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FLEA MARKETS IN ECONOMIC CRISIS, MIGRATION, AND URBAN REDEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF ANKARA FLEA MARKET

Ekonomik Kriz, Göç ve Kentsel Dönüşüm Sürecinde Bit Pazarları: Ankara Bit Pazarı Örneği

Erhan KORKMAZ*

* Folklor Bölümü, Ankara Üniversitesi | Department of Folklore, Ankara University

Abstract

This study critically examines the status of flea markets within the urban context, focusing specifically on the İtfaiye Square, a flea market, in Ankara. The analysis explores three interconnected themes: first, the impact of the current economic conditions on flea markets, particularly how they sustain trade activities through online sales platforms; second, the challenges faced by flea market vendors due to the influx of refugees, a result of increased foreign migration to Turkey over the last 15 years; and third, the pressure of urban redevelopment process that have pushed flea market vendors to the outskirts of the city, and the role of both national and local governments in this process. The study is based on interviews with 40 shopkeepers from different sectors within the flea market, ranging from industrial kitchenware sellers to scrap metal dealers, and from carpet sellers to furniture sellers. To further contextualize these findings, additional interviews were conducted in the Önder neighbourhood, a refugee-dense area, and the Dışkapı district, where vendors have been forcibly relocated due to urban renewal projects. This research, which has evolved into a form of "A Flea Market Monograph in Ankara," is of critical importance for articulating the multi-dimensional challenges faced by flea market vendors at both micro and macro levels. Through this exploratory approach, the research sheds light on the multi-dimensional dynamics shaping the experiences of flea market vendors amidst socio-economic and spatial transformations.

Key Words: Flea Market, Economic Crisis, Refugees, Urban Redevelopment, Online Sales Platform

Özet

Bu çalışma, kentsel bağlamda bit pazarlarının durumunu ele alarak, özelde Ankara'nın İtfaiye Meydanı bölgesine odaklanmaktadır. Çalışma, birbiriyle bağlantılı üç ana tema etrafında şekillenmiştir: İlk olarak, mevcut ekonomik koşullar altında bit pazarlarının durumunu ve bu esnafların özellikle çevrimiçi satış platformları aracılığıyla ticaret faaliyetlerinin nasıl sürdürüldüğü; ikinci olarak, son 15 yıl içerisinde Türkiye'de artan dış göç dalgası sonucu bit pazarı esnafının karşılaştığı zorluklar; üçüncü olarak ise, kentsel dönüşüm süreçlerinin bit pazarı esnafını şehir çeperine iterek yarattığı baskılar ve bu süreçte ulusal ve yerel yönetimlerin rolleridir. Çalışma, bit pazarında sanayi tipi mutfak eşyası satıcısından hurdacıya, halıcıdan mobilya satıcısına kadar çeşitli sektörlerdeki 40

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Correspondence | İletişim:
erhan.krkmzoglu@gmail.com
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esnafla gerçekleştirilen görüşmelere dayanmaktadır Bulgulara bağlamsal derinlik kazandırmak amacıyla, mültecilerin yoğun olarak yaşadığı Önder Mahallesi'nde ve kentsel dönüşüm nedeniyle esnafların taşındığı Dışkapı bölgesinde ek görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Keşifsel bir yaklaşımla yürütülen bu araştırma, sosyo-ekonomik ve mekânsal dönüşümlerin bit pazarı esnafının deneyimlerini nasıl şekillendirdiğine dair çok boyutlu dinamikleri ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bit Pazarı, Ekonomik Kriz, Mülteci, Kentsel Dönüşüm, Online Satış Platformu

INTRODUCTION

Can we define human beings as the best adapted to nature? Can the changing conditions over the centuries and human adaptation to these conditions be an indicator of their adaptive capacity? Historians have classified these changing conditions in chronological order, such as the Stone Age, the Old Stone Age, the Lower-Middle-Upper Palaeolithic, the Polished Stone Age, the Copper Age, the Bronze Age.... The period of importance for us is the one after the Neolithic, after which most humans shifted from a nomadic lifestyle to a sedentary one, and from subsistence hunting-gathering to agriculture and animal husbandry. The increase in agriculture and animal husbandry made property ownership practices more complex. Living spaces expanded and people built new rules and principles for living together. As technology developed, the areas where agricultural and livestock production activities were carried out were replaced by cities, and in time, these cities grew in importance on a global scale in parallel with the development of technology. People engaging in agricultural and livestock production began to industrialize and reassess the value of their labour force under the influence of technology. It was precisely during this period of increased labour exchange that cities gained value and provided jobs in industrial sectors for their inhabitants (Childe, 1936; Diamond, 1997).

Cities, or industrial labour areas, are not only places where the utility value of technology is at the forefront, but they have also become the commercial centres of their respective countries. Compared to rural areas where agriculture and animal husbandry are carried out with traditional methods, the relations in these areas of life, where trade is intensive, realize the producer-consumer relationship through indirect processes rather than establishing it directly. For instance, the Fordist mode of production emerged as a necessity of the indirect commercial relations of urban life. The fact that a product is marketed and made ready for sale not by the producer, but by the employer and the intermediary, as well as by the seller and the marketer, shows that the relationship is indirect. The aim of this study is not to negate the networks of commercial relations in urban life, but to analyse flea markets, which I see as an alternative to these forms of relationships. I believe that this analysis is an introduction to my study because flea markets are outside the routine consumption patterns of urban life. The fact that industrial producers increase the number and variety of their products in proportion to the increasing urban population, and advertise to encourage consumption, follows a more competitive and sales-oriented strategy than flea markets, where prices are set according to the seller-buyer and the utility value.

Before delving into the specific challenges and dynamics of contemporary flea markets, it is important to recognize their historical and structural significance as spaces of exchange. Flea markets historically predate modern retail structures, reflecting bartering and informal trade practices (Portes, 1994; Slack & McMillan, 2018). They offer a unique form of economic resilience and innovation, especially during periods of socio-economic upheaval. They embody the age-old practice of bartering and informal trade, rooted in human history long before the emergence of standardized currencies or organized marketplaces. Unlike conventional markets, where product prices are typically determined by overarching market mechanisms or standardized pricing strategies, flea markets grant individual sellers a more autonomous role in setting prices. While there may be an implicit understanding of market value, the pricing of goods in flea markets is ultimately shaped by the seller's discretion and negotiation skills.

Furthermore, the act of bargaining is a defining characteristic of flea markets, offering vendors and customers a dynamic interaction that is rarely seen in conventional retail settings. In these spaces, the price of a product can fluctuate dramatically depending on the negotiation, creating an economic environment that challenges the rigid pricing norms of conventional markets. This unique feature positions flea markets as not only an alternative but perhaps even an antithesis to the formal economic systems of conventional markets. Their adaptability, flexibility, and participatory nature make flea markets enduring spaces of economic resilience and innovation, particularly during periods of social or economic upheaval.

