How can urban context maintain urban identity and sustainability?: Evaluations of Taormina (Sicily) and Kyrenia (North Cyprus)

Derya Oktay*

Abstract

I centri abitati con un’identità ben definita rivelano che l’elemento maggiormente determinante del carattere urbano è il contesto locale, formato dalla sommatoria di tutti gli elementi fisici e naturali e, in particolare, l’ambiente creato attraverso le generazioni. A tal proposito, considerando che la scomposta, spoglia e marginale città pianificata attorno all’automobile e descritta come un ambito urbano decentrato, privo di confini e carattere non è stata a lungo considerata sostenibile, il distretto e lo spazio pubblico potrebbero essere reputati come una parte vitale del paesaggio urbano con le loro proprie qualità. D’altro canto, la percezione umana delle forme visuali, che crea la significativa apparenza del contesto edificato, ostenta chiaramente il modo in cui facciamo uso della città e si concretizza in relazione alle seguenti caratteristiche: lo stile e le proporzioni degli edifici, i loro colori e materiali, il fattore accattivante delle relazioni tra edifici e spazi, alberi e paesaggi, il profilo dell’arredo stradale, i segni e le superfici del piano. Comunque, poiché l’identità è corelata al “carattere” di un’area, è importante fare una distinzione tra il concetto di carattere e quello di aspetto; perché il “carattere” ha una dimensione puramente visuale o spaziale e non può essere automaticamente ottenuto seguendo l’attuazione di un nuovo schema di disegno urbano. Sulla base di simili concetti, il presente articolo offre un’introduzione teorica alla nozione di contesto urbano locale, ne fornisce un’analisi esemplificativa attraverso l’esame di due centri abitati dell’area mediterranea (Taormina in Sicilia e Kyrenia a Cipro Nord) ed individua alcune chiavi oggettive utili a disegnare/ridisegnare strategie mirate alla crescita dell’identità e della sostenibilità urbana.

1. Introduction

Since cities are constantly changing, and evolving new forms, their urban identity is created through the complex interaction of natural, social and built elements. Therefore, the urban environment has to be considered from a historical perspective, not merely by understanding historically significant buildings, but rather through the evolution of the local urban context, with respect to human activity, built form, and nature. At the most fundamental level, cities are identifiable in terms of their geographical setting; however, built elements are the most critical forms in terms of influencing the identity both in negative and positive ways within a short period of time. This is also significant in the creation of ‘a sense of place’, an important factor in achieving identity and sustainability in urban settlements as stated by many theorists, such as Relph and Punter.

It is often argued that individuals need to feel a sense of belonging to a collective entity or place, and of individual identity, which may be achieved by physical sepa-

* “Eastern Mediterranean University” – North Cyprus.
1 This is a revised version of the author’s paper Interfaces between Local Urban Context, Identity and Sustainability: Analysis in Two Mediterranean Towns - Taormina and Kyrenia presented at the International Conference for Integrating Urban Knowledge and Practice, Gothenburg, Sweden, May 29 - June 3, 2005.
2 Oktay 1996.
3 Relph 1976.
ration or distinctiveness, and/or a sense of entering into a particular area. As Norberg-Schulz\textsuperscript{5} argued ‘to be inside’ is ‘the primary intention behind the place concept’. Similarly, for Relph\textsuperscript{6} the ‘essence of place’ lay in the experience of an ‘inside’ as distinct from an ‘outside’, occasionally in an unconscious manner. Identity, thus, is closely connected with the experience of place.

