

UDC 81'42
УДК 81'42

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**THE USES OF ORAL HISTORY IN CYPRUS
AND BORNEO: MEMORY AND IDENTITY**
**ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ УСТНЫХ РАССКАЗОВ ЖИТЕЛЕЙ КИПРА
И БОРНЕО: ПАМЯТЬ И ИДЕНТИЧНОСТЬ**

Abstract

For thousands of years, borders and boundaries have sprung up all over the globe, have been violated, crossed, abolished and re-established. People(s) have moved within them and came from the outside and settled, continuously displacing already established communities and being displaced in turn. The current paper focuses upon people's memories concerning recent unsettlingings in the Eastern Mediterranean. The data stem from two Oral History Projects conducted in Cyprus and Sarawak. During interviews life and language experience of borderline residents of different origins was shared. The interview samples turned out to demonstrate all the three different modes of oral history narratives each with certain linguistic peculiarities: the institutional, the communal and the personal, although the personal memory dominated. Reactions to interviewer questions and lexical units used in the interviews demonstrated different degree of willingness to speak about traumatic experience connected with borderline unrest. The interviews obtained can be widely used for further research in the fields of discourse analysis and corpus studies.

Аннотация

Тысячелетиями по всему миру границы возникали и исчезали; их пересекали, нарушали, меняли. Люди перемещались по приграничным территориям, приходя из разных регионов, обосновывались там, при этом постоянно либо вытесняли уже устоявшиеся сообщества, либо сами были вынуждены покидать обустроенные места. В настоящей статье описываются воспоминания людей, живших в районах восточного Средиземноморья в такие нестабильные периоды. Данные были получены из двух речевых корпусов устных рассказов, сформированных в рамках проектов, выполненных на Кипре и в Сараваке. В ходе этих рассказов жители приграничных территорий делятся жизненным и языковым опытом. В полученных образцах интервью отмечаются черты всех трёх моделей устного рассказа: институциональной, общественной и личностной при преобладании личностного компонента. Реакции испытуемых на вопросы, заданные корреспондентами, и особенности использования лексических единиц в ходе интервью отражают степень готовности испытуемых говорить о своём печальном опыте во времена политической нестабильности на границе. Полученные интервью могут найти широкое применение при анализе дискурса и для корпусных исследований.

Keywords: borderline residents, oral history narrative, discourse, corpus studies.

Ключевые слова: жители приграничных территорий, жанр устного повествования, дискурс, корпусные исследования.

doi: 10.22250/2410-7190_2016_2_3_15_32

1. Introduction

For thousands of years, borders and boundaries have sprung up all over the globe, have been violated, crossed, abolished and re-established. Oftentimes, these borders had their origins in natural borders, but other times, these borders were drawn up by powerful entities such as empires, states and individuals. Naturally, the great plains of Asia, the steppes of North and South America, central Europe and the savannahs of Africa were prime examples of human drawn borders [Volk, 2008 ; Goody, 2007 ; Mazower, 2006 ; Kaufman, 2004 ; Makdidi, 2000, 2006 ; Meskell, 1998 ; Kovacs, 2006 ; Ozturkmen, 2006 ; Passerine, 1979 ; Haugbolle, 2005 ; Brown, 2003 ; Troebst, 2003], whereas islands, especially smaller ones, typically only had natural borders, such as mountain ranges or indeed the Amur River separating Russia and China. Islands themselves do usually not have such natural borders and were and/or are divided along political lines. Examples include Hispaniola, Papua New Guinea, Ireland, or Cyprus [Leventis et al., 2008 ; Nadjarian, 2006 ; Papadakis, 2006, 2005 ; Leventis, 2002 ; Scott, 2002] and Borneo.

The Eastern Mediterranean has been a particularly contested area [Hodgkin, Radstone, 2003]. People(s) have moved within it and came from the outside and settled, continuously displacing already established communities and being displaced in turn [Anderson, 2006]. This chapter is intended to analyse some of the memories associated with more recent unsettling in the Eastern Mediterranean and more specifically with Cyprus. The data used in the following stem from two Oral History (henceforth OH) (see more on oral history theory e.g. in [Abrams, 2010 ; Hamilton, Shopes, 2008 ; Denis, 2007 ; Perks, 2006 ; Merikle, Meredyth, 1998 ; Portelli, 1997 ; Frisch, 1995]) Projects, one conducted from 2009 to 2012 in Cyprus and partly funded by the European Union. The so-called SHARP project¹ aimed at adding its voice(s) to the cultural conversations taking place across the island by making them public. The other one is ongoing at the time of this writing and is taking place on both sides of the Sarawak - Kalimantan Barat border on Borneo.

