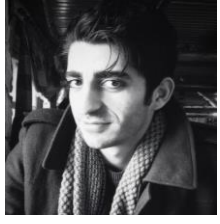


# Revitalizing Famagusta's Historical Urban Spaces to Promote Student Leisure time: a Case Study



Hesam Mosharraf, PhD candidate, University of Minho, Portugal, and Eastern Mediterranean University, Northern Cyprus. Email: Hesam.mshf@gmail.com. ORCID: 0000-0003-3066-4783

Received: 21.05.2023, Accepted: 21.06.2023

DOI:10.17932/IAU.ARCH.2015.017/arch\_v09i1002

**Abstract:** *Individuals commonly congregate in various locations, such as urban public spaces, to engage in leisure activities. The preservation and revitalization of these public spaces, particularly those with historical significance, are primarily geared towards accommodating tourists. That's why in the seasons or times that the number of visitors decreases, these areas became empty of life and livability. Therefore, in addition to the tourists, these places need some revitalization to encourage and attract local people and younger generations to use them. In the historical city of Famagusta, there are lots of historic urban spaces that being used for tourist attractions, but in spite of the high population of young people, which most of them are students, they don't spend their leisure time in this historic part. These urban spaces can become popular and alive again if people start to use them. the purpose of the present research is to find important factors and priorities of students to provide some solutions for revitalizing Namik Kemal Meydanı in the historic part of Famagusta. By considering the negative points and solutions from the viewpoint of the students and young generation, the data were collected through interview and questionnaires and review and analysis of library sources. According to the obtained results, revitalization is not successful by just attention to tourist's demands and there are some important problems that can easily be resolved for the aim of encouraging the students to spend their time in this part of the city and therefore, obtaining a complete and comprehensive revitalization.*

**Keywords:** *Revitalization, historic urban, urban conservation, urban management, Northern-Cyprus*

## Gazimağusa'nın Tarihi Kentsel Alanlarını Öğrencilerin Boş Zamanlarını Teşvik Etmek İçin Canlandırılması: Bir Alan Çalışması

**Özet:** Bireyler genellikle boş zaman faaliyetlerinde bulunmak için kentsel kamusal alanlar gibi çeşitli yerlerde toplanırlar. Bu kamusal alanların, özellikle de tarihi öneme sahip olanların korunması ve yeniden canlandırılması öncelikle turistleri ağırlamaya yöneliktir. Bu nedenle ziyaretçi sayısının azaldığı mevsimlerde veya zamanlarda bu alanlar yaşamdan ve yaşanabilirlikten yoksun hale gelmektedir. Bu nedenle, turistlerin yanı sıra yerel halkın ve genç nesillerin de buraları kullanmasını teşvik etmek ve çekmek için bu yerlerin yeniden canlandırılması gerekmektedir. Gazimağusa tarihi kentinde, turistik cazibe merkezi olarak kullanılan çok sayıda tarihi kentsel alan bulunmaktadır, ancak çoğunluğunu öğrencilerin oluşturduğu yüksek genç nüfusuna rağmen, boş zamanlarını bu tarihi bölgelerde geçirmemektedirler. Bu araştırmanın amacı, Gazimağusa'nın tarihi bölgesindeki Namik Kemal Meydanı'nın yeniden canlandırılması için bazı çözümler sunmak üzere öğrencilerin önemli faktörlerini ve önceliklerini bulmaktır. Öğrencilerin ve genç neslin bakış açısından olumsuz noktalar ve çözüm önerileri göz önünde bulundurularak, veriler mülakat ve anketler ile kütüphane kaynaklarının incelenmesi ve analizi yoluyla toplanmıştır. Elde edilen sonuçlara göre, yeniden canlandırma sadece turistlerin taleplerini dikkate alarak başarılı olamamaktadır ve öğrencilerin zamanlarını şehrin bu bölümünde geçirmelerini teşvik etmek ve böylece tam ve kapsamlı bir yeniden canlandırma elde etmek amacıyla kolayca çözülebilecek bazı önemli sorunlar vardır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Yeniden canlandırma, tarihi kent, kentsel koruma, kentsel yönetim, Kuzey Kıbrıs

