"ONE LEG IN THE PAST, AND ONE LEG IN THE FUTURE": A SOCIETY IN TRANSITION

Gisela Welz

Abstract

Modernity is a contested topic in contemporary Cyprus. Against the backdrop of the accession course to the European Union and the impact of globalisation processes on economic, political and social life, public debates on the pace and direction of social change in Cyprus are intensifying today. Based on qualitative interviews with opinion leaders and decision makers from politics and the media, state institutions, academia, and non-governmental organisations, the article explores how historical legacies, the present political situation, and contemporary social experiences both strengthen and limit the ability of Greek-Cypriot society to define its own path to modernity. In this context, the article places special emphasis on the potential of civ-il society institutions to function as an arena of "moral communication".

Contestations of Modernity

Is Cyprus a modern society? For outside observers, there is no doubt that it is. As soon as they are leaving one of the two airports of the Republic of Cyprus, even the tourists are immediately confronted with the mobile phones of the taxi drivers, the cars of the newest make congesting the access road to the highway, and the oversize billboards advertising global fast foods of American origin. Any illusion that Cyprus may be an island untouched by the passing of time - even though this is what the promoters of tourism like to claim - quickly dissolves The Republic of Cyprus today fully measures up to all those criteria that supranational organisations have devised in order to determine whether a society is "developed" politically, eco- nomically, and socially. This is a prospering society, by measure of its high per-capi- ta income making the list of the twenty wealthiest nations on earth. The latest tech- nologies are readily adopted - according to one statistic, every third Cypriot uses a

computer. Furthermore, the citizens of this democratically ruled society are better educated than those of many other countries in the region and are considered to be highly mobile, both in terms of their desire for socio-economic advancement and their predilection for travelling abroad.

Further details of this "success story" could easily be supplied and documented by the pertinent annual statistics published by the Government's press and infor- mation office. But how do Cypriots themselves see their society? Surprisingly, it is difficult to find anyone willing to relate in a positive way to the statement that the Re- public of Cyprus is a modern society. This is because they either consider Cyprus as not yet truly modern, or, conversely, as far too modern already. Within the frame- work of our research,[1] a large number of those interviewed saw their society as still being on its way to or not yet having achieved modernity in the fullest sense of the word. Most often, by way of explanation, they referred to what they consider the im- mobility, inefficiency, and incompetency of institutions that obstruct knowledge transfer from abroad and block the development of new ideas and innovative ap- proaches within Cypriot society. The observation that clientelism and patronage still to a great extent pervade politics, the state and the economy is critiqued as anachronistic in a changing world. Others claim that a critical public culture and an intellectual arena of discourse are lacking and that the media are not responding to this challenge in any satisfactory way. Similarly, cultural life and cultural politics are often denigrated as being provincial and incestuous.

While these statements voice concern about Cyprus lagging behind a desired degree of modernisation, a different perspective emerges when the downside of the rapid transformation process that Cyprus has been experiencing during the past twenty years is brought to the fore. Increasing prosperity, so goes this line of argu- ment, has undermined core values of Cypriot tradition such as the moral integrity of the family and the willingness to extend hospitality. Influences from Western soci- eties that enter Cyprus by way of commodities, media, and tourism are considered to be endangering the youth of Cyprus - key words of polemics along these lines being drugs and Aids. Modernisation is also credited with being responsible for a perceived increase in motivations such as envy, avarice, and materialism among Cypriots - with older and established patterns of competition for status, that had been widespread before, being clearly forgotten in the rush to point out what is wrong with modern times. Furthermore, there are complaints that unchecked development motivated by the hope for quick and easy profit has led to an irreversible degradation of the natural environment.

These opinions shortly summarised here represent statements uttered by a wide range of persons interviewed, from politics, state institutions, academia, the media, the corporate world as well as non-governmental organisations.[2] While not all of

them qualified as belonging to an elite of decision makers or opinion leaders, all of those interviewed shared a concern with the future of their society and felt the need to critically comment on the direction and pace of its development.

Critiques of Modernisation

It is easy to be misled by the apparent opposition between those who bemoan the incomplete modernisation of Cyprus and those who are angered by what they perceive as the destruction of a uniquely Greek-Cypriot culture by the influence of Western values and institutions. These two positions do not correspond in any uncomplicated or unequivocal way with other dividing lines within Cypriot society, such as between urban and rural populations, or political orientations to the left or right. Nor do those two perspectives on the status of Cypriot modernity correlate in an obvious way with the disjuncture between those social actors who emphasise the Hellenic heritage of their culture and often are more reserved about a rapprochement with the North, and those who are hoping tor reconciliation and reunification with the Turkish Cypriots, a hope that frequently is combined with visions of Cyprus becoming again the multicultural and cosmopolitan hub of communications and exchanges in the Eastern Mediterranean that it once was. What cautions us most against seeing the embracing of modernisation and, conversely its critique of having gone "too far already", as two clearly delineated and separate attitudes is the fact that often they are uttered by the very same persons. The young Nicosia dentist who has been trained abroad,[3] receives his patients clad in blue jeans and Birkenstock san- dals and has decorated the walls of his office with original modern art. He is adamant about the ready adoption of the latest technologies by the young genera- tion and sees the mobile phone as the epitome of what is wrong with Cypriot soci- ety today, especially the increasing superficiality of communication. In another vein, a cultural scholar who writes editorials for a recently founded daily newspaper that is favoured by liberal cultural and business elites, states with some bitterness, "To- day, you are supposed to be a modern person, and close your eyes and accept all the bad things that are influences from Europe and the States. We are at a point in [the development of our civilisation] where we are just copying, we have no output ourselves."

