

THE ROLE OF SEMI-PUBLIC SPACES OF EATING- DRINKING ESTABLISHMENTS IN THE COMMUNITY LIFE OF CYPRIOT MARONITES FACING EXTINCTION (1)

Eliz ERDENİZCİ* and Uğur Ulaş DAĞLI**

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PREFACE

The Cypriot Maronites are an ethnic minority community living on the island of Cyprus since the medieval period and have origins in Lebanon (Hourani, 1998). Because Cyprus has a long intractable conflict with a contested history that includes war, ethnic and territorial divisions, and population displacements (Trimikliniotis and Bozkurt, 2012), minority communities like the Maronites suffered negative consequences and were caught in the middle of ethnic conflict. The Island's division in 1974 had severe consequences for minority rights (Louzides et al., 2017), forcing minority communities to formally belong to predominating Greek-Cypriot or Turkish-Cypriot societies (Constantinou, 2008). This caused the majority of the Maronite population to flee to the south and become integrated with Greek-Cypriot society in terms of education, mixed marriages, and the use of language (Varnava, 2010). The community is socially, politically, and legally marginalized and completely reliant on others (Bryant and Hatay, 2020). A small group of people remained in their ancestral land of Kormakiti village, under the Turkish-Cypriot administration, located on the west coast of the northern part of Cyprus (**Figure 1**). In time, with the younger generation's increasing assimilation into Greek-Cypriot culture, the remaining community in Kormakiti village, which mostly consists of the elderly population, began to face extinction, and anxieties increased that there would be no future for the Cypriot Maronites. Villagers have expressed that the deaths of current residents of Kormakiti village will lead to the total collapse of the community.

"In the end, there will be nobody left in the village, and this is a very sad thing because the old people are the ones that maintain our traditions. Their deaths mean the end of our community, our roots, and our culture. If things stay the same, we really do not see a way out. We need to change the current situation, but this is not a situation that can be changed individually. It has to be done collectively, at all levels." (P12, Local customer)

* Corresponding Author; Eastern Mediterranean University, Famagusta, CYPRUS.

** Eastern Mediterranean University, Famagusta, CYPRUS.



Figure 1. The location of Kormakiti village on Cyprus map ((All figures in this paper belong to Eliz Erdenizci unless stated otherwise)

With the partial opening of barricades in 2003, allowing the movement of Cypriots between north and south, more Maronites returned to Kormakiti village. However, this was not sufficient to become re-united again since the dispersal of the community caused the loss of the village's powerful status. As a consequence of the island's political contest, the remaining Maronites in the village faced struggles and a sense of responsibility to preserve their roots and identities.

In the midst of uncertainties, semi-public eating-drinking establishments in the village turned into famous destinations for visitors, while the efforts of the managers appeared in the press, and they even became representatives, helping to raise the voices of Maronites and their struggles for existence. For instance, the manager of one establishment received a Female Entrepreneur Award for her contributions to the region (Kıbrıs Gazetesi, 2016). With the aim of contributing to discussions on semi-public spaces, this research highlights the comprehensive role of semi-public establishments in creating a continued presence for an endangering community.

INTRODUCTION

In this article, we focus on the role of local eating and drinking establishments for an endangering community, with an emphasis on the neighborhood restaurant and coffeehouse that behave as semi-public spaces, more of a border-zone, where public and private meet and lines between them are constantly renegotiated. We study semi-public spaces of establishments that are privately owned, but take the form of public space through their usage and demand attention as they have significantly evolved into symbols and communicative mediums of the Maronite community, helping locals to connect and raise public awareness of their threatened existence.

Scholars have long examined the role of semi-public commercial establishments such as restaurants (Cheang, 2002), coffeehouses (Waxman, 2006; Woldoff et al., 2013), cafes (Jones et al., 2015), to capture the complexity of these spaces. They have been argued to be total social facts (Beriss and Sutton, 2007) that embody overlapping layers of social relations

and serve as fascinating locations for examining the locally configured diversity. The spaces of eating and drinking establishments have been presented as community centers or neighborhood institutions (Zukin, 1995), being unique places in themselves, while attending these spaces is claimed to be much like an exploration of everyday encounters (Jones et al., 2015), as well as a means of keeping in touch with reality (Oldenburg and Brissett, 1982).

