

Thesen zur Dissertation

The Space In-Between
Towards a Spatial Genealogy of Nicosia's Buffer Zone
through tracing transformative processes in a post-conflict cityscape

zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades

Doctor philosophiae (Dr. phil.)

an der

Bauhaus-Universität Weimar

vorgelegt von

Zinovia Foka
Diplom Architektin

geb. am *10 Juli 1984* in *Thessaloniki, Griechenland*

Mentor der Arbeit
Prof. Dr. Max Welch Guerra

Weimar, den 03.07.2019

Summary of doctoral thesis

- I. **Subject and objectives of this work**
- II. **State-of-the-Art**
- III. **Methodology and interpretation of collected material**
- IV. **Results achieved**
- V. **Suggestions for further research**
- VI. **References**

The Space In-Between

Towards a Spatial Genealogy of Nicosia's Buffer Zone
through tracing transformative processes in a post-conflict cityscape

I. Subject and objectives of this work

This thesis examines urban partition in Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus, and how its changing roles and shifting perceptions in a post-conflict setting reflect power relations, and their constant renegotiation. Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus, was officially divided in 1974 in the aftermath of an eighteen-year-long conflict between the island's Turkish- and Greek-Cypriot communities. As a result, a heavily militarized Buffer Zone, established as an emergency measure against perpetuation of intercommunal violence, has been cutting through its historic centre ever since. Carved out of its urban fabric and under the control of the United Nations, this enclosed, abandoned, and slowly degrading cityscape was impermeable until 2003. Over the years of unresolved conflict, it acquired the status of a symbol in Cypriot imagination, charged with emotions, and vested with meaning for both communities, and was etched in popular perception as 'dead', 'unchanging', and 'stuck in time'. Being central to antipodal, state-produced, historical narratives that see their 'own' as victim and the 'other' as perpetrator, it has come to embody the Cypriot conflict itself. Moreover, employed to legitimize opposing political and territorial claims, it has also become a primary vehicle to sustain the state apparatus and its political elites in power on both sides of the divide.

The reinstatement of mobility between the city's two sectors in 2003 saw an unprecedented surge in local initiatives, as diverse formal and informal actors gradually stepped forward to articulate new demands with Nicosia's Buffer Zone at their epicentre. Three contemporary examples serve as entry points for analysis. First, there was a shift in official planning strategy for Nicosia's urban development. Influenced by cultural policies of the European Union, of which Cyprus is a member state since 2004, the mixed team of professionals, which worked across the Buffer Zone on the city's Masterplan since the 1970s, promoted an urban heritage-driven strategy, seeking to regenerate Nicosia's historic centre economically and socially. Through ensuing practices of space- and heritage-making, Nicosia's Buffer Zone is being reimagined and claimed as common and shared heritage for all Cypriots.

At the same time, two bottom-up initiatives have reclaimed and appropriated space in the Buffer Zone, contesting through new socio-spatial practices the state-produced, historical narratives, and producing new spaces to inhabit. The Home for Cooperation, an activity centre, which stands at the heart of institutionalized activism, offers a second example. Located at the periphery of the historic centre, and housed in a formerly abandoned building in the Buffer Zone, offers office and meeting space to a wide range of bi-communal, civil society organizations developing around it. Bringing people in the Buffer Zone, it is transformed into a bridge, connecting the two sides of Nicosia, and aiming to advocate from there a new norm for interrelation between Nicosia's communities. The third example is Nicosia's own Occupy Movement, which developed organically from protest directed against neoliberal approaches to economic development of Nicosia's historic centre. Openly critical to exiting systems of governance in Cyprus, this movement was generally concerned with peace and the island's demilitarization in the frame of an open, inclusive society, freed from established social norms. Occupying space in Nicosia's Buffer Zone at the heart of the historic centre, its participants performed sovereignty, realizing and inhabiting even briefly, in-between the polities they renounced, their own vision for Nicosia.

