

Multilingual voices of unification in ‘No man’s land’: evidence from the linguistic landscape of Nicosia’s UN-controlled buffer zone

Article

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Multilingual voices of unification in ‘No man’s land’:

Evidence from the Linguistic Landscape of Nicosia’s

UN-controlled buffer zone

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Abstract

The island of Cyprus and Nicosia, its capital, have been divided by a UN-controlled buffer zone since the 1974 war. The ease of movement restrictions in 2003 saw Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots crossing into each other’s area after 30 years of complete separation and increased mobility, especially through the UN-controlled buffer zone at the Ledras street crossing-point in Nicosia, interjected a new dynamic in the area. The analysis of photographic data collected over a period of three years from the Linguistic Landscape of the buffer zone reveals that ephemeral signs in Greek, Turkish and English are used to establish connections and strengthen social ties between the former enemies and project ideologies that go against popular nationalist narratives. By adopting new conceptualisations of the term ‘community’ (Blokland, 2017), this study discusses how a new, imagined community can emerge in conflict-ridden contexts through the display of written public signs in the Linguistic Landscape.

Keywords: community, conflict, border, buffer zone, Cyprus, mobility, Linguistic Landscape, ephemeral signs, ideologies, identity

1. INTRODUCTION

In the third millennium, issues related to conflict zones and ensuring their security are increasingly important for the whole world. Conflict predominates globally and often aspects that have to do with language are of great significance. According to Mac Giolla Chríost (2003: 163-164) ‘language is located at the heart of the matter of conflict’ as it relates to issues of identity, ideology, and to socio-culturally constructed and politically motivated ethnic difference.

The present study explores the Linguistic Landscape of a city that has been affected by long-term conflict and is politically partitioned. The island of Cyprus and Nicosia, its capital, are divided by a UN-controlled buffer zone with the north part being mainly inhabited by Turkish-Cypriots, while Greek-Cypriots reside in the south part of the island. It is important to investigate the Linguistic Landscape of conflict-ridden contexts as, according to Shohamy, Ben-Rafael and Barni (2010) as well as Rubdy and Ben Said (2015), the public space can function as a significant arena of contestation. It often reflects tensions and power struggles and it is a site where identities are negotiated, ideologies are propagated, and political activism is enacted. By capitalising on the concept of ‘Community as Urban Practice’ introduced in the literature by Blokland (2017), the aim of this study is to explore how Nicosia’s UN-controlled buffer zone enables former enemies to project counter-normative ideologies and identities, express shared values and, overall, establish a sense of community through the display of Greek, Turkish and English public signs in a contested space.

2. LINGUSTIC LANDSCAPE IN POST-WAR AND CONFLICT ZONES

The study of language in post-war and conflict-ridden areas has attracted the interest of scholars who applied the Linguistic Landscape approach as a method to explore how language use in the public space represents ethnic groups, reflects territorial conflicts, expresses

statehood and projects ideologies and sociocultural identities. This section presents recent studies that investigate the Linguistic Landscape of areas around the world that have been affected by some degree of conflict.

On the Balkan peninsula, the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s resulted in the breakup of Yugoslavia and the formation of independent successor states. Bilkic (2018) investigated graffiti in the in the Linguistic Landscape of post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina, focusing in areas where the territorial status is still contested. Provocative graffiti was found in the Linguistic Landscape of these territories which, according to Bilkic (2018), often express linguistic violence against the 'Other'.

The Linguistic Landscape of the Israeli-Palestinian context was investigated by Ben-Rafael, Shohamy, Amara and Trumper-Hecht (2006) who explored the visibility of Hebrew, Arabic and English in different cities. In another study, Trumper-Hecht (2009) looked at the use of Arabic in the Linguistic Landscape of mixed cities in Israel, while more recently, Amara (2019) investigated language choice in shop names in six Palestinian Arab localities. All three case studies identify a language battle between Hebrew and Arabic which reflects the wider conflict between the two groups in Israel.

The disintegration of the USSR in the 1990s resulted in major demographic shifts and drew new borders. Many newly established countries aimed for desovietisation which was promoted by language policies that disfavored Russian. Studies by Pavlenko (2010, 2009) and Muth (2015) demonstrate that linguistic and ideological conflicts in post-Soviet countries are manifested in the Linguistic Landscape, where exclusion, erasure and replacement of the Russian language on public signs enhances a strong feeling of nationhood. Yet, not all post-Soviet countries aimed for desovietisation. Muth (2014) for instance reveals that the self-declared Republic of Transnistria still retains close cultural and political links with Russia and promotes its usage through language policies as well as in the public space.

Other scholars studied post-colonial contexts. Jenjekwa and Barnes (2018) explored how land reforms, that came into effect after the revolutionary uprising against European colonial rule which led to Zimbabwe's independence, have changed the Linguistic Landscape of Gutu District, in Masvingo Province. Jenjekwa and Barnes (2018) found that new toponymy facilitated the creation of a new identity for Zimbabwe, recovering a lost sense of pride and disengaging with coloniality. Lai (2013) looked at the case of Hong Kong, 12 years after the People's Republic of China reclaimed sovereignty over the city, which ended the British colonial rule. Lai's (2013) findings indicate that Hong Kong displays a highly bilingual profile of Chinese and English, with the former being reinforced through the change of sovereignty from Britain to China and the latter functioning as marker of internationalisation and local identity.

While all these studies offer valuable insights into the various issues that surround language use in the public space of countries that are affected by some degree of conflict, they do not specifically take into account the complexities that characterise today's communities. Moving on from assumptions that languages mark the geographical territory inhabited by a given language community, introduced in the Linguistic Landscape research by Landry and Bourhis (1997), the present study will capitalize on novel conceptualisations of the notion of 'community' to explore the case of Cyprus, a country that is still affected by post-war conflict.

3. COMMUNITY, LANGUAGE, CONFLICT

Traditional understandings of the term '(Speech) Community' within the field of sociolinguistics referred to a somewhat homogenous group of people who interact regularly and share language knowledge, rules of appropriateness and attitudes (Fishman, 1971; Labov, 1972). Similarly, as Vetter (2015) observes, most research on language and conflict also presupposes a common understanding of the notions of 'community' and 'language' that often sees

communities as a group of people who live in a specific territory, share a common history and are defined by a homogenous and exclusive national identity. Language often functions as a marker of ethnicity.

