

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63332/joph.v5i4.1205>

The Relationship between Street Revitalization Project and Gentrification: The Case of Talas Ali Saip Pasha Street, Kayseri, Türkiye

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Abstract

The concept of gentrification was first introduced by Ruth Glass in the 1960s to describe the displacement of working-class communities in urban neighborhoods. Since the 1990s, this process has become more diversified and widespread under the influence of neoliberal urban policies and globalization. In Türkiye, gentrification examples have emerged particularly in the 1980s in major cities such as Istanbul and Ankara, encompassing both residential and commercial areas as well as historic urban centers. This study aims to investigate the relationship between the Street Revitalization Project implemented on Ali Saip Pasha Street, located within the Talas Urban Conservation Area in Kayseri, and the spatial and social transformation experienced in the aftermath of the project, in relation to gentrification processes. To thoroughly analyze the transformation and gentrification dynamics observed on Ali Saip Pasha Street, qualitative research methods were employed, including in-depth and semi-structured interviews. The findings reveal that although the project led to physical improvements in the area, residential functions declined, commercial activities became dominant, and this shift resulted in the direct or indirect displacement of long-term residents. The diminishing stock of affordable housing emerged as another critical outcome of the process. When assessed through the lens of gentrification's defining criteria, it becomes evident that the revitalization efforts have played a catalytic role in triggering gentrification within the area.

Keywords: Gentrification, Street Revitalization, Urban Transformation, Talas, Ali Saip Pasha Street.

Introduction

Following the economic crisis of the 1970s, the adoption of neoliberal economic policies in the 1980s led to the weakening of the welfare state paradigm. This shift entailed a downsizing of state responsibilities and the widespread implementation of privatization practices (Doğan, 2001; Ersoy, 2001). Consequently, deindustrialization and the expansion of employment in the service sector triggered a wave of spatial and social transformations in cities (Duman & Coşkun, 2015, pp. 28–30). Simultaneously, the globalization of capital intensified competition among countries and cities, turning urban space into a commodity with increasing market value (Doğan, 2001; Duman & Coşkun, 2015, pp. 31–38).

As a result, it became increasingly difficult for low-income populations to afford housing in city centers or historically significant districts. This process led to rising displacement rates and the depletion of affordable housing stock (Duman & Coşkun, 2015, pp. 41–42). Since the 1990s, globalization has further accelerated complex and multidimensional transformations in urban

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space. These changes are frequently linked to *gentrification* processes, especially in connection with urban renewal and transformation projects (Smith, 2002; Türkün, 2009).

The term *gentrification* was first introduced by Ruth Glass in 1964 to describe the displacement of lower-income residents from working-class neighborhoods in London as a result of the influx of the upper-middle class (Şen, 2005; İslam, 2003). In the international literature, scholars such as Smith (1979, 1986, 2002), Zukin (1987), Hamnett (1991), Ley (1986, 1994), Atkinson (2000), and Hackworth (2001) have made substantial contributions to the development of the concept. In Türkiye, academic studies on gentrification began to intensify after the 2000s, with notable research focusing on Istanbul neighborhoods such as Cihangir, Kuzguncuk, Fener-Balat, and Galata (İslam, 2003, 2006, 2009; Uzun, 2006, 2015; Şen, 2005, 2011).

Within the framework of urban regeneration and renewal policies, gentrification has rapidly expanded, often accompanied by spatial and social segregation, housing shortages for low-income groups, and forced displacement. On the other hand, it also yields potentially positive outcomes such as the conservation and adaptive reuse of historical environments (İslam, 2003). In Türkiye, gentrification has been studied from a variety of disciplinary perspectives including urban planning, architecture, sociology, business, and public administration. However, much of the scholarship focuses on case studies in Istanbul and Ankara. This study contributes to the literature by examining a lesser-known case in Kayseri: the gentrification process within the historical conservation area of Ali Saip Pasha Street in Talas. The analysis of the impact of the Street Revitalization Project on gentrification particularly brings a novel perspective to the existing body of research.

Launched in 2007 by Talas Municipality with support from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Street Revitalization Project has led to substantial transformations on Ali Saip Pasha Street. The process has resulted in the physical and social displacement of low-income local residents, a rapid decline in affordable housing stock, and the dominance of commercial functions throughout the area. These dynamics make it necessary to examine the post-project phase through the lens of gentrification.

The primary aim of this study is to assess the transformations that have taken place on Ali Saip Pasha Street as a result of the Street Revitalization Project and to investigate how these changes have affected different stakeholder groups such as residents, business owners, and local authorities in relation to gentrification.

As part of the field research, semi-structured interviews were conducted with various stakeholders, including the Talas Municipality Directorate of Planning and Projects, households, café operators, shopkeepers, and the local headman. For each user group, interview guides (control forms) specifically designed by the researcher were utilized. Spatial documents such as plans, project files, and maps were also analyzed to trace physical changes before and after the implementation of the project. The interview forms contained questions aiming to understand the development of the gentrification process, the nature of the transformation, and the past and present characteristics of the area in a comprehensive and accurate manner. In addition to the interviews, current maps, land use plans, and project documentation related to the pre- and post-project period were obtained from the Talas Municipality Directorate of Planning and Projects.

To examine the relationship between the Street Revitalization Project and gentrification, the following research questions guided the inquiry:

- (a) What is the relationship between the Street Revitalization Project and gentrification? Does the project act as a catalyst for gentrification?
- (b) How does the project affect the area both physically and socially? What kind of transformation has occurred in the neighborhood?
- (c) Does the Street Revitalization Project contribute to the displacement of local residents?

In addressing these questions, the study offers a holistic examination of the interplay between street revitalization and gentrification, using Ali Saip Pasha Street as a representative case.

Literature Review: The Concept and Evolution of Gentrification

Urban transformations characterized by the reinvestment and improvement of dilapidated and undervalued inner-city residential areas often followed by the influx of middle- or upper-middle-class residents were first conceptualized by Ruth Glass (1964) under the term “gentrification.” Glass’s observations in London neighborhoods, where working-class residents were gradually displaced by wealthier newcomers, laid the groundwork for understanding both the scope and consequences of this process. From the 1970s onward, gentrification began to spread rapidly, particularly in North American and Western European cities (Zukin, 1987; Uzun, 2006), evolving from a localized phenomenon into a globally deployed urban strategy (Smith, 2002). As the process became increasingly complex, its scale and dynamics varied depending on geographic location, urban morphology, and social composition, involving a wide range of actors including corporations, public institutions, and public-private partnerships (Behar & İslam, 2006).

In Türkiye, academic interest in gentrification intensified in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. In cities such as Istanbul and Ankara, areas close to urban centers or those with historic housing stock began to experience value appreciation through renovation and redevelopment, typically led by middle- and upper-income groups (Uzun, 2006, 2015). In the Turkish context, gentrification is often defined as a process that combines spatial renewal with social segregation. The literature generally explains this phenomenon through two complementary frameworks: the “rent gap” theory and demand-side approaches. Neil Smith’s (1979, 1986) rent gap theory posits that reinvestment is likely to occur when the potential ground rent of a property far exceeds its current value, incentivizing capital to flow back into the urban core. On the other hand, demand-side theorists (e.g., Ley, 1986; Hamnett, 1991) emphasize the cultural preferences of the “new middle class,” demographic shifts (such as rising divorce rates, an increase in childless households, and greater female labor participation), and the growing appeal of central city living. Hamnett (1991) reconciles these two perspectives by arguing that gentrification cannot be fully understood through either economic or cultural explanations alone, but rather through the interplay of both.

