

# Hybrid Living: Emerging Out of the Crises and Divisions

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**Abstract**—The paper will focus on the hybrid living typologies which are brought about due to the Global Crisis. Mixing of the generations and the groups of people, mingling the functions of living with working and socializing, merging the act of living in synergy with the urban realm and its constituent elements will be the springboard of proposing an essential sustainable housing approach and the respective urban development. The thematic will be based on methodologies developed both on the academic, educational environment including participation of students' research and on the practical aspect of architecture including case studies executed by the author in the island of Cyprus. Both paths of the research will deal with the explorative understanding of the hybrid ways of living, testing the limits of its autonomy. The evolution of the living typologies into substantial hybrid entities, will deal with the understanding of new ways of living which include among others: re-introduction of natural phenomena, accommodation of the activity of work and services in the living realm, interchange of public and private, injections of communal events into the individual living territories. The issues and the binary questions raised by what is natural and artificial, what is private and what public, what is ephemeral and what permanent and all the in-between conditions are eloquently traced in the everyday life in the island. Additionally, given the situation of Cyprus with the eminent scar of the dividing 'Green line' and the waiting of the 'ghost city' of Famagusta to be resurrected, the conventional way of understanding the limits and the definitions of the properties is irreversibly shaken. The situation is further aggravated by the unprecedented phenomenon of the crisis on the island. All these observations set the premises of reexamining the urban development and the respective sustainable housing in a synergy where their characteristics start exchanging positions, merge into each other, contemporarily emerge and vanish, changing from permanent to ephemeral. This fluidity of conditions will attempt to render a future of the built- and unbuilt realm where the main focusing point will be redirected to the human and the social. Weather and social ritual scenographies together with 'spontaneous urban landscapes' of 'momentary relationships' will suggest a recipe for emerging urban environments and sustainable living. Thus, the paper will aim at opening a discourse on the future of the sustainable living merged in a sustainable urban development in relation to the imminent solution of the division of island, where the issue of property became the main obstacle to be overcome. At the same time, it will attempt to link this approach to the global need for a sustainable evolution of the urban and living realms.

**Keywords**—Social ritual scenographies, spontaneous urban landscapes, substantial hybrid entities, re-introduction of natural phenomena.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

**C**RISES and Divisions are widely deemed as the negative repercussions of human interventions, related to the direct and indirect needs for the human living realm.

In contradistinction to the general negative understanding of the issues on Crises, Mark Wigley quite provocatively coined the notion that "Crises are ultimately productive. They force invention". [1]

Cyprus is a unique place where crises prosper: Among its social, cultural, political, environmental crises. It 'boasts' of the only divided capital in the world and the ghost city of Famagusta, while it was 'offered' for the first ever testing of the financial bailout. Thus, it constitutes the best opportunity for the rethinking of the urban environment into a holistically sustainable future.

The island offers a unique opportunity for testing innovative, emerging "hybrid living" conditions in a local scale with global application. The trauma of the war and the division are still vividly present, having Nicosia as the only divided capital in the world expecting a unification and the city Famagusta as the 'sleeping beauty' waiting for its 'awakening'. The 'dead zone' along the center of the former and the 'fenced city' of the latter are replete with some of the qualities of the 'contested sites': abandoned and inaccessible, conquered by natural phenomena processes, frightening and desirable, arena of eternal battles. However, together with the current unprecedented financial and social crisis, they can provoke the critical momentum for rethinking the urban evolution in both its living and its public realms and most importantly in its in-between status, the emerging 'hybrid living'.

The paper will focus on rendering the uniqueness of the two contested territories that create the right conditions for unique crises in the island of Cyprus. Consequently, an exploration of the response to the living and urban realms will take place through professional, academic and activist works in Cyprus. Finally, it will attempt to delineate an emerging sustainable evolution of the urban and living realms.

## II. CRISES AND DIVISIONS

'Hybrid Living' as an emerging sustainable evolution of the built environment is surely a global necessity that refers to all the urban environments in every corner of the planet. On the island of Cyprus, the imminent rebirth of the ghost city of Famagusta and the Dead Zone of Nicosia (see Fig. 1) escalates the need for embarking on incessant explorations how this evolving process may occur.

Ghost city of Famagusta- Indisputably a provoking site!

The time froze back in 1974: the most developed city in the island, embellished with luxurious sea front hotels and infrastructure was left abandoned. All the properties, private and public consists this no man's land territory. The whole city plays one main important role in the negotiations for solving the problem, in the area of properties. The literally dormant, decaying city tends to erase the borders of the properties. The nature, year by year takes over. It links the various properties into a unifying entity of which the connecting element is the thriving vegetation. Trees rise in the middle of the streets and pop out from the inner part of the buildings. The dilapidation and abandonment with the lush succulent, cacti and other untamed vegetation are interwoven in a contemporary unique 'war urban monument'.