In the Cypriot iteration of the project, over 100 interviews were conducted on both sides of the Green Line which since 1974 separates the northern Turkish Cypriot part from the southern Greek Cypriot one. Trouble between the two communities had been brewing even before Cyprus had gained its independence from Britain in 1960 and would still worsen afterwards.

¹ More information on the project and a sample of the interviews can be accessed at <http://www.sharpnetwork.eu>.

Issues of identity [Nair-Venugopal, 2009 ; Canefe, 2007, 2006], problematic relationships and differing historical accounts would continue to divide the two communities even today. And while not explicitly discussed here due to space restraints, the overall SHARP project relates to such issues of memory, memorialisation and the search for identity [The memory bank, 2014 ; Sa'di, Abu-Lughod, 2007 ; Nuttall, Coetzee, 1998 ; Frank, 1995 ; Schacter, 1996] by specifically analysing production settings, processes, the training of interviewers, the interviews themselves and the collective interpretation of this data via new media means and debriefing events [Linde, 1983 ; Duffy, Jonassen, 1992 ; Bamford, 2003 ; Stokes, 2001 ; Giorgis et al., 1999 ; Wileman, 1993 ; Sinatra, 1986].

Interviewees would typically be older members of both communities: the Turkish Cypriots in the north and the Greek Cypriots in the south. Additionally, a member of the Armenian minority (see more about it in [Armenian Diaspora]) living in Cyprus was also interviewed. A twofold outcome was expected: the sensitizing of the young regarding the older generation's experiences, and, secondly, reassuring the elderly that their memories and inputs are valued by society and making them understand that new media can go a long way in ensuring that their voices are heard and will continue to be heard.

This essay will show that politically instrumentalised stereotypes about the Other are just that, stereotypes, and how individual memories narrated by eyewitnesses and other grassroots accounts speak a different language. Of particular interest in the interviews were questions about how individuals from the two Cypriot communities interacted with each other in the events leading up to the 1974 intervention / invasion of the island by Turkish troops and how these events shaped people's lives and attitudes afterwards. Finally, the hope is expressed that these interviews will contribute to individuals' empowerment and their better understanding of the historic processes which shaped and are continuing to shape their lives and their ethics in sharing an island.

2. Cyprus and the OH project

Contemporary Cypriot society is beset by what Cypriot writer and artist Alev Adil claimed, is a 'secret archive of inherited amnesia.'² In many ways, the traumatic experiences [Dawson et al., 1999] of the 1950s, 60s and 70s have left deep traces in the local society or societies, depending on what kind of concept of the 'local' one applies.

The project presented here is part of a number of such projects being carried out in Cyprus at the time of this writing. Other projects are for example The Living Memory Project (Nikoletta Christodolou), The Life Stories Project (Olga Demetriou and Rebecca Bryant) and the Cyprus 2015 project (Ahmet Sözen). At the time of the writing of this text, most of them were in their final stages and are slated to go officially online within the following months or are already online. Thus, issues of reconciliation through remembrance, of official versus unofficial histories, the imagining of homelands, senses of belonging,

² Alev Adil, performing on 5 March 2012 at ARTos Foundation, Nicosia.

fractures of struggle, or 'Memory, Truth, and the Journey towards a New Past' (Catia Galatariotou) have all found a way into the public discourse and are eliciting information from important cross-border memories.

Moreover, what is becoming evident through these projects is that such memories are not confined to a certain region only. Especially in a shrinking world, these memories continue to traverse the globe; crossing borders, intersecting in many places, mingling with other local memories and sometimes returning with much cross-fertilised thought [Briel, 2008, 2012; Butler, 2007; Field, 2012; Hamilton, Shopes, 2008]. Cyprus is no exception. All of the project's interviewees have had experiences abroad, in the UK, in the USA, in Turkey and a host of other countries, sometimes voluntarily, sometimes involuntarily due to the political processes taking place.

