A Little Bit of History and a Lot of Opinion: Biased Authenticity in Belfast and Nicosia

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Abstract
Tourism has become a significant feature of contemporary capitalist society and the phrase "ethnic tourism" has emerged to account for the increasing ways in which individuals seek to escape the homogenisation of cultures by seeking out new and different "others" within globalisation. In conflict societies, tourism provides an opportunity for visitors to not only be, entertained but to be educated as well. The interest expressed by outsiders allows insiders to preserve but at the same time revisit and perhaps reinvent collective memory. Producers of tourist artefacts have to decide whose history is depicted and in what ways. The purpose of this paper is to explore how these processes are played out in Belfast and Nicosia. Specifically the paper will address how the realities and complexities of the conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Belfast and Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots in Nicosia are presented by tour operators to tourists visiting each region.
Keywords: Authenticity, Belfast, Nicosia, Tourism,

Özet
Turizm, çağdaş kapitalist toplumun öne çıkan bir öğesi haline gelmiştir. "Etnik turizm" terimiyle ise, bireylerin kültürel homojenleştirmeden kaçmak için küreselleşmede yeni ve değişik "ötekiler" arayışlarının iderek artan yollarından birisi karşılanmaktadır. Sorunlu toplumlar turistlere sadece eğlenme değil aynı amanda eğitilme olanağı da sunar. Dışardan gelenlerin gösterdikleri ilgi, yerlilerin ortak belleklerini muhafaza etmesine olduğu kadar, onu ziyaret etmelerine ve yeniden yaratmalarına da sebep olur. Turistik dokunun yaratıcıları kimin tarihinin nasıl anlatılacağına karar vermek zorundadır. Bu yazının amacı, bu süreçlerin Belfast ve Lefkoşe özelinde nasıl yaşandığını incelemektir. Bu yazı özellikle, Belfast'da Katolik ve Protestanlar ve Lefkoşe'de de Kıbrıslı Türkler ve Kıbrıslı Rumlar arasındaki sorunların gerçekliklerinin ve karmaşıklıklarının tur operatörleri tarafından bu bölgeleri ziyaret eden turistlere nasıl sunulduğuna bakacaktır.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Hakikilik, Belfast, Nicosia, Turism.

Introduction

We live in an era of mass tourism where the world is increasingly becoming an accessible global village. Rising "western" affluence, the increase in statutory paid annual leave and growth in low budget transportation, make overseas travel a viable option for more and more of the world's workers and their families. This democratisation of tourism has enabled hoards of tourists to board ships, planes and trains in search of brief encounters with unfamiliar places and cultures.[1] However, the age of mass travel has not produced undifferentiated mass tourists. Despite earlier academic representations, there is now an acknowledgement of the complexities of tourists' motivations for travel suggesting the need to classify them into separate categories seeking varying experiences within the broad tourism market. One particular type of tourist that has emerged in the burgeoning literature is the tourist in search of authenticity. The notion of authenticity was introduced into sociological accounts of tourism in the 1970s by MacCannell;[2] who regarded the modern tourist as similar to the traditional religious pilgrim in that each is seeking authentic experiences. Each is involved in a quest for meaning to counteract the shallowness of everyday life. However, often the search for authenticity proves fruitless. Instead the modern tourist often encounters "staged authenticity" deliberately manufactured by host societies in their efforts to attract tourists in an increasingly competitive market. Rather than gaining entry into the "back" regions of the host society where authenticity is likely to be found, modern tourists are often presented with "false backs" which parody authenticity.[3] While MacCannell laments this state of affairs and argues that when tourists become victims of staged authenticity then their experiences cannot be defined as authentic even if they themselves might think they have achieved authenticity, Boorstin argues that this is exactly what the modern tourist wants.[4] He argues that tourists seldom question the authenticity of contrived experiences. Rather they prefer the comfort and security of "pseudo-events" or "genuine fakes" which often back up their pre-existing provincial expectations.[5] This view is supported by Ritzer & Liska who state "we would argue, in contrast to MacCannell, that many tourists today are in search of inauthenticity".[6]

The increasingly contradictory usage of the concept of authenticity has led Urry to suggest that "the search for authenticity is too simple a foundation for explaining contemporary tourism".[7] However, while

acknowledging the many criticisms of the concept, Wang argues that "authenticity is relevant to some kinds of tourism such as ethnic, history or culture tourism, which involve the representation of the other or of the past".[8] Hence, authenticity is a particularly useful concept for exploring the potential for political tourism in divided cities such as Belfast and Nicosia. This form of niche tourism rather than mass tourism is the subject matter of this paper.

