THE DIFFERENTIAL EMBODIMENT OF HOME: CONSTRUCTING AND RECONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES AMONG REFUGEES

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Abstract

It has been twenty years since the first refugees moved to the new-built refugee estate in Tahtakallas, within the walled city of Nicosia, near Famagusta Gate. The attempt of the government in the 1980s was to renovate and rehabilitate the area. The present study[1] aims to explore the attitudes of these refugees towards their new place of residence eighteen years after their resettlement. Was a common place a sufficient factor to construct Tahtakallas as a new community in its residents' minds? This question is rigorously analysed in this paper following interviews taken from twenty-five Tahtakallas' residents aged from nine to eighty-six years old.

Introduction

Previous studies on Greek-Cypriot refugees have not focused on an in-depth exploration and contextualisation of the variety of 'refugeenesses' and the strictly associated term of 'home'. As analysed in this study,[2] varied experiences of 'home', its embodiment and more importantly its re-embodiment, shape and reshape the framework of understanding dislocation and the need for relocation.

While some scholars who have written extensively on Greek-Cypriot refugees, like Loizos (1977, 1981, 2000), have stressed the importance of the fluidity of the term, others have speculated on it as a static, uncontextualised and thus fetishised term that can be embodied and transferred from generation to generation (Hadjiyanni, 2002; Zetter, 1998). In other words, refugeeness is a social product under constant revision that cannot be understood outside the framework in which it is produced and reproduced.

Tahtakallas as Non-community and "Non-place"

Marc Auge (1995) asserted that "non-places" are those areas in modernity where interactions are performed by anonymous people. In such areas any cultural attributes or symbols become trivial. In genre of Auge's idea, I argue here that one of the most basic reasons why Tahtakallas has not become a community or a place in the discourse of the older participants of this study,[3] has not been the consequence of the strict anonymity among its residents but of the little knowledge they had for each other and for the place. As I discuss below, this low level of knowledge has been determined by various structural and individual factors.

Why do most of the older participants of this study dislike Tahtakallas? What are their arguments? Generally, they do not seem to like the area because it does not resemble their village in the north in both physical and social terms. Below I discuss in more detail three missing aspects of Tahtakallas based on the older participants' claims:

(a) the land
(b) the deep knowledge about people and the place, and
(c) the importance of the house.

The Land
The older participants emphasised that the lack of land in the area engenders negative feelings towards Tahtakallas. However, it is not merely the existence of land that counts but whether the participants own it and what relationship they have with it. Maroulla, a refugee from a village outside of Famagusta stressed: "In my village, I owned land, I had fields with olive trees and trees in my garden. We cultivated fruit and we did not [need to] buy anything". Another refugee, Stella, supports Maroulla: "When I became a refugee and I went to the market to buy fruit I started crying, Na ayoraso frouta? [To buy fruit?], that was something I could not accept". Most of the older participants, especially the women, spent much of their time in the fields, tilling the land and cultivating crops for the market so as to provide food and money for their family. The relationship between them and the land was direct not only in physical terms but also in emotional terms. To make and support a family in Cyprus was – and still is – something crucial, and what was even more important was the fact that owning and using land was for many families the sole source of income. Respectively, therefore, people's strong feelings towards the land were reinforced.

There are other reasons as well, as to why these people had a strong relationship with their land. First, land and property were very important a few decades ago as the prerequisites for weddings and the dowries of brides (Loizos,

1975b, 1981). The dowry was the bride's contribution to the wedding, as the groom contributed his job (Argyrou, 1996). Many families accumulated goods, clothes, money and property (usually a house) in order to present them to their daughter at marriage. Having a house available to pass on to the bride, made her more attractive to potential grooms (Loizos, 1975b). Owning land was also vital, as it was the vehicle to the event that was considered to be the most important in a person's life at that time. Coming to the south as a refugee after 1974 and owning nothing, not even the house they resided in, in Tahtakallas, equated to losing one's sense of belonging and 'self' (Hirschon, 1998). When parents married off their children but later on had little to give them, was hugely disappointing. Also, marrying off their children at a time and in a place where strangers were dominant, appeared to be devastating. Thus Harithea complained that her children's weddings did not make her "feel better", after her dislocation in 1974, because the congratulations she received came from strangers.

Secondly, the significance of land and ownership was magnified because the owners' merits were acknowledged by fellow villagers and they were thus regarded socially as more respectable. The knowledge of who owns which piece of land or property together with recognition as owner, were fundamental niceties in villages in the past. Here is what Maroulla said when she explained why it would have been better if all the current residents of Tahtakallas had originated from her village:

> The only thing I wish I had here was a sihoriano [a fellow villager] even if [s/he] was my worst enemy. We would understand each other. We would say that we had that piece of land and we would know that it was true. He or she would believe me. Somebody from another village would think that I was a liar.

