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Cyprus as a Multi-Diasporic Space

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Cyprus joined the EU in 2004, have seen some openings punched in the previously impregnable 'Green Line' separating the two communities, and cross-border movements are now possible for large sections of the island's population.

This paper brings together the respective experiences and interests in Cyprus of the two authors, one a long-standing engagement, the other more recent. In compiling this documentary overview of the complex 'migration story' of Cyprus, we aim to set a research agenda for further work, based above all on the theoretical and practical attraction of islands as key nodes within overlaying migration systems and diasporas. Russell King's research on Cyprus dates back thirty or so years to field studies on the political and settlement geography of population displacements consequent upon the division of the island (see King and Ladbury 1982, 1988), as well as a mapping exercise on the changing spatial distribution of Cypriots in London (King and Bridal 1982). Janine Teerling's research centres around her Sussex DPhil thesis about the 'return' of British-born second-generation Cypriots to Cyprus (2010) as well as papers deriving therefrom (Teerling 2011, 2012). This doctoral research was attached to a larger AHRC-funded project on 'counter-diasporic return' to Greece based at the Sussex Centre for Migration Research and directed by Russell King (see King and Christou 2008).

Recent data published by the World Bank (2011: 102) show that Cyprus is an emigration and immigration country in almost equal measure. The 'stock' of emigrants, 149,600, represents 17% of the Cypriot population of just over 900,000; the immigrant total, 154,300, is equivalent to 17.5% of the country's population. As with all migration statistics, the accuracy of these figures is open to question. One immediate perplexity is whether the World Bank data includes figures for Turkish North Cyprus, now known as the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' (TRNC) but not recognised as such. Probably they do for emigrants, since most Cypriot emigration took place before the partition, and Turkey is listed amongst the top ten emigration destinations.[1] Probably they do not for immigrants, since immigration has mainly taken place post-partition, and Turks are not listed amongst the top ten immigrant groups,2 even though it is widely known that there has been a substantial migration of 'mainland' Turks to North Cyprus since 1974.

In terms of its broad migration trends, Cyprus can be seen as a late addition to that distinctive group of Southern European countries (Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal) which has experienced a dramatic 'migration turnaround' in recent decades – from mass emigration during the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s, to mass immigration during the 1980s and, especially, in the 1990s and 2000s (King et al. 1997; King and Thomson 2008). Cyprus has all the classic features of what has been called the 'Southern European model of immigration' (King 2000: 6-19). These features include worker immigration from a wide diversity of countries 1 w 'co

republic, on 15 July 1974. Five days later, Turkey intervened militarily. The invasion divided the island and Greek Cypriots fled en masse to the south whilst Turkish Cypriots subsequently moved to the northern third of the island, which was now under Turkish occupation. This time, Greek Cypriots suffered the heavier human loss, as thousands of people were killed, missing and displaced. In fact, the number of displaced people accounted for almost one-third of the total Greek-Cypriot population (Loizos 1981).

The above brief sketch of the political conflicts which have affected Cyprus should be borne in mind throughout what follows. Let us now return to the post-1945 'migration story'.

As a former UK colony, many Cypriots – both

and became economically active in the clothing industry. Other typical examples were hairdressing and shoe-repairing. Later on, many managed to use their savings to set up their own restaurants, cafés and small factories. In fact, the 1971 census revealed that, in the self-employed category, Cypriots far out-performed the general population, with 23% of them being self-employed compared to a much lower 9% of the total British working population (Anthias 1992: 53-54). In her 1977 study, Pamela Constantinides stressed the occupational mobility of Cypriots, willing to experiment with a wide variety of jobs and small businesses beyond the clothing and catering trades, including 'cake shops, travel agencies, dress shops, furniture stores, television and radio repair shops, butchers, builders, hairdressers, grocers

Greek Cypriots in the UK than could be achieved in Cyprus itself after 1963. Whilst hostility, feelings of insecurity and resentment increased between Turkish and Greek Cypriots back in the 'homeland', the two 'communities' in Britain maintained work and business ties with one another. The vast majority of Cypriots of both

marriage and the dowry. In the 1970s, in contrast to what was happening in Cyprus, the formal dowry began to disappear amongst UK Cypriots and there was a growing tendency for engagements not to be blessed by the church, as well as an increase in registry-office marriages (Constantinides 1977: 294-296). On the

architecture and beautify the gardens, whilst typical English street names and social facilities such as British pubs and clubs are maintained, and green cricket and rugby fields within a parched environment project the aesthetics of colonial power, embodying a time long gone (Constantinou and Richmond 2005: 76). From the opposite side, however, the social outgoings of the military personnel have at times led to bad publicity and local hostility, with soldiers repeatedly being brought before local courts for acts of drunken and unruly

active community life, with a number of

the northern part of the island during the 1960s (following the intercommunal violence) and the 1970s (following the Turkish military invasion that portioned the island), whilst various waves of emigration – mainly to Britain – took place between the mid 1940s and mid 1970s (Gürel and Özersay 2006).