Although we make a distinction between conventional product markets and flea markets, the two are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, there is a strong relationship between industrial production and flea markets in terms of determining the prices and the utility value of products. Second-hand goods are offered for sale not only at flea markets, but also on second-hand internet sales platforms such as Sahibinden, Letgo, Dolap, etc., which are similar to the operating logic of flea markets. In this case, in this study, there is a tripod of industrial production, flea markets and second-hand internet sales platforms. The impact of the Internet on human life is undeniable. The Internet and the associated expansion of socialization networks that come with digital globalization, or simply with globalization have made it possible for people to make various transfers/shares with each other. These transfers/shares are not only in the form of producer-consumer, as in conventional industrial production or seller-seller-consumer, as in the flea market, but also in the form of seller-seller, consumer-consumer, and seller-consumer. This situation has forced both industrial producers and flea market sellers to change or transform their sales policies to include the Internet.

Cities have become more attractive than rural areas due to the industrial work opportunities they offer and the abundance of economic links they create through the centralization of trade. In fact, the "migration from the village to the city" that we are witnessing in Turkey is an example that we have closely experienced.[1] Compared to urban life, village life is an example of the settlement style of human communities based on traditional modes of production. Of course, villages have changed both their modes of production and consumption patterns in line with the Internet age and urbanization. However, villages are not

(1) In the case of Turkey, this migration began in the 1960s and intensified until the 2000s. The rural population, which was 75.8% in 1927, decreased to 27% in 2013 (Dinler, 2008). The urban migration rate was 9.34% in 1980, 8.67% in 1985, 10.81% in 1990 and 11.02% in 2000. In total, 15 million people migrated to the city for various reasons (Güreşçi, 2010: 79). There are many reasons for these migrations, but the most prominent one is that the agricultural policies of the period made it difficult for the rural population to make a living (Güreşçi, 2010). For further reading on migration in Turkey, see: Karpat, 1976, 2024; Pınarcıoğlu & Işık, 2001; Yenigül, 2005; Keleş, 2021; Mengi & Keleş, 2023.

considered to have reached the same level of "development" as cities. It is important to note the criteria that determine the distinction between villages and cities. The first is population. Cities are more populous than villages and require a diverse and extensive network of commercial relations. In addition, while the forms of production in villages are determined by the basic needs of the peasants, the forms of production in cities are based on broader needs, including those of the villages. Another criterion is that villages focus on agricultural and livestock production, while cities are characterized by industrial production that includes these.

Today, cities attract attention with their ever-expanding structures. The rapid growth of the world's population over the last 30 years has strained the capacity of cities and pushed settlements to expand out.[2] This situation can both increase inequalities within the city and put migration, both internal and external migration, on the agenda. I believe that the issues of external and internal migration, which sociologists have focused on intensively, are directly related to the expansion of cities and the reduction of opportunities. As can be seen in this study, this issue of migration has seriously influenced and even changed the focus of the research.

(2) If we look at the world population, we see that it was 500 million in the 16th century, 1.1 billion in the 19th century and 6 billion in 2000. According to the United Nations report, this number is expected to exceed 10 billion by 2050 (Clarke, 1971; Çamurcu, 2005; Sergün, 2012).

The topic of this research changed after I went into the field. In the research proposal I had drafted before going to the field, my aim was to observe how consumers build social networks through the items they buy, based on Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood's Anthropology of Consumption (1999), in the case of flea markets. I thought that the items bought would have symbolic values that would allow users to join certain communities. However, after the first few weeks in the field, I realized that the sellers in the field had issues that I found more important and worthy of research beyond my research topic. These are as follows: The impact of the economic crisis and online sales platforms on the flea market, the impact of foreign migration on the flea market, and the impact of urban redevelopment on the flea market. The scope of this research was not limited to a single topic. Instead, I have focused on the three main issues mentioned above, which affect the patterns of relationships in the flea market. This study can be called a monography on the Ankara flea market.

Flea markets, as alternative economic centres within the urban landscape, provide a unique setting to observe the direct impacts of socio-economic pressures such as economic crisis, digitalization, and urban redevelopment. These markets function outside of formal retail structures, often characterized by second-hand exchanges and generally economically accessible products compared to new items in conventional retail markets. With their high density of economic interactions, significant urban influence, and historical value, I consider flea markets to be a suitable context for examining resilience and adaptation. This study focuses on flea markets precisely because they allow for a concentrated analysis of how broader societal dynamics shape and are shaped by these alternative economic structures, offering insights into vendors' adaptive strategies within a distinct market environment.

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METHOD

The fieldwork was conducted over a three-month period from October 2021 to January 2022, including two months at the İtfaiye Square flea market in Ankara, two weeks in the Önder neighbourhood, and one week at the newly established flea market in Dışkapı. During the fieldwork, I interviewed a total of 49 people. Of these, 40 were shopkeepers at the İtfaiye Square Flea Market in Ankara, one was a security guard at the Dışkapı shopping centre, two were owners of a café near the shopping mall in Dışkapı, four were owners of shops selling new products in the Önder neighbourhood and two were taxi drivers in the Önder neighbourhood. Among the 49 interviewees, 28 were male and 12 were female, with ages ranging from their early 30s to late 60s. Almost all of the flea market vendors I interviewed had been in this sector for at least 10 years.

The research followed an unstructured interview-based fieldwork design, allowing for flexibility in adapting questions to the participants' responses and the context of each interaction. My contact with the interviewees took place informally when I stopped by their shops or stalls to ask them questions. The interviews lasted 30 minutes on average. I conducted my interviews in a systematic way, categorizing the flea market sellers according to the products they sold. My first interviews were with the furniture and appliance sellers, and then with the industrial kitchen utensil sellers, carpet sellers, scrap metal dealers, hardware stores and those who set up stalls in front of/on the ground. I made sure that I interviewed at least three shopkeepers from each product category to maintain a balance of diversity.

To protect the anonymity of the participants, pseudonyms and initials (e.g., 'A.T.') were used throughout the study. This approach ensured the anonymity of participants while allowing their perspectives and narratives to be conveyed accurately.

My Position as A Researcher in the Field

As this was my first field experience, I encountered both excitement and challenges that shaped my understanding of fieldwork. Over time, I felt that I had formed a bond with the people I was interviewing. However, I began to question how this bond was affecting my identity as a researcher. During the fieldwork, especially during the interviews, there were moments when I had

concerns such as 'am I compromising my researcher identity? For example, at one point in the interview, when a shopkeeper I interviewed said: "I used to work at your faculty; I bought your boiler rooms etc. with a tender, or there is a teacher there called K.", my natural reaction was to say , "Oh... I know this teacher, I like him. He is on another job now" and suddenly I found myself gossiping about the teachers. Fortunately, I soon realized the situation I was in and brought it back to my research questions. Such situations taught me how to strike a balance in the field; I realized that I had to walk a fine line between maintaining intimacy with my interviewees and keeping my distance.

