

Nicosia Master Plan for the Historic Quarters of Selimiye and Omeriye in Cyprus: A Comparative Evaluation

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Abstract

Following the division of Cyprus in 1974 between the Greek Cypriot (South) and Turkish Cypriot (North) Communities, the island has been dealing with a pluralism of social, economic, political and administrative concerns affecting its heritage as well as heritage management. These concerns are particularly visible in the capital of Nicosia, where the historic core of the city has been equally divided between the two communities and has been managed by separate municipal bodies since then. The Nicosia Master Plan (NMP) was introduced as a bi-communal initiative to assist in collaborative management of the city's heritage, and to prepare its historic core for a possible future event of re-unification.

Through the assessment of selected NMP initiatives meant for the historic quarters of Selimiye and Omeriye respectively, this paper attempts to critically examine the impact of division (prompted by conflict) on the heritage of Nicosia. This is achieved through evaluation of the effectiveness of NMP's efforts on each side of the Cypriot divide. The hypothesis here is that the existing buffer zone significantly impacts its adjacent areas, whereby buildings with closer proximity to the border suffer the most. Despite NMP's overall contribution in safeguarding a significant part of the city's historic urban core, the findings demonstrate a departure from its broader bi-communal heritage protection trajectory. Furthermore, novel insights into the use of specific heritage rehabilitation methods are presented and critically discussed, shedding light into the future – pertaining to their impending impact, and on the ways these could assist the heritage protection of the walled city.

Keywords: *Urban Regeneration, Nicosia, Divided Cities,
Cultural Heritage Management*

Introduction

Heritage Management

The use and practice of heritage management has evolved into a prominent subject of concern in the 21st century; as global issues affect the way the past is seen and engaged with. This pertains to both local and global contexts. As Evdipidis Fountoukidis illustrated at the famous 1931 Athens conference of the International Council on Monuments and Sites

(ICOMOS), the first reference to heritage anywhere always concerns its 'artistic heritage'. This notion has since been commonly employed in the manuscripts of similar international organizations (icomos.org, 2011; Vecco, 2010). The term management – in its most generic form – can be defined as “[taking] conscious decisions, with an eye to the future, about ongoing operations or the use of assets, or both in combination within a structured organization” (Lichfield, 1988: 38). Building on this definition, the area of heritage management is concerned with the maintenance and protection of cultural heritage. This is achieved by considering its significance for the interest – which includes integrity and authenticity – of the general public as a whole. The role of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the development and monitoring of context-specific heritage management approaches for safeguarding of heritage has long-been established within the international domain. More specifically, UNESCO’s Operational Guidelines sustain that the purpose of a given heritage management system is to ensure the effective protection of the nominated property for present and future generations. In this light, understanding the type/characteristics/needs of heritage, its cultural/natural contexts as well as the role of stakeholders are all vital for the development of effective heritage management mechanisms (UNESCO World Heritage Conservation, 2021). In the event of a conflict, the meanings attached to heritage are inevitably distorted, “[attracting] great symbolic value and considerable emotion and nostalgia, as identity becomes wedded to place and conflict” (Zubrow, 2002: 233). Consequently, identification of heritage with place brings about the desire for protection of physical relics of urban history, while evoking a sense of belonging (Orbasli, 2002).

Contested Cities

The extant comparative research on contested cities allows for a more accurate identification of any issues or opportunities associated with their troubled settings. Further, such research also advocates for an informed approach that considers their ethnic or political differences. This includes the management of their historic built environments as well as the creation/dissemination of knowledge that informs/supports regional and national planning policies. In this light, and depending on the effectiveness of such actions, contested urban settings – particularly ones enriched with diverse heritage values – can either evolve into facilitators or obstructers of cultural heritage protection. In Nicosia, the suspension of violence after the permanent division of the island in 1974 (Figure 1) was followed by the inter-communal efforts to protect its historical identity through a Master Plan (i.e. NMP). This was implemented in 1981 with the aim of protecting common heritage of the city, by decelerating its physical and socio-economic decay (Petridou, 2003). This Master Plan has generated a backdrop of precedent studies that allow for a closer understanding of the different parameters shaping the regeneration of walled Nicosia’s historic urban fabric. Such case studies have also significantly contributed to the findings presented in this study.



Fig. 1: Map of Cyprus demonstrating the division of the island. The areas shaded in red signify the UN Buffer Zone. The purple lines signify the division between the north (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus), south (The Republic of Cyprus) and the British Military Areas. **Source:** Open Street Map; adapted by Author (2022).

By examining two of the most historically and culturally vibrant quarters within the walled city – Selimiye (north/Turkish Cypriot Nicosia) and Omeriye (south/Greek Cypriot Nicosia) – this research intends to fulfill below objectives and aims. The first objective is to ascertain the contribution of the bi-communal Nicosia Master Plan and its broader goals for the rehabilitation of the walled city of Nicosia. The second is to assess the current physical state of selected buildings and streets within the Quarters of Selimiye and Omeriye. The third is to evaluate the plausible contribution to the academic discussion about Nicosia's heritage by introducing new topics linked to the division of the city (*i.e.* issues such as the interruption spatial patterns, heritage prioritization and obsolescence, as well as the disjointed approaches of the Greek Cypriot-Turkish Cypriot Municipalities of Nicosia in safeguarding its heritage etc.). In doing so, the creation and dissemination of new knowledge on the walled city will be established, encouraging a more informed heritage protection on both sides of the Cypriot divide. The final objective is to incorporate the applicability and generalizability of the research findings to similar contested urban environments elsewhere.

The aim here on one hand, is to offer a critical evaluation of the regeneration approach of each area, and on the other, to unveil the impact that conflict and division have had on their current physical states respectively.

Methodology

The methodology employed here was qualitative, and the strategy pursued was the holistic embedded case study approach. To collect information, photographic surveys were conducted and maps/diagrams were secured via empirical work, to be supplemented by a rigorous literature survey that formed the backbone of the examination. Such findings were further fed by empirical insights of the author as well as semi-structured interviews. The method of analysis was comparative in nature pertaining to Selimiye and Omeriye respectively. This was realized via the accumulated photographs, maps and diagrams that led to a comprehensive visual content analysis that formed the basis for comprehensive Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threat (SWOT) analyses for the two historic quarters in question to arrive at conclusions.

The information in the form of primary photographic recordings has been valuable both in understanding the evolution of Nicosia's urban fabric over the years, and also in providing a vivid comparison of the physical state of the city on both sides of the divide. Furthermore, these empirical findings have furthered insight into the social make-up of the walled capital, and provided an in-depth understanding of a specific subject of enquiry. As a result, the phenomenon being examined is addressed in a specific environment or situation (*i.e.* conflict and division), allowing the research to benefit from context-specific, focused, and intensive investigations. In this light, and in the absence of an evaluative framework designed by the project's creators/relevant stakeholders, this paper assesses the approach as well as the subsequent effectiveness of the NMP based on three general goals set by the same.

- a. The reoccurrence of permanent habitation within the historic core of Nicosia
- b. The sustainable economic revival of the Walled City
- c. The promotion and establishment of bi-communalism, and peaceful interaction between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities.

