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A Cypriot Tragedy and a New Identity

Analysing refugee assistance programmes and their impact on cultural
relationships in post-1974 Cyprus

Submitted by:

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For

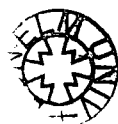
MA (Research)

University of Durham

Department of Anthropology

2000

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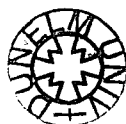
Acknowledgments

The research that forms the basis of this thesis was carried out over six months between January and February of 1998. The research followed the principle of participant observation and was conducted through formal and informal interviews with refugees and non-refugees in the capital city of Nicosia. Fieldwork proved to be a very demanding and difficult process in which I learned as much about myself as I learned about the refugees I had travelled to study. The difficulties that were faced resulted in a relatively small pool of informants that would ideally have been far larger. This was compounded by language difficulties that hid many of the subtleties of refugee thought and action. The fieldwork was a rewarding experience though and I feel confident that enough material was gleaned to justify the arguments made in this paper

Adjusting to life in an alien society is extremely difficult and lonely experience at the best of times. When you arrive in a new country with no contacts and little money, an extremely difficult situation seems almost impossible. My own fieldwork would not have been possible without the support of a number of people in both Cyprus and the UK who helped, funded and encouraged me throughout the time of masters. Special thanks go to Gabriel, Michelle, Helen, Jon, Demetre, Elizabeth, Lili and above all, Lisa who helped me during my fieldwork.

Without the support of Mum and Dad, their kind grants and their helpful encouragement, which never exceeded the bounds of annoyance, this Masters would have been impossible. Leonie, Peter, Ian, Lynn, Nick, Zoya and Jess provided enthusiastic support and to them I am grateful.

In Durham, I must thank my tutor, Paul, who put up with my inefficiency and disorganisation for two years and who provided indispensable help and encouragement. Pat who was a great help to me in the department and Ian King, who never doubted my ability to complete this project, must both come in for a special mention. I am also greatly indebted to the support of Gill, Rosie and Sonya



Introduction

Refugees provide a rich case study of how people interact with one another socially and how they construct identities in transformational contexts. Yet Anthropology has traditionally ignored the study of refugees despite the value that a culturally and socially oriented approach to refugee studies might have for state assistance programmes and aid agencies, which must formulate policies to re-house and resettle displaced people (Harrell-Bond & Voutira 1992). Such refugee assistance policies traditionally lacked a human dimension. Policy goals were formulated and applied without consideration being given to the cultural and social needs that refugees have. This has often resulted in undesirable outcomes for refugees, who are subject to those policies. In Cyprus, refugees continue to show an ambivalent and negative relationship with the state assistance programmes that were implemented after the invasion and partition of the Island in 1974. The intention here is to demonstrate how these negative relationships evolved and how they are explicable using anthropological theories to shed light on cultural ideologies and social relationships. The policy formulators ignored these relationships when the programme of assistance was designed in the aftermath of the conflict. The existence of these relationships and cultural values has conflicted with the formula for state intervention and results in tensions and ambiguities for refugees that could have been avoided.

Anthropology clearly has a role to play in defining and refining refugee assistance programmes. "For example, policy-makers tend to assume that movement within a region requires less 'cultural' adjustment since people are living with 'kith and kin' on the other side of.... imposed boundaries. Though shared language and history may alleviate the trauma of uprooting, they do not eliminate the challenges of exile." (Harrell-Bond & Voutira 1992:7) This is precisely the situation as it applies to Cyprus, where refugees are culturally identical to their hosts. The challenges of exile have not been removed by shared cultural inventories or pre-existing social relationships. The refugees have evolved a separate identity to that of other Cypriots and appear marginalized by the assistance programmes that were meant to help them assimilate. These paradoxical outcomes are explored and described in this paper.

It has also been noted that anthropology can learn a great deal from responses that refugees show in exile. "People who have been forcibly uprooted have to adapt to their new social, economic and physical environments. This process challenges the utility of beliefs, values, technology, statuses, exchange systems, and all other aspects of society in which anthropology has a vested interest." (Harrell-Bond & Voutira 1992:9). Cypriot refugees demonstrate a number of responses that can help us to refine our notions of social interaction and cultural change, particularly in understanding how people construct and manipulate their identities in ambiguous contexts in order to pursue political objectives. The implication in this thesis is that refugees do not passively accept their ambiguous situation and they do not conceive of it in simple ideological terms. Refugees are bound up in an intensely political world in which they must use their situation to construct strategies to realise their aspirations.

Refugees are involved in a struggle to gain control of their lives in the face of uncomfortable bureaucratic and non-refugee attitudes. They may use commonly held ideologies to reinforce their claims, but they are individuals in the sense that they have their own aspirations, which they pursue through continuously constructing and reconstructing their own identity. This paper has two aims: to assess the scale, success and impact of refugee assistance programmes in Cyprus and to explore the applicability of humanitarian and anthropological attitudes to refugee studies.

In assessing the impact of state assistance schemes on refugees in Cyprus, it became apparent that the effects of state policy were far reaching and had important implications for the manner in which refugees adjust to their exile. The first part of this paper examines how this impact was manifested in adverse reactions to the form and status of state-owned refugee housing estates. It particularly focuses on the issue of title deeds to explain the reactions of estate dwelling refugees to the assistance programme. Inadequacies in the housing provision conflicted with long established Cypriot cultural notions of housing, property rights, social status and memory. These negative reactions are set against an ambiguous context. They are undesirable for refugees because they hinder their adaptation to exile, yet they arose from a desire among refugees to prevent assimilation, which would hinder their claims for repatriation. The inhibitions that estate housing places on refugees are both desirable and undesirable at the same time. This quandary is encapsulated in the issue of title deeds. Title for estate housing is desirable because it alleviates the pressures that cultural traditions place on refugees; the stigma of not owning their own homes; the inability to use their housing to provide a dowry and the humiliation of knowing that their property will be handed to non relatives after their death. Yet it was also desirable for refugees not to own their estate housing, as it would have damaged their moral right of return to their abandoned homes. The dilemma is only being resolved as new strategies for demanding repatriation become available, enabling the dilemma to be solved.

The problems that this ambiguity created for refugees are examined in the second part of this thesis. What makes Cyprus remarkable in the field of refugee studies is that the refugees, despite co-ethnicity with their hosts, have developed a radically different identity. Different groups, who are competing for resources and the realisation of their own aspirations, construct identity along different lines for their own strategic purposes. Firstly, refugees construct an image of themselves that conforms to their own ideas of what it means to be a refugee in order to qualify for resources, maintain their claims for repatriation and regain control over their aspirations. Secondly, the state creates an identity for refugees that is articulated by the criteria for access to the housing programmes. It is negative for refugees because it extends state control over refugee lives by tying them into an unequal relationship of power and dependency. The politicisation of the refugee cause can be controlled and co-opted for the state's own goals of reunification. Thirdly, the attitudes of non-refugees and the construction of refugee identity that they engage in has power over the refugees whose successful competition for resources is resented. Refugees are not passive subjects of this negative stereotyping in which the state and non-refugees engage. Although refugees resent the contradictions and tensions that these stereotypes create,

they do not live passively with them. In contrast, they are empowered by their ability to construct their own identity to use these negative images for their own strategies and ambitions.

Chapter 1

Expulsion and Resettlement

Background to the refugee problem

Cyprus gained its independence from Britain in 1960, some 46 years after Cyprus had been annexed and 35 years after it had become a crown colony (Panteli 1990). The British had become the colonial power in the aftermath of the First World War because Cyprus was a strategic island in an area of British interest. Cyprus was island with a community drawn from Turkish and Greek speaking peoples who had lived largely in harmony for centuries. During the period of British rule, the aims and aspirations of the two communities began to diverge. Greek Cypriot ambitions became tied up with a nationalist discourse on union (*enosis*) with Greece, whilst Turkish ambitions focused on preventing such a union. The struggle for *enosis* and the guerrilla campaign of the EOKA fighters characterised the period from 1955-60 and forced the British to reconsider their relationship with the island. The British opted in accordance with Turkey and Greece, to declare the island Independent in 1960, whilst retaining substantial areas as sovereign British territory for military purposes. Cyprus became possibly the first country to become independent without the support of its population, none of which regarded independence as a desirable outcome.

Violence erupted in 1963 between the two communities whose ambitions still diverged in the way they had before independence. De-colonisation was not balanced by the formation of a replacement national ideology, and the vacuum that existed in Cypriot identity became filled with the two community's divergent attitudes to their ethnicity. Greek Cypriots continued to look to Greece, while the Turkish Cypriots began strengthening links with Turkey. The inter-communal violence of 1963-64 prompted the Turkish Cypriots to withdraw from political life and erect protective ghettos and fortified villages, into which as many as 25 000 Turkish Cypriot refugees retreated. The United Nations became involved in keeping the two factions apart, but it was to no avail. In 1974, right wing Greek Cypriots with the support of the *Junta* in Greece instigated a coup against the Greek Cypriot-run Republic with the intention of declaring *enosis*. Much of the violence was directed toward Greek Cypriots, particularly left-leaning Cypriots and trade unionists, who wished for a reconciliation with the Turkish Cypriot community. But inevitably, Turkish Cypriots became involved in the fighting and Turkey invaded on the pretext of protecting Turkish Cypriots.

The amphibious invasion swiftly established a beach-head around the northern port of Kyrenia, whilst paratroopers secured the road to Nicosia. The defending Greek Cypriots inflicted grievous losses on the invading poorly trained Turkish forces, but the weight of the onslaught and the failure of Greece to intervene saw increasing amounts of territory fall to the invaders. The Turkish army halted its campaign only when its objectives had been realised and a third of the island lay within its control. Turkey had

justified its invasion on the basis of the Treaty of Guarantee, which had formed part of Cyprus' post-independence constitution. This enabled Greece, Turkey or Britain to intervene if the constitution was threatened as it had been by the Greece-inspired coup. Legal justifications apart, the invasion was ruthless, indiscriminate and led to the deaths of many thousands of innocent Cypriots. Although the major powers did not intervene to prevent the Turkish occupation in 1974, they have at least refused the Turkish held north the legal status it needs to break away from the Republic. In doing so, they have ensured that there is still hope of re-unification, however slim that prospect is becoming with the progress of time.



The view north. This view of a mosque in north Nicosia was taken from a building adjacent to the 'Green Line.' The mosque symbolises the history of Greek and Turkish ethnicity on the island. It was once a Christian cathedral, but was converted by the Ottoman Turks after their invasion in 1570. The mountains in the background are the Kyrenia range. On the central-left edge of the picture, a giant Turkish flag that has been cut in to the rock of the mountain and is clearly visible in the south, can be faintly seen as a pale area. It's existence is a symbol of Turkish control over the north and is greatly resented in the south.

Resettlement policies and the housing programme

The Republic of Cyprus had become partitioned, with 40% of the island now under Turkish occupation (Zetter 1991:41). The partition had created two immediate problems for the Greek Cypriot government. Firstly, the economy had virtually ceased to exist as a result of the war. The richest farming land had fallen under the Turkish occupation; the timber forests of the Troodos Mountains had been badly damaged; the main deep-water port was inaccessible in occupied Famagusta; the island's airport lay unusable in the buffer zone near Nicosia and the main tourist resorts were in the Turkish held areas near Kyrenia and Famagusta. Rebuilding the shattered economy was one of Cyprus' most important priorities, but under these conditions, it would prove very difficult.

The second major problem was that the invasion was accompanied by the displacement and subsequent homelessness of over a third of Cyprus' total population. Between 50 000 and 60 000 Turkish Cypriots living in the south of the island, voluntarily migrated to the occupied areas, but nearly 200 000 Greek Cypriots were forced to leave their homes in the north during the exodus of 1974 and subsequent population exchanges (Kliot & Mansfeld 1994:329). This created a short-term humanitarian dilemma that was met through aid programmes to meet the refugees' humanitarian needs, but also it required a medium-term solution to the chronic housing shortage that refugees faced once it became apparent that their exile would not be temporary.

In some respects these two problems were complementary. The refugee population provided an employment base for rebuilding the economy and restructuring what had been a predominantly rural agricultural society, into an urban, industrial economy (Zetter 1991:42). For refugees, a rebuilt economy would provide a means of re-engaging themselves in normal social activities, including employment, whilst providing the revenues the state needed to supply them with social housing and welfare benefits. The aid programme can be broken into two responses. Firstly, the state had to provide short-term aid for refugees in the immediate aftermath of the invasion. Along with international aid organisations, particularly the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the state had to provide a weekly food ration, financial allowances, clothing, footwear, utensils and equipment to refugees through 312 distribution centres to refugees living in temporary accommodation or tented camps. This provision lasted for two years and cost c£48 million (Kliot & Mansfeld 1994:339)

As the refugees' exile began to take on an appearance of semi-permanence, the state was forced to implement medium term policies and frameworks for re-housing the refugees in permanent accommodation. The programme was partially assisted by the emigration and personal re-housing of 40% of the refugees, but that still left 110 000 Greek Cypriots in need of accommodation. The state response to these housing needs would need to be extensive and would require the commitment of considerable resources. The state adopted three strategies for re-housing those refugees who had not already re-housed themselves. Firstly, the Turkish Cypriots left behind substantial property, which was converted and distributed to refugee families. By 1980, 45 000 people had been re-housed in abandoned Turkish Cypriot property (Zetter 1982:475). Greek Cypriots were initially wary of occupying houses that belonged to exiled Turkish Cypriots. Many of the properties were of poor construction, isolated in remote rural areas and lacked facilities such as bathrooms and toilets. More importantly, refugees felt uncomfortable with the idea of occupying Turkish Cypriot property for fear of retribution in the event of further Turkish military actions or for fear of enhancing the permanence of the division (Kliot & Mansfeld 1994:341) Ultimately, occupation of Turkish Cypriot houses has proved successful. "As time passes and memories of the previous occupants' ethnic differences recede, the houses provided a more familiar and often more congenial physical environment than the major new housing alternatives." (Zetter 1982:475)

Refugee housing estates provided a second solution to the chronic housing shortages of post-war Cyprus. These housing estates were designed, built, owned and maintained by the state, usually on land adjacent to existing urban areas. "Between 1975 and 1992 about 25 000 refugees were settled in 24 Government housing estates in Nicosia, 13 000 were settled in 11 housing estates in Limassol and 9 200 in the 13 housing estates in Larnaca." (Klio & Mansfeld 1994:343). Housing was provided to refugees without any requirements that they pay rent.

The third strategy for housing refugees in Cyprus focused on provision of site and service housing plots to enable refugees to build their own homes with the aid of government grants. Plots were serviced with water mains and access to the electricity grid and occasionally with foundations or even partially completed dwellings. Refugees would complete the sites to government designs and would occupy them rent-free (Zetter 1982:475). Other schemes included grants for refugees to build on land they may already have owned in the south of the island before the war, the difference being, that they were owned by the refugees and did not tie them into a relationship of dependency on the state.

Fig 1. Total expenditure on housing between 1974 and 1980. (Zetter 1982:477)

| | C£'000 |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| Low-cost housing (estates) | 53 826 |
| Site & service projects | 1 981 |
| Self build loans | 16 900 |
| Rehabilitated Turkish property | 8 500 |
| Total | 81 207 |

This study will focus on how the refugee housing estates negatively affected refugee adaptation and assimilation through processes such as dependency and identity formation. These other housing schemes are important in understanding how refugees were re-housed after their expulsion from the north, but they fall outside of the scope of this analysis.

Strovolos 4

My first encounter with a refugee housing estate left me with very strong impressions. It was made on a cold, wet and overcast winters day at Strovolos 4, one of several satellite estates strung to the South of Nicosia. All of the estates are tied into a central bus network for they were built several miles from Nicosia's centre and would otherwise be quite isolated. In Cyprus however, the car is the favoured form of transport, so I shared the bus only with school children and a handful of old women on their way home from market.

The estate was not at its prettiest in the February rain. The walls of the houses were a mixture of rough grey concrete and peeling whitewash paint. Their monotony broken by the wide organic sweep of the roads and the individual attempts of the residents to brighten their houses with fruit trees, hanging gardens and flowers. Their appearance was by no means one of affluence, but neither was it one of poverty either. The refugees have not been excluded from Cyprus' economic miracle. Indeed, it has been observed that it would have been impossible without their labour. Estate refugees have not shared in the rewards of the economic miracle to the same extent as other Cypriots and there was a clear appearance of poverty among the people of Strovolos 4. High levels of car ownership hint at what little wealth there is on the estate. The corrugated iron sheds and carports that house them in the absence of proper garages, have been erected outside almost every house and stand as testament to their importance among the refugees.



Car ownership in Strovolos 4. Car ports have been erected outside almost every home.

