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Ethno-nationally divided cities and the use of art for purposes of conflict resolution and urban regeneration

EVANTHIA TSELIKA

This paper examines ethno-nationally divided cities and how the arts are used in such contexts for conflict resolution and urban regeneration. Three ethno-nationally divided cities at different stages of conflict resolution – Jerusalem, Nicosia, Belfast – are juxtaposed and explored. Ethno-nationally divided cities, which have become defined by their separation, are increasingly being studied to understand a common urban experience, to consider how partition politics develop and to learn how to best avoid them. Parallel art practices are also noted in these three urban milieus, in so far as they aim to assist conflict resolution and create zones that facilitate social transformation. This article addresses the use of art as a tool of social cohesion, through examination of art projects targeted at ethno-national division and conflict. Looking at three different, but similar, cities demonstrates how art has been used at different stages of the desegregation process, and how these processes can potentially lead to new patterns of divisions. The use of the arts in divided city contexts is related to art used in broader urban contexts to address segregation and facilitate social engagement and shared spaces.

narrate ethno-national development, segregation and regenerative structures. However different these cities might be, they are similar in the way that material, ethnic and spatial divisions are created, maintained, militarily controlled, transcended and crossed. Even though most cities experience racial, ethnic, religious, gender, class and linguistic divisions, few are the cities that are obviously divided by walls, barbed wire, checkpoints and armies. Today, divided cities are very often analysed using an interdisciplinary method combining social, spatial, historical and cultural analyses. This is related to socially engaged art methodologies (Lacy 1995; Kester 2004; Bishop 2006, 2012), which have shaped my practice-led research and guided this research paper (see Tselika 2015).² The juxtaposition of the three different cities will illustrate how parallel endeavours in art are used to create contact zones that can facilitate social transformation. I highlight how art has been used in regeneration processes at different stages of desegregation efforts, and how renewal efforts can often give rise to new patterns of divisions. Considering the contexts of the three cities in relation to their art projects, addressing the divide affords a clearer understanding of the role of the arts in urban regeneration and gentrification.

ART IN ETHNO-NATIONALLY DIVIDED CITIES

Cities have always been divided. They are divided by class and wealth, by rights to and over property, by occupation and use, by lifestyle and culture, by race and nationality, ethnicity and religion, and by gender and sexuality. (Hall 2004, 2)

In this paper, I examine Nicosia, Belfast and Jerusalem as ethno-nationally segregated urban spaces and consider how their division has directed visual art practices to promote interethnic contact in the public sphere, offering a way to understand conflict and relationship building. These three cities¹ highlight how divided urban spaces

Divided cities with polarised and segregated communities include amongst others Nicosia, Belfast, Berlin, Beirut, Brussels, Jerusalem and Mostar. A growing interest in how ethnic, religious and national conflicts have shaped many cities had led to debate on how such cities can resolve their territorial and social conflicts (Calame and Charlesworth 2009; Conflict in Cities 2010). Divided cities are often marked by identity politics and ethnic conflict, which are subsequently reflected in the way people negotiate their built environment. The walls, barbed wire fences, dead ends and the intensification of ethno-nationalism within divided cities have created an academic discipline that examines these urban milieus through an interdisciplinary framework.³

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When one walks through an ethno-nationally divided city, it feels like one city, but it also feels like two. Talking about the lack of urban awareness in Jerusalem, Yehezkel Lein describes the city as ‘two metropolises: a Jewish and Arab metropolis, and they do not live together’ (Calame and Charlesworth 2009, 83). This is also true of highly populated metropolises where gated communities housing the wealthy are found next to poor, impoverished neighbourhoods (e.g. Mexico City, Sao Paulo, London and New York). But the cities that Calame and Charlesworth examine are not megacities – they have populations under one and a half million. And yet, the inhabitants of these cities cannot or do not want to cross their communal borders.

The importance of location at the edges of empires and the historical development of ethno-nationalism are relevant to the discourse presented here. Political geographer James Anderson examines the historical events that helped create ethno-nationally divided cities and found that they ‘had their formative origins within territorial empires and, more specifically, at the edges and towards the end of empires’ (2008, 4). As empires gave way to nation states, these cities developed within the resulting contested terrains. Anderson distinguishes between ‘state-divided’, ‘ethnically divided’ and ‘ethno-nationally divided’ cities (ibid, 6): Nicosia, Jerusalem and Belfast fall within the ethno-nationally divided category. Looking at Belfast, he argues that Northern Ireland’s ambiguous position within the United Kingdom is similar to the uncertain borders found at the edges of empires, where contested landscapes also act as a metaphor for the ‘sometimes “over-stretched” peripheries of empire’ (ibid, 11). Anderson locates this feature in other divided cities, such as Jerusalem, Mostar and Nicosia. He confirms the ‘formative significance of location in empires’ (ibid, 13), as they do not produce ethno-nationally divided cities in their core but on their ambiguous peripheries. Whilst he focuses on Jerusalem, he nevertheless argues that ‘in virtually all cases ... politicised ethnic divisions were prenatal in origin’ (ibid, 13). For Belfast, it was the British Empire; for Cyprus and Jerusalem, it was the British as well as the Ottoman Empire.

Calame and Charlesworth argue that ‘partitioned cities act as a warning beacon for all cities where inter-communal rivalry threatens normal urban functioning and security’ (2009, 2). The three postcolonial cities discussed here show how partition politics develop in contexts of conflict and they are studied to understand processes of surveillance, imposed spatial separation barriers and social control in response to growing fears of terror attacks, urban violence and a persistence of

class and racial divisions. As cities around the world – due to a fear of external or internal threats of violence, put in place security measures, surveillance and gated communities; the urban space and experience transforms (Das 2011). This is nothing new for cities that are described by ethno-national divisions; cities such as Nicosia, Jerusalem and Belfast, where the presence of the military, the underlying possibility of violence and the internal borders that segregate the city have shaped daily life for decades (Misselwitz and Rieniets 2006, 22). The conflict urbanism framework, Philip Misselwitz and Tim Rieniets (2006) use to describe the case of Jerusalem, can bring about a ‘common understanding of the relationship between political violence and the production of urban space’ (ibid). Eyal Weizmann, who studies Israel’s occupation architecture, demonstrates how the conflict is apparent in how the physical space is separated and safeguarded: ‘manned checkpoints and guarded entrances have been erected to protect bus-stations, shopping malls and inner city residential neighbourhoods from suicide attacks’ (2007, 154). Identity cards are required to enter coffee shops, and physical fortification systems are available to the public in the market (ibid).⁴ The spatialisation of the conflict, partition politics and the important role of the military are observed in all three cases but varied in each context, as Jerusalem describes a situation of ongoing violent conflict, Nicosia exists in a suspended post-war state with no official resolution and Belfast operates in an official post-war context. The spatial ethno-national separations allow us to consider the way partitions develop and how they become cemented in multiple and varied lived environments manifested via the antagonism between different types of social groupings and disparate communities.

