

Trade and Exchange in Nicosia's Shared Realm

Ermou Street in the 1940s and 1950s

ANITA BAKSHI

A river once ran through the center of Nicosia's walled city. It was diverted by the city's Venetian rulers, and the "riverbed streets" later formed the backbone of the east-west route through the city—a major commercial corridor that ran along Ermou Street.¹ It is along these streets that Cypriots from all communities came together—streets that contained a mixture of Greek, Turkish, and Armenian businesses (Marangou 1995). This historic urban topography has endured, with most of these riverbed streets falling within the United Nations-controlled Buffer Zone, radically transformed from spaces of cooperation into lines of division. This division, first termed the Mason-Dixon Line, a wire fence following Paphos and Ermou Streets in the late 1950s, gelled in 1963, and became permanent with the arrival of Turkish troops on the island in 1974 (Hocknell 2001). What is commonly known about this part of the city is that it was an important commercial area, well used by both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, as well as other ethnic minorities, prior to partition. The importance of this part of the city is recognized in that it was one of the few ethnically mixed areas of a city otherwise defined by the Ottoman *mahalle* structure of generally segregated neighborhoods. The significance of this area is often mentioned in other texts that outline the history of the city, and it is also referenced in idealized reconstructions of a past of brotherhood and unity when Greek and Turkish Cypriots were sharing this area. Yet, the scholarship dealing with this site is thin, and little detailed information about it is available, thus enabling reductive depictions that serve these reconstructions.² This is a history that had remained unwritten, and had not found its way

into public discourse so that we might interrogate it as a more substantive resource.

This chapter will attempt to rebuild the lost topographies of the Buffer Zone—spatial, social, and commercial—using the few resources available and relying most heavily on the memories of those who knew this area in the 1950s, before intercommunal conflict changed the nature of the city. It examines what these memories can reveal about the slow process of change from a city of coexistence to the spatial segregation of the two communities. I use Simmel’s discussion of “the stranger” to explore how the spatial framework of the marketplace street supported both the phenomena of “nearness” and “remoteness” as the street changed from a space of coexistence to a site of conflict. These memories aid in the reconstruction of a clearer picture of the idealized description of the “mixed city” of Nicosia, using memories associated with the spatial framework of the Ermou marketplace to broaden understandings of social relations between the city’s diverse communities prior to division.

These streets contained many shops, almost all of which were long and narrow, lit only by the entrance and an *arsera*, or small high window. Therefore the tall wide doors were often left open, creating a rich and vibrant streetscape. Prior to division, residents from all over the city came to shop in these streets, where merchants and farmers from surrounding villages traded their goods. Today, however, this part of the city is nearly a reverse image of this past incarnation, its activity and density replaced by emptiness and silence. To use Dylan Trigg’s words regarding his experience of the temporality of ruins: “There is a sense of being displaced here, of having come to a scene too late, as though the presence is defined by what fails to materialize in the present” (Trigg 2009: 98).

While the nature of the Cyprus problem has changed over the years, being further complicated by developments since 1974, such as the demographic impact of large numbers of migrants from mainland Turkey and the accession of the Republic of Cyprus to the EU in 2004, in many ways the area within this set of lines has remained the same since 1974. The layout of its streets and shops remains unchanged, and on some buildings signs still hang that advertise businesses once located there. A journalist allowed to tour the Buffer Zone inside the walled city in 2010 writes: “We come across signs bearing the names of famous entrepreneurs who range from brewers of beer to importers of cars and electrical goods: Fotos Fotiades, Kozakis Galatariotis Bros, Philippou Bros, Hadzikyriakos and others” (Christofi 2010). Because many buildings in this area were constructed from mud-brick, they have been slowly eroding, and there have been many roof and facade collapses. The Nicosia

Master Plan (NMP) team has worked to reinforce several buildings, but they are only allowed to do as much as is necessary to prevent their collapse, supporting crumbling facades with wooden scaffolding.³ Thus a peculiar situation exists in this swath of land in the center of the city: buildings cannot be altered or demolished, and the effects of time can clearly be witnessed on their scarred figures.

The rationale for studying Nicosia through an investigation of place-based memories is connected to the problematic nature of official historical narratives related to contested histories, where certain events, chronologies, and perspectives are remembered while others remain unregistered, officially relegated to the realm of the forgotten. In regions of conflict, histories are contested and competing, often resulting in national narratives that are heavily imposed through official channels of history and memory. I will argue in this chapter that in Cyprus, where official repositories of history like archives and textbooks can be heavily manipulated, an investigation of *place* can prove a valuable resource for understanding and challenging these competing histories.

