

An Example for the Reuse of Historic Residential Buildings as Cafes: Zahra Street

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Abstract

Cyprus has hosted many cultures and civilizations for centuries. Thanks to these civilizations, architectural structures of different styles are seen together in Cyprus. Nicosia's walled city, which started with the Lusignan period and took its current form during the Venetian period, is home to some of these structures. Although very few of the ones that have survived are used in the function of the period in which they were built, most of them have been re-functionalized. In addition, while some of them are idle, some of them have been preserved and used. Despite the touristic interest and socio-cultural activities in the region, the unused buildings have brought various negativities to the urban structure. Over time, with the increasing interest of the individuals living in the city in the historical texture, the re-functioning and use of these structures have gained importance. In this context, Zahra Street, which is among the urban spaces with an important location and architectural structures bordering the Buffer Zone within the city wall of the divided capital Nicosia, was chosen as the study area. The use of the British Period residences here with the function of a cafe today has contributed socio-culturally to the city walled area of the developing city of Nicosia. Effective use has been achieved thanks to adaptive reuse in the region where traces of past life are found in contemporary living conditions. Thus, a more livable, safe and pleasant urban space has been obtained. This study, it is aimed to emphasize the importance of improvement in urban spaces when they are reused in accordance with the changing living conditions depending on human needs. A literature review was conducted on the subject and data were collected using qualitative and quantitative methods during the on-site inspection. The facades, entrance hall/service area, sitting areas, toilets and outdoor/courtyard sections were examined in the tables created for each building with the collected data. According to the research, it can be said that successful re-use was applied to the cafe function while it was a residential function.

Keywords: Adaptive reuse, historical buildings, British Period Houses, Zahra Street, Nicosia

Özet

Kıbrıs yüzyıllardır birçok kültür ve medeniyeti barındırmıştır. Bu medeniyetler sayesinde Kıbrıs'ta farklı üsluplardaki mimari yapılar bir arada görülmektedir. Lüzinyan dönemi ile başlayıp Venedik döneminde bugünkü halini alarak şekillenen Lefkoşa suriçi, bu yapıların bir kısmına ev sahipliği yapmaktadır. Günümüze ulaşanların çok azı inşa edildiği dönemin fonksiyonunda kullanılsa da büyük bir çoğunluğu yeniden işlevlendirilmiştir. Ayrıca bir kısmı atıl durumda iken, bir kısmı ise korunmuş ve kullanılmıştır. Bölgedeki turistik ilgi ve sosyo-kültürel faaliyetlere rağmen kullanılmayan yapılar kent yapısına çeşitli olumsuzlukları beraberinde getirmiştir. Zaman içerisinde, kentte yaşayan bireylerin tarihi dokuya olan ilgilerinin artmasıyla birlikte bu yapıların yeniden işlevlendirilmesi ve kullanılması önem kazanmıştır. Bu kapsamda bölünmüş başkent Lefkoşa'nın suriçindeki Ara Bölge ile sınırı bulunan önemli bir konuma ve mimari yapılarla sahip kentsel mekanlar arasındaki Zahra Sokak çalışma alanı olarak seçilmiştir. Burada bulunan İngiliz Dönemi konutlarının günümüzde kafe işlevi ile kullanımı gelişmekte olan Lefkoşa kentinin surları bölgesine sosyo-kültürel katkı sağlamıştır. Çağdaş yaşam koşullarında geçmiş yaşamın izlerinin bulunduğu bölgede yeniden işlevlendirme sayesinde etkin kullanım sağlanmıştır. Böylece daha yaşanılabilir, güvenli, keyifli bir kentsel mekan elde edilmiştir. Bu çalışmada, insan gereksinimlerine bağlı olarak değişen yaşam koşullarının gereğine uygun, yeniden kullanım yapıldığında kentsel mekanlardaki iyileşmenin önemini vurgulamak amaçlanmıştır. Konu ile ilgili literatür taraması yapılmış ve yerinde inceleme yöntemi ile veriler toplanmıştır. Toplanan veriler ile her bir yapı için oluşturulan tablolarda cepheler, giriş holü ve servis alanı, oturma alanları, tuvaletler ve dış mekan/avlu bölümleri irdelenmiştir. Yapılan araştırmalara göre bu yapıların konut işlevinden iken kafe işlevine yeniden kullanıldığı söylenebilir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Yeniden kullanım, tarihi yapılar, İngiliz Dönemi Konutları, Zahra Sokak, Lefkoşa