Cities worldwide and throughout time have been and are comprised by multiplicities of communities.⁵ Sociologist Michael Banton argues that how community identities are formed is presented in a complex and interrelated framework, which can apply to how any group of any kind is formed and constructed, be it of gender, class, national, ethnic (Banton 1987, 196). This is echoed in the work of political scientist Iris Marion Young who indicates that the kinship demonstrated by members of a social group also leads to a process of exclusion, and that any given social group exists only through its relations with other social groups (1990, 43). The members of a social group demonstrate kinship with one another because of similar life experiences; this leads to the formation of relationships and simultaneously the exclusion of others who do not share that experience. The grouping characteristic of social life is according to Young ‘an expression of social

relations' (ibid), as 'a group exists only in relation to at least one other group' (ibid). Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's argued in their 1985 book, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, that 'the premise of "society" as a sutured and self-defined totality' does not constitute a discourse, providing the reflective possibility that 'there is no single underlying principle fixing – and hence constituting – the whole field of differences' (2001, 111). Belonging, or being internal to a collective social entity, belonging being external to it, are presented in a non-resolvable tension. It is impossible for an entity to be totally internal in relation to its being and completely unchallenged by any exterior influences. The social is thus constructed on a marginal terrain of 'interiority' and 'exteriority' and is not confined by a 'fixed system of differences' (ibid). The urban environment is characterised by these coexistences of difference as conflicting social groups live side by side within its terrains – even if they are separated by walls. The exemplary antagonistic multiplicities observed in these cases are in fact the norm in most cities of today and not the exception. As David Harvey notes, 'the city is the site where people of all sorts and classes mingle, however reluctantly and agonistically, to produce a common if perpetually changing and transitory life' (2012, 67).

These three ethno-nationally divided cities which have become exemplary in discussions of urban antagonistic and agonistic politics have also generated innumerable peace-building initiatives, conflict resolution negotiations and dialogues, all offering expertise on issues of dealing with conflict and segregation. They have also spurred debates on the role of culture and art to promote contact and cross-ethnic visibility in the public space. Art's role within processes of building relationships, transforming antagonisms and fostering dialogue often appears symbolic in its social function. In fact today, this social use of artistic practice which aims to challenge the estrangement marking these divided cities, using the arts to create zones of contact and encounter, is quite common. Over the last 30 years, art aimed at peace-building has rejected the pictorial form of anti-war and peace art imagery in favour of social contact and engagement. Johan Galtung, considered the founder of peace-building and conflict resolution studies, argues that peace-building and creativity are similarly 'located in the borderland between the intellectual and the emotional' (2004, 160), where knowledge and emotions fuse to facilitate 'transcendence' (ibid). Conflict resolution analyst Craig Zelizer believes that the arts can help raise 'awareness of the dangers of impending conflict and speak out in favour of peace' (2004, 4), and his research in Bosnia–

Herzegovina highlights how artistic practice can be used to challenge prejudices and create bridges between communities (ibid). In the effort to bring segregated communities together and build relationships, artists employ a wide range of methods – performance, mural making, creative writing, painting and sculpture. Using art for conflict resolution can facilitate inter-group contact, encourage collaboration and build social bonds and relationships (Epskamp 1999; Zelizer 2004, 2007). Interethnic contact is key to developing a process of conflict resolution and for transforming social and territorial divisions into shared community spaces.⁶ Zelizer differentiates three types of social art: arts for peace-building, in which the two opposing groups conduct joint artistic endeavours; social protest art, which is art utilised as an act of resistance; and creative therapies, which involve healing through art (Zelizer 2007). Thus, we see the multiple ways in which the arts can assist in peace-building and social change.

Art alone cannot overcome this as in order to transform political conflict political will and policy changes are needed. But whilst art interventions cannot end warfare or conflict, they can promote better interpersonal relationships that might prevent the re-emergence of conflict. William Kelly, a community-arts practitioner from Australia, argues, 'it is my . . . belief that although a painting can never stop a bullet, a painting can stop a bullet from being fired' (cited in Zelizer 2007). Art projects targeting conflict resolution can also highlight underlying political agendas – e.g. who funds these projects, for what reasons, who benefits, their ideological framework and can they produce a shift in participant ideology. For the project examples, I present here (carried out between 2002 and 2009). I concentrate more on how they were enabled and look at their function as large-scale socially involving art projects manifested in the public spaces of the cities being examined here. I focus less on individual artworks and the artists' practice, and more on the facilitation of these processes, which included workshops, presentations, inter-communal collaboration, manifestations in the urban environment and the involvement of many people. The involvement of non-professional artists, young people and other community groups by these projects allows wider inter-relationships to become evident in terms of the ethical turn of contemporary art practices (Ranciere 2010; Bishop 2012). Looking at three divided cities at different stages of a desegregation process allows a reading of how the arts are used for peace-building purposes and their role within the process of urban regeneration. I look at the cities sequentially – Jerusalem, Nicosia and Belfast – based on the current context of conflict resolution processes, and stage of desegregation.

JERUSALEM

Jerusalem has a long history as a divided city. Here, two predominant cultures contest the urban space and maintain themselves separately based on ethnicity, nationalism, language and religion. The city's contemporary urban landscape has been shaped by conflict, and city life has changed and evolved through time: Jerusalem has changed hands over 25 times, it has been destroyed 17 times and it has been rebuilt on top of its ancient ruins (Silver 2010, 352). The city holds multiple collective memories within its enclosures and walls, and numerous religious histories are inscribed on its landscape. In his influential book, *Collective Memory*, Halbwachs argues that Jerusalem is 'a symbolic place, a heavenly allegory' (1941, 103). It is a historically contested site, with different cultures seeking ownership of its historic terrain. Its past is there to see in its buildings, sacred spaces, walls and archaeological remnants, while the old city contains multiple religious sites and archaeological projects that the Israelis and Palestinians increasingly contest in order to promote their respective 'historical narratives, legal authority and territorial rights' (Larkin and Dumper 2009, 16).

