Mapping as a Medium to Re-imagine Ankara With Unlost Tumuli – Ankara With Tumuli?

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The Barcelona Conference on Arts, Media & Culture 2024
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract
In the city of Ankara, which is known to have been founded by the Phrygians in the 8th century BC, there are monumental tombs called tumulus – an element of the Phrygian burial tradition – located on natural heights in the north and west of the city following the streams. These tumuli serving also as landmarks began to disappear one by one during the urbanization of Ankara since the 1950s (Alanyalı Aral, 2017). This research aimed to integrate these invisible landmarks with the contemporary city and enable citizens to notice and experience them. In this regard, the methods of this research were first to portray today's Ankara with tumuli and the Phrygian settlement, Roman roads and milestones, streams, and topography with which tumuli are associated; then to reveal their current situations, problems, and potentials; and finally to propose possible interventions to make them visible again, using creative mapping techniques – layering and drift. To attract the attention of locals/tourists and raise awareness about these lost historical values, this study focused on the western tumuli of Ankara due to their proximity to the city center and the current city landmarks. By overlapping western tumuli and their related areas expressed in layers, an experiential route was determined to explore Ankara with tumuli. The positive/negative aspects that were uncovered while experiencing this route by walking and using public transportation, and the interventions proposed accordingly were integrated into the map as new layers, resulting in an intriguing, informative, and suggestive mapping study.

Keywords: Creative Mapping, Urban Experience, Tumuli, Ankara

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Introduction

Ankara, the capital of Turkey, has a rich cultural heritage, having hosted numerous civilizations throughout history. Known to have been founded by the Phrygians in the 8th century BC, the city is home to significant monuments known as tumuli (Alanyalı Aral, 2017). These structures served as burial sites for prominent figures of the Phrygian period, who were interred in wooden chambers placed on natural heights along the region's waterways. A tumulus, formed by heaping earth over this burial chamber, was not merely a tomb but also a symbol of power and a prominent landmark visible from the Phrygian city center and ancient routes such as the King's Road and the Pilgrim Road.

These tumuli retained their prominence until recent times, serving as iconic elements in the city's silhouette and as spaces appropriated by locals for recreational activities. However, with the beginning of urbanization, these key elements of Ankara's cultural heritage and collective memory have largely lost their visibility and presence in the cityscape. Among the numerous tumuli identified in Ankara's northern and western regions, this study focuses on the western tumuli due to their proximity to the city center. Of the 19 western tumuli recorded in the past, only two remain visible today which are Asti Tumulus and The Great Tumulus (Figure 1). Despite their historical importance, the tumuli have become invisible within the current city, often unrecognized or forgotten even by those who were born and raised in Ankara. Once situated on natural heights, the tumuli established strong visual and spatial connections with streams, the Phrygian settlement, and ancient roads (Alanyalı Aral, 2017). These relationships have been disrupted over time due to urbanization, the closure of streams, changes in topography, and alterations to the city's silhouette. Today, the tumuli are not only physically flattened but also culturally diminished, their historical significance obscured in the evolving urban fabric of Ankara.

Public awareness about tumuli in Ankara is also limited. Often confused with mounds, their distinct historical significance remains largely unrecognized. This study seeks to bring attention to these monuments, emphasizing their value as part of the city's historical and cultural identity. The aim is to integrate these historical remains into the contemporary city and enable citizens to engage with and experience them. The focus is on making these tumuli visible again, reestablishing their connections with the urban fabric, and reinterpreting them as integral elements of Ankara. The study tries to illustrate how Ankara would appear when its historical layers are reintegrated and to explore the visual experiences citizens can have today through an intriguing, informative, and suggestive mapping approach. While offering visitors a historical experience on one hand, the study also promotes awareness and encourages the preservation of these invaluable cultural remains. It specifically addresses the following questions: How can Ankara's invisible tumuli become visible again today, and how can people become aware of their existence?

Figure 1: Asti Tumulus (left) and The Great Tumulus (right)
(photographs taken by Topuz in May 2024)

Mapping as a Creative and Subjective Process

Maps are conventionally perceived as objective and frozen in time, offering static and rigid representations of spaces. However, this conventional claim has been deconstructed (Alanyalı Aral, 2016). Maps are inherently subjective; they involve personal perspectives, positions, and interpretations. According to Tawa (1998), mapping is the process of observing and documenting the relationships and connections within a site to uncover its current patterns and future potential. It serves as a tool for envisioning possibilities and guiding design decisions by engaging with the context and weighing its transformative potential. According to Corner (1999), mapping involves three core operations: establishing a framework, isolating and extracting data, and reconfiguring relationships to create meaning, which reflects the map-maker's choices and intent rather than neutral documentation. He also identifies four innovative techniques in contemporary mapping practices—drift, layering, game-board, and rhizome—that reshape perceptions and interactions with space in design and planning.

Among these techniques, this study focuses on layering and drift. Layering involves combining independent layers, each with its own logic, to create a complex, non-hierarchical structure. Pioneered by architects such as Bernard Tschumi and Rem Koolhaas, it allows for richer, more flexible designs and hybrid interactions beyond conventional master plans. Drift, on the other hand, inspired by the Situationist practice of 'derive', is a subjective mapping approach that captures personal, street-level experiences, revealing hidden and overlooked aspects of urban life through spontaneous exploration (Corner, 1999).