Gentrification has been examined through distinct historical waves. The first wave, from the 1950s to 1979, is characterized as “classical gentrification,” involving the incremental renovation of working-class neighborhoods by individuals or small developers, as originally described by Glass (Hackworth & Smith, 2001). The second wave, spanning 1979 to 1990, was increasingly driven by large-scale capital investments, fueled by the expansion of the service sector and the influx of global finance into urban centers (Şen, 2005). In Türkiye, examples of second-wave gentrification include transformations observed in Istanbul’s neighborhoods such as Cihangir, Galata, and Asmalımescit during the 2000s (İslam, 2009b). The third wave, emerging from the 1990s onward, reflects the rise of neoliberal policies and involves strategic

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partnerships between the state and major investors (Hackworth & Smith, 2001). During this period, even peripheral urban areas such as former industrial zones or informal settlements came under the influence of gentrification, accelerated by tax incentives, infrastructure investments, and regulatory frameworks (Smith, 2002). New conceptual categories such as “new-build gentrification” and “super/re-gentrification” also emerged in this era (Davidson & Lees, 2005).

Across all three waves, displacement remains a central and recurring theme. Displacement can occur directly through rising rents and property prices or indirectly through social pressures and institutional policies such as evictions (Atkinson, 2000; Slater, 2006). Thus, while gentrification may offer benefits such as heritage preservation, urban revitalization, and economic stimulation, it can simultaneously restrict the housing rights of low-income residents and foster social exclusion, homelessness, and cultural homogenization (Zukin, 1987; Uzgören & Türkün, 2018). Both in Türkiye and globally, post-1980s applications have revealed the multidimensional nature of gentrification, which has expanded under the influence of upper-middle-class demand and state-driven incentives, prompting intense debate in academic and policy-making circles.

In conclusion, the various theoretical frameworks (e.g., supply-side and demand-side approaches) and historical waves of gentrification demonstrate that the phenomenon is not merely a matter of spatial improvement but also a process of socio-economic transformation. Key issues such as displacement, rising housing costs, and the growing dominance of the service sector continue to shape scholarly discourse on gentrification. In Türkiye, where the phenomenon became more visible from the 1980s onward, particularly in historic urban centers, gentrification has prompted profound spatial, economic, and cultural change. The literature emphasizes that while gentrification may possess the potential for urban revitalization, it also carries significant risks of exclusion and displacement. In this regard, understanding how interventions such as street revitalization projects intersect with gentrification dynamics is crucial for unpacking the socio-spatial consequences of urban change in historic cityscapes.

Methodology

This study employed semi-structured interviews with various stakeholders, including officials from the Talas Municipality Directorate of Survey and Projects, local residents, café operators, tradespeople, and the neighborhood headman. For each user group, customized interview forms were designed by the researcher, focusing on questions intended to illuminate the transformation process on the street and its connection to gentrification. In addition to the interviews, planning documents, architectural projects, maps, and implementation reports detailing spatial changes in the study area were analyzed to support the findings from multiple angles.

The selection of participants was structured to create a pluralistic sample of individuals and institutions who had either directly or indirectly experienced the transformation process. Interviews with households targeted residents who had utilized or disposed of their properties in different ways before and after the revitalization project. Conversations with café operators and shopkeepers focused on understanding how the area transitioned into a commercial hub. Meanwhile, interviews with the neighborhood headman and municipal personnel provided insights into the project’s institutional and planning dimensions. The data collected from the field were categorized according to the variables outlined in Table 1, enabling a systematic analysis of both the physical improvements and the various dimensions of the gentrification process.

Data Analysis	Primary Variables	Sub-Variables	Analysis in Terms of Primary and Sub-Variables
Examination of the relationship between the street revitalization project and the changes in the area and the gentrification process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General information and opinions of local residents who participated in the interviews - Street revitalization plan and project process - Historical environment - Interviews with institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rent/property values - Physical environment improvement - Displacement - Deterioration of the social fabric - Decline in affordable housing stock 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rent/property values increased after the project. - Physical improvements were achieved through façade restorations and environmental arrangements. - Both direct and indirect displacement occurred. - Neighborhood relations deteriorated. - Affordable housing stock decreased due to rising property values. - Increased noise and activity led to further departures from the area.

Table 1. Analysis of the Relationship Between the Street Revitalization Project and Gentrification in Terms of Primary and Sub-Variables

The interview control forms included questions aimed at understanding the spatial and social impacts of the transformation that took place on Ali Saip Pasha Street. Through the participants' experiences, in-depth insights were gathered on issues such as the increase in rent/property values, the physical condition of buildings, the characteristics of users, the transformation of neighborhood relations, forms of displacement, and the decline in affordable housing stock before and after the project. Each set of interview questions was tailored to the specific characteristics of the interviewee groups, such as their professional profiles, the nature of their engagement with the area, and their perceptions of the project. In addition, institutional representatives were asked about the planning decisions behind the project and the challenges encountered during its implementation. This approach enabled the comparative evaluation of findings through multiple data sources.

The qualitative data collected were categorized under specific themes in alignment with the main objective of the study. To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, the statements of various stakeholders were supported by document analysis (e.g., planning documents, project reports, and current maps), and a triangulation method was adopted. As a result, both physical changes (such as façade restoration and infrastructure improvements) and signs of gentrification such as residents or tenants leaving the area due to economic and social pressures were comprehensively identified. The data were classified using primary and sub-variables (see Table 1) and combined with field observations to arrive at a holistic understanding.

In conclusion, the methodology allowed for both an in-depth examination through fieldwork and a synthesis of institutional and spatial data to investigate the dimensions of physical and social transformation in detail. This framework yielded a robust dataset for analyzing the overall

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characteristics of the transformation on Ali Saip Pasha Street within the context of gentrification, thereby enriching the final findings of the study.

Findings

Located in the Talas district of Kayseri, the Talas Urban Conservation Area has historically accommodated diverse cultures and presents notable social, spatial, and cultural richness particularly in the case of Ali Saip Pasha Street. The Street Revitalization Project launched in 2007 initiated a remarkable process of physical and social transformation in this area. The location, demographic features, historical development, and socio-economic structure of Ali Saip Pasha Street and its surroundings offer important clues about how the processes of gentrification have unfolded.

The study area is situated in the southeastern part of Talas district, approximately 7 kilometers from the city center, at the foothills of Mount Erciyes (Figure 1). According to data from the Kayseri Governorship (2021), the district is bordered by Melikgazi to the north, Bünyan to the northeast, Tomarza to the southeast, Develi to the southwest, and Hacılar to the west. As of 2021, the total population of Kayseri is 1,434,357, while Talas district has a population of 168,783 (TÜİK, 2021). The Talas Urban Conservation Area, where Ali Saip Pasha Street is located within the boundaries of Kiçiköy Neighborhood, is defined as a corridor stretching from Gölbaşı Square to Kiçiköy Aşağı Mosque (Figure 2). With an approximate population of 5,453 (TÜİK, 2021), Kiçiköy is not only designated as an urban conservation area but also encompasses archaeological, natural, and historical conservation zones. This reflects the diverse cultural, historical, and natural assets embodied by Ali Saip Pasha Street.



