PUBLIC ART INTERVENTIONS IN NORTHERN CYPRUS: COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION IN DISCONNECTED COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

PUBLIC ART INTERVENTIONS IN NORTHERN CYPRUS: COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION IN DISCONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Drawing on a relational understanding of art developed in the 20th century, this practice-led study explores how public art interventions provide insights into social, cultural, and political divides within fragmented communities, public visibility and representation for marginalized individuals and groups, and alternative views to the contextual norm. Situated within historical and critical contexts, and the ‘local’ setting of Northern Cyprus, this study explores components of public art interventions in relation to their ‘successful’ practice. Northern Cyprus has been influenced politically, socially, and culturally by Turkey, the only country to recognise the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, since before the division of Cyprus. Conflict arising from the adoption of respective national identities caused separation of Greek Cypriots from Turkish Cypriots on the island. Varying views on the imposition of national and religious values upon Turkish Cypriots have marginalized progressive, alternative, and liberal lifestyles and ways-of-thinking. Unlike conventional platforms, public art interventions have the potential to attract attention to narratives surrounding social, political, and cultural issues isolated from traditional public platforms. The fieldwork consists of intervention-participants and the researcher-as-participant collaboratively and collectively creating public art interventions within varying contexts, using sound, performance, posters and stencils, situated in public spaces in Northern Cyprus, followed by the observation and documentation of post-intervention participants’ engagement and interaction. The researcher-as-participant, using ethnographic interviewing methods, conversed with post-intervention participants about their intervention experience, providing a basis for hermeneutic analysis within the local context. Findings reveal that public spaces can be utilized as platforms accessible to all members of a community, making visible narratives deviating from those dominating traditional private and public platforms, narratives in which public art intervention practices reclaim the right to public space by marginalized and alternative communities excluded from the ‘public sphere’. Interventionists’ emic understanding of social, cultural, and political references can create form and content within a context that is inclusive of its audience, leading to successful public art intervention practices. Not every public art intervention has the same degree of success, and it is only through the careful articulation of form, content, and context that the practice is able to instigate thought and discussion surrounding the subject matter of the intervention beyond the practitioners’ circle.
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AUTHOR’S DECLARATION

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed:                                      Dated:
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Here goes my tiny droplet into the pool of existing academic knowledge in which we swim. I hope I don’t drown. – Aycan Garip

1.1 The Case that Launched the Research Questions

The weighty collection of pages before you is the product of two concerns that resurface each time I visit the place I was raised, Northern Cyprus. The first is an amalgam of the lack of sense of community, a division of ‘us vs. them’ and the lack of willingness to listen and converse with ‘the other’, something I feel and observe during public debates, a conversation amongst friends, each time I read the local newspapers, or watch political programs on local television. This discourse revolving around ‘us’ (the self as subject) and ‘them’ (the perceived-other of the self), makes me wonder who these groups encapsulate. At the risk of sounding naïve, surely as people sharing a space, both groups could perceive the other as part as a ‘collective us’. From politicians in the media to people debating in the streets, I witness countless fingers being pointed at this perceived-other being accused as the cause for dissatisfactory situations in Northern Cyprus. The terms ‘other’ (öteki) and ‘otherization’ (ötekileştirme) have become increasingly used in local media, differentiating individuals and groups within a community rather than uniting them (Selçuk, 2012: 79). This diverts ‘blame’ for social, cultural, political, economic problems from one group to another, which is not self-contained within the borders of Northern Cyprus, but extends to include current affairs and the discourse surrounding the north-south divide of the island. As it stands, we must all be at fault. Yet stating the obvious is no solution.

This leads to the second recurring concern that underpins the pursuit of this research. It is set in my frustration with the passive-aggressive approach towards dissatisfactions with political, economic, social, and cultural issues within the local context. The finger-pointing individuals only seem to complain when their own self-centred realities and fixed constructs are perceived to be threatened, yet no constructive efforts are made to understand, engage or interact with the perceived-other. Is this because
they simply do not want to hear what the perceived-other has to say, or are they afraid that their own realities and constructs may change due to this engagement?

As a believer that diversity amongst individuals, cultures and communities within a context is something to celebrate, the constant ‘otherization’ of individuals in a small community seemed to be the underlying reason for the lack of sense-of-community and the lack of a ‘collective us’. Furthermore, everybody, at some point, practiced or stood on the receiving end of ‘otherization’, regardless of lifestyle, background, and chosen or given identity constructs. Thus, each ‘self’ had a ‘perceived-other’ removed from a ‘we’ construct, and vice versa. The difference was that some individuals were able to not only coexist with the perceived-other, but were willing to engage and discuss, not to attack or persuade the perceived-other into conforming with the self, but in the hope that each may gain a better understanding of their differences. Thus, it appears that the division of ‘us’ and ‘them’ is not caused by the adoption of different constructs, but the rejection of the other’s alternative constructs as legitimate or acceptable, thus rejecting these alternative constructs to coexist alongside those of the self. While those who believe that realities, identities, beliefs and values are constructed in relation to the individual’s contexts and experiences, those neglecting the unique experience of individuals and their role in constructing their realities and identities with ‘fixed’ constructs are intolerant and unwilling to acknowledge and accept the constructs of the perceived-other.

It is highly unlikely for a self and perceived-other to find themselves in a space and situation to constructively interact. This means no exchange of ideas or opinions, no debate and no furthering one’s understanding of the other. From my own experiences of interacting with someone who did not acknowledge alternative constructs as ‘acceptable’, the debate tended to revolve around ‘right’ self and the ‘wrong’ other. For me, what matters is not being right or wrong but, rather, for the self and the perceived-other to engage and converse on how each formulates their constructs. I searched for existing platforms in Northern Cyprus to exchange perspectives, constructs, or at least make alternatives publicly visible and accessible. Perhaps, this would help shrink the gap between the self and perceived-other, the disconnected groups within the community, and contribute towards a collective ‘us’, regardless of individual or collective constructs, as
expressed by the golden rule of treating others as one desires to be treated, or as another saying goes, ‘live and let live’.

Platforms making alternative constructs visible seemed to be lacking, and those that were available (such as online newspapers, social media networks) seemed to only reach ‘within its circle’, an audience already familiar with and supportive of relational and alternative constructs. Thus, an alternative public platform differing from conventional ones to make visible these constructs, beliefs, and views accessible to a public “beyond [our, the group of artists’] own affinity group” (Zuidervaart, 2010: 125) was necessary.

Several events inspired the idea for a public platform for alternative constructs, the main one being the group of Gezi Park protesters in Istanbul in 2013. That summer, Turkey experienced “the most crowded and powerful” (Çolak, 2014: 463) resistance movement against the “anti-democratic policies of the Justice and Development Party government” (ibid). Çolak credits “the language of the resistance” (ibid, 464) and the creative and humorous use of artistic interventions. The spirit of the protest and protesters was reflected through a unified community, while at the same time “threw the government into a grave legitimacy crisis” by not adopting the violent approach of the government and authorities (ibid). This showed the possibility to stand up for one’s beliefs and values without the dependence on conventional platforms and forms. Meanwhile in Northern Cyprus, I was attending art exhibitions with varying degrees of ‘public accessibility’. Most exhibitions were executed in the traditional way, in an ‘exhibition space’ where people would walk from one artwork to the other, pausing at intervals to gaze upon what the artist(s) had created before shaking the artist’s hand and showering him or her with compliments while sipping wine.

There were, however, some who wanted to retreat from ‘traditional’ art and exhibition practices: a younger generation of artists ‘updating’ the practice and understanding of ‘art’, expanding it into more relational, interactive and ‘publicly accessible’ content. Sites were chosen based on their public accessibility, their suitability to the works to be exhibited, or the transformability of the site to accommodate the exhibition. The ‘actively-participating’ audiences for these exhibitions were more diverse, and also attracted people passing by the site. These exhibitions were accessible, not in terms of being likeable for the sake of gathering an audience (Bennington & Massumi,
1983: 75), but in terms of location (public space), subject matter (content), form (audio, visual, experiential), and the socio-cultural and socio-political context in which they were set. Furthermore, the ‘exhibition-event’, having brought together a mix of people, allowed engagement, discussion, and interaction in an unfamiliar yet accessible context.

Even on a small scale, it could be said that the exhibition-event form created a new “public sphere” (Habermas, 1991). The works created had the audience in mind, using form and content that the public could relate to and recognize. After reflecting upon the types of exhibitions and interventions, my observations and interactions with the various constructs of those within the context of Northern Cyprus, I thought about something Claire Bishop (2012) stresses in *Artificial Hells*. She portrays an art of action, where the audience transforms from passive-bystander into participant, leading to the re-humanization of a numb society and some repair of the social bonds within a fragmented society (Bishop, 2012: 11). While art has been used as a means of self-expression, publicly accessible art (aforementioned) has not received as much attention by arts practitioners, audiences, and art enthusiasts in Northern Cyprus as have more traditional art practices and exhibitions. Reflecting upon the Gezi Park protesters and my personal experiences in Northern Cyprus surrounding the alternative ‘arts scene’ presented a potential platform through the practice of public art interventions.

1.2 Why art? Why intervention? Why now?

Dewey (1934), Goodman (1968) and Heidegger (1971) have all expressed the view that art and the human experience (Dewey) or the world-making experience (Goodman and Heidegger) are inseparable, making art an interdisciplinary study both in theory and practice by its very nature (Lehrer, 2011: 3). The person reflects upon artworks through their unique filters, shaped by past and personal experiences, projecting the self into their understanding of the viewed artworks (Dewey, 1934: 245-50). Goodman points out that both sensory and emotional engagement with an artwork enhances the meaning taken from a particular work (Goodman, 1968: 248-9). This quality of art, to elicit thought and emotion through interaction and engagement, paired with public and socially-engaging content and contexts could begin to serve as part of a public practice of alternative modes
The struggle, in the words of Johannes Birringer “for justice and equity, for freedom of expression and freedom of sexual preference, for better and more diversified education and health services, for a greater understanding and dialogue among cultures, and for the demise of discriminations, racism, sexism, and homophobia” seems unattainable if the status quo persists in Northern Cyprus (Birringer, 2000: 4). The need for “new multicultural forms of grassroots and community organizing” (ibid) would mean that in the situation of authorities and people in power failing to aid the organization of the community by creating opportunities in order to mend the broken social bonds, it would be the responsibility of members of the community, activists, those aware of the problem and willing to work, to look towards finding a solution.

More often than not, creatives, intellectuals and activists take matters into their own hands. Examples are seen across the globe in various periods of time. Although my focus lies with the changes in art practice and understanding in 20th century Europe (see 1.4 Section Outline), examples of the shift from traditional art practices to more experimental and alternative (which we now know as ‘contemporary’) practices can be seen across geographic and historical contexts. In Japan, following the Second Sino-Japanese War, an art movement emerged as a result of the struggle over power of the newly found Western values and the militarist and imperial heritage of Japan (Merewether & Hiro, 2007: 2). Having been deprived of the modern art of the West, an alternative means of expression was sought, which resulted in the forming of the ‘Experimental Workshop’ in 1951 (ibid, 3), a group of Japanese artists who created the first comprehensive exhibition in Europe.¹

The aim of this collaborative effort and its exhibition of experimentation was to include as many media of expression (whether it was music, visual arts, dance or poetry) with an emphasis on the works reflecting “real life” (ibid). The urge to get in touch with real life led to the need to reach a wider audience, which is when avant-garde artist Yoshihara

decided to carry exhibitions from the “traditional art space” to public spaces (ibid, 7). Here, we can see the progression of art from its dominant conception as a means of self-expression to catering for a greater purpose: the inclusion of the public in a dialogue with the works themselves.

In the 1960s, artists-as-activists in Los Angeles, in protest of the United States government’s involvement in The Vietnam War, erected the Artists’ Tower of Protest in Los Angeles in opposition to the war. The Tower was meant to gain mass attention through a more permanent artefact created collaboratively, making the “production and display of the Tower...an ‘event’, a version of ‘situationist’ street politics...A public event,” (Frascina, 2010: 57) that would not escape media attention. The Tower was kept under constant protection due to counter-protests and attacks, in addition to dealing with complications having arisen with the landlord of the rented site refusing a renewal of the lease to the artists (ibid, 17). Frascina declares that, “The subsequent fate of the ‘work’ [was] as revealing about the period as [were] the struggles of its production and protection” (ibid). Fifty years on, we still witness attacks on such artworks, as seen with the burning of the Rainbow in Warsaw, Poland in November 2013 (Nichols, 2013), which meant to celebrate diversity. These incidents are not only revealing of the times but of the places, the context as a whole, and those included within the context, which is what this research explores through public art interventions.

Just as new art movements demanding social change and questioning power emerged in the first half of the 20th century, a shift (albeit by a small group) in arts practices and understanding is occurring currently within Northern Cyprus. Although public art interventions have taken place in the past in Northern Cyprus, they have been met with mixed sentiments. As a researcher and creative practitioner, my curiosity lies not only in the practice of public art interventions, but its relation to the context in question, Northern Cyprus. I dissect the components of public art interventions and the components of its socio-cultural and socio-political contexts and, for my fieldwork, devise public art interventions for the given context in collective (and at times collaborative) art intervention

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2 Also known as the ‘Peace Tower’, this ‘scaffolding’ was erected in 1966 led by Irving Petlin and Marc di Suvero, with the support of the Artist’s Protest Committee in Los Angeles. Through the collaborative efforts of artists the Tower exhibited artworks protesting the Vietnam war. For more information see We dissent: four decades of politics and art in Los Angeles (Frascina, 2006).
practices. How these interventions unfold, and how audience members themselves become participants within the interventions can only be understood and appreciated once the reader is presented and equipped with the contextual information to come.

1.3 Research Questions, Aims and Objectives

As it is with all research that stretches over a period of time, changes occur as the initial stages of research progresses; research questions may evolve into slightly different, more focused versions of earlier ones, having delved deeper into the research area and literature. However, without these initial versions there would be nothing there to evolve, just as one must learn to crawl before one can walk.

In retrospect, my research questions have not deviated in essence, although having become somewhat fluent in the language of academia (although at times I insist on retaining a ‘non-academic accent’ for personal reasons) has led to their reframing. The initial research questions failed to encompass the aims of the research project in its entirety. The sentiment of returning to these questions resembled the same emotion arising from the discovery of a photograph of one’s self dated to a time when a certain fashion or haircut was in style, and is no more. Instead of discarding them, we keep them for sentimental reasons, as a reminder of how much we have learned and changed. Over the years my research has progressed and unfolded so have my research questions, aims and objectives. Therefore, I present the ‘improved’ research questions:

- How do public art interventions provide insight into socio-cultural and socio-political divides within fragmented communities?
- How do public art interventions give public visibility and representation for marginalized individuals and groups?
- How can the components of public art interventions be defined and what, in relation to these components, determines a successful public art intervention?

Associated questions do of course emerge. For example, what are the possibilities and limits for intervention through art? In other words, the interventions came to focus
more attention on the intervention part, as well as the art part, and consideration of the separability of these key elements provided a way too of thinking about their combination. This is something that came to feature significantly in the conclusion of the thesis even though it was not reflected in the questions presented above.

My aims and objectives were revised accordingly as well. The aims and objectives of collaboratively creating and situating public art interventions within Northern Cyprus are:

- To determine and define components of public art interventions and how each contributes to the ‘success’ of their practice in relation to their social, political and cultural contexts;
- To observe and participate in public art intervention practices from start to end in real-world settings in order to identify the advantages and limits of the methodology and methods adopted by the researcher;
- To gain a practical understanding of the usage of and expectations surrounding public spaces within the context of Northern Cyprus;
- To further the critical, theoretical and practical discourse surrounding public and interventionist art practice as well as the discourse surrounding the historical, socio-cultural and socio-political context of Northern Cyprus.

In essence, my research questions, aims and objectives have not changed since embarking on this research. What has changed is how they are verbalized and structured, so providing a clearer scope of the research as well as setting a more focused agenda to guide the researcher throughout the study and the reader through the thesis itself.

Before going into the details of the thesis outline, it is worth mentioning that the public art interventions, collaboratively and collectively devised for the purposes of the thesis have also been categorized thematically rather than chronologically. However, for the purposes of clarification below I present a chronological timeline of the creation of the public art interventions to avoid any confusion on the reader’s part.

Fig. a. A timeline of the creation of public art interventions during the summer of 2014
1.4 Thesis Outline

This thesis consists of three parts. Chapters 2, 3 and 5 present background information and position the research within historical, social, cultural, and artistic contexts, while Chapter 4 depicts the narratives of public art interventions which took place within these contexts. Chapter 6 and 7 analyse the preceding chapters in relation to one another that uncover findings, their analyses and finally a conclusion. A story told out of context is still a story, albeit incomplete. Additionally, I position myself, as researcher and researcher-as-practitioner within these contexts and critical debates surrounding art practice and its relationality as well as the socio-cultural and socio-political discourse surrounding the local context of the fieldwork.

I would like to note some resources referenced in this thesis do not exist in translation and are available only in Turkish. As a native English and Turkish speaker, I have included these as references as they are relevant to the ‘local context’. Overlapping material within the thesis serves to reintroduce material within the various contexts and is not intended as repetition. I aim to re-contextualize and intertwine the material being discussed. This maintains the relativist and constructivist framework adopted in discussing my subject matter while accentuating the interdisciplinary nature of the research. As the thesis progresses, this becomes more apparent and I hope it is seen as a constructive way of furthering my arguments rather than mere reiteration.

Chapter 2 provides a historical and theoretical context of public art interventions, focusing on the shift in arts practice and theory (from private to public, autonomous to relational, conventional media to experimental) and the art movements and groups associated with this shift in 20th century Europe. I draw upon Bishop’s (2012) *Artificial Hells* to state the influence of the historic Avant-Garde on art and its shift towards a more participatory form through audience engagement, which resonates with interventionist and activist practitioners alike. The historical context roots my exploration of public art interventions within a paradigm shift, one which resulted as an alternative to the traditional in relation to its context at the time. The relational quality of public art interventions is further explored by breaking down each component of the practice into ‘public accessibility’ in relation to context (audience and site) and content (subject matter) of ‘art
interventions’. The chapter also includes relevant critical discourses surrounding ‘public versus private’ space based on Lefebvre’s *Production of Space* (1991), interpretations of the Habermasian ‘public sphere,’ focusing on Benhabib’s (1992) and Fraser’s (1990) inclusion of minorities and ‘counterpublics.’ Furthermore, I elaborate on the relationality of public art interventions, mainly as defined by Zuidervaart (2015). My scope for these discussions is determined by their relation to the practice and construct of public art interventions and thus, I utilize relevant sections of some of the discourse surrounding these topics, in a way that can position public art interventions within a historical and critical context. The attempt to provide a full context with in-depth analysis of all relevant texts surrounding each component of public art interventions would potentially span over several theses, and so I aim to provide sufficient information on each component. Finally, I portray examples of public art interventions as socially-engaging, relational, and participatory practices. Following the example of Lacy’s ‘new genre public art’ (1995) and previous public art interventions from various contexts, I integrate discussions surrounding the individual components, resulting in the relational quality of public art intervention and its practice.

Chapter 3 depicts the social and political ‘local context’ of Northern Cyprus wherein the fieldwork and case-studies are situated. This positions the practice of public art interventions within the context as well as providing an understanding of the participants in relation to the context. The reader is familiarized with the brief history of Cyprus, and the various types of division of ‘us vs. them’ through varying ‘ways of thinking’ in the construction of identity and community in Northern Cyprus, and the participants involved within the fieldwork. Within this chapter, I position the researcher-self and explore the researcher as an ‘insider’ to the local context, as well as emic and etic perspectives of the researcher and researcher-as-participant in relation to the fieldwork and participants involved in the fieldwork of the study. I draw references from conversations, interviews and interactions with pre-intervention participants, as well as previous public art interventions within Northern Cyprus, to deepen the reader’s understanding of the socio-cultural and socio-political context as a framework to the public art intervention case-studies and their analysis.
Chapter 4 provides selected public art interventions devised by intervention-participants and the researcher-as-participant, grouped by the interventions’ temporal and situational contexts. These autoethnographic and reflexive case-studies, through ‘deep description’ bring to life the fieldwork surrounding the planning and creation of public art intervention with creative individuals who were invited to participate in the study and who voluntarily contributed their time and creative and critical skills in varying levels. These case studies are deeply situated within the social and political contexts of Northern Cyprus, providing real-life scenarios and experiences in relation to the engagement between the audience as post-intervention participants and the public art interventions in question.

Chapter 5 is dedicated to ontological and epistemological frameworks, methodologies and methods utilized during the research and the ethical implications accompanying these methods and methodologies. Without embedding my stance under any one framework, I discuss the relativist, constructivist and interpretive (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Dewey, 1934) frameworks adopted by the researcher and researcher-as-participant. I use my own ontological and epistemological perspectives and frameworks in further understanding the divide between the ‘us’ and ‘them’ discussed in previous chapters, and relate each group to ontologies and epistemologies that can be defined as being ‘fixed’ (relating to essentialist frameworks), or ‘flexible’ (relating to relational and constructivist frameworks). For my methodology, I discuss aspects of practice-led research, arts-based inquiry, and autoethnography and how these methodologies accommodate my fieldwork, whilst tackling the obstacles faced in identifying such multi-disciplinary research practices under one name. Within these methodologies, I also explore the shifting role of the researcher treading the space between emic and etic (insider and outsider) perspectives, and the researcher-as-participant, the insider working alongside intervention-participants to help create public art interventions through collaborative and collective participation in artistic practice and discussion. Methods accommodating the research as well as a detailed breakdown of the research plan are also included in this chapter, in addition to the ethical issues related to the fieldwork practices and participants.

Chapter 6 includes key findings of the case-studies, providing discussions surrounding findings in relation to historical, theoretical, and local socio-cultural and socio-political contexts discussed in earlier chapters. The thematically-grouped findings
are identified and discussed in relation to the various aspects of ‘publicness’ in relation to public art interventions, form, content and context of public art interventions, the practice of public art interventions as research and the possibilities and limitations of public art interventions within the context of Northern Cyprus. Within these themes I also reflect upon the constructing of public art interventions and factors that influence the relative ‘success’ of interventions within the aforementioned contexts. The chapter filters experiences and narratives from the fieldwork through the discussions provided in preceding chapters, combining the practice of public art interventions with the relevant theoretical discourses.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis, coming full circle to answer the research questions, aims and objectives determined in Chapter 1, drawing upon the practical and theoretical information provided and considered throughout the thesis. Finally, I reflect upon the study in relation to its local and global contexts. I conclude public art interventions and practitioners are needed now more than ever to promote freedom of speech and thought, the right to public space by bringing visibility to alternative constructs and realities and to bridge divides among local and global communities.

1.5 Conclusion

This thesis attempts to dissect and explore public art interventions and its components in terms of practice and theory, as well as the contexts in which they are situated and experienced. This study could be seen as a microcosm of how public art interventions are practiced and received in relation to socio-cultural and socio-political contexts. It focuses on public art interventions in the spirit of defending the right to freedom of speech, thought, and freedom to question for the sake of furthering the understanding between fragmented and conflicting societies and communities in order to bridge gaps within local and global communities rather than increasing the gap between them. It is only within a context that allows for the exchange and the questioning of the status quo without causing harm, discrimination, and segregation that we can bridge the gap between ‘us’ and ‘them’, not just within the local but within the global context. This thesis does not put forth public art interventions as the solution to the world’s problems, nor is it a step-by-step guide to
creating public art interventions. It does, however, demonstrate through findings and discussions surrounding the case studies and literature review that public art interventions have a role to play in reclaiming public space for marginalized individuals and groups within communities; as well as making their voices heard and their presence visible where traditional platforms fail so to do.
CHAPTER 2: COMPONENTS OF PUBLIC ART INTERVENTIONS

2.1 Introduction

*But on what is intervention founded, if not a system of thought which will replicate itself in (intellectual or practical) solutions, or the images with which metropolitan dwellers in a media age are assailed? (Miles, 1997: 43)*

In this chapter, I identify and explain the components of public art interventions, the various ‘public’ definitions implied in the name of the practice, the relationality of art, and how its practice intervenes within its context of practice. Through relevant literature, I support my claim that public art interventions could serve as an alternative platform and help create a public sphere, through which contextually-relevant content is made publicly accessible through creative practices. By comparing past and present public art interventions, I contextualise historically and critically the current practice of public art interventions to position my research within the existing research literature. Not all uses of the terms studied in this chapter liken to the same definition in existing literature; varying definitions of the terms exist depending on area of study or school of thought. This chapter provides the opportunity to provide the reader with my understanding and definitions for these terms as used within this research.

Wood identifies two uses of the term avant-garde in art history; the first, he associates with a “modernist” perspective, “the succession of ‘isms’ from the middle of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century,” (2004: 3). The second is defined as “the attempt to overcome [the pursuit of artistic autonomy] by seeking to re-enmesh the practice of radical art in wider projects to transform the modern world,” (ibid). Although many stylistic changes and artistic movements take place within this timeline, my focus remains on movements and groups that bear resemblance with the spirit of public art intervention, be it thought practice, form, content, and context (such as the Italian Futurists, Dadaists, Proletkult) or the integration of arts practices into the everyday and the use of public space as a platform (such as the Situationist International). My exploration of the avant-gardes does not follow a chronological path, but a path which leads to the mutual
characteristics shared by the avant-gardes mentioned in this chapter and public art interventions.

The avant-garde influence depicts similarities in practice and theory of movements of the ‘historic avant-garde’ from the early days of the 20th century to middle of the century (Dada, Surrealism, Italian Futurism, Proletkult), as well as movements not necessarily art related during this period (Situationist International) with public art intervention practices. The ‘avant-garde’ refers to the collective of movements, groups, and individuals transitioning from traditional constructs and practices surrounding art and its institutions to a more experimental, relational understanding and practice of art and its audience. As political and artistic ideologies varied from one group to the other, in essence, avant-garde movements desired to move away from the ideals and boundaries set by the middle-class concerning acceptable art practices and its conventionally defined role (Day, 2004: 316; Wood, 2004: 3). Although art history does not traditionally include these characteristics of the avant-garde, Bishop deems the “themes they embody” as being vital to “contemporary socially engaged practices” (2012: 41) of which I argue public art interventions are one. It is also worth mentioning that like Bourriaud (2002), I do not argue that the transition from the conventional to the experimental and relational existed prior to the 20th century avant-garde. I acknowledge that “from Dadaism to the Situationist International, [the 20th century avant-garde] fell within the tradition of this modern project (changing culture, attitudes and mentalities, and individual and social living conditions), but it is as well to bear in mind that this project was already there before them, differing from their plan in many ways,” (Bourriaud, 2002: 12). Unfortunately, these earlier periods are not to be covered in this thesis, as going that far back in time falls outside of the scope of this research.

Through the historical examples of art’s role as propaganda and protest, I portray how art developed its relational quality as a multi-layered, socially and culturally integrated and functional artistic practice. Situated within the historical context, I compare ways in which both avant-garde praxis and public art interventions share a relational quality in art autonomy, where form, content, and context consist of a ‘public’ quality in practice and reception. I discuss the ‘public’ component of public art intervention in detail.
by referring to theoretical and artistic literature to establish an understanding of public space, public sphere, and public as audience.

Public art interventions appear under many names. Public art intervention is a term I have come across in limited resources (Sharp, Pollock, & Paddison, 2005; Desai & Darts, 2016), however, it is one I feel encapsulates the practices undertaken in this research, as it comprises the relationality of the creative practice (art intervention), alongside its context as site and intended audience of its content (public). I dedicate a section to discussing public art interventions in terms of form, content, and context through selected examples. I compare and contrast these previous public art interventions within their own contexts, in advance of presenting those created for this research in Chapter 4.

To conclude, I summarize each section before moving onto the next chapter in providing a geographical and socio-political context with the location of the fieldwork. Having presented the reader in the first instance of a literature review of public art interventions, the following chapter places the practice into context as well as justifying the practice of public art interventions.

The academic literature on public art intervention and its practice is growing, whether the focus is on the artworks and practice in relation to critical, theoretical, or historical contexts, although there remains more work to be done in this area. This is understandable considering that public art interventions (an umbrella term which I use for a vast number of practices, media, and situations that take place in the public domain) are not only abundant, but also fleeting. What is left for documentation is only a small percentage of what existed in reality. Street art books tend to offer visual documentation of renowned artists and their works, mostly in western Europe and the United States, with little theory or analysis on the works or practice. A broader discussion on the practice of public art intervention rarely follows, although critical literature surrounding ‘public art’ is plenty. Depending on the subject, these texts end up in different books, on separate shelves. In this sense, I share the sentiments expressed by Anna Waclawek on the lack of “a major study…grounded in visual art analysis” (Waclawek, 2011: 8). Although Graffiti and Street Art (Waclawek, 2011) aims to fill the gap, I find the book satisfactory, but limited in that it lacks theoretical contextualisation. It is nevertheless an important step in creating awareness of the value of such practices. Thus, I, too, aim to “position” public art
interventions “as the quintessential art movement of the twenty-first century” (ibid). In my attempt to contextualise public art interventions and relating subject matter, I begin with the early influences behind the ideology of the practice of public art interventions.

2.2 The Avant-garde Influence

Despite its recent place on the timescale of art history, academics studying public space, participatory art, and other relating factors involved in interventionist art, such as Claire Bishop and Gregory Sholette, have argued that the eruption of participatory and public art practices are rooted in the examples of art and the manifestoes of the avant-garde of the early 20th century (Sholette, 2004: 133; Bishop, 2012: 53). Bishop dedicates an entire chapter to the ‘historic Avant-garde’, where references to Dada, Italian Futurism, and Proletkult in the Soviet Union are defined as “key moments from the historic avant-garde that anticipate the emergence of participatory art” (Bishop, 2012: 41), as these moments mark the shift in artists’ positions towards “audience inclusion” (ibid). Although, Bishop does not mention public art interventions, she notes the potential ‘usefulness’ of art, as well as having the potential to affect “concrete changes in society”, and “instrumentalising sentiments resonating with interventionist, activist and socially engaged art” (ibid, 52).

Thus, Bishop’s arguments support the proposition of public art intervention practices echoing the ethos of the historic avant-garde practices of the 20th century.

Essential elements shared both by the avant-gardes and public art interventionists can be categorised as ‘publicness’ of practice and reception in relation to form, content and context, including a strong political quality as both protest and propaganda, and its relational autonomy. These elements existing in the overall ethos of the avant-garde, one could argue that public art interventions are not only influenced by avant-garde movements, but are an extension of the historic avant-garde ethos and practice. In the 1960s, Poggioli reflected upon the movements of the earlier part of the century resulting from social upheaval; new ways of thinking about art, culture and society erupted, leading Poggioli to argue that the avant-garde was no longer what it was when it first began at the start of the century. In staying the same it would form the very mould which it tried so hard to escape (Poggioli, 1968: 220-1). Like the avant-garde, public art interventions are
“formed among those promoting new ideas and offering a critique of the system. While working outside the culturally and politically conservative establishment, they also [benefit] from the vitality of the arts in the city” (Gale 1997: 12). This quote, intended for the avant-garde, could also apply to public art intervention practices, drawing the two closer to one another. Public art interventions, with all their variations, may not just be the result of an influence, but the descendant of the ethos of the avant-garde.

2.2.1 Political protest and propaganda

The movements that gave rise to the avant-garde cannot be fully appreciated out of their historical context in how they paved the way in redefining the relationship between art, politics, society and culture. By their relational nature, their isolated study would be an incomplete study. Gaiger (2004) argues that it was the European Revolutions in the 19th century that led to the emergence of new art movements against the displays of populist risings, where new art movements were used by the marginalized few to rise up against those with power over them. This can explicitly be seen in several consequential movements. It is a widely-made argument across literature that Dada was born from the “artists’ hostile responses to both the First World War” and “the prevailing modernist culture, which had no discretion in opposing establishment values” (Gaughan 2004: 339; Gale, 1997: 11); and that Soviet constructivism arose as a result of the gap between their ideals of the “utopian dreams of the Russian Revolution of 1917” and the realisation of those ideals (Lodder 2004: 359). The aspirations of Surrealism, which when compared to “other avant-gardes throughout Europe in the 1920s… [were] not just an art movement, but a self-conscious revolutionary cultural project” (Barber, 2004: 427) ranging past the conventional moulds and templates of art and literature, was tied into the attempt to enact a “revolutionary transformation” (ibid) aimed at “social reality and moral values” by overthrowing the governing institutions, namely the state and religion (ibid). Futurism, whose founder Filippo Thommaso Marinetti sought to overthrow the bourgeoisie by reaching a broader audience, sought to create public-stirring performances, departing from “rotting in libraries and reading rooms” and marching into the streets to riot against the bourgeoisie, as stated in the Futuristic Synthetic Theatre Manifesto published in 1915 (Bishop, 2012: 44). Pogglioni further claims that the avant-garde’s raison d’être without a
doubt lay in the “tensions of... bourgeois, capitalistic and technological society” (Pogglioni, 1968: 107).

This movement and change occurring in Europe paved the way for the rest of the world, as “Europe was synonymous with civilisation” (Gaiger, 2004: 1). Art was seen in a new light, wherein art was no longer an entity to be viewed in isolation from the world by which it was surrounded, but moved “in step with scientific ideas and socialist politics, as part of a wider project of emancipation” (ibid). Poggioli references Gabriel-Désiré Laverdant’s words in De la mission de l’art et du role des artistes, declaring this “interdependence of art and society” and “the doctrine of art as an instrument for social action and reform, a means of a revolutionary propaganda and agitation” (Poggioli, 1968: 9). That is to say, the avant-garde envisioned (or re-envisioned) an understanding and practice of art interlaced with the current affairs of the time, acting and reacting within its surrounding context. This new living-definition of art would not dictate how or what it should be, as “this contestation of established taste and values, never entirely disappeared from the evolving avant-garde,” (ibid, 2).

Saying that art utilised in these ways began with the avant-garde would disregard previous accounts of art’s use in propaganda prior to World War I, of which there were many as demonstrated in Colin Moore’s Propaganda Prints (Moore, 2010). Simultaneously, not all avant-garde movements should be understood as being radically dedicated to social matters. What concerns this study is the “concept of ‘avant-garde’” and “its close association with the idea of social emancipation” (Day, 2010: 316). In addition to “[i]magining other modes for being and other ways of experiencing the world”, once again stressing experimental media and the subject matter of avant-garde works, the refusal of the status quo and the willpower and choice to initiate change “whether by reform or by revolution” unites the avant-garde with social transformation (ibid). It is not the idea of art as propaganda or protest, but propaganda and protest geared towards change rather than the encouragement of conforming to the status quo, the system, life, and ways of the world enforced by authority and establishment.

The avant-garde movements mentioned can be said to have influenced a type of revolution not only conquering the art-world but the context in which it existed, simply because the two became so enmeshed with one another that instead of remaining as
isolated components, they created a symbiotic existence. Because “avant-garde aesthetic praxis…aimed to intervene in social reality” it became part of life rather than something ‘observe[d] from a distance’ as did “the bourgeois institution of art,” which was “impotent to intervene in everyday life” (Bürger, 1984: xxxix). Thus, to reduce avant-garde art to simply acting as propaganda or protest would be an injustice to the social value carried by the movement and the works produced. After all, “ultimately the avant-gardes wanted to change not ‘art’ on the terms of ‘life, but ‘life’ on the terms of art” (Bürger in Gaiger, 2004: 3), using art as a microcosm for life, wherein the experimentation and freedom for expression was then transferred to the realm of daily life. The way in which public art interventions achieve this is by becoming accessible to their audiences in terms of location for visibility and the use of familiar imagery, as we will see in examples later in the chapter.

2.2.2 Public practice and audience

Until the avant-gardes came along and questioned ‘the rules’ of art, not only had modern art (mostly) followed the rule of “two and three-dimensional work”, but had also limited its exhibition space to the great indoors. The outdoors were not barren of artistic work, yet sculptures, being the only designated mode for public art, were “either monumental, statuary or architectural decoration….its role tend[ing] to be affirmative in relation to official culture” (Bishop, 2012: 43). While Dada moved its attention “from combative cabarets…towards more participatory events in the public sphere,” (ibid, 41) the Futurists sought alternative spaces “in which audiences could be confronted directly, rather than through the meditation of an exhibition or book,” (ibid, 43). Surrealism declared the streets its domain and ‘the stroll’ became a crucial practice “in its attempt to subvert and challenge [our] perceptions” (Coverley, 2012: 73). By making the shift from gallery to the streets, the shift from one public to another occurred, where the gallery, appealing to the educated, bourgeois and the traditional public sphere, gave way to an alternative public sphere through everyday life (Plant 1992: 63-4), making art not only physically more accessible to the majority of the public (not just the middle-class) but also accessible in terms of its content.
Art shifting to the streets made street-dwellers the audience. In the efforts of the avant-garde to experiment with art practice, they did so with its reception too. The emergence of a new understanding and practice of art gave necessity to a “break from conventional modes of spectatorship” (Bishop, 2012: 41). The avant-gardes, shifting their creative outlet from the page into the public space, preferred performance as “the privileged paradigm for artistic and political operations,” (ibid, 48). The desertion of static art also led to the desertion of the static audience, or as Marinetti states in the Variety Theatre Manifesto “a stupid voyeur” (Bishop and Groys, 2009). The ‘spectator’ would be transformed into what can be described as a collaborator in the creation of the work or part of the work itself. The intentions of the artist(s) to have audiences interact with the work can not only be seen across the avant-gardes, such as the Futurists’ seratas, the happenings of Dada, the action-events of the Viennese Activists, and the mass-spectacle of Proletkult. Today, these practices fall under the heading of participatory art. Although one can argue that earlier avant-gardes, as seen within the mass-spectacle and the Italian Futurist theatre, the lack of the audience’s awareness on the contribution of their participation may not qualify these practices as participatory, but more reactive, while simultaneously raising ethical issues within the practice. Nonetheless, the idea of audience involvement proves the ground-breaking vision and experimental practices of the avant-gardes, which at the time would have been no less than mind-boggling. This participatory element of art acts as a breaking down of the dichotomy of audience and artist, by which the borders of creator-observer are blended, thus making art not only accessible in comprehension but also in creation.

Amongst avant-gardes dominating the early part of the 20th century, similar concerns of breaking out of ‘the conventional’ through its critique can be seen in non-artistically inclined groups in the 1960s; The Situationist International “tried to move away from the institutional structures of art toward a broader cultural and political practice,” (Bolt, 2009: 35). Abandoning traditional modes of art practice for “new and relatively accessible means of expression such as video, photography, and postcards… artists sought to challenge the prevailing modernist art institution (that valued unique works of art)” (ibid) as well as leaving the institutional spaces of art for the everyday public space. The practice of the Situationist International centred on “staging semiautonomous
environments consisting of independent objects and flows of desire beyond the control of the creator to enable the participation of the spectator” (Sell, 1998 cited in Bolt, 2009: 35). Guy Debord, co-founder of the Situationist International, states “[t]hat which changes our ways of seeing the streets is more important than what changes our way of seeing painting” (Debord, 2006: 25). The avant-garde’s many movements succeeded in transforming the streets into a place of expression, reception and reaction, to the extent that Situationists not only aimed to transform the streets, but the entire consumerist system that shaped and controlled everyday life. Debord’s definition of the spectacle as “the omnipresent celebration of a choice already made in the sphere of production, and the consummate result of that choice” governs time spent within and without “the production process” (Debord, 1995: 13). Where “the Sun... never set[s] on the empire of modern passivity,” (ibid, 15) it is no surprise that taking to the streets to occupy the space of the spectacle through intervention, to use the methods of visual advertising of the spectacle yet with a contradictory message seemed familiar enough to be noticed by the consumer (or the audience) but with a sufficiently different message so as not to be ignored.

Surrealism, the Situationist International, as well as other avant-garde groups were led not only by the desire to create art outside the traditional boundaries, but also “by the hope of transforming [our] experience of everyday life and replacing our mundane existence with an appreciation of the marvellous” (Coverley, 2010: 73). Accessible to all, this could simply be achieved by strolling, walking through different roads and paths in the streets, discovering or observing something new, or reflecting upon that which was always looked at but never seen, in other words, a fresh outlook and a new perspective. This “study of the specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals,” was aptly named psychogeography (Debord, 2008: 23) and sought to “overcome the processes of ‘banalisation’ of the everyday” (ibid). Although some may argue that psychogeography has moved away from any political or cultural project to become a more self-contained practice (Coverley, 2010: 29), its appearance as a mindful and aware practice and a term in avant-garde history signifies the importance placed upon the streets and public space.

Having covered a fair amount of historical context of public art interventions in relation to the avant-garde movements of the 20th century, I have demonstrated similarities
with public art intervention practices. The next section tackles the subject of the relational nature of art autonomy within these practices as yet another distinguishing component of public art intervention practices.

2.2.3 Autonomy of Art

The discourse surrounding the autonomy of art has been taken up by many, from Adorno to Zuidervaart, from Kant to Kester. Varying interpretations and debates on what autonomy might mean and ways it relates to art make it difficult to understand each interpretation and complicates the task of positioning my research within this context. I do not attempt to provide an in-depth or complete analysis or summary of the entirety of which I have read, as it lies beyond the scope of this thesis. However, I include parts of the debate surrounding the autonomy of art and aesthetics that relate to my study. This condensed and focused section positions this research among existing debates surrounding art autonomy in relation to public art intervention practices.

When we read about the ‘autonomy of art’ or ‘aesthetic autonomy’ one must not make the mistake of assuming that each occurrence of the term refers to one particular understanding of art autonomy, making the term unclear without a well-situated definition within its contextual use (Haskins, 1989: 43). Autonomy, meaning “self-governance” (Gaiger, 2009: 56) or “the freedom to act” within a set of laws and rules (Zuidervaart, 2015: 237-8), was introduced into critical theory by Immanuel Kant, although it was not in relation to art, but moral philosophy (Gaiger, 2009: 56). However, it was his emphasis on aesthetics “having a separate field of enquiry than moral philosophy and epistemology” (ibid, 52) that brought the idea “art and beauty [could] not be subsumed under moral or scientific imperatives” (ibid). Thus, began the debate on art autonomy, with its various interpretations, the identification of dimensions of art autonomy in relation to non-aesthetic realms of culture and society, and its place within economic and political systems. Bourriaud argues that “art has always been relational in varying degrees” (2002: 15), a statement which reflects my position. Gaiger identifies two aspects of art autonomy: social, being the historical parting of art from “the interests of the church and the aristocracy, and the development of an independent art market” (ibid), and aesthetic, meaning “the separation of art practice and art criticism from scientific discourse and from moral and
legal enquiry” (ibid). Some refer to the aesthetic and social autonomy of art as Kantian and Hegelian respectively, which can be regarded as polarities (McMahon, 2011: 155-6).

Haskins also holds a two-part definition of autonomy where “strict autonomism” refers to the “non-instrumental view… associated with non-contextualist or formalist programs in art criticism and historiography” (Haskins, 1989: 43), while “[instrumental autonomism] emphasized the work of art’s distinctive capacity, as an object of value, to do something not done or not done the same way by other objects” (ibid). While others have similarly categorized the autonomy of art, Zuidervaart places autonomy somewhere between “the polarity between Adornian negativity and Habermasian affirmation” (Zuidervaart, 2015: 235). It is this extensive interpretation of art autonomy on which I focus to support the arguments put forth within this research regarding public art interventions’ practice, form, content in relation to its context.

Exactly what does Zuidervaart’s three-part relational conception of autonomy bring forth? I attempt to summarize his chapter-long explanation to demonstrate the meticulousness of his associations between art autonomy and socio-cultural realms. Here, Zuidervaart begins by arguing that “good art is intrinsically ethical” and can therefore “contribute to other modes of ethical conduct,” where politics is an example of many others (ibid). The ethical being referred to here, or better yet “social ethics” which he prefers, involves “normative considerations that govern interpersonal relations, cultural practices and social institutions,” (ibid, 236) that lead to a common, universal, good. He asks what good art is, when viewed in isolation from other cultural realms, as well as political and economic systems. He warns us of the two contradictory assumptions made; that art “should be an independent source of value” (art’s relegation to margins of society) (ibid) and that “the role of art...should not be reduced to economic, political or moral factors” (art’s elevation to a “sacrosanct pedestal where no human endeavour belongs”) (ibid).

Zuidervaart’s relational art autonomy consists of interpersonal, internal, and societal autonomy (ibid, 237) where the three are closely interlinked. In short, Zuidervaart describes the three aspects of his relational autonomy in regards to the arts drawing upon his definitions for relational autonomy for ethics. In the next paragraphs, I summarize his definition of each aspect of relational art autonomy.
Interpersonal autonomy in the arts proposes “three interlinked meanings” (ibid, 239); the first is the freedom of “participants, whether as producers or as audiences… to follow self-given standards for artistic practices,” (ibid) such as technical standards of competence or social standards of relevance (ibid), but the three key standards regarding quality are exploration, presentation, and interpretation allowing for external and internal criticism from producers and audiences (ibid, 240). This leads to the second meaning, the embracing of those standards “that genuinely articulate their own [identity]” (ibid) thus, aiding the “construct or reconstruct” of the “self or community” while inviting “others to interpret what is being explored and presented” (ibid). The third meaning calls for the participants to be “open to the expectations of other participants,” (ibid) to prevent the isolation of “artists from those who experience it” (ibid).

Art’s internal autonomy declares art as being a “social institution” (ibid, 241), wherein there is “a primary force field of practices, organizations, and relationships rather than a collection of artefacts and experiences” (ibid). Art does not exist within a vacuum, separated by life and systems in which it exists, as post-Enlightenment philosophers have attempted to do by reducing art “to its aesthetic dimension” (ibid). Rather, “art products and events provide reference points around which and through which human interactions can occur” (ibid, 242). This is also not something limited to a select few; the internal autonomy of art as well as its importance to society is inclusive of “anyone who engages in the practices of art” (ibid). While Zuidervaart acknowledges that there are other ways through which exploration, creation, and interpretation can occur, he stresses that it is art’s “capacity, via imaginative disclosure” to create, sustain, and revive critical and creative dialogue (ibid, 243).

Finally, Zuidervaart discusses societal art autonomy, where he stresses the relationship of the art institutions and practices within technological, political and economic domains (ibid). The previous vacuum analogy still rings true in this instance, where participants bring their convictions into the art viewing or creating process. There are forces that influence the participants of art that are removed from artistic and aesthetic realms. With emphasis on the positioning of arts institutions within the political and economic systems, Zuidervaart obliges art institutions to stand outside of them. That is not to say their subject should not include political or economic critique, but should break away
from the influence of the political and economic, so as to prevent becoming “sites for market competition and governmental power” (ibid, 244).

This condensed version of Zuidervaart’s relational art autonomy satisfactorily identifies and explains art’s relation to its practitioner, artist and audience, as well as the third-parties involved within its creation, reception, and interpretation within their relevant contexts. This relational understanding of art autonomy does not imply the dominance of non-artistic institutions over art, but that their existence has direct or indirect influences within the art institution, whether the influence is intentional or unintentional. Relational autonomy successfully contests strict views on autonomy, such as Clement Greenberg’s argument that the avant-garde represented art for art’s sake (Greenberg, 1939), or Mao Zedong’s argument that art become the weapons and artists the cultural army against “the enemies of the liberation of a nation” (Zedong, 1942: 459). There are those who would “dispute whether [art autonomy] is a necessary feature of art in post-traditional societies,” (Gaiger, 2009: 46), where Gaiger argues that just as the emergence of aesthetic autonomy is traceable, so is its decline “after the loss of authority of canonical modernism in the 1960s” (ibid). However, it is precisely the critical debate surrounding the autonomy of art that leads to a better understanding of art’s role within the system, the society, and the self.

The discussion surrounding art’s autonomy is as complex as the discussion surrounding the legitimacy of public art intervention being recognized as art. Zuidervaart’s views on art autonomy provide the knowledge and understanding of art (and its relation to other life realms) to identify and determine the role of public art interventions and further the critical discussion surrounding them. Just as the “avant-garde's revolt responds to aestheticism's radical claim for autonomy” (Bürger, Huyssen, & Zipes, 1981: 21), by the end of the chapter, I intend to demonstrate the similarity in the spirit and struggles of public art interventions to that of the historic avant-garde.

**2.2.4 Conclusion**

To Pogglioni’s satisfaction no doubt, there has been an increase in literature on the avant-garde since his day. It is perhaps in time that we shall witness the increase in critical and analytical literature on public art interventions as a legitimate field of practice within the arts, as well as in relation to its place in other disciplinary contexts. It is precisely the
interconnected nature of public art interventions that make their study worthy of effort and time. The practice of public art interventions, like that of the avant-gardes, does not focus on the resulting artwork, but on the processes within which the participants encounter art and the conditions that make public art interventions possible. It is about the mind-sets of the individuals that bring ideas, those who bring those ideas to fruition, and those who take a moment to gaze, think, and discuss (even if with nobody but themselves). Like the avant-garde, public art interventions are greater than the sum of their parts. Avant-garde movements were a revolt against an establishment. In the same spirit, public art interventions are like the smoke that is visible from an unseen fire. If ignored, chances are the fire will spread and all that would be visible would be the smoke.

I have given my account of the relevance of the historic avant-garde to public art interventions. Although not a historic movement as such, the significance of public art interventions within society as well as art history (and contemporary art) is clear. It is through the relational understanding of art autonomy and the political and public elements of art practices shared with the historic avant-garde that I continue to determine and define the components that make public art interventions.

2.3 Public Space, Sphere and Audience

In this section, I explain what is meant by ‘public’ under several contexts; the first is ‘public space’, as the site in which interventions take place; the second concerns ‘public as audience’, as determined by space; the third refers to the joining of the public space and the public audience in what becomes the public sphere, which brings a variation on Habermas’ definition. How public art interventions lead to the development of a public sphere as well as an understanding of place-making and reclaiming of space follows the preceding explanations of ‘public’ that dominate this thesis.

