

An Analysis and Review of the Divided City of Nicosia, Cyprus, and New Perspectives

DERYA OKTAY

ABSTRACT: *Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus for the last ten centuries, is currently Europe's last divided city, with the northern (Turkish) and southern (Greek) sections separated by a UN buffer zone. This continuing division is central to the city's ongoing problems, restricting development and creating complex problems for future planning.*

Despite the divide, and continuing political uncertainties, a substantial proportion of the Cypriot population are hopeful of future reunification, and efforts are being made on both sides to revitalise Nicosia in an integrated

fashion. One significant achievement has been the formulation of the Nicosia Master Plan, a ground-breaking, bi-communal template for the city's revitalisation. This article provides background information on Nicosia's historical evolution, urban structure and current conditions, before focusing on some of the recent planning initiatives and programmes, namely the Nicosia Master Plan and its complementary rehabilitation programme. An overview and interpretation of political-administrative and planning structures for Nicosia provides a sound basis for discussing the possibility of creating a more sustainable city.

Introduction

Nicosia, known locally as 'Lefkosia' in Greek or 'Lefkosa' in Turkish, is the capital and largest city of Cyprus. It is currently Europe's last divided city, with the northern (Turkish) and southern (Greek) sections separated by a buffer zone (Figure 1). This prevailing political situation has caused years of neglect and inertia in Nicosia, yet owing to its central location and its conceptual place as the island's capital, it continues to be a magnet for employment, administration and other services, as well as a centre for various educational and cultural activities.

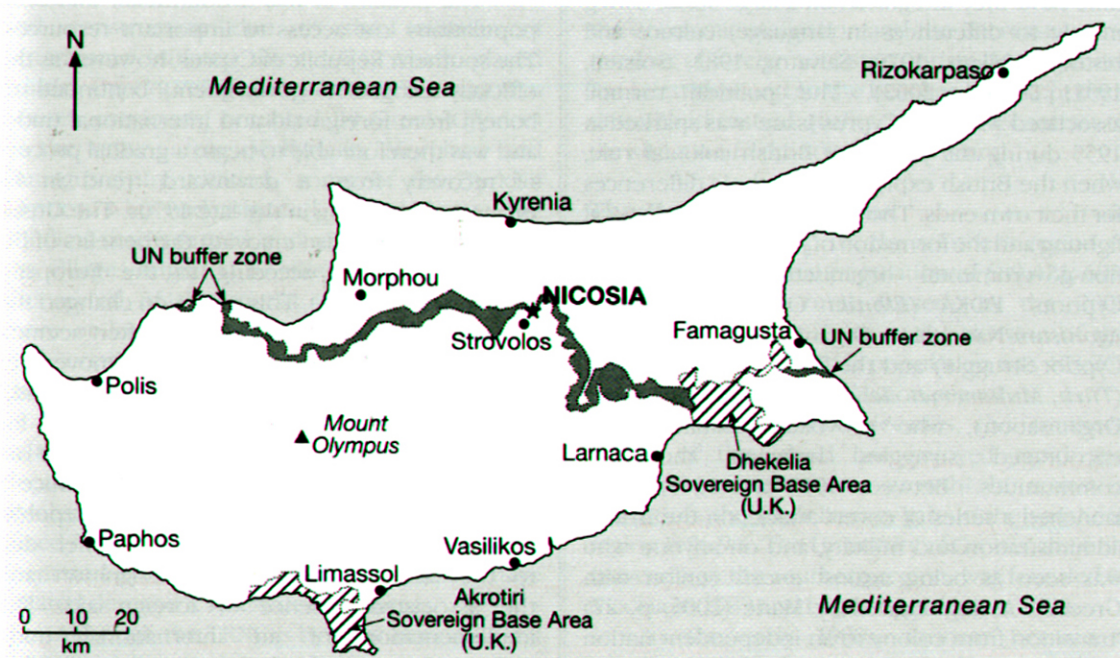


Figure 1: Map of Cyprus showing main cities and the north-south divide.

Despite the division, close co-operation between the engineers and planners on the two sides of the city with respect to the maintenance of the infrastructure, services, sewerage and electricity is ongoing, and comprehensive projects for the future of Nicosia have been revised in line with today's realities. Although Nicosia remains divided and the political uncertainties continue, the majority of Cypriots are hopeful of future reunification.

This article provides background information on the historical evolution, urban structure and current conditions in Nicosia, but its primary focus is on recent planning initiatives and programmes, namely the Nicosia Master Plan and its complementary rehabilitation programmes, which are being implemented in the Arabahmed and Chrysaliniotissa areas. In this context, an overview of the political-administrative and planning structures developed for Nicosia can provide a sound basis for discussions aimed at creating a more sustainable city.

Socio-economic and political conditions

Although the largest communities, the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, have shared the island of Cyprus for the last four centuries, at no time have they integrated on a large scale, owing mainly to differences in language, culture and history (Volkan, 1979; Salvator, 1983; Solsten, 1991; Doratli, 2002). The political turmoil associated with the 'Cyprus Issue' was sparked in 1955 during the period of British colonial rule, when the British exploited the ethnic differences for their own ends. The result was intercommunal fighting and the formation of politically-orientated non-governmental organisations: the Greek Cypriots' EOKA (*Etniki Organosis Kypriou Agoniston*/National Organisation for the Cypriot Struggle) and the Turkish Cypriots' TMT (*Türk Mukavemet Teskilati*/Turkish Resistance Organisation), who provoked hostilities and encouraged struggles between the two communities.¹ Between 1955 and 1960, EOKA launched a series of covert attacks on the British administration and military, and on anyone who was seen as being against *enosis* (union with Greece). As highlighted by Maric (2006, p. 27) 'transition from colony to an independent nation – following the establishment of the new and independent Republic of Cyprus – was not