Since 1974, the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which has not been recognised by any country except Turkey, has seen various patterns of immigration. Turkey has established a strong military presence in North Cyprus, taking over much property, land and resources. There are said to be 40,000 soldiers from Turkey still in northern Cyprus; however as the exact number is not officially revealed, the speculative figure tends to fluctuate somewhere between 30,000 and 60,000 in everyday discourse.

The Turkish Cypriots initially rejoiced over the arrival of the Turkish soldiers, because they thought they would protect them from the Greek-Cypriot nationalists. However, they gradually began to feel uncomfortable about the soldiers' presence – which turned out to be much longer and much more complex than Turkish Cypriots anticipated at the time – as well as about the presence of the thousands of Turkish settlers (Navaro

catering to the migrant clientele – and has taken on the character of an 'immigrant ghetto'. In addition, young Turkish soldiers come to Nicosia when on leave, and so additional shops and cafes, aimed at these soldiers in particular, are now scattered across the walled city (Hatay 2008). These developments are often lamented in the media by Turkish Cypriots, nostalgic for the times when the streets were filled with sights and scents that were familiar to them, such as the street peddlers selling muhallebi (milk pudding sprinkled with rosewater), the fragrance of the jasmine blossom, and the scent of traditional Cypriot home cooking coming from the houses – rather than the smell of lahmacun, a type of spicy pizza from the Turkish south-east (Hatay and Bryant 2008b). This nostalgia, as pointed out by Hatay and Bryant (2008a), 'uses symbols of cultural difference to portray the immigrants' residence in the walled city as a cultural invasion, [...] contrast[ing] "the jasmine scent of Nicosia" – a longing for a time when the area was purely Turkish Cypriot – with the odour of lahmacun'. There is a striking similarity between the Turkish-Cypriot public perception of the northern part of Old Nicosia, which has now turned into a 'migrant space', occupied by people who are perceived not to care about its historical, cultural and social fabric, hence turning the area into a site of crime and neglect (cf. Hatay 2008), and the views held amongst some Greek Cypriots about the southern part of the old town, which is also inhabited or used for leisure by a wide variety of migrants, and hence too has turned into a 'migrant space'.

Yet, despite inhabiting the same (albeit divided) walled town in very close proximity of each other, it is extremely unlikely for the inhabitants of the two 'migrant spaces' described above to experience any kind of interaction, as both the Turkish migrants in the north and the migrants from a variety of (mainly) non-European backgrounds in the south are unable to cross to the other side. Those who can cross (i.e. European passport holders, including Turkish Cypriots with a Republic of Cyprus passport) do so for a variety of reasons. One particular example are the 'returnees' from the Turkish-Cypriot diaspora, who in a sense are also immigrants to the northern part of the island[21] but, unlike their mainland peers, are able to cross, and do so for reasons ranging from shopping to entertainment,

these women 'suffer human rights abuses at the hands of the state and the employer. Starting with the withholding of their passports by the police department and the differential treatment in contracts and work visas, their arrival in indebted conditions and their limited freedom of movement, these migrant women are denied ... a number of basic migrant rights' (Güven-Lisaniler et al. 2008: 446).

While Güven-Lisaniler et al.'s 2005

'is not confined to families where the women work; women who prefer leisure to doing their own child care and domestic work may also employ an immigrant maid. In addition, more and more women [...] are hiring maids as part of a materialist status symbol' (Anthias 2006: 188; see also Lenz 2006). These Asian women are particularly important to consider when discussing migration in Cyprus, not only because foreign domestic workers constitute over half of all immigrant women in Cyprus (Panayiotopoulos 2005), but also because – by virtue of their perceived characteristics: female, foreign and 'poor' – they find themselves routinely in a disadvantaged and marginalised position in a patriarchal and status-oriented society (Sainsbury 2007). Equally, the large and diverse population of women (in terms of national, cultural or social background, education or professional experience) 'are commonly collapsed into a referent for a domestic worker [...] leaving no room for an alternative definition of their identity' (Sainsbury 2007: 2), a perception that is consequently passed on to the children of the households where these women work (Spyrou 2009). Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that these migrant women are 'visibly absent' in Cypriot daily life, which becomes particularly apparent on Sundays, when domestic and other workers have their only contractual day off. They gather in large numbers in areas not used by Cypriots, like squares in the centre of the old town of Nicosia and in downtown parks and parking lots. 'This visibility pattern (i.e. restricted to particular times and places) is both indicative of, but also sustains a general lack of interest in, and understanding of, the realities of migrants' lives among the wider Greek-Cypriot population' (Demetriou 2008).