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

There are some parts in every city known as historical and cultural signs of the city, they are often considered as the primary part of the beauty aspect and tourist attraction of the cities, and their visual qualities and functions are critical for the identity of the city [1]. The historic environment refers to all the physical evidences of the human life and activity in the past. Such areas are built during hundreds and thousands of years and it is evident for everybody that they bear important values. These areas are dynamic and changing every day. At one hand, they cover a wide range of places including the buried sites to historic monuments, natural objects like shores and mountains, fields and etc. On the other hand, it is something in which we live and spend our time, both mentally and physically.

It is complex, relying on buildings and sites that they are physical remains but their emotional and aesthetic are on the authority of history and memory [2]. Aesthetic aspect of the past time is simply appreciable and bears high value due to their own sake. Historic buildings and areas are beautiful and antique, simply because they possess a scarcity value.

Despite of the significant value of fabric in the spatial and functional structure of the city and their potentials and strength points, some problems and limitations have been indicated same as inconsistency of the frame and the reality, existence of urban inconsistent elements, incompatible traffic absorbent usages, the left unprotected spaces, no vitality and attractively; all these factors lead to lose the importance and value of the old fabric of the cities and population displacement and consequently departure of the groups with high affordability [3].

Earlier policies for conservations normally begin with simple concerns of “preservation” to a progressive concern for “revitalization” [1]. Revitalization as a response to tourism demands refers to reduce conservation to chosen history and only some physical aspects remain, same as packaged products for sell [4].

## **2. PROBLEM**

Touristic zones of the historic areas in some cities are alive and vital only during the seasons that tourists come and the weather is good. In spite of their attraction in other times of the day and other seasons, these places become empty from normal life, population, vitality and social interactions. Therefore, these valuable areas become worthless for people particularly new generations and this will damage them and maybe encourage owners to destroy and construct new buildings. In this way, the cities will lose their identity, history and culture over time.

### **2.1 Research Problem**

There are many various types of research about the revitalization of historic urban spaces, almost all of them focus on tourists and their demands, and there isn't enough research about demands of locals, students, and youth generation, and their important function in revitalization. Therefore, these valuable areas aren't used as they deserve. In addition, in some cities with a high percentage of students like Famagusta, this issue will be more important.

## **3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The present research with the aim of encouraging students and youths to spend their time in historic parts of the city tried to

- Understand the factors that are important to encourage students and young people to take advantage of the historic urban spaces in their free time.
- Define priority and importance of the factors. -know the reasons that historic and valuable parts of Famagusta city in spite of their advantages aren't popular as they deserve.

-Reach to better and more comprehensive definition for revitalization Therefore, the focus of the present paper is on defining the factors that are most important for students and their priority in order to obtain a comprehensive revitalization.

#### **4. METHODOLOGY**

The present study is a qualitative research based on a field study. It utilizes surveys (questionnaires and interviews) and employs phenomenological research methods to analyze data gathered from the conceptions of students. In addition, the study also incorporates the use of library sources.

The data were collected in three stages: documentary analysis, interviews, and questionnaires. These data were gathered from graduate students in the Faculty of Architecture and Urban Design at Eastern Mediterranean University. This particular group was chosen because they possess valuable insights and perspectives on urban and architectural subjects.

A total number of graduate students are 300. 7 interviews (more than 2%) and 60 questionnaires (1/5 of population) were conducted on a random basis.

First by using from documents and library sources, to select and categorize the phrases, to know the theories and experience of the other countries and opinions of urban designers and professionals.

Second, through the interview with graduate students of architecture faculty.

