The Role of Local Retailers’ Association in the Sustainable Development of a Historical Commercial District

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Abstract

In this study it is aimed to discuss the participation models of local retailers’ association to local development plans of Bursa Historical Bazaar and Han District for the last fifty years. The district is placed in the city of Bursa which is the fourth biggest city of Turkey in regard to population. The explanation of the participation models of local retailers’ association is constructed on Sherry Arnstein’s description about citizen involvement in planning processes titled as “a ladder of participation”. In the content of the paper, how Bursa Historical Bazaar and Han District Retailers’ Association established by local retailers can provide collective and civic intelligence for the sustainable future of the district and how the association climb the ladder of participation will be discussed.

Keywords: Participation ladder; retailers’ association; citizen power; historical commercial district

1. Introduction

As being on the Silk Road, many of the Turkish cities served as centers of trade for centuries. As a result, they possess historic urban cores that initially functioned as these cities’ centers of commerce. The diverse characteristics and uniqueness of these districts make them attractive to both the inhabitants and the visitors of these cities. However, many inner-city historic commercial districts in Turkey are being threatened, physically degraded or even destroyed by the impact of rapid urbanisation. Although particular revitalization projects have been planned to develop and promote social and economic activity

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in these districts, many of them concerned only preservation of physical space and provision of the required financial resources. The social dimension of the issue, including public participation during the revitalization process, has, unfortunately, been given a secondary status (Kilic, 2008). Instead of inviting the participation of engaged communities in the revitalization projects, the decision-makers prefer to focus on services that produce more visible results during their period in office.

The long-term success of the revitalization project planning process is dependent on defining the exact problems of the existing situation and the expectations of future users (Ammar, Ali and Yusof, 2012). The participation of retailers as the main users of the district to decision-making processes guarantees the social, economical and environmental sustainability of the district. Although there was a well-established community engagement model in the Ottoman Culture, known as Lonca (guild system), the existing concern about community engagement is deficient in Turkey. As a difference from this general situation, the retailers in historical commercial district in Bursa have an effective community engagement model which had its roots traditional Lonca culture. The name of this local model is “The Association of Bursa Historical Bazaar and Han District” (Vural & Cahantmur, 2011). Since the establishment of this association in 2008, they have been part of many decisions about the historical commercial district in Bursa, Turkey.

In the context of this study, the role of retailers associations about the sustainable development of historical commercial district in a traditional Turkish city, Bursa is discussed. In this discussion, the participation models of retailers associations to decisions about the historical commercial district in Bursa are evaluated with Shelia Arnstein’s “participation ladder” definition. This study is composed of three main parts. In the first part, Arnstein’s definition about the different models of participation is explained. In the second part, the study area, the physical, social and economic structure of Bursa Historical Bazaar and Han District is introduced. In this part, the establishment story of The Association of Bursa Historical Bazaar and Han District and its similarities in Ottoman Lonca system is defined. In the third part, the participation of Association in the decision-making process of historical commercial district is evaluated in respect to the participation models which are defined by Arnstein.

