



PRESS RELEASE

Nicosia, Cyprus
22th May, 2015

“Hands on Famagusta” Project Launches Web Platform www.handsonfamagusta.org

May 27th, 2015, 18.30

Home for Cooperation, Nicosia

Architects, urban designers, visual artists and planners, coming from areas across the divide, part of the “Hands-on Famaguta” project will launch the “Hands-on Famagusta” web platform at a public event from 18:30 till 22:00 on May 27th, 2015. The Hands on Famagusta project has been undertaken by the Imaginary Famagusta team together with Architecture Art and Urbanism (AA&U) and the Laboratory of Urbanism of the University of Cyprus (LU2CY). The interactive platform is **devoted to imagining a common urban future** for a unified Famagusta, paving the way for future collaboration and further cohabitations in a post-conflict Cyprus.

The public event will take place at the symbolically significant Home for Cooperation in Nicosia’s Buffer Zone. Guests will have the opportunity to hear from the “Hands On Famagusta” group as well as those who have been involved in the process and progress of the “Hands On Famagusta” project. They will also be able to explore the web-platform on computers that will be available at the venue. A cocktail party will follow.

The project leader, Socrates Stratis, noted that the team is “considering the public use of the webplatform extremely important in creating an alternative political practice based on the Civil Society. The webplatform users will come in contact with actors’ agendas regarding the common future of the city. They will navigate through alternative imageries of Famagusta produced by the project team. They should take a position regarding controversial matters about the city’s future. Finally, they could playfully create their Imaginary Famagusta”.

Stratis also emphasised that, within the scope of this project, “technology is not a tool that has a neutral value, but an active agent, which has a very important role to play in creating the “commons” for the Cypriot civil society.”

The Imaginary Famagusta members, who are the core of the initiative, have been working together informally for the last four years. Their initial aim was to establish a common understanding of the Famagustian territory (in collaboration with ALA Planning Partnership), which is at the moment a juxtaposition of enclaves or isolated urban areas, blocking a future unified vision of the city. By engaging multiple stakeholders, they have developed new imageries about the entire territory of Famagusta and ways to end its extreme fragmentation.

The focus of Hands On Famagusta is to empower Cypriot civil society to become an active agent in the creation of Cyprus’ “commons” through the urban transformation processes for a unified Famagusta. As such, it has produced several major tools to facilitate the ongoing

The “Hands-On Famagusta” Project
by Imaginary Famagusta, AA & U and LU²CY



public debate. In addition to the website, they include: (1) Debate platforms that have included a series of workshops, consultation meetings and public presentations since June 2014; (2) a mobile physical model of the city in its entirety which will assist Famagustians and others to visualize the city as a whole rather than fragmented territories based on ethnic division; (3) a publication to be finalized by the end of 2015 that brings together the project activities with their theoretical and methodological underpinnings ; and (4) a survey of over 470 Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot Famagustians based on personal interviews conducted on both sides of the divide (by Nektarios Christodoulou_ LU²CY).

The activities of Hands on Famagusta have been made possible with the support of USAID. The creation of the Hands On Famagusta platform was supported by UNDP-ACT through Mahallae. All Hands-on Famagusta Activities are supported in-kind by the University of Cyprus The November 2014 Hands on Famagusta Workshop was kindly hosted by the Goethe Institute and May 27th public presentation event is kindly hosted by the Home for Cooperation.

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AA&U (Architecture, Art and Urbanism)

LU²CY (Laboratory of Urbanism, University of Cyprus)

Webplatform development by LightBlack

Webplatform Graphic Design by AA&U

More information about the project can be found at:

<https://www.facebook.com/handsonfamagusta>

<http://mahallae.org/challenge-idea/hands-famagusta>

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