

# BETWEEN CONTESTED OPAQUE TERRITORIES AND SPONTANEOUS REAPPROPRIATION: DIVIDED NICOSIA

MELEHAT NIL GULARI<sup>1</sup>; CECILIA ZECCA<sup>2</sup>

1. Audencia Business School, Nantes, France, [ngulari@audencia.com](mailto:ngulari@audencia.com)

2. Royal College of Art, The Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design, London, UK, [cecilia.zecca@rca.ac.uk](mailto:cecilia.zecca@rca.ac.uk)

## ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the concepts of conflict and border in relation to place and identity reflecting on narratives and meanings of dividing urban and civil borders. It takes the divided Greek and Turkish society living in Nicosia as a case study. The significance of the wall, as an explicit expression of division, is discussed but also overturned by looking at its closure and its permeability when Nicosia's sealed borders opened again for everyday crossing.

The inquiry speculates an alternative path informed by Glissant's concept of Opacity, Agamben and Nancy's non-essentialist approaches non-community to look at entangled deep-rooted ethnic divisions and fragments of shared cultures. To inform urban epistemology, two bottom-up examples are analysed using De Certeau's concepts of everyday life: Home for

Cooperation, which is a neutral space in the buffer zone for unified collectively and Occupy Buffer-zone Movement, which has occupied a non-place and transformed it into a public square through grassroots activism.

The paper highlights that in order to draw a feasible future of Cyprus, an anti-essentialist acceptance of the multiple and eclectic origins of the context is needed. In this sense, the tangible and intangible meaning of division requires a shift of meaning, from delimitation, classification, separation to a porous element of balance and calibration. The top-down urban models and concept of inclusiveness have been shaken by the temporal civic grassroots communities, and this demonstrates that collective participation fosters the reappropriation of public space, overturning the perception and the experience of the border of differences. This contributes to theorizing a critical and reflective,

rather than idealistic, practice of participation in urban design.

**Keywords: collective memory, contested cities, urban identity, inclusive urbanism, Cyprus dispute.**

## RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza los conceptos de conflicto y frontera en relación con el lugar y la identidad, reflexionando sobre las narrativas y los significados de las fronteras urbanas y civiles divididas. Toma como caso de estudio la sociedad griega y turca dividida que vive en Nicosia. El significado del muro, como expresión explícita de la división, se discute, pero también se revierte, al observar su cierre y su permeabilidad cuando las fronteras selladas de Nicosia se abrieron de nuevo para el cruce cotidiano.

La investigación especula con un camino alternativo basado en el concepto de opacidad de Glissant y en los enfoques no esencialistas de Agamben y Nancy, la no comunidad, para examinar las divisiones étnicas profundamente arraigadas y los fragmentos de culturas compartidas. Para fundamentar la epistemología urbana, se analizan dos ejemplos ascendentes utilizando los conceptos de vida cotidiana de De Certeau: el Hogar para la Cooperación, que es un espacio neutro en la zona de amortiguación para unificar colectivamente, y el Movimiento Occupy Buffer-zone, que ha ocupado un no-lugar y lo ha transformado en una plaza pública mediante el activismo de base.

El documento destaca que para dibujar un futuro factible de Chipre es necesario aceptar de forma antiesencialista los orígenes múl-

tiples y eclécticos del contexto. En este sentido, el significado tangible e intangible de la división requiere un cambio de significado, desde la delimitación, la clasificación y la separación hasta un elemento poroso de equilibrio y calibración. Los modelos urbanos de arriba abajo y el concepto de inclusividad se han visto sacudidos por las comunidades cívicas temporales de base, y esto demuestra que la participación colectiva fomenta la reapropiación del espacio público, trastocando la percepción y la experiencia de la frontera de las diferencias. Esto contribuye a teorizar una práctica crítica y reflexiva, más que idealista, de la participación en el diseño urbano.

**Palabras clave: memoria colectiva, ciudades disputadas, identidad urbana, urbanismo inclusivo, disputa de Chipre**

## RESUMO

Este texto discute os conceitos de conflito e fronteira em relação ao lugar e identidade, refletindo sobre narrativas e significados da divisão das fronteiras urbanas e civis, tendo como estudo de caso a sociedade grega e turca dividida que vive em Nicósia. O significado do muro, como expressão explícita de divisão, é discutido, mas também superado ao olhar para seu fechamento e sua permeabilidade, a partir do momento em que as fronteiras fechadas de Nicósia se abriram novamente para a travessia diária.

