ARCHIS INTERVENTIONS_CYPRUS

2011 ACTIVITY REPORT

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Conflict in Cyprus. The conflict between the two main communities of Cyprus which dates back to the early ‘50s, reaches its peak in 1974 with the division of the island into two geographical areas causing hundreds of thousands of Greek and Turkish Cypriots to leave their houses and move to those areas where their respective community exercises control. Within this context, Turkish Cypriots live on the north with 36% of the territory declaring itself an independent state in 1983, the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” (TRNC) recognised only by Turkey, while the international community deplored this proclamation and Greek Cypriots reside in the rest in south under the rule of Republic of Cyprus. Until today the UN Buffer Zone (UNBZ) with its varying width crosses the island from east to west, also dividing the capital of the island, Nicosia, into two sectors. From 1974 until 2003, when the first checkpoints were opened, people were unable to cross the UNBZ and go to the other side of the island. As re-unification negotiations continue over the last 35 years, division in Cyprus has had direct impact on the development of urban and social structures. Collaborations were rarely possible, mostly failed, with a few exceptions like Nicosia Master Plan.

2 Republic of Cyprus (RoC) established in 1960 as a compromise solution between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. For more see Zürich-London Agreement, Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus and attached Treaties.
Despite the creation of two mainly ethnically homogenised areas on two sides of the divide, some Greek Cypriots still live in the north part of the island in the Karpaz Region. Rizokarpaso/Dipkarpaz and Aya Triada/Sipahi are the two major villages. Similarly, over a thousand T/C reside in the south. Since 1975, thousands of settlers from southeast and northern regions of Turkey have moved to the region creating a new demographical scheme. Uncertainty regarding the region’s future administration, unclear ownership issues and strict legislations on environmental protection combined with dramatic demographic shift create a fragile social and urban case to work on. The demographic composition before 1974 (1891 census: 1,810GC/4TC, 1946 census: 4,053GC/11TC and 1960 census: 3,152GC/2TC) indicates no shared life between the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities had been experienced in Dipkarpaz/Rizokarpaso previously. As the municipality office states, today, the village population is about 3,000 and nearly 1/10th of the whole population are Greek Cypriots (2006 census states 2006 people living in the village3 but Greek Cypriots number is not mentioned). Dipkarpaz/Rizokarpaso has experienced a decline in the 1960’s due to its isolated location from the rest of the island with decreasing population and low investments. There is very little support for local production and the economy is therefore very weak. Given the limited opportunities available to its traditional and more recent ambiguous residents, it is extremely difficult to foster a sense of belonging and social commitment in the village, or to promote positive social interaction, sustainable development policy and support for the settlement’s future. As the services and spaces are limited, there is youth drain in both Greek Cypriot and Turkish communities whose young people leave the village for bigger towns in north and south of Cyprus.

LEARNING FROM THE SHARED SPACE: DIPKARPAZ/RIZOKARPAZOSO PROJECT

The interest of the Archis Interventions team in Dipkarpaz/Rizokarpaso dates back to the ‘Revitalization of Dipkarpaz Project’ that was handled by a group of researches and academics from Eastern Mediterranean University, Faculty of Architecture in 2008. During this project, one of the main challenges was reaching local people and integrating their feedback into the project and, at the same time, have the project embraced by the local people and authorities. Although the introduced methodologies and strategies resulted in a project conceptualizing an ‘Agro-cultural Tourism Area’ in the village the project could never be implemented and was left on the paper. At that point, a new project supported by Archis Interventions is developed with the aim of digging deep into the shared space in the village through social and spatial analysis in order to explore the bottom up interventions to enhance the urban space in the village. The project has been undertaken with the awareness of the peculiarities of situation, in which relations among the various groups are fragile and the Turkish Cypriot community absent in the village. Dipkarpaz/Rizokarpaso is the only actual place on the island where the Greek Cypriots share a common space and common daily practice with the mainland Turkish Population in Cyprus. Accommodations of G/Cs and Turkish people are not assembled together in order to create any physical borders in the village. Population that migrated from Turkey in a number of flows since 1975 settled in the empty houses left by G/Cs, which resulted in a co-existence. Since then, the political instability in Cyprus at macro level has resulted in ambiguity at the daily lives and physical environment of village causing physical and social transformation.

