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# **THE CONFLICTS OF A ‘PEACEFUL’ DIASPORA:**

**IDENTITY, POWER AND PEACE POLITICS  
AMONG CYPRIOTS IN THE UK AND CYPRUS**

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DPhil in Social Anthropology  
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I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

**Signature:**.....

## Thesis Abstract

The thesis traces ethnographically the discursive, ideological and political processes through which connections between the Cypriot diaspora in the UK and Cyprus are imagined, articulated and (re)produced through peace politics and Cypriotist discourses that emphasise the need for reconciliation between Greek and Turkish Cypriots based on a common Cypriot identity. The fieldwork research was conducted between 2006 and 2008 in London and Cyprus, taking place at a very particular historical period, when a larger space apparently opened for British Cypriots' involvement in the politics 'at home'; I follow here their modes of political engagement across a number of actual sites and 'imagined' social fields –from community associations in London to online Cypriot networks; and from organised party groups in the UK to informal communal crossings of the Cypriot Green Line. The thesis ultimately presents an ethnographic account of Cypriotism and how individuals *employ*, *perform* and *(re)define* it within a transnational nexus of inter-related contexts, revealing that far from popular understandings of it as a unifying discourse, Cypriotism is also divisive and internally contested.

Whereas anthropological work on Cyprus has been prolific in studying and analysing ethnic nationalisms extensively, Cypriotism in its own right has not been problematised enough beyond being treated as a counter-discourse to other dominant ideologies. The perspective of the diaspora helps to crystallise how discursive battles and exclusive ideas of 'who is a Cypriot' simultaneously challenge and (re)produce difference among Cypriotists. Moreover, to challenge the dichotomy between 'good' and 'bad' nationalisms of Western-centric discourses, it is argued here that the boundaries between Cypriotism and ethnic nationalism are more blurred than often assumed, especially as they co-exist and are employed in the cultural repertoires of Cypriots.

The aims of the thesis, therefore, are threefold; first, it endeavours to illustrate *empirically* how connections between the Cypriot diaspora in the UK and Cyprus are constructed through 'peace politics' and how political subjectivities develop in such a transnational context by looking at the ways multiple agents mobilise, articulate and perform particular identities through the language of Cypriotism. To do this, the research *methodologically* integrates the 'ethnography of the Cypriot diaspora' with the

‘ethnography of Cyprus’, which have developed to some extent as two distinct study fields, through multi-sited fieldwork both in the UK and Cyprus. Moreover, with its focus on Cypriotism and how a Cypriot nation is (re)imagined within it, the thesis aims to contribute *theoretically* to ‘the anthropology of Cyprus’ by participating in ongoing discussions on nationalism and counter-nationalism, history and memory, identity and cultural ‘authenticity’.

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## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACGTA	Association for Cypriots, Greek and Turkish Affairs
AKEL	Progressive Party of the Working People ( <i>Anorthotiko Komma Ergazomenou Laou</i> )
BCP	British Communist Party
CCC	Cypriot Community Centre
CTP	Republican Turkish Party ( <i>Cumhuriyetçi Türk Partisi</i> )
CU	Cypriots United
DIKO	Democratic Party ( <i>Dimokratiko Koma</i> )
DISI	Democratic Rally ( <i>Dimokratikos Synagermos</i> )
EDEK	Movement for Social Democracy ( <i>Kinima Sosialdimokraton</i> )
EOKA	National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters ( <i>Ethniki Organosis Kypriou Agoniston</i> )
G/C	Greek Cypriot(s)
KKK	Cypriot Communist Party ( <i>Kommunistikon Komma Kyprou</i> )
PEO	Pancyprrian Federation of Labour ( <i>Pagkupria Ergatiki Omospondia</i> )
POMAK	World Federation of Expatriate Cypriots ( <i>Pagkosmia Omospondia Apodimon Kiprion</i> )
PRIO	Peace Research Institute Oslo
RIK	Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation ( <i>Radiophoniko Idrima Kyprou</i> )
T/C	Turkish Cypriot(s)
TCCA	Turkish Cypriot Community Association
TCWP	Turkish Cypriot Women's Project
TMT	Turkish Resistance Organisation ( <i>Türk Mukavemet Teşkilatı</i> )
TRNC	Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
UNFICYP	United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

‘Haji-Marcos pursed his lips and shook his head. He remembered a time when there wasn’t a cigarette paper between Orthodox Christian and Muslim. They worked together, played together, sang and danced together, celebrated each other’s weddings, mourned each other’s deaths. And why not? They shared the same space, spoke the same vernacular. As did the other people of Cyprus. Maronites, Armenians and Latins. Cypriots all.’  
(from *The Cypriot* by Koumi 2006: 21)

In August 2007, the annual ‘Conference of Overseas Cypriots’ was taking place in its customary location, at the Hilton hotel in Nicosia. The event that is supported by the Republic of Cyprus and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs brings together representatives of the Greek Cypriot diaspora every year in the summer as an opportunity to reconnect Cypriots abroad with their ‘motherland’. It is also an occasion for the World Federation of Overseas Cypriots (POMAK) to hold meetings and plan its own organisation and action. Political figures and representatives of local authorities rarely miss the chance to make an appearance every year at the Hilton conference hall to express their support for the Cypriot communities abroad and their commitment to co-operating with them. In 2007, the President of the Republic, Tassos Papadopoulos, addressed the opening ceremony of the event and religious figures, such as the Archbishop of Cyprus, also appeared on the speaker’s podium.

My fieldwork plan had taken me to Cyprus that summer in order to follow London Cypriots during their holidays and to trace their cultural practices, social interactions and political activities during their stay in the island. Many of the UK ‘community representatives’, who were sitting in the first rows of the Hilton conference room - middle-aged Greek Cypriot men in their majority- were individuals with a strong public profile amongst Cypriots in London through their roles in community organisations, media, political parties and activist groups and some had already been central informants and interlocutors in my research.

After spending long hours in the conference hall, many of them reacted to the fact that the largest part of the sessions was spent on detailed organisational discussions rather than on what they considered topics of major importance and for which they had primarily made the trip to Cyprus; namely, potential solutions of ‘the Cyprus problem’. The post-conference informal discussions reflected disenchantment with the event and some of the UK Cypriots found their participation in it futile. As one of them declared, ‘I came here to talk about the future of Cyprus, but we have been talking very little about this. If things remain the same, I will not come back to Cyprus again, I’m tired. After all, we are fine in London, we live together [meaning Greek and Turkish Cypriots] and we have no problems’.

This statement echoes popular and widespread representations of Cypriots’ ‘coexistence’ in London as ‘peaceful’ and undisrupted in comparison to a divided Cyprus. Such discourses have been reproduced by academic writings on the diaspora in the UK (cf. Constantinides 1977; Ladbury 1977) and through media reports and analyses. A BBC article (27/05/2005), for instance, highlights that

‘In London, where many Cypriots have settled, the situation in their home country appears not to have any dividing effect. A walk along Green Lanes<sup>1</sup> in North London reveals many Turkish-Cypriot shops sitting next to Greek-Cypriot ones. Greek-Cypriot community centres welcome their Turkish counterparts and vice-versa.’

Similar ideas have also underlined government funding policies towards Cypriot organisations, so that the Cypriot Community Centre (CCC) in Wood Green was established in the early 1980s with finances from Haringey Council to support inter-ethnic co-operation amongst *all* Cypriots and to represent their local community. More importantly, such representations are (re)produced by some Cypriots in London, who, mainly through a language of Cypriotism<sup>2</sup>, have claimed for themselves an ‘authentic Cypriotness’, for which co-existence and tolerance are a prerequisite. By no means all Cypriots in London are Cypriotists, however such understandings are quite widespread and project life in London as a paradigm of how peace could potentially be restored in

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<sup>1</sup> Green Lanes is a long North London road that runs through numerous boroughs, where a large number of Cypriot residencies, businesses and organisations are located. Its name’s coincidental closeness to the Green Line in Cyprus invites for unavoidable comparisons between the two contexts.

<sup>2</sup> Unlike Greek and Turkish nationalisms that are presented by Cypriotists to have historically dominated in and divided Cyprus, Cypriotism aims to promote a common identity and unity among all Cypriots. The term is extensively discussed in chapter 2.

Cyprus; of how the iconic Green Line, the ceasefire line that divides Cyprus into two parts, could mirror Green Lanes, a North London street, where Greek and Turkish Cypriot shops stand next to each other and which is often employed as emblematic evidence that symbiosis between the two communities is possible.

It is precisely within this framework of diasporic ‘Cypriotism’ that the disappointment of London Cypriot representatives at the 2007 Conference in Nicosia has to be analysed, as a reaction to the limited opportunities for political contribution and debate presented to them at the event. Having been long-term supporters of peace and re-unification and politically outspoken, many interpreted the political climate in the conference -and in the island more broadly- as an obvious manifestation of the lasting effects of the ‘post-Annan’ period. The rejection of the UN-backed re-unification plan, named after the Secretary General Kofi Annan, in 2004 led to an era of conflicting emotions, deflated hopes and political fatigue in Cyprus and the ‘Cypriotist’ language of some UK Cypriots appeared ill-timed and almost inappropriate in such context.

By the summer of 2008, however, the political scenery and overarching atmosphere in Cyprus had shifted, mainly due to the presidential elections and the victory of Dimitris Christofias, the long term secretary of communist AKEL (Progressive Party of the Working People [Anorthotiko Komma Ergazomenou Laou]), in February of the same year. Previously peripheral Cyprio-centric ideas became more centralised not only in the political repertoire and agenda of the state but also in the everyday discourses of Cypriots. Although, naturally, not everyone welcomed enthusiastically the electoral result, many UK Cypriotists discovered in the new status quo emerging opportunities for their participation in Cypriot politics. Even those, who had declared unwillingness the year before to travel to Cyprus and participate in yet another conference, returned to the Hilton venue in August 2008 with renewed hopes and expectations.

The above description of the shifting attitudes of UK Cypriots towards a conference at ‘home’ encapsulates what this thesis is essentially about: the discursive, ideological and political processes through which connections between the diaspora and Cyprus are imagined, articulated and (re)produced. The fieldwork research took place at a very particular historical period, when a larger space apparently opened for British Cypriots’ involvement in the politics ‘at home’, and I trace ethnographically their modes of

political engagement across a number of actual sites and ‘imagined’ social fields –from community associations in London to online Cypriot networks; and from organised party groups in the UK to informal communal crossings of the Cypriot Green Line. The thesis ultimately presents an ethnographic account of Cypriotism and how individuals *employ, perform* and *(re)define* it within a transnational nexus of inter-related contexts, revealing that far from popular understandings of it as a unifying discourse, Cypriotism is also divisive and internally contested.

The research for this project has been largely prompted by Anderson’s (1998) work on ‘long-distance nationalism’. Anderson (1998) has coined the term to describe the role of diasporas in their homeland’s political scene. Contrary to theories of globalisation that saw movement and the development of Western multicultural urban centres as the end of nationalism, he argues that mass migration and the development of mass communications have made long-distance nationalism possible and he examines ways, in which diasporas maintain or fuel ethnic differences and conflict, through physical, virtual or material intervention in their ‘homelands’. Along the same trend of thought a large body of literature has developed focusing on the articulation and development of nationalism within diasporas and the impact of such processes on the politics of the home country, in relation, for instance, to Sri Lankan (McDowell 1996), Kurdish (Griffiths 2000, 2002; Østergaard-Nielsen 2002; Wahlbeck 1998, 1999), Bosnian (Eastmond 1998; Al-Ali, Black and Koser 2001) and many other diasporic communities (Sorenson 1990; Van Hear 1998; Skrbis 1999; Ellis and Khan 2002; Al-Ali and Koser 2002).

However, not all diasporas appear to promote ethnic nationalism and sustain conflicts. Cypriots in the UK, as already highlighted, are commonly presented in public discourses as a ‘peaceful diaspora’, whose ‘peacefulness’ is typically underscored in a twofold way; first, in that Cypriots have not been a ‘trouble-making’ community for their host country unlike other perceived radicalised migrant communities and, second, in that they have practised co-existence in the diaspora and advocated for peace ‘at home’. This research was motivated by a great interest to study this ‘long-distance peace activism’ -to paraphrase and turn Anderson’s term around- partly with the intention to contribute to the ongoing academic discussions on the politicisation of

diasporas from a quite underrepresented perspective that focuses away from diasporic involvement in maintaining conflict.

However, the main stimulus for the study was an increasing theoretical and political concern that such popular and generic representations of ‘peace’ and ‘peacefulness’ reproduce polarised ideas of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ diasporas, a distinction that has particularly grown in Western imagination after 9/11 and the ‘securitisation’ of migrant communities, whose activities have been progressively more closely monitored and heavily controlled (Kalra, Kaur and Hutnyk 2005:1). The major issue with terms such as ‘peace’, ‘development’ or ‘democracy’ in such discourses is that originating from a Western perspective and used in a de-contextualised way they dismiss and veil the particular ways, in which these processes take place on the ground and are embedded in the historical and socio-political specificities of different locales. In other words, as the thesis argues, when the term ‘peaceful’ is applied unquestionably to describe the Cypriot diaspora, internal power dynamics and struggles are masked in the process of (self-) representation and ideas of ‘peace’ contribute to reinforcing some of the conditions and ideologies that are in reality root causes of the conflict. To move away then from strict distinctions between conflict-perpetuating and peace-supporting diasporas of Western-centric discourses, it is suggested here that ‘peace’, very much like ‘conflict’ has to be dissected and contextualised. The thesis argues that ‘peace politics’ by UK Cypriots cannot be analysed without examining how they connect to particular cultural ideas and pre-existing power dynamics and struggles on inter-personal, intra-diasporic and transnational levels.

However, there is also another distinction inherent in the conceptualisation of diasporas as ‘bad’ and ‘good’ that associates the former with negative and divisive ethnic nationalisms and the latter with positive and unifying civic nationalisms (Brown 1999). ‘Peace politics’ by UK Cypriots is often articulated through a language of Cypriotism, which is perceived in public discourses both in Cyprus and in the diaspora as a nationalism necessary for Cypriots to overcome Greek and Turkish ethnic nationalisms and unite around a common identity (cf. An 2011). Whereas anthropological work on Cyprus has been prolific in studying and analysing ethnic nationalisms extensively, Cypriotism in its own right has not been problematised enough beyond being treated as a counter-discourse to other dominant ideologies. However, through an ethnographic

lens, this thesis suggests that far from a unifying and homogenising ideological discourse, Cypriotism is internally debated and contested and the perspective of the diaspora helps to crystallise how discursive battles and exclusive ideas of ‘who is a Cypriot’ simultaneously challenge and (re)produce difference among Cypriotists. Moreover, to challenge the dichotomy between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ nationalisms, it is argued here that the boundaries between Cypriotism and ethnic nationalism are more blurred than often assumed, particularly in the ways, in which they co-exist and are employed in the cultural repertoires of Cypriots.

The aims of the thesis, therefore, are threefold; first, it endeavours to illustrate *empirically* how connections between the Cypriot diaspora in the UK and Cyprus are constructed through ‘peace politics’ and how political subjectivities develop in such a transnational context by looking at the ways multiple agents mobilise, articulate and perform particular identities through the language of Cypriotism. To do this, the research *methodologically* integrates the ‘ethnography of the Cypriot diaspora’ with the ‘ethnography of Cyprus’, which have developed to some extent as two distinct study fields, through multi-sited fieldwork both in the UK and Cyprus. Moreover, with its focus on Cypriotism and how a Cypriot nation is (re)imagined within it, the thesis aims to contribute *theoretically* to ‘the anthropology of Cyprus’ by participating in ongoing discussions on nationalism and counter-nationalism, history and memory, identity and cultural ‘authenticity’.

The following section (1.1) presents the history of the ‘Cyprus conflict’ through official and unofficial competing narratives in order to offer a background context for the rest of the thesis. It is followed by a review of the anthropological literature on nationalisms in Cyprus as well as studies on the Cypriot diaspora, in order to illustrate the ways in which the thesis builds on and converges from this body of work and to set its theoretical framework (1.2). The third part of the chapter (1.3) discusses the methodological approach of the research, presents the fieldwork sites and analyses some of the challenges that emerged during research. The final part (1.4) offers an overview of the thesis by outlining and summarising its main chapters.

### 1.1 The History(-ies) of the Cyprus Conflict.

It has become commonplace in most recent academic accounts of the ‘Cyprus problem’ to acknowledge that historiography and competing narrations of the past have played a major role in the (re)production of the conflict (Papadakis 2005; 2008). It is, therefore, almost an impossible task to trace historically the Cyprus conflict without relying on and recycling to some extent these historiographic traditions, their language and concepts. The most efficient way to deal with this limitation is to acknowledge *a priori* the contested character of major events and to present -whenever possible- how they are debated and presented by different sides. This section offers a brief overview not only of some of the important historical periods and aspects of the conflict but also of some competing understandings around them, as they are articulated in official accounts, public discourses and individual narratives.

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The island of Cyprus is located in the south Mediterranean, in a strategic position between Europe, Asia and Africa, which is often presented in popular narratives as one of the main reasons that Cyprus has been conquered and colonised so many times during its history (c.f. Hitchens 1997). Making claims to a Hellenic past and lineages, Greek Cypriots often emphasise on the arrival of ancient Greeks in 1200 B.C. as the first colonisers of the island; many Turkish Cypriots, on the other hand, see 1571 as a starting historical point, since this was the year that the island was passed over to the Ottoman Turks, after being occupied by Venetians between 1489 and 1571 and a Lusignan dynasty of Jerusalem France between 1191 and 1489 (Calotychos 1998: 5). On the other hand, it is characteristic that those who support a common Cypriot identity in order to distance themselves from the dominant nationalist narratives give greater emphasis on the numerous conquerors of Cyprus and explain Cypriot culture as a result of long historical processes of mixing and exchange. ‘Who knows where we are from? Cyprus was conquered so many times’, is a representative expression of such Cypriot-centric approach echoed in everyday discussions.

In 1878 the Ottomans rented Cyprus to the British and in 1914 the island was officially annexed to the British empire as part of its colonies. At that time the island consisted of 73.9% Orthodox Greeks and 24.4% Moslem Turks (ibid.). During the Ottoman period, the two communities operated separately, with the Orthodox Church of Cyprus having been given control over the affairs of Greek Cypriots. A similar system of dealing

separately with the two communities was also maintained by the British rulers, especially in the realms of education, religion and cultural affairs. The British, however, administratively, placed the Greeks and the Turks on the same level. For the Greeks, who had been subordinated to Turkish custom and law during the Ottoman Empire, this meant 'rising up', whereas the Turks were 'pulled down' (Loizos 1981:41). During the British rule, the idea of union (*enosis*) with Greece started to become popular among Greek Cypriots, however, any moves to gain alignment with Greece during that period were quashed. English became a common language and British-style institutions were established on the island (Fisher 2001: 309). But it was during that period, as Bryant (2004: 2) argues, that identity became singular and ethnic, the outcome of which she describes as 'ethnic estrangement', 'or the process by which people one knows may nevertheless appear to be or to become strangers'.

During the four centuries before independence, Muslim Turks lived dispersed throughout the island, both in separate villages and mixed villages with the Christian Greeks. With the exception of some occasional violent events, social relationships between the two groups were relatively harmonious (Loizos 1981:40) and it was not unusual for Orthodox Greeks and Moslem Turks to co-operate to 'further their interests' (Calotychos 1998:5), although intermarriage was not a common practice. In terms of language, as it was mentioned before, English was used by both communities, while at the same time each group maintained their separate languages. It is important to note, however, that, whereas 40% of Turkish Cypriots spoke Greek, most of Greek Cypriots did not speak any Turkish.

What is often not fully accounted for in historical narrations of the conflict is the mass emigration from Cyprus that peaked in the 1950s and 1960s. As Anthias (1992: 4) argues, to unearth the reasons of migration one has to locate it within the colonial context. The British colonialists failed to instigate industrial development into what was already a problematic agricultural economy suffering from heavy underemployment. Many of the protagonists of this thesis left their villages at that time in order to find jobs and a better life in the UK. They preferred Britain as they were familiar with the colonial context and also because an established Cypriot community had already existed in London since the 1930s. However, although migration from Cyprus to the UK has been categorised as economic, many Cypriot migrants, especially those from a leftist

background, rank their reasons of migrating first as political and then as economic, or at least they emphasise in their accounts on a strong interconnection between the two. Mr. Demetriadis, who arrived in London in 1952 at the age of twenty-one, came from ‘a right-wing family of farmers’, as he describes it, from a village near Nicosia. In his teens, he was sent by his parents to Larnaca to attend school and it was there that he discovered Marxism through sessions that students had secretly organised. ‘Whereas I graduated with good marks and I did very well in the exams, I couldn’t find a job. I was rejected many times until one day the *muhtaris* [*muhtar* in Turkish, the village head] told me “Why don’t you change your ideology? Because otherwise you are not going to get a job.” They wouldn’t give me a job because some people said that I was ‘*communistaros*’ [translated very loosely as ‘hard-core communist’ with negative connotations in this case]. After that I just decided to leave and come to England’.

As new ideologies emerged in the 1940s and 1950s, anti-Communist rhetorics also surfaced during the same period (Anthias and Ayres 1983), which partly explains experiences of marginalisation and exclusion as articulated by Mr. Demetriadis. In 1947, for instance, the Archbishop publicly declared communism as incompatible with Hellenism and Christianity, implying that a real Greek Orthodox could not be a communist (Kızılyürek 1999: 50, Loizides 2007: 176).

In 1955 the quest for union with Greece (*enosis*) was intensified and EOKA (National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters) was formed as a self proclaimed liberating movement against British colonialism. The group engaged in guerrilla warfare and operated under the leadership of Georgios Grivas (Markides 1977). The reaction to the guerrilla movement resulted in the loss of hundreds of lives, and alienated the Turkish population who responded to *enosis* with a call for the partition of the island (*taksim*) into two separate communities (Loizos 1981). The Turkish Cypriots aligned themselves with the British and established the TMT (Turkish Resistance Organization) (Papadakis 1998:149), which engaged in limited intercommunal fighting with the Greek Cypriots, until a ceasefire was implemented in 1958 (Fisher 2001:310).

It was not only the Turkish Cypriots, who were excluded from the language of liberation and patriotism of EOKA, but also leftists and communists. EOKA’s leadership saw the communists as outside the national community and as threats to their

struggle and decided to form allies with the Church of Cyprus and other conservative agents (Loizides 2007: 176). Mr. Andreas, an EOKA fighter, who now lives as a pensioner in Larnaca, was sharing with me and his daughter, who was visiting him from the UK, his stories in the organisation, when I asked him about their anti-communist agenda. ‘We never really had an anti-communist agenda’, he said, ‘it’s true that you couldn’t be a member if you were a communist, because we suspected that they could be traitors. But, you know, some communists helped indirectly. I had a communist friend, who had a lot of knowledge about bombs and sometimes I’d ask his help. And if there were attacks on leftists, this had most of the times to do with interpersonal problems and tensions. We didn’t have an order to kill leftists’.

Mr. Andreas’s interpretation of the EOKA agenda did not, however, correspond with that of communists and leftists, who not only see their exclusion from the EOKA struggle as a direct attack on their ideology but they often present the organisation as anti-communist in its genesis, with a primary focus on expunging communism from the island (see chapter 3). This is a common argument in popular critiques of EOKA that present the goal of the organisation as threefold including ‘the expulsion of the colonial rule, the subordination of the Turkish Cypriots and the weakening of the Communists’ (Igoumenides 1999: 31 cited in Loizides 2007: 176).

Although the level of EOKA’s anti-communist strategy is debated across different ideological positions and historical interpretations, it is commonly accepted that the operations of EOKA and TMT broke to a large extent horizontal relationships between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Turkish Cypriots, who had been members of AKEL<sup>3</sup> and PEO (Pancyprian Federation of Labour) and participated with Greek Cypriots in working-class struggles and strikes, were forced to leave such organisations under the pressure and threats by TMT (Anthias and Ayres 1983: 69). At the same time, AKEL demonstrated an ambivalent stance towards *enosis*. Its long-term support for self-determination that in cases was perceived to imply union with Greece and its inability – or what some of its critics frame as ‘unwillingness’- to directly oppose Hellenic chauvinism resulted to its failure to unite and incorporate Greek and Turkish Cypriots into the anti-colonial struggle (ibid.: 76). AKEL supporters often distance themselves

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<sup>3</sup> Although, as Adams (1971: 44) argues, AKEL was not successful in approaching Turkish Cypriots and, therefore, Turkish Cypriot membership in the party remained quite limited.

from the nationalist forces that have contributed to the Cyprus conflict by claiming that ‘the Left has no blood in their hands’, implying that they have not participated in inter-communal conflict and violence. At the same time, in these narratives, AKEL’s shifting stance towards *enosis* is highly underplayed and rarely debated.

In 1960, Greek and Turkish Cypriots accepted an independence document that was drafted by Britain, Greece and Turkey, who were to act as guarantors to protect the sovereignty of the new state (Papadakis 1998: 152). The 1960 Constitution was a complex power-sharing arrangement with both a national legislature and two communal chambers, and a cabinet, public service, police force and army (Fisher 2001: 310). In the newly formed state, Archbishop Makarios became the first President of the Republic of Cyprus, a clear proof of the strong continuing link between church and state, and Dr. Fazil Kutchuk, in the capacity of the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, was appointed as the Vice-President.

The 1960 agreement, however, did not bring an end to the already existing inter-communal tensions and both groups maintained the same political style by seeking to gain advantages within the same arrangement. The quest for *enosis* did not diminish and, simultaneously, Turkish Cypriots continued to pursue the idea of a bi-communal and bi-zonal political solution as articulated through the language of *taksim*. Within this political climate of antagonism, Greek Cypriots eventually proposed alterations to the original agreement, which would reduce the autonomy and representation of the Turkish Cypriots (Calotychos 1998: 7). As expected the proposed amendments were rejected by the Turkish Cypriot side, and these events were followed by a period of inter-communal violence and hostility (Loizos 1981; Papadakis 1998).

The number of mixed villages and areas dropped during this period, as thousands of Turkish Cypriots and some Greek Cypriots fled their houses to safer areas. In the years 1963-1964 and 1967, the Turkish Cypriots suffered the greater losses and many of them moved to areas that gradually became their armed enclaves (Patrick 1976; Loizos 1981; Papadakis 1998; Fisher 2001). In the narratives of many Turkish Cypriots life in the enclaves is remembered as a time of violence, insecurity and poverty. Mr. Ibrahim, for instance, who moved to the UK after 1974, is a committed leftist and participates in bi-communal events in London, recalls the ‘enclave years’ by saying: ‘I know it was not

all Greek Cypriots who did horrible stuff and I understand that everything happened because of nationalism and nationalists. However, I can never forget those times in the enclaves. I could see sometimes Greek Cypriot men waving women's underwear and saying "This is Ayşe's"<sup>4</sup> and making horrible sexual jokes. It was a really bad time that I could never forget'.

The increasing level of violence led to concerns in NATO and ultimately to the involvement of the UN. The United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP)<sup>5</sup> was established in March 1964 and remains on the island to this day. Hostility and intercommunal violence continued in the remainder of the 1960s and the early 1970s 'punctuated by intermittent crises sparking Turkish involvement and repeated calls for *enosis* by nationalist elements in the Greek-Cypriot community' (Fisher 2001:310).

The rise of a military junta in Greece also caused great political implications for Cyprus. With the support of the junta, EOKA B, a paramilitary pro-*enosis* organisation, was formed and started a series of attacks, killings and violent episodes against the government and members of the left-wing party (Hitchens 1997:71). All this violence culminated in a coup in 1974 and the situation erupted into major crisis. Whereas, initially, the fighting started between the coupists and left-wing supporters of Makarios, it was later followed by attacks on the Turkish Cypriot villages and enclaves. Turkey responded to the events with military intervention and Turkish forces moved to occupy 37% of the Northern part of the island (Papadakis 1998:152). The existing regime collapsed and the two sides were now separated. The dividing line, known as the 'Green line' that had been drawn in Nicosia by UN forces to deal with inter-communal violence, was now extended to separate the island into two parts.

The Turkish invasion caused the exodus of about 160,000 Greek Cypriots to the south of the island, creating a complicated refugee problem (see Zetter 1998). Subsequent to

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<sup>4</sup> Ayşe is a common Turkish name. In this particular narrative, Greek Cypriots appear to utilise the name in order to imply rape and assault. For the uses of rape both as a war strategy and a metaphor during conflict as well as for a broader analysis of the connections between nationalism and women, Yuval Davies and Anthias's 'Woman-Nation-State' (1989) offer comprehensive discussions on the topic.

<sup>5</sup> For more information on UNFICYP, see James (1989), who examines in detail the extent to which UN peace-keeping forces in Cyprus have fulfilled their purpose and how they could contribute to reconciliation. Ker-Lindsay (2005) provides a comprehensive history of the UN presence in Cyprus between 1964 and 2004. In a different publication, Ker-Lindsay (2006) examines the shifts in the agenda of the UN peace-keeping forces in Cyprus and speculates about their future in the island.

the ceasefire, an agreement on the voluntary regrouping of populations resulted in approximately 40,000 Turkish Cypriots moving to the North, while the approximately 10,000 Greek Cypriots who remained in the north were pressured to go south. Thus the events of 1974, in which several thousand people were killed or went missing, had the effect of creating two separate ethnic zones on the island (Calotychos 1998: 8).

In 1975, the Turkish Cypriot community declared itself as the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus, with Rauf Denktaş as its first leader. The northern part of Cyprus officially declared independence as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) in 1983. While the south part of the island, essentially the Greek Cypriot administration, gained international recognition and legitimacy as the official Republic of Cyprus, the state of northern Cyprus is only recognised by Turkey and it is treated internationally as an illegal non-state (ibid.: 9). At the same time, Greek Cypriots increasingly started dissociating their self-definition from Greece and Turkey and focusing on a Cypriot identity. Although Attalides (1979:57-80) describes the existence of a ‘Cypriot consciousness’ before 1974<sup>6</sup>, Papadakis (1998: 153), however, argues that only after 1974 Cypriotness emerged as a symbolic resource for the state’s official agenda to seek re-unification.

In 1990, the Republic of Cyprus initiated a unilateral application to join the European Union, which further alienated the Turkish Cypriots. As Argyrou (1996: 43) highlights, regardless of their ideological divisions on the national issues, all political parties in Cyprus reproduced a Eurocentric rhetoric, in which Cyprus was portrayed as ‘an integral part of Europe’. Even AKEL, although it expressed a concern about the EU application, did not take an explicit anti-European stance. According to the author, AKEL’s initial cautionary reaction was motivated more by an attempt to maintain its public façade as a communist party, rather than because of any ideological objections to the ‘Europeaness’ of Cyprus (ibid: 48).

Before the Republic of Cyprus joined the EU in 2004, hopes were momentarily raised about the possibility for reunification. In November 2002, UN Secretary-General Kofi

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<sup>6</sup> At the same time, Attalides underlines that this ‘Cypriot consciousness’ was never properly formulated or fully articulated.

Annan released a plan<sup>7</sup> for the reunification of the island and the solution of the Cyprus problem and the leaders of the northern and southern Cyprus engaged in rounds of negotiations. During the negotiations, Denktaş, the leader of northern Cyprus, opened the Green Line in 2003, in his effort to demonstrate a diplomatic expression of good will. Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots could now cross the line for the first time in decades. Although the official Greek Cypriot side accepted the Denktaş's announcement with reluctance, in the first weeks of the opening people poured in their thousands to cross and visit their old houses, neighbourhoods and friends. After long term division and isolation of the two communities, the possibility to cross opened new debates about the meanings of the opening and its possible significance for the future of Cyprus (Cockburn 2004: 7).

After countless rounds of negotiations, the Annan plan was placed before the two communities in a vote in the reunification referendum of 24 April 2004. Political discussions on the plan took interesting and, in cases, unexpected directions to the extent that, as Vural and Peristianis (2008: 40) suggest, 'seem to have transformed the historical division between left and right into a much more complex confrontation'. The strongest supporters of the plan appeared to be the leftist CTP (the Republican Turkish Party) on the Turkish Cypriot side and the right-wing DISI (Democratic Rally) on the Greek Cypriot side. Tassos Papadopoulos, the President of the Republic at the time, as well as his political party DIKO (Democratic Party) strongly campaigned against the plan. A 'No' position was adopted by the Turkish Cypriot right-wing parties too. What was noticeable, however, is that AKEL, although it initially supported the plan, in a last minute manoeuvre invited its supporters to reject it. The official justification of the shift was that the plan needed to be further improved in order to become accepted by the majority of Greek Cypriots. Whilst the proposal received a 65% favourable vote from the Turkish community, the Greek Cypriot community rejected it

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<sup>7</sup> In reality, there was a series of previously drafted versions that led to the final proposed plan, the Annan V or what is most commonly referred to as the 'Annan Plan'. A detailed version of the Annan plan can be found on the United Nations specially created website, on [www.cyprus-un-plan.org](http://www.cyprus-un-plan.org). For a comprehensive analysis of the Plan as well as the referendums and their results, see Varnava and Faustmann's (2009) 'Reunifying Cyprus. The Annan plan and Beyond'.

by over 75%<sup>8</sup>. Reunification therefore did not take place, and whereas the whole island joined the European Union on 1 May 2004, EU legislation only applies in the recognised Republic of Cyprus and is suspended in the north part until a solution of the ‘Cyprus problem’ is achieved.

After four years, in February 2008, Christofias was elected president of the Republic of Cyprus, while CTP<sup>9</sup>’s Mehmet Ali Talat was already head of the state in TRNC. That was the first time in Cypriot modern history that the two communist parties and old allies were in power simultaneously on either side of the Green Line and such political synchronicity inevitably raised hopes for some Cypriots, who welcomed it as a great opportunity for a faster achievement of ‘peace’ and ‘reunification’. Indeed shortly after Christofias’s election, and just after fieldwork for the thesis ended, the two leaders embarked on a long series of face-to-face ‘peace talks’ in search for a settlement of the Cyprus issue.

## **1.2 Re-viewing ‘the Anthropology of Cyprus’: From researching ethnic nationalism(s) to researching Cypriotism**

It is quite widely accepted that ‘the Anthropology of Cyprus’ developed mainly after Peter Loizos’s ethnographic study of a Greek Cypriot village, Argaki, which he first visited in the mid-1960s. It is worth noting that, like some of the protagonists of this thesis, Loizos’s own father had been a Greek Cypriot, one of the first communists in Cyprus, who left the island on his own volition in the 1930s after being in conflict with the Church because of his ideological position (1981:3). When Loizos arrived in Argaki, he found himself quite unexpectedly ‘returning’ to a place that he had never known or experienced before. He embarked on a study of local power structures and

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<sup>8</sup> For the reasons of the rejection of the Annan plan outlined officially by the Greek Cypriots, see the ‘*Letter by the President of the Republic, Mr. Tassos Papadopoulos, to the UN Secretary-General, Mr Kofi Annan, dated 7 June, which circulated as an official document of the UN Security Council*’ on the Cypriot Ministry of the Interior website, [www.moi.gov.cy](http://www.moi.gov.cy). Sözen and Özersay (2007) also discuss the reasons behind the rejection of the Annan plan by the Greek Cypriot community arguing that Greek Cypriots were not ready to commit to the levels of power-sharing with Turkish Cypriots that were proposed in the plan.

<sup>9</sup> According to Panayiotou (2006: 272), ‘[t]he T/C Left re-emerged autonomously in the 1970s within the officially Kemalist Republican Turkish Party, CTP, but it was excluded from power (much like AKEL) before the 1990s. The CTP’s “historical moment” arrived after 2000, when it came to express (in electoral terms) the social movement against the nationalist establishment, with the declared aim to support a solution to the Cyprus problem on the basis of a form of Cypriot civil patriotism’.

politics and their connection to broader political processes on a national level, which resulted to his first book titled 'The Greek Gift' (1975a). What Loizos did not know at the time of his arrival is that the people of Argaki in a few years time, as a result of the 1974 *coup* and then the Turkish intervention, would have to leave their village and become refugees. Quite unconventionally, Loizos managed to follow the life trajectories of his informants across the span of almost four decades, documenting their refugee experiences and mechanisms of re-adjustment almost immediately after 1974 (1981) and more recently publishing on the impact of displacement on the livelihood and health of the same Argaki people and their descendents (2008).

Although anthropological work in Cyprus has engaged with issues such as kinship, gender, honour and patronage, tradition and modernity (see Peristiany 1966; Sant Cassia 1982, 1993; Argyrou 1993), the majority of the literature generated especially after 1974 has concentrated mainly around the study of the conflict. There are some insightful ethnographic accounts of Northern Cyprus (Navaro-Yashin 2003a, 2003b, 2006), however, most post-conflict ethnography has focused on the southern part of the island with a number of studies offering a comparative analysis of aspects of the conflict on both sides (Bryant 2004, Papadakis 2005). Studies on inter-ethnic relations, population exchanges, refugees, land issues and missing persons have offered a micro-level understanding of the situation and this type of literature has dominated anthropological research in Cyprus for the past three decades (see Loizos 1975a, 1975b, 1981, 1988; Papadakis 1993, 1994; Calotychos 1998; Sant Cassia 1999, 2005; Papadakis, Peristianis and Welz 2006).

Most of this work has focused on the *dividing* aspects of the conflict, in order to unveil the processes and operations of nationalism. For the ethnographers of the conflict, understanding and deconstructing nationalism became a major quest in explaining how violence and division comes about, becomes consolidated and is reproduced. Sant Cassia (1999), for instance, analyses the separate campaigning techniques of Greek and Turkish Cypriots in relation to their missing persons. He studies mainly photographic material and official publications that unravel the differences in the representation of suffering between the two sides. According to Sant Cassia (1999:26), '[...] the differences are relatable not just to their different persuasive strategies, but also to different approaches to photography, to experience and memory'.

During the period of conflict and inter-communal violence, in the years between 1963 and 1974, it is estimated that 2,000 persons, both Greek and Turkish Cypriots, disappeared and for a long time few of the bodies had only been recovered (ibid.)<sup>10</sup>. The official campaigns in relation to the missing persons by both sides have been consistent and powerful, however, diametrically different in their approaches. Greek photography seems to emphasise absence in the representation of the missing, attempts to construct a continuity with the past, aims at emotion, is subtitled with questions and draws on individual memories. On the other hand, Turkish photographic material tends to construct a presence, does not maintain continuity with the past, adopts a realistic approach, is subtitled mainly by statements and seeks to evoke and construct collective memories.

Sant Cassia (ibid.) argues that the different approaches reflect the differences in the nationalist rhetorics and the official accounts of the conflict between the two sides. Material culture has often been brought into the foreground in studies of nationalism, in order to illustrate how national identity becomes embodied in the context of the nationalist project (Lowenthal 1985; Hewison 1987; Handler 1988). Papadakis (1994) has also focused on material culture in order to illustrate the articulation of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot nationalisms, in his study of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot museums. Bryant (2004) has examined the historical production and lineages of what she calls ‘two conflicting styles of nationalist imagination’ that were (re)produced by respective elites in both communities and then gained particular appeal amongst the masses. Within the colonial context, Christians and Muslims in Cyprus were turned into Greeks and Turkish respectively. Such transformations were based on particular understandings of and claims to history that were produced and –more importantly– *embodied* through various processes and institutions, not least through knowledge systems and educational traditions. Greek Cypriots, therefore, emphasise on a primordial understanding of history, according to which Cyprus has always been

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<sup>10</sup> In the past few years, especially since 2006 a group of scientists of both Greek and Turkish Cypriot background have launched a successful project that has led to the discovery and exhumation of the bodies of many missing persons. Sevgül Uludağ, a Turkish Cypriot journalist, who has taken up a leading role in searching for information on missing persons and opening publicly one of the most taboo topics in Cyprus describes the politics around the issue, individual trajectories and findings in her book ‘Oysters with the Missing Pearls’ (2006).

Hellenic; on the other hand, Turkish Cypriots take historical contingency (the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus in 1571) as their social basis.

However, the major question here that most of the literature tries to address is how, when and why nationalism(s) as an ideology and political project has gained so much acceptance and popularity amongst Cypriots. To answer this question, Sant Cassia (1999) argues in relation to official nationalist campaigns on missing persons, that the specific approaches draw their success by building upon and reflecting the *particular memories* and *experiences* of the people. He explores these memories and experiences through the analysis of religious symbolism. Although cautious about his suggestions, Sant Cassia draws parallels between the campaign photographs and Christian and Islamic iconography and goes further to establish a connection between current cosmological perspectives and theological tradition. Although he focuses on religious symbolism and dogma analysis, explaining less how such symbolisms and religious doctrine manifest themselves in peoples' everyday lives, he manages, however, to demonstrate how nationalist symbols and rhetorics are patterned in the shape of local experiences and memories, and illustrate, to a large extent, the popular appeal of nationalism.

Highlighting the connection between processes of nationalism and local experiences and conditions is a task that Papadakis (1998) also undertakes in his own ethnographic accounts of the Cypriot conflict. Many theorists have treated nationalism as a process mainly articulated from above (Gellner 1983; Anderson 1983), whereas others, in order to explain the mass popularity of nationalism, have developed primordialist arguments that see nations based on pre-existing ethnic cores, or *ethnies* (Smith 1991: 37), thus, dangerously naturalising nationalism. Papadakis, however, seeks to synthesise the two approaches by presenting how nationalism is internally contested among Greek Cypriots.

He isolates two models of nationalism: the 'Greek' model and the 'Cypriot' model, which he associates with the major right-wing and left-wing parties respectively<sup>11</sup>. The

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<sup>11</sup> In the Republic of Cyprus, the major right-wing party is named Dimokratikos Sinayermos [Democratic Rally] (DISI), whereas the major left-wing party is called Anorthotiko Komma Erghazomenou Laou [Party of the Uprising of the Working People] (AKEL).

Right stereotypically support *enosis* with Greece, emphasise their Greek identity on the expense of their Cypriot identity, and present history as an eternal struggle against their major threat, the Turks. On the other hand, the Left stress their 'Cypriotness' rather than 'Greekness', react with suspicion to the idea of *enosis* and express their desire for rapprochement, independence and the reunification of Cyprus.

In order to present nationalism as a contested process, Papadakis then diverts attention to the individual supporters of these parties, illustrating how 'grand narratives' are linked with local and personal history (1998:151). One of the main themes of this discussion 'concerns the ways in which such narratives express self-justification and assign blame to other agents' (ibid.). As Bhabha (1990) has characteristically argued, the nation's construction needs to be searched within social life and in the ambivalence, in which it is narrated top-down and by those who live it.

Papadakis became alerted to the inherent link between 'the national' and 'the personal', when the personal biographies he was determined to collect would often turn into political commentaries on local or national history interweaved with personal experiences. As he testifies,

I gradually realized that personal narratives consistently evolved into wider commentaries as the narrators addressed certain key historical junctures. At such junctures individuals were inevitably incorporated into events of wider significance even if they had not been active participants. The ways in which people became involved, however, were not uniform, because these trajectories depended on the actors' respective political affiliations (1998:160).

As suggested here, nationalism is not a one-way but a dialectical process. The parties' rhetorics gain appeal because they are adapted on their supporters' personal experiences and memories; on the other hand, these experiences and memories are shaped and re-constructed through peoples' exposure to the 'grand narratives' of nationalism. At the same time, subscribing to political parties' ideologies does not carry the same meaning for everyone. Papadakis's informants justify their membership in political parties presenting a wide variety of reasons and engage in self-reflection and criticism. Therefore, 'if anything unites Greek Cypriots in a community, it is their participation in

a debate about what constitutes the nation, not some shared conception of “the nation” (Papadakis 1998:162).

It is then possible to examine how individuals have the potential to strategically deal with nationalist ideology and symbols, engage in self-reflection and articulate counter-nationalist discourses. There have been many studies on the creation of social memory and perpetuation of nationalist ideology and ethnic dichotomies in Cyprus; such studies have focused on education (Bryant 1998a, 1998b; Spyrou 2000, 2002), political rituals and commemorative events (Papadakis 2003) and ethnic stereotypes (Brown and Theodossopoulos 2004; Papadakis 2004) in the construction of ‘otherness’ and creation of an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1983). The important common feature of most of these studies is that they try to go beyond identifying and describing the assumed totalising effects of nationalism; they rather highlight the processes through which individuals manage symbols and meanings in their everyday life.

By focusing on *forgetting* rather than *memory* in Cyprus, for instance, Papadakis (1993:139) attempts to reveal how the two are interlinked. Greek Cypriot historiography has underplayed or even been silent about some events of the past that jeopardise the internal unity of Greek Cypriots and endanger their national causes and agendas. These ambivalences in official historiography, however, create spaces for different views of history that individual agents seek to fill with their personal stories and experiences of what happened in Cyprus. Certain groups of Cypriots, for example, do not share the official narrative’s silence on interethnic conflict and, for their own purposes, violent events of the past hold a dominant position in their narratives of the Cypriot history (ibid.:147). It becomes understood, therefore, that the spaces left vacant in official historiography are internally and internationally contested, as the different experiences of the agents may give rise to different memories (ibid.:139).

The interplay between official historical narratives and individual memories and experiences is utilised in this thesis as an important analytical lens in order to understand the construction of political subjectivities and the articulation of counter-discourses. In large parts, my research traces the ways, in which Cyprio-centric narratives of the past have been historically constructed and articulated as alternatives to the dominant traditions of Greek and Turkish nationalism in Cyprus. Cypriotists in the

island and the diaspora have experienced and presented their own identities as marginalised and under-represented in the mainstream discourses. According to Peristianis (2006a), anthropological work in Cyprus for a long time concentrated its attention on the study of ethnic politics and ethnic nationalism on the expense of Cypriotism that is characterised as a form of civic nationalism (Brubaker 1998; see also chapter 2). Loizos, for instance, in his historical account of Greek nationalism in Cyprus from 1878 to 1970, focused merely on this form of nationalism as he was convinced that the quest for *enosis* had rendered another type of nationalism, Cypriot nationalism, impossible (Peristianis 2006a: 101). Peristianis, however, argues that a form of civic nationalism has developed in Cyprus and its history, discursive formation and dynamics has been documented in more recent works on the topic by the author himself as well as other academics (Stamatakis 1991; Papadakis 1993, 1998, 2006, Mavratsas 1999). Most of this work has investigated how Cyprio-centric ideas are employed in particular contexts and times in order to challenge the long-term dominance of ethnic nationalism. I build on these research findings and take them as an analytical basis in the thesis in order to move beyond this binary and focus on Cypriotism *in itself*, aiming to examine how it is (re)constructed, understood and practised in everyday life and how new identities but also contradictions and shifting power relations emerge through these processes.

However, I do not document these narratives as missing blocks of truth in the historicisation of the Cypriot conflict. Foucault (1980) explains how every social discourse with particular claims to ‘truth’ encounters a counter-discourse that aims to challenge it. But as he suggests, ‘truth’ should be defined as the product of the struggle between competing discourses; in other words, there is no absolute historical truth to be achieved, as it is power that always produces particular ideas about what is true. To a large extent, I examine in the thesis how particular claims to truth develop through the antagonistic but also dialectical relationship between ethnic nationalism and Cyprio-centric articulations of the nation and I argue that the political repertoire of Cypriots is *discursively pre-determined* by these two ideological traditions. Cypriotists, therefore, often reproduce the language of ethnic nationalism (although the opposite process is also observable) not only as a sign of what Herzfeld (1997) calls ‘cultural intimacy’, an essentialising process of reverting to the dominant language of the state in order to represent the national self to outsider others, who are considered of higher power; but

also in order to engage critically with Cypriotism itself, when it renders their own experiences and identities marginalised. Because, although a popularly assumed unifying idea, Cypriotism as a discourse stems from and creates particular *loci of power*, which produce internal spaces of exclusion and oppression.

Butler (1997: 2), building on the Foucauldian theory of discourse, argues that we all speak within a language that already exists, when she asks: 'Is our vulnerability to language a consequence of our being constituted within its terms?', in order then to say that '[i]f we are formed in language, then that formative power precedes and conditions any decision we might make about it, insulting us from the start, as it were, by its prior power'. In other words, political subjectivities are produced through repeating and performing an established language and, therefore, reinforcing the power structures that maintain the discourse, within which they operate. However, 'counter-speech' (ibid.15) that resists the dominant discourse is possible, but, instead of locating resistance within the framework of 'individual agency', Butler suggests that it lies in this very notion of repetition. She (1993: 220) argues that every act of repetition is similar but not identical in various contexts and it is performativity that enables the 'contingent and fragile possibility' of transforming the discourse by exposing the power, which sustains it. This is an important idea in examining how Cypriotism is performed by multiple agents in ways that reinforce established understandings of 'Cypriotness' and create particular identities around this notion. But through performing Cypriotism, individual agents simultaneously reproduce and transform the power structures, within which the nation is imagined, and the thesis traces these processes as they unravel in a number of social spaces.

Bryant (2004: 7) has observed that 'Cypriotness', articulated against 'Greekness' or 'Turkishness', has been growing as a form of identification in the past few years. Cypriots have increasingly imagined themselves independently of associated motherlands. 'The EU has presented new possibilities, new forms of sameness and otherness, and hence a new hierarchy of values in which it is possible not simply to live Cypriotness but even to value it' (ibid.). Also, the opening of the Green Line in 2003 and the prospects for a solution temporarily raised by the Annan plan brought Cypriocentric discourses to the foreground in public debates and language but also under academic investigation. From studying division and separation, researchers turned their

attention to new contexts of contact and communication created by such developments and to their potential impact on the future of Cyprus. A body of work on crossings was produced to investigate the new realities that were produced through interaction (Dikomitis 2005, 2009; Demetriou 2007; Hadjipavlou 2009; Bryant 2010).

Such research unravelled how new opportunities for bi-communal relationships, friendships, sharing of space and memories and political co-operation emerged and were utilised; at the same time, however, contact and communication created new borders and divisions, some times in unexpected patterns. In her recent book 'The Past in Pieces: Belonging in the New Cyprus', Bryant (2010) demonstrates how the opening of the checkpoints significantly challenged long-standing ideas, imaginings and myths on both sides. Greek Cypriots crossed to the North to realise that it was not the backwards and wrapped in a time-capsule place that their media and official political rhetoric had propagated; this realisation led to another, perhaps more painful, understanding that the return of the Greek Cypriot refugees to their houses in the North, but more importantly the return to a social space and community in the way that they were before 1974, was now an unattainable dream. For Turkish Cypriots, the opening of the borders collapsed the idea of *tanima*, recognition, as it had for years been pursued by Turkish Cypriot political leaders (ibid.: 170). Consequently, the opening of the checkpoints in some respects widened the distance between the two communities.

The analysis of the political developments in 'New Cyprus' in terms of 'new opportunities for contact' and 'new borders' is employed in the thesis as a helpful way of exploring how political subjectivities and power dynamics form but also shift in particular times and contexts. However, the thesis moves beyond exploring these processes solely on an inter-ethnic level. It is argued here that, as Cyprio-centric discourses became popular and Cypriots debated the future of the 'nation', a renewed interest of members of the diaspora in Cypriot politics resulted in new venues of contact between the island and Cypriots abroad but also in new spaces of tension and conflict between these contexts as well as on other intra-diasporic, intra-ethnic and inter-generational levels.

