Travelling through Guidebooks: Reading and Remembering Imagined Topographies of Nicosia

Aslihan Senel

This article presents a journey through the divided city of Nicosia, on the island of Cyprus, by confronting its dominant representations in guidebooks dating back to 1960s with my personal urban experience in the northern part of the city and placing these readings in the context of the delicate political history of the city. This approach provides an account of the extant, the constructed as well as the subjectively remembered and imagined spaces of the city.

The act of reading books includes spatial and temporal activities: following the lines, stopping at certain words, jumping through paragraphs, searching for certain images and turning the pages back and forth. These activities, in the case of guidebooks, may evoke spatial memories of textures, lights, sounds, streets, buildings and people.

Travelling through the different representations of sites in the guidebooks and mapping this activity of reading enabled me to lay out the ways in which traditional guidebooks cause a kind of topographical amnesia by privileging dominant knowledge in relation to places and decontextualizing other knowledge. I have used this multiple reading as a critical topographical practice that can question and dismantle the fixed representations in the guidebooks.[1] Such a critical topographical practice is indeed a practice of writing place, referring to the word's etymological meanings: *topos* for 'place' and *graphe* for 'which writes' or 'is written'. This topographical practice critically and subjectively relates knowledge to place and time. It offers the possibility for me – as a traveller and researcher – to temporarily appropriate real spaces and sustain other future spatial possibilities. With the following pieces of writing about sites in Nicosia, I propose possible but partial narratives of places, which are alternatives to the officially acclaimed interpretations present in the guidebooks. My alternative narratives of places present imaginings of the ground of the controlled buffer zone as unfixable, dead ends, as spaces resisting dichotomies of centre-margin, public-private and local-occupier and envisioning the horizon as a continuous extension of boundaries.

Topographical Amnesia

Topographical amnesia is defined in psychology as an 'impairment of memory for places and spatial layouts'.[2] Cultural theorist and philosopher Paul Virilio uses this term to refer to the failure to place received information in a certain spatial and temporal order.[3] Virilio specifically points to the contemporary image bombardments of electronic media, which cause

the viewer to miss the opportunity of turning information into one's own topographical knowledge; for instance when we receive a large amount of information about places from the internet or television without personally being able to relate them spatiotemporally. I use the term to refer to a similar disjunction caused by guidebooks that detach certain information from its complex context and align it in a fixed order. The problem is not only that this order is a decontextualized one, but that the reader is conditioned to use these often highly ideological representations without question.

Through such guidebooks, as sociologist John Urry points out, people develop a 'tourist gaze', which conditions them to search for certain signs in a visited place with an anticipation of pleasure.[4] However, the relationship between guidebooks and their readers is not as straightforward as the fixed information in guidebooks and the conditioned gaze they produce in their readers might imply. For example, sociologist Dean MacCannell and literary critic Juliet MacCannell argue that the postmodern tourist gaze is a 'second gaze', which is 'aware that something is concealed from it' and which seeks new meanings between the tourist attractions and how they are presented.[5] In addition, art and architectural critic Jane Rendell describes how the pleasure of knowing the city is not only a social but also a spatial mode of knowing derived from the contrasting experiences of reading about the experiences of the city and actually moving through the city.[6] Along this line of thought, I aim to show how representations of Nicosia in guidebooks have contributed to the creation of a kind of topographical amnesia and how a critical topographical practice may suggest a dismantling of ideological strategies of guidebooks. By these means, I hope to open the way to writing of alternative topographies.

I chose a number of guidebooks of Nicosia produced by authors of different identities and aimed at different reader profiles. *A Pocket Guide to Cyprus* (1960) and Güzel Kıbrıs ('Beautiful Cyprus', 1961),[7] are two versions of the oldest guidebook I could find on Nicosia, by a Turkish Cypriot editor and