The eccentric situation of “otherness” is visible in everyday life of the village. A specially defined status has been given to the Greek Cypriots, accepted as citizens with restrictions such as no rights of election or voting. A Greek inhabitant is provided a monthly fee plus provisions arriving from the south every week through the UN Forces within a meeting at the Greek Coffeehouse. Apart from the aid from south, they join the local production through fishing, animal herding and agriculture as they also run a coffee shop and a few restaurants in the region. A Greek primary school and a Greek high school are active in the region with teachers from the south. Religious practices are allowed on demand and the main church in the village center is active with a Priest, who is an active member of the informal commission dealing with the G/C community issues. Greek Cypriot villagers have to deal with the suspicious eye on their daily actions as they have been watched on all gatherings and meetings, which eventually reflected into every step of this project. Being representatives of Greek Cypriot community on the most sacred Orthodox-Christians lands of Cyprus, their actions are also watched from the south by the authorities and diaspora limiting their interactions with the migrants from Turkey.

Turkish settlers that moved in the houses left by G/Cs with the hope for a new life could never achieved peace as their new homes were always on the negotiation table on the community leaders. As Karpaz peninsula was negotiated to be returned to Greek Cypriot owners in some of the optional maps of UN sponsored Annan Plan for Cyprus\(^5\), no investment was made in maintenance of the buildings in the village until 2004 when Greek Cypriots side rejected the plan with 76% while Turkish Cypriots side voted in favor with 65% in the separate referenda. This result transformed Turkish settlers’ fragile relation with the physical environment as they developed the belief in their continuous existence in the village.

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Since then, many houses and public services buildings are renewed in the village, while new roads, hotels, a new marina and several pensions were invested in the region. The fomented nationalism as well as the strong religious belief, encouraged through religious courses for youngsters in the village, is reflected in over-used symbols in space.

The various parties involved from both sides of the divide tend to deal with the situation in line with popular political policy rather than by responding to the communities’ present-day needs for interaction in the social and physical environments. The resulted situation in the village constitutes a contested space. In contested spaces, competing culture groups, like the nationalists and loyalists, strengthen and legitimize themselves and their efforts through the development of adaptive spatial practices. This can be observed in the spatial uses of the communities in the village, where the village center is used by the Turkish population while the gatherings of Greek Cypriots are usually at houses, where they will be least ‘seen’. Yet, digging deep into peoples’ lives during several meetings and gatherings in the village reveals various modes of interactions describing the way they have produced new codes of communication as a result of living together for more than 35 years together.

‘One morning we woke up seeing some foreigners on the streets. Women, wearing scarves, were walking around hiding from us, looking shy rather than afraid. But we were afraid!’ a Greek Cypriot woman says describing the first days of the meeting of two communities. She adds: ‘In time, we learned how to communicate, we live together you know. They changed a lot as well, they adapted to us, to Cyprus. You can rarely see women wearing mandyla anymore.’ When we were having coffee together a young Turkish woman brings a wedding invitation, she sighs and says ‘every week there are marriages in the village!’

7 scarf
The main vehicular axis dividing the village into two, up and down according to the topography does not imply any ethnic division but rather a regional division which effects the actions of people’s daily lives. As there are no means of public transportation in the village, people rarely cross the main axis and they usually meet in the village center where most of the social services could be found. Education buildings, religious buildings and social spaces like coffee-shops co-exist almost side by side or facing each other in the public space although they rarely share them. Beyond the watching eyes, the informal relationships among villagers in their daily lives are defined with their neighbor relationships. Neighbors, mostly women and children, socialize through their daily habits, learning each other’s language. Son of a family that moved to the village from South East Turkey after 1974, has been working since his childhood at a Greek Restaurant and speaking fluent Karpaz accented Greek, introduces himself as a ‘Cypriot Kurd’, a new identity emerged in the village.