In Cyprus today, those social actors who speak of modernity, modernism, and modernisation engage a contested terminology, attempting to position themselves and their society in a framework of transition processes that are global in scope. Their assessments of Cypriot modernity are not merely descriptive of the state their society is in, but prescriptive of its trajectory into the future: "Modernity" is chosen as a term and topic by those who are dissatisfied with the present state of affairs and want to affect change in their society. In Cypriot society, discussions centring on modernisation are intensifying at this point in time precisely because Cyprus is

establishing increasingly close links (some would add: relations of dependence) with Western Europe and the United States as a consequence of the ongoing process of accession to the European Union, and of globalisation, more generally. One could expect that in the near future, the further integration of Cyprus into transnational frameworks of various kinds will increase the extent to which interna- tional standards and regulations impact on the social and economic life of the Re- public.

However, it is important to realise that debates on how much modernisation Cyprus needs or, conversely, how its society can cope with it without losing its identity, are not the main concern of public discourse in the Republic. The Cyprus Problem and strategies for potentially resolving it are predominant in political discourse, and more, generally, in the public arena, to an extent that is often astonishing to outside observers. Moreover, this almost exclusive focus with the political situation is reiterated by much of the international social science literature on the contemporary situation of the island, thereby affording political science the position of being the key discipline for "explaining" Cyprus. Even Cypriot scholars who are not political scientists rarely address topics unrelated to the issue that is deemed pivotal to the survival of Greek Cypriot society.[4] There are also some who warn that the preoccupation with the political situation is binding so much of the intellectual energy of the country that there is hardly anything left over to meet other pressing challenges posed by the transformation of society.

The status quo of the de-facto partition in the aftermath of the 1974 Turkish invasion is to this day being precariously stabilised by an ongoing United Nations peacekeeping effort. Greek Cypriots reject this situation as unacceptable and unjust; the visions of a post-partition Cyprus that permeate social discourse, however, are as diverse as are the positions that map out the political landscape of the Republic. What unites them is that they mobilise central values of modernity without explicitly referring to them. They do so by appealing to international law, human rights, and the lawful protection of property rights - laws that have been broken by the occupying forces with the take-over of a large part of the island in 1974, the violent expulsion of its Greek Cypriot residents, and the attempt to install an illegal and consequently internationally non-recognised Turkish Cypriot state. It is the re-establishment of a lawful order that the government of the Republic, politicians from all sectors of the political spectrum, as well as the general public are demanding, asking the international community for support. Also, - and this argument mobilises genuinely modern values on another level - the sustained separation of the two main communities on the island by the impermeable Green Line is criticised on the grounds of a thoroughly modern morality by pointing to the inhumanity and utter lack of civility of the present situation which precludes mobility across the divide, and effectively prevents Greek and Turkish Cypriots from normal interaction. This is

argued most forcefully by the bi-communal movement that is working for re-establishing communication between people in both parts of the island as a step towards paving the way to a political solution.[5] Yet another aspect is brought to the fore when members of the successful Greek Cypriot business community demand the division to be overcome because to them it represents an outdated obstruction of the free movement of goods, capital, and labour in an otherwise increasingly trans-nationalised economic world.

Less frequently voiced - and if so, only within the framework of specialist discourses of historians or political scientists - is the diagnosis that the conflicts that have generated the Cyprus problem are without exception consequences of modernity. Colonialism made the communities that opposed it turn against each other, the nationalist ideologies of Greek and Turkish Cypriots fuelled these antagonisms, and last but not least the super powers exploited these differences while pursuing their own geo-strategic interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. These developments can be interpreted as effects of what British sociologist Anthony Giddens (1990) has labelled "the globalising of modernity".

Models of Social Change

An anthropological approach to the contemporary debates on modernisation in Greek-Cypriot society, will then have to inquire into the goals and purposes that discourses of modernity serve, into why these are coming to prominence today, and which social groups are engaged in making and keeping "modernity" a live topic of public debate. But let us now turn to a critical examination of what modernity is.

Unproblematic assumptions about what makes a society modern - such as the criteria introduced earlier on, namely economic prosperity, technological development, evidence of "good governance", and a highly educated populace - can no longer be credited with that degree of objectivity that was ascribed to them in the heyday of classical modernisation theory. The latter viewed sovereign statehood, bureaucratic administration, monetary exchange, generalisation of markets, economic growth, industrialisation, population growth, urbanisation, the secularisation of culture, the positive power of the law, and various other indicators as both agents and products of modernisation. This was interpreted as the inevitable outcome of a universal pattern of evolution that all societies would undergo on their way from the traditional to the modern world. Conversely, as Giddens (1990), among others, has emphasised, these indicators are anything but universal, and the process they are supposedly mapping is no linear progression towards an evenly balanced final destination that all societies will ultimately reach. Rather, these are values characteristic of a small group of societies in Europe and North America, who have developed them in a specific historical context and for some centuries have been engaged in

implementing them worldwide. Following this assessment, it becomes clear that modernity is not a neutral standard against which to measure the development status of individual societies, but rather an instrument of actively aligning them with these standards. Modernity is one of the "controlling processes" (Laura Nader, 1997) that are generated by global power relations and under gird them by inscribing inequalities into cultural and social life.

