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Womxn's Agency in Divided Cities: Mapping Marginal Actions in Nicosia
Bölünmüş Şehirlerde Kadın Temsili: Lefkoşa'daki Marjinal Eylemlerin Haritasını Çıkarmak

Abstract

People of minoritized genders struggle the most in contested environments. Cities are shaped by marginalized communities constantly claiming agency and space to thrive. Designers and planners should develop intersectional lenses to identify such marginal forces and better understand urbanization, especially in contexts of ongoing conflict. An inclusive viewpoint must shed light on absent or obscured voices. Thus, mapping from the margins is essential to understand how informalities work and to build a more profoundly democratic practice. In this article, the divided city of Nicosia in Cyprus is analyzed to understand how womxn raise their voices for peace, shifting the focus of Nicosia's geopolitical conflict to a social territory reproduced by their bodies while traversing the quotidian in the city. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, this article distorts the conventional idea of borders as strict lines, presenting them as porous, dynamic landscapes affected by the social groups around them.

Öz**

Çatışmalı çevrelerde en çok zorluk çeken gruplardan biri, ötekileştirilmiş toplumsal cinsiyetlere sahip bireylerdir. Şehirler ötekileştirilmiş cemiyetlerin kendi failliklerini ve alanlarını genişletme mücadelesi ile şekillenirler. Tasarımcı ve plancılar kesişimsel bakış açıları ile bu ötekileştirilmiş toplulukların ilişkilerini çözümleyebilir ve çatışma içerisindeki kentleşme süreçlerini anlamak adına yeni yaklaşımlar getirebilirler. Bu amaçla kapsayıcı bir bakış açısını benimsemek ve susturulmuş seslere yer açmak önem kazanmaktadır. Sınır durumlarına yakından bakan haritalama pratikleri, bu enformal oluşumların arka planlarını açığa çıkarmak için daha demokratik bir alan açar. Bu makale içinden sınır geçen bir kent olan Lefkoşa'da kadınların barış için seslerini nasıl duyurduklarını incelerken, bunu oluşturan jeopolitik krizin dışına çıkmanın ve kadınların şehirdeki bedenleri ve gündelik hayattaki hareketlerine odaklanmanın yollarını haritalama yöntemi ile araştırmaktadır. Nitelik ve niceliğe dayalı yöntemlerin kullanıldığı bu araştırmada sınırlara dair geleneksel yargılar kırılmakta, bu alanları kullanan sosyal grupların etkisiyle sınır mekanlarının esasen geçirimli, dinamik peyzajlar olduğu açığa çıkmaktadır.

Keywords
Gender, city, conflict, urbanization, mapping

Anahtar kelimeler
Toplumsal cinsiyet, şehir, çatışma, kentleşme, haritalama

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Womxn's[1] role in Nicosia's conflict

Cities are complex environments highly shaped by marginalized communities who are constantly claiming their agency and space to thrive. However, these marginalities are either obscured or absent in the design and planning disciplines. This article focuses on the divided city of Nicosia in Cyprus, one of the last divided capitals in the world, where several communities coexist in its contested space. Nicosia is analyzed in terms of how womxn across the divide coexist and raise their voices for peace. Womxn's actions shift the geopolitical focus of Nicosia's territorial conflict to a social territory reproduced by their bodies while navigating the city's quotidian. This article suggests that designers and planners should develop intersectional lenses to identify marginal forces that shape the city and better understand urbanization in contexts of ongoing conflict. To acquire an inclusive viewpoint, one needs to shed light on absent or obscured voices by recording diverse perspectives, especially of womxn and people of minoritized genders. Mapping from the margins can help designers and planners understand how these informalities work and build a more profoundly democratic practice.

Figure 1
Map of Nicosia with highlighted buffer zone. Map made by the author.

Making marginal actions visible is a first step towards a feminist perspective in the design and planning practice. Feminism, according to bell hooks, is a broad vision for the rights of all bodies, identities, voices, and viewpoints. (hooks, 1984, p. xi) Hooks articulates that the "feminism movement happens when groups of people come together with an organized strategy to take action to eliminate patriarchy." (ibid, p. xi) Feminism is one of the most influential movements in social justice. Spatial practices, however, have never been neutral in social struggles. These spatial practices have been central to making visible, confronting, and naming social and spatial struggles. Battles of everyday life may include equal access to spaces, resources, and representation. When these socio-spatial struggles are amplified due to wars and other conflicts, the power structures in the social setting become more complex, and the role of spatial practices becomes obscure. Having a feminist perspective in examining the case of Nicosia means assessing how power (e.g., political hegemonies) has been reconstructed through the city's spatial qualities.

