

Nicosia after 1960: A River, A Bridge and a Dead Zone¹

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Abstract

This paper explores various spatial dimensions of Nicosia, the capital city of Cyprus that eventually came to be divided in 1974. Capitals are generally regarded as the spaces exemplifying nationalist ideologies, and in Nicosia these processes acquired added urgency due to the ethnic conflict that took place in Cyprus, leading to almost obsessive efforts to inscribe the national Self on the landscape and erase the Other. At the same time, other social groups critical of nationalist ideologies have been able to employ 'in-between' spaces in Nicosia in order to articulate critiques of nationalism and foster interethnic cooperation. The multiple displacements of the inhabitants of Nicosia, as well as attempts to establish their own 'places' are compared with those of other displaced groups, namely the foreign migrants that gradually came to live there. (Note: This paper was written during 2000, before the April 2003 opening of checkpoints in Cyprus, and subsequent political developments, which are outlined in the postscript.)

A River and a Bridge

A line crosses walled Nicosia in medieval maps – another line in contemporary ones. They more or less coincide, crossing the city in an east-west axis. On medieval maps this was a river, a natural divide which much later turned into a human-made divide. Even though the river later became a bridge, later yet, once again through human effort, it turned into a chasm, a dangerous 'no-man's land': a Dead Zone. As usual, when two sides are involved it often depends on how one decides to view the divide. A wall, for example, has two sides. For those on one side it may signify the protection of their rights and security, for those on the other side it may signify exclusion and the violation of their rights. Other dimensions may be as important. The fearsome visible border above ground yields to a different picture underground. And is a border merely a point of division, or also one of contact?

The river was called by various names: proper names and improper names, official names appearing on maps and unofficial names which people used, Greek Cypriot names and Turkish Cypriot names, some shared, some not. Officially, Greek Cypriots called it *Pedhieos* (from *pedhiada* meaning plane) though locals, including Turkish Cypriots, more often referred to it as *Pithkias*. Among Turkish Cypriots it was also known as *Kanlı Dere* (Bloody Torrent) due to the reddish colour of its water. During the medieval period, until 1567 it used to flow through the Venetian walled city of Nicosia, but it was later diverted outside and inside the newly built moat for strategic reasons, due to the expected Ottoman attack. From 1570 when the Ottomans took over Nicosia, the old river bed through the walled city was left open and was used as a dumping ground for refuse, where rainwater would rush through clearing it temporarily. During that period the major administrative Ottoman centre lay north of the river bed, while the Greek Orthodox centre lay south. In 1882, during the British period, the old river-bed was covered for hygienic reasons (Attalides 1981, p. 99). The old river bed thus came to be known as *Kotsirkas* (Turdy) in Greek and *Chirkefli Dere* (Filthy Torrent) in Turkish (Keshishian 1990, p. 15; Gurkan 1989, pp. 150 and 175).

When the river bed was covered, a road emerged in its place over the ground: Hermes Street. This road which bridged the old river bed in its entirety became the major commercial axis of the city, a trading zone which would draw the multi-ethnic inhabitants of Nicosia together for commercial exchanges. It thus brought people together, bridging ethnic particularities for purposes of trade.² Hermes was even the ancient Greek deity protective of traders. In due time, this site would fulfil the meanings of its many different names with their various associations and diverging functions. It came to fulfil functions such as a bridge and a chasm between the two major communities of Nicosia: the

Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots. After the 1960s, it came to fulfil its name and, this time, darker associations with Hermes related to death as it turned into a Dead Zone with even a Cerberus in proximity (the fierce mythical dog guarding the entrance to Hades, the kingdom of the dead). It came to be a violently fought over border, a site of much bloodshed. It even became the modern city's main carrier of dirt. In all, this river-bridge became a particularly revealing site for the multiple and contested realities of Nicosia's modern post-independence era.

War and Peace

The two official symbols of Nicosia provide a starting point for an attempt to decipher the city's contested present. Questions arise first of all regarding the existence of *two* such symbols. Secondly, they emerge through the ways in which the two symbols point towards differing conceptions of the past and the future: one suggesting past conflict and future division, the other presenting a hope for peace and future reunification. In order to explain these symbols, a short discussion is required on Cyprus's and Nicosia's recent past and the two sides' political orientations. One needs to examine Nicosia both as *Lefkosia* (in Greek) as seen from a Greek Cypriot perspective, and as *Lefkoshia* (in Turkish) as seen from a Turkish Cypriot one.

The first physical division of Nicosia took place in 1956 when the island was under British colonial rule (Drousiotis 1998, pp. 200-204). That was a period when the British exploited interethnic differences leading to interethnic violence and the erection of a barbed wire division of parts of the city known as the 'Mason-Dixon Line'. Later, in 1958, renewed and more protracted interethnic violence flared up, which concerned the issue of whether separate municipalities would be established in a future Cyprus. This led once more to a division of the capital. From that time onwards, the Turkish Cypriots established *de facto* separate municipal councils and the issue of whether the municipalities were to be separate or not was left open in the 1960 constitution.³

The issue of the municipalities remained a major source of friction between the two communities after the 1960 independence agreement. In December 1963 major interethnic violence once more erupted in Nicosia, spreading to the rest of Cyprus and leading to the deployment of a UN Peace Keeping Force and the establishment of a UN supervised 'Green Line' dividing the two communities in Nicosia and elsewhere. This line remained in place as a fearful division throughout the period of interethnic violence which lasted until 1967, and then became a permeable boundary as the relations between the two communities improved.⁴ In 1974, division was once more formidably established taking the form of a heavily armed cease-fire line in place until the present. This was related to the Greek (in the form of an Athens organised coup against the President of the Republic of Cyprus) and Turkish (in the form of a military attack) interventions in Cyprus, leading to the division of the island and population exchanges making each side almost ethnically homogeneous.

