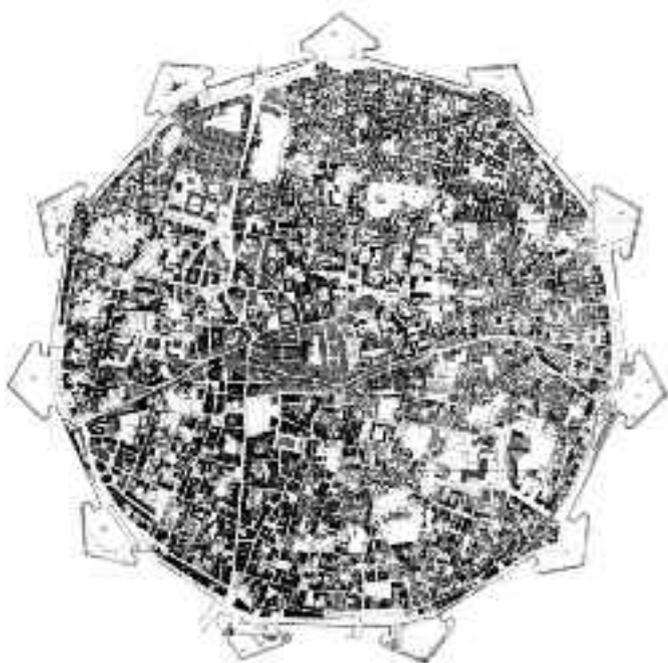


Rehabilitation of the Walled City

Nicosia
Cyprus

Nicosia Master
Plan Team



Introduction

Nicosia's rich and sometimes turbulent past is reflected in its urban and architectural composition, most markedly in its historic walled core. The city experienced centuries of foreign rule – Ptolemaic, Roman, Byzantine, Crusader/Lusignan, Venetian, Ottoman and British – before becoming the capital of an independent Cyprus in 1960. In 1974 the city was violently split into two sectors, separated by a buffer zone.

Since 1979, a remarkable effort has been made to regenerate the walled city and protect its architectural and urban heritage. What makes this initiative unique is the fact that it has been carried out on the local level by both the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities of the city. This was the first (and for some time the only) joint project carried out by the two communities and it has been a sustained effort, uninterrupted by the ebb and flow of politics. The most peculiar aspect is that there is no written agreement on this matter between the communities, only scattered notes relating to project works.

Jury Citation

The representatives of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities of Nicosia decided to transcend a tense political situation and take the first steps towards reversing the city's physical decay and economic decline through the catalyst of restoring the historic walled city. Out of this initiative grew a rehabilitation programme that would ultimately enhance the wellbeing of all the inhabitants of Nicosia.

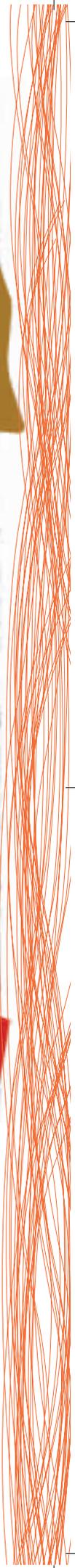
The project has maintained a high standard of workmanship and skills in urban restoration and renewal and involved close cooperation between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot members of the project team. The preservation of the cultural and architectural legacy of the historic centre has provided an impetus for private investment, attracted new residents, encouraged tourism and strengthened economic activity. In addition, the rehabilitated buildings are breathing life into the divided city, and new cafés, restaurants, cultural centres and public spaces abound.

The project is a fine example of how, with tolerance and sensitivity, opposing sides can be brought together to build a shared space for all people and all faiths.

landmark achievements



- rehabilitation projects
- restoration of monuments
- restoration of listed buildings
- public intensive uses
- pedestrianisation-infrastructure
- landscaping
- survey and documentation
- improvement of traffic circulation
- partial restoration/facades
- project area
- walking tour: Nicosia
- walking tour: Medieval Nicosia
- walking tour: Revitalisation of Nicosia



Project Description

The present city wall – which replaced earlier medieval fortifications – was built by the Venetians between 1567 and 1570. It was intended to repel an anticipated Ottoman invasion, but the Ottomans still managed to capture the city less than a year after its completion. The wall has a very distinctive geometric outline, forming a circle with eleven spearhead bastions spaced equally along its perimeter. There are three historic gates, to the north, east and west, along with further entry points for motor vehicles that were added during the modern period.