The “Cyprus Problem” today remains unresolved, and the fate of the Buffer Zone, which stretches for 180 kilometers through the island, remains suspended; but perhaps the most contested terrain of all in Cyprus today is that of history. Official Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot historical narratives represent the contested past in starkly different ways (Papadakis 2008). These divergent narratives present different chronologies, where different periods and events are remembered and forgotten by each side. Additionally, Nicosia in the past is represented in different ways: either as a city of brotherhood, where different communities lived together in complete harmony, or as a city segregated along communal lines (Bakshi 2012a). These factors have made it difficult to understand the nature of everyday coexistence and conflict between communities in Cyprus, necessitating the development of new theoretical and methodological tools arrived at through a close investigation of peoples’ individual and collective engagements that can enrich our understandings of this space. Such tools can allow us to describe how diverse populations negotiate, through actual relations, the daily practices of sharing space and living together, and also to understand how enmity is created in the transition to conflict. In this chapter, I attempt to do this through a detailed spatial investigation from my perspective as an architect, looking closely at the spatial configuration and materiality of the Ermou marketplace and how it functioned in structuring social relations.

Often the Buffer Zone is rendered simply as a line on the map. But it does have thickness—a thickness that extends beyond its edges as the *de facto* Buffer Zone, neglected and sparsely populated contiguous

areas, which radiate out from these edges deeper into the walled city. This chapter will argue that this part of the city has always “extended beyond” its apparent borders. The Ermou marketplace streets, while of a different nature than the rest of the city, introduced cohesion and structural integrity to the city as a whole. Market areas generally encourage the appearance of other urban activities and programs at their edges. These are areas of the city that have their own associations and symbolic meanings: areas that operate on a different clock from the rest of the city, known for trade, exchange, and a multitude of possibilities (Calabi 2004). This chapter, in rebuilding these topographies, aims to highlight the importance of these shared streets to the functioning of Nicosia as a mixed city of diverse populations.

A more comprehensive rendering of the Ermou marketplace will assist in broadening understandings of the nature of coexistence of diverse populations in mixed cities.⁴ This is especially important in contested or divided cities where, as in Nicosia, much of the rhetoric about the past centers on the city as *either* intermixed or segregated. Scholars have challenged this reductive understanding of place, proposing instead a more dynamic and flexible understanding of cities. Doreen Massey describes space as a composition of multiple trajectories, reading it as a medium that involves time and allows for the simultaneity of multiple stories within its framework. This allows for an understanding of the city as an entity that is neither “diverse” nor “homogenous.” She views space as “the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; as the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist; as the sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity” (Massey 2005: 8). This research attempts to examine Nicosia along these lines, as a city where, prior to the 1950s, different communities were dependent upon each other, while at the same time maintaining varying degrees of separation. The picture of life that emerges from this research falls outside of the overly strict definitions of the city as either intermixed or segregated. Rather, the city’s mixed nature was in some ways facilitated by its segregation.

The Buffer Zone is a gap in the city—a physical gap and a gap of the imagination, separating differing interpretations of the past. There also exists a gap in knowledge about this place and the way of life it at one time encapsulated. The limited existing scholarship on this site reveals that it was once the city’s main marketplace, well-used by all Cypriots, and that there are two divergent official narratives about life in the city before 1974 (Papadakis 2005). I argue that this makes it important to now go back to the city as the base, and then rebuild a richer and more nuanced depiction of life in the most important and ethnically mixed

urban space of the city. This investigation of everyday life complements the histories, and it also narrates, using individuals' stories, how people can become alienated and separated, even while sharing the same city center.

The reconstruction of the topographies of the Buffer Zone was accomplished through a process of piecing together information from different sources—including archives, newspaper advertisements, commercial catalogues,⁵ land registers, and photographic surveys—and emplacing them on maps of the walled city.⁶ These maps and visual prompts were then used in loosely structured interviews with Greek Cypriot, Turkish Cypriot, and Armenian Cypriot shopkeepers who once lived or worked in this part of the city, allowing themes to emerge.⁷ The spatial framework of this site was used to trigger memories in the people who once worked there, enabling them to provide narratives describing a lost way of life and the relatively undocumented dynamics of intercommunal commercial and social relations. A study and discussion of place allows access to these types of memories because these places provided the setting or background for the activities of daily life; and they serve now as a setting for memory. As this chapter will outline, the Buffer Zone was and is so crucial to the functioning of this city and the relations between its populations that it certainly merits a closer, more detailed investigation—one that zooms in, to elucidate how the city functioned as a whole, and how it broke apart.⁸

Life of the Ermou Marketplace

By tapping into the resource of these maps and narratives a scenario can be composed of the rich street life along Ermou in the early 1950s—of narrow shops with workers sitting outside, and of recognizable street vendors with their distinct calls for advertising goods. Most of the shopkeepers did not remember every detail about life in this area, nor were they able to remember time frames with much specificity. Rather, their remembrances were of certain images and sounds—memories of moments and places that have been strong enough to persist. It is these memories that begin to reveal the outlines of the narrow shops of the Ermou marketplace.⁹

These streets would fill with people early in the morning. Ali, whose father ran a grocery on Ermou, remembers opening the shop at 6:30 AM and selling around three hundred loaves of bread most mornings within the first two hours of business. His shop was located around the corner from a Greek merchant who ran one of the city's most recogniz-

able businesses, Tsaiousis 1,000,000 Things. Their shops were near the intersection of Ermou and Goldsmiths' Street, also known in Turkish as *Köprü Başı*, the "bridgehead," as it historically was the location of one of the main bridges that spanned the river. In Greek it was known as *Stavro Pazaro*, the "cross-market."¹⁰ This intersection could be considered the center of the marketplace streets, and many important merchants were located here. Monyatis, Klerides, Agrotis, and Kokinos were popular glassware shops. Nearby was a large KEO shop, selling the famous beer of Cyprus since 1951, as well as Platanis Wines and Spirits. Just to the east were smaller, but equally well-known shops, such as the Galip Grocery, Camberis Clothing, Varnavas Nicolaou the timber merchant, Irfan Hussein's large retail store, and the Çıraklı confectionary.