A investigação argumenta por um caminho alternativo baseado no conceito de Opacidade de Glissant e nos enfoques não essencialistas de Agamben e Nancy, a não-comunidade, para analisar as divisões étnicas

profundamente arraigadas e os fragmentos de culturas compartilhadas. Para fundamentar a epistemologia urbana, utilizando os conceitos da vida cotidiana de De Certeau, dois exemplos *bottom-up* são analisados: *Home for Cooperation*, um espaço neutro na zona coletiva de unificação e o Movimento *Occupy Buffer-zone*, que transformou um não-lugar em praça pública por meio do ativismo de base.

O artigo destaca que, para o desenho de um futuro viável em Chipre, é necessária uma aceitação ante essencialista das múltiplas e ecléticas origens do contexto. Neste sentido, o significado tangível e intangível da divisão requer uma mudança –de significado, de delimitação, classificação, separação– para um elemento poroso de equilíbrio e calibração. Os modelos urbanos *top-down* e a noção de inclusividade foram abalados pela ação temporal de comunidades cívicas, fato que demonstra que a participação coletiva promove a reapropriação do espaço público, alterando a percepção e a experiência da fronteira das diferenças. Isto contribui para teorizar uma prática crítica e reflexiva, ao invés de idealista, de participação no desenho urbano.

**Palavras-chave: memória coletiva, cidades contestadas, identidade urbana, urbanismo inclusivo, disputa em Chipre**

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Conflicts, small or big, are unavoidable within societies and do not only represent cultural, political and social divisions but also tangible demarcations in our territories. In this sense, urbanism plays a strategic role in planning a de-

sirable future for divided cities by moderating and rebalancing the different perspectives. In other words, starting from the concept of the conflict itself, other forms of negotiated collaboration may be envisaged.

Cuthbert (2007) and Caldereon (2020) are amongst other scholars who argued a lack of theoretical engagement and substantive knowledge earthing the political in urban design, and hence urban designers lack skills and understandings to address conflicts and power and to pose and answer critical questions about participatory urban design. Calderon (2020) suggests, building on Chantal Mouffe's (2005) critique of post-political vision, an antagonistic dimension of participation in public space projects to address a lack of political engagement that is necessary for the participatory and inclusive urban design process.

Carmona (2014) argues that urban design lacks social contents; the top-down approach, neoliberalism and global capitalism are prioritized among social and cultural aspects. Focusing on the line of societal and cultural differences between one part of the city and the other would help to address the aforementioned criticism mainly because it would lead to a deeper understanding of the challenges stemming from ethnic, racial and class issues. A deeper understanding enables the development of new theories of urbanism foregrounding participation representation, access and identity over the issues of housing and infrastructure.

Relph (1976) introduces enlightening reflections in his seminal book, *Place and Placelessness*, where, with surprising radicalism and clarity reveals the significance and the importance of a human-centric approach to urbanism:

*A deep human need exists for associations with significant places. If we choose to ignore that need, and follow the forces of placelessness to continue unchallenged, then the future can only hold an environment in which places simply do not matter (Relph 1976, 147).*

Peck (2015, 162) states later,

*The ongoing work of remaking urban theory must occur across cases, which means confronting and problematizing substantive connectivity, recurrent processes and relational power relations, in addition to documenting difference, in a “contrastive” manner, between cities. It must also occur across scales, positioning the urban scale itself, and working to locate cities not just within lateral grids of difference, in the “planar” dimension, but in relational and conjuncture terms as well.*

A few studies have analysed contested urban space including Brand (2009), Bollens (2012) Gaffikin, Mceldowney, and Sterrett (2010), Pullan and Baillie (2013) and focused on addressing segregation in contested spaces (De Vita, Trillo and Martinez-Perez 2016). This paper focuses on the Cyprus dispute, a case study that encompasses, through its dividing wall, a story of division and separation but also a story of common ground and profound silent human and cultural similarities. Yet the theoretical lenses that are drawn from Glissantm (1997), Agamben (1993) and Nancy (1991) were not used to unfold the Cyprus conflict and borders.

