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Urban Identity and City Squares Relationships

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Abstract: City squares planning ought to consider the real instantaneous plus long term needs of the inhabitants but it seems that meantime injudicious approaches to the subject are operable. As a consequence, the city squares built with philosophy of saving the moment, function as a crossing space where roads intersect. In order to overcome this dilemma, at the planning stage the decision makers, have to keep in mind that the city squares are spaces that give an identity to the city in accordance to their functions. City square identity is mostly determined by the surrounding symbolic items such as buildings, monument(s), and may be by the avenue and/or streets that intersects at that transition zone or area. Sometimes one of these may suffice for the unique identity of a square. Therefore, the symbols in the squares, should reflect the ritual, lifestyle, beliefs and traditions of the society, otherwise its considered as a simple passage. Inhabitants or with a broader approach, the society is happier with city squares reflecting their feelings as well. In general, medieval cities squares can be well-thought-out as good examples of full-filling the above-mentioned requirements. In this article, we examined two discrete squares within the historical walls surrounding the medieval city Nicosia.

Key words: Squares, urban identity, symbols, roads, historical cities.

1. Introduction

Squares, on the other hand, are in general three-dimensional volumetric arrangements that are limited to horizontal and vertical volumetric elements, in which people perform their actions, which surround people, and create a sense of integration and ownership [1].

According to Kevin Lynch, squares are focal points of intense activity focuses composed of urban spaces. Typically, squares are furnished and surrounded by high-density structures and streets. They have features that affect groups of people and facilitate meetings. The squares are the stops of the movement system created on the streets in the city. Main roads and streets are the main veins feeding the squares [2].

The squares have fulfilled very important functions in terms of communal and social aspects and have the feature of being the “city center”, as a witness of the important events of the period. They are places that give bring in an identity to the city according to their functions [3].

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The symbolic buildings surrounding the square, a symbolic monument or the crossing areas intersecting in the square give identity to the squares. Sometimes only one of them gives identity to the squares. Various building elements and the conscious combination of these elements play an important role in perceiving the avenues and streets, which are transition areas, as a comprehensible space [4].

Transition spaces emerge as a result of interrelation and interaction. They provide both the separation and connection of different spaces. They are effective in ensuring the spatial continuity of the city and in the gathering of various spaces within the urban order and the formation of an integrity [5].

Transition areas form the main architectural language in which the environment can be read and interpreted, functionally, visually and symbolically. Architectural Components are realized as a result of coming together in various ways and create visual impact on the scale of the environment [6].

It is seen that since the transportation system of medieval cities developed on the basis of topography, orientation and the historical traces that used to exist in the space and were planned gradually in time,

it developed organically differing from the grill form. The winding streets and angled approaches, which emerged as a result of this organic development, increase the quality of the square. As you move through winding streets, constantly changing perspectives and unforeseen squares mobilize the user [7].

2. Materials and Methods

In addition to literature research, two separate squares within the city walls of Nicosia have been examined by the method of observation today. In addition, the data obtained by the literature and observation method were supported by the Space Syntax Depthmap graphic program analysis.

3. Results

The city of Nicosia, which was founded under the name "Lidra" in the VII century BC, has always remained the capital of Cyprus from the 10th century (395-1192 in the Byzantine period) until today [8].

Construction of the city walls of Nicosia began in 1191 (Lucinians period 1192-1489) and the walls, which were strengthened with strong towers in 1383, were irregular in shape. In 1567 (Venice period 1489-1570), they demolished all of the walls that were left behind in terms of time and built the walls in today's circular form [9].

There are two squares in the city where human movements were most intense throughout history. One of them is Sarayönü Square, which was first known as Konak Square [10]. The second square is Selmiye square, which was also known as Ayasofya square at first.

3.1 Sarayönü Square

The Sarayönü Square is the square where human movements are most intense throughout history and today. The most important reason for this is the Venetian Column in the square. The second reason is that there are especially symbolic buildings surrounding the square. The third reason is possible to be conceived as the crossing area of avenues and streets that intersect in the square. In addition to these, the octagonal Gothic style fountain which is built during the Ottoman period (1570-1887) also gives the square an identity.

