



Transnational digital networks, migration and gender

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Thematic Report

"Migrant digitalities and Germinal social movements in three arrival cities: Mobile commons transforming the urban questions?"

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1. Introducing the Migrant Social Movement. Terrain and Methodology: Migrants' Right to the City

1.1. The Terrain

Our report geographically and in geopolitical terms is located in the most southern-eastern Mediterranean basin and the *boundary triangle* connecting Europe, Asia and Africa. We are dealing with a loaded political space as rubbles of the past, the core of what was once the Ottoman Empire, which the Greek national project would realise their dream, the *Megali Idea* ('Great Idea'), where *Megali Ellas* ('Great Greece/Hellas') would be reborn, 'Hellas of three continents and five seas'. The modern states emerged as a result of the collapse, the post-'Asia Minor catastrophe' for Greece, the 'rebirth of the nation' in Turkey (1922) and the implosion of *Enosis* (union With Greece) and *Taksim* (*de jure* partition) for Cyprus (1974). It has become a legitimate area for study,¹ not only due to the national/regional specificities, but for the ways/processes by which they encapsulate the 'logics of world' as the geopolitics of the globe. Another important dimension is the extent we can locate the three cities in the globalisation processes. In one influential project which graphically depicts a map of 'global cities',² Istanbul and Athens feature as 'global cities', classified as 'alpha', whilst Nicosia is marked as 'global' but less so, classified as 'gamma'³ The particular study distinguishes the concepts of 'intensive globalisation' and 'extensive globalisation' as a way of disaggregating the complex processes of globalisation.⁴ The map below features Istanbul and Athens as global cities:

¹ The context of the triangle has become an issue of investigation from the point of view of nationalist projects, history and politics.

² Globalization and World Cities (GaWC) Research Network (2008) available at <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/group.html>

³ See <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/world2010t2.html>

⁴ The research team of GaWC (2008) claim that "intensive globalization has been created largely by law firms and more specialised financial services. As a process it can be interpreted as indicating globalization's origins in mid-twentieth century Americanization. As an outcome it can be interpreted as a continuing core of the globalization process." The concept "extensive globalization" is considered as "created largely by accountancy and advertising firms": "as a process it can be interpreted as the diffusion of globalization from its Americanization origins. As an outcome it can be interpreted as the worldwide incorporation of cities into globalization." This is elaborated in Taylor et al (2010/2012).

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Source: <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/world2010.html>

The above studies do not deal with global/local social movements or migration for that matter, which is rather odd, as these are important features of globality. Studies dealing social movements and transnational interactions are missing and particularly studies on how movements and interactions contribute to regional, national and local transformations. Moreover, questions of migration and migrant praxis are distinctly absent. In that sense this report not only attempts to mark new domains, which are innovative in connecting digitality, migration and gender as regards social movements in the Cyprus-Greece-Turkey triangle, but it attempts to open up the domain to a much broader than an area-specific terrain; rather, it speaks to and of the global but must can only be understood in the context of the specificities of the social formations of the borders. Moreover, the study was designed, conducted and mapped as a study from below, which connects to the local, regional, national and global as constructions and as spatial structures and processes of transformation and contestation, rather as fixed and unchangeable entities.

It matters little for the purposes of this study which metaphor of politics other than to note that the politics that this sociologically grounded study contains a dialectic within it that is fluid, uncertain and highly contested. In this sense it can be seen as a Janus-like process between the liberal perspective of *politics as the art of governance* versus the radical alternative of *politics as a social struggle or insurrection* (Durenger 1964)⁵; or the other duality of, as proposed by Rancière (1998), the conservative logic of social control as police order (i.e. *politics as 'normality'*) versus politics as struggle for equality (i.e. *politics as an exception*). It is no coincidence that politics in the classical liberal thought is merely a tactical question of allocation of resources via the state and other

⁵ Referred to by Seferiades, 2012

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governance institution. Whichever metaphor adopted, the central argument for the cycles of deviance approach we adopt is that there is a constant social struggle manifested in the form of the institutional powers' use of *normalising processes of ordering* geared towards suppressing, curtailing, containing the *logics of disruption of the order*. Crises are moments where the normalising is not working. In this sense, Max Weber's celebrated and almost universally accepted formulation of the state as the institution with monopoly right to use of force, precisely to ensure that *order* is maintained, is the sociological and political foundation of Carl Schmidt's pinning down the ultimate source of power of the modern capitalist societies: sovereign is the one who can proclaim a state of emergency or state of exception (Schmidt 1994; Agamben 2004).

When dealing with 'dangerous classes', within the 'multitude', migrants are considered to be "a special category of the poor", which embody the ontological conditions not only of resistance but also of productive life itself" (Hardt and Negri 2000: 133). This applies to certain categories of migrants, not all migrants of course. These are but starting thoughts: It is well-documented that for centuries uncontrolled people on the move were considered to be dangerous. Yet, it was in the colonial era that this crystallised into what we have today, in post-colonial era. The legal sanctions and persecution of types of deviants defined as "rogues and vagabonds", i.e. persons considered "idle and disorderly", prostitutes and other unruly persons have a long history. One of the keys to understand the current *dissensus* in politics, i.e. the sharp disagreement in politics is *migration*, is that it causes 'turbulence' (Papastergiades 2000). Crucial are transformations caused by such mobility of people, which necessitate the examination of migration *as a force of change*; some even go as far as conceiving migration *as a mass social movement* (Mezzadra 2009) – *a mass mobilisation of 'deviants'* (see Papadopoulos et al 2008; Tsianos and Papadopoulos 2012). In this sense, migration is a constituent force in the reformulation of sovereignty (Papadopoulos et al, 2008: 202). From another perspective this very same *mass mobilization of 'deviants'* amounts to another 'Event' in the Badiou's sense, which we are witnessing now: it was once said that 'the empire strikes back', but in the 21st century we are witnessing a qualitative new phase as kind of third strike, a third encounter in the transformations of social/political movements.

Theorists of social movements have distinguished the 'old' social movements from the 'new' ones which emerged in the 1960s, emphasizing (a) the structure of opportunities which allow for the emergence, growth and demise of such movements, (b) the networks, structures and resources employed to mobilize support and (c) the ways of defining and framing these movements (see Tilly 2004; Tarrow 1994; MacAdam 1996; Balland et al 2006; Porta and Dianni 1999/2010). There is a question mark whether the movements we are

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examining now are merely 'new' social movements: the 2010s are not the 1960s and 1970s; to treat current movements as a mere continuation of the ones that emerged in the 1960s is highly problematic. If Tilly (1993-94, 6) is correct, social movements have no definite form, nor do they undergo natural histories" but are merely "historically specific clusters of political performances". Cohen (1972, p. 120) referred to the emergence of "*germinal social movements*" which are often accompanied by a 'moral panic' but not necessarily so. He claims although they may meet a number of the formal criteria contained in the literature on such movements, they are however rather difficult to classify within the usual typologies. Of course *Germinal* is the Zola's masterpiece title, a novel about the birth of political ideas and social movement in the French society of the 1860s, during the early stages of the working class rise against the bourgeoisie. The title refers to the idea of germination in plants: social and political ideas, much like wild seeds in the natural world find fertile soil and favourable conditions to develop stronger than their initial state might suggest.

It follows that this work package is searching for are the processes and the structures that create potentialities for subjectivities around transnational, trans-ethnic and migrant-related social movements that transform the very conception of space. Whether we are looking at young migrants entering in clandestine manner via Istanbul or the migrant struggles and contestations over the centre of Athens or, moving the most south-eastern border city of Nicosia, the mental/socio-political gaps between the transnational/trans-ethnic mobilisations in the buffer zone and migrant struggles, we can locate such processes in their particular shapes and forms. In this research project we explore the significance of the migrant networks in reshaping social spaces by the usage and sense of digitality within the constitution of group praxis and identity formation. In this sense the study offers a crucial insight into migration(s)-as-a-social movement(s) which are powerful factors in contestations and the reshaping of spaces. Social movements do not exist in a vacuum; they are very much part of a socio-political, economic and cultural dialectic, often depicted as a 'cultural conflict', whereby the control of a particular space, a kind of 'quasi-territory', or mere use of spaces for the purposes of passage, a passage route, becomes part of geo-cultural battle ground (Wallerstein, 2000). We explore how the distinctions related to migration, class, gender, age and social/political/ideological positionality affect the multi-ethnic/multinational sense of borders, the 'buffer zones' or other 'grey zones', which may have the effect of forging subjectivities that defy or reshape ethno-national notions of 'purity' and 'exclusivity' and may well have the effect of re-defining a social space. We explore what Anthias (2008) called 'translocational positionality' in reshaping digital and non-digital urban materialities, in the context of social movements, migration, class and gender. It is also possible, indeed it is often the case, that forces in reaction emerge to 're-establish control' or 'police' or aim to 're-establish' some imagined ethno-

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national exclusivity of the 'territory': different forces may be involved in this, such as local politicians, the police, immigration officers, municipal authorities, developers, local shop-owners and residents, professionals of different sorts, teachers or far right groups etc.

Focusing on the transnational and migration-related movements themselves, it is important to understand the profile and discourses of the activists. The contestations over the meaning and production of the spaces as *arrival cities* in the three areas under study are non-linear and not always apparent with the naked eye, even if the imprints are there. Moreover, the movements we examine often transcend ethnic/national exclusivities but the life-worlds of the subjects entail relations of power, economic exploitation, social oppression and alienation. The struggles of what Lefebvre referred to as 'the right of the city' are precisely aiming to open up spaces that would allow subjects to survive, counter and build new worlds. Some the issues we hope to begin to think about are the following:

- To what extent can we read the praxis of the social movements we are studying as entailing both *manifestations* and *resistance* to the 'alienated city' where its subjects are "unable to map (in their minds) either their own positions or the urban totality in which they find themselves in"?⁶
- Can we consider the efforts to enter the EU (via Istanbul) or daily struggles of economic survival, avoiding being captured and attempting to give meaning and shape by (re)occupying literally and digitally contested or abandoned 'zones' as 'acts of citizenship' (Isin 2009)?
- Should we therefore conceive the resulting inner cities in transformation as processes that necessitate the reconstruction of the ideological aspects of the city space? Is the very act of entering, moving, leaving and occupying as acting anew the Althusserian/Lacanian representations of "the subjects *Imaginary* relationship to his or her *Real* conditions of existence" (Jameson 1991: 51)?

We attempt to bring to light the living struggles, often depicted as 'underground' 'marginal' or surrogate, or sometimes on the edges or margins of the law. This is because there is often a 'ghostly' element implicated: the notion of *subalternity* as developed in post-colonial contexts may be 'returning' in rather twisted ways as 'the empire is somehow striking back' and 'the subaltern speak' (Spivak 1990), but by other means: the vast majority of the so-called 'third country migrants' are crammed *in* and *around* the inner cities, be it Istanbul, Athens, Nicosia or other major cities of the north or south of the globe for different reasons and thereby by their very presence and movement, literal, symbolic, economic, social or political are *de facto* transforming them.

⁶ This is taken from Jameson's (1991: 51) reading Kevin Lynch *The Image of the City*.

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The *subaltern* migrants, the most precarious, vulnerable, undocumented and irregular, the non-European 'Other' reside in the derelict houses of the lodgings next to or together with other 'poors'. However, right next to them the 'gentrifiers' (developers, city planners and others who expect to rip the benefits from the process of investing in 'development', 'regeneration' and 'modernisation' have a project which they consider as the very antithesis of subaltern migrants and other 'poors'⁷: the goal is to evict the poor and 'clear the city' in what they consider to be the norm in a modern European city.

1.2. Methodology

The analysis of the collected data is based on a combination of various "qualitative" examination methods. The transcribed interviews and the protocols from the observations were first analysed by using the method of the "open" and "theoretical" codification, with the objective to identify categories (Strauss 1991, Strauss/Cobin 1996) and in order to make possible minimal and maximal comparisons. By doing this, the concepts extracted step-by-step out of the data, were extended according to systematic comparisons of similar and highly dissimilar developments and attributes, and reassessed regarding their extendibility. The objective is a comprehensive analysis, which, taking the present transformation processes into account, turns the focus on the mode of socialisation. A "discourse-analytical" perspective (Keller 2005, Pieper 2006) was added to the method of codification by Strauss (1991, Strauss/Corbin 1996), in order to make the interviews and practices of the interviewees in their complete context to a matter of analysis. The micro-generated explorations on processes of subjectification, the arrangements of life, networks and gender roles as well as the forms of appropriation with knowledge are bound to a perspective of power and society hierarchy in the concluding step of analysis.

In the beginning of the research the defining terms of our hypotheses were relatively clear but still unpromising. We were thinking of 'social movements' in line with the existing rich literature (see among others Touraine 1978; Melucci 1996; Tilly 2004), and we were identifying digital networks with discourses and coordination practices taking place on and off line, including web-sites, blogs, and mailing lists as well as forums and platforms of alternative information. In addition, gender relations were to be explored through focusing on women's collective actions, such as female migrant domestic workers' transnational campaigns, e.g. the "International Campaign for the Rights and Recognition of Domestic Workers" (8-HR Campaign) addressed to the International Labour

⁷ The concept 'the poors' is taken from Desai's *We Are the Poors: Community Struggles in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, Monthly review press, 2002.

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Organisation.⁸ In the context of Nicosia, migrant-related initiatives have centred around organising support centred around daily survival, work-related claims and cultural activities on a case-to-case basis and various small-scale efforts to sensitise society at local and national level with asymmetrical and varied levels of success; gender-related processes are examined in this context. As for localised transnational movements, our study of the Nicosia-based 'Occupy the Buffer Zone' (OBZ), which was connected to the global Occupy movement, revealed fascinating aspects of material digitalities which aimed to transcend borders, even militarised buffer zones, such the 'Green Line' dividing Nicosia via the physical presence and imaginaries of activists from different parts of the globe. Simultaneously, the study reveals the limitations as local migrants, what we refer to as *subaltern* migrants were *de facto* excluded for structural reasons: first, there are barriers that expose them to danger of being arrested by the police, even those with legal visas; second, the very subject and process of organising around a globalised 'occupy' movement and the choice of the militarised buffer zone was an important symbolic act aiming to puncture the zone dividing Cyprus via barbed wire, but paradoxically made it impossible to connect with migrants, whose daily survival is a priority.

The starting point for the research being initially migration movements has turned to a more 'migration-as-a-movement' approach. This approach (Mezzadra 2004, p. 270) highlights,

"the autonomy of migration [by] understand[ing] migration as a social movement in the literal sense of the words, not as a mere response to economic and social malaise. The autonomy of migration approach does not, of course, consider migration in isolation from social, cultural and economic structures. The opposite is true: migration is understood as a creative force within these structures".⁹

Therefore, from an initial interest in formal and informal forms of social movements we quickly moved to the slippery but challenging attempt to explore the imperceptible and impermeable politics of everyday life that oscillate between survival and life, between resistance and transformation. But, in order to avoid hetero-tautological speculations, as Derrida would describe it (Derrida 1995, p. 83), we should make clear what we do mean by migration as a social movement *in itself*, in particular when it comes to informal, brief non-standardised, every-day practices. Lefebvre, in his *Critique of Everyday Life*, (1991b, p. 173) gives some insights – at least at the theoretical level – on the virtualities hidden within the forceful 'kingdom of necessity':

⁸ For more, see <http://www.kasapi.gr/8hr>

⁹ Papadopoulos et al 2008, p. 202, underlined by us.

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In the realm of necessity, human needs became degraded. They represented 'the sad necessities of everyday life'. People had to eat, drink, find clothes ... and so they had to work. But people whose only reason for working is to keep body and soul together have neither the time nor the inclination for anything else. So they just keep on working, and their lives are spent just staying alive. This, in a nutshell, has been the philosophy of everyday life - and it still is.

And yet, every human need, conceived of as the relation between a human being and the 'world', can become a power, in other words a freedom, a source of joy or happiness. But needs have to be rescued from the realm of blind necessity, or at least its ascendancy must be progressively reduced.

From our point of view, transformative practices do not necessarily emanate from specific 'necessity-free' time-spaces, where social subjects act upon specific and specifically formulated claims and objectives; neither do they necessarily come across with the various cultural characteristics attributed to the *new social movements* by contemporary sociology and political science. One of the leading scholars in social movement research, Tarrow (2002), has concluded that many case studies on transnational movements of resistance have been shifting from aiming at a broad understanding of globalisation to the specific mechanisms of activism. This paves the way towards understanding the real dynamics of transnational contention. As Downing (2008, p. 246) puts it, in general few studies properly integrate an analysis of media processes and communication technology uses in studies of social movements. This study combines the various elements, which we hope would enrich the literature on the subject. Moreover, we are suggesting that there is a need to find ways to grasp aspects of the complex situation, which may have been thought as 'ungraspable', or at least considered as silent or non-formulated agencies that constitute elementary forms of social movements cannot be limited in an insightful yet descriptive 'invention of everydayness'. What we mean as social movements related to migration or what we mean by migration as a social movement is the concretisation of social antagonisms and struggles, in which migrants directly or discretely participate. In an effort to respond to the *aporia* described above in a sufficient even if not efficient way, we transposed the centre of analysis from the forms of social action, which is our working hypothesis, to a specific space. Space here is defined geographically and socially; as a limited area and as a process of/in production; as a stage that contains/bears the signs of human (inter)action,¹⁰ and as the product of social relations and processes. The relation between the local, national, regional and transnational become increasingly important here:

¹⁰ Even if Lefebvre (1991a) insists that the 'space is not produced in order to be read' and stands with criticism against semiotics, he cannot finally avoid reading certain aspects of space's representation(s).

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we would like to retain the analytic usefulness of the term "transnational", which has become a trendy catch-all category.

In the case of the arrival city of Istanbul, the focus is different: we investigate the micro-politics of transnational migrants, i.e. the urban spatialisation of the effects of cross-border mobility tactics and strategies of transnational undocumented migrants. Viewed from this context, it transpires that borders are no longer fixed geographic lines of demarcation, but rather constitute fields of negotiation and disputed "border zone" territories of (Tsianos 2008, Tsianos/Karakayali 2010). They are the places where regulations, control technologies of the European border regime, and technologies and tactics used by transnational migrants: the locus of transformation of affect, subjectivities and technical artifacts of control - but also *social media* of "escape" - into the "embodied Identity of migration" and its control (Kuster, Tsianos 2012). In particular, the permanence of transnational migrants' mobility and hence our focus on the fluidity of the field requires a research design that reflects this dynamic - this process of "becoming" (Deleuze 1997, 317ff.). Analyses and instruments are required that are capable, *in actu*, of investigating the research field and its contingency (Pieper et al 2011). Our starting point is a common research practice on migration practices and controls that evolved in the context of the "Transit Migration" research network.¹¹ Here, in the course of our ethnographic-sociological migration research, we were constantly faced with the question of how to conceptualise the migration "flows" which we encountered. As social scientists and ethnologists schooled in action theory, we were sceptical of any "objectification" of practices; while as social theorists schooled in structuralism, we also knew that you should not "think" social activity as the result of individual projects. Existing research on transnational migration can be mapped along such a structure-action duality: some emphasise the subversive power of autonomous migrations, while others denote migrants as pawns of national or supranational powers. To escape this dualism, we developed the concept of an ethnographic analysis of border regimes (Tsianos/Hess, 2010). It was our intention, on the one hand, to aggregate ethnographic methods that focus on the concrete practices of actors and actants; while, on the other hand, we wished to aggregate the replicating and transforming structures resulting from such practices into ensembles of practices (Karakayali/Tsianos 2005). For example, we were interested in exploring what kind of power-relationship structures in the field enable "powerlessness" to act as an agency. By employing the concept of a regime, however, we strove towards a post-constructivist understanding of political processes and their everyday practices in the movements of migration. Following methodically from this insight is the requirement to closely link research on materiality, space and locality with research on practices. Thus, one may avoid simply viewing them as materialisations or emanations of an

¹¹ For more see the TRANSIT MIGRATION 2007 research group.

