

The Pyla Master Plan Project

Pyla has always been a mixed village inhabited by Greek and Turkish Cypriots (1973: 586 Greek Cypriots and 488 Turkish Cypriots). This small community, located in the United Nations buffer zone in the Larnaca District (Cyprus), remains one of the very few places on the island where space is still shared somehow on a daily basis by inhabitants of the two communities. Today, around 1500 people live in the village; of these, two-thirds are Greek Cypriots and one-third Turkish Cypriots. The village's contested identity is layered with many controversial legends, while its inhabitants avoid public spaces, as if they were obligated to continue maintaining a balance that was established long ago, but remains fragile. Architects Münevver Özgür and Socrates Stratis have been collaborating with others since 2007 on a common project: the Pyla Master Plan, with the aim of engaging both parts of the community in a participatory procedure, from which a series of urban development projects will arise in order to overcome stagnation and to foster a common future perspective for the citizens. (Esra Can Akbil, Demet Mutman, Giorgos Psaltis, Kai Vöckler)

How and when was the Pyla Masterplan project initiated and how did you become involved?

Socrates Stratis: The Pyla Master Plan is part of a general policy of the Cyprus government and encouraged by the European Union, aimed at establishing coherent community development plans. Such plans could become a roadmap for European funding sources, avoiding any fragmented approaches. We were assigned the Pyla Master Plan after winning a competition. The winning team consisted of architects, planners, and environmentalists.¹ I personally chose to get involved with the Pyla Master Plan because of the existing specific conditions of the community: Pyla is located in the United Nations Buffer Zone, a result of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. It is one of the very few communities with an ethnically mixed population, where Turkish and Greek Cypriots live together, ever since the bi-communal conflicts in the 1960s instigated ethnic segregation, which peaked during the 1974 war. Greek Cypriots were forced to move to the southern part of the island, while Turkish Cypriots went north. In

1 AA&U For Architecture, Art and Urbanism, S. Stratis, M. Ozgur, R. Urbano, F. Ozersay, ALA Planning Partnership and Atlantis Environmental Advisors.

Interview with Münevver Özgür and Socrates Stratis

our proposed methodology, we emphasized the fact that our study team would consist of architects and planners from both communities, in order to address questions of how to share common space, rather than the prevailing practice of dividing space. Such mixed teams are not common in Cyprus. Some of them exist under the auspices of the United Nations.

Münevver Özgür: It was Socrates's idea to create a bi- or multi-communal team. I think it's been a very wise idea/vision, and I do remember how natural it was to be a part of the Pyla Master Plan Project. I guess we started to collaborate at the beginning of spring in 2007. When we made the final presentation to the villagers at the main square, it was already summer 2008.

What are the particularities of Pyla, and what was the socio-political situation in Cyprus and specifically in Pyla when you started the project?

S: The particularities of Pyla, as I started mentioning before, are first, its location in the United Nations' demilitarized zone,² and second, the coexistence of Greek and Turkish Cypriots, even if relations are very bad. The village's location within the UN demilitarized zone is rather unique for the UN administration. When Münevver and I asked them if they knew of any similar situation anywhere else in the world, they admitted that there were not really any—meaning, a community living inside such a zone. The difficulty of this kind of condition is that it is usually rather unclear who is in charge, who administrates the community. The Republic of Cyprus and the UN attempt to operate in this territory through the Larnaca District Office. The local community council is linked to the Larnaca District Office and unfortunately consists only of Greek Cypriots. The Turkish Cypriot local authority is assigned by the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which is recognized only by Turkey. This poses all sorts of problems that are impossible to resolve. There is no official contact between the representatives of the two ethnic groups. Pyla has become, in fact, a macro-political arena. Residents of the village from both ethnic groups know very well that any local conflict could ignite a crisis on the island, and possibly even a regional one. And vice-versa. Whenever there is an increase in the existing tension between Turkey and Cyprus, Pyla gets its