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1. INTRODUCTION

Architecture develops as a process that provides social and cultural context for the era to which it belongs (Aydın & Yıldız, 2010). In order to preserve both listed cultural objects and properties that have been declared as World Heritage Sites by national or local governments, it is essential to keep utilising ancient structures (Wang & Zeng, 2010). Especially historical buildings that undertake the task of transferring the values of the period they belong to future generations come to the fore at this point. The fact that these structures carry traces of the past makes it necessary to protect them in a sustainable way. The preservation of historical structures that lost their original functions due to social, cultural, economic and environmental reasons experienced during the process and ensuring the continuity of this protection bring the concept of reuse to the fore (İslamoğlu, 2018).

Buildings that are historically significant for the era they belong to and reflect the social, cultural, and economic evolution of the society can be preserved using the reuse strategy. Buildings' physical lives outlast their functional lives, and the structure changes much more gradually than the latter. The function degrades through time in terms of technology, society, and culture. It can be summed up simply as preparing the facility for new requirements through modifications. (Burden, 2004). Functional change is seen as a contemporary conservation approach in historical buildings (Ahunbay, 2009). It aims to preserve and keep alive the historical building by assigning a different function. This method also helps to promote the concept of urban sustainability. The long-term preservation of any historic structure necessitates the integration of sustainable design and historic preservation principles. Building adaptive reuse is a viable alternative to demolition and replacement because it uses less energy and waste and can provide social benefits by revitalizing and revitalizing familiar landmarks (Conejos et al., 2011).

Repurposing ancient structures is a crucial instrument for maintaining social memory, which plays a significant role in forging a society's connection to its history. The dwellings in the walled city region have been vacant over time due to the urban structure's ongoing development and change. The bandabuliya (bazaar), cathedral, mosque, church, historical library, khans, and different commerce centres allowed movement and usage to continue even though the homes remained vacant. Despite the region's popularity as a tourist destination and the social and cultural events that take place there, the vacant homes' idleness has brought about a number of negative effects. Over time, with the increasing interest of the individuals living in the city in the historical texture, it has gained importance to re-function and use the buildings built in the residential function in the region. Within the scope of this study, the use of the British Period Houses on the Zahra Street axis in the Nicosia walled city will be examined as cafe function today. It will be investigated whether the original function and the current function are compatible, as well as how they relate to one another.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 History of Cyprus and Capital Nicosia

Cyprus has maintained its status as an essential island to be claimed in the Eastern Mediterranean over the years because of its strategic location commanding the nations of the Near East (Bağsıkan, 2005). Moreover, besides being in an important location for Anatolia, because of its geopolitical position, Cyprus was used throughout history as a military and commercial base between Anatolia, Syria and Egypt (Gürsoy, 1971). The island was ruled by Byzantine, Lusignans, Venetians, Ottomans and English. These periods played an important role in the formation of architectural styles as well as the influence within the socio-political and cultural contexts of the island. The effects of all these styles are manifested in Nicosia, a city that has preserved the title of the capital city throughout all these periods (Erdogru, 2008).

The ancient city of Nicosia was built in the fold of the "Pedias" creek, known to the Turks as "Kandere," as it changes course to the east on the Mesarya plain. Because of the abundance of soil in the area, the water was also abundant. This natural formation led to the establishment of several cities in succession. It is generally acknowledged that Nicosia, which is the continuation of the last of these established settlements, was erected on the ancient city known as "Lidra" (Ledra: Ledrae) (Gürkan, 1989).

