

The Role Of The Architect in Spaces Of Contested History: The Case of '*The Nicosia Master Plan*'

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Abstract:

This paper explores the role of architects and urban planning professionals in spaces of contested history. The paper hypothesizes that this role shifts as, the socio-political situation also changes. The result is data-driven theory through the examination of a case study. The outcomes can be made applicable to other comparable war-torn cities. This case study is 'The Nicosia Master Plan', which is a bi-communal project that started in 1981 in the last divided capital in Europe, Nicosia. The project manifested itself through several phases through which the paper hypothesizes resulted in several shifts in the role of the professionals. The arguments are made by consulting literature produced on either side of the island, primary sources in the form of drawings made by the team and interviews with two leaders of the team. These roles explore architects as providers of practical solutions, then deployers of politicians' visions and later as producers of their own political vision. Theory suggests a future progression of the role as facilitators of public participation as an essential last shift. This is considering the importance of public participation in conflict-resolution, which could not be facilitated in earlier and more sensitive stages of such projects.

1. Introduction:

Aim and Hypothesis

The paper examines the role of architects and professionals within the urban planning department, in spaces of contested history. Spaces of contested history are ones where there are multiple claims, often of an ethnic nature, on history and space. These disputes result to the complexities of divisive historical memory. Hence historiography, the process of writing history, is more complex within this context due to conflicting perspectives over events. While it's very challenging to pinpoint the exact origin of the term, it is currently being used by multiple related disciplines such as history, anthropology, sociology, political science and urban design. 'Long treated as anomalies, divided cities are linked to each other by clear and coherent patterns.' (Calame, 2005). For this reason examining the role of urban planning professionals within this type of setting is of particular importance as the complexities that arise from different claims over symbols, space and narrations are unique to these contested environments. There is a significant pool of literature produced to understand how these tangible and intangible divisions over space should be approached by professionals however, there is a gap within the literature on how this role of urban planners might be changing and evolving as time, and consequently as conditions of the contested environment, change. The paper hypothesizes that this role is not a fixed or constant, and not an ideal to be reached, but a role that evolves as the environment permits more interventions and collaboration.

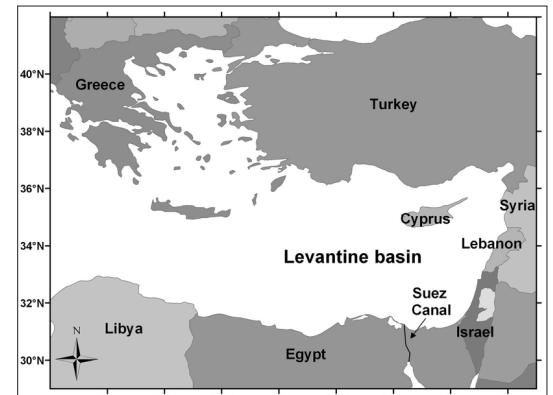


Fig. 1: Cyprus on the map (Katsanevakis, 2009)



Fig. 2: Cyprus separation (Orac & Dağlı, 2023)

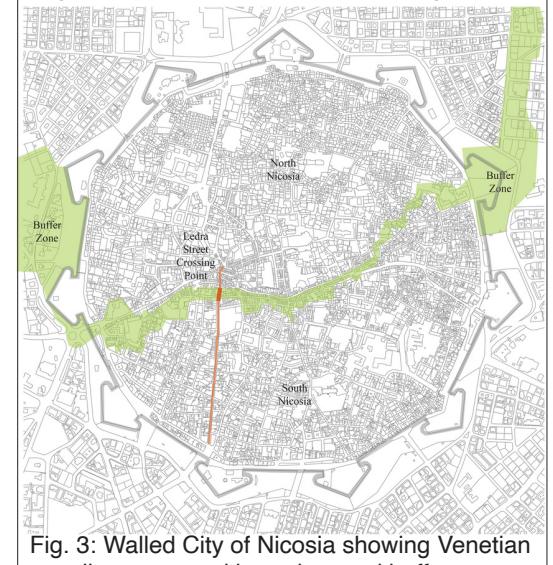


Fig. 3: Walled City of Nicosia showing Venetian walls as outward boundary and buffer zone
(Orac & Dağlı, 2023)

Methodology

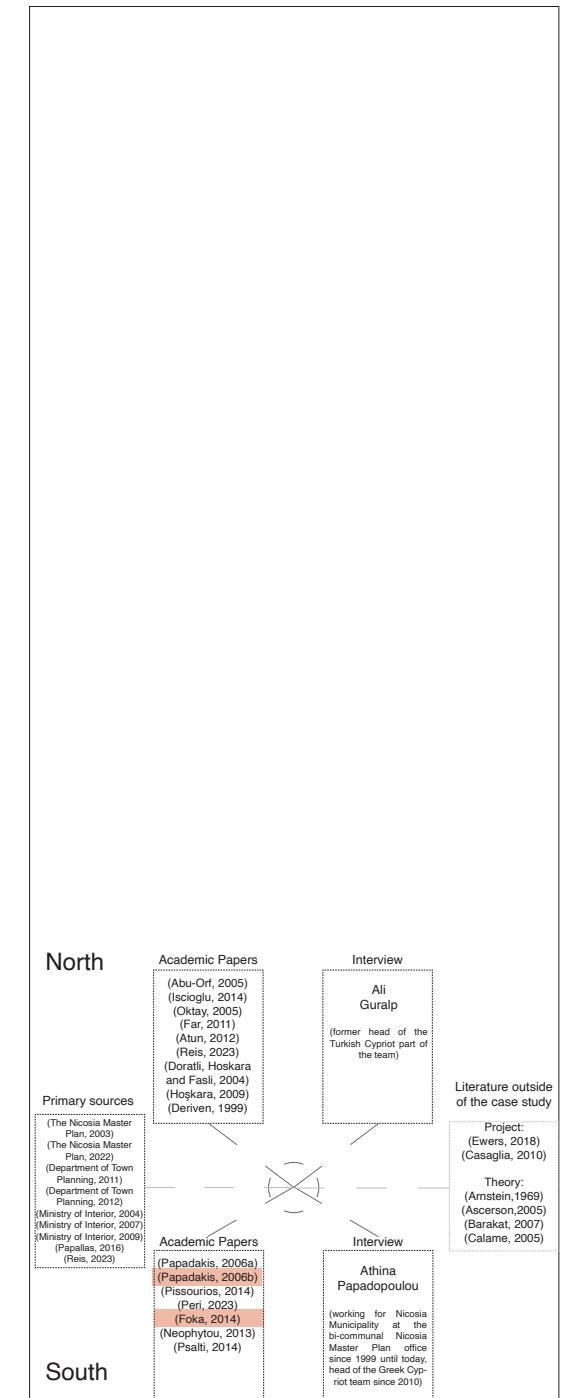
Due to the complex nature of contested environments, the paper is conducted through a case study to theorise by extracting information empirically. This results to a data driven theory in regards to the role of professionals in spaces of contested history. The case study is the Nicosia Master plan, a bi-communal project in the capital city of Cyprus. Critical lessons can be extrapolated and applied to other comparable war-torn cities. The data analysed is a combination of written and oral history in relation to the project. For written history, academic papers on either side of the island are used and for oral history, two interviews were conducted with two leaders of the bi-communal project. Furthermore, more primary sources in the form of drawings from newspapers at the time, photographs and official drawings made by the Nicosia Master Plan team are analysed. These role shifts and changes in the socio-political situation are explored through the use of a time line as an analytical tool to present a hypothesis of different phases, changes in roles, disruptions and vision shifts. The potential future steps are discussed through theoretical frameworks to understand the gaps and limitations of the projects' approach.

Context

This case study context is Nicosia, often referred to as the last divided capital of Europe and the physical and social division is still separating the city. The walled city of Nicosia (or Old City) is separated into two halves with a buffer zone in the middle and surrounded by Venetian walls, which creates a microcosm full of ethnic and social tensions, where the spatial separation can be observed in Figure 2 and 3. Nicosia, like all cities in Cyprus, has undergone several spatial and social changes under the control of each successive power that took control over the island ever since around 9th century BC with Phoenicians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Venetians, Ottomans and British before the island became an independent country in 1960. The volatile past only allowed for a very fragile state 'competing against contested nationalisms' to form in 1960 as its ethnic and social divisions were embedded deep within the social fabric (Papadakis, 2005 as cited in Foka, 2014).

Case study

The paper follows the case study of the bi-communal effort through its different stages to understand how professionals navigate through a constantly transforming context. 'The Nicosia Master plan' started in 1978 as an agreement was made between the two mayors on either side of Nicosia; Lellos Demetriades and Mustafa Akinci, to prepare a common sewage system. A year later, the two mayors set to create a common Master Plan which lead to the creation of a bi-communal multidisciplinary team in 1981 with the aim of drafting a common planning strategy for Nicosia.



Structure

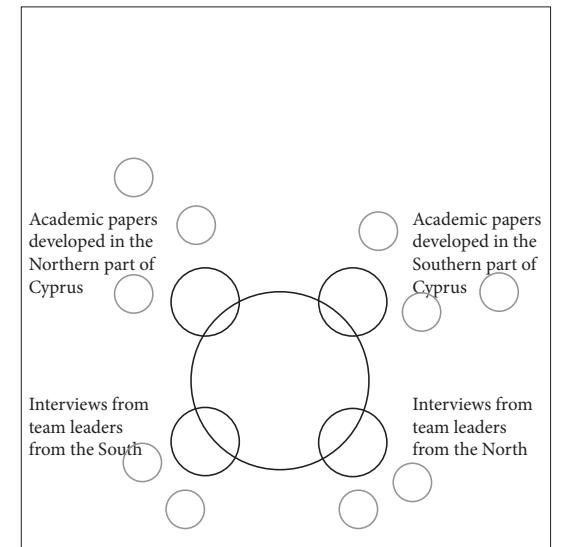
The paper is structured in two parts. The first part describes the background history for the case study. It provides information about Cyprus and the city of Nicosia. In this chapter the extent of contention through diverging narratives, symbols, names is explored. This is partially done through the ordering of history through a time-line as an analytical tool for showing the divergence of narration. The second part presents the case study. It is set up as a non-hierarchical round table discussion¹ between the academic literature produced on either side of the island and interviewees from the leaders of both communities of the bi-communal project. This is an imaginary set up created to contrast the lack of transparent exchange of ideas within such diverging, contested contexts. The case study analysis is separated into four parts. Each part addresses another role of the architect in these environments. The roles have emerged through the analysis of primary sources. They are used as classification devices and a means to analyse the changing nature of the role of professionals within the environment of contested history through time: In this case with Nicosia as an example. These are Architect as a provider of practical solutions, Architect as the material of politicians' vision, Architect as the producer of political vision and lastly, Architect as facilitator for public participation.

'Cities are the places where diverse people come together. They are the arenas in which conflict is taking place in everyday life. Conflict which is defined as a disagreement between people, groups or countries in Longman Dictionary can arise when they have different values, ideas and goals and they think that the attitudes of the other present a threat to their values, ideas and their own goal achievement. Disputes in cities with ethno-religious and national conflict is more severe and creates contested cities. When there is no way for reconciliation and the disputes exist, conflict leads to fights or even wars. If these conflicts cannot be solved or reduced, they are likely to physically change the cities. In such cities conflict not only leads to contested urban environments, but also inter-communal violence and wars leads the division of cities with 'conflict infrastructures' such as checkpoints, barriers, fences, walls, buffer-zones and dead zones.'

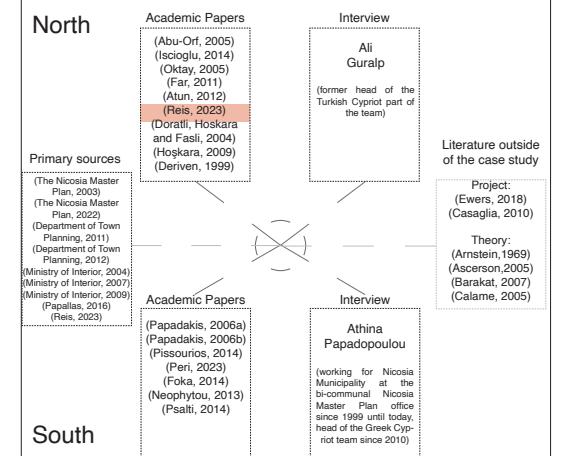
(Reis, 2023)



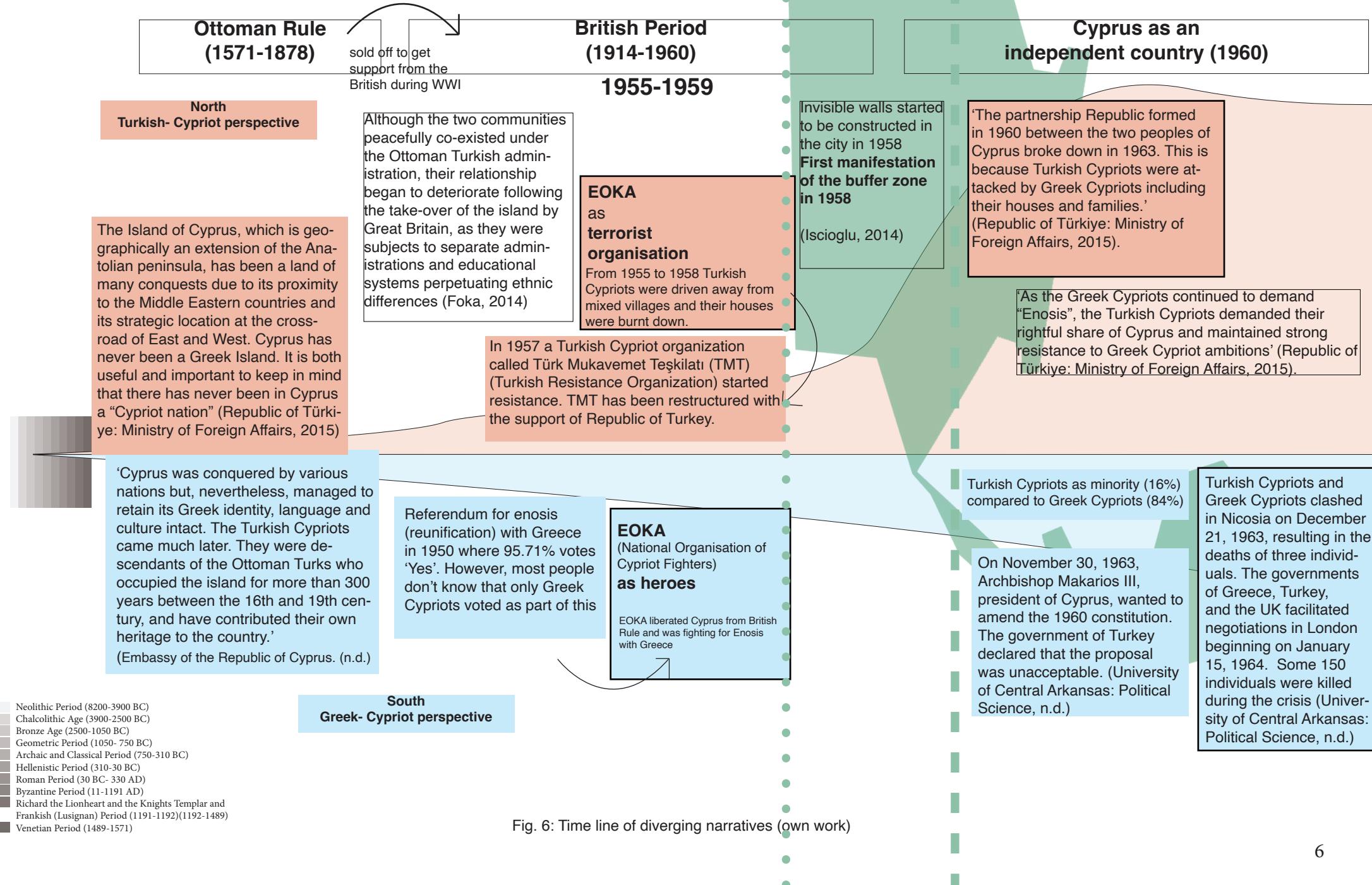
Fig. 5: Barricades separating the capital city
(personal image)



¹Fig. 4: Round table discussion of different groups of data (own work)



2.1 Background History of Cyprus and Nicosia: A Time Line





/ (1974)

Cyprus joins the European Union (2004)

'Peace Operation'

Cyprus Turkish community declared the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) in Northern Cyprus in 1983 (Iscioglu, 2014).

Annan Plan plan for reunification

Lack of willingness to collaborate by the Greek Cypriot community as only 25% voted yes, compared to 65% of Turkish Cypriots. The South saw the opportunity to get into the EU on its own and lost willingness for reunification (LegalMatters, 2024).

North

Buffer Zone

South

'Turkish Invasion'

The Ledra Palace check point opens in 2003 connecting the two parts of the country for the first time in almost two decades.

Annan Plan plan for reunification

The Turkish Cypriot side first showed no interest in negotiations over reunification and only considered this when the opportunity to join the European Union presented itself following a change in Turkish politics to a more pro-EU attitude following the economic crisis they experienced. The plan also failed to address security concerns adequately which is a priority for the Greek Cypriot community.

The North illegally opened up Varosha in 2020 which is found within the Buffer Zone and has been a ghost town for decades

The North illegally rebuilt and redirected roads within the Buffer Zone. (Pyla/Pile to Arsos/Yigitler)

Fig. 6: Time line of diverging narratives (own work)

2.2. Background History of Cyprus and Nicosia: Intangible Tangible and Intangible Separation

Nicosia as a city is divided spatially but also through ethnic claim, creating multiple layers of contestation in terms of social life, spatial separation, language employed, narratives told, symbols and signs. The urban planners had to start from an extremely sensitive and polarised setting in 1981. It is important to understand this conflicting claims before analysing the steps taken within the project to reconcile the two communities.