Mapping is not just a tool for representation but also an act of design, a provocative and creative process that challenges conventional spatial understanding. Inspired by the map "A Car-Free London" of Muf Architecture/Art (1999) reimagining London without cars, this study proposes reimagining Ankara through its tumuli, emphasizing the subjective nature of mapping as a creative and provocative action. For this research, layering and drift mapping techniques are employed to explore spatial and temporal relationships, enabling richer and more dynamic interpretations of the city. Layering becomes a critical method in understanding the city with its tumuli. Each layer, from contemporary life patterns to historical and natural landscapes, contributes to a multidimensional narrative. Overlapping these layers reveals the role of tumuli in the history of Ankara and their connection to the present, providing valuable insights into the city's evolving identity. Drift complements this by adding an experiential dimension, capturing the personal and spatial relationships that emerge through direct engagement with the tumuli and their surroundings.

Research Methodology

Within the scope of this study, the existing literature was reviewed from various perspectives, including the locations of tumuli within the city, their relationships with the Phrygian settlement, waterways, historical roads, the contemporary urban fabric, and topography, as well as creative mapping techniques to represent these connections. In light of the gathered information, it was decided to create a touristic map integrating written, visual, and digital content, enabling visitors to access information about the tumuli, Phrygians, and all the related areas as they navigate through these maps. This was tried to be achieved in two steps.

The first step of the research focused on mapping each layer considered to be associated with the tumuli. These layers were then overlapped to reconstruct the spatial connections between the past and the present. In the second step, the focus was on creating an experiential route based on the outputs of the first step. Accordingly, the study area—the western tumuli region and the historical city center—was explored by walking and using public transportation, applying the drift technique to uncover existing conditions, problems, and potentials, and developing design proposals for these issues. Based on the information observed, an additional layer of current state and future interventions was created.

By overlapping the layers from both steps, the final map defined a route that guides residents and tourists to the landmarks of the past and present, along with designated information points located near the tumuli. This route aims to reconnect visitors with the historical and contemporary significance of the tumuli and their surrounding elements.

Design Ideas Behind the Map

First Step: Layering

The layers included in the map are as follows: western tumuli and the Phrygian city center, waterways, Roman roads and milestones, significant locations in the current city, and topography. The positioning of the western tumuli and the Phrygian settlement on the map was based on the information provided in the research of Alanyalı Aral et al. (2023) (Figure 2). For the placement of the streams, the map illustrating Ankara's stream system from Yavuz's (2018) study was utilized (Figure 3).
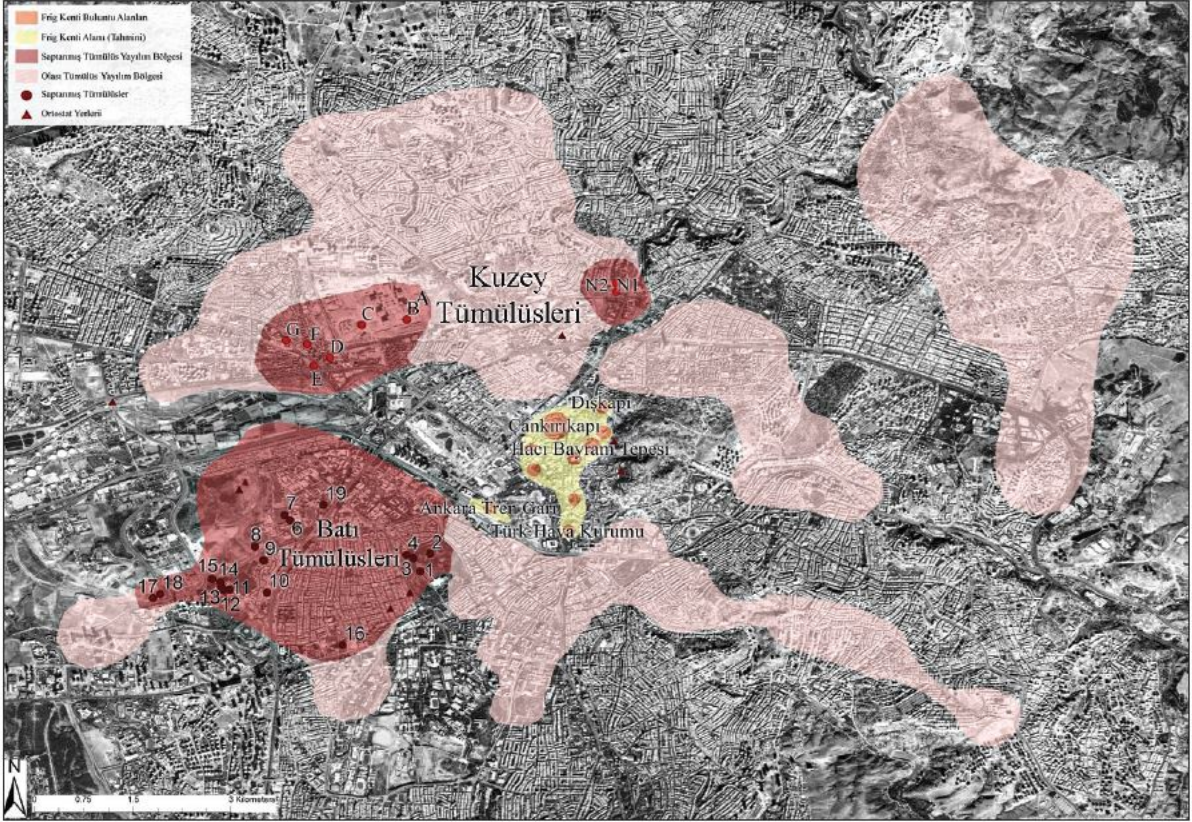
Figure 2: The Locations of the Tumuli and the Phrygian Settlement in Ankara
(Alanyalı Aral et al., 2023)