The aim of this inquiry is to use the Cyprus dispute as a context for a participative urban design approach that is informed by a political and philosophical conception drawn

from Agamben, Nancy and Glissant. The meaning of wall and borders is discussed by looking at Nicosia, the last divided capital in Europe, and at the changing narratives around its collective memory and architectural identity when the borders have been opened again. This case study is considered one of the most pertinent to open a debate on urban models developments and their fallacies when not human and cultural centric.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

The paper is drawn around extensive literature reviews and more specifically in the field of inclusive urban design and philosophy around the concepts of community and being in common through using Nicosia as a case study. The selection of the particular case resonates with Calderon view on expanding the antagonistic dimension in the inclusive urban design process. This has contributed to the significance of inclusiveness within urban design. Following the literature review, the paper is structured as follows: first, the period without borders and historical and political background of conflict are presented to provide necessary information to the reader. The relationship between collective memory with space is unfolded through the meaning and narratives of wall and as well through identities and architectural entities. Theoretical lenses by Nancy (1991) and Agamben (1993) and de Certeau (1998) are used to discuss two grassroots cases in Section 5. Conclusion remarks on the importance of Nicosia as a theoretical and political object of urbanism and highlights nuanced participatory urbanism against top-down mainstream urbanism approaches.

### 3 GREEK AND TURKISH VILLAGES COEXISTENCE

Cyprus has always been a contested territory due to its strategic and central position in the Mediterranean Sea, an ideal place to control European, Asian and African commercial exchanges (Delvecchio 2020). Since the Ottoman domination from 1571, there are pieces of evidence of bi-communal and shared villages between Greeks and Turkish. According to the British census data, in 1891 almost half of the villages were mixed (Lyatra and Psaltis 2012).

While relations and coexistence were already deteriorated by the Greek revolution against the Ottoman empire, it is with WWI that the percentage of mixed villages started to fall significantly (ibid). Despite several succession of dominations from different countries, France, Venice, Ottoman empire and Britain over the centuries, the Greek national identity remained strong while the Turkish population slowly became a minority of refugees controlled by the United Nations that created a Buffer Zone in 1963 to divide the Greek and Turkish political entities (Hugh-Wilson 2011).

It is in this climate that Greek and Turkish mixed villages had dramatically fallen in number (Lyras and Psaltis 2012) and with the military Turkish invasion in 1974, during which Greek Cypriots moved in the south and Turkish Cypriots moved in the Greek houses in the north (Webster and Timothy 2006), Nicosia was eventually divided into two.

In 1983 Rauf Dentas, the Turkish President, announced the birth of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (Kliot and Mansfeld 1995), sealing the borders between Greek and Turkish territories and expropriating pro-

perties to Greek Cypriots. The borders will be partially reopened only in 2003 and nowadays the only mixed village survived is Pyla. Located mainly in the buffer zone, the city is the only example of cultures, religions and vernacular architectures coexistence.

### 4 TWO PERCEPTIONS, ONE BORDER

We are drawn to borders, not because they are signs or elements of the impossible but because they are places of passage and transformation. Relationship depends on the mutual influence of identities, be they individual or collective, and requires each identity to be distinct and independent. Relationship does not mean confusion or dilution. I can change by exchanging with the Other and still not lose or distort myself. That is why we need borders, not as places to stop at, but as the point at which we may exercise that right of free passage from the same to the Other; savour the wonder of here and there. Glissant, 2006.

The historical narrative around the divided city of Nicosia, the capital of both Republic of Cyprus and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, has generated two different concepts of identity. On the one hand, the identity stands as the image of 'ourselves' embedded in and feeling a sense of belonging to the place; on the other, there is the image of the 'strangers' living in the space beyond the wall. The latter reinforces a narrative of negativity for which 'the other' is constantly perceived as a threat. Furthermore, the medieval Venetian city walls in Nicosia act as a historical reference of separation, endorsing the diversities and the relevance of being divided. The buffer zone, re-

presented as the green line now occupied by the UN and cutting the island into two different nations, has various widths along its route but it physically represents an urban void (figure 1).