Third, by questionnaires that were prepared based on the results obtained from the interviews and scientific theories from documents and literature review. The questions were designed on a Rating 4 Scale and closed format. In order to determine the importance and priority of the factors.

For explain results and analysis factors were used from coding and selecting and categorizing phrases and for presentation of results used from graphs and explanations.

The field study of the present research is limited to the historic part of Famagusta (walled city), Namik Kemal Meydanı. This area is known as an urban space with good quality in comparing to the new parts of the city. This area is alive during tourist seasons at specific times, but in other times and seasons, except in some events, it becomes empty. People and students don't spend their free time in such parts of the city and that's why this good urban space isn't lively and full of people as it deserves to be.

#### **5. INTRODUCING THE FIELD OF STUDY**

The study primarily centers around the historical urban area of Famagusta. Despite the presence of well-designed urban spaces, public areas, picturesque sights, and pedestrian-friendly pathways within the walled city (refer to Figure 1), it is observed that youth and students rarely utilize this particular section of the city.

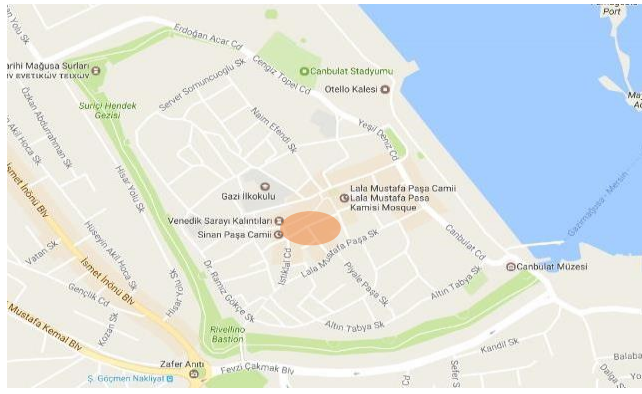


Figure 1. Wwalled city and field study. source: google map

Universities and higher research institutions have been subject to extensive academic study due to their substantial regional impacts [13]. In Famagusta, a significant number of students and local residents tend to spend their time in newer areas, despite the lack of adequate public spaces, parks, urban furniture, or pedestrian pathways. Given that students make up approximately half of the population in Famagusta, they play a crucial role in this research and are considered a pivotal factor in examining the issue.

Among all of the urban spaces that are created during different periods of time in various cities, urban squares are more important and placed in the center of attraction of people. These squares became empty after the industrial revolution [5] or under ideal conditions, they only transfer the feeling of a museum.

Regarding to the sources and history, the population in walled city is too few and the people currently residing in the walled city are mostly people with less choices, the population is about 2.250, while in the sixteenth century there were about 7000 inhabitants in this part of the city [6]. Namik Kemal Meydanı (figure 2) is the most touristic zone of the walled city. In the seasons with high number of tourists, the area is full of energy, vitality and life, but in the later times and other seasons, this valuable and beautiful urban space became empty of life and liveliness and turns to 5 ghost town.



Figure 2. Namik Kemal Meydanı, field study, Photo Taken by Author

## 6. IMPORTANCE OF HISTORIC URBAN ENVIRONMENT

Historical urban areas and buildings are regarded as enduring remnants of the past that continue to hold relevance in contemporary life. The widespread consensus among people and researchers globally is that these historic urban areas serve a paramount purpose in preserving the cultural and historical heritage of cities and countries [7].

Because historic zones are mostly located in the center of cities, their revitalization will become part of the whole revitalization of the cities. The value of these historic zones did not always appreciate till the 1960s. These areas were considered as a problem for development of the cities. In the 1970s, values and views to these historic parts changed and these places became conserved and protected [1].

## 7. CONSERVATION OF HISTORIC AREAS

The importance of conservation of historic environments is obvious from many charters that have emphasized on this matter. For example, many international bodies have emphasized on the importance of the conservation in historic centers. In 1976 UNESCO recommended that the necessary steps should be taken to ensure that the restoration and protection of historic areas and cities include development and harmonious adaptations to contemporary life of locals.