Criticism of classical modernisation theory that came to the fore in the 1970s and 1980s highlighted the fact that global modernisation - in spite of claiming to do so - has not made asymmetries in wealth and power between societies and regions disappear. Quite the contrary: the modern world system, so the critics contend, is based on the perpetuation of older inequalities and the creation of new ones that form the basis of the economic and political dominance of the core societies of Western modernity (see Taylor,1999). Employing this critical perspective, Cypriot anthropologist Vassos Argyrou, argues that the Western orientation of Greek Cypriots can take either the form of imitating European culture - as is evident in the enthusiastic adoption of Western commodities, practices, and ideas by the urban middle class - or of resistance, with the rural population and lower social strata rejecting this stance as put-on, superficial, and immoral (Argyrou, 1996). Neither attitude, however, Argyrou is quick to point out, achieves anything but the confirmation of an assumed inferiority of Cypriot society, as there is little chance of the West acknowledging a non-Western modernity as its equal. Embracing Western modernity, or else rejecting it, are but expressions of symbolic struggles for recognition that, according to Argyrou, are doomed to fail: "Through these struggles, Greek Cypriots express, enact, and inadvertently reproduce an historical experience of symbolic domination - the recognition that their cultural identity is inferior to that of the countries of Western Europe and North America." (Argyrou, 1996: 3) For post-colonial societies like Cyprus, modernisation is the name of a game that they cannot win and thus, a false objective: "The West is neither a destination to be reached nor an object to be appropriated. It is an historically constituted instrument of division (...) We will never be all the same because the symbolic instruments for defining sameness and difference - superiority and inferiority - have been historically monopolised by the countries of Western Europe and North America." (Argyrou, 1996: 157).

According to Argyrou, those social actors who believe that Cyprus is on its way to modernity and well able to achieve this goal have fallen victim to a dangerous illusion. Even when not agreeing with his assessment, one would be hard put not to acknowledge the fact that the majority of Greek Cypriots are convinced that their society is undergoing rapid change and that "modernisation" is the most apt term to describe this change. It would, however, be worthwhile to inquire further and find out what exactly they mean by this. None of the opinion leaders, decision makers, and experts interviewed in the course of our research had any doubts about the fact

that Cypriot society has transformed itself in the second half of the twentieth century. Among those interviewed, there is also widespread consensus that as a late- comer to modernisation, Cyprus has had to cope with radical changes in an ex- tremely short time-span. To illustrate this, the director of a regional development project surmises that Cyprus has been "going from agricultural society to con- sumerism without going through any of the processes in between." In this state- ment, some concern about the dizzying pace of change and its effects becomes ev- ident, as well. Many of the people interviewed mobilise the contrast between their own childhood, portrayed as a time ruled by poverty and the lack of modern ameni- ties, and the lifestyle of contemporary urbanites: 'We are talking about one lifetime in which we passed from a very traditional Mediterranean type of society to a quite modern society," states another interviewee who is a professional in the tertiary ed- ucation sector. Often, persons interviewed referred to their own biographies and to their family's history in order to create a vivid impression of what the speed of change actually meant, with the generation of one's parents - in the case of inter- viewees born before World War II - bearing the brunt of these transformations, pic- tured as embodying the strains of this process, with "one leg in the past, and one leg in the future."

The three-generations model of change that many of those interviewed em- ployed in their descriptions is suggestive of linear change. It also, however, man- ages to convey the coexistence of different times, as it were, within the same fam- ily, with individual family members representing different stages of the modernisa- tion process. Thereby, they point to a second trait - besides the rapidity of change - that characterises the Cypriot path to modernisation, namely the disjunctions and discontinuities it has generated. For one thing, these refer to the different "levels" of modernisation within society, that encompass the entire scale of orientations from traditional to modern: "There is a very wide gap in society. You have a very wide spectrum of people, of cultures - perhaps it is one culture! - but you start from the very basic village community with its own values, down to Nicosia and its more so- phisticated people," as a civil servant recently retired from a leading position in gov- ernment remarks.

Classical social theories of modernisation view this coexistence of differentially modernised life styles within a society and the resulting contrasts between modern urban life and the traditional rural village as a typical modernisation effect - as typ- ical of the so-called "cultural lag" diagnosed by the social sciences. When Greek- Cypriot social actors point out that cultural values and social relations have not kept pace with the changes in economic and technological development, they seem to be in agreement with this sociological assumption that cultural and social life is slower to change than other areas of society. "Superficially, we behave like the Eu- ropeans behave(...} The odd thing about Cyprus is that in economic terms we de-

veloped very rapidly in the last forty years. But at the same time, in terms of social concepts and values, there is a lot of confusion," a politician interviewed surmises.

Legacies of the Past

As sociological and anthropological studies on the pluralisation of modernities between various societies throughout the world suggest, modernisation never occurs in a vacuum, but engages the historical conditions it encounters and is refracted by them, producing a different type of modernity in each setting. Sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1995) propose that the cultural and social resources that individual societies bring to the modernisation process should be examined more closely. Cyprus is a post-colonial society where the effects of almost one century of British influence can still be felt even today in many sectors of society; while originating further back in the past, the legacy of Ottoman rule is also still pervading culture and society to some extent. What emerged in our interviews is that it is difficult for social actors in the Cypriot context to refer back to a "useable past" that may function as a resource for coping with modernity's challenges in a positive way. Some interviewees stressed that the many centuries of Ottoman rule are responsible for the late and ill-equipped launching of Cypriot modernity. Politi- cal scientist Niyazi Kizilyurek asserts that Cyprus has not been able to participate in the kind of modernisation process that European countries have undergone.[6] Two important aspects of European modernity - economic progress and the formation of the nation state - have been slow to take hold on the island and are not "home grown" in Cyprus. The philosophical influence of the Enlightenment has not been felt in Ottoman and post-Ottoman colonial Cyprus. Kizilyurek also argues that the impact of British colonialism and its contribution to Cypriot modernity remains a rather "muted" topic in the discourse on modernisation. Indeed, in our interviews, British colonial rule was rarely invoked, and if so, did not carry positive connota- tions.[7]

