



The Social Impacts of Pedestrianization on Tourist Public Space Usage Case Study: Nicosia Walled City, North Cyprus

*Yayalaştırmanın Turist Kamusal Alan Kullanımı Üzerine Etkileri, Kuzey
Kıbrıs Lefkoşa Surlarıçi Örneği*

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Abstract

Pedestrianization can contribute to restoring the values of historic cities and also create great potential for the development of tourist usage in public spaces. The pedestrianization of the historic city centres can bring many social, economic and physical benefits by offering diverse opportunities for various tourist-oriented uses. Nicosia Walled City is the last divided capital in Europe and hosts two separate states today. A buffer zone creates the border between Northern and Southern Nicosia. In 2008, a gate was opened between the two parts of Nicosia Walled City called Lokmacı Gate. The opening of the gate has an important role in both the development of tourism potential and the revitalization of the historical part of the City. Nicosia Walled City is a significant historic urban corner that the pedestrianization project was implemented after the opening of the Lokmacı Gate. The public spaces, which began to deteriorate and lose their characteristics before the opening of the Lokmacı Gate, have started to transform into important public spaces with the opening of the Gate. Pedestrianization can help to vitalize the historic city center through tourism facilities that are applied by the collaboration of the local and governmental authorities. This study is aimed to examine the social impacts of pedestrianization on tourist public space usage. On-site observations were carried out to determine the types of tourist activities and usage in the Northern part of the Nicosia Walled City. According to the findings, the recommendations were given in the final section of the paper.

Keywords: Pedestrianization, public space, tourist uses, historic urban corner, Nicosia Walled City

Özet

Yayalaştırma tarihi kentlerin değerlerinin yeniden kazanılmasına katkıda bulunabileceği gibi kamusal alanlarda turist kullanımının gelişmesi için de büyük bir potansiyel oluşturmaktadır. Tarihi kent merkezlerinin yayalaştırılması, çeşitli turist odaklı kullanımlar için fırsatlar sunarak birçok sosyal, ekonomik ve fiziksel avantajlar da sağlayabilmektedir. Lefkoşa Surlarıçi, Avrupa'nın son bölünmüş başkentidir ve bugün iki ayrı devlete ev sahipliği yapmaktadır. Tampon bölge, kuzey ve güney Lefkoşa arasındaki sınırı oluşturmaktadır. 2008 Yılında Lefkoşa'nın Surlarla Çevrili iki bölümü arasında yer alan Lokmacı Kapısı geçişlere açılmıştır. Kapının açılması, hem turizm potansiyelinin gelişmesinde hem de tarihi Kent'in canlandırılmasında önemli bir katkı sağlamıştır. Lefkoşa Surlarıçi,

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Lokmacı geçidi'nin açılmasının ardından, yayalaştırma ile birlikte önemli bir çekim merkezi olmuştur. Lokmacı geçişinin açılmasından önce, bozulmaya ve özelliklerini kaybetmeye başlayan kamusal alanlar, kapının açılmasıyla birlikte önemli bir kamusal alana dönüşmeye başlamıştır. Devlet ve yerel otoriteler ile turizm aktiviteleri ele alınarak, tarihi kent merkezinin yeniden canlandırılması için yayalaştırma yapılmıştır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, yayalaştırmanın turist kamusal alan kullanımını üzerindeki sosyal etkilerini incelemektir. Lefkoşa Surlarıçığı'nın kuzey kesimindeki turist sosyal aktivitelerini ve kullanıcılarını belirlemek üzere gözlemsel analizler yapılmıştır. Çalışmanın son bölümünde ise bulgulara yönelik önerilere yer verilmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Yayalaştırma, Kamusal Alan, Turist Kullanımı, Tarihi Kentsel Mekan, Lefkoşa Surlarıçığı*

1. INTRODUCTION

Public spaces are significant places that represent the lifestyles and cultures of inhabitants. Therefore, they are important destinations for tourists. Public spaces, especially in historic city centers, are the main attraction pole for the tourists who wish to learn and discover the history and culture of a destination. In historic city centers, tourism-related facilities should be attractive and properly designed.

Tourism plays an important role in the revitalization of public spaces in historic urban corners and it provides an economic return to preserve existing heritage value. The cultural experience may also link to historic buildings and monuments, traditions, a way of life, handicrafts, food and other less tangible aspects that must be included in the tourism facilities and they should be accessible to all the visitors. Traffic and circulation might be one of the factors that limit social usage in public spaces of historic urban corners (Orbaşı, 2008). As a result, the implementation of pedestrianization can bring many benefits to the conservation and revitalization of historic cities through tourism.

