Hate speech and behaviour in Cyprus

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HATE SPEECH AND BEHAVIOUR IN CYPRUS

- Hate speech is easily detected but not sufficiently studied and addressed.
- Dominance of nationalist narrative and lack of violence after 1974 sidelined these discussions.
- Ethnic composition, immigration and prospect of solution set the context for the phenomenon to take roots.
Research purposes

- Identifying the problem, its extent, its forms
- Basis for developing proposals and tools for confronting the problem
- Bicommunal project
- Both historical and contemporary perspective
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Methodology

- Secondary literature and primary sources (expert surveys, newspapers, etc.)
- Focus groups of stakeholders (bloggers, academics, journalists, youth organizations, children, etc.)
- Target groups: Greek and Turkish Cypriots, immigrants and LGBT persons
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Theoretical and analytical framework

- The ‘other’
- The organization and the control of our social world is structured based on a positive image of our self as opposed to the other
- Binary contrasts/antitheses simplify the world around us by developing images (e.g., Greek Vs Turk, good Vs bad, etc.)
People and groups are stigmatized as something ‘other’ and ‘different’, out of socially constructed models and stereotypes.

The ‘other’ is usually someone to whom we ascribe an inferior social, economic, and/or cultural status.

The ‘other’ is not treated as a separate individual but as a part of a group with specific characteristics.
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Racism

- Articulated around the stigma of heterogeneity (e.g., skin colour, nationality, etc.)
- Detected in practices of contempt, humiliation and exploitation
- Manifested in: verbal attacks, avoidance and ghettoisation of the ‘other’, discriminating acts of various forms, physical attacks
Basic concepts (OSCE)

- **Hate crimes**: criminal acts motivated by bias or prejudice towards particular groups of people

- **Hate speech**: forms of expression that are motivated by, demonstrate or encourage hostility towards a group or a person because of their membership of that group

- Since hate speech may encourage or accompany hate crimes, the two concepts are interlinked
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Nationalism and otherism (GC community)

- Hegemonic since 1910s
- Other voices sidelined even by force (1950s)
- 1950-1974: EOKA, TMT, paramilitary organizations, assassinations, intercommunal clashes, EOKA II, coup, invasion
- Nationalism integral part of both communities identity
- Many works addressed nationalism, much fewer the issue of hate speech and crime
Greek Cypriots: exiting the comfort zone

- Turning point the opening of the checkpoints in 2003: increase of inter-communal contacts and many TCs entered the labour market in the RoC

- Some violent incidents occurred: e.g., in the English School, near a right-wing football club, etc.

- TCs are perceived as a threat to the GCs sole running of the state and social affairs
The TCs are seen by GCs as persons who always ask for privileges that are not justified by their sheer numbers.

Even though the majority of TCs are atheists, the Islam factor constitutes part of the GC’s fear puzzle.

Negative stereotypes are build on past experiences carried to younger generations through storytelling, the educational system, political and social actors, etc.
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- Major outlets of nationalism: various centre-right and right organizations, part of the media, the Church, part of the intelligentsia and other associations

- Cyprus a Greek island, TCs presence a misfortune

- Feelings of cultural and economic superiority, racist stereotypes (‘crazy Turks’, ‘dirty Turks’, etc.)

- Mostly unconscious attitude
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**Institutional exclusion**
- Diffused in state structures and takes several forms
- Hostile reception in public hospitals
- Public signs only rarely feature Turkish
- Ethnocentric educational system (emphasis on the GC)
- Turkish are not taught in public schools
- GC pupils hold very negative attitudes (more than the rest of GC population) about TC
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Politically sponsored hate speech

- Target’s TCs political rights and the form of the proposed solution
- Archbishop: ‘in the event of such solution the 82% will become captive of the 18%’
- Politicians: TCs exploit the golden benefits of Cypriot citizenship
- ELAM: Turkish “Cypriots”, attack against Talat
- Right-wing football fans: ‘Turks you will die on Greek soil’
CONCLUSIONS

- Cyprus is a conservative society. The structure and the relations upon which power is build and embedded do not change easily and they create specific stereotypes.

- Upsetting factors: EU accession, increase in immigration and the prospect of solving the Cyprus problem.
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- There exists a huge depository of hostility, lack of tolerance and not acceptance towards ‘the other’
- The number of hate crimes is small, while hate speech occurs more often. Unavoidably one will lead to the other if is not dealt with
- Many incidents are not reported and no complaints are filed which indicates that the problem is simmering
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- Hate crimes or hate motivated incidents are usually the result of organized action
- State services fall short in addressing the phenomenon
- The legal framework is in place despite any voids but is actually missing is its proper and effective implementation