2 UN Buffer Zone.

share. I remember when we were working on the master plan, there was local tension when Turkish Cypriot residents of Pyla illegally accessed the community's electrical network, and some employees went to resolve the issue. The whole thing ratcheted up with the help of the media, of course, and community leaders from communities all over the island went to visit Pyla in order to calm things down. Greek Cypriots refer to Pyla quite often as an example of peaceful coexistence, as a model for possible coexistence for the whole island. In contrast, Turkish Cypriots refer to Pyla as a model of how Greek Cypriots suppress Turkish Cypriots. Through our experience with the Pyla Master Plan, we realized that none of this was really true.

Therefore, it was a sort of a paradox to attempt to provide a master plan for such an ambiguous territory. But such ambiguity was very intriguing for us, indeed. In fact, all of the UN's attempts to launch projects, especially for the main square of the village, had failed, because of the unwillingness of the inhabitants to adopt them. Another particularity of Pyla is the ethnic segregation of common space. Strangely enough, the homes of Turkish and Greek Cypriots are not segregated. There are no separate neighborhoods, even though there are more Turkish Cypriots closer to the northern edge of the village. However, coffee shops, schools, and athletic facilities are separate, even if they are sometimes located next to each other. The village's main square represents an example of this kind of segregated proximity. The space is used as a parking lot. The Turkish Cypriot coffee shop is located at the western side of the square, next to a mosque. The nationalists' Greek Cypriot coffee shop is located on the north edge of the square; it was built as a symbol after the 1974 war, on the property of a church, which is situated a few meters further north. (In fact, one of our proposals was to move that coffee shop to a new, adjacent building in order to open up the view of the very old church, and provide easier access to it, as well.) The leftist Greek Cypriot coffee shop is located further north, beyond the square. In fact, all Cypriot villages and towns unfortunately maintain this kind of right- and left-wing political segregation. On the eastern side of Pyla's main square, you can see the UN observatory, built on top of an existing building. The UN manager's office is at the southwestern edge. What struck us during our first visits was that people were sitting in or just outside their coffee shops,

with the UN soldiers in their observation booth, and they were all watching the parking lot in the square, without any contact to each other. You could feel the immobility of things; you might even imagine that they have been sitting like that for the last 37 years. Not really . . . during the 1990s, if I remember correctly, the Greek Cypriot inhabitants of Pyla erected an oversized community house just south of the mosque. They used the size of the architecture to show who is in control of the area. (In our proposals, we thought of a tactical move to alter this kind of symbolic gesture: placing a public observation platform and a cafeteria on the top of the building, with external access. It didn't really go through as a proposal . . .)

Did the opening of the gates affect the village in any way?

S: Yes, decisively. Before 2003, when the checkpoints between the north and south opened, Pyla was economically prosperous, since it was a sort of informal gate between the two sides, where the black market and smuggling could thrive. After 2003 a lot of shops closed and Pyla no longer had this exclusive status. The actual situation in Pyla is that Turkish Cypriot inhabitants are quite poor and some of them seek to move to the north part of the island, as they told our Turkish Cypriot colleagues. Some Greek Cypriot inhabitants are rather rich, since they own land of high value in the tourist areas on the seashore, which is also part of Pyla's territory.

M: Ever since my childhood (I was born in 1967; I was 7 years old in 1974) Pyla has been a special place in my perception. It was a dreamland and a land of fear at the same time. It was a segregated village (Turkish Cypriots could not get in without special permission) and a village of togetherness (Turkish and Greek Cypriots living side-by-side). It was a hilly site and at the same time was not so high. It was neither on a mountain, nor on the shore. However it had close relationships to both. It was both forbidden and accessible. Families secretly met there at restaurants. The fear and joy of meeting together in this heaven on earth was there, served with a traditional side of baked potatoes. Who were friends? Who were Greek Cypriots? Who were Turkish Cypriots? Who was from another nation? Who were members of the secret police? What was so criminal about eating potatoes and yogurt with friends? I cannot tell if the opening of

