

Ledras (Ledra Street): *Discovering it's Visible and Invisible Multiple Layers*

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Abstract. Today, historic preservation and re-use of historic sites are common techniques in urban development process of cities with rich historical background, which creates many contradictions and architecturally aesthetical problems. Architects should try to find ways to understand the problems underneath them and suggest a technique with a continuous outcome. Researching the multiple layers of this study area will help to discover the *time-space relationship* of the existing environment.

Prof. Dr. Semra Aydinli states at her presentation in Boston "Enmeshed experience motivates us to grasp the multi-sensory qualities of the existing environment. Every place that has specific spatiality in Istanbul establishes a different integrity for production of sensation because of its major changes in life and enmeshed experience." [1]

The disconnection between heritage and contemporary leads this research to search for possible ways to maintain the environmental value of the Cyprus' architecture in terms of quality, continuity, and aesthetical experience. Every historic building, their surrounding, and society carry its own has its own unique spatiality in its context. Therefore it is inevitable to not to come across with enmeshed experiences through a detailed research at any of the historic quarters of Cyprus. Places contains *enmeshed experiences* and *cultural codes*, with the intention that in this research the chosen method is the *bodily experiencing* to point out the identity of the area to identify a new conception of sense and to produce new events. Bodily experience of Ledra is supported with photography, and maps aesthetical value and identity. The island's built environment is rich in variety and each nation.

1. Introduction

In Ledras case, it is worth to discover the layers for a continual successful re-use and future. In this research Ledra is narrated with photos and bodily experiences. Here the layers are not only tangible and but also intangible. Bringing out both tangible and intangible layers of Ledra and its enmeshed experiences is necessary for future becoming.

Throughout history Cyprus has gone under control of different ethnics such as Byzantine, Romans Lusignan, Venetian, Ottoman and British, and as a result many architectural types and cultures codes have formed the island. Even at present Cyprus remains very rich with its built environment and architectural context. Footprints of each nation are sensed in different quarter of the island and each has their own unique spatiality in the island's context.

In fact the importance of historical identity and the value of the island's architecture have been ignored for several decades as the public and the authorities were busier with the conflict between the two communities and other political reasons. The division had a huge impact on the island's urban transformation and architectural development. The demand for housing was high after 1974 war, as a result of immigration between both sides and rapid population growth and immigration from Turkey and Far East countries.



....., *history and tradition are essential components of complex contrast, providing a background against which minimalist works inhabit more complex contrast in proportion to their purity and simplicity.* [3]

David Seamon stated in his article *Goethe's Way of science as a Phenomenology of Nature*, that;

This theory somehow proves that the existing history is also a part of our nature and should be involved in every step that will be taken in terms of environmental and urban development. Without history the contemporary architecture lacks of identity, contrast and aesthetic value. Perfection which is one of the elements of intense contrast can only be perceived here if only history is attached with the present-day. Both past and present day should be analyzed in advance to avoid failure and embrace the three dimensions of aesthetic value- Perfection, Invention and Celebration.



