

Praxis of Urban Peacebuilding in Famagusta Cyprus

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Abstract

Urban design and development have experienced significant changes, shifting away from traditional top-down decision-making methods. This shift has emphasized the importance of community engagement and participatory design, particularly in contested cities. Famagusta, a city affected by the ongoing division in Cyprus, highlights the urgent need for innovative approaches to rebuild and reconcile communities. Varosha, the city's former tourist resort, has been inaccessible to the public since the island's division in 1974 due to military restrictions. This study focuses on the Famagusta Ecocity Project, a case study for sustainable and inclusive urban development that aims to foster peace and harmony in a post-conflict setting. The study examines the project's 10-year journey towards urban peacebuilding and highlights key insights from the process. The findings reveal that an ecocity presents a transformative solution, offering a comprehensive approach to establishing a resilient "peace infrastructure" in a contested city.

Keywords

Urban Peacebuilding, Community Engagement, Participatory Design, Ecocity, Famagusta

Introduction

Urban peacebuilding has emerged as an increasingly significant and challenging undertaking in numerous conflict-ridden regions across the globe (Ljungkvist & Jarstad, 2021). One such region is the island of Cyprus, situated in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, which has been home to diverse civilizations for centuries. Currently divided into the Republic of Cyprus in the south, predominantly populated by Greek Cypriots, and North Cyprus in the north, predominantly inhabited by Turkish Cypriots, the island's fragmentation can be traced back to internal conflicts in the late 1950s (Boğaç, 2023), escalating to the brink of war in 1974 (Ker-Lindsay, 2011). These conflicts resulted in the separation of towns and villages, with

each ethnic group seeking refuge in their respective areas.

In the context of urban peacebuilding, the Famagusta case in Cyprus holds significant relevance. Famagusta, situated 7 km south of the ancient cities of Salamis and Enkomi, is comprised of various residential districts, including the walled city that provides natural protection for maritime vessels. The former tourist resort within Famagusta is Varosha, which developed outside the walls of the old city along the southern coastline. Since the division of the island in 1974, Varosha has been within a prohibited militaristic zone and inaccessible to the public. However, in October 2020, Varosha partially

reopened¹ after 45 years of inaccessibility, albeit through a process lacking transparency.



Figure 1. Map of Famagusta (Author, 2023)

Famagusta, with its rich historical and architectural tapestry, has stood as one of Cyprus' most cherished settlements for centuries. Unquestionably, the city's most poignant chapter lies within Varosha, a forsaken district encircled by barbed wire since 1974. Varosha possesses the power to leave an indelible psychological imprint on all who encounter it, with numerous scholarly investigations delving into these effects as they manifest within its space (Boğaç, 2009 and 2020). Over the years, these interwoven psychological dynamics have engendered a diverse array of yearnings for peace among individuals, giving rise to various scenarios envisioning the city's future should a lasting peace be attained on the island.

Restoring a peaceful order in an island marred by physical division for over four decades poses significant challenges. The enduring conflicts since the events of 1960 have severed the social fabric, leaving individuals displaced and creating a sense of disarrayed belonging throughout the entire island. Intruding upon these spaces presents both ethical quandaries and political conundrums. Therefore, a holistic approach becomes imperative in redefining, organizing, and even creating places with the ultimate aim of attaining enduring peace. Division, rather than fostering peace, only leads to discord, while boundaries serve to

separate rather than unite. Tools that facilitate peacebuilding are indispensable, with the language of peace being an essential element within these tools.

The prospect of reopening Varosha, an area held under military occupation for four decades, situated within the historic boundaries of Famagusta on Cyprus' Eastern coast, affords a distinctive occasion to glean wisdom from past errors and commence anew towards a more auspicious future. Nevertheless, this venture is not devoid of substantial perils. According to Cunningham and Byrne (2006), urban division is a common occurrence, and without careful consideration, there is a risk of further unsustainable development within an already overcrowded Mediterranean tourism sector. This situation could perpetuate Famagusta as the second partitioned city in Cyprus, following the capital city, Nicosia.

This study focuses on the inspiring efforts of the Famagusta Ecocity Project² as a case study for sustainable and inclusive urban development, with a specific emphasis on fostering peace and harmony in a post-conflict setting. Ecocities, which embody the essence of sustainability, go beyond the conventional understanding limited to environmental considerations, thus demanding urgent attention (Register, 2016). They also encompass economic sustainability, moving beyond excessive indebtedness and hasty construction aimed solely at mass tourism. Moreover, ecocities epitomize political sustainability, necessitating the cultivation of enduring systems that foster harmony and balance (Roseland, 1997). Consequently, this study approaches the concept of an ecocity as an umbrella framework for establishing sustainable peace in contested urban areas, serving as a tool for urban peacebuilding.

