Beyond State Authority: Dark Tourism in the Cyprus Buffer Zone

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Abstract

Buffer zones around the world have been referred to as 'No Man's Lands', a definition that reflects their element of abandonment and macabre decay in time, in the phenomenical absence of human activity. Although buffer zones might appear empty and lifeless, they often hide a microcosm of human and other activity, activity that occurs beyond state authority, in lands that are contested or publicly inaccessible. This paper focuses on the UN-controlled buffer zone cutting through the island of Cyprus. It presents a number of peace building projects that occurred within the Cyprus Buffer Zone over the past decade and discusses the involvement of local and international audiences. Interestingly, these projects attracted or were undertaken by foreign conflict professionals, a dark tourism audience that has developed beyond the island's state authority and tourism industry.

Keywords: Buffer Zone, Cyprus, Dark Tourism, Peacebuilding

Introduction

This study presents a fairly unexplored tourist audience, conflict professionals, who can be seen as a distinct audience within the classification of business tourism, an audience that directly affiliates with dark tourism. Foreign conflict professionals – hereby referred to as FCPs – engage in dark tourism activity when traveling to conflict or post-conflict destinations for business, either as freelancers and or as part of an institution or organisation.

Cyprus is one of the many destinations globally that has been attracting FCPs interested in professionally exploring the Cyprus conflict's intractability, history and current dynamics.FCP activity on the island experienced an increase when in 2003 movement across the Buffer Zone was enabled, allowing the partitioned communities of Greek and Turkish Cypriots to travel across the island and beyond their community's territory. Nevertheless, a Buffer Zone that was established in 1964 by UN Peacekeeping Forces (UNFICYP) in the Cypriot capital, Nicosia, and was extended across the island after 1974, continues to physically separate the Turkish Cypriot north from the Greek Cypriot south until a long awaited settlement is reached. In some cases being as narrow as a few meters and in others extending as wide as a few kilometres, the Cyprus Buffer Zone remains a macabre reminder of the Cyprus conflict and an intriguing inspiration for a range of professionals including artists and researchers.

This study presents a number of reconciliatory projects that have taken place within the Cyprus Buffer Zone and either included or had been initiated by FCPs. What is noteworthy about the case of Cyprus is not only the influence of this audience on the island's efforts for reconciliation, but also the fact that FCP activity on the island has taken place in areas within or in proximity to the UN-administered Buffer Zone, a contested territory that remains unresolved and, to its majority, inaccessible to the public. Consequentially, this paper is set to explore two questions that arise from the above observations: in what ways are FCPs influential to reconciliatory progress in Cyprus and what are the implications of their activity taking place beyond the boundaries of the local tourism industry?

Dark Tourism in the Cyprus Buffer Zone

Dark tourism is a fairly recent and unexplored concept. It has been used predominantly to identify the macabre element of certain tourist destinations and to discuss the tourist incentives for visiting 'dark' sites. The concept of dark tourism has been distinctly defined as the attraction to sites of death, tragedy and disaster (Lennon and Foley 2000; Sharpley and Stone 2009), but also broadened to include sites with