without pains, and sporadic violence and agitation continued. The unrest culminated when Greek Cypriots proposed amendments threatening power-sharing arrangements, resulting in Turkish Cypriot withdrawal from government. Serious sectarian violence broke out in 1963, further dividing the Greek and Turkish communities. The UN sent a peacekeeping force to the island in 1964 to support British troops manning the so-called 'Green Line' that divided the city of Nicosia. Turkish Cypriots retreated to ghettos and enclaves as a means of protecting themselves against Greek harassment and aggression'. Following increasing inter-ethnic conflict and Turkey's military intervention in 1974 in a so-called 'peace operation' (an action seen by the harried and harassed Turkish Cypriots as a godsend but a disaster by Greek Cypriots living in the northern third of the island), the island was divided into two parts: the Republic of Cyprus in the south, occupying 65% of the total land area, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TNRC) in the north – a state which declared its independence in 1983 but remains internationally unrecognised, except by Turkey. The transfer of the Greek Cypriot population from north and the Turkish Cypriot population from the south into the opposing sectors of the island under UN population exchange agreements completed the division of the island.

The creation of this divide meant that both populations lost access to important resources. The southern Republic of Cyprus, however, as the officially-recognised government, continued to benefit from foreign aid and international trade, and was therefore able to begin a gradual process of recovery from a downward trend in its economy, beginning in the late 1970s. The Greek Cypriots are now also enjoying the benefits of EU membership after acceding to the European Union on 1 May 2004. This accession changed the dynamics of a conflict which had often seemed frozen in time, and stimulated the movement towards a political settlement on the island.² However, despite the efforts and support for reunification that followed, the results of the last referendum (24 April 2004) did not produce a positive result.³ As such, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus continues to suffer due to the lack of international recognition and the associated absence of foreign aid. The implementation of an international trade embargo following the declaration of the TNRC in 1983, continues to hinder economic recovery, and

although there have been various attempts by the USA and the UK to reconsider the Turkish Cypriots' isolation, especially with regard to international restrictions on seaports and airports, no positive results have been achieved as they have strongly been resisted by the Greek Cypriots.

The result of the separate government and development of the two sectors, coupled with differing local factors, has led to very different trends and characteristics on each side. Two urban settlements in particular have been heavily affected by the division of the island: Maras (Varosha), the most dynamic quarter of the town of Famagusta in the northern sector, has been closed to habitation since 1974, and for the same period of time, Nicosia has been divided into two sectors, each of which is functioning and developing independently.

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) has a total population of 213,491 (2002 figures); 51% urban and 49% rural. In 1960, prior to the island's division, the Turkish Cypriot population was 109,942 (based on the last census that covered all of Cyprus), and 115,000 in 1973 (based on the estimate provided by the local authorities)⁴. Although these figures do not indicate a rise in the annual rate of increase compared to the pre-division period (1.9% annual rate of increase according to the 1960 census), there has been an increase in both urbanisation and construction due to the resettlement programme initiated after 1974, which placed Turkish-Cypriot refugees from the Greek region in houses previously occupied by Greek Cypriots in the urban areas of Kyrenia, Morphou and Famagusta. In addition, some of the Turkish Cypriots who had migrated abroad due to the conflicts now returned, and some people living in the villages migrated to cities to seek jobs. And the revival of the tourist industry which had more or less collapsed following the period of civil conflict, also contributed to increasing urbanisation.

The socio-economic dynamics of the cities in the north have changed over the last three decades, as resources have been mobilised to resolve the housing problems of citizens on low (fixed) incomes, and also through the establishment and growth of five universities, which have created demand for new developments.

Although the TRNC is by most standards still a so-called 'developing society', with a per capita income and other social indicators similar to those

of Greece and Turkey, the Turkish Cypriot education level is comparable to that of more advanced countries. The Turkish Cypriot literacy rate is 93.5% for ages 6 and above (TRNC-SPO, 2001), and school education is compulsory up to the age of 15. The existence and activities of five international universities in the area have also helped to promote the intellectual milieu of the cities to some extent.

In the last five years, the coastal cities of northern Cyprus – Kyrenia in particular – have had to come to terms with an immense construction boom, fuelled by increasing expectations of a possible solution to the political situation on the island, and by expatriates' exploitation of the benefits of the relatively low land prices, low cost of living, and the wide choice of locations. However, this is posing a serious threat to the most ecologically valuable and fragile areas of the island.

Tourism is currently one of the most significant sectors of the economy in the northern region, with the majority of visitors from Turkey and other European countries. However, the tourism industry has not been able to maximise its potential, owing to the lack of direct flights from other countries⁵ and delays in the formulation and implementation of the Tourism Master Plan, which was initiated in 1994 and finalised in 1999. Consequently, there are far fewer foreign tourists than in the southern region. This could, however, be considered an important 'asset' for the north in terms of environmental sustainability: because of the economic stagnation and the decrease in the number of foreign tourists, tourism development has been slow and so the beaches have kept their untouched natural quality, in marked contrast to the situation in the south of the island.

The Republic of Cyprus

The Republic of Cyprus, the southern region of the island, has a total population of 689,471, 69% urban and 31% rural (based on the 2002 population census). Prior to the division of the island, the Greek Cypriot population was 473,265 (based on the 1960 population census).

For the past two decades, the southern region of the island has enjoyed rapid and uninterrupted economic growth. In terms of education, the adult literacy rate in the southern region is 96.9%. The University of Cyprus, the only university in the southern region, was founded in Nicosia in 1989 and began operating in 1992.

In the early 1990s, tourism became a major pillar of the economy of the southern region. However, the mass 'sun and sea' tourism,

that led to building along the coast, put enormous strain on the society and its natural heritage. The local environmental character was negatively influenced by the new international-style tourism developments and the natural environment in the coastal area was fundamentally transformed (ICAM-CAMP Cyprus, 2002)⁶ leading to enormous amounts of energy consumption and shortage of water. Over the last decade, land values have increased greatly for this reason, also fuelled by the expectations of people, before May 2004, regarding the entry of the Republic of Cyprus into the European Union.