During the post-independence period the two ethnic groups presented different aspirations regarding the future, the Turkish Cypriots pursuing a more separatist policy, while Greek Cypriots followed a more integrationist one. After 1974 the official Turkish Cypriot aim was that of division, either in the form of a separate independent state or in the form of a confederation. Greek Cypriots were instead insisting on a federal solution within a single state. These factors have led to significant divergences in the two sides' constructions of the past, ones which were subsequently inscribed in the landscape of the divided capital itself: its symbols and physical structures (such as monuments and museums) along with related erasures (as will be later described).

Turkish Cypriots, who officially aimed for separation, constructed a historical narrative placing emphasis on events of conflict and animosity between the two sides, one focusing on Greek Cypriot aggression against them, especially during the 1960s, but often projected deeper into the past. This is also a view of the past emphasising boundaries and separation between the two. In this way, future separation is legitimated through the argument that 'the past *proves* that the two *peoples* cannot live together'. Greek Cypriots, by contrast, who desire reunification, have placed emphasis on past events of cooperation, constructing a historical narrative whereby the two ethnic groups are said to have 'peacefully coexisted'. This legitimates their aim of reunification by positing that 'the past *proves* that the two *communities* can live together'.

The two symbols of Nicosia express these aspirations. Both employ the Venetian walls in their logos (whose implications are discussed later). The Turkish Cypriot logo is '*Lefkosha Turk Belediyesi*' (Turkish Municipality of Nicosia) referring to the contested *de facto* creation of separate municipalities. Inside it shows a Muslim monument, the *Mevlevi Tekke*, an ethno-religious symbol. Underneath is the date 1958, one pointing to past interethnic violence, ethnic segregation and the creation of the Turkish Cypriot municipality. The Greek Cypriot logo of Nicosia is '*Dhemos Lefkosias*' (Nicosia Municipality). It has three colours: yellow for the walls and blue on the inside with a white dove and it was created during December 1974. The colours yellow, white and blue are typical of many official Greek Cypriot symbols after 1974. Previously, the colours would normally be blue and white, the colours of the Greek flag, when the desire for union with Greece was strong.

After 1974, when Greek Cypriots completely abandoned this aim in favour of the reunification of Cyprus as an independent state, yellow, the colour of the flag of the Republic of Cyprus, a symbol of sovereignty and independence, was added. Similarly, along the Green Line only Greek flags used to fly on the Greek Cypriot side, but after 1974 the flag of the Republic of Cyprus was also added. On the Turkish Cypriot side, the flag of Turkey used to fly alone while later that of the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus [TRNC] was added. The dove in the middle of the Greek Cypriot logo is said to symbolise a desire for peace, associated with the reunification of Cyprus and Nicosia.⁵ The Greek Cypriot logo thus avoids the use of ethno-religious symbols (which the Turkish Cypriot one employs) and points towards peace, perhaps also alluding to a peaceful past in accordance with the notion of 'past peaceful coexistence'.

The names by which the UN supervised cease-fire line dividing Nicosia are known carry their own associations and reveal the two sides' aspirations. Green Line (*Yeshil Hat* in Turkish, *Prasini Grammi* in Greek) is a rather neutral one. Many Greek Cypriots associate this name only with 1974 thinking that it was established during that year, as the notion of division is associated only with the events of 1974. Turkish Cypriots may call it *Ara Bolgesi* (intermediate area) or *sinir* (border), the latter striving to elevate it to the status of an inter-state boundary. For Greek Cypriots it is an obstacle that should be lifted and is thus called '*grammi tou aischous*' (line of shame) or '*grammi Attila*' (Attila line), the latter associating it with barbarism and the name of the notorious historic leader of the Huns. Dead Zone (*Nekri Zoni*) is another Greek Cypriot name. For Greek Cypriots it is not only an unjust division but also a threatening boundary given the formidable presence of the Turkish army in the north. The notion of living in a divided capital is clearly more pronounced among Greek Cypriots: they experience Nicosia as 'divided *Lefkosia*'. For Turkish Cypriots, Nicosia is officially *Lefkosha*, *their* capital, full stop. For Turkish Cypriots, another capital of another state lies beyond the divide. The line is officially represented as a barrier offering them protection and security from further Greek Cypriot aggression:

its dissolution calling both in question. The two different views of Nicosia's past and future are evident in the contrasting physical structures which comprise each side of the Green Line. On the Turkish Cypriot side these are permanent walls, walls which create abrupt dead ends on roads that once continued; on the Greek Cypriot side, they are temporary constructions, made of sand-bags and barbed wire which can easily be removed.

Both sides put forth fervent claims of independence and sovereignty. Greek Cypriots argue that the Republic of Cyprus is a fully independent state and *de jure* (though not *de facto*) the government of Cyprus as a whole. Turkish Cypriots argue that the internationally unrecognised (except by Turkey) TRNC is an independent state in its own right. Yet, the flags employed along the Green Line tell a rather different story. While both polities claim independence, the flags of the two 'motherlands' fly alongside that of each polity: the flag of Turkey and the TRNC opposite those of Greece and the Republic of Cyprus (with the UN flag in the middle flying at UN checkpoints inside the Green Line).