Discussion

Walled Nicosia

The walled city can be viewed as a microcosm of the wider social, political and administrative issues dominating the island of Cyprus; with heritage management in Nicosia evolving as a complex undertaking for several reasons. Firstly, the fact that the northern part of the island had not been internationally recognized since 1974 has resulted in it not being funded over the years. The consequence of this was the gradual economic decline of the Turkish Cypriot community living there (Balderstone, 2010). This political isolation has widened the gap between the Greek Cypriot (GC) and Turkish Cypriot (TC) communities in Cyprus; a consequence that has impacted upon walled Nicosia's heritage. Secondly, the fact that the two municipalities address the management and rehabilitation of Nicosia's heritage independently from each other exemplifies the extant adversity between them. This results in projects being coordinated independently on either side of the divide. Thirdly, the fact that the UN-controlled buffer zone runs through the centre of the historic core of Nicosia – cutting through neighborhoods and interrupting the functional continuity of streets – has caused the 'mirroring' of activities on both sides of the aforesaid zone, in order to supplement for the loss of activities on each municipal fragment (Figure 2). Consequently, this has encouraged the socio-economic decline of certain areas along the buffer zone and; especially towards the edges of the walled city.

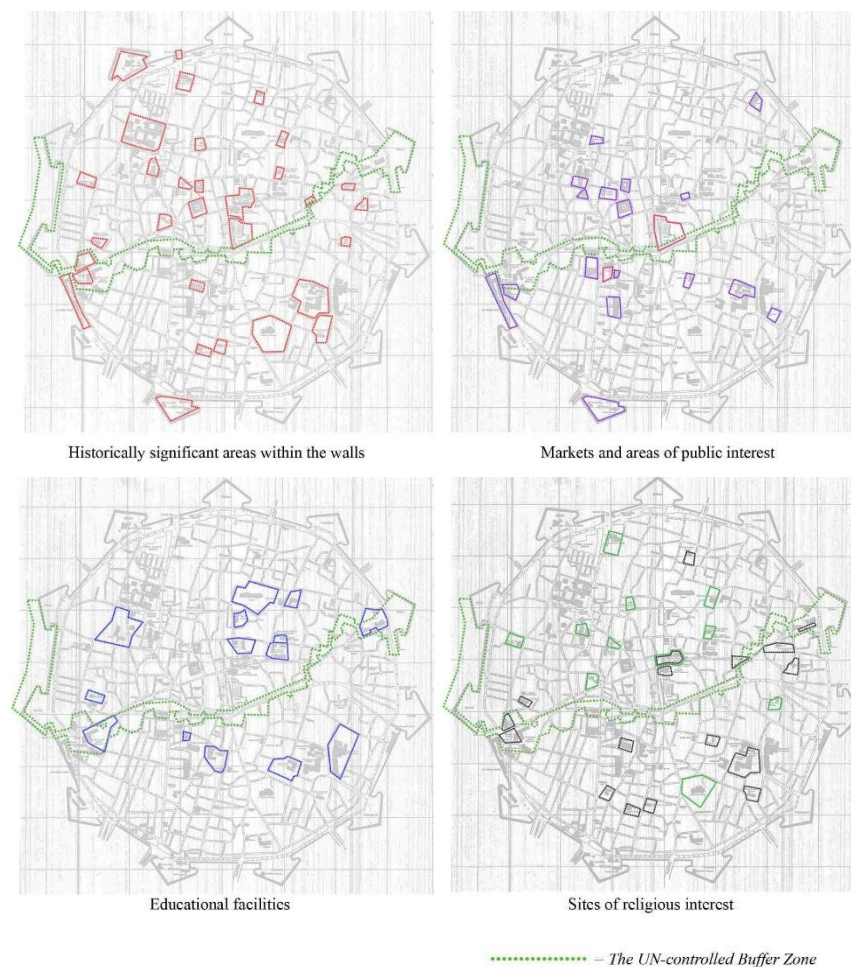


Fig. 2: Diagrams illustrating the mirroring of facilities, especially after the division of walled Nicosia.
Source: Author (2022).

This inevitable mirroring of activities is further proof for the institutional fragmentation of Nicosia. It illustrates the inorganic interruption to its urban and administrative compositions. In addition to above issues, the two Nicosia Municipalities outline several problems that influence the tangible heritage of the city following its division. According to Nicosia Master Plan by UNDP UNCHS (1984), these include (but are not limited to):

- a. the locational, structural and functional obsolescence of properties being rampant, along with the lack of suitable instruments and measures to address the problem of decay. This has led to the demolition of buildings with architectural and historical value as well as to the development of areas with higher building density.
- b. the limited public awareness of the importance of architectural heritage, which results in clumsy modifications and unsuitable renovations of old buildings.
- c. a mixture of incompatible land uses resulting in serious detrimental effects.
- d. the accelerated process of deterioration of city walls, historic buildings and old houses as well as the existence of many buildings in poor structural/aesthetic condition.
- e. the low level of prevailing rents discouraging regular maintenance and repair of buildings by their owners.

These concerns are evidently ascribed to the ongoing conflict dominating the historic capital, and in the continuous struggle for cultural prevalence against the 'other'¹ which in turn, has had a detrimental impact on the city's heritage. This outcome negatively influences the effective collaboration between the GC and TC municipalities, and can be witnessed through the separate realization of relevant NMP initiatives on either side of the divide. Furthermore, issues such as the lack of public engagement with the city's historic core can be observed. The existence of the buffer zone itself as well as the prominence of military presence within the walls are both strong contributors to the aforesaid. The areas suffering the most are, in fact, the ones closest to the boundary.



Fig. 3: Exposed view of military guard posts on the buffer zone boundary within walled Nicosia. The specific post is located directly next to a restaurant (right) and a shop (left).

Source: Author (2021).

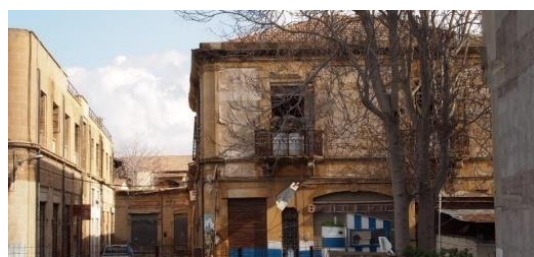


Fig. 4: Exposed view of military guard posts on the buffer zone boundary within walled Nicosia. A soldier can be seen inside during his shift.

Source: Author (2021).

Inevitably, this division has also contributed to the ethnic² fragmentation of the walled city; a factor that reflects on its social makeup (Figure 5). As a result, the historic core materializes as a microcosm of the greater issues brought to the city by division, with its current urban morphology amplifying the above concerns.

¹ In the context of divided Cyprus, the concept of 'otherness' is complicated further by the existence of a tangible boundary between GC and TC communities. Perception of 'otherness', in this case, encompasses meanings of distance, division, duality and detachment. More specifically, through the works of Bryant, R. and Papadakis (2012), it could be observed that the national GC or TC communities remain respectively, as ones in which "an ethicized 'other' is both the cause of suffering and, [also] on the other side of the division line". In line with the above theoretical examinations, their work implies the inevitable bias against the 'other' as well as the act of 'othering' as a process of construction and protection of the self as Mushtaq (2010) elaborates. The creation of an 'other' in this case, materialises as the result of division, which is manifested spatially, socially and culturally within the context of Nicosia (and Cyprus).

² The ethnic minorities in the north part of walled Nicosia primarily refer to migrants from mainland Turkey, whereas the ethnic minorities in the south part of the walled city represent ones from both EU and Third World countries.

