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How collective narratives of trauma influence the peacebuilding process in Cyprus

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How collective narratives of trauma influence the peacebuilding process in Cyprus

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THESIS

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Lastly, I would like to say that I am proud of writing this thesis, as the topic is very close to my heart. Having spent my early childhood in Cyprus, with friends and family living there, it has become very clear to me how the conflict and the connected traumas influence everyday life. Therefore, it was important to me to learn as much as possible about it. For the last two years, starting with my Bachelor's thesis, I have written every assignment I was allowed to on the conflict, to learn as much as possible, which has culminated in the time I spent in Cyprus researching, and ultimately, this thesis.

I hope that after reading my Master's thesis, your interest in the conflict might be sparked.

Most importantly, I hope that one day the conflict will be solved and that everyone can live together on the island in peace.

Abstract

For the last 60 years, peace has been absent in Cyprus. After the conflict between Greek- and Turkish Cypriots turned violent, a UN peacekeeping mission was established to appease the fighting. It was successful in maintaining the absence of violence since 1974, but since then, the conflict is protracted, as negotiations between the communities to find a solution have repeatedly failed. By answering the research question *How do collective narratives of trauma influence the Cyprus peacebuilding process?*, this thesis argues that the current peacebuilding approach in Cyprus, which focuses on finding a political solution, is ineffective, as the primary reason why the process fails are the underlying collective narratives of trauma, which have yet to be extensively considered by the relevant actors within to the peacebuilding process. Rather than attempting to heal the collective traumas, the political leaders politicise and actively perpetuate them to serve their political goals, which in turn perpetuates the conflict. I argue that only through an approach designed to account for the collective trauma, the conflict can overcome its protractedness, which this thesis lays the groundwork for, by firstly, establishing which collective narratives of trauma exist, and secondly, by analysing how peacebuilders engage with the narratives.

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Introduction

For the past 60 years, the peacekeeping mission United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) has been stationed in Cyprus which has the last divided capital of the world. The mission was created following a violent conflict between the Greek- and Turkish Cypriot communities that broke out shortly after the island's independence from Great Britain¹. Initially, UNFICYP's goal was to prevent further violence and the recurrence of intercommunal fighting. Once that was achieved, its mandate expanded to maintain the ceasefire. The Chief of Mission, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General's (SRSG) in Cyprus, assists the conflicting parties to reach a comprehensive settlement of the ethno-territorial conflict that separates the island². Attempts to solve the protracted conflict politically have not been successful so far, hence the mission is still stationed on the island.

The underlying conflict between the communities escalated due to the struggle for independence from the British colonisers, as Greek Cypriots wanted *enosis*, union with Greece, and Turkish Cypriots wanted *taksim* in response, a partition of the island³. The conflict escalated to the point that the communities attempted to ethnically cleanse and displace the other community from their surroundings. Therefore, the South is inhabited by Greek Cypriots and the North by Turkish Cypriots⁴. Between the North and the South is the UN buffer zone, a demilitarized area which covers three per cent of the island and is patrolled by UNFICYP⁵.

Decades of partition, media propaganda, school education and storytelling by family members keep the narratives of the evil other side alive. For the Greek Cypriot population, the fear of Turkey marching in like in 1974 and annexing the rest of the island is still alive⁶; in the same vein, Turkish Cypriots feel threatened by potential Greek Cypriot oppression if the conflict becomes solved and communities coexist again⁷. The trauma, which is ingrained in the communities' discourses and, by extension, in its leaders' narratives, has not been sufficiently addressed throughout the peacebuilding process, as the narratives are still being taught in school, and are consistently mentioned in the media⁸.

¹ Tocci, 2007

² UN, 1996

³ Tocci, 2007

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ UN, 1996

⁶ Psaltis, 2016

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Papadakis, 2008

Recently emerging academic literature investigates the role of collective trauma in political conflicts. It indicates that collective trauma shapes the way actors interpret the self and the other, which affects the way a collective reconciles, rehabilitates, and recovers⁹. Particularly in identity-based conflicts, such as the Cyprus conflict, it can be beneficial to consider the role collective trauma plays in shaping the peacebuilding process. As collective trauma has not been considered for the Cyprus conflict at the heart of an alternative peacebuilding approach yet, this thesis explores the trauma-informed peacebuilding approach¹⁰.

Therefore, this thesis will investigate the research question

How do collective narratives of trauma influence the Cyprus peacebuilding process?

Two sub-questions guide the analysis.

- 1) *What are the key narratives of trauma in the Cypriot communities?*
- 2) *How do they influence the work of local peacebuilding initiatives?*

To answer the first sub-question, I analyse ethnographic documentation, a film documentary and academic literature. To answer the second sub-question, I analyse interviews with peacebuilders of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and an International Organisation (IO) to understand why and how they engage with collective narratives of trauma through their activities on a local level. Overall, this thesis investigates the perpetuation of collective narratives of trauma within the Cyprus conflict by peacebuilders, by analysing whether their interactions with the trauma narratives stabilise their meaning or inspire a fluctuation.

To research this topic, I spent seven weeks in Cyprus conducting fieldwork, in Nicosia close to the buffer zone, and Limassol in the South of the island. During my time in Nicosia, I conducted a research internship at the Peace Research Institute of Oslo's (PRIO) Cyprus Centre to support my research. I crossed the border regularly and spent some time in the northern part of the island, visited NGOs in the UN buffer zone, and attended events organised by peacebuilders. Furthermore, I spoke to members of different communities, to get a better understanding of their reality and how it feels like to be confronted with the conflict in everyday life. The tangible

⁹ Lerner, 2022

¹⁰ Koh, 2021

result of my fieldwork is a significant number of interviews with peacebuilders, which form the main data body of the analysis.

I conclude that in their engagement with the narratives, peacebuilders try to destabilize the narratives of prejudice, racism and distrust towards the other side by offering the local population knowledge and experiences that make them question their beliefs based on the collective narratives. In contrast, they try to strengthen an emerging narrative. They argue that similarities exist between the communities, such as the pain and loss that they both endured, and show that this is something that can be worked through together rather than against each other. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that peacebuilders try to establish a new narrative that claims that Cypriots from both sides of the island can and do cooperate successfully. Hence, cooperation is possible if desired, an outcome that counters dominant narratives. The perpetuation of the new narrative can set an example for the rest of the island, therefore peacebuilders try to establish that “life also exists between the borders”¹¹.

The conducted research shows that the collective narratives of trauma are the primary reason for the stalling of the peace process, as politicians politicise the hurt and anger of the population for their short-term electoral benefit rather than trying to bring their communities peace. Connectedly, my thesis shows that only through engaging the broader population, the narratives can be broken and replaced by narratives that support inter-communal cooperation, and hence, peace.

The conflict must become resolved, as the traumas of Cypriots may not heal, since they are kept alive through education, propaganda, and media¹². The witness generation is growing old, and if it dies before the conflict is resolved, research suggests that the conflict becomes even harder to resolve¹³. As the classic attempt of achieving a top-down political solution to the conflict does not seem successful¹⁴, and as it is time-sensitive to find a solution to the conflict, this thesis argues that peacebuilders must choose an approach that resolves the conflict as soon as possible. If found to be effective, this approach could be applied to other protracted ethno-territorial conflicts¹⁵.

¹¹ Interview: Manager, Home for Cooperation, 24.05.2022, online

¹² Papadakis, 2005

¹³ Lev-Wiesel, 2007; Maffini & Pham, 2016

¹⁴ Herta, 2012.

¹⁵ Kolliarakis, 2015

Additionally, the research has academic relevance. Existing research on the conflict primarily focuses on the peacebuilding process between the political elites, their failures and how these failures can be overcome¹⁶. As academic literature has not sufficiently explored alternative approaches to solving the Cyprus conflict, this thesis will firstly, add to the emerging literature on the relevance of collective trauma in political conflicts, and secondly, it will fill the gap of research on alternative approaches as far as the solution of the Cyprus conflict is concerned. To do so, this study will build a base for a potential trauma-informed peace process in Cyprus by investigating how peacebuilders engage with collective narratives of trauma in the conflict, to understand how the dominant narratives of collective trauma that perpetuate the protraction can be destabilized to further the peacebuilding process.

This thesis is structured in the following way: after this introduction, chapter one provides the literature review which establishes the conceptual framework of the research. Chapter two explains the research design, which includes the scope of the research, case justification, data collection and analysis methods, and how I ensure validity. Following these, chapter three introduces relevant historical events. Chapter four provides insight into the role of IOs and NGOs throughout the peacebuilding process. Chapter five shows the conflict's collective narratives of trauma, which are crucial for the analysis in chapter six. It firstly introduces the conflicting dominant narratives on the most relevant topics for this thesis and, secondly, shows how the narratives are perpetuated through formal education. Chapter six consists of the analysis of seven interviews I conducted with peacebuilders from NGOs and an IO. Finally, the conclusion attempts to provide a clear answer to the research question, while reflecting on its implications, identifying the strengths and weaknesses, and the potentially relevant future research.

¹⁶ Aksu, 2003; Birgisson, 1993; Diez, 2002; Herta, 2012

Chapter One: Literature review

The literature review situates my thesis within the academic literature, by showing where gaps exist in the academic context, which the present study attempts to fill. It consists of three parts. First, it provides an overview of the current literature on the failings of solving protracted conflicts via dominant peacebuilding approaches through the example of the Cyprus conflict and demonstrates that a new approach is vital for further enhancing the peace-making process. The second section introduces a different approach to the dominant peacebuilding approach, focusing on collective trauma and its relevance within the political sphere. It introduces the concepts of *complex cultural trauma* and *collective trauma* as a multilevel crisis in representation, which is the type of trauma relevant for the analysis. Lastly, section three shows, in a more specific way, the value of focusing on collective trauma within political conflicts. Furthermore, it introduces the narrative identity approach, which will be applied to the analysis, by checking for stabilisation or fluctuation from existing narratives. The latter section will introduce the trauma-informed peace process, which might be effective in solving protracted conflicts, and to which, as argued in this study, my research offers a basis.

1.1 Status quo on overcoming protracted conflicts, and the Cyprus Conflict

The following section provides insights into the status quo on peace research regarding the solving of protracted conflicts via the dominant peacebuilding approach used by the United Nations (UN), as it is oftentimes the actor appeasing a conflict. The case of Cyprus is examined in this context, as it has been protracted for decades, and thus offers good insights into what did not work to solve it and what might help solve it in the future.

Ethno-territorial conflicts, which the Cyprus conflict can be classified as, politicize ethnicity and territory and are more likely to stall during the peacebuilding process in comparison with other conflicts. This is due to the complexity of the underlying identities and the connected clashes¹⁷. To understand why current peacebuilding approaches frequently fail with these types of conflicts, and to understand how conflicts can find a way out of the deadlock, a look must be taken at the theories underpinning dominant approaches.

¹⁷ Kolliarakis, 2015

As UN peacekeeping missions and the connected values oftentimes take the predominant role in peacebuilding efforts in violent conflicts, as is the case of the Cyprus conflict, it is crucial to understand what its neoliberal orientation entails. In addition to being the relevant actor in the Cyprus conflict, as the UN has a unique position and legitimacy, it is frequently asked to support other peacebuilding processes or appease conflicts all over the world¹⁸. Hence, for other ethno-territorial conflicts that have a UN peacebuilding mission, similar issues might exist.

Rooted in the democratic peace theory, the neoliberal peace approach focuses on the sovereignty of states¹⁹. Therefore, UN peacebuilding focuses on institution building, promotion of a free market, rule of law, protection of human rights and political participation²⁰. It is a top-down, objective approach, which focuses on the state institution and its political representatives²¹. Studies suggest that peacekeeping missions in post-conflict environments are often unsuccessful, as stability is preferred over re-opening wounds and solving underlying issues, leading to stalling of conflicts²². Further, UN peacekeeping missions seem to be successful in appeasing violence as they decrease the number of injured individuals and casualties. They reduce fighting between the parties²³, the duration of the conflict²⁴ and when peacekeepers are present, it lowers the risk of repeat war²⁵, but when it comes to solving the underlying conflict, that is where the UN struggles. Particularly with missions lasting over five years, no UN peacekeeping mission has been successful in solving the underlying conflict and being concluded²⁶. Seeing how UN peacekeeping missions can be successful in reducing violence, and thus saving lives, while being ineffective in solving the underlying conflict with the same approach, priorities, and values, it is crucial to consider how the latter part of a peacekeeping mission can become more effective.

A review of the literature on the neoliberal peace approach shows how peacebuilding processes stall but not how underlying issues can be overcome. Literature that takes both the stalled peace process and the possibility of moving on, into consideration, can be found in critical theory. In critical theory, only when the underlying context is understood and groups outside of the

¹⁸ Svensson, 2009

¹⁹ Bellamy & Williams, 2004

²⁰ Karlsrud, 2019

²¹ Heathershaw, 2008

²² Ibid.

²³ Hultman, Kathman, & Shannon, 2014

²⁴ Ruggeri, Dorussen, & Gizelis, 2017

²⁵ Hegre, Hultman, & Nygård, n.d

²⁶ Pushkina, 2006

political elites become involved in the peacebuilding process, sustainable peace agreements can be built²⁷. Traumas generated and situated within a conflict need to be considered when designing a peacebuilding process, to overcome the stalling²⁸. Therefore, rather than focusing on political leaders and elites, the process is bottom-up, through the engagement of the local communities, that help establish what needs exist within the conflict²⁹. Thus, from a critical perspective, solving a protracted conflict does not only occur at the local level, additionally to the political level.

The value of including critical approaches that focus on reconciling the broader population becomes clear in the Cyprus Conflict. As UNFICYP has played an integral role within the peacebuilding process, neo-liberal ideals are underpinning it. Several negotiation rounds were conducted, with only one being comparatively successful, which resulted in a comprehensive plan, that would have settled territorial, political, and compensation questions³⁰. Some of the strongest factors for finding a solution were Cyprus' prospective EU-accession in 2004, and the discovery of natural gas in its territorial waters³¹. Ultimately, these attempts proved unsuccessful even with the help of the UN mediators³². Prominent reasons why negotiations broke down were, amongst others, a) the mistrust of the other party, hence the sides not actually desiring to find a solution even though it seemed promising in the beginning³³, b) at least one party not having the feeling that the negotiation process was Cypriot-owned but imposed by other powers and thus urged the population to show its disagreement³⁴, as well as c) feeling disrespected at the negotiation table, shortly before proclaiming the independence of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)³⁵.

