Social Housing in Late Colonial Cyprus: Contestations on urbanity and domesticity

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Social housing made its first appearances in Cyprus during the last two decades of the nearly century-long British colonialism (1878-1960), to respond to the pressures of housing shortage in urban centers on the Island. The rapid increase of urban occupations brought an immense mass migration of peasants into the towns and a multifaceted transformation of Cypriot society which was experiencing a transition from a dominantly agricultural, rural economy to a rapidly expanding commercial economy centered on towns. Urbanization was further intensified after Britain’s forced withdrawal from Arab countries in the 1950s that turned Cyprus into Britain’s most important military base in Eastern Mediterranean; especially with communism hovering around the region, British military spending in Cyprus was increased fourteenfold between 1950 and 1956. The rapid urban growth was accompanied by the reverberations of war-time shortage of building materials, which was manifested both in an unprecedented increase in house prices and in the creation of slums in towns. The serious housing shortage was only exacerbated further after the war, because the continuing urban growth was coupled with an inflation in land prices.

Consistent with their larger efforts to revive town and country planning in the colonies just after WWII, the British began to seek solutions to dire housing shortage in Cyprus. Their goals were to stop the creation of slums in and around towns and to prevent labor troubles and social unrest that threatened to accompany it. In fact, the first workers housing schemes in Cyprus were prepared as a result of a great strike of Government labourers in March of 1944. This chapter focuses on the initial efforts of the British to house landless urban residents, through a series of social housing schemes which began in 1944. By analyzing these schemes, this chapter aims to uncover the complex historical context that shaped social housing debates in Cyprus. This context was constituted by the reformist drive of metropolitan Britain, and the colonial government’s —and particularly the Public Works Department’s (PWD)— postwar attempts to advance urban development and social welfare in Cyprus, which were accompanied by a drive to control overcrowding and stabilize workers, in the context of larger anxieties of a communist threat in the region. The historical context of social housing debates was also shaped by larger disciplinary rethinking of modern architecture and planning in the colonial world, especially in terms of the social role of private homes and gardens; and, this context was also shaped by the diversity of modernist aspirations among municipal authorities and local architects, who expressed competing views on appropriate urban density, hygiene, efficiency, economy and modern lifestyles and social improvement, even as they had to contend with other factors such as the realities of available technologies and material or the shortage of funds, or even the goals and perceptions of particular protagonists. By shedding light on the nuances of this historical context and the ways in which particular schematic proposals or built projects appropriated or challenged colonial references like cottages, flats or gardens; and conversely, by analyzing how these schemes appropriated or rejected vernacular models like the introverted yard: the chapter demonstrates how social housing in Cyprus, and the larger colonial landscape on which it emerged—were a product of multifaceted influences that cannot be entirely explained away in terms of colonial agendas.
of power and control; or in terms of stylistic variations of a “modern vernacular”; but rather, this social housing was the product of multiple dynamics of colonial social landscape, and was intertwined with many protagonist’ aspirations and ambivalences regarding modern urbanity and domesticity.

The first debate: Flats or cottages?

By 1944, the dire housing shortage in the relatively small urban centers of Cyprus along with the proliferating slums made social housing programs an emergency, and the colonial government officials in Cyprus began to discuss social housing schemes. The colonial Office of London had already asked all colonies to improve their housing conditions the year before; and, of course, there was already the underutilized opportunity from the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 that had promised grants to the colonies, underling the potential for housing to stabilize workers. Cypriot towns had not been developed under any comprehensive town planning legislation up to that point, and so social housing appeared as a valuable opportunity to reform the urban environment of the Island.

The main debates in Cyprus were about whether housing schemes should be in the outskirts of the city, in the form of Cottage-like individual houses; or whether they should be flats in multi-storey buildings in the town center. The first option, which followed the logic of low-density housing development according to garden city principles had been widely tested already in the UK and in the colonies since the inter-war period. The latter option of flats in multi-storey buildings designed to minimum dimensions, was seen in the industrial cities in the western world from the 19th century onwards and later in colonial towns like New Delhi. Multi-storey buildings offered the opportunity to not only offer flats for families, but to also take the form of “hostels”—a building type that was used in the colonies to house single men who left their families behind in rural areas, and they had been widely encouraged so as to prevent the permanent migration of families from the country to the city.

