(re)public fever (2013)

For the *Buffer Zone* residency at *Apartman Projesi*, Istanbul, *pick nick* tackles the "meaning" of buffer zones and/or borders not just as a "defining line" separating people on the basis of national identity, but as spatial and visual conditions where cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic boundaries are renegotiated. In this way, we became interested in looking for straddle lines of tension between what "is" and what is "hoped for". A widening way of approaching the issue of buffer zone is through other mechanisms, like gentrification, which work from above to divide and displace poorer and other local populations.

Looking a little closer at the particular type of gentrification processes, which take place in Istanbul, became a focal point of interest for us. The workshops provided a space in which to both observe and consider the forms of zoning regulations in the city. In this vein, we invited photographer, Hüseyin Yılmaz, to participate in the project with his recent documentary photography and videos, which zoom into personal sites and stories of people with different backgrounds – in terms of ethnicity, economic and social class, gender and sexual orientation – intensely effected by the imposed conditions of being temporarily suspended during long procedures of displacement.

While in Istanbul, we witnessed the emergence of a new socio-economic border in Cyprus. In the words of EU Commissioner for Economic Affairs, Olli Rehn, "the depth of the financial crisis in Cyprus means that the near future will be difficult for the country and its people". After the unfolding events which followed the implementation of the Troika "rescue" plans in Greece, Portugal, Spain and Ireland, we instantly witnessed vividly horrifying images of the near future: the decline of social welfare, the rampant rise of unemployment, thus poverty, the reinvention of extreme nationalisms, etc. *pick nick projects'* immediate reaction was to imagine what this might mean for the immediate future increase of multiple buffer zones in Cyprus.

Not long after our arrival to Cyprus, the workshops once again brought us into the feverish zones of new and old conflicts imposed by official powers, both local and international. However, a firsthand proliferating distrust of the public toward its own government opened up a very different public and political space from which to raise questions.

For us, this surfaced the right time to extend our efforts away from established approaches toward the ongoing unresolved national conflict, now layered with new austerity measures whose feverish consequences remain to be seen, and to refocus on possible shifts of perspectives rising from the Cyprus public.