This study considers how arts and cultural practices in Cyprus have been used in the context of conflict transformation and the role that the arts can play to alter policies and social practices at the grassroots level. It is embedded in a social understanding of the role of the arts in addressing conflict and looks at how creative practices can build community, social engagement and public involvement.

The phenomenon of social engagement in the arts is discussed in parallel with the use of art for the purposes of conflict transformation, with a particular focus on the perceived capacity of the arts to act as a catalyst for empathy and to facilitate contact and exchange across estranged communities. To understand the social and community dimension of contemporary arts practices a number of Cypriot cases that involve different aspects of arts organisation and cultural production across creative fields are mapped. The specific cases are examples of good practice and represent direct inter-community involvement, as well as long-term structures of creative collaboration that have focused on building social relationships and exchange.

In order to learn from other international experiences where art and culture have been used as tools to resist ethnic and social divisions, a series of place specific case studies are examined -- South Africa, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Northern Ireland and Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). The examples discussed here allow for a wider understanding of how arts and cultural practices enable inter-communal patterns of cooperation, which bridge divisions and offer insight into diverse modes of practices that use the arts for the purposes of relationship building and dialogue. Learning from these local and international practices a series of recommendations are then outlined. These policy suggestions emphasize community and socially engaged arts practices and place the focus on how to shape cross-cultural policies, considering institutional collaborations, grassroots initiatives, private-public backing and the restrictions on the involvement of state bodies.
About the Author

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CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION ART: Cultivating coexistence through the use of socially engaged artistic practices

Evanthia Tselika

Report 4/2019
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INTRODUCTION

Ethno-national narratives have largely shaped the institutional cultural frameworks on both sides of the divide in Cyprus, but peace-building mechanisms assisted by international bodies—such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU)—have also promoted the use of art and culture for purposes of conflict resolution. Johan Galtung argues that peacebuilding and creativity are similarly ‘located in the borderland between the intellectual and the emotional,’ where knowledge and emotions fuse to facilitate ‘transcendence’ (2004, 160). Conflict resolution analyst Craig Zelizer believes the arts can help raise “awareness of the dangers of impending conflict and speak out in favour of peace,” and his research in Bosnia-Herzegovina highlights how artistic practice can be used to challenge prejudices and create bridges between communities (2004, 4). Using art and culture for conflict resolution facilitates inter-group contact, encourages collaboration, and builds social bonds and relationships (Epskamp 1999; Zelizer 2004, 2007).

Conflict resolution and peacebuilding are inherently political processes. However neither conflict nor peace is driven exclusively by rational considerations and calculations, or by objective flaws and malpractices that motivate state and non-state actors, communities and political groups, men and women to resort to violence or champion non-violent social change. Emotional and communicational components are powerful in shaping individual and social decisions. Art as a quintessence of emotions that are expressed using allegories or symbols evokes emotions and becomes a potent tool in both conflict and peace. Whilst art cannot resolve conflicts or politically build peace, it can generate a unique process of people-to-people interaction that can contribute to the process of overcoming deep social, political and geographical barriers and divisions.

The focus of this study is to consider how art practices in Cyprus have been used in the context of conflict transformation, and to look at the role that the arts can play to alter policies and social practices at the grassroots level—i.e., to assist people in both communities experience coexistence in their daily lives. Artistic interventions unfold in parallel with institutionalized exchanges and projects, and help transform the very space where the latter occur. Examples of socially engaged art practices in other conflict areas are discussed to see how they enable inter-communal patterns of collaboration and bridge divisions.
RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

The research framework of the current research report is embedded in a social understanding of the role of the arts in addressing conflict, and looks at how creative practices can build community, social engagement and public involvement. In the literature review the phenomenon of social engagement in the arts is addressed in parallel with the use of art for the purposes of conflict transformation. There is a particular focus on the perceived capacity of the arts to act as a catalyst for empathy and to facilitate contact and exchange across estranged communities.

To understand the social and community dimension of contemporary arts practices, I examined a number of Cypriot cases that involve different aspects of arts organisations across creative fields. The cases included:

- a long-term collaboration between two theatre groups;
- the collaboration between two visual arts associations on the island;
- the work of Rooftop Theatre, which was established as a bi-communal organisation following the opening of the borders;
- an international contemporary art exhibition that took place in the buffer zone in the old city of Nicosia;
- a participatory music project in the public space;
- the multi-disciplinary neighbourhood-focused arts production of Studio 21 in North Nicosia using a ‘festival’ model; and
- the *Hands on Famagusta* project that uses participatory urban design processes to re-imagine a unified Famagusta.

All the above-mentioned efforts offer insight into local-level modes of practices that use the arts for the purposes of relationship building and dialogue across the ethnic divide.

The specific cases are examples of good practice and represent direct inter-community involvement; moreover, they represent long-term collaborative art practices that have focused on building social relationships and exchange. They are primarily related to performance, visual arts and public art festival models and contexts of exchange, and not on individual artist practices but on organisational structures of co-production. This methodology is not meant to exclude the important inter-community work carried out by musicians, poets,
filmmakers and other artists in Cyprus, but draws from the field of study of the author. As there are no formal collaborations between governmental institutions and state/public art institutions across the division, the pool of projects comprises primarily the work and practice of non-governmental organisations (NGO) and artist associations/organisations that have been active in long-term exchange activities.

Examples where art was used to bridge ethnic and social divisions in other parts of the world - South Africa, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Northern Ireland and Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) – offer a comparative analysis framework to view how artistic practices emphasising social involvement can be used in Cyprus. The methodology included research and interviews with the participants and authors of the art projects as well as with local and international experts related to the case studies carried out in Cyprus. Since 2010, a series of interviews were carried out with local cultural organizers and artists from across the divide that participated in and produced peace arts initiatives. These have assisted in building an overview of how the arts have been used in Cyprus as a tool for processes of exchange.¹

¹ The author has been engaged in research related to the use of art for purposes of conflict transformation in Cyprus since 2009. In 2015 she completed her PhD thesis at Birkbeck: University of London: Conflict Transformation Art: Examining the role of socially engaged art in resisting urban segregation, the case of Nicosia Cyprus. The background of the researcher in the study of how the arts can assist in peace-building through their social function has shaped the methodological approach of this report.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Socially engaged and community based artistic practices

Raymond Williams, in his book *Keywords* (1976), tells us that the Latin root of the word community, from the Latin *communitatem*, and derived from *communis* - common, first appears in the English language in the fourteenth century (1983, 75). Community becomes an important word to consider when aiming to work with people across boundaries that are a result of conflict and war. Community becomes a way to consider the human dimension of bringing people together, as well as how processes of differentiation are shaped between people. In the late 1960s, debates around the social and political utility of art, in its capacity to involve different publics and communities, started to become firmly present both in the practice of art and in the literature. The facilitator role of artists and cultural practitioners who use participatory art production models in their work with communities has become gradually more professionalized; this started with the community art worker of the 1970s and now applies to the socially engaged art practitioner of today. Professionalization of the practice has occurred together with a substantial increase in the wider use of the arts for the purpose of public engagement, audience participation and community inclusion. We see this in the work of museums, NGOs and local authority bodies, and in the sharp increase in festival and biennial cultural production. The use of social engagement through the arts has also featured significantly in processes of conflict transformation, in areas described by conflict and sites characterized by division, because of the arts’ focus on building inter-personal relationships among estranged peoples.

The methodological approach of socially engaged artistic practice (which is practiced in diverse artistic fields) features notions of community and the social in the arts, and has been described in varying terms. Some prevailing terms that are proposed by the art world include: new genre public art (Suzanne Lacy 1995), socially collaborative and participatory art (Claire Bishop 2012), dialogical (Grant Kester2004) or socially situated art (Lorraine Leeson, 2017). The most fitting term that we can borrow from the art world to consider the potential of the arts in cases of ethno-national division is the much-debated idea of socially engaged art (Helguerra 2011; Hope 2011; Finkelpearl 2013). As a practice and movement, socially engaged art is multi-faceted; it implies a methodology whereby artists aim to set up situations that will trigger critical thinking and spark innovative, creative responses to socio-political conditions. It also aims to motivate — and it can often even enable immediate — participation (engage-
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The cultivation (ment) of disparate social groups and their collaboration. Socially engaged art often takes the form of a participatory process where the spectators become not only participants but also co-authors in the project.

In the late 1960s into the early 1970s, the action-based performance and conceptual practices of the early twentieth century combined with political activism and community organizing to produce hybrids of social practice. In the 1980s, this methodology of practice expanded and in the 1990s became institutionalized (Felshin 1995, 9). At present we observe its influence in the branding of commercial art galleries and contemporary institutions, as well as its substantial inclusion in cultural funding programmes. Similarly, since the 1990s there has been an increase in more participatory and grassroots approaches in contexts where art and culture are used for purposes of conflict transformation (Zelizer 2004).

The work of Craig Zelizer proves to be particularly helpful when considering community art and the use of art in situations of confrontation and division. He argues that the arts can assist in raising “awareness of the dangers of impending conflict and speak out in favour of peace” (2004, 4), and he believes that they are particularly important in conflict resolution work. Through his research in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Zelizer highlights the potential of artistic practice to challenge prejudices and create bridges between communities in conflict (ibid).

He differentiates among ‘Arts for peace-building,’ which implies groups from different sides of the conflict coming together to conduct joint artistic endeavours; ‘Social Protest Art,’ that is, artistic /cultural processes utilized during stages of conflict as an act of resistance to violence, discrimination, fear and injustice; and ‘Creative Therapies,’ which focus on healing individuals traumatized by conflict through art (Zelizer 2007). This typology is useful for understanding how the arts can assist in peace-building and social change. He posits that change is facilitated through the “non-linear and creative methods of expression” which are used by the arts in order to trigger communication, and “alternative ways of interacting or expressing emotions and thoughts” (Zelizer 2003, 63).