Considering the large numbers of Cypriots who have emigrated and the connections between those who live in the UK with the island, one is left to wonder why the study of

the Cypriot diaspora has not been adequately incorporated into the academic discussions and research on nationalisms and politics in the island and why the work on Cypriots abroad has developed to a large extent as a theoretically and methodologically independent body. Most of the literature on Cypriots in the UK is of sociological character and has explored mainly the diaspora in their host country by focusing usually unilaterally on Turkish Cypriots (Ladbury 1977; Robins and Aksoy 2001; Canefe 2002;) or Greek Cypriots (Anthias 1982, 1992). The main emphasis of such studies has been the reproduction of ethnic and cultural identity (Constantinides 1977; Bridgewood 1986; Papapavlou and Pavlou 2001;), the geographies and politics of migration (Oakley 1970, 1987, 1989; Solomos and Woodhams 1995;), gender and class (Anthias 1992). Increasingly, researchers also became interested in generational aspects of migration and identity formation. Canefe (2002) and Anthias (2002, 2006b, 2008) focused on second and third generation Turkish and Greek Cypriots respectively in order to critically examine issues of 'belonging', 'multiple allegiances' and 'hybrid identities'. From a media studies perspective, Georgiou (2001) has focused on how media consumption in the Cypriot Community Centre contributes to community construction. In terms of political organisation, Adamson and Demetriou (2007) argue that Greek Cypriot diasporic politics challenge the neat fit between 'state' and 'national identity' and Østergaard-Nielsen (2003) examines Turkish Cypriots' participation in the host-country's political establishment and argues that a limited access to power structures impedes on the lobbying potential of the community for issues concerning their country of origin. More specifically about peace politics in London, Bertrand (2004) studies official political organisations and their actions in London and argues that, although Greek and Turkish Cypriots have lived in the diaspora side by side, there is only a small number of bi-communal organisations. As he suggests, the political debates between nationalist and Cypriotist sides are articulated mainly within each community. The most recent ethnographic study of Greek and Turkish Cypriots in London by Göker (2007) presents the relationships between the two communities at a very particular historical point, just before and after the Annan plan. Göker, who conducted research with members of both communities, argues that political developments in Cyprus awakened old stereotypes, revived particular memories and consequently put a strain on everyday local relationships between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, who were forced to reflect on and re-negotiate their own past and identities.

Such literature has comprehensibly described the development and articulation of ethnic identity among Greek and Turkish Cypriots in London, but it has been less concerned with how such identities form and shift in intra-ethnic spaces –both discursive and actual- that connect and disconnect the diaspora and Cyprus. On the other hand, studies of nationalism in Cyprus have extensively traced the ways in which the nation is debated internally in the two main communities, however, they have overlooked to a large extent the diasporic perspective in this process. The study of Cypriotism, therefore, in a transnational context, provides a lens that brings these two theoretical, empirical and methodological trends together, through logics and methods explained in the following section.

### **1.3 Studying Cypriotism in a transnational context: methods, sites and challenges.**

#### *Logics and Anxieties of Multi-sited ethnography*

In order to study how connections between the Cypriot diaspora and Cyprus are constructed, imagined and articulated through ‘peace politics’ and discourses of Cypriotism, this research is concerned with the institutional organisation of Cypriots in London. However, in its core, it is not an ethnography of the politics of these organisations. It looks at how ‘community associations’ produce particular loci of authority and power and how they articulate ‘peace’ in the process of appropriating it and often monopolising it, but if it was to limit itself there the thesis would not be able to answer how, when and why Cypriotism finds appeal among Cypriots in the UK beyond party ideologies, organisational membership and political views. Researching Islamist and secularist politics in Turkey, Navaro-Yashin (2002: 15) chose to not take a conventional methodological approach by only recording ‘articulated, conscious and formalized narratives’, which would have confined the political within what we typically understand as public sphere, but to also look for it beyond such accounts. In doing so, the author managed to avoid reproducing essentialised political categories and identities in representing Islamists and secularists as ‘communities’. As this project endeavours to move beyond sharp distinctions between peace-supporters and nationalists, it follows similar paths by tracing discourses of Cypriotism and peace *within* but also *beyond* and *outside* official political accounts and locating them in multiple other contexts, where they are reproduced and simultaneously, to return to Butler (1997), are shifted. After all, the main purpose here is to unravel the internal

divisions and contestations of Cypriotism, which is often imagined as homogenising and unifying.

Otherwise, the thesis would have missed important connections between formal political ideologies and other narratives that frame individual experiences. As the following chapters demonstrate, it would be, for instance, inadequate to study the popularity of Cypriotism among some first-generation Cypriots in London without locating it within their particular experiences of migration, which are often presented as a result of their economic and political marginalisation in Cyprus before departure to the UK (see chapters 2 and 3). Similarly, it would not be possible to fully understand ‘peace politics’ by second-generation British born Cypriots without contextualising it within broader inter-generational tensions over cultural identity and authority in the diaspora (see chapter 4) or within struggles for ‘cultural authenticity’, when their legitimacy ‘to speak as real Cypriots’ is challenged by those living in Cyprus, as chapter 5 discusses in relation to their online interactions and exchanges.

Identifying, therefore, ‘peace politics’ with organisational structures and official accounts as main centres of power would privilege an one-dimensional understanding of political discourse and would overlook contexts where the discourse of Cypriotism is reinforced but also contested through the enactment of more complex power relationships, multiple individual and collective identities and shifting experiences of both inequality and empowerment. Moreover, this approach would risk treating diasporic politics as static and unequivocal and reproducing essentialised concepts such as ‘community politics’, at the same time missing the *spontaneity*, in which new sites emerge as discursive contexts of Cypriotism, and the *dynamism*, with which they transform and shift.

To capture these processes, the research endorses to a large extent the methodological aspirations of ‘multi-sited ethnography’, which has been formed and articulated through a large body of anthropological literature in the past few decades. Whereas anthropology for a long time had focused on the study of cultures tied to particular geographical areas and ethnography was traditionally defined as the product of such study, more recent reflections on the ‘field’ have expanded the ways in which it is

conceived and approached<sup>12</sup>. Such critical move was prompted by an increasing realisation that processes of globalisation, movements of people, things and information, make it increasingly inconceivable to describe the world as a mosaic of neatly defined cultures anchored to specific physical locations (Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Appadurai 1990). Marcus (1995:96), therefore, suggests that ethnography should be adjusted in order to 'examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects and identities in diffuse time-space' and proposed a variety of methods for ethnographers to construct fields, in the absence of physically bounded sites, by following people, things, metaphors, narratives, biographies and conflicts.

In line with these suggestions, fieldwork research for this thesis transcended the idea of a geographically bound 'field' and followed people, narratives and biographies through multiple sites, from community associations in London to summer holiday trips to Cyprus and from online interactions of Cypriot groups on Facebook to crossings of the Cypriot Green Line. The question, however, that emerges here is what sort of 'field', if any, is constituted out of this movement between contexts. Although anthropological research has increasingly moved away from traditional ethnographic practices and has been involved in the study of multi-sited processes, multi-sited ethnography still creates some methodological anxieties for the anthropologist. It definitely moves away from the holistic ethnographic representations that have focused on localism in relation to the global. To resolve such anxiety, I return to Marcus (1995: 99), who advocates that multi-sited ethnography is not the portrayal of the world system as a whole anymore; rather, '[...] there is no global in the local-global contrast now so frequently evoked. The global is an emergent dimension of arguing about the connection among sites in a multi-sited ethnography'. Moreover, Gupta and Ferguson (1997: 5) argue that a real redefinition of the so central for anthropology 'fieldwork' has to be developed 'not with a time-honored commitment to the *local* but with an attentiveness to social, cultural, and political location and a willingness to work self-consciously at shifting or realigning our own *location* while building epistemological and political links with other locations' (emphasis in the original).

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<sup>12</sup> Besides the foundational work of Gupta and Ferguson (1992, 1997), Marcus (1995) and Appadurai (1990, 1996), more recent edited volumes have revisited and expanded the discussions on what constitutes the 'field', including Coleman and Collins (2006), De Neve and Unnithan-Kumar (2006), Falzon (2009), Coleman and von Hellermann (2009).

We are, therefore, directed to a flexible (Merry 2000) and opportunistic (Marcus 1995) ethnographic practice that is less concerned with circumscribing the field and more focused on translocality (Freitag and von Oppen 2010: 19), or, otherwise, on the inter-links between different and multiple locations and sites. Flexibility and opportunism proved particularly crucial in my fieldwork, as they allowed me to adjust my movement and strategies in order to follow connections between sites that constantly emerged and expanded ‘the field’. In other words, starting with an initial site, fieldwork developed not according to a pre-existing plan fixed on where Cypriotism could be located, but responding to the ethnographic opportunities rising in the process. Consequently, the selection, study and presentation of these sites are not exhaustive of how Cypriotist discourses and identities could be examined in a transnational context. The ethnographic settings of the thesis are those that emerged as mostly inter-linked and as more conspicuously concurrent in the period of fieldwork. By acknowledging this and by highlighting again the spontaneity and dynamism, with which sites materialise and shift, the thesis does not aim to present a neat and linear account of their connectedness by articulating it as inevitable and predictable; it rather recognises the need to pay attention to *connectivity*, the continuous and often unpredictable production of connection between contexts, as an inherent feature of fieldwork and vital mode of study.

Another concern about multi-sited research lies in its fragmentary nature. As traditional ethnography has secured its authenticity and power through long-term fieldwork in one place, multi-sited ethnography has often been considered weaker in terms of intensity and ‘depth’ (Falzon 2009: 7-8). It is true that in multi-sited ethnographies not all sites are treated in the same scope and scale of study (Hannerz 2006). Most of the fieldwork time for this thesis, for instance, was spent in London, intermitted by shorter periods of stay in Cyprus and, although the research process was long, taking 23 months to complete, still the movement between different contexts inevitably involved dividing the available time across them –often unevenly. This approach, evidently different from conventional anthropological ‘village ethnography’, does not necessarily have to result to a compromised quality of the research product. Siding again with Marcus (1995: 100), ‘to bring these sites into the same frame of study and to posit their relationships on the basis of first-hand ethnographic research [...] is the important contribution of this kind of ethnography, regardless of the variability of the quality and accessibility of that

research at different sites'. Moreover, in many cases, the disproportionate time length spent by the ethnographer in particular sites often reflects the ways such contexts are experienced by the research participants themselves. My movement, for instance, between Cyprus and London coincided to a large extent in terms of timing and duration with that of many Cypriots, who travelled back and forth. In this sense, instead of bringing limitations, 'multi-sitedness' can prove an important strategy for participant observation. Falzon (2009: 9) underlines this by writing '[...] in my case this involved moving around, as my people did, and experiencing a broader but possible 'shallower' world, as they did. Understanding the shallow may itself be a form of depth'.

Such realisation also allows for an ethnographic account of what lies beyond the everydayness of experience, on which anthropology has typically concentrated its attention and focus as a characteristic feature of fieldwork distinguishing the discipline from other research traditions. Malkki (1997), reflecting on her work with Hutu refugees in Tanzania, highlights that the ethnographic preoccupation with the everyday and ordinary provided an inadequate lens for capturing what her informants were most concerned about; extra-ordinary and transitory phenomena that made them refugees and defined their experience as such. Similarly, while, on one hand, I was focused on researching political identities and discourses of Cypriotism through everyday life in London and routinised practices, on the other hand, historical contingencies and transformative events directed my study to investigating sites that brought individuals together in ways not previously expected. The anticipation for the 2008 elections in the Republic of Cyprus, for instance, contributed to the emergence and flourishing of online Facebook groups in which some Cypriots from Cyprus and the diaspora united around a common agenda of demanding change of the state leadership (see chapter 5). Also, the opening of Ledra street in Nicosia after the elections, prompted a revived interest in crossing the Green Line among many of my informants producing a new body of narratives by those who experienced the crossings –and as a matter of fact, also among those who chose not to cross (see chapter 6). Multi-sited ethnography, therefore, was crucial in investigating these 'accidental communities of memory', a term utilised by Malkki (*ibid.*: 92) to describe common experiences and relationships taking shape at a particular point that 'neither correspond to any ethnologically recognizable community, nor form with any inevitability'. It is often the case that due to their ephemerality and fragility these contexts escape the ethnographic gaze as insignificant; however,

following Malkki, the thesis aims to illustrate how these temporary sites have a powerful impact on the identities, language, memory and imagination of those who experience them.

Not all multi-sited ethnographic projects necessarily cross national borders (Falzon 2009: 13), this research, however, does trace the development of political subjectivities and Cypriotist discourses within a transnational context. Whereas the study of the transnational has challenged the stiff associations of particular cultures and territories and of individual identities with bounded communities, the employment of multi-sited ethnographic methods to capture cultural and identity production in diverse and distant milieus does not disqualify the anthropological preoccupation with the construction and meaning of place within such processes; on the contrary, '[...] concerns over how we understand the role of place, space and locality have become even more evident' (Coleman and Collins 2006: 2). This clarification is important here as the thesis, by moving between different contexts, aims to investigate both the role of place(s) in their production as well as place-making practices within them. On one hand, it is argued that we cannot understand the 'production of locality' (Appadurai 1995) in London without examining how 'Cyprus', as a particular place (and temporal reference for that matter) is employed as an imaginative resource; or we cannot fully interpret the stylistic formation and character of Cypriot groups on Facebook without associating them with the symbolic dominance of the Green Line as a focal point in the 'landscape of peace activism'. On the other hand, and diverting here from Appadurai in terms of focus, the thesis is also concerned to large extent with how individual experiences and interpersonal relationships, which are *located* in particular places, shape and determine the condition of transnationalism. For instance, the discursive development of a particular type of Cypriotism in London that does not only highlight 'past peaceful coexistence' but also 'present coexistence' between Turkish and Greek Cypriots is very much defined by local relations and dilemmas between members of the two communities, that do not necessarily emerge in the same patterns in Cyprus. Or, as discussed in the next session and more extensively in chapter 5, while online spaces are popularly characterised by their placelessness, attention to the physical locations from which they are accessed reveals the importance of place in shaping the usage and effect of Information technologies as tools of political mobilisation.

*Narrating the Fieldwork: Sites and Strategies.*

Fieldwork for the thesis took place between October 2006 and September 2008, with a longer period of research in London for 16 months and two shorter field trips to Cyprus in the summers of 2007 and 2008. Although it was originally designed to last for a year, historical changes in Cyprus, such as the elections of February 2008 and a revived climate of political hope just before them, made the extension of the research time almost compulsory in order to capture the impact of such shifts on the field settings. For, while I was researching for almost a year ideas on peace and reconciliation and Cypriot identity between 2006 and 2007, my fieldnotes were rich with narratives of marginalisation, disappointment and pessimism by those who appeared most concerned with these issues both in London and Cyprus. The anticipation of the elections, however, contributed to a revitalisation of Cyprio-centric discourses and I continued fieldwork to investigate such change as well as new sites of politics, or ‘communities of memories’, that it prompted.

My interest in diasporic politics developed during an MSc course in Forced Migration at the University of Oxford that I took in 2004 and for which I prepared a thesis on the politicisation of Kurdish refugees in the UK. At the same time, I had worked as a ‘Greek teacher’ at a Cypriot school in Brighton since 2003, a position that I held until 2007 and which increasingly made me aware of Cypriot ‘communities’ in the UK. Combining the two, therefore, I embarked on the DPhil to examine political and ethnic identity in the context of Cypriot life in London, especially struck by the different ways in which various diasporas are represented in popular discourses and media accounts; the Kurdish diaspora, for instance, as more radicalised and conflict-supporting, whereas the Cypriot as quite ‘peaceful’ and peace-supporting.

As North London has historically become the place where most Cypriot organisations are concentrated and a large number of Cypriots reside, I chose it as my initial field site. The connections and long-term relationships that I had established with Cypriots in Brighton were of valuable help in entering the field, as some of them introduced me to their contacts, friends and relatives in London. My primary objective being to study ‘peace politics’ and discourses of bi-communalism and Cypriotism, I was very quickly directed to the Cypriot Community Centre (CCC) in Haringey, as one of the main organisations claiming to represent all Cypriots. Its main building, not very far from

Wood Green tube station, is open to Cypriots, who want to socialise in the coffee shop, to hire its function rooms for gatherings and events or to use its multiple services including a unit that caters for the elderly and disabled. I was granted a permission by the manager of the centre to conduct research there and I started by interviewing managerial and administrative staff members. I also sat in during organisational meetings, conversations among members of staff and counselling sessions offered particularly to elderly Cypriots, who sought advice about bureaucratic and legal issues, usually regarding housing. Unlike a large body of work on what has been categorised as ‘anthropology of organisations’ (cf. Wright 1994; Corsin Jimenez 2007), my intention was not to make the Centre my core ethnographic field and produce a comprehensive account of it as an organisation; I rather treated it as one of many sites, where Cypriotist discourses are produced, and although I studied how the ‘official line’ of the centre is constructed, articulated and practised through its operational activities, in order to move beyond official accounts of politics, I also diverted my efforts onto documenting the narratives and everyday interactions of Cypriots, who gathered at the centre’s coffee shop. Including a core of 20 regulars, at its busiest times the coffee shop hosted up to 50 people, in their majority middle-aged men.

In the first four months of fieldwork, I visited the Centre daily and engaged in participant observation, which often involved taking part in discussions, watching TV news and reading newspapers with the regulars. Simultaneously, I conducted unstructured and semi-structured individual interviews and collected life stories. Like in the whole duration of fieldwork, I used a voice recorder to record the interviews when I had the consent of the participants, which I later transcribed, and I also took notes of observations and discussions. At the end of every day I typed the notes and expanded them into a more detailed ‘field diary’. The accounts which I collected were focused to a large extent on the everyday practices and experiences in the Centre, which some times emerged as reinforcing its official ideological line and others as counter-narratives and ‘everyday forms of resistance’ (Scott 1985) to its ‘politics of representation’. However, I realised that such accounts were also connected to experiences and contexts outside and beyond the physical and discursive walls of the Cypriot Centre. I started, therefore, to study more broadly ‘Cypriot life’ in London, and through snowballing I made contacts and conducted interviews by meeting Cypriots in a variety of places, including houses, coffee shops and businesses. Surprisingly quickly, I found myself

getting invited not only to political gatherings and organisational events, but also to house meals, family functions, and important occasions, such as engagements and weddings. Although these contexts are not necessarily politicised, politics often emerged in them in unexpected ways and this offered an important insight into the multiple processes in which political subjectivities are enacted and articulated. Following also the accounts of non-Cypriotists, or even anti-Cypriotists, and their interactions with supporters of Cypriotism provided an opportunity to move beyond the study of Cyprio-centric accounts and experiences only *internally* and to locate them within broader fields of social relationships, in which they are employed and (re)constructed<sup>13</sup>.

Having said this, I continued to return to the Cypriot Centre almost weekly throughout the rest of my fieldwork, as it was always a place to collect news, attend events and arrange meetings. For similar reasons, I also spent time and conducted interviews in other associations and institutions with a Cyprio-centric agenda, including the Turkish Cypriot Community Association (TCCA), the leftist Greek Cypriot newspaper 'Parikiaki' and the leftist Turkish Cypriot newspaper 'Toplum Postası'. Through them I made contacts and interviewed 'community representatives' and others who held official 'community positions'. In the last two also, I had the opportunity to research their archives, collecting useful background information on media representation of 'Cypriotness' in London. Since 'Parikiaki' is tightly associated with the CCC, and 'Toplum Postası' with the TCCA and all four organisations claim to promote similar political ideas, I was interested in tracing the connections and disconnections between them.

In 'Toplum Postası' I met Serhat, who was involved in setting up a group representing British born Cypriots and I was introduced to the 'peace politics' of second generation diasporic Cypriots. A number of them had already been involved in organising informal bi-communal meetings in various spots in London, which I attended as a participant and to conduct interviews. Most meetings had been arranged through online social

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<sup>13</sup> I borrow this idea from Gledhill (1994), who makes a similar suggestion about the study of social movements. According to him, work on 'social movements' has often identified them with 'the people' by abstracting from the relationships between participants and non-participants and from the larger areas and fields of social relationships within which social movements operate. Anthropologists have emphasised the need to shift focus from movements to the social arenas where they exist, and to the study of individual identities through an ethnographic understanding of social relationships (Burdick, 1992).

networking sites. Especially Facebook seemed to have emerged as an important site of interaction for young peace supporters in the diaspora and Cyprus, and it, therefore, became another context of field research. I followed three particular Facebook groups for almost a year from October 2007 to September 2008 that aimed to bring together Greek and Turkish Cypriots from all around the world. By making a public post, I introduced myself and my research to the participants of the groups and I followed their activities and discussions in order to develop a textual and visual analysis of how individuals and groups present themselves through their written text as well as photographic material, which they use and exchange.

Discussions on the Internet often raise particular concerns about the effects of electronic communication. Questions such as ‘What is the Internet doing to communication?’, ‘How has the Internet changed our lives?’, ‘Is the Internet evil or good?’ have been dominant within the contexts of public discourses, the academia, formal politics and the Internet itself. Such concerns have been based on the idea that the new information technologies are able to create a new type of communication, and consequently a type of life, *different and apart from* the rest of social life. However, such approaches have been criticised in anthropological studies of the Internet (Hine 2000; Miller and Slater 2000; Guimaraes Jr. 2005) for their insistence on treating cyberspace ‘as an experience of extreme ‘disembedding’ from an offline reality’ (Miller and Slater 2000: 4). Miller and Slater, in their own research on the Internet in Trinidad, point to the need to treat the Internet as embedded in other social spaces instead of assuming a cyberian apartness from real life. As the writers suggest (ibid.: 5), even in cases where people treat online communication as a world apart, ‘this is something that needs to be socially explained as a practical accomplishment rather than the assumed point of departure for investigation’.

Although I eventually met face-to-face and interviewed many of the creators and central participants of the Facebook groups in offline environments, the purpose was not to achieve some sort of authenticity by matching identities and information between online and offline settings. Verifying online information by pursuing offline research has only resonance, if identity is accepted as a singular category (Correll 1995). On the contrary, following Miller and Slater (2000: 10), I wanted to examine how ‘people engage with material culture through versions of themselves that are both articulated and

transformed through that encounter'; how Cypriots use and understand the Internet and how they construct and debate authenticity themselves; whether and how they build boundaries between the offline and online; and to what extent this distinction relates to broader cultural settings and social relationships.

With such method it is possible to move away from the focus on the Internet as a cultural domain and treat it as a cultural artefact. Technology is produced by people in specific contexts and is formed by the different ways it is promoted, imagined and used. 'To speak of the internet as a cultural artefact is to suggest that it could have been otherwise, and that what it is and what it does are the product of culturally produced understandings that can vary' (Hine 2000: 9). Although we often talk about 'the Internet' as one object, the Internet and technology in general have 'interpretive flexibility' (Escobar 1994); they have different meanings in different contexts and to different people. In his recent book, 'Tales from Facebook', Miller (2011) reinforces this idea by explaining why we should not speak of one but many Facebooks. In his case, Facebook is particularly Trinidadian, whereas what I aim to demonstrate in the thesis is some of the ways in which Facebook is Cypriot.

Whereas many of the main users of the Facebook groups were based in London, others were located in Cyprus and I had the opportunity to interview them and attend their meetings during my research there. My first field trip to Cyprus was planned to follow some of my informants from London during their holidays in the island and trace their cultural and social activities and interactions. At the time, a main destination for many of them was Larnaca and places around it, so I rented a room in the centre of town and I made it my basis for four months between June and September 2007, although I travelled to most parts of the island to attend meetings and conduct interviews. Those I knew from London introduced me to their family members and invited me to their houses and I often accompanied them in their visits to relatives or to go out. With some of them, who came from refugee families, we also crossed to the North part of the island to visit villages, from where they or their parents originated. They also put me in contact with 'returnees', Cypriots who used to live in London and had 'returned' to Cyprus and I conducted interviews with a number of them. Investigating the official connections between the diaspora and the island in the context of Cypriotism, I also arranged interviews with politicians, particularly of the leftist AKEL in the South and CTP in the

North, and discussions with local peace activists. I attended the ‘conference for Overseas Cypriots’ in Nicosia and visited diasporic associations in various cities and villages in Cyprus, which organised re-unions and communal events for the ex-pats.

While the first part of fieldwork in Cyprus traced more broadly how cultural and political identities are enacted and performed by diasporic Cypriots when visiting the island, the second field trip in June 2008 was more focused on tracing how the election of the communist party leader Christofias had contributed to a re-centralisation of Cyprio-centric discourses and its impact on political contexts, in which Cypriots from London participated. This time I rented a room in one of the university hostels in Nicosia, which was located just next to the Green Line and traced the activities of ‘peace supporting’ groups that had formed by Cypriots from both sides on the Line and London. I attended meetings, gatherings and followed the preparation of a conference, which was organised for the first time through Facebook. The opening of the checkpoint at Ledra Street, the main pedestrian road that connects North and South Nicosia made ‘the other side’ more accessible by foot and I engaged in more regular and informal crossings with young Cypriotists, who stepped over the Green Line not to visit family houses and old villages but to see friends, socialise and organise political events. In order to examine what was particular about these new informal spaces of peace politics and their (dis)connections to organised politics, I also discussed the new political developments with officials and politicians again on both sides of the island and attended meetings of the youth party clubs of CTP and AKEL.

After almost two years, the fieldwork that started in London had to be concluded in Nicosia, in September 2008 before returning to the UK. As with any other fieldwork of course, everyday life and socio-political events did carry on in their normal and abnormal rhythms beyond the end of research, and I left Cyprus amidst exciting debates on the much anticipated start of ‘peace talks’ between the leaders of the two Cypriot sides.

#### *Whose Voice? Fragments, Boundaries and Silences*

The term ‘Cypriot’ is not employed in this research as a fixed and static identity to be located within bounded geographical areas and, particularly in the case of the diaspora, to be identified with notions of community. Individuals live complex and fragmented

lives in large cities like London and in their everydayness enact different identities, which are often re-prioritised in different contexts. Whereas traditional urban anthropology focused on so-called ‘urban villages’, urban areas that encompassed the social, economic, religious and work lives of people joined by close ethnic ties and institutional relationships (cf. Whyte 1955; Gans 1962; Hannerz 1969), urban anthropologists now not only find it increasingly challenging to pin people down into concrete communities, but have also questioned whether urban villages had ever been as cohesive or as bounded as previous ethnographies claimed (Merry 2000: 128).

But even if urban villages do not exist, this does not mean that ethnic identity is not *imagined* as anchored to particular spaces and places. As discussed in the thesis, those who lived in North London perceived themselves as ‘closer to the community’ than those, who did not and, therefore, as more Cypriot. Since I was living in central London during fieldwork, I would often receive comments such as: ‘See? You make the effort to take the tube and come here and you are Greek. There are others who do not even bother and they call themselves Cypriots’. As much as the intention was to compliment my commitment to researching ‘the community’, these statements also reflected broader discourses on cultural authenticity and boundaries. Taking North London as a main field site, the thesis does not aim, therefore, to privilege it as an authentic locale of Cypriot voices; quite the contrary, it aims to highlight how particular places and spaces come to be imagined as such and what effect this has on reinforcing some voices while silencing others.

To some extent, the thesis also appears to focus more on Greek Cypriot rather than Turkish Cypriot voices. This is, however, due to the fact that the research has been designed to examine discourses and practices of Cypriotism. As it is explained in chapter 2, Cypriotism, in all its rhetoric of bi-communalism and common identity, has not historically gained large appeal among Turkish Cypriots. The lack of large representation of Turkish Cypriots in Cyprio-centric politics is, therefore, more an endemic characteristic of Cypriotism itself -which still remains a point of concern and debate both for Cypriotists and their critics- than just a methodological limitation. As Hatay and Bryant (2008a) have illustrated, *Kıbrıslılık* or Cypriotism for Turkish Cypriots has increasingly diverged in meaning from that among Greek Cypriots. Although I did conduct interviews with Turkish Cypriots and research in North Cyprus,

this was done in the context of Cypriotism and to the extent that this focus permitted; indeed an ethnographic study of the development and articulation of *Kıbrıslılık* in the diaspora and Cyprus would be of great comparative and analytical value here, however due to time constraints it fell beyond the means and scope of this research. The term Cypriot is used in the thesis with all the acknowledgement of its alienating and exclusive connotations that it has for many Turkish Cypriots. However, it is used persistently here, as this is how most Cypriotists, Greek and Turkish Cypriot, describe and identify themselves, even while continuously debating its content.

Along similar lines, if the voices of women ‘sound’ weaker than those of men throughout the thesis, this has to be attributed to a large extent to the fact that organised Cypriot political spaces in the diaspora, including ones that appear more progressive, are mostly inhabited by men. In Cyprus, there have been women’s groups advocating for re-unification, and Cynthia Cockburn (2004) describes the organisation and activities of ‘Hands Across the Divide’, the most conspicuous of them, in her book ‘The line: women, partition and the gender order in Cyprus’<sup>14</sup>. However, such efforts promoting peace on the basis of a shared womanhood across the Green Line have often remained separate or parallel to other contexts of ‘peace politics’. Quite characteristically, in September 2008, after a meeting I had in Nicosia with a Greek Cypriot community activist, Mr. Stavros, and his wife, Mrs. Koula, both living in London, he invited me to go with them to a bi-communal gathering of NGO representatives and activists, who were organising a peace protest on the Green Line. Their meeting took place in the private room of a coffee shop in North Nicosia very close to the Ledra Palace check point. As I had not been officially invited by the group, Mr. Stavros asked me to stay with his wife and observe but not speak. When we entered the room, eleven men, Greek and Turkish Cypriot, were sitting around a big table; Mrs. Koula and I were given two chairs to sit separately behind them. After a long conversation on organisational issues, one of the men said turning to the rest: ‘It’s a shame we don’t have here any representatives from other Cypriot communities, Maronites or Armenians. And as a matter of fact it’s a shame that we don’t have any

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<sup>14</sup> At the same time the gendered image of ‘the mother crying for her missing son’ has been placed in a central position in state politics on the missing persons (Sant Cassia 1999, 2005; Bryant 2002: 515; Uludağ 2006).

women'. Whereas understanding women's political representation and participation in Cyprus is beyond the aims of this research, gender has been a central point in the agenda of second generation diasporic Cypriots, when contesting 'traditional' peace politics in London and the thesis examines how the trope of gender is employed by these young Cypriots to revisit and revise Cypriotism in chapter 4.

In terms of locating the 'voice' or character of the ethnography, fieldwork for the thesis transcended bounded understandings of 'going out there' or 'doing anthropology close to home'. Taking the tube to reach the 'field' as well as taking the plane to go away were both parts of the process and, as Hannerz (2006: 24) highlights, such experiences form and inform anthropological work more and more, while challenging the epistemological and ideological (and often moral) bases on which such categories have been constructed. The thesis is also based on ethnographic methods that go beyond practices of 'studying up' or 'studying down', which often imply a vertical understanding of power not only inherent in the ethnographic context but also between the ethnographer and the people she studies. In terms of gender, age, education and class, I found myself working in constantly shifting contexts and relationships of power with my informants. Therefore, as the field here is constructed by '[...]tracing webs of relations between actors, institutions and discourses' (ibid.), the notion of 'studying through', which Hannerz proposes, fits more comfortably with the nature of my research.

Because of my Greek nationality and language, I found myself some times in conferences and other academic and non-academic contexts being described as a 'native' or at least a 'not so outsider' anthropologist. Whereas obviously these terms are based on an assumed understanding of a shared culture between Greeks and Greek Cypriots, a cultural affinity constructed along these lines was never taken for granted by my informants. Most of them supporting Cypriotism, they were keener on highlighting our cultural differences than emphasising any sort of ethnic or national kinship. On the contrary, there were other aspects of my identity in their perspective that defined my being an insider or an outsider; was I leftist? What did I vote for in the last elections? Did I support peace? Was I an activist? It is such contextualised understandings of belonging that question traditional distinctions between 'real' and 'native' anthropologists and commit the ethnographer to an 'involvement that is unabashedly

subjective as it interacts with and invites other subjectivities to take a place in anthropological productions' (Narayan 1993: 682).

To ensure anonymity, I have changed all the names and some biographical information, where needed, of the participants in the research. I have tried to give common Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot names and I have avoided any resemblance between real names and pseudonyms. As an exception, I have maintained some of the original names of organisations and institutions and those of some officials and politicians, with whom I conducted formal recorded interviews, wherever this was necessary for clarity.

#### **1.4 Thesis Overview**

In order to trace the connections between the diaspora and Cyprus through discourses of Cypriotism and the practice of 'peace politics', the thesis is divided into five main chapters that examine inter-related contexts, in which these connections emerge and become (re)articulated. Chapter 2, therefore, starts from London and sets the background for the rest of the thesis by introducing and debating its main concepts: diaspora, peace politics and Cypriotism. The social geographies of movement between Cyprus and London are presented in the chapter in order to illustrate how the two places become cultural imaginative resources and are reconstructed in the ways Cypriots debate identity in London. Whereas Cyprus is seen as the source of an original Cypriotness, London is treated as the place, where an authentic Cypriotness, for which co-existence and bi-communalism are considered a fundamental criterion, has been preserved. Cypriotists in London, therefore, claim for themselves an undisrupted and historically consistent Cypriotness, which, according to this narrative, has been lost in Cyprus.

As such an authentic Cypriotness is often articulated by first-generation Cypriot migrants through appeals to a communist identity, chapter 3 focuses on the politics of the past as established through debates over 'official' and 'unofficial' histories in Cyprus. The Leftist historical account, particularly that of AKEL, has been characterised in popular and academic discourses as a counter-narrative to dominant nationalist history and as representing the voices and experiences of its supporters that have been marginalised in and excluded from official narrations of the past. In this chapter, however, close attention to the narratives and experiences of Leftists in the

diaspora reveals that these are often underrepresented in the Cyprio-centric historical narrative of AKEL, which appears then itself as containing its own silences and ‘unofficial’ histories and becomes open to internal contestation by individual members in London.

Chapter 4 carries on with the politics of history, but it also turns its attention to the history of politics, in order to examine how Cypriotism offers a platform on which inter-generational struggles over cultural and political authority in the diaspora are crystallised. Whereas British born Cypriots are often rendered to a position of cultural *inauthenticity* and are presented in popular discourses as ‘in-between’ two cultures, Cyprio-centric peace politics in London provide some British born Cypriots a discursive and political tool to reinstate understandings of Cypriotness and Britishness that reflect their own experiences and divert from hybridised notions of identity. In entering the debate of ‘who is a Cypriot’, British born Cypriots challenge dominant ‘landscapes of politics’ in London, from which they have felt historically excluded and alienated.

British born Cypriots also found and founded alternative political spaces on the Internet, away from established traditional structures, and chapter 5 follows their activities on Facebook, which emerged as a popular online context for the organisation of bi-communal Cypriot groups. The chapter examines how connections between the diaspora and Cyprus are created and what kinds of political activism develop in these settings. Far from separate from ‘real life’, Facebook politics, it is argued here, have to be studied as embedded within offline socio-cultural contexts and power dynamics in order to understand to what extent these are challenged but also reproduced online. In this sense, whereas the Internet created new opportunities for interaction among Cypriotists in the diaspora and Cyprus, it also highlighted and consolidated existing boundaries among them by revealing that the definition of ‘Cypriotness’ at the core of Cypriotism is not uniformly shared by everyone.

Chapter 6 encapsulates most of the divisions and power struggles among Cypriotists described in all previous chapters as expressed through discourses and practices of crossing the Green Line in Cyprus. Whereas border-crossing has been perceived as an ideological and moral commitment for Cypriotists and peace-supporters, the opening of the border has provoked various and contrasting responses by those most expected to

cross it highlighting the implications of other existing boundaries on intra-ethnic, inter-generational and ideological levels. It is not only ethnic nationalism that consolidates the border, it is argued here, but the border is created and reinstated within a discourse that –at least on the surface- promotes its elimination.

Finally, chapter 7 outlines the main conclusions by bringing together the core ethnographic and analytical points of the thesis in order to argue that although Cypriotism is popularly understood as a unifying discourse, its study from the perspective of the diaspora unravels it also as divisive and internally contested. As such contestations are often articulated through claims over cultural authenticity and identity, the thesis aims to illustrate how archetypal distinctions between civic and *ethnocultural* nationalisms are misleading, since both types of nationalism demonstrate –on different levels- a preoccupation with defining and establishing a shared culture.

## CHAPTER 2

### **‘Who is a Cypriot?’ Diaspora, Peace Politics and Cypriotism**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Two months after his election as president of the Republic of Cyprus, in May 2008, Dimitris Christofias visited London in order to meet with diasporic Cypriots. In his speech at the Alexandra Palace hotel in North London, he acknowledged the support of the community and thanked them for contributing to his electoral victory. He promised to enhance co-operation between Cyprus and its diaspora and to pay closer attention to their problems. As he characteristically said, ‘we need to show love and warmth to all Cypriots abroad, who live in their second countries [meaning Cyprus as their first country]’ (quote from field-notes, 18/05/2008). Christofias declared his commitment to work hard for peace and re-unification and, setting the ideological framework for his speech, he highlighted that ‘there is only one people (*laos*) in Cyprus, the *Cypriot* people’, an implicit criticism to Greek and Turkish nationalisms, from which the newly elected president wanted clearly to take distance. Continuing along the same line, he remarked that ‘Turkish Cypriots have been an equal partner since 1960, since the London-Zurich agreement. This is something some Greek Cypriots have to hear clearly’.

Christofias’s speech was attended by a large number of London-based Cypriots. ‘This is the most charismatic speaker I’ve heard. He really managed to move me and make me cry. This is the type of leader we need for Cyprus; decisive, straight-forward and simple. He is one of us’, was the comment of Mr. Yiannis, an elderly AKEL supporter, who has lived in London for the past fifty years and for the first time saw the secretary of his party getting elected as the president of Cyprus. Although the affinity that he expressed towards the speaker was explained by Mr. Yiannis as a comment on Christofias’s ‘simple manners and humbleness’, his statement, ‘he is one of us’, has to be understood also through his ideological identification with the new president as communists. Such reactions were not unexpected, since the majority of the crowd who gathered to welcome Christofias were leftists, supporters of his party, or ‘peace

supporters', who saw his election as a new ray of hope for re-conciliation and the reunification of the island. As the president made the trip from London to Cyprus to assure them about his commitment to peace, they also made the trip to Alexandra Palace to reaffirm their trust in his plans and the willingness of the diaspora to play a positive role in them. This is after all, according to popular discourses, a peace-supporting diaspora that has paradigmatically practised coexistence in their lives away from Cyprus.



Figure 1. *Queuing to congratulate the President –Christofias’s speech at the Alexandra Palace Hotel conference room, 18/05/2008*

This chapter sets the background for the rest of the thesis by examining how ‘peace politics’ and Cypriotism have been discursively articulated and historically developed in the diaspora. The first section (2.2) offers an overview of the social geographies of Cypriot movement between Cyprus and London and also highlights how these two contexts are interlinked through the ways they are imagined by individuals and groups in the diaspora in the process of being utilised as symbolic blocks for the construction of transnational identities. The next section (2.3) interrogates the notion of the diaspora by building on diaspora theories and current critiques and suggests that an expansive definition of the concept needs to be applied for the purposes of the thesis. Also, we

look at the ways ‘motherland’ politics institutionally operate in London, with a particular focus on organisations that support peace and re-unification. However, far from the popular understanding of the term as unifying, the meaning and purpose of peace divide the diaspora in multiple ways. Section 2.4 outlines the history and the discursive formation of Cypriotism both in Cyprus and in the diaspora. In the narratives of diasporic Cypriots, Cypriotism, articulated through the language of coexistence and common identity between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, is presented in terms of continuities between a pre-migration past and a diasporic present. Any ruptures to such continuities are seen as tensions transported to the diasporic context from Cyprus and external to the experience of coexistence in London. The particular experiences and ideological articulations of coexistence in the diaspora offer individuals a platform to negotiate these tensions on a local and interpersonal level. Finally, the last part of the chapter explains how Cypriotism is experienced and understood as a form of counter-nationalism or a ‘good nationalism’ and asks to what extent a sharp dichotomy between ethnic nationalism and Cypriotism is empirically observable and analytically useful.

## **2.2 From Cyprus to London and back and forth...: the social geographies of Cypriot migration and movement.**

Appadurai (1996) has famously argued that in a modern globalised world characterised by migration and constant flows of people, ideas, capital and mediated images, ‘the production of locality’ takes place through the imaginings of multiple other socio-cultural landscapes that transcend the borders of the nation and provide individuals with symbolic resources for articulating and negotiating identities. Following Appadurai and in order to trace the movement of Cypriots between London and Cyprus, the next section presents these two geographical contexts not merely as physical and bounded nodes within a transnational field, but as places, whose meaning is constantly (re)constructed within a nexus of individual and collective experiences, historical contingencies and political ideologies. What is largely argued here is that ‘Cyprus’ is (re)produced in London through various processes and, on the other hand, understandings and experiences of London mediate the ways ‘Cyprus’ is (re)entered as an imaginative field.

At the same time, 'Cyprus' and 'London', as 'symbolic resources of imagining' are not equally accessed and utilised by everyone. After all, they are discursive constructions within complex power structures and we have to examine how and why particular 'knowledges, images, and discourses are ... authorized' (Bhabha 1994: 270). As it is argued here, individuals reproduce established power structures by participating in these discourses; however, on a micro-level they also appropriate particular images and symbols in order to make sense of their own position within local and broader relations of power. For Appadurai, imagining is tightly related to individual agency, as 'the individual actor is the last locus of this perspectival set of landscapes, for these landscapes are eventually navigated by agents who both experience and constitute larger formations, in part from their own sense of what these landscapes offer' (ibid.: 33).

### *London*

London has been the field-site of a plethora of ethnographic studies, many of which focus on its migrant and diasporic groups to discuss the experience of migration and the development of their cultural and political identities (Adams 1987; Alexander 2000a, 2000b; Back 1994; Baumann 1996; Dench, Gavron and Young 2006; Eade 1989; Gardner 2002), the tensions between racism and multiculturalism (Herbert et al. 2008; James 2005; Keith 2008; Hewitt 2005; Watson 2009; Román-Velázquez 1999) and the interplay between globalisation and localisation (Eade 1997, 2000; Vertovec 2007; Wemyss 2009).

Tracing the history of the British capital from its imperial roots to its current global character, Eade (2000: 179) alerts us to the two-fold way that London is presented to the unsuspecting visitor; on one hand as the residue of a 'pure' national past and one the other hand as a modern cosmopolitan city. 'Most tourists still visit the famous sites redolent of the nation's past but the guide books urge them also to sample London's multicultural diversity and alternative locales. Although Soho was already portrayed as an alternative locality within the imperial capital, Spitalfields and Docklands add new themes to the global city' (ibid.). Tourists are encouraged to visit not only central spots but ex-industrial and working class areas, such as Soho, Spitalfields and Docklands, to acquire a complete taste of 'authenticity'. The contemporary representation of London as a 'tolerant melting pot', however, Eade argues, masks the imperial past of the city that has been marked by economic and political tensions and inequalities that still

determine and define the experience of particular groups and local communities. Multiculturalism is a by-product of colonialism and Cypriot migration to the UK, similarly to so many other migrant movements, took place within this colonial framework. Many Cypriots initially settled in impoverished and industrial areas of London, which contributed greatly to the stereotypical images of 'the dangerous migrant' that were generated in public discourses at the time about various ethnic groups including those who came from Cyprus<sup>15</sup>.

A number of Cypriots<sup>16</sup>, mainly Greek Cypriots, had already settled in London before World War II (Oakley 1987:3). However, Cypriot migration to the UK largely developed and peaked in the 1950s and 1960s. According to the 1966 Census, 100,000 migrants from Cyprus had arrived in the UK, of whom 75,000 were Greek Cypriots (Oakley 1971:2) and the rest predominantly Turkish Cypriots. Whereas the majority of pre-war settlers were single men (Solomos and Woodhams 1995:234), in the subsequent decades, Cypriot settlement in the UK took to a large extent the form of extended family units (Oakley 1971). As an effect of and after the 1962 Commonwealth Act, however, migration influx declined and only immediately after the 1974 war in Cyprus a new wave of Cypriot migration to the UK took place. According to Canefe (2002:65), the number of the post-1974 migrants was quite small compared to the overall diasporic Cypriot population. In the post-conflict period, about 12,000 Greek Cypriots, mainly displaced from the North part of Cyprus, and 15,000 Turkish Cypriots arrived to the UK (Bertrand 2004:99). Although many Greek Cypriots returned to Cyprus after 1974 to take advantage of the economic booming in the island, during the early years of settlement in the UK Greek Cypriots were four times more than Turkish Cypriots replicating the same proportions as in Cyprus (King et al. 2008: 8). As of more recently and including British-born children of Cypriot origin, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office counts over 300,000 Greek and Turkish Cypriots, who live today in the country (Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2009).

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<sup>15</sup> Solomos and Woodhams (1995: 234) argue that this was particularly the case for Cypriots in the pre-war era until the end of 1930s. As Britain moved from a period of depression to economic prosperity in the 1950s, discourses about the social and political stance of Cypriots in British society shifted quite considerably. Dench (1975) also discusses similar negatively charged images of Maltese migrants, usually single men, who shared work and residential spaces with Cypriots in the 1930s and 1940s.

<sup>16</sup> Their numbers are estimated to have been between six and eight thousand just before the war (Solomos and Woodhams 1995: 232).

London was and remained principally the place, where Cypriot migrants concentrated. The early migrants settled mainly in its central areas and around the West End, before other parts progressively started becoming 'Cypriots hubs', such as Camden and Islington that in the 1950s seemed to have the largest numbers of Cypriot residents. After the 1960s, however, a concentrated movement took place particularly northwards to areas such as Hackney and Haringey. Economic prosperity and access to better housing allowed some Cypriots to keep moving further up to the boroughs of Enfield and Barnet. Some also settled in the south of the river in places, such as Southwark and Lewisham, but North London has remained the centre of the 'Cypriot landscape'. Haringey was for a long time the borough with the largest Cypriot population (Alkan and Constantinides 1979) and it is still along Green Lanes and in the streets of Wood Green and Turnpike Lane that one is likely to come across a conspicuous number of Cypriot grocery stores, restaurants, businesses, community organisations, schools and churches.

In terms of areas of settlement, it is characteristic that there has been a significant overlap between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Although many more Turkish Cypriots have concentrated to the north-east and south of London than Greek Cypriots (Oakley 1987:15), in the 1950s a large number settled in Camden and over the decades followed a northwards movement similar to that of Greek Cypriots (Robins and Aksoy 2001:690). Writing shortly after 1974, Ladbury (1977) argues that members of both groups lived 'side by side' in London even after conflict and division made this impossible in Cyprus. Although at the informal, everyday level, interaction between Greek and Turkish Cypriots was quite uncommon, in institutional and employment contexts, there was exchange, coexistence and often co-operation between members of the two groups.

The spatial concentration of Cypriots in North London has been one of the main reasons but also a great result of the development of an 'ethnic economy', dominated by small shops and clothing factories, in which many Cypriots have been involved either as self-made employers or employees (Anthias 1992:9). If we can speak of one 'ethnic economy' ('Cypriot') or two different ethnic economies (Greek Cypriot/ Turkish Cypriot) depends on the extent to which people emphasise an identity and utilise a network based on a common 'Cypriotness' or separate 'Greekness' and 'Turkishness'.

Since the first years of settlement, however, many Greek and Turkish Cypriots shared work spaces and worked next to and with each other (Constantinides 1977:277). In many cases, Cypriot employers, who established small or larger businesses, relied on an 'ethnic' labour force, consisting of their own compatriots. This created a kind of economic interdependency between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, although, as Ladbury (1977:314) highlights, not always an equal one. Turkish Cypriots, who were smaller in numbers, tended to depend for jobs more on Greek Cypriots than the opposite, as the latter were more likely to own their own business.

Alongside businesses, a cluster of ethnic organisations, including the Cypriot Community Centre (CCC), the Turkish Cypriot Community Association (TCCA), the Turkish Cypriot Women's (TCWP) project, a number of media organisations and many other cultural and service-providing centres have contributed to the creation and maintenance of a 'North London landscape of Cypriotness',<sup>17</sup> and particular 'geographies of Cypriot politics'. I will return to the extensive discussion of these concepts later in the thesis (see chapter 4) in order to examine how in a popularly proclaimed cosmopolitan and diverse city like London ethnic group representation and political power is articulated in terms of geographical divisions and localised understandings of cultural authenticity and how individuals experience, reproduce and negotiate these discursive and physical borderlines.

Eade's work (1989; 1997; 2000) is important again here as he has extensively analysed how in resistance to the homogenising politics of nationalism or the essentialising projects of multiculturalism that create sharp divisions between communities,

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<sup>17</sup> In order to complete the picture of Cypriot settlement in the UK, it has to be highlighted that Cypriots are to be found in many other places of the country, especially in big cities, such as Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool. Many Cypriots from London also moved out of the city progressively (Anthias 1992: 8) and established themselves in the hospitality and catering industry in seaside towns of Southern England. In most cities and towns, there are to be found some community organisations usually operating through Cypriot churches and schools. Most of these communities, however, maintain links with London in various ways. For instance, many Cypriots of Brighton often travel there to do business, buy 'Cypriot' products, participate in political or cultural events or use particular services. In other cases, especially when distances are longer, contact with the core of the 'imagined' Cypriot community in the UK does not involve physical travel, but takes place through the UK-wide dissemination of newspapers published in North London; through letters with guidance from the Archbishop that are read in the local churches; through material and guidelines sent to local schools by the High Commission of the Republic of Cyprus in London; or through various 'ethnic' products that arrive in local specialised shops from or via the capital city.

alternative hybrid identities<sup>18</sup> emerge in postcolonial London. Some migrants and their descendants, for instance, develop multiple allegiances including their connection to their countries of origins. Their particular and localised experiences of the British capital plays a major role in how these transnational contexts are articulated and understood (ibid. 2000: 181). As the ethnographic data in this chapter and throughout the thesis suggests, particular *Cypriot* understandings and representations of London as ‘multicultural’ and as a place of ‘coexistence’ mediate and affect the way Cyprus is imagined, experienced and envisaged<sup>19</sup>.

### *Cyprus*

Although there were Cypriots in the UK since the 1920s, their contact with Cyprus before World War II was limited due to financial difficulties and restrictions in travel and communication technologies (Constantinides, 1990: 92–3). Those first migrants left Cyprus with very few hopes of reaching back its shores any time soon and many of them managed to visit their island only decades after their first departure. After the war, progress in technology and travel made communication between the migrants and their ‘home’ place increasingly possible, which enabled the development of diasporic practices (Adamson and Demetriou 2007: 506).

Cyprus strongly figures in the discourses and practices of those who live in London, even though the ways that it is imagined and debated are far from homogenous and unitary; on the contrary, what becomes apparent in all chapters of this thesis is that such debates are embedded within broader relations of power and interact with individual experiences, identities and narratives. Although its meaning is highly variable and contested, however, Cyprus is still treated as a source of ‘authentic’ identity for those in London who call themselves Cypriots. One way, for instance, that authenticity is articulated and experienced in material terms is through food. Like in other migrant contexts (see for instance Gardner 2002; Law 2001, Mannur 2007), Cypriots who go

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<sup>18</sup> However, Eade (2000: 181-182) does not accept theories of cultural hybridity uncritically. He still alerts us to the need to move beyond celebratory understandings of hybrid identities, as they often underplay structural and institutional inequalities, racism and exclusion that define the experience of many migrants and their decedents in the UK. I also expand on the critiques of the notion of hybridity in chapter 3, by highlighting that exclusion and marginality are also constructed and experienced within broader transnational socio-political and ideological frameworks.

<sup>19</sup> The word ‘imagined’ mainly refers here to the discourses through which past and present are articulated and understood; the verb ‘envisage’ entails a future orientation and it is, therefore, employed to refer to hopes for and perspectives on the future.

back to London after their visits to Cyprus often bring with them traditional ‘homeland’ food, such as *halloumi* and *sheftalia*, as well as fresh vegetables and fruits. It was very often the case at the Greek Orthodox Church on Sunday<sup>20</sup> that in the after-service tea, participants would make the effort to offer goods that they had brought with them from Cyprus. Their freshness and higher quality compared to what is available in the UK was always the subject of discussion. Moreover, the fact that the food had grown and been produced in Cypriot soil was often stressed highlighting a process by which ‘real’ Cyprus is being transported to and consumed in London<sup>21</sup>. Whereas there is an underlying Herderian logic that connects soil and blood here, I take the above example less as a straight-forward manifestation of ethnic reproduction and more as a context that highlights how claims to authenticity are implicated into particular power relations and structures. Because it was through these generous offers of ‘original’ food that one could make a statement about their ability to have travelled to Cyprus in front of those who did not. The talk about the food was most of the times accompanied by discussions about where one went, who they saw and what news they brought with them. In other words, ‘bearing gifts’ of a particular type often served as a tool of negotiating someone’s legitimacy ‘to talk about Cyprus’. This is important, therefore, in understanding contestation over particular types of ‘authenticity’ and ‘authority’ as intrinsic part of diasporic practices and politics<sup>22</sup>.

