Physical models, *maquettes*, are agents of liminal space-time conditions. They are “here” but they point “there”, they are “now” but they refer to “then”.¹ Physical models that depict cities enlarge the liminal space-time conditions. In the hands of city or state authorities, they become agents of consolidation for dominant power structures acting on city territories. We can find them in the foyers of most of the city authorities’ buildings, demonstrating the capacity of the city actors to make projections for, and thus to control, the future of the city. The city models are usually about existing city parts juxtaposed with the forthcoming ones. By dislocating the user from ground level navigation to a bird’s eye panoramic view, they exaggerate the illusion of control over territoriality, as well as mask realities on the ground. We can find them in various scales, usually sitting on robust fixed bases, covered by protective plexiglass cases. We quite often admire their craftsmanship and the capacity of the city institutions to collect and depict, through an object, all the data needed to evoke the physical aspects of the city.

The Greek Cypriot municipality of Famagusta has a physical model of the city, located on the second floor of the city cultural center in Derynia, situated south of Famagusta, just off the United Nations buffer zone. The Turkish Cypriot municipality of Famagusta does not have any model, neither the rest of the Cypriot cities across the divide.

Notes
In Cypriot cities, dominated by “laisser faire” urbanism, the role of local authorities in urban development is minimal and the availability of updated data is scarce. Even more so, in contested spaces data generating is a political tool that serves dominant divisive narratives. The model in Derynia depicts the city as frozen back in 1974 when the Greek Cypriots were forced to leave Famagusta. It portrays mainly the fenced-off part of the city, as well as the historical city within the medieval fortifications, where the Turkish Cypriots found a refuge from 1963 to 1974. When we look carefully at the depicted fenced-off part of the city, we can see tiny light lamps that blink every time you touch the corresponding button on the model’s base. They are points of reference of public and collective importance for the Greek Cypriot Famagustians back in 1974. In fact, this model is a device of recollection for lost territories. It is a memory representation taking over the subject, that of Famagustian territory. The reference to “then” for this model, is a frozen past overwhelming an absent present.

The making of the city model by the “Hands-on Famagusta” project team wants to introduce an alternative political debate about the future of the city through the rediscovery of the present of the city. The team benefits from the liminal space–time slots between “here” and “there”, between “now” and “then”. Instead of visually consolidating existing power structures on the city territories either through projecting or remembering, the “Hands-on Famagusta” model problematizes, as in the case of the counter mapped isometric drawing (see in this Guide the story by Stratis, Constantinou, Akbil “Counter mapped isometric drawing”, pp. 116-131).
However, it takes a diametrically different approach; instead of representing the multiple urban fragments as a way to overcome the dichotomy of the city, it represents a continuum of extensive landscapes consisting of built and non-built areas.

The Famagustan model is not about “there” as a projected object of the city in the future, but about “here” as projected processes for creating common concerns to the Cypriots, about the present of the city. It enhances the emergence of temporal communities by encouraging the readjustment of their mental maps. Such approach alludes to counter modeling practice, paraphrasing the counter mapping practice (see in this Guide the story by Stratis Constantinou, Akbil “Counter mapped isometric drawing”, pp. 116-131). In other words, it is about processes that take place in liminal time-space slots aiming for the construction of common mental geographies across the divide. A common mental geography may not suppress the narrative of the ethnic conflict, imprinted on space but it may suggest an alternative reading of the territory.

The construction of the model of Famagusta is a suggestion for the creation of such common mental geography. The territory is represented through the model, with a spatial accuracy: each building, each road infrastructure, various landscape patterns, the sea and the two rivers delta, the old city walls, and the port. However, despite its accuracy, the model “lies”. The “lie” is inherent in the model as depiction of “there”, but intentional as an object “here”. By default, a 1:2500 scale model masks ground information: walls, fences, barricades, army boards, political signs, and segregated areas. Intentionally, though, this detail abstraction allows the model to allude to a grand paysage, a continuum, as we already mentioned. The model represents a territory as a whole, a place “here” where to depart for imagining a common future and the urban controversies to confront (see in this Guide the story by Akbil “Transformative themes: advocating for commons that act across divided territories”, pp. 166-195).
Figs. 6, 7 Detailed views of the Famagusta city model
Such counter modeling practice is an alternative political statement. It confronts the idea of Famagusta being the next divided city in Europe, by offering “there” as a unifying territory of common concern.

The alternative political statement extends, in fact, along the process of making the city model, of transporting it, of displaying it, of making it public: collectives regularly sharing information, collaborating and discussing issues relevant to the model production. The process of model-making in parallel becomes public through the “Hands-on Famagusta” website, and social networks. The public interest appeared from the beginning of the process. Various initiatives and individuals contact the project team to find more information. The media interest in the project increases: “The Model of the City of Famagusta!” becomes headline news, inviting the team members for TV and newspaper interviews. For the team members, the media friendliness of the model is a *Trojan horse* to make alternative public narratives, to claim a role for civil society in the future of the city. The announcement of the launch event of the model in November 2015 got the same public attention, becoming another tactic of the project team to invite Cypriots to join in the public debate.

In the middle of Saints Paul and Peter Cathedral, in the old city of Famagusta, the model of the whole region of Famagusta is set. It consists of 20 pieces, 55cm X 85cm each, covering an area of 5.5m X 1.70m. Each piece is made of a light cardboard base depicting the rather flat city landscape. On top, there are white tiny plastic 3D printed urban blocks. 20 model pieces sit on 5 foldable aluminium stands, making the whole transporting operation quite easy. At the two sides of the model, there are two computer screens with videos about the use of the web platform. They sit on two bases made of four polycarbonate cases which serve as the storage of the model.
The overwhelming presence of the city model is enhanced by the imposing atmosphere of the Cathedral. Lights are off, and a visual projection on the model starts. Letters are projected one by one on the model and a sentence appears: “What if you could decide now about the future of Famagusta in a reunified Cyprus?” It fades and a second sentence appears: “Then join us in creating a common imaginary Famagusta for all Cypriots”, followed by a shuffle of different projections focusing on different spots on the model, surfaces extending along different spatial environments. People are surrounding the model, walking around, changing their position, going closer and again further, pausing in different spots, and then again in other. Many are trying to orientate themselves in relation to the model, in reference to their memories and knowledge of the actual environment. They are pointing to it, speaking to each other for help for orientation, or for affirmation of the model’s accuracy, or even for figuring out the model’s materiality and method of production. The projections are making the experience much more intriguing, fostering a movement of the bodies, of the gaze, of the discussions. The model is the protagonist together with the temporal collective it generates: A collective which is composed of different bodies. Each new position, each new gaze, and each new discussion of these bodies is a re-appropriation of the model, a construction of a new orientation, a new mental geography, and a new challenge to think about the future of the city.

In contrast to the usage of city model as agent of consolidating dominating power structures onto territories, in the hands of municipality or state authorities, this is a practice of city model as agent of confronting dominating power structures of ethnic division, in the hands of collective initiatives. The model of Famagusta has become an interface for articulating arguments around controversial matters in regards to the city’s future, hoping to influence divisive bureaucratic procedures and protocols.²

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