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Alice Buoli

Oana Cristina Țiganea *Editors*

# Territorial Fragilities in Cyprus

Planning and Preservation Strategies



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Editors

# Territorial Fragilities in Cyprus

Planning and Preservation Strategies



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ISSN 2198-7300

ISSN 2198-7319 (electronic)

Research for Development

ISBN 978-3-031-36075-6

ISBN 978-3-031-36076-3 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36076-3>

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This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG  
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

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# Tackling Residuality through Nicosia's Market Heritage



Verdiana Peron, Roberta Pellicanò, Aubrey Toldi, Constanze Wolfgring,  
and Shifu Zhang

**Abstract** Markets were central in the old city of Nicosia for decades, playing a crucial role in bolstering relations between different communities. Locals developed memories and attachments to these everyday spaces, demonstrating how they are part of a common tangible and intangible legacy, which still serves as a strong point of reference of what Nicosia used to be before the partition. The establishment of the buffer zone in 1964 disrupted the market space, transforming once bustling market streets, that were a common ground to the ethnically divided neighbourhoods, into disconnected residual spaces. When considering how to mitigate the existing barriers between Nicosians on both sides, these spaces could play a crucial role. Based on the hypothesis that Nicosia's history as a market city embodies a common, predominantly positively connotated heritage, this study explores its potential in tackling residuality within the area of the historical market space and in promoting opportunities for dialogue and encounter. The research was developed through bibliographic research, interviews, and on-site surveys. We propose short and long-term strategies concerning residual spaces and buildings to reactivate and re-center the former market space, arguing that these once vivid spaces in the very heart of the city can again assume bridging functions between communities.

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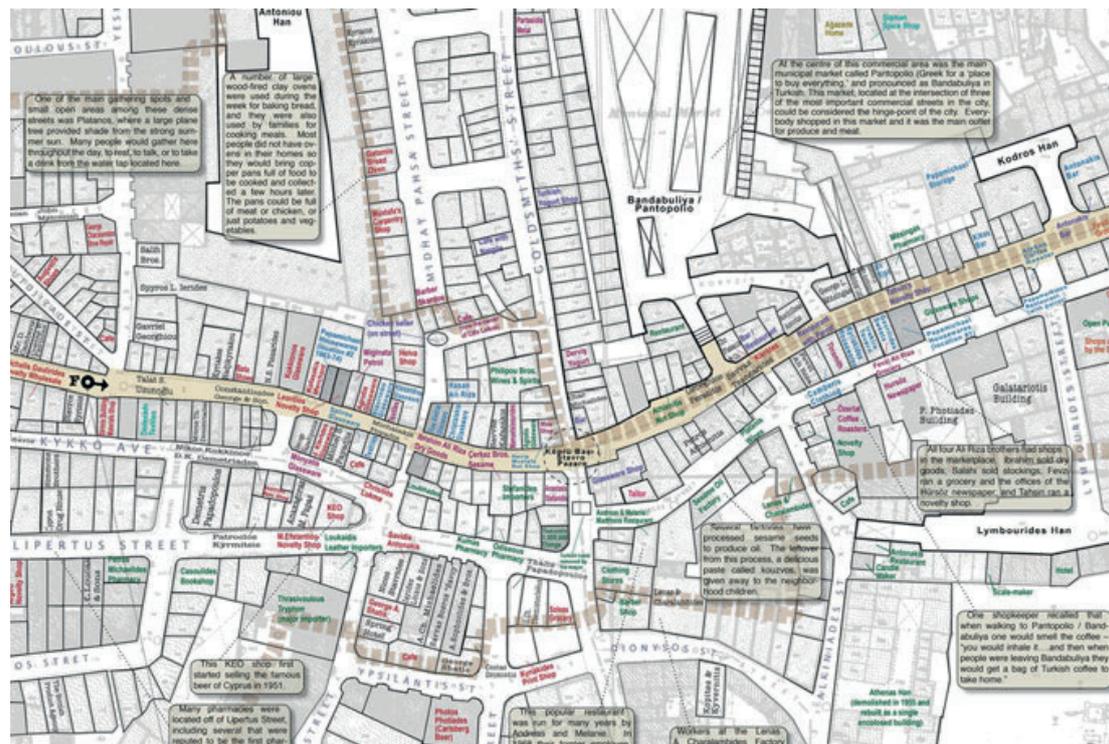
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## 1 Introduction

Markets were central—both in terms of spatiality and identity—in the old city of Nicosia for centuries, playing a crucial role in bolstering public communication and relations between and among different communities. As highlighted by the work of Bakshi (2017), the area of and surrounding Bandabulya market, located today in the north between Ermou and Uray street, has been perceived by many Cypriots as the heart of the city, the central location which brought together different communities and fostered the establishment of spatial and social identities. Whereas most other neighbourhoods were divided along ethnic lines, Ermou market space, as well as other commercial streets, were places shared by all communities. Starting in the medieval period, the diversity of customers and businesses turned Nicosia's historical centre into a bustling market space as activities were not limited to the market building itself but stretched out on both sides of Ermou street and into its backroads, encompassing local artisans such as carpenters and welders. However, in 1964, the establishment of the buffer zone had a tremendous impact on Nicosia's communities and the entire urban fabric. It disrupted the market space, dispersing economic activities, destroying existing centralities, and transforming sites of exchange and encounter into residual spaces. The historical centre thus declined as businesses and residents moved out, leaving residual spaces within this once vibrant area.

Yet, as Bakshi illustrates through a collective mapping project published in 2017 (Fig. 1), locals maintain strong memories and attachments to these everyday spaces, demonstrating how Nicosia's market spaces were much more than merely sites of economic exchanges and competitive activities. They have provided the scenery of a rich collection of both shared and contradictory memories of local histories, of collaboration and conflict. Today, they are part of a common tangible (through built space) and intangible legacy (through products, food, traditions), which still serves as a strong, and to some degree idealized or biased, reference of what Nicosia used to be before the partition. In this sense, they can be understood as a depository of memories and heritage. Our research focuses on Nicosia's old city as a lived place and creates a proposal that builds upon the city's rich market heritage, an *everyday heritage*, hoping to inspire new imaginaries rooted in predominantly positive memories on both sides of the buffer zone. The study seeks to consider more than the singularity embodied through the Green Line and embrace the everydayness of the city, approaching Nicosia as a place where people live, work, and play despite the partition.

