

TRANSFORMATION OF HISTORIC CITIES: A TYPO-MORPHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE HISTORIC CITY OF SILIFKE, TURKEY

Meltem Akyurek, PhD Candidate, Eastern Mediterranean University, North Cyprus, Lecturer, Toros University, Mersin, Turkey

Sebnem Hoskara, Professor of Architecture and Urbanism, Eastern Mediterranean University, Famagusta, North Cyprus

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to investigate the important features affecting the planning and transformation of historic urban patterns, focusing on their typo-morphological characteristics. After developing a theoretical framework on the topic, the paper uses the historic town of Silifke located in the south of Turkey as its unique case study. Accordingly, the study examines the current formal and spatial patterns of Silifke, from an historical perspective, highlighting the key issues that are emerging as a result of the political, socio-economic and cultural changes throughout history. From a methodological point of view, the study will present the evolution of urban form of the historic town of Silifke through town-plan analysis of M.R.G. Conzen, by concentrating on streets and their arrangement into a street-system; plots and their aggregation into street-blocks; buildings in the form of the block-plans; and, patterns of building forms and land use. The study will evaluate the layering of these aspects and elements through history, in order to comprehend the existing urban form of Silifke, with an attempt to describe and interpret major spatial changes in the town in terms of land use patterns and urban morphology under the effect of political, economic, social, cultural and environmental factors, which will guide the future transformation and management of the town. The outcome of the research supports the argument that the identity of historic cities relies on their adaptation to new conditions over time.

Keywords: Historic cities, transformation, urban morphology, typo-morphology, Silifke.

INTRODUCTION

Historic cities have been increasingly linked to economic, social, cultural and environmental forces both internal and external to their regional and national boundaries, which lead to their ongoing change and transformations. The breaking points of this change and transformation constitute physical determinants shaped by religious, ethnic and cultural elements that develop in parallel with administrative, social and political events. Within historical continuity, the preferred, established, expanding, shrinking, demolished and reconstructed urban spaces reveal their changes and transformations in a so-called vicious circle as they offer life opportunities to people.

This paper, which covers the partial findings of a PhD research carried out at the Eastern Mediterranean University, Department of Architecture, under the main title of “*Evolution of the Historic Town of Silifke in terms of Economic, Social, Cultural and Physical Perspectives*”, examines transformation of the historic city of Silifke in the age of environmental crises, cultural and economic globalisation, concentrating on its urban form characteristics. While the main research presents the evolution of Silifke throughout history, focusing on the relationship of the built environment formed by the contact of social traces of the urban fabric with politics and social events, including the field of urban morphology within its scope, this paper only presents today's urban form characteristics, which get their roots from history.

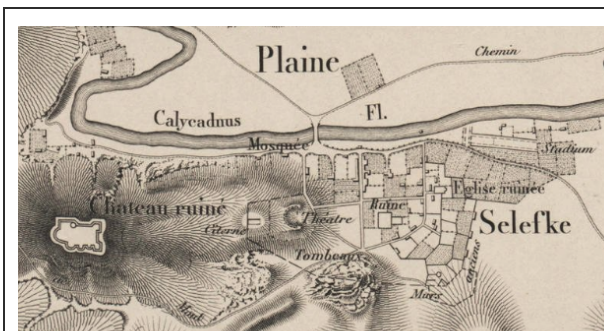
BACKGROUND

Silifke, also called Seleucia, is a town and district in south-central Turkey, 80 km (50 mi) west of the city of Mersin, on the west end of Cukurova. It is located along the banks of the Göksu River, overlooking the Taurus Mountains. Silifke, founded by Selefkos Nikator, one of the commanders of Alexander the Great, in the early 3rd century B.C., is surrounded by around 100 ancient cities featuring the unique heritage of the Greek, Roman and Byzantine civilizations

(<http://www.mtso.org.tr/en/announcements/mersin-s-history-ve-tourism>) The center of Silifke is situated on the banks of Goksu River down the lower slopes of Taurus Mountains and 14 km from the Mediterranean sea. The river is 260 km long and empties into the Mediterranean Sea passing through the rift valleys, Silifke town and finally Goksu delta. Mersin is a cultural and commercial center of Eastern Mediterranean of Anatolia since the 19th century. Silifke is located 80 km west of Mersin province on the junction of Mersin-Konya, Mersin-Antalya highways. The administrative boundary of Silifke under a central municipality, has 105 km of coastline and 72 km of this is included in the delta area.