In the Centre and on the Edge

Nicosia lies in the centre of the island. Yet the division of Cyprus meant that it has found itself lying on the edges of each polity, divided between the two. However the notion of the centre informs both sides' representations of Nicosia, especially with regards to locating it within the contemporary centre of 'the West'. Both sides employ, as noted earlier, representations of the Venetian Walls in their symbols of Nicosia. In this way their shared Eurocentric outlooks are revealed. The Venetian Walls, as a symbol of Western heritage, are incorporated within the two logos since both sides regard monuments of *Western* others throughout Cyprus as unproblematically 'their own' or as part of their heritage linking them with 'the West'. By contrast, as will be indicated later, when it comes to monuments of the other community in Cyprus this no longer applies. The tendency to endorse and symbolically highlight Western monuments was given added impetus due to both sides' recent aspirations to join the EU. Whereas the Venetian Walls were constructed with the purpose of holding back the Ottomans, and given that in order to do this the Venetians razed to the ground many local houses and orthodox churches, their Western significations elevated them to the status of a prestigious contemporary monument.

One particularly potent Western reference point for Greek Cypriots has been the Berlin Wall. Next to the Green Line in south Nicosia a café has been named as 'Check Point Charlie, Berlin No. 2'. After the reunification of Germany a sign appeared at the end of Ledra Street, the spot where most tourists and foreign dignitaries are offered a view of the Green Line from the Greek Cypriot side. An information centre has also been established there with various photographs and Greek Cypriot official publications. The sign still reads: 'The Last Divided Capital'. An even more explicit reference to Berlin was made in a Greek Cypriot official poster showing a broken wall passing through an unidentified city, yet continuing unbroken through Nicosia's circular walls. The title was 'Nicosia: The Only Divided Capital in Europe' and the caption referred to the hope for the reunification of Nicosia after the fall of the Berlin wall. This is an interesting representation in a number of ways, not least by explicitly placing Nicosia within a European context. If, say, one placed it in the context of the Middle East, the nearby presence of divided Jerusalem and Beirut would not have allowed the forceful presentation of the claim 'Last Divided Capital'.⁶ Especially so for Beirut whose dividing line bears the exact same name as that of Nicosia, 'the Green Line' due to the uncontrolled growth of vegetation inside the division. Yet, many Greek and Turkish Cypriots remain unaware of the presence of another

Green Line in such close proximity. Even within a European context the presence of Belfast, and subsequently of Sarajevo, render the rhetorical claims to the uniqueness of Nicosia problematic.

Bollens (1999, pp. 3-18) provides a useful and relevant discussion of divided and contested cities. His wide discussion of such urban sites suggests that a relevant context for the examination of Nicosia would be that of other sites such as Beirut, Sarajevo, Jerusalem, Belfast, Montreal (or even Brussels as a more positive example), rather than say Johannesburg, New Delhi, Hong Kong, or Algiers. Even London and New York can be regarded as Divided Cities as the title of a major comparative analysis of these urban locales suggests (Fainstein, Gordon and Harloe, 1992). While all cities and capitals contain different kinds of divisions and boundaries (such as those of race, class, gender, ethnicity etc.), the issue is precisely what kind of boundary is relevant for the case under consideration. Nicosia's particular predicament places it within a context of ethno-national conflict where groups posit competing claims for state sovereignty or secession that may implicate a divided city or capital.

Istanbul Road Becoming Athena Avenue

The circular walls of the Old Town of Nicosia are followed by a circular road on the inside which bears various names. At some point on the Greek Cypriot side it bears the name Athena Avenue, creating associations with the ancient Greek goddess and the capital of Greece. A bit further on, past the Green Line, it becomes Istanbul Avenue inside the Turkish Cypriot side. This section examines official inscriptions on the urban landscape of Nicosia. This is primarily related to the ways in which ideologies are inscribed on the landscape through the employment of street names, place names, monuments etc. Equally significant and dialectically linked to the above are processes of official erasures, as traces of others are made to disappear. Given the symbolic significance of any capital as the centre of, among other things, state-ideology, such processes of inscription and erasure tend to be especially marked in such sites.

Maps produced at different historical junctures provide a useful means in exploring the historical processes of inscriptions and erasures. The first 'official' map in the era of modern 'scientific' cartography is the Kitchener map (Plan of Nicosia 1878).⁷ Few roads of the walled town are named but the colonial presence is made evident straightaway with road names such as Victoria, Albert and George. On this map the bastions of the walls retain their Ottoman names but in later ones the British revert to the previous Venetian names of the bastions. Maps of the Republic of Cyprus and Greek Cypriot maps in general keep the Venetian names, while Turkish Cypriot maps produced after 1974 show the bastions with Ottoman names (Zesimou 1998, pp. 257-259). During the early part of the 20th century the British allowed the two communities to give their own names to streets (Michaelidou 1977, p. 21). Having firmly placed themselves within the 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1983) of the Greek and Turkish nations, the street names expressed in various manners identification with the two 'motherlands' (*mitera-patrida* in Greek, *anavatan* in Turkish). The names adopted referred to geographical areas, towns, sites etc. in Greece and Turkey while others to important personalities from the histories of Greece and Turkey. Even during the colonial period, place names were contested between the two ethnic groups. *Tophane*, for example, was around the end of the 1940s changed from Turkish into the Greek *Agios Andreas* prompting vociferous Turkish Cypriot complaints (Gurkan 1989: 160).

If the period before 1960 was an era of inscriptions signifying national identifications, the following decades were times of erasure and re-inscription. From the end of 1963 many Turkish Cypriots abandoned their homes, moving into other areas which became self-administered enclaves and the Green Line was soon established along Hermes Street which became an area of bloodshed, where the killings in fact started. Thus, Hermes Street in turning into a Dead Zone fulfilled the associations of Hermes, not now as the god of traders but as *psychopompos*, the one who directed the souls of the dead to Hades. The newly established Dead Zone soon acquired its own Cerberus. This came about in the process of erasure of Turkish street names from the areas which Turkish Cypriots abandoned (Zesimou 1998, p. 261). This action implied not only intolerance but was also based on the premise that those who left were neither wanted nor expected to return. (As the subsequent more massive process of erasure this time by Turkish Cypriots also reveals.) For example, the Turkish name *Chinar* (Plane Tree) Street in the Tahtakala neighbourhood near the Dead Zone was changed into a Greek one: Cerberus Street.

