Moving in the Buffer Zone borderland
Placemaking among young (Greek) Cypriots in Southern Nicosia

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Abstract

The conflict in Cyprus is long-lasting, thus it is experienced differently by younger and older people. All generations define Cyprus, Nicosia specifically, and its division, both internally and through their actions. It has created the many layers and narratives that are present today in Nicosia. The borderland is a space under negotiation by not only geopolitical actors, but (increasingly) by economic, municipal, religious and civilian actors as well. The borderland is also where young people make decisions about their behaviour in urban space. This thesis builds on the need that in the borderland of the UN Buffer Zone, placemaking and moving behaviour are to be studied in a context of a visual and non-visual presence of the Cypriot conflict.

*Key Words:* Placemaking; Borderland; Urban Division; Cyprus; Buffer Zone
Preface and acknowledgements

The fieldwork during which I collected the data presented in this writing, took place from April to July 2019. Since this period, the city has continued to develop. Therefore, this thesis as an empirical document might come with some history in its details and examples. In the end, it is about how those were understood and what they represent for young people.

From Lina and Kyriaki, I learned about the feeling of attachment or even love towards a place: Topophilia, originally a concept coined by Yi-Fu Tuan (Tuan 1990). My attachment to Nicosia is closely connected to the people that I met during my stay and that directly and indirectly contributed to this thesis. To my roommates, to my colleagues in research and colleagues at RISE, to my Cypriot friends, respondents and all others that helped: Thank you. Ευχαριστώ. Teşekkürler.

For his patience and constructive feedback, I would like to thank dr. Bert Bomert.

For their love and support, I would like to thank my family and friends.
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Chapter 1 – Introduction

There is a growing concern about the ‘economic, social and environmental’ sustainability of the ever-growing city (Hubbard 2017: 5). Climate change and population rise are among the main themes in this debate. However, solely proposing and executing solutions to those main themes is not enough to prepare cities for current and future challenges and therefore, there is a need for more attention to how cities are lived in. Through improving the condition of the urban space, cities can become more adaptable to change (Hurdalli 2018: 136). It is popular to look for smart solutions, whilst such improvement has to be based on how people of all generations and backgrounds experience their everyday life in the city today.

The city is built for many. Different people use the city, different companies settle in space. This multiplicity makes that there are different objectives for the planning of a city. Profit of the planning for one, does not per se mean that there is profit for the other. How the city is lived, is crucial for where people go, what they see and whom they meet. The ‘ability of cities to accommodate difference’ is a widely discussed topic in academic literature (Hubbard 2017: 4-5). In the case of a divided city like Nicosia, this is an even more crucial topic to look into. Urban planning can be used as a tool for the extension of existing division between people, or for the creation of new divisions (Hurdalli 2018: 137; Pullan & Baillie 2013: 11). It can, however, also contribute to peace-building processes. Cities should accommodate differences, but at the same time space has to be created for similarities in order to actually reach such accommodation.

The Buffer Zone makes Nicosia1 the embodiment of a city with a colonial and violent past, with a continuing presence of nationalism and conflict. The urban landscape is the visuality of every-day war trauma, displacement and economic issues.2 For a capital, Nicosia is relatively small. As of 31/12/2017, both sides of the city have 246,900 inhabitants combined (Statistical Service of Cyprus 2018a). Obviously, all those inhabitants’ relationships to the city is relevant for urban research and policy making, which makes that within academic research there is attention to the connection between individual city dwellers and the urban space. This relationship is often looked upon with the collective

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1 Unless otherwise specified, I refer to Nicosia as the capital of Cyprus, not as the whole region of Nicosia.
2 Both the financial crisis and the conflict itself have had a tremendous impact on the general economy of Cyprus. The conflict takes 37% of the Cypriot GDP, mainly because of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) (Institute for Economics & Peace 2018: 93). The total number of persons that are internally displaced because of the Cyprus conflict is 228,000 as of 31 December 2018. (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre). This number is on a ‘population of the Government controlled area,’ which is ‘estimated at 864,200 at the end of 2017’ (Statistical Service of Cyprus 2018b: 1).
memory of the city taken into account (Bakshi 2012; Bryant 2016; Hatay & Bryant 2008). Although this is highly relevant for a part of the current urban users, there is also a clear need to look at generations that don’t have such a shared memory of the city. For Nicosia, the younger generations play a crucial role in the possible continuation of the conflict. There is a need to understand how the youth in Cyprus experiences their capital and which elements represent conflict to them. By relating the behavior of youth and their stances about the Buffer Zone and the places surrounding the crossings to each other, more insight might be gained into the resilience of the city for current and future generations. This urban resilience refers to the ability to ‘maintain or recover functionality in the face of shocks and disruptions’ (De Boer 2015: 93-94). Political, technological, environmental and economic changes have affected Nicosia and its population for better and for worse, whilst the city has been held in a relative stable position through unnatural border making.

The Buffer Zone dividing Cyprus cuts the circular old city of Nicosia in half, which brought the center into its fringe. Looking into how behavior in the form of positioning oneself and moving around in a developing and divided city, relates to feelings about the conflict lived every day. In this thesis I will reflect on the following question:

How do young (Greek) Cypriot dwellers relate their (cross-)border behavior to the organization of public space around the Buffer Zone in urban Nicosia?

Evaluating the young (Greek) Cypriots’ use of the public space in the Old Town and its surroundings specifically is important for different reasons. First, a focus on youth gives insight into how places are signified, without them having direct memories of conflict connected to those places. Second, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is only recognized by Turkey, which has resulted into a tense economic situation and more than 30,000 military stationed in the north (Conflict in Cities 2007). As a consequence, (Turkish) Cypriots are more used to crossing the border, as there are more opportunities available in the south. At the same time, moving from one side to the other side of the border, requires a passport to be shown to the (Greek) Cypriot and TRNC authorities. Many (Greek) Cypriots understand this as an act of acknowledging the TRNC and it is therefore evaluated differently than among (Turkish) Cypriots (Gaffikin et al. 2010: 501).

A majority of contemporary conflicts takes place in cities or have a ‘significant urban component’, according to the IISS Armed Conflict Survey 2017 (The International Institute for Strategic Studies 2017). Even if a solution is negotiated, the conflict can dominate the image and livability of the city as it takes long to repair ‘the breakdown of coherence’ (Conflict in Cities 2012a). For example, the Buffer Zone in Nicosia unhinged the urban order and the mixture of its inhabitants (Conflict in Cities 2012a). Therefore, research concerning the long-term effects of urban conflict and
the temporary solutions to the conflict by looking at the everyday experience of the younger generations has the ability to influence sustainable urban conflict resolution in other cases.

The Cyprus problem: a historic overview

I will give a brief description of the history of the Cyprus conflict, so as to give the reader a better understanding of the historical connections made by the respondents as described in this thesis. The length of the conflict and its alternating periods of violence and relative peace makes the Cyprus issue a protracted conflict (Demmers 2017: 9). I only describe main events and actors; this should not be understood as a claim for certain details not to be relevant for the course of the conflict, however.

Cyprus was ruled by many foreigners before its independence, of whom the latest were the Venetians, the Ottomans, and the British. After World War II, Cyprus was one of the many countries where an anti-colonial discourse became popular. What this anti-colonial future for Cyprus would look like was contested between the main ethnic groups. Among Greek Cypriots, there was a longing for Enosis: unification with Greece. In reaction to the call for unification with Greece, Turkish Cypriots preferred Taksim: a partition of the island (UNDP-ACT 2011: 14). Those actively involved in the fight for Taksim were supported by Turkey, with arms and training (Conflict in Cities 2007). Archbishop Makarios acted as the leader of the Greek Cypriots and during the 1950s he advocated for Enosis. The fight became tense with the creation of the National Organization of Cypriot fighters (Εθνική Οργάνωση Κυπρίων Αγωνιστών (ΕΟΚΑ)) under the lead of Georgios Grivas in 1955. Once independence was achieved in 1960, neither the goals of Enosis or Taksim were met (UNDP-ACT 2011: 14).

Instead, the new constitution resulted in a malfunctioning government as it conditioned that the president (Greek Cypriot) and the vice-president (Turkish Cypriot) each had veto power. The state did not manage to get a monopoly on violence, but instead both the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots maintained their own armies, resulting in a fearful and insecure relationship between the two communities (Conflict in Cities 2007). In December 1963, inter-communal violence between the two main ethnic groups erupted. To prevent a repetition of such an outbreak of inter-communal violence, in March 1964 the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) was set up. The following years were marked by both violent events and reconciliation efforts in the form of peace talks. On July 15, 1974, a military coup d'état was staged against Archbishop Makarios, the President of Cyprus. The coup was plotted by the Cyprus National Guard and the Greek military junta. Five days later, Turkey invaded Cyprus and took control over 37% of the island, which is approximately the territory reaching until the Green Line (Conflict in Cities 2007). Since August 16, 1974, a ceasefire is in place (UNDP-ACT 2011: 45). The ceasefire lines fixated the demarcated division of Cyprus and partitioned the island. Since then, the Greek and Turkish Cypriots have lived apart from each other. The Buffer Zone or Green Line is
180 kilometers long; its width ranges from just a few meters (mainly in Nicosia) to a few kilometers (UNFICYP 2019). It is controlled by UNFICYP, except for Varosha and the British Sovereign Base Area of Dhekelia (UNFICYP 2019, UNDP-ACT 2011: 45). Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot army units patrol the Buffer Zone on ‘their’ sides as well, even though officially it is only allowed for the UN forces to do so (Bakshi 2011: 8).

In 1983, the Turkish Cypriot President Rauf Denktas declared the territory north of the Green Line as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which is still only recognized by Turkey (Conflict in Cities 2007). The period since has seen sporadic violence, but is foremost characterized by various attempts to find a peace agreement, albeit against the background of ‘skepticism among Greek Cypriots with reference to whether Turkey really wants lasting peace’ (Kyriacou & Çilsal 2013: 9). Examples of those attempts are the 2004 Annan Plan, for which only a minority of the population voted in favor, and the recent Crans-Montana peace talks from 2015-2017. The popular vote against the Annan Plan had as a result that instead of both parts of Cyprus joining the European Union, only the south became part of it (Conflict in Cities 2007). In 2019 (geopolitical) tensions increased, with the extraction of fossil fuels from the Mediterranean, affirming skeptic feelings towards needed efforts from the states involved.

The Buffer Zone

Already during the Ottoman and British control over Cyprus, (Greek and Turkish) Cypriots were treated differently. It wasn’t until the 1950s that the first physical barriers were established. This separation between Cypriots continued throughout the 1960s and it resulted in the current Buffer Zone, formed in 1974 (Conflict in Cities 2007). The Buffer Zone has a diverse landscape and various levels of control. Large parts of the Buffer Zone have stayed untouched since it came into place; however, there are certain parts that are used for agricultural purposes or that are inhabited (UNFICYP 2019).

The first crossing opened in April 2003, shortly before Cyprus entered the European Union in 2004. Between 2000 and 2003, massive demonstrations took place in the north. The Buffer Zone was a significant factor in the demonstrations, as at the time it was physically and symbolically standing between them and becoming part of the European Union (Demetriou 2007: 993). As a consequence, the discourse around (Turkish) Cypriots changed, presenting them as ‘victims of a Turkey-bound regime’ (Demetriou 2007: 993). However, the opening of the Ledra Palace crossing came unexpected; an event that until then had seemed unimaginable (Demetriou 2007: 992-995). With the opening, discussions started in the south about the significance of having to show one’s passport when crossing. Near the checkpoint slogans appeared, declaring ‘that one should “not need a visa to visit one’s own house”’ (Demetriou 2007: 1000). The choice had to be made between seeing Cyprus across the divide, including the areas people fled from, and resisting by not willing to show one’s passport and therefore not cross (Demetriou 2007: 999). The discussion made both crossing and not-crossing a conscious and
moral act. This choice became willingly or unwillingly connected to the identity of all (Greek) Cypriots (Demetriou 2007: 997).

Nowadays, the Buffer Zone can be crossed at seven places, as can be seen on the map below [Figure 1].³ The first one opened in April 2003, the last two crossings opened in November 2018. Three of the crossings are located in Nicosia. Within the old town, the one place to cross the Buffer Zone is at Ledra street/Lokmaci. This crossing opened in 2008, again preceded by demonstrations. Only just outside the old city, since 2003 there is another crossing located around Ledra Palace at Markou Drakou street. Just like the Ledra street crossing, it is meant for pedestrians and cyclists only; with the exception of diplomatic transport. Regular motorists can cross the border further away from the old town, from the suburbs of Agios Dometios – Metehan.⁴

[Figure 1: Map of Cyprus]

Urban development
During the 1950s, Nicosia started to spread outside the ancient Venetian walls. This development got an impulse with the internal displacement resulting from the inter-communal conflict. New neighborhoods and suburbs were created to house the displaced (Greek) Cypriots from the 1960s onwards (Gaffikin et al. 2010: 502). The swift and unsystematic growth of Nicosia resulted in a lack of a walkable public space and public transportation options (Gaffikin et al. 2010: 502). Just outside the

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³ The orange dots on the map represent the crossings. The black marking represents the Buffer Zone.
⁴ In this thesis, I refer to the crossing using primarily the Greek names.
walls, the Central Business District is located, which has been downscaled since the financial crisis. This commercial center and the malls in the suburbs have limited the need for (Greek) Cypriots to visit the old city. In contrast to the suburbs, the old city is more walkable and it accommodates well-functioning public transportation.

During the last years, the old city has become more populated. For a longer period of time migrants have been settling in the old city, resulting in them being the majority of the old city's population in both the north and south (Conflict in Cities 2011). In the north, it is foremost Turkish laborers who live in the old city, whilst other Turkish Cypriots settled in the suburbs (Bakshi 2011: 16). For centuries, the old city has accommodated a diverse population. The Venetian walls surrounding the old city of Nicosia were built during the 16th Century. Since then, the Pedeios river has functioned as a soft border dividing the city. The neighborhoods north of the river were mainly inhabited by a Turkish population, the neighborhoods in the south by a Greek population, while the west includes mainly Armenian and Latin minorities (Conflict in Cities 2011). There were however exceptions to this division, still visible today with the recognizable green- or blue-colored doors of the houses scattered throughout the old city. The color of the door often defined the ethnic background or identification of the people living there.

Historically, there are two main commercial roads through the old city. As can be seen on the map below [Figure 2], one of them runs from the south (Eleftheria Square (before Metaxas)) to the north (Kyrenia Gate), along Ledra street and Kyrenia street. The second is from the west to the east, Ermou street (before Hèrmes), covering the former Pedieos river connected Paphos Gate and Famagusta Gate. Those streets bridged the old city’s diverse inhabitants as they contained businesses from all ‘ethnic’ groups (Conflict in Cities 2007). Historically being a street of connection, today Ermou street falls mainly in the Buffer Zone, except for the last part that finds itself close to Famagusta Gate. Since 2008, the Ledra/Lokmaci crossing connects the north and south poles of the old city again.

Inter-communal violence and the creation of the United Nations Buffer Zone in 1964 and its expansion in 1974, brought the old city of Nicosia into decay. To counter the years of decline and downgrading, from 1979 on and throughout the 1980s the Nicosia Master Plan was formulated. This bicomunal project would make the greater city resilient to changing circumstances and, more specifically, rehabilitate and rejuvenate the old city, for instance through ‘historic conservation’ (Kyriacou 2011: 18). Since the start of the Master Plan initiative, goals have been reformulated and new plans have been adopted. The Master Plan would bring resilience as the plans were made in such a way that they could be adapted to both the current division as well as possible reunification (Kyriacou 2011: 18).
Figure 2: The old city’s edges connected.
Many young people in Nicosia know about the violent conflict in Cyprus from stories told by their relatives, at schools or through other sources. Already early on in their lives, the first crossings were opened. This defines their relationship to the city and its places in a different way than how this relationship is defined for older generations. The city itself plays a role in confirming or questioning the raised issues in education and in family stories; for example, younger Cypriots signifying the ‘return to land and property’ much less in the discussion of either reunifying or not (Kyriakou & Çilsal 2013: 7).

There is more to the usage of the city by young people. This generation grew up with another space-time perspective (Hubbard 2017: 72). Despite the existence of physical borders, contemporary modes of communication can bring people in touch with each other. In apps like Tinder and Google Maps, GPS systems only care about the shortest distance to a place or a person, ignoring the Buffer Zone dividing the people. It makes the physicality of the Buffer Zone of a different kind. According to Hubbard (2017), the segregation of a city like Nicosia reifies ‘certain forms of racial and ethnic difference’ (Hubbard 2017: 111). Growing up in such a city, this reification process can lead to an absolution of identity (Demmers 2017: 29). This has become more complex with (young) people’s access to cross-border communication through different means. Their possible cross-border mobility is defined by much more than that, however. The form of the city and its internal borders can be related to the usage of public space, the possibilities the city offers and for whom these possibilities are built.
Chapter 2 – Methodology

This thesis brings together accounts of the relationships of young Cypriots to urban Nicosia as a borderland space. Those relationships are connected to questions about meaning of and behavior in space. Therefore, qualitative methods are at the basis of this research. In this chapter, I clarify the methods used for this research and I reflect on their validity.