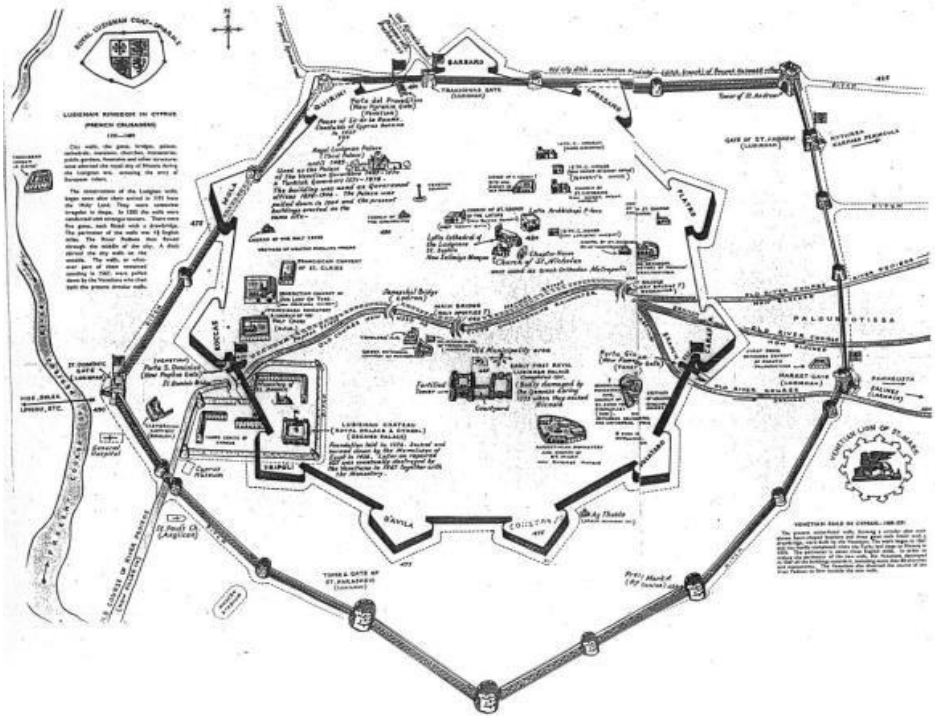


Fig. 1 Map shows the Lusignan and Venetian periods [9].



Fig. 2 Site plan of Sarayönü Square, Nicosia [11].



Fig. 3 Sarayönü Square [12].

Venetian column, column symbolized by society, called "Dikilitaş", is also used as humour in daily life [13, 14].

The most important building is the Courts and the title deed buildings [15]. These buildings are in the place of the destroyed palase "Le Baume", which is built in Lucianians period. The palace was used as the governor's palace during the Venetian era and called it "Palazzo del Governo" (Governor's Palace). The palace, which was used as the residence of the governors during the Ottoman period, continued to be used as an official building until it was demolished in the British period (1878-1960). The square takes its name from this palace [8, 16].

If we rank the buildings in order of importance, the second building is Saray Hotel, which was built with nine floors. The third building is Sarayönü Mosque. In place of the mosque, there was first the Latin Church. The construction of this church, after the palace, caused the first formation of the square. Although the connection of the mosque with the square was cut in 1960, the effect of the mosque on the square continued [17].

In the fourth row, we see the three-storey Yellow

stone building opposite the Saray Hotel. The building was built as a City hotel. Today, the corner on the ground floor is used as a pharmacy, while the other parts are not used. There are two buildings in yellow stone, which are also located in the square and built as residences. These buildings are now used as the headquarters of a political party. In addition to this, there is another one-story yellow stone building used as a shop. In addition, there are buildings consisting of reinforced concrete carcass, bank building, shops and offices, which are located on the east side of the square and form the boundaries of the square. These buildings have nothing symbolic to the square. These buildings were built by demolishing yellow stone two-story buildings and the single storey shops made of adobe. The third phenomenon supporting the square is Kyrenia Street, which is the main artery. This street is a street where human movements have been intense throughout history. The reason for this is that most of the buildings on the street have symbolic meaning and when one enters through the Kyrenia Gate, which is the starting point of the street, the Venetian Column is in the square, and hence the square is immediately perceived visually [10, 16].

In addition to Kyrenia Street, other street also gives the square an identity. Especially Sarayönü Street, because the main entrance of the courts and land registry buildings is on this street. In addition, the building, which was built as a post office in the British period and is still used for this purpose, has a great contribution to the square.

3.2 Selimiye Square

The square is the second square where human movements are most intense throughout history and today. The main reason for this is St. Sophia Cathedral. The main reason fort is St. Sophia's cathedral. Other iconic buildings surrounding the square also have an impact. We can rank the effect of the buildings according to the density of square in order of importance. However, the impact of the monument in the square is negligible.