After 1974 however the situation changed in important ways. Firstly, a much more pronounced process of erasure was instigated by the Turkish Cypriot authorities which changed all place names in the north into Turkish ones (King and Ladbury 1982). Secondly, the stance of the Greek Cypriot authorities changed with regards to Turkish place names and monuments. Whereas previously Turkish place names had been changed and Turkish or Ottoman monuments were neglected or ruined, Greek Cypriots after 1974 preserved all Turkish place names and started to look after at least some Turkish monuments, especially mosques. Since Greek Cypriots desired the return of Greek Cypriot refugees to the north, which meant that Turkish Cypriots living in Greek Cypriot homes would have to return to the south, they preserved mosques and Turkish place names. When for example the Greek Cypriot refugees who moved into the Taktakalas Refugee Settlement asked for the (Turkish) name Tahtakalas to be changed, the reply from the authorities was negative (Papadakis 1993: 185-188). This was not only linked to a strategy to encourage Turkish Cypriots to return but was also related to the heavy accusations levied by the Greek Cypriot authorities against the Turkish Cypriot authorities for destroying or leaving to abandonment Greek or Orthodox monuments in the north and changing all place names.⁸ Most of the English names of streets were gradually erased from the map on the Turkish Cypriot side (Gurkan 1989, pp. 172-3).

Maps depicting contested spaces such as the one of Nicosia easily turn into symbolic and ideological statements. The circular walls, for example, are often presented on Greek Cypriot maps in such a way as to suggest that a line crossing through – a line dividing the circle – is a breach of the circle's natural continuity and hence unacceptable. By contrast, Turkish Cypriot maps sometimes place the northern part of the walled city in the bottom of the map frame, thus eliminating the south completely from view. This presents Lefkoshia as complete and alone, in line with the official policy previously discussed. Usually Nicosia's maps of one side present the other as an empty void.⁹

Monuments – whether historic or newly created memorials – are significant sites for the inscription of national ideologies. The overall neglect of each other's monuments, which however is currently much more pronounced on the Turkish Cypriot side, has meant that this city has been gradually evolving from a multi-cultural site towards a culturally homogeneous Greek and Turkish side (in line with the changing demographics towards two ethnically homogeneous sides).

Canefe (2001) suggests that representations of the past in the Turkish Cypriot side of Nicosia take two forms. The first relates to the grandeur of the Ottoman Empire and the second to Turkish

Cypriot suffering under Greek Cypriots as a defining aspect of Turkish Cypriot identity. Sites such as baths (*Buyuk Hamam*), khans (*Kumarcilar, Buyuk*), mosques, tombs of Ottoman fighters killed during the capture of Nicosia (*Aziz Effendi, Kurt Baba*) have been renovated and celebrated as part of a glorious Ottoman heritage. Turkish Cypriot writers and official publications (e.g. North Cyprus Tourist Map n.d.) often suggest that the Ottoman period has provided the primary formative influences for contemporary Nicosia.¹⁰

One of the most interesting monuments signifying both identification with Turkey and Turkish Cypriot suffering is the statue of Ataturk, the founder of the Turkish state, 'the father of the Turks' as his name translates, one which was given to him by the newly created Turkish state's parliament. This statue is situated near the Kyrenia Gate in northern Nicosia. The statue is partly damaged and during my research in northern Nicosia my official guide pointed out that it had not been repaired on purpose so as to remind Turkish Cypriots of Greek Cypriot violence 'which was even directed against our statues'. Many Turkish Cypriot official ceremonies and commemorations take place under the statue of Ataturk, turning it into a site of symbolic union of the TRNC with Turkey (in line with various integrationist steps taken by the Turkish Cypriot authorities). The most striking monument in northern Nicosia suggesting Turkish Cypriot suffering instigated by Greek Cypriots and encapsulating many aspects of the Turkish Cypriot official representation of the past is the one situated outside Nicosia towards Kyrenia: the 'We Will Not Forget' Monument (Killoran 1994, pp. 220-242). One side shows a woman holding a dead man with the inscription '*Unutmayacagiz*' (*We Will Not Forget*), while another shows a young man and a woman with their arms outstretched holding torches above a quote from Ataturk: 'Youth, You Are the Ones That Strengthen and Maintain Our Confidence in the Future'. Another side shows Denktash, the Turkish Cypriot leader, standing next to Kuchuk, a prominent politician with a proclamation by Denktash: 'The Nation That Has Learned Freedom's Secret from its Martyrs Cannot Be Enslaved'. 'We Will not Forget' is the dominant Turkish Cypriot official symbol regarding social memory. It refers to the period of the 1960s and what goes without saying (because we know all too well) is that 'we will not forget the Greek Cypriot atrocities and our past suffering'.