New understandings emerged in the 1990s with the introduction in the literature of the term ‘Community of Practice’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991). According to Lave and Wenger (1991), people come together for functional purposes. They have mutual engagement through regular interaction, share a joint negotiated practice or mission which specifies the role of the members and develop social ties and a shared repertoire that may include routines, actions and resources of negotiating meaning (e.g. language, signs, symbols, gestures and other modalities). Bucholtz (1999) explains that, compared to Speech Community, the Community of Practice framework does not pre-suppose categories such as race, gender or language and, in addition, it considers the latter as one of the many social practices that participants engage in. This conceptualisation enables the researcher to observe various aspects of identity, and even conflicting identities, as manifested through a nexus of multi-membership of individuals in different Communities of Practice. Yet, other scholars highlighted some problematic areas. Jewson (2007), for instance, maintains that this framework often disregards broader historical and cultural factors, which can be crucial for understanding social aspects of language use. Gee (2005) also asserts that the idea of ‘community’ is often associated with overwhelmingly positive associations, as it connotes a feeling of membership, belongingness and assumes close-knit personal relationships among members (see also Blokland, 2017). Similarly, Jewson (2007: 69) argues that Lave and Wenger (1991) have failed to provide sufficient explanation or examination of cases of conflict, exclusion, power differences and struggles within and between Communities of Practice.

More recently, phenomena such as globalisation, superdiversity, mass migration and increased mobility have resulted in fuzzy boundaries (Block, 2006) and, consequently, in the creation more dynamic population structures. According to Vetter (2015: 109): ‘Although

rooted in one place, individuals can behave “transnationally” when they participate in global flows of information, communication or work, travel and media experiences’ forming therefore relations that perhaps did not exist before, revealing as a result unpredictable, fluid and complex language practices. Increased awareness of such phenomena has led many scholars to re-think the notions of ‘community’ and ‘language’ questioning the separateness and boundedness of these terms (Block, 2006; Blommaert & Backus, 2003; Gaiser & Matras, this volume; Heller, 2007; Li, 2018; Mac Giolla Chríost, 2007; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). Referring to language conflict, Vetter (2015: 110) maintains that: ‘super-diverse societies are simply incompatible with the notion of groups as developed in early conflict research’. In response to these challenges, Heller (2007: 13) argues that instead of treating these concepts as bounded phenomena, we should see them as ‘heuristic devices’ or ‘social constructs’ which can in fact help us unveil how people organise themselves.

Blokland (2017) provides a new theory on how ‘we do community’ in times of change and diversity by proposing the ‘Community as Urban Practice’ framework. Unlike the Community of Practice framework which presupposes mutual engagement through regular interaction and therefore the development of personal relations, this new theory takes into consideration that diversity and increased mobility can result in less homogenous population structures. It therefore sees community as public actions performed by social actors who may have different kinds of social relations. These can be durable engagements or fluid encounters. Durable engagements are when people engage with an institution or activity over time and form attachments. These relationships may not necessarily develop into personal network ties, but they may exhibit shared identities (Blokland, 2017: 67). Fluid encounters are brief, casual and superficial and they may not share a substantive aim. But just like durable engagements they do include an orientation to the other and in that respect they can also be seen as social ties (Blokland, 2017: 70). This theory therefore sees ‘community’ as a repertoire of ‘public

practices’ or ‘performances’, bringing to the fore aspects of agency. Instead of viewing community as bound in a specific place in which people have social ties, Blokland (2017) turns the attention to people’s everyday social and cultural practices which may exhibit symbolic values and a sense of identity. As these cultural practices are lived, their meanings can produce belonging, inclusion but also disengagement as well as exclusion (Blokland, 2017: 45).

‘Community manifests itself in the details of everyday social life’ (Blokland 2017: 8) and as one may argue, this could also include everyday social and cultural practices performed in public space. This is where the Linguistic Landscape approach becomes relevant as it enables the researcher to explore how written public signs contribute to the creation of communities, identity and belonging. The present study will therefore apply Blokland’s (2017) framework to Linguistic Landscape research in order to explore the case of Cyprus focusing on linguistic items displayed in the UN-controlled buffer zone that divides Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots.

4. THE CYPRIOT CONTEXT

4.1. The Greek-Turkish Cypriot conflict

The Republic of Cyprus was declared an independent state in 1960 after a liberation war from the British colonial rule. Although the power was shared among the Greek-Cypriot majority and the Turkish-Cypriot minority, disagreements between the two ethnic groups escalated to intercommunal violence in the 1960s and a war in 1974 (Mallinson, 2009). A UN-controlled buffer zone was established as a securitisation measure after the ceasefire, separating the island as well as the capital, Nicosia, into two parts (United Nations Peace Keeping Force in Cyprus, 2018). In 1983, the Turkish-Cypriot political leader, Rauf Denktaş, declared the *de facto* state of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), a state that is not internationally recognised except by Turkey.

The years 2003-2004 were a significant milestone for the history of Cyprus. In April 2003 the two leaders agreed to partially lift the movement restrictions on the island allowing people to cross the dividing line after 30 years of complete separation (Tofallis, 2016). Since then, seven crossing-points have been established across the buffer zone one of which being located in Ledras street (‘Λήδρας’ in Greek; ‘Locmaci’ in Turkish) in the centre of Nicosia. Apart from the crossing-points, access or activities in the rest of the buffer zone are still prohibited. On the 24th of April 2004, a referendum on the ‘Annan plan’¹ was held and while it was approved by 65% of Turkish-Cypriots, it was rejected by 76% of Greek-Cypriots (Tofallis, 2016). Consequently, on the 1st of May 2004 the Republic of Cyprus joined the EU with the TRNC not forming part of the deal. Recent developments in 2017 saw a new UN-brokered effort to reunify the island with the current leaders, Mr Nicos Anastasiades and Mr Mustafa Akinci, taking part in a summit in Crans Montana (Switzerland) (United Nations Cyprus Talks, 2015). However, the diplomatic efforts failed and the island remains divided.

4.2. Dominant ideologies in Cyprus and their effect on language use

Strong nationalist ideologies emerged on the island because of the long-term conflict. After the intercommunal fights in the 1960s, Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots started to show alignment with Greece and Turkey respectively which were seen as an ally and protector of each ethnic group (Mavratsas, 2001: 163). These close links with the ‘motherlands’ were further promoted through ideals like common heritage, culture, language and religion (Charalambous, Charalambous & Zembylas, 2013). However, two opposing ideological positions started to emerge on the island: 1) ‘nationalism’, which regards Cyprus as the extension of Greece or Turkey, and 2) ‘Cypriotism’, which envisages Cyprus as an independent

¹ The Annan Plan was a UN proposal to resolve the Cyprus dispute.

and distinct political unit. According to Mavratsas (2001), within the Greek-Cypriot context these opposing ideologies also correspond to the political opposition between Right and Left; Right being associated with nationalism, aspiring to integrate Cyprus into Greece and Left with Cypriotism, openly supporting the idea of rapprochement (Papadakis, 2005). Akçali (2011) and Dembinska (2017) also report that Turkish-Cypriot ideologies shift from a rigid Turkish national identity to more hybrid and flexible identification of Cypriotness (Kıbrıslılık).

