

Ethnic Groups, Space, and Identity

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Abstract

This paper utilises space analysis, and in particular the “space syntax” theory and methods, to investigate ethnic group relations. More specifically, it considers aspects of Greek and Turkish Cypriot spatial and social relations, on the island of Cyprus. The relations between the two ethnic communities have been marked by intense conflict culminating in the division of the country. Presently the island is slashed in two by a territorial boundary (known as the “Green Line”)- the result of the gradual hardening of the social boundaries between the two communities. Spatial analysis reveals that behind many apparent similarities (similar spatial and social ingredients), lurk strong differences in ethnic identity.

1 Introduction

This paper takes a first step in the direction of utilising space analysis in the investigation of ethnic group relations, by considering aspects of Greek and Turkish Cypriot spatial and social relations on the island of Cyprus. Ethnic relations in Cyprus have been growing ever more tense through time; there has been a progressive hardening of the social boundaries marking ethnic differences, accompanied by the creation of territorial division, culminating in the creation of the so called “Green Line” (a demarcation boundary), that slashes the country from end to end, separating Greek from Turkish Cypriots.

Despite the severity of the clash, ethnic relations between the two communities have not been the subject of systematic study and most writing on the issue is ideologically motivated (Loizos,1960) (Attalides,1975) (Kyrris,1985). Such approaches, of whichever extreme, add little to our understanding of the problem. That is why a number of recent studies, which try to view ethnic relationships utilizing more dispassionate and non-ideological approaches, are more than welcome. The present paper, based on one such study (Charalambous, 1992), attempts to explore relations between the two communities, as revealed through spatial and cultural differences and/or similarities. The sample used for the analysis consists of fourteen Cypriot villages: four purely Greek Cypriot, four purely Turkish Cypriot and six mixed villages, randomly selected from one province of Cyprus in order to eliminate the possibility of regional variations. At the local level, the sample is made up of 184 houses taken from the above villages: 93 Greek Cypriot houses and 91 Turkish Cypriot houses.

Keywords:

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2. Spatial Analysis

2.1 Domestic Space Organisation

Studies of domestic space which have concerned themselves with social organisation suggest that the household is a “sociogram” not only of a family but of something much more: a whole social system (Hanson and Hillier, 1979, 1982).

Ethnographic material on the rural life of Cyprus suggests that the household formed the main social and functional unit of Cypriot society (Markides, 1978), (Loizos, 1975). All social and most work related activities of the family took place within the boundaries of the household. The agricultural economies of the villages (both Turkish and Greek Cypriot) led to similar needs and a similar pattern of rural life of the two ethnic groups which, in turn led to similar “spatial ingredients” “and similar rules of growth (Ionas, 1988), (Papacharalambous, 1968), (Sinos, 1976), (Delaney, 1991). Visual inspection of some of the houses’ layouts confirms this observation, Fig 1a,b,c,. The “ingredients” of each space-code seem to be identical: yards, kitchens, living rooms, bedrooms, storage for animals and goods.

Obviously, visual inspection and comparison of broad geometric and locational aspects, cannot on their own help us to ascertain how one ethnic sample differs or is similar to domestic forms in the other sample or to suggest what the dimensions of variability within each sample might be. Closer investigation, utilising syntactic analysis (Hillier and Hanson, 1984) does indeed shed light on these issues and demonstrates that the forms of these dwellings embody patterns of family life and culture which are unique to each ethnic group, as is shown below.

Ethnic Group	Occ. class	RRA	RRA Funct.	RRA Trans.	RRA Exter.	L	Y	B	K	Integr. Space
Greek Cypriots	Total	1.16	1.34	0.69	1.32					
	C2	1.32	1.48	0.98	1.41	0.26	0.69	1.84	1.22	Y
	C3	1.16	1.34	0.78	1.36	0.09	0.48	1.70	1.20	Y
	C4	1.02	1.19	0.31	1.18	0.18	0.23	1.18	1.14	Y
Turkish Cyp. Total	1.14	1.20	1.06	1.50						
	C2	1.20	1.22	1.07	1.40	0.87	0.48	1.45	1.10	Y
	C3	1.19	1.25	1.06	1.75	0.77	0.64	1.44	1.36	L
	C4	1.02	1.12	1.05	1.34	0.68	0.25	1.17	1.51	Y&L

Table 1. Summary of houses’ syntactic data by ethnicity and occupational class

Within the whole sample there are clear differences in which functions are spatialised. Two distinct genotypical tendencies emerge: one centres on the highly integrating and shallow yard, little spatial differences among living spaces, which are segregated, and a more integrated exterior. The other centres on the highly integrating and shallow living room, strong spatial differences among living spaces and a more segregated exterior; living spaces are in this case more integrating while the yard though still very integrating becomes relatively deep in the complex. The former identifies with the Greek Cypriot subset while the latter identifies with the Turkish Cypriot subset.

These strong trends across the sample are in themselves strong evidence of underlying spatial cultures, expressing themselves through the spatial form of the houses. This suggests that although houses in both ethnic groups have the same spatial “ingredients”, it is their spatial configuration which discloses ethnic identity.

