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## CHANGING PARADIGM OF URBAN LEGIBILITY: THE CASE OF ATAKULE SHOPPING MALL

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### ABSTRACT

The moving structure of cities offers much information to visitors and its inhabitants. The legibility of this information is an important key to understanding and perceiving an urban environment. This legibility varies depending on social, psychological, economic, and political factors that create an urban narrative. The research attempts to explain how the legibility of public places changes over time. As a method, qualitative research was employed together with a review of the literature on the issue. It was decided to use psychopolitics and non-place as theoretical frameworks to analyze and evaluate the data acquired. This research mainly focuses on how city planners and architects created a story out of the relative mobility of cities and how this narrative changed over time. Second, a social and economic perspective is used to examine how retail complexes contribute to the legibility of the city and the adjustments they have undergone to survive. Finally, these adjustments are compared using the Atakule Shopping Mall in Ankara, Turkey, as an example. Despite the renovations, it has been decided that shopping malls can't offer a real public space experience and don't really help people understand the city because they only offer a virtual and limited habitable narrative.

**Keywords:** Urban Legibility, Psychopolitics, Non-place, Neoliberalism, Atakule Shopping Mall

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# INTRODUCTION

The built environment is a place where things happen and move. People live, work, study, worship, perform, and interact with each other in cities (Gibson, 2009:12). Although these experiences are fruitful for human-environment interaction, they can be problematic in terms of cognition as well. Because these environments are socially, psychologically, and politically complex in content and context. The legibility of the cities is not easy. There should be enough information for us to read it. The city should communicate with its visitors and inhabitants. A habitable narration should be available for an urban environment to be legible. Hence, architects and city planners try to develop solutions to that problem. However, the source, which is promoting and controlling that information, is in question.

This study aims to discuss the changing paradigm of legibility of built environment systems in the age of neoliberalism. First, the narrative attempts of architects and urban planners to handle the movement of cities were explained. Second, the transformation of the legibility of cities through time was analyzed. Then the changing role of trade centers was introduced in the legibility of cities. The death of shopping malls and the attempts at their resurrection were explained with a few examples around the world. Finally, these issues were discussed through an architectural case, which is the Atakule Shopping Mall in Ankara, Turkey.

As a method, a literature review was done on the topic and a qualitative research method was adopted in this study. Within a theoretical framework that includes the ideas of psychopolitics and non-place, the gathered data were examined and assessed. A social and economic viewpoint that is opposed to the ideologies of neoliberalism is adopted in order to explore the consequences of shopping complexes on the legibility of cities and the motivations behind the renovations it has undergone to survive.

## MOBILE VIEWPOINT OF CITIES

Although its massive static materiality, can we consider a city's mobility? It changes as one changes his/her proximity and perspective. When the city is viewed from a distant perspective, for example, from the top floor of a skyscraper, the city's image can be perceived as static. However, this changes on the street level. Nail (2018) stresses that a body's motion is described in terms of x, y, and z, but he assumes that a more fundamental non-kinetic and immobile space-time within which this motion happens. For him, when seen through the lens of motion, space and time aren't really immovable at all but only patterns of comparatively immobile matter in motion on which another pattern or trajectory might be drawn. Despite the fact that everything constantly changes, all changes are relative (Nail, 2018). That relative motion of the city consists of information about itself. "The setting for the space of access to information was and is the architecture, enriched with signs of visual information: inscriptions, sculptural detail of the communicative role" (Bonenberg, 2018: 23). One gains information about a city by passing by or walking in it. That mobility plays a role in people's cognition. As one experiences it, one perceives it. This ritual involves a guest being guided through light-filled areas (Bruno, 1997). According to Agata Bonenberg (2018), using the proper media, cities inform us about the people who inhabit the urban environment allowing us to recognize their tastes, level of culture, economic condition, wealth, and habits. Architects and city planners are the ones who design that proper media as the urban infrastructure of everyday life.

