Story Seven
Socrates Stratis

Atlas of Designerly Visual Knowledge:
Urban Commoning through the Critical Pedagogical Project

Fig. 1 Spatial unfolding of the "Atlas of Visual Designerly Knowledge", Department of Architecture, University of Cyprus

The atlas is not only a collection of images, but a "form of visual knowledge or a knowledgeable form of seeing". It is an infinite archive which gains meaning through the concept of montage. Images provoke different interpretations when working in groups. They perform specific functions in particular contexts. "You don't 'read' an atlas the same way you read a novel, or a book of history or an essay of philosophy", Georges Didi-Huberman states.

The "Atlas of Designerly Visual Knowledge" falls into such logic. It is about associations and interrelations between the users, the space, and an assembly of images consisting of axonometric drawings, plans, sections, diagrams but also collages and photographs of models, created through the urban design studio work, at the Department of Architecture, University of Cyprus, as well as at the School of Architecture at KTH in Stockholm, Sweden.

Notes
3. The tours of 2012 were Socrates Stratis and Christos Dimartzigou where in 2014 Socrates Stratis worked with Chrysanthi Constantinou. In fact, during the Winter Semester of 2014 an architectural studio from the School of Architecture, KTH in Stockholm tutored by Leif Brodersen and Tessa Selberg took place in collaboration with the University of Cyprus.
They portray potential urban commons of Famagusta after the longed-for reunification of Cyprus. The space is both physical and virtual with the visual material exposed on physical and virtual surfaces reciprocally. The ground floor of the Department of Architecture, served as the physical space, easily accessible from Ledra Street, part of the main pedestrian street of the old city of Nicosia (fig. 1). The panels with the visual material were placed along the walls of the linear space allowing both the jury members, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, to follow the students’ presentations, as well as the Famagustians and the general public to take a careful look (fig. 2). The virtual space is that of the interface of the www.handsonfamagusta.org interactive web platform. In this case, the visual material falls into the general layout of the web platform organized in various plate sizes consisting of controversial questions likely to emerge during the reconstruction processes of the city in relation to the creation of its commons (see in this Guide the story by Akhil “Transformative themes: advocating for commons that act across divided territories”, pp. 166-195). The users are the visitors of the day events in the physical space, back in 2012 and 2014, as well as those navigating through the three pools of the web platform, i.e., Actors and Agendas, Other Cities, and Urban Design Projects. In fact, the “Atlas of designerly visual knowledge” falls into all three pools. For the purpose of this story, we will concentrate on the pool of Urban Design Projects to unfold the pertinence of critical pedagogy in twinning urban regeneration design with reconciliation processes. The atlas demonstrates the complex agencies of architecture, which by definition operate both on the imagery level and on that of physical space. Unavoidably, the production of visual representation, such as that of the “Atlas of designerly
Fig. 2 Excerpt from the "Atlas of Visual Designerly Knowledge"
visual knowledge”, falls into the debate of *How to Carry the World on one’s Back?*, introduced by Didi-Huberman.

Producing the “Atlas of designerly visual knowledge” has been part of an overall critical pedagogy approach that supports both students of architecture, as well as active citizens for the demanding compositional and conflictual culture of urban engagement and practice in contested territories. They are all faced with the challenge of creating twin relations between urban regeneration and reconciliation processes. They all implicitly demand to be part of collective decision making in regard to the longed-for processes of Famagusta reconstruction, either by creating designerly knowledge, or by modifying it, or by supporting it, or even by turning it down. In other words, they look for a place in urban commoning practices (fig. 3-5).

**Making of the atlas as a critical pedagogical project**

When the tutors of the Urban Design Studio had invited the students to imagine Famagusta (fig. 6) after the longed-for reunification of the island, they produced moments of crisis and open-ended possibilities. They allowed the students to reclaim personal history as part of an understanding of a larger political and social process, in other words to make visible the political dimension of architectural practice.