It has been argued that the identity of settlements primarily depends on their figural character in relation to the landscape, and that the scattered concentrations reveal a basic environmental structure. In this context, as stated by Norberg-Schulz\textsuperscript{7} the identity of the settlement relative to its surroundings depends on a certain density. Since identity is related to ‘character’ of an area, it is important to make a distinction between character and appearance because, character has more than a purely visual or spatial dimension, and it cannot be instantly achieved following the implementation of a new urban design scheme. As Manley and Guise highlighted,\textsuperscript{8} a place can only gain real character with the passage of time. When people have been able to alter and adapt it, and, when they have evolved their own images of that distinctive place in their minds. Schulz and Relph obviously owe much to Heidegger,\textsuperscript{9} who was the first to maintain that “existence is spatial”; more clearly, “existence and existential space cannot be separated; the world at any time reveals the spatiality of the space which belongs to it; any activity means ‘to be somewhere’ ”.

Place-identity is defined by Lynch\textsuperscript{10} as ‘the extent to which a person can recognize or recall a place as being distinct from other places’. In relation with experience of a city, place-identity leads to ‘urban identity’. Urban identity is closely bound up with urban sustainability, an important factor to enhance the quality of urban life in cities, which embraces environmental, economic and social aspects.

Sustainability is the equitable preservation of the built and natural environments, cultural heritages, and economic opportunities. Sustainable development (and/or re-development) is the process that brings us ever closer to sustainability. One could argue that the sustainable city is one that simply lasts through the ages, which has the ability to rebuild itself. In addition to strategies for sustainable and economic development, cities should help generate and protect the sense of place, a quality that was also stressed by the European Commission ‘Green Paper on the Urban Environment’.\textsuperscript{11} Therefore, the notion that sustainability implies the fight for control over

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item\textsuperscript{5} Norberg-Schulz 1971, 25.
\item\textsuperscript{6} Relph 1976, 111-112.
\item\textsuperscript{7} Norberg-Schulz 1971, 29.
\item\textsuperscript{8} Manley, Guise highlighted 1998.
\item\textsuperscript{9} Heidegger 1962, 103.
\item\textsuperscript{10} Lynch 1981.
\item\textsuperscript{11} European Commission 1990.
\end{itemize}
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space and the fight for control over time should be supported.

2. What makes the local urban context?

Considering older and historic cities which have a strong identity, the most significant determinant of the urban identity is the local urban context that is formed by all elements of the physical and natural elements, in particular the urban environment created over generations. In this context, two important elements organise the city: the district and the public domain. However, the acknowledgement that the basic elements of the city are the district and the public domain, the street and the square, is in opposition to important trends in contemporary city planning. The dense district is today generally replaced by a scattered distribution of slab-like buildings, which can hardly be recognized or imagined as an entity. Consequently, identifiability of the districts is lacking and buildings are designed with little concern for their relationship to each other or for their effect on the quality of the city. Spaces left between them have become undefined, undesirable, useless and unliveable.

The district or the neighbourhood is the identifying symbol both for the evaluation of the city, and for the new urban extension, and it is also fundamental for sustainable development. The term ‘neighbourhood’ has had a special interest for urban designers, because designing communities has been a major social concern for more than three decades. As stated by Moughtin, a creative and responsive design attitude towards the districts by reinforcing their strengths can heighten local distinctiveness and create memorable places.

A major part of the urban experience is the experience of the public domain that could be differentiated into functional components, such as streets, parks, plazas, and, in Lang’s terms, quasi-public spaces that are either privately owned spaces open to the public or public spaces to which access is controlled. In addition to providing for a variety of ways to get from one place to another, the public domain provides many spaces for a wide range of additional functions and activities. In this context, in order to achieve a more sustainable urban context, these spaces should be acknowledged as a vital part of the urban landscape with their own qualities. Perhaps the best evidence for the vital importance of public urban spaces is historical. From the times of the earliest cities there is evidence of a basic human impulse to govern streets and open spaces, to make them more useful in the necessary and desired activities of the old city and to make them more beautiful and restorative to

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12 Moughtin 1996, 111.
13 Ibid.
the citizens of the community.15 This is especially true in the case of the street as a throughway. In fact, the ‘street’ is the prime exterior space of the city and an intrinsic component of the urban pattern. The primary quality of a street is due mainly to the handling of volume, but the mood or character of the street is created by its architecture. Streets with identical qualities play an important role in the image of a city, hence in the orientation of people.