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over-arching, global structure. The concept of the regime, since it usually refers to an order that is transversal or to be transcended, also lends the migration discourse a critical note. Both consequences, conceptualising the migration field with critical valence as well as a relative semantic openness, relate to how the concept can be applied to various contexts, while allowing field-related exchange processes and semantic shifts between such contexts. We are reporting on our fieldwork, a "multi-sited ethnography" (Marcus 1995), where we interview representatives of control agencies and NGOs, monitor their actions, and analyse their knowledge production. We also accompany transnational migrants and their mobility in South-eastern Europe, using the Internet to remain in contact with them along their further routes – as they, for example, utilise digital technologies specifically for *border crossing*. We wish to investigate the growing significance of digital information technologies (on the side of the control regime and that of transnational migrants) and the production of transnational spaces, both for the biographies of mobility, as well as for the conduct of conflicts surrounding the Schengen area. In this context, social media - Facebook, Twitter, and Skype – operate as powerful actors in the accomplishment of *border crossings*. We term this part of our research "net(h)nographic" border regime analysis (Pieper et al 2011). By employing this neologism and this specific orthography, we wish to distinguish ourselves from previous approaches to a "netnography" (Kozinets 2002, Füller et al. 2006), where a specific type of ethnographic research - especially that of non-participant observation – was used to study online communities and their communication flows (to gather information about their consumption behaviour). In contrast to these forms of "lurking" (Greschke 2007), i.e. anonymous observation, in our approach we prefer to disclose our concerns to our interaction partners. We establish both online and offline communication relationships in our efforts to follow the central ethical and methodological principles of interpretive social research (Hoffmann-Riem 1994: 29ff.). Unlike online consumer research, we are not striving for "objectivity and repeatability" in the collected data, but presume that we are engaged in the generation of "situated knowledge" (Haraway 1995, 73) that is produced in mobility and includes technological artefacts and the activity of digital media. In contemporary international discussions on migration theory, "digitalisation" should be more than just an additional variable that migration studies need to consider. What are required are research approaches that do not simply explore the use of digital technologies or how they affect the migration process, but rather examine how they create and make possible transnational mobility and subjectivities, and how, in interaction with these technologies, routes and spaces are produced. However, this does not imply an acceptance of a simple technological determinism, but rather an exploration of the emerging amalgamation of technical artefacts, technologies, bodies, discourses, and affects that are producing new forms of connectivities and links. At this point we want to extend the method of the border regime analysis with the aspect of an urban locality in reference to the "urban regime

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approach" (Stone, 2005). The local border regime has to be understood as effects of "down-scaling" processes away from the territorial towards the urban level. The spatial extension is a necessary supplement to the existing method. Hence *arrival* cities located inside as well as outside Europe become important spaces of negotiating Europe's borders. The term arrival city has been introduced by Doug Saunders in order provide one terminological umbrella for the various transitory spaces of migration, as mainstream academic terminologies i.e. immigrant gateway or community of primary settlement does not capture its dynamic structure and the nature of transit properly. While arrival cities like in Mike Davis' (2006) popular representations are scandalized as dystopian spaces of a "planet of slums", a homogeneous underworld or open prisons for the urban poor, such perspectives fail to notice the dynamic nature of such cities: the transnational networks, the relative class mobility, the eradication of rural poverty. Arrival is the central and primary function of these spaces. They are spaces of transitions. The arrival city is continuously and intensely connected to the places of origin of the migrants. The primary function of an arrival city is the creation and maintenance of a network (money transfer, communication technology). Beyond that an arrival city serves as an accesses mechanism; not only does she accept through enabling settlement and providing low-paid jobs, she also enables the process of chain migration, the wave of the coming ones (Saunders, 2011, 37ff).

2. The southern eastern European triangle: Migratory connectivities – Athens, Istanbul and Nicosia as *arrival* cities

2.1. Of Athens, Nicosia and Istanbul

Istanbul is celebrated both as a 'multicultural mosaic' as well as a global divide between 'East' and (see Kayder 1999; İçduygu 2011; Pusch 2012). Istanbul attracts many migrants, and is largely responsible in making Turkey both a "receiving country" and "migration transit zone" (İçduygu 2006; 2011). Istanbul is a global city with 13.2 million inhabitants with an a fast-growing economy, as underscored by GaWC research group.¹² Pusch (2012: 176) shows that "during their stay in Turkey they also set up various types of transnational spaces between Turkey and their country of origin". In our study are particularly interested in irregular transit migrants. Researchers claim that irregular transit migrants mainly come from the Middle East (Iran and Iraq) and from Asia and Africa and a number are smuggled into Turkey (İçduygu 2006).

In the cases of Athens and Nicosia we examined the content, meanings, contradictions and conundrums in the struggles to (re)claim 'the right to the city' that is essentially a 'border city': we can locate in inner Nicosia or the area of Kerameikos in Athens archetypal elements that define neoliberal city-societies torn migrant-related as well as other ethno-racial, class and gender divisions.

In the case of Nicosia there is an additional crucial and complicating factor: the barbed wire dividing the country and the city. The meaning of space therefore is not neutral but an active force that shapes and is reshaped by the social, economic and political forces in and around the inner city: even the so-called 'dead zone', the buffer zone handed over to the UN is hardly 'dead'. Space is the state-fied and nationalised but never fully subordinated or colonized. There is an active and ambivalent process of transformation which alters the rules of engagement with forces pulling in different directions. The city-centre is a spectacle of transformation replayed also digitally and mentally, reproducing

¹² The estimated number of irregular labour migrants is considered to be much higher than that of regular migrants with work permits and varies, between several hundred thousand and one million: this is estimated to be 4.3 % of the active population in Turkey consists of a foreign work-force. They mainly come from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation and Ukraine (Pusch 2012, p. 176).

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'new' and 'old' forms of materiality. The spectacle of the transformation of space via the claims to the city in the forms urban revolutions and counter-revolutions, evolutions and erosions is the subject of this study: the neoliberal crisis of capitalism is beginning to hit home in contradictory ways. Is the spectacle of the transformed city another 'social relation between people that is mediated by images'? Is this particular city transformation just another version 'capital accumulated to the point that it becomes images'? We reserve judgment as the struggle is hardly finished; in fact it is unending, indeterminate and inchoate. We witness the manifestation of the Althusserian 'aleatory materialism' or 'the undercurrent materialism of the encounter': developers, investors and city council professionals are drivers in the 'development of the city' – they own and are hungry to own *all of the city*; the orthodox Church,¹³ city councillors, professionals and experts. Yet there are local resistance pockets to neoliberal gentrification by those re-claiming the commons of the squares;¹⁴ subaltern and undocumented migrants in the everyday struggles; workers who are organised in the inner city; shop-keepers dealers of different kinds; children and school pupils; tourists and vagabonds; the police; racists and neo-Nazis re-claiming the city to revive the old glory.



Picture 1: Map of the walled Nicosia, the divided Capital of Cyprus.

¹³ In Cyprus, the church is the largest land-owner in the country, intends to build a new massive new Cathedral in the city centre of the Cypriot Capital, despite the fact the archbishop has claimed that the economic crisis and its investment in Greece has left it with 60% less income.

¹⁴ In Nicosia during 2012, the 'bufferers' strove occupy the buffer zone to reunite Greek-Cypriots, Turkish-Cypriots and non-Cypriots in a militarised 'dead zone', as πλατεία -πλατιά, until it was crushed by the police. See "[Η Αστυνομική Βία και το Ακατονόμαστο Μίσος για τη Νεολαία: Ηθικός Πανικός, Ψέματα και Συμφέροντα](http://thetrim1.blogspot.com/2012/04/blog-post_12.html)" at http://thetrim1.blogspot.com/2012/04/blog-post_12.html For the archive material on OBZ see: <http://occupythebufferzone.wordpress.com/2012/10/17/archive-of-occupy-buffer-zone-related-material/>

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Picture 2: Barrels dividing the Nicosia city

In this context we claim that the ungraspable does not only mean *production*, but also *disruption* of the ordinary. Even if migration has been recognised as a 'total social phenomenon' (Sayad 1984) linked to many if not all areas of social life, the space that diachronically attracts and condenses much of the interest of migrants and of migration studies is the urban space. Urbanisation in the past, metropolisation today, all major urban transformations are to a large extent linked to migrant inflows; in addition, most of the 'urban questions' (Castells 1981), such as segregation, polarisation, ghettoisation and so on are some, among others, controversial ways of conceptualizing migrants' presence in the cities; especially since urban decay and crisis are mainly linked to migration, as it happens currently in Greece where Athens inner-city is recurrently presented as a ghetto¹⁵ and migration is presented as threat to the cities historical and cultural centre.

In this sense, our exploration begins from a specific space rather than a particular social/ethnic group or type/form of social movement. This space lies on the borders of the so-called "ghetto" of central Athens, which can be compared to inner Nicosia. Inner Nicosia is a contested digital and geographical space. There are regular media reports distorting/exaggerating and amplifying incidents whereby the inner city is depicted as being 'unsafe', 'dangerous', a 'threat to public order', whilst other reports claim that Greek-Cypriots are abandoning the area because it is 'filthy' and 'full of smelly migrants'. In fact various mainstream media have referred to the inner city Nicosia as a "migrant ghetto"¹⁶ as 35% of the capital's population are

¹⁵ See for example the unofficial blog spot of municipal policemen on http://athens-municipal-police.blogspot.com/2010/06/blog-post_08.html)

¹⁶ See "the masses of migrants are transforming Nicosia to a ghetto" ["Οι μάζες των αλλοδαπών μετατρέπουν τη Λευκωσία σε γκέτο"] *Φιλελεύθερος* 25.9.2009.

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migrants;¹⁷ this is connected to crime, trouble as the inner city neighbourhood, largely inhabited and frequented by migrants and local radicals, "Faneromeni" for instance is thought to be transformed into the notorious Athenian neighbourhood of "Exarchia".¹⁸

2.2. The production of Kerameikos-Metaxourgeion (KM)¹⁹

In Athens our case study focuses on migrant movements and activities rising around the contestation of the metropolitan urban space in the centre of Athens. In recent years, the wider centre of Athens has become a site of conflict between various and diverse gentrification projects, those who are opposed to gentrification and those who are used as projection screen of the existing decay of these spaces.

Primary actors that inform our case study are subjects who are considered to be problematic and 'dirtying' by gentrification planning, such as migrants who inhabit, or ephemerally use, these contested spaces, homeless, squatters, street vendors, collectors of recyclable material for scrap industry, sex workers, informal entrepreneurs etc.; secondly, 'cleaning' social forces and actors, such as real estate capital and agencies, municipal and state authorities and institutions, middle-class newcomers, young artists, students etc; and thirdly, resisting bodies to the gentrification process, the 'anti-gentrifiers' as we call them in this study.

The space we have identified as a paradigmatic case study that can provide promising insights with regard to the dynamics mentioned above, is the area of Kerameikos-Metaxourghio, at the very centre of the city, west from Omonia square.

¹⁷ "Σε κάποιες περιοχές η σύνθεση του πληθυσμού άλλαξε ριζικά, Αλλοδαπός ένας στους πέντε κατοίκους στην Κύπρο", *Φιλελεύθερος* 7.10.2012, <http://www.philenews.com/el-gr/Eidiseis-Kypros/22/118701/allodapos-enas-stous-pente-katoikous-stin-kypro>

¹⁸ *Φιλελεύθερος* 23.4.2010.

¹⁹ We intentionally use the abbreviation invented by the NGO actors around the main real-estate company which operates in the area.

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Picture 3: map designating the centre of Athens as "ghetto"; from the unofficial blog spot of municipal policemen on http://athens-municipal-police.blogspot.com/2010/06/blog-post_08.html)

The *Historical and Urban Planning Development of Kerameikos* (Taxiarchi 2007),²⁰ a study commissioned by the most famous real estate investor of Kerameikos, starts with an exhaustive historical account of the Kerameikos area, going back to antiquity, classical era, post antiquity and Middle Ages. It ends with a description of the "Problems" and the "New prospects" of the district, as follows:

"The phenomena of the area's degradation from a social point of view, as well as from the aspect of architectural reserves and public space, are obvious. The main problems of the district are the lack of greenery, of free common utility spaces, since the only common utility area inside the district is the recently formed square of Leon Avdis. The pollution and traffic are attributed on the one hand to the close proximity of the area to one of the two central squares of Athens, Omonoia square, while on the other hand to the function of the streets of Metaxourgeion as linking axes between big avenues and smaller streets. A large part of the buildings of

²⁰ Written in 2007 and translated in the framework of the Student Housing, International Competition for Architects UPTO35 (<http://www.upto35.com/>).

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Metaxourgeion are abandoned, as ugly multi-floor buildings of the 60s co-exist side by side with insufficiently maintained and derelict neoclassical buildings, which often become refuge to drug addicts, and which, in turn, give way to humble little homes and empty lots, while the – sometimes abandoned – repair shops, warehouses and small trade shops are a frequent vista. The increased presence of foreigners living together in groups, in combination with the conduct of undesirable activities, the most important of which being the brothels (which are mainly concentrated at Iassonos street), and the co-existence of families with children in the same area, creates a significant problem of quality of life and a sense of insecurity to the residents."

"The statement of the above problems does in no case infer that Metaxourgeion is a degraded district without prospects of re-formation. To the contrary, in a more advanced interpretation of the situation it could be said that the very phenomena of degradation form part of the special nature of Metaxourgeion which, with the necessary interventions, could be limited to a great extent and contribute to the creation of an original, modern and multi-faceted culture. The rich historical background of the area and its special dynamics in the social and financial formation of modern Athens has passed down to Metaxourgeion, as it is today, a composite urban environment reflecting both the structures of the past and current day dynamics. The new prospects tend to reverse the existing conditions and create a new framework of activities. This may include a wide variety of activities, which also conforms to the history of the district, since it has traditionally been considered an area of multiple uses, where culture and recreation were side by side to the residences and productive activities."

The two passages above reflect at least two main things about the production of the space we examine. The first and obvious is that the history of the district – used as the cemetery of classic Athens and being an important manufacture and artisan centre until 1970s – has become an issue, which poses immediately the question(s): who writes this history and what is at stake within this process of memory construction. The second, linked to the former, moves to the future of the district: who and how will "re-form" the district by using all its dynamic in order "to reverse the existing conditions and create a new framework of activities"?

Both these questions lie upon or even define the centrality of the specific, contradictory and conflicting *culture* of the specific area. In order to answer these questions one has to enter the logic of the area by examining the actors who interplay in the district.

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2.2.1. The 'gentrifiers'

In the past decade, State and private capital initiatives invested in Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio and the area has been considered as a space of a gentrification under construction. As this gentrification has only been minimally realised, Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio is coming lately to be considered as a failed gentrification project, whose failure is reflecting the insurmountable problems that have been driving the centre of Athens to a growing degradation. It is in this juncture, that the interviews for the Mig@Net project were conducted. The discourse of the 'gentrifiers', as expressed in these interviews, is not unified: yet there are shared tendencies. Interviews were sought with four types of gentrifiers:

i) Real estate capital

As the principal real estate company that is operating in the area, OLIAROS officially owns 65 buildings with the intent of renovating and selling them and has been one of the most vocal institutions advocating the regeneration of the area. OLIAROS' is a unique case, at least in the Greek context: its understanding of its own activities exceeds the traditional role of a real estate company. OLIAROS' vision is for a radical reconstruction of the everyday life of the area. As its mission goal states, the company aims at "re-energising of one of the oldest and rundown neighbourhoods of Athens. An approach that includes non-profit initiatives attempting to address a range of social, urban, and other issues that affect the quality of our daily lives" (OLIAROS blog).

ii) Local inhabitants

Local inhabitants involved in grassroots initiatives for transforming public spaces in the area along the lines of the overall regeneration vision. These initiatives have often been funded and/or organised by OLIAROS or by NGOs around OLIAROS (such as KM Protypi Geitonia or Remap Athens), but seem to retain certain degree of autonomy in some cases. Many of the newcomers who are active in the area are characterised by one interviewee as "coming from the northern suburbs or rich enough districts of the centre of Athens like Kolonaki or Plaka, more adventurous people who wanted to find out what else is this city." For some, there is consciousness of the dispelling consequences of their actions: "(...) what attracts you in the first place, you throw away by arriving", but they remain in the position of defining and controlling what effects of 'colourful multiculturalism'(see below) they would like to protect in their area and what should be eliminated, especially unwanted presence of migrants who are referred to as 'illegal immigrants' as well as brothels and drug users. An activist involved in the beautification of the district via 'community gardening' states that "one reason we are cleaning the place up is

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so that they [the illegal migrants] move out of the abandoned houses and the squatting."

iii) The spearheads of gentrification

Local artists, mostly young precarious newcomers to the area that lent Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio the air of creative alternativeness and limited subversion that makes it so attractive for the first-type gentrifiers mentioned above. Some representatives of this group might criticise or oppose the massive signs or obviously dispelling effects of gentrification, while still profiting from initiatives (like ReMap) launched by the other gentrifiers. Opposite to the massively investing (i) - and state gentrifiers (see below, iv), one interviewee characterises the area as upcoming for precarious artists since 2008, because of the large number of small theatres, alternative cafes and artistic meeting points, and remarks with a reference to the ancient past of the area: "There are a lot of things going on in the cemetery."²¹

iv) Representatives of the municipality of Athens

There are several representatives of the municipality of Athens, who are involved in planning and supporting regeneration projects in the area as well of police forces trying to limit drug dealing and use to certain streets.

The discourse of the gentrifiers

Overall, there is a shared understanding amongst the gentrifiers that one of the 'main problems', barring the development of the area are the persisting 'illegal uses of space' that "cannot be controlled through institutional means", as a representative of OLIAROS put it. These 'illegal uses' are recounted in all the interviews we conducted and in many other informal discussions we had with local inhabitants and include: the drug trade and drug use in the area, the existence of numerous brothels, the illegal trade of counterfeit goods and the existence of warehouses with such goods, the ephemeral squatting and vandalism of abandoned houses and public spaces, and the excessive noise produced by bars and restaurants.

What seems to allow for their aggregation as the 'chief problems of the area' is 'dirtiness' connected to different activities and subjectivities that inhabit the space.

Along these lines, **drug use** is discussed with emphasis on the 'public sight' of someone 'shooting heroin' in close proximity to an unsuspecting bystander or passerby. **Sex work** is associated with the image of groups of "shadowy men

²¹ Kerameikos used to be the cemetery of classic Athens.

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walking around the area in search for brothels" or with the "bad odours of clients' piss rising from the nearby streets since the brothels don't have toilets". Ephemeral **squatting** is connected to the "amassment of garbage" in unattended private properties or the increasing presence in public view of destitute people collecting **recyclable material** in supermarket trolleys. Interviewees, in this respect, pose the impossibility of symbiosis between these practices and some snapshots of 'normal' everydayness. As one puts it: "how can you pass by with your child from Iasonos (the brothels street)?" Or, as another rhetorically asks: "how can you live in a house in this area when you can find at any moment a drug addict unconscious at your doorstep?"

All these 'dirtying practices' are ethnicised and gendered in the discourse of the gentrifiers. The ethnicisation of dirtiness however is coupled with an expressed support for multiculturalism. The main approach of OLIAROS has been to consistently argue for the inclusiveness of its project and for the importance of retaining the multicultural character of the area (OLIAROS blog). One interviewee explicitly named the 'multicultural' character as an attraction that made her move there: "Albanians, Romanians, Georgians, the old Turkish community, who are Greek by nationality but Greek by language and Muslim in Religion. It makes it very unique as a gathering of different nationalities and backgrounds culturally... it was the thing that attracted me."

These politics of multiculturalism are usually connected to strengthening the presence of certain 'proper' ethnic businesses like restaurants, garment, and gift shops, and to reproducing a folklorisation of the ethnic groups who are envisaged as parts of the regenerated area.

At the same time, in the discourse of the gentrifiers, ethnic otherness is associated with 'illegalities': of migrant mobility and the ineffectiveness of state policies in controlling them. Migrants, or *sans papiers*, or illegal migrants (the terms are used alternately by the gentrifiers), are directly connected with the rise of homelessness and destitute ephemeral squatting in the area because "they have nowhere to go", who are in "constant search for shelter and food" and "whose whole house is this trolley."

The ethnic Others are also connected to the persistent existence of the **brothels** in the area, either as suspected traffickers of the sex workers, the sex worker her/himself or as main clients. Migrants are also viewed to lie behind the expansion of the drug trade, through what the interviewees suspect as the rising influence of the 'African' or the 'Albanian' mafia in this industry.