Fig. 1 Cyprus Map- Greenline i.e. Buffer Zone. Source: <https://www.militaryhistories.co.uk/greenline/explanation>

The nature of a political void is translated in the urban settlement as a spatial absence. As a consequence, commercial activities and residences have grown around, following scattered arrangements outside the borders. The green line is a territory absence made evident by fences, barrels and gates. It has created different forms of living and different ideas of the city centre.

The south of Nicosia is a more contemporary city characterised by modern shops, amenities, multipurpose buildings and attractions. On the contrary, the closer we get to the border the more traditional handful of shops and narrow old lanes are present.

Glissant (2006), the Martinique-born decolonial philosopher, warns us against a homogenising colonial project of neoliberal globalisation. His relational philosophy asserts the other cannot be understood and our differences are in flux that undergoes constant and unpredictable changes (Glissant 1997). He claims for

the ‘right to opacity’, as a mode of survival against universal transparency and authoritarian truth. He invites us to accept the unintelligibility and confusion.

That is why I call for the right to opacity for everyone. I no longer have to ‘understand’ the other, that is, to reduce him to the model of my own transparency, in order to live with this other or to build something with him. Today, the right to opacity is the most obvious sign of non-barbarity. And I will say that the literatures that are beginning to appear in front of us and that we can foresee will be beautiful with all the illuminations and all the opacities of our world-totality. (Glissant 2020, 45)

This resonates with the Cyprus case. To Glissant, recognising the other does not mean understanding by comprehension but welcoming incomprehensibility. It is developing a relation against assimilating singularities. He celebrates the importance of diversity and claims that identity is opaque and should be protected. Glissant (2006 np) “No one should be denied the privilege of crossing a border, for whatever reason. Borders exist for the fulfilment that we derive from crossing them, and by so doing sharing the full impact of difference”.

The different perceptions of the city as an urban, political and social system is remarked by the different appearances of the wall itself. If for the northern side the wall is associated with the idea of protection, for the southern side it is only perceived as a temporary artefact and unacceptable barrier (Iliopoulou and Karathanasis 2014; Dikomitis 2005). In other words, the Turkish Cypriot borders are more permanent while the Greek Cypriot ones seem ready to be removed (See figure 2 and 3 for comparison).





Fig.2 Wall from the Turkish Cyprus side. Source: wikimedia.org

According to Dikimotis (2005), once the borders were opened again in 2003, some Greek Cypriots did not accept the ‘new doors’ as crossing places and defined the opening as a silent recognition of an illegitimate nation in the north of Cyprus. In this sense, the action of refusing a physical opening highlights, even more, the presence of a barrier and strengthens the collective imaginary of social differences. However, there are also signs of opposite reactions and so regular crossings take place as the border would not exist. Yet, this acknowledgement is a refusal at the same time (ibid).

These narratives resonate with Jones’ ‘space of refusal’ (Jones 2012). To him, that is a tangible condition and can be either accepted



Figure 3 The border zone, as seen from the southern side of Nicosia / Elizabeth Smith. <https://www.curiositymag.com/2018/06/29/crossing-the-other-dmz/>

by some people who will then live adapting to alternative configurations, or ignored by others who will live across and through the barrier.

The buffer zone is complex spatial presence and absence at the same time which comprises places where it is possible to see through and others that blur the view of the other city. Only by digging into the communal lives and traditions of this strip of land, it would be possible to imagine a reunion process.

Only recently two checkpoints were introduced on Ledra Street and close to Pafos city gate but, because the collective memory can easily become history, the temporality of the barrier has turned into a permanent border (Tagliacollo 2011).

Ledra Street is emblematic in its architectural features and urban asset; it is inhomogeneous in style and time and even presents contemporary attempts of urban continuity such as the recently Eleftheria Square designed by Zaha Hadid Architects (<https://www.zaha-hadid.com/2021/12/13/eleftheria-square-in-augurated/> last accessed 15 December 2021).

However, Cyprus is characterised by multi-layered architectural, urban features and stylistic traits that belong to a variety of

cultures and ethnicities. The Aya Sophia in Nicosia, for instance, was partially converted into a mosque after the Ottoman occupation in 1570 and since then, continued to be the most important Cathedral-mosque of the city. This twofold ownership has generated the distinctive Ottoman-Gothic style of the worship building (figure 4).