This reliance is hardly surprising in Cyprus where car use is the norm, but it is at least necessitated for refugees by the limited facilities and opportunities on the Estate. Considering its small size, it is not surprising that the estate provides little in the way of commercial support services and almost nothing in the way of employment; these must be sought elsewhere. This contrasts significantly with the refugee estate of Kokkinia near Piraeus in Greece. Hirschon (1998) describes a much larger cluster of estates built between the 1930s and 1960s which became almost entirely self-sufficient. They enjoyed their own public and commercial services; post offices, government departments, financial and legal offices; stores, bakeries, dairies and markets. All of the everyday essentials of life, as well as professional and banking services, are catered for in Kokkinia but are largely absent in its Cypriot equivalents.

The scale of the Cypriot estates is considerably smaller than those of Greece, part of a deliberate policy to break the refugee population into more manageable numbers. Strovolos 4 could not possibly support the level of services found in Kokkinia, but the presence of only one convenience store and a single coffee-shop was still a surprise. It is clear that the pattern of life in Strovolos 4 is at least partly shaped by the high level of car ownership. Residents use the facilities and find employment away from the confines of the estate. The refugees of Kokkinia had no such access to private transport and so the majority of the services came to them.

Strovolos 4 was not planned as being merely a residential estate. From its inception it was provided with primary and secondary schools, a social club and a church. At the heart of Strovolos 4 the church provides the community with its focus and helps to reinforce an almost village feel to the estate. It was not built merely as a residential add-on, but as a community in its own right and with its own identity. The replacement of the original temporary plaster-board church with a far larger structure in the classical Greek-Orthodox style hints at a long-term commitment to the viability of the estates by those in authority but acts also to reinforce the permanent nature of the refugees exile.

The housing stock on the other hand, is only just beginning to display similar signs of long-term commitment by their occupiers. In Kokkinia, many of the refugee occupants had purchased the title to their houses and had begun to make radical alterations to them and even to rebuild them from scratch. Partly this was necessitated by extreme overcrowding, but it was carried out in the face of relative poverty. The residents of Strovolos 4 are wealthy by comparison and have access to a raft of government credit schemes. It was surprising to find on that first acquaintance with Strovolos 4 that the houses, despite the addition of car ports and gardens, were generally unchanged from the day of their construction and in contrast to Kokkinia, they often looked uncared for.

This was not universally true of the whole estate and a tiny minority of houses showed some evidence of recent private investment. New windows, ornamental gates and one or two minor extensions had been added or were in the process of construction. As an exception to the rule, these houses were compelling. The answer lay in the policy decisions made at the estate's inception; that they are only a medium term solution and that ownership of the properties would remain with the state. Whilst in Greece, the Asia-Minor refugees were awarded title because it was accepted that they would never be able to return home, in Cyprus, the hope persists that the refugees will one day leave the estates and return to their abandoned homes.

The issue of title is of great importance in understanding the dynamics of estate life and the identity of the refugees. As a political issue, it sheds light on the refugee's place in the struggle and how it leaves them isolated from Cypriot society and reinforces their identity. On a personal level, it raises complex and conflicting social and cultural problems for refugees. On the other hand, the issue of property title

has provided refugees with a potent strategy for keeping alive the issue of their displacement and their demands to have their original homes restored to them.



The house on the left of this picture, has recently undergone investment after the owner received title for his property. New windows, an extension (on the far left) and a new roof-mounted heating system have all been added. Other houses retain the appearance they had when they were first constructed.

Changes to this strategy in the 1990s are beginning to lead refugees to pursue their claims in other ways, whilst at present, the refugees' demands for a resolution of their exile, lie at least in part on their disenfranchisement from their homes and their status as tenants on the estates, both of which are very serious cultural issues in the Cypriot context, the shift in emphasis to appeals made in international law, marks a new phase in refugee strategies. Whilst humanitarian appeals based on the refugees' impoverishment have clearly failed to shake the resolve of the Turkish-Cypriot authorities, their claims for financial compensation from Turkey are thought to offer a more robust offence.

On the estates, this is starting to be made apparent in personalised changes to the housing stock. That first visit to Strovolos 4 revealed several buildings that had been recently, or were in the process of modernisation or refurbishment. The stark grey concrete walls hidden behind rendering and whitewash, the narrow, prison-like slit windows replaced with larger more conventional windows, new rooftop water immersion heaters and boundary fences marked a new-found commitment to the buildings that seemed absent before. The contrast that these few houses made with the majority, which remained unaltered was striking in an aesthetic sense, but they represent how the estates will evolve in the coming years. As the role of the state in maintaining the housing stock declines, the input of the refugee owners will begin to transform the appearance of the estates.

Strovolos 4 was built on an exposed hill some distance from the original city limits several years after the war. The economic boom of the 1980s and its corresponding surge in the property and building industries has seen the old city grow out at an unprecedented rate and Strovolos 4 now stands on the cusp of that development. The ending of its geographical isolation may prove in time to be a metaphor for the social life of the refugees themselves. Their isolation on the conspicuous estates has acted like a barrier to their assimilation into the host society. This disjointment is one of the most important factors in assessing the relative success of the estate schemes.



The original church (left) is being replaced by a more permanent structure (right)

Government Policy, Success or Failure?

It might be considered that in the context of the achievement of resettling nearly 40% of the Cypriot population, the programme of re-housing and rehabilitating the refugees was an unmitigated success. In pragmatic, humanitarian terms this would certainly appear to be the case. The overwhelming priority in the second half of the 1970s was to provide those refugees still inhabiting tented camps and overcrowded temporary accommodation with requisitioned Turkish property or purpose-built modern housing close to potential sources of urban employment. By fulfilling these two basic requirements, the State would be able to help rebuild the lives of those refugees who were in no position to help themselves.

If the programme of refugee assistance is judged on these short-term aims, it could broadly be said to have been highly successful. By 1980, the government had re-housed 110 500 refugees (55%) in Turkish property, government housing estates and self-build housing schemes. Of the refugees who were not immediately re-housed by the government, 67 500 (34%) had re-housed themselves privately, 12 000 (6%) had emigrated and only 9 000 (5%) continued to languish in refugee camps (Zetter 1982:478). In addition to ensuring the resettlement of refugees in adequate housing, their economic needs were met through employment in an economy that was beginning to return high levels of growth. In economic terms, Cyprus had begun to enter a boom that has been sustained to this day and from which the majority of refugees have benefited through employment and improved living standards.

The example of Greek Asia-Minor refugees in the 1920s provides a more appropriate comparison. Between 1.25 and 1.4 million refugees were expelled from their homes by the war between Greece and Turkey of 1922, presenting Greece with a humanitarian disaster very similar in its scale and context to the problems faced by Cyprus in 1974. The total population of Greece at that time was only 5 million and the absorption of such a sizeable refugee population posed a very serious question of the Greek authorities ability to plan and co-ordinate a suitable long-term response. That such a response would be necessary was confirmed the year after Greece's disastrous military campaign by the expulsion of the remainder of the Greek population of Turkey and a subsequent announcement that ended any remaining hopes of repatriation. The confirmation of the refugee's permanent exile had the effect of galvanising the authorities into a response that they had hoped would be unnecessary had the refugees been allowed to return home.

The work of re-housing the sizable refugee population was carried out by the Refugee Settlement Commission, an independent international organisation under the direction of the League of Nations. It was funded by international loans of some £19 million, an amount necessitated by the chronic economic problems experienced by Greece throughout the inter-war period. The majority of the refugees were re-housed within seven years and the Refugee Settlement Commission was disbanded in 1930 with the work uncompleted. Over 40 000 families were still in need of re-housing and this had only dropped to 14 000 ten years later (Hirschons 1998:42). Many of those who had been housed were living in sub-standard pre-fabricated dwellings or in cramped multi-family refugee quarters. These problems were only partially solved by a further relief programme in the 1950s and even in the 1970s, many refugee properties housed two or three separate, unrelated households.

Hirschon's judgement of the Greek government assistance programme was that "...public investment in housing consistently failed to meet the needs of a sizeable section of the urban refugee population."(1998:43) She suggests that the problems were caused initially by political instability after the war of 1922 and subsequently by the refugee's political marginalisation and their ensuing inability to influence government policy. Their interests were neglected in part by their failure to organise as a pressure group and partly by cleavages in Greek politics that excluded poorer and less influential refugees from patron-client relationships that were essential to secure government spending, access that was not denied to other members of Greek society (1998:43-44).

The Asia-Minor refugees' failure to form a pressure group and which hampered access to new housing, did not hinder Cypriot refugees in the same way. The political system in Cyprus did not suffer from the instability of the Greek governmental system, nor did it suffer from the latter's exclusivity. Although the refugees in Cyprus were also prevented from organising as a pressure group in opposition to the state, they were given access to the reconstruction of their lives through government organisations that were instrumental in providing for the refugee's housing and welfare needs. The Asia-Minor refugee's difficult situation was made worse by the economic problems endemic in Greece that persisted for

several decades after the commencement of their exile. In Cyprus the economy regained its composure within months of the cease-fire and expanded rapidly in the ensuing years. The funding problems that proved so problematic for rebuilding in Greece were never a serious dilemma in Cyprus.

Why was it a humanitarian success?

The Cypriot response to the events of 1974 and the displacement of one third of its population was intended to pursue provision of durable housing stocks as a short-term solution to the chronic housing shortage faced by refugees after their displacement. The refugee's belief that they would quickly be repatriated to their homes, lingered around the camps and dormitories through the winter of 1974. The hardening of the Turkish position and the indifference of the International community to their plight did little to weaken the resolve of the refugees and their initial optimism was replaced only with a hardened conviction that repatriation would be achieved within the space of a few years.

The 'myth of return' became institutionalised among the refugees very quickly and remains as a persistent feature of their lives to this day. The government officially shared this view but regarded inaction on the humanitarian needs of the refugees as unacceptable, even if it meant that purpose-built housing estates might become empty within a few years of their construction if the political situation was to change. Several considerations lay behind this view. Firstly, funds were readily available from international and commercial sources to complete building within a very short space of time, whilst loans could be afforded because of the rapid improvements in the economic sector. Secondly, refugees were mostly economically inactive in the camps and their labour would significantly boost the economy if they were moved to estates near to urban sources of employment.

Thirdly, it was politically and morally unacceptable for the government not to act to alleviate the difficult conditions of the refugees in the camps, especially as they numbered one sixth of the population. Refugees look back at those bleak days of hardship spent in the camps with considerable bitterness. To have left them there any longer than was strictly necessary would have caused deep resentment and accusations of neglect. Conditions such as those might have led to the kind of alienation and radicalism that was exhibited by Asia-Minor refugees in Greece after their re-housing proved inadequate, took too long and was beset by problems of corruption and patronage.

In the event of an accord with the Turkish Cypriots and a subsequent repatriation of the refugees, there was a risk that the estates might become deserted. But even if repatriation was to come to fruition, the government knew that the housing stock, whose ownership was to remain with the state, could be put to other uses. Reserves of modern housing serviced with community facilities and close to centres of urban employment would have helped to alleviate conditions for those Cypriots who lived strenuous and ill-rewarded lives in inadequate, antiquated and unhealthy urban slums or rural dwellings. Although

Cypriots had benefited from a few small social housing schemes in the past, there were still many thousands who would have benefited from allocation of refugee property had the refugees been repatriated. This flexibility in government owned housing has become apparent in recent years as Greek Cypriots from low-income non-refugee, groups have in some cases been housed on refugee estates.

These considerations galvanised the authorities into adopting the construction programmes that eventually succeeded in re-housing almost a quarter of the Greek-Cypriot population on government-owned housing estates, self-build housing schemes and in abandoned Turkish-Cypriot property. The speed with which the housing crisis was dealt with, the quality of its organisation and the standards maintained in the planning and construction of the refugee housing suggest that the Cypriot experience was a remarkable success. The authorities had been faced with an unprecedented humanitarian disaster and had responded to their dilemma with adequate short-term measures to feed and shelter the refugees in the early stages of the crisis and to re-house and re-engage the population in the economy as soon as their immediate repatriation became impossible.

Chapter 2

Inadequacies in the Assistance Programme

What went wrong?

The government of Cyprus had not foreseen that the refugees' temporary displacement was only the beginning of a long-term exile that remains unresolved to this day. The intervening twenty-five years spent on refugee estates and occupying Turkish-Cypriot property has left significant sections of the refugee population severely compromised and disjointed from the rest of Greek-Cypriot society. The failings in the humanitarian assistance policy that are discussed here refer only to those refugees who were re-housed on government owned housing estates. Refugees who re-housed themselves or emigrated from Cyprus, may have received humanitarian assistance in the immediate aftermath of the war, but they fall outside of the scope of the resettlement programme that the state undertook after the initial displacement. Additionally, the experiences of refugees resettled in self-build schemes and rehabilitated Turkish Cypriot property has not been studied and will not be extensively remarked upon.

The problems that arose for refugees living on government owned housing estates must be understood in relation to a number of cultural concepts held by refugees since before their exile. Cultural attitudes toward dependency, property ownership, housing flexibility and the past are the lens through which refugees understand and conceptualise their properties in exile. Refugee attitudes toward their housing are mediated through these cultural values and explained in language that emphasises their importance. The re-housing schemes may have been a success in the narrowly defined sense of pragmatic humanitarian relief, but their implementation took no consideration of, and failed to adequately accommodate those traditionally held cultural values. This has resulted in the emergence of long-term problems of adjustment to life on the housing estates and the growth of clearly negative attitudes toward government housing schemes. Such problems raise questions regarding the overall quality of the approach that was pursued in Cyprus and emphasise the importance of a more subtle method of resolving refugee housing problems, in which solutions are adjusted to the requirements of the refugees in terms of their cultural features as well as their immediate shelter needs.

These cultural themes exist in conflict with the physical design and appearance of the housing estates and with an alien pattern of ownership imposed on the refugees by the state. Attitudes of alienation among refugees are associated in particular with the state's long-term policy of retaining ownership of its housing instead of distributing it among refugees as has been the case in many other refugee contexts. What is so unusual in this, is that private home ownership before 1974 was almost universal in Cyprus, whilst after the implementation of government schemes in the late 1970's, over thirty thousand refugee households came to be resident on government-owned property. This pattern conflicts

with Cypriot notions about dependency and self-reliance and prevents refugees from adapting their property to suit their cultural requirements.

This fundamental change in the way property ownership is distributed came about for two reasons. Firstly, the refugees' tenancy was seen as short-term and it was not therefore deemed necessary to transfer title. In Mainland Greece after the disastrous Asia-Minor conflict, the possibility of return for the refugee population was removed in 1925, just two years after the exodus of the refugees. Within a very short space of time the authorities began to distribute title to the refugee occupants of the housing it had built. In Cyprus, the conviction that the refugees would quickly return to their homes was so endemic that the state saw no reason to distribute title. The fact that the ideal of repatriation remains a strong component of government policy and refugee identity to this day ensured that the issue of title remained dormant for over twenty years.

Secondly, there is a tacit understanding between refugees, the bureaucracy and politicians that the title issue is a central component of the refugees' claim to repatriation. The difference in government policy between the Republic of Cyprus and the breakaway regime in the North illuminates the importance of title to the political dimension of repatriation and exile. After the war of 1974, the political aspirations of the *de facto* Turkish regime in the North began to diverge fundamentally from those of the Greek-Cypriots in the South. The Turkish community saw the division as a permanent partition of the island, and to that extent they declared independence from the Republic of Cyprus in 1985 as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC).

As the aims of the two sides diverged in the late 1970s, so too did their methods. Both sides used the status of their refugee populations as part of an ongoing propaganda war. In the North, the emphasis lay on the speedy resettlement of the displaced Turkish-Cypriot population and the granting of title to vacated Greek-Cypriot housing and the limited amount of social housing constructed after the war. The desired outcome of this policy was the ultimate removal of refugee status from displaced Turkish-Cypriots and the normalisation of their resettlement. To this extent, some 50 000 Turkish-Cypriot refugees in the North had been re-housed, provided with title and had their status as refugees terminated by 1992 (Kliot & Mansfield 1994:336). This achievement has enabled the Turkish-Cypriot regime to declare the situation resolved. If there are no more refugees left in Cyprus, then there is no moral imperative for re-unification and their repatriation.

The policy of the Republic of Cyprus is precisely aimed at preventing such a situation arising in the South of the Island. It is in the direct interests of the Republic's stated desire for re-unification and repatriation that they maintain the population of displaced Greek-Cypriots in the prolonged liminal status of refugee in order to have their humanitarian concerns as a bargaining tool at any future political settlement. This equation is foremost in the minds of all refugees in the South of the island, including those who do not inhabit government or Turkish-owned property or who were born after the 1974

invasion. The legal status of *refugee* extends to all of them, regardless of the degree of normalisation and reintegration they have achieved.

The concerns, status and destiny of the Greek-Cypriot refugees are bound up irrevocably with the intensely political arena of relations between North and South. Both sides are aware that there must one day be a reckoning over the division and constitution of Cyprus and both sides wish to be in the stronger bargaining position when that day comes. Title was distributed to refugees in Greece in the 1920s and in the Turkish-occupied sector of Cyprus in the 1980s because the authorities wanted the refugees to integrate with the host population at the earliest possible time. In Greece this was necessitated by the removal of repatriation as an option, in Northern Cyprus, the idea of repatriation itself was simply undesirable.