The PWD of the colonial government—which was staffed by both local and British architects/engineers, many of whom had already operated in other colonies, opposed the cottage idea, suggesting that contrary to the British, the working people in Cyprus, desired to live “in proximity to each other.” The PWD was in charge of implementing these housing schemes and had great power in matters of spatial development, given the absence of a Town Planning or Housing Authority. The chief architect of PWD, R.H. Macartney went as far as arguing that “if [Cypriots] like gardens, they certainly do not show it, judging by the general standard of upkeep and cultivation,” and he attacked a housing area outside the walled capital of Nicosia, for its “small uncared for plots of land, strewn with rusty petrol tins, each plot bearing its miserable bungalow.” What lurked behind this orientalist depiction of natives’ indifference to their environment was Macartney’s preference for creating a “compact and well built up” city that would have the maximum efficiency by keeping workers within the town center. In Macartney’s view, the colonial concern with overcrowding would be resolved not with individual houses in the outskirts, but with taller buildings in the city center; and this would not only protect the integrity of “productive gardens and agricultural land” on the outskirts; it would also bring “in the derelict center…its renaissance,” and would bring positive changes not only to the town, but also to the society and local people’s customs.

Other government officials, voiced concerns regarding the social consequences of the large concentration of workers, and particularly single males, in the center of town. This fear was tied to the drastic rise of trade unionism during the 1940s and 50s that continually provoked strikes; and was intensified by the fact that a large portion of the population (namely, the Greek Cypriots who constituted the 82% of the total population) had already began to voice their demand for unification with Greece and were hinting about an anti-colonial struggle, which would eventually materialize in the mid-1950s. The close
proximity of so many men of lower income appeared as a threat to turn these workers’ scheme into an incubator of local uprising/insurrection. Apart from government officials, the Cypriot Mayor of Nicosia also opposed the projects for his own reasons: He feared that the provision of housing would increase the waves of urbanization.\textsuperscript{20} Others based their reaction on practical matters—namely, that the multiple stories increased the dependence on imported materials such as iron beams.

Despite the reactions that were voiced, the PWD was able to advance its views through an analysis of cost that favored multi-storey buildings both in terms of economy of construction and in terms of economy of networks (road construction, water systems, drainage etc.), which, as they argued, could more than compensate for the higher cost of land in the town center. As a result, the PWD was commissioned to design three housing complexes, as a pilot emergency scheme to partially alleviate the housing crisis in the capital city of Nicosia.\textsuperscript{21} One was a complex of flats for families and the other two were hostels for singles. All schemes were to house both Greek- and Turkish-Cypriots, as part of the colonial government’s effort to promote the interaction of the two communities, at a time when the national aspirations of especially the Greek Cypriot community were beginning to be expressed. Of course, this type of coexistence was not uncommon at that time, as both in towns and in rural settlements, members of the two communities coexisted commercially and socially, even if they resided in distinct neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{22} It was not until later, in the late 1950s, that the conflicting national aspirations of the two communities would fully surfaced lead to radical spatial separations.

![Figure 1: Ground floor plan and section of Proposed Working Class Flats, PWD Cyprus: State Archives, Cyprus, SAI 705/1944.](image-url)
The complexes were designed on three different sites within the Venetian walls of Nicosia. The complex of flats consisted of 78 one-bedroom units, forming three curved wings/arms, each comprised of two three-storey blocks with communal lavatories and laundries (Fig. 1). Each hostel consisted of 210 and 189 rooms respectively. The first hostel followed a similar form as the complex of flats, and was organized as 3 parallel three-storey curved arms that were connected with a transverse wing through their middle—a three-storey “spine” which included the communal bathrooms, kitchen facilities, a canteen and a “caretakers flat” (Fig. 2). The second hostel was similar but with rectilinear wings. All projects included big atriums and external circulation corridors. The buildings covered just about 30% of the area of the site, allowing generous distances among wings, which were justified by the project architect in terms of access to light and air and a more hygienic environment—echoing the principles of interwar modernist urbanism that favored taller buildings and large open spaces on the ground for the purposes.

The scale and form of these new blocks, which maintained substantial distances from roads and adjacent plots, were introducing an altogether new aesthetic and a different mode of living than that which characterized the introspective character of local houses and the labyrinthine urban fabric of town centers (Fig. 3). The population density remained similar, but the sparsity of the new buildings, could lay claims on avoiding overcrowding as much as on improving sanitation.
Because of their favorable economic indicators and their promise to reform the primitive character of indigenous housing of unplanned neighborhoods and towns, these schemes were embraced by the government. The regular, geometric design of the schemes appeared to offer order, efficiency and healthy leaving, promising the establishment of a new avenue towards modernity. As the governor himself stated, these schemes acknowledged, these schemes had the potential to provide “a standard of accommodation, convenience, sanitation and appearance, considerably in advance of existing working-class housing in the colony.”