The walled city has a diameter of about 1.6 kilometres and covers an area of about 2 square kilometres. Its buildings are constructed of a soft, yellowish stone and rendered sun-dried brick in a variety of styles that mirror the city's diverse history – Byzantine, Gothic and Ottoman – as well as more recent vocabularies ranging from neo-classical to modernist.

Like most cities, Nicosia has been changed by the forces of modernisation. Beginning in the period of British rule and reaching a climax in the 1960s, its tightly knit urban fabric was undermined as streets were widened to accommodate traffic, and old buildings torn down to make way for new developments. A notorious example of this was the demolition in 1931 of sections of the wall on both sides of the historic Kyrenia Gate to ease traffic flow through the city. Nonetheless, the damage caused by such interventions remains limited in comparison to many other cities.

Much more detrimental was the imposition, in 1974, of a buffer zone passing right through the heart of the walled city. What was once a central and commercially vibrant quarter became, at a stroke, an uninhabited no-man's-land patrolled by United Nations peace-keepers. The adjacent areas to the north and south also deteriorated as the organic links between neighbourhoods were abruptly severed.

In 1979 the representatives of the two communities of Nicosia, Mustafa Akinçi and Lellos Demetriades, held a historic meeting under United Nations auspices and agreed to work together on problems affecting the city. They reached an agreement of cooperation at a time when other forms of collaboration between the two sides were non-existent. The first issue they addressed was the completion of a unified sewage system for the city. A year later they launched the comprehensive Nicosia Master Plan (NMP) project, which treats the city as a united entity.

The rehabilitation of the old city was from the outset an important component of the master plan. Surveys, studies and plans for the historic centre were drawn up, with every effort made to involve the two

communities equally, and to bring together a dedicated team of architects and planners from both the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot sides. A joint team of architects executed a detailed survey of all the buildings of the buffer zone before rehabilitation work began.

The first implementation phase started in 1986. This included twin projects for the rehabilitation of two areas located along the buffer zone: Arab Ahmet in the northern part of the city and Chrysaliniotissa in the south. The process of surveying buildings of historical and architectural importance was begun, resulting in the listing of about 1,100 buildings in the south and 630 in the north. (Before 1986, only the main monuments were listed.) A legal framework was developed to ensure the enforcement of the protection, including development transfer rights and height restrictions set at two storeys.

Restoration activity since the late 1980s has encompassed the eighteenth-century aqueduct, the north facade of Omeriye Mosque (originally the Latin Church of St Mary of the Augustinians) and the Tahtakale Mosque. Efforts have been made to pedestrianise commercial areas such as Ledras and Onasagorou Streets, Kyrenia Avenue and Arasta Street. Public open spaces have been improved, with the construction of Chrysaliniotissa Garden, the redesign of Phaneromeni Square, the paving of Selimye Square and the creation of an open space between the Omeriye monument and baths.

The built environment of urban neighbourhoods has been significantly improved by the restoration of facades and the upgrading of infrastructures, including roads. Specific projects have dealt with the neighbourhoods of Phaneromeni, Arch. Philotheou Street, Samanbahçe and Selimiye.

Wherever possible, restorations have incorporated traditional materials and techniques, and all interventions are designed to be reversible. But this is not a process of 'museumification': a number of adaptive re-use projects have a strong contemporary feel – as can be seen in the conversion of the 1930s power station into a modern art gallery. Many other historically significant structures have also been restored to serve new functions: a traditional building in the Arab Ahmet area is now a culture and arts centre; another restored traditional house is being used as a kindergarten in Chrysaliniotissa; the Buyuk Khan (Great Inn) has been transformed into a multipurpose centre with antiques shops, art galleries and a cafeteria; and the old Dervis Pasha and Eaved House mansions are now museums.

Other projects have returned buildings to their original functions. The sixteenth-century Omeriye baths are once again open

to the public, as is the old municipal market. The 'Fourni' (traditional oven) building has been restored and is being reused as a laboratory for the study of traditional building materials and techniques.

