

# **The Unresolved Past: The Frozen Cyprus Conflict and Its Spatial & Memorial Ubiquity**

*Marie Pouillès Garonzi, PhD in geography, Université Lyon II Lumière, laboratoire  
UMR5600 EVS-IRG, [marie.pouillesgaronzi@univ-lyon2.fr](mailto:marie.pouillesgaronzi@univ-lyon2.fr)*

LSE, HO 11<sup>th</sup> Symposium 29/05/2025

## *Abstract*

### **Introduction**

The Cyprus conflict is often referred to as the “Cyprus Problem”. While violent hostilities have subsided, the conflict remains “frozen,” continuing to shape the lives of Cypriots through the enduring legacies of its violent past. The term “vampire,” used by Papastephanou (2005) to describe a “non-resolved and poorly buried” past, is especially relevant as 2024 marked the 50th anniversary of the island’s division. This paper summarizes my PhD thesis defence and examines how this persistent past influences both memory and spatial dynamics in Cyprus.

The central research question is: how does the ubiquitous memory of the frozen Cyprus conflict shape space and society (both within the divided territories of Cyprus, its diaspora and non-Cypriots living on the island) ? The study aims to understand how the unresolved past continues to affect contemporary politics, social practices, and cultural representations, positioning itself within geopolitical, cultural, and memory studies, with a focus on frozen conflicts and their impact on post-conflict societies.

### **Literature review and scientific aims**

This thesis builds upon writings on frozen conflicts, collective memory, and the geopolitics of borders. It distinguishes itself by integrating a spatial and memorial approach to understand the interplay between physical/intangible spaces and memorial practices.

The study is motivated by the desire to explore a question that remains unresolved but continues to impact the island and its people. Despite the conflict being dormant for decades, it profoundly influences Cypriots (but not only) on the island and in the diaspora. Understanding how memory and space are linked in a frozen conflict seems essential for comprehending the persistence of division and potential reconciliation.

## **Methodology and plan**

This research uses a multi-methodological approach, combining participant observation, interviews, surveys, and analysis of documentary sources such as press articles, films, music, and art. This approach explores the spatial and social dimensions of Cyprus, particularly how these are shaped by value transmission, normative reinforcement, and socialisation in a frozen conflict-ridden society.

The first section investigates memorial practices in public spaces, including museums, monuments, and artefacts related to the island's violent past. The second section focuses on socialisation within institutionalised spaces, particularly schools, where future citizens are educated within the framework of division and its commemoration. The third section examines the conflict's presence in private/intangible spaces, with oral histories transmitting narratives across generations, while the Cyprus Question is ubiquitous in everyday life and culture. The fourth section explores the role of Cypriot diaspora communities, but also the “place” of the non-Cypriot “embedded” in the frozen conflict, and finally, how tourism also “shapes” the Issue.

## **Findings**

The research reveals that the frozen conflict is deeply embedded in both the material and immaterial landscapes of Cyprus. Public spaces, including monuments and museums, perpetuate memories of the violent past, with the Green Line symbolising the physical and symbolic division of the island. Education and commemorative practices reinforce the status quo, while emerging narratives advocating for reconciliation challenge this inertia, particularly in the diaspora and on digital platforms.

Private spaces, such as homes and family environments, are similarly filled with memories of the conflict, with histories and narratives shaping personal and collective identities. Artistic representations and digital landscapes also contribute to the ongoing presence of this unresolved past. Non-Cypriots living on the island are intertwined in the realities, limitations and dangers of the frozen conflict and what it implies. Tourism plays a significant role in commodifying the conflict, showing how the past remains omnipresent and shapes the future prospects for resolution.

**Keywords:** Cyprus, frozen conflict, memory studies, geopolitics, Cyprus Issue/Problem

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## **I. Introduction**

"To live is to move from one space to another while trying as much as possible not to bump", as Georges Perec said (Perec, 1974).

In Cyprus, one bump everywhere, all the time, and this is part of its uniqueness because of its insular character and the liveliness of its conflicting memories, despite this frozen situation.

When one bump, one comes up against limits, obstacles. It can be painless, just restrictive, while reminding of the limits, the restrictions. But it can also be painful, marking the body with bruises, fractures and inducing trauma of various magnitudes. And, of course, revive past wounds.

On the island of Cyprus, we bump in all spaces; at the heart of those the public ones, open and closed, in private or domestic spatialities and intangible spaces, where people live with their ghosts (Von Hirschhausen, 2017) and the transmission of memories of the frozen conflict through the generations. These spatialities studied in my thesis interconnect and collide.

As soon as I arrived, I did bump into the limits of the questions that could be asked. That same evening, in the car of Eleni, a Greek Cypriot, as we drove through the avenues of the capital, I asked her about the grandiloquent Turkish Cypriot flag flashing in the darkness. Her attitude changed in a second, and with a visibly heavy heart, she spoke of both the frozen conflict and her sadness about the situation. This was my first connection with the geopolitical situation of the island, and its effects on people.

