
Treball Fi de Màster

Negotiating cultural identities in post-conflict spaces: the memorial landscapes of Nicosia

Konstantina Chrysostomou



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MASTER THESIS

Negotiating Cultural Identities in Post-conflict Spaces.

The memorial landscapes of Nicosia

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Abstract

During the last forty-two years, Nicosia, the capital city of Cyprus has been a city divided by the Green Line after a long period of inter-communal conflicts and the Turkish military invasion in 1974. In this divided city, two main identities have been grounded over time: Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. The thesis aims to understand the role of the cultural heritage and urban planning in the post conflict urban scenario and the ways that memory, history and heritage of both communities have been widely used as a means to establish new identities after the division. By looking to different urban strategies, the research critically analyzes certain top-down urban strategies such as the placing of monuments and the Nicosia Master Plan which function as tools to inscribe specific memories in the urban space and eradicate others in order to shape new identities. Secondly, the thesis analyses other initiatives such as the Home for Cooperation, which proposes new understandings of the coexistence between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Finally this research aims to participate in a literature that highlights the importance of social participation and community engagement in post-conflict scenarios.

Key words

Divided-cities, Cultural heritage, Cyprus, Nicosia, Post-conflict disaster, Social Memory

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I am indebted to my closest friends for listening my thoughts throughout that period, giving me practical advices and valuable comments on my thesis. Without their support and belief in me and in what I am trying to interpret since the day one, nothing of these would come true.

Finally, the dissertation journey would not have been reality without the contribution of my family who was a warm supporter showing understanding and trust despite the red lines I had to cross. I will always be grateful to my grandfather Michalis, who has made that opportunity of knowledge possible in a number of ways.

**‘To all the walls we erect in order to protect the
constructed truths that designate our lives...’**

Table of Contents

Abstract	1
Acknowledgments	2
Table of Contents	4
List of Figures	5
List of Abbreviations	6
1. INTRODUCTION	7
2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	9
Identities and Memories in the Urban Space	9
The Past, Conflictive Heritages and Identity in Divided Cities	12
3. PRESENTATION OF THE NICOSIA CASE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY	14
Story of a division. Nicosia: A river, a commercial street, a Buffer Zone.	15
Methodology	18
4. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS: ELEMENTS FOR RE-GROUNDING IDENTITIES	20
Branding new Identities in the Urban Space: Names and Logos	20
Heritage and monuments	22
Nicosia Master Plan	26
Home for Cooperation	31
Voices: Questions about Identity and Space	34
5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	36
BIBLIOGRAPHY	40

List of Figures

Figure 1: Location of Cyprus.	14
Figure 2: Evolution of the Fortification.	15
Figure 3: Mason-Dixon Line.	16
Figure 4: Green Line.	17
Figure 5: Logos of Nicosia	21
Figure 6: Changing names of Streets.	22
Figure 7: Monument of Freedom	24
Figure 8: Monument The Resolution.	25
Figure 9: Monument Kemal Ataturk.	25
Figure 10: NMP interventions in Selimiye and Omeriye Areas.	27
Figure 11: NMP Interventions in Phaneromeni and Samanbahce Areas.	28
Figure 12: NMP interventions in the Omeriye, Faneromeni areas and Selimiye Market.	28
Figure 13: NMP intervention in the Great Inn	29
Figure 14: Home for Cooperation	31
Figure 15: Landscapes of Memory	37

List of Abbreviations

AHDR: Association for Historical Dialogue & Research

H4C : Home for Cooperation

GC :Greek Cypriots

NGO : Non-Governmental Organization

NMP : Nicosia Master Plan

PPI - CY: PeacePlayers International-Cyprus

SeeD: Center for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development

TC : Turkish Cypriots

TRNC: Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

WMF : World Monument Fund

UN : United Nations

UNCHS - Habitat: United Nations Centre for Human Settlements

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO : United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNOPS: United Nations Office for Project Services

1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines Nicosia as an example of a post-conflict divided city. In particular I am interested in the ways that memory, history and heritage have been (and are) woven into the urban reconstruction rhetoric and practices used in the segregated space of Nicosia in order to establish new identities. Identity is a widely used but difficult concept to define, usually deployed to refer to the sense of belonging people have (Hall and du Gay 1996). Since the late 19th century, national and ethnic identities have become central for the collective organization of human groups (Anderson, 1983; Gellner and Breuilly, 2008; Hobsbawm, 1992). In the case of Cyprus, and Nicosia in particular, these questions take a profound dimension since at least during the last century the region has experienced a complicated and dramatic history of human displacements, geographical separations and political and religious violent conflicts that affect issues of identity (Bryant, 2008; 2010; 2012; Constantinou and Hatay, 2010; Navaro-Yashin, 2012). In this context, I am interested in understanding the role of cultural heritage in this post-conflict urban scenario. As a field of study, heritage has grown significantly in the last years (Biehl and Prescott 2013; Biehl *et.al.* 2015; Hall, 1999; Logan, 2008; Waterton and Watson, 2015) and though it is not strictly at the centre of this research, a ‘working definition’ is necessary, thus I consider heritage as “a version of the past received through objects and display, representations and engagements, spectacular locations and events, memories and commemorations, and the preparation of places for cultural purposes and consumption.”(Waterton and Watson, 2015:1)

Indeed, the urban space of Nicosia has turned into a cultural battlefield where the identities of two nations (Turkey and Greece) are competing for a spatial rooting. Though it does not seem impossible that a political solution might come to Cyprus; and despite the fact that Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots continue imagining their past and their future in different and sometimes opposite ways, the local authorities have tried certain strategies, sometimes contradictory, to unify a possible unique urban identity (Master Plan) but also to reinforce identities based in conflict. In this thesis I am especially interested in this contradictory scenario where some alternative initiatives (Home for Cooperation) though without really tackling issues of memory and identity directly, are opening a space of social practices in the city, which are affecting the way that the new generations understand their lives in a divided city.

The main goal of this research is to examine how certain top-down urban tactics are functioning as powerful tools to inscribe specific memories in the urban space and erase others, and in this way shape new identities. Thus, in the next chapters I will analyze how certain *Lieux de memoires* and other symbolic elements (i.e. logos and street names) as well as urban planning strategies such as the Nicosia Master Plan can stigmatize the urban space by mobilizing heritage and memories that reinscribe and reify

the identity of each ethnic group in space. However, as will be argued, these strategies have limited civil engagement and are not been successful to really reground a new identity that moves beyond the issue of ethnic or religious identity. Indeed, I argue that other initiatives such as the Home for Cooperation that I analyse in this thesis are proposing new understandings of coexistence and cultural understanding in a social context that still lives the division as a major spatial reality in their everyday lives. By focusing in participatory process and bottom-up strategies that civilians from the two different communities are engaging in, independently from government-led policies, this research aims to participate in a literature that highlights the importance of social participation and community engagement in post-conflict scenarios.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In Nicosia, traumatic experiences inhabit the biographies of people for whom their former lives and histories are often kept in memories and inscribed in the urban environment. Taking this as an analytical point of departure, two bodies of knowledge shape the conceptual framework that informs my research. First, I am inspired by a literature that discusses issues of urban space, heritage, identity and memory. Thus in the first part of this chapter I will explain how collective identities are shaped by memories. These memories are materialized in multifarious ways in the urban space and in many cases are transformed into heritage sites. It is in this context that dominant symbolic elements such as monuments, museums, archives and cemeteries emerge to commemorate official histories. The second theme emerges from this one and focuses on how issues of memory and identity are especially conflictive in divided cities, as is the case of Nicosia. Thus, I will discuss how in post-conflict divided cities, the displacement transforms the locals into strangers in their own land, turning instantly the dual heritage into duel of heritages. Under these circumstances beneficiaries from both communities are struggling to re-own the fragmented territories in order to re-ground their identities. As it will be discussed, in divided urban scenarios with a variety of ethnic groups that used to co-exist, the loss of social links and the radical disruption of their urban experience brings to the surface feelings of fear of the “others” and anxieties towards difference which are often materialized in spatial practices.

Identities and Memories in the Urban Space

Several scholars have analysed and theorized how memory and identity are materialized, exalted and contested (Connerton 1989; Halbwachs 1980; Golda-Pongratz 2016; Juday 2014; Lowenthal 1985; Nora 1989; Salazar 2015). Indeed, the spatial dimensions of collective memory were already theorized by authors such as Pierre Nora (1989; 1990) who by proposing the notion of *Lieux de Memoires* furnished us with conceptual tools to understand the territorial expressions of memory. One crucial aspect of the argument is the distinction he made between memory and history, which is especially important for my research about Nicosia. Nora argued that ‘memory is life ... It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting ... susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past’ (1989: 8).

This distinction has been especially simulative and, following his argument, one could contend that memory is in constant production and therefore the relations among identity, memory and space are fluid, and subject to be contested. An interesting conclusion Nora (1989) reached is that “*lieux de memoires* have no reference in reality; or, rather, they are their own referent: pure, exclusively self-referential sign... the *lieux de memoire* is double: a site of excess closed upon itself, concentrated in its own name, but also forever open to the full range of its possible significations” (p. 23-24). Thus, following Nora’s ideas, I believe that memory is localized in objects and places, but can be contested. In addition, though memory inhabits places, it should also be examined what has been erased and neglected and how processes of remembering and forgetting tell a story about the ethnic conflict that permeates the current divided urban landscape and the lives of Nicosia’s inhabitants. In this urban landscape, the *lieux de memoire* would be naked of meaning if they would not be accompanied by the memories of people. Space could be used to remember and to inscribe traces of history and memory, but it could be also a means for obscuring or concealing certain parts of it. Thus, inspired by this relationship between space, memory and history, my research analyses how in the divided city of Nicosia, the urban landscape inscribes history and aims to shape memories, at the same time that it is used to create a rupture from the past.