Many studies have shown the importance of social interaction in these establishments (Hickman, 2012; Oldenburg and Brissett, 1982), providing an opportunity for sociability, community engagement, emotional well-being (Dupuis and Smale, 1995; Patterson, 1996; Zimmer and Lin, 1996) and expressiveness (Jeffres et al., 2009; Mannell and Kleiber, 1997), as well as enhancing the sense of community (Oldenburg R., 1989; Erickson, 2009) and sustaining social and emotional support (Rosenbaum, 2006). By being locations beyond home and work (Oldenburg R., 2001), they are considered as part of the constructed environment with an important role in contributing to people's living conditions (Das, 2008).

Besides social and emotional components, these spaces have the potential to mirror unique values, cultures, and collective and individual behaviors (Berman, 1986). Respectively, Zukin (1995, 156-9) frames these spaces as both theatre and performance, placing specific cultural expressions and meanings in the restaurant environments. Similar to Hannah Arendt's (1958) view of public spaces as spaces of appearance, physical spaces that act as venues of expression, semi-public establishments may also evolve into potential expressive and communicative platforms in anchoring and labelling distinct meanings in different societies, places, and times (Sammells and Searles, 2016; Erickson, 2009; Beriss and Sutton, 2007). Extending on this, semi-public environments are identified as distinct sites where private lives collide with public performance and are shaped by their connection to larger cultural, political, and historical processes.

While this research tends to understand the role of local eating and drinking establishments and their specific meanings in the community life of Maronites, it focuses on the daily encounters within the interiors and highlights the richness of local semi-public establishments and their potential contribution to the collective well-being of the community. Therefore, the research accepts the interior as the venue where the real drama is played out to examine the role of semi-public spaces of establishments in the Maronite community's struggle for existence.

METHOD, DATA COLLECTION, AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of the study is to explore the role of semi-public eating and drinking establishments as important mediums in the Maronite community's struggle for existence. To gain an understanding of the stated issue, it was necessary to understand what was happening in these spaces, as well as their significance to the participants and community. As Kormakiti is a very small village, there are only two restaurants and one coffeehouse located in the main square of the village. The study takes place in three establishments, which are locally owned semi-public zones, contributing to the community's conditions of living. In light of the research objective, the study systematically focuses on the routine, everyday encounters of managers and customers in these spaces. It involves a naturalistic and interpretive approach by observing the

situation in its natural setting and labeling the role and meaning of the establishments for the individuals and community. To do so, a qualitative research approach (Creswell, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 2017) is adopted by using the grounded theory analysis method (Bryant, 2017; Strauss and Corbin, 1998) to have a complete theoretical understanding of the role of semi-public establishments in community life.

Observation Sessions

According to Low et al. (2005) and Whyte (1980), observation is the primary method for studying public interaction and behavior in a certain place. In this study, observation is employed as one of the main data collection methods. First of all, the observation method helps to study social interactions within the spatial setting of the establishments, revealing everyday encounters and clarifying what is happening in these spaces (Lofland et al., 2006). Secondly, it uses this method to collect information on the physical characteristics of the interior settings of the establishments. Observation sessions took place in three establishments and lasted over 15 months. Each establishment is observed on a variety of days and times. Field notes were taken to outline interactions in these spaces, and photographs of the interior settings were captured for visual documentation. Observation sessions are also supported by interview sessions to get a deeper understanding of the stated issues.

Interview Sessions

To further understand the role of semi-public spaces of establishments held for the community's struggle for existence, semi-structured interviews are conducted with 48 participants in total: the managers of the establishments and 45 customers (25 local and 20 non-local). The interviews took place in the natural setting of the establishments, lasted approximately 45-60 minutes, and were recorded. The interviews consisted of several open-ended questions and were categorized into two; the first category addressed the managers' personal experiences, asking questions about their motives and spatial interventions in the interior setting of these spaces, and the second category questioned customers' experiences and thoughts about establishments, while we asked such questions as; how often are you in this place? How do you feel about gathering in this place? All the interviews were transcribed prior to data analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis conducted by the authors was organized to identify the clusters of meaning in line with the issues of the research. The coding technique of grounded theory analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) was used to analyze the data collected from observations and interviews.