We aim to understand the spatial and functional evolution of Nicosia's central market space, to recognize the impacts of the city's partition on these spaces, and to identify potential opportunities that the now *leftover spaces* in the very center of the city may provide for Nicosian communities on both sides of the Green Line. While different functions of markets have been well researched in stable political contexts (see, for instance, Watson and Studdert 2006; Morales 2009; Watson 2009; Janssens and Sezer 2013), their roles in conflict-ridden cities have received far less scientific attention. Given the residualization of these spaces in Nicosia, our project builds upon



**Fig. 1** Nicosia's marketplace before the partition. Reproduced from Bakshi (2017)

the existing theoretical discourse on residuality and extends its conceptualization, applying it to conflictual areas—as that of Nicosia—through the investigation of the former marketspaces lying on both sides of the buffer zone. Differing from pre-supposed ideas of residual spaces as unused or leftover spaces, our fieldwork in Nicosia<sup>1</sup> demonstrates that there are dynamic activities and communities already present within some of these spaces, showing how they can be sites of vividness and potential. This paper thus proposes occasions for further activating residual spaces near the Green Line and for envisioning ways in which it can become more permeable, as we recognize residuality as a starting point for (re)activation, (re)appropriation, and (re)connection.

The main goals of our fieldwork were to identify dead-end streets and underused or unused spaces along the edges north and south of the Green Line and to further explore their character, types of usage, and their actual *residuality*. Over the course of a week, we conducted a series of surveys at different times of the day, documenting our observations through maps, photographs, and field diaries. Our understanding of the spaces and buildings was expanded through informal interviews. Based on the hypothesis that Nicosia's history as a market city embodies a common and predominantly positively connotated heritage which is shared by different communities living in the city, the paper explores the potential of this heritage in tackling residuality within the area of the historic marketplace and in promoting opportunities for dialogue and

<sup>1</sup> See the introductory chapter.

encounter. Dealing with the issue of residuality, considering its tangible and intangible components, we aim to unpack the following research questions in more depth: How did the Green Line affect Nicosia as a market city? In what ways can markets act as depositories of memory and heritage? How can markets support connections between communities? How can residual spaces be activated and interconnected?

## 2 Nicosia as a Market City

### 2.1 *Markets as Spaces of Exchange, Interaction, Inclusion, and Heritage*

Cities and markets are inextricably linked to one another. As cities provide location, demand, and social context to marketspaces, marketspaces offer products, profit, and cultural liveliness to cities (Bestor 2001). Within urban societies, marketspaces can assume various roles, serving as spaces of exchange, interaction, inclusion, and heritage.

Markets are fundamentally sites of economic exchange, serving as locations for commerce, trade, and consumption. While marketspaces are foremost the places where goods are exchanged, these exchanges happen through a process that requires communication and engagement between people: a social act going beyond the mere economic transaction, turning markets into spaces of social interaction. This relationship between the economic and the social functions of markets can be considered from different perspectives during the process, for example, the products exchanged, the explicit and implicit rules of exchange, and the spaces where these exchanges happen. Firstly, the trade of products (i.e., tangible goods) is often accompanied by the exchange of intangible goods (information, stories, languages) between sellers and buyers, which may evoke attachment, sympathy or antipathy to places and cultures (Cresswell 2016; Hiebert et al. 2015). Secondly, the exchange of products does not solely depend on explicit rules such as the mutual agreement over a purchase price (which, differently from other sites of commerce, is not necessarily predetermined but can be the result of negotiation), but also on more implicit and interpersonal factors like building relationships of trust and personal bonding between sellers and buyers over time (Offer 1997), fostering longer-term customer loyalty. Thirdly, the spatial properties of markets (including the arrangement of vendors' stalls) can create inviting atmospheres for customers thereby providing occasions for interaction (Pottie-Sherman 2011). As Watson (2009) argues, the degree of sociability of marketspaces—that is, the extent to which they allow for or foster encounter—largely depends on their physical characteristics and locations.

Moreover, markets tend to be more democratic in their accessibility and more capable of absorbing diversity than many other public spaces. While in many other contexts, encounter and social inclusion are created through targeted efforts, at markets they occur in a rather incidental way, as users “mingle with each other

and become accustomed to each other's differences in a public space" (Watson and Studdert 2006: 11). This also becomes evident in conflictual areas, where markets can play ambiguous, and at times even seemingly diametrically opposed roles: they can act as relatively neutral spaces in which everyday practices can be carried out irrespective of political divergences, yet they may also be theatres of violence, becoming reminders of conflict (an example for this dual role is Jerusalem's *Mahane Yehuda* market, Feinberg 2010). The inclusionary capacity of markets is also apparent at the microeconomic level, as they provide economic opportunities and spaces for disadvantaged groups: markets often serve as entryways for the economic activities of those that struggle to access the formal labour market. Entry-level requirements for jobs in markets are usually lower, and language or cultural barriers are less relevant (Knierbein et al. 2012; Hann 2015).

Markets can furthermore be perceived as depositories of heritage, both in their materiality (i.e., built structures, spaces and buildings) and regarding the immaterial traces they leave or entail (e.g., food, know-how, traditions). Heritage has been defined as a group of "resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions" (Council of Europe 2005: 2). Apart from its importance in the dynamics of human life on a macro level (for instance, regarding conflict resolution and education for citizenship, see Council of Europe 2009), heritage plays a crucial—and reciprocal—role in the everyday lives of individuals and communities: just as a space turns into heritage by people recognizing it as such, the same people can be shaped through their everyday interactions with that space. As Giombini (2020) stresses, it is people who transform everyday sites into places of human significance since they are part of the social and lived-in dimension. The recognition of an *ordinary heritage* is linked to everyday practices that take place in specific spaces and are considered authentic by people (Podder et al. 2018).

## 2.2 *The Market City over History: From Centrality to Residuality*

In the medieval period, the market space in Nicosia was located alongside the Pedieos River which crossed the city (Leventis 2005). After the diversion of the river by the Venetians (1489–1570), the new streets built on the riverbed formed a commercial corridor, composed of narrow plots running through the city center, whose backbone was Ermou street (Bakshi 2016). During Ottoman rule (1570–1878), the shops and stands along these streets were the main places of commercial life (Michaelides 2012). The Archduke of Austria, Ludwig Salvator, after having lived in the city for half a year in 1873, depicted the interactions between people in the market spaces, highlighting the diversity of vendors and customers:

In all these places the most motley crowd in the world is hurrying up and down, especially before noon; peasants in showy dresses, veiled Turkish women, boys with widely opened eyes. [...] bakers, carrying brown bread on wooden trays, pedlars with cakes, fellows offering dainty little bites of meat to the known purchaser. The most varied scene is everywhere before our eyes (Salvator 1983: 55).

Salvator described Nicosia's markets as usually open structures, covered only with mats or linen rugs, and separated by the types of products for sale (e.g., shoes, copperware, cotton, fish) (ibid.).

During the British rule (1878–1960) the main center was located at the intersection of Ermou and Goldsmiths' street, known as *Stavro Pazarı* (lit. *crossmarket*) in Greek and as *Kopru Başı* (lit. *bridgehead*) in Turkish, since it was the former location of one of the main bridges that had spanned Pedieos river (Bakshi 2017). Most streets within the marketspace did not have official names until 1912 but were recognized for a specific trade and consequently identified according to the presence of manufacturers and merchants who had settled in each of them. According to Bakshi (ibid.), whereas most other neighborhoods were divided along ethnic lines, Ermou marketspace (Fig. 2a), as well as other commercial streets, were places shared by all communities.