In this research, both qualitative and quantitative methods are used. The first include archival, bibliographic, ethnographic research, fieldwork, and site and participant observation. The fieldwork includes site and participant observation, interviews, psychogeographic maps, and photography and video of the urban space. The latter consists of data from Maria Hadjipavlou's research as presented in her book, "Women and Change in Cyprus: Feminisms and Gender in Conflict." This data includes questionnaires responded by womxn of all communities across the buffer zone in Cyprus. Hadjipavlou's research comes from the discipline of sociology, but in this article, it is approached through spatial analysis, centering the space itself. In addition, Nicosia is analyzed through the provocative method of mapping. What can one learn from new visualizations and specifically from maps? What's the new knowledge that is being produced?

Cyprus is a site of nationalism, militarism, violence, and displacement that oppresses womxn in many ways. The conflict has been well examined, but its gendered aspect has never been raised publicly. (Hadjipavlou, 2010, p. 3) Womxn's perspectives, experiences, and agency are missing from the conflict's hegemonic nationalist narratives. (ibid, p. 3) Cyprus is also a patriarchal and highly religious country. Both sides of the island have solid ethics and religious habits that oppress and discriminate against womxn. The war added an extra layer to the oppression that womxn had experienced before and has taken precedence over all other critical social issues, including womxn's rights and public participation. (ibid, p. 97) During the 50s-60s and mid-1970, womxn were absorbed in nationalist armed struggles and acted as volunteers doing all the care work, which seemed natural by that time. (ibid, p. 131)

A brief timeline of the division

> *"The Cyprus problem has become an industry. The number of people who have gotten involved to solve the Cyprus problem exceeds the number of people living on the island."* (Mathew Nimitz, ex-envoy to Cyprus, 1997)

Nicosia is Cyprus's capital, administrative center, and most urbanized city (Brooke, n.d.). Historically, Nicosia has been the bridge for solving the Cyprus conflict, which is internationally referred to as the "Cyprus problem" (Cockburn 2004, p. 10). Before the division, the two main ethnic groups in Cyprus, the Turkish-Cypriots (TC) in the north and the Greek-Cypriots (GC) in the south, coexisted in peace, despite their social, political, and cultural differences. Colonial forces and the ethnic division between TC and GC resulted in nationalistic sovereignty claims, which led to Cyprus's territorial division in 1974 to reduce the tension between the two communities (Brooke, n.d.). After the war, the GC put pressure for Enosis; the union with Greece, resulted in 1955 to the collapse of the peaceful coexistence of the two communities; for the first time, the TC demanded partition to protect their rights. In 1959, GC and TC fought against the British colony, leading in 1960 to the recognition of Cyprus as an Independent Republic with autonomy and democracy and asserting its sovereignty as a member of the United Nations and the Council of Europe. This agreement excluded both Enosis and partition.

Figure 2
Nicosia today. Collage made by the author.

Greece and Turkey guaranteed the constitution with the right to station armies on the island and Britain to retain two large areas to be used as sovereign military bases. The population in Cyprus was divided into several communities based on their ethnic identity. In 1963, the tension between the communities prompted the British to erect the first temporary physical barricade in the place of today's buffer zone. In 1964, Cyprus' conflict became a matter of

the United Nations Security Council. The British created the division to reduce the violence in Nicosia and converted it into a cease-fire line patrolled by the United Nations Peacekeeping Force (UNFICYP) (Brooke, n.d.) In 1974 Turkish troops landed in the North of Cyprus and occupied one-third of the island, enforcing partition between north and south. This invasion led to a second displacement, with TC displaced in the North and GC in the south.