The academic literature focuses on the political leadership when explaining why negotiation processes fail³⁶. It does not explore how the breakdowns could have been managed at the time to increase the likelihood for successful negotiations. Greek Cypriots voting widely against the 2004 referendum became one of the few instances when the population's sentiment was studied

²⁷ Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013

²⁸ Koh, 2021

²⁹ Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013

³⁰ Georgiades, 2007

³¹ Gürel & Le Cornu, 2014; Today's Zaman, 2011

³² Herta, 2012

³³ UN News, 2016

³⁴ Ibid.; Demetriou, 2008.

³⁵ Georgiades, 2007

³⁶ Aksu 2003; Birgisson 1993; Diez 2002; Herta 2012

in depth³⁷. As the population's sentiments influence the peacebuilding process too, for example through the election of their representatives and when it comes to reconciliation within the broader population, it is crucial to focus on the collective to understand its influence on peacebuilding processes.

Summing up, through the neoliberal approach of UN missions, UNFICYP managed to decrease violence and to maintain the situation, yet it has failed to build sustainable peace. Conversely, the presence of the mission has led to the stalling of the peace process, deepening ethnic divisions between the two communities, as UNFICYP ensures the communities are kept apart by patrolling the buffer zone. Without contact to the other community, each side could be dehumanised³⁸. In the Cyprus case, with the conflict being rooted in identity issues, UNFICYP's support to solve the conflict based on UN principles has failed, as the underlying issues were insufficiently taken into consideration³⁹. Since identity and territorial issues are at the core of the conflict, an approach that focuses on tackling those issues could be successful in helping overcome the conflict's protractedness.

1.2. The role of collective trauma in the political arena

Over the past 15 years, and more specifically in recent years, the academic literature has started to consider the role of collective trauma in the political sphere. This section provides a definition of trauma, followed by an overview of what individual trauma is, and lastly, of what constitutes collective trauma, how it becomes formed, and how it influences political and social life. Lastly, the section explains why complex cultural trauma as a multilevel crisis in representation is the type of trauma relevant for this thesis. It is the relevant type of trauma in this thesis, as it explains how trauma can be inherited, which is crucial in the Cyprus conflict, as it has been going on for decades, which means that new generations have been born and have become actors perpetuating the conflict without having experienced the war. Furthermore, this trauma as a multilevel crisis in representation explains how the individual traumas could become collective, which is crucial, if the cycle should be broken.

³⁷ Drath, 2004

³⁸ Herta, 2012

³⁹ Ibid.

To understand how communal trauma affects political and social life, and more importantly for this thesis, political conflicts, it must be clarified which understanding of trauma is relevant here. Trauma occurs when an individual experiences a shocking and unexpected event⁴⁰, that changes the way they understand their reality. Broadly, it is a “delayed response to an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events”⁴¹. Thus, “it is not the experience itself which acts traumatically, but the memory of when it is reanimated”⁴². As trauma helps the sensemaking of an event not yet fully processed by the victims, it impacts how they understand the experiences, and how they interpret themselves and others⁴³. It is repeatedly experienced as the re-enactment of an event that one cannot leave behind. Derived from the Greek word for “wound”, it is similar to a wound to the psyche that is not as easily healable as a body’s⁴⁴. Trauma does not only occur in the real temporal space, but its consequences can show at a later stage in life and can haunt the traumatised individual or collective; for collectives it may even be up to centuries later⁴⁵.

Traumas within societies are experienced both by individuals and collectives and might present themselves in different ways. Academia has only started to focus on how trauma influences the collective in the past 20 years, with recent years seeing a spike in interest⁴⁶. This is because the trauma’s impact beyond the mind just emerged in 1990. Therefore, once the understanding of trauma outside of the individual psyche has been established, a connection can be drawn to trauma’s influence within the political sphere. Most approaches focus on the individual; therefore, a gap exists when analysing collective trauma’s influence on the political sphere⁴⁷. This thesis seeks to add to this gap, as it enhances our understanding of how collective trauma influences the political sphere, and particularly how engagement with narratives of collective trauma influences political conflicts. It fills the gap through exploring how peacebuilders interact with the local perceptions of collective narratives, as they hope to facilitate peace through attempting to change the local perceptions on the narratives

It has been established how trauma transfers from the individual to the group and its consequences. Individuals suffering of trauma oftentimes try to repress memories and suppress

⁴⁰ Caruth, 1996; Lerner, 2022

⁴¹ Lerner, 2022, 7

⁴² Fassin & Rechtman, 2009

⁴³ Lerner, 2022

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Volkan, 2001

⁴⁶ Caruth, 2010; Lerner, 2022; Koh, 2021; Volkan, 2001; Hutchison, 2016; Fassin & Rechtman, 2009

⁴⁷ Lerner, 2022

their own voice and isolate themselves⁴⁸. Once they communicate their experiences, their traumas can ripple through communities, which in turn form collective traumas⁴⁹. Trauma that becomes collective trauma must be “threatening a society’s existence or violating one or more of its fundamental cultural presuppositions”⁵⁰, and it opens up the possibility for collective identities to change through abruptly removing the meaning behind practices that were part of the group’s identity⁵¹. Therefore, collective trauma is connected to the collectives’ identity. Contrary to individuals suppressing their voices, the voices of political leaders and the communities’ elite appear more powerful. Hence, when they narrate the experiences, they can become the dominant perspectives and narratives within the community⁵².

Once a trauma becomes collective, it can shape the way actors interpret the self and the other, making the trauma shape the way a collective reconciles, rehabilitates, and recovers⁵³. Currently, the academic International Relations (IR) literature does not sufficiently take the role of trauma for these actions into consideration. It understands traumatic events in a linear way and does not take the delay of the trauma’s impact consideration⁵⁴. This thesis attempts to fill this gap, specifically for the Cyprus conflict, by providing a basis for understanding how collective narratives of trauma affect the peacebuilding process.

Collective trauma can be understood as a *multilevel crisis in representation*, meaning that underlying, individual trauma “when shared with others, reverberates through socio-political systems, spreading from political institutions and vice versa”⁵⁵. If an individual’s trauma becomes collective, thus a multilevel crisis in representation, it can stay with the group for a long time, and it can become a *complex cultural trauma*⁵⁶. Collective trauma becomes *complex*, when the trauma is continuously being experienced, and *cultural*, if it is passed on to the following generation(s)⁵⁷. Particularly if it does not become healed, it can stay with the collective for a long time.

⁴⁸ Lerner, 2022

⁴⁹ Ibid.; Volkan, 2001

⁵⁰ Smelser, 2004

⁵¹ Alexander, 2004

⁵² Lerner, 2022

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 46

⁵⁶ Koh, 2021

⁵⁷ Ibid.

When a group has a shared mental representation of a massive trauma that their ancestors suffered at the hand of an enemy, a trauma can become part of the group's identity⁵⁸. According to psychoanalytic theory, trauma becomes cultural⁵⁹, by being inherited through the process of transgenerational transmission⁶⁰, even though the next generation has not lived through the traumatic event itself⁶¹. This is due to past generations' inability to mourn losses of people, land, or prestige, making the group unable to reverse injury and humiliation by another group⁶². Research shows that a fluidity exists between the psychic borders of mother of child, meaning that the mother's anxiety, perceptions, and expectations of the external world can be passed down to the child⁶³.

A crucial aspect of collective trauma is shame. When individuals, and connectedly the collective, become traumatized, they experience shame and humiliation, as "trauma breaks down [...] ego defences and exposes our most vulnerable selves"⁶⁴. They subconsciously select a type of leader that promises to save them from their predicament, and if they fail to do so, find scapegoats within the collective or create external enemies⁶⁵. If individual or collective trauma shall be healed, the truth of the traumatic events must be remembered and talked about. Only then, will the social order and individual victims, and in turn the collective, be able to heal⁶⁶. It is unclear, if an attempt to heal the trauma might lead to the opposite effect of mobilising further violence rather than the desired peace.

With individuals' traumas seeping into collective narratives, traumatic events affect all individuals within an ethnic or national group, affecting societal or political processes⁶⁷. This is, for instance, the case with thousands of children of Jewish holocaust survivors, whose parents passed down the traumatic experiences of death camps and genocide⁶⁸. As the Cyprus conflict is an ethno-territorial conflict that largely focuses on the community identity, this thesis adopts an approach connected to collective trauma, as a review of existing literature shows that collective trauma in political conflict has not yet been researched in-depth. Connecting the

⁵⁸ Volkan, 2001

⁵⁹ Koh, 2021

⁶⁰ Volkan, 2001

⁶¹ Lev-Wiesel, 2007; Maffini & Pham, 2016

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Koh, 2021, 7

⁶⁵ Koh, 2021.

⁶⁶ Herman, 2015

⁶⁷ Lerner, 2022; Volkan, 2001

⁶⁸ Volkan, 2001

section's findings with the previous section's findings, focusing on collective trauma in the conflict could be the helpful alternative approach to make findings that could forward the conflict to a more effective peacebuilding process.

This thesis puts emphasis on the complex cultural traumas within the Cyprus conflict. As complex cultural trauma⁶⁹ is a multilevel crisis in representation⁷⁰, I argue that individuals consistently get re-traumatized if the collective's trauma does not get healed. Therefore, it is relevant to look at these long-term traumas that get consistently perpetuated and how they influence the Cyprus conflict's peacebuilding process.

1.3 Collective trauma in political conflicts

The following section introduces the concepts of collective trauma, and narratives of trauma within political conflicts, illustrating the reasons why it is crucial to consider them for solving political conflicts. Once collective trauma becomes narrativized by the political leadership, it can be a powerful tool to mobilise the population to become violent. When engaged in a peace process, it can hinder the process, as triggering the trauma can leave the negotiators and the population paralyzed, unable to solve the conflict. Therefore, collective narratives of trauma need to be at the heart of a peacebuilding process, to know how to interact with them to solve the conflict.

It is indispensable to consider collective trauma in political conflicts, since, once activated, even after centuries of lying dormant, it can fuel strong emotions such as fear and hatred towards a perceived enemy and help mobilise the collective to act violently towards the other group⁷¹.

Collective traumas have a particularly strong impact on political conflicts once they become narratives of trauma, which is why the narrativized version of collective trauma is investigated in this thesis. Narratives shape political imaginaries and can establish causation through repeatedly implying the causation, where empirical facts are not able to do so⁷². Implied causality allows narratives to shape interpretations of the world to orient collective actors'

⁶⁹ Koh, 2021

⁷⁰ Lerner, 2022

⁷¹ Lerner 2022; Volkan, 2001

⁷² Lerner, 2022

actions, therefore, “narratives restore new logics [...] and events according to implied cause and effect”⁷³, just as trauma destroys them⁷⁴. Narratives are used retrospectively as devices for meaning-making of situations that the individuals or collectives cannot make sense of due to their traumatic nature, and going forward, to justify structures for order⁷⁵. Hence, narratives also make traumas politically meaningful for groups due to their shared experience⁷⁶.

As they seek to explain events and reoccurring traumas, leaders can narrate traumatic experiences in a way that makes them the dominant explanation of what happened, which can in turn influence a collective’s understanding of the experience⁷⁷. Being a multilevel crisis in representation, the collective narrative, narrated by the elites, might not be the individual’s experience, but become the seemingly dominant experience⁷⁸. Whether an event will be narrated into a collective trauma is not decided by the empirical accuracy of public representations, but rather their symbolic power and sociocultural spread⁷⁹.

Since collective trauma becomes part of a group’s identity⁸⁰, if something threatens the identity, collectives are easily mobilised, which fuels conflict. For this reason, it is relevant to look at how narratives of trauma shape identities.

The *narrative identity approach* shows how narratives influence identity. Identity defines things according to similarities as defining oneself includes defining the other⁸¹. One can understand identities within the international arena as constituted by narratives⁸², as narratives build causations, and are constantly reiterated within societies to make meaning of situations, also of non-traumatic nature⁸³. Further, “narrative identities situate actors temporally and spatially relative to others [...] [and] breathe life into [...] labels such as ethnicity, nationality, or state identity”⁸⁴, which are then used in everyday discourse⁸⁵. Therefore, through narrating how we understand the self and other, they become our reality. As identity narratives are

⁷³ Lerner, 2022, 55

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Roberts, 2006.

⁷⁶ Miskimmon, O’Loughlin & Roselle, 2017

⁷⁷ Lerner, 2022

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Alexander, 2004

⁸⁰ Volkan, 2001

⁸¹ Lerner, 2022

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Miskimmon, O’Loughling & Roselle 2017

⁸⁴ Lerner, 2022, 83

⁸⁵ Ibid.

repeatedly articulated, interpreted, and rearticulated, their social discourses either stabilise meanings or lead to their fluctuations⁸⁶, ultimately leading to connected logics of action⁸⁷.

When the conflicting parties keep the narratives within a political conflict stable, the conflict can become protracted. Thus, to move forward, a fluctuation of the narratives might be necessary. As the Cyprus conflict is protracted since the 1970s and identity issues are at its heart, this thesis investigates the perpetuation of collective narratives of trauma within the Cyprus conflict by peacebuilders, through analysing whether their interactions with the trauma narratives stabilise their meaning or inspire a fluctuation. Fluctuations can be identified if individuals that shared the collective narratives start questioning them.

In order to address and understand the complex cultural collective traumas that perpetuate the Cyprus conflict, I propose considering a *trauma-informed peace process*⁸⁸. A peace process is trauma-informed when trauma receives a leading role within its design. The process acknowledges how triggered trauma of individuals or groups can influence the peacebuilding process. It is based on the psychodynamic approach, encompassing conscious and unconscious decision-making⁸⁹. The relevance of considering trauma becomes clear, as when it is triggered, an individual or collective can fall into regression. If an individual regresses, according to the medical discipline of psychology, they lose the ability of complex thinking. In political conflicts, this can lead to the stalling of the conflict due to the negotiator's inability to grasp collaborative approaches⁹⁰.