The square is the most distinct element of the urban structure, and is determined by the same formal factors as the street, with the difference being that the buildings should form a continuous boundary around the space. However, considering the whole city and its identity, not all squares should have the same significance. In many old and historic cities, one square serves as the heart of the town, region, or nation, and greatly helps identify the city. Piazza del Campo in Siena, Piazza San Marco in Venice, Piazza del Duomo in Milan and the Grand Place in Brussels are the most notable examples of such squares.

3. What constitutes the ‘character’ of a district?

The perception of the visual forms, which creates a meaning ‘appearance’ and constitutes the physical context, strongly affects how we make use of the city, and relates to the following qualities: the style and proportions of the buildings, their colour and materials, the attractiveness of the relationships between buildings and spaces, trees and landscaping, the design of street furniture, signs and ground surface. However, since identity is related to the ‘character’ of an area, it is important to make a distinction between character and appearance; because, character has more than a purely visual or spatial dimension, and it cannot be instantly achieved following the implementation of a new urban design scheme.

Theorist, Christian Norberg-Schulz speaks of the genius loci – the spirit of a place.16 Great plazas and other public places evoke this spirit. Genius loci is also the character of the site, and the ‘character’ of the site is, in a town, not only the geographical but also historical, social and especially the aesthetic character. An area’s character is experienced through its buildings and network of spaces, modest and grand, intimate or exposed, revealing views to landmarks or glimpses to secluded alleys and courts. The pattern of uses and activities is the other crucial determinant of the character of an area. As first explored by Jane Jacobs,17 activity both produces and mirrors quality in the built environment. She identifies four major determinants which govern or set

the conditions for activity: variety in primary uses, intensity, permeability of the urban form and variety of building types, ages, sizes and conditions. As Manley and Guise highlight, character also includes a sensory experience of sounds and smells as well as sight. To seek to understand the local character of a place Mark Childs suggests asking the following questions:

«How does the town and plaza sit within the topography of the land? Is it high on a hill or nestled in a narrow valley? Can we design the room so that it is part of the larger landscape, like a box seat in a theater? What are the temperaments and colors of the sky, and how can we frame them? Is water abundant or scarce? How have people survived and prospered in this landscape? What is traditionally grown here, and what birds or other creatures can we invite to share the plaza?... »

In addition to these, another important dimension of a place is ‘time’. A place also effects the more intangible cultural associations – a certain patina given by human use over time. This phenomenon arises from the need for people, as cultural beings, to have a stable system of places to depend on, thereby providing emotional attachment and identity with place. As clearly described by Trancik:

«The universal nature of this dependence on the qualities of a particular space places a very real obligation on the designer ‘to create truly unique contextual places’ and to ‘explore the local history, the feelings and the needs of the populace, the traditions of craftsmanship and indigenous materials, and the political and economic realities of the community’.”

4. Analysis in two Mediterranean towns: Taormina and Kyrenia

In consideration with the above, some key principles are introduced below with a view to urban identity and sustainability by means of analyzing two towns with distinctive identities in the Mediterranean, which are Taormina in Sicily, and Kyrenia in Northern Cyprus.

4.1. Taormina

The town of Taormina is situated 240 meters above sea level on the north eastern coast of the island of Sicily. The beauty of the town’s geographical position and the magnificent landscape with its rich vegetation make Taormina a unique place and a favourable resort in the Mediterranean. The picturesque and orderly historic centre displays a large number of buildings and other remains from the town’s Hellenistic, Roman and Medieval periods dating back to 396 BC. Metaphorically speaking the

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19 Childs 2004.
20 Trancik 1986.
town resembles a huge balcony perched on the hillside with a dramatic view of Mount Etna. Presently, Taormina provides a large number of hotels, restaurants and a great variety of entertainment facilities, where the majority of its residents (80 percent) earn their living from tourism. The history of Taormina has alternated between prosperity and decline under the rule of various civilizations including Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Normans, and Spaniards. The Greek theatre that dates from the 3rd century BC is referred to as the “Antique Theatre” and is the symbol and the major attraction of the town. It sits atop a hill surrounded by a dramatic landscape and overlooking Mount Etna. Presently it hosts cultural and artistic events, especially during the summer season, such as the ‘Taormina Arte’ festival (figs. 1-3).