Diverging narratives

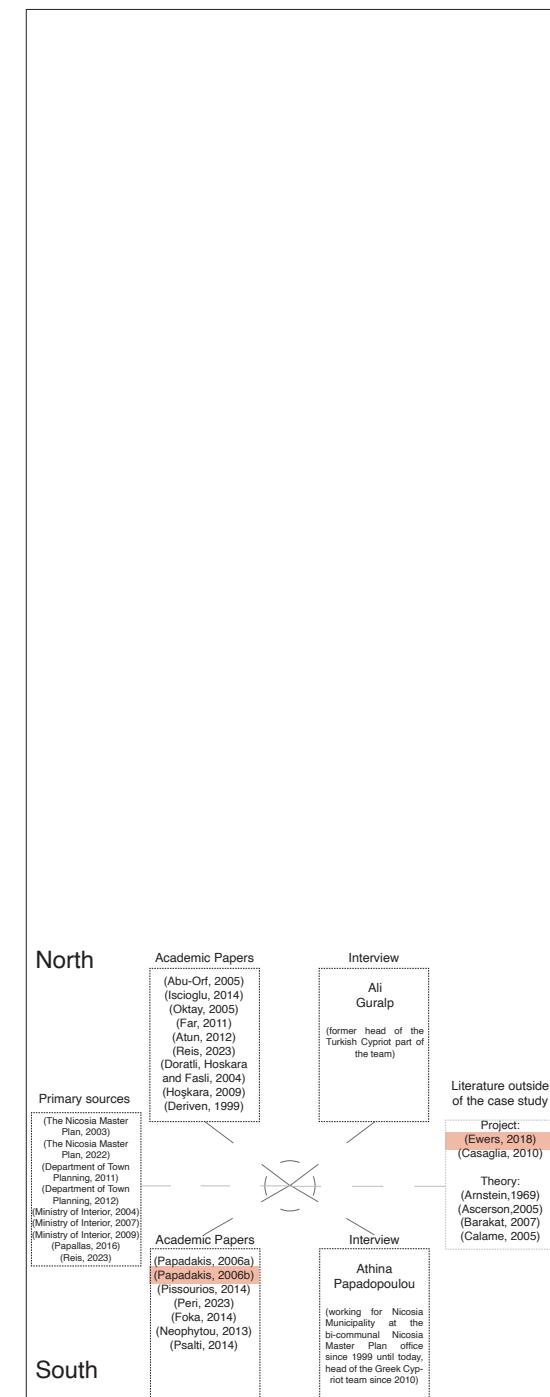
Figure 5 is not a comprehensive time line but an attempt to map out conflicting narratives and diverging opinions on the island at different points in time that have lead to ethnic tensions and social division. The word narrative here is not used to undermine the validity of the history told but, an attempt to point out at how history is told differently; in this case on either side of the island. These examples of diverging narratives have been taken from academic literature produced on either side of the island and the striking difference in language employed depicts the degree of contestation. For example, the most striking example is in 1974, where the Greek Cypriot community characterises the war as an 'invasion' by Turkey but, the Turkish Cypriots consider this a 'Peace Operation'. The year 1974, is a key moment in the time line in regards to the case study and context.

What is even more striking is the use of similar sayings that signify very different events and parts of history. For example, 'We Will not Forget' is a dominant Turkish Cypriot saying regarding social memory for the events of the 1960s. 'I Will not Forget' ($\Delta\text{εν } \Xi\text{χνώ}$) is a reference used by Greek Cypriots to encapsulate part of their social memory regarding the war in 1974 and the refugees who fled their home. Another striking example, is the two 'Museum of National Struggle' located on either side of the Green Line (Milli Mucadele Muzesi and Μουσείο Εθνικού Αγώνα) with the two respective 'motherlands' flags flying outside (Papadakis, 2006b).

Different references to the Buffer Zone: Green Line (Πράσινη Γραμμή) / Boarder (Sinir)



Even in relation to the Buffer Zone, which separates the country and makes up approximately 10% of the area of Walled Nicosia with 238 structures remaining idle, associations differ on each side (Ewers, 2018). The terms 'Green Line' is a neutral one, with many Greek Cypriots thinking it was established in 1974, because that is when it was made permanent but, to Turkish Cypriots it was set up during 1963 and started materialising since 1958, referring to the area as Ara Blogesi (intermediate area) or sinir (boarder). The choice of the word 'boarder' insinuates the existence of two separate states contrasting the language employed in the South which refers to one country, one capital where one half is free and the other occupied (ελεύθερη και κατεχόμενη περιοχή) (Papadakis, 2006b).



Ethnic claim through associated 'motherlands'

More examples of this ethnic claim can be observed for example through names on streets within the Old Town of Nicosia. The same road in the South is called 'Mrs. Athena Avenue', from the ancient Greek Goddess and the capital of Greece and past the Buffer Zone the same street is named 'Istanbul Avenue' (Papadakis, 2006b). These processes of official inscriptions full of political connotations and erasure of the plurality and complexity of identity on the island have lead to a sense of polarisation between the two sides.

Furthermore, Papadakis points out the heavy use of symbolism and flags of the two 'motherlands' to establish an identity on either side (2006b). This is also supported by photographs by the author and ones taken by Casaglia. The use of slogans, flags, colors of the associated 'motherlands' are all part of the inevitable need to strive for identity. This way of establishing identity creates a vicious cycle of further deterioration of ethnic relationships and hence more division and need for announcing a specific identity. Aspects of contested history occur when people hold opposing values, and visions and believe that one another's viewpoints pose a threat to their own. (Reis, 2023).

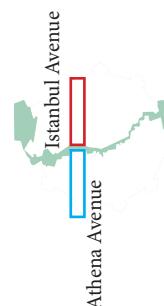
Papadakis, is a Greek social anthropologist who is a professor at the University of Cyprus and has focused on issues of ethnic conflict and social memory within the Cyprus case. He states that the common entity that encompasses the Greek Cypriot experience (and here the author would argue the Cypriot experience overall) is 'their participation in a debate about what constitutes the nation, not some shared conception of "the nation".' This is further strengthened by an example of two quotes from the Greek Cypriot side.

'Cyprus does not belong to Cypriots...Cyprus belongs to the whole of Hellenism.'

- C. Syrifakis, Minister of Education in Cyprus (January 14, 1968)

'Cyprus belongs to its people.'

- Greek Cypriot slogan used during mass protests after the Greek and Turkish interventions of July 1974 (Papadakis, 2006a)



temporary structures acting as boarders coated with colors associated to the two 'motherlands'



imposition of the notion of nations through use of flags



slogans as establishers of identity



Fig. 7 (Casaglia, 2010)

Author's reflection on the overarching contested scene

Overall, the city of Nicosia is pulled in different directions due to the contested nature of the space. The different claims over space, narration and symbolisms make this an extremely sensitive environment to navigate through. This is especially true for professionals that intervene spatially and run the risk of erasing the plurality of experiences and voices and further deepening social and ethnic divisions. The relentless strive for identity has lead both communities to look outside of the country, to the associated motherlands. However, this is what constitutes the common Cyprus experience; the engagement in the debate of what constitutes the Cypriot identity, instead of a fixed identity itself.



Fig. 8: Photograph of temporary boarder
(personal image)



Fig. 9: Photograph flags imposing national identity
(personal image)

3. The Case Study: The Nicosia Master Plan

Introduction

Having established an understanding of the tangible and intangible separation and contested history of the city, in the previous chapter, it is also important to understand the different phases of The Nicosia Master Plan itself. This is because the paper hypothesizes that there is a natural progression and change of the role of the architect as the socio-political situation naturally changes over time too. This shift of the different roles can be observed by the different phases of the project in the time line above. The breakdown follows the time line of the project in its different phases but forms a partly subjective model of the shifts in role, based on the literature consulted and interviews conducted. This subjectivity can be highlighted from the two time lines below produced by Papallas and Reis.

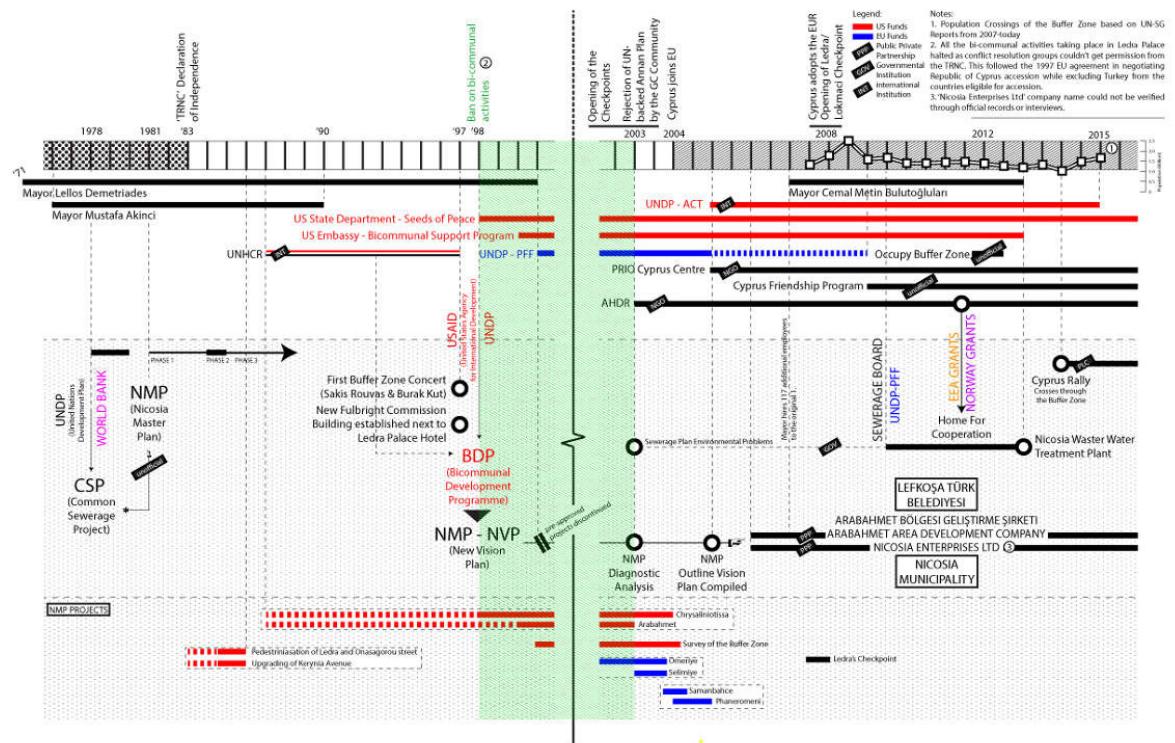
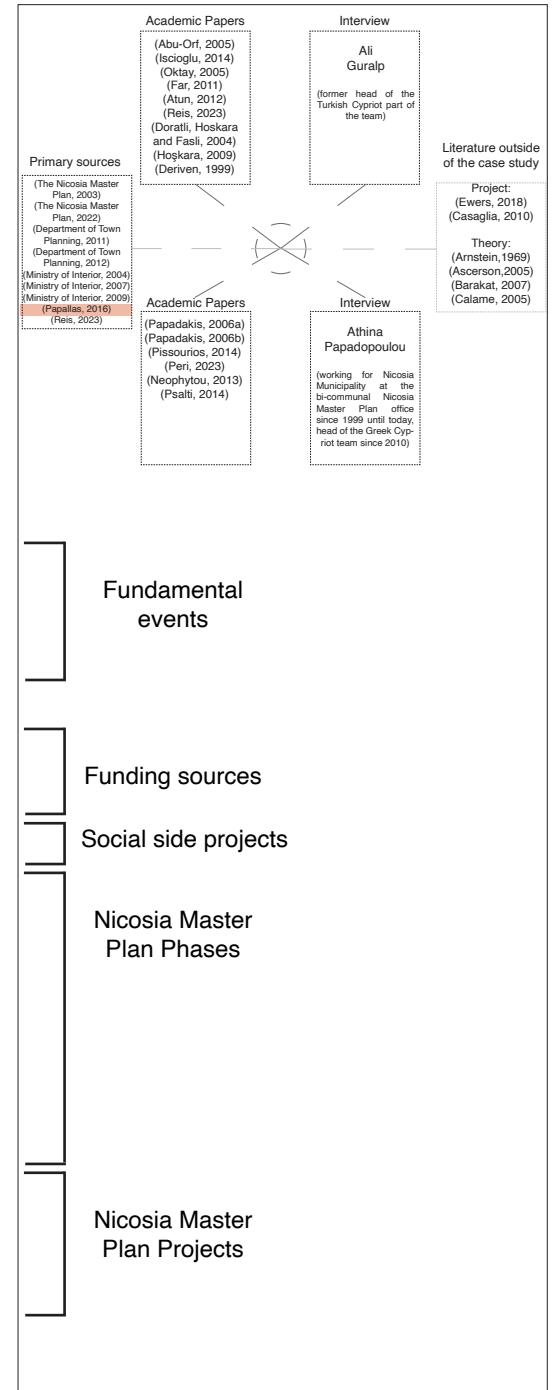


Fig. 10: An breakdown of The Nicosia Master Plan: a time line produced in the South (Papallas, 2016)



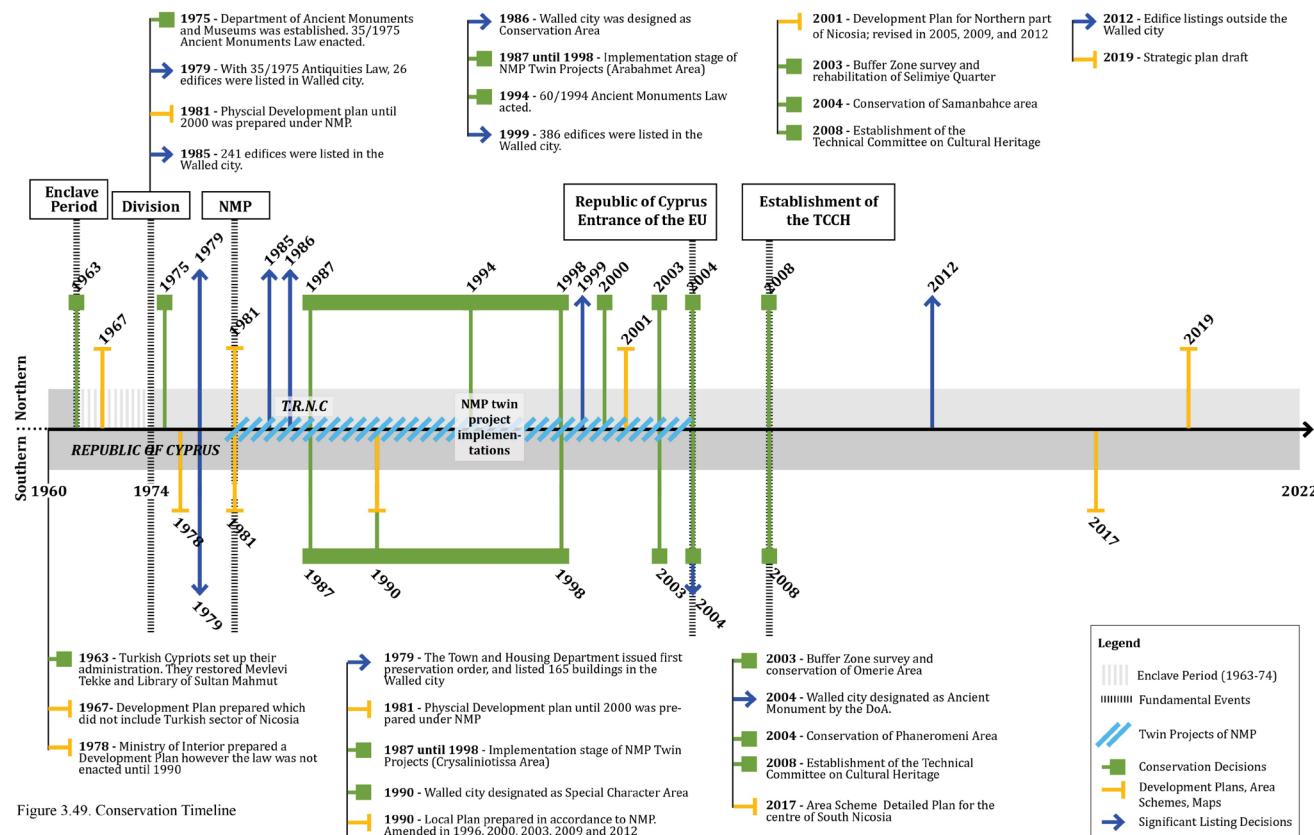
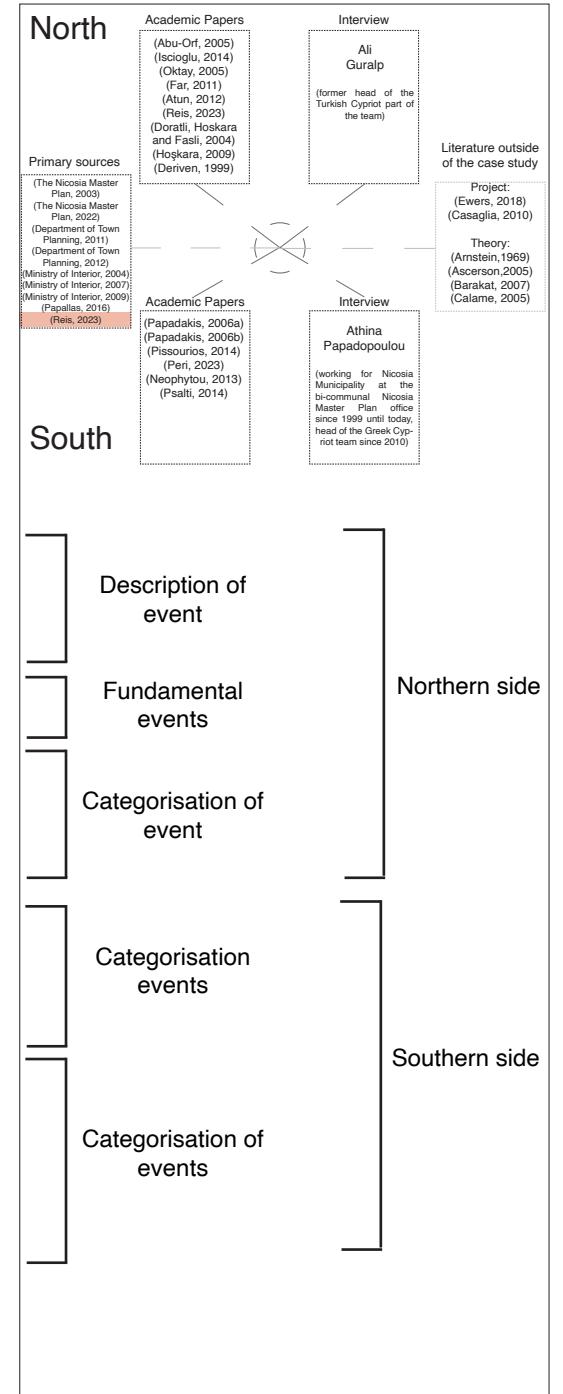