The Greek Cypriot official reference to social memory is encapsulated in a similar manner: 'I Don't Forget (*Den Xehno*)'. This refers to 1974 and the refugees who 'don't forget their homes and villages in the occupied areas'. It is often found along the Green Line under a map of Cyprus where the northern part has been painted red, as dripping blood (and significantly also the colour of the Turkish flag). The focus of Greek Cypriot social memory is 1974 and the suffering brought about by the Turkish military offensive, while Turkish Cypriot social memory is rooted in the interethnic conflict of the 1960s and their suffering in the enclaves. While for Greek Cypriots the major evil instigator is Turkey (given also the policy of rapprochement towards Turkish Cypriots and the notion of past peaceful coexistence), for Turkish Cypriots the archenemy is the Greek Cypriots. At one point along the Green Line the two symbols of memory confront each other. 'I Don't Forget' is written in Greek on one side and the reply on the opposite side in Turkish: 'Neither do we the slaughter'. Capitals are also sites of museums, sites which are created with the purpose of educating locals and visitors alike. The next section describes the museums created after 1960 with the purpose of providing an education into the recent political history of the island.

Museum of National Struggle (*Milli Mucadele Muzesi*) and Museum of National Struggle (*Mouseio Ethnikou Agona*)¹¹

The two museums bear exactly the same name, one in Greek and the other in Turkish, and are located on either side of the Green Line, within the walls of the Old City. The museums fly the flag of their respective 'motherland' both inside and out: the flags of Turkey and Greece. They are meant to commemorate the struggle of the fighters for national liberation, those of EOKA for Greek Cypriots and those of TMT for Turkish Cypriots. In Nicosia, two other relevant sites are monumentalised cemeteries for the fighters: *Filakismena Mnimata* (Imprisoned Tombs) in the south for EOKA fighters and *Shehitlik* (Martyrdom) in the north for TMT fighters.

The Greek Cypriot Museum of National Struggle was built in the 1960s in commemoration of the 1955-1960 EOKA struggle against the British, the struggle for *enosis* (union with Greece) which ended, however, with Cyprus becoming an independent state. The 'imagined community' which is constructed in the context of the museum is that of 'Hellenism' within which Greek Cypriots are placed. The letters EOKA are spelled using photos of dead heroes. Guns are on display to show how well equipped the British were in contrast to the EOKA fighters. The Museum focuses mostly on the struggle between the British and the Greek Cypriots, making only passing references to Turkish Cypriots. Yet, they are significant in revealing how Turkish Cypriots were at the time regarded as enemies, siding with, or being used by, the British and as having committed atrocities against Greek Cypriots. References are made in the context of this museum to Turkish Cypriots employed as auxiliary policemen by the British against the EOKA insurrection and to an event during which Greek Cypriots were killed with butcher knives by Turkish Cypriots (with the knives on display). Moreover, this historical narrative places Turkish Cypriots in the position of being 'remnants of foreign occupiers'. This is in contrast to the Greek Cypriots for whom it is claimed their historical presence and continuity stretches back to the 14th century B.C.E., positing them as the only rightful inhabitants and owners of Cyprus. Yet, after 1974 the dominant Greek Cypriot historical narrative shifted to emphasise 'peaceful coexistence' with Turkish Cypriots who were now treated as 'compatriots' and understood to be equal and rightful residents of Cyprus. Furthermore, the *enosis* ideal, which the museum was built to promote in the hope of a continuing struggle for eventual *enosis*, dissipated as a popular demand and the reunification of Cyprus became the new political goal. For these reasons the museum lost much of its significance and impact and fell into fairly poor condition.

The Turkish Cypriot Museum was constructed in 1978 and was built specifically in order to house this museum. This time the letters TMT are spelled using photographs of dead fighters and the comparison is made between the guns used by TMT and the guns used by Greek Cypriots in order to show the latter's military might. The Greek Cypriots are presented as the archenemy in this museum with only passing references to the British. The museum's historical narrative begins with the 16th century Ottoman conquest of Cyprus, suggesting that Cyprus has for most of its history (if history is said to start from the 16th century) been 'Turkish' and thus implicitly positing Turkey and Turkish Cypriots as the historically legitimate owners of the island. The museum is organised in strict chronological order and its architectural design was created in order to evoke certain feelings in visitors as they walk through the linear historical narrative. Most of the museum is devoted to depictions of Greek Cypriot atrocities and the suffering of Turkish Cypriots and the longest section deals with the period from 1963 to 1974. This section of the museum is a long and rather dark corridor with exhibits on either side: Turkish Cypriot mass graves, photographs of Turkish Cypriot refugees,

guns, and paintings. The relatively dark and narrow corridor leads onto the last section which is devoted to 1974 and built in the shape of a large, well lit, high and spacey room. The accompanying leaflet explains that the corridor was built in order to recreate the feeling of enclosure and suffering which Turkish Cypriots experienced, while the last room is devoted to the '1974 Happy Peace Operation' (*Mutlu Barış Harekati*), and is designed to recreate the feeling of freedom, relief and a bright future ahead. Since this is currently the officially endorsed Turkish Cypriot interpretation of the past, this Museum is kept in pristine condition for tourists and visiting school children. If the Greek Cypriot museum has already lost its significance due to changing political aspirations, the Turkish Cypriot museum raises significant questions as to its place in a future Cyprus if a solution of whatever form is found. However, both museums do share a strongly ethnocentric and selective representation of the past.

Just outside the walls and close to the Green Line lies another Turkish Cypriot museum: 'The Museum of Barbarism'.¹² This is a house where a doctor from Turkey serving in the Turkish contingent (which the 1960 constitution allowed for) used to live with his family. During the interethnic violence of December 1963, his wife and three children were killed in that house by Greek Cypriot irregulars. This is by far the most disturbing museum on the island. The inside of the bathroom where the murders took place was left intact, with captions explaining that the spots on the walls are the actual blood of the four victims. It is, in my view, a doubly disturbing museum. First because of the violence that was committed there, and second, because the violence of these tragic deaths was used as a prop to support the official Turkish Cypriot rhetoric regarding 'blood thirsty barbarian Greek Cypriots', in order to create more interethnic hatred.

