



## *Architecture as a tool for unifying divided cities; A case study of Nicosia*

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### **Abstract**

Globally the world witnesses several efforts towards uniting cities. Major cities are almost heterogeneous in terms of culture and ethnicity; this implies that every city is divided to certain extent. Many reasons may cause city division, where division occurs due to less negotiable aspects as nationality, sovereignty, ethnicity, or religion. Although these affecting aspects may be few, but they allow great insight into how division can ruin a city. Many people around the world may be suffering of living in divided cities, where sometimes there are no and in other times the borders may exist in a line, a buffer, or even mentally. Segregation will always lead to a dead city at the end, while urbanists and architects are seeking sustainable cities. Yet, there is neglect for the architecture solutions although that it could be a tool for gathering the divisions socially, economically, religiously, or culturally. Hence, when they are gathered, they may generate one revival city. Accordingly, this study focuses on a case study that suffers from the concept of “Divided Cities”, and highlight how social aspect, through the architectural solutions, could directly help on solving economical, touristic, and even political issues to achieve a unified convivial city. Moreover, the study is acknowledging the importance of governments and politicians believes towards architecture as a tool for unifying divided cities.

**Keywords:** Divided cities<sup>1</sup>, Sustainability<sup>2</sup>, Social aspect<sup>3</sup>, Unity<sup>4</sup>, People suffer<sup>5</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

The contemporary world is witnessing new forms of warfare and tactics being employed on a global scale. However, the impact of war remains the same: destruction and poverty. Many conflicts, particularly cold ones that stem from social segregation, can be prevented from escalating if addressed in their early stages. Political differences that cannot be controlled can lead to division within cities, and if these divisions become more pronounced, it can weaken the state and provide an opportunity for foreign nations to intervene, citing the need to solve and control the problem. This intervention can evolve into occupation and can last for many years, creating greater problems between countries and ultimately leading to war. Additionally, crime rates often increase as individuals struggle to meet their basic needs.

Architecture can play a significant role in bringing unity to divided cities. Architects and urban planners can help address social, economic, and even some political issues to create a more harmonious city. This study examines the concept of a "Divided City" and the potential of architecture to bring communities together. It uses the historical division between Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities in Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus, as a case study to demonstrate how architectural solutions can directly address economic, touristic, and political issues to achieve a more united and convivial city. Additionally, this study highlights the importance of government and political leaders recognizing the value of architecture as a tool for unifying divided cities.

## 2. Divided cities

In the past few decades, an increasing interest has been thrown into the urban dimension of conflicts. The concept of a "divided city" has been used to describe a wide variety of divisions.

It is notable that cities unite people from different cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds. Within this diversity, similar individuals often congregate and separate from other groups at the same time. (El Khateeb, S., Saber, M. and Shawket, I.M., 2023)

Divided cities mean that there are different areas within a city. All of these have different characteristics. This division may be an actual division to separate the city with completely different politics, religion, and cultures, or it may be a division that represents the differences between two or more groups, such as the prosperous or the poor, dominated by high-rise residential complexes, or single-family homes, or contradicts countless other factors. Although these affecting aspects may be few, but they allow great insight into how division can ruin a city. (Theresa Breslin, 2012)



Fig. (1); Urban division  
Source; Matthew Maganga,2021

The world is witnessing many efforts to unite cities. The Calame and Charlesworth's book came to explain the causes and results of urban division in some cities (Belfast, Beirut, Jerusalem, Mostar, and Nicosia), and concluded that division has long-term effects that can last for years, even if it is for a long time. The division is short. And where it causes problems that outweigh the social problems, it leads to hatred, bitterness and rebellion among the people. Other than the economic collapse and wars that can destroy the city. As segregation will always lead to a dead city in the end. (Case Western Reserve University School of Law Scholarly Commons, 2012)

### 3. Importance of Architects' & Urbanism role in communities

Throughout the ages, architecture has represented society, reflecting values and the eventual collapse of civilizations over time. From the monumental structures to the dwellings and buildings that make up the fabric of the city, we can learn a lot about the culture and lives of the people who inhabited it before us. As the role of the architect is not only limited to building distinctive projects and beautiful buildings but must also help connect the blocks together in a community where users feel supported and able to live well together in accordance with their different values and lifestyle to create a cohesive and collaborative community that does not No one feels privileged or discriminated against. Because architecture is more than just the built environment, it's also part of our culture. It expresses how we see ourselves, as well as how we see the world.( Bandarin, F. and Van Oers, R., 2012),( Lees, L., 2001)