However, not everyone participates in these processes on the same level. We can argue that many Cypriots in the UK express a diasporic consciousness and identity when they claim a connection and allegiance to Cyprus. There are, for instance, young individuals who have never or rarely visited the island, who present themselves as ignorant of or even indifferent to the socio-political affairs there, but who would still identify –and

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<sup>20</sup> I attended the Sunday service of a number of Churches in North London and other areas outside the city in the course of fieldwork. There is usually an after-service tea provided voluntarily by women for a small donation towards the church’s charitable fund [filoptwso tameio].

<sup>21</sup> Dikomitis (2004) provides a similar ethnographic account of Larnatsjiotes, Greek-Cypriot refugees, who returned from a visit to their ‘home’ village in North Cyprus bringing with them water, soil and food. Dikomitis compares the sacredness attached to these substances by the refugees to that normally experienced in cases of pilgrimage.

<sup>22</sup> Yeh (2007) examines the tensions emerging around claims to ‘authenticity’ amongst three groups of Tibetans, who arrived in the USA around the same time but have different relationships to the ‘motherland’. According to Yeh, an embodied knowledge of Tibet as a physical place and language command are valued highly in this intra-diasporic contest over symbolic resources. Klimt (2000) looks at the relationship between the diaspora and ‘homeland’ and examines how discourses of authenticity amongst Portuguese migrants in Europe often divert from hegemonic ideas of ‘Portugueseness’ in Portugal creating competing ideas of what it means ‘to be Portuguese’.

sometimes adamantly declare- themselves as Cypriots or at least British-Cypriots. Whereas various patterns of migration and displacement often emerge in the life stories of these individuals, as Anthias (2006a: 182) notes, '[t]hese are not always more important than other types of dislocation native youngsters experience, but they form a particularly meaningful part of the construction of the familial narrative; they are stories that are perpetually recycled within the family and by the collectivity as a whole in its social reproduction and its cultural practices'. In other words, ethnic identification is relational and situational and should not be privileged analytically over other identities or modes of identification.

At the same time, there are other individuals, who are more active in terms of their diasporic practices and they keep an open interest or involvement in life and politics in Cyprus and London. Some of them, in particular, travel often between the two countries and are well-known in social and political circles in both places. The two categories, however, of those who emerge as more active in a transnational context and those who do not are mainly of descriptive value because on a deeper analytical and empirical level they are neither fixed nor bounded. As I highlight in chapter 4, participation in the cultural and political life of the diasporic community may vary throughout one's life cycle and demonstrate peaks and lows. Moreover, although diasporic practices are often articulated by those engaged in them as a matter of personal choice, transnational identities and activities are enabled and restricted by other social structures and identities, such as gender and class, and by broader political and ideological frameworks. Economic capital, for instance, plays an important role in the production of transnational lives. There is a considerable number of older Cypriots, whose low pension and lack of savings do not allow them to visit Cyprus. Similarly, some younger Cypriots also face financial obstacles in their desire to travel to the island. Such individuals, therefore, experience a limited access to particular types of 'knowledge' and claims to 'authenticity' that are associated with a first-hand visit to Cyprus and the engagement with life there.

On the other hand, not everyone who is financially able to travel regularly between the UK and Cyprus is recognised as an active agent in the socio-political life of either context. Besides individual levels of interest, the lack of social networks, connections and know-how of politics emerge also as major restrictive blocks for the diasporic

practices of some Cypriots. One of the main concerns, therefore, throughout the thesis is to illustrate how diasporic involvement in ‘peace politics’ is *conditioned* by particular types and levels of social and cultural capital but also how it provides a context in which individuals can *negotiate* their structural position and identities both on a local and transnational level; in other words, one of the main study questions deals with how Cyprus is discursively constructed and contested as a source of authenticity in the diasporic context.

### **2.3 (De)constructing the ‘Cypriot’ Diaspora: political organisation and divisions**

In the past few decades the term ‘diaspora’ has been extensively employed, analysed and critiqued in academic discourses across multiple disciplinary fields. This section offers a description and analysis of the ways such definitions and critiques can be applied to the study of Cypriots in the UK. Even before such an attempt, however, a primary question on the issue is whether one can speak of one or two Cypriot diasporas –a Greek Cypriot and a Turkish Cypriot (Bertrand 2004: 93). It becomes instantly apparent that an absolute answer is not possible, as it depends on political and ideological identifications both on an individual and institutional level. Most of the Cypriot organisations in the UK identify themselves as either Greek or Turkish Cypriot and attend to the needs or causes of their respective ‘ethnic’ groups. Such organisations include community associations, refugee pressure groups, media, political parties and cultural centres. Although the majority of them strongly emphasise their distinct Cypriot identity vis-à-vis respective ‘motherlands’, there is a number of institutions that embrace official Greek or Turkish-oriented nationalist values and operate closely with other organisations that cater for the broader Greek or Turkish communities in the UK. However, because the term ‘Cypriot’ is used in public discourses in the UK almost as a metonym for ‘Greek Cypriot’ (rather than as inclusive of Turkish Cypriots too), many organisations that are self-proclaimed as Cypriot are in essence only representative of Greek Cypriots. The National Federation for Cypriots in the UK, for instance, is mostly comprised of Greek Cypriot groups and associations<sup>23</sup>. Reconciliation and rapprochement are less central for some of the Cypriot organisations that mainly deploy

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<sup>23</sup> Although some of them have Turkish Cypriot members too. Also, groups from other minority communities of Cyprus operate under the umbrella of the Federation, such as the Cypriot Maronites Association. In a personal communication, however, the president of the Federation, Peter Droussiotis expressed his commitment to approach and work more closely with Turkish Cypriot organisations and representatives in the future.

a particular historical narrative and understanding of the Cyprus problem identical to the official nationalist language that developed amongst Greek Cypriots after the division. They instead focus on human rights, especially on the right of Greek Cypriot refugees to return, and protest against Turkey's intervention in 1974 and the successive occupation of the north part of the island. Likewise, Turkish Cypriot groups, such as '*Embargoed!*', campaign for the lift of the international embargo on TRNC and the recognition of its residents' human rights.

Lobbying local British politicians, organising events and protests and campaigning through various media are the main political strategies of these groups. According to Bertrand (ibid.: 101), the Greek Cypriot voice developed as particularly influential during the election campaign of New Labour in 1997. The Labour Party eventually triumphed electorally in North London, even in constituencies like Enfield that previously belonged to the conservatives. As a result, '[n]o North London Labour MP can miss a Greek Cypriot event, even when this event is quite nationalist and does little to help reconcile Greek and Turkish Cypriots' (ibid.: 102). Compared to Greek Cypriots' political influence in the UK, Østergaard-Nielsen (2003: 687) characterises Turkish Cypriots as 'invisible' within the British political scene, mainly because of their lower numbers of registered votes but also of the complexities involved in the attempts of some leaders to establish and maintain a distinct identity detached from the Greek Cypriot and wider Turkish community. However, *Embargoed!* has managed to battle with such 'invisibility' to a successful degree. It was first founded in 2004 and by 2007, when research for this thesis was taking place, it had managed to be considered a very active Turkish Cypriot pressure group to the extent that it was perceived by many other Cypriot lobbying parties as politically 'dangerous' for overshadowing them.

However, not all Greek and Turkish Cypriot diasporic organisations run along antagonistic or mutually exclusive lines. A large number of London Cypriots support reunification and peace as a solution for Cyprus that will mirror their own experience of coexistence in the diaspora. They hold a Cyprio-centric perspective on the Cyprus issue that diverts from the dominant Greek and Turkish nationalisms, commonly blamed for the separation of the island. The ideological articulation as well as the everyday practices of this Cyprio-centrism will be discussed and analysed extensively in the next section. What needs to be highlighted here though is that following the post-Annan

period of disappointment and just before the presidential elections in Cyprus in 2008, Cyprio-centric discourses resurfaced stronger in the diaspora and a greater willingness for co-operation between Turkish and Greek Cypriot organisations was demonstrated in support of a solution for their common ‘homeland’. Many of these attempts were presented as political projects of one, united Cypriot diaspora, however, few organisations are ‘bi-communal’ or ‘inter-communal’ in the sense that the two main or all communities of Cyprus are represented in their membership. The Cypriot Community Centre (CCC) in Haringey is the most enduring and established amongst them. Founded in the early 1980s, it is supported by AKEL, which has been the only Greek Cypriot political party that boasts Turkish Cypriot support<sup>24</sup>. On the other hand, Cypriots United (CU) was founded as recently as 2007, by second-generation Greek and Turkish Cypriots to articulate a pro-unification diasporic voice in a period marked by excitement about the anticipated –at the time- elections in the Republic of Cyprus. ‘Friends of Cyprus’ is also a group that endorses bi-communal values and liaises often both with the CCC and CU. It was established in 1974 in London and acts through meetings, seminars and publications. As most of its core members are, however, British MPs and other leading political figures lobbying for a solution to the Cyprus problem through parliamentary politics, it could not be characterised typically diasporic. Similarly, the Association for Cypriot, Greek and Turkish Affairs (ACGTA) chaired by Zenon Stavrinidis and established in 1992 in London promotes understanding and co-operation on an academic level by encouraging dissemination of knowledge amongst scholars from Cyprus, Greece and Turkey. As the most significant, therefore, bi-communal diasporic organisations in London, CCC and CU are ethnographically presented in chapters 3 and 4. Their narrational juxtaposition unravels not only inter-ethnic but also inter-personal, generational and ideological intra-diasporic tensions. Although these organisations claim to represent the voice of the Cypriot diaspora, a closer ethnographic account of their internal dynamics challenges the unity and homogeneity that are assumed as essential prerequisites in any process of representing.

Precisely because of such empirical data, the ‘politics of representation’ emerges as one of the fundamental concerns about the uses of the term diaspora within academic

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<sup>24</sup> Until 1958, AKEL openly had Turkish Cypriot registered members. Under the pressure of TMT, most Turkish Cypriots withdrew from the party, although according to AKEL’s claims a considerable number continued as secret members. In the diaspora, the number of Turkish Cypriots supporting AKEL is even higher, allegedly reaching twenty per cent of the overall party membership (Bertrand 2004: 106).

discourses. Most of the foundational literature (Hall 1990; Gilroy 1993; Clifford 1994; Cohen 1997) celebrated the concept as a useful way of studying groups of people who have been dispersed from their original homeland, but at the same time maintain relationships with it. Diasporas are often described in terms of these transnational relationships that develop across national borders and challenge ideas of cultural homogenisation under the hegemony of the nation-state. By focusing on borders, Clifford (1994) claims that diasporas define themselves against the nation-state and indigenous claims by 'tribal' peoples. The nation-state, as common territory and time, is subverted by diasporic attachments, as national narrative cannot assimilate people who maintain strong ties to a homeland and 'whose sense of identity is centrally defined by collective histories of displacement and violent loss cannot be "cured" by merging into a new national community' (ibid.: 307).

In all its success at articulating why the concept is useful in understanding transnational identities, Clifford's definition also brings out some of its limitations. Many studies of diasporas tend to reify the idea of 'homeland' and analyse the relationship between the two in primordialist terms (Anthias 1998). As discussed in the first section of this chapter, not all Cypriots in London share the same understanding of Cyprus and the way Cyprus is imagined and experienced varies depending on individual identities, narratives and practices. Both Brah (1996) and Anthias (1998; 2001; 2002; 2006a) suggest that the emphasis on the transnational may turn attention away from the divisions of class, gender and race within diasporas. Issues of social exclusion and differentiated inclusion based upon these divisions need to be taken under consideration.

Also, neither 'Cyprus' nor the Cypriot diaspora are static and homogenous. As they are always in the making both as discursive and lived fields, the relationship between the two varies and shifts accordingly. Brah (1996) emphasises on the conflictual nature of diasporas and highlights the fact that any diaspora involves a multiplicity of journeys, narratives, and processes of re-memory. Therefore, 'the identity of the diasporic imagined community is far from fixed or pre-given. It is constituted within the crucible of the materiality of everyday life; in the everyday stories we tell ourselves individually and collectively' (ibid.: 183). This is what makes diasporas contested spaces and Brah insists that there is a need to examine how the collective 'we' is constructed.

Awareness of the flexibility and fluidity of diasporas also pushes for further questioning on their boundaries and issues of membership. In other words, who is included in the diaspora and can we use absolute categories of identifying diasporic identities and practices? The protagonists of this thesis come from a wide range of backgrounds that do not always fit with strict typological definitions regarding diasporas (cf. Safran 1991; Cohen 1997). Many of them arrived to the UK as early as the 1950s and 1960s, whereas others left Cyprus in the 1970s as refugees and to escape the aftermaths of the war. Although all of them would be labelled as ‘first-generation’<sup>25</sup> migrants, their internalised experiences and memories often diverge to a great extent. Many of those who are characterised as ‘second-generation’ also have different life trajectories to demonstrate. Although the majority of them were born in the UK, others lived years of their childhood in Cyprus. Some individuals also have experienced many movements back and forth between the two contexts in their life-time. The thesis is also concerned with second-generation Cypriots, who have decided to ‘return’ and live in Cyprus at some point in their life cycle<sup>26</sup>. As Christou and King (2008) argue, although such ‘counter-diasporic’ movements should provide a closure to the diaspora cycle through ‘return’, they often produce new narratives and experiences that contribute to the reproduction of transnational identities. As we see in chapters 4 and 6, therefore, some of the ‘returnees’, not only maintain strong social and cultural relations with London, but they portray their upbringing in the diaspora and their transnational consciousness as defining elements in their involvement in peace politics in Cyprus. More importantly, such self-understandings very often evoke nostalgia for and romanticisation of life in ‘multicultural Britain’. Finally, new and constant waves of movement from Cyprus to the UK, mainly of students and some migrant workers, stretch further the definitional

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<sup>25</sup> I use the terms first- and second-generation Cypriots mainly in relation to the migration cycle, applying the former to individuals who left Cyprus as migrants and the latter to those who were born in the UK or arrived at a very young age as descendents of Cypriot migrants. The terms are employed with all the limitations and concerns acknowledged in the text and even more. Beyond sociological attempts to define and conceptualise ‘generation’ along clearer lines (cf. Kertzer 1983), Loizos (2007) argues that the vagueness of the term still clouds academic writing with essentialising effects. Drawing on his own work with Greek Cypriot refugees, he argues that categories such as ‘refugee generation’ fail to account for the different impact that displacement may have on individuals who go through the same experience but at different stages of their life cycle.

<sup>26</sup> Teerling (2011) traces motivations behind such decisions, experiences of migration ‘back’ to Cyprus and complex understandings of home amongst a number of Greek Cypriots concluding that ‘essentialised’ and static understandings of identity do not apply to these individuals, as they often develop cross-ethnic and cross-cultural connections with foreigners and migrants in Cyprus of various backgrounds in order to feel ‘at home’.

borders of diaspora. Many of these ‘newcomers’ –but by no means the majority- take political roles in already established institutions in London, find jobs in Cypriot businesses, have social and, in many cases, kinship relationships with British Cypriots and some times become ‘permanent’ residents in London. They often hold normative ideas about what a Cypriot diaspora should be like and embark on cultural or political ‘enlightening’ projects. In these interactions, images and understandings of ‘Cypriotness’ are constantly debated and reproduced.

In order to account for such diverse experiences, relationships and identities, I, therefore, take an expansive approach in the employment of the term diaspora in this research. Instead of applying it a priori to particular groups of people and practices, the thesis traces the cultural processes, discourses and agents, through which the diaspora is debated and continuously (re)constructed, especially from the vantage point of those who promote a common Cypriot identity as a fundamental prerequisite for peace and reunification in Cyprus<sup>27</sup>.

Such an approach allows us to move beyond essentialised images of ‘peaceful’ or conflict-supporting diasporas. A relatively recent volume published by the United Nations University Press brings together various academics, who are asked to evaluate diasporas connected to ‘homelands’ in conflict as either ‘peace-makers’ or ‘peace-wreckers’. Through a comparative analysis of a wide range of case studies, however, this absolute dichotomy is considerably challenged. Bringing the data together, Smith (2007: 9-12) argues that diasporas can be peace-makers, peace-wreckers or neither at different times and such orientation depends on historical developments and political conditions both in the country of origin as well as the home country. As they are not homogenous units, they may involve elements, institutions and individuals expressing opposing views vis-à-vis the conflict. More importantly, the very concept of peace is interrogated, as its meaning needs to be closely examined and specified in particular contexts. Skrbíš (2007: 235), for instance, explains that unlike common understandings of the term, for the Croatian diaspora the idea of peace was not incompatible with

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<sup>27</sup> Characteristically, it is among Cypriotists, especially those who are British born that the term diaspora is employed to describe their communal experience in London. It is often employed to avoid other terms, such as *‘koinotita’* [community] or *‘paroikia’* (roughly translated as ‘next to home’) used traditionally by Greek Cypriots in London. Younger Cypriotists perceive these terms as essentialist and exclusive, whereas they consider the term diaspora as representing more their transnational predicament.

providing illegal arms to Croatian fighting forces during the Balkan wars in the 1990s and this was mainly because peace in this case only meant independence for Croatians.

Likewise, peace is an elusive term in the way it is used by Cypriots. For some Turkish Cypriots, for instance, peace was achieved in 1974, when Turkey interfered to rescue them from the violence exercised against them by Greek Cypriots. For the other side, since the official political line of the Republic of Cyprus after the conflict has been based on promoting peace and re-conciliation (Papadakis 1993), the majority of Greek Cypriots appear to support the re-unification of the island. However, their understandings and visions of such a solution vary and do not always coincide with formal processes of peace negotiations that have as their basis the future establishment of a bi-communal and bi-zonal federation. Those who oppose it, often treat this solution as unfair for the Greek Cypriot community, a majority community that now see their rights curtailed and compromised by having to negotiate with a minority (Turkish Cypriots) on equal terms. This particular rhetoric, although in principle supporting peace, is often characterised as typically Greek Cypriot nationalist, juxtaposed to more Cyprio-centric perspectives on a solution.

Even within these Cyprio-centric discourses, however, the idea of peace is constantly negotiated and it is tightly connected to broader social and political relations. Adding to Skrbíš's argument, the following chapters of the thesis illustrate how the meaning of peace is not only dependent on historical and political developments in host and home countries but in the case of Cypriots in London, it has also to be understood in relation to claims to identity, inter-personal relations and shifting individual and collective memories and experiences.

## **2.4 Cypriotism as discourse and practice in the Diaspora: Continuities and Ruptures**

### *Continuities*

On the very first day of fieldwork at the Cypriot Community Centre, Mr Georgiou, a man in his mid-seventies, who kindly introduced me to the place and its regulars, invited me to the centre's coffee shop. 'What would you like to have?', asked politely Mr. Giorgos, who run the coffee shop. 'Can I have a Turkish...sorry...Greek...I mean

Cypriot coffee?<sup>28</sup>, I replied in a confused manner concluding within seconds that ‘Cypriot’ was the right adjective for the beverage, as it was written on the drinks price list hanging on the wall behind Mr. George. The two men laughed at my confusion and attempt to use the appropriate term and the coffee shop waiter joked further: ‘Are you sure you want a Cypriot coffee? We can also make you a Greek or even a Turkish one, if you want. We are fully equipped’. Further laughs followed based on a common understanding of the complex political and ideological debates behind the different names of what is principally the same type of coffee. Papadakis (2006: 248), writing on cultural ownership as an inherent part of the nationalist logic, explains how the term ‘Cypriot’ offers a solution to the ‘Turkish/Greek coffee issue’ and it is used almost to diffuse Greek or Turkish nationalist claims. Moreover, as in the case of the Cypriot Centre, it is employed to make a political statement against these two dominant versions of nationalism.

Greek Cypriot identity and social memory, according to Mavratsas (1997; 1999) has to be understood through the antagonistic relation between Cypriotism and Greek Cypriot nationalism. Whereas the latter is based on the centrality and prominence of ‘pure’ Hellenism in the historical development of Greek Cypriot identity, Cypriotism treats cultural tradition as a result of mixing, syncretism and diffusion (Papadakis 1993). Correspondingly, in the Cypriotist versions of the past, Cyprus’s culture is presented as a combined product of the various conquerors, who set foot in the island, unlike the Greek Cypriot narrative that traces the historical past through the Hellenic presence. ‘Thus, whereas the nationalists focus on a distinguished legacy, the Cypriotists emphasize popular culture (λαϊκός πολιτισμός), rural customs and everyday practices which construct a more syncretic, and unquestionably less dignified, view of identity and tradition’ (Mavratsas 1997: 730).

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<sup>28</sup> In response and opposition to official campaigns in Greece to call the coffee Greek rather than Turkish, some people, like my grandma, who came from a family of Greek refugees from Turkey, insisted on the ‘Turkishness’ of the coffee (for the complex attitudes and discourses of Asia Minor refugees vis-à-vis the Greek state, see Hirschon 1989). I had taken on the term from her and also as a reaction to the official campaigns, I habitually call the coffee ‘Turkish’. In this episode and in order to respond to the context, I shift within a few seconds from this position, to the official Greek one (the second most established one in my cultural repertoire) and then to the one that I thought most appropriate for a centre that embraces Cypriotism.

Although Cypriotism did not take a clear ideological form before 1974, some of its traces and ideas were already to be found in the 1920s in the politics and declarations of the Cypriot Communist Party (KKK) that eventually transformed into AKEL. In typical Marxist language, the communist party had warned against the dangers of nationalism as an ideology that serves the imperialist interests of global capital and local bourgeoisies and emphasised on the importance of class solidarity and common struggle across ethnic lines (ibid.: 722). In the 1940s, AKEL's shift to pro-enosis (unification with Greece) contradicted to some extent its Cyprio-centric stance, however, prominent members and many of its supporters criticised the official turn of the party and remained loyal to communist Cypriotism.

Many of the migrants who left Cyprus in the 1940s and 1950s, coming from working class backgrounds, were already members of AKEL when they arrived to the UK. They often therefore explain their commitment to Cypriotism, as part of their politicisation as young AKEL members, and draw connections between their pre-migration and post-migration experiences. In response to the incident with the coffee, Mr. Georgiou explained smiling: 'What do you expect? We are leftists, of course we will call the coffee Cypriot'. In this frame of analysis, Cypriotism appears as an ideological heritage that is not only employed by migrants to analyse their everyday conduct in diaspora but also to prove retrospectively the higher morality of communism vis-à-vis Greek Cypriot nationalism.

Post-1974, however, Cypriotism dominated in Cyprus for the first time as part of the official Greek-Cypriot rhetoric that based on a language of 'past peaceful coexistence' between Greek and Turkish Cypriots (Papadakis 1993) urged for peace and the reunification of the island. The idea of *enosis* as a political project was dropped and the *pro-enosists*, who were now associated with the right and especially with DISI (Democratic Rally), the party founded by Clerides, were accused as the main instigators of the 1974 catastrophe (Mavratsas 1997: 720). In the new political shift towards *rapprochement*, Greek and Turkish Cypriots were presented as the blameless victims of broader political processes and interests that included British colonialism, American imperialism, extreme nationalism, which culminated with Turkey's intervention and occupation of the northern part of the island. According to the same discourse,

therefore, Greek and Turkish Cypriots, if left alone, would reunify and live peacefully together like before.

Most Cypriots in London, however, did not experience conflict and division in the same way. Greek and Turkish Cypriots in the British capital had been working together, living in the same neighbourhoods and sending their children to the same schools for a long time before the conflict and in many ways they carried on so after the conflict too (Constantinides 1977: 277). One day during fieldwork, this was the topic of the conversation in one of the coffee shops near Green Lanes that Cypriot men visit to socialise, play cards and pass their spare time. A group of 5 men were discussing politics as usual, when Mr. Stelios, who came to the UK in the late 1950s and is an AKEL supporter said: 'They (Cypriots in Cyprus) have to try to live together again, as we have managed to do here. Why didn't we have the same issues here?' Another man, in his mid-70s picked on what Mr. Stelios had said and quickly replied: 'It seems we can only live together under the English, Stelios, no? We lived happily in the past because of the English, we live together now in England', evoking a quite common argument amongst some Greek Cypriots that implies a degree of nostalgia for a pre-Independence colonial past in Cyprus<sup>29</sup> as an indirect critique of the rhetoric of an *organic* past and current coexistence used by many Cypriotists in the diaspora. 'What are you talking about?', Mr. Stelios quickly reacted reverting to a typical AKEList interpretation of the conflict. 'It was the English that created differences. But the problem was those nationalists. We didn't have to have an armed struggle against the English. Eventually they would have left, like they left from Malta. I'm telling you, my friend, the problem was that we wanted *enosis*. But we see things differently in England than people in Cyprus because we came here a long time ago. We carried with us the good situations from Cyprus on our shoulders and we still have these good situations. Here we were just left alone to live in the way we know'. Interfering in the interaction between the two men, a third person, Mr. Yiorgos raised his voice and said: 'But it's also how this society works, Stelios. Here black, whites, they all live together. We have

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<sup>29</sup> I agree with Cunningham Bissell (2005), whose work in Zanzibar reveals that 'colonial nostalgia' has to be ethnographically contextualised in order to be properly understood through the specificities of these contexts. Whereas in urban Zanzibar, he analyses it as a set of responses to neoliberal policies of urban restructuring, colonial nostalgia here has to be examined as a framework of response to experiences of violence and displacement that caused the Cypriot conflict.

no other choice. If you send your kids to school, you cannot ask them to not talk to Turkish Cypriots, you cannot ask them to not be friends’.

Besides representing different ideological stances, these utterances express a shared understanding of the continuities of Cypriotism, as everyday experience and practice, in the pre- and post-migration periods. Either as a condition of (post)colonialism or as an organic experience *outside* and *besides* colonialism or as a result of British multiculturalism, diasporic coexistence between Greek and Turkish Cypriots is represented in these narratives, as a replication of inter-ethnic relations in pre-war Cyprus.

In Cyprus, however, the dominance of Cypriotism as a political ideology and discourse was short-lived and within a few years after the conflict, towards the end of the 1980s, the Cypriot political scene was characterised by the emergence of what Peristianis (1995) calls ‘neonationalism’ and Mavratsas (1997) names ‘new Greek Cypriot nationalism’. A renewed Hellenocentrism developed as part of official rhetorics and public discourses, principally as a result of internal problems within the Greek Cypriot government and the continuation of the Cyprus problem that demanded a revival of the political relationships with Greece (Peristianis 2006a: 104). Most Cypriot parties therefore, including DIKO (centre) and EDEK (socialist and left-of-centre), but excluding AKEL, developed close connections with the Greek state. (ibid.). In this period, therefore, Cypriotism starts to be more tightly associated with the communist Left. However, as Mavratsas highlights, ‘Cypriotist elements and orientations can be found in almost all political parties, and it should be clear that the reduction of the contest between nationalism and Cypriotism into a left-right opposition cannot be fully sustained and can only oversimplify the picture’ (1997: 723-724). Peristianis (2006a), presenting a social survey that was conducted amongst Greek Cypriots in 2000, concludes that although a large number of those who identify themselves primarily or solely as Cypriots tend to belong to the Left, a Cypriot identity is also prioritised amongst members of the sample who come from different ideological backgrounds. Also, ‘Greekness’ is not totally excluded from the answers of leftists and it emerges as an identifying category for many AKEL supporters, especially in discussions about Turkey and the Turkish intervention.

Besides such overlaps between Cypriotism and Greek-Cypriot nationalism, however, the latter dominated the official political scene and set the parameters for permissible public discourse in the period after the mid-1980s. Such dominance was culminated with the rejection of the Annan plan in 2004 by the Greek Cypriot side that was seen by the international diplomatic circles as well as many Cypriots themselves as the victory of 'neonationalism' once again over the political consciousness of the Greek Cypriot community. Although the reasons and politics behind the rejection of the plan are more complex and besides the fact that AKEL at the end proposed an official 'no' stance towards the referendum, the emotive televised speech of the President of the Cyprus Republic, Tassos Papadopoulos on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 2007, in which, while shedding a tear, he urged Greek Cypriots to not accept the plan became an iconic moment of such victory.

This is why the election of Christofias was received by a large majority in the diaspora with great euphoria. His electoral success was the main topic of discussion for many weeks in coffee shops, public gatherings and house talks. Many of the AKEL supporters celebrated and some of them, especially older generation Cypriots, even had tears over what was for them a pivotal moment in the history of their party. Their hope, however, was not only oriented towards a future solution for Cyprus but also towards the revival of a relationship between the diaspora and Cyprus. For the years that Greek Cyprus was going through its 'hellenocentric phase', again in the language of continuity, which diasporic Cypriots employ in their narration, Cypriotism both as an ideological commitment and everyday practice carried on in the UK in its previous form. This continuity was considered to have caused a disturbance on the political relationships between Greek Cypriots in the UK and the Cypriot state. In an interview with a prominent member of the National Federation of Cypriots in the UK, he highlighted this shift by saying: 'Here in the diaspora we are more committed to the Cyprus problem than even people in Cyprus. They are just carrying on with their lives there. And the Cypriot state has not always supported us, but things are changing now with the new government. Papadopoulos had not come to visit us more than two times in the course of five years. Christofias is here every two-three months'. His words stem to some extent from his ideological closeness to the new president, but they also reflect a general atmosphere at the time that the election of a Cyprio-centric government would raise new opportunities for the voice of its 'Cypriotist' diaspora to be heard.

## *Ruptures*

I have presented up to this point a historical narrative often reproduced by some members of the diaspora –but not exclusively-, in which Cypriotism, as identity, ideological commitment and practice is expressed through a trope of continuities between a pre-migration past and a diasporic present. These continuities are articulated both through a romanticised nostalgia for a pre-conflict Cyprus as well as in terms of an essentialising language, in which diaspora identity and politics appears as static and fixed, almost untouched by broader historical and political processes that take place in Cyprus. In interaction with individual narratives and experiences, however, the discourse of Cypriotism involves the possibilities of ‘counter-discourses’ and ruptures to come to the surface. There are multiple contexts and examples, in which these ruptures occur and find space to be articulated, however, I schematically present two main historical moments that often emerged in the narratives of many of the protagonists of the thesis as points of reference: the Turkish invasion of 1974 and the Annan plan referendum in 2004.

### *1974*

Both Ladbury (1977) and Constantinides (1977), writing shortly after 1974 about Turkish and Greek Cypriots in London, argue that the conflict in Cyprus did not have devastating effects on the inter-ethnic relationships on an institutional level at least. At the time intermarriage and co-habitation between Greek and Turkish Cypriots existed but it was quite limited, a situation that replicated to some extent pre-1960s socio-cultural patterns of interaction in Cyprus. But Cypriots worked together in factories, shops and restaurants and they developed personal relationships in these contexts that according to the authors remained good even after the Turkish invasion that year.

However, 1974 emerges in the narratives of some diasporic Cypriots, as a moment of particular tension that put a strain not only on relationships with the other community but on their individual commitment to Cypriotism and co-existence too.

Mr Christos’s narrative presents a particularly severe case of rupture in this sense. He had been in London almost three decades by the time of the conflict, after leaving his village in Morphou in the North part of the island to become one of the main young

migrants to the British empire's metropolis. He was first employed in the restaurant of one of his co-villagers from Cyprus and with hard work, he managed eventually to own his own restaurant, a business now run by his children. To interview him as one of the early migrants who had arrived in the UK I visited him in the restaurant, where in spite of his 85 years he still 'offers a hand'. He does not describe himself as a leftist, but his account reproduces some of the patterns of the Cyprio-centric storyline.

'We didn't have any problems with the Turkish Cypriots. Neither in Cyprus nor here. But I remember that day in July I heard about the invasion. Some relatives of mine, who were in London as well called me. I went crazy, I totally lost it, I think. At the time I had a Turkish Cypriot guy working in my restaurant, in the kitchen. I heard him cheering after hearing the news of the invasion. I couldn't take it. I didn't even want to look at him, but I gave him a small bag with thirty pounds in it as compensation and I asked him to never come back. Right or wrong, that's how I felt at the time. But since then I have always avoided employing Turkish Cypriots in my businesses.'

Although it is almost certain that the narrator did not have the intention to draw any parallels, the incident with the thirty pounds, quite interestingly, bring to minds the biblical story of Judas's betrayal of Jesus for thirty silver coins, which is often utilised metaphorically in popular talk as an example of ultimate disloyalty and treachery. Mr. Christos reflected on his feelings and behaviour at the time, in terms of deep disappointment for what he considered as a betrayal on behalf of Turkish Cypriots.

However, not all accounts of 1974 recall such radical ruptures in the everyday relationships of Cypriots in London. Mr. Stelios had arrived in London in the late 1950s, as a young boy to join his older brother who had already been living in the capital for a few years. All members of his family including himself were and still are devoted AKEL supporters. By 1974, Mr. Stelios had already got married to his wife Eleni, had had his first child and had established a hairdressing business in North London with another Greek Cypriot man. 'I remember that day very clearly', he narrates. 'It was a Saturday and I was in the car with my business partner, Yiannis. We had just heard the news and we were both very upset. Yiannis was driving but he crossed twice over a red traffic light. I asked him to stop, so we could calm down. At that time we had a Turkish Cypriot barber working for us in the shop. Yiannis and I were thinking how we would face him. We were angry but it was not his fault. Why

would it be his fault? It was not our fault either. We had been living in London together and fine. I asked Yiannis to drive around for a while and to not go straight to the salon. After we relaxed and our anger was gone a little, we returned to the shop. We tried to behave to Hakan as usual’.

Mr. Stelios’s relationships with Mr. Hakan survived not only beyond 1974 but have lasted until today and this connection allowed me to trace Mr. Hakan’s side of the story for that particular day in July 1974. He had migrated to the UK in the early 1960s leaving some of his family members back in Paphos, in the southern part of the island. He considers himself a leftist and he is quite sympathetic towards AKEL ‘despite the mistakes they have made’, as he argues. For a long time, he used to attend the events in the Cypriot Community Centre and he has maintained relationships with some of the regulars there, although these days he prefers to go to the Turkish Cypriot Community Association (TCCA). Mr. Stelios brought me into contact with his old friend and former employee urging me to ask him ‘if what I said it’s true. My behaviour towards him never changed. Hakan knows that well and he can tell you’.

‘I remember very clearly that morning’, Mr. Hakan narrated. ‘My wife was celebrating and I was happy too because we felt that something was finally being done. We had been so worried about our families in Cyprus and at that time we thought Turkey was coming in to protect Turkish Cypriots. But I didn’t want to go to work that day. I didn’t want to see Stelios and Yiannis. I just couldn’t face them. What could I say to them? I was having my morning coffee and I was thinking what to do. But then I decided to go. It would have been a *betrayal* to not show my face at the shop that day. We didn’t speak about it much during the day. I guess I hid my happiness, they hid their sadness’.

### *The Annan Plan*

Whereas 1974 is a historical movement that has marked not only the official history and politics of Cyprus but also the memories and lives of most Cypriots, the Annan plan and the referendum became another important time in the history of Cypriots to the extent that the period after 2004 is often characterised as the post-Annan period in public discourses highlighting its significance and impact for Cypriot affairs. Characteristically, during fieldwork, especially in 2006 and 2007, the UN designed and

backed plan emerged as a point of reference in everyday discussions and interactions even more often than the events of 1974. For those who had believed in it or supported it as a compromised solution, the temporary hopefulness raised due to an imminent solution in 2004 had now been replaced by disappointment and hopelessness. ‘We had a chance and we missed it, who knows when we will have another one’, was often repeated amongst many Cypriots in the streets of London and Nicosia.

Moreover, the failure of the plan to lead to re-unification and re-conciliation shook the very notion of Cypriotism, as a long-term ideological narrative and practice, not least because the most Cyprio-centric political parties of all in Cyprus, AKEL, in a last-minute manoeuvre, took an official ‘no’ stance to the referendum and encouraged its supporters to vote accordingly. Although most Cypriots in London, as permanent residents and British citizens, were not eligible to and did not participate in the voting process, they, however, had their own views on and understandings of the plan; they also felt its impact on their life in the diaspora.

‘I was waiting until the last minute to see what AKEL would come up with. I did not believe that they would say ‘no’, I was hopeful until the last second’, Volkan, a Turkish Cypriot in his mid-50s recalled. He had arrived in London in the early 1980s, as a young communist studying at that time in Turkey, to escape persecution by Turkish military forces that were targeting –amongst others- leftist university students. He had been loyal to his communist convictions and had supported Cyprio-centric peace politics in London by participating in bi-communal events and activities mainly organised by AKEL. ‘But I was so disappointed with Christofias’, he carried on, ‘and with all those people who were saying that we could live together, that we are all Cypriots. After the plan, I stopped going to the Cypriot Centre. What was the point? If they care about their people, maybe I should start caring more about my people [meaning Turkish Cypriots]’.

Volkan’s words reflect a broader disappointment amongst Turkish Cypriots, especially those who had identified with the language of Cypriotism; in some cases, and as the quote implies, such disappointment was converted in the post-Annan period to a shift towards ‘Turkish-Cypriotism’. Hatay and Bryant (2008a) explain how a movement

among Turkish Cypriots, characteristically called the ‘Jasmine Revolution’<sup>30</sup>, emerged at the beginning of 2000s to protest against Turkey’s presence and what is seen as colonialism of their island. The movement evoked a language of nostalgia for a lost multi-cultural and cosmopolitan past. Although *Kıbrıslılık* or Cypriotism had not had many supporters amongst Turkish Cypriots before, at that point it became popular as a form of cultural resistance against Turkey. However, as the authors argue, the underlying nostalgia expressed through the language of *Kıbrıslılık* was less for a multicultural past and more for a time when Turkish Cypriots were in enclaves. Especially as the opening of the borders and the rejection of the Annan plan by Greek Cypriots brought to some extent Turkish Cypriots’ disillusionment with the possibilities of living together again with their old neighbours, ‘[...] *Kıbrıslılık* did not necessarily imply a common identity for the entire island. Rather, *Kıbrıslılık* implied the resurgence of Turkish-Cypriot demands for self-determination, this time posed in opposition to the domination of Turkey’ (ibid. :431).

The tensions caused on inter-personal, local and inter-ethnic relationships were acknowledged by many Greek Cypriots in London. ‘I had some Turkish Cypriot friends, but I don’t see them much especially after the Annan’, was a phrase regularly repeated during fieldwork when I would ask individuals about bi-communalism and coexistence. On an institutional level, the relationships between Greek and Turkish Cypriot organisations froze for some time, especially between AKEL and CTP. However, Cypriotists in London insisted that this was a period of hard work in order to regain the *trust* of Turkish Cypriots. Mr. Yiorgos, a member of AKEL London, conveyed his hopefulness about such prospect by stating: ‘Of course I understand that Turkish Cypriots feel unhappy after the Annan. But it’s our responsibility to approach them again and make them understand why the plan was rejected. I think relationships will be good again soon. Here in London it is actually easier, we’ve always had better relationships than in Cyprus’. Such statements, however, not only involve an underlying belief in the Greek Cypriot ‘no’ to the Annan as justified; they also fall short of recognising the growing appeal and transformations of *Kıbrıslılık* amongst Turkish Cypriots that diverts to a large extent from Cypriotist understandings of re-conciliation

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<sup>30</sup> As the flower of jasmine came to symbolise the city of Nicosia as a reminiscent of a *purser* time, before the city was contaminated with the presence of workers from Turkey living especially in the old walled part of the city (ibid.: 423).

and re-unification. Moreover, they are employed as strategies of avoiding blame and managing tension in the local context of London; according to this logic, Cypriots in the diaspora are the blameless victims of political processes in Cyprus and if left alone they can continue to live as they know: together.

In summary, a Cyprio-centric narrative of past and present in the diaspora emphasises *continuities*, mainly between pre-migration and post-migration peaceful co-existence of Greek and Turkish Cypriots. In some cases such continuity is expressed through a romanticised nostalgia for a colonial past in Cyprus, others as a commitment to the values of communism as articulated through the politics of AKEL and quite often as product of British multiculturalism. However, although the history of coexistence in the diaspora is presented as unaffected by and almost isolated from life in Cyprus, everyday experiences of even the most committed Cypriotists reveal that relationships in the diaspora are highly connected to and shaped by the socio-political and historical context in Cyprus. On the other hand, the particular Cypriot experiences of coexistence in London and their historicised and ideological articulation offer individuals a different platform than in Cyprus to negotiate and cope with such ruptures on inter-personal, inter-ethnic and institutional levels.

## 2.5 Cypriotism as ‘anti-nationalism’

Ekamaman kai fugame ouloi apo ta horia mas  
kai hassame o,ti eihame akoma kai ta paidia mas.

Ekamaman kai fugame ouloi apo ta horia mas  
ki irthame stin Agglia pou einai i mana tis klepsias kai olis tis  
atimias.

Ekeinai pou ta ekamasi simeron kuvernousi,  
erxontai tora na mas poun, hampari den exousi.

Tora me hilia psemata pashoun na ta skepasoun  
kai vgalan tous kai irwes kai oute tha tous dikasoun.

Keinai pou ta ekamasi thelousi na glitosoun  
keina pou mas ekamasi allou na ta fortosoun.

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They made us all leave our villages  
and we lost everything we had including our children.

They made us all leave our villages  
and we came to England that is the mother of thievery and  
dishonesty.

Those who did all this today they are governing  
and they come today to tell us that they know nothing.

Now they try to cover their acts with a thousand lies  
and they are even called heroes and they will never be trialed.

Those who did all this want now to escape  
they try to blame others for what they did to us.

(Mr. Socrates, Greek Cypriot, aged 87, 04/06/2007)

This poem was orally composed by one of my most elderly informants, Mr. Socrates, who migrated to London in the mid-1950s, already a man in his thirties at the time. He could be characterised as a Cypriot version of ‘the storyteller’, that skilful transmitter of oral history and culture, whom Benjamin (2007 [1936]), without avoiding romanticising, identifies with ‘traditional’ societies in his homonymous essay. Whereas Benjamin asserts that in modernity the value of experience, fundamental prerequisite for the flourishing of storytelling, is lost to more objectivist understandings of narrative, Mr. Socrates often attracts an audience around him at the Cypriot Centre coffee shop to listen to his personal experiences, his on-the-spot conceived poems and to old myths and tales. He is very proud of his skills and the clarity of his thinking at this age, which, as he often repeats, have also been recognised outside his circle of friends. As a proof, he recalls the time when a journalist working for ‘*Kiprion Nostos*’ (roughly translated as ‘The longing of Cypriots’), a TV programme about the Cypriot diaspora produced by RIK (Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation), video-recorded Mr Socrates reciting his poems.

Although Cypriot migration to the UK, as discussed before, is formally analysed as a type of economic migration, in the poem above that Mr. Socrates insisted should go into my thesis, he points out a different or parallel explanation of his reasons for migrating. As it is not very clear in the poem to what or whom he refers, I asked him to explain it to me and the other men who were sitting around him that day. ‘I’m talking about nationalism of course and those nationalists that destroyed the country’, he replied.

Many of the older leftist Cypriot migrants evoke a similar argument in their narratives of migration. In such narratives they appear as forced to leave their island because under the progress and dominance of nationalism they had been persecuted for their political beliefs; unable to find jobs, they had to look for a future in the metropolis of their coloniser –an anathema for them, as the connection of England to thievery and

dishonesty illustrates in Mr. Socrates's poem. Later in the thesis (see chapter 3), I trace more closely the consistencies and inconsistencies between AKEL's 'hidden' account of the past and that of its supporters in London. However, what needs to be highlighted here is that in popular narratives, Cypriotism is articulated as an antithesis to nationalism – mainly Greek Cypriot nationalism.

Although many Cypriots often represent their community abroad as traditionally 'anti-nationalist', peaceful and peace-supporting in terms of imagined continuities described above, however, the interactions between Cypriotism and nationalism in the diaspora produces further contexts of tension and narratives of marginalisation.

In the course of the fieldwork, I encountered these different political positions interacting and often clashing in a variety of spaces, including organisations, coffee shops, church meetings and even house meals, when members of the same family would find their own relatives polarised across opposing ideological stances.

The following interaction took place between Mr. Marios and Mr. Yiannis, two old friends at a coffee shop. I was recording Mr. Marios's life history and Mr. Yiannis was listening patiently when the first one said: 'I'm not a Cypriot, I'm a Greek of the diaspora. We are all Greeks, you know, no matter what'.

Mr. Yiannis: 'How can you say this, Marios? Cyprus is a different country, it's an independent country from Greece'.

Mr. Marios: 'I feel Greek and I have always supported *enosis*'.

Mr. Yiannis: 'But *enosis* cannot happen, Marios. It was an old idea, we are paying now for this idea'.

Mr. Marios: 'It happened already when Cyprus joined the European Union'.

Mr. Yiannis: 'No, as long as Turkey is there, it cannot happen'.

Although Mr. Marios is fully aware that an annexation of Cyprus to Greece is far from pragmatic, what he suggests here is that unification has taken place between the two countries within the European Union, after the 'Greek' part of Cyprus and, therefore, they only legitimate part in his understanding, became a full member. For Mr. Marios a political and historical circle has been closed; the Greeks of Cyprus together with the

Greeks of Greece are part of the broader community, in which they belong; that is Europe. For Mr. Yiannis, however, the circle is still open, as another unification is more imperative, the unification of Cyprus as one island. Unlike Mr. Marios, who seems to not discriminate between Turkish Cypriots and Turkish forces on the island, Mr. Yiannis evokes a Cyprio-centric argument that focuses on Turkey rather than Turkish Cypriots as the obstacle to re-conciliation and re-unification.

‘They are all Turks’, Mr. Marios commented in a louder tone this time. ‘I met once a Kurdish Professor, who looked Turkish to me but when I asked him, he told me “I’m not a bloody Turk”. He was Kurdish (*tserkezos*). Kurds are an Aryan race, like Greeks. They were just islamised’.

Mr. Yiannis did not reply and kept silent for a while before he tried to change the conversation to a different topic. Not only he found the words of Mr. Marios extreme but as he said after his interlocutor left, ‘this happens all the time, but we cannot argue. We have to be more tolerant than the nationalists. Discussion helps much better to convince people’.

Such interactions and clashes of different ideological positions do not always remain confined to the walls of a coffee shop or a house. They also take place in broader contexts with larger impact on those involved. One of my main informants, Nikos, a second generation Greek Cypriot and well-known for his Cypriotist ideas and peace activism amongst those involved in politics in London was publicly accused by a diasporic newspaper columnist as an ‘anti-Greek neo-Cypriot’. The columnist commented on Nikos’s commitment to ‘Greekness’ and questioned his patriotism and his ‘ethnic integrity’ consequently. Understandably, Nikos was quite concerned about and disturbed by the newspaper article. When I asked him about the reasons behind the allegations against him, he replied: ‘It’s because I didn’t enjoy going to Greek school; because I was interviewed by Turkish Cypriot newspapers; and because I prefer to call myself a Cypriot. They just want to silence us but I think we have to keep fighting back’.

The term ‘Neo-Cypriot’ relates, according to Mavratsas (1997: 731), to the renewed dominance of nationalism in Cyprus after the short term rising of Cypriotism in the

mid-1970s. It has negative connotations referring to those who deny Hellenism as the core cultural substance of Cypriot identity. Consequently 'Neo-Cypriots' are often accused for conspiring with foreign powers, especially the British, against Cypriot interests and for posing a threat to the cultural heritage and traditions of Hellenic Cyprus. The term, although not very common in London as much as in Cyprus, has, however, been imported and reproduced in the diaspora to single out individuals and organisations as 'anti-Greek'. Although in Cyprio-centric narratives, especially amongst the first generation, migration is associated with an exile from nationalism, nationalist rhetoric still dominates some diasporic contexts to the extent that Cypriotism is treated as a counter-discourse that challenges the core narrative from the margins; either through tolerance and convincing, as articulated by Mr. Yiannis or through the language of 'fighting back', as expressed by Nikos.

Within these contexts, therefore, supporters of Cypriotism see their political stance as anti-nationalist. 'Whereas the adherents of Greek nationalism usually have no trouble with the label 'nationalist', the Cypriotists present their views as explicitly anti-nationalist - assuming that the only type of nationalism that exists is ethnic nationalism which they view as inherently chauvinistic - and would certainly reject the label; Especially since in Cyprus the latter has been closely associated with Greek-Cypriot irredentism' (ibid.: 723).

Peristianis (2006a: 101), however, argues that alongside the development of Greek Cypriot nationalism as a form of ethnic nationalism, Cypriotism evolved as a case of civic/territorial nationalism. Although the former treats the nation as a cultural homogenous community bound together by primordial ethnic ties, the latter conceptualises the nation in terms of citizenship rights; all those who have the right to live in a particular territory regardless of their religion, ethnicity or class are considered members of the national community and they are equal before the law (ibid.). Cypriotism consequently does not imply the negation of the idea of the nation or of the state; however, it contests the particular ways, in which the two have been interlinked through the prevalence of ethnic nationalism.

In a self-reflexive mode, Cypriotists often admit that their own anti-nationalist rhetoric is inevitably another form of nationalism. To overcome such an internal contradiction,

in many cases supporters of Cypriotism would justify it as a ‘good’ nationalism, a necessary step to overcome the ‘bad’ dominant Greek and Turkish nationalist narratives that have divided the island. The insistence on the ‘goodness’ of Cypriotism is often defended even in cases when new exclusions and divisions emerge in its name. An indicative example of this was put forward to me by a young man in Northern Cyprus, Ibrahim, who proclaimed himself a strong supporter of Cypriotism. Ibrahim was born in Cyprus by Turkish parents, who had migrated to the island from Turkey in the 1980s. Since he is not of Turkish Cypriot ancestry, he is not eligible for an identity card of the Republic of Cyprus and he is aware that individuals like him, although born and raised in Cyprus, are often not distinguished in public discourses from Turkish migrants or the ambiguous and broad category of settlers<sup>31</sup>. He was discussing with another Turkish Cypriot friend how Cypriotist politics and language often dismiss or even exclude cases like his own when they put a strong emphasis on a shared socio-cultural past between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. ‘I am a Cypriot, I feel a Cypriot and I’m nothing else’, Ibrahim said, ‘but if there was a solution and I *had* to leave the island with the settlers, I would go; I’d do anything for the good of Cyprus’.

Navaro-Yashin (2006) examines how despite popular representations and official discourses of common ‘Turkishness’ in TRNC, Turkish Cypriots through a language of ‘autochthony’ separate themselves from the Turkish migrants in the island by claims to cultural difference. Public and media discourses often present the migrants as backwards and conservative compared to Turkish Cypriots and connect their presence with rising crime rates. Moreover, during my fieldwork in TRNC, Turkish Cypriots would express fears that their culture would soon be extinguished and that they are to be outnumbered soon by the Turkish settlers. The Cypriotists among them would

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<sup>31</sup> Hatay (2009) traces the historical roots of contemporary discourses that (re)produce distinctions between Turkish Cypriots and ‘others’, namely the Turkish migrants who arrived to Cyprus after 1974. Such representations, he argues, are orientalisising and have a great impact on the everyday lives and experiences of Turkish working class individuals who inhabit mainly the walled city of Nicosia. In a different paper, Hatay (2005) highlights the need to restrict the category of ‘settlers’ mainly to the ‘agricultural labourers’ who migrated to the island after partition through a settlement policy agreement between Turkey and Turkish Cypriot authorities. This agricultural labour force should be distinguished from other Turkish migrants who arrived to the island through their own arrangements and became citizens through naturalisation. Other groups of individuals of Turkish origin, such as registered or non-registered workers, students and army personnel also reside in the TRNC, however, they have no voting rights. As the ‘settler issue’ is a hotly debated topic in Cyprus and the number of those who should remain in the island after a solution appears as a major concern in the official peace negotiations, a clarification and better understanding of the different socio-historical backgrounds and citizenship status of those who arrived to Cyprus from Turkey is imperative in order to demystify public misconceptions about settlers’ numbers and their potential threat to outnumbering Turkish Cypriots.

emphasise their common culture and tradition with Greek Cypriots rather than ‘the Turks’, who came to their island from Turkey. This Cypriotist anti-settler discourse is epitomised in the words of Ibrahim in the most contradictory ways; on one hand he sees himself as Cypriot, as he was born in Cyprus and believes in a common Cypriot identity. On the other hand, he is prepared to leave with ‘the settlers’, if his lack of genealogical connections to Cyprus, in other words the fact that he is of no Cypriot ancestry, excludes him from a future unified nation-state based on a common Cypriot identity, as he envisages it.