In the interviews conducted within the framework of our project, the invasion of 1974 was often also cited as a further cause for delayed modernisation, interpreted as an interruption of the trajectory towards modernity that the Republic of Cyprus had embarked on from its inception. However, the meaning of the events of 1974 for the modernisation of Greek-Cypriot society is more ambiguous. In the second half of the 1970s, the Republic of Cyprus experienced an unprecedented econom- ic comeback, dubbed "the Cyprus miracle" (Christodoulou, 1992). At the same time, however, Greek-Cypriot refugees from the occupied North had effectively been "proletarianised" by the loss of property and land at the hand of the invaders, and had to be integrated at great cost into the South's economy and housing market. Furthermore, important economic resources such as the tourist areas of Famagusta and Kyrenia had been lost; resulting in the need for developing new tourism des-

tinations in the coastal towns of the south (loannides and Apostolopoulos, 1999). To some extent, however, the crisis also acted as a catalyst, driving the restructur- ing of the economy and releasing innovative entrepreneurial potential. However, not only economically, but in terms of social and cultural modernisation effects, the meaning of the displacement and loss forced on the refugees is complex and not easy to gauge (Loizos, 1981). Among the people interviewed, some who them- selves were refugees, argue that the uprooting and unmooring from a traditional or- der of things that the displacement effected, actually set them free to become "mod- ern", while at the same time they blame the refugee experience for much of the lack of orientation and the instability that they claim to observe in Greek-Cypriot society today.

Solving the Cyprus problem remains the biggest task of Cypriot modernisation, and is seen by many as the stumbling block that has held it back. The post-1974 (some would say: post-Independence) siege mentality of Greek Cypriots[8] and the concurrent need for social consensus has been restricting opportunities for dissenting critiques of society. The continuing political insecurity and the persistent sense of military threat has been binding creative energies and cementing conservative attitudes that preclude risk-taking - at least in the political and social arena, though not necessarily where the economy is concerned. MP Katie Clerides who represents the ruling DISY party in parliament and is known within her party for outspoken criticism of closed-minded approaches to the problems facing Cypriot society, claims, "The preoccupation with the national problem - I should not say obsession, because we feel it is a matter of survival - has not left room for a social dialogue. How do we want to move forward? What is it that we need to do in order to become more European in terms of the ways we think and act, in terms of concepts rather than laws? We are not actually going through the process in terms of the mental work that needs to be done. Cyprus is such a small place, and it is basically a conservative society. It is very discouraging for people who have new ideas."

Centuries of foreign rule and a history of only four decades of sovereignty, marred by the shortcomings of the establishment of a bi-communal statehood upon independence, and the ensuing inter-communal conflicts culminating in the de-facto partition since 1974 - these, then, are the historical conditions that have shaped, and continue to shape, and in a sense, to delimit the path of Cypriot modernisation. The assessment is widespread that the modernisation of Greek-Cypriot society is as yet incomplete. Modernity is being defined by many as a goal that Cyprus has yet to achieve. The dominant figure of speech is that of a deficit or a deficiency. More recently, for instance, Cypriot society's bureaucracies and organisations are increasingly being criticised as inefficient and not functioning as modern institutions. In particular, movements and groups working for women's rights, for reconciliation of the two communities on the island, or for environmental conservation and sus-

tainable management of natural resources complain that the - as yet - incomplete rationalisation of administrative and political processes, the wide-spread social conservatism, and the weakness of civil society pose serious obstacles to implementing progressive policies that are firmly embedded in many Western societies. From the point of view of those demanding reforms, Cypriot modernity is as yet not fully functioning and needs to be taken quite a few steps further by emulating the structures observable in Western Europe in particular.

Images of Transition

Classical approaches to modernisation indicated that a certain amount of discontinuities in social change - such as the disparities in development between urban and rural areas - are signs of a transitional state between the traditional and the modern world. Much of what can be observed in Greek-Cypriot culture and society today seems, at first sight at least, to fall into this category of transitional phenomena, to be taken as ephemeral symptoms of an in-between state, no longer traditional, but not yet modern. To be in-between is in itself an important cultural topic in Greek-Cypriot society. Not only do the interviewees consider Cyprus to be hovering in the indeterminate area between the pre-modern and the modern, but also, contemporary discourses on geopolitics and European integration never fail to point out that Cyprus is positioned between regions and continents, affording it a privileged position as a link and bridge between Europe and the Middle East. With its not-yet resolved conflict, Cyprus also of course appears precariously poised between military conflict and peaceful coexistence - a transitional state that generates a social imagery positioning Cyprus between civilisation and the threat of barbarism.[9]