The slogan ‘Δεν ξεχνώ’ [I don’t forget] was coined by the Greek-Cypriot author Nikos Dimou on the day Turkey invaded Cyprus in August 1974 and since then it became a dominant ‘Hellenocentric’ nationalist discourse within the Greek-Cypriot context and the backbone of education policies in the Republic of Cyprus (Karoulla-Vrikkis, 2010; Karyoleμου, 2003). Although nowadays this discourse has been significantly toned down, it still remains an active goal of educational systems (Charalambous, Charalambous & Zembylas, 2014). In addition, the mass media on both sides often create negative stereotypes of the ‘Other’, focusing on the suffering of their own people and promoting one-sided historical narratives of victimisation (Makriyianni, Psaltis & Latif, 2011; Psaltis, 2016; Şahin, 2014; Way, 2011).

Research demonstrates that dominant nationalist ideologies have influenced language use on the island. Although the opening of the border 17 years ago offered opportunities for contact, communication between the two ethnic groups is still limited (Akçali, 2011; Hadjioannou, Tsiplakou & Kappler, 2011; McKeown & Psaltis, 2017; Psaltis, 2016). Also, despite attempts to introduce Greek and Turkish as a foreign language in public schools, because of the segregation and the ethnic estrangement, multilingualism in Greek and Turkish still remains rare, despite the fact that both are the official languages of the Republic of Cyprus².

² It should be noted that the only official language of the self-declared TRNC is Turkish. Moreover, in addition to the standard languages, the two ethnic groups also speak local variants, namely the Greek-Cypriot dialect and the

English is considered a neutral, non-ethnically loaded language in Cyprus (Karoulla-Vrikkis, 2010) and therefore it is often used as a lingua franca for communicative purposes.

A recent study exploring language use in the center of Nicosia shows that strong nationalist ideologies are also manifested in the public space as the language regimes of each ethnic group often exclude the language of the ‘Other’ from their Linguistic Landscape (Themistocleous, 2019). Yet, Themistocleous (2019) also observed that ephemeral signs in Greek, Turkish and English are now being displayed in the UN-controlled buffer zone at the Ledras street crossing-point. Ephemeral signs (e.g. posters, labels, stickers, notes, graffiti) are transient in nature and have variable permanency. They are often created by members of the public, grassroot initiatives or local organisations and, unlike official signs, their emplacement in the physical world involves little conscious planning. According to Kallen (2010), ephemeral signs merit further investigation because they are crucial elements of the Linguistic Landscape contributing to the meaning of a given space. The aim of this study, therefore, is to explore the multilingual ephemeral signs that were found at the Ledras street crossing-point

5. RESEARCH METHODS

Fieldwork was carried out in central Nicosia over a period of three years (2016-2019). I used what Blommaert (2013: 21) calls ‘ethnographic monitoring’, namely ethnographic engagement with the area under investigation and a longitudinal participant observation. First-hand familiarity with the area as well as personal contacts with peace activists and people who live, work and shop in the centre of Nicosia enabled me to better understand this locale. The Linguistic Landscape is a dynamic and ever changing construct (Blommaert, 2013; Muth, 2014; Papen, 2012; Pavlenko, 2010; Shohamy, Ben-Rafael & Barni, 2010), therefore the longitudinal

Turkish-Cypriot dialect respectively.

nature of this study allowed me to collect signs that appeared over the course of three years and identify processes of change.

The data presented in this study is collected from the UN-controlled buffer zone at the Ledras street crossing-point (Figure 1). Ledras street is approximately 1 kilometer long. About 800 meters lies on the Greek-Cypriot side, 150 meters on the Turkish-Cypriot and approximately 80 meters of UN-patrolled ‘No-man’s land’ lies between the two (Map 1). Its geographical location is noteworthy as it permits access from both sides of the island by foot, making this space a significant portal. Although this crossing-point underwent substantial renovation after its opening in 2008, the buildings remain abandoned and commerce is not permitted. The main activity that takes place there is walking to get to the other part of the city. Access is forbidden beyond the portal and it is dangerous to go exploring in the rest of the buffer zone. Nowadays, this crossing-point is becoming an important tourist attraction with tourists often stopping to experience ‘No man’s land’.

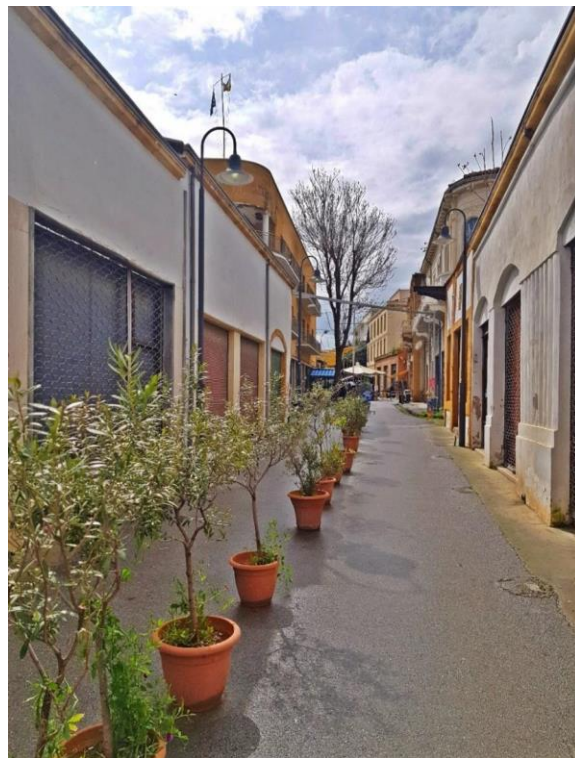
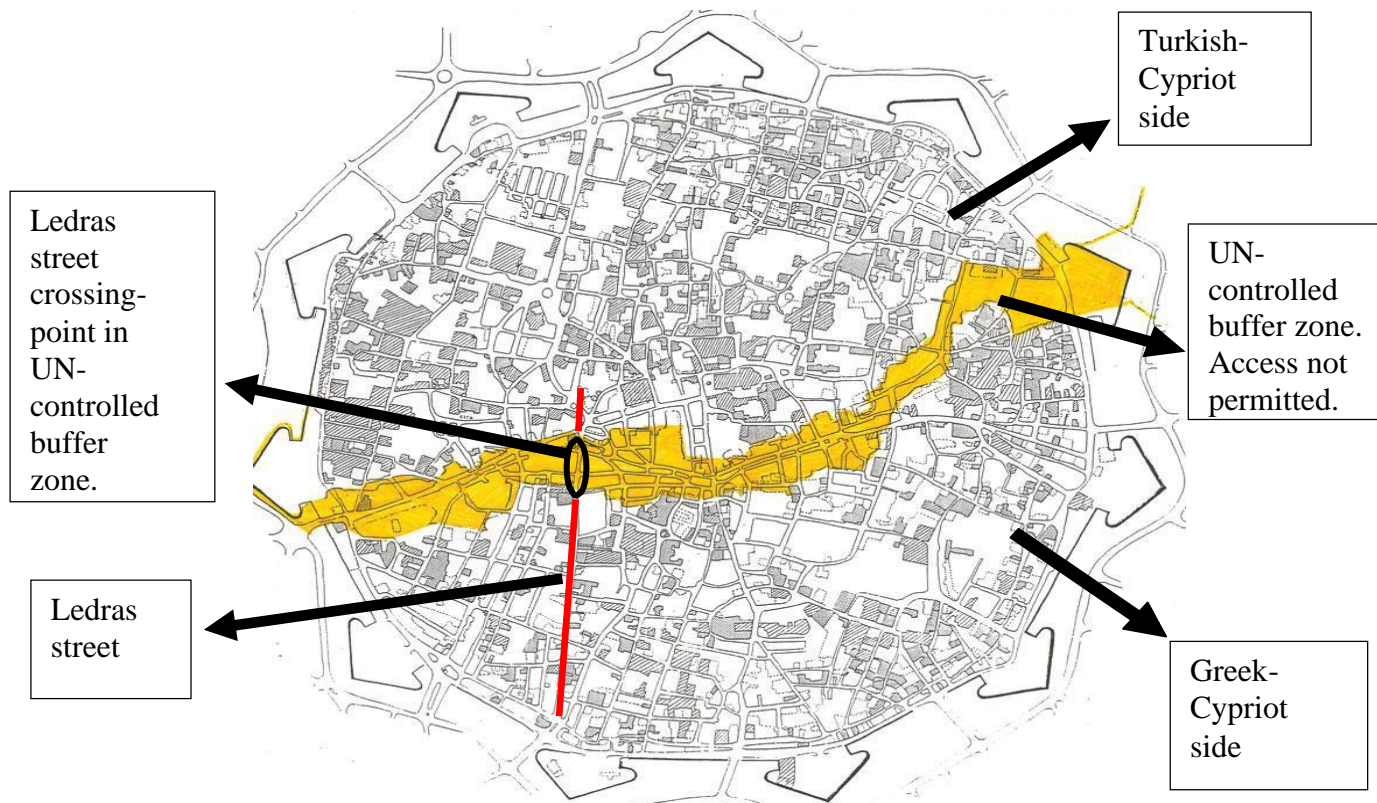