The shopkeepers' memories describe the crowded nature of the street with people sitting outside of their shops, and at outdoor cafes during siesta time, which lasted from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM during the summer. This was a mandated time of rest, enforced by the British, and people were required to close their workshops for these three hours. At 1:00 PM every working day a horn would sound from the nearby power station, marking the beginning of siesta. While some went home for lunch and a nap, others would sit at the cafes playing cards or backgammon. They sat on traditional Cypriot chairs, wooden with woven seats, in the cafes or outside of their shops. A frequent sight on the streets would be a boy holding a metal tray, delivering short cups of strong coffee. The streets were often enlivened by coppersmiths and blacksmiths who would take their work outside. Tassos recalls that as a child he saw two men sitting on Iphestos Street, where most of the coppersmiths were located, hitting a piece of metal and singing a song: "Ash gollarna, ash gollarna, sargolari"—a version of the Turkish song, "aç kollarını, aç kollarını, sarıl bana"—"open your arms and hug me." Photographs from 1957 show what Tassos may have seen: Coppersmiths sit on the street, hammering away at large pans held up between their knees, next to stacked pots and pans of all sizes. These were streets where daily rituals took place in accordance with a common clock, and where different traditions and languages came together.

Just as Iphestos was the street of the coppersmiths, other streets in the marketplace were also known for specific trades. Goldsmiths' was the street of jewelers. Arabacılar Street, "the coachmen's street," was one of the main stops for *amaxa*, horse-drawn carriages, and was lined with carpenters' workshops. Arasta Street was largely known as a place to shop for shoes and leather goods, and there were many Armenian merchants selling leather, shoes, and textiles.¹¹ Among these streets were several outdoor gathering spots such as Platanos, located at the inter-

section of Ermou and Militou, where a large tree provided shade from the strong Cyprus sun, and many people would gather here throughout the day. Towards the eastern end of Ermou Street, where it became considerably wider, were several factories processing sesame seed oil. The leftover from this process, a delicious paste called *kouzvos*, was given away to the neighborhood children. Many factories were to be found at this end of Ermou including the Klitos soda factory, the Kulabis flour mill, and Kyriakos Anastasiades furniture factory, well known for the sign above the door that read "VISIT US FOR YOUR OWN BENEFIT." And finally, at the end of Ermou, was the Olympiakos Football Club. Just as individual shops were known for certain features, different parts of Ermou Street were defined by distinct characteristics.

In the center of this activity was the main municipal market called Pantopolio in Greek, which means a place to buy everything, and pronounced as Bandabulya in Turkish.¹² This market, located at the intersection of three of the most important commercial streets in the city—Ermou, Goldsmiths', and Arasta—could be considered the hinge-point of the city. Everybody shopped in this market, and it was the main outlet for produce and meat. Mustafa, a butcher who has been working at Bandabulya ever since he was a young child in the 1940s, remembers the many languages spoken there—Greek, Turkish, English, and even some Arabic. The market was very mixed, although the Greek butchers were in a separate section selling pork, and it was always crowded. In one of the rare memoirs written about this period, Taner Baybars describes his impression of this place as a child in the 1950s:

We went to the closed marketplace on foot, walking along the road called Arasta which was the hub of haberdashery, lingerie and buttons. That smell from each shop, cool, starchy. The market was always cool. ... The whole place was a mixture of smells. There were rows. Each row smelled differently. One of spices, another one of vegetables and fruit, and another one of fresh blood dripping from newly slaughtered beasts hanging on sharp, shiny hooks. (Baybars 1970: 47)

Photos of Pantopolio taken in the 1950s show that the activity extended out from the large entrances of the market onto the surrounding streets. Just outside the northern entrance, located at the end of Arasta and in front of the Aya Sofya Mosque,¹³ a thick border of vendors defines the edge of the street. Goods for sale are laid out, and vendors push carts with ready-to-eat food. It was not only the buildings and places that defined Ermou, but these vendors were part of the common vocabulary of the streets as well, and, more importantly, part of the common language

shared by all communities in Nicosia. This language was composed of the repetitive practices of the daily life of the city—practices that were known and recognized by all.