The interactions among memory, history and identity in current societies have opened a window to examine issues of cultural identities and uses of heritage (Abu El-Haj, 1998; Baillie, 2012, 2013; Biehl, *et al.* 2015; Biehl & Prescott, 2013; Gable, 2005; Holtorf and Kristiansen, 2015; Logan, 2008). Scholars interested in heritage assume that does something significant to the consciousness and identity of those who visit heritage sites. Some, with a more critical perspective, argue that heritage could be a vehicle for the dissemination of ‘official histories’ that inculcates some sort of patriotic identity, but erases a more nuanced understanding of the past (Gable, 2005). Other authors examine how heritage shapes identity by creating a ‘community of memory,’ David Lowenthal for example argued that ‘the past as we know it is partly a product of the present; we continually reshape memory, rewrite history, refashion relics’ (1985:26). In the case of divided cities, since the very first moment that segregation occurs, heritage becomes an ally for the consolidation of different identities inscribed in the urban space. In that way following the above words of Lowenthal, identity is constructed and deconstructed according to needs of each period.

Studies about heritage and identity also drawn from Benedict Anderson pioneering work on understanding how heritage also shapes national identity by creating an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1983). These studies introduced also the notion of ‘invention of tradition’ in order to understand the development of a common identity by way of constructing continuity with the past in nation states (Hobsbawn and Ranger, 1983). Anderson’s understanding of modern nations, especially independent postcolonial nations, as ‘imagined communities’ and his emphasis in examining the similar

'styles' of imagining the nation seem insightful for this research about Nicosia. Indeed, the city is located in a postcolonial country whose national identity has clear resemblances with other nations that gained independence from European empires starting in 19th century. As will be explained later, Cyprus has been caught in finding a proper identity that would allow it to disengage from the British Colonialism. The dual outbreak of nationalism, Greek Cypriots binding with Greece and Turkish Cypriots patronage from Turkey engendered the ethnic schism, which turned into a socio-political gap between the two communities.

Anderson claimed that "nationality, or nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind" (1983:3) and he highlighted that the most important task for scholars was not to discern the true or false nature of nations, but to understand how nations have come into historical beings as well as "why, today, they command such profound emotional legitimacy" (p.3). In this way, Anderson opened up the window to examine cultural and material practices that appear alongside processes of collective identity formation and nationalism, which seem to me crucial to analyse spatial practices of memorialization. In particular he examined three institutions of power that nations have used to control make their traces more visible and shape the way in which they could imagine their domination: Census, Maps and Museums. A discussion of these three institutions is beyond the realm of this research, however, what emerges from Anderson's argument is that processes of nation-building are clearly accompanied by cultural and political strategies which are also related to the control of memory and the past.

I could be argued that even though the relation between collective memory and the past has been problematic, in cases where minorities are constantly disenfranchised from processes of memorialization and the contested nature of sites of memory is clearly evident. In this sense, the concept of symbolic landscape helps also to understand how memory and identity are inscribed in space. In these lines M.H Ross argues that the symbolic landscape has the potential to communicate social and political meanings through specific public images, physical objects and other expressive representations (2009:8). However, this symbolic landscape can also exclude a group by not recognising its legitimate position in the environment, and in divided cities where ethnic identity is inscribed in the separated landscape, is often the case that objects, buildings and sites relating to one culture are located in a territory that 'belongs' to another culture. That phenomenon of a spatial mismatch among people, cultures and heritages is described by Ashworth and Bart (2010:452) as 'enclaved heritage.' Thus, some of the questions that emerge in these divided contexts are: how the 'enclaved heritage' should be managed in divided cities? Or in the case that the authorities impose new monuments how these new *lieux de memoires* are stigmatizing the urban fabric? In both cases the cultural memory could be crucial ally for regrounding the new identities in a post divided context.

The Past, Conflictive Heritages and Identity in Divided Cities

The divided city as an urban phenomenon is not new (Marcuse, 1933). Divided cities appeared more intensively in the Middle East during the second half of the 20th century, with a numerous of political and social upheavals in the region. In most cases coming from a conflict disaster, the society stack in the past and the impact of trauma is visible. I will summarize the main aspects that seem relevant about divided cities by way of the presentation of Nicosia as the case study of this research in the next section, but first let me highlight some of the questions concerning heritage and identity that emerged in other post-conflict divided cities, and which are relevant for my case study at the same time that could help to contextualize Nicosia in a more general scenario of theoretical and policy debates about the memory, space and identity.

In divided cities, heritage and memory have been used in the urban space prior and after the segregation in different extent (Charlesworth and Fien, 2014; Dumper & Larkin, 2008; Pickering, 2006; Rosen & Shlay, 2014; Silver 2010; Wolferstan, 2008). Before the division heritage can be used as a weapon to polarize discourses about identity, ethnicity and nationalism highlighting the cultural differences between ‘them’ and the ‘others’ leading to the social and spatial division. When the partition demarcate the two areas resulting in the displacement of population in homogenous parts, then the utilization of the same tools of heritage and memory are the alleys of each group on re-grounding of their identities in the same urban space under the conditions of a different reality. In most cases, after a conflict, the society stack in the past and the impact of trauma is visible. The people after that moment according to Christalla Yakinthou (2014) require two things; need for closure and answers for what did happen, and afterwards the need for socio-spatial permanence. In the case of Mostar for example, the reconstruction of the bridge seemed to European Union, UNESCO and World Bank necessary as it would be the most feasible and immediately beneficial to the residents as it was standing as a symbol of civic peace prior the conflict (WMF). However that strategy resulted in a kind of virtual rather than actual recovery, since it was aiming to the international tourist trade, neglecting the needs of the inhabitants. As a local said “not until some firms or some factories are rebuilt where those people could work will we need the Old City (...) if only the eyes are full and the pockets empty, then there is nothing.” (Calame and Parcic, 2009: 1)

In the case of Beirut, the authorities concentrated in creating an urban place, which is dissociated from its immediate historical referents (Larkin 2010, 2012; Sakr, 2012; Salazar, 2015). In the Lebanese capital, Solidere a private urban redevelopment company aimed to ‘an ancient city for the future’ creating a memorial vacuum. According to that, the new plan was engendering unity between the two communities

by demonstrating the shared Phoenician or Levantine heritage rather than the pluralistic reality of the still politically shaken country (Sakr, 2012). The destruction of monuments and the spectacularization of history had radical changes in its spatial, socioeconomic and cultural textures.

In contradiction to what Benedict Anderson called as collective amnesia, meaning the process that new memories require concerted forgettings (quoted in Gillis, 1996:7), Berlin, another divided city of the past handled differently the gap that the first two cities tried to whitewash. In 1993 Cornelius Hertling speech, as president of the Berlin Chamber of Architects expressed oppositely to the ongoing destruction of memory: “We find it unacceptable that buildings that have become part of urban history are being erased from memory precisely because they are historically burdened. History and identity are therefore being eradicated.”(quoted in Bevan, 2007) Therefore, instead of demolishing the whole wall and the part of the history that it was representing, they kept parts of it as reminders. Despite that, new *Lieux de memoires* have been created where there were none before, as the Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum (Bevan, 2007).

Crawford and Lipschutz argue that in some cases identity politics is what defines the political game while in other places is not, and wherever that happens, the aggressive comprehensions escalate more and frequent. However, the incentives and the constraints which might be applicable by the authorities can determine the process of the situations (1998:517). As Calame and Charlesworth (2009) mentioned, the line is drawn usually after the intervention of external forces that require restoring the security. The lines in that way turn into walls and the walls into behavior that poisons the society. The boundaries could be natural or artificial barriers. On several cities, which are still divided, as Nicosia and Jerusalem, these lines have been marked into an hour but the scars need a long-term healing. In these cases along the two sides of a Buffer Zone have been constructed conterminous artificial borders. In other cases, the barriers emerged from the battlefields, the informal frontiers or from the semi permeable borders that occurred by the political events. In Mostar, in Beirut and in Belfast the boundaries appeared slowly and informally, turning into a spatial experience, difficult to escape from (Calame and Charlesworth,2009).

In post-conflict situations, as in the case of Nicosia, the two main ethnic groups are trying to renegotiate the space according the new facts that arise from the homogenization of the population and the absence of the ‘others’. On that way as it will be analyzed further in the next chapter, the heritage of the others become enclaved, a hostage at the hands of the new landowner. In the same time the existed monuments that were already glorifying the cultural identity of the community who lives there anymore, turns into a reinforcing element for the cultural ownership of the space. Furthermore, the rise of new objects of memory comes to separate definitively ‘them’ from the ‘others’.

3. PRESENTATION OF THE NICOSIA CASE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

“In the Mediterranean area we can find the largest number of divided cities in the world. From Jerusalem with its wall, to Nicosia with the “Green Line” and also others such as Gorica or Mostar, moving in the Balkan area. These impressive divisions, mark the cityscape with walls and borders, patrols and checkpoints inside in every town” (Leontiou, 2006; translated by the author)

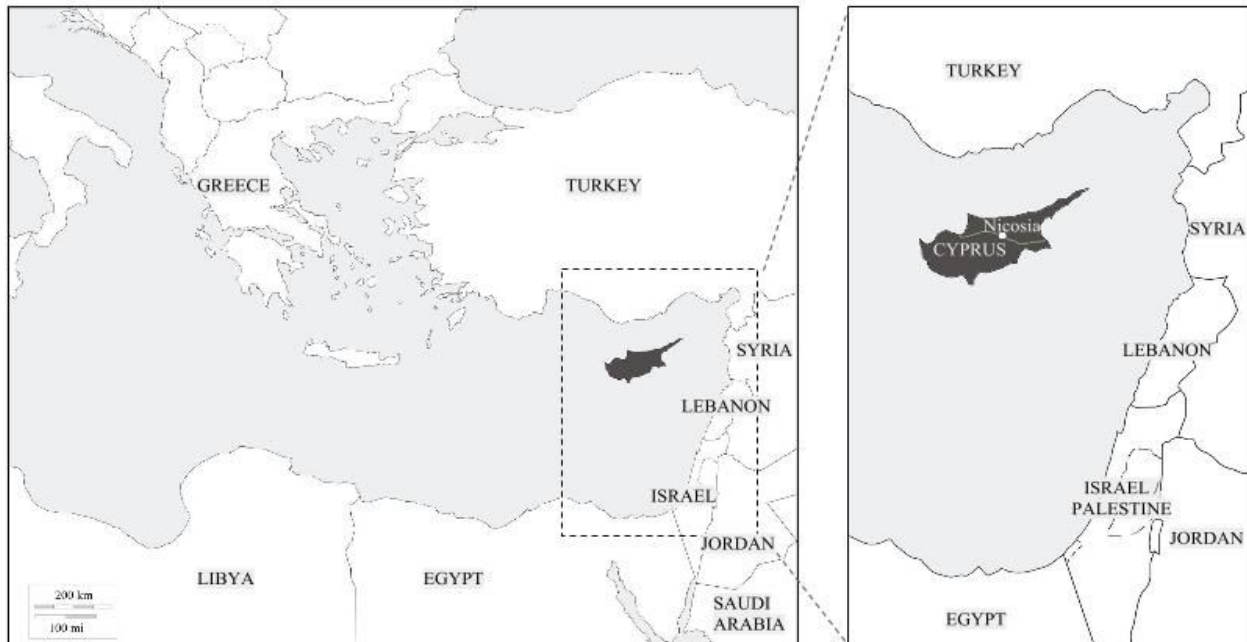


Figure 1: Location of Cyprus. Source: [https:// www.d-maps.com](https://www.d-maps.com). Adapted by the author