In this sense, architecture plays a multi-cultural landmark role in representing both cultures and beliefs. It can be the resulting sum of newer and older styles as well as the manifestation of contradictions or co-existence.

However, when moving the attention to other forms of art, the idea of conflict emerges more predominantly. The 'Museum of National Struggle' is the Northern and Southern museum containing and testifying the division and exclusion that has characterised the island for centuries. Each side, the Turkish Cypriot and the Greek Cypriot wing follows a personal narration that does not coincide even with dates. Twenty years span from 1963 to 1983 for the Turkish illustrations with the "Unutmayacağız", literally *we will not forget* masterpiece and five years from 1955 to 1960 for the Greek side representing the fight against British and movement for enosis (figure 5).



Fig. 4: Selimiye Mosque (Greek: Τέμενος Σελιμιγιέ Témenos Selimiγιé; Turkish: Selimiye Camii), historically known as Cathedral of Saint Sophia. Source: wikimedia.org



Fig. 5 Unutmayacağız- We will not forget- 'Museum of National Struggle' Northern Cyprus. Source: <https://cyprusscene.com/2018/07/18/north-cyprus-museum-of-national-struggle-and-tmt/>



As highlighted by Goker (2007) we assisted to an increasing difference between the cultures; Greek Cypriots slowly intensified more and more their Hellenic identity while the Turkish Cypriots became ‘more and more Turkified’. Perception, conception and pre-conception have contributed to crystallising the history and constructing two different identities (Karahasan 2005) although still similar in the methods and definitions of the narratives (ibid).

The conflict is also remarked by political, educational and media establishments that select significant memories and events that perpetuate the division. Henry Kissinger, former secretary of state (Mallinson 2016, xxvii) himself stated that the conflict was intractable.

Notably, the perpetuation of the conflict from generation to generation recalls the concept of the post-memory (Hirsch 2006) for which the next generation can be defined as the direct heirs of the memory. New generations are not linked with violent events or have experienced fear but they are anyway linked through retrospective and imaginary associations that replicate the traumatic effects and consequences.

## 5. BEING DIFFERENTLY IN COMMON

Nothing is more instructive than the way Spinoza conceives of the common. All bodies, he says, have it in common to express the divine attributes of extension and yet what is common cannot, in any case, constitute the essence of the single case. Decisive here is the idea of an inessential commonality, a solidarity that in no way concerns an essence. Taking-place, the communication of singularities in the attribute

of extension, does not unite them in essence, but scatters them in existence (Giorgio Agamben 1993, 18-19).

The establishment of nation-states has created an official narrative of negativity that fails to envisage pluralism. The notion of community as a unified continuous and enclosed model deserves to be questioned.

The role of complex, multiple relations and networks of power should be recognised as an inevitable factor in constituting the notion of community. Grounded upon the thinking of the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (1991) we should not define the essence of the community as a codified and engineeringly constructed model.

It is a matter of accepting the natural diversity embedded within communities, rather than modelling and remodelling the form of societies. This is a significant problem in the Cyprus dispute, the community has been engineered and re-engineered several times.

His idea of “community without community” (Nancy 1991, 71) suggests that community as a concept does not have necessary the meaning of connecting people. A community has a more complex essence of inner relationships where there is not a *common being* but rather a *being in common*. The self is not conceivable if not only in relation with others and so there cannot be self-determination but rather only co-determination. The latter implies the recognition of differences.

This philosophical concept informs our approach when we looked at the divided communities in Cyprus. It informs the urban epistemology and complex interaction between cultural structures (Hou et al. 2015), individual and collective memories that can shape the urban physical spaces.

Within the Buffer zone, there are two community-led examples of urban void reuse that can be theoretically linked with Nancy's approach (1991).

The Home for Cooperation, a landmark building is erected as a bridge-builder of communities that enhances arts, culture and provides spaces for cultural and social projects.

It has been recently supported by the European Economic Area and Norway Grants and has also received other funding. Through initiatives, performance and projects, people from different ethnicities have the possibility to meet within an alternative *third space*, to know and learn from each other in a climate of freedom of thinking and expression.