author, Kemal Rüstem.[8] A Pocket Guide to Cyprus seems to claim a role for Turkish Cypriots in international culture by including images of tourist activities and historically multicultural sites with Turkish interventions. 'Beautiful Cyprus' claims a distinct Turkish Cypriot identity, by including in the guide photographs of Turkish national ceremonies, the Turkish consulate and a Cypriot Turkish municipal building. Both guides share an additional emphasis on Turkishness in the captions of photographs. The guidebook *Aphrodite's Realm* (1969),[9] first published in 1962 with the support of various Cypriot government institutions, highlights the European and Greek origins of the civilization of Cyprus and contains contributions by Greek Cypriot historians. Another popular guidebook is *Everybody's Guide to Romantic Cyprus* (1972).[10] The guide was written by an Armenian refugee from Turkey who was an enthusiastic traveller in Cyprus during the early twentieth century.[11] This guide's aim was to claim a place in the growing international tourism industry. The last guidebook in focus is *Kıbrıs Rehberi* ('Cyprus Guide', 1983), written by a Turkish art historian and published by the Touring and Automobile Club of Turkey.[12] This is the earliest detailed guide I could find on Nicosia published after the divide. It is written for Turkish readers, to claim kinship between Cyprus and Turkey through the Ottoman Turkish identity. The most important reasons for my choice of these guidebooks are their popularity and their wide distribution. As such, they may be regarded as respectable resources of dominant representations of the city.

The troubling history of Cyprus and the conflicts connected with it are often reflected subtly in the content and formatting of the guides. The Republic of Cyprus was proclaimed in 1960 with the island's independence from British rule. The late 1950s and the 1960s were characterized by a continuing opposition by armed organizations of nationalist Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. EOKA (the National Organization of Cypriot Fighters), aimed for *enosis*, union with Greece. TMT (Turkish Resistance Organization) demanded *taksim*, the partition of the island.[13] A sequence of violent events related to this opposition included eruption of inter-ethnic violence in

1963, a coup by the Greek nationalists against the President of the Republic of Cyprus, who opposed *enosis* after the military junta had risen to power in Greece in 1967, and Turkey's launch of a military offensive in 1974. The events resulted in the division of the island in 1974, and a buffer zone, controlled by the United Nations, was established between the Greek south and the Turkish north. After the division, an ethnic population exchange was carried out between the two sides. In 1983, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was proclaimed. These events have left the city with social and spatial conflicts. The buffer zone is only the most visible of the many contrasts. I have used the tourist guidebooks as resources to understand the ways in which these conflicts are manifested in space and fixed through representations.

Unfixable Ground versus Absence

While travelling through northern Nicosia, at a specific point at the edge of the historic city wall, the dense urban texture ends and a continuous wire prevents one from passing to the south. Beyond the wire lies a green field where footballers practise under the supervision of a UN watchtower. (Fig. 1) The guide *Romantic Cyprus* shows the location on a map with the words 'Moat,' 'Jirit,' and 'Parade Ground,'[14] floating in the space outside the old city walls (Fig. 2). In other guides, the field is absent. In other guides, the field is absent. (Fig. 3) More recent guides either leave the spot empty or vaguely mark the area with a different colour without any further mention.[15] Only the guide 'Beautiful Cyprus' includes photographs of official ceremonies held on this spot. One has to understand the ideological intentions behind the omission and inclusion in 'parallel' with the tendency of minimizing Turkish representations or emphasizing it.

One of the photographs in 'Beautiful Cyprus' shows a ceremony in this spot: 'the Turkish national day of May the 19th.' (Fig. 4) At the lower edge of the photograph, ordered groups of students are visible. The students on one side and the crowds of viewers on the other define the edges of the field.

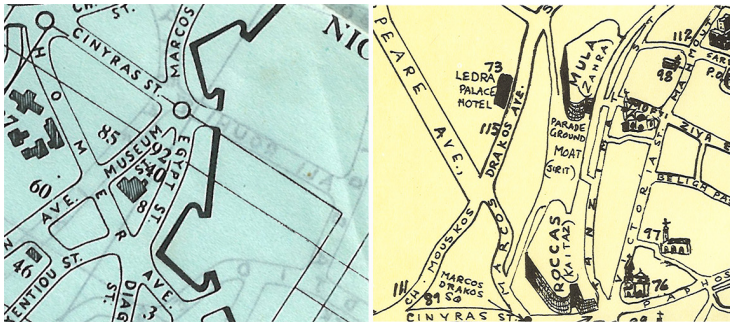Fig. 1. Viewing the buffer zone from northern Nicosia, photograph by Aslihan Senel, 2013.