Thus, in certain situations, political leaders or their constituency might not be unwilling to compromise but trauma shapes their point of view, making them lack the capacity to engage with a peace process. The protractedness of a conflict can be the result of the detachedness of an individual or a whole collective, if they are unwilling to confront their traumas⁹¹. Further, regression when the group's identity is being threatened, can lead to a time-collapse. In the context of political conflicts, it can make the individual or collective feel as if they go back in time and feel like they are in the moment of the traumatising event or shortly after, even if the event happened hundreds of years ago, which brings back memories and feelings of hurt and

⁸⁶ Hansen, 2006

⁸⁷ Lerner, 2022

⁸⁸ Koh, 2021

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

humiliation. The emotions can strengthen the narratives of the current conflict and allow for mobilisation of the collective⁹². Mobilisation of communities and the existential threat of the traumatising moment can make leaders order sadistic or masochistic decisions and their collectives can be distressed enough to follow through with said violent actions⁹³. Therefore, according to the trauma-informed peace process, the mediator should take all sides' trauma into account, preparing for a potential emotional eruption⁹⁴.

This thesis helps lay the basis for building a trauma-informed peace approach for the Cyprus conflict. For this approach to be followed for any conflict, an understanding of the underlying traumas must be given, and the knowledge of how the traumas and their narratives are perpetuated must be consolidated in order to offer the possibility of breaking the perpetuation. This thesis analyses how collective narratives of traumas are being perpetuated through the narrative identity approach, and how they influence the peacebuilding process. Therefore, my thesis firstly extends the trauma-informed peace process from the leadership to the collective, and secondly, offers a basis for a potentially effective peacebuilding process in the Cyprus conflict.

In essence, this thesis will analyse how collective narratives of complex cultural trauma are interacted with by peacebuilders via the narrative identity approach, since it investigates whether narratives are strengthened or destabilised. The findings will add to the understanding of how peacebuilders can influence the collective narratives of trauma, hence providing the knowledge needed to build a trauma-informed peace process in the Cyprus conflict to pull it out of its protractedness.

⁹² Volkan, 2001

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Koh, 2021

Chapter Two: Research Design

The following chapter introduces the scope of the research, justifies the case selection, and introduces the data collection and the analysis methods, as well as how the research design ensures validity.

The scope of the thesis is the peacebuilding process in Cyprus, with peacebuilding agents in Cyprus as the unit of analysis, since it investigates how they engage with collective narratives of trauma. The level of analysis is the local level, as the research investigates how peacebuilders interact with the narratives of the local population.

The methodology of collecting and analysing the data is interpretivist and explanatory. The collected data forms a bricolage, which is a construction of research data from diverse data gathering techniques⁹⁵. Table 1 offers more information on what kind of data can be part of a bricolage and how the researcher can generate the data. To collect data, I conducted interviews, took part in peacebuilding activities, gathered data from primary documentary sources, such as United Nations documents relating to UNFICYP, local media reports, and filmed documentaries. Data sources will be analysed through narrative analysis, particularly through the decentred approach⁹⁶ defined below.

The approach is interpretivist, as the thesis focuses on the meanings of narratives, how the interaction with them and the influence on the connected beliefs and discourses potentially affect the peacebuilding process. Thus, as this thesis is in the search for “search of meaning”⁹⁷ and its influence, the interpretivist approach is most helpful in answering the research question. It assumes that the analysts and research subjects cannot stand outside of the studied issue, free of their own “values, beliefs, and feelings”⁹⁸, as one acquires knowledge through interpretation, which cannot be objective. Rather, education, experiences, individual and communal backgrounds inform the interpretation of the subject studied and “play a central role in sensemaking”⁹⁹. In contrast, the positivist approach assumes that it is possible to make objective assessments of the meaning of words and concepts, thus that they have a single, unambiguous meaning that all individuals understand in the same way. This is the case as in

⁹⁵ Rhodes, 2018

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Geertz, 1973, 5

⁹⁸ Yanow, 2000, 5

⁹⁹ Ibid. 6

the positivist perspective, social science mirrors the natural world, rather than investigates a world that is constructed by human interpretations of the world¹⁰⁰. This thesis assumes that differing interpretations of the stumbling blocks to peace in the Cyprus conflict, and connectedly differing belief systems, influence which activities peacebuilders engage in. As this is based on understanding that concepts, words and events can be interpreted in a different way, and lead to differing actions taken the positivist approach does not suit this research.

| <i>Ethnographic methods</i> | <i>Definition</i> | <i>Potential sources of data</i> | <i>Examples</i> |
|-----------------------------|--|--|---|
| Hit-and-run fieldwork | Repeated, short bursts of intensive observation as researchers move in-and-out of the field | Legislatures, constituency offices, campaign events | Crewe (2015) and Rhodes (2011) |
| Ethnographic interviewing | Repeated, semi-structured and unstructured interviews with the same participant | Recently retired politicians and public officials | Corbett (2015) and Reeher (2006) |
| Memoirs | First-person reflections on governing | Autobiographies and authorised biographies; radio and television interviews | Rhodes (2017) and Richards and Mathers (2010) |
| Elite focus groups | Group reflections that encourage elites to flesh out and challenge each other's claims | Recently retired politicians and public officials | Rhodes and Tiernan (2014) |
| Para-ethnography | Ethnographic interviews with a decision-maker to explain a specific decision or event (see Holmes and Markus 2005) | Focused on particular legislative documents, departmental files | Novel in political science but see Holmes and Marcus (2005) |
| Visual ethnography | Using video recordings as a form of remote observation (see Pink 2013) | C-SPAN (and similar footage elsewhere); press conferences, parliamentlive.tv | Novel in political science but see Pink (2013) |

Table 1: Bricolage (Boswell et al. 2018)

2.1 Case Selection

This thesis is using qualitative analysis using a single case study. It analyses a single case, as conflicts and their peacebuilding processes, as well as the impact of the collective trauma on

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

them are unique due to the specific context, and one needs to go in great depth in order to understand how collective narratives of trauma form and connect to a peace process¹⁰¹. Analysing multiple cases would not offer the analytical depth needed to draw conclusions on how collective trauma influences a peace process within the scope constraints of this research. The research focuses on the Cyprus case for two reasons. Firstly, to add value to the general understanding of how traumas influence the peacebuilding process of political conflicts with identity issues at their roots. It is ideal for identifying a connection of the psychology of the communities to the peacebuilding process, as the conflict has not experienced violence since the 1970s¹⁰². Therefore, one can better analyse how collective trauma continues to influence the process. The lack of violence enables me to isolate the issue of collective trauma without the complication of the threat of violence, that other cases might contain, and which means violence is an overshadowing factor that affects decision-making and discourse. Secondly, the thesis investigates the case of the Cyprus conflict in order to understand how the engagement with the collective narratives of trauma in this specific peacebuilding process can lead it out of its protraction.

2.2 The Case of Cyprus

This thesis seeks to add to the exploration of what could lead the Cyprus conflict out of its protractedness. So far, the peacebuilding approach that the involved actors chose, which focuses on finding a political solution, has not been successful in solving the conflict¹⁰³. It is crucial that the conflict becomes resolved, as the traumas of Cypriots may not heal, since they are unable to return to their home villages, have lost property, family members have gone missing, and all the experiences are kept alive through education, propaganda, and media¹⁰⁴. If the witness generation, which in the case of Cyprus is growing old, dies before the conflict is resolved, research suggests that the conflict becomes even harder to resolve¹⁰⁵. Therefore, it is crucial that peacebuilders choose an approach that offers the possibility to resolve the conflict before it becomes even more difficult to do so.

Additionally to the societal relevance of needing to explore alternative peacebuilding approaches, exploring the Cyprus case is academically relevance. Existing research on the

¹⁰¹ Lerner, 2022

¹⁰² UN, 1996

¹⁰³ Georgiades, 2007

¹⁰⁴ Papadakis, 2005

¹⁰⁵ Lev-Wiesel, 2007; Maffini & Pham, 2016

conflict primarily focuses on the peacebuilding process between the political elites, their failures and how these failures can be overcome¹⁰⁶. As academic literature has not sufficiently explored alternative approaches to solving the Cyprus conflict, his thesis explores an alternative peacebuilding approach to the current neo-liberal approach. The literature review identified the trauma-informed peace approach as suitable for the conflict's context. As its literature mostly focuses on political leaders, this research extends its concept to the local population. Furthermore, in studying the influence of collective narratives of trauma on the Cyprus conflict's peacebuilding process, I contribute to the limited literature on the emerging field of collective trauma. Hence, the thesis adds to the emerging literature collective trauma, on the efficacy of trauma-informed peace processes, and provides important empirical details on the current state of the Cyprus conflict and how it might be led out of its protractedness.

2.3 Data Sources

Interviews

The Interviews were largely unstructured, and the questions open-ended, as the aim of the interviews was to understand interviewees' perspective on the peace process, and how they chose to narrate how they engage with the collective narratives of trauma. Analysing their narration is crucial for understanding how respondents constructed their own narratives revealing their underlying beliefs and past experiences. The questions were phrased according to the ordinary language interviewing approach, to see how the interviewees and their peers understand certain concepts and words¹⁰⁷. The method lets interviewees validate or contest the interviewer's understanding of the said terms and concepts, as the interviewer summarises her understanding of what the interviewee said and asks for confirmation or contestation if it was understood correctly¹⁰⁸. Depending on which terms are used in which context, it offers a clearer understanding of how they interact with the collective narratives of trauma and why they do so. For the selection of the interviewees, I reviewed websites and social media accounts of IOs and NGOs, to find out which organisations are active in their involvement. Some interviewees were personal contacts, or contacts of the PRIO Cyprus Centre, where I conducted a five-week research internship during my fieldwork.

¹⁰⁶ Aksu, 2003; Birgisson, 1993; Diez, 2022; Herta, 2012

¹⁰⁷ Schaffer, 2006

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

Interviews with current and former peacebuilders were conducted as it was necessary that the interviewee had insights into the peacebuilding process and background knowledge on why certain actions are taken. These comprised seven interviews, including peacebuilders from the Cypriot communities, as well as of peacebuilders of other nationalities, to ensure a balance of perspectives. The interviewees were both of international organisations (IOs), as well as of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The mix of perspectives from IOs and NGOs also offers critical perspectives on the other's work. The interviews focused on collecting data related to why and how the peacebuilders engage with collective narratives of trauma through their activities. The sampling technique used was both purposive and the snowball method. Purposive sampling is a non-random way of choosing potential interviewees, to increase the probability of the interviewees offering relevant data for the research¹⁰⁹. It was the relevant sampling technique, as the interviewees needed specific knowledge on peacebuilding activities to be valuable for the research. Snowball sampling involves asking interviewees for recommendations of other potential interviewees that could offer relevant insights for the researcher¹¹⁰, which was firstly, crucial to learn of new relevant individuals, and secondly, offered a higher likelihood of response if they knew the person who recommended I talked to them.

Participant Observation

If the interviewee's organisation had a peacebuilding activity in which I could participate while throughout my research, I did so to get better insights into what their working reality looks like, and to better understand their values¹¹¹. I attended two events organised by the German embassy, of which the bi-communal business lunch was attended by the head of mission of UNFICYP, who provided insights into UNFICYP's current strategy. Additionally, I attended an exhibition organised by Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR) at the Home for Cooperation, and an online seminar by the interviewed IO, which took place over the course of two months. This constitutes an ethnographic approach that is "based on personal interaction with research subjects in their own setting"¹¹².

¹⁰⁹ Robinson, 2014

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Rhodes, 2018

¹¹² Wood, 2007, 123

| Host | Event |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| German-Cypriot Business Association | Networking event on disruptive technology in Cyprus |
| German embassy in Cyprus | Bi-communal business lunch |
| AHDR | Art Exhibition: Mirror of Conflict – Iconoclastic Controversies II |
| IO | Online seminar on peace negotiations |

Table 2: Participant Observation

Documentary Sources

The primary documentary sources included United Nations documents relating to UNFICYP, for example, Secretary General (SG) and Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) reports, that offer regular detailed insights into UNFICYP’s activities, the situation on the ground, and political leaders’ actions. More sources included reports by UN special rapporteurs, and local media reports, all enabling to understand the perspective of local population and political leaders and how they chose to frame political issues. The reports and news articles are accessible through the online data bases of the UN and newspapers respectively.

Academic and practitioner literature, ethnographic documentation, as well as empirical material on peacebuilder activities and their engagement with collective traumas were reviewed to gain a broader overview of their actions. As I conducted a research internship with the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO) Cyprus Centre, a vast library with literature and research on the topic was accessible to me.

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Category | Documentary sources |
| UN documents relating to Cyprus | SG reports, SRSG reports, Special rapporteur reports |
| Local perspective | Local media reports |
| Peacebuilder activities | Academic and practitioner literature, ethnographic documentation |

Table 3: Documentary sources

2.4 Data Analysis

Narrative Analysis is a method which analyses stories and unpacks them to understand how discourse constructs meaning. The goal is to understand the subjects, their meanings, and experiences, through the narrative¹¹³. Narratives prescribe meaning to events and to an individual’s or group’s identity¹¹⁴. As the research question investigates how collective narratives of trauma influence the Cyprus peacebuilding process, narrative analysis is the relevant analysis method, to understand firstly, which narratives exist in the Cyprus conflict, and secondly, how these narratives influence the peacebuilder’s activities through understanding how they narrate the conflict.

Particularly, this research adopts Rhode’s approach of a decentred analysis., It aims to produce detailed studies of people’s beliefs to unpack narratives¹¹⁵. Decentred analysis understands individuals as actors with agency, that are socialised to have a certain web of beliefs, called traditional beliefs. As they have agency, their belief system can change over time¹¹⁶.

As it is crucial to understand which underlying beliefs influence the peacebuilders’ activities, to understand how they try to influence the peacebuilding process, the decentred approach is the relevant analysis approach. The decentred approach’s core technique is recovering stories. To apply, it “explore[s] the social context in which individuals think and act” ¹¹⁷, therefore it

¹¹³ Kartch, 2018
¹¹⁴ Ibid.
¹¹⁵ Rhodes, 2018
¹¹⁶ Bevir & Rhodes, 2022
¹¹⁷ Ibid., 154

situates the beliefs and actions within the actor’s set of believes and relates them to the tradition¹¹⁸. Table 4 offers a summary of the relevant concepts of the method.