Furthermore, ICOMOS in the Washington charter states that the process of conservation of historic areas and cities should be considered as a primary part of logical and comprehensive policies in urban, economic and social designs [14] and in the international cultural tourism charter that is about managing tourism in touristic zones (1999) mentioned the relation between tourists, local people and sites. From this charter we can understand that considering locals are important as to visitors and tourists[15].

### 7.1 Revitalization and Conservation

The “urban revitalization” term is used in the recent literature of the world as a general term that encompasses other concepts as reformation, renovation, reconstruction, empowerment and rehabilitation. Urban revitalization is a process that leads to create new urban spaces with maintaining the basic spatial, physical and activity characteristics [8].

In the primary preservations, policies just protected individual buildings and structures, most of the buildings are national or religious buildings. In the pass of time, this protection became wider and reached to urban contexts [1].

### 7.2 Urban Conservation

Urban conservation refers to enhance an area that includes qualities which built from the past. It's not about preserving history as an archaeological, visiting historic areas. Similarly, it is not the same as going to a museum. These fields of conservation and relations to truism are so wide and complex [4]. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, historic preservation developed into an urban design and planning profession [9].

Urban conservation is so different from conservation of buildings. Because it is multidimensional and encompasses the whole city including the buildings, the urban patterns, roads, urban spaces and green spaces.

There are three dimensions in the conservation of urban places that should be considered: physical, spatial and social. All of them interconnect and overlap. The conservation of an historic urban environment is a multitude of projects not a separate project. The *physical* dimension is very similar to normal building conservation, focus and appearance of the old buildings. The *spatial* dimension is more related to the urban designers and planner's view. It covers the circulation and road traffic, relationships between spaces and their usage, relationship between internal and external spaces.

The third and last is *social* dimension. It relates to the users and their concerns, the local community and the people that lives in the place. This aspect is the most challenging aspect to define in compare to the physical and spatial dimensions, but arguably the most significant and important one, because continuity in comprehensive conservation can only be achieved and be succeed through the continuation of vital urban life, not only a vital urban life during the tourism seasons of place [4].

### 7.3 Conservation, Tourism and historical areas

Today, the interaction of both tourism and historic places is an important object in the planning and management of historic spaces. There is a kind of struggle and contact between preservation of the character of existing historic 7 cities and “change” and it is considered as an important discussion for conservation [10].

## 8. TOURISM IN HISTORIC AREAS

From 1980s, researchers started to understand the importance of tourism and the role of visitors as a vital and important factor in the economics of urban, the country and world. This subject become an important and major focus in studies. They started to do special studies about connection between tourism and urban economics and they showed that this matter has important role in urban form [11].

In different types of tourism, urban tourism is classified as a very important type. Despite its importance, urban tourism is still vaguely defined [12].

The relation between tourism and architecture is bidirectional. On one hand, we have architecture monuments that, due to their history, their aesthetic, their celebrity are touristic objectives. On the other hand, we have architecture in the service of tourism [17].

## 9. VARIABLE FACTORS AND INDICATORS IN THIS RESEARCH

After interviewing with the students, some factors were found from their answers as problems and solutions. These factors plus some important urban design factors from theories and documentaries are gathered into a questionnaire.