These clashes multiplied in the following days, when I experienced the physical limitations of the Green Line in my first movements. For example, when I went to visit friends in their homes a few steps from my apartment, the garden overlooked the barbed wire of the demarcation line. I looked out the window and if I saw the space and the expanse unfolding on the horizon, I could not access it: sharp barbed wire and formal prohibitions prevented me from doing so. Accustomed to free mobility, I was coming up against this tangible reality and I wanted to account for it.

As I questioned myself, I realized that my experiences of clashes were shared by various actors. First, the Cypriots on the island, for whom the frozen conflict was still alive and real, but also the Cypriots of the diaspora, living far from the shores of the Mediterranean. And, as for me, this Cyprus Question was experienced by the non-Cypriots of the island, but also the tourists.

This crystallized the study around the matrix of "inhabiting/dwelling" (Lazzarotti, 2017). To inhabit as a Cypriot, as a non-native, as a punctual visitor, is to face different realities and materializations of the Cypriot Problem. To inhabit the place of conflict is to live through it and to make it live, to make it last, through daily or ritualized practices. But I was also witnessing, on and off the island, attempts at a settlement, in order to go beyond the Cyprus Question. I had to describe these observations, these uncertainties, these determinations; I had to restore them and show them to the reader.

On the very evening of my first arrival in Cyprus, I was therefore confronted, as mentioned, with the realities of the conflict frozen in the island's daily life, creating a geopolitics of the ordinary, so latent was it in all aspects of daily life.

In the end, I also bumped myself from my first Cypriot moments. Not having a direct affinity with this issue as an external actor, I nevertheless tried to develop my listening and active observation in order to have an empathetic and conscious presence. Over the months and years, I wanted to refine my perception of the Cyprus Problem but above all to share it in academic work. I discovered in my exchanges that this Cyprus Question was not well known in France and in French-speaking circles in general. This country and its history are little or not explained in school curricula or in the French press. So I thought it might be interesting to do academic research on this subject and share my early results in the scientific community. It is therefore gradually that interest in the Cyprus conflict has grown and matured. To make it understandable, I allow myself to contextualize it with the help of a succinct chronology.

## **II. Chronologic review**

In the heart of the Levantine Basin, Cyprus is located on the edge of the eastern Mediterranean and has been defined as a "crossroads of civilizations". A place of trade and commerce since Antiquity, the Hellenization of the island would have materialized at the end of the Late Bronze Age (Fourier, 2008). This was followed by several successive waves of occupations by different actors. The Cypriot Middle Ages were marked by the Crusades, particularly by the conquests of Richard the Lionheart, Guy of Lusignan and the Venetians. A turning point in the history of Cyprus took place with the colonization of the island by the Ottoman Empire in 1571 (Vassiliou, 2005, p. 414).

In 1878, Great Britain obtained the right to administer Cyprus, which officially became a colony in 1925 (Petithomme, 2014). The British had to deal with a Greek-speaking population demanding union with Greece: the so-called Enosis. The 1930s marked the beginning of popular revolutionary acts (including the great riots of 1931: the Oktovria).

The violent colonial conflict accelerated in the 1950s. From 1955 onwards, an armed struggle and a series of attacks were carried out by the supporters and fighters of EOKA A (the pro-Enosis Greek Cypriot nationalist militia). From 1958 onwards, the supporters of the TMT (the Turkish Cypriot nationalist militia) in favour of “Taksim” (meaning "sharing" in Turkish) fought back. The conflict is accentuated by growing hostility between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, but the violence is also intra-communal (Papadakis, 2008). Greece, Turkey and Great Britain met in February 1959 in Zurich for the signing of a tripartite treaty guaranteeing the right to intervene on the island as guarantor powers. On 16 August 1960, the independence of Cyprus was signed and was supposed to put an end to the decolonisation conflict. But the 1960s were marked by inter- and intra-community confrontations that continued (Bertrand, 2019).

Major unrest broke out in 1963 and 1964, leading to the establishment of UNFICYP: the UN peacekeeping mission in Cyprus. Despite the establishment of the Blue Helmets, the supporters of Enosis and the members of EOKA B proclaimed a Coup d'Etat against Archbishop Makarios in order to attach Cyprus to Greece on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 1974. Faced with this threat, Turkey, as a guarantor power, immediately responded with the launch of Operation Attila on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July and the 14<sup>th</sup> of August, aimed at landing on the northern coasts of the island. Exercising its right to intervene, it occupies more than a third of the island, with an initial concern to ensure security and protect the rights of the Turkish minority in Cyprus. The separation of the island materialized around the Green Line, and its crossing was made impossible. A large-scale population exchange took place, bringing together the majority of Greek Cypriots to the south and Turkish Cypriots to the north of this ceasefire line (Kazarian, 2012, p. 109). In 1983, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) was self-proclaimed. This remains illegal in the eyes of the international community and is only officially recognised by Turkey. Since then, the status quo persists, hopes for reconciliation have dwindled and attempts at reunification have not resulted in a lasting agreement. In 2004, the Annan plan was rejected by the majority of Greek Cypriots, as it aimed to reunite the two entities (Gauny, 2006). That same year, Cyprus entered the European Union (excluding the Schengen area). The Green Line opened in 2003, nine crossing points have been set up to date. The two entities of the island evolve separately, even after the partial opening of the Green Line.