This thesis consists of both verbal and visual reflections. This combination is used to portray the multiple layers and interrelations that answer my research question. This combination of the verbal and the visual are close to a method of deep mapping. Bodenhamer (2013) argues that the relationship between space, identity, imagination and memory creates the need for more complex ‘deep’ maps. According to him, the function of maps – of which the basis consists of ‘geographic location, boundary, and landscape’ – should be extended to a complexity ‘of the personalities, emotions, values, and poetics, the visible and invisible aspects of a place’ (Bodenhamer et al. 2013: 5). Such deep mapping acknowledges the people in the space and their diverse and dynamic relationships to all within. Bodenhamer argues that anyone should be able to add layers to a deep map (Bodenhamer et al. 2013: 5). The mapping I executed for this research was not open for just any contribution; however, the methods I chose to use, add the above explained complexity to the basic geographic aspects about Nicosia. Visual methods have been criticized as forming a “Western” frame (Wacowich 2012: 709). With maps representing interests, and having themes, all they form is a proposition (Wood & Fels 2008, in Perkins 2016: 598). Therefore, the visuals in this thesis are accompanied by text and thus are not to be understood as representations, nor should they be seen without considering the text.

The empirical data presented in this thesis is collected through conducting semi-structured interviews and through observations of space and observations of events. The data collection was executed from April to July 2019.

**Semi-structured interviews**

In-depth interviews were carried out with fourteen people and lasted between one to three hours:

- Three small group interviews (two with three participants, one with two participants). Two of the group interviews included a walk in which the topics discussed in the interview were further examined.
- Six interviews with single respondents. Two of the individual interviews included a walk (and bicycle tour) in which the topics discussed in the interview were further examined.
The small group interviews were not always planned as such, but partially came about on our way to the interview as we came across other people the respondent knew. During the interviews they did react to each other’s views and sometimes helped each other out with translating Greek into English. All participants had the option to use a printed map of Nicosia to help them speak about certain places and the space in between. However, many of the respondents struggled using the map and therefore it was not used in every interview. The visual maps presented in this thesis are therefore partially based on the notes written down on the printed maps, and partially based on verbal accounts. I would like to refer to Appendix I, which includes the interview guide used as a basis for the in-depth interviews.

Respondent selection

The respondents I interviewed are people I met during various events, on social media, via my internship, and through snowball-sampling. The group is diverse in age (18-30 years old), gender (8 women, 6 men), diverse in life occupation (high school students, higher education students and employees), and diverse in the neighborhoods or suburbs where they live. Some of the interviewed are active among leftist and/or environmental groups, others are not actively engaged in civil or political organizations. However, I did not manage to include young people that are actively involved with right-wing organizations. The specific age range that has been chosen is youngsters up to 30 years old, as those who are older than 30 years have experienced a longer period of their youth without any of the border crossings opened yet. I find it important that all respondents have seen a certain habituation in society of at least the possibility to cross the border, as this possibility distinguishes the young generations from older ones.

For different reasons I refer to the respondents as (Greek) Cypriots in this thesis. First, I want to clarify that I am not speaking about Turkish Cypriots or minorities like the Armenian population. Many (Greek) Cypriots have a bicultural background, as many have parents with a different ethnic or cultural background, for instance those who have a British or Philippine parent. Furthermore, it depends on the person you speak to, to what extent they identify with being Greek Cypriot specifically, instead of preferring to call themselves Cypriot. To have both the distinctive and inclusive element in referring to my respondents, I use (Greek) Cypriot as a term. For their anonymity, I use random letters to refer to a specific person.

Observations

Besides the interviews, I made observations of the urban space. Some of the observations were based on information from the interviews, whilst others formed the basis for particular questions asked during
the interviews. Finally, I joined events that focused on the urban space. However, it has to be noted that I only participated in events that were academic or organized by leftist groups, since, as far as I know, events with a link to the urban space were not organized by any other actors during my period of fieldwork. During the events, those with whom I spoke were aware of my research. Other observations were focused on spatial aspects and thus there was no need for making myself known as a researcher. I would like to refer to Appendix II for the observation protocol. I did not strictly follow the protocol, but I used it as a basis for the observations and as a reminder of what I should pay attention to.

Processing data
All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed word-for-word and coded. This enabled me to pay attention to the specific terms used to refer to certain objects in the field. The analysis partly consisted of a discourse analysis; however, the main analysis centered on connecting a variety of experiences to existing theories. To make this connection, I looked at the spatial relationships to those experiences through 'text-to-map transformations', using photographs and other visuals (Bodenhamer 2015: 19). The combination of the visual and the text allows for a presentation of ‘the contested meanings of space and place, as well as the dynamics that produce them’ (Bodenhamer 2015: 21).
Chapter 3 – Theory

The spatial realm exposes its dwellers to a visuality, to a sense of time, to other dwellers and their traces, among many other characteristics. Those features can be physical and non-physical. How they are seen and perceived is different for each person, each place and each moment. In this theoretical chapter, I outline the debate about (border)space, mobility and placemaking. It functions as a framework for the empirical data discussed in the following chapters.

The one-character city
Allegra et al. (2012) describe the interconnectedness of polity, politics and policy, in the form of spatial law enforcement, urban democracy and social-economic patterns. According to them, this relatedness comes with ‘spatial polarization’ as a consequence (Allegra et al 2012: 569). It makes the term ‘divided city’ that Nicosia holds, difficult and perhaps problematic to use. This terminology problem exists in urban research in general, as small samples and specific time, space and representations are used for claims about cities in general (Amin & Graham 1997, and Robinson 2011, in Allegra et al. 2012: 562). The divided or contested city are categories that are not well-represented in urban research. However, within this field of research, Nicosia, together with Belfast and Jerusalem, are most often taken as the primary examples. Therefore, it is those three cities that define the field (Allegra 2012: 562). It shapes the assumption that cities in for example the category of being “contested” share the same features as supposedly those three cities do (Allegra 2012: 562).

As there are many of those frames or categories produced, it becomes difficult to make comparisons between different situations within and between cities (Allegra 2012: 563). Examples of those categories are cities being dual; fragmented; divided ethno-nationally, ethnically or in dual-state form; partitioned; segregated; adjacent (Allegra 2012: 563). For all of those categories, it could be argued that Nicosia fits them in one way or another. Then, the question arises what meaning this framing has and what function those categories have within the academic discussion about a particular division within cities. This is especially the case, because those categories come with ‘single-factor explanations of urban fragmentation,’ whilst the situations are ultra-complex and don’t stand on their own. Without denying the power of language, urban research should take the everyday experience on the ground into account (Till 2012, in Allegra 2012: 563-564). To reflect on those everyday experiences in the city, the agency of an individual should be reviewed in a legal context. People across the divide have a different legal status that allows for particular behavior. The partitioning of Nicosia has influenced legal control

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5 Examples of such single-factor explanations are planning structures; ethnic, religious, or historical objects and practices; and feelings and applications of national belonging (Allegra 2012: 563).
by the internal displacement, the opportunities available, and with the rights of the European Union that don’t apply to all Cypriot citizens. This differentiation of the people has created ‘micro divisions’ in a space that is already physically partitioned (Allegra et al. 2012: 567).

Spaces and places
The construction of people’s views of the (urban) environment includes many processes. Place acquires meaning over time constantly. Those meanings are subject to change and can be conflicting for individuals and for groups of people. Places are experienced every day and thus from different perspectives.

Urban space bridges the people as the social element of space and the buildings, infrastructure and other objects as the physicality. Space is often ‘more shared’ than those who use it might be aware of. It is where people have ‘unexpected encounters,’ where they can see similarities and differences in culture and behavior, and where they are surrounded by language (CinC briefing paper 4: 1). Such lived spaces have a potential to counter segregation (CinC briefing paper 4: 1). The social and physical elements of space can bring narratives to the minds of the people, which multiplicity builds a complexity of different experiences and behaviors in space. Objects can consciously be used to convey a certain message, as for example Selim (2015) argues that buildings are used to realize political ambitions (Selim 2015: 185). Space itself doesn’t have a materiality nor a meaning. According to Gieryn, space can be understood as ‘abstract geometries’ like ‘distance, direction, size, shape’ or ‘volume’ (Gieryn 2000: 465). It is the people that give it a form and understanding, and thus space becomes a reflection of society. Different spatialities – the physical taking up of space – are involved in this creational and reflective process. This includes the landscape of border areas. It is among others through them how conflict ‘can be read’ (Demmers & Venhovens 2015: 162). Here, placemaking becomes important, because, as Demmers and Venhovens describe, ‘space is constantly claimed and framed by actors in their efforts to produce a “sense of place”’ (Demmers & Venhovens 2015: 162). For this construction of meaning, significance and imaginaries on the one hand, and practices and politics on the other, it is where a ‘variety of spatialities’ make a difference, like scale, positionality, and mobility (Leitner et al. 2008: 169). Such variety and fluidity raise the question whether it is actually possible to speak of a process of placemaking in which space is the starting point and place the end goal.

Through interpretation and physicality space becomes a place. This placemaking is an endless process of, among others, identification, usage and remembrance (Gieryn 2000: 468-471). Through movement, work, and leisure activity, places are ‘sites’ that are lived, where attachments and relationships are made and maintained, and where local and global interactions take place (Leitner et al. 2008: 161). This all happens in a setting where other people have lived the places before. The historical materiality
in space contains and breaths power and has an impact on everyday life (Leitner et al. 2008: 161). Places are penetrated with power. Social relations and daily activities take place in an environment that is packed with meaning and values (Leitner et al. 2008: 161).

Placemaking by parties in conflict is, in the words of Demmers and Venhovens, the ‘politics of place’ (Demmers & Venhovens 2016: 162). They connect this to a politics of mobility (or immobility), including laws or regulations to ‘regulate movement and activities of particular groups in specific places’ (Demmers & Venhovens 2016: 172). But, once connected, the distinction between the politics of place and the politics of mobility is not that clear; imaginaries and meaning of place regulate mobility, which is a time-space bound ‘material or virtual movability of individuals or objects,’ and thus not only happens between places but also within (Leitner et al. 2008: 165). That is how mobility can shape ‘experiences and identities’ (Leitner et al. 2008: 165). This is a continuous circular process: experiences and identities can influence mobility, which shapes these again and influences the mobility of the individual again. Cresswell (2006) describes mobility in a similar way. He argues that mobility is different from movement, as the ‘displacement of people’ is seen to entail ‘meaning, power, practice and embodiment’ (Cresswell, in Leitner et al. 2008: 165).

The private and the public

According to Low (2000: 128), the construction of public space through time is through ‘social exchanges, memories, images’ and the daily use of places (Jedrej 2012: 692). A basic definition of public space refers to the spaces ‘between and surrounding buildings’ (Hubbard 2017: 131). Despite its naming of ‘public’, these open spaces are often controlled and surveyed more than ‘enclosed’ spaces (Hubbard 2017: 131). This is where the overlap between public and private space, hybrid space, is highly relevant. According to Hubbard, there is a need for academic attention to places like shops, cafes or libraries, as they can fulfill both a private and a public function (Hubbard 2017: 131). Memories of violence can be written in these different kinds of spaces, as images of ‘contested […] landscapes’ (Demmers & Venhovens 2016: 174). Symbols that ‘glorify the own histories’, or refer to ‘historical injustices and inter-group inequalities’ can be found directly and indirectly when moving through the city (Brown 2001: 4; Justino et al. 2013: 16). Although for young people they are not direct memories, they are still visible for them every day and connected to the narratives. It again brings forward the power embedded in space. Previously, I described how placemaking takes place in space that has a history. Conscious and unconscious connections can be made with narratives in both public and hybrid spaces, but their own placemaking can leave traces behind as well. It makes it a two-folded aspect of behavior in space. According to Foucault, the ‘essence of modern power’ is ‘the capacity to distribute bodies and partition space’ (Foucault 1977: 202). It is not just the dividing power of the Buffer Zone, but also the power of the aforementioned history and active culture that exists in places, as well as the more abstract elements
of spatial definition. Space itself contains power or is reflected by power, but even more so in an environment where those powers might come together, like the borderland.

**Boundaries, barriers, borders**

Not only conflict, but also its resolution, like partitioning in the case of Cyprus, can redraw ‘boundaries of collective identity’ (Jenkins 2014: 4). The segregation of a city, whether by soft or hard borders, can reify ‘certain forms of racial and ethnic difference’ (Hubbard 2017: 111). This reification makes assumptions about identity into ‘something hard, unchangeable and absolute’ (Demmers 2017: 29). According to Baumann (1999), it makes ethnicity appear as ‘an autonomous factor in the ordering of the social world’ (Baumann 1999: 62). The absoluteness of ethnicity can therefore make it function as a boundary between people. Daily experience of it can be one of the space being segregated. This is not about the extremes of being completely segregated versus totally integrated, nor that the Buffer Zone as a physical border is the exact line that denotes this segregation. It is where characteristics like distance, narratives, and senses come into place. For example, Hubbard (2017) notes that due to the developments in transport and communications, the borders of the city have become less relevant. Therefore, he argues, there is no need to make a distinction between urban and rural dwellers (Hubbard 2017: 2). However, as two of the three border crossings in Nicosia are not accessible by public or regular transport, the distinction is still relevant here; especially since the Buffer Zone influences possible travel options. People tend to minimize their travel time from one place to another (Walford 2016: 673). However, both the Buffer Zone and the walls of the old city might increase the time it takes to travel. In some areas, the further away from the Buffer Zone, the less people are around from the other side of the divide.

A Buffer Zone is installed as a temporary measure to downsize violence by keeping particular groups apart. Throughout the years, the temporary character has become a permanent one. Not only in the heads of the people, but also in the design of the area and the living of people in the area around the Buffer Zone. It is in this spatial area that many actors come together in the official and unofficial planning of the urban space, like national and international military forces, the municipality, the inhabitants of the borderland or former inhabitants of where the Buffer Zone is today. All those various actors bring along restrictions, which for the Buffer Zone itself is seen as an attempt to formalize the Buffer Zone as a gray space itself (Amit & Yiftachel 2016: 145). At the same time, however, the Buffer Zone made Nicosia develop its outskirts. The scarce violence that remains today as a result of the Buffer Zone and the surveillance around it, creates ‘certainty’ and a manageability (Amit & Yiftachel 2016: 158). However, it comes at the cost of a continued active ethnic and urban conflict (Amit & Yiftachel 2016: 158). With the development on the outskirts of Nicosia and the underdevelopment of the area
close to the Buffer Zone in both the south and north, two different cities are created on both sides of the Buffer Zone (Amit & Yiftachel 2016: 153).

**From theory to fieldwork**

The relationship that Mitchell describes between goal incompatibility, behavior and attitudes is still often at the basis of conflict analysis. The behavior is specified to acts that are directed at challenging other persons to have them modify or abandon their goals (Mitchell 1981: 29). The attitudes are those ‘psychological states,’ like emotions or perceptions, that come with being involved with a particular conflict (Mitchell 1981: 27). The behavior of young (Greek) Cypriots can be, for example, to actively take the decision not to cross under any circumstances, in order to show their disapproval of the presentation of the north as a different state. However, the goal incompatibility does differ for every individual and thus also within groups of people, not strictly along the lines of ethnically defined groups. This frame not only concerns internal or individual aspects of conflict behavior. Individual attitudes need to be examined in the ‘context of group belonging’ (Justino et al. 2013: 18). There are also external elements that play their part, with ‘structural incompatibilities in society’ and the environment, in which among others the spatial organization is important (Demmers 2017: 6). Those internal and external elements are both involved with placemaking, and they are an important factor in the continuation of conflict (Mitchell 1981: 28).

It is therefore right, as the above-mentioned theories show, that attention is being paid to the meaning of 'place' in the academic debate. Research has been specifically done on the meaning of places in conflict, for example because their meanings are contested or because of the memories that are written in place. What is missing, is a focus on how space is signified by people who don’t have direct memories of conflict related to the space. By focusing on the experience of younger generations, a better understanding might be gained of the influence of indirect conflict memories in the city and the attitudes and behavior of youth in urban space. In the following chapter, I will outline their definition of, views on, and behavior in the area around the Buffer Zone in Nicosia: the Buffer Zone borderland.
Chapter 4 – How far to the border(land)?

Whether we take the whole of Cyprus, Nicosia as a city, or just a neighborhood or a single street as the borderland of the UN Buffer Zone, the definition of the Buffer Zone and its borderland is conceived in many ways by various people. Those perceptions are not just formed by the distance in miles. This chapter discusses visual and audible characteristics of the Buffer Zone borderland and their connection to mobility.