In the early twentieth century, the streets still reflected the liveliness of the marketspace, but in the mid-1950s, a sharp shift occurred. The opposition of Greek Cypriots to the British colonial government, which had been intensifying since the 1930s, erupted in the 1950s: Ledra street became the scene of violence between British soldiers and EOKA<sup>2</sup> partisans to the extent that it was named *Murder Mile* by the soldiers (Mousset 1971). The situation worsened in the late 1950s, when acts of aggression between Greeks and Turks occurred, moving from Ledra to Ermou street thus causing damage to the spatial and social structure of the marketspace (Bakshi 2017). Specific actions of vandalism, intimidation and pressure exerted by both Greek and Turkish Cypriot separatist groups (EOKA and TNT,<sup>3</sup> respectively) towards merchants and customers targeted at disrupting the commercial life of Nicosia (Markides 1998; Bakshi 2017). Consequently, the usual commercial ties between Greek and Turkish Cypriots gradually crumbled and sentiments of mistrust rose among the communities (Attalides 1977; Patrick and Bater 1976). Everyday commercial activities were more and more pushed out of the formerly shared marketspace, which was increasingly dominated by the presence of (para)military groups and spatial demarcations.

The ongoing process of social and spatial segregation between Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities was reinforced in 1958 with the de facto establishment of two separate municipalities. In 1964, escalated controversies—with Ermou street being again at the center of intercommunal violence—led to the formation of a buffer zone, creating a formal militarized area of division and thus dissolving the little that was

<sup>2</sup> EOKA (*Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston*, lit. *National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters*) was a Greek Cypriot nationalist paramilitary organization, founded in 1955 with the aim to achieve an end of British rule in Cyprus and unification with Greece.

<sup>3</sup> TMT (*Türk Mukavemet Teşkilatı*, lit. *Turkish Resistance Organisation*) was a Turkish Cypriot paramilitary organization, founded in 1957 with the aim to counter the claims raised by EOKA.



**Fig. 2** **a** Ermou street before the partition (Haigaz Mangoian 1930, Mangoian Bros. Ltd. Archive), **b** Phaneromeni Women Market (Felix Yaksis 1958, Press and Information Office of the Republic of Cyprus Archive, 1081-002-FY[46936]), **c** The former market before the construction of Bandabulya (John Lindros n.d., Medelhavsmuseet Archive, JL355), **d** Bandabulya Market's main façade (Constanze Wolfgring 2021), **e** Shop units in the Bandabulya Market (Constanze Wolfgring 2021), **f** The Market of the Old Town Hall during the interventions of renovation (Constanze Wolfgring 2021)

left of the market space. Alternatives to formerly shared commercial spaces were found elsewhere and the social life of the city pulled away from the center, both in the north and the south of the old city (Bakshi 2017). The present state of the urban fabric remains a testimony to this history of abandonment:

The current material reality of the buffer zone represents the loss of a collective way of life. Here an entire web of streets, buildings, occupants, and sounds has been destroyed. While these streets are still in place, the mud-brick buildings that define their edges are eroding away. Signs have rusted, walls have collapsed, and the life that sustained these marketplace streets is gone (ibid.: 108).

The conflict affected Nicosia's well-known and well-frequented marketspaces directly and in various ways. One of the most popular and long-lasting marketspaces, assumed to have arisen already during the Lusignan period (1192–1489) and enduring until the middle of the twentieth century, was the open-air women's market<sup>4</sup> which took place every Friday, though its location changed over time (Theodotou 2016). For centuries, women from different communities got together, producing woven items and selling textiles, fruits, sweets and cosmetics. In 1924, the market had been moved from the area at the northern end of Ledra street to the vicinity of Phaneromeni church, where a permanent market iron pavilion was built in 1928 (Fig. 2b). Due to the struggles, the market had to be closed in 1958 and was later demolished. The main municipal market building, Bandabulya,<sup>5</sup> on the other hand, has maintained its function as a market to this day, however, it lost its role as a space shared by the city's different communities. The present building, constructed in 1932 (Kiessel 2012), replaced the former market existing at the same site (Fig. 2c), composed of an open square surrounded by some built structures.<sup>6</sup> The project by Odesseas Tsagkarides (Nonument 2023) adopted the architectural language of the typical Turkish bazaar typology, characterized by the presence of stone masonries and a timber wood roof and composed of different blocks featuring small shop units (Fig. 2d, e). Located at the intersection of the most important retail streets (Ermou, Goldsmiths', and Arasta), it had been considered the hinge point of the city (Bakshi 2017). The establishment of the Green Line turned this previously central space into a site north of the buffer zone and, therewith rendering it inaccessible to the Greek Cypriot community located in the south. After the physical separation of the city, the southern part not only needed a revitalization of the urban infrastructure following the conflictual events of the previous years (as did the northern part), but now also lacked a municipal market (Theodotou 2016). In 1967, a new municipal market was therefore built in the area previously occupied by the old town hall. The project of the new building was devised by Stavros Economou, one of the most significant figures of modern architecture in Cyprus, who designed an experimental exposed concrete structure, characterized by mushroom-shaped pillars. Due to its architectural features and its cultural, historical, and social significance, the Market of the Old Town Hall was listed for protection in 2011. The market was closed in 2014, when a project for its renovation and conversion into an innovation centre was approved (Fig. 2f). The exterior area was also regenerated after the decision of the municipality, in 2012, to dismiss the open market located in the surroundings of the building and to move it to one of the eleven bastions of the Venetian walls.

It is important to note that Nicosia's marketspaces have changed (and with them their social functions) due to not only the physical barrier of the Green Line but also

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<sup>4</sup> The market was called *Genaikopazaron* in Greek, lit. *women's bazaar*, and *Cuma pazari* in Turkish, lit. *Friday bazaar*.

<sup>5</sup> The market was called *Pantopolio* in Greek, lit. *a place to buy everything*, and *Belediye Pazari* in Turkish.

<sup>6</sup> This can be noted in the Kitchener map of 1882. The cartographer Horatio Herbert Kitchener had been commissioned by the British colonial government of Cyprus to conduct the first trigonometrical survey of the island (Sylvia Ioannou Foundation and Harokopio University 2022).

the co-emerging identity-based, psychological, and administrative barriers. Although Nicosia's marketspaces seem to follow similar historical accounts, these accounts began to diverge once Ermou street became engulfed in the Green Line. Many of its once-connected streets therefore became dead ends that now carry countering political narratives (Casaglia 2020). Although the youth express more interest in ideas of *togetherness* (A. Grichting, personal communication, 15 Feb 2021<sup>7</sup>), there are still many trust-related issues when it comes to bolstering interisland exchanges (CyprusInno 2020). Though these concerns may differ between sides, they continue to fuel one another; for example, Greek Cypriots deny and hide their clients due to fears of being pillarized by their own communities and Turkish Cypriots fear of being treated as inferior, resulting in feelings of resentment (Hatay et al. 2008). Due to various economic and logistical restraints—such as, but not limited to, political and economic isolation of the north (Katircioğlu 2010), restricted telecommunications (Hatay et al. 2008), or even the lack of knowledge of the Green Line's regulations (CyprusInno 2020)—Cypriots remain legally restricted in further developing economic and social engagements between the two sides. These few examples demonstrate that even if the materiality (e.g., the fencing) of the Green Line could be eventually removed, other barriers would remain.