The lack of shared knowledge about bygone facts and events, i.e., ownership and weddings appears to be influential in the perception of how people observe others and the place. Being familiar with a place and its residents is what makes the older participants feel more comfortable and more at home. This lack of awareness and the impact it has had on their lives is discussed below in more detail.

The Deep Knowledge about People and the Place
Most interviewees from Group 1 claim that one of the basic reasons why they do not like Tahtakallas and why they do not feel comfortable there, is because they do not know their fellow residents. Maroulla, for instance, has contact with only two other older ladies, Harithea and Prodromou. Harithea and Anastasia do have more contact with their children who also reside in the area. Yiannis does not have any friends in the area as he has problems with his voice and vision and Vasilis prefers to visit a coffee shop in the suburbs where he lived prior to moving to Tahtakallas.

Knowing little about the people and community is a significant factor as to why these respondents feel they are xenoi. For example, Maroulla complains that she knows nothing about two of her neighbours apart from where they came from. These three women (Maroulla, Harithea and Anastasia) together with some of the participants from Group 2, stressed that knowing who is bad and who is good in the community is essential. They felt that they ought to be aware of any members in their community with bad reputations so that they would know how to behave towards them. They again compared their current situation in Tahtakallas with their memories of the past and the north and remarked that in their villages they knew one another very well and accepted each other like siblings. This egalitarianism is, according to Cohen (1985, p. 35), "a powerful symbolic process in the community". It is, I argue, what keeps people integrated. However, it is not merely being equal in status (e.g., being kin, having similar financial resources, getting married and having children) but also being equal in knowledge. To put it more clearly: knowing, for example, 'who married who', and sharing this knowledge in a ritualised form is a symbol to which people may ascribe different meanings (Cohen, 1985). But this is not the end of the story. In the past, many people in the villages did not simply want to know about the weddings of others but also needed personal recognition for the same reason. Cohen (1985), talks about this when referring to the coexistence of commonality and individuality. So it is not the mere sharing and practicing of the commonalties that count and keep people together, but that this sharing, very often ritualised, comes back to the "self" (through the other and the community) where the individual identity is constructed. Arguably, no such self-affirmation occurs in Tahtakallas because the older residents are unknown to each other and are thus not acknowledged for what they own or for how they behave in the community.

Nevertheless, not knowing about an area and its people and their place of origin is fundamental, but being deprived of developing a strong relationship with the land is also another factor of alienation from both the place and other people. To illustrate this point, many houses in Tahtakallas do not architecturally offer many opportunities for social interaction despite the fact that the dwellings are very close to each other and the area resembles a small village. The houses where Maroulla, Harithea, Anastasia, Kostis and Marilena (from Group 2) reside have one door only which has access to the road. There is no garden at the front and there is nowhere to sit outside of the house where human contact can be developed. This, according to the interviewees is crucial, because although their doors may be open they are unable to see any human being. Cars pass by despite the pedestrianisation of the area. They also feel that the lighting and airing of the house are unsatisfactory because of ineffective windows. The garden at the back of some houses is too small and is surrounded by high walls which prevent any social interaction with neighbours.

But what problems do the architectural characteristics of these homes create for the residents there? They are problematic for two basic reasons. First, the older participants previously had a great deal of contact with their fellow villagers in the north. The houses there, they claim, were built differently and had gardens. The homes incorporated many key windows for lighting and airing. Secondly, the interviewees characterised the houses as dark. It is hardly surprising that they do not like dark houses or places when their past relationship with the land, sunshine and air more than likely shaped their identity to empathise with natural resources.

The Importance of the House

Zetter (1998, p. 5) maintained that what is mythologized in Cyprus is not "return per se but the home". It is not 'home' in its restricted geographical position that counts most, but its social position in the village and the community. If it was only the physical existence and location of the house that was significant then the rehoused refugees would probably integrate themselves into their new place and community. However, things are not so simple and the reason why many refugees passionately orient themselves to the return is not to reclaim property but to reclaim the "self". Rapport and Dawson (1998, pp. 8-9) defined home as the place "where one best knows oneself". In support, Simmel (cited in Rapport and Dawson, 1998, p. 8) stressed that home is a "unique synthesis […] an aspect of life and at the same time a special way of forming, reflecting and interrelating the totality of life".

The importance of the house and its loss appear to vary in older participants' attitudes basically according to gender and to previous experiences. With regard to gender, older female participants were more likely to mention the loss of the house and the fields whereas the males were more likely to mention the loss of the community and the jobs. Not surprisingly, women were more likely than men to emphasise the loss of their social relations. Men stressed the loss of the house in physical and property terms rather than in social terms. Let us try to explain these gender differences.