Current housing issues are at the core of spatial policy considerations in southern Cyprus. Some of the main provisions of urban housing policies address the designation of areas for residential development, their differentiation according to development densities, permitted building heights and floor areas, the elaboration of parameters concerning non-residential uses considered compatible with residential uses, and the requirements under which such uses may be permitted (Republic of Cyprus DTPH, 2004).

During the 1990s, public policy concentrated on the implementation of planning legislation and the promotion of sustainable development. More recently, a series of new urban policies has been introduced in order to integrate the goals and objectives of the current Strategic Development Plan into the spatial planning system.

Nicosia: history, urban structure and elements

History

Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus for the last ten centuries, has been a living legacy of the island's rich heritage. It was declared a conservation area within the Nicosia Master Plan in 1989.

The Walled City, the oldest part of Nicosia, is one of the finest examples of medieval town planning, and dates back to the Venetian period (1489-1571). During this time, the major concern was the entity of the urban form rather than the internal structure: the city's Renaissance walls with their 11 bastions and three gates were built to consolidate the town, which had revealed a dispersed character.

The Ottoman period (1570-1878), saw the transformation of the city into a modern capital, through the improvement of both the infrastructure and the quality of residential areas.

Although Nicosia was not physically divided during this period, the two major communities of the town, the Turks and the Greeks, were already living in separate residential areas defined by their religious centres: the Turkish districts (*maballes*) were located around the mosques, while the Greek districts developed around the Greek Orthodox churches (Diaz-Berio, 1982).

During the British colonial period (1878-1960), urban density in Nicosia increased as empty land was built upon (Demi, 1990). However, the expanding administrative, commercial, marketing and service functions that accompanied British rule also led to suburban growth outside the city walls and along the main roads (Zetter, 1985). Nicosia expanded rapidly after the Second World War, with its population reaching 100,000 in the early 1960s. Between 1946 and 1965, the city also became more prosperous and new residential districts were added outside the city walls by both the major ethnic communities.

After Cyprus gained independence in 1960, southern Nicosia went through a process of rapid urbanisation, with older buildings cleared away to make way for modern developments and skyscrapers which soon began to dominate the townscape. The city also attracted immigrants from rural areas, refugees from the Middle and Far East, countries of the former Eastern Block, and tourists. Today, suburban growth continues in the peri-urban fringes of southern Nicosia, and is now accompanied by a parallel trend in the growth of smaller villages within easy commuting distance of the centre. The northern section of Nicosia is also being affected by rapid urban spread.

In 1958, the two major communities established their own, independent local authorities, who worked together until 1963, even after the foundation of the Republic of Cyprus on 16 August 1960 (<http://www.pio.gov.cy/cyprus/place/lefkosia.htm>; Interview with A.N. Guralp, July 2006).

As a result of the political struggles between the two communities, the city was divided by the 'Green Line' in 1963; the Buffer Zone has been established since 1974.⁷ The Buffer Zone cuts across the heart of the Walled City, forming a lifeless corridor and disrupting the city's cohesion. From the outset, the Buffer Zone demarcated the extent of territorial control by Turkish and Greek forces, and in the years that followed it became one of the major determinants in the physical development of the town. Along with political, demographic, and socio-economic

changes, the Buffer Zone also caused the development of the city outside of the Walled City to accelerate, with inhabitants moving out due to its deteriorating appeal as a place to live. Obsolescence began – buildings were soon occupied by foreign immigrants with lower

incomes and whose lifestyles and traditions were very different to the traditional residents. Inappropriate new functions, such as light industry, whole-sale units, low profile restaurants, fast-food and retail units (mainly serving the working population) prevailed. These changes