In the 1930s, French architect Le Corbusier envisioned a universal modern city. His model was "Ville Radieuse" Radiant City. He segregated the city into zones and connected them with radiant roads and automobiles. As an example, here is how he narrates his understanding of movement in city life:

The cities will be part of the country; I shall live 30 miles from my office in one direction, under a pine tree; my secretary will live 30 miles away from it too, in the other direction, under another pine tree. We shall both have our own car. We shall use up tires, wear out road surfaces and gears, consume oil and gasoline. All of which will necessitate a great deal of work ... enough for all. (Salingeros and Mehaffy, 2017, para. 20)

This was a Universalist interpretation of the movement in an urban environment at that time. However, this idea was deserted because people prefer busy streets, full of activities and interaction, rather than segregated dull roads (Lang, 1994). In the 1960s, Kevin A. Lynch suggested that the arrangement of structural features, including routes, neighborhoods, nodes, edges, and landmarks, affects how people perceive city space. The city was more cohesive, had stronger identities, and offered viewers a feeling of direction whenever they encountered paths with distinct and well-known sources and destinations (Lynch, 1960).

Those attempts aimed to create a sense of place in the city through theoretical thinking, a narrative form of knowledge. There is a parallelism between those physical paths and narrative meaning systems. "Public space creates a physical memory of the city by preserving meanings and stories" (Weiner, 2010: 99). That collective memory of experiences and narration creates a mental image of the city.

It is not surprising that some thinkers and architects resemble the moving structure of the cities to the moving images of the cinema, which is also a narrative art form. "Cinema suggests that images are organized in a linear chain" (Treske, 2017: 8). According to Guiliania Bruno (1997), film/body/city are both haptic dynamics; the city is a fantastic structure of lived space and habitable narrative. Swiss architect Peter Zumthor (2006) claims that the camera team and directors assemble sequences in the same way he tries in his buildings. For Bruno (1997), guidance, preparation, excitement, pleasant surprise, and relaxation are how he describes his architectural story. In response,

Moving with history, cinema starts to establish itself as an architectural practice: a street art form, a participant in the construction of city perspectives. The depictions in films end up connecting directly with the city's perception. The streetscape is an architectural and a cinematographic structure. (Bruno, 1997: 12)

The perception of a film spectator resembles an observer's experiences in an architectural space in the city (Toy, 1994). The similarity between the experiences is that while the architecture provides a spatial narration for the observer, the film tells the spectator a spatial story (O'Herlihy, 1994).

All these discussions are based on the "locus-solus" singularity of place, which was first introduced by the Italian architect and writer Aldo Rossi (1982). According to him, the locus is a certain specific location that forces us to pause for a moment in relation to men and place. That singularity begins with an event, a collection of private experiences, and a mode of living, which gives the soul of the city by its collective memory. That is, of course, related again to the linear narration of that collective memory.

As technology develops, architecture finds new ways of representations and communications by setting the relationship between man and the environment. Soon after the industrial revolution of the 19th century, construction techniques and mobility in cities changed the perception of privacy. Ecology of place mutated from the singularity of the enclosure to a more transparent and decentered one. Paul Virilio (1991) focuses on the disappearance of opaque closures in the urban built environment. For him, it is ironic that citizens are living in a time when the transparency of construction materials is being eliminated. "Curtain walls constructed of light and transparent materials, such as glass and plastics, replace stone façades" (Virilio, 1991: 12). Peripheries in the urban environment have become uncertain today. One can no longer talk about the centralization of a city in the 21st century. Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas carries the discussion to a new point. He talks about adapting architecture to de-location and mentions the space of flows (Bonenberg, 2018).

The urban plane now only accommodates necessary movement, fundamentally the car; highways are a superior version of boulevards and plazas, taking more and more space; their design, seemingly aiming for automotive efficiency, is in fact surprisingly sensual, a utilitarian pretense entering the domain of smooth space. (Koolhaas, 2013: 218)

The significance of public space in cities seems to have decreased in modern times compared to other historical eras. This is partially due to the removal of spatial ideas from the public realm and the decentralization of cities (Madanipour, 2003). Although decentralization and transparency seem to bring cities freedom, that fragmented and generic urban environment also brings a loss of identity and meaning.