In the end, however, further analysis of these schematic designs revealed the large and tall building masses were much more extravagant than initially estimated by the PWD, because they would necessitate the importation of large quantities of materials, which were in very low supply due to the war. In addition, the rent prices that needed to be charged in order to absorb the cost of construction were estimated to be prohibitively high for the workers. And there was no possibility of securing additional funding from the municipality of Nicosia as the Mayor opposed to the scheme; furthermore, this construction required a lengthy time frame, which contradicted the urgency of delivery. For all these particular conditions of Nicosia, the Governor decided to abandon the project, albeit “with reluctance.”

Figure 3: Map of Nicosia’s center of 1944 indicating the number of building’s storeys: State Archives, Cyprus, SA1 705/1944.
In search of a “standard” typology for Cyprus

Given the difficulties faced for a multi-storey development, the Colonial government turned to the design of low rise houses in the suburbs. The smaller structures would avoid dependence on expensive imported materials and could be completed with the know-how of local builders. This alternative approach that moved away from the models of barracks or hostels, in favor of “cottages on a garden plot” was in tune with much of the logic of British-based Colonial Office on colonial development and welfare that “applied to colonial management the same promise of postwar reconstruction that was being promoted in Britain.”

This alternative housing type would also save on construction time, in the sense that different groups of houses could be assigned to a number of different private contractors. The involvement of the private sector would bypass the government’s shortage of funds, and would have the added benefit of addressing unemployment. Specifically, the government proposed the immediate creation of 250 units using two different modes of financing. The first mode, which would account for 100 units, would commission private contractors to immediately construct housing on land that the government could obtain in the periphery of Nicosia. The housing would be rented out to low income families nominated by the government, at a low and fixed rate for three years, while contractors would receive a substantial government subsidy on imported materials, and they would have sole ownership of the property after three years. The second mode of financing the project was similar, except that that contractors had to buy their own property in urban peripheries without any subsidies other than those for imported materials. In this latter mode, the contractors could either use the government’s design or create their own which would, however, need to follow the same specifications in terms of user accommodations and dependence on imported materials. Perhaps this mode had the hidden agenda to extend the use of PWD’s standardized designs well beyond the projects the government itself could fund, to other housing projects that were funded by private initiatives. But as some officials had anticipated, this second mode was rejected by the private contractors as it only allowed for minimal profit compared to the risks it involved in renting at much low process that the current market prices, especially given the high inflation in rent prices.

The government was able to pursue only the first mode, and assigned the PWD the design of a single housing type which would come to be known by its future residents as “the standard.” The PWD housing type had a simple rectangular footprint of 25 x 17 feet and could be constructed as semi-detached or attached house in a row (terraced house), or in a L or U formation (Fig. 4). The “standard” working class home was to have two bedrooms allowing 48 sq. feet for each member of a 5-person family; this was considered close enough to the minimum acceptable area of 55 sq. feet per person set by 1935 Housing Act in England. Offering cross-ventilation and effective insolation in the bedrooms and living room, along with good sanitation services, it projected ideas of modern and healthy living, even if it offered no electrical supply (as this was generally difficult and expensive in the outskirts of towns).

The very spatial organization of the house was advancing a new mode of family interaction and privacy. Contrary to the multipurpose rooms of vernacular houses in Cyprus that usually aimed to accommodate large families, the house floor plan of “the standard” designated specific and separated uses for every single room based on the model of a small European nuclear family.

Still, the idea of providing for semi-open spaces in housing was certainly alluding to a typical practice in local vernacular architecture, which included a semi-open space called iliakos, typically on the south façade. This space accommodated utilitarian household tasks and was the heart of the social space of the house in the warm days of the year. Iliakos had a rectangular shape in plan, closed in its three sides by
wells, while its open side was constructed either with wooden posts or with arches, like in the “standard” house type by the PWD.

Figure 4: The standard type of proposed Workers’ Cottages: State Archives, Cyprus, SA1 849/1944/1N.

