

## **TELLING MAPS: POTENTIAL AND LIMITATIONS OF NARRATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR LAND-USE POLICY IN FAMAGUSTA, CYPRUS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

There is traditionally a disconnection between the media skills of a designer and the rhetorical arts employed by a politician. A significant proportion of a designer's skill is to simulate a vision of the world while suggesting relevance and meaning to the consumers of design. Those designers that engage with rhetoric often find themselves working in the public relations industry.

Urban change professionals, whether they are designers or activists or scientists, are often over-focused on formulaic approaches to the urban context. Such formulas tend to support a technical narrative in exclusion of the local narrative, leading to a disassociation from both politicians and their constituents.

Policy change is the result of stories told to policy makers. Such stories typically obey the narrative form of plot, setting, and character. When these stories conform closely to local history, the audience may enshrine the moral of the story to improve their community or curtail incivility. From stories identifying a physical shortcoming in the community, policymakers can justify investment of public funds to build new infrastructure or repair existing infrastructure.

The challenge for the urban change professional is to know which elements of the public's narrative should be valued, and how to translate those into a spatial expression that can become the basis for a common map or a Narrative Infrastructure. Lacking a common map that can be used for policy decisions makes listening to the public a chaotic process.

This paper briefly describes the drafting and testing of an oral-history-based pilot Narrative Infrastructure that was first used in Famagusta, Cyprus. Based on public participation results, the potential use of Narrative Infrastructure to propose land-use policy is discussed. By comparing the participants' senses of domain and identity with the morphology of the built fabric, a sampling error was uncovered that highlighted an equity challenge in the community. Recommendations for resolving the sampling error are included.

*Keywords: narrative infrastructure, oral history, storytelling, urban planning, urban design*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In 2018, Mağusa Suriçi Derneği (MASDER) of Famagusta (Figure 1) provided the research team with five oral story recordings (n=5) for a spatial narratology exercise in support of the author's graduate thesis *Deriving a Narrative Infrastructure from Community Stories in Famagusta Walled City* (Winn, 2019). The resulting map of community narratives provided a new documentation approach to local sentiment and

stakeholder engagement: Narrative Infrastructure (NI). Essentially a post-positivist tool for urban change professionals, NI's strength is in framing new urban proposals in continuity with community memory.

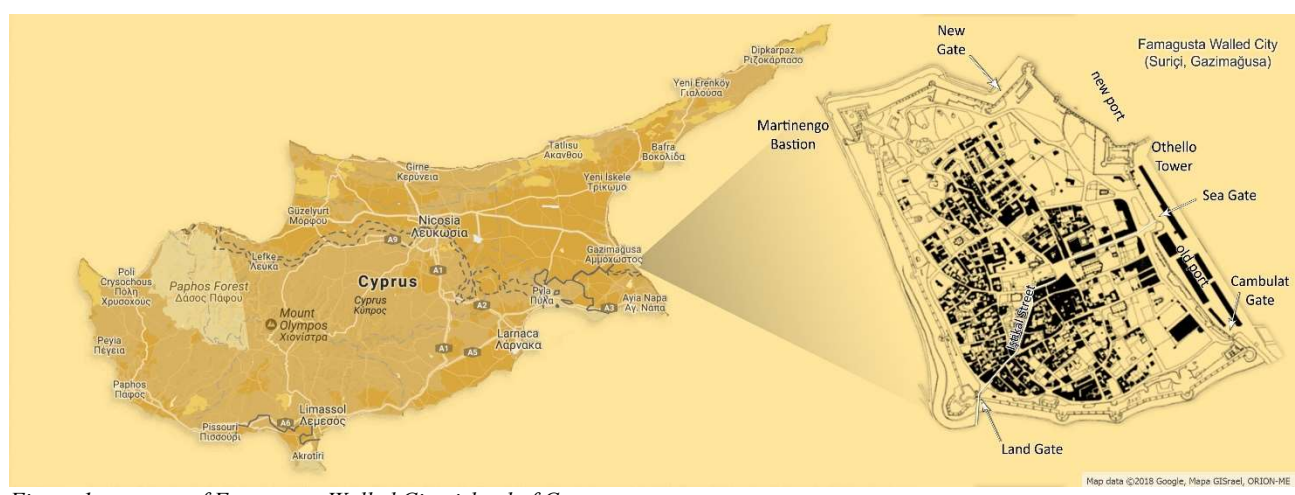


Figure 1 - context of Famagusta Walled City, island of Cyprus

Mapping the themed elements of an oral history lends a spatial order to desultory long-form oral histories. The community's stories are assembled into a frame story of the city itself. A frame story, or *hypodiegesis*, provides a loose narrative vector to orient innumerable discreet stories that may or may not have endings. Used as an urban change tool, the resulting stories describe a hidden structure that explains the current state of the urban fabric (hence an infrastructure).

Under normal conditions of urban reinvestment, this narrative infrastructure would be the dominant planning tool influencing urban change. With the insertion of crisis capital, informal narrative infrastructure struggles to have any influence over urban changes. The result is often major changes to the urban fabric that break the continuity of the narrative infrastructure. The change of urban fabric is characterized by different authors as periods of relative stability with small interventions at the community scale via local agents. These relative calm periods are followed by crises of unemployed capital that precipitates large-scale changes, straining cognitive continuity of the community:

Boosters routinely tout distinguishing qualities of their cities, seeking to change publicly held meanings of place as they encourage investment and migrants. Whether these claims correspond to any material or experiential reality is another matter. (Paulsen, 2004, p.250)

Paulsen's description of booster activity is itself a narrative that does not rely on community memory, but proposes a comedic fiction of the community in order to attract unemployed capital. The fictive approach, in seeking a comedic theme, necessarily omits all tragic elements of local community narrative. Used as a basis for urban change, this fictive comedic narrative, engorged with capital, demolishes the physical mnemonics (both happy and melancholic memories) of a community. Crisis capital tends to omit from plans all but fundamental survival needs and economic recovery or growth (Mollenkopf, 1975; Hoch, Dalton, & Frank, 2000).

In rare cases, this insensate urban renewal activity is called for by the community, as was the case for the Berlin Wall and the Pruitt-Igoe low-income housing of St. Louis (Trancik, 1986). Typically, urban renewal is a blunt process that causes as much damage to a community identity as it repairs (be the disaster natural or anthropogenic; Till, 2012). In either case, the lack of effective representation of all stakeholders prolongs community strife.

Narrative Infrastructure provides an effective checks and balances to the well-meaning intentions of crisis capitalists. Best employed at the initiation of economic development, NI can inform the schematic design process such that the community's narratives are embedded in the design. In this example, the new design becomes an adapted mnemonic of the preexisting narratives. If not addressed by the development team, the NI provides a geographically specific criticism of the developer's imported vision.

### HYPODIEGETIC CITY

The city is a frame story like Scheherazade's one thousand and one tales (Burton, 1885). The city presents an overarching narrative that most come to superficially equate to the city's "brand", but sociologists would have us explore more deeply to uncover a community's common myth (Schwartz, 1991). Such common myths are narratives of the community identity.

Where the story of Scheherazade differs from the urban story is in dimensionality. Though traditional storytellers will borrow from any portion of the 1001 codex, they are constrained to tell that story in isolation from beginning to end. Cities are composed of innumerable stories; many being told simultaneously. This degree of chaos makes the city's narrative unquantifiable due to unending narrative interference between different agent's stories.

Where the city's cacophonous narratives and Scheherazade's marathon storytelling do align is in the implication of cessation. If Scheherazade fails to entice her king, her story comes to an end with the choking off of her own life. If the narrative of a city fails to entice an engaged community, they will abandon the city. They are the characters in the city's story, and in their absence, the story atrophies into the science of archeology. The predominant narrative of such as city is "what once was".

Given these criteria, we can see some metrics of success shared by an oral frame story and the hypodiegetic city. All narratives rely on plot, characters, and chorus:

Place-identity is theoretically conceived of in the present paper as clusters of positively and negatively valanced cognitions of physical settings. The substantive and valuative natures of these cognitions help to define who and of what value the person is both to himself and in terms of how he thinks others view him. (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983, p.74)

The chorus is often the listener of stories. While ancient Greek theater provided a formal chorus to offer examination of both the hero and the villain's actions, the audience will forever have this role with or without the formal chorus (Tassinari, Piredda, & Bertolotti, 2017). This highlights a key element discussed by Hannah Arendt in *Life of the Mind* (1978). She indicated that all people exist in the social realm of

appearances. Humanity cannot help but live life in response to local community, whether we are heroes, victims, or villains. The very proposition of these roles presumes a judging chorus who assign the moral of the story.

Any narrative that lacks meaning, or moral, is inherently uninteresting. *Interest* is what an investor expects for their investment; it is what the audience seeks from the Latin *inte-rest*: to rest between what is known and what has been proposed. This definition suggests that interest can only be called forth from an audience when the proposed idea or narrative has a clear link to their prior experiences.

The prerequisite of a personal or urban narrative to be meaningful to the chorus supposes that the narrator must take into account on the chorus's preexisting stories. To find the mean of a story, one must sum the figures and divide by the count [e.g.  $(2+4+9)/3=5$ ]. Though we cannot reduce the city to numerical equations, we can see how meaning is found: sum the stories and divide by the plurality to find the coordinating myth. In this crude mathematical analogy, a new narrative that was a multiple of 5 (5, 10, 15...) would likely reinforce the local myth of 5.

#### HUMAN SCALE OF LOCAL POLICY

There is one equation people of all creeds agree upon: we were all born, we all live, and we will all die. This pattern is true of any unitary thing that is subject to change and attack. This pattern is necessary for life to persist, and forms the shape of human memory and speech (Schank, 1990). Morning, noon, night. Winter, spring, summer. Most of us think in sentences and so our very thoughts are governed by seeking and establishing the beginning of an idea, its middle, and its result. This paragraph is no exception.

This structure is best explored through an understanding of the nature of stories. An oral-history is an account of remembered facts. Also, an "account" is a record of debits and credits of the balance sheet. The account of your life is a similar record of your causes and effects. If a good thing happens to a person, they seek its cause that they may generate more of it. If a bad thing happens to a person, they seek its cause that they may stop it from happening again. The sum of our memories is a series of interlinking stories of varying scales. The ever-present dread of death drives us to seek some measure of immortality, to live a life of consequence to future generations (Arendt, 1978). This tendency is a gasp for more life in a process of dying.

With a broader perspective, we see ourselves in continuity with previous generations who lived much less comfortable lives. We take comfort in the awareness that civilization is slowly improving, and we play a small part in this most human of expressions: the story of society. Some (indeed, most) develop elaborate stories about what is to come after our deaths – be they stories of utopias or life after death.

As storytelling animals (Jones, McBeth, & Shanahan, 2014), humans seek the meaning of observed conditions and plan to promote a good life for ourselves, our neighbors, and our progeny. Stories are policy at human scale; assembled from the micro contributions of individuals of the polis (Jones & McBeth, 2010), the Narrative Infrastructure expresses a meso-level analysis tool of local sentiment.

Story, akin to speech, is effectively *action* (Arendt, 1959). As much as a grand movement requires the physical activity of the polis, they need to coordinate their ideas in the medium of story. Given our nature, no method of human communication has as much potency as the narrative. Its structure is ancient, and reflects our own nature. Story is the structure of memory, and to tell stories is to fabricate memory. This power is dependent upon an audience, and without an audience it is impotent. (Freese, 1929, Harvey, 2013)

Story and speech have the equivalent power of *action* within a community because they redirect the combined strengths of the community members (Arendt, 1959). In this medium, the combined little strengths of individual members are greater than the sum of the same strengths due to the dynamism inherent in the plurality. Without the vector of the past to guide it, public action without a story is directionless. Policy conceived in metrics is useful for supporting a story, but without the story the best metric is impotent.

Community narrative appears to be a prerequisite for evolving cities. This is not because of a lack of impetus, but due to a lack of vector. Without a vector, a force cannot move positively and consistently. The persistence of a community is dependent upon its memory, its story infrastructure.

#### ANATOMY OF A NARRATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

Memory is the purview of the chorus – the polis – of the hypodiegetic city. Throgmorton (1992) and Childs (2008) discussed at length the defining role political narrative plays in policy debates, shaping outcomes often in spite of accurate contrary data provided by opposing parties. This was first suggested by Aristotle in his text, *Rhetoric* (Freese, 1929), where he outlines the tools and conditions necessary to effect action in the polis.

Nuanced ethnographic studies would benefit from deriving unique thematic codes from their source material, then they can apply spatial narratology to demonstrate the distribution of those themes. For the purpose of studying the subject area in a comparable manner, it was necessary to borrow the framework of other authors who have specialized in describing the commonalities between communities. The study included developing an *a priori* code-set as a consistent and transferable framework.

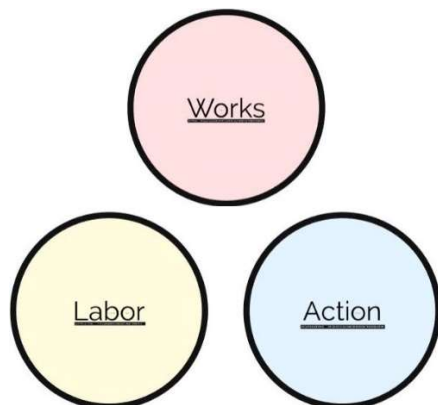


Figure - 2 Euler diagram of the three themes of Arendt's *The Human Condition* (1959)

Hanna Arendt's text, *The Human Condition* (1959), provides a simple and compelling description of ancient Athens' social framework as interpreted from Aristotle's writing (Figure - 2).

The city's workers were the makers of durable goods: tools, buildings, and works of art. The works of a city extend the effectiveness of labor with items that would survive more than one use. The worker was proposed as those who seek satisfaction in contingent well-being. Though free-men, they were not citizens since their efforts were ultimately focused on the preservation of the individual self rather than the city as a whole.

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The citizen actors were the class focused on the betterment and change of the polis. Whether through the development of policy, enforcement of said policy, or protection of the city, actors combined the laborers' and workers' products into the urban form. The majority of this effort was expressed through speech, in the mode of narratives.

Though a compelling description of an early democratic city, Arendt's discussion does not map well to larger cities that operate with multiple village-like neighborhoods and a more homogenized class-system. Modern democracies tend to stipulate that each member of the polis engages in all three modes. The ontologic relationship between Arendt's three Athenian classes provides a more complete outline of democratic life in the modern city as depicted in Figure 3.

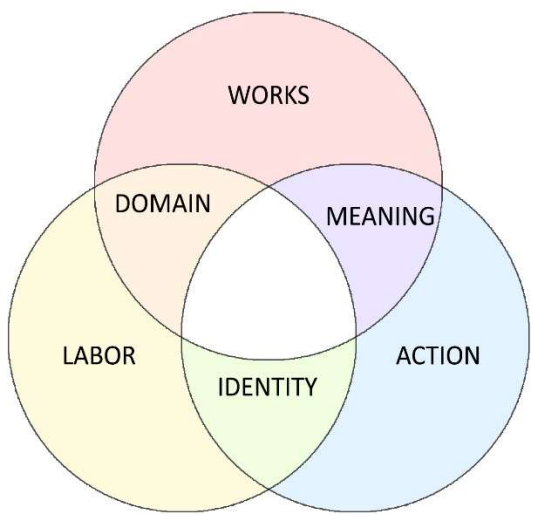


Figure 3 - Venn diagram of Narrative Infrastructure codes

The first concession of the contemporary urban planner is that the individual inhabitant is unlikely to frequent every portion of the city and employ every tool. Within the mission of satisfying their animalistic needs, the inhabitant will frequent their domus, or *domain*.

That *domain* is much more likely to inform the inhabitant's sense of *identity*, here used in the simplest definition as what the *id* is attached to outside the inhabitant's natural body. People tend to identify with more than real estate, tools, or clothing – extending psychological attachment to people and ideas. This

association to the physical body makes loss or damage to an identified item, idea, or group feels like a physical attack.

Given that the identification can be imposed on the immaterial, it is necessary for the individual to express their attachment, to tell stories that shape their *extra muros* body in the minds of others. Thus, our *identity* is a manifestation between our *labor* and our *action* – between our animal needs and how we explain them to others so that they may honor those needs.

*Meaning* manifests in a variety of ways but is, in essence, relational: some discrete thing is the mean between a previously held idea and a proposed idea. Some new ideas are rich with *meaning* and affirm the polis's *identity*, while other ideas challenge that *identity*. An individual's or group's identifications are routinely examined through the process of *storytelling*: in which plot an actor faced challenges and, as a result of conflicting or supporting identities, he or she failed or triumphed at the end of the story.

The result of the story, tragedy or triumph, is compared to the possessed identities of the characters. This comparison is the theme of the story. For example: A pedestrian, lacking wings, fell off a balcony to his death. The moral of the story is the balcony needed safety railings. This action, a story, means we should institute a policy mandating safety railings. This modifies the *works* via policy, but the *action* was a story.

CITY CONTEXT

The research aims to reveal gaps in the community domain. To accomplish this, we need to map the participants sense of place with their stories about the city and validate the findings through follow-up stakeholder meetings.

The city is the context – or common textile – for a vast number of simultaneous stories (Childs, 2008; Rogers, 2013; Filep, Thompson-Fawcett, & Rae, 2014; Bakshi, 2014.) The threads that make up that textile are themselves the threads of previous stories that form the warp and weft of the Narrative Infrastructure (Figure 4.) Media ties into this infrastructure and expresses new stories much as the knots of a rug display a pattern. Most media studies focus on the macro pattern expressed by the knotting, but offer only token reference to the underlying structure.

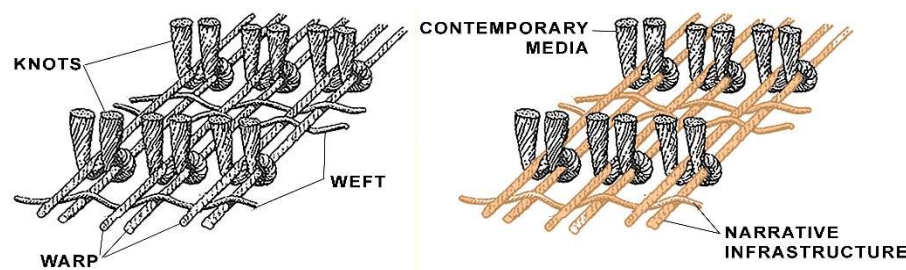


Figure 4 - Anatomy of a rug



Figure 5 - Damaged rug, Christian-Lorraine Oriental Rugs

In Figure 5 is an example of a worn rug that has lost its knot work and exposed the weft in one location, and the underlying structure destroyed in another area. If the city could be lifted up by the Narrative Infrastructure - as artistically suggested in Figure 6 - presumably abandoned urban space would be left



behind. Could urban change professionals use these gaps as opportunity-zones to propose projects that might mend these parted strands of community narrative? Based on the mapped community stories of domain in Famagusta, can areas of low resistance to development be identified for renewal activities?

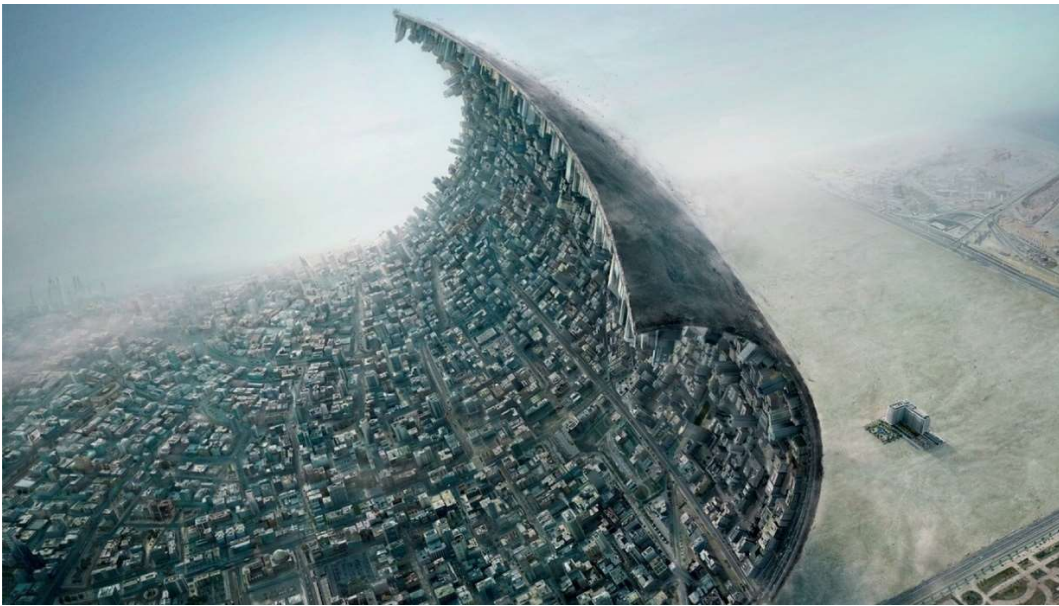


Figure 6 - City-Carpet, Wallpaperstock

The following is a brief description of the spatial narratology method used to describe the Narrative Infrastructure in Famagusta and the counter-intuitive feedback when the conclusions were initially presented to the community organization, MASDER. The influence of history is discussed to explain the community feedback and, to conclude, modifications to the NI process are outlined to overcome a sampling error.

### SPATIAL NARRATOLOGY

Spatial narratology is a method of combining an ethnographic approach with mapping tools to provide spatial extents of community stories. Five community narratives (n=5) were translated and transcribed before being inputted into qualitative data analysis software (Atlas.Ti) for coding. The codes were assigned to portions of the transcription that were strongly characteristic of one of the six *a priori* themes: labor, action, works, identity, domain, or meaning.

Those stories, or portions of the transcription, that included a geographic reference were then mapped into a Geographic Information System (ArcGIS). A point data value is not reflective of the neighborhood extent of a story's influence, so a *service area* of 220 meters was applied based on the consolidation process of locational memory (Pierrot-Deseilligny, Müri, Rivaud-Pechoux, Gaymard, & Ploner, 2002; Byrne & Becker, 2009). Parahippocampally-dependent memory tends to demonstrate spatial salience after approximately five minutes; during that time a memory will be associated with other physical sensations or *way-points*. The range of 220 meters was chosen to reflect five minutes of walking at the average walking speed of an elderly actor traversing an urban environment (Bendall, Bassey & Pearson, 1989). Other modes of transport were discounted due to the effect of an increase in speed and resulting loss of sensory density.



Walking locates the body in place. In the repetitious act of turning over our legs – of falling forward, then rising and collecting ourselves into a corporeal rhythm – we are as it were like large knitting (or perhaps sewing machine) needles stitching ourselves into the local fabric of the environs, grounding and rooting ourselves even if momentarily. In this sense, walking tracks, outlines or traces a place through the continuous trail left by the moving body and the memory of its motions. In route, the city is repeatedly taken in at a robust glance. The surroundings are actively synthesized in and through our bodies. We are oriented increasingly from single points to broader positions to localized regions and places (Macauley, 2000, p. 7).

As each story's service area is overlaid on the city's map, a theme by theme map can be generated that reflects the narrative shape of affect for the participants. This is not to suggest a definitive map of the participants' sense of the various themes. The sampling method was without prompting questions from the research team, so the resulting maps are spatially free of researcher bias.

By examining the spatial extents of the coded themes across a city, two important high-level observations were made: density and absence. Highly dense narratives of a particular code in a geographic area suggest the sense of place identity. The absence of a code indicates that the local community does not have a nuanced sense of place about that location. Locations absent of code suggests to an urban change professional that a community may be amenable to a new narrative in it provided the new narrative leverages nearby existing narratives.

#### NARRATIVE PLANNING METHOD

Once a spatial narratology map has been drafted, it is possible to employ narrative analysis and rhetorical tools to land-use policy. This method is inherently post-positivist by intention. Nearly all policy debate relies on the typical modes of human communication and the inherent crutch used by policy debate audiences: prior knowledge. New ideas or policy will constantly be compared to an audience's prior experience, which automatically directs a negative bias towards new data that does not map onto the audience's prior experiences (Schank, 1990). NĪ subverts this tendency by developing new policy proposals from the audience's priors, rather than imposing new ideas with new data that typically is not relevant to the audience.

There is the possibility that NĪ might be employed by urban change professionals to manipulate a community into accepting a policy narrative that references their priors without being a natural evolution of their sense of identity and domain. These attempts will likely fail since the rhetorical logic necessary to succeed presupposes narrative continuity. Discontinuous storylines have the effect of jarring the audience out of the spell of the narrative, giving rise to doubts and counter narratives.

## FINDINGS FROM THE MAĞUSA STORYTELLERS

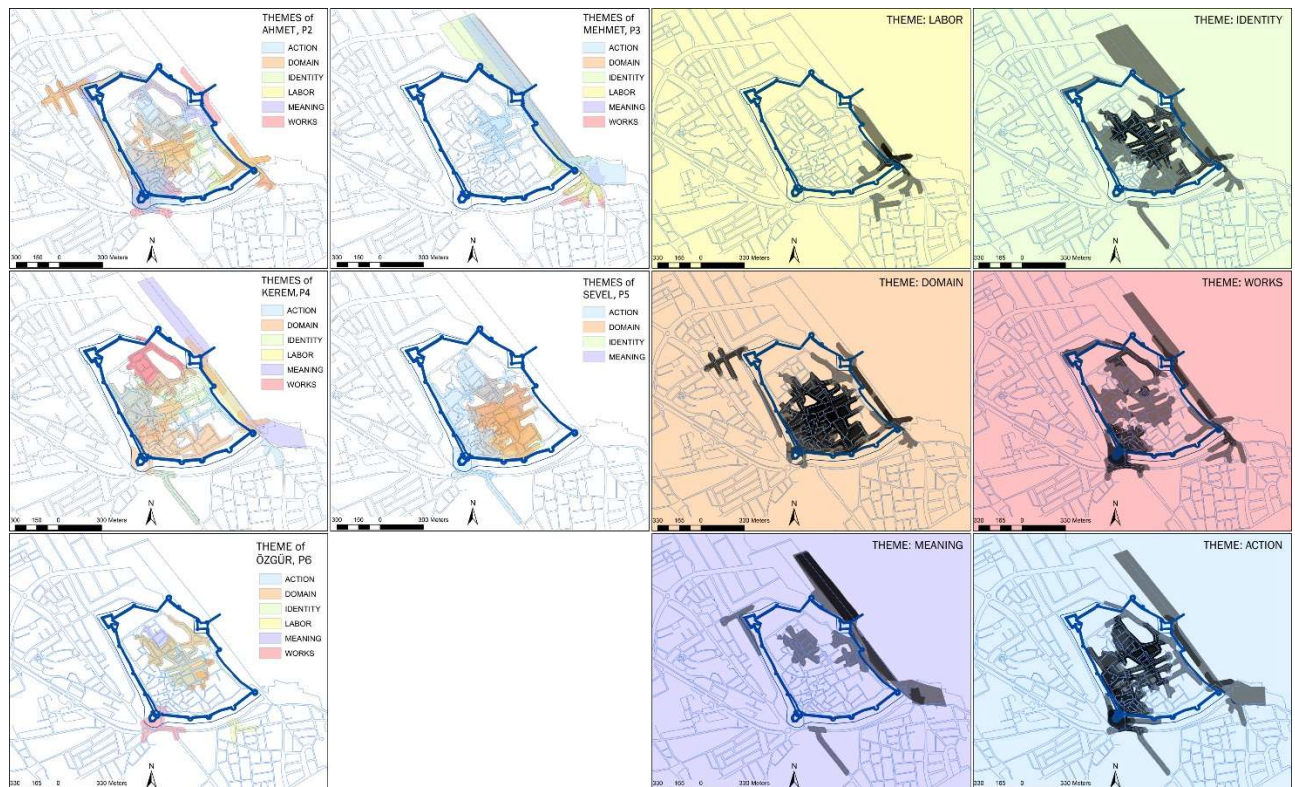


Figure 7 - Results of mapping narrative themes of the five story tellers (Winn, 2019)

The process and results were presented to MASDER at a general meeting on February 23, 2019. This was a particularly well-attended MASDER meeting because immediately after the research presentation the organization held its annual election of officers. The key finding of the research was a lack of labor and subjective well-being in the studied narratives (Figure 7).

A secondary finding was the lack of sense of domain along the northern edge of the walled city (Figure 8). This second finding suggested future development of short-term housing, in support of local tourism, could be located near Martinengo Bastion (Figure 1), an area known as *Çifte Mazgallar Şehitiği* (Martyrdom of the Double Lance). Part of the Ottoman-era military encampment, the area is free of historic vertical construction.

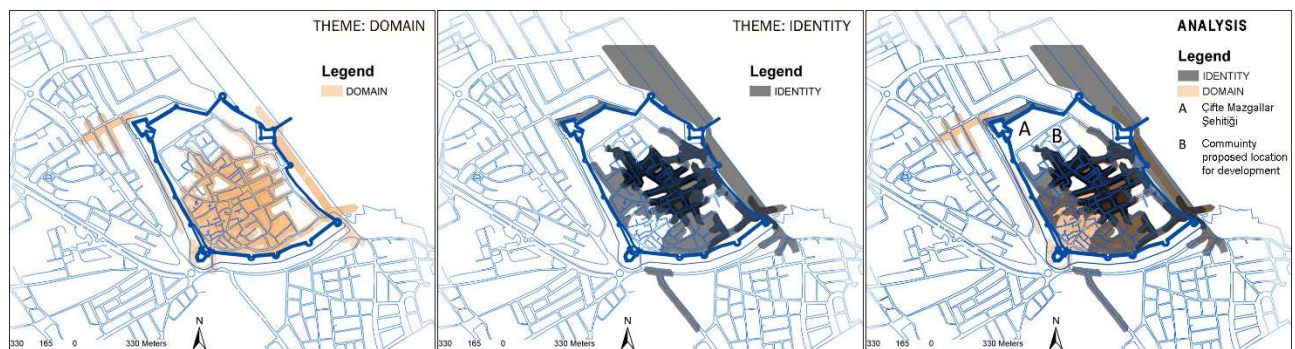


Figure 8 - Proposal of short-term housing and stakeholder response

After several minutes of group discussion, the consensus of those present was that the *Çifte Mazgallar Şehitiği* was recently placed under study because of the discovery of historic tunnels connected to the

fortified wall. The counter-proposal was to focus short-term housing to the east of Martinengo Bastion near the New Gate. That site is currently used for long-term housing and is fully occupied as of 2019 (area B, Figure 8). Like the empty fields of *Çifte Mazgallar Şehitiği*, this New Gate development was not part of the narrative sense of domain for MASDER members.

### DISCUSSION ON CONTINUITY

The British Colonial era in Cyprus (1878 CE to 1914 CE) included a marked influx of crisis capital (Doratl, Hoskara, Zafer, & Ozgurun, 2003). This included a new commercial port at Famagusta and a light-gauge rail line connecting the port to Nicosia (65 kilometers away). To better integrate the new harbor with the walled city of Famagusta, the project managers opened three new gates in the historic wall and provided warehousing near Cambulat Gate. The New Gate (*Yeni Kapı*) opened near the Staddon Bastion (**Error! Reference source not found.** ‘C’ compared to same in Figure 10) in the north-east corner of the walled city. It activated a quiet, isolated section of the walled city previously known for gardens and graveyards. Once connected to the new port, this neighborhood began developing to support British colonial objectives.

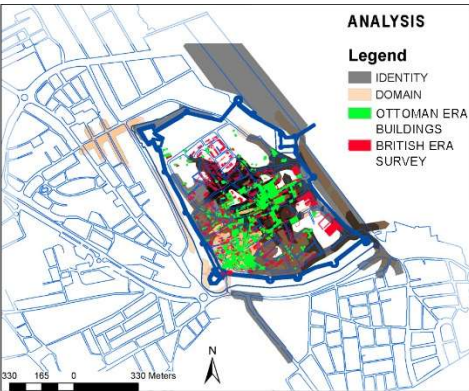
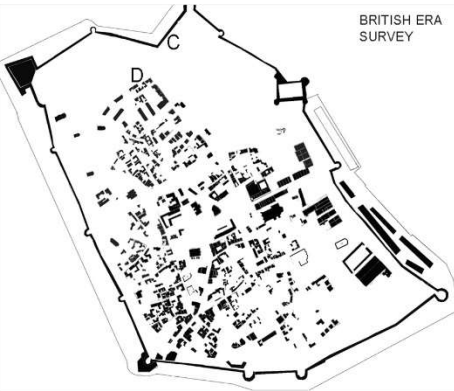
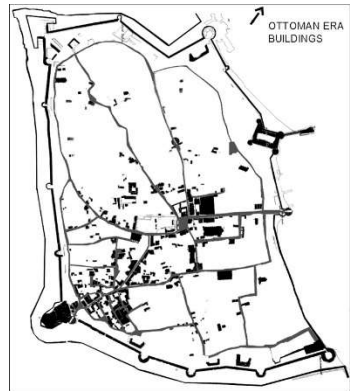


Figure 9 - Ottoman and British built infrastructure, (Doratl, Hoskara, Zafer, & Ozgurun, 2003)

Figure 10 - Historical fabric compared with community stories of domain and identity

Narrative Infrastructure that indicates an inhabited neighborhood without any sense of domain likely has a sampling error. In such cases, it is appropriate to engage in additional oral history collection in the identified neighborhood. This is particularly important to curb the enthusiasm of crisis capital investment that will gladly go where it anticipates little-to-no resistance.

The original Narrative Infrastructure study of Famagusta (Winn, 2019) clearly demonstrated this sampling error. The used oral histories were all collected by one group, MASDER, which promotes two agendas. Firstly, they intend to preserve the memory of their community. Secondly, they promote the city for tourism (boosters’ activity). Based upon the age of the participants, these boosters, per the domain map (Figure 8), are members of the older families and typically resided in the southern neighborhoods of the walled city. The port construction contractor had a green-field development opportunity in the north near the New Gate (Figure 1) where port workers and their families would be able to live. The new residential neighborhood was relatively unknown to the participant storytellers.

## CONCLUSION

Every map, NĪ included, tells a story about values. A lack of a narrative in a community artificially suggests that the neighborhood is unoccupied or otherwise without value. Maps used without verification of physical or current conditions can result in discrimination and disenfranchisement of local residents.

If we map a community's narratives, we are likely to find low-density Narrative Infrastructure in unitary locations. The reason for these gaps will be innumerable based on local morphologies. As locations of limited memory, they present opportunities for repair and improvement that will incite little resistance. Just as in repairing a rug, the weaver must look to the nearby threads to inspire the substance of the repair to be made.

From a narrative perspective, this might suggest looking for a nearby theme in community narratives that, though currently clouded by 60+ years of tragic overtones, could be converted into a comedy by combining existing community strengths into a new story that subverts expected tragic outcomes.

The NĪ map is telling: the danger of inadvertent redlining with a storytelling map directs urban change professionals to seek out the missing chorus – those who were not heard and manifest as a literal hole in the Narrative Infrastructure.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## FIGURES

Figure 1: Google, Mapa GISreal, ORION-ME, 2018, adapted by author, 2018

Figure 4: Anatomy of a rug, source: Ahmed Ben Ismail,

<https://www.bradfordsruggallery.com/blogs/the-blog/whats-the-difference>

Figure 5: Damaged rug, Christian-Lorraine Oriental Rugs, <http://www.clrugs.com/>

Figure 6: City-Carpet, Wallpaperstock, [https://wallpaperstock.net/city-carpet-wallpapers\\_w41660.html](https://wallpaperstock.net/city-carpet-wallpapers_w41660.html)

Figure 9: *The Walled City of Famagusta (Gazimagusa): An Opportunity for Planned Transformation*, Doratlı, Hoskara, Zafer & Ozgurun, 2003

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