The second case study is Occupy Buffer-zone Movement, a grass-roots movement that transformed a *non-place* to a *common public place*.

Occupy Buffer-zone Movement (OBM) has occupied the linear gap of the buffer zone and has transformed it into a public place where there is no distinction between *we* and *they*. The activities and events organised by OBM in the public sphere offer the opportunity for people to perform their identities, but they also create communities that enhance diversity (Iliopoulou and Karathanasis 2014) and communal spaces as a materialisation of a plural identity (Papa and Dahlgren 2017).

Both communities demonstrate that practically re-using third spaces may challenge the top-down urbanism models and through the strength of being together it is possible to create a sense of place and belonging. Through collective participation, they produced and altered the spatial perception of a divided city fostering greater empathy amongst them in order to diminish the intensity and scale of

the conflict. This project echoes the participation principles including inclusiveness, power balance and consensus-building, identified by Calderon (2020).

These civic communities' strength draws on the simplicity of everyday practices and physical presence to resolve conflicts. Paraphrasing de Certeau (1998), the practice of everyday life is the terrain of silent and tactical power production and consumption. The *urban voids* in this case are never neutral but rather dense and occupied by a network of human relationships.

Drawing on the practice of everyday life could be a useful method of addressing 'the political' nature of public spaces and uncovering how this challenges participatory urban design processes. It lends itself to be a practical method for urban designers to be physically there, moving between participation and observation, between the guest and host to set up the conditions for new types of designed spaces, where architecture, meant as a built space, is only one of the possible forms of expression.

The OBZ movement, as well as the activities delivered at the Home for Cooperation, in a way, raised the questions for urban epistemology: 'who is included in the community? What are the ethical boundaries of inclusion and exclusion of a community that contributes to the theory of the production of urban space and models of urbanism? The grassroots movements are indispensable as they force the city into a continuous transformation. They are strong as long as they evoke ambitions and hopes and they are inhabited every day and perceived differently. These constitute urban structural forces co-shaping the city.

Although participatory urban design tends to be underestimated and overall challenging (Calderon 2020), there are several examples, not only within academia, that demonstrate the importance of engaging with people as a way to generate incremental innovation. Using a metaphor, participatory design can be associated with evolutionary biologist Dawkins' image of climbing a mountain improbable (Gulari, Boru and Malins 2011). Participatory design is not a process that enables one to climb a mountain just with one big step but rather it is a long and incremental process where people take part of it all the time.

*"In today's all-commanding market economy, public space is constantly under threat –eroded and dehumanised. [...] Public space –big or small, noisy or quiet– reflects civic values. Greek and Roman civilisation centred on the experience of citizenship in the agora and forum" (Rogger 2017).*

To rethink the urban design approach from a more democratised bottom-up position, we advocate inclusiveness as a form of *acupuncture urbanism* in which all tangible and intangible elements are critically understood and the space is not always overdesigned but rather left unprogrammed, exposed to forms of spontaneous reappropriations and hybridization.

Inclusiveness is becoming an invaluable condition for all design practices (Gheerawo 2016) and for transforming government approach and public space conformation. By adopting a more empathetic and a human-centred approach, we will avoid the consequences of fractured society (Rogers 2017) that can lead to extreme actions, separations and segregations.

## 6 CONCLUSION

Borders create difference and otherness. While developing their own identity each side of the buffer zone experiences in-between state/space and ambiguity. The separate identities, created through otherness, perpetuate the existence of the border. The walls and boundaries strengthen the dispute, freezing the symptoms without ever resolving the conflict itself. It is a vicious circle. Their differences i.e. Greeks and Turks, east and west, Christianity and Islamism are emphasised but their similarities of lifestyle, shared history, mixed villages and architectural inheritance are often ignored. Without taking into account the antagonistic nature of pluralism and the impossibility of reconciling all points of view, the conflict in Cyprus would not be approachable. Looking over the history for what it has been, recognising the real facts and the contemporary without pre-constituted definitions is challenging for a divided bi-communal country. The misconception resulting from war struggles often generates fear and shadow even more insuperable than the wall itself.