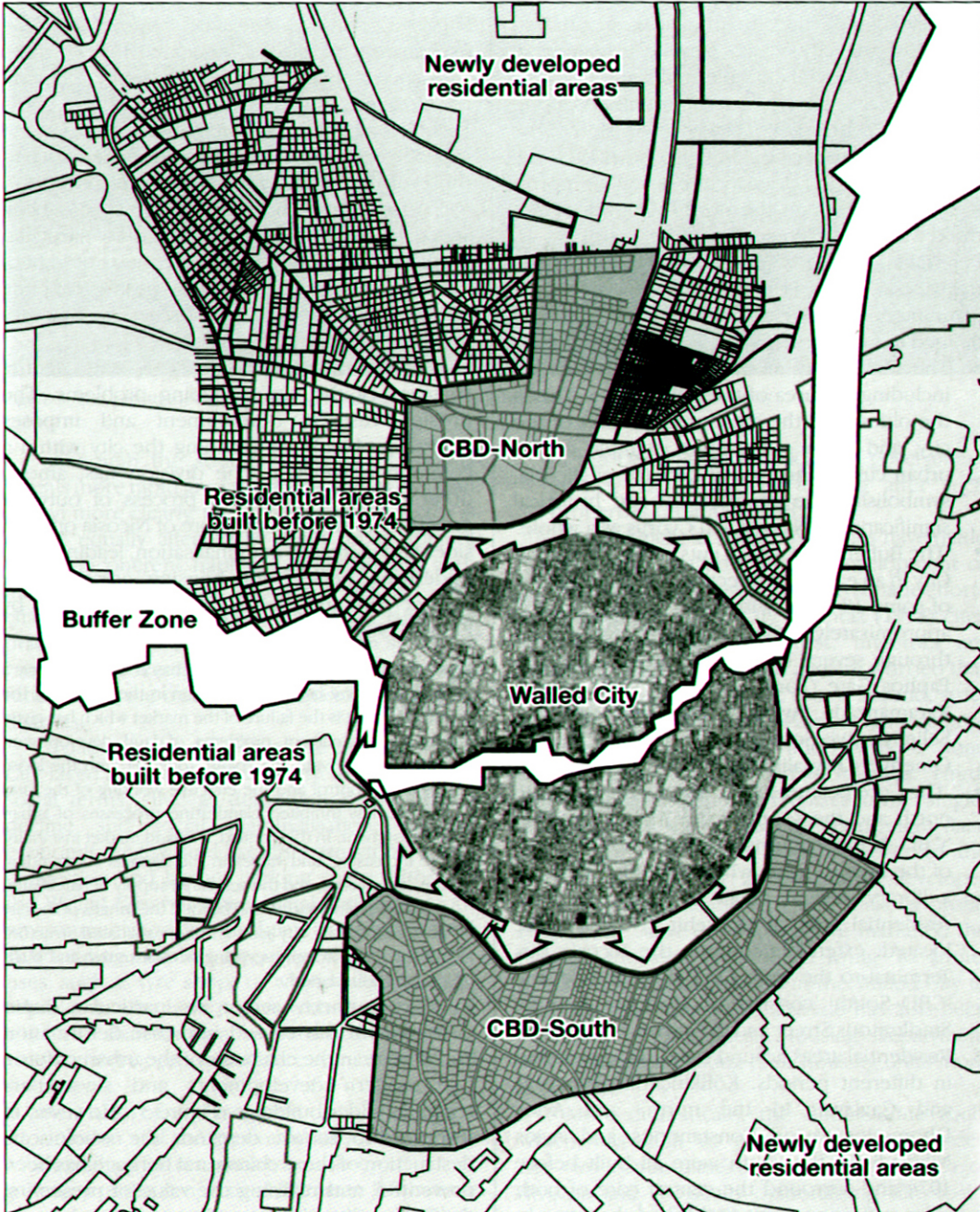


Figure 2: The current urban structure of Nicosia.

accelerated environmental deterioration in the area, in terms of physical decay, population decline, social marginalisation, the loss of economic vitality, and wasteful land use, as first highlighted by Zetter (1985).

Urban structure and elements

The urban structure of Nicosia is still unconsolidated, due to the vast, haphazard spread of the city, which may be explained in connection with the unstable land market and the high stock of urbanised but underutilised land in the 1980s (Zetter, 1985). Since the division of the city was reinforced by the Buffer Zone in 1974, the city has expanded dramatically along the north-south axis, although the pre-1974 development trend was towards the east and the west.

Taking into account the areas identified in the Nicosia Master Plan, as well as in more recent planning documents, this urban structure can be defined in four parts (Figure 2):

- The Walled City, an area of some 190-200ha, including the area of the Buffer Zone. This is the oldest and the most precious part of the city, and is an outstanding example of the urban cultural and social heritage of Nicosia, symbolising the geographical and historical significance of Nicosia and Cyprus as a whole.
- The Buffer Zone, which cuts across the Walled City in an east-west direction, covering an area of some 18-20ha. Within the Walled City, it is approximately 1.5km in length and passes through several old neighbourhoods such as Paphos Gate (Porta Domenica), Arabahmed, Karamanzade, Ayios Andreas, Phaneromeni, Selimiye (Ayia Sophia), Arasta (Lokmaci Point), Omeriye, Chrysaliniotissa and Ayios Kassianos.
- The Core Business Area, which extends to the north and the south of the Walled City. The 'CBD-North' comprises the area located north of the Kyrenia Gate, where four high schools, a library, several public buildings, and the residential area of Yenisehir (Neapolis) are located, extending towards the Nicosia Bus Terminal to the west. On the other side, the 'CBD-South' consists of Makarios Avenue, Stasikratous Street and the surrounding areas.
- Residential areas around the CBDs developed in different periods. Köflklüçiftlik, Yenisehir and Çağlayan in the north, and Ayios Dhometios, Ayios Constantinos and Ayios Nikoladis in the south were all built before 1974 and surround the central core of both sides, reflecting some established character. In the last 20 years, new housing areas have been

added and the city's boundaries have been widened significantly.

Current conditions, trends and problems

Considering the broader context of contested and divided cities, Scott Bollens' (1999, 2006) examination of urban planning techniques and tactics in a number of conflict-ridden cities, suggests that a relevant context for the examination of Nicosia would be that of other sites such as Beirut, Sarajevo, Jerusalem, Belfast, or Montreal, rather than Johannesburg, New Delhi, Hong Kong, or Algiers. While all cities and capitals contain divisions and boundaries (such as those of race, class, gender, ethnicity, etc.), this will differ greatly between cities. As has been stated by Papadakis (2006), Nicosia's particular predicament places it within a context of 'ethno-national conflict where groups posit competing claims for state sovereignty or secession that may implicate a divided city or capital'.

The continuing division of Nicosia is central to many of the city's ongoing problems. The division restricts development and imposes diverse problems for planning the city within a common framework. The division has, among other things, stimulated a process of outward growth away from the old core of Nicosia on both sides and increased marginalisation, leading to an underlying neglect for housing areas in the historic core and their social value. As noted by Zetter (1985):

■ In the 1980s, land development has come to occupy a significant and important position in the culture of the island, and it is the failure of the market which has given rise to the current problems of land development; respect for private ownership, together with the loose planning control and the effective working of the land market, has inhibited clandestine processes of urban development. In this context, the land market instability, the increasing land values in the districts surrounding the central core, and the very large supply of parcelled residential plots within and beyond the fringes of the city have helped the city gain an unconsolidated structure through leap-frogging existing administrative and built-up area boundaries'.

In the southern sector in particular, rapid development has caused immense deformation and change in the character of the urban pattern, e.g. modern developments and skyscrapers replacing older buildings (Figure 3). However, in response to tourist demand, the whole-scale destruction of the architectural heritage has been prevented, and realising the value of preserving the Walled City, owners and property developers are now capitalising on this.



Figure 3: The view to the southern sector of Nicosia from the northern historic core. Photos: D. Oktay.

Although the southern section of Nicosia reveals more rapid growth and the effects of urban sprawl more clearly, the Turkish-Cypriot sector is almost equally affected by rapid urban spread, though incoherent, haphazard and scattered, with many derelict and unused spaces, and characterised by frequent improper land use practices caused by prevailing random sprawl of commercial, recreational, industrial and service functions in the main distributors and residential districts.