The language of ancestry, genealogy, culture and tradition evoked by Ibrahim is not used here as particular to his own case only, but reflects broader Cypriotist discourses that often debate identity along these terms. Consequently, although Cypriotism is cast as a type of nationalism concerned with citizenship rights, everyday interpretations and practices make the picture more blurry. Writing about post-communist Poland and the ways in which the nation is imagined, Zubrzycki (2001) argues that although this takes place along two trends, on one hand ethnic nationalism and on the other hand civic nationalism, these two categories are not actually as distinct and independent from each other. They are defined as ideal types in the Weberian sense, but ‘contrary to what is often affirmed in everyday life discourses as well as in some academic works, the two models of nationhood are not as fundamentally opposed and mutually exclusive in *practice* as they are in *principle*’ (ibid.: 629, italics in the original).

Moreover, in his ‘Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism’, Brubaker (1998: 299) further deconstructs the division between ethnic and civic nationalism. Although the former is commonly perceived as ‘ethnocultural’, the latter’s conceptualisation of citizenship appears almost acultural. However, the author argues, even the most exemplary cases of civic nationalism, the United States and France, appear to have a strong underlying focus on culture i.e. a common American or French culture. In that sense, civic nationalism ceases to exist in its pure typological form, ‘and virtually all nationalisms would be coded as ethnic or cultural’ (ibid.).

The question then that emerges is how this common culture is articulated and (re)imagined and how it relates to identity construction. This does not occur by any means in a consensual and horizontal way. I argue in this thesis that besides the

antagonisms between Cypriotism and ethnic nationalism, internal dynamics and tensions appear within each model. In the following chapters I trace contexts in which such tensions emerge and are negotiated in the process of imagining a *Cypriot* nation. The perspective of the diaspora functions as a catalyst in this process, because it brings an important dimension into the discussions of 'who is a Cypriot'; when the diaspora enters the debate, long standing power dynamics, discourses and ideologies are mobilised by individuals and institutions in ways that unravel spaces of exclusion and differentiation. For although the nation can be imagined and envisaged in various and multiple ways, this process is always embedded within and bound by particular socio-historical and political contexts. The success of any model of nationalism, including in this case Cypriotism, is therefore 'historically constrained by specific narratives and "events" that frame the discursive field on the nation, as well as by specific historical and institutional arrangements' (Zubrzycki 2001: 630).

## **2.6 Conclusion**

Many of the Cypriots, who attended Christofias's first speech in London as the President of the Republic of Cyprus in May 2008, had arrived in the UK as young men and women decades before, to find work, to join family members or a spouse, and in general, to build a better life than they had in Cyprus. Although a number of them had imagined this as a temporary arrangement until they finally returned to their country, various reasons turned their migration to the UK into a permanent settlement and some had now gone to the event accompanied by their British born children and even grandchildren. 'Nothing is more permanent than the temporary', Mr. Socrates, the storyteller of the Cypriot Centre, once said about his migratory experience reproducing a common Greek proverb.

This chapter has traced the history of Cypriot movement between Cyprus and the UK but moreover examined how these two contexts are imaginatively utilised by diasporic Cypriots as cultural resources. However, not everyone participates in the diaspora on the same level and in the same ways. It has been argued here that an expansive understanding of the concept of the diaspora is adopted in the thesis in order to address issues of membership and, more importantly, to present the diaspora as an ongoing process embedded within a complex nexus of power relations and shifting dynamics. Far from having a united and homogenous diaspora, it has been explained that even

amongst those who support peace and re-unification in Cyprus, there are divisions both on inter-personal and institutional levels in terms of the definition and understanding of these terms. It is also debatable to what extent we can speak of 'one Cypriot diaspora', as 'homeland politics' is organised mainly separately along ethnic lines and very few institutions are bi-communal and representative of all Cypriots.

Cypriotist narratives in the diaspora, on the other hand, present coexistence between Greek and Turkish Cypriots in London in terms of continuities between a pre-migration past and a diasporic presence and blame any disruptions to such continuities on the external effect of politics in Cyprus. As a result, the diaspora is presented as maintaining an 'authentic Cypriotness', for which coexistence and tolerance are a prerequisite and which has not been preserved in Cyprus due to division and separation. Claims over 'who is a real Cypriot' prompt constant debates in a transnational context between the UK and Cyprus but also in an intra-diasporic space and these are examined more closely in the rest of the chapters. What has been argued here, in the final section, however, is that Cypriotism is experienced and presented by its followers as a form of anti-nationalism or at least as a 'good' nationalism. It has also been analysed academically as a type of 'civic nationalism' but, in terms of its everyday practice and understanding, Cypriotism appears to evoke some of the language and terminology of 'ethnic nationalism'.

I build on this argument in the next chapter that deals with how the history of the Cypriot Left that is often rendered to a position of 'unofficial' history, although it presents itself as anti-nationalist, in particular contexts replicates the structure of the dominant nationalist discourse and they develop together in a dialectical relation. Moreover, they co-exist in the rhetoric and political repertoire of Leftist individuals who often draw on both discourses in order to make sense of their memories and experiences. For, whereas the Left has developed its own Cyprio-centric account of the past, this is some times contested internally by Leftists themselves, when it fails to reflect their shifting experiences and, in chapter 3, it is argued that the narrative of AKEL often under-represents the narratives of its diasporic supporters.

## CHAPTER 3

### **The ‘Left-overs’ of History: Reconsidering the ‘Unofficial’ History of the Left in the Cypriot Diaspora**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

‘Whose history?’ is a question that often emerges in accounts of the past both in academic contexts and everyday discourses. In the past few decades, there has been a growing interrogation of ‘the writing of history’ in terms of its connections to hegemonic discourses and nationalist ideologies. It is now recognised that history, as a homogenous overarching narrative, is selectively constructed, strategically canonised and conducive to the legitimisation of the projects of the state and the ruling elites. Such history adheres to a scientific ideal of objectivism and presents itself as the single source of access to the truth about the past (Appleby, Hunt and Jacob 1994).

Until WWII, in most nation-states, the monolithic approach to history had systematically excluded alternative accounts/histories that diverted from the dominant narrative. After the war, however, intellectual absolutisms were highly critiqued and histories of ‘others’, those of the socially excluded and marginalised, were brought into the foreground (Hobsbawm 1998: 269). This chapter focuses on the dichotomy between ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ history as articulated and represented in older and more recent discussions on history writing in Cyprus. The question of ‘whose history’ is considered here with particular reference to the history of the Cypriot Left, which has been defined as one of the ‘unofficial’ accounts in the debates over the past in Cyprus.

The leftist narrative has been widely known amongst Cypriots through oral histories, publications and social activism; it has, however, been marginalised and excluded from public contexts dominated by the nationalist account of history (Papadakis 1998, 2003). According to Panayiotou (2006: 270), official historiography in Cyprus has operated a strategy of ‘negative integration’ towards the history of the lower classes, incorporating only parts of their history that did not contradict the hegemonic discourse. Silenced

within the official historical narrative, the Left has been rendered to function outside the borders of permissible public discourse and circles of power.

After the electoral victory of AKEL in 2008, discussions on the revision of educational history books in the Republic of Cyprus intensified with suggestions that more Cypriot-centric accounts of history, in line with changes already implemented in TRNC since 2004<sup>32</sup>, as well as excluded histories, such as that of the Left, should be incorporated in the history teaching curriculum<sup>33</sup>. However, it is argued here that, although these discussions legitimately recognise the need to revisit alternative histories, equal attention should be paid at how ‘unofficial histories’ are authored, reproduced and gain ‘authenticity’. In other words, alternative histories should not be treated as objective ‘hidden truths’, which can be unveiled under the totalising effects of official historiography. ‘Contrary to common-sense belief, they do not give us any simple, direct access to the ‘authentic’ voice and history of subaltern groups. They are in this respect no different from other ‘sources’ for the historian: they too need to be ‘read’. For they too are shot through with contradictory, naturalizing features: the constructions of the dominant and the privileged’ (Pandey, 2000: 284).

According to Pandey, the aim of discovering the truth in ‘unofficial’ histories, which dominated early works in Subaltern Studies, has now been questioned in more recent writings in the field (ibid.: 285). This chapter aims to contribute to the discussions generated by this kind of literature by arguing that the ‘unofficial’ history of the Cypriot Left is not in an opposing relationship to the ‘official’ history of nationalism. Although the Left has traditionally defended its anti-nationalist stance on the ‘Cyprus problem’, its own version of history shares a relationship of interdependency with the nationalist narrative. Building on theoretical approaches to memory and history, I argue here that when the unofficial history of the Left is awarded the status of a ‘historical truth’, other voices, internal contestations and differing experiences within it, such as those of the diaspora, are veiled and suppressed. In such cases, the history of the Left fails to contest the dominant nationalist approach to history; on the contrary, the leftist ‘unofficial’

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<sup>32</sup> After its election in government in 2004, the leftist CTP introduced a new approach to history teaching in TRNC aiming ‘to develop a culture of peace while highlighting cultural interactions, internal divisions, and discontinuities’ (Papadakis 2008: 1).

<sup>33</sup> Papadakis (2008) reviews some of these different suggestions and proposals in a report that he produced for PRIO (Peace Research Institute Oslo).

history may strengthen the official discourse by appearing as co-opted and confined within the same rhetoric.

The chapter focuses mainly on the Cypriot Community Centre (CCC) in North London as a case-study and draws on exchanges with first generation migrants and AKEL supporters, who frequent the centre. Before that, in the first part (3.2), I argue that the idea of communism as habitus can offer an insight into how its political ideology is sustained by diasporic individuals and what meanings communism takes for these people who left Cyprus as migrants at a young age, already identifying themselves as communists. To examine how habitus operates then, the following section focuses on the relationship between memory and ‘unofficial’ history in the CCC (3.3). However, approaching memory as a process, I argue that ‘unofficial’ histories develop along individual and collective memories, which contests our perception of them as hidden blocks of absolute historical truth. Attention, therefore, should be diverted to specific contexts, in which narratives emerge and develop. The particular experiences of AKEL supporters in the diaspora, as presented in the third section (3.4), indicate that ‘unofficial’ histories may contain and suppress their own ‘unofficial’ histories. The history of the Left is also constructed as a master narrative and, thus, shares structural similarities with the official nationalist account of history. Their constructiveness renders both accounts susceptible not only to external but also to internal contestation, is concluded in the last part (3.5).

### **3.2 Cypriot communists –Habituating Ideology**

The Left in Cyprus, at least among Greek Cypriots, has been largely formulated and expressed through the history and politics of AKEL, which was established in 1941. Unlike other communist parties in Europe, AKEL has not only managed to combat drops in its membership numbers throughout the years (Dunphy and Bale 2007: 287), but after the election of Christofias in the presidential position of the Republic of Cyprus in 2008, it is the only communist party in power within the EU at the moment. The success and survival of the party has been attributed by theorists to a number of historical, organisational and structural parameters, such as leadership skill and flexibility, the particular condition of Cyprus as a small divided country (ibid.: 129), where there is a strong left-right political cleavage, and presidential patronage (March and Mudde 2005: 30). More importantly, its resilience has been explained by its ability

‘to combine orthodox-Marxist Leninist dogma, with workerist, liberal-democratic and national liberation demands’ (Peristianis 2006b: 258). It is precisely this adaptability and chameleonic tactics that critics of the party highlight, when questioning its ideological substance as authentically communist. But such criticisms take a de-contextualised perspective on communism, since ‘proclaiming a party has definitively abandoned some kind of right to be called communist (or social democratic) relies on privileged and supposedly objective observers employing reified and static constructs rather than acknowledging that ideologies are always “contingent and changing entities”’ (Dunphy and Bale 2007: 299).

Moreover, communism in Cyprus, as Panayiotou (2006: 273) argues, although imported as a set of ideas, has to be understood in terms of the structural and historical specificities of the Cypriot context. In this sense, the Cypriot Left developed less as a theoretically articulated movement; as the author characteristically writes (ibid.: 267), ‘there is no Gramsci here’. It started mostly as ‘a movement of the people’, encompassing and operating as a common platform for a number of class-based and anti-colonial struggles. More importantly, after the end of the civil war in Greece, in the late 1940s, when AKEL dropped its pursuing of ideas of *enosis* and took a clear stance in support of self-government for the political future of Cyprus through a language of anti-nationalism, the divide between Left and Right emerged even sharper than before. ‘Local coffee-shops/ silloyi and even the main soccer teams split along Left-Right lines -a split which endures to today. It was out of this clash that the subculture of the Left was born. This subculture, which includes local coffee-shops/*silloyi*, cooperatives, and a variety of mass organisations, has expressed since then the political and cultural autonomy of the Left’ (ibid.: 270). It was in these contexts, that Cypriots came into contact with communist ideas and through which they developed political identities and party loyalties. ‘In all these ways abstract ideologies or dogmas became embedded in collective discourse and action, thereby being rendered more concrete social realities’ (Peristianis 2006b: 262).

It was after the events of 1974, Papadakis (1993, 1998, 2003, 2005) has highlighted, that the rhetoric of ‘past peaceful coexistence’ emerged strong as an ideological force behind political quests for reunification, particularly on the Greek Cypriot side. In that period, therefore, AKEL’s Cyprio-centric discourses based on the party’s history of

anti-colonialism, anti-nationalism and inter-ethnic co-operation, found broader appeal among Greek Cypriots -even though temporarily-, as discussed in chapter 2. Internally, however, communism remained as a signifier of ideological autonomy and developed as 'a "faith", which made the communists dedicated martyrs of working-class organising' (Panayiotou 2006: 275).

The idea of 'faith' could be linked to Žižek's concept of belief in understanding the operations of political ideologies. In 'The Sublime Object of Ideology' (1989), he argues that political words that are central in formal ideologies are not always captured in their meaning by their followers. This is because words, such as the Nation, the People or God, are inherently vague and undefined or, as he puts it, a 'signifier without signified' (ibid. 103). Making then a distinction between knowledge and belief, he explains that such lack of understanding on the behalf of political subjects does not destabilise their loyalty to official ideologies. On the contrary, political subjects are always divided by what they know and what they believe about particular regimes; and their inability to fully know is elevated into a proof about precisely how great ideas of the Nation or the People are, that they transcend the everyday and the ordinary.

If communism in Cyprus has developed as an autonomous sub-culture based to an extent not on a theoretical understanding but on its supporters belief in the ideological, and moral for that matter, supremacy of its core concepts and values, the question that needs to be examined is how such belief is articulated and sustained by political subjects themselves. For this, I argue here, one has to look at individual experiences and narratives. In the life stories of Cypriot communists in the diaspora, political words and ideas provide a platform to explain personal behaviours and identities conditioned by them. Among such stories is that of Mr. Stavros, who arrived in London in July 1958, at the age of 15, and has always considered himself a committed communist. Immediately after his arrival, he started working for the Cypriot leftist newspaper 'To Vima' and selling 'Haravghi', the communist newspaper brought from Cyprus. He later volunteered in a Cypriot leftist organisation that had offices in Camden offering advice and information to other Cypriots. Eventually, he became one of the most renowned members of AKEL in London and held official positions within the party. When recalling, however, the reasons for becoming a communist, he went back in time:

‘I think I’ve been a leftist since I was a child in Cyprus. I clearly remember a moment; after the coronation of the Queen in 1952<sup>34</sup>, someone brought us some chocolates with the picture of the Queen on the wrapping paper. My brother told me then: “don’t ever eat this chocolate”. I was a kid and we were poor, you know, we didn’t get much chocolate at that time. But still, I didn’t eat it. Since that time I remember myself always being *progressive*. The progressive party made me who I am and I gained so much in my life. I didn’t lose anything; I’ve only gained [from participating in leftist politics]’.

For individuals, therefore, like Mr. Stavros, communist ideas and values, expressed here through an anti-colonialist understanding of progress, acquire meaning when integrated into personal experience, which is formed within specific temporalities, locales and relationships. His narration of his brother’s comment highlights ways in which individuals are socialised into ideological structures often through experiences in contexts that fall outside the realm of official politics; political ideology then becomes most important not through intellectual engagement with its terms but through situated acts, such as that of not eating a chocolate. The performance of these acts is framed by ideological values, while simultaneously it gives them substance and makes them tangible and concrete.

In other cases, such contextualised performances of ideology emerge as ways through which individuals deal with marginalising and disempowering experiences that are produced within and because of this very ideology. This process is highlighted in the story of Ms. Mary, which she shared when I visited her in her house in North London. Ms. Mary moved to the UK in 1956, when she was 17 years old to join her father and brothers who had already migrated to London. Her mother and sister followed them the subsequent year. She got married to a Greek Cypriot man in her early twenties and they had a daughter. Ms. Mary worked for many years as a seamstress both from home and in various factories, a hard job that she blames for the back and neck pains that make her now suffer in her old age. Most of her family members were active leftist supporters and her own commitment to the Left is illustrated by the various AKEL flags that decorate her living room. At the same time, they sit next to many Christian icons, crosses and other religious symbols. ‘In Cyprus communists are Christians too. Most of my brothers and cousins were communists but every Sunday they would sing in the

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<sup>34</sup> He refers to the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, who became the British monarch as well as the head of the Commonwealth in 1952.

church as chanters (*psaltes*). Communism has nothing to do with being religious or not', said Ms Mary justifying her living room's decoration.

Whereas the Communist Party in Cyprus has historically criticised the Church's political and economic dominance, it has never openly denounced religion. 'Even more so AKEL, instead of promoting atheism, upheld an alternative version of Christianity, emphasising the communist practice of the early Christian church and Christ as a social revolutionary, who combined a message of brotherly love with an interest in the lot of the poor and of the suffering' (Peristianis 2006b: 259). Although some communists, therefore, in Cyprus and in the diaspora are self-proclaimed atheists, many others, like Ms. Mary find no contradiction between Christian practice and commitment to communism. 'But what then makes someone a communist?', I asked Ms. Mary to which she firmly replied:

'Suffering. Communists always suffer. I will tell you a story. Some years ago, my husband brought to the house a friend of his who was visiting from Cyprus. He came to our house and I prepared dinner, I made desert, I showed proper Cypriot hospitality. But do you know who that man was? The killer of one of my favourite cousins. He was a communist and he was murdered by this man. I was so upset, so angry but I was still trying to be a good hostess. But for a few moments, when I was preparing his coffee, I swear I thought of dropping some poison in it. I thought of poisoning the man. But we are not like them, the nationalists. To be a communist is to suffer and keep silent but also to be able to deal with your suffering'.

The episode can be compared to similar processes through which violence descends into the ordinary and social suffering becomes integrated into the everyday, which Veena Das (2007) has described in her work among survivors of the 1947 Partition of India and the 1984 massacres of Sikhs in New Delhi. As Das argues, the experience of suffering is covered by 'a zone of silence' (ibid.: 54), especially among women who engage in self-censorship in order to protect themselves and be able to assimilate their experience into everyday life; moreover, in order to maintain social relationships and to not disrupt the structural balance of local everydayness. Das's (ibid.) women in this case, said characteristically that they preferred 'drinking the poison themselves', keeping the secrets of suffering inside them, which to some extent, metaphorically, is what Ms. Mary decided to do.

In Cyprus, although leftists have experienced intimidation and witnessed violence, they have rarely openly or publicly revealed the identities of perpetrators, even though they were often known to their victims; on the contrary, silence was preserved precisely because of the fact that such individuals often happened to be members of the local community, the village or the neighbourhood as a means of not disrupting inter-personal local relationships. 'How can you reveal names when people live across the road or your children are friends with their children? And after all these years, how do you destroy someone's life who has already become a grandfather by naming them?', communists often say when interrogated about their unwillingness in pursuing justice after their own persecution. However, as the account of Ms. Mary illustrates, silence and suffering does not only define the experience of being a communist, but it also becomes endemic of a communist identity as a mechanism of protecting one's self and coping with the violence that caused it in the first place by providing a justification of such action – 'we are not like them'.

Going back then to the question of how belief in the language of a political ideology is sustained, both Mr. Stavros and Ms. Maria's accounts, illustrate how communism in this case can be analysed as *habitus*, a set of ideas and modes of actions that form for individuals a repertoire for everyday practice and at the same time are acquired and reinforced through such practice. As Bourdieu (1977: 73) has defined it, '[t]he *habitus* is the source of these series of moves which are objectively organized as strategies without being the product of a genuine strategic intention –which would presuppose at least that they are perceived as one strategy among other possible strategies'. Communism, therefore, frames personal experience and action in ways that become so naturalised and routinised that it appears as the only frame through which individuals give meaning to their decisions and actions.

The following sections investigate further how communism as *habitus* operates by focusing on the dialectical relationship between the history of AKEL and its supporters' memories in the diaspora. However, although this relationship appears and is experienced as 'natural', it often requires some 'memory adjustment' on behalf of AKEL followers in order to be sustained. It is in these moments and spaces of 'habit-change' then that the convergence between history and memory is challenged and contested.

### 3.3 Memory and ‘unofficial’ history at the London CCC.

‘Of course we talk about history and politics here. This is what we, Cypriots, do, isn’t it?’ is an expression often repeated at the CCC in London. Although not all Cypriots in the diaspora engage with the politics at ‘home’, the regulars at the centre’s coffee shop are involved in discussions on Cypriot politics almost on a daily basis. The space of the centre’s coffee shop is predominantly used by male Cypriots, whereas women normally only visit the centre to require services or to attend particular events –but extremely rarely to casually socialise in its premises<sup>35</sup>. Most regulars came as migrants to the UK in the 1950s and 1960s and worked in a variety of jobs until retirement, which now allows them to spend large parts of their day at the centre. Their discussions are often fuelled by the wide availability of media in the centre, such as satellite TV and newspapers<sup>36</sup>, which play a considerable role in connecting the diasporic community to ‘home’ (Georgiou 2001).

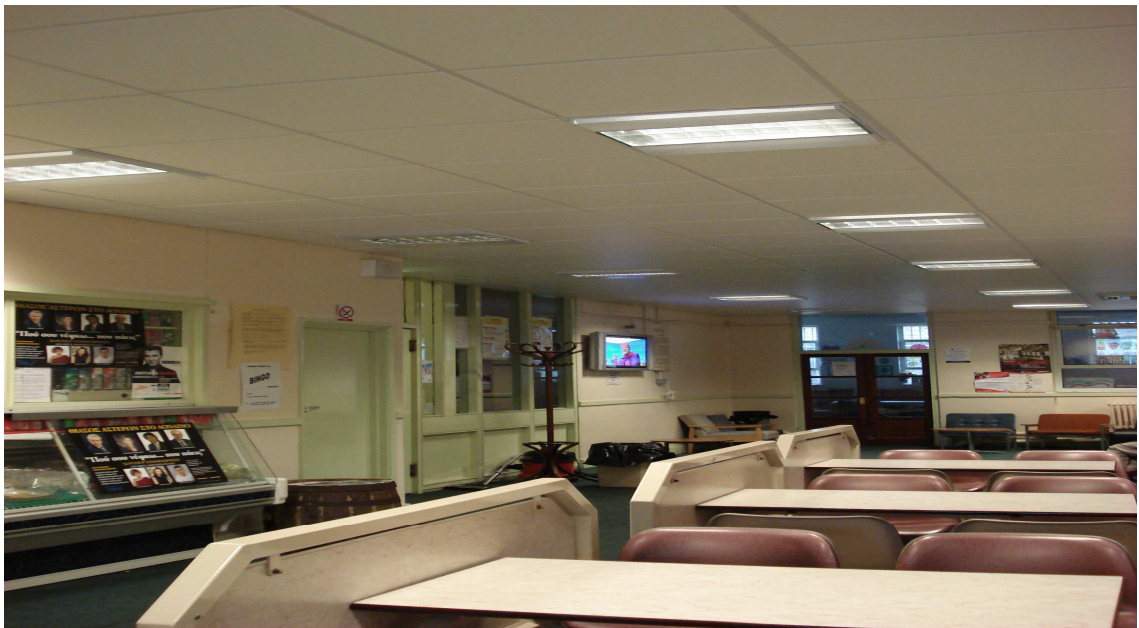


Figure 2. The premises of the CCC coffee shop

Although the discussants at the centre come from a wide range of political backgrounds, the majority, however, identify themselves as AKEL supporters or, more generally, as

<sup>35</sup> Papataxiarchis (1991) and Cowan (1991) have described coffee-shops in Greece as gendered spaces. The centre’s coffee shop operates as a space for male sociability, which often takes place through competing performances of masculinity.

<sup>36</sup> Bryant (2004: 32-39) traces the history of the development of the cafe in Cyprus as public platform from the beginning of the 20th century. Public reading of newspapers and official material ‘was often a highly value practice, and in Cypriot villages cafes it provided an opportunity for public debate of issues and discussion of the reliability of printed reports’ (ibid.: 35). Such practice takes place along similar lines in the CCC’s coffee shop through the regulars’ engagement with newspapers and television news that are read and watched communally and then debated and discussed.

leftists. AKEL had already established its presence since 1941 in London through various institutions, events and services for its members. As most of the migrants to London came from poor, working-class backgrounds, AKEL found a large supporting base among Cypriots in the UK. Between 1948 and 1971, AKEL belonged to the British Communist Party (BCP). Newton (1969: 78) characteristically writes that although the BCP did not draw large membership from ethnic and migrant communities, Cypriots featured in the party in large numbers<sup>37</sup>. After 1971, however, AKEL resumed its independence and operated autonomously in the British capital<sup>38</sup>.

The CCC, established in the early 1980s with funds by the Haringey Council, is affiliated to AKEL in multiple ways; the manager of the centre is the Secretary General of AKEL in the UK; many of AKEL's events take place in the premises; and, more broadly, the centre seems to promote AKEL's political ideals of co-existence and co-operation between Greek and Turkish Cypriots for a re-united Cyprus.

An emphasis on pan-Cypriotness becomes evident upon entering the centre. Announcements and signs on the walls are written in English, Greek and Turkish and there is an absence of any symbols, pictures or maps with potential Greek or Turkish nationalist connotations. Both Greek and Turkish Cypriots are members of staff and, while the majority of the regulars at the coffee shop are Greek Cypriots, there is a number of Turkish Cypriots who also visit the centre.

AKEL's political line and history rhetoric emerges in and often dominates the everyday discussions in the centre. In addition to privileging Cypriotism, such rhetoric presents the organised Left as the major link that has kept the two main communities in the island connected (Panayiotou 2006). Leftists from both sides have been persecuted

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<sup>37</sup> 'It is known that in 1961 the London District of the B.C.P. had 6,682 members and that 752 of these were Cypriots.' (ibid.) Newton also argues that these were merely Greek Cypriots because the party regarded the Turkish claim to Cyprus as imperialist sponsored. According to the author, their high numbers are explained to some extent by the fact that some Cypriots had 'brought their politics with them' and also because of their concentration in particular areas it was easy to recruit them into the party.

<sup>38</sup> In one of our interviews, the secretary of AKEL in London justified this move as necessary to address the language barrier that did not allow many of the Cypriot communists, whose English was not always fluent, to take part in meetings and conferences of the BCP. He denied any ideological drifts between AKEL and the BCP or any other cultural and political reasons for AKEL's independence; however, other AKEL supporters explained in their narratives that AKEL catered better for their political interests in Cyprus. To some extent, this illustrates the supporters' inclination towards a specific 'Cypriot communism', which, from their perspective, was not represented enough within the BCP.

equally by nationalists of their own ethnic community and, in this sense, their class position and political ideology unites them across ethnic divisions. For AKEL, Greek and Turkish Cypriots have not only always lived together but have also been united by their common interests and struggles as workers.

Mr. Costas, who came to London in 1956 and frequents the CCC coffee shop almost on a daily basis, recalls his personal experience as a testimony for AKEL's role in catering for both communities. When asked whether he has worked with Turkish Cypriots, he first refers to his working years in the UK and then to his pre-migration time in Cyprus:

'Not really, because the factory I worked in was a family business; we were just 10 people and there weren't any Turkish Cypriots...not because they didn't want Turkish Cypriots...it just happened. But in Cyprus I worked many times with Turkish Cypriots. They all spoke Greek. I worked at the port in ships; most of the workers there were Turkish Cypriots. When we finished work in the afternoon, on our way home, we all looked the same; you couldn't see any difference. Let me tell you something else. My father used to have a bus but not like the ones today; it was a semi-lorry. Our parents used to wake us up around 12 to take us with them. Before we left, a Turkish Cypriot man came to our house. There was such a big trust [between my family and the man]. He used to come to watch our house and our property. This is a proof that we could live together. Others did these things to us [*Alloi mas ta ekaman*]'.

To explain who was to blame, Mr. Costas shifted from a personal narrative to talking about broader historical processes:

'Chauvinism; Nationalism, first; from both sides. That's the main reason. But those who planted the seeds for chauvinism are not any others but English Imperialism. Wherever the English set foot and then left, there are problems. AKEL always supported the co-existence [*simviosis*] between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots; and we didn't make any distinctions. There were thousands...thousands of Turkish Cypriots who were members of PEO [Pagkypria Ergatiki Omospondia (Pancyprian Federation of Labour)]. Through PEO, you could go to the doctor, you could get medicine...it was a great help; So PEO helped organise [politically] the Turkish Cypriots...or the Turkish Cypriots organised themselves within PEO. And that's how I continued and I still continue [being politically active and supportive of the Left]'.

The switch between personal and party history here illustrates the tight relationship between complex mnemonic processes. As social memory is composed of the individual memories of those who belong in the social group (Halbwachs 1992 [1952];

Connerton 1989), AKEL's narrative is patterned on the experiences of the supporters. Accounts such as Mr Costas's, therefore, inform the leftist narrative of co-existence based on common struggles and class experiences.

On the other hand, individuals also shape their memories to fit broader accounts of the past. As Lowenthal points out, 'we treasure these connections with the wider past. Gratified that our memories are our own, we also seek to link our personal past with collective memory and public history. [...] But these recollections are often as erroneous as they are vivid. Indeed, the gross inaccuracies emphasize the point: people are so eager to be part of 'history' that they falsely 'remember' their responses to, or even having been present at, some momentous event' (1985: 197). Although Lowenthal treats individual memory here almost as a subconscious process, in which individuals are deceived by their own desire to fit their past into a broader social memory, I argue that many AKEL supporters in the centre are actively engaged in a process of negotiation between their personal memories and the party's historical narrative. They are involved in what Daniel calls 'deliberation' (1997), a process of active thinking on one's history, a moment of habit-change on what has been considered 'natural'. Such 'agentive moments', as Daniel characterises them, emerge when the regulars at the centre reflect on their party's history and strive to position themselves within it according to their current circumstances and their changing experiences.

An example of this 'deliberation' on the past is the emphasis on the close relationship between Greek and Turkish Cypriots in Cyprus before 1974 that Mr. Costas highlights in the narration of his personal story to contribute to AKEL's discourse of pan-Cypriotism. Memory, thus, is selectively reconstructed to respond to the requests of the present. For the same reasons, many of the regulars at the centre stress in their narratives the historical presence of Turkish Cypriots at the CCC. In the past few years and especially after the Annan plan that produced tensions in the relationships between the two Lefts in Cyprus<sup>39</sup> (Panayiotou 2006: 278), the numbers of Turkish Cypriots at the centre have been diminishing; it has, therefore, become more important than ever to

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<sup>39</sup> According to Panayiotou (2006: 278), there has historically been an underlying drift between AKEL and CTP in their rhetoric of Cypriotism, as the former focused on independence (through anti-colonial and anti-imperial language), whereas the latter was concerned more with the support of bi-communality and ethnic pluralism. These different approaches emerged as significant points of tension between the two parties after AKEL took a 'NO' stance on the Annan plan.

stress that their presence there was once considerable. ‘Deliberation’ on the past through ‘memory adjustment’ becomes necessary for Greek Cypriots in order to deal with the discontinuities and disruptions between the party narrative and their current experiences; this relationship will be further discussed in the next section.

What is important to emphasize here is that memory –individual and collective- is about the present as much as it is about the past (Hodgin and Radstone 2003). It is not only history that is constructed, reinvented and selectively narrated, but memory is also reconstituted in narrative and is significantly unpredictable (Miszta 2003, 73)<sup>40</sup>. ‘Unofficial’ histories, therefore, cannot be perceived as ‘authentic’ and ‘true’ because they draw on individual and collective memories as their direct sources of access to the past. The ‘unofficial’ history of AKEL is structured and reproduced through interactions and negotiations amongst individual, collective and party narratives.

Moreover, an approach to memory as processual does not only help us understand how memory is produced and reconstituted in the present; it also allows us to focus on individuals as active agents within the fields of production and re-production of ‘unofficial’ history - and history in general. It, therefore, sheds some light to the questions of how particular histories develop and become accepted or contested; the following two sections are dealing with these questions.

### **3.4 ‘Unofficial’ histories of the ‘unofficial’ history: the case of AKEL supporters in the diaspora.**

To accept that historical narratives are in a dialectical relationship with individual and collective memories and experiences means that we need to shift focus to the particular contexts in which this relationship is shaped. As Pandey has suggested, ‘unofficial’ histories should be examined in a situational and contextual perspective because ‘[t]he ‘text’ has no intrinsic or fixed meaning: rather, it is surrounded, infused and positioned (as in the case of acting) by the speaker’s experience, gestures, mode, as also by the audience’s placement and participation. We do not conform action simply to text or

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<sup>40</sup> A wide range of literature discusses the relationship between history and memory and debates on the intellectual, political and historical processes of separation of the two categories, especially within the context of nationalism. To refer to just a few of the numerous informative publications on the topic, see Olick (2003), Hodgkin, K. and S. Radstone (2003), Miszta (2003), Todorova (2004).

merely confirm the text by action: texts, or 'source materials', are inevitably shaped by the experience of the reader/actor' (2000: 285).

We have, therefore, to relate the development of the leftist historical narrative among Cypriots in London to their particular memories and experiences shaped by migration and their diasporic condition. It is suggested below then that the historical narratives of AKEL supporters in London emerge as underrepresented or as 'unofficial' histories within the 'unofficial' history of the party. The specificities of the diasporic leftist 'unofficial' history are articulated here in two ways: on one hand, the AKEL historical narrative has offered a familiar framework, through which migrants could make sense of their new experiences and current circumstances and migration has facilitated the expression and communication of the 'unofficial' history of the party. On the other hand, due to the disruption of their individual memory after departure from Cyprus and the gap between their current circumstances and party narrative, some of the AKEL supporters in London experience marginalisation both as leftists vis-à-vis the nationalist historical narrative and as migrants vis-à-vis the 'unofficial' history of AKEL.

However, the purpose here is not to essentialise and homogenize the alternative 'unofficial' history of the Left in the diaspora. Quite the opposite, such history or histories are employed to argue that approaching the 'unofficial' history of the Left as authentic reproduces an objectivist understanding of history, in which other voices or voices of others' are destined to be excluded and oppressed.

Although it is suggested that 'unofficial' histories should be approached as equally constructed and authored as 'official' histories, they, however, derive their power and authority through claims to 'truth'. An emphasis on such 'truth' is prominent in the discussions of many of the AKEL supporters at the CCC. Similarly to Papadakis's informants (2005), men at the centre were often insistent on giving me information that I would not be able to find in 'official' books. Their discussions revolve around the 'real' aspects of the 'Cyprus problem': the roots of the problem – 'the EOKA struggle for enosis', intra-communal violence – 'EOKA killed more communists than British' – and the recognition of the suffering of others – 'we did many bad things to Turkish Cypriots too'.

Even though analogous narratives are very popular and dominant in the centre, they are mostly labelled by the men as ‘unknown’ and ‘hidden’. This may seem contradictory, considering that AKEL has always been a strong political party maintaining almost a third of the votes throughout its political history and it has control over its own media and public spaces. Moreover, as already highlighted, its presence is especially strong in the UK community, which has often been proudly described by my informants as a leftist community in its origins. ‘This is understandable’, explained the Secretary of AKEL in London, ‘as most of the migrants in the 1950s and 1960s came from a very poor, working class background; and these were usually the people of AKEL’.

However, the sense of marginalisation and exclusion attached to these narratives is partly explained by the fact that, even though they have been told and heard many times in both private and public spaces, they have been conspicuously omitted in particular contexts, such as in education<sup>41</sup> and in governmental accounts of the ‘Cyprus problem’. Most of my informants would describe such contexts as the ones where nationalist history has dominated, it has been reproduced and it has, therefore, become ‘official’. Education would very often be raised as a serious concern and presented as one of the main reasons for the maintenance and domination of nationalism in Cyprus. This was pointed out very often by Mr. Loizou, one of the regulars at the centre. Mr. Loizou used to be a member of the Greek Parents’ Association<sup>42</sup> that operates a number of Greek Cypriot community schools in London and, unsurprisingly, he has always been interested in educational issues:

‘One of the main problems of nationalism is the school. Look what they teach them in Cyprus, how to hate each other. When my son was younger, I took him to a school that was part of the church to learn the language [Greek]. But he started saying things like ‘look what the Turks did to us’ and the boy started being full of hatred. They fanaticised him. I had never ever told him this kind of things. I hadn’t

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<sup>41</sup> About the relationship between nationalism and education in Cyprus see Bryant (1998a, 1998b) and Spyrou (2000, 2002).

<sup>42</sup> The Greek Parents’ Association was established in Haringey in 1950 to provide educational support for children of Greek and Greek-Cypriot origin (Charalambous 2005). Like the school, in which I was employed, most ‘Greek’ schools in the UK are run by the Greek Orthodox Church, which is headed by the Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain. At the same time the Greek and Cyprus High Commissions provide schools with books and other educational material and with teachers, who are transferred from Greece and Cyprus respectively. According to the secretary of AKEL in London, in one of our interviews, when the Greek dictatorial government sent teachers to London schools in 1971, the Cypriot community rejected the offer, proving for him that ‘the Cypriot community in London has always been progressive’.

actually told him anything. But then, I took him out of that school and I took him to a school where I knew they were not fanatics. And that was only once a week<sup>43</sup>. Imagine if this happens here, what happens in Cyprus. And then I told him many things myself, I told him about truths he would not get in books.’

Similar references are often made in relation to other institutions, such as the army and the church. For the migrants in the centre, leaving Cyprus provided them with the possibility of escaping to a large extent the power and control of these institutions. Although some of these institutions have been reproduced in the diaspora, many of the AKEL supporters in the centre often implied that in the diaspora one has a greater option of how close to or away wants to stay from the homogenising narratives of the institutions. With reference to the Iranian diaspora, Sullivan (2001) similarly recognises that diasporic contexts provide individuals with more choices compared to those in the home country. Diaspora, therefore, has offered an opportunity for the ‘unofficial’ histories of the Left to be expressed and fertilised more overtly. As Mr. Loizou stated, ‘I never felt comfortable as a communist in Cyprus. But when I came here, everyone was almost like me. It was much easier to be here than in Cyprus’.

In this case, being away from Cyprus can be interpreted as an empowering condition for individuals like Mr. Loizou, who claim to have a greater control over their own history and memories. At the same time, however, migration and diaspora reinforce marginalisation, which some of the AKEL supporters claim to have experienced as young leftists in Cyprus.

One of the main points of reference in the ‘unofficial’ history of AKEL is the exclusion of the Left from the EOKA struggle. EOKA developed and has been perceived in the ‘official’ historical account as a patriotic anti-colonial organisation that fought for unification (*enosis*) with Greece. Originally, the Left maintained some distance from the EOKA struggle and leftists were successively labelled as ‘traitors’ and ‘unpatriotic’ by supporters of EOKA. As explained before, this ideology often led to tensions and the persecution of members of the Left by EOKA members (Anthias and Ayres 1983; Papadakis 1998). The Left has, therefore, identified the EOKA struggle as the beginning

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<sup>43</sup> Many children of Greek-Cypriot descent in the UK attend ‘Greek’ school once or twice a week, usually on Saturday. There is a similar pattern amongst Turkish Cypriots, who send their children to ‘Turkish’ school. As part of the curriculum, children are taught the history of Cyprus and the language and history of their respective ‘motherlands’, Greece and Turkey.

of the dominance of nationalism in the island; a nationalism that was set to suppress and silence the leftist presence and rhetoric, as suggested in the words of Mr. Costas:

‘We love and honour and respect anyone who lost their life for Cyprus. But if we have to speak the truth, the countdown for Cyprus, for all this that’s happened, started with the armed struggle of 1955 for *enosis*. And you know who that Grivas was...when he was in Greece he was in a group called Hittes<sup>44</sup>. You know that Hittes had orders not to kill leftists but to cause them problems and to torture them to the extent that they end up in a wheelchair. Death is fast, but to be in a wheelchair is torture for life’.

The notion of suffering and exclusion emerged very often in the narration of the men’s pre-migration years in Cyprus as young leftists. As highlighted through the example of Mr. Socrates in chapter 2, the men often designate their political conviction as one of the important reasons that forced them to leave the island and migrate to the UK. This idea of being marginalised and forgotten was often allegorically presented in the centre through joking. In the first few months of fieldwork, there were long discussions about a letter, which the centre received by the Archbishop of Cyprus stating that he is offering financial help to all regulars in the coffee shop. A list should be produced with the names of all eligible for help. Whereas the men in the centre clearly knew that this was a joke made up by Mr. Loizou, they still put their names on the list. As an observer, I could not understand initially why a seemingly simple joke could spark uncountable discussions and laughs. Eventually, it became clear that the comical value of the joke was to be derived from the impossibility of the scenario it presented. Many of the men at the centre, having spent most of their lives working hard, rely on modest pensions and any kind of financial help would be very welcome. But the men never expected the Church, identified by them as one of the forces of nationalism, to want to reward a group of old leftists, who left their country decades ago<sup>45</sup>.

Sharing these stories in the centre confirms for many of the discussants that their experience is not individual but, also, collective. As Mr. Costas explained, ‘I find that

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<sup>44</sup> From the Greek letter X (hi), which was the name of a para-state group, in which Grivas is considered to have been a leader. Group X was allegedly active in the 1940s in Greece and it has been perceived by leftists as a group with a strong anti-communist agenda (Droussiotis 1998).

<sup>45</sup> Herzfeld (1988: xvii) discusses the use of joke among male Cretans in the village of ‘Glendi’ in Greece, highlighting the ways it is used collectively by men to draw on their ‘oxymoronic sensibilities’ in order to deal with social events that provoke fear or sadness. I understand humour here as being used by the men in the centre as part of a similar repertoire of ‘oxymoronic sensibilities’ to deal with marginalisation and exclusion that are articulated as collective experiences.

these people understand me. Whereas on the other side, you can tell someone this is water and they can say, no it's not. The best thing you have to do is leave them...they will not understand'.

Whereas 'the other side' is commonly used by Greek or Turkish Cypriots to refer to North or South Cyprus respectively, in this case it became clear that Mr. Costas referred to someone different:

'The people of the right. There are many here too...who don't want the Turkish Cypriots around. They talk against them. Look, you'll say it's just football but sports should unite people. There is a TV here and it shows football matches every Saturday and Sunday from Cyprus. There was a game of Anorthosi –although I've been with Salamina since I was a child- playing against a Turkish team from Turkey and some Turkish Cypriots came here with their wives or their families. And there were people here who started saying swear words [*ksemarishes*] and as a result those people left. This happened two years ago. And instead of those people reacting, they just left. And we were ready to intervene, in case something went wrong and they started arguing, you know.'

As the quote illustrates, the notion of 'being silenced' coexists with 'being able to speak up when it is needed'. Many of the men in the centre explained that they prefer to stay silent in some contexts, especially when they come into contact with non-supporters of the Left. This was justified as a result of years of persecution and fear but also of the need to avoid tensions and misunderstandings (see Papadakis 2005). On the other hand, as holders of truth, they believe that their voices should be heard as a challenge to the mainstream discourse and to the status quo. Their positioning in the margins of their own ethnic community allows them to reach the margins of the 'other', the Turkish Cypriot Left. Thus, as suggested in the previous section, the familiar leftist rhetoric of exclusion and marginalisation on one hand and bi-communalism and co-existence on the other hand provide the men in the centre with a framework, through which they negotiate interpersonal relationships and deal with ongoing experiences.

The notion of marginalisation is also repeatedly used in order to deal with issues of blame and guilt. As mentioned before, people of the Left blame the Cyprus problem on the expansion of nationalism and chauvinism in the island, in which they did not take part. For the first-generation migrants in the centre, however, there was extra blame to be attached to nationalism. As young, leftist, poor, persecuted and unable to find work

in Cyprus, many men blamed the EOKA struggle as one of the factors that pushed them to migrate. They identified themselves as doubly-marginalised, first as leftists, and second as migrants, who had to leave their country and through hardships to make a living on foreign soil.

While there are many factors to be named and/or blamed for becoming a migrant, for the men in the centre there was an additional level of guilt attached to their leaving their country. This feeling of guilt has to do with being an 'escapee of history', of not being in Cyprus when particular historical events took place. During my fieldwork I followed some of the men from the centre to their holidays in Cyprus. In a few cases, when heated political discussions developed, they were confronted with the marginal identities of leftists and 'escapees of history'. One of these discussions took place in a *taverna* in Larnaca, where I went to see Mr. Costas. He was sitting in a group of old friends, who had been discussing for hours, when a man from the group said: 'But what have the leftists done for this country?' When Mr. Costas tried to explain and defend the Left, he was confronted by the man: 'How do you know, Costas? You were gone by then...you, guys, were lucky, you didn't have to go through what we went through'. On our way back, Mr. Costas stated almost apologetically: 'See? They think we had it easy. But we didn't want to leave, we had to leave. They didn't want us in Cyprus and now they are asking why we didn't stay'.

What is evident here is that the notion of being an 'escapee of history' derives from a territorial understanding of history, which, as Malkki (1992) suggests, is part of the rationale of nationalism. It is also associated with issues of authority, of who has the right to speak about the past, and in this particular case it contributes to a double silencing of the AKEL supporters in London vis-à-vis the official nationalist historical narrative. For some men in the centre then, like Mr. Costas, the rhetoric of marginalisation is articulated in order to deal with the blame and guilt that are attached to being an 'escapee of history'.

The specificities of the diasporic experiences of AKEL supporters in London force us to reconsider 'unofficial' histories not as homogenous and static but as continuously negotiated and developing. For some of the first-generation leftist migrants, diaspora has been an empowering experience; however, it has also contributed to their

marginalisation both as leftists and migrants. The Leftist historical rhetoric has provided a structure, through which the experiences in the diaspora can be articulated. On the other hand, the ‘unofficial’ history of the Left has been invested with new meaning and value as it is reworked to fit the migrants’ particular experiences and memories (or lack of them).

If we are to accept the ‘unofficial’ history of the Left as a missing block of historical truth, we are at risk of dismissing the fact that such history encompasses other ‘unofficial’ histories, which may also be suppressed and silenced. The example of the diaspora is used here to argue against the homogenisation of the history of the Left. Moreover, as argued in the next section, ‘unofficial’ histories are often internally contested and resisted and demonstrate a close dialectical rather than opposing relationship to the ‘official’ historical narrative.

### **3.5 Beyond ‘Official’ and ‘Unofficial’ Narratives of History**

Supporters of AKEL often voice their opposition against Greek and Turkish nationalism in Cyprus and they stress their Cypriot identity. This focus on Cypriotness has been identified by social scientists as a form of civic nationalism against ethnic nationalism (Peristianis 2006a). AKEL, however, has avoided nationalist terms in its claims for a re-unified Cyprus. As a communist party, it has spoken about ‘the people’ instead of the nation and it presents itself as traditionally and historically against the particular nationalisms that has prevailed and led to conflict and division of the island.

Although the leftist claims to historical truth have developed in opposition to the ‘official’ nationalist discourse, it is argued here that the two historical narratives share a relationship of mutual interdependency. I follow Appadurai’s suggestion that it is not useful to consider the past as an unlimited and infinite symbolic resource. There are norms that define the ways the past is debated and ‘[...] although there might be infinite *substantive* variation concerning such norms about the past, there is a minimal set of *formal* constraints on *all* such sets of norms’ (1981: 203; emphasis in the original). In other words, any debate about the past takes place within a culturally definable framework that must provide the structures that make the debate possible and meaningful. According to Appadurai, an important pre-condition for any deliberation

over the past is the 'interdependence' of a version of the past with other versions; this is to secure a common ground for debating and 'to ensure minimal credibility' (ibid.).

I, therefore, highlight here some of the formal similarities between the leftist account of history and the nationalist 'official' discourse to establish their dialectical relationship. Furthermore, the interdependence of the two historical accounts is expressed in the ways that they both are employed in individual narratives. In order to deal with experiences and memories that cannot fit within the framework of the 'unofficial' history, individuals selectively use elements of the dominant 'official' narrative to critically engage with the 'unofficial' discourse. As discussed already, 'unofficial' histories develop dynamically and are invested with multiple meanings in relation to different contexts and individual memories and experiences; in that sense, they are susceptible to internal contestation as much as the 'official' history is.

One of the structural similarities between the two accounts is the way continuity is established between the present and the past through narration. The 'official' historical narrative has selectively focused on particular historical periods, in its attempt to present a linear and coherent narrative, where events follow from each other in a progressive and teleological order. This order is then presented as natural, 'the natural order of things', whereas alternative histories and narratives are silenced and excluded. However, the history of the Left also demonstrates gaps and silences. For instance, AKEL's ambivalent stance on *enosis* during the 1960s and on the Annan plan in 2004 that created tensions in the relationships of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot Left have often been avoided in the political discourses within the party.

In a discussion about these tensions with a prominent member of the party in London, he assured me that the Cypriot Centre in Haringey is for all Cypriots and that AKEL has successfully managed to keep the Turkish and Greek Cypriots united within the premises of the centre. However, when the topic shifted to talking about the dropping numbers of Turkish Cypriot regulars at the centre, he reluctantly added:

'Before 2004, there were more Turkish Cypriots coming to the centre. But after the referendum, the relationships froze. The Turkish Cypriots, without thinking properly and without being adequately enlightened thought that we should say yes. But if 76% of the population says 'no', you have to respect their opinions. Because if the

76% of the Turkish Cypriots, *not the settlers*, the Turkish Cypriots, said ‘no’, could we just say ‘accept it’? No, you can’t do these things. But Turkish Cypriots lost their trust on me personally. They would say ‘are you now saying no to the plan?’ But I couldn’t do otherwise; they couldn’t understand that the plan was not serving *our* country, my Turkish Cypriot compatriots!’

As the quote illustrates, there are internal contradictions, confrontations and disappointments within the history of the Left, which, however, are rarely discussed publicly, as they pose potential disruptions to the linearity and continuity of the party’s historical narrative. These teleological connections with the past through narrativization are particularly established through public events. Whereas public commemorations have been seen as a tool, by which the nationalist narrative is injected into public memory (Connerton 1989), the Left has also established its own commemorative events.

One of the most important commemorations AKEL organises every year is in honour of Mishaouli and Kavazoglou (Papadakis 1993). Mishaouli, a Greek Cypriot and member of AKEL, and Kavazoglou, a Turkish Cypriot and member of the central committee of AKEL, were murdered together on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April 1965 by members of TMT. They became the symbol of Greek and Turkish Cypriot friendship and, for AKEL, they came to symbolise the eternal common struggles of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot working classes.

In London a special event is organised every year in the CCC to honour the two heroes of the party. During my fieldwork, I attended the commemorative event twice. In the second year, however, the day acquired even greater importance within the new political developments in Cyprus and the election of AKEL as government and its secretary Christofias as president of the Republic of Cyprus in February 2008. The London-based AKEL newspaper, ‘Parikiaki’, clearly made a connection between the two events and tied them historically across an imagined chronological spectrum. On its front page of 10 April 2008 an announcement for the commemorative event is published along with some comments about the two murdered heroes:

‘The fascists of TMT wanted to silence an irritating voice, which was standing as an obstacle to their divisive plans. They wanted to terrorise every patriotic Cypriot, who was fighting for a united country. They wanted to terrorise AKEL. But they achieved the

opposite through such an atrocious crime. The Kavazoglou-Mishaouli sacrifice became the symbol of a shared struggle of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots for the salvation of our shared country. The anniversary of the Kavazoglou-Mishaouli sacrifice coincides with developments in the 'Cyprus problem'. The beginning of these developments was demarcated with the election of Dimitris Christofias as president of the Republic of Cyprus, who has changed the status quo with his stance, policies and flexibility. The meeting between Christofias and Talat, its results and the opening of Ledra Street are optimistic signs. They enhance the belief that we can fight the occupation and division. Of course, we have a difficult road ahead of us. A necessary precondition for the way to a solution is for Turkey to change its political stance [on the Cyprus issue]. Our main duty is to stand next to our president Christofias in his fight for Cyprus and our people' (Parikiaki, 10/04/2008).