Many shopkeepers remembered the vendor who sold chickens from cages in a street just off of Goldsmiths' and the petrol-seller who travelled the streets with a donkey-cart. But most popular of all were the sellers of sweets and refreshments. They would push their carts of *shiamali*—made from semolina, yogurt, and syrup—and *muhallebi*, the characteristic starch pudding of Cyprus, making their rounds through the marketplace, especially in the evening hours. A variety of *muhallebi* was made from milk, and the most coveted ones were those that came out blackened, the sugar slightly burnt and caramelized. In the mornings vendors would sell a variety of breakfast rolls, the warm and soft *koullaria* as well as bread rolls baked with *halloumi* or *kaskavalli*—a rich cheese with holes that the oil runs through when warm. Perhaps the most interesting vendor was the Turkish woman who sold Oxinдие Lemonade, which she carried in a tank on her back. She wore a belt stocked with glasses, bending over and pouring the lemonade from the tank into these glasses.

The vendors had their own unique calls for advertising their products. “Salebi vraaaaazi. . .” —“hot salep”—the men would call out who sold this sweet winter drink made from crushed almonds. Some even had their own lyrical sayings; particularly well-remembered was a Maronite man who sold *pastellaki*, a mixture of nuts and honey pressed into flat bars. He would walk up and down the marketplace streets two or three times a day calling out:

<i>To pastellaki to kalo,</i>	The pastellaki is good,
<i>Mono ego to poulo,</i>	The only one who sells it is I,
<i>Olo kouna kai athasi,</i>	All nuts and almonds,
<i>Opkios den fai tha hasi</i>	Whoever does not eat it loses.

These vendors and their calls were recognized by all, and in this unassuming way different communities shared these aspects of everyday life in the city.

While this area contained hundreds of small shops, cafes, vendors, and gathering spots, there were several in particular that came up repeatedly in many of the shopkeepers' mappings and remembrances. Many shopkeepers would gather in the taverns on Ermou in the evenings: “a bachelor's life was there, at the bar,” says Christos. While the rest of Ermou was quiet in these late hours, the bars and taverns, especially Antonakis, Kikas, and Iraklis, were always crowded. Antonakis

was a small, narrow bar where people would stop in for a quick drink and a light snack. Tassos remembers being intrigued by these places as a child, wondering about the clear, colorless beverage served there. Through the open doors he would watch the men sitting at small metal tables, eating from plates of olives and halloumi cheese; bottles of One Star Cognac sat on the tables.

Several popular restaurants sold *pacha*, a hearty soup made by slowly cooking together sheep head or stomach, vinegar, garlic, salt, and pepper. These restaurants were very popular both for breakfast as well as for a late-night meal, opening around 3:00 AM to prepare the soup for breakfast for workers who would begin arriving at 5:00 AM. The most popular was Hadjigeorgios' restaurant, located just north of Ermou. Some claim that Hadjigeorgios would carry cooked sheep eyes, considered a real delicacy, in his apron, popping them into the soup of his special customers. Another popular *pacha* shop was owned by an Arab from Beirut, who spoke excellent Turkish and also served hummus and pastries similar to *börek*. Vazken, an Armenian leather merchant who ran a shop on Arasta, remembers that his family would start work very early, leaving their neighborhood near Victoria Road around dawn, to return to their club only in the evening. They would open up shop at 7:00 AM, breaking for a 9:00 AM meal at Parsegh's kebab shop, run by an Armenian who had migrated from Turkey. Some claimed that his was the most popular shop in all of Nicosia. Ermou also hosted dozens of small cafes, which were especially crowded during the siesta hours. Of these, everybody had his or her favorite. Many remember the smell of coffee from Özerlat, a coffee roasters operating since the early 1900s near the southern entrance to Pantopolio. Another roaster, Tahsin Bey, was known for his unique method of preparing coffee without a grinding machine, using a hammer instead. Many *hans*, or inns, were also located on Ermou, known for specific characteristics and functions (Bakshi 2012b).

Legendary characters were also housed in these streets. Many shopkeepers told stories about Kutsofannis, who owned a small tobacco shop on Ermou. Many made of fun of him, recalling that he was a bit slow, a bit fat, and had a funny way of walking and talking. When Tassos was a child, his father, a soldier in World War I, collected his ration of cigarettes, taking them to Kutsofannis' shop to resell for cash. Tassos would stand outside the shop, and wonderingly stare up the steps at the "Cigarette Buddha." The common knowledge about this character can best be illustrated by an anecdote. Andreas recalls a time when an actor, who of course knew about Kutsofannis, went to his shop to play a joke on him, speaking in the same manner, and walking with a limp. When the

actor left, Kutsofannis saw him straighten up and walk properly from the door. He became very angry, yelling curses down the street after the actor; and of course, all the shopkeepers on the street laughed. Places on Ermou were known not only for their physical characteristics or the goods they sold, but also for the personalities associated with them. The Ermou marketplace might almost be imagined as a framework in which these characters, sounds, and daily practices were located.