Following the division of the city, the Walled City faced serious problems both in physical and social terms, such as deterioration, population decline and social marginalisation, loss of economic vitality, land-use disorganisation, traffic congestion and lack of parking space. Although the Walled City was once a vital and prosperous environment, today it has been isolated from the surrounding districts by its new incompatible uses, such as tyre shops or whole-sale units, and inhabitants who have no ties with the past of the city.⁸ The abandonment or poor maintenance of residential properties in this area can be explained simply:

- the lack of a resolution to the political situation and the economic fallout leaves few incentives for renovation or upkeep
- many of the properties have been left in trust to the state or temporarily abandoned by their Greek owners, and are under the jurisdiction

of the Department of Evkaf, the government agency responsible for looking after such properties (Mumtaz, 1998).

Interestingly, although the banks have made money readily available for the development of residential property, few people have made efforts to do so in the Walled City. Mumtaz (1998) cites several reasons for this: first, investors are uncertain of the city's future and are worried that large-scale violence may yet erupt. Second, strict enforcement of the conservation laws require some restoration or renovation work is done using original materials and techniques. Third, real estate developers often replace former single-dwelling units with a block of about eight flats, then make only one or two flats over to the landlord, while the rest are used by the developer to recoup their investment and make a profit. Fourth, the same developers have marketed the flats on the idea of 'modern living' to attract buyers from the old houses in the Walled City to their developments. This attitude has also been reinforced by the Social Housing Department which has been making their housing units more acceptable.

More dramatically, the Buffer Zone itself, which was built to prevent friction between the two communities now exudes a sense of division and is visually demoralising due to its derelict shops and houses with their broken shutters and windowpanes, and sandbags up to

GEOGRAPHY

AN ANALYSIS
AND REVIEW OF
THE DIVIDED CITY
OF NICOSIA,
CYPRUS, AND NEW
PERSPECTIVES

Geography © 2007



Figures 4a-c: Urban spaces closed to the opposite side following Nicosia's division. Photos: D. Oktay.

the sills. In addition, the transport system, comprising a multitude of ring roads, has been disrupted with many streets now dead-ends, blocked at the intersections with the Buffer Zone by either permanent walls or ugly sand-bag and barbed-wire barricades (http://www.metines.com/issue99-23/reg/frozen_in_time.htm; Doratli 2002) (Figures 4a-c).

Since the Walled City is not integrated with the newly-developed sections of Nicosia on either side, the main public spaces in the historic core no longer serve as a central plazas. Districts built before 1974 on both sides often had unique architectural and natural characteristics, and strong community ties. Today, however, these districts have lost many of these features through the addition of modest, international-style apartment blocks which have destroyed the characteristic urban pattern. On the other hand, the new districts extending the outskirts of the city on both sides were developed after 1974, and have no special character at all. Most of these housing environments, created either by governments or speculative developers, share similar problems (Figures 5a-b).

Political-administrative and planning structures for Nicosia

The current political-administrative and planning structures reveal that the two sections of the city of Nicosia are being ruled by two independent municipalities: the Nicosia Turkish Municipality (NTM) and Nicosia Greek Municipality (NGM).

With respect to the administrative issues at the urban level in both parts, and despite the collaborative attitudes of the responsible authorities, the lack of co-ordination has brought about many problems. There is a fragmentation of the authorities, each with different powers and responsibilities, whose



Figure 5a-b: The new peri-urban housing developments lacking character. Photos: C. Kara and F. Conteh.

interests sometimes conflict. There is no sound, stable basis for the allocation of different departments to the authority of certain ministries. Most aspects of public administration in each sector are highly centralised. There is also a lack of effective economic, financial and legal-administrative instruments for supporting sustained project implementation and bringing about necessary changes (Interview with L. Mesutoglu, 2004).⁹ The shift of market demand for housing and business accommodation to the suburbs poses the need for proactive planning and integrated strategies to mobilise private interests and active productive partnerships between planning and the market (Constantinides and Özen, 2004).

Between 1956 and 1958, the issue of whether separate municipalities would be established in a future Cyprus led to protracted inter-ethnic violence, and compelled the idea of a division of the capital. From that time onwards, the Turkish Cypriot members established separate municipal councils, and elected their own Mayor on 16 June 1958; the issue of whether the municipalities were to be separate or not was left open in the 1960 constitution (Interview with Ali N. Güralp, Head of Projects Department of Nicosia Turkish Municipality and Nicosia Master Plan Team Leader, 12 July 2006; Papadakis, 2006).

As highlighted by Güralp (2006), the establishment of separate municipal councils by the Turkish Cypriots was taken by the Greek-Cypriot authorities to be a threat to the united state. In 1963, 'the reunification of the two municipalities' was one of the 13 articles proposed by the Greek-Cypriot President, Makarios, which could be considered one of the major causes of the ethnic struggles later that year, and which led to the intervention of United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping Forces and the division of both the island and its capital city. Since then, the two administrations have been functioning in their own separate zones with no direct, formal correspondence. Communication is now through the organisations of the UN, such as the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), and, when necessary, through meetings at Ledra Palace, the headquarters of the UN Peacekeeping Forces¹⁰ which is located in the Buffer Zone. Concerning this, Güralp (2006) stated that: 'the Turkish municipalities are as real and functional as those in the south. However, owing to the continuing political situation and the lack of international

recognition, our municipalities cannot be represented in the international milieu'.

In the 1980s, the boundaries of the southern (Greek) municipality were tightly drawn, encompassing little of the city's post-independence suburban growth. The remaining area of the city was administered by Improvement Boards. Administrative reorganisation was therefore required to co-ordinate Nicosia's planned growth (Zetter, 1985). In the following years, this reorganisation was planned so that 'municipalities constitute the form of local government in the main towns as well as a number of smaller towns'. In this context, the government, recognising the essential and positive role of local authorities, has established a policy of decentralisation of decision-making, designed to give local authorities their rightful status, responsibilities and resources (Habitat Report of the Republic of Cyprus, 1996, p. 3).