These experiences showed me that fieldwork is not as simple as the theoretical version taught in class, on the contrary, the practical effort is more complex and challenging than the theoretical effort. The people from different cultures that I met during the fieldwork made each interview unique. Each interview had its own dynamic, which required me to be flexible as a researcher. In the process, I realized the need for the concept of reflexivity, which has gained prominence in qualitative research since the 1980s. Reflexivity shows how the researcher recognizes and controls their own influences and biases in the research process (Finlay, 2002). During this study, I had to both carefully follow my interviewees and constantly observe my own behaviour. During the research process, I often struggled with questions such as 'What impression did this attitude of mine create?' or 'Was it unethical to approach in this way?'

Throughout my research, I noticed that the people I interviewed were hesitant to approach me. I thought that on some political issues they would listen to what I had to say and then respond accordingly. I think there are many reasons for this. This situation showed once again how important the position of the researcher is in fieldwork. In Turkey, we live in a highly politicized environment, and this makes people approach research cautiously. As a researcher, it was important for the flea market shopkeepers what I was researching and collecting in the field, and who the higher authorities were that this information would reach. At the beginning of my research, when some of the shopkeepers asked me questions such as "What are you researching...where do you come from?" and "Were you sent by the government?" from a few shopkeepers, I realized that the most important requirement of being in the field was that the researcher should introduce him/herself correctly and sincerely. From then on, I introduced myself to each interviewee as "Hello, I am from Ankara University, Faculty of Language, History and Geography, this is my student card, I am conducting a study on the flea market, I would like to ask you some questions if you are available." I believe that the researcher should be sincere and honest with the people they are researching - unless vital issues are at stake.

FIELD RESEARCH

Flea markets, as dynamic spaces within urban economies, are significantly shaped by broader socio-economic and spatial dynamics. Migration alters the demographic profiles of both vendors and customers, introducing new cultural dynamics that influence bargaining practices and product preferences. Economic crises, on the other hand, have heightened demand for affordable goods sold at flea markets, positioning these spaces as crucial alternatives to formal retail

systems. Additionally, urban redevelopment often marginalizes flea markets by physically displacing them to peripheral areas, disrupting both economic practices and social interactions. These interconnected dynamics highlight the complex role of flea markets as adaptive spaces within rapidly changing urban environments. The following sections elaborate on these dynamics in greater detail, focusing on their impacts on the Ankara flea markets.

The Economic Crisis and the Impact of Online Sales Platforms on the Flea Market

The economic crisis that emerged in Turkey in 2018, the effects of which are still being felt today, directly affected flea market shopkeepers.[3] Some shopkeepers have been positively affected by this situation, while others have been negatively affected. A. T., a seller of furniture and appliances, was quoted as saying "We can't afford to buy diesel. If a product arrives today, the transport costs are more than the profit the product will bring... The rent is the same. This shop hasn't been able to pay its rent for 6 months.", E. K., a shop owner, was quoted as saying "Would you believe it! Students come and want to sell their mobile phones! That's how the crisis happened... No, we were also very much affected, and we are still affected, look, I haven't sold a single product since this morning." And the statement of carpet seller N. D. "I sell my carpets to families with a good economic status, I cater to them. In the past, middle class families used to come and buy carpets from me, but now the square meters of a carpet have become very expensive... I haven't even gone to villas to lay carpets in the last few months. I guess they've been affected by the crisis too." show that the economic crisis has reduced the business/income of some artisans, leaving them unable to cover their own expenses. High transport costs, the near doubling of shop rents in recent years and the decline in purchasing power of their customers are examples of the negative impact of the crisis.

(3) In 2018, the Turkish currency depreciated significantly against foreign currencies. In 2018, the TL rose from 3.78 to 7.23 against the dollar (Akkoç, 2023). Today (in August in 2024), the current price of the TL against the dollar is 34.07. From April to August in 2021, when I conducted this research, the dollar rose from 15.90 to 18.16. In parallel with this increase, there have been serious increases in the prices of fuel, electricity, and labour wages, which directly affects flea market artisans. At the same time, the increase in the price of industrial brand new products such as furniture, electronics, and white goods has also led flea market artisans to increase the prices. This, in turn, has led flea market vendors to pay exorbitant prices for the products they buy, in anticipation of future price rises.

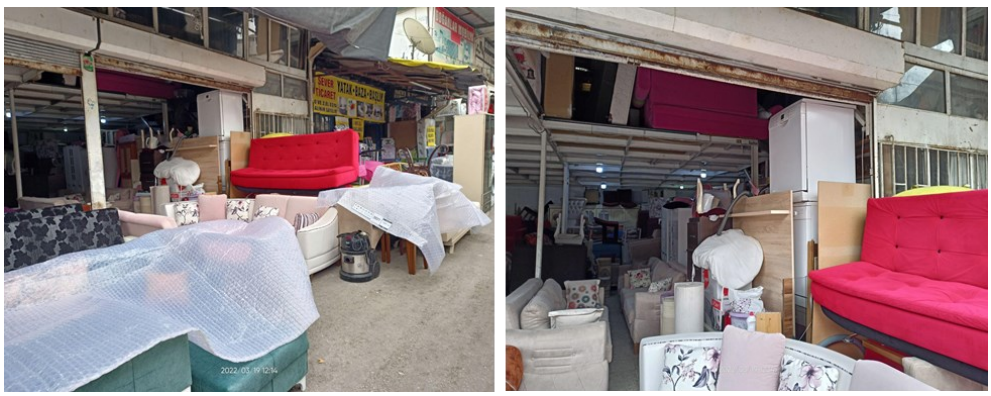

Figure 1. A Furniture and Appliances Shop

On the other hand, the economic crisis has created new opportunities for some shopkeepers. For example, Ç. S, who sells industrial kitchen utensils, said: "Most shops are closed nowadays, they call us and say 'come and negotiate for the products' and we go and buy all kinds of kitchen utensils from refrigerators to jimbalis. Many things have changed recently. Even those who want to open a shop come to us, whether they want to buy new products or not, of course they come to us, we set up the shop for them at an affordable price"; scrap dealer K. K.'s statement" ...yes, scrap prices have gone up with the economic crisis. A kilo of copper starts at 120 Liras, iron at

5-6 Liras...People who close their shops or even hotels call us, we go and buy the scrap, break it down here, sort it and send it to the wholesaler in OSTİM (Middle east industry and trade centre). Our business is good, thank God, it has increased recently" and D. İ., who sells industrial kitchen utensils, said, "Our business is good, a lot of material has come lately. We have just opened this shop. It isn't even a year old. There was a restaurant here before, look, even the signboard is still standing... When customers call us, we go everywhere to buy materials. We also set up a shop if there is a demand for it." His words also show that the economic crisis can offer opportunities, depending on the product sold or bought. The kitchen utensils left over from the businesses that closed down due to the economic crisis, the scrap value of the waste, and the fact that those who want to start a business get the kitchen utensils they need from the flea market at affordable prices instead of buying brand new products can be cited as examples of the opportunities that the economic crisis offers to flea market artisans.