The geographical position of Cyprus, in the depth of Eastern Mediterranean and in the area of Levant, has been a determining factor in the shaping of the inhabitant’s life and history. The island is surrounded by Africa and Asia, where some of the greatest civilizations of humanity dominated, while in the same time, a long history of war, conflicts and occupation was being carried out. Cyprus since 9th millennium BC has been at the center of these evolutions and got influenced by them, sometimes directly and in other cases directly.

Story of a division. Nicosia: A river, a commercial street, a Buffer Zone

Nicosia nowadays is known as the ‘last divided capital of Europe’. A Green Line is crossing the contemporary maps, creating a buffer zone in the middle, separating the population of the city in two sectors (Dikomitis, 2005). The south with a *de jure* sovereignty according to the international law governed by the Greek Cypriots, and the north holding a *de facto* domination by the Turkish Cypriots which is recognised only by Turkey, named as Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (from now on TRNC). Even though that situation is ongoing for the last 42 years, however the geographical significance of the Green Line known also as Buffer Zone or No Man’s Land, has been an urban referential point since the Frankish rule (10th century).

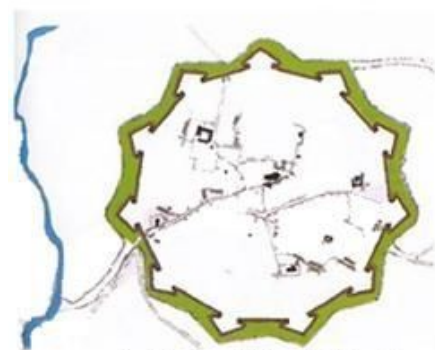
The area which today appears in the contemporary maps of the island as Green Line, was illustrated at the maps of the 11th century in the same approximately limitations as a river which was running at the axis east-west separating the at that time walled city. Later on, with the Venetians domination in the 16th century, the river was diverted outside of the new fortification walls in order to protect the city from the Ottomans attack.

When at the end, Cyprus became part of the Ottoman Empire in 1570, the empty river bed, functioned as a dumping ground for refuse, separating the Muslims administration center in the north of the urban gap left after the diversion of the river, and the Orthodox Christians in the south according to the existing ethnic criteria and of the period. That is, even though Nicosia was not divided during this period, the two main communities were already living in separate residential areas, defined by their religious centers. Muslim neighbourhoods (*mahalles*) were placed near the mosques, while the Orthodox Christians near the churches (Diaz-Berio, 1982).

In 1878, the British domination of the island, covered the riverbed of ‘*Pedieos potamos*’ in Greek, ‘*Chirkefli Dere*’ in



Fortification of Nicosia during the Frankish Rule (11th century)



Fortification of Nicosia during the Venetian Rule (16th century)

Figure 2: Evolution of the Fortification. Source: Galaktou, H., Malaktou, E. (2010) *Λευκωσία του χθες, του σήμερα και του αύριο*

Turkish, for health reasons, creating in the same place the commercial street “*Ermou*”, which was the trade zone and a meeting point for the two communities leaving aside their ethnic particularities (Bakshi, 2012; Oktay,2007). When the first intercommunal conflicts arose, this shared space of the two communities turned into a battlefield and at a zone of separation, for almost two decades. Nicosia was interpreted into a ‘proxy war’ for both sides and Ermou street as a symbol of milestone.

In 1956, during the British colonial period, the first physical segregation of the capital occurred when tactic of ‘Divide and Conquer’ that took advantage of the interethnic differences was applied (Calame and Charlesworth, 2009). At that time the first barbed wire divisions parts known as ‘Mason-Dixon Line’ were erected to restrain the violence between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots (See Figure 3). In 1958, the decision concerning the administration of the cities as separate municipalities, led to the escalation of the events and the anew division of Nicosia. From 1960’s independence agreement of the island and onwards, the problem of shared administration remained the main issue.

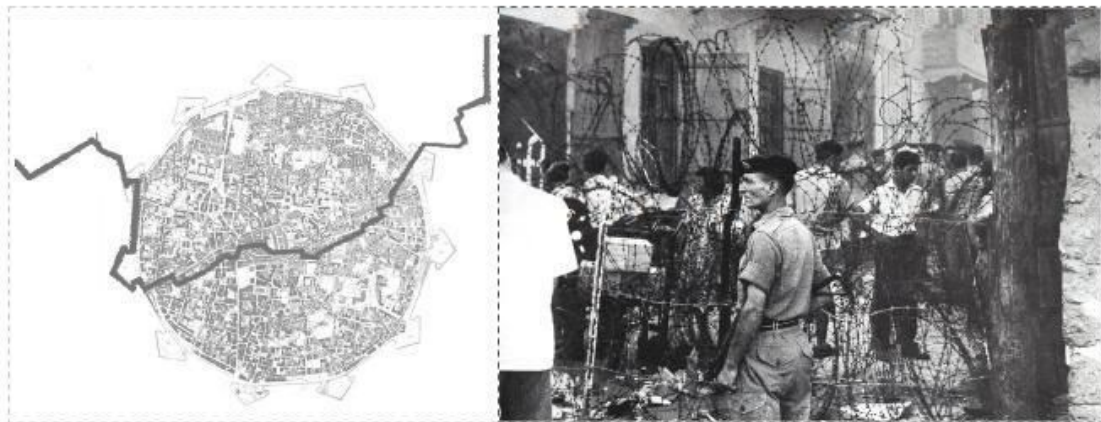


Figure 3: Mason - Dixon Line, 1958. Source: Left: Map made by the author; photograph on the right: Mapas online blog,2016.

In December 1963, new episodes of violence emerged to the island, leading to the ‘darkest period’ of the contemporary history of Cyprus. The Zurich agreements were abandoned and the violence was escalated between the paramilitaries of the two communities. A UN Peacekeeping Force deployed in Nicosia, and the UNSupervised ‘Green Line’ as it was in the Surrige Report of 1958, was established dividing *de facto* not only Nicosia but also the whole island (See Figure 4). The barriers remained impermeable until 1967 when the relations between the two communities were improved. However, in 1974, after the heavily armed ceasefire from the Athens organised coup against the President of Cyprus and then the military attack interventions of Turkey, the temporary barriers became permanent, dividing the population of the island in ethnically homogeneous sides until today.

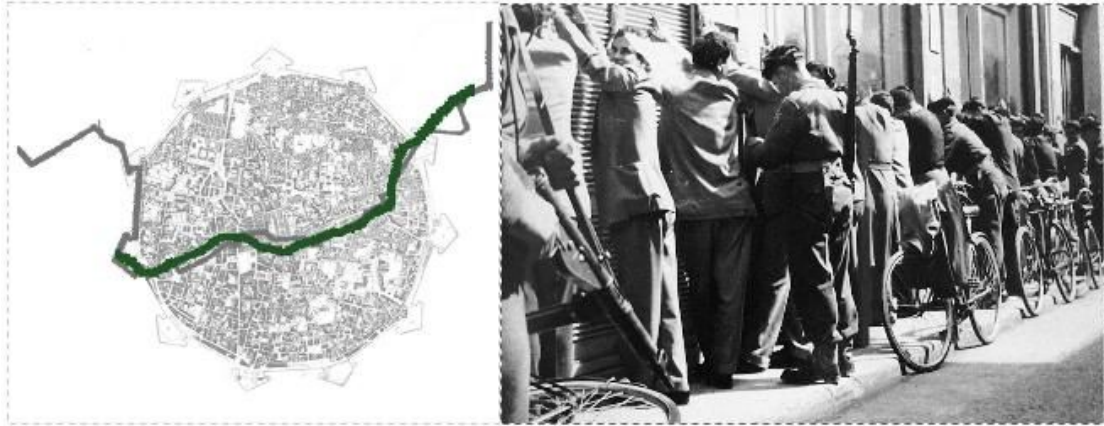


Figure 4: Green Line, 1963. Source: Left: Map made by author; Photograph on the right: Athens Press, 2016

However, in 2003, after 29 years of isolation of the two parts, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, opened the barricades allowing the movements to and from the occupied areas. Since then people from both sides are crossing the borders to see their homes or their friends, either for business purposes and leisure. A year later in 2004, just before Cyprus joined the European Union, a referendum took place asking citizens if they wanted the Republic of Cyprus to be a federation of two states, 64% of Turkish Cypriots accepted the Annan Plan, oppositely to Greek Cypriots who rejected it by 75%. Paradoxically even though the barricades became permeable allowing to the two communities to come in contact in the civil level after a long period however the referendum proved that the civilians were not ready for such a drastic change in the political.

Four years after the war, in 1978, professionals from both municipalities started working together rejected it by 75%. Paradoxically even though the barricades became permeable allowing to the two communities to come in contact in the civil level after a long period however the referendum proved that the civilians were not ready for such a drastic change in the political. on a common sewage system which one year later evolved into the Nicosia Master Plan aiming to create an overall planning strategy for the sustainable development of the city which is running until today. Moreover, taking in benefit the opening of the checkpoints, the Association for Historical Dialogue & Research (AHDR) comes up with the idea for the establishing of an inter-communal educational zone in the buffer zone, a case which becomes reality in 2011 with the name of Home For Cooperation allowing to Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots and to the other minorities of the island (Armenians, Maronites etc.) to meet under the same roof and develop a dialogue.