This thesis departs from a genuine interest in the material and ideational dimensions of urban partition. How is it constructed, not merely in physical terms but in the minds of the societies affected by conflict? How is it established in official and everyday discourses? What kinds of mechanisms have been developed to maintain it, and make an inseparable part of the urban experience? Moreover, taking into account the consensus in relevant literature pertaining to the imperative for its removal, this thesis is inquiring into the relevance of peace agreements to overcoming urban partition. For this purpose, it also

THESEN

looks at narratives and practices that have attempted to contest it. The examples examined in this thesis offer pregnant analytical moments to understand Nicosia's Buffer Zone as a dynamic social construct, accommodating multiple visions of and for the city. Its space 'in-between' facilitates encounters between various actors, accommodates new meanings, socio-spatial practices and diverse imaginaries. It is there that the struggle over power and control is taking place, offering as well the possibility for production of space accessible both physically and mentally to all. In this sense, urban partition is explored in this thesis as a phenomenon that transcends scales as well as temporalities, entwining past, present, and future. Urban partition in this work is, thus, a concept open to reinterpretation, through an exploration of relations that expand in both space and time. To this end, this thesis prioritizes the study of space to explore the entanglement of space, power and knowledge in shaping urban partition in Nicosia.

Keywords: urban partition, in-between, conflict, peace-making, urban heritage, space, power, knowledge

II. State-of-the-Art

This thesis reviews urban planning literature about 'divided cities', within which Nicosia is usually studied. Approaches in this strand of literature offer, however, a very narrow scope of study, dominated by the prevalence of ethno-nationalist conflict as the cause of urban partition. They disregard the fact that cities host multiple, overlapping, and often interrelated contestations and conflicts, unfolding simultaneously. Urban partition is addressed as a discord in the urban fabric in need of remediation, resulting in emphasis on peace-making approaches. These approaches are state-oriented, and focus on technical aspects of land use and urban policy-making, without engaging with issues of social justice or the infrastructure of conflict per se. These are pragmatic but only palliative approaches, targeting tangible aspects of socially, politically and economically embedded disputes. Moreover, as they presuppose the legitimacy of public authority, which is often an area of contestation in 'divided cities', they legitimize the divisive status quo, and institutionalize urban polarization. Studies on 'divided cities', even when they suggest the integration of urban planning with approaches from sociology, psychology and environmental studies, are predicated on the assumption that a linear transition exists between conflict and stability, between partition and spatial integration. I argue that to approach urban partition in a coherent and all-encompassing manner, research needs to go beyond the narrow scope of urban policy-making and top-down interventionism. A gap is then identified, as a complementary approach that directly engages with the urban dwellers to investigate bottom-up production of space in 'divided cities' is missing. Such approach necessitates an understanding of space that takes into account the agency of diverse actors, and the capacity of space to affect perceptions of conflict.

In order to move away from the narrow scope of ethnic polarization encountered in the 'divided cities' literature, the present thesis situates the study of Nicosia's partition within border and boundary studies, which is considered a most relevant field for the study of urban partition. Border studies offer a necessary toolbox of notions and concepts. In their contemporary sense, borders are not anymore considered to be fixed and unchanging territorial lines separating states within an international system. They are understood as institutions, socially produced phenomena, as well as ongoing processes, manifesting in boundary-producing practices and discourses. Hence, borders and boundaries are as much spatial as they are conceptual entities. The idea that *bordering*, i.e. border-making, takes place not only at traditional borders at the edges of states but is diffused in societies has dominated contemporary scholarly production. May they be state borders, boundaries within regions, urban-rural divides, walls or fences within cities, symbolic cultural or social boundaries, they mark a difference between a perceived 'us' from an 'other'. Whether visible or not, borders and boundaries are constantly reproduced in social life by producing and sustaining homogenizing narratives that bind groups of people together. In this vein, *bordering* is understood as ordering of societies facilitated by processes of *othering*. Following this understanding, this thesis considers societies as being ordered by multiple and overlapping borders and boundaries. Societies are not subjected to these processes, however, in a top-down fashion. *Bordering* places emphasis on identity-shaping processes (national, ethnic, religious etc.), and as such it involves power relations and their constant renegotiation, rather than some sort of imposition. Through the renegotiation of power relations, disjunction and reconstitution of boundaries, understood as *de-bordering* and *re-bordering* respectively, occur. Vice versa, power relations manifest in processes of *bordering*, *de-bordering* and *re-bordering*, as different perceptions of borders and boundaries emerge.