Figure 1: map of Cyprus



### **III. Research question, plan & methodology**

The starting problem of my research began with the observation highlighting that the Cyprus Problem is not solved. It continues to exist in the daily lives of Cypriots (on the island and elsewhere) and of the island's inhabitants (non-Cypriots), through the traces and memories of the conflictual past. From this, stemmed a general research question: what are the memory and geopolitical dynamics at work in the different spaces where the prospects of the frozen conflict are played out? The problematic of my argument was built with the aim of presenting the omnipresence of the "Cyprus Question" in the daily life of the actors affected by it, by examining its ubiquity in memory. The central purpose of my thesis can be summed up as establishing the liveliness of this so-called frozen conflict, which is not really frozen, because it is constantly warmed up by the presence of his memories.

In order to arrive at this demonstration, I have relied on a multidisciplinary methodology and tools. The analysis of written corpus is the main basis of my argument, compiling academic resources, artistic works, press sources, or even from digital social networks. This methodology accounts for the bulk of the off-the-field research, done during COVID restricting times

especially. In addition to this, I was able to analyse the answers received from a questionnaire I sent online to diaspora associations in a qualitative way. This qualitative methodology has forged most of my approach, especially during my various field trips in Cyprus.

These were punctuated by several main working methods. I mention that of “floating observation”, dear to Colette Pétonnet (1982). Sometimes, this observation became participatory, it could also be structured. The latter method was tamed during the field interviews. They were based on semi-structured interview grids. To vary the methodology, I decided to also carry out less directive interviews, especially during the last phases of the field study. Speech was then freer, richer and more intimate. This new tone was welcome in order to grasp the thickness of the anchors and the movements of these painful memories, which are relatively ordinary in this island space.

These interviews in a freer form also made it possible to establish the possibility of accompanied journeys with actors in the field, in particular through a form of wandering interviews, a journey through places strongly impacted by the frozen conflict. This was the case with the discovery of old North Nicosia for a Greek Cypriot refugee and her daughter, and our impromptu meeting with a Turkish Cypriot woman on the other side of the Green Line.

I also set up a methodology close to sensitive cartography, through drawing-elicitation, to try to understand what was preventing a Greek Cypriot woman from going to the North, even though this is one of her dreams. Through its various methodological processes, several main results emanate from this research.

This research argues that the Cyprus conflict, commonly referred to as ‘frozen’, is in reality continuously lived, negotiated, and reproduced through everyday spatial and memorial practices, affecting not only Cypriots but also non-Cypriots inhabiting or visiting the island

#### **IV. Main results of the thesis**

In what ways does the so-called ‘frozen’ Cyprus conflict persist through spatial practices, memorial traces, and everyday experiences?

To answer that question I built this thesis by borrowing the figure of the hourglass, starting from a broader study, gradually narrowing the focus on sensitive and situated experiences before broadening the questioning again.

I first highlighted how these conflicting memories, in many respects, collide in the public spaces of the island through a cartography that catalyses a systematization of painful memory in the island territory.

### ***Mapping the space/place(s) of frozen conflict: the example of Nicosia's monuments***

For the geographer Yi Fu Tuan, "space is transformed into a place when it acquires a definition and a meaning" (Tuan, 2011, p.10).