Methodology

As mentioned earlier, the overall goal of this research is to analyse the ways in which heritage and memory are been used and contested in the segregated urban space of Nicosia in order to establish new identities after the conflict. Being a native of Cyprus, has furnished me with a privileged perspective to undertake this research but also was a source of struggle. I am fully aware of how both Greek and Turkish Cypriots are haunted by their memories of the conflict and how these memories shape their (our) understanding of the city. The divided city shaped my identity in multiple ways, and I have passed from different stages of recognizing my role and my identity in this complex situation. However, there is a moment that you learn to live with this spatial map of the urban context, which is constantly reinforced by discourses of intolerance, ethnic identity and difference. As it has been mentioned earlier, being a native of this context without problematizing it is sometimes easy, one starts to naturalize the existence of the Buffer Zone, the empty spaces that were abandoned after the division, and the constant presence of ethnic markers in the built environment. Thus, this research has allowed me to look with a needed distance and using theoretical tools, to somehow conclude that alternative narratives about the past and the future of Nicosia could emerge from the everyday life of people and their urban practices.

In order to have the optimum viewpoint about the monuments and the logos that will be set in discussion later on, I collected the information by organizing a street walk in the city and visiting the official web pages. For the analysis of the Nicosia Master Plan information was obtained from the Department of Town Planning and Housing of the Republic of Cyprus, the UN Development, the UNCHS - Habitat and the two municipalities of Nicosia. This material has been used in order to read the spatial grid and comprehend the goals of the cooperation. Other tangible materials that have been analysed are photographs from the two parts in order to enrich my visual knowledge of the subject. This information about cultural sites, combined with the theoretical framework, helped me to understand the dominant symbolic elements. Furthermore, I have used photographs to explain how that type of *Lieux de memoires* has the potentiality to reground identities in the urban space. Finally, a Tedx talk relative to the Cyprus problem by Dr. Christalla Yakinthou has been used as well in order to explain the post conflict situation and the bequeathed of fear to the next generations after the war.

What interested me to see through this procedure is if there was a dialogue between the top-down and bottom-up initiatives in the imagination and planning of the urban space and their effect on forming and regrounding identities in relation to the past events and the current situation. In this sense, I had the opportunity to visit Home for Cooperation in March and spend some time observing and gathering

information about the organization and the people's perspectives about this space. In the H4C I interviewed the Communications Officer of the Home, Mrs. Yaprak Aydin.

Additionally, I prepared a survey and shared it among 58 Greek Cypriots and 28 Turkish Cypriots through social media, asking questions about issues of identity in personal and spatial dimensions. The questions that guided the interviews were organised around the following themes: interactions with people from different cultural communities, fears and anxieties regarding other communities, opinions about the opening of the barricades and the future of the Green Line, spatial movements in the city. Though the results of this survey provided with rich information regarding issues of identity that is not necessarily relevant for this research at this moment, in the analysis of results, I will highlight some themes that appear in terms of how people from both communities talk about their everyday spatial experiences in a culturally segregated city, how they imagine their live in a non-divided city, and what specific ideas they have for the Buffer Zone.

Finally, the dialogue between the top-down and bottom up actions as it is already abovementioned, aims to illustrate whichever has the potentiality to lead in a progressive construction of a space of peace and stability, shared prosperity and dialogue between the communities of the island.

4. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS: ELEMENTS FOR RE-GROUNDING IDENTITIES

In this section I analyse significant elements of the urban space in order to understand the relations among heritage, identity, memory and space in post-conflict Nicosia. These elements (monuments, street names, the Nicosia Master Plan and the Home for Cooperation are of different nature but I argue that they can be considered as a set of “urban strategies” aimed to address and mobilize historical and memorialization processes, and in doing so, they also intended to shape new post-conflict identities among Nicosia’s citizens. In other words, these strategies have spatial manifestations (not always intentional) that in turn shape (or intended to shape) how the two main ethnic communities in Nicosia (Greek and Turkish Cypriots) remember their past and imagine their future in a post-conflict, but still divided city. I have organized these elements in top-down strategies (monuments, street names and logos) and participatory ones (Home for Cooperation).

Branding new Identities in the Urban Space: Names and Logos

Naming cities and urban spaces are strategies to mobilize or inscribe collective memories in the urban scenario. Two different aspirations about Nicosia could be noticed on the way Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots appropriate the name of the city. Turkish Cypriots are citizens of the *de facto* Turkish Municipality of Nicosia (*Lefkoşa Türk Belediyesi/Lefkosa Turk Belediyesi*) while Greek Cypriots are recorded at the *de jure* Nicosia Municipality (*Δήμος Λευκωσίας/ Dhemos Lefkosias*).

One interesting element that illustrates the aspirations of each community about ‘their’ Nicosia is the official logo they use to represent the city (See Figure 5). For Turkish Cypriots the logo portrays the Venetian walls in orange color enclosing the ethno religious Muslim monument Mevlevi Tekke with the year 1958 illustrated, which marks the creation of the Turkish Cypriot Municipality. The Greek Cypriots’ logo uses also the Venetian walls but in yellow color, white for the dove which is placed in the middle and blue for the filling. Those three colors are commonly used for the official Greek Cypriots’ symbols after 1974, since prior then they were using the colors of the Greek flag; blue and white, following the aspirations for ‘Union’. Interestingly, despite the differences between the two communities, they both relied on the Nicosia Venetian Walls for the official representation of their heritage. This decision highlights that they choose to establish a direct connection to Western heritage and with a moment of history that was neutral and ‘unproblematic’ for both communities (Papadakis,2006:4).



Figure 5: Logos of Nicosia. Left: Greek Cypriot Logo, Right: Turkish Cypriot Logo. Source: Wikipedia; Center: Aerial view of Nicosia showing the Venetian walls. Source: The Peace Exchange, Retrieved from <https://peacechanger.wordpress>, 2016

While the use of the Venetian walls could be seen as a desire to highlight a historical common memory that appeals to a specific period of Nicosia's urban history, the naming of streets responds to a completely different strategy: street names promote different identities based on ethnicity. During the first years after the war, the urban landscape promoted opposite ideologies through street names, place names and monuments that connect each community with their own 'motherlands.' For instance, a circular street in the old city, which was running alongside the walls connecting the current 'two sides' initially, was named Athena Avenue (See Figure 6). With the establishment of the Buffer Zone, this main street is broken in two parts. The one in the south is still called Athena Avenue (capital city of Greece) while the other in the north has been renamed into Istanbul Avenue (Turkey's most important city).

Moreover, a more careful reading of this street and the addresses that consist it can be much of help to understand the aspirations of the two communities. As it can be seen in the map below, from the west clockwise to the east, the first part is called *Tanzimat* referring to a series of reforms in the Ottoman Empire that brought the culture, education and religion in line with the western ways, and the second part of the same street is called Istanbul. After crossing the Buffer Zone, when one enters the Greek side, the street takes the name Athena due to the Greece's capital city, and then it changes again the name into *Nikiforou Foka* who was a Byzantine Emperor. Following the history of Byzantium, the street changes once again the name into *Konstantinos Palaiologos* who was the last reigning Byzantine Emperor and a legendary figure in Greek folklore as the "Marble Emperor" who would awaken and recover the Empire and Constantinople (nowadays Istanbul) from the Ottomans. Returning to the history of Cyprus the last two parts of the circular street, are dedicated to *Kostakis Pantelides* who was a Greek Cypriot policeman murdered by the Turkish Cypriots in 1964 during the period of the intercommunal conflicts. The last part of the street is called *Riginis* naming a woman from the medieval folk tradition of Cyprus, which according to the stories, she could be defeated only with a fraudulently way and she was so proud to fall

into the enemy hands that she jumped on the cliff. Even today *Rigena* remains a female symbol of proudness for the Greek Cypriot nationalism.

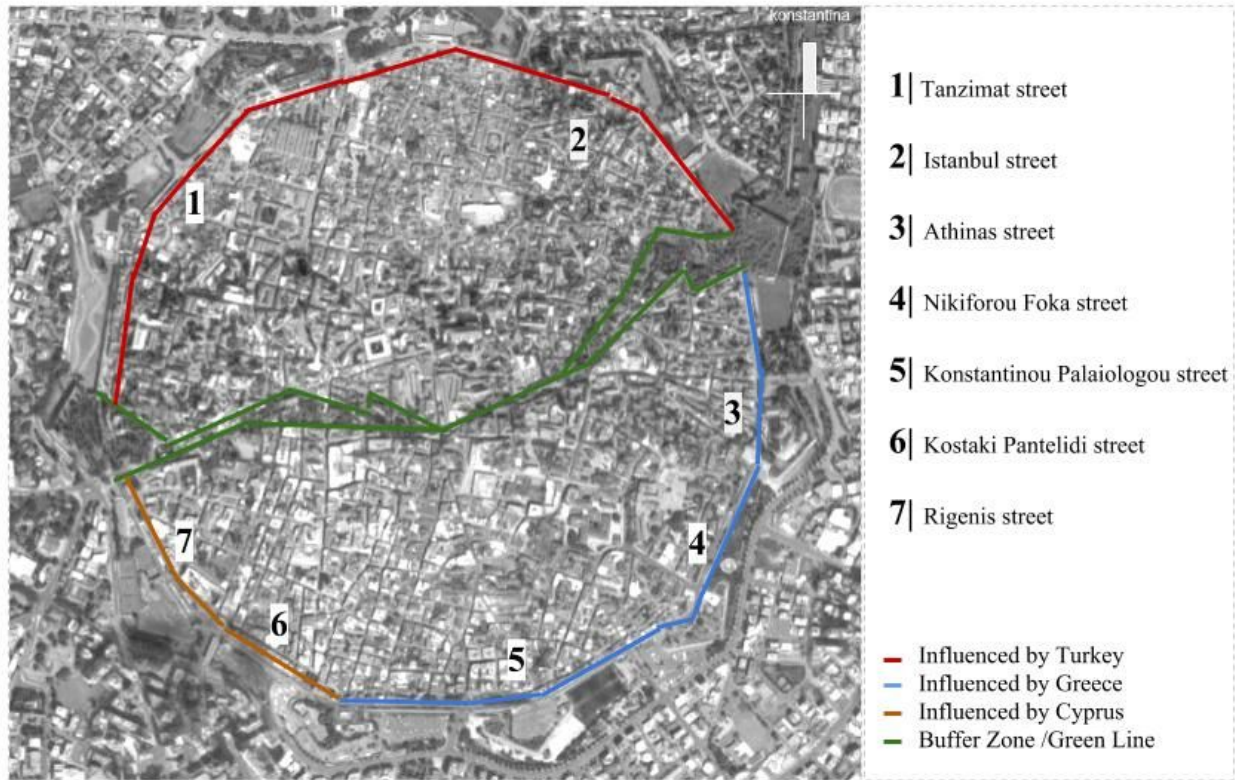


Figure 6: Changing names of Streets. Map adapted by author from Google Earth

The naming of the tangential street and the street names aim to remind citizens that they were members of one of the two communities and thus instead of finding an identity grounded in their experience as citizens of Nicosia, they viewed themselves as extension of the Greek and Turkish nation which seems to be hindered what Benedict Anderson considered as an ‘imagined community’ sharing a similar space and history (Anderson, 1983).