Today, used as a mosque (Selmiye mosque), St. Sophia Cathedral was built in Gothic Architectural Style. The second building is a medieval castle with battlement, presumed to be the meeting place of the priests in the cathedral, which is now used as a restaurant (Chapter House). The third building is made in gothic architectural style St. Nicholas church. Church was turned into a bazaar during the Ottoman period. St. Nicholas church later named as Bedesten. Church is used as a cultural center today. The square, which is formed by these three buildings, comes to life as an important religious center.

Although these two buildings do not have a direct connection with the square, today, especially St. Nicholas church contributes to the identity of the square [18, 19].



Fig. 4. View from the east [20].



Fig. 5. View from west [20].

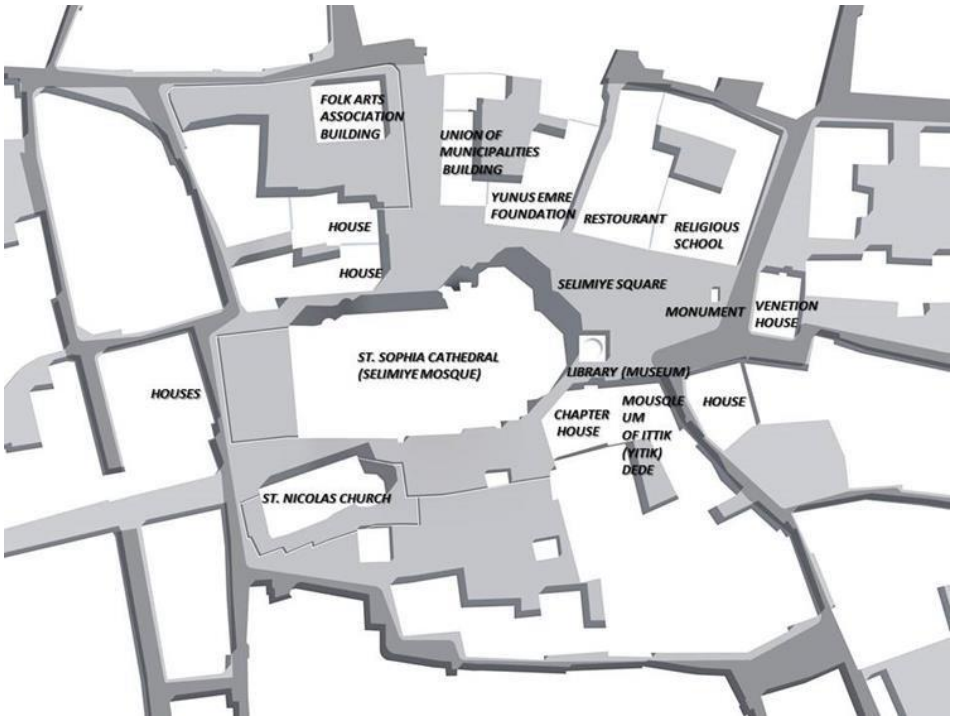


Fig. 6 Site plan of Selimiye Square, Nicosia [11].

The fourth building is the Latin Archdiocese building. It is used as Kadi mansion during the Ottoman period, the residence of the Secretary General of the British administration during the British period. The building, which has been used as a school since 1925, is now used as the Union of Municipalities building.

The fifth building is the Venetian House. The building, which was built as a guest house for the travelers and pilgrims coming to the city, is used as the Stone Works Museum today.

The sixth building is Sultan II. Mahmut's library. The building is currently used as a museum. The seventh building was built as a mansion. Today the mansion building is used as Yunus Emre Foundation.

The eighth building is the market and the religious school with an empty front porch. The ninth building is used as a restaurant today and is thought to be connected with the religious school.

In the tenth building is the İdadi (school) building. The building is currently used as the Folk Art Association.

In the last row, on the West side of the Square, we see three two-storey residential buildings. With the construction of these buildings, the western direction of the square was limited [18, 19].

4. Space Syntax, Depthmap Graphical Program Analysis

An analysis is done with Space Syntax, Depthmap Graphical Program. Termal density center is shown by Depthmap Graphical.

In the general plan connection map of the citiy walls of Nicosia, the termal color density of Sarayönü and Selimiye square is seen (Figure 8). The color intensity seen in the north of the map is around the Kyrenia gate, which is the starting point of Kyrenia Street, which is the main artery. This gate is the entrance gate where human and vehicle movements are the most intense throughout history.

In order to understand the spatial network with the social processes in the built environment on the Sarayönü Square map from the square scale elements of the city of Nicosia Surlariçi, we derive the connection, overlap and density in the Depthmap graphic analysis map, which can be of experiential importance in the color temperature of minimum blue maximum red (Figure 9).



