inconclusive results. A limited amount of housing (traditional kitchen, gift shop, and shop of embroideries, art gallery, cafe and guest house) was restored and new functions were given accounting to the revitalization project prepared for this street (Figure 7).



Figure 5. View from the Germiyan Street

As a result of lack of participation caused the migration of the local people and the population was declined. Restored buildings were rented to the outsiders rather than used by the local people. Thus although it was aimed gentrification based renovation at the beginning of the project, it was resulted in rental renovation. Further development of business was not observed.

Moreover, although this revitalization project has not being very successful, it is expected that it will be an example in the surrounding areas in the future and it will stimulate revitalization by the cooperation of the government and private investors. It is also expected that successful revitalization project in other Anatolian cities can be taken as an example by Kütahya.



Figure 7. View of the Germiyan Kiosks (restaurant) from Germiyan Street.

Although housing rehabilitation, which is certainly the most important evidence of gentrification improves the city's physical healthy by fore stalling further decay of the housing stock. This project was not influential in the surrounding areas yet. Since it was not well understood by the public due to lack of participation and lack of education.

Implementation of the project by the cooperation public and private investors and provision of participation may increase the impact and success of the revitalization of the street as it is observed in other cities of Turkey and other countries. The successful projects of other cities of Turkey such Safranbolu and Edirne, Antalya, Mugla can be example for Kütahya.

Thus, it will be possible to stimulate gentrification, to increase the amenities of neighborhood, to reveal better the historical values of Kütahya and to conserve its cultural values while its commercial life is revitalized. The result of this paper, offer important guidance to public policy makers.

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