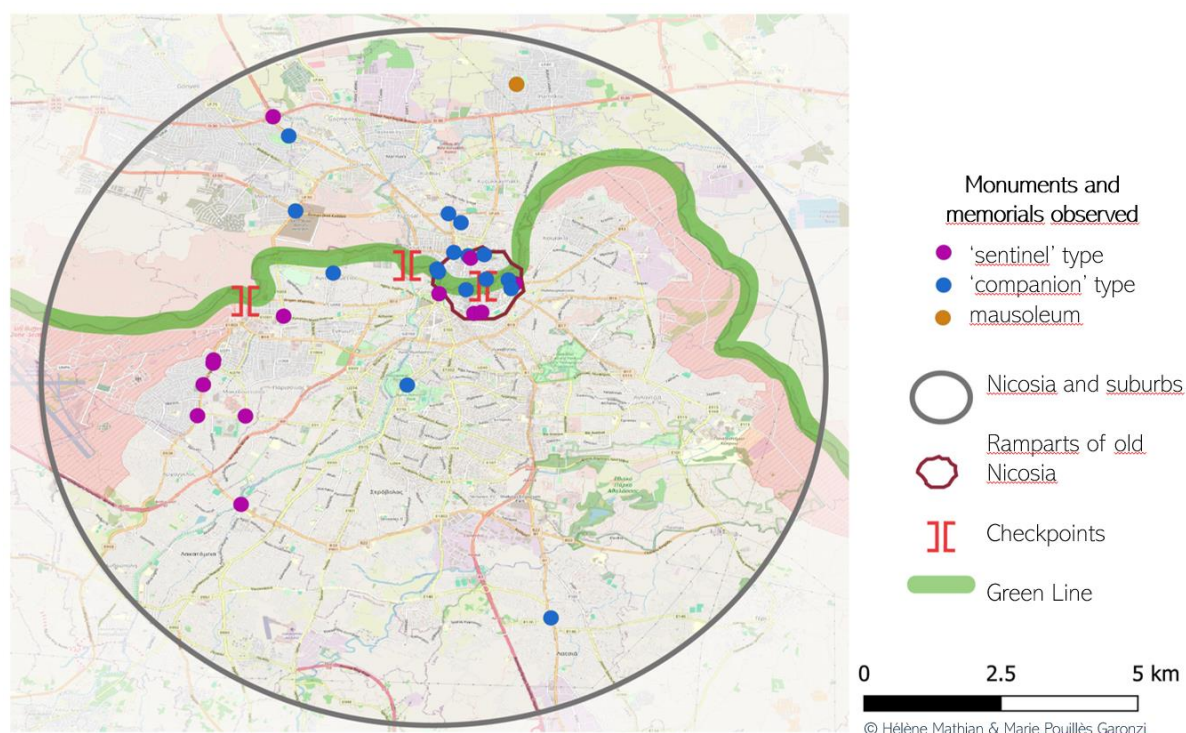
In this thesis, I use the term "space" in a generic way to designate a milieu, an expanse. The question of "place", however, animates my reflection, by analysing definitions and meanings. I propose to evoke the "space" of Nicosia, which has become a "place", focusing on two districts of the capital to explain how I examine the meaning of the places studied.

The antagonistic memories that collide in these different spaces manifest themselves in various ways. I decided to illustrate the case of the divided capital, Nicosia, which allows to visualize the omnipresence of monuments linked to the memories of the frozen conflict. I have chosen to represent them in an undifferentiated way between North and South, in order to show the systematic territorialization of the memorial objects in the living spaces of the Nicosians. The cartography highlights the notions of space and place, studied for instance by Yi Fu Tuan. One can observe "space", as a geographical extent, a neutral, measurable and situated given, as is the city of Nicosia. Inside, one can focus on "places", that have acquired a meaning, a cultural and emotional charge, invested and practiced by the populations who are attached to them.

The first map shows the location and observation of the monuments and memorials of Nicosia (North and South, including the outskirts). The pictograms represent the positioning of the monuments and memorials photographed on the ground. One can spot the Green Line, the 3 checkpoints (in orange) allowing the crossing between North to South. Adopting a local scale makes it possible to highlight different forms of space occupation by these monuments.



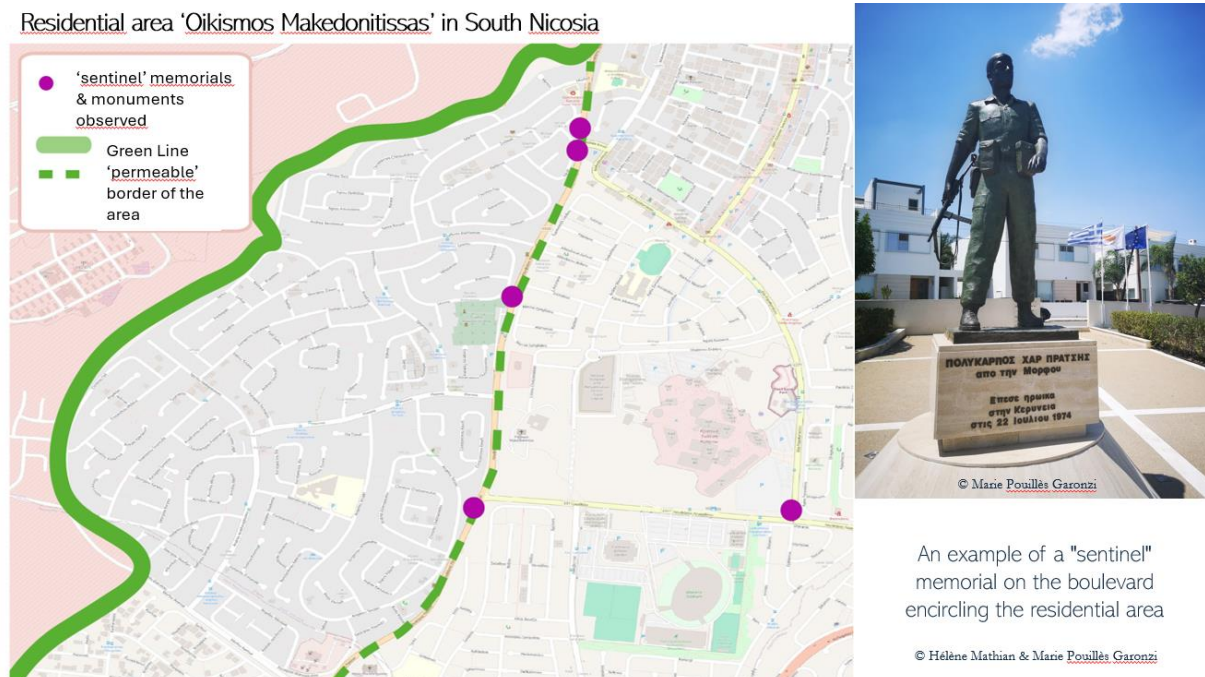
Figure 2: Monuments and memorials observed in the capital