2.3.1 Public Space

Upon uttering or hearing the words public space, what or where comes to mind? Depending on each individual’s everyday life (and physical surroundings) the spaces that come to mind may differ. However, to the average inhabitant of a city, one may think of
streets, squares, plazas, parks, full of the hustle and bustle of people in motion and repose. What these spaces have in common is not only the accessibility to all dwellers within their vicinities, but when times demand action, people-as-the-public come together in these spaces to practice the right to make their voices heard, be it as protest or other occasions. These spaces are occupied on a day-to-day basis, and become part of daily lived experience. Yet, considering how much time we spend in these public spaces, there is a sense of uncertainty regarding their definitions. What are the borders, visual and metaphorical, that define public space? Is it something that surrounds us, in which we exist at all times or are there specific coordinates and borders outlining public space? Not only must we consider where space becomes public, but also when. When does space transform into place? In my attempt to answer these questions, I arrive at my own understanding of public space in the following section. Due to the numerous fields in which extensive discussions on public space have been developed, I include literature relating to the scope of my research. If I have excluded any names or works that the reader believes to be crucial, it is either because I have somehow not crossed paths with the works due to their narrow scope or being marginal to the thrust of my argument.

As difficult as it is to discuss public space as an isolated entity, in this case, I find it easier to study this concept ‘uncontaminated’ by context first, before building upon its meaning. This is especially true of ‘public space’, since it is a concept studied across a vast number of disciplines, and subject to much cultural and social theorising. As Lefebvre mentions, the word ‘space’ has come a long way since the days where it referred to “a strictly geometrical” understanding of “an empty area” (Lefebvre, 1993: 1). In this section, my aim is not to list the various discussions on the subject of public space, or to create an absolute definition for what is meant by public space, but to integrate the discussions and definitions in order to position my own understanding whilst referencing those which exist.

Before I move on, I would like to clarify the usage of ‘space’ and ‘place’, as there are many who have seen it imperative to distinguish the two. Space is “traditionally” something “anonymous”, while place “accounts for the meaningful experience of a given site” (Visconti et al., 2010: 512; Tuan, 1979: 387). That is to say that space is neutral, devoid of any meaning or sentiment, all things that are formed by those who occupy the space, which transforms spaces into places. To simplify the differentiation between space
and place, I think of differentiation between house (as space) and home (as place), or as Tuan simplifies it, place is familiar space (Tuan, 1977: 73). However, Marcel De Certeau differentiates between space and place by stating that place refers more to the stable, physical location of something, whereas space is composed of other elements in relation to it, which in effect is changing (Certeau 1984: 117), which is the opposite of the “traditional” differentiation. For De Certeau “space, is a practiced place” (ibid), where the experience within a place is what produces space. If we subtract the aim to differentiate between the two, De Certeau’s construct of space mirrors Lefebvre’s, in that space comprises many other components and to neglect these would render it an abstraction. Therefore, to avoid confusion, I define place as the result of transformed space through subjective experience with and within a given locality, both physically and temporally. Space requires further deliberation.

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre calls for a need of “a unitary theory,” wherein “fields which are apprehended separately” are brought together (ibid, 11). Furthering his argument, he states that the space, which is our concern, is “logicopoiesis”, as it includes physical, mental, and social fields (ibid, 11-2). As a Marxist, Lefebvre’s main focus is a space that is “social” (ibid, 1; 12), and on the spatial dimension of power. The space with which I am concerned is social space, although the term ‘social’ can be misleading; this does not exclude artistic views on space within the understanding of social space. Lefebvre urges one to think of “what occupies that space and how it does so” (ibid, 12). I revisit this question in the following section of this chapter, as answering it by means of referencing the fieldwork for this research may prove more beneficial compared to hypothetical situations. For now, I continue the theoretical discussion on space.

Lefebvre elaborates his definition of ‘social space’ with boundaries that differentiate between types of spaces. These are defined as “accessible space for normal use”, which are administered by “established rules and practical procedures”, “boundaries and forbidden territories – spaces to which access is prohibited either relatively or absolutely”, “[permanent or temporary] places of abode”, and “junction points…often places of passage and encounter” (ibid, 193). This categorization of social spaces exists with varying aspects “according to the type of society” (ibid). Immediately, we can see that
one does not necessarily have to occupy a given space in order to form a relationship with it. Accessible space and junction points immediately draw me to the conclusion that these spaces can easily be defined as public, whereas places of abode are private spaces that exist within or engulfed by a larger public space; boundaries are strictly private, and in most cases exist external to the public, where it is not submerged within the public. If I have understood Lefebvre’s categorizations accurately, the following example should serve as proof of this.

The first entity of social space, out of the four mentioned, is the abode. This is the home, where private possessions are kept and the unpermitted crossing into the abode is illegal because it is still part of the accessible space (public) regulated by rules. Just as one cannot perform certain actions or possess certain objects in the abode, the same rules apply to accessible space. As boundaries, we have a neighbouring country or (as it is in Northern Cyprus) a military base, which although spatially positioned adjacent to all other spaces mentioned, is private and like the abode, can only be allowed access with permission. Yet the boundaries or forbidden spaces are governed by their own rules, which although they may coincide with rules for the public, mostly differ. Junction points are accessible space with a particular purpose. In other words, while the streets and pathways within a town may be accessible space, people gather at a particular bench in a square, or by a fountain in a square. These junction points appear more like landmarks located within accessible space. Bringing all these components together present us with a diagram of space, whether it is a village, a city, a country or a continent.

Hence, we must be careful when we use the term space. Lefebvre’s understanding of social space includes both private and public space. The fieldwork for this research takes place within public space. By borrowing from the terms mentioned earlier, this includes any space excluding spaces of abode and spaces within boundaries, leaving accessible space and junction points. These public spaces are potential public ‘places’, through interaction with and within the spaces, a process which is aided by the practice of public art interventions.

In this chapter, I focus on public space, although in the following chapter wherein I present the ‘local context’ for the fieldwork, I discuss the blurring of private and public space that may occur in small communities. This blurring of the lines of private and public
space also gives way to the exploration of generational and cultural understanding of public and private space, in addition to spatial distinction. The separation of space is not as simple as drawing a line in the sand. What divides space are not simply physical boundaries, but also “social action” (Tonkiss, 2005:31). Though the topic of public space is addressed in many theoretical and critical works, Fran Tonkiss explains public space from a social theorist’s perspective, yet does so in an accessible language, which serves as the perfect transitional explanation from theoretical to practical application of the definition of public space.

Simply put, public spaces are the spaces in which people exist and interact with one another (ibid, 67). The “ideal-types” of public space that “capture three different senses of being with others in public,” (ibid, 66-7) are categorized as the square for “collective belonging”, the café for “social exchange”, and the street for “informal encounter” (ibid, 67). Out of the three, Tonkiss identifies the square, as being the “most literal version of public space,” in that it is within these spaces where the public is perceived as a “political community,” (ibid). Just as it has been throughout history, the square is used as a space by citizens to rejoice or revolt. The square is neutral until those ‘occupying’ the space begin to show signs of expression. The square protected by governing rules and regulations, offers “equal and … free access to all users as citizens” (ibid).

The café, both as a category and as a space itself is considered public not in terms of its ownership, but in terms of the “sense of being out in public,” (ibid) within such spaces that enclose social interaction. This is revisited in the next section concerning the public sphere, as these spaces are crucial in Habermas’ public sphere, that is, spaces that allow for the formation of a “bourgeois public sphere” (ibid).

Where the square is the most literal version of public space, Tonkiss defines the street as the “best and most obvious example of shared public space,” even if interaction is considerably more “minimal” (ibid, 68). It is in the street where one encounters tens or hundreds of people, yet does not acknowledge or interact with them. However, there are unspoken and unwritten rules those living in the streets would ideally follow, such as, not invading someone’s personal space, or making someone uncomfortable. There is the understanding that everyone who occupies the same public space forms a community, in
that they exist and must live and share a given space, and should do so with respect and consideration for one another. This is not always the case, but for the most part there is the expectation that people will behave in a way that will not break “the social contract” (ibid, 69). In fact, this social contract exists amongst all types of public spaces and across communities in various contexts. The contract varies depending on the context in relation to the person within it. Thus there is no universal definition of the social contract, which can be seen as relational to its context.

Additionally, ‘public’ can indicate the ‘accessibility’ of something (Waclawek, 2011: 73), associated with “citizenship, commonality, and things not private, but accessible and observable by all,” (Papacharissi, 2002: 11), something which one can personally encounter and experience, deliberately or unintentionally. When something is defined as public, we understand it to be “open to all,” as opposed to “closed or exclusive” (Habermas, 1991: 1). This is not to say that if something is public, it is completely accessible by the entirety of the population, but it is more accessible to more of the population than if it were private. However, just because they are physically accessible does not always mean that they are culturally accessible in terms of form and content, as in the case of publicly-accessible art.

There is no way of measuring “whom street art reaches or affects,” (ibid., 96). As part of my research, I study how public art interventions ‘affect’ those who engage with them. Yet, this is a time-consuming and laborious task requiring specific research skills. Nevertheless, it is the combination of artistic, technical, and contextual expertise of the practitioner(s) that concoct an experience that is accessible to those encountering these works through the use of social, cultural, and political references recognisable within the local context. Familiarity helps audiences relate to the public art intervention form and content. It is not enough for the public art intervention practitioner(s) and artist(s) to have artistic or technical talent, they also need to be, as advocated by Cypriot artist Serap Kanay (Appendix 1d), ‘social commentators, or cultural analysts’ through their creative practice. It is worth mentioning the struggle between the artist’s desired culture-debating public and the culture-consuming public as we transition into the topic of the public sphere.

Seyla Benhabib reflects upon the Arendtian sense of public space by defining public spaces as “‘sites’ of power, of common action coordinated through speech and
persuasion…Power, however, is the only force that emanates from action, and it comes from the mutual action of a group of human beings; once in action, one can make things happen, thus becoming a source of a different kind of ‘force’” (Benhabib 1992: 93). This shapes my understanding of public space, indicating that a place may not necessarily be considered a public space until it becomes a site through ‘mutual action’ with the aim of influencing others towards, ideally, action. However, in some cases a triggering of thought suffices.

I have explained various definitions of public spaces and ways in which they are publicly accessible. These definitions serve not only as a means for defining certain aspects of public art interventions, but also facilitate an understanding of ‘public space’ in relation to the local contexts introduced in Chapter 3.

2.3.2 Public Sphere

Habermas is commonly associated with the term public sphere, which is why I begin with his definition of the public sphere (Öffentlichkeit) before introducing revised versions of his definition. Habermas defines the public sphere as “a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body.” (Habermas, Lennox & Lennox, 1974: 49) In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas also implies that the public sphere not only serves the purpose of forming public opinion but also of influencing action based on these opinions (Habermas, 1991:10-2). For Habermas there exist various public spheres, such as the *bourgeois* public sphere, where “a sphere of private people come together as a public” (Habermas, 1991: 27), the *political* public sphere, where “public discussion deals with objects connected to affairs of the state” (Habermas, Lennox & Lennox: 1974: 49), and the *literary public sphere* concerned with affairs concerning the literary realm, which can be likened to a sphere concerning only artistic autonomy. While initially the public sphere was meant to be a realm in which state affairs could be criticised, having been provided with transparency of such state affairs, it later acted as the informer of public opinion to the state via free media (Fraser, 1990: 58). As democratic and utopic as Habermas’ public sphere may sound, in reality, it was never as ‘accessible’ as claimed.
Fraser is but one who points out the exclusive nature of the public sphere to white middle-class, educated men, leaving out much of the public of this ideal sphere (ibid, 59-62). Thus, Habermas presents the public sphere as a great theoretical idea that quickly reveals its weakness in the very contradiction of itself in practice.

Since Habermas, many have written their own rendition of the public sphere, either by broadening the boundaries of Habermas’ definition of the public sphere (as he called it the liberal or bourgeois public sphere) or by filling in the gaps (to include private individuals across all demographics). Fraser finds Habermas’ bourgeois public sphere a “normative ideal” and further suggests that deriving a more satisfactory public sphere requires “not merely the bracketing, but rather the elimination, of social inequality” (ibid, 77). Fraser’s public sphere prefers multiple publics over “a single public sphere both in stratified societies and egalitarian societies,” and requires the inclusion, not the exclusion, “of interests and issues that bourgeois masculinist ideology labels ‘private’ and treats as inadmissible” (ibid). Fraser also shows that allowing both strong publics (which are decision-making publics) and weak publics (which are opinion-forming) would lead to a sound conception of a new, post-bourgeois conception of the public sphere (ibid). Fraser’s insight into the missing pieces of Habermas’ public sphere presents a more practical public sphere rather than one that is utopic yet strictly theoretical.

Benhabib and Fraser both highlight the lack of minorities represented within the public sphere. Minorities cover a wide range of individuals, basically, anyone who is not white, male, and bourgeois (Gardiner, 2004: 29). The publics, or counterpublics, created by these minorities providing a safe space for the exchange of ideas are not represented by the dominant public sphere (ibid) and resort to creating their own public spheres. I understand ‘counter’ as being contrary to that which represents the dominant public sphere; however, of whom is the dominant public sphere made up? Does ‘public sphere’ mean that the dominant public sphere represents those excluded from it, or are there alternatives that are more inclusive of the excluded ‘other’? This pushes me towards a different public sphere construct, without the hierarchization of other ‘publics’ by referring to them as ‘counter,’ which evokes a sense of opposition, even if this may not be the case. This implication may cause publics to disagree for the sake of being ‘oppositional’. Instead, I accept the existence of various public spheres within the same context. Therefore, I will not use the
term counter-publics, but will construct a different public sphere, one that accommodates the articulation of “multiple narratives and identities” (Benhabib, 2005: 756) as found in a model of deliberative democracy (Benhabib, 2005). The public sphere is made up of not one public, but of many public representations, accommodating minority and marginalized publics. While this inclusive construct of the public sphere seems utopic, it sets precedence for the representation of multiple publics over a singular public sphere.

Up until recently, our understanding of public space and public sphere would stop at that which was physically accessible. Today, we are faced with the phenomenon of the internet, and going one step further, social media. While a great debate revolves around the qualification of the internet as a public space, or as public sphere for that matter, there is no doubt that “computer-mediated communication offers a potentially new solution to the problem of the extension of communicative interactions across space and time,” (Bohman, 2004: 135) and as a result, can be taken as an indication that the “nature of public, or publics is changing” (ibid). However, what used to be an institution-free space, is now becoming a market place, contaminated with advertisements; what started off as a platform for free speech has now become an overcrowded arena of opinion-as-fact, making it increasingly difficult for most to differentiate between the two. On the other hand, the Internet and social media have allowed for the speedy spreading of news, global support on local issues and has given visibility to stories and people that may have remained in the shadows had they been depending on mass media. Thus, some may agree that the Internet has provided a virtual public space for discussion and action, but is not a public sphere (Papacharissi, 2002: 22), while others would argue that the internet can potentially provide an “interconnected world” defying distance and differences to “realize a transnational public sphere for a realistic utopia of citizenship” (Bohman, 2004: 154). The internet, like art, can be seen as a platform, guided by the intentions of those who create and act within it. The internet as a site of gathering and witnessing public dialogue appears within the interventions and plays a crucial role in the circulation of information, and as a site of discussion. Therefore, social media sites could be considered to act as a public sphere and public space.

Benhabib’s and Fraser’s public sphere is one that reflects my own understanding. Rather than a definitive public opinion, various publics (that is, various groups of private
individuals sharing similar views) form various public opinions, for which Fraser uses the term *interpublic relations* (Fraser, 1991: 66). Within the public sphere, these public opinions converse with one another, at times causing these opinions to change and reshape in response to others. Not only is the public sphere important for the exchange and debate of ideas, but also in influencing action within society (public and private realms) as well as action by the state and related institutions.

The acceptance and recognition of various publics and opinions within the public sphere, is necessary simply because it is a more realistic and therefore practical representation of the public sphere. Castells states, “we need Utopias – on the condition of not trying to make them into practical recipes,” (Ogilvy, 1998: 188). An ideal is what we aim for, and being human we tend to err at times and that is expected, but what matters is to maintain the ethos of the utopic idea within the practice.

In this section, I have mentioned public space as sites and situations for private individuals to come together, cross paths, and engage in conversation with one another to form a multi-representational public sphere. I have discussed the inclusive nature of public spaces and various publics which collectively make up the public sphere. So if these are all the ingredients needed to further public dialogue and to influence the ruling institutions, why do we need public art interventions? Suzanne Lacy, along with many others who were part of the new public art movement, saw art “as a neutral meeting ground for people with different backgrounds,” (Lacy, 1995: 27) and without the artwork, there is no ‘neutral meeting ground.’ Public art interventions play a part in moving towards a new public sphere through the use of public space as a platform for alternative and creative practices. I now continue on to discuss some of the artworks created within public spaces.

### 2.4 Public art intervention

#### 2.4.1 Introduction

In this final section of the chapter, I bring together the concepts of public discussed in the previous sections and further elaborate within the context of art intervention, resulting in a satisfactory definition for what I mean by *public art intervention* for the purposes of this thesis. I discuss the expansion of the meaning of *public art* as ‘the monument’ to ‘new
genre’ in the 1990s, as well as *how* public art interventions may play a part in recreating a new public sphere.

In the most general sense, “the term art intervention applies to art designed specifically to interact with an existing structure or situation, be it another artwork, an audience, an institution or in the public domain”\(^3\). Therefore, one could argue that the early examples of the avant-garde such as the provoking of the audience during *seratas*, or the shift from a *private audience* and into a more *public* realm could also be seen as art interventions, in that they are art works that *intervene* in pre-existing state and not one that is *created*. Unlike a gallery, museum, exhibition, workshop, a concert for a particular band, a public talk by a certain political figure, the audience does not *expect* to see or experience the *artwork*, which can appear in many forms. Stencils, performances, sound, installations, experiences, interactions, vegetation, digital media, everyday objects... Art intervention is not concerned with the medium of practice, as “there is no such thing as a “typical artistic intervention” (Berthoin Antal & Strauß, 2013) and thus, intention varies with each art intervention. No matter what that intention may be, an art intervention is never simply about the work itself: it is about the engagement of its audience in relation to the art intervention. The ‘art’ is only one part of the intervention and is a ‘relational art’ understanding and practice, “an art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and *private* symbolic space)” (Bourriaud, 2002: 14). Even though the intervention itself may be destroyed or removed, the intervention carries on for as long as the dialogue continues within its context. It is precisely this dialogue which then gives way to the (re)creation of a public sphere. First and foremost, the ‘public’ is at the centre of the practice. Unlike private practice, an artist practicing in public spaces as well as for a public audience (comprising various publics) has more to take into consideration both in terms of materials, content, and audience reaction. “[A]s the public sphere is increasingly being eroded by private interests” (Desai & Darts, 2016:1), I argue that public art interventions provide a public

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\(^3\) Retrieved from [http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/i/art_intervention on 29th October 2016](http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/i/art_intervention on 29th October 2016).
space for dialogue amongst publics\(^4\) to create a new public sphere, in that they provide a starting point for conversation that is neutral, at least in the first instance. What I mean by ‘neutral’ is not that the artist compromises all personal beliefs and values in an attempt to create artwork that portrays only that which is neither here nor there, a median of all publics’ thoughts and beliefs. What an impossible task that would be. What I mean by ‘neutral’ is that the audience of the artwork intervening in the public space and public audience, has emerged from an unknown source. Although at times, a clear statement delivered by the work may cause the audience to make quick associations, for the most part, a public art intervention that has just entered the consciousness of an audience sparks questions, like a spontaneous riddle sprung upon an unexpected passer-by.

Art interventions have been ‘utilized’ in the spirit of ‘art for the sake of the people’ within various disciplines by individuals or groups of individuals for various reasons. Fitting to its many forms, the practice and works appear under many different names; street art (Visconti et al., 2010; Waclawek, 2011; Lewisohn, 2008; Chaffee, 1993), guerrilla art (Smith, 2007; Bernstein, 1977; Peiter & Werner, 2009), artistic intervention (Berthoin, 2012; Dumont, 2015; Fuoss et al., 1992; Costa & Lopes, 2013) urban (art) interventions (Lehmann, 2009; Pinder, 2008; Yúdice, 2005), public interventions (Levan, 2011), activist art (Lippard, 1984; Holmes, 2009; Sholette; 1998, 2007), community (based) art (Ulbricht, 2005; Lowe, 2000; Bastos, 2002), and protest art (Guillermo, 2001; Early, 1986; Spanjaard, 2000) are just a few that come to mind. Lacy’s ‘new genre public art’ (1995) legitimized public, interactive and collaborative experiences as artwork. I use the term public art intervention as an umbrella term for all practices that fit into the definition provided, with a public element to it. The ‘public’ here, refers to both location (physical accessibility) and audience (accessible to multiple publics). Furthermore, the various labels mentioned above imply certain qualities of the artwork or artists that are limiting to the area of interest and area of practice. Thus, I opt for public art intervention as an umbrella term for all that I have mentioned above. Despite some of the negativity towards this type of socially and politically charged ‘activist art,’ to the extent where the practice interlacing art with popular culture, politics, media has been referred to as “parasitic” (Sholette 1998:

\(^4\) The recognition that the term ‘general public’ is non-existent and that there is “only a diversity of specific publics” (Miles, 1997: 84).
I defend public art interventions not as a utopic or idealist practice, but one of the many creative and aesthetic practices contributing towards the public sphere.

Although the ‘public art’ mentioned within this thesis is not the same as the ‘monumental’ public artworks that decorate streets, city squares, government building entrances or similar sites, they can be transformed into becoming a part of public art interventions. The following examples may shed light on how public art can become public art intervention.

Artists have re-purposed works of monumental or traditional public artworks, or have highlighted them through intervention. Where, when, who, and how are very important in such interventions, as in David Černý’s case with ‘Pink Tank’ which resulted in his arrest and brief imprisonment. In April 1991, David Černý, then a student at Prague’s Academy of Fine Arts, intervened in the monument that was Tank No.23, which had been “[d]edicated to the memory of the Soviet soldiers who had died during the liberation of Prague in May 1945” (Wright, 1991: 1). David Černý and the Neostunners not only painted this iconic symbol of “Soviet liberation” (ibid) pink, but attached to it a middle-finger, like an offensive obelisk rising from the top of the tank towards the sky. With David Černý’s name signed underneath, it was not difficult for officials to find the culprit. Černý was imprisoned for vandalism, and a few days later the army had painted over the tank back to green. However, not long after, Deputies of the Federal Assembly, making use of their immunity from prosecution, painted the tank pink once more. Černý was arrested under Paragraph 202 (ibid) also known as the ‘rubber paragraph’ due to communist authorities “stretch[ing] it out to suppress every kind of dissident activity…

5 Generally I would not include such commentary within my thesis, however I cannot help but mention my distaste for Gregory Sholette’s pessimism towards activist art in News from nowhere: Activist art and after. However, Sholette fails to see that the spirit of the early and mid-twentieth century avant-garde does not disappear, but merely transforms. Sholette’s belittling comments towards socially-engaged artists as well as their practice, offers critique but nothing more to further his argument. His views that socially engaged art or activist art has failed and that “cyber-activists and street-savvy public artists might consider developing a new theory of radical enthusiasm” seem prematurely spoken, and is proof that it is through the continuous practice and production of public art interventions that we broaden knowledge, improve and adapt practice, and not by mere critique and claims.

6 Judith Baca refers to these types of public art as ‘cannon in the park,’ where sculptures glorify “a version of national history that excluded large segments of the population,” (Lacy, 1995: 21). Although brief, I find this to be successful in clarifying the difference between the traditional sense of ‘public art’ and new genre public art.
under the general rubric of riot,” (ibid) and following this public art intervention the leader of the Federal Assembly announced that the ‘stretching’ would no longer be applicable. Although the tank has been retired to a war museum, “the pinkening of Tank No. 23 was intended not as a cheap provocation but to protest the falsehood of the myth that Tank No. 23 had come to represent the years of communism. To paint the tank pink was to insist on historical truth after decades of official distortion,” (ibid, 5). One cannot help but think of the consequences that would have followed this intervention if the Deputies of the Federal Assembly had not been backers of Černy and the Neostunners. The security of having the support of the government of a country in which the independent artist practices is rarely the case with public art interventions concerning public art.

Without permission and acquisition of the correct documents, the artist puts his or her safety and criminal record at risk, and the artwork risks being perceived as vandalism. This was certainly the case with Kamila Szejnoch who added a swing to the “Berling Army Soldier” statue in Warsaw, Poland in 2008. In a video recording on the artist’s website, the police arrive at the scene and interrogate the artist about the extent of her permission from officials. One journalist recording the event asks an officer “Are you joking?” implying the absurdity of the police treating the intervention as an act of vandalism. The video ends with the artist and her team of journalists and friends parting the scene, with the artist’s last remarks “I’ve got thirty minutes left,” indicating the termination and removal of the intervention. The artist remarks on her intervention (which was intended as part of a series of similar interventions where monuments were transformed into playground rides) by saying “To suggest a change in the function of the monuments is an attempt to build a bridge between the present and the past, to add a contemporary layer distinct from their original style and function.” Despite the good intentions of the artist and the playful and innocent nature of the intervention in comparison to the Pink Tank, the swing did not last long. These examples depict the uncertainty and non-formulaic actions of authority figures towards public art interventions (including situations concerning public art). This is somewhat encouraging to practicing artists, as one is never quite certain what one can get away with.

For some, however, the very danger of intervention is also its appeal and as I mention in the section covering vandalism, it is perhaps necessary for it to be so; it is this guerrilla practice that gives artists the freedom to say or do what others would not. Hence, the anonymity of artists who practice in such ways (at least, in most cases) is of utmost significance, especially within the context of academic research and securing the welfare and protection of volunteer participants. These are all things to be discussed in this chapter. To begin with, I explain what I mean by ‘public art intervention’ and in contrast, as I have already mentioned, what I do not mean.

2.4.2 Public Art intervention

I explain the various meanings of ‘public’ used in regards to public art interventions, so as not to be accused of providing an “atrophied” definition of public (Phillips, 1988: 93), like so many others have done. As mentioned in the previous section, public can refer to its intended audience, and thus subject matter that is of concern to the public, such as public issues (Jacob, 1995: 54), as well as the space in which it is created, placed, and received. Some would argue that it is not the location that qualifies art as being public; rather it is the “psychological, rather than physical or environmental, construct” (ibid). My use of public refers to all as they are all interconnected; “the reception of art by publics” (Miles, 1997: 85) can happen when an artwork is physically located and is depicted by the artist in such a way that makes the artwork readable, or comprehensible. In some cases, "a collectivity of citizens attributes itself a shared ownership" over public art interventions (Visconti, 2010: 512), through accessibility and inclusivity. Accessibility has various degrees due to the many factors that constitute an artwork as being accessible, such as the space in which it exists, the media used, and the content (visual components such as imagery, symbols, vocabulary as well as the understanding of the audience of participatory practices).  

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8 This can be related to what Bourriaud refer to as “microtopian” communities whose members identify with one another “because they have something in common.” (Bishop, 2006:67). According to Bourriaud, relational art practices have the potential to create such communities.

9 Blek Le Rat, one of the first street artists to popularize the use of stencil art and inspire contemporary street artists such as Banksy, “considers his social obligation as an artist to produce imagery with which people can identify.” (Wachawek, 2011: 70-1) That being said, the question of who ‘people’ are and how this ‘imagery’ is decided upon remains unanswered. While reflecting upon the fieldwork conducted, ‘people’ were limited
Location may be connected to a particular public as audience, which thus implies the imagery that may or may not be recognizable and decipherable. A neighbourhood predominantly consisting of international university students is bound to produce different opinions regarding an intervention than a location consisting predominantly of local citizens from an older generation. During the devising and implementing of public art intervention by artist participants for this research it has been crucial to select ‘public’ spaces and deliberately use imagery that are inclusive of as many publics as possible. By doing so, it is also inevitable to enter the creative process of devising and discussing interventions without having certain assumptions and preconceived opinions about the potential audience. However, intervention-participants being insiders and having extensive exposure to varying publics and therefore various publics’ perspectives on social and political issues were able to select public spaces, subject matter, and imagery in a more informed manner. As a result, the artists were able to create public art interventions that were intended to be inclusive of various publics. Inclusivity is a key characteristic of public art intervention, which is achieved by its public nature. That being said, the artist is not out to discover “a common denominator that absolutely everyone will understand and endorse” but rather “assists in the identification of” what “separates” the publics, “so that agreement on a common purpose is an impassioned deliberation rather than a thoughtless resignation” (Phillips, 1995:69).

Suzanne Lacy associates four factors that resulted in the rise in interest of “more public” art. Similar to the period that gave rise to the avant-garde, the 1980s were a time of a commotion and conflict caused by a ‘conservative backlash’ (Lacy, 1995:28) that fuelled the transition. These were “the increase in racial discrimination and violence” (in the United States), “the attempt to circumscribe the gains women had made” (abortion, sexual harassment, domestic violence), “an exercise in cultural censorship”, and “deepening health and ecological crises” (Lacy, 1995: 28-9). In the 1990s, the culture wars in the United States, between traditionalist conservative values and the progressive liberal values, provide a backdrop to Lacy’s ‘new genre public art’. What is interesting to see is that all four factors are concerned with publics that are otherized to the dominant public (in other to those with whom the artists were able to interact, and the content extracted from the cultural, social, political context (Chapter 6).
words, the white, educated, middle class male). Lacy argues that the transition of the artist’s practice into the “public sector through the use of public space” was inevitable for those who wanted to “inform and change” (ibid, 26). As ‘other’ publics had experience in activism, this also merged with their artistic practice, creating a concern for “effectiveness” with their new found arts practice as a result (ibid). Thus, public art interventions have traditionally been the creations of the other. The dominant public is generally privileged by having access to power, funding, and institutional support to propagate a norm through mainstream media, while the other resorts to alternative, avant-garde ways to join the public sphere. Likewise what differentiates “conventional public art” (as 'monument’) and “community arts or new genre public art”, is that the latter not only “acts as a catalyst for other people’s creativity, political imagination,” but “values” the other people’s responses (Miles, 1997: 8-12). Contrary to “the self-contained aesthetic of modernism,” community arts and new genre public art (which I place under the public art intervention umbrella) “reflect a critical realism derived from Marxism, feminism and ecology which implies that artists act for and with others in reclaiming responsibility for their futures” (ibid). This reclamation of responsibility is made possible by the re-joining of the other into the public sphere, demanding inclusion by drawing attention to their issues of concern (for the public sphere) through public art interventions. These interventions may not cause change of legislation or laws, but change can also occur within the mind. Public art interventions, because of their creative, accessible, and (the aforementioned) neutral nature may change something in the perspective of the onlooker, the participant, the audience, an ‘other’ public. These ‘local’ interventions may potentially and cumulatively give way to ‘global’ progress. It is this idea and belief that has been the driving force of this research.

Many artists practicing within public space and the public sphere who situate their practice within national, political, and cultural contexts have dedicated time and energy into rigorously and reflexively documenting, analysing and understanding their practice as research, and considering where it stands along the spectrum of other, more traditional art

10 Although Hazel Henderson (1982) stated “think globally, act locally” while discussing the politics and ethics of the solar age it insinuates that change begins from the smallest consciousness within a community, the individual, before it can expand into a broader, more collective consciousness. By making small changes, little improvements at a time can sustainable improvements be made.

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practices. Emerging in London during the 1960s, The Artist Placement Group (APG), started and led by John Latham and Barbara Steveni, re-positioned the artist from “outside the conventional gallery system” (Tate, 2017: np.), and into “industry and government departments…shifting the function of art towards ‘decision-making’.” Not only did the APG challenge the role of the artist within (or without) the community but it also challenged the role of art and the many different forms in which it could be practiced. Although the APG subsequently changed its name to Organisation and Imagination (O + I) to differentiate from previous placement schemes, it has set an example in breaking out from the gallery walls and into various contexts that would have otherwise not been seen as suited to host such arts practices. Kester (2011) provides an extensive list of similar artists and their practices such as Thomas Hirschhorn, Francis Alÿs, Helen and Newton Harrison, Santiago Sierra, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Suzanne Lacy, Jay Koh and Chu Chu Yuan, and groups, such as Superflex in Denmark, Park Fiction in Hamburg, Plastica in Argentina, Huit Facettes in Senegal, and Dialogue in central India amongst others, proving that relational and interventionist arts practices are not confined to any particular context and can take on many different forms.

Design activism, socially-engaged art, new genre public art, urban intervention, protest art, street art, aesthetic protest, artistic intervention all share certain qualities, which are voiced by Suzanne Lacy on the subject of new genre public art, but could easily be extended to all of the above. As all mentioned above can be grouped under public art intervention, by extending Lacy’s comments, we could say that public art interventions are not “built on a typology of materials, spaces, or artistic media, but rather on concepts of audience, relationship, communication, and political intention” (Lacy, 1995: 28). Likewise, “there is a distinct shift in locus of creativity from the autonomous, self-contained individual to a new kind of dialogical structure that frequently is not the product of a single individual but is the result of a collaborative and interdependent process” (Gablik, 1995: 76). Public art interventions can be said to be process-based, audience-oriented, dialogic, ephemeral, public, inclusive artworks created by non-traditional media and methods that

may be “identified with other fields [such as] science, or everyday life itself” (Jacob, 1995: 52). Furthermore, just as street art "includes a strong sense of activism" (Alpaslan, 2012: 53), public art interventions can be seen as “anti-authoritarian, irreverent, irrepressible” artistic practices (Chalfant in Alpaslan, 2012: 53). This goes hand in hand with the fact that public art interventions are not commissioned or supported by the establishment or the art market, although artists may often seek the support of like-minded organisations, institutions, civic or activist groups who share the same morals or principles as they do.

One aspect of relational arts practices such as public art intervention that seems to be shared by all of these practices is ‘engagement’ (Cartiere, 2010: 144; Lacy, 1995: 19). This engagement, as well as referring to that between artist and artwork, or audience and artwork, expands beyond the traditional lines of communication and sets up a more dialogical relationship between artist, artwork and audience. Stephen Willats’ Tripartite (1970) (Fig. b) depicts a ‘model of dialogical aesthetics,’ where arrows flowing to and from each component highlight the engagement between each not only in facilitating the creation of artworks, but also to underline the inseparable relationality of each component to the others. Chu (2013) expresses the relationality of ground (referring to “the context of a project”), contact (“the encounter with others”) and movement (“the efforts and learning that go towards achieving progress within a project”) (ibid, 8) by stating that “in lived experience” (ibid, 46) these components would not be experienced in isolation from one another.  

12 Although through slightly varying terminology, this inseparability of the components identified by artist-researchers within their relational practices seems to be a recurring finding, as well as within this thesis.
No one component exists in isolation. Kester argues that this extended process of engagement and “collaborative exchange” can lead to “the production of a critical community consciousness,” (2004: 174). The process or practice takes centre stage rather than any ‘specific or concrete outcome.’ Resonating with this is Chu’s (2013) research based on over 16 years of social engagement; drawing upon Kester’s (2011) “dynamic between the one and the many in the reciprocal creative labour of collaborative art practice” (Chu, 2013: v) Chu studies ‘negotiation-as-active-knowing (or experiential inquiry)’, which she describes as “a durational process of immersive involvement and nuanced relational responsiveness that gradually calibrates and tunes different positions and values so as to produce new understanding and relationships between artist/self and participant/other, thus opening new possibilities.” (Chu, 2013: 43). What Chu has essentially done is rethink engagement between the components as negotiation that constantly reshapes practice and vice versa. Once again, rather than having the main goal of arriving at a specific solution, point, or place, the idea is that there is progression, ‘becoming’ rather than a state of ‘being’, which is pushed forth by relational responsiveness of the self with the other and vice versa and could be likened to a dance wherein the one reorients the self in relation to the other. Such art practices, research and their findings further our understanding of the role and place of relational arts practice as well as the artists-researchers practicing within ‘the art world’ and broader social, cultural,
and political contexts. Additionally, it urges a rethinking of the form and context in which ‘artworks’ exist and the ways in which they are created.

Many critiques have questioned the new-found ‘utility’ of relational art practices, such as public art interventions. Lacy (2013) identifies – “among many critiques” – the conflict between the “useful” and “aesthetically sound” nature of the ‘artwork’ (Lacy, 2013: 8). Lacy states that the passed impression among most art circles and critiques was that utility paired with art equated to “bad art” (Lacy, 2013: 8). She argues, however, that “new critical art theory… is beginning to unpack the stereotype” (ibid). That being said, Lacy does not shy away from exploring and asking similar questions regarding the usefulness of art while posing questions such as:

“What happens to a work of art when function or use-value takes over? How far into the public realm can an artist venture without turning into something else, such as the head of an organization? In that case, is he/she still making art? And what position can a project assume in public life, balancing between fine art (with all its professional trappings) and social utility, often understood differently “outside” of art?” (Lacy, 2013: 5-6)

I am doubtful that these questions will find answers that satisfy supporters and cynics of relational art practices alike. Speaking from personal experience, such questions which resemble the early stages of an existential crisis, are rather inhibiting and disabling when dwelt upon for too long. What prevents this crisis is to remember that ‘aesthetics’ are not the only component that deems such work as ‘art’, as mentioned earlier. Another aspect to keep in mind is that the ‘art’ is set outside of the museum or gallery setting, and may be disorienting to some who are unfamiliar or inexperienced in art set within the public realm, outside of the ‘designated context for art’. According to Lacy, the simple fact that art is situated outside of the gallery or museum space should not negate its status or chance of being perceived as art. To answer a question with another question, is it not expected that art situated in public take on different forms and content due to the ‘complicated relationalities’ that exist within these settings when compared to the “laboratory and

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13 Chu lists several references in regards to the “re-defining” of the role of the artist; “artist as cultural facilitator and mediator (Graves 2005), collaborator (Green 2001), interlocutor (Shannon 2011, Dechter 2013), cultural animateur and activator (Monagan 2006, Reynolds 1984), leader (Douglas & Fremantle, 2009)” (2013: 22) urges a rethinking of the artist’s role and significance within various contexts, where the artist would previously be seen as out-of-place or marginal.
controlled conditions” of the museum or gallery? Lacy applies the same principle of practice and experimentation in site and media to other areas of research and practice such as psychology, sociology, and urban development stating that it has not diminished the value of the practice and results (Lacy, 2013: 8). As expressed by many, including Kester (2004), Lacy mentions the significance of the contextual situating of the art and how this (or the lack thereof) can deprive the critic or observer of essential information and experience necessary to derive meaning (ibid, 16-7). Lived-experiences of relational or participatory art are transmitted through the narratives developed by the participants and the artist, which is no easy task. Lacy in her research summarizes “a broad and multi-vocal set of descriptions of the events that transpired” over a decade, and suggests ways of understanding “these narratives as art and as social action” (ibid, 6-7). Despite the narratives not being “objective”, Lacy warns against undermining them as not being able to explore “accurate and engaging ways to cross-reference complex social narratives with histories and theories of art discourse” (ibid, 22), and that however ‘imperfect’ the art may seem, it is well suited to the location of considering from where the practice and research, “on the cracks and interstices, the fault lines and injustices, the failures and contradictions in civic life — and correspondingly the imperfections of art as a social practice embedded in daily life” (ibid, 23). Imperfect as it may be, what motivates artists to pursue relational arts practices within social, cultural and political contexts over ‘private’ practice? Chu writes:

What motivates us to go into the space of ‘others’ is that we believe that there are too many existing and dividing boundaries that produce anxiety and conflict that need to be addressed. The neo-liberal capitalist world is dominated by an unequal distribution of knowledge and resources, and by certain ways of seeing that are commensurate with these interests. Therefore, we do not claim to be non-interventionist, and our primary intervention could be seen as in working towards re-distributing knowledge and resources and promoting engagement with more varied ways of seeing. Yet when we go into different contexts, we respect that the way of thinking, knowledge and resources we bring may not be right or appropriate for, and may be rejected by the community. Our positions may be opposed to theirs, and possibly in conflict. Therefore it is important that we are not there to impose our views and knowledge— which are themselves not value-free, but to open up a range of views, and to learn of and negotiate with each other’s views. We are not there as ‘experts’ to impose an ‘expert’ solution, but to facilitate a process, involving ourselves and others, in exchanging knowledge and building new understanding. (2013: 12-3)

Bearing this in mind, the ‘public’ element of public art interventions also raises issues regarding ethics, as with any public practice. While some, like Claire Bishop, find
ethics within the context of art trivial, as “art is understood continually to throw established systems of value into question, including questions of morality” (Bishop, 2012: 276), others, such as Grant Kester, resonate with the ‘ethical turn’ in emphasising “compassionate identification,” as well as “respect for the other, recognition of difference, protection of fundamental liberties, and a concern for human rights” (Bishop, 2012: 25). Bishop sees this view of ethics within the context of participatory art practices as “self-censor[ing]” the artist, based on “second-guessing” the response of the other, which turns the reception of an artwork into a risk assessment of potential reactions, “becoming a new kind of repressive norm” (ibid). Having seen participants debate ethical considerations prior to a public art intervention taking place, my own views fall somewhere between the two. I can relate to both Bishop and Kester. I agree with Bishop in that the issue of ethics depends on the “singularity of each project” (ibid, 26), and artists who do comply with the socially acceptable without questioning dominant thought will be disabled from adding anything new to the public sphere. Kester makes an important point about the artist being able to sympathise with the audience, but as Bishop explains, this can be deemed patronizing to the audience and allows for prejudice to play a big part in deciding what may or may not be negatively received by the audience. Personally I relate to Kester’s concern of the artist’s responsibility towards the audience. I find this to be a matter of personal choice and situated judgement, something that is fluid and subjective, and not dictated and forced upon artists as a rule of practice.

So far, I have provided a definition for public and public art intervention, with a brief discussion as to what public art may refer to. As my main concern is with public art intervention, I will not go into a detailed list of differences between the traditional understandings of public art – works commissioned for public sites (Miles, 1997: 5), associated with institutions or created with the art market in mind (Lacy, 1995: 23) for a specific, ‘educated’ audience (ibid) – and public art in the interventionist sense. Instead, I would like to offer some criteria for determining what makes an effective public art intervention. This will serve the purpose of aiding the discussion chapter (Chapter 6) following the accounts of public art interventions (Chapter 4) that make up the fieldwork for this research, as well as creating a set of mutual characteristics shared amongst seemingly different public art practices, such as those I have mentioned earlier. This may
be a naïve attempt of trying to make the immeasurable into something calculable, and I am aware of the limitations and contradiction in the attempt. Nonetheless, as I present my criteria, I optimistically expect my reason and logic for attempting this to become (somewhat) apparent as well as how this may be of some use in later chapters. I achieve this by extracting mutual characteristics encountered in relevant literature (such as those regarding street art, new genre public art, urban interventions as well as others) over the course of my research.

Just like a story, it is by identifying the ‘who, where, when, what and why’ that we can begin to understand each public art intervention. Each is unique due to spatial and temporal factors (context), as well as the intervention’s chosen media, representation, and inherent intention (content). In addition to the context or content that gives meaning to the public art interventions, it is the viewing and comprehension of both through the audience that gives meaning. Of course, depending on the intervention, some components will carry more weight than others. In some cases, it might be the location of an artwork that adds meaning to the work, or the material used, or it might be the context of current affairs. This is not to isolate each component from others, but to understand that the role of the components varies amongst interventions and that each intervention should be taken into account independently from others. The relationship between the components can be seen as such; artworks in situ hint at the intention and (on some level) the intended audience of a public art intervention. The intended audience is not meant to be an exclusionary aspect, but if and when a public art intervention is located in a public space with a specific audience, then that is to be taken into account as intentional, and not simply a coincidence.

Banksy’s graffiti on The West Bank Wall, for example, along with that of many others, gains meaning from its geographical context and location, as it is “in the spaces where these competing, yet highly unbalanced, systems of power interfaced that meaning was constructed” (Peteet, 1996: 155). For them to be removed from their site, would alter its perception by the audience. Location also determines the audience for which the works are intended. The audience can be interpreted as the citizens of Palestine and Israel, the governing bodies of each country, third-party peacemakers and supporters of the two sides to reconcile. Through the internet and social media, such public art interventions that receive media coverage are quick to spread to an ever-expanding audience and although do
not engage with the works in person are able to become part of a global dialogue over a local issue.

The same argument can be made regarding the public art interventions that took place during the Gezi protest. Due to the political affairs at the time, the interventions that took place in the streets, in protest camps by those opposing the non-democratic practices of the right-wing, non-secular President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his supporting governors, the audience were able to perceive them within this context.

The Gezi Movement in itself was the epitome of a public art intervention created by an entire community of protesters, against the decisions and actions of their governing bodies. Coming together in peaceful protests, the interventions reflected the character of that community, as being humorous, witty and unafraid, fuelled by the camaraderie between protesters and standing up for what they believed (Fig.1, Fig.2, Fig.3). The Gezi movement and interventions developed in an organic way by the will of those participating: “It included the idyllic encampment of a park alive with youth, building hope through love and discovering how to shed the skins of divisive labels and loyalties to [political] parties, ethnicities, genders, and even sports teams” (Shaw, 2014: 5), which to the fanatic sports team supporter is not an easy task.


Fig.3 *Two posters featuring portraits of the Turkish Prime Minister.* [http://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/posters-stories-va-collection/occupygezi-gezi-protests-turkey](http://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/posters-stories-va-collection/occupygezi-gezi-protests-turkey). Original in colour.
There was another diversity that was visible; creatives from all practices were joining forces to create and make their struggle visible to the rest of the world. Graphic designers, musicians, poets, dancers, and performers created the works with which the movement and its message is now remembered. More importantly, the protesters expressed their frustration and dissatisfaction through lyrics, poetry, and satirical comments in spray paint, stencils, such as the penguin, began to appear on walls (referencing the main news networks showing a documentary on penguins instead of the breaking news concerning the riots), people joined in on performances, such as *Standing Man*, where performer and choreographer Erdem Gündüz stood facing the Turkish Flag and a poster of Mustafa Kemal (or Atatürk, as he was named by the public meaning ‘Forefather of the Turks’), the founder of the Republic of Turkey. This intervention made a powerful impact due to the time, place, and the scale of audience involvement. The fact that this one-man performance grew, with no instruction directed at the audience, may have people thinking that this was not in fact an art intervention but just a show of support (Fig. 4). However, this is a great example of the interwoven quality of public art interventions, life and art.

These examples also provide an example of how public art interventions are politically charged, and that their context as well as their content can have a role in this characteristic. Public art interventions have the ability to draw attention to issues, situations and people through creative practice and audience engagement. 'Making the city your own by re/claiming the space' (Lewisohn, 2010: 65) is an important theme amongst socially-engaged interventionist art practices, which makes it a characteristic of public art interventions. This idea of reclaiming space can be seen in Lefebvre's argument as well, wherein the ‘production of space’ (Lefebvre, 1994), is "intrinsically a counter-spatial intervention into the dominant order of urban public space" (Taş & Taş, 2014: 328).

Public art interventions are works with politically-charged content, not just in terms of the subject matter of the artwork, but through engagement with its audience as well as the context in which they take place. They are not artworks in isolation from their ‘surroundings’ and they are certainly not there simply to be viewed, but are intended to be received (and altered) in a dialogical fashion. Public art interventions, unlike the conventional model of aesthetics of the Enlightenment model, form subjectivity through “discursive interaction and inter-subjective exchange,” rather than “an essentially individual and somatic experience of “liking”” (Kester, 2004: 112). This can go the other way as well, where “an artwork’s expressiveness is not enough to evoke one’s endorsement of it, [but an] appropriate feeling response is” (McMahon, 2011: 157).

Kester sees discourse as not just a “tool to be used to communicate an a priori” set of judgments or opinions with others, but is designed to “model subjectivity” (ibid). While public art interventions intend to actively engage the audience through participation, and to include as collaborator, the audience does not always respond to the invitation to participate. As a bystander, the audience engages with the ‘artwork’ in the conventional ‘discursive’ method, entering the ‘art experience’ with their subjective opinions and leaving with their a priori beliefs unchanged. Kester believes that discursive interaction through “empathetic identification” (Kester, 2004a: 114) begins with the redefinition of the

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14 Again, I should point out my reservations regarding the use of 'counter' as I did with 'counter-public'. Rather than having publics or spaces that are in opposition to the other, I would like to emphasise the ‘counter’ as an ‘other’, which implies an alternative rather than a contradictory stance. I find that 'counter' implies conflict, whereas ‘other’ suggests variation and difference in addition to the conventional without the oppositional undertone.
‘self’, so that the self is ‘known and felt’ to be, not in isolation from the other, but rather in connection to the other (ibid). This makes it clear as to why Kester believes that art with public interest should not be shocking or provoking, but rather empathetic. I am able to empathise with Kester on this matter, but retain my views that one cannot think on behalf of the audience, but on behalf of one’s self, and intentional offence caused by public art interventions for the sole sake of offence is not to be considered art in the first place. That being said, Laclau and Mouffe declare “a democratic society is one in which relations of conflict are sustained, not erased,” (cited in Bishop, 2004: 67). Public art interventions could provide such a platform for expression not necessarily for the sake of offence or to instigate violence, but for the sake of provoking thought and dialogue within communities.

Having provided a few examples of public art interventions that have guided this research, I have presented the characteristics of public art interventions by comparing participatory, socially-engaged and public art practices. These characteristics include public context and content with political undertones, where the art is not considered simply as the end product, but as a process-based work, in which the conventional definition of art is replaced with a dialogic and relational understanding of art, including the audience within this process. This is achieved by use of experimental and non-traditional methods and media, which tend to be immersed (if not camouflaged) in everyday life. What public art intervention is not lies in the traditional meaning of public art, which is a monumental understanding of public art, commissioned by establishments and institutions in accordance with rules and views relating to the ‘art market’ with a select public as its audience. This form of public art resorts to a conventional, discursive interaction with its audience as well as being highly dependent on ‘the somatic experience of liking’ (Kester, 2004: 112).

Before concluding this section and with it this chapter, I would like to discuss public art interventions in regards to vandalism. Depending on the materials and media used for public art interventions, in some cases this results in practices that cross the borders of legal activity into an ambiguous area. While some defend that the illegality and ephemeral nature adds to the public art interventions, others argue that public art interventions should not be put into the same category of vandalism as damage to private
property. By presenting these arguments, I reiterate the multi-disciplinary nature of the practice and study of public art interventions.