Heritage and Monuments

Cultural heritage, according to Dolff-Bonekemper “has served as a means of underpinning and affirming a characteristic unity of state, territory, ethnicity and culture.” (2010:15). In the case of Cyprus, heritage had a crucial role in the conformation of the cultural identity both for Greek Cypriots and for Turkish Cypriots. Lawrence Durrell (1959:121), claimed that “Cyprus is Byzantine rather than Hellenic”, since the Greek Orthodox Church has a major part in the life and culture of the Greek Cypriots That is obviously expressed physically in its churches and monasteries, and culturally though the language and traditions (Balderstone 2009:27). After the war, many monuments have been raised to glorify the freedom that was achieved for the one part or the freedom that did not appear yet for the other. Graveyards were

built to honor those who fall as martyrs. Interminable flags, applied to the landscape carrying the colors of the nation, the emblems that spread the fear to the 'others'. In this way, the two communities built a relationship in the urban space among memory, nation and history, which in the present need a justification through the past and its two different narratives (Nora, 1989). In the post conflict scenario, if the abovementioned heritage of the 'others' is located in the physical space of the opposite community, then is turned into what has been described by Ashworth and Bart as 'enclaved heritage' (2010:452).

The main difference between the two municipal authorities was the way they confronted the enclaved heritage which was trapped in the physical space of the other (Ashworth and Bart, 2010). While in the southern side the Greek Cypriot authorities, maintained the religious buildings and the social spaces of the Turkish Cypriots, the same did not happened at the north part. The TRNC has been accused plenty of times for the vandalism against Christian sites, including Orthodox and Armenian (Leonidou, 2007) lacking of empathy for the spiritual and social value that have to Greek Cypriots. At the same time, key heritage sites in the north as the Saint's Catherine Church, which during the Ottoman empire transformed into the *Haydar Pasha* Mosque, today is functioning as a Turkish art gallery, maintaining only the physical marks of its past Islamic usage but erasing Christian decorations, though the gothic architecture of the building can unhide its origins (Balderstone, 2007; 2009).

At the same time, respectful of the constitution of the Republic of Cyprus, the official authorities kept the religious buildings and the social spaces of the Turkish Cypriots untouched, until 2003, when with the bi-communal UNDP/UNOPS project, "Partnership for the Future", in collaboration with Nicosia Municipality and Nicosia Master Plan, restored the *Hamam Omerye* Bath and many other.

Therefore the "enclaved heritage" can be perceived as a hostage at the hands of the 'others'. As it has been seen above, the confrontation of the cultural identity of the displaced people, after the conflict depends on the diplomatic tactic or to the need for spatial homogenization through the eradication of the 'others' traces. The latter, according to the sociologist Sari Hanafi, can be determined as 'spacio-cide'(2009). Israel is an example of a state-building project, which had as a target the place. In order to establish their cultural identity in the area they were converting the Palestinian spaces into 'swelling contours' of a Jewish state (Bardi, 2016:165).

Monuments are another type of material urban elements that I want to bring to the analysis as they seem to me closer to what Pierre Nora identified as *Lieux de Memoires*, not so much because of what they are (as intrinsic value) but because of what they can do or they do to people's identities. According to Nora, *Lieux de Memoires* are "simple and ambiguous, natural and artificial, at once immediately available in concrete sensual experience and susceptible to the most abstract elaboration ... they are *lieux* in the three senses of the word-material, symbolic and functional' (Nora 1989:18-19). The first sense, which is not the

focus of this research, could be the archive or the pedagogical books as they are establishing new historical memory. The symbolic sense of the word incorporates for example the commemorative ‘minute of silence’, a strictly symbolic action where memories crystallized and transmitted (p.18). In the urban space of Nicosia these *lieux* could be statues and monuments, which are mostly visited due to educational day trips or during national celebrations or commemorations.

I have chosen three monuments in my analysis, two built by the Republic of Cyprus and the third one by the TRNC.

The ‘Monument of Freedom’ (*Agalma tis Eleftherias*) (Figure 7) was uncovered unofficially by the Republic of Cyprus in 1987. Initially was dedicated to those who fought against the British Colonialism, but later on the significance changed and it was given to glorify the release of the island from the Turkish conqueror.



Figure 7: Monument of Freedom. Left, Location in Nicosia. Source Google Earth, adapted by author; Right: personal archive.

The monument ‘The Resolution’ (Figure 8) is a protest from the Greek Cypriots to the violation of human rights. On the round cement basis of approximately a meter in height, part of the text of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is written in embossed Greek letters. A stack of steel lances diagonally arranged hit the center of the text, symbolically destroying it. The meaning of the monument was different on the period that it was constructed. It was placed next to the Buffer Zone protesting for the violation of the human rights for the refugees and everyone who does not have the right to return at his house. However, since 2003 and the opening of the checkpoints, even though the monument still carries the same meaning, the scene around it changed. Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, are crossing both sides, while the situation between the two communities is not resolved.



Figure 8: The Resolution. Left, Location in Nicosia. Source: Google Earth, adapted by the author; Right: personal archive.

On the other side, the TRNC, erected monuments as frequent to the Greek Cypriots. The Mustafa Kemal-Ataturk statue (figure 9) was put up at the entrance of the old city of Nicosia in the north part removing a peace monument designed by a Greek artist into another location. “*It’s normal to put up monuments, but it’s not as if don’t we have enough statues of Ataturk and flags,*” as the Turkish Cypriot, Semavi Asik wrote in the Cyprus Mail (2009).

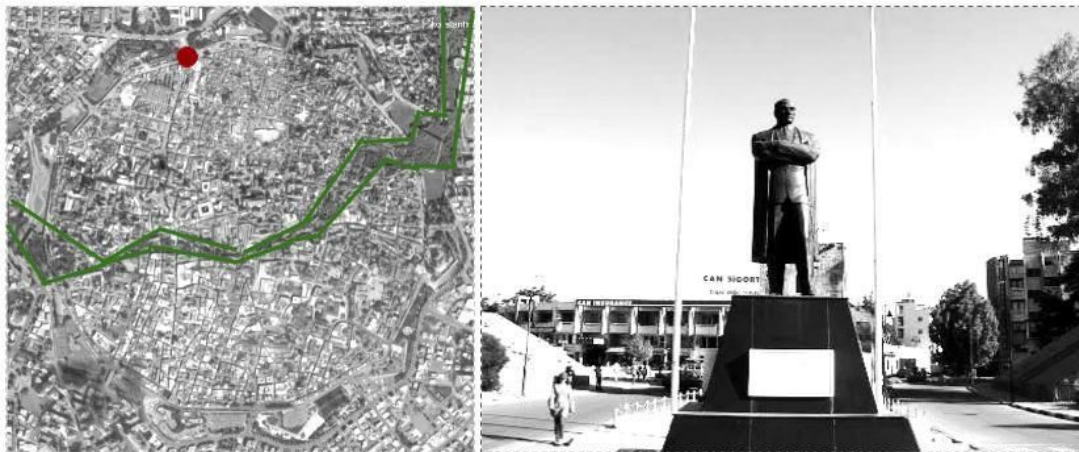


Figure 9: Kemal Ataturk Statue. Left: Location in Nicosia. Source: Google Earth, adapted by the author; Right: personal archive.

These urban elements (addresses, monuments and logos) which were imposed by the authorities during the second half of the 20th century until today, function as *Lieux de Memoires* which aim to remind citizens, events that took place in the contemporary history of Cyprus focusing on the two opposite nationalistic uprisings. However, since they have the potentiality to stigmatize the urban space with the memory of the war and the conflict for the one community mobilizing their cultural identity, in the same time they consist a symbol of barbarism for the other.

Above all, it is important to highlight the fact that these monuments which aimed to ground and strengthen the two different cultural identities are focused in particular parts of the contemporary history of Nicosia. The imposed monuments from the Greek Cypriot side remind the anticolonial struggle (1920's) and their desire for unification with Greece until the Turkish invasion in 1974 and the division of the island. On the other hand, Turkish Cypriots focus also in the same period, demanding their separation from the Greek Cypriots and their connection with the motherland Turkey, reminding the events of the intercommunal conflicts (1963-68) until the events of 1974. Both communities used the monuments to distance themselves from their shared past and called the attention at the period 1920's-1970's which consisted the milestone for their cultural identity due to the nationalistic movements and the influences of the motherlands.

Nicosia Master Plan

This section analyses one of the first top-down efforts for cooperation among professionals from both communities after the war. My goal is to understand the logic behind this Master Plan in relation to promoting or not, a sense of shared identity that could overcome the existing experience of separation and difference fostered by the divided city. In order to make that reality, the bicomunal team concentrated on the shared past of the two communities that can be recognised in the intramural urban space focusing on the period of the Ottoman Empire and British colonialism omitting the contemporary history of the island.