### **Transformation of the Legibility of Cities**

As visitors or inhabitants, users used to experience space as it is, un-networked and un-informal. The information and meaning are activated through their experiences. If it were an uncanny or alien environment for the people, they would immediately have a feeling of that space. For Korpela (2012), environments trigger seemingly automatic, emotive responses in around 200 milliseconds. Researchers have discovered that participants can classify a scene's global properties (mean depth, temperature, naturalness, navigability, transience, concealment, or openness) more quickly than its basic-level category (lake, ocean, river, forest, mountain, desert, or field), which takes an average of 50 ms (Greene & Oliva, 2009, as cited in Korpela, 2012). That first impression is the atmosphere of the space. In a moment, people may recognize a spontaneous emotional reaction, and they can reject things that they do not like (Zumthor, 2006). Experiencing that atmosphere is related to being in the world. Since the world became a spectacle by broadcasting technology, being in the world has been under attack, as Günter Anders once puts it for TV and radio (1956). For him, by TV and radio, people do not necessarily go to events; events come to them in their living room, which pacifies them. People consume the image of the world rather than participating in the real world. Henri Lefebvre (1991) mentions a moment of social space as the representational space. According to him, it is a space directly lived through its associated images and symbols. In capitalist societies, people pay for that pseudo experience. That experience is now a commodity in the capitalist system.

In the "disciplinary societies of control" (Deleuze, 1992), one is free as one competes with others. For Waterman (2018), competitive individualism is a central idea of capitalism and a cornerstone of neoliberalism. He argues that neoliberalism is a system in which governments are supposed to shrink, but instead, they have become more authoritarian, corporatized, privatized, and marketed, and they have stayed big even though they have given up many of their altruistic functions and responsibilities (Waterman, 2018). Furthermore, for the capitalist system, being in the world means a person only exists as long as that person consumes the image of the world. Everyday life is under attack by that capitalist narrative. Jürgen Habermas (1987) distinguishes between daily life and money and power systems, emphasizing how these systems tend to permeate and colonize ordinary life via monetarization and bureaucratization. Following an endeavor to broaden the reach of reason, he calls for rationally structured, communicative activity between persons that allows ordinary life to resist this penetration (Madanipour, 1996).

In Gilles Deleuze's "Postscript on the Societies of Control" (1992), the disciplinary society's animal is the mole. Mole belongs to the monetary system and biopolitical regime. A biopolitical control regime is structured upon biologically exploiting or oppressing within confined spaces. Such as family, schools, prisons, barracks, hospitals, and factories. For Deleuze, a mole is an animal of spaces of enclosure. It is restricted bodily in those disciplinary spaces. However, the snake is the animal of neoliberal societies of control. "The snake does not move in closed spaces... it makes space by means of its movement" (Han, 2017: 18). The snake embodies guilt and debts. The mole as the subject of the disciplinary societies was transformed into a snake as the project of the psychopolitical technology of domination (Han, 2017).

Structural capitalism was simply the transference of money from the mass wage laborers to the minority capitalist class, the owner of wealth, property, or production. This was creating a negative psychic effect on the working class and it was causing tension between these two classes. In order to defeat that tension and resistance, structural capitalism mutated into financial capitalism (immaterial mode of production) and neoliberalism (post-industrial). Neoliberalism is "broadly

defined as the extension of competitive markets into all areas of life, including the economy, politics, and society" (Birch et al., 2016: 2). Under financial capitalism, values are being destroyed, and the psyche is being exploited. Depression and burnout are healed with self-optimization. There is no place for negativity in Neoliberalism. If there is a failure, it only belongs to the misfit individual. One always has to upgrade and optimize him/herself in the system. The system carefully protocols desires, needs and wishes, psychopolitical power prospects, permits, and projects. Nevertheless, Byung-Chul Han (2017) claims that life consist of wholly of positive emotion is inhuman. As human beings, people grow through their failures and their agonies. It is a life experience. There is no humanity in the psychopolitical system. "In late capitalism, enclosures continue apace in all these realms but are obscured by liquid modernity's incessant shape-shifting. This is the sort of world in which "flexible" workers who are "life-long learners" can flourish" (Waterman, 2018: 8). The citizens turned into life-long learners and customers. The cities became large displays, and they work as media bodies for self-subjectified inhabitants. According to John Lang (1994), today, "the city is both an exhibition and a set of stages for exhibitions" (p. 174). The information gathered through the experience of the city, which could be pleasant or uncanny, mutated into the information of the self as a wholly happy and sterile project.