Fig. 2. T2. Two different representations of the field outside the walls: as an emptiness in *Aphrodite's Realm: An Illustrated Guide and Handbook to Cyprus. 4th Edition* (1969) and with its multiple identities in *Everybody's Guide to Romantic Cyprus. 14th Edition* (1972).
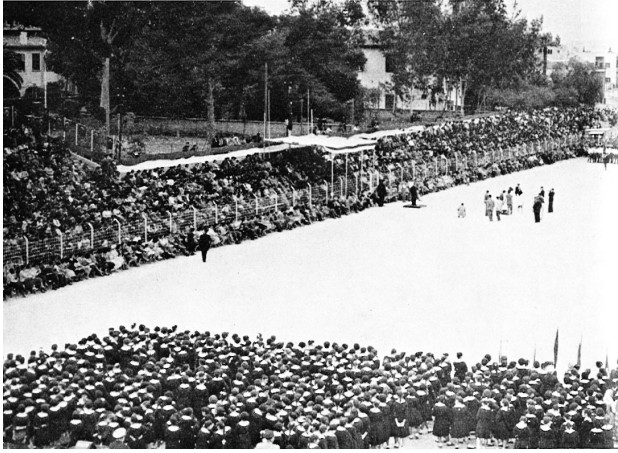
Fig. 3. A photograph that shows the Turkish National Day of 19 May celebrated at the Taksim Field, from: Kemal Rüstem, Güzel Kıbrıs Resimlerle ('Beautiful Cyprus with Pictures'), Nicosia, 1961.

Some rows of viewers are even placed inside the wires at the outer limits. The field is a large void in the photograph.

The field has been a space of contestation. The different uses, as a *jirit* field, as a parade ground for British royal celebrations and later for Turkish official ceremonies, consecutively claimed a link to a traditionalist Turkish identity, loyalty to the British crown and identification with the nationalist ideals of the Republic of Turkey.[16] Since the late 1990s, the field has acted as a symbolic ground for *Cyprus*. With the permission of the UN, football teams from both sides hold matches, bi-communal workers' day meetings are held, as well as concerts, cultural activities and international rallies.[17] As such, the ground represents the changing Cypriot identity, from colonized to polarized to united. It is a ground of negotiation.
Once part of a continuous moat circumscribing the historic city walls, the unbuilt area on the margins of the dense urban centre claimed from the moat surrounding the old city's defences provided open fields for temporary events. After the partition of the south and north in 1974, the UN defined new boundaries; the playing fields merged with the rest of the buffer zone. As a result, vegetation took over. Just like the cultural and social events, the transformation of the physical surface of the land is part of spatial negotiation. The construction activities, the continuous work of clearing, building, planting the surface of the field by governmental authorities may be regarded as various claims to ownership and control.

The political, social and spatial re-making of the ground, as architectural theorist Robin Dripps reminds us, is related to the ephemeral nature of the concept of ground, which may be hardly objectified and defined by fixed boundaries.[18] Dripps points out that unlike the concept of 'site', which simplifies the complexity of cultural and physical dynamics down to physical features and dimensions of a place, 'ground' takes on new meanings through multiple relationships. It is continuously redefined through processes, connections and stories.

Although the ground is not often represented in popular guidebooks, it is not an absence but rather a multiplicity that is hard to represent. It is temporally and dynamically made, unmade and remade. It is not agreement and compromise but a continuous negotiation. The ground becomes a common ground, belonging to multiple users and containing multiple meanings.

Dead End as a Third Space

Nicosia's guidebooks condition us to see the city in dichotomies, such as those of centre-margin, public-private, original-intervention, modern-traditional and nature-culture. In this way, the dichotomy usually strengthens one side that is more powerful or more desirable for the dominant ideology: one side is subtly privileged over the other. For example, in both 'Beautiful Cyprus' and *Pocket Guide to Cyprus*, photographs of traditional monuments and modern architecture, cultural environment and natural beaches and mountains are sequenced in order to point to the technical and cultural wherewithal to produce modern architecture underpinned by traditional knowledge and natural inspiration. In *Aphrodite's Realm*, the contrasting photographs of the lively night lights of the urban environment and an aerial view of the rural olive groves on the outskirts of Nicosia are juxtaposed. They suggest a successful urban development extending its life beyond daylight and supported by the rural surroundings.

Each guidebook defines the limits of a traveller's space in the city, drawing the line between public and private, between spaces for the traveller and for the locals. The mappings show this contrast: In 'Beautiful Cyprus' *and Pocket Guide to Cyprus*, the traveller's space predominantly consists of the northern part of the city, where the Ottoman heritage is concentrated. (Figs. 5–8) In *Romantic Cyprus*, the spaces to visit are in the vicinity of certain monuments. (Figs. 11–13) In *Aphrodite's Realm*, the tourist traverses the city from south to north in a circumscribing tour. (Figs. 14–16) Although this tour is the most exploratory one, it advises the tourist to use the main streets of Ledra and Kyrenia (Girne) and the roads on the walls. In *Cyprus*