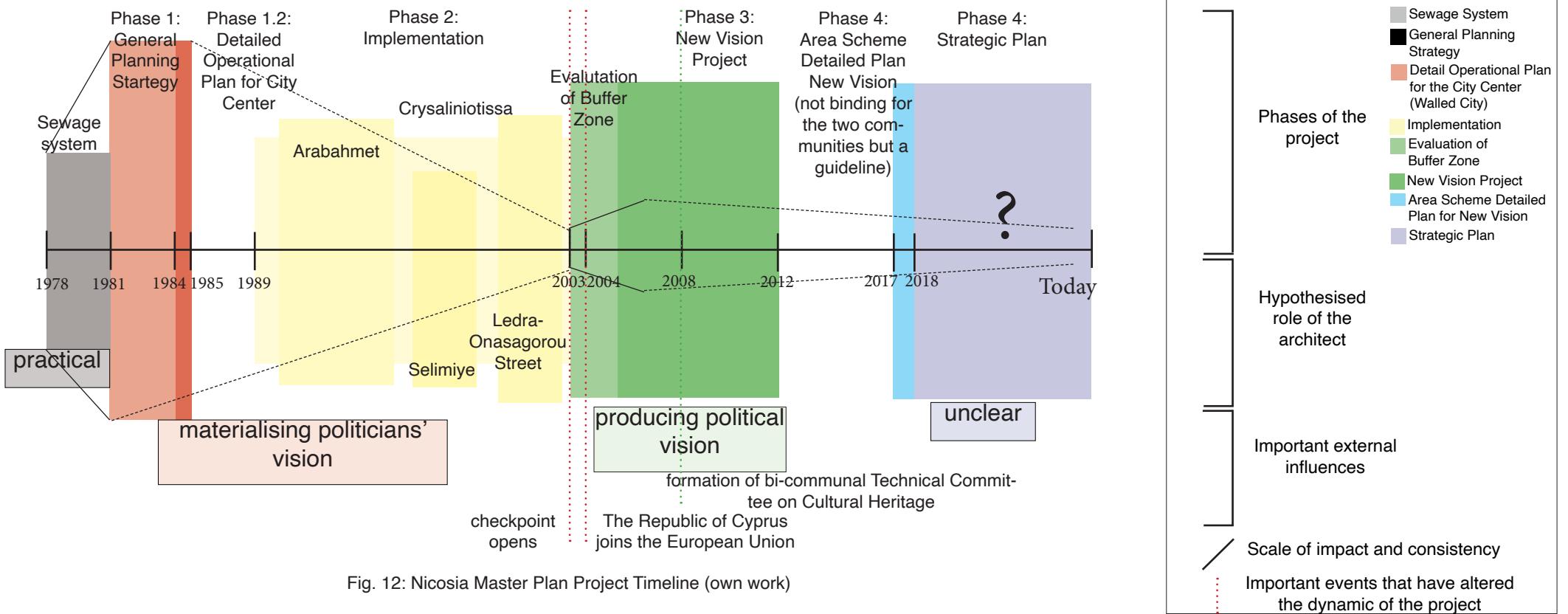
Figure 3.49. Conservation Timeline

Fig. 11: An breakdown of The Nicosia Master Plan: a time line produced in the North (Reis, 2023)



Time line as an analytical tool

The time line below presents the basis of analysis presented in the following sub-chapters. The hypothesis of the paper is presented here of a shift in the role of architects as time goes on and different phases are undertaken. The extent of impact and consistency in the bi-communal effort is also shown on this time line, showing how some disruptions, in the form of external influences, have affected the dynamic of the project as they offer either converging or diverging visions on the two sides of the island.



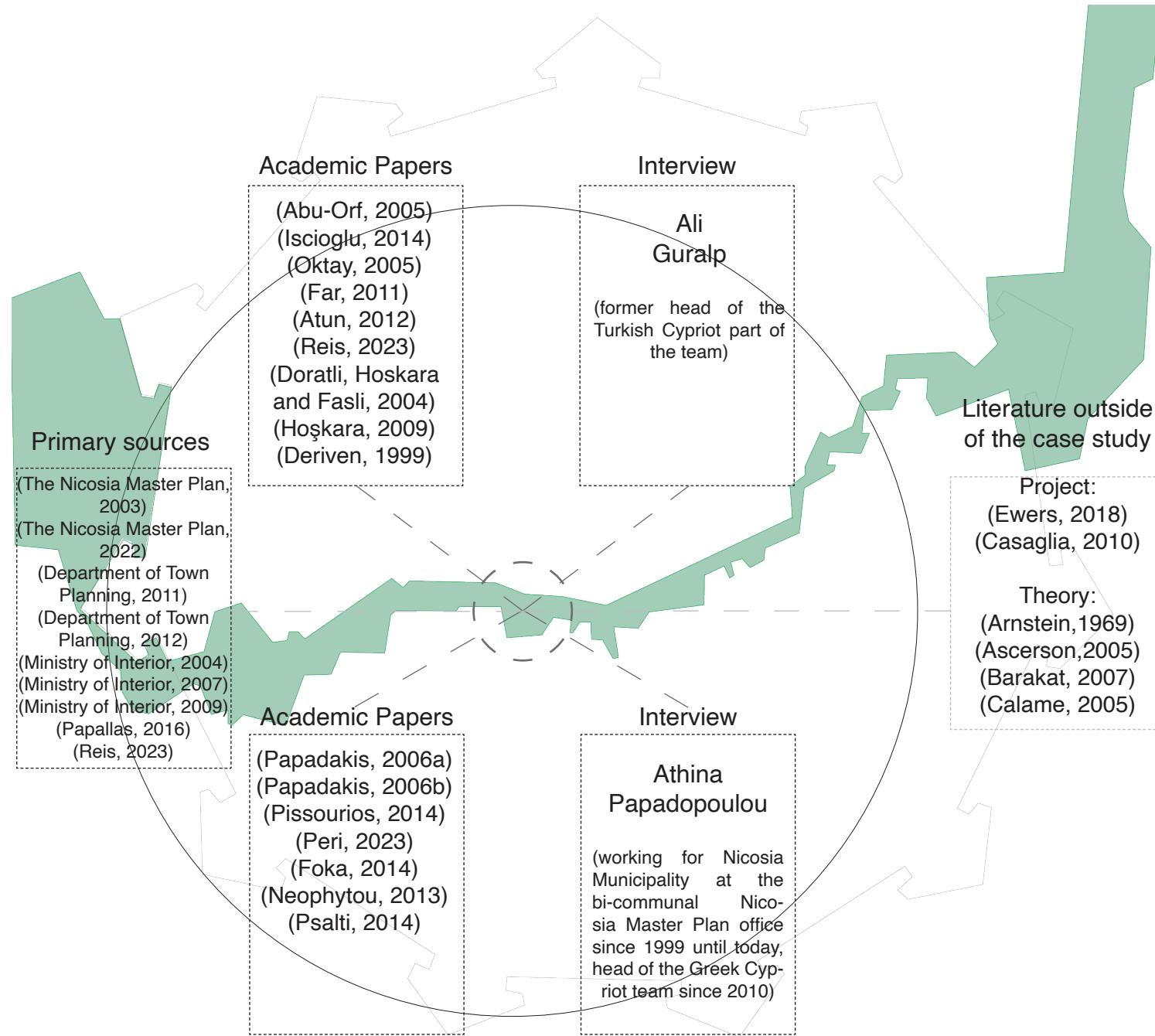
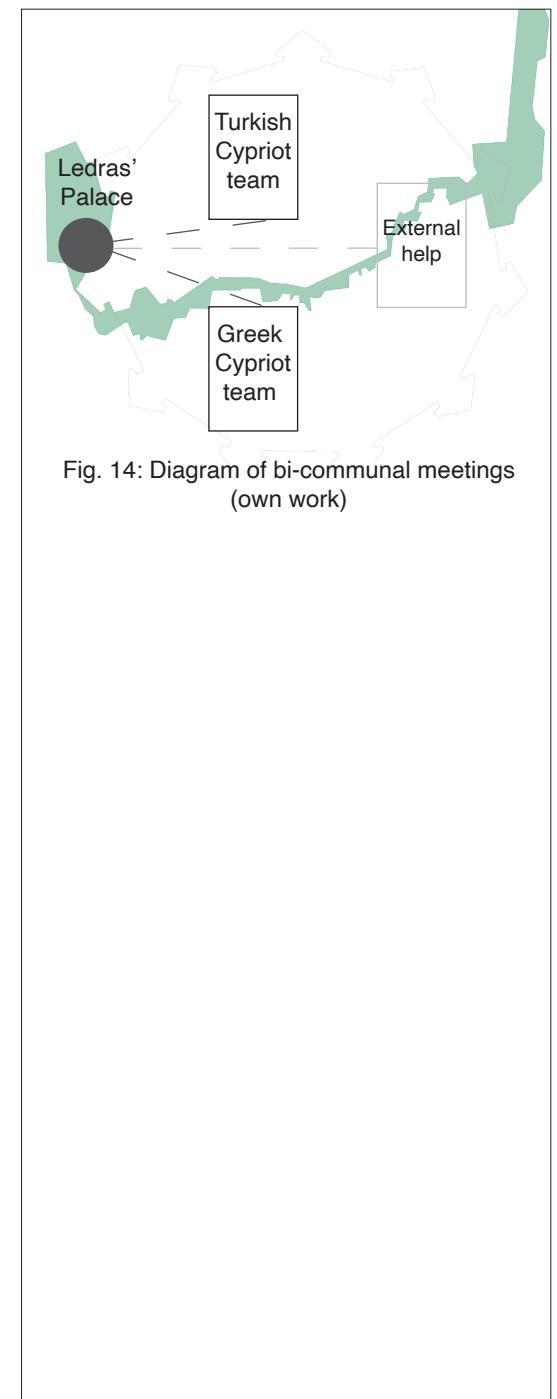


Fig. 13: Diagram of different sources (own work)



3.1. Architect as provider of practical solutions

This section argues for the practical inception of the project where the technical team involved collaborated on a practical basis to resolve tangible problems faced on both sides of the city. This is not to disregard the symbolic value of this practical collaboration however, there is no vision-creation as part of the role of the professionals in the team.

Background information

The bi-communal collaboration started as a result of a practical need as, in 1978 Nicosia was facing a sewage problem. This indicated that a plan and collaboration would be needed to resolve a common problem (Isicioglu, 2014). According to Ali, the former head of the Turkish Cypriot team, the North side also faced a lot of flooding issues due to the lower level of the terrain (full interview transcripts are available in Appendix A). Therefore, there was a need for the two communities to collaborate together in a small project that would benefit the infrastructure on either side. This collaboration was fostered by the two mayors on either side of the city, Mustafa Akinci in the North as the Turkish Cypriot mayor and Lellos Demetriades in the South as the Greek Cypriot mayor.

Analysis of primary sources by the author

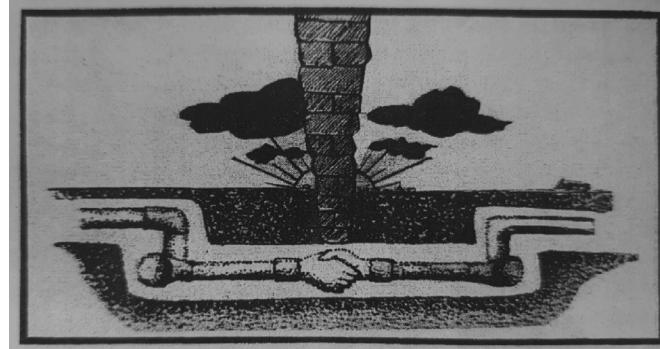
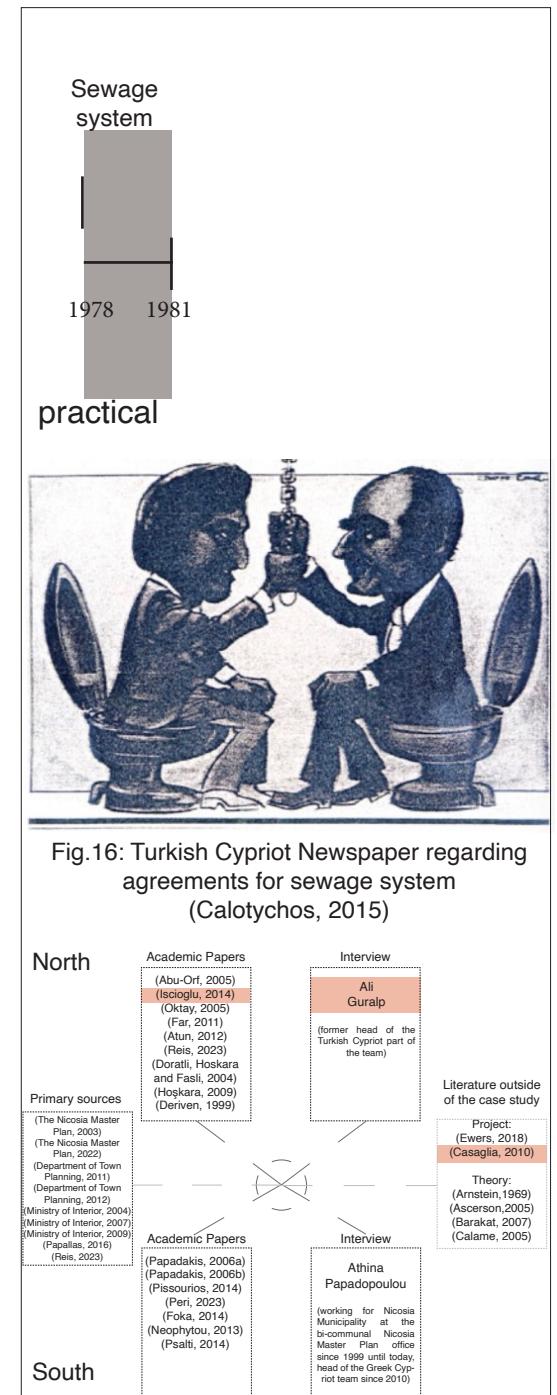


Fig.15: From the Turkish Cypriot Newspaper 'Yeni Duzen', 28th January 1979 (Casaglia 2020)

The figure above was included in the Turkish Cypriot newspaper 'Yeni Duzen' with the name 'The Municipalities reached agreement on the subject of sewers of Nicosia.' The diagram is one which shows equality and collaboration between the two parties as everything is symmetrical on either side; sharing the same sun, sky and clouds. The fact that this shaking of hands happens underground certainly relates to the fact that the agreements were made in relation to the sewage system but, might also relate to how all of this agreement, connection and collaboration is happening 'underground', meaning away from peoples' opinion and political associations.

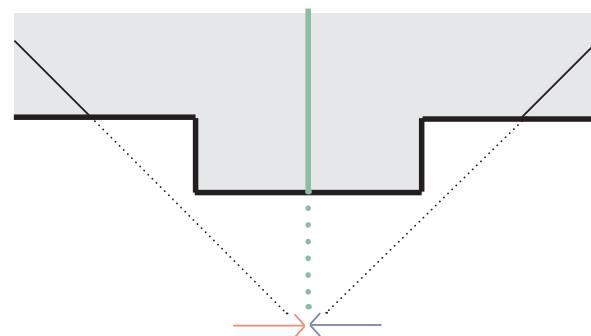


Literature and interviews

The literature and interviews consulted briefly mention the start of the project through this practical need in a more technical manner. They do not delve into the dynamics or importance of this stage in the development of the project further. Mr. Guralp and Mrs. Papadopoulou both present this as an essential milestone and attribute this to the two mayors.

Conclusion and Reflection on the role

The author sees this practical need, as the inducement for the two communities to come together at any capacity and establish a working relationship. The author sees this as the start of a collaboration through a situation where no one needs to make any compromises through a practical, mutually beneficial environment. Furthermore, due to the practical nature of the task there is little political debate hence, avoiding tensions. Through this process, a small level of trust and willingness to collaborate further is established. Thus it is important to not disregard the symbolic nature of collaboration even for practical projects. This role of architect as provider of practical solutions is of paramount importance in setting up initial relationships and showing willingness to work in a bi-communal way.



