

## A PROPOSAL FOR SUSTAINABILITY OF A PALIMPSEST CITY: NICAEA

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### ABSTRACT

Turkey is a geography situated on important commerce roads like Spice Road & Silk Road connecting Asia and Europe. With the advantage of its location, Turkey has a mild climate and rich soil. Because of this physical and geographical characteristics Turkey hosted different civilizations throughout history. All civilizations located in Turkey made their own settlements and some parts of this settlements ruined because of various reasons like wars, natural disasters, migrations etc. and became layers buried underground. This layers gradually increased during history and turned Anatolia lands into a palimpsest structure.

Although not having the same significance for Ottoman Empire, Nicaea has been the capital city of Byzantium Empire. For its religious and military importance, council meetings held in the city. Thus, many important historic buildings. Because of these specialties the city was accepted to UNESCO temporary heritage list in 2015. In our days many researches and excavation works are in progress to determine and reveal the historic and cultural layers of the city.

In the scope of this research; Nicaea as being one of the most valuable cities of Turkey and Anatolian history, will be examined in comparison with Thessaloniki (Greece) ve Byblos (Lebannon, Jbail) cities for their similar palimpsest structures and historical importance. Research will be done by literature review and map analysis on cities functional structures. The aim of this research is to compare these three palimpsest cities by means of their physical, social and spatial properties. The findings will be used to propose strategies in order to achieve cultural and historical sustainability of Nicaea.

**Keywords:** palimpsest, historic sustainability, cultural sustainability, Nicaea

### 1. INTRODUCTION

A city is not a single platform but more like a root constructed of different cultural, economic, political, social and archaeological outcomes. According to Brown, recent discourse recognises the city as a multi-layered consturct which can be named as palimpsest. 'Palimpsest' can be considered as a framework for analysis and as a way of thinking about both interventions within and a structuring of urban landscape with a primary intention to examine the relationships that exist between these layers, notably in terms of connections and

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dis-connections and what this might reveal both about how a place operates, and the potential for interventions within it (Brown, 2011).

The concept of palimpsest is broadly used in urban planning and heritage studies. For Azimzadeh, in urban planning field, the concept of the palimpsest is used to explain the construction stages of the architectural monuments and the urban morphology development during the era (Azimzadeh et al., 2007). Valceanu and friends mentioned that urban landscape as palimpsest can be analyzed from the perspective of urban transformation in time and space, and are important for the configuration of its current image (Vâlceanu, et al., 2014) whilst AlSayyah and Graburn think it can be conceived as a palimpsest comprising identity elements specific of each historical eras, genuine heritage that transform this inheritance in urban system heritage (AlSayyad, 2001; Graburn, 2001). From another perspective Gospodini pointed that; spesific aspects of urban morphology as built heritage and innovative design can actively contribute to preservation of the local identity. Gospodini also centers the urban palimpsest on the urban tissue components as; buildings; city image; stages of spatial dynamics of the town during the reference period; territorial development factors and elements that mutually condition the current urban configuration and its dynamics (Gospodini,2004). Turkey is located on important commerce roads like Spice Road and Silk Road connecting Asia and Europe. With the advantage of geographical location Turkey has a mild climate and rich soil. Because of these physical and geographical characteristics Turkey hosted different civilizations at different times. All civilizations located in Turkey made their own settlements and some parts of these settlements were wrecked because of various reasons like wars, natural disasters and migrations and became layers buried underground. These layers gradually increased throughout history and turned Anatolian lands into a palimpsest structure. Nicaea, one of many palimpsest cities of Turkey, is choosen as the main case field because of its historical importance for both Anatolian geography and Christian theological structure and also its cultural, political and archaeological importance. As being one of the most valuable cities of Turkey and Anatolian history, Nicaea will be examined in comparison with Thessaloniki (Greece) and Byblos (Lebannon, Jbail) cities for their similar palimpsest structures and historical importances. All three cities are, on the one hand, important models of classical, cities including archaeological sites and on the other hand, models of living cities. All three cities are designated as UNESCO World Heritage Site with different criteria. Urban archaeology approach, a set of researches to achieve the historic sustainability of cities by analysing and evaluating all periods of them in terms of their physical components and the connections between layers of cities, is choosen as the research method of this study. However, in the scope of this research, only literature review and analysis of functional structure of cities on maps will be undertaken. The data gained by the use of historic method and spatial analysis method will be compared to develop strategies for cultural and historical sustainability of Nicaea. The main aim is to light a way for the heritage management studies undertaken by different parties.