Figure 1. UN-controlled buffer zone at the Ledras street crossing-point



Map 1. Nicosia's city centre

Data was collected by walking through the portal from the road and photographing all linguistic traces which were visible and legible to passers-by. In total, 122 official and ephemeral signs were obtained. Table 1 below presents the various languages and language combinations found in the data:

Language(s) on public signs	Number	Percentage
Greek only	14	11%
Turkish only	9	7%
English only	54	44%
Turkish & English	6	5%
Greek & English	8	7.5%
Greek & Turkish	5	4%
Greek, Turkish & English	8	7.5%
No language (graffiti)	14	11%
Other language (Italian, Spanish, Hungarian)	4	3%
Total	122	100%

Table 1. Languages in the Linguistic Landscape of the UN-controlled buffer zone at the Ledras street crossing-point (2016 –2019)

Most of the signs in the buffer zone are English, a finding which is consistent with Themistocleous' (2019) study of the wider area. This is not surprising as English, which used to be the official language during the British colonial rule, is the lingua franca as well as the language of tourism, commerce and modernity. However, various ephemeral public signs in the form of stickers, posters and banners contained text in Greek, Turkish and English and even some were bilingual in Greek and Turkish, the languages of the former enemies. These signs will be the focus of this investigation. In the section that follows, I present and analyse representative examples from these ephemeral signs by taking into consideration Scollon and Wong Scollon's (2003) geosemiotics framework. In particular, I take into account the design

and code preference system on each sign as well as their location, material and method of production to unveil how authors use language and other modalities to index non-normative identities and voice counter ideologies.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

6.1. Promoting rapprochement through joint events

Various posters found in the area were promoting events that target both Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot audiences. These posters were mainly displayed on the walls of the abandoned buildings making them visible to passers-by who move across the portal. The Banda Bando poster in Figure 2 is advertising a late-night New Year's Eve party, intended mainly for the younger generation. Speaking to the creator, a Turkish-Cypriot DJ, it became evident that he often organises events and designs the posters himself, placing them in the buffer zone to attract partygoers from both sides. The sponsors (LEFKOŞA TÜRK BELEDİYESİ [Nicosia Turkish Municipality], Yenidüzen newspaper and SIM) and the location of this event (Bandabulyia, Old Market, Nicosia) indicate that the party is taking place in the Turkish-Cypriot part of Nicosia. However, there are other elements on this poster which show that the organiser is targeting not only Turkish-Cypriots, but also people across the border. Firstly, the poster is written in English, the lingua franca, making it accessible to non-Turkish-speaking audiences. Secondly, the payment is in Turkish Liras (the currency of the self-declared TRNC) as well as in Euros (the currency of the Republic of Cyprus and Europe). Thirdly, the performers include the Bandista (a Turkish musical collective from Istanbul), Radio Pangea (a local Turkish-Cypriot radio station) and two Greek-Cypriot DJs (Cotsios o Pikatillis and Koulla P. Katsikorou). The mixture of performers reveals collaboration amongst them, something which is further emphasised by the theme of this party: 'Music events that unite the world'.



Figure 2. Banda Bando New Year's Eve party

Another poster advertising a youth music festival was found in July 2018 (Figure 3). The poster is created by EDON (ΕΔΟΝ = Ενιαία Δημοκρατική Οργάνωση Νεολαίας [United Democratic Youth Organisation]) a left-wing Greek-Cypriot youth organisation. The sponsors are mainly Greek-Cypriot and the event is organised in the south part of Nicosia. Through my own observations but also speaking to local people it became evident that a Greek version of this poster was displayed in different locations in the Greek-Cypriot community, yet, the poster found in the buffer zone was written in Turkish. Most of the information about this event (e.g.

its nature, location, day, contacts, where to buy tickets from) is provided in Turkish apart from the names of some sponsors and the phrase ‘Εισιτήρια προπωλούνται’ [Tickets are sold] which are provided in Greek but are less visible and in a significantly smaller font. The use of the Turkish language on this poster instead of Greek indicates that although this is a Greek-Cypriot event, Turkish-Cypriots are also invited. In addition, other interesting features on this poster are worth mentioning. At the top left one can see the raised fist holding a flower; this is a symbol of solidarity, support and unity. The text above the raised fist contains the phrase “Yaşam ve Özgürlük için savaşan ... bayun eğmeyen halk diz çökmez” [The people who are fighting for life and freedom do not kneel] which is written in Turkish. The use of this phrase is significant as although it is written in Turkish on the poster, it originates from a Greek poem written by Tefkros Anthias (1903-1968), a prominent Greek-Cypriot poet. The translation of the poem from Greek to Turkish is not only inclusive, as this language choice makes it available to Turkish-speaking audiences, but is also symbolic. This is because this strong message about freedom, which was originally written by the poet addressing Greek-Cypriots, is now shared with Turkish-speaking audiences, promoting a new common cause for both: to unite and collectively fight for freedom. Another interesting feature on this poster is accommodation to Turkish spelling conventions. The images of the participating singers, who are all from Greece, are provided in the middle of the poster with a list of their names visible underneath the images. What is interesting is that on several occasions the spelling of the singers’ names seems to reflect Turkish spelling conventions, for example ‘Mikruçikos’ and ‘Antonopulu’, which would normally be written ‘Mikroutsikos’ and ‘Antonopoulou’ following the official transliteration conventions of Greek to Roman characters.