The economy of the district depends on agriculture, tourism and raising livestock. The town of Silifke is as a market for the coastal plain, which produces beans, peanuts, sesame, banana, orange, lemon, cotton, grapes, lentils, olives, tobacco, and canned fruits and vegetables. Silifke is also an industrial town, well-connected with other urban areas and producing beverages, chemicals, clothes, footwear, glass, plastics, pottery, and textiles.

Throughout the urban history of the city, differences in the social and economic structure is based on political developments. Despite the changing administrative periods, the most important factor in the city is the geographical data and the coastal element that determines the purpose of the establishment of the city. In this context, a reference was taken from the parallel of the flow of the Göksu River and the land use in the city was determined accordingly. There are six important administrative periods that affect the formation and development of the city. These are: (i) The Seleucid Period (312 BC - 64 BC), (ii) The Roman Period (64 - AD 395), (iii) The Byzantine Period (395 - 647), (iv) The Karamanoğulları Period (1256-1483), (v) The Ottoman Period (1483-1923) and (vi) The Period of the Republic (after 1923). During these different administrative periods, the structures were shaped around Silifke Castle, and they attempted to establish a commercial connection with the Anatolian interior and the developing trade through the Taşucu Port and Port Castle (Ak Liman) for the city. Thus, like many other ancient towns, Seleucia was made up of an upper town on a fortified hill (acropolis) and of a lower town along the river with markets and warehouses, then surrounded by houses in their extension.



Silifke 1839 ((nach MAMA III Taf. 3)



Silifke 1839 (Omer Ataman Archive, 2019)