Buffer Zone terminology

The Green Line, The Buffer Zone, the dead zone, the border, the barrier… Among the respondents, there are plenty of ways in referring to the line that has divided Cyprus. Sometimes, adjectives were added, like the UN Buffer Zone or the Turkish Barriers (A.). The terminology used by someone is powerful, which A. describes by telling me about what the word 'border' does to her:

Question: Why do you call it the barrier?
A: They are not borders. If you see the map of Cyprus, […] from Kyrenia to Paphos, all the cities, okay? That is the Cypriot map. If you are calling the Green Line borders, then that is the end of Cyprus. Then you are basically diminishing all the ideas of unity. If you keep saying border, border, border – then that is going to happen. You are going to feel okay with it. And, you are going to let other people say it. So basically, you want two different authorities, yeah.

To A., naming the Buffer Zone a border is a reification of there being two states. Instead, she interprets the Buffer Zone differently:

A: I think they are barriers, because there is still an opportunity to solve. And they are barriers because you cannot go freely without your ID to the other side. There is a barrier and it is not only the one that is physical, it is the one that is also, you know, in your head: “Oh yes, now I am going to the occupied side”.

The terminology6 is also relevant for how people speak differently about the distance of places in relation to the Buffer Zone. Something cannot be ‘on’ the Buffer Zone, it will either be in there or not. However, something can be on the barrier or on the border, which seems to be used as a more flexible term.

6 When respondents speak about the Buffer Zone, I will use the terms they use. From a theoretical perspective, I use the term border more often, as this is widely used in other research and therefore more comparable. Otherwise, I will use (UN) Buffer Zone, as this is used in institutional terminology as well.
Something that is not officially on the edge of the Buffer Zone, can still be considered as being on the border. To exemplify this usage of prepositions, I will again cite how A. uses them:

A: ‘New Division [1] is very very close to the barriers. Also, the house of Hadjigeorgakis Kornesios [2] is actually on the barriers. Ledra [3] also has barriers.’

As can be seen on the map (Figure 3), the Hadjigeorgakis Kornesios house [2] is not in the Buffer Zone [black], but A. does consider it as the barrier and so she uses it in a more flexible way. A street can ‘have’ barriers, thus the barrier is on the street. It shows her individual interpretation of distance and the reach of the barrier.

[Figure 3: Spatial definition of a barrier by A.]
Sensing border distance

The audible

When in the south of Nicosia, the ways to get a glance of the north without crossing are mainly limited to some elevated points or raised flags. However, non-visual elements like sounds naturally cross the border to the ears of those on the other side. Depending on the width of the Buffer Zone in the old city, there are parts of the borderland where the cafés on the other side are audible. One sound that spreads further is the adhan, the call to prayer.

The sound of the adhan plays a role in the experience of distance to the north and to the Buffer Zone itself. The relatedness of seeing the Buffer Zone in a certain form and the feeling of distance or closeness to it differs from respondent to respondent. Some of those who feel close when the Buffer Zone is visible, feel the same about the sounds coming from across the divide. For N., hearing the adhan can indeed make him feel close: ‘If the prayer reaches my ear, then I’m close. I mean, the Gotcha [Γοτθα, Gothic]’? This awareness of distance can bring along different feelings, but also change how Nicosia is experienced as a city. It is not only Nicosia that changes, according to L., but ‘how I see Nicosia.’ As a kid, hearing the adhan, brought him feelings of fear. Growing up, this fear was reduced. Instead of fear, he started to develop feelings of interest and affection.

L: I remember being in Orfeas for souvlaki. It is an area that is exactly next to the border. Exactly. And that is when I was eating souvlaki with the family, and suddenly in the night, I heard the Adhan. I was so scared, I asked my mother […] “Should we leave? Is there something bad about to happen?” It was the first time that I heard a noise or a sound from the other side […]. But, now, I like the adhan. I really like it. It is like… combining that picture of a Middle East society with west society… it is like the merging… and it is a beautiful result.

It is the Adhan that ‘reminds’ L. that the area doesn’t end at the checkpoint but continues, especially when in Ledras which is already very close to the north. That is how exploring the area in the south gives him a better idea of the north and makes the north more accessible to him. The time it takes to cross is something he experiences as minimal, as well as the differences between the north and south. Sometimes L. doesn’t notice any. Showing his ID at the checkpoints is something he sees as a means or opportunity to continue in the same area, not to change from being in one area to another. It is the possible interaction in space that shows him that peaceful living and an area of open-mindedness are possible. So, the socio-spatial encounters have given him another narrative than the one that initially brought him feelings of fear.

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? Γοτθα (Gothic) refers here to the oldest Gothic church that still exists in Nicosia, however converted to a mosque. It functions as the main mosque in Nicosia, the Selimiye Mosque (Selimiye Camii).
The Buffer Zone is not only a line that bridges the sounds from both sides to each other, but has a sound of its own as well. The minimum human presence allows for many animals to live freely in the Buffer Zone. By hearing their ‘voices’ instead of hearing any humans, made two of the respondents relate rather positively to the Buffer Zone.

M: Behind Xaratsi, you can hear them at night, screaming, and it is something unknown. No one is allowed there, whatever animal goes there is free to just walk around, and... I mean, keeping some parts of it as it is, would make me so happy.

N. [referring to the Green Line in Kaimakli]: Like when I sit on the veranda of the house at night, you don’t hear anything. It’s full of natural life, there [...]. Because the human presence is minimum [...]. I think there’s some secret to it, that I do relate to it, with the Green Line.

In contrast to the sounds coming from across the Buffer Zone, the sounds of the Buffer Zone themselves are not said to be related to the distance to the Buffer Zone, but to the connection between the Buffer Zone and the individual. For the visual aspects, it also seems to be about distance and about the individual connection. However, it also has a more political element to it.

The visual
There are many ways to experience closeness to the Buffer Zone. Whether by hearing the call for prayer or by seeing similar architecture in the north and south, L. feels close to the north: ‘Each side is very close to each other, I find that in every single road inside the old city’. According to him, this relatedness of the old city to the Green Line comes with the problem that the further away from the Green Line, there are less people that care much about the Cyprus issue. Those who hear or see the physical division, feel the division. Those who don’t, see a southern space that ‘just ends’ where the Buffer Zone begins. To L., because of his experience of feeling the division, tolerance towards the idea of a solution to the Cyprus problem has increased. It helps for example that (Turkish) Cypriots who come to the south and (Greek) Cypriots who come to the north are most often to be found in Nicosia. They are not seen in Paphos or Limassol, neither can the call to prayer be heard there (L.). According to N., the people of Limassol or Paphos don’t understand the magic of the Green Line, the experience of crossing, nor the everyday materiality of the division. All they have is the media propaganda (N.). In the old city, the presence of the Cyprus problem is inevitable and unavoidable. This inevitability decreases the further someone moves, from the walls to the suburbs, to the villages and other cities (L.). It is not a duality, but a gradual dynamic. Such gradual dynamics are influenced by more than the literal distance and the physical surroundings. The feeling of closeness can also be influenced by someone’s mood, with whom
someone is, the interactions someone has with a particular place, and the personal awareness. For example, L. says that the amount of news he reads throughout the day about the Cyprus issue influences his feeling of closeness. He does feel close ‘all the time’, therefore it is a question of feeling more or less close, instead of feeling close or not. For M., it isn’t always a question of closeness, yet more of awareness and how this affects her.

M [in Kala Kathumena]: I can feel that I am not aware of the border right now, because I am not next to it. I am aware of it, of course, but, it doesn’t really affect me.

This feeling doesn’t last per se. Sitting in the old city, the awareness stays, yet without being affected. A.’s feeling of closeness can come and go within the same area, as it is influenced by many things. The act of coming from outside the old city walls towards the inside and the act of crossing comes with more than just awareness. Different directions have to be chosen, because of the Venetian walls or the Buffer Zone. Feeling close to the Buffer Zone also brings other feelings and behavior along. It can make the area around the Buffer Zone a nice place to go. For example, M. visits Xaratsi because of its location near the Green Line:

M: It is secluded [...], there is something about having that unknown area behind it. That really intrigues me. When I am going up, there is a toilet upstairs and you can watch from outside the window, and there is a balcony as well. You can watch behind the border and it is amazing, how trees and the flowers and the house are just blending naturally there.

Such a positive feeling towards the Buffer Zone can be experienced from a much greater distance as well, as can be seen in what I. says about Skali in Aglandja:

I: ‘It is the city of stars. If you have a good view of the old city, you have like a range which is completely dark, that is of course the Buffer Zone. And then you can see like the other side. So, that is a beautiful place if you are not scared to go there.’

The far distance from which the Buffer Zone is visible, can make people feel more close despite the actual distance. Something specifically visible from afar, is the Turkish flag on the Pentadaktylos mountains in the north. It is a flag that brings various reactions to different people. An example is the connotation made by K. and J.:

K: Kaimakli is close to the flag.
J: I don't care, it is just there.
K: It kind of gets frustrated. Like, I remember driving from Larnaca to Nicosia. When you get really close to Nicosia on the highway you can clearly see the flag. It was always night, and there was the light... I feel frustration because I knew that it is a part of the country that we could use, but we can't because it is occupied. It is that reminder that you know – it is yours but it is not really yours.

What the Pentadaktylos flag symbolizes for different people, is addressed in chapter 6. The flag being visible from many places does contribute to an everyday awareness of the Cyprus problem and the Buffer Zone. N. clarifies how his feeling towards the Pentadaktylos mountains and the distance towards it changed over the years:

Q: How far does it feel?
N: Very far. I grew up feeling that it just didn’t exist, you know. It is inaccessible, so it is just [...] like a picture in the background. It felt like 2D.

Q: And now, did that change?
N: It changed, because I think of this political connection, or like having friends in the north, I have this ideal of unifying Cyprus... So, it is kind of, I do want to feel close. Although it does really feel distant. Especially, from here, in the center with Ledra street – it doesn’t feel that far away. But here, it feels... vast.

Q: Why does it feel far here and not there?
N: Because I think... I cannot cross from here. I need to go to the old Nicosia to cross.

There are many more flags around the Buffer Zone, yet none like the Pentadaktylos one. The other flags, you can only see when you are close to the borders, according to K. However, according to A., they can be seen from afar as well. This makes her feel very close to the barriers. She experiences them to be close, because where she goes in Nicosia is only a walking distance from them. Thus, she has a different view on how far things are from each other in space. She prefers not to see the flags.

A: Even if I didn't live at the time of the conflict, from what I have heard, it is not a nice thing to have every day. I mean, going to your work, seeing the barriers, going to your house... seeing them. It affects your mentality and it effects your emotions. It affects everything, I think. I wouldn't avoid it. It is not that I should be let's say afraid, or that it affects me that much.

Flags are part of the materiality of the border, according to N.: ‘Of course, on this island, flags are everywhere [...]'. But you kind of know that – ah, these are the flags on the border’ (N.). In other words, he differentiates them from other flags.
Mobility / accessibility

According to almost all the respondents, the traffic in Nicosia is all around and unavoidable. In combination with the heat, it is a death trap. Cycling along the large avenues is considered dangerous and therefore mostly limited to the old city and Kaimakli. Public transport is seen as an inconvenient option. The bus takes long, it doesn’t run frequently and one has to wait in the heat. Having a car in Cyprus is considered a must. It gives the freedom to go to malls, to the suburbs or outside of Nicosia. Whether having a car or not, of all the possible places to visit when staying in Nicosia most of the respondents still most frequently visit the old city. Those who don’t have a car, find it convenient to move around in the old town and therefore almost only move outside of the old town when paying visits to friends or family in the suburbs.

When it comes to crossing the Buffer Zone by car, it requires another insurance, which comes with extra costs. It prevents some from crossing by car. For many respondents, using public transport in the north isn’t an option, as because of a lack of a mobile phone signal they fear getting lost. As a consequence, the area of crossing becomes limited to the space within a walking distance from the Ledra Palace and Ledra street crossing. According to M. and C., this is why it is of such importance to have a common space within the walls of the old city. It allows for Turkish Cypriots to join meetings and events. C. adds that the old city is also accessible as the busses are close, which allows those living in the suburbs to go there relatively easy. Such a central place brings people from all neighborhoods together (N.).

Walkability

During the day, few people walk. In summer, there are not that many people in the streets. Many consider it impossible because of the heat. Walking (or cycling) is done mostly in wintertime or at night. ‘In the heat, you don’t want to leave the house before 5-6 pm, so you live at night’ (B.). Another walking or cycling restriction is the lack of well-kept pavements, which makes some streets dangerous and uncomfortable to walk or even inaccessible for those who need a wheelchair (G., H.). Within the old city, this is considered less of a restriction, as it is conceived as a walkable space (L., M.). The relatively small size of the old city and its streets makes that everything is close by. There are many things to do, many places to go, and the size makes that it doesn’t matter where to park the car (L., M.). However, even within the old city the walkability differs. Together with Eleftheria square, the municipality created a street from the end of Ledras to the Omirou bus station. Following protests, this street became a car

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8 Since mid-July 2019, there is a phone interoperability between the north and south. This confidence building measure allows Cypriots to continue using their mobile phones when crossing the Buffer Zone (Andreou 2019). When I conducted the interviews, this was not yet the case.
free zone. Together with the shopping streets Onasagorou and Ledras, it is one of the few places where walking in the streets is the norm.

Outside the old city, almost everything is widespread. Buildings are located far from one another and the streets are lengthy. By bike or by foot, large avenues outside of the old city are to be avoided. Because of those roads, N. would never take the bike from Kaimakli to Aglandja, which distant-wise is the same as Kaimakli to the old city. Without a car, it is hard to move in and between the suburbs and the old city. Therefore, N. perceives the space outside of the old city more as a transitory space, with the exception of private places of family and friends (N.). Given the extensive use of cars as a mode of transport, Nicosia doesn't have many people walking in the streets. Especially at night, this results in more carefulness among those who do walk – especially female respondents suggested this. The few places that are considered suitable for walking, like parks or the old city, can, but not necessarily do, feel more secure for some people.

Navigating

The lack of walking and cycling affects how city dwellers border the city. Two of its crossings cannot be used by regular car drivers. Especially for those who walk or cycle, the suburbs are distant from the old city and the Central Business District. Because of the Buffer Zone, Nicosia has an unnatural urban plan. It influences how someone has to move from one place to another. Even though Nicosia is not a big city, the Buffer Zone can double the distances of movement. However, the small size is, according to K., the reason there is no need for the use of maps; map-reading turned out to be very difficult for most of the respondents. An example of the increased distance is the position of Kaimakli, where N. lives. He explained why Kaimakli is the opposite of central. Because of the division, it is like an ‘enclave’ surrounded by the Buffer Zone. Except for Kaimakli as a direct destination, it is not a place that would be passed by on the way to somewhere else. M. also describes the influence of the border on her mobility: ‘The border makes you go around things, choose other ways, navigate differently. The realization of this comes within the walls or when crossing.’ The two cases below function as examples.

N: Although it is close to the center, it is really far away from all the other people of Nicosia. However, when cycling, it feels like the continuation of small neighborhoods as there are no big avenues to pass [Figure 4]. All the trajectory to go from one point to another is paralleled: it is traveling parallel to the green line or crossing it, traveling parallel to it on the other side.

M: It is not only the Buffer Zone that ‘makes you go around things’. The walls of the old city can have a similar effect. Mehmet Afik Caddesi is a popular street in the north of Nicosia as it has many bars. To go there from the Ledra street crossing, one needs to make a circle [figure 5]. To avoid this circular movement, the Ledra Palace crossing can be used [Figure 5].
Figure 4: The lack of big avenues [dark grey] in Kaimakli and at its route to the old city.

Figure 5: Moving from the checkpoints at Ledra Palace [left orange dots] and Ledra Street [right orange dots] to Mehmet Afik Caddesi [yellow].
Reflection

This chapter shows that the Buffer Zone and the borderland are not static spaces or places. Instead, there is an everyday (in)visibility at play, related to visual and audible aspects that are subject to change. The infrastructure, symbols (flags), and the use of language also give insight into how gradual the distance is seen, felt and acted upon by different persons at different times.

Apps are seen as a way to discover new places (geocatching, G.) or to make walks (Pokémon Go, I). Whether or not having those specific apps or GPS, not knowing where to go, discovering new places and even getting lost in the south is described as something fun (I., G., J., K., N., M.). This ‘fun’ effect of those apps stops however where the Buffer Zone is. Getting lost in the north is seen by some as scary and restricts people from going there. There is more to this than just the lacking phone signal or the narratives about the north. It is where memories are made, people are known, and where the daily life performances takes place. Those who do cross, often stay within the old city in the north, a place that is still somehow close to what is known in the south. This act of crossing will be discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 5 – Crossing the divide

To cross or not to cross? – it often is posed as if the answer is dual. There are, however, many ways of crossing, from going to the corners of Nicosia in the north, or to go partially to the space in between the north and south. In this chapter, I will discuss the experiences of young (Greek) Cypriots at two of the crossings in Nicosia and what decisions they make related to the act of crossing.

The act of crossing

Crossing is an act in two ways. Taking the decision of crossing to the north is one to be taken in a context of a morally bounded discourse about the meaning of the crossing process and therefore the role of the individual act. The actual movement after the crossing is related to various social, cultural, environmental and individual aspects. Furthermore, the crossing is an act in it being an experience in itself. This experience can be defined for example during the movement to the area of the checkpoint, or during the procedure a potential crosser has to undertake.