Migrants associated with these illicit uses of space are mostly considered to be **male** non-European, and this non-Europeaness also accounts for their excessively dirtying effects. On the one hand, these representations are

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explained by the sheer fact that most of the "illegal immigrants in Greece come from non-European states" or that non-European migrants are comparatively the poorest. On the other hand, the non-Europeanness of these migrants is also believed to explain their propensity towards obscene uses of private and public spaces. Migrants from South Asia, for instance, are assumed to be accustomed to live in unsanitary conditions: in terms of overpopulation of housing spaces and of lack of basic amenities like clean water or electricity. Chinese migrants, on the other hand, are considered to be uncivil, both in terms of their unwillingness to communicate with Greeks or other ethnic groups and of their disregard for the cleanness of public space. In a characteristic passage from one of the interviews, the Chinese are blamed for dirtying public spaces: "spitting incessantly, even when someone closely passes them by or urinating in the streets."

The 'dirtiness' of non-European migrants is inherently connected to the increasing presence of a set of threatening masculinities in the area. In the discourse of the gentrifiers, illegal activities or appalling everyday practices are also attributed to the lack of standardised gender relations in the area. Sometimes, "dangerous masculinities" are purposely lurking behind public view, as purveyors of the local sex-trade industry or as the masterminds of drug trafficking networks. At other times, they become visible, and this visibility is seen as barring universal access to public spaces, as in the case of "poor dark male migrants looking for sex". In this sense, the gentrification process is also framed as an attempt for standardising multiethnic and gender relations. In terms of multiethnicity, gentrification promises the institution of a politically orthodox/correct multiculturalism in the area (which is supposed to be a main point of attraction for the future inhabitants of Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio). In respect to gender, gentrification envisages the displacement of threatening masculinities and of sex worksites to open up the space for the inhabitation of the area by traditional and alternative masculinities and femininities: heterosexual couples with or without kids and gay couples (here, we have to note that the real estate marketing in the area has paid particular emphasis on branding Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio as a 'gay friendly neighbourhood' and on attracting gay professionals working in the city centre).

Migrants thus are on the same time the appealing and the principal subjectivities hindering the regeneration process.

2.2.2. The 'anti-gentrifiers'

Formal resistances to the gentrification processes in Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio have been minimal, although they have managed to gain significant public attention, at times. In this report, we won't focus on these formal resistances

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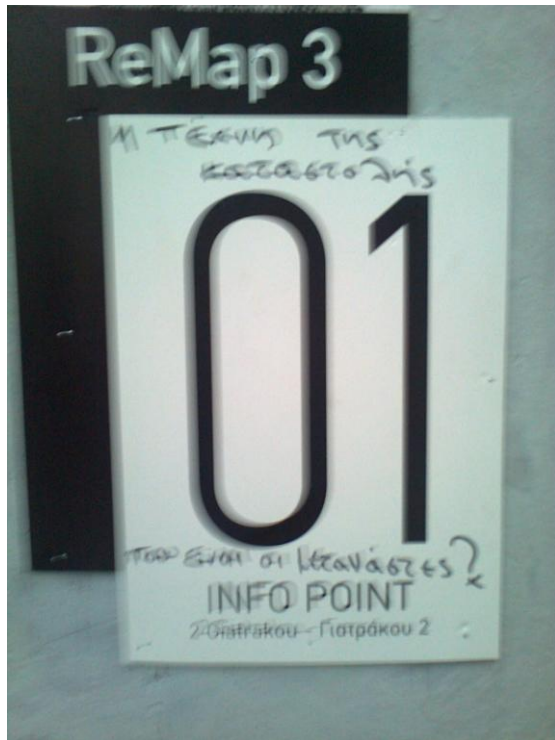
per se but rather to study the unrepresented, the informal, the unmediated and how their practices are entangled into the everyday fabric of the city.

The discourse of the anti-gentrifiers

What interests us, in this brief section, is to show how formal resistances, or how the 'anti-gentrifiers', have been largely disjointed from the everyday contestation of space in the specific area. The strategies adopted by the anti-gentrifiers have largely depended on a discourse intending to "unmask the dark sides" of the gentrification project behind several covered up projects of the gentrifiers, and on actions that had primarily a symbolic value. In terms of discourse, the anti-gentrifiers have consistently attempted to bring into light the convergences between private real estate capital, state interventions, civil society initiatives, and media attention for the area, pointing to the primacy of private interests behind these convergences (see among others Tzirtzilaki 2009; Futura 2010; Derveniotis 2011). This unmasking has been considered to be critical, since OLIAROS' strategy, up to a particular point in time, was to keep quiet or to deny its involvement in several initiatives in the area, a strategy that was reverted in 2009 after the process of unmasking became too embarrassing to the company. Along these lines, the anti-gentrifiers have been standing in support or are part of the 'losers' of the gentrification process - local inhabitants who would be forced to migrate from the area, mainly migrants and the poor. As Tzirtzilaki (2009) put it, "if we drive them out from Kerameikos, where would they go?" Beyond this formal recognition or of a politics of solidarity for the 'displaced to be', the anti-gentrifiers have not engaged with the really existing practices that the 'victims of evictions' have been pursuing in the context of the gentrification process. Gentrification is portrayed as a indomitable force that will radically transform urban space, unless 'something is done', but this 'something' is never actually related to how gentrification is actually confronted in the politics of everyday life.

This attitude is reflected in the past anti-gentrification mobilisations. Most of these have focused on counter-actions against *ReMap*, an international contemporary art festival, which is held biennially in Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio. After their initial revelation that OLIAROS is actually behind the organisation of ReMap, the anti-gentrifiers organised a mobilisation/disruption of the exhibition in 2009 with the distribution of anti-ReMap flyers on the spot to its visitors, and a more radical disruption in 2011 with the throwing of bags full of excrement in three different exhibition places where ReMap was held.

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Picture 4: 'Vandalised' Plaque on Remap-Infopoint: 'The Art of Repression: Where are the Immigrants?'



Picture 5: Stencil of Antifa X on a doorstep: 'Oh modern art, with whom do you walk hand in hand?'

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In many ways, the anti-gentrifiers' gaze goes beyond the immediate contestations of urban space. It is as if the anti-gentrifiers have an unwavering faith to the future success of the gentrification project, a faith that exceeds that of the gentrifiers who are becoming more and more sceptical about the feasibility of their project. Anti-gentrifiers portray Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio as a space of urban struggle, but the position of those who struggle against gentrification is left vacant: in no case, have the anti-gentrifiers taken cue from the immediate spatial practices adopted by the inhabitants and users of the space. It is to an analysis of these practices that we will now turn.

2.2.3. The social movement or the grounded forces of 'dirtiness'²²

In this section, we will try to highlight examples of spatial practices that are connected with migration, gender and digitality and are persistently disrupting the gentrification process, that are producing Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio as a stage of spatial antagonisms. The analysis does not take sufficient issue with the notion of subjectivity. The primary focus of the research is on spatial bodily practices rather than on the processes of production of subjectivities. We are not, thus, trying to depict migrants as full blown articulate activists, but as carriers of practices that exceed any efforts to control the transformation of urban space. These spatial practices, in other words, are not seen, as reflecting the identities of pre-defined subjects, nor as necessarily embodying the desires of migrant subjects. They are produced, instead, through an adoption of spatial tactics that remain largely non-representable, and non-articulable in public discourse. In order to approach these types of practices, we have used a mixture:²³

- of informal conversations with the agents of these practices (transit migrants, squatters, street vendors, drug addicts) whenever possible,
- participant observation in different parts of the area at different days and hours
- interviews with observers, other users or inhabitants of Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio, focusing on how they experience or interpret these practices.

For some migrants from Iraq, Egypt, Morocco or Syria, Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio symbolises their permanent residential area. An Iraqi refugee,

²² 'Grounded' here can be used in both senses: 'down-to-earth' and 'punished'.

²³ We would like to acknowledge that our analysis is tentative and incomplete.

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who is living with her family in the area for years, was stressing the convenience of the district as it gathers so many Arab-speaking people, and hosts tea houses, food places and an Egyptian mosque. For this Iraqi woman, "there are no Greeks living in the neighbourhood. Next to us is a family from Albania, around us there are mainly people from Sri Lanka, Pakistan. Our landlord is from Lebanon"; and she adds jokingly "My husband always says, here is not Greece, it is Kandahar."

To prevent this impression of uncontrolled crises spaces destroying the image of the area various projects were initiated by the different gentrifiers. In December 2010, one of the civil society organisations that has been active in the area (and is directly connected to OLIAROS), constructed an ephemeral playground in Sfaktirias street, in a plot bestowed by the National Organisation of School Buildings. The project was funded by international companies like L'Oréal. The playground intended, first of all, to embrace the coming transformation of Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio as a child-friendly neighbourhood and to also become a site for symbiosis amongst children of diverse ethnic backgrounds. The playground had an avant-garde design, composed of large cement rings and of non-lining cement stepping stones. After the ceremonial opening of the playground, the space was left to its own devices. The main game invented by the children users (exclusively non-ethnic Greek or 'Turkish kids and Gypsy kids', as one interviewee put it) was to deconstruct the cement rings and the stepping stones in order to form cement balls that were used as weaponry in battles amongst them and in occasional attacks against random passersby. These attacks were, in turn, attributed by the project designers to a 'violent ethnic kid culture' and to the lack of parental supervision. After these attacks were reported by some of the 'victims', the civil society organisation moved to close down the playground and removed all the material that had remained in the plot. This event marks an ephemeral re-appropriation on the part of the children of the game space that was designed for them in the context of the gentrification plans and of the games that were freely given to them.

Similar small-scale projects of the gentrifiers attempting to 'beautify' or 'clean', or to 'make safer' the area have been thwarted by the 'dirty users' of these spaces. Beginning in 2010, a series of ephemeral gardens have been planted, again through the initiative of civil society organisations and inhabitants. The gardens are located in privately-owned abandoned plots, sometimes with the consent of the owner and others without her/his knowledge. The rationale behind of this project was first of all to clean up these spaces as to prevent them from being garbage dumps and to discourage their use as sleeping places and second, to initiate a process of community-building around the maintenance of the gardens. Although, the development of ephemeral gardens became an Athens-wide fashion in the last years with various similar initiatives springing elsewhere in the city, all of the gardens that are surviving in

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Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio have alternated use. Some have been closed off with barbed wire in order to prevent access of the homeless and the transit migrants. It seems that all the planting acted more as an attraction for people looking for a place to sleep; after all the ground became smoother and more comfortable. In other cases, access to the garden is still formally open, but the plants and flowers are in visible disarray and seem to be left unwatered for a long period. All the plots are described as 'dirty' by some of the people involved in the gardening project, they are starting to be filled with waste of all kinds. In some cases, the waste clearly indicates that the spaces are regularly used for purposes of sleep, eat, or rest (sleeping bags or blankets left here and there, used food cans, cardboard boxes).

Close to one of these ephemeral gardens, presently cordoned off with barbed wire, lies the Presbyterian church of Samaria run by a Korean priest. The church offers free meals twice a week, followed by a Christian service. A high percentage of the visitors come from Afghanistan (around 80% according to the Korean priest), and also participate the free Greek language course and with Farsi-Greek translators. This influx of people in Metaxourgeio on a weekly basis seems to remain largely invisible for most of the inhabitants of the area (the existence of this church was never mentioned by the interviewees in the discussions we had). It seems that people who go to Samaria were simply lumped in their gaze as parts of those migrants who wonder around or find shelter in the area. In a focus group we organised with the participation of Afghan women visiting the Samaria church, we learned that none of them lived in the area. Not one of them even knew the name of the area – it was usually referred to as Samaria (the name of the church). Some said that they already knew of Samaria when they were living in Afghanistan. The Korean priest would later confirm these stories by saying jokingly that "he is more known in Afghanistan than in Greece". The main preoccupation of all the women who participated in the focus group was to find ways to continue their mobility to other Western European countries or to North America. They narrated extensively their past failed attempts to exit Greece, the past failed attempts of friends and relatives, they mentioned some stories of successful escapes, they talked about the countries they wanted to migrate to (who was waiting for them there, why they chose them), they discussed amongst them the very high prices asked by 'smugglers' to get them out of the country or for procuring counterfeit travel and identity documents, and they highlighted the fact that families almost never travel together (kids usually attempt to go first and the grownups follow).

The production of space by these transit migrants totally eludes the gentrification – anti-gentrification debate. They are not seen as the carriers of the multicultural flavours envisaged by the gentrifiers, nor are they the victims of the coming evictions deplored by the anti-gentrifiers. In a way, the practices of transit migrants in Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio connect the area with

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networks of transnational mobility. In fact, for the Afghan women, Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio is a space where they eat and meet to exchange information about their efforts to exit Greece. For other transit migrants, it might be a space where they can find a place to sleep (such as an ephemeral garden), or where they can get hold of a resource (money, something they can sell, a point of contact with a transnational smugglers' network) that might help them to fund or enable their mobility.

The space of Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio is mostly produced as a temporary dwelling, or a temporary shelter, or a temporary resource, which can enable transit migrants to organise their mobility networks in order to move on. The image of migrants sitting all day in squares and pavements or simply wandering around in the area is thus deceptive: What appears as inertia, or directionless movement and urban concentration is in fact a movement that connects these spaces within a network of mobilities through various physical arrangements and digital inter-connections. But these spaces are more akin to transnational locales, self-configured by the migrants themselves, organised to gather and exchange information amongst them and to communicate with friends and contacts in other European countries that will enable their planned border crossings.

These illicit uses of space, some of which we have described above, are currently eluding control and in this capacity they become potent obstacles to the gentrification process. It is important to highlight, here, the tendency of the forces of gentrification to increasingly digitise the technologies of control against these illicit uses of space and/or to enjoy the fantasy that the completion of the project of digitising the control of migrant mobility would be the solution to the problems of the area. It is characteristic that in some of the gentrified blocks of the area, security measures for protecting authorised inhabitants all tend to become increasingly materialised through digital mediums. For instance, the security of the mega building block located in Myllerou Street (whose construction symbolically marks the beginning of the gentrification process) is fully digitised. There are CCTV security cameras on all sides of the building, recording from all possible angles. An interviewee explained that the building is called by local people (where he put himself although he was a newcomer in the area working as a precarious artist, in a sense a gentrifier himself as well) 'Melrose Place', because of its artificial character and its luxury design. All the doors, external and house doors, open and close with personalised smart cards. The entry of vehicles is managed via automated high security access control barriers. Similar security plans are also mimicked by OLIAROS' plans for developing refurbished private residences. When, however, security measures are found to be lacking, when, for example, the gentrifiers deplore the incompetence of the state to battle criminality or the lack of action by the police who do not close down the brothels or arrest the drug dealers, there is a digitisation. There are for

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example, references to the future possibility of controlling illicit practices through 'counting who is coming in and out of the area' and/or 'knowing who these people are', a task which is associated with the potential of digital technologies: the proposed introduction of a mandatory digital (RFID enabled) migrant ID card by the government, the increasing use of digital fingerprinting databases, the utilisation of more sophisticated surveillance methods by the Greek police.



Picture 6: "If we don't resist in every neighbourhood, our cities will become modern prisons"

Digital mediums are on the other hand also used and appropriated by the "forces of dirtiness" as a means of organisation and as a means of creating parallel pirate markets within the metropolis. In the peripheries of Kerameikos, every Sunday, from dawn to midday, the biggest open air bazaar in central Athens takes. The bazaar is fuelled by 'illicit' practices. Most of the vendors have no license to sell goods, transactions are not taxed, a large part of the products sold are either counterfeit or stolen. The bazaar is a space of attraction for migrants both as sellers and buyers of goods. In a way, this bazaar functions as a real multiethnic business centre of the area, albeit uncontrollable and impossible to incorporate under the multicultural brand attributed to Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio by the gentrifiers. Attempts by state

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authorities to regulate or disperse illegal businesses are mocked by the sellers by moving their stand a few metres out of sight and then coming back again.

In this bazaar, migrant vendors usually stand and walk up and down trying to strike up conversations with potential clients. At most times, at least when we visited the bazaar, they sell digital gadgets, mainly mobile phones. They seem to offer all types of gadgets, from new i-phones to used cell phones, in very low prices. The goods are usually placed within large plastic bags, while some samples are kept under their clothing for showing to the potential customers. Many buyers of these cell phones are also migrants. We have practically never encountered a migrant in the area without a cell phone, regardless of what her/his economic condition seemed to have been.

In a very telling example, cell phones are becoming crucial communication mediums for a relatively new trade that has been proliferating in the wider metropolitan area of Athens especially since the start of the financial crisis: the recycling of scrap mainly by migrants and Roma, which "has plagued the Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio area", according to the gentrifiers. The material is stored and moved in supermarket trolleys and sold to specific warehouses, some of which are located on the south border of the Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio area. Although the actual collection is either an individual labour, or at most, a collective labour of two (one rolling the trolley and the other collecting the material), the mobilities around the scrap industry are far more orchestrated than anticipated. There are abandoned squatted shops that collectives of migrants use as storage for the collected goods and as a parking for their carriages.

Through an intricate use of their cell phones, the scrap collectors communicate and organise their mobility in a network fashion. Exchanging messages about the locations that have been already searched, the places that still need to be searched, sending warnings about the fact that someone's trolley is full and needs to be replaced, or that someone's is too empty, arranging to meet at particular spots in order to go collectively to the warehouses in order to sell what has been collected and then start from scratch. We haven't managed to gather substantive data on these cell phone exchanges or on the ad-hoc networks created by scrap collectors, though it would be a very productive path for the extension of the present research.

2.3. The production of a divided Nicosia

In the context of Nicosia as an arrival city, the notion of the EU borderline is institutionalised in relevant court decisions applying the Acquis Communautaire, the European legal order which allows EU nationals to cross from and to the

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north freely in the exercise of the right to free movement, but not the non-Europeans.²⁴ Strangely third country migrants are squeezed just outside the buffer zone on both sides of the barbed wire, as the buffer zone operates as the 'non-border of the EU' (see Trimikliniotis 2009; 2010), reminiscent of Kafka's great 'door of the law. Yet, once undocumented migrants manage to be 'smuggled' into the Europeanised southern side of the country, they are unable to re-enter, if they do not want to be arrested. To be political and is highly risky business for a third country migrant. So migration is a crucial aspect here.

"Everything started on October 15th. It started with people meeting up in Eleftherias (Liberty) Square. Someone created a facebook event and people gathered. We were meeting once a week. And then at some point on November 15th we started going to the buffer zone, between the two checkpoints and continue the discussion there. And then we said 'hey let's set up some tents'. It was something spontaneous." (P., bufferer²⁵)

Responding to the global call for action by the occupy movement, the 'bufferers' managed to localise the global message expressing with their presence their 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.²⁶ The linear gap of the buffer zone turned into an inhabited public place, a 'square' where people met, sang, drank, ate, slept, discussed, played, argued and demonstrated. The activists' physical presence and will were crucial elements for a new spatial perception and therefore for the revival of an empty, frozen zone. In other words, the new concept that entered the debate affecting both the spatial as well as the socio-political level is the 'demand', the 'claim' of space transforming the buffer zone into a 'common place of demand', while contesting the dominance of the official urban action.

The Nicosia-based "Occupy the Buffer Zone" (OBZ) is a movement that turned urban space into a battlefield of conflicting interests opening the debate regarding urban life and socio-spatial segregation. In that context, mobilisations managed to localise the global call for action spread by the global 'occupy movement', translating the demands into the 'language' of the local issues. Moreover, the largest number of 'bufferers' are drawn from local youngsters around the Faneromeni square, which is another highly contested zone under this study.²⁷ Although most of the organisers would agree that the OBZ movement constituted a discontinuity referring to Cyprus' social

²⁴ For more see Trimikliniotis 2009.