the gates affected the project in any way. But I can summarize the whole socio-political situation in Pyla as artificial and/or synthetic; much more than the one on the island in general. The perception of reality is a trick, as in The Truman Show. The villagers are like the hero in The Truman Show—unaware of what exactly is going on, living according to beliefs passed down from earlier generations, yet none of these beliefs are related to absolute truths. Only the protagonists (governments on both sides, embassies, the UN, the EU . . .) take part in the generation and modification of knowledge. They construct reality so slowly that it can hardly move, in my opinion.

It is known that, in recent years, the village has undergone huge development and seen its tourism units multiply. How did this affect the community?

Urban development has been occurring mainly outside of the village center, and extending all the way to the seashore. This area is outside the UN buffer zone. We don't have specific information on how such development takes place, who buys the land, etc. The land is mostly owned by Greek Cypriot inhabitants of Pyla, who either develop or sell it. What we do know is what is happening all over Cyprus: all land close to the sea is being overbuilt, in order to house large numbers of tourists for a few weeks during the summer, or else it is sold to foreigners who are attracted by the sunny Cyprus climate. Land owned by Turkish Cypriots in southern Cyprus is managed by a state authority and usually remains underdeveloped and in an uncertain state. Such parcels, close to the sea, are usually under pressure. Because land development is done in a super-private way, no community authority profits directly from it, except for service taxes. Therefore, the new foreign community is becoming part of this tourist development south of the area we have studied. It will be interesting to go back and see how they influence each other.

What was the main idea behind the proposal you developed, and what did you try to achieve with it?

S: The main ideas behind the proposal unfold on three levels: first, that of the process of making the proposal, to which we gave great value; second, that of the final projects of the master plan; and third, that of what we call "ignition projects," a

sort of 'To-Do-Tomorrow' kind of list, which could persuade inhabitants that change is, indeed, possible, and thus preparing in the final projects to be implemented.

We began work knowing beforehand that any attempt at a common project in Pyla involving Turkish and Greek Cypriots would be rather difficult. We decided to make maximum use of the process itself, turning that into a project—a project that could mobilize people, could engage at least some of them, could bypass or divert existing spatial practices. Together with Münevver and Fevzi, we established a sort of a project within the project of Pyla Master Plan. I have faith in the notion of activating public space through people's engagement. Resistance toward physical space, as some authors say, could increase the level of engagement. I could add that resistance toward the process itself could enrich such engagement. It forces people to get out of their private bubbles or normal practices and start creating a common denominator through the physical and social space. It is that common denominator that could allow the slightest communication to start between people. In order to realize a goal like this, a series of "friction genes," as I called them, were developed and inserted into different stages of the project development process. Some of them were very simple. The first of them was to include Münevver and her collaborators in the study team. Reactions of the Greek Cypriot local council gradually calmed, especially when they realized the usefulness of such a team. The second one was to bypass local authorities and establish direct contact with the inhabitants, developed through a workshop we had organized, activating the void of the main square, so far used only as a parking lot. We established informal talks with the local Turkish Cypriot authorities and EVKAF.³ Unfortunately, they were both excluded from the official references in the Pyla Master Plan due to the non-recognition of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. No effort was made, in fact, to develop any alternative modes of planning, such as a "Nicosia Master Plan," where professionals from both communities join in the project without any form of representation. They represent themselves and not any kind of state body, and in this way, they bypass any difficulties surrounding the recognition of the state in the northern half of the island.