Within this frame, this thesis explores *bordering* in Nicosia as a historically contingent process, examining how power relations and their constant renegotiation affect perceptions of the Buffer Zone. Although in contemporary border studies the congruence of state, nation, territory, and people is no longer presumed, and studies gradually shift interest towards less state-focused approaches, in cases

THESEN

similar to Nicosia's Buffer Zone, state territoriality remains a significant, if not authoritative, mode of societal ordering. As a result, the state and its institutions have dominated various studies and analyses, which focus either on the relation between state and territory, or on the relation between state and people. As a result, the relation between people and space has remained largely unexplored. Moreover, these analyses have been structured around multiple binaries: 'us' and 'them', 'here' and 'there', 'inside' and 'outside', 'centre' and 'periphery'. As border and boundaries are considered to be diffused in society, these binary distinctions become problematic. This is more pronounced in cases like Nicosia's, where mobility across a material / physical boundary provides opportunities for encounters and synergies. It is important to develop ways of looking at such cases, which are illustrative of multiple and overlapping boundaries (social, cultural, political, economic, and material / physical) that move away from binary distinctions; while acknowledging the relevance of territory and the significant role of the state, they must embrace the idea of dynamic *bordering* processes, involving a variety of actors at different scales. The development of such approach involves a more encompassing understanding of space.

This expanded understanding of space is found in E. Soja's (1996) *Thirdspace*. However, the present thesis does not adopt *Thirdspace* as an all-encompassing theory of space. Soja's (1996) explorations operate as motivation, and enrich the aforementioned approaches with a distinctly spatial thinking. *Thirdspace* serves as a departure point, functioning, as Soja intended it, as a tool to expand spatial imagination. The qualities he inscribed into his *Thirdspace* – simultaneity and inclusivity (space as simultaneously real, imagined, and real-and-imagined), the margin as a site of resistance, thinking beyond binary logics, self/society-reflection and self/society-transformation, the politics of difference, empowerment, political importance, relation to power and knowledge – constitute in my view an ever-expandable spatial paradigm. This thesis does not apply Soja's *Thirdspace* to explain Nicosia's partition. Rather, it enriches and expands the spatial paradigm he initiated with empirical material, realizing in this manner Soja's urging to think 'from space'.

III. Methodology and interpretation of collected material

This thesis follows an intensive case study approach to study Nicosia's partition. It combines content analysis with empirical work conducted in Nicosia in three (3) fieldtrips, which have taken place in March 2012, February 2013, and June 2014. The duration of each fieldtrip was between 3 and 4 weeks. The information collected can be categorized in three sets of material that shed light on different aspects of the phenomenon that is Nicosia's Buffer Zone: 1) personal direct observations in Nicosia's historic centre, and participation in events and meetings, 2) 21 expert interviews with former and current employees of the Nicosia Master Plan, municipality employees, city residents, and civil society activists, and 3) documentation and archival material from the Nicosia Master Plan office, as well as libraries, museums, research institutes, and the databases of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, the United Nations Development Programme, the European Commission, and local organizations. The collected material is correlated with secondary sources from the fields of history, political science, and social and cultural anthropology.

In order to analyse and interpret the collected material, and reflect on the interplays of space, power and knowledge in shaping perceptions of Nicosia's Buffer Zone, this thesis turns to M. Foucault, and adapts his concept of genealogy. In his essay 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', Foucault (1977) examines Nietzsche's 'Genealogy of Morals' and adapts his idea of genealogy to challenge traditional practices of history. He develops genealogy as a method of critical inquiry to examine complex power relations, and the ways they shape systems of thought (rationalities), ways of conscious action (practices), and ways of being in the world (subjectivities). However, genealogy is not an ultimate search for 'origin'. It uncovers the struggles between different forces that result in certain 'events / episodes'. Despite the emphasis on history and time, Foucault's (1977, 1979) analyses engage consistently with space as well. Although Foucault's spatial thinking remains undeveloped, I argue that his interest in the simultaneous engagement with space and time is best demonstrated in his genealogical inquiries.

