

REVITALIZATION OF A STREET IN A HISTORIC URBAN QUARTER : CASE STUDY: GİRNE LİMAN ARKASI

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ABSTRACT:

Girne is a waterfront and a touristic city with a historical identity. Due to Girne's harbour facilities, tourism has developed and the city becomes a touristic place within the time. Limanarkası is one of the historic urban quarters of Girne, which sustains its unique cultural heritage until today. In the past, the harbour was used for lighters and long shore boats. High and massive houses surround it. These houses were built for carob storage. However, they are used for touristic and recreational purposes today. Due to the observation made at Limanarkası, it is decided to provide a revitalization proposal for a street in the area, since the deterioration level observed to be very high. Regarding the mentioned problems in the area, the study starts with the physical and functional analysis. Then, in the second part, the determination of revitalization types in accordance with the analysis carried out in the first part is put forward. And finally, in the last part, a proposal is developed to rehabilitate the existing character and condition of the street in the surveyed historic urban quarter.

1. INTRODUCTION

Girne is the third biggest city of Northern Cyprus that lies at the foot of the northern slope of Girne range (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Location of Cyprus and Girne

It was built around horseshoe shape little harbor. It is one of the significant seaports of Northern Cyprus. Throughout the history, various cultures like Roman, Byzantine, Lusignan, Venetian, Ottoman and British have affected the evolution of Girne in terms of urban development or architectural characteristics (Castelli, 1974). The main characteristics of Girne are the little harbor and the castle. The original function of the city was a commercial port, which has gradually faded away and turned into a touristic center today (Figure 2).



Figure 2. A view from the harbour

In general, city center mainly composed of two historic urban quarters: Türk Mahallesi and Liman Arkası. These two historic urban quarters reflect the characteristic features of these different cultures, which are the components that constitute the cultural heritage. The district located between the medieval castle and the main commercial street called "Liman Arkası" and selected as a case area for this paper. It is a kind of buffer zone between the new developments and the harbour (Oktay, 2000) (Figure 3).

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Figure 3. Plan of the case area

This area composed of narrow organic streets that are defined by attached buildings where still keep their spatial quality of human scale and the local identity. The new developing districts of the city have a contrasting layout to the urban pattern of this area that makes Liman Arkası unique in the city scale.

Buildings are dominantly in attached organization, 2 storey high and having flat roofs. They are mostly painted into white color. There are small balconies projecting from the first floor level and supported with S or I motive supports, which are characteristic features of British period (TPO, 1979). The buildings are mainly used for housing besides a few touristic and recreational purposes. However, this functioning is not sufficient to attract people to this area. Due to the functional, physical and image obsolescence, it lost its livability and attractiveness. On the contrary, this district is an area that must be conserved due to its characteristics features and plays a significant role for the cultural tourism, which is one of the contemporary trends of today.

In this paper, a street, which reflects the characteristics of the area will be selected and, it will be analyzed physically and functionally in order to find out its present condition. Finally, a revitalization proposal will be put forward in order to rehabilitate the physical and functional condition of the street. The aim of this paper is to constitute a model for the similar areas.

In the following part, physical and functional analysis of the case study area will be presented.

2. PHYSICAL AND FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE CASE AREA IN TWO SCALE

Streets; are the most potent public places for social activities to occur, and the most effective elements in linking separate entities (Moughtin, 1992). In order to identify the existing physical and functional characteristics of the selected street in Limanarkasi, physical and functional analysed carried out both in space and unit scales.

The case area is a narrow pedestrian street. It is strongly defined by continuous building blocks that are mainly housing. Street itself is a meeting place that extends itself into the house at ground floor level. People carry out their sitting room into the street; they sit into the street and keep their doors open to watch the outside. The traditional buildings along the street are in human scale. There is a slight fluctuation on skyline properties. The buildings along the street have no unity problem. The units are mainly used for accommodation of the residents, only two of them are used for touristic and recreational purposes. One is used for art workshop and the other is used as restaurant. The base covering of street is parquet. There is no adequate street furnishing and landscape along the streets (Figure 4).