The government of Cyprus employs other means and arguments in its war of words with the regime in the North. The destruction of Hellenic culture by the occupying army, the treatment of the enclaved Greek-Cypriots in the North, the issue of the missing and the energetic lobbying of international bodies (particularly the United Nations) and governments are all part of the agenda of the Cyprus government. For the refugees, there was only one recourse for many years and that was the humanitarian, moral imperative implied by their refugee status. To compromise that, would be to lose the only power over events that they have and would probably put an end to their hopes of repatriation, as their displacement would no longer be an issue at any future peace talks. The title deeds issue should be seen as a specific refugee strategy to counter the explicit threat of their permanence in exile should it become implied that they are no longer refugees.

The possession of title deeds is rightly seen by refugees as being non-consistent with their claims for repatriation. In 1991, Zetter wrote of "the refusal of the refugees to accept property title. Title would imply permanency, the status-quo partition, manifestly a softening of the negotiating position with the Turkish-Cypriots." Conversely, the lack of title maintains a powerful commitment to the refugees that their situation is still temporary, that they are not, despite appearances, becoming assimilated and that they will be repatriated." (1991:56) Towards the end of the decade, the title issue arose once again in the context of a highly controversial government policy to issue title deeds to refugees. Opposition politicians whose argument was neatly summed up by leading politician Spyros Kyprianou opposed the policy. He claimed it "would give the impression to third parties that the refugee problem had been solved. Whether we like it or not, the Turks will take advantage of this. The Turkish side would maintain that an exchange of properties had taken place, with Greek-Cypriot refugees getting Turkish-Cypriot land in the free areas and vice versa for the occupied areas." (Quoted in Cyprus Mail, October 18th 1997)

This neatly sums up the dilemma for refugees living in government or Turkish owned property. If they accept title, they will forfeit their moral claim to repatriation, an ideal to which they continue to hold

most dearly. But this situation conflicts with strong social and cultural values and represents an undesirable state for most refugees. In addition, they have to contend with the relatively unsympathetic architecture of government-build refugee housing estates and the deterioration in their fabric. After 25 years of these conditions, the refugees who are subject to these government schemes show responses to these difficult and often contradictory circumstances that are compelling for refugee assistance programmes in general and lend support to the possibility that the Cyprus scheme in particular, was not as successful in human terms as the figures would suggest.

Social Housing and its Sigma

The history of social housing in its Cypriot context is compelling because, despite a clear and frequently identified need for government-implemented housing schemes throughout the post-war period, very few such schemes were ever actually carried through. This can be explained before independence as being the result of a lack of colonial interest in the housing conditions of native Cypriots. After independence in 1960, the continued failure to deliver social housing in Cyprus is confusing. Many of those Cypriots who lived in the poorest housing were Turkish-Cypriots who were cut off from potential government sources of funding by the inter-communal violence after 1963. But there is also a wider mistrust of social housing brought about by cultural norms and traditional attitudes to the ownership of property.

Informants generally made it clear that although they were grateful for the housing provision made by the government after 1974, they felt uncomfortable in housing they did not own and over which they have no control. Many longed for more traditional surroundings and it was not unusual to hear refugees reminisce about their original homes in ways that make it clear their new ones do not bear comparison. The problem with social housing, is that it contradicts Cypriot notions of self-reliance. Occupying social housing places the refugees in a large-scale patron-client relationship with the state, an undesirable relationship of dependence that refugees had almost universally avoided experiencing before 1974. In Greece, Hirschon describes a situation where “The position of a tenant, paying rent to the owner of a dwelling, was seen as one of dependence and rank inferiority. The head of the family... should be master of the house – but the tenant cannot be.” (Hirschon 1998:119) These attitudes are similar to those found on the housing estates in Cyprus, where, although the refugees do not pay rent, they are still tenants.

It is not merely unfortunate that refugees feel uncomfortable living in housing that do not belong to them, the discomfort estate-dwelling refugees exhibit when asked about their property circumstances reveals a pattern of emotional conflict, tensions and contradictions that results from the unforeseen combination of government policy and prolonged exile. The explanation for these tensions lies in a set of specific cultural values that tie Cypriots emotionally to their former homes. After conducting field

interviews with Cypriots displaced by the 1974 war and before the construction of the government housing estates, Loizos described these as a loss of "structures of meaning" (1977:234). He identifies the importance of cultural values as key determinants in these structures of meaning and he clearly argues that the financial loss of the property alone cannot explain refugee attitudes towards their vacated properties.

"The refugees lost far more than the simple material objects.... They lost key structures of meaning in their lives, and much of their behaviour must be understood as the process whereby they sought to regain them." (1977:234)

Loizos makes it quite clear that he regards refugees as having "Something quite fundamental missing in [their] lives" (1977:234) which he prefers to explain through the analogy of bereavement. Refugees in the immediate aftermath of their exodus, were mourning for their lost possessions and ways of life. These losses he argues, were not merely financial but the losses of homes in which the refugees' lives had been lived and which were filled with memories of their most important social experiences. These are the structures of meaning to which Loizos alludes and their loss is more important to them than their separation from material things alone. The importance of homes as the symbolic repository of memory, is a compelling argument, but cannot explain alone why refugees should continue to mourn for their abandoned homes 25 years after the commencement of their exile. Homes had other symbolic roles to play in refugee lives before the events of 1974.

Memory

It is hard to escape the importance of memory in certain types of Cypriot home. At first, my own acquaintance with homes in Cyprus was associated only with the modern, upmarket flats of the younger generations of Nicosia and these did not seem to conform to any notion of memory or emotionally invested structures of meaning. But these patterns are the products of Cyprus' recent economic boom and are a far cry from how the majority of refugees, particularly those living on refugee housing estates, lived before their exile. Several informants spoke of a fundamental change in the culture of home ownership among the young after the economic boom. Traditionally, they said, houses were passed on through the family or new houses were built on family plots, but houses were rarely bought or sold. The property market, as such, was a consequence of economic changes in the 1980s and the housing associated with it bears little similarity to traditional pre-war patterns of housing transfer, particularly those of rural communities from which estate dwelling populations draw so heavily.

My awareness of this *traditional* housing was aroused by the approach of the Easter festivities and the concentration of activity in which all Greek-Cypriots seemed to be engaged in order to prepare for this. I had been invited by a mixed family of refugees and non-refugees to join a feast in a village ten miles

to the South of Nicosia. The house was owned and occupied by Costas, a man of some eighty years whose son Demetre and daughter Katina had both married refugees who they had been courting at the time of the war. Costas' grandchildren, nephews and several close family friends, completed the numbers. The role of this house as a focus for the various relatives, several of whom (including Demetre and his wife) had travelled from London specifically for the occasion, hinted at its importance as a focus for family identity and aggregation.

This pattern was by no means unusual and urban Greek-Cypriots all over the Island choose the Easter holiday to return to their rural ancestral home with their relatives on the most important Orthodox holiday. Refugees are excluded from similar pilgrimages, as their ancestral homes are inaccessible. With no focus for their family celebrations, it is easy to see why so many refugees complained so bitterly that they rarely see their more distant relatives and village friends any more. The features that could be observed in Costas' house also demonstrated why the houses refugees inhabit today, are no substitute for the ancestral homes they have left before. As in most such houses, walls were decorated with the photographs of numerous ancestors stretching back to the early parts of the twentieth century. Long dead aunts, uncles and great-grandparents were pointed out and their connection to the house and household described in detail. Costas was particularly proud of a photograph of his father in uniform from the First World War and one of himself from the second, both of which were taken inside the house on whose walls they now sat. This is common in Cyprus and of course, family photographs are not unusual elsewhere. In this context, however, the number and age of the photographs and the stories that were told of their subjects hinted at a deeper connection between the family, its ancestors and the house in which all of them had at one time lived and which seemed heavily invested with memory.

The role of the house in symbolising and facilitating the unity of the family was much in evidence during the Easter festivities, but it's spatial extent only became apparent when the owner of the house and his children guided guests who had not visited before around the extent of the property. The buildings themselves were remarked upon, their age and construction carefully pointed out and their relationship to the surrounding orchard, fields and livestock extensively elaborated. The house should not be considered as being merely a physical construction, it is inherited from and inhabited by close relatives and it extends to include the surrounding farmland and crucially, those buried in the nearby cemetery who are bound into the Easter festivities and the unity of the family through ritual and homage during Easter. As a conceptual whole, the house and its surroundings is expressed through the concept of *home*, which is constructed by Cypriots to symbolise and embrace the ideas and relationships that take place within the spatial extent of house, farmland and graveyard. "... 'home', in this configuration, represents not just physically bounded space, but a living organism of relationships and traditions stretching back into the past..... The house distils the history and life of the family..." (Zetter 1999:12).

Status

The role of the house in the symbolisation of memory and family is clearly extensive, but there is another very significant structure of meaning that can be associated between property and owner which is not remarked upon by Loizos. Informants spoke frequently of the material wealth they had built up in their former homes, of the additions they had made to their property and the improvements they had made to their land. This interest is not purely economic as the refugees keenly point out should mention be made of financial compensation. Refugees do not list dispassionately the economic value of their lost assets, they are far more likely to bemoan the fate of an irreplaceable family heirloom or photograph collection. Instead, they focus on the pride they felt in their property and particularly in the additions they made to it themselves.

This is a subtle but important distinction between the economic value inherent in abandoned refugee property for which compensation is possible and the status value of property and land for which no compensation can be made, particularly through the provision of social housing. The key to understanding refugee complaints over the loss of their property, the cultural meaning of social housing on the refugee estates and the often ambivalent and negative relationship they have with those houses, lies in the dynamic social composition of pre-war Cypriot life and the cultural value of self-sufficiency. Traditional village life was characterised by a fierce competitiveness between co-villagers. The currency of this competition was pride and status based largely on a household's wealth. The reward of success was political influence and the possibility of being able to secure advantageous marriages for the children of the household. If status and prestige are based on one's ability to provide for oneself, it follows that refugees who depend on the state for their housing and do not own it for themselves will greatly resent this pattern of ownership for it denies them the status for which many had worked hard.

Loizos described these village status games in his pre-1974 study of Kalo village to the east of Nicosia, a settlement that was later occupied by the invading forces. He observed that villagers judge one another's status on a series of criteria based on work patterns, skills and land ownership. "Those men with little land, who earn their living by heavy labour for others, who cannot afford to refuse work, whose wives and daughters must also take paid labouring work are at the bottom of the village status scale. At the top are men who for one reason or another depend on no one for their prosperity, who employ labour, whose wives and daughters do nothing outside the house; these men have large land holdings, and they are fully occupied with them." (1973:50)

Conversations with refugees about life before their exile, bring up these themes of ownership and status repeatedly. Refugees talk of their humiliation at being forced to accept charity from other Cypriots after their exile and contrast their predicament with their idealised past when they could provide for themselves and were respected for it. "I used to own orange groves near Morphou" one elderly refugee woman told me, "I always had oranges to give away to my friends and family, but I never felt so poor

as when I had to beg for them off strangers." Another refugee, a man of around forty years complained that he had helped his father to plant a field of orange trees only a few months before the invasion. "We had so much" he said bitterly, "But he died of a broken heart because they took it all." The frequency with which citrus orchards were mentioned strengthens the argument of the importance of pride and status. Loizos argued in 1973 that owning trees "...has come to have a symbolic meaning in its own right, a meaning which suggests prosperity and success." (1973:56), thus explaining why planting became so popular after 1955 and why the loss of those plantations surfaces in so many refugee accounts.

The importance of status in property and housing partly explains why refugees are so anxious to return home and why financial compensation means so little to most refugees, but also it marks a failure of a large part of the government refugee assistance programme, specifically affecting those refugees living in government owned housing estates. The structures of meaning the refugees used to build and maintain their status in pre-war village life cannot be replicated in modern social housing in any positive way. In fact, refugees living in social housing exhibit negative opinions of and feelings toward, their dependence, which are not consistent with the prevailing notion of refugee assistance schemes as facilitating 'integration.' The government decision to house a sizeable proportion of the refugees in social housing schemes rather than in schemes more sympathetic to pre-war cultural attitudes, such as self-build housing, has led to feelings of alienation and dependency which were only compounded by the ongoing retention of title ownership by the state.

Providing the Dowry

The negative feelings refugees exhibit twenty years after the initial provision of social housing has been exacerbated by the imbalance of property ownership in other ways that have helped to differentiate and subordinate estate-dwelling refugees. The status of refugee housing as devoid of memory and status related structures of meaning is compounded by the loss of control over the use and transmission of the property in which they live. In some respects, these problems are closely associated with the features of status described above. But in addition to the status gained from being able to control the use and transmission of one's property, the imbalance of property ownership contradicts established cultural ideas concerning the flexibility of the domestic unit to accommodate the extended family and the transmission of property through the dowry and inheritance system. By retaining property rights and preventing even nominal control of property transmission and flexibility in the domestic unit, the government's policy provokes resentment and a sense of resigned subordination on the part of the refugees. Their problems are compounded by the contradiction between controlling their property on the one hand and the importance of retaining their nominal refugee status on the other. The two are both desirable for refugees, but were until recently, mutually exclusive.

This dilemma becomes more apparent when consideration is made of the pre-war cultural context associated with property ownership and transfer in Cyprus. In Cypriot tradition, it is desirable for a newly married couple to start life in a separate household of their own in order to underline their freedom and to reinforce the social prestige of their parents who have to provide their children with the necessary land or house (Loizos 1973:65). The land is provided through the institution of the dowry system by the parents of the marrying couple who allocate a share of their personal land holdings at marriage. In Kalo village before the 1974 conflict, Loizos calculated that only three out of 191 married couples did not receive land at marriage and noted that the property distributed as dowry represented most of the property they would ever get from their parents (1973:48). This relates to the competition for status in the sense that the size of the land provision awarded to each of the parents children, is judged and remarked upon by their fellow villagers once each of the children has been married off. The size of the provision then determines the status of the parent couple. "The acquisition, ownership and disposal of land symbolised social status and material wealth and, especially through the dowry system, the continuity of the line. Thus, respected children helped to establish the name of the family, which was then perpetuated through the inheritance of land and property." (Zetter 1999:12)

Estate refugees in Cyprus have no such room for controlling the inheritance or disposal of property on the housing estates. It is a deep grievance of refugees that their properties are returned to the control of the state upon the death of their inhabitants and released for occupation by unrelated Cypriots who are not necessarily even refugees. Most estate refugees cannot afford to provide a separate dowry house and cannot partition their own on the estates. The situation contrasts with that of Greece where dowry provision was equally important, but where ownership of estate houses and relaxed planning laws enabled refugees to divide their properties and provide a separate dowry house on the same plot as the parental household (Hirschon 1998:121). In Cyprus, the possession of title would enable refugees to fulfil their cultural obligations by either subdividing the estate properties themselves or using them as capital for loans to purchase alternative housing for their married offspring.

Flexibility

In addition to this transfer of property, the importance of flexibility in the housing stock itself was of considerable importance to the pre-war Cypriot home-owner. With land increasingly at a premium as the twentieth century wore on - principally as a result of population increase - the subsidiary households of the married offspring often had to be accommodated within existing family buildings or on subdivided plots. This was often achieved by constructing new dwellings within the confines of the parents household plot. "Under traditional conditions of large courtyards, a family could, if short of building land, divide the courtyard in two, thus allowing a marrying child a yard and dwelling unit of its own. Similarly, if a number of children had been married off, and were living at some distance from the

natal courtyard, the last child to marry often took over the parental dwellings and the big yard, while the old people retired to a corner of the courtyard in a small purpose-built mudbrick unit."(Loizos 1973:64)

The importance of flexibility in housing is underlined by the experience of Greek refugees quartered in government-built housing schemes in Piraeus. Hirschon described pre-fabricated housing units in Yerania, erected as temporary shelters in 1927, some 60% of which were still standing in 1983 (1998:59). They had each been intended to accommodate a single household but had been extended and subdivided in order to provide separate households for the original inhabitants and their married children and grand-children. As in the traditional Cypriot case, the original parents had often retreated into basement rooms excavated specifically to accommodate them, leaving the main quarters for their married offspring. Such subdivision was necessitated by poverty and land shortages, but made possible by the relaxed attitude of the authorities and the gradual distribution of title.

