

Constructing Peace through Public Space:

What Publics? Whose Commons?

Cyprus Aesop International Symposium



Organizers – Scientific Committee

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Symposium Format	3
3. Description of the two-day symposium	3
4. Annex I – Detailed Program and Abstracts	7

SYMPOSIUM REPORT

1. Introduction

The two-day symposium, held on May 30-31, 2024, aimed to explore the intricate relationships between urban spaces, conflict transformation, and commoning practices. The event brought together thirty-one (31) scholars, practitioners, and activists from various countries and disciplines to discuss how urban environments can either foster or hinder reconciliation processes, particularly in conflict-prone areas. The symposium was designed to facilitate a deep and interactive exchange of ideas, with a format that included keynote lectures, roundtable discussions, and experiential activities such as walking tours.

2. Symposium Format

- **Keynote Lectures:** Delivered by leading experts, these sessions provided critical insights into the overarching themes of the symposium, setting the stage for subsequent discussions.
- **Roundtable Discussions:** Each roundtable focused on specific sub-themes, featuring moderated discussions with interventions from participants, followed by open exchanges.
- **Experiential Activities:** The symposium included interactive elements such as urban games and a walking tour, allowing participants to engage directly with the urban context under discussion.
- **Networking Breaks:** Coffee breaks and lunches were designed to encourage informal networking and deeper conversations among participants.

3. Description of the two-day symposium

Day One: Thursday, May 30, 2024

The symposium began with a Morning Session at the Home for Cooperation, where participants registered before moving to the Goethe-Institut for the main events of the day.

- The symposium kicked off with participant registration, setting a welcoming tone for the day's events. The official opening included welcome notes, where organizers outlined the symposium's aims and the key questions that would guide the discussions.
- The first keynote lecture, "**Who should Decide? Territorial Conflict and Architecture in Action,**" was delivered by Fatima Abreek-Zubiedat. This presentation explored the role of architecture in areas of territorial conflict, highlighting how spatial decisions can influence both conflict and peace.
- The symposium continued with an interactive session titled "Critical Urban Play" by LUCY and AA&U, at the Home for Cooperation. Participants engaged with board

games related to urban planning, designed to provoke thought and discussion on the day's themes.

The Afternoon Session at the Goethe-Institut featured two roundtables, each focused on different aspects of conflict transformation and commoning practices.

- **Roundtable One** addressed the question, "**How do we create spaces for conciliation to transform conflicts constructively?**" Moderated by Professor Sabine Knierbein with Professor Socrates Stratis as the discussant, the session included interventions on:
 - Urban activism through community festivals in contested neighborhoods (Veronika Antoniou).
 - Commoning and intercultural exchange (Dr. Marion Hohlfeldt).
 - The Dead Zone as a site of place-consciousness (Yianna Tsolaki).
 - The poetic embodiment of public space memory in Varosha (Dr. Nafia Akdeniz).
- **Roundtable Two** explored "**How do commoning practices support the diversity of publics in peace-building and related planning processes?**" Moderated by Professor Sebnem Hoskara and discussed by Professor Evangelia Athanassiou this session featured interventions on:
 - Conflict-sensitive participatory planning (Vittorio Iervese).
 - Commoning practices as a solution for land ownership conflicts in Paphos (Ersia Stylianou).
 - The role of public spaces in combating racism (Volker Kirchberg).
- The day concluded with a **walking tour**, offering participants an on-site exploration of urban spaces relevant to the symposium's themes.

Day Two: Friday, May 31, 2024

The second day began with a keynote lecture and continued with three roundtables, each delving deeper into the symposium's core themes.

The Morning Session kicked off with the keynote lecture "**Between trauma and tolerance: Examining the challenges and opportunities of public spaces in Jerusalem**" by Nufar Avni, setting a thoughtful tone for the day's discussions.

- **Roundtable Three** examined "**Can urban challenges of common concern regarding social-ecological transformations (climate and other crises) trigger commoning practices, and how?**" Moderated by Professor Evangelia Athanassiou with Professor Sabine Knierbein as the discussant, this roundtable included:
 - Critical spatial practices addressing neoliberal urbanization in Cyprus (Charis Nika).
 - The impact of cross-border spaces on place-making (Diego Andrés Pinzón Quesada).

- Case studies on reclaiming public spaces and community building (Melissa Turgut and Duygu Cihanger Ribeiro).