The nature of this area changed greatly beginning in 1958. At the end of two months of arson, destruction, and murder in Nicosia, fifty-six Greeks and fifty-three Turks had died (Panteli 1990: 180). Even after order was restored and negotiations were underway for the eventual independence of a united Cyprus, the city was left divided in crucial ways. I have described this in more detail elsewhere, but for the purposes of this discussion, Pantopolio can serve as example of this change. The tone of an article regarding the municipal market in the Turkish press on 1 July 1958 is telling of the increasing territorial claims being staked in the once mixed commercial center:

The Lefkoşa Municipal Market, which had been closed for the last three weeks, opened yesterday. ... Numerous British soldiers with machine guns and billy clubs can also be found occupying the market. ... The market's Greek Cypriot shop owners appear to be gone. ... I met with the Turkish butchers and green grocers who had the chance to settle back into their old shops again. ... The Turkish owners say that the market already belonged to the Evkaf, and therefore it has always been Turkish. They also made the point that there are four municipal markets in the Greek Cypriot areas, and therefore the Greek Cypriots should not claim a right to this market.¹⁴

Thus after 1958 the Greek butchers and grocers never again sold their goods in Pantopolio. At the end of 1958 several major Ermou marketplace institutions including Bandabulya and the *hans*—both of which had once encapsulated a particular way of life and the overlapping of spatial, commercial, and social topographies familiar to both communities—were irretrievably transformed. The intercommunal violence lasted for only two months, but the damage to the city was much more permanent. The topography of the Ermou streets was transformed by the beginnings of division—demarcated by fences, barriers, and patrolling military groups—giving visual expression to the separation of the two communities. Like a zipper pulling apart, the Ermou streets became divided as Turkish-Cypriot businesses relocated north and Turkish-Cypriot residents of these streets left their homes as refugees.



Figure 4.1. “View Near St. Sophia - Late 1950s.” The main municipal market Pantapolio/Bandabulya appears in the background. Photograph from The Press and Information Office Archive, 20C.151 (27), Ministry of the Interior, Republic of Cyprus.



Figure 4.2. A portion of the map created through discussions and mapping sessions with the shopkeepers. Köprü Başı / Stavro Pazarı was a major landmark in the city and many shopkeepers were able to recall shops that once were located in this part of the city.

Exclusion within Inclusiveness

It was important to here describe the Ermou marketplace in such great detail because the depiction of these streets is critical to understanding how the city functioned as a whole. It is clear that many aspects of daily life in Nicosia's marketplace were shared and understood by Cypriots from all communities. But at the same time, the city was divided in other ways: structured into distinct *mahalles*, neighborhoods or quarters that were most often ethnically segregated.¹⁵

While these quarters were generally divided along ethnic lines, other public, civic, and commercial areas in the city were quite mixed. The Ermou marketplace perhaps best exemplifies this, but the commercial Ledra and Regena Streets were also used by all communities, as well as Sarayönü Square, considered the clerical center of the city. In this sense, the city was inclusive in that it provided spaces that were shared by all communities, allowing for the participation of all residents in a common urban life. At the same time, this was to some extent limited to certain areas, and the morphology of the city included spaces and urban practices that were formed around exclusion; there were differing degrees of inclusion and exclusion in the city. There were “public” institutions within certain neighborhoods, but these were mainly for the use of defined communities. For example, the Armenians, who were well represented as merchants throughout the city, had their own club, school, and church clustered around their main residential quarter near Victoria Road. The lives of the Armenians of Nicosia were “largely separate” from those of the Greeks and Turks (Pattie 1997: 56), yet significant contact occurred through children’s play, business matters, and shops. Their community life was focused around their club:

By 1925 the Armenian club had been functioning in Nicosia for twenty years.... In the library ... were numerous books and periodicals from around the diaspora. ... There was also a large room used for dances and meetings, and a small canteen from which coffee and food were served. Upstairs was a space for backgammon and card playing; above that were more rooms, where a few poor families lived. ... [There was] a cultural hour at midday on Sundays, after church. These were attended by both men and women and included poetry, music, dramatic recitations, and lectures. People from the community played instruments or sang, and occasionally artists or speakers would come from outside. (Ibid.: 73)

This was a community space and a community life that others did not have, nor expected to have, access to. The Latin community, located near Paphos Gate, had their own space near the Maronite Church. Likewise, the Greek and Turkish communities had their own institutions and spaces for gathering. This social structure existed alongside the understanding of the city as areas and spaces with varying degrees of inclusiveness or exclusion, one that consisted of realms that were shared to differing degrees. Even some aspects of the commercial life of the city were segregated: For instance, there was an order of Turkish tanners, marked by their special sashes and with their own initiation ceremonies in the Ömerye hamam (Bağışkan 2009: 469). Yet the Turkish and Greek

merchants and tradesmen came together in the Ermou bazaar. As Bryant notes in her introductory discussion of “multi-scalar sovereignties,” there was an understanding of the city as a number of overlapping public and private zones, not one monolithic understanding of the city as “shared space” to which every citizen had the “right” to access.