Most of the speeches at the event drew similar connections between the political developments in Cyprus and the historical past of the Left and incorporated the electoral victory of AKEL into the party's narrative of long-term struggles and achievements. Connerton describes commemorative ceremonies as 'collective variants' of personal memory told in a master narrative. However, he recognises that in order for these ceremonies to be persuasive to their participants, 'then those participants must be not simply cognitively competent to execute the performance; they must be habituated to those performances' (1989: 71).

Although it is useful to understand those who participate in the leftist events of the Cypriot diaspora as habituated performers, such events also provide opportunities for habit-change. To return to Daniel's concept of 'deliberation' (1997), individuals have the potential to critically reflect on their past and shift their stance on it. Commemorative events are collective expressions of individual memories; however, as memories are not static but change through different experiences, events also open the space for contestation of the master narrative that they construct.

At the Mishaouli-Kavazoglou event in 2008, among other participants, I spoke to Mr. Farouk, a Turkish Cypriot, who had come to the UK in the early 60s and worked most of his life as a tailor. He had been an old member of AKEL but, as he stated, he eventually became less politically active. 'I came to find some old friends today. I don't normally go to these things anymore. I felt quite disappointed all these years with

AKEL. First, there was their support for enosis, then the Annan Plan. And look at these events. There were few Turkish Cypriots speaking, it was mostly in Greek. This happens all the time. It's again like in the 1960s. Greek Cypriots want a federation but they don't believe in it'.

Although the event was organised as bi-communal, the main speeches had been delivered in Greek, whereas the fewer Turkish Cypriot speakers used English. Most speakers celebrated the election of the AKEL government and expressed their hopes for a solution to the 'Cyprus problem' and the establishment of a bi-communal federal state in Cyprus; Mr. Farouk, however, suggested that the format and organisation of the event was reminiscent and nostalgic of another period of Cypriot history, in which Turkish Cypriots were once again suppressed and not equal sharers of power.

Both Greek and Turkish Cypriots often comment in similar ways on the bi-communal events organised by AKEL in London. Many of these individuals are of a leftist background themselves, like Mr. Loizos. He is one of the regulars in the centre, and he has been a member of AKEL for many years; nevertheless, a 'critical supporter', as he says. When I asked him about the events, he told me 'yes, these things have been happening in the same way for many years. AKEL talks about old friendships and stories of co-operation but they have to talk to people about *today*. We have to take some responsibility too. We have to speak about things that are happening today. And our past shows that we have made mistakes too'.

For Mr. Farouk and Mr. Loizos, their participation in bi-communal events in London and their broader experiences in the diaspora contest to a large extent the historical narrative of AKEL and force them to revise their memories and stance on the party's version of the past.

The interdependency between 'official' and 'unofficial' history makes this contestation possible. Although different accounts of the past vary in terms of content, they demonstrate particular formal structures that allow them to converse (Appadurai 1981). As discussed, one of the most conspicuous structural similarities between the leftist and nationalist accounts of history is the narration of the historical past as a series of events that took place in a linear and teleological order. The 'unofficial' history, therefore,

develops as a master narrative with its own gaps and silences. It is in commemorative events, such as the one for Mishaouli and Kavazoglou, where this master narrative is told and gains authority. At the same time, these events, as spaces where individual memory and party narrative come into contact, offer the opportunity for debate and ‘deliberation’.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

The ideological commitment of some diasporic Cypriots to communism can be better interpreted, if communism is analysed as a form of habitus, a set of ideas, discourses and rhetorics that frame individual experiences and practices and, simultaneously, are reproduced through them. In this sense, AKEL’s history as marginalised and suppressed by ‘official’ history has reflected the experiences of marginalisation of its individual members. Members of parties, however, have multiple and complex experiences that affect their allegiance to the party line in various ways. The men at the Cypriot centre have experienced marginalisation not only as young leftists in Cyprus but also as migrants. For them, the rhetoric of ‘marginalisation’ that has dominated in AKEL is a way of dealing with blame but also with guilt for leaving one’s one country and becoming an ‘escapee of history’. This suggests that the ‘unofficial’ history of AKEL encompasses a variety of diverse narratives that also need to be studied and understood in their own terms.

Moreover, the ‘unofficial’ history of the Left is tightly dependent on the opposite ‘official’ discourse, not only in terms of form, but also in the way that both narratives often coexist in political and individual narratives. Similarly to how the ‘unofficial’ history has the potential to contest ‘official’ accounts, the ‘official’ history can also be used by individuals to contest the ‘unofficial’ rhetoric in order to match their changing experiences and memories. In short, the ‘official’ narrative of nationalism and the anti-nationalist historical account of the Left are not parallel lines that cannot meet; the boundaries between these two accounts are negotiable and porous.

Recent discussions about the improvement of the history schoolbooks in the Republic of Cyprus have drawn attention to the absence of the history of the Left in the official historical accounts. Although marginalised histories deserve to be heard and acknowledged the ‘unofficial’ history of the Left should not be unreservedly included

as ‘true’ and ‘authentic’ to fill the gaps of the dominant historical narrative. To move away from totalising narratives and to open up the space for continuous dialogue amongst different voices, we need to recognise history as perspective (Foucault [1984] 1991) and divert our attention to wider processes of history production; to how, when and where *any* historical knowledge emerges, develops and dominates.

As this chapter has focused on how the Cyprio-centric language of the Left is internally negotiated and contested by paying attention to the experiences and narratives of first-generation Cypriots in the UK, the next chapter examines how the discourse of Cypriotism and ‘peace politics’ offer a platform on which underlying inter-generational tensions between these first generation Cypriotists and British born Cypriots are crystallised and articulated through struggles around authority, political representation and cultural authenticity.

## CHAPTER 4

### **The Conflicts of Peace: inter-generational perspectives**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

During one of my first visits to the Cypriot Community Centre (CCC), a member of staff approached me and asked me to follow him to his office. He was a man in his early forties, who immediately addressed me in his London accent: ‘You can’t do this’, were his first words. ‘We don’t talk about history, religion or politics here. This is all finished, it’s left back in Cyprus; this is Britain. These people have suffered too much and now you are asking them about their past. This is a place for all Cypriots and we don’t want to jeopardise this by talking about the past or politics. No one will talk to you’. The ‘non-Cypriot’ decorations on his office walls, except for a map of Cyprus, seemed to convey almost a similar message: ‘we come from Cyprus, but we don’t want to be stuck with its history or politics’. Even after I explained to him the aims of my research and that I was not planning to ask any direct political or sensitive questions, he concluded that my project was incompatible with the character of the centre.

I would have considered leaving the Centre and finding a more ‘compatible’ field site, however, I had already secured a research permission by its manager to conduct research there. When I asked him for his advice next day, his response was short, but quite revealing about an inter-generational aspect of the politics of history in the Centre: ‘I am the manager of the Centre and you have already got my permission to do research. You can ask whatever you want and be here as long as you want’, he said. ‘This is typical attitude of second- generation Cypriots. This is the only thing I’ll say and I hope you understand. And of course we talk about history and politics here. This is what we, Cypriots, do, isn’t it?’ For the manager of the centre, the attitude of the British born Cypriot, Petros, who asked me to leave the centre, highlighted a common pattern amongst younger Cypriots in the diaspora of cultural apathy and political fatigue vis-à-vis Cyprus. Petros, however, being cautious and sceptical about the nature of my

research, feared that it would not be compatible with his own vision of how the Centre should operate as a pan-Cypriot space.

This episode brings to the foreground the main concerns of this chapter, which deals with inter-generational relations amongst Cypriots in London within the framework of ‘peace politics’ and discourses of Cypriotism. The first section (4.2) presents the ways in which an assumed distance of British born Cypriots from ‘community’ affairs and politics is discursively attributed to ‘cultural apathy’ and ‘political fatigue’, as articulated in the comments of the manager of the CCC. It is argued, however, that such terms should be contextualised in order to understand how they relate to particular power relations and structures and they should, therefore, be studied themselves as parts of political processes. As Petros’s words imply, disassociation from the past does not necessarily mean erasure of memory and a lack of political consciousness but a rejection of the ways the politics of the past have been articulated within an organisation, like the CCC. Moreover, the ‘double consciousness’ of second-generation British-Cypriots, is presented in popular discourses as a sign of ‘cultural inauthenticity’, which blocks their participation in Cypriot political and cultural spaces. However, as section 4.3 argues, contrary to theories of hybridity, ethnographic accounts and theorisations of identity as situational highlight that British born Cypriots draw on both their Cypriotness and Britishness in creative ways to resist discourses of ‘in-betweenness’ within British, diasporic and transnational contexts.

These identity shifts are reflected in the tactics of ‘Cypriots United’ (CU), a group established by British born Cypriots, which is used as a case study in section 4.4. By adopting a language of Cypriotism, they redefine Cypriotness in Britain in order to expand its meaning beyond its associations with Greekness. On the other hand, they appropriate the discourse through a ‘British perspective’ articulated in the rhetoric of multiculturalism that provides them with space and voice in debates of ‘who is a Cypriot’. The chapter ultimately argues that in order to trace and understand the operations of Cypriotism in this case, it is imperative to contextualise it within inter-related power struggles that are grounded here within a nexus of localised inter-personal, inter-generational and inter-organisational relations. Contrary to Western-centric assumptions, in which ‘homeland’ politics are treated as a sign of the unwillingness of migrant and diasporic communities to integrate in their ‘host’ country

(Østergaard-Nielsen 2003:6), ‘peace politics’ oriented towards Cyprus appear less as attempts for intervention in the politics at ‘home’; rather, they primarily provide British born Cypriots with a platform to contest London-based structures and ‘landscapes’ of traditional authority.

#### **4.2 The politics of cultural apathy and political fatigue**

It has been established in the literature on the Cypriot diaspora, as discussed in chapter 2, that not everyone who by definition belongs to the ‘community’ participates in its socio-cultural and political life<sup>46</sup>. Some individuals do not identify with what is called ‘community life’, whereas others take leading roles and often appear as representative figures of the larger group. Even for those who participate actively, some manage more diverse lives moving in and out of the ‘community boundaries’, while others’ everyday lives are consumed to a larger extent by the demands and obligations of their roles in the ethnic group. More importantly here, one’s engagement with the community life may vary throughout their life circle. A common theme that emerged out of many interviews with first-generation Cypriots is that during earlier stages of their lives, work and financial obligations as well as family responsibilities had left little time for active involvement in the socio-political life of the community. Many of them had come to the UK as young migrants, who focused on stabilising themselves professionally and financially by working long hours in order to provide for spouses and young children. Similarly, older Cypriot women, whom I interviewed, also highlighted that domestic work and taking care of the family at a younger age consumed most of their time. Although most of them were tied to domestic responsibilities, they also often worked as seamstresses from home, or were employed outside the house either in family or other businesses<sup>47</sup>. As many of them admitted, at that time, community cultural life, church-going or politics were quite low on their priority list. The connection for many of them to what they call ‘the life of the community’ [*i zoi tis koinotitas*] was (re)established at a later stage.

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<sup>46</sup> Anthias (2006a) discusses numerous attitudes towards ‘community belonging’ among Greek Cypriots in London. Canefe (2002: 70-71) describes similar trends amongst Turkish Cypriots in London regarding history and belonging, arguing that whereas some individuals and groups follow party politics in Cyprus, others distance themselves from Cypriot politics in their life in the diaspora.

<sup>47</sup> Usually in businesses that belonged to other Cypriots.

The prioritisation of everyday life and survival over broader political and social engagement implies a juxtaposition between a *dynamism* in personal life and a *stasis* in social involvement, which for many were characteristics of earlier periods of their lives or periods of ‘crisis’, such as those of migration. Such an idea is embedded within an understanding of personal life as challenging and shifting and of the socio-political aspects of the community as stable and undisrupted; meaning that someone who has withdrawn participation for a while can ‘return’ and continue in many ways from where they left. However, this language of ‘continuity’ by first-generation migrants often constituted a point of inter-generational tension, since for many British born Cypriots, it entailed an unwillingness for change, which for them was imperative to reflect their own experiences and identities, as it will be discussed later in the chapter.

At the same time, a paradox emerges here, since the same individuals who admitted an earlier disconnection from their diasporic ‘obligations’ in their youth, constantly highlighted that the major problem of the Cypriot community in London was the cultural apathy of young people. In most of the organisational meetings and gatherings in the Cypriot Centre, a central point of discussion emerged in the agenda: how to approach and draw the youth back to the socio-cultural life of the Centre. This anxiety is founded on the understanding that the long established structures and operations of Cypriotness in the UK do not appeal anymore to second and further generations of Cypriots, who lead more independent and detached lives.

This is not to say that other organisations did not battle with similar concerns. In discussions I had with teachers working in ‘Greek’ and ‘Turkish’ schools in the UK, the majority commented on the progressively decreasing numbers of students and the deterioration of students’ language skills. In the ‘Greek’ school, where I worked as a teacher, the constant concern of community members and parents was the increasing ‘anglicisation’ of their children and youth and they often put pressure on them to keep engaged with the community. One of the mothers used to entice her teenage boys to attend ‘Greek’ lessons by promising dinner at McDonald’s -apparently a treat- for the night of the week that their class was running. In other occasions, such as church events, national holidays or community functions, parents or grandparents would often draw others’ attention to their offsprings’ presence to stress their commitment to the community life; in case of absence, they would often provide explanations and excuses

that would regularly end with the statement: 'but you know how children are. You cannot force them to do things'.

For the Cypriot Centre that promotes itself as a Cypriotist and bi-communal context, however, the task of recruiting new members and participants into its activities posed an additional load of challenges. Unlike other organisations that could be characterised as Helleno- or Turko-centric, with much clearer nationalist agendas, the Cypriotism that was identified with the character of the centre lacked strong and concrete directions, narratives and symbols; not least, as the cultural activities taking place at its premises almost subverted its overarching ideology; and vice versa. On one hand, there were classes on Greek language and traditional dancing running, which were predominantly based on the Greek Cypriot curriculum and folk tradition. On the other hand, the focus on Greekness was highly underplayed in the public profile of the organisation and those it represented. This ambivalence inherent in the articulations of Cypriotism in the centre created an ideological and organisational vacuum that inevitably obstructed any internal decision and attempt to involve new people.

As a result, AKEL representatives and members in the centre feared that younger Cypriots would be attracted towards nationalistic ideologies and organisations. Or, in a less dramatic scenario, they would just remain culturally apathetic and politically inactive. This second interpretation was reflected in the words of the manager of the centre on the incident narrated in the beginning of the chapter. For this first-generation migrant, Peter's attitude typified a wider dismissal and discount of Cypriot politics by second- and further generation Cypriots in the UK. Besides the demands of everyday life, one of the excuses, which many of the youth employed to justify such distance, was a particular fatigue of the 'Cyprus problem'. Papadakis (1998) identified a similar pattern amongst post-1974 generations in Cyprus, who often appear overwhelmed by the hegemonic role, which the conflict has played in their everyday life and the ways it has overshadowed every other aspect of Cypriot politics. Younger Cypriots want to distance themselves from the 'dark past' of the conflict and to look forward to the future. This partly explains Peter's adverseness to any discussions on history and the politics of the past. For him, looking back revives tension, pain and violence, conditions that do not fit with his own experiences in the UK and from which he feels detached. Peter was not alienated from the community; on the contrary, he was working for the

centre and participated in many of its activities. He was, however, alienated by the way the politics of the conflict had historically defined Cypriotness.

For Papadakis (*ibid.*), the political fatigue of younger Cypriots is partly seen as reinforcing distance, lack of communication and stereotyping of the 'other'. However, this disillusionment of younger generations with the past, according to Anastasiou (2002), could also be seen in a positive light, as it opens the space for communication and dialogue between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, who did not participate in the conflict and do not wish to be associated with it. This is –at least on the surface- an optimistic way of interpreting and analysing the political fatigue of many young Cypriots and it is indeed a rhetoric that is often employed by some of those who support peace and reunification in the lines of 'we don't want to look back. We have not created the conflict, so we have nothing to divide'.

Both perspectives, however, can de-politicise and de-historicise the ideology and initiatives of younger Cypriots, as long as they do not trace the specific contexts and the power relations within which this 'political fatigue' is produced, talked about and acted upon as well as how political fatigue relates to particular processes of remembering and forgetting. For, distancing oneself from the past does not necessarily involve the collapse or absence of memory. Papadakis (1998: 151) argues that whereas the older generation, who have first-hand experience of the conflict and history, are more likely to take up the role of contesting official history through their personal narratives, the historical narratives of the younger generation, who are mainly aware of most events as 'learned history', seem to converge to the official history. The younger generation's narratives, therefore, appear to be much more distant to those of Turkish Cypriots, especially as the majority of younger people have never lived in mixed areas and have limited contact with the Turkish Cypriot side (*ibid.*:152). However, memories of trauma, exile and conflict but also of life and co-existence before conflict become part of the mnemonic repertoire of those who have not experienced them directly, through interactions with narratives produced in multiple spaces, such as the family, the media and the school, which often present various and even competing accounts of history<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>48</sup> In Cyprus, the connections between post-memory and identity have been explored particularly with reference to the experiences of refugees. Hadjiyanni's (2002) study has built on a more linear approach to memory by describing how a 'refugee identity' is transmitted from parents to children. Ege (2007),

One young man, whom I interviewed in Cyprus, for instance, claimed that most of his memories of the Cypriot conflict were produced through visual material, such as films, photos and documentaries, rather than through history lessons at school or narratives by family members. Papadakis's representation of younger generations in Cyprus has surely to be read as an account of the particular period in the late 1990s, to which the article refers, before the opening of the checkpoints and the widespread use of information technologies that have provided Greek and Turkish Cypriots with novel opportunities for contact. His account also appears less representative of diasporic Cypriots, who have not experienced physical separation and division or the homogenising effects of dominant nationalist politics promoted through formal education like those in Cyprus, as suggested in previous chapters.

At the same time, the production of 'post-memory' (Hirsch 1993; Goertz 1998) in the diaspora, or otherwise the ways in which memories are transmitted to the descendents of first-generation migrants, has to be located in multiple and complex processes and spaces. Employing a processual understanding of memory, studies on second-generations in the diaspora have described how it is (re)produced, for instance, through media consumption available due to transnational cultural flows (Kabir 2004), 'return' visits to the 'homeland' (Christou 2006a) or as a variable of current experiences and conditions (Mason 2007); these illustrations, therefore, break the linearity in which post-memory is often understood in popular accounts as unmediated blocks of memory passed on from parents to children. Similarly here, second generation Cypriots' post-memory is constructed, articulated and shifted beyond familial accounts of the past through a number of dynamic spaces such as new organisations that are described in this chapter, online encounters, which are examined in the following chapter and physical crossings of the Green line in Cyprus, as presented in chapter 6. One has, therefore, to keep alerted about how particular memories re-emerge and are redefined in the act of taking a distance from the past, rather than exploring new political initiatives of younger Cypriots as separate and discontinuous from that past.

In other words, cultural apathy and political fatigue have to be historicised and contextualised within particular loci and temporalities of power relations. It becomes

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however, furthering Hadjiyanni's work, has suggested that refugee identity is articulated and mobilised by children through more diverse processes and it is, therefore, more situational than often assumed.

apparent in this chapter that the fatigue of young diasporic Cypriots in London reflected less a holistic rejection of Cypriot culture and politics and stemmed to a large extent from a disillusionment with how politics have operated in the local community in London and a disappointment with their peripheral role both within these particular power structures and in a broader transnational space. Therefore, while the AKEL supporters of the Cypriot Centre agonised over appealing to new members through their own discourses of Cypriotism and peace, younger Cypriots in the diaspora created and participated in new political spaces<sup>49</sup> to promote co-existence and re-unification that reflected their own experiences. Paradoxically, in their broadness and vagueness, Cypriotism and peace as discourses provided the terrain for power struggles between generations in the diaspora to crystallize and take new forms.

### **4.3 Interrogating Hybridity –Dropping the hyphen**

The following scene took place in the premises of a Greek-Cypriot ‘community newspaper’ in North London, which is published in Greek, including also a section in English targeted towards second-generation Cypriots not fluent in their ‘mother-tongue’. Stella, a British born Cypriot, who had just been appointed as the new editor of the English section, was struggling to write an article about Cyprus. She was working next to Maria, who had moved to London from Cyprus a few years before to study and was now employed as one of the editors of the Greek section. I was sitting behind them in a desk going through the archives of the newspaper, when I heard Stella in despair asking: ‘Maria, the Cyprus invasion was in 1974, right? Or 1975?’. Maria took a few moments before answering, puzzled by a question that she obviously considered that any Cypriot should not even need to ask. ‘Of course, 1974’, she said, but Stella was already replying apologetically: ‘Thank you, I knew it but I don’t know why I got mixed up. I’m so bad with dates’. When I was interviewing Maria some weeks later, we were discussing about her experiences in ‘the Cypriot community’ through her role as the newspaper editor. It was then that she recalled the dialogue with Stella and said: ‘I realised that the community here has many problems but the main one is with the British born Cypriots. They have no idea about what is going on in Cyprus. They are not fully British and they are not fully Cypriots. In a way, I feel sorry for them’.

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<sup>49</sup> Mügge (2010) similarly describes the rejection by Kurdish youth in Holland of established political structures through the creation of new Kurdish organisations.

Hyphenated ethnic terms, like ‘British-Cypriot’, are used in everyday discourse both as political and descriptive categories to designate dual or multiple cultural affiliation and belonging. On one hand, they emerge from and fit well with the language of multiculturalism and the political project behind it in the ‘new Europe’ (Modood 1997). On the other hand, they are employed by individuals to declare personal identifications and life experiences. This duality or multiplicity of cultural loyalties has been celebrated in the literature often as tautological to a hybrid condition that is created in and defines contexts of postcoloniality. Associated either with ‘new ethnicities’ (Hall 1992) or with new culturally liminal spaces (Bhabha 1994), hybridity has been conceptualised in terms of its potential to interrogate fixed identities and transcend national or ethnic borders.

However, as the incident in the newspaper demonstrates, being ‘in-between’ can also be rendered to a condition of being nowhere fully. Even in such a mundane and ordinary interaction, Stella’s lack of historical and cultural knowledge, which *as/in order to be* a Cypriot she should possess and be able to instantly utilise, was highlighted and commented upon in a manner as subtle as a pause during dialogue. British Cypriots are constantly interrogated about their language competency, historical knowledge and cultural skills in a number of spaces; within family contexts, in media discourses, in public discussions in associations and community organisations, when they travel to Cyprus or when they attend ‘Greek’ school. Sharing once the same flight from London to Cyprus with a group of British born Cypriots, I observed them practising with some apprehension their Greek vocabulary and testing each other’s knowledge on the latest Greek popular music and songs preparing themselves for encounters with friends and relatives in the island. Celebratory accounts of hybridity, therefore, tend to dismiss to a large extent the fact that ideas of ‘cultural authenticity’ and belonging are not only externally imposed but that they are also internalised and reproduced by diasporic subjects themselves. The discourse of ‘cultural (in)authenticity’, into which diasporic Cypriots become socialised sustains their orientation towards Cyprus<sup>50</sup>, which is imagined as a territorialised source of ethnic identity.

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<sup>50</sup> This argument does not aim to dismiss other experiences in Britain that affect identity formation among British born Cypriots, such as social discrimination and racism. One of my informants described how he first started inquiring about his Cypriot identity and becoming involved in ‘the community’, when he was called ‘a Paki’ at school, explaining the verbal attack due to his skin colour. However, such events and

This, however, does not mean that British born Cypriots are confined by an assumed primordial connection to a 'homeland'. The following example, one among many similar incidents in the everyday encounters of diasporic Cypriots, illustrates the point. One evening at the 'Greek' school, a British born Cypriot woman in her mid-thirties was picking up her children after class. The teacher, who had been transferred to the school from Cyprus a few years before, was commenting about how difficult he found his everyday interactions with 'British people'. In a stereotyping mode, he was arguing that 'British people are unfriendly and inhospitable and they don't like relating to foreigners'. 'Yes', the woman responded, 'it is so difficult for *us* to live with *them* some times'. The teacher appeared almost shocked by her reaction: 'But it's not the same for you. You are British too, aren't you?', he asked the woman, to which she took no time to answer: 'Of course, we are'.

The intriguing part of this episode is that it was ended there. No further explanations or comments were added. No matter what the intentions of the teacher were, the British born woman masterfully shifted between the two categories of identification, simultaneously evoking and challenging them. While she initially showed empathy towards the teacher's concerns, she immediately rehabilitated her 'Britishness', when her 'Cypriotness' was interrogated by him. His surprised reaction implied that he did not see the two of them belonging to the same collectivity –or at least being Cypriot in the same way. By admitting to this conclusion, the woman somehow managed to avoid potential tension in this particular context.

There are a few important points to be made in relation to the incident. It does illustrate according to 'hybridity theories' that single and static identities are challenged by a diasporic 'double consciousness'. In this state, individuals question and reflect upon their own cultural resources and affiliations and transcend established ways of thinking about belonging. However, what the example also points towards is the importance of context, in which all these processes take place. Hybridity theories have been quite hasty to applaud the transformative potential of this postcolonial and postmodern condition, without paying enough attention to variations of how hybridity is

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experiences were raised less often in the narratives of British born Cypriots than perhaps in other diasporas (e.g. McLoughlin, S. and Kalra, V. 1999).

experienced and acted upon in different milieus. Anthias (2006a: 178) argues that we cannot pre-emptively assume that hybridities take always particular shapes or that they even consistently emerge in diasporic contexts. ‘Such hybridities cannot be judged as either transgressive or progressive without paying attention to their deployment’.

To take Anthias’s suggestion a step further, it seems important not only to trace when and where hybridities are *deployed* but also how they are *(re)produced*, *(re)defined* and *subverted* through everyday experiences and interactions. Because these contexts are not power-free, hybridities have to be examined as products of a wider nexus of interpersonal, socio-political and ideological power relations that constantly shift. In his critique of hybridity studies, Hutnyk (1998: 414) calls attention to the situations when the concept loses its political content and becomes not just a superficial postmodern parole but also ideologically dangerous for masking ongoing undercurrent struggles. As he characteristically writes, ‘[t]heorising hybridity becomes, in some cases, an excuse for ignoring sharp organisational questions, enabling a passive and comfortable -if linguistically sophisticated- intellectual quietism’.

The incident between the British born Cypriot and the teacher pushes for theorisations of identity beyond the concept of hybridity. The woman strategically shifts between different identities in ways that resist a condition of hybridity that leads to disempowerment and silencing. Goffman ([1959] 1990), in ‘The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life’, compares self-representation by social actors to theatrical performances, where the roles one takes up correspond to the expectation of the audience that watches. He argues that what is important for the maintenance of coherence and consistency is an agreement of the setting between actor and audiences. When the agreement shifts, as it does when the teacher challenges a common Cypriotness with the woman, the performance of the self alters in order to adjust to the new conditions. McLoughlin and Kalra (1999: 135) find similar dynamic and innovative performances of identity among British-Mirpuri youth, which call for attention to *routes* rather than *roots* (Gilroy 1993). As the authors articulate it, ‘[v]ery far from “being caught between two cultures”, as some have suggested in the past, the young people we spoke to produced situational and improvised accounts of identity and belonging which straddled “here” and “there”, “home” and “away”’.

To paraphrase a famous expression, there are only three problems with the term ‘British-Cypriot’<sup>51</sup>; the word ‘British’, the word ‘Cypriot’ and the hyphen. One of the main limitations and critiques of ‘hybridity’ is that through a notion of ‘mixing’, it reinforces the same categories that it seeks to de-essentialise (Caglar 1997: 170); in this case, the terms ‘British’ and ‘Cypriot’ appear as defined a priori and remain unproblematised. However, these terms carry ideological meanings that are (re)produced and negotiated at the shifting intersections between individual experience and overarching political structures and discourses.

The term Cypriot, for instance, in the UK is popularly understood to connote Greekness. In his novel ‘The Cypriot’, Andreas Koumi (2006: 32-33), brings to the surface the problem of this exclusive interpretation of the term Cypriot, through an episode, in which his main character Tony is being introduced by his friend Dave to a British woman in the pub. Tony, a Greek-Cypriot, who went to London as a migrant in the 1950s remains quite silent about his origins and his secret past in Cyprus that involved a life-changing, albeit short-lived, relationship with a Turkish-Cypriot young woman. He narrates:

‘I found myself rubbing the bristles on my chin self-consciously. I wished I’d made the effort to shave before coming out.  
 “Oh, dear. I should have warned you, Ruth,” interjected Dave, overhearing her as he returned from the bar with a round of drinks. “He doesn’t like to talk about that.”  
 Ruth accepted her glass of gin and tonic and took a sip. “I’m not after Tony’s life story, Dave. I just wanted to place him. Spanish? Italian? How about Greek? There’s quite a few living round here now.”  
 “Careful, Ruth’, warned Dave, wagging a finger at his cousin. “He’s touchy about people calling him Greek.”  
 “Turkish then”, Ruth suggested. Dave winced.  
 “OK, I wish I hadn’t asked”, she said with resignation. All three of us sipped our drink in an awkward silence. I knew I had to be the one to break it.  
 “I’m Cypriot”, I said, and then felt obliged to add, “I was born in a village in Cyprus. I came to England when I was a young man. I’ve not been back”.  
 “I see”, she ventured, in a way which suggested she didn’t rally see at all. How could she see? She looked at me expectantly.  
 “I’m sorry, Ruth. There’s nothing more to say”.  
 Ruth now looked at me with compassion.

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<sup>51</sup> Borrowed from Latour (2005), who has used the expression in his discussion of the ‘Actor-Network-Theory’.

“I’m the one who should apologise,” she corrected. “Where you’re heading is more important than where you’re from. It’s what I tell the kids<sup>52</sup>.”

I gave Ruth an approving smile.

“You should smile more, Tony. It lights up your face”, she suggested and I felt myself blush. The butterflies were returning.

I wanted to know more about Ruth’s work and she seemed delighted to tell me.

“They come from so many different backgrounds. English, Irish, Caribbean, Indian. One or two Greek kids too, I think”, she enthused proudly, “Or do I mean Cypriot?”

Koumi, whose book can be analysed as a Cyprio-centric account of conflict, migration and diaspora from the perspective of a British born Cypriot, skilfully presents a context where the ignorance of the British woman is treated in a sympathetic manner but also where simultaneously the power of the dominant discourse emerges as unsettling.

It is more so when such discourse excludes Turkish Cypriots from definitions of Cypriotness. Once I joined Sezan and Andreas in a pub near Wood Green tube station. Of Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot origin respectively, they are involved in bi-communal initiatives in London and they are supporters of Cypriotism. While we were having a political discussion about Cyprus, a British man from an adjacent table approached us and in a didactic voice he said: ‘You Greeks, I’m so tired of you. You always blame Turkey and Turks. Get over it!’. Without knowing explicitly what caused the man’s reaction and, moreover, what his interpretation of our discussion was, Sezan and Andreas tried to explain that they are actually Cypriot. Unsatisfied from their response the man was leaving the place, when Sezan said loudly: ‘And as a matter of fact I’m Turkish’. She seemed very surprised by her own utterance and turning to us she explained: ‘I really don’t know why I said this. I always say I’m Cypriot, it was the first time I actually shouted that I’m Turkish’.

What is illustrated broadly in this section is that whereas British Cypriots are defined as culturally hybrid, and they are therefore rendered to a position of ‘in-betweeness’, within British society and within intra-communal (first/second generation) and transnational contexts (diaspora/Cyprus), identity, however, emerges as dynamically produced through innovative ways of appealing to ‘Cypriotness’ and ‘Greekness’

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<sup>52</sup> Ruth works in a youth club.

depending on particular contexts and experiences. As it will be clear in the rest of the chapter, second generation Cypriots, organising themselves around ‘peace politics’, draw on a language of Cypriotism in order to perform a Cypriot identity that redefines its common meaning in British public discourses. On the other hand, when Cypriotness as articulated in established Cypriotist accounts proves limited in reflecting their particular experiences, they evoke and employ Britishness in order to expand it.

#### 4.4 ‘Cypriots United’

Cypriots United (CU) was conceived as an idea and was established by a small group of British born Cypriots in London towards the end of 2007. The pro-peace group promoted its cause through a quite strong Internet presence and activity, especially on Facebook, and it very quickly became known amongst peace supporters in the diaspora and Cyprus. This was a time before the 2008 elections in Cyprus that was marked by a peak of political activism and CU took the opportunity to promote their ideas by lobbying British and Cypriot politicians, publishing opinion pieces and organising events in various venues around London.

The *raison d’être* of the group was to represent a particular demographic of diasporic Cypriots, whom the founders considered as marginalised and voiceless not only vis-à-vis nationalist movements but also within peace politics both in Cyprus and in the UK. Serhat, one of the founders, exemplified the political and ideological gaps and tensions, within which CU emerged, when he traced its genesis:

‘It was 2007, November, in the Foreign Office, at an event just for the Turkish Cypriot Community and we were what they call it the representatives of the Turkish Cypriot community. We were against the idea in the first place of Greek and Turkish Cypriots meeting separately. If we fight for unification, it is a bit odd to meet separately. I remember sitting there as a journalist, I was not allowed to ask any questions, just take notes and write the article [about the event], feeling that I was being used. OK, fine that’s my job to come there as a journalist and write the news. But I remember thinking ‘these people, who the hell are they?’. There was the main self-proclaimed representative, who is a nationalist, discussing whether Cyprus would join the Eurovision song contest. There was also a woman there, who is a member of ‘*Embargoed!*’<sup>53</sup>, asking

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<sup>53</sup> ‘Embargoed!’ ([www.embargoed.org](http://www.embargoed.org)) is a London-based group campaigning for the lift of what its supporters identify as an economic and political embargo against Turkish Cypriots in North Cyprus. It was established in 2005 and cushions their pledge on a language of human rights. Some high-profile

ridiculous questions completely irrelevant to what's happening. I felt used and lots of people afterwards felt the same. So this event was organised by people from *Embargoed!* to put forward to the minister of Europe an idea that only some people from the Turkish Cypriot community subscribe to. Whether they are a large number or a small one, I don't know. But they were presenting themselves as if they were *the* voice, the *only* voice of the Turkish Cypriots. And they wanted us to make big front news about it to help them. I was fed up and I told Ilke later in the pub 'let's set something up'. But Ilke said that they wanted to set something up within CTP. And I said that we will not succeed in the party, because not all Cypriots vote for CTP. They are not all left-wing. We should do this broader and do it bi-communally too. I disagreed with them, I resigned from the CTP committee and with Petros and the help of Mary started this thing. And then other people got involved. [...] We wanted to create a Cypriot group, to show that we exist. Because before that we didn't exist. [...] You have this sort of groups in Cyprus, like Hands Across the Divide who are doing a good job. But we felt that the diaspora was left behind, maybe because diasporas in general live in a time warp.'

#### *CU and 'traditional' peace politics*

In our first meeting, both Serhat and Petros, two of the founders of the group presented themselves as outsiders to political circles that dealt with peace politics in London. Petros came from a left-wing Greek Cypriot family, who, however, never spoke to the young Petros about politics. He later became involved in the AKEL-associated Cypriot Centre and its London newspaper '*Parikiaki*', where he was contributing to its English section. He very quickly felt alienated by their 'flag-waving communism', as he characteristically said, and decided to leave the newspaper and to detach himself from the CCC.

Serhat, on the other hand, grew up in South London, away from the Cypriot centres of North London. This geographical distance coincided with a socio-political remoteness from 'everyday Cypriotness', as Serhat's family did not socialise very much with other Cypriots, Greek or Turkish. They were not politically active either, and as Serhat says, 'my dad was not an educated person, so he believed what he read in the newspapers'. In his early teens, Serhat was leaning towards Turkish nationalism and found himself writing passionate letters about Cyprus to local newspapers. It was only when he went

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Turkish Cypriots are amongst its members and it is a particularly active group in lobbying with British politicians. Their alleged dynamism and influence in the UK made '*Embargoed!*' well-known amongst other political circles in London and Cyprus. For supporters of rapprochement and re-unification, however, the group represents a pro-partition and nationalist trend and it is, therefore, seen as antithetical and threatening to peace.

to university that he started questioning his political ideas and changed his views and stance on the Cyprus problem. A South Londoner, Serhat started engaging with the Cypriot circles in North London and after university, he landed a job in one of the Turkish Cypriot newspapers located in the south end of Green Lanes.

Whereas both Andreas and Serhat spoke about their detachment from the centre of Cypriot politics, their marginalisation vis-à-vis such structures developed in almost opposite directions. Petros was originally an ‘insider’, who eventually became disenchanted with the politics of AKEL and the CCC. Serhat on the other hand, who is in his late twenties and more than ten years younger than Petros, initially came as an ‘outsider’, who worked himself up and into community politics in North London.

These identities were not only discussed and proclaimed by the individuals involved but were also debated by other members of the community within discourses of political authority and authenticity. It is quite characteristic that when internal issues emerged within CU, Serhat was accused for lacking a legitimate background in diasporic and peace politics. A few months after the creation of CU, tensions surfaced from within the group about its organisation and direction. Ilke, a young Turkish Cypriot man, who was one of the core members of the group decided to resign. He explained his reaction as a frustration against the inexperience of some of the other members in terms of community politics juxtaposing it to his own socio-political background. Explaining the events that resulted to his withdrawal from the group in one of our meetings, he concluded: ‘Serhat is not even from *here* [meaning North London]. He comes from *nowhere*. He lived all his life in South London. I have been raised here and my whole family have been involved in the community politics. I come from a leftist background and my uncle is a well-known activist both in London and Cyprus. My family have given their life for Cyprus’.

This comment is significant for considering both the metaphorical and physical geographies of political processes and identities. Generalised terms, such as ‘diaspora politics’ and ‘peace politics’ tend to mask the way internal politics is played out in and defined by particular localities. As shown here, participation in Cypriot peace politics in London is often judged according to locally specific criteria that determine one’s social and cultural capital –or the lack of it- to do so, through rhetorics of a territorially

imagined symbolic ‘landscape’<sup>54</sup> of Cypriots politics’. As Howard Ross (2009: 6) argues,

‘[a] society’s symbolic landscape communicates social and political meanings through specific public images, physical objects, and other expressive representations. [...] Symbolic landscapes reflect how people understand their world and others in it, but they can also be significant shapers of these worlds when they establish and legitimate particular normative standards and power relations within and between groups [...] Symbolic landscapes communicate inclusion and exclusion as well as hierarchy, and they portray dominant and subordinate groups in particular ways’.

It was these locally particular ‘cultural and political centres’ that CU aimed to challenge. The group’s establishment did not only oppose nationalist politics in the diaspora but also the monopoly of ‘anti-nationalism’ or ‘Cypriotism’ by particular agents, organisations and structures. AKEL and, by association, the CCC appeared as the main representatives of this ‘old’ establishment. The Turkish Cypriot Left was also included in this category as traditional allies with AKEL, however, to a much lesser extent; this was mainly due to the relatively low popularity and limited influence of CTP in London. The opposition to ‘traditional’ peace politics in the diaspora was motivated and enacted on different levels and, although not all of these complex processes can be exhaustively analysed here, I will try to highlight some of the main points of divergence between ‘old’ and ‘new’ peace politics in London.

First of all, as quotes by Petros and Serhat have shown before, CU was created partly to break away from the ideological dominance of the Left. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Cypriot communist parties have had a more conspicuous role in peace politics both in Cyprus and in London, historically justified by their lack of involvement in the ethnic conflict. The main difference between the two contexts, however, is that in Cyprus, individuals and groups of more diverse backgrounds, ideological orientations and agendas have participated in peace activities and organisations, ranging from identity-based groups, such as women’s groups to right-wing political parties, such as DISI.

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<sup>54</sup> As Christou (2006b: 34-35) argues in terms of Greek-Americans, ‘cultural cores alternatively provide the basis for a communal shared sense of ‘sacred space’, although, as she acknowledges, they are formed both through consensus and conflict.

In numerous discussions about the lack of diverse peace activism in London, two are the main interpretations that emerged in my informants' accounts. The first relates to the experience of migration, as most Cypriots spent their lives working to establish themselves and their family, which left little time for politics in general. The second explanation revolved around the discourse of co-existence in the diaspora - 'Cypriots have lived peacefully and together in London' -, which implied that there was no immediate need for strong political action. Due to its strong support base, therefore, and due to the lack of other political actions and structures around peace, AKEL monopolised the organisation and development of peace politics in London.

For Petros and Serhat, as well as for many other members of CU, this dominance posed issues of ideological rigidity and exclusion. In my first meeting with Serhat in the Turkish Cypriot Community Association (TCCA) in Haringey, he made this explicit at the beginning of our conversation: 'I'm not a communist or leftist myself but I am interested in peace and reunification in Cyprus. I don't think the two are mutually exclusive'. Serhat expressed a feeling of alienation and fatigue by the language and ideological line of Cypriot communism, which also underlined the politics and agenda of CU.

While many members of the CU, including Serhat and Petros, openly expressed their support for the candidacy of Christofias before his election in February 2008 both in private and in public forums and events, the group tried to distinguish themselves from AKEL by embracing other ideological strands on peace and re-unification. It is characteristic that in one of the largest events that CU organised at the London School of Economics in association with the Hellenic Observatory in October 2008, one of the key speakers invited was Cyprus's ex-president, George Vassiliou. Vassiliou, also a well-known businessman, has been consistently involved in peace activities and negotiations throughout his career and he took the opportunity at the particular event to emphasise the economic benefits that re-unification would bring to Cypriots. He suggested that, for instance, Turkish companies would be very keen to invest in Cyprus after a solution in order to access EU markets and this would, therefore, contribute enormously to the economic development of the island. This neo-liberal and instrumentalist approach to peace that promotes the ideas of the free market and economic prosperity has been at the core of his politics and activities. Unsurprisingly, in

this line of argument, the European Union features as an ideal framework within which re-unification can be negotiated and achieved. CU endorsed the argument and it has often been repeated by many of its members in private and public events as an alternative to the communist language of AKEL, which at least in London, still attacked international capital and called for a peace solution based on the solidarity of the Cypriot working-classes on both sides against foreign and economic imperialism. For some second-generation Cypriots, communist peace politics appeared as *passé* and unrealistic, reminiscent of older periods, from which they personally felt detached and alienated. As Serhat remarked, 'not everyone is a leftist' and CU attempted to open up to other rhetorics and solution ideas to address the disenchantment of some Cypriots with AKEL's communism.

However, CU's reaction to 'traditional' peace politics in London cannot be reduced to ideological differences. After all, many members of AKEL, including Petros, still considered themselves leftist and were sympathetic to the history and activism of the political party. Even Serhat, in one of our interviews pointed out that 'AKEL in Cyprus are doing a fantastic job but here it's different. It's personal. People in London are motivated for different reasons'. This statement points to the second conspicuous point of tension between first and second-generation Cypriots involved in peace politics, which could be summarised as an intergenerational and interpersonal struggle for power and authority. Whereas the AKEL committee members in their meetings repeatedly discussed the lack of participation of young people in their activities, some younger Cypriots saw the AKEL organisation as a type of gerontocracy, where the same hierarchy and structures have been reproduced for decades with the same people continuously holding positions and roles. This gap in mutual understanding and co-operation was reflected in the words of the president of the CCC: 'One of our main concerns is that young people need to be more active and involved. I have heard that they are doing things on the Internet and they talk to each other. But we need to get them involved in the activities of the centre'. What the president, who has also served as the Secretary General of AKEL for a long period, did not recognise, according to second-generation Cypriots, is that the recycling of power amongst the same individuals alienated anyone new who wanted to join them. This was the experience of Petros, who often explained how as a young British Cypriot within AKEL and its newspaper

‘Parikiaki’ his voice was marginal and almost never considered by the older people who held offices and positions.

However, whereas the criticism by CU members was often articulated against particular individuals holding onto power, the third point of divergence that is tightly related to the second one was expressed through a dissatisfaction of younger peace supporters with the internal organisational structures and values of ‘traditional’ peace politics in London. When President Christofias visited London and gave a public speech in May 2008 at the Alexandra Palace Hotel, members of CU were particularly agitated with the failure of the local AKEL organisers to provide live translation of the President’s speech into Turkish. This marked for them a consistent pattern within AKEL’s bi-communalism, in which Turkish Cypriots are used as token figures and are not seen as equal sharers of the State (see also Chapter 3). Serhat spoke about this tokenism when I met him and some other CU members the day after the speech and inquired about his absence from the event. ‘Why should I go? I wouldn’t be able to understand. These people [AKEL London] are doing bi-communalism by including two members [Turkish Cypriots] in their committee’.

On the other hand, CU tried to engage in ‘prefigurative politics’ (Breines 1989) and develop the organisation of their group according to a vision of the structures and values which a united Cyprus in the future should figure. First of all, the group moved beyond the term ‘bi-communal’ and adopted the self-characterisation of ‘inter-communal’ acknowledging therefore the other minorities of Cyprus, such as Maronites, Armenians and Latins. The bi-communalism of AKEL was critiqued as reproducing further exclusion of other Cypriots and both Petros and Serhat tried to incorporate into CU members of the other communities.

The same applied for issues of gender that were not addressed in the politics of AKEL, in which very few women held organisational and leading roles. Aware of such male-centrism, CU very quickly after their emergence tried to involve women and gave the role of ‘joint co-ordinator’ to Sophia, a British Cypriot, who took a very active role in the organising of the group’s activities. In general, CU aimed to deal with issues of strict hierarchy, power monopoly and lack of internal democracy that, according to

them, characterised AKEL by pursuing the ideals of diversity, multi-vocality and horizontality in their organisational structures.

*Who are the Cypriots United?: multiculturalism and bi-communalism*

CU was created to represent a particular group of second-generation Cypriots in London who felt alienated by the way peace politics had developed in the diaspora. In that sense, they also aimed to represent a 'fresh' diasporic outlook to the Cyprus issue. However, CU had consistently been careful to not intervene directly in the politics in Cyprus and stressed the fact that their space of operation was Britain and the Cypriot community abroad. As Serhat highlighted,

'We can't possibly represent people from Cyprus. We represent students but they are still based here. We lobby the government here and most of us are born and bred here so we understand the language, how the system works. We are looking to apply what we take for granted here -multiculturalism, human rights, equality- to Cyprus. So we are looking at peace from a British perspective.'

This 'British perspective', which is articulated in a language of human rights and multiculturalism, emerged in the discussions of many second-generation Cypriots as the most positive contribution that the diaspora could make to Cyprus. At the same time, a lack of understanding of these values was often highlighted as one of the main negatives of life in Cyprus.

Multiculturalism in this case is interpreted and talked about in two main ways that reflect broader discursive strands on the topic both in public and academic contexts. Firstly, the term is evoked to describe an organic way of life in the UK that is characterised by multiplicity of cultures, religions and mentalities and is often associated with values, such as tolerance and mutual respect (Modood 1997). In a night out in Larnaca with a group of British-born young women in the summer of 2007, most of them were commenting on the lack of a 'multicultural atmosphere' in Cyprus. Two of them were on holiday and the other two had left the UK to live in the island. Maria, who had moved permanently to Larnaca with her parents after spending the first 23 years of her life in London said: 'I'd never marry a *Cypriot-Cypriot* [meaning someone born and raised in Cyprus as opposed to the diaspora]. I think Cypriot men here are so

closed-minded. Cyprus is not multicultural at all. I feel much more foreign here than I have ever felt in London’.

The quote is quite significant because, on one level, it expresses feelings of social and cultural exclusion, which some diasporic Cypriots seem to experience as a result of contact with Cyprus. As discussed before, the discrimination, that is often humorously implied in the term ‘Charlies’<sup>55</sup> used for British Cypriots, is constructed around issues of language, authenticity and cultural repertoire. Members of the diaspora, who experience such types of marginalisation often associate them with the lack of an ‘open-minded’ or multicultural mentality, which on the contrary is represented as central in their life in the UK. In their interpretation, multiculturalism, encouraging identity politics and minority recognition (Turner 1993: 429), allows them to be ‘more Cypriot’ in London than in Cyprus. On a second level, however, the quote makes a particular value judgment, according to which ‘multiculturalism’ appears as an important indication of a liberal and progressive society. Maria’s friends agreed with her by stating that Cypriot men as well as Cyprus are quite conservative and ‘backwards’ in that respect.

In the agenda of CU, therefore, multiculturalism appears as an important requirement for a solution of the ‘Cyprus problem’ and for the operations of a future united Cyprus. CU members often criticise the fact that, although diverse groups of people, including large numbers of migrants<sup>56</sup>, live in Cyprus, multiculturalism both as an ideological framework and as practice has not characterised the Cypriot context. Besides it being employed to express an inherent aspect of the diasporic experience, in terms of the ‘Cyprus problem, ‘multiculturalism’ is used by second-generation Cypriots to refer to how ‘Cypriotness’ should be articulated and envisaged. Characteristically, both sides of the term are simultaneously evoked in CU’s official declaration that states:

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<sup>55</sup> A term used in everyday language to refer to British Cypriots.

<sup>56</sup> Hatay and Bryant (2008b) and Demetriou (2008) have produced reports documenting the experiences and lives of migrants in North and South Nicosia respectively. Whereas there is increasing academic attention towards migrant communities and experiences, the dominance of the ‘Cyprus problem’ and ideas of ‘bi-communalism’ on Cypriot public discourses leaves less space for discussions about migration and diversity that go beyond ‘anti-migrant’ rhetorics.

*Cyprus is not a problem between two nationalist extremes, each propagating the idea, whether consciously or otherwise, that the island's people comprises "Greeks" and "Turks" ahead of Cypriots; each promoting the perceived interests of the respective "motherlands"; each emphasising rights for one group at the expense of rights for the other.*

*The real differences in Cyprus are between these increasingly marginalised factions and the vast majority of Cypriots. Cypriots whose parents and grandparents lived, worked and played together peacefully in a united homeland, albeit under British rule. Cypriots who today live, work and play together peacefully in London's cultural melting pot. Cypriots who are, first and foremost, for Cyprus.*

*Our Declaration*

*We, as Cypriots United, declare that we are a united people with a shared goal: to create a reunited common homeland where:*

- all Cypriots can live in peace, freedom and prosperity under European Union values;*
- no individual or community faces isolation, restriction of human rights, or alienation from ancestral lands or heritage;*
- diversity, multiculturalism and inclusiveness are fully embraced and there is no discrimination on the basis of linguistic, religious or ethnic background;*
- there is participative democracy at all levels of society;*
- there is respect for the sanctity of life, rule of law and freedom of expression;*
- there is no interference in the affairs of state by military or paramilitary forces, religious bodies or by other countries;*
- there is a Cypriot citizenship under a bi-communal, bi-zonal Federation leading to a united Cyprus.*

What becomes noticeable in the declaration, however, is that the discourse of ‘past peaceful co-existence’, which informs the politics of ‘bi-communalism’ and underscores the basic rhetoric of Cypriotism as developed in Cyprus and the diaspora, are not rejected. On the contrary, a historical connection is being made between a quite romanticised ‘past co-existence’ in Cyprus before the conflict and the contemporary multicultural condition that Britishness entails. Co-existence in the pre-war era

represents an inherent quality of 'authentic' Cypriotness that was robbed by the operations of nationalism in the island; on the other hand, it is still to be found amongst Cypriots in London enabled by the British context. In other words, by employing Cypriotist accounts of the past, CU aim to redefine the limited understanding of 'Cypriotness' within British discourses that often reduce it to a synonym of Greekness. On the other hand, taking a 'British stance', framed through the language of multiculturalism and open-mindedness, they expand Cyprio-centric discourses of identity to include experiences and narratives of those, who otherwise appear as culturally inauthentic in ongoing debates of 'who is a Cypriot'.