Firstly, all data, including photographs as visual instruments, observation notes, and interview transcripts, is referred to line-by-line and used to build a general code tree. Secondly, all codes are compared and organized according to collected data, which involves the synthesis of the content. During the analysis, observations, interviews, and visuals revealed three broad themes that can be categorized as social, emotional, and physical dimensions, which appeared to be useful in classifying the role of establishments in the community life of Maronites (**Table 1**). Besides, it is observed that these themes are not working as three poles and appear more like intersected issues in contributing to the conditions of living in the village. The obtained themes are as follows:

	Concepts	Codes	Notes	
Social dimension	S1: Sources to reach out	S1.1	Attract and gather people together.	
		S1.2	Break the chain of isolation.	
		S1.3	Create public awareness and confirm the existence of the community.	
		S1.4	Enhance people's ability to understand the life of Maronites.	
Emotional dimension	S2: Performative presentation of managers' nurturing relations	S2.1	Acts of hospitality and creative use of space to communicate with customers.	
		S2.2	Intimacy between managers and customers facilitates social interaction and produces empathy between Turkish-Cypriots and Maronites.	
	E1: Emotional investments to ensure territorial survival	E1.1	Investing in the preservation of territorial existence and community continuity.	
		E1.2	Commitment to preserving what remains of ancestors.	
		E2: Support for emotional needs	E2.1	Maintain a productive daily routine.
			E2.2	Generate consistency and a sense of ownership.
Physical dimension	P1: Decorative practices	E2.3	Keep the community engaged while also meeting the need for companionship.	
		P1.1	Display of possessions fulfils the need for self-expression and is used to convey messages to customers.	
		P1.2	Served the purpose of preserving memories.	
		P1.3	Symbolic representations of the community.	

Table 1. Emerged themes, concepts and codes in the analysis

- Social dimension: establishments act as sources to reach people, create public awareness of the existence of the Maronite community on the island, and help to break the chain of isolation in the village. Performative presentations by managers also facilitate social interaction and nurture good relations between ethnically different communities.
- Emotional dimension: establishments have emotional value for the locals and can be perceived as emotional investments to ensure territorial survival together with supporting the emotional needs of the community.
- Physical dimension: establishments are symbolically imbued physical spaces with their purposely-decorative practices, where physical features are used as a non-verbal communication to fulfill the need for expression.

FINDINGS

Sources to Reach Out

Living an enclave life for years and having no integration with Turkish-Cypriot society created a situation of isolation and loneliness for the Maronite community. At this point, semi-public spaces of establishments evolved into important sources to reach people and break the chain of isolation by attracting visitors to the village, which then allowed the community to create public awareness of their existence on the island.

“At the beginning, people thought we were Greek. They were not aware of the Maronites on the island. We had to put in an effort to explain who we are, our roots, and the culture to which we belong.” (P1, Manager of Establishment 1)

During the interviews, the manager of Establishment 1 expressed the hardest part as being people's ignorance of the Maronites' existence on the island. Yet, the situation has changed in time through the active role of establishments, gathering people together with different backgrounds in the village. For instance, it is observed that establishments have a broad

spectrum of customers, including Turkish-Cypriot families, politicians, state officials, tourists, as well as organized tours by cyclists, walking and hiking groups, who stop over, sit and socialize with the locals. According to collected data, establishments allow customers with limited ties to the community to engage with the locals and recognize their existence and ongoing community-led struggles. Respectively, customers described establishments as symbols of community and important platforms, enhancing their ability to understand the life of Maronites.

“This place makes us remember the Maronites, who lived in Cyprus just like other societies and whose existence we have forgotten, perhaps knowingly or unintentionally.” (P19, Non-local customer)

“This restaurant helped many people become aware of the existence of Maronites on the island. The owner put a lot of effort into transforming this place into something beyond a restaurant, a symbol of her community. Thanks to her, we got to know Maronites and their struggles better.” (P28, Non-local customer)

“The restaurant is a very popular place, and I think it is the symbol of Kormakiti. As soon as you step inside, you understand that this is a family restaurant, preserving traditions. You can experience the unique Maronite culture here, which is not completely unfamiliar to us. I got to learn a lot here about the lives of Maronites” (P25, Non-local customer)

“Before we came here, we did not know much about the Maronites and their struggles. They told us about the village and its story. We organize walking and cycling tours here. Our main stopping point is the coffeehouse. It presents the coffee culture dating back many years in a nostalgic atmosphere. Sitting here feels like going back to old times. It gives you a chance to see the daily life of the old Maronites and their togetherness as a community.” (P38, Non-local customer)

Performative Presentation of Managers’ Nurturing Relations

During the observation sessions, the ways in which managers perform and treat customers are found to be radically different than ordinary patterns of dining out. It is observed that establishments’ contributions to attracting people to the village not only come from the quality of food they serve; but are also affected by the performative presentation of managers in terms of the acts of hospitality and the creative use of space to communicate with customers.