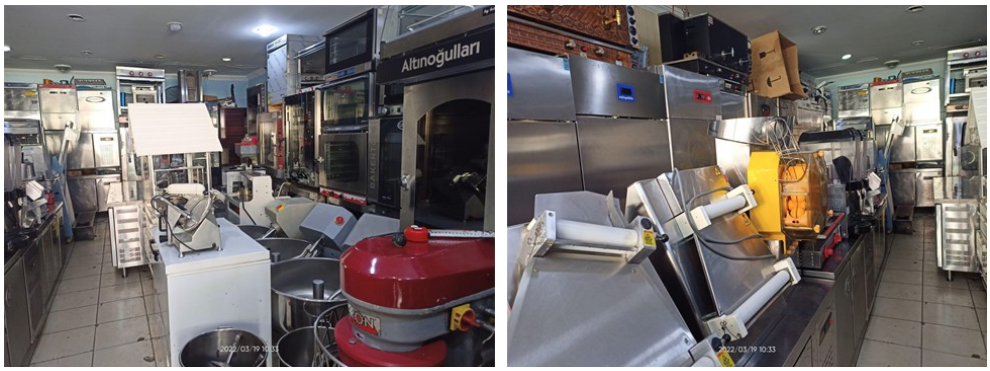

Figure 2. A Shop for Industrial Kitchen Equipment

After the economic crisis, sellers of furniture and white goods at the flea market said that because of the price of fuel, they preferred not to go to homes to buy and instead asked people they contacted online to bring their products to the shop or pay extra for transport. I found that online shopping was used extensively by flea market vendors. N. D., a carpet seller, said, "Everything is available online now. When I use Letgo, I expand the location, I see goods from all over Turkey. And I don't have to pay anything..." N. D., a carpet dealer, commented that he exchanges carpets with dealers from all over Turkey. Ç. S., a seller of industrial kitchen equipment, said, "Every seller has a group on Facebook. For example, we have a group called 'Kitchen Equipment Dealers'. Sellers from all over Turkey are there... I also use Letgo, but Facebook is more functional for us...", indicating the importance of online shopping. Some shopkeepers also said that they use Sahibinden and Dolap applications in addition to Letgo and Facebook groups.

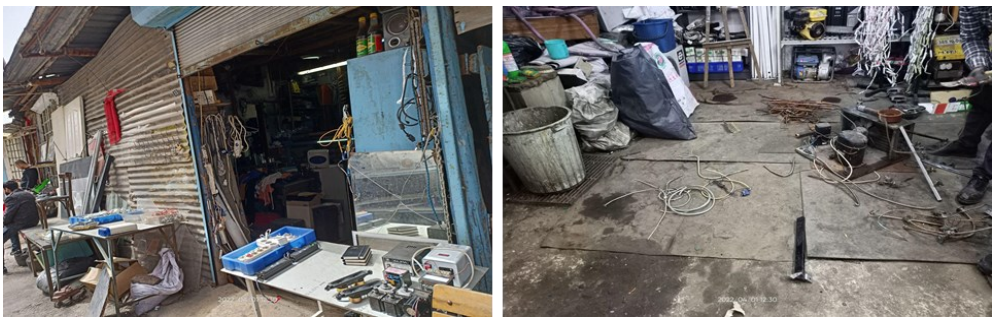

Figure 3. A Scrap Shop and Scrap Sorting Process

(4) Under this heading, I have included the field data I collected when I went to Önder neighbourhood, where flea market vendors said that refugees were creating a market. However, the Önder neighbourhood part of this study is weak due to the limited time I spent there. When I returned to the neighbourhood in the following months to collect more data, I was prevented by the plainclothes police officers on duty there. I was told that I had to get permission from the district governor in charge of the area to conduct a study there. Feeling insecure, I did not go to the district governor and ended my work in the neighbourhood.

The Impact of Foreign Migration on the Flea Market[4]

Following the outbreak of the civil war in Syria in 2011, Turkey began to host Syrian citizens. This migration increased even more after 2015, occupied the domestic political agenda and continues to do so with changing factors. When I went to the field for my research, I saw that flea market shopkeepers also drew attention to this issue. The wave of migration from Syria increased the number of Syrian employees in the flea market in 2016-2017 and 2018. However, after that, as T. K., a furniture dealer, recounted, "...there were a lot of Syrians here between 2015 and 2018. Then they went and created their own market in the Önder neighbourhood. They didn't do much trade around here". When I visited the neighbourhood, I saw a smaller specific economic space rather than a market with the breadth of a flea market. Y. M., one of the taxi drivers in the Önder neighbourhood, said, "These people, even if they are on the other side of Ankara, they still come here to shop... They are very attached to each other. These places were not so crowded 2-3 years ago, but over time, as they migrated, they settled here." and M. T., a hardware store owner at the flea market, said "There are not many Syrians left here. I remember there used to be a lot of them, then they set up a market for themselves, they went to a place called Siteler, they went there...". From his statement we understand that immigrants - predominantly Syrians - are not present at the flea market anymore and that they shop in the Önder neighbourhood instead. During my fieldwork, I did not come across any migrants working at the flea market.

Furniture maker S. G. "Until last year, Somalis used to buy a lot of products from us. They are rich, they change their houses every year. The UK gives them 5,000 pounds to go back to their own countries. Since there is a civil war in their own countries, they come straight to Turkey. Imagine how much 5.000 pounds is in Turkey, of course it is so much money. But they have not done much shopping in the last year." His words surprised me. I had no previous knowledge of Somali

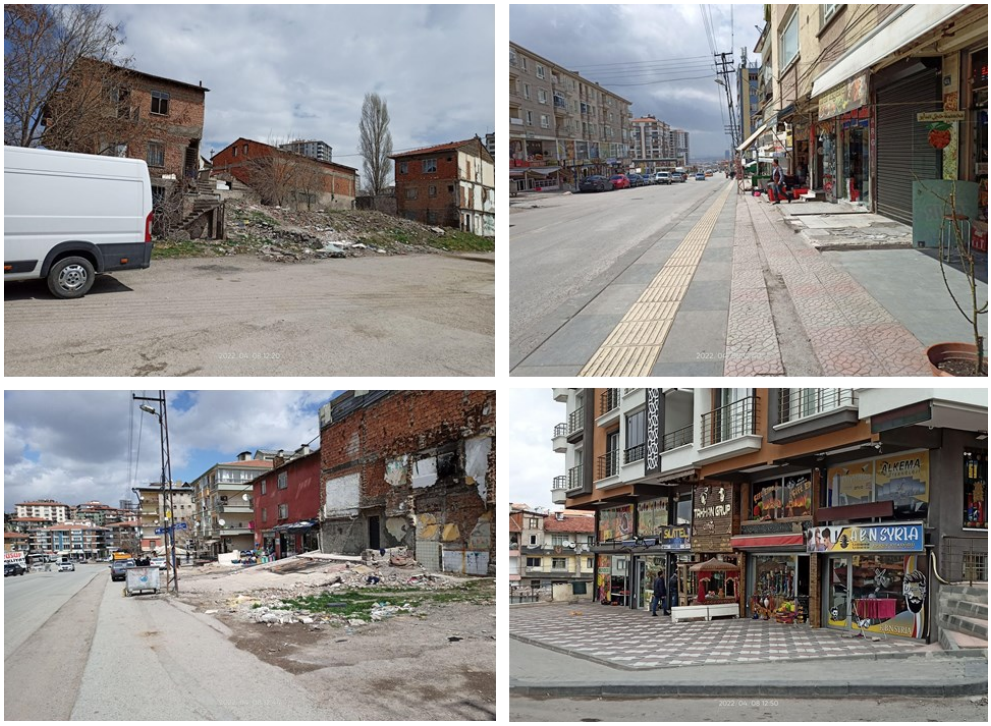

Figure 4. A Street View of Önder Neighbourhood

citizens who migrated from the UK to Turkey. When I asked other shopkeepers about this, they said they had no information. Perhaps if more people were reached, there would be rich data on Somali migrants.