Architecture affects not only society but also on a personal level. It affects everything from the spaces to the materials used in finishing to improve the health and productivity of users. Studies have shown that people who work in properly designed places take fewer sick leaves and are more focused and productive. The landscape surrounding the building must also be designed so that the user is close to nature. Boring buildings and large gray landscapes cause a high level of stress, and the human mind gets confused without variety and dilution. As paper published in 2009 by Murray Krelstein in the Psychiatric Times entitled, 'Have You Ever Felt Awe and Wonder?' mentioned that, "Awe reduces the prevalence and strength of mood disturbances, meaning that beautiful architecture has a role in creating a calmer and happier environment." Architects must understand the needs of the community before they can design spaces that can foster connections and relationships between individuals.( Herzfeld, M., 2006),( Adams, R.E., 2005)

In 2019, researchers at the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, performed a survey in which three-quarters of Rohingya refugees characterized a 'identity crisis' as a key cause in their loss of well-being. For a people whose whole lives revolve on a rich cultural legacy, the Rohingyas have watched helplessly as their language, culture, and customs have vanished before their eyes. In order to address this issue and create a forum for Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar to feel at home, stay connected to their roots, and pass on what they have learnt to future generations, IOM and the Rohingya community have developed The Rohingya Community. Cultural Memory Center (RCMC). (Magee, A., Diwakar, V. and Nicolai, S., 2020)



Fig. (2); Urban division  
Source; arch daily ,2022

## 4. Case study

### 4.1. About Nicosia

The capital of Cyprus, Nicosia, also known as the Republic of Cyprus (International), is the last split capital in the world. Northern Cyprus and (recognized exclusively by) (recognized only by turkey). Round, distinctive geometric form The Venetians constructed Nicosia's Old Town in 1567. The castle walls have remained in good condition. But its unique geometry is compromised. Military Buffer Zone: Green Party under UN rule the border dividing the nation's capital from Nicosia's southern region, it belongs to Northern Cyprus, the Republic of Cyprus, and North Nicosia.(Young-Brown, F., Spilling, M. and Spilling, J.A., 2019) Navaro, Y., 2012.

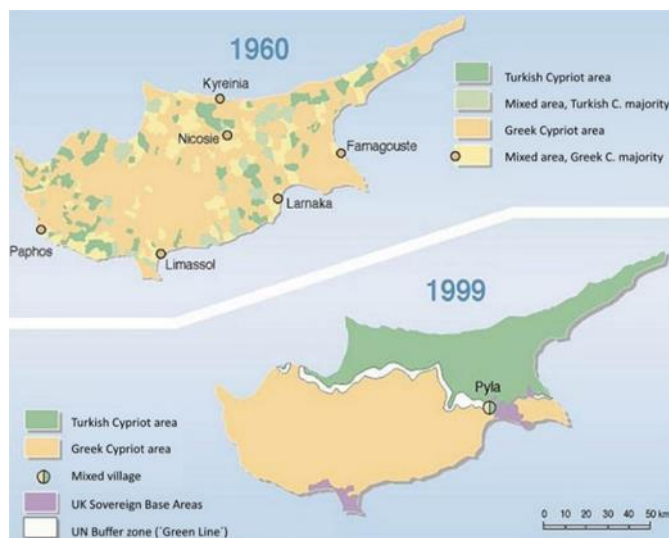


Fig. (3); Cyprus before and after division  
Source; Amazing map,2017

The historical division between the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities in Nicosia must be emphasized. Greek Cypriots and Turkic Cypriots have coexisted in the area north of the city since the arrival of the Ottoman Empire. (Damgacı, A.Y., 2017)