With the invention of computers and the internet, places are digitalized as a part of Big Data and degraded into locations only. People no longer talk about the experience of an atmosphere of space but a limitless video or image-sphere. "A state of permanent uninfluenced change of light might be created by all the billions of cameras from us and around us, constantly uploading, sharing, linking, and relating... an ocean of video" (Treske, 2017: 5). In the generic city, as a part of Big Data, there is no narration, just an endless flow of information, no conclusion is drawn, it is non-relational, non-historical, and non-concerned with identity and collective memory. Digitalized places are Non-Places as Marc Augé (1995) puts it. The idea of non-places that we come across as a byproduct of the postmodern era is a consequence of consumerism and the connection that the person has with space (Kocadoru Özgör, 2022: 45).

On the other hand, since the cities are being digitalized, they are legible through virtual reality (VR) systems today. Using VR on an urban scale is a difficult task, because of its complexity and requirement of huge data. Arnaldi et al. (2017) state that a city is made up of more than just buildings; it also contains other items of many complicated kinds, some of which may even be invisible (e.g., roadways, signage, networks that may be underground). They also say that one can look at a city in different ways, like from a macro point of view to look at urban planning plans or traffic problems. Hence, creating a complete 3D simulation of a city is rare, rather most of the largest urban simulations take into account the neighborhood level. Jeffrey Shaw, who is a media artist, created an art installation called *The Legible City*. In his installation, the spectator is able to use a bicycle, to interactively travel in a video, projected three-dimensional virtual image space. That virtual image space is a deconstruction and representation of the parts of real cities (Manhattan-New York, Amsterdam, and Karlsruhe). As an example, here is how he describes his setup:

These solid, 3-D letters create phrases and sentences as they line the streets in real time using computer graphics technology. Accordingly, these phrases and sentences are based on the city's real layout and size, which includes its streets, avenues, crossings, and parks, among others. As a result, the physical buildings of Manhattan are totally replaced with a new textual architecture. Visiting this city of words necessitates a reading voyage. Choosing a course of action is a decision based on the tales and the way they are juxtaposed. While riding a bicycle along their selected route, visitors may create their own textual and conceptual confluence in this "city of words" that can be read from any angle. (Shaw 1989, "Related Documents" section)

Ortho-photography (display of aerial photographs) is another technique that is mainly used by Google Maps and Google Earth. For a more immersive experience, Google Maps uses Geographic Information Systems (GIS) on street level. The

images are taken by a mobile scanner. Nevertheless, this method has limitations and one cannot qualify this method as a real immersive virtual experience. Because mobile scanners only follow streets and roads, the inhabitants cannot locate themselves freely outside of those pre-determined paths.

### **The Changing Role of Trade Centers on the Legibility of Cities**

Trade centers play a key role in the legibility of cities. The typology of the trade center of a city changed through time. Madanipour (2003) claims that perhaps the most famous public space ever was the ancient Greek agora, the town's main square where everyone met. According to him, it was more than simply a market where the inhabitants of the town gathered; it was also a venue for celebrations and entertainment. In the Roman period, with dominant buildings rather than democratized open form of the agora, the cities gained an axial character in form. In medieval times, cities became more confined because of security reasons. As the principal public venues of the medieval city, one or more markets were dedicated to commerce (Madanipour, 2003). With the changing typology of commercial complexes, the open spatial structure of the agora has changed. For Madanipour (1996) in low-density suburbs in the United States throughout the twentieth century, urban commercial district signs and symbols were utilized in an introverted design with blank front facades surrounded by parking. He goes on to say that a bevy of well-known brands, themed zones, and food courts assist to depict the spirit of a shopping center and the activities that go with it.

Along with decentralization, in the 60s and 70s, especially in the United States, shopping malls began to replace public centers with the commercial, social, and entertainment opportunities they offered. Between 1970 and 2015, the number of malls in the U.S. increased more than twice as quickly as the population (Vander Ark, 2020: para. 4). For Ho Chun Wang (2011), when it comes to urban life, shopping malls have taken over every element of it since they are not just famous landmarks, but also physical locations for socializing. He stresses that none of these privately owned or managed locations, despite being intended for public use, are genuinely public (p. 2). Due to their limited time use, security reasons, and private ownership, shopping malls could not compete with the publicity provided by city centers. The shopping malls, which seemed to have played the role of city centers in the legibility and image of the city for a while, started to go bankrupt due to the financial crisis, the spread of online shopping systems, and the COVID-19 pandemic that started in 2020 (Vander Ark, 2020: para. 6). Many shopping centers are closed for these reasons and are left to rot (Figure 1). For the last 10 years, the owners and operators of shopping malls have decided to make structural and content changes that will increase public interest and have started renovations.