Figure 1. The Location of Kayseri and Talas

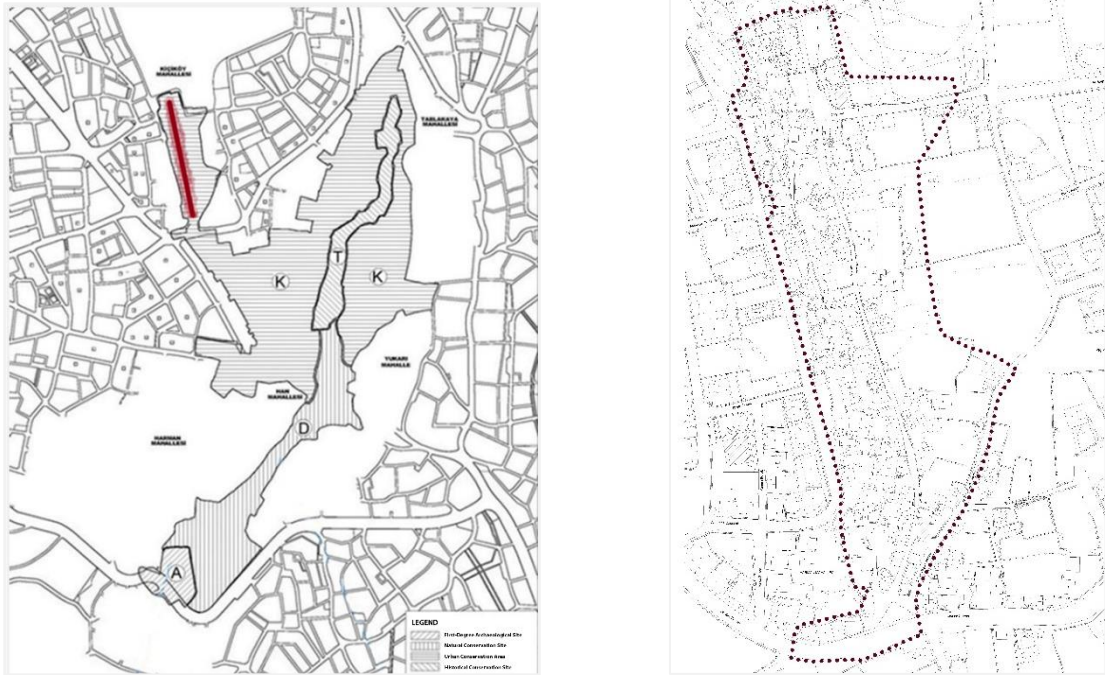


Figure 2. Location of Ali Saip Pasha Street and Boundaries of the Study Area
(Doğanay & Eraslan, 2017; Talas Municipality, 2020)

When the historical development of the Talas district is examined, it is known that the area was a Christian settlement in the early centuries AD and remained under the control of the Eastern Roman Empire until the 11th century (Talas Municipality, 2016). Following the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, the district came under Turkmen rule and was subsequently governed by various political entities such as the Danishmends, the Anatolian Seljuks, and the Ilkhanids. However, there is no significant architectural evidence remaining from the Seljuk period (Talas Municipality, 2016). Talas came under Ottoman rule in 1398. By the 1500s, Armenians had begun to settle in the area, and for a long time, non-Muslim communities (Greeks and Armenians) resided in Upper Talas, while Muslims lived in Lower Talas, creating a cosmopolitan center. In the 19th century, Kiçiköy Neighborhood, where Ali Saip Pasha Street is located, was predominantly inhabited by Muslims, while a more mixed population was observed in the Han and Harman neighborhoods, which were home to Armenian and Greek communities (Talas Municipality, 2016). Following the events of 1915 and the population exchange in 1926, the non-Muslim population left the region, weakening the multicultural structure of Talas and leading to a decline in local trade (Özsoy, 1991; Talas Municipality, 2016). Initially gaining township status in 1907 and later recognized as a subdistrict and borough, Talas officially became a district in 1987 (Özsoy, 1991; Talas Municipality, 2016).

From an economic and social perspective, Armenians were engaged in trade and the arts during the Ottoman period, contributing churches and places of worship to the region's architectural heritage, while the Turkish population predominantly worked in agriculture and livestock farming (Özsoy, 1991). During the early Republican period, particularly between 1930 and 1960, a significant portion of Kiçiköy residents earned their livelihoods as drivers, though this profession gradually lost its importance over time (Talas Municipality, 2016). Standing out with

its historical fabric, Talas served as a popular summer retreat for the affluent, especially as a location for country houses. It was incorporated into the administrative boundaries of Kayseri's urban center in 2004, which marked the onset of intense construction activity (Özsoy, 1991; Talas Municipality, 2016). Today, most district residents are employed in Kayseri's industrial, commercial, and service sectors, with public servants and workers making up a considerable portion of the population. Thanks to its proximity to Erciyes University, the high number of university students supports an economy driven largely by the service sector (Talas Municipality, 2016). While urbanization and infrastructure development have rendered the central lands unsuitable for agriculture, livestock farming and small-scale agriculture continue in the surrounding rural settlements (Özsoy, 1991; Talas Municipality, 2016).

From a spatial standpoint, Ali Saip Pasha Street stretches from Gölbaşı Square to Kіçiköy Aşığı Mosque, encompassing a variety of land uses. While commercial activities (such as cafés and small businesses) are concentrated around Gölbaşı Square, the western part of the street features a more scattered residential fabric due to its steep topography (Figure 3). An analysis of the distribution of built and vacant parcels reveals a higher occupancy rate around the square, with a noticeable increase in vacant lots further along the street (Figure 4). This suggests that the historical, touristic, and commercial appeal of the square diminishes as one moves deeper into the street. In terms of building usage, there is a predominance of residential, commercial, and vacant structures, along with religious buildings (such as Ali Saip Pasha Mosque and Aşığı Kіçiköy Mosque) and socio-cultural facilities owned by Talas Municipality (Figure 5). Due to the dominant traditional urban fabric, most buildings on the street are one or two stories high, whereas three- to four-story buildings are more common in areas outside the boundaries of the

urban conservation zone (Figure 6). This difference is largely attributed to zoning restrictions and conservation regulations.

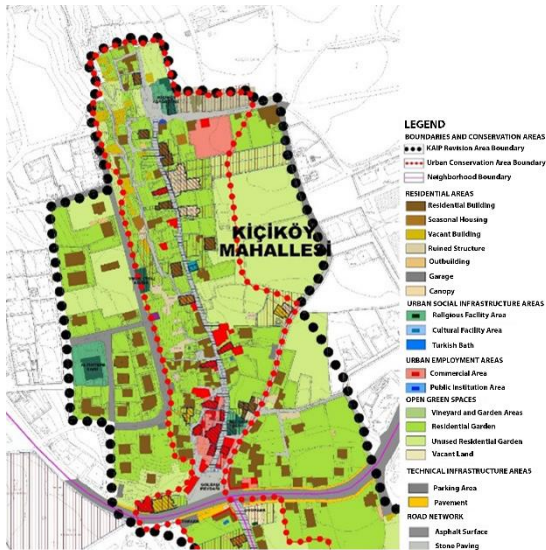


Figure 3. Land use (Talas Municipality, 2016)

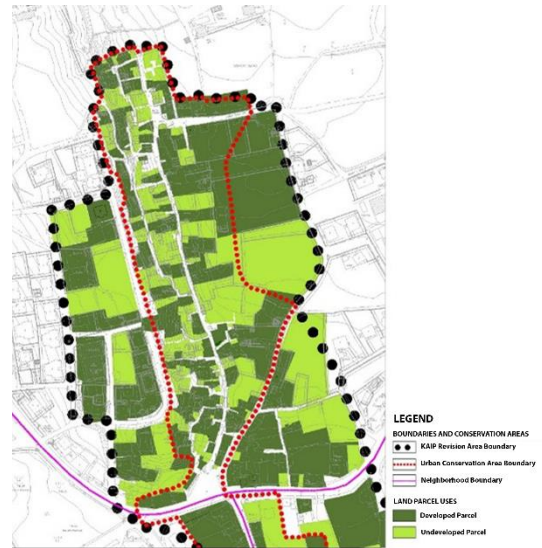


Figure 4. Full and empty parcels (Talas Municipality, 2016)