Wendy Pullan, whose work largely focuses on the divided city of Jerusalem, traces the root of the division to the 1948–67 period and highlights the transformation of the inner city divisions through time (2009, 40). Like Nicosia, Jerusalem was once a city with numerous and varied ethnic and religious groups co-existing in close proximity, very common in the Ottoman Levant area (Koureas 2014). And while these cultural quarters remain within its old city, Israeli development outside the old city and in new terrains has a mono-cultural character with no room for difference (ibid). The spatial realities of settlements, walls, borders, military checkpoints and bypass roads have imposed social segregation and estrangement of the Palestinian and Israeli neighbourhoods.⁷ Moreover, the physical partitions are forever changing: as Weizmann says: 'the anarchic geography of the frontier is an evolving image of transformation, which is remade and rearranged with every political development or decision' (2007, 7). The settlements, checkpoints and Separation Wall continually shift and transform; and the Separation Wall whose construction began in 2002 does not outline a permanent route, since it changes according to political conflicts, settlement locations, archaeology and territory (ibid, 162).

Unlike Nicosia and Belfast, Jerusalem is still marked by the wider ethno-national conflict. The art project discussed here presents an instance of visibility and reclaiming of the urban public space by Palestinian young people. The 'Youth Visions of Jerusalem'

programme, by the non-governmental organisation (NGO) 'Voices beyond Walls', took place in Jerusalem in 2009. Participatory new media was used to support creative expression and human rights; the programme targeted Palestinian youth with a steadily diminishing access to arts education and cultural activities⁸ and offered them an opportunity to voice their concerns through digital storytelling workshops, new media production and presentation in the public space of the city, and subsequent global dissemination of their work (Voices Beyond Walls 2012). The programme, engaging youth from both Shuafat Refugee Camp⁹ in East Jerusalem, and the Old City, showcased their media projects in the Old City. The media projects were developed based on workshops carried out about the city, filmed in the streets and screened in the urban environment. The intention was to address the lack of arts and culture activities in areas of Jerusalem that are largely inhabited by Palestinians.

The images of young people in action, understanding and creating, within the city fabric – Figures 1–3 show us the process of using the city fabric for creative production. Parallels could be drawn with one of the key aims of the project – to provide art educational training to an area with a lower creative learning access, challenging patterns of ethno-national segregation observed in the city. A 2005 study of art practice related to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict identified three approaches within art education.

- a) Art creation as an act of therapy involving the expression of feelings and thoughts related to violent experiences, b) art education as a means to broaden the gaze on the "Other" and beyond the conflict, and c) art education as dealing with political art and imagery without



FIGURE 1. Youth presenting their visual maps of the old city and Shu'fat refugee camp after visiting Jerusalem's neighbourhoods (courtesy of Anne Paq 2009, activestills.org).



FIGURE 2. Young people making films in the old city (courtesy of Anne Paq 2009, activestills.org).



FIGURE 3. Young people making films in the old city (courtesy of Anne Paq 2009, activestills.org).

detaching it from the students' reality. (Evron 2005, 309)

The 'Youth Vision' workshops and public presentation thus used art education as 'a means to broaden the gaze on the "Other"' (ibid), although the film showings were limited to the public spaces of the Old City.

This project was undertaken by Sawhney, Yacoub and Norman, who describe it as a 'participatory arts initiative' (2009, 72). They deem it a process of 'envisioning Media Arts for cultural identity and urban renewal in Divided Cities' (ibid) through its creation of a platform whereby youths could creatively explore their 'cultural identity and connection to the city' (ibid). With their focus on using the arts in urban renewal, they reflect on their own practice and examine how culture can be used to transform a marginalised city area. They drew on an earlier study by Landry et al. (1996) that explored the role of cultural projects in

British urban regeneration and how creativity can transform the urban experience. Sawhney and colleagues created a dialogue between how the arts are used within ethno-nationally divided city spaces and the broad social dimensions of the arts in relation to urban regeneration. They also drew parallels between East Jerusalem and Belfast's regeneration processes, which reveal a growing tendency in arts research to examine how art in divided city contexts can address urban segregation.

NICOSIA

In 1957, General Peter Young, head of the British colonial forces in Cyprus, is said to have taken a pen and drawn a line through the island. This action was in response to inter-communal conflicts, and in the early 1960s, barbed wire and division blocks were set up. At the end of the 1974 war, the Green Line (basically the demarcation line at which the fighting ceased) became fixed and firmly divides the island to this day.¹⁰ The no-man's land, also called the Buffer Zone, is home to and patrolled by the United Nations Peace Keeping Force in Cyprus and is surrounded by Turkish and Greek Cypriot troops patrolling the ceasefire line. The physical Green Line consists of roadblocks, checkpoints, fortified houses and sandbags. In 2003, movement restrictions were lifted so that there are now three crossing points in Nicosia. Nowhere is the conflict more evident in the everyday fabric of the city than in the divided old city of Nicosia.

Land, its in/accessibility, its loss and its place in the Cypriot collective memory: these are key elements in Cypriot art, life and social narratives. Social anthropologist Yael Navaro-Yashin graphically describes the heavily armed border areas that are filled with nationalist slogans, on hills, slopes and mountaintops: 'Soldiers are everywhere, either in person or through their symbols: khaki-coloured military cars; red-and-white barrels marking off access zones; guns, rifles and uniforms' (2006, 89). Navaro-Yashin also describes the experience of being close to the Green Line in Nicosia, and how the military presence shapes everyday life. The old city of Nicosia has become the emblem of this division: a mediaeval walled city, it has been divided to varying degrees since the early 1960s when interethnic friction led to separation of the Turkish Cypriots into enclaves. These divisions became much more defined in 1974, and the demarcation line that firmly separated the communities until 2003 is still very much present (Bryant 2004). In the 1980s and 1990s, Cypriots avoided the old city for its proximity to the Green

Line and its deterioration. However, this made it affordable for artists (Papadakis 2005, 53) and by the mid-2000s the southern part of the old city was becoming a creative hub and multicultural centre; 10 years on, by 2013, it had been redeveloped and regenerated to such a degree that the two main commercial arteries seemed like a giant open-air mall. Property values then increased, pushing out artists, small businesses and migrant residents. The action of resisting the ethno-national division through urban planning and architectural rehabilitation has resulted in this important historical site being given away to private businesses (Christodoulides 2014).