an indirect correlation to death and violence, including activities with a risk of death (Biran and Poria 2012; Robb 2009). The diversity of sites associating with death, disaster and the macabre provides a wide range of dark tourism attractions, with a higher or lower level of 'darkness', depending on their authenticity, the severity of the tragedy they depict and the level of sentimentality they provoke to their visitors.
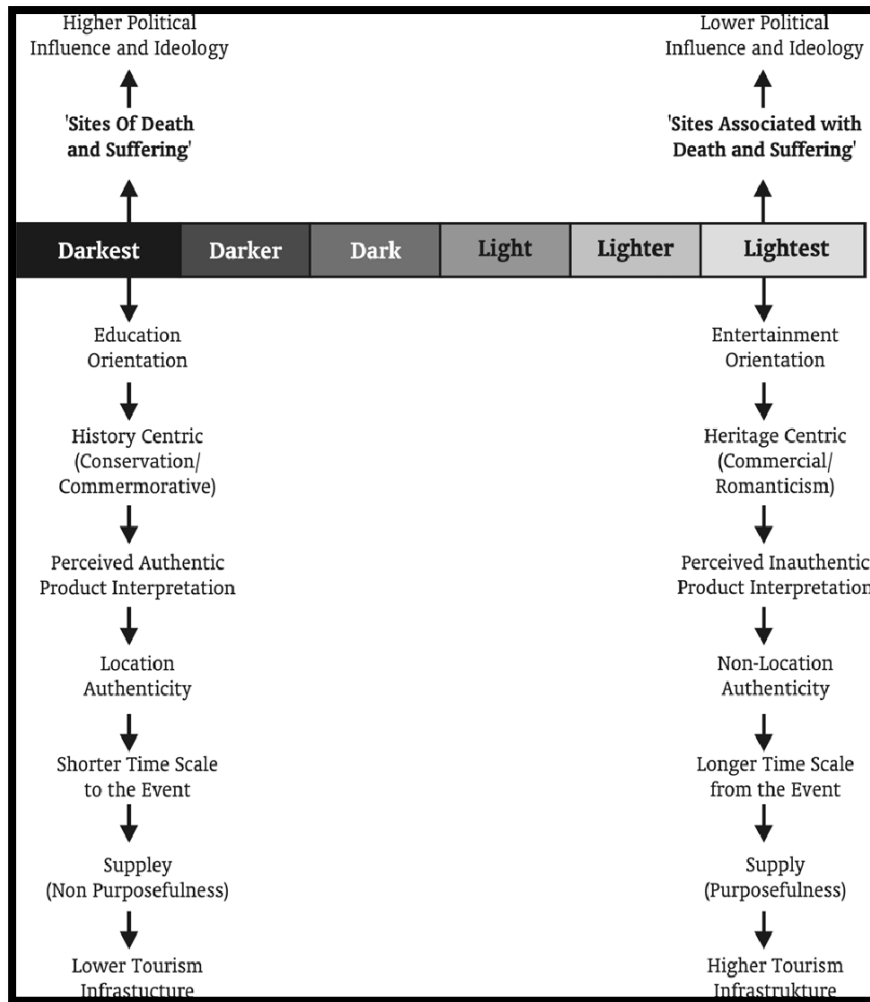
Post-conflict areas are examples of dark sites, as they illustrate the authentic aftermath of a past war and are of great interest to professionals dealing with conflict – social scientists, journalists, conflict photographers and film-makers, policy-makers, practitioners, activists. Conflict professionals have a professional interest in visiting certain post-conflict sites and can be considered a distinct tourist audience under the dark tourism domain, a sub-category of business tourism that is specific to post-conflict areas.

The tourist audience of conflict professionals is noteworthy for two main reasons: first, conflict professionals who visit post-conflict sites for business do so not to satisfy their fascination with death, war and tragedy – recreational travel – but to satisfy a professional interest that can be classified as necessary travel (Liutikas 2012). It is therefore an audience contradicting the negative connotation traditionally associated with dark tourism. In addition, post-conflict areas are dynamic in nature as they transition politically, institutionally and socially from a state of war to positive peace (Roberts 2008; Sewer and Thomson 2009). It is therefore important to examine whether the work of this niche audience, their publications, articles, photographs, trainings and contact with locals and key stakeholders has a notable impact on the post-conflict area's transition towards viable peace.

In order to identify the framework within which lies dark tourism, one must acknowledge the complexity associated with the concept of tourism. Burns and Holden suggest that identifying tourism as a product holds certain inaccuracies, as does the classification of tourism as an industry (1995: 5). Jafari (*ibid.*) identifies tourism as an experience and describes it from the perspective of the visitor, supporting that tourism is the activity of people away from their "usual habitat", making use of "a foreign industry of their interest, an activity with economic, social as well as environmental implications".