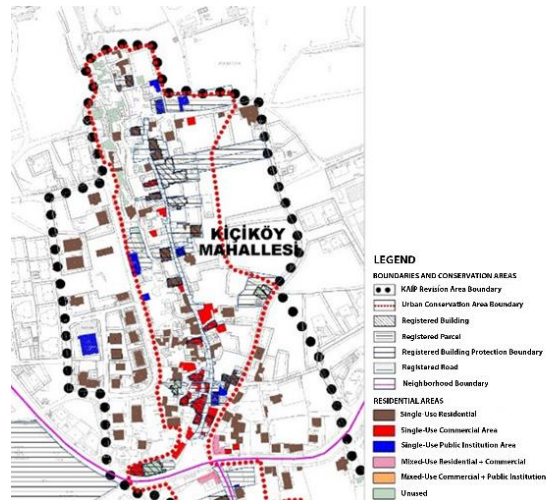


Figure 5. Building use (Talas Municipality, 2016)

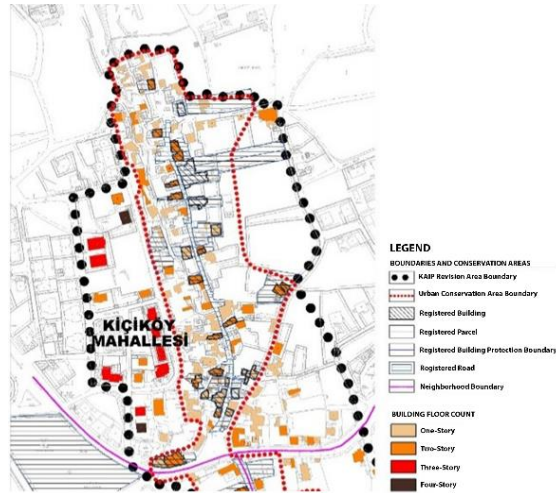


Figure 6. Number of floors (Talas Municipality, 2016)

The property ownership structure is also significant in understanding the dynamics of transformation in the area. Although a large portion of the land is privately owned, a considerable number of parcels are owned by foundations, Talas Municipality, and the Metropolitan Municipality (Figure 7). This indicates a potential for the municipality to implement public projects throughout the area. Finally, in the context of image analysis, prominent registered heritage structures such as the Meydan Fountain, Ali Saip Pasha Mosque, another historical fountain, and the restored Tol Church stand out as key focal points that enhance the historical and touristic value of the street upon entering from Gölbaşı Square (Figure 8). In particular, the section where cafés and antique shops are concentrated has become an important urban attraction in terms of social interaction and urban experience. The presence of Aşağı KİÇİKÖY Mosque at the end of the street contributes to spatial continuity, thereby endowing Ali Saip Pasha Street with a distinct identity in terms of cultural heritage tourism and urban aesthetics

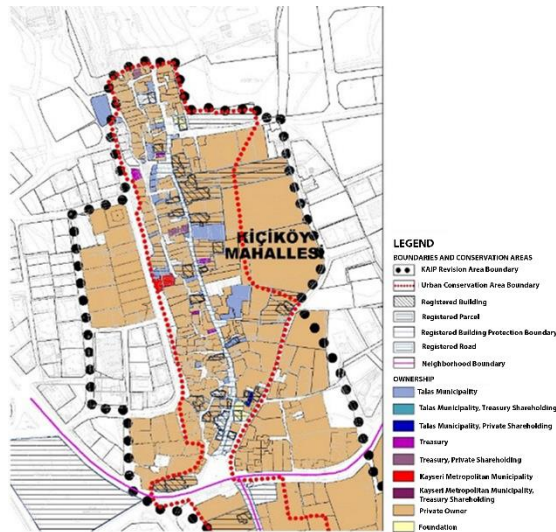


Figure 7. Ownership structure (Talas Municipality, 2016)

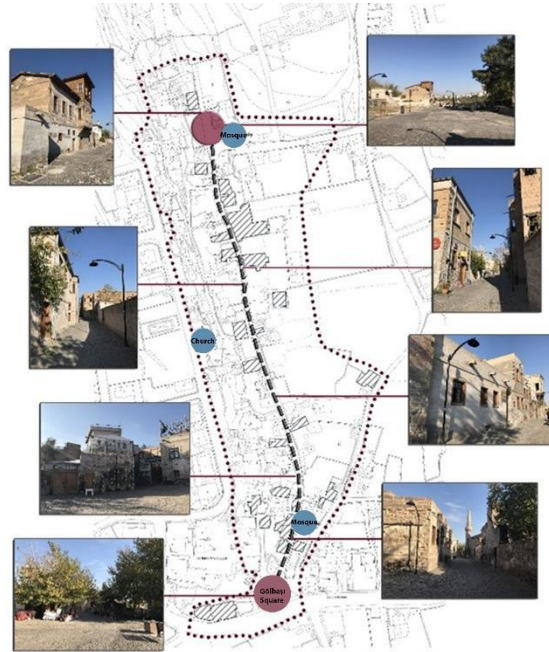


Figure 8. Image Analysis

All of these findings highlight the historical, cultural, and social diversity of the Talas Urban Conservation Area, and specifically of Ali Saip Paşa Street, while also emphasizing the need to evaluate the post-project transformation in relation to gentrification processes. The transformation of relatively low-rise traditional residences into spaces with new commercial and touristic functions has increased the area's investment appeal, which in turn has influenced local residents' housing costs and spatial preferences. Thus, while efforts to preserve the historical fabric of the area have supported physical improvement and economic revitalization, they have also introduced risks of social fragmentation and displacement. This situation reflects the multilayered nature of the gentrification process observed in the case of Ali Saip Paşa Street and signals a critical transformation dynamic that should be explored further through the detailed qualitative data gathered from interviews and field observations.

In 1998, the **Ali Saip Paşa Street Revitalization Project** was added to the Investment Program under the title “*Kayseri, Talas Streets Requiring Conservation Revitalization Project*” by the Ministry of Culture and the General Directorate for the Preservation of Cultural and Natural Assets, with the aim of implementing it on Ali Saip Paşa Street in Kayseri’s Talas district (Keskin, 2008). Prepared between 1998 and 1999, the project was officially launched by Talas Municipality in 2007 envisioning the Talas Urban Conservation Area as a culture and arts-focused Street and was completed in 2013.

The project’s primary goal is to address both registered and unregistered structures on Ali Saip Paşa Street, as well as on adjacent alleys (such as Akme Mehmet and Harmanlar Çıkması), in line with principles of preserving their authentic fabric, and to implement survey (rölöve), restitution, restoration, and urban design efforts through an integrated approach (Talas Belediyesi, 2009). Accordingly, the project report emphasizes the intention to make the historical fabric of Talas

sustainable in both physical and social terms and to provide the local populace with a healthier, higher-quality living environment.

As part of the implementation process, the façades of buildings and traditional street elements were renewed through detailed surveys (rölöve), restitution, and restoration work. Infrastructure, lighting, and urban furniture were also modernized, resulting in a contemporary urban arrangement (Figure 8). In addition, traditional structures were adapted for commercial, touristic, and socio-cultural uses, thereby generating not only a physical transformation but also a new social and cultural dynamism. In conclusion, the spatial identity of Ali Saip Paşa Street has been enhanced while preserving its historical and aesthetic values, transforming the area into a vibrant focal point that contributes to both urban tourism and the local economy.