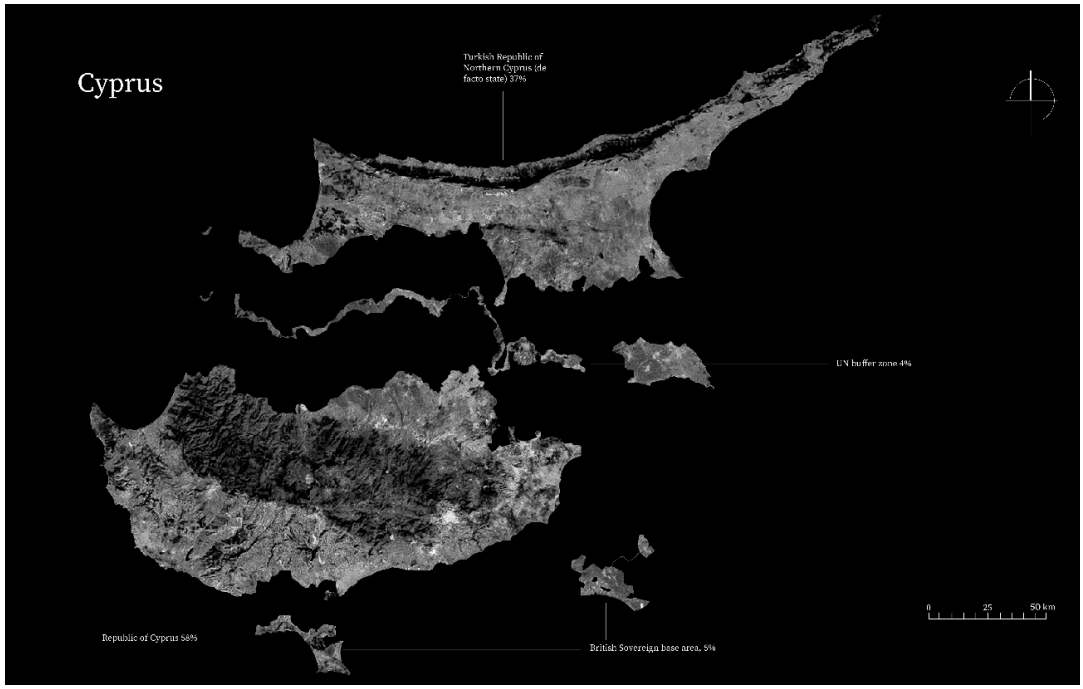

Figure 3
Cyprus' sovereignties today. Map made by the author.

The UN peacekeepers, including TC and GC soldiers, were assigned to patrol the buffer zone. Since 1974, the southern part of Cyprus has been under the control of the internationally recognized government of Cyprus, and the northern part is under the power of the government of Northern Cyprus. Since then, many laws and master plans have been enacted and partially implemented. However, this did not foster the relationships between the different communities. In 1983, the northern part of Cyprus declared Independence as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, a state recognized only by Turkey. The UN and the Republic of Cyprus rejected the sovereignty of the self-declared country. In 2004, Cyprus became part of the EU as a whole country, even though an unrecognized state occupies a part of its territory. In 1979, representatives of the GC and TC communities met under the auspices of the United Nations to discuss working together on the Urban Planning of Nicosia to benefit both communities. In 1980 the Nicosia Master Plan (NMP) was signed. (Nicosia Municipality, 2008)

Multiple divisions

Except for the spatial and ethnic division, there is also a gender division. Through fieldwork in Nicosia, one can realize that womxn use the urban space differently, and their everyday movements manifest the creation of a shared and common territory. From a social aspect, womxn in Nicosia tend to engage in caring and humanitarian roles instead of politics and economics. Engagement in these roles and the public sphere would challenge the traditional norms and social pressures. (Hadjipavlou 2010, p. 144) The gender of people involved in solving the Cypriot conflict are all upper-middle-class men. (ibid, p. 75) That implies, among others, the exclusion and marginalization of the female presence, voices, and perspectives. It also indicates how democracy, representation, rights, and participation operate in Cyprus. (ibid, p. 75) According to Hadjipavlou, ironically, these men are trying to imagine a different Cyprus, "in which a new state of affairs will be established if all the interested parties (all male) agree to it." This means that they are trying to imagine a future where half of the population (50.8 per cent of GC and 50.4 per cent of TC are womxn) are excluded. (ibid, p. 75)

Exclusion and oppression

An extra layer of oppression is added to womxn's life when a patriarchal and nationalistic society is in conflict, where the forms of surveillance are even more comprehensive. In Cyprus, womxn are under constant surveillance; they are born and belong to their fathers, then to their husbands, and later on to their sons. They rarely live for themselves. To protect womxn, it is believed that police and surveillance are a way to keep them safe in the city. However, one should consider that this form of protection usually excludes non-white, middle-class, transgender, and undocumented citizens.