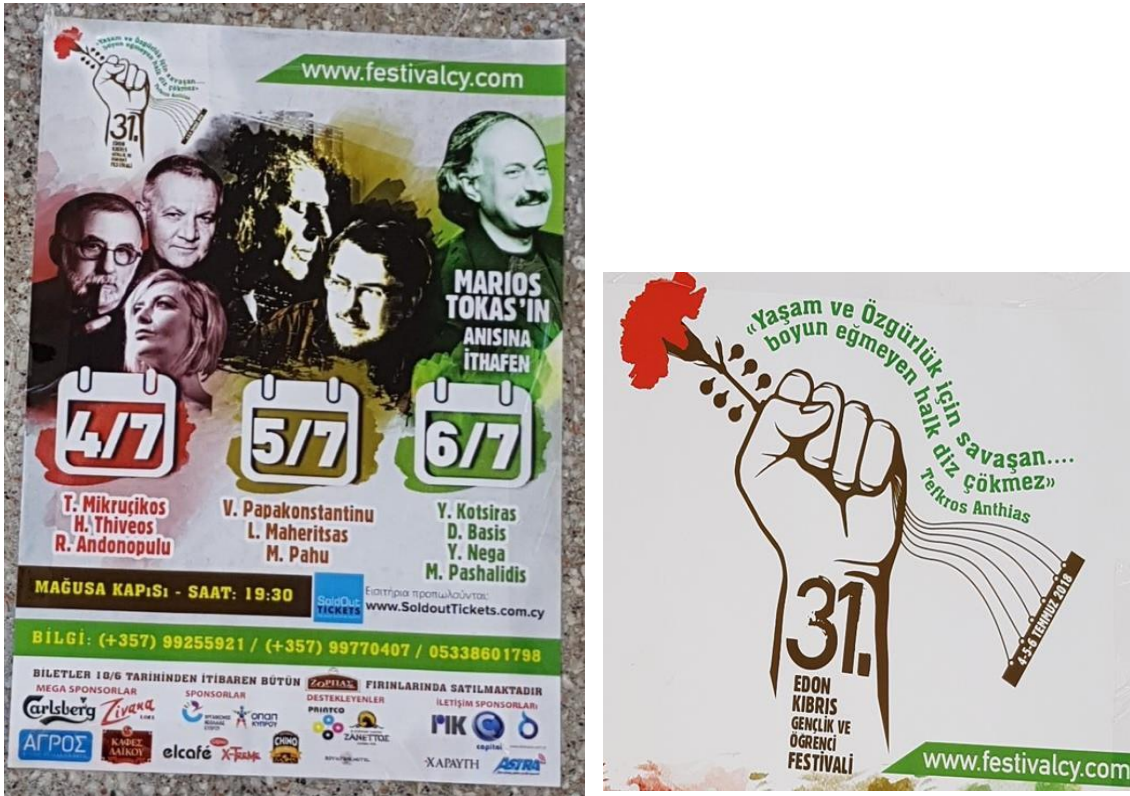


Figure 3. EDON youth music festival

In July 2018 an original poster of the 1997 Burak – Sakis concert started to appear in the centre of Nicosia and also on the walls of the abandoned buildings in the buffer zone (Figure 4). This concert was noteworthy because it took place before the ease of movement restrictions and it was one of the few bi-communal events organised since the 1960s clashes. It was a joint performance by singers Burak Kut from Turkey and Sakis Rouvas from Greece hosted in the buffer zone and organised by the UN. Unlike the EDON event in July 2018, this reconciliation attempt was extremely controversial and sparked public debates; as local people explained, some saw it as a brave undertaking, while others characterised the singers as traitors. The Burak-Sakis poster was accompanied by a homemade note which was printed on an A4 paper and emplaced underneath the original posters. It contained a text in three languages: English, the lingua franca, followed by the two local languages, namely Greek and Turkish. The text openly supports the Burak–Sakis 1997 attempt, condemning nationalism and emphasising the

importance of brotherhood, understanding and peace, a message that is further reinforced by hearts dividing the texts in each language. The creators of these posters are unknown; however, the multilingual nature of the signs make the messages they want to convey inclusive for speakers from both sides.