Transformation of the Area from the Perspective of Different User Groups

The Street Revitalization Project implemented along Ali Saip Paşa Street and its immediate surroundings has brought about a comprehensive transformation not only in the physical fabric but also in the socio-cultural structure of the area, thereby contributing significantly to the manifestation of gentrification. In order to examine the transformations associated with the project, semi-structured interviews were conducted in October 2020 with various user groups in the study area, including café operators, shopkeepers, households, the neighborhood head (muhtar), and Talas Municipality personnel. A total of 25 interviews were carried out (Table 2).

Approximately 16% of these interviews were conducted with café operators. Notably, one participant was found to operate three separate cafés on the same street. The café operators were predominantly young adults, all of whom began their businesses after the implementation of the Street Revitalization Project, and all were tenants rather than property owners (Table 3, Figure 9, Figure 10).

Interviewee Groups	Frequency	Percent (%)
Café owners/employees	4	%16
Local shopkeepers	5	%20
Households	14	%56
Institutions and organizations	2	%8
Total	25	%100

Table 2. Overview of Interview Data

Age Groups	Frequency	Percent (%)	Operating Periods	Frequency	Percent (%)
20-25	2	%50	1-2 years	1	%25
26-30	1	%25	3-4 years	2	%50
31 and above	1	%25	5-6 years	1	%25

Table 3. Data on Café Operators

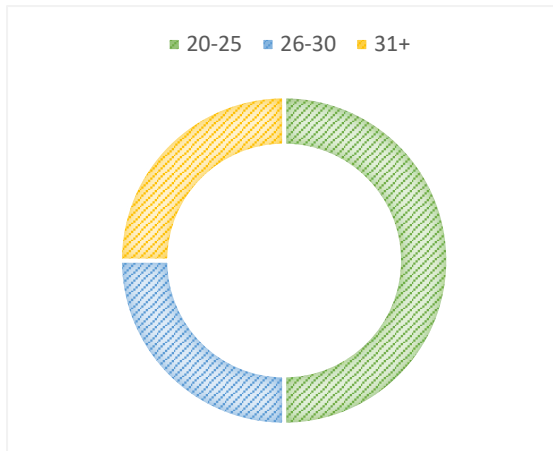


Figure 9. Age Groups

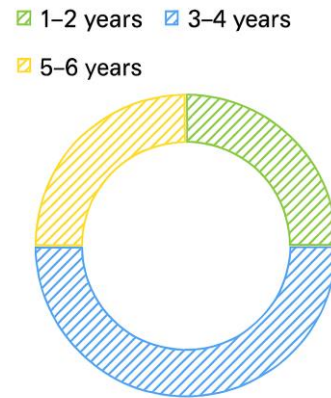


Figure 10. Operating Periods

The Street Revitalization Project implemented in and around Ali Saip Pasha Street has not only brought physical changes but also triggered a comprehensive socio-cultural transformation, contributing significantly to the visibility of the gentrification process. To investigate the changes attributable to the project, a total of 25 semi-structured interviews were conducted in October 2020 with a diverse group of users, including café operators, shopkeepers, households, the neighborhood headman, and Talas Municipality officials (Table 2). Notably, 16% of these interviews were conducted with café operators, one of whom reported operating three different cafés along the same street. These operators primarily belong to younger age groups and started their businesses after the implementation of the project. All interviewees in this group were found to be tenants (Table 3, Figures 9 and 10).

The interviews revealed that the café operators did not receive any institutional financial support prior to the project; however, external façade repairs and restoration works were carried out within the scope of the Street Revitalization Project. It was noted that some businesses had previously functioned as residences or advertising agencies, and that the transfer of ownership often occurred due to career changes. While the increase in the number of cafés has enhanced the area's commercial appeal, the entry of operators with higher capital has remained limited due to licensing difficulties and fluctuations in customer demand. Interviewees highlighted that the clientele mainly consisted of families, students, and tourists, and that the number of local residents was low. Complaints related to music and noise disturbances were also reported. This suggests that the increasing crowds and noise caused by café activity may have contributed to the physical and social displacement of local residents. Nevertheless, some participants noted that the area was previously perceived as unsafe, and that the opening of cafés and the subsequent revitalization improved perceptions of safety:

"In the past, people were afraid to enter here... Later, with the opening of cafés, everyone started adding their own lighting and liveliness... now everyone is overwhelmed with a zest for life." (Interviewee 3; Female, 25)

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns and restrictions significantly reduced business revenues. According to interviewees, although the street was economically more vibrant in earlier years, the pandemic led to a decrease in customer traffic and profit margins. Despite this, the majority of operators viewed the Street Revitalization Project positively, stating

that derelict buildings were renovated, tourist visits increased, and the street became a prominent attraction:

"It was a very positive change... People started to enter and explore a place they once avoided. A historical and touristic site was revived... It became a must-see for visitors to Kayseri." (Interviewee 3; Female, 25)

Operators expressed satisfaction with the area's increased visibility and accessibility, the high number of family visitors, and the site's historical and cultural appeal. On the other hand, the lack of a natural gas infrastructure and frequent municipal inspections were commonly cited issues. Many cafés were forced to temporarily or permanently close due to permit problems or pandemic-related restrictions. Interviewees shared concerns that, without new investments or supportive municipal initiatives, the street's future remained uncertain:

"I think in a year or two everything will shut down... There's constant opening and closing, and business is declining. A few cafés have regular customers, but the rest are struggling..." (Interviewee 2; Male, 24)

Overall, the interviews with café operators demonstrate that the Street Revitalization Project played a central role in the area's physical transformation while simultaneously triggering gentrification dynamics. Restoration efforts increased the value of properties, prompting owners to move away or seek higher returns through rental income. While the proliferation of cafés enhanced social activity and perceptions of safety, increased noise and pressure on urban space also led to periodic tensions between local residents and business operators. In conclusion, the café operators in the study area are both direct agents and witnesses of the spatial and social transformation, offering insight into the simultaneous benefits and challenges of the post-project period.

Perceptions of the Transformation Process from the Perspective of Local Shopkeepers

Local shopkeepers accounted for 20% of the interviews conducted in the study area. Among the participants were the operators of a film studio, an antique shop, a butcher, a traditional coffeehouse, and a combined butcher-grocer business (Table 4). All of these business owners were tenants. It was found that the film studio (established 7–8 years ago), the antique shop (8 years ago), and the butcher shop (3–4 months ago) were opened after the implementation of the Street Revitalization Project. In contrast, the butcher-grocer had been operating for approximately 30 years, while the coffeehouse, originally established in 1947, had been run by its current operator for the past three decades (Figures 11 and 12).