By navigating Nicosia, it is evident that the military and enhanced male gaze are two of the most promiscuous reasons this oppression happens. Especially their presence along the buffer zone urges people of minoritized genders to avoid this route and perform in specific ways to avoid interaction. One also notices that these forms of surveillance are evident in the organization of the built environment. Sacred spaces, for example, are ubiquitous and enormous, and their scale imposes a sense of control and perhaps fear on womxn and the marginalized. The massive scale of certain religious buildings spread the feeling that citizens are constantly under 'God's' surveillance or the surveillance of those running these spaces. In addition to the omnipresence of these buildings, their scale and sounds make it clear that people are under constant surveillance by those in power. This example is an excellent one to explain how Architecture and the built environment show, in this case, the power relationship of the inhabitants with their city.

Figure 4
Buffer zone closings, including abandoned buildings, wires, and barrels. Photos taken by the author.

Womxn's perspectives and agency

Through their actions, womxn in Nicosia have the power to change the impact of nationalism and militarism on their lives and the whole society. They should start by recognizing their exclusion, be sensitized to the levels of power over them, and build alliances across ethnic and class lines with other womxn in conflict situations. In Hadjipavlou's research, they were asked several questions about peace and war, such as "What does peace mean to you?" (Hadjipavlou, 2010, p. 131) The answers showed that womxn felt more oppressed and discriminated against in their social roles. The highest response by all communities was the 'absence of war,' which is the traditional definition of what peace means.

Womxn in Cyprus have confused ideas about the Cypriot problem's roots and its solutions derived from male-dominated narratives. Their views also result from their lack of exposure to various feminist readings of how a 'conflict-ridden society in which nationalist, militarist, and patriarchal views prevail can shape their choices and exclude them from public spaces.' (ibid, p. 144) Womxn challenge traditional norms and social pressures (e.g., the right to personal choice). However, there is still an ongoing tension between traditionalism and modernity, and especially for young womxn with high educational and professional aspirations, who struggle to shake off and challenge their traditional roles. (ibid, p. 144) The majority feels that the conflict hindered the achievement of womxn's rights and that their silence had contributed to the postponement of womxn's development.

Hadjipavlou asked if Cypriot womxn can contribute to building and strengthening relationships between and among communities. Most womxn responded yes, which proves their understanding of themselves as peacebuilders and love givers. (ibid, p. 136) Womxn

were asked about their beliefs on the causes of the conflict. This question aims to reveal their knowledge of historical events, the complexity of the issues, and the different points of entry for peaceful interventions. Hadjipavlou and her research team wanted to record womxn's perspectives to share them with policymakers, negotiators, and third parties that are involved in the peace process. (ibid, p. 133) The results showed that 78,8% GC and 90% Armenian womxn did not consider significant the influence of the Greek-orthodox church. However, 6/10 TC and 4/10 Maronite womxn believed that the Greek orthodox church contributed significantly to the conflict. (ibid, p. 137).

Social control, surveillance, and womxn's space.

> *"It takes an enormous amount of mental energy to navigate the public and private spaces of the city alone as a woman."* (Kern, 2020, p. 91)

The way people of different genders perform in the space varies. The space informs bodies' movement and behavior, and vice versa; bodies construct a space around them. Certain bodies' movements and experiences are disrupted, challenged, or even prohibited when an environment is contested. Most womxn unconsciously walk home or in the streets, especially during night-time, with keys sticking out from their fists. The hidden costs of fear keep womxn from living fully, freely, and independently in the city. They vary their travel routes, pretend to be on the phone, and avoid certain places altogether. This all adds to an exhausting set of routine and spontaneous safety decisions and the need for constant awareness and attention to safety issues. (Kern, 2020, p. 151) During field research in Nicosia, one can find that womxn and marginalized communities have established their "safe spaces" and use the space differently than the other citizens. These "safe spaces" are located in the walled city and its buffer zone and vary in organization and use. For example, there are several buildings (E.g., The Home for Cooperation) hosting multi-communal initiatives. Some of these spaces are "clean cut" places, while others are less visible initiatives had which have left their traces in the city's urban fabric (e.g., graffiti, printed manifestos, and posters in the city). For retaining womxn's privacy, this article does not reveal the exact location of these spaces.