This second map allows to change scale and shows the residential area of Oikismos Makedonitissas in South Nicosia. This neighbourhood is facing an impermeable border (the Green Line with the UN Buffer Zone behind, in red). During fieldtrips, I observed the existence of a permeable symbolic border, materialized by the presence of several memorials related to the frozen conflict. These monuments can be assimilated to “sentinels”, by the presence of statues of "soldiers with the task of keeping watch, of protecting a place, which makes it possible to monitor a situation, to bear witness to a process"<sup>1</sup>. I witnessed the presence of these memorials on the ground near the places where the inhabitants live: monuments affixed to the boulevard, near red lights, roundabouts, but also around the school, the church, the grocery store in the residential district. When one walk through the neighbourhood, whether while leaving or entering, one inevitably pass in front of these memorials, these “sentinels”, sometimes with forced breaks (e.g.: when stopping at a red light) sometimes with “oblique attention” (Hoggart, 1970).

<sup>1</sup> According to the dictionary definition of “sentinel”: <https://dictionnaire.lerobert.com/definition/sentinelle>

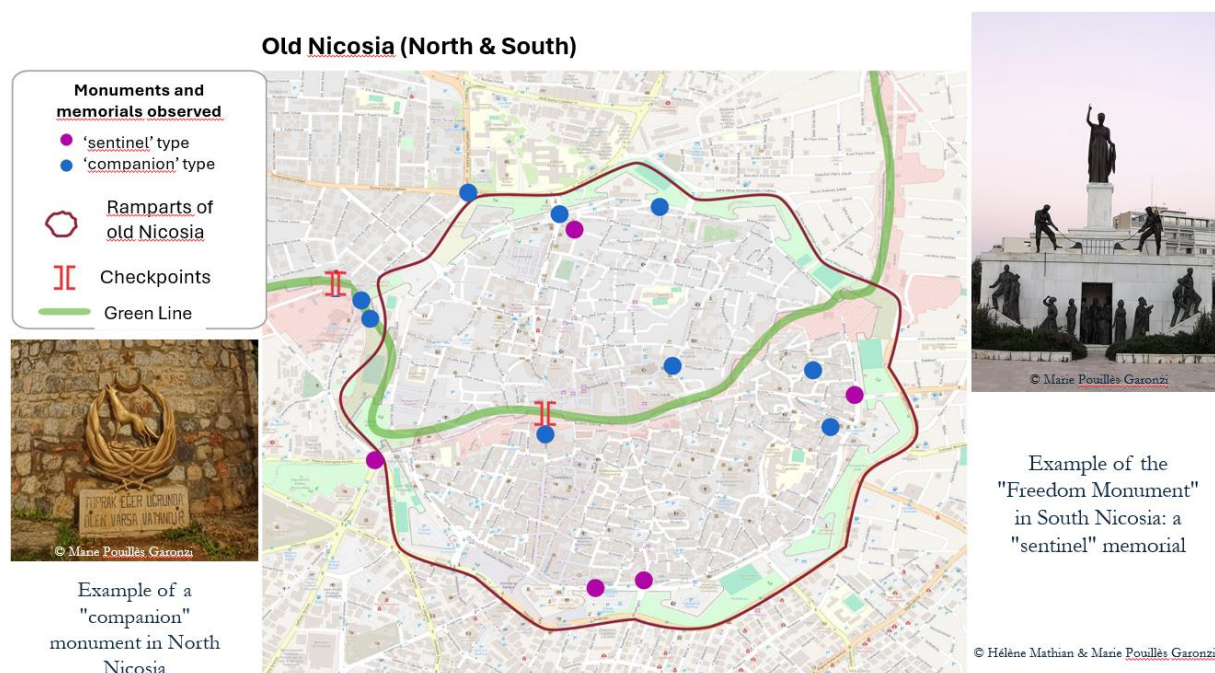
**Figure 3: ‘Sentinels’ of Oikismos Makedonitissas**



Finally, the third map highlights old Nicosia, North and South, crossed by the Green Line. The memorials are also scattered throughout the old town, have become symbols that are part of the heritage. Many strew the entrances and exits of the ramparts (the “sentinels”, the typology expressed above). But the monuments are also affixed to the heart of the inhabitants' functional places (near shops, administrations, etc.) as "companions". I named this second typology this way because these memorials seem to "accompany" the inhabitants in their daily lives. These examples show “space” becoming “place” when it is given a definition and a meaning, as is the case here.