The social location through the house was practiced daily by women and very often ritualised. Maroulla, like Harithea, for example said: sto horkon eixame ta terkasta mas, tous fournous mas tze kamname psoumia tze fai [in the village we had what we needed in the house, our stoves and we made food and bread]. The house was the female domain and it was not something that women were likely to experience as boring or hard work. They were happy, as they clarified, in serving their family. But they were happy for another reason as well. As Dubisch (1986) explained in her study in rural Greece, being a bad housewife received negative comments from fellow villagers. It was a kind of social control through gossip but it was also a way to reaffirm the "self" and to receive social support and affirmation for being a good mother and housewife. However, despite the fact that in

Tahtakallas gossip may well exists, it would only be effective if carried out among familiar people.

The importance of the house to men lay in the reality of ownership and control over the family, whereas for women it lay in the construction of the "self" through the social relations with other females. Conclusively, it is not a surprise that in the older participants' eyes Tahtakallas is not perceived as a real community or place and for this reason they dislike the area. Tahtakallas, for the older interviewees, becomes a "heterotopia", using Foucault's (cited in Soja, 1995, p. 15) terminology which means "the space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us". For the older female residents of Tahtakallas the house is there but the people who would reinforce its significance and how the housewife manages it, are absent. The sharing and formalisation of previously important events such as making bread, celebrating and cooking at Easter, Christmas and weddings do not exist in Tahtakallas. Similarly, men do not enjoy many of the things that previously were important to them. Quite a number have different jobs from what they used to do before 1974 or their wives now work too. They do not own the houses they reside in because they are refugees and the houses are built on Turkish-Cypriot land.

The Politics of Memory as another Influential Factor
The refugees in Tahtakallas like all refugees living on estates have been rehoused temporarily until the Turkish troops leave Cyprus and their properties in the north become available for them. The Greek-Cypriot government put into practice a plan to preserve people's memory of the north. The media used to air pictures and documentaries on the occupied area of Cyprus under the slogan Dhen Xehno [I don't forget]. The politicians claimed that all refugees would return and the ongoing attempts by the United Nations to solve the Cyprus problem kept the hope of return alive. In addition, schools teach the children about the Turkish invasion in 1974, the brutality of the Turks, and the Greek-Cypriots' right to return. Many students have participated in demonstrations against the declaration of the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus", nationalist festivals and parades (Gillis,1994; Zerubavel, 1995; Spillman, 1997; Papadakis, 1993b), and in 'reinvented' ceremonies (Hobsbawn, 1983) such as the 1st October commemoration. Students have learnt to identify themselves with the north and orient themselves toward the solution of the political problem.

The question here is what does this mean for people? Theoretically speaking, it means that hope for return has kept the refugee's imagination back in the village in the north and dwelling in the past. This has happened because, as Zetter (1998) successfully put it, refugees want to return home, and home does not merely mean a physical space but the "self". So through the politics of memory the refugees' "self"

is redirected towards the north (Halbswachs, 1992) and not towards Tahtakallas or other refugee estates. This deprives them of developing a deep physical and social experience with their current place in the south.

This theoretical argument is supported empirically by some examples on refugees from other countries who left their homeland, with no strong hope for return, to search for better luck in European and American countries. The Caribbean female migrants in Canada are one such example. Smith (1999), found that the women she interviewed in Canada survived in a productive way through 'home'. They basically resorted to some strategies such as education and social networking amongst other Caribbean and community activism.[4] It seems that the reason why they resorted to such strategies was because they found themselves in a place very different from home and the hope for return did not exist. They did not resort to these strategies simply because they wanted to keep their customs alive in Canada but because they also needed a social location as they did not intend physically to return. In effect they returned socially and this may have produced a new identity. For instance, the Cambodian refugees in the United States formed a new identity over time. On the one hand they wanted to keep their past identity alive but on the other hand they were looking for a new identity (Mortland, 1994). Mortland noticed that his participants emphasised the transitional period from their past identity to their current one.

Based on these two examples, there are two implications for Tahtakallas. First, the older refugees in Tahtakallas, unlike the Caribbean women, could not really locate themselves socially because they strictly associated the social location with the physical one. I would suggest that they could not return socially because the hope for the physical and thus social return was – and still is – very strong which reinforces the sense of national belonging (Renan, 1994; Searle-White, 2001; Smith, 1991, 1999). Secondly, and in line with the Cambodian case, the older participants of Tahtakallas do not refer to 1974 as a transitional point in time between their past and present identity. Instead, they refer to 1974 saying that they have not become something else and still identify themselves attached to the north and to the past. Therefore, 1974 does not appear to be a transitional reference point but a point of social and physical fixity. Furthermore, the Cambodians were in a different place in a different country and they integrated themselves into Cambodianess. In Tahtakallas, and in Cyprus in general, the refugees were unable to integrate themselves into "Cypriotness" because they were in Cyprus. They could only integrate themselves into their "villageness", however, they were unable to do this because they came from different villages.