The crossing space

The crossing space is the area around and in between the checkpoints. This space is not only of a procedural kind, but it is ‘symbolically charged’ marked by for example language and is part of broader and different narratives (Bodenhamer 2015: 14). Older generations have known the crossing space as one that was once part of the living area, and after that as a hermitically closed space. Younger generations have only known the Buffer Zone as a place they could not cross when they were small children. I assume that the more natural existence of the crossings for them, makes that they bring this specific perspective on the crossing space and to the crossing as an act as well. However, also other aspects like family histories or the distance of the home from the geographic location of the crossings can form a certain gaze.

The experience and definition of crossing the Buffer Zone also comes with, for example, family histories, not only as the crossing of a physical border, yet a border that is dividing the people. A. explains that her friends, family members and herself experience crossing as something unenjoyable and connected to the political powers in the conflict:

A: ‘It is like seeing two different worlds. You don’t see a united Cyprus. You see the Republic of Cyprus on one side, and you see a body which doesn’t reign Cyprus on the other side.’

The negative feeling this gives her every time she crosses, makes her want to visit the north not too often. However, she also agrees with the position of her father, who has a seemingly different opinion.
He says: “If we don’t go, if we don’t visit our places, then we will forget about them. And they will end up keeping them without being theirs in the end.”

When someone decides to cross, it doesn’t suddenly become a positive experience. The Cypriot police always makes M. feel anxious. She feels like the policemen are throwing her shade for the way they look at her.⁹ They sometimes picked on her and her friends when they didn’t ask to cross as (Greek) Cypriots.¹⁰ Even when someone has crossed many times, there is always this unclarity of what to expect from the police. However negative for one, the unexpected reaction of the police after having crossed multiple times can come with positive feelings for others. Even so, it almost becomes like a game, as with C:

C: ‘I like to cross. Cause I always… I always make fun of the border. You notice that they are on their phone. I love like: “Are you Greek Cypriot?” I was like: “YES!” (“sigh”). […] The first time, I was like… “Hello I am C., this is my ID.” But I noticed nobody gives a shit. So… I just now pass and I want to see if they notice me like… or at the other border at Ledras they are very flexible. So, I can pass really easy.’

This is the opposite of how M. acts. When she crosses, she consciously speaks extra loud, so that the police can notice her Cypriot accent.

A decision to make
As described in the introduction, after the opening of the Ledra Palace checkpoint, the act of crossing was framed into a narrative of immorality. The symbolization given to showing the passport at the checkpoint doesn’t mean that in reality is isn’t something that is valued differently by different people. K., for example, never crossed for this reason. K: ‘It is not a different country, so I don’t feel like showing off my passport to go there.’ Others do dislike showing their passport, although this doesn’t prevent them from crossing.

B: It has become habit now because it is what you have to do. But when you stop and think about it, you kind of think: I shouldn’t have to have identification to cross the borders to go to the other side of my own city.

However, one of the respondents associates the showing of his ID as an ‘opportunity of continuing the same area in the north […]. Moving from the south to the north in no time, and sometimes not seeing

⁹ (Throwing) shade, as used by M., is slang for expressing (non-)verbal insults.
¹⁰ A Greek Cypriot can cross the southern checkpoint without showing identification. They only have to show theirs at the northern checkpoint.
any difference.’ It is even, in his words, ‘one of the most significant reasons that I am actually, I love going out in this area.’ It makes him sad that others ‘refuse’ to cross to the north: ‘Showing just your ID to see your country. It is a very small price. It is not even a price…’ Having one of the above-mentioned feelings about showing one’s passport is not seen in every case. For example, M. says not to think of it as a decision that much, as she sees all of Cyprus as her country:

M: I cannot separate the two parts. I really want to know my island. I want to familiarize with the northern part too, as if it was no barricades, no borders […]. Okay, I am aware of what is going on, of course. Of the illegality of the whole thing. But, that doesn’t stop me from wanting to visit the places. Having strolls in the city, visiting the old market in the northern part, which I love. It is an amazing space because they have many similarities from our culture on the southern part. I even feel weird like of having to say - the northern part, the southern part, a part, this part, a Greek part, a Turkish part.

For the decision to cross or not to cross, when morally not feeling restrained, the north is imagined in a particular way. Before C. turned eighteen, his parents didn’t want him to cross. Referring to the north, he says: ‘Here we live in a bubble. We don’t know what happens there. We don’t know anything about it.’ Therefore, up till now he only crossed to the north with particular organizations. This does exclude his halfway crossing, for example to the Home for Cooperation.\textsuperscript{11} C. describes the north as a strange and surreal place, to which he doesn’t feel any connection. Also, he doesn’t feel comfortable to go any further than the old city, given the risk of getting lost.

C: I try to have it [a connection to the north], but I don’t want to force myself into it. Feeling this place as a home… it is not a home for me. Like, I know it is my country, it is Nicosia as well. But I don’t know about the social things going on there […]. With the phone, there is no signal, yep… So, I don’t feel secure for … of being there for myself. I wouldn’t go, even if I have the map […]. I never cross the wall. I passed like once with a friend. To show her around in the streets I know. I never just crossed to have a coffee.

As C. already explained, where to go to in the north depends on being alone or together. For example, M. prefers to go together with friends, especially when she goes further away. She does go by herself to Hoi Polloi, the nearest café to the checkpoint. G. only went with family when the Green Line opened. He felt safe at the time, but never went back: ‘Maybe I am afraid to go on my own. Because you need to go and show your ID. And then you would go where, you know, I don’t know anyone.’

\textsuperscript{11} An ‘inter-communal space’ located in the Buffer Zone where organizations and individuals from both the north and south can meet and work together (H4C 2011: 25). I explain this in more detail further down this chapter.
Another issue is going there during daytime or at night. There isn't any active night life in the northern part of the old city, which makes B. feel less comfortable or safe: 'It is not in terms of prejudice that I feel uncomfortable. It is a completely different environment to me.' It feeling as a different environment, does make the north side of Nicosia and the rest of the north of Cyprus a place for discovery for some, however. There are buildings, bars, and beaches that are known for being worth to visit. However, given the many challenges on the way (no phone signal; the need for an additional car insurance), and a 'fear of something happening' makes people not to want to go at all or not too far from the checkpoint (G., H.).

The discovery of the north side not only entails seeing the places that are well known for their historical value or their beauty. It is also for getting to know this side of the city that many (Greek) Cypriots consider to be their country, although they don’t know the place (well). Without living the place, which makes social interactions to take place, it is difficult to feel 'really attached' to the north 'as a place', as C. explains:

C: Especially when I go into the north, it feels like really not home to me. And I want to force myself into like this is my patrida [πατρίδα, homeland] [...]. It is considered my country as well [...]. I don’t have any feelings concerning the Buffer Zone, because I wasn’t here before the invasion. Or in the north. I have been in the north of Nicosia for like four times. No more than that. So, I am not really attached.

The Ledra street crossing

Before the checkpoint was opened, a former ‘military observation point’ acted as a raised platform allowing people to have a view across the Buffer Zone. According to Lefkos Kyriacou (2011), this platform was ‘a celebration of division’, as many tourists walked the steps (Kyriacou 2011: 12). This changed when the crossing opened in 2008. Since then, Ledra street bridges the north and south of the old city.

It is a popular crossing for those who cross by foot or bike. This fits the movement of the respondents across the divide, as most often they stay within the old city once they crossed. However, they do cross with different purposes. N., for example, worked at a bookshop in the north of Nicosia as part of a European Union program to find employment on the other side, but also crossed to party at the 1984 bar. M. crosses to have drinks at Hoi Polloi, or get halloumi pies that remind her of the ones her grandmother used to make. A. crossed twice in her life: with a teacher from a Turkish class at the University of Cyprus and to visit the Cathedral of Saint Sophia, nowadays known as Selimiye Mosque.

A: I went also to the church of ehm… sss… I guess Sophia […]. And, basically, I went for a long walk there. But I didn’t stay you know, to drink, to have a coffee. I just went and then I came back. Like walking in Ledras, haha.
A. describes how the walk she had in the north was a continuation of Ledras. Some immediately see the difference between the north and south side of the divide after crossing (H., B.). On the other hand, the similarity and continuation within the old city that A. describes, is also what L. notices when crossing.

L: If you didn’t have to give, show your ID, you wouldn’t notice anything. Basically, the roads are the same way, the structure is similar. the buildings are quite the same […]. Lokmaci and Ledras are the same thing, just different names.

This means a lot to him. Having the opportunity to walk in that area and to communicate with (Turkish and Greek) Cypriots in a similar environment proves to him that they are very similar. The area shows him that Cypriots can live peacefully and that those who come there are more openminded in the Cyprus issue than people that don’t interact a lot in these areas. Sticking to Ledra street and its continuation within the north, is not just done for the sake of its similarity to the south, but also in order to stay close to the south and thus feeling more safe.

Yet, dissimilarities can be seen or projected, especially as the north and its people are portrayed in a certain way in the south. This can result in a negative experience, as was the case for H:

H: I went and didn’t like it, because I think I was wearing [something] too short and everybody was looking at me, and I was kind of feeling nervous and - I said it to my boyfriend. He said, I was right because we were trying to look around if it was safe, so I didn’t go again.

The Ledra Palace crossing

A street with history

Every street has a history. Markou Drakou street where the two checkpoints of the Ledra Palace crossing are located, has one that is politically and socially of great importance for the history of Cyprus as a whole. The crossing is named after a former hotel, the Ledra Palace. It was a high-end hotel that initially was a location for guests from the national and international high society. With the violence of 1963 and the barbed ‘ghettoing’ of Turkish Cypriots until 1974, the street transformed from a multicultural to a monocultural (Greek Cypriots and tourists) and militarized space (Hatay 2017: 4-5, Demetriou 2012: 56).

Following the events of 1974, the street became characterized by broken-down buildings and the presence of the peace-keeping forces. Thus, it functioned as a symbol of the conflict and its consequences (H4C 2011: 21). The street didn’t become deserted, however. After 1974, the Ledra Palace hotel was a place for negotiations. The rich history, the militarization, the political processes and
current peace initiatives with the Home for Cooperation are the spatial narrative of what today is known for and used as a crossing. First, with the Ledra Palace actively functioning during a process of militarization, opulence and militarism coexisted (Demetriou 2012: 58). Today however, the building is falling apart. With its place in the Buffer Zone, it is unclear who is responsible for fixing the building.

Second, the Ledra Palace as a site for political meetings is made into a symbol of conflict, but as such also of failure to find a solution (Demetriou 2015: 190). The permanence of UNFICYP troops adds to this symbolization of conflict. It has become a synonym of the Green Line and division and, especially for younger generations, it is seen as a meeting point for politicians and activists instead of being known as a hotel (Demetriou 2015: 196). However, both its history and present state are contested, as there are different narratives, about peaceful coexistence as well as aggression and other discriminating measures (Demetriou 2015: 193). Those different narratives can be seen in the environment near the checkpoints.

According to the young respondents, the broken-down houses in this street or the peace talks that took place there, is not what makes the street special. To them, it is the history of the street they have direct memories of. For L., it is special as it was ‘the first border that opened in Cyprus’. He remembers how he passed through the street on the first day:

L: I was like nine, ten years old, it was like very, like, I felt, I thought… it was like, traveling to a different country. But then I realized it wasn’t. I was like what is there on the other side. And when I was, I was not surprised of what I saw […]. They pictured us Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots as two totally different things. I was expecting to see something totally different, but I wasn’t surprised. I didn’t see [that].

This isn’t something he still thinks about when crossing, as he crossed ‘hundreds and hundreds of times.’ However, Markou Drakou street represents more to him than ‘just’ a street or ‘just’ a crossing.

**The Home for Cooperation**

Across the Ledra Palace, one of the broken-down buildings got fixed in 2011 and was turned into what today is called the Home for Cooperation. The vision is to make the Buffer Zone ‘into a zone of cooperation’ (H4C 2011: 6). It acts as an ‘inter-communal space’ where organizations and individuals from both the north and south can meet and work together (H4C 2011: 25). It also has a symbolic character to it, as it has the goal to ‘function as the symbolic “third space” offering new readings and alternative voices’ (Makriyanni (AHDR Board President 2005-2011) in H4C 2011: 25).

At first, L. had hope for a solution of the conflict. Now, after spending time at the Home for Cooperation, he wants Cyprus to be like the Home for Cooperation: ‘In the H4C there are people with some values, some common values, in which they accept us for diversity. They act like it. […] I want
society to be like this small society.’ According to L., many Cypriots want a solution for a ‘wrong’ economical reason. Yet, he is optimistic about the new generation. It comes with new hope, as they have ‘another experience of the conflict’. This positive attitude towards the future isn’t widely shared. E. isn’t very optimistic in that respect. He stresses that peace talks have failed again and again, and movements like Occupy Buffer Zone are never to return.\textsuperscript{12}

It is a place where people also go if they don’t want to cross at all or prefer not to cross for whatever reason. This is the case for I., who went to the Home for Cooperation several times and therefore did pass one of the border controls. However, he never went to what he calls the ‘occupied side.’ G. and H., who were there during this conversation with I. as well, said that they didn’t know about the existence of the Home for Cooperation until then.

I met L. for the first time when we both volunteered for an event called Thursday Live, a series of concerts during the summer with music from both the north and the south of the divide, taking place at the Home for Cooperation. Especially seeing other youth being less prejudiced and more altruistic during this night, gave him hope for the future.

L: When we left our first Thursday live, it was like… I got back to a whole different other world […] When I left that night, I was really happy. You know why? Because, for the first time in a long time, I had hope for the Cyprus issue. I had hope for Cyprus. Because, I have seen Cypriots, people from other cultures… love each other. Being so warm to each other. Behaving in the same way, having the same traditions.

He sees the area of the Home for Cooperation, where he worked as an intern at the time, as one that affected his everyday life outside of it. It influenced his views, emotions, and the people he wants to be with in his life. However, the road itself gives him conflicted feelings. The history of the road interests him, sometimes it gives him hope, other times less so. By familiarizing with the area whilst interning at the Home for Cooperation, however, he painted the area differently in his mind to one that more often is about hope.

Reflection
This chapter has shown that it is not only a relevant question to ask if someone decides to cross or not, but that this question is also inherently connected to how and why someone decides to cross. The above-mentioned elements play a role in these questions, such as the moment (it being day or night), the

\textsuperscript{12} For more information on Occupy Buffer Zone, see chapter 8.
company (someone being alone or with others), the social interaction (the existence of a network, a recognition of the people in the streets or being familiar with the rituals), and knowledge about initiatives like the Home for Cooperation. Furthermore, the walls of the old city bring some familiarity and security, as the chances of getting lost are less and there is a feeling of continuity in the environment of the old city from the south to the north. Specifically named in this respect is Ledras. But, here it also comes into play what kind of imaginaries of the space there are for an individual, as some see the similarities, whereas others explicitly see the differences.

The crossings of Ledras and Ledra Palace are different in their location, but both have a distinct role in the history of Nicosia. Only limited historical references were mentioned, however. The focus seemed more on the social aspects. For L., the historic background of the crossing space had been important. However, his experience at the Home for Cooperation changed his views as well. To place the crossing experiences in a context of a broader space, in the next chapter I will focus more on the broader area surrounding the crossings and other places around the borderland in Nicosia.
Chapter 6 – Feeling and making the past

Someone can connect places or other spatial aspects to the past and present, influencing their behavior in space or relation towards particular places. Cities are continuously under (re)construction. Its places have present activity, but history. They attract existing users and new dwellers. The people, the historical and present definitions of a place, and the constant change of them, are all intertwined. How this is understood is different for every individual. In this chapter, I will describe the different accounts of the respondents about how they relate to the interrelationships of those spatial characteristics.

Making the borderland

A significant but not clearly defined space in Nicosia is its borderland. For everyone, the feeling of being in a borderland starts at a different point, if it starts at all. It depends on familiarity, narratives, having done military service, and other reasons. G. says to ignore the fact that the Buffer Zone is there: ‘For me it is just like that doesn’t exist.’ She knows well how much the war affected her grandparents, and about their hatred against the Turks. However, as she doesn’t believe that there will be a solution that includes them getting ‘that part back,’ she doesn’t want to be stuck with that idea. For B., however, the Green Line did actually become a symbol of ‘the occupation.’ It doesn’t make her sad, like the eroded buildings do. It plays such a big role in her daily life, that whilst being upset by it, she also got used to it as she has always known it to be like this: ‘Because, I am… Okay, I am 18. I haven’t known Cyprus prior to any of this. […] And when the border crossings opened in 2003, I was three, so I have always been able to go, been able to cross.’ It is a generational difference that appears to have different outcomes.