On-site research into the physical environment, quality of urban space, socio-cultural interaction and community involvement laid out specific problems such as the lack of public spaces, the low quality of infrastructural services, the lack of empowerment strategies for the young population, including failure to provide adequate incentives for youngsters to stay in the village, or to promote the broader participation of the women in the socio-economic life of the settlement. The team observed that, one of the main obstacles to fostering new initiatives and improvements throughout the village is an exaggerated sense of their ‘otherness’ and emphasis on political obstacles. As a result the residents of all communities in the village are in a passive state, not willing to speak-up, mobilize for or attend to activities for a change in the current dynamics.

Dress code of old ladies from the communities in the village
Given the circumstances of the case where the social and physical space is contested at local levels and the co-existing communities represent politics in space in the macro level within such a small-scale environment, the timing and methodologies of the project was beyond the known theoretical methodologies. Following the methodological Framework settled in the beginning stages of the project, an experience-based methodology comprising alternative directions has been developed, where predictions are tested continuously in order to adapt to reactions and the processes and short-term results become definitive for the future steps. With the aim of community empowerment in order to achieve creation of a mutual social space shared by the communities, the focus in such an environment is on short-term steps and outcomes, i.e. the process, rather than a pre-defined final outcome.

Archis Interventions_Cyprus team espoused a bottom-up approach for intervening into the socio-cultural relations in order to reveal potentials for a mature interactive platform at the physical level. In this manner, Dipkarpaz/Rizokarpaso project is developed through a series of participatory projects on various scales of meetings, events and workshops organized with the local residents, unions and authorities of the village Dip Karpaz / Rizokarpaso in order to read, learn from and contribute into their understanding and usages of space.

Two major gatherings with local residents, ‘Hands-on workshop’ and ‘Gathering children’s perspectives workshop’, are specifically worth mentioning with their outcomes.
HANDS-ON WORKSHOP
May 21, 2011, Dipkarpaz/Rizokarpaso, Cyprus
“Gathering for a better life in Dipkarpaz/Rizokarpaso”

On May 2011, ‘Hands-On Workshop’8 took place at Dipkarpaz/Rizokarpaso village for discussing the needs and possibilities of the village, the spatial environment and the inhabitants. This participatory workshop aimed to bring all the communities of the village together for evaluating and resulting the potentials of their living environment and the place of workshop is marked with two languages, Turkish and Greek. This first participatory gathering within the village got support from the municipality of Dipkarpaz, as well as the local communities. However due to ongoing social and political tensions until today, gathering together with all the communities was not possible as a first start. Therefore the Hands On Workshop accelerated firstly for the Turkish settlers of the Dipkarpaz village. Small meetings are arranged afterwards with the Greek population of the village in order to gain their contribution into the project as well. Besides being the first attempt of bringing all the communities of the village together for gaining better urban quality within the settlement, the hands on workshop was a good tool to bring out the potentials of the area.

The workshop tried to define the needs of the women, men, youth and the children living in the area. According to the discussions, several important socio-cultural and spatial needs and necessities were highlighted. As the area is a natural tourism attraction already the villagers stated the problem of legibility of the village to be a major obstacle. The village is a ‘pass by’ for many of the tourists instead of an attraction itself with its qualities, which are further explored in the common discussions to include the potential of co-existent buildings and signs in space representing communities. As a result, a number of possible interventions are identified with the contribution of people:
1. PERMANENT STRUCTURE: Development of a village map to show the main routes, highlights within as well as the brief histoire for key locations. Creation of a tourism information unit for the visitors on the main axis. This tourism info would serve with a small map of the settlement and this would continue to develop a village wide accessibility and readability design structures, information panels for each historically important locations, directions and defined routes.

2. PERMANENT STRUCTURE: a community center where several educational, cultural, and social facilities could take place (a temporary structure or temporal use of spaces due to the problematic ownership status of land).

3. TEMPORARY AND REPETITIVE EVENT: a repetitive event i.e. a local open bazaar, which will eventually feed into Dipkarpaz festival in order to catalyze the public attention to the village and to create a vibrant economic and social cycle while transforming an open space into a ‘public place’. This event is proposed to take place at the high season period where the tourism sector could feed the event positively. The possible location of the event is also discussed and further elaborated through the physical analysis in the village.

The workshop ended with a decision of gathering with the children in order to bring their input and participation into the project through drawing pictures, shooting photos and working together to create their accessibility and cognitive mappings for the surroundings. The results of the small workshop with children of Dipkarpaz/Rizokarpasos are aimed to contribute into the village legibility project.