The Impact of Urban Redevelopment on the Flea Market

The first time I went to the field, S. Y., a furniture seller, told me that the flea market was going to be moved to a shopping mall in Dışkapı as part of the urban redevelopment: "Brother, they are going to move all these shops. You can't believe that for how many years the shopkeepers have been on pins and needles because of this... They are building a place in the Ziraat neighbourhood of Dışkapı, and they will take the ones here." All the shopkeepers there knew that the flea market would be moved, but some of them did not know the details. For example, shopkeeper S. Ç. said, "Yes, I know about it, but I don't know the details, the authorities sent officers to negotiate and so on." Others, like furniture dealer T. T., said, "The shops in the mall they are building there [in Dışkapı] are small, each one is 30 square meters, how can you fit the 70-80 square meters of stuff here (pointing to his shop) in there? It makes no sense". I realized that the shopkeepers' knowledge of the urban redevelopment process varied, or that they felt the need to convey their knowledge to me in this way. I could not find answers to some of the questions I asked. For example, questions such as when the decision to urbanize the flea market was taken, what official processes this decision went through, who met with the shopkeepers and what was discussed remained unanswered.

Another reason why the flea market shopkeepers are against urban redevelopment is that shopkeeper T. S. said, "...they pay 8,000 liras per square meter. It doesn't matter how many floors; they measure from the ground. Do you think this place is worth 8,000 liras per square meter? Anyway, they will take more money from us if we go there [Dışkapı] than they give us here. They said how many million liras for each shop, and there is a 15-year payment period." As can be understood from this statement, the sales value of the shops in the shopping centre under construction in Dışkapı, which is considered suitable for the flea market, is quite high. The shopkeepers are sure that the flea market will undergo urban transformation and redevelopment. However, when I asked the shopkeepers, "So, what will happen here, what will be done?" shopkeeper T. S. said, "We don't know, we're not told anything. Some say it will be like the Hamamönü, others say they will extend the green area of the mosque. It is not clear what will happen".

There are also shopkeepers who have responded positively to the urban redevelopment of the flea market, although fewer in number than those who have responded negatively. For example, shopkeeper T. H. said, "I want it to change, I mean, look, isn't it very dirty here? Let it change so that our business can open up." and another shopkeeper K. K. said:" The customers will buy the product wherever they are, put it on this roof and they will still come and buy it, so it doesn't matter where we move to. It would be good, let's move" can be given as an example. The existence of ruins at the back of the flea market - in the opposite direction of the mosque - was the first

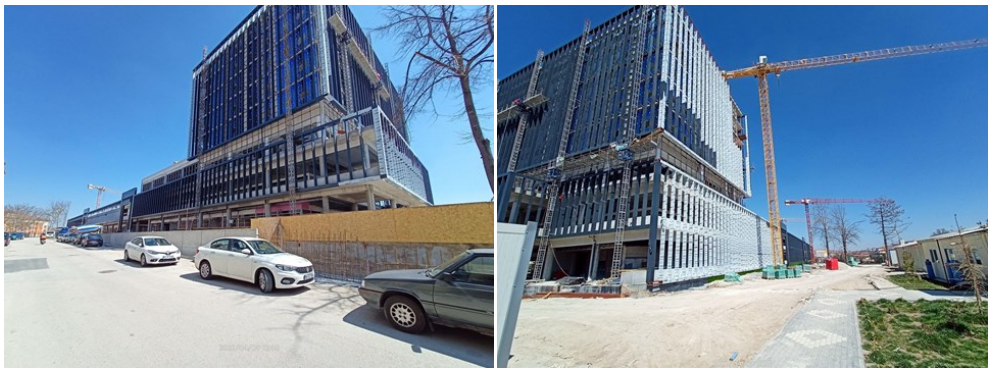

Figure 5. Left and right views of the mall under construction

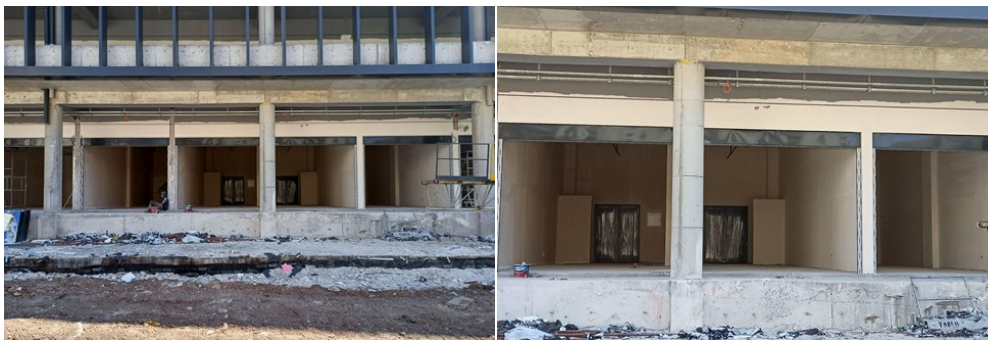

Figure 6. The Shops in the mall

justification put forward by those in favour of urban redevelopment. Although these places have brought symbolic meanings to the historicity of the flea market, they are thought to put the shopkeepers in a difficult situation in terms of function and location.

When I went to the shopping mall being built in Dışkapı, I met T. L., the security guard there. When I asked T. L. how this shopping mall was related to the flea market, he replied, "They are building shops for them here, it is expected to be finished in a year, then the shops there will move here." He added, "Some of the shopkeepers in the flea market have objected. There is talk of a stay of execution, but I don't think so. It is almost certain that they will move here, as you have seen, they have built shops like the ones here next to the Melike Hatun Mosque in Ulus, they will move the shops there [in the flea market] first there and then here." When I went to the place mentioned by Security T. L., there were more than 40 shops, each 30-35 square meters wide, lined up in rows.