This ex-territorialisation might actually have allowed them to take a more disaffected viewpoint from others who have never left the island and reach different conclusions. In terms of practicalities, the interviews conducted for the project had several interviewers. These were mostly MA students from the University of Nicosia's MA in Media and Communication who received training on questionnaire design, camerawork, interviewing techniques and post-production. All of them were given free rein to find their interviewees and all of them were rather successful, with many of them easily finding two or three interviewees within the space of a few days. However, it was felt that the training would allow for the interviewers to get a better grip on what they were attempting to do and to sensitise them to the technological as well as the human factors involved. Feedback showed that this information was appreciated, but that some of them also just set out to 'do their own thing', overwhelmingly with positive results. Some of the interviews were shot with a professional camera, others with a camera-equipped mobile telephone, still others with a typical budget home camera. This diversity was intended. As part of the remit of the European Grant funding the project it was given specifically to allow non-specialists to experiment with new media and their use in social research.

The three interviews selected and discussed below were conducted in the autumn of 2011 by one interviewer (the author) and a cameraman as pilots to be shared with the other interviewers. Interviewed were George, a middle-aged Greek Cypriot media worker, Ali, a retired Turkish Cypriot contractor and now a second-hand bookshop owner, and Nora, an Armenian-Cypriot writer and educator. The interviewer and the cameraman were both non-Cypriots; the interviewer was of German origin and the cameraman had a Serbian background. As discussed in many ethnographic texts, the relationship between 'foreign' interviewers and local respondents is always fraught with difficulty³.

³ As an example, consider Landolf Scherzer's 2005 *Der Grenzgänger* (The Border Rambler). In his reportage, the author wanders the length of the stretch of land that until 1989 used to be the German-German border. Through his low-key and conversational narrative, he is able to understand and portray people living along this once impenetrable border. And he readily acknowledges that the willingness of his respondents was mostly due to the fact that they felt he was one of them.

At the same time, the foreignness of the researcher might also allow for answers not readily provided to locals. Other project interviews were conducted by Greek and Turkish Cypriots, sometimes in English, sometimes in Greek, sometimes in Turkish. Most of the interviews with Greek Cypriots were, in fact, conducted in English, as were the interviews discussed below. Interestingly enough, English was none of the participants' native language. Also, these were the first or pilot interviews conducted for the OH project, and this explains why there were still sometimes awkward moments when the interviewers did not exactly know how to respond to a given interview situation.

2.1. The first interview: George

George is a seasoned Cypriot media worker in his early 50s. He grew up in Cyprus and then moved to the UK and the USA for study and work. He returned to Cyprus, working in the media industry and has numerous film production and director credits to his name. Among the films he has directed is one which deals with the Cyprus crisis and the events of 1974. Right from the beginning of the interview, it becomes clear that he has an easy rapport with the camera, having worked in front of and behind the camera for many years. Judging by his gestures and occasional frowns, he seemed a bit tired, if not wary at first, but this turned into concentrated and willing collaboration with the interviewer. Indeed, one has the impression that he is relieved to tell his story (once again).

He begins his story with life in the early 1970s but then very quickly moves onto the traumatic events of 1974. He recounts his childhood memories of the war and of hearing enemy airplanes passing above. After the end of the war, the airport in Nicosia was closed for civil aviation and nowadays it is very rare to hear an airplane crossing the sky over Nicosia. George states that he had forgotten this episode until he went to London, and for the first time in a long while he was confronted by airplane noise.

His statement is an ample reminder that specific memories (autobiographical/traumatic) consist of both psychical and social elements, which are oftentimes combined, as in this case. In his answers, George dispels the myth that all the people were mostly afraid of the 'Turks'. For him the fear of EOKA B, a Greek Cypriot paramilitary shaped after EOKA A, which had fought the British in the Cypriot anti-colonial struggle, and which now exacted strikes against Turkish Cypriots, was the scarier enemy. But he also acknowledged that the belligerent events of 1974 had changed his life. However, he also stated that many use these tragic events to their own devices, oftentimes creating (ideological) barriers to innovation and social progress in society. He exemplifies this attitude when he tells the story of his return to Cyprus in the 1980s working for CNN World Report. At one point, he wanted to cover another item, the breaking AIDS crisis. However, he was asked, 'Why do you want to cover this? We have the Cyprus problem which needs solving first!'

When responding to the last interview question about changes taking place in Cyprus for some kind of re-unification of the two halves, George can be

seen and heard letting out a long and deep sigh, which might be interpreted in two ways: a) as a sign of resignation, or b), a sign that not everything is lost, but that in Cyprus, things take longer than in other parts of the world.