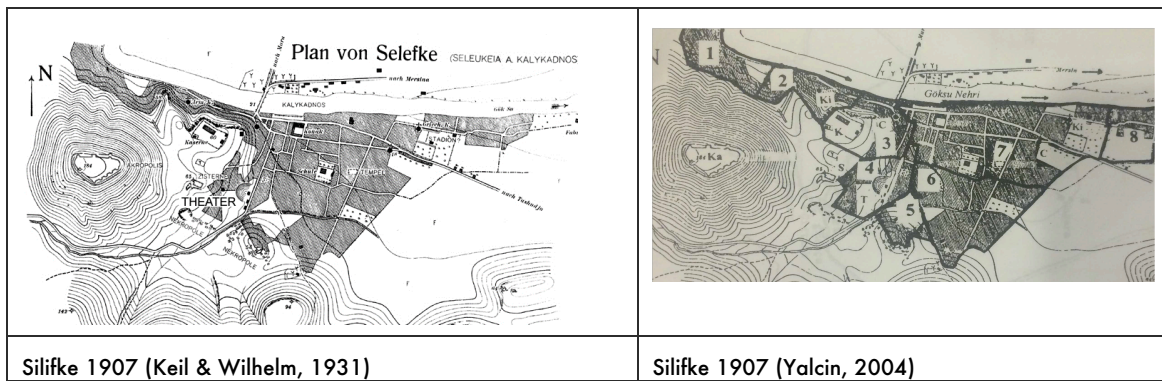


Figure 1. Historic maps of Silifke

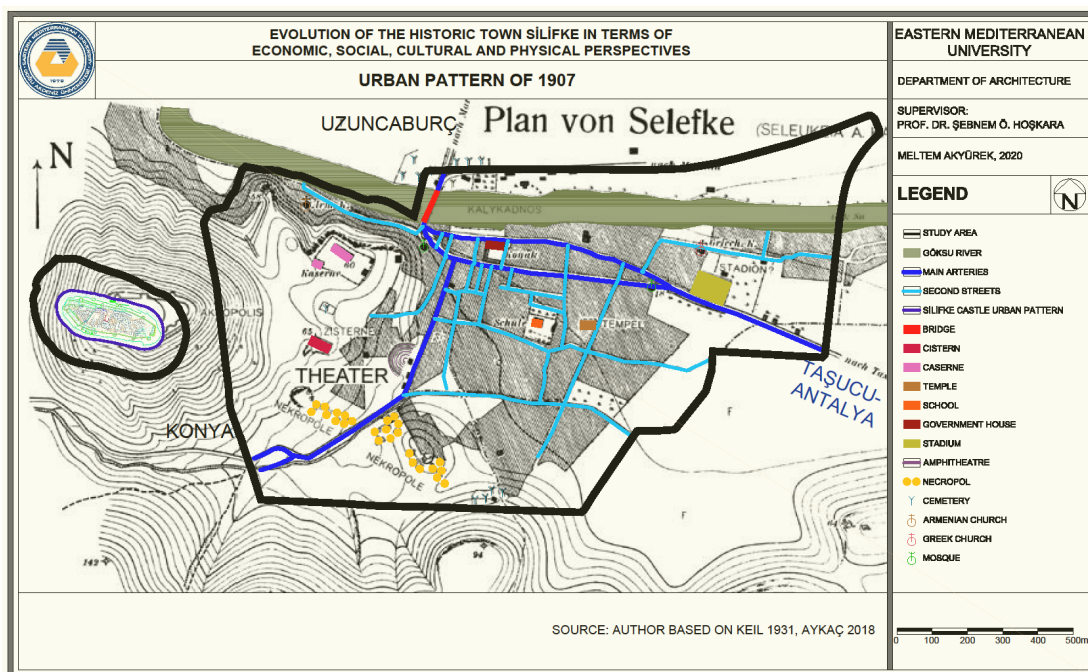


Figure 2. Urban pattern of Silifke in 1907

METHODOLOGY

Urban morphology is the study of the form and shape of settlements through the analysis of land uses, building structures, plot pattern and street pattern (Conzen, 1960). It is an approach that provides an understanding of the form and spatial characteristics of settlements, and their creation and transformation processes, through historical analysis. In that sense urban morphology is used as an assessment tool for the determination of the transformation processes of the urban fabric, considering their historic roots.

Urban morphology is a powerful tool to understand a city's history and to connect it to the processes of its development and rehabilitation. Because this discipline does not focus only on the outstanding monuments, but on the urban fabric as a whole, it can provide a basis for conservation planning that want to emphasize continuity of the urban form and of urban spaces. From the perspective of urban morphology, this study will present the evolution of urban form of the historic town of Silifke through town-plan analysis of M.R.G. Conzen, by concentrating on (i) streets and

their arrangement into a street-system; (ii) plots and their aggregation into street-blocks; (iii) buildings in the form of the block-plans; and, (iv) patterns of building forms and land use. M.R.G Conzen concentrated on evolutionary method, in which he argued that tracing existing forms back to the underlying formative processes and interpreting them accordingly. According to his understanding, the evolutionary method provides an understanding of the physical development of urban structural elements, resulting from the city's cultural and historical development (factors that strongly influenced its morphological development), which is an objective of his morphological approach. Conzen's approach to urban morphology allows the morphological analysis of settlements by developing the morphogenetic analysis method. Conzen regarded cities as a part of the historical development. For this reason, Conzen argued that all cultural processes that contribute to the current state of the city should be examined, especially in cities with a significant historical background. This study, mainly follows his town-plan analysis methodology, in order to understand the urban development of the historic city of Silifke. Original and re-produced maps and primary written documents have been used as a part of data collection techniques for the purpose of the study,

FINDINGS



The findings of the research will be presented under the 4 above-mentioned main topics defined by M.R.G Conzen.

1. Streets and street-system

There are 2 boulevards, 9 avenues and 117 streets in the Silifke city center study area. While the streets form the main axes, some of them are parallel to each other and some of them are located perpendicular to each other. Street axes have changed the formation of a net grid system by creating angles from place to place in the process. The city, which is claimed to have been established as a regular city at the beginning, like other cities founded by Seleukos Nikator, was formed by a network system that made the castle a focal point, with the transportation provided from Silifke Castle to the city in accordance with the topographic data.

Therefore, the plan of the city was not named as a clear grid type plan or a radial city plan formed by designing the castle as the center.