In light of this, the study initially explores paradigmatic shifts in urban design, particularly focusing on community engagement and urban peacebuilding. Subsequently, it delves into the journey of the Famagusta Ecocity Project toward urban peacebuilding, analyzing the project's documented timeline activities, observations, and relevant media sources for external validation. By providing a comprehensive overview of the project's trajectory, the study concludes with a summary of key insights derived from this process.

Paradigmatic Shifts in Urban Design: Community Engagement and Urban Peacebuilding

Over the years, the landscape of urban design and development has undergone a remarkable

¹ BBC (2020). "Varosha: Turkey reopens deserted Cyprus resort but tourists will wait", <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54465684> (01 July 2023)

² Famagusta Ecocity Project (2014). "Famagusta Ecocity Project: Uniting through sustainability", <https://www.ecocityproject.org> (01 July 2023)

transformation, marked by a discernible departure from conventional top-down decision-making approaches. Scholars such as Arnstein (1969) and Friedmann (1987) have noted this shift, highlighting the emergence of more inclusive, participatory, and collaborative methods.

In times past, urban design and planning decisions were predominantly steered by a select group of experts and professionals, with limited engagement from the very communities they sought to serve (Fainstein, 2000). During the 1980s, numerous case studies and approaches to community design highlighted the significance of collaboration, participation, and social responsibility in the design process. For example, Mark's (1983) study emphasizes the role of architects and designers in engaging with communities to develop meaningful and responsive designs that align with the needs and aspirations of the people they serve.

The following wave of paradigmatic shifts has brought about a profound recognition of the importance of involving a diverse range of stakeholders, including residents, community organizations, and local businesses (Landry, 2006). This understanding seeks to empower communities and grant them an active role in shaping their neighborhoods and cities. To achieve this transformative vision, direct engagement with communities has become an imperative, facilitating a redefined relationship between designers, planners, and the communities they serve (Agyeman et al., 2003). Henry Sanoff's studies have made significant contributions to the field of participatory design, particularly in the context of urban environments. His work has focused on involving community members, stakeholders, and end-users in the design and decision-making processes of urban projects (Sanoff, 2000; 2008). Through this more democratic and collaborative framework, cities are now poised to embrace greater community input and involvement in the pursuit of urban development that truly reflects the collective aspirations and needs of its inhabitants.

Parnell and Pieterse (2010) emphasize the importance of the right to the city in reshaping urban governance and advocate for a more inclusive and participatory approach to urban development. According to the authors, urban planning processes and governance structures that facilitate meaningful citizen participation and social inclusion are crucial for realizing the right to the city. They argue that such approaches contribute to the advancement of more equitable and sustainable urban futures.

Today, in addition to physically divided cities due to political disputes like Nicosia, Jerusalem, or Belfast, administrative reorganizations that lead to the formation of new divisions, rapid urbanization and

population growth resulting in the formation of new neighborhoods or suburbs, and urban regeneration projects also contribute to separations within previously neglected or underutilized areas, thereby leading to divisions (Hamnett, 2003). Consequently, implications for peacebuilding, particularly in contested cities, arise as the understanding of community engagement and urban design undergoes paradigmatic shifts (Cunningham & Byrne, 2006).

Famagusta, a city profoundly impacted by the ongoing division on the island of Cyprus, exemplifies the pressing need for innovative approaches to rebuilding and reconciling communities. Björkdahl (2013) argues that integrating critical peacebuilding and urban studies offers a valuable starting point to effectively address and alleviate tensions and ethnocentric spatial practices in the city, emphasizing the need to urbanize peacebuilding in response to emerging challenges in an increasingly urbanized world. This article aims to explore the intersection between the transformative potential of community engagement and urban design, and the pursuit of urban peacebuilding.

According to Björkdahl (2013) urban peacebuilding revolves around the transformation of urban space and the achievement of peace and its dividends. This involves diverse strategies such as reshaping the values and attitudes of urban residents, mediating disputes over territorial claims to urban space, and addressing grassroots issues. Urban peacebuilding encompasses intentional and methodical planning and design strategies with the objective of cultivating peaceful, inclusive, and harmonious urban environments. Its core focus lies in the creation of physical spaces and structures that facilitate social cohesion, encourage conflict resolution, and foster community engagement (Bollens, 2006; Björkdahl & Kappler, 2017). The ultimate aim of urban peacebuilding is to tackle the underlying drivers of conflict, and establish sustainable peace within urban areas.