## **2. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THREE PALIMPSEST CITIES**

In this section three palimpsest cities, all of which played important roles in history and include valuable traces for succesful development strategies, are compared with the help of urban archaeology method. Byblos and Thesalloniki are choosed to be compared with Nicaea because of their similarities. All stages of the implemented method are summarized in the following.



**Figure 1.** Location of three cities; Nicaea, Byblos and Thessaloniki.  
(37°25'14.22"K 30°12'48.80"D – Google Earth, 20.02.2017 sa. 19.30)

## 2.1. Documentary Research

In the first stage, short summaries of found written documents, reports, city plans, maps of different periods, photos and drawings of different periods of the chosen three cities are presented one by one.

### 2.1.1. Byblos, Lebanon

Byblos (Jbail, Lebanon) which provides one of the primary examples of urban organization in the Mediterranean world is considered to be one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities. City defined as the site of the multi-layered ruins of one of the most ancient cities of Lebanon, got integrated to UNESCO World Heritage List at 1984 for the criterias 3,4 and 6 which are;

- (iii) Byblos bears an exceptional testimony to the beginnings of Phoenician civilization,
- (iv) Since the Bronze Age, Byblos provides one of the primary examples of urban organization in the Mediterranean World,
- (vi) Byblos is directly and tangibly associated with the history of the diffusion of the Phoenician alphabet (on which humanity is still largely dependent today), with the inscriptions of Ahiiram, Yehimilk, Elibaal and Shaphatbaal (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria/>).



**Figure 2.** Embriaci Family of Genovia Archieve, 1871



**Figure 3.** Byblos Ancient City, Tim Schnarr 2001

For several thousand years city was called as 'Gubla' and later named 'Geba' till Greeks gave the name 'Phoenicia' referring the coastal area and called the ancient city 'Byblos' which means papyrus in Greek. City took the name Byblos because of its importance in the papyrus trade. Famous archaeologist Horn (1963) stated that; Byblos is the earliest of all cities in Syria-

Palestine mentioned in Egyptian records as well as in cuneiform documents of Mesopotamia Byblos was the most important harbour of the Levantine coastline during the Bronze Age and its spatial organisation is typical of this period, namely a series of simple juxtatrade network, particularly the trade of cedar with Egypt, described in the 11th century BC in the account of Wenamon (Horn, 1963). At the report of ICOMOS on Integration at 1984; the oldest human settlement in Byblos is a 7000 years old fishermen village. Around 3200 B.C. the city started to develop around a large necropolis area and at 2800 B.C. new city with a main street and a network of smaller streets was formed but was destroyed with a fire by Amorites at 2150 B.C. Two centuries later the city was rebuilt with a new temple. A commercial city, Byblos was able to accomodate successive domination: Assyrian, Babylonian, Achaemid or Greek. During the Roman period, its commercial role declined, but the city assumed an eminent religious function. During the Crusade the city lost its former importance as a commercial city but captured its religious importance. Under the impulse of the Genoansi commerce made Giblet a prosperous transit harbour (ICOMOS, 1984).

### 2.1.2. Thesaloniki, Greece

Thesaloniki (Greece) got integrated to UNESCO World Heritage List at 1987. The city walls surrounding the historic part of the city and Paleochristian and Byzantine monuments locating inside these walls were inscribed with the criterias 1,2 and 4 which are;

- (i) the mosaics of Rotunda, St. Demetrius and St. David's are among great masterpieces of Early Christian art,
- (ii) the influence of the Thessalonian churches in the development of the monumental arts was considerable first in the Byzantine and later the Serbian World, whether in the Early Christian period of the High Middle Age or the Palaeologan Renaissance,
- (iv) the Christian monuments of Thessalonika are outstanding examples of churches built according to central, basilical and intermediary plans over a period going from the 4th to the 15th century. For this reason constitute a series which is a typological point of reference (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria/>).