²⁵ The occupiers in Nicosia are called bufferers since they <occupy the buffer zone>

²⁶ In 'Occupy the buffer zone', manifesto of the 15th October movement, <http://occupythebufferzone.wordpress.com/about/obz/>

²⁷ See Work Package 10 of MIG@NET project, <http://www.mignetproject.eu/>

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movements, the developed mobilisations followed the path of actions occurred during the past decades:

"People who started the whole thing had done some other things in the past. They were people from 'Faneromeni Square'²⁸, they have created Gardash²⁹ and some other squats such as Malakasa, Fanari tou Diogeni³⁰, etc." (F., bufferer)

The OBZ movement did not emerge out of the blue but was a consequence of a historical trajectory. A genealogy of events and practices that preceded it shaped the field as the socio-political context made this movement possible. In the same light, this can explain the limitations of the OBZ movement which brought to an end. The 'Faneromeni crowd' was the 'dominant' tendency and the basis for the mobilization drawing on a sort of anarchist/libertarian spirit. F., who considers himself as part of the broader alternative youth movement spent most of his free time around Faneromeni Square, remembers that before the OBZ burst, he participated in several actions such as 'the Kogulu Park movement,³¹ street parade, bike rides and many other things". The Kogulu park movement of 'Free Cyprus' was an important antecedent and many of the youths in OBZ were drawn from this pool took place. Various urban mobilizations and initiatives were the various germinal political traditions that prepared the path for the OBZ: rapprochement activism, anti-racist movement, autonomous and anarchist groups as well as socio-political and cultural initiatives within urban space are the main categories of Nicosia's tradition in contemporary urban activism. After the global call and the other examples worldwide, the idea of 're-claiming the city' was no more an immature and high-flying suggestion.

28 From the late 1990s until 2003 which was the 'time of constitution', the general area around Faneromeni became a frame of reference

29 From 2004 until 2007 when a series of political and social events, projects and initiatives happened or begun, Gardas has been a key trajectory in this.

30 <http://squatofcyprus.blogspot.de/>

31 In February 2011 before the second mass rally of the Turkish Cypriot trade unions' platform. Every night youngsters used to gather up and light fires in old Nicosia calling for an uprising. A typical call reads as follows: "We are meeting 19:30 at Kuğulu Park, Nicosia, every night until March 2nd to light the fire of FREECYPRUS. It's time for solidarity and uprising against suppression. It is time to light the fire of revolution! It is time to say no to the dictators that reign over us! It is time to take over the STREETS, uphold our DIGNITY! Bring your guitar and your voice and your spirit for the revolution! Note: this is an politically independent event. LET'S SING AND DANCE OUR WAY INTO REVOLUTION" (see <http://falies.com/2011/02/15/isyan-zamani-time-for-uprising-%CF%8E%CF%81%CE%B1-%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CE%BE%CE%B5%CF%83%CE%B7%CE%BA%CF%89%CE%BC%CF%8C/>)

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In the broader global context, Peter Marcuse would argue that the global occupy movement is part of a long tradition.³² As he argues the Occupy movement places itself within the tradition of many early resistance movements, most recently, the movements of 1968, the World Social Forums, the self-consciously civil society (Marcuse, 2012). Following the thread of urban movements in Nicosia and their process of transformation, the current report unfolds the newborn image of Nicosia being a divided city with both visible and invisible borders. Moreover, the place of the buffer zone functions as a common place of demand, where the newborn 'right to the city' attempts to find its place within the broader process of bi-communal cooperation and rapprochement activism. Below we examine how spatial transformations are produced and perceived by the gamma of people, or else the 'inhabitants' in the Lefebvrian sense, involved in a direct or an indirect way. In this context, we present their interaction with respect to contradictory perceptions, representations, discourses and attitudes towards the movement's demands, practices and beyond.

In the study of the Nicosia-based movements, we organised our research work using four axes referring to four different target groups or else four 'concentric circles'. These four focal groups are 'the bufferers', 'the neighbours', 'the public discourse' and the 'subaltern migrants'. We interviewed key-organisers, activists, locals, shop- owners, we worked on the public discourse presented in the media, while using audio-visual material in order to tackle certain research questions. The aim is to gain a better understanding of the newborn right to the city, the urban movement and the socio-spatial qualities created:

- 'bufferers': The first group includes key-persons who organised the OBZ movement or participated in it as activists. This group is subdivided into smaller units for Greek-Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots and 'others' involved: this is a particularly interesting group for this research project to explore how powerful and important is the interaction between on-line and off-line practices.
- 'neighbours': The second group refers to 'the neighbours'. The included informants of that category are the locals, the inhabitants and shop-owners, who live and work in the Old City near and across the Green Line as well as the local authorities of the police in the sense Rancière (1998) uses it. This includes the Police in the traditional sense: the Police are a unitary 'force', yet they are simultaneously fragmented and consist of different specialised forces. However, it goes far beyond that: we are referring to the local administrators, professionals and others committed to the 'order of things'; most of them belong to the gentrifier

³² Marcuse, P., Blog #15 – The Right to the City and Occupy: History and Evolution. <http://pmarcuse.wordpress.com/2012/08/02/blog-15-the-right-to-the-city-and-occupy-history-and-evolution/>

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group; others do not. For instance, we interviewed key- persons on the institutional level of the reconciliation process, people working for "Nicosia 2017- European Capital of Culture", as well as people taking part in grass-roots initiatives within the rapprochement movement.

- 'public discourse': The third unit refers to 'the public discourse'. By the term 'public discourse' we refer to the virtual/digital space composed by mass media, social networks, blogs and websites controlled by both official institutions and grass-roots initiatives. From the extended variety of sources in the internet we selected some of the most reliable and mostly visited that represent the opinions of both the supporters of the OBZ and the opponents. In addition, we record the timeline of the movement as presented in the mass media together with official narratives regarding the mobilisations. Keeping in mind that official public discourse and formal narratives together with police brutality and parastatal organisations often construct 'moral panic' (Cohen, 1973) presenting urban movements as a threat for social order, we examine how that functioned in our case. Additionally, subscribing in social networks such as facebook groups and twitter and observing the links and debate among activists, we studied how virtual/digital space contributes to the development of an urban movement that re-claims urban life bringing 'global' to 'local' and vice versa.
- 'subaltern migrants': The fourth group refers to subaltern migrants; most were de facto not involved in the OBZ movement but do frequent inner Nicosia. Some are connected to individuals and groups in the OBZ, others have no connection; effort was made to include third country citizens from different ethnic/national communities, to be gender balanced and to include as much as possible migrants with a precarious position, in terms of work and/or stay conditions.

The study emerges from the need to approach participants' perceptions and beyond in order to understand the socio-spatial correlations formed by the occupation of the UN buffer zone. As Lefebvre insists, space as a social product is produced and reproduced, perceived and designed as well as experienced by users in everyday life, according to the triad of perceived space, conceived space, and lived space (Lefebvre, 1991c; 1996). In our study we make a use of that conceptual triad in order to compose the image of divided Nicosia and the emerging 'right to the city' as claimed by the 'bufferers', experienced by the neighbours as well as presented in the public discourse. The aim is to elaborate on the interaction among those levels and finally trace the newborn 'right to the city' "being far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city" (Harvey, 2008).

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2.3.1. 'Who': inclusions and exclusions

According to Lefebvre, the 'right to the city' is a call for a radical restructuring of social, political, and economic relations, both in the city and beyond (Purcell, 2002). Defining urban space as the decisive terrain of political identity, the right to the city makes a clear distinction between the inhabitants of the city and the others; between 'us' and 'them'. Referring to the Lefebvrian scheme of both 'us' and 'them', we examine *who* has the right to the city in a landscape of conflict such as the divided Nicosia. If the right to the city is like *a cry and a demand* (Lefebvre, 1996) then who has the right to claim the *political landscape* (Kliot & Mansfield, 1997) of a divided city in its multiple intersections and divides? In his writings on both the 'right to the city' and the occupy movement, Peter Marcuse asks: What is the city for? Who gets to live here? Who decides and how?³³(Marcuse, 2012)

In order to tackle the above questions, we focus on the "Occupy the Buffer Zone (OBZ)" as an urban social movement seeking "to overcome isolation and reshape the city in a different image" (Harvey, 2008) from that created after Nicosia's division in 1974. In actual fact the division of Nicosia goes further back to 1963-64 and 1958; but this was sealed and deepened in 1974, with the Greek fascist coup and the Turkish military invasion and occupation of the northern part of the country. In that framework we attempt to define the protagonists, understand the emerged, radicalised, political subjectivity, its characteristics and potentialities through processes of both 'inclusion' and 'exclusion'. The OBZ movement brought actions and discourses from the edge to the centre. That did not only occur on the spatial but also on the socio-political level. Former rather marginalised political statements, arguments and practices were brought to the centre of the debate forming supporters and opponents, or else forming a certain 'us' and 'them'; 'inside' and 'outside'. The bufferers' action, or even their lifestyle, their taste, their clothes, the way they behave cannot longer be ignored, since they occupy the heart of the city, contesting at the same time the heart of the city's division. In the buffer zone, where spatial and social separation meets with spatial and social contact, the OBZ movement manages to redefine people's identity during the redefinition of space.

A closer observation about the participation of the OBZ is revealing as to the inclusion and exclusion of actors in the movement. Interesting here is to map not only those *present* but also those *absent* either by design or default. The main goals of such an approach is to understand what occurred in that <October 15th movement>, to trace what it left back and finally to pinpoint

33 Marcuse, P., Blog #15 – The Right to the City and Occupy: History and Evolution, see <http://pmarcuse.wordpress.com/2012/08/02/blog-15-the-right-to-the-city-and-occupy-history-and-evolution/>

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both the dangers and the potentialities for its next scene. For instance, while migrants are crucial factors of the contested multicultural and multi-ethnic city centre of Nicosia, being the 35% -well above the 21% national average- we can safely argue that a very small minority of the [subaltern] migrants residing and frequenting the city centre is politically active in social movements beyond their own daily survival.

Such an exclusion has to be examined in parallel with the movement's goals and demands. Is then Panitch (2011) and Marcuse (2012) correct in insisting that some of the occupy movement's internal weaknesses are the resistance to unity with the discontented, the refusal to talk about 'power' and the insistence to limited but important rights as goals of its key campaigns (e.g. the right to sleep on park benches)? S, a Turkish-Cypriot bufferer notes:

"All kinds of people (participated in the movement). Young people, who believe in peace, anarchists, people from different countries. All sorts of people. There were lawyers, there were doctors, there were musicians, there were poets. People who are thinking, who are active, who want to create the world they want to live in instead of living in the world they have been given."

Many more activists confirm that S.'s point of view *represents the collective perception of people who took part in the movement*. However, the statement is revealing if one reads between the lines: who is excluded?. S describes the political subjectivity involved in the movement, while at the same time forming certain exclusions. In his words, the bufferer's profile is politically vague but at the same time fits to what expected as 'normal' being *a lawyer, a doctor or an artist*. In order to "answer" to those who blamed the movement as being *a hotbed of orgies and drugs for young and old people*, S. reproduces in a way the dominant perception of 'normality'. In such a normality, it seems that workers, migrants, marginal persons, street vendors, and other 'social outcasts' have no place or must be suppressed, at least when projecting or representing the public image of the movement. In the construction of the mental map we notice the conspicuously absent of working/subaltern classes and ethnic groups, gender and sexuality, as if they are somehow censored from the project image *this 'normality'*. It has to be born in mind that the representation of OBZ were made in the context of the effort to discredit it and the accusations by the gentrifiers that it is 'abnormal', 'marginal' etc.; in fact it by and large consisted of young persons of the 'alternative scene' (including anarchists, Leftists etc.) Yet, an open-minded public space requires openness to the urban underclass (Berman, 1986). So, what do we make out of the 'ghost element' here? The vast majority of the so-called 'third country migrants' are crammed around but rarely, if ever within the buffer zone the old city, unless they are strictly apolitical tourists or overtly political (i.e. committed activists etc). The *subaltern* migrants, the most precarious, vulnerable,

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undocumented and irregular, the non-European 'Other' reside in the derelict houses of the lodgings which are remnants of the war in arms length distance from the buffer zone; yet they essentially not allowed within the buffer zone in the same terms as 'Europeans'. As for migrant women, these are completely absent from the discourses. This is hardly surprising. Such matters are institutionalised within the *acquis communautaire* in multiple ways. For one the European legal order allows EU nationals to freely cross from and to the north freely in the exercise of the right to free movement, but not the non-Europeans.³⁴ Second, the national action plan for integration of *legal* migrants in Cyprus 2010, though an important step in at last recognising the Cyprus is a migrant destination, is gender blind with no policies specifically targeting migrant women and the particular problems they face.³⁵ Third, The OBZ drew extensively from the radicalised youth, many of whom were inspired with radical emancipatory ideas of oppressed and exploited subjects (youth, women, workers migrants, LOAT persons etc).

Non-EU migrants are squeezed just outside the buffer zone on both sides of the barbed wire, as the buffer zone operates as the 'non-border of the EU',³⁶ reminiscent of Kafka's great 'door of the law. Yet, the few undocumented migrants manage to be 'smuggled' into the Europeanised southern side of the country, they are unable to re-enter, if they do not want to be arrested. To be political and is highly risky business for a third country migrant. The issue of class, migration status and gender are crucial aspects, a subject we return at 2.3.5 of this section.

2.3.2. The 'bufferers'

The OBZ was a movement that contained something 'germinal': it was certainly fresh, new and dynamic. According to the bufferers themselves, as S. underlines,

"this movement is important because it's different from other movements, it happened in a no man's land. Nobody owns it. No country, no flag, no nation. It's a free zone, a gap."

Taking part in the same discussion regarding the local demands and the movement's conceptual framework, R. adds,

³⁴ For more on this see Trimikliniotis 2009.

³⁵ Adopted in October 2010 the national action plan for the integration 2010-2012 (NAPIM); see Trimikliniotis 2011; 2012a.

³⁶ See Trimikliniotis 2009; 2010; 2012a; 2012b)

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"demands change from person to person, I think. The main idea is about dealing with the problems caused by inequalities. Many issues come from that. It's not only capitalism. It's small things in life as well. We created an environment for people to think about alternatives. That was the common ground. I think. An alternative space for creative thinking".

In the same context, E. would repeat several times that the main goal was "*to create awareness*"; while A. marks that:

"it was unbelievable! Within a few days a whole community was created on that 'square'. It was self-managed, horizontal, based on general assemblies".

The worldview of those in the OBZ movement is based on the centrality of the link between spatial action and politics, mostly expressed via its digital reproduction. The process of occupying a former empty place turning it into a public place for all is interrelated with the socio-political process of contesting dominant policy, stressing *the need to restructure the power relations that underlie the production of urban space, fundamentally shifting control away from capital and the state and toward urban inhabitants* (Purcell, 2002). Being 'together' in 'no man's land' was a chance to experience co-existence 'here and now' in a way that co-existence is no longer a demand but a direct product of the bufferers' action. F., a G/C activist pinpoints that

"we thought about camping for a night. But then the UN forces came the other day. They told us that we bother them and that we had to leave. But we didn't. The UN provoked us, so we stayed...".

Appearing at a time of disappointment regarding the formal peace process, the OBZ attempted to contest the official peace-talks by governing parties and politicians on both sides. Inspired by the need to overcome the failure of formal narratives and policies regarding reconciliation and reunification, bufferers argued that grass root movements can create political events and play a leading political role. During the interview R. would insist:

"if the OBZ is consistent, it will definitely affect the political scene. It does not mean that we are going to become a political party, but in some way we create a political tradition".

In this sense, from the occupation of space new-born discourses emerge endowing concepts such as 'reunification' and 'rapprochement' a radical nuance and edge, as people are more inspired to see and act beyond the closed horizons of the mainstream politics (Stavridis, 2009). Moreover, it brings on surface the potential for new political subjectivities that were largely absent, silent, marginalised or suppressed in the past period, opening up

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spaces for subversive action. In this sense, such processes of re-claiming urban spaces affect the public sphere as well as individuals on a personal level. After being stabbed by far right-wingers, S. was prevented for a while from living a normal daily life. As he claims later, he was "helped" by "the OBZ movement to recover after the attack by the fascists". Choosing the particular place of the buffer zone in Ledras Street/ Lokmaci was symbolic, as:

"the buffer zone is a symbolic place; it symbolises a lot of things; the UN regulation, the division" [R., bufferer].

At the same time it offers a kind of utopia:

"in the buffer zone it was the first time that we lived together willingly, creating something out of nothing" [S., bufferer].

The 'right to the city' movement may well carry with it a particular danger from its birth: *the fetishization of space*³⁷. Both in the OBZ and in other cases of the global occupy movement, the occupation and appropriation of public space turned from a tactical tool into the strategic goal of the movement. In this sense, the prioritised aspect of the 'right to the city' was the use of public space undervaluing at the same time broader ideological visions, socio-political perspectives and long-term demands. As long as the free access to public space could be satisfied the ultimate goal seemed to be fulfilled too. One can 'read' that comment in almost every popular slogan of the OBZ:

- <<We are living the solution>>
- <<Welcome to the reunified Cyprus>>
- <<No borders camp>>

Some key questions are the following:

- Was or will in the future such an aspect be a dangerous obstacle for the movement's development and success?
- Could the fetishisation of space become a boomerang in the hands of gentrification policies? Or else, could such 'radical' demands harmlessly embodied and appropriated by the system as mainstream 'human rights'?

37 Marcuse, P., Blog #15 – The Right to the City and Occupy: History and Evolution. <http://pmarcuse.wordpress.com/2012/08/02/blog-15-the-right-to-the-city-and-occupy-history-and-evolution/>

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- Even worse, could a distorted view of the 'right to the city' as a right mainly based on the occupation, appropriation and use of public space be taken over by ethno-racists who 're-claim' the city from the 'social waste' (migrants, LGBT, communists, leftists, anarchists, etc) aiming to 'purify the Capital' to restore its 'old glory'?
- Finally, can we talk about the 'right to the city' (in the Lefebvrian sense) outside and beyond social imaginaries for a new social order?

2.3.3. 'Neighbours'

One of the difficulties the OBZ movement had was the insufficient interaction with the locals; often the activists would simply take for granted the opposition by locals; this would deprive them from seeking any local support, even if was forthcoming. R., a young Turkish-Cypriot female activist, notes that "there will be opposing factors for sure", given that

"not everyone supports every ideology and as long as we keep the movement in action, the opposition will be in action as well".

A., a young Greek-Cypriot activist would add:

"There are two certain groups of 'locals'. Within the Old City, there is a more alternative atmosphere around Faneromeni Square.³⁸ This is where we all came from. To a certain extent that part of the city was positive towards our movement. It happened many times that we came here to take chairs for example and we had support in general. Regarding the other group of 'locals' I would include neighbours and shop-owners in Ledra Street. They were detached from the movement."

Once again the OBZ movement seemed to have generated both 'inclusions' and 'exclusions' related to its basic concept, goal and characteristics.³⁹ This is predictable as the movement attempted to sharpen and radicalise socio-spatial segregation against the ethno-national and class divide. In this sense, while

38 The area around Faneromeni came into life in the late 1990s when the coffee shop 'Kala Kathoumena' was opened. Before it was merely a church and a school, "national" monuments and buildings given by the Church to reserve army officers and a nationalist student organisation. 'Kala Kathoumena' was not an ordinary coffee shop where older people gather – this was a coffee shop attracting primarily youth – many sorts of youth: nationalists as well as leftists and radicals, Greek-Cypriot and Greek soldiers as well as anti – militarists, middle class professionals, intellectuals as well as hippies and drop outs.

39We conducted several interviews and had numerous informal discussions with neighbours and shop-owners in the area next to the occupied part of the buffer zone

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people rallied around the ideas represented by the OBZ, dialectical opposites were being also constructed. Matters were polarised mostly due to the hostility of the Greek-Cypriot media, financial, commercial and professional interests and practices of gentrification forces. The OBZ was accused for threatening social order. Although in many other cases of activism local society would be indifferent, the spatial placement of the OBZ could not allow the 'locals' to be utterly passive. Because of the centrality of the location, the spectacle of the occupying by the large numbers of people crossing the checkpoints, the good internet promotion and the relative longevity of the action attracted attention, including the mainstream media. It was probably more known than anything happened before either in the context of alternative activism or peace activism in recent years.