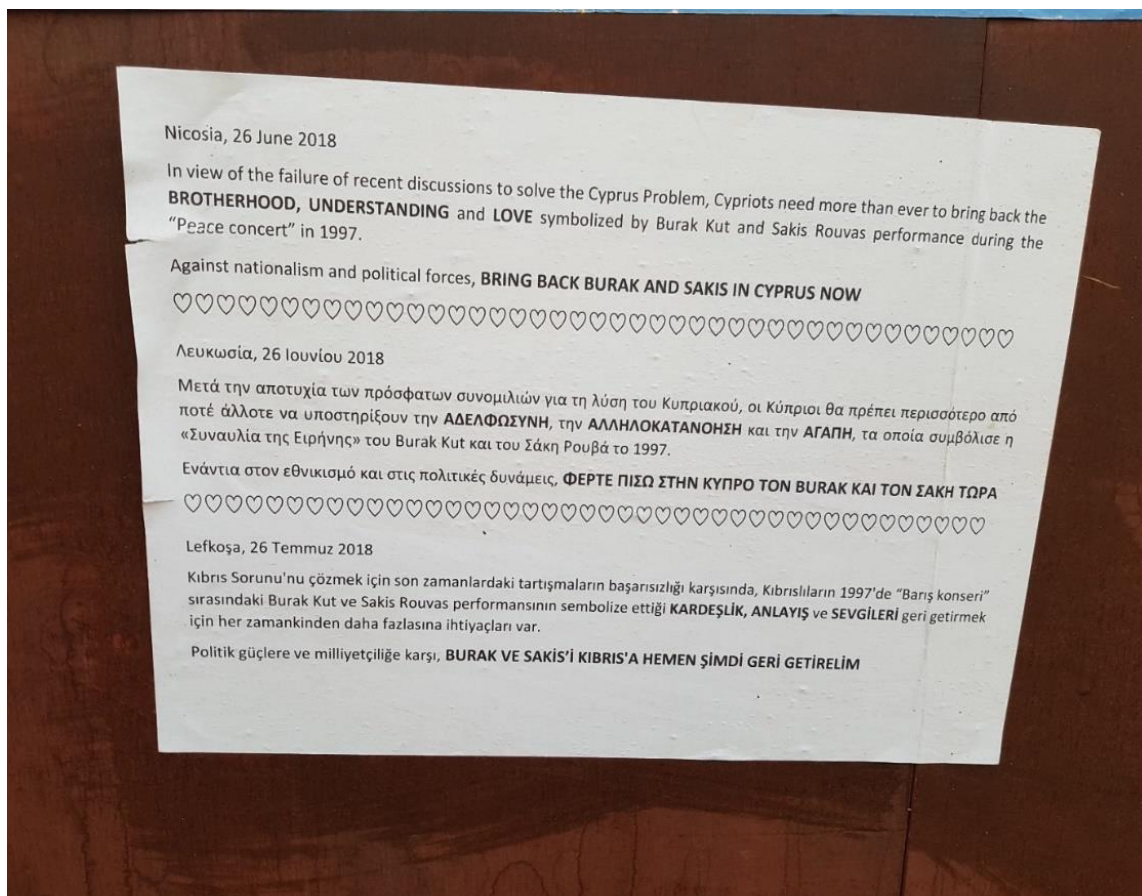


Figure 4. Burak – Sakis 1997 concert

Apart from music events, other activities are also promoted through posters displayed on the walls of the abandoned buildings. The poster in Figure 5 advertises a two-day event organised by ENORASI, a social and cultural club in Nicosia. It is a social event where Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots can spend quality time together, reflect and discuss how they can live in a unified Cyprus. The same poster is produced in Greek and Turkish and they displayed side-by-side. Although they are separate posters, they are not displayed apart and this enables these signs to function as a common, unified ‘voice’ targeting audiences from both sides. While the poster in Figure 5 is bilingual, the one in Figure 6 is mainly using the lingua franca, English, containing limited information in Greek and Turkish (i.e. the location name). This poster informs passers-by about a bicomunal therapy group which is based on systemic psychotherapy and aspires to connect all Cypriots, help them forgive each other and move on.

The image used on this poster shows people helping each other to scale a mountain, an image that functions as an analogy of the Cypriot problem, emphasising the importance of collaboration for overcoming big obstacles and achieving goals such building a life together.

DEKATO TRITO ΨΥΧΑΓΩΓΙΚΟ ΔΙΗΜΕΡΟ ΦΙΛΙΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΕΝΟΡΑΣΗΣ
με ελεύθερη συζήτηση με θέμα
"ΞΕΠΕΡΝΟΝΤΑΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΕΑΥΤΟΥΣ ΜΑΣ ΓΙΑ ΕΝΩΜΕΝΟ ΝΗΣΙ"
Σαββατοκύριακο 18–19 Νοεμβρίου 2017
"DROUSHA HEIGHTS HOTEL"
 στην γραμική κοινότητα Δρούσας στον παντόρφρο Ακρόα στην Πάφο

Ελεύθερη Συζήτηση
Σάββατο 18 Νοε. 2017, 5:30–8:30 pm
 με παράλληλη διαρρηγσία Ελληνοκ–Τουρκικά

Εισαγωγικές Παρουσιάσεις Προσκεκλημένων μας
Καθηγητή (Πανεπ. Κύπρου) Νιαζί Κιζιλγιουρεκ και
ΕΚ Διαπραγματευτή Ανδρέα Μαυρογιάννη

ΧΟΡΗΓΟΙ: Υπουργός Εσωτερικών,
 Synergia Media, Drousha Heights, Ενόραση και →

Δηλώσεις στον κοινωνικο-πολιτιστικό όμιλο ΕΝΟΡΑΣΗΣ:
 τηλ. 22767679 ή 99568223 ή fax 22592630 (Γερμανία) ή 05428807373 (Τουρκία)
 enorasis@epidemmat.com.cy www.enorasis.org ENORASIS Social Cultural Club

ENORASIS 13'ÜNCÜ GELENEKSEL EĞLENCİLİ DOSTLUK HAFTA SONU
"Birleşik Kıbrıs için Kendimizi Aşmak"
18–19 Kasım 2017 hafta sonu
Gürkemli "DROUSHA HEIGHTS OTEL"de
 Akroa bölgesindeki pitoresk manzaralı Drousha köyünde

Açık Oturum
Cumartesi 18 Kasım 2017, 17:30–20:30
 Eş zamanlı Rumca & Türkçe tercüme

Açılış Konuşmalarımız
Profesör Niyazi Kızılyürek ve
Müzakereci Andreas Mavroyiannis

SPONSÖRLER: İçişleri Bakanı,
 Synergia Media, Drousha Otel, Enorasis ve →

Kaydımız: Enorasis Sosyal-Kültürel Kulübü'ne yaptırımız:
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Figure 5. ENORASIS entertainment weekend for friendship and reflection



Figure 6. Bicommunal therapy group

The signs discussed in this section revolved around social events which both Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots are invited to attend. All posters shared certain elements of interpersonal engagement as their creators targeted both Greek- and Turkish-speaking audiences, expressing a sense of inclusiveness. The events revolve around shared interests and they not only aim to raise awareness about the similarities among the two ethnic groups, but they also convey a sense of belongingness by indexing a narrative of shared culture and a common Cypriot identity.

6.2. Enhancing shared values and common goals

Other ephemeral signs identified in the buffer zone were more transactional in nature and they revolved around shared values and goals. The 1974 war resulted in loss of life but also in many missing people whose fate is still unknown. The Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus (CPM) [Διερευνητική Επιτροπή για τους Αγνοούμενους (ΔΕΑ); Kibris'taki Kayip Şahislar Komitesi (KŞK)] is an organisation that was established in 1981 by Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot leaders and the UN, whose aim is to recover, identify and return to the families the remains of people who went missing during the war. The banner in Figure 7 below promotes this initiative. Compared to the posters discussed in the previous section, the material used for this banner is more robust making it less prone to damage and therefore somehow permanent. In terms of language, the banner is bilingual in Greek and Turkish and contains three sentences which translate to English as follows: 'Human pain has no ethnicity or religion', 'Help us find our missing persons', 'Give any information you know to CPM'. The banner is emplaced next to the Greek-Cypriot passport control checkpoint and its approximation to the Greek-Cypriot side, as well as the Greek-Cypriot telephone number and the fact that Greek is prioritised followed by Turkish, indicate that it is produced by initiatives from the south. Despite that, the incorporation of Turkish is important because the sign targets and includes Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot audiences. This common cause is further reflected in the lexical choices on this banner ('pain has no ethnicity or religion', 'our Missing persons') and by the visual aspect which shows a photo of a missing person which could be either Greek-Cypriot or Turkish-Cypriot. The missing persons banner indexes a narrative of shared history of suffering and loss, thus creating an emotional bond between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots who lost their loved ones. Additionally, it encourages passers-by to engage with activities of transactional nature, like sharing any information they may have about missing people. It therefore projects a collective goal as well as indexing interdependencies.