Indeed, while the social and economic positioning of migrant women in Cyprus has been discussed by various scholars (see for example Kosiva et al. 2010; Triminikliniotis and Demetriou 2005; Trimikliniotis and Fulias-Souroulla 2009), with some addressing the views within the Cypriot families who hire domestic workers as well as those within wider Cypriot society (Lenz 2006; Sainsbury 2007; Spyrou 2009), articles presenting the actual voices of the women themselves are much scarcer. A notable exception is Prodomos Panayiotopoulos' (2005) ethnographic study of a group of Filipina domestic workers employed by households in the coastal town of Larnaca. The personal stories of these women offer insight into their daily lives and how they are shaped by the complex relationships between individual domestic workers and their collective experiences, and between the private households, mediators and immigration officers, and the wider Cypriot society. They also provide an insight into the social control exercised by the employers,

girls' negotiation of local and global gender ideologies in Cyprus', which shows how 'in the local peer culture, girls are placed on a fabricated and culturally widespread "virgin-whore" continuum along which different cultural groups – which are often equated with ethnic groups – are evaluated' (Skapoulli 2009: 85). Another example of this awareness amongst children (both migrant and 'native') of the various social positions and stereotypes they occupy in Cyprus is discussed in Eleni Theodorou's (2011) article, which explores the ways in which children of Pontian immigrants negotiate and perceive their class positions. While stressing how Pontian children's 'multiple minority statuses as non-Cypriots, as members of a negatively stereotyped cultural group, and as members of working-class families' (Theodorou 2011: 12-13) often cause them to be discriminated by their Greek-Cypriot peers, her findings oppose the oft-encountered adult-construct of the naïve child unaware of the injustices and class positions in society. Rather, they indicate how children can have acute understandings of class and the financial status of their own and other families, and the effect these have on their own lives. With this in mind, let us now take a closer look at the role of education within this Cypriot multicultural reality.

barrier to their academic success. The teachers who participated in their study also stressed how they believe that students from a migrant background are rejected and alienated by the native students. Another study focusing on teachers' experiences of the growing diversity and multiculturalism in their classrooms (Zembylas 2010a) echoes these findings, emphasising the teachers' discomfort with the presence of minority children (and especially Turkish Cypriots), their fear that immigrants (in general) threaten the national and cultural identity of Greek Cypriots, as well as the lack of emotional and professional support to cope with the teaching of immigrant and minority children. Such views, these teachers claim, are not only common amongst their colleagues, but also amongst Greek-Cypriot pupils and their parents. Spyrou's (2004) study on schools in the South with Turkish-speaking children identified the inappropriate curriculum, the lack of a common language with teachers and classmates, as well as prejudice and racism as serious problems facing these children. Similar research (Demetriou and Trimikliniotis 2006) identified factors such as the language barriers and the lack of recognition of the contribution of Roma culture to society as contributing to the Roma children's poor educational performance. These findings prompt the legitimate question raised by Panayiotopoulos and Nicolaidou (2007: 75): 'what kind of attitude should we expect from children when they are brought up in an environment with such values and principles?' Indeed, overall, research on Greek-Cypriot youngsters' feelings towards minorities (both immigrants and Turkish Cypriots) indicates a variety of negative attitudes (Philippou 2005, 2009; Spyrou 2004, 2009; Trimikliniotis 2004, 2010; Zembylas et al. 2010), reflecting similar trends in the wider Cypriot society (see for example: Council of Europe 2006; Kossiva et al. 2010).

Yet, some encouraging results can be found. For example, children who participated in studies by Hadjitheodoulou-Loizidou and Symeou (2007) and Partasi (2010, 2011) seem to be positive about having classmates or friends from other national or ethnic backgrounds. Both indigenous and non-indigenous students welcomed the opportunity to learn about other countries, religions, cultures and languages. They claimed to enjoy the multicultural character of their classes, but acknowledged that the language barrier can get in the way at times (cf. Panayiotopoulos and Nicolaidou 2007). Also an EEA (European Economic Area)-funded pilot project, which included teacher training (guided by the Compasito Manual, a tool developed by the Council of Europe in order to promote Human Rights Education), had a positive outcome. The study showed how the)9F(P):o14K9PP()KB:p1;9L):A14;NA:s1;9(F(LP:h14K

entertainment. Many mixed couples are also regular customers and, despite the clubs nau

diasporic hub for migration and diaspora studies draws both on 'the island' as a unique spatial laboratory for study of social and ecological phenomena (King 2009), and on the global/local character of such an island, which has diasporic links to places both near (Greece, Turkey, Lebanon, Palestine etc.) and far (Britain, Eastern Europe, South and South-East Asia etc.). In addition to the field sites referred to immediately above (the Halal butcher's, the sports club, the international classroom etc.), we envisage further work in a number of other sites: migrant and refugee support groups, women's groups, (multi-)cultural event and festivals, the old-town crossing-point at the Green Line, (post-)colonial spaces of military and expatriate presence (access pending), as well as the casual and spontaneous sites of intercultural encounter (and exclusion) – the street, the park, the beach, the bar, the bus etc.

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