Dark tourism has been defined as "the act of travel to sites associated with death, suffering and the seemingly macabre" (Stone, 2006; 146). According to Collins-Kreiner (2010), dark tourism refers to the dark experience, one that is subjective to the visitor's perception. The dark element is therefore not an accurate characteristic for the site – which can combine dark, cultural, heritage, political and historical elements – or the traveller – who can be motivated by dark, cultural, recreational, emotional or other factors at the same time. One tourist experience at a dark site can be darker than another, according to Stone's "Dark Tourism Spectrum" (2006: 151):

Figure 1.1

| Darkest | Darker | Dark | Light | Lighter | Lightest |

Higher Political Influence and Ideology ↑ 'Sites Of Death and Suffering' ↑

Lower Political Influence and Ideology ↑ 'Sites Associated with Death and Suffering' ↑

Education Orientation ↓ History Centric (Conservation/Commemmorative) ↓ Perceived Authentic Product Interpretation ↓ Location Authenticity ↓ Shorter Time Scale to the Event ↓ Suppley (Non Purposefulness) ↓ Lower Tourism Infrastucture

Entertainment Orientation ↓ Heritage Centric (Commercial/Romanticism) ↓ Perceived Inauthentic Product Interpretation ↓ Non-Location Authenticity ↓ Longer Time Scale from the Event ↓ Supply (Purposefulness) ↓ Higher Tourism Infrastrukture

Source: Stone, 2006, pg. 151 (ibid.)

According to Stone's outline of the Dark Tourism Spectrum, some dark sites can be darker than others, more authentic, more controversial, more political and more sentimental. The classification of a site as authentic, however, and the interpretation of its political weight can be subjective and therefore controversial when developed by local communities in conflict. It is therefore a frequent phenomenon that such sites are subject to more than one interpretation.

Post-conflict areas can inspire unique types of dark tourism activity, because they combine the macabre element they portray (Timothy 2011) with the dynamic and continuously changing character they adopt due to their transitional nature (Serwer and Thomson 2009). This feature attracts tourist audiences beyond the traditional recreational tourist, and particularly conflict professionals, an audience of business tourists with a professional interest in post-conflict areas. As defined by Davidson and Cope (2003), business tourism refers to conferences, trainings, seminars and exhibitions; in the case of a post-conflict area, international conferences on conflict, reconciliation or related themes can attract foreign professionals, enable the development of new partnerships and develop knowledge products, such as conference publications and journals. The business tourism industry also consists of individual business

tourism, taken by journalists, politicians, consultants, artists and other freelancers (ibid.). These professionals, when working on conflict, are prone to travelling to a post-conflict area for business.

Lennon and Foley (2000) argue that 'specialists' are not the biggest share of the dark tourist category. Even though conflict professionals can be a quantitatively negligible audience, their role as business tourists to post-conflict areas might have a substantial qualitative impact, through the work they produce and the interaction they have with local stakeholders. According to Liutikas (2012), business travel is classified as necessary travel, linked neither to the thrill offered by the dark site visited, not to the emotional connection of the traveler to the site in question. Conflict professionals have a professional interest – either personal or institutional – in visiting a post-conflict site and either producing a knowledge product for replication – an article, a book, a report, a collection of photos, audiovisual footage – or interacting with local stakeholders in their professional capacity.