1. Ankara Çubuk Çayı	9. Dikmen Deresi	20. Ayvalı Deresi	31. Köçek Deresi
2.a İncesu Deresi	10. Kirazlı Dere	21. İncirli Deresi	32. Demirhendek Deresi
2.b İmrahor Deresi	11. Cevizli Dere	22. Kubbeli Dere	33. Bostan Deresi
3.a Bent Deresi	12. Karanlık Dere	23. Toklu Dere	34. Kakdibi Deresi
3.b Hatip Çayı (Tabakhane Suyu)	13. Kara Ova Deresi	24. Gelbura Deresi	35. Harman Deresi
3.c Mamak Deresi	14. Yalıncak Özü Deresi	25. Kavaklı Deresi	36. Mantarlık Deresi
4. Samanlık Deresi	15. Şarlak Deresi	26. Kanlı Dere	37. Bağ Deresi
5. Tuzlu Çayır Deresi	16. Çukurambar Deresi	27. Ala Dere	
6. Davulcu Bağları Deresi	17. Meşe Deresi	28. Aktaş Dere	
7. Kavaklı Dere	18. Kurt İni Deresi	29. Karacakaya Deresi	
8. Küçük Esat Deresi	19. Kemikli Deresi	30. Suluca Deresi	

Figure 3: The Stream System of Ankara (Yavuz, 2018)

Regarding the layer of Roman roads and milestones, it is first worth noting that during their occupation, the Romans developed an extensive and highly organized system of roads. Some of these roads passing through Ankara are known to have had visual connections with the city's tumuli serving as symbols of power. Although these cultural elements have largely disappeared today and do not align with the Phrygian period, including them on the map was considered meaningful. This approach contributes to the broader framework of reviving the lost or invisible aspects of Ankara's urban and historical landscape.

Furthermore, the Romans erected cylindrical stone markers, known as milestones (Clarkson-Wright, 2023), at mile intervals along these roads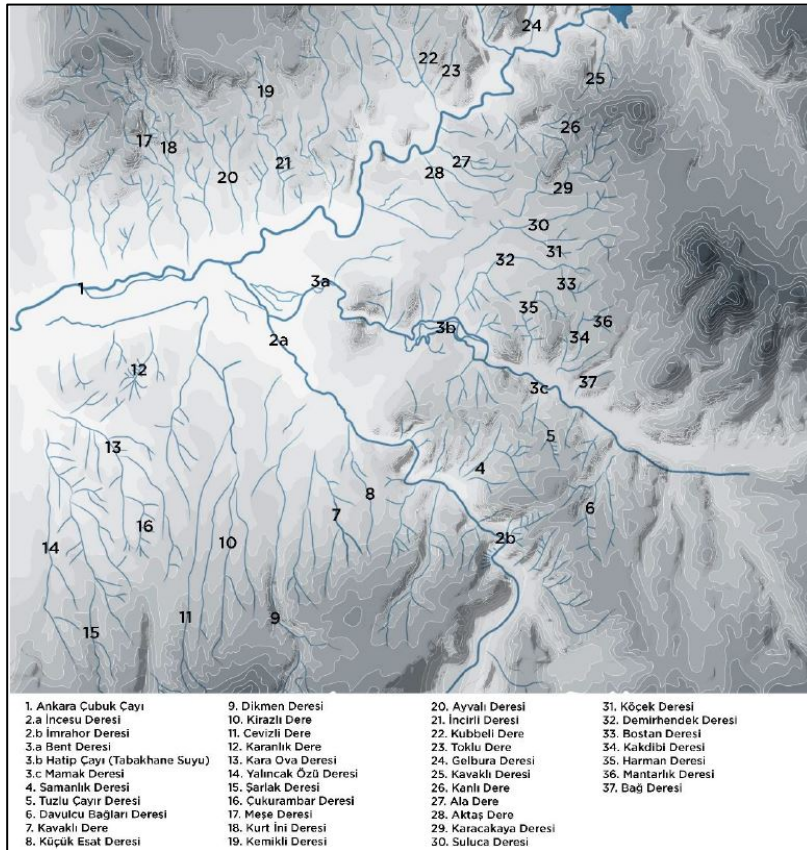 to inform travelers of the distance covered or the remaining distance to their destination. Such milestones were also present on the Roman roads passing through Ankara. Some examples can still be seen today in the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara (Figure 4). Although the prominence of Roman milestones has faded, the practice of marking distances continues in various forms. This concept was also integrated into this study. The design of signages and wayfinding elements, helping to guide visitors toward the tumulus locations was inspired by milestones. The layer of Roman roads and milestones was created based on the map "Galatia: 4.2.2 Ankara Sheet" by French (2015, p. 93) shown in Figure 5.