In the Greek example, there was simply no need to maintain any sense of refugee transience. With repatriation impossible, refugees were encouraged to normalise their lives and were aided as such by the transfer of control over their property enabling cultural values associated with property transfer to continue unaffected along traditional lines. With title and control over modifications to property firmly in the hands of the Cyprus authorities, the situation is very different to that of Yerania in Piraeus. Poverty is not as serious in the Cypriot context, yet it is still beyond the means of the vast majority of estate-dwelling refugees to provide their children with an adequate dowry provision. With sub-division made impossible by government policy, the government itself - in the words of Roger Zetter - becomes effectively the provider of dowry housing, provided that the married couple can pass the access criteria for such housing (1999:14)

The cultural values refugees associate with housing and its relationship to the evolution of the family are either denied by the system of property allocation, or they are at best reproduced in a wholly unforeseen and equally undesirable fashion by the state, which becomes not just the family patron, but in some respects the parent as well. Inevitably, the state's legal possession of the house entitles it to the physical repossession of the dwelling upon the death of the occupier. More than anything, this symbolises the balance of power on the housing estates and the helplessness the refugees feel in the context of their property rights. Not only are the refugees not able to sub-divide or alter their property while they are alive, neither are they able to pass the occupancy of the house on to their children when they are dead. "My elderly mother lived in Latsia housing estate [near Nicosia]" one middle-aged man from Famagusta bitterly complained to me. "When she died two years ago, they gave the house to someone who was not even a refugee. How can they give it to someone else when my mother lived there for twenty years." For this man, the decision touched a very raw nerve and he was considerably angered by it. The anger may have been provoked by the material value of the house, but considering his own wealth, it is more likely to have been caused by the subversion of the perceived natural order.

The loss of control over the property did not fit this man's understanding, formed as it was by traditional cultural values, which bear little resemblance to public sector housing practices.



Much refugee housing is highly integrated and impossible to convert. This inflexibility inhibits the refugees' ability to discharge cultural obligations such as the dowry.

Housing Design and Construction

These housing practices remained as an unchanging obstacle to refugee's ability to adapt to the refugee housing estates until the last three years of the 1990s when government policy on title deeds was reversed. Other problems associated with the refugee housing estates will continue to make themselves felt for many years to come. Several of these were apparent even very shortly after the commencement of construction in the late 1970s and were mentioned by Roger Zetter in a 1982 review of Cyprus' housing policy. He observed that cultural attitudes which made sub-division and dowry provision desirable and which were prevented by government policy, were also made impossible, or at least very difficult, by the physical construction of the housing itself. "The configuration of small-sized plots, substantial terracing [and] highly integrated layout, leaves little space for extension or modification of properties to accommodate changing family or social needs."(1982:486)

Zetter identified three specific features associated with the design of the estates that can be criticized as being insensitive to the refugees' cultural requirements and which he believed would lead to problems. The first two relate to the kind of multi-occupancy and overcrowding observed in Hirschons' study of Yerania in Greece. Dowry provision on the one hand and the sheltering of aged or infirm members of a

family on the other, are both seen as traditionally required social obligations that are constrained by the physical properties of the estates. In addition, there existed in Zetter's opinion "little scope...in the layout of plots and houses for making small scale adjustments to meet daily needs."(1982:480) The traditional Cypriot dwelling normally made room for kitchen gardens, vines and citrus planting. By the time I visited the estates, what little space there was had indeed been converted to these purposes, but the vast majority of houses did not have nearly sufficient room for activities of this sort.

The houses themselves are constructed of reinforced concrete to several designs placed on small plots that demand a high degree of terracing and in some cases, of stacking as flats. The high density leaves little room for expansion whilst the reliance on reinforced concrete and terracing, which structurally integrates separate dwelling units, makes conversion, if not impossible, then at least very difficult. In Yerania, the construction of the housing enabled refugee occupants to dramatically alter the appearance and layout of each building, "... the process followed a characteristic pattern. The first and second daughters would be given the original prefab rooms on marriage, and their parents would take up residence in the basement rooms excavated to accommodate this expansion. Extra kitchens for the younger housewives would also be provided, usually as alcoves in the basement area. A younger daughter would be provided with a dowry house in the courtyard of the dwelling and, in time, even the next generation would be provided with dowry in a similar fashion." (Hirschon 1998:122)

Regardless of this inflexibility in the housing stock itself, it is the issue of title and government rules that prevent any serious efforts at modification. The distribution of title to estate-dwelling refugees, will probably trigger more significant changes to the appearance of the estates in the long term, regardless of how difficult it might be to convert the housing stock. This should not absolve the design and building work on the estates of all responsibility. The very appearance of the estates and the aesthetic effect of the houses themselves, helps to reinforce the image of refugee dependence and 'otherness' that helps to mark and identify the refugees. There is no more visible symbol of refugee isolation than the housing of so many of them on self-contained estates that are fundamentally different in design and layout to other forms of Cypriot housing. Estate housing is perceived as ugly and institutional and does little for the (often negative) attitudes non-refugees construct of estate-dwellers. Even if these perceptions were reversed, the concentration of refugees on easily identifiable and differentiated estates would still reinforce refugee's sense of separation and isolation.

The quality of construction on the estates also gives rise to concern among refugees, which is illustrated by a very noticeable sense of decline and dereliction in some refugee buildings. The standards of construction and maintenance are a favourite conversation topic when the quality of housing estates is raised among refugees. It would be unwise to claim that refugees universally feel negative about their housing, for familiarity often breeds satisfaction and contentment, but it was made clear by a large percentage of the refugees interviewed, that standards could have been much higher. One conversation between several refugees with strong estate connections grew quite heated, each man trying to outdo the

other with stories of increasingly unlikely corruption and decay on the estates, culminating in this exchange: "There are cracks in the walls and the [plaster] comes off because of the leaks." one man eagerly told me. Another man named Takis, with whom he had been arguing, responded with his own explanation: "When they built these houses, government inspectors would watch to make sure they were built properly. When they turned their backs, the mafia paid the builders to take the iron bars out of the concrete and sell them because there was a shortage. They did the same to the cement, so now they are all falling down." The others rolled their eyes, Takis was always talking about the mafia and indeed his story sounds far-fetched. Whether it is accurate or is only partially important, it is the perception of the refugees that they live in poorly constructed and maintained buildings that increases and symbolises their frustration.



Houses were often constructed rapidly, to poor standards. Maintenance problems and ambivalent feelings toward houses can leave them looking very poor.

Those who constructed the estates must take the blame for the poor quality of the construction found in a great many of them, but in fairness, the town planning department is slowly addressing the worst of the problems. Several of those estates built in the greatest of haste immediately after the war have been, or are in the process of being condemned, dismantled and replaced. Kokines estates outside Larnaca have been gradually demolished and rebuilt from 1993, whilst an earthquake in September 1999 necessitated the abandonment and reconstruction of buildings on refugee estates in Larnaca, Limassol and Nicosia. The replacement work is long overdue and piecemeal, partly because building standards were very patchy; some estates having aged quite well whilst others decayed quickly; and partly because of prolonged bureaucratic inaction and relaxed attitudes to essential repairs.

The perception of build quality and maintenance problems on the estates is compounded by allegations of unfairness and illegality over the allocation of refugee houses and the vetting of occupants by the Interior Ministry. A long-standing theme of refugee attitudes to the allocation of resources since the invasion, has centred on their distribution and particularly on abuses to the system of allocation. Refugees argue that Turkish properties and land were frequently allocated to wealthy non-refugees and refugees with friends in the ministry. Individual allegations of patronage and corruption are hard to gauge and impossible to substantiate, especially when many are long standing grievances or stories circulated among the community that are rarely first hand accounts. What is certain is that the issue arouses much concern and anger among refugees. Many feel the injustice of property allocation very strongly and complain of marginalisation and neglect.

The degree to which the system has been abused is hard to judge from refugee accounts as refugees have their own political motives for exaggerating the size of the problem. The perception that there is injustice, by itself gives cause for concern about the success of the programme. Concern over perceived injustices would be less evident if the provision for refugees on the estates had not aggravated refugees in other ways. A clearer picture of the problem has been highlighted by recent concern in political circles, which show that the problem is being taken seriously at the highest levels. One opposition politician went so far as to claim that "There is an orgy of illegality; those who [break] the law are being rewarded; those who try going through the legitimate channels are never helped." (Kikis Yiangou quoted in Cyprus Mail 9-11-99) He also claimed that many of those in possession of property meant for refugees, were government officials who had appropriated it through improper means. Language of this sort might be interpreted as code for corruption, but its accuracy might be questionable; Yiangou had been in trouble for making unsubstantiated allegations against the authorities before. But his case was lent credibility by the Interior Minister who agreed that many of the allegations did in fact appear to hold water. Recognition and public acknowledgment of the problem at such a high level is firm evidence that refugees interests have been compromised by irregularities and corruption and that refugees who informed me that patronage links, political friendships and bribery were all part of the process in securing property are not likely to have been far wide of the mark.

Chapter 3

Title Deeds

Assimilation

Throughout this appraisal of the refugee assistance programme, the emphasis has been laid on how established cultural ideas conflict with the pattern of housing provision on the refugee housing estates. The cultural meanings with which Cypriots were able to make sense of their social responsibilities before the 1974 conflict, could not be reapplied in the context of the post-war resettlement because the physical design of the housing estates and rules governing their control made the application of those cultural meanings impossible or at least extremely difficult. This has acted as a barrier to the assimilation of a large proportion of the refugee population into its host community by establishing a difference or 'otherness' symbolised in turn by the uniformity of the housing estate.

The provision of estate housing was only part of the government's response to the refugee crisis. By re-engaging refugees in the economic life of Cyprus and by providing them with access to health and education resources and public office, the government's response could hardly be described as a failure. But it is the apparently smaller things that really matter to the estate refugees. Their economic and wider social lives are important, but the limitations of their estate housing, puts pressure on their domestic lives and their personal feelings of esteem and dignity. Such limitations and differences become magnified because they exist at the heart of refugee's lives; in their homes where social obligations and memories are vulnerable to insensitive housing policies.

The issue of title is central to any understanding of the refugee's situation on the housing estates and their perceived failure to assimilate satisfactorily with the host population. The retention of title was not conceived as a plan to prevent the adaptation of the refugees into wider Greek-Cypriot society, it was conceived as part of a package of measures designed to emphasise and guarantee the claims of the Cypriot state to re-extending its authority to the occupied areas. The distinction must be made between adaptation, which was desirable, and assimilation, which was not. Assimilation, where refugees become incorporated and identical to the host group, would compromise the refugee's aspirations of return. Successful adaptation to life in exile, where refugees normalise their lives without compromising their right of return, would not. The fact that the title issue had the effect of retarding adaptation was an undesirable by-product of the state's campaign to prevent the illegal occupation of northern Cyprus becoming a dead issue through assimilation. Title deeds fitted into a government and refugee strategy to pursue aspirations of return by deliberately creating a situation of non-assimilation or dependency that reinforced the image of refugees as being transient. This policy had the undesired effect of creating problems for refugee adaptation to life in exile.

In Cyprus, successful adaptation was desirable for a number of reasons. The authorities wished to avoid the politicisation of the refugee cause and any notion of class-consciousness that might have become associated with it. There was a moral desire to alleviate the humanitarian suffering of the refugees and an economic need to re engage them in the economy. The government wanted its resettlement policies to be entirely successful and did not anticipate or plan for any part of them to fail. This goal of adaptation did not fail because the authorities clandestinely planned for it to fail in line with its stated desire for repatriation; it failed because the planners did not foresee the importance that property ownership and control had, to established cultural traditions.

Title Deeds

The issue of title is a major feature of refugee life on the housing estates for it symbolises their dependence and their marginalisation, whilst preventing the implementation of key social and cultural norms, such as the dowry. It is also bound up with key political issues and aspirations regarding the policy of return. There has long been a tacit understanding within and between refugee and political circles regarding the refugee's property status. The refugee's status as refugees would be compromised if they were given title deeds to their properties as it would be interpreted as a property swap by the Turkish regime and an acceptance of the status-quo partition of the island. Evidence for this argument is strengthened by the differing positions toward title that the two sides have taken since the 1970s. The Turkish-Cypriots have pursued a diametrically opposed strategy to the Greek-Cypriots, placing emphasis on issuing title deeds for abandoned Greek property and Turkish-built housing estates to Turkish-Cypriot refugees in order to normalise and integrate refugees into Turkish-Cypriot society. The policy of the Republic of Cyprus, in contrast, is to guarantee the property rights of displaced Turkish-Cypriots (who may even be paid rent in their absence if their land is used by the government) and to deny the right to ownership by refugees of abandoned Turkish-Cypriot property or government built housing.

It has already been mentioned that the intention of this policy was to enhance the moral right of the refugees to repatriation and their occupation of their abandoned homes whilst strengthening the governments bargaining position at any future negotiations. It was not intended to achieve this by interfering with the refugee's assimilation, but rather to counter the very specific argument of property exchange; the side effects of this policy had not been planned. If the Turkish-Cypriot authorities could successfully argue that an exchange of properties had actually taken place, the refugees moral argument that they were displaced people forcibly separated from their homes would be invalidated because their temporary accommodation would have become their permanent home. The return of title was therefore a political strategy to emphasise the refugee's temporariness in the south and their ultimate right to return home to the north.

Many years have passed since the policy was formulated in the 1970s, yet the refugees appear to be no closer to their objective of returning home to their villages and towns in northern Cyprus. The state continues to pursue its goal of reunification with as much vigour as it has always done; yet its policy on refugee title has become confused in recent years, as indeed have the refugee's attitudes. In 1991, Zetter published a paper based on his own fieldwork among refugees that made reference to their attitudes toward ownership of property on the estates. "Refusal to accept title maintains... a label and special status of dependency and it is deployed as a strategy to legitimise a continuing commitment to their political objectives. Even, perhaps especially, in a country so firmly adhering to the precepts and status of private property ownership, refugees say they would refuse the gift of title even if their homes were gilded - 'these are not ours'." (1991:56)

Zetter outlined a clear and unequivocal response from the refugees that they would under no circumstances accept ownership of their government-built houses because it conflicted with their desire to return home. Yet in 1999, he published another paper dealing with refugees that was more ambiguous when it mentioned refugee's attitudes to title. Although he did not mention definitively whether refugees would still accept title or not, the absence of a negative assertion indicates that the situation may well have changed. "When asked if they would accept title in the south, the refugees make a significant distinction to dramatise the difference between refugee houses and houses left in the north. The former is defined in a strictly legal sense of entitlement and possession of the land registry stamp (*voulla*): the latter is emphasised as *my own* ('*diko mou*') house." (1999:12) The eight intervening years had seen refugee attitudes change from categorical denial of any wish to own government-constructed housing to a more ambiguous position where ownership is neither dismissed or embraced, but merely described as a legal possibility.

At the time of my fieldwork, this second position had not become known to me, but a series of compelling political exchanges concerning the title deeds issue which post-dated Zetter's earlier article, had. These exchanges were compelling because they appeared to contradict Zetter's earlier notion that refugees would not accept title, whilst supporting his conviction that the title issue and the refugees' previous submission to it, had indeed been formulated to prevent the refugees' cause from being compromised by their perceived assimilation. The first of these exchanges dates from Glafkos Clerides' 1997 campaign for re-election to the post of President in which he made the unconditional issuing of title to all refugee households a central proposal of his campaign for election in 1998. It is unlikely that he would have embarked on such a course of action if he had expected it to play badly with the refugee population. These refugees had, it must be reiterated, rejected the notion of ownership only six years previously in interviews with Zetter, yet here was a presidential candidate, presumably aware of the damage his proposals might cause to the refugees and their long-term interests, courting the refugee vote with a promise to distribute the title deeds to the properties in which they lived should he be elected.

In fact, Clerides lost no time in preparing the deeds for distribution and began the process in September 1997, several months before the election by giving the first one hundred deeds to their new refugee owners personally at the presidential palace. A government spokesperson described the act as "compassionate" and added that it "in no way meant the government was conceding that refugees would not return to their Turkish-held homes." (Cyprus Mail, 7-9-97) The choice of venue and the president's personal involvement supports the view that this was a high-profile attempt to win support for Clerides' re-election campaign. It should be observed that this strategy could only have worked had the refugees been willing to accept the title deeds for their properties. Based on Zetter's earlier report, this would seem unfeasible, but subsequent events seem to prove the refugees willingness to acquiesce and perhaps indicate that they were more than willing to accept title.

Clerides' actions quickly led to a major political confrontation, with opposition parties protesting that the title issue would be "negative" for the refugees and "dangerous" for the future of the Cyprus problem (31-10-97) before blocking the government's actions with a package of amendments and obstacles that would have made further provision impossible. What proved most interesting about the opposition's objections was that they were concerned only with the fate of refugee houses built on abandoned Turkish-Cypriot property and not on the very much larger number constructed on government-owned land. They argued that awarding title deeds concerning Turkish land to refugees would be tantamount to a property swap and would enable the Turkish regime to award title deeds of Greek-Cypriot land in the north. "... we cannot take some-one's property and then protest because someone has taken ours." (Cyprus Mail 31-10-97) One government politician was quoted as saying. The amendments indiscriminately blocked the issuing of title deeds to any refugees regardless of whether they were built on Turkish land or not and Clerides eventually dropped further plans to challenge the amendments the following May. That this was after the election - which he won successfully - is unlikely to have been a coincidence.