However, as we have seen, ethnic differentiation alone cannot explain the variety of forms and syntactic properties presented within as well as between the two groups. In both cases, on the basis of the evidence available, it seems that the syntactic properties of depth, asymmetry and nondistributeness are found among the poorer houses of the lower occupational classes, while more prosperous houses tend to be more symmetrical and distributed.

2.2 The Global Level: Analysis of settlements layout.

As we saw earlier on, the household formed the main social institution of Cypriot villages. Interaction mainly took place in the neighbourhoods, the villages' square and on special occasions in the Church or Mosque accordingly. Of primary importance for men, was the coffee shop (kafenion or kahve), usually found in the villages' centre and serving a multitude of functions (socialising, exchange of information and others).

In order to establish how these "spatial ingredients" are configured within the villages we need to study the open space structure of the villages. Two levels of analysis are used to describe the organisation of public space: the "convex" analysis or "two-dimensional" organisation of the system, and the "one-dimensional" or axial organisation (Hillier and Hanson, 1984), Table 2.

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No	Code	Ethnic Group	Axial Organ.	RRA	Con	Depth	Convex Artic.	Convex Organ.	Axial Artic.	Inter. Organ.
1	Vavat.	GC	0.65	1.38	2.44	6.60	0.89	1.16	0.42	0.96
2	Lefkar.	GC	0.90	1.42	2.50	4.75	0.74	1.53	0.33	0.93
3	Ora	GC	0.73	1.38	2.42	8.34	0.94	1.53	0.43	0.95
4	Psev.	GC	0.69	1.29	2.33	6.94	0.82	1.55	0.28	0.96
5	Menn.	TC	1.26	1.59	2.71	3.94	0.74	1.65	0.24	0.76
6	Klav	TC	1.23	1.90	3.26	4.17	0.71	1.61	0.18	0.82
7	Kellia	TC	0.98	1.71	3.03	5.18	0.86	1.67	0.31	0.66
8	Kivisil.	TC	0.98	1.00	2.97	8.05	0.79	1.62	0.29	0.73

Having in mind that the axial organisation refers to the access of visitors into the system, while the convex organisation refers to the inhabitants, we may broadly suggest that in the Greek Cypriot villages, access of visitors into the settlement is difficult; but once inside, the system ensures that the natural movement of inhabitants to, from and between the more segregated zones within the villages intersects the spaces used by visitors. This creates a strong, natural "probabilistic" interface between inhabitants and visitors in the settlements (Hillier and Hanson, 1984).

In contrast, the Turkish Cypriot settlements although easily accessible from the outside, restrict their integration cores and the movement of visitors to well defined peripheral areas and segregate large areas of the villages for the more exclusive use of the inhabitants. The stranger is allowed into the villages but under strong restrictions and control. The dwellings are segregated from both the open space of the village and from the outside world. Consequently, inhabitants do not interface with strangers in their role as inhabitants because of the depth of the open space from the dwellings, while strangers rarely penetrate into the residential neighbourhoods, because of their depth from the carrier.

Table 2. Purely Greek Cypriot and purely Turkish Cypriot villages - Basic Syntactic data

Differences in space organisation, however, are also found within each ethnic group, Table 3; if we look at the mixed villages, certain neighbourhoods or areas exhibit different spatial properties than others within the structure of the villages. In the Greek Cypriot parts houses of different occupational structures seem to share more or less similar syntactic properties.

In the Turkish Cypriot parts syntactic data reveals a different picture. Houses of higher occupational classes seem to be clustered along integrating axial lines, whereas houses of the lower occupational class are located in relatively deep and segregated locations. In all cases, the lower class is deeper, and both locally and globally, more segregated than the higher class.

Ethnic origin	Class	RRA	Depth	Connect.
GC	C2	1.14	5.14	2.91
	C3	1.56	4.16	3.16
	C4	1.07	4.86	2.53
TC	C2	1.40	4.70	4.83
	C3	0.96	6.50	2.50
	C4	0.71	6.10	1.83

Table 3 - Summary of syntactic data by ethnic group and occupational class

3. From space to society

We have seen in the previous section, two quite distinct forms of spatial organisation. To account for the social significance of these differences, we will now proceed to investigate possible relations between spatial patterns and sociological elements of each ethnic group.

3.1. Greek Cypriot Community

As various ethnographic reports indicate, the idea of the household (nikokirio), is the single significant element through which marriage and kinship are formally regulated and through which individuals acquire their key statuses in the village (Markides, 1978) (Balswick, 1972) (Loizos, 1975).

In Greek Cypriot society womanhood is associated with nurturing, cooking and cleaning. Manhood, on the other hand, means providing for and protecting the family as well as representing the household in the public life of the village (Peristiany, 1975). It seems that in the Greek Cypriot family, there is a natural division of labour so that the role expectations of men and women or husband and wife are clearly defined and complementary to one another.

However, a more careful look within the Greek Cypriot sample reveals differences between the three subsets introduced in the previous part. Visiting patterns differ in each subgroup. In the poorer families visitors are very rare, except close kin; the latter are entertained in the same living room shared by the family, a space which is shallow.