Figure 4: One of the Milestones Exhibited in the Ankara Anatolian Civilizations Museum (photograph taken by Topuz in May 2024)
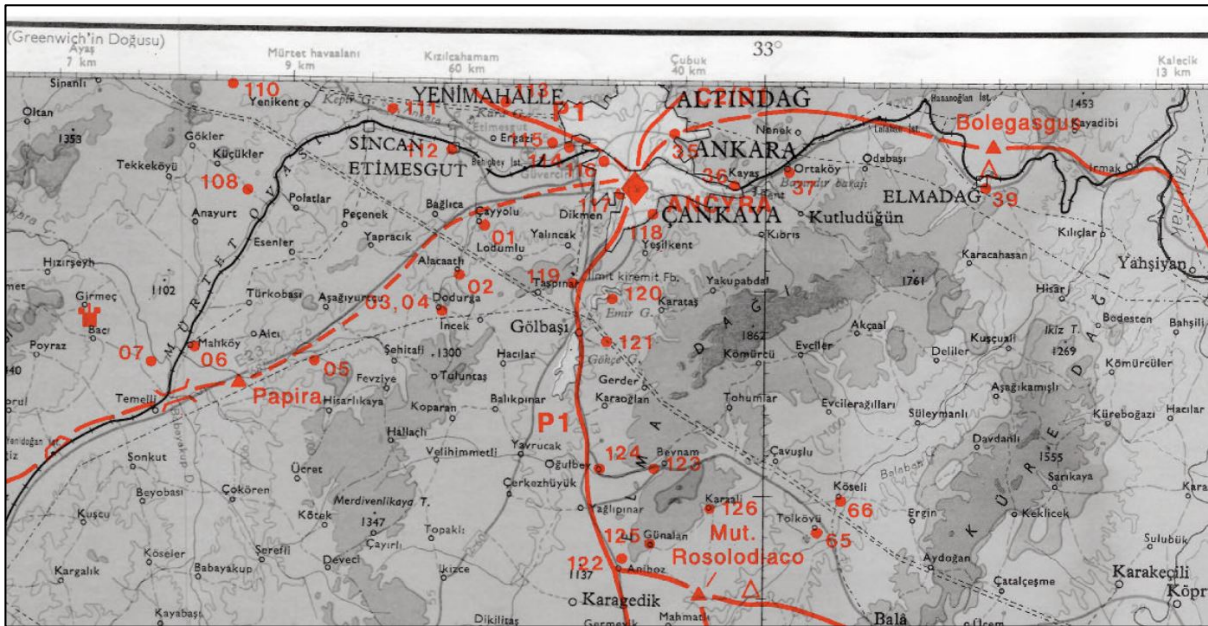
Figure 5: Partial Image of 'Galatia: 4.2.2 Ankara Sheet (French, 2015, p. 93)' Showing the Roman Roads and Milestones in Ankara

The western tumuli addressed in this study are located in areas close to the city center. To increase interest in the tumuli, current city landmarks situated in the city center have been included as another layer on the map, aiming to guide city residents and tourists visiting these landmarks toward the tumulus sites as well (Figure 6).

The topography of Ankara forms the final layer of the first step of the methodology. The practice of placing tumuli on elevated points in the city, the fact that the Phrygian city was established at the foothills of Hacı Bayram Hill, the natural flow of waterways shaped by elevation, and the preference for ancient roads to traverse flat terrains for easier access all highlight the importance of incorporating topography as a layer to analyze and understand all the layers effectively which are illustrated in Figure 6.
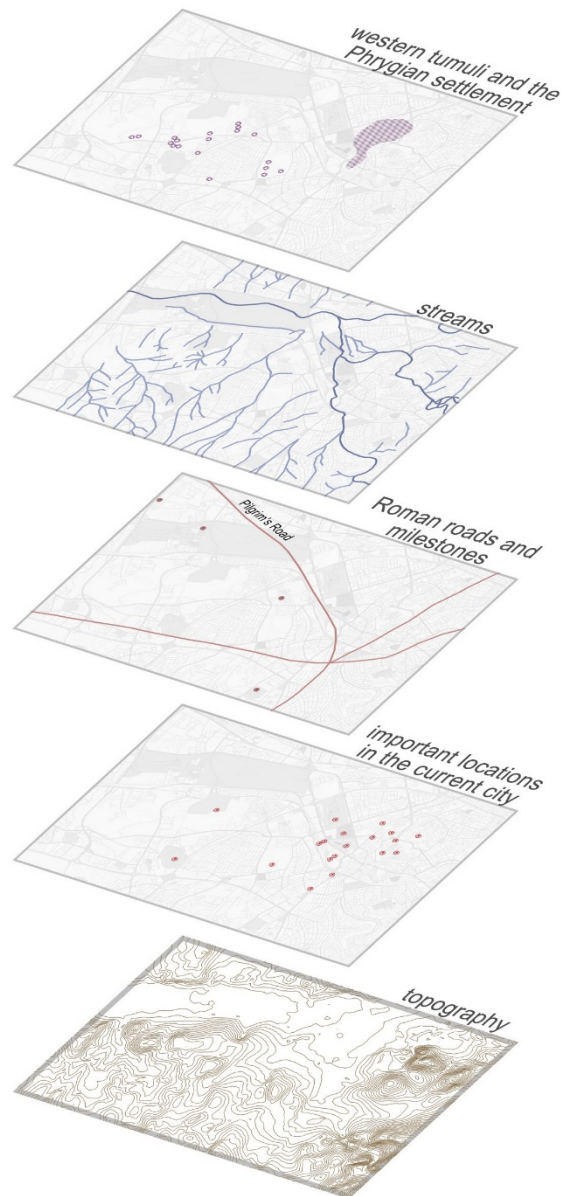
Figure 6: Ankara Tumuli and the Areas Related to Them Expressed in Layers