In northern Cyprus, however, there does not seem to be an integrated policy with regard to the administrative and financial framework, in the sense that many partners work together but do not communicate effectively at all times. Although the municipality constitutes the form of local government in the city, it is constrained to operate with limited funds and has no real power, due to the fact that the income comes predominantly from the central budget. However, in 2004, the Nicosia Turkish Municipality, together with the municipalities of Famagusta and Kyrenia, received some funds from UNOPS, and based on this, some projects were prepared and implemented for the piece-meal physical improvement of older sections of the cities.

'According to the provisions of the municipalities legislation, both sides of Nicosia now directly elect Mayors to act as executive authorities, while Municipal Councils function as the local policy-making bodies, with responsibilities including street construction, maintenance and lighting, waste collection, disposal and treatment, the provision of public open spaces, and the protection and improvement of the environment and public health, along with additional activities in social services, education, the arts and sport' (<http://www.eukn.org/cyprus/urban/index.html>).

Where the approach to planning is concerned, a strong private sector and a market-driven economy prevail in both sectors of the island. The local plans lack the proactive and integrated planning approach necessary to anticipate and entice market forces towards spatial development harmonising private sector

involvement with sustainable urban management. The predominantly regulatory approach of both Local Plans is insufficient to act as a catalyst for breathing new life into the core of Nicosia (UNDP-UNHCS, 1984; Constantinides, 2001; Constantinides, 2002; Constantinides and Özen, 2004).

Nicosia Master Plan and complementing investment projects

Nicosia's two communities first worked in co-operation in 1978 when the city's two mayors, M. Akinci and L. Demetriades, agreed to work together in order to build a common sewerage system to deal with the problems created when rain water flowed from the south to the north of the city. On 24 October 1979 this collaboration was extended to the preparation of the Nicosia Master Plan (NMP) which aimed to define a general planning strategy for the rational development of the city, able to address the needs of present-day political circumstances and at the same time sufficiently flexible to be adapted in the event that political circumstance would allow the development of the city as a single entity (UNDP/UNHCS, 1984). Underlying the Plan was the idea that close and systematic technical co-operation could foster new bonds of understanding between the two communities. Projects were planned and directed by bi-communal teams and provided opportunities for young Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot professionals to meet regularly, to work together and to be trained by international experts. The NMP was enacted in 2001 with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS-Habitat). This was in keeping with the aims of UN projects in other post-conflict areas, such as Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where a new unified urban plan was intended to help regenerate the historic city after the 1993 war.

In the first phase of the NMP, between 1979 and 2001, a detailed assessment of the Nicosia's structure and developed a long-term plan for its future development was carried out. This included approving an investment programme for special projects within the Walled City and the central business centre. One of the major tasks was to strengthen the administrative and service functions of the area, and to identify a set of policies needed to control the city's growth and reverse trends of decay in the Walled City.

In the second phase of the NMP, priority projects aimed at halting physical deterioration and socio-economic disintegration in the Walled City were prepared. Among the many restored buildings, the historically and architecturally invaluable Buyuk Khan (Great Inn) is particularly important in the cultural and social life of the old city. Today it is used as an information centre and is home to many small antiques/craft shops and art galleries which are devoted to Cypriot culture.

The implementation phase is still ongoing, with many special projects carried out by the NMP teams from 1989 to date. The major emphasis in these investment projects is the improvement of traffic flow and transportation, visual improvements in landscaping and urban form, restoration of historic buildings and the upgrading of the existing public spaces. Among these, the areas of Ledras/Onasagorou streets in the south, and its twin, the Kyrenia Avenue area, in the north, now form a continuous north-to-south axis within the old business centre of the Walled City. The prime objective of this project was to create the basic infrastructure for the development of physical, economic and cultural links between the walled city and the modern commercial area that extends around the wall on both sides.

The twin priority projects: Arabahmed and Chrysaliniotissa urban rehabilitation schemes

The implementation of the rehabilitation programmes began in 1989, with the two major rehabilitation schemes for Arabahmed in the north and Chrysaliniotissa in the south (Figure 6). Both areas are traditional residential neighbourhoods located in the Walled City, but due to their proximity to the Buffer Zone have suffered from a sharp decline in population, which in turn has dramatically accelerated the decay and deterioration of both the buildings and the overall environment. These rehabilitation programmes aim to preserve the historic charm of these areas with their traditional street patterns and buildings (dating from the early nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, with one or two storeys and courtyards and gardens to the rear), and the old urban fabric. As well as preserving the cultural and architectural legacy of these quarters, these projects also intend to give impetus to private investment, to enhance quality of life and sense of belonging in the district, and to attract younger and more economically-active households into the area, as well as to encourage existing residents



Figure 6: The Walled City of Nicosia showing the urban rehabilitation schemes.

to remain in the old core, strengthen economic activity, and ultimately to integrate these historic areas into the contemporary city.

The Arabahmed project has already helped save many formerly dilapidated buildings in the northern area including houses, small commercial ventures and cultural centres, some of which have been adapted for residential use and others for community facilities including a library, a community centre, a gallery, a folk dancing club, a small hotel and a restaurant (Nicosia Master Plan Bi-communal Team, 2005) (Figures 7a-c).

The Chrysaliniotissa project has helped restore many traditional houses and allowed for the construction of new units on empty plots, providing a total of 41 additional housing units. It has also provided community facilities with a series of sub-projects such as a crafts centre, the Chrysaliniotissa garden, a student hostel, parking places, a kindergarten, and the restoration of street facades (Nicosia Master Plan Bi-communal Team, 2005) (Figures 8a-b).

These projects, beyond their significance in improving the living environment of Nicosia, preserve the potential of the historic centre to have a role in the future functional integration of the city, and hence help create a more sustainable city.