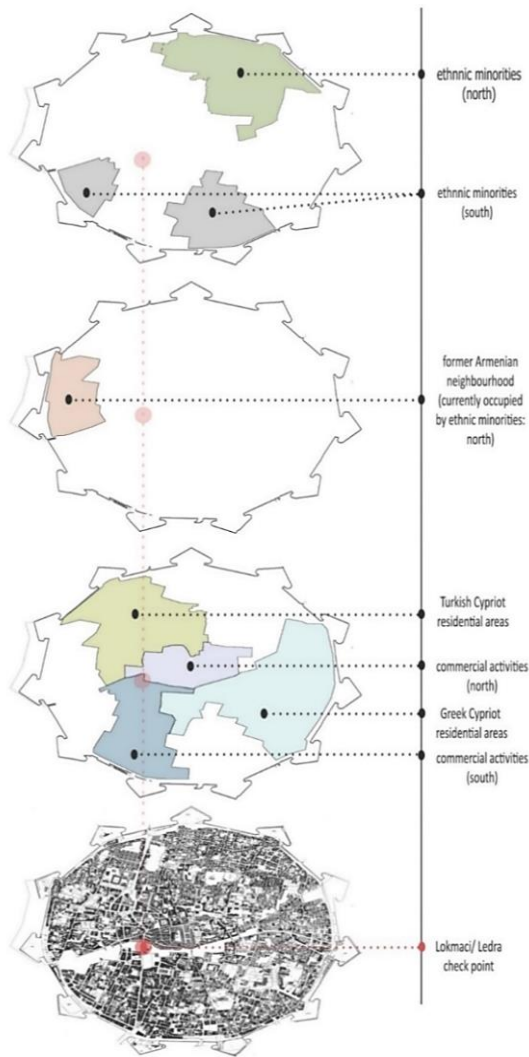


Fig. 5: Study of the different area types of Walled Nicosia
Source: Author (2017).

In evaluating the built environment of the historic capital, multiple properties can be observed to illustrate its declining state (Figures 6-9).



Fig. 6: Derelict properties adjacent to the UN buffer zone. The properties are mostly residential and date back to the early 20th century. They are vacant and in poor structural condition.
Source: Author (2022).



Fig. 7: Derelict property adjacent the UN buffer zone.
Source: Author (2022).



Fig. 8: Derelict property bordering the UN buffer zone. The particular building dates from the early 20th century and now remains abandoned in poor structural condition.

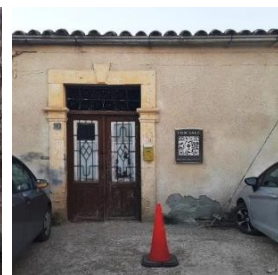


Fig. 9: Derelict property for sale bordering the UN buffer zone. The rear of the property is directly attached to the buffer zone, while the rest of the building appears to be vacant.
Source: Author (2022).

It is nevertheless acknowledged that regardless of the issues presented in this paper, the examples mentioned through this case study also offer an insight into some of the opportunities of collaborative regeneration. Thus, such opportunities highlight the need for a closer inter-communal heritage management approach between the GC and TC Municipalities of Nicosia. In doing so, the role of NMP in safeguarding the historic built environment of the walled city is unveiled, allowing for a more lucid understanding of the two Municipalities' efforts for regeneration of the historic urban quarters of Selimiye and Omeriye.

NMP and Its Efforts

The NMP forms the principal strategic document that guides the investigation of design projects in Nicosia, and thus, is the basis for evaluating the concept of 'design as reconciliation' in the capital city of Cyprus (Charlesworth, 2006). It was implemented in 1979 by the two mayors of Nicosia – Mustafa Akinci (north) and Lellos Demetradis (south) – with the support of the UN. It formulated an agreement to collaborate on urban issues affecting Nicosia (Hadjri et. al., 2014). The NMP included surveys, studies and plans for the walled city, with the first phase of implementation coming in 1986 (Aga Khan Award for Architecture in archnet.org, 2007). The regeneration of the old town started with small improvements in the buffer zone, combined with a series of urban public spaces and development projects. These interventions were targeted at enhancing the effectiveness and quality of the latter development phases.

NMP's Phases

The NMP initiative had been broken down into two major phases, with each phase separated into smaller sub-stages that complement one another. The Phase One (1980-85) involved an assessment of the impact of Nicosia's division, producing long-term plans (up to year 2000) for its improvement. This phase considered two scenarios. One considered the city as two separate and divided entities, while the other considered how Nicosia would function as a unified whole. The Phase One was broad in its scope, and focused on the study of Nicosia after its division, while identifying the areas in need of urgent regeneration (both inside and outside).



Fig. 10: Policy of Intervention; one of the initial proposals of the Nicosia Master Plan. This proposal established the wider character of areas to be rehabilitated, and excluded development of the UN Buffer Zone.
Source: Nicosia Master Plan (1984); adapted by Author (2022).

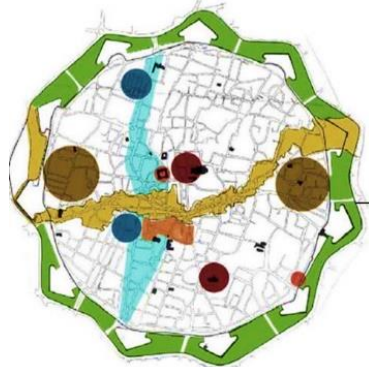


Fig. 11: Bi-Communal Priority Investment Projects; This proposal established the wider character of areas to be rehabilitated and excluded the development of the UN Buffer Zone.
Source: Nicosia Master Plan (1984); adapted by Author (2022).



Fig. 12: One of the initial proposals of the Nicosia Master Plan. This proposal included the redevelopment of the Buffer Zone area and focused more closely on specific streets and neighborhoods
Source: Nicosia Master Plan (1984); adapted by Author (2018).

Nicosia is an outstanding example of international architectural heritage, with the buffer zone being central to its ongoing problems. The aforesaid zone hampers development and encourages growth outside the walls (Nicosia Master Plan in UNDP UNCHS 1984). For this reason, the Phase Two of NMP (2000-04) concentrated on the walled part of Nicosia in more detail, identifying areas of potential development on either side of the divide. Heritage management in this phase was more focused, with considerable revitalization projects been undertaken within the historic core. Within this framework, the NMP paid increased attention to the formulation of a conservation/rehabilitation policy for the historic core, as the area within the walls is common heritage for both GC and TC communities (Siatitsa, 2012).

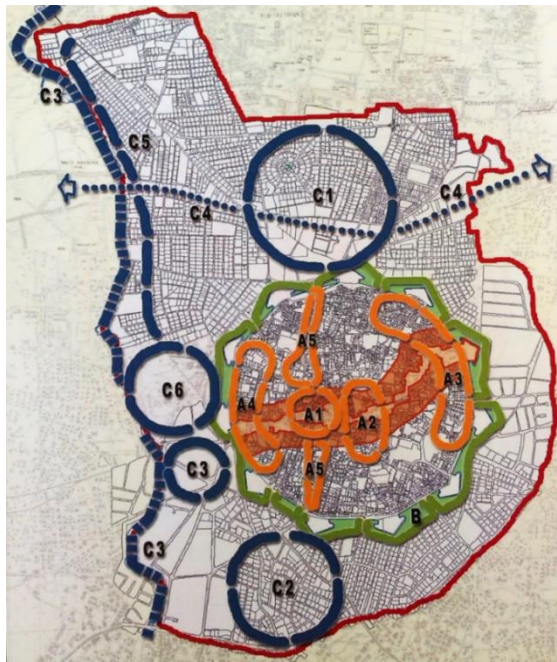


Fig. 13: Proposed New Vision for the Core of Nicosia Project Map.
Source: Nicosia Master Plan (2014).