It has been observed that a public space based only on consumption cannot adequately respond to social dynamics and social expectations, and as a result, shopping centers lose blood. The fact that shopping streets have many features such as mixed-use, vitality, bringing people with different economic incomes together, allowing surprise encounters, and having many features such as citizens can feel the urban fabric while living this experience, draws a more public image than old fashioned introverted shopping malls. There should be a paradigm shift when forming future trade centers. The legibility of the city cannot be explained only by consumption habits and public spaces should be shaped with a perspective based on people and their changing social expectations.



Figure 1. Decaying Rolling Acres Mall in Ohio became symbolic of the US retail apocalypse

According to the analysis of Brown and Lubelczyk (n.d.), younger customers today favor experiences above the purchase of "things" and place a higher value on access to functionality than ownership (para. 31). Taking into account the declining customer interest and the fact that the new generation is starting to demand experiences beyond the products sold, shopping centers have begun to take shape so as not to disappear. Shopping malls from the past are being transformed into consumer engagement spaces which will be divided into four fundamental categories: "retailidential" spaces, values centers, destination centers, and innovation centers (Brown and Lubelczyk, n.d.) (Figure 2).

#### Destination centers

Large regional centers, anchored by popular attractions, which draw from broad local, national, and some international audiences



#### Retailidential space

Mixed-use, multifunction centers located where consumers live, work, and travel



#### Values centers

Hyper-curated centers specializing in related retail businesses and services, reflecting the values and preferences of the surrounding community



#### Innovation centers

Every "store" (and the center itself) is a smart, active retail environment featuring the latest in high technology



Figure 2. Four main categories of successful future consumer engagement spaces

Architecture and design companies in the world have started to make suggestions for new generation shopping centers to meet this expectation. For example, a derelict mall has been transformed into a micro-village by Greenberg Farrow's architectural team (Figure 3). The concept design shown in the illustrations below shows the conversion of smaller retail businesses into residential space while converting the old anchor stores into co-working space, medical space, supermarket space, a food and entertainment center, and a school.

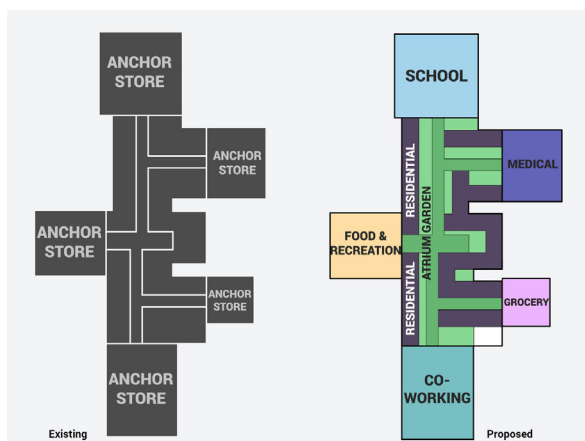


Figure 3. Proposal for transforming vacant malls into community assets for the future

Another example is that the Dutch firm MVRDV agreed to refurbish the sizable Vandamme Nord retail mall in Paris as part of their proposal. An assortment of glass slabs that protrude to varying degrees was included by MVRDV in an effort to "reintroduce the lost human scale and bring back a feeling of location" (The Angry Architect, n.d.) (Figure 4). Moreover, they redesigned the structure to make it a mixed-use public area with a kindergarten at its center and additional social dwelling units, commercial space, and offices around it. The Bibliothèque Vandamme will be moved to the plinth level, where it will have greater lighting and be much easier to reach than its prior location below the retail area (The Angry Architect, n.d.).



Figure 4. The existing Vandamme shopping center on the left and the proposed renovation of MVRDV on the right

Considering the changing user and consumer expectations, shopping center owners have started similar renovations in Turkey as well. An example of this was held at Akmerkez Shopping Center in Istanbul. Designed by architect Fatin Uran in 1993, Akmerkez was renovated in 2015. The shopping mall gained a technological appearance with its new transparent façade (Figure 5). Moreover, a garden where permaculture studies are explained and agricultural practices are developed has been created on the terrace of the building (Figure 6).