By then, some 5000 deeds had already been issued out of the governments target of 26 000. Many of these were rushed out in the minutes before the deputies had finished debating their package of amendments in a dramatic attempt to force through as many deeds as possible before running out of time. The government argument through all this was that refugees were more than happy with the scheme (Cyprus Mail, 13-5-98) and none had come forward to oppose it (Cyprus Mail, 14-5-98). A more recent report suggests that refugees were clamouring for their distribution to begin again." (Cyprus Mail, 13-7-2000). The same Clerides led government continues to assert that title will eventually be given to all residents of government owned estates. It acknowledges however, that this will not be possible for the 8000 houses built on Turkish-Cypriot land, which may eventually have to be abandoned within the next ten years.

None of these reports of refugee complicity in title deed distribution is inconsistent with the situation as it appeared to me a year after the title scandal. Refugees agree unanimously that their future would

ideally see them return to live in their abandoned homes in the north of the island, but there did not appear to be the same rejection of their refugee homes as Zetter had chronicled eight years earlier. Their continued adherence to the concept of return and the emergence of new attitudes to the permanent ownership of refugee houses would seem to be contradictory in the context of the prevailing idea that title ownership means an end to the refugee claim of transience in the south and eventual return to the north. One might, in fact, go so far as to say that it flatly contradicts one of the refugees' key arguments: that they are refugees because they have no access to their homes and are only temporarily resident in the south. This argument was easy to uphold when their shelters in the south were provided rent-free by the government, but may prove less convincing when they are owned and controlled by the refugees themselves.

Implicit in refugee arguments is the question: 'At what point does a refugee lose his or her moral right to return home?' The fear was that the threshold would be reached when the estate refugees accepted title to their houses. One of the last barriers to assimilation would have been dismantled and estate refugees would be able to go about their lives much like any other Cypriot, having lost the debilitating label of dependency. A logical outcome of private ownership on the estates would have been the ultimate break-up of refugee concentrations on the estates, as properties will eventually be sold to non-refugees. The most visible sign of refugee transience in the south would eventually lose its separate identity and become a collection of mixed, privately owned suburbs. This apparent contradiction between refugee aims and methods reveals a hidden complexity to refugee actions and ideologies and the attitudes of the state with whom they are inextricably bound.

The issue is further confused by a comment made by one of Clerides' spokesmen during the title deeds confrontation. At a meeting of the House Refugee Committee, in trying to refute opposition claims that the government move was a pre-election vote-winning ploy, he said that it was merely fulfilling a long standing pledge that dated back as far as 1983 (Cyprus Mail, 14-5-98). Clerides himself has argued against the opposition's amendments to his plans on the grounds - amongst others - that the implementation of his programme had begun five years earlier (in 1992) and that his subsequent re-election proved he had the support of the people (Cyprus Mail, 27-11-97). If these claims are correct, and there is no obvious reason to doubt them, it suggests that the issuing of title has been a long-term plan of Cyprus' most prominent and powerful politician. This is a plan that would only have been formulated if the president had thought it would find support among refugees. That it was formulated at least in 1992 and perhaps as early as 1983 suggests that the change in refugee attitudes may not in fact trace a simple trajectory from rejection in 1991 to acceptance in 1997.

The previous chapter outlined the ways in which the government's housing policy had failed the refugees in a number of respects. The main problem, it was argued, was the retention of property title by the government and the incompatibility of this approach to established Cypriot cultural concepts. Refugees may have understood the importance of this approach in safeguarding their long-term interests

- particularly for their desire to return home - but they were probably never ignorant of its short-term impact on their lives as they would have to live them on the estates. The contention here, is that refugees have always coveted ownership of their estate houses, not it might be added, because they believed the houses would be any kind of compensation for those they left behind in the north - they are an inadequate replacement for the financial and emotional investment made in their long cherished family properties - but because ownership of estate properties would alleviate some of the burdens and barriers to normality that are placed on them by government policy: the stigma of dependency, the lack of flexibility and control over the transmission of the property and the inability to use the properties as capital for loans.



Ownership of title deeds enables refugees to use their property as capital for loans that can be used to alter the appearance of the house. The identity of the house on the left has been dramatically changed to suit Cypriot aesthetic notions of design. It contrasts with the house on the right, which retains the monotonous and industrial appearance of social housing.

The evidence suggests that refugees are not held captive by their ideologies. There is variation among refugees may respond who may respond differently in different circumstances. This became apparent to me as I was talking to a refugee couple during a family re-union. Stavros and Charis had been teenagers when they were forced to flee with their family from Famagusta. At first, I spoke to them as part of a wider group, which included several non-refugee relatives. The general consensus was a reaffirmation of a common discourse that concerned many of the values and beliefs that are routinely raised in such discussions. The context to this discussion, was a resumption in peace talks between the Turkish and Greek Cypriot sides. "There have been talks before" Stavros ventured, "...they always end the same way. The politicians argue for months, but never agree on anything. Then they go home and start again next year." Another man added, "The Turks want us to recognise their regime, to legalise it, then they

say they will talk to us about our land." "They just want to separate from us and they will give us nothing" The conversation carried on in a similar vein for some time. The issue of the missing was raised. When asked if they thought they would ever be able to go home, the refugees were quite positive. None thought it would happen soon, but all agreed it was inevitable and above all, essential.

After the other informants had left, I asked Stavros and Charis if they really thought there was a chance of return. They had been bright and positive when asked the same question in the context of other Cypriots earlier in the day, yet their responses were confusing. It was Charis who spoke first, "I don't think so, it's been so long now." I asked her why she felt that way, she said "I don't want to get my hopes up any more." Stavros smiled and agreed with her, "We still want to return home. We used to think it was possible, but we are not so certain any more."

These conversations demonstrate the complexity of refugee responses to key enquiries about the Cyprus question and their own future. These responses cannot be glossed over with simple all-inclusive theories that portray ideology as a determinate of refugee thought and action. There might have been a temptation based on remarks made in the group discussion to conclude that refugees present a united belief in their eventual return, yet Charis and other refugees made it clear that, although this position may be agreed with in public, some refugees may question it in private. These exchanges reveal that refugees tailor their responses to different circumstances. The dichotomy between public and private responses is by no means institutionalised. Individuals may respond cynically and negatively in group discussions, and positively in private, but certain themes seem to make themselves apparent that give some substance to this notion that there are different layers of understanding in individuals, that may even contradict one another.

In public, there is a strong pressure to maintain a set of ideologies that are common to most Greek-Cypriots. When conversing with refugees about the Cyprus Problem, these ideologies are frequently presented as a set of grievances. The most powerful of these is the symbolic importance of the abandoned home and the idealised former life that went with it. The brutality of the Turkish occupation, the barbarity of Turkish settlers and paradoxically the friendliness to Turkish-Cypriots are frequently brought up. Dissatisfaction with politicians, the intransigence of the Turks and interference by the Americans are frequent themes. These and others form a powerful and institutionalised package of ideologies. In some circumstances these represent personal feelings and emotions. In others, they become a shared identity and in the presence of outsiders they may become a highly politicised agenda that might be described as propaganda.

Yet these men and women are intelligent, individual actors whose attitudes may not always agree with one another in private. Some refugees may agree with the ideology, yet others may use it only as a defence mechanism in the presence of other refugees or of outsiders. The circumstances are different for all refugees so they should not be thought of as homogenous. The likelihood of return for a refugee

from Kyrenia for example, is considerably less than that for a refugee from Varosha in Famagusta. In the event of a settlement, Kyrenia will most likely remain under Turkish jurisdiction, whilst areas further South, Famagusta and perhaps even Morphou are prime candidates for restitution. Some refugees may have a greater incentive for remaining hopeful of return than others.

Explaining the title deeds issue

By understanding this complexity, we can see that the title deeds issue cannot be understood through simple explanations. One obvious solution to the problem might have been deduced from Charis' confession: that refugees have lost confidence in the possibility of return and that public expressions of faith in repatriation can be dismissed as false. Such an explanation would apparently solve the contradiction between their earlier refusal and current acceptance of property title, that they have given up hope and wish to normalise their situation. This explanation does not fit the situation as it appeared among refugees who showed a wide range of responses, revealing that there are many variables that lie behind what they have to say. Charis' comments must not be misinterpreted as a rejection of return either as a possibility or as a desire. They should be considered within their context as a private expression of frustration rather than as an abandonment of the principle of return.

Instead, it is possible that refugee attitudes to their property have probably not altered greatly since 1991. Refugee responses have always been confused by a hidden layer of complexity. In saying that they would have rejected title even if the houses were gilded (Zetter 1991:56) they may have been reiterating an ideological concept, which they did not necessarily agree with in private. As has been mentioned before, the reasons refugees feel uncomfortable with their property status on the estates have always been there and it is probable that they have always coveted title to their houses as a result. The question then, should not be: When did refugees change their minds? But, Why did the issue arise over twenty years after the construction of the first estates?

There are a number of reasons that seem to have combined to spark off the issuing of title deeds in 1997. Firstly, the value of the policy seems to have declined as a result of over twenty years of stalemate on the Cyprus problem. Where once it was believed that all estate refugees would have to remain property-less in order to prevent the Turks from declaring a property swap, the only objections the opposition could raise, concerned only those refugee houses built on Turkish-owned land. The importance of retaining the policy for other estate refugees was not raised at all which suggests that the ownership of title was no longer considered a threat to their ambitions to return home. The second possibility is that it only required the first 100 refugees to apply for title and have it granted before the rest would demand it whether they agreed with the policy or not. Once the precedent had been set and the issue had failed to provoke the long anticipated negative response from the Turkish-Cypriots, any

refugee still harbouring the idea that their interests were best served by rejecting title, abandoned that position in the rush not to be left out and disadvantaged any further.

Thirdly and perhaps most importantly, new possibilities have emerged in recent years that enable refugees to pursue their ambitions without requiring the sacrifices that were necessary before. Refugee strategies originally hinged on the idea that Cypriot refugees were temporarily displaced people, deprived of a permanent home and dependent on the state for support. Although it has since been proved an unwarranted fear, refugees initially felt that accepting title would compromise this by providing a home (however inadequate) and cease their dependency on the state. This strategy depended on the question, Is a refugees claim to his or her home ended when they have assimilated into ordinary life elsewhere? The answer, judging by an absence of Turkish criticism, appears to be no. This strategy was pursued for twenty years, but by the mid 1990s, it had become redundant. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees pulled out in 1998 on the basis that there were no longer any refugees to help in Cyprus. By this stage, the majority of refugees who did not live on the estates, had apparently assimilated into society successfully without hindering their claim for repatriation.

The moral dimension to the refugee's claims, appears to have withered. Refugees still speak of their status of refugees and their moral rights of return, but they are adopting a new position that places the emphasis on legal rights rather than on moral obligations. Refugees are particularly excited about pursuing their property claims through international courts, directly against Turkey. A Kyrenia refugee who won her case in July 1998 made the first successful example of this approach. Titina Loizidou brought the case in the European Court of Human Rights and won damages of £500 000 on the basis that Turkey had denied her the human right of free access and possession of her property. Although the outcome of the trial post-dates the issuing of title deeds by almost a year, its origin pre-dates it and marks a significant shift in refugee strategies from moral rights to those enshrined in international human rights law. Although Titina Loizidou is still waiting for her compensation, other refugees have been quick to lodge further claims with the European Court of Human Rights. Within one year of the ruling, 30 applications were made by Greek-Cypriots and accepted by the Courts for hearing (Cyprus Mail, 29-6-99) and there have been more since.

Although title ownership was perceived as being important for refugee's aspirations, it actually turned out to be largely academic. The Turks haven't seized on it as was originally feared and the Greeks have new, legal strategies to replace it. It will however, lead to a long-term change of perception of the refugees as having become fully assimilated. This will no longer hinder refugee strategies for return to their homes in the north because the refugees have shifted their arguments away from a definition of refugees that placed emphasis on their transience and lack of integration, to a new position that embraces the strategy of human rights.

Chapter 4

Refugee Identity

The war of 1974 was a disaster for those caught in the direct path of the Turkish campaign. The scale of the upheaval, the loss of relatives and property and the sudden exodus of refugees into an utterly alien situation is difficult for anyone else to fully or even partly comprehend, it was a defining moment in their lives. It is very clear, however, that the concepts and meanings people used to understand and identify themselves and those around them, were forced to undergo substantial changes in response to the new physical and social environments that emerged as refugees started rebuilding their lives. The emergence of a refugee identity distinct from that of other Cypriots is a key feature of the post-war refugee experience. The emergence of new and distinct identities for refugees proved to be a key observation during fieldwork and has been remarked upon by several other authors within the Cypriot context (Zetter 1983,1991,1999; Kliot & Mansfield 1994; Loizos 1977).

This discussion of refugee identity will explore the emergence in Cyprus of three identities, which are constructed by different sections of society in relation to the refugees. The form of these identities, the reasons for their emergence and the importance they have for refugee's lives are important because they highlight the difficulties refugees face when they attempt to realign and reorganise their lives into new contexts. These difficulties are not unique to the situation refugees faced in Cyprus after their exodus from their homes and communities. The identities people construct of themselves and others are a feature of social life all over the world, but they are particularly acute when a group is forced into exile. The example of Cyprus demonstrates that these identities are not merely the embodiments of ideology, neither are they passive or a-historical, but they are part of a complex changing political interplay of conflicting aims and strategies that can sometimes be positive, but are very often damaging, resented and deeply hurtful.

The emergence of these identities is relevant in the context of this paper, because they emphasize and are a response to the ambiguities and contradictions between assimilation on the one hand and the demands of the desire for return on the other. Refugee identities that are distinct from those of other Cyprus citizens indicate that refugees remain disjointed from other Cypriots in ways that were not foreseen by government policy formulators and planners. It must be stressed that the emergence of a refugee identity was not necessarily undesirable and was in some regards encouraged and facilitated by the state for its own political ends. The formation of this refugee identity should not be considered in isolation from these larger political issues as they developed, at least in part, as a direct response to them.

It was in neither the refugee's, nor the state's interests for the refugee population to fully assimilate without leaving a trace of their existence or of their demands for repatriation and reunification. In order

to maintain a strong voice in the issues and demand repatriation to the north, the refugees had to have a common position from which to vocalise their sentiments. In some respects this is the equivalent of forming a pressure or interest group, but the concept of a formal political body does not adequately describe the more subtle and pervading notion of identity. The overall success of this attempt at maintaining refugee interests through establishing some form of refugee identity, is hard to fully ascertain, but in this case, the identity that refugees constructed in order to make sense of their situation and to pursue their political aims was joined by two other distinct forms of identity that were not part of any plan to preserve refugee political interests. These are studied in the following chapter and were forced on refugees by failings in the government's refugee assistance strategy in ways that were admittedly difficult to predict, but whose understanding is of great importance for refugee assistance schemes elsewhere. The implication in this study, is that the impact that novel, negative identities brought about by humanitarian schemes have on refugee groups throughout the world, can be minimised by understanding the failures that occurred in the context of Cyprus.

The emergence of new refugee identities and the implication that refugee's assimilation has not progressed smoothly is in some regards surprising. From our own experience of recent immigration in Western Europe, refugee identities most commonly appear to emerge as a result of fundamental differences in cultural beliefs and social organisations between the host society and arriving refugees. Assimilation is made difficult for refugees when their own cultural understandings conflict with those of the host group. It may well be beneficial for a refugee group to maintain their differences in the presence of another culture in order to benefit from feelings of security and social networks with others in their own position. The emergence of refugee identities is often linked to national or ethnic identities, which exclude them through their difference. Even in cases where the refugee group is culturally very similar to that of the host, minor differences can play a significant role in promoting the emergence of a refugee identity. There were enough cultural differences between the migrating Asia-Minor refugees and their mainland Greek cousins in Hirschon's study, to result in the formation of a refugee identity based on the Asia-Minor Greek's sense of their cultural distinctiveness and superiority.

The emergence of a distinct refugee identity in Cyprus is surprising because there were no cultural differences between the migrating refugees and the host society. This does not disregard the many similarities between refugees caught up in the Cyprus conflict where migration occurred within a society and those forced to migrate from one country to another, but the cultural similarities and social bonds between the refugees and their hosts in Cyprus renders the development of refugee identities more difficult to explain. The Greek example does not provide a direct comparison in this sense because the migrating group considered itself to be culturally distinct and in fact superior to its host. A more realistic example can be found in Palestine where a remarkably similar situation to that of Cyprus was initiated by the fifty-year old Arab-Israeli conflict. The emergence of a refugee identity in the Palestinian Refugee Camps occurred for reasons not dissimilar to those of Cyprus. They demonstrate that Cyprus is not an exception, but that new identities can evolve in any refugee context and do not require a significant cultural difference between the host and refugee.