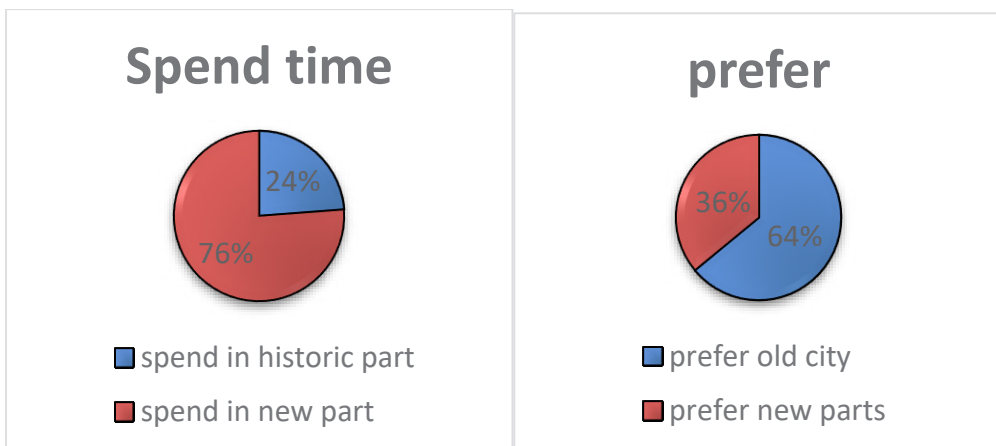


Figure 3. The percentage of students that like and prefer historic part or new parts

Figure 4. The percentage of students that spend their time in new and historic parts

The result from graphs in figures 3 and 4 show that Although 64% liked to spend their time in historic part, but due to problems 24% of them going and spending their time in historic parts.

## 10. INTERVIEW AND PROPOSED IDEAS FOR FIELD STUDY

Most of interviewees said that public transportation should be better. Many of them said that new restaurants, cafes, bars should be open in the old city. This is very common statements during interviews: “nobody is there” “old city is boring” and “I don’t have different choices there “

Some of the other ideas are: organizing more festivals in old city, opening new branch of universities Building dormitories, tax reduction of commercials and encouraging policies to convince them to open in late times, getting more tax from empty house and shop; and, Creating spaces for daily markets and second-hand markets.

## 11. THE FACTORS

These factors are obtained from the interviews and urban design theories in revitalization. Importance and priority of each of them were asked in the questionnaire. Walking ways and pedestrians, facilities (WC, Urban Furniture ...), the number of cafes, bars, restaurants, quality of café, bars and restaurants, public transportation (taxi, bus), cafes and bars prices, sense of space, food prices, shopping prices, variety of markets, car parking spaces, safety, lighting, views and architecture of buildings, urban spaces and public spaces, events and festivals.