Conclusively, the strong hope for social and physical return due to the politics of memory and coupled with the impossibility of the production of a new social identity,

contributes to the production of negative feelings towards Tahtakallas. Interestingly, below I discuss why some other older participants together with younger members enjoy Tahtakallas, and how Tahtakallas has become a community and a social place and therefore 'home' to some.

Tahtakallas as a Community and a Place

There are two female participants, Anastasia and Loukia from Group 1, who like Tahtakallas. Let us examine these two cases in more detail.

The Place and the Reaffirmation of the Self
Anastasia is seventy years old and identifies herself only with her town, Morfou, in the north. However, she likes Tahtakallas and whether or not she would return to Morfou upon a solution to the Cyprus problem depends on where her children ultimately decide to go:

> It will hurt me if they tell me to leave in case the Cyprus problem is solved. Where are they going to take me? If I go to Morfou I will not mind only if one of my children is close to me. Here in Tahtakallas I have one daughter. I am getting older and less able to support myself; if I go somewhere else I will not have somebody close to me.

In Tahtakllas, Anastasia has frequent contact with three other ladies and with her daughter's family. There are two basic reasons why she does not have many friends there and why she likes Tahtakallas. Foremost, and unlike the other older participants, she does not like talking about her property in the north because she does not want to remember:

> Maroulla always talks about her village. I tell them to forget. I forgot. It is done now; only our health is important. With my friend Xenia, we talk about our current life, our children and about the current issues of the Cyprus problem and what is going to happen to us.

Anastasia, therefore, appears to be more likely to orient herself to the present and the future rather than to the past. This leads to the second reason as to why she likes Tahtakallas. It appears that before 1974 Anastasia lived in a town and had neither fields of her own nor a close relationship with the land. Furthermore she was not used to having many friends in Morfou or to visiting their houses on a regular basis either to make bread or talk. She is the only older participant who claimed that having fellow villagers in Tahtakallas would not make a difference. I suggest that it seems that living in a town has contributed towards a better adaptation to living in the south.

Anastasia ceased to feel herself a refugee because of her accepted adaptation:

> I used to feel a refugee. To me, I do not feel I am a refugee now. I lost what I lost; I just wish my children to be healthy and I do not mind. I wish not to suffer anything else and I do not care. Nobody will take things with him or her [upon death].

Anastasia's case reveals that having past experiences similar to those experienced in Tahtakallas has made her adaptation easier as well as eliciting positive feelings towards the place. Interestingly, because Anastasia likes Tahtakallas she bases her argumentation only on the positive aspects of the area stressing that the place is quiet, convenient, and the Churches are very close. Finally, she also orients herself towards the condition of her house in a more positive fashion.

To support Anastasia's experiences and opinions is Loukia's case. Loukia is sixty-three years old and she was born and grew up in Ayios Ioannis, which is about two hundred metres away from her house in Tahtakallas. She is not a refugee and has been living in Tahtakallas since 1985. She does not differentiate Tahtakallas from Ayios Ioannis because they are very close and she feels that she originates from Tahtakallas. She likes the area very much plus she prefers the architectural differences to the area even better. Loukia does not have many friends there but does not mind this because her daughters are near by. Her arguments below show that she emphasises those positive and negative aspects of Tahtakallas that are important to her and are similar to her life experiences in the area:

> I like it here because it is nice, quiet, schools are close and we can pick up our grandchildren from school without stress and traffic. Here, we can hear the school bell. Children can play safely. If one gives me the most beautiful house outside Nicosia I won't accept it. The churches are close, we have markets, we have everything. The problems are with the foreigners. Nicosia has changed a lot because of that. They are not bad, they are actually very quiet but it is hard to walk around and hear somebody speaking Greek. I do not like that because it changed the character of Nicosia.

There was no reference by Loukia to either land, social relations with other residents or any customs that are not practiced anymore. Arguably, and based upon the views of both Anastasia and Loukia, Tahtakallas is of primary importance for those residents who are able to "find themselves" in the area. Anastasia, for instance, asserted that it would be better if the government gave her the house where she currently resides. In other words, and unlike the other older participants, the importance of the house in town was – and still is – different from its significance in the villages.

In the mind of Anastasia the place, therefore, becomes important. In general, a place usually appears to be important if it reaffirms people's personal and social identity. This affirmation and reaffirmation appear to be more salient in the attitudes of two of Tahtakallas' workers (from Group 2) and strong enough in the young residents' minds to strictly identify themselves with Tahtakallas as discussed below.

The "Place" and the "Self"
Dimos is fifty-nine years old. He has been living in Tahtakallas for fifteen years and has been working there since 1957. Yiannakis is fifty years old. He lives outside of the walled city of Nicosia and has been working in Tahtakallas since 1963.