The closing of public spaces to motor vehicles is a kind of solution to provide safe and pleasant movement for touristic historic city centers. Instead of using narrow sidewalks which are not comfortable and safe, tourists can benefit from the public space activities without fearing the possible traffic problems. The pedestrianized areas of historic cities create a great potential for tourism development while they are offering a pleasant atmosphere for them. When a pedestrianization project is implemented on a historic site, designers/experts have to consider the needs of all users. In general, for pedestrianization projects, economic issues are mainly taken into consideration. However, the social benefits should be included in these projects by considering the diverse user profile.

Cyprus is one of the Mediterranean Islands and it has a long history, cultural heritages, hot climate and clean beaches that make the island attractive to tourists. In Cyprus, tourism is an effective and foremost sector which can facilitate to rise and ameliorate the economic situation by adopting sustainable tourism development that is based on quality (Kiessel et al., 2011; Vehbi B.O., 2014, Güvenbaş and Polay, 2019, p.244). The Nicosia Walled City is located at the heart of Cyprus Island and it possesses rich historical values that still carries the traces of various civilization passed through Cyprus. Before the opening of the Lokmacı Gate, the North Section of the Walled City was in poor condition. There was physical, socio-cultural and economic decay. In 2008, by the opening of the Lokmacı Gate, the area was designated as a 'Special Tourism Zone' which carries a high potential for the revitalization of the whole Walled City. (Monitoring, Coordination and Steering Committee of Nicosia Walled City, 2008). The Arasta and Asmaaltı Pedestrianization Project was implemented by the Nicosia Turkish Municipality.

This paper is aimed to examine the social impacts of pedestrianization on tourist public space usage in the Walled City. On-site observations were done for determining the social effects and the socio-cultural quality of the pedestrianized areas of the Walled City. During the observations, tourist usage was analyzed in terms of the type and availability of activities in public spaces.

In this paper, initially, it was concentrated on a literature review related to the importance of public space usage for tourism, pedestrianization and the social impacts of pedestrianization. Then, the methodology of the study was given. Following that, the findings of the research were put forward. In the final section, some recommendations were given to increase the positive social impacts of pedestrianization for tourism in historic urban corners.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Importance of Public Open Space Usage for Tourists

Public spaces are significant parts of urban heritage and they are strong elements of cities where social interaction and community development take a place (Woolley, 2003; Council of Europe, 1986). Such places could be shared by different people who are not relatives, friends, or work associates of each other. Users of public spaces may have different roles and duties; they may be tradesmen for selling the products or students for making research or tourists who discover their destinations.

As stated by Zukin (1995, p.259) public spaces are the primary site of public culture, they are window into the city's soul. Since the greatest amount of human contact and interaction takes place. Public spaces play an important role in reflecting the lifestyles and culture of the inhabitants. Accordingly, they may be significant destinations for tourists who can learn about the culture, history and lifestyle of destination places by using such spaces. Public spaces in historic urban corners carry traces of past and present and they are the main attraction pool for the visitors.

Successful public spaces must have four key qualities; accessibility; activities and uses; socialization; comfort and image. Great public spaces must be easily accessible, social places that offer more uses and activities with comfort and a good image (PPS, 2000). Accessible public space allows its visitors to socialize, enjoy, relax and discover the environment and fosters a sense of well-being as well. Pedestrianization provides easily get to the place, it performs to increase safe and comfortable uses and activities. Arrangement of the tourism-related facilities can improve the significance of those spaces by giving physical, social and economic returns.

Since they represent traces belonging to past and current lifestyles, public spaces of historic urban corners are valuable parts of the city. They become a main attraction pole for the tourist. Such places should be preserved to restore cultural and architectural heritages which can contribute to development of tourism. In order to provide sustainable tourism facilities in historic urban corners, public spaces have provide easy, comfortable and safe access and usage to their visitors. Accordingly; pedestrianization can contribute to the development of tourism in historic urban corners.