A range of scholarly work is devoted to the explanation of tourist motivation (Liutikas, 2012; Burns, 1999; Urry, 1990; MacCannell, 1976). Many tourists are motivated by a search for spirituality, contact with nature and a sense of freedom (Burns, 1999), others by their search for authenticity and desire for pilgrimage (MacCannell, 1976), while many engage in the visual consumption of new surroundings, an activity defined by Urry as the tourist gaze (1990). Nevertheless, following Liutikas' categorisation of travelers, tourist motivation has been developed more with regards to recreational travelers, less for valuistic, and even less so for necessary travelers. What is evident when reviewing relevant literature is that there is little to no work devoted on the examination of necessary travellers, particularly business tourists in post-conflict areas. As a result, there is limited understanding on the sociocultural impact of their activity as travelers, and to a further extent, no sufficient evaluation of the work they produce, the interactions they have and the overall impact they generate. The following section introduces Cyprus as a case study through which FCP activity will be discussed.

A Review of the Cyprus Conflict
At the beginning of the twentieth century, Cyprus was a British colony inhabited predominantly by a Greek-speaking, Christian Orthodox majority, a Turkish-speaking Muslim minority and Greek-speaking religious minorities of Maronites, Armenians and Latin Catholics. The island was also governed by the autonomous Greek Orthodox Church, with its religious figures exerting political influence over the public throughout the island's colonial era (1978-1959) and often driving the Greek Cypriots' guerrilla uprisings for *enosis*, or political union with Greece (Kelling, 1990; Bryant in Calotychos, 1998).

Greek Cypriot guerrilla fighting cultivated in the establishment of the EOKA revolutionary group, which carried out a 5-year war against British rule, resulting in the island's independence in 1960. The new Cypriot state was a consociational democracy, comprised of a Greek Cypriot majority and a Turkish Cypriot minority, with the Greek-speaking religious minorities of the island becoming – constitutionally – part of the majority. Nevertheless, independence was not a positive outcome, as the ultimate goal of the majority was *enosis* with Greece. Relations between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots started to deteriorate, the power-sharing government soon collapsed and civil warfare erupted. Tensions lead to the establishment of a UN peacekeeping mission on the island and nearly a decade and a half after independence, the island was attacked consecutively by the Greek junta and the Turkish military forces. The latter established their presence on the north of the island and in 1975 the population was displaced and re-settled into a Greek-speaking south and a Turkish-speaking north, partitioning the island with a Buffer Zone (Antoniou, 2015; Coughlan, 2000).

Over the course of the next four decades, Cyprus experienced several attempts of building communication across the two communities and trying to agree on a settlement that would reunify the island. These attempts, with the most prominent and long-tern being UN-mediated negotiations between each community's political leaders, have yet to result in a comprehensive settlement of what has come to be known as the Cyprus Problem, and thus the conflict in Cyprus has been widely referred to as stagnated, intractable and frozen (Antoniou, 2015; Haklai and Loizides, 2015; Hannay, 2005; Strazzari, 2008; Hadjipavlou, 2007).

A territory with a history of inter-state war and civil unrest, Cyprus can be identified both as an intractable conflict as well as a *de facto* post-conflict territory. Under either scenario, Cyprus is a frozen conflict, whose inhabitants have been experiencing decades of attempted reconciliation and negative peace between its two main communities, the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots.

Cyprus has been a tourist haven due to its picturesque landscape and warm, Mediterranean climate. The unique characteristics of Cyprus as a *de facto* post-conflict society have led to the development of two separate tourism industries on the island, one in the north under the Turkish Cypriot authorities and one in the south, as part of the Republic of Cyprus. The Greek Cypriot (GCC) and Turkish Cypriot communities (TCC) remain geographically and institutionally partitioned (Causevic and Lynch, 2013), while tourist activity within the TCC suffers embargo restrictions and can only accept visitors traveling from Turkey or the GCC.

With the tourist industry making up a considerable portion of the island's economy – approx. €2 billion for the Republic of Cyprus in the south and €343 million for the Turkish Cypriot industry in the north (Farmaki et. al. 2015) – the conflict professionals who have been visiting Cyprus due to their interest in its conflict and post-conflict development have been identified as members of wider tourist audiences and not as a niche audience in itself. The implications of overlooking at the primary incentives of this audience can be extensive, essentially leading the tourism industry to overlook that this audience's primary interest lies within the island's Buffer Zone and beyond the industry's geographical scope.