3 The foundation in charge of managing the Muslim religious land on the island.



Another “friction gene” we developed was to make public presentations in both Turkish and Greek, using a translator. It sounds, in fact, like a very common-sense practice, but, believe me, it is not. Our aim was to create the best conditions through which a practice of active coexistence between Turkish and Greek Cypriots could take place. Listening to a public presentation in Turkish and Greek is one of the rarest things one could do here in Cyprus, even if it sounds obvious to others. It was in fact, a sort of indirect critique of the given terms of reference, which did not address such issues. Well, you can’t imagine the difficulties that confronted us. Even choosing a space for the presentation was impossible. How to choose an equally inviting place for both Turkish and Greek Cypriots? That is why we chose the main square for the final presentation, thinking that it was neutral enough to give us the chance to get a message across. It turned out to be a disaster . . . Not very many people showed up. The atmosphere between the local authorities and the study team was not very nice, because I think we tried a little bit too hard to get our point across; maybe we became very defensive, seeing all our efforts come to nothing. Münevver and I were accused of not being patriotic enough for our ethnic groups, and of not considering their ideas enough during the preparation of the master plan.

Going back to the importance of the process itself: a positive result of the project is that the study team came out much stronger than it was at the beginning. In fact, members of the team had met through the project. All this experience created a nice bond between the team members, hopefully useful in the future. This is a quite important aspect, since the study team could be considered as a sort of a temporary community, with around fifteen to twenty people involved, especially during the workshop and the preparation of the



drawings: students of architecture from both sides, plus younger people like Jasmine, Münevver’s daughter, and her friend, were involved. Being part of intense discussions with the president and secretary of the local Turkish Cypriot authority at the Turkish Cypriot coffee shop, together with Münevver and Fevzi, was worth all the effort, indeed. A strong bond was created among the three of us during that discussion. In fact, Münevver and Fevzi mentioned after the discussion that it was probably one of those rare times that a creative discussion had taken place, seeking the point of view of the Turkish Cypriots. Just to provide a glimpse of the context of such discussion, I’ll mention an ‘informal’ interrogation we had to go through at the coffee shop, conducted by an officer of the Turkish Cypriot secret police, who was trying to understand what the hell we were about.

Regarding the actual content of the final proposal of Pyla Master Plan: the aim was to emphasize projects that might collectively engage Pyla inhabitants of any origin, both on a very small scale and a very big one. Yiannis Papadakis, an anthropologist who worked on Pyla, suggested we emphasize aspects of everyday life, such as health care and exercise, for example. We were aware of the limits of architecture in such a context, and so we therefore aimed to encourage things to happen, rather than to patronize residents or force them.

Ten projects were proposed, relating to the specific context of the community. Some of them were about activating voids in the community: either strategically placed empty plots, programmed for ephemeral uses, such as open-air cinema, for example. Other cases had to do with residual space gained by new traffic management of private cars, which increased space for pedestrians. For example, a network of playgrounds was proposed, profiting from the ethnic mix of neighborhoods, and encouraging kids to

come out of their houses and play. We named it the K.A.A. project (The Kids Are Alright). A negative reaction from a member of the local Greek Cypriot council was that people don’t allow their kids to play in the streets, because of safety issues. It sounded to me like a sort of middle-class, suburban logic of “all inclusive residences,” where people go from house to house, bypassing any public space.

For the main square we proposed an open-air market, since Pyla had been rather notorious for all sorts of markets, plus it could become a real space of exchange based on commerce, which could hopefully add to productive transactions between the two ethnic groups. A series of links were proposed to re-establish physical connections to the adjacent mosque, church, and the Venetian tower. Such links were proposed with minimum means attempting to get maximum results: Discreetly connecting the beautiful mosque garden with the square, replacing a building of rundown shops located at the edge of the same garden in front of the local Greek Cypriot council building. Plus, as I mentioned already, moving the Greek Cypriot nationalists’ coffee shop, allowing space for the very old Byzantine church.

Another project proposed was a Memory Museum: the creation of a people’s archive of personal experiences, giving an alternative discourse to the official ones. This museum will be located in the former police station, which would symbolically show the shift from police control to people’s self-determination, which will hopefully be possible sometime.