In this context, urban peacebuilding involves a systematic approach that takes into account various factors and considerations. It encompasses thoughtful spatial organization, architectural design principles, and the integration of amenities and facilities that foster positive social interactions and promote community well-being (Bollens, 2006). By facilitating connectivity and shared experiences, urban peacebuilding seeks to establish an environment conducive to harmonious coexistence.

Key elements of urban peacebuilding include the development of public spaces that encourage community gatherings and dialogue, the incorporation of design features that address potential sources of

tension or conflict, and the promotion of inclusive decision-making processes that involve diverse stakeholders (Agyeman et al., 2003; Bollens, 2006; Björkdahl & Kappler, 2017). By addressing the root causes of conflict, such as socio-economic disparities, unequal access to resources, or cultural divisions, urban peacebuilding endeavors to create a foundation for lasting peace and stability.

The significance of urban peacebuilding lies in its capacity to shape the physical and social landscape of urban areas. By intentionally designing spaces that facilitate interaction, understanding, and collaboration, it aims to forge a sense of belonging and shared ownership among residents (Landry, 2006). Through this approach, urban peacebuilding serves as a proactive strategy to prevent and mitigate conflicts, promote social integration, and cultivate environments that support the well-being and cohesion of urban communities (Bollens, 2006; Cunningham & Byrne, 2006).

This study approaches urban peacebuilding as a systematic and purposeful approach that aims to create urban environments characterized by peace, inclusivity, and harmony. It acknowledges the complexity of urban dynamics and employs design principles to address conflicts, foster social cohesion, and ultimately contribute to the establishment of sustainable peace in urban areas. While considering the case of Famagusta, the study identifies the most significant challenge in peacebuilding as the capacity to establish a united city that can sustain a peaceful system among citizens, the built environment, and nature. As emphasized by Björkdahl (2013), urban peacebuilding concentrates on the revitalization and reconstruction of urban spaces impacted by conflicts. Consequently, the definition of urban peacebuilding in this study encompasses conflict resolution through mutual dialogue, the use of empathetic language, and the collaborative design of a well-balanced and integrated environment that incorporates nature.

The Ecocity Project's Path to Urban Peacebuilding

Urban peacebuilding poses significant challenges, particularly in countries like Cyprus, where physical division has persisted for over forty-five years. As mentioned before, the fragmentation of the island in 1974 resulted in the separation of social spaces, leading to a chaotic sense of belonging as individuals were detached from their homes and neighborhoods. Consequently, negotiating the concept of place becomes an extremely sensitive issue. At this juncture, architecture and urban design possess a unique potential to collectively create or, if necessary, recreate a peace infrastructure.

The eco-city framework emerged during the 1992 United Nations' "Earth Summit" conference, resulting in the creation of "Agenda 21" for sustainable development. This led to the recognition of the need to redesign cities and empower their bioregions. "Ecocity Builders" was established in 1990 by Richard Register (Roseland, 1997), followed by the "Ecocity Standards" initiative in 2010 (<http://www.ecocitystandards.org>). According to Joss (2011) eco-city developments are driven by environmental challenges, socio-economic pressures, business development, cultural branding, political leadership, and international cooperation. They aim to address climate change, urbanization, and resource efficiency while promoting green technologies and sustainable urban living. These initiatives involve various stakeholders, including governments, businesses, and international networks, fostering knowledge sharing, innovation, and collaborative efforts for a greener future.

The Ecocity Framework (developed by Ecocity standards initiative, 2010) encompasses 18 standards that are organized into four distinct categories: urban design, bio-geophysical conditions, socio-cultural features, and ecological imperatives. Within the urban design dimension, four standards are identified, namely "access by proximity", "safe and affordable housing", "green building", and "environmentally friendly transport". The bio-geophysical conditions category includes standards such as "clean air", "clean and safe water", "healthy soil", "responsible resources/materials", "clean and renewable energy", and "healthy and accessible food". The socio-cultural features category comprises standards including "healthy culture", "community capacity/governance", "healthy and equitable economy", "lifelong education", and "quality of life". Lastly, the ecological imperatives category encompasses standards of "healthy biodiversity", "earth's carrying capacity", and "ecological integrity".

The adoption of the Ecocity Framework has proven successful in various cities worldwide, serving as inspiring models for sustainable and inclusive urban development. Cities like Curitiba in Brazil, Portland in the United States, and Freiburg in Germany have demonstrated the positive impact of embracing the principles of the Ecocity Framework (Joss, 2011). These cities have integrated sustainable practices, community engagement, and environmental consciousness into their urban planning processes, resulting in thriving and peaceful urban environments.

By implementing the Ecocity Framework and its standards, cities can align their development goals with the principles of urban peacebuilding. The pursuit of sustainability, inclusivity, and environmental consciousness can contribute to the transformation of

cities affected by physical division and conflict, fostering a sense of place, belonging, and ultimately, peace.