Another of those is about the feeling that H. has when she sits at Giagia Victoria (Γιαγιά Βικτωρία), which is directly situated next to the Ledra street checkpoint:

H: You see there [a white fence] and some buckets of sand. So, you understand that it is something that comes from war. […] Sometimes it makes me feel sad. […] I am aware of that feeling that some people, like my grandmother, my mother felt. Sometimes I do, like, I [feel] greedy. Because, I am happy and drinking, and here there was war and people died and my mother left from her home and stuff like that.

Defining the Buffer Zone

It is not only the borderland, but also the Buffer Zone itself with different definitions and ideas of what it actually means. This already becomes clear in language, as the respondents speak about it in different terms. A. does not want to call it a border, as that would mean it is something fixed, set by certain rules and regulations. Therefore, she uses the word barriers, as it is a more flexible term; it can be moved ‘five meters away,’ for example. When A. is close to those barriers, she feels that they represent ‘the political
issues that people [in power] abroad should see,’ that ‘no [Cypriot] politician is taking the next step to do anything about it,’ but foremost that it is the people from both sides who suffer.

N. and C. don’t describe their view on the Buffer Zone in such a political way, but from a perspective of esthetics. N. prefers the Buffer Zone as it is in Kaimakli, which he describes as a space that looks like a war video game, lacking the national colors, flags and slogans from the war that are visible in the old city. C. finds the borderland a sophisticated space, about which there is ‘something special’, with the Green Line being next to it. It makes him curious about what is there to see, and therefore he hopes one day to enter the Buffer Zone. ‘It is mysterious […] of what is there. Like the old buildings being abandoned.’ The ones in the Buffer Zone are more special to see or enter, he says, than the abandoned buildings that are not in the Buffer Zone, ‘[be]cause you know that no one went in for 45 years.’ He sees that having turned eighteen now, he feels like trying to get in there one day: “Oops, I didn’t know I am in the Buffer Zone!”, ha ha ha. 

Besides the esthetics, N. describes the Buffer Zone as well as a line that most of his life has been there, with his schools and sports clubs being alongside of it. He used to play in the trenches of the Buffer Zone. However, when he was a child, it was always very clear that he wouldn’t go any further than those trenches, that denoted the line. It didn’t occur to him as an option. It was not until he was seventeen, that he tried:

N: So it is the trench which is like the home and then you have like the little mountain, we will climb up the mountain and stop there [Figure 6]. And I don’t even remember anyone telling me – don’t go there. It was like very much internalized. We were I think 17 years old when we dared to take one step in the buffer zone. Like we walked maybe three meters in the Buffer Zone and we just sat in the bushes, hah. Like down – go down from the trench and like – “Ah, we are in now.”

J. speaks very differently about her crossing this Buffer Zone for the first time. Referring to the same place in Kaimakli:

J: You go up a hill and then you go to the other side. That’s it. If they arrest you there, it is not good. If they don’t, you just go to the other side without much eh… effort. […] We did that at some point. […] I was with some friends that new the place. And they were like “Yo, if we go up this hill, we go to the other side.” And I was like, “Fuck yes, let’s go.”

Although the trenches are also part of the Buffer Zone, it is another kind of Buffer Zone than the field behind them. It is both a flexible and a fixed way of looking at this space at the same time, perhaps making the Buffer Zone of a hybrid character. This also comes forward in how N. looks at it from a more political perspective. He has never thought about the negotiation of the space itself, like changing
the Buffer Zone or defining it like the unfixed barrier as A. does. The only change he could think of, is the complete removal of it, which to him is not the physical aspect per se, but it means ‘a series of political developments that enabled the disappearance of the Buffer Zone, of the border.’

A certain kind of mysteriousness, magic or sense of freedom of the Buffer Zone and borderland is described by N., M. and C. When I told B. about this description, she says she somehow understands this surrealism, not being brought up in times of (violent) conflict or massive military presence, but to her it does not feel like a free space. Instead, to her this surrealism is unpleasant. M. sees both this positive sense of freedom, the power of nature and it being a green space. She describes that at Xaratsi, where she likes to sit, the barrels demarcating the Buffer Zone are now used as a garden, as they put dirt in them and planted shrubs. She does see the Buffer Zone as the entity that separates Nicosia. Those different meanings are another completion of a certain hybridity, as she describes it the following way: ‘[It is] a separation line. But, at the same time, it connects us deeply […] I feel both.’
Many buildings in Nicosia are broken down, have fallen into despair and are not maintained well. This is especially the case with the ones close to the Buffer Zone. Silverman calls such abandoned structures ‘zombie properties’, ‘lifeless shells’ (Silverman et al. 2013: 141). The broken-down houses may partially form the identity of Nicosia, whilst being in the way of it as well. For example, B. finds that the broken-down houses are part of the culture and the identity of the city: ‘[I]t does symbolize very important – I guess – events, which contributes heavily [to] the Cypriot identity. It is vision, it does symbolize that. But not all symbols are nice to look at, I guess.’ Also, L. has conflicting feelings when he passed broken-down houses. He has gotten used to seeing them on a daily basis, but still has moments that seeing them makes him feel sad, especially with the buildings having bullet holes in them: ‘Sometimes I feel angry about people that did these things, from both sides. And it takes me back to what I know that happened. I am more conscious, aware, of the Cyprus issue inside the old city. Just because of that. Because I am seeing abandoned buildings, buildings that are ruined.’

For B., the broken-down houses, especially the ones on the Green Line, symbolize that Cypriots don’t appreciate the cultural heritage there, nor the history of them, as those buildings once ‘represented someone’s life, someone’s business, and it represented the part of Cypriot society, Cypriot culture in itself.’ To see this, makes B. upset: ‘You feel like your own culture is being eroded slowly,’ she says, ‘I think a lot of the times, like I said, people don’t realize these places are part of who we are and what we are. But, seeing them there, it is quite sad.’

H. sees similar dynamics in Cypriot culture. According to her, the community doesn’t have the ability nor the interest to rebuild or fix their buildings, and by doing so, their history. She wants it to be more appreciated by preserving them, keeping them ‘beautiful’, instead of letting them rot. This is not only for esthetic purposes, as H. actively avoids those places that are broken down, both for safety reasons, and for the complicated history behind them. For G., it is not just the preservation of the buildings that is needed, but in order to counter the abandonment there is also a need for more people to live in the streets of the old city. He feels that those who currently live there are either elderly or foreigners. As since 2012 only the facades of some buildings have been fixed, it is not this social aspect that received the attention G. wants it to have [Figure 7]. The outsides of buildings have been renovated, which made the prices in the old city increase (D.). The insides stayed the same, but it changed the street views. M. believes this is not a logical move from the government: ‘[T]hey are fixing the facades for a better image […]. Maybe there is just a wall, a facade, but behind that there are just ruins, there is nothing. And it is really freaking me out. You have the money to do all those modern things, and building that hideous municipality center.’
[Figure 7: Restored facades on Lidinis street. As can be seen on the picture above, the street includes houses of which only the facade has been restored, but not the rest of the house.]
For L., there is nothing that reminds him of Cyprus outside of the walls of the old city, while inside it is a place different from other countries: ‘When you see the old buildings, when you see multiculturalism, when you see people able to express themselves as they do what they want, okay... without harming something, someone else. I think that picture is great and sustaining the buildings, is partially sustaining that picture as well.’ At the same time, this picture is changing with the welcoming of global brands into the old city. To have a McDonalds and a Starbucks annoys B., as she feels like there should be more of an effort to promote Cypriot culture in such places: ‘You can see the influence of globalization and the disconnect. But then again, in the city center a lot of shops [...] have been there for years, they are family-owned. So, you do see a continuation, it is both the old and the new.’ It is the contradiction that comes forward here with development initiatives on the one hand, and the balancing of Cypriot culture on the other. The abandoned or broken-down buildings are not only a symbol, but are also in use. (Social) businesses or coffeeshops give character to the city, according to C., and the abandoned buildings are used for scavenging and hanging out at night (M.).

Symbolization
Symbols and rituals can be used to signify a (collective) identity (Jenkins 2014: 7). In various parts of Nicosia, there is a symbolization of power through flags, mostly along the borders [Figure 8]. There are many slogans put in graffiti as well. First, I will address the role of flags in the landscape of Nicosia. A. doesn’t like to see either Greek or Turkish flags, or other signs that symbolize specific nationalities. Coming from the south of the divide, she notices them less there. In the north, however, the red flags would make her feel sick, seeing them primarily as a promotion of their nationality. The flag on Pentadaktylos mountains she finds the worst. It is visible from afar; being able to see it, makes her feel that she is close, however. ‘They are reminding us of their presence,’ she says, and this promotion of their nationality gives her negative feelings.

According to C., connecting certain ideas or feelings with the flags is something (Greek) Cypriot children learn at school: ‘[T]hey design Turkish as bad people in the child's eyes and Greek as the good side of people. [...] You match that flag with fear and feeling that this is bad.’ However, growing older and thus ‘developing reasoning’, he began to make his own connections. Symbols like flags don’t bother him anymore. The only one he is bothered about is, once more, the one on Pentadaktylos mountain. However, ‘that has nothing, really nothing to do with Turkey,’ he says. ‘It is just making me sad having that beautiful view of the mountain being distorted by some lines.’
Figure 8: Turkish, Turkish Cypriot, Greek, and Cypriot flags in the old city.
For all, the flags seem to bring different (or no) emotions in different situations. For N., flags symbolize the violence that produced the border, and thus there is none that he identifies with. Places however can be marked by flags, as a visualization of their political perspective. N. explains how in and outside of Nicosia, there are left-wing and right-wing coffeeshops: ‘If there is a Greek flag – it is the right wing. You see a Cyprus flag, it is the left wing – or the center, which is more like this complex thingy. But you can always distinguish from some other symbols apart from the flag. Like the name… like many of these nationalist places, they have apart from the Greek flags, they have the name of hero.’ K. is concerned about the flag on Pentadaktylos, while J. doesn’t care about that one. Both don’t feel good about the Greek flags around, however:

K: I am like – why is there a flag of Greece, that is another concern of mine.
J: Why do they blame like the current situation of the island for not being united with Greece – we wouldn’t be united with Greece, they didn’t want.
K: It gives me more frustration to see Greek flags rather than Turkish flags. […] Why do people still want to merge with Greece? […] I don’t see the reason behind it – we have the cultural connection, we have descendents from Greece, but if they don’t want us, why would we want them?

Whereas K. and J. connect the Greek flags to the history of the conflict and the current perspectives of the people in that respect, there are also other symbols that come with feelings or ideas directly connected to the conflict. This is the case in two ways: calls for peace, as well as slogans that are favoring division. Many of the slogans can be found close to the Buffer Zone. Seeing peaceful graffiti there gives, in the words of A., a ‘nice vibe to the city.’ On the other hand, M. is worried about what she calls ‘Nazi sings’ from right-wing (student) groups, that she increasingly sees. She actively tries to change this image in the streets: ‘One of our aims is to scratch the stickers off, even from signs in the streets, or if we are in a hurry, because we are in a visible place, we just cover for each other, sneaking stickers on top of other stickers.’

In particular close to the checkpoints are images that refer to the conflict. When I passed the Ledra Palace checkpoint, C. pointed at the Kyrenia Municipality building. ‘That screen is only there for a short time now’, he said about a digital screen that shows a bloody map and the text ‘never forget’ both in English and Greek. He called it ironic: ‘Yes, well, we say it all the time, but we don’t know what it actually means. We only learn a part of the history, and now we have to forget what we have done wrong? Or not?’ B. understands the various pictures close to the Ledra Palace checkpoint, as there are more than just the bloody map, also portraits of people and pictures of buildings, as an effort to actively keep up the divide, or ‘to keep alive the memory of the atrocities that happened.’ Here again, she refers to the saying of ‘I don’t forget’ (Δεν ξεχνώ). She says to understand to a certain extent that there are
people who are still upset, but at the same time she wants to move on: ‘I understand – horrible things happened. But we can’t move forward if we constantly are stuck in the past.’

Among the various respondents, there are two images that are connected to positive feelings. First, there is a poster of the Greek singer Sakis Rouvas and Turkish singer Burak Kut pasted on the walls all around Nicosia [Figure 9]. The poster originates in 1997, when they sang at the first peace concert organized by the United Nations in the Buffer Zone (Cyprus News Agency 1997). After the negotiations at Crans Montana, the posters were pasted on the walls again, written underneath ‘Bring Sakis and Burak back.’ For D., and according to her also for others who wanted a solution but were disappointed, ‘Cypriots should more than ever support brotherhood, a common understanding in love,’ like Burak and Sakis did during the concert for peace. This ‘cannot be shared in the dominant public sphere […]’, [t]hey wanted to just express it and they expressed it on the city walls’ (D.). For C., those posters show how everything and everyone reacts to each other.

A second image is a collage near Kala Kathumena made by a Spanish artist of a man playing backgammon [duckmandesign]. The collage includes posters that were on the walls of the old city, including the one of Sakis and Burak. ‘The idea was that the artist wanted to do another old guy playing backgammon in the north, across the border. But, unfortunately he didn’t find a space in the north to do it,’ explain both D. and M.

[Figure 9: Posters of Burak Kut and Sakis Rouvas in the old city.]
Where and what to feel

For every individual, placemaking is a different process. Familiarity of a place is comforting, for B., whereas M. believes that people make places, as they create the mood that is felt in a particular area. It is why she avoids big chains like Starbucks, and instead goes to Kala Kathumena: ‘[I]t is like a big family. Some nights we are putting four tables in a row because people keep on coming.’ Both this familiarity and the people have to do with aspects of everyday life. This daily characteristic enables to connect to a certain place at different times, thus feeling different emotions. This enables C., for example, to connect to the old city in the south: ‘When you engage and observe the city, you become a part of it. And you feel complete with small things happening around.’ He lacks such a connection in the north of the divide: ‘I was there as a tourist,’ he said.

The importance of people being around in the process of placemaking, is notable. Cyprus in the end is a small island, and thus the community is too. ‘Everyone knows everyone, everyone talks to everyone about everything, there is always sort of a community,’ which is, according to B., ‘a Cypriot thing’. Although Nicosia is not a small city, it does feel like everyone knows everyone or is even related to everyone. In many of the places respondents go to, they know the owners, the people who work there or the regular visitors. H. goes to Xalara and to Shisha town because a friend of him works there; M. goes to Apomero as it is owned by the grandmother of her friends and her boyfriend used to work there, and J. hangs around outside the old city because she has a friend living in Strovolos. Such familiarity can be sought or not sought specifically in a place, for it to feel comfortable. With Kala Kathumena as a common space, where M. always finds someone she knows, in Xaratsi she found a place where she could sometimes be alone, although at the same time investing in getting to know the owner, and other people who visited the café regularly.

A continued culture of fear carefulness

If you say goodbye to each other, one often says ‘be careful’ (προσεχε). Although this isn’t uncommon in other countries as well, it is said that there is a wider conception of unsafety. It is the idea of things not being safe, like walking or cycling. This relates to a culture of fear somehow, perhaps closely connected to there being a family culture in which long-lasting care is offered to those who are young. The family and their remaining fears have a huge influence on how to look at things as a young individual, where to go to and foremost, where not to go to. Amongst youth, some have those feelings of fear when moving around Nicosia, while others don’t.

According to B., there is no feeling of unsafety, as there is a sense of community. A. also feels pretty safe in Nicosia, but she does feel that she has to be careful, especially as a woman. J. and H. however do say that feelings of fear originated from their parents or other family members. For J., this refers to a lack of trust towards people outside of her family; for H. it takes on the form of framing
specific places as the dangerous ones. Family narratives play different roles in the continuation and development of ideas amongst the young generation. For example, J. says that through the stories she got from her mother, an IDP, her mother’s fear was transposed to her. I. never heard any stories from his father, who is a refugee as well; K. did hear stories, but none of them are about fear or blame to those who now live in the former house of her grandmother. For M., the emotions of her parents around the violent history, especially when crossing or visiting the old villages, are of concern to her. However, at the same time, she feels connected to that old village and the former house of her mother, and that makes her to love the buildings in the old city.

To have heard stories about Turkish Cypriot neighborhoods where Greek Cypriots supposedly were not allowed to come in the past, scare G. about specific areas in Nicosia. This is why she does not go into streets other than the main ones, as it feels safer for her. She doesn’t want to come too close to the Buffer Zone, either. She said: ‘We don’t want to go by that line,’ referring to more people of her generation, instead of just to herself as an individual. For G. the Buffer Zone is a place where she doesn’t feel as safe as in other places. M. feels the opposite way about the old city, including the parts close to the Buffer Zone. ‘I know that my safe space is starting beyond the wall,’ she told me. A specific safe place is Xaratsi: ‘I needed to chill somewhere were people couldn’t reach me. […] Where I wanted to go and chill, smoke, drink… by myself. Kala Kathumena also [is] a safe place, but not always. They have problems with fascists here, sometimes. I don’t want to be here if something happens.’ M. is also concerned with coming across people from the far right when doing so-called bombing nights (pasting stickers and posters, or drawing graffiti). Signs or symbols don’t scare her, but the people do. ‘The signs make me even more aware that they are getting more and more involved, but, coming across such groups, it is freaking me out. Because, even if I would hide that I am different, I can’t. They are targeting non-normal people. And I am a girl, so it increases the risk for me to walk alone and come across such a group.’