Place and Non-Place

The very fact of its division makes Nicosia a peculiar kind of place. But what kind of place exactly is Nicosia, a city characterised by displacements of various kinds? De Certeau (1984) and Auge (1995) have commented extensively on 'places' and 'non-places' and their analysis has interesting implications for the construction of 'places' and 'non-places' in Nicosia. De Certeau's approach places emphasis on praxis, on how social actors reinterpret, manipulate and tactically employ official constructions for their own ends. 'Place' is what lies at the opposite of 'proper space' (de Certeau 1984, pp. 36, 38, 94). Proper space is constructed from above by officials and town planners with rationalist or political considerations. The previous analysis of Nicosia involving official constructions (naming, erasing, museums and monuments) was one essentially limited to the level of 'proper spaces'. Yet, local actors ('local authorities' in De Certeau's own terminology) give local meanings to 'proper spaces' as they walk through them, live in them and infuse them with their own memories and significations, in short, as they act through them. Auge draws a different contrast, this time between 'place' and 'non-place'. The former is defined as a place of identity, of relations and of history (1995, p. 52). The latter, 'non-places' lack such qualities. His argument is structured in terms of global changes associated with 'supermodernity' and, in particular, the pronounced modes of mobility which it demands. As people are constantly on the move they come to 'inhabit' more and more sites of transition (airport lounges, cars, trains, suburbs from which they soon move elsewhere) and in this era of mobility displacement is the norm rather than the exception.¹³

One way in which local social actors construct their own places, in de Certeau's sense, is through the employment of names. *Hora* (in Greek) and *Sheher* (in Turkish) are the two more intimate names

by which Nicosia is known while *Hora* was often employed by Turkish Cypriots as well. Official names and the meaning of official sites may be subverted by social actors who either choose different names or transform the meanings of official names. Various examples of such subversions among the Turkish Cypriot are provided by Killoran (1994; 1998). Members of the left wing opposition on the Turkish Cypriot side (those who are more committed towards a compromise solution and dislike the official rhetoric stressing animosity), often, for example, chose not to use the official name 'Ataturk Square' (with its explicit links to Turkish history and identity) and employed instead the older name 'Sarayonu' (1994, p. 183). It should also be noted here that in general the Turkish Cypriot Left a notion of a Cypriot identity that sees Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots uniting, rather than the Turkish identity officially espoused by the Right. The meaning of the 'We Will Not Forget' monument was transformed when PKK supporters spray-painted the acronym above the inscription (1994, p. 226). In another instance, a Turkish Cypriot oppositional folklore director ironically exclaimed 'Ah, I have already forgotten' while passing in front of the monument (1998, p. 162). Museums were mocked at times. For example, when left wing Turkish Cypriots suggested that a more appropriate museum would be a 'Museum of Poverty, Misery and the Minimum Wage' (1994, p. 207). During my own research, the ever-present stern gaze of Ataturk from mountains and buildings, and his masks or photos placed on walls inside buildings, was often joked about by parents who mock-scared their children saying 'Don't do that, Ataturk is watching'.

Turning to the Greek Cypriot side now, inhabitants of the area of Tahtakalas might employ a different name such as '*Akritikes Enories* (Parishes on the Edge)' when striving to present themselves as heroic guardians of the border, like the famous *Akrites* who used to guard the Byzantine Empire's frontiers. With regards to proper officially designated names, de Certeau suggests that even if they are employed they may acquire different connotations. If one, for example, mentions 'Soutsou Street' on the Greek Cypriot side, the association created for the listener is not (although officially intended) with the renowned literary figure from Greece but with prostitutes who work there. Similarly, mention of 'Rigenis Street' does not call into mind the glorious queen who used to rule Cyprus but rather the cabaret joints for which it is notorious.

As suggested earlier, Nicosia has been the site of involuntary displacements since the late 1950s, but particularly so in the periods around 1963 and 1974. It is highly interesting in this respect to examine the two side's official constructions of places with regards to the displaced. For Turkish Cypriots the north is officially designated as their own country, their place, their home(land). It is suggested that their movement from their homes in the south was in fact one towards the *real* and *permanent* home. For this reason, traces of past Greek Cypriot presences were erased and replaced with pasts bearing Turkish significations. Turkish Cypriots are encouraged to forget their old villages and associate them only with negative memories of persecution. Yet, the displaced Turkish Cypriots were placed in communities with their previous co-villagers.¹⁴ What links them together then is this previous life together, one however that they are not supposed to reminisce about and certainly not with any signs of nostalgia. Turkish Cypriots were not to feel like refugees, like displaced persons. Thus, officially, the north is *their place*, *their home* despite the lack of memories and emotive associations which would turn it into one.

For Greek Cypriots the situation was reversed. The refugees were continually reminded of their homes in the north and encouraged to think of them as their *true homes*. In this sense the official policy of the Greek Cypriots was to create only transitory 'non-places' for Greek Cypriot refugees who

moved to the south, places that they should never consider as their permanent residence. The cultivation of nostalgia for their old homes and villages became a significant part of the official policy. These Greek Cypriots, and their children, should always feel like refugees. Despite this, the Greek Cypriot refugees were re-housed indiscriminately and their settlements contain people from many villages and towns. Thus, on the one hand, they are encouraged to think of themselves as members of a community (the previous village) that no longer exists, while on the other hand, they were placed with people from other villages with whom they were unable to share memories of their previous lives.