Second Step: Drift

The proposed mapping study for Ankara seeks to raise awareness about the tumuli as an integral part of the city's heritage. It envisions a route that combines historical, spatial, and experiential layers, allowing visitors to rediscover Ankara with a focus on its tumuli. Accordingly, in the second step of the research, it was tried to design an experiential route connecting the western tumuli region of Ankara with the city center. All layers revealed in the first step of the study were integrated into a single map to identify viewpoints that would allow visitors to experience the lost visual connections of the tumuli with other layers; locations planned for visits to learn about the Phrygians, tumuli, Roman roads, and milestones; as well as the starting and ending points of the route (Figure 7). Based on the initial planning, the route was experienced by walking and using public transportation. During this process, photographs of the current conditions were taken regarding observed problems, potentials, and possible design solutions.

For instance, out of the 19 western tumuli, 17 have unfortunately been replaced by roads, buildings, a pool, and parking lots. Among these 17 lost tumuli, the locations of 3 were found to be not very convenient for inclusion in the route due to their distance from the other tumuli and the planned walking or public transportation path. Access issues were also observed for the surviving Asti Tumulus and the Great Tumulus, as their surroundings are fenced off. While limited access to the Asti Tumulus was possible, entry to the Great Tumulus could not be achieved. Additionally, visual connections between the sites are mostly obstructed by tall buildings. Furthermore, the area thought to have once been the location of a Roman milestone is now occupied by a university campus.
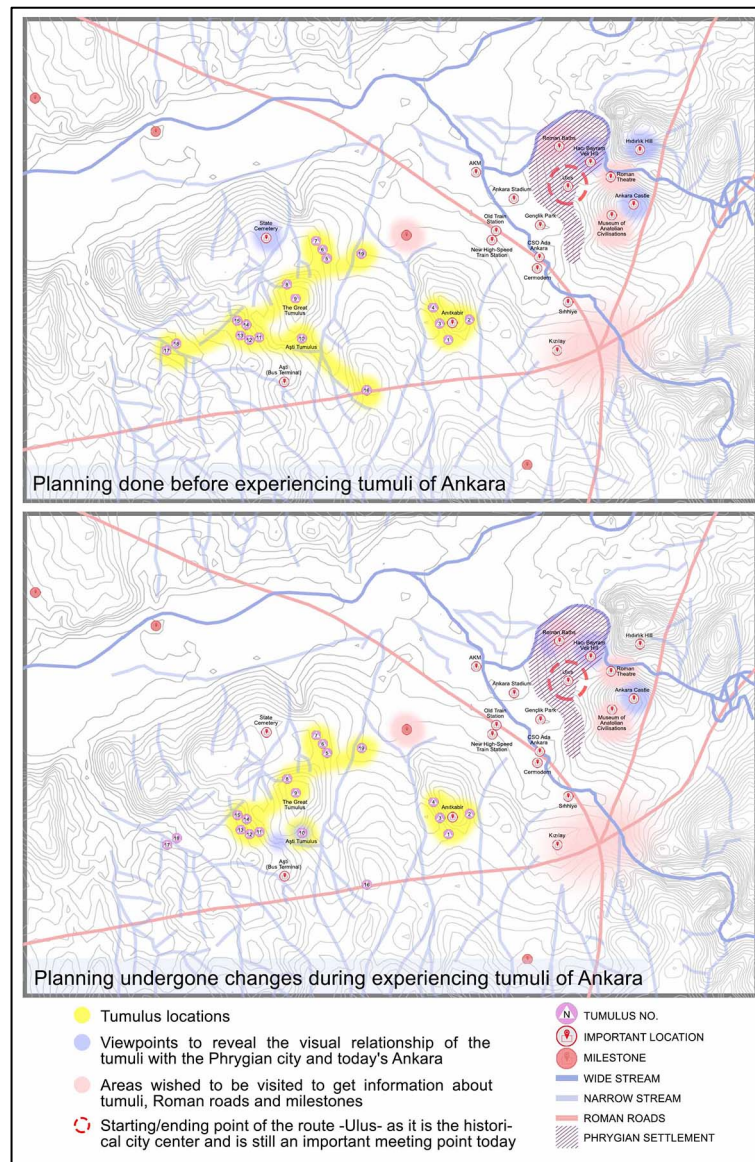
Figure 7: Planning of the Experiential Route Determined Over the Overlapped Layers