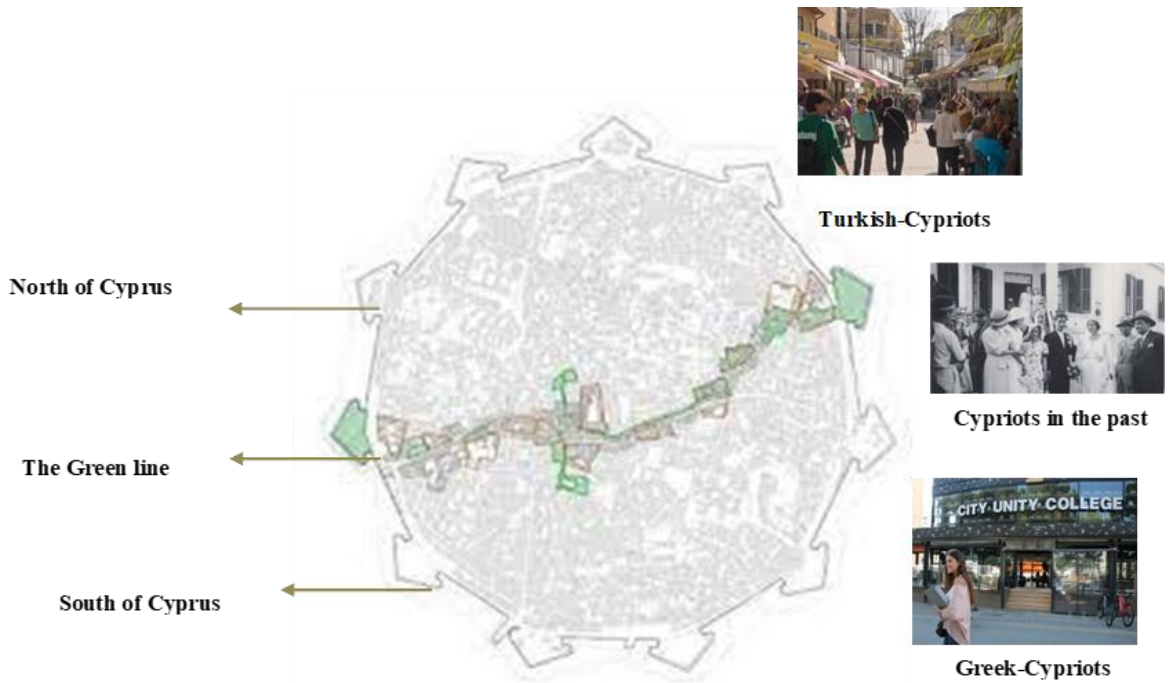


Fig. (4); Derived after Nicosia Master Plan (NPM) – physical development.  
Source; UNDP/UNCHS (1984).

#### 4.2. Communities in the city

The "Cyprus Issue" was the cause of political unrest that began in 1955 when the British colonial government used ethnic divisions for political gain. Despite sharing the island of Cyprus with the two major communities for the past four centuries—the Greek and Turkish Cypriots—they have never fully blended due to their disparate histories, languages, and cultures (Volkan, 1979; Salvator, 1983; Solsten, 1991; Doratli, 2002).

The island was divided into two parts in 1974 as a result of growing interethnic conflict and Turkey's military intervention in a so-called "peace operation" (a move that the harassed and harried Turkish Cypriots saw as a blessing but was seen as a disaster by Greek Cypriots living in the northern third of the island). In 1955 and 1960, EOKA

carried out a number of covert operations against the British government, military, and anyone who was thought to be opposed to enosis (union with Greece). Intercommunal violence and the creation of the Turkish Cypriot TMT (Türk Mukavemet) and Greek Cypriot EOKA (Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston/National Organization for the Cypriot Struggle) political-oriented non-governmental organisations were the outcomes. Transition from colony to an independent nation - following the foundation of the new and independent Republic of Cyprus - was not without hardships, and periodic violence and agitation continued. (Geddes, I., 2014)

Greek and Turkish Cypriots alike enjoy a rich tradition of handicrafts, folk art and silversmithing, which is practiced throughout the island. The gross salary range in Cyprus is from 96000 EUR to 361600 EUR. Weekly holidays in Cyprus are Saturday and Sunday. The most common age group is young people; whose ages range from 25 to 54.