Fig. 1 Nicosia- the divided capital, Famagusta- the ghost city [12]

Nicosia- the only divided capital of the world! Through the years, we experience the dividing 'green line' completely failing to play the role of separating. The disruption of the previously existing flows by the barrels, the barbed wires, the sand bags, the snipers' posts, the dividing walls state the clear intention of the prohibition of movement. However, the abundance of flows and the freedom of trespassing the vague territories in the form of images, whispers, sounds, smells, vegetation flows, animals' transitions, birds' flights, light and darkness, information, symbols, even smugglers and fugitives triggered the notion of the fluidity and mobility, of porosity and trespassing. The Division Zone is gradually weakened to sustain division. Consequently, it tends to start reuniting instead of separating. As in Famagusta, the taking over Nature triggered the mechanism of fading away the traces of the properties. The jungle like vegetation unifies the elongated zone. It somehow defines and directs the development of the urban centers of the two parts of the divided city, thus forcing and provoking game with properties' issues in the city.

Intrigued by the unique conditions of the 'green line' and division - thriving vegetation and life in the dead zone, frozen memories and nature taking over in the ghost properties, division as a porous creative entity- the unique phenomenon of these two cities provoke the discussion on notions such as seasonal and temporary ownerships, interexchange of private

and public realms, nature taking over manmade environments, spontaneous and ephemeral urbanism, living where the immaterial matters [2], blending of the human and built topographies in ritual scenographies. The imminent rebirth of the ghost city and reunification of the divided Nicosia could set the premises of the discourse of a new recipe of cooking architecture and the built environment seen as 'hybrid living' rendered with 'ephemeral property situations' defined and altered by human topographies rather than by strict spatial grids of properties.

The Division of the island, together with the extreme environmental Crisis especially in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea together with the very recent, unprecedented financial bailout that acutely undermined all the facets of the human activities in Cyprus, aggravated the situation and re-boosted the urgency and the need of this discussion.

Nicosia is experiencing an exceptional situation of flows of its functions including its center, forcing radical changes in terms of properties be them both permanent (as permanent can be) and temporal. As an aftermath of the current great Financial Crisis that altered the urban scene in the cities of the island is the unprecedented emergence of vast numbers of eating and drinking facilities (private sector). The Crisis generated an aggravating sprawling of the cafeterias, bars, and restaurants in the city, conquering every vacant space and every single empty corner of streets and squares (public sector) [3]. A constant interchange of properties takes place incessantly. These conditions of the two 'ambiguous cities' – 'uncertain sites' of Famagusta and Nicosia did set the premises of an experimental exploration in surge for an urban prototype. They offered a serious argument for fluid urban entities, where flows, buildings and uses are not thought as separate constituent elements but rather as ingredients of an urban entity in a flux status, that are organically interconnected. These urban ingredients are constantly generating an ever changing built environment that attempts to respond to the constantly emerging crises. [8]

### III. 'GROWING' CITIES

Notions of radical revitalizations and regenerations of the cities led to a rethink about the urban issues and methodologies in a direction which is inspired by the ambiguities of these sites setting new understanding about the property issue. The contested sites within and along the Division, in parallel to various forgotten urban sites and vague terrains as derivatives of the division, being created by 'force', the human intervention onto the nature (city) in the beginning and the human onto the artificial (war) are temporarily 'carved' by natural phenomena as they are left abandoned. As formal and future active parts of the cities, they call for new ways at looking at them, not as ingredients of an organized city with the constraints of the strict and predictable of the gridded built environments, but with qualities of an interactive urban realm which continually generates unpredictable situations in the built environment [8], where borders are questioned.

Following Henri Lefebvre's understanding that 'the space we are living in it is not a natural creation by a fully human work, produced by people in a way that is conditioned by natural, social and cultural factors' [4], we may think of these conditions that they will enable the right to the city based on the urban everyday life. These new qualities call for a city as place of appropriation, festival, game and interpersonal exchange, Lefebvre continues. In order to manage to achieve these radical improvements of the quality of environment of life, the new urban ecologies of 'Hybrid livings' will be only realized by rethinking the status of the properties as a fluid entity.