2.2. The Second Interview: Ali

Ali, an amicable Turkish Cypriot in his early 70s, is a shop owner in the beautifully restored Büyük Han Market in the Turkish northern part of Nicosia. He has had many professions in his life – he worked as a carpenter and in construction, is a collector of books and stamps and he is a sportsman. After his retirement, he opened a second-hand book and curiosity store in the aforementioned Büyük Han. He is active in the community and whenever one walks by his shop, one can see many people inside it enjoying his hospitality.

It is clear from the start that, just like George, Ali is also comfortable in front of the camera. He jokes and laughs a lot and is clearly enjoying himself. He proudly mentions that he has been interviewed by foreigners many times over and relishes the memories and this present interview.

Very early on in the interview, Ali comments on the fact that he is fluent in English, Turkish and Greek and thus speaks all three of the island's languages. This allows him to position himself as an expert not just on his own Turkish Cypriot ethnic background, but also as an interlocutor for the two other official languages of the island. He grew up in Limassol but moved to Istanbul when he was 19 and then to Kyrenia (Greek: Κερύνεια, Turkish: Girne) and Nicosia after his retirement. His father and mother had remained in Limassol and then 'moved' to Kyrenia. This was directly after the 1974 war and their move was an enforced patriation (from what had become Greek-Cypriot 'territory' to Turkish-Cypriot 'territory'). It is not surprising Ali uses the hyperbolic and safe word 'moved', rather than 'flee' or something similar, as this is one of his ways of coping with the difficult political situation in Cyprus, then and now. He is also keen to stress that he had good relations with the Greek community. 'If I want to buy something [at a house/shop], I was invited to the house.' This in his eyes was a sign of inclusion in the Greek community.

Prodded to tell one of his stories from the old days, he responds: 'Every day is history', insinuating that for him the small events count as much as the big ones. And, indeed, he does not tell a story until the close of the interview; the story of a burglary at his house (in Istanbul, not in Cyprus!), which prompted him to stay away from it for a whole week. Psychologically, this might be explained as a belated reaction to the Cyprus events (the forced removal of his parents from and the loss of their family home) and his replaced fear. Just as he was away from Cyprus during some of the unrest, thus avoiding major calamities for himself, he now stays away from his house longer than objectively necessary in order not to be exposed to a perceived risk. Apart from being a gifted narrator and performer, Ali is also a master of evasion. Asked whether he sees the 'old days' of both communities living together peacefully returning again, he replies: 'This is a political question. I keep away from that. ... I am a very good mathematician and am also good at hunting.' A while later

he comes back to the subject, though: ‘We pay politicians to do things for us. That’s it. We do not need to be involved. A normal life is better.’ This statement speaks very clearly to his politics, at least when talking to us. He stays away from them, even implying that politics are ‘un-normal.’ He also stresses the use of the word ‘happy’ when referring to himself, which appears time and again. And, lastly, he stresses that ‘if you have so many problems in the past, you work on your body.’ Besides that, according to his statements, you also withdraw further into your private matters.

Throughout the interview, Ali puts great emphasis on his hobbies: ‘I judge international stamp [competition]s. I have been in exhibitions. I am also a chess player....’ He is proud of his body and mentions that he has been a runner and still goes walking in Troodos, the highest mountain range and spanning both parts of Cyprus. This last element is again a hint that he does not see Cyprus as a divided entity.

2.3. The third interview: Nora

The third interviewee, Nora, exemplifies the fact that the political and violent episodes in recent Cyprus history not only affected Greek Cypriots as the majority of inhabitants on the island, Turkish Cypriots as the largest minority on the island, but also other minorities, such as Armenians and the Maronites.

Nora is a teacher in her 40s at the Armenian School in Nicosia and also a prolific writer of poetry and shorter prose. She asked to be interviewed at home where she ‘feels comfortable’. Just like the other two interviewees, it is clear that she is relaxed in speaking to the camera. Being a teacher and celebrated artist, she is used to explaining things in public and giving her opinion. She is composed and keen to tell her side of the story. She begins by telling the interviewer that there are 3000–3500 Armenians still living in Cyprus and that they have always been active in the arts, culture and the music of both communities. She is obviously proud of her heritage, but also emphasises that ‘the Armenian diaspora has always integrated well... . Armenians are not foreigners, but separate.’