Interesting juxtapositions emerge once we bring the 'neighbours' in an imaginary dialogue. Our local informants' attitude towards the movement was by and large negative, even though the discourse contained internal contradictions. The interviews were conducted on both sides of the barbed wire. In the northern part of Nicosia, only few shop-owners, especially in the Buyuk Han, were sufficiently informed and had first-hand experience as long as most of the shop-owners on this side are Turkish, non-Cypriots who are not allowed to cross the border. The dominant discourse regarding the OBZ by 'locals' in general undervalues the significance of the initiative and stresses what they considered to be a 'threatening' character of the action potentially damaging peaceful, clean, normal, legal, healthy, quiet everyday life. There was a consensus almost amongst all of the local informants on three accusations:

- They are 'dirty';
- They 'take drugs';
- They have 'abnormal social and promiscuous sexual behaviour'.

Typical is the shop-owner of a shop just a few meters from the border:

"they do not even obey hygiene rules. I see them every day. Go there and see how they live in their filthy tents. I saw them taking drugs so many times. In front of my eyes they dropped a bag full of marijuana."

During another discussion, a female shop-owner just round the corner, would repeat again and again:

"they have done me much harm. The night before the police attacked they had done so many damages out of our shops. They throw their garbage

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here all the time. They steal our banners in order to use them as blankets. We had to work in the morning and we faced all that dirt."

Some meters away, on the other side, a Turkish Cypriot shop-owner in Buyuk Han would also agree that

"unfortunately there are some youngsters who take drugs. I hoped that it wouldn't be that way."

Responding to the question whether they have seen these things and how many times they have visited the other side across the barbed wire, most of them answered that they have been there once or twice during those months while crossing the border. They all prioritised 'abnormal social behaviour' rather than their political disagreement; in fact they would broadly state that they would highly agree with the political demands of the movement with respect to Cyprus' reunification and demilitarisation of the island. The 'bufferers' on the other hand have a totally different view, strongly countering the above accusations, as *"these are only ways to make a scandal: drug use, older men with under-age people, vandalism"*, contending that

"dirt is something you find everywhere. In our case it was just used for marginalising" [P., bufferer].

F. would definitely disagree with all those arguments mentioning that:

"the place was being cleaned every day. All those who support such accusations, do not agree with the movement. Perhaps they do not even want the island to be reunified. Maybe they are right-wingers or fascists who express themselves like that in order to spoil the movement. Even my mom was visiting the place and she said that it was clean". [F., bufferer]

S. emphasises how deeply unfair are the accusations:

"we basically occupied a building, a destroyed building and we restored it. We tried to make it a place where we can enjoy, do things, activities and projects. Abnormal? Who? For whom? For the system everything we are doing is maybe abnormal."

Although the locals imply that they represent the 'normality' in sharp contrast with the 'abnormal' activists, the scheme of 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' is used in different terms. For example, while the locals regard themselves to be the ones who exclude the 'others', they often exchange roles in order to justify themselves. For instance, almost all the informants agreed that they were victims of exclusion: *"the activists didn't come not even once in order to give me something, to say who they are and what they protest for"*, a local shop owner complained. Another would add:

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"I have no clue about their demands. They never gave me a text. They never spoke to me. They didn't speak to anybody."

The 'excluded' locals expressed feelings of victimisation; some even went as far as claiming that they would have had a different opinion if someone talked to them and "explained the reasons of the occupation". Interestingly, some bufferers would partially agree that a basic problem of the movement was the lack of sufficient contact with the local society. On the other hand, others such as E. and M. would remind that there were texts translated in Greek, Turkish and English, but "one cannot expect everything from a small group of people in such a small period of time".

Furthermore, we have to note that in that imaginary dialogue it is difficult to place the migrants either on the side of the 'bufferers' or the side of the 'neighbours'. They could be potentially 'bufferers' as long as the OBZ movement could have included them in its practices and demands but with such limited participation it would be unrealistic to claim that they were organic components of the movement. On the other hand they could be included in the group of the 'neighbours' as long as they are shop-owners, workers and local inhabitants, too but on the other hand non-immigrant 'neighbours' exclude them from their "indigenous" grouping. The words of a Greek-Cypriot shop-owner below are almost common sense between the locals around Ledras/ Lokmaci check point:

"I was one of the first who came here. I saved the Old City. Thanks to me and some others the area is alive again. If it wasn't for us, the whole area would be full of immigrants and foreigners."

Despite its transnational and trans-border manifesto, the OBZ did not gain support amongst the resident migrants, who were hardly aware of its claims.⁴⁰ However, particularly in landscapes of multiple urban and ethno-national conflict, which are endowed with class, gender and racialised aspects, it is essential to examine in context the dynamics of the contestation of various claims over 'the right to the city'.

As a conclusion to this section, what strengthens the function of the OBZ as an urban movement is the contested urban space itself where different groups and scenarios confront. In that way, the 'right to the city' constitutes the spark for the debate on production of urban space and in parallel becomes the demand each side desires to monopolise. The debate covers a broad span of all aspects of social life: from politics, economic development, urban policies, moral issues and matters of social behaviour.

⁴⁰This was the view of many interviews we had with local migrants, migrant community activists and a focus group we organised.

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2.3.4. 'Public discourse'

A crucial dimension is the digital/non-digital aspects of representation and action and on-line/off-line practices:

"Sometimes I feel like things are as valued as pushing a 'Like' button..."
(E, bufferer)

The term 'public discourse', practically contains a virtual public space developed where public opinion, values, representations of physical space, social relations, beliefs, ideologies or cultural identities are being formed, affected, contested or even controlled. It is a public arena where individuals' value systems are both reflected *and* (re)shaped. Moreover, social networks offer the chance to users or else to 'actors' within that public sphere to connect with each other and create virtual social relations. Extensive use of Facebook was made by OBZ, expressing feelings and statements obeying to certain 'unwritten laws' within the 'virtual publics'.⁴¹

The interesting publication entitled "Tweets from Tahrir" refers to the Arab spring and the occupation of Tahrir Square following the timeline of the revolt through the tweets shared that period of time. In the foreword, Adhaf Soueif would argue:

"I think we're agreed: Without the new media the Egyptian Revolution could not have happened.[...]It remains to be seen whether the impetus and immediate success of the Revolution will also help in the tasks that lie ahead: building consensus, building institutions, mending the damage and moulding the future."

With his foreword, Soueif unfolds both the potentials and the limits of virtual public space since on-line practice can never replace the need for direct communication and action in physical public space. In the case of the OBZ movement in Nicosia, internet and social media were by and large *not used in an instrumental way to inform about the actions*; rather they were used *in an almost existential way*. In fact, we could argue that the over-exposure to the internet use often reversed the off-line and on-line relation. For instance, while the involved activists were never more than 200 in physical space, the

41 Facebook, as one of the mostly used social network allows multiple users can be linked and share experience, thoughts, photos or calls for action. Each user creates its own profile selecting nick-names and profile pictures, giving willingly all possible personal information and finally entering the virtual public sphere among other virtual 'friends'. Virtual publics are then a type of computer mediated discourse space created by using various technologies including email and social networks (Jones; Ravid; Rafaeli). Apart from that the internet and related technologies have created a new public space for politically oriented conversation (Papacharissi, 2002).

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corresponding OBZ- Facebook page had around 2.000 'followers'. A young bufferer, A., would remark:

"Internet is really important. Everything is happening there actually. You just enter your Facebook account and you are being overwhelmed by information and news about anything".

R., would name the phenomenon as 'internet activism' spotting both the advantages and the drawbacks of it.



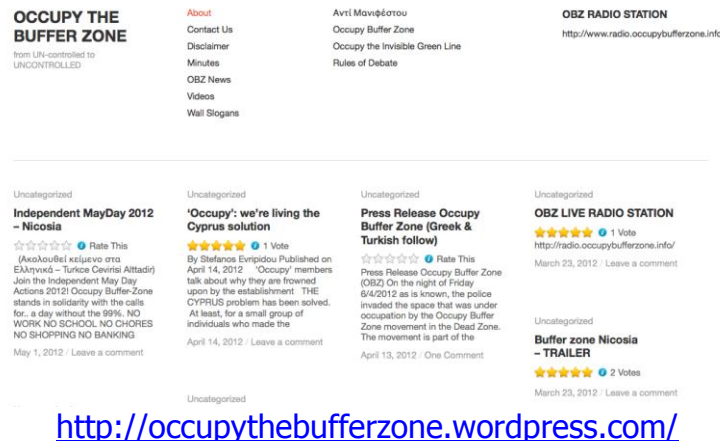
The extended use of on-line practices by political groups attempts to transcend traditional mass media since the utopian rhetoric that surrounds new media technologies promises further democratization of post-industrial society (Papacharissi, 2002). Activists contest the dominance of the state and the ruling class on controlling public discourse and therefore support alternative ways of information and mobilisation through the net. As all interviewees mention, the OBZ movement started with a 'facebook event'. The facebook page was one of the prioritised things to be done while being followed by several people. What is also worth to be noted is that the virtual aspect of the movement was one of the most crucial factors that helped the local movement to be globally connected. As a consequence, internet use influenced the movement's demands, too since they were linked with the broader demands of the <occupy movement> against austerity measures, capitalist crisis and for an anti-capitalist struggle. <https://www.facebook.com/OccupyBufferZone>

Together with all different social networks, a large variety of websites and blogs compose the virtual public space, too. The image below refers to the blog made by the bufferers that kept everybody informed about forthcoming actions, while posting different opinions, thoughts, pictures, video clips and articles regarding the movement. The manifesto posted on that blog shortly mentions:

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

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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. In this way, we have reclaimed the space of the buffer zone to create events (screenings, talks etc.) and media of these events, which relate to the system as a whole and its numerous and diverse consequences.



<http://occupythebufferzone.wordpress.com/>

Media, blogs, websites



The OBZ movement was covered by international media almost from its very beginning. Aljazeera produced a documentary commending that *Cypriots join the global protest movement to heal their divisions*, inviting the bufferers to talk about their aims. Reuters published also an article entitled 'Fed up with separation Cypriot youths seek change' hosting a Greek-Cypriot and a Turkish Cypriot activist. Interestingly, at first local media including TV channels, magazines, and newspapers presented the mobilisations sympathetically:

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The turning point in the public discourse at least on behalf of the mass media was the public debate immediately prior and straight after the evacuation of the occupied building by the police forces. On April 6th the police invaded the occupied place, arrested 28 activists after a brutal attack. On behalf of the OBZ movement, the press release stated:

“The participation of the Special Anti-Terrorist Force shows the way in which the state handles the youth of this place, G/Cs and T/Cs, who claim a future which will be a creation of the Cypriot people themselves and not a creation of the existing domestic and world politico-economical and social status quo. We apologize for being unable to transfer in words the repugnant scenes of state violence we lived, and we wish to assure you that we will not stop existing actively and creatively. «You cannot evict an idea»”.



That police raid was the turning point for the movement; mainstream public discourse turned against the movement with a vengeance. In order to invade the place and evacuate it from the activists, the police claimed that there was extended drug use in the area. After such an announcement, the link was beginning to be clear: bufferers constituted a threat against social order since they were drug users, abnormal, unhealthy and therefore marginal. The TV Channel ANT1 mentions that,

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"Many attempted to prevent police investigations while forty people gathered in the area just after the event in order to ask for explanations. A 52-year-old British, who lives in Pafos was intoxicated, according to the police...".

In two short sentences, the reporter manages to create the activists' profile composed by aggressive behaviour against the law, weird mixture of ages and finally the most crucial moral issue: sex, drugs and alcohol.

Επίδρομη Αστυνομία σε κατοικία στην Λήδρας
Υπήρχαν πληροφορίες για χρήση ναρκωτικών

Διαρρινούνται και άλλα θέματα, τα οποία στο παρόν στάδιο δεν μπορούν να ανακαλυφθούν, δηλώνει η αστυνομία

Επίδρομη σε κατοικία στο τέρμα της οδού Λήδρας διενήργησε η Αστυνομία με δικαστικό ένταλμα, ύστερα από πληροφορίες ότι γινόταν χρήση ναρκωτικών. Δημοσιεύματα στον Τ/κ τύπο αναφέρουν ότι η επιχείρηση έγινε στη νεκρή ζώνη κάτι όμως το οποίο διέγνευσαν τα Ηνωμένα Έθνη.

Όπως δήλωσε στο Πρωινό Δρομολόγιο ο εκπρόσωπος τύπου του αρχηγείου Αστυνομίας Ανδρέας Αγγελίδης, αφού εξασφαλίστηκε δικαστικό ένταλμα διενεργήθηκε η επιχείρηση, στη διάρκεια της οποίας εντοπίστηκαν στον πρώτο όροφο της οικίας ένας Τουρκοκύπριος και ένας Ελληνοκύπριος 28 χρόνων, καθώς και μικρή ποσότητα κάνναβης.

Στο κτήριο υπήρχαν επίσης 28 άτομα, Ελληνοκύπριοι και άλλων εθνικοτήτων, οι οποίοι οδηγήθηκαν στην Αστυνομία.

The forceful evacuation of the April 6th was also the starting point of a stronger polarisation in the public sphere. By and large the main stream media accused the movement of improper behaviour citing public morals, public security, health and safety, OBZ activists responded with accusations of police brutality and the media provocations. An issue here is the media representation of the Police raid influenced the opinion of the majority of the 'locals'. From that moment, the OBZ movement not merely was a marginal political movement re-claiming the buffer zone but constituted something more threatening: on the eve of the country's taking over the Presidency of the EU Council, we had a lived example that did not fizzle out threaten to turn the show-piece in the centre of a divided Capital, right after the touristic checkpoint, into battlefield of conflicting lifestyles, value systems and cultural identities. Was this what made the OBZ an urban movement that stands up for the 'right to the city'? As Harvey (2008) put it,

"the question of what kind of city we want cannot be divorced from that of what kind of social ties, relationship to nature, lifestyles, technologies and aesthetic values we desire".

There are various interesting angles from which one can read the OBZ; an important one is its legacy in endowing possible future struggles, as "for the

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greater part of history we deal with societies and communities the past is essentially the pattern for the present" (Hobsbawm1972):⁴²

if one looks in the past not for what had happened but for what could have happen, then one places oneself to the side of those who lost, who tried to change the route of things and failed. On the other hand if one can understand that historical time has ruptures and discontinuities within ones struggles, then one can find hope in what has already passed...⁴³

Public discourses on OBZ and Inner Nicosia

The 'public discourse' regarding the OBZ movement and the representation of the spatial redefinition of the buffer zone is crucial.⁴⁴ From the extended variety of sources in the internet we selected some of the most reliable and mostly visited ones that represent the opinions of both the supporters of the OBZ and the opponents. In addition, we recorded the timeline of the movement as presented in the mass media together with official narratives regarding the mobilisations. Keeping in mind that official public discourse and formal narratives together with police brutality and parastatal organisations often construct 'moral panic' (Cohen, 1973) presenting urban movements as a threat for social order, we examine how that functioned in our case. In this sense the 'gentrifiers' and those who can be considered to be part of the 'police/order' are hegemonic in the official and mainstream media. The forces of *order* are the local authorities of the police (in Rancière's sense) and includes the Police (in the traditional sense), which is itself a 'force' but at the same time fragmented amongst the different specialised forces. However it goes far beyond that: we are referring to the local administrators, professionals and others committed to order of things. This utilizes Rancière's distinction between *politics* from *police*: disagreement as dissensus from the established or normal order (law, power, state apparatus etc) generates the *political*, which is the result of exceptional circumstances. Rancière argues instead that the most relevant distinction to be made is that *politics is exceptional*, while *police is commonplace* (Rancière 1998: 17, 139):

"Politics, in its specificity, is rare. It is always local and occasional".

The question of policing a buffer zone from activists who are occupying as part of a localised global movement is itself riddle with paradoxes: the buffer zone is a 'state of exception' par excellence (Schmidt 1994; Agamben 2003; Papadakis, 2003; Constantinou, 2008) and the contestation over control, the use, the meaning of this space sometimes referred to as the 'dead zone'

42 Hobsbawm, E., 1972. The social function of the past: Some questions. *Past and Present*, 55(1), pp. 3-17.

43 *Utopia Journal*, vol.48, 2002, <<tribute to W. Benjamin>>, p.5

⁴⁴ By the term 'public discourse' we refer to the virtual space composed by mass media, social networks, blogs and websites controlled by both official institutions and grass-roots initiatives.

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indicates how live and shifting the space is. This is a highly contradictory but nonetheless gendered space controlled by male soldiers – Greek-Cypriots, Turkish-Cypriots, Turkish and UN troops where the 'local' meets the imperial global (dis)order.

2.3.5. Subaltern migrants de facto excluded?

We tried to address the question of migrant participation in the OBZ movement in different ways. First we interviewed people in the movement to ask about migrants: it was obvious that about one third of those who had camped there were migrants but they were mostly students, travellers etc mostly from the EU. We had located one young male activist Z , who was there the night of the Police raid and we interviewed a number of the buffers.⁴⁵ In addition we had another twenty follow interviews, a focus group⁴⁶ and several fieldwork visits at the streets, parks and squares frequented by migrants.⁴⁷

A rare exception of a non-EU migrant, resident in Cyprus was Z: This is a 15-year old young male activist from a neighbouring Arabic country whose parents have sought protection in Cyprus and has been in the country from the age of 11. He attends a Greek secondary school and was amongst the activists who were arrested on the night of the raid. He is fluent in Greek to the extent that one does not recognise that he is not a Greek-Cypriot. In fact he attributes the improvement in his speaking Greek to his involvement with the OBZ movement. During his interviews he noted that when the Police arrested him, he was threatened by the Police that if he continues to participate in the movement then his immigration status would be affected. When probed to put forward an official complaint against the Police he stated that he could not because the Police also told his parents that he may be deported. Z told us of another non-EU migrant, an activist from Iraq, who was involved in the movement but was arrested at some point and was deported by the immigration authorities. We are informed that on a couple of occasions some African students from the northern part of Cyprus attended events organised.

⁴⁵ After our first round of interviews, we talked to about twenty persons in the OBZ movement, we had about a dozen follow up interviews, mostly after the Police raid and specifically raised the subject of migrant participation.

⁴⁶ The focus group meeting took place on Sunday 13/05/2012 at the 'Kala Kathoumena'.

⁴⁷ We utilised the networks of OBZ activists themselves as well a female migrant activist, who was very positive about the OBZ, as she was part of the alternative scene of the inner Nicosia, but could not participate as her visa papers were not in order: she organised a number of interviews with migrant activists and a focus group from different migrant communities, who had no involvement with the OBZ.

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L is 25year old female Bangladeshi activist, who flew to Cyprus as an unaccompanied minor to study in Cyprus, fleeing from an oppressive family who trying to forcefully marry her. She had some problems wither documents and had remained without a visa for a couple of years. She fluent in Greek and English and has a strong activist background and knows all the of OBZ people from Faneromeni square. She organised the focus group in inner Nicosia and has been involved in various migrant activistic initiatives in the city. She feels very comfortable in the old inner old quarter of Nicosia:

"I feel more included in this place than any other part because I find people that -- ok, it's also probably because of my friends... aaaa...[pause]....aaaa... I have a huge network of friends that most of them are Cypriots and most of whom hang out here. aaaaa...mmmm... plus it's also because it always fascinates me - the structure of old town and I find people more open to - you know - to differences. I feel -- I don't feel -- if i sit here for 6 hours at Kalakatoumena, nobody is going to tell me 'move' which I feel in other places. Or you know I can freely access myself that - things that I don't feel free doing in Makarios. I find it moreshiny and it's meaningless for me. Here it's more meaningful."

Her story illustrates how the inner city around Faneromeni is the area she feels most comfortable with, unlike other parts of Nicosia where she gets racial and sexual harassment on a regular basis:

NT: Do you-- have you not experienced any racism?

L: Yes I did. Of course [laugh]. But I don't hang out in places that exclude -- you know I feel the racial tension. I mean here- no - in kalakatoumena or Phaneromeni or places like that.

NT: But Faneromeni? Never?

FI: No!

NT: But different times different....

FI: Yes, but I didn't come across this kind of... you know. I will sit down on the bench there- on Manolis for hours, I didn't the tension that someone came or.... But outside- if you just go outside- say Solomos Square- yes, I am called all the time [...] the bus stand. If you just go there - out of this circle, this concentrated circle -- if you just go to Ledra, say the end- Elefteria Square, I -- most of the time I hear 'how much?'