1. Map of Taormina.
The urban plan is of clear medieval origin, based on a number of thoroughfares, among which is the Corso Umberto (Umberto Street), the major street, along which there are several renowned meeting places, such as Piazza IX Aprile (9 April’s Square). Corso Umberto is a very well defined semicircle in the urban texture of the old city and links Porta Catania (Catania Gate) in the south with Porta Messina (Messina Gate) in the north (figs. 4–5). These two arched gates are in fact the gates to the heart of the historic town and provide a strong ‘sense of place’ marking ‘inside’ and ‘outside’. Much of Corso Umberto is typically medieval in appearance (fig. 6).

The street is narrow and devoid of pavements and is lined with a variety of buildings styles. Diverse functions, including the houses above the shops and restaurants, make it a place that is alive round the clock. The street is closed to vehicular traffic between the two gates and served by a loop of vehicular traffic on one side. Many lanes and alleys lead off it, many of which are spanned by arches and stepped (figs. 7–8). These give picturesque glimpses of the surrounding hillsides with their luxuri-

21 It is fortunate that a new multi-storey car parking has already been introduced outside Taormina allowing the visitors and tourists to leave their cars and walk to the city centre.
ant vegetation, gardens and villas, and the maze of medieval alleys below against
the background of the blue sea. Occasional small squares with bars and meeting-places
and a great variety of elegant shop-windows make the walk along the street a very
pleasant experience (fig. 9).

Piazza IX Aprile (9 April Square), the main square,
opens out from the central
street, Corso Umberto,
breaking the continuity of
the town’s central axis. Sur-
rounded and ennobled by
buildings of considerable
monumental and architec-
tural interest, the square
serves as a highly identifi-
able civic room in the town.
The Clock Tower dominates
the lower side of the square
and forms an entrance lead-
ing into the medieval town,
separating the latter from
classical and Hellenistic
Taormina through an arch.
Because of its ‘strategic’ po-
sition the piazza is the main
focus of social gatherings in
the Ionian town and offers a
panoramic view of the bay
and of the Etna volcano (fig.
10). The piazza, shaded and
embellished by plants, is the
favourite destination of tour-
ists and visitors, the compul-
sory stop of the evening
promenade along the main street. Elegant open-air bars and meeting-places invite one
to take a rest (figs. 11–12). The city offers many other plazas and many worthwhile his-
toric buildings as well. The medieval houses and palaces in the town, buildings of
distinctive character, display a mixture of architectural styles.
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8. Taormina. Houses around Corso Umberto.


It is fortunate that the newer parts of the city outside the gates could be said to be in harmony with the older core, as they were designed with sensitivity in topography. The castle of Castelmola is located in the village of Castelmola near Taormina, that was an outpost against foreign invasions. The castle, nestled atop a cliff overlooking a beautiful landscape is a point of attraction where one drives and looking over the unique context of Taormina provides an overall picture of the town. Located in the centre of the town, the Municipal Garden is a green area offering a panoramic view of the coast and of the volcano, with colourful gardens mainly composed of tropical and Mediterranean plants.

The sea previously exploited for fishing, today is a fundamental tourism resource in Taormina.