The owner of the film studio stated that his choice of location was influenced by *"its nostalgic atmosphere and its proximity to arts and culture"* (Interviewee 7; Male, 35). Meanwhile, the antique shop operator explained that he had settled in the area upon the invitation of the former mayor:

"This area had been designated as an 'art street.' We said, 'Well, this is a historical building, and our business is related to history,' so it made sense. The former mayor was also a close friend of mine he kindly asked me to come, and I couldn't say no." (Interviewee 6; Male, 70)

Age Groups	Frequency	Percent (%)	Operating Periods	Frequency	Percent (%)
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25-40	1	%20	Less than 1 year	1	%20
41-55	2	%40	1-10 years	2	%40
56 and above	2	%40	More than 10 years	2	%40

Table 4. Data on Shopkeepers

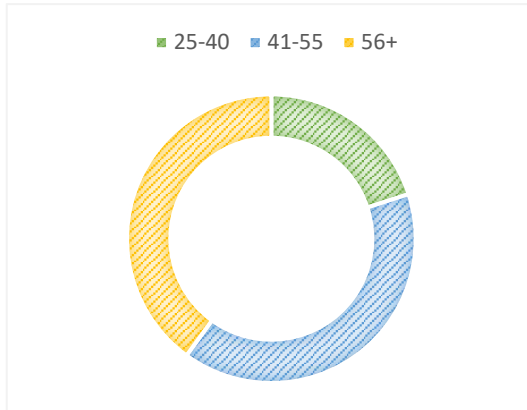


Figure 11. Age Groups

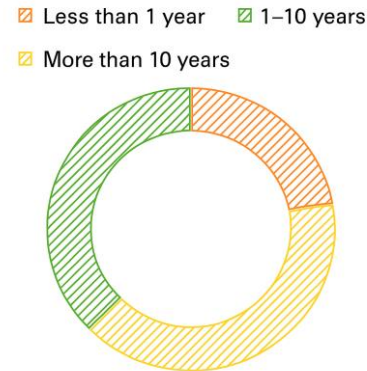


Figure 12. Operating Periods

Interviewees noted that the façades of the buildings were restored by the municipality, and that the interiors of some municipally-owned structures were also renovated. All businesses, except the antique shop, began operating without institutional financial support. The antique shop was supported by the municipality with a symbolic rental fee. Customer profiles varied, including local residents, students, and visitors from outside the area. With the arrival of cafés following the project, competition increased. However, several cafés were forced to cease operations shortly thereafter due to challenges related to obtaining business licenses. Participants emphasized that the initial lack of licensing hindered the attraction of investors with substantial capital:

“(The municipality) didn’t issue licenses, which prevented ordinary people from coming in... Now, would a reasonable person with financial means buy a place that doesn’t even have a license?” (Interviewee-6; M, 70)

Unlike the café operators and residents, the shopkeepers did not report any complaints from the local community. However, tensions between café operators and residents over issues like noise and live music were confirmed. This aligns with the observed decrease in the number of long-term residents and reflects an ongoing social transformation in the neighborhood (Figure 13). The presence of a municipal police station at the street entrance has enhanced the sense of security. Participants also noted that the Covid-19 pandemic severely impacted their financial circumstances. One long-term coffeehouse operator who spent his childhood in Ali Saip Paşa Street shared that the area once had a tightly knit social fabric where neighbors frequently visited each other in the evenings (Interviewee-9; M, 55). He believed the revitalization project had weakened these traditional community ties.

16 *The Relationship between Street Revitalization Project*

Some shopkeepers stated that prior to the project, the street was largely abandoned, and the municipal intervention prevented the collapse of the historical buildings. As a result, property values significantly increased. One participant emphasized this point:

“If the municipality hadn’t done this, everything would have been demolished... A friend of mine was offered a two-story building here for 15,000 liras (approximately 3,107 USD in 2018) fifteen years ago—he didn’t take it. Now, he could have sold it for 300,000 (approximately 42,700 USD in 2020) or 400,000 (approximately 57,000 USD in 2020).” (Interviewee-6; M, 70)



Figure 13. Café Businesses and the Residential Use Located Across from Them (Ayşe Nur Özyazgan Archive, 2018)

In contrast, some interviewees expressed concern that the family-friendly atmosphere of the street had deteriorated, social ties and neighborly relations had weakened, and that declining business had led them to consider relocating their establishments: *“Things will only get worse from now on. I’m the only local shopkeeper left... They [the cafés] sell a cup of tea for 5–6 liras and seem satisfied with their business.”* (Interviewee-5; M, 64)

Other participants emphasized that the street’s future largely depended on municipal action and the post-pandemic economic climate: *“If the municipality steps in, takes care of the street, and tries to improve things, the future looks good. But if things continue like this, nothing will come of it.”* (Interviewee-6; M, 70). Despite these concerns, the majority of participants expressed hope that activities geared toward youth, efforts to make the area more attractive, and recovery from the pandemic would help improve the local economy.

These assessments collectively reveal that most shopkeepers began operating in the area following the implementation of the Street Revitalization Project and that the presence of

traditional local merchants has become increasingly limited. Compared to street residents, there appears to be less conflict between shopkeepers and locals; however, perceptions persist that the increase in cafés has negatively impacted the overall social fabric. Thus, while the revitalization project has clearly enhanced commercial activity and physical renewal, the gradual displacement of long-term residents underscores the socio-spatial dimension of the gentrification process.

Transformation Process from the Perspective of Local Residents

As part of the household interviews conducted in the study area, semi-structured interviews were carried out with a total of 14 residents living on Ali Saip Pasha Street. Of these participants, 57% were women and 43% men. Most of the female interviewees were between the ages of 15 and 64, whereas the majority of male participants were aged 65 and above (Table 5, Figure 14). A significant portion of the participants had either lived on the street since birth or had settled there at least 20 years ago, primarily due to marriage or family-related reasons (Table 6, Figure 15). Only one interviewee had moved to the area after the implementation of the Street Revitalization Project, indicating a marked demographic continuity in the neighborhood prior to the project.

Cinsiyet	Age Groups	Frequency	Percent (%)
Female	19-64	5	%36
	65 age and above	3	%21
Male	19-64	1	%7
	65 age and above	5	%36
Total		14	%100

Table 5. Data on Households

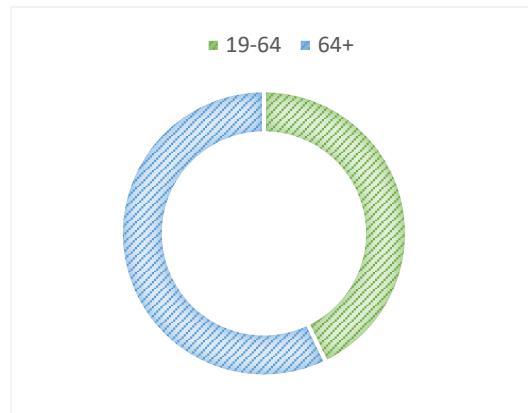


Figure 14. Age Groups

Duration of Residence (year)	Frequency	Percent (%)
0-20	2	%14
21-40	5	%36

41-60	1	% 7
60+	6	%43
Total	14	%100

Table 6. Duration of Residence of Households

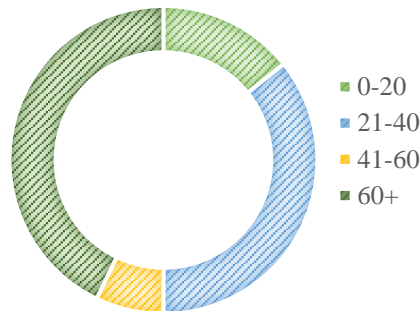


Figure 15. Duration of Residence (years)

Data gathered from the interviews reveal a shared view among residents that neighborhood relations and daily life were warmer and more cohesive prior to the project. One participant noted, *“It used to be great; we didn’t even lock our doors. Now, things are different—people are scared, and theft is common”* (Interviewee-10; M, 74), highlighting growing concerns over safety. Another stated, *“People used to visit each other in the evenings. That doesn’t happen anymore. Everyone knew each other back then”* (Interviewee-11; M, 87), emphasizing the decline in social interaction. Similarly, a respondent recalled, *“We had such wonderful relationships with our neighbors—it’s hard to describe. What brings vibrancy to the street now used to be found in the community itself”* (Interviewee-12; M, 69). Reflecting on traditional values, another added, *“When I first moved in as a bride, people were so respectful... If someone milked a cow, they’d leave a bucket of milk at every neighbor’s door”* (Interviewee-15; F, 70). A younger participant commented on the changing dynamics, saying, *“We used to hang out on the street. If someone did something, they’d call others to join—always drinking tea together. Now, as new people move in, everyone retreats to their homes”* (Interviewee-13; F, 19).