During the 1960s, Famagusta experienced growth and became a popular resort area in the Mediterranean, but after the 1974 internal conflicts, Varosha and other districts of Famagusta underwent significant changes. Greek Cypriots involuntarily left their homes in Varosha and moved to the south, while Turkish Cypriots from the south relocated to the north, leading to the division of Famagusta into different zones. The coastal segment of Varosha was declared off-limits, and Kato Varosha was assigned to Turkish Cypriot refugees and immigrants from Turkey. The Eastern Mediterranean University's increasing student population in the 1990s contributed to urban sprawl in the northwest axis of the city, and the presence of dry riverbeds and open reservoirs also influenced the city's development.

Stoltza et al. (2014) stress that ecocity projects are more holistic planning approaches. Building upon this understanding, the following discussion highlights how these ecocity projects have garnered contributions from diverse and globally significant sources. The Ecocity Project's path to urban peacebuilding involves a range of activities, which will be elaborated upon in a step-by-step manner below:

Step 1: Team Set-up

As mentioned previously, in the case of Famagusta, the ecocity framework has been embraced as an overarching concept for urban peacebuilding. Dr. Emily Markides, a permaculture professor, and a Famagusta refugee herself, initially introduced this concept to the United Nations and the European Union in 2006. This vision was embraced and developed by the project's core team, which convened for the first time in 2013. The team took into account various urban problems in the city, including the absence of public transportation, the abandoned and fenced-off condition of Varosha, the need to preserve wetland biodiversity, the presence of fragmented enclaves, and inadequate infrastructure, among others. In her book "The Human Condition", Hannah Arendt (1958) argues that while individuals can survive without work, they cannot lead meaningful lives without action. She posits that action is a fundamental aspect of human existence within society. This understanding served as the primary motivation for the team to initiate the project.

To initiate the project and document the story of the team and The Famagusta Ecocity Project, a Kickstarter campaign³ was launched with a fundraising

goal of \$30,000. The campaign garnered a total of \$33,842 in donations between 14 October 2013, and 13 November 2013, spanning a period of 30 days. This successful fundraising effort served as the initial impetus for the project.

The project core team convened multiple times throughout the year with the aim of engaging various experts, civil society initiatives, citizens, and researchers, inviting them to participate in the project. The experts were carefully selected from a pool of specialists to encompass the ecocity framework, considering their expertise in areas such as urban design, bio-geophysical conditions, socio-cultural features, and ecological imperatives.

As a foundational step, media campaigns were strategically executed to introduce the purpose, motivation, goals, and guiding principles of the project, thereby capturing widespread attention. Notably, within a mere three days of being featured by the esteemed British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)⁴, the project resonated with a staggering readership exceeding two million individuals.

Step 2: Design Studio

Sanoff (2000) advocates for the utilization of participatory design exercises that actively involve community members in the design process. These exercises may include activities such as mapping and scenario-building, providing participants with the opportunity to express their needs, preferences, and aspirations. Drawing inspiration from these ideas, the "Famagusta Ecocity Design Studio", a crucial phase of structured work, was meticulously planned and supervised by the esteemed architecture expert, Professor Jan Wampler. Sixteen postgraduate students from the University of South Florida's M.Arch Program, along with eleven postgraduate students specializing in architecture and civil engineering from both the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities in Cyprus, participated in the design studio. This workshop, situated in Famagusta, transpired within the confines of the buffer zone, spanning multiple days and attracting a diverse audience comprising local residents and international bureaucrats invested in the development of Cyprus.

Sanoff (2000) furthermore suggests organizing collaborative workshops or charrettes where community members, designers, and stakeholders can come together to brainstorm, share ideas, and collectively design solutions. According to him, these workshops create a platform for open dialogue and collaboration. Throughout the Famagusta Ecocity

³ Kickstarter (2013). "Waking Famagusta (documentary film)", (01 July 2023) <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/320929240/the-famagusta-ecocity-project-a-documentary>

⁴ BBC (2014). "Varosha: The abandoned tourist resort", <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-25496729> (01 July 2023)

Project workshop, a series of comprehensive analytical studies were undertaken, delving into various aspects including Famagusta's historical legacy, coastal landscapes, emerging zones for development, existing watersheds, and the environs surrounding Varosha, all supported by the invaluable collaboration of local residents. Moreover, meetings were convened with both the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot mayors of Famagusta, who had served in leadership roles within both the northern and southern regions, under the auspices of addressing the formidable challenges and impediments obstructing the revitalization of Famagusta. Distinguished personalities, such as the Cyprus Nobel Laureate Professor of Economics, the Presidents of the Famagusta Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Cyprus Turkish Chamber of Commerce, and notable executives including the Austrian Ambassador, whose unwavering commitment has remained resolute throughout his tenure, as well as workshop staff, civil society representatives, bureaucrats, and local residents of Famagusta, engaged in candid dialogue, seeking answers while maintaining a certain sense of distance.