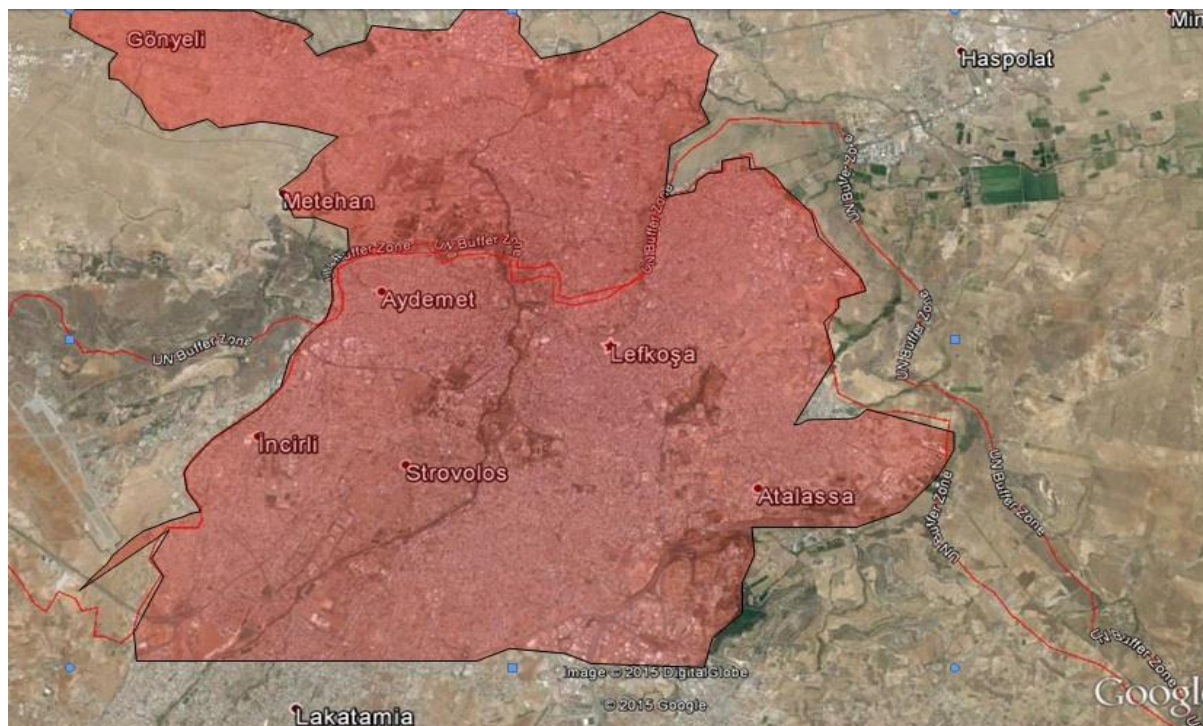


Figure 1.Geographical location of Nicosia showed in different.

2. Location- Ledra

The name of the ancient city-kingdom of Ledra, established in 1050 BC located in the centre of the island where the capital Nicosia is today. Today Ledras is the name of a street that that leads of Elefteria square runs almost in the centre of the walled part of Nicosia in a South to North direction and is about 1 km long. Most of it lies within the area of Greek part of Nicosia while the short stretch at the northern end lies between the UN Buffer Zone and the intersection with Arasta Street and Kyrenia Street falls within the Turkish part of Nicosia. Ledras plays a very important role in the urban context of Nicosia as it is one of the only two pedestrian crossings between the divided Nicosia and Cyprus.



Figure 2.Ledra street connection routes.

3. Character – Ledra

Traditionally, Ledra was the main commercial of the capital, although in recent years it has been suppressed by more accessible streets further out from the centre. Buildings lying on both sides of the street are largely for commercial use on street level; however the upper levels are serving as residential. On this street while shoppers are eyeing boutiques, couple of people sip there coffee or dinner and armed soldiers and policemen guards the barricade. Yet this feeling could not be encountered at any European city.



Figure 3. Soldiers walking up and down Ledra Street and communicating with tourists.

The decaying no-man's land zone and crumbling buildings slicing Ledra into Greek and Turkish interrupts the vibrant Ledra, disturbs the continuity of this unique medieval core. Ledra street barricade, acts as one of the symbols of the city enduring separation between two communities, therefore attracting tourists from different part of the world. Yet it is possible that this symbol of division may now turn out to become a symbol of reunification.



Figure 4. The diagram narrates the division and unity of Ledras.

Besides hope, the crossing offers tangible benefit injecting new life in the old town nestled with 15th century Venetian walls, as tourists and locals eager to satisfy their curiosity, commerce is increased, therefore socio-economic standard is boosting and Ledra is bustling more and more day by day.

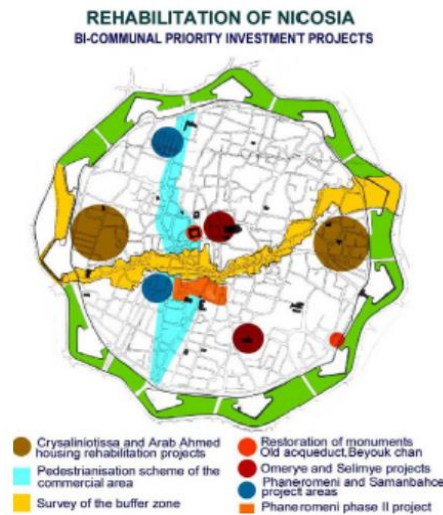


Figure 5. Bi-communal rehabilitation project map of Nicosia old town.