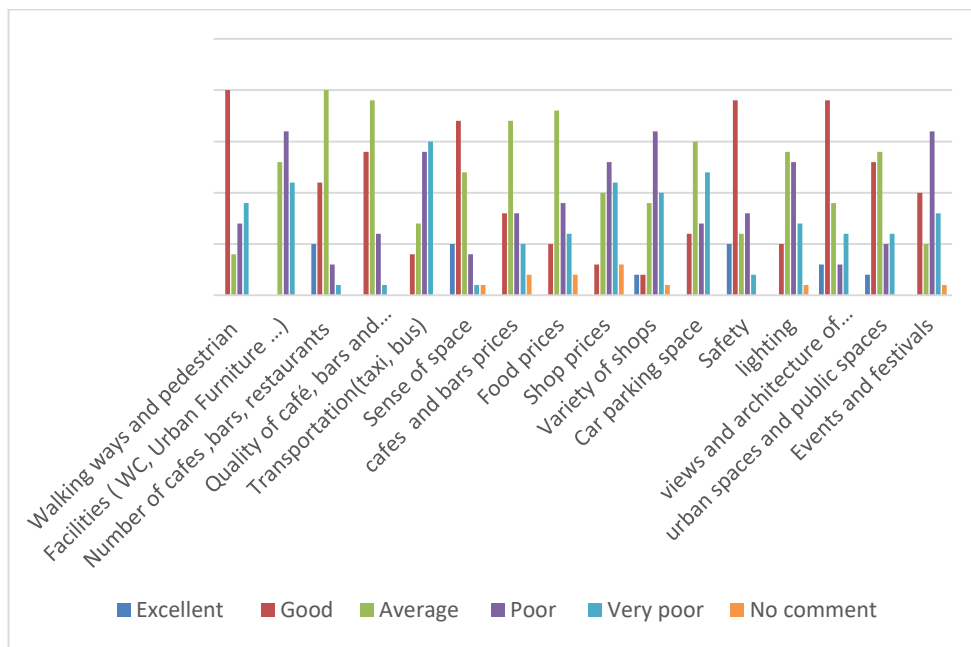


Figure 5. Graph of overall factors evaluation

In Figure 5, the comprehensive results of the questionnaires are presented. While the number of cafes, bars, and restaurants, as well as their quality and prices, did not receive negative ratings and garnered average responses, it is intriguing to observe that students who have resided in the city for a longer duration expressed lower levels of satisfaction compared to new students in these particular aspects. This suggests that the perception of satisfaction may vary depending on the length of time students have lived in the city.

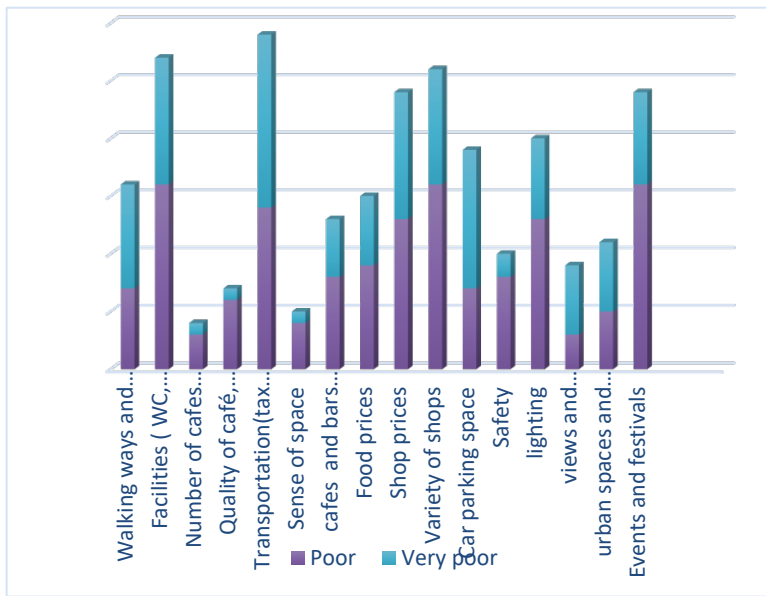


Figure 6. Graph for the Number of Poor Plus Very Poor Answers are shown

As it is shown in the Graph above (figure 6) The findings reveal that transportation emerges as the primary concern among the weak factors that students perceive as reasons for their limited visits to the historic part.

Second poor factor is facilities, that need to enhancement. Variety of the markets and prices are the next important items for attention. In Figure 7, the responses regarding excellent and good factors are depicted. The findings of the present study indicate that aspects such as the sense of place, safety, views, architecture, and walking pathways are currently perceived positively and deemed satisfactory. These elements do not require immediate attention or prioritization in terms of revitalization efforts.