Ethno-national narratives have also largely shaped the institutional art system of Nicosia (Tselika 2015). But the use of art within peace-building frameworks – assisted by international bodies such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations and the European Union – has also allowed for a conflict resolution art practice to develop. Conflict resolution art is a label/description that I use informed by research on how art practices have been used in peace-building processes (Epskamp 1999, 2006; Zelizer 2004; Lederach 2005). It also describes artistic practice in Cyprus that involves both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities and that is often funded and assisted by conflict resolution bodies based in Cyprus, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It was during the 1990s and early 2000s that bi-communal art production began to flourish in Cyprus.¹¹ The roots of bi-communal cooperation within Nicosia across the divide can be traced to the 1979 Nicosia Master Plan, which followed the successful implementation in 1978 of a common sewage system. Led by the then mayors of the city, Lellos Demetriades (South Nicosia) and Mustafa Akinci (North Nicosia), the city administrations worked together under the umbrella of the UNDP (Petridou 2001). The project has been operating for 37 years and has achieved multiple urban transformations and cooperative endeavours.¹² This legacy also created a bi-communal framework through which the use of the arts for conflict resolution evolved. The UNDP plays a large role in the funding of NGOs that work with conflict resolution in Cyprus: the 1998 bi-communal project UNDP-ACT sought to build confidence between the two communities and assist in reconciliation and reunification (Cyprus Bi-communal Development Program 2004, iv). Its primary purpose was to contribute to peace-building and cooperation through projects benefiting both communities, and from 1998 to 2004, it supported projects with USAID funding of over 60 million dollars (ibid, v). In 2002, increased funds for

projects relating to culture and art were approved (ibid, 22).

The relationship between two communities' main art associations, South Nicosia's Cyprus Chamber of Fine Art (EKATE)¹³ and North Nicosia's European Mediterranean Artists Association (EMAA),¹⁴ has been important in the development of conflict resolution art. Both organisations took a progressive political stance by working together; their first joint efforts were supported by the Bi-communal Development Programme (UNDP-ACT 2013).

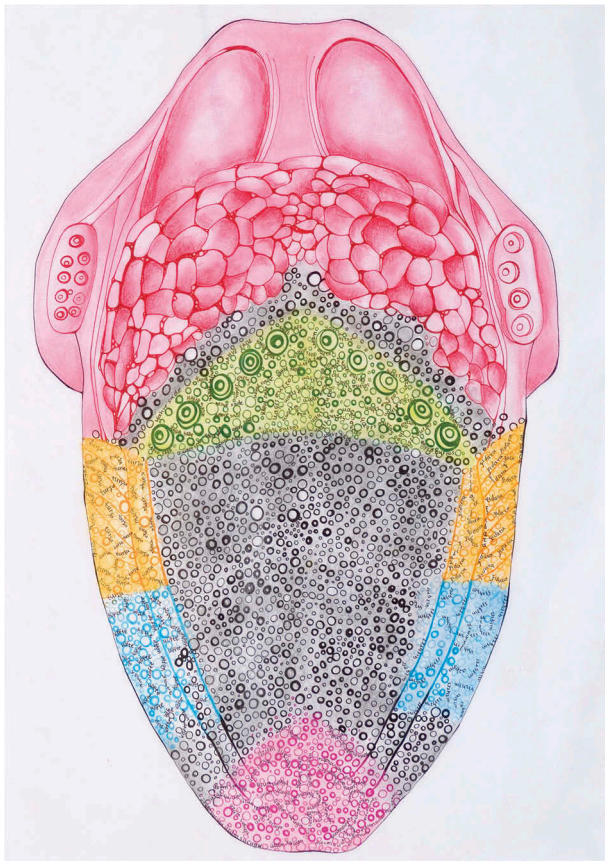
After organising a series of different workshop-focused events encouraging exchange between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, in 2007, EKATE and EMAA received considerable funding from UNDP and USAID to develop the bi-communal art competition, Art Attack, and the subsequent exhibition, Cypriot Puzzle (2007–2008) (Cypriot Puzzle 2008, 1). This was the first competition of its kind and was open to Cypriots of all ages.

The project requested artwork reflecting one of the themes – 'Environment–Identity–Difference and Equality–Memories–Spirituality–Future–Line' (Cypriot Puzzle 2008, 2) – and received over 900 entries. Divided in different categories, it was open to all ages and to both professional and amateur artists. An example of the first prize for the age category 13–17 is demonstrated in Figure 4. The exhibition, which followed the competition, travelled around the island in 2008 and was shown in exhibition venues and in public spaces (Figure 5). As such, it was widely seen by a large number of people through the form of photo displays of the artworks on large outdoor panels. The exhibition aimed to highlight the island's cultural diversity and to emphasise the important role of the arts in sharing and celebrating this diversity (ibid, 3).

The ties to conflict resolution art initiatives are clear in the following statement on the opening page of the exhibition catalogue.

In many places around the world, art is used in areas of conflict as a way to bring communities together. Art and art projects can provide people with ways of expressing thoughts and feelings about a situation in a way that far outweighs their ability to do so in words. (Cypriot Puzzle 2008, 1)

The project catalogue highlights its positivity and proclaims its success in using the visual arts for purposes of reconciliation. Yet if we examine the UNDP evaluation documents, we see the politics underlying



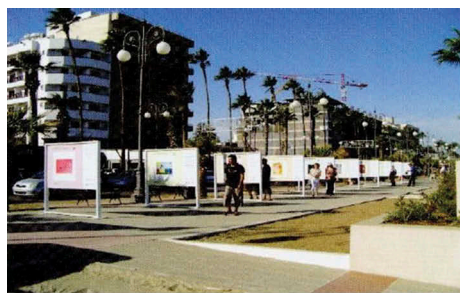
*Σίτουσιούκος, Κιεφρές, Ξυδάτα, Καφέ/Üzümlü Sucuğu, Kofte, Turşu, Sade Kahve"
by Margarita Kotsoni, Age 13
First Prize: Age 13 - 17 Category
Art Attack - Cyprus Art Competition 2007