As it was and still is the main touristic quarter of the city with its coffee shops, restaurants, and small boutiques, in April 2008 the street reopened and encouraged to return to normal civilian and pedestrian activities. This area was subject to physical decay and socio-economic decline conditions for many years. The proximity of the Green Line was the primary reason for the lack of maintenance and the subsequent conditions. The urban upgrading of these areas was the priority of authorities under Nicosia Master Plan supported by UNDP.

4. Time – Space Relationship

Before understanding a problem its origin should be probed, in Ledra's case one approach was to define the layers, examine the facts then to bring them out to daylight for further debate and analysis. As mentioned previously the first but not the only reason of the deterioration, is the division. Secondly it is observed that some of the historic buildings have been wiped out and new buildings aroused instead. The reasons behind this method might be it might have been believed that this was a cheaper approach. However there is one thing that authorities failed to notice the upcoming disastrous result - the link between the past and the present was detached as a result the continuity of the space was lost as well as the originality. The importance of layers and the past have been described profoundly at Merleau Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception and can be summed up briefly as;

Space maybe defined as a form of external experience, rather than as a physical setting in which external objects are arranged. The relationships between objects in space are revealed by the experience of the perceiving subject. A perceptual field is a field in which perceptions are present in time and space. Space is modified and restructured by time.

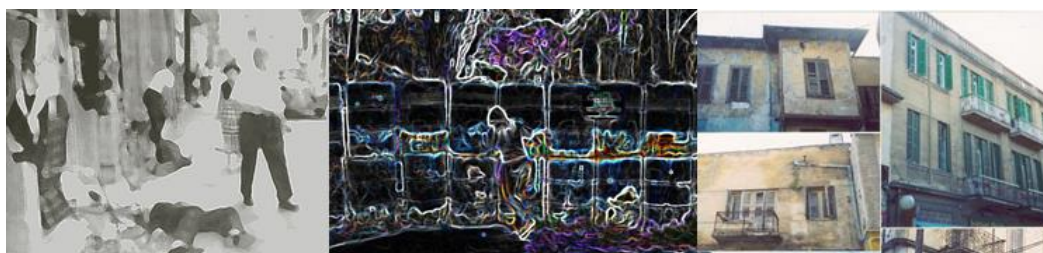


Figure 6. Picture narrates time-space relationship of Ledras.

5. Revitalization- Ledra

At stage 1 the revitalization project of Phaneromeni Area covering Ledra Street has been completed in 2004 and stage 2 was completed in 2005. The project focused on upgrading urban context as the strengthening of buildings overlooking the street on both sides foreseen. The works included the restoration of foundations and walls, the reconstruction of intermediate floors, the restoration of facades, and the replacement of rain water pipes, external doors and windows. It included transportation upgrading, partial pedestrianization, improving existing road, buildings with architectural value and facade restoration and street lighting. In order to create a safe pathway external cladding and bracing of the buildings in the northern and southern part of the street away from the buildings for the pedestrians an also new public space was created where all Cypriots can come together. And then the result was satisfying; proper conservation of the buildings overlooking the street on both sides was ensured, safety for pedestrians was increased. Pedestrianization of the commercial streets of Ledra upgraded its functionality and environment and allowing the area to compete with the new modern commercial centers outside the walled city. During planning and implementation of the project an effort was made to enrich the area functionally, aesthetically and architecturally, rendering it more attractive to residents, shoppers and visitors. Visible and invisible changes carry occurring at Ledra since the re-use.



Figure 7. This picture shows the present pathway with safe facades lying on the both sides of the street.



Figure 8. In this picture the upgraded quality of Ledras is presented.

6. Urban Transformation – Ledra

The urban and architectural development of Ledra did not occur instantaneously, or within just several years, it happened in a continuous change throughout decades and this change will continue for forever, it will never stops. As it continues o change new layers are introduced, each year put many things on top of the previous year, therefore creating visible and invisible layers and cultural codes. There has been a continuous difference at Ledra Street albeit it manages to keep up with the present conditions and retain honest with its past. The transparency can be grasped on even a routine visit to the site. The metamorphosis of urban transformation is described as the following in the study - Experiencing the place- memory of Kuzguncuk, Avsar 2014;