3.2. Architect as deployer of politicians' vision

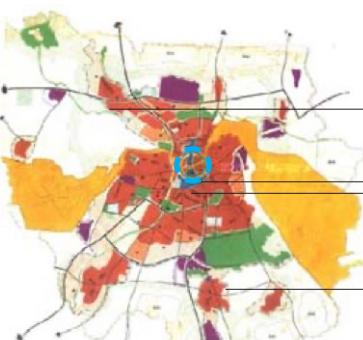
This section analyses the extent of autonomy the team had during the first phases of the project due to the political involvement of the two mayors and the UNDP experts in the process. Furthermore, the ideals presented through their drawings are contrasted to the reality to see how the team had to manoeuvre and compromise through conditions full of restrictions, due to the tense political dimension.

Background

Following the sewage system, the two mayors wanted to propose a common Master Plan for Nicosia. Thus, a bi-communal, multidisciplinary team was formed where weekly meetings took place within a neutral location of Ledras Palace as can be seen in Figure 14. During these meetings technical support was offered by the UN Center for Human Settlements (Habitat) and the overall program was funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Mrs. Papadopoulou states 'The initial Nicosia master plan was put together by planners, economists, traffic managers, architects, engineers, and they it preceded the 1990 planning law. And it was a very significant document regarding Nicosia, placing at the centre of it the historic city, the walled city.' The first phase took place between 1981-1984 creating a scheme for the Wider Nicosia in two scenarios; one addressing the current situation and one of reunification (Reis, 2023). According to publications made by the team, at this stage the plan had to remain flexible to changing circumstances.

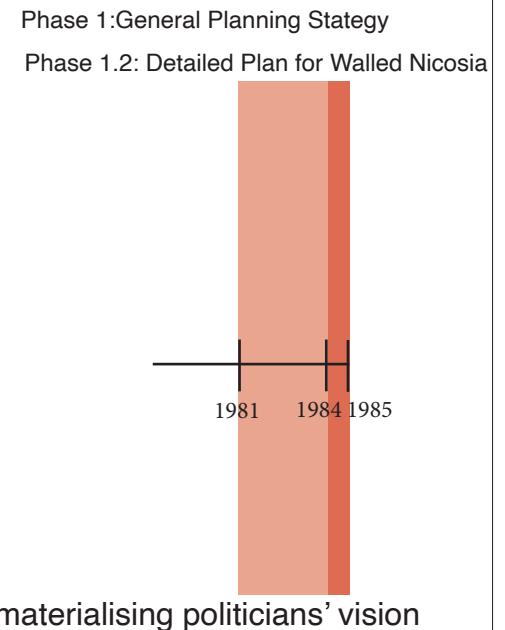
Analysis of primary resources by the author

Here the author analyses the drawings made by the team, as these are seen as a political tool capable of transmitting their core ideas and attitudes. The Island Plan and Nicosia Plan before the war are also shown for comparison.



- Focus on residential areas
- Pedestrianisation and connection of the two sides
- Buffer zone still in place
- Protection of existing green spaces

Fig. 17: Scenario 1 - Addressing problems under current circumstances (The Nicosia Master Plan, 2022)



Walled Historic Nicosia Center



Fig. 18: Scenario 1- Checkpoints (The Nicosia Master Plan, 2022)



Fig. 19: Scenario 2 - Reunification (The Nicosia Master Plan, 2022)

 Walled Historic Nicosia Center

One of the key ideas that is identified when comparing Figures 14, 15 and 16 is the pedestrianisation vertically to connect the two parts of the city; in many ways acting as a band-aid to the scar which the buffer zone presents. Figure 15 also shows a very daring proposition for that time, of opening up two check points within the walled city. The Lokmacı Gate- Ledra crosspoint has in fact opened up but, only in 2002; 18 years later. Interestingly, in Figure 16 the buffer zone disappears completely, becoming part of the residential area. This insinuates that the whole area would revert to the condition that existed before.

From Figures 17 and 18 a lot of information as to the thinking process of the team can be deduced. For example, Figure 17 shows four types of circles of the same size each placed on both sides of the city. This indicates the effort to create an equal effect on both sides of the city from big rehabilitation projects (brown) to restoration of small monuments (bright red). Furthermore, the pedestrianisation connecting the two areas clearly looks like the main strategic move in connecting the two areas. However, this seems to be an illusion as the circles do not represent the actual area covered, which can be seen in Figures 19 and 20. The same attitude to creating, at least a perceived notion of equality, can be observed in Figure 18, where area is taken into account and the colours seem to balance each other on either side.

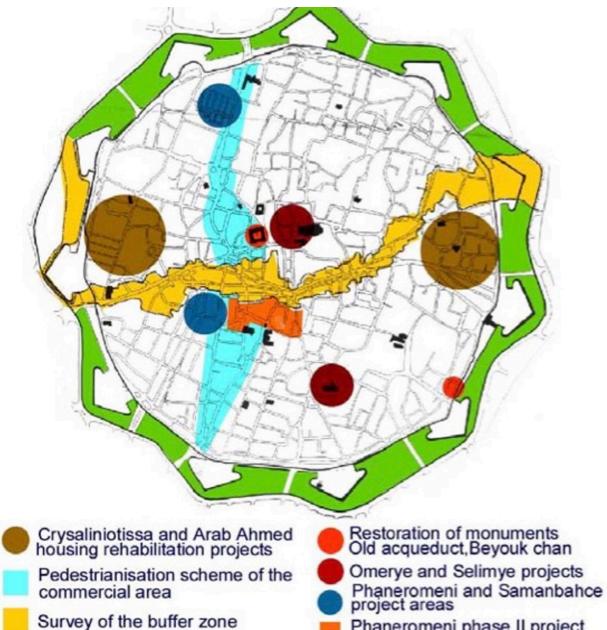


Fig. 20: Scenario 1 (The Nicosia Master Plan, 2003)

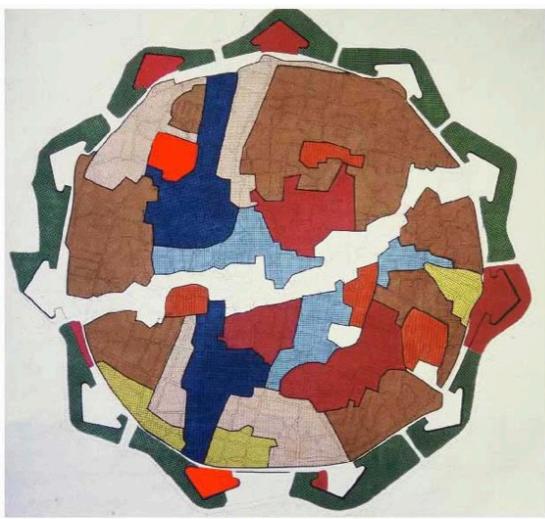


Fig. 21: Scenario 2 (The Nicosia Master Plan, 2003)

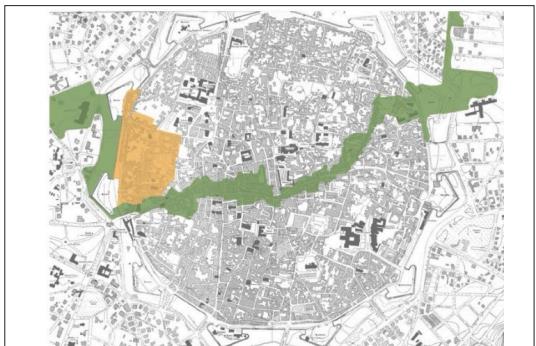


Fig. 22: Arab Ahmet project (Ewers, 2018)

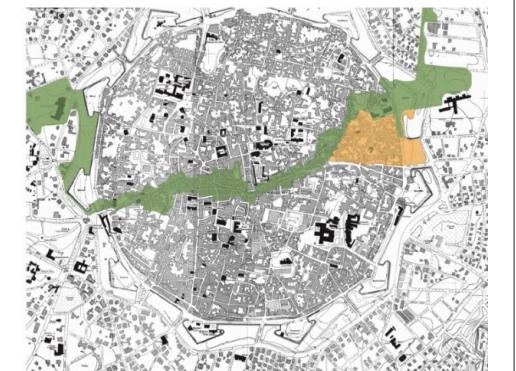


Fig. 23: Chrysaliniotissa project (Ewers, 2018)

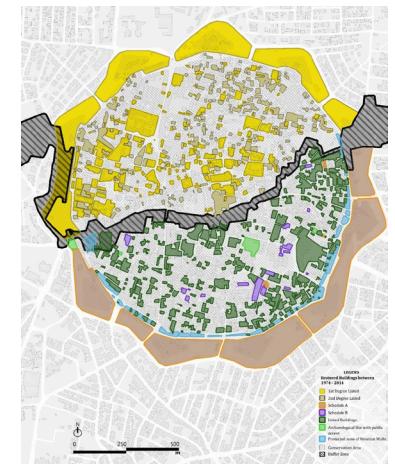


Fig. 24: Ancient Monuments and Listed Buildings in the Northern and Southern Walled City of Nicosia (redrawn from Öge (2020) by E. Reis in 2022)

Contrasting the figures on the previous page, the types of drawings produced within the Municipal-ity of Nicosia before the 1974 war show a united Cyprus and capital Nicosia, free of borders and separation, as can be seen from Figures 26 and 27.

The consistency in the effort to reunite the two parts of the city can be seen from the Master Plan walking tour stamp, map and symbol which do not show the presence of the buffer zone or any separation. This shows the attitude within the team operated; to revert back to the pre-war setting.

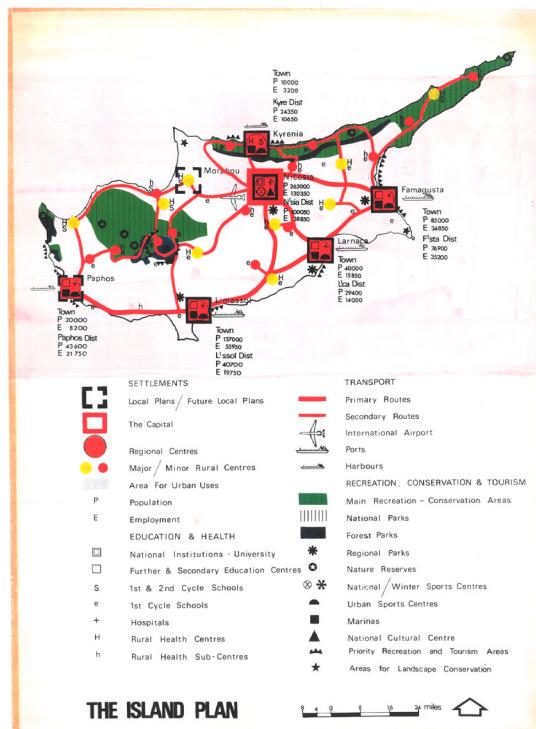


Fig. 25: Pre-war Plan for Cyprus from 1973
(Department of Town Planning and Housing, Republic of Cyprus, 2011)

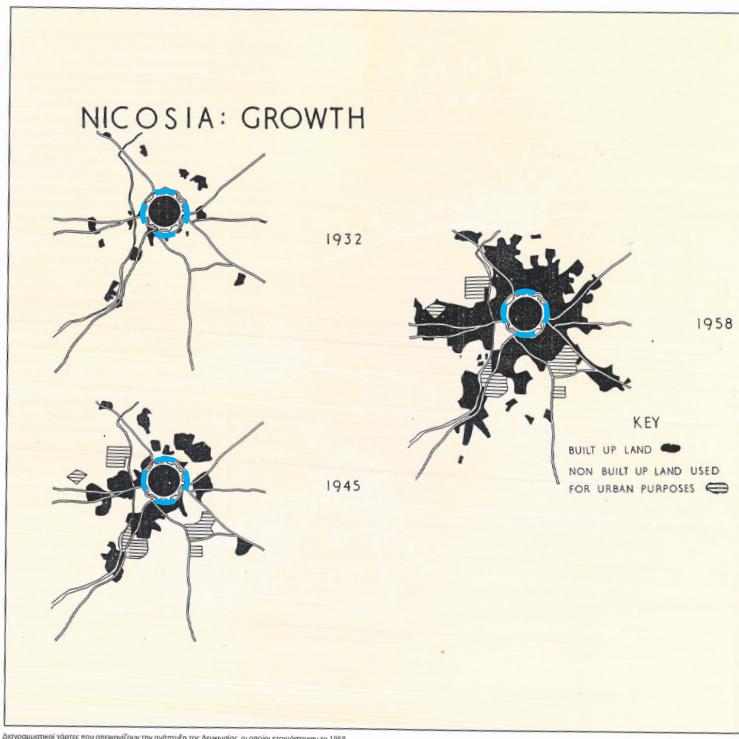


Fig. 26: Pre-war Plan for Growth for Nicosia from 1958
(Department of Town Planning and Housing, Republic of Cyprus, 2011)



Fig. 27: Master plan walking tour stamp
(Hanson, 2010)



Fig. 28: Master plan walking tour map
(Katsanevakis, 2009)



Fig. 29: Master plan symbol
(The Nicosia Master Plan, 2022)

Literature and interviews

Oral history, as presented through the interviews with Mr. Guralp and Mrs. Papadopoulou, would contrast the idealistic and democratic representation of the plans (full interview transcripts are available in Appendix A). According to both the former and current leader, respectively, a big limitation of the project was the lack of funding for the North as they both pointed out that the North side would only acquire a quarter of what the South would. Mr. Guralp remained positive in saying that even this amount of money was of paramount importance for the North as it provided them with necessary funds to keep the city going as they experienced a very bad economic state in the years following the war.² Far also supports Mr. Guralp's statements, saying that much needed improvements experienced by the Turkish Cypriot community in the form of infrastructure but also economic advancement for the government (2011).

Despite this, it is clear that the quality of the projects would not develop to the same extent on both sides considering the budgetary limitations. Ewens also compares the two 'twin' projects of Chrysaliniotissa in the South and Arabahmet in the North. The Chrysaliniotissa project went according to plan, allowing for 8.8% percentage increase in population in the area. Likewise, Arabahmet saw success in terms of physical preservation but is considered as less successful due to the more limited funding and support received, leading to the deterioration of the buildings in as they have not been inspected by the Municipality. Ewers suggests that fewer people in the North found enough incentive to want to re-invest in the area as a 'significant portion [of the inhabitants] is comprised of Turkish immigrants or descendants of Turkish immigrants, who were encouraged by Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot administration to move to Cyprus in the 1970s and 1980s.' (2018)

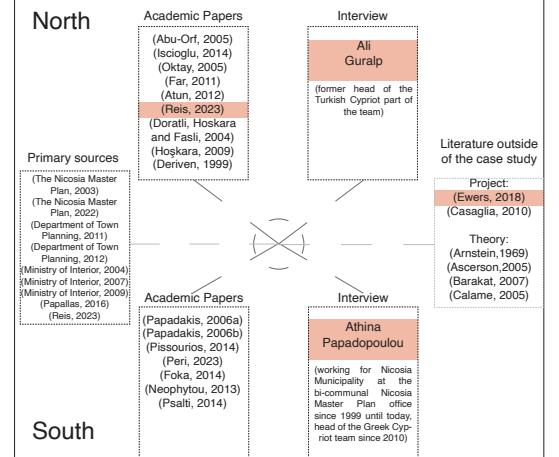
'Fair management of conservation sites becomes more important in contested places. Fair allocation of resources, fair policies for heritage conservation and fairness in every step of conservation including documentation, conservation and interpretation.' (Reis, 2023)

The different attitude to budget on the two sides becomes a serious problem as it creates further division spatially and inequality between the two parts of the city. This a problem of contested spaces in particular, as stated by Reis, as the different narratives and ethnic groups should be given a fair and equal space to represent their collective memories through the spatial conservation and interventions made. Furthermore, Ewens an architectural historian and preservation planner from the USA, presents the view from an external perspective that '...these sources are decidedly optimistic and insufficiently address potential pitfalls' (2018). There is a clear disconnect between the idealistic vision presented through the drawings and their real manifestation.

² Mr. Ali Guralp

'Although when you look at the walled city, it's almost half and half, the funding that was received in the Southern side was three to four times higher than the North. So These are all before the EU enlargement in 2004. But it was again, something that was like a gift for the Turkish Cypriot side because the situation was really precarious in the northern side. These funds provided a life saving supply, a blood supply, otherwise, you would have nothing.'

"More specifically, Akbil states that "UNESCO does not work with the North because of the embargoes," (Pieri, 2023)

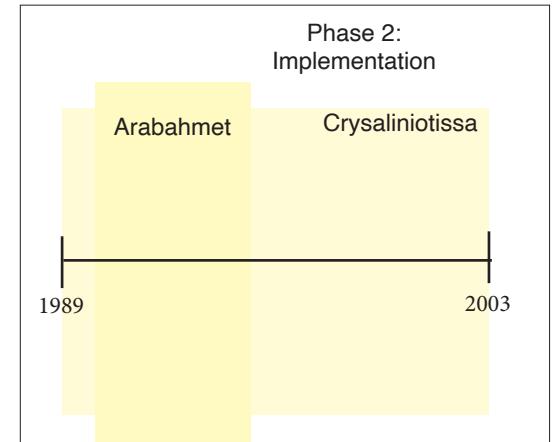


During the implementation phase, between 1989 and 2003, Oktay points out that certain problems arose as revisions made by either side of the team delayed implementation, particularly in the South. This is because collaboration between the two technical teams did not continue during this phase (2005). This is contrasted by the interview with Mr. Guralp, where he appointed delays to the Master Plan not getting accepted until 2001 due to pressures placed on politicians from developers, to benefit from the existing inertia.³ Mrs. Papadopoulou and Mrs. Guralp both contrast Oktay's statements saying that in particular the Chysaliniotissa project in the South was carried out the closest to the original plan than any of the other projects.