The second phase in the revitalisation of Nicosia continued and expanded the rehabilitation and upgrading of historic areas: Selimiye (including the Arasta – Nicosia's Municipal Market) in the north, and Ömeriye (including the Ömeriye Mosque and the Ömeriye



Figures 7a-c: Buildings in the Arabahmed area. Photos: D. Oktay.



Figures 8a-b: Buildings in the Chrysaliniotissa area.
Photos: C. Kara.

Bath) in the south. It also continued rehabilitation work in two other socially, economically and physically neglected areas: Samanbahçe in the north and Phaneromeni in the south.

Results of the NMP, bi-communal investment projects and the twin priority projects

The formulation of the NMP and the implementation of many initiatives since 1986 have produced significant achievements both in terms of policies and projects, as well as the

capacity of both communities to work together in bi-communal actions for the revitalisation of Nicosia as a whole. Also, beyond seeking to increase the capacity of the city's services and to improve the existing and future conditions of Nicosia, these bi-communal projects have acted as a means of building confidence between the two communities, and have contributed positively to the creation of an atmosphere of reconciliation and mutual trust which has been missing for almost an entire generation of Cypriots.

As well as working in a bi-communal context, the NMP team have also paved the way for permanent collaboration between the government Town Planning and Housing Department and both sectors' municipalities. In the north, the Department of Antiquities and Museums was also included in this network. These three authorities did their best to apply the proposals offered through NMP, although the plan had not yet been legalised. Until the plan was put into operation in 1999, the realities and conditions of the place developed ahead of the Plan (Interview with Layik Mesutoglu, Chairperson of the Chamber of Cyprus Turkish Town Planners and Head of Planning and Research Section of the Department of Town Planning, 19 February 2004; Interview with Ali Güralp, Head of the Projects Department of Nicosia Turkish Municipality and Nicosia Master Plan Team Leader, 12 July 2006).

The consolidation and concentration policy of the NMP could be considered very positively, as it encourages new developments in the already developed areas in the central areas, namely the Priority Development Areas. But, since this policy is not being supported by other policies, developments could still be oriented according to personal preferences.

As noted by Zetter (1984), 'one of the constraints to conservation and rehabilitation of the old core of Nicosia is the fact that owners are squeezed by low rental levels on the one hand and restrictive conservation policies on the other which prevent the realization of higher use value through renewal/redevelopment'. In order to break this circle, in the years following 1984, the Greek-Cypriots introduced the Transferable Development Right, as a development tool that is useful particularly for the areas of conservation. Thus widespread and severe decay were prevented as renewal took place under controlled conditions with the profitability of transferred rights acting as an incentive to more sympathetic building in the old core. On the other hand, in the northern sector, although there were certain proposals in the original NMP regarding real estate development, none of these were realised due to the lack of incentives and so deterioration of buildings was far more widespread than in the southern sector (Interview with L. Mesutoglu, 19 February 2004).

Regarding the NMP Twin Priority Projects for the Walled City, the Chrysaliniotissa residential rehabilitation scheme has had positive results, meeting the challenge of combining conservation objectives with socio-economic revitalisation and encouraging private owners to invest in and re-use traditional buildings through favourable conditions, such as funding, a better economic environment and strong political support. In Arabahmed, however, despite the US\$5 billion spent on rehabilitating this historic district, socio-economic vitality has not been achieved due to the lack of diversity of uses which would keep the area active round the clock, and the social profile of the residents, who are low-income and under-educated immigrants from less developed regions of Turkey. The Arabahmed district still need strong external support, but the revised implementation strategy giving new public uses to old houses, such as a cultural centre, a women's library, restaurants serving local traditional food, art centres, and so forth, is starting to bear fruit.¹¹

In the southern sector of the Walled City, the pedestrianisation project, implemented

with funds from the EU, has succeeded with regard to the rehabilitation and environmental improvement of the business area, and has allowed this area to begin to compete with the new commercial centres of the modern city.

Conclusion

The continuing division of Nicosia is central to the city's continuing problems, as it, among other factors, has stimulated a process of outward growth away from the core, as well increased marginalisation, giving rise to an underlying neglect for historic housing areas and their social value. As a result of the land use change arising from urban sprawl, agricultural land is shrinking in favour of residential land, and the urban form is being fragmented while services are becoming inadequate. All these problems create a non-sustainable urban and housing environment that requires planners, urban designers, and architects rethink the principles and processes they are employing.

The formulation of the Nicosia Master Plan (NMP) and the implementation of many initiatives since 1986 have produced significant achievements, in terms both of policies and projects on the ground, and enhancing both communities' capacity for bi-communal action for the future revitalisation of Nicosia as a whole. Further, these bi-communal projects, beyond seeking to increase the capacity of the city's services and to improve the existing and future human settlement conditions of all the inhabitants of Nicosia, have acted as a means of building confidence between the two communities although no solution has yet been reached in the Cyprus problem and the divided status of the city continues.

However, the plan is not capable of meeting either the needs or dealing with the problems of the contemporary city, since the realities on the ground have moved far ahead of the plan's projections. With regard to the core, the lack of a coherent vision for the future regarding the role that this area will play both locally and within Cyprus as whole, is considered the main reason why interventions, despite their local success, do not contribute sufficiently to an overall regeneration outcome (Constantinides and Özen, 2004). The long-standing political problems of the two separate communities has overshadowed the importance of the need for developing such a vision. Despite the progress achieved during the past 20 years in the planning system, in the

implementation of conservation and traffic management schemes and the various financial incentives, the impact on the social, economic and spatial structure of the core of Nicosia has been limited relative to the objectives of the NMP and the expectations of the authorities involved. The NMP, conceived for a planning horizon of up to the year 2001, is therefore in need of a renewed planning framework to respond to the continuing social and economic needs of the Core of Nicosia and, particularly, to identify new opportunities for the integrated revitalisation of the Walled City, the heart and the most precious part of Nicosia.