For instance, in Establishment 1, the sharp lines between the restaurant staff and customers are highly blurred, and there is a constant renegotiation of the lines between public and private realms due to intimacy between manager and customer. It is seen that the manager welcomes everybody, not just ordinary customers, as if a friend comes to her house, and sometimes sits and chats with the customers. The manager’s ability to speak multiple languages, including Greek, English, and Turkish, also helps to build good relations with everyone.

“The manager’s affinity with Turkish-Cypriots has made this restaurant a symbol that brings Turkish Cypriots closer to Maronites. Although it is not architecturally striking, it embraces Turkish-Cypriot customers with its warm atmosphere. Because of this, many Turkish-Cypriot authorities are more sensitive to problems of the community” (P16, Non-local customer).

Similarly, in Establishment 2, the manager occupies the role of a friend, and the restaurant serves as her own kitchen, with a menu filled with the traditional recipes passed down from her mother. The restaurant has an open kitchen, and its spatial organization allows the manager to chat while

she cooks, facilitating social interaction with the customers. She translates the dishes for tourists, giving them knowledge of the local cooks, and persuades people to eat more, combining commercial establishments with the intimacies of domestic cooking. Family members and her friends eat in the same place as the customers, and they flawlessly transform themselves from diners to staff, blurring the lines between staff and customers, as well as friends and customers. Her intimacy with customers was not limited to their food preferences, as she engaged them in conversations about life in the village, difficulties, community struggles, families, and other topics beyond their orders.

“You can experience an incredible food culture and hospitality. The manager is an incredibly sweet person. It is like she is welcoming you to her home, rather than a restaurant. You can feel the warm, homely atmosphere here.”
(P24, Non-local customer)

The managers were observed to be the representatives of their community, and their performed acts of hospitality had a positive impact on the customers and in the long term, allowed deepening inter-cultural relations between Turkish-Cypriots and Maronites. Turkish-Cypriots felt a sense of responsibility as a result of their empathy and assisted villagers in resolving specific issues in the village. The managers expressed that customers listened to the problems of the villagers and contributed to the solution of infrastructure problems.

“I have many customers who have become my friends now, including politicians, state officials, teachers, housewives, etc. The majority of my friends are Turkish-Cypriots. Many of them supported us in easing the difficulties we have experienced. Life was much harder before. In order to leave the village, we had to get permission from the police. It was not easy to bring meat here, even water. It was very difficult to access ordinary necessities that should not be a problem.” (P1, Manager of Establishment 1)

“There are many people out there who really listen to our problems and help us. We used to have a lot of infrastructure issues, and they have helped us with some repair and maintenance work. Conditions have improved compared to the past.” (P3, Manager of Establishment 3)

Data show that the act of eating together and ritually expressing what is held and shared in common transformed establishments from a place of consumption to a place of community development, where managers worked hard to raise collective voice and express themselves by incorporating social, political, and everyday issues within the establishments. Thence, establishments properly introduced Maronites and their struggle to customers, especially Turkish-Cypriots, who were not really aware of the living conditions of the community until they had first eaten together and created social bonds with each other.

Emotional Investment to Ensure Territorial Survival

Besides the social attributes, establishments have emotional value for the managers and can be perceived as emotional investment concerned about the preservation of the continuity of the community. According to the statements of the managers, the current situation generates moral pressures and insecurities for the locals, and doing business in the village is explained as a risky attempt because of the ongoing uncertainty about the future of the community. Still, managers expressed that they would try their best to remain in the village.

“My daughter even told me not to invest that much money here. She said, “Mom, why are you spending your money here?” I said, “no, I will.” I spent

all my financial savings to renovate the building. Of course, I have worries too, but we are a small group, and we have to be together.” (P2, Manager of Establishment 2)

Establishments are not only emotional investments to remain in the village but also a commitment to protect what has been left by their ancestors. For instance, Establishment 1 is a family restaurant and it was first opened as a butchery by the manager’s father, who was one of the pillars of the Maronite community (Duzgun, 2015). When he passed away, his daughter continued to operate the establishment with a desire to protect what had been left by her father, and over time, the establishment grew and reached out to more people by leaving positive impressions on customers.