2.4.3 Public Art intervention and Vandalism
Street artists have gained notoriety over the past few decades, to the point where they are being hailed as superstars, and following the removal of their work from their original sites, have been put on the market at some hefty prices. Banksy is perhaps one of the first names that come to mind whose works and style is well known amongst a wide audience and his work in high demand by art collectors. Shepard Fairey, known for repeating stencils of 'Andre the Giant' with OBEY written beneath in various sites as well as designing the iconic poster for Barack Obama's 'Hope' poster made popular during the Presidential election in 2008. What is not well known (or questioned) amongst this wide audience, is that while Banksy faced legal problems due to infringement of copyright issues in his 'Dismaland' exhibition, essentially a dystopic Disneyland, Shepard Fairey has been arrested fifteen times to date (1 November 2016) on charges of vandalism. Although both artists' practices are situated in the streets, while Banksy remains anonymous, without arrest, and his work highly sought after with high monetary value, Shepard Fairey who has an impressive work history, distinct and iconic artwork, has faced more arrests than he should have.

Of course, Fairey is not the only street artist to have faced arrests on vandalism charges and he certainly will not be the last. The question is, why does Banksy seem to be immune from the law? Although, his identity remains a mystery to his audience, by looking at his work across the globe, it is highly unlikely that there is no team supporting the artist. The simple answer as to why the law has overlooked Banksy's arrest is the obvious one; his artworks make a lot of money and, once created, the site in which the work is created attracts media attention on a global scale. Banksy means good business. When a new work of his appears on a wall, it could be said to be the equivalent of discovering a lost Picasso painting. In this sense, it is hard to place Banksy as a public art interventionist, because of the commodification of his works, the monetary value attached to them by the art market, and his right to a privileged practice in a realm where so many others suffer and risk in doing the same. This can be compared to the surrealist and Dadaist
art movements, where the art created would soon graduate from the avant-garde and become mainstream, contradicting its initial purpose. Although, this does not detract from his work as a successful street artist, his increasing involvement in the institutions of art, which represents a success for street art's legitimization, comes at the cost of what some might consider selling out.

This example suggests that unless one’s work has monetary worth then any public art intervention consisting of media that is placed on or in a public space may be considered vandalism. Street artists, protest artists, and graffiti artists often push back at such claims stating that their work is part of the “visual culture of the city” along with the billboards of advertising, neon signs, and brightly lit shop signs of the corporate and commercial world imposed upon the citizens (Waclawek, 2011: 157-8), only the commercial signs sell a product or brand for profit, and the art in the street is to provoke thought, engage in a dialog with publics, and to challenge to whom public space truly belongs. If public art interventions are not concerned with private interest and are in fact of public interest, then why are some forms of public art interventions (such as graffiti, posters, installations) still considered to be vandalism and criminal (even though there are those who are able to get away with it)? Is it just a matter of permission?

Permission defies the concept of intervention. It also suggests that in the case of a denial of permission that the art intervention would not take place. Public art interventionists who have been silenced or accused of committing a crime through their public practice may easily identify with the following sentiments, that as “creatures of the public realm… we find ourselves silenced whenever and wherever we might create meaning to share with others,” (Luna, 1995, n.p.). However, public spaces are “legally comprised of a grid of privately owned spaces” (Hansen & Danny, 2015: 901). That being said, legality is often overlooked depending on who it benefits. A stencil on a wall can cause the arrest of its artist, and yet the pollution and damage to a shared land, atmosphere and water supply by governments and oil companies can be legal. What is more, a stencil on a wall cannot be compared to intentional, targeted, physical damage to private property, such as tossing a rock at someone’s living room window. Both of these acts would fall under vandalism, yet the motive and practice are far from being similar.
One good argument for the use of public space is that the illegality of usage is a necessity. The argument continues as such:

To get the attention necessary for fully democratic discussion, a disruption of normal routines, of expected occurrences, is optimal. But that means disregarding normal rules and regulations, and often for purposes critical of the institutions imposing such rules. Unplanned, unpermitted use of public spaces by assemblies increases their visibility and their often desired disruptive capacity. But by the same token they contravene law and official regulations. (Marcuse, 2014:105)

Marcuse brings a solution to this paradox by suggesting re-education of those in law reinforcement. Legalising such artistic practices takes away from their anti-establishment nature and contradicts their reason of "production and signification of resistance and defiance" (Peteet, 1996: 142). Marcuse calls for the education of “law enforcement and court officials to respect the motives of those breaching regulations on the use of space in how offenders are treated,” which is the “exact opposite” of how such cases are currently handled (ibid).

I find that arguments made in favour of public art interventions as vandalism are often in regards to council expenses made for their removal or a private owner of a site regarding it as damage to private property. What is overlooked in these discussions is the bigger picture of what public art interventions contribute to society and the subject of public, whether it be in relation to space, sphere or issues. Public art interventions are the voice of the perceived-other, in that the work speaks for the unrepresented, under-represented, or misrepresented publics and issues that may have trouble being heard. This is something that councils and municipalities, as well as art institutions need to actively participate in changing, to support the ‘publicness’ of space to be available to all ‘alternative groups’ within a community, including artists and the practice of public art interventions.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored historical movements and artistic groups that led the way for contemporary artists in questioning and challenging the conventionality of the art institution, and introduced social and critical discourse on the aesthetic. These movements also marked the beginning of the ‘counter’, as alternatives for dominant spaces and publics
emerged to contribute to the public sphere. I have dissected and discussed terms such as public, public space, public sphere by presenting arguments from literature that relates and resonates with the research as well as those that do not, in order to position the research within these contexts. Finally, I brought together mutual characteristics found in socially-engaged public artistic practices and collected them under public art intervention as the unifying umbrella term. I also discussed how such practices can be penalized by the law under vandalism and what this means for what we perceive as public space and who it belongs to.

I have provided a historical as well as a socio-political and critical context for this research. In the following chapter, I will provide a geographical context for the location in which the fieldwork for this study took place. This will help with the further specification of the terms in this chapter, enabling the reader to relate to the local context and aiding empathy with participants through familiarization. These chapters will enable the reader to better understand the public art intervention accounts in Chapter 4 and will enable a more structured and focused analysis of them in Chapter 6.
CHAPTER 3: NORTHERN CYPRUS - THE LOCAL CONTEXT

3.1 Introduction

Having provided a historical and theoretical foundation for public art intervention practices, I move on to the fieldwork’s social, political, and cultural contexts. The ‘local’ context presents foundational knowledge related to Northern Cyprus, which allows a deeper understanding of the case-studies in Chapter 4. Within this local context, I explore concepts of identity and community from the perspectives of the self and perceived-other by drawing from relevant texts and experiences situated within these contexts.

The island of Cyprus is often portrayed as a treasure chest of culture, history, mythology and natural beauty, romanticized in literature, folklore and, of course, travel-brochures. For the less geo-politically informed, the division of the island may not be known. This chapter takes into account this possibility, and presents a brief and somewhat alternative historical account of the past and present geo-political divide as well as the various social, cultural, and political contexts of Northern Cyprus.

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is an un-recognized (except by the Republic of Turkey) de-facto government, still housing the Turkish military, as well as United Nations Peacekeeping Forces. Internationally, it is considered part of the Republic of Cyprus, thus is generally referred to as Northern Cyprus, especially in academic literature. The TRNC shares with Turkey the same currency, national anthem, language and a national flag that closely resembles the Turkish flag. The strong ties between Turkey and Northern Cyprus as well as the Turkish influence over the political, social and cultural contexts in Northern Cyprus are met with contradicting sentiments within Northern Cyprus, as well as the entirety of the island.

Historical, political, and social contexts influence the development of identity, collective consciousness, the self and perceived-other, and thus the development of artists emerging from the region (Güalp, 2006: 69). It is important, therefore, to provide a depiction of these contexts to make sense of the participants’ experiences and practices. Although impossible to explain the historical background of the island in its entirety, I
attempt to provide sufficient information within this section to set the backdrop for the research that has formed the substantive body and the empirical core of the thesis.

3.1.1 Insider Researcher

With the research entering personal and familiar territory, it is necessary to mention it is difficult for me as a researcher to remain an outsider to current events taking place in Northern Cyprus, the location of the fieldwork. Thus, this chapter is written predominantly as the researcher as an ‘insider’ (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002) where I, as the researcher, “[have] a greater understanding of the culture being studied... an established intimacy which promotes both the telling and the judging of the truth” as well as “not altering the flow of social interaction unnaturally” (Unluer, 2012: 1). This insider position is similar to the ‘emic’ voice (Pike, 1967). Pike defines the “etic viewpoint” as coming “from outside of a particular system," and the "emic” as coming “from inside the system" (ibid, 37). Within this thesis, the emic can be understood as the ‘insider-researcher’ and the etic as the voice and position of the researcher, without prior knowledge or association with the content or context in question. The etic can be seen as the researcher adopting an outsider viewpoint, whereas at times I speak from within a public and/or a community.

The emic and etic viewpoints indicate the degree of involvement of ‘I’ in relation to the subject matter, where etic viewpoints are based on that which is “observable” (Harris, 1976) by a universal observer, and the emic viewpoint is dependent on “phenomenological reality whose locus is inside of the heads of the actors” (Harris, 1976: 342). Although I am an ‘insider’ to the ‘local context’ and adopt an ‘emic voice’, I am not an ‘insider’ to certain groups within this context. As the researcher-as-participant I am an insider to the intervention-participants mentioned within this chapter, and thus I write as ‘one of them’. However, the post-intervention participants consist of various individuals from varying cultural, social, and political groups and thus, there is no way of knowing whether I am an insider in relation to these participants. I do, however, report on my experiences in the field through auto-ethnographic and reflexive methods; what is observed and written is filtered through the researcher or participant-self. I do not present my perspective as fact, but as one perspective and interpretation amongst many, although these interpretations are grounded in the qualitative methods and methodologies presented in Chapter 5, the case-studies in Chapter 4, and the discussion of the findings in Chapter 6.
As an insider to the local context, I have developed certain views due to personal experiences and observations during my life in Northern Cyprus. I have lived and learned certain things regarding the history of Cyprus as well as its current socio-political situation. Through nature and nurture, a certain self has been shaped and is continuing to be shaped in relation to my contexts and experiences. I portray the self in the following sections so that the reader is able to read the ‘insider accounts’ on the local context bearing in mind the position of the researcher and researcher-as-participant.

The following section provides a brief history of Cyprus. I have tried to exclude partial language, although in parts where the insider-researcher interferes, I have tried to make this as clear as possible to the reader. This distinction allows the reader to follow the researcher’s reflexivity and position without distorting the written content, by including ‘I-the-insider-researcher’ or ‘I-the-participant’ depending on the section. Any other ‘I’ should be taken as the etic voice of ‘the researcher’.

3.1.2 His-story, her-story and Other-stories

There are several reasons why I have chosen not to include the conventional ‘brief history’ of Cyprus often encountered in academic articles related to Cyprus. First, a detailed listing of the historical events and dates related to Cyprus would not contribute much to the understanding of current circumstances that are to be discussed in this thesis, and neither would an account with a much broader scope. Second, there are too many perspectives from which the history of Cyprus can be told and re-told. Third, there are unofficial, alternative histories (Chatzipanagiotidou in Bryant & Papadakis, 2012: 94-117) that have not been documented but have been passed down from generation to generation, which at times contradict written history. I-the-researcher believe that these histories suppressed from public knowledge have truth-value, and are silenced because they contradict that which is in history books; they defeated the purpose of instilling national pride, deprived the self from being victimized by diverting fault from the self, Turkish and Turkish-Cypriots to the perceived-other, Greek and Greek-Cypriots.15

15 Cypriots define their ethno-national identity in many ways, such as Turkish-Cypriot, Turkish-speaking Cypriot or in some cases, simply Cypriot excluding the ‘Turkish’ all together. For brevity and clarification, I use the terms Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot. This does not however indicate my support of these terms
In lieu of a traditional re-telling of history, I provide a timeline, which starts with a list of numerous rulers of the island throughout its history and ends in present times (2017). The history of the island frames the understanding of the current local context in relation to Northern Cyprus. In moving away from the commonplace ‘Cyprus problem’ narrative, I attempt to provide an alternative narrative “‘excluded’ (or discouraged)… but which could in a sense be more inviting to people” (Vassiliadou in Thompson et al., 2004: 287). In many languages the word history means ‘story’. I present one version of this story.

3.1.3 A Brief Story
Considering human presence on the island dates back to 10,000BC, the declaration of the island’s independence only in 1960 demonstrates the imperial control of Cyprus over its long history. Due to its highly desirable geo-political location in the Eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus has been conquered and ruled by many across the centuries.

10,000 BC-1570 AD The many rulers of Cyprus
First settlements by indigenous people date back to 10,000BC. Settlers from distant shores appear around 2000 BC, including Mycenaean, Phoenician, Assyrian, Egyptian, Persian, Macedonian, Roman, Byzantine, Franco-English, Lusignan (Franks), and Venetian. Considering all these peoples’ presence on the island, it is hard to imagine a pure “Cypriot” ethnicity.

1571 Cyprus is taken over by the Ottoman Empire from Venetian rule
The Ottoman Empire takes over the island from Venetian rule. The change in rule “terminated the Latin persecution of Greek-speaking Christians” (Yılmaz, 2005: 76) and the people enjoyed self-government (ibid). Sultan Selim II increased the Turkish-speaking population of the island by transferring population from Anatolia (Pollis, 1973: 582). Soldiers, nomads as well as some craftsmen were also sent over as settlers (ibid).

over others and does not represent the political, social, or cultural connotations implied in this version of defining one’s identity.
1878 – 1914 Ottomans lease Cyprus to Britain with Britain eventually annexing Cyprus
‘Greeks’ and ‘Turks’ who have not yet developed a national identity, live in an “ethnoreligious plurality”\(^\text{16}\) without borders separating them despite their difference in religion, mainly Orthodox and Muslim (ibid, 587). Increasing ideas of independence and national pride emerging in neighbouring nations significantly encourage nationalist attitudes (Bryant, 2004: 871).

1914-1960 Great Britain’s ‘divide and rule’ reign in Cyprus\(^\text{17}\)
During the early days of this new rule, although no “trouble” is experienced, the two communities live in separate quarters from each other, mostly due to the language, ethnic origin, religion and customs. Separation by geography and identity is further influenced by the growing tendency of both communities to identify themselves with the larger Greek and Turkish nations (Yılmaz 2005; Hasgüler, 2007; Papadakis, 2008) and separate educational systems instil in each community’s youth “a strong sense of patriotism” (Yılmaz, 2005). Hopes to unite Cyprus with its respective ‘motherlands’ gain momentum, due to emerging nationalism, following British colonization (Loizides, 2007: 172). While Greek Cypriots demand the unification of Cyprus with Greece (enosis), Turkish Cypriots hope for taksim (the partitioning of the island into two distinct sections) with backing from Turkey (Attalides, 1977: 78–86).

1960 Cyprus declares independence
After EOKA (National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters),\(^\text{18}\) a Greek Cypriot paramilitary organization, led an attack to end British colonization on the island, the first government of

\(^{16}\) This is defined as the “generally peaceful coexistence of two or more different communities within one territory sharing its resources and infrastructure, while expressing and practising their religion in one and the same public sphere.” (Dietzel & Makrides, 2009:71).

\(^{17}\) Concerning ‘divide and rule’ (see Dietzel & Makrides, 2009: 77; Pollis, 1973: 593). Although this is not agreed upon by unofficial and official histories, it is often said that it was during the British rule that the division of the otherwise united community happened. I-the-researcher have always seen this accusation rather bold, as a concoction of internal and external events influenced the division within the island, making it difficult to pinpoint any one particular factor as the reason.
Cyprus was founded (Zembylas, 2009: 438), with a Greek Cypriot president and Turkish Cypriot vice-president. While EOKA continued to strive for enosis, Turkish Cypriot leaders feared the safety and wellbeing of Turkish Cypriots (Necatigil, 1998: 7). During this time, Greek Cypriots made up 80% of the island’s population, whereas the Turkish Cypriots made up a mere 18% of the population (ibid).

1963-1974 Period of violence and displacement

With neither enosis nor taksim accomplished, inter-communal violence broke out, leading to the internal displacement of the Turkish Cypriot community into enclaves (Volkan, 2008: 96; Papadakis, 2008: 130). Volkan also marks this period of violence and displacement as the first trauma faced by the Turkish Cypriot community by being forced to live in enclaves, and subject to dehumanization and humiliation (ibid). In 1967 a shift occurred from armed conflict between the two Cypriot communities to an internal conflict between Greek Cypriots striving to maintain an independent Republic of Cyprus, without the influence of the Greek junta. In 1974, a coup against the president and Archbishop Makarios led to the Turkish military’s intervention, one of the guarantor countries alongside Greece and Britain. The displacement of the Greek Cypriot community to the south of the island and the Turkish Cypriot community to the north is the clear division between the two communities and the island itself (ibid).

1983 The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is founded as a de-facto government

Having separated from the Greek Cypriot community, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was founded in 1983. In an attempt to increase the “Turkish” population on the island, a second wave of people was brought over from Turkey. With the sudden increase in Turkish Cypriot citizenship distributed liberally, and the lack of records, it is not possible to give exact numbers. However, it is common knowledge that Turkish Cypriots are a minority within Northern Cyprus, and that Turks from Turkey make up for the

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18 There are some Greek Cypriots who frown upon the violence and national fanaticism displayed by EOKA, and that it is often forgotten in the re-telling of history that EOKA eventually divided amongst itself due to disagreements as to who the enemy was. EOKA B, the right-wing extremists, still in pursuit of enosis (Papadakis, 2008:131; Zembylas, 2009:438) jeopardized the security of not only Greek Cypriots opposing enosis and the struggle of EOKA B, but also the security of the Turkish Cypriot community.
majority of the population. Studies show that there are more Turkish Cypriots living abroad than there are on the island (Robins & Aksoy, 2001:659).

**1983-2017 The Cyprus Problem**

In 2004, the Annan Plan offered a solution for the unification of the island, in attempts to resolve what is known as “the Cyprus Problem”. In a referendum, The Greek Cypriot community voted against the plan (76%) whereas the Turkish Cypriot community voted in favour (65%) of reunification. Regardless of the results, The Republic of Cyprus entered the European Union, leaving the Turkish Cypriot community to continue living in isolation from the rest of the world of politics, economics, and culture (Akgün & Tiryaki, 2010: 23). In 2017, embargoes still prevent the economy of the TRNC (as a de facto state) growing, thus furthering dependence on aid from the Turkish government.

**3.1.4 Turkish influence on Northern Cyprus**

In this first instance of Turkish military intervention in 1974, the Turkish troops were welcomed to the island as liberators by most Turkish Cypriots, but due to the TRNC’s isolation from the international arena, economic stagnation, the colonization of Turkish settlers, and the intervention of the Turkish government in internal affairs, these feelings of gratitude began to fade (Loizides, 2007: 177). With the Republic of Cyprus applying to be part of the European Union in 1990 (and eventually acceding in 2004), Turkish Cypriots became further alienated from the international community and turned to the Turkish government for help that resulted in an association agreement, which permitted further military and economic integration (Fisher, 2001: 311).

The mass population relocation from Turkey to Cyprus, continuing since 1974, is faced with mixed sentiments among the Turkish-Cypriot and Turkish communities (Keser, 2006). Despite his nationalist tone, Keser admits that during the mass population relocation from Turkey to the island, there was lack of planning and calculation in re-populating Northern Cyprus, leading Turkish-Cypriots to feel that settlers were receiving better treatment and had more resources, whereas Turkish-Cypriots got significantly less help from the Turkish government, even though they had been forced to leave their homeland and much of their belongings behind in the southern part of the island (ibid, 113-4). Thus,
Turkish-Cypriots have always been a minority within the island. The TRNC may exist on paper (although unrecognized only by Turkey), but there are those who believe that it is but a puppet-government with the Turkish government holding the strings.

Coming back to national identity, Turkish-Cypriots did not identify as Turkish until the early 20th century. What we have found out about the Cypriot identity is that a strong sense of national identity for both Greek and Turkish speaking Cypriots did not arise until British Rule, where Turkish-speaking and Greek-speaking Cypriots formed their own educational systems, each teaching younger generations of being ‘Turkish’ or ‘Greek’ (Dietzel & Makrides, 2009: 74). Before the rise of national identity, Cypriots coexisted as ethno-religious groups where conscious divisions amongst groups did not exist. What is more is that these “groups” not only lived and worked together without the separation of boundaries but would often use each other’s places of worship and celebrated together regardless of their ethnicity or religion. It is also safe to say that the ethnic identity of being Cypriot was one that was shared by all, regardless of religion or language, whereas national identity was taught and later instilled in communities from each community’s respective ‘motherland’.

Prior to national identity, Cypriots identified with their religion, such as Muslim instead of Turkish and Orthodox instead of Greek. History demonstrates that Cyprus has had internal affairs (especially in the governing of now Turkish-Cypriots on the island), regardless of its name, closely tied in with the internal affairs of the country with the ruling power occupying what is Turkey today. When the Ottoman Empire took over the island, religion inevitably played a key role in their politics, culture, and identity. Thus, it had an effect on Muslims living in Cyprus. Additionally, other influences caused the adoption of religion and language, such as tax exemptions or reductions for Muslims. Later on, with the rise of Kemalism in Turkey and the end of the Ottoman Empire, fundamental

19 This includes minorities such as Maronites, Latins, and Armenians, who were also recognized as ethno-religious groups (Frangeskou & Hadjilyra, 2012: 11). However, when Turkish and Greek Cypriots became ‘national’ identities, the minorities remained as religious minorities despite having their own language and religion.

20 Kemalism was “a state ideology in the 1930s” based on “a very selective forgetting of the ‘shameful’ Ottoman/Islamic past” (Çolak, 2006: 599). To this day, it remains “a hegemonic cultural memory to the present,” despite structural changes over time, resulting on different understandings of Kemalism in different ethnic or national communities (ibid). Kemalism served as an ideology for a collective national identity (that
secularism and nationalism replaced the religious identity in Turkey and, once again, the once-Muslim now Turkish-Cypriots. It is therefore no surprise, bearing in mind the return of political Islamism after a long repression imposed by Kemalism, there is yet another shift in the role of religion in politics and daily life in Northern Cyprus. The problem is that while Turkish-Cypriots, albeit a minority, remain secular, the majority of Turks on the island allows for religion to play a more dominant and visible role in socio-cultural and political affairs.

The influence of the Turkish government as well as fundamentalist Islamic attitudes (as a political ideology as well as becoming an integral part of national identity) adopted by the current Turkish government, affect and control the governing bodies of the de facto state, the communities within, and the Cypriot identity, even though some would argue against such an identity ever existing.\textsuperscript{21}

It should be pointed out here that Islam has always had a place in Turkey’s culture and politics, however it was due to the “non-visibility of Islam in Turkish politics during the early Republic (pre-1950)” that the re-appearance of Islam has been viewed as the ‘Rise of Islam’ when in fact, the absence of Islam from “societal basis” was “because it was not allowed to express itself publicly and politically” (Erdoğan, 1999: 30). Erdoğan argues that what we are witnessing is a return to the balance of Islam in the culture, politics, and society of Turkey (ibid). However, I (as well as others who have not lived through previous Turkish presidencies in Northern Cyprus) have experienced an increase in not only mosques, the presence and visibility of religious institutions, but also the increase of religious schools and faculties. Keeping in mind that Turkish-Cypriots are recognized as one of the most secular Muslims in the world (Yeşilada, 2009) and consider their values to be more “progressive” in comparison to settlers from Turkey (Robins & Aksoy, 2001: 690), the fundamentalist Islamic values imposed upon education (ibid),

\textsuperscript{21} Some Turkish-Cypriots feel there are more social and cultural similarities with Greek Cypriots than Turks (settlers and those in Turkey (Kızılyürek & Kızılyürek, 2004)). One such similarity exists in language, where despite being different, the Cypriot-Greek and Cypriot Turkish mimic each other in that they are both “bidialectical” where there is a standard and a vernacular that is indigenous to the island (Zingi, 2010: 3).
resources and national funds, is seen as a threat to the ‘Cypriot’ way of life and the values of Cypriot institutions and individuals (Psaltis & Cakal, 2016: 239) by those who identify first (if not only) as Cypriot. For others (including participants interviewed and involved in the creation of public art interventions for the fieldwork) this imposition of fundamentalist values is seen as a threat to human rights such as the freedom of speech, freedom of (artistic) expression, freedom of choice and way of life, above any hindrance it may cause to national or ethnic identity. As the researcher, the latter is more of a concern: the censoring of the self and the fear of being an outcast within one’s own country. The fear lies in living within a community where personal values and identities are not seen as just that, but viewed as a disease, sin, abnormality or as a threat to a collective value system and identity. Those identifying as non hetero-normative, anti-militarist, or leading alternative life-styles such as rejecting marriage yet living with a partner often encounter opposition and at times rejection from other communities, which at times lead to the individual’s rejection or judgement from one’s own family. This occurs in many other countries and communities, but Northern Cyprus is a small place, both in size and networks; a soiled reputation (either rightfully or wrongfully so) can have detrimental effects on one’s future life and relocation to another city does not always solve the issue. Support from educational and government facilities educating the public on sexuality, freedom of choice and expression, and critical thinking, rather than a system based on memorization, would aid in creating a society that is able to comprehend the versatility of identities and ‘ways of thinking and living’. Instead, the increasing influence of Turkish and Islamic values regresses the development of a more accepting and peaceful way of thinking of the perceived-other and uses its collective national identity to reshape whatever meaning ‘Cypriotness’ embodies.

The perceived-other, as opposed to simply ‘other’, is to be understood to mean the following. The perceived-other refers to the individual or community perceived to be

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22 In 2010, the number of mosques on the island surpassed the number of schools in Northern Cyprus (Ellis, 2010). In 2013, an Islamic College was built along with a mosque at a cost almost equating the budget reserved for the entire schools in Northern Cyprus. The demand for an Islamic College comes from the increasing fundamentalist Islamic population, influenced by the religious and political context in the Turkish government. Ellis also mentions an increase in crime rate and a straining of education and health services due to “uncontrolled immigration from Turkey” (ibid; Keser, 2006).
separate from the self in question. As Mead (1934) and Derrida (2007) state, the perceived-
other exists in relation to the subject, the ‘me’, or as I use in this thesis, the self. As one
who argues for the fluidity and transient nature of the self, the perceived-other, too, must
be fluid and transient. Due to the mutual reliance of the self and the perceived-other, it
would seem that one cannot exist without the other. Rather than keeping the two at a
distance from one another, their symbiotic relationship would imply an interconnection,
rather than opposition. I could demonstrate my understanding of the two in a Venn-
diagram of the self and the perceived-other, where the two would partially overlap. This, I
believe, applies to any individual and any community in relation to another; people are
similar in some ways and different in some others. However, the transient nature of the self
(and thus, the perceived-other), due to the constant state of ‘becoming’, influences the
overlapping area. Consequently, the Venn-diagrams are not drawn as perfect circles, but
squiggly and fluid shapes that adjust and move in space and time, influenced by the
experiences of the self and the perceived-other simultaneously.

Contrary to my beliefs on the perceived-other in relation to the self, the language
occupying mainstream media, daily life, and politics portrays a different understanding of
the perceived-other. In Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot media and politics, the term other or
otherization (öteki and ötekileştirme in Turkish respectively) has become a staple term,
referring to that which divides and differentiates individuals and groups of individuals
within a community rather than uniting them (Selçuk, 2012: 79). This definition taints the
view of the other to a given subject, thus working against the understanding of the
connectivity and symbiosis of the two entities. It is an understanding that I believe is one
of the main underlying reasons for the polarization of society, be it in Europe, the United
Kingdom, the United States of America, Turkey, Cyprus today, or Cyprus during the start
of internal conflict.

Although a shared Cypriot national identity was never constructed, this is not
necessarily a requirement for creating collective identity. In terms of shared experience,
Cypriots “share a time. They live in enforced division” (Navarro-Yashin, 2003: 117). The
experience of war and trauma is shared, as is the hope that such a disaster is never
repeated. What is more is that I believe that there is a cultural identity that is shared among
Cypriots. I remember my first experience in crossing the border to southern Nicosia, and
could not differentiate between Turkish and Greek Cypriots, even when they were speaking. Amongst the noise and the crowd, their Cypriot dialect shared similar phonetic characteristics with the Turkish-Cypriot dialect. The dress, mannerisms, physical characteristics seemed too familiar for me to be able to tell Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots apart, whereas in the north, differentiating between a Turkish settler and a Turkish-Cypriot was somewhat easier for me. It was at that moment that I recognized a difference in what it meant to be ‘Cypriot’ and ‘Turkish’. Despite the lack of a national identity, I was able to recognize ‘Cypriotness’ (Adil, 2015), perhaps an indescribable but visible cultural identity in place of an ethno-nationalist identity. This recognition led me to a newly formed ‘we’. Before, there were Greek Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots, who were different in some ways and similar in others. Once I crossed the border and saw the similarities, first hand, I ‘felt’ the transition from thinking “I believe there is a thing such as Cypriotness” to “I know there is such a thing as Cypriotness”. For me and many others there is, and perhaps always has been a ‘we’ of Cypriots.

The Turkish government has embarked upon expensive projects for Northern Cyprus, although I personally have learned to be suspicious of any act of generosity coming from Turkey or any other third-party regarding the welfare of Northern Cyprus. One example of an act of generosity is the pipeline project for which a giant underwater pipeline was built to carry water from Turkey to Northern Cyprus. This has been described by some as the “umbilical cord” attaching the “child [land] (yavru vatan) to mother[land]” (Bryant, 2015). While some rejoice at the idea of having this physical connection, others are not too keen on having something as vital as water supplies being dependent on the Turkish government. Being dependent on the Turkish government for financial (due to the embargoes) as well as vital resources prevents the TRNC from becoming an independent and self-sufficient country or community. Readers of such stories often ask whether it would not have been better to invest money in more sustainable and self-sufficient ways of gaining clean water, such as desalination plants.

I cannot help but interpret these seemingly generous acts (of which there are others) as a cover for something that will inevitably benefit the Turkish government. Now that there is a (literally) physical connection between the two countries, it will give the Turkish government more leverage to remain on the island and reap the benefits of being present. I
have often been told by some Turks when discussing history that “Turkish-Cypriots should be grateful to Turkey. If it weren’t for us, you’d all be dead, or speaking Greek.” This mentality has allowed Turks to believe they have the right to the island and its resources. However, there are some who oppose Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s authoritarian methods and the self-entitled attitude of some fundamentalists. One such politician is Sırrı Süreyya Önder, who echoed the sentiments of a marginalized group in his speech delivered at the Turkish Parliament stating, “Stop lying by saying that the TRNC is a government, it is not,”  
(Göçekli, 2012). He then continued to say that the Turkish government treats Northern Cyprus as a Turkish state and not an independent country. In regard to the pipeline project, mentioned earlier, he said, “When you treat a country like your large intestine, of course you need to carry the water to flush it all away,” (ibid) referring to the self-entitlement of the Turkish government and military to Northern Cyprus. Needless to say, such views are not always popular amongst crowds who think otherwise. Even in parliament – where an example of civility and democracy should be set — the vocalization of anything contrary to the values of ideology of the ruling party, the Turkish nation and identity is seen as provocative, antagonizing and is often met with fanatical and at times threatening reactions.23

Extreme and potentially dangerous reactions discourage many from starting a dialogue, especially one in person. It is very unlikely that I would be able to have a fruitful conversation on acceptance of diverse cultures and lifestyles, respecting individuals with lifestyles different than one’s own, or the constant state of ‘becoming’ of the self, with someone whose beliefs and values are as rigid and radical as those seen in the Turkish Parliament. As a Cypriot, this is what I fear influences and continues to influence the disconnection between the ‘self communities’ in Northern Cyprus (as well as Cyprus as a whole). I-the-insider-researcher believe the issue is not with how I choose to identify myself, but the attitude others have towards the way I choose to identify myself. Because

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23 While addressing Civil Society Organizations after the coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016, Sırrı Süreyya Önder called Abdullah Öcalan (leader of the Kurdish Worker’s Party who is often described as a terrorist by Turkish media and politicians) with a title that when translated means ‘respectful’ or ‘respected’ (Sayın), in the name of democracy. He was met with sounds of disapproval from listeners. After his microphone was switched off, his audiences started to cheer and chant nationalist and militarist slogans. Önder is now being sued for a 40-year prison sentence for provocation and propaganda for a terrorist organization.
my view of identity is fluid and not set in stone, I accept this to be the case for the perceived-other as well, and refrain from passing judgement on ‘the other’ as much as humanly possible. My idea of the self is subjective; it is not the one and only version of the self. What is more, to me, the self and the perceived-other are interconnected, since the self does not and never has existed in a vacuum and reacts and responds to its surrounding. My understanding of the symbiotic relation dictates that the self is that which observes, listens, and reacts to the perceived-other and that the two, although existing as independent entities, are connected through their paths of communication and at times mutual characteristics, as “it is impossible to conceive of any being outside the relations that link it to the other,” (Todorov, 1984: 94). Alas, I-the-insider-researcher fear that Turkey has become a country in which the censorship of freedom of speech is misrepresented as the ‘preservation of democracy’ by state authorities and is promoted as such to the masses through ‘controlled’ media. Those who depend on these controlled media for ‘information and facts’ and who are devoted to those in power believe the abuse of power is in fact democracy. The TRNC, as an extension of Turkey, is also suffers from these situations and events as a consequence of the effects of Turkish rule over political, cultural, and social contexts, which has been labelled in the media as an autocracy, and its ruler Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as a “dictator” (Tremblay, 2016: n.p.).

In Northern Cyprus, it is hard not to overhear a conversation on the issue of politics. The local media include a large volume of content on the subject of Turkish politics, because of the deep ties which exist between the two countries and the influence of one over the other. In the name of self-interest it is not thought to be wise to publicly oppose or say anything negative regarding Turkey, Turkishness or any of the values cherished by the Turkish people (such as tradition or religion). I have come to believe, along with others, that people in the government want to continue the incoming financial aid and secure their jobs; companies want to continue doing business with wealthy Turkish companies, and although political party leaders tend to start off by supporting Turkish-Cypriot rights and values, after coming to power, leaders become puppets to the will of the Turkish government. Scarce as they may be, there are groups who are visible and vocal opposition to unjust and undemocratic practices of government. The Cypriot-Turkish Teachers Union (KTÖS), known for their pro-unification and pro-Cypriot attitudes and
opposition to Turkish government and military involvement, is one such organization encompassing a vast number of educators and non-educators alike that echo such thoughts and sentiments, often taking action against impositions by or influenced by the Turkish government. I believe that KTÖS represents a significant percentage of my immediate social-circle, but do not always agree with the execution or voicing of their ideas. This causes me to take a few steps back, in that their ‘action’ has often been conventional forms of protest and strike, which have become commonplace. Their actions seldom inspired me to take part in their displays, but consequentely, birthed an alternative action, one that has resulted in inspiring the fieldwork for my research.

The fears of Turkish influence and the threat on not only Cypriot identity but on how one views identity can be summarized as follows:

Open interference of Turkey into [the] Turkish Cypriot affairs, the threat of becoming a minority as a result of population transfer from Turkey, the fact that the Turkish army exercises control in all spheres of life, economic and political isolation are some of the factors which threaten the very existence of the Turkish Cypriot community in the north of Cyprus. It is under these circumstances that Turkish Cypriots have started to identify themselves with Cyprus as their motherland and as primarily Cypriots first and then as Turks, something they would probably never have done before 1974.

(Kızılyürek & Kızılyürek, 2004: 51)

There are several clauses in the constitution of the TRNC that state the right to freedom of speech, artistic expression and thought (Appendix 2), yet actions or thoughts expressed opposing the current Turkish government, its values, beliefs, and the current Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan have been prevented and punished, sometimes outside of legal processes. During a peaceful protest on the 15th of November 2014 (Independence Day of TRNC) three activists were taken away by force before they even opened their banner, which stated “Peace is our duty for our country, conscientious objection is our right” (Yurt Ödevimiz Barış Vicdani Ret Hakkımız”). The protesters later revealed the incident during a newspaper interview and announced that they would be suing the police for inappropriate use of violence, verbal abuse, destruction of personal recordings and potential evidence without initiating any sort of official legal process. The police had treated these protesters like criminals when there was clearly no crime. The issue here was that during a national ceremony, one celebrating Turkish-Cypriot (and therefore Turkish)
military and national ‘success’, a banner advertising peace and conscientious objection would be taken as disrespectful and unacceptable. When the protesters questioned the police regarding banners displayed in favour of mandatory military service and the rejection of the right to conscientious objection during the celebrations for the Turkish Independence Day on the 29th of October, just a few weeks before, the police stated that unlike the protesters’ banners, the banners in favour of the military were “normal” (Güler, 2014, n.p.). This event is one of many that blatantly show the failure of the constitution being put into practice and the tendentious behaviour of those enforcing the law. The activists continued to say in their interview that the police had surrounded them before they were able to open their banner, because the police had come to know them through other protests and were well-informed of their beliefs, their ideology and for what they stood. Sadly, they stood on the opposite side of the police and the ruling power.

Despite the embargoes and the influence of Turkish politics and culture on Northern Cyprus, certain events have signaled that Northern Cyprus can become a humanistic and democratic place. The decriminalization of homosexuality in the constitution of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is one such an example. Although the intentions behind the change in legislation were thought by some not to be the desire for equality and justice for all, but the necessity to have a constitution to the standards of a European Union country. This meant the dismissal of laws or legislations conflicting with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Left to its own devices, it may have taken parliament another five years to change this law. In fact, it was the issue of the continuing criminalization of homosexuality that led to the first public “rainbow” intervention in Famagusta in August 2013. It was following this public art intervention, after it made it into the local newspapers and after overhearing the public...

24 Although negotiations for changing this law began in 2010, it was not until January 2014 that the law was passed, after extensive campaigning by local organizations against homophobia, those that supported LGBT rights, and pressure from outside forces and figures such as Marina Yannakoudakis, member of European Parliament from the Conservative Party for London, as well as others.

25 An open letter was published in the newspaper Yeniduzen (New Order), stating their reasons for conducting this intervention, in order to increase visibility of LGBT individuals as well as raising the issue of having to remain anonymous in order to avoid judgment from society. Translated from original article: http://www.yeniduzen.com/Ekler/gaile/226/lgbt/617. Retrieved on 17th January 2016).
engaging in discussions around the ‘taboo’ topic of rainbows and LGBT that I began to think about how public art interventions could penetrate the daily conversation of perceived-others, who may not have considered thinking, let alone discussing such issues (that are seemingly far removed from their ‘self’).

I have heard many variations of names for the TRNC, including banana republic, the Wild Wild West, The Turkish Republic of Poo, and possibly many more. The isolation of the TRNC from the rest of the world, except Turkey, and the embargoes make it much harder for sectors such as tourism and trade to flourish. Northern Cyprus continues to be capitalized by private companies benefiting mostly their own agenda, giving very little back to the local community or economy, such as it is with the hotel and casino developments that have boomed on the island over the past decade (Rakoczy, 2014). This is said to have occurred due to gambling being banned in Turkey in 1998 (Besim et al., 2010: 103). However, the lack of “institutionalisation” and the failure to “formulate and define a clear policy” (Alipour & Kilic, 2003: 79) result in the disorganized and uncontrolled construction and development of such projects, which have caused deforestation for the construction of new roads and buildings, the destruction of endangerment of wildlife, such as the Caretta Caretta turtles that nest on the beaches, and the polluting of the sea with discarded waste. The TRNC’s dependency on Turkey in terms of tourism and finance is further criticized in that a federal solution (Altinay, 2000: 307) — in other words, removing Turkey from the political and economic equations — that leads to “peace on the island…is expected to make a positive impact on the performance of the tourism industry of North Cyprus” (ibid).

The Turkish involvement in politics and the financial aid towards the TRNC’s recourses and infrastructure have often resulted in patronizing claims, calling Cypriots with hopes of a Cyprus solution, either through unification or federalisation, ‘ungrateful’ and ‘traitors’ by Turkish citizens and Turkish-Cypriots with strong ethno-national identities alike. Being on the receiving end of such names leads one to feel like an outsider within one’s homeland. Such experiences urge one to think about how the perceived-other sees

26 The acronym for the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in Turkish is K.K.T.C, where the first two letters are pronounced kaka, which means faeces.
him or herself: as a saviour, a knight in shining armour, a protective mother or father figure? And how in this case am I, alongside those who think as I do, seen? As a spoilt child, ungrateful traitor, someone who does not belong here, a potential threat to Turkishness? There has been no successful discourse in my experience in which this issue has been discussed. The volumes of voices are amplified to a point where nobody can listen to the other, not that there was a desire to listen. Hence, the search to find alternative means of communication with perceived-others, such as ‘them’.

Like a child, the TRNC has been kept on an allowance by the Turkish government and if the TRNC were to disobey the hand that feeds them, then consequences would be severe. It is within this context that the marginalized struggle to have their voices heard and attempt to communicate. It is because of this context that the research and practice contained in this thesis are connected to this socio-legal cultural struggle. It is for this reason that public art interventions may be the medium through which these marginalized voices can be heard, because these anonymous works exist apart from the individual, the creator. They are simply there to be heard and seen by whoever chooses. Public art interventions also provide the censored and the marginalized with a platform to have their voice heard, to reclaim a space which once felt like home, and to reach out to those who would not otherwise listen.

The fact remains that changing the name of a country or identities of people, or removing borders will not resolve the relations and communication (or lack thereof) between people. Instead, I believe the attention needs to be brought towards the ways in which we understand and see concepts which are used to divide people. Rather than viewing different identity constructs as being separate from dominant constructs, these alternative constructs can be seen not in opposition or counter to dominant constructs, but as part of the diverse constructs present within a community. This could transform ‘disconnected communities’ into a community that is inclusive of alternative constructs and the groups which adopt them. This is one of the main beliefs that has driven the practice undertaken in this research. Where the mutual language spoken is inadequate, my theory is that a different kind of language – one that is not spoken but experienced or felt – that is potentially mutually understood across in-groups and communities can begin the communication necessary to develop this shift in perception. For me and this research, art
has been that potential language, as it has with many other artists, creative practitioners, activists, musicians, and many others who believed in the power of art. The language of art aims to translate the human condition living in today’s world. The fieldwork for this research consists of the creation of art interventions that could potentially infiltrate in-groups other than the one in which the artist practitioners belong. In the next section, I will further explain who the self and the perceived-other represent in relation to the various participants involved in the fieldwork as well as those who have participated in previous public art interventions in Northern Cyprus.

3.2 I, You, We, They

What does it mean to be of a certain identity? Is it something you are, something that is passed down at a very young age from generation to generation, or is it learned and therefore something you become? Is it something that we are (or not), something that we do (or don’t) that makes us part of an identity, and thus, part of a community of a shared identity construct? Is it possible to simultaneously have many identities, even if certain parts of the constructs tend to clash? More importantly, who decides what defines each identity? These questions led to the examination of identity in relation to the self, the other, communities, and culture. I do not attempt to provide all existing definitions of these terms, but have selected definitions within the context of Northern Cyprus, and in relation to the fieldwork of this research. To start with, I draw upon literature that reflects the fieldwork and research, such as transnational identities, and the variables influencing the formation of identity.

3.2.1 Identity formation

Identity or identities are formed “within specific social, cultural, economic, and historical context” (Hall, 2000). Due to the dependence of identity on the contexts mentioned and assuming certain contexts or the individual’s perception of these contexts may change, we could then assume that identity is not something set in stone but rather responsive to its environment. Identity could be said to be not so much a ‘state’ but rather “a construction, a process never completed – always ‘in-process’” (ibid, 2; Frable, 1997: 10). The
interventions created for the fieldwork intended to alter and disrupt the environment of the individual, the context of the day to day lives of individuals and communities with the aim of exposing the individual to a perceived-other. This exposure was hypothesised to evoke thinking or feeling in the audience as a result of seeing or experiencing the public art intervention. While artists creating interventions provided content reflecting their own values, beliefs, and depictions of their perceived-other, responses from the audience, consisting of members of the general public directly encountering interventions, allowed for the observation and analysis of the reactions of the perceived-other. In some cases, audience members developed their own understanding of the artists and their communities derived from the content of the interventions, allowing both artists and audiences for the exchange with the perceived-other through expression of the self.

The public art interventions that took place during the fieldwork had a start and an end, depending on the media and methods used. The interactions, however, between researcher, participants, and the artwork can be said to have longer life-spans, as experiences and memories of those experiences. It is that experience holding the power to expand or alter perspectives, changing or introducing individuals to new ways of thinking in aiding the expansion of their understanding of the self, the other, and the ‘expansion of their psychic space’ (Robins & Aksoy, 2001: 703) through direct experience with those from a public ‘not of their own.’

In the next section, I contextualize the self and the other by using the participants of the fieldwork. Where possible, I discuss the individual and culture of the public with which individual identified. Due to the nature of some encounters with participants (such as post-intervention participants), the verbal exchange was limited to what little time was available in the circumstances. Although the methods used to gather data from participants will be covered in the following chapter, I find that the reader can become better acquainted with not only the socio-cultural context in which the fieldwork took place but also to understand the influence of the socio-cultural context on the participants, and how it influences or portrays various individuals and the culture of their public.
3.2.2 The Self and the perceived-other or Us versus Them

In this study I have taken up a number of different roles, involving the self in the research in a variety of ways, as well as different voices (the emic and etic voice) within each role. The roles assumed were as researcher and as participant. As I discuss the roles and voices of the researcher more in depth in the following chapter, this section focuses on exploring the participants and their potential publics in relation to the self of the researcher.

How does I-the-researcher writing this now differentiate from I-the-participant? The two have the same understanding and view of self, in that the culture, ‘the way of thinking’ is the same, whether it is regarding identity formation of the self, of the other, or the relation of the self to the other. There is a subjective belief of how these ways of thinking should be, an ideal, or a view of what is ‘right’, and a subjective belief of the perceived-other’s beliefs on what is ‘right’. That is not to say that there is one acceptable ‘right’ and certainly at times the views of the perceived-other and the self may overlap, in which case the perceived-other becomes part of the culture of the self. The inclusion of the perceived-other within one’s self culture results in the expansion of one’s public, in the self’s definition of ‘us’. Cases where the perceived-other’s culture or ways of thinking do not overlap with the self’s result in the perceived-other remaining as just that. Here is where a ‘way of thinking’ may differentiate the self from the perceived-other. In reading the previous sentence, if one understands the lack of overlapping of cultures as a conflicting situation, to me, this puts that person in the group of the perceived-other. My view of the ideal is that the non-overlapping beliefs do not cause the perceived-other to become ‘the opposition’ or ‘the enemy’, but instead lead to a mutual respecting of the self of the perceived-other, a coexistence of non-overlapping cultures. As this belief defines the self and consequently encompasses my public or ‘us’, anything outside of this would result in a potential definition for the belief of the perceived-other regarding this view. I would like to stress that what differentiates the ‘us’ from ‘them’ is not necessarily nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, or age, but rather how we see these components and whether we deem them worthy to make up our understanding of the self. In addition to the way of thinking, it is also about how this reflects one’s behaviours and actions. The point is that what separates ‘us’ from ‘them’ has nothing to do with the labels per se, but with the way we view and practice these labels. In the following subsections, I explore the self and the
perceived-other and their publics through auto-ethnographic narratives as well as interviews and encounters with participants involved throughout the fieldwork.

I, Researcher-as-participant

Many factors influence the forming of the self. Qualities which we possess from birth, knowledge and behaviours we acquire through experience or interaction with others, some of which we learn on our own accord and some of which we are taught. We are born in a certain place, at a certain time and become part of certain people’s lives. This environment forms the foundation for the self to be built upon and the changing of that environment can as a result either change or add to the self.

I am a Cypriot born in London, with Cypriot, TRNC, and British citizenship. I am bilingual in Turkish and English. I grew up and completed my primary and secondary education in Northern Cyprus. Despite having Muslim grandparents, I am agnostic (although my grandparents assume I am Muslim). I would describe myself as a considerate and open-minded person. I value humane, moral and ethical qualities and try to adhere to these values. Although I value these characteristics, I am aware that there are times when my actions do not always reflect this to the fullest, and there is always room for improvement.

At an early age, from first-hand experience, I learned that some people do not like people (or groups of people) who are or behave in ways that are different or act differently within certain contexts, leading to hostile or judgmental behaviours towards them, which is why I have always tried to treat each person with respect and understanding. I believe in honest and hard work and very rarely find myself in a situation where I “do not care” about that in which I am involved. I am highly competitive and struggle with anger management issues. I am an over-thinker and I am highly emotionally sensitive, which is great for acting and creative performances, but can be intrusive in day-to-day living.

This is how I see myself at this point in time. I am guided by ideal versions of the values and beliefs mentioned above, and as time goes by I try to improve on my understanding and practice of these beliefs. Being human, these beliefs and values fail in practice at times, but I, the self, am always ‘in the making’. Additionally, there are many identities that I have constructed and become during my life, depending on the various
socio-cultural and socio-political contexts in which I have experienced, different cultures and peoples with which I have engaged, and the way in which I have compared the ‘new’ with my already established beliefs and values. “It is no longer a question of cultural synthesis or syncretism, but moving across both,” (Robins & Aksoy, 2001: 704) that leads to the ‘becoming’ of the self. This is not just done on a wider, cultural scale, but can be done on a personal level, the exchange of cultures between two people, or even more so, the exchange of cultures within one’s self.

My beliefs and values are a result of experiences and the ways in which I processed them. These repeated strings of experiences, observations and have negated some beliefs and values whilst enforcing others. In relation to my thesis, my way of thinking has led to my hypothesis, whereas my behaviour and actions have shaped the methods of my fieldwork. Some of the personal experiences below may give an insight into the formation of my way of thinking, while setting the foundation for the fieldwork that is to come in later chapters.