2. Arnstein’s participation ladder: Different models about being part of decision-making processes

As Horelli (2002: 609) describes “participation is a human, moral, and democratic right, a duty in the new type of welfare society and a necessary resource for mastering the problems of glocalisation”. Different disciplines or fields such as political sciences, social sciences or psychological studies tend to define citizen or public participation in various ways. According to Horelli (2002) the rising consciousness about the importance of participation can be explained with two significant changes in the history of urban planning. The first one took place in the 1960’s, in that time period which is just after the Second World War, the centuries-long tradition of seeing planning as mostly physical design of human settlements with an aim of producing master plans and blueprints for the construction of high aesthetic quality environments was ended. Instead of this one dimensional approach taking care of only physical dimension, the focus of planning has gained multi-dimensional approach including the social, cultural and economic aspects of human settlements. Therefore the tradition of planning as urban design was transformed into a systems and rational process view planning. The second significant change took place in the 1970s and 1980s, the role of planner became conspicuous. The role of planner transformed from a technical expert to a negotiator or a communicator who enables stakeholders to express themselves and make planning value judgements. This communicative turn in planning necessitates new methodologies for providing a collaborative environment with different stakeholders and decision makers. In 1990s, different communication models in participatory urban planning has dominated the academic discussions of the 1990s (Horelli, 2002; Peerapun, 2012; Dian & Abdullah, 2013). Before that time period, at the end of 1960s, Shelia Arnstein illustrated different models of citizen participation in decision making with examples from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Modern Cities programme. She
has a pioneering research about the history of participatory urban planning (Titter, Callum, 2006; Sarvarzadeh and Abidin, 2012). Arnstein, an urban redevelopment specialist, categorizes different modes of participation in her “ladder of participation”. In this ladder, the different rungs relate directly to the degree to which citizens have attained decision making power. The complete citizen control is defined as the highest point. Her ladder consists of eight rungs: two levels of non-participation (Manipulation and Therapy), three degrees of tokenism (Informing, Consultation, and Placation) and three degrees of citizen power (Partnership, Delegated Power, and Citizen Control). In lower rungs (Manipulation-Therapy-Informing-Consultation-Placation) show the limitations of citizen power and in those kinds participation modes citizens do not necessarily influence the decision making. Moving from the lower rungs, only the top three steps – Partnership, Delegated Power, and Citizen Control – demonstrate citizen power (Titter, McCallum, 2006; Arnstein, 1969)

Fig.1. Eight rungs on the ladder of citizen participation

(Source: Arntsein, 1969)

The bottom rungs of the ladder are (1) Manipulation and (2) Therapy—describe the levels of "nonparticipation". Their real objective is not to enable people to participate in planning or conducting programs, but to enable power holders to "educate" or "cure" the participants. Rung 3 (Informing) and Rung 4 (consultation) show the level of tokenism. These modes of participation allow the citizens to hear and to have a voice. By means of these two modes participation, citizens may indeed hear and be heard, but under these conditions they lack the power to assure that their views will be into accounted by the powerful. When participation is to these levels, there is no assurance of changing the status quo of power holders. Rung (5) Placation is simply a higher level tokenism because the ground rules allow citizens to advise, but keep the power holders the continued right to decide. Higher rungs in the ladder show the citizens’ participation modes with increasing degrees of decision-making clout. Rung (6) Partnership power is, in fact, redistributed through negotiation between citizens and power holders. This mode of
participation enables citizens to negotiate and engage in decision making process with traditional power holders. In Rung (7) Delegated Power, negotiations between citizens and public officials can also result in citizens achieving dominant decision-making authority over a particular plan or program. The topmost level is (8) Citizen Control, which guarantees that citizens obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power (Fig 1). In that mode of participation, participants can govern a program or an institution, be in full charge of policy and managerial aspects, and be able to negotiate the conditions under which "outsiders" may change them (Arntsein, 1969).

3. Community engagement models in Ottoman Bazaars: Lonca(Guild) system

Retailers’ community engagement models in Anatolia (geographical name of Turkey) had begun with Akhi associations in 12th century. They were the popular organisation of Anatolia in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. They recruited their members mainly from craftsmen; the association as such was nonprofessional (Baer, 1970). Behind the Akhi tradition, there was the Futuvva ideal (Demirpolat & Akca, 2004). The Futuvva ideal, which was on religious and ethical sources, had contributed to the development of work and ethical principals continued for generations among not only the Turkish guilds and artisans, but also the Turkish people. Lonca system, which had its roots in Akhi association, had established at the end of 16th century.

During Ottoman era, wholesaling and retailing in commercial districts were controlled by loncas (guilds) which were developed under the protection of the government for the effective control of the economic life. Manufactured goods were produced in the bazaar within small workshops that were also served as retail establishments. Guild members rented their shops from vakifs, which used bazaar as an important source of income (Tokatl and Boyaci, 1999; Vural Arslan, Dostoglu, Koprulu Bagbanci, Akinciturk, 2011).