Geography helps us understand how gendered social control works, how it does play out on the ground, and how it is enforced. (Kern, 2020, p. 148) Womxn's fear of men can be expressed in a geographic logic. They learn how to avoid certain places instead of people. They develop an illusion of control over our fear by developing a knowledge of where and when we might encounter dangerous men, as feminist geographer Gill Valentine explains. (ibid, p. 219) The reality, however, is that womxn have very little control over the presence of men in their environments, and for this, they displace their fear of individuals to places (e.g., streets, alleyways, and dark sidewalks). These spaces represent womxn's mental maps of safety and fear. (ibid, p. 149)

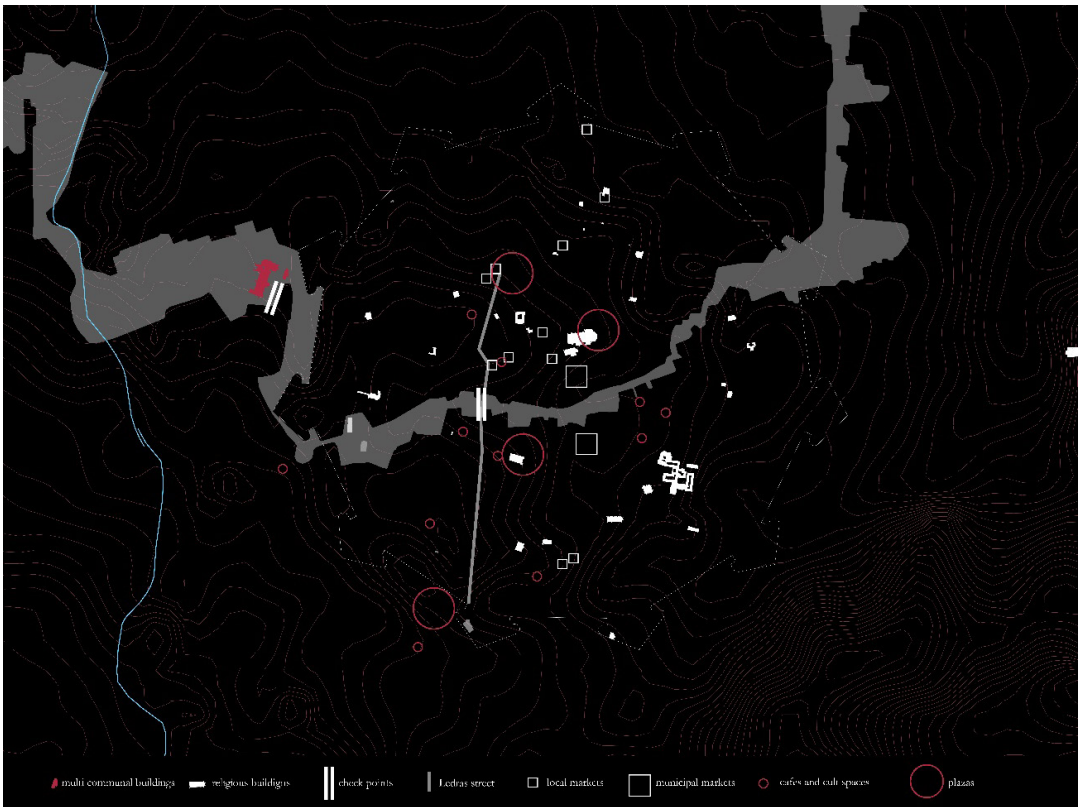

Figure 5
Sketch of spaces for multi-communal cooperation in the walled city. Map made by the author.

Inhabiting space and having the freedom to bodily perform in it (e.g., by walking and talking) can lead to territorialization through the bodily inscription of the locality. (Appadurai, 2020, p. 45) Through everyday acts, this corporeal performance in the city becomes a form of resistance for the marginalized. Hegemonic power is established by refusing people to create a 'homeplace' for themselves where they can regain a sense of self. (hooks, 2021, p. 99) Bodily performance and postures by the marginalized in certain places in the city create somehow 'diasporic homes.' Through these postures and techniques, learned and relearned, one is remaking habits producing locality.

The above is not a narrative from a different century: womxn's bodies are still highly controlled in urban space. These obstacles shape womxn's everyday life in a profoundly gendered way (Kern, 2020, p. 5). Men[2], on the other hand, barely have to encounter these barriers and so they are invisible to them. Nicosia's decision-makers, urban planners, and designers are men, and they will most likely not experience any of the aforementioned barriers. However, these male professionals have the power to make choices (e.g., on issues around urban econo-

my, housing, urban transportation, and surveillance) without knowledge or concern for how their decisions affect all social groups.

Mapping as a tool of feminist practice.