B. and J. also refer to the role of gender. First, B. explains that when she moves in the streets by foot, every time she gets confronted with verbal abuse: ‘I think it is also the patriarchal aspect of society that you see in the way they raise young men. It is like the sun shines out of your ass, practically.’ As a young girl, she had less freedom, but as she is older now, she does take the freedom she wants. Second, J. says that there are many things that woman are told they should do nor should they go to certain places when they grow up, and therefore fear got stuck in the heads of some. For example, her classmates didn’t dare to come with her to Faneromeni. They would tell her, ‘they do drugs, I can’t go in there.’ M. however blames this to Faneromeni being a bit of a sketchy place, with the anarchists being there at the time.
Heritage of a narrative

There are both internal and external influences on how the young generation sees Nicosia, the conflict, and its people. One of the major influences is education. None of the respondents spoke positively about this; however, it should be noted here that none of them agreed with what is taught and that of course there are many young people who do so. For example, J. & K. spoke with each other about how at school ‘they only show one side of the story’:

J: They make Cyprus look like the hero and the others look like the enemy. Whereas in reality, like – we fought them, they fought us.
K: […] Before like 1974…
J: … they were friends. […] The far-right groups – they started fighting each other. Enemizing [sic.] each other. And that is what they started teaching everyone.

D. also refers to this ‘enemizing’ as a framing process. Education makes you expect a monster, creating an ugly picture of the other side of the divide, she says. The story of the war and the destruction, is according to F., the reason for Cypriots to fear ‘the other.’

Furthermore, what happens in the north, is not much heard of in the south, and there is a lot of prejudice towards events or Turkish Cypriots (B.). Only at the international schools there is some mingling of Cypriots, which is how some young (Greek) Cypriots have come to know quite a few (Turkish) Cypriots from an early age on. This was the case for B. Still at school she saw the rest of her generation being a mix of ‘hard core traditional,’ and ‘incredibly liberal’ people: ‘[Y]ou can really tell the people that have grown up in conservative households, and conservative households with more space to breath [and] form [their] own opinion.’

It is not just the stance in the conflict or the ideas or feelings about people from the north of the divide that continues in more or less the same way from generation to generation. The way people look at space, also has a certain inheritance to it. A. always refers to the Buffer Zone using the Green Line as its name, as her father did so too. C. notices that friends and family don’t care about nature, the landscape, nor the arts. That makes him go with them to the mall, a bar or a club, instead of going to Agora: a space of cultural encounter in the old city.\(^\text{13}\) He refers to this lack of care or appreciation as a bubble. He doesn’t consider himself to be part of the bubble, because he ‘had the right people at the right time’ that ‘woke up’ something inside of him, and made him think more critically and appreciate his environment.

\(^{13}\) More can be read about Agora in chapter 8.
People and places can counter ideas, fears or other feelings. For L., it was the old city that changed him, it being a place where ‘all the cultures that exist and have existed in Nicosia all the time’ come together. In addition to studying and meeting with Turkish Cypriots, it is the old city that made him develop positive feelings towards Turkish Cypriots, whom he previously thought of as monsters. In his opinion, it is the army service following the education, that makes (Greek) Cypriots more nationalist. However, after leaving the army and becoming independent students, they manage to become critical and inform themselves. Depending on their social interactions and the groups they are involved in, L. saw many of his friends change their minds, or their entire perceptions, from a racist to what he calls an altruistic point of view.

While being critical at their education, their lack of information became clear when I walked with G., H. and I. through the old city. Just after the MAS Green Supermarket, we entered a street about which H. said to never walk there, as she believes that it is a Turkish zone. We walked those streets however, and passed the Syrian-Lebanese restaurant Zaatar. Here, she called the street Turkish again, pointing at the name of the restaurant. As it was written in Arabic, I told her the name wasn’t Turkish. ‘Oh really?’, was the only response, after which she continued by saying that being with a group makes it less dangerous then being on your own. It was clear that she and the others didn’t feel comfortable walking here, nor were they used to it, and the only reason they came there that day was because I decided the route we took. Before we walked there, H. had told me during the interview that there are places that are called Turkish neighborhoods. ‘Turkish people used to live here,’ she said, ‘because of the war they were forced to move to the north side.’ G. told her it were Turkish Cypriots that used to live there, not Turks. After this interruption, H. continued: ‘Yes – Turkish Cypriots. Something like that. So, they moved. And these places are not really abandoned, they just… some people come here that are poor. Sometimes they are just Turkish or they are from another country. We don’t really go there, because it is like a “bad” neighborhood.’ One of those is close to Archeopiskopi, where she doesn’t go on her own. When I asked her how she recognizes those ‘bad’ or ‘Turkish’ neighborhoods, she says she doesn’t know, but that she feels like it. She calls them that because her parents did do so as well: ‘It is called Τουρκική γειτονιά (Τουρκική γειτονιά), it is the exact translation for Turkish neighborhood.’ It is something that G. and I. don’t know about, as they respond to H.

**Reflection**

In and outside of the old city, many connections are made. The Buffer Zone has a significant role in how the space is looked at: either as the edge of the city, and perhaps not even part of it, or as an active element defining space. Someone can ignore the Buffer Zone, how close it is or what their family history is. The Buffer Zone can be a natural symbol of the division and of a part of the country not being accessible the way it is preferred. For one, it can bring emotions of sadness or greed, while for another
having always known it in the current state, it can have this symbolic meaning excluding the negative feelings.

The Buffer Zone is looked upon with a certain flexibility. The way in which it is described by the respondents, spans a great variety. The Buffer Zone clearly is something that only has one representation for each person. The Buffer Zone can start at the trenches, but the inaccessible one at the fields. The cafes on the edges can be seen as part of it, but not by all. The esthetics and feelings of separation and surrealism were mentioned.

It is not only in reference to the Buffer Zone that those diverse responses were given. It is the borderland as a whole, with a specific attention to the broken-down buildings. Their presence in the landscape of Nicosia brings along a consciousness of the historical conflict, but contemporary forms of the conflict and politics as well. The bad preservation is interpreted as cultural erosion. It appears as if a distinctive Cypriot character is felt necessary, in particular in light of the increasing number of global chains settling in space in addition to the symbols like flags or stickers, that for some bring the awareness of a historical and present state of the conflict.

In the preceding chapters it also became clear that social interactions are significant markers of places. Knowing the people in a particular place, makes the place. It is where familiarity and a feeling of comfort can be found. For some it is about safety as well. Feelings of fear and safety are projected on places, because of narratives told by relatives or at schools, or for gendered reasons. For some, the old city appears to act as a counter-narrative, with shifting ideas and feelings around particular places. Assumptions about what is visible in the old city can also be confirming, however. In the next chapter, I will discuss the intervening power of people, places, and the narratives about them.
Chapter 7 – Space interventions

There are not just Cypriots to be found in Nicosia. Internationals use the space as well, and thus leave their traces. In particular the old city hosts a variety of internationals (tourists, expats and migrants). This might mean that the surroundings of the checkpoints are experienced as an international third zone, manifesting itself between the living spaces of (Greek) Cypriots and of (Turkish) Cypriots and Turkish settlers, respectively.

A foreigner in town

Cyprus is a touristic destination for its beaches. This is less so for its capital. There are not many tourists in Nicosia, but those who are, visit the old city. Nicosia has quite a few tourist shops in both the north and south of the old city, and at the checkpoint tourists might make up the majority of the crossers at particular hours of the day. Tourists are seen as people who often are keen to learn more about Cyprus, including the Cyprus issue, instead of being an influence on the space and the continuation of similarities in space in Ledras specifically or in the old city as a whole (M., L.). A. does see an influence of touristic places for the view on the Buffer Zone. Close to the Buffer Zone are cafés that use the experience of being close to the Zone as a marketing tactic:

A: ‘It is like a tourist thing now. […] I mean, it doesn’t give anything to the community. But, at least it is something of a next step that they are going be not afraid anymore.’

Those cafes not solely focus on international tourists, but are also popular among Cypriots. The rest of the old city is not yet made attractive for tourists. H. says that something beautiful could be built on Eleftheria, while C. thinks that the arrows of the Venetian walls could become gardens that tourists would like to go and see. This could make the old city as a whole, including the borderland itself, more attractive for Cypriots from outside of Nicosia.

The old city is inhabited by quite some people from outside of Cyprus; in some areas they might even be the majority of the population, for instance the area around Oxi. When K. is close to Oxi, she expects remarks from people that are not from Cyprus. She doesn’t mind, since she is used to it. In general, however, people are uncomfortable with the arrival of new communities, according to B. For C., the immigrants in the old city do make some parts of it feel like another – non-European – country. He specifically refers to Oxi and Riginis: ‘You know Oxi? Where you go in [to the old city]. Not Ghetto Ghetto, it is more like there [are] foreigners from less economically developed countries living there. Not like Ghetto that much or a crime area. But you can definitely see a difference. Because they are
walking in the streets, […]. Because in their country they are not used to, like, structured road systems.’ The reactions of K., B. and C. show that there are some areas in the old city that come across as foreign to some because of the immigrants that have settled there. M. sees a connection between the possible usage of space of immigrants and of her people. She mentions that a cleansing operation is directed at immigrants, for example by having a security system at the new Eleftheria square, as well as at her and at other fellow young activists that have been trying to reclaim public space: ‘[T]hey are adopting policies of far right countries that are not allowing immigrants […] to visit such places.’ Another example she gives is Riginis street, where the rents have increased and the mafia comes over to make sure stores close. By chasing away the immigrants, M. feels chased away too. ‘They are trying to find ways to legally [tear] us apart.’

Not just Oxi or Riginis, but the old city in general is the most multicultural area of Nicosia, says L. This is not because of immigrants or tourists, but the (Turkish) Cypriots crossing at Ledras make it like that. According to L., this is why there is more racism within the old city. ‘I can see expressions on peoples’ faces. For example, when a Turkish Cypriot passes by next to them [racists, in his words], they hear the Turkish language, they do a disgusted face. That annoys me okay. It is not something that… it is something you could see everywhere, but you would see it more inside the old city, because like I said, it is a more multicultural space.’ To experience this in the old city, gives him negative feelings. However, multicultural places like the Home for Cooperation and Faneromeni, give L. positive emotions: ‘I see people from different cultures interacting with each other, with Turkish Cypriots and with people that are not Cypriot. And people that are more hippies, trendies, and hipsters. I am seeing everything. I like diversity.’

Cultural erosion
‘You want to, kind of, Cyprus give back to Cypriots,’ is what B. told me. The historical and contemporary influences from Turkey, Great Britain, Greece and recently Russia as well, make that Cyprus finds itself in a complicated geopolitical situation. B. feels like all of these foreign powers are always trying to grab a part of Cyprus, already a tiny island. Foreign influences as such don’t upset her, but it does upset her that the foreign influences are being used to override Cypriot cultures and identity. It is those other countries that created the different identities of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, says K., when they had their say in politics.

K: They thought that labelling us, would make… us fight. That is exactly what they wanted.
J: And that is exactly what happened.
The frustrations about the foreign influences described above, mirror the feeling that people don’t invest in a Cypriot culture as such. B. understands the presence of nationalist symbols as an active effort to establish a Greek or Turkish identity, rather than a Cypriot identity: ‘When you kind of see the effect of foreign influence on your country and the way people behave between each other, it gets upsetting. […] Even though it was happening a hundred years ago, you feel the effect today definitely in society. We are such a divided society. And it is unfair.’

The University grounds
In addition to the old city, the University is a place that many of the respondents have spent a lot of time. The many days and evenings they have spent there, made them connect to the place. Because A. knows it that well, she feels comfortable: It ‘is a place where you can feel yourself’, she says. G., H., and I. agree that the University made them feel at home: ‘Outside the labs […] we were watching the street, watching the cars, watching the trees. […] I love Nicosia, but I don’t feel like it’s mine, like the University of Cyprus’ (H.).

The University of Cyprus is built in a relatively green area. It is close to Athalassa, a national park, as well as to the Green Line. According to K. it is even ‘built in the Green Line’, which makes her see it as ‘a mutual zone.’ It is why there is some military architecture around. For example, there is a gun bunker in case of war where K. used to sit with a friend. However, for her it felt ‘weird’ sitting in that place, knowing that in case of war soldiers are going to shoot at people. ‘It is a bit confusing, but we live with it,’ she says. The University is located on the edge of the Buffer Zone, which means it is located along a huge secluded area. The University does not only bring a connection to the buildings and the institution itself, but also towards the Buffer Zone as a green space. ‘I find it amazing how it is untouchable,’ describes M. ‘It grows and it decays and it grows again and it decays and this year because of the rain it was green. It was amazing. It is the healthiest non-toxic dead zone I have ever seen, haha. […] It is a separation line. But, at the same time, it connects us deeply.’

For L., the University is also a place of connection, but then for its people. As the students are multicultural and interact on a daily basis, he believes that prejudice against ‘other ethnicities and types of people’ are reduced. To see this interaction gives him hope: ‘I see them grow. Society is changing because youth are.’

Everyday military presence
The Buffer Zone borderland contains a military presence in both architecture and people. Especially the area around the checkpoints is a heavily militarized space. Reactions to both those people and buildings vary, depending on how familiar people are with such a presence or with the Buffer Zone itself. B., having grown up in the area, thinks that she has gotten desensitized of suddenly seeing military
barricades in the dead-end streets along the Buffer Zone. Another example relates to how, as a child, she was biking with a friend in a field near her house: ‘We got stopped by a Turkish soldier who tells us to go back, cause there are mines in the field […]. We were like, oh okay, we are on Turkish territory, go back you know, basically. Yeah. Registered.’ However, when B. sees the military holding guns, or walking around with the flag, it upsets her: ‘it feels threatening, it feels hostile,’ she says. It is different than having to show your ID card at a border crossing, because the guns and barbed wire everywhere makes her feel the hostility around her. When it comes to former military architecture like bunkers, she does not pay that much attention to them when moving around Nicosia: ‘It is a constant reminder of the history and of the divide. It is quite a strange situation, because you are aware it is there, but it doesn’t play as big as a role as you think it would. So, you know, it is present, but not overwhelmingly present.’

N. also grew up with the Buffer Zone as part of daily life. Living in a street that ended at the Buffer Zone in Kaimakli during his childhood, there would always be a soldier on guard. That is why he doesn’t care about seeing military in the streets: they aren’t there for ‘you,’ and they are young. He remembers that it was very common to give the military guard in his street some food. He is also familiar to the Buffer Zone itself. When he was a child, the trenches of the Buffer Zone were his playing ground, including the ‘little machine gun posts’ [Figure 10]. We walked past a modern version of such a fighting position; nowadays children are hanging out there as well. Right in front of it, there are some electricity boxes. As they are directed towards the main road, ending at the Buffer Zone, they block its position. According to N., they are not only there in case of another invasion, but also to justify the role of the army.

J. still likes to hang out at the machine gun posts in Kaimakli, and it doesn’t affect her either to see watchtowers in use. She knows that those who are stationed there, didn’t get the choice with the military service being mandatory in Cyprus. J. and K. also used to hang out at the watchtowers, which J. calls σκοπκης (skopkis). It is a place, she says, where most of the time there are no other people around, which somehow makes it a free place, since it enables them to do whatever they want, like smoking weed. On the edge of Athalassas park, where G., H. and I like to go during their leisure time, there is another one of those watchtowers in use. The area is used for army training, says I. Not wanting to hang out in a military place as such, as J. and N. actively did, places that are more regularly used for leisure activity are also places where one gets confronted with the military architecture.
Reflection

In this chapter, it showed that tourists are of little influence on the space in Nicosia, except for perhaps a single shop or café. However, respondents did see the benefit of making places more attractive to tourists. The places that are considered to be more international, are either those where many immigrants have settled, or where global influence through politics or economics is visible. This is primarily signified by the little investment in Cypriot culture. Nicosia and specifically the old city are not defined by internationals per se, nor is it understood as an international third space. However, the lack of space for a Cypriot culture to cover the city, is more of a defining power. For some, the places where there is room for diversity, like the bicultural projects of the Home for Cooperation, at Faneromeni square or at the University, there is more of this needed space. The military architecture mentioned at the end of the chapter, shows how incorporated and natural specific elements have become to the borderland environment, and thus to the old city and the University grounds. In the next chapter, I will address the spatial powers that are seen as less natural.
Chapter 8 – People, power, places

A city is arguably in a continuous state of change. For change to occur, various dynamics determine who is in control of the city. Power over space is negotiated by the municipality, the church and the people, while financial and global dynamics influence their relationship. This chapter addresses the role of youth in this negotiation of power over space.

