

provocation:

The Buffer Zone of Ledra Palace as a Third Performative Space in Cyprus: Considering Theatre and Performance as transformative parameters in post-conflict, contested space

The provocation entertains the question whether the Buffer Zone of Cyprus, the UN Controlled Area between the two sides, constitutes a carrier of new narratives, alternate to the Greek Cypriot or Turkish Cypriot narratives, through being a third performative space. Analyzing space, uncovering/unraveling and presenting narratives through different artistic methodologies is a dynamic process that has been in development in the years since the opening of the Ledra Palace checkpoint in 2003, and more so after the opening of the Home for Cooperation in 2011.

In considering similar geopolitical contexts, scholar and artist M. Hafeda (2019) mentions that the existence of alternative (performative) spaces in the city of Beirut constitutes a means of transforming “the conditions of the borders as well as the materiality between the borders” (33).¹ He redefines the city and its experience, since borders (and the areas between borders) attain new meaning through an artistic approach, a dynamic creative process.

Through the years, various events and practices have taken place in the Ledra Palace buffer zone, rendering it performative: the surge of Cypriots to visit the ‘other side’ in 2003, demonstrations and protests, performance art and street art, performing arts festivals, and ad hoc events and theatre productions. The agency relating to these creative manifestations is varied, between local, international, targeted and chance encounters; however, the question of whether we can consider this space a ‘third’ performative space, the alternative to the ‘othering’ processes so prominent in the two communities, I will argue, is a valid one.

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¹ Hafeda, Mohamed (2019). *Negotiating Conflict in Lebanon: Bordering Practices in a Divided Beirut*. London: I.B. Tauris.