With the launch of the Street Revitalization Project, the physical renovation process accelerated. Numerous façades and roofs were restored, and municipally owned buildings underwent comprehensive interior restorations. Several interviewees noted that prior to the project, most residents were long-time property owners. However, following the project, many sold or rented out their properties and left the neighborhood: *“Most of the people here were homeowners. Locals, like us, sold their old houses to the poor and left. Honestly, they cashed out”* (Interviewee-19; M, 60). Another explained, *“There used to be a lot of property owners... After the project, they all rented their homes to cafés. Now, most regret it, but it’s too late”* (Interviewee-18; F, 58).

While some improvements in the physical environment were acknowledged particularly in terms of infrastructure like electricity, sewage, and natural gas residents’ reactions to increased tourism and commercial activity were mixed. One participant remarked, *“There are no neighbors left.*

We used to sleep with our doors open. Now the cafés bring noise, and when they close, the street becomes dark and quiet. Security might have improved, but the privacy of the street is gone (Interviewee-12; M, 69). Another expressed dissatisfaction with the new functions of the street: *“It’s bad now—everywhere turned into cafés. What good are cafés if you have no neighbors?”* (Interviewee-14; F, 65).

On the other hand, it became evident that the number of visitors and tourists increased significantly after the project. *“During Ramadan, people poured into the street—I used to wonder where they were all coming from”* (Interviewee-12; M, 69) recalled one participant, underscoring the liveliness brought by the revitalization. Nonetheless, others noted a decline in crowds in recent years, citing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (Interviewee-10; M, 74) as a factor that reduced the street’s attractiveness (Figure 16).



Figure 16. Visitors of Ali Saip Paşa Street (Ayşe Nur Özyazgan Archive, 2018)

The majority of participants stated that they preferred to live in inherited detached houses with gardens and that they would not consider moving, expressing sentiments such as *“I could never live in an apartment.”* Nevertheless, some residents indicated that they were contemplating leaving the area due to issues such as *“frequent complaints, problems with cafés, loud noise, the increase in youth, and the fact that the area no longer feels as safe as it once did”* (Interviewee-20; F, 40). Nearly all interviewees expressed concern over the weakening of neighborhood ties and the decline in the number of local residents, seeing this as a threat to the area’s traditional social fabric. Those who still live on the street reported feeling *“socially displaced”* (Interviewee-15; F, 70), noting that the former neighborhood atmosphere had been replaced by a space geared toward commercial uses and external visitors.

All of these accounts indicate that the Street Revitalization Project has produced both direct (physical) and indirect (social) impacts on local residents. The statement *“There’s no more*

community—just strangers now” (Interviewee-16; F, 75) highlights that the revival of the area’s “liveliness” and “touristic appeal” has been accompanied by the erosion of long-standing local connections. In the face of rising rental and property values, homeowners have increasingly opted to sell or rent out their properties, resulting in the gradual spatial and cultural detachment of original residents from the area. Ultimately, while the physical improvements brought by the project enhanced the neighborhood’s aesthetics and attractiveness, they simultaneously accelerated the gentrification process an effect felt acutely by those who have remained in the area.

Insights from Local Institutions and Authorities

To examine the transformation process in the study area from an institutional perspective, interviews were conducted with representatives of Talas Municipality and the Kіçiköy Neighborhood Headship. The mukhtar, who has lived in Kіçiköy for nearly 40 years and served as the neighborhood head for the past 20 years, summarized the historical development of the area as follows:

“Armenians and Greeks used to live here. When I came, there were still Armenians living in Upper Talas... Most people in Talas were drivers back in the day BMC and Ford trucks were common. When I arrived, the population was 6,000. Now it’s close to 200,000... After the 1980s, people with better means moved out, and newcomers like us migrants from villages bought homes here. Rents were cheap. Now with some renovations, prices have soared.” (Interviewee-24; M, 64)

These statements highlight that the area and its surroundings were predominantly inhabited by lower-income groups prior to the Street Revitalization Project. Echoing sentiments shared by residents, the mukhtar emphasized that prior economic conditions, physical deterioration, and stronger neighborhood ties defined the area:

“Back then, the houses were falling apart... Most of Talas’ residents are retirees. People used to plant things in their gardens... Neighborhood relations were better; people were kinder to each other.”

While the mukhtar expressed appreciation for the renewal efforts, he also conveyed dissatisfaction with the current condition of the street. Emphasizing the link between post-project development and population displacement, he noted:

“Property values rose, more visitors came to the area. It could have been better if not for bad impressions and ill-intentioned people. Now only 7 or 8 households remain everyone else has left. They sold their homes and moved to apartments elsewhere. Some even sold for 800,000 lira (≈114,285 USD)... Music plays until 3 a.m.—how can the elderly endure this?” (Interviewee-24; M, 64)

He also observed that, whereas homeownership had previously been common, many residents have now rented out or sold their properties. Additionally, the proliferation of cafés and associated noise have prompted complaints from the remaining residents.

The Talas Municipality was another key institution consulted. A municipal officer described the street’s pre-project conditions:

“Although most buildings were occupied, their physical state was poor... In the 1990s, cooperative housing efforts began. People exchanged their land for apartments in new

developments, leaving this area behind. Later, lower-income groups arrived factory and construction workers, expatriates... Derelict buildings were exploited by problematic users.” (Interviewee-25; M, 35)

Despite residents’ long-standing demands for infrastructure and maintenance, the officer emphasized that comprehensive interventions only became feasible with municipal initiative and ministerial support. The project’s main purpose was to implement the land-use functions outlined in the conservation-oriented zoning plan and to safeguard historical-cultural values for future generations.

Describing the project as a “turning point,” the officer noted that it increased the area’s visibility among researchers, academics, and tourists:

“The goal was to give Talas a recognizable face through revitalization and restoration. Before this, it had no such identity. Its current promotable character was gained through this process.” (Interviewee-25; M, 35)

He also raised concerns about practices by some café operators that compromise the historical fabric of the area:

“A building designated in the plan as a traditional urban workshop is converted into a café, the yard is enclosed with glass, the roof is covered or draped with fabric... The visual integrity is being compromised again.” (Interviewee-25; M, 35)

He further observed that many local residents chose to leave the area post-project in favor of more comfortable, modern housing. The officer explained that during the restoration process, many residents could no longer live in their homes, and once renovations were complete, rising rents made it unaffordable for them to return leaving the properties viable only for commercial use:

“Many residents could not remain in their homes due to the restoration work starting in 2010... After completion, rents rose so high that only businesses could afford them.” (Interviewee-25; M, 35)

Some residents had expressed dissatisfaction with the project’s focus on façade improvements, noting the lack of interior restoration. However, the officer remarked that recent reductions in resident complaints stemmed from increased awareness and participation in the process:

“There’s not much to complain about now they’ve seen that they were part of the process. Compared to before, they no longer have as many reasons or the material to complain.” (Interviewee-25; M, 35)

Nonetheless, the officer acknowledged shortcomings in addressing structural issues and integrating infrastructure:

“The project fell short particularly in solving structural problems and integrating utilities.” (Interviewee-25; M, 35)

In conclusion, institutional perspectives were largely consistent with the findings from other stakeholders. Prior to the project, Ali Saip Paşa Street was an aging, under-serviced residential area predominantly inhabited by low-income groups. The revitalization effort improved physical conditions and sparked commercial activity, but also led to increased property values and the gradual displacement of original residents through rental turnover or sales. Ultimately, both the

municipality and the neighborhood leadership acknowledged that while the project succeeded in achieving physical renewal, it also triggered gentrification-related dynamics with significant social and economic implications.