Figure 7. Missing persons in Cyprus

The 2019 European elections in Cyprus were somehow different than previous years. This was the first time that Turkish-Cypriot candidates³ took part in the election with Niyazi Kızılyürek, a prominent Turkish-Cypriot academic and a strong advocate of reunification, being fielded by AKEL, the leftist party in the Greek-controlled south. The poster in Figure 8 was found in February 2019, ahead of the elections. It is produced by the European Parliament in different languages and the one found in the buffer zone is written in Turkish addressing Turkish-Cypriots and encouraging them to vote. This is highlighted by the text underneath the image which translates to: ‘European Elections: This time it is not enough to hope for a better future. This time we all need to take responsibility. We ask you not only to vote in these

³ It should be noted that Turkish-Cypriots (including their descendants) who were born and lived in Cyprus before the partition are allowed to hold passports of the Republic of Cyprus. Consequently, they are permitted to enter the Republic of Cyprus, vote and be candidates at European Elections. However, immigrants from Turkey, known as ‘Turkish settlers’, who came to the north part of Cyprus after the 1974 war are considered illegal by the Republic of Cyprus and are not permitted entry to south part of the island.

elections, but also to convince others to vote'. The blue themed colours as well as the European Union flags show alignment with Europe, something that the north part of Cyprus needs as it is still diplomatically isolated. In terms of location, this poster was displayed next to the Greek-Cypriot checkpoint where Turkish-Cypriots are required to queue to show their passports. The emplacement of this poster in this particular location is significant as it makes it mostly visible to those Turkish-Cypriots who cross the border and who could potentially vote in these elections. The European elections voting poster, although monolingual in Turkish, also expresses a sense of inclusiveness as Turkish-Cypriots are now invited to vote in the European elections and be involved in a process that allows them to gain a political voice in an international forum.



Figure 8. European elections

6.3. Expressing counter-narratives

As mentioned in section 4.2, strong nationalist ideologies still exist in Cyprus and these are often manifested in public discussions, mass media and education. The stickers in Figure 9 contain the slogan ‘Δεν ξεχνώ’ [I don’t forget] accompanied by an image of the island of Cyprus cut in half, representing the north part ‘as a slow flux of blood ebbing down the island’ (Dimou, n.d.). Names of the villages Πάνω Ζώδια [Pano Zodia] and Πάνω Δίκωμο [Pano Dikomo] are written in Greek. These stickers were found on the windows of an abandoned building opposite the

Greek-Cypriot passport checkpoint. Their proximity to the Greek-Cypriot passport control and the fact that they are monolingual addressing Greek-speakers only function as a reminder to those Greek-Cypriots who have crossed the border of the tragic consequences of the Turkish invasion and the places that were lost after the war. These stickers construct a collective memory of the war and project strong ideologies of division, conflict and alienation.



Figure 9. Δεν ξεχνώ [I don't forget]

Apart from the Δεν ξεχνώ stickers, other stickers found in the area seem to project a narrative that goes against this strong nationalist ideology. The stickers in Figure 10 were displayed on a lamp-post in the centre of the buffer zone. The sticker at the top shows a blindfolded man with the hashtag 'people of Cyprus', representing Cypriots as somehow conservative and narrow-minded. The use of English makes the message available to wider audiences and addresses people from both sides. The sticker below shows a human skull accompanied by the Greek text 'Η ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑ ΕΝ ΣΥΝΤΟΜΙΑ: Ο ΕΘΝΙΚΙΣΜΟΣ

ΓΕΝΝΑ ΝΕΚΡΟΤΑΦΕΙΑ' [A BRIEF HISTORY OF CYPRUS: NATIONALISM GIVES BIRTH TO CEMETERIES]. This sticker is produced by Antifa λευκοῦσα (2014) an anti-fascism group which fights against nationalism on the island. Overall, both stickers suggest that nationalism is the reason for the conflict in Cyprus.



Figure 10. Anti-nationalist stickers

Messages of unification and peace are disseminated by more stickers, some of which portrayed federation as the only solution to the Cypriot problem. For instance, the sticker in Figure 11 is bilingual in Greek and Turkish and contains a phrase which translates to English as: 'Antifascism needs unification'. This message is further emphasised by the visual aspects of the sticker which show a smaller image of Cyprus being divided and a larger one without the

dividing line. In addition, the colour choice is symbolic as white and yellow are the characteristic colours of the flag of Cyprus.



Figure 11. Ο Αντιφασισμός θέλει επανένωση [Antifascism needs unification]

The stickers in Figures 12, 13 and 14 are produced by the ‘Left initiative - We want federation’ movement (2019) and they include interesting visual features: 1) the raised fist (a symbol of solidarity and unity) holding a peace sign above the island of Cyprus (Figures 12 and 14), 2) a clock within the Nicosia walls (the symbol of the capital) with a red handshake (the colour traditionally associated with socialism and communism) denoting that the clock is ticking so it is time to agree to a solution and unite Nicosia (Figure 13), and 3) John Lennon, a famous musician and peace activist (Figure 14). The visual aspects of these stickers appear to express unity, solidarity and peace. The text on the two stickers is mainly Greek: ‘Ειρήνη επανένωση τώρα’ [Peace unification now] (Figure 12) and ‘Ομόσπονδη Κύπρος Ενωμένη Λευκωσία’ [Federal Cyprus United Nicosia] (Figure 13). However, the sticker on Figure 14 contains an interesting word play. The text reads: ‘ΟΜΟΣΠΟΝΔΙΑ, ΔΩΣ’ΤΗΣ CHANCE ΟΛΑΝ!’ which translates to [FEDERATION, GIVE IT A CHANCE DUDE!]. This phrase contains multiple codes: [FEDERATION, GIVE IT] is in Standard Greek, [CHANCE] is in

English and [DUDE] is in the Greek-Cypriot dialect, a variety that is rarely used for written purposes (Themistocleous, 2010). The use of the Cypriot-Greek linguistic feature, which actually originates from the Turkish word ‘oğlan’ (Papangelou, 2001) functions as a way of specifically addressing Greek-Cypriots making the message more personal to them. Furthermore, this phrase in combination with John Lennon’s image is an example of intertextuality with John Lennon’s song ‘Give peace a chance’ further promoting a strong message for unification and peace. While the stickers in Figures 11 and 12 are displayed on the wall of an abandoned building, the ones in Figures 13 and 14 are emplaced on a barrel similar to the ones used to create roadblocks across the buffer zone. The emplacement of these stickers on the barrel that used to divide the two ethnic groups further emphasises the importance of ending the war and promoting peace.