On the basis of these factors, to evaluate the achievements and challenges during the implementation of the NMP and to help update the plan to meet current and future challenges, 'A New Vision for the Core of Nicosia' (NVP), was introduced in 2003, 22 years after the NMP's creation. The project, conceived within the framework of the bi-communal NMP and funded by UNOPS, defines new initiatives that will enable the public to take the leading role in the rejuvenation of neglected areas, especially the Buffer Zone where many properties have been reduced to ruins.¹²

The lack of a resolution to the political problems that have caused the physical divide of Cyprus for 30 years has meant that the opportunity of working collaboratively to solve problems is being lost by all cities on the island. However, Nicosia's bi-communal actions for future development and revitalisation have immense value as they have already contributed towards the creation of a more positive atmosphere of reconciliation and mutual trust, which could in turn facilitate direct negotiations at the political level. In addition, technical support from the international community should be encouraged for the development of appropriate planning strategies.

Given the unstable land market and heavy problems in the existing stock, strategic plans will require innovative policy instruments if some incompatibility between land needs and development processes is to be achieved. In this context, sustainable renovation is of great concern in housing policies, without ignoring the need to tackle fundamental problems that take priority over environmental improvements.

Notes

1. Centuries of conflict between Greece and Turkey (the two motherlands) afforded an ample stock of brutalities to strengthen the aversion felt for the 'traditional' enemy, be it Greek or Turkish. On the other hand, the

commonly practiced British colonial policy of 'divide and rule', of setting two communities' interests against one another to maintain London's hold, also engendered inter-communal animosity (Solsten, 1991). The political involvement of the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, during the Cold War was also a source of complication as it placed the island on the list of peripheral points of friction (Doratli, 2002).

2. In April 2003, the Turkish Cypriot leadership under Rauf Denktaş opened the first checkpoints on the Buffer Zone, following massive demonstrations led by the Turkish Cypriot Left and other liberal forces. Following this, people, except those subject to the restriction for 'people who were born in Turkey', crossed both ways in large numbers, and still do, but with a naturally decreasing interest. Despite the large emotional upheavals accompanying such crossings to the other side after 30 years, there was a notable lack of incidents of violence.
3. According to the results of the referendum, the majority of the Greek-Cypriots (75.8%) were against reunification while the majority of the Turkish-Cypriots (64.9%) voted affirmatively.
4. After the division, a de facto census was undertaken in northern Cyprus in January 1975. However, owing to the fact that a substantial proportion of the Turkish population in the south and at Erenköy had not yet gained access to the Turkish territory, and was not therefore covered by this census, the census was deemed to be incomplete and invalid.
5. There are only a few direct flight connections to other countries, mainly the UK, requiring a touch-down at a Turkish airport.
6. In Limassol and Paphos, the cities that are a pole of attraction for elderly Western tourists wanting to buy a property in proximity to the beach, new concrete developments sprawl along the seafront and disguise the true local identity.
7. As stated by Papadakis (2006) and Akçakoca (2007), some people argue that the division has been in place for longer, citing the years of British colonial rule when a barbed-wire fence, known as the 'Mason-Dixon line', was erected between the Greek and Turkish communities in Nicosia after bloody inter-ethnic violence in 1956.
8. These are so-called voluntary migrants, from countries whose poor living conditions have brought them to Cyprus in search of temporary employment and a better future. On the Greek-Cypriot side these comprise primarily of migrants 'from the east' (either from the Middle East, primarily from Syria and Egypt), the Far East (primarily from Sri Lanka, the Philippines, India and Pakistan), or from the countries of the former Eastern Block (Russia, Poland and Moldavia). Such groups also exist on the Turkish-Cypriot side, although in much smaller numbers. Seasonal and temporary workers from Turkey fall into a different category from the Turkish settlers who have come to live in northern Cyprus following the division, as do the women from the former Eastern Block.
9. These were the points on which Zetter (1984) gave warnings. Unfortunately, his hypothesis came true.
10. The Ledra Palace was formerly a four-star hotel, but is now used by the UN Peacekeeping Forces as their headquarters. It has one entrance from each side of the buffer zone and forms a convenient meeting-place in 'no-man's land'.

11. According to a recent survey, there is a growing interest in the Walled City for establishments in the catering and entertainment sector. Businessmen involved in this sector have greater optimism about the future of the Walled City and report willingness to invest in the area (Constantinides and Ozen, 2004).
12. The New Vision Project (NVP) extended over 11 months, November 2003 to October 2004, was executed as part of the activities of the Bi-Communal Development Programme (BDP) and was funded by the US Agency for International Development and the UN Development Programme. The staff of the NVP comprises two BDP senior national consultants from both communities and a bi-communal team of 10 professionals. Project co-ordination was carried out by a steering committee composed of representatives of the implementing authorities and national planning experts (Constantinides and Ozen, 2004).

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Since writing this article, the Rehabilitation of the Walled City of Nicosia project has become one of nine projects to be awarded an Aga Khan Award for Architecture. The work was recognised as a collaborative and sustained effort and was found to be successful in reversing the city's physical and economic decline, using restoration and re-use as the catalyst for improvement to the quality of life on both sides of this divided city. The award was presented to the representatives of the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities as well as the Nicosia Master Plan team (www.akdn.org/news/2007september4.htm).

Derya Oktay is in the Department of Architecture, Eastern Mediterranean University, Famagusta, Northern Cyprus, via Mersin 10, Turkey (tel: +90 392 630 2701; fax: +90 392 6302365; email: derya.oktay@emu.edu.tr).



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✗ ERRATUM

Volume 92, Part 3, p. 232, column 2, sentence starting line 13. This should read 'Following increasing inter-ethnic conflicts and Turkey's military intervention into the island in 1974 in a 'Peace Operation' (an action seen by the harried and harassed Turkish Cypriots as a godsend but viewed as a disaster by the Greek Cypriots living in the north of the island), the island was divided into two parts...'. Apologies for this error.