The **Afternoon Session** at the Goethe-Institut featured two roundtables focusing on bottom-up initiatives and reconciliation processes.

- **Roundtable Four** focused on **"What institutions are needed for constructing conflict transformation? What is the role of civil society and bottom-up initiatives?"** Moderated by Professor Socrates Stratis with Professor Nadia Charalambous as the discussant, the session explored:
 - The public limits of institutions in Prague (Jitka Hlaváčková and Martin Netočný).
 - Post-conflict centers in Gorizia/Nova Gorica (Dr. Paul Rajakovics).
 - The proposal for a Museum of Multi-Perspectivity in Nicosia (Haoran Wang).
 - The Buffer Fringe Festival's role in curating beyond liminal fragility (Dr. Ellada Evangelou and Nihal Soganci).
- **Roundtable Five** concluded the symposium with a discussion on **"How does the active agency of the urban environment support or cancel out reconciliation processes?"** Moderated by Professor Nadia Charalambous with Professor Sebnem Hoskara as the discussant, this session featured interventions on:
 - The 'Urban Glenti' in Buffer Zones (Yiorgos Hadjichristou).
 - Mitrovica's urban landscape and the quest for common ground (Eliza Hoxha).
 - Outdoor historical education in divided societies (Dr. Loizos Kapsalis).
 - Enclaves of commoning across divisions (Effrosyni Roussou and Ana Ricchiardi).

The symposium concluded with a wrap-up session, summarizing the key insights and discussions from the two days, and highlighting the importance of continued dialogue and collaboration in addressing the complex challenges discussed.





Photos from the Symposium

ANNEX I – DETAILED PROGRAM and ABSTRACTS

1. Program

Day One: Thursday May 30, 2024

Morning Session

9:00 - 9:30 (Home for Cooperation).

Registration of participants We move to the Goethe-Institut, where the keynote talk, and the roundtables will take place. The coffee breaks will be at the the Home Café of the Home for Cooperation.

9:30 - 10:00 (Goethe-Institut)

Welcome Notes

10:00 - 11:00 (Goethe-Institut)

Who should Decide? Territorial Conflict and Architecture in Action. Keynote lecture by Fatina Abreek-Zubiedat

.....
11:00 - 11:30

Coffee Break (The Home Café at the Home for Cooperation).

11:30 - 12:30

Critical Urban Play by LUCY and AA&U (Home for Cooperation).

The board games will be available throughout the symposium (more details to be given on-site).

12:30 - 13:30

Lunch (The Home Café of Home for Cooperation Café – at the participants' expenses)

Afternoon Session (roundtables, Goethe-Institut)

13:30 - 15:30

Roundtable One:

How do we create spaces for conciliation to transform conflicts constructively?

Moderator: Sabine Knierbein, Professor, Technische Universität Wien, Austria Discussant: Socrates Stratis, Professor, University of Cyprus, Cyprus

Interventions:

Playing with Rules: Commoning and Intercultural Exchange in the Work of Border Crossings

Dr. Marion Hohlfeldt, Senior Lecturer in Art History, Rennes 2 University, EUR CAPS, France

Common and commoning processes have played an increasingly significant / prominent role in recent art. While pointing towards alternative political movements (Dardot & Laval, 2014) and serving as operative concept of practical forms of democratic governance (Nicolas-Le Strat, 2016), the transition to more collaborative forms of social, cultural and political action paves the way for new forms of co-production. Thus, it opens up space for new perspectives that we can refer to as, according to Arjun Appadurai, imagination as social practice (Appadurai, 1996). The communication proposes to analyse the notion of commoning in light of the work of the intercultural theatre company *Border Crossings*. Through their projects and workshops, the company actively implements commoning practices that acknowledge difference and experiments forms of cooperation. Whether they take place inside or out on the street, they allow engagement with communities “in the real”, while taking into account the specific ontology of playing and expression, more than an artistic gesture, an engaged political position (Walling, 2022). While art and playing maintain an ontological proximity in their demarcation to life, they also open an interstice between the real and imaginary in which serious items can be enacted. That is what Winnicott (1971) described as *potential space*: a protected, yet open space, able to mediate between the individual and society while negotiating new rules up to its own reversal. We will examine how artists use this notion to create playful laboratory situations in which new possibilities can be experienced beyond all forms of assignments.