Understanding the Cyprus Buffer Zone
Buffer Zones are found between volatile environments and act as the physical barrier preventing armed violence. Dictionary definitions (2016) of Buffer Zones identify them as 'neutral zones' between 'potentially hostile' environments and 'areas serving to neutralize potential conflict'. Buzan and Waever (2008) have applied this term to states within the wider discussion of international security scholarship, identifying states within regional security complexes and in between securitized rivals as *buffer states*. When it comes to buffer zones within states, they are often seen as lifeless and abandoned spaces, to which access is restricted in order for their buffer capacity to apply. Nevertheless, much scholarship has argued the contrary, that life can in fact be detected within buffer zones (Constantinou, 2015; Sadri, 2015; Grichting Solder, 2012).

With regards to the case of Cyprus, the Buffer Zone across the island can be seen as a dynamic space whose status and accessibility has evolved through time (Constantinou, 2015).Although much progress is evident today, the road to accessing the Buffer Zone and crossing to the *other side* was not easy, mainly due to the political implications and sentimental representations entailed (Bailie and Azgin, 2008). Until today, the legal status of the Buffer Zone remains ambiguous (Christodoulidou, 2008). According to Constantinou (2015), along with the checkpoints for north-south access across the island, there are currently five areas within the Buffer Zone that are inhabited, three of which are the communities of Pyla,

Denia and Mammari. Along with residency rights, permissions have also been given for farming in additional Buffer Zone areas, allowing for human activity within the Buffer Zone to multiply (*ibid.*).

The opening of the Ledra Palace checkpoint at the MarcouDracou street and the establishment of venues such as the Home for Cooperation and the Cyprus Community Media Centre have enabled not only the contact and cooperation of locals across community 'borders', but has inspired foreign conflict professionals to travel to Cyprus and collaborate with locals within and beyond the Buffer Zone.

Demetriou (2015) refers to the Buffer Zone as a 'time-free concept', and questions whether the No Man's Land notion refers to a land that is not inhabited or simply to a land that is not governed. Constantinou (2015) refers to the photojournalistic representation of the Cyprus Buffer Zone as problematic, since much international coverage emphasizes the emptiness of the Buffer Zone and not so much the human activity, often intercommunal that takes place within it. Whether out of fascination over its notion of emptiness, or more due to the appeal of intercommunal contact and interaction with local stakeholders, FCPs make up an emerging tourist audience interested in visiting the Cyprus Buffer Zone and exploring its dynamics – or lack thereof.

Methodological Approaches
This paper provides an overview of reconciliatory projects that took place in the Cyprus Buffer Zone that involved or were implemented by FCPs. With reference to each project, the paper discusses the affiliations of involved FCPs, and their primary incentive for involvement, either through personal communication with FCPs or through publicly available information over each project. In addition, the paper incorporates interviews from local professionals involved in the aforementioned projects in order to assess whether FCP involvement yielded positive outcomes with regards to the island's reconciliatory attempts.

The paper utilizes three main techniques for data collection: the use of secondary data and literature as the thesis' basic data, the development and delivery of personal interviews, and thirdly the engagement in field research for collecting primary data. Secondary data used consist of academic publications, archival records, journal articles and publicly available surveys, reports and indices. The majority of the secondary data used relate directly to the case study of the Cyprus conflict and the island's socio-political discourse until today.