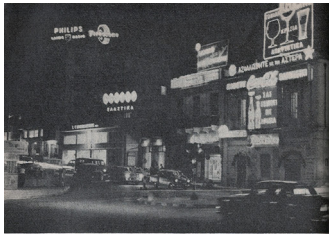*Lefkoşa'da yeni yaptırılan İş Hanından iki görünüş*

Lefkoşa'da T. İş Bankası Kıbrıs Şubesi
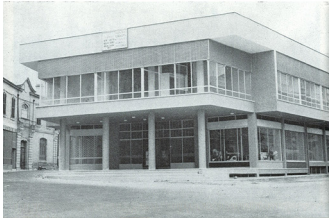
Lefkoşa Türk Belediye Dairesi

Fig. 4. Two pages of Pocket Guide to Cyprus: Nicosia is represented with modern architecture at one side and traditional architecture at the other.

Metaxas Square, the principal square of Nicosia, at night.
Photo: D. Fullach.

Olive groves on the outskirts of Nicosia; the Kyrenia hills in the background.
Aerial Photo by D. Fullach.

NICOSIA DISTRICT

NICOSIA is the capital district of Cyprus and the largest in area, covering a total of 1,053 square miles.

Centrally situated, it has borders with each of the other five districts - with Kyrenia in the north, Famagusta in the east, Larnaca in the south-east, Limassol the south-west, and Paphos in the west. It also has one sea border, in the west, running along the west and north coasts at Morphou Bay.

Rather more than half the district, roughly the north-west, stretches across the Mesaoria plain, the remainder lying in the northern slopes of the Troodos range.

The finest scenery of Nicosia district lies in the hills and its highest point is Mount Kokkinorotsos (5,610 feet) near the border with Limassol district. Beautiful valleys lined with poplar trees and with picturesque villages lead up to these heights, and many fantastic little Byzantine churches with superbly painted interiors may be visited on the way. The higher regions of the hills include several minor holiday resorts, some with medicinal waters, and one major resort, Pedhoulas, 3,600 feet above sea level.

The agricultural production of Nicosia district is predominantly of cereals, which are grown in the plains. Legumes and summer vegetables are grown to a considerable extent in the lower slopes of the hills, and oranges at Morphou and Lefka, which are among the most important centres in the island for this crop. Higher up in the hills a variety of fruit and nuts is grown, the most notable product being the cherries of Pedhoulas. The hill villages are also dependant for a livelihood on a considerable extent on various crafts.

Economically the most important activity in Nicosia district is mining. The Troodos hills are rich in mineral deposits, some of which were exploited in Phoenician and Roman times. Today there are two important centres of this activity in Nicosia district - a copper and sulphur mine at Mavrovouni, near Lefka, and an iron pyrites mine at Mitsero, south-west of Nicosia town.

The principal place of historic interest in Nicosia district is the capital itself, with its magnificent Venetian walls and fine medieval cathedral and churches in the interior. Most notable among other places in the district are the remains of Vouni Palace and Soli Theatre, on the north-west coast beyond Lefka.

NICOSIA TOWN

The capital town of Nicosia is the seat of government and the principal commercial centre of the island. All of the foreign embassies are housed there as well as the consulates, with the exception of a few honorary consulates.

The central part of the town is the old Venetian city, surrounded by a vast circular wall with eleven imposing bastions. This is still the main commercial and shopping area of the town, though considerable developments have taken place in recent years outside the walls.
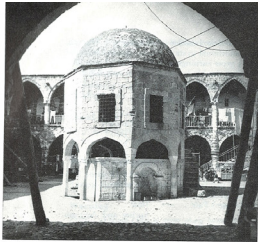
(17)