The project's ambit was initially broached with the incumbent Turkish Cypriot mayor, entrusted with the leadership of the city's current administration, as well as the Greek Cypriot mayors duly elected by their respective populated cities. During these interactions, the project's purpose, objectives, and intended outcomes were succinctly elucidated, while soliciting vital support.

Accompanied by enlightening city tours and guided by experts in art history, the project's volunteers, observers, and stakeholders were afforded the opportunity to perceive the urban potentialities inherent within the landscape.

Within the purview of the design workshop, a cohort of 86 experts hailing from both communities shared their profound insights with the public. These panel presentations were meticulously organized under nine main categories:

1. History, Culture, and Community
2. Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution
3. Economics for the Creation of Sustainable Employment Opportunities
4. Business Stakeholders
5. Renewable Energy and Sustainable Agriculture
6. Urban Planning
7. Civil Engineering
8. Coastal and Environmental Engineering
9. Architecture

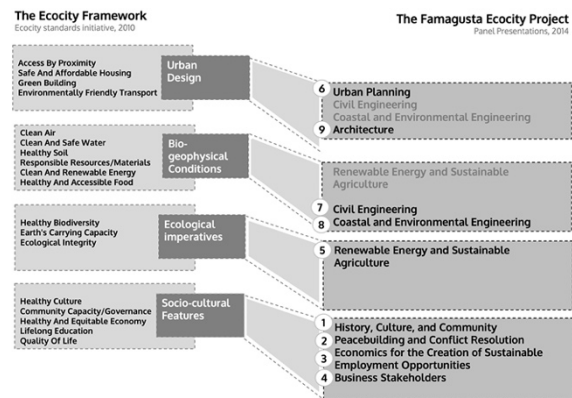


Figure 2. The relation between the Ecocity Framework and the Famagusta Ecocity Project panel presentations (Author, 2023)

Bollens (2012) advocates for grassroots strategies, acknowledging the power of emotions and emphasizing the need to address structural issues. During these presentations, citizens and other participants demonstrated the resilience and courage to pose a diverse range of questions to the experts, reflecting their own perspectives and expectations. These inquiries encompassed both the historical legacy and contemporary essence of Famagusta and the entire island. By maintaining an unwavering focus on a shared language of reconciliation and peace, any adversities that occasionally arose between local residents and experts were overcome through inclusive dialogue. Within these discussions and presentations, the interplay between the old and new aspects of Famagusta became apparent, highlighting the intricate tapestry of its past and present.

To Sanoff (2000), holding design review meetings where community members can provide feedback and critique design proposals ensures that the designs reflect the collective aspirations of the community and allows for iterative improvements based on community input. The process of design production unfolded within two key locales: the Famagusta Municipal Cultural Center in Deryneia and the Famagusta Walled City Association (MASDER) building within the historic confines of the Famagusta Walled City. At Buğday Mosque (formerly St. Peter and Paul Church), five distinct design teams, led by innovative students, played crucial roles in shaping the vision for Famagusta. By unveiling their proposals⁵ within the mosque's sacred ambiance, they opened up avenues for discussion, fostering a profound perception of its special atmosphere. According to Stoltz et al. (2014), for a city to achieve sustainability, it is crucial to establish ambitious yet achievable goals and

⁵ Cyprus Profile (2014). "Urban innovation as part of Famagusta Ecocity Project", <https://www.cyprusprofile.com/articles/urban-innovation-as-part-of-famagusta-ecocity-project> (01 July 2023)

effectively plan and organize the urban environment. While the participants warmly embraced endeavors such as the establishment of green corridors, the development of a comprehensive public transportation network, and the enhancement of coastal arrangements, certain approaches—including the construction of a Varosha war memorial and architectural practices that deviated from the city's inherent character—were met with rigorous criticism. A comprehensive workshop review was conducted by students from the University of South Florida, who carefully examined these proposals. Over a period of four months, the students developed their design ideas and shared them with project participants, panel presenters, as well as foreign and local diplomats, during a live video conference hosted at the Goethe Institute. The Goethe Institute is located within the buffer zone of Nicosia.

Step 3: Publicity

The main aim of the Famagusta Ecocity Project has been to provide a platform for discussing the future of Famagusta with various stakeholders. Therefore, publicity has played a vital role in fostering transparency, inclusivity, and accountability within the participatory planning process. It is believed that transparent planning builds trust as it demonstrates that decisions are not made in isolation but with the involvement and input of the community (Hansson, 2018). As a result, every endeavor undertaken in collaboration with stakeholders was candidly shared with the wider public during a press conference of significant magnitude, boasting widespread participation.