Images of transition, then, are prevalent in social discourse. Within the context of social change, this transition is interpreted as leaving the traditional order behind and replacing it with the patterns of the modern world. However, many of the con- flicts erupting today in Cypriot society do not occur in some battleground between the advancing forces of modernity and those of tradition retreating. Rather, they are thoroughly modern conflicts. Increasing environmental degradation and irresponsible management of natural resources, for instance, is - in a grimly ironic way - evidence for the fact that Cyprus is a modern society. The tourism sector of the economy, in particular, with its strategy of rapid expansion is threatening to destroy the last remaining stretches of as yet undeveloped coastal areas.[10] While entrepreneurs follow a modern logic of growth, claiming that "more is more", non-governmental organisations and civic groups who are protesting against these developments and demand the protection of the natural environment also are taking a modern stance, albeit a different one. German sociologist Ulrich Beck (1986) distinguishes between an older mode of modernisation as "progress", based on the belief that industrialisation and the world-wide application of science and technology

will ultimately bring prosperity to all, and a more recent modernist perspective that recognises that most of the problems that humanity is faced with today are consequences of the application of this notion of progress. Beck calls this second mode of modernisation "reflexive" in that it makes modernity turn back on itself and critically reflect its own effects. Environmentalists who argue that not short-term economic profit, but the sustainable management of the island's environmental capital, should guide policies of tourism development, seem to adhere to that second mode of reflexive modernisation.[11] This and other instances of conflict, then, are no longer the outcome of a competition between traditional and modern values, but emerge from the internal contradictions of a full-blown modernity.

Reflexive Modernisation and Civil Society

The proliferation of social movements, civic groups, and NGOs that have sprung up in Cyprus in recent years - particularly in the women's movement, bi-communal activities, and environmental groups - point to a strengthening of this reflexive impetus, and the desire to achieve a society that fulfils the modern promises of social justice, peace, and the protection of natural resources for future generations. These groups are also introducing new forms of political culture into society and constitute an arena for discussions on the direction of societal change. Cypriot sociologist Nicos Peristianis, who in public statements often links current issues in Cypriot so- ciety to the upheavals of modernisation and globalisation, views these groups as evidence for a strengthening of a civil society that Cyprus had not developed so far due to the clientelistic underpinnings of social institutions: "In a patron-client type of society, you have a tremendous growth of the state, but you do not have interme- diate institutions, formations that mediate between the individual and society." So- called intermediary institutions are those institutions below and beyond those of the state such as social movements, trade unions, the media as well as cultural and ed- ucational institutions. Political scientists attribute to them the capacity to safeguard democracy because they curb the arbitrary and abusive wielding of power by the state. More recently, sociologists also draw attention to the potential of intermediary institutions as agents of producing values and meanings that help the individual to make sense of social reality. Intermediary institutions create social cohesion and at the same time, serve as power points for the transformation of societies. As Ger- man sociologist Thomas Luckmann (1998) puts it, they are catalysts for social change precisely because they are able to aggregate the concerns of individuals and communicate them to larger social contexts. He points out that in modern societies, personal identities and moral values "are less obviously and not so strongly determined by social institutions" (1998:35). Conversely, in pre-modern societies, "the things a collective takes for granted were firmly anchored in homogeneous so- cial milieus" and were "safeguarded by the norms of social institutions" that - ac- cording to Luckmann - emerged from actual social practices and were in turn legit-

imated by them. In modern societies, with their tendency towards individualisation and social fragmentation, there is a pluralisation of social milieus and normative frameworks, and a weakening of the power of society-wide institutions to provide authoritative guidelines for conduct and plausible readings of the meaning of social reality. Thomas Luckmann and Peter Berger[12] suggest that intermediary institutions step in here, providing an arena for "moral communication" that allows people to work out values and moralities that will give them orientation in a changing world (Berger and Luckmann, 1995).

The critiques of .modernity and modernisation recorded in the course of our research are evidence of instances of "moral communication" that respond to a pluralisation of values and lifestyles observable in contemporary Cypriot society today. This is a recent phenomenon; the dominant system of values had insulated itself successfully, if not wholly intentionally against change well into the 1990s. During much of the process of social change initiated in the 1950s, the Church of Cyprus had successfully sustained its role as the exclusive authority on ethics, inscribing its morality into the very fabric of gender relations, of the institution of the family, and of the practices of everyday life. However, the moral authority of the Church is wan- ing today, as socio-economic change both generates and demands the secularisa- tion of society. Another factor contributing to the persistence of conservative values is the,fact that after 1974, Greek-Cypriot society bonded around the trauma of the invasion and the prevailing political insecurity, with all social groups striving for a "maximum possible consensus" (Christodoulou, 1992: 278). Today, new social movements centring on the environment, on women's rights, and on the rapprochement between Greek and Turkish Cypriots increasingly serve as intermediary institutions that initiate and drive moral communication in Cypriot society. However, we need to be cautious about viewing them as testing grounds for new value orientations, as many of them - whether by conviction or for pragmatic reasons - do not constitute a radical break with the prevailing value consensus in society. Yet, it is beyond doubt that their critiques of modernisation - not fully achieved or, conversely, gone too far - have the potential to function as a starting point for working out a uniquely Cypriot modernity. Such a modernity would not just accidentally depart from Western precedents and models - in terms of not measuring up with its ideal standards, - but set itself apart intentionally.

Is Cyprus Becoming "Westernised"?