4. Bursa Historical Bazaar and Han District

Bursa Covered Bazaar and “Han”’s district is the unique example of traditional Ottoman commercial districts. The most important building typologies in this district were Han and Bedesten. The initial buildings of the area, such as Emir Han, Orhan Mosque and Orhan Bath, were built in the 14th century. In the following two centuries, each of the prevailing Ottoman Sultans had constructed many Han buildings. As the number of these buildings increased, new shopping streets appeared on the axes connecting the Hans and Bedesten, such as Long Bazaar and Covered Bazaar. By the 16th century, the early growth of Bursa’s historical commercial centre was complete. The 17th and 18th centuries were periods of stagnation for the district. The 19th century showed the earliest signs of change with transformation of the pre-industrialised city to an industrialised city, which was by changes in commercial activities and historical commercial districts. In this period, new transportation routes had destroyed the organic structure of the city and bounded historical commercial districts (Vural, 2007). The area had a decline in terms of its architectural characteristics, spatial unity and socio-economic activity due to rapid industrialisation and urbanisation experienced in the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries in Bursa. New building typologies, including banks, health clinics, some administrative buildings and new types of commercial buildings, were built in the periphery of the area by the mid of 20th century (Fig 2-3).
There were 24 branches of merchant guilds in 1584 in Bursa, including the guilds of barbers, tailors, bakers, shoemakers and butchers, to name a few. As Yediyildiz (2003, 47) points that, there had been 3170 retail units in the Bursa Historical Bazaar and Han district in 17th century. Today, the guild system of the historical commercial district of Bursa is no longer in existence, but its ethical principles remain valid, among the merchants and the artisans working in this district.

At the beginning of 21st century, Covered Bazaar and “Han”s district includes 3500 retail units where approximately 5000 people work both as employees and employers. Also, nearly 200.000 user visit the area per day both commercial and social purposes. In this huge commercial area, there are 29 nongovernmental organizations which represent the employees having retail units in different quarters of the district. All these organizations are affiliated to “Bursa Historical Bazaar and “Han”s Platform”, which is also another nongovernmental organization. The mission of this platform has some similarities with Ottoman time lonca (guild system). Its mission is as follows: “provide the coordination between non-governmental organizations in the commercial district and governmental organizations in order to solve the problems of the owners of the units, workers and users of the commercial district” (Bursa Historical Bazaar and “Han”s District Platform Report, 2008).

5. The participation of retailers’ association to revitalisation projects in Bursa Historical Bazaar And Han District since 1958

Revitalization works in Bursa Covered Bazaar and “Han”s District in 20th century has begun after its partly burn-off in 1958 Bursa Fire. With the supervision of Prof. Luigi Piccinato, restoration works had been initiated with an aim of gaining the original structure. Piccinato’s project is the first project having a holistic approach about the revitalization of the district. This attempt was the first comprehensive revitalization project. In the preparation of this project, Piccinato worked with a local team included architects and city planners but not the representatives of the local users like the leaders of retailers’ associations or the leaders of nongovernmental organizations. The Project was not fully implemented due to the conflicting interests of tradesmen and the local municipality. However, it succeeded in raising consciousness about the historical and architectural values of the district. It is noteworthy that, the legal restrictions about the revitalization of historical quarters in Turkey weren’t defined clearly, when this project was prepared. Legal restrictions about the conservation and revitalization of historical commercial districts, only including the ones in Istanbul, Kayseri and Bursa, had first defined in 1977 and then, in 1979, “Bursa Covered Bazaar and “Han”s District” was declared as a “protected area”. As there were no
legally defined rules about the conservation of the district since that time, after 1958 in the partial realisation of Piccinato’s Project, separate retailers’ associations finance the restoration works of some Han buildings in the district. In these restoration works, Piccinato’s Project was taken into account.

Another holistic project about revitalization of historical commercial district in Bursa, called “Bursa Reyhan, Kayhan and “Han”s District Preservation and Development Project”, was prepared by a team of academicians in 1988. The aim of this project was defined as follows: rehabilitation of the district while protecting the unique values; clearing the physical additions which were belonged to the original structure of the buildings; design of new buildings in consideration to the architectural and historical value of the district (Bursa Historical Bazaar and “Han”s District Platform Report, 2008). In the preparation of the Project, for the first time, the detailed analysis of the district had been prepared by the team. This analysis included comprehensive surveys applied to retailers and customers. In that context, the Project can be seen as the first examples of participatory approach about the revitalization of the district. However, implementation of this project was also incomplete due to negligence of the local municipality regarding the priorities of the project. Thus, only some short-term physical improvements were achieved, which ultimately caused social and economic decline of the area in the long-term.