Castells (2009) emphasizes the role of communication technologies, media systems, and networks in shaping power structures and driving societal change. The project core team, comprising representatives from both communities who joined forces within the project's ambit, continued to foster synergistic collaborations, creating compelling content across diverse platforms⁶. Their tireless efforts ensured that the Famagusta Ecocity Project resonated far beyond the confines of the island, permeating numerous international conferences, meetings, and gatherings.

Publicity played a crucial role in preventing the exclusion of certain groups and ensuring that planning outcomes aligned with the needs and aspirations of the entire community. However, it is worth noting that different groups demonstrated varying priorities regarding the future of the city. Moreover, the implementation of publicity measures established a system of checks and balances, reducing the potential for corruption or biased decision-making. The increased awareness and engagement of the public acted as safeguards, ensuring that the interests of the community were thoroughly considered and protected. Furthermore, the use of publicity facilitated collaborative decision-making by providing a platform for dialogue, information sharing, and deliberation among stakeholders. It fostered a sense of ownership and support for the project, which in turn contributed to increased cooperation, support, and the successful implementation of urban development initiatives.

Step 4: NGO Set-up

According to Bevir (2006), citizens and associations need to undergo coherent changes and adaptations while constructing new roles and mechanisms for governance in society. These changes are necessary to uphold participatory democracy, foster pluralism, and facilitate the pursuit of dialogue. In the year 2017, an influential non-governmental organization known as the Ecocity Project emerged, serving as a guiding light for both local and global initiatives.

The transformation of the Ecocity Project initiative into a non-governmental organization (NGO) was considered important for multiple reasons. Firstly, the establishment of an NGO provided a formal legal framework and organizational structure, facilitating clearer governance, defined roles and responsibilities, and a more efficient project operation. NGOs are typically perceived as independent and transparent entities, dedicated to addressing social or environmental issues, which enhances trust and support for the initiative (Arenas, Lozano, & Albareda, 2009). By becoming an NGO, the Ecocity Project aimed to gain credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of various stakeholders, including local communities, government entities, and potential partners or funders.

⁶ CNN (2014). "Can eco-city plans bring Cypriot ghost town back to life?", https://edition.cnn.com/2014/05/27/business/varosha-famagusta-one-square-meter/index.html?hpt=ie_u_t4 (01 July 2023)

London School of Economics (2014). "The Fracture and Destruction of the Memory of a City and a New Hope: Famagusta Ecocity Project" Ceren bopaç <https://youtu.be/5qLIT8s-vmo?t=9449> (01 July 2023)

TEDx Talks (2015). "From ghost town to ecocity: A new path to peace" Vasia Markides, TEDxLimassol, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dhz9Qnf3JUA> (01 July 2023)

Euronews (2017). "Cyprus: the trapped treasures of a divided island", <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2017/02/23/cyprus-s-trapped-treasures-and-the-promise-of-reunification> (01 July 2023)

France 24 (2018). "Reunifying Cyprus: Hopes and fears, 44 years on", <https://www.france24.com/en/20180305-europe-now-cyprus-hopes-fears-reunification-turkish-cypriots-famagusta-part-2> (01 July 2023)

Through this transition, the initiative also sought to demonstrate its commitment to long-term sustainability and continuity in pursuing its objectives.

Step 5: Developing Participatory Planning Tools

In the subsequent year of 2018, under the sagacious guidance of the research director within the Ecocity non-governmental organization, a remarkable quest commenced to imbue urban design with a greater sense of democracy. Through the application of innovative concepts such as gamification, data visualization, and immersive technologies, a participatory planning process for the city began to take shape, fostering inclusivity and empowering the collective vision.

The idea behind the use of gamification was to provide a creative and interactive approach to participation, turning the planning process into an engaging experience that encouraged collaboration and problem-solving. By introducing game-like elements, participants would be motivated to actively contribute and explore different planning scenarios (Christodoulou et. al, 2018).

Data visualization has always played a crucial role in making complex urban data more accessible and understandable to a wider audience (Eilola et. al, 2023). Through visually compelling representations, such as maps, charts, and infographics, the community would be able to grasp and analyze the information relevant to the planning decisions. This would enable informed discussions and empowered individuals to make well-informed contributions.

Immersive technologies, on the other hand, such as virtual reality (VR) or augmented reality (AR), would provide an immersive and realistic experience of future urban scenarios. By virtually experiencing proposed designs or urban interventions, participants could better comprehend the potential impact on the physical environment and make informed choices.

