

## “What is all this Akamas about?”

Nature, protest and the media in Cyprus

**Goethe-Institut Cyprus cordially invites you to a presentation and panel discussion on Thursday, 27 September 2018 at 19:00. Admission is free.**

With its ragged coastline and secluded beaches, the Akamas peninsula on the west coast of Cyprus is a landscape of spectacular natural beauty. It is also an area of great ecological value and rich biodiversity as well as significant archaeological and architectural heritage. In 2009 and 2010, parts of the peninsula were declared protected areas by the European Union. This came after many years of conflict between local landowners, government authorities, real estate developers, European agencies and environmentalist organizations. However, the struggle over the future of the peninsula is far from over. More recently, Akamas has again become a flashpoint of conflict. In the aftermath of the debt crisis, tourism growth and real estate development have emerged as important sectors to get the economy back on track, and plans for large-scale development projects in the vicinity of Akamas threaten to place the ecological integrity of the entire area at risk. In response, a grassroots protest movement has sprung up, calling to "save Akamas" and to have the area acknowledged as the shared natural heritage of all Cypriots.

A presentation by German cultural anthropologist Gisela Welz – who has been conducting fieldwork in Cyprus since the 1990s – engages with this as yet unresolved controversy. The conflict over Akamas is one of the case studies presented in her most recent book *European Products. Making and Unmaking Heritage in Cyprus*, published by Berghahn Books. In 2016, the book received the prestigious PROSE award as best book in anthropology published in the United States.

The presentation will be followed by a panel discussion. Media experts, social scientists and environmentalists will discuss the Akamas issue in terms of its recent rise to prominence in the media and in public debate. While for decades, local activists as well as transnational organizations calling to protect Akamas had largely been ignored, today, the public in Cyprus is more attuned to environmental topics than before. What is the role of social media platforms and grassroots activism in this? And what lessons can be learned from similar processes in other European countries?

## Participants (in alphabetical order)

Dr. Christophoros Christophorou, media expert and political consultant, former professor at the University of Nicosia and press officer at PIO

Dr. Maria Hadjimichael, political ecologist and environmental campaigner, postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Social and Political Sciences, University of Cyprus

Dr. Gregoris Ioannou, a political and media sociologist teaching at the University of Cyprus, with a research focus on social movements and media framing.

Klitos Papastylianou, environmental sociologist and environmental campaigner, spokesperson of the "Initiative for the Protection of the Natural Coastline of Cyprus"

Prof. Dr. Gisela Welz, Institute of Cultural Anthropology and European Ethnology, Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany

**Venue:** Exhibition Hall of Goethe-Institut Cyprus at 21 Markos Drakos Avenue (near Ledra Palace checkpoint).

There will be a reception afterwards, hosted by Goethe-Institut Cyprus.