Both men identify themselves with Tahtakallas saying passionately that they love the area. Specifically, Dimos's words are striking: "I am from Mia Milia but I feel that I was born in Tahtakallas. I was raised here. I spent more time here than in Mia Milia […]. I was here for 12 hours a day and 2 hours in Mia Milia. I was going to Mia Milia to sleep and come back". Dimos also maintains that he and other workers in the area are like brothers. In the event of a solution to the Cyprus problem, both Dimos and Yiannakis would go back to their villages in the north. The reason why Dimos would like to return is because he grew up in the north and he has property there. On the other hand he emphasises the good social relations he has with his current fellow villagers and says that he would much prefer it if the residents of Tahtakallas were from Mia Milia. Similarly, Yiannakis said:

> I have Tahtakallas in my heart […] It takes a part of my life. I have been coming here since 1963. It is a neighbourhood that we love. It is more than a second home.

> I have many friends here. The whole neighbourhood is friends. We have our daily problems but we never stop helping each other. When we meet we talk about everything, kouventes tou kefene, gossip, politics, our problems. We talk about our village in the north. This is the first thing we discuss. We come from different villages but we talk, it does not matter. We talk about how we lived in our village, our customs during the big celebrations of Easter and Christmas.

Yiannnakis further stressed that should he ever have to leave Tahtakallas for any reason he would feel that he had become a refugee for the second time despite the fact that Tahtakallas is not his place of origin.

What these two cases show is that it is not age per se that matters but the quality of experience in a place. And by "quality" I mean that what is important for these two men is their job of work and the approval they receive from others either in their village as the basic providers of the household or in Tahtakallas as successful

workers. Tahtakallas has been the place that constructed their identity and their sense of "self" through their working life. Because they are still working in the same area, they have constructed a sense of continuity with both the past and the "self". It seems that for them, Tahtakallas is a place full of memories (Hayden, 1996), through which they reaffirm the "self" under their social and personal identity. They lost both their property and social networks in the north but they still retained their jobs and their professional and social networks in the south. Memories from Tahtakallas gather together when these workers meet at the small coffee shop in Ermou street to share their experiences, make jokes, and this illustrates the main difference between men and women (also see Loizos, 1981). The women lost almost everything that reaffirmed their sense of "self". They lost the household in its social and symbolic context and their female social networks. It was, therefore, harder for females to adapt to the south and it was not easy for them to find other aspects of social life in the south whereby they could reconstruct their identity. In view of this, it seems that personal and social identities go hand in hand with a place, identity, and people's preferences for an area. Theoretically speaking, would an ambiguous identity elicit ambiguous feelings towards Tahtakallas and the place of origin?

Belonging to Nowhere
Interestingly enough, those participants from Group 2 aged thirty-five to forty years old who did not experience the north over a long period of time and thus their 'socialization was disrupted' (Ahearn, Loughry and Ager, 1999, p. 217) appear to have ambiguous feelings towards both Tahtakallas and the north and towards their sense of belonging.

This ambiguousness was expressed by four participants (two women and two men). Christalla, aged thirty-five years old, identifies herself with her village in the north. She feels that she knows little about Tahtakallas in spite of her fifteen-year experience there and as a result feels that she would be able to live anywhere. Further, she asserts that she does not come from Tahtakallas despite the fact that she likes the area because it is close to the centre of Nicosia and her work. However, when I asked her to say whether or not she would return to the north upon a solution, and whether she feels she is a refugee, she contradicted herself:

> If there is a solution I will not go back. Because I was too young, Aggastina is a military zone. My mother will go, I will not. En eho tipota na riso [my roots are not there] … I feel it like my topos but I do not know, I was very young and Aggastina did not remind me of anything when I visited it recently. If I had to choose between Aggastina and Tahtakallas, perhaps I would prefer Aggastina.

> I feel I am a refugee because I do not have anything here to own. Nothing belongs to me here. If they give me the house I do not think that I will stop

> feeling a refugee. But it is good if they give it to me. I have nothing to own and I am not from here.

Christalla did not orient her refugeeness towards the north and the past but towards Tahtakallas and the present. For her, refugeeness means the lack of ownership. She visited the north recently but did not feel Aggastina to be her topos. Christalla's husband, Pavlos, identifies himself with his village in the north. Nonetheless, he asserted that Tahtakallas is his place and he likes the area because it is close to Nicosia and has many workshops where he can find anything he wants for the house. Pavlos' ambiguousness was apparent when he was asked what it meant for him to be a refugee:

> To me, being a refugee means to be away from your roots. You cannot forget easily. I feel a refugee because I was uprooted from my topos. I was born there, grew up, went to school, I had my friends, people were together and separated upon Turkish invasion. We are here for 15 years and we are strangers, people here do not even say good morning. We are not close to each other.

Despite the fact that Pavlos wants to go back to the north should there be a solution to the Cyprus problem, he was disappointed when he visited his village recently because, as he explained, he went to see it as an adult but remembered it as a child.