Divided cities form part of an emerging "dark tourism" whereby areas emerging from protracted ethnic conflict become sites of alternative tourism.[9] In their book on "Dark Tourism", Lennon & Foley include North Cyprus as an example of this phenomenon and argue that the island's "darker" history which remains unresolved is a potential tourist attraction.[10] In particular they suggest that the border points in the Demilitarised Zone "exerts a "dark" fascination for many visitors on both the southern and northern sides of the island". This is because it is one of the last remaining national military borders left in the post cold-war period. Yet which sites or countries qualify as "dark" is open to debate. Stone for example questions whether it is possible or justifiable to collectively categorise sites associated with war, conflict and death together under a neat umbrella term such as "dark tourism".[11] He asks whether some sites may be "darker" than others. In this vein, while acknowledging that Northern Ireland, has a well developed range of atrocity sites, such as the wall murals often commemorating sectarian murders that dot Belfast, Ashworth and Hartmann question whether Cyprus should be included as an example of a "dark tourism" location.[12] They specifically criticise Lennon and Foley for their inclusion of Cyprus as a case study for "dark tourism" arguing that the majority of visitors to beach resorts in the North and South of Cyprus are unlikely to be aware of the intensity of the ethnic conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots and suggest that these deep seated ethnic divisions are likely to "make no contribution to their holiday experience."[13] Yet at the same time some tourists actively seek out "dark" experiences.[14] Hence, in relation to Nicosia, some tourists specifically visit the capital and actively seek out walking tours of the city to differentiate themselves from the "sun, sand and sea" type who may visit Nicosia as part of the itinerary of tour companies. It is clear that Belfast and Nicosia, with their deep-seated cleavages based on competing nationalisms and arguments over state legitimacy, provide a different and unconventional type of tourist

experience from the increasing homogenising experiences emanating from globalisation.[15] Both Belfast and Nicosia allow tourists to see first-hand the physical manifestations of segregation in relative safety. They enable tourists to visit flashpoints of former violent relationships and gain some insight into the highly emotive events that spawned the turbulent history of both cities.

I wish now to develop the insights provided by Wang on *Rethinking Authenticity*.[16] His approach emphasises existential authenticity as the way forward, but I want to develop his notion of "constructive authenticity" and its potential application to touring disputed spaces. In his usage, constructive authenticity refers to "the authenticity projected onto toured objects by tourists or tourism producers in terms of their imagery, expectations, preferences, beliefs, powers etc". In this vein, authenticity is a social construction. In other words there may be various versions of authenticity. Rather than assuming that an authentic reality is something "out there", this approach assumes that reality itself is socially constructed, often by people during their everyday encounters with one another.[17] While Wang focuses mainly on tourism objects I want to focus instead on discourse. In doing this, I want to highlight the core role played by local tour guides in presenting what I call biased authenticity. I use this term to acknowledge that in divided societies in particular there are competing versions of the past and of the "other". These versions are rarely based on objective knowledge or truth. Indeed I would claim that no such version is possible. Rather multiple and plural interpretations of past and current history are constructed by tour guides from a variety of different perspectives and these often reflect wider political discourses where competing powers are involved in an ongoing struggle to have their version of history accepted. I intend to illustrate this through a focus on Belfast and Nicosia. In the former, local tour guides compete with each other to coax tourists to accept their competing interpretations of history while in the latter, tour guides claim that their tours are non-political. However, as Hollinshead points out, historical truth is always a problematic concept involving biased choices and judgements about which aspects of the past to remember and which to forget.[18] Moreover, the telling of history often entails the transmission of untruths.[19] By validating certain versions of the past and invalidating others, I will demonstrate how tour guides in both cities demonstrate biased authenticity.

Methodology

This is a small scale exploratory study involving analyses of the discourses produced by tour guides in Belfast and Nicosia and their responses to questions asked by tourists. I undertook each of these tours on two separate occasions (except for the North Nicosia tour where the walking tours are no longer in operation). In two cases, once in Belfast and once in Nicosia the tours were taken by separate guides while in the other cases, the same tour guide was present on both occasions. The Belfast tour involved a combined bus and walking tour of "peace lines" from the perspective of an ex-republican and ex-loyalist prisoner. In Nicosia, two walking tours were undertaken. The first related to the Turkish part, and the second related to the Greek part, of Nicosia. Both of these tours were organised by the respective official Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot municipalities in Nicosia. The discourses produced by the tour guides were transcribed in full as were their answers to questions asked by other tourists on the tours. The Nicosia data is supplemented by interviews with two representatives whose work is connected with the Nicosia's Masterplan[20] and an interview with a representative of the Peace Museum at the Ledra Street (Greek side) lookout point.

Tour guides have been described "as information givers, sources of knowledge, mentors, surrogate parents, pathfinders, leaders, mediators, culture brokers and entertainers."[21] They act as memory managers or memory sieves. Interpreting what is seen and experienced is a core aspect of what tour guides do. This interpretative work enables visitors to better understand the destination that they visit and the wider culture in which it is immersed.[22] However, according to Cohen this sometimes involves presenting fake information as if it were genuine or true.[23] Or at the very least, it involves some element of subjectivity on the part of the tour guide.[24] At the same time, tour guides often follow set scripts. Indeed, since most of the tours described in this paper were taken on two occasions this enabled me to witness set scripts in operation. Moreover, unlike Belfast, the tours in Cyprus were organised under the auspices of the municipalities of both parts of the island. In these circumstances, as Dahles points out, formal guides may be encouraged (or indeed compelled) by the Government to provide politically and ideologically approved narratives.[25] This may influence which sites are visited, what information is transmitted and more importantly, what is left out. However, if tour guides are themselves products of the history which is

being revisited then their personal opinions may impinge on the interpretations offered. At times this subjectivity may support the dominant narrative but on other occasions this personal opinion may reflect personally lived history. While interpretations of history are likely to always reflect some bias, it is the contention of this paper that where this bias is based on the authentic, real, genuine experiences of tour guides, this provides potent memories of a lived history which may have a greater impact on tourists than that provided by professional guides without such "authentic" backgrounds.