**Cultivating empathy**

It is the cultivation of empathy, emotional identification and the shaping of relationships across social groups in conflict that these arts initiatives aim for; they hope to foster dialogue and exchange across conflict and division at the grassroots level where social practices may be born from the re-shaped inter-personal interaction and new personal understanding. Johan Galtung points out that conflict work is passionately rooted in values such as empathy, creativity and non-violence (2004, 160). Jill Bennett addresses the process of emotional identification in her exploration of artistic practices that demonstrate “certain conjunctions of

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2 An understanding of artistic practices as hybrid is when e.g., a project could be considered as performance art or film; however it could also be placed under the label of education, social work and political activism. This trans-disciplinary function is described by Suzanne Lacy as “hybrid practices” (Lacy 2010, p.224).
affective and critical operations” that “might constitute the basis of something we can call empathetic vision” (2005, 21). Bennett believes that empathy can be imagined through the “feeling for another” (ibid, 10; italics in original) as that is instigated by an encounter “with something irreducible and different, often inaccessible” (ibid). She discusses contemporary visual art produced in conflict and traumatic contexts, and refers to Nikos Papastergiadis’s characterization of empathy as being able to get closer to the other but also not forgetting one’s own positionality (ibid). Papastergiadis, in conversation with Marina Zournazi, describes his understanding of empathy as: “that process of surrender to the other and [willingness] to learn with the other, but also the catch that transforms your perception” (Papastergiadis cited in Zournazi2002, 96). Empathy is thus shown to be a complex process of dynamic oscillation in the tension of “going to and fro” (Papastergiadis cited in Zournazi 2002, 95), of seeing another reality but still “never forgetting where you are coming from” (ibid, 96).

The arts have been used as a tool to facilitate empathy, collaborative action and relationship building in post-conflict societies due to their ability to:

- Restore and nourish people’s capacities to listen, to empathize, to communicate, to receive, to hope, to imagine, to trust, and to act compassionately — the very capacities required for sustainable coexistence and reconciliation. (Yalen & Cohen 2007, 3)

All the above-named actions and abilities assist in building trust — a challenging and important task for estranged and divided communities. Peace-building research indicates that the arts have the potential to inform and develop relationship building (Epskamp 1999; Zelizer 2004; Lederach 2005). Their particular ability to enable communication without words expands the avenues for exchange amongst different social groups. Research into the arts and peacebuilding shows that the efforts of the arts are not confined to post-war societies but encompass “a wide range of efforts to prevent, reduce, transform, and help people recover from violence in all forms, at all levels of society, and in all stages of conflict” (Shanks & Schirch 2008). The arts, in fact, are often used in peace-building efforts because of their ability to offer a new way of seeing a given situation and opening up the participants to interpretations beyond the confines of their cultural context. They serve the ultimate goal of re-framing the situation, acting as a steppingstone in the conflict resolution process (Rothman 2017). It is important to remember, however, that the arts alone cannot produce a change in policy but must be accompanied with more direct civic action.

**The notion of facilitation**

The civic function of the arts and their potential in civic dialogue and community communication becomes an important feature if we are to consider how to facilitate collaboration across formal structures of separation, backed up by military forces. A key figure in this process is the community or socially engaged artist, or better yet, the cultural producer/art project facilitator. The image of the facilitator is an important one in the case of conflict mediation and also in cultural community based projects.
Theatre narratives can assist in developing a clearer understanding of the community-based artist-facilitator who actively aims for social contexts of interaction and dialogical exchange. We can consider this figure through Augusto Boal’s ‘joker’ (curinga in Portuguese) character. Boal’s joker acts as an intermediary between actors and spectators, orchestrating the performance/workshop (in line with the practice) such that disagreement/conflict arises as a way to examine the situation and perhaps re-imagine a new and transformed reality. There are more explicit scenarios in Boal’s Games for Actors and Non-Actors, in which the joker character keeps reappearing and acquires a position of enabling and facilitating the transformative context (2002). Whilst this facilitator “must maintain his or her neutrality and try not to impose his or her own ideas” (Boal 2006, 104), this is a “responsible act and arises after having made a choice, after taking the side of the oppressed” (ibid). By extension, the ‘spectactor’ figure proposed by Boal is interpreted as an active spectator who invades the stage, and, by “showing his will in action, being the actor, being the protagonist” (ibid, 85), engages in a “transformative act” (ibid).

The importance of the performing arts in the fields of social development, change and peacebuilding in situations of conflict is particularly noted. Zelizer maintains that many theatre groups that explore issues related to conflict draw on Boal’s work (2004, 65), and he chooses to focus on the performing arts in exploring how the arts can be used as a peacebuilding tool, “because of their more interactive and social nature” (ibid, 5). The performing arts are often seen as an easier way to facilitate social contexts of exchange and transformative platforms. Epskamp has argued that the arts can be used in “healing divided societies” (1999), and highlights the collective and social form of the performing arts, which “invite[s] people to work together –to create collectively, to a much greater degree than the visual arts” (1999, 287). Boal has been exceptionally influential in the development of narratives on how theatre can assist in peacebuilding and social change (Zelizer 2004; Epskamp 2006). His theoretical framework can illuminate the responsible action that people take when becoming involved in the use of the arts for social change and civic involvement. In a book written at the end of his life, Boal wished to remind us that his most cited and discussed proposition, the Theatre of the Oppressed is “a duty of citizenship” (2006, 106). He highlights that “relational transformations” are a vital part of a theatre of struggle.

The position of the artist facilitator oscillating between communities and local and international funding and governance agencies is a challenging one. Artist Inigo Manglano-Ovalle states: “artists who do community-based work should remain ‘critically suspect’ of their intentions and actions if they are to orchestrate responsible community process and artworks.”
Literature Review

Understanding the role of the practitioner as facilitator within the context of conflict transformation community art echoes wider debates over how we understand the figure of the mediator when he/she is encountered on the ground and not in first-tier diplomatic discussions. John Paul Lederach writes that most often mediation and facilitation function in an exclusionary fashion, as these are usually undertaken by leaders and civic representatives (2005, 96). He would rather see social spaces as contexts of facilitation, which “broaden and deepen the purpose of transformative intermediary design and action” (ibid). He emphasizes that “there are many people, relationships, and actions that need constructive, transformed, and sustained interaction well beyond a handful of key leaders” (ibid).

Lederach indicates the need to move away from the idea of a linear timeline and the moment of an agreement or specific solutions (2005, 47). Instead, he emphasizes the need to move toward the image of “ongoing social and relational spaces, in other words, people in relationships who generate responsive initiatives for constructive change” (ibid). He argues for the need to focus on creating and sustaining a framework and contexts that will generate “adaptive change processes” (ibid). In these adaptive change processes the artist facilitator becomes an important figure; his/her role in relation to the notion of mediating transformation must be clarified. His/her position as a figure with a long-term commitment to a place or as one from the outside who will act as a trigger for change can inform how we understand good practice in terms of involving communities and imagining change through the arts. Artist and architect Marjetica Potrc, when writing about her practice, cites the artist’s role as the “mediator and the role of art to mediate” within a collaborative framework (cited in Phillips & Erdemci 2012, 210). She highlights the importance of field research prior to working with a community in order to understand the social-scape of the place and to learn from the people; only then can she mediate a model that can have a long-term effect on the community. Learning from past efforts is important; for this reason it is crucial to reflect on how the arts that focus on inter-community interactions have been used in Cyprus for purposes of transforming the ethno-national dispute.
MAPPING SOCIALLY FOCUSED ART INITIATIVES FOR CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN CYPRUS

The fragmented Cypriot cultural landscape

The artistic production of a country is largely shaped by its government’s cultural policy, where policy is defined as a system of stated objectives, outcomes and content that are implemented/assigned by the relevant state authorities. As with any policy, cultural policy is defined by a convergence of collective actions aimed at achieving certain goals by assigning the use of certain resources. In the Cypriot context of division this becomes even more complex and fragmented, as, since the 1960s, the official state (Republic of Cyprus) has been operating under the Cypriot Doctrine of Necessity without making official amendments to the constitution itself. Owing to the non-recognized status of the North, the situation in relation to the arts is even murkier.

Ethno-national narratives have to a great extent defined the cultural policy and the institutional art systems of Cyprus, or lack thereof, as there is still no formal written cultural policy on either side of the divide. In an environment of ethnic segregation and prohibition of formal collaboration between public/state bodies, the primary context of artistic collaboration is between non-governmental bodies and arts/community organisations and associations.

In the South there is no state cultural policy, but there are five-year strategic plans for the arts that disseminate state funding. Different cultural Departments are dispersed among different Ministries, and the art system functions for the most part according to small community structures based on inter-personal relationships (Gordon 2004). Funding for the arts is handled by the Department of Cultural Services, which administratively belongs to the Ministry of Education and Culture; according to the five-year strategic plans this department outlines specific objectives for art-related endeavours. Different art categories that are supported through the cultural programmes include theatre, visual arts, literature, music, dance, folk culture and cinema (MOEC Cultural Strategy 2018). In the North of the island there is no formal cultural policy and no government-funded/supported national art museum. There are primarily small-scale and independent spaces that usually operate in conjunction with arts associations, cultural centres and university-based cultural initiatives and institutions (Onar and Zincir 2008). As Esra Plumer Bardak indicates, “the visual arts scene within the Turkish Cypriot community in Cyprus has been growing since the late 1970s without a centralised system to support, record and archive artistic activities and exhibitions” (2019).
In this landscape there is quite an imbalance between the two sectors in terms of cultural production and institutional infrastructure (in the form of state art museums, national theatres and the like) in parallel with the necessary economic support. This is in itself a reflection of the political state of affairs, wherein, because of its official status as a Republic, the South has a more clearly defined arts system and structures of cultural production and support. As the ethno-national narratives have shaped popular discourse and cultural production for years (Bounia & Stylianou-Lambert 2016), particularly when the borders were almost completely impenetrable from 1974 to 2003, it is important to note that working across the division was a political act of resisting dominant attitudes related to identity, mistrust and fear of what lies beyond the divide. The entry of the Republic of Cyprus into the European Union in 2004, together with the freedom of movement across the buffer zone enacted in 2003, resulted in a dramatic shift in cultural production and infrastructure.