Step 6: Publications

As the year 2019 unfolded, a chorus of esteemed authors lent their voices to the discourse, expounding upon critical environmental issues, the very essence of sustainability, the profound principles and teachings underlying the ecocity paradigm, and the personal accounts of current and former custodians of the city. They eloquently unveiled how this project brought them together, intertwining their narratives into a tapestry of unity, while illuminating how Famagusta stands as a beacon of peace, not only for the island itself

but also for the broader Mediterranean region (Markides, Boğaç & Kelly, 2019). This momentous compilation, aptly titled the "Famagusta Ecocity Book", was unveiled, inviting readers on a captivating journey into a world where harmony between humans and nature flourishes.

Covid-19 Pandemic Period

Regrettably, in the year 2020, the noble peacebuilding endeavors encountered an unforeseen obstacle in the form of the Covid-19 pandemic. The formidable impact of this global crisis forced the Ecocity Project to temporarily suspend its tireless efforts, as the non-governmental organization found itself grappling with financial constraints, impeding its steadfast march towards progress.

Nonetheless, even in the face of adversity, the preparations for the documentary entitled "Waking Famagusta"⁷ persist. This captivating film serves as a beacon, shedding light on the arduous yet triumphant journey undertaken by the project's core team, unveiling the step-by-step process with unwavering clarity.

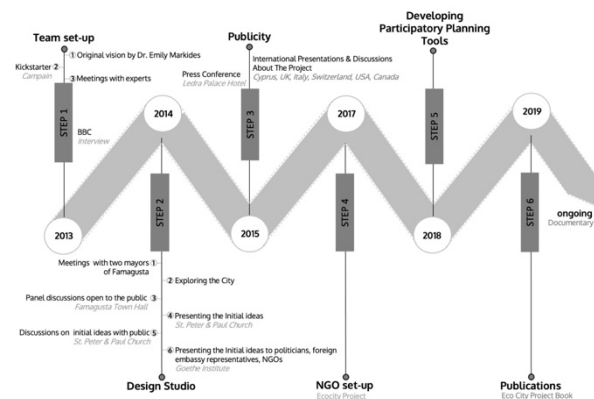


Figure 3. The timeline and process of the Famagusta Ecocity Project

Key Learnings From the Famagusta Case

According to Roseland (1997), eco-cities also referred to as sustainable communities, embody a vision and trajectory for community development that extends beyond mere marketing rhetoric. He further states that the task at hand is to foster local democracy while operating within the confines of global sustainability and this is how a unified vision for sustainable human settlements is beginning to take shape. In the realm of Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East geographies, the unyielding human yearning to exert dominion over both fellow humans and the natural world has given rise to an enduring state of conflict. The establishment of a sustainable peaceful

⁷ Youtube (2017). "Waking Famagusta", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIA_auh4MOs (01 July 2023)

order within this increasingly exacerbated milieu, marked by ignorance and a distressing absence of empathy, presents daunting challenges. The inherent perils of such a societal landscape further compound the intricacies involved. According to Björkdahl (2013), the integration of peacebuilding into urban areas and the inclusion of the city are essential.

The parameters that underpin the cultivation of a peaceful order, rooted in the principles of the ecocity paradigm, reveal a steadfast potential to evolve into an autonomous movement, shaping a sustainable future infused with unity and concord. Without a doubt, the role of architecture and urban design, as the artistic manifestation of spatial creation, assumes an indubitable significance within this systemic framework, irrespective of dissenting voices. It becomes evident that a disjointed assemblage of incremental reforms cannot engender a reconciliatory milieu within an order and spatial fabric that has been ravaged and fragmented by conflicts waged against both nature and humanity.

According to Björkdahl (2013), urban peacebuilding strategies have the potential to prevent the transformation of post-conflict urban spaces into ethnic spaces, characterized by the dominance of segregated communities. The "Famagusta Ecocity Project", a laudable endeavor undertaken collaboratively by Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, stands as a rare and pioneering venture. It transcends the realm of mere spatial planning or the imposition of construction, aspiring instead to dissolve divisions through reciprocal dialogue, fostering a shared living environment within an integrated system of integrity. Björkdahl (2013) also states that urban peacebuilding encompasses the operational aspects at the urban level and includes various components, such as social and spatial relationships, as well as tangible and intangible structures. Within this context, the project has undergone a metamorphosis, emerging as a widely embraced discourse of peace that finds apt expression in the concept of the "ecocity", while concurrently demonstrating how architecture and urban design can function as a potent instrument in this transformative process.