“Something has always kept and attracted me here. I wanted to remain here because as a community, we want to protect what is left us by our elders and teach Maronite culture and traditions to new generations.” (P1, Manager of Establishment 1)

Moreover, Establishment 2 has a unique story of being the manager’s childhood home and being transformed into a semi-public establishment to contribute to the local economy and community maintenance. Hence, establishments have important links with the managers’ past and family history, illustrating their emotional bond with the place.

“I was born and grew up in Kormakiti. And I’d like to stay here until the end of my life. Sometimes I have nightmares that someone will knock on my door and tell me to leave this place. We faced and are still facing many difficulties, but we want to be here... We want to protect our land. We love our village. Kormakiti is like oxygen to our bodies... When my father was alive, I promised him that I would do great and exciting things for the village... Finding a way to bring people from different cultures to the village is a source of pride and joy for me. It is more than a financial investment; we can show our presence, and existence as a community. Despite all the difficulties, I am happy that I was able to achieve this. I kept my promise.” (P2, Manager of Establishment 2)

Support for Emotional Needs

Since the majority of the village population is retired, establishments provide spaces to maintain a productive daily routine and allow locals to get out of the house, feel social, and somewhat confirm their existence as a community. Establishments generate consistency and familiarity for local retirees who reliably seek out everyday activities, saying that they do not have much to do during the day.

“Most of us are old and retired people. We don’t have much energy to do a lot during the day. Coming here is a reason to get out of the house. You can clear your mind.” (P40, Local customer)

In particular, Establishment 3 is observed as the daily meeting spot (**Figure 2**), where local customers spend a lengthy time coming together to socialize and see each other, allowing daily routines to have a social component. Chat, coffee, and card games are described as the kinds of leisure activities by villagers.

“I come here every day. I like to meet friends. Most of us are retired; we do not have much to do. We come here to chat, drink coffee, and sometimes play card games.” (P17, Local customer)

“We are a small community; everybody knows each other, everybody is a friend, and everybody is a neighbor to each other. We like to get together and spend time here. I drink my morning coffee here every day. Drinking



Figure 2. Establishment 3 - daily meeting spot for locals

together with friends while chatting is more delightful.” (P33, Local customer)

The incidents reveal that establishments play a big part in locals’ social lives, satisfy the companionship needs of older-aged consumers, and serve an important role by keeping the community engaged at any hour of the day. For the locals, establishments easily switch from being places of consumption to being everyday places where they engage in fun and play. Moreover, locals’ ritualized use of the establishments illustrates a sense of ownership over the spaces, such as easily moving their seats around, combining tables to accommodate conversations or playing card games, or walking behind to the kitchen side to give their orders.

Interiors and Decorative Practices

In the interior spaces of establishments, decorative practices are majorly used as powerful expressions, and the decisions about how to spatially organize the establishments are as much a part of the managers’ effort to present the community to customers. In doing this, interiors are used as the container of collective and personal traces and are filled with symbolic representations of the community.

In Establishment 1, the first thing that caught the attention was the display of possessions hanging on the yellow-colored walls. Photographs, visual art, and objects cover almost every corner of the interior (Figure 3). Besides the photographs of the manager’s family members, which work as the tangible form of her memories, there are photographs of the manager with customers, such as state officials and local politicians, illustrating the good relations she developed with Turkish Cypriot officials. There are also photographs of leaders such as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the Republic of Turkey’s founding father, Charbel Makhlouf, a Lebanese Maronite saint, and Mehmet Ali Talat, a Turkish Cypriot politician and former

president of Northern Cyprus. These photographs symbolize the existence of a multiplicity of ethnic identities on the island, and by hanging them side-by-side, the manager illustrates the respect she has for everyone. While political symbols can act as signs of differentiation and opposition, in this case, they emphasize the shared context of ethnically different communities. As the Maronite community struggles for recognition on the island, the display of these photos, either memorable moments with the family or political figures, fulfills the manager's need for self-expression and serves to convey messages to the customers. Likewise, framed newspaper cuttings about the loss of the manager's father and other news about the family and the restaurant illustrate the establishment's contribution to raising the voice of Maronites in the Turkish-Cypriot press.