....Transformation does not refer to a phenomenon that occurs in an instant or within a couple of years; instead it denotes a kind of continuous change that would last forever. Transformation is not a continuity that produces sameness, but it generates differences. Here, transformation is used in the sense Deleuze uses the term metamorphosis. In his work Difference and Repetition (1994) Deleuze links metamorphosis to the eternal return of Nietzsche, in the way that eternal return exists in every metamorphosis. Moreover he states that what causes to return is also subject to metamorphosis, which he refers as the metamorphosis of the agent. He understands metamorphosis as a difference in itself. Regarding Deleuze's metamorphosis, the urban transformation could be understood as a continuous production of difference via everyday life routines of the users in a certain locality. This production of difference that depends on the continuous social relations of the users with the place, transforms both the users and the locality simultaneously, like in metamorphosis. [5]



Figure 9. The multiple street layers of Ledras and the urban transformation from the past to present.

7. Inhabitants – Visitors:

Ledras has got visitors from all over the world. It is alive for 24/7. As it is the main artery of the walled and the divided city and visitors use Ledra's road every day. The shop owners are mainly Greeks and Turks and the working class is from Far East, Georgia, Bulgaria, and Turkey etc. The population is very hybrid and the temporary population changing of the street is changing for every day. It is a multicultural street. The diversity and the unity between the communities despite the division of the street make Ledra very unique. There is a variety of cultures, religion, and tradition. In every corner of the street mind comes up with different feeling and imagination, one discovers new fact at each step through Ledra. At this street many states occur: the past-present relationship, time-space connection, visible- invisible cultural codes, love- hater between communities, crowded- but quite road, narrow streets- but wide content. Even though Ledra is narrow in structure, it shelters a global world here; therefore a wide variety of human beings and phenomena is inevitable.



Figure 10, 11. In these photographs diverse cultural codes of Ledra and both blending - clashing immigrants within the scene is narrated.

It is used in diverse ways by the locals and visitors, which is another generator of tension. Ledra is a preferred place for the visitors every day. People from different part of the world visit Ledra or use Ledra Street every day either for exploring the historic environment or use to cross over from north to south. Locals from the other parts of the island visit here for shopping, breakfast, lunch or dinner or taking photographs of the historic buildings, or students for research purposes. Tourist purpose may only be taking pictures of the border. Activists use this street to protest and camp on the UN line to take attention of the authorities to unification. Film producers also use this street because of its mystic and layered character. It consists of everything that one can ask on a photograph or on a movie scene. Limestone buildings of the Colony period, the buffer zone, the check point etc. The divided scenery might be the part of daily life of the inhabitants and locals but this is very unusual situation for the rest of the visitors.



Figure 12. In this photograph few green texture of the street is captured to indicate the dominance of manmade environment.

8. Man Made vs. Nature– Ledra

Unfortunately there is very little green tissue and vegetation at Ledra Street; few trees are spread along the road and parks within couple of minutes reach. On the south side at the very far end of the east side of the walled city there is a park called Athens Park. And on the north side there is Kugulu Park that is right at the far end of the walled city and perpendicular to Ledras. The Public area right at the end of Ledra surrounded by trees where people may sit under shade at hot summer days for relaxing and chatting and also people can feed pigeons encourages the body and mind to question the link between nature- men even in contrast to each other. This physical environment causes the body to sense the tangible and intangible aspects of the scenery.



Figure 13. The Schaloas Tower- the manmade observation hill of Ledras - is shown in the above picture.

The street is naturally straight and plain; there are no slopes at all in contrast to the road reaching up to other bastions. And this fact makes it impossible to perceive the city and the street from different levels. However as a solution a tower called Scholas was built as an observation tower as the demand of the locals and the visitors to capture different vistas of the walled city and the last divided capital and lessen their curiosity about the forbidden zone. Observation request of buffer zone provides another source of tension, curiosity: gives birth to necessity to bodily experience this outrageous fact. The tower made it possible to have various vistas and to capture unforgettable scenery of life. But this man made block is not the only level difference at Ledras, the hundreds of years old bastion at the far end of the street provides a different vista of this interesting street. Going on top of this observation tower and bastion recalls history (memories) and evokes imagination.



Figure 14, 15. Ledras from different angles and street levels.

It has become obligatory to boundary the shop fronts with flower pots as the smell and visual beauty of green is missing at Ledras. It should be obligatory to the residents of the houses as well to have plantation at their balconies facing the street for providing at least a little amount of green tissue and bringing an aesthetical look to the facades of the buildings. The nature has a direct relationship with social and cultural life. If greenery is provided, the soul of a body will rest from the surrounding man made environment. The connection between the outdoors and indoors of buildings should be provided to avoid disconnection between the human and nature.