Multiple others on both sides could be said to live in 'non-places' though in a sense rather different from that proposed by Auge: a sense of alienation and oppression sometimes bordering towards enslavement in a place where they have no rights. These are the so-called voluntary migrants, people from many countries whose poor living conditions at home brought them to Cyprus in search of temporary employment and a better future. On the Greek Cypriot side these comprise primarily of people 'from the East', either from the Middle East (primarily male workers from places like Syria and Egypt) or the Far East (primarily women from Sri Lanka and the Philippines working as domestic helpers, or some men from India and Pakistan as workers), or even from countries of the former Eastern Block (Russian, Polish, Moldavian women working in the cabaret and prostitution networks). These are people who were displaced by the social processes created through global capitalism where the forces of demand for and supply of cheap labour for unattractive domestic occupations led to flows dictated by price-differentials, reinforced by domestic political, social and economic upheavals in their homelands. Sometimes, especially in the case of women from the former Eastern Block, they were forced into prostitution upon arrived in Cyprus, or they were employed under much harsher terms than they had expected. The lives of all such groups are highly controlled and monitored, allowing little possibility of free movement with only a few hours a week on Sundays when they can go out. These displaced people live a shadowy existence either in the dark cabarets or shielded in parks where they meet on Sundays and literally come alive as persons in the company of friends, away from the gaze and control of their employers and other Cypriots. Their sometimes illicit presence, the criminal networks which control them, and their lack of organisation, have denied them a possibility of claiming rights of any kind.

Such groups also exist on the Turkish Cypriot side although in much smaller numbers and proportions than on the Greek Cypriot side. The presence of women from the former Eastern Block (the *Natashas* as they are called) is marked but in terms of males there is a much more formidable presence of seasonal and temporary workers from Turkey.¹⁵ Many of them come temporarily for occasional jobs and can be seen sitting around the statue of the injured Ataturk early in the morning waiting for Turkish Cypriots to load them into trucks. Others come as part of the 'suitcase trade', towing large suitcases on wheels, having come to sell items from Turkey and take back goods from Cyprus. Often unwelcome, looked down upon by Turkish Cypriots, and accused of having made Old Nicosia an unsafe place to live in, many stay in cheap *pansyons* in Old Nicosia, five to ten persons in a room.¹⁶ They can be seen eating the cheap Turkish *pide* (a flat flour dough base with some meat or vegetables on top) from restaurants run by other Turks who cater to them, or sitting in all male coffee-shops watching a Turkish soccer game and drinking *chay* (tea) from small glasses as they do in Turkey (not the more expensive coffee which Turkish Cypriots normally drink).

In-Between and Underground

The paradox of borders is that they divide at the same time that they provide sites of contact. The UN controlled Ledra Palace hotel, lying just outside the walls, is the prime site from where tourists and, less occasionally, Cypriots can cross into the other side, as well as being a point of multiple contacts which take place inside. The two checkpoints on either side are covered with proclamations, posters, graffiti and statements which reflect the two side's positions on the Cyprus problem. The physical construction of the checkpoints is in itself revealing. The Greek Cypriot checkpoint is built as a small temporary construction, whereas the Turkish Cypriot checkpoint is a large concrete two-storey structure with a banner on top proclaiming 'TURKISH REPUBLIC OF NORTHERN CYPRUS FOREVER'.

The site of Ledra Palace, especially the two checkpoints around it, was often used for demonstrations directed against the other side especially on commemorations when people from one side would protest against a commemoration taking place on the other, or would gather there during a commemoration taking place on their own side. Ledra Palace however is also the major site of cross-ethnic contacts. In the past it was mostly left wing groups and parties from the two sides which would try to meet each other and discuss. These groups were linked by a committed anti-nationalist stance and they shared a history of significant interethnic cooperation and struggle for common causes – especially in the form of workers' trade unions and demands. Gradually many other groups were created on both sides: groups organised by concerned citizens under all kinds of rubrics (women, lawyers, educators, artists, etc.), which also started to employ Ledra Palace as a site for coming together. The UN gave added impetus to these contacts by providing space and logistics for them and organising days when the Hotel would be opened for people from both sides. Given the Greek Cypriot policy of *rapprochement* and the Turkish Cypriot policy stressing animosity and desiring division, such groups encountered many more obstacles on the Turkish Cypriot side. Still, the number of the groups and of individuals joining them proliferated rapidly, especially since the late 1980s. Some meetings were organised in the form of conflict-resolution seminars, often supported by a variety of external institutions and foreign embassies. During such meetings participants tried to create a space for interethnic dialogue and communication in ways which could take into account both of the ethnic groups' experiences, aspirations and fears, while also giving due to the multiplicity of experiences and voices within each side. If the presence of the Dead Zone created a formidable chasm between the official interpretations of the two sides, these meetings provided opportunities for mutual interchange, dialogue and questioning. Since the end of 1997, Denktash, the Turkish Cypriot leader, has virtually prohibited the participation of Turkish Cypriots in such groups allowing only a very limited number of meetings to take place.¹⁷

The largest and most successful project of bi-communal cooperation on the island after 1974 took place in Nicosia. The project involved the co-management of the sewerage system for the city as a whole. The leaders of the two communities of Nicosia, Greek Cypriot Lellos Demetriades and Turkish Cypriot Mustafa Akinci, managed to cooperate on this project, despite many difficulties and setbacks. They also created a Master Plan for the overall development of Nicosia. Part of the inspiration for this came through a joint visit to Berlin where they came face to face with their own problems both in the present and in the future, should reunification take place. The Nicosia Master Plan strives as far as

possible to create the parameters for the compatible development of Nicosia's two sides. As for the future it includes two scenarios: one of a divided Nicosia, another of a united one.¹⁸

If the two sides have difficulties in agreeing upon a map of Nicosia above the ground, the sewerage map of Nicosia underground is one accepted by both. Nicosia, divided by war and ethnic conflict above the ground, is united underground through a project of interethnic cooperation. Hermes Street (the river-bridge which later became a site of division above the ground in the form of the Green Line), runs over the old river bed which is the main carrier of the city's dirt in this project of underground co-operation for sewerage management also bridging part of the ethnic divide.