GC & TC Municipal Heritage Management

According to Balderstone (2010: 2), The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Union (EU) – through United Nations Development Program (UNDP) – have encouraged the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRoNC) to embrace “a pragmatic approach to heritage management” that takes into consideration the current political situation of the island. A key objective of the NMP has been the implementation of a strategy consisting of short-term and long-term management approaches for the walled city of Nicosia, following the second Phase of the NMP (*i.e.* New Vision for the Core of Nicosia). In doing so, a focus on heritage conservation has been targeted as a means of encouraging economic development via tourism and private investment through the adaptation of damaged buildings for new uses (UNDP, 2004b). To support this objective, rehabilitation projects were identified for certain sites and monuments, as well as housing zones. In addition, the awareness of the value of urban heritage has been reinforced as a way of “[regaining] the vitality and regenerat[ing] the cohesion and unique quality” of the walled city (Balderstone in Langfield et al., 2010: 7). This is to be realized by attracting tourism, enhancing local engagement and encouraging private investment back into the historic core.

The *Table 1* summarizes the shared heritage management approach applied in walled Nicosia, and outlines the plans proposed for the historic core since the initiation of the second key phase of NMP (2000-04). This approach succeeds Phase One of NMP (1980-85), and is focused on the walled city and its adjacent neighborhoods.

Main goal for the walled city of Nicosia
The regeneration of the Walled City and the Buffer Zone area based on the social and economic potential inherent in the area's cultural heritage and environmental character.
Actions applied to realise the above goal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Strengthen the centrality of the walled city and its socio-economic base. b) Prepare a strategic land use plan for the walled city and its buffer zone. c) Create links with the European TELS Project¹ addressing the needs of the visitor and national population. d) Prepare public information material and activities and strengthen the role of the bi-communal Information Centres. e) Establish a strategy for communication / negotiation with property owners and investors to assess and stimulate their interest and willingness to invest in the walled city within the ambit of important planning and social principles and objectives. f) Explore opportunities and improve legal frameworks to efficiently apply economic instruments to collect revenues from property owners who have benefitted from the projects and improvements made to public places. g) Introduce fiscal charges on long term private vacant plots and buildings. h) Define areas (project packages) around important cultural landmarks and prepare outline site plans identifying opportunities for joint Public-Private Partnerships. i) Designate residential zones, apply strict land use controls, and provide financial incentives for housing restoration. j) Establish the principles and mechanisms for a 'Revolving Fund' for sustainable finance channelled to a rolling implementation programme, including the restoration of listed and other housing units k) In the 'project packages' containing private investment opportunities, include selected housing blocks and open spaces for private sector participation in the cost as part of the total investment. l) Implement a rational traffic and parking policy in favour of public transport, bicycle movement and pedestrian circulation

Table. 01: Walled Nicosia's Heritage Management; as interpreted in the NMP's 2004 Final Report.

Source: Nicosia Master plan (In UNDP, 2004b); adapted by author (2022).

Examination of Quarters

The areas of Selimiye (north) and Omeriye (south) are located centrally within walled Nicosia. These two quarters have been selected for examination on two grounds – firstly, because they are regarded as two of the most important historic areas of the walled city as Petridou (2003) confirms, and secondly, because they have undergone a significant amount of rehabilitation work as per the NMP (with a long-term outlook of strengthening connections between the North and South as well as encouraging visitors back into the historic core).

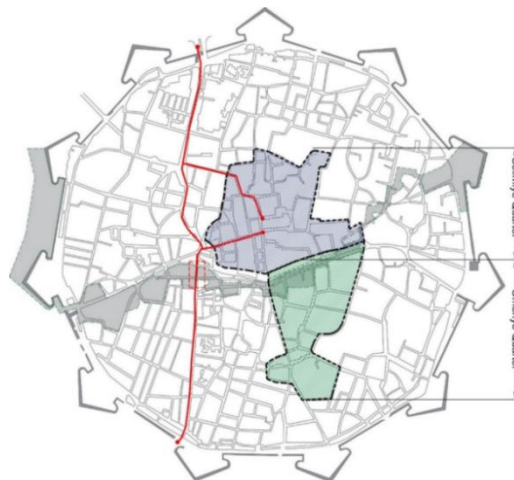


Fig. 14: Map illustrating the areas of Selimiye (north) and Omeriye (south). The grey fill represents the UN-controlled buffer zone within the walls of Nicosia, while the light blue line represents the main axes that lead to the Ledra Street Crossing point and the area(s) concerned.

Source: Author (2022).

When the local stakeholders within the walled city of Nicosia were subjected to interviews, they failed to identify the areas of Selimiye and Omeriye as being a part of the authentic character of the walled city. Despite the long-established historical texture of specific neighborhoods, all interviewees argued that the selected areas closer to the walls and away from the buffer zone were in fact more inclined to retain the authentic make-up of walled Nicosia (Pieri, 2018) – subsequently neglecting to acknowledge the heritage values of Selimiye and Omeriye due to their proximity to the boundary between the north and south municipalities of Nicosia. This finding raises several questions about the impact of the UN Buffer Zone on public perception, as well as the effectiveness of the NMP in embracing a unified regeneration approach for the walled city on either side of the divide. In this light, the historic quarters examined here demonstrate the isolated efforts of the NMP towards their protection, and their subsequent evolution as separate entities (despite their adjacent location and aims of the NMP; due to existence of the Buffer Zone).

Selimiye Quarter

Some of walled Nicosia's most significant monuments are situated within the Selimiye district. The main arteries into the Selimiye area are Idadi Street (north-west of Selimiye), which is also one of the most noteworthy streets within the Venetian walls, and Arasta Street (south-west of Selimiye), which is situated in close proximity to the Ledra street check point and therefore, can be seen to link the two parts of the city together (*Figure 14*). Selimiye contains a collection of commercial/residential buildings, including rows of houses from the Ottoman, Venetian as well as Lusignan times, and stone masonry buildings dating to the British colonial period (UNDP, 2012). As the following images demonstrate, several historical buildings within the Selimiye area face lack of maintenance and restoration. It is evident that the buffer zone has contributed directly to this disrepair and neglect, as the buildings worst affected are those closest to the boundary.



Fig. 15: Buildings adjacent to Selimiye mosque
Source: Author (2022).



Fig. 16: Declining buildings in Salmiya,
Next to the buffer zone
Source: Author (2022).

Omeriye Quarter

The cultural and civic importance of Omeriye is reinforced by its reputation as one of the wealthiest quarters of the city during the medieval times (UNDP, 2012). Just as Selimiye, Omeriye too contains several buildings of heritage value such as the former Augustinian monastery of St. Marie (which was converted into a mosque during the sixteenth century), and also the Omeriye Hamam (baths).

Fig. 17: Omeriye Mosque and its present context.
Source: Author (2022).



Fig. 18: The restored Omeriye Hamam.
Source: Nicosia Master Plan (2014).



Fig. 19: The restored Omeriye Hamam.
Source: Author (2022).



As in the case of Selimiye, the parts of Omeriye that show greatest signs of deterioration are those closest to the buffer zone (*Figure 20*). Many of the buildings in these areas are currently being used as workshops and storage spaces, while others remain uninhabited.

Fig. 20: Declining building in Omeriye impacted by existence of the buffer zone.
Source: Author (2022).



Fig. 21: Declining building in Omeriye adjacent the buffer zone.
Source: Author (2022).