Using the terminology of research methods for social sciences, as provided by Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, there are three main models for delivering personal interviews: the schedule-structured interview, the focused interview and the nondirective interview (1992). This study primarily adopted the first model, under which personal interviews follow an identical sequence of questions for each participant, to eliminate the risk that differently structured interviews can produce different responses and attitudes by the interviewees. Nevertheless, throughout the field research process in particular and the duration of this study in general, members of the populations under study provided original information and useful data both through occasions of focused interviews – to the author, the media or other public outlets – as well as nondirective, non-structured interviews. As a result, additional data collected from interviews other than the scheduled-structured interviews carried out by the author are also used as part of the findings, yet they are not used in direct comparison or within the same context as the findings of schedule-structured interviews. For the interviews, open-ended questions were used, allowing participants to elaborate accordingly and enabling the interviewer to clarify and enrich the findings with customized follow-up questions.

Lastly, field research was conducted in the areas in and around the Buffer Zone, areas including the Home for Cooperation establishment, the Nicosia walled city from both sides of the divide, the Nicosia International Airport within the secluded UN-controlled Buffer Zone and the city of Famagusta – not including the secluded Varosha district.

Results

The following table provides an overview of 24 projects that were inspired by the Cyprus Buffer Zone and explored its theoretical, practical and mainly socio-cultural implications from a variety of perspectives:

Table 1.1

No	Project Title	Year	FCPs involved	Locals Involved	Project Output	Theme
1	Nicosia Master Plan	1979	✓	✓*	Infrastructure Development	Urban Planning
2	Urban Design in the UN Buffer Zone	1996		✓	Urban Design	Architecture
3	The Green Line Cyprus	2002		✓	Website	Media
4	The Buffer Zone	2004		✓	Music Performance/Book chapter	Music
5	Echoes from the Dead Zone	2005		✓	Book	Literature
6	Home for Cooperation	2011	✓	✓	Venue for intercommunal use	Infrastructure
7	Sharing an Island	2011		✓	Documentary	Youth perspectives
8	Uncovered Nicosia Airport Exhibition	2011	✓	✓	Photography Exhibition	Photography
9	Stitching the Buffer Zone	2012	✓	✓	Book/Exhibition	Architecture
10	Occupy Buffer Zone movement	2012		✓	Activism	Peace and demilitarisation
11	Hands On Famagusta	2013	✓	✓	Online interactive platform	Urban Planning
12	Community Media Studio	2013		✓	Multimedia studio	Media
13	Famagusta Ecocity Project	2013	✓	✓	Film	Urban Planning/Sustainability
14	The Thin Green Line Project	2013		✓	Documentary	Interpersonal Relationships
15	The Sunrise	2014	✓	✓	Book	Literature
16	Greening the Buffer Zone	2014	✓	✓	Book Chapter	Ecology
17	Border Football Carlsberg Commercial	2014	✓	✓	TV Commercial/Documercial	Football and peace
18	Buffer Fringe	2014	✓	✓	Annual Festival	Performing Arts
19	Nicosia Old Town Walking/Cycling Tours	2014	✓	✓	Guided Tours of the divided city and Buffer Zone	History, Education, Recreation
20	Green Line Project	2015	✓	✓	360° Spherical Film	Virtual Reality
21	Buffer Zone postcards	2015	✓	✓	Paintings/Photos/Postcards	Art and Photography
22	Reimagining the buffer zone	2015	✓	✓	Workshops/Presentation	Children's perspectives
23	No Man's Land: Looking Beyond the Buffer Zone	2015	✓	✓	Presentations/Discussions/Documentary	Travel and research
24	Old Nicosia Revealed Photosouvenirs	2015	✓	✓	Workshops/Photosouvenirs	Photography

*Implementing Agent

Source: Author

As shown in table 1.1, the Buffer Zone has been an inspiration for a wide variety of projects dealing with themes from architecture and urban planning to literature, art, photography and virtual reality. Prior to 2011, when the Home for Cooperation was established in a publicly accessible part of the Nicosia Buffer Zone, projects relating to the Buffer Zone were smaller in scale, implemented essentially by local individuals – with the exception of the Nicosia Master Plan. What appears to be a breakthrough project for the Buffer Zone is the establishment of the Home for Cooperation, a physical venue used intercommunally both for public events and private meetings. The establishment of a physical space within the Cyprus Buffer Zone acted as an access point for FCPs to present their work, run workshops and conferences and connect with local stakeholders (LS). Today, there seems to be a balanced contribution both by LS and FCPs on Buffer Zone-related initiatives, which in their overwhelming majority portray synergies between locals from both communities as well as foreign experts. The Home for Cooperation, as well as the majority of the initiatives mentioned, received financial support by international development and civil society organisations.