During the Hellenistic, Roman, and Early Christian eras, from BC III to AD IV. In the fourth century A.D., Paphos was superseded as the capital of Cyprus by the city of Constantia, which Constantine II built on a smaller scale in Salamis. But the coastal cities were torched and destroyed during the Arab invasions, which began in 647/49 AD and lasted until 965 AD (318 years), ushering in an era of cessation. Therefore, it was crucial to move the administrative centre within the island, where it would be secure. Nicosia, in the middle of the island, was chosen to serve as Cyprus' administrative and military hub at the conclusion of the 11th century AD, which corresponds to the Byzantine era. Accordingly, from the Byzantine Period, Byzantine dukes, Templar Knights, Lusignan and Venetian Kings, Dukes, Lords, and Ottoman and British Administrators who were assigned to Cyprus as governors have all accepted and utilized Nicosia as their capital (Bağışkan, 2019).

The Lusignans constructed a stronghold in the form of a ring in Nicosia in 1211. Peter II finished building the four-mile-long surrounding fortress walls in 1372. But the defence walls built by the Lusignans were shrunk to their current dimensions when under the rule of Venice (1489–1571). The walls' circumference was cut to three miles during renovation, and eleven bastions were added to the ramparts (Charles et al., 1913).

2.2 Adaptive Reuse of Historical Buildings

Today's architectural discipline has the innovative and exciting problem of repairing and restoring existing structures so they can be used in the future. This extensive remodelling process is typically referred to as "adaptive reuse." According to Brooker and Stone, other names for adaptive reuse include remodelling, retrofitting, conversion, adaptation, reworking, rehabilitation, or refurbishing (Plevoets & Van Cleempoel, 2011).

Historical buildings are significant pieces that provide information about the culture, architecture, art, tradition and customs, the lifestyle of the society, in brief, all its past experiences. Historical buildings within the scope of cultural heritage are documents and symbols that reflect the economic, social and cultural accumulation of societies and the urban and architectural style of the period in which they were built. The most preferred method of preserving historical buildings is to give the building a new function (Aydın & Şahin, 2018). Functional change is seen as a contemporary conservation approach in historical buildings. Reuse is a technique that can be used on modern buildings in addition to old ones that have lost their use and served as witnesses to recent history. The reasons why historical buildings cannot continue their functions are summarized as the loss of their original functions and the functional obsolescence of the buildings (Altınoluk, 1998).

Functional change is the creation of new usage opportunities, including interventions that are going to meet new user needs, by preserving their architectural, aesthetic, social and cultural values, instead of the original functions of historical buildings that cannot be maintained due to different reasons such as environmental factors, economic reasons, socio-cultural changes. . Re-functioning is considered as a necessary practice to transfer historical structures and areas to future generations, to ensure physical and cultural continuity, to contribute to the economic and cultural environment by re-evaluating the structures and areas, to beautify the current environment and to meet the needs of the city (Gazi & Boduroğlu, 2015).

Giving a historical structure a new purpose, preventing it from being destroyed, maintaining it, keeping it in use, improving the appearance of the city, raising historical knowledge and stimulating the economy are all examples of contributions (Altınoluk, 1991; Gazi & Bodurođlu 2015). While historical buildings are being re-functioned, the new function to be implemented must be in accordance with the original. In addition, it is essential to consider criteria such as the structure and material of the building.

Due to the changing cultural, social and physical environmental conditions, the reuse of the buildings, which are the cultural heritage of the cities, depending on today's conditions, is also important for the sustainability of the cities. The principle of reuse in historical buildings is to transform the building into a new function independent of the original function it was designed for, as a result of not being used over time. The British Period houses on Zahra street in Nicosia (Figure 1), the capital city of Northern Cyprus, are also re-functionalized and used. The British Period houses in Zahra street, whose function today is a cafe, are examined as a study area in this article.



Figure 1: Zahra Street, Arabahmet - Nicosia (Wikimedia Commons, 2022)

The history of the building, its location and its relationship with the environment should give us a clue as to what the original function of the building was. In line with this argument, the new function to be given to the building should be close to its original function. In this point, for this study, the relationship between the house-cafe functions is so important.