2.2. Pedestrianization

Pedestrian zones include integrated roads, streets or areas made available to pedestrians only (Demir et al., 2016, p.83). Different types of pedestrianization can be implemented: full mall, transit mall and semi-mall. Full mall only allows pedestrian uses and it is entirely pedestrianized area/street that vehicular traffic is not allowed. Transit mall is a pedestrianized street that just accepts public transportation and pedestrian use, other vehicles cannot enter the area. A semi mall is a street which includes both pedestrian and vehicular access together, but there is a pedestrian priority and traffic speed, and volume are limited according to the pedestrians' needs (Demir et al., 2016, p.83).

Pedestrianization is a tool that makes public spaces operational. It promotes the quality of a public place by providing accessibility, mobility, safety and a pleasant environment for all the inhabitants (Yassin, 2019; Soni and Soni, 2016). A pedestrian street function is not only dependent on movement, it also performs as a public space where the combination of sociability, activities and accessibility occurs (Yassin, 2019; Jou, 2011).

Pedestrianization contributes to “emphasize and protection of historic values of the cities, to the encouragement of tourism, to meet the recreation needs of the city people, and to the increase retail trade and urban green areas” (Akyüz and Zengin, 2012, p.89). Accordingly, the implementation of pedestrianization projects can improve the tourism potential of historic urban corners and these projects can be used as the main tool for the development of effective and long-run conservation and revitalization strategies in the historic sites.

Public authorities can practice pedestrianization for different purpose: “to improve public safety, to increase street life, to decrease isolation due to living outside of the city centre, to eliminate transportation problems in the historical problems which have generally narrow streets, and to portray social life” (Altunbas, 2006; Demir et al, 2016, p.83).

One of the important reasons for pedestrianization is to create a pleasant environment where people can involve in different social, cultural and tourism activities. Pedestrianized zones are attraction poles for both local people and tourist users of public spaces since they offer a pleasant walking environment with a sort of facilities like sidewalk cafes, fountains or other street furniture helping the areas to become popular attractions for all people (Iranmanesh, 2008).

The advantages of pedestrianization can be classified under three main sub-headings: environmental impact, economic impact and social impact. The environmental advantages are composed of reducing air and noise pollution, saving fuel and creating a more aesthetic physical environment with more landscaping. The economic advantages are related to increasing retail incomes and fewer medical expenses for reducing air pollution. The social advantages include significant returns related to physical health with increasing walking rate, gaining a more pleasant environment including diverse socio-cultural activities and increased pedestrian safety (Iranmanesh, 2008). The impacts of pedestrianization may differ according to its context.

2.3. The Social Impacts of Pedestrianization in Historic Urban Corners

Apart from the environmental and economic impacts, pedestrianization can also bring several social impacts to historic urban corners. One of the social impacts of pedestrianization is to encourage people to walk by offering them a more pleasant historic environment. Tourists can have a good experience without heavy motor vehicle traffic and crowded narrow pavements.

Pedestrianization gives an opportunity to present both tangible and intangible aspects of heritage culture, so it helps tourist users to discover existing heritage values of historic urban corners. In historic urban corners, pedestrianized public spaces can also be used for periodic festive events that enable tourists to learn more about the culture and lifestyle of their destination place. In addition to these, pedestrianization supports accessible tourism, since it promotes the accessibility and usability of tourism facilities. Disabled and elderly people can reach to access socio-cultural activities with comfort and safety.

3. MATERIAL AND METHOD OF THE STUDY

3.1. Method of the Study

In this study, the qualitative research method was used. At the site, tourists’ activities were observed in order to determine and evaluate the social impacts of pedestrianization on tourists’ public space usage. During the observations, tourists’ uses and activities were noted as well as visual data was collected.

3.2. Case Study

Nicosia Walled City was selected as a case study. The Walled City is located at the heart of Cyprus Island, and it is the last divided capital of Europe which hosts two separate states today. The Walled City, like all Cyprus Island, was divided into two sections in 1974, due to the conflict between Turkish and Greek Cypriots. Then, Turks started to live in the north and Greeks settled in the south section of Nicosia. There is a buffer zone between two different states which creates a border between Northern and Southern Nicosia, and it is under the control of the United Nations.

