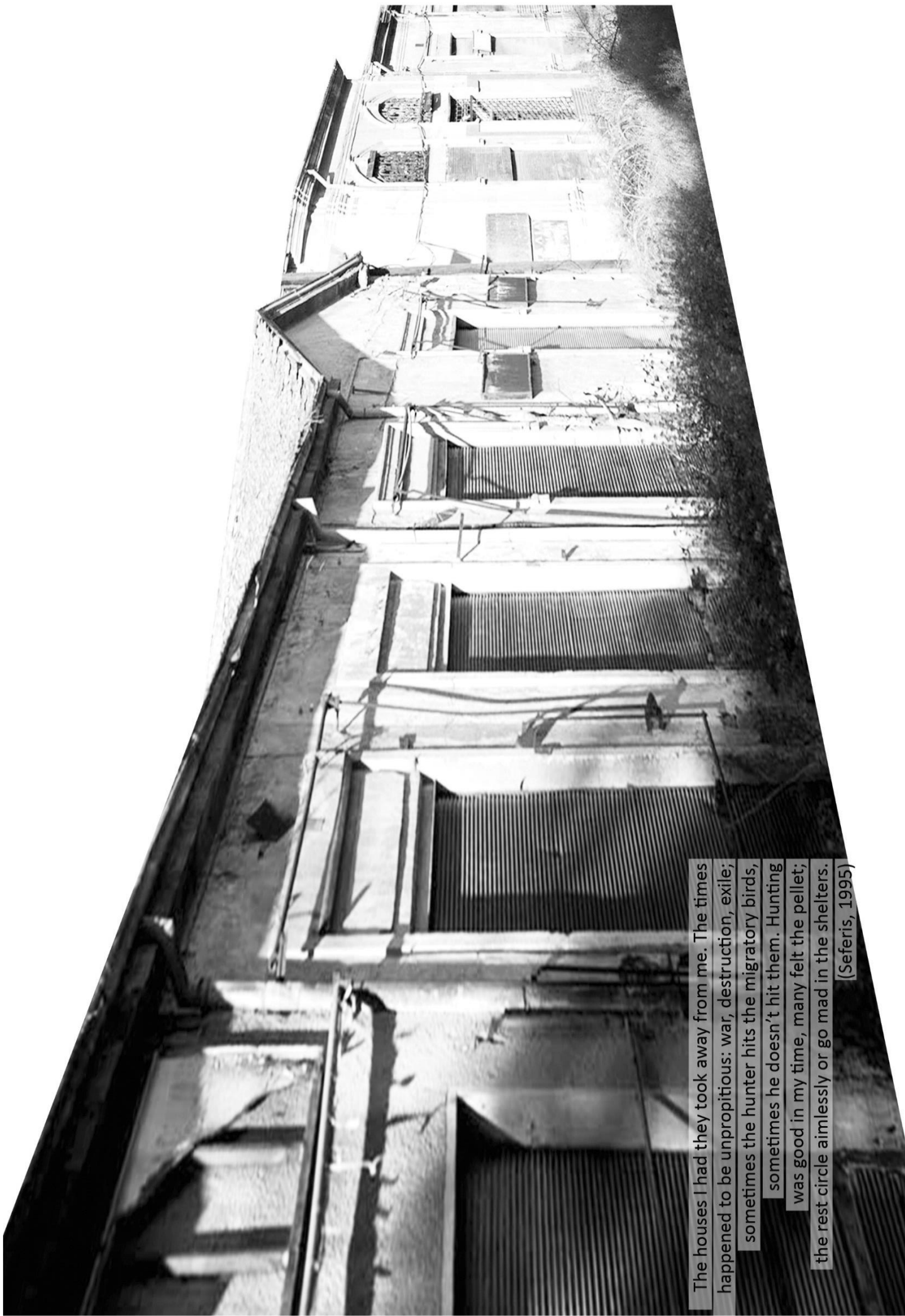


# THE SEMIOTICS OF A DIVISION

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2015-6

To my dearest sister, Dimitra.



The houses I had they took away from me. The times  
happened to be unpropitious: war, destruction, exile;  
sometimes the hunter hits the migratory birds,  
sometimes he doesn't hit them. Hunting  
was good in my time, many felt the pellet;  
the rest circle aimlessly or go mad in the shelters.

(Seferis, 1995)

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## Introduction

“There was a wall. It did not look important. An adult could look right over it, and even a child could climb it. Where it crossed the roadway, instead of having a gate it degenerated into mere geometry, a line, an idea of boundary. But the idea was real. It was important. For seven generations there had been nothing in the world more important than that wall. Like all walls it was ambiguous, two-faced. What was inside it and what was outside it depended upon which side of it you were on” (Le Guin, 1974).

Boundaries, paradoxically so, can both divide and unite; they divide “us” from the “other”, the aberrant, the hostile, the unknown; they divide “here” from “there” where “here” is understood in terms of familiarity, ownership, sovereignty and “there” is perceived as the foreign, contested, mysterious or perilous. They help create and sustain notions of identity, citizenship, nationality and entrench self-determination. They unite since they circumscribe groups of similars, those who share powerful bonds. They also unite as they form bridges where the alienated imageries of both sides meet and interact. They always have two sides; for those on the one side they may signify protection of their rights and security and for those on the other side exclusion and infringement of their rights. Boundaries may be physically articulated or they can be of mental constitution, the latter lacking none but the materiality of expression. They may prevent movement or regulate and canalise it. It is often said that good fences make good neighbours, however the higher these artificial constructions are, the more they obstruct visibility and breed ignorance. The image of the “other” becomes blurred and distorted and the boundary that was meant to protect induces fear, fear of the obscured alien that lurks beyond the dividing line.

One such boundary that has attracted the attention of peacebuilding organisations, political analysts, anthropologists, urban planners and architects is the Buffer Zone that has horizontally severed Cyprus since 1974.



**Figure 1:** Map of Cyprus with the Buffer Zone in the middle (Geography).

The Buffer Zone is a demilitarised ribbon patrolled by the UN Peacekeeping Force that divides the island from side to side to the north (Turkish Cypriot) and south (Greek Cypriot) segments (UNFICYP, 2016). It is 184 Km long with a width that fluctuates from less than 20m to more than 7km and in total occupies 346 km<sup>2</sup> (3% of the island's area) (Kliot and Mansfield, 1997). The Zone is physically articulated with the use of permanent materials in its perimeter such as cinder blocks, sand bags which create solid walls or with the employment of flimsy ones such as barbed wire, barrels, screens, old tyres etc. Watchtowers belonging to both sides and the UN can be found all along the dividing line and parts of it are mine laid. It begins from Kokkina to the west, continues to bisect the capital of Nicosia and terminates south of Famagusta. Some 8.000 people live and work within it (Charlesworth, 2006). It includes the village of Pyla on the northeast, the only village where the two communities coexist under UN supervision (Papadakis et al, 2006). The other three villages within the Buffer Zone are Deneia near Nicosia, Atheniou (5000 people) and Troulloi (1175 people) both in the Larnaca District (Lacarrière, 2003).

Seen as a boundary the Buffer Zone is a forced, artificial one that violently lacerates the environmental, social and urban fabric of the areas it traverses. Seen as a rupture it presents a chasm in time and space. It is an anachronism as until recently the only testimony of the passage of time was the deterioration of buildings and the uncontrolled sprawl of trees and plants within its confines. If places acquire life and are defined by the people that populate them, the Buffer Zone for a large part lacks human presence and social interaction. If space can define and direct behaviour the Buffer Zone does so with negative imperatives. You have to be vigilant of what not to do there, how to avoid unauthorised access, how not to be trapped in the unpredictable dead ends it spawns. It is an absence with a tangible and painful presence.

This investigation was triggered by the realisation that the Buffer Zone is imbued with rich connotative associations apart from its overt functionality. The semiotics of the Buffer Zone are only collaterally discussed in the bibliography and had never constituted an autonomous research objective. An attempt will be made to answer the following questions: What are the significations that the two groups ascribe to the Buffer Zone? Do the visions of the two ethnic groups with regards to the Buffer Zone coincide or collide? Do specific segments have distinctive significative power? Do these meanings pertain to the ideological constructs of each part?