**Figure 4.** Thessaloniki Map, 1850 – Unknown owner

**Figure 5.** Thessaloniki

The ancient city of Thessaloniki was founded in 315 B.C. by King Cassander of Macedonia who named it after his wife Thessalonike, just a short time after the new cities of Alexander (ICOMOS, 1987). At the Roman period Thessaloniki was an important metropolis because of its location on the Via Egnatia which connected the city to Byzantium and Rome. At that time Thessaloniki was considered the second largest city of the Byzantine Empire after Constantinople (Gemenetzi, 2016). Being a cosmopolitan and prosperous seaport, the city grew in commercial and strategic importance during the Roman period and was one of the first bases for the spread of Christianity. When Ottomans gained control over the city in 1430, it was transformed to an Islamic city. During Ottoman period different usages were given to the

religious buildings and new sanctuaries were built (ICOMOS, 1987). City remained under Ottoman Empire rule from 1430 to 1912 and in 15th century lost 75% of its population (Karadimou-Yenolympon, 2008). At 16th century improved economically and demographically and at 18th century Thessaloniki became the major economic center of Balkans (Gemenetzi, 2016). Thessaloniki owes its present form to an extraordinary sequence of events -fire and war- which restructured the city. The fire of 1917 burnt the central area and precipitated a vast reconstruction effort. While rebuilding was underway Thessaloniki was inundated by refugees of the Asia Minor war in 1922 (Hastaoglou-Martinidis Vilma, 1997). During twenty three centuries of its existence it had successively passed through Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman periods which marked its space with their specific architecture and urbanism. (Hastaoglou-Martinidis, 1997).

### **2.1.3. Nicaea, Turkey**

Nicaea got integrated to tentative UNESCO World Heritage List at 2014 for the criterias 2, 3, 5 and 6 which are;

(ii) Nicaea has been an important centre of the production of the ceramic tiles and exerted great influences across the regions for long centuries. The technical quality and the beauty of Nicaea ceramic have made it one of the most popular art forms around major cultural centres of the world. Today, fine examples of Nicaea tile can be found almost the entire world's leading museums,

(iii) as one of the capitals of the Anatolian Seljuks and the Ottomans, Nicaea represents the unique testimony to cultural, architectural and artistic examples of these cultures.

(v) with its historic cultural landscape shaped over centuries, Nicaea represents a testimony to the human interaction with both the lake and the surrounding agricultural areas.

(vi) Nicaea is directly and tangibly connected to great historical and religious events that shaped the faith of Christianity (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria/>).

According to ancient reports of famous geographer Strabon; Nicaea was founded in 316 B.C. by Antigonos and named after Lysimachos's (the general who took Nicaea from Antigonos) wife Nicaea (Yalman, 1998). During the Hellenistic period the settlement was planned as a rectangular shaped city with four city gates (İstanbul, Lefke, Göl and Yenişehir) and two main perpendicular axes which can still be seen and actively used today (UNESCO, 2014). The city had four major civilisations ruled over –Roman, Byzantine, Seljuks and Ottoman- till its reach to be a Turkish city. The remains dating earlier than Roman period can be seen out of the city walls but no remains left or yet found inside. During the Byzantine period, Nicaea became an important religious centre, particularly after Emperor Constantine converted the city into Christianity in 313 AD. The first Christian Council called the great Council of Nicaea was held in Nicaea in 325 AD with the participation of bishops more than three hundreds coming from different parts of the Empire. The Seventh Ecumenical Council was also convened in Nicaea in 787 to deal with the iconoclastic controversy on the use of icons. This council was held in the church of Hagia Sophia, constructed by the Emperor Justinian over the ruins of the former church dating back to the 4th century. Anatolian Seljuks took over Nicaea in 1081, made the city their capital and renamed it Nicaea. The city was regained by the Byzantines in 1097. After the Fourth Crusade captured Byzantine capital of Constantinople in 1204, Nicaea became the core of the successor Byzantine Empire after emperor Theodore Laskaris founded the Empire of Nicaea there. During this period, the city became an important political and cultural centre with the construction of imperial and civic buildings such as the palace of the Patriarch, the hospitals, the charity institutions, and the churches. The city walls were also

expanded and reinforced with plenty of towers. With the growth of İstanbul as an Ottoman political and cultural centre after 1453, Nicaea lost its prosperity (UNESCO, 2014).