Fig. 7 Satellite image of the city walls of Nicosia (Google Eart Pogram).

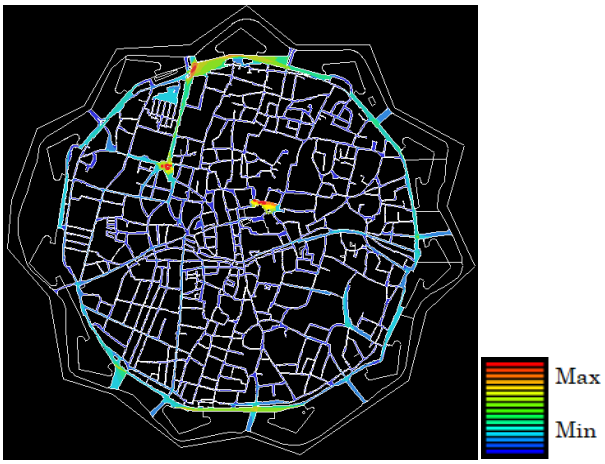


Fig. 8 General plan connection analysis of Nicosia city walled city [21].

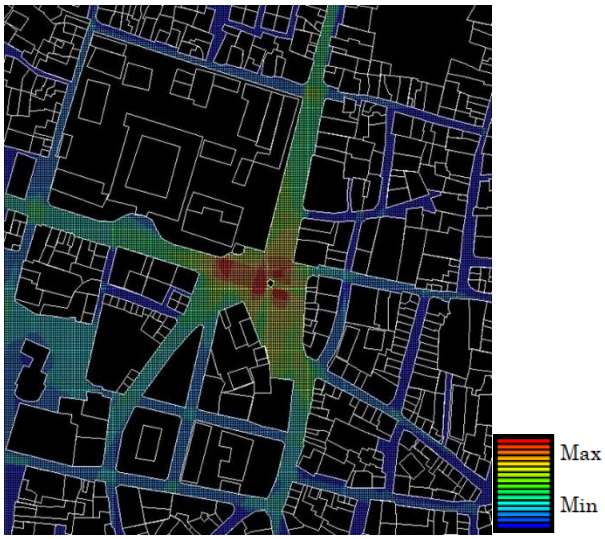


Fig. 9 Local scale connection graphic analysis of the built environment of Sarayönü Square [21].

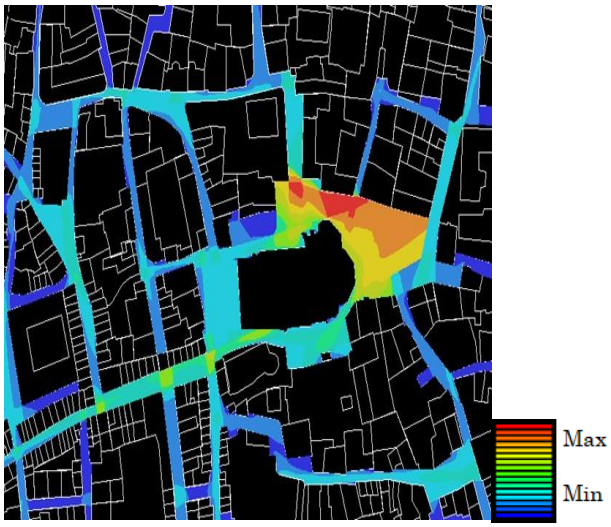


Fig. 10 Local scale connection graphic analysis of the built environment of Selimiye Square [21].

In today's Selmiye Square Depthmap graphic analysis, which is located in the North, northeast direction of Selmiye Mosque (St. Sophia Cathedral), one of the central regions in city planning within the built environment of Nicosia Surlariçi, we thermally test the connection and overlap depth expressed in color density (Figurer 10).

Two separate squares within the city walls of Nicosia are supported by the Depthmap graphical program analysis, and we see the potential for people to come together as there is a direct relationship between space organization and social structure.

5. Conclusion

Squares are not just a crossing space where roads intersect; they are spaces that give an identity to the city according to their functions.

Nowadays, due to the urban planning made with only daily needs in mind, squares are not built or the squares built are only arranged as a crossing space where roads intersect.

It should consist of semantic and symbolic elements that have a conceptual quality in order for people to perceive the place where they live in relation to their environment.

The influential factor in this regard is the ritual view, tradition and lifestyle of the society. Urban

planning without considering these factors brings the alienation of the residents to the city. This is not a "Sustainable Urban Policy".

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