### 2.3 *Exploring Residual Spaces within Nicosia's Marketspace*

As cities age, they get used and abused by people who live in them. We sometimes patch what we damage, but other times we let things fall apart. As a result, lost urban environments are a hodgepodge of haphazard fixes and odd vestiges. Yet pointless leftovers and accumulated remnants are just as much a part of the city as thoroughly considered, still-functional objects. Such imperfect items are not always the prettiest examples of what we can make, but they perfectly represent our flawed and complex humanity (Mars and Kohlstedt 2020: 33).

The lack of attention towards residual spaces seems to be rooted in their very nature, as they are spaces that are hard to grasp, to demarcate and to classify. For instance, these spaces could be places or buildings that have been abandoned, infrastructures that have become obsolete, the negative/leftover space in between designed or curated spaces, and dead ends. This intangibility is also reflected in the theoretical discourse on these spaces. There is no uniform understanding of what residual spaces are, of the role they assume within the urban fabric, or what potentials they might entail. However, attempts have been undertaken by some scholars, turning to different terminologies and stressing diverse aspects of the phenomenon: leftover spaces, void spaces in the background of everyday life that “may [have] outlive[d] their purpose” (Rickles 2019: 29), *terrains vagues* that are “mentally exterior in the physical interior of the city” (Solà-Morales 1995: 120) or even “paradoxical spaces [...], neither planned nor designed [...], often results of mistakes, coincidences, neglect” (Barron

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<sup>7</sup> See the introductory chapter.

and Mariani 2013: 135). Inspired by these fragments, we established a working definition that builds upon four dimensions through which the process of residualization can be understood and addressed:

- a *time* dimension: Residualization occurs over time. It is usually a process shaped by the cumulative effects of regular and irregular developments. However, it may be initiated (or consolidated) through a sudden disruption (such as a natural or man-made disaster, a military conflict, etc.);
- a *mental* dimension: Residualization affects the meanings and images of spaces, leaving emotions, stories, and memories as residues of former connotations attributed to these spaces;
- a *spatial* dimension: Through the process of residualization, spatial qualities and spatial relations change (e.g., spaces are abandoned and deteriorate, formerly central spaces become marginal, former connections become dead-end streets, etc.);
- a *usage* dimension: Through residualization, the use and purpose of a space changes or dissolves.

Considering that residualization is a process, we argue that residual spaces can be “de-residualized” and refilled with purpose and meaning through (re)activation, (re)appropriation and (re)connection. Because of this, there is ample reason to dedicate attention to residual spaces, as they entail a variety of potentials, yet are mostly underestimated and unused. The absence of design and curation gives them a certain authenticity that carefully planned spaces often lack, and an openness for appropriation. Chase et al. (1999) emphasized that the emptiness of residual spaces gives users the freedom to produce and reproduce place meanings through spontaneous appropriations. Moreover, residual spaces provide different opportunities for usage, experimentation, and innovation: underused spaces, caught in the fractures of bustling urban environments, show a more privileged atmosphere for projects (Scoppetta 2010) and can be spaces for informal, self-organized or temporary uses (Willinger 2007).

The residual spaces in Nicosia’s historical centre have been shaped not only by regular processes of residualization over time, but also through the forceful conflict, still evident today in the form of the Green Line. Due to the establishment of the buffer zone, streets have been cut off and deprived of their uses and relations with other spaces, creating a broken network of dead-end streets, of void spaces and of buildings vacated during the conflict and not reused ever since. These spaces and buildings allow for an ambiguous interpretation as forgotten landscapes, simultaneously serving as reminders of forceful disruption and as sites of potential. Given the historical and the potential value of Nicosia’s residual spaces—in view of a (at this time hypothetical) scenario of reunification, but also considering a scenario in which the status quo remains—it seems promising to address the question of how they can be reactivated and filled with new uses and meanings. If physical barriers might be partially or entirely lifted, today’s residual spaces will be at the very city centre and, therefore, valuable spaces for communities to interact.

As we explored the edges of the Green Line within Nicosia’s old city, we collected information, impressions and insights, allowing us to identify residual spaces that

demonstrate potential for activation or connections between the north and the south. We found that the character of these former marketspaces presents both unique challenges and features. The Southern edges of the Green Line can be perceived as much less inviting due to the noticeable military presence. Many constructions are in a state of decay or already in ruins, although a significant number of buildings have been restored in the recent past (Fig. 3a). These interventions often targeted the facades only, leaving the interior of the buildings untouched, thereby making it difficult to distinguish between used and vacant buildings. While many renovated buildings seem vacant, many of the ones still in need of repair are used by craftsmen. Thus, south of the Green Line, the contrast between *the new* and *the old* is evident, and the transition between them is quite abrupt. For example, at the intersection of Pentadaktylou and Ermou street (Fig. 3b), one can perceive the increasing decay of the buildings inside the buffer zone to the west and, in contrast, of renovated buildings accommodating highly priced stores, cafés, or shopfronts of young creatives on Ermou street to the east.

Along the northern edges of the Green Line, the use of buildings and spaces is more heterogenous, with a mix of functions such as bars, restaurants, fabric stores, workshops and tailors. Residential uses near the buffer zone contribute to a higher density and frequency of users as well as to other types of usages of the dead ends, such as informal semi-private patios (Fig. 3c). This heterogeneity is also reflected in the demographic structure, with an overall higher diversity and a larger share of younger population groups. The variety of uses and users creates a more vivid and lively atmosphere that spills into the dead ends.

Despite these differences, there are several shared challenges and/or features between the two parts of the city. Many buildings have been abandoned and are in advanced material decay but, although this affects both sides, the extent of deterioration (Fig. 3d) is more widespread in the north, where the repair of buildings seems to be a major challenge. However, some interventions have occurred, as in the Bandabulya market, which had been renovated between 2010 and 2012 with EU funds (UNDP 2013). The works included the replacement of the timber roof, the application of a new layer of plaster and the rehabilitation of stalls. Another remarkable similarity concerns the presence of workshops and traditional craftsmanship, which can be considered a valuable resource for livelihood, culture and economic well-being. South of the Green Line, these workshops (Fig. 3e) are managed by a generation soon approaching retirement, and they currently seem to be the main source of liveliness along the edges of the buffer zone. By contrast, in the north (Fig. 3f), a wide range in the age of merchants, as well as in the types of businesses operating in the area, can be observed. Lastly, many residual spaces exist along both sides of the Green Line, though their presence is more evident in the south. This could be due to several reasons, such as the more noticeable military presence and the lack of a residential population. During informal interviews, local stakeholders raised concerns about the loss of once public spaces, such as the former municipal market, and processes of gentrification clearly taking place in the south. Moreover, they stressed the need of attracting regular residential users to the area and establishing facilities for daily needs, e.g., grocery stores, schools, and markets.



