

Public Opinion and the Property Issue: Qualitative Findings

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Methodology

Research participants were drawn from wide socio-political spectrum, ages and gender

- Focus Groups
- In-depth qualitative interviews
- Stakeholder Panels – Bi-communal Panels and specialised Property Panels for Greek Cypriots

Research conducted from August 2009 to March 2010

Basic Principles

Greek Cypriots

- Original owner must have first say.

Turkish Cypriots

- The rights of the users must be recognized.

Discussing Rights

Greek Cypriots

- Greek Cypriots are focused on their property ownership right – this principle is very important to them.
- This does not necessarily mean they will return to their homes – but they expect their right to be respected anyway.

Turkish Cypriots

- Turkish Cypriots acknowledge the ownership of property but place less emphasis on the exercising of ownership rights and more emphasis on the rights of the current user.



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Some Empathy

Greek Cypriots

- They do understand the other community from a humanitarian perspective; no-one should be thrown out of their homes with nowhere to go just so that a Greek Cypriot can move into their old home immediately after a solution.

Turkish Cypriots

- They tend to understand the Greek Cypriots' approach that from a legal point of view it is wrong to profit from someone else's property.
- Some see this situation the fault of the Turkish Cypriot administration because it encouraged use of GC property.



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Mutual Misunderstanding

Greek Cypriots

- They think that it is unfair that Turkish Cypriots can have access to their property in the south while still using Greek Cypriot properties – this leads to lack of empathy for Turkish Cypriot displaced people.

Turkish Cypriots

- Turkish Cypriot displaced people using GC property believe that they do not have access to their property in the south and at the same time, they do not see themselves as the real owners of the properties that they are using. So they feel that they own nothing.



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Personal Security Concerns

Greek Cypriots

- For those Greek Cypriots who would consider living in the north, although property is very important, security is even more important - they will not return to the north if they feel insecure or isolated.

Turkish Cypriots

- Those Turkish Cypriots who would consider relocating to the south are apprehensive about living with Greek Cypriots - they are concerned about their safety and so they are deterred from moving south.



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Understanding of available options for solution

Compromise

Greek Cypriots

- Some said they are willing to compromise for the greater good.
- For others, any solution is bound to be unfair for Greek Cypriots – staying as we are is preferable to a compromise solution when it comes to property.

Turkish Cypriots

- They believe that the status quo is unsustainable and a solution must be found for the property issue.
- They do not think that everybody will be satisfied, but they are willing to compromise.



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“work it out amongst ourselves”

Greek Cypriots

- Some say that they believe that Greek and Turkish Cypriots can settle the issues amongst themselves - if someone provides guidelines on the values of properties.
- Others have no faith in this approach.

Turkish Cypriots

- Some say that they believe that when owner and user get together they can solve the issue amongst themselves – but based on clearly defined framework of regulations.



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Turk vs. Turkish Cypriot

Greek Cypriots

- They make a distinction between Turkish Cypriot and Turk.
- They do not accept that they will not be able to get their home back because a Turkish settler is living in it.

Turkish Cypriots

- Some Turkish immigrants/settlers say, and some Turkish Cypriots agree, that they will leave the homes and possibly relocated elsewhere if someone compensates them.



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Understanding of Options

Greek Cypriots

- Some say that alternative housing has to be guaranteed for Turkish Cypriots before they are forced to leave the homes they are using.
- Others are willing to come to an arrangement if significant improvements or changes were made to their properties.

Turkish Cypriots

- Some Turkish Cypriots with equity in the south say that they are willing to leave the houses they are using if they get their property in the south back – they might sell it and buy another property in the north.
- Others say that where their house in the south is less valuable than the one they are using in the north, they are willing to pay the difference and stay.



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How should different types of property be handled?

Classification of Properties

Greek Cypriots

- Some Greek Cypriots are very suspicious of the idea of classification of properties – they see it as a ploy to “sell” them a suboptimal solution.
- Others are willing to accept this for the sake of solving the Cyprus problem.

Turkish Cypriots

- Some do make a distinction between types of properties, while others adopt a position of principle either in favour of current users or in favour of original owners.



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Priority for Restitution

Greek Cypriots

- It is most important to displaced persons that their original homes are returned to them - they are more flexible with other kinds of properties.

Turkish Cypriots

- They do not have a strong rank ordering on property types.

Views on Compensation



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Views on Compensation

Greek Cypriots

- They are suspicious about how their property is going to be valued.

Turkish Cypriots

- They are suspicious about how their property is going to be valued.

Views on Compensation

Greek Cypriots

- Compensation is a taboo issue – they consider that they will be excusing the Turkish presence in Cyprus if they accept it.
- Exchange seems to be more acceptable.