Summing up, this thesis’ narrative analysis focuses firstly, on identifying the collective narratives within the Cyprus conflict, and secondly, on decentring the peacebuilders’ underlying beliefs from how they narrate their engagement with the conflict’s collective narratives of trauma. It is crucial to understand their priorities and beliefs when we analyse how they engage with the collective narratives, as it clarifies why different peacebuilders take different approaches in trying to shape the conflict, and therefore, potentially influence the peacebuilding process.

| Concept | Definition |
|-----------------|---|
| Beliefs | Beliefs are the basic unit of analysis in that they are the interpretations of individuals of their world and their surroundings. Their webs of belief are the source of the reasons they give to explain their actions |
| Practices | A set of actions that often exhibits a stable pattern across time. Practices are the ways in which beliefs and traditions manifest themselves in everyday life |
| Traditions | Traditions are “webs of belief” and form the background of ideas in which agents find themselves. Agents will adopt beliefs from traditions as a starting point but may amend them |
| Situated agency | Individuals are situated in wider webs of beliefs, or traditions, which largely shape their beliefs. Yet they keep a capacity for agency in that they respond to traditions, beliefs, and dilemmas in novel ways |
| Dilemmas | A dilemma is an idea that stands in contradiction to other beliefs, posing a problem. Dilemmas are resolved by accommodating the new belief in the present web of beliefs or replacing old beliefs with new beliefs |

Table 4: Decentred theory: A summary
 Source: Bevir and Rhodes 2021, p.154

2.5 Validity

In line with this interpretive approach, and the use of framing theory more broadly, an abductive method was used for both data gathering and data analysis. This is an iterative process of evaluating primary source data obtained during the research and returning theoretical propositions to explain patterns in the data¹¹⁹. In this approach, positivist criteria for assessing the validity and reliability of the research are limited in their applicability as the research goal to understand the contextualized meaning-making process of respondents. The criteria for

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012

verification of the findings in this approach are predominantly reflexivity, and researcher sense-checking during the research process, such as separating the note-taking and note-making process, searching for tensions in respondent responses, and questioning surprises in the data¹²⁰.

To become aware of and mitigate biases throughout the whole data collection and analysis process, the base of the research process is abductive inference, an iterative process of sensemaking. An abductive approach calls for constant analysis of the evidence to refute current findings, adjust methods and conclusions. It increases the validity of the research as it helps to avoid confirmation bias. Abduction is an iterative process by which the researcher goes back and forth between the empirical evidence and theoretical presumptions¹²¹. When new evidence enters the sensemaking process the explanation of circumstance might have to be given up at a later stage¹²².

As this thesis analyses narratives of peacebuilders, it is crucial to understand their narratives how they intended to bring them across. Only then one can truly understand the motivations behind certain actions. To increase the validity of the researcher's conclusions, the ordinary language approach accounts for the possibility of misunderstanding interviewees. Once one builds "up an understanding from the data, [one tries] to confirm that it is accurate"¹²³. Confirmation can take place through member-checking, asking other members of the community similar questions to verify if the researcher understands concepts correctly¹²⁴, contesting or confirming current findings. To check the sense of the findings, one can also ask other community members direct questions to confirm the meaning of a concept¹²⁵, to ensure the true meaning of narratives is analysed and not a misrepresentation

Furthermore, I have to demonstrate reflexivity, which means I iteratively reflect on my identity as a Greek Cypriot, since I grew up in the Greek-speaking part of the island during my early childhood, with close family and friends still living there. As the researcher enters a context and investigates specific sensemaking, she cannot be fully disconnected from the researched topic¹²⁶. My identity can enter the data collection phase if I ask potentially leading questions, and through the way the interviewee perceives me, as I am interviewing individuals from both

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Walton, 2004

¹²² Lipscomb, 2012; Walton, 2004

¹²³ Schaffer, 2006, 192

¹²⁴ Schaffer, 2006

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Yanow & Shea, 2012

communities. For this reason, my identity might bring additional value to the research: interviewees might open up more to me, as an insider, compared to whether they would see me as an outsider or a perceived enemy. My identity could also enter the analysis phase if I searched for specific answers. To mitigate this risk, I will check for ‘tension’ in the data and findings that contest my emerging explanation. This ensures that I keep an open mind and avoid to “rush to [a] diagnosis”¹²⁷.

¹²⁷ Yanow & Shea, 2012, 105

Chapter Three: The History of the Conflict

For the past 48 years, Cyprus has been divided into the Greek speaking Republic of Cyprus (RoC) in the South, and the Turkish-speaking northern part of the island¹²⁸. Currently, Nicosia is the last divided capital in the world through the UN buffer zone¹²⁹. The UN peacekeeping mission UNFICYP has been stationed on the island for 57 years. The following chapter provides the historical background required for the fieldwork and analysis in later chapters.

3.1.1 Build up to the hot conflict

Cyprus has always been an island influenced by the cultures that either invaded, ruled or settled on it, primarily due to its strategic location, ideal for trade and military operations. These include the Venetians, the Spanish, the French and, most importantly for today's conflict, the Ottomans and the British¹³⁰.

Originally, it was a Hellenic civilization that became part of the Ottoman empire in 1571, which significantly restructured the island's society¹³¹, which laid the basis for today's communal separation. Among the measures to restructure society was the offering of a monetary incentive for tens of thousands of Turkish settlers to move to Cyprus¹³². The communities self-segregated into the Greek-speaking Orthodox community and the Turkish-speaking Muslim community, due to the ethnic, linguistic and religious heterogeneity¹³³. The separation of the communities implied that their identities developed apart from one another, and that they identified themselves through the said separation¹³⁴.

In 1878, Cyprus came under British rule¹³⁵, which furthered the separation of the communities since it divided every aspect of public life and decision-making. This included the separation of school life, which perpetuated the lacking development of a common Cypriot identity, and

¹²⁸ Tocci, 2007

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Papadakis, 2008

¹³¹ Yilmaz, 2005.

¹³² Volkan & Itzkowitz 1994

¹³³ Birgisson, 1993

¹³⁴ Amussen, 2004

¹³⁵ Birgisson, 1993

further increased the attachment to their respective ethnic groups and the outside supportive nations Greece and Turkey¹³⁶.

As Greek Cypriots questioned the legitimacy of the British rule, they demanded *enosis*, unity with Greece. Fiercely supported by Greece, the Greek Cypriots launched an armed struggle against the British rule in the mid-1950s. Britain reacted with force and repression, and mobilised the Turkish Cypriot minority, which represented 18% of the population and was supported by Turkey, to help fight the violent struggle for *enosis*¹³⁷. *Enosis* demands were disconcerting for the Turkish Cypriots who feared that they would be repressed, a fact that led to their demand of *taksim*, the partition of the island. The difference in demands for independence led to the formation of paramilitary groups in both communities, which destabilised the island and the society, resulting in inter-communal killings in 1956¹³⁸. Ultimately, when violence escalated and Britain started fearing that it would lose all of its influence on the military strategically important island, it agreed to Cyprus' independence¹³⁹.

The self-proclaimed guarantor powers Greece and Turkey together with Britain, agreed on four documents, constituting the foundation of the Republic of Cyprus¹⁴⁰. These are the Treaty of Guarantee, which allows Turkey and Greece to intervene unilaterally to re-establish the political status quo; the Treaty of Alliance, which allows Britain to keep two sovereign base areas, Greece and Turkey to station officers¹⁴¹; the Treaty of Establishment; and the Constitution, which ensure strict power-sharing of the communities to avoid supremacy of the Greek Cypriots and which ruled out both *taksim* and *enosis*¹⁴².

After the British retreated from the island in 1960¹⁴³, Greek and Turkish influences remained strong through propaganda in education and media, and through the paramilitary groups, as neither community was satisfied with the framework of the new state¹⁴⁴. Due to the strict power-sharing and resistance of the other parties, parliament was in constant deadlock¹⁴⁵. To ensure a smoother functioning of state development, Greek Cypriot President Makarios presented an amendment of the Constitution in 1963, which would result in the transformation of the

¹³⁶ Herta, 2012

¹³⁷ Tocci, 2007

¹³⁸ Yilmaz, 2005

¹³⁹ Aksu, 2003

¹⁴⁰ Birgisson, 1993

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Herta, 2012

¹⁴³ Asmussen, 2004

¹⁴⁴ Aksu, 2003

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

Republic of into a state with Greek Cypriot decision-making power with a protected Turkish Cypriot minority¹⁴⁶. The Turkish Cypriot community and Turkey were worried the amendments might lead to oppression of their community, which led to a violent uprising and intercommunal violence. Between the end of December 1963 and January 1964, the violence escalated, ranging from the kidnapping of people and taking of hostages to casualties¹⁴⁷.

3.1.2 1963-1974 - The hot conflict

Initially, a force between Greece, Turkey and Britain, under the latter's lead, negotiated ceasefires for short time spans, establishing a buffer zone in the capital Nicosia; these, however, were unsuccessful and ended in violence. The situation deteriorated to the point that the ROC's government consented to a UN peacekeeping mission¹⁴⁸. In March 1964, the UN peacekeeping mission UNFICYP was created with resolution 186, which included a mediator¹⁴⁹. The role of UNFICYP will be discussed in a latter section.

The following decade saw repeated but sporadic eruptions of inter-communal violence. In July 1974, the situation escalated, when the Greek government launched a coup d'état in Cyprus to oust Makarios' government¹⁵⁰. Turkey reacted through launching a limited invasion of the island, overthrowing the military regime and reinstating a civilian regime¹⁵¹. With the new civilian government, talks about a new governance solution were initiated but broke down and resulted in a second, much larger invasion in 1974¹⁵². This time, Greek Cypriots launched attacks against most Turkish Cypriot villages and communities, and Turkish forces occupied the main Turkish Cypriot enclaves in Northern Cyprus¹⁵³.

At the end of July 1974, Turkish, Greek and British representatives met in Geneva, and agreed on a security zone which only the UN would be allowed to enter. Today, this area covers three percent of the island. Additionally, they took measures to protect Cypriots who evacuated their homes, and to ensure safety in mixed villages. Since the 16th of August 1974 until today, a

¹⁴⁶ UN, 1996

¹⁴⁷ Aksu, 2003

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ UN, 1996

¹⁵⁰ Tocci, 2007

¹⁵¹ Hoffmeister, 2006

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ UN, 1996

ceasefire is in place, which was declared by the Turkish Cypriots. Until today, no official peace treaty is in place¹⁵⁴.

Thousands of Cypriots and some peacekeepers lost their lives, hundreds of thousands were internally displaced and 2002 people went missing¹⁵⁵. Further, the Turkish invasion resulted in the long-term occupation of 34% of the island's territory¹⁵⁶.

3.1.3 Post-1974 until 2004

After the war ended in 1974, the goal of the Cypriot communities and its guarantor powers was to reunify the island under a common government, which was at the time rejected by the Greek Cypriot leaders¹⁵⁷. As negotiations became more tense, the Turkish Cypriot leadership declared the North independent under the name 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' in 1983, which is internationally non-recognised¹⁵⁸.

Multiple negotiation rounds failed, until the prospect of joining the EU presented itself, initially with the condition that Cyprus needed to be reunified¹⁵⁹. Thus, the late 1990s until 2004 again saw multiple negotiation rounds, that were fruitless. Only when Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General at the time, presented a comprehensive peace plan for Cyprus with the final round of direct talks being restarted in 2004, was a breakthrough achieved¹⁶⁰. It was the first time that the communities agreed on a comprehensive settlement¹⁶¹. Shortly before the planned EU accession, the EU stated it would let Cyprus join in divided form, and the referendum before the implementation failed: 76% of Greek Cypriots voted 'no' after the president strongly urged them to do so "during an impassioned televised speech"¹⁶², as he fuelled resentment towards the other side and old colonial powers. In contrast, 65% of Turkish Cypriots voted "yes", expressing their desire to implement the plan¹⁶³.

The reason for the breakthrough was a combination of different factors. Firstly, that the prospective EU accession was initially only possible if the island was reunified. This gave the

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ CMP, 2022

¹⁵⁶ Tocci, 2007

¹⁵⁷ Michael, 2015

¹⁵⁸ Tocci, 2007

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Georgiades, 2007

¹⁶¹ Tocci, 2007

¹⁶² Deutsche Welle, 2004

¹⁶³ Georgiades, 2007

incentive to come to the negotiation table¹⁶⁴. Secondly, only because both sides understood the value of EU accession, they stayed at the table. Initially, the Turkish Cypriot leadership did not see the value of joining the EU, which changed after the EU showed them the economic benefit, and after the population demonstrated and voted for a more liberal, pro-EU government¹⁶⁵. Thirdly, the UN involvement had changed. Kofi Annan was able to present a comprehensive draft plan for the first time, which was not possible before due to the norm of non-involvement into domestic affairs. The presentation of a draft allowed more concrete negotiations, and ultimately, success¹⁶⁶.

31.4 2004 until today

No major breakthrough was achieved since 2004. Instead, new challenges appeared. Particularly, the newly discovered gas reservoir off Cyprus' shores added fuel to the conflict, particularly as Turkey started mining for the gas in the northern seashore of Cyprus without the RoC's consent¹⁶⁷. In 2011, the gas' existence was confirmed after test drills¹⁶⁸. This was followed by licensing rounds to international companies¹⁶⁹. Turkey sees the discovery of the gas as a possibility to decrease its dependence on gas from Russia, Azerbaijan and Iran¹⁷⁰. Turkey and the TRNC accused the RoC of acting as if "they were the sole owners of the island"¹⁷¹ and disagreed with some agreements signed with potential extractors¹⁷². Hence, once ships of the RoC drilled for gas in 2012, Turkish naval ships were released. Turkey threatened that if the RoC would not share the gas with all inhabitants, it might annex Northern Cyprus¹⁷³.

The last round of extended, promising negotiations to solve the conflict took place in Crans-Montana in Switzerland in 2017. The negotiations went further than ever before¹⁷⁴. Contrary to previous negotiations, this time the process was owned by the Cypriot leaders¹⁷⁵, to avoid a breakdown in the implementation due to the feeling that the process was not Cypriot-owned¹⁷⁶.