> *"I am learning to see. I don't know what it is, but everything enters me more deeply and doesn't stop where it once used to."* Rainer Maria Rilke (Lim, 2016, p. 279)

To reframe the city's agenda having a feminist perspective, we should first bring marginal narratives into the design practice. To unveil how womxn and people of marginalized gender experience the city, one must trace all the signs in the urban fabric. This act of looking requires the project investigator to look deeper and understand relations, subjectivities, and provisional politics. Representation can lead to empowerment, leading to different approaches to resolving conflict and achieving inclusivity in multi-communal plans. Nicosia is a city highly formulated by various diasporas over time. The agency of diasporic communities and their relational exchanges project changes in the urban space. Diasporas, in other words, act topologically, making their own space-times through their interaction.

Why feminist mapping?

Maps serve as visual tools to reconstruct the conventional storyline of the conflict. Maps are used from the conflict's early days to describe the island's geopolitical state. In Nicosia, the conventional maps describing its conflict represented only the urban form, the typologies of the urban fabric, the city's architecture, the location of places, and some aspects of the urban environment. They include disembodied views that generally align with masculine epistemologies. A feminist response to these views is the mapping proposed in this article. The research presented in this article is a work in progress, exploring new forms of cartography that can read and rearticulate the relationship between womxn's bodies in the divided space of Nicosia. The increasing diversity of Nicosia falls under the unconcerned reading of the mainstream architectural practice that does not recognize its growing diversity and segregation, like in the rest of the European cities. The neoliberal economy and the unquestioning faith in property rights obscured the decline of communal spaces, community displacement, and the privatization of spaces and services. (Awan, 2016, p. 3)

Alternative urbanisms are slowly imagined by alternative practices that recognize the shortcoming of mainstream architectural practices. These alternative practices do not ignore the conditions discussed above (e.g., time); instead, they use them as a starting point. Architect Teddy Cruz, for example, supported this need for a different approach to architecture, centered on difference and the empowerment of the other. He commented that today, it is

essential to reorient our gaze towards the drama embedded in the reality of every day and, in so doing, engage the shifting socio-political and economic domains that have been ungraspable by design. (Cruz, 2013) This viewpoint calls for addressing more local socio-political challenges by paying attention to everyday experiences.

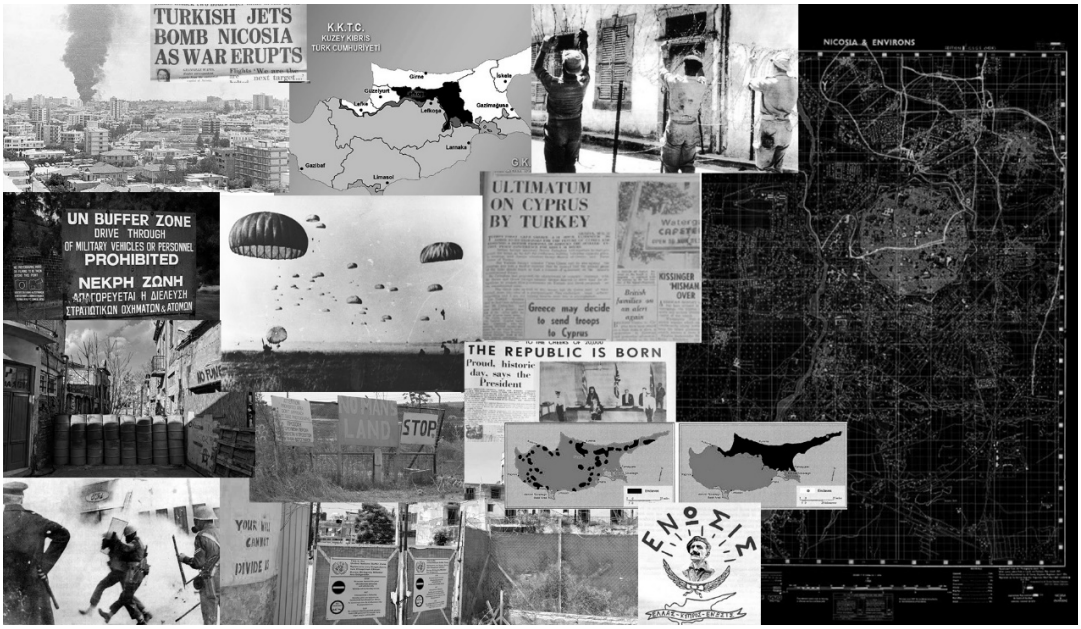

Figure 6
Collage of maps and photographs describing the Cypriot conflict in the press. Collage made by the author.