FIGURE 4. Art attack – Cypriot puzzle first prize in category ages 13–17. Margarita Kotsoni (courtesy of Ezgin and Toumazou).

and enabling such projects. Following the completion of the project, the Turkish Cypriot collaborator EMMA noted the following in the UNDP Closure Report:

Our biggest challenge was not being treated the same as EKATE when it comes to response/acknowledgement of officials. ... The partners felt that at times, they were treated differently as Turkish Cypriots especially when it comes to property and finding venues for the exhibitions. Some of the exhibition related events were not well organized and were not conflict sensitive. For example materials were only produced in Greek – there was nothing in English or Turkish (EMAA, Art Attack and Cypriot Puzzle UNDP Closure Report 2008). This caused arguments at the event and brought up issues of inequality. (ibid)

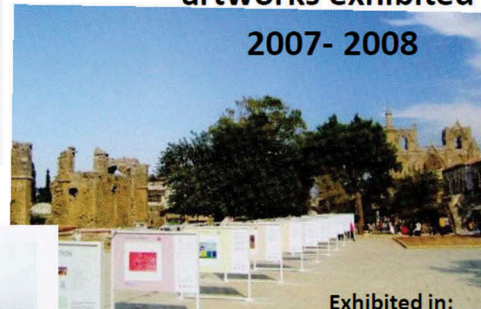
This evaluation highlights the need for sensitivity in such projects. Socially involving art initiatives vary widely, from small-scale art projects for young people to artist collaborations. However, building relationships and restoring/developing trust, empathy and social bonds require long-term, consistent face-to-face interaction (Toumazou 2014). While such practices can instigate contact and relationship building, we must also consider who is being brought into contact, how, why and by whom. Thus, it is significant that the two main collaborators of these projects, Ozgul Ezgin and Argyro Toumazou, continue to work together on



Exhibited also in
open public spaces



“Cypriot Puzzle” the winning artworks exhibited 2007- 2008



Exhibited in:

Nicosia
Limassol
Larnaca
Pafos
Kerynia
Famagusta
Lefka

FIGURE 5. Cypriot puzzle: Prize-winning artworks exhibited in public spaces in cities throughout Cyprus, 2007–2008 (courtesy of Ezgin & Toumazou).

projects outside the framework of the EKATE EMAA collaboration, which collapsed in 2013 (Tselika 2015).¹⁵

When I interviewed Toumazou about the bi-communal artist collaborations since the early 2000s, she stated that the ‘social element, the element of encounter was stronger than the aesthetic development aspect at the start’ (Toumazou 2014, 05:00). Speaking of Art Attack, Toumazou indicated: ‘very specific issues became apparent in the work of the young people through the evaluation process – the symbols being used, political and social issues, and so forth’ (ibid, 13:10). An arts manager who has produced many large-scale international projects at both local and international levels, Toumazou believes that art is useful in the context of conflict transformation:

Firstly at the human level. Usually I develop programmes for groups and people to come together, even though as Cypriots we are not noted for collective action in the public space. Sometimes we take people abroad, and to large-scale events, and we manage to involve individuals who are not interested in peace building and have quite a hard-line ethnical stance, and you see people changing slowly one by one. You do not win everyone but the change happens. (ibid, 14:30)

Toumazou’s recognition of how the arts can cultivate change echoes another quite common use of the arts to facilitate empathy, collaborative action and relationship building in post-conflict societies. This is because of art’s perceived ability to

Restore and nourish people’s capacities to listen, to empathize, to communicate, to receive, to hope, to imagine, to trust, and to act compassionately – the very capacities required for sustainable coexistence and reconciliation. (Yalen and Cohen 2007, 3)

All these ways that assist in building trust are especially important for estranged and divided communities.

While in this paper I point out how art has been/is used to facilitate contact between three specific divided communities, this phenomenon also occurs in many other urban contexts and situations. In fact, research indicates that the use of art in cases of ethno-national division is part of wider developments and directions within the visual art currents and systems.¹⁶

BELFAST

Belfast is iconic in terms of ethno-nationally divided cities: with the political conflict officially resolved, the

situation is extremely well documented and well researched (Gaffikin, Morrissey, and Sterrett 2001; Byrne 2005; Shirlow and Murtagh 2006; Shirlow and McEvoy 2008).¹⁷ Shirlow and Murtagh believe that the conflict in Belfast is ‘not based upon religion but rather religion acts as a boundary marker with regard to competing aspirations regarding forms of Britishness and Irishness’ (2006, 22). Belfast has been associated with and used as a representation of the Northern Ireland conflict because in the last 30 years, it has been the site of 40 per cent of all conflict-related deaths (Gaffikin, Morrissey, and Sterrett 2001, 143). Belfast is spatially divided into Catholic (predominantly nationalist) and Protestant (predominantly loyalist) ethnic territories, with micro-ethnic territories within the different sectors. The ethnic pockets are usually divided by ceasefire walls (ibid).

As sociologist David Sibley argues, the ‘self is a cultural production’ (1995, 7). He believes that we develop a sense of borders when we are very young and that this becomes a defining factor in how we relate to others and internalise a feeling of belonging to a culture (ibid). In ethno-nationally divided cities, the sense of the (in) visible borders in the city becomes heightened, as does the spatial awareness of belonging. Madeleine Leonard’s research with teenagers in Belfast, in which she found that the youth have become accustomed to an everyday life of invisible walls, confirms this (Leonard 2010). The inherent understanding of borders and knowing where one can and cannot go is also common among the youth raised in border areas in Nicosia (Tselika 2015).