This article distinguished being in common versus being united through drawing on Glissant (1997), Nancy (1991), Agamben (1993) and several urban theorists. The Cyprus dispute highlighted the role of identity politics, collective memory and education as a means of homogenising and nationalising the communities and constructing models in urban planning. Echoing Glissant (1997), transparency can be rarely expected or achieved in addressing conflict and entangled segregated cities. We have to accept the opacity in building a relation with others in an inclusive participatory urban de-

sign process. Accepting the uncertainty and unpredictability through opacity is a liberating antitotalitarian notion in building a relationship and dealing with incomprehensibility, insularity and ignorance.

Despite the desire to use urban planning as a mechanism to address the conflict, the change cannot be delivered by a large master plan. The complexity of urban conditions in Nicosia evidences the impossibility of a unitary vision, form, definition, design and image of a city. Nicosia could serve as a theoretical object to better comprehend political urban processes and forms of contemporary urbanism and to move beyond single definitions of unified city and community. It challenges urban design assumptions of a solution, problem and temporality. Moreover, it pushes the focus of urban theory beyond 'ordinary' urban development

challenges, such as inner-city redevelopment and the provision of affordable housing. Urbanism should follow a relational, evolutionary, and incremental path without trying to construct a community and to deliver a permanent plan of a perfect future. Participated urbanism should re-think participation and reimagine the power within this process: involving people, developing a relationship with them, navigating-unearthing power struggles, giving participants an active role, space and voice in defining the problem and solutions and envisaging a route to pursue. It is beyond giving them a vote to evaluate the choices or facilitating a workshop with post-it notes. In this sense, the concept of place would be drawn on inclusivity and on the fact that differences are, for new processes of urbanism, forms of enrichment and of heterogenic evolution.

## REFERENCES

- Agamben, Giorgio. 1993. *The Coming Community*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Brand, Ralf. 2009. "Written and Unwritten Building Conventions in a Contested City: The Case of Belfast". *Urban Studies*. 46, 12: 2669–2689.
- Bollens, Scott A. 2012. *City and Soul in Divided Societies*. London: Routledge.
- Cacciari, Massimo. 2004 *La città*. Villa Verrucchio: Pazzini Editore.
- Calderon, Camilo. 2020. "Unearthing the political: differences, conflicts and power in participatory urban design". *Journal of Urban Design* 25, 1: 50-64.
- Carmona, Matthew. 2014. "The Place-shaping Continuum: A Theory of Urban Design Process." *Journal of Urban Design*. 19, 1: 2-36.
- Cuthbert, Alexander R. 2007. "Urban Design: Requiem for an Era - Review and Critique of the Last 50 Years." *Urban Design International* 12 (4): 177–223.
- De Certeau, Michel. 1998. *The Practice of Everyday Life: Living and cooking*. London: University of California Press. Translated by Steven Rendell.
- De Vita, Gabriella E., Claudia Trillo and Alona Martinez-Perez. 2016. "Community planning and urban design in contested