Realising these adverse conditions in the urban development process of the city, local authorities decided to develop a strategic development plan concerning the environmental, social and economic sustainability of the district. For this aim, in the mid –2008s, they charged three independent design teams (all of them including academicians, architects and city planners) with preparing a holistic project in order to provide physical, social and economical revitalization of the district. However, in the content of project’s technical specifications, the demolishment of many new additions discordant with historical texture and some radical decisions about the future of the district have caused the reaction of some of the tradesmen. These tradesmen tried to promulgate their reaction to the policy of local authorities through the trade associations that they affiliated. However, the separate trade associations’ reactions weren’t able to form an influential force on these local policies. Consequently, these separate associations decided to join under the roof of an association including all 29 independent trade associations in order to be influential both on local authorities and other tradesmen. They founded “Bursa Historical Bazaar and Han District Platform” in May, 2008. The mission of the Platform is “to provide the coordination between non-governmental organizations in the commercial district and governmental organizations in order to solve the problems of the owners of the trade units, workers and users of the commercial district” (Bursa Historical Bazaar and Han District Platform, 2008). It is noteworthy that the mission of the Platform is very similar to the mission of the traditional community engagement form- guild (“lonca”) system; to provide a collaborative link between retailers (users) and local municipalities (decision-makers).

In one of these three projects, the author of this article has taken place in the design team. In the preparation of the Project, the design team apply surveys both to retailers and customers. In addition to that, in the preparation phase of the Project, design team organised meetings with the representatives of retailers’ associations. However, in these meetings, there was limited participation of leaders of retailers’ associations to the main decisions of the Project because the design team had already constructed their design main concept about the district (Fig 5). As these meetings mainly focuses on informing and getting advises of the retailers association, the mode of participation of retailers associations can be defined as Arnstein’s “Placation”.

In 2010 Bursa Metropolitan Municipality has charged an international star architect “Massimiliano Fuksas” to prepare a project about the revitalization of Bursa Historical Bazaar and Han District. In the preparation of the project Fuksas has worked with a Turkish team. In the preparation process, the teams has prepared detailed analysis of the district and offer some new functions for the obsolescent areas in order to revitalize the district. Although, it was a comprehensive and well designed project, in the preparation process, the participation of the retailers associations as the main users of the district was very
limited (Fig 4). The Municipality only informed them about the project. Therefore, this mode of participation can be seen as Arnstein’s “Informing”.

Fig.4. Concept Project for the Revitalisation Of Bursa Historical Bazaar and Han District which is prepared in 2008

Fig.5. Fuksas’s Project for the Revitalisation Of Bursa Historical Bazaar and Han District (Bursa Chamber of Architect’s Archive)

Fig.6&7. Views from the Second Strategy Formulation Meeting- Han District Part Discussions

(Source: http://alanbaskanligi.bursa.bel.tr/2-strateji-arama-toplantisi.html)
In 2000, Bursa Metropolitan Municipality applied UNESCO to register Bursa Historical Bazaar and Han District as World Heritage Site. Although, the site has been in the tentative list of UNESCO, there had not been any attempt to prepare a management plan and apply UNESCO again to request to evaluate the site again till 2011. In 2011, Bursa Site Directorate was established and to work about drawing up a Management Plan for selected historical sites in Bursa including historical commercial district with the participation of all stakeholders with a view to preserving these areas. Main aims of this plan were defined as follows:

- Preserving the authentic texture at Historical Sites of Bursa, which has survived throughout history and rendering the periphery of such sites habitable.
- Raising awareness regarding cultural assets both within the city and outside, with emphasis to those who living and working at Historical Sites of Bursa.
- Ensuring participation of local and international experts to thematic workshops to provide recommendations for conservation of Historical Sites of Bursa in accordance with international standards and to share their experiences" (http://alanbaskanligi.bursa.bel.tr/en/site-directorate/our-mission).

