



RESURECTING A SHOPPING STREET

Despite the economic crisis, there continues to be a strong commitment to the traditional shopping street. These streets and town centres have historic significance as a focus for social and communal activities, from Roman and medieval marketplaces to streets. The shopping streets and town centres often form an important part of a community's identity.

“Is the spread of clone towns and the creeping homogenization of the high street anything more than an aesthetic blight? We think so. Yes, distinctiveness and a sense of place matter to people. Without character in our urban centres, living history and visible proof that we can in some way shape and influence our living environment we become alienated in the very places that we should feel at home.”

New Economics Foundation, Reimagining the High Street, 2010

From that quote one can see one of the most important reasons why the most central and modern Avenue of the capital of Cyprus stands deserted and alone in the last years. The truth is that Makariou Avenue was just another clone

shopping street that had no specific character. Although its modern looks, Makariou Avenue had nothing particular to offer that you couldn't find in any other shopping street. It wasn't unique. As a result, Makariou Avenue which once thrived and was full of life, is now empty and the people that meet to pass their spare time there are diminishing more and more.



A comparison of how Makariou avenue was few years ago (above) and the current situation (below).

In contrast, the once empty and deserted shopping street in the old walled city, Ledras street, is upgraded, and now people prefer to go there. It has become the new hangout of all ages. It is where people feel more at home and more comfortable. For the people it is a place where you can enjoy your walk without the stress and noise of the cars.

The people prefer to go to Ledras Street where many gather to witness something different. As the market trends are showing, visitors to shopping streets are increasingly seeking an “experience”, as well as the opportunity to shop. Hence, footfall is drawn by eating and drinking establishments and leisure opportunities. This is what Makarios Avenue is lacking, it must seek to establish a competitive offer.

The historic center has the benefit of an attractive environment that offers a variety of cafeterias, restaurants, bars, low prices, and a relaxing walk in a pedestrian area in combination with shops without the worry of cars.



This gives the old street a strong competitive advantage to Makarios Avenue, which is a modern street that offers all the unique and exclusive brands. If Makarios Avenue becomes more accessible to pedestrians then maybe it will have an increase to its visitors.

But why investors turned to look in old Nicosia? What was it that marked the turning of 180 degrees and caught the attention of the people? Historically, the old town had its own beauty, and so when the municipality gave the “ green light “ to open cafes and restaurants in the pedestrian zone, the meeting spaces increased and people slowly began to prefer the old town.

The Mayor of Nicosia pointed out in an article, that this revitalization and development of the historic center of Nicosia, was achieved through:

- Incentives through the revitalization program,
- Providing free Internet access,
- Shade a part of Ledra and change in regulations for outdoor dining,
- Frequent garbage collection,
- Ensure the feeling of security in the region,

- Smooth traffic movement and
- Effectively address the illegalities, in cooperation with the police.

The old city that was once filled with low income and illegal immigrants is now flourishing and full of life night and day. The current 30% increase in real estate investment, results in higher rents and thus all low income immigrants are forced to move to the outskirts where it is cheaper.

Currently only a few cafeterias have survived in the Makarios Avenue and continue to operate normally, but hardly cope. Rents are too high, parking is also expensive and as a result people found an opportunity to go somewhere else. The shopkeeper’s only hope for a better future rests in the Nicosia Municipality that organizes various events in the Makarios Avenue.

“As a municipality of Nicosia, we place great emphasis on transferring activities in the Avenue, increasing mobility. For this reason we organized the Pop Up Festival”, said the Mayor of Nicosia.



In late October a new cultural initiative of the Municipality of Nicosia, filled the empty shops in Makarios Avenue with Pop up shops from some of the most talented young Cypriot authors, artists, designers, animators, photographers, musicians and producers.

Apart from the fixed hours of operation, each store hosted exhibitions, concerts, film screenings,

theater performances and other interactive events, revitalizing the sadly deserted, shopping street and giving everyone the opportunity to experience the work of talented young cultural creative city.

This attempt was praised by the locals and attracted a lot of attention. It helped make people aware of the situation and made people wanting to help resurrect this Avenue by starting a movement called “occupy Makariou”, organizing peaceful protests and making sure that everyone gets the message.



Many other attempts are made for Makarios Avenue to be revitalized by the municipality. For example a layer of grass was placed recently and the once busy street became an open field to a friendly football tournament called «Food - ball fiesta» where entertainment and food were mixed together for charity.

“At a time when people are increasingly looking for a leisure experience rather than simply a range of shops to visit, an approach can help in creating a greater sense of ‘destination’ and potentially competitive advantage. Cohesion and pride in the quality and economic vibrancy of our town centres arises from much more than just shopping. This is especially true in those locations which also have a strong business identity or offer wider attractions for entertainment, leisure, cultural and tourism activities. These centres are also often those with the greatest heritage qualities.”

The Changing Face of the High Street: Decline and Revival
A review of retail and town centre issues in historic areas, June 2013



Some of the activities organized in Makariou Avenue.
Nicosia marathon (above) and day without a car (below)

By observing these two very different shopping streets one can see clearly that activities that promote interaction between the people play a very important role in supporting the vitality of shopping in a street. In particular, the mixture of retail and leisure play an important role in increasing the number of people in the street, especially outside of normal trading hours.

Let's hope that these innovative events encourage people to visit the Avenue and enjoy a pleasant shopping and leisure experience but most importantly capture the interest of businesses and restore the marketability and vitality that the Avenue once had.



Makariou avenue was transformed into "Christmas avenue" and all the car traffic was stopped so that people from all ages could go and revitalize the street once more.

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