The eighteen-year-old C. only began to feel a connection to Nicosia during the last two years: ‘When I was younger, I wasn’t allowed to come to Ledras with my friends. We always went to the mall, which is a controlled environment.’ In this research, those who just turned eighteen and those who are reaching the age of thirty and everybody in between speak about what Nicosia means to them. They are all young, but they are from different generations nevertheless. Therefore, one might have seen greater Nicosia and the old city specifically in more different stages than the other. There are active processes and initiatives that try to shape the city. Some are in reaction towards events, like economic changes that have resulted in urban change as well. It is in those reactions that the role of space and place, where people of different generations and ethnicities move, and agency in making the city come forward. Thus, in this chapter I describe different institutions, groups and events that have played their part in spatial definition processes of the borderland.

A city in crisis
Cyprus’ economy was hit hard during the financial crisis and its consequences are still visible today. A. remembers how the city changed because of the crisis: ‘Four years ago, there was a lot of empty spaces in Nicosia because of the crisis. A lot of people were leaving their shops because they couldn’t afford it. And Makariou was empty. There was a time when Makariou had, let’s say, six shops working.’ Originally, the Central Business District and shopping center were located at and around Makariou street. It is a street that starts just outside of the old city, on the left of Eleftheria. At first sight, the abandonment of Makariou is not really noticeable. Continuing the street, however, the more it does show. The facades don’t show how empty the buildings are, as the shops that border the street are often in use (again). But, walking into one of the malls, everything is empty and falling apart [Figure 11]. At the same time, new buildings are being built in the area, for instance on Omirou. C. never goes there: ‘Makariou? [...] [A]ll of the shops like closed down during the economic crisis. So, there is nothing. Or like expensive shops.’ For him, the center is Ledras and Faneromeni, as this is a social place as well. A. sees that shops are being opened again at Makariou, and connects it to being the city ‘more alive than before.’
Figure 1: One of the empty malls on Makariou street.
Defining Nicosia

Whilst one defines the city center as the old city alone (Ledras and Onasagorou specifically), another still sees Stasikratous and Makariou as the center as well (to which I have referred to as the CBD in this thesis). What all respondents agree upon is that the atmosphere is different. First, the people are different: there are ‘many suited people, not many tourists’ in Stasikratous and Makariou (A.). There are coffee shops and more high-end stores. For A., she goes there for it being another place than the old city: ‘You don’t want to go to Ledras again, you don’t want to go to Faneromeni again, you want to go somewhere more... special.’ She does feel comfortable in Ledras however, as the people are ‘going to their work, they are going to their shopping, I think they don’t give a lot of attention to you because they have their own business to look at.’ Also, she finds it attractive that in Ledras the old character of the city is visible. Nicosia is ‘alive’ because of the youth that are there for its Universities. Especially around Faneromeni, where there are a lot of youngsters gathering around in the coffee shops.

The old city is changing, as well as the discourse about it. Yet it differs per person. For the one it is a city that ‘has been revived’, while for N. for example, this suggests that the old city ‘was dead before’. He says people say: ‘now it is “nice”. Now we can go and its nice. Before you couldn’t go.’ The architecture, infrastructure as well as social events make the old city attractive for the respondents, not per se the newly built parts. The old buildings and the small coffee shops form the ‘symbol of local culture and the way people like to live,’ says B. For M., it is the familiarization to the old city, especially towards architectural or infrastructural details that connects her to the old city. The old city is loved by C. as a place in general, and Ledras or Agora project specifically. He has a special empathy for it, partly because of the esthetic shapes he likes. To him Makariou is not part of the inner city; Ledras and Faneromeni are the center in a social sense, and there is nothing that attracts him to Makariou. The people he often sees in the old city, as well as the architectural details of the buildings, form his connection to the city, in particular to the south of the old city, where he regularly comes. As C. explains, the identity of Nicosia is formed around this division: ‘[It] does not follow a model, because it is divided.’ Without the division, for B. the identity would go from ‘Europe’s last divided capital’ to ‘Nicosia as capital.’ The old city is what foremost brings a connection.

The changes that have been going on in the old city worry some of the respondents. It is not just the decreasing amount of public space, but rather the new things being made in the old city are not in line with the architectural feeling. M. says this incoherence is ‘like a toxic thing for us’ and it is ‘breaking the notion of the actual town as we knew it.’ Instead, she envisions the old city as a common, bicommmunal space. This includes the buildings to be fixed, but keeping the character by not changing much in the architectural outlook, specifically by preserving the stones many of the old buildings are made of. For N. and his friends the ‘little regeneration in the old city’ is a reason to be less around and spend more time in Kaimakli. ‘It is still a very quiet neighborhood,’ he says, ‘and not at all gentrified,
generally working class.’ Aesthetically, central Kaimakli is very similar to the old city, and it is close by. For N. it feels like ‘the continuation of a small neighborhood’ as there are no large avenues to be entered when travelling between Kaimakli and the old city. Despite being that close, Kaimakli is an enclave. The Green Line prevents the neighborhood from developing the same way as the other neighborhoods did. N: ‘the Green Line saved this neighborhood for staying like a little village.’

On the one hand, it is said the old city is not changing for the better. However, this seems to be connected to the different generations within the group of the young as well. For some, they only found a connection to the old city during the past couple of years, while others find themselves more disconnected than before. It is not only the changes within the old city, for example the arrival of global chains, but it seems as if it also has to do with changes within the individual people. For example, passing Khartas at Asiniois street 5, the first bicommunal social center that opened in 2003 as soon as the borders opened, makes N. feel a bit nostalgic:

Like, ten years ago we had the feeling that we owned the city, let’s say. The old city. Because it was abandoned and this like after ten o’clock there was no one in the street. And we would do whatever [...]. Now I have this feeling less so, because it has been some time and I have been maybe accustomed to a new order of things.

These individual changes are also noticed by J., as he sees a connection between the identity of Nicosia and his own identity:

J: ‘It [Nicosia] is free. Not in all circumstances, but if you want it to be it is. Whereas some cities, it is not that much, […] because of the laws and government and shit. Cause here you can like go around stuff a lot. You can shape things how you want. […] it is for the whole Nicosia, but only for the people that can pursue it.’

J. believes that Nicosia as a whole changed him to a better person and made him more aware, not exclusively the old city. He feels belonging in greater Nicosia, as he knows many people in various neighborhoods. For him, the Venetian walls don’t feel like a transition:

J: ‘Since I was a child, I wasn’t crossing something, I was going around. So, it is like it’s not a border, it is something, like a building. It is nothing. […] When I was little, I didn’t even notice until somebody showed me – there is a circle here. Haha.’

To make assumptions about there being a relation between the material presence and visuality of the Venetian walls between the old city and greater Nicosia, and to a feeling of connection to both places,
is difficult. Yet there seems to be a contrast between those who see the walls as a transition and feel closely connected to the old city more specifically, and those who don’t. This seems to be the case for the various ages among the group of the young, and therefore not a single-generation issue. For M., passing the wall is like passing a border for both the mobility, as well as for the feeling: ‘In the inner walls, I find it easier to walk […]. In the old city, I can stroll, I can be chill, yeah. And the outside, I cannot have a somewhere to sit or chill.’ For L., passing the walls also comes with different feelings: ‘I feel like I am entering, because it is like the moment you pass the walls, you go inside the walls. So, it feels like I am in the city center […]. I can say that the more old things I see, the more I feel that I am in the city center.’ For him, the old city comes closest to what Nicosia was like before ‘the invasion and separation.’ At the same time, the moment he passes the walls, the old city reminds him of the Green Line. But, instead of having this feeling define the old city directly to him, this definition comes through the behavior and ideas of the people that are formed in an area this close to the Buffer Zone. For him, the old city ended being a place of hope that one day a solution might come: ‘I think that people that are hanging around in that area are more openminded to a solution in the Cyprus issue. So, being with people that are more tolerant against diversity, […] it is not only the area but it is the people that are in it, living it.’

The church in power

The Cypriot-Orthodox church is the biggest landowner in Cyprus and its financial assets are vast, as it is actively involved with businesses all over the country (G., H., AFP 2015). This means that the church actually has a lot to say about how the streets end up. Most associations made among the respondents with the church were not of a religious kind, except for its active role in education (H.) and for rites de passages to take place there (B.). Instead, they speak about space when talking about the church. For example, H. says about the Archeopiskopi, the Archbishop Palace, that it is ‘full of gold and full of marble’ whilst the school opposite has ‘falling walls’. But foremost, it is about spaces that seem public, but are church property. The courtyard of the church at Faneromeni was used as a public square, but now the barriers are heightened and the gates close early, after young people, among others from the anti-globalization movement, began hanging out there, as addressed later in this chapter. D. says that this closure of the courtyard is ‘another way of evicting people from the area’, referring to the propagation of cafés in the area as the first way of eviction. She also notes that this specific church is important, as it is a symbol of the Greek Cypriot struggle and therefore has a ‘nationalist flavor’.

For J., it is uncomfortable to be in a place that is owned by the church. However, church yards also function as a place for dealing and using drugs, for instance in Faneromeni and in the suburb of Lakatamia. For K., this shows the corruption of the police, who are involved with the drugs dealers, while having to secure the yards. As shown by the stories above and literally said by I., there is little trust
in the church. It does have quite some power, however, when it comes to what the urban space can be used for.

**The new public**

_Eleftheria square_\(^{14}\)

At the end of Ledras, there is nowadays a square across the Venetian walls [Figure 12]. It connects the old city with Makariou street. From this square, there is also a pedestrian street connecting the end of Ledras with the Omirou bus station [Figure 13]. Initially, cars were allowed to use the square as a passage between the old city and the CBD. After protests it was made into one of the very few places only accessible for pedestrians in Cyprus. It has taken many years to come close to a finalization of the building of the square. After so many years, G., H. and I. all agree, the square is just very plain. They consider it useful, but not user-friendly. Especially specific groups of people haven’t been taken into account well in its design. For example, the path people with visual disabilities can follow, has lights sticking out from the ground. Their hopes for improvement are overshadowed by doubt. ‘It is supposedly coming something better’, says I., ‘There would be stuff. Supposedly, again.’ For walking and passing, they consider it nice. But, they don’t use it in any other way. However, for them it does feel like the walls of the old city have opened up, as the access has become easier. This doesn’t mean that they think of the Venetian walls as a border. For I. for example, the walls don’t really feel like this as he uses the parks along the wall just for their purpose as a park, not to enter the old city. Also A. thinks the new square might function more as a bridge between what is within the walls of the old city and what is outside: ‘It connects, I mean… it is not allowed for cars to use it, so it is going to be only for pedestrians. So it is going to be nice for the people working outside the old city to come to the old city and move around.’ In general, her hopes are better about Eleftheria. A: ‘It is a mess. If they don’t plant trees, it is going to look awful, honestly. I think the trees are going to take it to the next level. Now it is just cement, nothing else. If they don’t plant trees, it is not going to look at all nice. If they do - I think it is going to look nice, especially […] with the new places that are going to open. I mean… They are trying to eh… open new shops around the place and basically to use it to the most that they can.’

The not very positive feelings about Eleftheria from G., H. and I. are shared by others. C. says it is ‘definitely ugly’, M. calls it ‘not livable’. The concrete and the lack of proper benches and trees makes it unattractive for people to sit there in the Cypriot heat (M.), and J. feels uncomfortable to go there with the security around: ‘Whatever I’m doing, I might be sitting there with a friend, having a talk. I don’t feel welcome with the bodyguards there.’ According to C., the square is made in a ‘European spirit’ and therefore forms a contrast with the area. For example, to him Rigenis street looks like ‘slums’ next

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\(^{14}\) Translated, Eleftheria square is Freedom square.
to Eleftheria. What happened to the square is decided by the government and municipality, about whom L. says that they focus on building new things, rather than maintaining and sustaining what they already have: ‘It is what I see with the old city. It is like, they made a whole new square, Eleftheria square, which is modern and that kind of stuff. They eh, spend a lot of money on that. But they didn’t do something useful for buildings to sustain old buildings and to keep that character of the city alive.’ Just like C., he feels like Nicosia tries to be as any other European city, developing new infrastructures rather than sustaining the old ones. To him, it cuts of the real image, spirit and vibes of Nicosia.

[Figure 12: Eleftheria square.]

[Figure 13: Street between Eleftheria square and the Omirou bus station - exclusively for pedestrians.]
Green spaces

There are few parks in Nicosia. One more than the other, but all respondents talked about their need for more green spaces. This need is there ‘for the fresh air (…), to sit, drink coffee, rest’ (A.). However, at the same time some of them also describe that they don’t use the current ones (anymore). First, this is because some see it as something they did during their teenage years. For example, B. used to go to the park where the liberty monument is located when she was 14 years old and went there as she didn’t know what else to do: “I think we just outgrew it, as a place (…). During the day time, it is a monument’. At night addicts are there, which makes it not the best place to sit around. It was safer before, according to her, however she does not feel in real danger there, yet uncomfortable. So the second reason is a feeling of discomfort. For others, it is indeed about safety, as parks are secluded areas (M.). This issue of safety or discomfort foremost seems a concern for the female respondents. With Agora leaving, the events that happened there, like the Fork food market, would move to the Municipal Park near Paphos gate. For I., this means that there is another place to go. In reaction to him, however, H. and G. explain that there are ‘dark rumors’ about this specific park: ‘That is why I kind of don’t want to go there. (…) People go there, it is an open sexual thing at night.’ Third, the green spaces are not maintained well, nor user friendly according to C. Fourth, Cyprus being a small country with few parks, those that are there are known that well that L. doesn’t feel like he has anything to explore there, and therefore leaves Nicosia for nature.

The one park that is used a lot, is the one below Polokatha Bastion, but more commonly refered to as ‘the dog park.’ I. goes there for Pokémon Go reasons, M. went there a lot to hang out, drink a beer, or even have a concert: ‘I can take my dog there and no one is making a fuzz about it, it is a legal space for leaving your dog and having fun in the grass.’ This clear purpose of the park seems to make it accessible. But, for M. this park being below the walls, is an ‘invisible border’ to her. It is not a question of physical accessibility, but one about having a different feelings inside and outside the walls. For N., Orfeas park and the park around the liberty monument being inside the walls, is the reason for having gone there a lot. However, whether they are inside or outside is yet debatable. M. considers the parks on and below the bastions as outside the walls, or the entrance towards the old city. She does consider them as public and hopes that after Agora, it ‘would be our next stop.’ They used to use them before: ‘Like eh, Irinis park. The peace park. And we used to go there, having fun… But it is more big. It is like a… we are spreading. We use it a lot. The only problem with the parks is that, whenever we decide to have a party there, because – the public spaces are reducing every time - sometimes they won’t even give us license. Sometimes, they are saying they are fully booked for big events (…). So, we will see how it is developing.’
Local reclaims

K. and J. have spent many nights at school ground. After dark, they climb over the fence. Those grounds feel safe to them, among others because there are less people there, with no one asking them about what they are doing. There aren’t many alternatives to those school grounds, as there are few but none common or public spaces. This is the case in the old city, but especially on the outer city. The few squares that are there, are not trusted or felt as an open and comfortable space, as they are owned by for example the Church (J.). There is the hope for more inclusion with more common places for everyone to share, as C. describes: ‘[Then] there is more community forming, more interaction, things happening. And I think I would be more touched (...), because there are more things for me and also for me to develop as an individual, as an organization... Because I can use the city to express.’ An example of such a current expression is by doing sticker bombings in the streets with his dance school: ‘It was on like all shops that were closed, or Kala Kathumena, or at like the street lights. Those are places that I don’t mind vandalizing, to be honest. Because, it is everyone’s property. It is the commons.’

There are changes happening to the city with Eleftheria square, but also with Ermou street. There, the streets and houses got mended and new shops and cafes have opened. M. is worried about the current route this development takes, as ‘now they have this new fashion, the posh are coming in. (...) It would be amazing if those houses, and those buildings were accessible to the public, mainly.’ This ‘gentrification’ also resulted in more or less all Nicosians to have met the old city in the past ten years (N.). It becoming more accessible and attractive for one, made it less for the other. Below, I will describe a few examples of places that illustrate how the development of the old city went hand in hand with local youth reclaiming urban space since the opening of the checkpoint at Ledra Street in 2008 and the upswing of [more left-wing] social movements.

Faneromeni

Public space is one of the main points of action of different initiatives and assemblies that have happened in the old city. Now, it is the Ecopolis festival, but in the past Faneromeni square was about reclaiming public space. Today, Faneromeni is not that much a public square anymore, as it is filled with chairs and tables from the cafés that reach almost until the fence of the church yard. Around 2009, there were none, with only Kala Kathumena as a coffeeshop in place (D.) and benches to sit on for free. At the time, the area was practically abandoned, following the war and division. N. describes how suddenly this changed, as about ten years ago young people started to use the square for ‘street parties or hanging out, juggling or whatever.’ Many teenagers came to Faneromeni because they felt the need to be outside

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15 Faneromeni square is also referred to as Manolis square, the name they gave to a tree that once had a circular bench for people to sit around, later to be replaced by a linear bench and today that one isn’t there anymore either. This name and the tree symbolize the privatization that has happened there (D.).
instead of in a club or at a bar. N: ‘We were like saying: “let’s reclaim the public space, let’s do activities we don’t have to pay for or places that we can put our own music.” (…) But it was also very clear, not for everybody, but the general mood was: we are doing something subversive. Like, politically subversive.’