The present effort was based on field research conducted in Cyprus by numerous social anthropologists such as Y. Papadakis and Y. Navaro-Yashin etc. and their findings. Furthermore, a rich bibliography and reports that holistically analyse the history, the political landscape, the identity formation of the two ethnic groups were consulted upon. This work, in addition, relied heavily on a variety of articles which offer an up to date view of the Cypriot conundrum. A paper of a conference on cities and the future of urban life was also examined in order to understand how the two ethnicities perceive the shared space of the Buffer Zone. The main concern in this process was to find sources from both flanks of the Buffer Zone since it became apparent from the beginning that the interpretations the two groups assign to the division might not always coincide. All the abovenamed findings were thus organised to conform to the classificatory system of the architectural sign as postulated by D. Preziosi. The semiotic perspective was favoured since it seemed pertinent to the objective of this work, which is to analyse the signification of the Buffer Zone and its constituent parts. Finally, recourse was sought to images that reaffirm and enrich the abovementioned sources and are analysable by the semiotic methodology.

## Chapter One: Brief history of the division.

A brief overview of the island's history is necessary in order to be able to perceive the multifaceted nature of its predicament which is manifested in the physical division (Timeline-Appendix A, Vocabulary of the Division-appendix B).

Because of its strategic location in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, off the coasts of Syria and Turkey, Cyprus has always been influenced by the rise and fall of the empires that ruled the region. It was first settled by Mycenaean Greeks in two waves in the 2nd millennium BC (Kliot and Mansfield, 1997). The Ottoman occupation of 1570-1 led to a complete change of demographics of the island by establishing a population different from the Greek element not only in ethnic origin but also in culture, religion, language (Coufoudakis, 1976). In 1878 the island was ceded to the British. This period marked the rise of the Greek and Turkish nationalisms (Papadakis et al, 2006) as the British politics in the area incited polarisation and nationalist expression generating the eventual clash between the two communities (Coufoudakis, 1976).

Between 1955-9 the Greek Cypriots fought against their British rulers with the ulterior motive to obtain “enosis”, the annexation of the island to Greece. For fear of that prospect, the Turkish Cypriots supported the British and later demanded “taksim”, the partition of the island. The first physical division of the capital of Cyprus, Nicosia took place in 1956, when interethnic violence led to the erection of a barbed wire dividing line in parts of the city, nicknamed “the Mason-Dixon Line” (Papadakis, 2006). In 1960 the Republic of Cyprus was established, a “reluctant republic” (Constantinou, 2008), as a compromise of the radically different aspirations of the two major ethnic groups.



**Figure 2:** The wish for enosis visualised (Maragos, 2014).



**Figure 3:** Turkish Cypriots fleeing in 1963 (2014).



**Figure 4:** Turkish Cypriot women fleeing their homes during the 1963-64 conflict (Katrivanou, 2009).

**Figure 5:** Three children Murat, Kutsi, Hakan and their mother were brutally murdered by EOKA (Greek Cypriot guerrilla fighters) in their bathroom (Kurt Lariken, 2007).



During the Christmas of the 1963 interethnic violence escalated and 25.000 Turkish Cypriots, who were the weakest party, were forced to leave their abodes and seek refuge to self-constituted, protected enclaves (Antonsich, 2012). The following year the UN felt compelled to intervene to prevent the continuation of violence and amongst the measures adopted was the establishment of a dividing line which was never meant to be nothing more than a temporary measure, a cordon sanitaire, separating the two armed groups (Kliot and Mansfield, 1997). The United Nations Resolution (Resolution 186, 1964) predicted that a UN Peacekeeping force had to be created for the purpose of promoting peaceful resolution. Thus the UN force that was to control and guard the Buffer Zone was formed (Hadjichristos, 2006).

By 1967 the political situation on the island showed signs of appeasement and amelioration (Papadakis et al, 2006). A coup in Greece that resulted in militaries rising to power disillusioned the Greek Cypriots and the aim of unification with the motherland was abandoned as official state policy (Papadakis, 1998). Even so, radical right wing factions with the support of the Greek junta organised acts of subversion as they felt that the “enosis” cause had been betrayed (Papadakis et al, 2006). The intracommunal conflict culminated with a coup on the 15th of July 1974 against the Greek Cypriot president, Archbishop Makarios. Five days later, Turkey, on the pretext of its right to intervene, afforded by the Treaty of Guarantee of 1959, invaded the island from the north (Papadakis et al, 2006). On the 14th August 1974 a second Turkish invasion took place with tragic consequences for the Greek Cypriots this time (Hadjichristos, 2006). The Greek Cypriots fled to the south and subsequently the Turkish Cypriots moved to the north. The division was since then formally articulated with a heavily militarised cease fire line, the Buffer Zone, which was extended to the west and east of the island.



**Figure 6:** Greek children, Strovolos camp planned for 1,600 people, Cyprus, 1974 (Mohr, 1974).



**Figure 7:** Greek soldier burnt by a napalm bomb (Halaris, 2014).



**Figure 8:** Greek Cypriot captives during the Turkish invasion of 1974 (Parapolitika, 2013).

The two communities responded differently to the events of 1974 and their aftermaths. The Greek Cypriots felt betrayed by Greece since it was the motherland that instigated the coup which led to the Turkish invasion and was unable to forestall it thereafter (Papadakis et al, 2006). The Turkish Cypriots in the beginning welcomed the Turkish intervention only to realise later that the motherland established political and military control in the north. In an effort to change the demographics of Cyprus Anatolian settlers were fed to the north and were naturalised much to the disillusionment of the Turkish Cypriots (Kliot and Mansfield, 1997).

The southern segment of the island is a recognised state today under the name Republic of Cyprus (henceforth RoC) and is member of the European Union since the 1st May 2004 (Demetriou, 2004). The northern part, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (henceforth TRNC), that declared its independence in 1983, has not yet gained international recognition (Papadakis et al, 2006). The two entities are up to the present divided by the same strip that was consolidated in 1974.

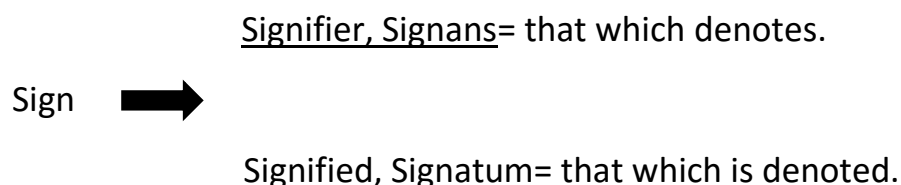
## Chapter Two: Semiotics and divisions.

This effort will attempt to analyse the meanings that the Greek and Turkish Cypriots assign to the physical barrier that divides them and its constituent fragments. Barthes suggests that humans in general tend to seek meaningfulness in all objects for the following reason:

Since our society produces only standardised, normalised objects, these objects are unavoidably realisations of a model, the speech of a language, the substances of a significant form. To rediscover a non-signifying object, one would have to imagine a utensil absolutely improvised and with no similarity to an existing model: a hypothesis which is virtually impossible to verify in any society. This universal semantisation of the usages is crucial: it expresses the fact that there is no reality except when it is intelligible (Barthes, 1964).

As there is no Archimedean point away from the polarity, wherefrom one could dissociate and impartially describe the findings, which are of qualitative and not of quantitative nature, an effort will be made to understand the conflicted or converging meanings of the Buffer Zone from within the system where they manifest themselves. Therefore the initial approach will be that of structuralists that in need of a system to describe itself from within they chose language. The semantics of the Buffer Zone in its totality will be approached in the form of binary oppositions as these are articulated by the two ethnic groups.

More specifically the methodological principles of semiotics will guide this attempt. Semiotics are an offspring of Saussure's inveterate binary oppositions, especially of the opposition between signifier signified and despite the fact that their initial intention was to translate signs of human interaction, they expanded to include phenomena that transcend the process of intentional communication (Shields, 1991).