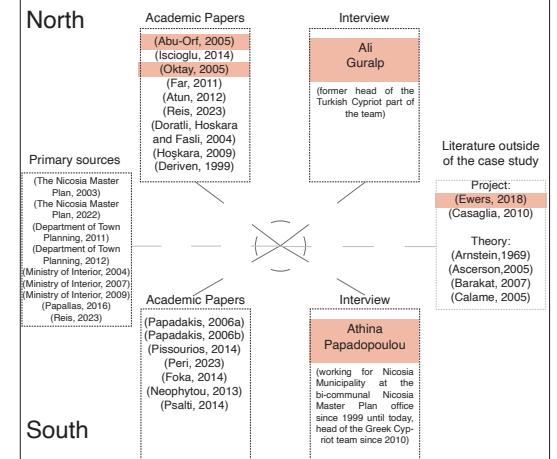
Ewens expressed the belief that more than the NGO assistance it was the efforts and dedication of the two mayors that facilitated the bi-communal master plan (2018). This insinuates that without the willingness of these two men all efforts to create a common master plan and vision would be fruitless. Thus, holding the view that any efforts are directly political in nature and are a product of the two mayors' aspirations for the future. The monthly meetings with the two mayors and the bi-communal team further supports this claim of architects as deployers of politicians' vision.

Furthermore, Abu-Orf examines how informal communication is conducted within divided cities and emphasises the political and social nature of planning. For Abu-Orf, '...the understanding of communication draws on the social construction of meanings. It builds recognition that knowledge forms do not only have an objective existence to be discovered by scientific methods' (2005). What is meant here is that the group not only has to establish common knowledge but, also common ways of knowing- which could never be process that occurs in a vacuum, away from political and social frameworks already established in the mind. Here, Abu-Orf reinforces the belief that the architects were operating under a political agenda. But, he holds a more negative view than others, saying that urban planning practice is not democratic and especially in divided cities a comprehensive plan might be impossible for the city (2005).

However, considering that discussions followed a more practical tone, direct political conversations were not part of meetings. As mentioned by Abu-Orf, 'establishing the meetings as a technical debate over a political one was of paramount importance for the success of the project' (2005). Any political discussion was referred to as 'top-level' meetings conducted specifically to overcome political constraints in an effort to convince authorities on both sides of the ideas created within the team. Thus, there were external political meetings instead of carrying out any political conversations internally. Both Mrs. Papadopoulou and Mr. Guralp stated how they felt very free to discuss ideas with their colleagues and felt like they had common political and spatial visions. Mr. Guralp even said that the teammates had become friends over the years and established very strong relationships.



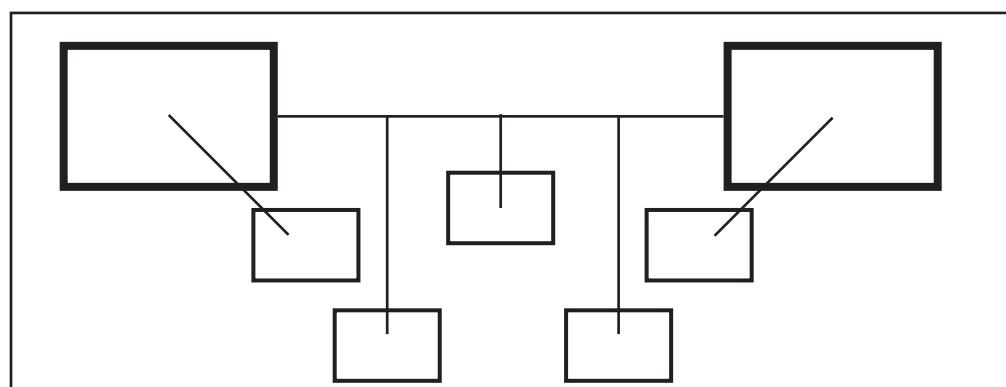
³ Mr. Ali Guralp:
'There are a lot of opportunistic people who makes use of the lack of laws and restrictions, and saw the opportunity to do things to their advantage, because legislating the master plan would prevent them. So after the news that there was this master plan was coming up, people, especially in the south, used that opportunity until it was legislated.'



Conclusion and reflection on the role

The author would like to debate the extent to which this time period presented the architects and other urban planning professionals with the opportunity to produce their own political vision or whether the team was materialising the political visions of politicians at the time. Firstly, the drawings present an idealistic form of the project, of ultimate democracy and equality which never materialised as such. However it shows the clear efforts of the team to achieve similar scale of impact despite disparities in budget. This is likely the result of both a need to convince the two mayors and an internal agreement within the team as they had the same goals. Through the analysis done above, the conclusion that the team was operating under the political guidance of the two mayors is clear. However, the interviews indicate that this external political vision and the internal architectural vision shared the same core ideals for the prospect of reunification. It is clear that without the initial political push this effort might have never materialised and the efforts were constantly monitored and supervised by the two mayors.

Other than this, there is an important criticism that the author feels has been missing in relation to the how the team was operating; and so their exact role. This is the fact that forms of knowledge and validation were acquired through a third party, namely the international consultants. This process provides some opportunities as there is a knowledge transfer from the international consultants for the team that had limited experience in the field. However, this benefit does not necessarily outweigh the disruption created by not allowing the team to establish its own ways of knowing, generating ideas, communicating and deciding. The reliance on an external party immediately distorts the power dynamics that Abu-Orf examines in his paper. The author suggests that in order to establish meaningful long-lasting relationships then these need to be established based on internal trust and independently-decided ways of working. This might be particularly important in spaces of contested history where the initial separation was prompt by external powers and so conflict resolution should not rely on outside forces.



Mayors:
Mustafa Akinci:
1976-1990
(President in the North 2015-2000)

Lellos Demetriades:
1971-July 1974, October 1974-2001

3.3 Architect as producer of political vision

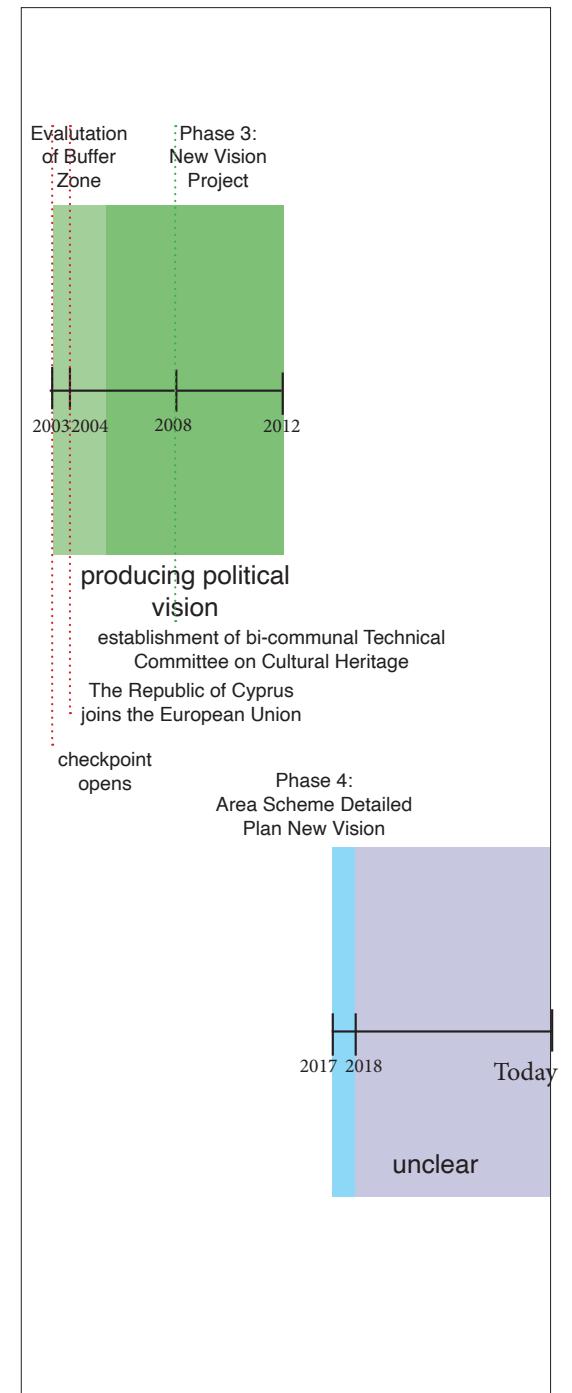
This section considers the shift in the role of the architects within the team to that of deployers of political vision to producers. Despite this, the transformed socio-political reality pulled the two communities and parts of team towards different visions. This is an interesting moment in the scheme as the professionals saw a change in their strategy whilst themselves still abiding by the same intra-team ideals as before.

Background

In 2003, The New Vision Project according to Mrs. Papadopoulous was to reactivate life in the city and the Buffer Zone as a key gluing area for the city. At this time, different important changes in dynamics took place which influenced collaboration both positively and negatively.

On the one hand, after people saw the benefits of inter-communal collaboration there was more room for the Nicosia Master Plan team to navigate through this contested environment. First, the completion of the two twin projects which were the biggest projects undertaken by the team, allowed for some revitalisation to take place within the urban core. But, the most important of these was the opening of the first crosspoint within the Walled City. On the other hand, the entry of the Republic of Cyprus in the South without the incorporation of the North created a big moment of diversion in visions for the future.

This is more clearly shown within the next phase of the project. The Fourth phase took place between 2017-2018 through the Area Scheme Detailed Plan New Vision project which was a non-binding scheme for both communities, seen as a guideline. This shows how collaboration is still seen as important from the perspective of the team however, there is no strong sense of a common project keeping the communities from developing independently.



Analysis of primary sources by the author

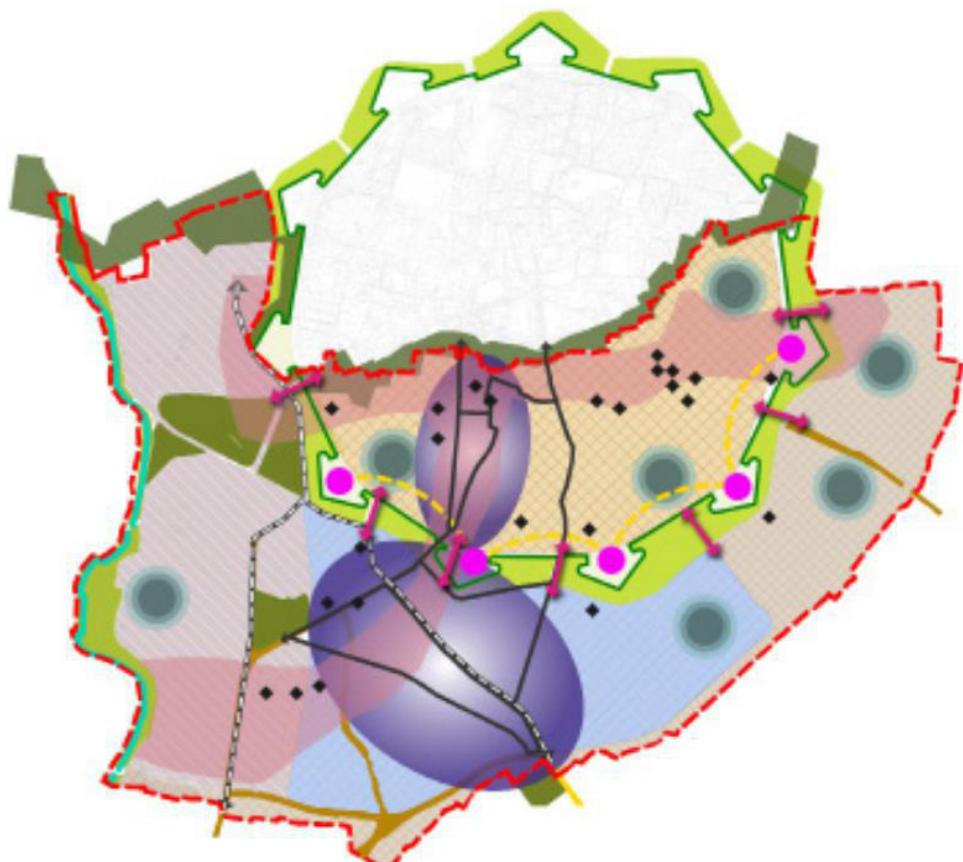


Fig. 30: Strategic Plan for the South (Nicosia Municipality, 2019)

Following this, the South has developed Strategic Plans for the Southern part of the city. As you can see from Figure 30, the Strategic Plans that are now being developed are in isolation. Within the map, the buffer zone is still very much visible and the checkpoint is not shown. The North of the Walled City and Wider Nicosia are not shown, showing the lack of focus on the North. It still shows the pedestrian path that connects the two parts of the city and it extends out towards the rest of Nicosia to the South, possibly still trying to draw people in. The map seems more conceptual than technical but the boundary of the area under consideration is shown through the red dotted line.

Literature and interviews

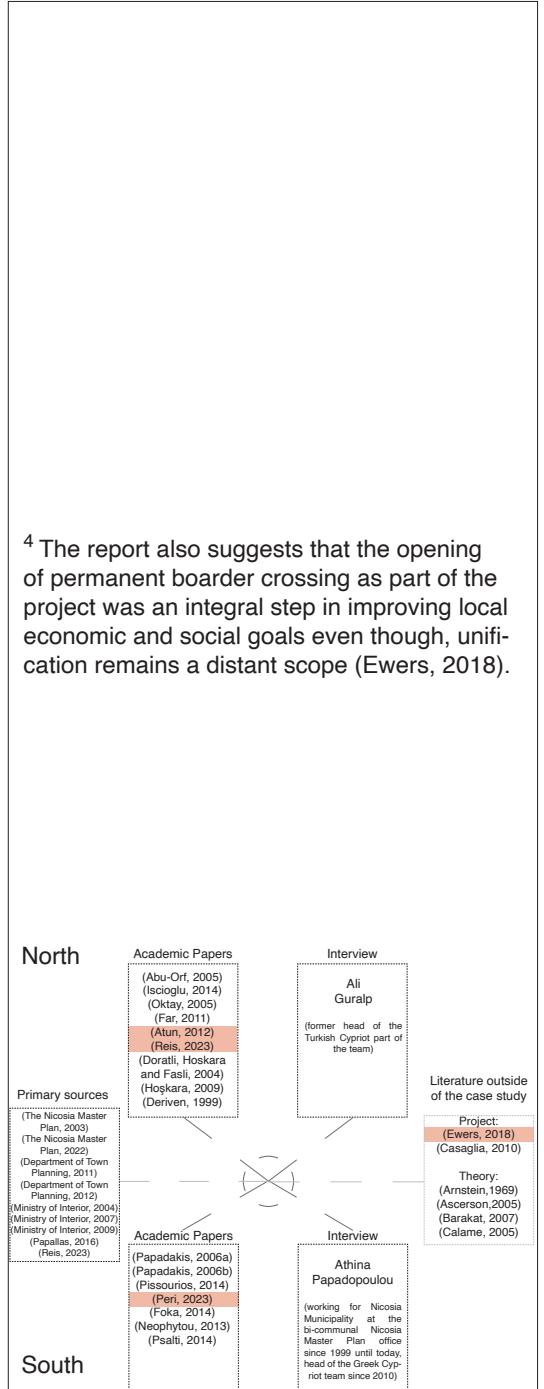
'This optimistic and favourable political climate has significantly been supported by the opening of the Lokmacı Gate, which was the barricade, blocking the movement between traditional Commercial Street, Ledra. Microlevel trade liberalization and people-to-people (civil society) exchange projects operating as a bottom-up dynamic bridging the two communities across the Nicosia divide.'
(Atun, 2012)

Others hold a more negative opinion. Pieri points out that for as long as the buffer zone divides the two areas the social effect of such interventions will be limited as 'boundaries can also impact the stability of power relations particularly in divided cities' (2023).⁴

Yet again the opening of the crossing point might be appointed by some such as Atun to the political change from the nationalist Papadopoulos to the more pro-settlement Christofias. However, this would be dismissive to the big efforts made by the bi-communal team in creating this vision from the first manifestation of the plan - pushing for an opening that would allow the two communities to interact since 1984. This was a major shift and opportunity for the island to start interacting again, leaving behind 29 years of complete separation. This was a catalyst for Cyprus.

On the other hand, a force acting against this success of the team arose. This was the entrance of the Republic of Cyprus to the European Union just a year after the opening of the crosspoint, 2004. This meant, that the South now had access to the European Union's structural funds to improve the country's infrastructure and conservation projects. This meant that twin projects between the two communities stopped as the North no longer had access to common funds (Reis, 2023).

According to Mr. Guralp, there was a shift in eagerness to find common projects and collaborate under the UN umbrella following the Republic of Cyprus entering the EU because they no longer needed to search for projects to get funding for infrastructure. However, he states that the team would still want to collaborate together and that if a project was to come up they would be eager to



work together. However, the same drive would not be observed as before as funding was not so easy to find anymore.⁵ Mrs. Papadopoulou adds to this by saying 'But we still have meetings with our Turkish Cypriot colleagues. We've tried all through these years to find funding for the buildings in the buffer zone within the walled city because there's significant architecture and heritage there. We haven't succeeded so far. In 2013, the buffer zone was in the most endangered Heritage List of Europa Nostra and we tried through that to find funding to support and restore the buildings but that was not successful.' Furthermore she says that the development of the Strategic Plans separately by saying that 'I know that, in the south, the areas scheme was developed much sooner. And at that time, we tried to push forward to have one area scheme and not do separate areas schemes. I think they're at the end of completing the area scheme for the North. Which is unfortunate, because it's a really significant tour planning tool. It would be much better to have a uniform tool.' From this, we can clearly see that the two communities are diverging in their commitment to plan for the future together.