In cafes, individuals can unwind, eat, drink, converse, and socialize while assessing their leisure time. Cafes fulfil various social functions and as a service and cultural institution, they follow the economic and social developments of the time. Houses, on the other hand, is the private place where individuals perform many activities as well as meet their shelter needs. The conversion of abandoned buildings for various reasons, designed as a house, into a cafe function, is a common situation in cities. In the continuation of the study, the housing-cafe reuse of the buildings in the study area is examined.

2.3 British Colonial Period Houses in Cyprus

Cyprus was one of the last colonies in the Mediterranean to be added to the British Empire. The island was ceded to Britain by the Ottoman Empire as part of a secret deal to support the latter against Russia in the 1877 Russo-Turkish wars. Britain supported the Ottoman Empire at the Congress of Berlin in 1878. British rule in Cyprus was relatively short compared to control by previous powers. It lasted for 82 years, from 1878 to 1960 (Kuban, 2000).

Courtyard buildings were generally constructed inward-facing, away from public streets and spaces, for defensive and privacy reasons. Entrance doors were strongly constructed for security. Any windows were mainly at a high level or protected with heavy iron railings or grilles at the lower level. Townhouses for wealthier citizens were built of stone or of composite construction, including mud brick or timber framed construction on upper floors, with pitched clay tiled roofs. Courtyards were generally spacious relative to the dwelling's ground floor plan coverage and provided a protected oasis of greenery and water from wells and cisterns (Kuban, 2000).

During the first period of British Rule, Cyprus was not a Crown Colony but a kind of Protectorate, where Britain had the authority to occupy, station troops and govern the island but sovereignty remained with 'The Porte' - the Ottoman Sultan. Under pressure from the European states, the weakened Ottoman Empire allowed relatively greater freedoms to its non-Moslem subjects, Christians and others, and granted privileges to countries of the West to develop trade and enterprises on its territory (Costa, 2013).

The island's economy was mostly agricultural and almost 90 per cent of the population lived in the countryside. Towns were relatively small, comprising attached inward-looking buildings and clearly defined boundaries, particularly for the walled towns of Nicosia and Famagusta (Costa, 2018).

During this period Building and Town Planning controls were limited and basically dealt with matters of health, safety and circulation. The absence of legislation requiring the mandatory submission of architectural plans for approval, allowed the master builders to continue to design and execute buildings and works without drawn plans (Ionas,2001)

3. MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Area

Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. It has an important strategic location in the world. The Greek and Turkish communities lived together for many years in Cyprus. Nicosia is the capital of the country. The walled city with 11 bastions is part of it.



Figure 2: Cyprus island and 11 bastions (Oktay, 2007; Aga Khan Foundation, 2020)

Because of some problems between Turkish and Greek communities, Cyprus was divided into two parts North and South Cyprus in 1974. There is a buffer zone called the Green Line (YeşilHat) between them. As a result of this, Nicosia is also divided into two and continues to serve as the capital on both sides. Zahra Street, located in the Arabahmet neighbourhood, which borders the buffer zone in northern Nicosia, is chosen as the study area.



Figure 3: Zahra Street and buffer zone (Google Earth, 2022)

The idle state of abandoned houses had a negative impact on Zahra street in terms of social, cultural and security. The reuse of these buildings as cafes has led to the revival of the street.

3.2 Research Design and Evaluations

In the context of reuse in the historical texture, two cafes on the Zahra street axis are discussed. The current use of the cafes, whose original functions were residential, has been evaluated by the researchers. 'Room concept cafes' are places that only have a change in function, without changing the main decisions of the housing plan scheme during the reuse phase.

An inventory study is conducted to physically analyse the selected buildings. For inventory work, the facade, interior spaces (entrance hall, sitting rooms, kitchen, WC), and exterior spaces (semi-open space, courtyard) parts of the buildings are photographed (Table 1). The photographs of these areas and their evaluation by the authors are presented in Tables (Table 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6).