The Home for Cooperation receives hundreds of visitors and hosts a variety of international events and local projects ranging from academic conferences to children workshops, photography exhibitions and documentary screenings. The common element in all of the Home's activities and initiatives is the

promotion of intercommunal cooperation for Cyprus, intercultural dialogue and understanding. Today, the Home is 'a lively community centre providing opportunities to young people, the general public, activists, educators and other agents of change to develop knowledge and critical thinking through diverse and rich cultural, artistic and educational programs' (Home for Cooperation, 2015) and it has been awarded with the EU Prize for Cultural Heritage/Europa Nostra Award in the Conservation category.

The list of projects and initiatives included in table 1.1 is by no means exhaustive, considering that numerous academic publications, editorials and international news agencies have dealt with the Cyprus Buffer Zone (Demetriou, 2015b; Bailie and Azgin, 2008; Christodoulidou, 2008; Boedeltje et al, 2007; Lindley, 2007). In recent years, a number of international photojournalists have travelled to the Cyprus Buffer Zone to either collect photographic material from the eerie and abandoned areas of the Buffer Zone or to interview local stakeholders, with great attention paid to the establishment of the Home for Cooperation (Dawson, 2016; Papallas, 2015; Oliver, 2015; Hall, 2014; Powell, 2014; Corcoran, 2014; Taylor, 2014).

Feedback from local stakeholders involved either in the Buffer Zone projects listed in table 1.1 or in analogous reconciliatory initiatives, appears to be overall positive regarding the activity and involvement of FCPs in local reconciliation efforts. More specifically, according to local stakeholders, there are three main areas to which FCPs – across disciplines – appear to have notable positive impact:
1.   The conflict's portrayal/narrative
2.   The capacity-building and effectiveness of local stakeholders
3.   The promotion of reconciliation across the general public

Thereiteration of the conflict narrative byFCPs can offer new perspectives to the involved communities and potentially new approaches to its understanding. At the same time, both structured and informal interaction with local stakeholders, either on peacebuilding or organizational/logistical practices, is seen as beneficial to the capacity-building of local organizations, institutions and individuals. Lastly, the physical presence of foreign experts in intercommunal initiativesis considered to further endorse inter-communal contactacross the general public.

GrichtingSolder (2012) uses the term *trans-experiences* to refer to human activity across the Buffer Zone, such as crossing, and how it is perceived. The evolution of the Buffer Zone from a void space dividing two hostile communities into a space connecting the two sides is not only an intriguing concept for FCPs, but the medium of this audience for *transcommunal tourism*, a term referring to the conflict-related business tourist activity that takes place within and between the two communities of Cyprus.

Transcommunal tourism can be seen as a form of dark tourism lying at the darker end of Stone's Dark Tourism Spectrum (2006), as it satisfies the conditions of location authenticity, education orientation, short time scale to the conflict in question and low tourism infrastructure. Although the last condition applies to the formal tourism industries in the north and south, civil society organisations such as the AHDR and Old Nicosia Revealed (ONR) have started to address the demand of transcommunal tourism by providing transcommunal tours of the old city of Nicosia (entry 19 of table 1.1) and by having created a series of transcommunal Nicosia photosouvenirs (entry 24), available at the Home for Cooperation.