Drawing on Foucault's genealogies, this thesis develops *spatial genealogy* as a mode of analysis, which prioritizes the study of space as a category of inquiry. It is conceptualized as a way to analyse, interpret and narrate the material collected in the frame of this research. It is the study of space, of spatial practices and relations governed by and reflecting power relations. In this sense, it does not only seek to understand space as an object of study, but also to explore how the production of space intersects with the production of knowledge (rationalities, practices and subjectivities), social relations, and power relations over time in specific contexts. A *spatial genealogy* of Nicosia's Buffer Zone is not a story of the divide's origins, following a linear temporal axis from wholeness to partition, and from partition to reunification. It is an excavation of 'events / episodes' in the Buffer Zone's timeline that highlight

THESEN

complex and interweaving sets of relations between places (real, imagined, real-and-imagined) and between people and places. It aims at shedding light on the interstices, on the grey matter 'in-between', to uncover the workings of power and the knowledge it has produced, as it is traced in rationalities, practices, and subjectivities relating to the spatiality of Nicosia's Buffer Zone. At the same time, it exposes discontinuities in the official historical narratives, uncovers silences, probes irregularities and deviations, tracing transformations in ways of thinking, acting and being that open up possibilities and spaces of resistance.

This thesis is organized in three parts. Part I (chapters 1-3) presents the research framework. Parts II and III compose the *spatial genealogy* of Nicosia's Buffer Zone. In Part II, chapters 4 and 5 analyse and reflect on material from secondary sources to trace the *emergence* and *deepening* of Nicosia's partition. In Part III, chapters 6, 7 and 8 analyse material gleaned from empirical work in Nicosia, and the study of documents, to trace the *consolidation*, *crossing* and *transcendence* of partition through encounters that take place at various scales simultaneously. Each chapter of Parts II and III performs an excavation of 'events / episodes' in the timeline of the Buffer Zone. To facilitate this process, each of the five chapters of Parts II and III tackles each of the five leading research questions of this thesis.

IV. Results achieved

- **Spatial genealogy** provides an approach to urban partition in Nicosia, which explores the entanglement of space, power, and knowledge.

Chapter 4 - Emergence, builds on the work of historians and anthropologists to tackle the first research question of this thesis, concerned with the ways in which Nicosia's Buffer Zone was established as a dividing boundary, first in political discourse, and then in society, and on Nicosia's ground. This chapter predicates an understanding of partition in Cyprus, not as a means to stop interethnic violence, but as a *bordering* process developing within a particular historical and political conjuncture, involving international and local actors. This chapter contradicts the ethnic origin of conflict and partition in Cyprus.

Chapter 5 - Deepening, addresses the second research question of this thesis, concerned with the ways in which Nicosia's Buffer Zone became implicated in the post-conflict status quo in Cyprus. It traces the institutionalization of the pre-existing political, social, and economic divide between the Cypriot communities in administrative, political, and communal structures, which led to intercommunal violence, and the establishment of Nicosia's physical partition. It analyses the adversarial, state-produced, historical narratives, developed in the aftermath of conflict, and the ways in which they have produced dominant conceptualizations of the Buffer Zone, which help sustain and legitimize them.