Additionally, Ermou Street was a very different space for women than it was for men. Vathoula, an 83-year-old Greek Cypriot woman interviewed for this research, remembers the Ermou of the 1950s as being crowded with stores that sold jewelry, lace, fabrics, and shoes. Few women worked in the shops, but many shopped in these streets. While she remembers noticing restaurants and coffee shops from the street, she would never stop there. These were places that were only for men, and if women even glanced inside they would be labeled with a “bad name.” Young girls never went to the market alone; they would always be accompanied by mothers, grandmothers, or brothers. The structuring of the Ermou marketplace, then, excluded women from certain parts of the city. As Vathoula’s testimony illustrates, it was not considered proper to even *look* into certain places.¹⁶ The differential access allowed to men and women exemplifies what was then an accepted structuring of the city into zones of inclusion and exclusion for different groups—much in the same way that it was accepted that the Turks had their own *nargile* cafes, the Greeks their own taverns, and the Armenians had their club.

There is much in contemporary writing about cities that praises diversity and multiculturalism, and this narrative, as a nostalgic trope, is especially dominant in official Greek Cypriot understandings of what the old city was like. But we can see through the example of the limited access that women had to certain places on Ermou, and the example of the Armenian Club, that this utopic narrative of urban inclusiveness does not stand up to close scrutiny. Rather, the city was inherently structured as different zones, and it was well understood which populations had access to which places. Nicosia worked as a mixed city because of a spatial structure and communal understanding of the city as one that was divided into areas with differing levels of public access and private exclusivity. This overlapping could roughly, for the purposes of this discussion, be divided into three categorical realms, although greater subtlety and nuance would assuredly allow for more. Each of these realms allowed the residents differing levels of participation in the public life of the city, and thus enabled varying degrees of interaction with members of other communities.

The most mixed realm of the city consisted of shared commercial areas, most importantly the Ermou streets. This area structured daily life into a system that was repetitive: certain daily patterns and timings were

followed by all. This allowed for recognition of people that one would get to know over time, enabling relationships of secondary familiarity. A reference to Georg Simmel's analysis of "the stranger" and human relationships can shed some light on why this realm was so important. In his discussion of "nearness" and "remoteness" Simmel claims that the stranger is someone that we know, and in knowing them we understand that they are not part of "us":

The unity of nearness and remoteness involved in every human relation is organized, in the phenomenon of the stranger, in a way which may be most briefly formulated by saying that in the relationship to him distance means that he, who is close by, is far, and strangeness means that he, who is also far, is actually near. (Simmel 1950: 402–8)

These strangers are not really "conceived as individuals" in the sense that we do not think about their individual qualities, but rather generalize them into a group that is characterized by their being different to us. The shared realm provided by the Ermou streets allowed for the recognition of specific differences—the elements that begin to form the outlines of individuals, distinguishing them from the group as a whole. These outlines may remain hazy. They need not be deep friendships, and indeed they probably often were not, but they do help to create a public life in which the individual can operate comfortably—what Sylvaine Bulle in this volume describes as "co-presence."

Unlike the Jerusalem described by Bulle, however, Nicosia of this period was one that may have experienced the sorts of everyday tensions described by Bryant in her introduction, but where there was little overt hostility. This allowed for a particular habitus to emerge, one constituted by the repetitive nature of interactions and facilitated by the stable pattern of streets and intersections. As Doreen Massey states:

One of the truly productive characteristics of material spatiality [is] its potential for the happenstance juxtaposition of previously unrelated trajectories, that business of walking around a corner and bumping into alterity, of having ... to get on with neighbors ... what is important is that contact is involved and some form of social negotiation. (Massey 2004: 94)

The spatial characteristics of the Ermou marketplace created the possibilities for such activities and mediation. This part of the city had functioned as the main bazaar area for centuries, and its material and spatial characteristics developed because of this location and function. It was once a riverbed, and the narrow and twisting roads that were laid out

here were originally unpaved market lanes that followed the course of the river. It was the main east-west route through the city, linking two city gates, so *hans* were established along its course. Plots in this market area were divided to create narrow lots. The wide doors fronting on Ermou provided the main natural light for these narrow shops, and were often left open to the street making the shopkeepers visible to passersby. The few squares and wide streets became places where vendors would establish themselves into recognizable patterns. People could be seen sitting outside of their shops, walking in the streets selling their goods, or resting in cafes during siesta. Thus trade considerations created this particular spatial configuration, and then the material reality of the spaces served to create a well-functioning shared realm for the city—a space that allowed for visual recognition, contact and social negotiation. It was the praxis of the city that allowed for this. In her introduction to this volume, Bryant proposes using the term “constructive ambiguity” to think about a process that allows “certain boundaries to remain in place while finding common ground where it is possible” (p. 23). In this way, differences are bracketed, allowing it to be retained while everyday practices continue. The Ermou marketplace provided a spatial field that could accommodate this kind of negotiation.