The Dead Zone as a Place-Consciousness Site

Yianna Tsolaki, Cultural Management Curator (Heritage/Design), Larnaka, Cyprus

The reclaiming of a space for self or community, and in enabling a quilting of resources and emotions, which together can form the dynamics of change. The buffer zone, denotes not a barren land, but rather a big area of agricultural land which prior to the 1963 division, was cultivated by its inhabitants. No man’s land is that man’s land which now lies uncultivated, unengaged and unloved. The repercussions are that people who frame these borders subconsciously shy further away from it. A certain spontaneous or ephemeral urbanism is lacking. In this proposal, what is suggested is a reclaiming by re-connecting the divide, made possible by engaging through place-consciousness. A green area of untraversed, untamed, and of a certain unruliness green site can be both tamed and embraced through a cultural borrowing from both sides, in recouping or re engaging with the loyalties which were once in place before they were abruptly interrupted. Purposely distancing ones’ self from politicising the context, but rather tending to the green space as a communal shared garden in need of reconnection. A place-consciousness initiative is a learning method of engaging both the environment, cultural, historical and geographical context experiences of a place. A perspective of ecological and justicial viability of an active, reactive and contributing community. A reorientation of rural and urban environments through a critical approach of cultural decolonisation and ecological rehabilitation is ordinary, restrictive elite minds should ensure that it is available to all. That discourse of a common, hope-filled horizon is the Ithaca that most community-building initiatives of solidarity have at heart.

A prelude with a seamark to poetic embodiment of public space memory in Varosha: The Camel Rock

Dr. Nafia Akdeniz, Eastern Mediterranean University, Cyprus

In the wake of Varosha’s partial opening to public visits in October 2020, the former pre-war residents walked into their deserted militarized city again after 50 years of their enforced displacement. This new refugee experience intensified their place attachment narratives as a mnemonic resistance preserving the place memory. The narratives refuse the cancellation of their hope-for-future in the city and contest against the city currently being visited as a post-conflict site of ‘dark tourism’. As well as making the narrative mapping of the private homes and workplaces, Varosha refugees define the public places, such as beaches, parks, cafes, galleries, cinema, etc., as the landmarks of collective memory and cultural heritage. “We are not ghosts” is an oft-heard counter-response objecting to naming the city as a ghost town; they claim their existence, the vibrant presentness of the collective memory, and the right to have a say in the city’s future. Drawing on ongoing ethnographic research, this placed-based poetry project aims to amplify the collective memory of the public places in Varosha in the form of poems as digital sound maps. Because poetry enhances human experience with emotionally charged, thought provoking sensory images, this project intends to communicate the memory and

to create an empathic space between the memory and physical/virtual visitors of the city.

15:30 - 16:00

Coffee Break (The Home Café at the Home for Cooperation)

16:00 - 18:00

Roundtable Two:

How do commoning Practices support the diversity of publics in peace-building and related planning processes?

Moderator: Sebnem Hoskara, Professor, Eastern Mediterranean University, Cyprus
Discussant: Evangelia Athanassiou, Professor, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

Interventions:

Festivals as a Form of Urban Activism: A Case Study of 'Pame Kaimakli,' a Community Festival in a Contested Cypriot Neighborhood

Veronika Antoniou, Tokyo University, Japan

Our study explores the synergies between artistic endeavours, community engagement and place-making in reimagining urban landscapes through the lens of the 'Pame Kaimakli' Festival in Nicosia. It addresses a notable gap in urban sustainability policies and planning, which often overlook the potential of these 'soft' tools despite their growing acknowledgment in scholarly discussions for their role in urban transformation.

Our research underscores the importance of public spaces as pivotal components of urban commons, demonstrating how the NGO Urban Gorillas (UG) adopts practices to nurture the commons fostering social cohesion and inclusivity within contested neighborhood territories. We dissect the strategies and tactics employed by UG to invigorate public spaces, employing place-based creative activities aimed at rejuvenating communities and promoting peace and conviviality. Specifically, we will discuss festival activities that advocate for peace between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities through artistic and spatial practices. By focusing on the tools of practices and the role of UG as a mediator, we provide an in-depth look into their success in nurturing the commons as a peace-building and place-based practice in urban settings.