**Figure 9:** Diagram based on Preziosi's works (Sousamli, 2016).

The relationship between architecture and semiotics was not always a given, instead they were first introduced in the field in Italy during the late fifties where there was a "crisis of meaning" (Broadbent et al, 1980) and architects sought regional or historical alternatives to the dominant depersonalised International Style. A decade later semiotics were used to counterattack functionalism in France, Germany, and England.

The main concerns of architectural semioticians for decades were how to define the minimum significative architectural unit and what the signifier-signified should be in the architectural code. Broadbent, for instance, argues that the building can at times be the signifier, the signified and the referent (Broadbent et al, 1980). Much of the work of these pioneer semioticians consisted in transferring currently fashionable linguistic models into architecture in hope of specifying the nature



of the architectural “deep structure” or of classifying architectural formations into phonemic, morphemic or textual entities (Preziosi, 1979).

In an effort to apply semiotics in the field Jenks asserts that the signified in the architectural sign is the function of the building and further connotative meanings, if they exist, are only secondary and subservient. For him the building resembles a machine that does what is supposed to do and that is where any meaning should be sought after (Broadbent et al, 1980). Eco, on the other hand, discerns between denotative and connotative meanings and suggests that these meanings are determined by codes in the light of which we interpret signs. He concludes that the basic meaningful unit in architecture can be traced at the level of an individual, separable and autonomous component such as a column (Broadbent et al, 1980). Bonta attempts to construct a system of architectural signification based on the paradigm of Buysens and Pietro and their dual articulation of signal-indicator (Broadbent et al, 1980).

Preziosi, whose theoretical framework will underpin this exploration, argues that all built expression is communicative therefore the built environment should be considered as one more semiotic code (Preziosi, 1979). The built environment is a model of the reality or realities of a society at a given time and space, staged in a spatiotemporal/geometric language (Preziosi, 1979). Each architectonic object carries information about a variety of subjects deemed important by a community. In the architectonic system there is little if none space for synonymy instead architectonic manifestations are polysemous by principle. This notion can explain the contradictory meanings the Buffer Zone has acquired for both communities in the passage of time.

All the sign systems, Preziosi claims, which were developed by humans are relatively self-sufficient but at the same time they are complementary, destined to interact “like galaxies passing through each other” (Preziosi, 1979). What begins in language can be completed spatially and so forth. A boundary, for instance, between two settlements can be a wall and a written message-redundancy of signification- or a wall or a message separately, a piece of legislation etc. According to him the architectonic sign is the combination of a formation (signans) or that-which-signifies and a meaning (signatum) or that-which-is-signified (Preziosi, 1979). The architectonic code is the body of rules which demarcate the conventional associations between formations and meanings or between similar signs or signs of a different type.

Any physical medium, he suggests, can be employed or incorporated to construct significative formations (Preziosi, 1979). A corollary of this statement is that an architectonic system could exist and be analysed as such without containing those which we conventionally consider as buildings.

Preziosi resorted to, but did not rely solely on, the linguistic analogy in his effort to articulate the different significative units of architecture. The architectonic code for him is based on the principle of double articulation, a principle borrowed from linguistics (Preziosi, 1979). The smallest significant component of the code consists of sign-units (figure, form), for instance walls or a ceiling, which per se may not be significative, but gain significance when systemically combined. They are meaningful systematically as formal components of an entity. Still, they can occasionally acquire meaning in themselves as is the case of the ceiling of a temple which is part of the building but separately may symbolize heaven (Preziosi, 1979). The material components of the Buffer Zone, such as the barricades for instance, can be directly significant and their meanings can affirm or contradict those of the Buffer Zone as an entity.

Linguistic Term	Architectonic Term	Application
Morpheme	Figure	Materials of the Buffer Zone (blocks, barbed wire etc.)
Word	Cell	Checkpoints on Ledra Street
Phrase	Matrix	The Ledra Palace Hotel, H4C, the Nicosia International Airport
Sentence	Compound	Ledra Street
Text	Structure	The village of Pyla
Discourse	Settlement	The Buffer Zone as an entity

**Figure 10:** Table based on Preziosi's theory (Sousamli, 2016).

Preziosi defines as the minimum meaningful unit of the architectural code the space-cell, a spatial fragment or minimal enclosure that interacts with others in a multiplicity of ways (Preziosi, 1979). As such minimum significative units, the checkpoints on both sides of Ledra Street will be analysed. The abovementioned cell can enter into a variety of higher level relations which Preziosi defines as cell-matrices. The Buffer Zone encloses buildings such as the Ledra Palace Hotel, the Home for Cooperation, the Nicosia International Airport that fall into the category of matrices. Above the individual level, matrices may group into compounds, neighbourhoods of constructions organised into grids or blocks. Such a compound would be the Ledra Street in Nicosia part of which is trapped within the Buffer Zone. The village of Pyla, again within the Buffer Zone, would correspond to the structure unit on this hierarchical scale. Finally the Buffer Zone itself as a whole would be a settlement, the highest combination of components.

### Chapter three: If walls could talk.

Corresponding to the minimum linguistic fragment, the morpheme, figures in architecture are elementary forms that may be combined to create significative entities. That however does not preclude the possibility of them having separate semantic charge.

The physical structures that comprise the perimeter of the Buffer Zone, according to some authors, betray the contradictory aspirations of the two communities with regards to the final outcome of the Cyprus dispute. On the Turkish Cypriot side there are permanent concrete walls which create unexpected and irrational dead ends on roads that once continued (Papadakis, 2006), antitank ditches, minefields, watchtowers. According to Papadakis the Turkish Cypriots are committed to a federal solution where both sides will have a strong say and will live separately, next to each other (Papadakis, 1993). Since they desire a separatist solution, the structures that comprise the barrier on their flank are sturdy and durable. The Buffer Zone's material articulation seems to be consonant with their belief. On the Greek Cypriot side there are temporary constructions made of barbed wire, barrels, screens and watchtowers which can be quickly and easily removed. The Greek Cypriots still feel that the partition of the island is an artificial, shameful, temporary condition that will be waived once the open Cyprus problem is favourably solved. Papadakis in his article "The Politics of Memory and Forgetting" (Papadakis, 1993) suggests that the Greek Cypriots conceive the federal solution as an opportunity to establish a unitary administration, believe that the refugees of 1974 will be able to return to their former houses in the north, and imagine that they will live once more peacefully

together with the Turkish Cypriots. Referring to Nicosia Lellos Demetriades, former Greek Cypriot mayor of the city (1974-2001) mentioned: "I hope one day I will see my city functioning like a normal city. If someone tells me that Nicosia has been reunited in as little as 48 hours I can remove the obstacles and the barriers" (Charlesworth, 2006). Not only is the insubstantiality of the physical articulation of the barrier on the Greek Cypriot side apparent in this statement but also the wish for a unitary resolution of the dispute is being openly professed.



**Figure 11:** Clearing the Buffer Zone from mines (Christou, 2015).

**Figure 12:** The tangible reality of a division (Hall, Reuters, 2014).

Despite the fact that the Buffer Zone is clearly demarcated on maps of both sides the barricades have gradually disintegrated at places. Wherever restorations took place they relied on supplies at hand, old mattresses, used tyres, iron, cinder blocks, barrels, anything that could be upcycled into protective material (Lacarrière, 2003). This gradual deterioration and state of disrepair can have two contradictory interpretations according to the author of this work; first, it can be argued that the symbolic capital of the Buffer Zone is as might as ever, therefore the collapsing by the passage of time structures even if they contest the zone's symbolic power they cannot seriously undermine it; the boundary is mental rather than actual and tangible; conversely, it can be argued that the Buffer Zone has been occasionally contested, occupied, crossed for almost half a century, therefore its functionality and its symbolic capital have weathered and the unwillingness to restore and preserve it attests to that.

The Turkish and Greek Cypriots have clashing aspirations with regards to the future of the divided island and the diverse materials used in the perimeter of the Buffer Zone primarily signify that dissonance.