The second realm was that of institutions within, or in close proximity to this mixed area: cafes, taverns, or clubs that were segregated and were for the exclusive use of one group or another. These allowed for certain moments when one could withdraw from the shared realm. And finally, the third realm is that of the *mahalle*, neighborhoods or quarters that were most often ethnically segregated. This allowed for a complete retreat from the mixed, public life of the city into the comfort and familiarity of the *mahalle*. It is important to state here that some of these neighborhoods, such as Tahtakale and Ömerye, were ethnically quite mixed, and here the familiarity with neighbors also became a defining feature of the *mahalle*, outside of ethnicity.

Conclusion: Loss of a Structure of Meaning

While the walled city is mythologically depicted either as a space of comprehensive coexistence or total separation, a closer investigation reveals a more complex urban structure. Communities came together for trade and commerce, working together but generally living in separate quarters. Most of the Turkish neighborhoods were north of the old riverbed, with the exception of Tahtakale and Ömerye to the south. Most of the Greeks lived in the south, with the exception of Ayios Lucas in the north. Still, there were many places in the marketplace streets

frequented by both communities. These were the tacitly agreed upon places for public intermingling, while intimate neighborhood spots, certain cafes, or ethnic institutions like the Armenian Club, were private, used exclusively by certain communities. An understanding was in place that the city was composed of a number of realms of varying degrees of exclusion or integration.

It is important to introduce this distinction and this gradation into the discussion, as this is lacking in most depictions of the city. For example, a Greek-Cypriot text, *Peaceful Co-existence in Cyprus under British Rule*, shows a photograph taken in the 1950s at the Women's Market, of Greeks and Turks shopping side by side. This text, using such photographs, seeks to render the old city as a site of unity, prior to 1974 (Kyrris 1977). Yet, these kinds of narratives leave out the forces that changed the city from the 1950s to 1974. Rather than stopping with such photographic "evidence," it is necessary to continue to examine the resource of place, to trace the devolution of the city toward complete division. From the shopkeepers' memories outlined above, it certainly does seem as if these streets contained a common way of life that was recognized by many—a world of recognizable faces and images, a rhythm consisting of the regular flow of known sounds and daily patterns of movement, governed by a common clock. Halbwachs has argued that "[h]abits related to a specific physical setting resist the forces tending to change them" (Halbwachs 1992: 133). This understanding is limited by his assumption of the given dynamics of a stable society. Different dynamics present in sites of conflict, and it is obvious that it was not possible to resist the forces that changed Nicosia from a mixed city to a divided city.

The current material reality of the Buffer Zone represents the loss of a collective way of life. Here an entire web of streets, buildings, occupants, and sounds has been destroyed. While these streets are still in place, the mud-brick buildings that define their edges are eroding away. Signs have rusted, walls have collapsed, and the life that sustained these market-place streets is gone. What has been lost is what Peter Loizos, in his study of the 1974 refugees from the Cypriot village of Argaki, has called a "structure of meaning." This refers not just to the loss of homes, but rather the loss of highly unique and particular homes, "in which most of their most important social experiences had taken place ... identified with labour, life-history, taste and personality of their owners, and they are in each case a unique combination of subject (owner) and object (construction)." Loizos argues that a refugee can be given a new place to live, a new plot of land, or a new business, "but in the most profound sense, he cannot be given his home again" (Loizos 1977: 8–9). The same can be said of those who were forced to leave the Ermou streets—either

in 1958, 1963, or 1974—due to political developments and intercommunal conflict. What they cannot find again, what has been lost, is the common experience of the mixed city. The closure of these streets meant the disruption of the everyday lives of all Cypriots. It meant the loss of the smell of warm *koullaria* breakfast rolls sold on the street, the rhythmic hammering of metal workers, the cries of the salep seller, the endless rounds of jokes about Kutsofannis, the crowds flowing into Pantopolio/Bandabulya from two entrances in the north and the south, the end of quick drinks of cognac at Antonakis, and the end of long discussions under the shade of Platanos. What has been lost is not just this collective memory, but the collective city itself—the way of life that had existed in the shared realm of the Ermou marketplace.

Again, Simmel's discussion of "the stranger" is useful in thinking about the change in the nature of social relations between Greeks and Turks in Cyprus:

With the stranger one has only certain more general qualities in common, whereas the relation to more organically connected persons is based on the commonness of specific differences from merely general features. (Simmel 1950: 407)¹⁷

This statement can be used to analyze the changing nature of relations between shopkeepers from different communities. In their remembrances of these streets, shopkeepers spoke about "organically connected persons" such as Kutsofannis or Hadjigeorgos, and other well-known personalities. They spoke of the "commonness of specific differences" such as "he was fat," "he walked funny," "he had a quick temper," "he was good about extending credit." These qualities later changed to "merely general features" about "the Greeks" or "the Turks" as the shopkeepers reminisced about later periods with statements such as "the Greeks were cunning" or "the Turks wanted too much." There was a shift in the dynamics of personal relations between Greeks and Turks, moving those from the other community into the position of "the stranger."