Yiorgos, aged thirty-five years old, expressed similar feelings to that of Pavlos but the reason why he would prefer to return to the north is because of his property rights in the former place. Finally, Niki, a thirty-seven year old hairdresser who has her shop in Tahtakallas, expressed her feelings towards the place that she comes from:

> From the three places I have experienced I do not feel any of those as my topos. I feel Ayios Dometios more than Tahtakallas because I spent my childhood there. I do not feel Zodia close to me especially after I saw it. The passion to return was there but when I saw it felt like something cut it. I found everything too small and narrow. I remembered it as kid, I saw it again as an adult.

Niki likes Tahtakallas with its advantages and disadvantages but she emphasises that she is a refugee orienting herself to what she lacks in the present and not to what she lost thirty years ago:

> I feel I am a refugee because I do not feel that there is a place that is mine. For example, I saw Zodia, but I do not see it as my topos, I felt as a xenos in my village. Economically also, we do not have anything that belongs to us. If

> they give this house to me it may help me because I will feel that something belongs to me and that I belong to somewhere.

It is interesting to note that these four individuals lack a physical and thus a social location. This deficiency has blurred their feelings and attitudes either towards Tahtakallas or the north. They have each experienced at least three different places at different ages in their life cycle without having the opportunity of developing their sense of belonging. Of course, the politics of memory, and the lack of ownership as discussed earlier in this paper, have played their role in cultivating contradictory feelings. Conversely, the adolescents of Tahtakallas and the children who were born and raised there, appear to be constructing their identity through the physical and social space of Tahtakallas.

"I am from Tahtakallas"

The above words were used by all the young participants of the study aged between nine and eighteen years old. This subsection is based upon the participants from Groups 3 and 4.

Three of the participants, Petros, Mihalis and Leandros from Group 3, asserted that they originated from both the village of their parents in the north and Tahtakallas. They also claimed that they like the area they currently reside in and they do not want to leave. If Mihalis and Leandros had a choice they would prefer to have a house in both the north and Tahtakallas. All three, however, visited the north recently and did not really feel any pangs of belonging toward their parents' villages. This is what Leandros said:

> These days I have gone to Dikomo. I basically tried to support my parents when they saw their places. I was moved because they were moved. My feelings were mixed. In the event of a solution, I would prefer to have a house here, one in Dikomo and one in Aggastina.. I love this place, I like it. Wherever you have experiences you like it, I just cannot leave. But if it were for the common good, surely I would agree to leave.

On the other hand, despite the fact that Petros said that he also originates from the north, he stressed that he does not want to return because he does not know anybody there: "No, I will not go to Morfou because when I did I saw everything destroyed. I do not know anybody there, I will stay here". Similarly, Melani identifies herself with Tahtakallas in all aspects, emphasising that she does not even want to visit her parent's village in the north because she does not feel that it belongs to her. Furthermore, Melani does not feel that she is a refugee.

Leandros also does not feel like a refugee because he has no experience of it and does not know what it feels like. Nonetheless, Mihalis and Petros maintain that

they are refugees. Petros went on to say, "I feel I am a refugee because my father is from Morfou", and Mihalis:

> I feel I am a refugee because I do not have the right to go to the place my parents were born and grew up there. If they allow us to go and live in Kerynia then I will stop being a refugee.

Mihalis and Petros perceive their refugeeness through their parents' experience and their right to reside freely in any part of the island. It is interesting that the older participants of this study define refugeeness as being forced to leave one's house and losing everything, whereas the younger participants from Group 2 perceive refugeeness as being deprived of ownership and the sense of belonging, and some of the young[5] blame it for preventing them from visiting and staying where their parents were born. This reveals that refugeeness is a subjective concept based upon people's past and current experiences.

Tahtakallas, similarly, is full of memories for the children of this study who also appear to strictly identify themselves with this area. Five children, two boys and three girls, aged nine to twelve years old (Group 4) were asked some key questions about their experiences in Tahtakallas. They were also required, along with another five children who attend Ayios Kasianos School, to write a brief essay on Tahtakallas. All of these children identified themselves with Tahtakallas despite the fact that some also said that they came from the north. Two of them also said that they were refugees:

> I am a refugee because my father is and I would like to visit the place where he grew up. I want to go now but it is not right because we do not have to show our passport to visit our topos.

> I feel I am a refugee because I did not experience the places in the north. I visited the north and I liked it. I would like to stay here and have another house there.

All the children stressed that they like Tahtakallas because they have many friends there and can play frequently together. This is actually the prime reason why they do not want to move away at all, and why they do not want to move to their parents' villages in the north. They would miss or lose their valued friendships. In addition, the children asserted that should they have to move to the north they would do so, but they would also return to visit Tahtakallas very often.

The children of Tahtakallas, both boys and girls, usually play football and other games, ride their bikes and gather together to talk. Tahtakallas, therefore, has become the place where these children can find their memories and their "self."