More recent findings from sociology and from social and cultural anthropology suggest that modernisation processes in each society meet with particular, historically generated conditions (Eisenstadt, 2000). This does not only mean that the transition from traditional to modern structures proceeds at a different pace - including delays, setbacks, and detours - in each case, but also, that the end results

of the transition will be different in each society. The modernity of one society is not like the modernity of any other. While this diagnosis has been reached primarily when looking at social change in non-Western societies, it would be erroneous to assume that this does not apply to the societies of Western modernity's core as well. Indeed, social historians and anthropologists have never ceased to point out that there are important differences between the modern everyday cultures and mentalities of Western European societies. The term "the modern European society" represents an abstract concept that has no equivalent in empirical reality. Rather, what we are witnessing today is a multiplicity of options to live modern lives and develop modern attitudes towards the world. Accordingly, in recent years, anthropologists have become more cautious about positing a homogenised world culture as the outcome of modernisation. Instead, they are suggesting that modernisation results in both sameness and diversity, setting in motion a contradictory dynamic of differentiation and homogenisation. The increase in interactions and exchanges between societies that is both the product and the root of modernisation does not only assimilate cultures to each other, but also acts as a catalyst for the production of new types of difference and differentiation that may not necessarily be co-terminous with the boundaries of nation states, but more often than not, cross and transcend them in a myriad of ways. In an important way, this points to the fact that cultural difference is not merely a relic of pre-modern times. What is unique about a society and culture may not be left over from tradition, but could well be the outcome of its grappling with the recent challenges of modernisation. It is of course true that the global diffusion of modern institutions - bureaucratic statehood, formalised transfers of knowledge, mass media and telecommunications, industrial-ism, and a military apparatus,[13] that accompanies the globalisation of the economy, has a strong impact on all societies. It would be wrong, however, to assume that the effects of this are the same everywhere: "As the civilisation of modernity enters into contact with other cultures, changes and refractions result, so that one may see it alternatively as an increasingly internally diverse civilisation or as multiple moder- nities," suggests Swedish social anthropologist Ult Hannerz.

There is a problem, then, with those understandings of the modernisation process that expect its outcome to be the same everywhere and explain difference and diversity as mere left-overs from earlier times, bound to disappear the very mo- ment full-blown modernity is established. Such a view cannot acknowledge discontinuities and disjunctions as having a status and quality of their own that is not transitional but more lasting and stable. Nor can it accept them as anything other than stations or stagnations on a path leading to an imagined ideal of modernity, identified with the West. In Cyprus, that which is culturally and socially specific to Cyprus, its modes of everyday life, types of social relations, symbolic practices and collective memories are generally understood to be an expression, or rather, a relic, of a pre-modern culture. Subsequently, it is expected - and anticipated with considerable

excitement by some, or fear by others - that its particularities will disappear once Cyprus has successfully completed the metamorphosis of becoming a thoroughly modern society. This scenario of Cyprus becoming "Westernised", indistinguishable from other European societies, is a pervasive trope of public discourse and can eas- ily be backed up by first-hand observations. On a Saturday morning along Nicosia's Makarios Avenue, the fashionably dressed young adults thronging the lifeline of the capital's shopping district or sitting at the tables of its sidewalk cafes seem indeed indistinguishable from their peers in Rome, Berlin or London. Still, their values and aspirations in many cases are very different - and indeed also not quite identical with those of their generation in Beirut, Tel Aviv, Athens, or Istanbul. A manager of a leading consultancy and market research firm that has its headquarters in Nicosia surmises that "there is a lot of mimetism, of copying without assimilating" and goes on to say that if you would ask the young people about their attitudes towards gen- der roles, these would tend to be very much like those of the generation of their par- ents. So, while it is true that much surface homogenisation has taken place, espe- cially in terms of the transnational commodities and media products that are being consumed, the practices into which these imports are being embedded grow out of and feed into a specific, historically shaped social life.

Cypriot Modernity

What makes the Cypriot way of leading modern lives and holding modern atti- tudes towards the world unique is in how it engages tradition. I would insist, how- ever, that tradition is both something more, and less, than the notion of the cultural heritage of a people handed down unchanged through the ages, recognisable as a clearly defined set of customs and beliefs. Traditions are not encapsulated in old artefacts, but emerge from everyday routines and attitudes that underlie the social relations of people. Traditions cannot be found in museums, but are reflected in and created by the social experience of people past and present. Tradition, then, is both the essence of collective memory and the fabric of contemporary social life. Tradi- tion is local in that its emergence requires an actual locus in space and time where people communicate with each other, creating, transmitting, and modifying a com- mon culture. The localised nature of tradition also suggests that traditions are shaped by the specific, historically generated political, social, economic, and envi- ronmental conditions under which people live. In the case of Cyprus, these condi- tions imply both an openness to the world and the introverted, parochial nature of a small society. Contradictory as these may seem, both traits - or traditions - con- tribute in an important way to what makes Greek-Cypriot society modern these days.

Openness to the World

It is often said that Cyprus has for millennia been situated at the crossroads of