Notes
Controversy 1: CONNECT THE HINTERLAND TO THE SEAFRONT? The Famagusta hinterland is disconnected from the seafront because of private development along the coast. What if collective spaces in strategic locations could help connect the city and its citizens to the seafront?
They encouraged the students to question dominant narratives on divisive ethnic territories and challenge themselves in multiple ways: “why our parents haven’t told us about this?” was a moment of crisis of a student, after crossing the divide, going to the north part of the island for the first time. Some of the students’ parents are refugees from Famagusta or from other areas in the north part of the island. The student was confronted with a radically different urban reality from the one represented by the dominant Greek Cypriot community narratives. In fact, most of the students were crossing over the divide for their first time, despite the fact that the building of the Department of Architecture is located just 100 meters from the Ledra Street checkpoint in Nicosia. Another wave of moments of crisis took place when the students deployed design as consolidation tool of dominating politics of division. Their initial attempt to imagine Famagusta was dominated by the overwhelming presence of their ethnic community narratives, embedded in their perception for ethnic segregation based on property and population issues.

Critical pedagogy has become a valid approach to open up the architectural education to reconciliation processes focusing on the urban environment where peace building takes place. Reconciliation departs from a negative peace building process where each community in conflict, in our case the Greek Cypriot as well as the Turkish Cypriot, challenges its dominant narratives about the “other”. The urban design studio adopted a negative peace approach by focusing for a couple of years on the urban future of Famagusta. The tutors interweaved the hidden curriculum with the formal curricula, and consequently the production of designerly knowledge with social practices.
The formal curriculum has to do with the designerly knowledge the students should acquire by the end of the studio’s semester. The hidden curriculum refers to the ideology of the designerly knowledge and the social practices which structure the experience of students and tutors.

The Urban Design studio focused on Famagusta in the fall semesters of 2012 and 2014. In both cases, the tutors provided a theme (see in this Guide the story by Akbil: “Transformative themes: advocating for commons that act across divided territories”, pp. 166-195) as a transformative force to encourage students to challenge both the actual status quo of division, as well as the position they occupy in such context. The studio theme during 2012 was that of confronting the increasingly fragmented city of Famagusta in spite of the unification of the island. The students were exposed to the enclaves’ territorial reading by the “Imaginary Famagusta” group (see in this Guide the essay by Stratis: “Architecture as Urban Practice in Contested Spaces”, pp. 12-45), as well as to the designerly theme of a wide public waterfront. They were invited to manage the creation of third spaces by translating in space programmatic, as well as symbolic public infrastructures, such as that of a European Eastern Mediterranean Regional Government Network. The urban design studio, during the winter semester of 2014, investigated the role for architecture in creating the urban commons during the extraordinary conditions of the reconstruction process of Famagusta. The students’ projects were about supporting the urban everydayness of commons during the very first period of reconstruction, where usually architecture is excluded and public space suffers in the name of safety, health, and urgency.
Figs. 9, 10 “Zipping Across the Edge”, A. Agapiou, N. Andreou, C. Palochi, G. Charalampous IU2CY 2013
Controversy 5: TRANSFORM MAIN TRAFFIC ROADS INTO SHARED SPACES NETWORKS? Famagusta’s main traffic arteries are dominated by private cars and commercial development. What if public programming could transform these arteries into a network of shared spaces, opening them up to new uses and means of transportation?

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**Figs. 11, 12** “Working with limits”, A. Leonitou, K. Panteli, E. Hadjipetrou, D. Hadjitiangou, LUCY 2013

**Figs. 13-15** “Trojan Horse for Public Space”, T. Alexi, A. Kallis, A. Spyrou, S. Frangogloumpoulos, LUCY 2013
Material agencies of the atlas