There were also various objects, including a small wooden plate with writing on it: 'This is my happy place' hung on the door frame, showing the manager's emotional bond with the place; evil eye beads in every size that are believed to be the protector against misfortune and bad luck happening in one's life hung on the interior walls; trophies placed on the shelves spoke about the communication of pride and collective achievements, as well as a bunch of candles for rituals, a cross sign, and the statue of Virgin Mary placed at the top of the fireplace, symbolically representing the ethnic origins and religious belief of the community (Figure 3).

In Establishment 2, decorative practices are used to serve the manager's purpose of preserving the memories inside, as the building used to be her childhood home. Gaston Bachelard (1994) suggested interior space as a repository of memories, and similarly, the manager interpreted interior spaces to keep her memories alive and to construct links with her past. Even though the building is not a house anymore, a homely, warm atmosphere is preserved in the interiors.

"Every building has its own story, and here I can see my childhood in every corner of it. It is no longer a house, but we wanted to protect the original



Figure 3. The interior of Establishment 1

elements as much as possible. I didn't want to wash away my memories. I am very happy to achieve this because we are a very small group left in the village, and I believe we have to protect what we currently have for the future of the community." (P2, Manager of Establishment 2)

Original features are preserved as much as possible by aesthetic treatments, matching the historical appearance of the building. For instance, new cover materials are used with respect to the original texture of the building, and old stone material is exposed on the interior walls (Figure 4), together with renewed old pieces of furniture (Figure 5). Black and white family photos hung on the walls also create a sense of nostalgia in the interior setting and act as a sort of sentimental thing, a trace of the manager's past (Figure 6). The painting of the manager's childhood home (Figure 4) illustrates the old appearance of the building, giving an idea of her efforts to reach this point. Thence, there is a combination of new and old, retaining the original style while adding new pieces to harmonize with historic layers.



Figure 4. The interior of Establishment 2



Figure 5. Renewed old pieces of furniture in Establishment 2



Figure 6. The display of black and white family photos in Establishment 2

Unlike establishments 1 and 2, the interior of Establishment 3 is filled with the collective traces of community rather than the manager's material representation of self. Even though the manager said she had lived her whole life in the village and mostly in the establishment, there are hardly any personal possessions on display in the interiors (**Figure 7**). Instead, the ethnocultural and religious identity of the community is represented through visual materials and objects, and they take various forms, such as photographs or posters depicting religious and political figures. The flag of Lebanon can be seen in various sizes around the interior space, reviving the roots of the community, and shelves are filled with trophies to illustrate collective achievements (**Figure 8**). Group identity is expressed through these possessions, and the interior of the establishment is encoded with material representations that give ideas about community history and ethnocultural background.

Thus, establishments with their interior settings go beyond being ordinary eating-drinking establishments and shift into spaces of expression, where decorative practices are creatively used to convey messages and to present community through material representations (**Table 2**). Varied possessions contained inside held messages of their own and fulfilled the need for expression by mirroring unique Maronite identity and culture, as well as serving the purpose of preserving memories



Figure 7. The interior of Establishment 3



Figure 8. The display of trophies, and political or religious figures in Establishment 3

	Concepts	Place	Observation notes	Code		
Physical dimension P1: Decorative practices	<p>P1.1 Display of possessions fulfils the need for self-expression and is used to convey messages to customers.</p> <p>P1.2 Served the purpose of preserving memories.</p> <p>P1.3 Symbolic representations of the community.</p>	Establishment 1	Photographs with customers, i.e., local politicians and state officials, illustrate good relations developed with the Turkish-Cypriot community.	P1.1		
			Photographs of political leaders symbolize the shared context and the existence of ethnically different communities on the island and show the manager's respect for everyone.	P1.1		
			Photographs of family members are the tangible forms of memories.	P1.2		
			Framed newspaper cuttings about the establishment illustrate the establishment's contribution to raising Maronites' voice in the Turkish Cypriot press.	P1.1		
			Objects symbolize the Maronite community's emotional bond with place, rituals, ethnic origins, and religious beliefs. Objects such as trophies serve to communicate pride and collective achievements.	P1.3		
			Establishment 2	Aesthetic treatments to preserve original features and match historical appearance, such as cover material selection with regard to original texture.	P1.2	
		Establishment 2		Black and white family photos create a sense of nostalgia and act as traces of the manager's past.	P1.2	
				The painting of the manager's childhood home is the tangible form of a memory, giving an idea about the manager's efforts to transform the building into a semi-public establishment.	P1.2	
				Establishment 3	Photographs and posters of political and religious figures symbolize the ethno-cultural and religious identity of the community, as well as express the existence of a multiplicity of ethnic identities on the island.	P1.3
				Flag of Lebanon, reviving the roots of the community.	P1.3	
				Objects symbolize the collective achievements (i.e., trophies), and ethnic origins of the community.	P1.3	