In line with the analysis, observations and the interview with local people, visitors and tourists, Taormina could be considered a city with identity/character owing to the following characteristics:
- its geographical position surrounded by steep slopes, with buildings well integrated with the slope and the cliff in the background
- flexible-grid urban pattern applied on the steep topography
- presence of a powerful symbol: the Greek/Antique Theater
- presence of a highly identifiable civic room: Piazza IX Aprile

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22 A survey was conducted by the author in Taormina between 15 August 2003 - 15 September 2003 in order to determine their views concerning the effects of tourism, and the image of and satisfaction with urban life in the town.
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- presence of a highly identifiable main street as ‘a place to go’: Corso Umberto
- presence of great unity in the townscape, despite the diversity in forms, colors, and functions
- maintaining the authentic character, true to its identities, and keeping the local Sicilian spirit without giving way to Disneyland images, despite the prevailing tourist-oriented functions
- opportunity of viewing the entire town from a higher level
- rich greenery and landscape unifying buildings
- a hierarchical network of well-defined/well-enclosed outdoor spaces
- surprising effects: glimpses to the Ionian sea walking through the streets
- vitality in public spaces due to the range of mixed-uses including residences
- opportunity of having contact with local people in all areas including the main public spaces
- similar age range of buildings
- similar building materials and textures
- narrow balconies with iron-work railings and rich greenery
- ceramic ornamentation and symbols on building walls
- residents’ direct contact with the street: sitting/socializing in their front balconies
- transparency/visibility of functions seen as one walks through the spaces
- similar pattern of ownership
- common image of the town perceived by residents, visitors, and tourists.
- mild climate
- cheerful pace of life due to the crowd of tourists in the streets and bars/cafes/restaurants

Taormina could be considered a sustainable city as well, because of the following qualities:

- walkability owing to its compact urban form and human scale
- locally appropriate urban context, which was set out as similar to Hippodamus’s plan of Priene, allows most of the buildings to have view towards the Ionian Sea and be naturally ventilated
- identifiable and frequented public urban spaces with unique qualities enabling local people meet and socialize, and visitors pass the time
- mixed-used quality in central parts where houses and tourist facilities are mingled
- non-existence of separation between the local people and visitors/tourists
- easy access to all parts of the town despite the level changes
- characteristic trees as the main components of the major public spaces
- rich architectural heritage and appropriately renovated and re-used historic buildings
- economic viability of the town owing to its being a centre for cultural and recreational tourism including sea resources
- keeping the local Sicilian spirit without creating the image of a commercialised place
- satisfaction of the residents of the town with the fact that tourism dominates the urban life for 12 months of the year.

4.2. Kyrenia

Kyrenia is regarded as the most charming town and the most popular resort on the northern coast of the island of Cyprus, where the urban life dates back to Hellenistic periods to 58 B.C. The history of Kyrenia had alternating periods of prosperity and of decline under the rule of various civilizations including Romans, Byzantines, Lusignans, Venetians, Ottomans, British, Greeks and Turks. The city is attached to the 7th Century Byzantine castle which lies to the north-east of Kyrenia and dominates the harbour. Presently the castle hosts cultural and artistic events, occurring during the summer season. The city is built around the horseshoe-shaped harbour, and surrounded by beautiful scenery at the foot of the northern range of mountains, the Beşparmak Range, which steeply slope towards the sea as a vast land for olive trees, a symbol for the Kyrenia region (figs. 13-15).

There are a number of places of historical interest within easy reach of Kyrenia amongst which is the well-preserved 12th century Bellapais Abbey and village. Also St. Hilarion Castle, which is perched 2,000 feet above Kyrenia in the Five Finger mountains, providing the visitor with a panoramic view of Kyrenia and most of the northern coastline.

13. The map of Kyrenia: the old core.

The urban pattern in the old core of the city still keeps its spatial quality of human scale and local identity despite some inappropriate uses in certain parts and general mismanagement (figs. 15-16).