**Fig. 3** **a** Restored building south of the Green Line (Constanze Wolfgring 2021), **b** The intersection of Pentadaktylou and Ermou street (Verdiana Peron 2021), **c** A semi-private patio north of the Green Line (Constanze Wolfgring 2021), **d** An example of the state of decay north of the Green Line (Constanze Wolfgring 2021), **e** Inside a carpentry workshop in Lidinis street (Constanze Wolfgring 2021), **f** Inside a brewery north of the Green Line (Constanze Wolfgring 2021)

Overall, the area surrounding the buffer zone is characterized by strong contrasts not only between the north and the south, but also within each of its parts. This diversity allows us to imagine different scenarios of potential futures of these spaces, but the presence of workshops, the role of residential uses and the functions of public spaces raise questions about how such futures could accommodate all.

### 3 Towards De-Residualization: A Project Proposal

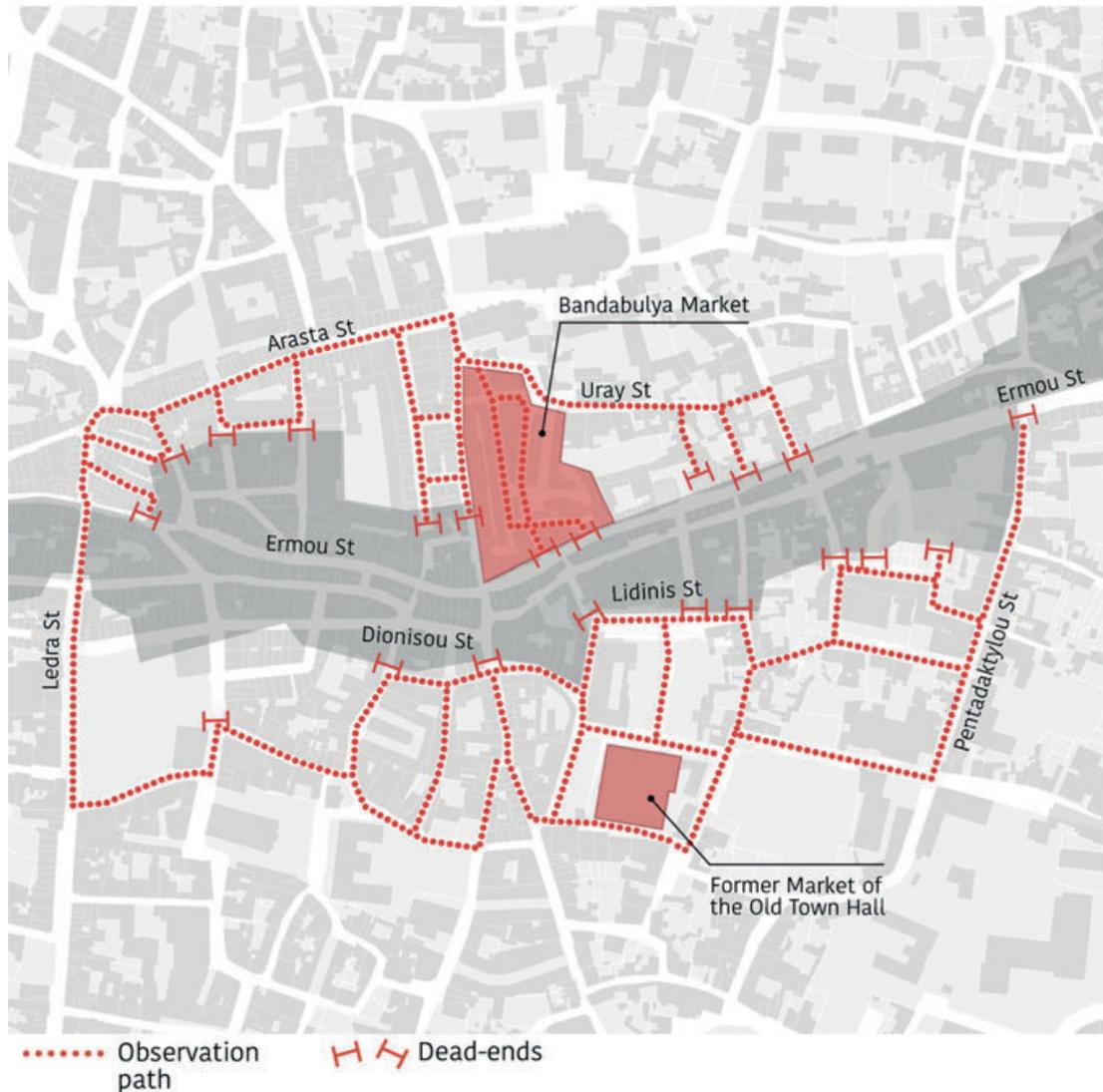
#### 3.1 *Project Goals*

The role of Nicosia's marketspaces has changed over time, in part due to the conflict, but also due to regular processes of economic and spatial transformations that are happening globally. These shifts allow for new layers of meaning to be added to Nicosia's residual marketspaces, nurtured by the symbols and stories these spaces still contain (Casaglia 2020). Focusing on residual spaces around and in between the two main markets, Bandabulya in the north and the prior Market of the Old Town Hall in the south (Fig. 4), the goal is to demonstrate the potentials for engagement between different Nicosian communities. As this area is of interest to many stakeholders, our proposal is situated not only in currently existing plans and interventions, but with an eye towards the future, conceived as practical steps forward that are applicable to various future visions of the city. One key aim is to propose occasions for re-activating residual spaces near the Green Line, with an emphasis on addressing how long-standing craftsmen and new target groups can use them in complementary ways. The other main objective is to address the Green Line itself, envisioning how it can become more permeable and how the former marketspaces can regain their lost centrality.

These aims will be addressed through three proposed strategies that tackle both tangible and intangible dimensions of residuality: (a) activating residual buildings; (b) activating residual spaces; and (c) reconnecting Nicosia's former marketspaces. The first two strategies are devised from short-term and long-term perspectives, recognizing that temporary interventions can create opportunities for more established ones. The third strategy is a hypothetical scenario that considers a physical connection between the (then) re-activated spaces on both sides of the Green Line. The common thread guiding all three strategies is Nicosia's rich market heritage, both in a spatial sense (focusing on former market buildings and spaces) as well as in a thematic sense (drawing from the legacy of the past marketspaces).

#### 3.2 *Activating Residual Buildings*

The first strategy tackles residuality in its material dimension through two main measures: attracting people to *come and see* and introducing complementary policy measures. Informal interventions create opportunities for residual buildings to be flexibly re-imagined and consciously re-purposed. Complimentary policy measures provide a framework to enhance these interventions and pave the way to more long-standing material solutions. The approaches applied here are inspired by *what works already*, recognizing much is happening within these spaces, and envisions *what could work*, taking a step forward that builds from ongoing everyday practices.