Discussion
When comparing the state of the Buffer Zone and the two communities at its north and south, there is an evident de-securitization from the 1990s to today. In a 1995 publication on the Canadian peacekeeping experience with UNFICYP in Cyprus, Last makes reference to a volatile environment across the Buffer

Zone, with the section cutting through the walled city of Nicosia being among the most dangerous, as soldiers from the two communities were only meters apart. 1996 was a year marked by violent clashes along the Buffer Zone in the Famagusta area, during which two Greek Cypriot protesters were killed (Christou, 2006). Papadakis(2005) reaffirms the securitized state of the Buffer Zone in the 1990s in his book *Echoes from the Dead*Zone, which describes his challenging experience to obtain permission to access the north, a request that was received with suspicion and apprehension by officials in both communities. Two decades later, although a peace settlement is yet to be agreed for Cyprus, the two communities are connected through a de-securitized Buffer Zone of multiple checkpoints. 2016 marks not only a year of increased transcommunal tourism by locals and foreigners, but also a time when political leaders in both communities endorse intercommunal contact.

When looking at projects concerning or inspired by the Cyprus Buffer Zone, two prominent observations arise; firstly, that the majority of these projects entails a reconciliatory character and includes members of the communities both north and south of the island's Buffer Zone, and secondly that FCPs have become an integral part of the implementation of these projects for the benefit of the local reconciliation process. Additionally, the findings of this research indicate that the not-so void Buffer Zone is not only an inspiration, but more so a physical space within which an ever-evolving range of intercommunal work has been taking place, with the establishment of the Home for Cooperation serving as a turning point for the latter.

Despite the fact that the activity of FCPs as a tourist audience has a positive impact over the reconciliation efforts on the island, the mere existence of this audience remains unacknowledged from the tourism infrastructures both in the north and south of the island. Taking into consideration Stone's Spectrum for dark tourism experiences, visiting the Cyprus Buffer Zone can be classified as an experience at the darker side of the spectrum, a parameter of which is the lack of tourism infrastructure. Although initiatives for developing tourist infrastructure for transcommunal tourism have been taken, such as guided tours and photosouvenir merchandise, further developments in the tourist infrastructure for transcommunal tourism could potentially redefine travel to the Cyprus Buffer Zone as less dark that so far perceived.

Conclusion

This paper presented the dynamics of reconciliatory work in Cyprus as developed at a former line of crossfire between the local communities, namely the UN-administered Buffer Zone. Intercommunal reconciliatory projects at the Cyprus Buffer Zone are not only relevant to conflict resolution literature, but more so to the academic realm of tourism, in particular dark and business tourism. This is due to the identification of an emerging niche audience, foreign conflict professionals (FCPs), whose activity as travellers directly relates to reconciliation initiatives in Cyprus.

Findings of this study suggest that due to a professional interest to research, observe and depict the Cyprus Buffer Zone, a range of FCPs has actively contributed to the island's reconciliation projects and their interaction with local stakeholders such as local conflict professionals has been regarded by the latter as positive.

What is interesting to note is that the activity of this niche audience is taking place primarily out of the island's tourism industry boundaries, an industry which is operating under the Turkish Cypriot authorities in the north and the government of the Republic of Cyprus in the south. This is not necessarily a challenge for an audience interested in the areas in between the two industries, since this form of *transcommunal tourism* taking place within and around the Buffer Zone can be classified as a dark tourism experience that entails minimal to no tourism infrastructure (Stone, 2006). On the other hand however, the demand for tourist infrastructure created by continuous FCP visits to Cyprus is seen to be addressed by ad-hoc

initiatives of local conflict professionals, such as *transcommunal tours* provided by the Home for Cooperation.

In conclusion, the emerging tourist activity of FCPs is one that directly supports local reconciliatory efforts that take place in a previously conflict-preventing zone, which is currently a neutral space for cooperation. This is an essentially significant observation, as it allows future scholarship to research the impact of the FCP audience in reconciliatory efforts across the world, particularly in intractable ethnic conflicts such as the case of Cyprus.

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