Figure 3. Street system in Silifke

A road with stairs or steps that connects the area where the Hellenistic city is thought to have been established with the city leads down to the Central Alaeddin Mosque by connecting to the streets of the modern city. These roads, which are available today, provided the connection of the ancient city with the river and the plain. The streets connecting the avenues varied according to their importance, depending on their density and supported the transportation network.



Figure 4. Street network in Silifke from 1839 to 2018

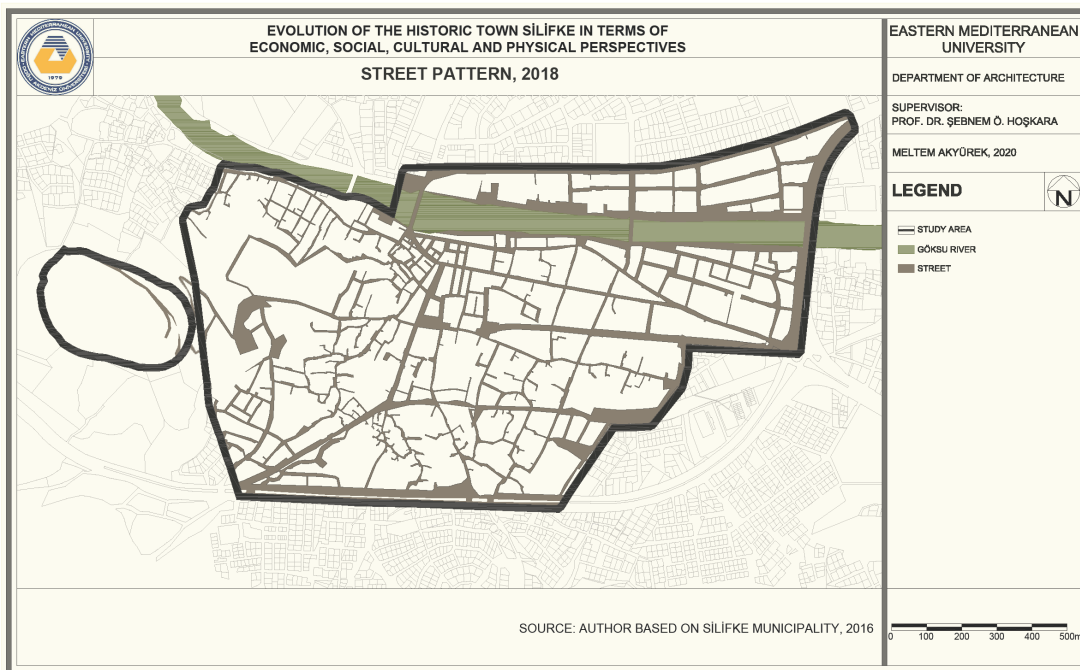


Figure 5. Street pattern in Silifke in 2018

2. Plot pattern – plots and street blocks

The plots in the city are in different shapes sizes and ratios. They are mostly irregular in shape. The smaller plots are more concentrated in the central part, as getting far from the center to the north of Goksu River they get bigger for contemporary residential purposes. The ratios differ from 1:1 to even 1:4 and 1:5. In the central region of the city they are small, mostly between 1:1 and 1:2 as seen in the maps. It can be argued that the distribution of various plot ratios does not follow a particular logic however the smaller ratios are seen mostly around the archaeological sites dating back to Hellenistic periods.

