Claiming the City, Potential for Co-existence

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The ideas guiding this project are inspired by the French Marxist intellectual Henri Lefebvre, particularly his writings on the "Right to the City" (Le Droit à la ville). His dialectical analysis on the historical evolution of the "western civilization cities" and the focus on the relation with class conflicts over time is a stepping stone for the project. The theoretical framework that derived from his writing is setting up a "lens" that helps to critically analyze the historical center of Nicosia as a space hosting interactions and claims of individuals, creating a chain of events in an urban environment which makes the power relations apparent in the urban space.

The historical center of Nicosia is chosen as a case study due to its exceptional character, in terms of the social differences. The evolution of the historical city along with the strong appearance of political differences is influencing the urban qualities, making it strongly variable from the conditions someone identifies in other areas of the city. Nicosia have been divided since 1964 by a thin strip of land, which is known as the "green line" and runs across the main core of the city and separates it into two main sectors, North and South. Eventually, the physical and social division of the city had affected the urban character of the surrounded area. In the last decades the property holders gradually have moved from the center to the suburbs and small industrial activities were deserted. As a result, the urban structure had been neglected, the historical center remained almost abandoned and the old city became an intimate destination for migrant populations creating a gradual social transformation, from being a single economical class area to a strong mixture of different socio-economic groups. The vacant areas become hospitable destinations for migrants, contextualizing a zone of transition that happened to take place at the most central point of the city.

The above realities synthesize a context, in which political dynamism provides a ground for creating a place where different social groups coexist in adjacent neighborhoods. This frames a fertile set up where interaction can take place and eventually it could trigger progressive change in the urban environment. For the scope of the project the neighborhoods of the historic city are mapped according to the variety of "claiming actions" they hold in their environment. The analysis is further integrated with theoretical writings of Lefebvre creating a sufficient knowledge and understanding to re-think the existing physical space in socially neglected areas of urban Nicosia by re-designing it. Different design strategies are used to rebalance the existing power relations between users, in public and private segments of the city. This will help to redefine the existing socio-economic relation by promoting common ground for sharing claims in urban environment.

CLAIMING PARAMETERS		LOW CLAIM			HIGH CLAIM	
WATCHING		TALL BUILDING (TOWER)	BUILDING'S ROOF	BUILDING'S BALCONY	STREET	
GATHERING		OPEN SPACE	CAFETERIA RESTAURANT	STREET	RESIDENCE	
CIRCULATION		OPEN SPACE	PARKING AREA	STREET	PEDESTRIAN ZONE	
COMMUNICATION		SOUND	SIGNS	FLYERS AND POSTERS	WALL GRAFFITY	
HOUSING		INDIVIDUAL RESIDENCE	FAMILY RESIDENCE	FLAT SHARED BY 2-3 RESIDENTS	FLAT SHARED BY 4-8 RESIDENTS	
COMMERCIAL AMENITIES		CONCENTRATED (SMALL)	SERVICES (MANY)	SMALL SHOPS	LOCAL SHOPS AND MARKETS	
MOBILE AUTHORITY		HOUSING CONTROL	STREET CONTROL	OPEN SPACE CONTROL	PERIMETRIC CONTROL	

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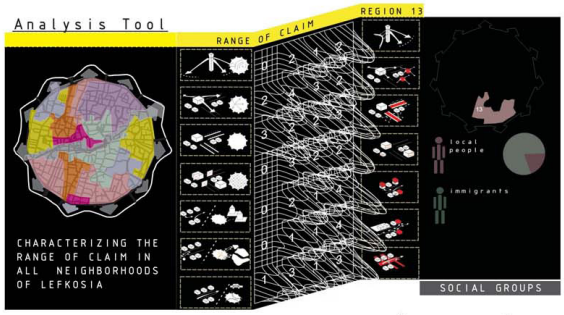
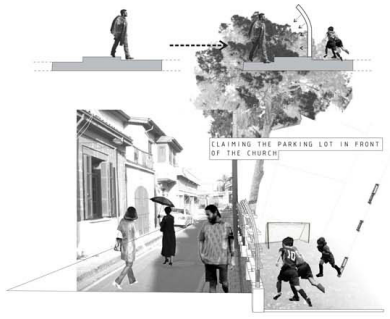
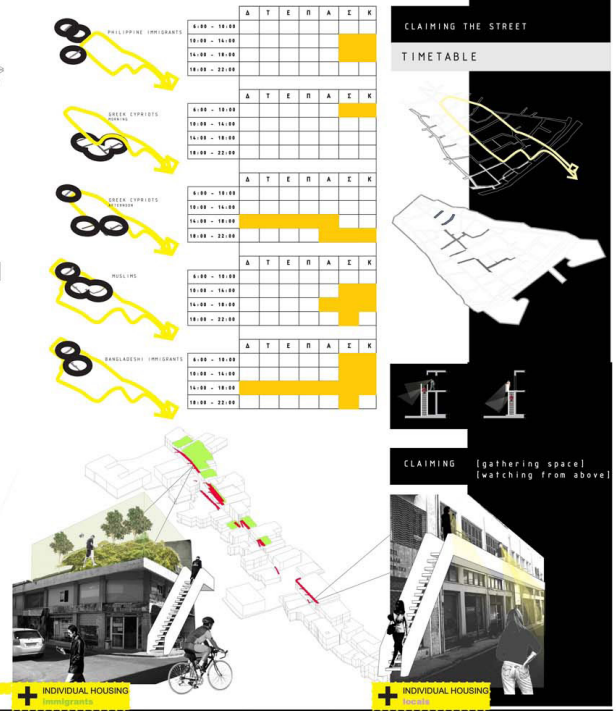




Re-claim Eschilou St. Project

CONVERTING STREETS TO TEMPORARY CLOSED PEDESTRIAN ZONES (ACCORDING TO THE TEMPORARY NEED OF THE SOCIAL GROUPS)