NMP's Heritage Management Approach

One of the overarching objectives of the NMP was to improve the environment for residents living in different quarters of walled Nicosia through regeneration and restoration projects (Nicosia Master Plan Office, 2001). The districts of Selimiye and Omeriye are relevant examples of these initiatives, where rehabilitation has taken place in order to re-establish and re-emphasize on cultural significance, and to collectively benefit the residents of the walled city. The approach taken by the NMP in these cases involved encouraging local property owners to take responsibility and restore, protect and undertake ongoing maintenance of their buildings. This was achieved by providing an initial financial stimulus (made possible through EU grants), supporting rehabilitation and the consequent conservation of buildings as well as neighborhoods of cultural significance in these (and the wider area of walled Nicosia).³ Moreover, the NMP targeted strengthening of Selimiye's commercial character and encouraged visitors as well as investment in the area through a programme of pedestrianisation. This programme reflected the initial aims of NMP for the area, as presented in Figures 12 and 25. Additionally, relocation of the new Nicosia Municipality Headquarters (completed in 2019) within the walls (particularly in the Omeriye area) further exemplifies its significance to the

³ An example of this financial stimulus is the funding provided to shopkeepers (€8,600 per shop) for the restoration of façades (Petridou, 2005). This approach has been implemented by the south NMP team with funding provided by the District Office of South Nicosia, to encourage locals to maintain their buildings, and to provide an incentive to continue their complete regeneration.

walled city. This takes place also in the backdrop of large parts of the Omeriye area being pedestrianised, the Omeriye Mosque facing partial restoration, and the Omeriye Hamam being restored from its once severely declined state.

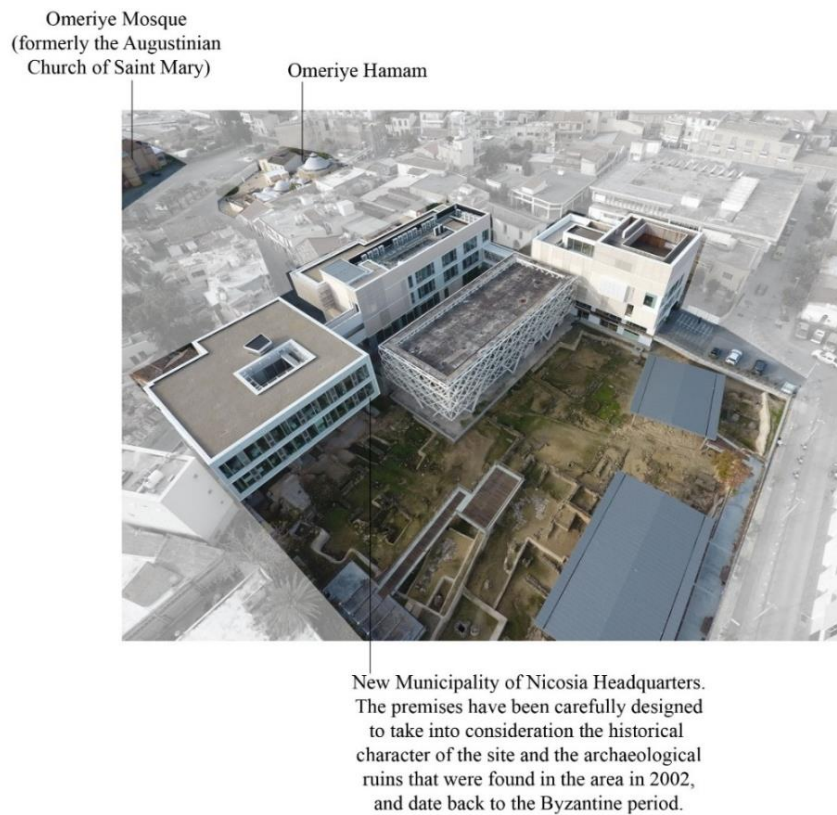


Fig. 22: New Municipality of Nicosia premises, showcasing their proximity with other pivotal areas within the Omeriye quarter.

Source: Nicosia Municipality; adapted by Author (2022).

To accurately rehabilitate the two quarters, the NMP first conducted surveys to determine the condition of buildings, and also to record, assess as well as understand the level of intervention required (*Figures 23 and 24*).⁴

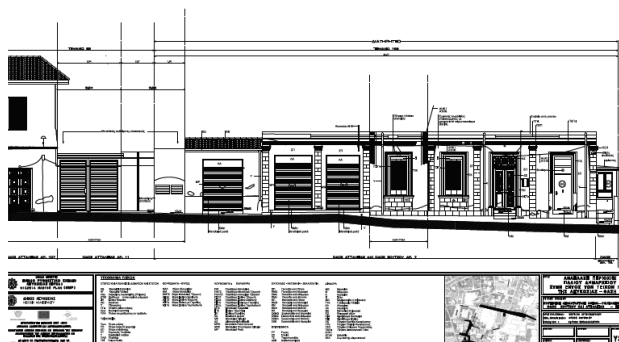


Fig. 23: Survey of the existing condition of buildings in the Omeriye area by the NMP.
Source: Nicosia Master Plan (2015).

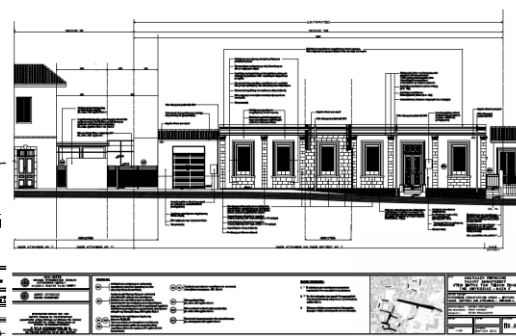


Fig.24: Proposed intervention by the NMP, based on the surveys of Omeriye area.
Source: Nicosia Master Plan (2015).

⁴ This approach is also consistent with UNESCO's Operational Guidelines. These guidelines firstly encourage the identification of cultural heritage to ensure its protection, conservation, presentation and transmission for future generations (UNESCO, 1972). The identification and recording of heritage in walled Nicosia subsequently encourage its authentic conservation, by assessing its (heritage's) needs and obtaining appropriate financial, artistic, scientific and technical assistance for its protection.

In addition, the NMP proposed the creation of a new bordercrossing to link Omeriye and Selimiye, in order to strengthen their inter-relationship (Bensel, 2016). Even though this proposal is yet to be realised, this approach aimed to contribute to the NMP's wider objective by encouraging/spreading activities throughout the historic core (and not just around the current crossing of Ledra-Lokmaci Street (*Figure 25*). As can be observed through *Figure 25*, the primary focus of the Selimiye-Omeriye regeneration is the reinforcement and protection of their common and interlinked heritage, through a series of interventions that promote public interest. The proposal reinforces the significance of selected historic buildings and activities (e.g. traditional bazaars), and thus, employs them as primary points of attraction and co-existence. This can be viewed as an approach that can also enable the sustainable development of the areas through public engagement and subsequent financial support (to ensure their long-term management and protection).