At the other extreme, a very large-scale project was proposed, an “elephant project,” as Münevver called it. This proposal was a joint venture, involving the entire community, for the development and protection of state land located on a higher plateau north of the community center, where the Turkish army is strategically located. Creating an environmental park with all sorts of uses and with trans-local importance could provide a common vision for the inhabitants, shifting their interest from emphasizing issues that divide to dealing with challenges that could unite them.

How to start change in such a context is usually a tough thing to deal with. When almost nothing has happened in the village in this direction during the last thirty-seven



years, such a goal becomes rather impossible. For a team of architects and planners to reassure the inhabitants that they could make the difference sounds rather naïve, at least. For these reasons, we developed a sort of an “engine” in each project, which could work as a catalyst for creating the right dynamics for the final project to be implemented. We called it the “ignition project,” even if the notion of ignition in Pyla has rather negative connotations; you never know when and what could be used as ignition for a new micro-conflict in the community. In our case, we wanted to give a creative value to such a notion. The ignition project is based, in fact, on a ‘To-Do-Tomorrow’ project with little means and budget, and a collective initiative. Each final project had an ignition project imbedded in it, which could, in fact, determine the final form of the project to implement, depending on all of the issues one knows nothing about when one designs a project, especially of urban scale.

Unfortunately the idea of the “ignition project” and the main square was very badly received by the local authorities. But that made us think of another kind of use for such a project. I will explain what I mean. The final presentation of the Pyla Master Plan, as I mentioned before, took place in the main square. We presented most of the projects, without any significant reaction from the audience. When we arrived at the presentation of the ignition project involving the main square, which was to draw over existing asphalt lines to create playing fields for different sports, so that young people could play there, the president of the local Greek Cypriot council reacted rather badly, rejecting this kind of idea, being scared, as he said, of quarrels between Turkish and Greek Cypriot youngsters playing against each other, and possibly turning the square



into a violent zone. My interpretation of that reaction, which might be wrong, is that the immediacy of such a project forced people to show their real position vis-à-vis this kind of common project. It becomes much easier to put long-term projects away in a drawer, using excuses such as budget issues, acceptance from the inhabitants, etc. In the case of the ignition project, all such excuses were waived, leaving no other way to confront it, except with a sincere reaction, such as the one from the president of the local Greek Cypriot council.

What is interesting is that all our proposals have been approved by the central government and the local Greek Cypriot authority. Our proposals include the EVKAF ideas about developing their property close to the mosque. It remains to re-engage Pyla’s inhabitants of any origin in a different manner, trying always to avoid the consequences of the large-scale politics hovering over the community.

So how did the story with the asphalt lines end up? Did they accept it at the end? Or better: has anything—even a small ignition project—been implemented?

M: No, not yet. After the project was submitted, we did not hear from them. I vaguely remember that one day I read some news in the newspaper that the local Turkish authorities in Pyla received some money from the Turkish Embassy in the north for some other projects. I was so upset that I did not continue to read the article in full.

S: As I mentioned already, our proposals were officially accepted both by the local Greek Cypriot authorities and the Planning Department. But . . . everything is on the shelf, labeled as old attempts. We didn’t have the courage to go back with Münevver and try to push any of the ignition projects

forward. Maybe we will get the courage soon, hopefully. But, as Münevver mentioned some time just after we had submitted the project—and she was right—we were not able to create some allies within the community who could encourage us to go on, who could also push the things. Of course, it was evidently very difficult. Maybe that is how we should start over.

With whom did you work after the project was initiated; who supported it, and in what way?

M: As Socrates mentioned before, we tried to cooperate with as many parties as possible: e.g., the village community, local authorities, EVKAF, the UN, etc. EVKAF was the most neutral of all the parties involved. They, too, were technical people who concentrated more on the qualities of life and space, rather than on national, economic, and power relations. The thorniest path of communication was the one leading to the local authorities. Even though they were polite, they were very suspicious of us, our moves, motives, ideas, and, most of all, they were both surprised and scared by the human bonds we had among us as a team. We somehow did not fit into their perceptions of scenarios of life.