NT: O... they think that you are a prostitute.

L: Yes. Or they will smile, they will come closer or they will step in front of you.

NT: Is it Cypriots or Non-Cypriots?.

L: It' s old Cypriots. I wish it were the young ones [loud laughter].

NT: Old men! What ages?

L: 50. 55 .That's the reason that you see me walking on the street -- I walk a lot. Even if you say hi to me, I will not hear you. Because I put high volume i-pod because it ruins my day. I -- I am very reactive person. If I hear it, I react. aaaaa I would say shouting at them - you know 'aai

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gamisou malaka' or something like that. So, I don't want. Because it's not him - I ruin my day. So... [pause] I need to protect myself.

NT: So... so you walk down the street, you leave this area - this sheltered multicultural centre, you find this -- you find this whenever you go this happens? It's a daily thing when you walk here?

L: Honestly, even in the morning when I used to come to KISA and walk through the road behind, they used to stop the car, they would laugh at you and say 'apo pou eisai?', 'omorfoulla mou'

NT: So, it's harassment on constant basis.

L: Of course it's harassment. I mean [pause], it's a racial harassment, it's because.... you know...

NT: Sexual harassment

L: Yes, it's based on my gender, based on the perception they have about me as a woman because they can see that I am not Cypriot.

Most persons interviewed agreed that old Nicosia, particularly around Faneromeni, was friendly towards migrants. Not all migrants interviewed were keen on the inner city. One 25-year student from India was adamant that inner Nicosia is "trouble" as the Police would pick on young male migrants. Others disagreed. The focus group⁴⁸ illustrated the distance in the socio-political priorities of the everydayness of most *subaltern migrants* life and the youthful transnational activism of OBZ. Most of participants accepted the invitation even though some expressed anxiety of being exposed. Three others cancelled the participant very last moment due to fear of being stopped by police or immigration official and finally decided to remain low-profiled. One showed his interest to be interviewed providing that the researchers travel to his town and find a 'secure' place. For all three of them, old Nicosia is seen as a zone of intense special police-surveillance; therefore, the risk to be stopped and interrogated is considerable higher than other part of the town/ other towns.⁴⁹ Other participants contributed to the similar discussion on the difficulties on a regular basis faced by the undocumented migrants from their own experiences and their interaction with other migrants. Interestingly none of them had anything to say about the OBZ. Apart from L who know the OBZ people well and as an activist herself mingling with Cypriots rather than her ethnic/national community, the others said that they did know or could not related to what they were up to. In one of the interviews she put it nicely:

⁴⁸ For the participation in the first focus group meeting, initially about 10 -12 representatives from various migrant communities were targeted. The factors of age range, gender, the degree of their involvement in their own community were taken into account. An informal sample list of targeted ethnicity included the representatives of the communities of Sri Lanka, Philippines, Palestine, Iraq, Bangladesh, India, Kurd (Syria), Cameroon. Accordingly, the participants active in these migrant communities were invited.

⁴⁹ Even though the participation of these migrants could have enriched the discussion of meeting and provide us a better in-view of their individual situation, however, the overall structure of the focus group was not significantly affected by this.

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"You can't really expect migrants to get involved. They work like mad all day six days a week and their only day to have any sort of social life is Sunday. It is logical to me that they will not spend their time on Sunday to do some political movement, even though it is important; it affects the Cyprus problem and the life of migrants big time."

At the same time she said that she would have liked to get involved herself, if she had the chance: "It is not just the country needs to be reunited, for the sake of Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots; it affects the life of everyone, everyday. The hatred, the racism, the discrimination, xenophobia; it affects society as a whole and it is a much bigger problem than that. I believe in the cause, I believe that the movement was worth it and that things must change!" Another activist, P. would pose a crucial question:⁵⁰ "if migrants could not reach OBZ, then why did not OBZ reach out for migrants?" The response illustrated some of the limitations of the ways digitality interacted with non-digital materiality:

L: "They could have done more to reach out for migrants. I meant they could not just rely on Facebook and internet but have face-to-face contact with people. How did I find out about the movement? I had friends in the movement, we talked about it. [...] If you want to involve migrants you must focus your activities on the Sunday.. the rest of time is surviving..."

P: On the night of the raid, before the raid, I suggested that we should organise something for migrants; I suggested that we organise a karaoke night so that Filipinos come over. When I said that people laughed; and I said to myself what is the problem?

L: What exactly was the problem, the fact that it was a karaoke or that it was going to be Filipinos in a karaoke?

P: I don't know... they did not take it seriously...

Sundays at municipal parks

Our fieldwork illustrates that the lives of subaltern migrants is closely linked to their 'translocational positionality', as Anthias would have it: migrant status, class, ethnicity/nationality and gender are crucial aspects in the organization of their everydayness, their social imaginaries and political outlook. The spatiality of this gendered migrant perspective is visible if one visits inner Nicosia on the only day off non-EU (subaltern) migrants have, the Sundays. Two parks are 'occupied' on Sundays by migrants, as these are their hang out:

(i) The (Sri Lankan) Park

⁵⁰ This was a recording of the conversation between P and L, where they were asked to reflect on the OBZ movement, its legacy, meaning and limitations. The conversation took place on 26/9/2012.

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On Sundays, the Nicosia Municipal Park (or informally called as 'Cyta Park') located next to the CYTA roundabout (named after the old CYTA building) turns into one of most lively places in the city. Only on this very specific day of the week, it becomes the 'Sri Lankan Park' for many- especially to migrant communities who are familiar with 'who occupies which park' on Sundays. The life-span of such 'Sunday-occupation' in this park is between 8am to 3pm. During this time, this park is crowded by Sri Lankan migrant community and one can hardly notice a local stepping into this area without a purpose (i.e. work, or other obligatory commitments such as coming to choose a domestic worker or unskilled labourer etc.). In the small context of the park, the range of activities is as wide as the broader society outside but the only difference there is the cultural elements that make it unique from others. The traditional food is being cooked and served on spot on low prices. A beautician corner is informally made with a couple of plastic chairs and a kit of necessary accessories and a waiting queue of female customers chatting around. A specific place is designated where a group of women sells gold jewellery designed and imported from mainland Sri Lanka. Commercial exchanges are being carried out but this interaction is based mostly on the mutual trust, rather than being bound by state controlled business process (i.e. usage of receipt, cash-box, guarantee documentation etc.). There is also freelancer photographer (a migrant but not Sri Lankan) who offers his services. Besides these profit-making activities, social networking between the Sri Lankan compatriots, exchanges/ swaps of inexpensive goods such as clothing, circulation of Sri Lankan newspapers writing in either Sinhalese/ Tamil dialect are widely part of Sunday-life of migrants in this park. The migrant women not only with their number but also their active participations in various activities outbalance that of their male counterpart. Most of the users of this park appeared to be unskilled workers working mostly in the domestic sectors. Practically, they are permitting only on Sunday to refrain from their employment, thus Sunday becomes day of social interaction; meet other migrants, to chill out, carry out personal tasks. I came across park-users sitting in groups sharing their 'stories', food & beverages. A group was celebrating the belated birthday of their friend who turned into 23. Generous amount of traditional spicy food on a foldable table sharing with even others, chanting, citing poetry was a great part of the celebration. Speaking to some of the migrant in an informal manner, there is a notion of a strong community feeling that may be invisible from outside. This kind of feeling results not only the concept of providing each other moral support, but also practical assistance through advising, provision of information on a wide range of issues- including those of crucial immigration matters, consolation during the difficulties, usage of social network to find employers etc.. One said:

'We do this because we have no one else. Our Embassy doesn't care for us. We are often cheated and treated unfairly and sometimes violently by our bosses and the agents but we have no one to hear us'.

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Surrounding the Sunday-occupation of Sri Lankan migrants, some other businesses use their marketing tools to promote their work. Among these, I came across the flyers of money-transfer agents, cheap international phone calls, 'jobs in Canada' recruitment agency. Most of these flyers are in Sinhalese dialect. Even though one can still come across non-Sri Lankan migrants in this park, there were very few to be noted. From my chatting with few of them, they appeared to be accompanying their Sri Lankan partner in the park. Nevertheless, they expressed their feeling of having 'closer-connection' with Sri Lankan community.

(ii) The Filipino/Vietnamese park

The park set beneath the walls of Solomos Square, the main hub for public transportation, used mainly by migrants, is referred to by migrants themselves as the Filipino/Vietnamese park. Walking there, one notices the buzzing of cheers, microphone voice and music scattering by the side of the railing. Looking over, as shown in Figure 1 below, one sees the observers by the railing down into an extended space beneath, where a large number of spectators are gathered facing towards an unseen space beneath the railing. We notice a few people dancing to Western pop music.



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During the fieldwork visits we can observe many Asian migrants gathered around sitting, relaxing away from the buzzing atmosphere or entering the kiosk by the corner where they buy So-Easy cards having a small chit chat with the cashier. Vietnamese women have set up their products on cloth on the ground. I see vegetables, medicine, hats and clothes. Customers stand on top and are browsing through the clothes. When they select something to try on, they go to the back, behind the stall per se and an 'assistant' would lift a sheet of white cloth, like a bed sheet, and surround the customer with it while standing, with another assistant holding the other side. The customer would then be engulfed in an upright tunnel of sheet and then change their clothes in there while her back would face the crowd and passersby crossing behind.



Most of the people compose of women, mainly South-East Asian, with the occasional South Asian women passing by. They comfortably sit on the grass, and group laughter reverberate across the space. There is a large number of phone use and taking pictures with their cameras. Most of them pose. I also notice a new phone being taken out of its box, as the woman plays around with it in her hands. There are men scattered in the area, some are Asian who engage with the women in a familiar set. Yet, other men are further scattered across the space, either standing on their own and to me they seem out of place. One stands by the railing, another by a tree, and another sitting by me. They take on a more performative mode observing the game and the rest of the space but not engaging with others. It is a usual site to observe man, may times old Cypriot men, trying to buy sexual services and harassing migrant women.⁵¹

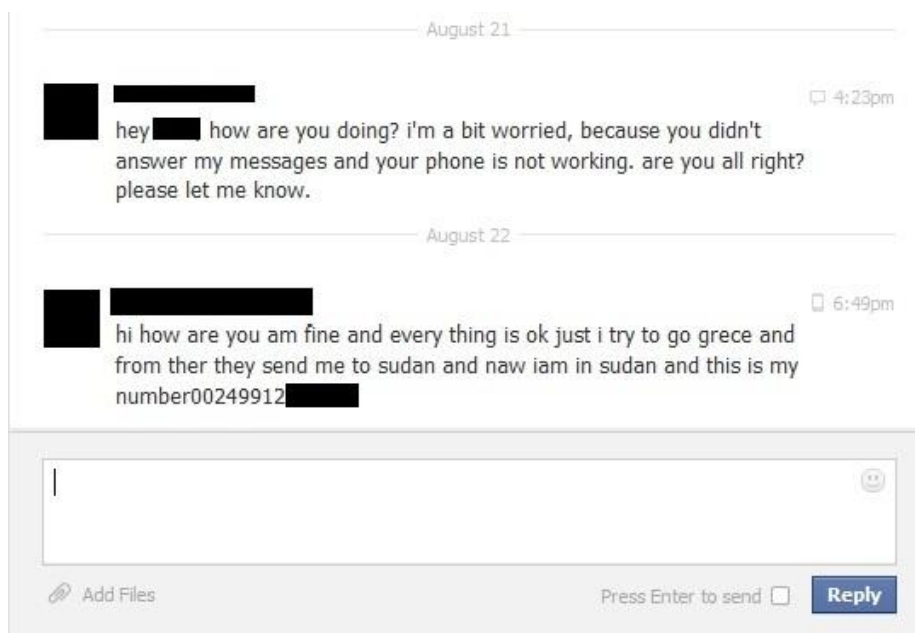
⁵¹ We have included one of the field notes of the researcher as appendix 1

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2.4. Welcome to Europe



Screenshot showing a facebook conversation between Abdulraheem and A. Ibrahim, 21/08/2012

When we first met Abdulraheem he was living in Istanbul. He was a member of UYRT a self-organised group of unaccompanied minor refugees mainly from Afghanistan, Sudan, Congo and Eritrea who are living in Turkey. We learned of the existence of this group during a research trip together with activists from Greece and Germany. *Diktio Athens, Infomobile Greece* and *welcome to europe* were part of the journey.⁵² UYRT was founded in 2010 in order to alert the public to their situation and change the precarious living conditions of young refugees in Turkey. During that first visit we attended a conference organised by the Initiative. For the first time UYRT held a public event to

⁵² The background of this trip was the deployment of Frontex Rapid Intervention Teams on the Greek side of the Greek-Turkish land border. It is the first time since the establishment of the European border agency Fontex in 2005 that this special unit is taking action. The aim of the trip was to create more transparency around the border fortification and find out more about the real actions, forms of involvement and co-operation with the Greek and Turkish authorities and the practical tasks of the Frontex force on the border, especially the Rapid Intervention Teams (RABITs), thus, to understand the implications and the responsibilities that Frontex automatically accepts with this mission. Another very important aim of the trip was to strengthen the networking with self-organized refugees and migrants as well as, solidarity groups and other organisations in Turkey. For more information: <http://w2eu.net/2010/10/27/on-the-details-of-the-upcoming-rabit-mission/>

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publicise the situation of young refugees in Turkey. During that conference the members of UYRT described the issues they had to deal with. The biggest problem the young refugees are confronted with is the permanent threat of being homeless. Under age refugees are usually taken to the main reception centre for minor refugees in Kadiköy upon their arrival to Turkey. This facility was initially an orphanage, accepting both Turkish orphans as well as unaccompanied minor refugees. By now, only unaccompanied minor refugees are being housed there, but the capacities don't match the need and the numbers, hence they are distributed to other orphanages all over Istanbul. The sudden rise in numbers of Somali and Afghan unaccompanied minors led to overcrowded facilities. The conditions in these facilities are bad, there is no psychological support specialised on minors, although most of them fled from areas of war and have also been traumatised by the experiences made during their passage. There were also reports about chicanery on behalf of the administration, like being tied to the bed. Although overall conditions in the orphanages are said to have improved, the acute feeling of isolation has remained. Initially, the minors were not allowed to leave the institution, it was only through struggling that they obtained that right.



Entrance of the shelter for unaccompanied minors in Kadiköy, Istanbul, 30/11/2011

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Shelter for unaccompanied minors in Kadiköy, Istanbul, 30/11/2011

After their 18th birthday, they have to leave the facility, find a home by themselves and earn their living independently. There are no follow-up projects, and youth support is only available before reaching the age of 18. For that reason to turn 18 means to become homeless for most of the young refugees. After having been expelled from the facility, they spend the first two weeks on average in the streets. Most of the them have a legal status in the form of recognition as a refugee, or at least filed an asylum application. Others merely have humanitarian status. But in practice no rights are related to these statuses. According to law the residence permit can be granted for a period of a maximum of six month. However the period is set by the national authorities on an arbitrary basis and is never issued for the maximum of six months, because this would allow the refugees to apply for a work permit. That means young refugees are not allowed to work legally, exposing them to conditions of exploitation. And it is even extremely difficult to find informal labour. "I go around, I look for people looking for worker, also I look in the newspaper, they advertise that for example they are looking for restaurant or looking for workers. I look there and I ask, but until now I did not get a job and I have nothing. Even sometimes I leave my number in many different places, to call me if they got a job." (Rashid) If they cannot receive money from their relatives abroad, they don't have any money and thus cannot pay for accommodation. The duty to pay for the issuing and prolonging of a residence permit also apply to the young refugees and creates an additional burden to their already bad living conditions. A new regulation issued in March 2010 allows refugees to apply for exemption fees⁵³, but it practically has not worked in any case. The fines people have to pay if they do not renew their residence

⁵³ "hCa Welcomes MOI Circular on Residence Permit Fees for Refugees" from May 2010, Helsinki Citizens Assembly: <http://www.hyd.org.tr/?pid=796&Keyword=residence>

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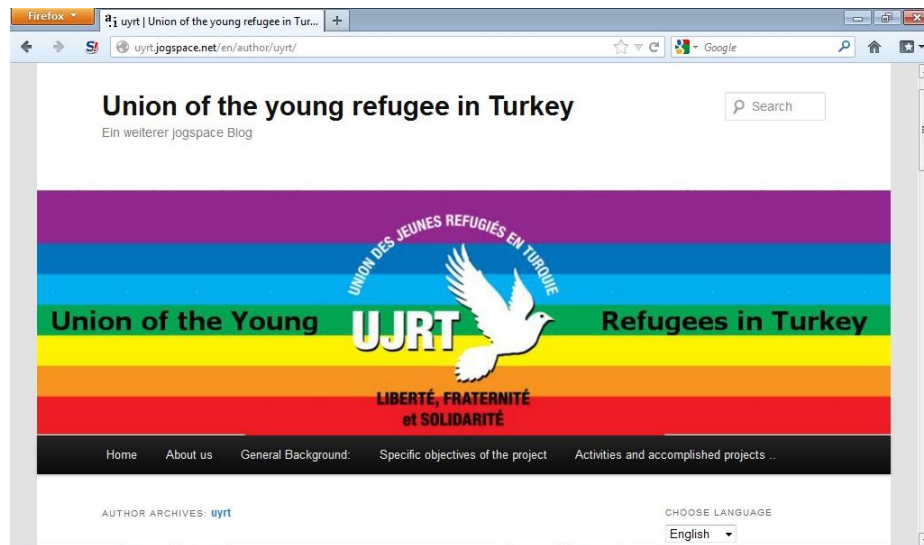
permit create another serious problem for asylum-seekers and refugees. This results in a complete exclusion from any kind of social services, as one needs a residence permit to have access. The period from submitting an asylum application until the invitation to the first interview by the UNHCR, usually reaches eight to twelve months. In the case of recognition by both, the UNHCR and the national authorities, it takes at least another two years until being resettled to a third country. Nevertheless, in most of the cases the period exceeds two years, some people wait up to six years until they are resettled. "And the UNHCR here is, they don't help us. Really! If you are out of the camp they don't help you, nothing. They are just talking, talking, talking without doing nothing. When you go to the office they say, Okay, insha'allah next month, next week, next year, nothing! Until now four years is gone." (Abdulraheem) Throughout the whole asylum and resettlement procedure people are given a residence permission (İkamet) and are distributed to so called satellite cities⁵⁴, where they have to stay and report to the local police weekly and sometimes on a daily basis. The distribution of the young refugees to the satellite cities and the residential obligation makes it difficult for the members of UYRT to have their weekly meetings and thus constitutes an obstacle to the self-organisation of young refugees. "Because if we stay in one place we will be strong and we will get what we want. But they don't that, they send us to Satellite City. That time we don't go, we still here. The month they give us 100 TL, even that money they send it to Satellite City, if you not in Satellite City, you don't get your money. Even that we don't go, we are still in Istanbul and we fight for (3) our (3) organisation and we get what we want." (Abdulraheem)

UYRT

"The idea came...when I came to Turkey I was a minor. When I turned 18 I left the shelter, the camp for refugee for minor. And then, after that it was very difficult to... 'cause when you turn 18 you don't have place to live and the situation is very difficult. 'Cause you know, we are refugees here we don't have right to work, we can not go to school, it was very difficult. And then because of this reason we decide to come together to create a group and to find a solution for our live." (Rafael) Rafael was the prime mover for establishing the self-organisation UYRT. After reaching the age of 18 he had to leave the shelter for minors, which is located in Kadiköy on the Asian side of Istanbul.