Nora recalls her childhood in Limassol and especially a cat which also features in one of her short stories, ‘Ledra Street’. In the beginning of the interview, and especially when referring to her childhood, her eyes sparkle and she laughs and smiles a lot, so much so that at one point she asks for a minute to regain her composure. This light-heartedness would give way to a more earnest expression when talk about the events of 1963 and 1974 begins.

She recalls the day the sirens went off and her childhood ended, using words such as ‘bittersweet’ and ‘traumatic’. Like the other interviewees, she reiterates the stories told by her parents and grandparents about how good life was in the old days, i.e. before 1963, when all communities would live together peacefully. Significantly, it was her mother who talked about the old days while her father did not dwell on them at all. And just like George, who first had to go abroad to meet a Turkish Cypriot, she said that she did not meet one until 1974.

Nora also declared that she only realised that she was living on a divided island when she moved from Limassol, which was by the seaside and far from the Green line-dividing the two communities, to Nicosia, the divided capital which sits on the Greenline. And it was this event, the first-hand experience of division which set her off on her writing career, looking back at what she had lost and assessing the present. And, she alleges, such a move does not work if you write about barbed wire and borders, but rather, one needs to have them reflected and embedded in the emotions of the characters described. She thereby hopes to capture those times and by having people reflect on what has been happening hopes they might possibly change their attitudes for the better. Shejoy fully recounts one of her readings in New Zealand and how she had the impression that her stories really moved people.

3. Analysis of the interviews

When analysing the interviews, it becomes clear that all three individuals interviewed seemed to enjoy the telling of their stories. They are experienced narrators and have many elements of their stories readily available. They view their speaking as empowerment and also as a bridge between their professional and private selves.

Significantly, all three stress that the old days were better, a sentiment shared by the majority of the people interviewed. This might have several reasons. For one, this is a mind-set oftentimes found among older people, and since all interviewed were older than 40 years of age, most of them significantly so, this might be a general sentiment which appeared time and again. For another, this age group still remembers the ‘old days’ and they are aware of the fact that a common, shared life had been possible for both communities before, whereas this is not the case for the younger generation. While, generally, much banter and goodwill was displayed and visible in the interviews, when it came to individual events in the early 1960s and in 1974, the mood changed, at least for George and Nora.

And this is not surprising, given the nature of the events discussed. This also implies that when doing research on events which might have induced trauma in respondents, special care needs to be taken. Studies on Holocaust survivors have proven that traumatic experiences are hard to relate, as they have had a profound effect on the respondent. Ali would be included here, as his refusal to acknowledge any of these issues is in itself an attempt to keep these events at bay. Different respondents react differently to the re-telling of a trauma-inducing event. Some might go quiet, whereas others use the interview to cathartic effect in that pain is extra-territorialised (Dawson, 1999). In our sample the respondents acted in very different ways: George told a story about his fear of hearing airplanes which is due to his experiences in the 1974 war, whereas Ali refused to recall any traumatic experiences. Nora has tried to work through the events by becoming a writer. In George’s and Nora’s case, this retelling might have a cathartic effect to help overcome any trauma by cladding the experience into a stock narrative and thus making it a manageable part of

oneself's history. In Ali's case, any trauma associated with the events was downplayed and evaded, which is another, but perhaps not the healthiest, way of managing it.

For all interviewees, one might apply the theory of compartmentalisation of events into several modes. A. Portelli [Portelli, 1997, pp. 24–27] stipulates that oral history narratives generally adopt three different modes: the institutional, the communal and the personal. In oral history narratives, each one of these is characterised by the usage of a different personal pronoun: the third person singular for the institutional, the first person plural 'we' for the communal and the first person singular 'I' for the personal. In our sample, all three modes appear, although the personal memory dominates in two accounts, suggesting that agency is at a prime for both these interviewees, but an agency which is mostly reduced to personal and less to institutionalised interactions.

Due to the perceived evasion strategies employed especially by the second respondent, both interviewer and cameraman experienced a certain kind of frustration, as they had had other topics in mind. All three interviewees used emplotment strategies in which they presented themselves to the interviewer in a certain light (the politically interested media professional, the generally happy apolitical semi-retiree, and the writer trying to make fictionalised sense of events) and by refusing to discuss certain topics. This might be stated outright or with the use of certain words (e.g. 'troubles' rather than the more appropriate 'deadly raids' or 'war' for the unrests in the 1960s and the Turkish intervention/invasion of 1974). The interviews can thus also be read as an exercise in narrativity and how to structure modern-day narratives within contested and intercultural social settings and offer personal solutions on social challenges. In this sense they are also literary undertakings, but 'literary' applied in a broad sense and more and more inclusive of and dependent on new media and technology.