This particular version of Cypriotism, however, although it provided a discursive space for British born Cypriots within local, national and transnational political spheres, was not directly endorsed by all its members. Whereas for some created conditions of political empowerment, for others the agenda of multiculturalism proved alienating, particularly for students from Cyprus, some of who were active participants in the board meetings of CU. A Turkish Cypriot woman, who came to the UK in 2004 to study and work, raised the issue of multiculturalism as romantic and untimely for the Cyprus context. 'Let's try to deal with the problems of the two communities first and then we can talk about multiculturalism and all these issues', she commented, in one of the group's meeting at the premises of 'Toplum Postası', the Turkish Cypriot leftist newspaper. 'You have no idea what is happening in Cyprus. No one will listen to such arguments', she continued saying, highlighting once again the discrepancy between life in Cyprus and life in London. Paradoxically, however, it was such comments and interactions, which reinforced the meaning of the Cypriotist language of CU.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

The chapter has aimed to illustrate that a close ethnographic study of the involvement of British born Cypriots in Cyprio-centric politics at a particular period before the 2008 presidential elections in the Republic of Cyprus, unravels its embeddedness within particular spheres of political and social interaction in London. It is therefore argued here that in order to understand how and when political subjectivities are constructed and articulated in a transnational context, we need to examine them at the intersection of broader political and historical processes and localised experiences and narratives. Whereas British born Cypriots are often characterised in popular discourses as

culturally apathetic towards and politically disengaged from the life of the ‘community’, it has been argued here that such categorisations should be examined within existing power structures and relations. It then becomes apparent that far from being culturally and politically aloof, some British born Cypriots resisted the ways politics and cultural life in London has been monopolised by established agents and organisations and, by employing a Cypriotist language, formed their own political groups in order to engage in peace politics and, at the same time, to alter their traditional format and operations. Their attempt was timed at a historical period when political and discursive shifts in Cyprus enabled the proliferation of Cyprio-centric politics. Peace politics, therefore, crystallised some of the undercurrent inter-personal and inter-generational conflicts in the diaspora, revolving around issues of authority and the right ‘to represent’. At the same time, however, when they do take political initiatives, second generation Cypriots in the UK are interrogated in terms of their cultural knowledge and authenticity often by the same agents who encourage their participation in the politics of ‘home’. The discourse of ‘cultural inauthenticity’ is employed as disempowering and silencing, but British born Cypriots, rather than being trapped in a state of ‘in-betweenness’, they often strategically shift between different categories of identification in order to overcome ‘voicelessness’ as experienced in various contexts and levels.

All these processes are illustrated and encapsulated in the case study of CU, a group of British born Cypriots, who, through a language of Cypriotism, aimed at reinstating discursive articulations both of Cypriotness and Britishness that reflect their own experiences and identifications; albeit, reified through the rhetorical tropes of ‘bi-communal co-existence’ and ‘multiculturalism’ respectively. Cypriotism is appropriated, therefore, here as a means of resisting cultural and political marginalisation in local, national and transnational contexts.

As discussed in the chapter, the hegemonic constructions of Cypriotness in London were also articulated through particular claims to symbolic and physical landscapes. North London and organisational spaces like the CCC figure as actual and imagined centres of ‘community’ life. However, whereas CU emerged as a counter-hegemonic group to such cultural and political cores, the group did not radically disconnect from them; on the contrary peace politics provided some of the members the cultural and social capital to penetrate the landscape of Cypriotness in North London. They

maintained, therefore, a close relationship to the CCC, while simultaneously trying to develop a different political and ideological approach. One of their very first events, for instance, took place in the premises of the Cypriot Centre and the group often held some of its meetings there. In many ways, for the group to acquire legitimacy, it needed the recognition by the ‘official’ structures of peace politics in London, which have long-established connections both with the Cypriot and British states.

On the other hand, British born Cypriots found and founded alternative spaces for political engagement that secured a larger degree of autonomy from the control and co-optation by ‘traditional’ institutions in London. In the next chapter, we turn our attention to the ways the Internet provided such spaces, by focusing on Cypriotist bi-communal groups that developed activity on Facebook, in order to examine how the Cyprio-centric discourse was shaped in this context and what kinds of politics emerged online.

## CHAPTER 5

### **The Faces of Cyprus on Facebook**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

There has been a wide acknowledgment in the recent mass protests in the Middle East, collectively labelled as ‘the Arab Spring’, that Information technologies, especially social networking sites, have been instrumental for the mobilisation and organisation of large numbers of people into revolutionary political action. Such technology uses have dispelled fears by theorists, who writing in the 1990s tended to see the Internet as the end of real politics (Holmes 1997). Less pessimistically, other researchers of the same period emphasised on the role of technology as determinant for the changing nature of grassroots politics; Castells (1997), for instance, described how significant the use of Internet has been in the development and popularity of the Zapatistas movement in Mexico (see also O’Lear 1999); for others, while the Internet enhances and expands offline political action by allowing for the development of counter-hegemonic discourses, it is not however an adequate means of politics in itself, but it only complements real-world struggles (Warf and Grimes 1997; Elin 2003).

Taking different perspectives, all these discussions, however, tend to accept separateness between online and offline politics, usually privileging the latter as more ‘real’ or efficient (cf. Ayers 2003). Drawing on anthropological literature on the Internet (Miller and Slater 2000; Hine 2000), this chapter argues that instead of accepting such a dichotomy a priori, it is important to understand how ideas of online and offline politics develop in particular contexts and how this distinction is constructed and negotiated by different agents. Such approach allows then to examine how online politics are embedded within broader offline historical and ideological processes, power structures and dynamics. In terms of Cyprio-centric peace politics online, it is argued here that the disenchantment of some individuals with Internet activism has to be understood in relation to how ‘peace activism’ in Cyprus has been historically developed around a ‘particular landscape of peace’ that emphasises the importance of transcending physical boundaries, such as the Green Line, and meeting face-to-face as a sign of commitment

on behalf of peace supporters. Others, however, who lack access to such established 'landscapes of peace', privilege online politics as a context that provides them with opportunities to gain social and cultural capital that are limited in offline settings.

Moreover, for some British born Cypriots, as highlighted in the previous chapter, the Internet provided a space for the articulation of a Cypriot-centric discourse and identity that were marginalised in cultural and political centres in London. Acknowledging this potential of Information Technologies, a large body of literature has examined the development of ethnic identity and politicisation of diasporas on the Internet (see for instance, Graham and Khosravi 2002; Panagakos 2003; Parham 2004; Axel 2004; Bernal 2006). Following such processes, Eriksen (2006) has identified different categories of 'long-distance nationalism' representing different diasporas. For instance, he presents the Kurdish diaspora as an example of 'pre-independence' nationalism and Moroccan-Dutch nationalism as 'multiculturalist'.

Whereas this categorisation is useful in understanding and tracing different styles and forms of Internet nationalism, it raises, however, some issues especially when applied to the Cypriot example. First, there are different 'nationalisms' promoted within and by the same diaspora. On the Internet, there are Cypriots who promote ethnic, Greek or Turkish nationalist ideas. These are different to the Cypriotism mostly promoted and articulated by pro-peace and pro-re-unification voices. Second, by focusing and categorising diasporic nationalism online, we overlook other kinds of interactions and connections between the diaspora and 'home' and tend to re-territorialise diasporas not only in terms of the 'country of origin' but in terms of the 'place of residence'. In the Cypriot online sites, members of the diaspora, communicate and co-exist with members who reside in Cyprus. Such interactions produce discursive contexts within which the nation is defined and imagined and this is a process that involves conflict as well as consensus. Instead of strictly labelling a Cyprio-centric nationalism online, it is, therefore, imperative to examine how Cypriotism is articulated but at the same time shifted and redefined online.

In order to address these points, the chapter ethnographically presents Cyprio-centric and bi-communal groups that developed high activity between 2007 and 2008 on Facebook. These groups emerged to a large extent in anticipation of the 2008

presidential election in the Republic of Cyprus, as ‘temporary communities of memory’ (Malkki 1997), bringing individuals together from the diaspora and Cyprus, who originally organised around this particular historical event. The first section (5.2) traces the history of technology use within the peace movement in Cyprus to examine in which ways Facebook continues and diverts from previous ICTs utilised for peace building. Without aiming at establishing a causal connection, such an ‘archaeological’ investigation provides insight into how ‘real’ political activism has been debated and articulated in Cyprus. Section 5.3 looks at ‘dynamics of mediation’ (Miller and Slater 2000), or, in other words, the ways Facebook is used for ‘peace politics’ and the reasons that it emerged as a suitable medium at that particular historical moment. I then look at the role of the diaspora in the pro-peace groups (5.4), in order to argue that whereas Facebook provided some diasporic agents with a voice that they claimed to be marginalised in offline settings, the debates around ‘who is a Cypriot’ online simultaneously challenged and reinforced ideas of cultural authenticity and authority ‘to speak as a Cypriot’. In section 5.5, one of the groups, ‘One Cyprus-One Cypriot Population’, is presented as a case study, illustrating how the Cypriotist character of the group is established and expressed and the ways the group operates online. However, the cohesion of the ‘imagined community’ created through the group is challenged internally; for some, its meaning ceases to exist when online politics does not convert into offline action. For others, on the contrary, who imagine themselves as participants in broader networks, it appears too limited and restrictive.

## **5.2 ICTs and Peace in Cyprus: tracing lineages**

The role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in conflict-affected areas is acknowledged to be twofold: on one hand, they enhance communication between opposing forces, individuals and groups and therefore contribute to reconciliation and peace-building (Stauffacher et al. 2005); in terms of their negative impact, on the other hand, they reinforce conflict by permitting different expressions of hate, violence and war; such processes are labelled as cyberconflict, cyberhate or cyberwar (Karatzogianni 2009), terms that are mainly employed to highlight a new (although this ‘newness’ is often debated) technological but also cultural twist in modern warfare. This chapter deals mainly with the role of the Internet in its former description, as a tool for peace and reconciliation; however, conflict, tensions and disruptions are also discussed as inherent parts of the same process.

Communication between the two parts was very restricted in Cyprus after the division in 1974 and the crossing to the other side was not officially permitted until 2003, when the ceasefire line opened for the first time after the war. As Anastasiou (2002) illustrates, physical separation has been part of a wider process of non-communication, sustained through state policies, public discourses, nationalist influences and media propaganda. This hostile context to communication raised serious obstacles for the development of bi-communal activities, which were relatively limited until the 1990s (Constantinou and Papadakis 2001). Up to the mid-1990s, most of these activities were externally mediated and supported by organisations such as the UN, the Fulbright Cyprus Commission, the American Embassy and the European Commission. The bi-communal movement peaked in the mid-1990s but faced a serious disruption in 1997, when the Turkish Cypriot administration decided to ban bi-communal exchanges; the ban lasted for more than a year and is considered to have played a detrimental role in the operations of the bi-communal movement (Anastasiou 2002).

Technology was given an important role in the facilitation of bi-communal activities and workshops, especially in the 1990s. At the beginning, computing technologies were introduced to the Cypriot peace activists by foreign peace builders trained in using particular computer programmes to enhance communication and understanding between the divided Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Giorgos Sophocleous, one of the older members of the peace movement and participant in the bi-communal workshops in the 1990s recalls the routines of his group under the supervision of the Fulbright scholar Benjamin Broom:

‘Ben, every Wednesday, with his computer, facilitated our own dialogue from 6 till 9 in the evening at Ledra Palace and every Thursday he facilitated their own [Turkish Cypriots] dialogue. And the data that was collected was shared with the participants. For instance, we were constructing our own vision for the future and they constructed theirs and we could see how close they were’<sup>57</sup>.

Without aiming at establishing an evolutionary or teleological connection between technologically enhanced peace activism in the 1990s and more recent uses of

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<sup>57</sup> Benjamin Broome has extensively written on his method and experience as a facilitator of bi-communal workshops in Cyprus in the mid-1990s; see for instance Broome (1997, 1998, 2001, 2003).

technology for peace, it can be argued that the use of computing technology at the early stages of the bi-communal movement founded the conditions in which technology became a significant element in the peace building process in Cyprus. It is notable that members of the bi-communal workshops in the 1990s went on to expand on their technological experience, fascination and expertise.

Giorgos Sophocleous is one of these individuals who connected his career and professional life with the peace movement. He was born in Cyprus and studied in Germany and the US before returning to the island. More than a decade after his first involvement with the bi-communal movement, he still considers himself a peace activist and runs an NGO involved in peace-building from his offices in central Nicosia. Amongst other projects, he was one of the founders of 'Technology for Peace' (Tech4Peace), a website designed to facilitate peace-building and dialogue; in this capacity, he assessed in one of our discussions the impact of technology on peace:

'When Denktaş forbade the crossings in December 1997, there was no way to carry on with the meetings. Only 3-4 groups carried on. So, we made the Technology for Peace. We tried to make an organising group that didn't work out. Some other groups kept meeting in Pyla<sup>58</sup>, individuals. And there was a bi-communal magazine that came out, 'Hade'. All this happened with no funding. But it was too little. The funding was all for the Americans who did the workshops. There was no funding for such things. It was only through individual contributions. If the UN gave funding, this would expand. The only funding we got was to establish computer networks between the North and South because at that point emails did not go directly from one side to the other. Technology helped at every point to some extent. We shouldn't exaggerate its impact but it did help. The first time it facilitated the structured dialogue, which needed the technology. The Internet helped a lot, especially after the green line closed. At that time the Internet was very limited in Cyprus and people who were involved in bi-communal activities did not really know how to use it. So we did lots of training to those people. And we had two cafes with four computers on this side and four on the other side that were accessible to all people. We also had virtual workshops, having as a model the Israeli-Palestinian context. Next thing that technology was useful about was the portal in 2000 when we had the 'Technology For Peace' site. This is where people could advertise all the events. We had

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<sup>58</sup> Pyla is a village that falls within the United Nations Buffer Zone and is still inhabited by both Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Papadakis (2005) has documented the politics of 'co-existence' in the village after the conflict. Because of these particularities, the village also became a place for bi-communal meetings between activists from both communities, especially when these were restricted elsewhere (Constantinou and Papadakis 2001).

thousands of hits in the first years. Now they are close to zero. The reason being that lots of other sites came out, like the UN site that advertised events and because we got attacked by hackers. They attack us all the time. The forum of the site never picked up. We were just too early. People did not even know what a forum is. We introduced all these concepts in Cyprus. At that time people didn't even know about emails. Kaiti Kleridou<sup>59</sup> was in our group. We got her a computer, we gave her 30 hours of lessons, we went to the presidential palace to train her just to have a person who could say 'now I know what an email is, so I can send an email'.'

There are some important points to be raised here in relation to Sophocleous's words and experience. First, like in other conflict affected areas, communication technologies have been employed in Cyprus to bridge the gap created by physical separation and to mediate peace. As externally introduced and imported at first, technology both materialised and abstracted peace building. Slides, charts and models generated by computing software contributed to a visual and tangible aspect to the peace process; on the other hand, the mediation of technology implied that, whereas a peace solution should be based on face-to-face interactions and human contact, it should, however, be processed through the 'neutral', 'impersonal' and 'scientific' mechanisms of the computer. In this sense, technology not only substituted for the lack of physical contact and communication but it also came to fill the vacuum created by subjectivity, emotions and tensions that were expected to rise in the face-to-face interactions of Cypriots of the two ethnic groups.

However, this 'sanitising' of communication and peace should not just be taken as an inherent part and natural result of technology. It is rather imperative to examine how this process is experienced, understood and contested within the specificities of the Cypriot bi-communal movement, instead of pre-ascribing technology with a totalising role. Contrary to popular concerns about the all-consuming and homogenising effects of technology, social scientists have warned against technological determinism (Miller and Slater 2000; Hine 2000). In this light, the quotation above offers an important insight into the particularities of technological adaptation in the context of Cyprus.

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<sup>59</sup> Daughter of former Greek Cypriot leader Glafcos Clerides. Because of her status as a public figure, her computing training seemed important in order to promote Internet and email use amongst activists.

In a place where physical separation has severely impeded communication, technology has been employed to overcome fences and barriers. According to Sophocleous's account, technological 'literacy' became important for 'peace-building' from the perspective of both funders and the activists themselves. Understanding, therefore, the processes through which technological 'literacy' was integrated into the 'cultural capital' of peace supporters and activists helps us to further examine issues of inclusion and exclusion and ongoing debates about the role of technology within the bi-communal peace movement.

The rest of the chapter will follow this pattern of unravelling the processes through which technology is understood, contested and debated within Cypriot initiatives for peace and re-conciliation. However, it has to be highlighted that I do not argue for a mere 'localisation of globalisation'; such an approach favours a micro-level focus on how global processes (i.e. the expansion of communication technologies) are adopted, modified or resisted in particular localities. However, the term raises some issues when applied to the study of the Internet: first, it still assumes a distinction between the 'local' and the 'global' as separate domains, with the local being territorially defined and culturally specific and the global being conceptualised as boundless and supracultural. And, second, it still privileges the global as the site of change and agency as opposed to the local that is rendered to the role of a respondent.

On the contrary, ICTs challenge the 'localisation' of culture and communities by enabling interactions across spatially separated contexts and contributing to the emergence of 'imagined networks' as opposed to 'imagined communities' (Green et al. 2005). Castells (1996) sees these networks as dominated and exploited by privileged elites across different locations. They participate in a global stratum of power, in a global acultural space, from which the 'local' people are excluded as they remain tied to their territory and culture. Castells writes in the 1990s, when access to such technologies was indeed limited to the 'privileged few', however, his idea of culture appears reified and strictly defined in territorial terms. With the popularisation of ICTs and especially the Internet, more and more individuals, groups and organisations participate in and construct translocal networks; at the same time, as the example of the Cypriot peace activism demonstrates, these actors also (re)define both the local and the global through their translocal encounters. As Green et al. (2005) highlight, the

important point to consider here is that both networks and communities are ‘imagined’; they are just imagined in different ways; networks as boundless and non-territorialised, communities as bounded and territorialised. A study of ICTs provides a context where culture can be examined as a result of debates, conflicts and negotiations around these two different categories.

With its popularisation, the Internet played an important role in Cyprus in the communication efforts of individuals, groups and organisations across the divide. With increasing access to computers and the Internet, bi-communal communication online ceased to be limited to a few websites designed for the very purpose of ‘peace-building’. A wide variety of websites and forums that emerged hosted such communication, which was also enhanced with the increasing use of e-mail and other forms of online communication. In addition, a number of existing or newly emerged bi-communal groups seized the opportunities provided by the Internet to strengthen and expand their group’s work and participation. Cynthia Cockburn (2004), in her book ‘The Line’ describes how e-mail use enabled the organisation and operation of the women’s bi-communal group ‘Hands Across the Divide’.

These developments can offer a possible explanation for the decrease of participation in ‘specialised’ and formal websites, such as Tech4Peace. In other words, the democratisation of the Internet contributed to the decentralisation of bi-communal communication online. Murat, who lives in North Nicosia and works for a Human Rights organisation, narrated to me how his participation in a forum in the beginning of 2000s led to the development of more ‘organic’ and individual relationships across the Green Line. Through the forum, Murat became ‘closer’ to few individuals with whom he continued to talk over online chat services, such as MSN, and to exchange personal emails. One of these individuals was a Greek Cypriot woman, a journalist, with whom he decided to meet after a year of regular online interactions. The meeting was arranged to take place in Pyla, as it was the only place at the time that they could physically meet.

‘It was really late at night and I was a little scared but also so excited that I would finally see her. I had been in Pyla before but not by myself, but I thought it was worth it. I waited there for a long time but she never showed up. I couldn’t call her and I had no other way to communicate with her from Pyla, so, eventually I left. I don’t blame her, I understand. She was

probably afraid. I kept thinking about her for years. I met her after the green line opened in the dead zone outside Ledra Palace. There was an event going on, so there were many people around. I walked towards her and introduced myself. I never mentioned that night in Pyla. After all these years, it didn't matter anymore.'

As long as the green line was closed and difficult to cross, individual and organisational contacts developed online. However, as the example of Murat demonstrates, 'real life' encounters were often arranged through online communication and were considered an important element of the communication process –in other words, talking via e-mails or MSN was never enough. These attempts for face-to-face meetings were some times successful, some times unsuccessful; but a general sense of frustration dominated when bi-communal groups were not granted permission to cross to the other side by their respective authorities or when individual meetings did not go according to plan; the night Murat waited futilely in Pyla was one of them.

In this context, crossing the green line and managing to meet in 'real place' operates as a sign of commitment for the involved parties. Attending meetings across or on the line renders the participants visible and, therefore, potentially subjected to stigmatisation and condemnation by their respective authorities, media on both sides, family and friends. This experience is contrasted to online peace activism, which involves less risk and hence a lesser degree of responsibility. This distinction is illustrated in the willingness of Murat to understand and forgive a person who does not turn up for their meeting in the middle of the night. Although the offline meetings in these cases are often perceived as the verification of online encounters, online commitment is not seen as a guaranty for physical presence.

This distinction between online and offline political activism dominates both academic discussions and everyday concerns and generates debates around the idea of 'virtual community' (Miller and Slater 2000). However, instead of naturalising such separateness as an expected result of the technology, we have to look at whether and how this distinction is produced and contested in specific contexts. In terms of online Cypriot activism, I will illustrate in the last part of the chapter that peace politics have been simultaneously enhanced and limited by competing understandings of political activism: one that stems from traditional understandings of politics and favours party-based organised action; another that recognises online politics as complementary to

offline grass-root mobilisation and emphasises on the crossing of the Green Line and the physical meeting of the group; it is in other words tightly connected to a particular 'landscape of peace activism' and its lineages can be traced back to the ways technology was originally introduced into peace-building in Cyprus. The third is concerned more with peace as a network and promotes the transnationalisation of doing politics.

### **5.3 Facebook –Dynamics of Mediation**

By the time of fieldwork, the green line had opened and its crossing was allowed to those with valid documents, however, the Internet continued to be an important means of communication between members of the two communities. This trend relates to the fact that, after an initial period of excitement and high traffic across the green line, the crossings eventually reduced and continued to be treated on both sides with suspicion and hesitation (see also chapter 6). In this context, the Internet has remained a useful tool in sustaining relationships and organising action. Also, it has to be highlighted that, with its rapid expansion and democratisation, Internet mediated communication has become in recent years a more routinised and widespread everyday practice for Cypriots<sup>60</sup> in general and not only across the dividing line.

As explained before, whereas some of the 'official' websites dedicated to the 'Cyprus problem' saw a drop in their traffic, decentralised communication online had as a result the birth of a large number of forums or spaces where bi-communality was practised. Amongst a plethora of such virtual spaces, Facebook became a very popular site for the creation and operation of peace supporting groups. Initially a university based networking site, Facebook has rapidly expanded after it was opened to the general public in 2006. Since then, it has enjoyed great popularity worldwide and it has overshadowed previously available networking sites, such as MySpace and Hi5.

In many ways, Facebook provides the same service to peace supporting groups as other online forums and email lists and in this sense functions as a development and extension of them. Facebook, however, has been welcomed by most of my informants as a very important tool that provided them with greater visibility, which was justified in a

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<sup>60</sup> According to statistical research, 65% of Cypriots use the Internet daily. The most popular social networking site is Facebook, used by 98% of those Cypriots who are active on online social networks (CyprusUpdates 10/02/2011).

number of ways<sup>61</sup>. First of all, they found Facebook much more interactive in the sense that allowed them to create groups, post pictures, have discussion boards, see all the members of a group. This created a sense of a community that was more conspicuous. Unlike previously used chat rooms and forums that attracted those already ‘converted’ into reconciliation politics, Facebook groups are usually much more open and visible. One can become aware of them even without looking for them; for instance, through a friend’s profile. Unless there are restrictions, one can browse the discussion without becoming a member and if one wishes to join, this can happen at a click of a button.

The terminology of ‘groups’ plays an important role in creating a sense of solidarity and connectivity among members. Unlike chat rooms and forums, where the format that is promoted is that of individual contributions, the participants of the bi-communal groups are actively involved into creating and maintaining a common ground, identity and agenda. This is usually demonstrated in the description section which appears on the main page of each group and where its character and aims as well as the codes of conduct for its main uses are outlined.

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<sup>61</sup> In his portrayal of Facebook in Trinidad, Miller (2011: 201) uses the term ‘polymedia’ to describe the availability and utilisation of various types of media by people in their everyday life. ‘In a situation of polymedia, one technology is preferred to another because it seems a better medium for being emotional or for hiding emotion, for showing one’s face or foregrounding one’s voice, for having arguments or avoiding them, and above all for choosing between dyadic communication involving only two people or conversing within a much wider public sphere. There were many examples within the portraits where people considered carefully what Facebook was essentially good for before deciding to use this as opposed to some other communicative vehicle’.

## ONE CYPRUS - ONE CYPRIOT POPULATION

Global

### Basic Info

Name: ONE CYPRUS - ONE CYPRIOT POPULATION

Category: Organizations - Philanthropic Organizations

Description: ONE CYPRUS  
ONE CYPRIOT NATION  
ONE CYPRIOT PEOPLE

! Κύπρος ! Cyprus ! Kıbrıs !  
! Ειρήνη ! Peace ! Barış !

WE ARE CYPRIOT AND PROUD!

This group aims and supports PEACE IN CYPRUS FOR ALL CYPRIOT PEOPLES

We are an independent group with NO CONNECTION TO ANY POLITICAL PARTIES.

Our Aims:

One Independent Cyprus with a non-aligned Cypriot population  
One Cypriot Nation to live in harmony on the Island  
One Cypriot People United together in a Free Island

The future of our island and its destiny is up to us....

Hostility and Hatred will never lead to Peace...  
Understanding and Mixing will....

!!! We CANNOT change our past !!!  
!!! We CAN shape our future !!!

You may discuss politics and disagree,  
BUT: No racist or personal attacks will be tolerated!

Please also post comments in English.  
This is a bi-communal group so people must be able to understand.  
You may still write in Greek/Turkish but please translate into English afterwards.



Figure 3. 'One Cyprus-One Cypriot Population' - The entry page to a bi-communal Facebook group's profile.

On the first page the names of the administrators and officers of the group also appear. These normally include individuals who created the group or who are the most active participants online or who have the social and cultural capital to become so even if not active online; for instance, if they are well known activists or connected to other activists. Everyone else who joins the groups is a member. The administrators are usually the moderators of the group and demonstrate a lesser or higher level of 'ownership' of the group depending on the context. They are the ones who can change text on the main pages and who can delete 'inappropriate' posts. Whereas the Internet is popularly assumed as a free and democratic space (Dibbell 1994), such hierarchical arrangement of the groups offers a glimpse into the normative framework within which

interactions operate that defines how inclusiveness and exclusiveness are negotiated and the ways particular power relations are constructed.

What also contributes to defining the identity borders of the group is the visibility and existence of other groups alongside on Facebook, which normally represent the 'ideological other'. Unlike email lists and chat rooms, which are more individualised and thematically organised, on Facebook, groups can find and 'see' each other, browse each others' pages and have access to members' names. The groups are therefore built also in parallel or in response to each other and there is a constant monitoring over the performance and popularity of the 'other'. As Ali, one of my informants who is based in North Cyprus told me, 'I've always wanted to meet people from the south but I couldn't. But now things are different. We have the best communication tool, the Internet and especially Facebook. It's made things much easier...but also more difficult. For example, peacemakers get together and try to fix things up, right? But on the other side, nationalists get together as well...So we are not the only ones who are getting more powerful. That's why it's more difficult'.

The group is circumscribed and strengthened when the interaction with the 'other' takes the form of 'cyberconflict'. When member names or wall posts are erased the perpetrators are always alleged to be the members of 'opposing groups'. These events usually involve calls for the group to re-emerge stronger and fight the attempted hacking. The following dialogue took place during such an incident<sup>62</sup>:

Murat (Australia) wrote  
at 8:12am on January 31st, 2008  
People someone attacked the group again...

Zoe (Cyprus) wrote  
at 9:49am on January 31st, 2008  
a massive re-invite is necessary again...we will build it up again...like  
we did before...they will not beat us!

Nicolas (UK) wrote  
at 3:46pm on January 31st, 2008

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<sup>62</sup> The original format and text of the posts, including spelling and grammar mistakes, are maintained throughout the chapter to give a picture close to how they appear online. The names have been changed, but the places of access that the participants declare as well as dates have been kept unaltered.

I can't believe this shit! seriously! They have two groups that have grown to 4000 and 1000, but we are still being hacked! what will stop them doing this again and what is facebook going 2 do about it?

Zoe (Cyprus) wrote

at 7:15pm on January 31st, 2008

we MUST re-invite...i have everyone's name on a list (because i know this would happen)...if u want to help out let me know...soon i will start messaging people...i already got messages from devoted members asking what happened! hackers will only make us stronger...we will not stop and make them happy!

Costas (London) wrote

at 11:19pm on January 31st, 2008

I know. its very annoying. Facebook said they wont do anything without a court subpoena.

I am thinking of getting a specific performance order just to find out who did this!!

Thank you for helping out, if everyone does the same we will be back to usual in no time!

ONE CYPRUS, ONE CYPRIOT PEOPLE, ONE CYPRIOT NATION!!

The spirit of cypriot unity will never die!

Evrin (Cyprus) wrote

at 11:34pm on January 31st, 2008

Mates, number of members keep increasing in every minute! Thanks all..

We stand stronger together!!

Whereas hacking is difficult to trace and prove, it gives the opportunity for members of bi-communal groups to construct their 'ideological other' and therefore strengthen the group's unity. From the exchange above, it seems that this 'other' is not only the 'opposing' groups, 'the nationalists', 'the fascists', 'the anti-Cypriots'; groups also often discuss themselves as hierarchically and ideologically different to the site that hosts them; Facebook. On one hand, groups are created on Facebook because of its popularity and the fact that allows them to be in a broader space of networks. On the other hand, members often distinguish themselves from Facebook, when this tries to censor them or fails to 'protect' them, like in the case above.

This ambivalent encounter with Facebook is not particular to the Cypriot case. On one hand, the Internet more broadly and Facebook more specifically have been perceived by users, service providers and states as a fertile space for the emergence and development of marginal voices, alternative histories and counter-hegemonic discourses. It is these

counter-narratives and forms of resistance that create anxiety for institutions and governments in many contexts. The ban on Facebook in countries, such as Syria and Iran, has been interpreted as an attempt on behalf of these states to control anti-government information and activism. The arrest of two young men in North Cyprus in 2008 over allegations that they levelled insults against president Talat (Famagusta Gazette 30/11/2008), raised discussions in Cyprus about the attempt of the state to control information shared online.

On the other hand, Facebook, a little like the MacDonald's of cyberspace, has been very much resisted and critiqued in popular analyses for its rapid expansion, totalising effects on communication, policies to control and censor content. Some members of the Cypriot bi-communal groups subscribe to this discourse. They often feel that they use a medium, otherwise, different to their ideals, goals and principles. Besides debating and agonising over the effects of the site on peace activism, which will be discussed later in the chapter, they often protest against the commercialisation of information, the superficiality of communication and the interventionist policies of the site. George, one of the most active members in the groups, showed me when I met him in Nicosia a long exchange of emails between him and Facebook, when the monitoring team of the site insisted on him using a 'real' name, as the one he had been using sounded fake and was therefore picked up by Facebook administrators. 'The crazy part', said George, 'was that when they sent me the message asking me to use my real name, they signed as "the Facebook team"'. I told them that if they signed with their real name, I would sign with my real name'. After that George has followed a strategy of adopting real-sounding names that he keeps changing from time to time.

This example illustrates the ways users articulate the relationship between their normative way of using the site and their experiences of it. When there is a big discrepancy between the two, this can often lead to a reduction of usage or even withdrawal from the site. Whereas the format and terminology of Facebook has influenced the ways in which Cypriot peace-promoting groups have organised themselves online, this analysis rejects a line of technological determinism by paying attention at the way users actively negotiate between their values and needs and the format of the site. On one hand, the medium has contributed to the formation of a group, as part of an 'imagined network' and to the self-identification of the members as

participants in this network. On the other hand, the identity of the group is also constructed and sustained against the overarching structure of Facebook.

#### **5.4 ‘A breath of fresh air’ -Facebook and diaspora**

Contrary to what was often repeated among those involved in the ‘politics of home’ in London about the cultural apathy and political indifference demonstrated by younger generations of Cypriots in London, as discussed in chapter 4, a large number of the participants in the bi-communal groups on Facebook are in the diaspora. The first generation Cypriots in London often say ‘Young people meet and talk now online’, in some cases in a hopeful and in other cases in a dismissive tone. This line reflects the two sides of a discourse about online activity; on one hand, it is celebrated as a progressive and encouraging way for doing politics, on the other hand it is seen as an extension of political weakness and disengagement.

During fieldwork, many British born Cypriots seemed aware of the pro-peace groups on Facebook and they used them to follow up information, as a source of establishing connections with other Cypriots in Cyprus and in the diaspora and, in some cases, they treated their involvement in them as a demanding and important political activity. When I asked how one finds such groups, the answer for my informants seemed self-evident: ‘Easy. Type in ‘Cyprus’’. Whereas ‘Cyprus’ here can be taken to imply particular territorialised understandings of identity, however, as suggested in chapter 4, the Cypriotist rhetoric of second generation British Cypriots in London involved redefined notions of both ‘Cypriotness’ and ‘Britishness’. Facebook offered the space for them to effectuate identities that corresponded to both perspectives, which were silenced or marginalised in offline diasporic contexts. Such processes of ‘expansive realisation’ are identified by Miller and Slater (2000: 11) as enabled by the Internet, when individuals use online spaces to realise identities, which they have not fully enacted in other contexts.

At the same time, for Cypriots in London, Facebook became a useful and powerful tool in articulating their pro-peace voice and participating in political discussions and structures in Cyprus from which they claimed to have been previously alienated and excluded. Cynthia Cockburn (2004), for instance, describes how the inclusion or exclusion of the diaspora as members of the bi-communal group ‘Hands Across the

Divide' emerged as a dilemma during the formation of the group in 2000; the inclusion of London Cypriot participants was feared that would divert, diffuse and complicate the aims and organisation of the group –based on a preconceived understanding of the diaspora as having a different perspective and agenda on the 'Cyprus issue'. When it was finally decided that London Cypriots should take part in the e-mail list of the group and also participate in a bi-communal meeting in London, the author argues that previous concerns about differences and lack of common vision and agenda dissolved and that London Cypriots made a valuable contribution to the group. The incident, however, gives substance to claims by Cypriots in the diaspora that they had been politically marginalised in the decades after 1974 not only by the consecutive governments in Cyprus but also in the bi-communal, pro-peace contexts –and this was often the case even when Greek and Turkish Cypriots were flown to London to attend meetings, which could not take place in Cyprus due to the closure of the Green Line.

Facebook, however, did not erase these tensions between the diaspora and Cyprus; on the contrary, it highlighted the struggle over cultural authenticity and political representation between these two contexts, as it allowed for open interaction and confrontation illustrated by the following exchanges on the wall of one of the groups:

Socrates (Cyprus) wrote  
at 1:46pm on August 29th, 2007  
wat ever we do there will be promblems first a greek cypriot is rascist  
to all he english cypriot i seen it with my eyes vilagesthat say that  
charles are not cypriot. i dont realy like englsh cypriot acting tough but  
they are cypriot ike the turkish cypriots latinos cypriots siclines etc  
cyprus is for everyone

Because of the spelling mistakes and the incomprehensibility of the above post, the administrator of the group interfered to clarify:

Zoe (Cyprus) wrote  
at 9:27pm on August 29th, 2007  
i think what he means is that any one who is english cypriot (i.e. is  
more fluent in english than in greek) is looked at differently by the  
other greek cypriots. I think the point he was trying to make was that  
the reason why the english cypriots are treated with such distaste is coz  
they act like they are better than the rest of the cypriots due to their  
'englishness'. He doesnt, however, agree with racism of any sort.

Zoe (Cyprus) wrote  
at 9:29pm on August 29th, 2007

it is true that greek cypriots dont like other cypriots from abroad because they act as if they are 'more educated' or 'wealthier' than the rest of the cypriots in cyprus...however, i think things in our generation are changing...for example, all the cypriots in Cyprus (aged 20+) are well educated coz everyone has a uni degree...therefore these stereotypes dont stem into our generation as much as in our parents generation.

Yannis (USA) wrote

at 9:54am on August 30th, 2007

It's not a matter of liking or disliking the person itself. It is rather an issue of culture. While I do not like to use stereotypes, Cypriots experiencing life abroad and Cypriots never experiencing life abroad is an analogy similar to people never leaving their village and people living in a cosmopolitan city. There are vast differences, but nothing that should create either hatred or mistrust. On the contrary, we should be feeding each other with our unique knowledge and perspectives.

Nicolas (UK) wrote

at 12:15pm on September 1st, 2007

i can agree with the last comment, but i do c a difference in the cypriots whether they are from england or from cyprus and i dont believe that I'm 'better than any cypriot from cyprus just because I'm from england' like Deanna stated below, 4 i believe that im just the same as them, but when i come over there are some (not as many as there used 2 be) that make u feel as if u r english n not welcome. but in the same breath i can say that ther r some cypriots from england that stand out from the crowd when they are over, 4 whatever reason but that doesnt mean we are all the same and i dont expect the same treatment!!!!!!!!!!

Yiannis (USA) wrote

at 3:00pm on September 1st, 2007

Nicolas, not recognizing differences is what brought as to the point we are today. I refuse to say that I am similar to every single person in Cyprus, or that anyone in Cyprus is the same as me. I do like my uniqueness, thank you very much. The whole point is recognizing differences and valuing them. We are all different, but that does not make the "other" inferior or superior. As the slogan for the European Cultural month was, All different, all equal. No?

Zoe (Cyprus) wrote

at 5:39pm on September 2nd, 2007

of course no one is un-equal to anyone else - that was the point i was trying to get across - the only problem is that some cypriots who are raised abroad (in our parents generation, not ours) have tended to be of an entirely different mentality and often do treat cypriots in cyprus differently. I'm not saying that everyone is like that, but I was simply pointing out how many people in Cyprus view English Cypriots. Sorry if I offended anyone, that wasn't my intention x

On a different occasion, another participant expresses a more polemical view:

Jonny (London) wrote  
at 12:40am on February 27th, 2008  
sorry, last point: it's easy being a patriot living in london, i think it's much easier than actually living in the reality of cyprus. (though having said that i'm currently studying so away from cyprus) go tell the soldiers serving on the green line in nicosia that they should freeze their arses off and waste two years of their lives. why?

And in a similar tone:

Mehmet (London) wrote  
at 12:53am on March 5th, 2008  
Christos, those who left the island and built themselves new life elsewhere should let the Cypriots on the island govern their own affairs. It is really easy to be patriotic from a distance.

Yiorgos (UVA) wrote  
at 9:22am on March 5th, 2008  
Likewise, its easy to support a cause when you stand to gain something from it that you otherwise have no relevant claim to. Why should my word be any less respected here? If we want to look at the bare bones facts of the issues, my family owned (and still holds title to) land that is now illegally occupied by a state that is not recognized by any country in the world aside from Turkey. Much of my relatives who were displaced and now live in Nicosia can say the same. Thus, I would be very much affected by any potential solution. Finally, if you are serious about your issue and are open to share it to the world, you should be ready to defend it in an intellectual manner, instead of conveniently dismissing my original point.

Whereas 'who has the right to speak as a Cypriot' is a constant point of tension and argument in these groups, this struggle for dominance should not be interpreted exclusively as a 'silencing' and disempowering process for those participants who are at the receiving end of discrimination and accusations. In other words, instead of accepting such process as the 'subalternisation' of particular individuals and actors, Facebook offers the forum where these tensions, differences and contradictions are voiced and articulated and, therefore, become subject to negotiation and discussion.

In this sense, many of the members in the diaspora insisted on describing the groups as 'a breath of fresh air'. Yiannis, a second generation Greek Cypriot compared his experience in the groups with a process of 'coming out'. Born and raised in London by Cypriot parents, Yiannis had never been politically active, although he always tried to

keep up with what was happening in Cyprus. He grew up in South London, quite away and disengaged from the concentrated Cypriot population in North London, so he never had the opportunity to express and exchange his peace-supporting views. 'I'd always had this kind of ideas and for a long time I thought I was the only one because I never spoke to my family about politics', he said when we met in London, 'but now I could find like-minded people; finally. When I first became a member, I felt like I was coming out, I was finally who I wanted to be'. Networking and interactive sites, such as Facebook, therefore, open up a space for engagement with peace discourses for a larger group of people, who have possibly been in the periphery of such discourses before and never engaged directly in them.

However, although Yiannis logs onto his Facebook account regularly and he follows the discussions on some of the groups' walls, he does not contribute often to these discussions. 'Most of the times, I feel I have nothing to contribute as other people there seem to know better what's going on. But I follow the discussions to learn the truth about stuff I read in the papers and to be informed about what's happening in Cyprus.' Many of the users of the Facebook groups I met during fieldwork acknowledged that they followed a similar routine to Yiannis's –log in, read the discussions and leave the page. I actually found myself following the same process most of the time.

This raises some significant points. First of all, Facebook, by bringing together in one site individualistic applications, such as personal mail, with more network-centred services, such as friends' lists and group membership, has contributed to a blurring between these contexts. It has, therefore, become easier and more acceptable to move between these spheres –to become visible and 'active' in public but also to remain invisible through lack of activity and to 'watch' others. Many users, perhaps because the public is so close to the private, make the leap and join groups, in which they never contribute. This is why there are groups with thousands of members but fewer active contributors and the lack of activity often creates anxiety for the creators and administrators of the group as it raises issues of representation, credibility and responsibility. However, as the example of Yiannis illustrates, this 'lurking' is not always associated with passivity and political apathy but it may be connected to the individual positionality towards particular discourses and structures that is enhanced or limited by cultural capital. Yiannis's Facebook 'lurking', therefore, can be understood

as a personal mechanism and strategy to overcome his self-projected ignorance and inexperience on the Cyprus issue and enhance his knowledge.

If we then focus on the effortlessness, passivity and lack of responsibility as characteristics of political activism online (cf. Salter 2003: 138; Eriksen 2006), there is the risk of failing to grasp and understand cases, such as Yiannis's. In this way, we can better appreciate the impact of networking sites, such as Facebook, as settings of information and knowledge vis-à-vis traditional media. Like Yiannis, many of my informants use the Facebook groups for access to information not provided by more structured media, such as TV and newspapers. And although Yiannis is talking above about 'learning the truth', most of them understand that information in this case is fragmented, highly subjective and contextual. Giorgos, another member of the groups, said once in a group discussion we had in a meeting in Cyprus on this issue: 'I know there is chaos when everyone expresses their own opinion in the group wall but at least you can see this way many different points and perspectives and then form your own opinion. I sometimes play devil's advocate and provoke people in the discussions forum, just to be able to get all these different perspectives. It's better than watching TV, or reading a newspaper, or a history book isn't it?' This processual and fragmentary understanding of information and knowledge points to the emergence of new political subjectivities, who even in 'lurking' establish, accept and reproduce different definitions of permissibility and credibility of public discourses. Theorists argue that the Internet by fragmenting and facilitating pluralism cannot be conceptualised according to Habermasian notions of public sphere, which is characterised by consensus (Salter 2003: 122). In this light, the format of exchanges in the Cypriot bi-communal groups opposes the homogeneity and consensus of the public sphere in Cyprus and the diaspora that has been dominated by nationalist and anti-nationalist, right and leftist master-narratives.

Whether this can have any political implications in 'real' life or it is just restricted to the Internet is something I will discuss at the end of the chapter. Here however, I need to highlight that, whereas for some members of the groups 'invisibility' and 'lurking' are mechanisms of coping with exclusion, others in the diaspora utilised the 'visibility' Facebook provides. 'Cypriots United' (CU), for instance, which was discussed in chapter 4, was founded almost simultaneously as its Facebook profile. Reaching a large

number of members on Facebook ‘enabled us then to go to politicians in London and show them that we represent people’, explained Serhat, one of the founders of the group. CU has since its creation organised events inviting participants from both Cyprus and the diaspora and has consolidated its presence as a pro-peace lobbying organisation for UK Cypriots. Emine, a student, who was born and raised in London and who became very active in some of the groups through discussions after one of her trips to Cyprus remarked: ‘Through Facebook, people in Cyprus know me and I know people, so I can be more active in what is happening there as well as when I go [to Cyprus]—it’s not like before.’ In fact, while I was in Cyprus, many times UK-based Cypriots who travelled to the island, including Emine, attended or even organised meetings with other members of the Facebook groups.

Individuals in the diaspora, therefore, have utilised Facebook to create social and cultural capital and convert it into new political roles in the diaspora but also in Cyprus. This ‘long-distance peace activism’, to paraphrase Anderson’s (1998) term, diverts from the anonymous, responsibility-free online diasporic politics that Anderson identifies with ‘long-distance nationalism’. Unlike other Internet sites and forums, Facebook insists on the identification of individuals –even if they do not use their real names, participants can be identified through their photos, personal information or even network of friends. This renders individuals into a position of visibility within a transnational network, which gives them both new status as political players but at the same time makes them vulnerable to criticism and attacks. Serhat, who works as an editor for a London-based newspaper, receives tens of emails per week criticising his online activities, some of which take the form of explicit threats.

What emerges from the discussion so far is that Facebook has enhanced the connections between the peace supporters in the diaspora and in Cyprus. It is notable that most of the groups were created by individuals, who live outside Cyprus and, also, most members are diasporic Cypriots. Although individuals in the diaspora may lack particular types of social and cultural capital in order to engage with politics in Cyprus, they can mobilize other skills that are necessary for participation on Facebook. For instance, language is a very important element. As the dominant language of the Internet but also necessary for the exchange of bi-communal or multi-communal dialogues, English is a prerequisite for anyone who wants to take part in the Facebook

discussions; English-speaking Cypriots in the diaspora, who often feel inadequate in terms of their command of Greek or Turkish when they visit the island, have an advantage online over non-English speaking Cypriots.

At the same time, it is not only a diasporic cultural repertoire that defines the use of the Internet but the place of access also has an important role in how technology is interpreted and utilised. As the Internet affects and shapes particular localities, particular localities and geography also influence the use and effects of the Internet. There is an illustrating example from one of the meetings organised through Facebook in London for Greek and Turkish Cypriots. The meeting took place in a bar in central London. When I arrived I met Elena, the organiser of the meeting and Savvas, a Cypriot student who had been living in London for the past five years. After a while a few more Greek and Turkish Cypriots came in, some of them born and raised in Cyprus, others in London, but all of them based in the UK. No one knew each other from before but almost everyone seemed used to this kind of setting. One of the participants had already directed a peace-promoting film, another one was a member of a pro-unification party in Cyprus and the majority of the rest had already attended at least one bi-communal/peace event. Only for Savvas, a 26 years-old, it was the first time he met Turkish Cypriots in his whole life. He seemed overwhelmed and utterly surprised by the experience as he kept repeating at the end: 'We agreed about so many things [with the Turkish Cypriots]'. He also explained why he had decided to come to one of the meetings at that particular point: 'It'd be very difficult for me to come to one of these events if it wasn't for Facebook. I had particular ideas before but went into one of these groups and started reading. And here I am. I wouldn't go to one if it wasn't in London. Here no one knows me. In Cyprus it's very difficult to go to this kind of things. I don't want people [who disapprove] to talk behind my back. I'm from Paphos, not from Nicosia. People are not used to this kind of things there and I wouldn't feel comfortable to sit and have a coffee with a Turkish Cypriot in the middle of the town'.

This account highlights the importance of place in accessing information technologies. Although the Internet is often imagined as a unified and universal medium, its effects and uses may depend on and be restrained by the cultural and social contexts, in which it is accessed. In this sense, the Internet enabled members of the diaspora to take up new political roles in local and transnational contexts, but London, as a particular socio-

cultural locality mediated and reinforced the use and usefulness of Facebook for individuals like Savvas.

### **5.5 ‘One Cyprus, One Cypriot Population’**

During fieldwork, I followed the discussions and activities of most Cypriot bi-communal and met with members in Cyprus and the UK. Most members tend to appear in the participants’ list of all groups. However, I particularly focused on ‘One Cyprus, One Cypriot Population’, as it seemed the most active and popular for a particular period. The group was created in 2007 in opposition and response to groups with more traditional nationalist messages, such as “Get the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus recognized as a country” and “Η ΚΥΠΡΟΣ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ - CYPRUS IS GREEK”. ‘One Cyprus, One Cypriot Population’ was one of the first bi-communal groups that were set up to promote peace and reconciliation and it attracted thousands of supporters very quickly. One of the creators of the group is Elisa, a Greek Cypriot, who studied in the UK and Canada for four years. As she told me, it was in Canada, when she first familiarised herself with Internet technologies and saw the potential of using it to promote peace in Cyprus. When she returned to the island, therefore, she decided that she had to create a group online. Like many other members of the group, she is fluent in English, as her mother is a British born Cypriot, so she had the necessary language skills to organise and facilitate a bi-communal online group.

The group enjoyed great growth and activity especially a few months before the national elections in the Republic of Cyprus in February 2008 that resulted in the election of the pro-peace communist party in government and Dimitris Christofias as new president of the republic. Many people joined the group before the elections to voice their frustration against the old government and president Tassos Papadopoulos and to advocate for change. The posts here are indicative of the discussions that were taking place at the time:

Achilleas (UK) wrote  
at 2:42pm on September 3rd, 2007  
Cyprus now is passing one of its most critical moments since the anan plan, the coming elections and the possibilities that will come up from that elections are very important! But these days the national council will take place to decide what kind of solution GC want, unfortunately

many are those who talk against any kind of federation and they dont hesitate to even say that division is the best solution!!!This policy is mainly supported by papadopoulos and his followers ( nationalist)! Its the first time in our history that some GC politics demand DIVISION of our country, division of our people! Lets all hope and work to stop papadopoulos from being re-elected, lets all say no to division!!!

Yiorgos (London) wrote  
at 9:06pm on September 4th, 2007

It was Marios Matsakis, a EURO MP from Papadopoulos' party who said a two state solution is better than a Federation. Complete idiot, but unfortunately there are many in the DIKO hierarchy and other Papadopoulos supporters who agree with him. I'll be behind Christofias 100% in the elections, for a federal solution.

Serhan (Cyprus) wrote  
at 10:07pm on September 4th, 2007

DIKO must go down!!!... always support one Cyprus & always against occupation of militarist turkey... from now to eternity

Yiorgos (London) wrote  
at 3:41am on September 6th, 2007

DISY, who some of its members were part of EOKA B, now seem to be in agreement with the "communist" (in reality are moderate social democrats) AKEL as they are both clearly in favour of a federal solution. Never have these two parties agreed on anything Lol.

Polls show that some left wing Akelistes would vote Kassoulidis over Tassos and right wingers would be prepared to vote Christofias. Only in Cyprus.

Murat (Australia) wrote  
at 1:32pm on January 10th, 2008

Elections in both sides of the island are a big ugly joke. In north because of Turkish army and in south because of endless cycle that keeps spinning around same mentality and parties. Nothing will come out of it, come back here after the elections and you will see what I mean. Any serious attempt to solve the conflict in Cyprus means serious compromises for both sides` politicians and that would finish their political career, and I can't see any "peace hero" who would go such extreme measures just for the sake of "peace", they will do anything to glue themselves to chairs, which has been happening all the time. I am not pessimist but I believe being realistic means not trusting politicians with politics, like you wouldn't trust generals with wars.

Mutlu (Uni Leipzig) wrote  
at 10:58pm on January 14th, 2008  
yep :)

tassos has a bad record anyway. firm believer in eoka, gombare of georkadjis (one of the creators of the akritas plan), cries on tv to get people to vote like he wants :P etc. etc.

anyway, nationalism has always been a tool in the hands of imperialism. and it's very illogical; what difference does it make what blood flows through my veins? we all bleed the same color. it's the land that makes us who we are. even if i could trace my lineage 500 years back to mainland turkey, it wouldn't mean a thing. it's cyprus that i miss when i'm away, not some other "motherland"..

Nick (Cyprus) wrote

at 2:34pm on February 3rd, 2008

Hi everyone. The presidential elections are approaching fast and i believe it would be good for all the members of the group to have an independent clear and true picture of all three candidates. Could the administrators provide to the group a summary of the history of each candidate and their approach to the potential negotiations? I am sure that there will be no bias in favor or against any of the candidates. It is important for all of us and especially t/cs to know who will lead the negotiations on behalf of g/cs and not base their opinion on rumors and half-lies. Thanks:)

Andreas (London) wrote

at 2:23pm on February 20th, 2008

Christofias got the support of DIKO by giving them 3 ministries including the foreign ministry, parliament presidency and most importantly, a decisive role for Papadopoulos on the Cyprus problem.