Table 2. Interiors staged with decorative practices

CONCLUSION

In this research, the aim was to investigate the role of semi-public spaces of eating-drinking establishments in the struggle for Maronite community existence. For decades, the community faced threats to the continued presence of their ethnic origins, and their particular experience evolved these establishments to serve as a means of keeping up and resisting community extinction. As the literature suggests semi-public spaces as community centers and institutions (Zukin, 1995), the establishments in

Kormakiti village eventually become community symbols that act beyond ordinary consumption spaces and contribute to the betterment of living conditions in the village.

As semi-public commercial establishments are argued to be total social phenomena (Beriss & Sutton, 2007) and sources of engagement (Oldenburg, 1999; Erickson, 2009) and emotional well-being (Dupuis and Smale, 1995; Patterson, 1996; Zimmer and Lin, 1996) or expressiveness (Jeffres et al., 2009; Mannell and Kleiber, 1997), the findings of this study resonate with these understandings and demonstrate that semi-public establishments function as repositories of social relationships and satisfy the emotional needs of the community. Data reveals that establishments are important sources of reaching people and create public awareness about the hardships of the Maronite community on the island. Managers' performative presentations, including the acts of hospitality and the use of space to communicate with customers, allow for positively valued engagement in these spaces and contribute to nurturing relations between Maronite and Turkish-Cypriot communities. Besides, incidents highlight the emotional value of these establishments as emotional investments to ensure their territorial existence and protect what remains of their ancestors while also meeting the companionship needs of the older-aged population.

Furthermore, the decisions about the physical features of the establishments are part of the managers' effort to present the community to the customers. In doing so, decorative practices are strongly implemented to materially represent the ethnocultural identities, religious beliefs, memories, and collective achievements of the community, as well as to convey other intended messages to customers, i.e., a hanging photograph of a Turkish leader as a gesture to Turkish-Cypriot customers. In this regard, the interiors of the establishments are used as active agents and are indicated as symbolically constructed environments responding to the needs of the expression.

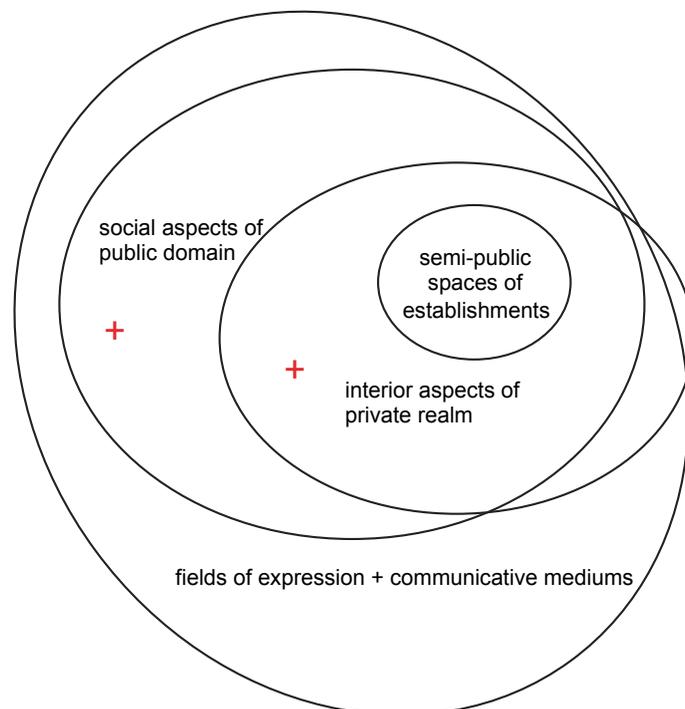


Figure 9. Proposed conceptual model of semi-public spaces of eating-drinking establishments in Kormakiti village

Thereupon, with social aspects of the public domain and interior aspects of the private realm, semi-public eating-drinking establishments in Kormakiti village turned into fields of expression and communicative mediums for the community (**Figure 9**). Alongside the blurred lines between public and private realms, this study highlights that the Maronite community creates their spaces of appearance through these establishments by socially, emotionally, and physically expressing themselves and reaching reciprocal understanding through communicative actions within these spaces.