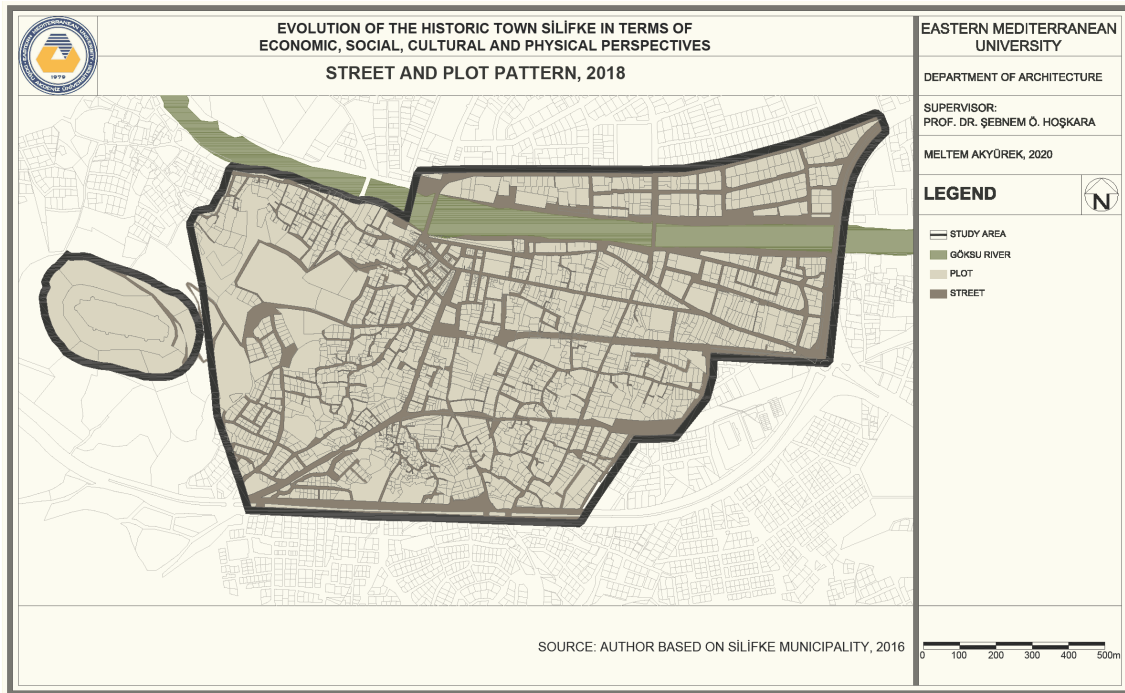


Figure 6. Silifke street and plot pattern

3. Block Typology

The building pattern in Silifke consist of 6 different periods. There are 10 archaeological sites from the Hellenistic period in the city; 8 of these sites are within the urban structure. Most of the buildings according to the analysis are built in Turkish Republican Period after 1923. As illustrated in the analysis sheets the blocks of the city are in regular shape following a grid pattern in the exact north and south of Goksu River, whereas more organic shape to the far south and west. The city center where the commercial functions are located, the urban blocks present a slight grid-radial form. The block sizes are considerably small around the central commercial area of the city whereas the commercial center and the main axis to the east consist of larger blocks.