**Figure 6.** Nicaea Map, 1998 – Bedri Yalman

**Figure 7.** Nicaea Aerial Photo, Nicaea Museum Archive

## 2.2. Documentary Analysis

In this stage, analysis of urban pattern and transportation network together with indication of monumental buildings are described. At the end of the documentary research, it is decided that the comparative analysis of the maps should be made primarily on current aerial pictures and 3D visuals of the cities. The main reason of this decision is that although there are so many maps and pictures describing the choosen cities, unfortunately none of them presents the situation of the three cities at the same period of time. Thus, it is impossible to compare their former urban layouts. The following maps show the main axis of the urban layout with blue, the historic walls with red and the main monumental building with orange color. The urban development process of the cities are also analysed via maps, photos and drawings of different time periods.



**Figure 8.** Byblos- City walls, Citadel & Roman Theatre



**Figure 9.** Thessaloniki- City walls, Main Axes, Forum, Citadel & Roman Theatre



**Figure 10.** Nicaea- City walls, Main Axes & Roman Theatre

## 2.2. Evaluation: Comparative Analysis of the Cases

In this section; data driven from the archival analysis including literature survey, survey of historic maps, photos and pictures together with analysis of current maps are evaluated comparatively. The results of this evaluation are introduced by the help of tables below. The comparison is made under five main headings which are;

- Form and Physical Environment
- Palimpsest Structure
- Historical Importance
- Archeological Heritage
- Architectural Heritage

**Table 1.** Outcomes of Comparative Analysis

	<b>BYBLOS</b>	<b>THESSALONIKI</b>	<b>NICAEA</b>
<b>Form &amp; Physical Surrounding</b>	City developed between pentagon shaped borders.	City developed between pentagon shaped borders.	City developed between pentagon shaped borders.
	Has a coast to Mediterranean Sea.	Has a coast to Aegean Sea.	Has a coast to Nicaea Lake.
	Has a commercial harbour within boarders.	Has a commercial harbour within boarders.	Has an harbour without boarders.
<b>Palimpsest structure</b>	Includes different civilisation periods; Chalcolithic habitats Bronz Age, Amorites, Persians, Romans, Modern	Includes different civilisation periods; Byzantium, Roman, Ottoman, Modern	Includes different civilisation periods; Roman, Byzantium, Seljuk, Ottoman, Modern
	Modern and historic settlements are apart from each other. No modern structuring within boarders, archaeological site is protected from new settlement.	Modern and historic settlements are interwo ven inside the boarders. Modern settlement developed outside the borders and archaeological findings are surrounded by modern life and its buildings.	Modern and historic settlements are interwoven inside the boarders. Agricultu ral fields and farm houses are outside. Archaeological findings spread throughout the city.
<b>Historical Importance</b>	Has commercial importance as a harbour city.	Has commercial importan ce as an harbour city, being on Via Egnatia road connecting Byzantium to Rome	Has commercial importance because of its location on important commercial roads (Silk road, spice road,..etc.).
	No information found	No information found	Has military importance; a defense base between Anatolian settlements and Constantinapole.
	No information found	Has theological importance; an important base for Christianity to spread.	Has theological importance a scene to two important councils of Christianity.
<b>Archeological Heritage</b>	A large part of periodical layers have been discovered and emerged to daylight.	A large part of periodical layers have been discovered and emerged to daylight.	Many of the periodical layers and buildings have still not been discovered.
	Land pieces broke off from coast because of abrasion. City is protected from any human settlement.	Lost some of its elements during fire at 1917. Well protected Ancient city remains are interbedded with modern settlement. Transparent walls and green areas seperate some of the mains from the city.	Has so many architectural layers because of earthquakes, wars and fires. Basilica wrecked and sunked because of natural causes Ancient remains are interbedded with modern settlement and many of them aren't under protection.
<b>Architectural Heritage</b>	Architectural findings are remaining because of Lebannons' heritage conservation policy.	Religious buildings had been undergone a transformation process from church to mosque. They protected their architectural identity during this transformation.	Many of the architectural findings felt into ruins because modern settlement is integrated with the former one. Using spolia materials was a kind of a building culture for the Ottomans.



