SUGGESTIONS
FOR THE FUTURE URBAN ROLE OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF CYPRUS
CONSTRUCTIVE COMMENTS ON THE
ADP’S UNIVERSITY OF CYPRUS MASTER PLANNING
PROCESS
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1. INTRODUCTION

This report is about comments and suggestions focused mainly on the role of the University of Cyprus (UCY) in regards to the Nicosia historical centre and to the future of Academia Campus. Furthermore, there are comments about the main organizational logic of the Athalassa Campus. The report offers suggestions about the ongoing Master Plan revision.

This report is part of an on-going constructive debate on the future urban role of the University of Cyprus. LUCY (Laboratory of Urbanism of University of Cyprus) could take a constructive role, useful for the University of Cyprus. One priority should be the formulation of urban strategies that may feed the process of masterplanning by ADP London.

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Fig. 1 (excerpts from ADP’s report)
2. ENVISIONING THE UNIVERSITY OF CYPRUS’ URBAN ROLE IN REGARDS TO NICOSIA’S METROPOLITAN AREA

The main point that we want to add to the ongoing UCY Master plan revision is to formulate a rather open vision in regards to the relation between a campus oriented organization and the city.

We propose to review the territory which is considered by the UCY as the area of its strategic operations. More specifically to consider the city centre as a third pole of activities and to establish dynamic relations with the three poles of the UCY: the Athalassa Campus, the Academia Campus and the City Centre.

Envisioning the future of UCY built environment should then be organized in three different strategies with the relevant planning and development tools. In other words, the method of Master Planning could be relevant to the Athalassa Campus but it could pose problems for the Academia Campus. For the city centre, the UCY should reconsider its approach of using it only as a sort of cultural shopfront and make use of it as an open workshop.

Fig xx Excerpt from the ADP Master Plan report
3. THE UCY AND THE NICOSIA CITY CENTRE

Actual Situation
We propose to revisit the city centre actual development and plans in order to map all research and academic activities that the UCY is directly or indirectly involved. We will realize that there are already a lot more than just the Axiothea cultural center mentioned in the Master plan documents. The “RISE” program is an eloquent example.

The on-going debate for locating the Department of Architecture in the UCY’s own property in the city centre should be kept as an open scenario and it should be used as a catalyst for further involvement of the UCY in the city centre.

Long term vision for a unified Nicosia
We should also keep in mind that the UCY, as one of the few State Institutions with independent and open character, should play a decisive role for the reunification of Nicosia after a potential political agreement. The city will remain deeply divided after any political agreement. The private market, based on security and safety is unlikely to take risks towards such aim.

Fig. 2 (UCY and Nicosia city centre
Urban Design Studio 2016-17, Dept of Arch. UCY)
3. THE UCY AND THE NICOSIA CITY CENTRE

Need of new approach
The main difficulty for enlarging the role of UCY in the city centre is that of property. In addition its potential partner, the Nicosia Municipality has not sufficient land resources nor planning tools to establish such synergy with the UCY. The failure for the last 10 years to build the Department of Architecture in the city centre is a sort of a proof for that.

However, there are a lot of opportunities that are appearing and the UCY should be ready to grasp them. Some State buildings seem to be under evacuation or are already empty (Paphos Gate Police). Others are in the buffer zone (Ayios Kassianos). We suggest to create a map of such opportunities and work towards their acquisition.
3. THE UCY AND THE NICOSIA CITY CENTRE

Turning Nicosia into a technological urban environment

We suggest that the UCY, could profit from the potential moving of the Technological park in the Nicosia’s municipality boundary. Its failure to be located in Pentakomo should be carefully examined. We propose to consider the three UCY poles as part of such endeavor. We also propose to avoid the current tendencies of enclaving such Technological Park and diffuse its activities in a network of locations in the city. The study of Keller Easterling on such activities may help considerably such approach (Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space, New York, Verso, 2014).