The harbour, which was only used for lighters and long shore boats in the past, is now lined by old tall and massive houses, originally built as carob stores for the staple trade of the neighbourhood. The region stopped exporting carob long time ago and the long rectangular carob houses encircling the harbour have been restored and converted into bars, cafes and restaurants. Some of these still retain their original arched windows and wooden balconies. The harbour makes a highly identifiable civic room and is a unique architectural heritage, currently being the most popular area for tourists and the local people to dine and spend time. When the area is not crowded with visitors, it is frequented by expatriate Englishmen and Germans who prefer the mild Kyrenia winter to the cold and wet winter of their countries and buy properties in the region. The harbour has so powerful character that, without it, there would not be a Kyrenia. However, since there are only a few dwellings in the harbour, a visitor cannot have clues about the local people and their life styles; therefore there is a risk of losing the local spirit.

The traditional urban pattern surrounding the harbour has a medieval and organic character with well-scaled narrow streets that ascend and descend the hillside. Since this is the quarter that is directly accessible from the harbour, its peculiarities are one of the determinants of the general identity of the town. The old pattern owes
its positive place quality to contained outdoor spaces that are defined, ordered and scaled by an array of houses serving as a ‘perimeter wall’ to the street on one side, and the gardens and courtyards on the other. The role they play as an interface between public and private domains remains fairly constant throughout the area.\(^\text{23}\) In the area, as a positive quality, where possible, in harmony with the topography of the site, the steep slope was used through introducing steps; accordingly, dramatic changes were created and the people’s spatial experiences were extended. The urban pattern has some narrow openings to the harbour in a few places where the view is impressive. However, there seems to be a risk of losing the authentic character in the area due to the increasing number of shops, cafés and restaurants that favor international styles and images rather than reflecting the Cypriot image. The street itself, in the past, was the communal meeting place that extended into the house at ground level. Today, despite the functional transformations, social gathering among the neighbours in the street is still popular as observed in certain parts, even if the houses have private courtyards at the back. However, in some places where the vehicular and pedestrian traffic flow is dense, they sit close to the entrance inside and keep their door open to watch outside. The quarter is clearly bounded by larger streets that had been transformed and included commercial and recreational uses in the appearance of modern shopping arteries; this provides easy access from the residential quarter to the central facilities.

On the other hand, the newer districts of the town do not seem to follow either a logi-

\(^{23}\) Oktay 1998.
cal development system or a locally appropriate urban pattern. They are totally different in their urban character, and the residential buildings in these areas are modern concrete-frame slabs and construction isolated on their individual plots. Consequently, local identity is lacking. The positive qualities of a definite centre cannot be observed either in the major node of the expanded city, the Municipality square, or in the other square by the sea (Monument Square) where the ceremonies are being held. Both squares lack three-dimensional qualities; the major node serves as a traffic island only, and the other square, despite its potential of being a lively gateway to the harbour area and a ‘place to go’, reveals a very artificial image and cannot attract people at all. In addition, green elements that are characteristic to the region, such as olive trees, are not valued; the new environments reflect rather artificial images. Consequently, there is no clear identity in the newly developed quarters and their negative features greatly endanger the identity and local values of Kyrenia. However, despite the presence of problems in the newer parts, the local people and visitors still describe Kyrenia as a town with identity and character due to the following qualities:

- its geographical position on the coast and surrounded by slopes on the skirt of the Beşparmak Mountain range
- presence of a highly identifiable civic room: the harbour
- opportunity of viewing the entire town from a higher level
- presence of a powerful symbol: the Venetian Castle by the harbour
- architectural style and materials of the old buildings surrounding the harbour
- organic urban pattern in the older quarters
- contained outdoor spaces in the older quarters
- surprising effects: glimpses to the harbour and the Mediterranean sea walking through the narrow streets in the old quarter
- residents’ direct contact with the street: sitting in front of their houses in the old quarter
- houses simple in size and architectural details in the old quarter
- mild climate and smell of the sea
- peaceful pace of life in the harbour area except weekends.