Reflecting on past experiences, it becomes clear that official state-funded collaborations can present difficulties—a case in point is the cancelled Manifesta 6—organized by the International Manifesta Foundation in collaboration with the Municipality of Nicosia. Manifesta 6 was a contemporary art biennial that was meant to take place in Nicosia in 2006 but which never happened. Its cancellation has been mainly attributed to the efforts of the curators to host a part of the biennial (that was meant to take form of an art school) in the North sector of Nicosia, resulting in the withdrawal of the Nicosia Municipality amidst much local and international controversy. This was only three years after the lifting of the restrictions of movement was enforced and the Municipality, who was the principal local organizer, was hesitant to allow funding to move from the South to the North. Due to the non-recognised status of the North sector, formal state collaborations such as cooperation between state museums, departments and universities are limited, yet they are not impossible. In September 2015, and through the work of the Bi-communal Technical Committee on Culture, the Cyprus Theatre Organisation (South Cyprus) staged the tragedy Hippolytus by Euripides in the ancient theatre of Salamis (located in North Cyprus) (THOK 2015).

A predominant restriction, however, of flows of formal funding from South to North has also meant the need for more support to cultural production for the North. This is evidenced in the funding programme approved by the European Commission in late 2012 for “a €27.2 million annual programme of assistance aimed at the social and economic development of the Turkish Cypriot community” focused “on promoting the economic integration of the island, the overall objective being to help prepare for its reunification” (Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus, 2013). It is programmes such as these that have enabled projects and efforts administered by organisations based in the North. Several of these are analyzed below, including Confrontation through Art and various activities organized by Studio 21.

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4 I do not address this case in the present report, it is detailed in my upcoming article, “Conflict transformation art in Nicosia: Engaging social groups across the divided city through artistic practices” (2019).
The organisational structure of cultural actions and artistic developments (and here I do not mean the participation of individual artists in cultural production but rather the organisational arts framework) happen largely without state-related formal bridges of official collaboration. As a result, the predominant legacy of cooperation lies with community movements and associations, NGOs and independent/private arts and culture institutions. Those who wish to transcend the division and build relationships must do so largely outside the mechanisms of the state. For the expansion of this framework, support is demanded both in terms of infrastructure (so as to have platforms for interaction) and funding. A good example of such an infrastructure is the Home for Cooperation, inaugurated in 2011, which assists in the set up of cross-border cultural events, such as the Buffer Fringe Performing Arts Festival, running up to its sixth edition in 2019 (Buffer Fringe 2018). Central Nicosia, within the Venetian walls, is very interesting due to the transformation of the inner city through the restoration of buildings, and the many arts and culture initiatives that have been taking place there. These efforts have reshaped the city from a neglected border area into a historic, cultural, commercial and tourist hub.

Nicosia becomes important in our discussion, as the roots of bi-communal cooperation across the divide can be traced to the 1979 Nicosia Master Plan (NMP), which followed the successful implementation of the common sewage system project that had been disrupted by the conflict, and which was completed in 1978 (Nicosia Master Plan 1984). Led by the then mayors of the city, Lellos Demetriades (South Nicosia) and Mustafa Akinci (North Nicosia), the city administrations worked together under the umbrella of the UNDP (Petridou 2001). The project has been operating since 1979 and has achieved multiple urban transformations and cooperative endeavours. The first phase between 1981 and 1984 formulated a general planning strategy for greater Nicosia, and in the second phase 1984-1985 an operational plan was executed. There was particular focus on the historic centre of Nicosia within the Venetian walls as it represents a common heritage for all communities of Nicosia, and as the most historic part of the city it also exhibited the most deterioration (Nicosia the divided city 1998). With the restoration of the buildings that surround the Buffer Zone, the NMP hoped to revive this area that is seen as the most important for the re-integration of the communities. By the mid-2000s the Southern part of the old city was rapidly becoming a creative hub and a multicultural centre; and by 2015 it had been redeveloped and regenerated, with new restaurants, cafes and shops having transformed the two main commercial arteries of the old town. A particularly important milestone in this process was the opening of the Ledra/Lokmaci inner city crossing that opened in 2008 and allowed access across the divide within the walls. By 2020 the old town will boast more than thirty museums, cultural centres, galleries and other sites of interest across the divide together with a new municipality building in the South. Property values have increased and this has displaced more independent and community-driven initiatives and attracted international commercial corporations.
Legacy of artistic collaborations bridging divisions

There have been collaborative structures of cooperation through the arts in Cyprus since the 1980s with a peak in production in the 1990s and early 2000s. The format of the bi-communal framework, through which the use of the arts for conflict transformation evolved, has been— and is still— supported by international bodies such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been pivotal in supporting collaborations across the divide, as have organisations such as the US Bi-Communal Development Programme, whose purpose was to support programmes that would assist the reunification of Cyprus and promote peace and reconciliation between the two communities (USAID Evaluation Report 2004). International support mechanisms and private funding are the major sources of support for community initiatives for relationship-building and contact using the arts.

In the mid-1990s participants from both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities took part in civic training programmes supporting action for peace-building activities. The activities also included art exhibitions and other artistic work from both communities, and even though they did not “bring together large numbers of people,” they did serve “as important symbols of peaceful co-existence” (Broome 2005, 21). In 1998 the bi-communal project UNDP-ACT was formed with the goal of building confidence between the two communities and assisting in reconciliation and reunification (Cyprus Bi-communal Development Programme 2004, iv). In its efforts to contribute to peacebuilding and cooperation through projects benefiting both communities, from 1998-2004, UNDP-ACT supported projects with USAID funding of over 60 million dollars (ibid, v). In 2002, there was an increase in funds for projects related to culture and art (ibid, 22).

The above-noted increased support for community/ contact driven art projects, and more and more meetings in Cyprus began to occur in parallel with a shift in the way processes of conflict transformation were practiced; i.e., with a greater focus on more participatory models of community involvement that went beyond the leadership level. Within this context art began to be understood as a tool for conflict transformation, as its ability to build relationships through shared action was recognized.

The symbolic significance of the arts and their potential to strongly communicate messages of social change, dialogue and co-existence have placed them on the agenda of peace-building organisations and allowed them to feature in the building of relationships between disparate communities. The following exchange efforts and projects were selected—out of countless creative projects that were taking place in Cyprus at different times—because they embody key tendencies in how the arts have been utilised in the context of peacebuilding in Cyprus, particularly after restrictions of movement were lifted in 2003.
Cypriot cases

Social peace-building is about relationships. It deals with feelings, attitudes, opinions, beliefs, values and skills as they are held and shared between peoples, individuals and groups. (Notter and Diamond 1996)

A. Satiriko Theatre and Lefkosa Belediye Tiyatrosu, a collaboration from 1987 onwards

Satiriko Theatre (South) and Lefkoşa Belediye Tiyatrosu (North) first met in 1987 and continued to have meetings and exchanges up until the opening of the checkpoints in 2003, at which time they were finally able to work together on the same project (UNDP Project Database 2004). In May 1987 the Lefkoşa Belediye Tiyatrosu theatre was able to perform—at the invitation of Satiriko Theatre—the play *Irene* by Aristophanes, directed by Yashar Ersoi. Actor Polykarpos Polykarpou remembers:

> The play was a celebration, a feast of the people, humorous, live, direct. It has an opinion, shows the director’s knowledge and concerns, it enhances the work of the actors. It’s bold. The music, played by a live orchestra, is genuinely Cypriot, the choreography follows steps of well-known Cypriot dances. What work, what knowledge on how to re-approach [the ‘Other’]. The public enjoys, understands (without language being an obstacle) and feels. The end of the show is met with thunderous applause. For twenty minutes those on stage and those in the audience applaud each other. Everybody wants to embrace, to kiss the actors and the director. The stage becomes the arena and the arena becomes the whole stage. (Chroniko, Politis Newspaper, January 2010)

Since 1987 the two ideologically like-minded theatre groups have been collaborating to jointly produce theatre plays that bridge the divide and focus on themes of peace and coexistence. Their co-operation has become exemplary of how theatre assists in processes of relationship building and dialogue. Kees Epskamp (a leading figure in Theatre for Development)\(^5\) differentiates between art that can be used “as an end in itself” and art which acts “as a means to achieve an additional goal” (Epskamp 1999, 287). In this case art has been clearly used as a means for achieving an additional goal: for Cypriot actors to interact over a period of time, to produce work together, and through this to assist peacebuilding. Epskamp describes the process of producing art together as an “educational or therapeutic instrument” (ibid). He believes that more participatory art forms (such as the performing arts, for example) mean a more inclusive process of collaboration, which can assist in making the outcome collectively shaped and owned. As a result of the creative contact, a truly joint output – a play

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\(^5\) Theatre for Development uses theatre and performance as a tool for development within the framework of international development. As a tool it is used for educational purposes with a focus on social change, and interpretations of the latter half of the twentieth century reveal the influence of Augusto Boal (Epskamp 2006).
or performance – is presented to the public, which in itself is an encouragement of relationship building and inclusive community involvement. In this context art becomes a tool for peacebuilding and bases its praxis on the ideology of collaborative action and inter-cultural authorship to build discursive contact, both between the actors and between the actors and the audience, through creative methodologies (such as those previously mentioned drawing from Augusto Boal).