Fig. 5. Two pages of *Aphrodite's Realm*. Nicosia is represented with a close-up view of the urban environment with lively night lights and a contrasting aerial view of the rural olive groves.
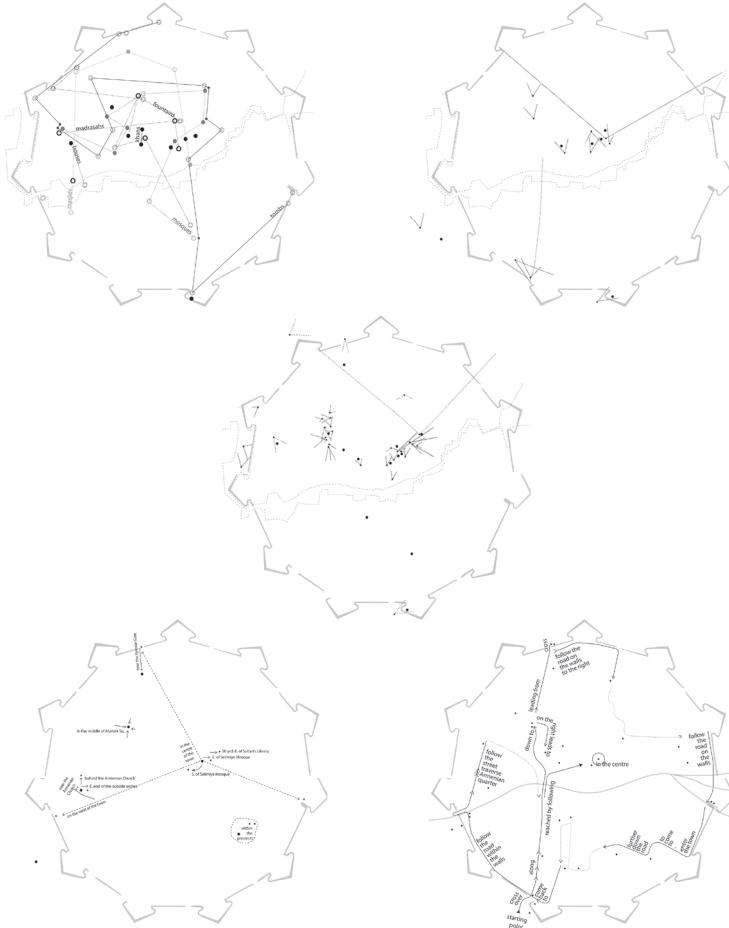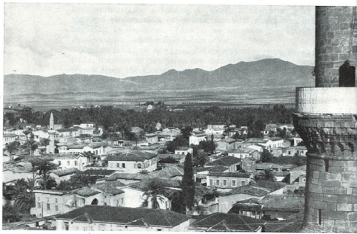
6. The mapping of the Nicosia part of Pocket Guide to Cyprus. Mapping by Aslihan Senel, 2018.

7. The mapping of the Nicosia part of Beautiful Cyprus. Mapping by Aslihan Senel, 2018.

8. The mapping of the Nicosia part of Romantic Cyprus. Monuments such as Selimiye Mosque, Armenian Church, and Archiepiscopal Palace are primarily described and other monuments are located in relation to those. Mapping by Aslihan Senel, 2018.

9. The mapping of the Nicosia part of Aphrodite's Realm. The topography of the city is formed through a route, which starts from the southern edge at Metaxas (Eleftherias) Square and after a circumscribing movement it ends at the centre, at the St. Sophia Cathedral (Selimiye Mosque). Mapping by Aslihan Senel, 2018.

10. The mapping of the Nicosia part of Cyprus Guide. The topography of the city is formed through constellations Ottoman monuments that exist, ruined, demolished, and remained in the Buffer Zone. Mapping by Aslihan Senel, 2018.

Fig. 11. A dead-end street formed after the divide,
photograph by Aslihan Senel, 2013.

A view from the inside of "Buyuk Khan", Nicosia

A general view of Nicosia from the top of Selimiye Mosque

Fig. 12. Two pages of *Beautiful Cyprus*. Nicosia is seen in the aerial view looking towards outside the walled city.
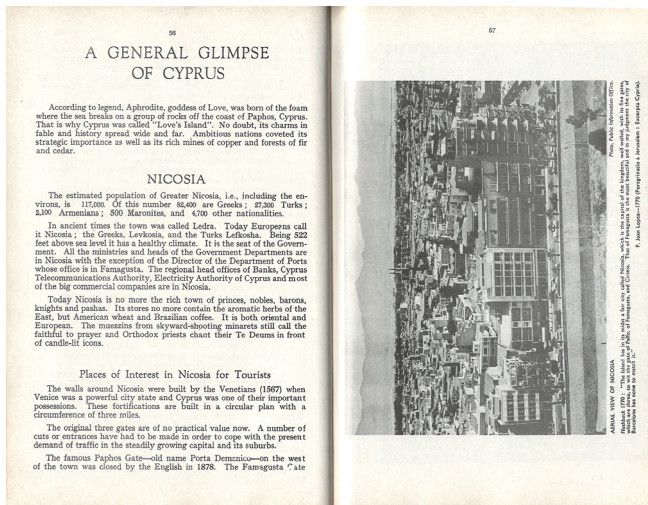
Fig. 13. Two pages of *Romantic Cyprus*. Two pages where the Nicosia part starts with the description of walls and an aerial view looking toward the walled city from outside at the southern edge.