Material choices included local stone for external walls, and timber frame and masonry for internal partition walls. Mud and straw were used for thermally insulating the roof structure; round tiles for roof cladding; and marble for the flooring. In order to reduce the amount of structural timber (which was limited due to the over-quarrying of forests for military use during the Second World War that made Cypriot timber practically non-existent), door and window frames were constructed out of arched stone lintels, and the entrance porch was created by an archway following a practice found on the Island. The total amount of imported materials was thus confined to 278ft³ of structural timber, mainly for the roof and floors, 0.4 tons of concrete, and small amounts of glazing, paint and hardware. The strategies for economizing on imported materials were in tune with Downing Street’s directive to the colonies, to promote their own local construction techniques and experiment more with indigenous materials, noting that the problem of sourcing materials was even more serious than that of funding construction projects.
Similar experiments were done in countries such as neighboring Egypt and Ghana, which, built dwellings for low income households using local materials and methods of construction.\textsuperscript{41}

The PWD built the project in an area northeast of the Venetian walls of the capital Nicosia. The plot was deemed ideal as it was cheap, and located in an essentially industrial area where a great number of workers were employed. There was also the added benefit of being in proximity to both the town center and the village community of Omorphita, which was equipped with public services.\textsuperscript{42} Like the multi-storey flats, this project was intended for both of the main communities of the Island.

The “standard” housing type underwent some alterations by PWD after the intervention of the medical officer who deemed that sanitation facilities should be located outside the building for hygiene reasons. This resulted in the creation of an outhouse for ablution - laundry attached to the rear façade, while the toilet as a separate ancillary building located on the rear boundary of the site.\textsuperscript{43} This reasoning reintroduced a trait of traditional Cypriot architecture which had started to be abandoned by the locals.\textsuperscript{44}

In this ancillary building also a small chicken cottage was added as though to increase the standard type’s response to old local habits of including such animals within the household.

The masterplan developed by the PWD subdivided the land in urban blocks defined by wide streets and sidewalks. It, organized the housing units in linear blocks that contained 106 houses in total.\textsuperscript{45} Houses were grouped in several complexes of 2 to 6 units each, to allow for the phasing of construction. The buildings had great distances from the road, creating a garden on the street side and another larger one on the back side following British suburban development principles that trace back to Garden cities and anticipated British New Towns. Interestingly, this type of spatial organization of housing would gradually become typical in Cypriot towns following the planning regulations of the previous years and the more comprehensive planning legislation adopted one year later.\textsuperscript{46} The initial PWD criticism that Cypriots were incapable of handling gardens was no longer an obstacle. For British officials, projects like Omorphita had the potential to decisively initiate changes in local mindsets that would bring the urban society closer to British habits.

The front façade of the “standard” and its semi-open space that was reminiscence of Iliakos were looking into a yard that was open to the public space of the street. Unlike the courtyards of local vernacular houses which were more introverted and mainly housed ancillary functions of the home the new houses created a new relationship between dwelling and the street that was more anti-urban, and less efficient in terms of shading and heat gain.\textsuperscript{47}

Apart from the residential buildings, the masterplan incorporated a school, two shops, a football pitch and a coffee shop, following the modernist principles of self-sufficient neighborhood units (Fig.5). Buildings like health centers and the schoolmasters’ dwellings designed with the same principals of savings on materials, also incorporated historical references to the civilizations that had passed through the Island, in both their typology and morphology, as was the case of the shops which were designed along the lines of an Ottoman Kiosk.\textsuperscript{48} Similarly, the coffee shop, which was incorporated within public spaces to allegedly enhance the social interaction of male inhabitants, was consciously making a reference to the Island’s Ottoman past. These gestures were in tune with the common modernist practices to insert local character into a standardized master plan. For the particular case of Cyprus, the reference to Ottoman (or in other cases Byzantine or Gothic) stylistic traits was also a colonial strategy for managing the competing national aspirations of the ethnically mixed population on the Island.\textsuperscript{49}

The building contracts were signed in the middle of 1945 with an initial plan to complete the project in five months. But a series of general strikes and difficulties in sourcing masons and materials delayed it. The project was finally completed in 1946 (Fig. 6), to introduce the first workers settlement in an urban
area. Although workers housing had been created occasionally in early 20th Century to house miners in company towns, it was not until this point that such housing was to be included in cities. In the former case of miner housing, this was advanced by European and American companies serving paternalistic policies; in the latter case, this housing was brought by a colonial government advancing the logic of postwar British welfare state and the desire to socially transform urban space—and all this, of course, was not entirely disassociated from a paternalistic desire to control local workers.50

Figure 5: Omorphita’s Workers’ Housing Scheme Model: State Archives, Cyprus, SA1 849/1944/2N.