In Cyprus these seem to fit into three separate expressions of identity that conform to the perceptions of each of Cyprus' three groupings: the refugees themselves, the bureaucracy on whom they are dependent and other Cypriots who are not refugees. Each of these groups has developed a very different ideology or discourse of what a refugee is, although each ideology interacts in the refugee's own daily needs and aspirations. There is a danger, that by looking at refugee identity as merely an ideology we are stifling the individual's own ideas and the details of his or her complex social life. By drawing a stereotypical picture of people's attitudes, we might obscure the details, the motives and the exceptions, which are as important in understanding the actual situation, as is the overall ideology. An ideology itself is an abstract notion that is useless if it is not related to the complexities of people's actual lives and explained in relation to the choices and decisions that they have to make and the pressures that contextualise those choices. Likewise, it must be remembered that the refugee identities that are observed in Cyprus do not apply equally to all refugees and are not constructed or supported equally by all non-refugees. Some are more affected by them than are others and the reasons for this can only be understood if people's personal lives, motives and feelings can be illuminated.

Refugee Consciousness

The identity that here is described as 'refugee consciousness', operates on two complementary levels. On the one hand it is an active and dynamic political tool designed to pursue refugee interests by justifying their *status* of refugee, on the other it is an attempt to recover their lost past and enable them to control their adaptation and assimilation in exile. In both cases their attempts are underpinned by the crucial concept of *home*, enabling them to partially reconcile the contradictions inherent in their ambiguous situation. They are refugees, yet they display an appearance, albeit incomplete, of assimilation. Their dominant ideology is of 'return', yet the world to which they wish to return no longer exists and the one in which they live displays an integration and transition which threatens their moral right of return. The concept of *home* is created in the first instance to justify the demand for return and it is created in the second, to fill the void created by their exile.

The refugee's identity is closely bound to the concept of *home*. As has been observed earlier in this thesis, the concept of *home* is distinct from that of the *house*. Its meaning is very clear to refugees who view their current houses as temporary shelters, and in no way as a replacement for their abandoned homes in the north, which are symbolised by a rich imagery of memory, status and emotional attachment. *Home* is conceived through a symbolic conjunction of the spatial extent of the property, its value in terms of the status it conferred and its relationship to memory, the family and the ancestors. It is not merely the materialistic value of the house and property, it is the reconstruction of a whole world of social and symbolic relationships that were lost through war and are re-conceived in exile.



“We don’t forget” is the message of this painting. It hangs in a prominent public place in Strovolos 4 as a reminder of the refugee’s anger and grief. The central panel depicts grief; the one on the right depicts the issue of the missing. Cypriot women carrying portraits of their dead and missing sons or husbands are a common sight at the UN checkpoint in Nicosia where they gather to remind tourists using the checkpoint to cross to the north of the continuation of their plight.

‘Home’ as a political strategy

My own point of entry to the importance of refugee consciousness and the value to refugees of *home*, came very early in my fieldwork. It demonstrated not only the importance of identity to refugees, but also the questions of objectivity and positioning to the fieldworker. I was given an early foretaste of this importance of identity to the refugee community; of its ideological composition, but also of its deeper underlying currents and meanings for individual refugees in an informal conversation with the first refugee I came into contact with in Cyprus. Lili, a refugee from Morphou and her husband were to become good friends and very helpful informants during my time in Cyprus, but the initial conversation was undermined by a rich vein of emotion and anger brought about by asking questions of her that with hindsight seem rude and ill-judged.

Lili had arranged to meet in a coffee shop in the heart of Nicosia’s Old Town, not more than a few minutes walk from the Green Line and the border with the Occupied North. She had explained a great deal of background information about herself and her family during our first exchanges. Her husband was a lawyer who had a successful practice in Nicosia while she herself enjoyed a high-profile career in management. She was proud of her family’s success and of the large suburban house it had provided for them. Her daughter, she told me, was taking traditional Greek dancing lessons. “She’s dancing in Larnaca on Saturday, would you like to come?” I was asked. “She’s just 15 years old.... Spends all her time on the phone to her boyfriend....” These were the trappings of a well-ordered, modern Cypriot, middle class life, but they contradicted the notion of temporary exile that the label *refugee*, demands.

This contradiction prompted me to ask her how she could still be a refugee with such a normal, regular and comfortable life.

She looked puzzled at first, as if the question made little sense, but then she seemed shocked, in the way people often do when they've been asked what must have seemed like a ludicrous question. I felt that I had blundered quite badly for she seemed quite upset by the query. "How can you ask such a question? Of course I am a refugee. My home is over there..." she gesticulated northwards, "...and I cannot visit my home." She calmed herself as it dawned on her that I had asked the question because of my ignorance rather than as any kind of a challenge. "You can't possibly understand how it feels." She reflected after a very uncomfortable minutes silence.

We parted company soon after, thankfully on friendly terms, but the incident begged a number of questions. The exchange had demonstrated the difficulty of approaching the identity of the refugees with preconceived ideas of what the term *refugee* means. Clearly there was a whole undercurrent of emotional feeling bound into Lili's refugee identity that left my conception of the refugee as merely an impoverished and displaced person, hopelessly inadequate. The exchange had clearly demonstrated that the issue for her was of greater importance than I had imagined. Her protestation had included the line "My home is over there" that was later to become familiar to me from other refugee accounts. At the time it was dismissed as simply a figure of speech, the importance of the term home only became apparent later on. What was clear was that the emotions and passions that it had aroused in her, were an indication that her identity was not merely a passive ideology, but was clearly connected with other, important features of her life, in particular with her aspirations of return.

Some weeks after my first meeting with Lili, I was given a further opportunity to understand more about how she constructs her identity and the importance to her of the concept of *home*. Apparently forgiven for my earlier indiscretion, Lili began to tell me of her life before the war and of the events and experiences she had been witness to as a young refugee in 1974. She talked of bombings and deaths and the terror and violence of exile, but it was the description of her home and community that seemed most important to her construction of identity. She detailed an inventory of lost possessions, communities, social relationships and experiences that she had taken for granted as a child and to which she deeply wished to return. The list combined to form a lost and reformulated idealised world that encompassed more than just the specific home she had been forced to leave in her youth. The concept of *home* is more than simply the physical boundaries of a house. It is an inclusive concept that covers an idealised way of life that may never have existed in the way to which Lili alluded. The communities from which the refugees had come, were the arenas in which they formed their identity and their standing in relation to others. They were a network of friends, competitors and enemies with all of the obligations and rivalries that go with them. The pre-war communities provided the focus for ritual life and a connection through the home and cemetery to the ancestors and to the memories of the past.

Home is an attempt to symbolically reconstruct this past, but it is an ideal. Papadakis (1993) points out that what is forgotten can be as revealing as what is remembered in the Cypriot context and this conversation with Lili demonstrated this feature of identity quite well. The peaceful and pleasant life of pre-war Cyprus is remembered, yet the inter-communal violence that characterised relations in the 1960s between Turkish and Greek Cypriot, is conveniently forgotten, for it might pollute the refugee's construction of the past and damage the cause in the future for which their identity has been constructed. *Home* is an imagined community in the way that social scientists describe identity when studying nationalism (Anderson 1983). It is not an objective reflection on the past, but a contemporary construction altered or invented to fit present needs. Refugees construct a concept of *home* that justifies their demand for return, yet that home never existed in the first place and its reconstitution would be impossible if the refugees returned to the north.

The use of *home* in refugee identity is an attempt to create a moral argument for their return. By first accepting tenancy on government housing schemes and now by accepting title, their exile has taken on the appearance of permanency because they no longer conform to outsider notions of what constitutes a refugee. "There are no more refugees here" Zetter (1991) was informed by Cypriots in the bureaucracy and those words were echoed by the withdrawal of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in 1998. The image of the refugee used in these cases is based on a *humanitarian policy* definition. The refugee is seen in the realm of refugee assistance regimes on the one hand as "...a transitory phenomena of crisis and disorder, and thus only temporarily relevant." And is seen on the other as by human nature being "...best served in a sedentary setting" (Harrel-Bond & Voutira 1992:7). "The presence of floating groups of oppressed and miserable persons presents the international community today with one of its greatest challenges" (Lillich 1984 quoted in Harrel-Bond & Voutira 1992:7). Clearly the only way for refugees to preserve such an image, is to remain in a temporary setting such as a camp, an approach that has already been shown to have been unfeasible and undesirable.

The idea that refugee status is a transitory stage through which refugees must pass before they become assimilated is widely accepted in refugee policy and in sociological studies. For anthropology, refugees have "...undergone a violent 'rite' of separation and unless or until they are 'incorporated' as citizens into the host state (or returned to their state of origin) find themselves in 'transition', or in a state of 'liminality'" (Harrel-Bond & Voutira 1992:7). Anthropologists keenly use the notion of progressive adaptation to explain the manner in which refugees are incorporated into the host population after exile and they may formulate models of the stages through which they pass before full assimilation (Zetter 1999:3-4). Refugees in Cyprus do not conform to these notions of progressive adaptation because they conflict with their desire to return. They maintain their status as refugees in the face of policy definitions formulated by Western organisations and researchers by altering their own definition of refugee to fit their concept of what exile means: that it is a state of being denied access to the conceptual world of the *home*. Their claims are based on the *moral* right to reclaim their lost world, which is boosted by the process of forgetting the violence and intimidation of the Turks that in turn provoked the loss of that world in the first place.

The problem for this concept of identity was outlined in the previous chapter. The refugees covet and have now, in many cases won the title to their homes whilst the rest of the refugees, with the exception of those who live in Turkish owned houses and in government property that is built on Turkish land, will eventually win their title, is only a matter of time. This severs their last links with both the *policy* definition of refugee and the definition based on *home*, which the refugees construct themselves. It severs the former because the policy definition of refugee also incorporates the idea of dependency which is lost when title is accepted and in the latter case, because the barriers that prevent the refugee house becoming a *home* (ownership, control, transmission etc) are visibly - although not symbolically - overcome.

This does not seem to have damaged the refugee's political aspirations for return as their claims are still clearly being addressed in ongoing inter-communal discussions. One must conclude that their moral claims are more important as a personal justification for their refugee status rather than as part of the political process, which has clearly not excluded their demands after their acceptance of title. That is not to say that those moral claims are unimportant in other political ways. The reason my conversation with Lili provoked such a vehement defence of her status was because I was an outsider, a non-refugee who she had to convince of her authenticity and the legitimacy of her and her fellow refugees' claims. Refugees are bound up in a process of ongoing struggle to justify their position through convincing others of their undiminishing refugee status.

The difficulty of maintaining this identity through the moral argument of *home*, has recently led to a further addition to the concept of refugee that the refugees of Cyprus employ to justify their status and their demands of return. They have supplemented their strategy by incorporating the language of international human rights programmes into their own cause. It is hard to see exactly when refugees began to use the language of human rights in constructing their identity, but the first example of its political use dates to 1989 when Titina Loizidou first submitted her claims to the European Court of Human Rights. The Court's decision in favour of her case in 1995 and 1996 and the subsequent issue of title deeds the following year indicates a subtle shift among refugees from maintaining their status as refugees through an apparently ineffectual moral argument based on their concept of *home*, to pursuing their ambitions through international human rights law. The language of human rights has been incorporated into refugee's discourse on their status, but it has not replaced their moral arguments, rather it supplements them. Refugees speak of both when they talk about their identity: they are refugees because they are not allowed access to their *home* and they are refugees because they are denied the right to use their property. The distinction may appear subtle, but it is fundamental to the way refugees construct their identity.

'Home' as an attempt to regain control

In the above example, *home* is used to justify the refugee's status in the face of contradictory appearances of assimilation. That assimilation threatens the use of the concept of *home* as a strategy in pursuing the refugee's goal of return and has increasingly become supplemented by the language of human rights law. But the concept of home presented above does not fully explain the contradiction that still apparently exists between the refugee's assimilation and their desire to return home and the conceptual problem that this dilemma raises for anthropological study. Adaptation and the myth of return are still treated as separate entities: the refugees use return to the *home* to refute the idea that they are integrating when in fact they are. In this representation, the two notions are in conflict when what is needed is a mechanism for reconciling them. Zetter proposes a conceptual framework that demonstrates that home is not an effort to contradict assimilation, but is constructed to control assimilation.

My own research indicates that refugees are not averse to normalising their lives: employment, property ownership and participation in everyday Cypriot life are desirable for refugees and have been attained by the majority of them. Refugees no longer have to reconcile their desire for normality with their desire for return like they had to do in the first 15 or 20 years after their exile because the idea that the two were incompatible is no longer current. Refugees feel that they can accept title to their properties without it damaging their status of refugee. These two may be contradictory to the outsider, but to the refugee, they are perfectly logical and desirable goals. Zetter demonstrates that we can resolve our perceived contradiction by recognising that refugees have adapted on their own terms. Instead of adaptation becoming integration and the loss of their status, the refugees have used the concept of home to regain control over their adaptation: they can now normalise if they want to, without jeopardising their desire to return home.

The problem that was presented to the refugees by their exile was that it fractured the way refugees perceived the relationship between their past, the present and future. Zetter proposes that these three concepts should be treated as the three points of a triangle rather than as a linear progression because they are not separated by time. They are concepts that exist together and rely on one another for support and continuity. When refugees lost access to their past, it fractured the triangle and caused them to lose control over their future. "If one of the parameters is metaphorically fractured or removed, then the crucial element of continuity is broken... The contention of a broken triangle is analytically valuable because this is precisely the situation of refugees after displacement. More specifically it is the loss of continuity with the past – the home as the physical and symbolic representation of what has been irreplaceably lost in exile – which distinguishes refugees, like the Greek Cypriots, from their non-refugee hosts." (1999:8)

Continuity with the past is crucial to how people articulate and control its relationship to the future. Faced with the loss of their past, refugees must reconstruct it as the concept of *home* in order to re-

establish control over the future. Zetter argues that this is achieved by expressing the continuity through the symbolically reconstituted and invented past (the home) and is sustained through social and institutional constructs such as the attendance of the weddings and funerals of co-villagers 1999:8-9). Between this relationship of past and future, is the mediating world of the present. "...the refugee households pass from the past to the present through the socio-economic system of the host society and its structures – including the extensive assistance programmes – within which they are located. The present is conceptualised as a mediator since, unlike the past and the future, it is not a variable so clearly within the control of the households, and is thus less susceptible to modification by them." (1999:9)

Refugees cannot easily modify the present in which they suffer from the limitations of their government owned housing, but if they can link their reconstructed past to their future aspirations, they can bring their actual future under some control. Instead of sliding down a path toward assimilation without hope of return, refugees construct a new situation in which their aspirations for return can live alongside their assimilation and normalisation. The reason this appears as a contradiction to the outsider is because it is not the type of adaptation we expect from refugees: notions of return should not be able to survive assimilation. What it does is provide us with a process for explaining how refugees adapt to their exile without abandoning their desire to return. Restoring continuity with the past through re-conceptualising it with the reference point of *home* enables the refugees to restore equilibrium to their conceptual world and maintain their aspirations for return in the future, as a viable proposition. The relationships between the past, present and future are not part of a fixed transition in the way they are often portrayed in conventional understandings of the refugee. They all exist and are constructed by refugees in the present so they can conceptualise and control their situation. Understanding this process enables us to see how refugees can adapt and change their social relationships and cultural identities through time. The process prevents refugees from becoming slaves to a collective ideology or identity whilst empowering the individual to control their identity and the form of their adaptation.

The individualism this allows the refugee is reflected in the variability of responses that are received in discussions with refugees. In the previous chapter, Soulla admitted her own doubts that her aspirations for return would ever be realised despite her Famagusta home being one of the most likely to be included in any future land deal. Other refugees with slimmer prospects may hold onto the myth with greater determination. The extent of this determination can influence the prospects each refugee has for adapting to their exile and reconciling that adaptation with their desire to return home. Zetter suggests that in some cases, refugees who rely heavily on the myth of return and the myth of temporariness in exile, suffer from the excessive idealisation of the past *home* because their new situation in exile compares very unfavourably with that construction of the past. "In contrast with the past, the present comprises many unsatisfactory material and cultural symbols – the disliked refugee house, the lack of trust in neighbours, the unwanted challenge of sustaining the village community after the diaspora; these are all negative and cannot be controlled." (1999:13)

Reproducing the past in this manner hinders the individual's ability to adapt in a positive way to their exile. Other refugees may *replace* the past with a combination of images and values from the past and more positive reflections on adaptation. The difference between *replacing* and *reproducing* the past can have wider implications on how refugees cope with their exile. Those who rely on reproducing the past and cannot adequately relate this to the difficulties of the present usually experience a decline in socio-economic status and suffer from higher levels of stress and anxiety. Those who *replace* the relationship between the past and future, with a more realistic appraisal of their chances of return and what they may expect to find if it should occur, may improve their present socio-economic situation. The importance of their separate refugee identity becomes a less important feature of their lives because they are not so dependent on return and because they are less negative and alienated about their exile. (1999:13)

The second generation

The refugee's identity as they construct it, is an attempt to rationalise their exile, control their aspirations and vocalise their demands on the wider political stage by using the central construct of *home*. All refugees share these characteristics, although the extent to which they are underpinned by processes that affect the individual, ensures that they are not a blanket application of ideology. Identity is allowed to vary for different refugees under different circumstances and its expression is allowed to fluctuate in intensity between individuals. This provides us with a conceptual tool to explain the emergence of a second generation of Cypriots who continue to call themselves refugees without ever having experienced what their parents knew as *home* or what their parents endured in the war and exodus of 1974.