multiple cultural influences and confluences. Centuries of foreign rule imply a long history of inter-cultural contacts. Most recently, the rhetoric of the business community priming Cyprus for becoming the "regional communications and trade hub" in the Eastern Mediterranean emphasises this historically inherited openness to the world and makes much of the ability of Cypriot people to integrate these influences productively into the fabric of their culture. Interestingly enough, the experience of living in the multi-lingual and multi-religious society that Cyprus once was and hopefully will become again is less often mentioned as a type of social capital - perhaps because it has not produced a culture of tolerance that would extend acceptance to non-Cypriot social or cultural Others. The openness to the world that characterises Greek-Cypriot society today is also the effect of mobility, of Cypriots emigrating, living in the diaspora scattered over the English-speaking world and Greece, but also in other European countries, and later coming back to the island. Up until the 1990s, there were very limited opportunities for tertiary education in the Republic of Cyprus, necessitating young Cypriots without exception to go abroad for academic training. Many - but not all - returned to embark on a professional career in Cyprus. Christos Eliades, the president of an NGO safeguarding the rights of medical pa- tients who himself was trained as an urban planner and sociologist in France, views this group of repatriated university graduates as an important force in the moderni- sation of Greek-Cypriot society: "They are the ambassadors of new ideas, of change - by virtue of having been exposed to different mentalities, to a different way of life." Many of those interviewed in the course of our research had also spent years of their lives abroad. In the interviews, this biographical experience emerges as an impetus for criticism in a twofold way. On the one hand, many express the wish that the institutions in their society would function more like those in the United States, Great Britain, Germany or wherever else they lived as students and of- ten as professionals as well. In this sense, the social experience of emigration and return migration seems to fuel a demand for Cypriot society becoming 'Westernised" in the sense of an increase in efficiency, transparency, and rationality. On the other hand, however, the very same experience of living abroad also prompts them to utter an often harsh criticism of the quality of social relations - or rather, the lack of it - in their host societies which they perceive as impersonal, anonymous, highly individualised and superficial. This criticism has to be understood against the back·drop of that other set of traditions making Cypriot modernity unique: the way in which social relations are shaped by the smallness of Greek-Cypriot society.

A Densely Networked Social System

The Republic of Cyprus today is a densely networked social system, linking villagers with urbanites, expatriate Cypriots with those living on the island. Kinship ties and the bonds of co-villagers often crosscut social class barriers and serve as the underpinning of patron-client relations.[14] This clearly represents a "social capital"

hailed by contemporary theory in economics as a resource that makes small societies competitive in a globalised world (Musyck and Reid, 2000). The downside of the parochial nature of society is an intense social control, even in the urban con- text, with not only the individual being held accountable for her or his actions by public opinion, but these also reflecting back on family and kin. Interpersonal con- tact and communication remains primary even after the advent of television with much leisure time dedicated to commensality, to eating and drinking in the circle of family or friends. With Cyprus being a small island, the short geographical dis- tances, now even more easily bridged by car on a modern road and highway sys- tem, seem to facilitate this cultural predilection, in much the same way as the ad- vent of the latest telecommunications technologies - mobile phones and internet - does not so much replace face-to-face communication as feed into it. Words like "warmth", "spontaneity", "hospitality", "solidarity" only partially capture an attitude that is also extended to foreign tourists and non-Cypriot guests - albeit not to mi- grant workers from Third World countries. In our interviews, many people were at a loss to find terms to describe the immediacy of social contact and the high degree of social accessibility that characterises Cypriot society. Anna Marangou, an ar- chaeologist whose newspaper columns on current issues in culture and society re- ceive much public attention, put it most succinctly by emphasising, "our culture is not about the commercialisation of the human being."

Conclusion

Cypriot modernity is produced by an interplay between the local and the global. The cultural uniqueness of Cyprus is not merely a residual category of modernisa- tion, something that is bound to disappear, but rather a resource that can be utilised to actively shape modernity on the island. The collective memories and contemporary social experiences of Cypriots have the potential to empower them to take charge of the modernisation process and define its outcome, to have a say in how and to what end they want Cyprus to modernise.

Notes

1. In 1999, the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and European Ethnology of Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany conducted a research project on "Cyprus: Contemporary Culture and Society", addressing issues of modernisation and European integration and focussing on the emergence of civil society in the Republic of Cyprus. Funding was provided by the Ger- man Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and Goethe University Frankfurt. We wish to thank Intercollege Nicosia, the University of Cyprus, the Cyprus American Archaeological Re- search Institute and the Cyprus Conservation Foundation for their support of the research un- dertaken in November 1999. Information on the project is available at www.rz.uni-frankfurt.de/FB/fb09/ku1turanthro/e/projects/cyprus/intro.html

2. Close to one hundred interviews took place in the context of a two-week stay in Cyprus with a group of ten students and Ph.D. candidates in November 1999 under the direction of the author. Other interviews as well as more informal talks were conducted by the author during five additional visits to Cyprus between 1998 and 2000.

3. Members of the medical professions without exception have received their training abroad as the young University of Cyprus does not have - and will not in the foreseeable future - have a medical school.

4. Other topics for social research could also include emigration and immigration, tourism, consumer culture, the management of natural resources, the role of media in society, health care, the educational system, tourism, as well as the emergence of civil society.

5. See Amelang, forthcoming, as well as Schulze, forthcoming.

6. See Kizilyürek 1993, Kizilyürek 1998.

7. Zervakis (1998) and Faustmann (1998), however, assert that the reform projects that the British colonial administration initiated early on - even though they were not implement- ed until much later, starting in the 1930s - have indeed contributed to the modernisation of Cypriot society.

8. See Mavratsas 1995, Mavratsas 1998.

9. There are transitional social groups as well in Greek-Cypriot society. The large population segment of refugees from the occupied North embodies an in-between situation in a poignant way: They have managed to build up a new life in the south, but at the same time feel strongly connected to their lost homes in the north and hope for the opportunity to return.

10. The Akamas peninsula, one of the last wilderness areas of Cyprus containing sensi- tive coastal ecosystems and the habitats of rare species, was designated to become a na- tional park. In March 2000, however, the Cyprus government passed a decision to allow for tourism development in this area. See Baga, forthcoming.

11. For an application of this theoretical approach to an analysis of the Cyprus water management crisis, see Weber, forthcoming.