**Fig. 4** Map of the focus area. Elaboration by the authors

The first approach is to encourage local craftsmen to exhibit their products and know-hows. During our walking surveys near the Green Line, many artisans were eager to show us their shops, tools and traditional machinery while openly sharing their stories and memories. We believe that these long-existing workshops—directly linked to Nicosia’s market heritage—are valuable resources that should be maintained. Most of the craftsmen have been operating their shops for decades, and many are approaching an age of retirement with no legal standing over what would happen to their current workshops. The disappearance of this *living heritage* through retirement or displacement of those that have maintained this market space trade—thereby keeping these areas active over the past decades—would be a great loss. From our perspective, these workshops are an opportunity to engage with a meaningful part of Nicosia’s market heritage and to re-interpret it for the future. Therefore, we propose to showcase the craftsmen’s products and know-hows through open houses, in which interested visitors are invited into their workspaces, or through coordinated events,



**Fig. 5** Unused spaces alongside the Green Line (Constanze Wolfgring 2021)

like street markets. These initiatives would not only showcase their crafts at the sites of production but also encourage commercial and personal connections.

Secondly, we propose to introduce events and pop-ups to the area. During our fieldwork in Nicosia, we noticed the presence of active local communities organizing various public events, as advertised through flyers posted throughout the old city. As these activities are currently occurring in more vital and established spaces, our second approach is, therefore, to encourage similar cultural events and pop-up activities in the focus area. Alongside the Green Line, there are several unused spaces and vacant buildings with the potential to host open-air activities, like the large vacant space at the end of Uray street in the north or the underused parking lot on Trikoupi street in the south (Fig. 5). This could not only bring new energy to the neighbourhood, but also direct wider attention to the ongoing activities and the area's existing qualities.

Thirdly, we want to stress the importance of minimizing the side effects of maintaining workshops within the old city centre. There are potential obstacles to activating an area largely composed of workshops, such as safety and noise during the workday. However, we believe that an approach encouraging a temporally stratified use of these spaces can be fruitful, understanding that space can serve different yet complementary uses at different times of the day. The potential success of this suggestion can be seen at the Charátsi bar on Lidinis street. During the daytime, it is a traditional workshop street permeated with a laid-back atmosphere, while on certain nights, young people gather to enjoy drinks and music. This coexistence highlights how *the young and old*, or *the new and existing*, can occupy the same streets without disturbing the rhythm and lifestyle of the other. Keeping in mind that space can serve different purposes throughout a given day, more types of these complementary uses can be identified within the area.

While temporary on-site measures are crucial for creating new spatial imaginaries, an accompanying policy framework is indispensable to sustain their longer-term effectiveness. We, therefore, propose policy measures that tie in with the pre-mentioned measures, aimed at providing incentives for investment around the buffer zone while at the same time preserving existing qualities and resources.

The first proposed policy measure would establish subsidized apprenticeships and intergenerational partnerships between the craftsmen and young trainees. Many workshop owners have fixed, long-standing rental contracts, and have been renting the same shophouses for more than fifty years. As they are reaching retirement age and these contracts cannot be passed on or inherited, the future of these workshops is called into question. The current projects within the area, such as the transformation of the Market of the Old Town Hall, are focused on attracting young creatives. We are unaware of current initiatives underway to preserve the existing workshops. Building from potential connections sparked at the open houses and showcases, subsidized apprenticeships and intergenerational partnerships can go a step further to provide employment opportunities and preserve these long-standing businesses. Subsidized apprenticeships educate future craftsmen, whereas subsidized intergenerational partnerships then aid in maintaining affordable rental contracts for current businesses once the current owner retires.

The second proposed policy measure would promote market investment in the area. Attracting permanent residents to the area is challenging for several reasons. As political uncertainties continue and property-related questions remain unsolved, investment is disincentivized, leaving many buildings in need of repair. Moreover, the area around the Green Line is not perceived as inviting for residential use or daily activities due to the military presence, which is seen as a constant reminder of the conflict. Lastly, housing options in the old city, particularly for middle-class residents, seem to be rather limited. In the past decades, two housing rehabilitation interventions have been carried out as part of a twin project funded by UNHCR and UNDP within the old city in neighborhoods near the buffer zone: Arabahmet in the north and Chrysaliniotissa in the south (UNHCR 1995). The aims were to attract new low to middle-income families, increase the number of housing units and improve the quality of services and public spaces. Continuing the efforts in expanding the housing market and boosting investment, the *1 Euro Houses* model might be a suitable reference for Nicosia. The scheme, promoted by several European municipalities,<sup>8</sup> aims at tackling abandonment and building decay in marginal areas through the sale of houses at low prices in exchange for the commitment to renovate and register a residence. These approaches have demonstrated their potential to re-attract people to depopulated areas (Giuffrida et al. 2020). Other similar models could be applied, such as subsidizing rents (for instance, a rent waiver for an allotted amount of time in exchange for self-renovation). Not only could this bring residents back into the area, but also, it could encourage upgrades in the current decaying infrastructure. This scheme could also be beneficial for the shophouses along the Green Line, allowing the new owner or renter to use the ground floor for business and the first floor for housing. It should be noted that the ownership-related and continuing political uncertainties, especially along the Green Line, are highly contentious issues that could impede on using this measure in some instances.

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<sup>8</sup> For instance, in Italy, mostly in inner areas (see Case a 1 Euro 2022), but also in larger cities such as Liverpool, UK (see Liverpool City Council n.d.).

We recognize these measures could have a direct impact on the management of the historical built environment. Thus, when reflecting on attracting residents to this area and reusing the historical buildings, crucial aspects that need to be considered are their architectural qualities, construction features, their state of conservation, and their capacity to be testimonies to the history of the city. The evaluation of their current conditions and of potential reuse interventions, as well as the assessment of their cultural significance, require the contribution of experts. However, new owners/renters could actively support the maintenance by monitoring the general conditions and reporting the detected criticalities to professionals in buildings conservation. The constant use of the built heritage and its continued maintenance is indeed crucial in reducing the extent of needed interventions in the future.