B. The Relationship between the Cyprus Chamber of Fine Art (EKATE) and the European Mediterranean Artists Association (EMAA), 2003 to 2013

The relationship between the oldest Greek Cypriot and the principal Turkish Cypriot art associations—in the South, the Cyprus Chamber of Fine Art (EKATE)\(^6\) and in the North, the European Mediterranean Artists Association (EMAA)\(^7\) — has been important in the use of the arts for the purpose of conflict transformation. There has been a conscious effort by both organisations to take a progressive political stance by working together, and across the island’s ethnic division.

Throughout the years EKATE and EMAA have received funding for a variety of projects on which they have collaborated and which promoted cooperation between Greek and Turkish Cypriot artists. One of the first projects organized by EKATE and EMAA took place in 2004, following the opening of the borders. In this *Sunrise to Sundown* project, Greek and Turkish Cypriot artists camped together in the South (Polis) and in the North (Karpas). The project emphasized the sharing of daily lives and getting to know one another through face-to-face contact after thirty years of no contact between the communities. This project aimed at helping the two sides better understand each other and emphasized the value of being together (Ezgin & Toumazou 2015). After organizing a series of different workshop-type events encouraging exchange between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, in 2007 EKATE and EMAA received considerable funding from UNDP and USAID to develop the bi-communal art competition, *Art Attack*, and the subsequent exhibition, *Cypriot Puzzle* (2007-2008) (*Cypriot Puzzle* 2008, 1). This was the first competition of its kind and was open to Cypriots of all ages. The results of the competition were exhibited in the public space of different cities across the island.

In early 2013 there was an EKATE-EMAA dispute when the Greek Cypriot—who prior to the division in 1974 owned the building housing EMAA in North Nicosia— made a formal complaint to EKATE regarding their collaboration with EMAA. The Nicosia Turkish Cypriot

\(^6\) The Cyprus Republic Chamber of Fine Art (EKATE) was founded in 1964 by a group of Greek Cypriot artists often considered ‘the fathers’ of Cypriot Art, along with predominant members of the so-called first generation, and the inter-war generation of Cypriot artists (Christou 1983). The association primarily aims to promote artistic creation in Cyprus.

\(^7\) The European Mediterranean Art Association (EMAA) was established in 2002. It emphasizes that with all its activities, publications, bi-communal art events and international events, EMAA is the first non-profit institutionalized art organisation in [the] northern part of Cyprus (https://www.emaa-cyp.org/).
Municipality, under whose jurisdiction the property is, has allowed EMAA to use the building. EKATE took the side of the Greek Cypriot owner and followed on his protest by disrupting a long-standing collaboration with EMAA. The reason for such a decision was likely due to the changes in the board of EKATE in 2012, as the new board favoured a more ethnocentric agenda. The relationship of the two organisations was tested when each side decided to suddenly adopt their respective side's official (legal) discourse regarding the Cyprus property issue (Lambrou & Moyseos 2013, 6). Their cooperation up until that point had been reliant on the notion that art works despite politics and that it values people above propaganda. Thus, we were faced with a complex understanding of what working creatively across the ethnic divide means in the local context and how easily cooperation can turn into disagreement and lack of collaboration. It also highlighted the important role of those in the artist associations in how the ethos of the organisation is shaped, especially in terms of whether they place collaboration across the divide as a key priority.

The case of these two organisations has also highlighted the long-standing collaboration between Ozgul Ezgin, and Argyro Toumazou, two women who, since 2003 when the restrictions to movement were lifted, have been extensively involved in promoting conflict resolution art practices in Cyprus. The latest project they collaborated on was Confrontation through art: Contemporary Art as an Instrument for Reconciliation in Cyprus, an EU-funded project that involved EMAA and Rooftop, the latter being a new partner (Confrontation through Art 2018). Following the 2013 dispute with EKATE, EMAA started to collaborate with Rooftop. Ozgul Ezgin has been a core member of EMAA and largely responsible for its cultural output, while Argyro Toumazou acted as an independent collaborator on the project. Confrontation through art, which lasted almost three years and included residencies and exhibitions, educational workshops in rural areas and activities in Athens and Berlin, was one of the first to involve young people in rural areas, thus enlarging the art-scape beyond the metropolitan district of Nicosia. Particularly pertinent in this project was the curatorial work of Viviana Checcia (At the Fruit Stand, Nicosia 2016), who brought together five artists to work collaboratively, with an emphasis on socially engaged art practices.

In an interview discussing bi-communal artist collaborations since the early 2000s, Ms Toumazou stated that the “social element, the element of encounter was stronger than the aesthetic development aspect at the start” (Toumazou, 2014). As an arts manager who has produced many large-scale international projects at both local and international levels,
Toumazou believes that art is useful in the context of conflict transformation at the human level, while change —where you see people shifting perspective on a one-to-one basis—is slow (ibid).

C. Rooftop, model of good practice
In 2003 after the opening of the checkpoints in Nicosia, theatre enthusiasts and active citizens from across the island set up Rooftop Theatre to work on community-based creative actions. This organisation, which has been active in shaping community-based cultural actions across the division for the last 15 years, is a unique example in Cyprus and one whose work needs to be highlighted.

Ellada Evangellou, was one of the initiators and the director of the organisation, indicates that at the time:

we started to think about theatre and film, mostly theatre though, as a community-based tool, something that can bring together people to produce what we later found out was called “devised theatre.” So we came together after the checkpoints opened in very early 2004 and we put out a call out in Greek and Turkish language newspapers saying we want bring a group of people together from across the divide. At the time not much was happening so whatever we did I don’t think we could have gone wrong. Now, when things are very sensitive, you need to be aware/careful of the language you use. Things at the time were very fresh and new I think, and we knew some people in the North; so putting out a press release wasn’t an issue. So in February 2004 we brought together a group of people that were interested in what we were interested in, which was to produce theatre that is a staged manifestation of our experiences in life. (Evangelou interview, July 2018).

The organisation operates on the idea that the theatre—and the arts in a broader context—can and does “help develop active tolerance skills in people; that is, an openness to the other with a likely greater maturity and understanding within an individual or group” (Rooftop Theatre 2018).

Among the group’s core aims are: bridging the gap brought on by the conflict, and creating productions with a socio-political context that challenges the dominant conservative narratives and stereotypes. In the last 15 years they have worked with diverse communities, Cypriots of different ethnic communities, and migrants. Even though their local projects have addressed social change on the island through art and culture, they have also been involved in a series of European and international platforms, where they have produced projects, performances, workshops and festivals (ibid).

Speaking about a project that was particularly important to the group, Evangelou highlighted the 2008 project Performing the Experience. This was a 15-month long project funded by the United Nations Action for Cooperation and Trust (UNDP-ACT), with the main focus on empowering young people. Through a workshop format, the coordinators and
participants interacted with theatre-based games and exercises, the material of which was then used by a team of Rooftop members to create a play and a theatre production. The play was staged in Greek, Turkish and English in both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. This project, which was based on a re-interpretation of dominant historical narratives, received much negative attention in the Greek Cypriot press—putting a lot of stress on the organisation and its members.

Currently we note a shift the organisation’s focus—a shift that is indicative of a wider change in Cyprus: the organisation has gone from a bi-communal structure of collaboration to one that emphasizes multi-cultural frameworks of exchange and cultural production. Evangelou locates this shift to 2011-2012 and she says that:

We started to be more interested in issues related to migration and economic equality on the island. As some of our members started to work, for example, in the Özgür Okul/Free School in North Nicosia, we started to think about non-Turkish Cypriot populations in the North of Cyprus and the fact that we have been kind of not dealing with those people at all… It became very important for me and to the group to recognize who is present on this island, also who is around us… In the last 4-5 years, we have worked with the Kofinou refugee camp and the Red Cross; we’ve shaped women’s refugee workshops and so forth. (Evangelou Interview 2018).

It comes as no surprise, therefore, considering Rooftop’s trajectory, that when the United Nations decided to set up a new space around the prospective Famagusta/Deryneia checkpoint, they invited this organisation to facilitate the structuring of the space. This occurred in Spring 2018, with the formal opening in the summer of the same year (The Garage of Deryneia 2018). The space was then passed over, by the municipality of Deryneia who has jurisdiction over it, to a commercial hospitality business and the initial inter-disciplinary team of volunteers that set up the space is working in 2019 on developing the project in the wider area. The initiative drew on the model of the Home for Cooperation, situated at the Ledra Palace checkpoint in Nicosia, with the distinct difference being that the Home for Cooperation was shaped through community-led initiatives and supported by international bodies, where as in this case the initiative was instigated by the UN. Using the buffer zone as a place of encounter has a long legacy in Cyprus, spanning over four decades, and it is a strategy that underlies various endeavours and actions, as is evidenced in the following two cases (Tselika 2019).

D. Uncovered, a contemporary art exhibition in the Ledra-Lokmaci crossing 2011
The project Uncovered (2011-2013) pivoted around the abandoned Nicosia Airport, which is located in an area uninhabited except for UN forces, and which has been neglected and unused since 1974 (Uncovered Cyprus 2011). The project was initiated by artist Vicky Perikleous and the exhibition was curated by Greek Cypriot Pavlina Paraskevaidou and Turkish Basak Senova (Lambrou 2011). It is probably one of the projects that has been most covered by the
International press and art publications— because of the involvement of the curator and scholar Basak Senova.