Conflict-Sensitive Participated Planning: Three Lessons from Children and Youth

Vittorio Iervese, Professor, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy

Following the Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1989 in Europe and in other parts of the world, many activities aimed at promoting the social participation of children and adolescents flourished. Italy was a protagonist of that season by supporting forms of LUDIC, PLANNING and DECISION-MAKING participation. In this presentation I'll focus on the second form, which includes experiences of planning public space in workshops with experts (adults) and non-experts (children and adolescents). Of particular interest are those projects realized in places that are disputed or crossed by conflicts, violent events, clashes, etc. The interest is not only in the results of the design but also and above all in the processes of participation and consultation activated. As a researcher, I have had the opportunity to take part in many of these projects and to analyze them empirically, drawing from them some theoretical-methodological insights useful for future planning. In this presentation I'll illustrate, through three concrete examples, the Conflict-Sensitive approach developed precisely in the work with children and adolescents: from a park at the site of a massacre to opposition to a mausoleum dedicated to a fascist general to a road between Albania and Montenegro that leads nowhere.

Commoning Practices: A Solution Mechanism for Land Ownership Conflicts in Paphos

Ersia Stylianou, Phd Candidate, University of Cyprus, Cyprus

This paper investigates the re-appropriation of the "territory" a colonised term that indicated power and domination over an area, through the historical commoning practices of Cyprus. The focus on the Paphos district as the case study was due to the large-scale agricultural Turkish Cypriot land ownership, the highest percentage

in Cyprus, and the geomorphological terrain and fertile soil, mainly used for agricultural practices. The importance of the past is immense thus, a thorough investigation of the collective-cooperative-commoning approaches could contribute to the transformation of land ownership in Paphos; an idea based on land privatisation, bicomunal collisions, population shifts and power conflicts. The focus on Potima Chiflick, Paphos, is due to the transformative nature of the ownership status and the arable lands mostly used for agricultural practices. Examining contestations and power dynamics in Potima Chiflick, will provide valuable insights into the transitional design required for reimagining the ethnic “territory” as common and shared. How do the collective-cooperative-commoning practices contribute to mitigating conflicts, fostering a vision of common ground in Paphos? I hypothesise that a collective approach, a design practice focusing on agricultural practices within the Cypriot framework, could offer a viable solution for the reimagining of land as commons.

Racism and Common Public Spaces in the Arts

Volker Kirchberg, Professor, Leuphana University, Lueneburg, Germany

Racism can be seen as the main contrasting pole to diversity in public spaces. A special public space are arts and cultural organization. In a 2023 survey of Hamburg’s arts organization, students of my master class in the discipline of “culture and society” and I, as the principle investigator, asked artists and arts managers about their experience with latent and manifest expressions of everyday and structural racism. We interviewed actors in seven art fields (theater, classical music, film, museums, advanced arts education, governmental agencies and foundations). Sociological theories of racism applied to the arts (e.g. Critical Race Theory, framing, diversity and white space concepts) provide the theoretical framework. The result is a comprehensive overview about different aspects of racism in Hamburg’s art worlds, including ways and means that the interviewed experts suggest to overcoming art world racism. Findings include the suppression of everyday racism, overt policies of diversity programs hiding the existence of everyday racism, the postcolonial discourse as a tool to reveal present racism, and the (lack of) a public awareness of racism as a prerequisite for institutionalizing anti-racist policies as a means for transforming public arts spaces to more diverse urban common places.

18:15 - 19:30

Walking Tour (Details given on-site)

Day Two: Friday May 31, 2024

Morning Session (Goethe-Institut)

9:00 - 10:00

Between trauma and tolerance: Examining the challenges and opportunities of public spaces in Jerusalem, keynote lecture by Nufar Avni.

10:00 - 10:30

Coffee Break (The Home Café at the Home for Cooperation)

10:30 - 12:30

Roundtable Three:

Can urban challenges of common concern regarding social-ecological transformations, (climate and other crises) trigger commoning practices, and how?

Moderator: Evangelia Athanassiou, Professor, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

Discussant: Sabine Knierbein, Professor, Technische Universität Wien, Austria

Interventions:

Of Common Concern I. Critical Spatial Practices Addressing the Neoliberal Urbanisation of the Coast of Cyprus