Figure 5. On the left - Akmerkez Shopping Mall before it was renovated, on the right - Akmerkez façade after renovation



Figure 6. Farming at the terrace of Akmerkez Shopping Mall



## AN ARCHITECTURAL CASE: ATAKULE SHOPPING MALL IN ANKARA, TURKEY

The economic model of the modern Turkish Republic, founded in 1923, was based on the management of its resources and the consumption of domestic products. Şumnu (2020) states that, on an urban scale, there were significant changes throughout the 1960s, particularly in the latter half of the decade. According to him, the bazaar typology, which may be seen as the forerunner of today's retail malls, expanded during this time, and the first escalator-equipped bazaars also debuted at this time (p. 369). In this context, the stores opened by Sümerbank became widespread in Turkey as the first examples of the department store typology. With its stores and modern city life, Ankara, as the capital city, has become a symbol of the new modern republic. After the 1980s, with the transition to the market economy in Turkey, the sale of foreign products in the country and the search for new markets by foreign investors changed the shopping habits of the citizens. For Erkip (2003), shopping centers are inexorably influenced by global causes to become a part of Turkish urban culture (p. 1078). She claims that new consumption and leisure venues were needed in place of small stores and streets due to the want to consume more and more uniquely (p. 1075). Some of the features of this high standard of living include purchasing name-brand goods, dining in the same way as Westerners, having a comparable shopping experience, and wandering around the mall's luxurious and immaculate setting (Akçaoğlu, 2008: 68).

As a result of this expansion, the number of shopping malls in Turkey has skyrocketed in recent years. According to a report by the Real Estate and Real Estate Investment Trust Association (GYODER), there were 454 shopping malls in Turkey as of November 2019, and the total amount of rentable shopping mall space was 13,508,000 square meters in 2019 (Doğanışık, 2020, para. 4). The number of shopping malls in Turkey has increased to the point that people and families living in big cities visit the malls on weekends as if it were the only optional place in the city, even if they do not purchase anything. For the last twenty years, the goal has been to reduce public space in the country and to attract large crowds of people under the guise of shopping. People's ability to interact with the city in new ways is diminishing. On this basis, almost all policies and investments have been made to convert Turkey into an enormous retail mall.

Atakule Shopping Mall is the first shopping mall in Ankara, the second in Turkey that includes 125 meters high iconic tower architect Ragıp Buluç designed. Atakule Shopping Mall has a symbolic meaning with its location at the highest city junction of Ankara's Çankaya region, close to the former presidential residence, representing modern Turkey and greeting the city at the top of the city's main commercial axis. It was first opened in 1989 and served in Ankara until 2012. At the time it was opened, Atakule shopping center had become the most visited commercial and entertainment center in Ankara.

Atakule in the nineties was a symbol of status and a landmark for Ankara. Famous stores spread over 5 floors in the air-conditioned enclosed area, the playground Dreamland, which was the grand prize of the children of the period. Atakule was a place that attracted all the people of Ankara with its wedding hall, the stylish restaurants in the tower, and the cruise terrace. (Dedekargınoğlu, 2014, para. 3)

In the 2000s, Ankara began to expand towards the west and became more decentralized. With the emergence of various and bigger retail malls in Ankara, the interest in Atakule Shopping Mall started to wane. The shopping axis of the city shifted from the Çankaya region, where Atakule is located, to the Eskişehir road. The danger of extinction of shopping centers that could not meet consumer expectations was also valid for Atakule. The owner of the Atakule shopping mall changed and the new owner of the property (Atakule Real Estate Investment Trust Inc.) decided to demolish the old shopping mall and build a new one without touching the tower (Figure 7). The architectural firm, A Tasarım, that undertook the renovation project of the shopping mall expressed the changes they made as follows: The circulation spaces were minimized, the tower rising from the structure was taken into consideration as a feature of the atrium, and

the planned central atrium was positioned on the axis of the botanical garden. To provide a rich spatial experience that increases the value of the building, it was intended to establish a continuous link with the existing park in the interior space that expands upward with terraces (A Tasarım, n.d., para. 2). In 2018, the renewed shopping mall was re-opened on the Republic Day of Turkey.