Figure 5; Old stamp of traditional clothes  
Source; Karl Erik(2019)

North Cyprus has the farmers market close to Kyrenia Town which is open every Wednesday and features displays of regional seasonal produce, Weekly homemade food market at Chateau Lambousa in Lapta. Turkish Northern Cyprus' nightlife is not particularly vibrant, but there are bars and clubs in the coastal areas with a variety of Indian, Chinese, French, and Italian restaurants where evenings can be spent in a calm and idyllic setting. These restaurants are arranged in a ring around the port of Girne. There are occasionally concerts in addition to the big hotels being open to gamblers. Due to the world's nations' failure to recognize secession, the northern region experiences high rates of unemployment and inflation. (Media Effects and Beyond: Culture, Socialization and Lifestyles-2008)

In South Cyprus, Greeks, love to spend time outdoors, they like to get together to share a meal, to party. Greek cuisine is famous all over the world for its healthy taste without any sauce or

Seasoning along with fresh herbs, lemon juice and vinegar, and mainly includes vegetables, fruits, seafood and meat. South Cyprus is the most popular tourist region, and this part of the island is infamous due to Aphrodite recognized as the goddess of love, where tourism has been the largest source of foreign income for the Greek Cypriot sector. The Greek part of Cyprus is richer than the Turkish part and its economy is more stable, especially after Cyprus joined the European Union.

### **4.3. Architecture in Nicosia**

The many architectural styles adopted by the Lusignan, Venetian, Ottoman, and British rulers in Nicosia, the island's capital, show how the connection between political authority and architecture in Cyprus has varied over time. The French ecclesiastical style of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was brought to the island by the French Catholic Lusignan Administration (1192–1489), reflecting a political desire to transform Cyprus into a Catholic military and political base. Under the Venetians (1489–1571), the government palaces and homes of Nicosia's socioeconomic and political elite were built in the Italian Renaissance style. As a lasting symbol that has had a significant impact on the architectural identity of the city, the circular walls that were constructed around the city in the late 1560s to defend Nicosia from Ottoman attack are still referred to as the "Venetian" walls. (Given, M., 2005)





Figure 6, The modern building in south Cyprus  
Source; Mark Moxon -2018

Mosques, khans, fountains, and townhouses (konaklar) were all built by the Ottomans, who also introduced their own aesthetic tastes and architectural styles to Nicosia. They also combined several architectural motifs to create an Ottoman "architecture of power." The Ottomans changed the architectural power configuration of Nicosia's political, economic, and social urban spaces by building military, commercial, and administrative structures as well as converting religious buildings like monasteries and churches into mosques. They also changed a Christian architectural power posture into an Islamic one. Along with the city's governmental buildings, the homes in the residential area mirrored the Ottoman culture. Despite the ethno-religious disparities among the empire's subjects and their expression in the aesthetic variants of their homes, the presence of an official welcome chamber (selamlak), especially among the socioeconomic and political elites, affirmed their owners' Ottoman identity (The politics of architecture and urbanism in postcolonial Lagos, 1960–1986'. *Journal of African Cultural Studie.* (Bilsel, N., 2017)



Figure 7, The Roman Hotel is built around a genuine ruined tower  
Source; Mark Moxon -2018



Figure 8 , The modern building in south Cyprus  
Source; Mark Moxon -2018

#### 4.4. About Verocha

The city was named after Arisnoe the II Greek queen of Egypt and in the 3rd century book it was named as Ammochostos which mean the city hidden in the sand and the greek still calls it by Ammochostos, it was found around 274 B.C as Salamis was heavily damaged by an earthquake. By 1192 the city developed and has increased in importance to the Eastern Mediterranean due to its natural harbor and its population began to increase and by the 14th century it was said that Famagusta to be one of the richest cities in the world. The wealth of the people at that time was measured by the church's that was built to inspire the merchants as Famagusta was also know as the district of church's.( Raber, P.A., 2002)