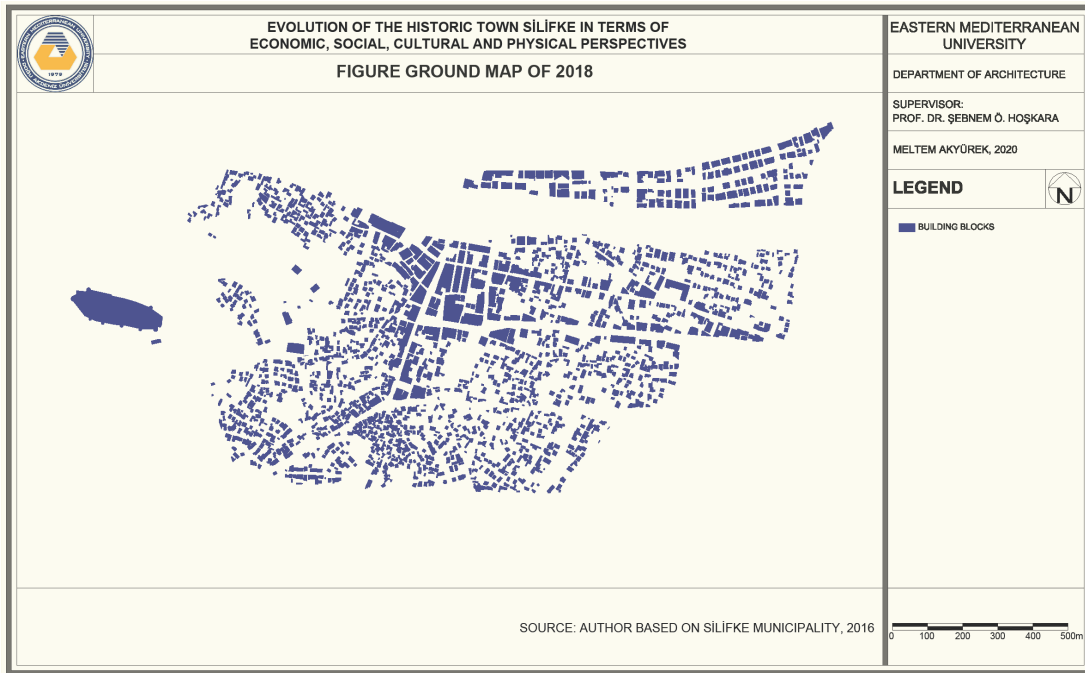


Figure 7. Figure ground map of Silifke showing building blocks (2018)