Postscript (January 2006): Inside and Outside

On 1st May 2004, Lefkosia/Lefkosha became the capital of one of the newly acceded countries of the EU when Cyprus became the 9th and two thirds new member, instead of the 10th since in practice only the Greek Cypriot side entered. So while Lefkosia became part of the EU, Lefkosha remained outside, despite the fact that the Turkish Cypriots had voted in favour of the UN-proposed plan for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus Problem and the Greek Cypriot side had rejected the plan.¹⁹ The Dead Zone became the easternmost border of the EU, a problematic boundary that has not allowed the EU to precisely delimit itself in the East.

About a year earlier, during April 2003, the Turkish Cypriot leadership under Rauf Denkash opened the first checkpoints on the Dead Zone, under pressure from massive demonstrations led by the Turkish Cypriot Left and other liberal forces. Despite initial discouragement from the authorities of both sides, people chose to cross both ways in large numbers. In a few days, Lefkosha/Lefkosia came to reacquire characteristics of its multiethnic past where people from the two communities mixed once again. Given the large emotional upheavals accompanying such crossings to the other side, the lack of incidents of violence was notable. Suddenly, those unreachable places, places of memories for some, of mystery for others, became accessible as people were now able to walk those previously prohibited 150 meters that had turned the other side into the most distant place on earth.

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End Notes

¹ This paper was first published in German in Welz, Gisela and Ilyes, Petra (eds.): *Zypern. Gesellschaftliche Öffnung, europäische Integration, Globalisierung*. Kulturanthropologie Notizen, Frankfurt am Main, 2001. It was written during 2000, before the April 2003 opening of checkpoints in Cyprus, and subsequent political developments, which are outlined in the postscript.

² Another Hermes Street elsewhere has a similar, though less tragic, history. This is the one in the mixed city of Komotini in northern Greece. It is also built on the old river-bed and it roughly divides Komotini's predominantly ethnic Greek and predominantly ethnic Turkish sections. It is also a lively marketplace bringing people together for trade.

³ For the developments regarding the issue of municipalities and the politics involved see Markides (1998).

⁴ See Patrick (1976) for a detailed review of interethnic conflict during the 1960s.

⁵ For a wider discussion of colours and symbolism, and related post-1974 shifts see Papadakis (1993: 129-173). It should be noted here that whereas the colour combination is typical of post-1974 Greek Cypriot symbols (such as that of Cyprus Airways for example), the explanation for their choice in this particular one diverges from that proposed by the author. Blue was said to have been chosen as the colour of the sky. and yellow as the colour of the Venetian walls.

⁶ Rarely, and in an attempt to signify excellence or superiority, Cyprus may be placed within a Middle Eastern context. An advertisement of a shop in southern Nicosia presents it as the 'The Largest Darts Shop in the Middle East'. Similarly the construction of a new athletics facility in southern Nicosia was accompanied plentiful rhetoric as to how this was the 'best of its kind in the Middle East'.

⁷ For a general history of the cartography of Nicosia see Stilianou and Stilianou (1989). For a critical discussion of Nicosia's maps, their biases, their explicit and implicit political orientations see Zesimou (1998).

⁸ See for example a publication distributed by the Greek Cypriot Public Information Office on 'Muslim Places of Worship in Cyprus', detailing various such places in the south and presenting them in pristine preserved condition while also accusing the Turkish Cypriot authorities for neglect of Greek and Orthodox monuments (Association of Cypriot Archaeologists 1990). For a critical discussion see Sant Cassia (1991).

⁹ These observations are drawn from Zesimou (1998) whose paper presents more analysis of depictions of the walls and many examples of maps.

¹⁰ Canefe (2001) suggests however that given the problematic character of the Ottoman legacy in Republican Turkish historiography, the privileging of the Ottomans in Cyprus in general and Nicosia in particular can be seen as a Cypriot particularity. For a detailed discussion of Nicosia's Ottoman heritage from a Turkish Cypriot perspective highlighting all such sites see Gurkan (1985). For the cover of his book on Nicosia he chose a depiction of Nicosia by a foreign traveller made in 1730 showing the walled city as dominated by mosques (and palm trees) alone. For a rather exoticising discussion of hamams and khans by a Greek Cypriot author see Michaelidou (1977, pp. 79-90).

¹¹ For a more detailed discussion of these museums see Papadakis (1994).

¹² For a description of the Museum of Barbarism see also Killoran (1994, pp. 201-219).

¹³ For a wider critical discussion of Auge and de Certeau in relation to Nicosia see Papadakis (1998).

¹⁴ On the relocation of Turkish Cypriot displaced persons see Scott (1998).

¹⁵ These are a different category from the Turkish settlers, tens of thousand of people from Turkey who have come to live in northern Cyprus. On the issue of foreign women from Eastern Europe or the ex-Soviet Union see Scott (1995).

¹⁶ On the general negative feelings towards workers or immigrants from Turkey see Scott (1995, pp. 391-392).

¹⁷ For a more extended discussion of various bicomunal meetings, their aims and the history of their development see Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis (1998).

¹⁸ For the sewerage project and the Nicosia Master Plan see Demetriades (1998). For a wider discussion regarding transboundary resource management in Nicosia see Hocknell (1998).

¹⁹ For an analysis of the referendums on the UN-proposed plan see Jakobsson Hatay (2004).

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