**Table 2.** Comparison of the Components of Physical Environment

	<b>BYBLOS</b>	<b>THESSALONIKI</b>	<b>NICAEA</b>
<b>Coast</b>	Coast line was used only as a commercial harbour. Because of having a sharp topography it has'nt been used anytime.	Coast line is being used effectively as a walking route and recreational area.	Coast line had not been settled around till today. Discovery of the sunken basilica started researches for the old settlement. Coast line is being used as walking trail and recreational areas.
<b>Street Network</b>	Settlement developed organically –this may be because of topography- so Street network grew out to be organic.	City grew around two main crossing streets. Street network grew around main axes in gridal plan.	City grew around two main crossing streets. Street network grew around main axes in gridal plan.
<b>Citadel</b>	Settlement has a citadel.	Settlement has a citadel.	Settlement has no citadel but has 2 layers of city walls interbedded.
<b>City Walls</b>	Has city walls existing.	Has city walls existing.	Has two layers of city walls existing
<b>Roman Theatre</b>	Has a Roman theatre located close to sea side of the city walls	Has a Roman theatre with a forum on perpendicular coast axe.	Has an unfinished Roman theatre away from main axes located close to lake side of the city walls
<b>Forum</b>	No information found	City forum is located on the coast perpendicular axe with Roman theatre and religious buildings.	City forum has not yet been found but it is thought to be located at crossing area of main axes with Hagia Sophia church.

Table 1 shows the outcomes of this comparative analysis whereas Table 2 shows the components of the physical environment of these cities all of which have a great historical importance and constitute both the archeological and architectural heritage of them. These components are the coast, street network, the citadel, city walls, the Roman Theatre and the Forum.

In this section; outcomes of literature, Picture & drawings, other documentary research and outcomes of document research made on historic maps and current aerial pictures will be explained with a table under chosen headlines; form&physical surrounding, palimpsest structure, historical importance, architectural condition by researchers for classification of the data gained. Document research primarily made on current aerial pictures and 3D visuals of the cities because of historical maps of every city has different dates and difficult to compare.

#### **2.4. Strategy Development**

At the end of the three stages of this research, it is possible to propose some development strategies for the palimpsest city of Nicaea. It is understood that the chosen palimpsest cities have some differences besides having many similarities and these differences make them unique. The development strategies of all these cities should give direction not only for protecting their historical and cultural heritage values, but also making them vital components of the cities' socio-cultural and economic lives. It is a worldwide accepted fact that historic cities should have management plans in order to have a sustainable development process. Having been designated as World Heritage sites in 1984 and 1987 respectively the cities of



Byblos and Thessaloniki have some participatory studies about their management plans. Some strategies have been developed in the scope of these studies.

Some common main needs derived from these studies should be pointed out before offering strategies for the palimpsest city of Nicaea. First of all there is a great need to build up an understanding of the documentation of all the historical phases of these palimpsest cities. Thus, all relevant actors including the local population should be aware of the importance of their living environment. There is a need to verify and update the legal protection of the heritage assets in their context via evaluating historical and landscape connections and interrelationships. Furthermore, a multidisciplinary process via participation of all related actors should be undertaken in order to develop conservation and management strategies.

In the light of these main requirements and analysis made, the first action should be preparing a site management plan with a participatory approach. Furthermore, following strategies can be proposed;

- The outstanding universal significance of Nicaea (different periods and layers of the city, religious importance) should be described and presented to the local people and their awareness about heritage values of Nicaea should be raised,
- A visitor management plan, including the suggestions of a suitable traffic network outside the walled city center, possible improvement of facilities and services, should be prepared,
- A disaster management plan depending on a detailed risk analysis should be prepared,
- A restoration guideline offering the suitable and affordable techniques and materials should be prepared,
- Adaptive re-use of the suitable buildings that have heritage value should be provided in order to vitalize their usage and contribution to the everyday life of the city.

### 3. CONCLUSION

A brief summary of a detailed comparative analysis of three palimpsest cities is presented throughout this study. It is made in order to find out the similarities and differences of these cities having the same degree of historical importance for the World heritage. Indicating these properties enables us to propose some strategies in order to achieve sustainability of these multi-layered palimpsest cities for the future generations.

It is found out that the research methods and process used in urban archeology approach is effective for studies about multi-layered historic cities. The contiguous research and analysis stages support the examination of different archeological layers of different periods of time. Implementation of this methodology for analysing the palimpsest cities having many layers will make the process more efficient and lead the researchers to their objectives systematically. Further in depth researches should be undertaken in order to offer solution alternatives for historical heritage management problems in countries including many historical sites like Turkey. The proposed strategies for Nicaea will light a way to the related actors of heritage management of the city including central and local government representatives, private initiatives and local people. The streets should put on the vital necessity of making the local people aware of the heritage value of their city and improving their sense of belonging to their living environment. Thus, it will be easier and more affective to adopt the developed strategies in order to achieve sustainability of the city.

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