The 2011 exhibition brought together Greek and Turkish Cypriot artists in an abandoned hotel building situated in the Nicosia Buffer Zone at the Ledra/Lokmaci crossing (after the use of the airport was prohibited), thus giving the wider public access to a space that has been inaccessible since approximately 1963 (Uncovered 2011). The artists engaged with themes that provided an insight into the spatial and social aspects of a site that Cypriots are not allowed to enter, and that challenged not only Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot official narratives, but also those of the UN. One artwork in the exhibition, Erhan Oze’s ‘Extraterritorial Electromagnetic Interventions,’ was censored by the UN and was not allowed to be displayed. This reflects the binding nature and limited freedom of expression in relation to militarily sensitive issues for projects funded by international bodies that have their own agenda and obligations and oversee both the selection process and the outputs. This is a worrying sign.

This project utilised the framework of involving Greek and Turkish Cypriot artists and was realised through conflict resolution funding mechanisms (UNDP and USAID funding). However, it was also a project that presented the possibilities of using the buffer zone for contemporary art and cultural production that related to international artistic trends. The project managed to gain access to a building within the Buffer Zone, which enabled the public to enter an area normally inaccessible. The project related to the effect of conflict on this particular urban environment and conceptualized this effect through the lens of politics, hegemony and power, thus demonstrating the potential of contemporary art as a mechanism of cultural production and community action in line with international and regional trends and practices. Just outside the building housing the exhibition, artist Andreas Savvas created replicas of chairs in the old Nicosia airport, transforming this space of transition into one where people could participate, it was here that the Nicosia movement *Occupy the Buffer Zone* emerged (Senova 2012).

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11 This artwork was considered too sensitive by the UN due to the fact that it used spatial mapping to illustrate the inter-communal conflict over airspace between Ercan Air Traffic Control and Nicosia Air Traffic Control (Uncovered 2011, 61); the art project also included interviews with respective officials. The UN also considered this to be sensitive information, arguing that it jeopardised their position as organisers. They therefore asked for the removal of the piece from the exhibition.

12 This was a local movement that sparked the global ‘Occupy’ movement of 2011, but which focused on local issues. The group camped out in the Buffer Zone until they were removed by the local authorities and the UN Forces. As they state: “We have occupied the space of the Buffer Zone to express with our presence our mutual desire for reunification and to stand in solidarity with the wave of unrest which has come as a response to the failings of the global systemic paradigm. We want to promote understanding of the local problem within this global context and in this way show how the Cyprus Problem is but one of the many symptoms of an unhealthy system” (Occupy the Bufferzone 2012)."
E. Long Distance Call, an international sound event, 2005

The above-described endeavours have all been locally initiated and organized by Cypriot art communities, individuals or art organisations and funded by international bodies. *Long Distance Call*, however, was initiated and documented by nonlocals with the participation of musicians from both sides of the border. This was a performance executed on rooftops that aimed to bridge the buffer zone dividing the island through the use of sound and music. This was a project created by the Dutch composer Merlijn Twaalfhoven in 2005 and documented in the 2006 film *Echoes across the Divide*, made by Australian filmmaker Adam Sebire. Twaalfhoven, who was fascinated with the sounds across the division of the inner city line, set up a participatory music performance, which involved more than 400 participants of all ages from both communities, at a time when the Ledra/Lokmaci passport control checkpoint inside the old city of Nicosia had not yet opened (Merlijn Twaalfhoven 2005). Participants on both sides of the dividing line played music to create a unity of sound spanning the buffer zone and acoustically uniting the two parts of the city. The workshops leading up to the performances brought the participants together and built relationships across the divide. This project could not have taken place had it not been for a number of local participants from both communities who had already been working creatively together for many years. I find this project and the film that documented it particularly interesting as they offer insight into a project implemented by non-Cypriots, but using methodologies and contacts developed locally. It was also interesting to note the friction between some of the Cypriot professional participants and the Dutch composer, as demonstrated in the film documenting the project (and which one of the Cypriot participants had asked—unsuccessfully—to be deleted) (Hadjimichael 2016).

The methodology of this project acts as a warning to remind us of the tension that can be triggered when international artists or cultural practitioners enter a conflict setting and attempt to create an artistic production. In this case, this was particularly true, as this project took place relatively soon after the opening of the border (2003). Further to this, it seems to have aided the career of the composer who went on to do projects such as the *Al Quds Underground* (2009/2010) Festival in East Jerusalem, where Western and Palestinian musicians and actors collaborated in some 150 small performances in living rooms. He also spoke at conferences, such as *The Music on Troubled Soils Conference* in Jerusalem in 2008, where the role of music in troubled regions such as Israel, Cyprus and South Africa was discussed.

Although the outsider artist or community worker acting as a catalyst and mediator can impart value to a local project, they must also carefully and sensitively consider how they will enter into a situation of ongoing military ethno-national division. It is important that they do not assume a position of superiority, and are aware that friction is also a possibility in relation

13 The film can be viewed here- https://vimeo.com/256377583.
to authorship—i.e., who earns recognition for and from participatory peace-building art projects. This project is important for reflecting on the management and purpose of art projects instigated by non-Cypriots, as non-Cypriot led conflict resolution art projects are now easily met with suspicion and mistrust, especially if their agenda and reasons for carrying a project out are quite vague.

F. Studio 21, an emphasis on youth culture in the multi-cultural scape of inner city North Nicosia

Studio 21 is an arts, sports and cultural association which is community driven and whose actions are shaped by its members. The founder of this community organisation is Dervish G. Zeybek and he coordinates the curation of the events, the funding and the community activities. The organisation focuses on the involvement of a collective of young people of various professions and hobbies related to art, ranging from artists, dancers, photographers, writers and so forth, who both shape and take part in the actions. Locally based and international artists are involved in the activities presented by this organisation, which is based in the old city of North Nicosia. Studio 21 emphasises creating projects and participating in them as a collective, with the aim of triggering change, sharing ideas and talent, communicating and helping each other in everyday life. Through the production of art, music and performance events and workshops that use the public space and the street, Studio 21 has assisted in the transformation and involvement of the community that hosts it. A good example of the type of work that the organisation undertakes is the street art festival Yuka Blend, which as the organisation states is “a unique experience for the city on either side of the buffer zone” (Yuka Blend 2018). The festival is co-organized with the local authorities and the local residents in North Nicosia and it transforms the built and social environment of the neighbourhood. This is a particularly important project as it presents a new type of interaction between Cypriots across the divide: it does not focus on bi-communal art production as such, but focuses on those who actually live in this particular neighbourhood. Through its emphasis on street culture, art and action, it is indicative of a larger wave of informal interaction that brings Cypriots together to listen to music, go to festivals and shape relationships that are not fostered for the sake of forming relationships and interaction, but through an organic process of sharing common interests.

G. Hands-on Famagusta project

In 2016 Cyprus was represented at the Venice Biennial with the Hands-on Famagusta project led by Dr Socratis Stratis (Architecture, Art + Urbanism, http://www.aaplusu.com/en/home) and a team of Greek and Turkish Cypriots. The project has been evolving since 2014 and “uses participatory urban design processes to facilitate dialogue about the future of Famagusta” (Hands on Famagusta 2018). Now accessible publicly and freely through a web platform, it “is devoted to visualizing a common urban future for a unified Famagusta, thus paving the
way for future collaboration and further cohabitations in a post-conflict Cyprus” (ibid). The project has completed a series of actions facilitating an ongoing civic and public debate regarding the urban transformation for a unified Famagusta. These have included debate platforms through workshops, meetings, public presentations; a physical model of the city to assist in the visualization of the city as a whole; a publication; an online tool and web platform, with the list continuing and evolving.

It has been supported by a variety of international funding mechanisms such as UNDP-ACT, but has also represented Cyprus at the international level at the Venice Architecture Biennial in 2016. This project highlights the important contribution of architects and urban planners in re-imagining the fragmented landscape and working actively across the division and in a participatory manner, reminding us that it was, in fact, urban planners and architects who paved the way of cross-border artistic and cultural cooperation through their cooperation in the Nicosia Master Plan. *Hands on Famagusta* is important to consider because it draws attention to the issue of the abandoned area of Varosha and its potential as a collectively imagined zone and also because it was the national contribution to a highly prestigious international art event.

**Section Conclusion**

Examination of the above-mentioned endeavours allows us to better understand how artistic practices have used their community function to resist ethno-national segregation in Cyprus. Even though there is a broad scope of efforts and various artistic formats (plays, concerts, performances, art competitions, exhibitions, workshops, camps and films) I have chosen to focus on these particular instances as they shed light on how the community dimension of the arts can be used to assist relationship building across the divide. Starting from the Satiriko- Lefkoşa Belediye collaboration, I want to highlight that the bi-communal efforts, during the period when contact between the two communities was restricted, were more about becoming re-acquainted with an ‘other’ who had for so many years been inaccessible. Following the lifting of restrictions to movement in 2003 there was a rapid increase in artistic efforts, especially those aimed at building relationships across the communities and helping Cypriots meet with one another. The EKATE-EMAA collaboration and the creation of the Rooftop Theatre Group attest to this. The iconic space of the buffer zone and how it can be utilized to produce high impact projects of an international calibre are both attested to by *Uncovered* in 2011 and *Long Distance Call* in 2005. The work of Studio 21 that comprises a palate of arts for the community points to the need to rebrand bi-communal structures of collaboration to reflect the importance of informal and a grassroots style of mobilising and interacting. This grassroots approach of the arts that has been used to bring Cypriots together across the divide is important when considering how to shape an arts policy that moves beyond the confines of the dominant ethno-national narratives.
As visual artist Elizabeth Hoak-Doering\textsuperscript{14} has stated:

Policy-making, and grassroots efforts to change the status quo can only come about after a balanced effort to understand the conflict intimately, through a variety of methods and at different levels. Conflict resolution is about finding analytical ways to cross-cut a situation for the purposes of learning and education. (Hoak-Doering 2007, 55)

By looking at these different manifestations of artistic practices that function within a conflict resolution context, a reading emerges that demonstrates a legacy of a particular method that has been extensively influenced by peace-building methodologies. As Hoak-Doering has argued, conflict resolution and visual art overlap in a specific way, as both “pose the challenge of effectively representing agendas of individual actors within larger events and policies” (ibid, 56).

\textsuperscript{14} Hoak-Doering is an American visual artist who has worked and lived in Cyprus at different times since the late 1990s. She is a sculptor and installation artist who is particularly interested in anthropology and ethnography. She represented Cyprus at the Venice Biennale in 2011.
LEARNING FROM INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES: ART AND CULTURE AS TOOLS TO RESIST DIVISION

There is an increasingly popular inter-disciplinary discourse that investigates ethno-national division and how conflict is negotiated in physical space. Recently there is substantial literature focused on how divided urban environments function and how they act as sites of division as well as zones of contact. Nicosia is one such city: exemplary of urban partitions, inner city no man’s lands and spatial ruptures that are reflections of the conflict. Other similarly divided cities that portray or have portrayed polarized and segregated communities include Belfast, Berlin, Beirut, Brussels, Jerusalem and Mostar, all of them within either a European, including the Balkans, or near Middle Eastern setting (Calame and Charlesworth 2009; Conflict in Cities). Comparative analysis of how European and Middle Eastern places have been shaped by ethnic, religious and national conflicts has led to debates on how built environments can absorb, resist and potentially transform territorial and social conflicts. Identity politics and ethnic conflict often characterise these partitioned places and subsequently become reflected in how the built environment is negotiated. In parallel, artistic and cultural practices have been developed to resist these patterns of division. This phenomenon is explored below, analyzing specific examples with regard to how ethno-nationally divided cities are studied and how the arts are used to resist patterns of segregation and division.

A. Narratives of artistic resistance from South Africa

A process of creative resistance can be seen in the context of apartheid and post-apartheid arts in South Africa. Colonialism and the imposition of segregation in this society have ensured, even to the present day, that variant ethnic constituencies remain un-integrated. With the fall of the apartheid regime, both the state and the church provided funding to art and media projects that would assist in the public in changing perceptions. While trying to visualize and incorporate multicultural diversity, artists encountered a newly surfaced tension that often accompanies societal change when policy and state mechanisms shift. The BLAC Arts Collective, which operated under post-apartheid South Africa (1998- 2003),
Conflict Transformation Art: Cultivating coexistence through the use of socially engaged artistic practices

was initiated by Minty Zayd,\(^{15}\) and a group of cultural practitioners. It had a threefold function: to initiate discussions through artistic projects and seminars; to commission articles; to eventually document and publish the projects/articles.\(^{16}\) The collective pursued projects revolving around art and its role in the public realm, and examined how the country’s cultural diversity could become a case through the arts and culture industry. It developed the project *Liberating Zones: Cultural Movements of the 80s in Cape Town*, which was a series of talks, videos, radio productions and events that reflected on the use of culture to fight segregation and repression. These projects were, however, an evolution of the resistance art projects organized throughout the years of apartheid,\(^{17}\) and which challenged the status quo, segregation and how identity construction was denied. Medu Art Ensemble was one such collective and during its eight years of existence (1977–1985) it included from 5 to 55 members. It was initiated in Botswana by exiled Black South African artists and cultural activists. As a cultural organisation it sponsored art, graphics, theatre and music workshops in Botswana and promoted resistance to the South African Apartheid through artistic and cultural activism (Peffer 2009). In 1982 Medu hosted the *Symposium on Culture and Resistance*, one of the most important gatherings of South African and international cultural activists in Botswana. The symposium was accompanied by an art exhibition of South African and exiled artists entitled *Art towards Social Development*. In 2009 an exhibition at the Johannesburg Art Gallery explored the artistic legacy of Thami Mnyele,\(^{18}\) and the Medu Art Ensemble.

**B. The arts in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the post-war period**

Craig Zelizer, whose work has contributed significantly to parts of this report, based many of his observations on how the arts are used in contexts of war and post-conflict on his study of Bosnia. Particularly interesting are his ideas on how the use of arts and culture change when there is a shift from a state of war to a post-war scenario, where peacebuilding and conflict transformation take centre stage. Zelizer observed that despite limited official cooperation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, many arts-based efforts were developed at the grassroots level that aimed to promote interaction across the communities (2004, 154). This meant that there were many projects organized by NGOs and independent artists, e.g., “music therapy projects, inter-cultural festivals, cross-community arts’ evenings” (ibid, 156). He notes that the hyper-production observed during the war, which resulted from the “basic need for survival,  

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15 Minty Zayd is also the deputy director for Arts Public Programming and for the District Six Museum in Cape Town.

16 Media Works and Community Arts Projects is managed by ONE project and is an independent arts and cultural production company based in Cape Town, established in 1998. It is involved with the District Six Museum of which Minty Zayd was also director and which raises one of the most important questions of who is included/excluded in the post-apartheid new democracy.

17 Referring here to the Community Arts Project (1977), which was actively involved in the resistance.

18 An artist and political activist who was determined to bring about social change in South Africa. He was assassinated in 1985 along with other activists by the South African army in a raid.
Learning from International Experiences: Art and culture as tools to resist division

creative expression and resistance” (ibid, 157), faded in the post-conflict period. There were nevertheless some significant efforts, including a “community-based theatre and peace-building” programme established in 1996... through the cooperation of an international humanitarian NGO and a local youth theatre” (ibid, 162). In fact, youth work and youth development has become a strong focus in both international and local NGO work. Zelizer highlights specific youth-focused programmes that use a range of the arts to enhance communication skills and facilitate conflict transformation, noting the predominance of theatre and its techniques being used to trigger a process of creating contact zones and processes of exchange. Further to Zelizer’s analysis, an important art landmark in terms of the presence of the country on the regional and international cultural map, was the establishment of the Sarajevo Film Festival. In 1995 the Obala Art Centre initiated the festival, with the goal of assisting in the reconstruction of civil society and the revival of the cosmopolitan spirit of the city (Sarajevo Film Festival 2018). The festival is now the leading film festival in the region of Southeast Europe; it is recognized by film professionals as well as by a wider audience.

C. Art and conflict resolution- the case of Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland is an iconic case in terms of narratives of conflict resolution and the input of the arts. There are a multiplicity of initiatives that grew out of the use of art to address issues of conflict and that continue to work in professional cultural production with an emphasis on community engagement and addressing sectarian divisions. In Northern Ireland public funds for community art initiatives became available in the 1970s in parallel with the growth of the community arts movement in the UK during the same time period.

Following the traumatic period of the 1980-1981 Hunger Strikes, teacher, trade unionist and community activist Danny Burke gathered a group of local photographers and set up a photography exhibition that reflected on the experience from the inside. The exhibition was named Belfast Exposed and it included 200 photographs and slides observing the life of the city (Belfast Exposed 2018). Belfast Exposed as an organisation is described in 1999 as a “small but thriving photographic studio and gallery” which “holds a library of more than 10,000 images captured by participants from many different backgrounds during its community photography projects” (Epskamp 1999, 295). Contrary to the internationally circulated images associated with the troubles, the images produced by the residents showed people enjoying life despite the troubles.

The group attempted to forge solidarities across the sectarian divide by representing the work of photographers from a range of backgrounds and by appointing a “cross-community steering committee and, wherever possible, bringing exhibitions to venues in neutral and loyalist areas of the city” (Belfast Exposed 2018). Belfast Exposed is now the leading contemporary photography organisation in Northern Ireland, hosting international exhibitions and multiple educational and community-orientated programmes.

The transformation of Belfast Exposed from a community-led initiative to an international photography art centre occurred in parallel with the rise of the community arts movement in
the UK and its transition towards a socially engaged contemporary art production that would be funded by national and international sources. The steady increase in community art initiatives in Northern Ireland, including those with a focus on conflict resolution, is also evident in the expansion of the Nerve Centre. Northern Ireland’s Nerve Centre is now a leading media arts centre with sites in Derry-Londonderry and Belfast, hosting a variety of facilities and programmes. The centre was developed with a focus on providing opportunities for people to come together across cultural differences, with a particular emphasis on involving young people (Matarasso 1997, 27). It has initiated projects that include a FabLab and European-funded exhibitions with artists from across the continent that focus on the intersections of art and technology, e.g. the exhibition Future Artist Maker, which was staged both in Northern Ireland and Spain (Nerve Centre 2018).

Both Belfast Exposed and the Nerve Centre started off with a focus on community and participatory art structures resisting the divided context of Northern Ireland. Considering the signing of the Peace Accord Agreements in 1998, it is interesting to note that since the late nineties both organisations have expanded and operate at the forefront of international arts and culture production, expanding beyond the use of the arts in conflict transformation.

