

Nicosia: Topographies of Memory



Anita Bakshi



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Tuesday 9th October 5:30-7:00pm Library
(Department of Architecture)

Trade and Exchange in Nicosia's City Center: Memories of Pre-Division Urban Practices

In Nicosia's inaccessible Buffer Zone lies Ermou Street, formerly the backbone of the city's main marketplace. Once the dynamic heart of city life, well used by all communities, since 1974 it has become a no-man's land, and much knowledge about what it used to be has been lost. This talk will describe the research used to reconstruct the topographies of the Buffer Zone - using the few resources available and relying most heavily on the memories of those who knew this area in the 1940s-1950s. This research employed the use of visual materials and mapping in interviews, to serve as prompts to bring up memories that had long been lying dormant, as well as to document these memories.

The topographies that emerged from this research will then be outlined - describing the streetscape of Ermou as marked by distinct features and landmarks that were widely recognized by all. The function of the Ermou streets as a marketplace created a very particular spatial configuration in the heart of the city - one of narrow lots, wide doorways, recognizable patterns, and openness and visibility. In turn, the material reality of these streets served to create a well-functioning common realm for the city. These streets served as a framework in which characters, sounds, known institutions, and daily rhythms were located: a framework that allowed for visual recognition, contact, and social negotiation.

Anita Bakshi recently completed a PhD in Architecture at the University of Cambridge within the context of the Conflict in Cities Research Programme. Her PhD research examined the interplay between history, memory, place and conflict in Nicosia, the divided capital of Cyprus. She previously received degrees in architecture from the University of Illinois at Chicago, and the University of California at Berkeley, and worked in architectural design firms in Chicago, Berkeley, and Istanbul.

All welcome.