Some views on identity, such as those of nationalist extremists, carry with them non-malleable, rigid definitions. Masculinity and femininity have strict descriptive boundaries. Age is perceived as determining experience and therefore intelligence, regardless of the types of experiences in question. There is generally an understanding of ‘normal’ which equates as ‘right’ and everything beyond the borders of this normal is perceived as wrong, without questioning why it is wrong. This is highly contradictory to the idea that identities are always in a state of ‘becoming’. The problem which I observed for some was that this way of thinking remains because there are no other ways of seeing, as it has not been introduced to their reality. I shall give you one such example, one which took place a few months prior to the beginning of my thesis.

In 2013, my grandmother urgently asked to talk to me in private. She pulled me aside and said “I am going to give you some money so you can buy an engagement ring for you and your boyfriend. Since you’re living together, you might as well get engaged. What will other people say if they don’t see a ring? They will start rumours about you.” To my grandmother, who is very traditional in matters of romantic relationships, my unconventional decision to move in with my then-boyfriend was a source of worry. Her main concern surrounding the ‘rumours’ were that my namus (purity, virginity, honour)
and thus name, would be marred. What I had expected to be an uncomfortable conversation was received with open-ears. I asked her whether she considered me to be a smart and strong woman with a good sense of judgement, to which she responded ‘yes’. I reassured her by saying that if people were talking about me, and my namus, then they clearly had nothing better to talk about. The ‘ring offer’ was concluded by me asking my grandmother about her own marriage. Having been married off at the age of 14 through an arranged marriage, my grandmother was always bitter about not making more of her youth, her thirst for knowledge and her desire to travel the world. I once again asked her “If you had a chance to get to know someone before getting engaged, wouldn’t you do it?” to which she replied “I probably wouldn’t marry at all” and laughed. This brief conversation allowed my grandmother to see my reasons for not wanting to get engaged, although this has not prevented her from continuously asking when we are going to get married, as getting married and having children was the only path for a woman ‘in her reality’. Each time, I answer by giving her alternative paths I could follow which are consequentially ‘right for me’. She has learned to understand and accept these alternative choices, even if she does not always agree with them.

As stated in my introductory chapter, I would like to remind the reader of the two concerns that inspired this research: the lack of sense of community due the constant otherization of ‘us’ and ‘them’ and the passive attitude resulting from a sense of powerlessness caused by the lack of accessible platforms to initiate action and change to reflect their values and beliefs, and accommodate their ‘community’s’ needs. As an advocate of celebrating individual and cultural diversity, the constant otherization of individuals in such a small community seemed not only unproductive but destructive to the bonds between members of an already broken community. Moreover, it seemed that nobody was immune to being the perceived-other as well as making someone else the perceived-other, regardless of educational background, heritage, economic or social status, religious or political ideologies, sexual orientation, and lifestyle choices.

I, as the researcher-as-participant, have experienced encounters with the perceived-other throughout my fieldwork. The perceived-other is not always a stranger; our friends, family members can be the perceived-other to our self. The ‘us’ to which I refer does not always have to represent those in our close vicinity. Travelling far from home often proves
that it is possible to have more in common with a stranger than a lifelong friend. While each subject has an ‘us’ constructed on their terms, the next section is dedicated to the ‘us’ from the researcher-as-participant’s perspective. The titles pre-intervention participants and intervention-participants refer to the groups of participants who contributed to the fieldwork, which I mention in detail in Chapter 5. I have taken this as an opportunity to describe these groups in relation to the researcher-as-participant and to keep the subject of public art intervention at the forefront of the reader’s mind. The participants in both groups were strangers at some point and our paths crossed at a particular place and time, which resulted in something I had not necessarily experienced, as it was the first time I had voluntarily found myself within a ‘community’ of which I felt part. I had felt the feeling of being ‘us’.

Pre-Intervention Participants (Us)

Pre-intervention participants refer to those whom I interviewed outside of the public art intervention practices mentioned in Chapter 4 as a means of gathering information regarding artistic and activist practices within the context of Northern Cyprus. Here, I use a more emic voice in describing the ‘us’.

There are many communities working towards what they believe to be worth their time and energy in making Northern Cyprus (or at least their world) better and more liveable, based on their own values and belief systems. We choose our battles, because sometimes we lack the time and energy to fight them all. Though the specific cause may vary, the mutual action towards ‘countering violence and exclusion’ (Butler, 2004: 225) between individuals and their respective communities is a uniting drive among communities that are a part of us. Returning to the idea of ‘ways of thinking and living’, members of these communities acknowledge the equality of the perceived-other and the self, as well as the value of life. This value of life recognizes the relationality of all things, living and non-living, creating respect and responsibility towards the self, perceived-other, and the environment in which life is found. It is not something that simply exists as an idea but is something integrated into one’s daily practices. The following examples extracted from
interviews, observations, and conversations with artists and activists highlight the differences in ways of thinking and living between *us* and *them*.

During interviews with ‘one of us’, be they artists, activists, or members of the public, the interviewee was eager to share more than what was asked. Anything and everything that may be helpful was presented before me. I felt that this was not because of my position as the researcher, but because I was seen as the participant’s *us*, someone who was spending time and energy on a mutually valued cause; the exploration of the exclusion of communities from and by each other within Northern Cyprus and attempts to find ways to prevent otherization through the exchange of knowledge and information. The methods and media used to accomplish this helped gain sympathy from artists and activists, as the difficulties of working within the borders of Northern Cyprus in an academic and artistic context were assumed to be many. During my interview with Serap Kanay, whom I have previously mentioned as ‘cultural analyst or social commentator’, remembered the difficulties faced when trying to create through her artistic practice in Cyprus. She had become reluctant to practice and participate within the local established art communities, be it due to her method or subject matter. She stated that at the time she began her art practice in Cyprus, the art(istic) circle that she had encountered did not have the same understanding as she, regarding her method and understanding of art practices. As a conceptual artist, her creations manifest themselves in various mediums, including installation, writing, photography and storytelling, amongst many others. The misconception of art practices in Cyprus was that one had to be able to draw or paint really well to be an artist, whereas Kanay associates ‘being an artist’ with being able to take an idea further, question, research what others would not necessarily consider thinking about and to integrate these thoughts into creative practices (Appendix 1d). This idea that art (or an artist) is restricted to a set of media and methods is no longer the dominant conception of art among those who have educated themselves through exposure or literature, but it nevertheless remains popular among the general public. Consequently, anyone with the talent or ability to paint, draw, or sculpt is immediately identified as an artist and their creations as art, contributing to the further establishment of the definition of art and artist by the general public in Northern Cyprus. Kanay has a different view of what it means to be an artist consisting of but not limited to ‘living one’s life as an artist’. For her, art is
‘more like expressing life through artistic practices’ where an artist reflects artistic leniency in every aspect of one’s life. She explains this as creating art for the sake of art, expression and exploration, not for fame, money, or prestige. The artist may be starving in the eyes of those who measure wealth in material possessions, but that is because the artist’s hunger is determined by a different value system. Rather than material concerns there are metaphysical concerns, the concern of rejecting a conventional and traditional way of life. Instead of following or even desiring the expected linear timeline of school, job, marriage, children, and retirement, the curiosity to explore other possibilities and ways of living seems more desirable than the traditional model.

From the perspective of the perceived-other, there is a ‘right way’ of doing something, where as we ‘as-the-self’ believe that there is the ‘right way for us’ to do so something. This allows room to manoeuvre within social constructs, making life more “liveable” or “bearable” to the individual. It is a ‘way of thinking and living’ which allows for the inclusion of alternative ways of living and thinking, whereas the traditional is more exclusionary of these alternatives. That is not to say that choosing a traditional path is wrong, but to think that it is the only way demonstrates an exclusionary way of thinking and living which pushes the perceived-other apart causing the divide between communities to grow.

Those who have participated in public art interventions recognize these challenges as part of their struggle to develop a sense of belonging, to co-exist with the perceived-other within a shared space. Limitations and boundaries have led these individuals and communities to experiment with media and methods to make their ways of thinking and living more accessible to their perceived-other. This has been the case with a group of activists presenting their way of thinking and living as an alternative to the dominant way of thinking and living in Northern Cyprus, which is seen as a more traditional and socially acceptable way, using stencilling, wheat-paper pasting posters and using performances as a means of intervention. Despite being more of a day to day struggle, their alternative is not just an alternative for the sake of being contradictory, but for the sake of making their lives more liveable in a shared space. What is more, this struggle is not just recognized as one strictly belonging to their community, but their alternative allows them to empathise with a perceived-other facing the same struggle of trying to exist in such a rigid system. One
participant defined their interventionist actions as a means of “reclaiming place, because you can see something coming from you” (Appendix 1e) before adding that “you want to be able to have that sense of belonging in the place in which you live. I live here, I work here…I want something when travelling between the two that makes me feel like I belong here.” This implies that there is very little within the shared space, be it person, object, or action that makes the participant feel a sense of ‘belonging’. It could be said that it is the lack of sense of belonging and community within one’s daily environment combined with a strong desire to belong to a place and a community that may lead to taking matters into one’s own hand. Public art interventions were simply one method that could reach a broader audience consisting of communities of the perceived-other sharing the same space.

Sometimes removing one’s self from the context is the last resort. Sümer Erek, a Cypriot artist now working and living in London, chooses to live away from not just Cyprus, but the “drama and politics” of working within such a problematic geo-political context and mind-set. Erek’s work is embedded in social engagement and audience participation and has included this aspect in most of his work across different settings, media, and subjects ranging from environmental issues of waste and sustainability (‘The Newspaper House’, Installation, London and Liverpool, 2008), to socio-political issues of ownership and belonging (‘Ownership, Earth, Belief in Cyprus’, Intervention, inside parliament building in Nicosia, Northern Cyprus, 2005). Although Erek has taken up issues of identity and belonging within the Cypriot context in his artistic practices, he believes that not being in Cyprus has allowed him to create and grow as an artist in a way that he could not have done had he remained in Cyprus. During our brief meeting (Appendix 1c), Erek also stated that it is difficult to find a community in which one can be as an artist even within a community of artists because of immature and childish arguments amongst artists. This lack of support and collaboration within one’s perceived community would hinder an artist who strives for social collaboration, thus seeking other communities outside of Northern Cyprus with alternative ways of practice.

To be able to change perceptions of the traditional, socially acceptable ‘ways’, whether it is art practice or reception, thinking or living, would eventually lead to the awareness, recognition and – perhaps in time – acceptance of the alternative by the status quo. Those who have chosen to stay in Northern Cyprus (or those who have not yet
decided to leave) contribute towards making the alternative visible on a day to day basis, through their interactions with the perceived-other, manner of dress and conduct, performing subjective gender constructs, and finding ways to make their lives more liveable without conforming to that which contradicts their way of living and thinking.

**Intervention-participants (Us)**

*The intervention-participants refer to those who have created the public art interventions mentioned in Chapter 4. Here, I use a more emic voice in describing the ‘us’.*

Upon my return to the Cyprus, having been in the United States and the United Kingdom, I found myself – alongside those whom I would later associate as ‘us’ – as a perceived-other of the general public, labeled under the category of marginalized youths by those who had the strict and rigid way of thinking mentioned in the previous section. This group of ‘us’ did not conform to conservative and traditional views, beliefs and lifestyles that had been passed down from older generations and was adopted by our peers without question. Nor did these marginalized youths agree with the more materialistically inclined peers who were followers of the mainstream. These differences would cause long-standing friendships to grow apart, yet lead to the formation of new ones. However, the fact remained these perceived-others would not voluntarily meet and converse in any space or situation. If debating ideas did find its way into topics of conversations, it would often consist of each party defending its own opinion without listening to the other, until one or both sides grew tired of arguing and not being heard and would give up. One side was allowed to ‘get it out of their system’ while the other sat silently, waiting for it to finish. What is shared between the two is that this type of ‘debating’ rarely creates a new point of view. Rather than supporting the “I am right, you are wrong!” argument, communities need a platform to exchange perspectives in order to gain understanding of the perceived-other. This may enable each perceived-other, as the saying goes, to live and let live.

Determining factors for marginalization range across a spectrum of characteristics, from things as noticeable as fashion sense to those less visible, such as political affiliation or heritage. As with any prejudice, there are certain assumptions made in relation to a particular way of dressing, or a particular place where people may choose to socialize.
Certain brands, places, clothes and music become associated with a particular group of others, and all of these factors played an important part in inspiring some of the interventions that took place during the research and some of the preceding exhibitions.

Just as it was for I, researcher-as-participant, the way of thinking for ‘us’ was a combination of personality and life experience, from having lived and traveled abroad, kept an open mind to new experiences, people and their ideologies, engaging with other cultures, people, and arts in order to have a better understanding of the essence of the people and place. The experience of being the perceived-other (and being very conscious of being othered) instilled in ‘us’ the golden rule of treating others as one would want to be treated, with an open mind and open heart, for there was the acknowledgement of the world not just being a collection of dichotomies and binary oppositions of right or wrong, black or white. The understanding of certain concepts, ideologies and beliefs had more fluidity rather than being bound by strict and rigid borders. This growing conception of cosmopolitan human relations and human in relation to its surroundings adopted by the humanist and ‘eco-centric’ activists and artists, us, contrasts greatly with the more conservative, linear and rigid view adopted by the older and younger generations following strong cultural, religious, and nationalist traditions in their ways of living and thinking, ‘them’.

Post-Intervention Participants (Them)

Post-intervention participants refer to those whom I, the researcher-as-participant have encountered on-site in relation to the public art interventions described in Chapter 4. What may seem like ‘gathering feedback from an audience’ is not separate from the intervention-practice. Through the intervention practices, the ‘passive audience’ is transformed into an active participant in their engagement with the public art interventions. Here, I use a more etic voice in describing ‘them’.

One of the aims (and struggles) when finding suitable locations for each intervention ‘artwork’, was to make sure that the works were as ‘public’ as they could possibly be. One of the factors playing into the suitability of sites was that chosen sites were inclusive of and accessible to all communities of the public, while still creating a meaningful context to its
intervention-work. The difficulty of finding sites that were ‘as public as possible’, suitable
to the content and practice of the intervention-works within Northern Cyprus made
apparent the lack of the kind of space that the intervention-work participants considered to
be ‘public’, (Appendices 1f, 1g & 1h) let alone decide upon a single definition for what
made a space public. However, the initial concern above everything else was to not isolate
members and communities due to the choice of site. This section helps provide insight into
the perceived-other’s ways of thinking and living mostly through the reactions and
contributions of the audience-as-participants during interventions prior to and during the
fieldwork. These reactions help portray to the reader the socio-cultural context of the
perceived-other of ‘us’, and the dominant, traditional way of thinking and living in
Northern Cyprus. To what is the-way-of-living and thinking of ‘us’ an alternative?

Interventions took place in two cities of Northern Cyprus, Nicosia and Famagusta,
places that have influenced and continue to influence pre-intervention participants and
intervention-practitioners alike, they ‘know’ these places as opposed to ‘knowing of’ them.
This knowledge gave practitioners a head start in creating interventions suitable for its site
and context. In both cities, areas within the Venetian Walls called Suriçi (literally meaning
within-walls) were chosen as potential sites for interventions involving stationary works,
such as stencils and wheat-paper paste posters. The intimate and self-contained nature of
the Suriçi regions in relation to the commotion of the rest of the city harbour a calmer
space of practice and reception, allowing for more interaction time for participants with the
work and researcher. The Suriçi regions in both cities are more inviting to pedestrians as
more of the old city can be absorbed on foot, from the old architecture to the rows of shops
lined up along one’s path. The many historical attractions, independent cafés, restaurants,
and retail shops helps create a mixed demographic. Universities attracting international
students have also contributed to the changing demographics of the cities and this change
is more visible in cities with nearby universities, such as Nicosia and Famagusta. Another
shared characteristic of the two cities is that they both have checkpoints through which
people can cross-over the Buffer Zone. The crossing-over of individuals from the across
the border contributes to the diversity of the public occupying these cities.

The term ‘they’, in reference to post-intervention participants, is more problematic
than explaining the ‘us’, simply because ‘they’ are a bit of a mystery to the researcher. The
knowledge of the perceived-other to the researcher lies within the brief interaction (brief, in relation to the length of knowing one of ‘us’). It would be unethical and unfair to classify the perceived-other based on a few bits of knowledge disclosed to the researcher, as a stranger, without really knowing the credibility or genuineness of the knowledge or opinion disclosed. It is rather this lack of knowing the perceived-other, which puts them in the ‘they’ category. Another factor shaping the categorization of ‘they’ lies in the language used by the perceived-other when referring to the researcher, or the community in which the researcher belongs. The ‘they’ has been determined by the post-intervention participants in how they perceive and categorize the perceived-other, as they. The identification of the ‘they’ is nothing more than a reciprocation of their establishing of the perceived-other.

When interviewing a journalist who had written a news piece on the increase of stencilling within a particular area (prior to the public art interventions for this research) the journalist swiftly declared that she “was not the one to talk to regarding these matters,” as she had no knowledge or interest in “street art”, but that a columnist on arts and culture for the same newspaper would be of more help, as he was ‘one of us’ (sizden), meaning ‘interested in arts and culture’. Her reaction was not at all surprising; the article which she had written went viral on social media, and the news-article had generated an on-going discussion in the comments section below the article, some finding her perspective amusingly ignorant while others took a more patronizing and aggressive tone to her content. A brief interview and discussion would have helped clarify that the journalist had simply recorded the sentiments of a single habitant living in that area, who had opportunistically spoken to the journalist while she was in the neighbourhood reporting on another story. A brief note on her role as the messenger would have clarified and diverted the negativity coming from the comments. The fear arising from the potential threat of these readers had discouraged her from responding to any communication, including emails and phone calls from me, as the researcher. In spite of my reassurance that I was not there to incite conflict but to gather information and perspective, I remained an outsider. Her repeated refusals to listen to my reasoning for wanting to interview her, to answer questions regarding her news-article content defaming street art and the opinions which they supported, in addition to listening to the research being conducted and how she could
help contribute to it paired by the distancing of herself from me, the researcher positioned me as the perceived-other, and thus vice versa.

This language, the use of ‘one of you’ in reference to I, as the researcher, without necessarily knowing who the researcher is, was a recurring theme amongst post-intervention participants. The corner-shop often visited by intervention-participants as well as myself within our spaces-of-practice both in Nicosia and Famagusta, associated unconventional ways of thinking and living to us as their perceived-other. A behaviour that was followed by a series of questions would be the refusal of plastic bags. This seemed extremely puzzling to the shop-keepers and would often insist that a plastic bag was essential despite the short journey from shop-to-house. Plastic bags often double in purpose as rubbish bags, as recycling facilities are minimal or require the effort to transport the recyclable materials to the points of disposal, a deal-breaker for most. While I transported recycling to its rightful place and discarded biodegradable items in a homemade compost, very little was left to discard, significantly reducing my dependence on plastic bags. This explanation would generate more questions, such as “Why bother? It’s all going to end up in the same pile of rubbish anyway?” or “When do you find the time to think about rubbish?” During my introduction to the shop-keeper in Nicosia, upon my refusal of a plastic bag, he responded with a smirk saying, “Oh, here we go; another one! There’s another one of you around here as well.” He then guessed, with the same intensity that one tries to guess the number you were thinking of, that I had spent some time abroad, was “one of those activist-environmentalist types” and was not from around here. This was particularly interesting as he, too, was not from around here, but I was more of a foreigner to those in the area due to my ‘activist-environmentalist’ attitudes. The more we talked the more of a stranger I became. My preferred mode of transport was incredible, walking under the summer sun in Cyprus is considered dangerous, but to me was nothing an umbrella or hat could not fix. My understanding of his amazement came from the lack of excuses for not taking the easier option; it was easier to drive a short distance in the heat, or grab a bag and not bother with carrying a reusable one around, to throw all disposables in the same pile without worrying about sorting or transportation. He even correlated the ‘activist-environmentalist’ characteristic to the fact that both plastic-bag-refusers had short hair. While the length of hair is no determining factor to one’s behaviour, it is perhaps
worth noting that when faced with unfamiliar practices, to make sense of things, one resorts to any mutual characteristic to help identify the perceived-other.

The act of walking around the Old City in Nicosia and Famagusta, either alone or with other participants became a performance in itself. We looked like tourists, walked around like tourists, yet spoke Cypriot-Turkish. In Nicosia’s old Arabahmet region, populated mostly by families from Turkey, looks would be received by a foreign-local, but no questions would be asked, no matter how badly those looks hid the accumulating questions within their heads. Several times, I took it upon myself to introduce myself, and explain that my paternal family spent many years within the region, while some still do. I would mention my paternal grandmother whom they may have known. I would greet people who I walked by, which is a practice by those who know one another. Perhaps, that was my way of trying to thin, if not eliminate, the walls between myself and the perceived-other. One demographic responded better to this practice than any other.

Children were always in the streets. With school terminated for the summer holidays, and parents off working, children would congregate and play games and talk under any shade they could find. These children are Cypriots, born and currently being raised in Cyprus, but their Cyprus is a very different to the one in which children were raised in the same area several decades ago. Their culture is a cross of the local and the native, the latter being the culture of their parents, from their homelands. I image it to be the same situation as when my grandparents and parents left Cyprus and moved to the United Kingdom, escaping insecure and unsafe situations to provide a better life for the next generation, without compromising one’s own culture and heritage. The children, perhaps even more so than the adults, recognize Northern Cyprus as their home, and the streets as theirs just as much as anyone claiming to be “from around here”.

I was abla, older sister, not necessarily because of familiarity, but it was generally how one addresses someone whose name is unknown, with the recognition that the person is not old enough to be teyze (auntie). They had seen me walking around, sweeping the balcony and wiping windows that faced the streets that they dwelled, walking to and from places (at times they would follow out of curiosity), and would sometimes whisper things at each other that made them giggle as I passed them by. During one of the interventions, where I painted white rectangles over stencils that were scribbled out by others (people
guessed that it was either the disgruntled resident who complained to the journalist or civil police), the same children congregated around me asking questions regarding who I was, what was I doing and why I was doing it. As I painted walls white, simultaneously answering questions, I found their curiosity and courage to ask and engage with a stranger laudable. The instinct to inquire in order to uncover what was unknown to them was met with genuine answers and communication. Although some answers caused some to lose interest in the conversation, such as “There are people who think differently than you do, and you won’t understand them unless you listen to what they have to say,” some children related to this by stating that their parents, teachers, in some cases friends did not listen to them. The relatability was mutual; as a single woman, at an age where most women would have been married and becoming mothers themselves, as someone still ‘a student’, in the public eye, I was still very much a child. I had not completed my rites of passage (by achieving the conventional definitions of career, ownership of real estate, marriage then children) into becoming an adult. We had more in common than we imagined. Throughout my stay in the neighbourhood, our small chats and interactions continued. However, the susceptibility of the children to different ways of thinking and living made me hopeful and worried at the same time, in that these minds would be moulded by an educational system, and a socio-cultural tradition that would form another generation with the traditional binary and rigid ways of thinking and living.

Less perceptive and curious than their younger participants, people going out for a night of leisure, to drink, dance and have a good time did not dwell too much on the sudden appearance of the interventions, but gave brief in-passing responses, so brief at times that they walked out of sight in a matter of seconds without allowing any time for further conversation. To say the least, however, there was an acknowledgement that the work was present, that it occupied a certain space, and that it did attract the pedestrians’ attention. The disinterest of the perceived-other, who had grown accustomed to seeing similar public art interventions through social media and their immediate surroundings, was assumed by a pre-intervention participant to be the result of over-exposure (Appendix 1e). I cannot help but wonder whether this was truly a case of desensitization through over-exposure to public art interventions, or whether the form, content, and context chosen by the public art intervention practitioners were not ‘accessible’ to the public ‘audience’. If
the public art interventions did not receive attention from its ‘audience’, then their content could not be questioned or discussed either. If grabbing the attention was the initial and all-important step to beginning the chain of mental and behavioural reaction, should it not be something unexpected and routine-breaking to stir the perceived-other, the post-intervention participants?

This explains why some interventions received a warmer ‘public’ welcome than other interventions. While the visual interventions seemed to blend in with the cityscape, lost amongst the many posters and advertisements, the song Piyasa (Appendix 3) that was composed and played as part as an intervention, went viral on several social media platforms (Chapter 4.2). The one characteristic I strongly associate with the song’s success is the use of the Cypriot Turkish dialect and the content consisting of local political affairs at the time, as well as the daily practices and conversations of ‘ordinary Cypriots’. The lyrics are spoken, as if one was listening in on a conversation of two friends, driving around in their car, so much so that it could be argued that it is the exposure of this private conversation in a very public manner, through mainstream media (and mainstream-sounding music) that drew people’s attention. It is very much situated in the culture, language, and day-to-day life of the local. Humour is another leading characteristic, the ability to recognize the patterns within the song and to be able to laugh about it. Watching participants on location, dressed up without a hair out of place, hearing the song and then reacting in laughter as if they had been caught on a ‘Candid Camera’ prank show, was enough to acknowledge that interventions that were relatable were seen as more favourable by post-intervention participants, and even removed the stigma attached to the practice of stencilling and wheat-paper pasting in the streets. This was verified by similar reactions across post-intervention participants regardless of their age, gender, nationality, economic status, or educational background although a knowledge of Turkish was required.

If, as intervention practitioners, we were to stick to the model of ‘consumer demand and supply’, this would be the sort of interventions we would have to produce to maintain a friendly relationship between practitioners, the practice, and the people, but art is not a commodity, and participants do not work at an intervention-making factory.

The post-intervention participants’ reactions provide an understanding of how they may react to certain types of interventions, whilst giving clues as to the identity of the
perceived-other. This could then help future practitioners, civil societies, awareness groups, minority groups, and many others determine how better to plan, prepare, and execute socially-engaging and interventionist arts practices in public. The wheat-paper paste posters in Arabahmet, Nicosia (in hindsight) could have been adapted in order to diminish the feelings of hostility the post-participants felt due to the content of the interventions. Strictly using text as stencils gives the impression of slogans, whereas the strict use of imagery without text leaves too much room for interpretation and practitioner intention, which could be mistranslated as threatening, not leaving post-intervention participants with much mental space for contemplation or questioning.

The following section takes a look at previous public interventions, and their respective post-intervention participants in furthering the understanding of the perceived-other, as well as the qualities of public art interventions that either bridges or disturbs the space between the Self and the perceived-other.

**Previous public art interventions and their post-intervention participants**

Confrontational public art interventions are necessary according to intervention-participants. The aim is to make the perceived-other feel the same discomfort felt by intervention-participants, and those within the same community, in their daily lives within Northern Cyprus. Participants exclaimed how they are expected to keep quiet and accept the norm, but that this falls against their values not just a creative-practitioner, but as a person. Pushing boundaries is a shared desire amongst those wanting to engage the perceived-other in the perspective of the self. During a pre-intervention interview, a participant stated that through their interventions, they wanted to see how far they could push the contextual boundaries of the expectations of public space. However, being faced with the unexpected, let alone confrontational, has put off members of the public in wanting to engage with such practices and practitioners alike.

In a previous public art intervention, conducted by a few members of the feminist branch of a socialist political party (i.e. YKP-fem), helium-filled balloons with signs attached to the ends were carried around streets, restaurants, and bars along the busy street of Dereboyu, Nicosia. These places were packed with people, mostly couples, ready to celebrate Valentine’s Day. The signs hanging from the balloons read similar to the
intervention the group had done the year before, where they held the banners over their heads, consisting of questions such as “Is ‘Love’ one man and one woman?” “Does ‘Love’ forgive violence?” “Is ‘Love’ a rose, a box of chocolates? Is ‘Love’ for sale?” The following year, they opted to write these questions on small pieces of paper, and leave the rolls tied with shiny ribbon on the tables of customers. Some read the bits of paper and nodded in approval, while others did not even open the rolls. The problem arising once again is this: chances are, the person choosing to engage in such acts of awareness-raising belong to a group of people who are open-minded and aware of the existence of the perceived-other, if they in fact make the distinction of the perceived-other at all. The question is what methods can be adopted by the self in order to reach and engage with the perceived-perceived-other? Could public art interventions be one option amongst many?

In 2012, a mix of twenty-something year old friends got together and decorated the streets and roads of Famagusta with cardboard rainbows, overnight, in support of LGBT+ individuals who felt trapped and alienated by the legal system as well as dominating traditional, religious and cultural values of society and in some cases, their immediate circle. The only reason for there being any media coverage of the story in the local newspapers was due to the fact that the same people conducting the intervention wrote a joint-statement and sent it to the press along with photographs. A year later, a public staircase went up during the Gezi Park Protests, as the colourfully-painted staircase was painted over by the municipality, and re-painted by Gezi Park supporters. To show solidarity with this act, pavements, roads, and public steps were painted in Nicosia, Famagusta, and Kyrenia in an organized intervention, supported by civil organizations. It seems that while local interventions do not get third-party support similar interventions from another context receive media, practitioner, and financial support. This once again highlights how the local context is tightly knitted in with the Turkish media and current affairs.

Although there is nothing wrong with engaging in an act of solidarity, especially within the context of the Gezi Park Protests, which has been an inspiration to this research, it demonstrates the keenness of some individuals and organizations to contribute to fighting a battle that has already been won rather than fighting their own battles, or supporting those who choose to do so. When YKP-fem stood along the sides of the roads
in Nicosia at rush hour, holding up mixed-media structures constructed to represent women who had been murdered in Northern Cyprus, there was no support from other organizations or individuals. There was no grand gesture of solidarity for the women being murdered. One thing that is made apparent from public reactions to these occurrences is the Cypriot-Turkish ‘we’ problem. Why is the Gezi Park Protest in Istanbul seen as our cause, while the murder of women in Northern Cyprus is not given as much attention? Is it because we do not see forced sex-workers as being part of the ‘Cypriot’ reality? Is it because the women being murdered by their ex-husbands or husbands are from a culture and tradition that is not very ‘Cypriot’ and therefore, again, is not part of our reality?

In 2012, a group on social media was set up to gather people wanting to join an unconventional protest, one that differed from the slogan-heavy, banner-adorned marches with megaphones. The group was to protest the lack of action and precaution taken by the municipality as a response to the Bin Men Strike, which caused garbage, pests, and unpleasant sights and scents to take over Nicosia in the summer heat. Dereboyu – the busy street of cafés, bars, and restaurants— was once again the scene of action. Photographers from newspapers were present, people from various organizations joined as representatives and the group wearing black bin liners and pollution masks attracted the desired attention. The walk lasted no more than twenty minutes. The proof had been documented by journalists and the protesters dispersed among the many cafés along the street to have their afternoon coffee. It was as if nothing had happened, and the next day, the rubbish was still there and the strike was still continuing.

3.3 Conclusion

Of course, one cannot expect painting rainbow-stairs to achieve peace amongst all people in the nation, or wearing bin liners to end littering and establish the proper use of disposal facilities, but what it can do is make issues visible to the passive bystander. Newspapers everywhere were covering the Gezi Protests in Istanbul as well as the Bin Men Strike in Northern Cyprus. The accounts of women’s murders were mere blurbs in newspapers, a few sentences so as not to leave them out. Had the YKP-fem group not given these tragedies a voice, a space within the daily lives of ‘the public’, chances are that some
would not even be aware of these murders. More importantly, they would not be aware that these issues mattered had a group collectively not taken on the responsibility to do what the media and politics of Northern Cyprus failed to do: demand justice for the women victims.

What harm is caused by promoting the knowledge and understanding of women’s rights? If no newspaper, radio show, politician, television personality, educational system, application on your phone, family member or friend cares to understand or acknowledge those undermined and isolated whilst sharing the same space at the same time, if ‘live and let live’ is a concept lost among the collection of clichés left over from generations, then I, too, ask “[w]hat resources must we have in order to bring into the human community those humans who have not been considered part of the recognizably human?” (Butler, 2004: 225). Previous interventions as well as the interventions (in their entirety, including the engagement with pre, post and intervention participants) have demonstrated depending on content and context how they can inform or entice people, and how they can (or rather cannot) be ignored. These all provide a scale for future public art interventions and aid in preparing for those to come. It gives insight into the audience’s willingness to engage with public art interventions within the context of Northern Cyprus, in addition to practitioners, processes, and the perceived-other in relation to the self. Public art interventions may not be the definitive answer to the problem of bridging disconnected, ‘other’ communities, but can certainly be argued to be a piece of the solution to the puzzle.

In the following chapter, I present the case-studies on which the rest of the thesis is based. With the local and historical contexts in mind, as well as the examples of public art interventions already presented, I leave you with ‘The Summer of Public Art Intervention’.
CHAPTER 4: THE SUMMER OF PUBLIC ART INTERVENTIONS

4.1 Introduction

As a researcher, one attempts to have control over as many aspects of the fieldwork as possible, to eliminate the element of surprise, not to be caught unprepared, and to ensure that the fieldwork follows a structure and a timeframe in order for it to be completed in the time it was allocated. The artist’s method is far from that of the researcher, and when one takes on the role of both researcher and artist, it is common for there to be disagreements, frustration, and impatience between the two positions or roles.

Inspiration can come at any place or any time, if one is in search of it. In some cases, it is found in the most mundane moments of everyday life, or it can found through diligent reflection upon the subject matter of interest. Some of the interventions that took place were inspired through lighting-bolts of inspiration, while others, through reflecting upon dormant ideas that were brought to light, shared and discussed, leading to their realization.

These case-studies are written by the researcher-as-participant. The dialogic interaction between I-the-researcher and I-the-participant has led to the resolution of complications in some instances, and to the occurrence of further complications in other instances. Nevertheless, it is the self-reflexivity of the researcher and researcher-as-participant that has produced the case-studies that follow. Four selected case-studies explore the inspiration, and the creation of collaborative and collective processes through which these public art interventions were brought to life. These case studies aim to provide the reader with the closest-possible experience of the emic (insider) perspective of the researcher-as-participant. Each case study brings to light something new regarding the practice and processes of public art interventions, and their components. These findings are revealed and thematically discussed in Chapter 6, while methods used, methodologies adopted and ethical considerations practiced or debated are discussed in Chapter 5. To ease the reader into these findings and discussions, I provide brief reflections of the autoethnographic narratives without taking away the spotlight from the following stories.
4.2 Piyasa

This intervention has been the most successful intervention in terms of public accessibility, artistic collaboration, and interventionist quality. The success of ‘Piyasa’ lies within the combination of all of the components mentioned above. The intervention imitates life and the song which is part of the intervention makes use of the Cypriot dialect, socio-cultural references and practices. It provides insights into how interventions can make use of form and content to contribute towards a collective culture and identity.

Piyasa in Turkish, meaning piazza, has come to be associated with a different meaning within the socio-cultural context of Turkey and Northern Cyprus. It has come to be a versatile word that is used to describe a certain type of place, person and product. To an outsider, the word is best explained through examples and visuals. As no academic resources for this social phenomenon exist, it is through these examples as well as online social platforms, such as Ekşi Sözlük (Sour Dictionary) that I define piyasa.27

As an adjective, noun, or verb, for a place, person, or product piyasa refers to something popular and mainstream. Anything that can be considered the latest fashion makes its way into the trend followed by piyasa people. It is all about not being left out of any new fashion or gadget trends, which includes frequenting the newest and most have-to-be-seen clubs, bars, and restaurants. Piyasa is a celebrity lifestyle without (though not always) the celebrity status of those following these trends, which tend to go as quickly as they come.

According to one Ekşi Sözlük member, to do a piyasa is “(translated) something that is popular among tikis.28 You go to Pasha (a restaurant/cafe/bar) with a friend, they introduce you to their friend and you introduce them to yours and it goes on and

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27 One of the biggest online communities currently in Turkey, this site is a “collaborative hypertext 'dictionary' based on the concept of Web sites built up on user contribution.” Retrieved from en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ekçi_Sözlük.

28 Tiki is the nickname given to a person (originated in Turkey and spread to Northern Cyprus), who is rich, privileged, and image conscious, generally with superficial values. Leading personas in reality shows such as Made in Chelsea (UK) or The Only Way is Essex (UK), or Keeping up with the Kardashians or Jersey Shore can be described as tikis within their respective contexts.
on…there’s usually a good meeting ambiance, such as music, alcohol…the conversation carries on…you meet new girls.” Another translates as “getting all dressed up and wandering around.” One simply states that *piyasa* is Bağdat Caddesi (Bağdat Avenue), a major shopping area for fashion brands, bridal shops, and the likes. Those who frequent and shop at the stores here would most probably be regarded as *piyasa* people by others. The term can also be used as an adjective to describe people, places, products and everything in between associated with the behaviour mentioned here. It often, though not exclusively, refers to the hangouts or the products favoured by the nouveau-riche or the petit bourgeoisie.

To ‘do *piyasa*’ could also mean “when five or six guys park their cars in a vacant bus stop or by the pavement and stand around in the cold chatting to each other,” usually accompanied by loud music played from one of the cars, through a powerful sound system. Another definition could mean when people drive around, generally with nothing better to do and nowhere in particular to be, once again accompanied by purposeful loud music in order to get the attention of onlookers. This pastime is also called *piyasa*, meaning *to cruise*. It is this *piyasa* with which this intervention is concerned and this practice which inspired the first intervention.

Such practices are not exclusive to Northern Cyprus and Turkey. Reality television shows from various contexts and countries depict similar people within their respective cultural contexts. It suggests that people spend much of their money and energy on portraying and upholding a certain ‘image’, generally dictated by celebrities from popular culture and the world of entertainment. The focus is on the superficial. Not only are *tikis* concerned with the superficial for themselves but pass judgement on others based on superficial qualities. Although a *tiki* is generally considered to be in a financial position that supports his or her expensive lifestyle, engaging in *piyasa* or being *piyasa* is not limited to wealth. That is not to say that all *tikis*, or *piyasa* people are the embodiment of the most superficial values in existence, but even if they were, they would not care as long as they looked good.

On the 29th June 2014, local elections, as well as a referendum were to take place in Northern Cyprus. The referendum concerned the amendment of certain sections and certain temporary laws of the constitution that had remained unchanged since 1985. While some
agreed that change for better (such as having a constitution more in line with human rights) had to begin somewhere, others saw this change as insufficient and a weak attempt to amend the old ways. The referendum was mostly known by the slogans “YES!” and “NO!” in regards to the potential changes to be made. However, the exhaustive discussion and debates both in the media and in social contexts had left some people confused and tired of the subject. I personally was very confused and unsure as to which source of information to rely on for guidance on the subject matter.

During the drive from Famagusta to Nicosia with one of the intervention-participants, we had been discussing the potential consequences of the election and its possible aftermath. Once we drove into the city centre of Nicosia, even though it was not rush hour, we found ourselves moving very slowly through a traffic jam. As we waited for the cars to slowly advance in the heat, a car drove by, cruising, with the music blasting through the speakers and a heavy bass-line pumping its way into other cars.

Turning off the air-conditioner in the car, we rolled down the windows. As I put my arm outside the car, like a piyasa person, I turned to my friend sitting next to me, thrusting my head back and forth to an invisible beat I rapped: “Piyasa! Onayladigim tek yasa!” which translates into: “Cruise! The only law that I approve!”

‘Yasa’ means law, which is embedded in the word piyasa. The current political context and the concern for image in the political climate in Northern Cyprus seemed to fit together. As we laughed and giggled at how this one line caught the current mood, we realized the potential of the catch-phrase to turn into a full-length song, to make a statement, even if subtly, in its accessibility and through its humorous content. For reasons then unknown, there was a feeling of wanting to be certain, and to some degree perhaps even knowing, that this could be the first public art intervention to come to life. What we did not know was that it would be as popular as it came to be.

A phone call later we were on our way to a close friend’s house; Inal Bilsel, a composer, musician and sound artist. Upon arriving at his home-studio, we mentioned the chorus line, the reason for making the song, and its part in the intervention process. As no particular melody had been agreed on, other than the beat and rhythm of the chorus line, we decided to set aside the composing for the time being and focus on the lyrics. After
quickly writing down what I could remember from the car ride, the lyrics were reviewed and altered, with a few other participants of the focus group who were also present. When all had agreed that the lyrics were satisfactory, we went into the studio to record the lyrics to a simple beat so that each person was in time with one another (Appendix 3).

The entire song was a spontaneously written and produced in three days and was released three days before the day the elections were to take place. Although it was executed and completed in such a short amount of time, it proved to be a success through social media sites. The fact that the first intervention (that had not been planned as the first intervention) was created by the researcher-as-participant also allowed insight into the creation and production process of an “artwork”, under the pressure of having the work fit into particular criteria. As future interventions would take place, this spontaneity would prove to be a common denominator in the initial phases of the interventions.

The song tells the story of two girls Fatosh and Shaziye who wake up at noon and decide to go cruising around the capital city, Nicosia. As Fatosh leaves the house she is asked to buy some rice as her mother is cooking. Fatosh and Shaziye drive around, watch people, gossip and talk about ex-boyfriends they have run into. They both have a carefree attitude. They see some boys standing next to their shiny new car and modified sound system and the boys noticing them. After dedicating a verse to their car and its modifications, they start following the girls in their car, which turns into an automotive courting scenario. Although both of the girls are impressed by the expensive car owned by the boys, the boys eventually lose interest and drive away. Next, Shaziye asks Fatosh what they will be doing that night and asks her to check for events that they could attend. While looking at a social media website, Fatosh comes across some debates discussing the upcoming election. As they are both unaware of the election they spend some time trying to figure out what’s going on, but quickly lose interest as they are still concerned with where they will be partying. As they approach Fatosh’s house, Fatosh realizes that they have forgotten to pick up the rice, and so they drive off, to cruise around the town for a while longer.

Upon the completion of the mixing and mastering of the song, options were discussed as to how the song could be transformed into a public art intervention. With the
limited time that was at our disposal, locations and means that were immediately available to us would have to be used.

Whilst deciding on how to turn the song into a public intervention, we realized that we had been driving around town without any particular destination in mind. Our actions and intentions replicated those that were mentioned in the song, which seemed to complement each other perfectly. The CD was placed into the car’s CD player, and the windows were rolled down with the volume turned up. We drove through the busiest roads with the most popular cafés, restaurants and bars in the capital and glared at people as we drove by, as cruisers tend to do.

Although the song had to compete for attention not only with the music blasting from other drifters, but also with the music coming from the shops and businesses alongside the road, the distinctive Cypriot-Turkish dialect, intonation, vocabulary and expression seemed to make heads turn towards the source of the song, as it was rare – dare I say unheard of – to hear a song for the purpose of cruising to consist of humour and politics, let alone sung in a Cypriot-Turkish dialect. Radio shows, television programs, the news are for the majority of the time delivered in Standard Turkish. Newspapers, unless aiming to make a statement by using the Cypriot-Turkish dialect, are written in Standard Turkish. Therefore, hearing the Cypriot-Turkish dialect in this context would be out of the ordinary.

The Cypriot-Turkish dialect, especially when exaggerated upon delivery, has come to be associated with comedic effect, such as it has been done in videos where popular film scenes have been dubbed with a Cypriot-Turkish dialect, or theatre plays or short sketches, where the story takes place within the context of Cyprus. Profanity is often combined with the use of the dialect and unfortunately is commonly seen in such videos that circulate through social media sites. The use of the dialect is different in the song as there is no intentional exaggeration when delivering the lines. Furthermore, the delivery of the lyrics, although following a rhyme pattern, falls somewhere between ordinary speech and rapping. The sentence structure and expressions used on a day-to-day basis have been preserved for the sake of making the song more relatable to the listener. It is not a song

29 Other potential methods of intervening included, handing out CDs of the song on road-sides, a common way of distributing flyers for clubs, however, these tend to be costly and create a lot of waste.
about Turkish-Cypriot youth performed in a standardized or Turkish manner, but in the language spoken by Turkish-Cypriots. Not only is the language familiar, but so are the circumstances, places, and daily activities and conversation topics mentioned in the song. One shared opinion from the feedback on the song was that once people listen to the song, they became self-conscious of the way they speak. Even as the artists, we became more conscious and self-aware of our language and delivery and choice of vocabulary, which seemed self-evident from the beginning as it was the work that was imitating life, but every time a phrase similar to that in the song was uttered, such as a basic conversation on the phone “Have you woken up yet”, it became increasingly difficult not to carry on singing the following lyrics.

Originally, the intention had been for the characters in the song to represent the Turkish-Cypriot youth constantly engaging in cruising and all that was related and associated with it. As I mentioned above, the word piyasa could be used in junction with many things, and grammatically could be a verb, a noun, and an adjective. The typical piyasa individual would wear expensive and flashy clothes, be well groomed, drive a flashy car (often with modifications) and spend a significant amount of time, money, and energy looking a certain way whilst ensuring that they hang out in the most popular and to-be-seen hangout spots. They are celebrities without the fame. The lifecycle of the piyasa youth consists of getting ready and going out. However, whilst attempting to use the piyasa persona to represent an apathetic and unproductive group of others, we found a commonality, that we find ourselves with similar dilemmas and conversations at one point or another. Even though the song is more satirical and playful rather than demeaning in the way that it criticises, because of the common language and expressions used, the song was able to communicate to others.

The first direct feedback received for this intervention was straight after it was played in a bar, which the collective often frequented. As frequenters, we had formed a friendship with the owner. We approached him to see whether he would play the song in the bar. The laughter began within the first few lyrics of the song and continued till the end. After listening to it privately, he accepted to play the song through the bar’s sound system and requested a CD of his own.
When the lyrics began, the chatter in the bar slowly died down. The few tables that were opposite the speakers stopped talking amongst each other for the entire song, while tables further away, continued to chat. Occasional bursts of laughter interrupted the song every now and then, and other than a crowded table at the far end of the bar, away from the speakers and outside, the attention from the customers seemed to be fairly consistent. At the end of the song, one table accompanied their laughter with applause.

As I stood at the bar to retrieve the CD, two girls in their early 20s asked whether it was I who had written the song, to which I responded by pointing in the direction of the table where the collective was sitting. I accepted a “Congratulations!” and “Well done!” on behalf of all who had made the song possible. Without having to prompt them, the girls began to pour out their feedback enthusiastically, always returning to the point that “for some reason [she] couldn’t judge the people in the song. Because [she and her friend] are guilty of doing what they (the people in the song) do too. We like to think we’re smarter and better, but we’re not.”

As it is with any kind of media, in order to gain access to a broader audience, the song was uploaded onto a music sharing website, SoundCloud, and shared via other social media websites, such as Facebook and Twitter. The song quickly began getting more hits. This inexpensive and borderless medium allowed the song to be circulated between different circles, and, shortly after, among others who would not be within the circle of the creators of the song. It was important not to advertise the song and to allow the song to take on a life of its own. If it was able to communicate to others, no extra effort should be necessary to “promote” the song. Shortly after uploading the song onto these sites, I was contacted by the moderator of the website uGavole, a platform for sharing Turkish-Cypriot social content. The moderator asked whether they could share the song on their website and Facebook page. Having granted them permission to share the song, three days later, I was contacted by the moderator again, stating that the song had received 10,000 hits, while on SoundCloud the number of hits were also increasing. Of course, the increasing number of hits and the popularity of the song, made it just that: a popular song, but not necessarily a successful intervention in the eyes of the researcher.

Social media sites made it easy to access comments of those who had listened, shared, liked, or disliked the song. Comments were mostly concerning their favourite lyric
of the song, which was the part where the hunky boy calls out to his friends driving by in the car, a line which we would hear on the streets, delivered in a way similar to the song. After a while, we could not distinguish whether we had subconsciously heard the same line and put it into the song, or whether the people in the streets were delivering the line as a result of listening to the song. Something was certainly beginning to stick in people’s minds. As mentioned before, the song was not a musically ground breaking sound or melody, but the use of a relatable and familiar language resonated with the listeners. The question was whether it was just this one line, which made people laugh that summarized the whole song for them or whether there was more to their understanding of the song than just the ‘funny’ lyrics.

Although feedback mostly consisted of people stating that they thought the song was funny and relatable, there were a few instances that varied from the others. During a one-on-one discussion with a sports car enthusiast, the person stated that they had hoped for the song to be more “club-like” musically so that they could actually play it in their car while they cruise. Another person said that they judged the characters in the song at first, but as the two ‘ditzy’ girls rapped about not knowing what the constitution alterations would be and what the referendum was for, they realized that they did not know the exact details either and had only heard about the referendum as others were discussing it. This made them think that they should know about the subject matter, so as not to end up like the characters the person so readily judged.

In this case, the work exceeded the audience of the intervention as it was taking place. However, as the first of many interventions and works to come, it created an excellent example of combining creativity, collaboration among artists, and creating whilst touching upon current affairs and social matters. It supports the idea that when a particular subject has been exhausted in the news, by articles, debates and discussion, presenting the same subject in a different medium can generate more buzz and attract more interest from the public. By presenting the same information in a different way, we can alter how an audience perceives it, and Piyasa made that clear from the start.

Previous public art interventions in Northern Cyprus (as discussed in chapter three) resembled or imitated public art interventions that had made news headlines either around the world or in Turkey (such as colouring the pavements or stairs of public spaces in
rainbow colours, as it had been done around the time of Gezi Protests in Turkey, or writing famous poetry on walls, or even imitations of popular Banksy stencils), yet here was something that had been created for a local audience. The artwork created was disguised, if you will, in something familiar to the audience. Playing loud music from a car or having loud music at a café was nothing out of the ordinary. What was out of the ordinary was the dialect of the conversational style in the song. Although Turkish-Cypriots use and hear the dialect every day of their lives, to hear it coming from such a style of song must come as a surprise. As Jean-Francis Lyotard would argue, this was something that the public would “recognize… [and] understand, what is signified” (Lyotard cited in Kester, 1995:4). The familiarity of the dialect and the familiar music invited the audience to pay attention to it, rather than being forced upon them, and it invited the audience to receive a message through the work via a familiar language, their own language. It is less aggressive in its attempt to connect with the audience, which has not been the case with certain stencils done by activists, even though their messages were of love, equality, and justice.