Charis Nika, Architecture, Phd Candidate, University of Cyprus, Cyprus

This paper explores the neoliberal urbanisation processes transforming the coast of Cyprus across the divide and reflects on the ongoing work of the author, in collaboration with bottom-up initiatives, in addressing these processes and the spatial injustices they produce, through spatial practice. In the past two decades, a wave of urbanisation, focusing on large-scale, investment-based development, has transformed coastal areas in Cyprus at a fast pace (as happened in the case of Limassol, Trikomo and soon Larnaca). This kind of development leads to the destruction and privatisation of coastal commons, influences the housing market, making it inaccessible to a large percentage of the population, and increases the vulnerability of coastal areas in the face of climate crisis. It therefore needs to be critically considered and collectively reimagined. The paper explores critical spatial practice as a way of addressing these developments and the spatial injustices they produce and as a way of encouraging, challenging, and enriching public debate and imaginaries. It specifically focuses on a series of walking practices (walking tours and discussions), organised across the divide, to examine how such practices, by focussing on socio-ecological challenges of common concern, can challenge and reimagine current urbanisation processes and encourage collective discussion and exchange among a variety of publics.

Of Common Concern II

Maria Hadjimichael, Senior Associate Scientist, Marine and Maritime Institute, Cyprus

Cross-Border Spaces: Place-Making Informal Trader's Practices in the Colombian – Venezuelan Checkpoint

Diego Andrés Pinzón Quesada, Development Planning PhD Candidate, UCL, UK

Informal trade plays a central role in cross-border urban economies and migration. Since 2015, when Venezuela's economic crisis started, the politics of border closure and opening with Colombia have impacted the dynamics of cross-border informal trade and the exponential migration patterns. In this context, cross-

border 'informal' traders have sustained economic exchanges that alleviate the precariousness of local economies while navigating complex biopolitical regimes. Yet the spatial agency of these traders is misrepresented and underestimated. To address this gap, this research asks: how did the Cross-border Informal Traders "I-CBT" spatial agency and practices configure the Venezuelan-Colombia border public space through their practices. This research contends that I-CBT transgression of border regimes, moving beyond regulatory frameworks and reproducing a particular "borderless" spatial network of economic exchanges and transitions that are essential to understanding contemporary border formations. This work will merge three strategies being the last one the analysis of the placemaking dynamics of the border Checkpoint regarding the Simon Bolivar binational bridge. This space was recorded using static footages which unveils the different layers of transactions and transitions in the public space. This research contributes to critical border studies and informality debates underpinning the processes of bordering, practices of resistance to borders.

Reclaiming Public Spaces: Yedikule Urban Gardens as a Case Study in Community Building and Urban Commons

Melissa Turgut, Research Assistant, Istanbul Beykent University, Turkey

Duygu Cihanger Ribeiro Middle East Technical University, Turkey

The commons embodies an active process of producing, organizing, and allocating both tangible and intangible shared resources within urban spaces. These dynamic processes play an essential role in fostering interaction among individuals and building new connections between people with physical space through new materials, knowledge and alternative ways of social life. This research perceives the commons as a catalyst for transforming neglected spaces spoiled by conflicts over ownership, governance, and utilization. By delving into the role of the commons in shaping the socio-spatial dynamics of public spaces and exploring the question, 'What role do civil societies and bottom-up initiatives play?', this research interprets urban gardens as common grounds providing alternatives for transforming disputed urban spaces and thinking about urban futures.

Yedikule Urban Gardens in Istanbul, situated within and along the historical Land Walls of the city, has a complex, multi-layered structure and a historical narrative with many transformations and contestations. Currently, they can be defined as private gardens in a public space regarding functioning and ownership. However, the aftermath of the Gezi Events witnessed a collective uprising spearheaded by NGOs, activists, and city residents, who orchestrated protests, public lectures, and workshops to safeguard this area from municipal and private encroachments. Their efforts underscore the enduring presence of communal values within these gardens. Consequently, this study reviews the commons as a peacemaking and socio-spatial strategy capable of preventing further exclusion of this multifaceted and contested urban space from the broader urban environment, plagued by conflicts over ownership, governance, usage, and socio-spatial relations with the rest of the city. Thus, the focal points of discussion will revolve around a brief socio-spatial developmental history of the site, the pivotal roles played by Yedikule Urban Gardens during the recent urban insurgencies, the place of civil societies, and grassroots initiatives against the top-down decision-making processes governing the site.

12:30 - 13:30

Lunch (The Home Café at the Home for Cooperation Café – at the participants' expenses)

Afternoon Session (roundtables- Goethe-Institut)

13:30 - 15:30

Roundtable Four:

What institutions for constructing conflict transformation? What is the role of civil society and bottom-up initiatives?

Moderator: Socrates Stratis, Professor, University of Cyprus, Cyprus

Discussant: Nadia Charalambous, Professor, University of Cyprus, Cyprus

Interventions:

Public Limits of Public Institutions.