What goes in the public sphere of politics cannot be understood as divorced from the private. In Nicosia, the walled city offers various places where womxn of both communities meet, discuss, and interact. Everyday life in the walled city is quite similar for the different communities; they assemble into public spaces (e.g., markets, commercial streets, plazas), private or semi-private spaces (e.g., art spaces, cafés, social spaces), religious and sacred spaces (e.g., churches, mosques). Many of these spaces in the heart of Nicosia support an alternative scene or the city's subculture. Specifically, local markets preserve communities' identity, and community spaces (e.g., Open-air markets) activate public spaces keeping the walled city vibrant. These uses exist on both sides of the walled city, maintaining an everyday lifestyle for the citizens across the divide.

Figure 7
Religious spaces in Nicosia. Collage made by the author.

Diasporas and the body as a starting point of feminist mapping

Talking about diasporas poses the need to talk about identities, home, and the concept of return. Diasporas are the product of displacement and are extremely important when dealing with future urbanism and territoriality questions, especially in today's ongoing migration crisis and transitions. The fragmentation of fixed communities poses questions about the future of urban environments and the notion of home. That includes all populations and not only diasporic communities. Displacement gives the possibility of change; as products of displacement, diasporic communities can often challenge hegemonic notions, including national cultures. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall suggested that diasporas had to be defined not as fixed identities but in terms of the production of subjectivities. (Hall, p. 235) Avtar Brah writes, "The concept of diaspora places the discourse of 'home' and 'dispersion' in creative tension, inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origins. (Brah, 1996, p. 192-93)

Beginning by looking at the body can help one explore the diasporic space's potentialities. For diasporic bodies, the linearity of the modern version of time makes little sense, as our ideas of time are mostly connected to our memories, anamnesis, and nostalgia. Everyday

life at the space of arrival and its rhythms are tuned to the local time zone and often to other places (e.g., the place one calls home). This perception of time alters the connection between space and place and our experience. Their relationship with other places perplexes traditional architectural conceptions (e.g., static scale and three-dimensional space). (Awan, 2016, p. 15) Diasporic bodies are therefore understood space and time based on the difference. Elizabeth Grosz's conception of difference supports that difference inheres duration, meaning the becoming and unbecoming in all things. (Grosz, 2005, p. 13).

In the sociology of the everyday, Henri Lefebvre supported that '(social) space is a (social) product.' (Lefebvre, The production of space, p. 26) It is essential to think of the diasporic space that embodies notions of difference, born by how the body is mediated through space and time. In that sense, diasporic spatio-temporalities of displaced bodies are conceptualized by the entanglement between space, time and difference. As Deleuze describes it, difference and the notion of becoming are central concepts to describe diasporas, away from the fixed notions of identity. Belonging is not necessarily subject to one identity.

Womxns' actions for peace

Looking at history and at how national struggles and peace efforts operate in Cyprus, one realizes that womxn were not passive spectators, but active participants in various forms of resistance. (Hadjipavlou, 2010, p. 75) Since the 1950 and especially after the partition in 1974, womxn have initiated several anti-occupation actions and actions for peace. Because of their marginalization and invisibility, it was easier for them to assemble in space and access places men did not have. The movement organized marches in several areas of Cyprus, where thousands of womxn stood up in front of the Turkish army and requested the liberation of Cyprus.

Urban activism

Cities have been the primary sites of activism for the majority of the sociopolitical movements of the last two centuries. These movements combine a critical mass of people able to message their requests to the halls of power (e.g., governments). This way, these groups can get access to communication and media. Despite the rise of media and the attraction of attention through hashtags most movements still "take to the streets" at critical moments. Activism and public protests are a way to connect womxn and underrepresented groups of people with the surrounding urban environments. It gives individuals a sense of belonging, the "right to the city." They teach and spread concepts like solidarity and allyship, reveal the connection of feminism to other social movements, and teach us about intersectionality. (Kern, 2020, p. 118) There are many paradigms of womxn taking up the streets in their cities. These womxn have used the city as both the site and the stake of struggle. (Wekerle, 2000, p. 215)

Figure 8
Examples of womxn's actions for peace. Collage made by the author.

The city, in this way, transforms into a place to be heard and a place that its inhabitants are fighting for. Marginalized groups were rarely given anything without struggle or a fight, neither freedom, rights, recognition, or resources. Sometimes this fight takes the form of a public protest. Likewise, feminist demands on the city take similar forms, such as collective protests. (Kern, 2020, p. 119) Marches and protests are often described as having specific characteristics that include the contestation of and resistance to power, bringing together a particular community, and being public in nature. Protests create a sense of community and de-functionalize the urban space "by interacting its usual business, transport, work, and specialization." (Awan, 2016, p. 79) By doing so, protests interrupt the hierarchical order of class society; they disturb the class relations between the diasporic bodies and their hosts. (ibid, p. 80) These marches increase the group's territory participating in it in the public space. It is not the scale of the protest that matters most but the audience—especially for womxn and marginalized groups, participating in demonstrations to create new and different experiences in the city. They take over the streets, link arms with strangers, and express their anger, joy, and solidarity. (Kern, 2020, p. 117) History has taught us that social change happens after some form of protest.