A spatial examination of two cafe constructions is shown in Table 1. These include the exterior and courtyard, sitting places, restrooms and washbasins, and entrance halls and service facilities.

Table 1: Inventory work areas at selected buildings

	CAFE 1: "TIPICA"	CAFE 2: "ZAHRA"
FACADES	In the facade layout of Tipica Kafe, there are two window openings on the left side of the entrance door on the ground floor and two on the right. There is an overhang above the entrance door that protrudes from the first floor. There are two window openings on the facade of the exit. There are one window on the right side of the exit and two on the left side. There are four cornices under the exit and three cornices under the balcony on the right and left sides. Window ratios are 1:3.	In the facade layout of Zahra Cafe, there are two window openings on the right side and one on the left side of the entrance door on the ground floor. There is an overhang on the first floor above the entrance door. There are two 1:3 windows on the facade of the exit. There is a window and a balcony on the right and left sides of the exit.
ENTRANCE HALL +SERVICE AREA	In Tipica Cafe, the entrance hall and the service area is positioned parallel to the stairs in the space.	In Zahra Cafe, the entrance hall and the service area are located at the bottom of the stairs in the space.
SITTING ROOMS	In the seating area of Tipica Cafe, wooden dividing elements are used between sofa furniture groups and spaces.	Various furniture groups are used in the sitting area of Zahra Cafe. These consist of armchairs, chairs and tables.
WC-LAVATORY	The WC sink area in Tipica Kafe was designed with dividing walls added later. There are two toilets and one sink.	The WC sink area in Zahra Cafe was designed with dividing walls added later. There are two toilets and one sink.
EXTERIOR SPACES - COURTYARD	The exterior of Tipica Cafe is located on the east and west facades. There are outdoor seating elements on the west (entrance) façade of the building. In the courtyard on the eastern (rear) façade of the building, there are code differences and seating elements within the space. There is also an exit from the courtyard to the other street front.	The exterior of Zahra Cafe is located on the east and west facades. There are outdoor seating elements on the west (entrance) façade of the building. In the courtyard on the eastern (rear) façade of the building, there are code differences and seating elements within the space. There is also an exit from the courtyard to the other street front.

Table 2: Evaluation of facades



	CAFE 1: "TIPICA"	CAFE 2: "ZAHRA"
FACADES	 <p>Duman, 2022</p>	 <p>Duman, 2022</p>
<p>Architectural elements of a traditional British Period house can be seen on the facades of both buildings. Among them, cumbria and 1:3 window ratios can be said.</p>		

Table 3: Evaluation of the entrance hall +service area

	CAFE 1: "TIPICA"	CAFE 2: "ZAHRA"
ENTRANCE HALL +SERVICE AREA	  <p>Karaderi, 2022</p>	 <p>Karaderi, 2022</p>
<p>In the entrance halls, there are service areas in both cafes.</p>		

Table 4: Evaluation of the sitting rooms



	CAFE 1: "TIPICA"	CAFE 2: "ZAHRA"
SITTING ROOMS	 <p>Karaderi, 2022</p>	 <p>Karaderi, 2022</p>
<p>The fact that each room in the British Period houses has been arranged to be used for more than one function has been suitable for the use of cafes as living rooms in its current function.</p>		

Table 5: Evaluation of WC lavatory



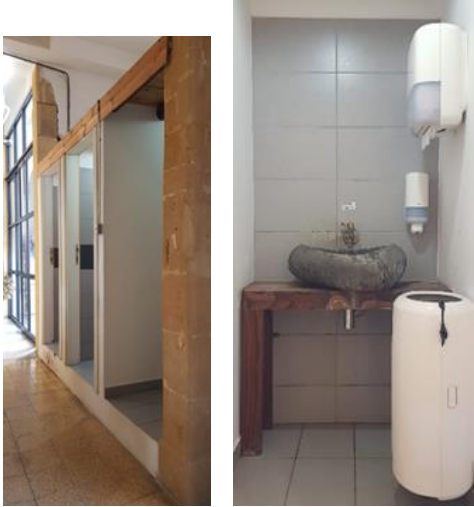


	CAFE 1: "TIPICA"	CAFE 2: "ZAHRA"
WC-LAVATORY	  <p>Karaderi, 2022</p>	 <p>Karaderi, 2022</p>
<p>In both buildings, there are spaces that have been transformed into WC - lavatory areas with the interventions made to the original functions of the old British Period house.</p>		