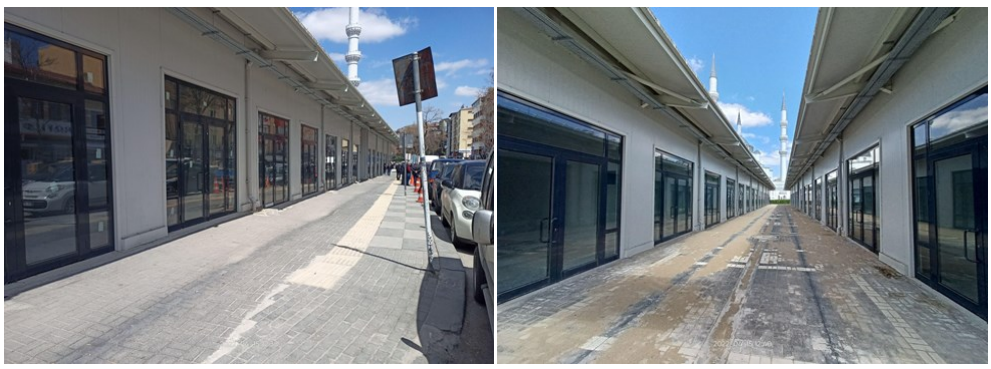

Figure 7. Flea market shops next to Melike Hatun Mosque

DISCUSSION

In this study, I have tried to observe urban consumption relationships in flea markets, which are second-hand markets, rather than the usual brand-new appliance market, and to identify and analyse the urban problems affecting the

market. Throughout the research, I found that the negative effects of the nationwide economic crisis on flea market vendors were frequently mentioned. These discourses allowed me to evaluate the economic conditions of the country through the eyes of the flea market shopkeepers. The words of A. T., a seller of furniture and white goods, "We can't afford to buy diesel. If a product arrives today, the transport costs are more than the profit the product will bring...the rent is the same, this shop hasn't been able to pay its rent for 6 months." are an example of this situation. Although the economic crisis is perceived as a negative situation for most shop owners, Ç. S., who sells industrial kitchen equipment, said: "Most of the shops are closed nowadays, they call us and say 'let's negotiate for the products' and we go and buy all kinds of kitchen utensils from refrigerators to jimbalis. Many things have changed recently. Even those who want to open a shop come to us, whether they want to buy new products or not, of course they come to us, we set up the shop for them at an affordable price." I observed that the economic crisis has also been an advantage for some shopkeepers. As A. T. T., a furniture and white goods dealer, said, while some shopkeepers in the flea market cannot even pay the rent, others have been working in the area for years and run the shops they have inherited from their ancestors without having to pay rent. Within the flea market, the differences in economic levels are striking. I have seen that shopkeepers who pay rent are more economically distressed than those who do not, and that they organize their sales strategies accordingly. For example, S. S, a furniture maker who pays rent and complains about the increase in the price of diesel, said that in addition to buying and selling in the shop, he also buys and sells products online, and even finds more and different products than he would buy online, and sometimes sells them to shopkeepers he knows. Such flea market strategies can be seen both as a necessity of the widespread use of the Internet and as an alternative to economic hardship. In response to these economic hardships, some vendors have adopted alternative trade strategies to sustain their businesses. The impact of the economic crisis on flea market vendors has manifested in multifaceted ways. Rising rent and transportation costs have restricted some vendors' commercial activities, reducing their income levels. However, some vendors have adapted to these conditions by turning to digital platforms and developing alternative strategies. Online sales platforms present new avenues for vendors to expand their business amidst increasing competition brought about by the economic crisis, enabling them to reach customers beyond their limited spatial opportunities. These strategies demonstrate the vendors' creativity and resilience in the face of economic inequalities exacerbated by the crisis.

Another important point that caught my attention throughout the research was the impact of foreign migration on the flea market. The Syrian civil war, which started in 2011 and is still ongoing, has forced Syrian citizens to migrate to Turkey. Commenting on this situation, T. K, a furniture maker, said, "...between 2015 and 2018, there were a lot of Syrians here. Then they went and created a market for themselves in the Önder neighbourhood. They didn't do much trade here anymore." I asked other shopkeepers about the Önder neighbourhood mentioned by T. K. and got almost the same answers. Then, I went to the given neighbourhood. I did not find a flea market as I had hoped, but I did find something else of equal importance: The Önder neighbourhood had turned into

a closed economic area, inhabited mainly by Syrian migrants, but also Iraqi and Afghan migrants. Talking to the taxi driver there, I learned that every Middle Eastern migrant living in Ankara comes here to do shopping. This reminded me of David Harvey's claim in his book "Social Justice and the City" (2009) that in urban structuring, the residential areas of the city reproduce the classes. In his book, Harvey compares the residential areas of black people living in the US with those of white people and argues that even if these two groups of people have the same salaries, they are not equal at the urban level and that this structuring of the city reproduces inequality with advantages and disadvantages:

> "In most American cities, of course, this condition has been exacerbated by the lack of an open housing market for the black population which, of course, just happens to constitute a large segment of the poor. Meanwhile most of the growth in new employment has been in the suburban ring and hence the low-income groups have gradually been cut off from new sources of employment. They have had to resort to the local employment opportunities in the stagnant industrial areas of the inner city or in the central business district (CBD), which in any case only offers a small proportion of its employment in the unskilled low-income category." (Harvey, 2009, pp. 62)

The Önder neighbourhood, like the black neighbourhood in Harvey's example, was on the periphery of the city and had fewer opportunities in terms of environmental conditions than the city centre. This situation allowed me to understand both the response of the flea market economy to foreign migration and the impact of the political structure of Turkey on migrants. This closed economic structure not only impacts local trade but also reflects deeper social tensions arising from economic competition. The formation of migrant communities' own economic structures in neighbourhoods like Önder has brought economic competition between local vendors and migrants to the forefront. These neighbourhoods, where migrants establish their own commercial spaces with limited resources, create a sense of a "closed economy" for local vendors, both economically and culturally. This can be interpreted as a reflection of migrants' pursuit of economic autonomy. However, this process heightens local vendors' economic concerns, even leading some to perceive it as a threat. Such tensions challenge social cohesion within the city and deepen economic divides.

Increasing urban population is one of the major determinants and causes of urban settlement variability. Especially in the last 25-30 years, increasingly crowded cities have expanded their peripheries. Cities are shaped by economic, social and political processes and reinforce social injustices, particularly through the displacement of disadvantaged groups. Urban regeneration projects often result in the further marginalization of the relatively poor living on the periphery of the city. This process restricts access to resources for those who lack economic and social capital, thereby deepening spatial and income inequalities. According to Harvey, such projects are the result of the restructuring of urban space in line with capitalist interests, often at the expense of the interests of low -income groups. Harvey also argues that to achieve spatial justice, urban planning must take into account not only economic but also social and political

dynamics. In this context, he argues that urban regeneration is not only a reorganization of physical space, but also an equitable transformation of social structures (Harvey, 2009, 2012). In this way, cities can be shared in ways that are accessible and equitable for all. As seen in Harvey's example and in the Önder neighbourhood, the outer parts of the city offer more limited opportunities than the inner parts.