As a result of various observations made and notes taken during the process, adjustments were made to the route initially created before the drift phase, and design suggestions were proposed (Figure 8). For instance, pedestrian pathways and public transport routes, including the vehicles and their stops used, when necessary, were mapped. One significant issue was the busy road separating tumulus sites 8 and 9, with no pedestrian crossing available, which disrupts the connection between the tumuli and extends the route. To address this, a

pedestrian overpass was proposed at this point. Additionally, the route requires resting points, so existing parks along the route were included, and the creation of a new park was suggested. Some of these areas also have the potential to serve as viewpoints and therefore require reorganization to fulfill this dual purpose.
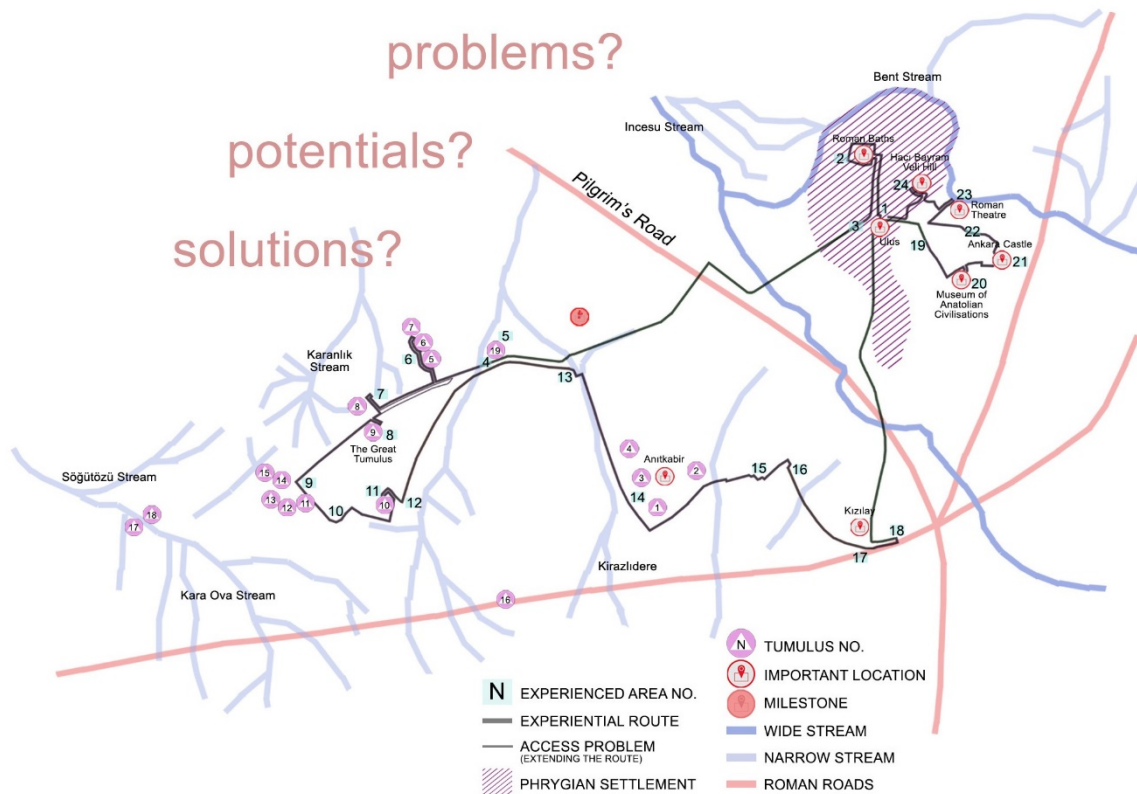
Figure 8: The Proposed Experiential Route Connecting Ankara's Western Tumuli Region With the Historical City Center

One of the most critical problems identified during the experience of the route is the lack of informative elements at the sites of the lost tumuli. People are unaware of these lost cultural values. The two tumuli that have survived to the present day have become trapped amidst urban development. Even locals have forgotten or are unaware of their significance There is only a statue that was placed in the area when tumuli number 7 and number 8 were converted into a parking area and that contains brief information about these tumuli, but this has made the situation quite tragic. A comprehensive arrangement is needed to inform people about all the tumuli and their historical and contemporary connections, offering a chance to reexperience them.

It is believed that reconstructing all the tumuli at their original locations is unfortunately neither realistic nor feasible. Instead, it was decided to create info points at the sites of the lost tumuli, acting as a mirror to the past. Inspiration for this approach was drawn from a project implemented in the Trenčín region of Slovakia. In this project, transparent graphic info panels were placed at specific viewpoints overlooking castle ruins that had lost their structural integrity (Figure 9). These panels displayed line drawings of the missing sections of the castles, allowing visitors to instantly visualize the original outlines of the structures by looking through the glass, thereby connecting the past with the present (Ard System, 2023, pp. 30–32). A similar approach could be applied to Ankara's tumuli (Figure 10). Visitors could access additional information through QR codes, such as animations depicting the

tumuli, artifacts discovered within them, and more. The placement of these panels can be determined based on their relationship with the surrounding context and the points that offer the best views for visitors. Temporary frames can be used to photograph the locations of the tumuli and appropriate dimensions and angles can be determined, then these photographs can be used to create drawings based on historical information from literature. These drawings can then be transferred to glass panels and placed in ideal locations for visitors. Furthermore, to facilitate access to these panels, cylindrical units resembling milestones could be placed at various points in the city (Figure 11). These units could provide distance information and quick details about tumuli, guiding people to the info points effectively.