The UCY should examine potential synergies around the Academia Campus. The Athalassa campus could host also research activities that need large building sites allowing those demanding less space to be located in Academia. The UCY should support the city of Nicosia and the State to establish new policies for attracting Research and Technology activities diffused in the city. The actual work of Europan Europe network could be very useful, (Stratis, Architecture-As-Urbanism For Uncertain Conditions in Europan 12 Results: Adaptable City, Europan editions, Paris, 2014).

This is one of the reasons why we believe that we need of alternative urban strategic approaches before any physical master planning for the Academia Campus.

Fig. 4 (the three poles of UCY)
4. The Academia Campus and its potential urban actors
4. THE EXTENDED ACADEMIA CAMPUS

As we mentioned before, the method of master planning for the Academia Campus may miss quite a few dynamic urban conditions that are part of its adjacent environment.

Firstly, we need to look outside the strictly UCY territory in the area in order to formulate the future urban role of the Academia Campus. We need to search for potential synergies despite the fact that the Cypriot urban governance system is not friendly for such relations. On the contrary, if the UCY fails to take a catalyst role for such urban innovations, nobody could take the initiative from the urban actors involved.

The Academia campus should search for synergies with the rest of the State urban actors located around the corner. For example, the Ministry of Education with the schools inside the Academia Park and just outside, the Productivity Centre, the Forests’ Department, the Philoxenia, the Department of Managing the state land opposite Hilton, Nicosia and Aglanjia municipalities and the Planning Department.

In this case any kind of master planning should be part of an overall strategic plan of the area. What if all these neighboring state assets play a role in the research and technology potential activities in Nicosia?
The hidden role of the Academia Campus

Since the constitution of the University of Cyprus, the Academia Campus has been used as an intermediate vessel before the various programs would have moved to the main campus in Athalassa.

Any master plan for the Academia Campus should therefore make explicit its transient character for at least the next ten years. It should create scenarios, multiple possibilities and phasing in order to accommodate potential urban roles of the campus.

Such endeavor should address:

- The creation of spaces that could host multiple programs that are in transit.
- The introduction of new programs that may support the role of the Academia Campus in the overall network of UCY facilities. For example why not introducing students housing as well as residential areas for academic faculty (incentives for attracting internationally renowned faculty)
- The creation of synergies with the adjacent state programs.

Fig. 7(Academia iconic building)
The Fine Arts and Architecture School for the Academia Campus

We propose to reevaluate the placement of the Fine Arts and Architecture School in the Academia Campus by searching for alternatives that are based on the initial objective we have stated, that of the open role of the UCY and its relation to the city centre.

In addition any final decision should take in consideration the following issues:

Firstly, the Fine Arts School scenario is a rather long termed idea and its implementation is not part of the near future plans of the UCY. The faculty members of the department of Architecture are actually offering alternatives for the placement of the building in the city centre.

Secondly, we need to study whether the actual building stock in Academia Campus is friendly for artists’ studio spaces. Will the transformation of the actual building stock into artists’ pedagogical environment financially feasible in comparison to other Schools with rather typical teaching facilities?

Thirdly, we should include in the future development of the UCY, a potential Urban Planning and Landscape Architecture departments.

Fig. 8 (proposed site plan from the ADP Master Plan report)
Formulating a spatial organization for the Extended Academia Campus

Following the logic we have already formulated for the Academia Campus, you can see in the following maps, possibilities for repositioning the area controlled by the UCY with the rest of the area. In short:

- Creating new soft mobility entries to the campus

- Introducing a main soft mobility linear greenway to Larnaca Avenue the main axis between Athalassa Campus and the city centre served by Public Transport

- Using the actual empty lot opposite Hilton Hotel as a temporal parking space in order to push out of the actual campus the private cars.