Last but not least, this research also confirms the significance of local semi-public establishments as sites to be in touch with the reality of communities and underlines the importance of acknowledging everyday encounters in these spaces, which, in this case, become subject to deliberation and management of communal concerns to create a glimpse of hope for a community on the verge of extinction.

LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The findings of this research have to be seen in the light of particular limitations. The research is focused on the unique experience of an ethnic minority community, therefore, data was collected and verified at one site. Besides, local participants were older people with an average age of 65. Future research could, for instance, integrate the perspectives of the younger Maronite generation, who come to the village for short family visits and compare them with this study's results. It would also be interesting to involve other types of gathering places, as this research contextualized an argument for local eating-drinking establishments and their integral connection to community preservation.

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Anahtar Sözcükler: yarı-kamusal alan; yeme-içme mekanları; iç mekan; toplumsal yaşam; yok olmak üzere olan Kıbrıslı Maronitler topluluğu.

YARI-KAMUSAL YEME-İÇME MEKANLARININ YOK OLMAKTA OLAN KIBRIS MARONİTLERİNİN TOPLUMSAL YAŞAMINDAKİ ROLÜ

Makale, yarı-kamusal yeme-içme mekanlarının, gündelik iç mekan etkileşimlerine odaklanarak, toplumsal yaşam üzerindeki rollerini incelemektedir. Çalışma, yok olmak üzere olan ve benzersiz bir etnik azınlık topluluğuna dönüşen Kıbrıslı Maronitlerin, yarı-kamusal yeme-içme mekanları üzerinden toplumsal yok oluşa karşı direnişlerini, sosyal, duygusal ve fiziksel boyutları irdeleyerek analitik bir çerçevede sunmaktadır. Bu doğrultuda, yarı-kamusal mekanlar, yok olma tehlikesi altında olan azınlık bir topluluk için farkındalık ve toplumsal devamlılık

yaratma amacına hizmet eden, potansiyel alanlar olarak gözlemlenmiştir. Araştırma, nitel bir çalışma yöntemi olan temellendirilmiş kuram metodunu ele alarak, mekan işletmecileri, yerel ve diğer müşteriler ile derinlemesine yapılan röportaj ve gözlemlerle gerçekleştirmiştir. Çalışma sonuçları, bu yarı-kamusal mekânların, yeme-içme mekânı olmanın ötesinde sosyal ilişkileri barındıran, bireylerin ve Maronit topluluğunun kendini ifade edebilmesine olanak sağlayan, birer iletişimsel araca dönüştüğünü saptamaktadır.

THE ROLE OF SEMI-PUBLIC SPACES OF EATING-DRINKING ESTABLISHMENTS IN THE COMMUNITY LIFE OF CYPRIOT MARONITES FACING EXTINCTION

This paper examines the role of semi-public spaces of eating-drinking establishments in community life, attending to the everyday encounters within their interiors. The study focuses on the unique case of the Cypriot Maronites, which is an ethnic minority community on the verge of extinction, and presents an analytical framework addressing the social, emotional, and physical dimensions of semi-public spaces of establishments in resisting the total collapse of their community. Thus, establishments are observed as potential sites that serve the purpose of raising awareness and creating a continued presence for an endangered community. The research takes a qualitative approach with the grounded theory analysis method, utilizing observation sessions and in-depth interviews with managers and local and non-local customers of the establishments. Results indicate that these semi-public spaces of eating-drinking establishments function as repositories of social relations and have evolved into communicative mediums, fulfilling the needs for expression of individuals and community.

ELİZ ERDENİZCİ B. Int. Arch., M.Sc. PhD.

Received her bachelor's degree in interior architecture from Oxford Brookes University (2014). Received her master's degree in interior architecture and PhD. in architecture from Eastern Mediterranean University (2016-2022). Major research interests include, space-place studies, interior space, community well-being. elizerdenizci@gmail.com

UĞUR ULAŞ DAĞLI B.Arch., M.Arch, Ph.D.

Received her bachelor's degree in architecture from Istanbul Technical University (1988). Received her master's degree in architecture from Istanbul Technical University (1990). Earned her Ph.D. degree in architecture from Istanbul Technical University (1995). Major research interests include, architectural design, city culture, and Cyprus architecture. ugur.dagli@emu.edu.tr