The occupation of Faneromeni might seem a sudden event, however N. explains that Faneromeni was suitable specifically for four reasons. First, given that Faneromeni was an area that was greatly abandoned, they had the chance to do things with not a lot of control. With this lack of control, N. doesn’t only refer to the minor amount of police being there, but the abandoned space means to him that less people are there that have clashing interests. ‘You have to imagine that there were maybe nights there were 300-400 people hanging out here. It was just people in the street, all around the church’ (N.). Second, those people came from all over Nicosia, with Faneromeni being central: ‘In the neighborhoods around Nicosia, you do have teenagers hanging out in parks, doing teenage stuff. Like, in a way they are claiming public space, actually. (…) In this case it was people of all neighborhoods of Nicosia’ (N.). Third, the architecture of the old city attributed, its small streets giving a sense of exploration. ‘For many people, it was unknown. (…) Since a young age I’ve had friends here and also my parents had a relationship with the old town. So I always knew the old town. But for many people it was like a new world, to come here from the suburbs.’ Fourth, the people that were active or interested in bicommunal activities, found their natural home in the old city after the opening of the Ledra checkpoint in 2008 (N.).

With chain coffeeshops developing, Faneromeni was commercializing and getting privatized. As a result, many moved into the Church’ courtyard. Youngsters continued to hang out there, to have political discussions and to have education groups there. However, this was also a temporary space for them to stay. D. shows the fences around the yards: ‘We saw how this space through time became a bit of a fortress. So you could see from the difference in barriers. So the barriers were up to there., pointing at a much lower height than to where the spikes reach today. Faneromeni was a self–proclaimed common space. The loss of it, was for many of those involved a loss of a place of belonging, it being very much connected to the people making the place. Once it ended, the people scattered, and so the meaning of the place changed:

J: ‘I could go there and I knew that I would find someone I knew.’

K: ‘You could come like downtown with no plans, with nobody, and you would know that somebody would be there.’

J: (…) ‘It is like the vibe that vanished. It went away. It was the people that made the place.’

16 Both the square surrounding the Church’ [the court yard] and the square outside of the fence are referred to as Faneromeni.
Today, J. doesn’t pass Faneromeni anymore ‘because now it is just a drug place and nothing more.’ Her history there doesn’t make the place today. Sometimes J. feels that she and with her many others ‘don’t feel like the city is theirs’, nor that a place is theirs. She got acquainted with Faneromeni as an underage woman. It is where she found her people and a ‘place to be.’ J. ‘There was a time that I started (…) going to my neighborhood more, but I didn’t like it that much. And then I just ended up somehow in Faneromeni and I felt in love.’ It is where she found belonging, as was the case for K. as well. Faneromeni defined their connection to the city, and was a central place in them becoming of age. They are unsure if a community such as the one at Faneromeni will ever come back. Although it doesn’t exist anymore for external influences, there were internal problems as well. Those had a big effect, as the circle was small and made people stop going.

As of today, N. would not make use of the relatively new bars at Faneromeni square. He considers them an enemy, and are therefore to be avoided. He remembers constant tensions when they came to the square and the people still made use of the square as a public space. One of the few new places he does visit is Apomero, a café on the edge of the old city, as he knows the owners well. At Faneromeni, the only place that isn’t new, is Kala Kathumena. It opened in the early 1990s as a coffeeshop and the owner was – and is – an ally to the youth reclaiming the space there, for example by providing electricity, water and by enabling them to use the restroom (N.). Again, he knew the ones working there well. Having the community as it existed in Faneromeni, did create an ingroup - outgroup situation. Especially because the mostly anarchistic character of the people staying there was new to the Cypriot society. This community created a certain freedom for the ingroup, among others because other people did not want to pass through there (J.), which does make the space exclusive at the same time.

There existed other spaces with similar yet smaller created communities, like Zena Palace (N.), and Lakatamia skatepark (J.). However, they also ended and are examples of the temporarily character of those spatial communities.

Agora project

After Faneromeni, time has passed without a specific place for people to meet. M. describes how during this time of being dislocated, they gathered at different places, like houses or at marches. One year long from October 2018 until July 2019, Agora brought such a space back again. This former market building in the old city hosted artists, (craft)shops, and many events. Agora functioned as a space of cultural encounter. The square in front of it was used by many young people as well to spend their evenings hanging out. This square brought back the memory of Faneromeni for N., as he describes that he likes to hang out at Agora square and drink a beer at the bench, as he liked to do at Faneromeni as well when there were still benches there. ‘In the past, it was like, for me, and for other people, our home, let’s say’
(N.). For C. it is not just a square that has gotten a feeling of home, but he became attached to Nicosia through Agora and the community there, as ‘there was a common space for everyone.’

From the start of the project, it was known that they were only able to use the space temporarily, as it was sold to RISE. Whilst some put the short existence of Agora into this perspective (H., I.), others feel that having to leave Agora is a great loss. M: ‘It is another minus public space part. It was a really huge paying, because I think it was the last place that is a collective, basically standing because of the people that are involved in (…). The people are amazing there, they are doing great things, (…) they created a family there too.’

M. and her friends initially transferred themselves to Agora and the square in front of it, because of existing relationships with the people inside. However, she says that [her being in her mid-twenties] the youngest generation is using that part of the space as well, and that more and more of them are going there too as they pass from there. What is to happen to the square in front of Agora was yet unclear, but a worry in the minds of M. and N:

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17 Research center on Interactive media, Smart systems and Emerging technologies
M: ‘Hopefully, they will not affect us [gathering in the square] (...). I am mostly worried about reducing our access and availability to... considering the public spaces in Nicosia.’

N: ‘Maybe it is better that you have RISE instead of cafes, that they would put fifty tables each and that they would fill the square with tables. I might be wrong, I don’t know if RISE has plans for using the public space. But I hope they don’t. (...) I hope that it [Agora square] will remain the same as it is now.’

The actual problem is not that RISE suddenly is taking over, as it was known at the start of the project that they would. However, one is still sad about the project closing down, as it became in a short amount of time a space for community, where people felt belonging, and agency to make something out of their city (H., M., N., C.). For I., the events that happened at Agora made the old city ‘lively again’. However, he does believe that with RISE and the modernization that will come to the area with a technological research center being there, it will also ‘bring more life to the city.’

Global movements
There isn’t much of a protest culture or history in Cyprus (B., D.). The society is conservative and the church has a lot of control over the city and in education, as described above. B. thinks that the colonial past has to do with people being quite complacent and docile: ‘I think people just don’t challenge the government very much, or they don’t like something they will complain about it, but they won’t actively go and do something about it.’ Whilst this obedience might have a post-colonial tail, some protest culture arrived from overseas to Cyprus.

Occupy Buffer Zone
Many of those who were active in the beginning of Faneromeni, joined Occupy Buffer Zone. Following Occupy Wall street and other occupy movements all over the world, the Buffer Zone at the Ledra street checkpoint was occupied in 2011-2012 for half a year. The Occupy movement was a reaction towards the financial crisis. For Occupy Buffer Zone, however, the financial system was said to be related to the conflict (D.). Accordingly, requests were among others redistribution of lands with the archbishop as the greatest landowner in the south of Cyprus, and demilitarization. Such a call for peace within a highly militarized zone, having the Turkish army, the Greek army, the United Nations forces, and the Cypriot police officers in the checkpoints present, created a space of challenge and contestation within the smallest details. One example is an experience by E., who took part in the occupation. He describes how relevant the exact location of a banner they placed was in this contested area. A banner that faced the north had to be moved ten centimeters to the south after a control of the Turkish army: ‘There were different banners that were kind of facing either side, that were creating a conversation of the conflict...”
on each side.’ This space was an important space for activism as it moved the message across the divide. Furthermore, it created a temporary community of both Turkish and Greek Cypriots (D.). With the Buffer Zone being a marginalized urban space, its occupation reincluded it to being part of the lived city, where not only military or police are in control.

*Critical Mass bike rides*

Faneromeni was an important space where youth challenged a discourse of nationalism and where they created an alternative culture and community challenging the commercialization of the old city. But a more continued presence of youth occupying space was through a Critical Mass bike ride. It is a practice that originates in the anti-globalization movement. It started in San Francisco in 1992, where they occupied the streets for a certain time with bicycles and other alternative forms of transportation (Christou 2018: 102). This form of occupation was chosen to fight the alienation within cities by showing their resistance against the overuse and private ownership of cars and the pollution they bring with them to the city (Christou 2018: 102). The bike rides have happened for over a decade in Nicosia. Faneromeni was associated with the Critical Mass that back then, was organized frequently. N. recalls that at the time of the Faneromeni occupation, the rides were ‘big for Nicosia standards’, as there were between 100 or 200 cyclists in some of the events. ‘The Critical Mass bike rides would always end in Faneromeni square where we would have a little party outside.’ Late May 2019, around thirty activists gathered. This amount was considered a positive surprise, as there were only ten participants the year before. At the time, they cycled a small round, just in the old city. This May however, it took place outside of the Venetian walls as well. ‘If you really want to make impact’, one of the participants told me, ‘then you shouldn’t stay within the old city, but get onto the big streets’.
[Figure 15: Critical Mass bike ride. The first picture is taken at the gathering and end point at Eleftheria square. The second picture is taken just outside of the old city (Ecopolis Festival 2019).]
Youth for Climate

Assuming their age, the participants of the Critical Mass bike ride in May were in their late twenties or thirties. Younger activists fighting against pollution are found today at the Youth for Climate movement, a more present global movement that has left its traces in Cyprus. Whilst fighting for policies to tackle climate change, again public space is a topic of discussion. First of all, they are not allowed to do their protests in the streets where they want them to do, resulting in them not getting any visibility. C. describes how the police directed them away from the main roads: ‘Last time we were saying that we have no trust in the government. That was considered a bad word. (…) We were jumping and shouting slogans. And they were like: “You are jumping and you are violent so as a punishment you will be here.” (…) We were going through the small neighborhood, so nobody could see us. So we don’t have the choice of being a part of where we want to go.’ Second, C. feels that there is not a lot of space in Nicosia to do their events, especially as Agora is closing down: ‘As a youth without a budget. Where will I be able to host something? (…) If I want to use a square I need to get permission, which at the end of the day is so long messy process. When you don’t have the right connection, you can’t do it. So, Nicosia doesn’t have common places for everyone.’ Whilst being part of a global movement and not getting the preferred space, C. specifically feels that during the protests, workshops and events of Youth for Climate, he is making a contribution to the city: ‘I feel that I am a part of it and I give back to the community.’

Reflection

It is not just because of the economic crisis, that the social center of Nicosia has become the old city. It is a place that is found attractive literally for its old character, that for some symbolize a place that has a history that goes back prior to the conflict. But it also has a central position in Nicosia, being on the edge of the south, but right in the center of both sides together. And it is a place where familiarity is sought and found, in both people and architecture. However, current developments don’t per se bring much good to what is valued of the old city. New buildings that are built, are not coherent with their environment. The public space is decreasing, or owned by for example the church, which makes less places suitable for feeling as comfortable or free as some say they need. It makes the city into one that doesn’t feel theirs. Green spaces are not well kept and thus don’t feel safe or comfortable.

Within the young generation, there are different perspectives with the older ones who experienced the old city ten years ago, and those who discovered it two years ago. With time, such different perspectives are expected to change. However, it is the temporal character to the places that function as public or in another way as free and comfortable meeting spaces, that make the generational difference and expectations rather big. It is not per se that the different young age groups feel more or less belonging, but do find it in other places and are more natural with certain developments that happened during the last decade. It is remarkable that those different generations of youngsters create
or find a community and belonging to the old city through claiming [semi-]public space in the old city, yet are or feel chased away. This is as if they are not allowed to belong, nor to give their city a meaning. Their perception of the old city is formed when growing older, and thus in a period in which they not only find the identity of their city, but form the identity of themselves. Those identities in this process often get connected in some way, for example through places like Agora and Faneromeni. The city forms around the individual, as the individual forms themselves around the city.
Chapter 9 – Conclusion

People experience multiple things throughout the day, wherever we go. It is built on external factors, such as the people we are with, or whom we see in the streets, as well as the infrastructure, posters, music, and other objects and subjects in space. What we see, hear, or feel, and how we do so, is also very much connected to our individual stories, and our interpretation of narratives and the actions of people in our surroundings. It is why this thesis speaks of internalized fear, of discovering the city, and of reclaiming space. Seeing the internal and external dynamics playing with the people, it is especially those who are young, that have to form their behavior around them. They are in a stage of development, becoming the young adults they supposedly are or want to be. They learn about themselves in a city that is in a similar process. I would describe it as a coming of age of the city and its dwellers going hand in hand. It is exactly this aspect that came most unexpected, when looking at the question ‘How do young (Greek) Cypriot dwellers relate their (cross-)border behavior to the organization of public space around the Buffer Zone in urban Nicosia?’ It is not just the continuation of narratives, the ownership of space, or the political symbols that are visible in the streets. It is what those mean when someone is in a time that they have to decide about their own path, thus what their behavior is like and how they relate themselves to their environment.

One of the reasons that the presence of a coming of age in the experiences from my respondents came unexpected, is because it is something that was not mentioned in any of the literature I read about divided cities. However, I believe it to be connected to the discussion in the theory chapter of this thesis, in which Allegra et al. (2012) critically describes how division is often used as an all-covering framework for a city, and that the academic focus is mainly on single-factor explanations for a city in being in such a condition, and for other on events that happen there. Further research could be done in which the agency of people in the specific stage of their life is related to the borderland specifically, and other (urban) spaces in general. This research is relevant independent from there being a solution or not, however deeply connected. It is not only the young city dwellers that are in a period in which self-discovery and development take place in their lives. It is Nicosia that is has been in a transitional phase for many years. The division of Cyprus is implemented as a temporal solution, and thus that is still what it is. Whilst Cyprus continues, it is the generations of inhabitants that change.

The question about the agency of people in the specific stage of their life related to the borderland specifically, and other (urban) spaces in general, then, is not to be disconnected from other aspects like mobility, narratives, and urban politics. To give an example of how the change of city and individual developments are related in practice, I would like to end this thesis with a picture from Kaimakli [Figure 16]. N. told me about the new residents that started to live there, had not internalized
the Buffer Zone as the same border as the inhabitants who grew up in the neighborhood had. It is this picture that shows the new paths through the Buffer Zone created by the new residents footsteps, and it is those people, that made N. do the same.

[Figure 16: Desire paths in the Buffer Zone in Kaimakli.]
# Appendix I - Interview Guide

## A. General information

1. What is your name?
2. What is your age?
3. Have you always lived in Nicosia? Where?
4. When did your parents come to Nicosia? (Or were they born here?)
5. Do you feel Cypriot (or: Greek-Cypriot/minority/otherwise)?

## B. Everyday life activities

1. Can you describe what your daily life looks like? 
   - Where do these activities take place?
   - How do you go there (mode of transport, alone or together)?
2. Are there other places in Nicosia where you (sometimes) got to?
   - How do you go there (mode of transport, alone or together)?
3. Are there places where you feel comfortable or a sense of belonging? Tell me about these places and how you feel in them.
4. Are there places in Nicosia where you don’t go to?
   - Are there places that you avoid? Why? How do you feel if you do visit these places?
   - Do you not go to places anymore where you did go before in your life? Why if yes?
   - Do you go to places where you didn’t go before in your life? Why if yes?
5. Did your vision on to which places you want to go change over time? If yes, can you describe how?

## C. Borderland

1. What means the Buffer Zone for you? Did this change? How?
2. How do you feel if you visit the environment of the Buffer Zone? Where does that feeling/the Buffer Zone start for you?
3. What do you think of the organization of the environment of the Buffer Zone?
4. What do you think of the organization of the environment of the old city in general?
5. How do you think the environment of the Buffer Zone should look like?
6. How do you think the environment of the old city should look like?
7. Do you speak about it with the people around you? In what way?
8. Do you sometimes cross the border?
10. What is your opinion about crossing the border?
11. Does the environment of the old city influence you in crossing the Buffer Zone or coming close to it?

## D. A.o.b.

Are there any issues that you would like to raise?
Appendix II – Observation protocol

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<th>(1) Spatial planning</th>
<th>(a) Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Verbal description of the space, picture or drawing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) Map (scaled, zoomed) including the position of objects and actors (incl. north/south axis)</td>
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<tr>
<th>(2) Artefacts</th>
<th>(a) Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>(b) Number (-&gt; map)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) Picture or drawing</td>
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<tr>
<th>(3) Actors</th>
<th>(a) Individual; Group</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Sex, age, look, function</td>
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<tr>
<th>(4) Time</th>
<th>(a) Date, time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Length of actions and observations</td>
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<th>(5) Activity</th>
<th>(a) Detailed account of actions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Positions on map</td>
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Bibliography


All pictures and maps are made by myself, except for Figure 15b: