

A Life Story under the Shadow of the Cyprus Issue: The Migration, Homecoming and Community Activities of Mr. İsmail Cemal

Kıbrıs Sorunu'nun Gölgesinde Bir Hayat Hikayesi: İsmail Cemal'in Göç Etmesi, Geri Dönüşü ve Aktivizmi

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Abstract

This paper discusses the life story of İsmail Cemal as a migrant Cypriot by crisscrossing the recent socio-political history of the island. Mr. Cemal established progressive grassroots-community work and social networking in Büyükkonuk village after spending a long time in Australia. We, as two foreign academics on the island, believe sharing a life story has the power to bring social-political transformation in a community. The study has conducted in 2013 as a result of five visits and in-depth interviews. The study consists of five sections on his childhood in Paphos, community life during the Cyprus conflict between 1950s and 1970s, his migration and working experience in Australia, his homecoming and community activities that resulted with an eco-village.

Keywords: *the Cyprus conflict and migration, diaspora, community building activities, ecovillage, alternative tourism.*

Özet

Bu yazı Sayın İsmail Cemal'in bir göçmen olarak yaşam öyküsünü Kıbrıs'ın yakın sosyo-politik tarihinin ışığında tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Sayın Cemal Avustralya'da uzun yıllar yaşadıktan sonra adaya Büyükkonuk köyüne dönerek taban faaliyetleri yürütmüş ve bir dayanışma ağı yaratmıştır. Bizler adada yaşayan iki yabancı akademisyen olarak kimi hayat hikayelerinin paylaşılmasının topluluklar için sosyal ve politik dönüşümler yaratacak gücün farkında olarak 2013 yılında Sayın Cemal ile beş ayrı derinlemesine görüşme gerçekleştirdik. Bu çalışma, Sayın Cemal'in Baf'ıdaki çocukluğundan başlayarak 1950-1970ler arası Kıbrıs'taki çatışma dönemini, göç etmesini, Avustralya'daki çalışma deneyimini, geri dönüşünü ve bir ekoköy kurulmasıyla sonuçlanan toplumsal aktivitelerini içermektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Kıbrıs sorunu ve göç, diaspora, topluluk faaliyetleri, eko-köy, alternatif turizm.*

The aim of this paper is to discuss the life story of İsmail Cemal by crisscrossing the recent socio-political history of the island of Cyprus. We aim to write a comprehensive life story of Mr. Cemal, who is one of the leading community figures in North Cyprus. He has migrated on the island, but also spent a long time away from it; with experience and a new perspective, he returned to the island to settle there.

As two foreign or non-Cypriot academics who have lived on Cyprus for more than 10 years, we have closely observed Mr. Cemal's progressive grassroots-community work and social networking, which has challenged the mainstream capitalist-mass tourism discourse and practices. İsmail Cemal, along with his wife, Lois Cemal, has been trying to build a community in Büyükkonuk by providing local-traditional and global-contemporary activities. According to Lenart-Cheng and Walker (2011: 141), sharing a life story furthers social-political transformation in a society. Our motivation is to bring alternative community activities to the attention of the public on the island by sharing Mr. Cemal's initiatives in Büyükkonuk. Our work is based on five different visits and in-depth interviews with Mr. Cemal in Spring and summer of 2013.

A short background

The colonial history of Cyprus plays an important role on the island at various levels. The Ottoman Empire leased the island to Britain in 1878. Under British rule, all Cypriots became "equal subjects of the new administration" (Bryant, 2004: 27; Michael, 2009). After a long colonial period under the British, Cyprus became an independent country in 1960. Agricultural products, such as citrus fruits, potatoes, and table grapes, were the main bases of the economy of Cyprus. In 1960-1961, agricultural exports accounted for 43% of its total exports.

İsmail Cemal was born on December 6, 1948 in the village of Paphos, Aks(il)u as the son of a villager/farmer¹. His father later began to work with the British in various locations after reaching middle

age. İsmail remembers going to Aksilu during the summer while his father worked in the British camp in Famagusta.

Like many other Cypriot families who were involved in the population exchange after 1974, his parental family left Aksilu to go north. They chose to come to the Büyükkonuk (Komikebir) village on the Karpaz peninsula where they applied for an exchange property. According to İsmail Cemal, some people from Aksilu moved to Lapta, but many of the villagers came to Büyükkonuk.

Mr. Cemal believes that his previous childhood village was not an old settlement; it was just a settlement, where a shepherd had found a water source.

"We never had a sophisticated lifestyle. It was basically a survival culture. My father and my mother were always arguing. Going out and coming back, and it was a normal relationship. I don't know how things went... The marriages were mostly convenience marriages or arranged marriages. So, my family, on my mother's side and my father's side, they were second marriages. My mother, her first husband died, and my father, his wife died, and they got together. It was a convenience marriage. First, they both liked each other. They had no property or anything, so they used to steal olives at night and take them to town and sell so they could buy food. Then, the war came, and everyone was going to the war and being soldiers because it was a British colony. After the war, my father also went to the Suez canal project as part of the team caring for the large Cypriot mules;...., he stayed for five years altogether and what he earned he sent to my mother, and my mother managed to buy some property. So when he came back they had some property, they had a farm".

His childhood was spent in deep poverty, like many Turkish Cypriots in the pre-money-market economy. He remembers the survival culture of his childhood and youth. He recalls the saying: "He doesn't own a tree to hang himself", referring

to a person in absolute poverty.

“Very many Cypriots, they were homeless, landless people. There was poverty after the war. It was just in the early 50s and 60s, money was not available, because there was no money. It was an exchange system: You give me this, I give you that. There was no money around. Well, this is it. I mean it excludes all emotional attachments and all that shows how people used to survive ... really ... lots of things that were merciless, rude, inhumane, people did them to survive. This is life”.

Life in Paphos

In the first half of the interview, İsmail Cemal spoke about his childhood, which was spent in the mountainous Paphos region, and later in Famagusta. He recalled people from the Paphos region going to the Mesaoria Plain for harvesting throughout the whole summer. Mr. Cemal thought that the farmers striped the whole land, which led to today’s dry Mesaoria, which, for him, is an “ecological disaster”. During that time, “Mesaoria was feeding the whole country, really²”. Paphos, on the other hand, was a grape growing area. In his childhood, he helped load the donkeys to carry the grapes from the vineyard to the village.

Paphos was also goat-raising area, because of its geography.

“Sheep are not very practical in the area. Sheep want flat land. So everybody was raising goats. They say that my grandfather received a medal

from the British authorities for having 1000. It was a big, big herd”.

Agriculture was the main source of income for the population in the rural area. The main crops of Cyprus were varied and plentiful in the period from 1961 to 1974.

Traditionally, agriculture had been similar in previous times. The French consul, M. Fourcade, wrote a report on Cyprus in 1844. According to his data, barley, wheat and oats were the crops that used the greatest amount of arable land, in that order (Gazioğlu, 1990: 132). In the middle of the eighteenth century, Alexander Drummond stated that the main exports from Cyprus were wine (£68,500), silk (£35.000), and cotton (£28,130). This historical background of its agriculture makes it understandable that the main crops mentioned by Mr. Cemal were grapes, barley, and wheat.

With respect to the infrastructure of the villages, Mr. Cemal stated: “We never had electricity until after 1974. You see, electricity came to the area but at that time there was a conflict from ‘63 to ‘74 The Turkish villages refused to let the Greeks come into the villages to install electricity. Mehmetçik was an example in the Karpaz also. Mehmetçik was an all Turkish village and didn’t have electricity before 1974.”³

Mr. Cemal noted that the basic energy source was wood: “Because they used to cook with wood, they used to bake with wood; they used to keep warm with wood, so wood! Wood is not only solid wood, I’m talking about anything!”

Table 1. The main crops of Cyprus in the period from 1961 to 1974.

Products	Potatoes	Grapes	Oranges	Barley	Wheat	Carobs	Forage	Grapefruit (incl.pomelos)	Lemons and limes
Average harvested quantity in tons	149,414	141,264	96,499	75,481	64,438	46,423	41,292	36,266	21,852

(Retrieved from <http://www.fao.org>)

He made a distinction between cash crop agricultural products:

“Grapes for wine don’t need water and up in the hills it is cool and the grape vines are very small; maybe you will get 3 or 4 bunches from one of them. It was what we called a cash crop. A cash crop is when you have it, you sell it immediately. Olives weren’t a cash crop. Olives, you had to find your own market. The government supported olive tree growing, for example, paying for retaining walls around olive fields, but it does not buy the crop. But the grapes were a cash crop. Not that the government was buying, but the alcohol companies⁴ had a policy that if you had ten shares from the company, you are entitled to give them a thousand kilos of grapes, and they have to take them from you, because you are a shareholder”.

Mr. Cemal started school in Aksilu in 1954 with one teacher for six levels in one room. They used slates and chalk. One incident caused them to change to paper and notebooks. He narrated the story as follows:

“There was an earthquake. It was in 1952. So, they built us a new village. One of the blessings of this event was cement bags. The teacher asked us to collect all of the cement bags. So, we just collected all of the cement bags, and we just cut them. At that time, cement was imported from England. To make the bag strong, they had six layers. Now, they only have three. Six layers of paper was a lot of paper, so the teacher had a stock of paper. That was our first privilege of having paper. This was my first paper”.

His observations about gender differentiation in his childhood were quite prominent: Mr. Cemal placed the role of a man as a provider, as one that has been played for centuries. For him, a woman does everything else around the home. He did establish visible and invisible lines regarding the gender roles of women and men:

“In social structure, there are two things. One

that is visible and can be observed, and there is one that you don’t observe. So, in a relationship, you can never know, but what was expected of a man in public was to be dominant, you know, a macho man”.

With respect to the gender differentiation between his father and mother, we learned that his father was not a family man, which led his mother to become a creative entrepreneur.

“My father, well, he should have been born in New York or Hollywood. He was a fun-loving man. He wasn’t a hard-working, a family man and all, and had no interest in anything. He wanted to gamble; he was a gambler, womanizer, and all kinds of things...he was not meant to be a family man, dedicated provider”.

Mr. Cemal gave this description of his mother:

“She used to raise turkeys. She knew that the Greeks want turkey during Christmas. She used to raise all these turkeys ... in the villages...full of turkey. Everybody was complaining because they were going into their vineyards and eating their grapes”.

His family moved from Paphos to Limassol after his father was a witness in a criminal case. His father was later hired by the British military camp in Famagusta. Mr. Cemal attended Alasya primary and Namık Kemal high school. His description of the ethnic tensions on the island is a familiar one (Kızılyürek, 2002; Bryant, 2007; Michael, 2009; Hampton, 2002).

“The military police were hired by the British to fight EOKA. That added to the whole enmity between the Greeks and the Turks, because the British hired the Turks to become the military police to chase out EOKA. Of course, they gave the Turkish Cypriots privileges, and they did all kind of things, and the British would turn a blind eye to them. This really increased the enmity between the Greeks and the Turks. Physically, it

was a bad time period. I mean they should have been the best of friends after we kicked out the British. They should have just celebrated; they should have set a big table and had fun, the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots”.

During his stay in Famagusta, Mr. Cemal was taken to military training that he described as child soldering.

“We did schooling until one o’clock. After one, we were actually given military training because of a shortage of people. I was there in 1963. Yes, my gun, my rifle was bigger than me”.

Mr. Cemal mostly stood guard on shifts. He did not use the gun, but he was trained to use it, like many other Cypriots.

The time of conflict

During the 1950s, armed conflict broke out between the main communities. The conflict was fairly recent compared to their long cohabitation (Anthias, 1989: 153; Hampton, 2002: 148). According to Anastasiou (2002), two inter-related parameters defined the conflict on the island: a) the “long-standing impact of ethnic nationalism as a world-and-life view”, which makes them similar in terms of their understanding of nationalism; b) the collective memory of “experiences of pain and injury in each community” (581-582).

İsmail Cemal’s life was interrupted by tension, exclusion, deprivation, displacement and migration as a result of this conflict. He pointed out the external impacts on the conflict:

“The general policy of the time for local and foreign authorities toward Turkish Cypriots was to divide the island. And, of course, under the security and protection, of course, there was conflict, but the conflict wasn’t to the degree that they magnified it. You talk to some person who thinks and behaves in some line. There is the truth, and there are many ways in which this story is told, ok. That’s what we are doing now.

We are telling a story, but what the truth it is, I don’t know. Maybe it’s a story from my point of view, maybe. You see, that is how to talk. This is my story, ok, and then, everybody has a story to tell you about these things. But basically, the way I look at it is that there was a policy to divide the island. They had to segregate the communities because if you leave them living together, you don’t create the segregation. Then, you cannot achieve the division, so the segregation was there. The segregation started even earlier than the 60s; it started in 1957, and the Greek Cypriots were attacking the small villages”.

On the way to Australia

After graduating from high school, Mr. Cemal was awarded a scholarship for a university education in Turkey. But the scholarship was postponed two years because of the conflict on the island. During this period, he was still engaged in military service. Mr. Cemal’s brother-in-law had recently gone to Australia to work, and he offered Mr. Cemal the opportunity to move to his sister’s home in Limassol and take care of the family and the farm. Since he was a soldier, he was given special permission to transfer to Limassol by the Turkish commander. He spent two years there and was close to attending his planned studies in Turkey. Meanwhile, his brother-in-law suggested to him that he should go to Australia to work and stay with them as İsmail’s sister had now gone to Australia with all 4 of their children. So this is what he decided to do.

He had two different images in the media. The one from Cyprus was limited to some movie shows and the Bayrak radio. “But, of course, we had radio. Bayrak was good; Bayrak, I think, was the only media that actually informed. There was Kemal Tunç and we were entertained every Sunday by sketches of Caher and Aliko ⁵. We had a little world at the time, but it was enough. But now, we have such a big world, and we are still looking for more.” His second media image was of British comedian

Norman Wisdom.

“One thing that made me leave may sound very silly. I used to watch Norman Wisdom, a British comedian in the 50s, in a movie. They used to show two movies; one was Turkish, one was English. They had a student matinee in the afternoon, Saturday at 2 o’clock, and it went on to 6. So, I was really hooked up on this. I used to love him so much. We used to laugh so much. I used to say to myself, I don’t understand a word of what he was saying, and if I could understand English, how much more I would enjoy it. So, I said to myself, I have to go to Australia and learn English, so I can watch Norman Wisdom”⁶.

Ismail Cemal is very glad that he went to Australia. This gave him a chance to see the world and, on return to Cyprus, to go to parts of the island he had never visited. Before he went to Australia, he had never been to Kyrenia and Trodos.

It took Mr. Cemal one month to go to Melbourne and Sydney, Australia, via Genoa, Italy by ship. “It was a big thing”, he said. He passed the main test and obtained the right to stay as a commonwealth citizen. After two years, he had the right to become an Australian citizen.

He found the Australian people to be tolerant and ethical.

Also, they are sympathetic, the Australian people. I never regret any time that I spent there. What I learned over the long while I was there I may say was ethics; Australians are very good with ethics. In their contacts, either ways, everybody, it is not the law, but everybody agrees on that...

Mr. Cemal is still amazed about how quickly he narrowed down his community until he reached his own villagers.

“You realize that wherever you go, you always find people from your country. You narrow down to the background; you narrow down the community; you narrow down to Cypriots; you narrow down to Paphos; down to villages; it is amazing”.

One of the earlier jobs Mr. Cemal found was for an Australian car company. He had to attend English courses, and his dedication to English when he was at school in Cyprus enabled him to be very successful in the language. After staying with his sister, Mr. Cemal moved to a single room.

With respect to the first years in Sydney, he stated:

“Well, going from a closed society to a permissive society, it’s like a very privileged freedom you have. Especially when you are young, you are not accountable to anybody. You can do anything and get away with it, and on top of it all, you have the money to do it”.

Mr. Cemal learned many things, not just about scholarly subjects, but about life. He experienced a time of adaptation along with other young workers who came from different cultures. Mr. Cemal made some decisions just out of curiosity; he decided to move to Western Australia to a mining town and worked there for 6-7 years. In Western Australia he bought his tools and started to work as a carpenter. He worked on building the towns and settlements of the companies that were mining iron ore, which is one of the main export goods of Australia.

It involved teamwork, and Bob was his friend from work: İsmail Cemal was impressed by Bob’s mentorship of him as was a relatively inexperienced carpenter:

“He said to me, ‘fill your pockets with nails and take them home. After dinner, you go into the bush. The desert is not just sand, it has bushes and lots of trees as well, but they are very few. If you go to the bush a mile away, you will find a dry trunk. With your hammer you hit nails, and you hit, and you hit, so that’s what I did. Then, I took a swing, swing after swing’. In a week’s time, I was getting better. So, Bob used to call me, ‘come, let’s go do this’. When I missed hitting a nail he would say ‘the wind is too strong’. I went through that and I became a very good carpenter, because I had education through Bob himself”.

İsmail Cemal has a clear accent in English. It cannot be categorized as British or Australian.

"I don't know what you can say about my accent, but a lot of people don't know what to say. I have been to Australia, and maybe I am more British and not American. I communicate, but my accent is not a specific accent of any region".

Mr. Cemal appreciated that the language he speaks is influenced by Greek, Italian, Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, and English.

"When you are speaking in dialects, you should not be ashamed. You should be proud of it. When I read and write, I do not use dialects.... If I write something, I write it properly but I do not speak like I write.... Other cultures speak to each other in dialects like the Scotsman, yet the Scot writes in English. Some Turkish Cypriots are ashamed because they do not speak Istanbul Turkish. But why would you worry about it?"

Mr. Cemal considered local dialects to be intangible heritage that can be protected by passing it through the generations. He also mentioned that, with language, you can only pass that kind of heritage intact to the next generation, because it is a tool of communication and is not like traditional knowledge.

Mr. Cemal remembered the attempt to purify the Turkish language in Cyprus, mainly from the influence of the Greek language. TMT, the Turkish Resistance Organization, actually banned its members from speaking in the Greek language.

"There are some other versions of this story; they have this pressure to speak this pure Turkish. If they are not with their school friends, the shopkeepers and bus drivers, they cannot understand it, so they feel this pressure to speak this pure Turkish".

Homecoming

After selling their house in Australia, İsmail

Cemal, his wife Lois and two children moved to

Cyprus in late 1986. They settled in Büyükkonuk ⁷, where Mr. Cemal's parents were living at that time. Mr. Cemal had initially been concerned about whether his wife, Lois, could adapt to their new life after seeing the amount of corruption in Cyprus, because she was a lady coming from a very democratic country.

This is how İsmail Cemal described Cyprus in the mid-80s: "The atmosphere was more than damaged. It was not pleasant. It was a society scared of saying anything, and it was a people suppressed and oppressed, by poverty and forced obedience."

The family at first lived in a two-room stone house heated by wood. It had one cupboard, one wall for book shelves, and the toilet was outside. They bought a secondhand table and sat on old school chairs, the children had iron beds. They lived like this for three years. As Lois explained: "The kids had baths behind the kitchen door; they did not know any better." It was while living here that their third child was born.

Lois was a nurse. She gave injections to many villagers, and they 'paid' her with garden produce, potatoes, grapes and so on. Looking back, İsmail and Lois remembered that during those times there were few shops and there were frequent power cuts. He brought a car to Cyprus, which was only the third car in the village; he was often asked to transport other villagers to hospital, to Görücülük ⁸ or to Ercan airport. Mrs. Cemal, Lois, was the only woman car driver in the village at that time. There was another woman who drove a tractor. Women did not have the courage to walk around the village or go out to the fields alone.

Lois started an informal playgroup for mothers and children. But because it was not run by the government, the villagers viewed it suspiciously. For a while they looked around the northern part of the island for a place to live and in the end decided to stay in the village. Their children went to the village school for their primary education. First they had rented a stone cottage while they built a small apartment on top with a garage/storeroom below,

and later on, Mr. Cemal built their large stone house, which took many years to build.

“We were living upstairs. When we moved down to the big stone house the apartment was left empty. We had a couple of friends who used it while visiting. Once there were tourists cycling through the village. They asked us for accommodation, and we said OK, so we let them in. Slowly, it came to us that we actually could rent such a place. We did not want to rent the place permanently to someone. We did not want to have to share our space with them. But visitors just come and go. We started renting our place to tourists”.

After they began providing accommodations for visitors, İsmail and Lois thought about combining this service with handicrafts. Having worked in the carpentry industry for years, Mr. Cemal was also interested in handicrafts, such as souvenirs for tourists. He was aware of sources for juniper and olive wood that could be used for making wooden souvenirs at the carpentry workshop in the village. Mr. Cemal said that it annoyed him that the villagers “were just burning the olive wood and juniper roof beams.” for firewood. He first made a little chair out of juniper. He stated: “We prefer to make things using local materials that reflect Cypriot environment as well as culture.”

Lois and İsmail also encouraged women in the village to sell their embroideries and other crafts in their shop, allowing them to charge their own prices. The shop charged 10% commission to sell their goods. As Mr. Cemal put it: “We are not here to exploit you. You set your price. If it sells we take commission from it.” This small workshop is now known as Delcraft.

It was about this time, in early 2000 that İsmail started to wear his iconic white ‘mandilya’ headscarf. At first he used it to cover his long hair from getting dusty while he was in the carpentry shop. But then it became a symbol to him of his Cypriotness, like a protest to the changes going on around him, the pressure to westernize, the pressure

of fashion. He explains:

“Some people think I wear it because I’m going bald. But I’m not. I’ve kept wearing it because to me it was a symbol of my culture, part of my heritage. Men in my youth wore scarves, white for the Turks, black for the Greek Cypriots. In the fields it gave shade and stopped flies going in their ears. Some older men laugh at me, saying ‘what is that thing on your head’. They don’t even know what it is called. I feel sorry that they have forgotten their history, their culture, so soon”.

Towards an Eco-village

The Karpaz Region has a natural habitat and is characterized by biodiversity. It is one of the NATURA 2000 fields in the region, which includes three environmental protection areas (Karpaz Bölgesi Yerel Kalkınma Stratejisi, 2011: 15). In the region, there are five municipal administrations, İskele, Mehmetcik, Büyükkonuk, Yenierenköy, and Dipkarpaz. There are 35 villages (Karpaz Bölgesi Yerel Kalkınma Stratejisi, 2011). Büyükkonuk, which has a population of 2,885, is the fourth largest village/municipality in the region. It is known as a village that is rich in community activities, such as the Eco-Days, which are organized twice a year. The village is very close to the northern and southern beaches. Various international organizations fund Büyükkonuk as an eco-village for environmental protection, the protection of cultural heritage, and to increase the number of accommodation facilities. It is expected that the village will become a leading community for eco-tourism in the near future (Karpaz Bölgesi Yerel Kalkınma Stratejisi, 2011: 9). Most of the bed and breakfasts (B&Bs) and hotels are now members of the Karpaz Eco-tourism Union (Karpaz Bölgesi Yerel Kalkınma Stratejisi, 2011: 26). The main agricultural products in the region are grains, potatoes, carobs, olives, grapes and greenhouse vegetables (Karpaz Bölgesi Yerel Kalkınma Stratejisi, 2011: 31-32).

Having spent a lot of time in the village,

Lois and İsmail often worried about how to save the village and how to save the way of life. One day, while they were taking the government's tourist guide course, they came across an advertisement in the newspaper about a seminar on cultural development, implemented by UNDP. It was 2003 and Cyprus was heading for accession to the European Union⁹. While attending that seminar, they were given a pamphlet on a post-graduate course in cultural development which was seeking applicants. The course was organized by the ILO (International Labor Organization) and the UNDP (United Nations Development Project) in Italy at Turin University. Mr. Cemal applied and was accepted. He stated that the "course itself was brilliant. We had lecturers from all over the world. We met fantastic people there. It was all about culture. For four months, 9 to 5, it was very intense, with continuous lecturing and lecturing."

While he was there, he formed his plan for the cultural development project for his village, Büyükkonuk. He returned to Cyprus trained and with ideas and enthusiasm. Importantly, Mr. Cemal and his wife, Lois, became experienced in project writing. He stated:

"Lois and I became more or less professional in project writing. It is rare for us to write a project and not have it accepted. Actually, all of our projects have been accepted, especially the cultural projects, which are my line".

İsmail became a prime motivator in many cultural projects in Buyukkonuk. There were projects to fully restore a traditional olive mill into an olive oil museum, to enhance the village square (including repairs to the roof of the church), for a composting course to educate villagers, for rainwater collection off roofs, for village signage, and to open new walking trails. With the help and support of local and international donors, such as the UNDP, the European Union, the Turkish Embassy and the Ministry of Tourism, İsmail, Lois, and a core group in the village/region started to discuss the concept of ecotourism. They called it an eco-village destination

in Cyprus, providing a different form of tourism. At the beginning, it sounded like special interest tourism, such as diving. Ecotourism was very new to Cypriots.

In the beginning, about 2 million TL from the Turkish Embassy, was released to the Tourism Department for B&B accommodations in Karpaz. This was a substantial amount of money. Eventually, only 12 people received this money instead of the intended 50. Most of the money went to Dipkarpaz. Three people from Büyükkonuk received money from this fund to create their B&Bs.

A very early call for proposals made technical assistance and funds available to help people who were already working in tourism. İsmail and Lois Cemal were able to expand and refurbish their existing small B&B, craft outlet and activity centre. İsmail recalls;

"There was a separate call from UNDP for entrepreneurial people who were already established and were involved in ecotourism activities. As we already had the apartment upstairs as occasional B&B use, we renovated the garage downstairs to make three more rooms and we put two beds into each of them. Our B&B then had a capacity of 10...Additionally, we had to refurbish the activity center. The project gave us materials. We paid for all of the labor. It took almost 8 months to do the work".

These activities have now been greatly reduced as both the Cemals enter retirement age. They do, however, still actively help with tourism activities, are on the Eco-Day festival committee and manage a website in English to bring tourists to Buyukkonuk.

The Turkish Embassy has been the biggest investor in eco-tourism in Buyukkonuk because it has provided many opportunities to the municipality, such as the restoration of a large house that arched across the road. Karpaz Mediterranean University chose the village as a venue in which it would provide tourism training, especially ecotourism, which will be one of the subjects of their

research and training. The Americans, with USAID funding, saw the village's potential and starting from 2005, worked with the ecotourism committee on several projects. They helped to establish a logo for 10 local products that could use this geographical emblem. The eco-tourism committee later became the Buyukkonuk Ecotourism Association which was then eligible to apply for EU funding independently.

Mr. Cemal explained how and why Büyükkonuk was found to be suitable for the eco-village concept by international organizations:

"It is not on the coast, and so it was not going to be taken by a developer. People carried on traditional farming. Most villages close to cities their people work in cities. Our people mostly worked in the village in farming and animal husbandry. The council of ministers chose us as a pilot village. We did receive a lot of training from different donors. They helped us to form a village eco-tourism committee. Our committee discussed alternative tourism. We realized that we have to do the job with villagers. In the training they asked us what we wanted in the future for the village. We believe we want a quiet village where people can come and enjoy a place of tranquility, where they will have an opportunity to find local food, and they will be able to walk in a relatively clean landscape. In their walks, they should be able to join in the seasonal village activities".

The representatives from USAID suggested and funded a village festival. They gave three weeks of training to the villagers, followed by the first festival, which featured 20 stands. It was estimated that 1500 people attended, and by mid-day, all of the food and water had been consumed. As the festivals became larger and larger, both in terms of visitors and participants, the municipality took over its organization. The last festival (2013) featured 120 stands, and 20,000 people attended. Mr. Cemal believes that the village needs more activities, and that is why they have additional events during the year, such as "Olive Day" and "Sunday Markets". With all of these activities the village is better known

than before. When one says Buyukkonuk, they may first think of the festivals rather than an eco-village. Today, Eco-Days are organized twice in year, in May and October. Thousands of people visit and enjoy organic and traditional foods. During the Eco-Days, people are also provided with many other activities, such as cycling and walking tours, donkey rides, crafts, and cooking demonstrations.

In 2011, as tenants of the ecovillage, İsmail Cemal and villagers from around the region opposed a proposed petroleum and oil storage facility for the coast of Yedikonuk, a very close neighboring village. Actually, this generated substantial publicity and credit for the village and the region. Villages from around the region formed a coordination committee, which included İsmail Cemal¹⁰ both as a member and the spokesperson. This committee issued a press release regarding their concerns about the incongruity of being an ecotourism region and being chosen for a petroleum storage depot at the same time. They stated that this decision would be extremely dangerous for the region. After almost 8 months of campaigning the petrol storage proposal was finally rejected by the government. The committee and villagers had won their case for eco-tourism.

Another project of İsmail Cemal was a project to raise the awareness of the plight of Cypriot donkeys which are no longer used in agriculture. Eight young people from the peninsula from different professions were taken to the UK and Portugal. They were to learn about donkey care, their protection and the potential use of donkeys in ecotourism. Mr. Cemal mentioned that donkeys had been important participants in the previous generations of village life and that there are still lots of stories regarding donkeys in every household. Following this project rides on donkeys at Eco-Day festivals and events became very popular. There is also a Donkey Day event held every year in February, similar to the Olive Day Fest, to remind people of the role of donkeys in traditional Cypriot village life.

Regarding the village's social structure,

according to İsmail Cemal, there is relative harmony. Prior to 1974, the economic opportunities in Buyukkonuk were very unfair. Locally, the Greek Cypriots used to have economic control of the village. Now the municipality, muhtar and shopkeeper jobs are divided between Turkish mainlanders, and Turkish Cypriots. The Turkish settlers now have more economic balance. There are not many mixed marriages between the settlers and Cypriots. Currently, members of the younger generation of Turkish settler families can now be considered as Cypriots. In the village, the local Cypriots speak in the Karpaz dialect, but the older settlers from Turkey have kept their mainland accent and people from Paphos speak in the Paphos dialect.

Based on Mr. Cemal's narrative, both leaving and returning to Cyprus were major events in his life that led to important changes for him and his surroundings. Having lived again in Cyprus since 1986, Mr. Cemal has witnessed the potential of more sustainable local/community activities, as well as the disadvantages of the mass tourism that has been fed by the casino industry. Eco-tourists, unlike mass tourism customers, are more responsible and are shown to revisit many times.

"The eco-concept has kept us very active and occupied. We do not yet have the full product, and there still is a lot of potential. I believe we raised the awareness not only for the village but on the island. Eco-tourism has to be a priority form of tourism: a sustainable tourism for the future really, since there are so many examples of the failure of mass tourism. The negative aspects of mass tourism projects that people started long ago we are now trying to clean up. I think this should be an example for Cyprus, taking a step towards ecotourism, because of the small size, because of being an island with limited environment and because of the need for sustainability. Almost everything about ecotourism is positive".

We believe that the activities initiated by Mr. Cemal will create a powerful sense of community and contribute to the creation of social

and political justice on the island. We will be happy if the life story of Mr. Cemal, which we obtained and shared in this article, is placed in the collective social memory of the Cypriot community. We also urge policymakers to realize the value of life stories as a tool of communication in making the more sensitive decisions regarding the environment and the community in order to obtain sustainable development.

Notes

1. In Mr. Cemal's village, the first language spoken was Greek.
2. The company that Mr. Cemal mentioned in his narratives was KEO. KEO is still active. It was formed in 1927 with its shares quoted and trading on the Cyprus Stock Exchange. It produces and exports wine, beer, and a wide variety of alcoholic and non-alcoholic products.
3. There were 346 mixed villages in Cyprus in 1891. This number had dropped to 252 in 1931. There is only one mixed village today, where Turkish and Greek Cypriots live together, Pyla (5). At the time of Cyprus' independence, there were 114 mixed villages left (6). The number of mixed villages dropped to 48 in 1964 (7). The demographic structure is as follows: 77% Greek Cypriots, 18.4% Turkish Cypriots, 0.5% Maronites, and 0.6% Armenians (6). Cyprus became an independent country pursuant to the London-Zurich Agreement and the guarantorship of Greece, Turkey and Britain (6). "Greek Cypriots were not allowed into the enclaves; and Turkish Cypriots were not allowed out" (7). (Calotychos 1998).
4. The Mesaoria plain is enclosed between the Trodos mountain range and the northern Kyrenia. Mesaoria (also called Mesarya) is the plain on the Island of Cyprus. The meaning of the name is "between the mountains". Mesaoria is the part of the island between the Trodos and Kyrenia (Beşparmak/Pentadaktylos) Mountains. It consists of two parts. The larger part is situated in an east-

west direction from the Bay of Famagusta to the Trodos Mountains. The smaller part is around Güzelyurt (Morphou). Its total area is around 1000 sq km. There are many villages on the plain. The altitude is from sea level to 300 meters. The summer is hot and dry, and most of the rivers lose their water. The Güzelyurt part has more rainfall and is a citrus production region. The larger part comprises the main arable land of Cyprus. The main products are barley, wheat, and animal feed. Cyprus is famous for its production of potatoes. If the land is irrigated, they can be harvested twice a year. The traditional products are tobacco, almonds, carobs, olives, figs, grapes and grape products, including raisins (for further information, please see: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesaoria>; <http://www.fergusmurraysculpture.com/cyprus/interiors-5-pages/ii-the-mesaoria/>).

5. Caher and Aleko are two literary figures who spoke the Karpazian dialect of Turkish. Bayrak Radio aired this program until 1972, when it was prohibited. The program gave moral support to Turkish Cypriots. Recently, a sculpture of Caher and Aleko was erected in Büyükkonuk.

6. Norman Wisdom (1915-2010) was an English actor, comedian and singer-songwriter known as the character Norman Pitkin.

7. According to a census during the Ottoman time period in 1831, out of 90 in the male population, there were 26 Muslims and 46 Christians. In 1891, during the British time period, the population was 740, out of which 231 were Muslims and 509 were Christians. In 1960, there were 289 Turkish Cypriots and 654 Greek Cypriots in the village. As of 2010, the village's population is 950. With the surrounding villages, including Tuzluca, Yedikonuk, Sazlıköy, Zeybekköy, Kilitkaya, Mersinlik and Kaplıca (see Bağışkan), the population can reach up to 2900.

8. "Görücülük" is acting as a go-between, which is provided by several women of the family of a young man who wants to get married. The group pays a special visit to the home of the girl and reveals their intentions.

9. The ethnic tension and conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots on the island made a pick in the 1950s during the British colonial authority and continued until the partition of the island in 1974. After the coup in Cyprus initiated by Greek junta, Turkish troops landed the north and took 37 percent of the island under its control. Throughout this time, the Turkish Cypriot community and Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus have been left unrecognized by the international community, however, the Republic of Cyprus kept its existence. In 1975, the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus and, in 1983 Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was established. The peace negotiations between the leaders of two communities on the island have been continuing on and off the aftermath of 1974 war. Since 1974, these two communities, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots were largely isolated from each other until the partial border opening on 23rd April 2003. During this time there were many reconciliation activities and bi-communal workshops held by local and international initiatives. The referenda, which were held on 24 April 2004, was prepared and submitted by UN titled as 'The Annan Plan'. The referenda were voted for the 'united Cyprus' and 'accession of Cyprus to the EU' as a united country. Turkish Cypriots said 'yes' with the percentage of 65 and Greek Cypriots said 'no' with the percentage of 76 for this plan. Consequently, the Republic of Cyprus as a representative of the whole Island entered to the EU.

10. Other members included: Kemal Yılmaz (Yedikonuk), Orçun Kara (Kaplıca), Yılmaz Erginel (Balalan), Ali Çelebi (Mehmetçik), İbrahim Hakkı Genç (Kaplıca), Ahmet Tumbo (Kilitkaya), Orhan Çiftlikdüzü (Tatlısu), Hasan (Balalan), Lois Cemal (Karpaz Dostları Derneği) and Raif Mındık'ın (Ekoturizm Derneği).

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Biographical Sketch

Hanife Aliefendioglu studied sociology and social anthropology in Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey. She has been teaching sociology of communication, media anthropology, cultural studies, and gender and media in Faculty of Communication and Media Studies in Eastern Mediterranean University in North Cyprus. She was awarded as a study fellow by the International Gender Studies at Oxford University in 1997 by Five College Women’s Studies Consortium at Mount Holyoke College in MA, USA in 2007. She is the co-editor of international women’s studies journal, *Kadın/Woman2000*. Béla Vizvári has MS (1973) and PhD (1979) degrees in mathematics (operations research) from Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest (ELTE). He received of the degree dr.sc.nat. from TH Merseburg (Germany) in 1987 and CSc (1988) from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He got the degree of dr.habil. (2003) from ELTE. He held a research position in operations research at the Computer and Automation Institute in Hungary from 1973 to 1989. In 1989, he joined to the Department of Industrial Engineering, Bilkent University. He was with ELTE from 1993 to 2007. He served as director of the Institute of Mathematics 1 in 2004 and 2005. Since 2007, he

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Otobiyografik Öz

Hanife Aliefendiođlu Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyoloji Bölümü'nden mezun oldu ve aynı üniversitede Antropoloji Bölümü'nden 2001 yılında yüksek lisans ve doktora derecesi aldı. Dođu Akdeniz Üniversitesi, İletişim Fakültesi'nde 2001 yılından bu yana iletişim sosyolojisi, medya antropolojisi, kültürel çalışmalar, toplumsal cinsiyet derslerini veriyor. 1997 yılında Oxford Üniversitesi'nde uluslararası toplumsal cinsiyet çalışmaları Merkezi'nden ve 2007 yılında ise ABD'de Five College Women's Studies Consortium at Mount Holyoke College'dan araştırma bursu aldı. Barış İçin İletişim ve Araştırma Merkezi'nin yönetim kurulu üyesi olarak görev yaptı. Derslerinin yanı sıra halen Kadın/Woman2000 adlı uluslararası derginin eş editörlüğünü yürütüyor.

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