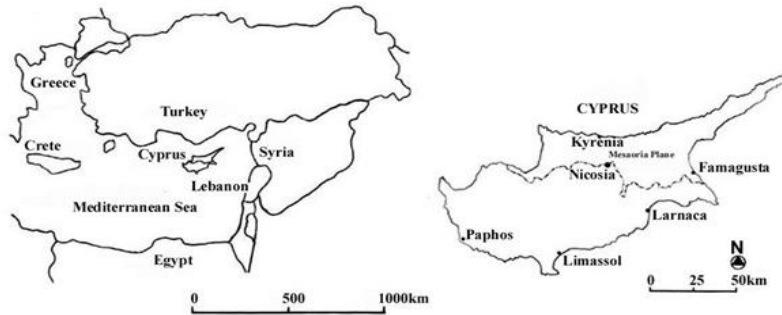


Figure 1. Location of Cyprus

The Nicosia Walled City is an important historic urban corner that possesses rich historical values and still carries traces of various civilizations passed through Cyprus. In 2008, a gate which was called Lokmacı Gate, was opened between two parts as the sixth crossing point in Cyprus. “The Lokmacı Gate was opened in two Phases- PHASE I Safety interventions to guarantee safe pedestrian crossing in 2008 and PHASE II Repairs and consolidation interventions of the building along the road of the crossing in 2010-2012”, (Uzunoğlu and Uzunoğlu, 2021, p.597).

Before the opening of the Lokmacı Gate, Nicosia Walled City was in poor social, economic and physical conditions. Accessibility and use have decreased since the south was enclosed by the buffer zone and the newly developed areas have grown to the north. Accordingly, some improvements had to be made in the Walled City, in order to revive the historical part.

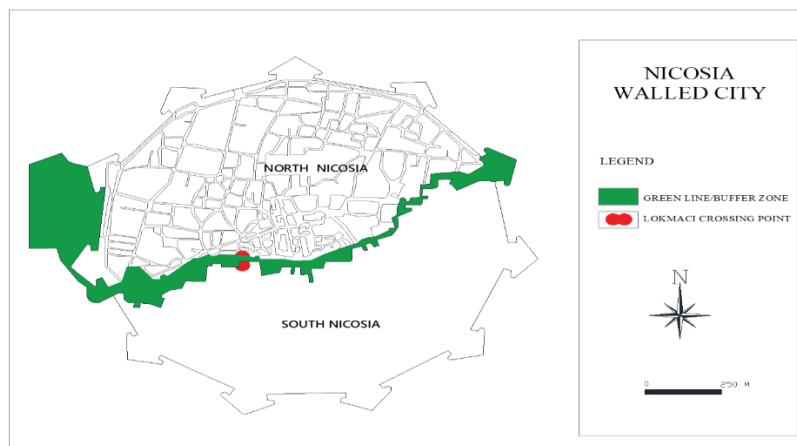


Figure 2. Nicosia Walled City and the location of Lokmacı Crossing and Buffer zone (modified from https://www.reddit.com/r/MapPorn/comments/or1o1e/map_of_nicosias_oldwalled_city_divided_between/)

The panoramic train is operable for the tourist's sight trip and it supports accessibility in the Walled City.



Figure 4. The Arrangement of Accessibility in Pedestrianized Zones of the Walled City

During the observations, it was determined that there are diverse social and ritual activities in the pedestrianized zones-Arasta and Asmaalti Districts. The determined activities in the pedestrianized zones of the Walled City are listed in the Table 1.

Table 1. The determined social and leisure activities in the Arasta and Asmaaltı Districts, Nicosia Walled City

Arasta District	Asmaaltı District
<p>Arasta Street & Square</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shopping of the branded fake products • Production and selling of the traditional sweets, dried nuts/fruits and herbal products. • Social events for special days. 	<p>Great Inn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional handcrafts product in and selling • Traditional foods selling • Artworks production and selling • Traditional and authentic clothes shopping • Local manufactured natural olive oil soaps shopping • Old and historic Cyprus photos selling • Historic postcards selling • Folk dancing events that temporarily take place in Great Inn • Attendance to ceramic/ mosaic art workshops • Traditional Cyprus Turkish Theatre clubs activities • Authentic handmade fixture & furnitures production and selling • Accessories (handmade accessories workshop) production an selling • Traditional food/deserts/drinks selling • Traditional herbal shopping <hr/> <p>Kumarçılar Inn and Its surrounding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shopping opportunity of the contemporary and traditional foods, drinks and clothes.

Arasta which is linked to the Ledra Street/ Lokmacı Gate from the south, is the most important commercial area of Nicosia. Numerous shops selling clothes, shoes and bags, jewellery, souvenirs, local foods, drinks, and sweets; cafes and restaurants are on Arasta Street. Tourists can also find small retail shops which produce and sell traditional sweets, dried nuts/fruits, and herbal products along the Arasta Street.