Figure 9: Info/Instructional Media Realization Called 'Window to History' Created for Beckov Castle Located in the Trenčín Region, Slovakia (Ard System, n.d.)

Figure 10: An Example of Info Points Proposed for the Tumuli of Ankara: Anıttepe Info Point, Inspired by Ard System's Info/Instructional Media

Figure 11: A Design Idea: Milestones Leading People to Info Points
(Originally an Advertisement Unit of Masia Media)

This study also proposes preserving the Great Tumulus and Asti Tumulus, the only surviving western tumuli, and transforming them into museums. By doing so, these historical assets could be made more visible, offer visitors a richer cultural experience, and raise awareness about the tumuli. Additionally, a replica of the Roman milestone could be placed at its original location, turning the site into an informational point (Figure 12).
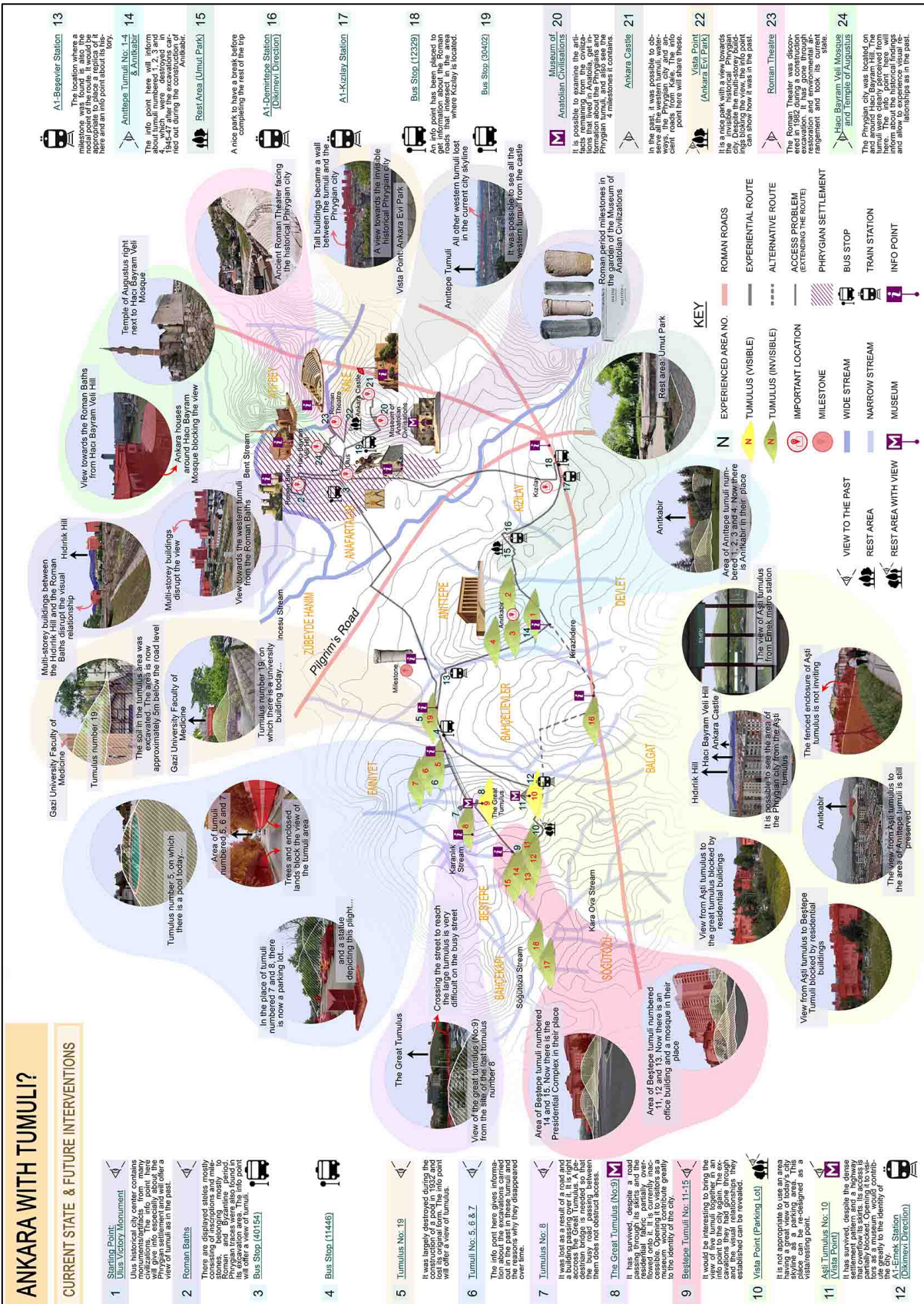
ANKARA WITH TUMULI?