The status of refugee is passed on and willingly adopted by the second generation, despite the alienation and difference this creates with fellow Cypriots who are non-refugees. The expression of refugee identity by Cypriots too young to have been involved in the 1974 expulsion is an unavoidable feature of refugee life in Cyprus. Again, this is confusing for the outsider for whom the term *refugee* should represent a very different set of images to that which is portrayed by second generation refugees. The problem with the view that assimilation and return are mutually exclusive concepts has been explored in relation to first generation refugees and the reconciliation between the two that Zetter's theory encourages, applies equally to second-generation refugees. Refugee identity is not forced on refugees by outsider's opinions, it is constructed through the daily cultural life of refugees who use it for their own ends: to understand their loss and to fight for their repatriation. Second generation refugees did not experience a loss in the way that their parents did and their conceptual framework of past, present and future can not therefore be thought of as having been fractured. Yet they still fight for repatriation, however embedded in society they have become and however impractical their removal to homes in the north would be.

The key to this dilemma lies in the language that young refugees use to describe their aspirations for return. The same commitment to return is vocalised by second-generation refugees as by their older relatives and in many cases it is spoken of even more vigorously. But the language used by younger refugees, appears in many cases to be bound into a framework of nationalism and antagonism toward their Turkish neighbours that is not often vocalised by their parents. The implication is that attitudes toward return are mediated and shaped through the context of the formal education that young refugees receive and through the constant ideological portrayal of the struggle from political and media sources. These attitudes are bound into a larger Cypriot identity that portrays Cyprus as the victim, whilst emphasising Turkish aggression and barbarity.



A flag emphasising Cyprus' Hellenistic identity flies outside this estate home. Identity is partly constructed along lines of nationalism. The partition of Cyprus is a part of the wider struggle between Greek and Turk.

The nationalist education that young refugees receive (as do their non-refugee counterparts) is supplemented by the language of human rights. The use of human rights as a strategy to pursue refugee interests has already been shown to be important for older refugees. In the case of younger refugees, it is more important still, for it replaces the concept of *home* in the younger Cypriots comprehension of what *refugee* means. Whilst their parents reconstruct the past as an idealisation of what was left behind and what they intend to return to, younger refugees must reconstruct it through the language and concepts of human rights because they have only very limited access to their parent's conceptual world of the *home*. Their definition of refugee identity becomes based on the doctrine enshrined in the European declaration of human rights that all people have the right to the free enjoyment and use of their property. Their desire to return to a place that they have never visited, and which would probably be alien to their own urbanised way of life, suggests that second generation refugees are less interested in recreating the *home* of their parents and more interested in regaining the rights to property in the

material sense. The only sense in which young refugees can be linked to their parents' notions of home, is that they may want to "...give expression to a physical and symbolic entity [*home*] of which they are only aware through the myth." (1999:18) Intrigued by the re-creation of the myth of home in which their parents are engaged, young refugees seek to endow the myth with a physical framework.

The role of formal organisations in politicising an identity

Refugee identity is constructed by the individual drawing from common cultural ideologies and experiences and it is expressed through the language refugees use to describe their exile. Identity should be thought of in this context as a strategy that refugees construct to understand their experiences and control their aspirations. The politicisation of their identity is a key feature of the refugee experience in Cyprus, but the way in which it is politicised needs to be clarified. The refugee's requirements after their exile fall into two categories. Firstly, their aspirations for return to their homes in the north remain as strong as ever. Secondly, their requirements for normalising their situation by re-engaging themselves in the socio-economic life of the south are also a key consideration. The first of these has led to the formation of political organisations that aim to express and pursue refugee interests in returning home, in other words to enhance the politicisation of the refugees. But the second has been de-politicised by state intervention and the formation of political structures that aim to engage refugees in the political process of the Republic without alienating them. Behind the latter of these, the state has, to a certain extent, co-opted and controlled the refugee's aspirations in its strategy of preventing political fragmentation and in pursuing the goal of state re-unification. Protest is mediated by the intervention of the state, which has helped to shape it for its own requirements.

Formal political organisations and structures perform a role for enhancing the aspirations of return on the one hand, whilst preventing refugee exclusion from the political process on the other. The structures that are implicated in the former are the refugee associations and direct action movements that campaign for the return of refugees to the north of the island. Principal among these are the associations established to cover each of the occupied towns such as 'Free Morphou' and the 'Kyrenia Refugee Association.' These organisations operate independently and organise political rallies to maintain the high profile of the refugee's demands. In doing so they crystallise the refugee's identity through direct political action. Political rallies usually take place on the anniversary of the 1974 war and are characterised by a symbolic march toward their homes that usually stops just short of the 'Green Line.' On some occasions, marchers have actually broken through the barrier and into Turkish occupied territory in their determination to return home. One such occasion recently resulted in the death of two refugees who were beaten and shot by Turkish guards as they attempted to remove Turkish flags from the buffer zone.

These organisations that refugees have formed, act as pressure groups. The identities that refugees construct are a personal expression of their aspirations, but these pressure groups magnify and vocalise

those aspirations on a far larger scale. They can therefore be described as a strategy that refugees adopt and support to further their own ambitions for return. Such pressure groups tend to be formed by refugees where there exists a determination to return to a country or area of origin. They are formed when the refugee community is forced into exile, but they are not aimed at the new host society. In the Cypriot case where the aims of the refugees and the state are in accordance they may apply pressure on the state if the state should modify its position. This has not yet been seen in Cyprus where, for example, the refugee pressure groups remained silent during the recent title deeds debate, but it is likely that they will become more vocal during future peace talks when the state is forced to make concessions that conflict with refugee sentiments.

The notion that these kind of refugee pressure groups tend only to be found in societies where there is a strong ideology or myth of return, is strengthened by the two nearest comparisons: those of the Palestinians and those of the Asia-Minor Greeks. In the former case, the myth of return is particularly strong and results in a high degree of politicisation of the refugee cause aimed at the Israeli occupation forces. Refugee identity has become highly politicised as an expression of individual frustration at adverse socio-economic conditions and conviction in the myth of return. For Asia-Minor Greeks exiled for over 75 years in Greece, refugee identity became politicised for very different reasons to those found in either Palestine or Cyprus: because the myth of return was extinguished very early in the refugee's exile. As a result, their identity is formed as much out of their political marginality as it is out of their shared experiences of loss and bereavement. It is politicised against the state, the elites and the system of patronage - which they see as having conspired against their humanitarian needs - rather than against the Turkish government from whom they could no longer expect any kind of redress. (Hirschon 1998: 44)

The comparison with the Greek situation reveals why a similar politicisation of the refugee's cause against the state, did not occur in Cyprus. Refugee identity became constructed in the face of a persistent failure on behalf of the state to provide adequate humanitarian assistance or compensation. In the Inter-war period of the 1920s and 30s, Greece was hampered by economic stagnation, bankruptcy and the prevalence of patron-client relationships that excluded refugees from the benefits of the political system. Refugee identity grew out of hardship and inequality in the face of state negligence and perceptions of corruption. Hirschon regards the failure of the political classes to share internationally agreed compensation extracted from Turkey in 1930 among those who needed it most, as the point at which refugee identity against the state, crystallised. "...this treatment exacerbated their growing sense of alienation from the Greek state, their feelings of dissatisfaction, of injustice, even betrayal. With very real grievances regarding living conditions and unfulfilled expectations for rehabilitation, a section of the refugee population began to perceive itself as an 'interest group' *vis-à-vis* successive Greek governments." (1998:45)

After the settlement of 1930, the more marginalized sections of the community began to swing their political support decisively behind the parties of the left (1998:47). Refugee housing estates, including

those studied by Hirschon, became Communist strongholds in the 1950s and retained that reputation into the 1970s. In Cyprus, refugee identity did not crystallise into a form of protest against the state, or indeed, into a significant increase of support for any one political party. Despite initial fears among the Cypriot elite that there would be a marked swing among refugees to the parties of the left caused by demands for wealth distribution (Loizos 1977:236), Appendix 1 demonstrates that support for left-wing parties increased only marginally after the war from 11 out of 35 seats in 1970, to 13 out of 35 in 1976. The 1991 parliamentary elections were contested by a new party called the Refugee Movement (PAKOP), who gained only 0.6% of the popular vote. Their failure to stand in the 1996 elections is a clear indication that refugees have not politicised against the established political parties or against the state in any manner comparable to the experience Hirschon described in Greece or which Loizos feared might occur in Cyprus (1977:236). Appendix 2 provides more detailed statistics for the 1996 elections, which demonstrate that refugees registered to vote in the occupied districts of Famagusta and Kyrenia, voted in a pattern comparable to that of other Cypriots.

Refugee identity did not become politicised in opposition to the state because the state was able to prevent a sense of injustice and marginality from becoming associated with the refugee's identity. The Cypriot state avoided the problems associated with Greece partly through luck as well as by judgement. The economic problems of post-1974 Cyprus were alleviated by generous international aid and by rapid economic recovery. Humanitarian schemes were quickly implemented and appeared to most refugees to be fairly allocated. Marginality was prevented by giving all refugees, including those from the lowest socio-economic groups on the estates, direct access to the process of government. The principal body for this is the House Refugee Committee on which a panel of senior politicians and representatives of the refugee community sit to discuss refugee issues and lobby for refugee's interests. The committee hears issues raised by Estate Committees who are directly elected by refugees from the housing estates, by refugee lobby groups such as the Refugee Association (PEP) and by other groups who represent the missing and the enclaved.

The state prevents political marginalisation by giving refugees the kind of direct access to the process of government that was denied to refugees in Greece as well as through its rapid and fair humanitarian programme. Politicisation of refugee identity might have occurred if either of these conditions had not been met. "You know the reason they abolished the camps so quickly?" a Cypriot man asked, "...because they didn't want the refugees to become radical like they did in Israel." Refugee camps breed strong ideologies, which can be as corrosive to the host state, as they are to the state that exiled the refugees. The Palestinian situation, where refugees continue to live in camps many years after their exile, illustrates this problem dramatically. In Cyprus, the camps were a relatively short-lived experience, but a limited form of politicisation may have occurred in the form of identification with the far-left had the state not intervened to prevent Communist meetings among refugees shortly after their displacement. (Loizos 1981)

Once the state had prevented the politicisation of refugee identity against itself, it co-opted the refugee's struggle for return into its ambitions for re-unification of the island. Several of the more cynical non-refugee Cypriots that were interviewed, suggested that the state was 'using' the refugee cause for its own ends in the same way that it was using the issue of the missing. At the time of this fieldwork, the state was being accused of covering up the knowledge it had possessed for years that concerned the identity and whereabouts of several hundred of the 1619 officially registered missing from the 1974 conflict. In the eyes of these Cypriots, the state had perpetuated the misery of the relatives of those who disappeared in the conflict, in order to preserve the issue of the missing for its own political ends. The state is concerned about the ultimate fate of the refugees, but there are clear signs that it is not always acting in the refugee's best interests. A political settlement that could see the return of refugees to re-occupied northern territory or to live under the authority of the Turkish Cypriots, is consistently being compromised by the state's desire for greater control over the northern areas.

Chapter 5

The Identity of Dependency

In the previous chapter, refugee identity was portrayed as a political strategy and as a tool for justifying and controlling aspirations of return. The refugees express their identity through qualities in the language employed by individual refugees as well as through the activities of corporate pressure groups. Identity was portrayed as a means of empowering refugees to individually take control of their own destiny through strategies and cultural constructs that enhance their right of return: the ultimate expression of this empowerment is through the language of human rights and the pursuit of those rights through the international courts. The intervention of the state in forming and controlling that identity is evidence that the process through which refugees construct their identity does not take place in isolation. External forces in the shape of the state were demonstrated to have had a profound impact on the manner in which refugees pursue their strategies. This theme is extended in this chapter to take account of other ways in which refugee identity is constructed in the context of external bodies and non-refugees. In these cases, identity does not represent personal empowerment, but is forced on refugees by the bureaucracy on the one hand and by non-refugees on the other. The emergence of this identity is mediated through discourses on refugee status and dependency. It is most serious for refugees living on government owned housing estates and emphasises refugee dependence on the state and marginalisation from other members of Greek-Cypriot society.

'Refugee' as a label

After the enforced exile of Greek Cypriots from the north of Cyprus in 1974, a substantial proportion of the Cypriot community came under the scope of refugee assistance programmes and government social welfare policies for the first time. In the context of administering this large segment of the population who were to receive state aid in the form of loans and housing, the policy administrators had to decide who would qualify as a refugee. The status of 'refugee' as a legally defined construct was implemented to decide who qualified for and gained access to this extensive state aid. The status became a label in the sense that it came to embody a set of stereotypes associated with dependency among low-income refugee groups. There exists an extensive set of ethnographic material that has explored the effects of government labelling strategies on refugee identity: In the case of Cyprus, the subject has been most thoroughly dealt with by Roger Zetter (1991).

Zetter emphasises that *refugee status* should not be confused with the refugee's concept of defining who is a refugee. Status merely defines who is allowed access to government aid schemes and it can clearly be seen that not all refugees qualify for such aid. Refugee status becomes a question of qualification for access to the assistance programme. You are a refugee for policy purposes if you can conform to a

given set of criteria. Refugee status was desirable for most refugees because it provided access to quality housing and financial resources and it was not unusual for refugees to alter their life history to ensure that they met the relevant criteria. "Whether a strategist or a compliant client the objective was to be included. Because of the symbolic importance of housing exit or self settlement were not perceived as options." (1991:47) Regardless of the transgressions refugees may have committed in attempting to be included in the housing schemes, the initial criteria ensured that it was mostly those refugees from low socio-economic backgrounds, particularly rural families and the urban poor, who formed the main contingent of those housed in the early stages.

Those with surviving sources of income, property and with smaller families, were initially excluded by the access criteria. This had the effect of creating a class of refugees who were differentiated from fellow refugees and other non-Cypriots by their socio-economic characteristics. Being poor may have initially been attractive for low-income refugees in that it ensured access to housing, but as wealthier refugees were later incorporated by a loosening of the access criteria and were provided with higher quality housing than that rushed through for the poorest refugees, it came to be counter-productive. A social stratification became evident on the housing estates that reinforced and symbolised the image of estate refugees as low-income groups. "They are inhabited by a population of uniform demographic and socio-economic characteristics (larger families and poorer means). This image is underpinned by physical characteristics as well, since the oldest estates are, generally, much larger, housing designs are more monotonous, maintenance problems with the then new technology are greater." (Zetter 1991:48)



Refugee houses are a symbol of refugees' reliance on the state. Some estates, such as Strovolos 4, are particularly bad at conveying an image of institutionalised dependency on the state and difference from other Cypriots. Strovolos 4 was one of the earliest housing estates to be built and has a disproportionate number of low income refugees.

The label *refugee* came to be synonymous with stereotypical attitudes toward those who came under the scope of the assistance programmes. The access criteria essentially came to label the refugees according to concepts of income status, family size, marriage and birthplace that were alien to refugee's conceptions about their wider understanding of their status. Their identity has already been shown in the previous chapter to have been drawn from concepts of *home* and exile from *home* and not from bureaucratic notions of access criteria. The refugee's own concept of themselves has been partially replaced by an alien notion of policy identity. "... they deploy [these] co-existing, yet contradictory languages to pursue their own agendas and interests – the need for shelter at one level; pressure for repatriation at another." (1991:50) One empowers the refugees to pursue their political objectives, the other is an undesired but necessary requirement for pursuing shelter needs that the refugees are forced to accept.

Discourses on dependency

Zetter stresses that this bureaucratic identity is not a passive stereotype mediating access to housing, but is an active process that has power over refugees. "The label has become, through powerful institutional processes, a potent tool of prescription and differentiation far removed from the initial premise that refugees need shelter." (1991:53) On the one hand, the language used in bureaucratic approaches to assistance programmes creates an identity of refugees, on the other, the actual effects of the policy create images of refugees that affect the way they see themselves and the way they are seen by other Cypriots. The label has become more than just the need to provide accommodation to displaced people, it has come to embody a range of stereotypes and it inflicts those stereotypes on the refugees. The key to understanding how refugee identity is affected by the bureaucratic imposition of a policy identity, is to explore how the label creates notions of dependency and ambiguity among refugees.

Dependency on state aid and housing is an undesirable element of refugee life, but it was perceived as being essential for maintaining refugee aspirations of return. Refugees had an ambiguous relationship with dependency. They saw it as an essential part of their strategy for returning to their homes, yet it conflicted with cultural concepts about property ownership and self-reliance and it prevented cultural ideals such as dowry provision from being applied. Refugees wanted to leave the programme, in the sense that they wanted to leave the stereotype of dependency and the implications of dependency, yet they believed they could not. "The refugees acquiesce in the creation of dependency; but they wish also to disengage from the unwanted outcomes of the policy. Dependency and independence, integration and the wish for repatriation occur, ambiguously, together." (1991:57) In Zetter's view, this dilemma was encapsulated in the refugee's refusal to accept title to their homes. Subsequent events have proved to the contrary and refugees now seem set to receive title for their properties if they haven't already secured them. The tensions inherent in the ambiguities proved too much for refugees and they have turned to

other strategies, including the international law courts, to preserve their aspirations of return. But the image of dependency will take a great deal longer to fade from the minds of non-refugees.

Dependency is a discourse on power: specifically on the power the state holds over refugees. It is created by government policy and is undesirable, but it is not resisted by the refugees, as might be expected in an unbalanced power relationship. Scott (1990) has argued that dependency is not merely a consensus of values, but an active process of ensuring social stability through unequal economic and political relationships. By creating and sustaining refugee dependence through a government controlled humanitarian programme, the state binds refugees into an unequal relationship and prevents instability. Scott insists that such domination results in resistance from the dominated group but this is not necessarily so in Cyprus where the ambiguities that lie behind the refugee's condition and status; that refugees must resist assimilation and that they wish to return home; create reasons why dependency can be viewed by refugees as simultaneously desirable as a strategy for return, and undesirable as an unequal relationship with the state and a social stigma. The recent issue of title deeds is a sign that these pressures are changing. The refugee's position has become less ambiguous as the strategy of dependency loses its appeal in the face of evidence that it is both unnecessary and that there are other, more successful strategies that the refugees can adopt to pursue their interests.

Power and dependency

Despite the recent shift in refugee strategies to pursuing their aspirations of return through the International law courts, many thousands of refugee households are still dependent on property that is owned by the state. The issuing of deeds was implemented by, and then fell victim to political rivalries and ambitions in the run-up to a presidential election and has still not been completed after three years. It enhanced the social stratification that had already been apparent on the estates by creating a new division between those who owned their houses and those whose claims had not been processed before the interruption of the state's programme. Dependency is still a feature of refugee lives on the housing estates and it still forms part of both the refugee's own identity and of the identity that the state creates to conceptualise the refugees.

The stigma that refugees associate with the concept of dependency is based on pre-war cultural traditions surrounding ideas of property ownership and self-reliance, but it is felt most strongly through the attitudes expressed by non-refugees. "Despite the identical social characteristics of hosts and refugees, the refugees feel stigmatised. Prejudice though often understated and subtle is painful. Some refugees feel that their hosts begrudge the housing provision, despite their losses." (Zetter 1991:56) Such feelings are painful for refugees. When asked what they think of the attitudes many non-refugees show toward them, they respond angrily. "They have lost nothing and we have lost everything" they say. "We ask only a little, but they would give us nothing. They do not care about our troubles." Such sentiments reveal a third dimension to the concept of dependency. Refugees may use it in their own

construction of identity or they may be stereotyped in the eyes of the bureaucracy, but these feelings reveal that they are also stigmatised through the relationship of inequality that dependency creates between refugees and non-refugee.

This is a relationship of power, in which non-refugees subject refugees to processes of domination through the concept of dependency. Relationships of dominance and subordination in relation to the state, have been explored in this paper in relation to Scott (1990). Resistance to domination is prevented by the fact that refugees can actually use their dependant status as a strategy for pursuing their own aspirations: dependency is both desirable and undesirable in the context of the state. But refugees do resent their domination by non-refugees who use the concepts of dependency and particularly of cheating, to create a domination of their own. Howe (1998) describes a situation he found in Belfast, where employed men use the concept of *scrounging* to dominate the long-term unemployed. In Cyprus, there exists a language used by non-refugees to dominate refugees through accusing them of cheating. "Refugees are all greedy", I was told by many non-refugees during my fieldwork. "Go to the estates and you will see they all drive three cars each. They are wealthy yet they are always asking the government to give them more." These attitudes were repeated time and again by non-refugees. They represent an attempt to subordinate refugees because their position as *dependants* runs contrary to cultural ideals that emphasise self-reliance.

Scott regards such discourses as essentially uni-directional. They are applied by the dominant group to subordinate the dominated, who only resist in the sense that they may use covert strategies of retaliation, such as criticism, strikes and theft in order to surreptitiously subvert the prevailing order. Such retaliation does not occur in the refugee context because dependency is actually in some ways desirable. In contrast, Howe argues that discourses of dependency are actually co-opted by sections of the dominated in order to deflect them onto others among the dominated class. "There is rarely a single orientation towards dominant representations, and rarely an outright rejection or acceptance of them. Instead, whilst actors may be partially influenced by dominant images, they also develop strategies which manipulate them in a variety of ways, using them to pursue their own interests and survival." (Howe 1998:532) In Belfast, the discourse on scrounging is used by the wealthy to unfairly stigmatise unemployed men who legally qualify for state aid by linking them to those cheat in order to qualify. But those unemployed men who are unfairly stigmatised, may use the same discourses in order to emphasise their difference and their deservingness of state aid.

"The contention that only a proportion of the unemployed are scroungers is a very forceful one because the use of a moral distinction to divide the jobless enables the 'deserving' unemployed to be enlisted in the crusade against the 'feckless'. Consequently, many unemployed people use this individualistic explanation to claim special status as 'deserving' for themselves, and thus as 'allied' with workers, whilst branding other unemployed people as 'scroungers'. In short, themes of the dominant discourse simultaneously constitute part of the cultural armoury of the disadvantaged, and are used against others

in objectively the same weak position as themselves, and it is this that gives rise to an intense and competitive internal politics amongst the unemployed.” (1998:534)

In Cyprus, refugees who regard themselves as deserving, employ the dominating discourse of *cheating* to differentiate themselves from those they regard as having obtained property on the estates improperly; either because they hid their own wealth or because they engaged in corruption in order to pass the access criteria. Very often, the *cheat* is a non-refugee who has appropriated refugee or abandoned Turkish property through improper means. In doing so, they ally themselves with non-refugees and shift the image of *cheating* onto other groups.

This position demonstrates that the refugees operate as individuals, engaged in their own struggles to pursue their own objectives. They do this through constructing an identity in the face of domination from other Greek-Cypriot groups. This identity is not merely a passive collection of ideologies that binds the refugees into a neo-Marxist ‘class’. Identity is a complex inter-relationship of ideologies and strategies that are employed by individual refugees for their own purposes. In the process, refugees must make sense of their position and must deal with the tensions and ambiguities that the various and often contradictory contexts apply to them.

Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to examine and explain the negative responses shown by refugees to the state assistance schemes that housed them on government owned estates after the 1974 conflict. This discussion was broken into three interconnecting parts that examined firstly, the cultural concepts that lay behind refugees' problems accepting life in state owned housing; secondly, the specific issue and importance of title deeds; and thirdly, processes of identity formation and exclusion that emerged from competing strategies and aspirations among refugee and non-refugee groups in Cyprus.

The numbers of successfully re-housed refugees, the cost of the re-housing programme and the extent of economic reintegration for refugee groups are the criteria often used to judge the success of humanitarian schemes. On these criteria, the Cyprus refugee assistance schemes can be broadly described as successful. They rapidly re-housed and re-employed a sixth of the total population in inexpensive housing and a booming economy. Yet it is clear that there are serious problems for refugees subject to these housing schemes that fall outside the scope of conventional evaluations. The value of anthropology in examining the social and cultural relationships that lie beneath the appearances of success has been underlined by the arguments put forward in this paper. The principal problems in the case of Cyprus arise from the tension that exists between the concepts of adaptation and assimilation. Humanitarian schemes emphasise the importance of assimilating refugee groups into the host population, yet in Cyprus, the aim was to facilitate the adaptation of refugees to life in exile, without hindering their chances of repatriation by assimilating them into the host society.

The differences in these two aims are subtle but important. The refugees' moral claim for repatriation depended on them maintaining their differences from the host society through dependency on the estates and by refusing title to their properties. The refugees' conception of themselves as deprived of their *homes* would have been damaged if their accommodation in the south had taken on the form and appearance of their homes in the north. The outcome of this problem was that steps were taken to enhance refugee claims for repatriation by retaining title and establishing dependency. These were designed to prevent assimilation, but for many refugees living in state owned property, they also damaged the potential for adaptation. Refugees were left in a position that was both undesirable because refugees coveted the title to their houses; yet it was also desirable, as refugees knew that owning title would impede their claims for repatriation. This tension has only been resolved in recent years as refugee strategies move to alternatives based on human rights law and the international courts. Assimilation no longer appears to be the damaging factor to the aspirations of repatriation it once was. Refugees have started to receive the title to their houses and are beginning to transform their houses to fit the cultural patterns previously established in their abandoned homes. Refugee houses are being turned into *homes*.

This does not mark a retreat from the demand for repatriation. On the contrary, it merely marks a shift in emphasis and strategy that enables previous contradictions to be resolved. These changes in strategy might appear to be specific only to the manner in which refugees construct their own identities and their relationships with their properties. But they are also played out in a highly politicised public competition between refugees, the state and non-refugees, in which identities are formed and transformed according to the strategies the participants are engaged in pursuing. The refugees must enhance their political objectives whilst deflecting criticism and stereotyping based on their low-income status and dependency. The state must control the refugees' politicisation to prevent extremism whilst introducing a discourse on refugee status to mediate access to housing. Non-refugees must enhance their own demands for resources whilst creating a refugee image of cheating that enables them to establish a power relationship over refugees. Identity is a highly politicised arena in which competing groups form and promote images of one another and themselves in order to achieve their objectives.

The unusual situation found in Cyprus, where assimilation did not follow an apparently successful re-housing programme, has been explained as a result of its contradiction with the urge for repatriation. Anthropological approaches to refugees after they have had time to adapt to their exile can reveal these contradictions and the manner in which they are articulated. Anthropology in turn, can benefit from examining identity formation among people in transformational contexts that the study of refugees offers. In this thesis, such an approach has revealed a rich seam of cultural concepts and social relationships that explain why the re-housing programme was not as successful as it appears.

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Appendix 1

Source: Cyprus Government Website: <http://www.pio.gov.cy>

1970 Parliamentary Elections

Five parties contested the 5 July 1970 elections. Three of these, the Unified Party, the Progressive Front, and the opposition Democratic National Party, were right-wing, one, the Unified Democratic Union of Centre (EDEK), of the centre and the other, AKEL, left-wing.

The allocation of seats was as follows:

| Party | No. of Seats |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| Unified Party | 15 |
| AKEL | 9 |
| Progressive Front | 7 |
| EDEK | 2 |
| Independents | 2 |

1976 Parliamentary Elections

The third parliamentary elections took place on 5 September 1976, two years after the Turkish invasion. It was contested by the Democratic Rally, the Democratic Front, socialist EDEK and left-wing AKEL. The right-wing Democratic Rally received about 26% of the votes, but due to a coalition ranged against it, was left with no Deputies.

The allocation of seats was as follows:

| Party | No. of Seats |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Democratic Front | 21 |
| AKEL | 9 |
| EDEK | 4 |
| Independents | 1 |

In all the above parliamentary elections, the electoral majority system was used.

1981 Parliamentary Elections

The fourth parliamentary elections took place on 24 May 1981. The elections were contested by the right-wing Democratic Rally, the centre Democratic Party, the New Democratic Front and the Union of Centre, socialist EDEK and left-wing AKEL and PAME.

The allocation of seats was as follows:

| Party | No. of Seats |
|------------------|---------------------|
| AKEL | 12 |
| Democratic Rally | 12 |
| Democratic Party | 8 |
| EDEK | 3 |

In the above election, a type of proportional system with threshold was used.

1985 Parliamentary Elections

The fifth parliamentary elections took place on 8 December 1985.

Following a law passed by the House of Representatives the number of seats allocated to the Greek Cypriot community was increased from 35 to 56. The number of Turkish Cypriot seats was raised from 15 to 24.

The elections were contested by four parties - the right-wing Democratic Rally, the centre Democratic Party, the socialist EDEK and left-wing AKEL - as well as independent candidates.

| Party | No. of Seats |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Democratic Rally | 19 |
| Democratic Party | 16 |
| AKEL | 6 |
| Independents | 0 |

Vassos Lyssarides, leader of socialist EDEK, was elected House President. His candidature was supported by his party and by the Democratic Party.

1991 Parliamentary Elections

The sixth parliamentary elections took place on 19 May 1991. They were contested by the following political parties or party groupings - the Democratic Rally Party in coalition with the Liberal Party, the

Democratic Party, the Socialist Party EDEK, AKEL-Left-New Forces Party and two new parties the Refugee Movement (PAKOP) and the Reformed Left (ADISOK), a splinter group from AKEL.

The results were as follows:

| Party | % | No. of Seats |
|-----------------------------|----------|---------------------|
| Democratic Rally – Liberals | 35,8% | 20 |
| AKEL-Left- New Forces | 30,6% | 18 |
| Democratic Party | 19,5% | 11 |
| EDEK-Socialist Party | 10,9% | 7 |
| ADISOK-New Left | 2,4% | 0 |
| PAKOP- Refugee Movement | 0,6% | 0 |
| Independent candidates | 0,2 % | 0 |

Alexis Galanos (Democratic Party) was elected House President with the joint votes of the Democratic Party and the Democratic Rally - Liberals coalition.

1996 Parliamentary Elections

The seventh parliamentary elections took place on 26 May 1996. They were held under a newly-adopted system of proportional representation according to which a party receiving 1/56 of the valid votes or (1,79%) elected a House member. The new voting system encouraged the participation of more parties in the elections. The following political parties took part in the 1996 elections – the Democratic Rally - Liberal Party coalition, the New Horizons Party, the Democratic Party, the Movement of Free Democrats (of former President Vassiliou), the Ecologist Movement, the Socialist Party EDEK, the new Left (ADISOK) and the AKEL-Left-New Forces Party .

Spyros Kyprianou was elected House President.

| Party | Votes | % | Seats |
|-----------------------|--------------|----------|--------------|
| ADISOK - New Left | 5.311 | 1,44 | - |
| AKEL- Left-New Forces | 121.958 | 33,00 | 19 |
| DEMOCRATIC PARTY | 60.726 | 16,43 | 10 |
| FREE DEMOCRATS | 13.623 | 3,69 | 2 |
| ECOLOGISTS | 3.710 | 1,00 | - |
| NEW HORIZONS | 6.317 | 1,71 | - |

| | | | |
|----------------------------|---------|-------|----|
| EDEK | 30.033 | 8,13 | 5 |
| DEM. RALLY - LIBERAL PARTY | 127.380 | 34,47 | 20 |
| INDEPENDENTS | 463 | 0,13 | - |

Appendix 2

Source: Cyprus Government Website: <http://www.pio.gov.cy>

History of Parliamentary Elections

1996 Parliamentary Election Analysis

| District | Seats | AKEL | DIKO | KED | EDEK | DISY-L |
|-----------|-------|------|------|-----|------|--------|
| Nicosia | 21 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 7 |
| Limassol | 12 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Famagusta | 11 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| Larnaca | 5 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Paphos | 4 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Kyrenia | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 56 | 19 | 10 | 2 | 5 | 20 |

Famagusta District

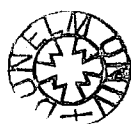
District Election Information

Registered Voters: 81.067

| Party | Votes | % | Seats |
|---------------------------|--------|-------|-------|
| ADISOK | 926 | 1,27 | - |
| AKEL - Left - New Forces | 27.546 | 37,69 | 4 |
| DIKO | 8.526 | 11,67 | 1 |
| FREE DEMOCRATS | 1.904 | 2,61 | - |
| ECOLOGISTS | 473 | 0,65 | - |
| NEW HORIZONS | 1.154 | 1,58 | - |
| EDEK | 3.523 | 4,82 | 1 |
| DEM. RALLY- LIBERAL PARTY | 28.977 | 39,65 | 5 |
| INDEPENDENTS | 49 | 0,07 | - |

Kyrenia District

District Election Information



Registered Voters: 21.208

| Party | Votes | % | Seats |
|---------------------------|--------------|----------|--------------|
| ADISOK | 216 | 1,13 | - |
| AKEL - Left - New Forces | 6.919 | 36,36 | 1 |
| DIKO | 3.789 | 19,91 | 1 |
| FREE DEMOCRATS | 659 | 3,46 | - |
| ECOLOGISTS | 215 | 1,13 | - |
| NEW HORIZONS | 468 | 2,46 | - |
| EDEK | 1.484 | 7,80 | - |
| DEM. RALLY- LIBERAL PARTY | 5.281 | 27,75 | 1 |