**Figure 13:** Buffer Zone wall re-appropriated (Hall, 2014).

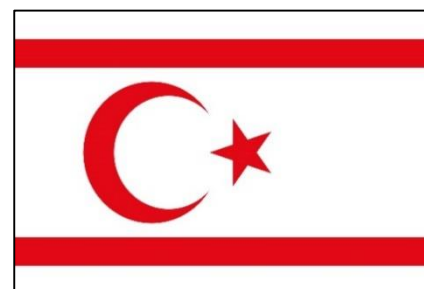
#### Chapter four: Cells of signification.

Preziosi equates the architectonic cell with the linguistic term “word” and defines it as the minimal arrangement that bounds and encloses space (Preziosi, 1979). It may have independent significative power and may enter into configurations of a higher order in the same manner that words are combined to form sentences. The respective checkpoints in Ledra Street are such minimal enclosures.



**Figure 14:** Turkish Cypriot checkpoint on Ledra Street (Dreamstime, 2012).

**Figure 15:** Turkish Cypriot flag (Northcyprus) (Analysis in Appendix B).



**Figure 16:** The Turkish flag (LSE, 2014).

The Turkish Cypriot checkpoint, a two storey concrete structure is, if nothing else, imposing. Its architecture is utilitarian, succumbs to practicality. The construction is solid and immutable. This permanence and rigidity reflects the fixed separatist position of the TRNC on the dispute. As a federal





solution is desirable, and since the partition will be perpetuated, a permanent checkpoint was necessitated.

The colours of the checkpoint and the hard landscaping have not been chosen randomly. They are the colours of the TRNC's flag which is in fact the Turkish flag with its colours reversed. The TRNC has never severed the umbilical cord with the motherland. In the official Turkish discourses the Turkish Cypriots are conceived as Turks left outside the Republic of Turkey after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the consolidation of national borders (Navaro-Yashin, 2012). The geographical position of the island 40 miles from Turkey's southern shores-400 miles from Greece- is further interpreted as proof of the connection of Cyprus to Turkey (Navaro-Yashin, 2012). After all it was Turkey that has liberated the Turkish Cypriots with the "Peace Operation" of 1974 and has been heavily funding the north since 1983. The abovementioned explain the extensive use of Turkish symbols including the Turkish flag which flies in tandem with the Turkish Cypriot along the Buffer Zone. The Greek Cypriots probably perceive these symbols as a menacing sign of the embrace of the Turkish Cypriots by Turkey and of a future attack by the later.

The messages on the top of the checkpoint are not pertinent to crossing legalities. They are written in a language understood by Cypriots and foreigners alike, in bold lettering. The first sign, symbolising the politics of partition, states: "TRNC FOREVER". In a smaller sign the visitors are welcomed and informed that they are entering the sovereign republic. The TRNC had seceded and declared its independence in 1983 and has been ghettoised by the international community since. The only state that recognises it is its patron, Turkey. Therefore in every occasion the statelet strives to state and reaffirm its sovereignty and this sign is suggestive of that effort.

Far from spectacular the Greek Cypriot checkpoint is a provisional cabin probably prefabricated. The flimsiness of the construction confirms the Greek Cypriot position that the division is undesirable, unsustainable in the long term, and will be eventually abolished. A permanent construction was thus unnecessary.



**Figure 17:** Greek Cypriot checkpoint (Discovercyprustours).

The chosen colours of the structure are not random either. They are blue and white, the colours of the Greek flag, not the Greek Cypriot one which is on the whole different. The relationship with the

motherland however is tainted in the case of the Greek Cypriots. The Greeks are considered “foreigners”, “untrustworthy”, “crooks and liars” (Papadakis et al, 2006), those who betrayed their brothers and failed to stop the Turkish hordes in 1974 (Papadakis, 2005). However, and despite their feelings, the Greek Cypriots emerged from the 1974 invasion more dependent on Greece, their only ally in the diplomatic arena and abstract protector in the case of a new Turkish attack (Papadakis, 1998). After all it is not the modern Greeks that count, ancients do. Greek Cypriots grow up as Greeks and everyone knows that ancient Greece is the cradle of civilisation. The Greek Cypriot dialect is closer to ancient Greek than any other dialect of mainland Greece. But above all they are the truest Greeks since they have suffered so much in the hands of the Turks, the archenemy of Greece (Papadakis, 2005). The island is thus conceived as a stage where a relentless battle between good and evil, Greeks and Turks, civilisation and barbarism is being enacted (Papadakis, 2005). This adherence of the Greek Cypriots to Greek symbols, and especially to the Greek flag that flies with the Greek Cypriot flag along the Buffer Zone, is not perceived by the Turkish Cypriots as an effort of self-definition, but is doubtless misinterpreted as a sign of the lingering wish of annexation of the island to mainland Greece.



**Figure 18:** Greek flag (Enchantedlearning).

**Figure 19:** The relationship with the motherland is not apparent in the flags (Cyprusflag, 2016).

Surrounding the checkpoint, greeting the visitors, there are large commemorative signboards with images of the stories of two protesters killed in 1996 within the Buffer Zone. Two large portraits of the victims aim to induce empathy with their tragedy and the rest of the images describe in a raw manner the atrocities that led to their deaths. The Greek Cypriots feel strongly the need to remember which they consider a patriotic duty (Papadakis et al, 2006). These posters however may be interpreted as a warning, informing those about to cross that they are in fatal danger or alerting them about the mischievous “other” on the other side of the barrier.

The checkpoints on Ledra Street can be regarded as multi-layered signifiers. First they exemplify the opposing perspectives of the two communities on the dispute. Secondly they illustrate the strong link of these communities to their respective motherlands and their struggle for self-definition. Finally by invoking symbolic associations with the motherlands, they inspire emotions of disquietude and threat to both ethnic groups for practically the same reason, the occupation of the island by either Greece or Turkey.





**Figure 20:** The story of Tassos Isaak and Solomos Solomou, ‘the Deryneia Martyrs’, greets visitors at the Ledra Palace Hotel crossing (Motionlessvoyage, 2015).

## Chapter five: Matrices, the Ledra Palace Hotel, H4C, the Nicosia International Airport.

Cells according to Preziosi (Preziosi, 1979) can be integrated into higher level formations which he designates as matrices. Endeavouring to discover the diverse meanings of the boundary for the two ethnic groups, three buildings that lie within the Buffer Zone are examined.



**Figure 21:** Ledra Palace Hotel in 1955 (Sourkounoudes, 2013).

The Ledra Palace Hotel was designed by the architect Benjamin Gunsberg, was built in 1949 and in its heyday had 163 bedrooms, a conference room, cardroom, ballroom, two restaurants, two bars, a café and several small shops (Singlehurst, 2013). Following the military invasion of 1974 it was caught isolated within the newly established Buffer Zone. In 1974 an exchange of war prisoners was held in its parking lot (Ioannidou, 2013). The hotel has diachronically been the focal point for most bi-communal meetings and activities all of which were supported and authorised by international organisations. In the 80s the Nicosia Masterplan conversations between the technical teams of both sides took place there with the intention of proposing a basic framework for the divided city of Nicosia. The most consistent efforts to cultivate bi-communalism involved programmes and seminars taking place in the hotel and dealing with conflict resolution. Their goal was to kick-start dialogue and build trust between members of the two ethnicities. In 1992 a group under the name “Bi-communal Steering Committee” was formed, served as advisor for conflict resolution activities, and obtained a room at the Ledra Palace Hotel for its office and meetings (Broome, 2005). In 1995 a group of business leaders was brought together at the hotel. In September 2000 the young wings of the political parties across the Buffer Zone helped their parent parties organise a “Festival of Mutual Understanding” at the Ledra Palace Hotel which included a bi-communal cultural programme with music, dance, and poetry (Broome, 2005). The aim of all the above-mentioned meetings was to meet with the “other”, interact, understand each other’s hopes and fears, and build relationships based on mutual trust (Foka, 2015). The hotel also hosted the repeated volatile negotiations over the Cyprus Dispute and high level meetings between the leaders of the two communities (Broome, 2005). In the course of time the hotel came to signify the attempts of groups of well-informed peace activists to overcome the division and the cultural and political barriers. As stated by Foka, the Buffer Zone is here reinvented and reinterpreted as common cultural heritage in order to spatialise the vision of reunification (Foka, 2015). The fact that the two communities, to this day, consistently choose the hotel for their meetings and as the demonstrations that take place in the city have their point of reference or conclude there further attest to the semantically charged interpretation of the establishment by the Cypriots.