9. Scale & Architecture

Ledras might seem as an attractive centre for outsider and they may want to live in but it does not have a potential to develop horizontally any longer, luckily because of Nicosia walls surrounding it and putting limitations to its boundaries. Only vertical development is possible if few recently built apartment blocks are demolished and new high rise technological buildings arose.



Figure 16. Ledras architectural layers.

However the demand is low to live in this area as it is a commercial busy street. And its geographical and historical constraints become an advantage for it, preventing it to expand and became a victim of regeneration projects and new development sites and thus get over populated and disturb the historic texture.



Figure 17. The roof scale of the street.

The buildings of Ledras are many two, three and even up to five storey houses or apartments. On the street level of Ledras there are only as commercials and used by authorities, such as restaurants, jewellery shops, souvenir shops, restaurants, cafes, bars, school and banks etc. The upper levels are mainly inhabited by low income immigrants from Far East and few locals or by local law firms and dentistry or medical clinics.

The dominating architecture of the area dates back to British Colonial Period. It is observed that there are late 20th century's architecture extensions on the historic buildings and also again late 20th century concrete tower blocks with marble cladding and it is notable that there are few replica facades of British period with modern structure and elements which is not an honest approach. It is seen that Ledra preserves its overall impression of a place that hosts good examples of British colonial architecture, evoking common memory and successfully integrating past with present architecture. Albeit these buildings were abandoned and decayed till the revitalization project, they survived and did not deprive Nicosia from their beauty. And also the low come inhabitants of the area could not cope well with the necessities of the old houses After the gate were open the shops were renovated, new cafes and restaurants were open therefore triggering its cultural, social and economic transformation, through these different ways of conservation old and abandoned buildings have been reoccupied and the population of the area increased.



Figure 18. Ledra time-space relationship-the honest development of the street in the whole time of becoming.

The inhabitants of the Ledra Street despite religious and ethnic differences and despite the division and hater between them still continue to have strong social and cultural relations with each other. Today not only the unique physical appearance but also the social relations that are departing from it make Ledra a desirable place to live, study or visit. In this architectural transformation process the old buildings of Ledra have not been replaced with new ones but instead the present day conditions are integrated with the past. The physical conditions of the buildings are improved or modified, and some of their functions have been changed, according to different demands. New meanings have been introduced to the street; inhabitants adapted their own needs to the existing. Both the inhabitants and the buildings integrated into a new look of Ledra, forming future of it. The past, the present and the future are integrated transparently in Ledra. The life styles of inhabitants have not been changed instead they are reflected to space adding something from themselves. The past, present and future cannot be separated. Without past there is no present, and without the present there will be no future.

10. Conclusion

This study focused on covering and discovering the layered visible and invisible character of the Ledras Street – linkage between the divided districts of Nicosia city. As this road links people from one side to another, it also links religion, ethnics and architectural environment of both sides. The link between the communities was detached but through this road visible and invisible attachment is

provided once again. The intangible and tangible shifts can be grasped via this zone of Phaneromeni quarter of old Nicosia. The architectural character of the street remained honest in comparison to the rest of the conservation projects going around the island. The integration of the past and present is honestly and ethically applied at Ledras. The rhythm between the street and the community has been kept. The street is not left as a ghost zone, today it lives and it will live in the future. Sustainable and continual architectural conditions have been developed on this street. The street has been looked by different ranges of perspectives and the multi layered character of Ledra brought up to daylight. This diversity should be preserved well for an infinite future. We are responsible for forming lively environments and read our cities, towns, village and streets as narratives. By doing so, it is possible to obtain holistic, transparent, and honest places to live in.



Figure 19. Diagram narrates the desired form of Nicosia and Ledras.

11. References

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- Local Authorities.
Such as; Lefkosia Municipality (Greek& Turkish), the Leventis Museum, Evkaf.
- European and Worldwide Authorities.
Such as; UNDP, UNOPS, ICOMOS, British Council Library.
- Libraries on both sides.
- Books, magazines, leaflets, published articles, archive websites, plans and drawings.
- Gathering information from Inhabitants and own observations.
- Site visits

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