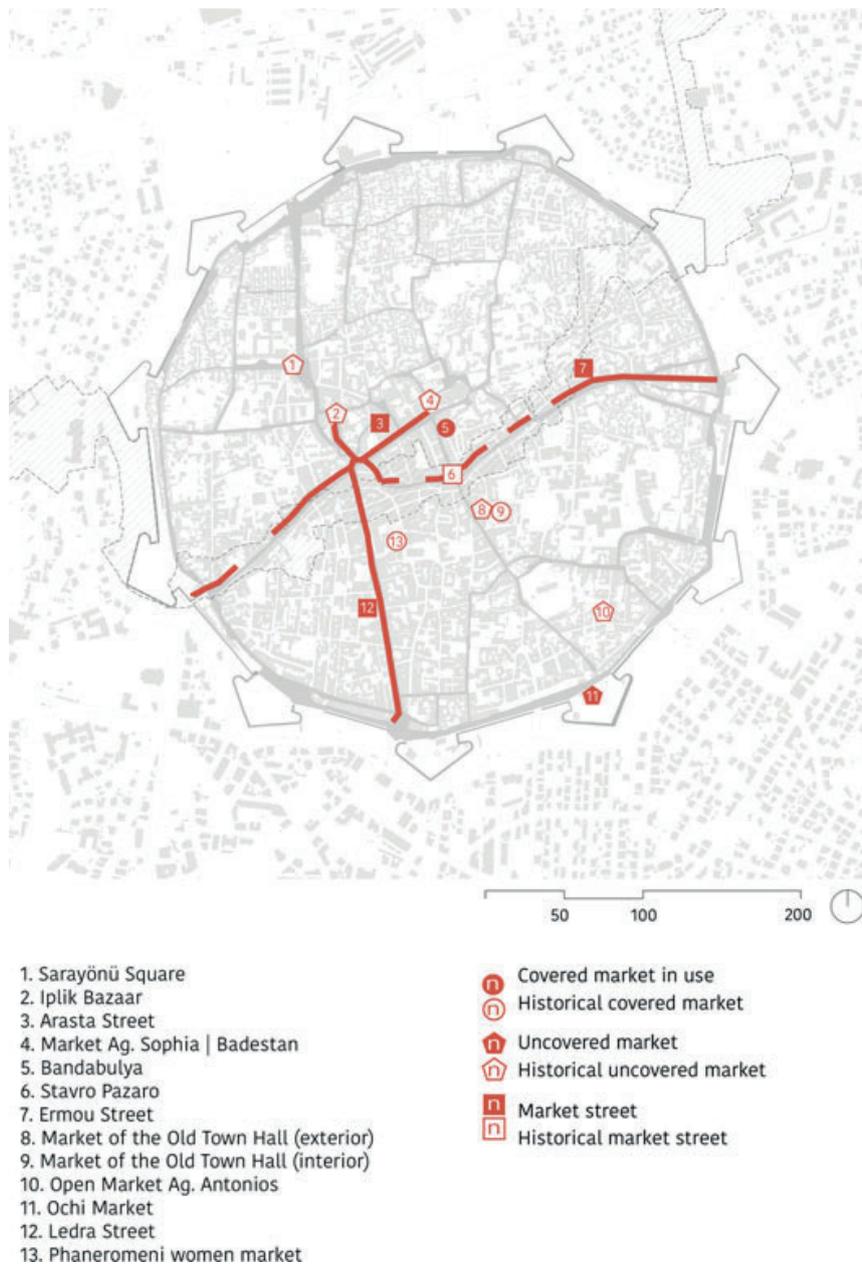
Overall, to better inform these proposed policy measures, we call for an inventory of the buildings within the old city. International organizations have been raising awareness and collecting information on the state of the built environment within the Green Line (e.g., in 2013, Europa Nostra has shortlisted Nicosia's buffer zone as one of the seven most endangered heritage sites in Europe, Europa Nostra 2013, EIB Institute 2013). However, a comprehensive dataset of the historic built environment at the edges of the Green Line does not exist to date. Therefore, it is difficult to assess the features and qualities of the buildings, as well as their current conditions, uses, ownership, etc. Such an inventory effort could be coordinated between and led by both municipalities and carried out with the help of professionals, trained volunteers, and institutional partnerships.

### ***3.3 Activating Residual Spaces***

The second strategy focuses on the activation of residual spaces. This strategy is envisioned to complement the first, as it promotes the exploration of these spaces beyond time and location-specific events. The main measure we propose is a thematic walking path of the (former) market buildings and their residual spaces, highlighting the social and historical significance of past and existing marketspaces in the old city. In Fig. 6, we identified these marketspaces, providing reference points for a path that can be incorporated into organizations' or institutions' broader strategies. This measure could involve both analogue and digital tools. The area of the walking tour can be explored through information panels, paper maps and booklets, providing visitors with information about these spaces, activities and ongoing initiatives. These materials can be connected to digital platforms, such as an app or website, through a QR code printed onto these resources, adding a digital dimension to one's experience. We imagine that these platforms will serve both locals and tourists in several ways. For instance, the digital platforms' design could allow users to build personalized tour paths around the Green Line and add localized pictures, real-time impressions and comments. The platforms could contain a news section to provide information about events, permitting local organizations and institutions to directly contribute. The goal is to provide physical and digital spaces for all to engage with Nicosia's

market heritage in a discursive and interactive way, raising awareness of its cultural and historical significance.

There are several local institutions actively promoting projects aimed at enhancing heritage using both traditional and innovative tools, which could serve as gatekeepers or collaborators for such a measure. Museum Lab, a department within the CYENS Research and Innovation Center, would be a highly competent partner for the implementation of such a project. One central objective of the Museum Lab is to “to explore how technology can help expose different layers of history in places of contested heritage and help visitors/users negotiate difficult or awkward heritage”



**Fig. 6** Map of Nicosia's marketspaces. Elaboration by the authors re-edited with the support of Neofytos Christou, 2023

(Cyens 2021). Another valuable partner would be the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR 2021), which produces multi-disciplinary research, policy, and educational materials. Their project *Nicosia. The story of a shared and contested city* consists of an interactive website containing maps of the city's transformation during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As a multi-communal, non-profit, non-governmental organization established in Nicosia in 2003, its mission is to provide access to learning opportunities to individuals, irrespective of personal, religious or cultural backgrounds. The involvement of local actors is crucial for the feasibility of this proposal as they provide concrete support and know-how for its realization.

### ***3.4 Reconnecting Nicosia's Old Marketspaces***

Building upon the municipalities' idea to open a new crossing point between the two markets (connecting Trikoupí street in the south with Kuyumcular street in the north), we propose to consider an additional pedestrian crossing point further east, connecting the intersection of Ermou and Pentadaktylou street in the south with Kutuphane street in the north (Fig. 7). This intersection is centred within the sites of our proposal and might therefore contribute to reconnecting Nicosia's old marketspaces on a wider scale. Being the former location of one of the main bridges at the historical centre, which spanned the Pedieos River, this new crossing point could be understood as a new or re-imagined bridge, a reminder of its former function as a connection between the two sides.

Recognizing the very hypothetical nature of this proposal, the implementation of the other interventions might be treated independently from this one. However, in such a scenario, the three pedestrian crossings in the very heart of the city (including the one already existing in Ledra street) would allow for easier accessibility to and from both sides, incentivizing exchange and interactions and re-establishing a centrality that has been lost.

A step towards the realization of such a scenario could be the temporary opening of an enclosed extraterritorial space within the buffer zone at the site of one of the two proposed crossing points (between Trikoupí and Kuyumcular or between Ermou and Kutuphane street), accessible from both sides under the auspices of a bi-communal committee. Such a space could serve as a site for a variety of commercial activities (such as farmers' markets, arts and crafts markets, and flea markets) or events (like concerts, readings, and street food festivals) to promote encounters and exchanges.