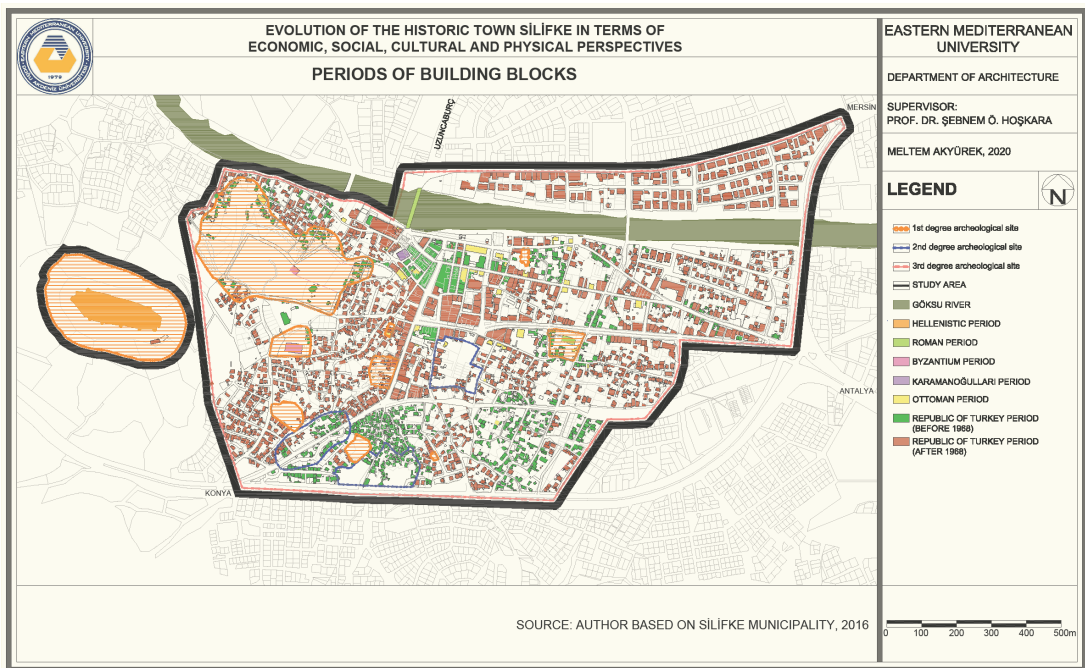


Figure 8. Historic periods of building blocks in Silifke

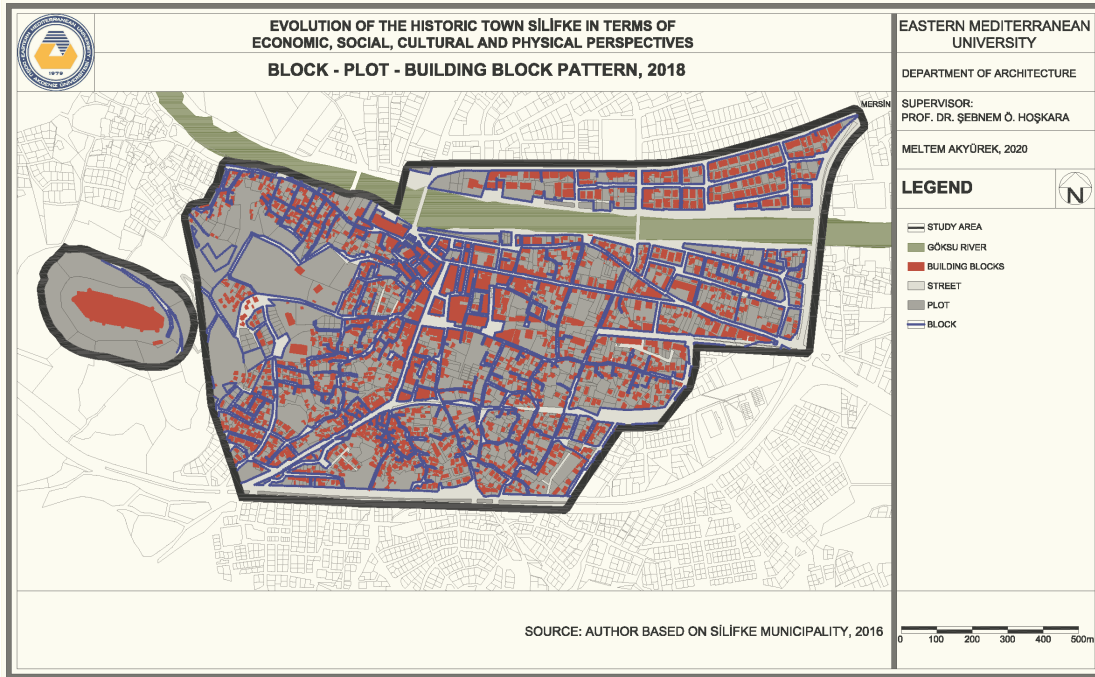


Figure 9. Block – plot – building block pattern of Silifke (2018)

4. Land-use

According to land use analysis the dominant premises in the town are the residential buildings mainly surrounding the commercial zone in the city center. North of Goksu River and the east of the commercial center presents a mixed-use of commercial and residential units. The main route or axis of the city is where the most of commercial and mixed-use premises take place. Though in the central part of the city, variety of premises and uses can also be spotted in the secondary routes and between alleys. The mixed-used premises are commercial and residential where the ground floor is dedicated to commercial function and the upper floors are for accommodation.