Guide, the spaces of the city are acknowledged to be of public interest as long as there is an Ottoman heritage connected to them. (Figures 17¬−19)

For a traveller without a guidebook, walking along the border in northern Nicosia requires a continuous forward and backward movement through the streets. The streets perpendicular to the buffer zone used to be main commercial streets; today they are dead-end streets, used for liminal activities, such as repair workshops and temporary housing for immigrants, the homeless and the disadvantaged. The dead-end streets are the scenes of accumulation, transformation and transportation of scrap materials and goods such as temporary construction materials, either used immediately or kept for future possible uses. The liminal spaces of the border not only allow materials but also temporary lives to be accepted: the border is a space of acceptance.

The edge of the buffer zone compels people and things to be in continuous movement and exchange. The traveller who wants to understand the city moves back and forth along the border. The temporary inhabitants traverse the city in other ways, unexpectedly relating different parts. The accumulated goods are transformed for different needs. The inhabitants of the dead-end streets appropriate public space for private and community uses, such as dishwashing, seating and laundry. Being in the appropriated public space, the activities of the private realm may be witnessed by the passer-by. In these instances of encounter, the boundaries between the public and the private are questioned.

The balconies in the dead-end streets have the potential to destabilize our understanding of public and private space. The photograph (Fig. 20) shows a balcony that is accessible from the ground by a wooden staircase. Being adjacent to the buffer zone, this building with the balcony was apparently abandoned after the split of the city and is now occupied by immigrants or other disadvantaged residents of the city. The balcony in the photograph

becomes the entrance of a house, complicating the traditional relationships between interior and exterior.

Deserted spaces, as social anthropologist Rebecca Bryant argues, suggest a spatiotemporality specific to 'the times of war' that keeps people in a state of 'immediacy' in order to live in a compressed present with past and future folding into it.[19] The buffer zone between the two sides, according to Bryant, may be regarded as the spatialization of this state of immediacy. This is likened to a wound that represents the past suffering and the possible future recurrence of past violence. It is kept in a suspended state, with manholes in blocked windows, sandbags and fire barricades, as well as gunfire holes in walls.

Contrasting the stability suggested by the buffer zone, the small-scale interventions in the built environment on the borderline suggest new spatiotemporalities that allow us to imagine a present that is distanced from the suffering of the past, leading to possible other futures. It is arguably the nomadic urban experience of the traveller and the immigrant, who claim responsibility without ownership,[20] that offer new spatiotemporalities. This is not to say that all traveller and immigrant activity is nomadic, but a nomadic view has the potential to destabilize dichotomies such as centre and margin, public and private, local (owner) and immigrant (occupier). A third space, not defined by either side of the dichotomy, is introduced. Appropriating the dead end in actuality by the inhabitant and in imagination by the traveller may suggest such third spaces.

The Horizon as Extending Boundaries

Architect and architectural historian Anita Bakshi points out that for locals, the old city within the historic walls is a place of remembering and forgetting, and certain spatial characteristics allow practices of memory to take place.[21] For example, the enclosure of the city walls acts as a manifestation of unity and an ideal bi-communal life for the Greek Cypriots, whereas the

isolation and dereliction of the old city reproduce the image of being under siege for Turkish Cypriots. The old guidebooks often represent the walled city as a closed entity. All the guidebooks in focus start by depicting the city walls and gates. The difference between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot guides is that the former include aerial views of the walled city looking from outside in, but the latter consist only of those looking from inside out. While all aerial views imply a desire for control and a complete view of a subject, I suggest that looking outwards refers to breaking through the limitations of the old city, while looking inwards reinforces the image of unity.

The *Pocket Guide to Cyprus*, for example, starts by depicting Nicosia with a view looking towards the north from the top of the Selimiye Mosque. (Fig. [22]) This view from above creates a sense of enclosed unity; here the city is a dense texture of traditional architecture in contrast to the open fields outside. The accompanying text supports this image of homogeneity, by defining it with narrow streets, latticed windows and old Turkish houses. But it also urges the viewer to look beyond to the future of the city, indicating that 'the most rapid development is outside the city walls in the modern residential districts' of Turkish Cypriots.[22] Similarly, *Romantic Cyprus* starts with the definition of walls and gates, then two aerial views follow, looking toward the walled city from the southern edge, which is the direction British and Greek Cypriots extended the city. (Fig. 23) The view from the south in *Aphrodite's Realm*, on the other hand, is accompanied by a text pointing to the 'striking architectural contrasts' contained within the walls, those that originate from different historic styles and uses.[23]
Contemporary guidebooks continue the tradition of the old ones in offering a view of the city from above; however, they often use it to emphasize the divide and reinforce an image of difference. One of the guides points to the high-rises in the south that represent prosperity and development, in contrast to the modest and thinly spread buildings in the north.[24] In another one, a view from above is presented with its contested spatiality by showing the imposing Turkish flags carved on the hills in the north.[25]