Conclusion and Reflection

A significant element that is not mentioned within literature in relation to this time is, the rejection of the Annan Plan in 2004. The Annan Plan, was a Cyprus Reunification plan that would result in a federation of two states. The rejection of this plan, showed more clearly than ever that bridging the two communities was harder to achieve than anticipated which deterred confidence in a common future and the prospect of reunification for both communities.^{6,7}

At the time, the team had more freedom to produce their own political vision and share it with the two communities. This is because of a lack of intervention from the two mayors if the team was to continue collaborating without being under the umbrella of the United Nations projects which mandated weekly meetings and monthly meetings with mayors. However, at this time because of this big change in identity, future possibilities and new markets, the two communities were being pulled apart in terms of a vision for the future. They no longer have a structure in place to meet in regular intervals and make decisions together but instead plan the future of the city as two separate entities. Thus, within the case study of The Nicosia Master Plan, at a point where the team could create their own political visions to influence the spatial and socio-economic fabric of the city, the political visions pulled the two teams in different directions. From the interviews, it is clear that both teams still want to collaborate and plan for a unified Nicosia as much as possible but the prospect of this happening to them is not as likely as what it used to be. Despite this, their ideal vision of a unified city and country has not changed and as a team this has always been what they were and are pushing for. Furthermore, Mr. Guralp explained how the project was heavily facilitated and encouraged by the initial two mayors however, even when mayors changed, and more nationalist

⁵ Mr. Ali Guralp:

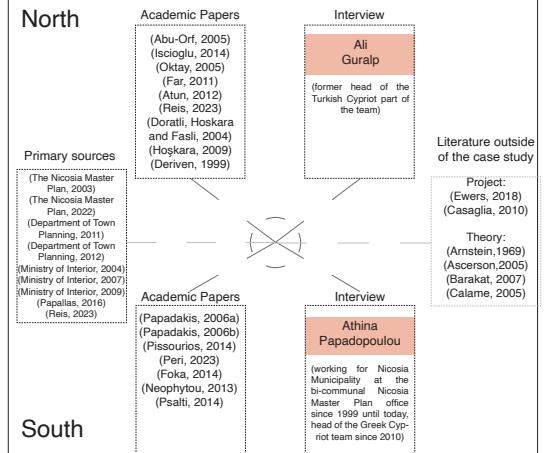
'I can say that the original idea of the master plan is still available today. It is still continuing. Although there are divergences on both sides. Due to the master plan being not legislated.'

⁶ The political leaders of both sides (Tassos Papadopoulos and Rauf Denktaş) had campaigned for a 'no' vote, but Talat had campaigned for a 'yes' vote, strongly supported by Turkey. In exit polls 75% of the Greek Cypriots who voted 'No' cited 'security concerns' as the main reason for their choice whereas 65% of Turkish Cypriot voted 'Yes'. (Pericleous, 2009)

⁷ Mrs Papadopoulou:

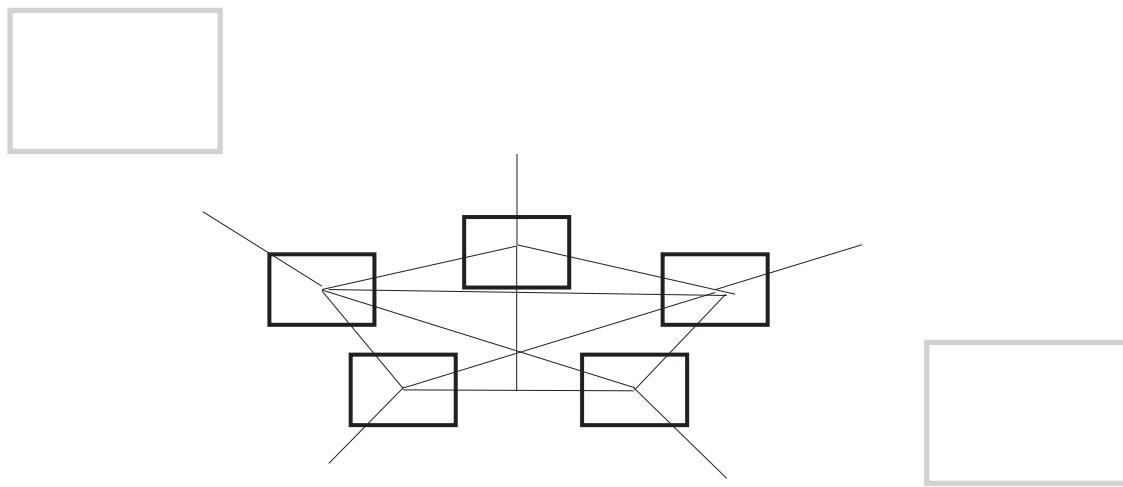
'So there's quite a bit of change since the NMP, started in the 80s. And that's mostly due to the different sources of funding... And pretty much since the referendum [for the Annan Plan], we've had very little to no budget, namely for by communal projects.'

'Also, the lack of one planning body is also a problem. But you know, that goes back again to the Cyprus problem. It's not something that could be agreed upon and have authority for the whole city, as you may imagine.'



pro-Turkey mayors took power in the North, they never tried to deter the efforts of the bi-communal team. This means that political support helped the project get started but, the project acquired a life of its own.

When extrapolating this information to be more widely applicable to divided cities and contested spaces, it seems that there is a point where this freedom is granted to professionals undertaking such efforts to produce their own political ideas through the cityscape and whether there is enough confidence in a common future will determine the attitude of the team in undertaking this task or whether they will resort to the status-quo.



3.4 Architect as facilitator of public participation

This section argues by consulting theory or literature based on a theoretical framework the weaknesses of the project in relation to its structure and its future possibilities. A last transition in the role of the architects is argued for in relation to extending this conversation over spatial reconciliation to both communities.

Theory: Barakat's data driven theory

Barakat's research into postwar contexts in the last fifteen years has resulted in the theory of particular elements that are essential in the effective reconciliation of space. These include a shared path to recovery, consideration of cultural heritage, economic and political support, local capacity to rebuild, active participation of local people, integration of replacement and conservation approaches and prioritising authenticity over rebuilding fast (Barakat, 2007). The only element that seems to have never been part of the projects work is that of active participation from locals.

Barakat argues further that imported, standardised models and responses based on a set of steps which disregard the need for local adjustment may not work.⁸

'Imported and externally-imposed models ignore the two most important basic needs for human recovery in the aftermath of conflict: to reaffirm a sense of identity and to regain control over one's life.' (Barakat, 2005).

Barakat also refers to The Nicosia Master Plan as an important confidence-building measure in the broader reconciliation strategy (2007).

Literature and interviews: arguing from a theoretical framework

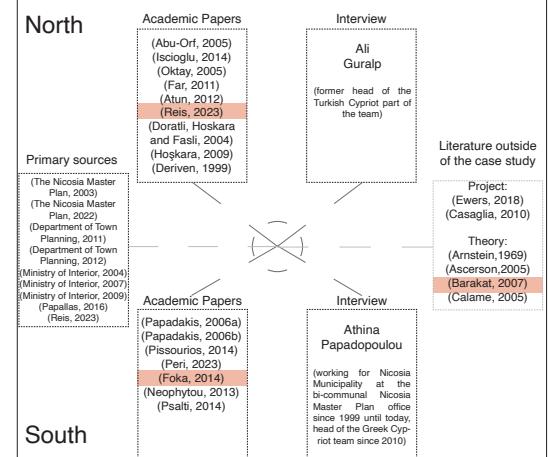
"I believe that the idea of the totality, the finality of the master-plan, is misguided. One should advocate a gradual transformation of public space, a metamorphic process, without relying on a hypothetical time in the future when everything will be perfect." (Libeskind, 1995) (Foka, 2015).

Divided cities are a multidisciplinary phenomenon.' (Reis, 2023)

Foka uses the reference by Daniel Libeskind about the re-unification of Berlin to urge for a holistic approach where the urban, social and political dimensions are considered simultaneously. To the author, this statement seems to go beyond what Foka is suggesting. It seems that Libeskind is suggesting that the notion of a master plan or planned intervention is not appropriate to begin with,

⁸ 'Since postwar reconstruction is essentially a development challenge, it should follow best practice in development, in which the local affected community must actively play the key role. Experience shows that locally generated, development-oriented approaches tend to work whilst top-down, externally conceived solutions do not.' (Barakat, 2007)

Sultan Barakat, founded and led the Post-war Reconstruction and Development Unit (PRDU) in the University of York between 1993-2016, a research center dedicated to the study of the aftermath of war.



instead advocating for an incremental change through bottom-up entities that consequently affect space. This is especially and specifically when it affects contested spaces.

To add to this, Reis suggests that maybe architects and urban planning professionals should not be the only ones deciding how space will be affected and advocating for a multidisciplinary approach. Far argues that revitalisation of the residential areas could be improved by participation from property owners and appoints this to people awaiting for political settlement as many were displaced from their houses, demanding to return, which left things in a volatile condition (2011). Further highlighting the role of people's confidence in the political environment in the success of the project, Atun explains how the delay in the materialisation of the project meant that most people moved to the suburbs leaving the Walled City is a state of decline where they had enough time to stabilise in their new environment hence, the project created physical improvements but limited socio-economic benefits (2012). For this lack of participation, to some people the project only created physical improvements without socio-economical developments (Atun, 2012). Papadakis refers to a 2012 report named 'Bicommunal Future Together Report' where the creators of the Master Plan acknowledged the lack of participation from the inhabitants of Walled Nicosia (2006a). Despite this, the context before the opening of crossing points in 2003 made the city largely impermeable, as pointed out by Papadakis, making the lack of participation understandable (2006a).⁹

This is the main point of criticism from the literature produced on both sides of the island but not at all mentioned as a limitation by the two interviewees. Therefore, it seems like a concern from the public but not a serious consideration within the team.

Conclusion and reflection on the role

It can be deduced that the Master Plan in some ways acted as a top-down intervention compiled by the bi-communal team. Considering that the aims of the project were to reconcile the relationships between the two communities then an approach which involves participatory design would not only bring more people together but would also have a wider impact; as more people would be aware of the project, acquire a greater interest to re-invest in the areas and form concrete points of contact between the two communities in establishing a bottom-up entity. To add to this further, potential collective memories and intangible heritage could be highlighted through the interventions made by first understanding how the inhabitants of the Walled City relate to the space around them.

However, the notion that the project only made physical improvements is not a fair judgement to the efforts of the team as there are multiple examples of the social and economic improvements.

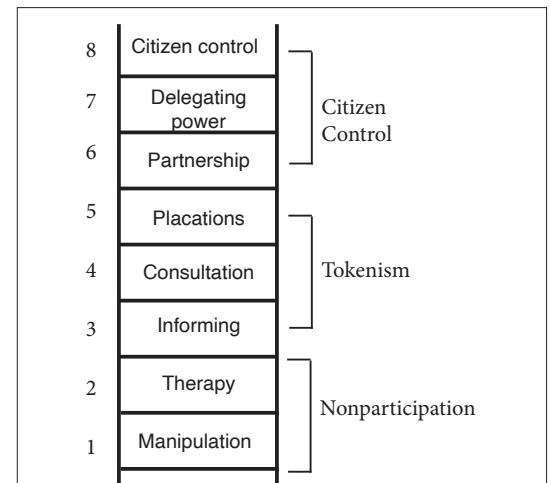
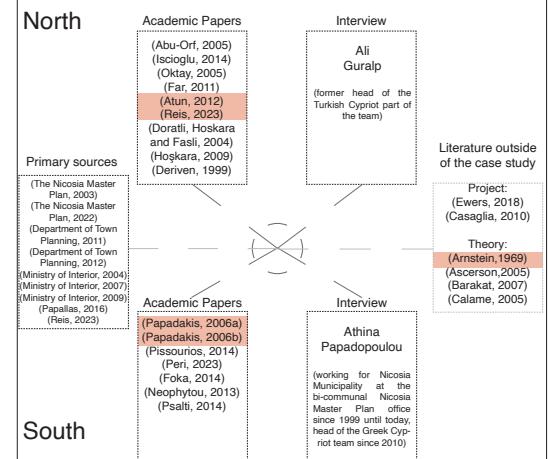


Fig. 31: Arnstein's Ladder (1969): Degrees of Participation

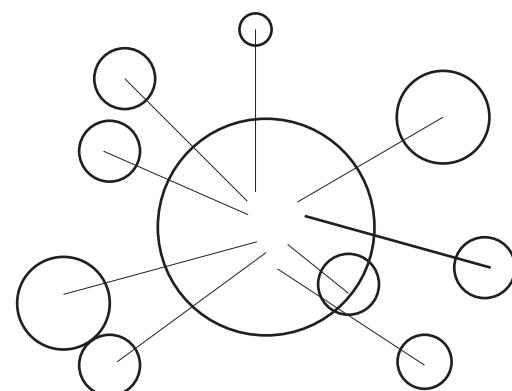
'Sherry Arnstein is Director of Community Development Studies for The Commons, a non-profit research institute in Washington, D.C., and Chicago.' (Arnstein, 1969).

⁹ In Papadakis' analysis the NMP (Nicosia Master Plan) is placed within the 'nonparticipation' portion of Arnstein's 'Ladder of Citizen Participation' (2006a)



Namely, through the revitalisation of the urban core where local people had the incentive to move back to the center and reinvest in their properties, Laiki Gitonia which is a project that creates small scale local shops in the city center and most importantly the opening of cross points from one part of the city to the other. Also, it is also clear that public participation could not be facilitated at the initial phases of the project as the situation was very sensitive and the team itself has to acquire special permission to meet every week, according to Mr. Guralp and Mrs. Papadopoulou.

As the socio-political situation and the role of architects' changes the project could move up the Arnstein's Ladder to in order to strengthen bottom-up approaches and empower the two communities to collaborate. This is because in volatile environments such as this one, local communities play a vital role in re-establishing relationships. This becomes especially important when the two communities have lost their confidence in a common future due to several occasions of disappointment and hence the prospect of reunification and peaceful co-operation and reconciliation has to be rebuilt. This time, from the bottom-up. It becomes evident that the local communities have to be influenced by the idea of reunification and engage in meaningful conversations with each other for there to be anticipation instead of a mere possibility over reunification. This is a critical lesson for all war-torn cities as they transition through the possibility of including the public as part of the reconciliation program. Public participation cannot be the first step in this process but is an extremely important element when the socio-political environment allows for it.



4. Discussion

The working dynamics

On one hand, the weekly meetings in a neutral location within the Buffer Zone provided the right environment for the team to operate with an appropriate distance from either side and lack of interference so they could indeed form their own internal patterns of working.¹⁰ Additionally, the team on both sides was made up of people who had the same vision and goals and hence discussions focused on technical aspects. However, following the argument of Barakat, the author would like to conclude that there should be a limited involvement of third parties in this process; limited only to providing expertise information on a technical level. The level of intervention in mitigating discussions, moderating or guiding outcomes should be limited as this does not help the two communities build trust between them. Third parties also usually do not understand the true reality of the experiences and dynamics as they lack the grasp on the intangible memories and associations these groups have over space and symbols, which are often conflicting due to their contested nature. Thus, any such team should be allowed to create its own independent frameworks of understanding, analysing and communicating away from the preconceived notions of a third party. Furthermore, a standardised framework of working that is applied to these war-torn cities will not work properly. This is because of a lack of consideration for local ways of working, dynamics and understanding of context that dramatically affect the success or failure of such a sensitive project.

Evaluation and conclusion on case study

The Nicosia Master Plan is a bi-communal effort to reconnect the deteriorating urban fabric of the capital of Cyprus. Apart from the spatial dimension, the project also aimed to bridge the rapidly evolving divergence between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities on the island after the invasion in 1974. The project won the Aga Khan award in 2007 but the overall effectiveness of the scheme is unclear. The project established catalyst changes within the urban fabric of the city since its inception and had to fight for strong interventions within a very contested and inert socio-political environment. Despite this, there is some criticism for the overall wider impact it has had in relation to social, economic and political aspects. Many view the project as a mere spatial intervention, which has affected only a few areas within the city. This has resulted in most people within the city not understanding the impact of the project, or even not being aware of it. Today, socially-focused projects are given priority, such as the Cyprus Friendship Program shown in Figure 27 and the Nicosia Master Plan is in steady decline. However, there is a strong need for a project which encompasses all of these dimensions to meaningfully integrate the two communities. Specifically on the role of the practicing professionals within the team, the dynamic and impact of their role has changed over time, through the three phases identified. The socio-political situation has

¹⁰ Mr. Ali Guralp:

'Yes, there was a need to collaborate because the political environment wasn't so good at the time and there was no connection like today. Until 2003 there was virtually no connection between the two sides. I can safely say that only a very limited amount of people were crossing over to the other side. And the Nicosia Master Plan team was actually maybe the only one that collaborated under that restricted political environment. The meeting venue was the Ledras Palace. These technical people came together in a mutual and neutral ground. And for years, you know, we didn't cross to the other side. But at least we got together in the buffer zone.'



changed a lot, now pulling the two teams in opposite directions in relation to the vision for the future of Nicosia. Not all ideas were able to become reality due to the state of inertia and lack of the belief in a common future, which is a natural consequence in the years following a nation-wide traumatic event such as a war. Despite this, the team has shown immense determination, always abiding by the same core principles over decades. Now, the prospect of reunification lies not in top-down interventions but, in the gradual rebuilding of trust and a common vision through the local communities. The project has lost its central nucleus that was bringing the two communities together, therefore a different entity needs to establish itself as this force that binds them together; in this case public participation. Hence, the professions within the team would see another shift in their role towards that of facilitating public participation. The case study offers an excellent example at how the architects and urban planning professionals' role continuously adapt to volatile and ever-changing political situation when it comes to divided cities and spaces of contested history.