Chapter 6 - Consolidation, tackles the third research question of this thesis, unpacking the framework in which the city's bi-communal masterplan operates, by exploring the relation between peace-making processes in Cyprus and spatial practices in Nicosia. It addresses consolidation on two levels: first, on the level of elite peace-making, and then on the level of peace-making on the ground. After reviewing the failures in high-level political negotiations, this chapter focuses on the latest settlement plan, known as the Annan Plan, exploring the ways in which its acceptance by the Turkish-Cypriots and its rejection by the Greek-Cypriots illustrate deviations from their official historical narratives. It then traces the consolidation of partition as a result of peace-making narratives developed within a depoliticized framework of technical projects undertaken in Nicosia since the 1970s. In this analysis, urban planning emerges as a principal field of depoliticized, bi-communal cooperation. The involvement of the European Union in space- and heritage-making as practices of peace-making on the ground provides the opportunity to examine shifts in power relations. At the intersection of the European and the local, peace-making narratives become embedded in Nicosia's historic centre, reclaiming its Buffer Zone as common and shared heritage for all Cypriots. As long as this peace-making narrative does not address the traumatic past, and continues to rely on a depoliticized approach, it reproduces the status quo on the island, hence contributing to the consolidation of partition.

Chapter 7 - Crossing, tackles the fourth research question of this thesis, which examines the impact of the 2003 opening of the crossings on the socialization of individuals across the Buffer Zone. It examines the initiation and development of bi-communal interaction and relations in Nicosia on the

THESEN

grassroots level. It begins with an examination of the bi-communal movement in the 1990s, and the ways in which interaction, initially within its frame, and later within the civil society of reconciliation, became depoliticized, structuring a socially acceptable 'norm of conduct'. It proceeds to examine how the opening of the crossings in 2003 shifted power relations by providing opportunities for encounters and synergies impossible in the past. After the failure of the Annan Plan, the de-politicization of bi-communal relations at large contributed to the *normalization* of partition in public life, despite the reinstated contact between the two communities.

Chapter 8 - Transcendence, tackles the fifth research question of this thesis, concerned with the role of current, bottom-up initiatives in critically looking at established social norms, and the processes in which they were produced. It examines the Home for Cooperation and the Occupy the Buffer Zone movement, and the spaces and places activists have produced as they acted politically, and exerted agency. Both initiatives reclaimed Buffer Zone space, appropriated it, and vested it with new meaning, marking a prominent shift in local socio-spatial practices. Through these processes, the space of the Buffer Zone became transformed, reflecting the involved actors' diverse intentions and associated imaginaries for Nicosia and for Cyprus. As Nicosia's Buffer Zone was transformed, power relations were renegotiated and reconstituted, challenging the 'norm of conduct', highlighting their potential to 'transcend' partition. In this analysis, the Buffer Zone emerges as a real-and-imagined space, where domination, subjection and resistance are emplaced.

- **Rethinking Nicosia's Buffer Zone as a dynamic social construct**

The *spatial genealogy* conducted in this thesis uncovers the workings of power, and the knowledge they have produced in the form of rationalities, subjectivities and practices. In this analysis, Nicosia's Buffer Zone emerges as a dynamic social construct. Situated 'in-between', it becomes contested around competing claims to space seeking legitimization on the level of the everyday, as much the locus for compliance with established norms as for revolutionary praxis, articulation of new ideas, visions and demands. It is reclaimed and appropriated by different actors, becoming an intersection of different imaginaries, while offering the space for their physical expression. It is there, that the struggle over power and control is taking place, where power relations are reproduced, but also challenged. Through these processes, its material and ideational dimensions are being transformed, transforming along the peoples' lived experience in space, the ways they relate to past experience, as well as the ways they imagine future urban experience, and how they articulate and pursue the realization of these imageries today.

- **Expanding spatial thinking**

Nicosia's Buffer Zone epitomizes the qualities that Soja inscribed into his *Thirdspace*. It is real as it is imagined, and real-and-imagined. Hence, it offers a concrete, empirical example, which enriches and expands the spatial paradigm Soja initiated in *Thirdspace* with empirical material. In this manner, this thesis realizes his urging to think 'from space', and provides another way of thinking about power, knowledge and space in studying Nicosia's partition.