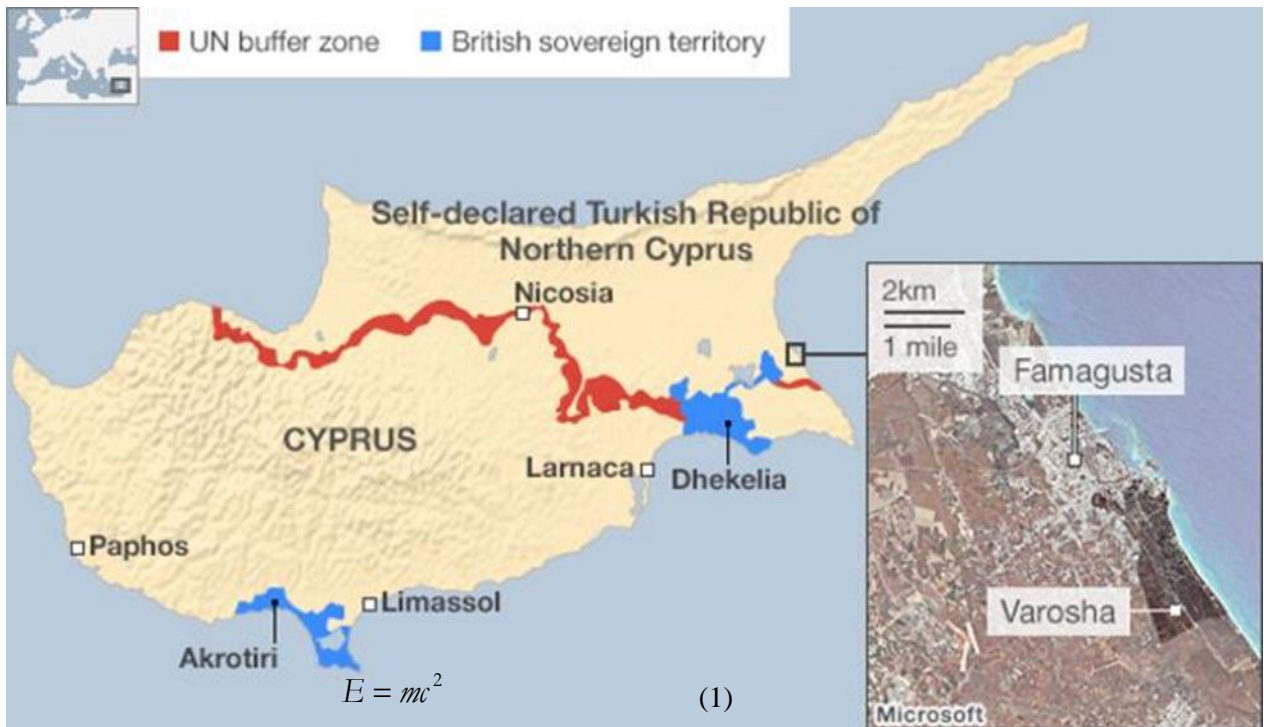


Figure 9, Varosha map

Source; Hooper, R. and Venema, V., 2014

## 4.5. colonizations periods

### 4.5.1. Ottoman Famagusta

Famagusta was the last stronghold to hold out against the Turks under Mustafa pasha, it resisted a siege of thirteen months until the last garrison surrendered but they defended bravely, and the ottoman forces lost around 50,000 men including musta pasha's son. While the ottoman ruled over Fagamusta the Latin's lost the privilege and were expelled from the city even the Greek natives were allowed to buy and own property but later they were banished from the city from 1573-74. Famagusta lost its importance as a trade center due to the Latin's merchants who were expelled and banished from the city. (Uyar, M. and Erickson, E.J., 2009), (Brewer, D., 2012)

### 4.5.2. British rule

With the British takeover Famagusta regained its significance as a port and economic center, as the british took-over the island one of its main role was to reconstruct and re-developed the city including the streets and also provide better hygiene, also the port was developed and expanded between 1903 and 1906 Versoha became the administrative center as the british moved their HQ there and the tourism grew significantly also the trading of citrus and potatoes grew significantly as well. During the British period, the demographics of the city changed significantly. In 1881, Christians made up his 60% of the city's population, and Muslims made up his 40%. By 1960, the Turkish Cypriot population had declined to her 17.5% of the total population, while the Greek Cypriot population had increased to 70% of his. The city was also the site of one of his British concentration camps for nearly 50,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors attempting to emigrate to Palestine. Following nationalist violence in the 1950s, Cyprus was granted independence in 1960. The crisis of 1963–64 brought further intercommunal violence between the two communities, displaced more than 25,000 Turkish Cypriots into enclaves and brought the end of Turkish Cypriot representation in the republic.