It should go without saying that sometimes interviews do not go according to plan. In the case of the Ali interview, even the cameraman intervened twice and proposed clarifications on the questions posed. But this was more of a problem for the interviewers than for the respondent and rightly so. Oftentimes, for the success of an OH interview it is important that the respondent has the feeling that s/he is in a position of power and can speak from this position. And despite the frustration felt by an interviewer, the yield from such an interview might actually be quite good, as different strategies such as not talking about certain events can be observed and analysed as easily as ones in which issues are discussed outright [Stoler, 2006].

All three respondents were content with being interviewed at their respective places of work, George in his office, Ali in his shop and Nora at home where she spends much of her time writing. George was able to tell a story right away, perhaps also because the airplane story was one he had recounted numerous times. Ali had so many stories that it was hard for him to concentrate on any one in particular. And Nora of course has written down many of her stories, but was willing to give insights into their creation process. It is

remarkable that all three of them were not keen to speak directly about politics, with George being more open than Ali or Nora. George stressed the fact that he did not leave Cyprus permanently, because for him it was worth fighting for a solution on the island itself and thus stay true to his roots. Ali did not explain why he moved back to Cyprus following his retirement, but his life on the island is ample proof that he considers it his home. However, Ali refrains from speaking about politics and sees his own body rather than the country of his residence as a construction site. In all three cases, the interviews revealed how much the Cyprus problem has intervened in their lives and altered their life choices and attitudes. All three of them made their choices accordingly: George came back to Cyprus and entered the media field to perhaps affect some changes in the thinking of the population in the south; Ali came back restricting himself to his own body and the book and tourism trade; and Nora began her writing career.

It is fair to say that without the events of 1974, their lives would have moved on different tracks but they have found coping mechanisms and coherence systems to deal with the ensuing changes: George and Nora in a more professional capacity, Ali in a more private one. In all three, composure appears to have been achieved through the retelling of their stories, be it politically, apolitically or artistically.

4. Malaysia – Indonesia

The Malaysia and Indonesia Project was undertaken 2014 and 2015. After preparatory lectures and training, in 2015 20 interviews were conducted near a village along the Kalimantan Barat-Sarawak border on the Indonesian side⁴. It became clear that while some local issues were particular to the area and culture (e.g. geographical issues as large rivers and mountain ranges), many other items were similar to issues people faced in Cyprus: ownership of fields, the difficulty of family reunions, fire fighting across borders and similar. If it was the problem with drought and water supplies in Cyprus, it was the problem of electricity in Kalimantan. People were unhappy with the border, slicing into their lives and making commerce and day-to-day life difficult. What irked them particularly was the border's administration by a remote government and through non-compassionate and non-local military personnel. Other than that, a large part of the interviews was taken up by a discussion of prices of goods and utilities in both countries and ways to make life easier despite the border.

In particular, one interview stood out, with the village elder, Nugen. When we first arrived at his house, he was just coming in from the forest, having cut some bamboo. He gave the impression as somebody who was well grounded and who is making the best of a difficult situation. People around him deferred to him and were keen to seek his advice.

⁴ All interviews and additional information can be found here: <http://www.xjtlu.edu.cn/en/departments/academic-departments/english-culture-and-communication/research/border-studies-in-kalimantan>.

As many other men interviewed, he used to be an 'ojek rider', one of the people involved in bringing goods across the border on motorbikes. Before he took this job, he said, he did not really know there existed a border. They were free to cross the border until 1985 when a border post was erected. In commerce, he makes no difference between Malaysia and Indonesia and will sell where he gets the best price.

He remembers the land exchanges between Malaysians and Indonesians affected by the border and stated that the governments paid compensation. While this is no apparent problem to him, he does state that other villagers were less forgiving of this process and still claim village ancestral lands on both sides of the border. He categorically states the oneness of Malaysian and Indonesian local culture and states that there has never been any trouble at the border. He does regret that the villagers cannot send their children to Malaysia for schooling as schooling in Malaysia is free, but only to citizens. Especially secondary schools are closer on the Malaysian side than on the Indonesian one, making the journey appreciatively longer for village school children.