With Piyasa, a work was created that reflected and imitated the very audience that received it. At times, it made people break out in laughter, a moment of “it’s funny because it is true, we do say that,” but in the end, it did reach a wide audience, an audience that was pleased to have some recognition of part of a collective identity and culture, but hopefully, the song held a mirror up to their own practice of piyasa, and the time, effort and money that could be utilized for a more productive and beneficial cause.

4.3 Rodin’s Thinker on Wicker and Sitting Woman

The following two interventions take as their subject matter the very context in which they are set, making them site-specific works. Although similar in content, the two interventions, in close proximity to one another, occupy public spaces of varying accessibility, one being set right next to a coffeehouse and the other positioned in a quiet residential street with not much foot traffic. These interventions highlight the influence of public space over the type of reception and engagement between spectator and intervention.
“Napan?”
“Nolsun, aha otururum.”

“What are you doing,” a way of asking “How are you?” in Cypriot Turkish, is sometimes answered with the peculiar response, “What else? I’m sitting,” meaning that the person is not doing much or doing anything of much importance, such as watching television, reading the paper, or some other ‘sitting’ activity. If the sitting is done as a group, it may indicate, chatting, gossiping over tea or coffee. Either way, it is a common expression used to indicate that one is engaging in an uneventful activity.

The first time I heard this expression was from my maternal grandmother, a perpetually busy woman, constantly tackling a task or running an errand. She is rarely without company and has no reservations when it comes to making new friends. To this day, her productivity throughout the day has never failed to impress me. However, when the phone rings or there is a knock at the door, she responds, nonchalantly, “Oh no, I’m not busy. I was just sitting.” It was almost as if the expression become a default answer to avoid further interrogation, or to cut the conversation short, a bit like answering “How are you?” with “I’m okay,” or “I’m fine,” regardless of reality. I struggled with such answers, because the answer never seemed to reflect the truth. It was almost as if one had to say one was not busy so as not to appear rude by dismissing their visit or suggesting that they were okay so as not to make the other person uncomfortable.

My grandfather, on the other hand, preferred not to get involved in other people’s problems and mostly kept to himself.30 Quite contrary to my grandmother, who always runs around and enjoys the company of others, my grandfather sat out on the porch on his own. Over the years, he amazed me with certain observations and inventions he had made in his free time as he sat in his chair out in the garden. During the colder days, which are not many in Cyprus, he sat on a chair not in front of, but next to the gas heater, facing the television. His chair was always “just the right distance” from the heater and the television, and out of my grandmother’s way. During the summer, ‘the ideal place to sit’ varied throughout the day, as my grandfather had astutely observed over the years he had been sitting in the garden of his house. Through his instructions I know that in the morning, the

30I have mentioned the passing of my grandfather in my acknowledgements.
cool shade of the gazebo at the front of the house, overlooking the rose bushes, the African jasmine, and the plum tree is the perfect spot, whereas in the evenings, the chair is to be transported to the back of the garden, just outside the kitchen overlooking the mulberry, fig, lemon, and peach trees, and the water reservoir, a giant concrete cube he built in his youth. He would announce that this location is the coolest place to be and that everyone should all come and join him there. Sitting is obviously, not just something to do when there is nothing better to do; rather, just as a monk practices meditating, it is something to be perfected with dedication and time.

During the two years I spent in Cyprus before coming to the UK for my studies in 2013, I would visit my grandparents in my own time. Our family tradition was to visit the elderly as a family. The more the merrier. When I opted for paying solo visits to my grandparents, I began to notice just how much sitting and coffee-drinking we did. They say if you become aware of something, perhaps to the point of obsession, and it remains at the surface of your consciousness, then you begin to notice it everywhere. It was a few years ago that this response left me unsatisfied and I began to think “What kind of an activity is that? Sitting...” The more I thought about it, the more it annoyed me, and the more annoyed I got, the clearer it became that my annoyance could be translated into creative practice. As annoying as it was, I found it simultaneously amusing that we Cypriots consider sitting an activity, a pastime.

My paternal grandmother, at almost ninety years of age, is quite similar, in that my oldest memory of her is sitting in front of the television and not much has changed since. She, like my grandfather, spends most of her time sitting. Her reminiscing is rarely of happy times, and her thoughts on the present are no different. I have concluded that this is her way of life rather than her physical ability is the cause of her spending most of her time sitting, the Cypriot method of meditation.

The first time I attempted to tackle the subject matter of sitting as creative content was through a short stop-motion animation called Shh! I made as part of my Masters degree, the story of a man who sits in a chair, hushing every single sound that disturbs his silence from car horns to the sound of wind blowing outside. The film concludes with the man sitting in silence, beginning to hear a high-frequency noise, as one with tinnitus might hear. Hushing the sound several times, the man realizes that the hallucinated noise will not
go away, and as the camera zooms in on his sweating face, with the understanding that hushing away the sound cannot get rid of it.

_Shh_ is an exaggeration of people I have seen throughout my life, who sit around and complain about anything and everything from corruption in the government to currency exchange rates, from air pollution to the decline of humanity. Perhaps, like gossip, to sit and complain with company is treated as a bonding ritual. My grandmother and her friends sit around in the kitchen, my grandfather used to do this with his friends at the local coffeehouse. My paternal grandmother sits and contemplates on her loneliness even when surrounded by people, as if to get as many of her thoughts as possible out of her system.

When with my friends, we sat around talking, planning, brainstorming, joking, drinking. In fact, it was as I was having coffee with one intervention-participant discussing ideas for interventions, sitting across from one another on the balcony of this Walled City house that I had a revelation. The phone rang and following a ‘hello’ the next sentence I heard was “Nothing… just sitting.” We were all guilty of _sitting_. Was it that we were not doing anything valuable while we were sitting? To me, sitting implied not ‘doing’ anything worthy of mentioning. Our sitting was accompanied by talking and talking about what we already talked about and what we were going to talk about and not _do_ anything as a result. The talking never ended and neither did the sitting. So I got up and said “I am going for a walk.”

The Walled City in Famagusta was similar to Arabahmet, an old, affluent neighbourhood of Nicosia where my father’s childhood home was based and where I had based my headquarters throughout the fieldwork timeline; old houses were left unoccupied and deteriorating, and the area was rich in history. My memories of the Walled City started with me attending ballet rehearsals when I was a child and gathering in the square on New Year’s Eve with our family friends to watch the then-impressive fireworks. The older I got, the more the Walled City became part of my life. Cafés became regularly frequented spots and the high-rising ancient city walls became our late night hangout spots, a quiet place for making noise with friends through laughter and music. A few bars popped up here and there, with the old space trying to accommodate new trends. I walked down the roads I knew, I made an effort to walk down those I had not ventured down before. Deserted
houses, once homes, were left to rot in the sun and rain. All I could see was surface, lots of it, waiting to be tampered with. Not the fragile stone walls, but the pieces of wood pretending to be doors, or the broken glass that was once a window, or the sheets of metal resting against the walls, resting as if waiting to be picked up and taken away, although nobody ever did. The paint cracking and falling off from some of the walls, and the exposed concrete contrasting with the thick, white plaster created outlined spaces as potential practice spaces. I took photographs to take back with me so that I could contemplate, away from the overwhelming feeling of the vast spaces that harboured potential for intervention.

As I was walking back, I stopped for a drink of water and a bit of shade. I sat down across from a local coffeehouse. Coffeehouses (kahvehane) are gathering places (generally for men) to converse and play backgammon over a hot or refreshing beverage. Like a ‘local pub’ or a ‘watering hole’ (without the alcohol), it is a place to mix with the community, to stay in the ‘know’ and discuss current issues. Coffeehouses are declining in popularity, at least in their traditional setting, as popular franchises have replaced the modest coffeehouse for the more ‘modern’ option, appealing to all generations and genders.

The tradition of the coffeehouse or kahvehane goes back to the 16th century, where the institution of the coffeehouse was adapted to Turkish customs in Constantinople (Robinson, 1972: 37). Robinson writes:

To these “schools of the wise” came, in the first instance, young students and professors; persons come up from the country to seek for appointments; lovers of chess and backgammon; acquaintances whose only aim was to pass away an hour or two in company: each and all found entertainment here for a modest sum (Robinson, 1972: 37-8).

The coffeehouse became a place for social interaction, informal debate and the exchange of ideas. Robinson mentions a Cambridge professor, John Houghton, who declared that “a man might pick up more useful knowledge at these places than he could by application to his books for a whole month,” comparing these coffeehouses to the likes of a university (Robinson, 1972: 79). During a time when televisions and radios were scarce, coffeehouses had them and the whole community would gather to share the experience. With the
growing accessibility of technology, coffeehouses lost their role in providing to the community. However, some coffeehouses still exist, thanks to their customers’ loyalty, still mostly men belonging to an older generation, and the occasional passer-by asking to buy a bottle of water. The coffeehouse continues to serve as a modest public space for certain members of the community to gather, engage in discussion and debate. These spaces have been and still are a significant cultural and political realm in which exchange of knowledge takes place.

I watch the men sitting outside of the coffeehouse, under a tree in the breeze, sipping coffee. One raises his hand in disbelief that the dice favoured his opponent playing backgammon. His opponent laughs a dirty, sneaky laugh, rubbing in his luck with the dice. There is a table of men talking amongst themselves. It does not seem like a conversation because after someone says something, there is a long pause. Mouths are moving, but I do not know if there are any ears doing any listening. A boy, seemingly in his late teens, is going back and forth with a tray, full of cups of hot coffee on the way out, full of empties on the way back into the coffeehouse. I watch the men, wonder what they are thinking and then notice a table of men watching me, most probably wondering what I am doing watching them. I stand and leave, leaving them to continue to sit and stay where they are, as they were. This time, it was I doing the sitting, watching and observing, taking a note to myself that I should join them in their customs and speak to them, in order to capture their voices.

I returned to my friend’s house. I explained that since I became obsessed with all the sitting, I kept thinking of Auguste Rodin’s The Thinker, a renowned statue across the world. For years, I thought the statute to have been a single entity all by itself, until I came across this information on the Musée Rodin website:

“He [The Thinker] represented Dante, author of the Divine Comedy which had inspired The Gates, leaning forward to observe the circles of Hell, while meditating on his work. The Thinker was therefore initially both a being with a tortured body, almost a damned soul, and a free-thinking man, determined to transcend his suffering through poetry… While remaining in place on the monumental Gates of Hell, The Thinker was exhibited individually in 1888 and thus became an independent work. Enlarged in 1904, its colossal version proved even more popular: this image of a man lost in thought, but whose powerful body suggests a great
capacity for action, has [become] one of the most celebrated sculptures ever known.\textsuperscript{31}

My internal monologue began to flow; “those men who sit and sip their coffee, are they thinking? What of, day after day, week after week? My grandfather, does he relive every single memory over and over again? My grandmother, when she sits without the television on, what is it that’s going through her mind?” If you ask anyone who spends their days sitting, they all have an opinion and a suggestion for everything. Whether it is something they know about or think they may know about, they have an opinion. At times, they will distract their nostalgia by bombarding others with questions. “When are you going to get married? Time is running out. What are you going to do with your life? You need to decide,” yet a second later, they transition into reminiscing and reflecting with a simple “When I was your age”. They will talk about how they never wanted to get married, how they never had a car growing up, how they could not be free to follow their dreams, and then they return to the present moment by tell you not to rush into marriage, to study hard, and not to drive on your own after dark. They will tell you to get a safe and secure government job if you can, and then complain about the neighbour’s son who got a government job only because of nepotism. Apparently, everyone who has a secure and well-paid job has connections, and none of them have earned their place. They complain about the lack of independence of the younger generation from their parents and then demands that you take the money they are giving you, to “spend on something nice,” to sum it up, repetitive contradictory and conflicting thoughts, due to all that sitting and thinking.

I told my friend that I wanted to do an intervention that night, like I had just come from a walkabout, spent days in the dessert searching for meaning, an answer, and having found it returned to my tribe to announce what it was. I explained that I wanted to do a stencil of Rodin’s \textit{The Thinker}, sitting on an iskemle.\textsuperscript{32} A laugh accompanied by “That will be a good one!” was reassuring. When asked “where?” I did not have an immediate


\textsuperscript{32} An iskemle, is a significant and symbolic piece of furniture in Cypriot life and culture. It highly resembles Van Gogh’s \textit{Chair}. Hand-made of wood and wicker, the iskemle is a part of tradition, in the private and public domains of Cypriot life.
answer, as having come back from the walk, there seemed too many options. I shared the
thoughts and ideas that came to me during my walk, showing the photographs of potential
sites, and mentioned the busy coffeehouse of the men just sitting, drinking coffee, people-
watching and thinking of who knows what. Were they also reminiscing? My understanding
of Cypriots was that, we were not a nation of doers, but of sitters, coffee-drinkers, and
‘thinkers’, without the energy or will-power to get up, stand up and do something better
with our time and energy.

My friend then asked, “Why don’t you just do it outside the coffeehouse,” almost in
disbelief as to why this had not occurred to me having stared at it for at least fifteen
minutes. I am puzzled as to why it did not occur to me, maybe I, too, got carried away with
sitting and thinking. It took four hours, one projector, two large sheets of acetate, some
tracing paper, and coffee breaks in between to get the stencils of the chair and two layers of
the base and shadows for Rodin’s The Thinker (Fig. 5). We waited for the late hours of the
night, as usual, to go out to intervene in the wall of this coffeehouse. I worried whether we
would get into trouble, if someone saw us. Although the street was dark, we still had to use
our phones as flashlights to make sure the layers overlapped properly, which would have
seemed suspicious to anyone had anyone been passing by at that time of day. We used that
which we had available to us, black spray paint for shadows, wall paints left over from
previous projects applied with used sponges for everything else, as the surface of the wall
was uneven, bumpy and rough; holding brushes somehow triggers our brains to be too
careful with our strokes and would have made the process much longer. There were three
of us, and although the hour was late, we were wide awake. Perhaps it was the amount of
coffee we had, perhaps it was the potential danger of getting caught and possibly getting
into trouble, but we were buzzing. The heat coming from the concrete and the surface of
the wall did not help the task at hand, as we wiped away the sweat from our foreheads with
our paint-tainted hands. It was over within fifteen or twenty minutes. A quick photograph
taken with a smart phone, and a not-so-smart flash that screamed out for attention, marked
the completion of the work. And we headed home to sit and have another coffee.

With the work completed, it was time to see the ‘intervention’ come to life. A few
days later, I returned to the scene. Due to some problems with the police in Nicosia that
were encountered after a nation-wide intervention took place, I was afraid that the same
might happen in Famagusta, so I did not return to the site immediately after it had appeared. Certain stencils have also been mentioned in a bad light in the media, so I wondered whether the reaction of the locals would be similar, angry at the people who have drawn this ‘nonsense’ on their clean, white wall. Soon, however, I found out that this was not the case.

There were about 5-6 tables set outside of the coffeehouse occupying the pavement. As it was on the day, men were sipping coffee, playing backgammon and talking in a rather loud manner, although this was not a heated argument but a friendly conversation. I immediately felt out of place, I did not fit the definition of his usual customer. I felt people staring, trying to figure out whether I was lost or whether I was a tourist. They were shocked when I started speaking Turkish, like them.
Fig. 5 Rodin’s Thinker on Wicker, Famagusta, Cyprus, 6 July 2014. Photograph by Aycan Garip. Original in colour.
“Oh we thought you were a tourist,” says one of the customers. It is clear that all customers are regulars and know each other.

“No, I’m from here. I just wanted to speak to the owner or the manager if possible,” I say in a very formal manner.

I am directed inside, where I ask for Ibrahim Bey (Mister Ibrahim). He looks at me with inquisitive eyes, his eyes shifting every-so-often to the notebook and papers in my hand. I introduce myself and my purpose for coming to his coffeehouse.

“I am a doctoral candidate, you see,” I say.

“I see,” he says. “You are a doctor.”

“No, I’m not a doctor. I am a-” stopping to think of a better word to make my position as clear as possible, “a research student. I am doing research.”

He nods, but I get the feeling that it is not because he understands, but because he does not know how else to respond to that statement.

“I wanted to ask you a few questions about the stencil on the wall.”

“Yes, you are here for our artwork?” he asks.

“Yes, but I was hoping to arrange a time and day to talk to you. You see, I was hoping to get a recording and you would also need to sign a form of consent as I will be using the interview for my research.”

“Well, you can talk to me now. I have time now!”

“I understand, but I was hoping to arrange date and give you some background information on what it is I am doing. Due to ethical reasons, you would need to sign a consent form for your permission to use your input in my thesis. Also, I was hoping to record the interview, which would also require your permission, if that is okay.”

“I see, but if you come later, you may not find me. We get very busy. I cannot promise that I will be free when you come around next.”

“Well, you can talk to me now. I have time now!”

“I understand, but I was hoping to arrange date and give you some background information on what it is I am doing. Due to ethical reasons, you would need to sign a consent form for your permission to use your input in my thesis. Also, I was hoping to record the interview, which would also require your permission, if that is okay.”

“I see, but if you come later, you may not find me. We get very busy. I cannot promise that I will be free when you come around next.”

“I see, well in that case can I take a bit of your time?”

“Sure.”

“Returning to the stencil—” I commenced, opening my notepad and beginning to write, but was interrupted with:

“About the what?”

“The picture on the wall, outside.”

“Yes, I closed the shop a few days ago and when I returned to open shop in the morning, it was there. Some youngsters must have done it overnight.”

“It would appear so. What do you think of it?”

“Well, it seems to be a young, or youngish man, I should say, definitely younger than me, sitting down on an iskemle…and he’s thinking. He’s a bit like us. That’s what we do here.”

“So you think it is suitable to your coffeehouse?”

“Yes, yes! The customers like it. We even had some tourists coming and taking photos of us. They said, we’ve never seen anything like it before. It’s good for tourism I guess. They said that they’ve seen similar things in Europe but not here. If it makes the tourists happy, we should do more.”

“I see. So you believe we should have more street art for the sake of tourists, not because you think the local community can benefit from it?”
“Well, do you see our government funding anything like this? I see our youths and they’re not interested in art. There’s a group of people who gather in the Bandabulya (a closed marketplace that is open to community classes, opposite the coffeehouse) and they do sketching and painting. There’s a blue-haired girl teaching them. They asked me if I could sit still so they could draw me the other day, but that was only a handful of people.”

“That must have been an interesting experience. So, when you look at this work, does it evoke any thoughts or feelings in you personally?”

“What do you mean?” he says, unsure where this interview is headed.

“Does this work make you feel or think of anything in particular?”

“I mean…it’s nice. It’s accurate. It’s interesting.”

“Interesting in what way?”

“I mean…I don’t understand art, I barely finished secondary school.”

“I think you do. If the person or people who did it didn’t think you could understand it, they wouldn’t put it outside your coffeehouse, would they?”

“Yes, but I just look at it and see a man sitting on an iskemle and thinking. He seems to be deep in thought. That’s a bit like us. We are always thinking, always with our troubles, this country, its government, always thinking. It’s good.”

He asks me if I would like a coffee and I decline. He asks me where I study and I tell him that I study in the United Kingdom. He says he could tell, because, I talk different. I tell him that it is because I was trying to be formal. He tells me that formality is unnecessary. I now understand why my permission papers, mention of recording devises and scheduled interviews has made him uneasy. He prefers to talk with a cup of coffee and in the familiar language that friends use towards one another, not in the language of news reporters. I stand up, thank him for his time and ask him whether I could use our ‘talk’ for my thesis.

“Your what?” he asks.

“Once I finish my research, I will write it all up, like a book.”

He says I can and that he would be happy to help a young student trying to learn and ‘get somewhere’.

A few days later, I visit the stencil again with my sister and a close family friend, who insists on seeing the stencil. The stencil is still there, untouched, and the coffeehouse is crowded, as always. My friend points and makes sounds of amazement and positive remarks, slightly exaggerating, attracting the attention of customers.

“Oh my, it’s so clever! How lucky you must be to have this on your wall.”

I cannot and do not say anything, out of embarrassment. What happens next is this: Customers turn around to face us and begin praising their work to us:

“Yes, it was done here by someone,” shouts out one.

“Yes, look, it’s us,” says another with a smile.

“Are you tourists?” asks another.

A wave of similar comments erupt from the customers, and turns into a sea of mumbling, as they talk over one another. My friend answers;

“No, I live just down the road and I heard about someone doing a stencil and wanted to see it. How lovely it must be to get all this attention.”

Similar to the chorus above, the gist of what is being said is:
“Oh yes, we’ve had so many tourists coming and taking photographs of it, that’s why we thought you were tourists. It’s our little attraction!”

My friend smiles and in perhaps a bit of a patronizing tone remarks, “Well whatever you do, don’t paint over it or take it down! It would be such a shame!”

The chorus chants once again: “Oh no, no, no! We wouldn’t! He’s our thinking man. He’s going to think us out of this mess.”

A grand finale of laughter and a choreography of waving hands and we go on our way, leaving them to sit and sip coffee with their Thinker.

Similar to Piyasa, there is once again a familiarity between the audience and the subject matter (Chapter 4.2, p. 129-131). Although Ibrahim and his friends at the coffeehouse did not know of Rodin’s Thinker as an art enthusiast would, they knew, or were told upon its appearance on their coffeehouse wall, that this was a famous statue. It is hard to say whether Ibrahim was annoyed or even angry upon first seeing that his wall had been tainted, but as tourists and those who recognized the statue sitting on an iconic piece of Cypriot furniture, the wicker chair or iskemle, and began taking photographs, and furthermore sitting down to have coffee at his coffeehouse, Ibrahim recognized the stencil as a good thing. However, when I asked him how, if at all, he related to the work itself, he stated that the stencil was a depiction of him and his customers at the coffeehouse. When I first asked Ibrahim about his thoughts on the work, he answered me by stating that he knew nothing about art, and yet, here was a representation of him on his wall. Perhaps over time, the stencil will be a reminder that he and his coffeehouse is a place of thinkers, perhaps it will be taken as a sign of encouragement to debate and discuss and to keep the coffeehouse as a place for critical discourse. As mentioned by an activist during an interview the act of public art intervention “is a means to reclaim a space” (Appendix 1a) that may not feel familiar anymore. In this case, the public art intervention reclaimed not the space, but the purpose of the space for the audience. To make visible and remind others of the value and presence of members of the community who may have gone unnoticed.
Fig. 6 *Sitting Woman*, Famagusta, Cyprus. 3 September 2014. Photograph by Aycan Garip. Original in colour.
That very same summer, my family had gotten news that my great-grandmother had been hospitalized. She could not speak or stand, and could hardly breathe. We were told to use this opportunity to say our goodbyes. I arrived with my mother at the hospital. I have never enjoyed visiting the hospital and this occasion was no different; rows and rows of people, sitting and waiting for their appointments, children running around and screaming, mothers running after them and screaming, I absorbed it all in within a matter of seconds and it made an imprint in my collection of memories.

My mother was at the reception desk, not feeling her best. I saw an arm rise from behind the desk, signaling “straight, and then to the left!” like an air hostess pointing out the emergency exists. My mother and I went straight, then to the left, and we walked into a bare-walled room with two hospital beds and a few chairs, two tables, and a fan that was rotating at a speed that wasn’t fast or powerful enough to cool down anyone in the room. In the bed further away from us was an old lady swearing, cursing, shouting, accusing her caretaker of someone else’s mistakes. The care-provider seemed undisturbed and nodded her head and said “Yes, yes, but you’re disturbing these other people, stop shouting!”

The person lying in the bed closer to us was not my great grandmother. It resembled her, but it was not the way I wanted to remember her. She was in her late 80s, she had had a hard life and should not have been in this room, at least, not next to the shouting, screaming woman. My mum sat next to her and smiled, talking to her as if she could respond. We both knew she did not know who we were or what we were saying, but we acted like she could. There is no real way of ever knowing for certain, is there? My mother stroked her hair, I massaged her back gently, my mother gave her some cool water, I talked to her. Then something amazing happened; this old and small woman, with bruised skin and sunken cheeks grabbed my mother’s wrist and tried to say something. She then looked at me and said “mavisz”, meaning blue-eyes, which is what she called me. It was as if we had heard a baby saying its first word. Her care-provider jumped out of her chair, “Oh my, she recognized you!” This woman who had worked so hard all her life, who had smiled and laughed as much as she could, who had now been reduced to a dying patient in a hospital bed turned to my mother and said “The government! That fucking government! Fuck the government!” And then, there was silence. She let go of my mother’s wrists, the nurse said that visiting hours were over, and that it was probably time we had left.
To think that those were the last words uttered by someone on their death bed, to not be able to rest in peace for those last few moments, to think that there had been and would be many more deaths like this was heart-breaking and disturbing. There was a whole sea of untold stories hidden in the memory of this disappearing generation. I had become so obsessed with the lack of opportunities for the upcoming generation of artists and creatives that I had forgotten about those who had suffered, struggled and still managed to smile. I remembered walking through the Old Walled City in Famagusta and seeing all those houses that were once occupied by this disappearing generation, the houses forgotten just as much as the people that once lived in them. A tribute, I thought, was necessary and so a tribute was made to look out onto a quiet street of the Old Walled City, so that if anyone either lost their way or stumbled upon that street by chance, they might do a double take, they might remember them, maybe pick up the phone and make their day, distract them from their sitting and those thoughts of the “fucking government” (Fig. 6).

4.4 Arabahmet-Bandabulya

The many interventions mentioned in this section are the result of what I consider to be a collective, rather than collaborative, practice. Within this case-study there are a number of works included, although I focus on some more than others, as they make greater contributions to the research than others in terms of understanding form, content, and context of public art interventions and the audience’s relationship and engagement with the interventions.

For the majority of my fieldwork, my headquarters was my paternal grandmother’s old house in Arabahmet, a once affluent region of the capital Nicosia. This had been the same neighbourhood where my great grandparents lived and the corner shop had once belonged to my great grandfather, although now had a different owner. Sadly, most of the residents of this area had either moved away or passed away. While some of the houses remained unoccupied, some were occupied by settlers from surrounding countries, refugee families that could barely fit into the tiny homes, or who had come to Northern Cyprus hoping to find work and provide for their families. My grandmother had decided to leave this house,
because she did not feel “at home” anymore in her neighbourhood and “did not feel safe living alone amongst strangers.” Although the streets appeared to be run down, I always found the region to be unique and very Cypriot, in that you could walk to the edge of the City Walls and look over the border to the south, that one minute you could hear the mosque and then the church bells. I liked the idea that this was a place where children still played in the streets, that the corner shop owner would offer me a plastic bag for my groceries without exception and I would reject and explain why I refused the plastic bags on every single visit. The famous Arabahmet Mosque had a beautiful garden I would walk by on my way to the Great Inn to meet up with friends for coffee, and there were bars and cafés that were perfect for some evening entertainment. Although not quite a melting pot, Arabahmet was more like a mezze plate, much like the rest of Northern Cyprus; each lived according to one’s own book without interference of the other, not mixing together but co-existing. That is why on this hot day in July, I was surprised and disappointed by the news article, which had been brought to my attention by a research participant.

The article in question is titled Amaç ne? (What’s the purpose?) (Appendix 4), and discusses why and how the stencils on the walls of houses and buildings of the Arabahmet neighbourhood came to be there. Although published in a newspaper, the article lacks the language, structure, and tone to be taken as a news article. Accusations such as “Some presumptuous people are writing whatever they like on the walls in Nicosia, expressing their feelings and opinions by creating visual pollution,” and “These individuals who do not have the courage to express their opinions and thoughts face to face to individuals and who are only able to do so by writing on walls are scolded by society,” read as if they are coming from the journalist, as the journalists’ own opinion on the matter (Appendix 4). As a whole, the accusatory paragraph resembles a letter of complaint sent in by a reader as opposed to the craftsmanship of a competent journalist.

The stencils in question send messages through their form and content. In the first photograph accompanying the story (Appendix 4), the stencil of a firearm is overlapped with a red universal circle-backslash sign; to the left of the ‘no arms’ sign, is a set of headphones, or perhaps ear mufflers, maybe trying to indicate tuning in or tuning out of something. The text “fascism begins in the home” does not require decoding, but is stating that fascism comes from nurture rather than nature. In the second photograph
accompanying the story, we see another ‘No Fighter Jet’ sign in black and red placed next to a kite, perhaps suggesting that the kite replace the fighter jets in the sky. The stencil of a top hat sits on top of a lyric from a famous 1980s pop song, which translates as “Who stays in the luxury cabin?” referring to the cabins on ferries. A possible purpose for this quote may be calling out to those in their symbolic ‘luxury cabins’ or ivory towers, living remote lives from those who are unable or unwilling to do so. Finally, there is a stencil of Chrysostomos II, a Greek-Orthodox bishop with the writing “ευρογηται (trans. we will not forget)” written underneath, all in red, as I am told by a Greek Cypriot friend who knows the artist of this particular stencil.

These images were not unfamiliar. This was the street I walked every morning and they were a reassurance that there were people moving through or dwelling in the area who were trying to get a peaceful message across, that they would rather have a happy community rather than a high standard of living for just a few. These stencils appeared over a period of time, one by one, by which one brought on another, and were created by different groups and individuals. Their mutual aim was to spread a positive message of unity, equality, and peace. Not included in the article, but found in the area, were a series of stencils of slogans, such as “Love is Love”, “Labour is labour”, “Violence is violence”, which voiced a request for the non-discrimination of love, labour and what would qualify as violence. I could not fathom how one could see and read into these stencils, created with good intention, as offensive or dangerous. Scrolling down to read the comments left by readers, I realized that I was not alone in my bemusement. From patronizing comments on the journalist’s lack of knowledge of the subject matter to one’s of rage at her lack of journalistic abilities, the entirety of the comments oppose the views of the interviewee, to the extent where someone living in the area states that they are ‘quite content’ with their neighbourhood. What had intended on being an ‘informative piece of writing’ that would have been some use to the research and understanding of people’s attitudes to street art and art interventions had turned into a disturbing wake-up call that there were still journalists who did not have the skills to research and write about ‘the news’, which meant that people reading the article in question could potentially, and very easily, read the opinions of the journalist as fact.
That evening, I had arranged for an interview with a number of activists who had used stencils as public art interventions to bring to the attention of others their beliefs on every individual’s right to freedom of expression, freedom of speech and freedom to be who they are (Appendix 1e). Towards the end of the interview, the topic turned to the ‘What’s the point?’ article. The activists could not understand why and how the journalist could refer to the interventionists as “irresponsible, good-for-nothing hoodlums”, as the messages expressed no violence or threat. One activist commented on how the media was neither considerate nor objective in Northern Cyprus, while another activist said that the media played a huge role in ‘demonizing’ (öçüleştirme) the unknown. There was a shared understanding that not all newspapers practice journalism in a way that adheres to the rules of media ethics and codes of conduct. Some newspapers have a reputation for not being taken as seriously as others due to their lack of partiality and lack of knowledge on the articles written. However, the fact remained that some would read such an article and pass judgment on street art, stencilling sending positive messages as threatening. Unlike the journalist, I had to get my facts straight to clarify any misunderstanding between the interventionists and the journalist, but more importantly, to discover the intention behind ‘What’s the point?’

I left my grandmother’s house and began walking to the newspaper’s office. As I walked along the uneven roads, due to the lack of pavements, I passed the walls with spray-painted stencils. Some had been sprayed over, like someone scribbling over writing on a piece of paper with a pen, with no other means of erasing it. During the interview with the activists, they had suspected that the culprits spraying over these stencils were either civil police, or, as they had witnessed, an elderly resident who walked around spraying over stencils. No matter the culprit, spraying over the stencils was not considered a crime, unlike the stencils that had the same form they were attempting to cover up. Was it not the act itself, but the content of what was being sprayed on the walls that caused offense? It appeared so, as one of the activists had mentioned during the interview that although the ‘neatly-sprayed stencils’ were all sprayed over by an unknown culprit, a line of poetry that was simply sprayed on the wall, with no stencil, which read “Let us look to the sky,” stood out from the other ‘neat’ stencils, its form indicating no pre-determined intention. It was
spontaneous and intended to send a message giving hope of a better future through the line of a Turgut Uyar poem.\textsuperscript{33}

Just as the residents had wondered about the identity and possible political affiliation of the intervening activists, the feeling had been mutual in deciphering the identity and affiliation of the journalist who had written the article. What had the journalist hoped to gain? What was the purpose? Was it simply to make a statement or was there a demand for action against these stencils and those who had placed them there? I had attempted to contact the journalist of the article, Melin Dobran, and I knew that I was not the only one searching for her. The newspaper did not provide any means of contacting the writer and emails and phone calls made to the newspaper were left unanswered and unfruitful. The only thing left to do was to go to the office and meet Dobran face to face, which was my preferred method of interaction. Outside the main office, I saw two women smoking cigarettes, having their afternoon coffee and a conversation in what looked like a booth for a security guard. I approached the two women and explained that I was looking for a journalist who worked for the newspaper. It turned out that one of the two women was, in fact, Dobran. She invited me to sit down and I told her the reason I was there and that preferably, would like to arrange a date for an interview for which I knew we both had the time, without distractions and with a bit more privacy. Contrary to my plans, she did not understand why another date for an interview had to be set and insisted that I ask her my questions in that very moment. This I could understand, as she defensively threw her hands in the air, as if someone had falsely accused her of a crime, and complained to me that she had to deactivate her social-media accounts because of the “mean comments” people kept sending her as a result of publishing the article. She could not understand why such an “insignificant article” had caused so much commotion, so much so that she was now scared for her life (Appendix 1b). As I assured her that I did not mean her any harm, I explained to her that my reasons for wanting to talk to her were for the sake of my research and to better understand her process and intention in writing and publishing the article. She admitted that she had not intended on writing the article and that it was in fact, a ‘quick

\textsuperscript{33} The appearance of famous poetry in public spaces is reminiscent of the use of poetry during the Gezi Park Protest (Çolak, 2010: 463) and its appearance in Northern Cyprus is perhaps a sign of solidarity with the protesters. Turgut Uyar was a Turkish poet and one of the leaders of İkinci Yeni (Second New), described as the Turkish avant-garde (Messo, 2014).
one’ written upon the request of a resident in the area, who had seen her with her notepad and complained about the stencils in hopes that she would write about it. She also regretted not having done much research on the issue, as she personally had no issues with the stencils and their content. She insisted on cutting short our conversation and gave me the phone number of the journalist covering the arts and culture section of the newspaper, if I had other questions regarding the issue. I gave her my contact details in return, in case she changed her mind and wanted to meet up for an extended conversation.

That evening, a meeting had been arranged with the artist participants in order to discuss devising and implementing an intervention. My meeting with the infamous Dobran had certainly sparked curiosity within the group, as it had with the activist I had interviewed. The article and the attitude of Dobran confirmed what the artists had assumed all along. That the younger generation of artists and activists were not and perhaps would never be taken seriously. Having to resort to controversial methods to communicate controversial content was not solely out of choice, but because of safety that came from remaining anonymous. Even then, the audience gazed upon the works and messages with dismissal and disregard. It was simply labelled as pollution or graffiti. However, the resident who had requested that the article be written feared for his life, not necessarily because of the stencils themselves, but because of the idea of an ‘organized underground, secret group of youths’ who could potentially be violent. After all, who else if not such individuals would roam the streets at night spray painting messages of equality and human rights? On one hand we had free thinking individuals who were afraid of expressing themselves openly, and on the other we had an audience that was afraid of the artists whose faces they could not see. It was a stalemate between artist and audience, but with fear for their own lives and wellbeing in common.

A graphic designer with whom I had been discussing my thesis, fieldwork and encounter with Dobran believed that the fearful resident had every right to be intimidated by the stencils, and that artists and activists had disregarded the past of this man. Perhaps he was an illegal immigrant who had suffered the trauma of having to leave his home behind and start a life in an unknown place. Perhaps he had lived there all his life and the scars of the war in 1974 were still fresh, Arabahmet being extremely close to the Greek Cypriot border. It is common for a certain generation to still fear the sudden breakout of
war. “I understand what the artists are trying to do, and I respect that” he said. “But it’s been done. It’s been overdone. I think it’s time for something different.” When I asked if he had any ideas or suggestions, he answered, “I’ll let you know when I find one.”

That night we discussed this brief comment at length. As artists and the othered, was there any existing platform within the borders of our island where we were not censored? Even when it came to anonymous, guerrilla style art interventions, did we still have to steer away from explicit, honest, self-expressive imagery or verbalization? The article that had been published in the newspaper did not target the spray painted messages of patriotic slogans or declarations of love or misogynistic threats stating, “Either you be mine, or you be buried.” These political yet positive messages voiced equality for all, the end of violence and judgment. These were the messages deemed threatening, dangerous. These were the messages they wanted to keep quiet. The verdict was that being silenced and guilty of speaking out would be taken up as the subject matter of the next series of interventions.

Shortly after the discussion had ended, each began working on individual pieces that revolved around the theme of ‘being silenced’ and ‘being apologetic’. Known imagery such as a nurse signalling patients to keep quiet was at times paired with a stencil of the news article’s title “What’s the point?” as a reference point. A mirror frame with the popular quote from the fairy tale Snow White “mirror, mirror on the wall,” aimed to urge the audience to consider their own actions and beliefs before judging others (Fig. 7). Another stencil used a commonly seen message used at construction sites that apologized for the disturbance, mess, and inconvenience caused, but with the word disturbance swapped for awareness. Accompanying these posters were others that diverted from this shared theme of making use of ‘familiar socio-cultural forms’. One participant reintroduced the well-recognized poster of a hushing nurse, generally found in hospitals, into a different kind of public and shared space (Fig. 9). Little, misshapen monsters were put up tucked away behind flowerpots and out of immediate sight. “We are like these little monsters,” explained the artist. “We are seen as monsters because we are unknown to the people. They don’t understand our lifestyle or our choices, what we do and how we think. So it frightens the audience. Perhaps we are monsters, but we needn’t be scary ones.” The final poster that went up would be perhaps the most controversial one of the stencils.
created for this project. A poster, the top half being a male soldier and the lower half of bare legs in stilettos was placed close to the border where the Turkish Military stood guard. Within the group, the poster was interpreted in many different ways. One participant thought it highlighted the issues of forcing mandatory military service onto individuals who had beliefs contradictory to the military mind set as well as those who were forced to enter a highly homophobic and strict environment, which meant that they would have to hide their sexuality in order to steer away from harassment, ridicule, and abuse. Another participant believed it depicted the dichotomy of our understanding of masculine and feminine. One other participant pointed out that it was the common belief that individuals who travelled from Turkey to Cyprus to do their mandatory military service endorsed and contributed to the abuse, harassment and sometimes death of women working in brothels due to improper and unregulated conduct. Overall, the work had intended to create associations with the military in relation to various social and cultural constructs, as opposed to ‘calling the military “sissies”’ as one participant observer would later describe it. “Even if they get offended, tell me, what’s wrong if a man wears women’s shoes and has gorgeous legs?” was the artist’s final comment on the issue.

The night following the devising of the works, consisting of wheat-paper paste posters and stencils, the works were all put up. By that point, we had well understood that the shorter the duration between the devising and the implementation of an intervention the more likely it was to be done. Ideas that lingered rarely materialized. The shorter duration also indicated the excitement and enthusiasm towards the intervention, which meant that it was unanimously considered to be worthy of resources and risk.

The Bandabulya area of Nicosia is known for its crowded busy pathways during the day, attracting local shoppers, tourists and those crossing the border from the south. It is a commercial and historical region with recent upgrades that attract a younger crowd to the area. If ever there was a public place that was accessible, and consisted of a varied mix of demographics, this was it. Although I had not expected anyone other than the participants to be out in the area on a weekday after midnight, there were a few that were walking around, which led to interesting conversations about the works as they were being put up. Once again, the most controversial work seemed to be attracting the most attention: the
soldier with women’s legs and stilettos (Fig. 8). The two strangers put their hands over their mouths, attempting to hide their smirking faces, but badly doing so.

“What is that,” said one of the young boys, possibly in their late teens, “is such a thing possible?” “Why shouldn’t it be possible?” responded one of the artist participants, mimicking their smirk back at them. Not wanting to dwell around in one place for too long, we moved away from the poster, leaving our audience with the work to digest and ponder, and giggle some more. In under an hour, all the works had been put up and the equipment had been returned to the boot of the car. While taking one last look at the stencils and posters – ensuring they were all well stuck and sprayed – we patrolled the streets in pairs. As we walked up the alley to where the mirror was located, another pair, unrelated to the project were chatting and gossiping away. The stencilled words “We apologize for the awareness we are raising”, a play on “we apologize for the disturbance created” on construction sites, stood alongside the monsters, the child raising his hands surrendering. The mirror had grabbed the attention of the two passers. “Awareness? What awareness? I don’t feel more aware, do you?” he mockingly asked his friend. Hearing this, I contemplated whether it would be rash to talk to them about the works, but decided not to risk getting into a potentially heated conversation this late at night, and did not wish to put the other participants in danger by having them being associated with the works.

Fig 7 Mirror, Mirror, Nicosia, Cyprus, 4 August 2014. Photograph by Aycan Garip. Original in colour.
The following day, under the scorching sun, I walked into town, as I usually would, with my wicker basket to visit the farmers market. Strolling into town with a camera and a notepad with the sole intention of interviewing people about the stencils that only just appeared the night before would seem like an extremely luck coincidence.

Considering the area (a commercial and busy one), it was likely the stencils – especially those with the potential to upset or offend the audience – would be noticed and swiftly removed or reported. Therefore, it was crucial that no time was wasted and that no risk were taken that may have revealed my relation to the appearance of the stencils. With basket in hand, along with a notepad and a camera, I made my way, ready to capture the interventions in broad daylight and to interview members of the public as the audience.

They were residents of Nicosia, born and bred, who had come to the area for an afternoon coffee on their lunch break. After making small talk, I asked what they thought of the poster, and what they thought the message behind the image may be. My audience was quick to declare the ambiguous nature of the work, but soon enjoyed debating amongst themselves. One stated that it was quite possibly a request for drivers to keep the noise down from their car stereos and engine revving. Sentences like “they think they look cool, but frankly they just look like idiots,” and “nobody cares about your car,” expressed with gusto hinted that my audience was truly annoyed at these instances of noise pollution and associated this ambiguous work to something which they had a personal connection.

The first work I came across was the Hushing Nurse. Located by parking lot and crossroads in the Bandabulya area, it would be difficult for people passing by not to notice the poster. Due to the heat, most people opted to transport in their cars, however, as I was photographing, a couple of women walking by stopped to look at the poster.
Fig. 8 *Soldier in Stilettos*, Nicosia, Cyprus, 3 August 2014. Photograph by Aycan Garip. Original in colour.
Fig. 9 *Hushing Nurse*, Nicosia, Cyprus. 4 August 2014. Photograph by Aycan Garip. Original in colour
However, the guessing game continued with the duo debating whether the *Hushing Nurse* was “telling the people to be quiet,” that is to say, to conform and not speak out their opinions. When asked “who may be telling the people to be quiet?” they said “those in charge,” but were doubtful that they were responsible for putting up the poster. This seemed to trigger them to go off on a tangent on how funny it would be if “those in charge,” meaning government officials or municipality workers, were to attempt to put up this poster. They concluded by laughing hysterically at the likelihood that they would stick the poster on the wrong side. Before they made their way back to work, I asked what they thought about street art in general. They unanimously agreed that if done right, it can add beauty and value to a neighbourhood, as opposed to having unkempt buildings and disintegrating walls, that street art could add character to a certain area when created in harmony with its surroundings. Although they believed there was a message in the poster in question, they thought that the work could have been executed more aesthetically.

My first audience interaction seemed promising. I was hopeful that my next interaction for gathering feedback would involve a friendly and patient audience. The next stop on my way was to view and photograph the little misshapen monsters, strategically placed by Ara Sokak (Side Streets) Cafe & Bar,34 a venue which stands out from its surroundings by offering an alternative hangout spot for a demographic adhering to their principles, provides a safe space for leisure and discussion for those seeking conversation or solitude in a public setting. The posters of the little monsters did not go unnoticed by the owner and the staff that were preparing to open shop. After a brief chat, I thought it wise to return once customers had arrived, as I personally knew the owner and staff. In order to get an unbiased reflection of the artwork, I moved on to the intervention that required the most caution and careful approach: the soldier with the stilettos.

The poster, having been up barely for 12 hours, had a tear on the “legs”. Someone had clearly wanted this to be removed, but had made do with the removal of the legs, disconnecting the abdomen of the soldier from the stilettos. As attempts to remove the poster completely had been unsuccessful, the next best thing had been done by placing a display stand for crisp packets and snacks, partially obstructing the poster, even if not

34 Ara Sokak Cafe and Bar’s Facebook page states that the venue upholds the following principles: translated “anti-authoritarian, anti-hierarchal, anti-sexist, anti-discriminatory, anti-exploitation”.

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entirely. I walked in and greeted the man behind the counter. He did not seem too pleased, and confirmed this observation by responding to my customary “how are you?” with a genuine concern. He was in shock. Why would anyone stick such a poster in front of his shop? “Do they know that the military has a base just over there?” he said, gesturing the direction of the base with a fully-extended arm. “What would they do if they saw this in front of my shop? Are they trying to get me in trouble?” During this rant, I felt a rush of blood reach my head, which felt like boiling water pouring over me. I reassured him that he would not get in trouble as the poster was not in fact in front of his shop, but on a wall shared by an unoccupied shop. The more we talked the calmer the situation got. It turned out that he had arrived to his shop in the morning with people gathered around his shop staring at the poster. The group, consisting of other shopkeepers in the area were wondering from where and when the poster appeared. Their concern that the military would take action and question why the poster appeared within this particular area overpowered their will to think about the poster itself. The shopkeeper briefly said “I don’t know, it’s a soldier with women’s legs. That can’t be good. [The artists] are making fun of soldiers. [The soldiers] won’t like it.” I thanked him for his time and apologized for the stress he had experienced. Before I left, I wrote down my contact details and requested that he contacted me if anything regarding the poster happened with the military or police or if he wanted to talk and discuss about the poster. I assured him I would be able to help if he needed, explaining that I was conducting research on “street art”. He thanked me, and heavy-hearted, I left.

I walked into a few other neighbouring shops, asking if anyone has seen the Soldier in Stilettos, and was willing to talk about it. Some said they were busy and did not have time to talk, whereas others refused to share their thoughts upon finding out that I was a student and was conducting research. This was a reaction I had encountered in Famagusta with the coffee-shop owner in my attempts to discuss The Thinker on a Wicker Chair. Similarly, the journalist Melin Dobran had refused to talk as well, claiming that she was not well informed enough to provide insight, assuming that it was information, not opinions, that I was after.

As the refusals piled up, I was ready to give up on trying to discuss this particular intervention. The (mis)representation of a soldier seemed to repel any sort of discussion
concerning it. However, one person did not shy away from making clear their intentions to
discuss the poster. Having overheard me trying to talk to the shopkeeper next door, he did
not hesitate in extending a helping word or two. “It is blatantly an insult to our heroic
soldiers.” He did not refrain from volume and hand gestures. He spoke with passion about
the soldiers and the military, but with contempt for the artist(s). I asked why he thought
this representation as an insult. He answered my question with one of his own: “Are you
being serious? Are you joking? Can you not see how this is an insult?” The look of
disbelief on his face indicated that he did not comprehend the possibility that there may be
other ways of interpreting the poster. Each time I asked and rephrased my question, in
order to find out why he thought of this representation as an insult, he began by saying
“Women’s legs on a soldier? This is an insult. Our soldiers are heroes; they should not be
made fun of.” The cycle repeated itself when I asked why he thought they were being
made fun of, and I was faced with the same “Are you kidding me?” response. It wasn’t
long after that he started attacking my own neutral stance on the issue and insisted that I
did not understand history, and the war that broke out in 1974, and was too young and too
naïve to see who the enemy is. I explained that I was not present to discuss the history of
the island but to find out about the Soldier in Stilettos. Unimpressed by my answer, he told
me to give up as I would not be able to understand. Luckily, his wife, who was silently
sweeping the shop did understand him and kindly spared a few minutes to reassure me that
his reaction was nothing personal.

Her husband, just like many others who became part of the Cypriot diaspora, had
left Cyprus along with his parents during unstable times in the early 1960s and had moved
to Australia, where he eventually met and married his wife. The family had hoped to one
day return to Cyprus, and although he eventually did with his own family, the coup
initiated by a Greek Cypriot rebel organization in 1974 had shattered their dreams of
returning home anytime soon. Although his wife’s family also experienced the same fate,
she believed that both communities, Turkish and Greek, Turkish-Cypriot and Greek
Cypriot, along with the “meddling of other countries” (such as the United Kingdom and
United States of America) had faults. “Save your breath,” she advised me. I believed her;
this was not my first encounter with such a conversation (for lack of a better word). I had
endured many a monologue of people defending the Turkish invasion and the bases that
were still present on the island, that “had it not been for them, we’d be dead.” To this mind set, the war and the ways of the world was black and white, with no room in the middle. The worse part about such monologues was that there was no room for anything contrary to what was being said. As I sat down in the shade on the sidewalk, I was reminded of why I had chosen my research in creating public art interventions in the first place: because you cannot talk to a wall.

Before returning to headquarters, I had spent a few hours at Ara Sokak, taking notes and reflecting on the events of the day. To the few customers that were there, given the time of day, they thought the works put up around the area were “promising”. “We are always seeing things like this on our social media and applaud it. It would be nice if we did things [in our neighbourhood] as well.” After a while I realized that they were not necessarily concerned about finding a message in the works. “Sometimes just having something nice to look at, even if just passing by, can be uplifting and it makes you think ‘I’m lucky I live here.’” The conversation moved on to why locals could not appreciate what they had, which translated into ‘there is no point in creating anything ‘nice’’. “It’s a bit like our beaches. People come from all over the world and I’ve only been to the beach three or four times this year. When we do go, we see people leaving their rubbish behind. That makes me wonder. How can people do that? I guess it’s because they don’t care.” As I made my way to go home, I could hear them discussing amongst themselves “I feel like colouring [the monsters] in!” and their laughter disappeared as I walked home.