The second round should send the same message as the first one did: "Papadopoulos go home!".

Evren (Cyprus) wrote

at 9:28am on February 21st, 2008

i believe we should all be politically active... and do not trust the governments and politicians... of course it is our right to vote... but we should be watching the moves they make and criticise them actively and effectively... i think this is missing in cypriots' life...

Zoe (Cyprus) wrote

at 7:32pm on February 24th, 2008

Congratulations to Christofias for winning the presidential elections...we still have hope that our island will be reunited :) I hope this presidential decade will see a step forward in the reunification process...bye bye Tassos!

As its name indicates, the group promotes a common Cypriot identity and Greek and Turkish nationalisms are condemned as the reasons behind the division of the island. On

its description page, the group agenda is set out: 'ONE CYPRUS, ONE CYPRIOT NATION, ONE CYPRIOT PEOPLE. WE ARE CYPRIOT AND PROUD!'.



Figure 4. 'One Cyprus' Facebook logo

The bi-communal character of the group is certified in various ways. The language used is English, as opposed to Turkish or Greek and the contributors are often reminded of this rule, whenever they divert from English. Also, a good balance between Greek and Turkish names is maintained in the list of administrators and officers in the group. The visual material that is posted is carefully selected to avoid any Greek or Turkish connotations. Unlike the main pictures of most nationalist groups, the main symbol of One Cyprus is simple and minimalistic -although this relates to a general lack of symbols when it comes to Cypriot identity and Cypriotism. The pictures that appear in the albums are either of events organised through the group or scenic pictures of the natural beauties of Cyprus, of local produce and local traditions and practices, which are presented as common for all Cypriots avoiding divisive nationalist symbols. In that way the group adheres to particular formats, structures and symbolism that have characterised bi-communal Cyprio-centric events in the past few decades in such an embedded way that points towards a 'banal peace-activism', to paraphrase Billig's (1995) term. Billig describes how the presence of national symbols is so routinised in everyday life that they become invisible. It is however, this invisibility that renders them powerful and embedded in people's national consciousness and identity. Similarly, the aesthetics and methods of bi-communal politics in Cyprus have developed into a particular repertoire replicated so often that has been habitualised by individuals to the extent that it is employed and reproduced within new settings and

spaces. The 'newness' and separateness, therefore, of the Internet context is challenged through such practices, whose lineages are to be traced within offline realms.

Although the group promotes a forward thinking by stating on its first page that 'We cannot change our past! We can shape the future!', many of the contributions and debates revolve around discussing the past. Personal testimonies come to challenge and fill the gaps of the dominant nationalist discourses on both sides. Stories of previous peaceful co-existence between Greek and Turkish Cypriots before the war are evoked, narrated and reproduced. 'Unknown' or 'unofficial' historical events become the corner stone of discussion and their importance is rediscovered and reinstated. Individual memory and testimony, therefore, create a counter-hegemonic historical narrative that challenges Turkish and Greek nationalism:

Zoe (Cyprus) wrote

at 9:16am on October 23rd, 2007

My grandparents used to have Turkish Cypriot friends in their old neighbourhood in the north. Another old man that was working closely with EOKA during those years told me that it was an ideological error that divided tcs and gcs (and leftists from rightwingers as well), so it was not a simple case of racism. So, if we scratch the ideological differences there should be a high possibility for peace and prosperity...right?

Zoe (Cyprus) wrote

at 9:19am on October 23rd, 2007

And my grandparents live in a refugee area today, so there are also a few tcs living there. There are no problems between them. They actually exchange vegetables. My granny gives them lemons from her lemon tree and they give her parsley from their garden. It's actually quite sweet I think. So it is possible if we try!

Most old refugees (which have a reason to be angry) are not as hostile as people who know nothing of the past. That's odd isn't it?

Gregory (Australia) wrote

at 11:55am on January 14th, 2008

My Grandfather, who was very powerful and influential in his town, and well respected by Muslim and Christian alike (and the Brits), was eventually threatened with his life, when a group of EOKA thugs came to his property to KILL him. The only thing which save him and his family was their huge Alsatian dogs which drove the mob away, and thankfully Pappou<sup>63</sup> didn't have to use his rifle. My Grandparents realised that it was not safe for the family, and my Grandfather put

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<sup>63</sup> Greek for 'grandpa'.

himself into self-imposed EXILE, coming to Australia in 1950, and then bringing the rest of the family in 1955.

To add insult to injury, my Grandfather returned in 1974 for a holiday and watched the whole island of Cyprus fall apart right before his eyes - something he KNEW would eventually happen from way back in 1950. If most Cypriots were like my Grandfather, and had his pragmatism and foresight, we would not be in this mess today. Cyprus, please start using your brains!!

The Cypriotist identity of the group, however, is not constructed along a linear and orderly narration of the past. Contrary to Pierre Nora's (1989) expectations that due to an obsession with (dead) memory –that has replaced living memory- we will try to engage in the documentation of our past in the most accurate, systematic and professional way, what we get here is heavy miscellanizing (Hoskins 2009). Photos are posted in no particular order, most of the times with very little explanation or titling; information is fragmented and unsystematically presented; conversations are unstructured and often unfinished. This creates space for interpretation and negotiation of meaning, in a context where history and memory as subjectively experienced and partially constructed appears accepted and validated.

The collective memory, however, here is not only produced through agreement and conformity but also through contestation and conflict. There are often contributions that challenge the main ideology and purposes of the group and usually this is achieved by attacking the overarching historical narrative that is being constructed. One such contribution that took the form of personal attack against one particular member of the group reads as :

“Mr Panayiotou, you are another brainwashed little kid, who never bothered to read history himself but preferred to listen what the others told him, probably in edon<sup>64</sup> or wherever . How can u have a Cypriot nation you moron? Seriously, so all the people from 2000BC until the 1920's AC where no one ever question the greekness of its people and the island were stupid and you the the Νεο-Κυπρίος<sup>65</sup>, dare to reject what all those people died for??? i pity you”

Such contestation often fortifies the response and the identity of the group. Many of my informants found this to be the strength and weakness of Facebook. As one of the

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<sup>64</sup> EDON is AKEL's 'United Democratic Youth Organisation' [Eniea Dimokratiki Organosi Neoleas].

<sup>65</sup> Νεο-Κυπρίος means 'Neo-Cypriot' (see chapter 2 for the discussion of the term).

founding members of the group said, ‘before all hate mail and exchanges were personal, on MSN, emails etc. Now they attack us as a group, but this makes us stronger and ready to respond to the enemy...the nationalists’.

The peace process on Facebook, therefore, is not always so peaceful but the tensions and contradictions do not always arrive from the outside. Some of the members of the group voiced their concern about the level and type of nationalism that it appeared to promote. For them, the future face of Cyprus seems to be negotiated in limited and exclusionary terms. Cypriots are interpreted to be those whose families have lived in Cyprus before the war and have stories and pictures to contribute about that period. This principle excludes the large numbers of Turkish settlers, who came from Turkey and reside in the Northern part of Cyprus and numerous migrants, who work and live on both sides. More importantly, for some of my informants, such a narrow definition of Cypriotness does not correspond to the international and globalised character and nature of the Internet itself. Some of these informants use the Internet as a liberating space from ethnic, national and local identities. ‘The Internet makes you feel a citizen of the world’, told me Antonis, who spent a long time studying in the USA and he now lives in Cyprus. ‘It makes you think about multiculturalism. We need peace but not in the way they do it. Even their logo...one Cyprus, one Cypriot nation. It makes me feel like a Nazi.’

Antonis used to be a member of ‘One Cyprus, One Cypriot Population’, however, because of these ideological differences he decided to withdraw and create his own Facebook group. This kind of schisms occur often and contribute to a fragmentation and decentralisation of the peace activities online, and are therefore highly disapproved. In addition, antagonisms and tensions often spill over offline contexts and they are then re-introduced back to online contexts. During the Christmas holidays in 2007, ‘One Cyprus’ decided to organise an event in Ledra Palace hotel, in the ‘dead zone’ of Nicosia. It was considered to be a good time as it was before the upcoming elections in February 2008 and also because members who lived abroad could be returning to Cyprus for the holiday. Antonis’s group had also the same idea and organised an event but it did not go according to plan. The ‘One Cyprus’ group had their own event one day before his group and they secured the keynote speaker Antonis had approached, a well-known Cypriot documentary maker and activist.

These tensions are a reflection of two different visions of Cyprus online; one, promoted by Cypriotism aims at the creation of a common identity defined through particular territorial and cultural references, an example of an 'imagined community'; the second one, is about an 'imagined network', promoting peace in Cyprus as part of a more globalised and multicultural terrain. When I discussed these issues with the founders and members of the 'One Cyprus' group, Elisa told me: 'Not everybody is beyond nationalism and we cannot start talking immediately about other issues if we do not first build a common identity. Our terminology might be simple or simplistic but it is necessary in order to attract people who are not already 'converted''. This 'strategic essentialism' is founded upon a typical understanding of Cypriotism as a 'good' nationalism, which is selected not as an ideal but a necessary option within the discursive limits that the nation is imagined and envisaged in offline contexts.

Internal tensions also emerge when members of the groups try to reconcile their ideas about the Internet with the ways they actually use it. Popular debates in Cyprus and the diaspora about online activism seem to correspond to academic debates about the definition and role of 'virtual community'. Within these debates, some see online politics as a threat to traditional organised political action, as the fragmented, individualised and virtual political participation is based on passive and effortless understanding of politics that has no 'real' effects and deduces numbers from more traditional organised political schemes. Others argue that online activism should be accompanied by 'real' offline activism in order to have any effect and achieve political goals. In this sense, groups on Facebook are seen as important tools in disseminating information, mobilising members and organising action. Finally, fewer others see online politics as a new way of political participation that does not need to directly correlate online and offline political action; in this sense, it is concepts such as political activism, participation and democracy that need to be revisited and redefined.

In terms of the first strand of thought, the Facebook groups have been received by official Cypriot political structures with suspicion and concern. Especially for the political parties of the Left that have traditionally been associated with bi-communalism, the online groups raised concerns as they divert and fragment the parties' ongoing projects. In my conversations with politicians from both AKEL and

CTP in London and Cyprus, they all seemed to agree that whereas these groups are a useful tool for recruiting new members and announcing events, they are also posing a risk when they are moving away from organised political schemes or when they are confined to online interactions. This idea is shared by members of the online groups, who also belong to political parties. They usually use the groups to advertise their party's events and projects and to call for action through these organised groups.

For others, however, the main aim of having the online groups is precisely to move away from traditional party politics, by promoting a 'bottom-up' type of peace-building. Many of the members express a fatigue of party politics in Cyprus and interpret the parties' disapproval of their online activities as an anxiety over the loss of a monopoly of bi-communalism and peace activism. One evening, when I was in Cyprus, my friend Yiorgos, who studies in the UK, seemed particularly upset about this particular issue and said: 'They think that you should only do politics through them. You don't have to go through them in order to have relationships with the other side. I don't want to belong to any party but I want a solution for Cyprus. I think we can do it by ourselves on a grass root level.'

In this light, the groups do not only represent themselves as an alternative to nationalist politics that have dominated the Cypriot context but also as a different option to partisanship in general that has characterised Cypriot politics, including the pro-peace leftist and communist parties on both sides of the island:

Panos (America) wrote  
at 5:06pm on March 19th, 2008

Our primary aim should be to open the borders of our brains. We, especially young people but we mustn't be the only ones, should organize a gathering in Cyprus so as to talk about the problems that we face as concerns the co-existence between Greek-Cypriots and Turk-Cypriots. We should firstly open the borders of our brains and then those of all people that live around us. Opening our brains will help all the "barricades" open in a magic way.

We must isolate the minority called nationalism and not let it influence people. We must all take part in this gathering, both those involved in politics and those who do not. We mustn't belong to any political party for this gathering. We may be single people that want a solution in order to live all-together peacefully. This gathering must be open to everyone. I am sure that this message-thought and desire at the same time is not only mine but it is also in many person's brains

Elena (UK) wrote  
at 12:44am on April 5th, 2008  
hey guys! im thinking of organizing a meeting in the UK so that  
people studying here get the chance to meet each other.. especially  
people studying at the same universities..  
As a way to celebrate the opening of Ledra street (lokmaci), having no  
presentations involved, no politics involved.. just for socializing! what  
do you think? For any comments, suggestions, ideas etc,i will create a  
discussion topic.

This grass root mobilisation, however, that takes place online does not always translate into offline action and this creates anxiety for many of my informants who seem to privilege offline political action (protests, gatherings etc.) compared to online action:

Evren (Cyprus) wrote  
at 10:59am on January 8th, 2008  
i would like to suggest to focus on a strategy... it will not be enough to  
discuss on certain issues on facebook... we can have a program of  
action... to reach more people... for the cause...

The opening of the Green Line had raised hopes that meetings, gatherings and protests would be more easily organised. The crossings of the Line have of course increased to both sides, however, many of the events organised online did not attract significant numbers of attendants –nowhere close to the numbers of people who participate, discuss and show enthusiasm online. In the summer of 2008, Yiorgos had decided to organise a bi-communal meeting upon his return to Cyprus from the UK for the holidays. For weeks, he advertised it on Facebook, created a discussion forum about the event and also recruited individuals to help him invite as many members as possible. As I was seeing Yiorgos almost everyday, I also became part of the organising process and I shared closely his enthusiasm and apprehension about the event's prospects. The online responses were very encouraging and we decided to meet in bar in the centre of South Nicosia, famous for its relaxed and bohemian atmosphere. When we arrived at the garden of the bar, Yiorgos, who had been anxious about attendance, was disappointed to find out that only six people had turned up, including a Greek Cypriot man, Achilleas, who had been involved in the online groups, two friends of his, for whom it was the first time to take part in such a meeting, Achilleas's Turkish Cypriot girlfriend, Belkis, and one of her friends, both familiar with bi-communal events, and Serhan, a middle-aged man, who as much older had been involved in peace activism for longer than everyone. In the course of the night, four more individuals joined the gathering.

The meeting was interesting, especially for the two friends of Achilleas, who were introduced to this kind of setting for the first time –‘we used to be nationalists’, they said and Achilleas jokingly replied ‘you still are’. They both seemed comfortable that they came along, although they admitted that Achilleas had dragged them there. ‘Achilleas was never like us, said one of them, Marios. He was never really religious and he always used to argue with the teachers about history and politics. I was the good, pious and disciplined student’, he said, provoking laughter to the rest. However, although the recruitment of new ‘non-converted’ individuals is arguably one of the main aims of these meetings, Yiorgos and Serhan seemed very concerned about the low attendance and spent a large part of the night discussing the discrepancies between online activism and offline lack of participation. Their response has to be interpreted within the framework of peace politics as commitment to transcend physical boundaries and meet face-to-face, developed in Cypriot bi-communalism through the emphasis on particular ‘landscapes of peace activism’, discussed at the beginning of the chapter.

After a few months and when Yiorgos tried to organise a similar meeting in London, he had a similar experience with low attendance. He got even more disappointed and he said: ‘This is the last time I’m trying to organise a meeting. It seems that you have to be someone known and to have the right connections, in order for people to show up’. Yiorgos felt that one needs to be recognised either as a ‘peace activist’, to have therefore a particular social and cultural capital, or to be politically organised through one of the mainstream parties. This illustrates that while Facebook has created new political subjectivities and has empowered individuals with new status and political roles, however, it should not be conceptualised as a virtual space independent of traditional social and political structures. The use and potentials of Facebook is enhanced or limited by an individual’s (lack of) social capital. However, to deal with this perceived inequalities, Yiorgos decided not to leave Facebook but to find alternative ways to use it. Whereas he became less active in the groups’ discussions, he created through Facebook a closed mail list of fewer individuals that he knew already, whom he felt it was easier to bring together, to organise and to mobilise for particular meetings.

But even on larger scale events, there is a discrepancy between the online support and the offline presence. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2008, the Cyprus Peace Platform, an umbrella organisation that represents political parties and NGOs from both sides of the island, organised their annual protest/gathering in the buffer zone in front of Ledra Palace, which attracts media coverage and large number of supporters. On that day, 300-400 participants gathered outside the historic hotel. After a couple of hours of presentations, speeches and singing, the participants dispersed quietly. Very quickly on the same night, pictures of the event were uploaded online with accompanying posts, comments and discussions that attracted a much larger number of interested individuals than the ones who took part in the peace protest. In some ways, the protest became secondary to the online exchanges; it became valuable as a stimulus for the online discussions rather than for its importance as an event. Whereas for some this seemed like a paradox, for others, like Antonis, who sees himself as part of a wider online network, it appeared as a positive sign that Cypriot peace activism is expanded and takes a broader and more inclusive form on the Internet.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has illustrated the ways, in which Facebook emerged as popular space for the articulation of Cyprio-centric discourses at a particular historical period. To understand, however, the format and uses Cypriotist groups took online, it is argued here, that they have to be studied in relation to the development and history of the bi-communal peace movement in Cyprus. Far from taking a radical new shape, Facebook groups reproduced the structures, rhetoric and aesthetics of offline peace activism, by encouraging the communication between Turkish and Greek Cypriots as fundamental, utilising similar symbols and focusing on the (re)construction of a common Cypriot identity; a result of what has been termed here as ‘banal peace activism’.

On the other hand, Facebook provided a new arena for the mobilisation and expression of individuals and groups, who shared experiences of marginalisation and ‘voicelessness’ in offline settings. Cypriotism online did not, however, only develop as a counter-narrative to the rhetoric of ethnic nationalism that has dominated other social spheres. As illustrated, Facebook was utilised by some members to move away from peace politics traditionally organised through political parties or other official groups. Similarly, some British Cypriots found on Facebook a space separate from the political

centres in London, from which they felt excluded and alienated. What the Internet crystallised, however, is that whereas all these different members shared a language of Cypriotism, their understanding of and claims to Cypriotness varied considerably. Confrontation, agreement and disagreement are then part of the process through which Cypriotism is negotiated, internally contested and shifted online. This processual aspect of 'how the nation is imagined' makes it less plausible then to unreservedly identify particular groups, such as the diaspora, with particular types of nationalisms.

Such observations also unravel that as much as the Internet offered an area for new identities to be expressed and articulated, its uses and effects are very much mediated by multiple and diverse existing structures and socio-cultural contexts. Whereas Facebook has given some individuals new political roles and status within local and transnational settings, for others, lack of social and cultural capital in offline contexts has restricted the ways they have experienced and utilised it. Technology use, therefore, is embedded in and enabled by broader historical processes and discursive domains.

It is characteristic that after the first year of popularity, the activity in the groups started to increasingly reduce, especially after the election of Christofias and the beginning of the negotiations between the two sides in the island. On one hand, there was a sense that the aims of these 'temporary communities of memory' coming together had been achieved after the elections and an anti-climax in their dynamism was to be expected. On the other hand, it reflected disillusionment on behalf of some participants with the potential of Internet politics to translate into 'real' life activism. Such frustration, as the chapter argued, has to be connected with particular understandings of 'bi-communal politics', which in the Cypriot context often imply the commitment to transcend physical and ideological borders and meet face-to-face.

This, however, does not mean an inherent failure and inferiority of online politics. Instead, it is argued here, we have to look at how the relation between the online and offline is constructed and understood in particular contexts in order to understand the ways it is implicated in more complex sets of power structures and relations. For, the privilege of online activism as opposed to offline political participation does not always signal lack of commitment and responsibility. As illustrated in the chapter, some individuals were enabled through the Internet to expand their membership into networks

that extended beyond the primacy of ethnic and national identities. For others, it is a mechanism of dealing with offline experiences of exclusion. This is why ‘lurking’ is often explained as a result of lack of particular types of cultural capital in the diaspora. And others cannot even reach places where peace activism is consolidated through physical presence.

The following episode is an illustration of this last point. Days before the event Yiorgos organised in Nicosia, we crossed the green line to the North to meet with Mehmet, a very active member of the Facebook groups. Yiorgos insisted on him attending his event in the following days, as he would make a good contribution to the group. Whereas other Turkish Cypriots crossed the line and came to the meeting, Mehmet failed to turn up, which made Yiorgos disappointed and put Mehmet’s commitment as an activist into question. Yiorgos was unaware about something that some of us knew: that Mehmet, an active supporter of peace and Cypriotism could not cross the line because, although born in Cyprus, he is not recognised as Turkish Cypriot; his family came originally from Turkey, but this is something that he does not always disclose to others.

Picking up from this incident, the next chapter focuses on discourses and experiences around the border in order to highlight how the opening of the Green Line in Cyprus revealed and created internal boundaries and power dynamics among those who were expected the most to cross it.

## CHAPTER 6

### Crossing the Line -Borders and Boundaries

#### 6.1 Introduction: Closings and openings without closure

The Green Line in Cyprus had for decades symbolised, embodied and materialised the division between the north and south parts of the island. According to Hadjipavlou (2006) and Cockburn (2004), the line, which separates the capital Nicosia and the island into two parts, takes different names depending on one's ideological and political stance: the *green* line, the *ceasefire* line, the *dead zone*, the *demarcation* line, the *partitioning* line, the *Attila* line, the *no-man's land* or the *border*.

First drawn in 1963 after the eruption of interethnic violence and later consolidated in 1974, the line was rendered impenetrable for most Cypriots and communication across it had not only been technically disabled but also highly discouraged by the state and officials on both sides. During the closure of the line, crossings and bi-communal meetings required great organisational effort and demanded long bureaucratic processes as permits had to be granted to groups and individuals from both sides (Constantinou and Papadakis 2001).

Bi-communalists faced public disapproval, which was very often articulated and expressed in national media and this collective experience of marginalisation played a pivotal role in the formation and self-identification of the peace movement. The overcoming of the separation and division became an important point in the agenda of the bi-communal groups but also a prerequisite for their existence and organisation; as bi-communal groups, their main purpose was to bring the two communities together with the ultimate purpose of re-unification and the erasure of the partition line. As explained in the previous chapter, the Green Line dominated the 'landscape of peace activism' in Cyprus and, quite paradoxically, the bi-communal movement concentrated and intensified their activities around and on the Line they sought to abolish.

The increasing visibility of the peace movement at the border is, according to one of my informants who was a participant in the first bi-communal meetings, what led to the tightening of crossing control and eventually the complete shut of the border that was implemented by Denktaş's government in the North in 1997. George Georgiou, in his narration of the organisation of the peace movement at that time, suggested:

After the summer of 1996 and the killings of Isaac and Solomou<sup>66</sup> there was great disappointment and no one was listening to the few voices of peace. We had the great idea to contact the 15 diplomatic missions in Cyprus and organise an event. The American embassy responded and they were willing to help. A big party took place on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September. We got an award as peace leaders by the ambassador in a big event at Ledra Palace. Some people say that when Denktaş saw that, he panicked. Because up to then they had heard about people going and coming [through the Green Line] but they didn't pay attention. They hadn't realised the magnitude [of the movement]. After the awards ceremony, they realised the magnitude. No one will tell you this opinion of course besides some Turkish Cypriots.

Even if the increasing visibility was not the sole or most determinant influence on Denktaş's decision, the words above demonstrate that the crossings have been imagined and articulated as an important element of the peace movement. Moreover, crossing or the *intention* to cross became a recognising sign of the good peace supporter or *epanaprosseghistis*<sup>67</sup> (supporter of rapprochement).

When the border, however, unexpectedly opened in April 2003, its crossing became possible for all Greek and Turkish Cypriots. In the first days of the opening, in their thousands, Cypriots queued in front of the check points in order to visit the other side. Dikomitis (2005) identified three main attitudes towards the border and its crossing amongst Greek Cypriots in the period after the opening. One was that of people, mainly refugees, who travelled to the North to pay pilgrimage to their lost villages and houses. Then, there were those crossing to go to the beach, see friends or do shopping. And third, there was the category of non-crossers, Greek Cypriots, who objected to having to show their passports in order to travel 'in their own country' and to recognising, in this way, the 'pseudo-state' in the North.

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<sup>66</sup> Greek Cypriot cousins, Tassos Isaac and Solomos Solomou, who were killed 5 days apart by Turkish para-military forces for trespassing the Green Line into TRNC territory.

<sup>67</sup> The term has negative connotations and carries some irony when used by critics of bi-communalism.

This last perspective was founded in broader nationalist discourses in the South and was largely linked to the initial hesitancy of the Greek Cypriot state to take a clear stance on the issue of the border opening. As Demetriou (2007: 995-997) argues, in the first days of the crossings, the state was absent and the trips across the line happened outside institutionalised frameworks and, therefore, challenged the state apparatus. However, official authorities very quickly declared that only a state could recognise another state and, in this case, the citizens' activities across the border did not mean recognition and legitimisation of the TRNC. This reshaped the political subjectivity of Greek Cypriots, as Demetriou concludes. 'The state was thus re-instated as the sole agent of assuring its own 'standing' and 'existence'. The domain of political subjectivity had not only been reduced, but was declared to have always been that much narrower' (ibid.: 999). Hadjipavlou (2006) seconds this argument by explaining that although the opening of the border enabled contacts across the division line that could contribute to mutual understanding and peace-building, the effects of these contacts are limited because they are not institutionally supported and endorsed.

Whereas these studies deal with issues of (non)crossing as inherent problems of nationalism and nationalist politics, the chapter diverts the focus here on the experiences of crossings among Cypriotists and peace-supporters in the diaspora and Cyprus. For, even for those who have fought the closing of the border, its opening has not necessarily brought closure. Bryant (2010) has illustrated how cross-border visits have very often not fulfilled people's expectations on both sides of the divide in Cyprus and the opening of the border unravelled other deeper boundaries that set Greek and Turkish Cypriots further apart. Taking the argument further, the chapter illustrates how discourses and experiences around the border brought to the surface boundaries within Cypriotism and peace politics and highlighted old and new power dynamics among different agents. On various levels, the chapter brings together and encapsulates most of the issues and themes discussed already in the thesis: the politics of memory, internal divisions within the Cypriot Left, inter-generational tensions over 'peace'.

Both in the diaspora and Cyprus, peace supporters have traditionally advocated for the opening of the border, but the first parts of the chapter investigate why some of these same individuals have not crossed or rarely cross after the opening of the line in 2004. In section 6.2, it is argued that for some older peace supporters in the diaspora, non-

crossing emerges as an agentive decision to preserve particular memories and to avoid further displacement by visiting places that used to be home but are now ruined and strange. For others, however, crossings have to take place in a right way –and this is the way of the Left. In other words, section 6.3 unravels how Leftists see the current openings of the line as discontinuous with and disruptive to peace politics, as traditionally operated by the Left. Some British born Cypriots, who support peace, oppose both these approaches and emphasise the need for everyday use of the line as a means to peace. For them, I argue in section 6.4, the ‘green line’ has emerged as an empowering space, away from the socio-cultural conditions of either side of the island, in which British born Cypriots often find themselves marginalised. But although the green line in this case is imagined and envisaged as ‘everyone’s land’, it is not equally shared by everyone, and section 6.5, which deals with the affectivity of the border, outlines how emotive reactions at the border can unmask emerging power imbalances among those who support peace. The focus is shifted here from examining discourses *about* the border to looking at experiences *of* the border. The final section 6.6 carries on with this theme by narrating two journeys across the line. The journey, treated here as a liminal stage that is experienced outside the ordinary and the everyday, creates conditions that challenge habitualised political ideologies. As we follow the journeys, we are forced to think how experiences of crossings further problematise strict dichotomies such as ‘peace-supporter’/nationalist and crosser/non-crosser.

## **6.2 Crossing the line of Memory**

By the time of fieldwork in 2006, many of the UK Cypriots, at least those who maintained close connections with the island, had crossed the Green Line to the ‘other side’ to see their old houses and villages. Memorabilia of the crossing had been carried back to London, which included photos of the visit, recovered possessions and gifts given to the crossers by the current residents of their ‘land’. It happened very often that when I visited Greek Cypriots in their houses in London that they would pull out such memorabilia, an act that was regularly accompanied by comments about the kindness and hospitality of those who welcomed them in the North. Many Turkish Cypriots also evoked similar experiences in their crossings to the South. During an interview with a Turkish Cypriot radio producer in his mid-50s, he showed me a collection of family pictures that the Greek Cypriot residents in his house outside Limassol had saved and returned to him upon his visit. He included them in an online album that he had created.

Whereas stories of crossing as a positive experience were many among Cypriots in London, there were also those whose narratives were dominated by a different rhetoric; and whose crossing experience not only did not contribute in bridging the gap between the self and the 'other' but, on the contrary, it reinforced it. Mr Christos, who migrated to the UK in the late 1940s, recalled:

I decided to go and see my village in *Morphou*, because I'm getting old; who knows if I'd ever get the chance to go again. It was horrible. I really regret it. I went to my old house and the woman who lived there showed me some orange trees in the garden and said "These are my son's". I shouted at her and said "No, these are mine". The woman insisted and I was getting angrier. How can she say that these are her trees? They are mine and no matter what anyone says, they will remain mine<sup>68</sup>. They don't even take proper care of them. When we lived there, we had a big orchard; there are only a few trees left now.

In parallel with such accounts, still among those who supported peace and reunification in the island, the majority had welcomed the opening of the border as a positive and promising political development for the island; as an opportunity for Cypriots in Cyprus to interact with each other and live together like Cypriots in London. For Cypriots in London, crossing the green line in Cyprus is primarily about visiting 'home' and the other half of 'their country' rather than coming into contact with 'the other'. After all, according to a common rhetoric followed by my informants, in London, Cypriots have co-existed side by side with no disruption.

These crossings, however, as the words of Mr. Christos demonstrate above, involve distressing and dislocating experiences that shake one's idea of 'home' and create the conditions of confrontation with new 'others'. For, although in dominant nationalist discourses the distinction between Turkish Cypriots and Turks tends to collapse, both leftist and nationalist accounts among Greek Cypriots agree on the presence of Turkey and 'the Turkish settler' as a source of destruction, threat and pollution.

Mr. Yiannis, one of my key informants at the Cypriot Centre is a devout communist, who left his village in Cyprus in 1948 and migrated first to Australia and then to the

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<sup>68</sup> Trees here evoke notions of 'rootedness' and become metaphors of belonging to a particular soil. In terms of her work on gardens in Cyprus, Jepson (2006: 173) writes '[...] the soil represents the implied permanence of all that underlies the notion of home. Soil serves as a vessel for the dead of a nation and as something conjoined with underlying geology (and therefore with history)'.

UK. Talking about his village and the opening of the border, he said once: 'I have sworn to myself that I will never go back. To see what? All that is ruined? But of course it's all those Turks brought from Turkey who destroyed everything and not the Turkish Cypriots who used to live there before'.

In a discussion with another of the regulars at the Cypriot Centre, Mr. Costas's idea of staying away as a way of 'fully being there' became more explicit, when he characteristically said: 'I have a photo of my village [and it's enough] to look at. I have a photo of my house. I don't want to go' (Eho tin fotografia tou horiou mou kai tin vlepo. Eho fotografia tou spitou mou. Den thelo na pao). What Mr. Costas meant is that the old photos of his village and house, which he kept in a frame, were more representational of the way he had left them and he did not want to jeopardise this particular image by crossing to the North.

Slyomovics (1998), in her account of Arab and Jew narratives of a Palestinian village that used to be inhabited by the former before it became 'home' for the latter, recognises the significance of the 'house' in the way identity is constructed through particular claims to memory. She argues that an 'environmental memory', the way we remember space, buildings and objects defines the ways our existence is shaped by them. To visit a ruined house that does not match our memory of it any more then means that we have to deal with the disruption this causes to the coherence through which we perceive the self. In order to avoid the de-stabilisation of identity, therefore, for Mr. Costas, the simulacrum, the representation of 'home' becomes effectively more real than the actual physical space, which is described as altered, inauthentic and strange.

Such accounts point to what Herzfeld (1997: 111) has termed 'structural nostalgia', the recollection of the past as a 'collective representation of an Edenic order –a time before time- in which the balanced perfection of social relations has not yet suffered the decay that affects everything human'. This however does not mean that individuals are always oblivious to the nostalgic elements of this representation and the constructedness of memory. In fact, in many accounts of crossings my informants discussed precisely how the very experience of crossing alerted them to the contradictions, inconsistencies and elusiveness of memory. I was once spending time with two Greek Cypriot sisters, who

had left their village in the North as refugees when they were very young girls. One of them, Maria, lives in the UK and she was visiting over the summer holidays her sister, Sophia, who lives in Nicosia. While narrating the events of 1974 and of the night they had to leave their house, they both realised that in many cases their memories differed, whereas in others they complemented each other. 'We have told these stories so many times but every time we come up with something slightly different. I think we cannot separate now what we actually lived in reality and what we've learnt from listening to and learning the stories', Maria said pointing out the processual and changing character of their accounts of the past. 'Memory is very funny', Sophia said, 'when I first crossed and visited our village, everything looked so much smaller and insignificant than I had remembered all these years. We had a road next to my house that I remembered as huge...almost like an avenue. When I saw it this time I realised it was a narrow, muddy road that a modern car could barely go through [laughs]'. 'Same with our house', Sophia complemented her sister's argument. 'I used to remember it as really large and quite luxurious and now I wonder how we could even fit in there'.

Social sciences, including anthropology, often try to deconstruct approaches to memory that see it as static; as a repository of true facts that one can access any time. As anthropologists, we often see such understandings of memory as essentialising and problematic. When memory is associated with nostalgia and romanticism, it is often analysed as a form of 'false consciousness' (see for instance Lowenthal 1985). In a modern perspective, memory then operates as a smoke screen prohibiting us from achieving historical truth. In a post-modern analysis, it creates the sense of a reality and totality that is inconsistent with the fragmentations, contradictions and processual character of history production (Rowlands 1994:139; see also Crapanzano 1991; Klein 2000). Either way, theorists have often tended to see individuals as subjected to and mystified by their own mnemonic aptitude.

However, as we see here, individuals are often aware of the distinction between everyday and anthropological understandings of memory. And although its constructedness and nostalgic qualities are often evident, they actively employ the romanticisation of the past in order to deal with displacement and dislocation. For crossings to visit 'home' may reveal not only that this home is not there anymore but also that it was never there in the ways it features in memory, on which the coherence

and narration of the present self is founded; crossing the line of memory is therefore sometimes more costly than crossing the green line.

### 6.3 Crossing ‘the right way’ –for the Left

The 3<sup>rd</sup> of April 2008 was a day of celebration for many –although not all- Cypriots; another checkpoint was opened in the previously closed Ledra Street/Locmaci. Shortly after his election as President of the Republic of Cyprus, Dimitris Christofias and the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mehmet Ali Talat, agreed on the reopening of the main pedestrian street that runs through the old walled town of Nicosia and connects its North and South parts. Speeches, music and a festive spirit<sup>69</sup> set the mood for the opening event that attracted many celebrators, passers-by, tourists and local and international media. The press worldwide hailed the news as an important step for peace, the international community sent encouraging messages and Internet sites were filled with enthusiastic comments. ‘Hey there mates. Ledra Street is open now. Next is to open our brains and cooperate to be able to kick all foreign troops out of Cyprus. For one Cyprus, one Cypriot population!!’, was the very first post on the wall of the ‘One Cyprus’ Facebook groups. Tens of other messages echoing similar sentiments and replicating the same tone appeared during the day.

Very far from the green line but very close to Green Lanes, in the Cypriot centre in London, the regulars had gathered to watch the news about Ledra Street on the centre’s TV. As most of them are long-term AKEL supporters, excitement and praise took a more particular form and were mainly linked to discussions about the charisma and abilities of the newly elected president Christofias. ‘He’s just come into power and things are already changing’, Mr Kyriakos, a regular, was pointing out to a small group of four men gathered around him. This language of change and the celebration of a new era also featured in the speech that President Christofias gave a month later at the Alexandra Palace hotel in London as part of his UK visit. He reassured London Cypriots and AKEL supporters that the opening of Ledra Street, as a symbolic gesture,

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<sup>69</sup> Some media reported that state officials also cut the ribbons of balloons to set them free during celebrations of the opening of the street. The use of balloons was particularly disapproved by those who were suspicious of and negative about the opening and it was interpreted as a way of underplaying and carnivalising the ‘Cyprus problem’ in its gravity. One of my informants in Cyprus, who was very critical of the politics of the Left and of *rapprochement* in general, would never fail to repeat in every conversation we had about the opening of Ledra Street: ‘And those balloons! How ridiculous!’

proved the commitment of the new government to peace and the willingness of the two Cypriot leaders to co-operate and engage in sustainable dialogue towards a solution.

In broader public and political discourse, however, the significance of the opening of the new checkpoint was not reduced to its symbolic value for the conjoint efforts of the two major leftist parties in Cyprus, AKEL and CTP, which, for the first time, were simultaneously in power on each side of the division line. What was also celebrated as special about the opening of Ledra Street was its potential to facilitate more spontaneous, hassle-free and informal crossings, which would strengthen bi-communal relationships and could also eventually contribute to the regeneration and redevelopment of the old town of Nicosia. For, unlike other checkpoints in and around Nicosia, this is in a central location, it re-connects the two parts of a pedestrian street full with shops and cafes on each side, and it involves a very small –almost unobservable- UN-controlled buffer zone that eases the crossing to the other side.

This ease of crossing as a theme kept emerging in the comments of many of those I met on Ledra Street in the summer of 2008, when I returned to Cyprus a couple of months after the checkpoint opened. One very warm evening, I was walking on Ledra Street when I accidentally met a family of London Greek Cypriots, whom I knew from the UK. ‘We are just coming back from crossing to the other side’, was their first sentence. ‘We were just walking on Ledra Street and we decided to carry on walking [to the north side]. It’s so much easier now’.

However, when I asked them if this meant that they would now cross more often, the father answered: ‘Not really. There is no point in going back and forth; the point is to have a solution’. This statement was repeated to me by other peace supporters both from the diaspora and Cyprus and reflected a situation, in which individuals, who in principle supported the political initiatives of the leftist leaders to open new checkpoints, in practice did not cross or crossed reluctantly. The justification of their stance was that crossing without a permanent solution of the Cyprus problem was pointless and counter-productive in the long term.

This ambivalence towards border openings did not emerge exclusively in the margins of or outside the official circles of the Left in Cyprus. In the summer of 2008, I

interviewed the presidents of the youth party groups of CTP and AKEL, in North and South Nicosia respectively. They both share similar backgrounds and experiences as two young men, who have devoted much of their political careers supporting peace, rapprochement and co-operation between their two parties. Both of them are also considered promising career politicians in their respective side of Cyprus. However, as the leaders of their parties were celebrating the opening of Ledra Street, they both expressed reservations. 'Openings and crossings have to happen in an organised manner and with some careful planning. We didn't struggle all these years [as people of the Left and bi-communalists] in order to have this. I can even say that these openings are actually dangerous for peace and bi-communalism', Michael Stefanou stated with disappointment. In the North of Nicosia, Evrim Sehinoglou, almost echoed the words of his Greek Cypriot counterpart: 'It was probably counter-productive to have all these checkpoints opened. In a way, if people can cross freely, they have nothing to fight about, nothing to protest about. It becomes too easy.'

Both quotes conform to a rhetoric that sees the opening of the border at that historical point and under the particular political circumstances as threatening to the older peace efforts organised by the Left. The new arrangements allowed most of those who wanted to cross to do so outside orchestrated political efforts and party groups. Also, according to the same line of thought, such border arrangements potentially operate as a 'safety-valve' for the continuation of an established status quo. For, if people cross and enjoy some of the benefits of a unified island, they are less likely to experience the frustration and disempowerment that normally lead to collective resistance and upheaval –the kind that happened in the North of the island before the opening of the border and the Annan plan. In other words, while the leadership of the Left in Cyprus were opening new checkpoints, a critical narrative had developed alongside and within the Left that saw in this *ease* of crossing an *ease* of doing politics, which was juxtaposed to their own 'traditional' and right way of fighting for peace.

The contradictions and tensions, however, were not limited there. Whereas in this common critical leftist rhetoric border openings are treated with suspicion as disrupting to Leftist peace politics, for others, disappointment and cracks in the relationship between the 'two Lefts' in the island were the *cause* rather than the *result* of peace supporters' disenchantment with the green line. This was highlighted to me by Ilke, a

Turkish Cypriot man in his thirties, who moved to London in 2004 to work and study. A devoted member of CTP and a peace activist, he left the island with a 'heavy heart' after the rejection of the Annan plan by the Greeks Cypriots. Throughout my fieldwork he has also been one of the most consistent and outspoken critics of AKEL's last minute rejection of the plan. In a discussion about the crossings, he said in a realistic-cum-pessimistic tone: 'Whenever I go back to Cyprus, I don't cross back and forth. I fly usually to Larnaca because it's easier for me to get a flight there. But that's it. I cross once to the North to go home and then I only cross again to go to the airport on my way back to the UK. I normally have to find excuses to not go to the South, because in principle we support peace, reunification, communication. But I'm fed up with them, with AKEL people. I can't say openly why I don't cross, I prefer to find excuses, it's better this way'.

Ilke's words contained a spirit of disillusionment with AKEL's politics common amongst a number of Turkish Cypriot leftists in the post-Annan period. But what is more significant here is the mechanism he employs to deal with his ideological and political disappointment. The use of excuses or 'the presentation of self', to borrow Goffman's ([1959] 1990) term, in different contexts and in front of different audiences offer ways to reconcile conflicting experiences and identities; those of a 'good' and long-term peace supporter, who does not wish to jeopardise peace and to publicly display disloyalty to his party with those defined by political fatigue and resentment.

For some peace supporters, especially from the Turkish Cypriot Left, like Ilke, non-crossing came as a reaction to the failures of the Greek Cypriot Left in the referendum and post-referendum period. For others, mainly Greek Cypriot leftists, non-crossing was a reaction to 'easy' politics that diverted from and disrupted their ideological and activist tradition. However, whereas these discourses were quite widespread outside and within the Left, non-crossing for peace supporters had often to be accompanied by apologies, explanations and maintaining a particular 'public' façade.

This need for a public facade highlights the extent to which the Green Line has historically been invested with a prominent symbolic place in the 'landscape of peace activism' and leftist peace politics, as discussed in chapter 5. As the denunciation of the closed border has been part of the discursive repertoire and practices of the 'ideal' peace

supporter, the act of not-crossing challenges the official party line; disrupts an imagined continuity in the peace politics of the Left; and, moreover, interrogates fundamental aspects of being a leftist and a peace supporter as social identities. As there is much at risk here, some individuals strategically manage and try to reconcile the discrepancies between discourse and practice.

Such political dualism is not experienced only by those, who live permanently close to the Green Line, but for leftists in the diaspora too. In the summer of 2008, many of those who had publicly been celebrating for the opening of Ledra Street in the Cypriot Centre in London, had the opportunity to cross it during their visits in Cyprus. Still, many did not cross or crossed a limited number of times to the other side, often evoking the unofficial leftist justification against border openings.

Whereas diasporas are usually imagined both in academic writings and public discourses as inherently transnational, mobile and border-crossing, different borders carry different significance and are not considered uniformly penetrable by members of the diaspora. Also, as we can see here, borders are not always, at least on a symbolic level, the discursive products of nationalist ideas and sentiments. For some of the Cypriot peace supporters of the Left in Cyprus and in the diaspora, the decision to not cross was also informed by particular ideological struggles and historical processes within the Left itself.

#### **6.4 From ‘no man’s land’ to ‘everyone’s land’ –Reterritorialisation of the border**

One very warm afternoon in August 2008, Alex and his fiancée, Maria, two of my key informants in Cyprus, came to pick me up from my room, which was at the University of Nicosia student halls. The building is adjacent to the Green Line in Aghios Dometios and to two army grounds on either side of it. I used to spend evenings in my room’s small balcony looking at the border guards in the North and South parts of it standing for hours sometimes smoking or listening to music and I used to try to get a glimpse of ‘the other side’, which was so close but directly inaccessible, due to the absence of a checkpoint. Alex was as fascinated by the location of my room as I was, and that day, he asked if we could go to the roof of the building so he could take some pictures. Taking pictures of army bases or of the Green Line is forbidden, but Alex was only

interested in taking pictures of the 'other side' and of the large Turkish flag that covered a big area of the Pentadaktylos Mountains in the North.

We got to the roof and he had been taking photos for a while, when we got spotted by the soldiers from both sides of the border who were trying with gestures and shouting to warn us to stop, as they obviously thought that we were photographing them. However, the more the soldiers looked alerted, the more Alex kept taking shots and very quickly the soldiers from the Greek Cypriot side started coming towards us –with their guns clearly visible. Maria and I urged Alex to stop. 'You are going to get us shot', she kept repeating, simultaneously joking and panicking, but Alex did not even turn his head. After a few minutes Maria almost physically pulled him away from the roof and we went downstairs. We had to explain to the soldiers what we had been doing, but Alex by that time was very upset: 'They don't have the right to ask us questions. This is my island and I can go wherever I want; I can take photos of whatever I want. The Green Line is part of my island'.

Born and raised in the UK by Greek Cypriot parents, he moved permanently to the island in 2006 with his Cypriot fiancée in order to get married and start a new life there. In the two years after his move to Cyprus, he completed his military service and managed to get a job as a researcher in one of the universities in Nicosia. He had been involved in projects that promoted research and academic co-operation between North and South and he was a member of bi-communal groups and participant in many bi-communal activities. Although he seemed to have settled in very well and he spoke Greek fluently, Alex's group of friends were mainly Cypriots born outside Cyprus, who, like him, had 'returned' to the island. Most of them were British born and the dominant language in the group was normally English. 'It's much easier to hang out with people who have the same background. They understand you better. And growing up in the UK, I'm used to being in a multicultural environment', Alex told me almost apologetically in one of our first meetings in order to explain the particular demographics of his friends' circle. To make a home 'at home', Alex created and participated in this social space, which he seemed devoted to expanding by always welcoming newcomers –usually English-speaking Cypriots and non-Cypriots, either living in or visiting the island.

During fieldwork, I crossed the Green Line many times with Alex and his friends –some times to attend an event, other times to just see friends. Most of these young second or third-generation ‘returnees’<sup>70</sup> are supporters of peace and reunification and have relationships with ‘the other side’. Their ideological and political orientation, as they often claimed, was inspired and triggered by their understanding and experiences of multiculturalism in the countries, where they were born. Although Alex was involved in bi-communal organisations and NGOs, he always expressed his pride of having an ‘organically’ grown multicultural group of friends that included Turkish Cypriots.

Opposed to nationalist aphorisms but also left-wing reservations about border crossings, these peace supporters insisted that border openings were a very positive development for peace and communication and expressed no hesitancy or reservations to cross. As John, a British Cypriot and friend of Alex, who used to spend his summers in Cyprus, said once: ‘We cannot see the border with emotionality. Old emotions are those that keep the Cyprus problem a problem. We are influenced by how our parents feel about Cyprus but we have to move beyond’.

Within this discourse, emotionality and long-established political ideologies are seen as negative residues of the past and as impeding progress and a solution for the island. They are, therefore, metaphorically talked about as bigger barricades than those of the physical division line. All these barriers, including the abolishment of the border, can only be outdone through openness, tolerance and the everyday practice of these principles.

Informal crossings play a large part in this *everyday practice of peace* and the green line features here again as an important point of reference, however, with different meaning and symbolic value attached to it. As the words of Alex during the episode with the border guards demonstrate, there is a sense of ownership of the Green Line, of the right to be there, use it, photograph it. Whereas the quest is again a unified and peaceful Cyprus, the border is not treated as the embodied proof of irreconcilable difference, like

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<sup>70</sup> Christou and King (2008) alert that the term has to be problematised before being employed as a descriptive category. The concept of ‘return’ relates to ideas of where ‘home’ is considered to be in the first place. Also, as already discussed in chapter 2, the return of the diaspora does not always bring the closure that is popularly assumed but opens up the space for counter-diasporic narratives, like in the particular case of British born Cypriots here.

in nationalist discourses, nor as the ultimate actual and symbolic obstacle to peace, like in traditional leftist rhetoric. Instead, the *use* of the border here is a *means* to peace.

The term ‘use’ is employed to include a diverse set of practices beyond just crossing. A number of peace supporters have very recently started visiting and operating within the green line, or at least parts of it. One such part of the Green Line is that in front of Ledra Palace hotel and it has been in recent years under significant development and change. What used to be a so-called ‘dead zone’ (Papadakis 2005) of a few hundred meters, with old deteriorated buildings and only the Ledra Palace hotel in use by the UN-soldiers, is now a quite lively strip of land. The Goethe Institute has had a base next to the hotel since 2001, but through very recent initiatives other buildings have been re-opened and restored too. In 2008, the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR), a group of Turkish and Greek Cypriot teachers, who advocate for educational co-operation and communication between the two sides, had just bought one of the old buildings on the site as their new ‘home’ with international funds. Another old house that used to belong to Armenian Cypriots has been turned into a multi-function building, that includes a restaurant, a café and conference rooms. It is privately owned and some international or bi-communal conferences and meetings now take place there.

Clearly what is promoted through the development of this part of the Green Line is a spirit of co-operation, peace and cosmopolitanism and a detachment from the fixity of nationalist identities and symbols that presumably have dominated the island’s landscape. The French-sounding name of the café-restaurant, ‘Chateau Status’, after all, explicitly conveys this message of internationalism. A number of agents, including local activists, entrepreneurs, international funding organisations, the European Union, and the Cypriot state, seem to be co-operating -some times unintentionally- in turning this ‘no-man’s land’ into ‘everyone’s land’.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the place attracts individuals, who identify with or aspire to such cosmopolitanism, such as diplomats, NGO workers and international businesspeople. This air of ‘openness’ drew Alex and his friends to the Green Line too. Unlike many other Cypriots, they chose Chateau Status very often as a place of leisure, for a coffee or an evening drink. ‘Why should we go for a coffee in the South and not to the Green Line? It’s a good way to support peace, isn’t it? If more people get used to

doing it, things would be much better', said Alex in one of our visits to the place. Another advantage of the place is that their Turkish Cypriot friends could join them easily from the other side.

But what seemed particularly important is that they had the opportunity there to be around local and international like-minded people. As we were all sitting around a table in the back garden of Chateau Status one evening, Peter, a British born Cypriot, who went to live in Cyprus in his mid-twenties said: 'I feel more at home in this place than anywhere else in Cyprus. Everybody speaks English here and people are more open. It's Cyprus and it's not Cyprus. It's not the North, it's not the South. It doesn't have all the things I hate about Cyprus, I definitely feel more comfortable here'. Everyone else in the table, around eight people, mainly British-born, shook their head in agreement.

So beyond the practicalities of meeting with friends and the ideological commitment to using the line for communication and peace-building, Peter's statement presents the green line as a home inside and outside home that allows different identities to be articulated. The long-term deterritorialised Green Line, where social life was absent, becomes through processes of reterritorialisation (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 1988) and re-appropriation a separate space, where new social relations are mapped and in which these English-speaking peace supporters are safeguarded against their ideological and cultural marginalisation in the rest of the island.

This idea of the green line as a safe haven was raised in a newspaper article by a peace supporting journalist, who imagines what an occupation of the Green Line would mean:

'Three weeks now the quite provocative idea has seemed to me more and more tempting. Moderate people, with lots of energy for the future, [living] in the heaven of abandonment! As people with environmental and human sensitivities, we will find again the footprints of the place, amongst the flora and fauna that have reoccupied this zone of the island from one side to the other. We will be able to move around easily; we will speak any language we find convenient to communicate about basic stuff; we will find again our tranquillity, away from the civilization [*politismos*] that 'develops' from both sides crunching mercilessly on the land, shores, hills and trees! OK, we will have less access to the sea but we will have tranquillity. In terms of numbers, we will be equal, in terms of Greek-speaking and Turkish-speaking people of Cyprus, taking into account the percentages of those who supported a solution and in proportion to the overall population. We will

find the language, we will find the music, we will find the ways through our common experiences and our common vision. Don't imagine an Amish community; we will enjoy whatever we need from civilization and we will move freely to any of the three zones we want, to work, see friends, to fulfil needs. Maybe with time, the minority of the dead zone will start to gain ground and to expand territorially, until they occupy what they deserve from future Cyprus. And if you try to encourage me by saying that we will become a boxing sack between the extremists on both sides, I have to remind you that, anyway, our life has not been very easy in a country, which decided through collective and democratic processes to kick away the future. Only before, there has to be demining [of the Green Line]! (Stefanou, Politis, 19/09/2010, p. 2)

In its neo-romantic style, the article envisages the Green Line, as a separate strip of land that should be controlled by its 'natural' inhabitants; the plants, the animals, and the people who can organically live and want to live together regardless of nationality or background. As the Greek word *politismos* has a twofold meaning of both civilization and culture, the author seems to imply that what lies outside the green line is environmental destruction and uncontrolled development, results of civilization and progress, and nationalist and divisive ideologies identified with culture.