A very critical incident was the telephone call I received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the north. I was cross-examined, with questions like: What are you doing there? Why are you involved? How did you get involved? Did you get any permission? Who is supporting the project, economically? Very annoying. Very unpleasant. I kept cool and answered politely. They were satisfied. Misunderstandings were cleared up . . . Obviously there was no threat . . . Just a pointless suspicion.



S: Yes, I guess . . . that was confirmed by the UNDP team, even though they stood somewhere in the middle. They liked us and our ideas, but not the idea of being involved in any way with Pyla. Too hard a project; too impossible to attain positive, constructive, creative, or applicable results . . . that was the personal impression I had from their facial expressions. Too many parties were involved; it felt too crowded, but it still felt too alone. We did not mind! We kept our optimism!

What have been the results and the biggest obstacles during the procedure?

M: Regarding the results . . . we definitely learned a lot about Pyla, from the village people, from nature, from each other. We enjoyed working together, doing interdisciplinary work. Anna was great. Her team was very supportive. Socrates was a luxury to have around. So was Riccardo. Maria and her input with her short film, and the Siamese twins' live demonstration was like a magical touch of art in our process. Fevzi was very helpful. During the interviews, his presence was irreplaceable. His wise and human approach calmed down even the most aggressive party during our coffee shop conversations.

We brought a colorful discourse to the people of Pyla. Against all odds, we were interesting role models, as a team. I am not sure if they fully realized this, but, at least, I am sure we opened a decent crack in their firmly molded perceptions. Good ideas! If they will be used or not, I do not know. But definitely, we as a team produced very good project ideas.

S: It will be interesting to go back, if we have the courage, and ask the people involved what they remember of this expedition of ours. It has become clear to our team that one has to understand how the architecture of the procedure itself is crucial for the

partial success of a project, but maybe it is not clear to the other parties involved. Our team itself, with all of the people involved—architects, planners, students—has become a creative space of exchange and of creation of trust and respect. We sort of created our own micro-environment, which was then harshly tested in Pyla, but, on the other hand, it was thanks to the Pyla project that such an experience was created at all.

Our proposals were approved and they incorporate ideas from some parties that were, unfortunately, not involved in the process like EVKAF. Our productive cooperation, as Münevver mentioned, resulted in ideas worth remembering, worth using and in conjunction with another base of cooperation.

And the obstacles?

M: People. People themselves! Bureaucracy. Mediocracy. “Too many cooks spoil the broth”: the UN, the police, local authorities, church, mosque, coffee shops . . . The villagers had almost no voice! Even if they had any, it was hardly audible! And the local authorities . . . the tension between them . . . inequalities, both social and economic . . .

S: At the moment you realize that you are in a “Truman Show,” and that everybody is watching your every single move—which is the case involving Pyla and the rest of Cyprus—then bizarre things begin to happen. First of all, you continuously test to see if people are watching you, by creating small crises that intensify and contaminate the “people watching you.” As I mentioned before, a lot of such instances of micro-conflicts start large-scale political crises and vice-versa. That was one of the main obstacles.

Then, the terms of reference of Pyla Master Plan did not take into account the particular condition of the community, and therefore encouraged a lot of misunderstanding and mistrust. Of course, any other plans—like the Jacob plan initiated by the UN, which was sort of a joint venture with the community—also failed. Or even a medieval tower, a very important community landmark, which was renovated through the UN initiative, is now completely abandoned. I think there are various layers of obstacles related to the presence of a long-term conflict and the absence of any sort of civil society.

What kind of impact could the project have on the village in a social, political, economic, and cultural sense?