Promoting an event as a place of social interaction in combination with several sub-projects on various scales is expected to upgrade the village’s spatial and socio-economic quality and environmental conditions, and thereby to overcome the divisions there – not by addressing the differences but by promoting social interaction.
COLLECTING THE CHILDREN’S PERSPECTIVES WORKSHOP
August 5, 2011 Dipkarpaz / Rizokarpaso, Cyprus.

As it was proposed on the results report of the Hands-on workshop in Dipkarpaz / Rizokarpaso, a Children’s Workshop is organized in the village on 5th of August 2011. This workshop was part of several meetings, events and workshops organized with the local residents, unions and authorities of the village in order to read, learn from and contribute into their understanding and usages of space.

According to 2006 census results, %23.2 of the population of Dipkarpaz/Rizokarpaso are between ages 0-12 which constitutes almost a quarter of the village that mostly are born on the village and lived their lives under the existing conditions. Children’s workshop is organized as a step of several attempts for collecting children’s perspectives about the existing conditions in the village while also providing them the chance to re-think and evaluate their environment and social dynamics in the village. Throughout the process they have had the chance to discuss with us, among themselves and their families on physical and social environment qualities of the village including cultural interaction among groups of people. The basic aim of the workshop was bringing together the children from both communities in the village to discuss together the existing qualities of the village from their point of view and envision a future image for the village. By excavating the spatial uses of children within the village potential intervention spaces are identified where all members of the society, but children specially will eventually pass by on their everyday routine. Through this strategy, the project aims to find out a neutrality of space and the routes of the youngest societal group of the village where collaboration between communities seem to be possible.

The children’s workshop is carried out with 12 Turkish children (5 girls and 7 boys) and a Greek child in the village that are in 8-13 age group. The tension in the village that shows itself when inter-communal activities are organized didn’t allow the team organize a common workshop for all the children in the village. Separate meetings are being organized with Greek children who were also not able to attend the photo-shooting event as their families were concerned about getting into trouble with the authorities. As the meetings could proceed the gathered information will be reflected to the results and outcomes.

The children in the concentrated age-group attend primary school and secondary school in village (Primary and secondary schools are separate for Turkish and Greek Cypriot children). Children are either selected with guidance of local contacts in the village, which are informal representatives of different groups of people or selected randomly during our site observations. With pre-meetings with their families children are provided with disposable cameras and are asked to keep the cameras with themselves for 5 days and took photo shoots from their environment that he/she relates himself/herself with. On the fifth day of collecting the photos, children are gathered in a class provided by the Municipality and asked to discuss together about their environment, criticizing the strengths and weaknesses of their village, also dreaming about the future possibilities and opportunities. When they are asked to draw a cognitive map of their village, they rather preferred to draw some reference buildings and places which eventually became very important to evaluate their perception of environment. Last step of the workshop was working with children individually to identify their movements in the village on a map.

Results:
The photo shoots and work on the maps identified that children have limited movement in the village and their photos usually are taken from their near surroundings. They have a strict daily routine of school-home traveling everyday. In holidays, most of the Turkish children also attend the religious courses that are organized in the Secondary school and Mosque which add some new stops to their route. They rarely visit their relatives or friends in the village in a distance that require car-ride. For Greek Cypriot kids traveling across the border in the weekends for family gatherings or weddings became a routine. Children of either community have the chance to engage with the beautiful natural environment by animal herding and going to seaside for swimming. One of the young members of Greek Cypriot Community admitted that he has learned Turkish language through the friends he met while herding animals.