According to Demetriou (Demetriou, 2007), on the other hand, the hotel signifies the point of division. To attempt an interpretation of this statement, the Ledra Palace Hotel has gradually transformed into a signifier of division because all the negotiations and activities that took place there, despite bringing together the two communities, failed to propose and implement a reasonable, acceptable to both, solution.



**Figure 22:** The lobby of the Ledra Palace Hotel, looking out of the main entrance (Humpheys, 2012).

**Figure 23:** Leaders Akinci and Anastasiades came together with the leaders of the 5 religious communities in Cyprus in Ledra Palace Hotel (Thecypriotpuzzle, 2015).



**Figure 24:** Picture of the building now hosting the Home for Cooperation (Home4Cooperation, 2015).

**Figure 25:** Home for Cooperation today (Parikiaki, 2014).

On Marcou Dracou Street just opposite the Ledra Palace hotel a building was erected in early 50s that was meant to host a house and various shops (H4C, 2015). The events of 1963-4 ensued and the barricades that separated the Greek and Turkish Cypriot sector were set up near it. Until 1968



movement was limited in the area (H4C, 2015). In 1974 the building was caught in the middle of a crossfire and was left abandoned by its inhabitants, a relic of the past within the confines of the Buffer Zone (H4C, 2015). In 2005 the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research envisions an intercommunal educational centre within the limits of the Buffer Zone, a scheme which in the beginning seemed impossible even for the most passionate bi-communalists. The UNFICYP subsidises the project since it was seen as a valid effort to transform the use and the interpretations of the Buffer Zone. The Home for Cooperation opens its doors in May 2011. It is the positive outcome of liberal forces within both communities that sought to create a communal multifunctional area within the Buffer Zone that up to then was deemed as space of partition and confrontation (H4C, 2015). The organisation stands at the heart of institutionalised activism (Foka, 2015). It aims to create the conditions that will allow the cohabitation of the two communities in the aftermath of the solution of the dispute. It seeks to discover the two different versions of history taught on the island (Antonsich, 2012). It works as a peculiar public venue which hosts activities based on individual and group commitment (Foka, 2015) including language courses, dance classes, seminars, workshops, conferences, film screenings etc. (Andreou, 2014). As it is within a neutral zone it is earmarked as a place for socialisation conveniently placed in between. According to Antonsich, this initiative, along with some NGOs and foreign cultural institutions (Goethe Institute, Fulbright Programme) which have chosen to open their offices in the Buffer Zone, clearly speaks of the function of the Zone as a neutral space and as such a space of encounter (Antonsich, 2012). It is mentioned in the organisation's site that the building is a landmark for the citizens facilitating intercultural communication and dialogue (H4C, 2015). Sanctioned, however, by the administrations of both sides, the Home for Cooperation has limited influence only within the limits of the Buffer Zone failing to reach the wider strata of the societies in conflict. The Buffer Zone reinstates here its role as an exclusive boundary.



**Figure 26:** Kids painting at the Home for Cooperation in Turkish, Greek, and English (Cyprus.usembassy, 2013).



**Figure 27:** Nicosia International Airport in its heyday (Cybarco, 2016).



**Figure 28:** The crew of the last flight of the airport (Efsthathiou, 2013).

The Nicosia International Airport (Διεθνές Αεροδρόμιο Λευκωσίας, Lefkoşa Uluslararası Havaalanı) located 8.2 km west of Nicosia in the suburb of Lacatamia was inaugurated in 1968 (Constantinou et al. 2012). Nicosia could boast an exemplar of modern aviation architecture that could compete its equals in Europe. The German-designed airport followed international style standards thus was deprived of telling details of locality and time and offered, amongst else, ample waiting spaces with leather sitting, restaurants, cafeterias. It provided the venue for an ideal transitional break for the passengers and was a pleasant curiosity for the locals who would flock to admire the new feat (Constantinou et al. 2012). However the commercial flight area has lain empty since the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 (Ioannou, 2014). Its terminal was designated a United Nations Protected Area during the conflict, and both sides were required to withdraw at least 500 metres from the perimeter of the airport. It was subsequently trapped within the confines of the Buffer Zone and its effective service life was ended. The visitor that now approaches the former glory, first encounters a



**Figure 29:** The departure lounge of the airport (Scarborough, 2012).

bombed aircraft on the side of the runway. Then, the interior of the building is ravaged by destruction, abandonment. The seats and floors are covered with debris and bird droppings. In places the wooden floors are dismantled and glass is shattered. Against all odds columns, light fittings, furnishings and stairs obstinately persist creating a feeling of inertia, of time standing still. According to Constantinou (Constantinou et al. 2012) the remaining structures of the airport are significant and “mark the shift from the transitoriness of travelling to the permanence of abandonment, from the globalisation of



design to the localisation of ruination, from inclusion in the international space of sovereign independence to the exclusion of ceasefire buffer zones”. In his article “Nicosia International Airport, A Symbol of Division and Hope” P. Sabbidis posits that the airport is a simultaneous indicator of division and hope since it has also hosted unsuccessful rounds of negotiations and remains one of the main venues for their future realisation (Sabbidis, 2014). In September 2009 a public access music concert was held there under the aegis of the UN, bi-communal art projects focusing on shared meanings were organised, and possibilities of future common restoration were examined (Constantinou et al. 2012).

**Figure 30:** A ghost airport (Doublewhirler, 2013).

In the case of the Ledra Palace Hotel the Buffer Zone is divested of divisory connotations, is re-appropriated, and spatialises the hopes of peaceful coexistence of the two communities. The Home For Cooperation, by bringing together members of both groups and by preparing them for a shared future, transforms that fragment of the Zone to a space of encounter and reconciliation despite the fact that its influence is limited within the confines of the Buffer Zone. The Nicosia International Airport, a signifier of abandonment, ruination, and spatial exclusion from the urban fabric can potentially transform into a space of encounter and mutual understanding if future bi-communal efforts to restore it bear fruit. It is already apparent, and indicative of a future process of dissolution of the boundary, that the efforts to recuperate the Buffer Zone and invest it with new meanings are made by activists and bi-communalists therefore from the ordinary people of the divided island who wish to co-habit it.



## Chapter six: Compounds, where the streets end, where streets begin.

Compounds are higher level significative formations that consist of matrices. The Ledra Street fragment in Nicosia, that vertically crosses the Buffer Zone, is an exemplar of a compound.



**Figure 31:** Ledra Street, the street of division (Psyllides, 2015).

The street runs south to north, is almost 1km long and its biggest part lies within the Greek Cypriot controlled area. It traverses vertically the Buffer Zone and reaches the lands in the north. It is a major shopping venue at the heart of the city and functions as linkage between south and north Nicosia. Between 1955-9 the street was nicknamed “the murder mile” because of the frequent targeting of British military forces by Greek Cypriot nationalist fighters (Time, 1956). In 1963 violence flared between the two ethnic groups and the street was blockaded (BBC, 2008). The barricade across the Buffer Zone signified and encapsulated the division of the island. On March 2007 the Greek Cypriot government demolished the wall between the southern part of Ledra Street and the Buffer Zone and replaced it with 2m high screens. On March 2008 the leaders of the two communities agreed to reopen the street after clearing it from mines and shoring up the buildings flanking the street. On April 2008 the part of the street that lies within the Buffer Zone was once more accessible to the public after 34 years (BBC, 2008).



**Figure 32:** British policemen serving in Cyprus in 1956. They were patrolling Ledra Street, when an EOKA gunman, shot them down (Egby, 1956).