Table 6: Evaluation of exterior spaces -courtyard

	CAFE 1: "TIPICA"	CAFE 2: "ZAHRA"
EXTERIOR SPACES - COURTYARD	 <p style="text-align: center;">Karaderi, 2022</p>	 <p style="text-align: right;">Karaderi, 2022</p>
	<p>Semi-open seating areas are created with the shading elements installed later on the front facades of both buildings. In addition, the opposite sidewalk of the buildings is arranged as open seating areas. Besides, there are courtyards on the rear facades of both buildings.</p>	

4. CONCLUSION

The concept of the contemporary city includes the idea of development in a way that is sensitive to the cultural and natural values of the city. Nicosia has been home to many civilisations throughout its long history. These included the Lusignans (1192-1489), Venetians (1489-1571), Ottomans (1571-1578), British (1878-1960), and Turkish Cypriots and Greeks. The walled city is the historical region of the city with its star-shaped walls, multicultural traditional texture, buffer zone and natural beauties. However, a number of other reasons, such as static development, inappropriate usage, and changes in social structure, as well as physical, functional, regional, and image obsolescence, contribute to the rich cultural heritage's daily decline.

One of the important methods of preserving cultural heritage is reuse. Reuse in architecture can be defined as the preservation of the values of historical, socio-cultural, social, economic, scientific, architectural and aesthetic structures and their survival by reusing them (Kök & Uşma, 2022). The concept of reuse, which emerged at the point of protection of buildings that are important in the formation of urban identity and ensuring the sustainability of this identity, is a frequently preferred approach in contemporary conservation understanding.

There are also British Period houses in the cultural heritage of Nicosia. Considering the destruction of these structures, which have lost their function within the walls, after a while due to neglect, it can be said that the continuity of use of the structures is important. It is necessary to meet the current requirements in preserving and transferring the British Period houses to the future. However, while doing this, the protection/use balance should be established correctly. For the adaptation to be successful, the building must continue to live with its new function and the new users of the building must be satisfied with the spaces they experience.

Today's functions of British Period houses in Zahra street, which are examined within the scope of this study, are cafes. It has been determined from the analysis that the structure of the buildings, which are examined as facades, interior spaces, courtyards and exteriors, is preserved and adapts to their current functions. They are used for various activities throughout the day in cafes which start their activities in the morning and are open until late in the evening. These activities include casual meetings, social media activities, reading, study, and event meetings.

It is important for harmony with the cafe function that each room, which is among the features of the designs of traditional British Period houses, is suitable for flexible use to be used for every function. In this context, the usage relationship between the cafe and the house is explained in Table 7. As can be seen from Table 7, most of the actions performed in the residential building can also be carried out in cafes.

Table 7: The cafe - house action relationship

Action	House	Cafe
Shelter	✓	
Eating/Drinking	✓	✓
Activities (Having fun, listening to music, chatting, watching TV, etc.)	✓	✓
Cooking/preparation/serving	✓	✓
To lie down	✓	
To sit	✓	✓
WC/Lavatory requirements	✓	✓
Casual meetings	✓	✓

Social media activities	✓	✓
Reading, studying	✓	✓

It is accepted that functioning is the healthiest way to integrate cultural heritages with society (Kök & Uşma, 2022). In the examples in this study examined the adaptation to reuse, it can be said that the transformation of the British Period houses from a residential function to a cafe function was a correct function change. It is seen that there is a sociocultural and economic revival thanks to this reuse of Zahra Street, which was previously considered to be one of the idle areas of the city. In this case, a need of the city or society will be met and improvement of the quality of life will be increased. In addition, the sustainability of buildings with historical value has been ensured by reuse.

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