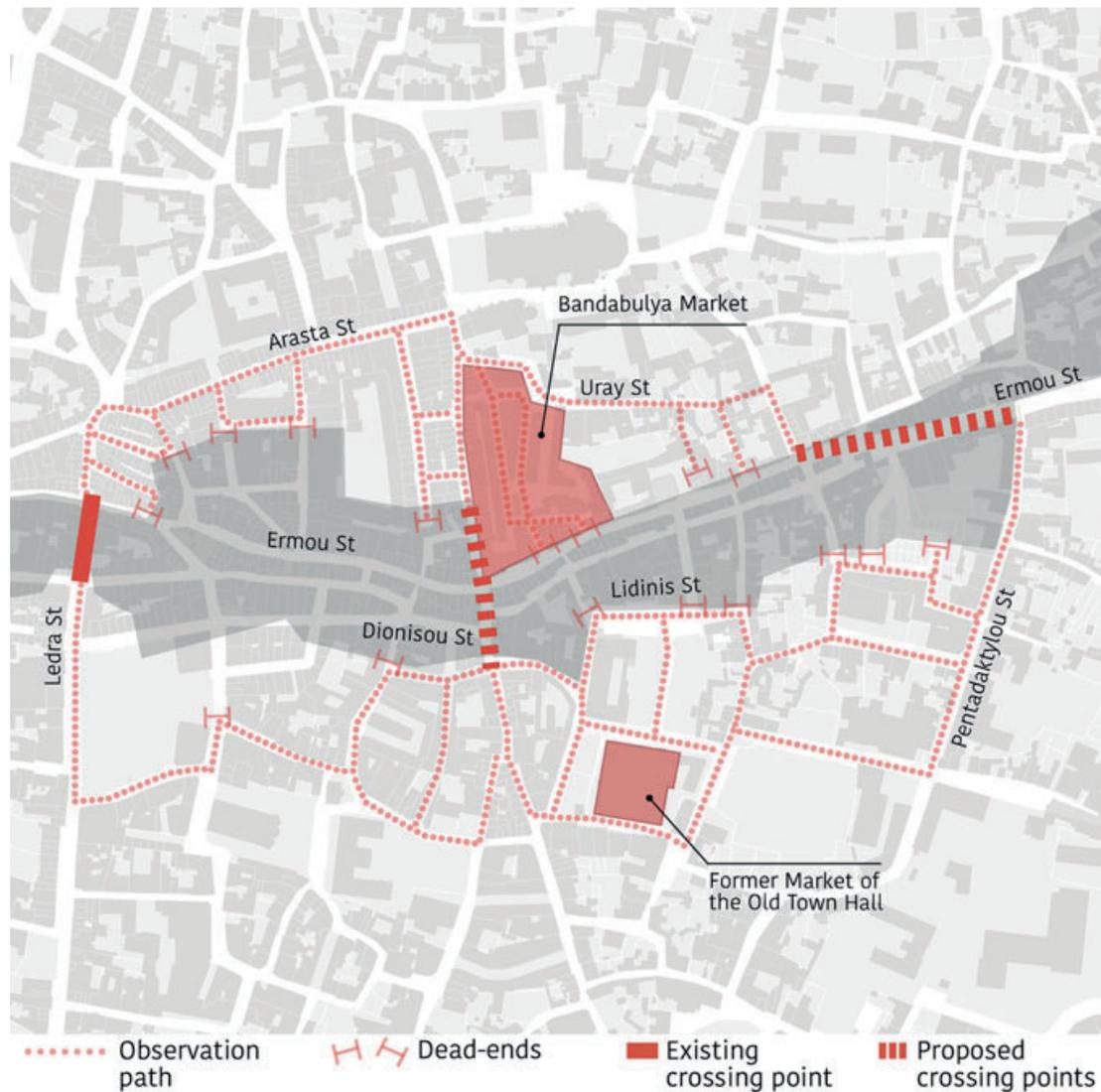


Fig. 7 Proposed crossing points. Elaboration by the authors

## 4 Concluding Remarks

Our research focuses on Nicosia's old city as a lived place, embracing the everydayness of the city and approaching it as a place where people live, work, and play despite the partition. Picking up on the city's rich market heritage—one that is rooted in predominantly positive memories on both sides of the buffer zone—we hope to create proposals able to inspire new imaginaries for spaces that, once vivid and shared, today seem largely overlooked. Building from the theoretical discourse on residuality, our study extends its conceptualization and applies it to conflictual areas through the investigation of the former marketspaces lying on both sides of the Green Line. The fieldwork revealed the presence of various activities and actors within some of these spaces, demonstrating the limitations of the pre-supposed conceptualization of residual spaces as spaces of abandonment and voidness. We realized that, indeed, processes of reappropriation and reactivation exist at the edges of the buffer zone

(albeit on a small scale and in an informal manner), as well as commercial activities that had never left, predating the conflict.

This is, for instance, demonstrated by the presence of highly diversified small-scale craftsmen located within and surrounding the dead ends. The craftsmen occupying these spaces, like welders and carpenters, belong to labour groups commonly pushed to peripheral areas, typically not located within a historic city centre. This unique spatial positioning of small-scale craftsmanship in Nicosia is a valuable resource that many cities try to incentivize. Globally, and also in Nicosia, there is a (re)developmental focus on attracting young, mobile creatives into city centres, which is reflected in urban initiatives, designs, and policies. While this is a meaningful goal, we strongly believe that integrating the existing structures and users into these considerations, interweaving the old and the new, can contribute to the economic and social liveliness of Nicosia's old city and to maintaining its character.

Although we benefited from the freedom of an outsider's perspective, we remain aware of the limitations it entails, even more so in a context as complex as that of Nicosia. We, therefore, would like to emphasize that our proposal is not intended to provide solutions. Rather, we aim at putting practicable ideas on the table that might kick off occasions for encounters and interactions between Nicosians of different backgrounds. As aforementioned, we believe a more thorough knowledge of a site helps interventions be respectful of the vocation of the places, avoiding self-referential projects or proposals taken out of context.

There are many ways in which this research could be further developed. First and foremost, the collection of solid data on vacancies, the state of buildings and ownership structures could put it on stronger grounds and lead to more specific actions. In addition, targeted involvement of the stakeholders in the area (e.g., interviews or focus groups with shop owners, craftsmen, residents, etc.) could provide a better understanding of needs and future perspectives. Another crucial line of research is to explore further schemes with which ordinary residents and complementary infrastructure can be attracted to the area. Affordable housing is a promising (but certainly not the only) starting point. We advocate that such research should be practicable and produce useful and usable insights that might feed concrete projects or initiatives, believing that it is important to *get our hands dirty* to spark positive change.

**Acknowledgements** This essay is the product of the joint research work and editing of all authors.

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