After two decades and the implementation of dozens of projects, the historic centre has reasserted its role in contemporary Nicosia. The rehabilitated core offers not only a rich architectural heritage but also a healthy urban environment where all services are within walking distance, where pedestrian movement takes priority over motor traffic, and where significant economic opportunities are evolving. The infrastructure is being comprehensively upgraded, from the level of the street paving to the renewal of the water, electricity, sewage and telecommunications networks. In some instances, such as the Chrysaliniotissa project, a policy of offering subsidised housing to young families has injected new life into neighbourhoods with elderly populations (and in the process helped the long-term residents feel part of a vibrant community again). The large-scale projects have also triggered the restoration of numerous private houses, with grants available to cover up to 40 per cent of the cost of the work.

Beyond their impact on the built fabric, the restoration activities of the NMP have had a most interesting effect on the cultural life of Nicosia: there are now numerous joint cultural activities between the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities, from photo exhibitions to theatre performances and folk dances.

A bold and forward-thinking project, the Nicosia Master Plan has brought together opposing communities by identifying what unites rather than divides them. It has used the shared space of a historic urban core as the motor to develop a relationship of cooperation and positive coexistence that has continued to evolve over a quarter of a century.

Text adapted from a report
by Mohammad al-Asad

Rehabilitation of the Walled City
Nicosia, Cyprus

Client
Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot
Communities of Nicosia

Initiators
Lellos Demetriades, Representative
to the NMP (1979–2000)
Mustafa Akinci, Representative to
the NMP (1979–1990)

Current Representatives
Eleni Mavrou, Representative of the
Greek Cypriot community
Cemal Bulutogulari, Representative
of the Turkish Cypriot community

Coordinators
United Nations Development
Programme (UNDP)
United Nations High Commission
for Refugees (UNHCR)

Sponsors
United States Agency for
International Development (USAID)
and the European Union

Nicosia Master Plan Teams
Greek Cypriot community: Agni
Petridou, team leader; Athina
Papadopoulou, Elena Sofianou,
Eleni Petropoulou, Nayia Savvides,
Marina Tymviou, Simos Droussiodes,
George Tsangarides, architects; Paris
Skouloukos, civil engineer; George
Passiardi, quantity surveyor; Elena
Papamichael, Iro Ioannou, junior
architects; Yianna Constantinou, Poli
Votsi, Andreas Giallourous, Demoulla
Metaxa, Frosso Anastasiou, techni-
cians; Christos Kyriakou, Caterina
Photiou, office assistants, all in Cyprus

Turkish Cypriot Community:
Ali Güralp, team leader; Cemal
Bensel, Ali Kodan, Gamze
Keleşzade, architects; Zeka Yılmaz,
Hüseyin Cakır, civil engineers; Ayça
S. Curalı, town planner; Mustafa
Kelebek, technician; Gül Öztekin,
Hülya Davulcu, Emine Pilli, Ahmet
Buçaner, Kerime Darbaz, Aydın
Tayyareci, Mehmet Kanan, team
members, all in Cyprus

Project Data
Site area: 2,010,000 m²
Cost: US\$ 18,749,000 (Greek Cypriot
side) 1986–2007
Cost: US\$ 6,900,000 (Turkish
Cypriot side) 1986–2007
Commission: 1979
Planning: 1981
Design: 1986 ongoing
Construction: 1987 ongoing
Occupancy: 1989 ongoing

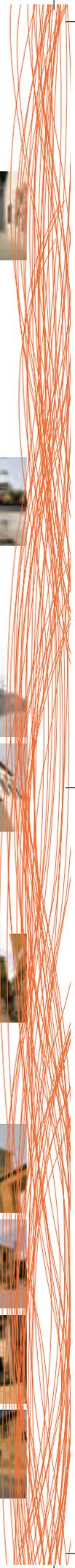
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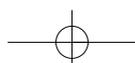
In 1979, at a meeting of the
representatives of both the Greek
Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot
communities in Nicosia, it was
agreed that the two sides should co-
operate closely for the purpose of
preparing a common masterplan for
the proper unified development of
the city. The objective of the project
was the improvement of the built
environment and living conditions
of all the inhabitants of the city.