Figure 12. Ειρήνη επανένωση τώρα [Peace unification now]



Figure 13. Ομόσπονδη Κύπρος Ενωμένη Λευκωσία [Federal Cyprus United Nicosia]



Figure 14. Ομοσπονδία δώσ' της chance ολάν! [Federation, give it a chance dude!].

The stickers discussed in this section convey a sense of belonging by openly challenging dominant nationalist ideologies and instead actively promoting shared values in the public arena. Consequently, a new ideology of unification and peace that moves away from the dominant ‘Δεν ξεχνώ’ [I don’t forget] narrative starts to surface and, although it might not be endorsed by everyone on the island, it becomes visible in a space that is used by passers-by who choose to cross the border.

7. DISCUSSION

After analysing the textual and visual components of the ephemeral signs found in the buffer zone as well as considering their creators, target audiences and emplacement in the physical world, in this section I discuss their broader implications by taking into account Blokland’s (2017) Community as Urban Practice framework. Similarly to other cases of conflict-ridden areas, language use in Cyprus is crucial for the projection of ideologies and sociocultural identities. Themistocleous (2019) demonstrates that language use in the public space of the two ethnic groups in Cyprus reflects territorial and political conflicts on the island, an outcome that is also consistent with findings from previous studies discussed in section 2. Using therefore traditional notions of the term ‘community’ we can argue that the island of Cyprus is divided into two communities (the Greek-Cypriot in the south, and the Turkish-Cypriot in the north) which have clear political, social, linguistic and geographical boundaries.

However, the present study has revealed that the Linguistic Landscape of the crossing-point at the Ledras street UN-controlled buffer zone tells a different story. The easing of the movement restrictions marked a significant social change which drastically transformed the character of that part of the buffer zone from a highly militarised, contested space that divides the capital, into a portal. Increased mobility turned this portal into a shared space, used daily by Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots to cross the border. In this paper, I argue that the

neutralised character of the buffer zone enables the creation of a new imagined community which consists of social actors from both sides who come to this shared space to display an array of ephemeral public signs that contain the language of the ‘former enemy’. Although we see no social actors actively displaying signs on the walls of the abandoned buildings, Linguistic Landscape items function as traces of these performances in the buffer zone. In addition, the fact that these ephemeral signs were not found beyond the buffer zone (with the exception of the Burak-Sakis poster) indicates that members of this new community are specifically operating in the neutralised area of the buffer zone which enables them not only to express counter normative ideologies but also make them visible to passers-by who cross the border.

This new community does not have clear boundaries and it is not fixed as its members consist of social actors who are affiliated and inhabit either in the north or the south part of the island. Therefore, the concept of Community of Practice cannot be satisfactorily applied to describe the complexities of this particular context as these social actors do not necessarily have mutual engagement, clear-cut patterns of membership, clearly defined practices or regular interactions. This is why Blokland’s (2017) new conceptualisation of ‘community’ can be a more suitable approach for dealing with the complexities of the linguistic and social practices that take place in this space. This new approach helps us understand how former enemies who might not have strong or even weak social ties come together to ‘do a community’ which is more open-ended, evolving and heterogenous than a Community of Practice. Strangers with a sole focus on certain common interests display ephemeral signs in a space that was originally developed to divide them. Although these social actors might not necessarily be interested or even able (due to restrictions) to form a community in the buffer zone *per se*, their public doings exhibit symbolic values which express a common identity, encourage the future development of social ties and, most importantly, promote a narrative of belonging which according to Blokland (2017) this is what makes up community in the first place.

The events and initiatives that are promoted through the ephemeral signs displayed in the buffer zone have the potential to initiate fluid encounters among unfamiliar people from both sides, giving them the opportunity to socialise and familiarise themselves with the ‘former enemy’. These fluid encounters could potentially develop to durable engagements. Contact is often difficult or even undesirable in troubled societies but, according to McKeown and Psaltis (2017), if positive intergroup contact is achieved then it can reduce prejudice, increase trust, improve attitudes towards the ‘Other’ and even lead to increased intentions for further contact. The signs found in the UN-controlled buffer zone encourage desegregation through sustained contact, promote common goals for all Cypriots and index a new ideology of unification and peaceful cohabitation. All these aspects have the potential to create a collective sense of shared history and cultural belonging, which can lead to further development of this new community that consists of both Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots who share common values and a mutual Cypriot identity.

The complexities that characterize the reality in this ‘No man’s land’ part of Cyprus make it important to move on from assumptions that languages always mark the geographical territory inhabited by a given community (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). Applying instead Blokland’s (2017) Community as Urban Practice framework to the study of Linguistic Landscape can help us understand the complexities in this unique part of Cyprus in times of change, by highlighting the role of written public signs in constructing social identification.

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Η Κύπρος και η πρωτεύουσα της, η Λευκωσία, έχουν διαιρεθεί από μια ελεγχόμενη από τον Ο.Η.Ε. ζώνη ασφαλείας (Πράσινη Γραμμή) λόγω του πολέμου το 1974. Η διάνοιξη των οδοφραγμάτων το 2003 επέτρεψε σε Ελληνοκυπρίους και Τουρκοκύπριους να περάσουν ξανά στην ‘άλλη πλευρά’ μετά από 30 χρόνια διαχωρισμού και η αυξημένη κινητικότητα, ιδίως μέσω του σημείου διέλευσης της οδού Λήδρας στο κέντρο της Λευκωσίας, έφερε μια νέα δυναμική στην περιοχή. Η ανάλυση φωτογραφικών δεδομένων τα οποία συλλέχθηκαν κατά τη διάρκεια τριών ετών από το Γλωσσικό Τοπίο της Πράσινης Γραμμής στην οδό Λήδρας αποκαλύπτει ότι εφήμερα σημεία (ephemeral signs) γραμμένα στα Ελληνικά, Τουρκικά και Αγγλικά χρησιμοποιούνται για να δημιουργήσουν σχέσεις και να ενισχύσουν τους κοινωνικούς δεσμούς μεταξύ των δύο ‘πρώην εχθρών’, καθώς επίσης για να προωθήσουν ιδεολογίες οι οποίες αντιτίθενται σε διαδεδομένες εθνικιστικές τοποθετήσεις. Υιοθετώντας μια νέα έννοια του όρου ‘κοινότητα’ (Blokland, 2017), η μελέτη αυτή αποκαλύπτει πώς μια καινούρια, φαντασιακή κοινότητα (imagined community) μπορεί να δημιουργηθεί σε περιπτώσεις διαμάχης μέσω της χρήσης γραπτών δημόσιων επιγραφών στο Γλωσσικό Τοπίο.