Kevin Lynch's "The Image of the City" (1960) is a fundamental reference point on how cities are perceived by individuals and how mental images are formed. Lynch argues that individuals perceive spatial arrangements in cities through five basic elements: nodes, paths, edges, neighbourhoods, districts, and landmarks. These images not only help us understand the physical structure of a city, but also reveal the emotional and cognitive ties that individuals have to the city. For immigrant communities, Lynch's theories are very relevant because individuals who have recently settled in a city connect to the city through these spatial images and try to find their place in the city. Particularly in neighbourhoods where immigrants live densely, the fact that shop signs are in their own language and that they often use their own language in the neighbourhood shows how these communities perceive urban space and how they own and transform it. According to Lynch, such signs and images are not only physical landmarks but also symbols of cultural identity and social solidarity. Such linguistic and cultural signs can also be deeply understood through Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and symbolic capital. Bourdieu defines habitus as a set of social experiences and internalized structures that shape the way individuals perceive, evaluate and act in the social world (1977). Habitus shapes the processes by which individuals and groups make sense of both their social and spatial worlds. New immigrants to a city make sense of and own this space through spatial and cultural signs appropriate to their habitus. Symbolic capital is the cultural values that enable an individual or group to be accepted and recognized in the social sphere (1986). For migrant communities, shop signs, spoken language and other cultural symbols in the neighbourhood become part of their symbolic capital. These symbols allow the community to maintain its cultural identity and establish a place in the urban space. Symbolic capital is a force that reinforces and legitimizes the social position of individuals and groups. Through symbolic capital, immigrants create their own habitus and determine their place in the spatial and social structure of the city (1984). In this context, Lynch's theory of imaginability, together with Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and symbolic capital, provides a powerful analytical tool for understanding how migrants transform urban space and reproduce their identities in the process. While immigrants make their identities visible and permanent in urban space through cultural symbols, these symbols also reinforce their social capital and their relationship to urban space.[5]

It is now clear that flea market vendors are moving away from the traditional "open a stall and wait for customers" method. A shopkeeper C. K. said, "Now we have opened a page on Instagram, we get orders from there. We used to just set up a stall and wait, but now we do business online." His words clearly show how digitalization has accelerated the change in the market. This is where Manuel Castells' concept of the network society comes into play. Castells argues that digitalization has reshaped not only economic relations but also social structures.

(5) How does living on the outskirts of a city make you feel urban? This is a question that I found valuable to answer during my research. In this context, a documentary by Imre Azem titled "Ecumenopolis: City Without Limits" (2011) is an important source that sheds light on this question. The documentary takes a government-oriented perspective on how urban transformation/ redevelopment projects leave the relatively poor in a difficult situation, and how this process is shaped by liberal policies. The suburban life shown in the documentary is strikingly important for my research, especially in the context of the spatial and social marginalization of migrant communities. The experiences of migrants in the Önder neighbourhood bear a strong resemblance to the urban periphery life depicted in the documentary. The migrants living in these neighbourhoods have been pushed to the periphery of the city in a way that weakens their ties to the city, and in the process have faced social exclusion. Azem's documentary portrays the marginalized position of migrants in the city by exploring the struggle of these communities to exist in the city through themes such as the threat of displacement, socio-economic pressures and cultural alienation. In this sense, the documentary makes important contributions to the theoretical and empirical framework of my research by evaluating the effects of urban redevelopment on migrant communities from a broader perspective.

Businesses now connect with their customers through digital platforms and conduct their business through these new networks (Castells, 1996). Social media has become not only a marketing tool for shopkeepers, but also a necessary platform for them to sustain their business. Castells' concept of the network society helps us understand how shopkeepers are adapting to the dynamics of the digital world and how this process is changing the way they do business.

CONCLUSION

During my time in the field, I found that the shop owners in the flea market were passive in the face of many factors ranging from the economic crisis to urban redevelopment. The shopkeepers neither have clear information about supportive measures against the economic crisis, nor about what would happen to their location as a result of urban redevelopment. This state of ignorance and uncertainty led shopkeepers to put forward different arguments. While some shopkeepers believed that urban redevelopment was beneficial and that their business would increase as a result, others drew attention to the negative aspects of urban redevelopment. When I asked some shopkeepers about the shops built next to the mosque, they said they had no information. Similarly, I observed that most shopkeepers had little or no information about the shopping mall built in the Ziraat neighbourhood. It is not difficult to say that there is no consensus among the shopkeepers, at least on this issue. This situation not only shows the weakness of the relationship between the shopkeepers, but also shows that their relationality with official institutions is also weak. The shopkeepers' accusations against the official authorities were partly about the weakness of their relationship with them. As shopkeeper E. K. said, "Nobody care about us, what will those of us who have set up shop do when the urban redevelopment happens tomorrow? Do you think they will give us a place here; I don't think so. If it becomes like Hamamönü, they won't let us open a stall... Nobody has come and said anything, we just hear about it here and there."

Above, "supportive measures" refers to a range of potential initiatives and incentives that local governments or civil society organizations can implement. For instance, short-term tax reductions, rent subsidies, or low-interest loans could be introduced for small-scale vendors who are struggling in the wake of the economic crisis. Additionally, training programs (e.g., improving digital selling skills) and marketing assistance tailored to the needs of flea market vendors might enhance their competitiveness. These measures serve as tangible examples of practical steps aimed at sustaining vendors who are adversely affected by economic downturns. Should urban redevelopment projects be fully implemented, there is a significant risk that flea market vendors will face spatial disadvantages. Relocation to newly built shopping centres or peripheral areas could diminish their customer base, particularly if the local government does not provide sufficient infrastructure, advertising, or incentives to attract new clientele. In the long term, such measures may also weaken the historical and cultural significance of flea markets, potentially eroding an important aspect of the city's collective memory. Without adequate support, this scenario could result in considerable income loss for many vendors and a reduction in the diversity of urban commercial life.

The policy recommendations proposed in this study—such as enhanced transparency, inclusive decision-making, and digital skill development programs—not only offer short-term relief but may also prevent the deepening of urban inequalities in the long run. In the absence of these measures, flea market vendors could find themselves operating in an increasingly precarious environment, where unregulated competition and limited consumer demand further exacerbate their vulnerability. Moreover, tensions between local vendors and newly arrived migrant communities may intensify without adequate conflict-resolution mechanisms, potentially complicating social integration efforts. Hence, these recommendations play a pivotal role in fostering both social and economic sustainability.

With the outbreak of the economic crisis, some shopkeepers found themselves in a difficult situation, which weakened commercial relations and created a pessimistic atmosphere in the region. I was angrily rejected by some of the shopkeepers. For example, a shopkeeper selling industrial kitchen utensils said, "Don't ask, my friend, I have enough problems, there are no sales, what are you going to ask?" Another shopkeeper, a scrap metal dealer, replied somewhat sarcastically and a bit angrily, "There is nothing to tell, if I talk, there will be trouble." Some shopkeepers were uncomfortable at the beginning of the interview but opened up later. The primary issues mentioned by the shopkeepers negatively affected by the economic crisis were the increases in fuel and rent. Such an increase in transport costs has directly affected a significant proportion of flea market shopkeepers. I observed that the shopkeepers who were less affected by the economic crisis did not have to worry about paying rent or transporting goods like the shopkeepers, but they also reacted to the crisis for different reasons. Some of them were the decrease in the purchasing power of customers and the increase in the cost of products.