The cartography shows that Nicosia is a space studded with places. In the manuscript, I proposed to talk about the “polytopicality” of places of memory, including those of commemoration. I borrow the term “polytopicity” from Mathis Stock (2011), in the sense designating multiple places to highlight the diversity of those. These places are shaped and inhabited by the omnipresence of memorials. Most of which are, like the categorization established by Patrick Garcia (2009) about war memorials in France, belligerent, pacifist or funeral.

Figure 4: monuments and memorials observed in Old Nicosia



### ***“Bumping into” the omnipresent remains, reminders and revivals of the conflict***

Anyone arriving in Cyprus comes up against one monument or another, at one time or another, and finally feel the presence of the frozen conflict traces in the public space. The first section of my thesis specifically evokes the spatial dimensions of Cypriot conflictual memories in public spaces, materialized on different medium. This materialization involves the physical and symbolic presence of the ceasefire line, memorials, flags, museums, works of street art for example, making Cyprus "an open-air museum" as Halil<sup>2</sup> said in an interview in 2017.

I observe the insistence with which each entity displays a distinct identity: by occupying the space with strong symbols, such as flags, often those of the so-called "motherlands": Greece in the South, Turkey in the North, conferring a Hellenic or Turkishized character in the Cypriot space.

When one live in this divided society, institutional spatialities, including schools, shape citizens to this reality of partition. This socialization, particularly through the educational sphere, is thus evoked in the second section. It produces territorialized practices. I study the different commemoration processes, but also the various and varied activities of civil society. Memory

<sup>2</sup> All names were changed to anonymise the people I interviewed on the field

traces in open and enclosed public spaces as well as institutional places have been studied with regard to the practices of the actors, between tradition and disruption, but also in the light of the tumults of current events impacting the frozen conflict, sometimes reawakening it.

The practices noticed are punctuated by the jolts of current events inviting themselves into the frozen conflict, warming up the dormant tensions of the Cyprus Question, provoking a "rebordering" (Reitel, 2017) of the island societies. I mention several of these episodes since 2020 in the manuscript. I started with a study of broad and encompassing spatialities, before narrowing the focus on the sensory experience at the heart of private and intangible spaces, in the sense of impalpable.

### ***Navigating between tangible and impalpable spatialities shaping the ubiquitous memory of the frozen conflict***

If conflicting traces and memories manifest themselves in public and institutionalized spaces, they are just as numerous in private and immaterial spatialities, as shown in the third section of my manuscript. The transmission of the Cyprus Problem takes place within homes, families, in circles of friends and multiple influences. It is present in everyday life, exposed in the press but also in artistic productions. This ubiquity extends into these intangible spaces, with the example of the digital worlds.

From a large-scale geopolitics, I then wanted to probe and explore a geopolitics of the everyday and the ordinary. This involves the transmission and full presence of memories of the frozen conflict in the heart of domestic spaces, through traces and memories of the missing persons for example.

This also happens in different societal groups but also through impregnation in the arts. The latter make and say the world and the society in which we evolve. If this living memory is telling in the artistic fields, it is also significant in intangible spaces such as digital spatialities. I wanted to highlight how the memories of the frozen conflict were also stirring up the sphere of digital social networks and the press.



### ***To cross or not to cross ? The case of sensitive experiences across the Green Line***

To measure this ubiquity of memory, I have recounted sensitive experiences, evoking and recounting the (sometimes impossible) crossing of the Green Line. I refer to this act as crossing the Rubicon. In fact, even twenty years after the opening of the checkpoints, crossing to the "other side" of the Green Line remains a significant act, whereas it has become habitual for some users. I have as witnesses case studies with Cypriot women for whom the crossing remains unique, in particular through the evocation of the case of Chloé & Maria, and Daphne. The days of observations and interviews with these women show the diversity of feelings and experiences during their (non)crossings.

### ***Between : "how far can I go?"...***

The wandering interview with Chloé and Maria, two Greek Cypriot refugees, highlighted various substances of the ubiquity of memory of the frozen conflict. Maria began by reminiscing at length about her memories of the "Turkish invasion", in a café next to the checkpoint on the southern side. Finally, after having exhausted all the tricks that could delay this first effective crossing to the old North Nicosia, she finally decided to go. To the policeman present in the gatehouse of the checkpoint of Ledra Street, she asked: "how far can I go?".

Her anxieties at the discovery of North Nicosia were eased when we met Leman, a Turkish Cypriot woman (and Maureen, an Australian friend of the latter) around the Büyük Han. The northern islander invited all of us for a traditional Mediterranean coffee, where we shared stories and political opinions while sipping the rose syrup and leblebi şeker<sup>3</sup> on the side. This unexpected encounter was immortalized in photographs. An observer who witnessed this scene could have thought it was a family reunion, as the resemblance between Maria and Leman is striking. For this reason, I allow myself to talk about sisterhood, between these women who have only just met. The exchanges were fluid and the physical closeness obvious. However, on the way back, Maria couldn't help but feel some remorse: "maybe Chloe and I talked too much?" she wondered.