¹⁶⁴ Tocci, 2007

¹⁶⁵ Demetriou, 2008

¹⁶⁶ Zeipekkis, A.-S, 2020

¹⁶⁷ Gürel, Mullen, & Tzimitras, 2013

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Gürel & Le Cornu 2014

¹⁷⁰ Today's Zaman, 2011

¹⁷¹ Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018

¹⁷² Karakasis, 2020

¹⁷³ Euractiv, 2012

¹⁷⁴ Cyprus Mail, 2017

¹⁷⁵ UNSC, 2017

¹⁷⁶ UN news, 2016

The UN hoped that the parties would achieve breakthroughs on six crucial topics¹⁷⁷. Most importantly, the issue of guarantees, which allows Turkey and Greece to have troops on the island, as well as the right of intervention by the two states, were under discussion and were close to a breakthrough. Both sides were initially eager to come to an agreement¹⁷⁸, but once again the process halted, as at one point “the way people spoke about each other and to each other did not sound like people who were about to unify their homeland”¹⁷⁹. After the failing of the process, particularly the Greek Cypriots blamed the other for the failure¹⁸⁰. Therefore, once again these were promising negotiations, that this time they were taken further than ever before, until past narratives came into the way of a successful outcome.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.; UNSC, 2017

¹⁷⁸ UN news, 2016

¹⁷⁹ Cyprus Mail, 2017

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

Chapter Four: The role of IOs and NGOs in the Cyprus peacebuilding process

This chapter provides a brief introduction to the role of IOs and NGOs in Cyprus' peacebuilding process

4.1 International Organisations

The most prominent international organisation involved in the Cyprus conflict is the UN with its peacekeeping mission UNFICYP and the mission's good offices and their mediators that help facilitate dialogue between the conflicting parties. When it initially became active on the island, its goal was to appease violence, in which it succeeded, as it negotiated local ceasefires and established a buffer zone between the island's North and South¹⁸¹. Today, the mission patrols the buffer zone and facilitates agricultural and bi-communal work in it, with a focus on the role of youth and women¹⁸².

The UN has impacted the peacebuilding process in numerous ways. Initially, it halted the violence¹⁸³, which provided the basis for a peace process. Through the establishment of the buffer zone, though, it institutionalised the division of the communities, which ensured that the communities could not check their biases, fear and the stories told in their social circles. Therefore, the institutionalised division allowed for different versions of history and the connected hatred to spread¹⁸⁴. In regard to solving the underlying conflict, the UN brought the political leaders to the negotiation table, but no solution was reached.

During the negotiations of the Annan Plan from 2002-2004 that preceded Cyprus' EU accession, the interest of the EU in unifying the island increased. It launched initiatives to influence the Turkish Cypriot community, as the Greek Cypriot community was already convinced of the value of accession¹⁸⁵. Through showing the Turkish Cypriots the potential improvement of their economic situation, the EU gave the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce more responsibility and funded independent bodies that were not strongly influenced by the government. It succeeded in swaying Turkish Cypriot opinion¹⁸⁶. Pro-EU demonstrations led to Northern Cypriots electing a pro-EU leader that brought about a strong

¹⁸¹ UN, 1996

¹⁸² UNFICYP, 2022

¹⁸³ UN, 1996

¹⁸⁴ Papadakis, 2008

¹⁸⁵ Tocci, 2007

¹⁸⁶ Demetriou, 2008

shift in both reunification and EU-accession talks¹⁸⁷. Since then, the Turkish Cypriot political leadership became more open to solving the conflict. Since the EU agreed to let Cyprus join as a divided island, it only offers limited funding for bi-communal initiatives and research on the conflict. EU involvement impacted the Turkish Cypriot openness to find a solution, but as it allowed a divided Cyprus to join, it decreased Greek Cypriot willingness to find a solution, since the status quo is comfortable for them, and the current situation increases the RoC government's legitimacy¹⁸⁸.

4.2 Sub-national Organizations and NGOs

In the early 2000s, the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR) was founded, which was the most notable civil society organisation at the time. It revised the history books in Northern Cyprus to include a less biased representation of the conflict after the new government was elected¹⁸⁹. Until today, the AHDR hosts projects in the buffer zone to remodel education on the island. Sharing the value of historic education and dialogue, as well as critical thinking as an integral part to society¹⁹⁰. One of the AHDR's projects "Imagine" was launched in 2017 around the Crans-Montana negotiation round. It conducts anti-racism and peace education trainings for students and teachers. Within three years, 5091 students and 1014 participated in Imagine's trainings. The organisation also includes students and teachers from rural areas that, due to their geographical position, might otherwise not get in contact with members of the other community¹⁹¹.

The organisation that has been active the longest is the Committee for Missing Persons (CMP). The body was established in 1981 to recover, identify, and return the remains to the families of 2002 agreed upon individuals that have gone missing in the intercommunal fights between 1963-4, as well as during the events in 1974. Its goal is to bring closure to the affected families¹⁹². So far, the CMP has exhumed 1181 of the 2002 missing persons, and identified 1026¹⁹³, which helps bring closure to thousands of families that might change their attitude to the peacebuilding process as they are able to process their grief. It is crucial, at this point, to

¹⁸⁷ Tocci, 2007

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ INTRAC, 2011

¹⁹⁰ AHDR, n.d. a

¹⁹¹ AHDR, n.d.b

¹⁹² CMP, n.d.

¹⁹³ CMP, 2022

highlight the importance of the missing persons in the conflict. In 2021, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) established that the Greek Cypriot government has failed to effectively investigate the fate of a missing person and to inform the family of his remains¹⁹⁴. UN experts of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances have further established that the issue of missing persons is still highly politicised, to the point that political leaders of both sides prioritise political considerations over fully evaluating existing information to find missing persons¹⁹⁵.

Further, some organisations have been active in fostering cross-communal contact, peace education and cooperation for years. Some of them are located in the buffer zone. These are amongst others Peace Players, the Home for Cooperation and Cyprus Inno. Each organisation targets a different age group and audience. Through events and activities, they work on bringing people from the two sides of the island together to foster contact and break down prejudices taught in school and through stories told in the social circle¹⁹⁶.

In conclusion, different IOs and NGOs have influenced the peacebuilding process in different ways. The UN largely focuses on the elite politicians' level, although their focus is now shifting. NGOs are more focused on engaging civil society for the peacebuilding process and in addressing the population's issues. To get a better insight of the motivations and nuances of these organisations' activities, I have conducted interviews with members of some of the aforementioned organisations, which form part of the analysis in a latter chapter.

¹⁹⁴ Cyprus Mail, 2021

¹⁹⁵ OHCHR, 2022

¹⁹⁶ H4C, 2020

Chapter Five: Collective narratives of trauma in the Cyprus Conflict

The following chapter gives an overview of the dominant collective narratives of trauma within the Cyprus conflict and how they serve the communities, to answer the first sub-question

What are the key narratives of trauma in the Cypriot communities?

This chapter introduces the communities' narratives, as only when one understands which narratives exist and which role they play in the conflict and the connected peacebuilding process, can one understand how engaging with them influences the peacebuilding process, which the following chapter analyses.

The chapter is divided into six sections. Sections one to five introduce the dominant collective narratives on what exactly is considered the active conflict, the blame narrative and the connected self-victimisation, the origin narrative, the threat narrative, and the refugee narrative. In each section, the contrasting narratives of the Greek- and Turkish Cypriot community are introduced. Section six introduces how formal education perpetuates the narratives.

5.1 When did the hot conflict take place? – Memory narratives

The communities have not agreed on a common historical reality, including the importance of certain events. This becomes obvious when examining when exactly the conflict started to emerge. For Turkish Cypriots, the active conflict started in 1963 and lasted until 1974, when Turkey's peace operation arrived in Cyprus to protect them and re-establish the constitutional order¹⁹⁷. As Greek Cypriots started their open aggressions towards Turkish Cypriots in the 1960s with the formation of enclaves and concentration camps, it made everyday life difficult for the Turkish Cypriot community, with many becoming refugees within the island itself, forced to relocate to other areas. The phase between 1963 and 1974 is narrated as the main conflict, as it is the phase of main suffering¹⁹⁸.

For Greek Cypriots, the active conflict is the invasion by Turkey and the ensuing civil war, which took place after the coup in 1974. In schoolbooks, as well as in the media, 1974 is

¹⁹⁷ Psaltis, 2016

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.; Papadakis, 2005

narrated as the start of the escalations, which led to the civil war¹⁹⁹. The island's division taking place after 1974 backs the Greek Cypriots' narrative.

Therefore, for Turkish Cypriots, the active conflict took place between 1963 and 1974, ending with Turkey's peace operation, while for Greek Cypriots the active conflict started in 1974, with the invasion of Turkey.

5.2 Who is to blame? – Blame and self-victimisation narratives

Greek Cypriots blame Turkey for the conflict, who started dividing the communities during the Ottoman empire, a fact that can be seen in formal education, where students learn about Turkish aggressions throughout history²⁰⁰. More recently, the British are blamed for further dividing the communities with their 'divide and rule' policy back when Cyprus was a colony. The Greek Cypriot community narrates that coexistence was peaceful until the British orchestrated violent incidents in the 1960s²⁰¹. Further, Greece and the US, due to their backing of the Greek government, are blamed for the coup in 1974, which provoked the Turkish invasion and occupation of half of the island²⁰². Thus, 'the West' is blamed for having betrayed the Greek Cypriots, and even helping the Turks²⁰³. Lastly, Turkey is blamed for invading, occupying half of the island, killing and causing the disappearance of Greek Cypriots, and taking the homes of many others²⁰⁴.

Turkish Cypriots blame the Greek Cypriots for mistreating them with the goal of eradicating them, starting in 1963, which led to a decade of suffering²⁰⁵. Further, Greek Cypriots' desire for enosis, which Turkish Cypriots did not want, is narrated as the main cause for the escalation of the tensions²⁰⁶, which ultimately led to the division, and later to the proclamation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Turkey, in contrast, is seen as an ally due to the peace operation in 1974, which is narrated as the 'Happy Peace Operation' having liberated Turkish Cypriots from Greek Cypriot oppression²⁰⁷.

¹⁹⁹ Psaltis, 2016

²⁰⁰ Papadakis 2005; Papadakis, 2008

²⁰¹ Papadakis, 2005

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ PRIO Cyprus Centre, 2010

²⁰⁵ Papadakis, 2005; Psaltis, 2016

²⁰⁶ McKeown & Psaltis, 2017

²⁰⁷ Stylianou, 2011; Psaltis, 2016

The narratives of blame are naturally connected to the narratives of self-victimisation. Through the communities defining themselves via the narrations as victims²⁰⁸, others can be blamed for all traumatising events. Crucial for the self-victimisation is the narrative of the own suffering, through killings, disappearances, and displacement. Additionally, the communities did not acknowledge any of their own wrongdoings for a long time, as they could otherwise no longer be the victim. Today, the communities have acknowledged their own blame to some extent, while still narrating that the blame of the others is bigger and, thus, they themselves are the bigger victims²⁰⁹.

Through portraying their own community as a victim, the communities do not need to take responsibility for their actions and confront the connected shame, which means they do not need to offer apologies or reparations to the other.

5.3 Who is threatened? – Threat narratives

In a similar vein, the narrative of blame is connected to the narrative of threat. When the differences between communities impact everyday life, becoming an existential threat²¹⁰, they can start building narratives that help mobilise their own community against the perceived aggressor for protective reasons²¹¹. Both communities' narratives of threat are based on the fear of expansionism. For Greek Cypriots, it is the fear of Turkish expansionism; for Turkish Cypriots it is the fear of oppression by Greek Cypriots and Greek expansionism through enosis²¹².

The fear of Turkish expansionism is narrated through the past confrontations between Greece and Turkey, with aggressions starting with the fall of Constantinople in 1453²¹³. Students learn the most important dates of Turkish aggressions against Greece in school, and they have pictures of 'brave' Greeks that fought against the Turks hanging on classroom walls, which overall builds the narrative of the threatening Turk²¹⁴. Media keeps the narrative of the threat

²⁰⁸ McKeown & Psaltis, 2017

²⁰⁹ Papadakis, 2008

²¹⁰ Gurr, 2007

²¹¹ King, 2007; Gurr, 2007

²¹² Psaltis, 2016

²¹³ Papadakis, 2005

²¹⁴ Ibid.

alive by connecting Turkey with illegal activities in their reporting and portrays the Turkish troops on the island as a threat²¹⁵.

For Turkish Cypriots, two threats are dominant. Firstly, the threat of oppression by Greek Cypriots, particularly visible in the years 1963 and 1974²¹⁶. The community experienced an existential threat due to the Greek Cypriot government and population, and describes that time in their narration as “hell every day”²¹⁷. Secondly, the threat of Greek expansionism, and the connected strive for enosis are claimed as the reason for the Turkish intervention in 1974²¹⁸. Greek expansionism is narrated through attributing importance to events such as the adoption of a resolution in the RoC’s government in 1967, declaring that enosis shall happen²¹⁹. Particularly the coup of 1974, backed by the Greek military junta is narrated as an attempt to extend Greek rule to Cyprus. Even after Greek Cypriots officially abandoned plans for enosis, the Turkish Cypriot leadership convinced its population that the plans for enosis are still there²²⁰.

5.4 Who is a real Cypriot? – Origin, glorification, and racism narratives

Both communities have differing historical narratives about the origins and ethnicity of the Cypriot people. Depending on the origin story and the attributed ethnicity, it becomes clear that only ‘true’ Cypriots have the right to the island, others are considered barbaric people who are excluded.

According to the Greek Cypriot narrative, Mycenaeans were the first to settle in Cyprus, hellenising the Cypriots²²¹. Even though different peoples conquered Cyprus and held the island as a colony, Cypriots have retained their Hellenic character due to the original settlers coming from Greece²²². Everyone who settled on the island at a later stage does not have the right to a place in Cyprus, which consequently excludes Turkish Cypriots. According to the narrative, Turkish Cypriots too are originally Greeks that have been islamicized²²³. While the Byzantine

²¹⁵ PRIO Cyprus Centre, 2010

²¹⁶ Psaltis, 2016; Papadakis, 2005

²¹⁷ Papadakis, 2005, 93-94

²¹⁸ Psaltis, 2016

²¹⁹ Papadakis, 2005

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Psaltis, 2016

²²² Papadakis, 2005

²²³ Papadakis, 2008

empire and thus Greece are glorified in the origin narrative, being described as “flourishing”²²⁴, the Turks of the Ottoman empire are considered barbaric, blood-thirsty, and as “bestially savage people”²²⁵. The way others, particularly Turks and Turkish Cypriots, are narrated in school and media, and that their ancestors’ descent determines and denies Turkish Cypriots their identity, makes the origin narrative racist²²⁶.

For Turkish Cypriots, the design of the narrative is similar, though reversed. Cyprus is considered Turkish, due to Ottomans being the original settlers on the island²²⁷. Here, the Ottoman period is glorified²²⁸ and Greek Cypriots are considered as their own group, but as subjects of the former Ottomans. They are not considered Greeks, which denies them the claim to a Greek identity and enosis. Similar to the other narrative, Greek Cypriots are described in a negative way, in the past as ungrateful, and closer to the present as barbaric²²⁹.