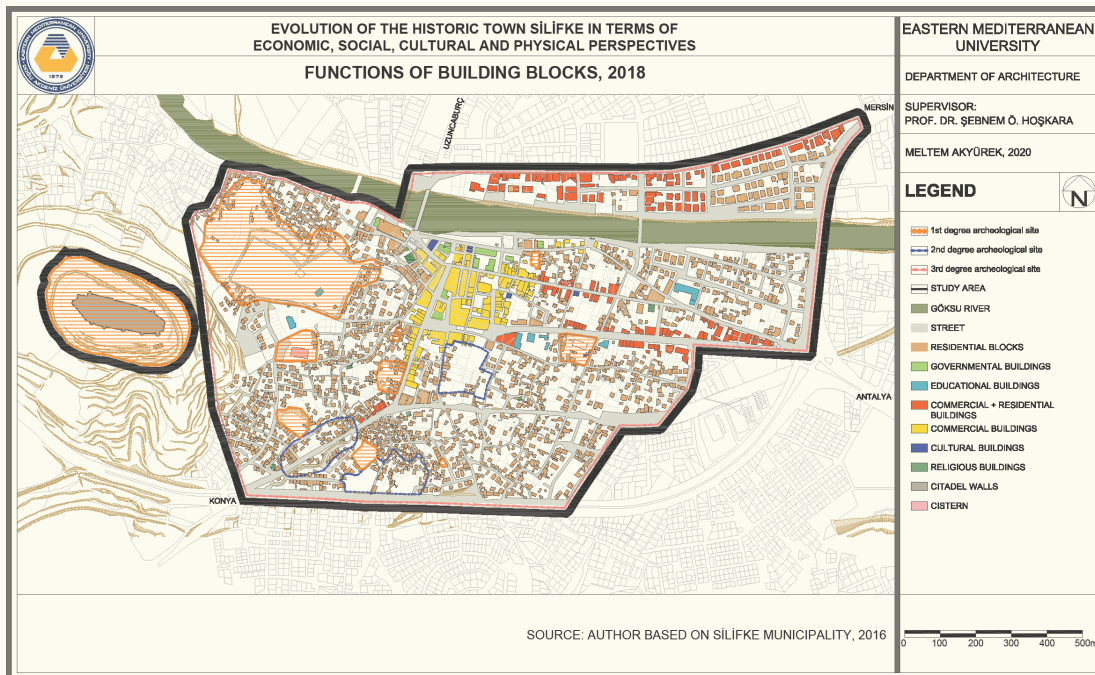


Figure 10. Land uses in Silifke (2018)

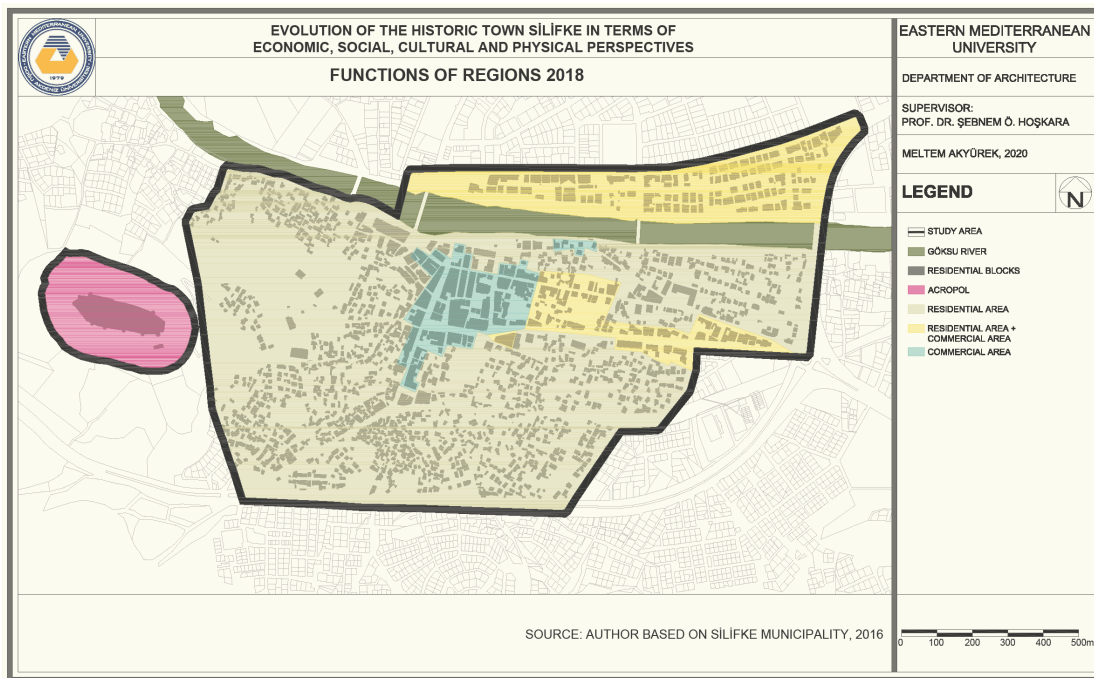


Figure 11. Regional uses in Silifke

CONCLUSIONS

Urban morphology analysis methods based on M.R.G Conzen have been used within the scope of this paper, in order to present the development and transformation stages of the historic city of Silifke. All analyses on the physical form characteristics of the city have been carried out through historic data including street pattern, block-plot-building typologies and land uses, blending them with the social and economic conditions within the historical process. In this sense, it is important to understand and absorb the founding philosophy of the city and to interpret certain periods of the city correctly for its future development which should also include conservation policies. The initial findings of this ongoing research will lead to understanding the city of Silifke from economic, social, cultural, and physical perspectives once they are merged with more detailed historical data.

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CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

Sebnem Hoskara, Professor of Architecture and Urbanism, Department of Architecture, Eastern Mediterranean University, Famagusta, 99450, North Cyprus.

sebnem.hoskara@emu.edu.tr @SebnemHoskara (twitter)

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