In 1978 the two mayors of the city, Mustafa Akinci (current leader of the Turkish Cypriot community) and Lelos Dimitriadis, agreed to cooperate in order to build a common sewage system to address the problems that had been created by the flow of the water rain from the south to the north (Papadakis, 2006). In October 24, 1979 this cooperation continued in the united Master Plan of Nicosia, which was intended to establish an overall planning strategy for the sustainable development of the city and simultaneously to be flexible enough so as to be adapted easily in the possibility that political situation will allow the development of the city as a single entity (UNDP/UNCHS, 1984). Behind the Plan was the idea that the close and systematic technical collaboration could promote the understanding between the two communities (Oktay, 2007).

The project provided the opportunity for Greek and Turkish Cypriots to meet regularly, to collaborate and be trained by international experts. Part of the idea for that cooperation was inspired by a visit to Berlin where a group of professionals and mayors confronted their own problems both in present and future whether the reunification becomes reality (Charlesworth, 2007). The Nicosia Master Plan came into force

in 2001, with the support of the UN Development (UNDP) and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS-Habitat), following the objectives applied in similar cases, such as Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where a new single urban plan was designed to help the regeneration of the historic city after the war of 1993. The project aimed to set the parameters for a pursuant development of Nicosia's two sides following the two possible scenarios. The one of a divided city and the other of a united one (Papadakis, 2006).

One of the main goals of the Master Plan was to slow down the degradation of the intramural city in order to deter the heart of Nicosia to become 'a derelict no-man's land' (UNDP 1984:12). Thus, a priority was the restoration of historic buildings and the upgrading of the existing public spaces; specifically, the areas of Ledra-Onasagorou in the south and the area of Kyrenia Avenue, in the north, forming today, then the old commercial north-south axis. According to Esther Charlesworth (2007) the regeneration of the old city, initiated with small improvements along the Buffer Zone. In order to improve the quality of the urban space they concentrated on the creation of local public spaces alienating old buildings and plots (p.92). In addition to that, housing for local middle income groups was the first priority of the NMP aiming to the social revitalization of the area avoiding though the mistake that Solidere development did in Beirut which was targeting the privileged wealthy minority.

The Nicosia Master Plan unfolded in four non consecutive, phases. During the first phase, between 1979 and 2001, a detailed evaluation of the two neighbourhoods of Nicosia, Omeriye and Selimiye was done and a long-term plan for the future growth was proposed, including the adoption of an investment program for the historical center (Figure 10). One of the main tasks was to strengthen the administrative and operational services in the region by implementing a series of strategies required for the development of the city and reversal of the deterioration trends in the city wall.



Figure 10: NMP interventions in Selimiye and Omeriye Areas. Source: Left and Right: personal archive; Center: map retrieved from <http://www.undp-pff.org/>

During the second phase (1984-1985) of the Nicosia Master Plan, projects were designed to halt the physical deterioration and the socio-economic decay of the city within the walls. At that moment the project focused in the Phaneromeni and Samanbahce areas (Charlesworth, 2007) which were abandoned by the locals due to the insecurity that the Buffer zone was inspiring to them (Figure 11).

In addition, the buildings in the historical center were inadequate to accommodate new features such as industry, wholesale and retail units or leisure. These changes combined with the physical deterioration, the decay and the loss of economic vitality, downgraded the historic center of Nicosia.



Figure 11: NMP interventions in Phaneromeni and Samanbahce Areas. Source: Left and Right: personal archive; Center: map retrieved from <http://www.undp-pff.org/>

The third phase of the programme, from 1986 till today, it is concentrated on the accomplishment of the interventions at the neighborhoods of Omeriye and Phaneromeni and the restoration of the Market in the Selimiye area (Figure 12). The Fourth Phase of the Programme is based on the second phase of the urban upgrading of Phaneromeni area, and the restoration of Bedestan in the Selimiye area.



Figure 12: NMP interventions in the Omeriye, Phaneromeni areas and Selimiye Market. Source: Left and right: personal archive; Center map retrieved from <http://www.undp-pff.org/>

Even though the NMP aimed to unify historically the two sides of the city, however socio spatially the impenetrable nature of the walls prevent the two different versions of the contemporary history of the city to fly over the Buffer Zone unhampered, meet and develop a dialogue. That resulted a cultural memory constructed through the accumulation of stories that we tell ourselves about the others; relationships which are reflecting fear or ignorance, mythologies that deny the reality of the others (Robins,1996:80). This situation resembles what Robins wrote that “the cultural relationships may easily become dominated by fears and anxieties or by fantasies involving the projection of collective emotions on to the others. That may become restricted by cultural arrogance denying the possibilities inherent in the others and producing feelings of indifference or resentment towards them”(1996:80).

The role given to preserving heritage was very central to the urban plan, assuming that it could be a useful tool for engendering peaceful coexistence and mutual pride, especially were focused on common objectives of social and economic well being (Balderstone, 2009). Therefore, the restoration of numerous buildings through the NMP aimed to fertilize the space for a future coexistence using the shared past, in a city where both cultural identities can be accepted and equally respected. To fill the gap that the Buffer Zone and walls engendered, by creating a spatial grid where every community in the same time can see its reflection on history, but also portray its legitimate position into a shared culture. That reconsidered symbolic landscape, aimed to inspire the sense of mutuality and shared stake for the two communities using the “heritage as a vehicle to create a sense of belonging and place.”(McDowell, Reid & Forsythe, 2016:2)

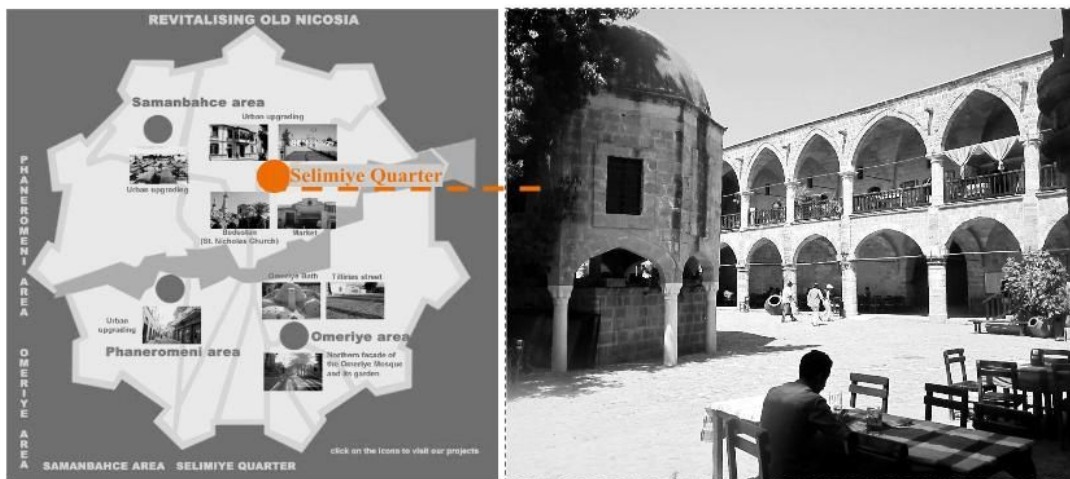


Figure 13: NMP Intervention in the Great Inn. Source: Right: personal archive; Left map retrieved from <http://www.undp-pff.org/>

Consequently the NMP team focused on the buildings with historical and architectural value as the Buyuk Han (The Great Inn) (Figure 13), which was particularly important in the cultural and social life of the old city. The building was the largest caravanserai and is considered to be one of the finest buildings on the island. The Ottomans built it in 1572, the year after they had seized Cyprus from the Venetians. In the

centre of the open courtyard there is a mosque with a fountain for pre-prayer ablutions. It became the first city prison under British administration. Today it is used as an information center and hosts recreational areas and galleries dedicated to the Cypriot heritage.

The oxymoron of the Nicosia Master Plan lies in the contradictory nature of monuments and heritage in the urban scale. On the one hand the nationalistic monuments imposed by the two governments (such as the Freedom Monument, The Resolution and the Mustafa Kemal-Ataturk statue) are still a strong element in the urban space commemorating the identities of each group, highlighting the difference between the two communities. On the other, the same authorities in cooperation with the United Nations are involved in rebuilding heritage sites with the aim to bring Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots together in the same page of the history highlighting the shared past. The cultural landscape turns into a battlefield of hazardous instability. While NMP could be seen as trying to unite the old city through the restoration triggering memories of a shared past (Hayden, 1996:46), at the same time the monuments aim to touch the construction of official history and in this process ‘a historical knowledge (was) transformed into heritage commoditised or shaped to suit the needs of its creators’ (Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, 2007: 7), therefore it become a competitive element.

Despite this tension, the two strategies (the NMP and the branding of identity through monuments, street names and logos) share important commonalities in the way that relied on heritage as a tool to ground identities in the urban space. The first one is that both were top-down tactics and the second is the absence of civil engagement. On the other hand, the monuments are *lieux de memoires* (Nora, 1989) which are rarely visited by the inhabitants while the NMP was designed by professionals from both sides with a lack of citizens participation. Indeed, even though the Nicosia Master Plan aimed to bring a spatial cohesion through urban planning, however, its goal for collaboration was targeting a specific group; the one of the professionals from both sides, while the voice of the locals has never been heard in any of these procedures. The lack of participation was the reason that today even if the buildings are trying to narrate a common history from the north to the south into the walled city, the same did not happened on the way that Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots understand their past and envision their future.

In sum, although people from both sides formed the professional team of architects and planners in a moment where the paths of communication were blocked, the voice of the people was missing. Therefore, the final map as Benedict Anderson could describe, was an illustration of a scientific abstraction of reality, that communication theory and common sense persuade us that is true. The NMP at the end portrayed the character that the two municipalities would like to imply at the city ignoring what the city really meant for the population. Consequently a neutral, soulless map was produced focusing on the ideal shared history that could illustrate, hushing up the hopes for a shared future. In this context, as it will be

explained in the next chapter, Home for Cooperation gave the needed space to the civilians to work together under the same roof giving them the voice that was missing from the Nicosia Master Plan.