Touring "Peace Lines" in Belfast

The signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 opened up the North of Ireland for an influx in tourism. Prior to 1998, the ongoing, often violent, confrontations between Catholics and Protestants dissuaded tourists from visiting the region in significant numbers. The ongoing peace process has removed the perceived danger associated with visiting Northern Ireland even though statistically throughout the period of the "troubles", tourists were never specifically targeted. The popularity of Northern Ireland as a tourist venue is evident in the recent Lonely Planet's elevation of Belfast as one of the top ten cities to visit in the world. Part of Belfast's attraction is its "peace lines" which continue to residentially segregate Catholics from Protestants at varying points in the city. Along with "peace lines", these areas are visibly marked by flags, graffiti and wall murals displaying each respective community's allegiance to either an Irish or British identity. Rather than shying away from visiting such locations, the Lonely Planet guide and other tourist guides specifically single out "peace lines" and political wall murals as significant tourist attractions. Capitalising on this growing interest in the political history of the city, a multitude of tour options are now available whereby tourists from the comfort of open top buses, tour coaches and black taxis can visit some of these sites and receive a commentary on the political conflict that paved the way for the urban divisions. Some of these tours resemble the type of tourism first criticised by Boorstin in the 1960s.[26] The tours are packaged in such a way that the tourist avoids any real contact with locals. The history of struggle in Northern Ireland is not told by those who experienced this struggle but by employed tour guides who have never lived in or directly experienced the intense ethno-sectarian divisions of the enclaves they bring tourists to visit. In order to

challenge the perceived false authenticity of these experiences, a number of local tour options have been made available. These local options claim to provide "authentic" tours of the divided city.

This section of the article will focus on one such local enterprise and that is the tours organised by Coiste na n-Iarchimi (referred to forthwith as Coiste) which is an organisation aimed at integrating former political prisoners into the community mainly via employment. The organisation is financially supported by the European Union Peace 11 Programme. It also receives funding from Combat Poverty Agency, Co-operation Ireland and the Department for Social and Community and Family Affairs, Dublin. The organisation was quick to recognise the economic potential in developing political tours. However, apart from this economic incentive and subsequent employment opportunity, a primary motivation for embarking on the political tours was to provide tourists with an authentic tourist experience. As the republican tour guide put it:

> We saw the taxis and the buses coming up here doing the tours and we wondered what they were doing. And we decided we would do our own tours to tell others what we have lived through, how we had experienced the conflict….We are presenting a people's history from the eyes and voices of the people who lived through that history. They are the true experts of this city.

The tours guides are drawn from republican and loyalist ex-political prisoners who tell the history of the conflict from 1969 from each of their competing perspectives. Indeed the title of this paper is drawn from the opening comments from a republican ex-prisoner who after introducing himself stated:

> What I am going to give you is a little bit of history and a lot of opinion. I am going to tell you about the struggle here from the perspective of republicanism and I make no apologies for this because this is my history. This is the history of my area.

The tour focuses specifically on one of the "peace lines" which divides Catholic West Belfast from Protestant West Belfast. The Catholic side of the peace line is toured with a republican ex-prisoner and the

Protestant side of the peace line is toured with a loyalist ex-prisoner. The tour is taken mainly by bus with various stop-offs entailing short walks to visit memorial sites on each side of the wall and take photographs of wall murals. The same bus is used for both parts of the tour. The swap over of tour guides takes place at the edge of one of the interfaces connecting both sides of West Belfast and is referred to by both guides as "Belfast's Checkpoint Charlie".

While both tour guides refrain from demonising the "other", both portray themselves and their respective communities as victims rather than perpetuators of the conflict in the North of Ireland. The first stop on the republican leg of the tour is Bombay Street which in 1969 witnessed one of the worst scenes of communal violence. Between 13th-17th August 1969 bloody rioting broke out in many parts of Belfast during which seven people were killed, many more were wounded and hundreds of families were either driven from their homes or left because of fear of sectarian attacks. On 15th August Protestant mobs set fire to houses in Bombay Street and some houses occupied by Catholics in adjoining streets. The incident left 1,800 people homeless and sparked off a major population movement throughout Belfast where people living in mixed religion areas left their homes to move to the perceived safety of "living among their own kind". The events of August 1969 are widely regarded as the beginning of the "troubles" in Northern Ireland with Bombay Street being regarded by the local priest as the first significant incident of "ethnic cleansing" in Northern Ireland. Scenes of the burning street are encapsulated in the first wall mural that forms part of the tour. In the foreground of the mural a mother comforts her son while both watch aghast as the street disintegrates in flames. At the top of the mural is a picture of Gerard McAuley, a fifteen year old boy who was shot dead by a Protestant gunman during the attack. He was a member of Fianna Eireann, the youth section of the IRA and is considered as the first republican activist to be killed during the current troubles. The republican tour guide emotively recreates the scenes for tourists:

> I want to bring you back to 15th August 1969, to Bombay Street where we are standing now or to what use to be known as Bombay Street. Try and imagine it in your mind's eye. The wall wasn't there. In the late 1960s the civil rights movement was formed. If you were a Catholic you were likely to be

> discriminated against in housing and employment. People decided to form the civil rights movement. They saw the riots in Paris and the civil rights' movement in the United States and they decided to form their own movement. Bombay Street was burned to the ground. All over the city, Loyalist mobs came into districts and burnt Catholic homes down. Imagine you are a young child. You are dragged from your bed in your pyjamas. You are in your pyjamas and as you flee for your life your home is burned to the ground.

Following the night of burning and shooting, the army began putting up corrugated iron panels to form a dividing wall between the two communities and this represented the start of the building of separation barriers between Catholics and Protestants in Belfast known colloquially as "peace lines".[27] The corrugated iron and barbed wire gradually evolved into brick structures. By 1982 the height of the barricades proved insufficient to prevent opposing sides from throwing debris at each other including petrol and nail bombs. In 1983, the Department of the Environment replaced the corrugated iron barricades with wall containing 80,000 bricks.[28] The wall remains in place today and effectively separates working class Catholics from their working class Protestant neighbours although other parts of the city remain accessible by both sides and many other neighbourhoods remain unaffected by "peace lines".

Later in the tour, tourists return to the wall and stand on the other side to where they previously visited with the republican tour guide. The loyalist guide proudly proclaims that around a quarter of a million tourists visit the walls each year. The same history is then retold from the loyalist perspective. In this version, the burning of Bombay Street is glossed over and is utilised primarily to illustrate the re-emergence of the IRA. As the loyalist tour guide put it:

> Protestants in Belfast charged down and attacked Catholics and put out many of the people who lived on the other side of this wall.....When the Protestants attacked, there was no IRA to defend them. The IRA was re-born out of that conflict like a Phoenix rising from its ashes.

The dialogue then concentrates on the Irish Republican Army (IRA). The guide discusses what he interprets as the Marxist ideology of the IRA. He tells of how the British Army were initially welcomed by the Catholic population on the other side of the wall but as the IRA re-grouped and re-armed they began to press for a united Ireland and use colonialism and its associated ideology as a justification. However, the guide is keen to point out that while the British Army became the new enemy, sectarian hatred continued to influence IRA operations. He claims:

> Republicans like to portray the conflict as one against the British state, as a colonial conflict. They see the army as an occupying force and they see the enemy as the British state and they imply that loyalists are by and large out of their picture. But the conflict degenerated into a sectarian war and many ordinary Protestants were killed just to get land.

To support this view, tourists are brought to a political wall mural which states: '30 years of indiscriminate slaughter by so called non-sectarian Irish freedom fighters'.

The mural provides the backdrop for a discussion of the Shankill bombing which took place on 23rd October 1993. The tour guide discusses how the IRA/Sinn Fein (the Political Wing of the IRA, the term's literal translation is 'ourselves alone') placed a bomb in a fish shop on the Shankill Road which subsequently killed nine Protestants along with one of the two bombers. The guide indicates that the motivation of the IRA/Sinn Fein was to murder innocent civilians. The bombing was one of the worst atrocities in the history of the Northern Ireland conflict. Among the casualties were a married couple, a man with his common law wife and nine year old daughter and another thirteen year old girl. The guide emphasises how the victims were ordinary working class people and discusses the outrage that was subsequently experienced by the community when Gerry Adams, leader of Sinn Fein, carried the coffin of one of the bombers during a funeral procession one week later. However, essential elements are left out of the memory. A meeting was due to take place in an upstairs room where the shop was located between senior loyalist faction leaders including Johnny Adair whose "C" company of the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) had been involved in the random killing of Catholics. Adair had openly bragged about the role of his "C"

company in killing Catholics and the Royal Ulster Constabulary (Northern Ireland's police force at the time) believe that his unit may have killed up to forty people. Details of what happened are open to interpretation. In some accounts the meeting was relocated. In others, the meeting was due to take place but the bomb went off prematurely before delegates had arrived. The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF: a loyalist paramilitary organisation) retaliated with a random attack one week later on a bar in Greysteel thought to be frequently by Catholic civilians. Eight civilians were killed in the shooting including two Protestants. While of course these additional facts do not justify either incident but they demonstrate how the partial presentation of history can be utilised to gain sympathy for one side or the other.

The discourses also serve to reinforce a notion of tit-for-tat killings where each side is as much to blame as the other. It also enables each tour guide to distance themselves from their personal involvement in the conflict. Both tour operators indicate that they are former political prisoners who have engaged in "terrorist" acts to support their opposing ideological positions. However, they draw on various discourses of denial in terms of denying the occurrence, and seriousness, of certain atrocities.[29] They allocate responsibility elsewhere and then admit personal involvement, which they claim, justifiable, given the previous actions of the "other", and in so doing distance themselves from personal responsibility. This reminds us of the need to consider under what conditions and under whose terms authenticity is presented to the tourist.[30] Tour guides in politically sensitive places may present a skewed version of the past but one that is considered authentic to them and the tourists they interact with.

Touring the Green Line in Nicosia

While the "peace lines" form the backbone of the Belfast tours, the Green line forms only, a small part of walking tours in Nicosia. Moreover while the tours in Belfast are shared between locals, albeit holding very different entrenched ideological political opinions, tours in Nicosia are totally separate with the Greek side and Turkish side by and large doing their own thing. Indeed during an interview with one of the Greek Cypriot tour guides she purported to be unaware that there were any walking tours of the Turkish part of Nicosia claiming "I don't know anything about what goes on over there". Moreover, while the tours in Belfast are overtly

political, the tour guides in Nicosia claim that they are historical tours rather than political ones seemingly ignoring the possibility that heritage sites representing a country's past are often an important element in the construction of a national identity.[31] Moreover, as Allcock points out, to speak of heritage is to speak of politics as "to designate any object, practice or idea as a component of heritage (or equally to exclude any item from this designation) is to participate in the social construction of a reality which is contested".[32] While the walking tour in South Nicosia was undertaken on two occasions, in North Nicosia only one walking tour was undertaken on 11th April 2007. By the time I returned to Nicosia in June 2007 to undertake a second tour, the walking tours of North Nicosia had been cancelled due to a perceived lack of interest. This issue will be returned to later in the paper.

The walking tours in North Nicosia commenced in September 2006. They are provided free by the Ministry of Tourism and operated three days per week. Each tour lasted approximately two and an half hours with a break for refreshment in between. The Turkish Cypriot tour guide, at the outset, points out that the tours are "historical not political" and indeed the first part of the tour focuses on a history stretching back to the sixteenth century and begins at Kyrenia Gate which is one of three gates that mark entrances to the old walled city of Nicosia built by the Venetians to unsuccessfully avert an attack by the Ottomans in 1570. The guide states that the walls around Nicosia contain eleven bastions with five located in the Greek side, five in the Turkish side and one on the Green Line controlled by the UN. Hence almost immediately history and politics are brought together through references to the divided nature of the city and the role of the UN in managing the divide. Within a short period of time, tourists are brought to Ataturk Square where the site is presented as if it has always been called Ataturk Square and no mention is made of how Greek place names were replaced with Turkish ones after 1974. According to Kliot and Mansfield references to Ataturk are a major component in the Turkification of the north.[33] A short walking distance away the Green Line is reached. However, the section visited is a small section where the Turkish Cypriot side began removing barbed wire and sand bags from a small part of the Line. The guide also refers to the demolition of a footbridge over Ledra Street but the controversy over the building of this bridge is not referred to.[34] By focusing on the partially dismantled section of the Line, the guide implies that the block to the

unification of Nicosia lies with the Greek side rather than residing with both Governments. The guide uses the location to discuss the Annan Peace Plan which was supported by 65% of Turkish Cypriots but rejected by 75% of Greek Cypriots in a referendum in April 2004. There is no mention of the events leading up to the physical reinforcement of the Green Line by the Turkish army in 1974 and the dialogue provided by the guide suggests that only for Greek-Cypriot resistance to the Annan Plan, the Green Line would no longer exist. This contrasts with the check-point at Ledra Palace where visitors crossing from South Nicosia into North are met with a sign stating "TRNC Forever". Of course, those tourists familiar with the Annan Plan will be aware that the proposed solution was for a bi-communal state. Under the Annan Plan, a United Republic of Cyprus would have become a member of the European Union as an indissoluble partnership with a federal government and two equal constituent states, divided between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. One of the tourists' questions why the Greek-Cypriots rejected the Plan and the guide's explanation was:

> They have too big a slice of the pie. They do not want to share their tourist industry. They are frightened of the economic competition.

An article in the *Irish Times* (24th April 2004) suggests that such a view is shared by some EU representatives.[35] Gunther Verheugen, the EU Enlargement Commissioner, argued that many Greek Cypriots voted against the Annan Peace Plan because they did not want to damage their tourist revenue by allowing greater competition from a revamped North. Some research suggests that when different political groups are located in a single destination, this results in a power struggle among entrenched stakeholders.[36] In a qualitative study comprising interviews with key stakeholders in the North and South of Cyprus, one Greek Cypriot tourism expert stated:

> The South part has recorded a decrease in terms of the number of tourists visiting the country in recent years. We are aware of the tourism potential of North Cyprus and we don't want them to compete with us once the political embargoes are lifted if the solution is found.[37]

These embargoes and general non-acceptance of the legitimacy of the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus (TRNC) has negatively affected the marketing and promotion of tourism in the North. For example there are no direct flights to TRNC without a stop-over in Turkey making the travel time too lengthy for some tourists to contemplate and adding to flight costs given the absence of a competitive aviation market. Yet, the South has also experienced a downturn since the massive drive to promote tourism in the aftermath of 1974 aided by a number of European countries. This has resulted in ill planned tourism with many areas characterised by unsightly architectural pollution accompanied by the widespread destruction of indigenous flora and fauna.[38] By contrast, the North has been able to escape the ravages of mass tourism and its unspoiled natural environment is gradually becoming a major competitive advantage.[39]

The remainder of the tour is devoted to core historical sites in North Nicosia such as the Great Inn and St Sophia mosque. However during a scheduled coffee break, the guide discusses his own history after being asked to do so by one of the tourists. He discusses how his family had to leave their homes in Paphos in 1974 and move to the North of the island. He poignantly discusses how in the aftermath of the opening up of the Ledra Palace checkpoint, he revisited his former home which had subsequently been demolished with a Greek house being built in its place. His brother and sister also owned separate properties and their homes were still standing but were now occupied by Greek Cypriots. He presents an account of a shared victimhood whereby the Greek-Cypriot occupiers of his former home allowed him inside and then prepared refreshments while they each engaged in a mutual sharing of unhappy memories whereby both had lost former homes.

The Greek Cypriot walking tours of Nicosia commenced in 1987. Similar to the ones in North Nicosia they typically last around two and a half hours with a break for refreshment. The Nicosia Municipality which organise the tours state on their website: "The Nicosia Walk aims to provide to the visitor the opportunity of having a general image of the city within the walls and its development from medieval times until today through buildings, monuments and churches that are located in the old city. The visitors also have the chance to visit workshops and stores where craftsmen continue working in the traditional manner, such as candle makers, shoemakers, blacksmiths, chair-makers, coppersmiths and

tailors."[40] Like the tours in North Nicosia they are provided free of charge. While this bland description is devoid of any overt political content; the language of division permeates the discourses provided by both tour guides. In the opening speech explaining the format of the tour, one of the Greek Cypriot guide states:

> We will in a very short time see the occupied part because as you know half of the city is illegally occupied.

This usage of terms such as "occupation" permeates the discourse provided by both tour guides throughout the duration of the tours although one tour guide seemed to provide a more entrenched political view than the other suggesting that although a common script is provided tour guides themselves have leeway for introducing personal opinion or bias into the descriptions on offer. For example, a substantial element of both tours involved visiting various Christian Churches. This is not surprising since religion is one of the most fundamental components of Greek Cypriot identity and is expressed physically and culturally through the Greek Orthodox Church.[41] In one tour, the main discourse around visiting the Churches was to point out the differences between Greek Orthodox Churches and other forms of Christianity particularly Catholicism. However, the other tour guide tended to focus on differences between Christians and Muslims. This is exemplified in both tour guides references to St Sophia Cathedral/Selimiye Mosque located in the Turkish part of Nicosia. In the first instance, the guide discusses how the structure was built by the Lusignans during the 13th century but then was later turned into a mosque by the Turks. She stated that the mosque resembles Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris and although it is now located in the "occupied North", she advised people to visit and see its splendour. The second tour guide began her description of the structure by saying:

> This is another example of a Christian church being turned into a mosque. Look at the minarets. This was one of the most beautiful of all Catholic churches. You can cross and see it but it certainly will not be as beautiful as when the French had it as it will now have the atmosphere of a mosque.

The building was converted into a mosque during the Ottoman period in 1571 but no date is supplied by the tour guide and it is possible that uneducated tourists may equate the transformation with the events of 1974. At other times the Ottoman period is specifically and repeatedly referred to. For example we visit the house of dragoman which has been restored as part of the Nicosia Master Plan. The position of dragoman was one of the most powerful given by Ottoman authorities to local Christians and enabled them to amass enormous wealth and power. The house came into possession of Hadjigeorgakis Kornesios who was dragoman from 1779 until 1809 when his jealous enemies cunningly managed to have him beheaded in Istanbul. The event is again turned into an encounter between Christians and Muslims:

> Here is the house of the dragoman. The Ottomans tricked and killed him. He was a philanthropist. He was helping Christians but the Turks forced him out and killed him.

Again this suggests that there are irreconcilable differences between Muslims and Christians, a discourse made all the more powerful since the events of 9/11. It also serves to underline a position that given the long history of Turkish invasion and their subsequent actions, they can never be trusted.

The first sighting of the Green Line is behind a café called the Berlin café. This immediately makes connections in the minds of tourists between the North/South divide in Nicosia and the East/West divide in Berlin. Some tourists discussed among each other the similarities in terms of imposed walls. Both tour guides point out differences in the construction, in that while the Berlin wall was a specifically built structure, the Green line is a haphazard structure. As the second tour guide remarked during a personal conversation with me:

> Tourists are very much interested in the wall and certainly one of the key things that they want to see is the wall but often they think that it is a wall that you can walk along but as you can see it is not that kind of wall. It is an uneven wall. It is made up of barriers and blocks that cut off streets rather than a running wall.

Both tour guides reminisce about how the streets surrounding the wall were once full of shops and people but are now largely deserted although there have been recent attempts to revitalise the area. In the remainder of the tours, other aspects of Greek history are referred to, particularly its colonial struggle with Britain. However, the pre-existing economic, social and cultural divisions between Greek and Turkish Cypriots and their physical manifestations into ethnically divided communities which paved the way for ethnic violence during the enosis (a political movement of Greek Cypriots aimed at securing union with Greece) campaign and the subsequent military intervention of Turkey is not alluded to and the general impression given is that spatial divisions were created by the Turkish army in 1974. However, as Kliot and Mansfield point out, the creation of the Green Line was first carried out by British troops to separate fighting Greeks and Turks during inter-communal conflict in 1963.[42] As with the Turkish Cypriot tour guide, the Greek Cypriot guides claim that their tours are historical, however the over-emphasis of certain historical events and neglect of others is a deeply political act enabling guides from both sides of Nicosia to present a partial view of history favourable to a specific biased interpretation of the conflict. Hence both Greek and Turkish Cypriots hope to gain more political sympathy with their struggle by exposing tourists to certain dimensions of the conflict. Moreover, as with the Turkish Cypriot guide, during informal conversations, both Greek Cypriot guides draw poignantly on their personal history of losing their former homes in the North adding credibility to their subsequent interpretation of the contested nature of their country. As Lennon and Foley point out, dark tourism is all the more potent when people still living can validate dark events.[43]

Biased Authenticity in Contested Spaces

Tourists visiting divided spaces in Belfast and Nicosia are presented with competing versions of history by tour guides who overtly or covertly present visitors with contrasting narratives based on difference and division. However, this is not to suggest that tourists are passive recipients of the information that they receive. Rather tourists are themselves products of particular socio-economic, political and cultural systems and bring a range of pre-existing views into their encounters with tour operators. Hence tourists pre-existing assumptions and prejudices may be reinforced rather than challenged by visits to places of conflict

and division. A number of studies have outlined how some tourists may exhibit a pre-existing, albeit weak, support for one or other of the parties in a conflict and that their views are by and large unchanged through encounters with the "other".[44] At the same time, there are a growing number of more politically "neutral" tourists who are simply curious to learn more about ethnic conflict and its manifestation in high-profile places.[45] These tourists seek to separate themselves from the banal mass tourist market and seek short-term encounters with cities demonstrating a volatile political situation, which are at the same time, safe places to visit.[46] Of the two cities discussed here, Belfast has gone further in recognising the economic benefit of political tourism. A wide range of options are now available, with political wall murals in particular attracting specific marketing attention. According to Lisle, while the potential for the development of political tourism in Nicosia has been strengthened by the opening up of the Ledra Palace crossing in 2003, both sides remain uncertain about how to deal with a growing conspicuous number of political tourists who want to find out more about the recent conflict and the ongoing stalemate.[47] She argues that some of the tourist sites in the North are characterised by "outdated propaganda" while in the South, they reflect "nostalgic erasure". While she concludes that parts of the Dead Zone should be preserved to enable each side to reflect on how to represent over three decades of conflict and the legacy of partition, she suggests that as the desire for peace gains momentum, incompatible representations of Cypriot history will become increasingly obsolete.

However, this is not what has happened in Belfast. While some political tours in Belfast emerged within a framework designed to exploit their economic potential, others go further and are just as concerned with capturing the "hearts and minds" of visitors. The tours in Belfast provide tourists with straight-talking, no holds barred political messages. Their aim is to encourage tourists to accept their version of events and to potentially return to their respective communities as bearers of specific political messages. Rather than a "post peace" phase obliterating the need for such messages, such a framework provides the impetus for these types of memories to flourish. It is not just that tourists should be allowed to forget what happened - the local community should not forget either. Commemoration builds cohesion and strengthens group identity. Propagating the continuation of entrenched political positions is a way of dealing with the legacy of messy political conflicts. It is a way of

convincing local communities and outsiders that the struggle was not in vain, that it was, and indeed is, justifiable. Brin outlines a range of case studies including Cuba, the Philippines, Indonesia, Albania and North Korea where tourism was harnessed not just as a means of earning hard currency but as a means of propagating a certain political position.[48] In Belfast, tourists are provided with two entrenched opposing views with each guide attempting to win converts to their specific political outlook.

The walking tours in Nicosia are subsidised by the municipality of each side of the demarcation line and are provided free of charge to tourists. This means that their economic benefit is indirect rather than direct. They are a means of drawing people to both sides of the city and encouraging them to spend money during their visit. Each tour includes short visits to local crafts-shops where tourists are encouraged to return to and buy something to commemorate their visit. The tours also purport to be historical rather than political although as I have demonstrated earlier, each is imbued with selectivity and partiality. At one level, this is unproblematic. Tourists can obtain both versions of history and come to an understanding of the underlying contested nature of the information on offer. However, the Greek Cypriots are likely to be more successful in this regard. This is due to a number of factors including the substantially higher numbers of tourists visiting the South compared to the North. While since 2003, tourists can cross at Ledra Palace, the crossing involves a very long walk across the Dead Zone which acts as a disincentive for many visitors. Moreover, the tours in the North of the city are very badly publicised and indeed have stopped operating due to a lack of demand, without a thorough investigation of the underlying reasons accounting for this low take-up. There is also some evidence to suggest that Greek Cypriots are aware that economic factors are only one consideration and that tourists can potentially be won over to propagate desired political messages. As one Greek Cypriot tour guide told me:

> We will keep doing the tours even when there are only a few people to take them, we still will keep doing them. We do them even if only one person turns up. We want as many people as possible to know about our divided city.

Conclusion: Divided Cities and the Search for Authenticity

The purpose of this paper is to focus on the role of tour guides in Belfast and Nicosia as disseminators of biased political opinions either covertly or overtly. Of course there are many differences between Belfast and Nicosia as examples of divided cities. For example, a political resolution of sorts has been arrived at in Belfast but not in Nicosia and this fundamentally impacts on the type of tourism strategies employed in both cities. There is also a striking difference in terms of the depth of history that Cypriots draw on going back to the Ottoman period and beyond whereas tour guides in Belfast draw on more recent history confining their dialogue to the 20th century. The differences between Catholics and Protestants in Belfast are also much less stark than those between Greek and Turk Cypriots. The latter are divided by language and religion and indeed there is much controversy over the extent to which it is possible to talk about a Cypriot identity. Hence divisions in Nicosia are much more extensively reflected in the total division of the city into two distinct municipalities. By contrast, there is only one municipality in Belfast and while parts of the city are divided other parts are shared between the two main communities as are tours of the city. Catholics and Protestants speak a common language and their religious differences are confined to sub-divisions within Christianity. However, the core division between Catholics and Protestants is not related to religion but to power differentials between majority and minority groups with religion being used as a convenient marker to justify unequal power relationships. In this sense, Belfast has some similarities with Nicosia whereby at the core of the divisions between Greek and Turkish Cypriots are relationships between majority and minority groups with the majority group favouring policies which perpetuate their majority status.

While tourists are not passive recipients of dominant discourses, for a short period of time, they provide a captive audience which can be influenced, persuaded, cajoled and deceived into accepting the legitimacy of certain interpretations of events over others. There has been "meagre academic attention given to perceived political instability as a tourist draw."[49] Yet the increased growth of the curious tourist in search of authenticity provides an expanding market for cities that reflect political instability. The Green Line in Nicosia and the "peace lines" in Belfast were not created as tourist attractions. They reflect on-going mistrust between competing groups. Hence they are not just features of the past

but they exist in the here and now and reflect ongoing, not past, tensions between divided groups. They symbolise the extent to which the past reflects the present. In such places, "tourists are more often than not, still safe from harm, yet they can experience a reality that is still troubled."[50] Apart from the physical manifestations of divided spaces embodied in walls, barriers and demarcation lines, the discourses provided by tour guides who have been personally affected by political instability provide further opportunities for tourists to experience brief encounters with the authentic "other". The "perpetuators" of the conflict in Belfast and the "victims" of the conflict in Nicosia through their personal discourses can draw tourists in to the everyday reality of their daily lives through their reminiscences. Their recollections reflecting hostility, mistrust, pain, anguish, positive and negative opinions on the future are exactly what the tourist in search of authenticity wants to hear. Heartfelt stories encourage sympathy and understanding and expose tourists first hand to the volatile political realities of divided cities. They also open up tourists to biased versions of a shared history where certain discourses are privileged at the expense of others but since the account emerges from real experiences, its authenticity is enhanced. The discourses illustrate how the past is fundamentally connected to the present and how tour guides can simultaneously reshape the past as well as the present. Through these discourses, "authentic" tour guides recreate and reconstruct the troubled political environment in which their lives are embedded. Their real life memories validate the accounts produced and have the potential to evoke a greater level of empathy than accounts provided by more "neutral" commentators.

North Cyprus' current tourism strategy is based on a fundamental paradox. It advertises itself to the potential mass tourist market as a "sanctuary of unspoiled beauty" or as a "corner of the earth touched by heaven" (North Tourism, June 2007).[51] Tourism companies advertise North Cyprus ironically as "the Mediterranean's best kept secret". Hence the commercial marketing of North Cyprus depends on broadcasting its non-commercial nature as a place untouched by mass tourism. Maintaining this potential tourist advantage, while simultaneously attracting more and more tourists to the region, is likely to be highly problematic over the next decade. It has been slow to recognise another paradox and that is the potential of political tourism especially in the wake of fragile political settlements. Peace processes, rather than

allowing people to forget, provide the framework to enable them to remember. In this vein tourism can contribute to the process of identity formation. The success of Belfast in capturing the tourist market over recent years through the exploitation of the recent political conflict illustrates the potential economic payoff associated with political tourism. It also illustrates tourism's potential for capturing the hearts and minds of visitors by allowing entrenched political groups to articulate, and in the process come to terms with, their past. Tourism becomes a vehicle through which the process of remembering and forgetting becomes constructed and legitimised. While South Cyprus is slowly wakening up to the empathetic benefits of political tourism, North Cyprus continues to see political tourism in narrow economic terms and as such fails to recognise its other important facets.

Endnotes

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