Everything seemed like a hopeless task. On the one hand, the challenge of the fieldwork and the reaching out to the public invited me to carry on, but on the other hand I knew that there were people like the shopkeeper whose voice was loud and ears were blocked. I leaned over the balcony and stared at the walls covered in spray-paint. Beneath them, remains of stencils and slogans peeped out from the gaps. Whoever attempted to cover up these messages had not even bothered to do that right. It was haphazardly done with no care, no plan, and no consideration for what it was covering up.

I rummaged through my grandfather’s collection of tools and equipment. I found a tub of white wall-paint and some unused paintbrushes. For reference purposes, the name of this intervention has been titled White Censor.
and took to the streets. As I painted over the scribbled out stencils, with my oversized correction fluid, I thought about the reactions to the interventions and questions from the audience. One part of the community supported the idea of using the streets as a canvas, as a medium for expression, while the other part could not care less. While some chose to contemplate what it was that they saw, the rest jumped to a well-established reaction in their heads, without breaking the connection between the subject matter and the meaning behind it. The public seemed to be divided, not just in how they viewed the interventions, but how they viewed their world. It was either black and white, or varying shades of grey.

Had the works simply been aesthetically “pleasing”, without being concerned about a message, would the shopkeeper be worried about the damage done to the wall? If aesthetics was the only concern, by whose definition would the artist define the aesthetics as being pleasing? It seemed that if a public art intervention was to focus solely on the aesthetics rather than being used as an agent, it would not make the artist’s life any easier in deciding what that may mean. Even if one member disagreed or was displeased with what had been created, they would not allow that work to exist, not thinking that there were other members of the community who would want that work to continue to exist. Instead, they would pick up whatever form of paint they would find and spray or paint over it, adding to the visual pollution against which they stood so firmly.

This act of painting over was not an erasure of what had been done. It was like placing a clean plaster on an open wound. It was a clean slate. Furthermore, the fresh white rectangles resembled blank pages, almost tempting people to write or draw on them. Lost in my thoughts I walked down the street, painting over only the writings that had been painted over, badly, by whoever was so displeased with the messages. Intrigued by my actions, a group of children that were playing in the street approached me. They had interrogated me the first time they saw me leaving my grandmother’s flat that summer. A stranger leaving a flat that had been unoccupied for a while needs to be questioned by the curious children in such a small neighbourhood. I had become used to the spontaneous questions they would throw at me: “Why don’t you ever drive your car?”; “Why do you walk everywhere?”; “Why do you carry your shopping in a basket like a grandma?” I always remembered to be patient and give them a well-rounded answer to all of these questions. My aim was to talk to them not as if they were children, but as if they were
adults learning different customs. This was perhaps one of the reasons why each time I saw them, they were encouraged to ask even more questions. “Why are you painting the walls?” the eldest of the group asked. She was 11-years old. “Because there were writings on these walls, and someone came and scribbled over them, which wasn’t very thoughtful of them. So, I am painting over it.” The questions had only just begun. “Why was it not thoughtful?” Instead of explaining the content, I decided to try another method. “Imagine you’re trying to say something you believe in, that you find important.” “Like what?” she said, smiling, clearly making a game of our back and forth conversation. “Well, what do you feel passionate about?” There were a multiplicity of things that got entangled in one another as they each gave an answer. They did not want to be excluded from the game. “Well, imagine you’re trying to talk about that thing you’re very passionate about and someone keeps interrupting you, or they hold your mouth shut and all you can hear is this.” I covered up my mouth with my hand and started mumbling. The children laughed. “Do you think that’s a nice thing?” I asked not trying to bring the mood down. “My mother said they wrote bad things,” seemed to be the answer to my posed question. “That is according to your mother. I read things I don’t agree with in the newspapers, I hear things I don’t like. Some of these things, I believe to be very bad, but I listen. Do you know why?” I asked not expecting an answer. “So you can answer back,” jumped the little boy in the back of the group. “Well...that too, but more importantly everyone has the right to speak their mind. It’s called freedom of speech. What was written on these walls was something similar. Someone clearly didn’t agree with it, but I am disagreeing with the way they are disagreeing.” A few seemed to lose track of the conversation. The eldest moving her hands in circles said “and then they’ll paint over it and then you’ll paint over it and then it will go on and on and on and it will never end.” The children imitated the girl and started moving their hands in circular motions and giggling. “Then maybe instead of scribbling over what is written, they could read what is written and try and understand why this is being said.” That seemed to be the end of the lecture for them.

“Can you come and play hide and seek with us?” I knew I had to go and wash the paint off of me, sit down and gather my thoughts, but I also knew that some things were more important, and that in order to connect and become part of a community, you had to be open to engaging in the other’s world. Once upon a time, my grandparents lived on this
street, along with their brothers, sisters, aunties, and grandparents. My family had left Arabahmet and now the streets belonged to these children where they played, lived, spent their days and nights walking and running up and down. I put down the paint and the brush by the steps of my house, turned away from them, closed my eyes with my forearm against the wall and counted to ten as loud as I could.

4.5 Suspended Spaces, Suspended Lives

This case-study explores the limits of public space in its relation to a ‘successful’ public art intervention. With the form and content being placed at the boundary of public space within the context of Northern Cyprus, the intervention lacks an audience with which to interact. However, it reveals that practices of interventions placed at the boundary of public and private space can perhaps break through the existing boundary, to extend communication and interaction across borders.

Through history lessons, children grew up listening to and reading about the ‘heroic’ Turkish army, who saved us from the ‘barbaric Greek Cypriots’, our saviours to whom we owe our lives, our present, and our future. My peers, both older and younger than myself, remember these text books, which remained unchanged until quite recently, ridding the curriculum from a history written in the most subjective and one-sided way possible. At the time, the educational system tried hard to instil into every child love and respect for the Turkish military. To add to the propaganda of nationalism in history lessons, another lesson (titled National Security), introduced in the final years of high school, taught about the military, militarism and nationalist views and ideals, which was appropriately taught by a military officer (Altinay, 2004: 78). Essentially, until the changes mentioned above, children have been taught how to be honourable Turkish citizens, as the curriculum does

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36 Yücel Vural and Evrim Özuyanık discuss the differences in old history books used in the Turkish Cypriot educational system and how ethno-nationalist emphasis on Turkish Cypriots propagated an identity rooted in ethnicity, instead of geography. Turkish Cypriots ended up identifying as being ‘Turkish’ rather than ‘Cypriot’ (138: 2008). Ethno-nationalist emphasis on ‘Turkishness’ influenced identity formation as well as fondness of the Turkish military’s presence, not as an occupying entity, but as ‘their own’. 

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not differentiate between a Turk and a Turkish-Cypriot. Turkey is the motherland, and Northern Cyprus is forever the ‘child land’ (yavruvatam).

Yet, there are those who are grateful for the Turkish military’s intervention in 1974. The discourse revolves around the belief that the Turkish-Cypriot community would have been ‘slaughtered’ and ‘eliminated from the face of the earth,’ while others believe that the Turkish military has caused more harm than good. In addition to invading Cypriot space, the military presence and the self-proclaimed justification of rights over the island (or at least part of it) led to intervention in the educational system and the propagation of a Turkish identity to Turkish-speaking Cypriots.

Some children have grown up harbouring positive sentiments towards the Turkish military and the Turkish government, while for others the contrary is true. To some, including myself, the Turkish-military symbolises invasion and occupation of space, the enforcing of national identity, and a hegemonic masculinity that consequently determines ‘acceptable’ gender and sexual identities through the imposition of militaristic and nationalistic constructs. Masculinity and femininity are supposed to lie on opposite ends of the spectrum in a complementary position, not to overlap. Barutçu further states that if a man fails to perform his masculinity, then he is seen as ‘incomplete’, which most likely brings shame upon themselves and their family (Barutçu, 2013: 8). These various reasons contribute to my unsympathetic attitudes and feelings towards the military and the mandatory military service; it is considered to be a reminder of the division of the island caused by the enforcement of national identity. Within national and militaristic contexts, “being a man” (and thus, ‘being a woman’) continues the myth that this definition is the norm and the ideal definition of “being a man” (Sünbüloğlu, 2013: 4; Biricik, 2012: 89), while at the same time being reminded that, as Turkish-Cypriots, they are subjugated by other nations; in this case, the Turkish Armed Forces and, as a result, the Republic of Turkey.

Such fanaticism that sees its own identity constructs as superior to others is seen in groups across the globe. Through fixed identity constructs, others on the outside of these constructs are excluded, penalized, or ridiculed for not ‘fitting the mould’. Contexts that do not tolerate alternative identity constructs result in these people either suffering in silence, attempting to oppose and change these contexts through personal or organized action, or
fleeing the context in question. Concerning mandatory military service, appeals have been made for the Right to Conscientious Objection for Turkish-Cypriots, which is declared in the European Convention of Human Rights (Biricik, 2012: 102). Apart from declaring conscientious objection and taking the issue to the European Court for Human Right, there are a few other ways of being exempt from or completing a reduced mandatory military service, such as leaving the country, continuing higher education, which results in shortened military service. The only get-out-of-jail-at-a-price card is the ‘pink certificate’, although the connotations behind the ‘pink certificate’ induce mixed reactions. The ‘pink certificate’ states that an individual is unfit for mandatory military service, due to physical or mental disabilities as diagnosed through military medical screenings in the initial recruitment phase. A ‘pink certificate’ holder is deemed ‘rotten’ (çürük). Despite being exempt from their mandatory service, the term rotten portrays the individual as being not right. This is problematic in the case of non-heterosexual individuals, as sexual and gender identities that diverge from the hegemonic masculinity construct are regarded as ‘psycho-sexual’ disorders in a military context. Biricik (2008, 2012) and Başaran (2014) discuss problematic medical processes used to determine homosexuality and how these procedures negatively impact patients during examination and after, when results have been transferred to the person’s permanent records. For those who oppose the Turkish military and mandatory military service, it is not just about the practice of such fixed constructs, but also because of the imposition of these constructs onto those who disagree with such fixed and fanatical ways of thinking.

There are conflicting stances in regards to the presence of the military bases in Northern Cyprus. I, for one, would be happier without having to see my friends leaving their home country for no other reason than to escape their military service and not be subjected to potential humiliation, bullying, or torture due to their sexual and gender identities. I could do without the pockets of restricted spaces occupied by the military as a constant reminder of the past and present context. Although Cyprus is no longer ‘at war’,

37 Until cases reach the European Court of Human Rights, they pass from court to court in what is the beginning of a lengthy process, as seen in Murat Kanatlı’s case, the longest-running conscientious-objection case in Northern Cyprus, which is also the first to have reached the ECHR. http://www.ebco-beoc.org/node/372.
for someone in disagreement with the militarist practices and presence, living in relation to these spaces and situations is a daily battle. One place in particular, is a constant reminder of military presence and its ideological impositions, and is accentuated by the contrast of its adjacent context. This place is the ghost-town Varosha.

Once Famagusta’s tourist capital and a major source of income for the Cypriot government (before the island’s division), Varosha now deteriorates under sun, salt, and neglect. Barbed wire encircles the area keeping it out of public reach as it shares borders with the public beach, a popular spot for tourists and locals alike. Warning signs decorate the border wires, reminders of no trespassing and no photography. Those sneakily attempting to take photographs of what lies beyond the wire are abruptly stopped and warned by an officer enthusiastically blowing on a whistle, whose sole purpose is to keep watch for the day. If agitated, or bored, the officer may go beyond the call of duty by approaching ‘criminal photographers’, and ‘restore safety’ by deleting the photographs and/or confiscating the machinery. Alas, Varosha appears in documentaries, photography blogs, and foreign news due to its glamorous history and pathetic present. The World Post, in an article discussing the post-coup effects on Cyprus which took place on 15 July 2016 in Turkey, mentions the ghost-town Varosha as a reminder of the “bitter past,” describing it as, “once a glamorous resort... now sealed by barbed wire, guarded by Turkish troops and off-limits to the public” (Mohamed, 2016: n.p.). Varosha has received international and local (social) media attention, due to its story. It is our non-volcanic Pompeii, a museum of history frozen in time, where dust-covered cars, toys, and furniture become sad reminders of waste and destruction in a place that was once full of life. Its stillness and silence is exaggerated by the contrasting space on the other side of the border; the sound of beach ball racquets, booming music from the family-run shack, and the chatter and laughter of sunbathers and beach enthusiasts.

September had finally come, which meant that my summer of public art interventions and the fieldwork was drawing to a close. The final days of the summer craze meant peace and calm was gradually being restored from the ‘holiday rush’ in my home town, Famagusta. I had reserved a few weeks for fieldwork reflection prior to my departure from Cyprus back to the United Kingdom. These two weeks, although reserved for reflection, had in no way been influenced by my own desire to enjoy the island and the
weather, free of ‘researcher responsibilities’, simply enjoying the sea side, overlooking the unfortunate landscape of deserted buildings stretching towards the horizon.

What should have been a celebratory-gathering to mark the completion of the fieldwork was somewhat bittersweet. A friend had recently announced his decision to quit his job as a university lecturer to complete his military service. I was both shocked and heart-broken that he had reached the decision to put his life on hold to serve a cause he did not believe in that was mandatory, not voluntary. It was something he would inevitably have to face, and now was as good a time as any, although ‘never’ would have been ideal. We were out enjoying each other’s company and our ‘freedom’, while he was being subjected to military service.

I could not help but draw parallels between my friend’s new-found soldier-status and the way his life in the ‘real-world’ has been suspended, and the real-world between the barbed wire had been suspended, still present, but out of reach, lacking the accessibility of those beyond their borders, away from the restricted freedoms, which was considered not enough but within this context seemed more than he now had.

These suspended buildings, the suspended lives of those gone to do their military service sparked a sentiment of sorrow, a churning of frustration and anger that this divide and imposition of the Other was not disappearing any time soon; the military was entitled to land, and the lives of those who ‘should want to die for their country’, and all anyone could do was watch until someone decided that this was no longer the way it was going to be. These emotions when vocalized in casual conversation are generally met with the classic “There’s nothing you can do, so don’t worry about it,” a sad reminder that the military does as it pleases, within and without the barbed wire.

The more I thought of it, the more I realized how much military-bases were part of my life. Living in a flat in Gülseren, Famagusta when I was in secondary-school I used to wake up to the chants of soldiers training, chanting nationalist slogans as they jogged around the base. It marked the start of everyday. Walking around in my neighbourhood or a quick trip to the shop was accompanied by knowing that I may run into a soldier or two, which often meant ignoring the glares and stares in my direction. Years later, as I was driving home at night, I had the unfortunate experience of being followed by another car. I knew this, because when I took a turn so did he, even as I drove in circles. Slowing down, I
had signalled to stop in the middle of nowhere, as did the driver. Once his car had come to a stop, I got back on the road and drove fast until I reached the police station up ahead. Upon reporting the cars number plate, I discovered that it was an unregistered vehicle. The police said that it was highly likely that it was owned by military personnel, and therefore nothing they could do about my report. Surely the culprit could have been non-military, but perhaps then the police could have done something about it. My experiences made me think how many others there had been who had such experiences, if not worse.

As we all sat by the little shack, talking about Varosha, its potential and how it could have been if circumstances were different, the conversation topic became the military. One of our friends talked about their earliest military memory of playing with tiny, plastic, green soldiers as a child. Fixed in their positions, the extent of these toys’ abilities was to point, hold grenades, and aim guns. I added that I would tie plastic bags to them, throw them in the air, to see if they would gracefully parachute down. They always came down too fast for my liking. Their storyline was limited, and thus they had no part in our playtime as children. As adults, the situation was about to change.

On my way home I stopped off to buy a set of green plastic toy soldiers. I took them home and painted them in bright colours, destroying their camouflage-uniforms. I splattered some with contrasting colours, giving each its own identity. On their bases, I wrote names. A few names close to my heart, and some who were close to the hearts of others. I set them to dry on some old newspaper. They were no longer sad replicas, products of a mould, but were unique.

I showed them to my friends the next day. My initial plan was to leave them at the entrance of my friend’s military base, but that may cause problems for my friend. Ideally, too much interaction with the soldiers would be avoided. The dark of night did not offer the same cover as it did for other interventions. This would have to be done in broad daylight, to avoid further suspicion. Unable to decide on a place to situate the soldiers, we ended up at the beach again, which would be my final trip that year. Finding a spot to set our things, I also found a spot for the soldiers. It seemed to make sense. I told my friends that the soldiers were in my bag and I was not afraid to use them.

“What do you mean you’re going to hang them?” said one of my friends
“Not hang them, as in, execute them. I’m going to suspend them by hanging them onto the spikes of the barbed wire over there, like when lovers hang padlocks on a bridge, or people tie cloth onto a tree and make a wish.” I explained. “Can you do that? Is it allowed? What if the guard sees you?” echoing what I had been thinking since the idea came to me. “I don’t know. It doesn’t say ‘Cannot place toys on barbed wire,’ but I need to take pictures of it, so at some point I will have to take pictures, and that might cause problems.”

We debated the least risky way possible to carry out the plan, but no such thing existed. I would hang the soldiers, as I did not want to jeopardize anyone else’s safety. A volunteer would accompany me to keep watch. We fabricated and practiced our backstory; if asked, we were two friends, getting away from the crowd to discuss a private matter, which was not far from the truth.

We walked to the edge of the border. The ghost-town seemed sadder through the barbed wire. As we improvised our conversation, we placed a few of the coloured soldiers onto the barbed wire and dropped most onto floor where the wire met the sand (Fig. 10, Fig. 11, & Fig. 12). We even kicked a few through the gaps into ‘occupied’ territory. We only managed to take a few photographs, and out of those few, only one was in focus, before we were called upon by the guard.

“Hey, you girls, what are you doing?” “Nothing… just walking and talking… didn’t want to be near people so that we couldn’t be heard.” I said without trying to sound too rehearsed. “You have a phone on you,” he said, pointing at the phone in my friend’s hand. “Should we not have a phone on us? How will our parents reach us?” I replied. After all, he should understand that we, even as adults, must not have our parents face the stress of their children not answering their phone when called. “You’re not taking photos, are you?” he said with a smirk on his face. “Why would we take photos? We come here every day. We’ve seen this place since we were young. Even if I was going to take photos, it would be of the rubbish that has piled up here right underneath your nose.” I said, slightly acting up and pointing the accumulation of beer bottles, cigarette butts and other rubbish that had been left behind. He wasn’t smirking anymore. “You’re very quick to start blowing the whistle at people trying to take a photograph, which is silly, because they’re not taking photos of anything that isn’t already visible. It’s not like it’s a secret. And yet, you can’t use your authority to stop people from littering the beach. What do you say to this?” I noticed my friend looking at me in disbelief, as if to say ‘what are doing?’ And the truth was I did not really know what came over me. After all, I was improvising.
The officer agreed with me and a back and forth began, blaming the uneducated, the foreigners, the youngsters, the students; he blamed everyone but himself. He continued for a while. I was hoping that he had forgotten about the phone.

“I’m going to clean up this mess,” I said to him.
“Do you have a plastic bag?” he asked, seeming concerned.
“There are plenty here that have been left. It’s a surprise they couldn’t figure it out and use them as bins,” I replied, fishing the bags from the sand.
“Well, be careful! There may be broken glass. You don’t want to cut your hand and catch something,” he warned us.
“It’s okay, we do this all the time,” I replied, which was also no lie.

My friend came over having completed the distribution of toy soldiers on the wire and the sand, and helped me collect rubbish around the wire. Collecting rubbish around the beach was a happy medium between exercise and a civic duty. As we walked away, with a couple of photographs, I asked my friend, “How am I going to get my feedback on this?” to which my friend, ever the wise one, answered by saying “You won’t. Just be grateful that he didn’t blow that bloody whistle.”

Fig 10. Toy Soldiers on Barbed Wire, Famagusta, Cyprus, 3 September 2014. Photograph by participant. Original in colour.
The next day I was on a plane leaving behind my summer of interventions that may or may not last to see another summer. I felt like a soldier returning home from war, treating the journey as time to recover from the experiences on the battlefield before returning to real life. The experiences seemed too fresh to reflect upon them as the researcher, I was still in ‘participant’ mode. In retrospect, in remote safety from the island, I provided myself with feedback on the final intervention that had none from the audience. I regretted not being more vocal and open about the soldiers on the barbed wire. Had there been more interventionists, and had it not been so secretive maybe it would have been okay. Did the soldiers have to be on the barbed wire? What if instead the soldiers were placed close to the border but not on it? How bad could it have been? Disappointment overtook the satisfaction of completion, an anti-climactic crossing of the finish line.

Once the plane landed, I called my friend who had promised to check up on the soldiers to see if they were still there. They were not, but, as it turned out, the broken glass
was all cleaned up, which meant that they had seen the soldiers and removed them. In terms of witnessing engagement of an audience with the soldiers, we had nothing. My friend had asked the officer that was keeping guard the next day whether he had seen any soldiers, about which he knew nothing, but perhaps next time we would get our feedback.

I had not considered repeating interventions differently, at least not for the fieldwork. It was true that each intervention was a prototype that could be altered to produce various forms of audience engagement. It did not have to fit in, in terms of conforming to the contextual space, but it could devise in a way that encouraged audience engagement. Considering the same materials and space – the toy soldiers and the border at the beach – several other interventions could have been created, such as a performance-based intervention involving collective action to attract the audience’s attention on either side of the border. Once interventions end, it is natural to consider other ways the intervention may have been devised, but there is no denying that each intervention starts from a particular point and there is no way of knowing what journey the creative process will take and where it will lead. It always leads somewhere even if it may not be what or where you expected. As practice, what matters is that it materialized in its own unique way and satisfied some reason, concern, or question for the practitioner. As research, what matters is what can be learned from the intervention in question and how it can contribute towards the creation of others to come. No matter how successful a public art intervention may be, there is always room for reflection and adding a bit more to what we know to this complex practice.

4.6 Conclusion

Transitioning from participant to research back again took some time. Reflecting upon the interventions as a participant raises questions regarding specific steps taken during the practice, whereas as researcher these questions revolve around the bigger picture of public art intervention practices. Over the course of four months, I accumulated notepads of reflections, a couple of dozen photographs, audio recordings, sketches, and even napkins with ideas jotted on them. As participant, they were memories gathered, future interventions to realize, and others that were not pursued due to fears of their
consequences. Although ideas for public art interventions are plenty, part of the practice is deciding when and where the right time is to create them, with as little doubt as possible. The researcher, although not ignorant of the risks of the practice, may not fully understand why so many interventions were excluded from the fieldwork, or why certain decisions were made instead of others regarding the form, content or context of the interventions. In the next chapter, we bid farewell to the participant and welcome back the researcher as author.
Fig. 12 *Toy Soldiers on Barbed Wire*, Famagusta, Cyprus, 3 September 2014. Photograph by participant. Original in colour.
CHAPTER 5: Methodology, Methods & Ethics

5.1 Introduction

In this self-evidently titled chapter, I discuss and differentiate qualitative methods and methodologies that have shaped my research and practice as well as methods and methodologies that were shaped by my research and practice. This is because the methods precede the research in question; it can be said that the research is based in the practice (the artwork as described for this research, which includes processes of the creation and participants’ interaction with the public art interventions) though whether this is strictly practice-based research is debateable and will be clarified further in this chapter. Although adaptations to the preceding practice methods were tailored to suit the study, my intention was to interfere as little as possible with the established thought and behaviour of the participants in order to keep the practice as collaborative and natural as possible. Certain aspects of the methods that changed as a result of the context of academic research were the rigour of documentation, the space and time allowed for reflection, the ethical dilemmas and questions that prevented some ideas from realization and adapted others in various ways, leading to the production of interactions. Following the public art interventions, theoretical and critical contexts were also introduced into the analysis of the practice of public art interventions, which can be read in Chapter 6.

Each selected account of these ‘processes of production’ is written as a detailed case-study in Chapter 4, as experienced and (re)told by I-the-participant. This chapter also aims to clarify the methods utilized in the writing of these accounts. In writing of the combination of methods and methodologies, as well as ethical issues encountered (as one does with research set in the lived-world in an unsuspecting social setting), I aim to contribute to the development of both arts and practice-related methodologies and methods, in order to aid and improve the experiences of the researcher, researcher-as-participant and participants during fieldwork and practice.

The multi-disciplinary nature of this practice means that there are methods and methodologies, as well as ethical issues that cut across disciplines, thus resulting in a mixed methodology, though all adhere to the interpretivist paradigms and qualitative
approach. Throughout this chapter, I try avoiding embedding the research and my position as participant or researcher in any –isms, school of thought or practice and allow inter-methodological manoeuvrability to best communicate my own. Knowles and Cole state that before we enter the world of academia, we never labelled our process of meaning-making, “how we came to know the world” (2008: 57). As a researcher and practitioner moving up and down the continuum of academia and art (and reflecting upon how the two influence and apply to each other), taking a moment to stop and verbalize the action of conducting research and practice can seem disorienting. Yet this verbalization can help improve the understanding and processes of arts-related and practice-involving research.

5.2 Ontological and Epistemological Frameworks

In Chapter 3, I dedicate a section to defining *I, the self* and highlight aspects of my way-of-thinking-and-living that are also shared with other participants involved in the research (i.e., intervention participants). This fundamental quality of being or becoming is expanded from the individual self to participants sharing the same way-of-thinking-and-living, which results in the forming of a community, placing the individual and their respective community with differing ways-of-thinking-and-living as the perceived-other. I see ways-of-thinking-and-living as something *you are*, not something you have. I accept it as the filter through which all thoughts and actions pass and is thus a part of one’s being influencing other personality and behavioural qualities and characteristics that are then possessed.

I-as-researcher and I-as-participant, act as the vessels and filters through which data and information (as experiences and observations) are passed on to the page as layered and reflexive auto-ethnographic narratives (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011), due to the belief that I-the-researcher (or anyone else for that matter), am only capable of *fully* comprehending and communication my experiences, due to the construction of the researcher and participant ‘self’, which has resulted from the combination of experiences and our ‘ways-of-thinking’ in addition to socio-cultural influences.

Even within communities of like-minded and similar individuals, a particular word or event may not affect individuals to the same degree or in the same way. In Northern
Cyprus, two people can say that they care about environmental issues. One can devote time and energy into organizing volunteer rubbish-collection trips to public spaces or devising effective ways to reduce littering in public spaces so that more people and other organisms can make use of the space, whereas the other burns their rubbish in their back garden using their own means to reduce the accumulation of landfill. How these people care for the environment are very different, although according to each what they are doing is right. Chances are the two people have very different meanings for when they say ‘environmentally-friendly,’ “But if they do not mean the same thing, it is not clear that [they] are talking about the same thing (italics in original)” (Fristedt, 2010: 474). This is their ‘right way’, although one could argue that the burning of plastic is not the most environmentally-friendly way of getting rid of it, but I digress and shall stop talking of rubbish.

My understanding of ‘the way things are,’ or ontological framework, falls along the constructivist paradigm, in that things exist and gain meaning within context (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). That is not to say that they do not exist in their own right, but perhaps not in the same way, as “[taken] alone, particular meaning is not simply false, but is completely indefinable, or thoroughly unspecifiable” (Taylor, 1978: 46). There can be facts indicating ways in which one can care for the environment, which would suggest that if we consumed less, used environmentally friendly materials and sustainable resources then this would be better for the environment, our ecosystem, and as a result we would all be better off… according to some. This, too, is a ‘better’ that is relative. How will corporations make more money if they are not selling as much? What will happen to suppliers of non-renewable fuels and materials? Perhaps, it is more fitting to say that it is only in a vacuum, or in isolation from lived-experience that a thing may exist in its own right. However, for the most part, things not only exist in relation to its context, but are experienced through each individual’s own subjective filter, shaped by one’s own ontological and epistemological framework, which determines how that individual shapes their reality and creates meaning. My research focuses on how these varying ontological and epistemological frameworks that shape one’s way-of-thinking-and-living and construct realities interact, engage and communicate with one another through the use of public art interventions. As my focus is on constructed world-views as opposed to fact-based
realities, I adopt a combination of relativist, constructivist and interpretivist (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) frameworks in that I accept that the participants as well as my own reality is subjective to my own experience in relation to the context in which I have existed and continue to exist (Dewey, 1934).

The research is built upon the premise that the relation of the self and the perceived-other is influenced by the individual’s way of thinking, living, and meaning-making mechanisms (which could be seen as the individual’s own ontological and epistemological framework). It could be said that opposition between the self and the perceived-other is caused by the kinds of ontological and epistemological frameworks individuals have (or adopt), considering that to many this is something that develops intuitively, without a ‘label’ and without the active or conscious thinking of “what is my reality?” Within the fieldwork context of Northern Cyprus this can be seen in evidence: individuals who believe that their reality is the one and only reality (and that everything that goes against this reality is false) cannot acknowledge, understand, and thus tolerate the existence of other realities. The issues causing the divide between communities is not essentially the differences in religion, ethnicity, gender, lifestyle or physical self-representation, but the meaning-making frameworks which influence how one views these differences and similarities with the self and the perceived-other. The self and perceived-other act as a way of differentiating between two opposed ways of constructing reality, in the context of Northern Cyprus; some have a “fixed belief” system (Locke in Dewey, 1910) and others have a relatively more flexible belief system. I claim that it is the opposition of ontological and epistemological frameworks, fixed and flexible belief systems, which construct opposing “worldviews” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 107) and may be the cause conflict between the self and the perceived-other.

This can be observed on a global scale, where two people can identify as the same thing, but have different definitions of performing that identity as well as having different attitudes towards other representations of the shared identity. This research aims to explore the dialogue that takes place between the varying types of ontological and epistemological frameworks and varying performed identities, in short, the self and the perceived-other. Although it is possible for “people to misunderstand each other systematically (italics in original)” (Fristedt, 2010: 473), where each has little or no knowledge of what the other is
saying the person with a more relativist ontological and epistemological framework will be more lenient to at least listen to the perceived-other, whereas the person with a non-relativist framework will most likely have passed judgement on the perceived-other before listening to the perceived-other’s story.

A researcher dealing with artistic practice within social, cultural, and political contexts would ideally have a more reflexive view of meaning-making and the various realities that people form. Reflexivity is an integral part in understanding the perceived-other, and equally important in advancing the construction of the self, making reflexivity valuable outside of academia and in lived-experiences in everyday contexts, which can then be used towards improving and impacting the lived-experience of individuals of all communities.

There are two kinds of situations in this research that require the deriving of meaning from ‘data’: participants’ (telling of) processes of creating interventions; and participants’ (telling of) experiences in engaging with interventions. To refer back to the previous chapter, these lived and told experiences by pre-intervention and intervention-participants allow insight into the views of intervention-participants of the perceived-other, the assumed post-intervention participants, and vice versa. These are subjective stories as told by participants. Just as I write of my experiences and observations, they tell of their own experiences and observations as seen through ‘their eyes’. My position is that their realities have been formed by a constructivist epistemology, however I also believe that it is from what is observable, what is made apparent to the researcher that I can derive truth and meaning. Although this could be called empirical data, the truth is that a deep familiarity of social interactions within the socio-cultural context is necessary to decipher that which is observable, which Geertz refers to as ‘thick description’ (1994). It is here that my ‘nativeness’ to the fieldwork context becomes useful in generating meaning and in the recognition of genuineness. It is the combination of empirical data set within a constructivist epistemology that leads to the meaning-making processes of I-the-researcher self.

In the end, however, it is I-the-researcher and I-the-participant “as instrument” (Leavy, 2015: 17), as the only constant in each phase of data collection, analysis and finally, the communicating of this information to the reader. The one constant (as in ever-
present) is the researcher-participant whose gathering, documenting, and in all cases participating in the creation of these experiences combines all phases and interactions to make sense of the bigger picture using the following methodological frameworks, though the interpretation of this data should be given meaning within the context presented to the reader.

5.3 Methodology

5.3.1 Practice-led Research and Arts-Based Inquiry
The research for this study can be classified under many names. It could be defined as practice-led research (Candy, 2006; Smith & Dean, 2009), as it is through creative practices (the creation of public art intervention) that discoveries have been made about the perceived-other which engages with the creative product. It can also be defined as practice-based (Candy, 2006), because the creative product itself leads to certain realizations regarding the participants who have created them. The research conducted can be studied as practice-based research, in that the artworks alone made by participants can be studied and be the subject of analysis, but that would defeat the purpose of the aims of this study. Thus, it is more fitting to call the study at hand ‘practice-led’ rather than practice-based, though I find that claims and characteristics that apply to practice-based or arts-based research (ABR) (Leavy, 2015) also apply to the shaping of the fieldwork and practice, such as the suggestion that the “beauty [that] lies in ABR is the utility of the work – how it affects people” (ibid, 20). Finley (2008) discusses arts-based inquiry where every sentence resonates with my research and practice, which leads me to contemplate if the two could simultaneously apply to the research in question. If “practice” or “art” is meant to be understood as the physical product resulting from creative labour and critical thinking over a certain period of time, then my research remains as practice-led. However, if I were to define the terms “practice” or “art” as experiential, resulting from all that which has gone into the creation of the physical product or “expressive object” (Dewey, 1934: 208) mentioned earlier, but with the addition of the creation of narratives through the dialogical relationship between the ‘artist’, the physical ‘artwork’ and the ‘audience’ forming a more dynamic and socially-engaged definition of ‘practice’ and ‘art’ then I could argue that my
research falls under arts-based research. If the reader’s definition of art falls closer to a more experiential understanding as stated by Dewey in that “the work of art is complete only as it works in the experience of others than the one who created it” (ibid, 211), then the reader may find that arts-based inquiry would suffice in providing a methodological framework for this study.

The expressive object or the “art product” (ibid, 3) of the public art interventions exist in their own right, however the research focuses on the experiences of individuals in relation to the public art interventions and the dialogue resulting from these interactions, which are then reflexively analysed by the researcher and communicated to the reader as auto-ethnographic narratives. Instead of being concerned about ‘labels’ for my research, I focus on the aspects within these ‘labels’ that allow me to construct a methodology that is tailored to the research. Those who consider art as having a more conventional form and practice may situate this research as one instead of another, however, if the reader expands their understanding of art beyond the conventional definition, forms, and practices then the nature of the research undertaken and thus, its methodology begins to make more sense.

5.3.2 Autoethnography

I have stated my position regarding the subjective and relational experience of the individual, including the researcher. The researcher is the vessel that contains all experiences, stories, observations, and data from all participants involved and therefore experiences as told by the researcher are “(re)presented data that are grounded in both social context and biographical experiences” (Coffey, 2002: 313). These are further filtered through the subjectivity of the researcher. It is my view that one cannot completely remove one’s self from experience, due to the relationality in meaning-making. Goldschmidt stated that “traces of the researcher are present in all ethnographic work” (Adams et al., 2015: 16) and although varying degrees of self-involvement in the narrative are possible, it is my belief that one is unable to completely remove one’s self. One can tell a story on behalf of the perceived-other, but it will never equate to that of the perceived-other’s telling of the ‘same’ story. Reed-Danahay describes autoethnography as “a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context,” (Butz & Besio, 2009: 1660) and I ask that the
reader keep in mind the context and positioning of I-the-participant presented in the previous chapter having read the case-studies of public art interventions in Chapter 4.

Throughout the thesis, my involvement in the stages of the fieldwork have increased and decreased, yet there are always traces of the researcher-or-participant-self regardless of the mode of expression. Another researcher may have interpreted and analysed these experiences and events differently than I have, and yet perhaps someone sharing a similar position to myself would concur with me. My goal is not to speak on behalf of any one community, but to present one interpretation of these case-studies as the-insider-researcher-and-participant. Lincoln and Denzin (1994, 2000) mention “‘five moments’ of qualitative research” (Coffey, 2002: 314), which outline the gradual development of qualitative research starting from its being “part of a positivist programme” (ibid) to the “the postmodern period of experimental ethnographic writing” (Denzin & Lincoln in Coffey, 2002: 315). Lincoln & Denzin (2000) further mention another two moments wherein the final seventh moment “[s]elves, autobiographical ethnography, representation and performance are all part of an envisaged future of qualitative work” (Coffey, 2002: 315). Perhaps, it is safe to say that the future is now and that this research is positioned within the seventh moment.

Autoethnography is ethnography that is done through the self. Geertz writes, “what doing ethnography is…is not a matter of methods…What defines it is the kind of intellectual effort it is: an elaborate venture in, to borrow a notion from Gilbert Ryle, ‘thick description,’” (Geertz, 1994: 214). I could argue that the purpose of all chapters preceding Chapter 4, containing the case-study accounts of public art interventions, is to aid the understanding of these accounts and the meanings derived from them. The changing roles of the researcher (as researcher and participant) allows for the “thinking” (the mental processes taking place during an action) and “reflection” (the mental processes concerning an action that is not taking place) (Ryle, 1968: 211) to occur through the same constant individual. The researcher-as-participant is concerned with the thinking and reflecting of

38 The five moments are identified as “objectivist and positivist”, “the modernist and creative” (Coffey, 1999: 8), the “new multiplicity of theoretical orientations and paradigms” (ibid. 9), the “crisis of representation”, in which canons of truth and method were challenged,” (ibid) and the “continuing diversity and a series of tensions” regarding qualitative methods adopted by the ethnographer.
the fieldwork, while the researcher-as-writer then thinks and reflects upon the reflections of the researcher-as-participant. The researcher’s involvement on so many levels of the research allows the researcher access to first-hand participant experiences, which I argue brings a deeper level of understanding. In my personal experience, this involvement made it difficult to stand removed from the content and context of the research and fieldwork, keeping in mind that this was a struggle from the very beginning of the research process, as I am a “native” or “insider” (Kanuha, 2000). On one hand, the involvement of the self, and the attention and dedication devoted by the researcher to the subject matter and the participants, enhanced the research processes, while on the other, the involvement of the researcher’s self could at times be detrimental to the research, if one ends up “going native” (Malinowski, 1922) the researcher can have problems removing one’s self from that state and back into the reflexive process. Time is certainly a friend to one going back and forth between the roles of researcher and participant, however, when time is scarce, the rapid back and forth between the two roles may cause the distortion of data, observations, and the reflexive process. This was something I struggled with during the fieldwork, to differentiate between or to move between the two roles. However, in hindsight, what was happening was that the reflexive processes were those of the researcher-as-participant and not of the researcher-as-researcher. One aspect of the research design that helped keep the shift between the two roles was I, the researcher, conducted the fieldwork without disruption of thesis writing. The focus of the researcher was entirely devoted to the researcher-as-participant. For the entirety of the fieldwork, which lasted four months, the researcher became participant, and did not revert to being ‘just the researcher’ until after leaving Northern Cyprus and returning to the geography associated with the writing of the thesis. Although one should not have to escape to a different country to write-up research, to engage in a practice that is closely associated with a particular state of being, could either consciously and unconsciously affect the ways in which the experiences are reflected by the researcher. If everything has its time and place, then the time and place of the fieldwork and the researcher-as-participant should remain as such, and the time and place for writing and reflecting upon the fieldwork and the thesis kept separate from the former.
5.3.3 Emic and Etic Perspective of Researcher

Throughout the writing of this research I have taken on various perspectives in communicating data and information to the reader. Emic and etic (Pike, 1967) are concepts which have been applied to various disciplines with (subtly) varying definitions. Thus, to avoid any misunderstanding, “[t]he emic approach focuses on studying cultures from the inside, understanding culture as the members of the cultures understand them [and the] etic approach, in contrast, focuses on understanding cultures from the outside by comparing cultures using predetermined characteristics” (Gudykunst et al, 1996: 6) or as Pike (1967) simply defines them as being from outside (etic) or inside (emic) (37). Although the two approaches seem to stand opposite one another,39 Tirandis (1972) endorses that both approaches and both types of data should be utilized (ibid, 7). The way in which I have integrated both of these approaches into my research has been through the fieldwork, data collection, the writing of the reflexive narrative and analysis of the research. In Chapter 3, the etic perspective was used in communicating the historical context of Northern Cyprus as is widely accepted, taught in textbooks, schools, and summarized in academic articles. These brief summaries provide a glimpse into how a history of the island is re-told in such brevity. In most cases, there is little mention of subaltern groups, minorities, alternative histories and accounts of history that only exist as oral histories, which is where the insider voice, the emic comes into play. In reference to Chapter 4, all covert observations of situations and participants are written from the etic perspective, until the researcher becomes involved, and the involvement removes the researcher from the role of researcher, and into the realm of researcher-as-participant adopting the emic perspective. Once involved, it is no longer possible for the researcher to separate the subjective experience from the narrative. Therefore, we are faced with a ‘before’ picture as observed through the etic perspective and the ‘after’, as seen through the emic, the involved researcher.

When observing participants perceived to be part of the researcher’s community, ‘us’ as mentioned in Chapter 3, I argue that an emic perspective is adopted more so than when observing participants from the perceived-other’s community, ‘them’, though in both

39 Berry (1980) provides a table differentiating between emic and etic approaches indicating the singularity of culture in the emic approach and the universality of the etic approach (Gudykunst et al, 1996: 6-7).
cases the researcher is attempting to understand the participant’s perspective through the involvement of the self. In the case of the perceived-other, the researcher starts from the etic view, with a pre-determined idea of the perceived-other, but without any real understanding from the perceived-other’s perspective. To me, where a true understanding of the perceived-other is reached by the researcher, where the researcher is able to understand the perceived-other in ways that involve more than just a mutual language, but perhaps motives and sentiments associated to the perceived-other is when an emic perspective is gained by the researcher. The most accurate colloquial term that could explain this phenomena is to ‘see through one’s eyes’ or to ‘put one’s self in the other’s place’. The problem is how does one know when this is achieved? How is it measured? How can one really know when one person’s ontological and epistemological frameworks overlap with that of another? Even if it is not entirely possible for these understandings to completely overlap, communication between two individuals through personal experiences, stories and their potential of their stories to become relatable to the perceived-other can begin to allow a mutual understanding of each other, depending on one’s attitudes towards the perceived-other and the perceived-other’s understanding on a particular subject, within the context of Northern Cyprus.

Next, I discuss some of the methods used in order to extract stories and subjective understandings from participants through their experiences with public art interventions created, either through their part in creation or through their encounters with them, while simultaneously covering the nature of each type of participant involved with the research.

5.4 Methods and Study Design

This section of the chapter informs the reader of the study design, including methods utilized for data collection through researcher engagement with participants and processes involved in creating public art interventions, as well as discussing how shifting between the roles of researcher and participant have affected the research throughout its various stages.

The original design for data collection consisted of a tripartite study design that would follow a linear timeline. In practice, however, these phases were not sequential but
took place simultaneously due to participant availabilities, unforeseen developments introducing new opportunities for interviews as well as inspiration for new public art interventions. Research situated in social engagement and lived-experiences, set in relational contexts as opposed to isolated and controlled contexts (such as a laboratory) requires a dynamic approach, which requires the researcher to intuitively and spontaneously adapt the study design to new situations and opportunities to further and benefit the research. Throughout the fieldwork it was deemed more beneficial to have a research design that was not “pre-specified, but [that would] ‘emerge, unroll, cascade, or unfold during the research process.’” (Lincoln, 1985 cited in Gray, 2004: 23) rather than insist on dwelling on a research design that was not furthering, but rather hindering the fieldwork. To remove any implication of a linear timescale being followed throughout the research, I refer to the three types of participants involved in the fieldwork rather than the phases as pre-intervention participants, intervention participants and post-intervention participants, which I have already briefly introduced in the preceding chapter. While pre-intervention participants contributed to the narrative surrounding artistic and activist practices in Northern Cyprus, it was the intervention-participants and post-intervention participants who were actively involved in the ‘artworks’. Intervention-participants brainstormed ideas for potential public art interventions while discussing socio-cultural and socio-political issues in Northern Cyprus and how they situated their Selves within these contexts and in relation to perceived-others.

Intervention-participants also contributed in creating and situating public art interventions through their chosen form and location, under the supervision of the researcher. Post-intervention participants consisted of members of the public who encountered the public art interventions as an experience within their everyday life and were questioned by the researcher about their interaction with the public art intervention. The public art interventions act as expressive objects of the perceived-other created by the intervention-participants’ Selves. These expressive objects lie along a spectrum of serving as commentary and critique of the perceived-other in which the self is at times included. Public art interventions serve the purpose of making apparent to a broad audience a reflection of society in Northern Cyprus as viewed by the intervention-participants as the perceived-other.
Pre-intervention participants of the study consisted of artists and activists selected by the researcher in order to gain a better understanding of practicing within the context of Northern Cyprus. The reason for this was to gain perspectives of artists and activists who were not part of the researcher’s immediate circle, yet whose practice reflected similar values, worldviews, and concerns that were relatable to the researcher. These participants contributed to the narrative surrounding the practice of public art interventions in Northern Cyprus and the practitioner as the marginalized perceived-other. Through semi-structured (Denscombe, 2007: 176), face-to-face interviews (Opdenakker, 2006: n.p.) artists and activists answered questions relating to their practice and experiences within Northern Cyprus. Out of the eight pre-intervention participants only one person did not respond to the request to be interviewed, for unknown reasons. All other participants were keen to share their experiences and their stories. Semi-structured interviews transitioned into unstructured interviews (Denscombe, 2007: 176) to allow for the free-flow of participants’ thought processes. This led both researcher and participant to explore tangents leading off of the initial semi-structured interview. This is why I choose to refer to these individuals as participants, as opposed to interviewees, because the information being transferred could potentially serve as material and inspiration for public art interventions as well as developing the narrative surrounding the practice and the context of Northern Cyprus. This contribution makes it fair to say that all participants are collaborators within this research rather than passive observers, or uninformed subjects. Due to our inability to cross paths, one participant agreed to answer the questions to the best of their ability in writing and send them to me via e-mail. The participant was told that the answers were meant to reflect the subjective experience of the participant and was encouraged to write their answers in a language that reflected their personal thoughts and beliefs regarding art and public art intervention practices in Northern Cyprus. Although questions invited the participant to produce elaborate answers, concise and vague answers were given. Had all participants been contacted via surveys, the quality and depth of knowledge and understanding acquired through face to face interviews would not exist.

The rest of the pre-intervention participants chose to meet in a ‘place’, a space with a great sense of familiarity to the participant. In Northern Cyprus, this translated as the homes of the participants. One participant, with whom I met in London, chose a regular
and familiar location. It was important to have participants feel at ease and comfortable in order to share their experiences without the added confusion of disorientation. Having done some background research on each participant, I was able to structure questions around their areas of interest and practice, rather than following a fixed set of questions. The nature of the interview was more of a set of guiding questions that initiated a naturally flowing conversation. The act of ‘gathering data’ is not strictly based on a question-answer structure, but rather in developing an understanding of the participant through conversations of sharing experiences, stories in a dialogic manner.

To really understand and know what the participant is talking about, one must devote time and mental space to absorb what is being shared, and to understand why the participant is choosing to share certain information or memories. Developing a rapport with participants is not a mandatory act, and is not part of ‘a job description’, or a means to an end; it should not be reduced to the term ‘networking’, but the interaction between the researcher and participant is an essential part of acquiring knowledge and constructing a understanding of the participant’s worldview. These interactions have greatly contributed to furthering the narrative and understanding behind the concepts of self and perceived-other, us and them. The stories told, coming from outside the researcher’s inner circle, demonstrated a shared reality amongst artists and activists within Northern Cyprus due to the shared worldviews, as well as ontological and epistemological frameworks.

Researchers are advised to take notes or use recording devices in order to retrieve them at a later date. Ideally, both methods would have been utilized during interactions with the participants; however, due to various circumstances (such as the environment), it was not always possible to use recording devices. Note-taking automatically slowed down the conversation, even when it was subtly attempted so as not to disturb the flow of conversation. The act of writing caused participants to stop or slow down and broke the flow of conversation and thought process. Where having a recording device was out of the question, note-taking was continued despite breaking the flow of conversation, but where recording the interviews were possible, brief notes were only kept to indicate thoughts or parts of the conversation that were deemed highly significant, either because of their insight into the research topic or because of its expressiveness of the self and perceived-other relationship. During the covert interactions with post-intervention participants,
documentation of the engagement and interviews took place in private, so as not to defeat the purpose of the covertness of the researcher.

Due to the transition of semi-structured interviews into unstructured interviews, I as well as participants would often lose track of time, or the interviews would run for so long that the recording devices ran out of memory. As the sole researcher, I chose to dedicate my attention fully to the participants, but this could have been avoided if a time limit had been put on the interviews. Although parts of the interview from one instance are missing, it was the unstructured interview section that had been cut out, which consisted of the participants sharing stories unrelated to public art interventions, but relating to how they are seen as ‘others’ by the normative self of Northern Cyprus. These stories served the purpose of emphasising what had already been said during the semi-structured interview, and so their essence was still captured in the recordings; however, had new insight been brought to the research, this would have been rectified by the reflective note-taking by the research following each participant encounter.

These methods and processes have indicated that face-to-face, semi-structured interviewing techniques can be highly effective at establishing trust between researcher and participant, allow for the exchange of genuine thought and emotion, as well as the sharing of experiences and stories that can benefit developing ‘alternative’ narratives through alternative perspectives. Furthermore, the use of data collection methods such as note-taking, recording (especially for the ‘covert’ researcher) were utilized at a time and place that would not interrupt the natural behaviour, thought and flow of conversations of the participants.

Intervention-participants were selected by invitation to be part of the research group, specifically because of their history in conducting art in public art interventions, as well as having worked with each other on various exhibitions and projects.40 The group discussions planned for devising the interventions, which would potentially require the revelation of personal views, meant that a certain degree of trust and understanding had to be present between the participants as well as an understanding of the confidentiality of

40 Prior to the research, two exhibitions followed a similar structure, where the collective and collaborative practices of artists were well received by an engaging audience-as-participant. This structure set a solid starting foundation for the fieldwork methods. The names, dates, and locations of these exhibitions and projects have been left out to protect the anonymity of the participants involved.
such information. It was, therefore, beneficial for the research to have artists as participants that were not only familiar with the process of each other’s practice and process, but also with their personal characteristics. This allowed participants to be able to speak freely within a group. This setting is similar to what Habermas refers to as “ideal speech situation” (Habermas cited in Kester, 1995: 5), where dialogue is not a matter of winning an argument or debate, but without being “charged with defending a priori positions” participants share “an extensive collective knowledge of the subject at hand” (ibid).