Figure 7. On the left - Atakule Shopping Mall before it was demolished, and on the right - the New Atakule Shopping Mall's main entrance façade

Even the municipality emblem of Ankara today uses Atakule as a symbol of modernism (Figure 8). "An architectural icon is imbued with a special meaning that is symbolic for a culture and/or a time, and that this special meaning has an aesthetic component" (Sklair, 2006: 25). Although the previous atmosphere of the shopping mall diminished, it still carries the iconic character because of the tower building. "One of the prime functions of the built environment is that of a symbol" (Lang, 1994: 175).



Figure 8. Emblem of the Municipality of Ankara

The arrangement of restaurants and cafés on terraces with views of the botanical garden was the most significant structural modification in Atakule. The retail center's operating hours have been extended in this manner, and the area now offers additional options for socializing. Numerous concerts and social gatherings are held on the grass terrace that was built on top of the retail mall. With its updated shape, the prior project's isolated ambiance, which was evocative of a covered market, has improved its visual contact with the city. Urban residents with middle-and upper-class incomes are targeted by the interior's opulent and clean environment.

When Atakule originally opened, it was crowded with locals who had come to experience the first thrill of western-style shopping as well as the sensation of innovation brought about by the free market economy. Many brands opened their first stores in Atakule. However, the context is different today. In Atakule now, all but a few stores -including cafés and restaurants- are established as outposts of national and international brand chains. Citizens are now living in a neoliberal society and the new Atakule shopping mall is subjectified accordingly. Both interior-exterior elements and even its image serve the market. A shopping mall only simulates public space. Although the previous shopping mall looked like a public space in the center, with its resemblance to a town square, it only

had a "leisure function associated with shopping rather than intersubjective communication" (Madanipour, 1996: 151). However, the renewed mall promotes more opening to the outside, transparency, and communication. The previous shopping mall was more confined and enclosed. The new mall has a large glass façade looking at the Botanical Park view below (Figure 9). Although Botanical Park is a public space and citizens could experience the park free of charge, Atakule Shopping Mall sells the park's image to the customers of the cafés and restaurants located purposefully at that façade, using the advantage of being on the higher grounds. That kind of transparency is just for the marketing strategies of the shopping mall. Even its green terrace is a simulation of a public park.



Figure 9. Renewed Atakule Shopping Mall overlooking the Botanical Garden

Moreover, the Atakule Shopping Mall has a big screen above the main entrance façade and another screen around the top part of the tower for commercial, communication, and surveillance purposes. Attachment to such new places is realized through familiar commercial images and branding, which is always positive. In Atakule Shopping Mall or similar other shopping malls, it's a global, recognizable, and respectable cosmology that "all space consumers find themselves entangled in" (Augé, 1995: 106). The shopping mall promises entertainment and consumption within a world full of pre-defined experiences. There are no surprises or discoveries allowed. It is the location of the self-realization project. Moreover, the diversity of people is reduced, segregated, and restricted, compared to a public square. The citizens who occupy the shopping mall are identified only as customers in that space.

Today, neoliberal technology of power targets emotions rather than feelings. Because feelings have no performativity whereas emotion is dynamic and performative. For example, if a person has feelings for something or someone, the system cannot predict how that person would behave towards it. However, if that human being is sad, which is an emotion, the system can encourage him/her to consume chocolate. According to Byung-Chul Han (2017), emotions and drives are steered by the limbic system. Inevitably, consumer capitalism boosts people's drives and profits from emotions. Emotions are more temporal than feelings. Consumer capitalism provides fleeting and short-lived emotions in order to generate more desires and needs. "Actual experiences of buildings and spaces do not match their iconic images" (Sklair, 2006: 26).



Figure 10. BBC big screen projects

New Atakule Shopping Mall is an emotional architectural media body. Its interior and exterior façades are just for the urban screen of pervasive advertising. To create an architectural virtual experience, selfie corners are placed on each floor where visitors can take and share their images. It is desired that the clients make themselves a part of this architectural image. Images of iconic architecture are meant to encourage people to purchase (in the sense of both consuming and giving credibility to) buildings, places, and lifestyles, as well as the architects they represent (Sklair, 2006). There are a few examples of these media façades working as a creative work of art liberating or engaging citizens, such as BBC Big Screen projects in the UK (Gould, 2015) (Figure 10). To watch or participate in national ceremonies or events, crowds congregate in front of these screens in open spaces. In order to maintain the perception of Atakule Shopping Center as a public area, the proprietors' post event notifications on large screens. Atakule Real Estate Investment Trust organizes joint events with the Turkish Government, foreign embassies in Ankara, or non-governmental civil organizations. For example, in 2018, Atakule Shopping Mall supported a campaign with The Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (SGDD) and United Nations Women. Just after its opening, to raise awareness within the scope of an international campaign, Activism against Gender-Based Violence, Atakule was enlightened with orange lights to galvanize action to end violence against women (Hürriyet Daily News, 2018) (Figure 11). Unfortunately, Atakule's screens are not able to encourage social interaction in the open area. The screens on the tower are 125 meters above the visitors and have just one remarkable feature: they attract attention. The front of the big screen above the main entrance only defines the entrance and serves as an advertisement feature rather than a gathering place or a small town square.