The Past, Present, and Future of Ali Saip Paşa Street in the Wake of Transformation

Ali Saip Paşa Street, a historically significant area, underwent a major transformation beginning in 2007 with the launch of the Street Revitalization Project. In-depth interviews conducted in the area shed light on the street's evolution from past to present and its projected future.

According to interview findings and the *Talas Urban and Archaeological Conservation Area Zoning Plan Revision Research Report* (2016), Turks, Armenians, and Greeks lived together on Ali Saip Paşa Street until the early 1920s. From 1923 to 1960, many residents of the street were known to work as professional drivers. Following the cooperative housing activities and zoning regulations initiated in the 1990s, several landowners sold or rented their properties in the area and moved to newly developed settlements. By the 2000s, a significant portion of property owners had left the area, and low-income households began occupying the houses either at minimal rent or rent-free. During this period, the physical deterioration of buildings (Figure 17) and the occupation of abandoned structures by problematic users became increasingly prevalent.



Figure 17. Ali Saip Pasha Street before the Street Revitalization Project (Talas Municipality, 2018)

The “Ali Saip Paşa Street Revitalization and Environmental Design Project,” implemented by Talas Municipality in 2007, brought about several physical improvements including façade renovations, infrastructure upgrades, and refunctionalization efforts. However, due to rising property values and rental rates, tenants living in the area at minimal or no cost were forced to vacate. Similarly, many homeowners chose to rent their properties to commercial businesses or sell them entirely, distancing themselves from the street. As a result, the Revitalization Project marked a turning point not only in physical enhancement but also in the transformation of the social fabric laying the groundwork for gentrification dynamics to emerge.

Today, it is evident that the number of households living on Ali Saip Paşa Street has significantly decreased (Figure 18). Whereas the area once boasted strong neighborhood ties, familiar social networks, and collective community practices, it has now largely been overtaken by commercial enterprises, weakening the traditional family-oriented atmosphere. Interview data revealed that approximately forty cafés opened in the area following the project; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the municipality's licensing requirements, only 8–10 remain in operation.

Household interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with loud music and late-night activities, noting that these disturbances have eroded the social order of the street.



Figure 18. Café Businesses After the Street Revitalization Project (Ayşe Nur Özyazgan Archive, 2018)

Assessments regarding the street's future paint a generally pessimistic picture. Many believe that the area's low-standard housing will no longer attract new residents, and that the post-pandemic decline in visitor traffic will deter potential investors. Consequently, further openings of cafés or commercial establishments are deemed unlikely. Nonetheless, conditionally optimistic views exist: if institutions such as the municipality and cultural-tourism authorities provide support by organizing events for young people or tourists and revitalizing public life Ali Saip Paşa Street may achieve a more promising future.

In conclusion, the *past* of Ali Saip Paşa Street was characterized by a small-scale, close-knit historical settlement where Turkish, Armenian, and Greek communities coexisted. The *present* reflects a shift toward café- and tourism-oriented functions following substantial physical and social transformations induced by the revitalization project. The *future*, while uncertain for many, is seen as potentially positive if strategic investments, activities, and incentives are introduced. This aligns with broader findings suggesting that the Street Revitalization Project brought about both physical improvements and simultaneous gentrification processes.

Conclusion

Talas, one of the central districts of Kayseri, hosted a culturally diverse population including Turks, Armenians, and Greeks until the 19th century and possesses a significant historical fabric. Situated within the Talas Urban Conservation Area, Ali Saip Paşa Street has been deeply affected by the city's broader transformation dynamics and, in particular, entered a period of rapid change following the launch of the Street Revitalization Project in 2007. Introduced in the wake of regulations pursuant to the Law No. 2863 on the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets, the project involved various interventions between 2007 and 2013, including façade renovations

and infrastructure upgrades. While the project improved the physical environment of the street, it also activated gentrification dynamics that led to the displacement of long-term residents and the deterioration of social relations.

When the transformation process of Ali Saip Paşa Street is examined, it is observed that the area, which accommodated high-income Turks, Armenians, and Greeks between 1923 and 1960, became a residential space for predominantly middle- and lower-income Turkish households especially those employed in the transportation sector between 1960 and 2010. From 2010 to 2022, however, the area evolved into a mixed-use zone inhabited by low-income groups and increasingly occupied by café owners and tourists. Forecasts for 2025 and beyond suggest an increase in café establishments and tourism-related commercial activities, with a corresponding decline in residential use and a shift in property ownership towards investors. This progression illustrates that the street's transformation entails not only physical change but also demographic and socio-economic shifts.

Findings from this study show that, following the revitalization project, spatial and social changes resulted in the displacement of most long-term residents due to direct and indirect pressures such as rising rents, noise pollution, and late-night activity. On one hand, the project supported the restoration of the historical fabric and the development of infrastructure; on the other, it contributed to the displacement of vulnerable or low-income groups by promoting commercial and tourism-oriented land use. This provides a clear answer to the research question: "What is the relationship between the street revitalization project and gentrification?" namely, that the project acted as a trigger for gentrification.

From the perspective of gentrification criteria, the observed changes in the area align with several key indicators: the renewal of depreciated housing leading to increased property values, the presence of direct and indirect displacement, the improvement of the built environment, and the occurrence of these changes within a historically significant setting. Although the area is not centrally located and the shift from tenancy to ownership did not occur directly, the overall process can nonetheless be defined as gentrification. This aligns with Sönmez's (2014) concept of "commercial gentrification," wherein the transformation is driven by the spread of café and tourism functions and supported by municipal interventions.

Nevertheless, the positive spatial outcomes of the project must also be acknowledged. The restoration efforts enhanced the visual character of the street, attracted more visitors, and contributed to tourism revenues. The improvement of physical conditions including façade repairs and upgraded infrastructure has supported the preservation of the historical fabric. However, these interventions also created conditions conducive to social disruption, such as noise, extended business hours, and the withdrawal of local families. Noise, in particular, has emerged as a novel factor prompting departure from the area one that sets this case apart from conventional gentrification examples in the literature.

In response to the research question, "How has the street revitalization project physically and socially impacted the area?" it can be concluded that the project has simultaneously facilitated physical improvement and social fragmentation. Lower-income residents and tenants have been indirectly displaced due to increased rental costs, noise, and overcrowding, contributing to a rapid transformation of the area's socio-cultural structure. Although many residents have no immediate plans to relocate, current dynamics such as increasing commercial pressure, the aftermath of the pandemic, and persistent noise serve as long-term drivers of displacement.

In conclusion, the transformation observed in Ali Saip Paşa Street encapsulates nearly all key indicators of gentrification: rising property values, physical renewal, displacement, and increasing commercial intensity. Even at present, residential use continues to decline, and local residents are being pushed out due to their inability to adapt to the street's increasingly commercial character. This affirms Ruth Glass's (1964) original insight that gentrification, once initiated, does not cease until it has fundamentally altered the social composition of an area. Therefore, future revitalization or renewal projects must adopt consent-based approaches that prioritize the right to housing and the interests of local communities. Developing affordable housing models, ensuring participatory planning processes, and implementing economic support mechanisms are essential policy tools to mitigate the gentrifying effects of such interventions.

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