The biggest festival in the village is Thanksgiving. On this occasion, friends and relatives from the villages across the border are invited to participate and that they do. Nugen is very interested in having good relations with the villagers across the border and seeks to defuse any tensions.

His posture during the interview is relaxed, he answers questions with little hesitation and it is clear that he has a leading role in the village. He does not focus on individual bad events, but paints a picture of a village caught up in big politics but coping with the fallout. He is future oriented, but advises his fellow villagers not to lose their roots and to not move away to the cities, no matter whether in Malaysia or in Indonesia: "I advise the people to not sell their land if they want to have a better life." Here he is all Village Chief and, against his own advice, values local customs higher than financial benefits in the city.

It is also clear that the border is a partitioning device, but on a local level, there is little evidence that such a device is working on an ideological level; day-to-day events, exchange rates and border patrols weigh heavier on people's minds than the question of Malaysian or Indonesian identities. If at all, the Indonesian soldiers rotated in to guard the border are at times seen as the intruders and not the people from the other side of the border.

5. Conclusion

The series of interviews undertaken aimed at providing an up-to-date snapshot of Cypriots and Kalimantan inhabitants and the interviewees' views on the past and its relevance for the present. From the four interviews discussed above, it became clear that all three individuals were and still are affected by the events of the 1960s and 1970s and that while individual composure has been achieved, closure on the other hand, individually, communally or bi-communally, has not. The remaining interviews speak to the same fact: all Cypriot respondents agree that the status quo is untenable (unless one, like Ali, uses most of one's intellectual defences to expunge politics) and in need of

change. In Borneo, the attitude towards the border is more relaxed. It does not appear to hold an ideological thrall over villagers as it does in Cyprus. People have learned to live with it.

For the interviewers in Cyprus, in both cases they became better able to appreciate the fraught process of reconciliation and normalisation when they were introduced to individualised life stories [Linde, 1983 ; Frank, 1995], not only from their own community but from the ‘others’ as well, thus creating a different perspective from the official records on both sides.

The interviews conducted during this project made it clear that much of the Cypriot memory and identity research work is still going on and that the Indonesian work has just begun. In Cyprus, all respondents were trying to make sense of their own identity vis-a-vis the general political situation in returning to individualised events in their pasts. As there are other ongoing projects scattered across the island, OH has of recent times, become an important tool in working through memories and collecting them. In Kalimantan, this process is not as advance, but in both cases the next task will be to provide a more centralised way of accessing all these diverse interviews and thus making it easier for future researchers to evaluate this much needed material. It is important to involve the next generations, as they will become the guardians of this knowledge and should be given as many narrations as possible to evaluate [Meyerhoff, 1992 ; Baldwin et al., 1990]. Due to the technology available today, especially video equipment and easy storage facilities, this job is becoming easier as time goes by. Yet, more training, motivational discourse and institutional support are all still required in order to get projects such as the current ones off the ground, a task the EU, UN and national governmental and non-governmental institutions [UK Oral History Society ; US Oral History Association] all need to work on together in order to provide the grounds for success.

Such projects can be proposed and conducted in many places. With technological developments advancing, such undertakings have become easier to manage and although some training is necessary, this can be effected with relative ease. Technological developments have also allowed for these project to be run and owned locally while still allowing for global exposure. Lastly, the border between Russia and China is a strong candidate for such work and indeed some of it has already been undertaken, e.g. by Anna Zabiyako from the Amur State University. It is hoped that many more such projects will follow.

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The videos of the Cypriot interviews are available from September 2016 at <http://www.xjtlu.edu.cn/en/departments/academic-departments/english-culture-and-communication/research/border-studies-in-kalimantan>. Should you have trouble with these, please email me (holger.briel@xjtlu.edu.cn).

APPENDIX I

Borderlands Project Sample questions (generated by the Workshop Group, Kuching, Feb. 2014) Written responses 1–3