**Figure 33:** Ledra Street divided by the Buffer Zone-replacement of the wall with screens (Berg, 2013).



On October 2011 Occupy Movement protesters, within the wider context of the existing on the island grassroots activism, began to occasionally squat the 50m long passage between the Ledra-Lokmachi checkpoints on Ledra Street (Iliopoulou and Karathanasis, 2014). On November 19<sup>th</sup> they set up tents and camped overnight in the Buffer Zone (Antonsich, 2012). The occupation became permanent. On January 2012 they reclaimed abandoned buildings within the Buffer Zone for cultural and political initiatives (Iliopoulou and Karathanasis, 2014). The occupation lasted until June 2012. The activists were mainly young men and women from both sides of the Buffer Zone and abroad, leftists, academics, artists. Critical to existing practices the movement was inherently and directly political (Foka, 2015). They organised diverse activities including discussions, film screenings, workshops etc.

**Figure 34:** Permanent Occupation of the Buffer Zone at Ledra Street, Nicosia, Cyprus (Kypris, 2013).



**Figure 35:** “We are living the solution” (Kypris, 2013).

Influenced by similar initiatives worldwide, the Occupy Movement in Cyprus protested against neoliberal economic politics that intensified social inequalities (Foka, 2015). The activists’ approach shifted from the local to global and vice versa (Socrates, 2012). They voiced a context specific claim, the reunification of Cyprus, along with anti-capitalist, anti-military, anti-state, and eco-friendly appeals

(Foka, 2015). Dissatisfied with the inability of their political elites to reach an acceptable solution they claimed that “they were living the solution” (Iliopoulou and Karathanasis, 2014) by cohabitating for 6 months an undivided space, proving that coexistence was feasible without an official resolution of the dispute or the succorance and endorsement of political elites. They defied bi-communalism as they thought that it only perpetuated the divisive logic (Antonsich, 2012).



**Figure 36:** Anticapitalist messages (Lettersfromcyprus, 2011).

The pedestrianised part of the Buffer Zone that had been occupied functioned as an atypical plaza, a performative space where acts of subversion of norms took place. It was the object of contestation and at the same time a terrain of resistance where that contestation took place (Antonsich, 2012). The Zone’s functionality, according to Antonsich, was challenged and imbued with new meanings and associations. In addition, as the Buffer Zone counted 38 years of presence, its existence was normalised for the citizens, it was an unnoticeable, invisible part of their lives (Antonsich, 2012). By occupying it the movement challenged that normalisation of space and made it once more real by interrupting routines, rituals, sequences of life.

The appropriation of the Buffer Zone’s space signified the vision of coexistence and its tangibility as the participants had re-appropriated the space and relinquished it to the citizens. The Ledra Street, the street of division (BBC, 2008), due to the efforts of a handful of people, has gradually transformed into a symbol of hope.

## Chapter seven: Where they coexist or a glimpse of a peaceful future.

The village of Pyla, situated within the limits of the Buffer Zone may be considered as an autonomous signifier, a characteristic example of a structure in Preziosi's hierarchy, consisting of compound units (neighbourhoods, streets etc.).

The UNFICYP's (UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus) mandate predicted that it should "use its best efforts to prevent a recurrence of fighting and, as necessary, to contribute to the maintenance and restoration of law and order and a return to normal conditions" (Resolution 186, 1964). The Security Council directive has been successfully implemented in Pyla, a mixed village next to the British sovereign area whose inhabitants were not forced to flee in 1974 due to the location of the village within the Buffer Zone (Constantinou, 2008). Its position made the villagers feel they lived in precarious conditions "on top of a powder keg" (Papadakis et al, 2006). A series of effective measures have been adopted by the UNFICYP to avoid friction (no police or army presence of both sides without permission by the UN, no flags apart from those used in certain commemorations etc.). The villagers themselves were keen to maintain peace and avoid incidents that would cause eruption of violence. In December 1997 as a countermeasure to the European Union's decision to delay granting candidature to Turkey and to begin accession negotiations with the Republic of Cyprus, the Turkish Cypriot authorities ceased giving permissions to Turkish Cypriots to cross the Zone in order to meet their counterparts for their bi-communal meetings (Broome, 2005). The status of Pyla, being within the Buffer Zone in a state of exception, has allowed these unconventional practices to take place there, practices that were either discouraged or directly forbidden in the north and/or in the south. From 1998 to 2003 Pyla was one of the few places where both sides could meet. Countless society initiatives, academic workshops, cross cultural reunions and so forth took place there, all of which aimed at opening a dialogue between the two communities and empowered their relations in order to overcome the division (Constantinou, 2008).



**Figure 37:** Location of the village Pyla near Larnaka (Paroikiaki, 2015).





**Figure 38:** The village of Pyla (Kear, 2013).



Once more it is apparent that the efforts for rapprochement that transmute the nature and signification of the Buffer Zone originated from initiatives of ordinary people. In the opinion of Constantinou, the case of Pyla is idealised as symbolic of the feasibility of peaceful coexistence of the two ethnic groups, of how Cyprus could prosper without the affliction of the division (Constantinou, 2008).

**Figure 39:** Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot musicians during bi-communal activities (Economopoulos, 2002).

## Chapter eight: Settlement, one signifier different significations.

The Buffer Zone as an entity corresponds to the settlement unit in Preziosi's classification. Both sides capitalise on its spatiality to promote contrasting claims and visions, those of division for the Turkish Cypriots and those of rapprochement for the Greek Cypriots (Foka, 2015). The creation and sustenance of such narratives is described by Papadakis as "ethnic autism". In these narratives the "other", across the barrier, is perceived as the perpetrator and the "self" as the victim (Papadakis et al, 2006).

For the Turkish Cypriots the Buffer Zone fossilised by the passage of time came to signify the line of protection against the dominant influence and oppression of the untrustworthy "other" (Lacarrière, 2003). The period between 1963-7 is vivid in their memories, a time of intercommunal strife and killings during which they felt helpless being an endangered minority. In four years 420 deaths of Turkish Cypriots were recorded and 25.000 of them, 20% of the community, became refugees (Papadakis, 1993). The visit to their houses in 1967 which they found looted or destroyed (Papadakis, 1993) confirmed their conviction for the necessity of the division of the island. The attempt to overthrow the Greek Cypriot president Makarios in 1974, and the resulting threat of extinction of the Turkish Cypriots in the hands of the putschists, further aggravated their precarious condition (Papadakis, 1993). The "Peace Operation" (invasion by Turkey) of 1974 liberated them and consolidated the division. The Turkish Cypriot administration created a safe haven in the north, protected by a solid barrier, where the Turkish Cypriots would no longer be prosecuted (Demetriou, 2007). To add insult to injury the military built up in the south, the patriotic messages and the wide use of Greek symbols are perceived by them as pending menace, as a sign of the intention of annexation of the island to Greece in the wider context of the Greek irredentism (Papadakis, 1993). The Turkish Cypriot narrative legitimises division claiming the impossibility of peaceful coexistence (Papadakis, 1993). The past is one of pure conflict proving that the two communities could never live together. The division and subsequently the barrier were a historically dictated necessity.



**Figure 40:** The use of Greek and Greek Cypriot flags in official commemorations (The Cypriot Puzzle, 2014).



According to Lacarrière, the Buffer Zone is a symbol of protection, albeit an undesirable one, for the Greek Cypriots as well (Lacarrière, 2003). However the menacing other is not the Turkish Cypriots that are perceived in the spirit and politics of reconciliation and forgetting as future compatriots, citizens of equal rights with whom they could once more live peacefully; the archenemy is Turkey which after 42 years maintains a considerable army force (40.000 soldiers) in the north and no one can guarantee that it will not resume military activities in the area (Lacarrière, 2003). To better comprehend how the Greek Cypriots perceive the military presence in the north suffice to say that one of the names they use for the north is “Katehomena” (the land under occupation) (Dikomitis, 2005). The abstract fear of engaging in a new conflict is palpable for the Greek Cypriots as the Turkish Cypriots remain dependent on Turkey. The narrative of the Greek Cypriots capitalises on a supposed “golden age” of peaceful coexistence which proves that an integrationist solution to the Cyprus problem (one state with federal system) is possible (Papadakis, 1993).