- **Thinking from space about 'divided cities', and borders and boundaries**

The approach of this thesis can inform the scope of inquiry offered in literature about 'divided cities', and borders and boundaries. By prioritizing the study of space, it highlighted the simultaneity of top-down and bottom-up processes of transformation. By shifting focus away from the state, it provided insights into the contemporary interests and concerns of urban dwellers in the divided city, beyond the prevailing mode of conflict. Moreover, it showed that conflict and stability, partition and spatial integration, coexist, and are constantly negotiated in urban space by different actors simultaneously. In this process, new spaces and places are produced. Therefore, urban partition is not merely a discord; it can be productive as well, giving rise to opportunities for social and political transformation.

This thesis traced state-produced perceptions of Nicosia's Buffer Zone, and gradually shifted focus to people-produced perceptions, which emerge bottom-up, through people's everyday experiences and practices. In this process, it uncovered the parallel border dynamics at play, entangled with shifts in power relations, and the simultaneity of *bordering*, *de-bordering* and *re-bordering* in Nicosia's historic centre. Furthermore, it problematized border openness in relation to urban partition. In the various encounters that took place across and inside Nicosia's Buffer Zone, although the physical boundary was still in place, people overcame various mental and imaginative boundaries, and engaged in practices, which challenged the status quo of partition. In these

THESEN

encounters, binary distinctions, such as 'us' / 'them', 'here' / 'there', 'inside' / 'outside' collapsed. The Buffer Zone became simultaneously here-and-there, inside-and-outside; distinctions between 'us' and 'them' were denounced. These are not hybrid categories, bringing the two ends of the binaries together; they entail transformation of their constituent parts into something more inclusive. In Nicosia's case, urban partition was transformed into an inclusive space 'in-between', where new rationalities, practices, and subjectivities found expression.

- **Conceptualizing the space 'in-between'**

In the analysis in this thesis, the Buffer Zone emerged as a position of enunciation 'in-between', challenging power relations, and facilitating the production of new forms of meaning, and the exercise of agency. The notion of 'in-between' expands spatial thinking beyond *Thirdspace*. It is simultaneously space as real, imagined, and real-and-imagined. It can be geographically and temporally specific, but also simultaneously the host of various imaginaries. It does not only bring the distinct ends of binary positions together; it fuses them into something extraordinarily inclusive. This is, however, not a static hybridization, but entangled in power relations, hence constantly made and remade. Explorations of the 'in-between' must take into account time, as it is through the relation of space and time that transformative processes can be understood. Finally, the 'in-between' facilitates the exercise of agency; it is there that power relations are negotiated. It should not, however, be seen as liminal, merely in the process of becoming, but as already being at any given moment, simultaneously, the space where various imaginaries find expression. Therefore, the 'in-between' elucidates as well the entanglement of the spatial, the historical, and the social.

V. Suggestions for further research

By thinking from space about the entanglement of space, power, and knowledge, this thesis went beyond the exceptionality of its case study, and uncovered processes that otherwise remain obscure. Nicosia's partition has been diachronically employed as an instrument of social control, inclusion and exclusion, beyond the ethno-nationalist conflict. The recent claims to Nicosia's Buffer Zone constitute no exception. In this respect, in Nicosia more relevant than the discussion on the Cyprus Problem is the contemplation of the terms and conditions under which this discussion has been taking place, and the debates it has overshadowed along the way. Future research can address the curtailment of public participation, and the marginalization and silencing of people's voices and political action in specific areas of interest. Contemporary issues, such as various forms of discrimination, gentrification, racism, and gender issues, which are in Nicosia as present as in any city, need to enter the research agenda.

The present thesis provided a perspective for spatial analysis as critique, which considers the simultaneity of phenomena at multiple scales. It serves as an invitation for researchers in urban studies to use *spatial genealogy* as a method of analysis to study other kinds of spaces historically and contextually, and through these explorations to enrich and expand spatial thinking, and expose the processes that have shaped conceptions of things we consider given and immutable.

VI. References

- Foucault, M. (1977). Nietzsche, Genealogy, History. In D. F. Bouchard (Ed.), *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault* (pp. 139-164). Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Foucault, M. (1979). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Allen Lane.
- Soja, E. W. (1996). *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell.