



Challenges for a new future

THE CYPRUS GREEN LINE – BRIDGING THE GAP

By Zacharias Antoniades



*The Cyprus buffer zone divides the old city of Nicosia into North and South*

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## Abstract

Since 1974, Cyprus, the country that I call home has been divided in two parts, separating the two major ethnicities of the island (Greeks and Turks). In between these north and south parts lies the well-known Cyprus Buffer zone that to this day expresses the realities of the armed conflict that took place there four decades ago. This buffer zone represents the lack of communication and mistrust that exists between the two 'rival' sides.

As a Cypriot designer I felt the need to come up with an appropriate project that will bring people closer together, giving them the chance to communicate, debate, exchange knowledge and views and generally understand the needs of each side leading to a better and smoother social and cultural blend thus making it easier for the people to digest any future plans of total reunification.

In order to get inspiration and a better understanding of how to deal with such situations I examined borders and their evolvment at different scales and contexts, but also looking at various peace-promoting projects in conflict zones.



*Ionic columns decoraring a building in old Nicosia*

## Introduction: Brief story of Nicosia

Since the beginning of the Bronze Age (2500 years BC) Nicosia has been in continuous habitation. From the 10th century AD onwards, the city moves on from being an independent "city-kingdom" and becomes the capital of the whole island<sup>1</sup>. From the beginning of the city's history, Nicosia has been the center of many conflicts and has changed its allegiance to almost any empire or greater power that conquered it. Every conquering power left its mark in the city, from gothic to oriental from Hellenistic to contemporary, the city, thanks to its rich history, inherited a very diverse architecture feel. A feel that can leave someone confused as to where and to whom this place belongs to. The results of such a turbulent past can still be read through the many scars and wounds that history left behind. The buffer zone that splits the whole country but also Nicosia in two parts, north and south still remains an open wound for the city.

The first physical division of Nicosia took place in 1956, when Cyprus was still under British colonial rule<sup>2</sup>. That was a period when the British exploited interethnic differences leading to interethnic violence and the erection of a barbed wire division of parts of the city known as the 'Mason-Dixon Line'. In 1974, when Turkey invaded the island this barbed wire division, became an impassable border, separating the two main communities of the island (Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots) into north and south.

According to various medieval maps from the Venetian era, one can see that the city has always been divided into North and South. In medieval maps a line crosses the walled Nicosia, but that line evolved through the centuries into another line that bears a different meaning in contemporary maps. These lines almost overlap with each other, crossing the city in an east-west axis. The line depicted on medieval maps was a river. The river was called by various names. Officially, Greek Cypriots called it Pedhieos [from the greek word *πεδιάδα* (*pediada*) meaning plane] though locals, including Turkish Cypriots, more often referred to it as Pithkias<sup>3</sup>.

During the medieval period, until 1567, the river used to flow through the Venetian walled city of Nicosia, but for strategic reasons it was later diverted outside the then newly built defenses.

1 Marangou A. & Koutas, A. (2011), *Nicosia The History of the City*  
2 Dr Papadakis, Y. (Spring 2006) *Nicosia after 1960: A River, A Bridge and a Dead Zone*  
3 Dr Papadakis, Y. (Spring 2006) *Nicosia after 1960: A River, A Bridge and a Dead Zone*

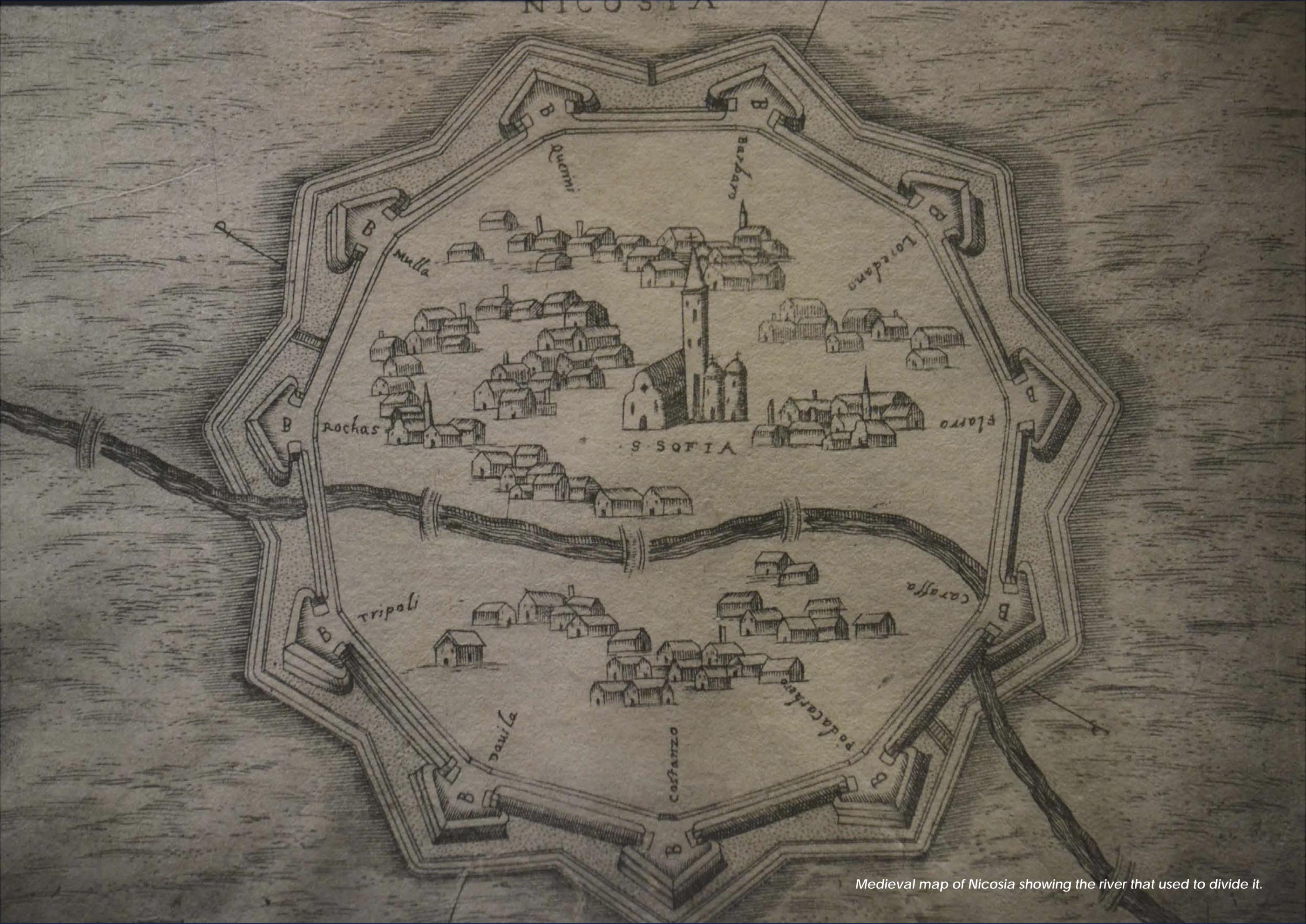
When the Ottomans took over Nicosia in 1570; the old riverbed through the walled city was left open and was used as a dumping ground for waste, where it was temporarily cleared by the rainwater that would rush through<sup>4</sup>. The old riverbed was later covered for hygiene reasons in 1882, during the British period. As a result of this action, a road was developed in its place over the ground, called Ermou Street. This road, which bridged the old riverbed, now created a connection between the north and south of the city, an important development while during this period the major administrative Ottoman centre lay north of the riverbed, while the Greek Orthodox centre lay south. From then on Ermou Street developed into the major commercial axis of the city. It became a trading zone, which drew the multi-ethnic inhabitants of Nicosia together for commercial exchanges, bridging cultural differences for trade purposes. After the 1960s, this vibrant and flourishing street became a site of much bloodshed, as it developed into a fiercely fought over border and as a result turned into a Dead Zone, and a no mans land.

*"... a natural divide which much later turned into a human-made divide. Even though the river later became a bridge, later yet, once again through human effort, it turned into a chasm, a dangerous 'no-man's land': a Dead Zone."*

Y. Papadakis 'Nicosia after 1960'

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4 Dr Papadakis, Y. (Spring 2006) *Nicosia after 1960: A River, A Bridge and a Dead Zone*



Medieval map of Nicosia showing the river that used to divide it.



*Former Iron Curtain is transformed into a pan-european Green Belt*

**"Borders are the scars of history"**

Robert Schuman (former French Statesman and one of the founding fathers of the European Union (1955-1961))

*"It is necessary to have a project and a vision before the walls fall or are demolished, as the case of Berlin teaches us that once there is a solution, the economic forces of real estate quickly fill in the voids"*<sup>1</sup>.

What I will try to create is just that. To create a general vision for the future of the whole buffer zone using and analyzing various case studies and focusing on the development of the buffer zone that lies within the walled city of Nicosia.

Through history, not only Cyprus was split in two halves by a visible borderline, but also other geopolitical lines materialized as physical walls, defining their borders. Separating and protecting the edges of empires from invading armies, or separating different government systems, just like in the more recent past, capitalist from communist societies.

An example of such a border is the Great Wall of China, which started to take form as early as the 7th century BC<sup>2</sup> across the historical northern borders of China to protect the Chinese States and empires against the raids and invasions of the various nomadic groups of the Eurasian plain. Now the great wall is the host to the very challenging annual Great Wall Marathon, which takes place on top of the Great Wall of China offering spectacular views and scenery to the visitors and contestants. Naturally linking a marathon to the long stretched Chinese wall is a spectacular gesture in time and space. But for the Cyprus divide I search for (semi-) permanent solutions, which would fit that particular situation better.

A similar example of a visible divide and a spectacular reminder of its history is Hadrian's Wall, which was a defensive fortification in the Roman province of Britannia, that begun in AD 122 during the rule of emperor Hadrian<sup>3</sup>. A 130 kilometers National Trail has recently been created along its path, following the remains of the wall both through built up areas and the National Park areas. Now it has become the most popular tourist attraction in Northern England and was made a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987<sup>4</sup>.

Another very impressive and ambitious project is the European Green Belt initiative. It aims to transform the former Iron Curtain, which was the edge of the former Soviet Union and spanned for 8500 kilometers from the Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean, to a pan-European

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1 Karatas, E. & Kuhlwein E. (2010) *Climate Change - A Challenge For Europe and Cyprus*  
2 Tanenhaus, S. (2011) *The New York Times Guide to Essential Knowledge: A Desk Reference for the Curious Mind*, The New York Times  
3 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/9558984/Brian-Dobson.html>  
4 <http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/gb>

green belt<sup>5</sup>. The Iron Curtain was a very big no-mans land, full of minefields and bunkers. Currently nature took over this once fierce border and created valuable biotopes that have become home to a number of endangered species. The former patrol path, which today serves bicycles, pedestrians and service vehicles, now links all the biotopes and nature parks.

The Great Wall of China, Hadrian's Wall, and the Iron Curtain were all transformed from being the edges of Empires to becoming backbones of cultural and natural tourism, developing nature trails, connecting heritage sites, and even organizing yearly marathons.

By studying the above case studies it is of no surprise to see that South Korea, which until this day is at war with North Korea, likes to look ahead by already proposing to transform the 250-kilometer long and four kilometer wide Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) into a peace park. For over six decades the buffer zone between North and South Korea remained relatively untouched, which has had an unintended effect on this no-man's land. It has become a thriving natural habitat for thousands of plant and animal species.

*"And if South Korea has its way, the DMZ will eventually be transformed into an ecology peace park"*<sup>6</sup>.

Maggie Hiufu Wong, January 28, 2015 CNN

As with the Korean DMZ and the Iron curtain, in the Cyprus Buffer zone, being a no-mans land and remaining relatively untouched for just over 40 years, has resulted in nature taking over. Now many animals thrive in that space that measures up to 3% of the whole country<sup>7</sup>. My grand vision for this green line is to create a peace park that would be the green belt of the country, stretching from one side of the island to the other. A peace park that connects the two sides of the island as a green space and also an event space where annual events can be held, giving the participants an opportunity to view the once heavy guarded Buffer zone from a new perspective. Even an eco-park is possible following the inspiration I took from the Korean plan.

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5 <http://www.europeangreenbelt.org>  
6 <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/01/27/travel/south-korea-dmz-eco-park/>  
7 Dr. Grichting, A. (07-16-10) *Landscapes of the Green Line of Cyprus: Healing the Rift, Naked Punch*

*The Great Wall has become a backbone of cultural and natural tourism for China*





## Lessons from Berlin

1989, Berliners were very eager to destroy the 'wall of shame' that divided them

However, the Cyprus buffer zone not only divides the rural areas, but just like in Berlin the buffer zone also divides the old Venetian capital of the Island. Thus giving it a distinctive attribute and also creating opportunities in making this peace park very unique. For this reason I will examine Berlin as a case study in order to get some insight on how the division was dealt with and see what lessons can be learned.

Similar to the current situation of Nicosia, Berlin has also been a divided capital city until 1989 when the wall fell and Berlin became one city. Following the fall of the wall on the 9th of November 1989, the first reaction of Berliners was to eliminate all the signs of the Wall of shame or as many Berliners called it "Schandmauer". But twenty-five years later, the city is struggling and fighting to save the last remaining segments<sup>1</sup>.

As author Engin Karatas and Eckart Kuhlwein, a former Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Education and Science of Germany, state in their book 'Climate Change – A Challenge For Europe and Cyprus': "With retrospect, some Berliners feel that "the wall was dismantled too quickly" and argue that there are not more spaces to keep alive the memory<sup>2</sup>."

Nevertheless some pieces of landscape and pockets of green were recovered along the former No-Man's land by local populations and organizations. Such sites include the 'Mauer Park', which resulted from a bottom-up, community led initiative; the Chapel of Reconciliation and Berlin Wall Memorial initiated by the Minister of the Evangelic community whose land was swallowed up by the Death Strip; and finally, the Lohmuehle Wagendorf, an ecological community of caravan dwellers who have invested in a segment of the former Wall<sup>3</sup>.

Currently, in Berlin, it is difficult to recognize the path and see the traces from the famous Wall, unless the visitor experienced the Berlin Wall when it was still there. The path of the Wall is now indicated by discreet copper signs that lie along a strip of stones embedded in the pavement and streets. This representation does not necessarily express the spatial impact of the death strip. As the Berlin Wall was not one wall, but a death strip surrounded by two walls, just like the green line in Cyprus existing of two cease-fire lines that define the buffer zone. In addition to being divided by a physical border into North and South, like Berlin was divided into West and East, Nicosia has a different divide as well. It is also a city with dense ethnic,

1 [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/08/david-hasselhoff-berlin-wall\\_n\\_2838744.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/08/david-hasselhoff-berlin-wall_n_2838744.html)  
2 Karatas, E. & Kuhlwein E. (2010) *Climate Change - A Challenge For Europe and Cyprus*  
3 Karatas, E. & Kuhlwein E. (2010) *Climate Change - A Challenge For Europe and Cyprus*

political, religious walls, dividing Muslims with Christians, Turkish with Greeks and two governments that consider as motherlands either Greece or Turkey. These "walls", whether physical or immaterial borders, separate the Turkish Cypriot and the Greek Cypriot communities from each other. In comparison, although the Berlin wall divided German inhabitants, most of whom were even family members, it also divided two different ways of life and social fabrics.

Former German political party leader and former minister-president of Brandenburg state (2002 - 2013), Matthias Platzeck, stated: "German unification in 1990 was not a merger of equals but instead an "Anschluss" (capture) with West Germany taking over East Germany"<sup>4</sup>.

Although the reunification of Germany meant free speech and freedom to travel, they have come at a high price for many East Germans. The fabric of their society and their way of life has now been lost. Many are still struggling to come to terms with life in reunited Germany and are nostalgic about life in East Germany. That is clear in the Berlin streets where it is very common to see people selling merchandise that refers to communism and the former Soviet Union. An opinion poll published in Stern magazine found 67% of easterners do not feel like they are part of a united country and only 25% said they felt like "ein Volk" (one people). By contrast 47% of the westerners surveyed feel that the two parts of Germany have overcome what divided them in the last 20 years<sup>5</sup>. Professor of Sociology at the London School of Economics and University Professor of the Humanities at New York University, Richard Sennet, offers a useful insight to understand the dynamics between conflict and consciousness in his book 'Together: the rituals, pleasures and politics of co-operation.'<sup>6</sup> He distinguishes between notions of 'dialogic and dialectic' communications. Sennet suggests that dialectic conversations "involve a thesis and antithesis, opposing one another, and building to synthesis, a common ground that results in resolution." In contrast he describes dialogic conversations as "an alternative that is more open ended." He states that "it does not resolve itself by finding common ground" and suggests that: "through the process of exchange, people may become more aware of their own views and expand their understanding of one another"<sup>7</sup>

4 Peel, Q. (September, 30, 2010) *Germany: An unequal union*, The Big Read  
5 Kirschbaum, E. (September 29 2010) *The dark side of German reunification*, Reuters  
6 Sennet, R. (2012) *Together: the rituals, pleasures and politics of co-operation*  
7 Sennet, R. (2012) *Together: the rituals, pleasures and politics of co-operation*

In my opinion the reunification of Berlin, and Germany in general, happened too quickly. Even though the physical border has been removed, a psychological one still remained. Hence a more gradual reunification process was needed, based on the framework of an open-ended dialogical conversation', as explained by Sennet. It should have been more about producing deeper understanding of oneself and the other. Resulting in bringing people closer together, giving them a chance to communicate, debate and understand the needs of each other. Thus resulting to acceptance and a series of compromises that can be made easier for the sake of harmony.



*Discreet copper signs lie along a strip of stones embedded in the pavement and streets, indicating the path of the Wall*



*Pieces of the Wall are now part of an indoor exhibition in Berlin*



*A bench sits a few meters from the Ledra pedestrian crossing point with a peace sign above it*

Is a border purely a point of division, or can it also become one of contact between two different cultures?

The Cyprus buffer zone crosses the whole country from west to east. If isolated and examined separately as an independent space then one can be amazed about the diverse and fascinating landscapes this strip offers. From beautiful coast lines, through valleys with breathtaking views of two mountain ranges on each side, to flat fertile lands. The buffer zone even passes through the historical centre of the capital where it narrows down to only a few meters wide (as wide as the street in some cases). Consequently the locals preferred to stay away from the border and resulted in leaving the buildings along this no-mans land derelict. The state of the buildings and the idea of a border next door made people have a preference to use the buildings further away from the dividing line. Being in the middle of both sides, the buildings in the historic centre of the buffer zone are in my opinion perfect candidates for a reconciliation project.

Until 2008, the main shopping street (Ledra) of the capital, which lies within the Venetian walls of the old city, came to a sudden halt. The visitor was confronted with a wall, soldiers with automatic guns ready for action and a viewing platform where one could have seen (always with the escort of a soldier) the battle scarred buildings and the streets within the buffer zone. Seeing buildings in ruins, plants growing out of windows and coming out of the pavements, moss thriving on the forgotten rooftops, the rusted shop signs and advertising boards still trying to attract customers, soft drink bottles from 1974 and even cars left behind to rot. The visitor being on that platform got the sense that time had frozen in the buffer zone. In 2008 the wall and platform were destroyed and replaced by checkpoints creating a passage: the only pedestrian crossing along the whole 180km border that divides the island.

As mentioned in the book *Ringscape* by Van Acker on the transformations of cities in the 19th century, he writes: "Fortifications were demolished in order to become sites where new infrastructures, green spaces or even urban boulevards, responding to the needs of the city."<sup>1</sup> Accordingly by liberating a military landscape within a city such as the Berlin death strip or the Cyprus buffer zone, a unique opportunity appears. An opportunity to respond to the needs but also to reflect and express the chasm that once existed within the city.

In the case of Cyprus, introducing a space that encourages Sennet's 'processes of exchange' and also communication between the people, will result in better understanding and appreciation of each other's culture. Consequently such a proposal will lead to a better and smoother

<sup>1</sup> Acker, M. (2014) *Retracing the Ringscape Infrastructure as a Mode of Urban Design*

social and cultural blend. In this case a cultural program is the most relevant as it promotes knowledge exchange and contact between people.

Some examples of projects that successfully help to deal with conflicts within cities:

To this day Rwanda's ethnic groups, still struggle with the aftermath of the genocide that took place in 1994. In the search for peaceful co-existence and seeking to fight the ethnic division of the Rwandan people through education and social programs, "Football for Peace and Anti-AIDS" was established<sup>2</sup>. The goal for this centre is to use football as a tool for reconciliation, and also to facilitate life skills training and education focusing on the youth. The centre is strategically located within the heart of the Kimisagara valley, which is amongst the most densely populated and disadvantaged area. Since its opening in 2002 the centre proved to be very successful. By adding more layers to the communication process by knowledge exchange in this case the program adds value to the site by focusing on children of the area helping them understand each other but also to gain knowledge.

In the early 2000's during instabilities and the destruction that took place in Kabul, Afghanistan, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture took on to restore a park and its monuments in the city<sup>3</sup>. The Bagh-e Babur (Babur's Garden) is the former palace garden of the sixteenth century. The site has a strong symbolic value representing the unity of the Afghan people and their shared history. The park is now a public space and people are encouraged to leave their houses and go to this garden to socialize and also have their traditional Sunday picnics.

In the case of the above case study, the site itself, using the location as a history lesson to the locals, adds the value to the project. Another very interesting project took place in Belfast, a city where divisions have always been very intense between the Protestants and the Catholics. During the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival 2013 the artists' used vacant houses in the city centre for exhibitions and hence gave them a new lease of life as temporary cultural venues<sup>4</sup>.

This project uses the expressive forms of communication (such as Art) to help people bond. As Art influences people, so do other forms of expression like literature or music.

<sup>2</sup> <http://openarchitecturenetwork.org/projects/esperance>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.akdn.org/hcp/afghanistan.asp>

<sup>4</sup> Vöckler, K. (2014) *Four Strategies to counter the division of cities, Volume, Architecture of peace, (p.28-30)*

Therefore they create an ideal program for the building to promote the universal language of expression.

These case studies as described, although in different parts of the world and created under very different circumstances, they have one common factor. As urbanist and founding member of Archis Intervention, Dr. Kai Vöckler explains:

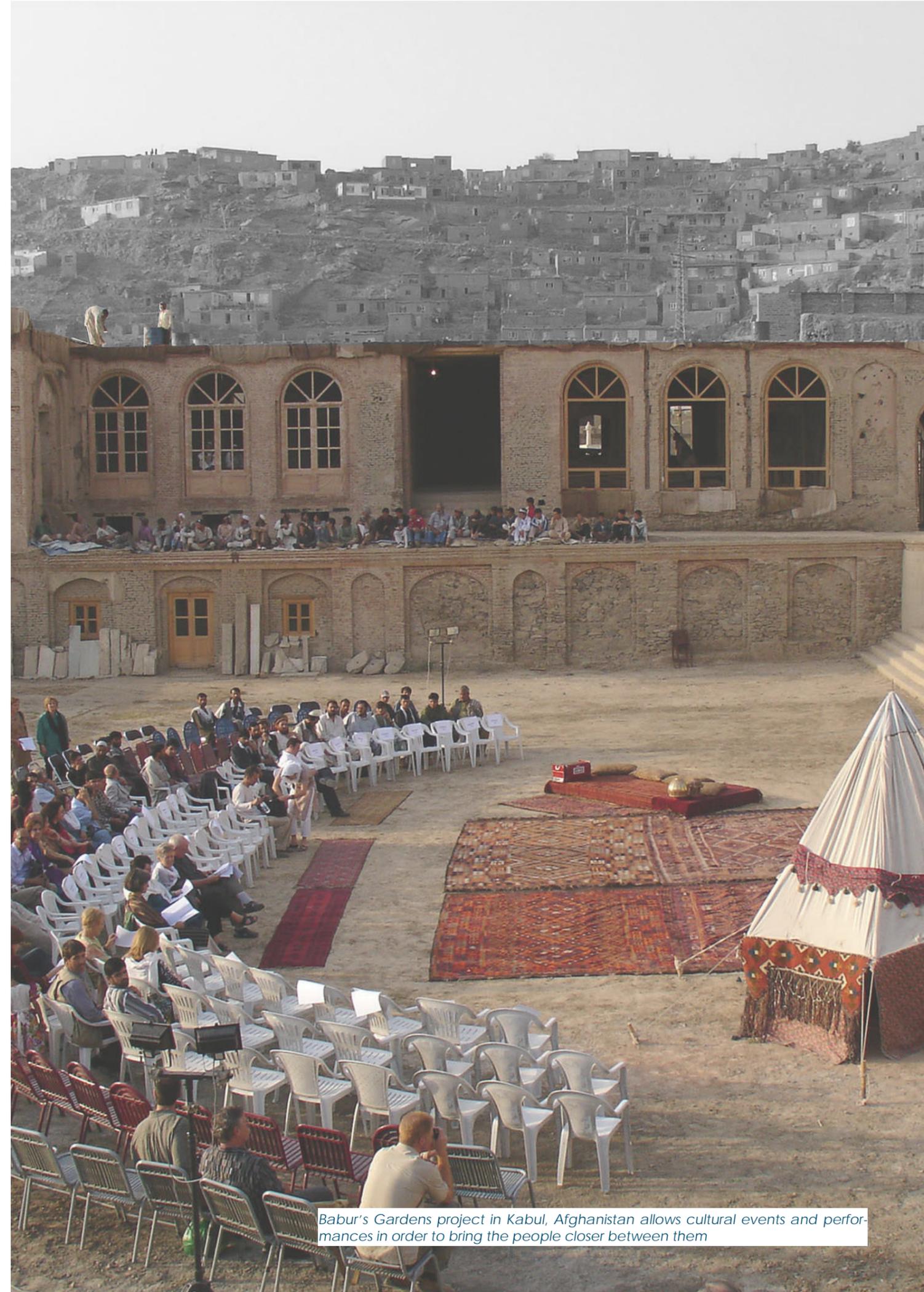
*"To create a common space for all residents within the contested spaces of divided cities is a first step to understand and overcome division"*

Kai Vöckler Volume, Architecture of peace

The above case studies gave me the inspiration to change my perspective on the way I see the Buffer Zone of old Nicosia and can now view it as an exceptional opportunity. Like the Bagh-e Babur project in Kabul, the old Venetian walls carry a strong symbolic value. They represent the unity of the people and also their shared history. It can be also perceived as a third space that lies between the north and south part of the city.



Aerial photo of the Bagh e Babur (Babur's Gardens)



Babur's Gardens project in Kabul, Afghanistan allows cultural events and performances in order to bring the people closer between them



**“Third-spaces create space for envisioning changes in divided cities”**

Kai Vöckler, Volume, Architecture of peace

This third space as learned from the above case studies should be a gathering point. A space that will host a cultural program where people from opposite sides can socialize, exchange stories, debate, get informed and also be educated. By giving the visitors the opportunity to understand and appreciate the culture of each side, but at the same time be able to see and be part of the ruins of the old buildings as a history lesson to all, it adds another layer to the project but also brings an additional value to the whole project and site.

Like the design approach of the British Architect, David Chipperfield in Berlin's Neues Museum, where the building was damaged during the Second World War and through his design, Chipperfield manages to preserve the buildings' memories and sense of decay. By using contrasting materials and a contrasting architectural language Chipperfield, emphasizes the added layers on the building. Like for example the iconic big white staircase that very confidently meets the old structure. Accordingly the program of these buildings should be designed with the preservation of history and the passing of time in mind, making the visitors aware of the significance of this 'Culture Park' and also bring to mind what once took place there.

A new purpose and meaning can be brought to the long forgotten buffer zone buildings, by introducing various cultural programs. Consequently the central urban part of the buffer zone can be developed into a Culture Park. Just like the project in Belfast, in the walled city of Nicosia, locals will have the opportunity to discover cultural activities giving the old derelict buildings a new reason for existing and also using the qualities that as ruins they have to offer.

By introducing new buffer zone Galleries, a Library, Art exhibitions, Crafts (wood, metal, glass) and other activities I plan to promote dialogue and deeper understanding and appreciation of the others' cultural background. In an effort to preserve as much as possible from the aesthetics and atmosphere the old derelict and forgotten buildings within the Cyprus buffer zone have to offer, an additional new and contrasting layer should be added to them. By using modern and contrasting materials and colours with the old structures a clear distinguishment is created between the new from the old but also at the same time emphasizing the beauty of the damaged structures that time has forgotten.

This Culture park vision would be created in steps. The first step would be to raise awareness and create a steady flow of people in the otherwise dead strip by providing a destination, a place that would be useful for the locals and also a place that will allow interactions (from formal to informal), knowledge exchange and culture events. So for that the right program, such as cafeteria, performance spaces, galleries but also studying and meeting rooms, had to be found and matched with an appropriate building.



*A view of the Nicosia buffer zone behind the renovated facades*



**What could be the most appropriate program for such a unique and symbolic location?**

While crossing the buffer zone by foot to the opposite side, a visitor encounters a very distinct building. It used to be a hotel that was called "Olympus" with commercial spaces on the ground floor and large openings, hand carved stone decorations, ornaments and beautiful balconies on the upper floor; all expressing the existence of a high-class hotel. The building is located in the middle of the only pedestrian crossing along the buffer zone, right where the old riverbed used to be. In my view it provides the perfect location for the creation of a new "bridge" between the two communities, since people already walk next to the building before reaching the checkpoints. It is worth mentioning that at this location, pedestrians are not required to show identification; a factor which generally deters people from visiting the other side.

Killian Doherty, architect responsible for the Kimisagara Football for Hope in Rwanda, writes in an article published in *Volume Architecture of Peace*: 'A war memorial as a symbolic form is too blunt and only privileges one side. It often reinforces divisions, rather than unite. Architecture of reconciliation needs more subtle tactics. An architecture that can forge a common goal; that brings diverse groups of people together; that promotes dialogue<sup>1</sup>.'

From the conclusions of the case studies and examples analyzed and explained above, a space for communication and cultural understanding is needed. With an additional layer of education combined with a casual meeting program (cafeteria) a wider audience will be addressed. This kind of program can be hosted in schools, libraries and culture centres.

As schools have a limited target group I will be focusing on the other two categories but leaving the educational part that schools provide and delivering it in other ways (such as workshops).

Although the primary and traditional function of a library has always been its capacity to store and present books, it had and has to evolve due to the rise of technology and the needs of its users. Libraries are evolving to more actively support the social dimensions of information and learning. They are creating welcoming spaces, explicitly associated with tolerance and culture, for social interaction and intellectual dialogue. One of the powerful attractions of libraries is the unique pleasure of being alone, in a quiet place, while simultaneously being in a public place. Libraries have also changed their policies to adapt to the reality of people

<sup>1</sup> Doherty, K. (2014) *Some footnotes concerning the Kimisagara 'Football or Hope'*, *Volume, Architecture of peace*

needing coffee, water, and other beverages to sustain them<sup>2</sup>.

In some cases libraries have gone a step further like the case of the library in The Hague. The firm responsible for the interior design (AATVOS) state, their goal was to "Make sure it doesn't look too much like a library. Reduce counter space and increase display areas. Open up views on the libraries escalators and strongly focus on espresso bars and internet to go units for leisure use."<sup>3</sup> The Hague library also hosts various events such as live music.

This development of contemporary libraries, to cater the social and cultural needs of a city, shows an important quality of the library as a typology. As the books become a secondary aspect of modern libraries and the focus shifts on hosting more cultural programs and catering for the community's cultural needs, it can be extremely valuable for the specific site and situation of the area that I am investigating: the dividing zone of Nicosia.

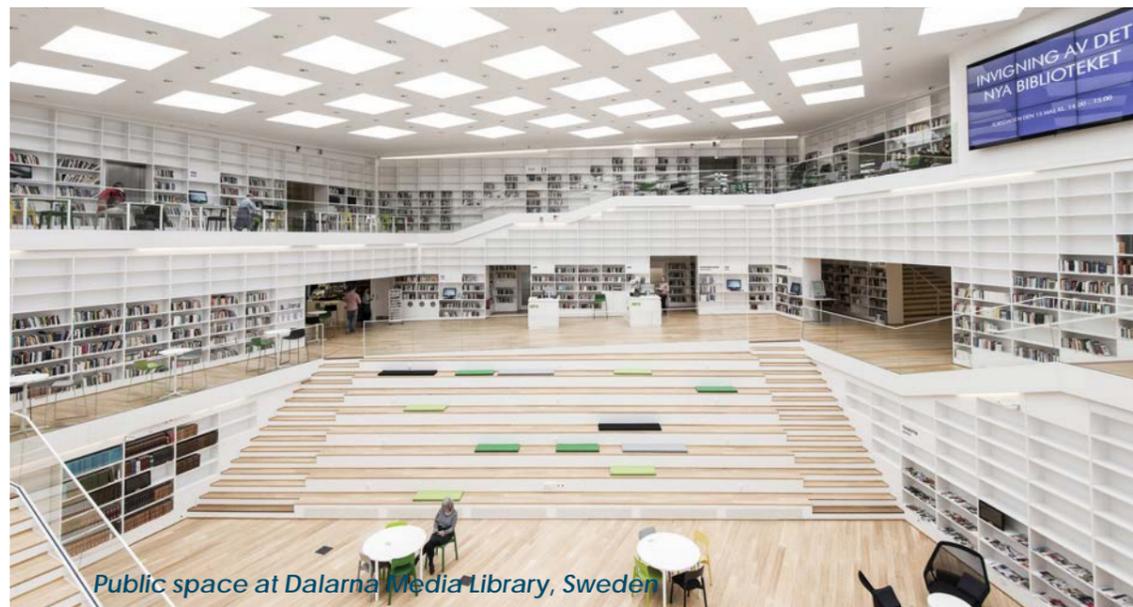
To my surprise, my research showed that the Cyprus library theoretically acts as National Library of Cyprus, however it tends to cater primarily Greek rather than Turkish Cypriots. Under the recommendation of the 1994 United Nations Report, 'Feasibility Study on the Establishment of a Bi-Communal Reference/Lending Library for Cyprus', the Cyprus Library should change its position, to being a library available to all Cypriots.

By researching the current National Library of Cyprus I discovered that the whole library is divided into four buildings scattered around the city. By interviewing four current librarians in Nicosia, I learned that it is inefficient and for that reason the government was planning since 2000 to find a new site for the development of one single building that would host all of the necessary facilities effectively and efficiently. As my research on libraries explained earlier, the definition of contemporary libraries has changed. For my design challenge I will be focusing on the evolved definition. As the concept of this building will be to focus on public interaction and promotion of communication, books will not be a major feature in the interior of the building maximizing the space for social meeting opportunities. The structure that will hold the books though, will be defining the circulation of the building becoming a bridge between the silent and private part with the open, public and noisy part. Consequently the term 'library' (although the function is included in the program) might be confusing and misleading.

<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>3</sup> Demas, S. *From the Ashes of Alexandria: What's Happening in the College Library?*  
<http://www.aatvos.com/project/the-hague-city-library/>

The Norwegian sociologist, mathematician and the principal founder of the discipline of peace and conflict studies, Johan Galtung distinguishes in his book 'Peace by Peaceful Means' between two types of peace: positive and negative. He describes negative peace as "a process of reducing, or the absence of direct violence by a perpetrator."<sup>1</sup> On the other hand he explains that positive peace is a process of life enhancement. He elaborates this positive peace as, "a cooperative system beyond passive peaceful coexistence, one that can bring forth positively synergistic fruits of harmony".<sup>2</sup> He further elaborates that peace is not only an absence of all three types of violence (direct, structural and cultural) but, as he explains, can also be described as a creative conflict transformation.

Consequently, under Galtung's framework, proposing Cultural programs and activities in the Cyprus Buffer zone, can be seen as a form of positive peace that not only attempts to eliminate all kinds of violence, but also works towards what Johan Galtung refers to as "creative conflict transformation."



1 Galtung, J. (1996) *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*  
 2 Galtung, J. (1996) *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*



"The new midtown Manhattan's 53rd Street public library by TEN Arquitectos will portray an open, airy, vibrant library with multiple kinds of public space".

'NY daily news'



Conclusion

To conclude, by examining the former empire borders like the Great Wall of China, Hadrian's Wall, and the Iron Curtain and observing their transformation through the years, one can gain inspiration and realize that a border or a buffer zone is not necessarily bad. By taking advantage of the unique spatial opportunities they create, they can become unique attractions and whole economies can be built on them.

As the closest case study to the division of Nicosia is Berlin, many lessons can be learned from this city. For example the passage of time changes the views and feelings that are linked to historical happenings. Therefore as designers we should be able to foresee these changes of views and use rather than erase the memories. We should act upon them before the impact of impulsive and reckless decisions create more social problems. Another lesson learned is the fact that by using a more gradual contact between two sides, it helps people to understand the opposite side's situation better. Thus people could potentially become more open to compromises for peace and harmony's sake. Making it easier to digest any future plans of total reunification.

Finding and using a building such as the Olympus Hotel, located in the middle of the only pedestrian crossing along the 180 km buffer zone, seems to be the perfect location to take advantage and use it to create a connection between the two cultures. By adopting the new definition of libraries, I aim to create more opportunities for communication between the visitors and at the same time enriching the cultural and political role of the building.

With an architectural design thinking in a problematic space like the Buffer zone in Nicosia and especially the part within the walled city, I will be creating one of the most robust starting points in a peace-promoting project between two 'rival' communities. This will be achieved by taking advantage of the frameworks of positive peace and dialogical communication by Johan Galtung and Richard Sennet as explained earlier.

Following the examples of other historical borders and how they developed and transformed through time I aim to transform the Cyprus buffer zone, from an open wound to a scar that will not only become the backbone of cultural and natural tourism, but also bind and bring the two communities of the island closer together.



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