**Figure 41:** “Ne mutlu türk'üm diyene” (How happy is he who call himself a Turk) written on Pentadaktylos mountain range in the TRNC (Hekkers, 2015).



**Figure 42:** The use of Turkish and Turkish Cypriot flags in official commemorations (The Cypriot Puzzle, 2014).

The TRNC has declared its independence under the auspices of the Denktash administration in northern Cyprus in 1983. As a new state it had to have well defined borders and the Buffer Zone symbolised and sustained notions of sovereignty and statehood (Demetriou, 2007). However the new state was never recognised as such and remained a liminal legal formation in a state of exception, an international pariah (Navaro-Yashin, 2003). It has been deprived of any form of interaction with other states, has been repeatedly embargoed, a situation that in turn lead to underdevelopment and depravity (Lacarrière, 2003). The Buffer Zone that was meant to define, secure, protect became in the passage of time a suffocating knot. As P. Marcuse (Ellin, 1997) mentions:

“In the process boundary walls have come to reflect one of the chief characteristics of our historical experience: that those who oppress are themselves limited by their oppression, those that imprison are themselves imprisoned”.

The Greek Cypriot official policy, on the other hand, invariably refuses the function of the Buffer Zone as a border. Such an acceptance would automatically imply the recognition of the TRNC as an independent state (Demetriou, 2007). This notion has been deeply engrained in the collective unconscious of the Greek Cypriots who bitterly reject such an interpretation of the dividing line and commonly refer to the northern part of the island as “the pseudo-state” (Dikomitis, 2005), or claim that “Our borders are in Kyrenia” (further north). A possible recognition of the north as state entity would entail a separatist solution to the dispute to which the Greek Cypriots vehemently oppose. In addition, according to Demetriou “this disjunction between the rhetoric that the Buffer Zone is not a border and its function as such contributed to the physical divide” (Demetriou, 2007).



**Figure 43:** Our borders are not here, our borders are in Kyrenia (Ellhnas1821, 2005).

In the beginning of 2002 a series of demonstrations broke out in the north, a culmination of years of internal oppression and external marginality (Hatay and Bryant, 2008). It was a revolution instigated by liberal Turkish Cypriot politicians, journalists, poets, etc. that opposed to a present they considered aged and corrupt. They demanded consideration of a solution to the Cyprus dispute which would ensure the admission of the island as a whole in the EU (Capron, 2012). This movement used nostalgia to underpin its politics. It was not nostalgia for the common life with the Greek Cypriots, since such a feeling would suggest that the communal past was not always bleak in stark contrast to the official Turkish Cypriot rhetoric (Papadakis et al, 2006). It was nostalgia for the life in the enclaves. Three years after the independence (1960) interethnic violence erupted and a substantial number of Turkish Cypriots were displaced in refugee camps (Papadakis et al, 2006). Terrified by the Greek Cypriot nationalist guerrilla fighters and incited by their partitionist leadership they organised enclaves scattered throughout the island (Kliot and Mansfield, 1997). It was a period of hardship, but it was hard for everyone. It was also a period of self-determination. The obsession of the Turkish Cypriots with nostalgia, with bygone days, urges them to cling to the existing boundary. The Buffer Zone is the

only barrier, physical and mental, that can protect the innocence of that unsullied past or the innocence of ignorance (Hatay and Bryant, 2008).



**Figure 44:** Turkish Cypriots protested against economic austerity measures backed by Ankara in April 2011 (AP, 2011).

The Buffer Zone equally triggers and sustains feelings of nostalgia for the Greek Cypriots (Lacarrière, 2003). It is a boundary that bolsters memories of lands that were the best agricultural, natural, and commercial resources on the island (Coufoudakis, 1976). In the north are the houses and neighbourhoods of the Greek Cypriot refugees that were displaced in 1974, an intervention that transformed a once ethnically mixed island into two spatially segregated communities. The refugees come from four main districts, Morphou, Kyrenia, Famagusta, and Karpasia (Brubaker, 2010). They have lived since 1974 with an unrelenting defiance and longing for return. Nostalgia for them is not merely a sentiment, it is a patriotic duty (Papadakis et al, 2006). They could never perceive their current residences as home, since the real ones are at the other side of the Buffer Zone. The Buffer Zone marks a psychological and cognitive threshold beyond which the past lies. The Greek Cypriots did not have the opportunity after 1974 and not until 2003 to visit their former houses. Therefore they preserved an idealised view of the past and for a long time their expectations did not fall short (Dikomititis, 2005). Some of them still refuse to cross it now for the very same reason. However the reality on the other side of the Buffer Zone deplorably fails to live up to the refugees' imaginations. One of the first initiatives of the Turkish Cypriot administration, in order to consolidate its presence in the north and cut the ties with the south, was to turkify names of places, streets, villages (Navaro-Yashin, 2012). In the Times of May 1976 it is mentioned "the process of obliterating everything Greek has been carried out methodically" (Bevan, 2006). The Greek Cypriot houses, when not left to disintegrate, were handed over to Turkish settlers or Turkish Cypriots (Navaro-Yashin, 2003). Cemeteries were vandalised, churches damaged or turned to mosques and museums (Constantinou et al. 2012). The Buffer Zone has at least until 2003, and up to now for those who refuse to cross it, served to protect the Greek Cypriots from a painful reality that the past is forever lost, encroached upon, sullied.



**Figure 45:** Greek Cypriot cemetery, St Paraskevi, Akanthou, occupied Cyprus (Lobby for Cyprus).

The Buffer Zone in its entirety spatializes the diverging visions of the future of the two communities and holds similar symbolism for them. However that symbolism is not of peaceful coexistence for both of them, a symbolism which the constituent parts of the Buffer Zone had assumed in the passage of time. For the Turkish Cypriots the Buffer Zone functions as and represents the physical protection against the Greek Cypriots in accordance with their narrative that the two communities should live independently in the future. It is also a mental boundary that protects their memories of the solidary past in the enclaves. The Buffer Zone is perceived as a border expressing their wish for state recognition. For the Greek Cypriots on the other hand it is a measure of protection against the Turks. The Buffer Zone serves once more as a notional boundary that helps the Greek Cypriots preserve their memories from the life in the north. However they categorically refuse to invest the Buffer Zone with border associations.

## Conclusion

The Buffer Zone in Cyprus displays regional theoretical peculiarities mainly due to its strong and diverse semantisation. Semiotics, within the general context of structuralism, provide a powerful methodological tool in order to unveil and understand the manifold meanings of this artificial boundary.

At first the semiotics of the Buffer Zone manifest the clashing ambitions of the two communities with regards to a future solution of the Cyprus dispute. From the Turkish Cypriots' standpoint the solid walls on their flank of the Buffer Zone, the figures according to Preziosi, and the permanent checkpoint on Ledra Street, the cell, signify the wish for a federal formula according to which the two groups will live separately, side by side. The temporary physical structures of the Buffer Zone on the Greek Cypriot flank and the provisional checkpoint on Ledra Street attest to the immovable position of the Greek Cypriots that a federal solution should be sought after which will ensure the reunification of the island and the subsequent coexistence of the two communities.

The Buffer Zone is also the two-faced barrier on the flanks of which the quest for national identification and self-definition is being enacted. It is the space where the relationship of each side with their respective motherlands is being expressed, a condition that mutually propagates mistrust and threat.

To some extent the Buffer Zone is divested of divisive connotations with the reclamation of spaces-matrices such as the Ledra Palace Hotel, the Home for Cooperation, the Nicosia International Airport by bi-communalists who invest them with encouraging overtones of mutual understanding and cooperation. Furthermore, the appropriation of the fragment of the Ledra Street which lies in the Buffer Zone, a compound in this semiotic classification, by members of the Occupy Movement contested the function and the signification of the Buffer Zone from within. It became evident in all these cases that people can dramatically alter the meanings and associations that spaces generate.

The case of the Pyla village, a structure in line with Preziosi's hierarchy, is a living proof that the two communities can live harmoniously together, therefore it is considered a signifier of peaceful coexistence.