Divided cities are urban spaces where encounters with separation walls, frontiers, checkpoints, barriers, Buffer Zones and military areas shape everyday life. Their landscapes falsely demarcate space with flags, nationalist public monuments, wall paintings and other expressions of ethnic affiliation. For example, Belfast is recognised for its ‘peace walls’ and nationalist and loyalist graffiti, and there are now guided tours where people can read the history of the city through the wall paintings (Blevins 2011).¹⁸

In Northern Ireland, we see that contemporary art practice also addresses the country’s challenging urban conflict and ethno-national divisions. Littoral, a Lancashire-based non-profit arts trust, has for many years explored community relations through art in Northern Ireland, focusing particularly on ‘Culture after Conflict’ (Littoral 2011). Littoral’s 2002 ‘Routes’ programme was one such project: from 2000 to 2002, Littoral worked with a photographers’ collective (Belfast Exposed), artists (Flaxart Studios) and filmmakers

(Banter Productions), as well as ‘bus drivers and associated workers’ (Littoral Organisation – Routes and Working for Change 2013). The project encouraged collaboration between artists and bus drivers to highlight the region’s sectarianism as well as the role of public transport workers throughout the conflict. The project resulted in multiple interpretations: a photographic exhibition, a publication on the bus drivers’ experiences, educational materials and more, including an entire month of events (ibid). Through the medium of artistic and cultural practices, the collaboration of artists and transport workers produced his/stories illustrating how conflict is dealt with in day-to-day life. The Routes project took place four years after the Good Friday Agreement, and transport workers were the focus because their jobs required working in an integrated manner within a sectarian and divided society (Belfast



FIGURE 6. The Bogside artists with the banner they created for the Ulsterbus and Citibus branches of the ATGWU, used at the May Day Parade in 2002. ‘Routes’ programme, 2002 (courtesy of Bogside Artists). Photograph by Ian Hunter.



FIGURE 7. Ursula Burke photograph shown as part of the *Routes* exhibition, Belfast (courtesy of Ursula Burke).

Exposed 2002).¹⁹ The project cultivated interaction between the artists and the bus drivers and gave rise to a multiplicity of arts manifestations (Figures 6 and 7), both within the public context but also within dedicated exhibitions, bringing together issues of difference and coexistence, labour and trade unionism.

The Bogside artists, so named for their murals (‘The People’s Gallery’) in the neighbourhood of Bogside, created a banner for the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers’ Union (ATGWU), carried in the 2002 May Day Parade (Figure 6). We see the artists standing together with a man part of the transport union. We know this by his placement in the image, in uniform, holding the banner created by the artists for the union’s presence in the May Week Trade Union cultural festivals in Belfast. Ursula Burke, Figure 7, is a Belfast-based artist that was commissioned by Belfast Exposed (as part of the Routes project) to produce a series of photographs of the bus drivers. These were exhibited in May 2002 as part of an exhibition organised by Belfast Exposed but within the larger framework of actions carried out within the Routes project (Belfast Exposed 2002). The bus drivers as a working group, which moved across geographical, religious and sectarian divisions throughout the violent conflict, are highlighted as part of this art project within a labour narrative and a union focus.

Littoral stresses the need for critical reflection on conflict-related projects if new insights are to be gained (Littoral 2011). The Routes project moved beyond the typical art-focused peace-building narrative to explore cultures of work and the relationship between trade unionism and art. The bus drivers offered a unique perspective on the urban transformation of Belfast since the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.

Since then, the city has experienced an intense regeneration and gentrification process. To offset the spatial segregation, the government emphasised renewal of what is deemed the ‘neutral spaces of the Downtown and Waterfront’ (Gaffikin, Morrissey, and Sterrett 2001, 159), re-developing the waterfront as a ‘shared’ corporate space. The development project was tied in with public art initiatives – including an art route accessible via the corporation’s website – also aimed at rebranding the city and detaching it from its violent past (Laganside 2010). The importance of this project is that the community was consulted and involved so that a ‘community strategy was formulated and a community officer appointed, ensuring a greater focus on community involvement and in particular on job

creation and training' (Smith and Alexander 2001, 189). And yet despite these claims, what must not be overlooked is a process of gentrification in an inner city area. Murtagh (2008, 4) explains that in the 1990s and 2000s, a 'twin speed city' emerged with 'new interface separation barriers'.

For a city whose recent imagery has been built on violence, peace lines and fear, the formation of low risk, glitzy and speculator investment sites has been a vital strategy in normalization and place marketing. Belfast has been 'quarterized' in order to create neutral images of the past and create new sites for tourists, investors and moneyed residents. (ibid, 9)

Analysing the desegregation process in South Africa, Lemon and Clifford noted that 'urban areas have been characterised by "re-segregation within a process of desegregation" whereby new socially segmented spaces simply overlay stubborn patterns of racial segregation' (2005, 8). Comparing the various stages of the desegregation process in divided cities is particularly interesting. For example, both Belfast and Nicosia are experiencing intense rebuilding and redevelopment. Comparing Nicosia's old city,²⁰ and Laganside, we can see what Minton describes as the 'privatisation of public space' (2006) – areas once hard hit by conflict are transformed into places characterised by 'a fake, theme-park atmosphere which is a result of disconnection from the local environment' (ibid, 4). Harvey (1988) believes this type of development results in 'voodoo cities', where the glitzy new urban space merely masks increasing social inequality. In both Nicosia and Belfast, many art and cultural activities are concentrated in the areas once most affected by violent conflict. These we can identify as part of a wider urban planning strategy that involves gentrification of these sites. Thus, it seems important to reflect on how much the arts can actually help in bridging social division.

ART AS A PERCEIVED TOOL FOR SOCIAL COHESION

In the 1990s there started to be increasing scholarship on the potential of the arts for social transformation, in so far as they

May help strengthen social cohesion, increase personal confidence and life skills, create common ground between people, improve their mental and physical well-being, strengthen their ability to act as democratic

citizens. ... (Landry, Greene, Matarasso & Bianchini 1996, 8)

In fact, it is debatable whether the arts can really accomplish all the above, and it is important to resist these assumptions.²¹

Landry and Bianchini have been interested in modern cities and their problems for over 30 years and note the phenomenon of 'division' (1995, 14) as an important issue – especially in large urban centres (London, New York, etc.) that are increasingly socially fragmented and divided. And with other colleagues, Landry notes that 'arts programmes have made a positive contribution to local vitality and urban renewal' (Landry et al. 1996, Report Summary) and emphasises that creativity and culture can encourage innovative urban redevelopment.