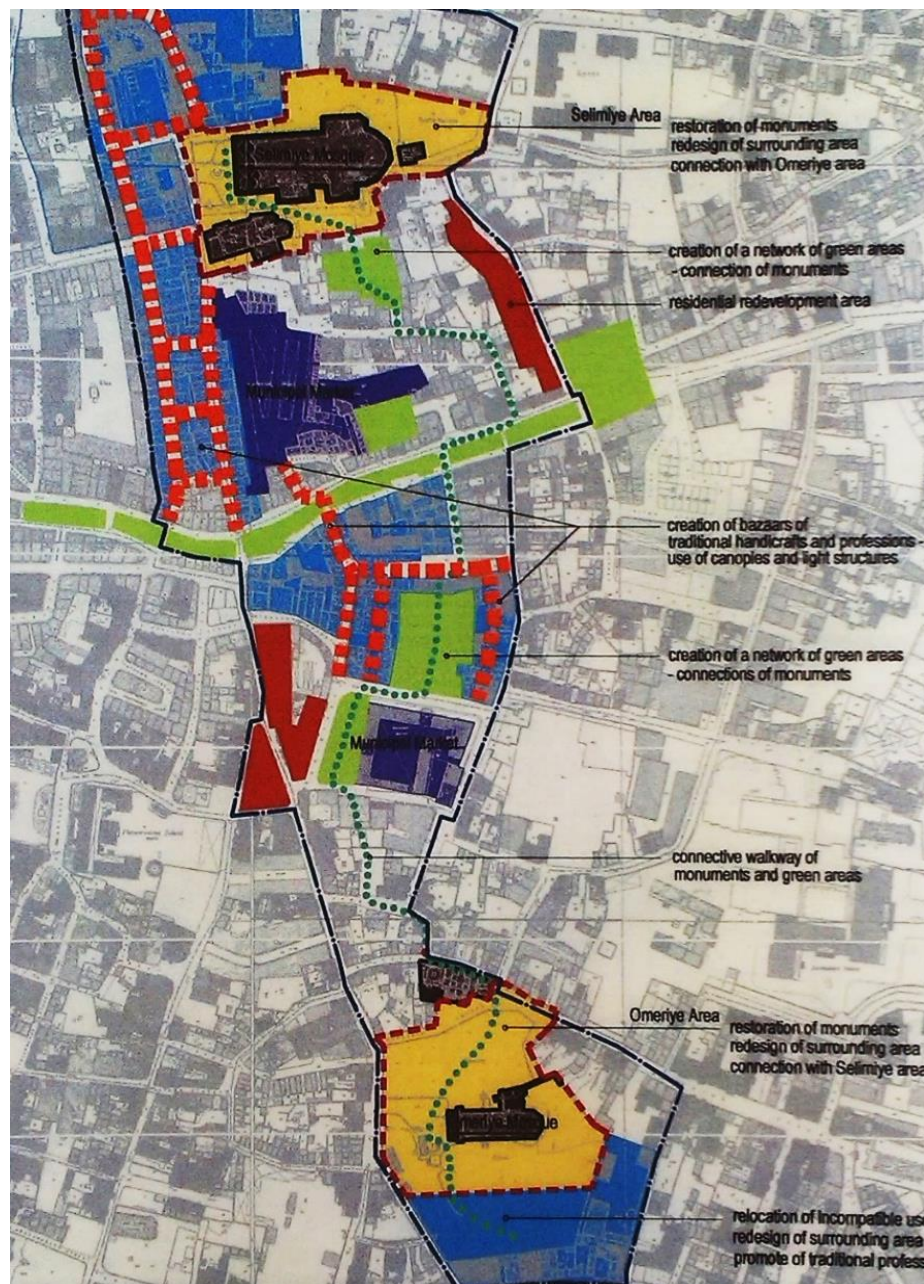


Fig. 25: Proposal for the rehabilitation of Selimiye and Omeriye. The illustrated proposal puts forward the creation of a collective walkway of monuments and green areas (dotted green line) that links the currently disjointed historic quarters together. **Source:** UNDP (2004a); adapted by Author (2022).

The proposal and subsequent (now ongoing) rehabilitation of selected buildings or building façades act as a starting point, and encourage private investment by promoting the return of activity to the areas of Selimiye and Omeriye. As a result, this approach can be considered a stimulus for further investment and an effective contribution to heritage management of the walled city. In doing so, the power over the city's heritage is returned to respective stakeholders of walled Nicosia – the local property owners and the public in this case – who can manage as well as protect their individual properties, and subsequently, the historic core as a collective.



Fig. 26: Facade restoration on Trikoup Street, adjacent to the buffer zone.
Source: Author (2022).



Fig. 27: Facade Restoration on Trikoup Street, adjacent to the buffer zone.
Source: Author (2022).

However, one of the main weaknesses that can be observed by following the revitalisation of several neighbourhoods within Selimiye and Omeriye is the lack of wider functional continuity of buildings. Specifically, the fact that several previously residential and commercial streets have now been restored aesthetically (i.e. façade-only) but not functionally, exemplifies this statement. Furthermore, even though rehabilitation work has commenced on the GC side and even completed in some areas of Omeriye, certain buildings continue to remain unoccupied, and therefore, unmaintained. This reflects the ongoing impact of conflict (and the prominence of the buffer zone) despite recent revitalisation initiatives. This highlights a concern in the ongoing management of the walled city's heritage. In this case, the connection between conflict, memory and place has evolved into a key consideration for the protection of Omeriye and Selimiye. This is demonstrated by how several areas close to the boundary continue to be considered as unpleasant milieu de mémoire (real sites of memory).



Fig. 29: Unoccupied buildings in Omeriye
Source: Author (2022).



Fig.28: Poorly maintained buildings in Omeriye, directly next to the restored Omeriye Hamam and adjacent Omeriye Mosque. The Mosque is a prime attraction and heritage site for the area
Source: Author (2022).

In addition, despite the shared initiation of the Selimiye-Omeriye project back in 2001 (Nicosia Master Plan Office, 2001), the streets on the TC side that are interrupted by the buffer zone have received limited resources in comparison. The fact that the restoration efforts primarily finding focus towards the areas around Selimiye Mosque and other prominent landmarks here is noteworthy. This illustrates the selective protection of heritage at the expense

of less-renowned buildings or sites within the walls. This concern echoes the discussion by Bevan (2006) on the prominent role played by conflict in the prioritization of heritage, and frames the argument that the impact of conflict and division on “*the authentic, sincere and true engagement*” of the Cypriot stakeholders with their heritage (Laouris *et. al.*, 2009: 364).



Fig. 30: Example of building rehabilitation on the south side of Selimiye mosque.
Source: Author (2012).

What has also been observed from the Selimiye-Omeriye regeneration project however, is the urgent need to re-instate the commercial character of the specific quarters in order to encourage visitors back to the walls. This can be witnessed through the attempts by the NMP to create a stronger connection between the north and south by proposing the creation of additional crossings. As a result, this approach also illustrates how the NMP has considered both the functional and cultural values associated with the areas, through the strengthening of links between the north and south. In addition, even though the buildings closest to the north part of the buffer zone continue to show signs of heritage decline and selective protection, the wider approach aimed at the areas also suggests that the NMP interventions seek to complement the diverse character and activities of the walled city.

Lastly, the specific project can be deemed of particular significance to both communities, as the restoration and ongoing protection of the Ottoman baths and the Omeriye Mosque in the GC part of Nicosia highlight an objective and inclusive approach to the heritage management of the particular area. This point carries symbolic meanings for the GC and TC populations respectively, as protection of the heritage of the ‘other’ forms a crucial step in establishing a more effective heritage management approach in the long-term. In this case, and in line with three goals set by the NMP, the promotion of bi-communalism unveils further possibilities for peaceful co-existence between the GC and TC Nicosia Municipalities, by safeguarding the social and economic potential inherent in the area’s cultural heritage.

SWOT Analysis

In line with above, the following tables present comprehensive SWOT analyses of the areas of Selimiye and Omeriye respectively; based on the wider empirical fieldwork findings of the author. The intension of these tables is to summarize the existing condition of the cases examined, while providing an appraisal of their future potential.

Selimiye

The SWOT analysis for Selimiye reveals the great advantage of the historic quarter as a primary destination within the walled city, as well as being a pivot point for encouraging regeneration and subsequent protection of surrounding neighborhoods. The existence of historically significant buildings in the area – such as Selimiye Mosque (previously Hagia Sophia), Büyük Han and the Municipal Bazaar – further exemplify this point since their regeneration attracts a continuous flow of visitors and activities. However, the analysis also highlights issues associated with heritage prioritization, and illustrates how division is a leading obstacle to its sustainable development; socially, functionally and economically (*Figure 33*).