'I think all the people that participated throughout the years, had a very strong commitment to the reunification of the city and the country and a joint future... I think whatever we do has a political dimension to it. We were on the same page as technical people to help out towards reunification of the city. So anything we proposed had that at the at its core. I think our role as architects, or visionaries, if I dare say, is definitely crucial in such environments.'

(Mrs. Papadopoulou)

5. Conclusion

Methodology

This research has been conducted to derive some conclusions regarding the shifts in the role of architects within these contested environments as data-driven theory. A hypothesis of the potential shifts has been set up and arguments have been made, analysed and counter-argued through primary sources (such as maps, drawings, symbols, interviews) and secondary sources in the form of academic literature produced on either side of the island. It was important to argue through a plurality of different modes because as observed, the reality within a drawings was far more idealistic than the reality told through the interviews and the perception and impact on the public through the academic papers. Incorporating both aspects of written and oral history were also important to contrast the narrative that is told and written. This plurality of voices incorporated was integral to this research paper due to the different narratives that exist around the topic. For this reason, especially as public participation has proven to be an essential next step, further research into the existing public perception and their ideas of future steps through interviews would be an important addition to this pool of literature.

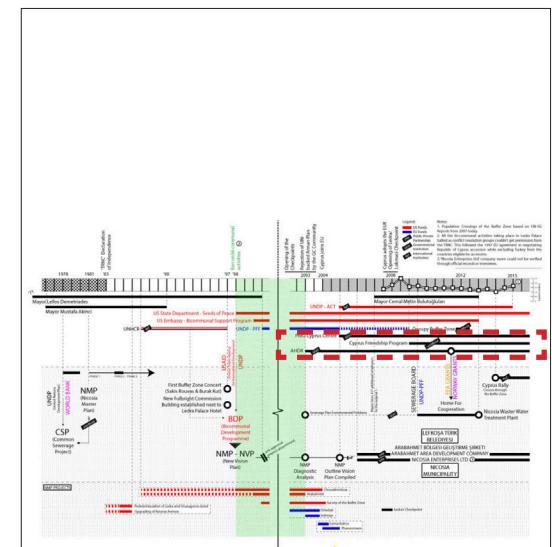


Fig. 32: Nicosia Master Plan Time line by A. Papallas

Conclusion and reflection on the role of architects within spaces of contested history

Contested environments are extremely volatile and sensitive spaces. The paper has hypothesised that the role of urban planning professionals changes over time as the political situation also changes. The observation within the case study of The Nicosia Master Plan can be made applicable to other war-torn cities. These key lessons from this case study are gradual shifts in role but the paper does not suggest that a standardised model of role shifts be expected. Instead, simply expecting the role to transform hand-in-hand with the societal dimension. Furthermore, it is essential for a team to work with autonomy, creating a shared framework of understanding and establishing information within the two (or multiple) ethnic or contested groups. Lastly, extending this process of common framework-establishment outside of the group of professionals to the wider public, over time, helps bridge the gap between the two communities in a meaningful way, as suggested through

Contested environments are intricate settings for urban planners to navigate through as they deal with spatial separation and boundaries but also in an attempt to bridge mental ones. In an environment which is always changing, with multiple conflicting narratives, the profession of architecture resorts mainly to its social entity. This social way of looking at architecture has in cases like these the role to restore, or reconcile. There is a moral responsibility in the hands of these professionals over how they shape space as it is within their hands to heal the spatial separation and mental wounds or create a permanent schism.

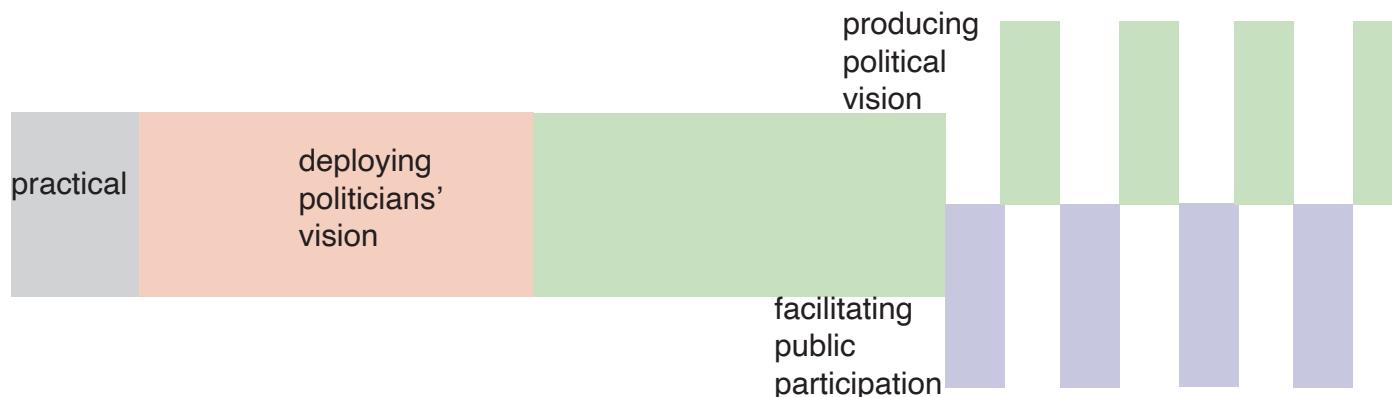
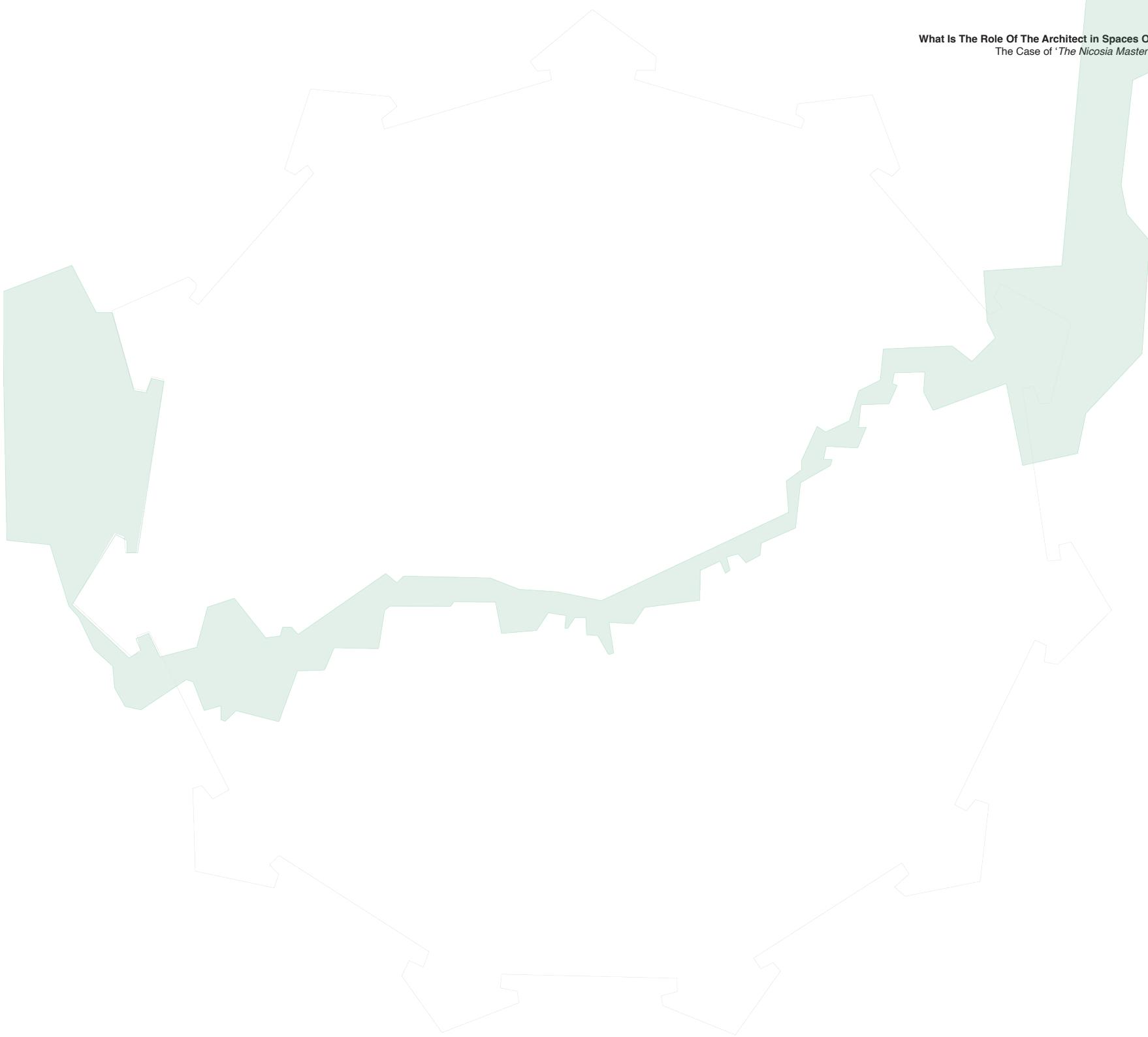


Fig. 33: An example of shifts in roles of architects within contested environments based on the Nicosia case



Appendix A:

Transcript from Interview with Mrs. Athina Papadopoulou:

Interviewer: Hello Mr. Papadopoulou. Thank you for getting on a call with me. Before we start I wanted to introduce to you the focus of my study which is specifically The Nicosia Master Plan to see how, as professionals, you navigated in that case in a quite tense political environment. I wanted to conduct this interview to bring in some elements of oral history into my study to see how the things you share might defer from papers written on either side in regards to the project. Can you explain how the project started and what the goal was when the team came together? As I understand, the project started from a practical need, and then came the opportunity to start creating a vision of what this effort could become when the two communities came together. Is that right?

Mrs. Papadopoulou : So there's quite a bit of change since the NMP, started in the 80s. And that's mostly due to the different sources of funding, which have changed because the Republic of Cyprus has become a full member of the European Union. So we have access to funding from the structural funds. This is a much bigger part, then the Turkish Cypriot colleagues. There's also the package from the EU for assisting the Turkish Cypriot community, but the priorities, how to disperse the money made centrally I guess, and it seems that the walled city is not a top priority or the issues that are involved in the Nicosia Master Plan initial objectives. So that has been a major change. And pretty much since the referendum, we've had very little to no budget, namely for by communal projects. The only project currently, that's in the final design stages, is the rehabilitation of Pedieos River, which starts from the old Nicosia hospital site, and goes along the river to the north, covering a distance of about five kilometres. About 500 metres are south of the buffer zone, and the rest are in the north. But we still have meetings with our Turkish Cypriot colleagues. We've tried all through these years to find funding for the buildings in the buffer zone within the walled city because there's significant architecture and heritage there. We haven't succeeded so far. In 2013, the buffer zone was in the most endangered Heritage List of Europa Nostra and we tried through that to find funding to support and restore the buildings but that was not successful. So the last few years we try and clear the buffer zone area of vegetation, but it's already affecting the buildings to a degree that maybe will not be reversible. And there's a lot of damage being done. We also propose proposed the renewal of the rainwater drainage system, again, within the buffer zone, because there are many places we suspect that it's not working. So you can't control or you can't manage the rainwater. And as a result, you get water into the foundations of the buildings and you have a sudden collapses of buildings within the buffer zone or along the fringe of the buffer zone. The initial Nicosia master plan was put together by planners, economists, traffic managers, architects, engineers, and they it preceded the 1990 planning law. And it was a very significant document regarding Nicosia, placing at the centre of it the historic city, the walled city. But going back to what we do today, the political change is always an issue. Leaders and mayors may have other priorities. But on a tactical level what is basically affecting is the availability of funding.

Interviewer: As I understand, there were weekly meetings taking place at Ledras Palace in the Buffer Zone for the first phases of the project. How does that differ to the reality now?

Mrs. Papadopoulou: It's not as frequent. It's much easier to meet because of the opening of the checkpoints. So we just arrange that on our own. We exchange visits either to share knowledge or to visit new projects in the city. Also, the current two mayor's Yiorkadjis and Harmanci have met a few times. But the meetings are no longer conducted on a regular structured basis.

Interviewer: Were there any other restrictions that made it difficult for the team to operate?

Mrs. Papadopoulou: Well, the forces of developers have been an issue here. Also, the pressure regarding listed buildings is constant. So that was a significant factor. Also how different departments communicate or if they have different mandates. That's also an issue. I mean, they may not see, may, they may not have the same priorities. The funding, of course, was major issue. I know that, in the south, the areas scheme was developed much sooner. And at that time, we tried to push forward to have one area scheme and not do separate areas schemes. I think they're at the end of completing the area scheme for the North. Which is unfortunate, because it's a really significant tour planning tool. It would be much better to have a uniform tool.

Interviewer: Is there a reason why there was such a big delay in the North for the Area Scheme?

Mrs. Papadopoulou: I think it is the same forces and powers acting on the two sides but in the North there was greater difficulty to combat them.

Interviewer: Were there any other failures in the scheme?

Mrs. Papadopoulou: We didn't manage to create a revolving fund for heritage that would go back which was a very significant proposal through the new vision for the core of Nicosia, which was done in 2003. The approach there was a heritage-led regeneration of the Old City and one of the tools was a revolving fund. So you can use the money that to put back into heritage and to planning of the of the Old City. That was that could have been a very useful tool. Also, the lack of one planning body is also a problem. But you know, that goes back again to the Cyprus problem. It's not something that could be agreed upon and have authority for the whole city, as you may imagine. I think these two are major.

Interviewer: Was the failure of the revolving fund a result of loss of faith by people to reinvest in their property next to the Buffer Zone or a result of something else?

Mrs. Papadopoulou: Well, I think it needs more tools, and a constant monitoring of these effects, attempts and tools, because in the south, there have been significant financial tools for listed building owners through the Department of the Ministry of Interior. But you know, throughout the years, you have a financial crisis, you had the pandemic, you have a significant increase in prices in the building industry. I mean, these are not steady conditions that you can blame one aspect or the other. Plus, in the north, what I spoke about before, is it doesn't seem to be a priority for their central planning of how to use funding. With as a result, the city in the north is in a much worse, can condition. It has many problems. I mean, the the physical city, but also any policies for encouraging regeneration. In the south, about a year ago, with the announcement of the encouraging for student accommodation schemes, there's been quite a bit of extra funding that will be put into the old city and the efforts made to bring university departments in the city like the architecture school. So that's in transition, and we will have to monitor that and see how that works. And how much that will change or help the regeneration efforts. So it's a dynamic situation, and it has to be monitored and evaluated.

Interviewer: How was the collaboration between the team. Was it always running smoothly? Did some people feel like they couldn't express all their ideas? Was there any political pressure?

Mrs. Papadopoulou: Well, for us as individuals, you know, we have no problems in collaborating. But as priorities may shift in both municipalities, then people might be moved around and have less people towards this cause working towards this. So yeah, the team is affected in that way. That it's not steadily built or priorities are not always as focused.

Interviewer: As I understand from my research at the beginning there was support offered through the UN in terms of technical knowledge. Is that true and was it useful at the time or was it impeding in the establishment of an intra-team ways of collaborating, discussing and knowing?

Mrs. Papadopoulou: Not really, that was the very beginning when the initial team came together with specialists from different parts of the world. I mean, it's much easier for us now to know to find other professionals with expertise that we might need at a given point.

Interviewer: As I am writing about the role of the architect in a contested history setting. My thoughts when I was starting this were, are we just acting on other people's political visions? Are we just actors that kind of bring their visions forward? Whatever we've been hearing and whatever other people's political beliefs are, or it can we somehow as architects and urban planners shape the urban fabric in a way that then yields different political opinions where we can start stitching things back together?

Mrs. Papadopoulou: I think all the people that participated throughout the years, had a very strong commitment to the reunification of the city and the country and a joint future. So that was always underlined in lining our proposals and our actions. Even in the original NMP document, there were two scenarios with and without the buffer zone, but So I think as technical people, we try to push forward solutions and projects that would encourage and influence that. But, you know, we're not the ones in power. And I think whatever we do has a political dimension to it. But I think we were on the same page as technical people to help out towards reunification of the city. So anything we proposed had that at the at its core. But, I think our role as architects, or visionaries, if I dare say, is definitely crucial in such environments. But of course, you need to find supporters to take it further to be understood, to get people to join you. It's not something that as an individual you can do. You need good solid collaborations and commitment from people in order to deal with all the complexities that that come with it, whether it's funding or dealing with contradictory interests.

Interviewer: One last question I have is whether you think that including the general public more actively within this process would help in stitching the city back together from now on instead of relying on two separated municipalities that seem to reach for diverging political visions?

Mrs. Papadopoulou: Yeah, definitely. And I think there have been public participatory sessions at different stages of the project. I think that really helped because it brought together stakeholders opinions, and that was put back into the this whole exercise. But now due to the lack of funding and changing of priorities, I would say, on both sides, and the not very positive umbrella regarding the talks about the Cyprus problem, things are rather slow. So, yeah, I wish things would get back into pace with the relevant funds and encouraging this project further. But as I said, the general political climate is not helping right now. However, a city is a living organism, and you can't expect to find everybody agreeing it's basically the opposite. But you really have to learn to listen, to focus to map things out and be able to convey the ideas in a way that people can understand and creating trust I think that's at the core of every communication. So if you and you create trust by being well open and by delivering what you say you're going to deliver.