- Proposing common program with State urban actors managing actual building clusters
  - Putting in the planning brief of the private development of this state owned property some UCY related program: Parking for students, Housing for students, Research Units

- Proposing new interfaces between the actual building clusters and the National Forest (program useful to the Department of Forests – greenhouses, workshops, gardens)
Formulating a spatial organization for the extended Academia Campus
- Using the actual empty lot opposite Hilton Hotel as a temporal parking space in order to push out of the actual campus the private cars.
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  - Parking for students
  - Housing for students
  - Research Units

Soft mobility entries to the campus
Connection to Larnaca Avenue Public Transport to Athalassa and city centre UCY areas
Linear greenway as the new front to the national Academia Forest

Adjusting the soft mobility network of the Academia National Forest

UCY PARKING

Parking for students
Housing for students
Research Units

Soft mobility entries to the campus
Soft mobility entries to the campus
Soft mobility entries to the campus
Soft mobility entries to the campus
Soft mobility entries to the campus
Fig. 12
Proposing new interfaces between the actual building clusters and the National Forest (program useful to the Department of Forests – greenhouses, workshops, gardens)
Proposing common program with State urban actors managing actual building clusters.
Proposing a courtyard spatial type for the buildings in the Academia Campus

For the midterm development of the Academia Campus, the ADP proposes to emphasize the courtyard character of the buildings.

We propose to push it further and develop ways to transform the actual freestanding building into courtyard clusters. These courtyard clusters would be located within an extended park adding value to the actual National Forest.

The masterplan should rather designate the envelope of the courtyards rather than that of the buildings themselves.

In addition, each courtyard cluster should be able to host either a University Department, a Research Unit or even a Residential Building.

Consequently, the Master Plan will remain open both for transient use as well as for accommodating unspecified program.
Proposing a courtyard spatial type for the building in the Academia Campus
Defining the courtyard envelopes and the extension of the forest into the Academia Campus
5 THE URBANIZED ATHALASSA CAMPUS

We acknowledge that there has been an extensive dialogue between the UCY authorities and services with the ADP, plus we are coming rather late in the process. Having said that, we will formulate some basic challenges and suggestions how to turn an isolated enclaved campus into an urban environment with a rather continuous life throughout the day.

We propose to take the revision of the Athalassa Campus as a pertinent moment to evaluate its actual isolated character vis a vis the rest of the adjacent city. The UCY authorities should establish such change not only through physical planning but also through policies of use of the campus by the city.

We also urge the UCY to formulate scenarios of its potential role in a reunified Cyprus. For example, how its activities will change due to its proximity to the Tymbou Airport in the north part of Cyprus? It is actually located closer to the Athalassa Campus than the Nicosia airport. What kind of public transport may facilitate such proximity? Should a road be planned for that?

Fig. 19 (excerpt from ADP report)
Potential Road connection?

Nicosia Airport

UCY Athalassa Campus

Tymbou Airport

Legend

Google Earth

Image © 2017 DigitalGlobe
5 THE URBANIZED ATHALASSA CAMPUS

One of the major characteristics of the actual spatial organization of the Athalassa campus is the zoning of activities. On one hand, such approach helps to keep control over planning of various types of uses. One the other hand, it does not allow for new proximities that may increase the use of the campus throughout the day.

Another characteristic is its setback from the adjacent city fabric with parking and green areas. Its gated character gives a clear territorial control of the UCY authorities but on the other hand it keeps out the everydayness of the city.

We propose to rethink the location of the students’ housing on strategic locations along the campus edges. Some of them should be located on the north edge along the roadway. We need to rethink what is the critical mass of clusters of housing so they could be redistributed in the campus.

Their proximity to the rest of the city may help as well as their proximity to the social program of the campus, so they could use it late evening hours.

Fig. 21 (excerpt from ADP report)
5 THE URBANIZED ATHALASSA CAMPUS

The strategy for redefining the edges of the campus could include a different way of looking at the peripheral roads. They are actually treated by the State as highways rather than urban boulevards. The UCY should encourage the State to establish traffic calming measures along theses boulevards so the Students’ housing could be sustainable along them. Plus to allow safer on-street crossings.

The major park that runs inside the campus should be considered as the continuation of the Athalassa forest. In fact the Athallassa park defines both the west and the south edges of the campus. Therefore, the uses along these edges should allow such infiltration.

The actual location of students’ housing and of Research Centres are rather isolated from the rest of the campus due to the major park of the campus.

We propose to create clusters of research units as well as of student’s housing and diffuse them along the edges of the campus.

Fig. 22 (excerpt from ADP report)