Figure 4. A view from the street

When the street is analysed in unit scale, it is seen that, it is dominated by traditional houses. Some of the traditional buildings are physically in poor condition in terms of facade, architectural detail and structural system. The houses along the street have one or two storey height. They were constructed by load bearing system. Stone is the main construction material. They are continuously located along the streets. Each house have a small courtyard at their side or back. Each courtyard has a number of fruit trees in them. Main entrances are generally given from the middle of the front facades. Some of the houses have a small front balcony that is the characteristics of the British architecture in Cyprus around at the beginning of the 20th century. They have flat roofs. Timber works were used for doors. Generally the doors have two wings. Vertical windows were designed for them that were screened by timber shutter (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Houses and courtyards

The street is opened to a nice defined square with an arch. The square is dominated by a white church that is very harmonious with its environment (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Street view towards the church

It is used as Icon Museum. All of the outdoor space covered by hard surface and it is unbearable during the day, because there is nine months summer in Cyprus (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Icon Museum

Although the street and the square have potential to be used for tourist purposes for economic gain to the city, due to the physical and functional obsolescence, they are useless with the existing situation.

3. DETERMINATION OF THE REVITALIZATION TYPES

Conservation of historic urban quarters has to be considered not as a straightforward and restrictive concern with preservation but a concern with Revitalization and Enhancement. Since a historic area is a part of the economic dynamism, it should be able to compete with the rest of the city, and without being revitalized this would not be possible (Lichfield, 1988).

The determination of physical and functional qualities of the surveyed street as a result of the analysis will be followed with the decision of revitalization types in both means of physical and functional revitalization. In this course, obsolescence type and development dynamics of the area must be searched to determine the revitalization types.

In accordance with the general obsolescence classifications; physical/structural, functional, locational, image and official/legal; obsolescence types and level of the street will be determined (Tiesdell, 1996). As a result of the physical analysis it is discovered that there are some buildings in the surveyed street having physical/structural deterioration, which leads obsolescence. Besides most of them fail to meet the contemporary standards and the requirement of the user, besides inadequacy of central heating, air conditioning and other contemporary facilities that are the deterrents of functional obsolescence. And also the general characteristics and the attributes of the street having organic tissue with narrow organization create unfavorable conditions and strengthen the functional obsolescence in other means. As a result of the mentioned attributes above the surveyed street as a general perception can be determined as having a high level of obsolescence.

Determination of type and degree of obsolescence, which is not much concerned about, during problem definition and description of historic urban areas, is essential for sustainability of conservation (Dorathl & Önal, 1999).

Every place or different parts of cities as well as historic areas have their own characteristics and dynamics. With proper identification of development dynamics, it is possible to prevent wrong decisions related to revitalization. The surveyed area is more or less stable in terms of development. There is not much pressure for the demolition of old historic buildings. And the surveyed street itself has a static state of development dynamics and there is no demolition of the buildings that align the street.

The further step of this research after the determination of obsolescence levels and development dynamics is the decision of revitalization types. As a result of the mentioned attributes above, the surveyed street needs physical and economic revitalization. Upon the physical obsolescence of the buildings, they need a physical intervention to ensure the continued performance of their structure and fabric is what called refurbishment. And some of the buildings need conversion in order to make the street one of the magnet points of this historic urban quarter since it has a potential in terms of location and different physical characteristics. This might be a short-term strategy in order to improve the infrastructure and environmental conditions to increase confidence in the area.

In this course, in order to make this street sustainable, since the physical revitalization only may not be a long run provision, being only a cosmetic intervention, there is a need for economic revitalization as well (Leigh & Fitzgerald, 2002).

Depending on the physical and functional obsolescence and the static state of development dynamics, the surveyed street needs a 'functional diversification' that the existing uses is kept to some extend and some new uses are introduced as a long term strategy. There will be a limited restructuring and some new uses to synchronize and support the existing economic base (Dorathl & Önal, 1999).

In the following part of this study, a proposal will be generated in accordance with the decisions mentioned above.

4. PROPOSAL

As a result of physical and functional analysis and the determination of the revitalization types, a proposal is generated to enhance the qualities of the Limanarkasi. The proposal includes two types of revitalization: Physical Revitalization and Economic Revitalization. Social Revitalization do not include in this decision since it is considered in the Economic Revitalization.

The physical revitalization proposal for the area includes the following features:

Physical intervention to:

- Poor building façades including windows, balconies, roofs and walls;
- Buildings in poor structural condition;
- Buildings with lack of maintenance;
- Poor conditioned building courtyards;
- Lack of landscaping features and urban furniture;
- Base covering of both street and the neighbouring square;

The economic revitalization proposal for the area includes the following features:

- Adoption of some buildings to a new function or use like arts and crafts centre, lace-work workshop, restaurants having traditional cuisine, clubs or pensions.
- Extension of new uses to the street, courtyards and square.

As a result of the suggested proposal, the area will become one of the attraction points of the Limanarkası, which effect Cultural Tourism in a positive way, provide liveability and vitality due to the mix-use, provide economic gain to the whole city and therefore, the area physically, economically and socially revitalized, will be sustained.

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