Meetings of the project team with the family members generated an excitement for the children and families. Some children were so motivated with the event that they organized a meeting day with the sea-turtles research group and visited the turtle beach to take photos. Their excitement could be read in their photos of their most loved ones and most precious buildings and nature scenes:

10 of 12 Turkish children took photos of Ayios Sinesis Church and Dipkarpaz Mosque in the village center. These buildings are referred as the most dominant/definitive buildings in the built environment and majority of the children thought their co-existence represent their village. The other man-made environment photos include: Atatürk Statue in the Village Square (5/12), Ramadan Iftar Tent (2/12), sports areas (1/12), new constructions (2/12), upper Church (2/12), pensions (2/12), entrance of Ayios Sinesis Church (1), Municipality Building (2/12), Recep Tayyip Erdogan Secondary School (1/12), abandoned house (1/12), mosque interior Shadirvan (1/12). 4 of 12 children took interior space photos including the mosque, hotel, and houses (with people). One of the kids took photos of the new marina construction close to the village. The built environment and especially new constructions are considered positive by the children as they also mentioned having very few apartment blocks negatively. 2 of 12 Turkish children took no spatial (interior space, outer space, and building scale) photos except from their own kitchens and terraces. As they mostly took natural environment photos, 7 of 12 children shot domestic animals in natural environment reflecting the extend animal herding is involved in their daily lives.
As the children have contributed into the project with their valuable group discussions, the visual material collected from this workshop as well will contribute into the village map developed which was one of the main requirements of villagers mentioned in the Hands-on Workshop in order to provide legibility and accessibility to the village. Next steps of this process of working with children involves developing new formats of events and new spaces for children (and their relatives) which will lead in the long run to a new common practice. The common junction points of the routes of most children on the map proposes a potential neutral zone that might arise for the creation of a possible shared space for communities and eventually work for the rehabilitation of the mutual interactions of inhabitants. These spaces are to be supported by architectural features to guarantee sustainability. Execution process of this project would have significant contribution to the participants – local people in the village in general and children in particular. The most immature citizens – children who directly or indirectly have ties to the village will be involved in realization of this project. This will let them achieve more awareness, consciousness and sensitivity to their environment.
interaction densities in Dipkarpaz/Rizokarpaso according to uses of spaces

- Low interaction zones, local production areas
- 4th level interaction zones, houses and neighbourhoods
- 3rd level interaction zones, pensions, market places
- 2nd level interaction zones, schools, wedding hall, fair area and sports facilities
- High interaction zones, village center and main social facilities

**PROPOSALS AND FUTURE STEPS**

By identification of the uses of spaces and potentials for interactions that gathered through the team's experiences in the village an interaction map is developed which indicates the potential zones for interventions.
Mapping the movements of different actors in the village constitutes a layout that will identify the possible junctions of routes. Intervention into the space shall eventually create a pause in this network of movements where all actors will meet and share the experience.
The ongoing project in Dipkarpaz/Rizokarpaso inspired a new understanding of sustainable public space for the multi-communal residents of the village. Qualities for a sustainable socio-economical development in the village are identified together with the human potential and support. Local organizations and local production are supported within the scope of empowerment of residents towards mobilization for an event organization. This temporal - repetitive based event would eventually become a shared cultural reference. Through mappings and social input a neutral space is defined on the junction of the movements of people, young generation in specific, in the village for temporal interventions, which eventually will lead into a memory of common references in the space. With local input, a village map is proposed for legibility of the historical and touristic sites of the village for visitors and tourists.

Overlapping the interactions map and transportations map identifies possible neutral locations for interventions.
Several alternatives of info point and sign systems in addition to/support the village map are designed with the support of EMU, Faculty of Architecture, Industrial Design Department students to be evaluated by the locals. Recent developments in the village are the current will of the Greek Cypriots for the renovation of the village church, supported by municipality in order to create a better quality of village square. The newly emerging women’s association supported by the Archis Interventions_Cyprus team is adopting the multi-communal image of the village in their hand-works valuing this quality of the village. These hand-works constitute the examples local production to be on exhibit during the envisioned Dipkarpaz Festival. Altogether, the dynamics in the village lead towards the creation of a third space in Cyprus, where Greek Cypriots and Turkish settlers, with the newly emerging cross-identities constitute the inhabitants. Thus, celebration of their co-existing differences has the potential to enhance the physical environment and provide the opportunity for socio-economical development of all actors involved through generating touristic attraction.
CALENDER

31.03.2011 – 01.04.2011 ‘Divided Cities’ meeting and workshop at Abrasevic Center, Mostar. Organized by Abart and Archis Interventions.


05 August 2011 Children’s Workshop: Collecting the Children’s Perspectives, Dipkarpaz/Rizokarpaso, Cyprus.
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND CREDITS

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Credits

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