D. Inner city borders, the favelas of Rio de Janeiro and the production of art

An alternative type of division is brought to attention here as the focus shifts to the inner city borders, where divisions are caused by economic struggles and racial patterns of segregation. The informal favela neighbourhoods that Rio de Janeiro has become so infamous for are communities that have their roots in encampments built prior to slave emancipation in Brazil in 1888. Escaped slaves, predominantly of African or Afro-Brazilian heritage, resided in these clusters which were called quilombos, and which were most commonly built in the extended Rio area because of the sugar plantations. The word favela is associated with the word quilombo and refers to the living environments on the hills (morros) of the city, which were close by but harder to urbanise, and from where the inhabitants could access their jobs quickly (Campos 2005). Favela resident numbers grew rapidly later, in the twentieth century, when large inflows of families arrived from the north and northeast of the country in search of work and a better quality of life. The unavailability of affordable housing meant people moved to the favelas-morros (hills), creating a distinction between the morros (clandestine, informal urban areas) and the asfalto (referring to the formal part of the city fabric). As an informal part of the city fabric, the favelas are characterized by violence, state brutality, political instability and particular processes of pacification through government and police interventions. Numerous art projects have been implemented in an attempt at social transformation within these areas, most having been set up/funded through international aid initiatives (such as the Prince Klaus Foundation).

A particularly interesting community grassroots project that became a renowned art initiative is the Morrinho project. Initiated in the Rio favela of Pereirão, situated right above the upper-class neighbourhood of Laranjeiras, children reproduced a model of their environ-
ment using the leftover building materials of their own homes (Project Morrinho 2018). Although this was undertaken first in 1998, it became well known when it was filmed in 2001 by Fabio Gaviao and then used by world-renowned Brazilian hip hop group O’Rappa. The structure fills 300 square meters and is adorned with discarded toys and objects. The setting is used to re-create scenes and happenings of everyday life, ranging from fights to dance and music events. The project has now travelled around the world, with stops in the Giardini of the Venice Biennale in 2007, at the Southbank Centre in London in 2010, as part of the Brazil, Brazil Festival, and exhibited in the Museum of Art of Rio (MAR), Rio de Janeiro in 2016. The Morrinho project, which has since developed into an NGO, carries out multilayered projects that range from TV Morrinho to guided tours of the model and exhibitions on a smaller scale in other cities, aiming to contribute to the development of the neighbourhood socially and economically.
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

An emphasis on actions in the public space and on the creation of contact zones through the arts

The recommendations below are a result of learning about and from the ways in which the arts have been used in an attempt to transform conflict at both the local and international level. These initiatives emphasize community and socially engaged arts practices, using the public space as a forum of interaction, and highlight the importance of using the crossing points to ensure ease of access to both communities. The recommendations focus on how to shape cross-cultural policies, considering institutional collaborations, grassroots initiatives, private-public backing and the restrictions on the involvement of state bodies.

The emphasis here is to design a cultural policy that emphasizes social change that can be shaped from the bottom up in order to reinforce the peace constituency. This concept and practice of arts is tuned to the concept and praxis of peacebuilding mediation from the elitist diplomatic exchange to the multi-track diplomacy model (Lederach 2005; McDonald 2009), where a grassroots approach of civic involvement is placed centre stage. In the current context of Cyprus, where there is no formal cultural policy on either side of the divide, it has been up to the respective governments and private initiatives to shape artistic and cultural programming and planning. This lack of formal cultural policy reinforces ethno-national narratives on both sides, on the one hand, but it also encourages unstructured, non-governmental and non-institutional collaborations as a way of resisting the barriers of division and supporting people-to-people initiatives. Such local collaborations and also international examples can show the way for artistic cooperation to emerge and be sustained beyond the political resolution of the dispute.

- It is important to recognize the legacy of the arts working for peace in Cyprus and acknowledge their emergence and operation in spite of the absence of a formal arts policy on both sides of the island. The good practices and the shortcomings of these initiatives include their centralisation in urban areas such as Nicosia, where we have seen a transformation of the urban landscape. While this focus on Nicosia makes sense and has been successful (the city is divided; the two sides are geographically close; the arts are strong on both sides of the capital) other cities on the island must be targeted too. Establishing cultural centres in other cities, villages and in crossing point areas would facilitate smaller scale interventions, and would include those living in rural areas and cities that are far
from the crossing point zones. As contemporary art and culture centres are not a regular phenomenon in Cyprus, such initiatives could be successful if they can draw in the existing arts community of the area. An area with good potential is the Astromeritis checkpoint crossing, as there are already cultural initiatives and festivals in the nearby villages of Flassou and Katydata. In addition, the work of artists as individuals who have played a key role in peace-building efforts, such as filmmaker Panicos Chrysantou and poet Neshe Yashin, amongst many others, should be highlighted and promoted.

- Smaller scale actions and mobile exhibitions and performances across the country could engage publics from the periphery and shift the focus of politics and culture from the centres. Besides, a broader variety of people could be reached this way, reaching beyond the already converted few in the capital.

- Emphasis must be placed on community-based and socially engaged practices. The purpose of bridging the division through the arts is to let artistic practices motivate and facilitate community involvement. This was clear in the case of Northern Ireland where numerous local and internationally funded arts projects and interventions played an important role in conflict transformation. As this is a matter of public cultural policy, it should be addressed at a broader level (see point below). Official or elitist art mechanisms may hinder the proliferation of arts at the grassroots level because of the inaccessibility of public funding, negative media and/or a lack of collegial support. If artists can demonstrate how social change can be realised through community-focused art practices, policy makers might be encouraged to incorporate such initiatives in the policy framework. We must use dialogue and inclusion in our effort to popularize grassroots, participatory, engaging art.

- To ensure continuing support for such initiatives, arts-for-peace must be incorporated in cultural policy. Even if cultural policies were to be written now, in either sector, there is no guarantee that community-focused artistic practices would be incorporated. This highlights the need for a specific culture-for-peace policy, and can perhaps be achieved by drawing interested parties from the civil society, the cultural and NGO sectors that are key actors and that have supported bi-communal artistic production for years.¹⁹

- There should be a special focus on the youth in any such art projects, which should rebrand modes of exchange at the young people’s level and considering their interests

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¹⁹ One such person is Dr. Yiannis Toumazis, director of the Nicosia Municipal Art Centre and acting board president of THOK, Cyprus Theatre Organisation. It has been during his directorship of the theatre organisation and involvement in the Bi-communal Technical Committee for Culture that plays were performed in Ancient Salamis, as mentioned earlier. Due to his long experience directing the art centre (the largest contemporary art centre of its kind in Cyprus) and THOK (the largest state funded cultural organisation in Cyprus) he would make an ideal advisor in terms of a spherical understanding of the cultural management sector and how such community driven art efforts could be lobbied into policy.
–such as was accomplished in the initiatives of Studio 21 and Project Morrinho. Targeting what appeals to youth, e.g., street actions, street art, hip hop and break dancing will capture their attention and involvement. The choice of the physical place for encounters and art production is important; safe spaces that are welcoming and accessible to all, particularly in the buffer zone, may be an acceptable option for the parents and the youth.

An appealing idea is to initiate artistic and research partnerships with other countries and regions that have lived through times of sectarian division and violent conflict (Northern Ireland, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Germany, Belgium and so forth). This is already done in the urban planning field, and something like this could also be undertaken for the arts. International exchange programmes and collaborative art production in the zones of conflict may generate greater interest from European and International funders and expand the support base within the artistic, business, civil society, education and other fields.

Art initiatives should emphasise the crossing points and check points, as these are convenient meeting spaces for people who reside on either side of the divide. Drawing from successful models such as the Home for Cooperation, which has been operating since 2011, art projects can unfold around crossing points, while local specifics should be used to the best effect and organically incorporated into the art product and process. The visual arts could play a significant role here by replacing ethnic symbols of division that dominate the buffer zone and transform the visual landscape of the areas. Each crossing point should host one such community centre—one that is conceptualized, designed and operated in line with the needs and preferences of the local communities.

There should be an emphasis on the use of public space, festivals and community art practices. An international festival of community or socially engaged art might be established in Cyprus, on an annual or bi-annual basis. This could encourage international high-calibre artistic production to come to the island and promote the focus on social change, civic action and the involvement of people in the process of artistic production. This can draw in and encourage similar efforts to what is already happening locally — such as the Buffer Fringe Festival, the work of Rooftop, EMAA and other artistic efforts and cultural producers and teams on the island. Due to the political climate of the region, proposing such a Festival could draw attention to the Cypriot case and further encourage cultural production across the divide at the local level. This has great potential to cultivate exchange and co-production between organisations that are already involved in

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20 The Cyprus Network of Urban Morphology (CyNUM) is a regional group of the International Seminar on Urban Form. It is a bi-communal network and was founded in 2015 to promote research on the urban form of Cypriot cities and to support its dissemination both throughout the island of Cyprus and abroad.
community and social art practices in Cyprus at an international level. The issue of representation and the participation of the authorities and official art institutions, especially in the context of non-recognition, require creative approaches to enable broad participation and circumvent political and administrative obstacles. Framing such events as civil society and professional exchange, and selecting festival sites within the buffer zone to make it accessible to all, as well as preparing the society and the authorities to accept and even support such endeavours through dialogue and persuasion are necessary to defuse tensions and find common ground.

- Long-term collaborations between associations and other independent arts bodies must be ensured; this can be accomplished by establishing internal specialized teams that can operate independently of the boards— whose members change regularly, which means that agendas can change too. The emphasis here is on NGO and artist association collaborations that could use institutional platforms but function independently so as not to be bound by public body legislation. Greater independence of art producing teams and organisations is needed. Past experience has revealed the susceptibility of semi-public professional associations to political and administrative influences that disfavour cross-conflict collaboration.