M: I could say that; socially, the project might function as a “secure communication milieu”—in a metaphorical way—where open space could be created to bring in villagers’ voices and choices. For example, the swimming pool project or the kindergarten project ideas were based on very basic human needs, such as getting refreshed in hot summer days or taking care of your children. Different stages of the design process for such projects mean that one has to discuss very human details. Or the environmental research center! Why not focus on environmental global problems, rather than being stuck with local problems, which cannot be solved momentarily.

In a political sense . . . what a great political stand, and what aluxury it is, being able to say, “Look, these are our projects. We, as the people of Pyla, want to go forward with them.” It is political strategy originating from the people on the inside toward those on the outside. Just the opposite of what has been happening to Pyla so far.

The other political mission the master plan might have carried out could have been the formation of a pilot project, or proof that things can be done together. In other words, instead of concentrating on the demographic differences, the people of Pyla could be evidence of the fact that, by concentrating on our human similarities, a lot can be done. Maybe it is a dream, but it's a nice dream: Cypriots bringing their own projects into life. What a huge positive step toward the solution of the Cyprus problem! What a nice and colorful source of hope!

In an economic sense? I do not know. I was never very good with money issues! In my opinion, most of the projects we have proposed are like seeds: a new source of life; richness; energy, and work opportunities. The happier the environments are, the happier the people feel—and hence, they are gradually transformed into empowered human resources for a more mature, independent, critical, and stronger country, island, world.

When the dimension of the cultural impact of the Pyla Master Plan Project is considered, the only thing that comes to my mind is the creation of a new culture. Two communities have so far developed a culture of

silence and invisibility in Pyla. If women from two different nations get along very well, they experience their friendship behind doors, during coffee breaks, at home, informally. It could be a minor step from a hidden, tense, and rigid culture toward a more transparent, dialectic, and transformative culture.

Are you connected to other projects similar to yours? If so, please specify the project, the partner, and the country/location.

M: Ever since its initiation, I have been a member of the team of consultants for a project called Revitalizing the Dead Zone: An Educational Center and Home for Cooperation. Fevzi and I have been involved in the Kontea Cultural Heritage Project and also took part in the preparation of anti-discrimination and anti-racism policy documents for the English School of Nicosia.

S: I have not been involved with similar planning projects concerning bi-communal issues. On the other hand, I have been involved with projects that considered Cyprus as a conflict zone and investigated possibilities of contributing to the activation of public space, of common references, etc.—for example, the Anatomy of Coffee Trips in Spaces of Borders,⁴ Leaps of Faith,⁵ the Public Private Synergy Convoy,⁶ which was a mobile workshop and exhibition space used later on for Pyla, and finally, the KillingFreeTime@Cyprus⁷ project, which was a critical stance on the coexistence of military and leisure infrastructures on the island of Cyprus.

What can possible future initiatives learned from your experience? What is your advice?

4 A research project looking common means of representation in a divided city, such as Nicosia, mapping the everyday trips taken by coffee-shop owners in both parts of Nicosia and generating new common maps. Contribution to the Venice Biennale of Architecture 2004.

5 International exhibition of Art with the “Call # 192” project, 2005

6 PPS Convoy: a joint project with Maria Loizidou, under the auspices of the AAPLUSU platform and created by its members: an architecture for escorting people back to their homes (Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots) and documenting their experiences.

7 Contribution to the Venice Biennale of Architecture 2006.

Contribution to the Venice Biennale of Architecture 2008

M: I definitely would try harder to get into the homes of local people and conduct interviews with women and children. I think we unconsciously left out these two very important sources of knowledge and an important sector of our participants during the process.

S: Keep trying, even if you know you will fail. Failure has become a means of learning, especially for us as a study team. I like Münevver’s metaphor of The Truman Show, with all the inhabitants being in The Truman Show, while the diverse authorities survey and control them, instead of representing them. Where were we situated throughout our project? We tried to step into the “Truman Show” city in several ways, but maybe it was too hard to sustain our efforts. People might not be used to being asked for their points of views about their environment. A lot of work needs to be done there.