Questions	Answers
a) What are your earliest memories of the border?	a) Seeing logo of Republic of Indonesia, Garuda b) Immigration building during my trip to Pontianak by bus via Tebedu c) Not much: I never feel Serikin as the border
b) What did your parents/older people tell you about the border?	a) Small stalls and cheaper price sold by Indonesian people b) Hygiene c) Warned me to beware of strangers, take care of won belonging and not to bring along many valuable things.
c) Have you ever crossed the border and if yes, for what purpose? Where and how do you usually cross the border?	a) Yes, to buy things, e.g. cloth/clothes at Tebedu by car. b) Yes, by bus on vacation c) Yes, to Pontianak by bus for a visit
d) Does the border have an impact on your life? If yes, how?	a) No b) Yes, new experience and eye opening c) No
e) Do you have relatives across the border? Do any of your friends/neighbours have?	a) Yes. Friends. b) No c) No. However, my friend have some relatives
f) How do you get your information about what is going on on the other side of the border?	a) From village people nearby b) Just following a tour guide organized by my in-law c) From the newspaper
g) How do you feel when you are on the other side? Have you had problems on the other side? Do you know of people who have had problems?	a) The language is different a little bit and also money exchange b) Yes, my wife: Hygiene (WC) language, living standards c) Normal except for the language difference
h) If people cross the border, what are they likely to purchase? How safe is cross-border trade?	a) To buy clothes, household. Safe enough b) Cheaper local products; imitated products; pretty safe c) I bought Baju Kebaya and hat and others buy imitated bags, clothes etc.: safe

APPENDIX I**Borderlands Project****Sample questions (generated by the Workshop Group, Kuching, Feb. 2014)
Written responses 1–3 (continuation)**

i) Do you own property across the border?	a) No b) No c) No
j) Can you imagine a relationship with somebody across the border?	a) No b) Yes, not going to be easy and successful c) No
k) The idea of a borderless world vs. - nationalism - can they coexist peacefully?	a) No idea b) Cannot c) cannot
l) How do you hope the border will look like in 20-year time?	a) No idea b) More controlled c) More advanced, cleaner, more organised

APPENIDX II**Borderlands Project PONTIANAK - INDONESIA****Sample questions****Written interview 1**

What are your earliest memories of the border?

I am not sure if I have earliest memories of the border. As my life is mostly far away from the border, I also did not have too much interest in it before. I only got close to the border when I and some friends conducted the border blogger movement program in the middle of 2011. That program was established to empower the border people to sharpen their awareness about their life by sharing their life story through web blogs.

What did your parents/older people tell you about the border?

From my source of information, there were no borders between Indonesia-Kalimantan and Sarawak-Malaysia a long time ago. There was only one people, a sub-ethnicity of the Dayak, living in both in Kalimantan and Sarawak. But after that, the line across the country made them separate.

Have you ever crossed the border and if yes, for what purpose? Where and how do you usually cross the border?

Yes. Some friends and I crossed the border to meet our Malaysian friend and we spent our relaxed time in a small restaurant in the Sarawak area, near the border. We crossed the border in Entikong in the Sanggau district, one of the formal borders between Kalimantan and Sarawak Malaysia.

Does the border have an impact on your life? Which?

Yes. I recently became more interested in borderland life. It's so unique, challenging, and beautiful. Many different ways of life can be find on the border. Also, we hear from its people about how they understand the "nation"

concept. People who live on the border are more reachable by the Malaysian services instead of their own country's. For examples: Indonesians who live across the border have it easier to consume many Malaysian products, such as foods, but also services such as hospitals, education, radio and television. It is caused by the long distance of their village from the capital city of their district, province, even country.

Do you have relatives across the border? Do any of your friends/neighbours have?

Yes, I have some friends who live on the border.

How do you get your information about what is going on on the other side of the border?

I get the information from many media: internet, mobile phone connection, and sometimes I get it directly from person-to-person talks.

How do you feel when you are on the other side? Have you had problems on the other side? Do you know of people who have had problems?

If I were living on the border, that would be so challenging! Maybe I will see a new life that I never imagined before! Many people I asked always told me about their problems. Especially difficult to access government services such as health, educational, infrastructures, etc. services.

If people cross the border, what are they likely to purchase? How safe is cross-border trade?

Which border that you mean? There are formal and informal borders between Kalimantan-Indonesia and Sarawak-Malaysia. People become easier to establish the trade in the formal border, but they have to be more careful if trading via the non-formal border, that is illegal but they are looking for a better life!

Do you own property across the border?

No, I don't.

Can you imagine a relationship with somebody across the border?

Yes. I have some friends on the border. No problems with the relation, we can build our communication via the cellular phone and internet.

The idea of a borderless world vs. – nationalism – can they coexist peacefully?

Yes, if the government always tries to empower the people there. But if the government never gives it attention, nationalism is only a joke!

How do you hope the border will look like in 20 years time?

Become a modern border!