- places. Some insights from Belfast”. *Journal of Urban Design*, 21:3, 320-334, DOI: 10.1080/13574809.2016.1167586
- Dikomitis, Lisa. 2005. “Three readings of a border”. *Anthropology Today* 21, 5: 7-12.
- Hirsch, Marianne. 2001. “Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory”. *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 14, 1: 5-37.
- Gaffikin, Frank, Malachy Mceldowney and Ken Sterrett. 2010. “Creating Shared Public Space in the Contested City: The Role of Urban Design. *Journal of Urban Design* 15 (4): 493–513. DOI: 10.1080/13574809.2010.502338
- Gheerawo, Rama. 2016. “Socially inclusive design: A people-centred perspective”. *Companion to Design Studies*, edited by Penny Sparke and Fiona Fisher, 304-316. London: Routledge.
- Glissant, Édouard. 1997. *Poetics of Relation*. Translated by Betsy Wing. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Glissant, Édouard. 2020. *Introduction to a Poetics of Diversity*. Translated by Celia Britton. Available online: <http://public.ebib.com/choice/PublicFullRecord.aspx?p=6230108> (accessed on 15 December 2021).
- Goker, Ayse A. 2007. “Being ‘Cypriot’ in North London: strategies, experiences and contestations”. PhD Thesis, University College London, Department of Anthropology.
- Gulari, Melehat N., Asli Börü and Julian Malins. 2011. “Towards an evolutionary understanding on the success of participatory design”. 2011 *Design Education for Creativity and Business Innovation Conference* edited by Ahmed Kovacevic, William Ion, Chris McMahon, Lyndon Buck, and Peter Hogarth, 721-726, London, UK.
- Hou, Jeffrey, Benjamin Spencer, Thaisa Way and Ken Yoco. 2015. *Now Urbanisms. The future City is here*. London: Routledge.
- Iliopoulou, Eirini and Pafsanias Karathanasis. 2014. “Towards a Radical Politics: Grassroots Urban Activism in the Walled City of Nicosia”. *The Cyprus Review* 26, 1: 169-192.
- Jones, Reece. 2012. “Spaces of refusal: rethinking sovereign power and resistance at the border”. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 102, 3:685-699. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00045608.2011.600193>
- Karahasan, Hakan. 2005. “Different narratives, different stories: the language of narrative and interpretation”. *Journal of Cyprus Studies*, 11 28-29: 115-128.
- Kliot, Nurit and Yoel Mansfeld. 1997. “The political landscape of partition: The case of Cyprus”. *Political Geography* 16, 6: 495-521.
- Mallinson, William. 2016. *Kissinger and the Invasion of Cyprus: Diplomacy in the Eastern Mediterranean*. New Castle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Mouffe, Chantal. 2005. *On the Political - Thinking in Action*. Abingdon: Routledge.



- Nancy, Jean-Luc. 1991. *Inoperative Community*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Papa, Venetia and Peter Dahlgren. 2017. *The Cypriot 'Occupy the Buffer Zone' movement: online discursive frames and civic engagement*. Oxford: Berghan books.
- Peck, Jamie. 2015. "Cities Beyond Compare?" *Regional Studies: The Journal of the Regional Studies Association* 49, 1–2: 160–182. doi: 10.1080/00343404.2014.980801
- Pullan, Wendy and Britt Baillie. 2013. *Locating Urban Conflicts – Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Everyday*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Relph, Edward. 1976. *Place and placelessness*. London: Pion.
- Rogers, R., 2017. *A place for all people: Life, Architecture and the Fair Society*. Edinburgh; London: Canongate Books Limited.
- Tagliacollo, Emma. 2011. "I confine di Cipro: il "muro" di Nicosia". *Ricerche di S/Confine*, vol. II, n.1. Available on <https://www.repository.unipr.it/bitstream/1889/1546/1/TAGLIACOLLO-confini.pdf> Last accessed 15 December 2021.
- Webster, Craig. and Timothy, Dallen J. 2006. "Travelling to the 'Other Side': the Occupied Zone and Greek Cypriot Views of Crossing the Green Line". *Tourism Geographies*, 8 (2): 162-181.

**Melehat Nil Güları** is an Assistant Professor at Audencia business school. She completed her PhD at Robert Gordon University (UK) in 2014. She was a researcher on several high impact research projects including H2020 GROW Citizen Science Observatory, Design in Action AHRC Knowledge Exchange Hub and Centre for Design Innovation (SEEKIT). Her expertise focuses on design thinking, co-design and participatory innovation methods. Her current research interests focus on the role of art and design in business and entrepreneurship, society and ecology in identifying issues and driving change and innovation. Her current work draws on Glissant, Haraway and Arendt to address these issues. She has authored a number of publications on topics metaphors, design expertise, innovation support, organisational change and knowledge exchange, and citizen science.

**Cecilia Zecca** is a postdoctoral research associate at Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design at Royal College of Art in London. She has experience in urban regeneration and interdisciplinary collaborations. Her interests focus on design processes and their cultural, social impacts within cities. She is currently working as a postdoctoral research associate on a project focused on innovative later living housing models and funded by Innovate UK. The work is developed through a collaboration between Cartwright Pickard Architects and the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design. Cecilia received her PhD from Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, in 2019. The research work contributed to practical process of urban and architectural regeneration by developing methodologies for establishing periodical workshops between universities and local authorities as a form of cross-sector collaboration.