The visual information of the students’ projects has been acting as a material agent by changing our stance but also ourselves vis-à-vis the priorities of the city reconstruction. They urge us to think about urban infrastructures and networks both strategically and tactfully coping with uncertain conditions. They give equal emphasis on the processes of implementing the projects, as well as on the possible outcomes. They offer, in fact, plenty of material for negotiation processes for those urban actors who may seek for the city commons. We see axonometric drawings on top of each other that propose alternative modes of reconstruction when approaching the city by the sea, suggesting sea routes to carry building material to the city port, and, at the same time, to put down the foundation of linear public spaces along with collective housing (figs. 7, 8). We see an image of floating buildings and housing parts of the European Eastern Mediterranean Regional Government Network (figs. 9, 10). In other cases, there are diagrams about public transport networks that stretch along the city waterfront territory. At the same time, they create nodes in proximity to common education institutions for the dared ones of the two communities who may wish to send their kids to common schools. There are also diagrams that visualize how to insert tactfully a web of public spaces and services within the derelict fenced-off part of a privatized city by setting on the ground zones of reconstruction vertical to the seacoast, (figs. 13-15).
Eco-culture as Common Ground

Controversy 8: CREATE NEW WAYS OF LIVING BY PROFITING FROM THE RICH IN NATURE, UNINHABITED AREAS? Uninhabited territories of Famagusta have developed a rich natural life. What if the process of rehabilitation uses this richness in creating new ways of living?

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In some other images, we see a "Network of Oasis" of support services, a kind of shared space concept for the members of the two communities (figs. 16, 17). Such support services would be very handy during the first period of reconstruction when the Greek Cypriots will return and the actual infrastructures would not be sufficient. Another image welcomes us to the "Fabulous Famaround" (figs. 18-20), offering a tool-kit of actions to celebrate the first days for all those visitors who would want to take a look at the unique place of a human settlement sealed-off for at least 42 years. A public transport network loop, stretching along the city, would support such visit and would unfold the celebration on the Famagustian territory inviting to the event all city inhabitants laying the seed for a common urban identity.

The students and tutors of the urban design studio underwent a transformative process, a change of themselves, while investigating the ethnically conflictual Cypriot society by questioning the position they occupy, challenging the role of the distanced expert. Actually, all those unstated values, attitudes, and norms in regard to the dominant divisive narratives due to the ethnic conflict, stemming from the Cypriot education across the divide, became explicit and challenged by changing the studio relations and the studio course content. The Urban Design Studio pedagogy abandoned the *transmission* model that considers students as empty vessels. It showed how designerly knowledge is part of a social product grounded in relations of power. To do so, the tutors had fostered a learning environment that encouraged the shift of power relations between students and tutors. They increased interaction and knowledge exchange among students informed by competing interpretations.
They encouraged them to formulate their own questions and develop critical thinking by engaging them with the social and political dimensions of design. The relational, dynamic, and conflictual aspects of contested urban environments became the heart of the design investigations.

To look more carefully at the atlas of designerly knowledge, we need to situate ourselves either in the physical space of the ground floor of the building of the Department of Architecture, or to turn on a computer screen and follow the directions of getting playfully engaged. In both instances, there is a reshuffle of images creating diverse groupings. They perform indeed multiple functions because of the different contexts. In other words, the atlas allows a continuous enrichment of the visual designerly knowledge, allowing dynamic associations and interrelations among users, space, and images. When we stand in front of the panels full of visual material of the students’ projects, the association we sense has to do with their painstaking questioning of their position in the actual Cypriot conflict. At the same time, they are related to the right to imagine, challenging the actual status quo. When we are in front of the computer screen, the images blend into the web platform interfaces. Their association or interrelation with other images depends on how playfully we engage with the visual and textual material. The images act as representations of actions-to-be that advocate for the urban commons. They become part of the user’s personal history while attempting to contribute to a collective “Imaginary Famagusta”.

Figs. 18-20 "Famaround", E. Kyriakou, E. Zarou, E. Orphanidou, S. Christophorou LU2CY 2014

Controversy 6: INTRODUCE PUBLIC EVENTS TO DIVERSE SEGREGATED SPACES? Public spaces in Famagusta are ethnically segregated. What if public events could help diversify the city’s public spaces by attracting different groups of inhabitants?

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