Indeed, this perspective of an almost culture-free space differs from the idea of the line as a multicultural or cosmopolitan place that is currently promoted through the reconstruction and development of some of its parts. However, both lines of thought represent the border as the land of those who support co-existence and who find themselves not fitting in the socio-cultural context of either side of the island.

Within this framework, the use of the border provides an empowering experience for many second-generation diasporic Cypriots, who find themselves culturally and ideologically marginalised in their everyday life in the island. Whereas, however, the 'internationalisation' of the border gives voice and space to some individuals, others are still excluded from sharing such cosmopolitanism and/or are alienated by its current reconstruction and commercialisation. The next section discusses reactions to these processes, by looking at particular affectivities of the border.

### **6.5 The affectivity of the border**

Whereas the opening of the border has facilitated movement across it, such crossings are not experienced by everyone in the same way. The physical and institutional

arrangement of the 'dead zone' has still multiple and variable effects on the subjectivities, identities and existence of those who cross and do not (or cannot) cross it. Following Navaro-Yashin's (2007) study of documents in Cyprus in terms of their affective quality, I focus here on the affective interactions between individuals and the border. I engaged before with the ways the border appears as a representation, an image or an idea in public discourses and individual narratives; in the last section, I looked at the border in its physicality and materiality. I asked questions about what happens *at* the border rather than *across* it; how the border is laid out but also how it changes as a landscape; and in what ways the border layout produces different experiences. Here I focus on the diverse emotions expressed and produced at the border for those, who interact with it.

This is not to say that the border has a particular essence in itself that is released upon those who cross it. As Navaro-Yashin puts it in terms of documents, 'when placed in specific social relations with persons, documents have the potentiality to discharge affective energies which are felt or experienced by persons. My argument, then, is not that documents maintain autonomous or self-contained affectivities, but that they are perceived or experienced as affectively charged phenomena when produced and transacted in specific contexts of social relation' (ibid.: 81). Likewise, in specific contexts, *being* at the border provokes emotive responses that are felt by individuals.

Green (2005) has shown in her own study of borders in North-West Greece that the fixity and rigidity of the border promoted by the state is challenged by those who live close to it or cross it and has focused on issues of negotiation and plasticity. Although questions of what and where the border *actually* is help us to focus on how the border is discursively and performatively (re)configured, most Cypriots experience the materiality and physicality of the Green Line by crossing it through a checkpoint.

I focus, therefore, here again at the Ledra Palace checkpoint because of its structural, architectural and functional particularities. As discussed above, for many 'outward-looking', cosmopolitan peace-supporters, including diasporic Cypriots, this strip of Green Line provides an empowering and liberating space, where different identities are expressed and (re)formed. Many of these individuals, as it was also highlighted, see this part of the Green Line as detached from the geographical and ideological boundaries of

nationalism, which dominates the rest of the island. Associating emotional responses to (non)crossing with nationalism, for the cosmopolitan peace supporters, ‘emotionality’ – almost synonymous to sentimentality here- towards the border is avoided, as it reinforces division and impedes peace-building. What I argue is that, whereas forward-looking, this stance neglects and undermines other or others’ experiences at the risk of masking older or emerging power structures and relationships.

To make this clear, I will refer to two independent examples of crossings, two ethnographic snapshots that were marked by the strong emotive and somatic responses of individuals. What is important in these cases is that both crossings were to the Green Line only, and not to the other side; affect was therefore produced at the very act of crossing and through the experience of the border, rather than of what is beyond.

The first snapshot comes from a day in the summer of 2008, when I was following Mr. Yiannis and his wife, Mrs Toula, to the Ledra Palace Green Line. Already married in 1974, they left the island in the same year for the UK. After staying there for a few years, they moved to Australia, where they have lived since. Mr. Yiannis is a leading figure in diasporic politics and a firm supporter of peace and reconciliation and his wife, although not directly involved according to her, always accompanies him in his activities. Whereas they go to Cyprus almost every summer and participate in bi-communal and peace events, they had never crossed before the summer of 2008. I met them through friends the day, on which they had just come back from their first visit to Mr. Yiannis’s village in the North. They shared the same ambivalence towards the line and crossing as many leftists in the island and diaspora –that crossing without a solution is futile.

The time that they were crossing the Ledra Palace checkpoint was only the third time they would have entered the Green line. They were going to attend a bi-communal meeting at Chateau Status and they had kindly accepted to take me along. However, the minute we passed the Greek Cypriot checkpoint from the South, Mrs Toula started shaking. ‘She gets very upset, would you please look after her and hold her hand?’, her husband asked me. We went into the coffee shop but while sitting around a table and sharing coffee with Mr Yiannis’s interlocutors, Mrs Toula’s somatic expressions of distress intensified. She was looking around inquisitively, sighing and shaking for the

whole time. Only when we were leaving the coffee shop, she said: 'I can't believe there is a café here, as if nothing has happened. A café in the middle of the green line, as if there was no war, as if we left for nothing'.

Her somatic expressions of stress and her response to the border reminded me of a different crossing. It was by Mehmet, a young man in his early twenties. Mehmet lives in the North and is an active peace-supporter and heavily involved in party politics. Whereas his dream is to see Cyprus united, as he often says, Mehmet is not officially recognised as a Cypriot by the Republic of Cyprus. Although he was born in Cyprus, his parents came to the island in the 1980s from Turkey. Without the right ancestry and the right documents, Mehmet is not allowed to cross to the South<sup>71</sup>. The green line is as far as he can go.

Mehmet would normally cross to the Ledra Palace checkpoint to meet with friends or attend events. Alex was one of his closest friends and most times Alex's group would go to Chateau Status, Mehmet would join. He would always, however, look very uncomfortable there, which was remarkable for a very confident, sociable and outgoing person, such as Mehmet. One particular evening, while walking down the green line, he started sweating, shaking and getting upset. His group of friends kept looking at him and asking him if he was ok, to which he constantly replied 'yes'.

While I did not raise the issue at the time, I later asked Mehmet in an interview about his reaction at the border. 'It all started when the border opened', he said.

'I managed to cross the first day, as no one was really checking. It was great, the dream of my life had come true. When I tried to cross the next day though, there were long lines. I queued with the others, but when it was my turn, the Greek Cypriot policeman took me out of the queue and shouted at me: "You cannot cross, you are not a Cypriot, go back!". It was so hurtful, the most embarrassing time of my life. To tell me something like this in front of everyone. Who is he to tell me if I'm a Cypriot or not? Since then I always get stressed at the green line, even if I don't remember the episode, I still get this stress, I feel uncomfortable, as if someone is going to tell me to go back'.

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<sup>71</sup> Only Turkish Cypriots, who hold valid documents of the Republic of Cyprus, are allowed entry to the South. Those who cross to the North and do not hold TRNC documents are granted a temporary VISA for 90 days, which is stamped not on the passport but on a separate paper slip, as TRNC is not a recognised state.

If we are to locate power, borders are one context where the state becomes especially conspicuous and its control over movement of its citizens and aliens is directly experienced (Donnan and Wilson 1999). The fenced green line across Nicosia is guarded in different parts by soldiers on both sides, whereas to pass through a check point, crossers have to present their documents to the border control authorities of the Republic of Cyprus and the internationally unrecognised TRNC. I have examined before how individuals exercise their agency by challenging the fixity and control of the border through discourses and action. For some, however, border lines are more fixed than others. In Mehmet's case, he traces his emotional response at/to the border back to the embodied traumatic memory of being singled out and excluded. At the same time, as his last phrase suggests, this sort of affectivity is also linked to his sense of limited agency to overcome the physical and ontological barriers that the border encompasses for him.

However, it is not only state visibility and official use of force and control that makes the border a point of inclusion/exclusion. For Mrs Toula, it was the development, reconstruction and commercialisation of the green line that raised feelings of alienation and distress. She explained her reaction also in connection to her traumatic experiences of refugeeness and migration, which the border all these years symbolised in its emptiness and desertion. But the commercialisation of the border through new 'geopolitics of capitalism' (Harvey 1985) in Cyprus, disrupted the connection between past, present and future. In this forward-looking landscape of the green line, Mrs Toula could not locate her past and, inevitably, could not identify her future.

What is highlighted here is that the shifting landscape of the Green Line through processes of re-appropriation and re-territorialisation has empowered individuals, such as diasporic Cypriots, who otherwise felt alienated and estranged within the everyday political and cultural realities of life in the island. It is understandable why for this group of peace-supporters, it has been important to move away from the emotionality that has dominated discourses and practices around the border. On the other hand, this empowering space is not equally shared by everyone who supports peace. As a group of those who have the right social and cultural capital and the right documents to enjoy the green line as 'everyone's land' emerges, there are also those who feel more alienated there than ever. Their particular affectivities in relation to the border arise as embodied

modes of resistance to the new status quo. It is therefore important ethnographically to pay attention at these affectivities, because, as shown here, they unravel on-going, but also new and shifting power relations within peace politics at the border.

## 6.6 Journeys

*Have Ithaca always in your mind.  
Your arrival there is what you are destined for.  
But don't in the least hurry the journey.  
Better it last for years,  
so that when you reach the island you are old,  
rich with all you have gained on the way,  
not expecting Ithaca to give you wealth.  
Ithaca gave you a splendid journey.  
Without her you would not have set out.  
She hasn't anything else to give you.*

(‘Ithaca’ by Constantine Cavafy)

As the well known poem by Cavafy artfully suggests, a journey is a learning and self-transforming process. Even in the best-planned journey, one may need to deal with contingencies, to follow new paths or to change route. One has to take a few minutes in front of a cross road, a cul-de-sac or a wall and think again about which is the right way to go. The journey involves experiences and encounters that invite us to reflect on our previous plans, revisit our decisions and respond to challenges.

In this sense, the journey relates to the anthropological concept of liminality (Turner 1969), an in-between stage that opens up the space for self-reflection, interrogation of one’s moral universe and habitus change. It provides opportunities for the articulation of a counter-structure, a reflexive and external perspective on an established status quo. In this section, I discuss in detail two crossings of the line that took the form of a journey; taken at different times by different individuals and in different contexts, however, both

journeys can be analysed in terms of their processual character and transforming potential.

The idea of crossing as a journey helps us to challenge the fixity in popular understandings of the border, 'home' and political identities. Ethnographically detailed analysis of the journey allows us to examine how places and spaces are imagined, experienced and reconstructed during the journey and how they are invested with different meaning by different individuals. Rodman (1992: 640) has suggested that to understand the complex social construction of spatial meaning, we have to look at places as multi-locally and multi-vocally produced and Greek Cypriots' crossings to the North are examined through such perspective. Moreover, the analysis of journeys here challenges rigid dichotomies, such as crosser/non-crosser, nationalist/peace-supporter in the Cypriot context, as it invites us to examine how individual agents manage the challenges to their political, moral and affective subjectivities that emerge in the state of liminality.

### *Journey 1*

Chrystalla went to the UK in the autumn of 1974, at the age of fourteen, to continue and complete her education that was disrupted by war and displacement. Her family had to leave their house in Famagusta (Greek: *Αμμόχωστος*, Turkish: *Gazimağusa*) after the Turkish invasion in the summer of 1974 and they found refuge in Larnaca. At that time, they lived in uncertainty and anticipation; they did not know when the war would finish and when they would return to their house. 'Because for some time, we really thought this was a temporary thing and sooner or later we would go back home', Chrystalla recalls. As a good and ambitious student, however, she preferred to not wait and waste a year out of her high school. Therefore, in consultation with her parents, Chrystalla joined her aunt, who lived in London, to carry on with her studies, at least until the situation in Cyprus was resolved. Against her predictions and hopes in 1974, more than three decades later, Chrystalla still leaves in the UK and her parents have not left Larnaca; on the contrary, they have bought a plot of land and have built a house there.

Their house in Larnaca also served many times as my own refuge during fieldwork in the summer of 2007. I had met Chrystalla in London, where she lived with her two teenage children, but we spent more time together during her holiday in Cyprus. She

visits her parents almost every summer for one or two months, but in that particular summer the family had also to deal with the constant presence and burden of a Greek researcher (*kalamarou*<sup>72</sup>, as Chrystalla's father used to jokingly call me), who was always around asking questions. I was at the time very interested in the interactions between Chrystalla and her British born children and their local family.

The first time I entered the house, I was welcomed by a large framed photo of Archbishop Makarios hanging on the wall of the living room. Very close to it on a bookshelf, there was a medal that had been awarded by the state to Mr. Michalis, Chrystalla's father, for his contribution to the anti-colonial struggle against the British in the late 1950s. The decoration of the living room would have led someone familiar with the 'aesthetics of politics' in Cyprus to instantly draw conclusions about the ideological and political profile of the household. Mr Michalis had indeed been an EOKA fighter and he had been arrested and imprisoned by the British colonialists in 1958 for a year. A devoted admirer of Makarios and a DIKO supporter, he very often reproduced his party's official line in our discussions. However, he was also self-reflexive and critical of the operations of nationalism in the island. But what the decoration of the living room failed to convey was that Mr Michalis's wife, Mrs Mary, comes from a renowned communist family<sup>73</sup> and, as an outspoken person, she challenged very often her husband's narrations, ideological opinions and political interpretations. Mrs Mary openly accused the nationalists (including EOKA A' in which her husband participated), the Great Powers, Turkey and Greece for her own and Cyprus's misfortunes. When she felt that she overdid it with her anti-Greek talk, she would turn to me and apologetically say: 'Of course the people who are present here are excluded'.

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<sup>72</sup> Kalamaras (masc.) –kalamarou (fem.) meaning a person who carries a *kalamari* (pen). It is used in everyday speech by Greek Cypriots to refer to Greeks from mainland Greece. As Argyrou (1996: 51) highlights, the term is used to demarcate a cultural boundary between Greeks and Greek Cypriots and in most cases it carries pejorative connotations. 'The image of the *kalamaras* consists of a set of negative cultural traits that allegedly characterize mainland Greeks and set them apart from Cypriots (*Kiprei*). Mainlanders are said to be sly and deceitful, not to be trusted and to be kept at a safe distance at all times. For, as the rhetoric has it, they are sooner or later bound to take advantage of one' (ibid.).

<sup>73</sup> I had been introduced to Mrs Mary's brother in London before I met her and I had the opportunity to see him again in Cyprus, in Mrs Mary's kitchen. I had been told about their family's strong communist links and action by other informants who come from the same village and knew the family before migration and displacement.

The differing political positions mixed with family stories and varied interpretations of past events would make the conversations in this household a micro-cosmic example of the debates over competing versions of history that take place in Cyprus on a broader level. And what I would eventually find out is that whereas there were repetition and recycled patterns in the stories told and heard in my refuge in Larnaca, there were also inconsistencies, ambivalences and contradictions in the narratives, about which the two main discussants appeared aware. These would emerge depending on what was being debated at the time, who was the audience and as a response to particular events in the present time. Although the couple had agreed to disagree, they also seemed to have accepted the flaws and shortcomings of their own arguments. But Mr Michalis and Mrs Mary had not been strangers to contradiction and irony in life; when they met in the mid-1950s, he was a young man dedicated to planting bombs and fighting the British colonisers, whereas she was a young communist working as an administrator in one of the British bases. Her 'British' salary was the family's main income for a while, by which Mr Michalis sustained his anti-colonial activities.

The discussions that took place in their house offer a good example of history and politics as *performed* on the stage of everyday life. Family history intermingles with broader historical accounts and memory is constantly reconstituted by actors operating in intrafamilial and intergenerational contexts. In this sense, Chrystalla's trips from the UK to Cyprus every summer involved long journeys into the family and country's past that would take off usually when everyone was seated around the kitchen table. Chrystalla was an active participant in her parents' debates. She was often as surprised as I was to discover inconsistencies and modifications in the storylines and she would articulate her puzzlement in the form of questions at every opportunity.

However, despite the diversity and plurality of political opinion within her family environment, Chrystalla most of the times took her father's side. 'I'm a nationalist', she would often say even when I used to ask her about her Turkish Cypriot friends, whom I had met in London. 'Individual friendship is a different thing', she explained. 'I'm a refugee and I cannot be like the peace lovers you meet up with. They will go out of their way to make Turkish Cypriots happy, I can't', she told me once in London. Another time in Cyprus, she offered to drive me to one of my interviews with a peace activist. Then she took again the opportunity to express her concerns about my encounters with

peace supporters: 'You should be careful and not naïve about what these people tell you'.

Chrystalla's worrying extended to my regular crossings to the North side of the island too. She had crossed only once with her parents in 2003 after the line opened but she was reluctant to cross again, as she had found the experience very emotional and painful. On top of that, unlike other Greek Cypriots, who were welcomed by the residents of their old houses in the North and invited for coffee or food, Chrystalla described her visit to her Famagusta house as a negative experience; especially because, according to her narration, the people who lived in the house, settlers from Turkey, had not let her and her family go inside. I was, therefore, surprised when one day Chrystalla announced that she and her father wanted to take me for a day trip to Famagusta. She had received me in her house in the UK, in her house in Larnaca and it was now time to show me around 'her' house in Famagusta, therefore completing a planned tour of 'home'.<sup>74</sup>

I accepted the invitation instantly; however, in the following days after our talk, the visit to Famagusta kept being postponed and Chrystalla's anxiety about it growing. In the course of few days, she expressed the following concerns: the trip might be too emotional for her father; it might be unsafe for us to drive in the North; we might not find our way, as Mr Michalis had only been there once before (after 1974); the visit might bring painful memories back to her; this visit goes against her decision to never cross again; by crossing, we not only recognise the TRNC but we also support the economy. Her dilemmas covered a wide range of the reasons many Greek Cypriots provide for not crossing. But this phase of hesitation, contemplation and planning is what distinguished this visit from a casual, spontaneous crossing to a thought-out journey.

Although I never challenged her decision to not cross, Chrystalla called me one evening and instructed that I should be ready to be picked up for our trip in the following morning. We had to leave early and there was one condition to be followed throughout

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<sup>74</sup> Home is perceived here as consisting of all these different places and houses. Chrystalla never gave concrete answers to which place she mostly considered as 'home' and her answers varied depending on the context, time and other people's presence.

the day: that in no circumstances we should buy anything in the North. ‘Not even water, even if we die from thirst’, as she put it<sup>75</sup>.

Mr Michalis, Chrystalla and I drove through the Dekhelia British bases to reach the checkpoint on the way from Larnaca to Famagusta. It was a hot summer morning but there was already a queue of cars waiting to show their documents and purchase some car insurance for the North. Mr Michalis sorted out our paper work and we carried on. But whereas I had expected a narration of the place to start, after we crossed the checkpoint Mr Michalis turned up the music volume and the rest of the trip was spent almost in silence. We were going through roads decorated with Turkish flags, renamed with Turkish signs, roads once familiar but now strange and confusing for Mr Michalis. Rodman argues that ‘multilocality can refer to the reflexive relationships with places. An anthropologist, traveler, or anyone whose place has been transformed, for example, by a natural disaster or suburban development –in other words, anyone dislocated from his or her familial place, or from the possibility of local identity- is keenly aware of the contrasts between the known and the unfamiliar’ (2003: 212). As refugees, whose place has been altered, Chrystalla and her father responded to the strangeness of the landscape with silence<sup>76</sup>. The only thing clashing with their silence was the loud sound of the Greek *rebetika* songs coming from the speakers that made the car a familiar space as we were navigating through an unfamiliar place.

After some time on the main road, however, Mr Michalis took a right turn, carried on straight into a smaller road and then turned again right into an even smaller street and then he stopped without turning off the engine. This is when the silence broke and Chrystalla hesitantly asked: ‘Are we going inside?’ ‘No, there is no point’, Mr Michalis answered looking distressed. We were outside their house; an old, small house with off-white walls and a very small garden in the front. The outside paint was chipped, the garden door was rusty but a few pairs of shoes left neatly outside the entrance door indicated that the house was inhabited. I was prepared to get off the car and take a few

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<sup>75</sup> This decision was loyal to some Greek Cypriot politicians’ stance on the crossings after the opening of the line, who advised crossers to not spend money in the North and to not contribute in anyway to the economy of TRNC.

<sup>76</sup> Rodman cites Basso (1988) to highlight silence as a common response to the puzzlement caused by the interaction with an unfamiliar place (2003: 212).

looks around, when Mr Michalis pushed down the hand-brake indicating that it was time for us to leave.

The ‘visit’ to their house was clearly an emotional and distressing experience for both father and daughter. Although this was the shortest period I spent with Cypriots visiting their house on the ‘other side’, my co-travellers’ protracted silence prohibited me from asking the questions that instantly sprung in my mind: why did we take the trip if we were to stay for such a short time? Why did we not even get out of the car? Was the purpose of the trip to see the house or not? Were Mr Michalis and Chrystalla so traumatised after the last time they visited the place that they did not want to undergo the same experience again? Did they just not want to overwhelm the residents of the house with our presence? Did they want to see only the exterior of the house, as this was the part that remained almost identical to the state they had left it (in contrast to the interior that had probably been altered)? However, it seems that no single question or answer could adequately cover the reasons behind the ‘*uneventfulness*’ of our visit; all these questions and many more need to be considered alongside to offer a fuller interpretation of the affective complexities that emerge in this context. And asking my informants explicitly for their reasons would have been an incomplete project. Rather than having ready answers, they could have also been using their silence to consider similar questions and to make sense of their subjective experience.

While driving away, Chrystalla said, ‘Do you see how these people live? They don’t take care of anything. These Turks from Turkey are so backwards’. She was reproducing a common discourse amongst Greek and Turkish Cypriots against the settlers. The opening of the line meant that many Greek Cypriots could come into contact with the Turkish settlers, about whom they had been hearing for years. This resulted in new processes of ‘othering’, of separating the ‘indigenous’ Turkish Cypriots from the Turkish settlers, the first as the legitimate inhabitants of the island, the second as posing not only a demographic and political threat, but also a cultural one as expressed through arguments about their lack of hygiene and backwardness<sup>77</sup>. The dichotomy was mobilised –in ways described below– for the rest of the day in

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<sup>77</sup> Although these encounters can also result to different and more positive stereotyping of the settlers, as I will discuss later (see also Loizos 2009: 76).

Chrystalla and Mr Michalis's effort to interact with the unknown landscape and negotiate their way through it. For, after we left the house, the 'real' journey started.

In contrast to the very short stopover at the house, Mr Michalis took his time driving us around the roads of Famagusta. We visited Chrystalla's primary school, which was still running as a an educational institution; a building that used to be the workplace of Mr Michalis, when he was a young civil servant, and which had been bombarded during the war and has remained in that state; another property that they owned and it was now a public square. Father and daughter became more vocal about these sites especially as they were trying to identify them, remember them and visualise their past state and condition. But their talks never transcended the information-sharing level to become narratives. The family stories and memory mining that I had expected never really materialised.

When we were concluding the tour of Famagusta and I thought that we were getting to the end of our trip, unexpectedly, Mr Michalis said: 'It's getting late, we need to find somewhere to eat'. It was the first time that occurred to me that although my co-travellers had decided that nothing was to be purchased in the 'occupied' side of Cyprus, none of us had brought any food or drinks with us.

Our driver took us outside Famagusta to the coastal village of Boğaz looking for a restaurant that was owned by a Turkish Cypriot, not a settler. It became an important quest to find a place, where we could be served food by Cypriots and not Turks who took over Cypriot land and property. This rationale became an important element in Mr Michalis and his daughter's way of negotiating between the strict guidelines given by Greek Cypriot authorities and their own experience in and of the place. It cannot be argued with certainty whether they had made the decision to follow or break these guidelines before departure; but as the journey was opening new possibilities and was demanding for new decisions to be made, Chrystalla and her father took up the challenge of reconciling broader political rhetorics and their own ideological predispositions with new options that emerged 'on the road'.

We finally arrived at a local fish restaurant and the owner, a middle-aged Turkish Cypriot woman, welcomed us very politely in fluent Greek. Her 'right' choice of

language and communicative skills made her the first person, with whom the two Greek Cypriots made a conversation that day. After a nice lunch, Mr Michalis, content with his choice, said: 'See? It's different with Turkish Cypriots, they speak Greek, they understand us better; we understand them better'.

As if this interaction was necessary to break the emotional numbness and distance of Mr Michalis and Chrystalla, on our way back we visited the archaeological site of Salamina, where we actually paid to see what is considered by Greek Cypriots their heritage and culture. We returned to Famagusta and sat outside a mosque and we even had another coffee in a café across it. We then drove to the Varosha<sup>78</sup> area, where we sat at the beach and we had another drink at a nearby canteen. The waiter there was a young Turkish man, probably in his mid-twenties, who had been in Cyprus for two years. Unaware of my co-travellers' concerns and reservations, he started sharing with us his life story: how he had come to Cyprus from Adana for a better life to escape unemployment and poverty; how he was willing to work hard to make it; and how Cyprus was becoming a 'home', which he was starting to accept and love. Even though Chrystalla and her father looked relatively uncomfortable during the conversation, she said afterwards: 'These people come from poor backgrounds and they have to make a living too. This young man wants to survive; he doesn't know anything about Cyprus, about us'. Mr Michalis shook his head agreeing.

This reconstitution of the 'settler' not as threatening and impure but also as naïve and hard-working marked a shift in Chrystalla's previous interpretations and descriptions. It was a concluding statement to a day defined by new options, constant decision-making and negotiations. 'Step by step' my informants' moral worlds were challenged and reconstructed to include new encounters and experiences.

The realisation of this process can be empowering, but also distressing, upsetting and up-rooting for an individual. On our way back, while being on a road taking us straight back to the check point, Mr Michalis suddenly took a turn. After a while I realised that we had gone back to their pre-war house. Almost in a ritualised form this time, we

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<sup>78</sup> Very touristic and developed before the war, this is an area that has been abandoned and sealed since 1974 by the Turkish Cypriot authorities. Everything within the area remains almost as it was left in 1974, which led to the popular characterisation of Varosha as a 'ghost-town'.

stayed for a few minutes outside looking at it with no comments and then we drove off. This second visit could be interpreted as a way of reinstating order into the unruliness caused by the journey during the day; a way of reclaiming structure; it was Mr Michalis and Chrystalla's way of dealing with disruption and preparing to go back. And, needless to say, on the way back everyone was very silent.



*Fig. 5. The beach of Varosha and, in the background, buildings within the evacuated, fenced part of the town.*



*Fig. 6. Chrystalla standing at the door of a Mosque and looking around.*

## *Journey 2*

Whereas the journey described above took place in August 2007, when Tassos Papadopoulos was still the president of the Republic of Cyprus and the side-effects of the Annan plan were still strong, the political framework had shifted by the time of the journey followed here. In the summer of 2008, AKEL was in government in the South, Ledra Street had opened and a wave of hope for peace and re-unification had been encouraged by the new political developments.

One morning in August, Alex called to invite me to join him for a trip to the North. Whereas most of our previous crossings had occurred in a spontaneous or informal manner, in our phone conversation on that August day, Alex asked me to prepare for a 'journey' to the North. We would travel up to the tip of the Karpaz/Rizokarpasso peninsula, to reach the monastery of *Apostolos Andreas* (St. Andrew, the Apostle), a site of historical and religious importance for Greek Cypriots that naturally became a very popular destination for tourists and pilgrims after the opening of the border. However, our visit would have two main purposes. One was to see members of Alex's family in Rizokarpasso, who were among the Greek-speaking *egklovismenoi* (entrapped/enclosed, as they are called by Greek Cypriots); Greek Cypriots, who had not managed to flee to the South after the Turkish invasion and have continued living in the North. The priest, who runs the monastery with his wife, is Alex's uncle.

The other purpose was to take Nick, a Greek Cypriot born and raised in London, for his first trip to the 'other side'. Nick's decision to cross came as a surprise. A few days before our journey, I had met and interviewed his father, Mr. Yiorgos, who had told me: 'I have no problem with Turkish Cypriots and I am quite open, but I'd never allow my children to cross to the other side'. Mr. Yiorgos had left to the UK after the war and 20 years later, he and his family moved back to the island. In 1974, he and his brother were captured and taken as prisoners of war to Turkey, where they spent two months in jail before they were eventually released. The memories of violence and conflict haunted him during our talk: 'I'm sorry I can't tell you the same things as others', he said, 'but I can't see how re-unification in these circumstances with Turkey over our head can work'. Nick's decision to cross was never announced to his father and he used silence

as a negotiation strategy between his desire to visit the North and respect for his father's views.

This intra-familial divergence was not, however, the only concern, of my co-travellers before our departure. When some of Alex's Turkish Cypriot friends heard that he was planning for a trip to the North, they expressed interest in joining us. Although meeting with his friends in the North had been Alex's main purpose of crossing most of the times, on that particular occasion he seemed anxious about inviting them for the trip. For two days before our planned travel date, numerous discussions took place about who was to go on the trip. Alex had explained to everyone that because he wanted to show Nick and me around, he would prefer to go in one car. Also, fewer people meant that we could stick to a particular plan more easily and we could visit more places with less distraction. These explanations, however, did not seem to suffice for one of Alex's friend, Mehmet, who called me one night inquiring about the trip. 'We can join you for most of the day, but we don't need to come all the way to *Apostolos Andreas*. We can wait near Golden Beach for you to come back', Mehmet said. His statement conveyed a concern for the potential tension, which their presence, as Turkish Cypriots, could add in a visit to Greek Cypriots in the North; and it also implied that this was perhaps the underlying reason of Alex's anxiety.

This small episode highlights the importance of *relationality* and *intersubjectivity* in the experience of space and place. Whereas the crossings of the border in Cyprus opened the ground for researchers to investigate their implications on individual and collective identities, further contextualisation of these crossings are necessary in order to appreciate their meaning and experiential significance for particular agents. In other words, the focus on ethnicity and political ideology are not enough to understand why one chooses to cross (or not); attention also needs to be paid on when and with whom one crosses and how agents negotiate and reconstruct their interpersonal relationships in this process.

In this context, whereas it became clear that this crossing was different to others, Alex avoided further discussions on his arrangement of the trip in an attempt to deal with the emerging tensions. At the end, he, his fiancée, Nick and his girlfriend picked me up in one car for our trip to the North. We crossed from Nicosia driving through the *Aghios*

*Dometios* check point. The minute we passed the border, Alex started a very eloquent, almost rehearsed narration, which explicitly reflected his knowledge of and familiarity with the place. Unlike Chrystalla and Mr. Michalis, Alex was not born in Cyprus and had never lived in the North, but his confident voice and geographical orientation, which came as a result of his multiple crossings to the North after 2003, manifested a particular ‘ownership’<sup>79</sup> of the place that was missing in the crossing experience of my other co-travellers.

Our first stop was in North Nicosia, in an area where Alex’s maternal family house used to be. His mother had gone to the UK in 1973 to study but after the war she decided to stay on, she got married and never returned to Cyprus. Her husband was a Greek Cypriot, whose family had left the island in the 1940s and settled in the UK. While Alex was still narrating the history of the family as well as that of the place, we drove off towards Famagusta, where we visited the beach and the *Varosha* area. Alex directed our attention to buildings with old bullet holes on them, guided us through streets with Turkish names and pointed at landmarks and monuments, like a proper tour-guide would have done. When I asked him about his knowledge of the place, he replied: ‘What do you mean how I know the place? This is my country. The whole island is my country’.

On our way to the North tip of the island, we stopped at the village to visit a place where Alex’s paternal family house used to stand. The minute we arrived, the Turkish Cypriot family, who lived in a small house on the property, came out to welcome us. Mustafa, a man in his early forties shared the house with his wife, children and his mother and they all seemed happy to see Alex, who had obviously been there before. We sat under the vine arbour in their garden and had coffee, sweets and home-grown grapes. Mustafa, the only English-speaker in the household engaged in small talk with Alex and the rest of us. When the conversation turned to politics, both Mustafa and Alex were very careful to maintain a consensus between them. Mustafa commented on the newly built mosque opposite his house, which he disapproved as something

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<sup>79</sup> I use ‘ownership’ of the place and not ‘belonging’ to a place. The latter is commonly used in the literature, however, it often refers to the territorialisation of essentialised ethnic or national identities. By the very act of crossing, my informants here do not want to ‘return’ to a place where they belong, but to claim the whole island as their own (the idea of the whole island belonging to all Cypriots, common in Cyprio-centric rhetorics).

externally imposed on Turkish Cypriots; Alex, from his side, expressed understanding and pointed out that the reunification of Cyprus is imperative, if Turkish Cypriots are not to lose their identity and culture.

After this conversation, we visited the small abandoned house attached to that of Mustafa's, which was the original house of Alex's family. When we entered the dilapidated building, Alex half-jokingly said: 'It's funny how in my grandma's stories the house always sounded so much better and bigger than it is'. On our way out, Mustafa's mother had packed grapes for Alex, who carried on joking by saying: 'I came to collect my rent and here it is' [pointing at the bag with the grapes].

Unlike Chrystalla's and Mr. Michalis's visit to their house, Alex did not show any high emotional reaction during this stopover. Such emotional detachment was not only particular to his family house but it was characteristic of his narration style throughout the trip. In his historicisation of places, Alex had avoided any nationalistic language, any distinctions of 'us/them' and he had tried to maintain an assumed objectivity and balance. Like many other young Cypriots, Alex had stated before that *emotionality* from both sides was one of the obstacles to a realistic and viable solution for the island.

At the same time, the aspired objectivity in his engagement with the place and people reflected Alex's moral responsibility towards his audience; particularly, Nick, whose first crossing to the North was treated by Alex as a 'rite of passage'. I had followed Alex in many contexts across the border; however, he was particularly careful in how he replied to his co-traveller's questions and concerns on that day, showing an awareness of his influence on this process of 'initiation'. Nick also responded to the situation with an apparent distance and neutrality. Whenever he would make a comment about Turkish Cypriots, he would try to balance it out with a reference to Greek Cypriots and vice versa and he kept a reserved presence during our stopovers and encounters.

All this, however, changed when we reached the monastery, where the priest and his wife welcomed us. As they took us around, they discussed some of the challenges and difficulties of their living as Greek Cypriots in the North and running a Christian institution that was constantly monitored by the Turkish authorities. Their life trajectories made Alex and Nick to abandon their realistic position and to engage in a

language that had not emerged before during the day. They suddenly employed a collective 'we' in their conversations in order to express their identification with our hosts as Greek Cypriots; and as it usually happens with a 'we', the category of 'they' also surfaced in the conversation, which, depending on the framework of the discussion, variably referred to the Turkish Cypriots, the settlers, Turkey or the Turkish Cypriot government.

On the way back, Alex and Nick were more silent than before and still seemed affected by the conversations they had at Apostolos Andreas. 'Sometimes you understand why people are nationalists', Alex said referring to what he had experienced at the monastery; the rest of his co-travellers nodded approvingly. This shift of perspective was expressed through a particular emotionality, that all of them had critiqued before as an inherent problem of the 'Cyprus issue'.

We were heading towards Pyla, in order to cross back through the bi-communal village, however, as it was getting dark, Alex lost his way and we found ourselves in the middle of nowhere. Our 'Greek' mobiles were not working because of lack of signal and our 'Greek' map did not match the Turkish-named roads. The landscape challenged Alex's 'ownership' of the place and shook his previous confidence in navigating through it. We finally stopped in front of a confectionary shop along the way to ask for directions. A man approached the car and Alex asked in English for the way to Pyla. The man replied in broken English: 'Where are you from?' Alex hesitated for a few seconds and then he said: 'Hmmm...I'm Cypriot'. The man, who was a Turkish Cypriot, gave him a friendly smile and carried on: 'We are all Cypriots, my friend, but from which side are you? Don't worry, I'm asking so I know how to give you directions and in which language'. 'I'm a Greek Cypriot', Alex answered reluctantly.

This last encounter in a long journey further unsettled the cohesion in the narrative my co-travellers had initially presented in terms of their identity, political positioning and experience of the place. The materiality of the border and its existence as a political and social reality contrasted with their own attempts to overcome it and imagine Cyprus as a unified country. Also, the physical and social landscape challenged their 'ownership' of a place that eventually became difficult to claim as one's own. And their encounters

along the way demanded that they take a side. Even though they left as ‘Cypriots’, they found themselves as ‘Greek Cypriots’ during the journey.



*Figure 7. Alex giving a ‘tour’ to his co-travellers.*



*Figure 8. The entrance stairs to Apostolos Andreas and part of the church.*

## 6.7 Conclusion

Starting from the end, the two stories of crossings presented in the last part of the chapter and analysed through the framework of a journey, a liminal and out of the ordinary stage, sum up to a large extent the ways in which the boundaries between ethno-nationalist and Cypriotist discourses are blurred at least in terms of the modes they are deployed by individuals in particular contexts. The unexpected circumstances of the journey challenge habitualised rhetorics of those who take it and force them to resort to other discursive palettes that form part of their cultural repertoires. Whereas Chrystalla and Mr. Michalis started as self-proclaimed 'nationalists', after crossing the border they engaged in a process of negotiation of their political ideologies and values that transcended the boundaries, which they had set as condition before embarking on the journey. On the other hand, Alex and his friends, who emphasised on their Cypriot identity and their 'ownership' of the whole island, found themselves reproducing boundaries, which they sought to transcend in their everyday life. It was not only their encounters on the road that made them rearticulate their identity and reposition themselves accordingly but also the experience of a place, which was initially imagined as familiar before it became strange and alienating, rendered them to a condition that they had to proclaim themselves as Greek Cypriots.

The transformative potential of such journeys, however, cannot be always exaggerated. Before returning, or *in order* to return, to the 'normality' of an established and familiar order, Chrystalla and her father revisited their house, as a reminder of what was lost and as a confirmation of their habitualised nationalist narratives. Making Pyla their last stop, Alex and his friends reinstated their belief that not only Greek and Turkish Cypriots can live together, but that in particular places they have carried on doing so. However, going back to the ordinary way of being, reinforcing the structure as Turner (1969) would state, is a means of coping in a conflict affected place like Cyprus, in which 'the political problem' has not only been discursively bounded but also polarised around two competing versions of nationalism; ethnic nationalism and Cypriotism. This is why individuals, in order to critically assess the status quo, find themselves deploying the version of nationalism opposite to the one they have habituated and embodied.

As such processes can be disrupting to the ways the political self is located and constructed, the non-crossing of the border, the chapter has argued, is adopted as a

strategy of avoiding these experiences. For, the long-term closure of the border had allowed the development of particular 'truths' that its opening came to challenge as well-constructed 'myths'. Whereas physical boundaries were lifted, other internal, social and cultural boundaries were revealed. These were not only between Greek and Turkish Cypriots or nationalists and peace supporters. As the chapter has argued, those most committed to peace and the opening of the border became divided over their decision to cross or not to cross. For older members of the diaspora non-crossing of the border was part of a conscious decision to not cross the line of memory. For the two Lefts in Cyprus, the opening of the border revealed underlying boundaries between them; non-crossing therefore became a way of avoiding tensions and maintaining a public façade of solidarity. For younger British Cypriots, both of these approaches represented everything that was problematic about the 'Cyprus problem': emotionality and ideological rigidity. For them it was easier to cross to the Green Line than it was to cross out of it, as they felt alienated and marginalised outside the socio-cultural microcosm of this 'everyone's land'; which in all its 'cosmopolitan' character became a bounded empowering space for those who had the right types of social and cultural capital and alienating for those who lacked them.

## CHAPTER 7

### Conclusion

In less than a year after the election of Dimitris Christofias as the president of the Republic of Cyprus and numerous official meetings between the president and the Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat, which were popularly labelled as ‘peace negotiations’, the heightened hopes for a ‘fast solution’ to the Cyprus problem that the co-operation of the two leftist leaders had promised started deflating. The momentum created by the fact that the two ‘allies’ with long historical and ideological connections were in power simultaneously for the first time on either side of the division line had not delivered the expected results. The inability of the Cypriot Left to unite the island was consolidated in public discourses with the election of Derviş Eroğlu as President of the TRNC in April 2010, whose ideological and political commitments were seen as setting him far apart from Christofias.

This historical turn was perceived by some Cypriots as a proof that Cypriotism, a discourse and political project identified with the development of the two Lefts in the island, had never been the right framework through which the ‘Cyprus problem’ could be resolved. For some Cypriotists on the other hand, the failure to achieve re-unification was not a sign of the weaknesses of Cyprio-centric politics but of the dominant role of outside powers, particularly Turkey, that once again obstructed Cypriots from deciding jointly about their own political future; Cypriotism therefore is still the only viable route for a re-unified and peaceful Cyprus. An (2011), for instance, promotes this perspective in a recently published article titled ‘Cypriotism can Pave the Way to Reunification’, where the responsibility of the Left, however, and particularly of AKEL, in pursuing such an agenda is critically assessed.

No matter how conflicting their perspectives may appear, both pro-Cypriotist and anti-Cypriotist accounts converge in understanding Cypriotism as a discourse that promotes unity and ‘sameness’ and that stands in opposition to the ethnic nationalisms in the island. Whereas then social scientists have studied exhaustively the development and

operations of ethnic nationalism in Cyprus as a fundamental requirement for examining the creation and consolidation of conflict, they have problematised less other types of nationalism, such as Cypriotism, which has often been studied as a form of civic nationalism that emerged as a counter-narrative to dominant ethno-centric rhetoric. The thesis has aimed to balance such focus by shifting emphasis on how Cypriotism is constructed as a discourse and how it is articulated and performed by agents in multiple contexts, revealing processes that point towards two main conclusions.

The first is that the distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism may be useful on a descriptive level, but in their everyday articulations, the boundaries between the two types of nationalism are blurred and difficult to circumscribe. Whereas the notion of civic nationalism has been founded on an acultural definition of citizenship, ethnic nationalism has been popularly understood as ethnocultural (Brubaker 1998). However, it becomes apparent in the thesis that what lies at the basis of the discursive deployment of Cypriotism is a preoccupation with defining the cultural core of a common Cypriot identity. In other words, 'who is a Cypriot' is debated around particular notions of cultural authenticity and heritage. The centrality of culture therefore in the ways the nation is imagined is far from exclusive to ethnic nationalism. The distinction between the two nationalisms is to be located in the different ways that a shared culture is defined and constructed rather than in the existence or absence of a cultural element in their articulation.

The second conclusion to be drawn from the thesis is that Cypriotism, although understood as a unifying discourse is also divisive and internally contested. It has often been treated both in academic and everyday contexts as counter-hegemonic to the dominant nationalist rhetoric and politics due to its capacity to uncover and represent unofficial histories, suppressed memories and hidden voices. As a discourse, however, Cypriotism is produced and operates within power structures that privilege particular narratives and identities, whereas they marginalise others. It, therefore, provides the terrain where struggles over symbolic and political power take concrete shape and are carried out by different agents.

Both conclusions, it has been argued here, are particularly observable in the study of the political connections between the Cypriot diaspora and Cyprus formed around Cyprio-

centric 'peace politics'. At a very particular historical period, when Cyprio-centric discourses emerged as more centralised in the Cypriot political scene, new spaces for 'homeland' politics were created for Cypriotists in London, who engaged more dynamically in what I have called in the thesis 'long-distance peace activism'. These new opportunities for political action and involvement, however, brought to light a number of old and new boundaries that found Cypriotists divided on intra-ethnic, intra-diasporic and inter-generational levels built around debates over cultural authenticity and identity. The thesis has been concerned with how political subjectivities are constructed within these processes by looking at the ways multiple agents mobilise, articulate and perform particular identities through the language of Cypriotism.

To follow the spaces, where such power dynamics emerge and take shape, the thesis has been based on multi-sited research following the discourse of Cypriotism in a variety of contexts. Although the opportunistic nature of the research has resulted to different amounts of time spent on each ethnographic site, it has allowed, however, to trace the connections between these settings and to examine how political subjectivities develop and operate in a transnational context.

Chapter 2, therefore, starts from London, in order to examine how Cyprus and London as socio-cultural landscapes become symbolic resources in the ways cultural authenticity and identity is debated in the diaspora. It is argued that although Cyprus is imagined and articulated as the source of Cypriot identity, London figures as the place where an *original* Cypriotness has been preserved and nurtured. In both popular and academic discourses, life between Greek and Turkish Cypriots in London has been presented as safeguarded against the effects of physical separation of the two communities in Cyprus. Through a language of continuities between a pre-migration past and a diasporic present, Cypriotists in London often claim themselves as holders of an authentic Cypriotness, for which bi-communal co-existence is a prerequisite. Any ruptures to such co-existence are presented as externally introduced and a diasporic discourse of Cypriotism becomes the ideological framework through which disruptions to local relationships are negotiated and managed. Because of such understandings of authentic Cypriotness, co-existence in London becomes in these narratives a model paradigm of how a future re-unified Cyprus is possible and legitimises the primary role the diaspora can undertake towards this direction.

As most first-generation Cypriotists in London claim an affiliation to the Left, and particularly, AKEL, chapter 3 has dealt with the politics of the past as articulated through the main communist party in Cyprus. For older migrants, communism, as a form of habitus, becomes a cultural repertoire deployed to deal not only with past experiences of marginalisation in the pre-migration era but also to understand and frame experiences in the present. The operations of habitus, it has been argued, have to be located in the interactions between AKEL's historical narrative and individual memory. The first is patterned on its supporters' experiences and accounts and then it provides the language through which individual memories are articulated and expressed. Such memories that form and inform AKEL's Cyprio-centric account of history have been treated as 'hidden' and underrepresented in the official historical narrative of the past. However, reviewing the agenda and objectives of 'subaltern studies', Pandey (2000) has alerted that 'unofficial' histories should not be treated as blocks of absolute truth but they should also been examined as constructed and embedded within power relations and structures. The memories and experiences of AKEL supporters in the diaspora are often interrogated as 'incomplete' because of migration, which renders them to the alienated position of 'escapees of history'. The 'unofficial' history of the Left, therefore, although it emerges as counter-hegemonic, it encompasses other unofficial and underrepresented histories, such as those of diasporic individuals. At points of divergence between the unofficial history of AKEL and individual memories, the Cypriotist account of the past that the Left has promoted becomes internally challenged and contested.

The politics of history as well as the history of politics, however, emerge also as a point of inter-generational tension in the diaspora. British born Cypriots are often associated in popular discourses with cultural apathy and dismissal of history, and are, therefore, presented through a language of '(in)authenticity' as 'in-between' two cultures. Chapter 4, however, has illustrated the dynamic and creative ways, in which British born Cypriots produce situational accounts of identity in order to deal with cultural 'silencing'. Cyprio-centric rhetoric was reformulated by some second-generation diasporic Cypriots by drawing a historical connection between bi-communal co-existence in pre-war Cyprus and multiculturalism in contemporary London in order to reinstate definitions of both Cypriotness and Britishness that reflected their own

experiences. Moreover, through such discursive refashioning they engaged in ‘long-distance peace activism’ not primarily to intervene in the politics ‘at home’ but to challenge ‘political centres’ in London, from which they were excluded. In other words, ‘peace’ provided the platform on which inter-generational conflicts in the diaspora unravelled over political authority and legitimacy.

To avoid, however, co-optation by the established political cores in London, British born Cypriots searched for autonomy in alternative spaces and the Internet emerged as a significant setting. Chapter 5 has traced the blossoming of Cyprio-centric peace politics on Facebook, the global expansion of which at that time coincided with a reinforcement of Cypriotism as a counter-hegemonic, anti-governmental narrative in the political scenery in Cyprus. The appearance of peace-promoting bi-communal groups on Facebook provided new opportunities for interaction and communication between diasporic Cypriots and those at ‘home’; at the same time, however, it opened up a new forum where debates over how the nation is imagined revealed that the definition of ‘Cypriotness’ at the core of Cypriotism was not uniformly shared and divisions over cultural authenticity and the ‘right to speak as Cypriot’ were both challenged and reinforced online. Moreover, Cypriotists online were also divided over the very definition of political activism. Emerging out of what I have called in the thesis ‘banal peace activism’, Facebook groups followed the format and aesthetics of ‘traditional’ bi-communalism in Cyprus, which has emphasised the need for face-to-face communication and offline mobilisation and visibility stemming from a preoccupation with overcoming physical separation represented by the emblematic Green Line. Whereas for some then the online ‘imagined community’ ceased to be meaningful when Facebook politics failed to convert into street action, for others, particularly diasporic Cypriots, online activism was privileged as a space where they could achieve social and cultural capital, which they lacked in offline contexts.

Chapter 6 traced further the symbolic importance of border-crossing as an assumed ideological commitment of Cypriotists and peace-supporters. Discourses and experiences of the border, it was argued, highlighted old and new boundaries and encapsulated established and shifting power dynamics on most levels discussed throughout the thesis. For some of the first-generation Cypriotists, the opening of the border created an ontological dilemma over its crossing, as to go beyond the border and

visit one's 'old home' posed a danger of crossing the line of memory and facing a present that does not match the ways the 'self' has been constructed and narrated. For leftists, the opened border appeared as an obstacle to 'peace politics' operated through organised party politics. However, the opening of the check points also made the border to be used and experienced as a bounded space, which diasporic younger Cypriots treated as a cosmopolitan zone that let them escape marginalisation in the socio-political life beyond it; but for others, this 'everyone's land' created new alienating experiences. In this sense, I am in agreement with Bryant (2010: 29), who highlights in her own work: 'It took the opening of the checkpoints to make me realize that borders are created not only through isolation but also through interaction, not only in their closure but also, and perhaps even more, in the act of crossing them'. The opening of the border required that other boundaries be collapsed and it was precisely these boundaries that often rendered the border non-crossable. For, as the two crossings narrated in detail at the end of chapter 6 illustrated, what is unsettling about crossing the border is the possibility of having boundaries blurred and intersected. As those committed to the nationalist rhetoric found themselves developing empathy towards the 'other', those most attached to their Cypriot identity had to take ethnic sides during the journey. Crossing 'back' then enabled them to re-enter and reinstate order, the way one imagines the self 'as always having been as such'.

The boundary, therefore, between ethnic nationalism and Cypriotism is not solidified but it is constantly performed and rebuilt by agents on either side. It is in these processes, however, that corresponding identities, such as 'nationalist' and 'Cypriotist' appear essentialised and homogenised. To go beyond these essentialisms, the thesis has aimed to contribute to ongoing anthropological discussions on nationalism in Cyprus by bringing together 'the ethnography of the Cypriot diaspora' with 'the ethnography of Cyprus' and examining how the nation is actively imagined, debated and (re)produced at a point when new spaces emerged for the involvement of the diaspora in the politics at 'home'. It is ethnographic attention to these spaces, the thesis has highlighted, that reveals the 'bad' faces of a 'good' nationalism. To maintain a theoretical and methodological sharp distinction between different types of nationalism obscures and covers the internal gaps, silences and boundaries of Cypriotism. As Brown (1999: 300) has highlighted '[n]ationalism does have two ideological faces, civic and cultural; but its political character is surely protean rather than Janus-faced'.

At the time of writing this conclusion, young Greek and Turkish Cypriots have occupied the stretch of Green Line right between the Ledra Street/Lokmaci check points in Nicosia inspired by the ‘Occupy Wall Street’ movement that spread globally taking various forms. ‘Occupy the Buffer Zone’ through a language of common Cypriotness has claimed a shared space for members of both communities, who, while advocating for the re-unification of the island, acknowledge that ‘the Cyprus problem’ is largely a by-product of a globalised capitalist system and logic (Hurriyet Daily News, 29/11/2011). It is characteristic, however, that the diasporic support group of the movement, ‘Occupy the Invisible Green Line-UK’, that is organised in London emphasise the need to overcome other multiple invisible boundaries besides the physical border in Cyprus; and conflicts over ‘who is a Cypriot’ continue to dominate the pursuing of peace for a future Cyprus.

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