In addition, issues linked to the lack of up-keeping can be observed, as well as concerns associated with the loss of authenticity attributable to over-commercialization (and excessive touristification).⁵ These are amplified by the possibility of further neglect, decay and consequent loss of heritage within the area, and raise questions about the impact of conflict on the memory of the collective; that has already resulted in the inattention of buildings closer to the buffer zone. Nevertheless, the popularity of Selimiye – accompanied by its central location and rich cultural identity – highlights its advantageous position against less prominent quarters within the walled part of Nicosia. This is suggestive of its growing revitalization in the long-term, and the possibility for a steady return of investment in the area.



Fig. 31: Büyük Han in walled Nicosia North. The Han is located near the Ledra-Lokmaci crossing and acts as a pivot point for social, cultural and commercial activities within the Selimiye quarter.

Source: Author (2020).



Fig.32: Büyük Han in walled Nicosia North.
Source: Author (2020).



Fig. 33: Workshops located towards the east part of Selimiye, away from the Ledra-Lokmaci crossing
Source: Author (2020).



Fig. 34: Shops located towards the east part of Selimiye, away from the Ledra-Lokmaci crossing, but on one of the main arteries linking Selimiye Mosque with the Ledra-Lokmaci crossing.
Source: Author (2020).

⁵ "Touristification refers to the transformation of an area [...] into a place for tourist consumption and the resulting changes in the landscape, the environment, and in social, cultural, and economic dynamics" (Lorenzen, 2021: 65).

STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the most visited areas within the walled city. • Contains a collection of commercial and residential buildings, including rows of houses from the Ottoman, Venetian as well as Lusignan times. Also boasts of stone masonry buildings from the British period. • Selimiye Mosque and Büyük Han are also located in the area and attract a significant number of visitors throughout the year. • One of the most commercialised areas within the walled city. • Connects with the Ledra-Lokmaci crossing. • One of the closest historic quarters to the existing Ledra-Lokmaci crossing. • Contains several mixed-use buildings/facilities. • Contains heritage belonging to both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot Communities. • Contains heritage and commercial activities that attract local visitors and tourists. • In specific locations, the urban renewal of the area as an essential part of the NMP has contributed to the slowing down of its physical decay as a result of the ongoing division of the city (and the island as a whole). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creation of additional central crossings between Selimiye and Omeriye to 'thin' the buffer zone and to allow the re-connection of the built environment as well as of the activities (and/or rituals) that once used to take place in the area. • Adaptive re-use of obsolete buildings and activities to respond to contemporary demand. • Strengthening of private investment through the provision of incentives, in order to encourage building owners to restore and conserve their individual properties. • Connection of the two markets/bazaars selling local products. • Use of the existing historic buildings and/or open spaces to disseminate knowledge regarding the common heritage of the GC and TC Communities. • More effective utilisation and improvement of public open spaces. • Rehabilitation of workshops to reflect the traditional character of streets along the buffer zone, rather than demonstrating severe signs of decay due to the abrupt interruption of those streets. • The use of existing heritage buildings, sites and cultural activities in order to attract more tourism into the area. • Creation of a network of green areas that will potentially encourage interaction, and strengthening of links between Selimiye and its adjacent neighbourhoods.
WEAKNESSES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Situated directly next to the buffer zone. • Several areas within the Selimiye Quarter suffer due to lack of up-keep, especially those next to the buffer zone. • Street-lighting and pedestrian routes beyond the areas around Selimiye Mosque are poor. • Insufficient infrastructure contributes to the deterioration of the area. • Ownership issues after GC community moved to the south, and TC counterpart to the north. <p>Change of street names following the division of the city and the creation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus which has furthered the disconnection between the north and south, especially in cases where one street is divided by the buffer zone and has a different name on each side of the divide.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of the buffer zone. • Lack of up-keeping. • Not adequately engaging with the areas adjacent to the buffer zone, which could result in further decline. • Over-commercialisation and touristification of Selimiye. • Loss of authenticity as a result of the above. • Ineffective employment of adaptive re-use and, consequently, inappropriate use as well as management of historic buildings. • Lack of bi-communal initiatives. • Lack of investment or funding to continue with the up keeping of selected areas, particularly for privately-owned properties. • Lack of international recognition and embargoes. <p>Heritage prioritisation and consequent neglect of less prominent, yet historically significant architecture.</p>

Table. 02: SWOT Analysis of Selimiye.**Source:** Author (2022).

Omeriye

Amongst other things, the SWOT analysis for Omeriye highlights the buffer zone's impact on the neglect and obsolescence of buildings and activities in the area. As in Selimiye, this issue raises concerns about the role of unpleasant memories of conflict on the up keeping of properties and the attraction of private investment. This argument is even stronger in the South since, despite the beautification of buildings and neighborhoods closer to the buffer zone, a vivid lack of occupancy and investment continues to be observed. This raises questions about the long-term management and protection of specific areas, the lasting return of permanent habitation within the historic core and its sustainable economic revival.⁶ Furthermore, the application of 'facadism' is more vividly employed in Omeriye, due to more prolific funding availability in the South (for GC Nicosia Municipality).

Even though facadism contributes to the skin-deep beautification of buildings and to their consequent protection in the short-term, it also raises concerns about their authentic conservation and historical continuity, as all traces (and memories) of conflict have been eradicated from the buildings' fabric. In this case, selective heritage protection materializes as a method for addressing the damaging effect of the buffer zone. However, it could also be argued that this outcome challenges the recommendations set by international guidelines on heritage protection, such as the Nara Document on Authenticity (in ICOMOS, 1994) that considers "*form and design, location and setting [as well as] spirit and feeling*" as essential prerequisites to the protection of tangible and intangible heritage authenticity, by concealing the historical continuity of the walled city. This point is based on the fact that, beautification of the buffer zone boundary and of the adjacent buildings contradicts with the treatment of other areas around the walled city that continue to preserve the unpleasant traces of conflict, thus suggesting a level of inconsistency in the management of the different areas within the walls. In addition to the figures below, the contrast between *Figure 20* and *Figure 26* (which are adjacent buildings), or *Figure 31* and *Figure 33* (which are within a proximity of a few meters) further exemplifies this point.



Fig. 35: Restored buildings and street leading to Omeriye.
Source: Author (2022).



Fig. 36: Restored buildings in Omeriye.
Source: Author (2022).



Fig. 37: Derelict building close to Omeriye and opposite the restored buildings shown in *Figure 35*.
Source: Author (2022).



Fig. 38: Abandoned shops in Omeriye.
Source: Author (2022).

⁶ Concerns deriving from the general goals of the NMP.

STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevailing Mix of residential and commercial activities. • Noteworthy buildings of historical, religious and cultural significance. • Return of visitors to the area due to the increase in commercial and leisure activities. • Contains a diverse range of heritage belonging to different cultures that once occupied the area; including both GC and TC communities. • Central location within the walled city and (despite the buffer zone) directly next to Selimiye. • Nicosia's municipal market is also located in the area, along with traditional workshops. • The existence of noteworthy museums, historical remains and the Archbishop's palace, which are of administrative as well as religious importance to the GC community. • The existence of important municipal bodies within the area, including the Cyprus Scientific and Technical Chamber. • The existence of the Nicosia Municipality Headquarters in the area. • The proximity between historically, culturally, financially and commercially-oriented 'pivot' points that tie the area together. • The ongoing regeneration of a large number of private and public buildings of heritage value within the area. • In many locations, the urban renewal of the area as an essential part of the NMP has contributed to the slowing down of its physical decay as a result of the ongoing division of the city (and of the island). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger connection between open spaces, monuments and other areas of public/tourist or heritage value. • The creation of additional crossings between Selimiye and Omeriye to 'thin' the buffer zone and to allow the re-connection of the built environment, as well as of the activities (and/or rituals) that used to take place in the area. • Use of facadism⁷ (i.e. façade only regeneration) as a means of regenerating areas quickly and attracting private investment. However, this approach needs to be carefully employed in order to avoid authenticity loss. • EU funding opportunities for the sustainable rehabilitation of the area. • Creation of a network of green areas that will potentially encourage interaction and strengthen links between Omeriye and its adjacent neighbourhoods (including the north). • Archaeological remains that can attract heritage tourism to the area.
WEAKNESSES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obsolescence of buildings and lack of activity along the buffer zone. • Disjointed areas (both due to the buffer zone and as a result of the different levels of up-keep) and rehabilitation between streets and neighbourhoods. • Selective protection and prioritisation of heritage due to the allocation of funding in the area. • Facadism rather than complete restoration and conservation. • Existence of empty properties and consequent ownership issues after the division of the city. • Lack of car parking space. • The existence of the buffer zone reflects memories of conflict. This is aggravated further by the presence of nationalist/religious symbols such as Greek/Cypriot flags and the orthodox cross. • The identity/character of the area is not as clearly defined as in areas such as Arab Ahmet, Selimiye or Chrysaliniotissa. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive use of facadism that does not generate the expected public interest or investment. • Loss of authenticity/memory due to excessive use of facadism and the consequent concealment of the truthful historical continuity of the city's heritage. • Existence of the buffer zone. • Lack of up-keeping of buildings closer to the buffer zone. • Limited bi-communal initiatives. • Limited investment or funding to continue with the up keeping of selected areas, particularly for privately-owned properties. • Functional and aesthetic obsolescence of buildings and sites. • Heritage prioritisation and consequent neglect of less prominent, yet historically significant architecture. • Demolition and potentially permanent loss of historically significant buildings, without the permission of the relevant authorities.

Table. 03: SWOT Analysis of Omeriye.**Source:** Author (2022).

⁷ Facadism in this context refers to the mere regeneration of facades, while leaving the rest of the building fabric in its existing state; an approach widely employed in the case of walled Nicosia as a part of the Nicosia Master Plan initiative (Pieri, 2018).

Conclusion

Using case studies, this paper investigated efforts of the NMP in addressing heritage management in the walled city of Nicosia. It attempted to highlight the contribution of this bi-communal initiative in reversing Nicosia's accelerated decay. The findings of this study unveiled that the division of the city has significantly altered not only the physical continuity of the historic core of Nicosia, but also its functional and historical integrity. The aforesaid further demonstrates the impact conflict has had on the city's tangible and intangible inheritances. This issue has been exemplified through an examination of individual buildings and streets within Selimiye and Omeriye; pinpointing the way partition has interrupted – and continues to interrupt – the physical, social and cultural stability of Europe's last divided capital. The empirical findings of this research provided a valuable insight into the current condition of the walled city on each side of the divide, alongside of current Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) affecting the areas in question. This new insight included findings on the impact of conflict and division on Nicosia's heritage, while highlighting the role and significance of sustainable (bi-communal) stakeholder engagement in encouraging private investment back into the historic core. The comprehensive insights obtained from the case study data collection and analysis form a point of departure for the examination and heritage protection of other similar contested environments such as that of Nicosia.

In addition, it appears that the use of facadism has been considered in terms of its short-term potential to revive the historical urban fabric of Nicosia. This seemed to encourage economic revival of the walled city. This approach was particularly visible in Omeriye. However, concerns around facadism's long-term endurance (along with its impact on collective memory) and considerations on authentic conservation of the walled city are being expressed here.

In line with the first three objectives of this research, this paper demonstrates that the efforts of the NMP are in keeping with the historical identity of the walled city, with a focus on the protection of selected heritage assets. The examples of Buyuk Han and Omeriye Baths further exemplify this point. However, the empirical data and the subsequent SWOT analyses both suggest that the lack of a coordinated approach between the GC and TC communities, paralleled by the 'skin-deep beautification' introduced by facadism, can impede the long-term protection of the affected properties. This is owing to the fact that the specific method merely conserves the façade and not the entirety of the heritage assets. In this light, it could be assumed (by deriving from the data collection and analysis) that facadism can be a potentially promising approach if strategically applied, funded and employed. This is able to engage public stakeholders and property owners in following through with the complete renovation of their respective properties. In keeping with the final objective, this approach can be applicable for the protection of related historic urban contexts in the short term.

Reflecting on broader goals of the NMP for effective rehabilitation of the walled city, the findings demonstrated that permanent habitation within the historic core of Nicosia was isolated. In the areas of Selimiye and Omeriye, permanent habitation even deviated from the UN Buffer Zone. Nevertheless, the commercial and tourist-oriented functions of the two areas, alongside of ongoing regeneration projects, appeared to have a promising outcome for the initial economic stimulation of the walled city. It can also be observed that the regeneration of the selected quarters was indeed encouraging the return of habitation through several urban rehabilitation initiatives.

The abandonment of properties however, continued to outline a sense of temporality and an eminent lack of sustainability; both in terms of long-term economic revival and of enduring building stock survival. Lastly, despite the opportunity costs presented in the Sections Selimiye and Omeriye, the heritage rehabilitation projects continue to take place in isolation

between the GC and TC communities respectively. Even though the regeneration of multiple buildings within Selimiye and Omeriye could be seen as a positive approach towards the sustainable management of the historic building stock, the promotion and establishment of bi-communalism and peaceful interaction was yet to be achieved; particularly since the goal of the NMP to link the two quarters is still pending (and in no near sight). This is a significant limitation that was derived from the case study data analysis, and is expected to significantly impact future heritage management initiatives on both sides of the Cypriot divide.

In line with above, and alongside of UNESCO's recommendations for maintenance/protection of cultural heritage for public interest, this paper maintains that in order to sustainably address and safeguard heritage of the areas examined, a stronger understanding of the type, characteristics and needs of the properties/stakeholders alongside the buffer zone should be harnessed. By doing so, issues such as heritage obsolescence, lack of sustainable investment, lack of up-keeping and ineffective employment of adaptive re-use can be addressed. These actions will potentially mitigate the opportunity cost of ongoing political/physical division and, manage the subsequent disconnection between Selimiye and Omeriye. The empirical fieldwork findings from Selimiye and Omeriye were presented and analyzed in the form of photographs, maps, diagrams and SWOT analyses. The critical evaluation of the regeneration approaches of Selimiye and Omeriye provided unique and in detailed explanations of the issues currently affecting the two areas – and the walled city of Nicosia as a whole. The collection of novel empirical insight and observations to analyze both the impact of conflict and division, as well as the NMP's efforts on the heritage management of Nicosia's historic core form a vital contribution of this paper; and demonstrate the impact conflict and division have had on its current physical state. Subsequently, the findings can be applied to inform the heritage protection of similar contested environments, and to enhance the ongoing academic discussion (and practice) around divided Nicosia's heritage and heritage management. Summing up, through a systematic review of relevant literature and a context-specific qualitative methodological approach, this piece has addressed its aim to critically examine the impact of conflict and division on the heritage of the Walled Nicosia and to evaluate the NMP's efforts on both sides of the divide.

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