One reason for having a group of intervention-participants for creating public art interventions was to prevent the interventions from ending up as public displays of private art, that is, art intended for the expression of the ideas of one person. The collaborative process for devising and implementing art interventions would allow an artwork to emerge as the result of the conversing of different perspectives by the input of different minds. The collaborative nature of the artwork would also mean that no one artist was the sole creator of the work and, therefore, depending on how one chose to see it, either belonged to nobody or belonged to everyone. As artists, there was the mutual understanding that once an artwork is completed and sent out into the world, it is no different than having a child grow up and becoming their own individual. They have their own identity, make their own decisions and are not under the guardianship of any other person. As soon as an artwork is in a public realm, it becomes an artwork of the public, for the public.

Intervention-participants attended a preliminary presentation where the thesis topic was summarised and provided a background of public art interventions and their role in creating public art interventions for the purposes of the research (Appendix 1f). Intervention-participants then attended meetings for devising or conducting public art interventions depending on availability and whether they could relate to the medium and methods for each public art intervention.

During the preliminary presentation, a few intervention-participants decided that they were not fit to participate in the fieldwork, even though their knowledge and experience in different artistic fields (such as performing arts) stood out from other participants. Even though the intervention-participants had close relations with one another outside of the research project, when it came to putting their artistic knowledge into practice, they were timid or modest in their capabilities and potential contribution. I will
note that although some artists possess the necessary skills to create in some disciplines, they may not be as confident in performing and creating for others, such as the public sphere, or working alongside other artists. I consider this a major loss to the community, as artists should be encouraged and enabled to expand their platforms, experiment through ways of expression for the sake of the growth of the community as well as the self.

The initial step was to discuss and determine what issues wanted to be addressed by the intervention-participants. By determining common issues that were to inspire the creation of the public art interventions, participants would be creating work on shared issues rather than individualistic ones. This mattered, as the public art interventions, being in public, were meant to address the public and be able to relate to them. These open discussions and brainstorming sessions were held in privately reserved spaces where participants would be prompted by the researcher with questions to guide their thought process and discussion, with minimal input on the discussion itself. Rather than dictate to the group what should be discussed, it was important that the group was allowed to function and debate as a self-driven organism and that ideas and decisions occurred due to a result of the discussion and not due to any implications from the researcher. Transcribed audio recordings and field notes were used to document these sessions, four of which took place.

Bringing together artists with pre-established relations and a ‘shared-language’ to practice collaboratively led to long discussions on what, when and where interventions would take place. Although the collaboration was an intended part of the study-design, the debates surrounding potential public art interventions would gradually stray from the task at hand and subject matter, concluding meetings without an action plan, which would be postponed to the next meeting. This made it apparent that collaborative and collective work were not to be interchangeably used, where collaboration states “research facilitators, must be able to draw out issues, talents, and energies of people they are working with and help them spark each other’s strengths” (Barndt, 2008: 354). It could have been that the collective way of working was too ingrained in the participants’ experience to transition into a collaborative state-of-mind, where artists would work individually, on an artwork of their own creation, but with a shared subject or aim in mind. A collective arts project to me is the equivalent of each artist writing one song for an album; even though each song is
different and bears the unique style of the artist, all the songs ‘go together’ to form a whole. In this instant, I as the researcher could have guided participants into a more collaborative way of working and thinking by taking control of the debates in the first instance and gradually reducing that control to allow the participants to work more independently. However, I was concerned that this would discourage participation and the production of ideas and discussion.

Free-flowing, brainstorming discussions were meant to allow each member to participate and join in to the discussion. Any idea could end up as an intervention and it was better to generate as many ideas as possible in the initial phase and then to gradually pick four that were manageable and meaningful in purpose. Too much discussion amongst participants was soon replaced by discussion taking place amongst only a few participants. Although familiarity allowed for uninhibited discussions and a safe space to discuss socio-politically and socio-culturally sensitive subjects, the downfall was that some members got carried away in ‘discussing among themselves,’ excluding the majority of the group. After noticing the silence of those who were previously contributing to discussions, I approached them privately to ask whether something had happened that caused them to stop contributing to discussions. One member stated that they “did not see the point” in contributing or making suggestions as someone always had something contrary to say. Another member stated that they felt insecure amongst the participants because their strengths and skills differed from those in the group, therefore thought their contribution to be futile.

The next two meetings were scheduled with the intention of brainstorming for ideas for possible interventions. The first of these consisted of a smaller group (five participants as opposed to the following meeting that consisted of twelve). As researcher, I prompted the group with the question of what issues and topics the participants considered worthy of being tackled or made subject material through the interventions. The jumping point to start off discussion was things that disturbed or annoyed participants from having to spend each day on, in and around this geography. Ideas for interventions were constructed based on place, topic, and audience. The themes of the issues were environmental (such as the accumulation of rubbish in urban and rural places, the cracks and potholes in the roads and the lack of government initiative to fix them, the increasing number of construction sites.
without city planning and disregard for conserving parks or greenery within cities),
be behavioural (such as, throwing rubbish on the floor and not seeing any problem with it,
parking in disabled parking spots because it is more convenient, dangerous and careless
driving, the need to contradict any suggested action or alternative action to what exists, the
necessity to “crush the ego” in order to stimulate behaviour change), and constitutional
(which concerned constitutional changes that were to be voted on during the month of June
that year).

The concept of public space, how it was defined, and which of these defined public
spaces would be the target for the purposes of the research seemed to differ between
participants; to some, a coffee-shop qualified as a public space because all people were
able to gain access to it. To others, it was not a public space because once you entered you
become a customer, and had to purchase goods to be there. This meant that those who did
not like the brand, product, or did not have sufficient money (or did not want to spend it)
would not be able to gain access. Even though there was an audience, it would not qualify
as a public space. Yet, public spaces that were available to all, such as parks and squares
remained isolated and silent, but fulfilled their criteria, even though it lacked an audience.
Whether a place containing a crowded and a non-specific audience even existed was
debatable.

Ideas began taking specific form by drawing upon similar interventions that were
seen on social media. Some ideas for interventions that emerged during the meetings are as
follows:

- Filling pot holes in the roads with flowerbeds
- A “behavior-modification booth” where the habit of throwing rubbish on
  the floor is replaced with the habit of picking it up
- Road signs or commercial signs encouraging people not to change in a
  sarcastic manner
- Fliers for cars requesting that the person throws the paper in the bin
  otherwise they will receive 10 years of bad luck
- Musical rubbish bin
- A “scenic view” telescope positioned to look at a rubbish pile
- Handing out samples of rubbish on a busy high street mainly consisting of
  high street stores, as they do in many department stores or shopping malls
- Performing domestic chores (mostly) attributed to housewives in a trendy
  coffee shop
• A sign similar to those stating the population of a city but instead of the number it poses the question “How many of ‘us’ are there?”

Spoilt for choice, there were many options, themes, places and audiences to choose from resulting in each idea becoming a potential though not definitive option. By the third and final meeting it was clear that if the meetings carried on the way they did, then there would be all talk and no action.

Similar to the pre-intervention interviews, discussions that took place in a room that had been laid out and prepared for discussion with a recording device seemed to create an atmosphere that almost put them on the spot. Although no objections were made to having an audio recording device during the meetings, this new set-up seemed to have thrown off the otherwise natural development of discussion that would occur in a casual gathering of the group, in a coffee shop for example. However, when meetings did take place in the more causal settings, the recording of the meetings became highly obscured by traffic, other customers, music, as well as the constant moving of participants. I had to decide on what was more important: the stimulation of productive discussion and debate or the recording of a not-so-productive discussion that I could return to over and over again during the writing up of the thesis? In the end, the arranged meetings would be dismissed all together. Instead, rather than devising interventions through calculation and planning, interventions would be created without the pressure of time constraints and lengthy debates, but rather through immediate action taking place in the event of a spontaneous idea or inspiration. Just like any other artwork, the artist would know when an idea emerged, share it with the rest of the collective, and after a brief sharing of ideas and opinions it would soon be implemented. As soon as the words “meeting” or “debate” had been removed, there were a flow of ideas from group members and participation increased, as did the number of public art interventions.

Having gone to one participant’s house after the final meeting, accompanied by a few cool beers under the even cooler air conditioning and some soft music in the background, we sat scattered across the room. Some were on their phones checking

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41 The “us” referred to here is what I have discussed in the previous chapter, concerning the way individuals create and identify their own communities using sets of subjective criteria.
updates from their friends while some were discussing their new exercise regimen. I sat in silence, somewhat disappointed with the final meeting and that my plan had not turned out the way I had hoped. Noticing my silence, questions began coming my way. I explained my concerns for my fieldwork, explaining that the structure I had planned did not seem to work within the group, which did not mean that it was anyone’s fault and that it was okay for it to turn out like this, as this could mean that the solution was still out there. In an attempt to comfort me, participants asked me what I would have done, had I not had to do the fieldwork and had I not been dependent on other participants involved in the creation process. I talked about the interactive wardrobe installation I wanted to do for Reckless, a three day festival similar to Pride but on a much smaller scale, that would create awareness of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ) community in Northern Cyprus. A wardrobe would be placed in the festival area with pen and paper and a stool on the inside, and people would be able to get in the closet and write something, anything. Anybody would be able to enter the closet, sit, reflect, and write down a thought, a note of encouragement, or a memory. The outside would be decorated with whatever colours, slogans or stickers people chose. The doors of the closet would then be open for people to go and read other people’s stories and if they felt like it, they would be able to add their own to the collection. I had already mentioned this to a few of the participants, before the research even began, and they seemed to think that it was an intervention that would engage the audience as collaborators. However, due to the lack of time for preparation and the cancellation of Reckless (even though the Rainbow Walk still went ahead and took place on the 18th of March, which was the first LGBTQ walk in Northern Cyprus) the closet intervention never happened. However, it remained (and remains) as a very special idea that will hopefully one day be realized.

After talking about some other ideas I had scribbled down whilst doing my literature review, I realized that everyone had become more interested, and it was then I realized that it was perhaps the lack of the personal story behind the interventions that affected the participants in how they had visualised and discussed their ideas. The isolated intervention without a context seemed more like a task instead of a creative ‘practice’. When ideas became personal, from within a context that related to the self instead of creating ‘for the sake of creating’, participants seemed more excited and eager to share
their ideas, because they were *genuine* and not *concocted*. Sentences began with “I wanted to do this… because I believe that this… would communicate this,” instead of, “Maybe if we did this… it would mean that… and it would be.” Ideas for interventions that came from each person, having been inspired by something that created a reaction strong enough that it sparked an idea, proved to be more powerful than those simply for the sake of fieldwork. Having found what was right for this group of participants, those who had sat quiet for most of the meetings began speaking up, and revealing their own ideas. Soon, it was an all-inclusive collaboration and within thirty minutes, everyone had a definitive idea for an intervention.

Intervention-participants contributed to developing public art interventions through their generated ideas through discussions and debates with one another, their observations of socio-cultural and socio-political practices and attitudes in Northern Cyprus, as well as their role as part of the ‘marginalized other’ to the normative self of Northern Cyprus (Appendices 1g and 1h). Their choices of public art interventions serve as a commentary on society as a whole, inclusive of individuals. The interventions that were made public by the participants were intended to start a dialogue between the marginalized other and the normative self of Northern Cyprus, even if for a little while, and even if no words are said, as long as a moment of thought and contemplation was shared.

Post-intervention participants were perceived by the intervention-participants as ‘the other’, the members of society that would either side with the artist in their expression or those who would be offended or aggravated by the content. The content and form public art interventions would be ‘world-disclosing’ (Lafont, 2000) of the individuals within the context of the public art intervention. That which was originally planned as a ‘gathering of feedback’ developed into a more active viewer, resulting in these individuals becoming participants, including members of the public who crossed paths with the public art interventions devised for the purposes of the research.

At first, I would stand at a distance from the interventions and the post-intervention participants engaging or going about their day within the vicinity of the intervention. I would covertly observe (Gray, 2004) the participants’ behaviour in relation to the intervention. This allowed me to see the participants’ natural reactions to the interventions as well as assess whether it was appropriate to engage with participants in person, and if
so, I would decide on how I would approach and engage with the participants depending on the initial observation. Once I approached participants, I would casually greet the participant(s) before easing the conversation into the topic of the public art intervention in question. This approach of informal conversational interviewing (ibid) proved more successful in eliciting participant’s subjective experience of the public art intervention than interviewing participants in a more explicit manner. This method allowed for participants to generate answers without feeling the pressure of ‘being interviewed’ as well as giving answers that would be acceptable to give in an interview setting.

The interviews were not recorded, as this would have been too obtrusive, but notes were taken relating to the encounter and interview immediately after the encounter. As the researcher, I kept my participant-identity hidden, so as not to be associated directly with the public art interventions. If the researcher had been directly associated with the works created then this may have influenced the participants’ responses to the questions asked in favour of the researcher and it was important for participants to maintain their own subjective judgment.

Post-intervention participants contributed towards developing the narrative of the other as intervention-participants as well as their perceived-other. This step was one that had not been taken by previous public art intervention practitioners and the continuation of such dialogic practices can ensure a better understanding of the context in which artists and activists practice in public and how the products could be adjusted to better fit the practitioner’s intentions, whatever they may be.

The processes of how each public art intervention was created by intervention-participants and the researcher’s encountering with post-interventions participants are written as selected auto-ethnographic case-studies making up the entirety of Chapter 4. Recordings, reflexive diaries, and notes from the field along with the researcher’s subjective experience was reflected upon before generating meaning through critical thinking and theoretical knowledge, resulting in findings regarding the researchers initial research questions. What proved most beneficial to developing the narratives that gave way to answering these questions was the dialogic nature of interaction and engagement between participants with other participants and participants with researcher. The focus and purpose of this method favoured “qualitative depth of experience,” over “a quantitative
range of experiences” (Cartiere, 2013: 156). These encounters, however brief or long-lasting, also presented a series of situations where complex problems could arise. Next, I discuss problems of an ethical nature that I identified during my research, in reference to these encounters.

### 5.5 Ethical Considerations

As with all socially-engaging research, ethical issues were encountered during various stages of the research in varying degrees of complexity. Some of the main areas in which ethical measures were taken to “avoid harm…respect the rights of all participants and consider the consequences of all aspects of the research process” (O’Reilly, 2008: 59) were matters of consent, authorship and participant safety during fieldwork practice (in the event of vandalism accusations). To elaborate, these could be further categorized as: a) consent of pre-intervention participants during interviews with researcher to be used as part of this research; b) consent of intervention participants for their speech and actions to be used as part of this research; c) shared authorship of artworks created for research purposes; d) anonymity of intervention-participants and some pre-intervention participants due to the risk of potential legal action taken against participants; and e) consent of post-intervention participants for their actions and speech to be used for this research. While some ethical issues were resolved with the signing of consent forms or the participant’s verbal consent, other situations taking place in public, real-world settings, where my role of the researcher had been covert due to not feeling secure or comfortable in the presence of post-intervention participants, offered more challenging ethical justifications to the practice. In this section, I discuss how the fieldwork was designed and manipulated to be as ethical as possible given the nature of the research, while explaining how the more trying situations for the researcher and participants were dealt with during the fieldwork.

#### 5.4.1 Consent of Participants

Pre-intervention participants were made aware that I, the overt researcher, would be using their contributions during the interviews for the research. The research content and scope were explained prior to interviews. During interviews, if they required anything to be off-
the-record then they would simply just request it. Their verbal consent was noted. Participants were also asked if they wished to remain anonymous, and were given an explanation as to why confidentiality (Gray, 2004: 235) may be considered, so that their answers were informed rather than spontaneous. For participants unfamiliar with the logistics and formalities of ethics, signing a consent form made them uncomfortable as well as suspicious, even when presented with signed and stamped forms from the university, stating my position and purpose. Therefore, rather than forcing these practices onto participants, it made sense to resort to methods of gaining consent from participants with which they were more familiar, such as verbal consent. Participants also directed the researcher to information that was publicly available on the internet, social media and online newspapers, which the researcher was free to include in the research.

For intervention-participants, consent forms were handed out along with information sheets describing the nature of the research and their voluntary role. Participants were also made aware that due to the nature of some of the interventions, there would be a risk of being accused of vandalism, as it has been the case with many street artists and graffiti artists, if we were to be caught in the act. In such a situation, I, the researcher stated that I would take full responsibility and would take up the issue with the authorities or the person making the accusation. Of course, due to the inconsistencies of the practice of law enforcement, there was no way of knowing how authorities or bystanders may react to witnessing of the works created as part of the interventions. It was not possible to guarantee that my stepping forward in the event of getting caught would protect the other intervention-participants. Intervention-participants were well aware of the consequences and the potential risks and they assured me that if an accusation was made or authorities intervened in the practice that they would stand by their actions and the cause of the fieldwork. As the intervention-participants’ safety was at stake, it was my priority to ensure that interventions took place with caution, to ensure no permanent damage was caused to any government or private property, and discrete swiftness, to reduce the chances of participants being caught in the act and avoid an unpleasant situation. Intervention-participants were made fully aware of the risks of the fieldwork and were free to quit the fieldwork, or adjust their level of involvement in the research.
Getting consent from some post-intervention participants was fairly straightforward. As mentioned with the pre-intervention participants, verbal informed consent was preferred over the signing of consent forms. In the socio-cultural context of Northern Cyprus where signatures and documents belong to ‘formal situations,’ verbal consent seemed to suffice for both participant and researcher within the interview context. However, in certain situations the lines of whether informed consent was given were blurred, and in other cases it seemed like there was no appropriate time to inform the participant of the research topic. The dilemma presented here is that the exclusion of these encounters would present a very one-sided post-participant involvement, where only the situations where post-participants were in agreement with the intervention-participants and researcher are included. Would this then come back to researcher as exercising selective participant involvement? Here the research struggles with having power over the participant and what is included or excluded in the final thesis (O’Reilly, 2008: 61). However, the backbone of the research is the stories of participants through engagement with the public art interventions. Would their exclusion not deprive the reader and the research from valuable information? As with the intervention-participants, it is not necessarily the author, but what the author has to say, their story. Would it be safe to include the stories without referring to these individuals as participants, despite their contribution to making sense of the public art interventions in question? Would their omission from the research be just as unethical as their inclusion? To answer these questions, I turn to Lincoln & Guba:

As a result, the naturalist is not interested in pursuing some single ”truth” (which s/he does not believe exists, in any event), but rather is interested in uncovering the various constructions held by individuals and shared, occasionally, among members of stakeholding groups in a social context (1987: 15).

Gray states that “the purpose of research is to collect data, not to change people or opinions” (2004: 235). The problem here is that by the time the researcher reaches the post-intervention participants, they have already engaged with the public art intervention, which means emotions and thought processes are already set in motion prior to the interview, but still caused by factors related to the research. The trouble is there is no way of knowing how post-intervention participants will react to these interventions (Sinding,
Gray, & Nisker, 2008: 463). If the artworks make people angry does that make it unethical? Does this mean, as Sinding et al. (2008: 465) suggest, that we should exclude from our research all imagery and representation that may be considered to be critical? Of course not, the researcher cannot control the behaviours of the participant, but can control what the researcher chooses to do in the face of a potentially harmful or disturbing situation (either to the participant or the researcher). I mentioned how as the researcher, I act as a vessel and messenger (not a representative) of the participants and their stories during the research process. Perhaps the way around this would to consider their reactions as well as their story for the final discussion and findings, but not provide a thick-description of their story as has been the case for participants with consent and eliminating parts of the dialogue which would reveal the exact location or identity of the participants. It may be that this compromise may resolve the ethical dilemmas arising from such situations, which I have mentioned in the next section.

5.4.2 Unethical encounters

In terms of content of the artworks, it was agreed that no intentional offence was to be caused by the artworks. This was challenging to achieve. While some intervention-participants contested by saying that this would fall under censorship, as the researcher, I defended the idea that as artists working in a public space we had a responsibility to be inclusive of all audiences. For example, a graphic and obscene work may be acceptable in a private exhibition where audience members would chose to attend the exhibition, but as the artists were intervening in a public space, the art interventions had to remain appropriate to all members of the community.

Although the idea was not to intentionally produce offensive art interventions, the possibility remained that in some situations members of the community could take offence by the content, even with the precautions agreed upon at the start of the intervention-participant gatherings. The art interventions were an alternative means to communicate with members of the community, to send a message. The art interventions were not meant to be taken as a means of self-expression, at least not entirely, but as a mirror, reflecting that which is present within the country and community. The interventions were simply highlighting an existing sentence, if you will, and yet there was no guarantee that they
would not be met with aggressive language and behaviour, as was the case with one intervention. This is why the anonymity of intervention-participants is significant for their safety.

When the intervention in question was still being developed (*Soldier in Stilettos* Chapter 4.4, p.142 & p.144), two voices spoke to me. The first was that of the researcher, saying that this image, placed exactly opposite from the Turkish soldiers’ watch-point on the city border, will most certainly cause offense and, therefore, if seen by anyone, it was almost certain that we would get into trouble. The second voice was that of the ‘artist-activist’, who did not like the idea of being controlled through the fear of being caught or told off. The artist did not *intend* to offend, but simply to express. And so, it went up on the wall that night, and was torn down the very next day, as I witnessed upon my return to the scene the next day to take photographs of the intervention in daylight. There I came across a small crowd of shop-keepers and coffee-shop owners by the wall on which it had been placed, and where the poster was partially torn and partially blocked by a tall stand holding snacks for sale. This is my recollection of that moment:

I walked in to one of the shops and bought a bottle of water. 
“What was all the commotion about?” I asked the cashier.
“Some people came and stuck an uncouth poster”, said the cashier, taking my money from the counter and slamming it into the till. I felt uneasy, uncomfortable and it seemed that within that brief time the heat had gone up a few degrees. The encounter was so traumatising that I had no need for any recording device; the incident is now carved into my memory. I inquired about the poster. The description was fairly straightforward, a say-what-you-see definition, and added that those who did it must have done it overnight. The following comment pointed out to a possibility that had not crossed my mind:
“What if the soldiers or the police saw this and thought it was me who did it? They might throw me in jail for being disrespectful. I would lose business. Thankfully, it is blocked now.”

In the dark of night, all we could see was a blank wall. Had we looked above, we would have seen a shop-sign. The wall was not exactly part of the shop, but it was being used by the shop. Our fault was unintentional, but the consequences would have been severe had there been any serious action taken towards the shopkeeper. As the researcher, I had seen how that particular work may have caused offence, but like the artist who
genuinely could not see why it would cause offence, I could also see why it should not cause offence. Similarly, I could see why we would get into trouble with the authorities, whereas the artist and intervention-participants did not care if we did get into trouble. As researcher and participant, I was always aware of the potential of trouble, but had taken that risk’s consequences on myself, not for the other participants. This was an experience that could not have been foreseen through any ethics textbook; it was only through the experience that one could have known this particular action to cause this particular reaction. As a researcher, I could only inform and warn some participants, the decision to act was on them. Had I said no to a particular work, firstly, would I not be censoring freedom of expression, and secondly, could not they have gone and done it anyway, outside of the research parameters?

Another encounter regarding the same poster took place with another shop owner. This time, I was able to introduce myself as a researcher and that I was looking for people to talk to regarding public art interventions in Northern Cyprus. At first, the participant seemed quite keen on talking about the poster, the history of Cyprus, and how the existence of the Turkish-Cypriot community was owed to the Turkish military. The poster was clearly a cause for concern and contempt for the participant in question. Upon my attempt to carry the discussion further to find out the participants’ views on those who may think differently about the military, the keenness for the discussion elevated into frustration and rage not directed at those thinking differently, but at me, as the researcher, for being so daft as to even consider such a question and that I must be as ignorant and unaware as those who hold beliefs in opposition to the military. The interview was cut there, with my attempts to apologize for any frustration caused being ignored. My only consolation was another employee who stated that this should not be taken personally, as the topic of Northern Cyprus, its history, and the involvement of the military was always a cause for elevated emotion with the participant.

Although these encounters do not take place within the ethical parameters of qualitative research, the intensity of participant reactions and the consequences following the interventions shine light on practical issues that could be avoided in future projects. When the practice of public art interventions is considered by some as unethical, or as vandalism, one could argue that there is no point in arguing for the participant interactions
as being ethical. However, this research is truly set in the grey area of art-based, autoethnographic, qualitative research taking place in real-world settings and the occurrence of such complications can only help further the understanding of such practice and its relevant ethical and practical implications.

5.4.3 Vandalism

In the previous chapter I discussed the de-facto government status of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, where freedom of expression of alternative socio-cultural and socio-political narratives is constrained due to a more conservative mind-set, due to the current government in power. Punch mentions, “politics suffuses all social science research,” (2013: 117) meaning that the context in which the research and fieldwork takes place is shaped and affected by various elements that make up the fieldwork environment in this case, from culture, to religious beliefs, from government legislations to corruption of authoritative institutions. This meant that there was a high possibility of encountering individuals with such mind-sets while implementing interventions or even when collecting feedback. This was another reason for abandoning the original research design where group-discussions would generate feedback from the public regarding the public art interventions. The content of this artwork in question may have provoked controversy to the extent of verbal abuse, discomfort, and anxiety amongst other participants. Even though having members of the public engaging with their perceived-other was an aim of the fieldwork; the ways in which these interactions took place could jeopardize the safety and wellbeing of the artists and members of the public.

The dilemma of whether stencilling or pasting posters on walls is freedom of expression or vandalism stretches across borders (see Chapter 2.4.3). In the USA, both Shephard Fairey and Banksy have been accused of vandalising buildings with unauthorized artworks, yet many have stood up against these charges saying that their art has been an inspiration to contemporary aspiring artists. Attempting to resolve the issue of whether public art (either permitted or unpermitted) is vandalism would take up a significant amount of time, however, my personal stance on this issue is that vandalism and art are quite distinct. Public art intervention, whether authorized or not, serves the purpose of more than existing for the sake of its creation. It is not ‘damage to property’ for the sake
of damage to property, simply to spite someone or in some cases for no reason at all. To me, that is vandalism. Public art intervention, be it graffiti, street art, installations, interventions, cannot be put under the same category. In Chapter 2, I mention that one of the reasons that unauthorized public art has so much power is precisely because it defies rules and the system which is meant to be in control of every aspect of public and private lives. Yet it is not a destructive act, although some might argue that it is destructive. The idea behind (unauthorized) public art interventions is that it is the practice of true freedom of speech, an attempt to create a public sphere, where all voices can be heard without the control or dependence on media owned by third parties. It cuts out the middle-man, the authority figures, the media owners, and the small percentage of power which controls information that is made available to us. It is one way of getting around what Herman & Chomsky (1988) have defined as the five filters of the “propaganda model” (2010: xi), the manipulation of the media to serve the goals and funding of institutions which are in power, or what Guy Debord (1995) calls the “spectacle”, on which Debord commented “spectacular domination has succeeded in raising an entire generation moulded to its laws.” (1988: 7). I believe that interventionist art, such as Fairey or Banksy’s requesting permission from the very same authority and system to which they stand opposed negates the practice and contradicts the purpose. Vandalism is defined by a system that hopes to keep the private and public lives and individuals under strict control, allowing only that which is pleasing to the system. The ‘spectacle’ will do all it can to ensure it thrives and survives. Article 25 in the constitution of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus states that everybody has the right to teach, learn, publish, and research the arts and sciences freely (Appendix 2). Furthermore, Sections 1 and 2 of Article 62 state that the government will ensure the security of artists and provide the means for artists to practice and progress as well as the safety of the works created (Appendix 2). In examples I have given in my Introduction and Chapter 1, it is clear that the government or authoritative institutions in Northern Cyprus do not abide by the articles stated in the constitution and behave in a selective manner in what they allow. Vandalism indicates that as a result of the artwork being introduced to the public, the object or building or surface has been deemed unusable. A wall is still a wall, even with a wheat-paper paste poster on it. A car being scratched by boisterous individuals is vandalism, but when police officers misuse their power to arrest
and detain individuals for holding a banner expressing their thoughts and nothing more, their phones are confiscated, their data erased, and sometimes their cameras are broken, because the officers’ misuse of power has been documented. They will consider themselves lucky if they get to walk free, instead of being put in a jail for a night or two. A logic that considers a picture on the wall as vandalism, but not the destruction of private possessions by officer’s misusing power in the name of ‘public safety’ is lost on me.

During some of the pre-intervention participant interviews, a few mentioned that they had been called into the police station and questioned, simply because of their liberal views that often challenged anti-humanitarian laws, regulations and practices of authoritative figures and institutions. It was not the content of the graffiti that caused the police to act upon them, but the identities and the ideologies with which they were associated, which happened to be contrary to that of the police. Their artworks were not offensive or abusive, but on the contrary, messages of peace, equality, and acceptance of all member of the community. They artworks were declared as vandalism and were crudely erased, as a way of censoring their freedom of speech. Now there are many squiggly lines sprayed all over the old city in Nicosia, proof of the police’s and the municipality’s great attempt to cover up the vandalism. Could one not argue that the actions of the police are also vandalism? The classification of public art interventions as well as any other unauthorized public art as vandalism is an insight into the mind and system that makes that accusation. To reduce freedom of creative and critical expression to a crime is a crime of censorship, an act which is associated with suppressive governments and ruling powers. If this is still the case in so-called developed countries, then how ‘developed’ are they really? If public artworks are to be taken as ‘damage’ or those engaging in public artwork as labelled ‘criminals’, then the problem is not with the artwork or the artist, but the system that labels them as such.

Although there is much more to be written on the topic of ethics, I have covered the core ethical issues experienced during my fieldwork as well as the justification of the methods to suit the research-purposes. The paradox that lies within research taking place in unpredictable and uncontrolled real-world settings, unaware of the relational and unique experiences of the participants with the public art interventions. The ‘emic’ and ‘insider’ positions of the researcher-as-participant provide some understanding of the context, yet

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censoring intervention-participants gives the researcher-as-participant power over the participants, and thus negates the researcher’s participant status. Not only that, but it defeats the purpose of observing the creative processes and practices in its natural development. The research aims to document that which would have taken place had ‘the research’ element of the fieldwork been absent. Additionally, the challenges faced during participant engagements and ‘unethical encounters’ are worth contemplation. For future public art intervention practices, the experiences mentioned above will help in devising research designs and creative public and collaborative practices, and in understanding the context in which the fieldwork is situated, bearing in mind that there will always remain unexpected surprises within research conducted in the real-world. Practice makes progress, not perfect.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the reader with my ontological and epistemological frameworks as well as my methodological approaches for this research. I have also included in the chapter situations in which ethical dilemmas were faced and how they were (to some extent) resolved. While referencing existing knowledge, I have contributed to the on-going discussion on relational methodology, ontological and epistemological frameworks and ethics in practice-led and arts-based research in real-world settings. In the following chapter, I present my findings in relation to the fieldwork and those involved in the practices that shaped the case-studies and discuss them in relation to the relevant literature already mentioned in the previous chapters.
CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4, I presented selected case-studies as stories and situations within the context of Northern Cyprus, whereupon reflection and analysis will give insight into some of the questions and claims made at the very beginning of this thesis (though at times reshaping these initial questions) while inevitably birthing new questions. In this chapter, I will state my findings by drawing on the fieldwork surrounding the case studies as well as an intervention not included in the case studies, before thematically discussing these findings and furthering the practical and critical discourse surrounding them. Therefore, in this chapter, the interventions which will be mentioned are in the order they are presented in Chapter 4: Piyasa, Rodin’s Thinker on Wicker Chair, The Sitting Woman, Soldier in Stilettos, Little Monsters, Mirror Mirror, Raising Awareness, Not Guilty, Hushing Nurse, What’s the Point, Censors, Toy Soldiers on Barbed Wire and a brief section on the unwritten intervention Hey, Taxi, which was omitted from Chapter 4 due to the lack of narrative surrounding the intervention caused by the simultaneous appropriateness and unsuitability of its site. However, the intervention sheds light on some of the debates surrounding site-specificity and ‘public’ accessibility, which I will discuss separate from the rest.

Key findings have been divided into the following themes although these themes do interrelate: publicness of public art interventions; possibilities and limits of public art interventions in Northern Cyprus; form and practice of public art interventions; and public art intervention practice as research. These key findings when combined with the discussions and literature from earlier chapters (such as the shift of ‘public art’ from the ‘monument’ to a more relational aesthetic, and practice mentioned in Chapter 2, or the ‘generation gap’ that highlights the socio-cultural divide across individuals within the local community mentioned in Chapter 3) begin to provide the answers to the questions and fulfil the aims and objectives posed at the start of the thesis.
6.1.1 Hey Taxi

Perhaps it was fitting for this intervention to turn out weaker than its counterparts. Hey Taxi was inspired by a famous Turkish pop song from the 1990s by singer Emrah; this upbeat and playful song tells of a young university graduate whose optimistic outlook on life is diminished by the obstacles life brings. Things do not work out for the protagonist singing the song, and so he is hails a taxi, perhaps to escape his troubled life. During the Rodin’s Thinker on Wicker (Chapter 4.3) intervention, the empty parking spots reserved for taxis along Bandabulya, in Famagusta, were seen as an opportunity to make use of the space in a way that reflected the practitioners’ sentiments towards being an artist in Northern Cyprus in a playful and culturally-familiar way. One parking lot already had the words ‘TAXI’ written and after a quick calculation it was decided that there were enough parking spots to fill in the rest of the lyrics, imitating the text ‘TAXI’ that was already present. As practitioners, the intervention was thought to be publicly accessible in terms of space and content, and the form in relation to its context. One very important aspect, which was overlooked, was that come morning, the parking spots would have cars parked and nobody would be able to see the lyrics at the same time. The only time when they would be visible would be when there were no cars around, which meant that there was nobody in the area to see it. Several times, I attempted to ask business owners, workers, pedestrians, and taxi drivers in the area to see if they had noticed the lyrics on the floor, but the answer was always ‘no’. The public ‘invisibility aside’, the social, cultural, and political message was not as strong as the other interventions that were mentioned in Chapter 4. It was a spontaneous decision to seize an opportunity, mostly because of its humourous connotation. However unlike Piyasa (Chapter 4.2) or Soldiers on Barbed Wire Chapter 4.5) it did not have contextual significance, and was simply treated as a ‘bonus intervention’, one that was shared amongst the practitioners present that day, as a little secret.

6.2 Publicness of Public Art interventions

Chapter 2 dealt with the breaking down of the terms “public” and “art intervention” and the related discourses within the practice and understanding of public art interventions.
‘Public’ was determined in relation to accessibility, not just in terms of situating the art intervention, making it accessible to individuals and groups who made use of the public spaces as sites, but also in terms of the depiction and content of the art intervention. In the case studies various degrees of ‘publicness of site’ can be observed, from the most remote of public spaces (such as with Toy Soldiers on Barbed Wire Chapter 4.5) to the most public (Piyasa Chapter 4.2). It would be safe to say that the two interventions lie on opposite ends of the spectrum of ‘publicness of site’.

Piyasa, where the song was played on a car stereo whilst being driven down the most popular road in the northern part of Nicosia (where at all times a high density of pedestrians, cars, and customers sitting along the road in the various eateries, bars, and cafés is guaranteed, comprising all generations and backgrounds), is the most public out of all the art interventions not just because it was ‘in public’ but because of the specific site, which is no fixed point, due to the car being driven up and down. The intervention was not targeted at any one specific group of individuals, but all members of the community, including the interventionist participants. Moving the intervention into specific locations (restaurants and bars) limited and constricted the diversity of the post-intervention participants, although this allowed for more and longer-lasting interactions and observations in a contained environment. I was able to talk to people about what they thought was happening, what the song meant to them, whether they knew anything about the elections and the change in constitution that was soon to occur. I was able to observe people stopping mid-sentence in their conversations to pay their utmost attention, their eyes widening, to what had just started playing on the speakers, and then throwing their heads back in laughter whilst clapping their hands, turning to look at others sharing this moment with them. The only reactions observed when driving around were the turning of heads and in some cases, when traffic was slow and the car was at rest, people’s attempt to pay attention to the lyrics. Additionally, in a few cases, depending on what lyrics they heard, people produced a smile and appeared to have a bit of a giggle.

Spaces of varying ‘publicness’ serve certain (though generally not all) aims and objectives of a public art intervention (e.g. reaching a high number of post-intervention participants), but may restrict the researcher from achieving others (observing post-intervention participants engaging with the work). These challenges could be overcome by
having a team of researchers placed within the smaller, contained public spaces to observe and document post-intervention participants’ reactions; however, this was not possible due to having only myself as researcher. The problem was somewhat resolved by going from a fully public space (the road), to a semi-public space (the café and bar).

On the opposite end of the spectrum is Toy Soldiers on Barbed Wire, at the very end of ‘public’ limits, the border of the ghost-town of Varosha in Famagusta, which houses the Turkish Military Forces and affiliated residential and official structures (Chapter 4.5, p. 155). Entering this zone requires special permission through formal procedures, which one is either granted or denied, and even then, one is excluded from the forbidden spaces deep in Varosha. Just as there are degrees of publicness, there are varying degrees of ‘privacy’ in spaces too. All military camps, of course, deny non-military access to military zones, unless granted permission. The choice of Varosha was a deliberate one; the contrast of the stillness and liveliness on either side of the barbed wire is to such a degree that one can almost forget that the two spaces lie on the same strip of sand. By placing the painted toy soldiers on the barbed wire, the literal border of where ‘public’ ends and ‘private’ begins was reconstituted into a site of intervention that briefly brought closer the two divided spaces. Once again, here we see how this public extremity, bordering the private, fulfils the aim of the public art intervention to ‘occupy the unoccupied space’, ‘to touch without breaching’ and to ‘push the limit’ of that which is ‘permitted’. This isolates this public art intervention from a significant number of post-intervention participants. However, a variation of this intervention where the border had not been utilized, would have resulted in something other than the intended intervention. Therefore, how successful would this be as a public art intervention aiming at challenging the limits of this particular public space? Would the limited access to post-intervention participants deem the public art intervention as incomplete? This may be true for the researcher, but for the researcher-as-participant, the materialization of the public art interventions and the ‘idea’ of post-intervention participant engagement was sufficient to deem the practice complete. For the practitioner, the success of the intervention may lie in making visible the space that is public, whereas for the researcher (for this particular research), post-intervention participant engagement may deem an intervention to be more successful for the purposes of the research, but not necessarily the success of the intervention itself. The potential for dissemination of the
intervention via visual or written documentations can thus be considered not separate from, but as part of an integral part of the practice, however, the documentation is by no means a replacement for the intervention itself. However, when the artistic practice in question is of a fragile and fleeting nature, documentation is key as proof of something that could at any moment seize to exist from the public view. The public art interventions may be erased, removed, and come to an end, whereas the documentations of these works persist and exist for future reference and reflection. In a way, the case-studies act as a detailed documentation of the public art interventions as well as their relevant contexts. Not all public art interventionists have the privilege of dedicating an entire thesis to their interventions, however, it is a significant element of the practice to provide documentation of the works, in some form, to preserve the these unique and unrepeatable artistic experiences.

Publicness is not just in relation to accessibility of site, but also to the content and its depiction. Art interventions that escape the understanding of the public may do so because they lie outside of the socio-cultural and socio-political context of its intended public. Although I discuss the subject of content and form in more depth in the following section, it is worth mentioning here the content and form of public art interventions in relation to their ‘publicness’ and their accessibility in terms of public reception and comprehension. If the public is not able to ‘read’ the works themselves, to be able to understand them through their own unique and individual filter, then it might as well sit in an art gallery where it appeals to the select few.

Socio-political and socio-cultural narratives in the media and daily discourse in Northern Cyprus tend to be saturated with opposing debate and discussions, where little space is dedicated to alternative narratives that might exist among marginalized individuals or groups. The marginalized then make use of their right to public space to make visible these alternative narratives in order to reach individuals and groups that lie beyond the borders of their own circles. By occupying a public space, shared by all, the perceived-other not only makes itself available and visible to the self that represents those engaging in the socio-political and socio-cultural normative narratives, but also includes its perceived-other as part of the normative narrative. Public art interventions can therefore act not only as a means of ‘reclaiming space’, but also as the assertion of the perceived-
other’s existence to be included as part of the ‘local public’. In some cases, public art interventions can also serve to rectify misconceptions and erroneous narratives surrounding ‘the other’. The intervention is not only upon the ‘space’ dominated by the normative, but also the discourse. The belief that the other’s (the practitioner’s) voice is being unrepresented or misrepresented across platforms (political, cultural, communication, educational platforms) leads practitioners to take an active role in creating public representation for their marginalized and outcast voices.

Within the context of Northern Cyprus, Piyasa (Chapter 4.2), Soldier in Stilettos (Chapter 4.4), and Rodin’s Thinker on Wicker Chair (Chapter 4.3) were successful interventions in terms of the publicness of content and form. The methods and materials used in the depiction of their subject matter combined with the suitability of site, and their relevant socio-political and socio-cultural contexts contribute towards the reception and comprehension of public art interventions by the contextual ‘public’ and thus establishing a form of successful post-intervention engagement. It is highly likely that these interventions would not be successful if repeated in a different socio-cultural or socio-political setting. When public art interventions are directed at a ‘local’ public within a specific public space, the practitioner must take into consideration the ‘local’ cultural, social, or political references for depiction and contextualisation. The extensive knowledge of the ‘local context’ can aid and direct practitioners in making informed decisions regarding the subject matter and depiction. Practitioners should remember that this is a ‘public’ practice and not the public exhibition of private work. Whether the work is used for the depiction of that which has been excluded from public view or public awareness, or for the inclusion of a discourse or critique deviating from the norm, the practitioner should make use of universal or globally recognisable and local references in their depictions. This is more of a determining factor of post-intervention engagement than the subject matter itself; it is not what you say but how you say it, which is where form and content take on a key role.
6.3 Form, Content, and Context of Public Art interventions

Many factors contribute towards successful public art interventions, as there are many ways in which an intervention can be deemed successful. Though there are no straightforward answers to what constitutes a successful public art intervention, the complexities that unfold upon reflecting on possible answers generate insight into the form of the works, their staging, and their relation to participants. One answer seems to lie somewhere in between how public art interventions are defined through research and utilized by practitioners. I provided an in-depth definition of public art interventions in Chapter 2, however the utilization of public art interventions varies among practitioners and, therefore, what makes one intervention successful may not be the case for another. One must consider not only the content and form of the ‘art’ itself, but also the context in which it is situated, which determines its ‘publicness’. Aesthetic and technical skill could determine the success of the ‘art’, but will not guarantee a successful ‘intervention’. A work could be successful as ‘public’ (in terms of location and content), yet rather be deemed more successful as simply an intervention rather than an ‘art’ intervention. Each of these components is debatable and can exist in any one intervention in varying degrees. However, the fact remains that all three, content, form and context exist in relation to one another and the success lies in how well the three components interact with one another.

Certain factors, such as form and content, can be pre-determined through extensive research, planning and reflection prior to the intervention, whereas other factors cannot be predicted or controlled. As mentioned before, it is important that practitioners have an extensive understanding of the ‘local context’ in which they will be situating the public art interventions. This knowledge and understanding of the local context can then aid in the decisions surrounding the components comprising the form and content of public art intervention.

Content refers to what is depicted by the public art intervention, the subject matter which is intended to be materialized through the use of materials and media (audio, visual, performance, or a combination of these). These must be contextually situated. In this fieldwork, there are examples of site-specific interventions and time-specific interventions.
How this is done through the use of materials and media refers to the form. For this fieldwork, content was determined by intervention-participants’ discussions and reflections on socio-political and socio-cultural issues. In some cases (both within and without the fieldwork timescale), these issues were drawn from current affairs where an on-going discourse surrounding the issues was recent and prevalent across various platforms, such as the media and the collective daily discourse surrounding everyday life in Northern Cyprus. *Piyasa* (Chapter 4.2) was inspired by the discourse surrounding the upcoming election and voting on the change in the constitution; *What’s The Point?* was inspired by a news article harshly criticizing the practice and practitioners of stencilling going viral on social media (Chapter 4.4, p. 137-40). These works can be said to be temporally situated within the local context, as they referenced temporally relevant events; a delay in their creation would not have produced the same reception, and *Piyasa* may not have received as much social media attention as it did. Temporally situated works need to materialize not only at the right place, but also at the right time. Although the two were both contextualized temporally, *Piyasa* became a widely-shared and widely-appreciated intervention, whereas *What’s the Point* remained on a wall amongst other stencils and spray-painted slogans and scribbles. It blended too much with its surroundings, to the point where it was invisible. It was perhaps the right time, but the wrong place, and the way it was said reduced it to a whisper.

*Piyasa*, on the other hand, not only temporally situated its content within the local socio-political context of North Cyprus, but was depicted in a form already highly present in the every-day, and made use of local socio-cultural and socio-political references. Furthermore, the musical form used as part of the intervention meant that it could be easily shared across social media platforms, making it easier to follow comments and discussion surrounding the song. Although the intervention remains in the past, the song itself has found different purposes such as being used by musicians and DJs (in Cyprus, and to my knowledge as far away as Berlin), who have integrated the song into their set-lists after having remixed it as they see fit.

It would not fall out of place to say that out of all the interventions that took place as part of the fieldwork *Piyasa* was the most successful; the content was temporally and situationally contextualized, the form was collaboratively created by various individuals
confident in their technical and artistic skills and made use of inclusive socio-cultural and socio-political references, and the intervention was situated in a highly populated public space used by all members of the community. These components combined to ensure the widespread accessibility in every sense as described in this thesis, thus making it a successful public art intervention within the context of Northern Cyprus.

With Piyasa having set the bar as a successful public art intervention, we can then use the same principles to determine the success of the other interventions, and also apply these factors across other existing or future public art interventions, bearing in mind that no one factor alone guarantees a successful public art intervention. The rest of the public art interventions that constituted the majority of the fieldwork were successful in some ways, and not so successful in others.

Site-specificity is an important component when considering the ‘publicness’ of public art interventions, however, it is also important for the intervention to be site-specific. This is where the public art intervention practitioner reflects upon method, materials and medium best suited to site-as-location as well as site-as-context of the intended public art intervention. Site can influence the form of the public art intervention, and vice versa. Site provides a certain degree of publicness to the public art intervention, but it also contextualizes the public art intervention, so that when practitioners are creating a particular public art intervention, questions arise such as “Is the chosen site relevant to and supportive of the public art intervention?”

Out of all the interventions, the wheat-paper paste posters in Bandabulya, Nicosia (Chapter 4.4) were perhaps the least thought through in relation to their sites, yet are also arguably the most successful in terms of the collective effort of intervention-participation. While some of the works evoked confusion in some post-intervention participants, such as (trans.) We apologize for the awareness we are raising (Chapter 4.4, p. 142) or The Hushing Nurse (Chapter 4.4, p.140 & p. 145), a reason for this may be due to the lack of situational context. Further thought and reflection may have found ‘more suitable’ sites for these works, where the site and its surroundings would have a direct relation to the work. The Hushing Nurse or the ‘awareness raising’ stencil may have been more ‘successful’ had they been placed amongst the scribbles as attempting to censor previous stencils of protest. What’s the point? may have been more successful if situated closer to the newspaper
headquarters where the article degrading those who had previously used interventions to ‘reclaim space’ was written. Therefore, the site must provide the necessary context in order for the intervention to take shape as closely as possible to the practitioner’s intended reasons for realizing it. Not doing so could easily take away from its intended purpose, message, reception and thus, post-intervention participants’ engagement with the intervention.

The Soldier in Stilettos (Chapter 4.4, p. 140, 142, 144, 146-9) is perhaps the best example of inadequate reflection upon the site, which as a result influenced its reception and thus, the engagement of post-intervention participants. The intervention was public in terms of site, yet its proximity to one shop in particular brought on irritation, annoyance, and fear that this ‘offensive depiction’ of the soldier would be associated with the shop-owner. The site as context was deemed appropriate due to the military base’s location a few steps away from where the intervention was situated, which was also the reason behind the shopkeeper’s concerns. In this scenario, a different site or a different form may have prevented the misdirected targeting. Post-intervention participants engaged with the intervention as predicted and as intended by the intervention-participants, and in these terms it can be considered a successful public art intervention; however, for the purposes of this research and future practice, I would exemplify it as an intervention that distances the intervention-practitioner from the post-intervention practitioner.

Another factor to consider is the role of content and form in creating inclusive or exclusive interventions. I demonstrated how in Piyasa, the inclusive nature of content and form made the intervention and its relevant artwork accessible through the use of local socio-political and socio-cultural references, while Soldier in Stilettos demonstrated the excluding nature of form and content. Public art interventions, especially those aiming to capture socio-political content within a socio-political context can cause mixed reception, due to the contradicting views and narratives surrounding the socio-political context. That is not to say that interventions with exclusive form and content should not be created, but the choice of inclusive and exclusive form and content provides insight into the practitioner’s position in relation to the intended ‘public’, referring to ‘us’, ‘them’ or the collective ‘we’.
Works targeting the perceived-other, ‘them’, was surrounded by language such as saying “they never accept us,” “they never see us for who we are,” “we might as well be invisible to them.” This language was present in intervention-participants as well as post-intervention participants. While those creating the intervention utilized a divisive language, resulting in the intervention form transmitting an ‘us-versus-them’ message, the post-intervention participants saw this divide as well. These works were seen more as belittling by the post-intervention participants. The Soldier in Stilettos and We apologize for the awareness we are raising were perhaps the two interventions that caused this divide the most. If the issues to be addressed were gender and sexuality norms in the military (or gender and sexuality norms in Northern Cyprus), perhaps less ‘divisive’ imagery could have been used. The depiction of a soldier in stilettos caused offence and induced fear while the raising of awareness was seen as portraying the intervention-practitioner as ‘educating’ its audience, implying that there was a gap in the intelligence or knowledge of those creating the work and those viewing it. A more interactive form of intervention, where the audience could interact with the intervention, for example, providing a choice of garments (including stilettos) for the soldier so that it was the audience ‘dressing’ the soldier may have been less offensive to the soldier, yet the presence of the stilettos as an option may have planted some questions in the audiences mind as to ‘why’ the stilettos were there, and beg the question ‘why not’ with some audience members. Perhaps this would have generated a different kind of debate, not directed at the work or the intervention-participants but amongst the audience. The military base close by could have also been utilized; rather than having the audience interact with a representation of the soldier, engagement directly with the soldiers at the base could have been encouraged, similar to the interaction between the intervention-participants and the guard that took place during Toy Soldiers on Barbed Wire (Chapter 4.5). These are possible alterations that could have been made and such reflection on existing public art interventions can potentially aid in the creation of other interventions that can help bridge the divide between us and them.