The origin narratives show the tensions between Greece and Turkey, fighting about their grand Byzantine and Ottoman empires, and they clearly show how racism is legitimised within the Cypriot communities, which in turn legitimises the political leaders’ claims for their solution to the conflict.

5.5 What should happen to the refugees? – Refugee and coexistence narratives

The differing narratives on who is considered a refugee and how past coexistence is narrated, implying how the communities should live together once the conflict is solved.

As Turkish Cypriots understand and narrate 1963 - 1974 as the main time of aggressions against them, talking of the past, living together with Greek Cypriots is narrated as “hell every day”²³⁰. Therefore, the community does not desire to coexist if the conflict is solved²³¹. When the ‘happy peace operation’ arrived in Cyprus in 1974, more people were displaced and relocated to the North compared to the previous time of hardship. The narrative surrounding people relocating is that they have come to their homeland²³². Overall, after 1974, and more specifically after the

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Psaltis, 2016

²²⁸ Papadakis, 2008

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Papadakis, 2005, 93-94

²³¹ Psaltis, 2016

²³² Papadakis, 2005

proclamation of the TRNC in 1983, displaced people are no longer officially considered and narrated as refugees; since they are now in their homeland, they should forget about their previous homes and lead a new life. Therefore, Turkish Cypriot refugees often say they `were´ refugees, speaking in the past tense²³³. The narrative of `We don't forget´ is prominent throughout Northern Cyprus, representing the desire of the population to never forget the suffering they have endured by the Greek Cypriots²³⁴, and thus to not coexist again²³⁵. The narrative of dislocated Turkish Cypriots no longer being refugees, as well as the narrative of `We don't forget´, legitimise the political demands for a divided Cyprus²³⁶.

In contrast, Greek Cypriots glorify the past, narrating the time of coexistence as a peaceful and pleasant time that was disrupted by outside powers²³⁷. Therefore, once the Cyprus conflict is solved, the communities should coexist again²³⁸. With regard to the refugee narrative, only Greek Cypriots that were dislocated in 1974 are considered refugees²³⁹.

The refugees' loss and their longing to return to their homes is represented in the `I don't forget´ (δεν ξεχνώ) narrative. The slogan is placed in prominent places, such as on posters and nowadays electronic billboards alongside pictures of villages and towns prior to annexation by Turkey. The slogan with said pictures and videos were also shown before the main evening news until the borders opened in 2003, accompanied by melancholic music, ensuring that Greek Cypriots never forget about the lost places, not letting the wound heal, making them feel the urge to return one day²⁴⁰. Additionally, documentaries on individual occupied villages and towns were shown on national TV²⁴¹. The glorification of coexistence in the past, and the prominent narration of `I don't forget´, which reminds of the lost land, homes and good life legitimise the Greek Cypriot demand for unification and return to the original homes²⁴².

The differing narratives of `We don't forget´ with Turkish Cypriots remembering the suffering of their community, legitimise the partition of the island, and the `I don't forget´ narrative for Greek Cypriots representing the loss of homes and the previous life, legitimise reunification

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Psaltis, 2016

²³⁶ Papadakis, 2005

²³⁷ Psaltis, 2016; Papadakis, 2005

²³⁸ Psaltis, 2016

²³⁹ Papadakis, 2005

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation, 2013

²⁴² Papadakis, 2005

and the returning to the homes, capture the essence of the contradicting narratives surrounding refugees and coexistence.

5.6 Collective narratives of trauma in the educational system

Within the educational system of both communities, an ethnocentric, narrativized version of history is being taught, except for a short period in the North. The teaching method and underlying ideals are the same, “justifying contemporary social arrangements or political actions”²⁴³.

Commonalities in the educational systems are the ethnocentric view and the narratives, teaching about the connection to the motherland²⁴⁴, only telling part of the truth and sometimes even lies. The latter is illustrated in the award-winning documentary ‘Sharing an Island’, where three young adults of both the Greek- and Turkish Cypriot communities came together and shared a house for five days, visiting different historical and cultural sites, and discussing the Cyprus conflict. During a fight about a contract allegedly accepting enosis, which was signed by Turkish Cypriots leaders according to the Greek Cypriot school education, it became clear that the schools had lied to their students and that this never happened²⁴⁵. The scene shows how students are taught lies. Unavoidably, if individuals never openly talk to the other community, they might spend their lifetime believing and perpetuating the lies and narratives fuelling the conflict.

A focus of the education is on the connection to the motherland. The history of Greece or Turkey, their glory and their conflicts are taught first, as well as how the other country is full of barbarians²⁴⁶. The Turkish Cypriots are called Turks, and the Greek Cypriots are called Greeks throughout the history books, further establishing the division between the two groups of Cypriots. In addition to this connection to the motherland, students are taught the origin narratives²⁴⁷, to ensure firstly, that they identify with the motherland and, secondly, to show that the other community does not have the legitimacy to call themselves true Cypriots.

²⁴³ Barton & Levstik 2004

²⁴⁴ Papadakis, 2008

²⁴⁵ Stylianou, 2011

²⁴⁶ Papadakis, 2005; Papadakis, 2008

²⁴⁷ Papadakis, 2008

Furthermore, collective trauma is kept alive for example when teachers ask children of refugees to ask their parents about their `real` homes²⁴⁸. Showing the children and their parents that their current home is not their true home, makes trauma transgenerational and thus cultural. Therefore, the educational systems largely participate in the perpetuation of collective narratives of trauma, making them transgenerational.

Between 2003 and 2010, the Turkish Cypriot leadership changed its history books, teaching a critical view of the past, acknowledging the own blame and the hurt caused to the other community, to raise critical citizens²⁴⁹. The books did not acknowledge the full extent of harm caused to Greek Cypriots but teaching about all of Cyprus and taking a critical stance on history with the aim of raising critically thinking citizens to reduce prejudice and bias was a breakthrough²⁵⁰. With the elected government of 2010, this changed, and the former textbooks were reinstated²⁵¹, thus, both sides continue to teach their children the collective narratives of trauma, to ensure they internalise them and stand behind the status quo and the political leaders' actions as adults.

In sum, the chapter shows that for all narrative themes almost contradicting narratives exist within the two communities. This increases the difficulty of solving the conflict, as both sides have fundamentally differing understandings of the conflict and the underlying issues that they feel need to be solved, so that it becomes difficult to bridge these gaps. If already no agreement exists on what the historically relevant events were, the likelihood of fully accepting the other's perspective and hurt is not high, as is visible in the Cyprus conflict. Furthermore, seeing the sheer number of narratives that exist within the conflict and how they are consistently narrated in everyday life, it shows how individuals see everyday life through the lens of the Cyprus conflict, which denies them the opportunity to heal and perpetuates the conflict.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Psialtis, 2016

Chapter Six: Peacebuilders’ attempt to destabilise collective narratives of trauma

The following chapter provides the analysis to answer the second sub-question

How do they influence the work of local peacebuilding initiatives?

This chapter analyses seven interviews that I have conducted during my fieldwork in Cyprus (see table 5 for an overview of the interviewees), as well as reports published by the interviewees’ organisations to get a broader insight into their activities, methods and into what they think their impact is.

The chapter is divided into two parts, along the lines of the decentred narrative analysis approach, as it shows how actions are informed by underlying belief systems. The first section introduces the motivation behind the peacebuilders’ actions, demonstrating their underlying beliefs. It analyses why they engage with what they believe are stumbling blocks to peace. To do so, it firstly analyses what they believe are relevant stumbling blocks to peace and, secondly, what their motivations and values behind their engagement in peacebuilding actions are. Section two analyses how peacebuilders engage with the collective narratives and the interconnected stumbling blocks to peace due to their underlying beliefs. In particular, it analyses how the peacebuilders attempt to destabilise or stabilise the narratives they interact with.

| Interviewee | Affiliation | Date of Interview |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Manager | Home for Cooperation (H4C) | 24.5.2022 |
| Co-Founder | Cyprus Inno | 28.04.2022 |
| Film director | Film Documentary: Sharing an Island | 23.05.2022 |
| Director | PRIO Cyprus Centre (PCC) | 17.05.2022 |
| Communications Officer | HADE | 05.05.2022 |
| Team-member | Peace Players Cyprus (PPC) | 29.04.2022 |
| Civil affairs staff | International Organisation (IO) | 11.05.2022 |

Table 5: Interviewees

6.1 Peacebuilders' Belief systems

To gain insight into what the peacebuilders understand as hurdles to achieve peace in Cyprus, their answers are classified into four main categories: firstly, their *lack of confidence* in the top-down political peace process alone to solve the conflict; secondly, the *implications of the physical division*; thirdly, the *lack of institutional support*; and fourthly, the *problems connected to narratives*. Lastly, the analysis extends on the peacebuilders' belief systems.

6.1.1 Lack of confidence in the political peace process

The interviewees largely agree that the “top-down approaches have failed us for so many years [...] people are comfortable in their positions. They don't want to risk having something different”²⁵². The film director argues that “th[e]se groups of peacemakers [...] find themselves quite apart from their policy and decision-making. I don't think they're represented by the current political wave”²⁵³. Additionally, she argues that:

Cyprus is governed by such capitalist governments, [which] reflects on how they deal with the Cyprus problem. [...] [I] feel like the biggest enemy to peace is the greed for money. They are not working on a grass-roots level for the people, but they always see it from a financial point of view, either if that concerns the gas, [...] or that kind of thing ²⁵⁴.

Therefore, due to the ideological distance, politicians don't seem to share similar priorities and beliefs with peacebuilders, which becomes visible in their inaction towards implementing strategies to further peacebuilding within the population. “They talk about that we want peace, but there's no actionable steps to actually get provided this institutional support”²⁵⁵. HADE agrees, “If they don't truly want [...] a solution, then they are not going to make the right campaign for the solution to come”²⁵⁶, which shows the frustration that many peacebuilders share and their connected lack of confidence in the political peace process.

²⁵² Interview: Communications Officer, HADE, 05.05.2022, South Nicosia

²⁵³ Interview: Film director, Documentary: Sharing an Island, 23.05.2022, online

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Interview: Civil affairs staff, International Organisation, 11.05.2022, online. The members of the IO asked me not to mention their or their organisation's name

²⁵⁶ Communications Officer, HADE

When I asked what they identify as the biggest stumbling blocks to peace, most Cypriot interviewees laughed and claimed that it was the political process itself. Therefore, this explains that they see the current dominant approach focusing on the politicians as ineffective, as the politicians do not want to achieve peace in their opinion, which justifies why they want to strengthen the role of the local population in the process in the hope of finding a solution.

6.1.2 Implications of the physical division

“I think part of the problem deeply running, is the fact that the two communities constantly have only been drifting apart”²⁵⁷, “there’s no ties”²⁵⁸. Since the communities do not share everyday life, many difficulties emerge, both practical, as well as ideological. On the one hand, this leads to “the lack of understanding and trust between the communities”²⁵⁹, which consequently fuels the conflict. On the other hand, “they have no idea who is the other. And they hate him, but [...] we have no idea of who is the other. [...] What do they eat? [...] How often do they go to their religious institution?”²⁶⁰. This illustrates that peacebuilders find the lack of knowledge about the other an important issue, as the normalisation of the physical division and the consequences perpetuate the conflict, as it fuels distrust and a lack of connection between the people, which means they do not yearn for a solution. Additionally, the division has practical implications for peacebuilding activities.

It is impossible to be inclusive in Cyprus [...] because if you do an event in the South, you are excluding all people in the North that cannot cross to the South. [...] This is a very big obstacle [...] to understand each other [...].²⁶¹

Peace Players Cyprus shares the opinion, as they answer that “Logistics [and] checkpoints”²⁶² are the most frustrating part of their work, that inhibit exchanges between the people and, thus, inhibit understanding. Overall, it is difficult for NGOs to organise events on both sides of the island, as:

²⁵⁷ Interview: Director, PRIO Cyprus Centre (PRIO CC), 28.04.2022, online

²⁵⁸ Civil affairs staff, IO

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Communications Officer, HADE

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Interview: Team-member, Peace Players Cyprus (PPC), 29.04.2022, Nicosia buffer zone

For example, to [...] pay people, [and], vendors from both communities, [...] organisations [...] in the South or in the North cannot do any bank transfers to the other communities. [...] So even very practical issues like [that] are quite difficult²⁶³.

Therefore, peacebuilders see the physical division as a reason for the deep prejudices, the lack of desire to be reunited with the other side, and as a hurdle to execute peacebuilding activities.

6.1.3 Institutional hurdles

Obstacles on an institutional level are also strongly evident in the interviewees' answers. As the conflict has been going on for a long time:

The accumulation of all this in the last 40, 50 years led to a situation where [...] for it to be rebuilt again, you need a lot of effort, a lot of institutional support, which is lacking again on the island. [...] [But] there [is]n't a lot of institutional support to create more understanding and empathy between the communities²⁶⁴.

The lack of support indicates the political leadership welcomes initiatives only theoretically but does not actively support them to make the needed change. Therefore, it becomes clear that the political leadership does not try to support the NGOs in their activities but rather makes it difficult for them. Firstly, because of a lack of funding, and secondly, due to threats by nationalists and the political leadership. "They might get attacked. Many times, we see activities being stopped by the government [...], especially in the South [...]"²⁶⁵.

Connected to the decisions made by the communities' political institutions, Education is one of the most influential factors in the conflict, as it perpetuates the collective narratives. "[...] The education system [...] is a huge problem"²⁶⁶, as "[they] are quite biased in what they teach"²⁶⁷.

²⁶³ Civil affairs staff, IO

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Interview: Co-founder, Cyprus Inno, 28.04.2022, Nicosia buffer zone

²⁶⁷ Team-member, PPC

We find out about different parts of history. If you grow up in the Greek Cypriot community in the South, you learn a specific set of events. If you grow up in the Turkish Cypriot community in the North, again, you learn a different set of events²⁶⁸.

Due to the selective history lessons, as chapter five shows, schools only teach specific facts and knowledge, on which the next section elaborates. In addition to teaching the biased history of the conflict, the educational systems teach “[...] the good things of the nation and the bad things of the other nation [...], no critical thinking, no self-criticism”²⁶⁹. In the South, “any attempts to change the education system is blocked by the church [...]”²⁷⁰, which shows the role of the relevant institutions in blocking potential reform for peace, and thus their disinterest in furthering peacebuilding activities.

In sum, the peacebuilders understand and perceive the political leaderships, the educational system, and the church in the South as actors that actively perpetuate the conflict, rather than as a support system. They do so either through not acting on their promises and passively inhibiting the peacebuilders’ activities as they do not allocate funding, or secondly, through actively threatening peacebuilding actors to end their activities. Therefore, change could only be possible if either the institutions change their behaviour, if the population pressures them to act in favour of peace, or if the IOs that do not get threatened by the political leaderships can extend their activities to reach more local population.

6.1.4 Differing narratives

Connected to the differing educational systems are differing collective narratives that are perpetuated by the communities. According to the director of the PRIO Cyprus Centre:

We rarely fight facts inside this. We fight perceptions and ghosts. It is perceptions that, at the end of the day, form the reality in the people’s minds when they make their choice. [...] People sometimes in conflict areas, and that

²⁶⁸ Interview: Manager, Home for Cooperation (H4C), 24.05.2022, online

²⁶⁹ Communications Officer, HADE

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

seems to be the case in Cyprus, live more in the past rather than the present or the future²⁷¹.

This repeatedly shows the important role narratives play in the conflict. But “it is person to person [...] and depends on their own experiences or whatever they heard from their elders”²⁷², therefore it is crucial not to generalise, but rather look into the context of the individuals’ narratives to counter them. “The challenge is to navigate around these narratives”²⁷³, which describes one of the main tasks peacebuilders take on. The importance of dealing with the narratives comes as “everything [...] has to do with misconceptions about the other or prejudice that we carry sometimes, [...] we all carry stereotypes [...] in our minds”²⁷⁴.

In addition to education, media appears to be another actor perpetuating the narratives, which becomes a hurdle for achieving peace. Recently, the government of the RoC allowed the import of some non-animal products from the North to be distributed to the South and Europe. The national news narrated that this food would be on the table in a negative way, which the film director criticises:

[...] it’s all about representation in the media. So how [do] you prepare the people to live together if this is how you transmit this kind of news, even the simple news that I told you [...]. It’s a very nationalist rhetoric²⁷⁵.

The intensity of the narratives has different effects when deeply ingrained in people. For some, “the established perceptions and the lack of the will to tackle”²⁷⁶, can be a challenge “combined with lack of pragmatism”²⁷⁷ as it can lead to missed opportunities. For others, particularly young people, they can lead more to fear rather than unwillingness to act. The trauma has been inherited to the children, as “a big issue [...] is the lack of addressing trauma. [...] it is very much generational as it was never addressed even mono-communally”²⁷⁸. The internalisation of narratives is very visible in children:

With a lot of these younger kids [...] their opinions have already been formed a little bit through the educational system, through the stories that they hear from their family, from their grandparents. So sometimes kids are scared. We

²⁷¹ Director, PRIO CC

²⁷² Co-founder, Cyprus Inno

²⁷³ Manager, H4C

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Film director, Documentary

²⁷⁶ Director, PRIO CC

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Civil affairs staff, IO

have a lot of stories of kids that are crying, giving tantrums, all of that, because they just don't want to meet kids from the other side, or they don't want to cross to the other side because these people are monsters and they have killed people. They are evil [...] they do have some prejudices²⁷⁹.

According to the peacebuilders, the collective narratives perpetuated through education, media and the family, deeply impact individuals. Therefore, they promote misconceptions and mistrust, and keep people in the past, preventing them from moving forward, which they identify as one of the main reasons why the peace process fails.

6.1.5 Peacebuilders' beliefs

The stumbling blocks to peace that peacebuilders identify, inform their beliefs in what is needed for a successful peacebuilding process. Overall, they agree that prejudices and misconceptions need to be broken down.

Peace is not only in politics. Peace is a mindset [...] of not being racist, of not hav[ing] enemies because of ethnicities, not having enemies because you don't know them [...] so we have to build a bridge²⁸⁰.

When asked which narratives they want to weaken, the overarching response was “everything that has to do with misconceptions about the other or prejudice that we carry sometimes”²⁸¹. To do so, they believe that they need to strengthen interaction and collaboration:

We both believed that there wasn't enough intercommunal [...]. It's mainly about two people being able to communicate, have a dialogue and collaborate together [...] it puts a lightbulb in their head²⁸².

Therefore, interaction and collaboration are the main goal. “The mission of the home is to be an enabler to facilitate contact, [...] relationships, to build bridges”²⁸³.

I think top-down approaches are not going to convince the people. (...) of course [it] can help (...) I think people need to interact with each other and [...]

²⁷⁹ Team member, PPC

²⁸⁰ Communications Officer, HADE

²⁸¹ Manager, H4C

²⁸² Co-founder, Cyprus Inno

²⁸³ Manager, H4C

experience their own, have their own story. Because without interaction, you believe the state²⁸⁴.

Largely, the focus of peacebuilding activities is on Nicosia, where most organisations are situated and thus the interaction with people is the highest, but “[we] wanted to expand outside of here and have these posts in all sorts of sectors so that they expand in different cities of the island as well”²⁸⁵. This can, at times, be challenging, which motivated the director to make her documentary film on the interaction between youth of the two sides “because a film as a medium, you can take it and you can screen it anywhere. [...] We tried to go to very far away communities and outside of Cyprus as well and talk about these issues”²⁸⁶.

In addition to promoting interaction, offering unbiased information to citizens and politicians to decide on their priorities can support the peace building process. Among others, the PRIO Cyprus Centre, for instance, has been:

[...] designed to contribute to an informed public debate on the Cyprus problem and the framework [...]. We don't take a stance on things; we are not trying to impose models of behaviours or solutions. [...] For people to have a[n] [...] objective basis on which to make their mind [...]²⁸⁷.

Peace Players are also:

not trying to influence any opinions here, but we want to at least give them the opportunity to form their own opinion outside of the [...] traditional ways of getting information about the conflict²⁸⁸,

which shows that the peacebuilders believe that offering unbiased information is vital for weakening the dominant collective narratives in the communities. On a more personal level, many of the peacebuilders “needed to feel something is happening”²⁸⁹, to ensure that the conflict continues to be tackled, particularly because the absence of violence might result in people becoming comfortable with the current situation and, therefore, the latter risking never changing.

²⁸⁴ Communications Officer, HADE

²⁸⁵ Civil affairs staff, IO

²⁸⁶ Film director, Documentary

²⁸⁷ Director, PRIO Cyprus Centre

²⁸⁸ Team-member, PPC

²⁸⁹ Manager, H4C

Because it is so-called frozen, it is much more difficult to solve in a sense, because [...] there is no burning daily reality and [...] and violent conflict that would prompt people to do so. So, it's extremely important that we don't let it be on the [...] backburner²⁹⁰.

Most peacebuilders I spoke to are Cypriot. The high number of Cypriots involved compared to internationals in bottom-up approaches could be the case because:

I felt that in Cyprus, I could make a change because it was my society. I understood it better. Like I had a take [...] I was part of this, and I felt in place to do that. So I think for me that was quite motivating²⁹¹.

Apart from weakening the traditional narratives, peacebuilders also seem to be seeking to form a new one: “I think what we want people to get out of this, is that a lot more is possible for [...] Cyprus [...] we are trying to share the narrative around life that exists across the divide”²⁹². Through showing that life is possible with the two communities, “we want to give people that vision. If we work together, it's more beneficial in the long term and we're stronger”²⁹³. They try to strengthen the narrative as “we can focus [on] the common struggles. We can focus on the cultural diversity and embrace it, [...] the forward-looking narrative”²⁹⁴.

In sum, peacebuilders want to weaken the traditional narratives that fuel fear and discrimination, which they believe they can achieve through interaction and collaboration; they want to make people think critically, to form their own opinions, which they are convinced they can achieve through offering unbiased information; and build and strengthen a new narrative on how cooperation is possible.

6.2 Peacebuilders' engagement with collective narratives of trauma

This section shows how the interviewed peacebuilders interact with the collective narratives of trauma, based on their underlying belief systems that were identified in the previous section.

²⁹⁰ Director, PRIO CC

²⁹¹ Civil affairs staff, IO

²⁹² Manager, H4C

²⁹³ Co-founder, Cyprus Inno

²⁹⁴ Communications Officer, HADE

6.2.1 PRIO

The PRIO Cyprus Centre, that opened in 2005, “acts as an academic research institute and a think tank in trying to contribute to th[e] informed public debate on the Cyprus problem”²⁹⁵, and is no activist organisation. Therefore, they distribute objective information for when “people decide on their future”²⁹⁶. As the peace process should be owned by the population:

We always have a[n] [...] objective [...] information background on what we do. We offer analysis [...] but that is the most we can do in presenting the public with; the final decision is for themselves ²⁹⁷.

It shows that they deem it important for the population to own the process, and to form their own opinion, independently from the collective narratives. In addition to explaining the overall context of the conflict and conducting research on emerging challenges, it “tr[ies] to take what is discussed at the track one and introduce[s] it in the public dialogue in a nuanced way and vice versa”²⁹⁸. This means that they take information discussed by the political elite and make it available to the public, as they believe the disconnect between the population and political leaderships can stall the peace process. It is crucial for them to offer the public access to unbiased, non-narrativized information on the conflict and new developments, which helps firstly, to form an opinion that is neither overridden by an emotional response nor does it trigger the instilled traumas, and secondly, to avoid that politicians choose which information (not) to relay to the constituency. Furthermore, PCC organises events to “facilitate as much contact as possible between the two peoples [...] as the perception of enmity is very much part of the [...] non-contact”²⁹⁹.

Therefore, the PCC destabilizes the collective narratives of trauma through offering alternative, objective information, which can change the way the public thinks about certain aspects of the conflict, through attempting to bridge the disconnect between the political leadership and the public, as well as through establishing contact between the communities so they can confront their perceptions and start questioning their beliefs.

6.2.2 HADE

²⁹⁵ Director, PRIO CC

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

As a young activist organisation, HADE has many volunteers “that are teaching Greek and Turkish”³⁰⁰. One of their main goals is to “gain [people’s] curiosity. Inspire them to read more”³⁰¹, which is similar to the PCC’s aim. Interaction with the other community, while learning about concepts surrounding the division, is their main method for attempting to weaken the collective narratives.

One of our main concepts [...] is to promote physical interactions [...] and create meaningful connections between youth [...]. We are also organizing excursions in both sides of the divide, and we are always trying to link different concepts, concepts to the division³⁰².

To offer the interactions to as many islanders as possible, they try to organise activities that are ideally for “free, because we are trying to be [...] as inclusive as we can”³⁰³. To foster inclusivity, their activities alternate between the North and the South, which also means participants “get out of their comfort zone [...] and they start questioning things”³⁰⁴. Being outside of the comfort zone on the other side of the island, traumas might get triggered. If they emerge, “we say it with their name, we express our opinions”³⁰⁵, which can trigger conversations and make participants further question their beliefs. In addition to conversations, HADE also:

Tr[ies] to bring new narratives [...] by oral history, by organising excursions that we invite people that are much older than us to tell us their story and go to abandoned villages and explain to us how life was there³⁰⁶.

Overall, adding to the discussions about existing narratives, HADE wants to “focus [o]n the common struggles, the forward-looking narrative”³⁰⁷. They try to frame the common struggles that connect to the forward-looking narrative both via looking at the past and, towards the future, using methods similar to those of politicians when building their narratives. Talking about the past, they stress, for example, the “common struggle of the Pancyprian strikes, and a lot of oppression from the British force [...], killing many people, arresting many”³⁰⁸. As for

³⁰⁰ Communications Officer, HADE

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

the future, they hope “that the checkpoints will leave”³⁰⁹ and thus a reunited island will become a reality.

Through the group activities, language classes and confrontations of the collective narratives, they try to foster mutual understanding, respect, they advocate for the end of the existence of checkpoints to allow for increased physical interaction, and they try to build a narrative that focuses on a common future through showing how collaboration worked in the past and could work again in the future.

6.2.3 Cyprus Inno

Cyprus Inno, in contrast, is building an inter-communal entrepreneurship ecosystem, and chooses not to openly interact with the collective narratives.

We don't force bi-communality because we're more focused on the business needs. [...] We find all the resources who might be able to connect, and the rest happens naturally. And when it happens naturally, the sustainability of the collaborations is longer³¹⁰.

Rather, they try to understand the business needs of the community to bring people together and create sustainable relationships, which in turn weakens the collective narratives without actively addressing them. This does not only include Cypriots, but “it's for anybody that lives here, passes by or participates in the economy of Cyprus”³¹¹.

They see business as a particularly valuable path to building peace, as:

Every time there is a political downfall because of the politicians or newly elected politicians, you might see those people losing motivation as well. But [...] business is always there. [...] Usually when you look at peacebuilding initiatives, it's interest-based. So, a person needs to be interested in peacebuilding to attend an event when you call it a peacebuilding event. But what we do with business is a need. People need to earn money³¹².

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Co-founder, Cyprus Inno

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid.

This explains how Cyprus Inno can attract participants, such as “people from centre- to right-wing parties joining our events that you wouldn't see [...] in a regular peacebuilding event”³¹³. Through having sustainable relationships, “there’s a level where you make somebody aware of something. It puts a light bulb on their head. They start thinking differently and investigating”³¹⁴.

Through their focus on business, which is a need throughout all parts of the communities, and through their flexibility in finding out what the communities need, they engage businesspeople who build long-term relationships, which supports their narrative “that together we can grow further and more sustainable”³¹⁵. They attempt to weaken the collective narratives through engaging audiences that traditionally do not join peacebuilding events, as they believe that interactions break down the barriers, and strengthen this new narrative through their stability and continuity, compared to the political process, showing that collaborating between the communities can work.

6.2.4 Home for Cooperation

For the Home of Cooperation, that was established 11 years ago in the UN buffer zone, “it’s more about getting people together to actually take the next step. Because for a while now, the peacebuilding process focused on bringing people in the same room”³¹⁶. Now, they focus on “the more difficult discussions that trigger more dialogue and more exploration about what identity means”³¹⁷. Interacting with the traditional collective narratives, the Home:

[...]share[s] multiple stories, [...] different narratives. [We] explain also the shared pain or the shared anxieties or the shared kind of aspirations for the future. The more stories you have, the less polarized two stories will become. Because if you [...] share more and different experiences, then all these narratives start to become less resistant to each other³¹⁸.

Like the other organisations, Home for Cooperation wants to offer alternative points of view to have the individuals build their own opinion. Here, they also go beyond words, as “this is usually through art for us [...] because artists are invited to question [...] how they exist within

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Manager, Home for Cooperation

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

these narratives [and] interesting discussions and dialogues come from this”³¹⁹. To break stereotypes, these kinds of activities can be crucial, as they “mak[e] oneself aware of the stereotypes [which] in itself is a very important step”³²⁰.

If one is aware of the stereotypes and implications of the narratives, the Home tries to share the narrative that there is contact between the two sides, that “life exists across the divide”³²¹. It will do so through “a short documentary, which is not shared yet to the public”³²².

To increase cooperation between the communities, the Home has two pillars. Firstly, supporting others “to create their project, to run their events, whatever they might have in their mind”³²³, as they offer rooms and can connect people if needed, and secondly, through “our own programs that we run”³²⁴.

We are presenting a model for what the area could look like, even a solution, [...] through this interaction and coexistence every day [...] We work together, we create things together³²⁵.

Therefore, the Home for Cooperation interacts with the narratives firstly, through trying to break them down through their interactions and activities with individuals, particularly via art and through getting people to attend the many different events they host, and secondly, via their bi-communal model of operation, hoping to make individuals question their beliefs and open up to collaboration, as they see that cooperation is possible.

6.2.5 Peace Players Cyprus

Peace Players Cyprus’ model of destabilising the collective narratives is the most extensive of the analysed organisations “because there is a very clear pipeline”³²⁶, as they build interaction and understanding “through sports and non-formal education”³²⁷. To bridge the divides:

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Team-member, Peace Players Cyprus

³²⁷ Ibid.

All our programs make sure that [they] need to work with people from different backgrounds, different cultures. It's not always only between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, but also in people who have maybe a migrant background or people from refugee communities.

To firstly attract people to join their basketball practices, club membership is very cheap, “so there are quite some pull factors that might attract some families and kids that might not be open-minded towards the peacebuilding side of what we do”³²⁸. Being a member of PCC, a child goes through different peacebuilding steps. In the beginning it is mono-communal, and after getting to know the team and the coach, “they start to meet people from the other side or different communities, and they realize internally how they might be the same or there might be differences”³²⁹.

They don't do a lot of different stuff than they would do in their normal practice. But they do it with people from the other community and that's where they realize: “hey, these are also just kids like me!” You have done multiple trainings most of the times with the same other group of kids. So, you actually build a relationship, you get familiar. It feels not that scary anymore³³⁰.

After developing a relationship with children from the other side, when they are 12, they can join the bicomunal basketball league “which is the first ever bicomunal [...] sports league on the island”³³¹. Non-formal education then becomes part of the program. It “goes a little bit more into sharing cultures, conflict resolution and peace building, [...] but in a very playful way, [...] through [...] fun activities mostly”³³². When they turn 14, they can join the leadership development program, where they “meet once a month and we go really into conflict resolution, peace building, leadership skills”³³³. Furthermore, to support the children when they get triggered by the traumas that underly their collective narratives, or if they have questions, they can ask their coaches, as many are alumni. “They are role models to the kids. [...] We also realise that the kids really look up to them and they can [...] answer any question”³³⁴.

With their plan, that might be so clear because Peace Players is represented in multiple conflict areas, and thus has had the time and experience to develop its program, of how to introduce

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Ibid.

young children to the other community, build relationships and teach them about concepts connected to peace, in their experience, they weaken the collective narratives as after participating in the program for some time, the children “don't really understand why there's a conflict and [...] they really want to meet each other also outside of the peace program”³³⁵, which clearly demonstrates how the original narratives may become destabilized through allowing interaction and allowing the children to form their own belief systems.

6.2.6 Film director – Sharing an Island

Danae Stylianou's documentary film *Sharing an island* “was one of the few really bicomunal projects in film, and both on camera and off camera”³³⁶ at the time, in 2011. For the protagonists on camera that came from the two sides of the island, “we were basically giving triggers for the group to start conversations and analyse[d] things as they visited these places and as they experienced and interacted”³³⁷. Hence, the filmmaker had the participants actively confront and discuss their internalised conflicting collective narratives. The narratives and stories they were addressing are common themes within the Cypriot audience who watched the film. These were for example: “Sertunc, who has been a victim of a fascist attack, and Bahire, who had this background with the missing grandfather, which is a very [...] known story in Cyprus”³³⁸. As every viewer has their own experiences, and therefore watches and understands it in their own way, “I would like people to feel the importance of peace in whatever sense that is, [...] [while] we can experience this journey with these people”³³⁹.

Asked if there were any collective narratives she tried to weaken with this film, she responded:

That's the whole essence of the film. [...] It's trying to break down these stereotypes and narratives, but at the same time allowing the people who are in the film to express them. [The viewer] would see how these people narrate the history because they were affected by the propaganda of each side. So, we acknowledge that this is what is spread in the society³⁴⁰.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Film director, documentary

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

The acknowledgement of the other's perspective plays a crucial role in the film, as it leads to understanding between the participants. Initially,

The group was kind of separated. But by the end of the trip, they came to realize that there are dividing elements, that they cannot be erased. [...] But [...] they needed to overcome them so they could be together in this house. Let's say it's kind of like a metaphor for how the wider society would have to deal with issues of trauma and conflict for the bigger cause of reuniting the island. [...] You have to cultivate acceptance³⁴¹.

The documentary confronts the viewer not only with the other side's narratives, but also with their own, by contrasting them, and showing how it is possible to overcome the prejudices fuelled by one's beliefs in building acceptance with the other community through questioning their very own beliefs. Overall, it allows for the viewer to relate with the process of getting to know the other side, through identifying with the protagonists that share similar stories like many Cypriots. Furthermore, through showing the importance of acknowledging the other side's perspective and struggle, it offers a perspective on how the broader conflict could benefit from the interaction. Here as well, the peacebuilder attempts to confront the viewers belief system, hoping to weaken the collective narratives. Particularly as screening a movie reaches more people than static peacebuilding activities located in Nicosia, it offers the potential to make more people question their beliefs, even though they are not as extensive as long lasting, interactions in person.

6.2.7 International Organisation

Lastly, one of the international organisations³⁴² based in Cyprus tries to weaken mistrust and animosity between the people "through contact and through meaningful discussions and communication, [as] we do realise that people do enhance their empathy and their understanding toward the other people"³⁴³.

Therefore, they too are convinced that interaction changes the traditional narratives. One of the main ways this IO increases contact is through the support it offers to NGOs if they try to reach out to the other side, in logistical questions, or if they need small grants. "We work closely with

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² The members of the IO chose to remain anonymous.

³⁴³ Civil affairs staff, IO

them”³⁴⁴. Since most NGOs and IOs are close to the buffer zone in Nicosia, this IO “decided [...] that they wanted to expand [...] and have these posts in all sorts of sectors so that they expand in different cities of the island as well”³⁴⁵. As the previous section shows, cities far away from the buffer zone mostly do not get in contact with peacebuilding activities, therefore, their inhabitants oftentimes do not question their beliefs connected to the Cyprus Conflict. Expanding activities to these areas might lead to more people questioning their beliefs, which is easier for IOs than it is for the NGOs, due to the higher standing they have with the political leaderships and the higher financial support.

To ensure that people engage with the IO’s activities repeatedly, thus increasing the likelihood of questioning the collective narratives:

We want them to have a good experience. [...] When they start engaging more meaningfully in an activity, they [...] understand that all of these other narratives and stereotypes are also part of what they grew up as well³⁴⁶.

The IO also wants to strengthen a narrative of collaboration through their own organisation, which they also narrate on their social media.

We are [...] bicomunal [...]. There's two people that work together on something and [...] then we are [...] going to meetings together, [and] I don't decide by myself, I need to discuss first with my colleague. [...] That's also something that I think showcases to people like this is that this is possible, right? [And] the messaging in our social media, it's a lot of like different faces [...] talking about their experience [...] trying to promote a cooperation between organizations or people that are working on something³⁴⁷.

The IO has similar goals of promoting understanding, which it implements through events that bring people from all communities together, as they believe confronting the prejudices through interacting with the other side will weaken them. Further to the interactions, their bi-communal operation model portrays how cooperation could work. Contrary to NGOs, they are better accepted by the political leaderships, which makes it easier for them to implement their projects. Thus, they also support NGOs in their work, which increases the number of people NGOs can interact with and weaken the narrative of prejudice in.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ ibid

Summing up, as all interviewees or their organisations believe that one of the main stumbling blocks to peace are the collective narratives of trauma and their implications, they try to destabilise them when engaging with them, to overcome them. Overall, they want to spark new ideas and that people who interact with the peacebuilders question their beliefs, as they offer them differing perspectives and information than they have themselves, which is oftentimes done through interaction with people from other communities. Depending on the peacebuilder and their underlying beliefs in what is the most effective way to go about destabilising the collective narratives, the methods to do so differ. Furthermore, almost all peacebuilders seek to establish a new narrative, that is not yet a dominant one. It is the narrative that collaboration between the communities is possible. Throughout their activities, and partly through the structure of the organisations, they try to model how cooperation could work for the rest of the island.

Conclusion

Concluding, this thesis answered the research question

How do collective narratives of trauma influence the Cyprus peacebuilding process?

Through answering the two sub-questions that guided the analysis.

- 1) *What are the key collective narratives of trauma in the Cypriot communities?*
- 2) *How do they influence the work of local peacebuilding initiatives?*

To answer the first sub-question, one can divide the key narratives into six categories. The narratives describe what exactly is considered the active conflict, the blame narrative and the connected self-victimisation, the origin narrative, the threat narrative, and the refugee narrative. Within the categories, the conflicting communities have opposing narratives, which complicates finding a solution to the conflict as both sides have fundamentally different understandings of the conflict, making it difficult to bridge the gaps.

Regarding the second sub-question, the peacebuilders' aim is to destabilise the collective narratives of trauma, particularly the narratives of prejudices and the connected hatred and distrust. They engage with the collective narratives on a local level. Through different methods, depending on their beliefs of what is effective, they offer individuals an alternative perspective from the way they were socialised, through constructing opportunities to interact with the other community and through receiving less biased information, to confront and form their own beliefs. In contrast, peacebuilders try to strengthen the emerging narrative that common struggles exist, such as the pain felt by all communities. It is emerging as a collective narrative, as politicians partly acknowledge their communities' blame, which offers space to build bridges. Furthermore, I argue, that peacebuilders try to establish a new collective narrative, which shows that collaboration between the communities is possible and exists. Ultimately, they hope that through engaging with enough people, the new narrative of how cooperation is possible will be strengthened, which could become a new collective narrative that could influence the peacebuilding process bottom-up and move it out of its protractedness.

To answer the overarching research question, collective narratives of trauma are the primary reason for the stalling of the peace process. Today, 60 years after the first round of violent conflict, politicians still use the communities' traumas and politicise them to shape the public

opinions in a way that helps them win the next election, through formal education and media. If they wanted to, the political leaderships could change these narrations. Instead, they continue to narrate the own community as the victim and the other in a way that justifies their political agenda. In the North, to divide the island to ensure peace, in the South, to unify the island to receive justice. Due to their short-sightedness, the political leaders use their own people's hurt for their benefit, as they purposively perpetuate the collective narratives of trauma and thus repeatedly re-traumatise their own population. Hence, the Cyprus conflict will likely not be solved by relying on the top-down approach that focuses on a political solution to the conflict.

The UN mission UNFICYP also plays an important role in the perpetuation of the collective narratives of trauma, as they have ensured that the buffer zone divides the island for the past 60 years. Even though UNFICYP has programs encouraging cooperation and interactions, they are not designed for the larger population, but individuals close to the border. According to the new head of UNFICYP, the UN has understood that the broader population needs to be involved in the peace process, which the UN has neglected in the past. They will try to do so by increasing business ties across the island³⁴⁸.

Even though the plan to involve a broader population moves their strategy in the right direction, focusing on business again only focuses on a certain group of people, and it is not clear how that should extend to the broader population without business ties. The UN, as the peacebuilding actor that is most respected by the political leaderships and does not face similar threats as NGOs, should design strategies that put trauma at the heart of their approach, as only when addressing the collective narratives of trauma broadly, to change the broad population's perceptions, the Cyprus Conflict can be solved, as even if a political solution existed tomorrow, the population could not suddenly change their belief systems.

NGOs are more confident in their peacebuilding measures within the population, as they are convinced that their actions change the perceptions of the individuals they interact with, but they do not have the means or support to conduct peacebuilding work in the broader population. They see that the change within the population to favour peace moves slowly, which the UN could accelerate.

³⁴⁸ Head of mission at UNFICYP Colin Stewart, speech given at the bi-communal business lunch of the German embassy in Cyprus, 10th May 2022, Nicosia

My thesis benefitted from my identity as a half Greek Cypriot, as interviewees likely perceived me as an insider rather than an outsider. Most were quite honest with me, also opening up about their own opinions, worries and hopes for the future. My identity and how I positioned myself in the research could also be a shortcoming. I might be slightly biased; therefore I was constantly reflecting on the implications of my identity throughout the research. As I conducted seven interviews, conducting more might increase the validity of the findings, and through more interviews, different beliefs might have emerged.

As the influence of collective trauma is crucial to the peacebuilding process, relevant future research could attempt to theorize what a trauma-informed peace process could look like in Cyprus that could succeed in changing the belief systems of a significant part of the population. It would also be crucial to assess how large the population size would need to be to have an impact on the process and push for a solution from the bottom up. Furthermore, the impact of the collective narratives of trauma on the political leader's actions could be researched, to understand how the perpetuation could be broken. Lastly, it would be relevant to investigate the impact of peacebuilder's engagement with the collective narratives, to understand which activities are most impactful for certain target audiences, to see how they might be extended for the larger population to increase the impact on the peace process, to overcome its protractedness.

Concluding, my thesis shows that in the status quo, the collective narratives of trauma, which are the primary reason for the stalling of the peace process, can only be broken and replaced by narratives that support inter-communal cooperation through engaging the broader population. Peacebuilders have been trying to achieve this for a longer time, but to succeed, three things would need to change. Firstly, the political leaderships would need to remove institutional hurdles that block peacebuilding activities, secondly, the educational system would need to be reformed, to end the perpetuation of current narratives of trauma, and thirdly, the UN, as the peacebuilding agent most respected by the political leadership, would need to focus on engaging the broader population to change their perceptions rather than focusing on politicians, or only a limited group of people that predominantly lives close to the border. Only then, collective trauma within the conflict can be addressed, and peace can be achieved.

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