On 15 July 1974, a coup d'état was staged by Greek Cypriot nationalists and elements of the Greek military junta in an attempt at enosis. This action precipitated the Turkish invasion of Cyprus on 20 July, which led to the capture of the present-day territory of Northern Cyprus and the displacement of over 150,000 Greek Cypriots and 50,000 Turkish Cypriots. A separate Turkish Cypriot state in the north was established by unilateral declaration in 1983; the move was widely condemned by the international community, with Turkey alone recognizing the new state. These events and the resulting political situation are matters of a continuing dispute. The results of this war led to the Turks taking over the city of Varosha and expelling the Greek citizens from this city. The future of the city became a matter of disagreement between the two prominent ethnic communities. (Stenzel, S., 1999)



Figure 10, Sinan Pasha Mosque  
Source; Gerhard Haubold-2016



Figure 11, paper on the buffer zone in varocha city “I’ve left my soul inside, open up”  
Source; Hooper, R. and Venema, V., 2014

#### 4.6. City-division reflections

An interview with an engineering: A Greek Cypriot citizen who was exiled from Varosha in 1974 when he was 10 years old.

Researchers: we would be grateful if you gave me the opportunity to discuss this project and I hope to gain from your knowledge. Please let me know if there is any other information I can provide. I look forward to talking with you soon.

Arch. Address: Hello dear Mariam, I am well and happy. Thank you also for following the Varosha news. It means a lot to many people, and myself, let me now how can I help you?

Researchers: Can the people unite again? and how? Is the architecture can solve this gap between them? and how? Knowing the necessity of preserving the nature of the green city (which occurred after the abandonment of the city).

Arch. Address: Having worked on Famagusta Ecocity the best way forward is the rehabilitation of the people of Varosha at their homes, and assistance of said people to organise themselves and a city plan. I am saying this because Ecocity showed that there is a lot of reaction with touching the lives of people.

In this case your project should have to do with finding ways of bringing people working together. As far as architectural terms, I would say best you use City Planning wise Famagusta can become a 21st century Ecocity in terms of infrastructure and overall parameters.

The buildings should be reused as this is eco, with exoskeletons providing electricity and water production from atmospheric humidity. I would research Ecocity and financial incentives towards this direction as they would allow you to come in unlocking the real issue which is money

## 5. Conclusion

If the government will support the idea of unification, only then the role of architecture will be effective and have a clear impact with the help of the political and social aspects and study them so that we can through their application achieve the unity of society and then follow it up and study the impact until we get comments and feedback and thus the elements of unity can be developed and improved to obtain better results.

Therefore, the role of architecture is very important because it affects societal unity and preserves it from division, and it can be considered as a preliminary stage for preserving unity, spreading security, safety, peace, and distancing itself from the destruction that wars can cause.

*Governmental support/ allowance*

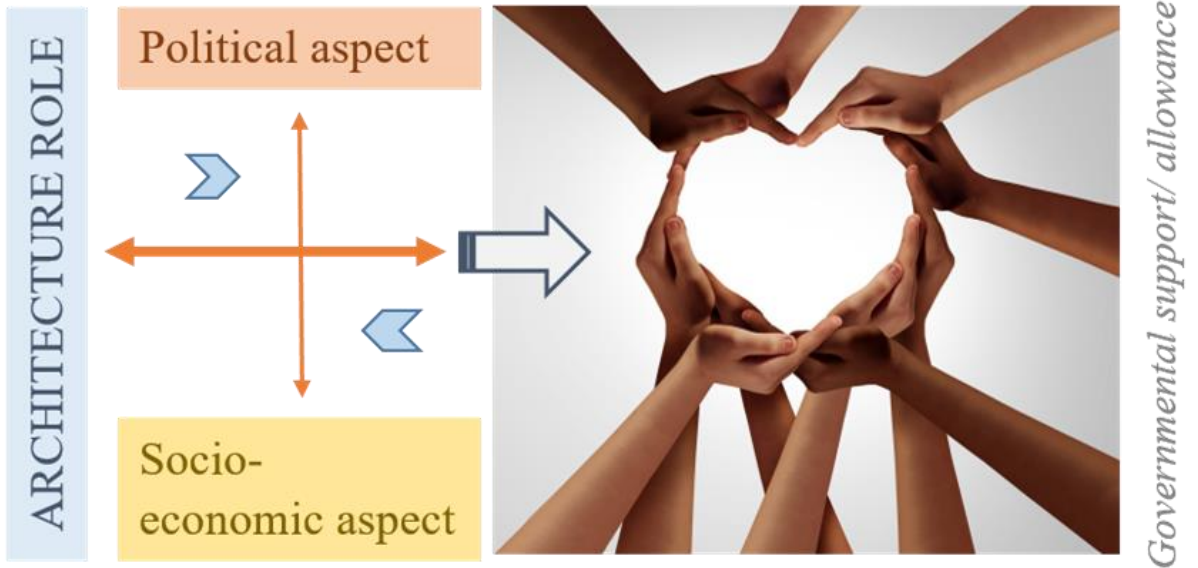


Figure 12, Architectural role via socio-economic aspect  
Source; Researchers, 2023



## **6. Recommendations**

The following recommendations are to highlight the role of each discipline and its effects on community unity and engagement. According to the study the following aspects should be taken into consideration to overcome Divided cities.