Jitka Hlaváčková and Martin Netočný, Prague City Gallery, Prague, Czech Republic

We attempt to analyze the limits determining the position of Czech institutions in relation to public space practices. Using several cases of spatial activities (ranging from private subjects and NGOs to other types of art institutions) operating in the Central European region, we attempt to show strategies which art, through political engagement, aims at a balanced development of society in the field of social and political conditions. The case study of the Prague City Gallery and its broader context of activities will help to describe and examine the paradigm that classifies public institutions as would-be neutral entities with no connection to external political influences. This critical comparison of the more active and effective smaller subjects, together with our position of limited 'state neutrality', will provide deeper insight into this situation. The paper should raise questions such as: Is this phenomenon typical just for the Czech Republic, or is it recognizable also in other states of Europe? What is the possible solution? How to make state actors more active in public space while not breaking any ethical border? Those key questions are deeply anchored in our curatorial practices without any visible solution. By presenting the specific local aspects, we would like to open the international and interdisciplinary discussion and try to raise this question toward other participants of the conference.

Learning from Gorizia/ Nova Gorica: Center for Post-Conflict

Dr. Paul Rajakovics Transparadiaso, Vienna, Austria

Learning from Gorizia/ Nova Gorica wants to offer a perspective after physical and political borders have been overcome – even though the mental borders in Gorizia (I)/ Nova Gorica (SLO) are not yet overcome. But the ECoC 2025 Nova Gorica offers a new perspective on overcoming these borders. Therefore Transparadiaso suggests to install a „Center for Post-Conflict“, which could be used by international conflicting parties for providing a safe environment for addressing their issues. This could be a best practice example for other current conflicts. (e.g. Ukraine, Palestine,...)

A collective performative walk along the border between Gorizia and Nova Gorica. The border crossings which Transparadiaso researched for the competition “EPICentre” (2020) for European Capital of Culture 2025 Nova Gorica/ Gorizia will serve as basis for the performative walk. The walk will also explore topics like isolation in border regions, whereas e.g. animals find habitats without being limited to political borders. The walk for establishing a „Center for Post-Conflict“ should be realized in collaboration with the Università degli Studi/ Polo Gorizia (Faculty of Architecture), Gorizia, and with artists, researchers and authors from Gorizia/ Nova Gorica, and from other countries of conflict.

Establishing a „Center for Post-Conflict“. In parallel to preparing the walks along the border, a building will be researched as permanent site for a „Center for Post-Conflict“. This is also envisioned as potential “legacy” reflecting on the experience in Nova Gorica and Gorizia during the process of ECoC.

A proposal- The Museum of Multi-Perspectivity -in Nicosia, Buffer Zone, Cyprus

Haoran Wang, University of Melbourne/University of Manchester/University of Cambridge, UK

In Cyprus, the city stands as a testament to the waves of conflict and the lived experiences of its inhabitants. The buffer zone emerges as a spatial manifestation of an ongoing state of conflict, serving as both a symbolic representation and structural reinforcement of identities of difference. Memory and architecture become so intertwined that distinguishing between matter and memory, testimony and evidence. Museums play a crucial role in negotiating the meanings of our past, helping to define current identities, and influencing vision of the future. The history of Cypriot national museums is best understood as layers of various expressions, with distinct cultural-historical priorities established by different communities. Thus, the establishment of a new museum in the buffer zone could serve as a channel for reconciliation, sharing narratives and encapsulating the region's diverse history and identity. It is critical to introduce the concept of multi-perspectivity. By focusing on how both individual and collective memories resonate within contexts of loss, contestation, division, and conflicting claims of statehood and national identity, this project aims to explore how the architecture of the museum might serve as a testing ground for multi-perspectivity and narrative plurality, redefine museums as platforms for inclusive storytelling and collective healing.