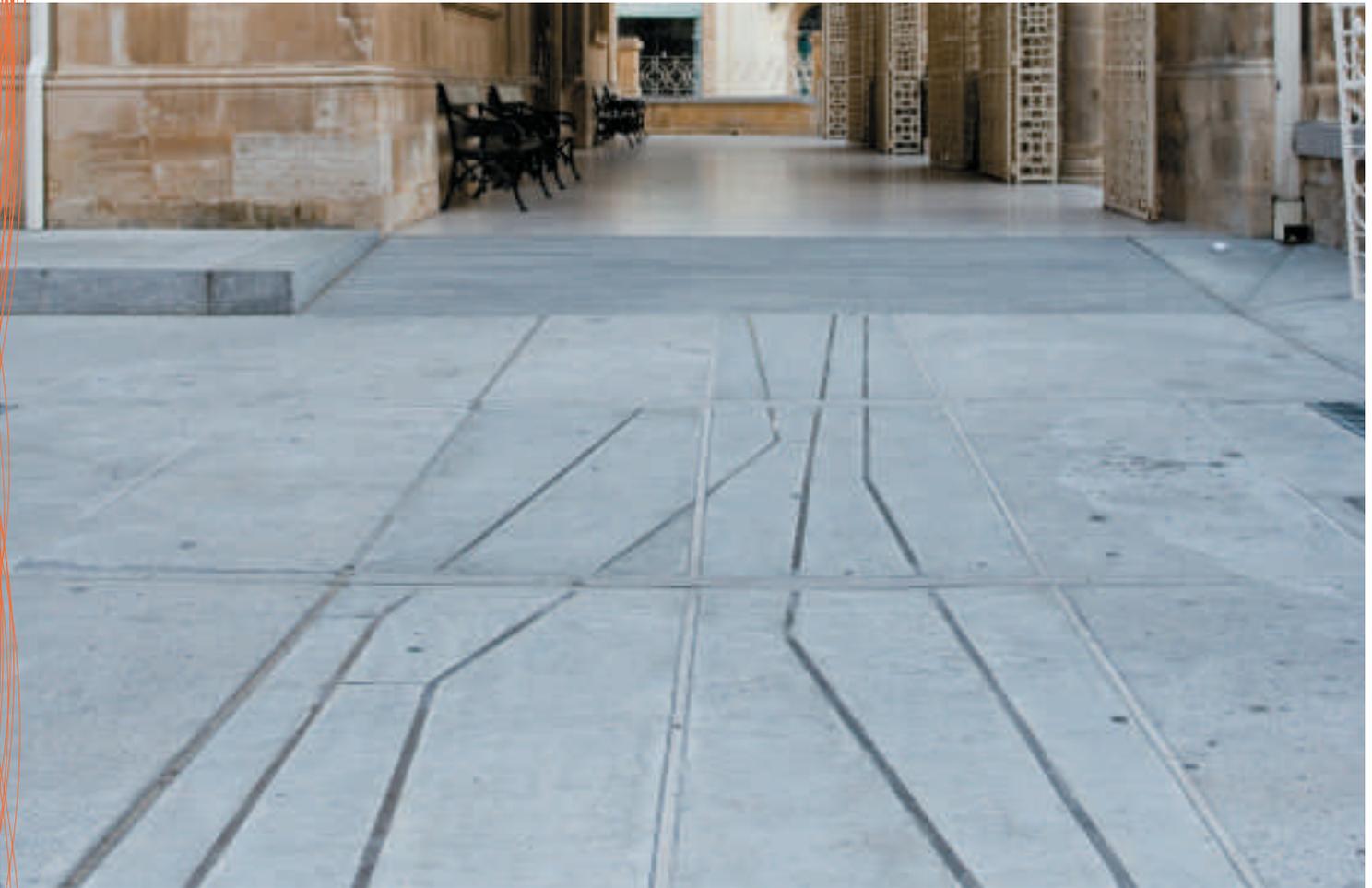
A bi-communal, multidisciplinary
team of national and international
experts was formed in 1981 to
prepare a joint master plan for
Nicosia. The team consists of town
planners, architects, civil engineers,
sociologists, economists and experts
in traffic and transportation,
conservation, landscape, urban
finance as well as other technical
staff. The formation of this team was
one of the first attempts at technical
cooperation between the two
communities.

Initial funding for the Nicosia
Master Plan (NMP) project was
provided by the United States
Agency for International Devel-
opment (USAID). Implementation
was carried out through the United
Nations High Commission for
Refugees (UNHCR), the United
National Development Programme
(UNDP) and the United Nations
Office for Project Services (UNOPS).
More recently, funding has also been
provided by the European Union.

















Nicosia Master Plan
Walking Tour

İplik Pazarı Camii
Τέμενος Ιπλικ Μπαζάρ
İplik Bazaar Mosque



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