Turkish Cypriots

- For many, compensation and exchange are preferable to restitution, even in cases where they have significant property in the south.



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Greek Cypriots and Return

Greek Cypriot Attitudes

- “Return” is entrenched in displaced Greek Cypriots’ discourse.
- Often even those who are very pro-solution will have ‘hard-line’ attitudes to property – even though they might not return, they still want to have first say.



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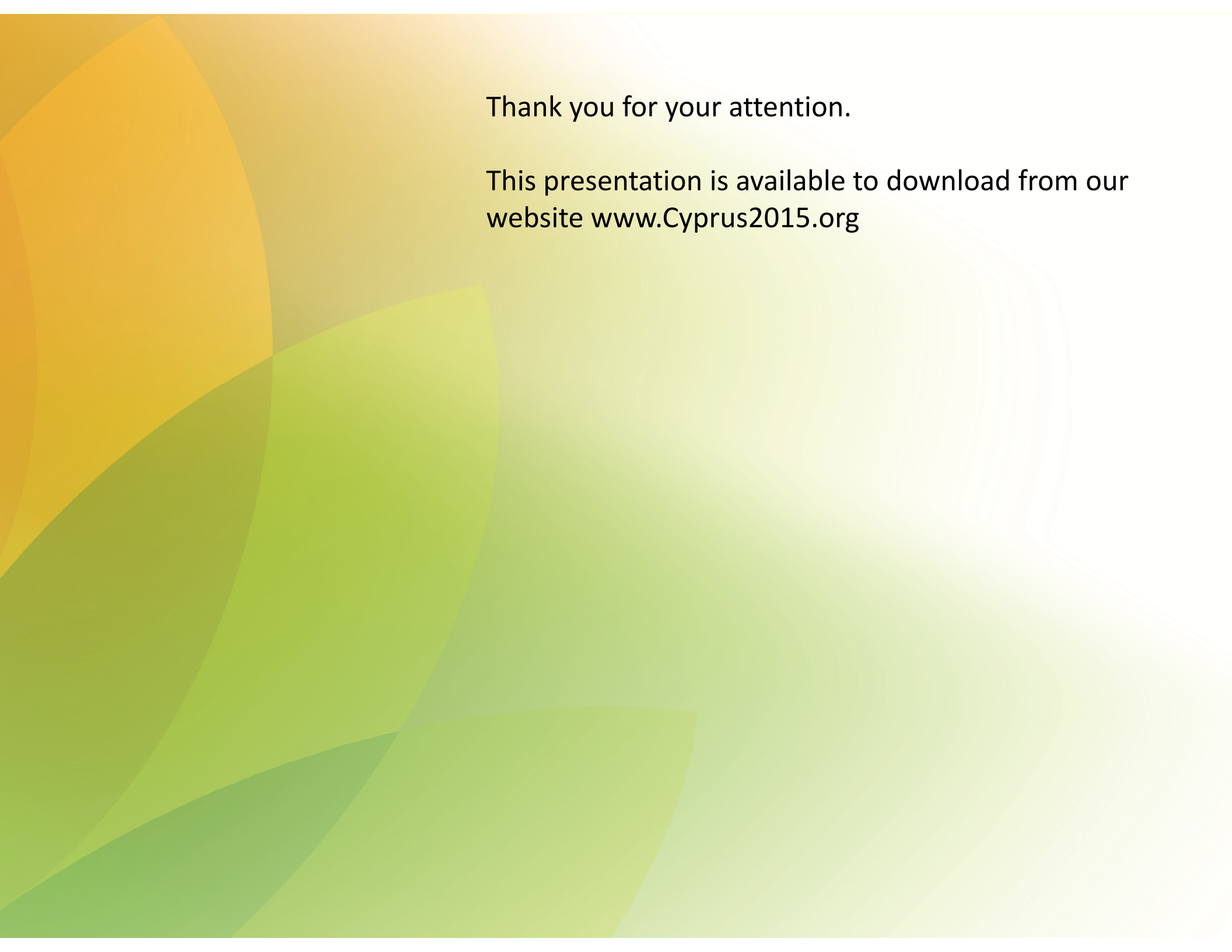
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Greek Cypriot Attitudes

- Having seen their properties since the checkpoints opened in 2003, some people already have scenarios in mind as to whether it is possible for their properties to be returned to them.
- This leads to them becoming even more uncompromising – and yet they say they will not return under Turkish Cypriot administration.

Greek Cypriot Attitudes

- A segment of displaced Greek Cypriots have moved from the desire to return to a desire for justice – for these people remaining true to their right of ownership is more important than the issue of whether they will return or not.



Thank you for your attention.

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