Womxn's actions

After opening the buffer zone's crossing in 2003 due to an easing in diplomatic relations, womxn from both sides of the divide came together. Their interaction sparked a set of multi-communal initiatives for peace. Despite the geographic proximity, there is a vast socio-psychological distance among womxn in the different parts of Nicosia. Before the buffer zone opened, the different communities had no interaction, and the only information they had for one another was through oral histories and narratives. The use of the divided space by womxn challenges the nationalist perspective of the conflict, instigating hate and fear among the major ethnic groups (Papadakis 2006, p. 3). Despite their political repression, womxn's multi-communal initiatives brought international attention to the Cyprus problem (Herodotus 1987). Their solidarity groups, marches, and projects focus on bottom-up interventions and participatory decision-making (Gender Advisory Team, n.d.).

Womxn use the walled city and its buffer zone to unite, organize, and plan actions for peace. Their initiatives inspired other multi-communal programs that engage citizens across class, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality. Their efforts take various forms, such as demonstrations, lectures, workshops, art festivals, conferences, and the formulation of solidarity groups. (Kotsoni, 2022) Their use of the walled city and the buffer zone as safe spaces opens up a new reading of these spaces that challenges the current narrative of their hostility because of the social

Figure 9

Catalog of womxn's action for peace. Catalog made by the author in "(RE)MAPPING NICOSIA: Women's agency in the contested walled city." Published at the Harvard Mellon Urban Initiative report.

and territorial conflict. The way womxn use Nicosia's urban space shows how borderlands act as experimental places for different ethnic groups to reunite and reclaim both these places and their identities. Although the buffer zone can signal safety, womxn frequently need to "claim integrity, security, and safety of their own bodies" (Mohanty 2003, p. 2). Understanding the spatial dynamics of Nicosia's buffer zone through the way womxn use it can help designers and planners better understand the transformative nature of the conflict and how the aforementioned multi-communal efforts can exert political pressure to affect it.

To conclude, womxn's use of Nicosia's divided space in as urban commons, challenges the conflict's nationalist status quo that wants the two main ethnic groups to hate and fear each other. Womxn's actions shift the geopolitical focus of Nicosia's territorial conflict to a social territory reproduced by their bodies while traversing the quotidian in the city. This alternative use of the urban space distorts one's perspective of how the division operates on the ground. Womxn's use of Nicosia's divided space opens up a new perspective on the notion of borders as strict lines, presenting them as porous and dynamic landscapes affected by the social groups around them. The work presented in this article is a work in progress, and it is presented as such, by proposing toolkits (e.g., on-site observations that can inform urban policy) instead of strict outcomes and design interventions. In the case of Nicosia, the buffer zone is a porous and deep interstitial zone. The article questions what this in-between space can turn into and what kind of spatial network can offer in the city. The article concludes with more research questions and provides a dynamic reading of the current conflict and a methodology to visualize and understand the movement of different social groups in this contested and complex space. For example, how do womxn made the buffer zone more porous, and how has the buffer zone affected their actions? How do womxn somatically experience urban space? How can the socio-spatial dynamic in the buffer zone help designers better articulate an urbanistic borderland of the future? Can the example of Nicosia's buffer zone help reconceptualize its liminal zone? Mapping is a tool that speaks a language that both planners and managers in different contexts can understand. (Peluso, 1995, p. 402). All the above are important to understand how womxn, who constitute almost half of the population in every city, create space. By understanding the above, designers can influence their recommendations and ideas for other urban environments.

1 In this article, the term Cypriot womxn or womxn refers to female-identified people in Nicosia from Cyprus's two main ethnic groups, the Turkish-Cypriots and the Greek-Cypriots. For purposes of more targeted research, I avoided including other minoritized groups (e.g., queer, migrants, etc.). Minoritized are the groups that are actively diminished and oppressed by more dominant social groups that hold greater socioeconomic and political power (D'Ignazio and Klein 2020b, p. 7).

2 In this article, the term men refers to cis-straight white male-identified people.

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