Buffer Fringe Festival: Creating and Curating beyond liminal fragility

Dr. Ellada Evangelou, Nihal Soganci, Cyprus

The Buffer Fringe Performing Arts Festival was born out of the contested and fragile space in between border lines, the buffer zone in Nicosia, Cyprus. This paper will address the Festival's enactment of a new understanding of affective space that can enable resistance and co-creation beyond the liminality of a post-conflict buffer zone (in Nicosia and beyond) through the pandemic years 2020 and 2021, as well as 2022. It proposes unpacking the role art and co-creation can play at a moment and a space of transition to produce alternative affective subjectivities to dominant ideologies. Within an already contested geography, 2020 brought along the pandemic and the closure of crossing points in Cyprus which created a split in all planned activity and demonstrated the fragility of contact between communities and artists, but also produced other possibilities. Buffer Fringe 2020 was one of the few artistic platforms in Cyprus and globally to have adapted and materialized a festival, while also developing interdisciplinary and innovative methodologies which enable exploring the relationship between arts, resistance, liminal fragility, and alternative affective agency by investing in collaborative and process-based approaches. Encouraging a decolonizing agenda and embedding creativity into a social process, the paper also looks into the public space action in the recently opened ghost town of Famagusta in the 2021 festival iteration, closing with the 2022 collective curatorial approach of the festival as embodiments of a new understanding of space that can enable resistance and co-creation beyond liminal fragility.

15:30 - 16:00

Coffee Break (The Home Café at the Home for Cooperation)

16:00 - 18:00

Roundtable Five:

How does the active agency of the urban environment support or cancel out reconciliation processes?

Moderator: Nadia Charalambous, Professor, University of Cyprus, Cyprus

Discussant: Sebnem Hoskara, Professor, Eastern Mediterranean University, Cyprus

Interventions:

The 'Urban Glenti' of the Buffer Zones

Yiorgos Hadjichristou, Professor, University of Nicosia/ Urban Gorillas, Cyprus

This study examines the collaborative endeavors of the Non-Governmental Organization Urban Gorillas (UG) and the Creative Center for Fluid Territories (CCFT), alongside the participation of local and international actors in investigating the notion of "Place" along contested sites. The diverse research-action activities took place in Norway, England, Scotland, Alaska but mainly in the island of Cyprus. UG's mission is to transform public spaces into lively, innovative, and inclusive hubs for all the people through creative activities. The CCFT is a peripatetic international research group contributing to discussions about interdisciplinary practices about place making, belonging and occupation. The collaboration facilitated a series of peripatetic activities, transcending traditional academic boundaries to incorporate practical actions within the divided capital of Nicosia, the abandoned urban landscape of Famagusta, and rural settings in Cyprus. The presentation will focus on the 2018 festival 'Ayios Sozomenos – place of barley' _ 'Timeless Encounters' and three participations in the Buffer Fringe Festival of Performing Arts starting in 2019 with the Urban Glenti (Feast) and continuing through the Covid Pandemic in 2020 and 2021. It will contribute to a deeper understanding of how creative and scholarly practices can intersect to articulate the notion of People- Places- Processes of contested sites.

Bridging Divides: Mitrovica's Urban Landscape and the Quest for Common Ground

Eliza Hoxha, Architect/Urban Planner, Kosova

Cities emerged from the ravages of war with scars and crises, which morphed into new political battlegrounds during times of peace. As a result, new spatial and social configuration arose, accompanied by new borderlines

and urban landscapes, leaving behind a trail of pain, lost memories and heritage. These changes fractured the sense of belonging and identity among inhabitants and the city itself. Mitrovica, since the end of the 1999 Kosovo War, has grappled with a prolonged history of problems and division. The river that runs through the heart of the city became a stark dividing line, with the main bridge transforming into a checkpoint and a contentious public space, separating the north and south of Mitrovica. Presently, the city is formally divided into two municipalities: North Mitrovica, where Serbs form the majority, and South Mitrovica, where Albanians predominate. The bridge and the river have evolved into political symbols of mutual rejection, despite considerable efforts from the international community, local NGOs, artists, and activists to foster new spaces for dialogue and common ground. This paper aims to delve into the condition of the divided city of Mitrovica and explore the endeavors of its cultural and community scenes to rebuild trust and tackle social and urban challenges through placemaking and other grassroots initiatives.

Doing history outdoors in divided societies: the AHDR's educational walks and study visits

Dr Loizos Kapsalis, Association for Historical Dialogue and Research, Cyprus

The Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR) is an inter-communal, non-profit and non-governmental organization established in 2003 in Nicosia. The AHDR envisions to contribute to the advancement of dialogue, critical thinking and intercultural understanding amongst teachers, students, and the public by providing access to various learning opportunities for all. Since its foundation, the AHDR has offered educational walks of Nicosia across the divide as part of its History Education and Peace Education activities. These invite participants to examine the landscape and the lives of the various communities that have inhabited the urban space, and to actively engage with the social, political and cultural histories of the city. The AHDR has published two educators' manuals that incorporate outdoor methodologies and in 2024, it will be expanding its outdoor programming with study visits for young people to significant sites around Cyprus. In this presentation, we will look at how education in outdoor spaces, particularly the study of the (urban) landscape, can support and enhance efforts to foster historical dialogue and build a sustainable culture of peace in divided societies. The AHDR's educational walks draw on outdoor, experiential and place-based education methods, which encourage learners to build deeper connections with both the places/communities in which learning happens, and with each other.