The key learnings from the Famagusta case can be summarized as follows:

1. The pursuit of a sustainable and peaceful order in conflict-affected environments necessitates addressing the human desire for dominance and fostering empathy. This highlights the importance of understanding and addressing underlying psychological and emotional factors that contribute to conflicts.
2. The ecocity paradigm offers a potential framework for shaping a sustainable future that embodies unity and harmony. By promoting environmentally conscious urban planning and design, ecocities can serve as models for sustainable development and peaceful coexistence.
3. Architecture and urban design play a significant role within the systemic framework of peacebuilding and spatial creation. The physical environment can influence social dynamics and interactions, and thoughtful design can contribute to fostering inclusivity, social cohesion, and reconciliation.
4. The Famagusta Ecocity Project stands as a pioneering initiative that transcends spatial planning, aiming to bridge divisions through reciprocal dialogue and promote a shared living environment. It goes beyond conventional urban development by actively seeking to overcome political and social barriers through collaborative efforts.
5. The collaborative efforts between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots within the Famagusta Ecocity Project exemplify the potential for cross-community collaboration in post-conflict settings. It demonstrates that shared goals and mutual understanding can facilitate cooperation and create spaces that benefit all stakeholders.
6. The project underscores the importance of an integrated system founded on integrity and embraces the concept of the ecocity as a platform for peace discourse. It highlights the need for holistic approaches that consider social, economic, and environmental aspects to build sustainable and peaceful communities.

Conclusion

Throughout history, the prevalence of one-sided truths, misinterpretations, myths, and propaganda has contributed to the entanglement of complex and wicked problems (Rittel & Webber, 1973). It is now imperative that we confront these challenges by actively engaging with and acknowledging diverse narratives while fostering a genuine spirit of empathy and understanding. The attainment of peace is not only a highly desirable outcome, but it also represents an essential condition for the continued existence and well-being of humanity. Therefore, recognizing the significance of peacebuilding in conflict-affected regions is crucial for achieving an enduring and sustainable future (Carius, 2006). Importantly, it should be noted that the task of designing in conflict zones has evolved into a global concern rather than an isolated incident. The current climate and ecological crises have transformed the entire world into a global conflict zone, demanding urgent attention.

Bollens (2012) suggests that physical interventions in contested cities have the potential to heal the collective trauma embedded in their social fabric. As urban peacebuilding gains recognition as an

essential aspect of urban design and development, it is crucial to further explore its potential and the practical implications it holds for fostering peace and social cohesion in diverse urban contexts. By acknowledging the transformative power of community engagement and adopting inclusive and participatory approaches, cities can aspire to become spaces of harmony, collective growth, and sustainable development.

This study centered around the remarkable endeavors undertaken by the Famagusta Ecocity Project, serving as a compelling case study for the advancement of sustainable and inclusive urban development, specifically highlighting its role in cultivating peace and harmony within a post-conflict environment. The Famagusta case emphasized the transformative potential of sustainable urban development in post-conflict contexts, showcasing the significance of empathy, collaboration, and integrated approaches in fostering peace and shared prosperity. As Björkdahl (2013) highlights urban peacebuilding focuses on the revitalization and reconstruction of urban spaces affected by conflicts. By prioritizing ecological urban design and planning, we can mitigate the challenges posed by conflicts and create sustainable environments that harmoniously coexist with nature. These efforts not only address the immediate needs of conflict zones but also contribute to global peacebuilding endeavors by promoting sustainable development and nurturing a culture of inclusivity and empathy.

In their seminal work "Toward an Urban Design Manifesto", Jacobs and Appleyard (1987) emphasized the significance of human-scale environments, pedestrian-friendly streets, and the integration of nature within urban settings. Their advocacy centered around the creation of cities that prioritize the well-being and overall quality of life for their residents. The study by Jacobs and Appleyard has had a lasting impact on the field of urban design, highlighting the importance of designing cities with a focus on people and their needs. From an architectural and urban design perspective, it is still crucial to swiftly adopt ecological urban design and planning approaches to counteract threats to our future. These threats include the unsustainable consumption of natural resources, environmental degradation, poverty, unemployment, the erosion of cultural values, and the loss of social memory, all of which contribute to various conflicts. Emphasizing green architecture and eco-cities is vital, as they provide spaces that seamlessly integrate with the web of life, preserving ecological balance and fostering tolerance among individuals. Achieving such places necessitates the adoption of participatory planning approaches, where stakeholders are actively involved in decision-making and peacebuilding processes.

To Forester (2019), negotiation and mediation in public planning should be based on the principles of empowerment and the recognition of underlying community values. This approach necessitates the investment of time, active engagement, and proficient mediation skills to achieve successful outcomes. In this manner, an ecocity emerges as a transformative solution, offering a holistic approach to forge a resilient "peace infrastructure" in the heart of a contested city.

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