Home for Cooperation

The Home for Cooperation (from now on H4C) is located in the heart of Nicosia, inside the Buffer Zone. It was created with the prospect of bringing the two communities together under the same roof, promoting intercommunal cooperation, empowering the collective efforts of the social initiative for peacebuilding and intercultural dialogue. It officially opened its doors on May 6th 2011, eight years after the opening of the checkpoints due to the initiative of an intercommunal Cyprus-based group called Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR). This was a non-governmental, non-profit, multi-communal organisation formed in 2003, by a number of educators and researchers with an interest in researching, teaching and disseminating history. Since then they have organised and developed a range of projects and activities and produced supplementary materials, which are largely used by the two governments. The AHDR received financial support from the European Economic Area Grants and Norway Grants (major donors Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) allowing the H4C project to move ahead. At this moment, the H4C is trying to remain self-sufficient with the activities that they organise.



Figure 14 : Home for Cooperation. Left: Location in the city. Adapted from Google Earth, Right: Retrieved from AHDR website <http://www.ahdr.info/>

The aim of the center is to turn the Buffer Zone from a place that separates Nicosia into a bridge-builder institution, encouraging the locals to imagine possible scenarios of a future coexistence in the city. It is a place that gives space to the intercommunal memories and visions to meet, providing opportunities to a numerous of NGO's and individuals to design and turn into reality their innovative projects that involve the development of a creative dialogue in a peaceful place through cultural, artistic and educational

activities. The resident NGOs are the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR), Center for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development (SeeD), PeacePlayers International-Cyprus (PPI - CY), Prio Cyprus Center, Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process under the Auspices of the Embassy of Sweden, Humanitarian Relief Mission and The Writing Room.

In March of 2016 in a short trip I did to Cyprus I was able to interview Mrs. Yaprak Aydin who is the Communications Officer of the H4C. She mentioned that the Home aims to affect the lives of the citizens through a variety of activities, which include all the citizens of Nicosia. Steadily, the motivation of the participants for joining the events is not about entering in a bi-communal environment, but for being in environment that helps them forget their daily problems through these activities.

The establishment of the place as an education and training institution has also changed, and in the last two years, they began to give opportunities to people not just to participate in the programs but also to be the instructors or propose new activities, which target new groups. One very interesting aspect is that the H4C does not aim to target only Greek and Turkish Cypriots but when they organize the activities their goal is include all the other existing communities, who do not belong to any of the traditional ethnic groups. On that way they the H4C began to move away from the ethnically-based identity politics eliminating the bi-communal vocabulary.

This philosophy appears clearly in activities that besides language courses (Greek, Turkish and English are the most studied) consist in classes of African drums, tai chi, yoga, zumba and salsa. Two workshops for children (5 to 7 year old) are offered. However, one of the main problems as Mrs. Aydin explained is that while children seem enthusiastic and attend the workshops regularly, it is hard to obtain the commitment from the parents who rarely participate in activities neither they remain in the Home, while their kids are occupied. For that reason the H4C began to dedicate some spaces such as a coffee place, and an open library where parents can spend some time, not just to wait but also to talk and dialogue with other people.

People from ages 18-35 and middle aged are also meeting at the H4C. While visiting the place I asked some young people about why they attended it, and a clear response that they were not looking for a bicomunal place to discuss, but they were there because it was fun and they liked it; they can do things differently from their routine life and that what makes it unique. This, I believe, puts challenges to the organizers that need to find a new vocabulary beyond the bicomunal traditionally used in Nicosia. For example, the locally led 'Peace Players' which is housed at the Home, uses the basketball court for more than 350 children, to allow Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot boys and girls to play together, learn together and build positive relationships that overcome generations of mistrust and formidable physical barriers to interaction. By facilitating regular, frequent, and structured interaction, it helps reverse

prejudices built steadily over years in segregated communities and fosters the long-term trust necessary for true friendship (H4C, 2015).

At the same time, the Home is hosting The Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process under the Auspices of the Embassy of Sweden. The goal of that initiative is to bring the five religious leaders from all the communities of the island (Orthodox Christians, Sunni Muslims, Armenians, Maronites, Catholics) and make them work together. As Mrs. Aydin explained, when people start seeing their leaders working hand in hand, reprobate past events or celebrate the religious important days together, that brings respect among them. Even though religion was the most valuable system to attach people around the authority during the medieval period, today the national state is claiming for the same, without weakening the influential effect of religion in ordinary.

All these alternative activities, as Mrs. Aydin continued, managed to bring together, not just academics and students who concentrated on the research, but different members of the society who seem to be tired and fed up by the 'Cyprus Issue' or the 'Cyprus Problem'. People who grow up in Nicosia are taught with the idea that the city where they have been born has always been a 'problem' (i.e. the ethnic division) and thus, those who cross the physical border realise that it is not a barrier anymore. Young people are passing from the one side to the other in order to meet with their friends in bars and coffee places. Of course all this are happening just in Nicosia, limited to a small part of the population, in comparison with the rest island. Thus, a forty two years of division needs at least the double time for recovering, knowing that radically nationalists or people who disagree with each other will always exist.

Even though, the H4C brings fresh air to a somehow stagnant political scenario, the media do not spread their news; neither dedicates some time informing the citizens from both sides about the activities. As the H4C is standing mainly because of the funds from the Norway Grants and the NGOs, they are not able to spend money in publishing. So it is all about the good will of the local media to use some of their time in order to inform the civilians in the rest of the country about what is happening inside the Buffer Zone and what is changing between the two communities. Taking this into account, the H4C uses social media and other networks they created through a variety of platforms.

The most difficult part as Yaprak Aydin described during the interview, is to extend the initiatives of the H4C outside of the Green Line. Even though its location is symbolically meaningful and critical in the context of the divided city, the activities that occur at the Home should not be trapped into that area. The fact that at the other homogenized cities of the island the division did not influence the lives of the citizens as much as in divided Nicosia, the inhabitants from both sides did not put themselves in the procedure of knowing the 'others'. Consequently, the largest percentage of the population of Cyprus is unaware with the current situation that holds in the capital city and the bicomunal efforts that are

fulfilled. Under those circumstances the H4C raised that crucial issue as one of the main challenges for the future.

For the past five years the H4C has been benefiting from the opening of the checkpoints efficiently, making solid steps, which have been able to bring people from the two communities together. The existing dialogue is their daily tool against the silence that monuments promote. During this short period of existence, in comparison to the long period of 42 years of political negotiations about the ‘Cyprus problem’, they managed to abolish the binary vocabulary from their meetings and creating a routine that helps civilians escape from an existing discourse that promotes more division and intolerance than the contrary. Even though lifeless monuments are getting more attraction from the media throughout the year, H4C, a breathing organization is running with a limited local support. I will finish the analysis with a brief summary of the survey, which I believe could complement the information analysed until now.

Voices: Questions about Identity and Space

The questions of the survey used on the thesis are organized around the following themes: interactions among people from both communities, cultural identity and relation with motherlands and religions, fears and anxieties towards the ‘others’, envision for the future of the Green Line and spatial movements in the city due to the opening of the checkpoints.

Responding to the question “How often do you come into contact with members of the other community due to the following cases?” Greek Cypriots claimed that they avoid social interaction whereas the Turkish Cypriots are making efforts to interact, by joining bicomunal events or just contacting them, mainly when they are in the north part since they feel safer there. Greek Cypriots on the other hand in both North and South parts keep a more conservative behavior either because they feel insecure at the North part or because they keep a hostile behavior when they are in their side.

The responses to questions about cultural identity and the sense of belonging of the two communities, show that both sides are equally proud for being Cypriots but also highlight their Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot identity as relevant. Following that, they both believe that the cultural roots of the two motherlands characterize them separately. That can be explained due to the culture, traditions, customs and main languages, which since the early 20th century, are influenced by Greece and Turkey respectively. However, the geographical distance of the island from the two countries allowed to the population during the centuries to develop the Cypriot dialect which was serving in the past the common trade and daily activities.

When they were asked whether Cyprus is historically Greek or Turkish, Greek Cypriots agreed totally that the island is Greek. On the other, Turkish Cypriots are divided in those that they agree totally that is Turkish and to those who disagree completely. That could be explained as a result of the unilateral educational system, the family legacy memories and the influence of the media, which are promoting diametrically opposed views about that issue. Regarding to the religion, both agree that each religion is inextricably linked to their national identity.

The questions that asked about the opening of the checkpoints, led to the conclusions that Greek Cypriots still view this as negative, believing that it will not help to the solution, neither to the improvement of the communication with the others. Oppositely to that, Turkish Cypriots believe that due to the permeable barriers the peaceful coexistence might be possible in the future. However, in that scenario both would prefer to live in homogenized neighborhoods since that would offer them security.

Finally, I asked Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots about their opinions concerning the Green Line to be transformed into an urban void with the demolition of the buildings and the idea of the creation of a network of parks and squares. Both consider it as unacceptable the option to keep it unchanged for the preservation of the collective memory. The Buffer Zone even though it's a dominant element in the urban space of Nicosia, however the citizens from both sides want to escape from that which is 'impregnated with memories' of war (Golda-Pongratz, 2016:6).

More particularly, when they were asked about the buildings-ruins trapped in the Buffer Zone, Greek Cypriots preferred the option "to demolish the buildings which are dangerous according to evaluations while the remains should accommodate various cultural uses and become part of the network of parks and squares that will be created in the Green Line." The worst option for them was "to accept partial restoration for the preservation of the collective memory". Turkish Cypriots on the other hand, agreed that the best solution is "to restore and get their pre-war appearance, with the same functions as before 1974" while the worst solution is "To demolish and operate the Green Line as an urban void or large park. "

In conclusion both communities still feel attached to their motherlands, even though they feel that they have their own cultural identity related to the island. They still have fear and feel insecure about the 'others' something that can be seen as a result of the media, education and political speeches translated in socio-spatially ways. Moreover, even though they want to appropriate the Green Line and the buildings trapped inside, Greek and Turkish Cypriots have different aspirations about their usage influenced by their envision for a possible solution in a national level. However, since both sides do not want to keep any contact with the 'black' period of the contemporary history of the island they are willing to erase physical traces from the 'collective memory palimpsest' (Golda-Pongratz,2016:6) in order to move on.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis I have examined a set of elements (monuments, street names, and logos) and one urban planning tool (Nicosia Master Plan) that together intend to shape individual and collective memories and identities in contemporary Nicosia. I have also examined an existing institution (Home for Cooperation) that was established in the Buffer Zone in 2011 with the intention to promote dialogue among different cultural and ethnic groups existing in the divided city. I have argued that the first ones could be seen as top down strategies to ground identities, whereas the H4C, though very novel, is a more community based initiative. And yet, to find a solution that encompasses both physical as well as identity issues for the current complex scenario in post-conflict Nicosia would not have a single approach.