In a quite challenging way, Lefebvre asks the question: 'What is architecture? Is there something specifically architectural? Is it an art, a technique, a science?' [4]. He finally renders a provocative conclusion, despite the general assumption of the notion and the discipline of architecture that 'architecture is a social practice'. In relation to the needs of the built environment he continues that a new need is emerging: 'That of the urban life of the city'. He explains in the 'Right to the city' discourse that the need for urban life includes the need for places (and times) of simultaneity, encounter ('places where exchange will not pass through exchange value'). Once more he provokes the role of the architect and the urban planner; he calls for a city based on a game and spontaneity. On the same path, Lefebvre restates the understanding of inhabitation: "for an individual, for a group, to inhabit is to appropriate something. Not in the sense of possessing it, but as making it an oeuvre, making it one's own, marking it, modeling it, shaping it... To inhabit is to appropriate space, in the midst of constraints, that is to say, to be in a conflict- often acute- between the constraining powers and the forces of appropriation". As appropriation gains a significant role in this discourse, Lefebvre examines its impact on its small and big scales. Thus, he continues by stating that 'appropriation of space covers a wide range of practices, whether individual or collective, that modify, reshape, adapt, adjust or alter space on various scales, from a nook in a pavilion to an urban territory'. He further juxtaposes the roles of domination and appropriation: he clarifies that 'domination ravages nature, while appropriation 'transforms it- the body and biological life provided, and the time and space- into human property'. It is thus 'the goal, the direction, the purpose of social life': Economic and technical growths are possible without it, but not social development. This polemical opposition between domination and appropriation is seen as a social, spontaneous and open-ended practice. [4]

Lukasz Stanek in his introduction to the Henri Lefebvre's *Towards an Architecture of Enjoyment* [5] states that: "Lefebvre seems to argue that the dynamics of the social production of space require dissolution of architecture into a momentary enjoyment, a flash of desire, an ephemeral situation created by "activities of groups that are themselves ephemeral". He then states that "any location can serve as a site for pleasure and joy once it has been hijacked". This can set the premises of an emerging urban environment where the material boundaries may ephemerally, seasonally and

momentarily evaporate and alter in order to sustain a really social context of the built environment. The paper suggests that this notion of appropriation and constant questioning of the borders, boundaries, thresholds calls for radical changes in the built environment for evolving 'growing cities' like a living organism and thus defying the restrictions of the property's system on which the contemporary cities are based.

#### IV. EVOLUTIONS OF LIVING TYPOLOGIES

The understanding of appropriation and the challenging of the property as a driving force of the built environment inevitably triggered the mechanism of testing the living typologies. As a response to the various kinds of crises experienced in the island, innovative typologies of mixed uses emerged. The current constraints of the urban regulations discourage any radical attempt to really question the notion of properties in the living realm. However, the mixing of the use of a house with the owners' occupations, be they educational institutes, artists' workshops or fashion designers' workshops, opens up the beginning of the discussion of what is private and what becomes public. The easy accessibility, the sharing of the interior and exterior spaces, the changing of the use in relation to the time and season, alter the perception of what once was perceived as ultimately private.

The limits of the private realm were further pushed by their interaction with the urban realm. The opportunity is given through their participation in the activist festivals for the regeneration of neighborhoods. In the 'Pame Kaimakli' festivals organized by the author in the traditional neighborhood of Nicosia, the activities were inspired by the porous identity of the adjacent 'Green Line'.

At the festival 2015, certain activities were orchestrated within the private spaces of the houses along the continuous urban fabric of the traditional core of the neighborhood. The activity took the character of the 'open windows'. The participants of the festival could visually intrude the private realm by watching the 'public events' uninhibited. Moreover, a number of houses opened their doors to the people for a whole day during the festival 2014. In collaboration to the adjacent street that became pedestrian for a day, the 'open houses' became temporary part of the public realm as an organically interwoven fluid entity where property issues ceased to exist for a day. The experience of this unusual and provocative urban testing was enhanced in the author's own refurbished traditional house. The house is an attempt to deal with a traditional house literally cut in the middle. It refers to one half of a traditional house in Kaimakli, [6] remain of the implementation of the still enacted dowry system [10].