Guided by Turkish Cypriot colleagues, we went up to the terrace of the Saray Hotel. A glimpse towards the buffer zone and the south side created excitement for those with a Turkish passport, as this prevents access to the other side. (Fig. 24) Locals who had been to the other side for the first time when the border was opened for a temporary pass in 2003 helped us in locating the landmarks. For those who were born after the political turmoil, this view must have been a source of curiosity and an attempt to extend their boundaries. The aerial view may be oppressive, manipulative and contested; however, in Nicosia, the vertical movement to achieve it may be seen as an extension of horizons, reflecting desires for movement beyond borders, and as such carry emotions of hope.

Reading, Mapping, Writing and Travelling
Travelling through Nicosia and its guidebooks has allowed me to explore limits, gates and gatekeepers. Seeing myself as a 'nomadic subject' in places, as well as in the literature about those places, I have travelled with a heightened perception of their limits and gates. I argue for taking detours in the given knowledge of each guidebook and for being sceptical at the limitations and gates that offer a fixed interpretation. Mapping has enabled me to take these detours by linking the spatial knowledge to others in order to find unexpected relationships. Switching between writing modes in this article – from archival research to personal travel log, from theoretical discussion to literary review and to the description of my mappings has encouraged me not to be satisfied with a single knowledge and to acknowledge the possibility of others.

1   I explored this concept initially in Aslihan Senel, *Unfixing Place: A Study of Istanbul through Topographical Practices*, doctoral dissertation, University College London, Bartlett School of Architecture, Architectural History and Theory, 2009.

2   American Psychological Association Dictionary of Psychology, https://dictionary.apa.org

3   Paul Virilio, 'Topographical Amnesia', *The Vision Machine* (London: BFI, 1994), 1-18.

4   John Urry, *Tourist Gaze* (London: Sage, 1990), 1.

5   Dean MacCannell and Juliet MacCannell, 'Tourist Agency', *Tourist Studies*, 1:23 (2001), 23-37, 37.

6   Jane Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Gender, Space, and Architecture in Regency London* (London: Athlone Press, 2002).

7   Kemal Rüstem, *A Pocket Guide to Cyprus* (Nicosia: K. Rüstem and Brother, 1960) and Kemal Rüstem, *Güzel Kıbrıs Resimlerle* ('Beautiful Cyprus with Pictures') (Nicosia: K. Rüstem and Brother, 1961).

8   Rüstem was a prominent figure in the cultural and political life of Cyprus. Özay Mehmet, *Sustainability of Microstates: The Case of North Cyprus* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2009), 35-36.

9   Robin Parker, *Aphrodite's Realm: An Illustrated Guide and Handbook to Cyprus*. 4th Edition (Nicosia: Zavallis Press, 1969).

10 Kevork Keshishian, *Everybody's Guide to Romantic Cyprus*. 14th Edition (Nicosia: Poulias & Koniaris, 1972). As Daskalaki has stated, this was 'the longest-selling tourist guide, published in seventeen editions between 1945 and 1993.' Georgia Daskalaki, 'Aphrodite's Realm: Representation of Tourist Landscapes in Postcolonial Cyprus as Symbols of Modernization', *Architectural Histories*, 5 (1): 8 (2017), 1-16, 6.

11 Susan Pattie, 'Refugees and Citizens: The Armenians of Cyprus', *The Cyprus Review*, 25:1 (2013), 133-145, 141.

12 M. Kamil Dürüst, Kıbrıs Rehberi ('Cyprus Guide') (İstanbul: Turkish Touring and Automobile Club, 1983).

13 Rebecca Bryant and Yiannis Papadakis (eds.), *Cyprus and the Politics of Memory: History, Community and Conflict* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 4-5.