The existing top down strategies, including the monuments and the NMP have not been successful to really reground a new cultural identity that could move beyond the issues of ethnic or religious identifications of each community. As it has been already mentioned in the previous chapters, the existing monuments, street names and logos used by the two authorities, are reinforcing and sometimes “inventing” cultural difference and inscribing it in the urban space. Indeed, the authorities concentrate in highlighting specific parts of the modern history of the island.

Greek Cypriots focused on a sequence of events that evolved from the 1920's with the struggle against the British rule for the island's self determination and the union with Greece, until the Turkish Invasion of 1974 and the separation of the island in two pieces. On the other side, the national identity of the Turkish Cypriots was based on the need for separation from the Greek Cypriots and the shift to their the motherland Turkey, glorifying the same symbols, highlighting the period of 1963-1968 of the intercommunal conflicts which was a milestone for them, reaching the events of 1974. Since then the two communities use those periods as main axis for their cultural identity.

The Nicosia Master Plan was a top down strategy that emerged from the two governments and an international organism (UNDP), which intended to reveal a shared past in the context of the walled city. As explained in this thesis, the NMP concentrated in the recreation of an urban place which is distanced from the contemporary history of Cyprus, focusing on the restoration of monuments that prevail a shared past between the two communities. Finally the H4C brought not only the two historically conflicted communities under the same roof, but they also re-imagined the possibility of alternative identity politics by incorporating other communities and programming activities that were move beyond the reification of ethnically based conflicts.

As a final conclusion and with the aim to open the topic for further discussion, I have made a diagram (Figure 15) that puts together the analysis of these elements and strategies with the discussion about memory, identity and history.

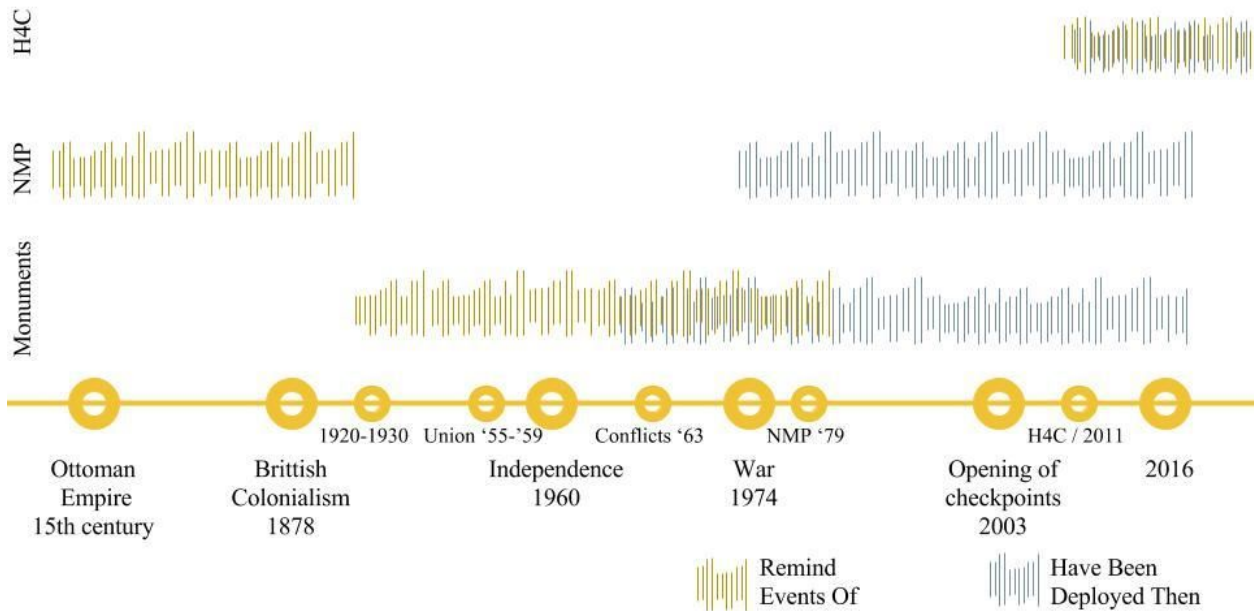


Figure 15: Landscapes of Memory (made by author)

The diagram, aims to conclude and highlight the roles of the three already-mentioned strategies: monuments, NMP, H4C according to the time that they are taking place (that is, when they have been planned and have been deployed) and paying attention to the events that they aim to remember or commemorate. In the case of monuments, even though they were located in Nicosia’s urban landscape since the 1960’s that is during the Independence period and a moment of intense intercommunal conflicts, these monuments were commemorating events that were dated in the 1920’s. At that time the first efforts for unification of the Greek Cypriots with Greece and the separation of the Turkish Cypriots from the Greek Cypriots came to the surface. Even though the struggle for Independence from Britain was escalating at that time, the monuments instead of fostering a sense of ‘Common National Identity’ they aimed to inscribe in the urban landscape a clear oppositional cultural identity of the two communities, showing divergence in their political aspirations and clear connections with their own ‘motherlands’ through cultural memory.

In the case of the Nicosia Master Plan, as it has been already explained, it was created initially in 1974, four years after the war and the division with the specific aim to build a common sewage system. In 1979 that cooperation evolved into the bicomunal project in the form as is known today. As it is illustrate in

the diagram, one of the aims of the project is to bring Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots in confrontation with a shared past. With this in mind, the NMP aimed to highlight the period from the Ottoman Empire until the 1920's where both communities were living together before the emerged of the nationalism.

As David Lowenthal explained 'the past as we know it is partly a product of the present; we continually reshape memory, rewrite history, refashion relics' (1985:26). The NMP is working as a tool to create an 'imagined community' (Anderson,1983) highlighting and using heritage as a vehicle to achieve it.

Finally, the Home for Cooperation, which opened in 2011, bridges the chronological gap of the other two strategies. Its focus since it is working today on the current situations of the city giving voice to the inhabitants and an opportunity for civic engagement in the procedure. In order to help build a sustainable peace between the two communities the reference of the past derives through the dialogue helping them to deconstruct the cultural identity and reconstruct it together from the symbolic location of the Buffer Zone throughout the urban space of Nicosia (sites of conscience).

All things considered, the monuments and the NMP have created a confusing scene for the inhabitants from both sides, according to notions about the past, the present and the future the two authorities are trying to establish in the urban space. Young people are living with pre-war memories borrowed from their ancestors. These flexible and fluid memories however, are strengthen and fixed by the statutes, names and logos inscribed in urban space. The NMP highlights a moment of shared past from the Ottoman Empire since the 1920's that most of the people who lived it actually, have passed away. Even though both monuments and NMP are products of the present that deal with selected events of the past, however both are downgrading the chronological gap of the last 42 years. During that period the two parts of the city along the Buffer Zone continued to live in a different rhythm of livelihood corresponding to the current socio-economic situation of each part.

However, platforms such as the H4C by being located in a collective landscape frozen in time, meet the needs of the present aiming for a mutual future for the two communities working with young people. And that is the part that was missing from the other two. The civic engagement, the voice of the people and the present situation. According to CIVICUS website (2016) "Civic engagement aims at fostering interaction between civil society and other institutions in order to increase the voice of citizens in public life". That can occur through the involvement of the community in health, education and other organizations providing problem-solving through tangible and accessible ways. In order a vigorous civilian decide to join these activities it should be inoculated by the sense of responsibility to the community where his voice can be heard among the voices of young people and adults who work together for a civil society.

But in order this to happen on the one hand Cypriots from both sides should find a way to cooperate peacefully and on the other side the foreign agencies should organise an exit plan allowing to young people and adults, through the civil engagement, to build together resilience to the society and a 'sense of belonging' (Nabeel, 2015). As Hamdi Nabeel continued, "we should not build community, we should cultivate community". In the case of foreign NGO's and other agencies, the first part seems to happen, allowing to the locals to depend on them and receiving without making any effort for improvement, resulting the collapse after their withdrawal.

According to my analysis, there should be given more space to the Home for Cooperation and to similar initiatives allowing them to maintain the past in these dynamic places that promote the civil engagement. In order for this to happen they should have the potentiality to work outside of the Buffer Zone and apply their model in national level. Regarding this both governments should support it efficiently allowing to the withdrawn of the foreign agencies. Media should be a side tool, supporting the organization and the new initiatives that will occur, changing the civilian and political scenery of the country.

Moreover, the places of memory in Nicosia that connect past to present through memory should not be eradicated in the future since a fact such that could obstruct the new generations from developing a critical dialogue with the past. With this intention, the past will enable a way to build a sustainable peace between the two communities, inspiring understanding to each other and a better realization of the displacement struggles that occur nowadays. These places of memory can shift into places of activation where the public can be engaged with and comprehend their new role in the new situation that will occur.

The national monuments that have arose and the historical buildings that have been restored due to the NMP should not function as museums in the stereotypical way but we should renegotiate their role in the post conflict situations including the scenarios of formal division or unification. Regarding this, civilians from both communities should be able to recognise their cultural identity in both sides of Nicosia through interactive activities. That could include neighborhood walking tours, mutual workshops or variety of teaching activities, talks, discussions, performances and screenings. In this way the elements that have been analyzed in this thesis can work together supportively. Individuals and initiatives such as the H4C, shifting from spaces of memory to spaces of action, can activate the monuments and the NMP areas. The engagement of the civilians through a participation and cooperation that connects the past with the present, not just under a single roof but in the urban space of Nicosia, will allow them to envision and form a just future that does not exclude anyone.

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