This detailed study of Ermou has attempted to again bring out the "commonness of specific differences." Place-based research has much to offer in bringing to light alternative narratives in contested environments where alternative histories may be unavailable or obscured by official versions. The retrieval of memories from the resource provided by the Ermou marketplace does not serve simply to enable nostalgia for this lost past. Rather, if a shared future is to be possible in Cyprus, a recognition of a shared connection to place, by all Cypriots, can serve as a useful foundation for dialogue and exchange.

Anita Bakshi teaches in the Department of Landscape Architecture and the Cultural Heritage and Preservation Studies (CHAPS) Program in the Department of Art History at Rutgers University. Following several years in architectural practice in Chicago, California, and Istanbul, she received her Ph.D. in the History and Theory of Architecture from Cambridge University, where she was a member of the Conflict in Cities research group. She is interested in the relationship between memory and materiality and engages in design research that looks for new forms for monuments, memorials, and other commemorative structures.

Notes

1. The name of this street in English is *Hermes Street*, and in Greek and Turkish it is *Ermou* or *Ermu*, pronounced the same. In this chapter I will refer to it as *Ermou*, as this is the name by which it is recognized by all shopkeepers interviewed for this research.
2. I have described elsewhere the significance of this area in the construction of the differing Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot “myths” of the city (Bakshi 2014).
3. The NMP is a bicomunal initiative involving the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities. It was established in 1981, largely at the initiative of the mayors of the two sides of the city. Since that time they have worked to create an overall master plan for the city.
4. There is significant scholarship that addresses this issue in cities in the former Ottoman sphere. For instance, Gilson Miller and Bertagnin have looked beyond the dimensions of segregation in these communities, arguing that apparent fixed boundaries were perhaps more fluid than previously thought (2010).
5. The *Cyprus Industrial, Commercial, and Professional Guide* and *The Cyprus General Directory* contain listings and advertisements of businesses in the old city prior to division. For this research I consulted annual issues dating from 1946–1951. These catalogues feature advertisements for many shops along formerly important commercial streets such as Ermou, Arasta, Yeşil Gazino, Kykko, Ledra, and Libertis Streets.
6. As the existing maps gave no indication of street addresses, it was necessary to use partial Evkaf property registers and photographs of buildings taken during the Buffer Zone Survey in order to connect the building plots with door numbers. Issues of the *Cyprus Mail* newspaper from the 1940s and 1950s provided additional information about shop addresses through advertisements published by vendors in the back pages.
7. I conducted a series of interviews with these shopkeepers in Nicosia, meeting with them regularly in 2010–11. Eleven Greek Cypriots, twelve Turkish Cypriots, and two Armenian Cypriots were interviewed. The names of individuals appearing in the text have been anonymized.

8. As Dennis Cosgrove has stated, urban archeology works by “mapping the stratigraphy of material deposits stretched across former urban space.” These mappings then can be used to “reconstruct not only a city’s physical appearance but also its social, political, commercial and religious life” (1986: 169).
9. Unless otherwise noted, most of the material in this section comes from interviews conducted with the shopkeepers.
10. Interviews with the shopkeepers revealed that different communities at times used common names to describe places in Nicosia, and in other cases described them using linguistically specific referents.
11. At the foot of Arasta was Lokmacı Krikor, an Armenian maker of *lokma*, fried sweet dough, who unwittingly gave the name to the barricade that was to be built in front of his shop in 1964, the Lokmacı Barikat, which is the name by which the Ledra Street crossing is known today in Turkish.
12. While Pantopolio was the main market, there were smaller weekly markets as well such as the *Gynaikobazaro*, the Women’s Market, which was also mixed. This market was south of Ermou, and bordered on one side by the popular north-south commercial Ledra Street. An open structure, consisting of two sets of slender columns supporting a wooden pediment roof with arched vault, defined the crowded market.
13. This former Gothic cathedral, which had been commonly known as the Aya Sofya Mosque, was renamed the Selimiye Mosque in 1958. Tensions between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities was reflected in many such name changes, such as the names of street names, in 1958.
14. Türk Belediye Çarşısı açıldı [The Turkish Municipal Bazaar opened], 1958.
15. For example, the census of 1946 shows that Phaneromeni, a neighborhood in the south, had a population of 10 “Mahomedans” (Turks) and 1,065 “Non Mahomedans” (mainly Greeks). Tahtakaleh, also south of the riverbed streets, had 518 “Mahomedans” and 902 “Non Mahomedans.” The neighborhood of Emerieh (Ömerye) had a population of 249 “Mahomedans” and 917 “Non Mahomedans.” In the north, Ayios Lucas had a population of 536 “Mahomedans” and 263 “Non Mahomedans.” Unlike Phaneromeni, these neighborhoods were the most mixed in the city.
16. According to Doreen Massey “not all the ‘others’ whose existence and difference were so vital to the establishment of the modern sensibility were located in distant regions of the planet. There were also ‘others’ within ...” including women (Massey 2005: 92–93).
17. See also Rebecca Bryant’s description of George Simmel’s analysis of “the stranger” in her 2004 study, *Imagining the Modern: The Cultures of Nationalism in Cyprus* (Bryant 2004: 186).

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