14 These names refer to the different historic uses of the field, which was originally a part of the moat outside the Venetian city walls. During the Ottoman rule, traditional sports called *jirit* were played. Between 1878 and 1960, during the years of the British colony, celebrations of the King's and Queen' s birthdays were held on this ground. It was allocated to Çetinkaya Turkish Cypriot Football Club in 1955. Marios Epaminondas et. al., *Dayanışma Evi* ('Home for Cooperation') (Nicosia: AHDR, 2011), 14.

15 Josephine Quintero and Matthew Charles, *Lonely Planet Cyprus 5th Edition* (Melbourne: Lonely Planet Publications, 2012), 260; Marc Dubin, *The Rough Guide to Cyprus 6th Edition* (New York: Rough Guides, 2009), 280; Sue Bryant and Melissa Shales, *Frommer's Cyprus: Day by Day* (Chichester: Wiley, 2010), 150; Grzegorz Micula and Magdelena Micula, *Eyewitness Travel Cyprus* (New York: DK Publishing, 2016), 129.

16 After the Republic of Cyprus was proclaimed and during the conflict years of the early 1960s, the field was called *Taksim*, which means division in Turkish, to refer to the partition claims of Turkish Cypriots. Turkish National celebrations were held on this ground until the partition in 1974. Epaminondas et al., Dayanışma Evi, op. cit. (note 14), 14.

17 *'Taksim Sahası Hazırlanıyor'* ('Taksim Field is Being Prepared'), *Kıbrıs Gazetesi*, 3 October 2016. http://kibrisgazetesi.com; *'Taksim Sahası Yeşerdi ama . . .'* ('Taksim Field has turned green but . . .'), *Ada Basını*, 1 June 2015, http://adabasini.com; 'LTB *Taksim sahasında temizlik yaptı* ('Turkish Municipality of Nicosia made a clearance at the Taksim field'), *Haber Kıbrıs* website, 28 August 2010, http//:haberkibris.com.

18 Robin Dripps, 'Groundwork', in: Carol J. Burns and Andrea Kahn (eds.), *Site-Matters: Design Concepts, Histories, and Strategies* (London: Routledge, 2005), 59-91.

19 Rebecca Byrant, 'Partitions of Memory: Wounds and Witnessing in Cyprus', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 54:2 (2012), 332-360.

20 Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011[1994]), 35-36.

21 Anita Bakshi, 'A Shell of Memory: The Cyprus Conflict and Nicosia's Walled City', *Memory Studies*, 5: 4 (2012), 479-496.

22 Rüstem, *A Pocket Guide to Cyprus*, op. cit. (note 7), 55.

23 Parker, *Aphrodite's Realm*, op. cit. (note 9), 18.

24 Diana Darke and Murray Stewart, *North Cyprus: Bradt Travel Guides - Edition 8* Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press, 2015 [1993]), 133.

25 Micula and Micula, *Eyewitness Travel Cyprus*, op. cit. (note 15), 14.

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ABSTRACTS

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This article presents a journey through the divided city of Nicosia on the island of Cyprus by confronting its dominant representations in guidebooks dating back to 1960s with my personal urban experience in the northern part of the city, and placing these readings in the context of the delicate political history of the city. This approach provides an account of the extant, the constructed as well as the subjectively remembered and imagined spaces of the city. The act of reading books includes spatial and temporal activities: following the lines, stopping at certain words, jumping through paragraphs, searching for certain images and turning the pages back and forth. These activities, in the case of guidebooks, may evoke spatial memories of textures, lights, sounds, streets, buildings and people. Travelling through the different representations of sites in the guidebooks, and mapping this activity of reading, enabled me to lay out the ways in which traditional guidebooks cause a kind of topographical amnesia by privileging dominant knowledge in relation to places and decontextualizing other knowledges. I have used this multiple reading as a critical topographical practice that can question and dismantle the fixed representations in the guidebooks. Such a critical topographical practice is indeed a practice of *writing place*, referring to the word's etymological meanings: *topos* for 'place' and *graphe* for 'which writes' or 'is written'. This topographical practice critically and subjectively relates knowledge to place and time. It offers the possibility for me – as a traveller and researcher – to temporarily appropriate real spaces and sustain other future spatial possibilities. With the following pieces of writing about sites in Nicosia, I propose possible but partial narratives of places, which are alternative to the officially acclaimed interpretations present in the guidebooks. My alternative narratives of places offer imagining the ground of the controlled buffer zone as unfixable, dead ends as spaces resisting dichotomies of centre-margin, public-private, and local-occupier, and envisioning the horizon as a continuous extension of boundaries.

Keywords: Guidebooks, Topography of Amnesia, Spatial Practices, Nicosia, Travelling, Commoning

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