CURRENT STATE & FUTURE INTERVENTIONS

1. **Starting Point: Ulus Victory Monument** — Ulus historical city center contains monuments/artifacts from many civilizations. The info point here will give info especially about the Phrygian settlement and will offer a view of tumuli as in the past.

2. **Roman Baths** — There are displayed steles mostly consisting of inscriptions and milestones, belonging mostly to Roman and Byzantine period. Phrygian traces were also found in its excavation area. The info point will offer a view of tumulus.

3. **Bus Stop (40154)**

4. **Bus Stop (11446)**

5. **Tumulus No. 19** — It was largely destroyed during the construction of a pool in 1992 and lost its original form. The info point will offer a view of tumulus.

6. **Tumuli No. 5, 6 & 7** — The info point here gives information about the tumuli and the reasons why they disappeared over time.

7. **Tumulus No. 8** — It was lost as a result of a road and a building passing over it. It is right across the closed tumulus. A pedestrian bridge is needed so that the busy road passing between them does not obstruct access.

8. **The Great Tumulus (No.9)** — It has survived, despite a road passing through its skirts and the residential fabric partially overlapped on it. It is currently inaccessible. Opening it to visitors as a museum would contribute greatly to the identity of the city.

9. **Bestepe Tumuli No: 11-15** — It would be interesting to bring the view of five tumuli together in an info point to the city again. The excavations that had gone through the caverns they had passed and the visual relationships they established can be revealed.

10. **Vista Point (Parking Lot)** — It is not appropriate to use an area having a great view of today's city skyline as a parking area. This place can be re-designed as a vista/resting point.

11. **Aşti Tumulus No. 10 (Vista Point)** — It has survived, despite the dense settlement pattern and a highway that overflow its skirts. Its access is partially blocked. Opening it to visitors as a museum would contribute greatly to the identity of the city.

12. **A1-Emek Station (Dikimevi Direction)**

13. **A1-Beşevler Station** — The location where a milestone was found. It is also the nodal point of the route. It would be appropriate to place a replica of it here and an info point about its history.

14. **Anıttepe Tumuli No: 1-4 & Anıtkabir** — The info point here will inform about tumuli numbered 1, 2, 3 and 4, which were destroyed in 1945-47 after the excavations carried out during the construction of Anıtkabir.

15. **Rest Area (Umul Park)** — A rest area to have a break before completing the rest of the trip.

16. **A1-Demirtepe Station (Dikimevi Direction)**

17. **A1-Kızılay Station**

18. **Bus Stop (12329)** — An info point has been placed to get information about the Roman roads that intersect in the area where Kızılay is located.

19. **Bus Stop (30402)** — All other western tumuli lost in the current city skyline. It was possible to see all the western tumuli from the castle

20. **Museum of Anatolian Civilisations** — It is possible to examine the artifacts remaining from the civilizations that lived in Anatolia, get information about the Phrygians and Phrygian tumuli, and also see the 4 milestones it contains.

21. **Ankara Castle** — In the past, it was possible to observe all the western tumuli, waterways, the Phrygian city and ancient roads from Kale. The info point here will share these.

22. **Vista Point (Ankara Evi Park)** — It is a nice park with a view towards the invisible historical Phrygian city. Despite the multi-storey buildings blocking the view, the info point can show how it was in the past.

23. **Roman Theatre** — The Roman Theater was discovered in 1982 during a construction excavation. It has gone through restoration and took its current state.

24. **Hacı Bayram Veli Mosque and Temple of Augustus** — The Phrygian city was located on and around Hacı Bayram Hill. The tumuli were clearly perceived from here. The info point here will inform about the historical findings and allow us to experience the visual relationships as in the past.

KEY

- EXPERIENCED AREA NO.
- TUMULUS (VISIBLE)
- TUMULUS (INVISIBLE)
- IMPORTANT LOCATION
- MILESTONE
- MUSEUM
- ROMAN ROADS
- EXPERIENTIAL ROUTE
- ALTERNATIVE ROUTE
- ACCESS PROBLEM (EXTENDING THE ROUTE)
- PHRYGIAN SETTLEMENT
- BUS STOP
- TRAIN STATION
- INFO POINT
- WIDE STREAM
- NARROW STREAM
- VIEW TO THE PAST
- REST AREA
- REST AREA WITH VIEW

Figure 12: The Final Map: Ankara With Tumuli

Conclusion

This research has emphasized the significant role of the tumuli in shaping Ankara's historical and spatial identity. In order to ensure spatial continuity between the past and the present, the visual and spatial connections of the tumuli were re-established, and attempts were made to improve the visitor experience with design proposals and to strengthen the urban identity. The resulting map integrates landmarks of both the past and present, serving as a touristic guide designed to attract public attention. Alongside the map, images provide insight into the obstacles and challenges encountered along the route concerning the tumuli. This approach aims to make visitors aware of the tumuli, encourage them to scan QR codes for more detailed historical information, allow them to compare the original forms of the tumuli with their current state, and understand the transformations they have undergone over time, fostering a stronger willingness to protect and preserve these historical assets.

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