As a way to heal the amputation of a traditional spatial organization the author proposed an essential extension of a 'truncated' traditional house recuperates the amputated original 'milieu' by converting it into an innovative 'malleable courtyard' typology (see Fig. 2). The proposed courtyards become essential parts with the rest of the spaces of house. They orchestrate the collaboration of the old and newly injected spaces of the house in diverse and surprising ways. The constituent surfaces that define the courtyards and the

annexed spaces are consisted by sliding and movable light structures. They provide the opportunity to the users to act as the scenographers of their everyday life, continually altering the spatial relationships responding to functional and seasonal needs. The system of the courtyards becomes the means of the mechanism that the practical issue of the borders, boundaries and their thresholds, together with the levels of privacy are tested. An abundance of spatial conditions provides enclosures and openness, movements and pauses, and their in-between endless variations, until the house eventually is converted into a unified open courtyard [9]. The participants of the festival appropriated the abundance of diverse moments differently, converting parts of the one day's 'public house' into private and semi-private realms. Similarly, the academic research yields to parallel results. The 'Living Where the Immaterial Matters Unit' [2] (see Fig. 3) taught by Maria Hadjisoteriou and Yiorgos Hadjichristou and the 'Crisis In & Out\_Emerging and Adaptive' [7] (see Fig. 4) taught by Alessandra Swiny, Michalis Georgiou and Yiorgos Hadjichristou, which are 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> year's research based studios deal exhaustively with the issues of a unified urban entity with no permanent

constraints due to the property issues. They are envisioning the cities of Nicosia and Famagusta with 'Hybrid Living' and urban conditions in an ever interchanging flux equilibrium in order to respond creatively to the ever emerging and altering Crises. Thus the limits of the functions and the properties are deemed as parts of a living urban organism, allowing them to temporarily and ephemerally expand and shrink, share and appropriate, scatter and concentrate.

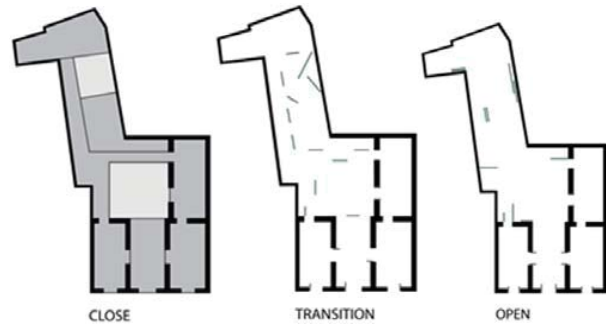


Fig. 2 Malleable courtyards [13]

## Blurred Boundaries & Flows

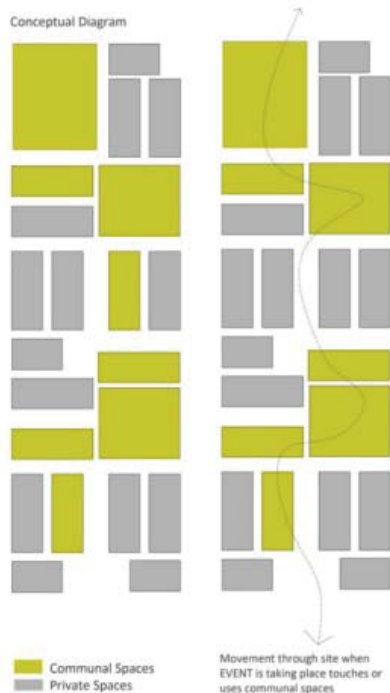


Fig. 3 Blurred boundaries. Investigations of the public/ private, Flow/ entrances [14]

## V. EVOLUTIONS OF PUBLIC, URBAN REALM

In a parallel path, the challenge of public domain is tested.

The 'Pame Kaimakli' festival in 2015 [3] provokes the public identity of the street. As a first step, the street becomes

pedestrian temporarily for a day. Then an elongated inflatable structure penetrates the conjunction of the street system (see Fig. 5). It is offered to the people to be used in different diverse ways changing from public, to semi public and private activities. At the end of the ephemeral presence of the

inflatable structure, the ‘anthropometry’ live painting performance redefined its usage and significance of the dance and painting improvisation performance by artist Mathieu Devavry and the dancer Charlotte Kirschner was a witty interactive play with movements of the human body that prevailed in the space injecting the very private traces onto the ‘public canvas’.



Fig. 4 Sculpting public spaces in the living domain [15]



Fig. 5 Appropriation of the street during the ‘Pame Kaimakli’ [16] festival in 2015, organized by Y. Hadjichristou and Kaimakli neighbors

The ‘Green Urban Kitchen’ project by the NGO ‘Urban Gorillas’ utilizes an abandoned urban bus. Andre Wogensky suggested already back in 1952 the discussion of dwelling rather than habitat and the redefinition of dwelling as a set of everyday practices that are not limited to a single apartment but extend to commercial, health, educational, social and administrative services. [4] So the ‘Green Urban Kitchen’ project places it an underutilized public space and injects in it a natural milieu with lush vegetation. Furthermore, it adds to it the function of the kitchen allowing public and private kitchen and other activities to take place.