There seems to be a growing interest in using the arts to generate social change in today's urban context, which is often defined by division. Engaging artists with their communities is now widely utilised for purposes of urban regeneration and neighbourhood change, similarly to using art to cultivate relationship building in cases of conflict. Artist Lorraine Leeson (2008) argues that the realisation that art can assist in regeneration has brought on new challenges. The same mechanisms that support social art practices also restrain more locally led community initiatives, which can reduce a regeneration project – even one that uses socially engaged art methods – to a social exclusion project. Such issues are becoming more important as governments are increasingly interested in regenerating their cities. Neil Gray notes how radically the situation has changed, in the case of the United Kingdom. Once it was artists and squatters unconsciously leading to regeneration and gentrification (cited in Slater and Iles 2010), while now it is the city officials who lead this movement as 'they seek to enhance property values through the cultural capital of artists and the creation of creative clusters' (ibid, 9).

While the rise of the creative class and its effect on the city environment gained prominence through the work of urban studies theorist Richard Florida (2002), I would like to trace it back to sociologist's Sharon Zukin's interpretation of how 'artistic production' transforms areas of the city (1982). Zukin has shown the process by which artistic production transforms the city space and results in the displacement that eventually follows once the area becomes commercially attractive (1982, 4–5). The same scenario occurs in ethno-nationally divided city contexts, as the city

administrations plan for desegregation and regeneration.

EPILOGUE

In this paper, I have examined three ethno-nationally divided cities at different stages of conflict resolution in relation to how the arts have been used to assist peace-building. I have also explored the relationship of the arts to processes of urban regeneration. Belfast, a city where the conflict has been resolved, reveals extensive regeneration and gentrification in areas previously at the heart of the conflict. The arts have been employed throughout the city to cultivate interethnic contact and to promote its regeneration. Nicosia is a city divided by a buffer zone, with a non-resolved conflict, but with a peaceful everyday life. Like Belfast, the arts have been used both to regenerate the area hardest hit by the conflict and to cultivate relationship building across the divide (Tselika 2015). Jerusalem is a city still troubled by ongoing violent conflict and which exhibits very different patterns of gentrification largely related to ethnic segregation. Here, we are presented with an example of art being used as a means to ensure citizen participation and visibility within the conflicted public spaces of the city.

Richard Scholar describes divided cities as ‘the stage upon which fundamental political concepts – such as those of citizenship, democracy, and human rights – both find their origins and encounter their limits’ (2006, 2). These concepts become reflected in the signs of division, which are most visible in the public spaces of polarised cities. To challenge division, peace-building processes are developed within the spatial patterns of divided cities, transforming social and territorial divisions into shared community spaces of interethnic contact. It is important to consider the role that ‘shared spaces’ can have in a partitioned urban setting, as they can become sites of inter-communal face-to-face contact (Wallach 2011). Sites suitable for interaction and encounter can be anything: the street, the cafe or the cultural centre (Poposki 2011). In divided cities, often the identity of one social group is excluded from representation in the public space of the other. The creation, therefore, of situations and places where all groups are included and feel represented can help challenge the visible and invisible borders of the segregated urban fabric and form more cohesive sociopolitical frameworks. It is with the creation of these ‘contact zones’ and ‘shared spaces’ that we can challenge segregated structures. Art is one avenue through which such shared spaces are triggered, as the initiatives that were referred to in this article demonstrate. The impact

of these initiatives differs in each case but an insight into the longer term impact is presented in Argyro Toumazou’s comment that ‘you cannot win everyone but change happens’ (2014) in the case of Cyprus, the main site of my practice-led research.

An image of art is presented as having the potential to inform and develop relationship building (Galtung 2004; Lederach 2005), through its ability to enable communication without words and expanding the avenues for exchange amongst different social groups. Using the arts in such contexts does not confine them to post-war societies; their use can include ‘a wide range of efforts to prevent, reduce, transform, and help people recover from violence in all forms, at all levels of society, and in all stages of conflict’ (Shanks and Schirch 2008). Furthermore, art undertaken in the public realm and involving social groups can ‘help rejuvenate severed social connections, both by promoting community discovery and awareness and by directly enhancing social connections’ (Hall and Robertson 2001, 11). This kind of art can be ‘active in the development of tangible networks and inter-personal links, promoting social development and cohesion’ (ibid), and can facilitate ‘developing civic identity’ (ibid, 13).

Yet I believe we must view these claims with a critical eye. As Hall and Robertson argue, this recent explosion of social and public practice, which is based on its ‘supposed contribution to the alleviation of a range of urban problems’ (ibid, 18), must be read cautiously. As artist Inigo Manglano-Ovalle (of the Tele-Vecindario project, Chicago) said: ‘artists who do community-based work should remain “critically suspect” of their intentions and actions if they are to orchestrate responsible community process and artworks’ (cited in Bacon, Yuen, and Korza 1999, 42).

The increasing fragmentation, separation and conflict that are observed in urban contexts; the regular debates in relation to issues of division and surveillance; and the use of art within these processes indicate the need to bring into focus and promote discourse related to ethno-nationally divided cities. Ethno-nationally divided cities have a legacy in dealing with conflict, urban segregation, and in using the arts to challenge separation and facilitate contact. Study of divided cities and their use of art for relationship building not only reveals how they are successful in the early stages of the desegregation process but also points to how this can lead to gentrification as large corporations move in to the desegregated regenerated areas. It is important, therefore, to question the use of art as a bandage, as a social glue that can facilitate cohesion between

conflicted social groups. Looking at these cities marked by violence, division and segregation, the social function of art appears twofold: one, to build relationships between estranged social groups; and two, to bring about regeneration of run-down areas. It is this dual purpose that makes these particular environments so important within the broader study of how arts and culture are used in urban contexts where all cities are divided, whether by ethnicity, religion, gender or economic class.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