### **6.1. Regarding city formation**

The formation of the city is one of the things that can be affected by division, so it turns from a place full of activity and vitality to a deserted place that does not have any kind of life, so parts of the city turn into dead parts, and here is the role of the architect to solve this problem and revive these places constructively About the type of division and the people's need, which effectively hastens its solution. The study recommends that architects and urban planners should consider the potential effects of division when designing and developing cities, and actively work to create spaces that promote inclusivity and community. This can be achieved through various means, such as incorporating mixed-use developments, designing for accessibility and accessibility, and promoting public spaces that encourage social interaction and engagement. Additionally, it is important for architects and planners to involve the community in the design and development process to ensure that the solutions they propose align with the needs and values of the people who will be using them. Ultimately, the goal should be to create vibrant, livable spaces that foster a sense of connection and belonging among residents.

### **6.2. Regarding socio-economic aspect**

One of the fastest and most dangerous factors affected by the division is the social and economic factors, so that the country's economy collapses as a result of this division, especially if it is not recognized globally, such as Cyprus, and therefore the per capita income is less than usual, so it is difficult to meet the basic needs of the individual to enable him to live, such as food drink, housing, clothing, education and health care, thus the new generation becomes uneducated and not healthy. Accordingly, we will find that the crime rate increases so that individuals can meet their daily needs to satisfy the human instinct to survive. The study recommends that this could be done by promoting policies and initiatives that aim to improve economic opportunities and living standards for residents in affected areas. This can include measures such as job creation programs, investment in education and healthcare, and social safety net programs to support those in need. Additionally, it is important to focus on building a more inclusive economy that promotes shared prosperity and addresses income inequality.

In terms of recognition of division, it is essential to work towards achieving a global recognition of the divisions, through diplomatic efforts and negotiations to achieve long-term peace and stability.

Furthermore, it is important to actively engage with the communities affected by division to understand their needs and develop solutions that are tailored to their specific circumstances. This can be done through community consultations, public engagement

and participation, and the promotion of collaboration and dialogue between different groups.

In summary, the study recommends taking a comprehensive approach to address the social and economic factors affected by division, by promoting policies and initiatives that support economic opportunities and living standards, achieving global recognition, and engaging the communities affected by the division to understand their needs and develop tailored solutions.

### **6.3. Regarding political aspects**

Differences that could not be control make division occurs in the city, and if these differences grow, it makes the state weak, and that enables external countries to intervene under the pretext of solving and controlling the problem, which can then develop into an occupation that can last for many years and create bigger problems. between countries and thus could lead to wars. The study recommends that efforts should be made to address the underlying causes of division in order to prevent the escalation of tensions and potential intervention by external countries. This can be done by promoting policies and initiatives that promote inclusivity, understanding and acceptance of differences, and encourages dialogue and collaboration among different groups.

It's important to actively work on building strong institutions that can effectively mediate conflicts and provide a framework for resolving differences. This can include creating independent and impartial judicial systems, as well as strengthening democratic institutions such as parliaments and local councils.

It's also important to actively work on building strong civil society organizations, which can provide a space for peaceful dialogue and cooperation between different groups. This can include promoting civic education and awareness, as well as supporting local community-based organizations.

In addition, it's important to develop robust economic policies that promote stability and sustainable development, which can help to mitigate underlying economic and social tensions and reduce the likelihood of conflict.

Finally, it is important to establish a strong communication channel to reduce misinformation and rumors that may increase the mistrust between different groups, this can be done through different mediums like social media, official news channels, and community forums, for example.

In summary, the study recommends taking a multi-faceted approach to address the underlying causes of division, by promoting policies and initiatives that promote inclusivity, building strong institutions and civil society, developing robust economic policies, and providing a platform for peaceful dialogue and cooperation. This can help to prevent the escalation of tensions and potential intervention by external countries and reduce the likelihood of future conflicts.

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