Figure 5. There Are Many Textile Businesses and Jewellery Shops along the Arasta Street.



Figure 6. Small Retailers Produce and Sell Sweets, Dried Nuts/Fruits, and Herbs.

Especially retail shops which sell fake products of the world-famous brands take tourist attraction.



Figure 7. Shops which Sell Fake Products of Famous Brands Like Shoes and Bags.

Arasta Square is an old commercial square which was renovated with a semi-open tensile canopy to create more comfortable uses. The small historic square started to be used for social events

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after its renovation. The social events are generally organized for celebrating special days such as the New Year and World Children's Day. A stage is set up for the performances on special days. Music performances take tourists attraction and enable them to participate in activities.

Asmaaltı District is located between the Sarayönü and Selimiye areas. The most famous historical landmarks of the Nicosia Walled City - Great Inn and Gamblers Inn- which were constructed during the Ottoman period is placed in Asmaaltı District.



Figure 8. Great Inn and Gamblers Inn Buildings in Asmaaltı District, Nicosia Walled City.

The observation results revealed that the socio-cultural and leisure activities in Asmaaltı District gather around these important historic landmarks (Great Inn and Gamblers Inn). The socio-cultural activities which take place in Great Inn, are more traditional and they carry traces of the old and authentic lifestyle of Cypriots. It is also possible to find some art and handcraft workshops in Great Inn Building. Old and historic Cyprus photos, postcards, traditional authentic clothes, fixtures and furniture are among the important tangible cultural heritages that attract tourists to the area. Besides, cafes and restaurants also offer a pleasant atmosphere to tourists. They can sit and taste the traditional Cypriot foods, desserts and drinks after their sight trips.



Figure 9. Some of Socio-cultural Activities in Great Inn

In Great Inn, traditional Cyprus Turkish Theatre and Traditional Folk Dancing Festive events are routinely performed and they are among the significant intangible heritages of Cyprus' culture that invite tourists to the Walled City (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Traditional Cyprus Turkish Theatre Represent Oral Traditions of Cypriot's Culture

Both contemporary and traditional socio-cultural and leisure activities take place in Gambler's Inn and its surrounding. There are traditional and contemporary foods, clothes and drinks. While, tourist can find the most famous old bakery which produces and sells traditional foods and sweets is located at this part, they can also visit contemporary coffee shops for resting at the same time (Figure 11).



Figure 11. Contemporary Coffee Shops and Historic Bakery in Asmaalti Square.

During the observations, it was also determined that pedestrianized historic urban corners include different user profiles:

- Tourists
- Local people
- Immigrant workers
- Students with a middle and low income level

Since the socio-cultural and leisure activities are mainly consumed by the tourists, tourist-oriented prices of selling; products, foods and drinks are very expensive and they are not affordable for other users such as students, local people and low-income immigrant workers. Accordingly, local people, immigrant workers and students may get negative social impacts from pedestrianization.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Tourism is one of the important foremost sectors for the Walled City of Nicosia, particularly the existence of historic values creates a high potential to generate physical, economic and social benefits from the tourism sector. The opening of the Gate was an important decision that positively affects tourists' use in the Walled City. The pedestrianization project contributed to the revitalization of the area at a significant level. From the tourism point of view, the project is successful and has left many positive social impacts on the area. The pedestrianization project also increased nighttime activities in the Walled City. All abandoned businesses have been re-used after the implementation of the pedestrianization project. Nowadays, it has become almost impossible to find empty shops in the pedestrian areas of Nicosia Walled City. Some of the public open spaces are used twenty-four hours a day.

In addition to these, the research results determined that tourist-oriented prices are not affordable to all users of the Nicosia Walled City. The needs of the local people, migrant workers and students should be taken into consideration.

As conclusion; it can be said that pedestrianization projects can be accepted as a tool for the revitalization of the historic urban corner and similar pedestrianization projects are expected to be developed and applied to the whole Walled City. However, great attention should be given to develop more socially sustainable and inclusive pedestrianization projects for the Walled City. Before the implementation of a project, it is required to make a sensitive environmental analysis and syntheses about the historic context and its social structure. In addition to tourists, the needs of existing users have to be integrated into pedestrianization projects.

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