The relationship between space and children is strong as the former brings them together in a way that is important to them. Playing and socialising are important elements in the construction of the children's identity.

The strong relationship appears to be immune to the politics of memory as presented earlier in the study. The children learn a great deal about the Turkish invasion in 1974 and they actively engage themselves in anti-1974 activities. For example, in grade 4 they are required to make a small book full of photos from the north clarifying what the Turks did to the Greek-Cypriots. The title of the book is Gnorizo, dhen xehno kai ayonizome [I know, I do not forget and I struggle]. The book begins with the refugees, the destruction caused by the invasion, the dead and the missing persons. Then, it continues with the declaration of the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" and what it means. The book ends with a prayer to Apostle Andreas, the life of Makarios and the basic EOKA fighters. Children learn about the Turkish invasion and the Cyprus problem at both elementary school and high school. One might expect to see these children more likely to identify themselves with the north thus reducing the importance of the home-place of Tahtakallas. In effect, the exact opposite is true. When I asked the ten children to write down whatever they wished about Tahtakallas in an attempt to explore their spontaneous feelings, children wrote positive things about the area. Only three boys mentioned that there are many houses in Tahtakallas that are close to collapse, and two of these boys said that Tahtakallas is close to the Green Line, associating it indirectly with the Turkish invasion. However, two of them, when interviewed, said that they liked Tahtakallas and did not want to leave. The children who described Tahtakallas in positive terms utilised arguments such as:

> The neighbourhood is a place where many tourists visit and many married couples come here to be photographed. Also, there are three ancient churches and old houses.

> Our neighbourhood is very beautiful. Tourists and married couples come here. Also, there is a mosque here. There are many ancient things here. Many kids gather together and play.

> Tahtakallas is a neighbourhood in the old city of Nicosia. I will be sad when I will leave some day.

> If I have to leave one day I will be sad. I hope I will not have to.

It seems that the politics of memory has not really worked for the children of Tahtakallas in the sense that experiencing a place has been much stronger than teaching them that Tahtakallas is a Turkish neighbourhood where they are refugees who must fight for their return to the north. It is not so easy, however, to understand

the impact of the politics of memory, especially on some children as the case of Georgia reveals.

Georgia, aged nine years old, is the youngest participant of this study. When I asked her to tell me about her experiences in Tahtakallas and whether or not she likes the area, she expressed a similar attitude to that presented above. Interestingly enough, when she wrote about Tahtakallas she utilised reverse arguments. Here are her exact words:

> Turks used to live here in Tahtakallas. Here, there is a church of the Turks. I do not want to see it in front of me because they took half of our land. I do not like Tahtakallas much because Turks used to live here.

When Georgia talks about her experiences in Tahtakallas with other friends, she stresses that she likes the area a lot and does not want to move to the north. She, however, associates the name "Tahtakallas" as being that of a Turkish neighbourhood. This, together with the Turkish invasion, cements her negative feelings towards the area. This contradiction supports the previous argument that the politics of memory appear to be relatively ineffective when compared with the actual experiences of the children in Tahtakallas.

Conclusion: The Differential Embodiment of Home

The present paper has rigorously analysed Tahtakallas' refugees' experiences and attitudes towards the place and the home in particular. 'Home' is not a static term which has its own external reality acting like a fetish shaping people's attitudes. Instead, 'home' is a fluid term that is relative to time, generations, past and present experiences. Rapport and Dawson (1998, p. 9) assert that home reflects self knowledge and memory. Most of the older refugees in Tahtakallas do not like the area in which they currently reside because they cannot reaffirm their personal identity through self knowledge, community recognition and the sense of continuity. The reason this is so is because Tahtakallas does not reflect their past identity and experiences. However, in some cases where Tahtakallas reflects the older refugees' past experiences, Tahtakallas is seen as a second home probably because it has been perceived as a second context of the "self". This argument appears to apply to the next generation in Tahtakallas. It seems that those who have not experienced the north over a long period of time, and those children who have been born and raised in Tahtakallas, enjoy living in this area and identify themselves respectively with it. 'Home', therefore, pertains to the physical, social, and more importantly, imagined context where, what I call, "the personal-identity continuum" is preserved. It is a place that allows people to preserve continuity, not merely with the past as an epoch, but with the past 'self'. The past 'self' resembles

what Bourdieu (1992) calls "the habitus" which "whispers" to people imparting how they should behave in very specific 'fields' or contexts. This habitus functions as a psychological map which secures the individual in terms of his or her present and future intent.