For both communities the Buffer Zone as an entity, a settlement, assumes a protective role; the Turkish Cypriots perceive it as a justifiable barrier that protects them from the Greek Cypriots whereas the Greek Cypriots regard it as an undesirable necessity against the Turks. It is protective for yet another reason; For the Turkish Cypriots it safeguards the memories of an innocent past in the enclaves and for the Greek Cypriots it maintains nostalgic associations with their former life in the north.

The Turkish Cypriots, in order to establish sovereignty of their professed state and as the later still remains in an ambivalent condition, consider the Buffer Zone as a border. The Greek Cypriots conversely abhor such an interpretation of the boundary since it would imply the indirect recognition of the statelet.

The experience of the volatile negotiations on the Cyprus dispute has up to the present proved their inefficacy in finding a commonly acceptable solution. Yet the barrier is an artificial one and has outlived its purpose, to divide two ethnic groups in conflict. It is true that both sides differ in religion, language, ethnicity. After all people had built walls in the course of history for less important reasons. Still, the two communities share a strong bond, one that determines their identity apart from any ethnic definitions; they are all Cypriots. Perhaps the dissolution of the barrier will ensue once a strong

common Cypriot identity is shaped and empowered. Additionally, practice has shown that Cypriots, by occupying the Buffer Zone, transform its uses and undertones, therefore the dissolution of the boundary may occur from their gradual but constant re-appropriation. The purpose of this work was to underline the significations of the boundary and moreover trace the initiatives that transform it in order to show that if Cypriots in the past knew how to build walls, they are now learning how to build bridges.



**Figure 46:** Re-appropriation of the Buffer Zone (Sousamli, 2016).



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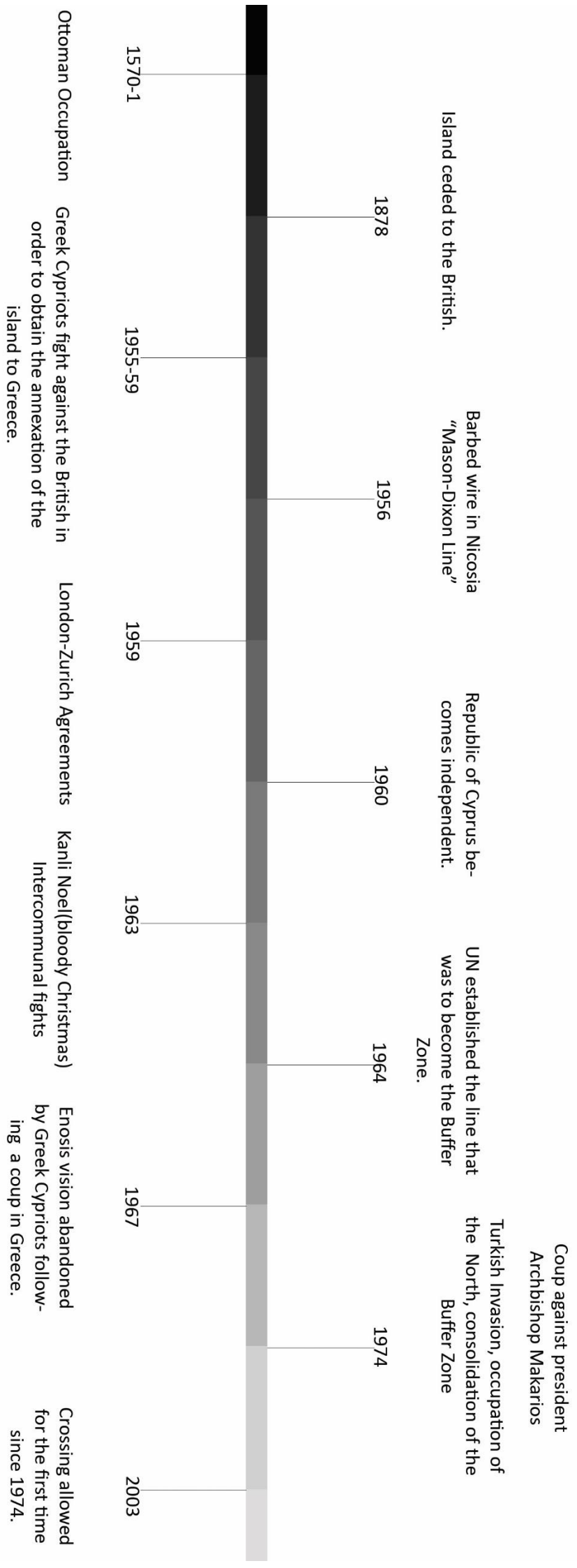
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## Vocabulary of the Division

Buffer Zone: Another phrase that the Greek Cypriots coined for the Buffer Zone is “The Line of Shame”. The Zone is perceived as the embarrassing obstacle that deprives Greek Cypriots of access to their rightful properties, their lands, their memories and is therefore unacceptable (Papadakis, 2006). Another explanation could be ventured here. After the espousal of the politics of reconciliation, of “epanaproseggisi”, the Buffer Zone remains a shameful barrier that divides the land and people that the Greek Cypriots wish to see reunited and as such it should be lifted.

Enclaves: In December 1963 the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios, proposed several controversial amendments to the constitution resulting in a major crisis between the two communities. After the rejection of the proposed amendments by the Turkish Cypriot community the situation escalated into a severe conflict between extremists from both sides, which lasted throughout 1963 and 1964. Turkish Cypriots, either of their own volition or by force, began retreating from isolated rural areas and villages into enclaves. These lands were accessible only to Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriot presence was strictly forbidden. The enclaves, with the largest one being in Nicosia, were scattered throughout the island and the people living there were deprived of necessities due to Greek Cypriot restrictions on materials that could have been used for military activities. The freedom of movement for the Turkish Cypriots was restricted during that time.

Enosis: The efforts of the Greek Cypriots to achieve the annexation of the island to mainland Greece.

EOKA: EOKA was a nationalist guerrilla organisation that fought against the British yoke in order to achieve the self-determination of the island and its annexation to mainland Greece. The name is the acronym of the organisation's full name in Greek, Ethniki Organosis Kypriou Agoniston ("National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters").

Flag of the Republic of Cyprus: It is the same one that was designed by a Turkish Cypriot for the new state in 1960 when the two communities lived together. It depicts the island in its entirety with two olive branches –a symbol of peace- signifying the peace between the two communities. The island's colour is copper orange symbolising the copper deposits on the island from which Cyprus probably took its name.

Greek Cypriot Refugees: Their longing for the life in the north explains their inability to integrate in the south.

Mason-Dixon Line: In 1956 the British colonial officials etched out the “Mason-Dixon line” named after the line that divided the north and south of America in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and symbolised division.

Nicosia Masterplan: A bi-communal attempt of preparing a masterplan for the divided city of Nicosia in 1979.

Peace Operation: The invasion of the island by the Turks in 1974.

Taksim: The efforts of the Turkish Cypriots to divide the island into two different polities.

Treaty of Guarantee 1959: “In the event of any breach of the provisions of the present Treaty, Greece, the United Kingdom, and Turkey undertake to consult together, with a view to making representations, or taking the necessary steps to ensure observance of those provisions. In so far as common or concerted action may prove impossible, each of the three guaranteeing Powers reserves the right to take action with the sole aim of re-establishing the state of affairs established by the present Treaty” (King, 1963).

Turkish-Turkish Cypriot Flags: The Turkish Cypriot flag is the Turkish flag with its colours reversed and two red stripes added at the top and bottom. The red colour of the Turkish flag represents the blood shed by Turkish soldiers in war times. The symbols of the star and the crescent, common to both, are Muslim. The current Greek Cypriot flag, on the other hand, as it was meant to serve both communities in the sixties, is deprived of any religious symbolism.

Vandalism: Both communities have destroyed cultural traces of each other when they were spatially segregated. However in the spirit of reconciliation and with the hope that the Turkish Cypriots will return to their lands in the south and the Greek Cypriot refugees will go back to the north there was an intensive effort by the Greek Cypriot administration to save mosques, houses, names, etc. The Turkish Cypriot properties are left intact and no planning permissions are granted for them.