⁵⁴ There are 30 satellite cities existent in Turkey. (Van, Kayseri, Konya, Eskisehir, Ağrı)

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Blog created by the members of UYRT during the workshop organised by Mig@Net as part of the project

The idea to organise came in January 2010 during the new year party of the Congolese Community in Istanbul where Rafael and some other young Congolese refugees attended. During the event Rafael and his companions had some discussions and felt that there was not enough support for young refugees who had just attained full age and suddenly found themselves out on the streets – either from the state, the UNHCR or the communities themselves. The self-organisation started out of urgency. As stated on their blog “The first aim was to try to solve our problems and to find solutions regarding housing, food and health after we were obliged to quit the state shelter for minors when we turned 18 years old.”⁵⁵

“It was the minors themselves who started this. Against/ at the beginning against the Congolese community they started to think about this and then they started their own dynamics with all the other minors. They went to the shelter, they saw also the Sudanese, the other nationality that were already kicked out and they started to think about what they wanted to do together.” (Anais) The fact that the members are from different countries is a point they emphasize repeatedly. During a walk through Rafael’s neighbourhood he explained to us that he is very angry about the fact, that Refugees although recognized by the UNHCR as such have to wait for years for their resettlement. But what makes him even more angry is the situation of Afghan Refugees. „At least the recognize us, the Africans as Refugees and we have some perspectives for the future, although it takes too long to be resettled. But the Afghan are never recognised as refugees. They receive a humanitarian status and that is it. With that status they are not allowed to work officially and they

⁵⁵ Blog of UYRT: <http://uyrt.jogspace.net/about-us/history/>

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do not have a chance to gain the Turkish citizenship. They are just stuck. That is not right." (Rafael) Rafael mentioned that it is very important to act on behalf of everyone and not to do a division between the different nationalities. "Mostly the migrants or refugees communities are divided along nationalities. Concerning their status afghan refugees are the ones facing most of the problems, so we have to show solidarity and demand their rights together." (Rafael). By the time we met Rafael in May 2011 he was living in a subterranean flat with 5 other young refugees, who where in the same situation. The first step of UYRT was to organise a place to stay: "We decide to write a project to fund a place, to fund a house. We wrote the project to the Caritas. And then the head accepted the project to find a place for us, for 8 persons. The Caritas helped us for only 6 month and now we have, now they stopped." That was at the beginning of 2010. They also managed to receive support to buy food through a Turkish NGO (Kimse Yok Mu) and the St. Joseph School in Istanbul provided them with computers and also covered part of the rent. Besides the everyday struggle for life the UNHCR is the another main battlefield for UYRT and refugees in general in Turkey. The UYRT has submitted an inquiry to the UNHCR, demanding that the recognition and resettlement process should be accelerated. The uncertainty concerning the length of the resettlement process combined with the precarious living conditions has led many young refugees to feel despair and anger towards the UNHCR. During their first public conference the members of UYRT graphically described the dilemma they face addressing the UNHCR. "When we filed an asylum application with the UNHCR, they told us we should wait and should not try to cross to Europe illegally, since this would be dangerous and we shouldn't risk our lives. We trusted their judgement and believed them, but by now, years have gone by and we have realised that nobody is really concerned about our safety. Of others we have learned that they have continued their journey to Europe. They survived and have been recognised as refugees in various European countries. But we are here, and only have temporary asylum, and some of us have been rejected. We have neither money nor a place where we can find refuge. As you can see, they (the UNHCR) do their best to ruin our lives. Should we commit collective suicide so that our voices will be heard?"⁵⁶

2.4.1. The Concept of Mobile Commons in the Arrival City

The term "Arrival City" has been introduced by Doug Saunders in order provide one terminological umbrella for the various transitory spaces of migration, as mainstream academic terminologies, i.e. immigrant gateway or community of

⁵⁶ Quoted from a declaration, which they wrote together with other young and minor refugees at the shelter to present it at the conference.

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primary settlement does not capture its dynamic structure and the nature of transit properly. While Arrival Cities like in Mike Davis' popular representations are scandalised as dystopian spaces of a "planet of slums", a homogeneous underworld or open prisons for the urban poor, such perspectives fail to notice the dynamic nature of such cities: the transnational networks, the relative class mobility, the eradication of rural poverty. Arrival is the central and primary function of these spaces. They are spaces of transition. The Arrival City is continuously and intensely connected to the places of origin of the migrants. The primary function of an Arrival City is the creation and maintenance of a network (money transfer, communication technology). Beyond that an Arrival City serves as an access mechanism; not only does she accept through enabling settlement and providing low-paid jobs, she also enables the process of chain migration, the wave of the coming ones. The mobile commons exist as such only to the extent that they are commonly produced by all these people that add and expand its available contents. These contents are neither private nor public, neither state owned nor part of civil society; rather it exists to the extent that people use it and generate it as they are mobile. But beyond its use and actualisation, it is equally important to partake in the creation of the mobile commons, in the making of a common non-proprietary and non-enclosed world of mobility (as discussed by Anderson *et al.*, 2009). The making of the commons, 'commoning' as Linebaugh (2008) calls it, is the continuation of life through 'commoning' the immediate sociality and materiality of everyday existence (Papadopoulos, 2012). This is a flight into a world where the primary condition of existence is the immersion into the worlds you inhabit and share with other people as you move. Against and beyond the forms of mobile life are the enclosures of public, private and civil society aggregates that attempt to appropriate the knowledge and practices of the mobile people. But the knowledge and practices of mobility exist despite and beyond these enclosures, they are cooperatively produced in the commons and through the commons (Bollier, 2003, Peuter and Dyer-Witford, 2010). Papadopoulos and Tsianos (2013) understand this kind of knowledge and practices of mobility as the practice of producing alternative everyday forms of existence and alternative *forms of life*. In forms of life (Winner, 1986) we encounter a re-weaving of the social and the material through the insertion of new shared exchanges, practices and technologies. It is the organisational ontology of these forms of life that we want to explore here. Papadopoulos and Tsianos call the organisational order of these other forms of life *mobile commons*: the ability to cultivate, generate and regenerate the contents, practices and affects that facilitate the movements of mobile people. The concept of Mobile commons comprise of four analytical key categories: I. *knowledges of mobility* II. *politics of care* III. *infrastructure of connectivity* IV. *informal economies* V. *communities of justice* . In the following we will apply the concept to analyse the results of our field work in the arrival city Istanbul.

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Charging station for different Handyphones in the underpass leading to the tram stop Karaköy in Beyoğlu, Istanbul

I. The invisible *knowledges of mobility* that circulate between the people on the move (knowledge about border crossings, routes, shelters, hubs, escape routes, resting places; knowledge about policing and surveillance, ways to defy control, strategies against bio-surveillance etc.) but also between transmigrants attempting to settle in a place (knowledge about existing communities, social support, educational resources, access to health, ethnic economies, micro-banks etc.). Abdulraheem fled as a minor from the war in Darfur. It was a friend of his father who took him across the border to Chad. He had a small van with which he transported people from Sudan to Chad. In Chad Abdulraheem could stay with a relative and work at a gas station cleaning cars. From there he followed the rumours that it is easier to get a job in Libya than in Chad and that many Sudanese people are already working in Libya and having a better life. "I organised with some guys, he is also a transporter, he is working, he is have his own car. He is taking people illegally to Libya, from Chad to Libya. I went with them. I stayed with my mom's sister

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there like two months. After two months, I see some guys they say that, eh, they are going to Libya, because Libya is good and have job and you can continue your life there. I moved to Libya. I live in Libya like eight months and I was working hard. Any work I find, I work it. I worked many different there and I collect some money." (Abdulraheem) He was brought to the South of Libya and left with a ticket to Bengasi. From where he had to find his way alone. To organise a place to stay and a job in Libya he relied on the connections inside the Sudanese community. But first he had to find Sudanese people: "Just anyone. I asked everyone in the street, they say that there is one shop, is called Suk al Jumma, they say. You can get many Sudanese right there. I went there and I talked to someone, maybe his name is Hamid. (Abdulraheem) It was Hamid who got him jobs in the beginning. Abdulraheem did several jobs, but he was unsatisfied with what he was doing and the money he earned with that jobs was too less. He talked to Hamid and told him that he wanted to find something where he wanted to use his skills. "After that he asked me to draw for him something. I draw flowers, many things for him. He try to get people who want to make draw in his wall. If like someone get a new house, he wants some decors or something like that. I start to work that work and he is have good money. But this was criminal. The people they give him like 1000, he give me just 100, 200. yah. And I see, this enough for me and don't want more money." Through this small business he got to know to people outside the Sudanese community and started organising jobs by himself without a contact person, because finding jobs directly without a contact person in between enabled him to earn more money. "After I find that I need more money, I leave his job and in that time I know many people. Because all the people they looking for me, they asking where is the, they calling me bambino, by Libyan (laughing). Everyone is small children, they say for him bambino. Where is bambino, where is bambino. After, some Libyan guy he take me to his house, like I clean and cutting grass and I looking for, they have dogs, animals inside, I care about them." The contact between Abdulraheem and the facilitators that organised the way to Italy was made by the man he was working for. Abdulraheem heard about a boat that sank on the way to Italy where about 20 people died and wanted to know more about the ways of getting to Europe. "I ask the owner of my work, I ask him to how this way? He say, this way is very dangerous, but if you want, he say, I can take you. Maybe he lied to me and he take me to Turkey, I don't know. He say, Okay I will find people. After three week, he say that, I have some of my friend, he is doing this work. I say, Okay take me to him, I want to go. He say, Okay. He take me." Finally after 8 month in Libya Abdulraheem had made enough money to set off on a boat towards Italy. "Yes! Tss (laughing), I found myself in Turkey! I asked people there, Where is this? No one can speak Arabic, no one can understand my own language. I see some black people there, I think that is summer time, they work in the eh, near the sea. I ask them if they know Arabic. Some of them they know Arabic. He is from Sudan also. He is living there, I don't know what he is doing there. Yes, of course I

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talk to him and he say that, This is Turkey and you are in Izmir and here is nothing. You have to go to Istanbul. Maybe you can get more Sudanese guys there and they help you. After they take me ticket to Istanbul, I come to Istanbul. When I come Istanbul, I don't know no one, I was in the street like eh, one week and half. Finally I find myself in Aksaray. I see many black people, I ask, they take me to some Sudanese guys. After I live with them, they say that, You have to go to Greece or you are recording yourself here in Turkey to UNHCR, but in Turkey there is nothing. I say I don't have that kind of money to go Greece and I go Greece, what I do? They say you can go to Italy and from Italy you can go to France, after France you can go to UK and you continue your life there. I say, no this is long story, I don't want it and I don't have enough money. I go to UNHCR I record my name. In that time I was maybe 17 years or something like that." (Abdulraheem) Just like Abdulraheem, Adel fled the war in Darfur with the plan to go to Europe. "We have area called Mellit. There they used to bring goods from Libya and they used to take goods from Mellit to Libya. Because there is a well known market. We get things from that site. And there are people who have relation with other people, they direct us. And we went with that car. But you cannot bring you to Libya inside. They leave you at the border in the jungle and you cross by another side. Because security turn you back when they see you there. We had to walk about 10 hours. And then later they call and ask you, Where are you? And they tell you don't leave that way and go that way and so on until we reach. After that we pay the money. After that they took us to the transport to Tripoli. So we travelled to Tripoli and spent 11 month in Tripoli. I was working with someone in Tripoli and made saved money for travelling to another country, from Libya to Europe. My friend he was working with Arab people, Tunisian and Algerian people. Because they are working there they know everything. When you ask them they say, Ah, that one is easy, it just depends on your money. If you have money, it is very easy. We can take you to that place and you can travel, no problem. We know the connection. So we went there and they introduced us to those connections. About maybe 28 persons we were. Every boat can carry about let's say 18 person. In our boat we were 28 person. Too much. You cannot take a lot of food. Just small food. Bread and water. They directed us about some minutes and then we returned back. But Tunisians they are drivers, they even go to Italy and so on." (Adel) But Adel's plan was traversed too: Like Abdulraheem he found himself in Izmir instead of Lampedusa. "Ya, we went to the city and we met some Somalis. Because they are African like us, we told them we need this and that and so on. We were really confused. We didn't have any place. We slept over there one day and they said, No, because here there is no way for you to live here. Because Izmir is very difficult, there is no way for you to work here and nobody will keep you here. You are supposed to go to Istanbul. Because there is a office or you can go to Ankara. There is also an office of the UN. Go and apply over there. They will help you. When we came here we applied for refugee." (Adel) With the help of the description they got from the Somalis in

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Izmir Adel and his companions made their way to the arrival city Istanbul. "Those who live in Izmir showed us. We went by bus 9 hours. From the Otogar in Istanbul we took a taxi to Kumkapi. The Somalians in Izmir told us go to Kumkapi or Aksaray. In Kumkapi we met many Africans and we asked for the Sudanese. They took us to the Sudanese. After that I told my friend to apply with me for refugee. He said, No I don't want to stay here, I want to return back to Izmir. When he returned back to Izmir. There were people working in sending people to Greece. So he returned back from there and was gone. With the Kurdish people. He applied for refugee with me and after two days he returned back to Izmir. Because he had little money, not like me. I directly went with my bag to the UN office here. They said, okay we know one Sudanese and the Sudanese took us to Kumkapi about 5 days and after that they sent us to the shelter." (Adel)

II. The probably most crucial dimension of the mobile commons is the *politics of care*, care as the general dimension of caring for the other as well as immediate relations of care and support: mutual cooperation, friendships, favours that you never return, affective support, trust, care for other people's relatives and children, transnational relations of care, the gift economy between mobile people etc. (see an impressive account on this in Bishop, 2011, Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012). "I knew Rafael from the camp. He was living in Taksim and he called me to stay with him and I went there and stayed with him like for 20 days. After that he explained to me that he wants to organise a group and so on. And from that time we started this UYRT group and we are still doing continuing." (Rashid) The knowledge and practices, the relations, connections and affective support all that are a cultural and material good that does not belong to nobody and cannot be ultimately controlled by nobody: it is produced through the commons of mobility. People on the move create a world of knowledge, of information, of tricks for survival, of mutual care, of social relations, of services exchange, of solidarity and sociability that can be shared, used and where people contribute to sustain and expand it. This is the world that facilitates Sapik's movements as described in the interview excerpt at the beginning of this paper. However, it is not just that Sapik uses all these invisible resources to remain mobile but that by actually using them and by remaining mobile he contributes to expand and circulate this knowledge for coming migrants. This contribution is neither related to the good intentions of those who participate nor to a presumably 'natural' solidarity 'reflex' between migrants. Migration as we described it in this paper is by definition a process which relies on a multitude of other persons and things. This extreme dependability can only be managed because it relies on reciprocity. Reciprocity means the multiplication of access to mobility for others. Multiplying access is the gift economy of migration. This is the world of the mobile commons.

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III. The *infrastructure of connectivity* which is crucial to distributing these knowledges and for facilitating the circular logistics of support to stay mobile: collecting, updating and evaluating information by using a wide range of platforms and media – from the embodied knowledge travelling from mouth to mouth to social networks sites, geolocation technologies and alternative databases and communication streams. As we talked for example to UYRT members about how they use digital media in the course of getting organised as a group they told us that they mainly use their mobile phones. "You know there is not checking email. If they checking email we would try to make eh, email groups. But there is some of them don't, they have email, but they don't using. In that time we have to call them. Yeah, if you don't call them they don't know. Why, because he is not checking his mail and he is not sitting in internet. How can we find him? We have to call him." (Abdulraheem) They are transnational spaces, heterotopias, which are constantly being created anew under conditions of fragility and instability: and to an extent they carry within themselves the potential to actualise - a potential that corresponds to the power of a heterotopia to incorporate several mutually incompatible spaces and places in a single real place. This is also *the power of transmediality* - the interlocking of different media such as Facebook, mobile phones, satellite TV, Skype etc., in the production of a space for the politics of testimony in transit. Therefore connectivity, or the fiction of connectivity, not only has the potential, even under asymmetric conditions, to secure mobility, but it is also a form of "affective politics" (Thrift 2006). This transmedial polysemy is expressed in the following interview fragments:

"For example they are the same area. But they are living in other different places. For example like Kevin: we don't know where he lives. But he is living in Taksim around here. After what we do? Daniel where he is living we don't know. If he is one of our member we supposed to send him message and then he can check email. You can send to the address. The email they can check from there and then they meet us. Like that. But who have the phones you can call them they just come and going to meeting." (Adel) It is different when it comes to keeping in touch with friends or family members outside the country. "Facebook. Yes, cause I have a lot of friends there. In different countries, I can chat with them. And if I want to talk I can use Skype. I use mostly facebook and skype. And yahoo I check if I have message. Yahoo for email. because on facebook everybody can see what you write. (...) "For example if my friend was in Libya and he does not have my contact, he doesn't have my email adress, there is another friend and he has my phone number. So when he sees him he can give him my number. And then they can call me "Is it you? - Yeah! - Really? - Yeah! - What are you doing there? (laughing). This is how we get together." (...) "I ask them about the situation. They are better, much better. But in Germany it is not so good. Not anymore. But those who are in Sweden, they are

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happy. In England they are happy. Those who are in France say, France is not good. And Holland even is good for them. You know, in Sweden they work, they study and at the same time they are refugees. In England, when you want to work you can do that. Sometimes you can study. In France, if you don't know the language you cannot work. So first you study French language and then you work. Whatever you speak, English or German, no you have to speak French to get a job. It is not easy for them, they are suffering. But in Holland it's okay. Every month they get about 800 Euro for the refugees. And some of them, we were refugees together here." (Adel)

These migrant space-constituting practices of Internet use involve lasting consequences for processes of border negotiation as well as for the way biographies of undocumented and transnationally mobile subjects are processed. Chat rooms and social media, such as Facebook, but also the contact addresses that, in the course of mobility, are exchanged and accumulated at points of deceleration, such as the camps (Panagiotidis/Tsianos 2007), provide the migrants with the latest information on routes, opportunities, and tactics for getting through. But they also provide information about which destinations might prove particularly promising for finding work and living clandestinely, or for attaining the status of asylum-seeker. Thus, they constitute a *reservoir of knowledge* that, analogous to the restrictive practices of the control regime, requires constant updating so as to always remain one step ahead: acting as a synchronous differential that recalculates the gaps in the current control regime.