Transcript from Interview with Mr. Ali Guralp:

Interviewer: Hello Mr. Guralp. Thank you for getting on a call with me. Before we start I wanted to introduce to you the focus of my study which is specifically The Nicosia Master Plan to see how, as professionals, you navigated in that case in a quite tense political environment. I wanted to conduct this interview to bring in some elements of oral history into my study to see how the things you share might defer from papers written on either side in regards to the project. Can you explain how the project started and what the goal was when the team came together?

Mr. Guralp: Yes. The initial need for The Nicosia Master Plan actually dates back to late 60s, when the Nicosia municipality started to seek for [the] development of a sewage and storm water system for Nicosia. Then, there was some engineering consultants who visited Cyprus, Nicosia and developed some plans and they initiated this sewage and rainwater plans. Things begin to develop until 1974. But then, as you know, the war broke out and the endeavours were interrupted. The time it was mainly the Greek Cypriot side that was developing this plan and the Turkish side was actually almost in similar orientation, but was not included in these improvement plans. But then, the geography of Nicosia is that the southern part is at higher elevation and the northern side is lower. And then the main inclination from South to North then goes towards the sea, from Nicosia to Famagusta. So, you have natural gravity flow of water for both sewage and rainwater from South to North, from North to East. And accordingly, the location or the treatment plan was thought it's hotspot Mia Milia area. Then, I mean, because of the political division, at that time, it was possible for the Greek Cypriot side to make connection from Nicosia to Mia Milia area, through going through the Greek Cypriot sectors of Nicosia but after the war, that has changed and it became necessary to cross over to the north, and then go to the Mia Milia Treatment Plant. So it wasn't long after, it was only five years later, that two mayors of Nicosia, Dimitriadis and Mustafa got together and started to make a collaboration on how to resolve these issues. Nicosia didn't have any sewage system and the existing rainwater was failing. It was very old. So they got together to continue the, or continue the efforts that were made previously, to finalise it, through collaboration. That's how they start getting together. But then when they got together, it wasn't just about continuing the sewage and rainwater system, they need to make projections to the future and how the city was going to develop so that it would contain and cover the greater parts of Nicosia. Since these designs are made for at least 20 years into the future, then they needed to understand how the consumer was developing on both sides. So that led to a need for a master plan which covered both sides. Then they started this endeavour and together with an international experienced team, architects, engineers, town planners, they formed two teams from both sides from south and north, again, consisting of engineers, architects and town planners, and they started preparing a Master Plan for Greater parts of Nicosia. And the master plan was started in 1979, completed in 1984. And the second phase plan for the walled city was produced just right after. It was completed in 1985. After that the implementation period started.

Interviewer: So, as I understand, the project started from a practical need, and then came the opportunity to start creating a vision of what this effort could become when the two communities came together. Is that right?

Mr. Guralp: Yes, there was a need to collaborate because as I said, because the political environment wasn't so good at the time and there was no connection like today. Until 2003 there was virtually no connection between the two sides. I can safely say that only a very limited amount of people were crossing over to the other side. And the Nicosia Master Plan team was actually maybe the only one that collaborated under that restricted political environment and they are meeting venue was the Ledras Palace. These technical people came together in a mutual and neutral ground. And for years, you know, we didn't cross to the other side. But at least we got together in the buffer zone. So that's how it started.

Interviewer: It was weekly meetings right?

Mr. Guralp: Yes, weekly meetings.

Interviewer: Would you say that the original energy of an active endeavour which was present at the beginning is still there in just as a consistent effort as before? Or has something changed?

Mr. Guralp: I can say that the original idea of the master plan is still available today. It is still continuing. Although there are divergences on both sides. Due to the master plan being not legislated. I can't remember exactly when it was legislated in the south. But in the north, I know that it was legislated in 2001. So imagine, I mean, you get a master plan in 1985 and then it gets legislated in the 2000s. So you know, there are a lot of opportunistic people who makes use of the lack of laws and restrictions, and saw the opportunity to do things to their advantage, because legislating the master plan would prevent them. So after the news that there was this master plan was coming up, people, especially in the south, actually. They they use that opportunity until it was legislated the north because of the financial status, they could not manage but the mentality is the same for both sides. The developers wanted to use or abuse the land or make the most profit they can. However, I can say that on both sides, although there was no legislation they use Chapter 96 to prevent or to make some restrictions, at least. So that the developments would not go far away from what was intended in the master plan and wherever there was chance to implement something that was foreseen in the master plan they went ahead and implemented it even though there was no legislation. So we didn't diverge a lot from the Nicosia master plan, until it was legislated on both sides. Especially in the walled city, the developments I can say that is almost as it is in the Nicosia master plan. But outside the walled city, as I said, I mean, according to the developments, things have changed. So, new revisions were made to the master plan on both sides. In the North it didn't get accepted until Mr. Akinci passed it, which as I have mentioned the project was like a child to him from his time as mayor of Nicosia. But the master plan I think is still widely accepted and used.

Interviewer: Were there any other restrictions that made it difficult for the team to operate?

Mr. Guralp: No, the only problem for the northern side was the financing. The government almost did not fund any of the projects that we had. The only funding was through the UNDP, supplied by the US aid in the beginning. And then it was the European Economic Community, precursor to EU who supplied money. And there was also the World Bank, who through the Greek Cypriot municipality, provided funding for the implementation of the sewage and waterworks implementation to the walled city. So mainly it was financial restrictions that prevented the development.

Interviewer: Can you explain the reasons for this disparity in funding on the two sides?

Mr. Guralp: There were big efforts from the South that has provided the money. And the northern side was on the receiving end, actually. They didn't have much leverage in provision of the funds because the northern side is not recognised. And the municipality doesn't have much say, in finding funds, or provision of the funds. So since the Republic of Cyprus is recognised government and the municipality also recognised body in Nicosia. It was easier for the South side to get funding. And, of course, although when you look at the walled city, it's almost half and half. On both sides, the funding that was received in the southern side was three to four times higher than the north. So actually, these are all before

the EU enlargement in 2004. That was received, but it was again, something that was like a gift for the Turkish Cypriot side. Because the situation was really precarious in the northern side These funds provided life saving supply, a blood supply, for things to keep, keep alive, otherwise, you would have nothing.

Interviewer: Did the disparities in funding get worse after 2004?

Mr. Guralp: Unfortunately, yes. There was this good momentum going towards 2004. Because of the political situation, then both sides, especially the southern side was enthusiastic to have funding for projects that were bi-communal because we were going towards reunification. So the political atmosphere was ripe for lots of activities on both sides. So there was lots of lots of projects implemented between 2002-2004. Even until 2006, because the momentum continued after the acceptance of Cyprus to EU because as I said, I mean, there were lots of projects in the pipeline that were accepted by the international organisations. But then, after 2004, the funding or the project's sources have changed. The UN started to pull out and they only provide funding for soft projects, not like brick and mortar projects, or restoration or pedestrianisation activities or sewage or brain water or whatever. They pulled out from that. And they only funded projects that were for social improvements. And then there was EU on the other side. But what happened was that when Cyprus entered the EU, the structural funds were directly available for the southern side. And this wasn't the case for Northern side. And there was this aid to the Turkish Cypriot community like a gift from the European Union, to Turkish Cypriots for accepting the Annan Plan. This was 259 million euros for the Turkish Cypriot community. It was all in a rush before the actual acceptance of Cyprus to EU. But I remember until the money that were utilised for the Turkish Cypriot community, it was 2009 or 2011. So at that time, the only project that were implemented was the pre-2004 accepted projects. Afterwards, there was a stagnation. Before that they needed partner. And it was, since it was bi-communal, it was a lot easy for it to be accepted by the international community since it was working towards reunification. But after that the incentive was lost. Since you can find money, and there was no reunification. You know, you didn't need to prioritise a reunification.

Interviewer: Based on this information would you say that then a different vision of the future was pulling the two sides of the island apart, as the prospect of reunification was a more distant prospect than in 2000 for example?

Mr. Guralp: Yes. That is the case. You can see that the number of projects in the North has been reduced. The Nicosia Master Plan team has made every effort to find bi-communal projects to work on however, the general political environment did not support this concept. This is because as I said the Southern side doesn't need to push the Northern side into a project in order to get funding. So yes, the vision of the two sides has changed but for us [within the team] the two sides should develop in the same fashion. We are connected, making a line will not stop illness or water to flow from one side to the other. Also, the cultural heritage is of everyone and so if a significant portion of it disappears then we all lose. But the team, still today, is trying to find ways to implement bi-communal projects for example the buffer zone project.

Interviewer: How was the collaboration between the team. Was it always running smoothly? Did some people feel like they couldn't express all their ideas? Was there any political pressure?

Mr. Guralp: In regards to the technical team,.. it was a perfect match. We became friends, or even like relatives. Although I have retired now, from the municipality, and from the Nicosia master plan, I'm still continuing to work with my friends. Three days ago, I was at the municipality, meeting with Agni [the leader of the Greek-Cypriot team at the same time as Mr. Ali]. And, you know, she also retired, but continuing her Eleftheria square project. And so, we still continue. And at the moment, I'm implementing project feasibility study for improving the social and physical infrastructure of the walled city for Nicosia, and, of course, always keeping in mind that there is a sister project in the south, so that we can couple them if we find funding. So as I said, I mean, regarding the technical team, there was no problem. And I can also say the same for both municipalities and the mayors. Even though, in the north, we had more conservative mayors, none of them actually discouraged. None of them discouraged bi-communal collaboration. Even at the worst times. The only thing was, in the beginning, it was the military, especially in the north, that was not keen on collaboration on both sides. It was very difficult to obtain permission to go into the buffer zone. But since it was very regular, and there wasn't any political disadvantage that was caused, because of these meetings, they were not creating problems for our crossings. But in general, as I said, I mean, it was very difficult, especially from north to go to the south. Of course, the same was also applicable for the people from the South to enter to come to the north. Because of the same problem.

Interviewer: Do you feel like everyday people are aware of how the Master Plan kind of shaped the city around them and how it changed it? For example, I knew that Chrysalinitissa was reshaped but I didn't know that it was part of this bigger plan. At least I was unaware.

Mr. Guralp: Chrysalinitissa's sister project is Arab Ahmet which were all, pre 2004. Yeah. So there was this movement. And also we got clever and instead of doing one or two restoration among too many precarious buildings, which didn't show any improvement because it was a large area and restoring one building here and there would not create an impact. So we started improving the streetscape, the facades, the existing building condition. So instead of utilising the money, the funding for one building, we didn't restore one building, but we upgraded the whole street facades, especially the roofs and pedestrianisation. So that actually created an impact to a lot of people. And by doing that, we manage to attract people attention towards the area. So, after this movement, we started other projects, which were fundable by the local authority. And these were like holding festivals, or activities or events in the locality. And of course, especially the young were very interested in moving to the Old City, the authentic Cypriot buildings and experiencing how the old people lived in Nicosia before it was emptied. This is because both areas are adjacent to the buffer zone. So, both area were abandoned by their inhabitants. So, and in both areas hit very rich, architectural heritage buildings, almost all of them are listed. So that encouraged young people especially to or the old owners, to come back and invest in their buildings. So again, as I said, I mean that creates momentum. They started to invest in their property, because the area was improving. But in the South the municipality also gives a lot of monetary incentives in re-investing in the area. In the North it was more about having an impact in the local people, especially young, for them to want to reinvest. This was especially in the hospitality sector. It has now become more lively and rejuvenated which is very encouraging. There are also bi-communal efforts such as the Cyprus Friendship Program, some Art projects in the Old City. But again, you get connections you get people from out visiting and giving conferences or seminars in the north or they're called going to the south and trying to achieve something, but as I say to the main thing is the political will to encourage bi-communal collaboration, this is this is missing, I think is your it is very in practice is very small. But in political talk it is shown as a big thing but in practice, it doesn't. It doesn't come to life.

Interviewer: And that is actually where the my last question was about actually, as I am writing about the role of the architect in a contested history setting. My thoughts when I was starting this were, are we just acting on other people's political visions? Are we just actors that kind of bring their visions forward? Whatever we've been hearing and whatever other people's political beliefs are, or it can we somehow as architects and urban planners shape the urban fabric in a way that then yields different political opinions where we can start stitching things back together?

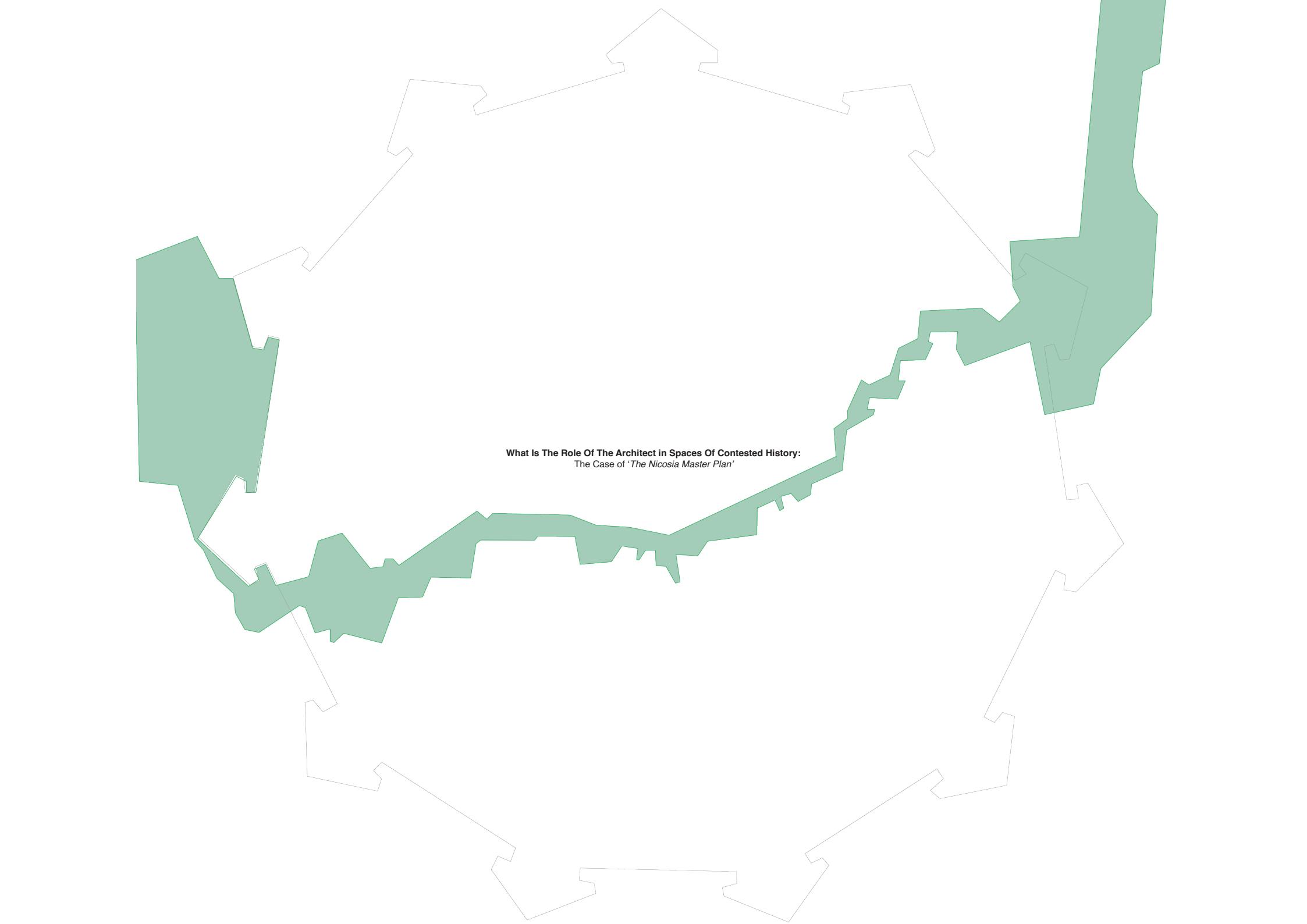
Mr. Guralp: That is a very good question! So, you would have one in the north and one in the south, and then an umbrella one, which will consider both sides. My friend Grafkos Constantinides, is an expert on this. He suggested forming a City Regeneration company. We managed to have one in the North and one in the South but we need an umbrella team above that would oversee and balance the developments. This is a way forward. Because since the North is not going to be acknowledged or accepted as a legal body and the South is the legal government according to international law, then this organisation this company, since it is not political or it's not a governmental thing then could operate. But as time passes, and things don't change, we get older, beginning to retire so the new generation need to move in and search how we can rekindle the connection between the two communities, then the efforts of these teams will fade away. This is because the political situation is not improving and if we don't do something it will continue diverging even further. For example, in the Nicosia Master Plan we had designed for four cross-points in the Walled City instead of one. But you cannot imagine the difficulties we faced at the time. Before the opening of the checkpoints we had built a temporary bridge for people to cross in Ermou. We had all these projects, but we were able to just push it up to a certain point. Then it was the politicians to decide to open a checkpoint. We had a lot of ideas Interviewer. We had an idea of opening a bi-communal building to house a school, a bi-communal museum displaying Cypriot culture and heritage. However, the political situation could not let us go further. These projects are all there, in the books. But after that it's also on the mayors. In the North we had a period where we were moving dramatically away from the South because of the mayor that had won two consecutive elections. He also made the municipality almost go bankrupt so you can see that the power that politics holds is not irrespective of our work. But even him, didn't stop bi-communal collaboration even though he didn't encourage it. Of course, if the momentum if the reunification continued, things would have been much different. And people would be more encouraged to collaborate with the other side. If they saw it could be come to life. This is because you know, people tend to move away or not invest in things that does not seem to come into life. So you get only the people who are very eager for reunification, or very eager to collaborate with other community that are interest still interested to do something together.

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