NOTES

- [1] A 'divided city', as the term is used in the context of this text, is a city characterised by ethno-national segregation within its urban environment.
- [2] It is important to note the practice-led dimension of the research project that gave rise to these observations (Tselika 2015).
- [3] The increasingly popular interdisciplinary discourse that characterises the notion of the ethno-nationally divided city is often negotiated through numerous academic strands: political studies, sociology, anthropology, architecture, urban planning and cultural practices, amongst others. Such an approach is needed due to the complexity of the social, cultural and political disintegration in such cities.
- [4] Here, we see evidence of another reason why these cities should be studied: the state's and powerful social groups' desire for surveillance and control in response to growing fears of terror attacks, urban violence and a persistence of class divides.
- [5] The Oxford English Dictionary places the emergence of the word in the 14th century as a derivative of the French word 'communete' and the Latin 'communitat' – 'communitis'. Both these are used to refer to joint possession or use and shared social relations, fellowship or association. Raymond Williams in his book *Keywords*, 1976, tells us that the Latin root of the term 'common' literally means together under obligation. Today, the word community still invokes a sense of collective social responsibility (1983, 75).
- [6] Yehuda Amir demonstrated that when contact occurs between two members of different cultural groups, opinions of one another can turn from negative to positive (1969). In order to ensure the positive outcome of contact, he argued that contact is informal, repeated and makes each participant feel of equal status (Amir 1969).
- [7] Calame and Charlesworth (2009) present a timeline history of the physical partition of Jerusalem from the early twentieth century, when the British partitioned the

city into 12 religious regions, sparking communal friction. This was followed by the social tensions of the 1920s caused by the changing demographics of the city; this friction eventually led to the city's physical and functional partition by 1947. The partition saw the coexistence of mono-ethnic neighbourhoods side by side as opposed to a clear-cut dividing line. The postcolonial inter-communal strife strengthened the ethnic social boundaries and separation. By 1948, the city was formally partitioned and there was but one legal crossing point. The fenced border erected in 1962 by Israeli forces was dismantled by the Israeli Minister of Defence in 1967. In 2002, Israel began building the security fence that crosses Jerusalem and the West Bank (Calame and Charlesworth 2009, 89–96).

- [8] The 'Youth Visions of Jerusalem' project was part of the 'Voices beyond the walls' initiative (2006–2009), which sponsored workshops that trained dozens of adult facilitators and engaged hundreds of youth in producing their own digital video shorts. Nearly 60 video shorts were created by teams of youth within the context of the umbrella project of the organisation 'Digital Media Program for Creative Expression by Youth' (Voices Beyond Walls 2012) and were shown in many festivals around the world (ibid). The 'Youth Visions of Jerusalem' project was hosted by the Al-Ma'mal Foundation for Contemporary Art and the African Community Youth Center in the Old City and the Woman and Child Centers in Shuafat refugee camp.
- [9] Shuafat Refugee Camp is the only West Bank camp that lies within the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem and which is administered by the Israeli authorities. Originally established in 1965 to house around 1500 refugees, Shuafat today is unofficially home to approximately 18 000 people of which around 50–60 per cent are registered refugees (Shuafat Report 2013). It is a concrete refugee camp, comprising many closely spaced blocks of flats.
- [10] The early lines of separation erected by the British colonial forces transformed into the urban and rural Turkish Cypriot enclaves in the early 1960s following the lapse of the constitution. The year 1974, however, brought about clear demarcation lines and the formation of the Buffer Zone that firmly separated the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities for the next 29 years. Even though the life of the Cypriot Buffer Zone since 1974 has been transformed, its geographical territory has not shifted.
- [11] Bi-communal art implies the involvement and active participation of members of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot ethnic communities in artistic production and creative collaboration.
- [12] The first phase between 1981 and 1984 formulated a general planning strategy for greater Nicosia, and in the second phase 1984–1985, an operational plan was executed. There was particular attention on the historic centre of Nicosia within the Venetian walls as it represents a common heritage for all communities of

- Nicosia, and as the most historic part of the city, it also exhibited the most deterioration. With the restoration of the buildings that surround the Buffer Zone, the Nicosia Master Plan hoped to revive this area that is seen as the most important for the reintegration of the communities (Nicosia the divided city 1998, 27–31). The area has indeed been revived and it is currently one of the busiest sites of the city.
- [13] The Cyprus Republic Chamber of Fine Art (EKATE) was founded in 1964 by a group of Greek Cypriot artists often considered ‘the fathers’ of Cypriot Art, along with predominant members of the so-called first generation, and the inter-war generation of Cypriot artists (Christou 1983). The association primarily aims to promote artistic creation in Cyprus (EKATE 2009).
- [14] The European Mediterranean Art Association (EMAA) was established in 2002. It emphasises that ‘with all its activities, publications, bi-communal art events and international events, EMMA is the first non-profit institutionalized art organisation in [the] northern part of Cyprus’ (EMMA Description on Buffer Zone Project 2012).
- [15] Just concluded the two-year programme Confrontation through Art (Confrontation through art 2015).
- [16] The methodological approach of the social practice of the arts has been explored under variant titles but finds strong links with the collective and collaborative approach that contemporary art production entails. ‘New genre public art’ for Suzanne Lacy (1995); for Nicholas Bourriaud the term ‘relational aesthetics’ (1998); ‘dialogical’ for Grant Kester (2004) and ‘participatory’ for Claire Bishop (2006, 2012) – these are only some of the terms that the art world has used to iterate some shifts that have been inscribed as methods of working in a socially engaged manner. As a wide-ranging practice, it incorporates a multimedia and multidisciplinary approach (Tselika 2015).
- [17] There is even a research journal on peace, conflict and community relations in Northern Ireland, *Shared Space* (2005-ongoing), published by the Community Relations Council.
- [18] As the earlier segregationist murals are increasingly deteriorating, residents have been painting over them with peace imagery (Sharp 2011). This is a concern within art, culture and history communities, which believe they are important artistic images that should not be lost. Bill Roston asserts: ‘the problem is they are not seen as art, they are seen as political. They look like art but are not in the eyes of the people who paint them, so there is no pressure to preserve them’ (cited in Sharp 2011).
- [19] This arose from the 1970 Transport and General Workers Union decision that all city routes would be conducted by drivers regardless of faith or political conviction, which meant that public transport was one of the few aspects of daily life where Protestants and Catholics, Republicans and Loyalists interacted on a daily basis throughout the conflict.
- [20] Whereas 10 years ago the area within Nicosia’s Venetian walls was replete with derelict and abandoned houses, and sparsely inhabited with low rents, now it has once again become the centre of the city, teeming with bars, cafes, galleries and shops. The Ledra–Locmaci crossing that has been open since 2008 has greatly increased the movement from north to south. It is unclear though how this regeneration is building on the ethnic relationship. The only attempts at working together for the development of the city seem to be activist attempts that oppose the gentrification and corporate development that has pushed the prices in the old city to such high levels.
- [21] It is also important to consider that such methodologies are already integrated in developers’ interventions in different city areas, in both North European and American (USA) contexts.

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