IV. The multiplicity of *informal economies*. The mobile commons is not outside of existing relations of production, reproduction and even exploitation. It covers all these economic activities and services that cannot not be easily accessed through the public sector or privately: how to find (and let alone pay) a doctor or a lawyer; how to find short term work or more permanent working arrangements, send and receive money, communicate with friends, family and fellow travellers, make it through the economies of smuggling, get the necessary papers for your move, pay for your rent and find the right person 'to talk to'. To get a working permit and a legal job as a refugee in Turkey is most unlikely. Most people choose to leave the satellite city they are assigned to and live and work in Istanbul without permission. "It doesn't matter, where ever I get a job I work. First I was in Adana but now they transferred me to Yalova, that is my satellite city right now and I'm there. But if I get a job I don't care I work everywhere. (Rashid, Interview 10.9.2010, Istanbul)

Kumkapi and the neighbouring areas Aksaray, Beyazit and Laleli are the central spaces for life and work of migrants and refugees as well as Roma and Kurds in Istanbul. Being wholesale districts they offer job opportunities from odd jobs through jobs in little sewing factories located in the basements to work as an

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interpreter for traders mainly from Afrika and East-European countries. "Like, if I meet someone in the shop, he want to buy something and I want to buy something, I try to speak to him. And like that I make friendship more. And when I work in call shop, there is some of them they coming to, ya, to internet and they calling, they trying to talk to me. Like that."(Abdulraheem, Interview 7.1.2011, Istanbul)



The busy Gazi Mustafa Kemal Pasa Road in Aksaray, Istanbul

One night Abdulraheem took us for a walk. He said, he wants to show and explain Kumkapi to us. So we walked in the neighbourhood for a while and every few minutes he met someone he knows, migrants as well as locals. While walking he told us that for him Kumkapi is a safe place and that it means freedom for him. "Turkish are better than the Kurdish people, but Kurdish want black people here, because that means good business for them. This neighbourhood is Kurdish, you don't have many Turkish people here. But for about 20 years black people are living here and they made this also a black area. In the night when I stay at home and watch TV and the time still don't pass I come here and walk around. This is a safe place and I enjoy it. I feel better when it is safe, not like Tarlabasi. Yes they fight, but not with us, just between them. They love us." We turned into a street with many internet cafés and call shops. "This is called the 'Black Street'". Here you see only black people, that's why everyone calls it 'Black Street'." He pointed on one of the call shops: "This internet café, Deniz Internet Café is open 24 hours. Migrants who don't have a place to stay come here for the night and sleep here. They sleep in the chairs." We went inside to see if one of Abdulmajeed's friends is inside, but there wasn't. We continued walking until we reached the main road Gazi Mustafa Kemal Pasa Cadessi. That street leads to the Tramvay Stasyonu Aksaray and then further to a bridge under which the Dolmus towards Taksim

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leave. During daytime it is a very noisy street with many cars and people. At the time we were walking there it was quite calm and street vendors/hawkers selling latest fashion sneakers lined our side of the street. Abdulmajeed told me that they start selling very late around midnight, because they don't have a licence. "The price is at least half less than in the closes markets that you can visit during the day in Istanbul." He told us that he and his friends always buy shoes from here. He knew almost all of the vendors and they greeted him warmly and had some small talk. "In Kumkapi nothing is going legally. Ya, because, even police they know that it is not legal but because they take money they don't say nothing." (Abdulraheem) Before we went for a walk through Kumkapi Abdulraheem had taken us to the club. Outside in illuminated letters it read „heaven bar". Steep stairs led to a basement door were the club is. When we entered, the first thing we noticed was that migrants were sitting there on different tables seemingly separated along their different origin. We asked Abdulmajeed if he knows some of them and where they are from. He explained that it is always that mixed and that people who come here are mostly from Nigeria, Ethiopia, Eastern Europe, Maghreb, Turkey, mainly Kurdish. Very loud Nigerian music was coming out of the speakers and just a few people were talking. Beside two or three men, mostly they were sitting at the tables surrounding the dance floor and watching each other and those dancing. The bar keepers and me were the only women in the club until late a group of young Ethiopian women entered and joined the table with the Nigerian men. The bar keepers are very sovereign the way the handle that room full of men. Later we learned that one of the barkeeper owns the club together with her Nigerian husband. The other woman lives in Istanbul since three month. In the interview we carried out with Abdulmajeed earlier he told us that Turkish people are often denied entering clubs, bars and restaurants run by migrants. "No, sometimes they do that and sometimes, because you know, if Turkish people they come inside like just two person, they making trouble there. They fighting, they drink without paying and they do things that is not good. And they using stupid words and they want to dance and they need other table, they want to change table, they want to change table where some people are sitting, they say, Get up we want to stay here. This is our country, we are Turkish. This is typical, because that they don't allow them enter inside." (Abdulraheem, Interview 7.1.201,Istnabul)

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Heaven Club in Kumkapi, Istanbul

We asked him to tell us more about how the people deal with such situations. He explained that if there are more than 10 Turkish/Kurdish people in the club the owner calls the landlord, who is also a local. His presence in the bar prevents the locals from picking up fights. That night, as the place was getting more and more crowded, a elderly man and a younger one came. The elder one stayed behind the bar and helped a bit, but was mainly observing what was going on. The younger one was sitting at the bar and in between he went to the nearby shop to get some things for the bar. He was mostly observing too, joking and chatting with the bar keepers. Abdurraheem continued telling us that if the strategy with the land lord didn't work, the owner calls the police to sit in the bar uniformed and with full equipment. They are paid by the club to secure the place and to not ask for ID or any other questions concerning the legal status of the guest in there. „This is our place. Here we are save, we are free. When the police is here people start to enjoy even more, because it's save. They know they don't say anything to them.“ (Abdurraheem, Interview 7.1.2011, Istanbul)

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V. Diverse forms transnational *communities of justice*: alliances and coalitions between different groups, local governments, political organisation, NGOs etc.; access to power; the selective organisation of campaigns in collaboration with local groups and other social movements and civil society organisations; the organisation of camps or support actions etc. In cooperation with the UYRT we organized a workshop in Istanbul on the weekends from 16. - 18.07. 2011. The content of the workshop was to discuss the opportunities the internet offers for UYRT as a self organisation with the aim to create a blog for the "Union of Young Refugees in Turkey" on the antira.info⁵⁷ server. The server has been created with the aim to provide access to server space and publishing technology for antiracist initiatives in Europe. For the UYRT members who attended the workshop the question of data protection was a major issue, because their intension to scandalize the conditions of migrants and refugees in Turkey is accompanied by the fear of state repression, when going public. This uncertainty influences their decision to use or not to use ICTs, like blogging and an official homepage an also how to use it. Questions where raised like, what information can be put on the blog without putting oneself in danger? Can the information published on the blog be traced back to the person who posted it? What is an IP-address and how does it work? The outcome of the workshop is an UYRT blog⁵⁸ connected to the social network jogspace that is hosted on the antira.info server. Jogspace is a network

⁵⁷ <http://antira.info/about-antira-info/>

⁵⁸ <http://uyrt.jogspace.net/en>

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created for and by minors and young people who call themselves Youth without borders (Jugendliche ohne Grenzen – JoG). As Sanja a JoG activist stated, "Youth without borders is a movement that has been fighting for the rights of refugees in Germany since 2005. The majority of its activists are young people living in Germany with a "Duldung" - exceptional permit to remain. Inspired by the blogging movement in Iran we had a vision of a blogging platform that would display the perspectives, thoughts and opinions of young refugees living in Germany under precarious legal status. Besides the obvious aim of providing an opportunity for them to network and voice their thoughts, there are many further possibilities that could ensue from such a project." (Sanja, Interview 2012, Germany, Hamburg) Sanja is a digital education activist and was part of the transnational group of Greek German and Turkish Border-activists that carried out the No Border Camp Lesvos and the research trip in 2010 in the Border Greek-Turkish Region mentioned above. Anais member of GDA reconstruct the Connection between the No Border transnational Networking in the Lesvos Camp and the emergence of a new activist spaces in Istanbul "It was after the No Border Camp in Lesvos. It was/ just because, we had a platform of oppositional of resistance against IMF meeting in Istanbul just after it was, yes, the summer of Lesvos Camp and just after the meeting was in October 7,8,9, I think, of October. So we had 2, 3 month of resistance platform and etc. and had working groups and during this direnistanbul there were not really let's say on migration working group, but then we had our first demonstration in front of Kumkapi detention centre for example and after the end of direnistanbul we started to have meetings and. okay it lasted 4, 5 month to first of all to understand the issue, what we want to do, who we are and/ not 5 month but 3, 4 month/ and then we came with this campaign against detention and there we started. (...) Okay, the connection came because, okay actually when we created GDA there was no organised groups of migrants here. Of course we don't want to be representatives, we are solidarity movement we are not a migrant movement. We have 7 goals. First of all is to create a visibility of the issue here in Turkey, because no one knows about migration issue and no one cares really apart from Ministry of Interior, UNHCR and a few NGOs. So this is our first aims. The second one is to bring the migration issue to the left agenda. The other aim is of course to be in solidarity with migrants in a way but we have a lot of talk about, should we have a kind of a centre, cultural centre where we could provide something. Some of us say no because the need here is so huge we would turn into an NGO without having the capacity, we don't have the budget. And then the Young Refugees Union was created, I think they spoke to you the way they created it. So I was in contact with them because they are at the same time my clients and I work with them. So we decided let's support these kids and we had a meeting with them to see what we can do. First thing was a solidarity party because they were really needed money. They were in the situation that they couldn't pay their anymore. So we had a solidarity party with them and then we had this conference that basically came from them.

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And basically the support we were giving it was giving them the idea of printing t-shirts. And also providing them with a social network, that they don't have. So in Leyla Terrass we bought all the first material. But then with GDA we have a lot of debates, what is the Young Refugees Union? Is it really self-organisation? Because there are like 3 kids really doing some stuff and the others more or less following and it is not always clear what is going on. Even it is very good what they do. And how can we support them? They are much more in the course of we have to accuse UNHCR and we have to deal with our resettlement case and so of course we support them and we try to do what we can. And then also it was all going through me. I was really pissed off with this. So GDA was forgetting and then, so what about UYRT, what are we going to do? And I see the kids also in my office and then I started to get crazy over this and during the meeting, what the fuck, I'm not going to be the contact person any more, you deal with them together and you I don't want to have to deal with all of it. Because I feel just fucking responsible of everything and my mind becomes crazy after. And they were calling me coordinator, but not really coordinator, I was writing their project and there was the resettlement going on, so we skipped the project a little bit. So yeah, I was too much in too many things and it was complicated. So we had a meeting 1 month or 3 weeks ago with them. I was still there but to make the translation" (Anais, Interview on 27/05/2011, Istanbul)

2.4.2. Gender and the Limits of the Arrival City

We met with Rafael shop in Aksaray in the evening for dinner to talk about the work shop. Afterwards he asked us if I would like to join him visit a friend nearby. We went there together. His friend Lisa is from Congo too and lives in Istanbul since 2 years. She is registered in a satellite city that is almost 3 days drive from Istanbul. She explained that she had moved to Istanbul because there was no possibility for her to work in the satellite city. In Istanbul she lives in a one room apartment in Beyazit, close to Aksaray, together with another Congolese woman. They both don't speak English, but French, Turkish and Lingala. Lisa recently started taking English lessons that is offered to migrant women by Caritas. She was saying, that she likes it very much, but it is only once a week and she has not the possibility to practice in her everyday life. At work she speaks Turkish and at home Lingala, so she feels that it is difficult for her to improve. (Rafael brought up the case of Festus Okey that was one of the topics on the last GDA meeting a couple of day before. Festus Okey a refugee from Nigeria had died at a police station located at the centre of Istanbul after being shot by a policemen. Lisa and her friend started telling about their experiences with the police in Istanbul. Once they were together in the neighbourhood and someone stole her friends bag. They called the police and after they arrived they took the two women to a police station, yelling at them. They did not know why they were taking them to the police station. It

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was late in the night and there was no one who at the police station, who could speak French. They had to wait for hours until an officer, who spoke French came to translate. She said they were very rude until he arrived. They reported what had happened to them and were told, that they will be informed about the case.) "It is important because the girls are in the union. The girls even they living the same our situation. About men maybe it will be normal but to the girls is be too much different. If someone is come over 18 years and they take out of the camp, where you go and how you can live. This is difficult." (...) I see them in Kumkapi and they ask for, if I can get for them job. I okay and I try to get for one of them job in Beyazit and still now she is working. Because of her I know any friend. Because every weekend she is bring her friend, girls-friend, we stay and we see if we are going to club or we are staying in some of our house to enjoy our time." (Abdulraheem, Interview on 07/01/2011 Istanbul)

3. Conclusions on migration-gender-digitality and Germinal social Movements in three arrival cities

The report examined three distinct but somehow comparable, and historically connected 'arrival cities' in Eastern Mediterranean. A number of factors locate them historically and geographically at the southern borders of the European Union, forming a kind of 'frontier' between the so-called 'Orient' and the 'Occident' but makes them 'arrival cities' in 'border societies'. Their common Ottoman past, their historical and ongoing political, socio-economic and cultural connection Europe, as well as the EU in particular, makes the 'triangle' Athens-Istanbul-Nicosia a worthwhile subject for investigation: this is understood as a triangle consisting with distinct urban laboratories and migratory processes, which are at the same time remarkably inter-connected, whilst the comparison/contrast of the particularities in the comparative study interesting. Moreover, as per the research design we have chosen to focus on two different aspects of migrant-related movement networks: both 'local' and 'transnational', even though this distinction is becoming increasingly untenable as 'local' initiatives are certainly digitally connected to 'global' and the local are *themselves increasingly* transnational, intercultural and trans-border. Having recognized this, we cannot ignore the parallel and contradictory processes of 'ethnisation', racialisation and ethno-racial polarisations as well as gender and class processes, which generate a multiple matrix of contestations and social struggles. These are found in the three cities under investigation, but that is beyond the scope of this report; we only briefly mention this to illustrate the complexity of the broader context and link this work with other crucial debates.⁵⁹

The smallest of the three post-colonial setting of the divided Cypriot Capital, Nicosia, can be perceived as a violent 'connecting' point, which paradoxically has its core a default-line, militarized buffer zone still standing as a ceasefire line since 1974: this is the 'border'/no border (i.e. the de facto operated dividing line) as manifested via the consisting of a securitised area with both barbed wire and some check-points allow for crossing over. However, the liminality is hardly confined to war-related ceasefire line; there are multiple borders and contestations within the urban setting of inner Nicosia, strongly related to the multicultural/multiethnic urbanity and the struggles related to the 'right to the city'. From the north of the city, which under the control of the unrecognized Ankara backed TRNC, Nicosia has resemblances of parts of Istanbul; in fact it

⁵⁹ See WP10 of MIG@NET, <http://www.mignetproject.eu/>

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very much directly connected not only via direct flights⁶⁰ to Istanbul, perhaps the most celebrated city, the cliché which wants located between 'East and West'. In fact Istanbul is *the* European *divided* arrival city par excellence, with the artificial border dividing Europe and Asia, and thus 'the west and rest' without any controls, as the city contains both the European and an Asian part (see Papadakis 2008). Yet, there are commonalities with both Athens and Nicosia, in the shaping of its internal borders, which are best mapped by locating the urban mental and social boundaries as manifested by contestations and struggles connected to migration. What scholars refer as the social erasure of 'a clear delineation' of 'the Istanbulite-immigrant duality' is noteworthy: we can locate new forms of differentiation reflecting local specificities of urban globality that retains segregations, albeit in new forms and modes; hence we can speak of transformations of the material basis of "the division of zoned districts and the shantytowns districts" and re-shaping of "the cultural segregation between moderns and the others or Istanbulites and Anatolians" (Kayder 1999: 157). This is where the study of Athens nicely compares with Istanbul.

The work package has explored an interesting reloading of the Lefebvrian 'right to the city'. We are essentially dealing with the three distinct instances of the metaphor in each city under study. This can be analytically distinguished as the *right to enter*, the *right to inhabit* and to *adapt ones built, cultural and social environment according to ones habitus*, the *right to transform the environment to belong*, the *right to move on to another city and country*. Central to the realization of these aspects are the *contested spaces* of urbanity. The main concept informing the research was that of contested spaces taken as the social stage where urban social antagonisms are played out. Contested space embodies the conflicts among several individual and collective actors (formal, informal, migrant, non migrant, entrepreneurial or voluntary and so on) around differing productions of space. In this sense, contested spaces are not related to a merely geographical point of view, but to a social, sociological if you want, view on antagonistic social processes. The research has attempted to map contested space amongst gentrification and anti-gentrification processes, focusing especially on how this contestation is subverted by the asymmetrical disruption effected by the forces of 'dirtiness'. In terms of the *right to enter* and the right to move on to another city, the social movements are not interested in changing the environment; in fact they are interested in remaining as *undistinguishable* and *unnoticed as possible* and so as not to attract attention by authorities: how about thinking of *the right to remain informal but safe?*

⁶⁰ This is possible via the unrecognized/illegal airport of Erczan, a few kilometers towards the east from Nicosia.

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This brings to the broader question of the *informal social movements*. The analysis attempted to focus on the unrepresented, the informal, the unmediated and on spatial practices that are entangled into the everyday fabric of the city. It attempted to show how the gentrification process is contested and disrupted primarily by actors who are considered to be problematic and 'dirtying' by gentrification planning, such as migrants who inhabit, or ephemerally use, these contested spaces, homeless, squatters, street vendors, collectors of recyclable material for scrap industry, sex workers, street vendors. In Athens the organisation promoting the rights of female migrant domestic workers' transnational campaigns and the Nicosia-based informal groups such the OBZ are social movements such as the Filipino are and intend to be visible to make their specific and general claims to the right the city known; numerous equivalent migrant movements of the multitude exist in the global mosaic of Istanbul. However, in the instance of the Istanbul group we studied in this work package and the Nicosia-based informal groups supporting subaltern migrants are solely interested in retaining the informality so as to allow the *daily survival* of the migrants involved: they are cannot afford to make themselves visible as they will risk being arrested by the Police and immigration authorities, as many are irregular and clandestine.

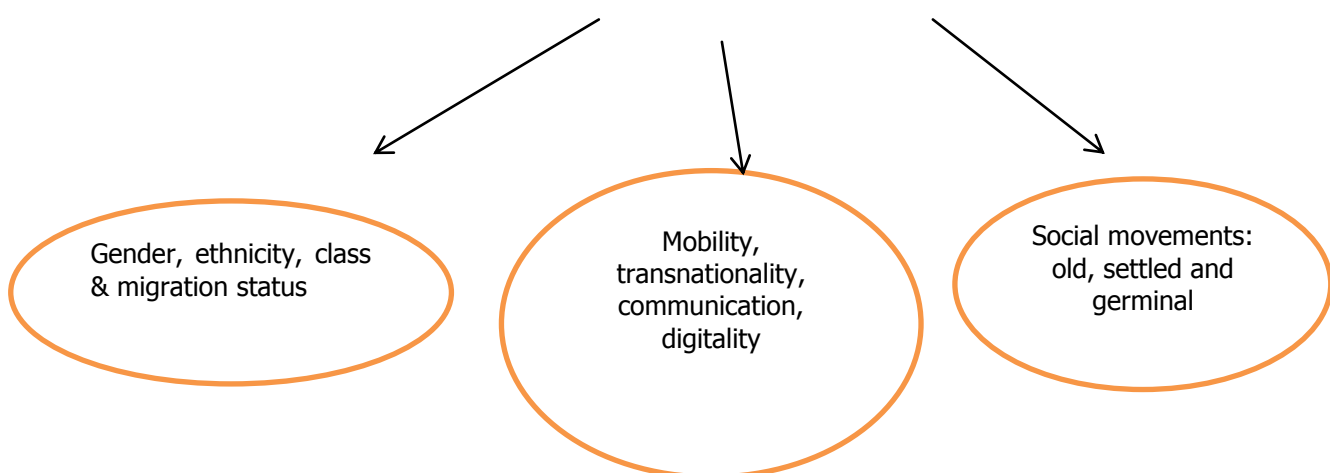
A crucial aspect of the project was the *transnational dimension of locality*. Practices of informal social movements in Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio and OBZ connect the area with networks of transnational mobilities. Kerameikos-Metaxourgeios becomes, along these lines, a transnational locale, self-configured by the migrants themselves, organised to gather and exchange information amongst them and to communicate with friends and contacts in other European countries who will enable their planned border crossings. In Nicosia this was also a particularly important: for one the buffer zone is a border zone; second, inner Nicosia is the most intensely transnational space in the country. Connected to the above are issues relate to the re-constituted praxis or acts of citizenship. With migration, particularly undocumented, informal and irregular migration, the very notion of 'citizenship' can no longer be reduced to a mere legal category. In fact the already bloated Marhalian 'social citizenship' is in flux (Balibar 2004; Isin 2008; Tsianos and Papadopoulos 2012). We are therefore opening the concept of citizenship to constantly reshaped migrant social movements: they are in this sense 'germinal' but their future remains uncertain, conditional and relational. Their organisational forms and constitution are ever-changing; they may well be connected to 'old' organisations and movements such as labour movements and trade unions, anti-racist and migrant support NGOs, gender-based and other activist groups. Such connection can be very beneficial to cities. On the other hand migrant and transnational movements are often unconnected and autonomous of these; they may even view with suspicion or antagonistically or may consider them as irrelevant from their actions, depending on the specificities, the goals, priorities and groups and individuals involved.

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In the case of groups organised around transit migration, the social struggles involved are different from the migrants who want to claim their right to settle. The type of 'turbulence' cause is quite different from that of settled migrants, even if their status is informal.

Digitality and activism and the mobile commons: From our empirical finding we can safely claim that digital forms of representation in the context of migration and transnational activism differ in terms of effect and visibility in the field. The activity of the networks, as it takes place face to face, is not reflected in the intensity of its digital representation. In general, the networking between the different groups/actors are maintained and deepened. In this sense we can begin to imagine of a right to city reloaded: sans papiers' citizenship *acts* from below are certainly challenging both geopolitical readings of the world, politics of representation of local, national, regional and global governance and they are certainly challenging borders. There is here a *lacuna* of social movements studies as the challenge of migration as a social movement in general calls for a rethinking of urban questions as urban molecular 'revolts' and 'counter-revolts' and further study. At least in our study we can locate a disjuncture: what is the relationship between movements, struggles and times: Hamlet's aporia that 'time is out of joint' finds another twist in the context of this study.

Migration and gendering must be properly integrated in understanding the claims to the right to the city. Transit migration and mobile commons are reloading politics of the local and the global as the everydayness of digital (im)materialities between exception and normality: Are digital materialities of everydayness transforming the terms of social struggles and movements? This study shows that this is the case.



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