- Artists, organisations and groups that are already active in enabling such cultural programmes need funding support to continue their activities. Organisational and programmatic formats that ensure accountability to the donors and to the public, on the one hand, and independence and professional integrity, on the other, may be needed. Whilst there has been public funding from the South that has supported bi-communal cultural production and collaboration, it is limited. Diversification of the sources of funding and other types of support such as engagement of the private sector, self-financing mechanisms such as crowd-funding, or international collaboration are some alternatives to the conventional funding mechanisms. If sources of support for socially engaging art production are expanded, more artist groups and cultural institutions, including informal community groups, could consider integrating such initiatives in their operations.

- Casual encounters, informal meetings and congregation points are extremely important. In the last few years, particularly in the case of Nicosia, a culture of crossing the dividing line to socialize, to have fun, to listen to music, dance, paint, attend festivals and spend nights out has developed. Considering this type of informal culture and style of socialization can greatly assist in understanding how people-to-people involvement takes place spontaneously and voluntarily, unmediated by formal situations and funding agencies. This is important so as to draw from grassroots social behaviours and patterns and then reflect those in community driven policy recommendations that will support local social characteristics of bridging division.
Policy Recommendations

- It is important that high-calibre artists are brought into local initiatives. However, the selection of artists from abroad must consider the specific context and the political and professional record of the artist. The latter is important to minimize risks of conflict insensitive or provocative, even if inadvertent, intervention. Selected artists must be willing to study the context and look at how local initiatives have functioned prior to launching art projects in Cyprus. This will prevent the exoticisation of the conflict and the communities involved. Moreover, known artists will attract funding.

- Support mechanisms are required for any existent long-term collaborations between artists/professional and civil society organisations and groups across the divide. A platform might be created where in all the different organisations that work in community-focused arts practices and those who collaborate across the divide would be invited to contribute. To establish such a platform an open call should be sent out to cultural institutions – this would strengthen the cultural basis so that such a platform could serve purposes of conflict transformation as well as support the cultural capitalisation of Cyprus’s unique position in the region. Incentives could include the formation of a support body within the platform that could assist or advise on issues of coordination and fundraising, the latter being particularly important for the North, as it is harder for Turkish Cypriots to attract funding due to the status of non-recognition.

- A research network should be established, where the research focus is conflict transformation, arts and culture. An independent research network that is based in Cyprus but works globally through international collaborations in relation to issues of conflict and the arts could assist in knowledge production and research and education centred activities. Similar research centres are commonly found in Western European and North American institutions and thus the establishment of such a research network/centre within this geographical region but global in scope could contribute positively to the support of cultural practices resisting division.

- A re-branding of bi-communal art production is necessary, shifting it to a more grassroots model that focuses on how the arts come into conversation with civic action. This would place Cyprus on the international art map as home to socially and politically active artistic practices. This in turn will stimulate more artists, civic activists, academics, students and other professionals to use arts as a tool for fostering co-existence and people-to-people interaction and evoke change in perceptions. As a result of encouragement and support for community-orientated art— in the current cultural landscape that is dominated by the elitist forms of art—more socially engaged and popular artistic production will flourish, a production that will resonate with the needs of a diverse population.

- An understanding of both the abilities and limitations of the arts needs to be embedded within a holistic approach. The arts have great potential for symbolic and informal
interaction. If this is conflict sensitive and resonates with people’s needs then the arts could provide important messages of peace and social change from the bottom up. However it is important to note that the arts alone cannot foster such change but need to be aligned with other strategies aimed at social change. Whilst they can impact public opinion to a certain extent they need to interact with other conflict transformation strategies to assist in a process of long-term peaceful co-existence.

- Crossing points as focal points for artistic projects bear special political and social meaning, on the one hand, and create a new meaning of connection to replace division, on the other. Yet this is the only space where contact and exchange can take place without crossing on each respective side, which implies greater psychological comfort and the sense of being in a safe place. Besides, since tourists, businesspeople, other visitors as well as temporary workers cross as well, a wider segment of the population can be involved beyond Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Cyprus is a multi-cultural island with a significant migrant population, as well as temporary residents and visitors, which means that a variety of people will be exposed to or participate in the cultural strategies. Therefore other cultural narratives— more international and diverse, beyond dichotomy, cultural and art production— need to be nourished to include and respond to various cultural narratives. This shift and the transitioning landscape where the multi-cultural must be emphasized, instead of just the bi-communal, was pointed out by Ellada Evangelou (2018).

- It is imperative to account for the imbalance that exists between the two parts of the island. In the South the institutional framework is much more developed, having taken advantage of its internationally recognized state status and its access to European funds and instruments that support art and culture. In the North of the island there is limited institutionalization in the arts and culture sector. Due to the inaccessibility of international funding and professional associations, including participation in international art and cultural events, Turkish Cypriot artists often strongly depend on Turkish and limited European funds. This means restricted creative freedom and political hurdles that may not be conducive to the production of socially engaged and counter-mainstream art. This imbalance can be addressed through the focus (proposed in this report) on a more community and socially engaged approach that does not emphasize institutional collaboration but personal relationships and a grassroots collaborative framework that utilizes the common area of the buffer zone, public spaces and informal structures of interaction.

- The establishment of a peace museum is suggested that acknowledges the ethno-centric narratives of each respective side but provides an alternative and is shaped through socially engaged methodologies. This can draw from the experience of a wide pool of peace museums around the world.
There must be an integrated art strategy to counter-balance the occasional spoilers that target all attempts at bi-communal initiatives. This strategy can be formulated by artists, arts organizers and anyone involved in artistic practices. Collaborations are key here—such as unofficial working groups that would also include civil society peace activists, policy makers and others to formulate holistic peace strategies, of which art would be an integral part and a tool. If informal, such working groups may be platforms where official actors from each side could individually contribute, providing an alternative to the existing art and cultural practices that are predominantly ethno-centric. Examples of the peace projects that have art as an integral part of a broader peace strategy may include common art hubs that are devoted to the theme of dealing with the past, reconciliation, empathy or designing a common future where artists from both sides of the Cyprus divide facilitate encounters and exchange by artistic means.

A platform could be erected that engages Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot artists in joint art projects that also include teachers, both local and from countries with similar ethnical conflicts. The results and experiences of these endeavours could be transformed into teaching materials that could form part of the art curriculum in public and private elementary schools on both sides of the island. Artists trained in conflict transformation and social change initiatives would train teachers to counter ethno-national narratives within the curriculum of the creative subjects, and to contest the production of symbols of war that dominate artistic output in the public school system. A good example is the artistic production to support the celebrations of Greek and Greek Cypriot national holidays in the form of plays, songs, dances and so forth. Such an approach will help teachers involve students in a variety of non ethno-centric artistic outputs.
CONCLUSIONS

Political theorist Hannah Arendt defines the public realm as “everything that appears in public” and “can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity” (1958, 50). If we want to shape art and cultural projects that aim for contact across the Cypriot division we can find no better location/situation than the terrain of the public realm and in our particular case the in-between space of the buffer zone. To assist in re-shaping public opinion, we can find no better target group than the grassroots initiatives in the form of civilian action groups and NGOs. It is in this “common world” that “gathers us together” (ibid, 52) that the stage is shaped through which we can form actions that bring together people through art and culture. And it is only through action that people are forced to come together and perhaps to remove themselves from the misconceptions that society has ascribed to them. As Arendt argues, action “no matter what its specific content, always establishes relationships and therefore has an inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries” (ibid, 190). Symbolic and action-based models of triggering engagement through the arts are powerful tools in the creation of contact zones, which allow for relationships to be developed across differences and for the peace-building constituency to be expanded.

Postcolonial theorist Mary Louise Pratt in the 1990s conceptualized the term ‘contact zones’ as social spaces where there is coexistence of diverse cultures or social groups. Pratt, who is a comparative literature theorist, focuses on western expansions and ethnographic explorations and uses the term contact zone to describe:

The space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict. (1992, 6)

Studies such as these have helped us understand how artistic and cultural processes can act as spaces of interaction in cases of conflict. It is precisely this power of art—i.e., to create situations of interaction and zones of contact that allow for relationship building—that reveals their potential as catalysts of change and transformation in cases of ethno-national division. By triggering processes wherein the conflict is re-imagined, the arts can assist in processes of re-imagining the current status quo and the division. Through some of the proposed recommendations outlined above the arts could act as triggers of peaceful co-existence and conflict transformation on the level of everyday life, despite what is going on at the political leadership level.
REFERENCES


References


This study considers how arts and cultural practices in Cyprus have been used in the context of conflict transformation and the role that the arts can play to alter policies and social practices at the grassroots level. It is embedded in a social understanding of the role of the arts in addressing conflict and looks at how creative practices can build community, social engagement and public involvement.

The phenomenon of social engagement in the arts is discussed in parallel with the use of art for the purposes of conflict transformation, with a particular focus on the perceived capacity of the arts to act as a catalyst for empathy and to facilitate contact and exchange across estranged communities. To understand the social and community dimension of contemporary arts practices a number of Cypriot cases that involve different aspects of arts organisation and cultural production across creative fields are mapped. The specific cases are examples of good practice and represent direct inter-community involvement, as well as long-term structures of creative collaboration that have focused on building social relationships and exchange.

In order to learn from other international experiences where art and culture have been used as tools to resist ethnic and social divisions, a series of place specific case studies are examined – South Africa, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Northern Ireland and Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). The examples discussed here allow for a wider understanding of how arts and cultural practices enable inter-communal patterns of cooperation, which bridge divisions and offer insight into diverse modes of practices that use the arts for the purposes of relationship building and dialogue. Learning from these local and international practices a series of recommendations are then outlined. These policy suggestions emphasize community and socially engaged arts practices and place the focus on how to shape cross-cultural policies, considering institutional collaborations, grassroots initiatives, private-public backing and the restrictions on the involvement of state bodies.