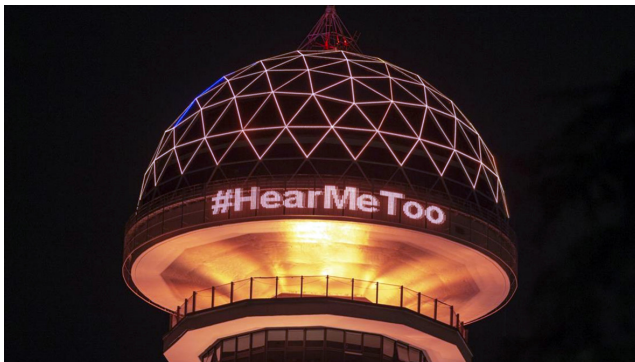


Figure 11. LED screens around the Atakule tower

## CONCLUSION

For the legibility of a city, it is necessary to pass through the streets of that city and experience its public spaces. Only then can inhabitants read what the texture and structure of the city want to tell them. People get a feeling about a city based on how open or closed buildings and public spaces are and what kind of spatial experiences they offer. Cities are constantly being created digitally in the age of digitalization, not just via their physical architecture but also through user-taken photos with their mobile devices and pictures reflected off the digital displays that cover the buildings. Today, the legibility of the city takes place in both actual and virtual environments. This study shows that the paradigm of legibility of built environment systems changes in the age of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism has shifted from relying on physical environments to relying on emotional imagery to communicate with its audience. Users are expected to contribute to the overall picture of the space rather than producing a unique and communal experience and a sense of belonging. This paradigm shift has altered the city's and architecture's readability toward generic designs.

For legibility, architecture should provide a habitable narrative by creating an actual public atmosphere in the moving structure of the cities. Public places are the performing spaces of everyday life where feelings emerge through limitless

encounters. Semi-public places or non-places create virtual or limited interaction between inhabitants. In the light of changing conditions and user expectations, the structural changes made to keep the idea of shopping malls intact and the search for new consumption categories based on experience trying to extend the life of these semi-public spaces. This study contributes to the literature by both justifying and exemplifying the effort to move traditional shopping malls into the future. Because of their primal commercial purpose, shopping malls, as semi-public spaces, cannot liberate or engage citizens. This commercial space, as an extension of competitive markets, promises nothing more than a temporary and shared identity of customers rather than a collective memory of citizens. It never has and it never will. This study draws attention to the shrinking of actual public spaces in today's Turkey and the danger of turning almost all cities into giant shopping centers. This unsustainable situation points to a paradigm shift in the legibility of cities in Turkey as well as in the rest of the world.

Whether the renovated Atakule Shopping Mall will become a popular center of attraction that can attract a wide range of local and international visitors will be determined by the experiences it offers. The store management and services that reflect the current social values and preferences will show whether this shopping center will be a value center. Bringing together activities such as living, working, traveling, and entertainment will give the space a mixed-use feature. Making technology a part of the experience can turn this place into a creative hub. Of course, the combination of all these features is a prediction for future commercial success. The public experiences of the atmosphere beyond commercial concerns and the feelings it will create for the city of Ankara are worth investigating. Despite politically correct campaigns and the promotion of entirely positive images, Atakule Shopping Mall will remain a non-place like any other shopping mall because it lacks an organic society and will never provide intersubjective communication among citizens. However, the image of the Atakule tower as a landmark will continue to make visitors and people who live in Ankara think of a modern way of life.

#### Authors' Contributions

The study has a single author, the author contributed 100%.

#### Competing Interests

There is no potential conflict of interest.

#### Ethics Committee Declaration

This study does not require an ethics committee declaration.

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