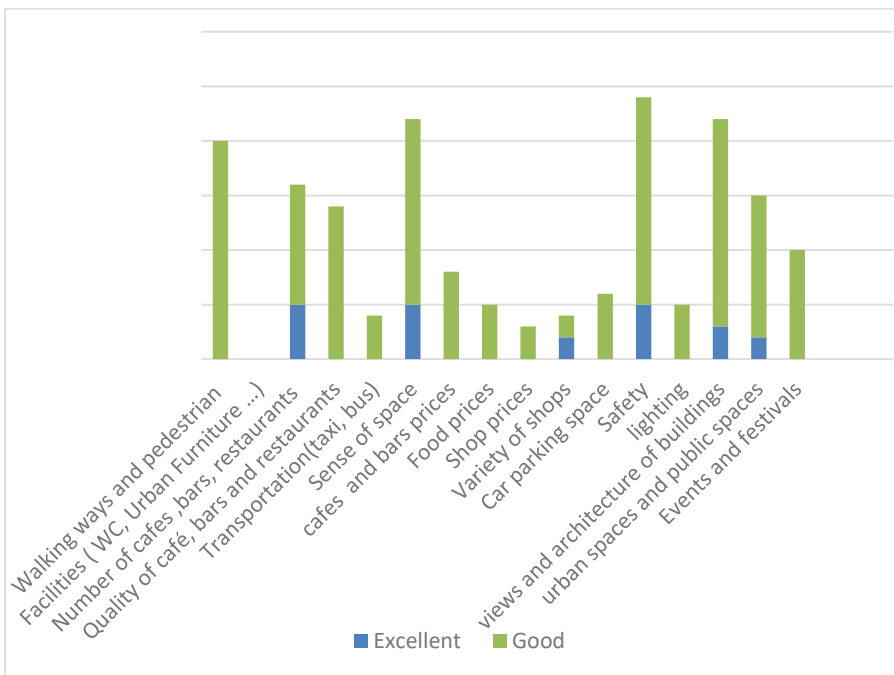


Figure 7 Graph based on satisfaction of the factor.

On the other hand, markets and shopping centers are identified as areas of weakness for both visitors and locals. These establishments lack diversity in their offerings, and prices are considerably high.



## 12. SUGGESTIONS

If the programmers and organizations that are working on conservation of Famagusta city pay more attention to the ICOMOS charters, as we understood, the revitalization purpose should cover locals and residents of the city, not just for Excellent Good 11 the visitors and physical urban space. This part of the city should be alive in every time of the year, not just for visitors.

A complete conservation must consider the whole time all types of users of an urban space. By continuing the current policies and eliminating the function and role of young generations, locals and the students, the value of these valuable urban areas will reduce in the minds of new generations and it isn't a sustainable conservation. We conserve these urban areas for locals, not for visitors. It is important to see the tourist as a tool for attaining better conservation and not considering them as a goal of conservation of buildings and urban spaces. According to tourism charter, paying lots of attention to tourism or poor attention both of them can be a threat for physical, integrity and character of site or building.

It is obvious that there is a need for conservation planning for walled city. Local and national governance has many limitations to action at the moment, but the NGOs can be very effective. Revitalization just for tourists will change the space and buildings to level of a product for sale [4].

According to the Valletta Principles by ICOMOS[16], development programs for tourists in historic cities should enhance the building and monuments and urban spaces and admire for residents and locals of their culture and life style. It should preserve character of environment and should follow the daily life of residents not opposite to it so if the plans decision makers just consider the demands of visitors and it's opposite to sustainable conservation.

## 13. CONCLUSION

One of the important purposes of the revitalization of historic urban spaces is bringing life, vitality and enhancing the quality of living in these areas. But if the programmers just consider the demands of tourists, these actions will be useless. As in low seasons that the rate of tourist is comparatively low, the place becomes empty.

In the present research, the emphasis was on students and youths and tried to evaluate the problems of a touristic part in the old city of Famagusta (Namik Kemal Meydanı) in order to know the priority factors to work on. Although this place has better conditions in compare to the new parts of the city and most of the students prefer to spend their time there, but the low percentage of them are using these areas because of lacks and problems.

Based on the obtained result, the most important problems of the students are transportation (main), facilities, the variety of markets and prices of the products.

By Considering these demands of the students that aren't very costly and difficult to be resolved, these areas could be more revitalize and alive and therefore, encourage people to even live in this parts that lead to better restoration. We should know that good urban places have a structure and 12 fundamental dynamics of activity at any time of the year.

## Acknowledgement

The present paper has been written as part of the Advanced Research Method course in architecture, under the guidance of Professor Dr. Yonca Hürol at Eastern Mediterranean University. Special thanks are extended to Dr. Antonio Paolo Russo, professor at Universitat Rovira i Virgili, and Dr. Habib Alipour, professor at Eastern Meditation University, for their valuable comments and assistance.