Works that were targeted at a collective ‘we’ were led by language discussions such as “we are all guilty of doing this,” “we know we should be doing more but we don’t,” or “we need to do this so that future generations don’t have to suffer.” Piyasa was
taken as representing a collective ‘we’ in its content due to the use of socio-cultural references applying to a collective ‘we’. Its non-physical and impermanent form in any one location (audio, rather than a poster fixed onto a wall) not only made it less of an intrusion to the space (in terms of permanence or being seen as vandalism), but meant that it could be shared and manipulated by others as they saw fit. It did not become property of any one place or person, but that of a wider public. Its form has allowed for Piyasa to be played and listened to over and over again, and each time it plays, it becomes another intervention, extending its lifespan when compared to the torn posters in Bandabulya or the sprayed-over stencils in Arabahmet.

I do not argue that fixed form and materials cannot encourage audience participation. Despite being located in a secluded public space, the Sitting Woman poster with thought bubbles that resembled rain clouds floating above her head encouraged an onlooker to fill in the thought bubbles (Chapter 4.3, p. 132). What seems to be an internal monologue has been depicted as the sitting woman’s thoughts. Although the poster was isolated from foot-traffic or crowds in comparison to the Rodin’s Thinker on Wicker, the Sitting Woman acted as the materialization of someone else’s thoughts. Perhaps the audience was hoping to also reclaim the space, to connect with a forgotten and lonely member of the public. Perhaps this was an act to eliminate the element of loneliness and isolation though interaction. After all, is not the fear of loneliness in old age a universal reference? Perhaps the fact that the intervention was set in an isolated public space is what allowed the audience to engage with the work.

These interventions demonstrate that engagement can be encouraged where context, content, and form enables it. These interventions have helped in revealing the boundaries of form and content set within the particular context and how form and content can be devised to meet these expectations of the utilization of public space within the given context of Northern Cyprus in order to make present that which is lacking from public space. This knowledge can help intervention-practitioners in how they choose to reclaim space without excluding themselves or others from the public in which they intervene.

In hindsight, there are always different ways in which interventions could be improved in terms of public accessibility (be it through site or content), artistically (whether that is in relation to aesthetic depiction or collaborative nature), or degree of
intervening in its context (be it setting or audience). Each intervention enlightens the practitioner on one aspect of public art interventions or another. It is an ‘art’ that can only be improved through its practice. Although there are aspects to consider in the practice of public art intervention, there is no step-by-step tutorial that can be followed that will deliver the expected results each and every time. In this way, it differs from other arts practices, in its relationality to its multiple contexts, methods, and use of materials, and the knowledge and intuition necessary to create or facilitate the creation of public art interventions.

6.4 Public Art intervention Practice as Research

For this research, public art interventions have been used as part of research in the following ways:

- to determine how form, content and context contribute to the creation of public art interventions through the use of inclusive/divisive socio-cultural and socio-political references;

- to reveal the aftermath of public art interventions within the socio-political and socio-cultural context of Northern Cyprus and how this limits or enhances the practice of public art interventions;

- to understand how public art interventions can be used to reclaim space, through the (re)insertion of that which is lacking from public view or public discourse within a given context;

- to determine factors contributing towards the success of public art interventions, such as the collective or collaborative process of creating interventions.

The one element uniting the practice and analysis of public art interventions is the deep understanding of the socio-political and socio-cultural context, which influences form and content. Approaching the practice of public art interventions from an emic perspective, as an insider (Unluer, 2012) who is familiar with the context of subject matter and setting, allows the practitioner to create works with publicly accessible form and content that are appropriately situated. Furthermore, ideas for public art interventions are more likely to generate when immersed in the context, especially when the construction of public art
interventions are discussed within the setting of potential interventions. Settings, surroundings and situations can then act as stimuli for intervention participants as opposed to discussing and devising interventions in isolation. While situation and site can be effective in generating public art interventions, returning to a familiar setting allowed participants ‘mental space’ to process and reflect upon their ideas and the discussions that took place in the formal research setting. Immersing intervention-participants in the context and setting of the potential public art intervention allows practitioners to experience the context not just based on one’s own constructs surrounding the context, but to experience the site and context in relation to all that is contained within. Visiting the site of Rodin’s Thinker on Wicker prior to the intervention allowed for a ‘complete understanding’ of the context, to experience the context as it is. As an insider, perhaps being too familiar with the context may give the practitioner the impression that this step is unnecessary, as one is already familiar with the context. However, allowing participants to be in a given context as the Other, an outsider to one’s own community may reveal aspects of the context that would otherwise be overlooked. While intervention-participants created interventions as insiders, as part of the ‘the marginalized Other’, in some cases this meant that the normative context in which these works would be received were overlooked, such as in the example of the shopkeeper and the Soldier in Stilettos. The emic perspective of the researcher as intervention-participant caused a lack of reading of the post-intervention participants’ context. As researcher, it was apparent even before the intervention took place that this work in particular would be problematic in terms of form, content and context, yet it was not apparent in what way the problem would present itself. This could not have been predicted without my extensive knowledge surrounding the context of Northern Cyprus as an insider. However, preventing the intervention from taking place would have meant that I would have abandoned my role as participant and resumed my role as researcher, which would have resulted in me having more power over the intervention-participants. As this was meant to be a collaborative practice, I did not want to jeopardize the equality of power among participants by introducing the researcher as ‘the decider’ into the process, which would have negated all attempts of preserving a collaborative and collective practice.
6.4.1 The Researcher’s Role

The researcher-as-participant should at times allow one’s self to enter the role of participant without having to multi-task as the researcher. At certain stages of the fieldwork, it is better to focus on being a participant, to document these experiences as a participant so as not to contaminate the ‘participant experience’. Once the ‘participant experience’ is recorded, it can then be reflected upon as ‘researcher’ at a later time. This ‘complete participant’ role (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) is easier said than done, as it can lead to participating in ways that may jeopardize the research (such as Soldier in Stilettos). It is important to note and pre-determine these shifts between roles to ensure consistency in documentation, reflection, and participation differentiation.

During the fieldwork, the role of the researcher changed across pre-intervention, intervention, and post-intervention stages. In the pre-intervention data collection stage, while conducting interviews with artists and activists the researcher acted as an overt ‘insider to the group’ as well as an overt ‘insider to the context’ (Dandelion, 1995: 181), meaning that the researcher’s position and role was made known to the participants being interviewed, allowing for trust and understanding between researcher and participant. That is not to say that had the researcher not been an insider that information would have been withheld completely, but it may have been taken a more formal and perhaps on a more superficial level as opposed to a more personal perspective.

The researcher took on a similar role being an insider to the group and context with the intervention-participants, only this time as a ‘complete participant’. This was somewhat confusing to the intervention-participants as at first, during the stages of informing participants of the research and fieldwork aims and practices the researcher was seen as having more power due to the fieldwork being part of my research. It took some time for other intervention-participants to comprehend the role of the researcher as ‘complete participant’ and to view the researcher as a participant rather than someone ‘in charge’. Dandelion warns the insider researcher of “saying too much” as being in “a key position of influence” where increased or decreased participation ‘has the potential to alter the situation’ (1995: 188). This was consciously kept under control when I was immersed in a ‘complete participant’ role. So as not to influence other intervention-participants, I had refrained from interfering in discussions and brainstorming that seemed to be progressing
without my input, although this may have resulted in me ‘not saying enough’, and not contributing as much to the discussions and brainstorming sessions. This was rectified upon my telling of a previous public art intervention idea that had not been realized, setting an example of a public art intervention that I, as the researcher, had envisioned the fieldwork, as mentioned in the Bandabulya interventions in Chapter 4.

The researcher’s role when engaging with post-intervention participants varied in terms of making one’s self known. The researcher was overtly an insider to the context, but it was not always an insider to the group. Did my role as an insider to the Other groups (pre-intervention and intervention participants) mean that I was potentially an outsider to some post-intervention participants’ groups? To some extent yes, but this was part of the initial aims, to have post-intervention participants, even those with opposing socio-political beliefs, engage with one another. Yet these conversations were always met with hesitation and were prematurely ended by the post-intervention participants. If I were to become an insider of the post-intervention participant’s group, it would have been deceitful. Remaining as a ‘complete participant’ during certain post-intervention participant interactions (such as the one’s concerning the Soldier in Stilettos) created the very situation I was trying to avoid. So perhaps, it would benefit the research more, in terms of gathering feedback on the public art interventions, if the ‘complete participant’ then became the researcher rather than the overt outsider of the group, in this case, the post-intervention participant who would be better off talking to the researcher, rather than talking with an insider who is seemingly on the opposing side. Of course, that is a decision to be made depending on what information the researcher is aiming to uncover.

6.4.2 Constructing art Interventions

I mentioned early in the thesis that the research design for this research was based on previous interventions in which I had taken part. In previous interventions, due to the absence of research taking place, the interventions were inspired by contextual events and situations. The intervention artwork was generally predetermined, by either a person or a group of people, and was carried out by a larger number of individuals working together to create the public art intervention. The practice was a collaborative endeavour even though the intervention itself had been determined by one person.
During the fieldwork for this research, however, without any pre-instruction or determinant as to content, form or context, intervention-participants were left to work on their own accord, including the determining of a single element to initiate the devising of a public art intervention. As mentioned in Chapter 4, “research facilitators, must be able to draw out issues, talents, and energies of people they are working with and help them spark each other’s strengths” (Barndt, 2008: 354). When working independently, where form, content and context for public art interventions are to be determined by those creating them, it might be worth asking intervention-participants what they see as their strengths and how they think their collaboration would be most valuable to the practice of public art intervention. Due to the nature of the fieldwork, interventionists were selected based on prior practice intervention experience as well as prior experience with other intervention participants. Future intervention groups may benefit from having smaller groups consisting of individuals with different strengths. This would enable various participants contributing to various aspects of the creation of public art interventions without getting fixated on one aspect of the process (i.e. the discussion surrounding the content overpowering the discussion surrounding form and context). A semi-structured timeline for intervention-participants may also help in ensuring progression. As I often remind myself, “I am never going to be completely satisfied with what I have done, so better to have something imperfect at hand, than to have nothing.”

On the other hand, because intervention-participants were to determine every aspect of the public art interventions, certain decisions made gave insight as to what was chosen to be materialized and why it was chosen. The public art interventions themselves provide an insight into the practitioners’ thoughts in how they choose to depict their chosen content. In Chapter 5, I discussed how this can provide insight into not only the thoughts and beliefs of the practitioners, but also how practitioners view their audience. For the Bandabulya interventions, the audience’s reception of the works were not of the practitioners’ concern, as it was mean to represent the marginalized and silenced group. This implies that the practitioners see the normative public audience as a group that has neglected the presence of the marginalized other. Their neglect is returned to the normative audience in that there is an unapologetic portrayal of content made visible. This should
signal the lack of alternative discourses surrounding the relevant content and that there is a need to include these alternative discourses into public awareness.

How does one contemplate and decide upon a public art intervention? During the fieldwork, when I thought of an idea, I simply knew whether it is worthy of pursuit or not, which is expressed in Schön’s (1983) “alternative epistemology” (Hébert, 2015: 364) that depends on “artistic, intuitive processes” (Schön, 1983: 49). Although hard to describe, Schön states that “tacit knowledge” (ibid) plays a key part in “intelligent action” (ibid, 50). This knowledge, as experienced in the fieldwork at many times, becomes useful in “situations of uncertainty, instability, [and] uniqueness” that require action to be taken ‘spontaneously’ (ibid, 49–51). At times where I found the form was suited to context, its content for the intervention seemed unsuitable. There is much internal debate, sporadic research, and reflection involved in the process as well, generally caused by a wandering mind. Often, I tend to write down ideas in a notebook (of which there are many) and revisiting certain ideas managed to fit them in with a new form, context, or content that has entered the intervention equation.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, interventions can be altered to eliminate elements that ‘did not work’ perhaps in terms of setting, content, or form. In this sense, it can be said that the creation of public art interventions are collaborative in that there is a cycle of devising, creating, engaging, and revisiting the practice. Practice does not make perfect, but it does lead to improvement. Referring back to the interventions that have taken place, reflecting upon the processes and practices involved in their creation and the engagement of the post-intervention participants in relation to the content, form and context of public art interventions qualify the practice as a collaborative effort, even if the practice appears to be coming from a single individual. The relationality of public art interventions give them the power of uncovering socio-cultural and socio-political constructs of a particular context and how this context engages with the content and form. In the next section, I further discuss key findings on the possibilities that lie in the practice of public art interventions as well as some of the limitations within the context of the fieldwork conducted.
6.5 Possibilities and Limitations of Public Art interventions in Northern Cyprus

Public art intervention and its practice can be seen as one ‘body of knowledge’ within a “complex landscape of different communities of practice” (Wenger & Wenger, 2015: 15). Working collaboratively or collectively with other communities of practice (public and private institutions, non-profit organizations, and civic groups) can help further mutual goals as determined by the communities of practice (ibid, 100). Within socio-political and socio-cultural contexts, working alongside civic, government and independent organizations, charities, educational institutions, public art interventionists can work within these realms to help create awareness and understanding within the public at large through the utilization of references relevant to these contexts. For example, public art intervention practitioners can help devise interventions to raise awareness of the subject of domestic violence within a certain context. Working alongside individuals with an emic perspective associated with these issues, interventionist practitioners can help create public art interventions that may reach the broader public to help gain a better understanding of the issues surrounding domestic violence to better relate to those who have fallen victim to such abuse. In addition to conventional methods utilized to spread awareness (such as informative posters and videos on social media) more interactive, socially engaging interventions could be devised interventions that portray these issues in ways that relate to and involve the audience. Public art interventions alone would not suffice in eliminating such problems, but the practitioner can act as a “systems convener” (ibid, 100), bringing together communities of practice to reach a broader audience and have more resources towards creating public art interventions.

Previous public art interventions have demonstrated that alternative ways of thinking seek a public platform for making visible that which deviates from the normative discourse within socio-cultural and socio-political contexts. Findings from this research can help such alternative ways of thinking gain more visibility through the creation of public art interventions. Interventionists can aid marginalized groups or individuals (perhaps even bringing these groups together) to identify mutual goals and devise ways to integrate these narratives into public discourse. Piyasa was able to depict a collective ‘us’,
contributing towards a collective identity without discriminating towards other identities. The use of the Turkish-Cypriot dialect, socio-cultural mannerisms and vocabulary celebrated aspects of the ‘Cypriotness’ of the Turkish dialect, which is often referred to as ‘broken Turkish’ by Turkish speakers from Turkey. During my high school years, Turkish literature instructors would often ‘correct’ students for speaking in ‘improper’ Turkish-Cypriot dialect. Piyasa was able to celebrate the Cypriot dialect without discriminating towards others, contributing towards the celebration of the differences in the Turkish-Cypriot dialect rather than humiliation or belittling of others. Furthermore, public art interventions that celebrate such aspects of Cypriot culture (including the entirety of the island) can help establish what has previously been called a ‘non-existent’ or ‘disappearing’ mutual culture, without resorting to the distinction of divisive elements such as religion or nationality. Interventions can be utilized in ways that highlights that which is mutual, inclusive and uniting as opposed to that which is divisive and exclusive. Public art interventions do not require an audience to have extensive prior knowledge of art, simply because they utilize references (form and content) within contexts already familiar to the audience.

The accessibility of public art interventions can make use of public space as a neutral platform, as opposed to utilizing spaces and platforms that are charged with specific socio-cultural and socio-political references, such as mass media. The aim of public art interventions can therefore remain with the mutual goals of various organizations without being associated with previous conceptions of organizations. This may shed light on why the stencils and posters put up in Famagusta received different reactions to those in Arabahmet, Nicosia as the latter was already associated with groups from previous public art interventions. It can be said that the practice of public art interventions can establish a certain association with particular groups within the space of practice depending on the intervention form and content, such as stencils from previous interventions in Arabahmet being associated with anti-militarist, anti-establishment and feminist interventions and practitioners. The form and content of these interventions have been met with resistance and disapproval, leading to their (attempted) erasure from public view. The question that interventionists should then attempt to answer would be “in what way can this content be formed so that it is not met with negative reactions?” Making use of impermanent forms,
or more interactive forms of intervention may help eliminate the problem of erasure and the interactive form may eliminate the imbalance of practitioner and post-intervention participant, making the audience part of the intervention. This was something I experienced during *White Censor* (Chapter 4.4, p. 149-52), where requesting water from houses within the area to mix the paint I would then use to ‘erase’ the scribbled-over stencils included the residents of the neighbourhood and allowed for the practitioners interaction with the audience. Those with whom I spoke exclaimed that the scribbles were no better than the stencils themselves. It would be worth hearing what members of this shared space think regarding these independent and individual stencils and, perhaps, a collective and collaborative intervention may gain wider support from those sharing the space with the practitioners. Form that makes use of mobile and impermanent methods may also reduce the association of vandalism with public art interventions. Nele Azevedo created an installation consisting of five thousand ice-figurines to remember the men and women lost in World War I. Performances such as Erdem Gunduz’s ‘standing man’ and Ziya Azazi’s gas-masked whirling dervish during the Gezi Park Protests in Turkey captivated the passive and peaceful essence of protestors. Such forms are capable of leaving a permanent mark through their impermanence and should not be overlooked because of their fleeting nature.

Unfamiliarity towards public art intervention does not prevent post-intervention participants from commenting on, critiquing, or engaging with public art interventions (*Piyasa, Sitting Woman’s* speech bubble, ripping off of *Soldier in Stilettos*, contributing to the paint for *White Censor* and accompanying in the process of painting). Public art interventions can therefore encourage and empower ‘spectators’ to actively engage with the works and thus become participants. In Chapter 2, I mentioned how the Italian Futurists would agitate and irritate their audience to engage with one another through creating situations which made it impossible for the audience to avoid interaction. At times the audience would not be aware that these situations were intentionally created by the Futurists in the name of art and at times the intervention was so intertwined with real-life that it was not obvious to its audience that the intervention was taking place at all. Perhaps within the context of Northern Cyprus and public art intervention, encouraging engagement through irritation and agitation would portray a negative perception of public
art interventions and its practitioners and might jeopardize the reputation of future public art interventions. *Rodin’s Thinker on Wicker* intervened in the day-to-day coffee drinking and socializing experience of customers of a particular coffeehouse in Famagusta, by occupying the customers’ space in a somewhat similar way. As the coffee shop owner stated, the stencil became ‘one of them’ and they saw themselves in the stencil. Whether the customers were aware or unaware of their coexistence with the stencil did not change the fact that the two seemed to be part of the shared space and because neither the location of the coffeehouse nor the stencil was removed, they continued to inhabit the same space together and will continue to do so until the stencil is erased or the coffeehouse closes. Finding ways to incite, encourage, or seamlessly blend in audience participation by intervening in their daily public practices (depending on the context) would help devise public art interventions aiming to include more of its audience as participants.

Public art interventions alone cannot change minds, legislation, the way people think or behave towards normative or alternative reality constructs within socio-cultural and socio-political contexts, yet they can act as signs alerting one another through their form and content and plant seeds as to the existence of something lacking from public discourse or space. Furthermore, by rethinking the artist’s role as working not in isolation from but in relation to social, cultural and political contexts we can begin to understand how public art practices can disclose realities of communities within these contexts to influence and inform change within said contexts (Lacy, 2013; Chu, 2013; Cartiere, 2010; Kester 2011). Change is not something that can be achieved independently or within a brief period of time, but through the collaboration or cooperation of interventionists and activists over an extended period of time, alongside institutions and individuals who have the power to enable a context where alternative ways of thinking and living are not merely tolerated, but discussed and understood, rather than marginalized, and integrated into the community as part of its public.
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter, I draw upon my research findings and discussions as well as the literature used to define the various contexts of the research. I formulate answers for my research questions and reflect upon how this material satisfies my research aims and objectives, in addition to my original contribution to academic knowledge filling the gap surrounding the study and practice of public art interventions. Furthermore, I consider the limitations of my research and ways in which it has not been able to resolve some of these questions, aims, and objectives. In these final pages, I take the opportunity to integrate the research into the bigger picture of relational creative public practices, as well as situating it within the local and global social and political context. In discussing my findings, I encounter some challenges in discussing findings in isolation when research involves interdisciplinary and relational elements to its contexts. Nevertheless, by treating these contextual findings as microcosms, I discuss how they relate to a more universally applicable context.

7.1 Findings and discussions summary

1. There are varying yet interconnected ways in which the ‘publicness’ of public art interventions and their practice can be defined: accessibility of site, form and content, in relation to the socio-political and socio-cultural context in which the interventions exist. Public space can be utilized as an alternative and platforms accessible to all members of a community to make visible issues that have been neglected or excluded from their respective social, cultural, and political contexts. Additionally, public art interventions can be used as a means to ‘reclaim the right to public space’.

2. In terms of form, content, and context, it can be said that public art interventions can bring critique, comment on, or celebrate its content. However, the public art intervention practitioner must either have a deep, insider understanding of the social, cultural and political context in which
they plan to intervene, or work in collaboration with individuals or groups that have an ‘emic perspective’ on these contexts to create work that is suitable for situating the intervention within the ‘public’. Public art interventions can be deemed successful depending on the various components of which they are made, although some components are more easily measured than others. For example, an intervention can be successful in terms of publicness of site, if it is encountered by a diverse crowd or publicness of content, if the subject matter of the intervention is understood by those who encounter the work. Either can make it a successful ‘public’ art intervention, although the former is easier to determine when compared to the latter use of ‘public’. That being said, one must also bear in mind that the success (or failure) of public art interventions is dependent on how form, content, and context engage the ‘public’ which receives and interacts with it, although in some situations (depending on the intervention) this may be affected by the limitations brought on by clashes of the suitability of site for the intervention which prevents ‘public interaction’.

3. Public art interventions as research, through their practice, engagement and study, can reveal discrepancies between normative and alternative views surrounding social, cultural, and political opinions within the context of practice. This can help uncover certain qualities and aspects of the context in which public art interventions are practiced, especially in regard to determining the dominant ontological and epistemological frameworks adopted within these contexts through the engagement with these public art interventions. Moreover, artists can assume roles allowing them to mediate between publics and individuals and institutions in positions of power (policy-makers, legislative bodies, civic organizations) to influence change in cultural, social, and political contexts and vice versa, thus extending art and the artist into a relational practice and practitioner.

4. Regarding the limitations and possibilities of public art interventions it can be said that public art intervention content and form which has local socio-cultural or
socio-political references within its ‘local’ contexts can contribute towards a ‘collective culture’. This can be achieved through the ‘inclusive’ nature of public art interventions through the utilization of ‘inclusive content’ in relation to the context without the highlighting of an ‘us vs. them’ divide. Regarding public art interventions as research, they are ideal collaborative practices where groups can work either on the form, content, or context of the intervention, without having a single individual needing to excel in all components. Due to their relational practice, public art interventions could thrive and flourish within contexts that are not only tolerant but that encourage alternative creative practices as well as alternative views, yet these contexts do not necessarily require an alternative platform. It is in contested, ontologically and epistemologically ‘fixed’ contexts that public art interventions would provide an alternative practice; although within a context that would not be as tolerant of the alternative practices and views. The same could be said about ‘collaborative practices’ wherein groups that are successful in collaborative practices are most likely already utilizing such ways of working, whereas a context that is not familiar to or inexperienced in ‘collaborative’ practices may not grasp the concept of working collaboratively in creative practices. Collaboration cannot be forced upon practitioners, individuals, and institutions and thus extra efforts towards encouraging and constructing a context that is collaboration-friendly are needed.

7.2 Findings and discussions relating to research questions

Looking back on the entirety of my study, I combine my findings and discussions in reference to the literature provided throughout the thesis chapters in order to resolve my research questions and fulfil the aims and objectives determined at the outset of my research journey.

My first research question asked how public art interventions give public visibility and representation to marginalized individuals and groups. The ‘publicness’ of public art interventions has been defined in this thesis as referring to accessibility of public space (Lefebvre, 1991) and content (Jacob, 1995). However, it is worth reminding the reader of
the reasons behind the move of art from the gallery and museums and into ‘public space’, as it happened in the 20th century art movements mentioned in Chapter 2. The reason was not only to make art more accessible to its spectators, but to make more-accessible art for its spectators (Bishop, 2012) to occupy ‘everyday life’ (Plant, 1992) whereupon the once-passive audience member was transformed into a collaborator (Bishop & Groys, 2009). Unlike the “contemporary art exhibition” (Bourriaud, 2002: 16), public art interventions seek to create “free areas, and time spans” (ibid) whose ‘rhythm’ compliments as well as “contrasts with those structuring everyday life” (ibid). Public art interventions encourage “an inter-human commerce” that does not necessarily ‘differ’ from the "‘communication zones’ that are imposed upon us,” yet operate within these zones through artistic intervention, making it not a practice reserved for the privileged few, but a ‘publicly’ accessible practice. This echoes the ‘avant-garde aesthetic praxis’ (Bürger, 1984) that encouraged art intervention in “social reality” (ibid, xxxix). Thus, public space was transformed into a platform of artistic expression and social intervention. Art was used as protest and propaganda, treating public space as a platform (Debord, 2006) through the exploration of alternative and creative ‘templates’ (Barber, 2004). These alternative views consisted of the opposition of the status quo, such as ‘establishment values’ (Gaughan 2004; Gale, 1997). Public art intervention practices still bear an air of resistance towards the establishment and established values, feeding off the strains of ruling powers (Pogglioni, 1968), but it is not confrontation ‘for the sake of confrontation’. The need for creating visibility of that which has been forgotten by ‘the establishment’ is resolved through making use of ‘public space’ as a platform, so that the invisible can share the space amongst that which is visible, and thus interact with one another. After all, as Tonkiss (2005) describes, if public spaces are intended for “collective belonging”, “social exchange”, “informal encounter” is it not fair that art which encourages such interactions should exist amongst such spaces? Public art interventions take place not because they are dominating representations of their contexts, but because the case is quite contrary. This is why many participants in this research, as well as others (Visconti, 2010; Miles, 1997; Waclawek, 2011; Taş & Taş, 2014), have viewed the practice of interventionist artistic practices in public space as a means of ‘reclaiming space’. It is to include the
practitioner(s) and the content of public art interventions as part of a space and a community from which it is lacking.

The second question sought the answer to how public art interventions could provide insight into understanding socio-cultural and socio-political divides within fragmented communities. In relation to the depiction of form and content within its relevant social, political and cultural contexts, public art interventions can (as seen in the preceding paragraph) be ‘world-disclosing’ (Lafont, 2000) through their practice and reception within social, political, and cultural contexts. While public art intervention practice discloses perceived realities or the potential for alternatives to existing realities, the reception of these interventions positions the audience in relation to these depictions and critiques. The mediation between sensitivity and provocation in art interventions might be understood as an ethics and politics of art in relation to the potential realization of a public sphere within agonistic pluralism (Mouffe, 1999). The practice of public art interventions can be seen as “the exercise of ‘free public reason’” (Mouffe, 2000: 4). Within a deliberative democracy, Benhabib states that “all have the same chances [and right] to initiate speech acts, to question, to interrogate, and to open debate... to question the assigned topics of the conversation... to initiate reflexive arguments about the very rule of the discourse procedure and the way in which they are applied and carried out” (cited in Mouffe, 2000: 5). Acknowledging the “ineradicability of antagonism and the impossibility of achieving a fully inclusive rational consensus,” (ibid, 17) public art interventions “make room for dissent and... foster the institutions in which it can be manifested,” which Mouffe highlights “is vital for a pluralist democracy” (ibid) before stating that the ‘agonistic’ approach recognizes “the real nature of its frontiers and the forms of exclusion that they entail, instead of trying to disguise them under the veil of rationality or morality” (ibid).

While the historical context presented in Chapter 2 paints a picture of interventionist art in public spaces as anti-establishment, protest, and propaganda, more recent examples presented in Section 2.4 of the thesis as well as the interventions conducted during the fieldwork have highlighted how public art interventions may gain “shared ownership” by “a collectivity of citizens” (Visconti, 2010: 512). Within their relative social, political, and cultural contexts, the use of ‘inclusive’ form and content can contribute to ‘collective’ cultures. This is perhaps a deviation from Scholl’s (2010) verdict
of art’s use in social movements as being disruptive and confrontational. Scholl further states that the two are not so much “exclusive categories” (ibid, 159) but are integrated into one another, however through some of the interventions, the disruptive, wherein the “normal flow of things” was disturbed by public art intervention, was not always confrontational, but in some cases quite the contrary. Would this require the addition of a third use of art in social movements, perhaps, under the title ‘conciliatory’ or ‘peaceful? Reactions received from spectators, media, and politicians, as well as the social engagement of ‘collaborative spectators’, can illustrate degrees of contextual acceptance of the use of alternative creative platforms such as the practice of public art interventions as well as their content. From the examples mentioned in this thesis, we can see not only the divisive or uniting potential of content within contexts, but also the way in which interventions unite and divide communities, with reactions vary across degrees of tolerance. This also draws boundaries of the expected use of public space within these contexts, which can then help further the understanding of the context as well as provide insight as to different ways in which content can be made visible within these public spaces. Practice and research that requires a deep understanding of context in which the intervention is to be situated necessitates an ‘emic’ (Pike, 1967; Gudykunst et al., 1996) or ‘insider’ (Unluer, 2012; Dandelion, 1995) position of the practitioner, researcher, or collaborating individuals.

The first part of the third question concerning the components of public art intervention (form, content, and context) have been defined and discussed throughout the chapters and in the previous paragraphs of this section. The second part regarding the success of public art interventions and their practice is not as easily defined. Art relationality (Zuidervaart, 2015) is something I have associated with public art interventions. The inherently ethical quality of ‘good art’ is meant to translate into other contexts of conduct (ibid, 235). ‘Societal’ ethics (ibid, 236) are meant to relate to universal moral and ethical codes, which indicates that what may be considered ‘ethical’ within a particular socio-cultural context may not adhere to the universal. This, as we have seen with certain public art interventions in the fieldwork, may result in conflicting attitudes towards the reception of public art interventions; however, as they are universally inclusive and are intended to contribute to the universal good of how we see the Other (as we
witnessed with Soldier in Stilettos and the activists stencils that resulted in an oppositional article in a local newspaper in Northern Cyprus) these interventions, although met with resistance from the local context, can be argued as ‘good art’. That being said, it is important to bear in mind that public art intervention components significantly influence one another. Public art interventions that can be argued as ‘good art’ do not mean that they are ‘good’ in terms of ‘publicness’, and the ‘good publicness’ of art does not always result in a ‘good intervention,’ but may be seen as being ‘imperfect’ (Lacy, 2013: 23). There is no formula for public art intervention as it is a highly relational practice, although there are strategies and principles for the public art intervention practitioner that can inform the practice as demonstrated in this study.

Public art intervention should not be taken as just any art in public, but art that is reflective of current social issues and that is accessible to its context. By choosing to produce works that address the public within public spaces (or spaces made accessible to the public), we can begin to reach out or intervene in its audience “beyond [our, the group of artists’] own affinity group” (Zuidervaart, 2011: 125), but not for the sake of gathering an audience (Lyotard, Bennington, & Massumi, 1984: 75). If the aim of the artist is to reach out to an audience unfamiliar with the practice and purpose of art, then it is also the artist’s responsibility to create artworks that are accessible to such an audience, as well as to educate the public through exposure. That is not to say that the artist becomes a commissioned individual who depicts that which its context wants to experience, but by allowing their artwork to be accessible the artist plants a seed, giving others the opportunity to gaze at, interact with, reflect on, or simply ignore, the intervention.

A wholly successful public art intervention is not determined solely by the success of the ‘art’, ‘public’ or ‘intervention’ but the entirety of these components in relation to and its context and the dialogue with its audience which follows, a concept derived from Mikhail Bakhtin (Bakhtin in Kester, 2004: 2). Public art intervention is simply the beginning of what is to be slowly integrated into the local social, cultural, and political discourse. It is “the relationship between art and the broader social and political world” and “the kinds of knowledge that the aesthetic experience is capable of producing” (Kester, 2004: 2) that has not only laid the foundation for the practice of this research, but represent
the position at which I arrive on what the practice can do, and for what it can be used, as revealed through the sections of this chapter.

The final research question was in regards to the limitations and possibilities within the practice of public art interventions. The multiple components and relational quality of public art interventions have the potential to create ‘communities of practice’ (Wenger & Wenger, 1998). Collaboration can take place during the planning of public art interventions as well as their practice and engagement with its audience. Although ‘emic’ and ‘insider’ practitioners within the practice of public art interventions are necessary, once present, there is no obstacle which prevents others from participating in the creation of and engagement with public art interventions; this resonates with ‘new genre public art’ (Lacy, 1995), which is concerned with art in relation to the socially-engaging aspect of ‘public’ art. Nonetheless, contextual limitations (such as in Turkey, where the social, political, and cultural context are intolerant of individuals with alternative ontological and epistemological frameworks and lifestyles counter to the ‘normative’ and ‘fixed’ acceptable way), as well as the lack of experienced practitioners, can hinder the practice and ‘social engagement’ of public art interventions. Where the gap between fixed and flexible ontologies and epistemologies within the context of practice is bigger, the more determined the resistance towards the display of the alternative through public art intervention and the greater the threat towards its practitioners depicting (and advocating for) such alternatives. The paradox is that it is in such contexts that public art interventions find more of a purpose than those contexts that are more ‘humane’ and accepting of diversity amongst its communities.

Through participating and studying the stages of public art intervention practice from start to finish within a specific context, I have outlined limits and possibilities for the use of public art interventions as well as determining the factors that play into their success. Through the extensive study of literature relating to the components of public art interventions, I have provided a historical and critical context surrounding the constructs of public art interventions and brought structure to the practice and study of public art interventions, situating the practice within the contexts surrounding them. In the entirety of my thesis, I have furthered, to some extent, the critical, theoretical and practical discourse surrounding public and interventionist art practices as well as the discourse surrounding the
historical, socio-cultural and socio-political context of Northern Cyprus, whilst gaining a practical understanding of the usage of the expectations surrounding public space in relation to its context. By treating my case-study as a microcosm for public art intervention research, I have applied my findings to broaden the discussions surrounding these critical and historical contexts, thus filling in the gaps of academic knowledge concerning public art interventions whilst discovering or creating more gaps to be filled in by future research.

### 7.3 Conclusion

“Art cannot change the world; it can, however, change those who engage in art, who in return can change the world” (Greene, 2007: 1). The notion that art alone can bring about change is perhaps as likely as conducting research that can make universally grandiose claims, therefore, not very likely. However, by thinking of a relational arts practice that extends beyond the traditional definition, one that is confined within the studio, gallery, or museum and by redefining the artist as not an isolated practitioner but one that is able to engage and collaborate with publics, communities as well as institutions and individuals who are able to influence change, we can begin to imagine art and the artist as becoming an ingredient in a recipe for creating inclusive and democratic communities and governing bodies. With cautious optimism, then, this thesis presents a strong argument for motivating art practitioners, activists, and researchers alike to continue their field of study or practice within the public realm for a ‘universal good’. Additionally, it advocates the need not of a shift in the definition of ‘art’, but an expansion of its definition to include that which is socially-engaging and is manifested in various forms, rather than something fitting a single a particular definition or structure.

Since the completion of the fieldwork in September 2014, Pikadilli, a once-popular haberdashery in Famagusta, has been repurposed as a free-space by artist Nurtane Karagil, promoting artistic, educational and socio-cultural practices through collaborative and collective efforts, and stimulating and hosting activities to help promote community engagement across groups of individuals and practices that would not normally cross paths. Although not included in my thesis, I helped organize, host and also participated in an event that combined social, cultural, political context with critical thought and artistic
practice. Lasting an entire week All Debord studied and discussed selected sections of the *Society of the Spectacle* (Debord, 1967) and included discussions from the *Situationist International Anthology* (Knabb, 2006). Not advertised as any one thing in particular, the idea was to encourage and allow the audience to become participants by taking active roles in discussion and artistic practice and the shaping of the activities that comprised the event. The sense of creative critique – collective in varying degrees, but never purely individualistic or independently implemented – that underpinned my research pervaded the spirit of All Debord. With a growing recognition of the place of public art interventions as a potential challenge to the culturally stifled conventions and orthodoxies of Northern Cyprus, it is highly probable that comparable events will take place and in the emergence of such a trend, the power of art to challenge the status quo and question forms of ethnocentrism and otherization will be confirmed.

Without exposure of alternatives to the ‘norm’, the ‘traditional’ or ‘acceptable’, there can be no awareness of their existence. That which we do not know, we can only discover with the help of others or by first hand experiences. In contexts allowing for these alternatives without adopting the norm as ‘right’ and the alternative as ‘wrong’ is where alternative practices lie. Public art interventions proliferate where language and vocabulary proves insufficient. “What can be shown cannot be said” (Wittgenstein, 2014: 31), an understanding inherent in the practice of public art interventions in their openness to creative and artistic form beyond the confines of language.

In a time where everyone has something to say regardless of fact, fiction, fable or folly, perhaps we more than ever have the need, not to be ‘told’ through conventional means, but to be shown that there are other ways, alternatives to that which is perceived to be set in stone. In this thesis, based upon my integrated research and practice, I have argued that public art intervention can be presented as one possible solution (although not the only one) to the growing problem of not being able to live on this rock we call Earth without destroying it, ourselves and one another.

Meanwhile in some geo-political settings, including Turkey, poets educators, artists, lawyers, from the famed to the unknown, are being arrested and silenced, persecuted and punished for opposing the ruling power in the name of ‘threatening democracy’. Social media platforms are being shut down or prevented access to cut off the
distribution and access to information and communication. In contexts where there is no
tolerance towards questioning the norm, for critical thinking, for the space and right to
expression, where the alternative is presented as ‘confrontation’, I am disheartened. Where
nationalism, sexism, racism, segregation widens the gap between communities, the ‘us’
and ‘them’, I am disheartened. This has sometimes caused me to lose focus, to forget the
purpose of my research and practice, to wonder why I started this thesis. But the public art
interventions and concentrated fieldwork upon which the study is based have shown the
power of art to transcend the disheartening experiences and contexts, indicating that there
are other worlds, other futures, other possibilities, beyond the set constraints of a deeply
divided society and the ossifying culture of convention that so often characterises such a
society. By completing the thesis, by imagining and then enabling the collectively
generated possibilities of art’s agency in the public sphere, I know that all hope is not yet
lost.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDICES

Appendix 1

List of Interviews


e. Group Interview of Pre-intervention Participants. (2014, 3 August). Nicosia, Cyprus.


g. Second Group Discussion Intervention-Participants. (2014, 19 June), Nicosia, Cyprus.

h. Third Group Discussion Intervention-Participants. (2014, 26 June), Nicosia, Cyprus.
Appendix 2
(Translated by Aycan Garip)

As read in the Constitution of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

Retrieved from: www.mahkemeler.net/cgi-bin/anayasa/anayasa.doc on 4/5/2017

*Bilim ve Sanat Özgürlüğü*

**Clause 25**
Everyone has the right to freely learn, teach, explain, publish, and conduct research of any kind within the sciences and arts. (13-4)

*Sanatın, Sanatçının ve Kültürel Hakların Korunması*

**Clause 62**
(1) The government provides a context where art can freely develop; the government takes precautions to protect, support, encourage, reward the artist.

(2) The government does what is necessary to ensure for all the participate within the cultural context; to benefit from scientific developments and practices; to protect the right to benefit from material and moral outcomes resulting from the protection of scientific, literary, and artistic products and respects the freedom to carry out creative activities and events. (23)
Appendix 3

Link to song: https://soundcloud.com/search?q=onayladigim%20tek%20yasa

Lyrics:

I woke up in the morning at like 11:30
Checked to see what’s on Facebook
Shaziye messaged me “Are you up?”
So I was like, “I’m up!”
She wasn’t online so sent her a text from WhatsApp
Said, “If you’re not busy come over!”
She said, “What business would I have at this hour?”
So she came over and picked me up
I told my mother I was going to the shop
She said “Buy some rice when you’re coming back. I’m going to stuff the courgette flowers.” I said “Okay.”
Got into Shaziye’s car.

CHORUS:
Cruise, the only law that I approve x 3
Cruise!

So we were driving in the car with Fatosh
I said “What would we do staying at home anyway?”
“Why were you sulking the whole of last night?”
“As if you didn’t know Kamil was going to be there!”
(Of my God! I’m so sick of him!)
“It was so long ago and he still ticks you off?”
“Plenty of fish in the sea, darling. You were the one who dumped him.”
“I bet you by the time we’re done cruising you’ll find someone way better than him."
“We’ve got the car, we go wherever we want.”
“Forget about the rest.”

CHORUS

Hey bro, I just got a car-wash
She’s like a lady (shiny shiny)
I don’t need no club or a discotheque
Even if I just parked the car outside
I bet you I’ll get the girl to come inside (hehehehehe)
Have you seen the cars modifications?
Just threw it on her (WooooW)
What do you think of the subwafers?
The car is like a club itself
The bass is blaring out shaking the place
Oh my god, have you seen the hotties? “YANGYAUWWWW”
What do you say we follow them?
Come on, jump in the car.

CHORUS

(Shaziye) I think the guys in the back are following us
(Fatosh) Didn’t we just see them just now?
(S) Check out his ride, money must grow on trees for him
(F) Go round the roundabout one more time!
(Car screeching)
They’re totally following us!
(S) What shall we do? Stop or continue?
(F) Where the hell are we gonna stop in this traffic?
We’re moving at snail’s pace anyway.
Are they still chasing us?
(S) No they’ve turned into the Long Road.
(F) Fine drive home so we can get ready.
(S) Shall we go to Famagusta?
(F) Who is gonna drive all that way? We’re better off driving along Dereboyu.
Let me check the events on Facebook, maybe there’s something going on.
(S) Oh look, isn’t that Ahmet going by?
(F) Ohh, that boy got fit!

How’s it going bro? x10
(S) What are you still reading? Have you found any events?
(F) Someone posted something I’m reading that
(S) What?!
(F) I don’t get it, something about the election, constitution amendment and stuff or something
(S) What constitution? What election? When?
(F) Well that’s kind of what I’m trying to figure out. I think it’s this week?
(S) What am I asking and what are you answering back? Come on now we still have to get ready. You haven’t even checked what’s going on tonight.
(F) Oh it’s always the same thing anyway. Why don’t we go to Ayia Napa?
(S) Can you imagine? Just us girls?
(F) Oh no! (echo: Child get me some rice so I can make the dolma!) I forgot to get the rice.
(S) You remember this now that we’ve arrived?
(F) Well we’re not out of the car yet. Come on let’s do another round.

Chorus

Bro how’s it goi..hahahahahaha!
Original Lyrics:
Uyandim sabah iste saat 11:30
Baktim feysbuka Ne var ne yok
Saziye mesaj atti gaktin mi diye
Dedim kalktim
Baktim online degil vatzapdan mesaj attim
Dedim isin yoksa gel
Dedi ne isim olacak bu saatta?
Ciki geldialdi beni
Dedim anneme ben markete gidiyom
Dedi gelirken prinç al, cicekleri dolduracam
Dedim tamam, bindim Saziyenin arabaya

NAKARAT:
Piyasa, onayladigim tek yasa x3
Piyasa

Fatosnan arabada giderdik
Zaten evde oturup napacayik dedim
Dun gece noldu da triplendin?
Sanki da bilmezdin Kamil’da gelecegidi
(Aman biktim usandim elinden)
Kac zaman oldu daha siniri bozar
Ellini sallasan ellisi kizim
Hem sen istemezden gendini
Bahsine girerim tur atana gadar
Bulun ondan eyisini
Altimizda araba, biz nere istersak oraya
Bos ver gerisini

NAKARAT

Gomma arabayi yeni yikattim
Kiz gibi oldu (gicir gicir)
Ne disko isterim ne mekan
Diskonun onune paretsem
Kesin kizi atarim arkaya (hiihihihi)
Gordun arabanin madifiyeleri (modifiyeleri)
Yeni attim gendine (WOW)
Subvafırlar nasil ama?
Zaten araba disko gibin
Bengiledir bas ortaligi
Aman annam gordun gizleri?
“YANGYAU!”
Gitmeyik be peslerinden
Hade atla arabaya
NAKARAT

Be arkadiakiler bizi takipeder galiba
Deminki oğlanlar değil onlar
Gormen altındaki arabayı
Parayı agactan toplar galiba
Don raundabouttan bir tur daha
E vallahi arkamızdan gelirler
Napalim duralim yoksa devam
Nerden duracayik bu trafikte
Zaten milim milim ilerlerik
Gelirler pesimizden daha?
Donduler simdi kalin yol
Sur o zaman eve hazirlanmaya
Acaba yapambil bir Magusa
Kim cekecek be o yolu
Daha iyi yaparik bir dereboyu
Bakayım feysubktan evenlere
Belki birsey var bu gece
Aman bak ahmetler gecer
Hi, O cocuk da oldu bodi!
Gardas naan be? X10

Ma nedir daha okuduun bulamadin event
Aha biri bisey postladi da ona bakarim
NEY NEY NEY NEY
Anlamadim secimman ilgili
Anayasa degisikligi falan filan
Ne secimi anayasa ne, ne zaman?
E aha onu anılama calisirim, bu haftadir galiba
Ben ne sorarim sen ne den bana
Hade da haziralacayik daha
Zaten bakmadin birseyler varsa
Aman iste hep aynı seyler
Gitmeyik be Agia napaya?
Aman dusun giz basimiza..Hii..
(Aha gizim pirinc al da dolmalari dolduracam…)
E geldik evin onune be kapida gelir aklina
E inmedik ya arabadan, hade at bir tur daha

NAKARAT

Gardas naan b-aahahahaha…
Some presumptuous people are writing whatever they like on the walls in Nicosia, expressing their feelings and opinions by creating visual pollution.

The capital Nicosia is covered in writings on the wall reflecting freedom of speech causing visual pollution (This sentence has been translated to form a grammatically correct sentence). Composed of black and red paint

Almost all of the writings and images on the wall reflect freedom of speech and are done with red and black paint. In addition to this, these writings causing visual pollution are attracting everyone’s attention. Opinions such as “Who lives in a luxurious cabin,” “What’s it to you,” “Fascism begins in the home” are written by who knows at who knows what time. These individuals who do not have the courage to express their opinions and thoughts face to face to individuals and who are only able to do so by writing on walls are scolded by society. Residents who have spoken to our [sic] reporter say that they do not know who is creating this visual pollution and that they are concerned. Residents have requested for police or municipality officers to patrol the alleyways within the Walls.

Photograph published with article: Fascism begins in the home. Original in colour.
Comments by readers:

11:11 23 July 2014 Wednesday
I think it looks beautiful 😊
One who cannot talk face to face

10:58 23 July 2014 Wednesday
The question that we should be asking is what’s the point of this news article?
Anonymous

8:09 23 July 2014 Wednesday
Melin Dobran the pollution you see in the streets is caused by the pollution in your head. The moment you get rid of the pollution in your head, you will begin to see what’s in the streets as art.
Your name

04:11 23 July 2014 Wednesday
😊))Aw my sweet! Look at the little darling writing the news.
Ahmet S. Sayin

23:04 July 2014 Wednesday
Someone should write “MELIN DOBRAN you know how to play the game!” on the walls… Should study a bit on Graffiti. Hoping that our young aspiring journalist friend learns what graffiti is…
Our name

17:57 July 2014 Wednesday
I believe this is a beautiful irony, as it can be nothing more than irony.
Munise Alibeyoglu

09:31
You are the kind of person I am ashamed of breathing the same air
Fehmi Ozturk

09:06 July 2014 Wednesday
You haven’t the courage to say it to my face so you write it in a newspaper. I say let’s be environmentally friendly and stop printing newspapers, it’s a shame to have to turn trees into paper to have such a silly story printed on it.

Kibris Garip
Melin, could you let me know what your phone number is? I am conducting research and would like to arrange for an interview. You may reach me on Facebook. Thank you.

22 July 2014 Wednesday 10:24
Ahmets Said Sayin. Author at Dusun Bagimsiz Hukuk ve Kultur Fanzini/ THINK Independent Law and Culture Fan-zine
I’ve said what I wanted about her journalism, but who’s the priest on the bottom left? :D
That priest is Chrisostomos, but I’m curious to see who this Melin Dobran is 😊

Didem Gurdur · METU Northern Cyprus Campus
22 July 2014 9:26
We’ve laughed today God knows what will happen tomorrow :D What is this?! This is our neighbourhood, we’re quite happy and content living there. What concern? People are going to think that people are hiding cooped up in their homes because there are stencils being done on the walls. Brave enough to write an article, but presumptuous enough to not bother to stop and think what these things are and research into it. It is technically impossible for you to be a journalist; I think you should try again.

Demet Arisoy Belen
22 July 9:14
Ooooo, you presumptuous person who wrote this article…street art? Graffiti? Stencil? Do you know these? You don’t know them….This is utterly rude, you call this news…

Huseyin Ozinal works at Cyprus Turkish Municipality Theatre
22 July 08:59
Oh my child, oh my child should I be mad at the mother and father who brought you into this world, the teachers who taught you how to read and write, or your boss who hired you and have you the title of journalist. Oh my child, you know how they say when the one upstairs was handing out smarts, were you outside the door…Oh my child, oh my child, it’s sad but true, but you won’t be anything, you cannot be anything my child…I think what would be best is for you to climb somewhere high up and jump off it…you know the moment you hit your head, maybe in that moment you will think what writings on the wall, graffiti means..but it’s going to be too late my child…come on my child…may the path ahead be clear (expression: clear of obstacles).

Dilek Karaaziz Sener
Ahahahahah…..is this article a joke? Is the writer a joke? I couldn’t decide