The Green Urban Lab (GUL) is a project carried out by the Urban Gorillas NGO together with two partners, the Architecture Department of the University of Nicosia and the Dendros Ltd. [3]

The ‘Inflating the Public I’ activities challenged the notion of the boundaries including the ones of the property. As an initiative to regenerate public spaces the project intended to raise awareness on the importance of public spaces. Ephemeral inflatable structures were injected in various, diverse parts of the city of Nicosia provoking public awareness and consequently questioning the notion of the property.

The ‘Serenity Bubbles’ at the Hamam Square offered ‘private moments’ in the public open spaces in front of the luxuriously renovated Omeriye Hamam. Every participant could experience a milieu similar to the private and extravagantly, forbiddingly expensive Hamam, pushing the limits of the boundaries of what is private and what is public.

The ‘Agoraphobic storm’\_ ‘Nicosia traces’ at Stoa Tarsi (see Fig. 6) managed also to encourage the passerby to perceive in alternative ways the notion of this open but covered public space that was used primarily as a mere passage. Furthermore, the flexible and interactive character of the structure with the use of strings allowed the visitors to constantly alter the internal and external boundaries of the space, claiming as private parts of the external and internal public space.



Fig. 6 Appropriation of the stoa by flexible and interactive inflatable structure [17]

In the interior space of the Phaneromeni Library, the ‘Alice in Bufferland’ intrigued visitors with the interacting play of boundary and adventure with an installation inside the magnificent but unknown space. A labyrinthine-like cluster of elongated inflatable structures were situated on the impressive set of stairs and interior of the main hall. The installation triggered the mechanism for exploration of public realm and set a stage for private encounters to take place within the permanent and temporary public structures.

The ‘Inside-Outside a Dream’ at the dilapidated hotel

'Hotel Ypnos' traced the private world of the interior of the hotel, by injecting the inflatable structure within the building's inner world. The intervention exposed the contents of the bedrooms through a transparent layer, and later exposed the structure with the memories of the visitors at the street. The mysteries and the traces of the more private hotel did render the public area of the dead zone along the street's limits, reversing in this experimental way the notion of what might be private and what public and what can be owned or not.

The ΦουσκόΠolis and Inside-Outside a Bubble events, aimed at claiming the historical sites of the cities of the island of Cyprus (see Fig. 7) and erase the notion of borders either due the physical conditions or 'historical gravity'. Thus the chosen sites were thought as a continuation of the city's flows as another urban artery, which is freely and invitingly accessed by people. The project challenges their everyday use or rather their non-use in the middle of the city. The injection of the inflatables with their the almost immaterial behavior, their malleable 'liquid' spaces questioned the borders between various kinds of public domains, and attempted to temporarily render them with innovative public milieus embedded with momentary private and semi-private realms.

In the parallel academic environments, the testing takes on the continuation of the explorations. The seasonal and ephemeral interweaving of the public and private realms aims at proposing 'hybrid livings' within a sustainable evolution of the cities.

By doing so, the defying of the existing urban rigid grids is proposed.



Fig. 7 Appropriation of the historical monuments [18]

Lefebvre already stressed that the grid lends itself to any parceling required by land speculation- but also to functionalist zoning and social segregation. [4] He also states that it is deprived of intrinsic differentiations, and that the entirety of space is endowed with a geometric homogeneity that means both a representation and a practical attitude towards the management of space. He continues that the city is conceived as productive, replacing nature as the 'laboratory' of social forces in which humans 'produce' their social existence. Within this notion of the 'laboratory', the city is seen as an ever growing organism that constantly changes its

entity to serve the social existence rather than maintain the restrictions of the material presence of the city.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The deterioration of the built environment is escalating by the flourishing of threatening kinds of crises. Mark Wigley succinctly clarifies that "crises force invention - radical destruction gives way to new forms of production" [1] set the premises of a provocative stance towards these phenomena. A stance that is not related to the negative repercussions, but that takes the emergence of the crises as great opportunities to look into the future of the built environments in innovative, positive and creative ways [11].

The structure of the society that evades tackling with the issue of the property and boundaries might not be able to yield to real sustainable urban developments. Answers might be found in territories where the notion of property system and the limits of boundaries have been questioned by force or natural evolutions. Thinking and rethinking about the rebirth of the 'ghost city' and the reunification of the 'divided capital' might lead to urban evolutions of 'spontaneous urbanisms', where the 'Hybrid living' will behave as an ever responding living organism challenging constantly the limits of the boundaries and hence of the properties.

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