Enclaves of commoning across the divide: self-organised spaces against divisions

Effrosyni Roussou, PhD Candidate, University of Cyprus, Ana

Ricchiardi, Researcher, University of Cyprus, Cyprus

Contemporary Nicosia is characterised by overlapping layers of division. The rising neoliberalisation resulting in intensified touristification and commodification of resources, paired with the tangible division between north and south, and the limited social safety nets for incoming migrants and refugees, widen the socio-economic gaps among different communities. This situation also fuels an increasingly precarious terrain of social and spatial enclosures for urban dwellers to navigate. Against this backdrop, there is a proliferation of bottom-up, self-organised, horizontally managed, non-commercial spaces that operate in the margins of everyday life in Nicosia across the divide. While these enclaves of "commoning" may vary in terms of scope of activities, members or target audience, they all share similar ideological positioning and socio-ecological values, thus forming a network of alternative forms of encounters. This work explores the factors enabling the emergence of these commons and the ways in which they operate to overcome the various layers of division. By adopting a spatial mapping and ethnographic approach, we look into both spatialities and processes, exploring motivations, intents, actions/activities and methods towards self-sustenance and intercommunal outreach. The exploration highlights commoning practices and discusses their potential in creating bridges across divisions.

18:15 - 19:30

End of the Symposium Conclusions

THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE FIVE ROUNDTABLES AT A GLANCE

Date/Time	MAY 30, 13:30 - 15:30	MAY 30, 16:00 - 18:00	MAY 31, 10:30 - 12:30	MAY 31, 13:30 - 15:30	MAY 31, 16:00 – 18:00
Roundtable (Goethe- Institut)	ROUNDTABLE 1	ROUNDTABLE 2	ROUNDTABLE 3	ROUNDTABLE 4	ROUNDTABLE 5
Questions	How do we create spaces for conciliation to transform conflicts constructively?	How do we do commoning? Practices support the diversity of publics in peace-building and related planning processes?	Can urban challenges of common concern regarding social-ecological transformations, (climate and other crises) trigger commoning practices, and how?	What institutions for constructing conflict transformation? What is the role of civil society and bottom-up initiatives?	How does the active agency of the urban environment support or cancel out reconciliation processes?
Moderators	Sabine Knierbein	Sebnem Hoskara	Evangelia Athanassiou,	Socrates Stratis	Nadia Charalambous
Intervention s	Marion Hohlfeldt	Veronika Antoniou	Charis Nika	Jitka Hlaváčková Martin Netočný	Yiorgos Hadjichristou
	Yianna Tsolaki	Vittorio Iervese	Maria Hadjimichael, Nurtane Karagil	Paul Rajakovics	Eliza Hoxha
	Nafia Akdeniz	Ersia Stylianou	Diego Andrés Pinzón Quesada	Haoran Wang	Loizos Kapsalis
		Volker Kirchberg	Melissa Turgut, Duygu Cihanger	Ellada Evangelou, Nihal Soganci	Effrosyni Roussou, Ana Ricchiardi
Discussants	Socrates Stratis	Evangelia Athanassiou	Sabine Knierbein	Nadia Charalambous	Sebnem Hoskara

The AESOP Thematic Group for Public Spaces and Urban Cultures

The Thematic Group of Public Spaces and Urban Cultures (TG PSUC) aims at introducing the research and design focus on lived space and everyday life in and beyond member schools of the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP).

The members of the AESOP Thematic Group on Public Spaces and Urban Cultures discuss and develop approaches proposed under the biennial group's working topic and engage in peer-to-peer exchange on research and design projects. In addition to annual AESOP Congress, the group meets regularly in the meetings spanning academia, praxis and activism, which take place in the form of workshops, seminars and conferences, accompanied by a field trip. The meetings are organized by group members' institutions, after submitting a declaration of interest to host an event to the group's working theme.