In the wealthier households the best room in the house, the living room is almost never used by the family except to receive honoured guests; it is thus rendered a “transpatial” space. Its’ function is to articulate relations across greater distances, both social and spatial. Indeed the syntactic values of the living room express this requirement; it becomes more and more segregated by the addition of the loggias which act as transitions between interior and exterior.

The yard has the contrary syntactic principles: shallow from the exterior and most integrated with the rest of the household. The yard is the key locus of spatial solidarity: it is the space to which all members of the household have equal access and to which they have equal

rights. But it is also a space in which all local interaction dependent on spatial proximity - relations with neighbours - normally take place. However, although the yard door is usually left open for most of the day, neighbours seldom enter one another's living spaces Bailey, 1971). Family life is reserved for the home (Peristiany, 1965) (Loizos, 1975).

This sharp differentiation between the nuclear family and the outside world is modified by a number of relations which fan out of the family into the community, linking the family groups in a number of different ways. At first sight the Greek Cypriot men appear to have a big advantage in terms of spatial arrangements outside the house, which is not available to women; they have a special place of their own, the coffee shop (*kafenio*), where women are not allowed to go (Photiades, 1975) (Papataxiarchis, 1988). Women however, are powerfully present throughout the local open space of the Greek Cypriot villages, not as a group but distributed everywhere through church attendance, work in the fields and neighbourhood life. This way of life accounts for the dense interface pattern both between inhabitants and between inhabitants and visitors, found in the Greek Cypriots settlements.

An interesting fact related to Greek Cypriot society is that we do not find the emergence of a vertical, monolithic stratification system where the rich of the community determine both the economic life of the villages as well as the politics (Loizos, 1977); we could suggest with some caution, that we have a relatively egalitarian social structure which clearly accounts for the uniform pattern of syntactic properties found for both rich and poor houses.

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4.2. Turkish Cypriot Community

In Turkish Cypriot society we find very similar values relating to the family and the relations between the sexes, the main difference being that distinctions are much sharper (Pierce, 1964) (Stirling, 1963, 1965, 1974). This is well documented by the syntactic data of our sample. There are special places where visitors are entertained, men and women are allocated specific and distinct spaces in the house and there is an obvious attempt to enforce a strong boundary between the interior of the dwelling and the public street. In other words, the main difference between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots households seems to be that although social differences do exist in both cases, in the latter they are not "build into the bricks and mortar", neither are they institutionalised in such a way as to create marked structural inequalities.

The back yard in the Turkish Cypriot house becomes the hinge which separates the two different areas of the household. It is mainly a place for the realisation of women's solidarity, strongly segregated from the outside world. Very often the houses have passageways leading from courtyard to courtyard which allow women to move between houses without having to use a public lane or street. In complete contrast, the world of men is the public world of the street, the place of business, the mosque and above all the *Kahve*, the coffee house.

The above observations reflect how rules of residence have affected the proliferation of family segments over time. This is clearly seen in the sparse interface maps of the Turkish Cypriot villages; a consequence of these properties is that visitors experience a different settlement than the inhabitants know.

Unlike the Greek Cypriot case, economic power and political power are closely related in Turkish Cypriot society. This is experienced both at the local level of the domestic interior and the global level of the village. In the former case, as we have already seen, every household

contained a living room but only the better off could afford a guests' room, a room which was more than an entertainment. Attendance in one of those rooms, implied political submission to and support of its owner (Stirling, 1974).

At the global level of the village wealthy households tended to cluster in particular locations while poorer houses were located in different "mahalles" (neighbourhoods). Each group exhibited different syntactic properties; the poorer were isolated within the segregated areas of the villages while the wealthy were concentrated in the centre of things, occupying the most integrating areas. In other words, both the local and the global level of the Turkish Cypriot society can be seen as a spatial mapping of a strong hierarchy in terms of social status and wealth within the villages.

4. Summary of the findings: a comparison

The cultural investment in space, both locally and globally, varies to a considerable degree between as well as within each ethnic group. Morphologically, most of these differences add due to the fact that the Turkish Cypriots partake in a "correspondence" society, while the Greek Cypriots in a non correspondence society, meaning that in the Turkish Cypriot case there is a correspondence between social groupings and social demarcations; that is, a cultural investment in the locality. A strong exogenous model is found in both household and village arrangements, based on the relations between men and women dictated by Islamic law and structuring strong patterns of encounters and avoidance between the two sexes.

In the Greek Cypriot sample social structure is not reflected or does not correspond to spatial organisation, and there is more investment in the global structure at the expense of the local group. An endogenous model is detected which organises relations within and between the households which are spatially stable but non-territorial.

Based on the analysis we believe that although the two ethnic groups are made of the same spatial and social "ingredients", the spatial configuration of these brings about strong differences in ethnic identity. It has also been suggested that ethnic differentiation alone cannot explain the variety of forms presented within as well as between the two groups. We used both the form of the local spatial organisation at the domestic level and its relation to the global level, to suggest that spatial differentiation was also associated with the occupational class and status of different social groups in the villages. A more complex picture emerges which has both differences within each ethnic grouping as well as tendencies which cut across ethnic divisions, but which relate together people of a similar status or social position.

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