The question here is why identity and the past are so strong that they cannot easily change when the fields change (in this case forced dislocation)? Arguably, people do not merely experience home or the community and the construction of their personal identity. 'Home' is embodied through the construction of personal identity. There are scholars who have stressed the importance of embodiment (Jenkins, 1996; Cohen, 1994) but such approaches appear to lack continuity. That is, if only embodiment is stressed, then there must be a threshold of internalisation that establishes the experience. Nonetheless, the existence of such a threshold would be a simplistic way of understanding the process of embodiment. I suggest here that what is crucially important and what eventually constructs people's personal identity is found in a twofold dialectic relationship. First, it is not the embodiment of home that counts most, but its constant re-embodiment within a series of social and physical contexts. Re-embodiment needs to be consistent in order to produce either positive or negative feelings. Secondly, embodiment and re-embodiment are not individual or structural processes. They are highly influenced by individual biological factors such as the role of the senses. For example, how is re-embodiment influenced by a vision that elicits memory when an older refugee in Tahtakallas sees a picture from his or her village in the north; listens to a song which he or she listened to in the north during the 1960s; touches an object that has been brought to the south; applauds his or her grandchild in a parade? Re-embodiment may occur every minute without a direct comparison between home in the south or the north, at an unconscious and imagined level, and the individual as a biological entity plays a role in how re-embodiment is shaped.

Nonetheless, this is not to say that constant re-embodiment only strengthens the sense of 'home' in the north. Re-embodiment may function to produce positive attitudes towards the south if the field in which it occurs reflects the habitus or individuals' current needs. For example, Anastasia feels that what currently matters for her is to have her children close by in order to have some company and be taken care of. In other words, perceptions of home change over time according to one's needs and current self reflection.

The embodiment and re-embodiment of home has been experienced by younger generations as well. The re-embodiment of home in this case includes Tahtakallas and not the north. The children's identity, therefore, has been constructed along with the place of Tahtakallas and as a result they identify themselves with this area. The re-embodiment of home, however, may differentiate

when for example, it occurs outside the context of Tahtakallas, such as when protesting against the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus', listening to grandparents' narratives about the north or watching a documentary about the Turkish invasion. In these contexts the feeling towards Tahtakallas as 'home' may weaken, but the embodiment and re-embodiment of Tahtakallas' space along with children's personal identity, is an everyday and powerful actual experience that makes it stronger than embodying knowledge and attitudes about the north.

Conclusively, 'refugeeness' is a fluid term. It means different things to different people and the way it is perceived directly relates to how 'home' is perceived, and has been experienced, in the past. Arguably, if 'home' is the place where the personal-identity continuum is preserved, then refugeeness is the physical, social and imagined place where this continuum is disrupted.

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Notes

1. This study was initiated within the context of Medvoices Project (www.med-voices.org) which is under the coordination of London Metropolitan University.
2. This paper has been generated from a Master of Sociology thesis (Intercollege, 2004), supervised by Dr. Peter Loizos and Dr. David Officer.
3. See appendix for more details on methodology.
4. Other cultural elements such food and music played their role.
5. These younger participants identify themselves with Tahtakallas because it has been the place where their identity has been constructed and is, therefore, full of memories.

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Appendix

Method and Procedure

The method followed in this study utilised semi-structured interviews[*] and observation. The purpose was to explore residents' attitudes towards Tahtakallas and how they experience and use space. Therefore, twenty-five people (twelve male and thirteen female), aged between nine and eighty-six years old were interviewed in May 2003, one month after the opening of the Green Line. The participants were grouped into four sociological categories based on age. Group 1 included those interviewees who had spent the greatest part of their lives in the north; those who became refugees at the age of forty to fifty and had children either in jobs, married or in late adolescence. Group 2 included those refugees who settled in the south at the age of twenty-five to thirty-five, single or just married with babies. Furthermore, Group 2 included four individuals who had no long-term experience of living in the north because they moved to the south when they were less than twelve years old. The youths aged sixteen to eighteen years old who were born in the south and spent the majority of their lives in Tahtakallas comprised Group 3. Finally, Group 4 included five children aged between nine and twelve years old who were born and raised in Tahtakallas.

The participants from Group 3 were asked very similar questions but some themes such as personal past experiences in the north were not applicable to them. The questions and the procedure employed to explore Group 4 differed. Initially, I visited Ayios Kasianos elementary school in the heart of Tahtakallas and asked ten students (five boys and five girls) between nine and twelve years of age, who were born in Tahtakallas and grew up there, to write a short essay. Basically, I asked each child to write down on a piece of paper whatever they wanted to in relation to Tahtakallas, as though they were describing the area to a friend who had not yet been there. The reason for this was to observe their spontaneous feelings and attitudes and to allow the children to express themselves freely without being shy to divulge things. Then, I selected five children and asked each of them key questions about their experiences in the area, for example:

a) whether or not they liked it there,
b) what would they change if they could, and
c) whether they would like to go and live in the places where their parents had come from.

These short interviews took place on different days, because it was necessary to obtain parental permission.

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[*]   The interviewees were firstly identified on a door-to-door basis and then through the snowball method.