## REFERENCES

- [1] **Heath, T., Oc, T., & Tiesdell, S. (2013).** Revitalising Historic Urban Quarters (1st ed.). Hoboken: Taylor and Francis
- [2] **Graham, Helen; Mason Rhiannon; Newman, Andrew. (2009).** Historic Environment, Sense of Place, and Social Capital; International center for cultural and heritage studies Newcastle university
- [3] **Keshavarz, M., & others. (2010).** Geological evolution of the concept of reinventing the city as a new approach in urban contexts. *Journal of Iranian Islamic City*, no 1, 73-92.
- [4] **Orbasli, A. (2000).** Tourists in historic towns (1st ed.). New York: E & FN Spon
- [5] **Hakimi, H. Nazari, S. & Nazari, N. (2015).** Revitalization Strategies for Historical Squares, Case Study: Sahebabad Square. *Journal of geography and planning*, 52(4), 65-83
- [6] **Mason, R., Uluca Tumer, E., Kiliç-Ünlü, A., Silman, R., Severson, K., & Schmid, W.** The walled city of Famagusta. *A Compendium of Preservation Studies*, 2008–2012
- [7] **Doratli, N. (2005).** Revitalizing historic urban quarters: A model for determining the most relevant strategic approach. *European Planning Studies*, 13(5), 749-772.
- [8] **Habibi, S., Maghsoodi, M. (2007).** Urban Restoration 6nd Ed. Tehran: Tehran University
- [9] **Ryberg-Webster, S. & Kinahan, K. (2013).** Historic Preservation and Urban Revitalization in the Twenty-first Century. *Journal Of Planning Literature*, 29(2), 119-139.
- [10] **Nasser, N. (2003).** Planning for Urban Heritage Places: Reconciling Conservation, Tourism, and Sustainable Development. *Journal Of Planning Literature*, 17(4), 467-479.
- [11] **Herrera, L., Smith, N., & Vera, M. (2007).** Gentrification, Displacement, and Tourism in Santa Cruz De Tenerife. *Urban Geography*, 28(3), 276-298.
- [12] **Ashworth, G. & Page, S. (2011).** Urban tourism research: Recent progress and current paradoxes. *Tourism Management*, 32(1), 1-15.
- [13] **Den, B. L. van, & Russo, A. P. (2017).** The Student City: Strategic Planning for student communities in EU cities. Routledge.
- [14] **Pickard, R. (2001).** Management of historic centres. London: Spon Press.
- [15] International cultural tourism charter. *Managing Tourism at Places of Heritage Significance* (1999). (2016). Retrieved 3 November 2016, from [http://www.icomos.org/charters/tourism\\_e.pdf](http://www.icomos.org/charters/tourism_e.pdf)
- [16] ICOMOS, The Valletta Principles for the Safeguarding and Management of Historic Cities, Towns and Urban Areas. (2016). ICOMOS. Retrieved 21 December 2016, from [http://www.icomos.org/Paris2011/GA2011\\_CIVVIH\\_text\\_EN\\_FR\\_final\\_20120110.pdf](http://www.icomos.org/Paris2011/GA2011_CIVVIH_text_EN_FR_final_20120110.pdf)
- [17] **Tulban, N. (2011).** Architecture and tourism. *Journal of EcoAgriTourism* 2011 Vol. 7 No. 2 pp. 67-71.

**HESAM MOSHARRAF, MSc.,**

He is in the final stages of his PhD at the University of Minho (Portugal) in the field of urban morphology. Previously, he started a PhD at Eastern Mediterranean University in Cyprus, which he didn't continue. Prior to that, he was a lecturer at various universities in Iran. His main research fields include urban revitalization, morphology, and environmental psychology. He obtained his bachelor's and master's degrees in Architecture Engineering from Azad University of Isfahan in Iran.