As mentioned above, the widespread use of the Internet has had a significant impact on commercial relationships. Groupings and bargaining spaces have been created on the Internet, such as the "Kitcheners Group" on Facebook. As some stated, "I am expanding the range on Letgo and reaching everywhere in Turkey", this has also removed the limits of shopping distances for shopkeepers, but it should be noted that buyers/sellers also increase with the expansion of the market, so this can also increase competitiveness. About half of the respondents actively use the Internet.

Findings show with Harvey's (2009) call for social justice in urban spaces and Castells' (1996) idea of the network society, particularly in the context of digital platforms transforming vendors' survival strategies. From Bourdieu's (1977) perspective, the effort to maintain a traditional spatial presence can be viewed as an ongoing struggle over cultural capital. Therefore, urban redevelopment projects do not merely alter physical locations; they also reshape the habitus and social networks that have long defined these marketplaces.

As a result of my interviews in the Önder neighbourhood, I observed the inadequacy of the immigration policy in Turkey. The inadequacy of the living conditions in the neighbourhood, the reasons why the people in this area had to create such a closed economy for themselves and much more reflected this political inadequacy. When I went to the Önder neighbourhood, the first thing I saw was a TOMA and the riot police waiting in front of it. CCTV cameras had been

installed in central parts of the neighbourhood. When I asked a Turkish shopkeeper in the area why the TOMA[6] was there, I was told: "There was a fight recently between Turks and Syrians, and now they are here for security." I observed that the economic structure in the Önder neighbourhood was viewed negatively by some flea market shop owners who even thought that this situation was organized by the government and that they were subordinated. The attitude of B. G., a furniture maker, was striking: "They established their own market, they got support from the state, and here we are, grovelling...". This attitude of the immigrants reinforced the anti-immigrant political discourses within the flea market. In fact, I noticed some exaggerations in the discourses about the Önder neighbourhood. For example, K. İ., a furniture seller, said "They sell everything there, even more than here. Soon they will come and take over here too." When I visited the Önder neighbourhood, I realized that this statement was invalid and exaggerated.

(6) TOMA stands for Community Incident Response Vehicle. It is a kind of military tank used to ensure internal security. They spray fresh water at their targets. They are popular in street demonstrations in Turkey.

I was surprised to see that the shops in the shopping mall being built in the Ziraat neighbourhood - in Dışkapı - were as small as the shopkeepers at the flea market had described. I have to admit that before I went, I thought, "I wonder if the shopkeepers are exaggerating a bit, it can't be that small." And when I found out that the new shops cost at least twice as much as the ones at the flea market, I realized that most of the shopkeepers would not be able to move to the new location by borrowing money in this economic crisis.[7]

(7) I have made sense of these effects of urban redevelopment through the words of flea market shop owners. Perhaps the different results would be different if the official process were heard from the mouths of those who projected and presented. However, due to the scope of the study, I did not attempt to contact any official institutions.

As I mentioned in the last section of the introduction, urban life allows some citizens to enjoy certain luxuries while depriving others of basic amenities. Considering the area where the shopping mall was built, it is noteworthy that the flea market was built away from its current location, outside the city centre. The shopkeepers' complaints such as "the place they will take us to is very desolate. Who would come there!... The customer potential here is not the same as there" can be understood. Urban redevelopment projects not only displace vendors physically but also exacerbate their sense of financial uncertainty and marginalization within the city. The spatial and economic effects of urban redevelopment projects are deeply felt by vendors. Forced to move out of city centres, vendors face difficulties reaching their customers and, with reduced customer potential, experience significant income loss. These projects not only physically displace vendors but also socially and economically marginalize them. Weak relations with local authorities and the uncertainty vendors are left with erode their sense of security, posing a threat to the sustainability of small-scale commerce within the city. Flea markets present a distinct site of economic activity within the urban landscape, shaped by their high density of economic interactions, significant urban influence, and historical value. They offer a unique shopping dynamic characterized by informal, second-hand exchanges, differing from conventional retail markets. This study's focus on flea markets is grounded in their ability to reveal the ways in which broader socio-economic pressures, such as economic crisis, digitalization, and urban redevelopment, play out in an alternative market structure. These factors collectively underscore the relevance of flea markets as a valuable area of study, providing insights into resilience and adaptation in a sector with distinct market dynamics and social significance.

This study demonstrates that flea markets, as alternative economic spaces, serve as a microcosm for understanding broader socio-economic dynamics such as

economic crises, migration, and urban redevelopment. By examining these dynamics, the study contributes to urban anthropology and provides valuable insights for policymakers seeking to integrate marginalized economic actors into urban redevelopment plans. Future studies could adopt a comparative perspective by examining flea markets in different urban contexts, thereby revealing variations in how urban redevelopment and migration shape market dynamics. Additionally, ethnographic research focusing on interactions between migrant and local vendors would offer deeper insights into newly emerging patterns of solidarity and conflict. Such work could further illuminate the ways in which changing social landscapes transform daily life and economic practices in urban settings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Transparent Communication about Urban Redevelopment Projects

Authorities must provide detailed and transparent information about urban redevelopment projects to flea market vendors. This includes specifics on eviction processes, compensation packages, and potential sanctions for non-compliance. Such transparency will alleviate fears, reduce misinformation, and empower shopkeepers to make informed decisions about their futures.

2. Inclusion of Shopkeepers in Decision-Making Processes

The implementation of urban redevelopment projects without consulting shopkeepers has created dissatisfaction and distrust. Authorities should establish inclusive dialogue platforms where shopkeepers' voices are heard, and their rights and livelihoods are protected. Joint decision-making processes will ensure a more equitable and collaborative approach to urban renewal.

3. Reducing Social Tensions Between Vendors and Refugees

Misunderstandings and exaggerated perceptions about refugee economic activities in the Önder neighbourhood have heightened tensions between flea market vendors and refugees. Accurate and comprehensive information from authorities about refugee activities can prevent conflicts and promote social cohesion. Additionally, organizing community-building activities between vendors and refugees can foster mutual understanding and reduce prejudices.

4. Enhancing Digital Literacy Among Flea Market Vendors

The disparity in digital literacy levels among flea market vendors creates inequalities in commercial activities. Authorities and local organizations should initiate training programs to increase vendors' technological skills and provide user-friendly online sales platforms. This will not only bridge the digital divide but also strengthen the overall competitiveness and sustainability of the flea market.

These recommendations aim to address the socio-economic and spatial challenges faced by flea market vendors and contribute to a more inclusive and equitable urban development process. By fostering transparency, inclusivity, and technological empowerment, these measures can improve the resilience and sustainability of alternative market structures like flea markets.

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