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<sup>3</sup> Chickpeas sugar-coated served as a treat

Figure 5: Maria & Leman, towards a fleeting 'sisterhood'



*...and : “ will I ever be able to overpass those limits?”*

This experience contrasts with the one of Daphne, a Greek Cypriot in her thirties, for whom fear and trauma related to the conflict prevent her from crossing to the North of the country, even though it remains one of her dreams. However, several times, Daphne had promised me to cross to the North for the first time, with me by her side. She believed that she would succeed, she was convinced of it, but at the last moment she couldn't. To somehow overpass those limits, she agreed to share what prevented her from doing so, in a drawing-elicitation.

Figure 6: mental map of Daphne



Her sketches represent her mental map. She illustrates at the top left the Abbey of Bellapais, that she absolutely dreams of visiting. This abbey, she has seen it many times because it appeared in a photo on one of her school notebooks. She then decided to represent the large Turkish flag visible from Nicosia, the one I “bumped into” as soon as I arrived. Between the two, to show her fear of crossing, she represents a hand that could push her towards the black tunnel that is for her the Green Line and, behind it, the North. This is what she has in mind, drawing a cross-section of her brain, her hair tangled in the barbed wire around the demarcation line on the southern side, where barrels and inscriptions inviting people to stay away from the ceasefire line are prominently displayed. Her choice to draw bloody Cyprus in the North refers to the “I don’t forget” doctrine, instilled in the South of the island. This visual can be found to the right of the drawings. She included it in her production, proof of the omnipresence of this ideology in her memoirs and the Greek-Cypriot ingroup. The blockade making this crossing impossible says a lot about the restrictions weighing on some Cypriots.

During the last phase of the fieldtrip, carried out in April 2024, I managed to convince Chloé and Maria to cross the line; this experience resulted in an unlikely encounter for these two Greek Cypriots: the meeting with two other women, one of whom is a Turkish Cypriot. And Daphne agreed to put these representations of the “island other side” through drawing, somehow as a salutary exercise. Beyond my consideration for Cypriots, I also wanted to have an inclusive perspective throughout my manuscript.

***Enlarging the scope by including the Cypriots on the island, the diaspora and the “other” protagonists: the allogeous and the tourists embedded in/embedding the frozen conflict***

The objective of my work was to cover as many meanings as possible to account for the omnipresence of the frozen conflict and its memory in the lives of Cypriots as well as of the inhabitants and visitors of Cyprus. I insist on this, and I come back to the image of the hourglass in order to reopen the analysis on spaces and actors on a larger scale. In this way, I wanted to take into account in the analysis the presence of Cypriots outside the islands' borders. These actors, even hundreds or thousands of miles away from the shores of the island, live and keep alive the memory of the frozen conflict in the space of their diasporas.

I found also crucial to include non-Cypriot people living on the island in the analysis because they also bump into these spaces where the memory of the conflict is omnipresent. They come up, sometimes violently and dangerously, against the limits induced by the pending Cyprus Question and the excesses that this "border windfall" brings about, to use the words of Stéphane Rosière (2020).

The latter also brings out a non-negligible financial windfall: tourism. I chose to name some practises revolving around the trope of “dark tourism” (Folio, 2016) as "sinister tourism" (“tourisme sinistre”) for its multiple meanings in the French language. As a matter of fact, “sinister” can be used to signify a “damage”, a “disaster”, a “loss”. In French dictionaries<sup>4</sup> it designates “what brings death; which death accompanies”, it can “evoke misfortune”, “inspire fear”. The term ‘sinister’ is also used to refer to material and physical casualty caused by

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<sup>4</sup> According to the dictionary definition of “sinistre” : <https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/sinistre>



multiple events and incidents. This particular definitions echoed with some tourist practises linked to the frozen conflict.

The tourist, as an actor, may deliberately seek to bump into, to come up against the manifestations of the Cyprus Problem. Sometimes this is precisely what he is looking for: the traces of the conflict. He lives and makes the frozen conflict alive through his situated experience. And in a way, it contributes to its sustainability.

## V. **Discussion, conclusion & future prospects**

After the summary of the main results discussed in my thesis, the question that arises is the one of these permanent clashes and bumps. I have deliberately chosen to describe them at depth, in order to make this permanence, this recurrence, understood and visible. It is a wilful choice to devote time to the description, to be sure to take the reader into what is at stake within the many spatialities studied. I wanted to explore the multiscale of spaces, actors but also practices and traces of the frozen Cypriot conflict in this research to explain the liveliness of the Cypriot conflict.

This work and its multidisciplinary orientation is positioned in the field of cultural geopolitics, with a particular emphasis on conflicting memories and identity representations inscribed in the many spatialities inherent to Cyprus. If I do not explicitly subscribe to a single school of thought, I borrow approaches from several currents.

First, critical, social and political geography, in the image of Yves Lacoste's work by exploring the conflict inscribed in multiple territorialities. Like the researcher, I explore "the rivalries of power over a territory" (Lacoste, 2008), and even the symbolic rivalries with (geo)political as well as memorial issues.

These analyses of "conflicting memories" echo with the concept of "collective memory" developed by Maurice Halbwachs (1950), which is the framework in which societies remember and represent their past, influencing their present identities and interactions. In the same vein, I also tried to explore how societies remember and forget. This involves, for example, the analysis of commemorative places and practices that reinforce the divide, as Anne Hertzog

(2021), Dominique Chevalier (2018; 2021) , or Stéphane Michonneau (2018) explore in their works for instance.

A specific context linked to insularity and a divided territory is emphasised along the manuscript. I enrich my demonstration with Johan Galtung's concepts of "negative peace" and "positive peace" (1967). Applied to the Cypriot field, it shows the efforts of coexistence and the obstacles to inter-community rapprochement. This plurality of approaches makes it possible to address the complex and multiscalar dynamics of the divided Cypriot society. The multidimensional perspective of this work is thus based on an empirical and interdisciplinary methodology.

I also wanted to get closer to a cultural and social anthropology, by highlighting the specificity and insularity of Cyprus, which could however echo other fields of study. Like the break-up of Yugoslavia (Jouhanneau, 2021) but also other frozen conflict areas around the world (Jolicoeur & Campana, 2009), Cyprus can be included in a broader study of fractured societies. One example that comes close to Cyprus, if we had to propose a rise in generalities, would be the one of Northern Ireland, at least the comparison between Belfast and Nicosia. I find many similarities, particularly in the expression of memory, but also the compartmentalization of spaces and inter-community relations. The short but rich experience I had in Northern Ireland in 2024 brings me in a way closer to the work of Juliette Renard in political science. This Belgian researcher compares in her PhD thesis the two islands (2023), their capital cities with their physical and societal breaches, that are sometimes sealed or tried to be plugged. I would be glad to continue my work in the future, perhaps in concert with other researchers involved in similar questions.

It seems that the main contribution of this work has been to shed light on this spatial polytopicity when it comes to evoking the ubiquity of memory of the frozen Cypriot conflict, which is only “frozen” in words. It deeply remains alive and significant, impacting a diverse matrix of actors, as demonstrated in the manuscript. The challenge is to provide a global perspective, allowing the Cypriot problem to be approached from an overarching perspective, while placing oneself at the heart of everyday life. I hope that the results mentioned in this text can be deepened in future research.

To summarize the paper, this research has illuminated the paradox at the heart of the so-called “frozen” Cyprus conflict: a situation portrayed as static, yet lived as dynamic and omnipresent. By tracing the multiple spatialities such as—public, domestic, digital—across which memory

and space interact, this study reveals that the Cyprus Problem is less a frozen impasse than a constantly re-enacted socio-spatial phenomenon. The pervasive layering of collective memory onto tangible and intangible spaces ensures the continued vitality of the division, while simultaneously generating sites of contestation, negotiation, and potential transformation.

At the public level, the systematic presence of memorials, flags, or monuments demonstrates how memory is territorialised and how space is politicised through everyday practices. These material traces do not merely commemorate; they actively participate in the reproduction of division, both symbolically and physically. Educational institutions and ritualised commemorations further entrench these memories, embedding them into generational transmissions of identity and belonging. Yet, emergent counter-narratives, particularly within diaspora spaces, civil society and digital platforms, suggest that memory is not a monolith but a field of tensions, resistances, and creative appropriations.

The private and affective dimensions of the conflict, explored through oral histories, participatory observations, and drawing-elicitation, show that in intangible spaces—domestic memories, embodied emotions, mental representations—are equally critical in understanding the endurance of division. Experiences of crossing, or the refusal to cross the Green Line, act as crystallisations of internalised borders, encapsulating the ambivalence between the desire for reconciliation and the weight of inherited trauma.

Moreover, by including the Cypriot diaspora, non-Cypriot residents and tourists on the island in the analysis, this research broadens the conventional focus on “Cypriot agency” alone. The phenomena of embedded “outsiders” and “sinister tourism” highlight how the conflict’s memorialisation intersects with globalised patterns of mobility, consumption, and affect. In this sense, the Cyprus Problem is not confined to local narratives; it is embedded within wider circuits of meaning-making, memory economies, and geopolitical imaginaries.

By adopting a multidisciplinary lens combining cultural geopolitics, critical geography, and memory studies, this thesis offers a framework for thinking about frozen conflicts beyond the Cypriot context. It demonstrates how space is continuously re-meaning through memory practices. It also highlights how conflictual pasts shape, and are shaped by “lived” geographies. Comparative perspectives, such as those drawn from Northern Ireland, former Yugoslavia and not only, suggest fruitful avenues for future research, particularly in examining how divided societies spatialise, contest, and sometimes transcend their pasts.

Ultimately, this piece of work argues that frozen conflicts are not mere historical residues but living, multiscalar processes that demand renewed conceptual approaches. Recognising the liveliness of the Cyprus conflict invites scholars to reconsider the relationship between memory, space, and reconciliation, opening new paths for interdisciplinary inquiry into the enduring geographies of division.

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