12. The team Berger/Luckmann is best known as authors of the book "The Social Construction of Reality" (1996). Quotations from Berger/Luckmann 1995 translated from German by the author.

13. These are the institutional dimensions of modernity listed by Anthony Giddens (1990).

14. Community studies in Cyprus conducted by anthropologists and sociologists have emphasised this quality, enabling social actors to cope with the challenges of modernisation successfully while remaining embedded in and actively utilising a "traditional" system of social relations. See Loizos 1975; Markides et al. 1978.

Bibliography

Amelang, K. (forthcoming) "'The only one that crosses the barriers" Grenzüberschreitende Kommunikation auf einer zypriotischen Mailingliste', in Welz, G. and llyes, P. (eds.) *Zypern. Gesellschaftliche Öffnung, europäische Integration, Globalisierung.* Frankfurt, Kulturanthropologie Notizen.

Argyrou, V. (1996) *Tradition and Modernity in the Mediterranean. The wedding as symbolic struggle.* Cambridge/London, Cambridge University Press.

Baga, E. (forthcoming) "'Lunatics, lesbians, and spies" Zypriotische Umweltschützer im Kontext einer sich schnell modernisierenden Gesellschaft', in Welz, G. and llyes, P. (eds.) *Zype rn. Gesellschaftliche Öffnung, europäische Integration, Globalisierung.* Frankfurt, Kulturanthropologie Notizen.

Beck, U. (1986) *Risikogesellschaft. Andere in die Moderne.* Frankfurt A.M., Suhrkamp.

Berger, P. and Luckmann, Th. (1995) *Modernität, Pluralismus und Sinnkrise.* Gütersloh, Verlag Bertelsmann Stiftung.

Christodoulou, D. (1992) *Inside the Cyprus Miracle. The Labours of an Embattled Mini-Economy.* Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

Eisenstadt, S. E. (2000} *Die Vielfältigkeit der Moderne.* Weilerswist, Velbrück.

Faustmann, H. (1998) 'Clientelism in the Greek Cypriot Community of Cyprus under British Rule'. *The Cyprus Review,* Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 41.

Giddens, A. (1990) *The Consequences of Modernity.* Stanford, Stanford University Press.

Hannerz, U. (1996) *Transnational Connections. Culture, People, Places.* London/New York, Routledge.

loannides, D. and Apostolopoulos, Y. (1999) 'Political Instability, War, and Tourism in Cyprus: Effects, Management, and Prospects for Recovery'. *Journal of Travel Research,* Vol. 38, p. 51.

Kizilyürek, N. (1993) 'From Traditionalism to Nationalism and beyond'. *The Cyprus Review,* Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 58.

Kizilyürek, N. (1998) 'Sozialstruktur', in: Grothusen, K.-D., Steffani, W. and Zervakis, P. (eds.) *Südosteuropa-Handbuch Band B Zypern.* Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Loizos, P. (1981) *The Heart Grown Bitter: A chronicle of Cypriot war refugees.* Cambridge/London, Cambridge University Press.

Loizos, P. (1975) *The Greek Gift: Politics in a Cypriot Village.* Oxford, Basil Blackwell.

Luckmann, Th. (1998} 'Gesellschaftliche Bedingungen geistiger Orientierung', in Luckmann, Th. (ed.) *Moral im Alltag. Sinnvermittlung und moralische Kommunikation in intermediären Institutionen.* Gütersloh, Verlag Bertelsmann Stittung.

Markides, K. C., Nikita, E. S. and Rangou, E. N. (1978) *Lysi. Social Change in a Cypriot village.* Nicosia, Publications of the Social Science Research Centre.

Mavratsas, C. (1998) 'Greek-Cypriot Political Culture and the Prospect of European Union Membership: A Worst-Case Scenario'. *The Cyprus Review,* Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 67.

Mavratsas, C. (1995) 'Greece, Cyprus and Greek America: Comparative Issues in Rationalization, Embourgeoisement, and the Modernization of Consciousness'. *Modern Greek Stud- ies Yearbook,* Vol. 10/11, p. 139.

Musyck, B. and Reid, **A.** (2000) **'A** Regional Innovation Strategy for Cyprus'. *The Cyprus Review,* Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 83.

Nader, L. (1997) 'Controlling Processes. Tracing the Dynamic Components of Power'. *Cur- rent Anthropology,* Vol. 18, No. 5, p. 711.

Peristianis, N. (1998) 'A Federal Cyprus in a Federal Europe'. *The Cyprus Review,* Vol. 10, No.1, p. 33.

Schulze, N. (forthcoming) '"Cracks in the Walls" Bikommunale Aktivitaten und friedensstif- tende Maßnahmen auf Zypern', in Welz, G. and !lyes, P. (eds.) *Zypern. Gesellschaftliche Öff- nung, europäische Integration, Globalisierung .* Frankfurt, Kulturanthropologie Notizen.

Taylor, P. J. (1999) *Modernities. A Geohistorical Interpretation.* Minneapolis University of

Minnesota Press.

Weber, A. (forthcoming) '"A Second Cyprus Problem" Wasserknappheit und Ressourcenverhalten auf Zypern', in Welz, G. and llyes, P. (ed s.) *Zypern. Gesellschaftliche Öffnung, europäische Integration, Globalisierung.* Frankfurt, Kulturanthropologie Notizen.

Zervakis, P. (1998) 'Historische Grundlagen', in Grothusen, K.-D., Steffani, W. and Zervakis, P. (eds.) *Südosteuropa-Handbuch Band 8 Zypern.* Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.