As it is in these aims, the participation of the stakeholders was one mission of the mission of the Site Directorate, they organised several meetings at first to inform the public about the management plan preparing process and then to get their contribution to this process. These meetings can be seen below:

- A panel titled “Bursa Hanlar Site and Cumalıkızık in The Process of Application for Nomination for UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List” was held on 27 September 2011.
- A coordination meeting was held on 30 March 2012 with the stakeholders, namely the concerned nongovernmental organizations and institutions.
- The First Strategy formulation Meeting regarding the selected Historical sites including Bursa Historical Bazaar and Han District was held on 23-24-29 May 2012 with the attendance of 162 participants from various occupational groups.
- The Second Strategy formulation meeting regarding the selected Historical sites including Bursa Historical Bazaar and Han District was held on 27-28 June 2012 with the attendance of 128 participants from various occupational groups, who are specialists in their fields, all of whom have also attended the first strategy formulation meeting (http://alanbaskanligi.bursa.bel.tr/en/site-directorate/b-a-b-calisma/ri/6/7).

Considering all these attempts to provide the participation of the stakeholders mainly the retailers’ associations, this mode of approach can be evaluated as Arnstein’s “Delegated Power”

In parallel to all these works of local governments, the retailers association in Bursa titled as “Bursa Historical Bazaar and HanDistrict Association” worked on establishing a legal structure to provide a self-governing historical commercial districts. A bill concerning about the autonomous management for the historical bazaars had been prepared under the presidency of “Bursa Historical Bazaar and HanDistrict Association” with the participation of the retailers associations in 50 historical commercial sites in Turkey. They propose this bill for the consideration of Turkish National Assembly in 2012. Considering the efforts of retailers association to provide the autonomous management of historical bazaar areas in Turkey, this mode of approach can be evaluated as the last rung in Arnstein’s participation ladder as “Citizen Power”
6. Conclusion

Creating and enriching relationships between communities and local authorities through a structured engagement process can deliver innovative new planning and design options towards a sustainable future (Satherley, 2009). This study presents different participation models of retailers’ association to the revitalization process of a historical commercial district. In the classification of these models, Arnstein’s categorization is . For nearly a half of century, Arnstein has been central to developing the thinking on the engagement between individuals and public sector elites. Although, there were various approaches developed upon her ladder of participation, her study has been still unique and inspiring (Choguill, 1996 Tritter & McCallumb, 2006; Collins & Ison 2006). However, as Arnstein conceptualises participation as power or in other words, she relates different levels of participation in regard to levels of, or access to, power. Arnstein’s emphasis on the transfer of power assumes that power has a common basis for users and providers (or policy makers). However, such approach limits the potential for sharing experience, knowledge and the harnessing of multiple perspectives inherent in successful user involvement (Tritter & McCallumb, 2006). Ultimately, what is to conceptualise a new ladder of participation for the urban planning. Processes of user involvement seek to transform the culture of urban planning. This requires more focus on the professional development of providers as education and recruitment of both users and local authorities. Consequently, understanding user involvement as a small part of a larger system helps bridge the divide between micro level changes and system-wide transformations about the cities.

In 35 years period after Arnstein, many researchers has criticized her classification in regard to the limitations of her model (Tritter & McCallum, 2006) and to its applicability of underdeveloped countries (Choguill, 1996). According to Tritter & McCallum (2006) the sole aim of Arnstein’s ladder is the user empowerment. Her model is unclear about the methods adopted to involve users and sees no relationship between the aims of an involvement exercise. According to Choguill, although Arnstein’s model is adequate for analysis in developed countries, it provides misleading results within a development context. In response to limitations in Arnsteins ladder, Choguill suggests a new set of criteria in order to adapt better to the context of development. In the content of this study in order to understand the evolution of participation models of local retailer association, Arnstein’s classification is used. For the future research author plans to compare the participation models of various local retailers’ associations in decision making processes in order to suggest new set of criteria which is unique to our culture.

References