Concerning sustainability, despite the doubts one may have about the current state of the newer parts of the town, Kyrenia could still be considered semi-sustainable owing to the following qualities:

- walkable city centre owing to its compact urban form and human scale
- locally appropriate urban context in the older core reflecting environmentally sound

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24 A survey was conducted by the author in various durations between 2002-2004 involving the students of Eastern Mediterranean University, Famagusta.
design principles
- presence of a major public space (harbour) bringing people together
- keeping the local Cypriot spirit without creating the image of a commercialised place in the harbour area
- variety of primary uses
- diversity in recreational use (bars, restaurants, cafes, casinos, etc.)
- diversity in use in the main shopping strips
- rich architectural heritage and appropriately re-used historic buildings
- economic viability of the town owing to its being a centre for tourism.

5. Conclusion: what makes a city identifiable and sustainable?

Considering older cities with a strong identity, the most significant determinant of the identity of the city seems to be the local urban context that is formed by all elements of the physical and natural elements, in particular urban environment created over generations. In this context, the district and the public domain organise the city.

Cities and urban projects should always be seen, considered and devised within the appropriate context, culturally and environmentally. Giving primacy to identifiable districts and the public domain comprising of locally appropriate outdoor spaces should be a major issue for the designers and the other professionals when dealing with the quality and identity of a city in a period of change. Architecture and landscape architecture must respond to and aim at strengthening the meaning and sense of place. In regard to ecological sustainability, that means the fight against the apparently irreversible deterioration of the environment and of the quality of life, nature in the city is a fundamental issue. This brings into the discussion the idea of fighting against the end meaning of the localized space or the meaningless of space, which creates a major challenge. In order to achieve a more sustainable urban context, acknowledging urban space as a vital part of the urban landscape, with its own specific sets of functions is very important.

In line with the theoretical evaluations and the findings of the analysis, observations and the interviews made in Taormina and Kyrenia, two Mediterranean towns with distinctive identities, the following qualities should be taken into consideration by planners and urban designers in order to create and/or enhance the urban identity and sustainability.

- the city should be well integrated into the topography, and planned as a compact settlement to reduce the walking distances
- the presence of symbols or landmarks identifying the city should be highly valued
and protected; in newly developed urban areas, new symbols, landmarks or focal points should be introduced into the urban townscape
- the identifiable ‘civic rooms’ in the city should be highly valued; in newly developed urban districts, similar concept should apply to new squares in order to bring people together
- the major streets should be designed or redesigned as ‘places to go and spend time’
- the opportunity of viewing the entire town from a higher level should be created by means of natural or artificial settings
- unity in diversity should be the major challenge
- green elements that are characteristic to the region, such as olive trees of Kyrenia region, should be protected or, in newly developed districts, introduced in the new townscape
- the city centre should have a mixed-use character including the residential function; in this context, flats for students, single persons and elderly may be integrated with the commercial areas
- public spaces should form a venue for a range of diverse activities, from outdoor eating to street entertainment, from play areas to a venue for civic or political functions, and most importantly of all, as a place for walking or sitting outside
- presence of historic and old elements in the urban scenery should be sustained through the appropriate re-use of the built resources.
- building elements that are characteristic to the area should be valued and used in new designs
- local life-style should be enhanced
- similar pattern of ownership should be provided.

The problems and opportunities discussed above bring into view one fact: it is crucial that in the future legislative framework for development and growth, the ‘urban design’ scale concerning with the creation, regeneration, enhancement and management of the built environments which are sensitive to their local contexts and sympathetic to people’s needs should not be neglected. Planners and urban designers should ask themselves whether they can shape districts and towns through the development of patterns of public spaces as the set of squares, streets, urban frameworks and other public places are a significant component of the character and functioning of our towns. In this regard, a comprehensive city spaces and public works plan ought to be a vital component of comprehensive plans produced by the planning authorities.
References

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Photographic references
Map (1, 13); Postcard (2); Bonechi 1988 (3); D. Oktay (4-12, 14-18).