Residents were chosen by a government-appointed committee which included apart from a government official, and an employee of the Nicosia Municipality, two members of local trade unions, one Greek- and one Turkish- Cypriot. Apart from the prerequisite that the tenant be a worker, other selection criteria took into account the wages, family size, and current residential status. The 515 applications proved that the average family size was 7 members, instead of the five for which the project was designed.51 The great number of inhabitants in each unit, the limited space and the customs of the inhabitants ended up leading to alternations in the uses of these dwellings. For example, living rooms were partly transformed into sleeping areas; or the gardens were largely transformed into spaces for domestic labor tasks, with the introduction of light roof structures. Thus, once again, the initial aspirations for space organization or social reform, came face to face with alternative uses of the spaces and competing interrelations.
Figure 6: A row of houses just after their implementation in Omorphita Workers’ neighborhood: State Archives, Cyprus, SA1 849/1944/2N.

**Gardens vs. Public Spaces**

The Omorphita project may have resolved several of the difficulties of faced by the initial multi-storey project, but it did not alleviate the housing crisis much, as it accommodated only a handful of families for a few years. A series of surveys which the colonial government carried out since 1944, showed that in order to solve the housing crisis, roughly 1700 houses needed to be built by 1949, and many of these required substantial subsidies. Even after the Omorphita pilot scheme aside, there was still need for subsidizing 500-650 residences in towns. As a response, the government decided to subsidize up to 290 additional homes as its immediate priority between 1946 and 1948; and 110 homes between 1948 and 1949. These were the limits of the governments available funding for housing and the schemes were incorporated in a broader 10 year development plan for create prosperity and stability on the Island. This program, was imperative for the British in the given period, due to the pressure it was under by the majority of the natives who were in favor of decolonization and because no significant development programs or reforms have been implemented since 1931 the time when the first local uprisings had occurred.

For the new housing schemes, the colonial Government decided to collaborate with town municipalities. Such collaborations had been avoided before so as to avoid delays; at this point, however, they were considered important in easing public scrutiny and ensuring long-term success, especially because the Omorphita project had been harshly criticized by locals and their elected municipal councils for serving the interests of contractors. Just like the involvement of the private sector mentioned before, the collaboration with municipalities was a practice already followed in social housing practices followed in
the UK. This time, the housing would be constructed by Municipal Co-operations, which would then own the houses. Once again the workers would have to pay rent, the cost of which would be determined by the municipalities, which would be responsible for the design as well as the allocation of the units. The government, in turn, would offer a subsidy (which was smaller than in the Omorphita case), and any additional funds required would be provided in the form of a loan. These conditions were notably less beneficial to the Municipalities in comparison to what Omorphita offered to contractors. Even though the municipalities criticized the government’s plan for both the level of funding and the limited number of workers’ dwellings, they accepted it, under pressure from public opinion and trade unions, like the newly established and leftist leaning Pancyprian Labour Federation.

The Nicosia Municipality, which had been allocated the greatest number of workers housing, decided to follow the government’s suggestions to erect the workers houses in an area adjunct to the southern boundary of Omorphita in order to save on the provision of public amenities. To render the new project as an extension of the previous one, the Nicosia Municipality used the “standard” house type for the construction of 134 dwellings and the siting of the units followed the pattern of the previous project (Fig. 7). Nonetheless, the Nicosia Municipality appeared more eager to highlight its modernist aesthetics: it eliminated the entrance porch which had an arch that was widely associated with local formal vocabularies; and it favored plaster over the exposed stone for a similar reason. The Municipality of Larnaca also opted to follow the same logic of low density cottage development in the outskirts, without however making the two formal changes to the “standard” Nicosia attempted. Also, the Larnaca Municipality used the U formation in more compact forms, so as to respond to the geometric characteristics and the limitation of space of the plots. In addition, Larnaca chose not to follow the British colonial preference for pushing the two communities to mix within the social housing it provided. Unlike Nicosia and the other municipalities, the Larnaca municipality placed the houses for Turkish-Cypriot inhabitants within an existing Turkish-Cypriot neighborhood in the center of town; and it placed the Greek-Cypriots inhabitants in a separate area in the outskirts.
Figure 7: The Nicosia’s Municipal Workers’ neighborhood (indicated with red line) and the Omorhita’s first workers’ housing (indicated with hidden red line), as they appeared in a 1963’s aerial photo: Department of Land and Surveys, Cyprus, 72_19_029, October 1963.

The Municipality of Limassol followed another strategy, which may not be entirely unrelated to the mainly leftist leanings of the council. It redesign the typical housing unit. This was done on a site north to the industrial zone of town. The new designs (by municipal engineer Nicos Rousos) followed the principal of the two-storey block of Omorphita, but reconfigured the attached and semidetached standard house into typical flats (Fig. 8). The choice to opt for the design of flats was for two main reasons. Firstly, the municipality held the opinion that houses with such a small area would be less functional if they were spanning over two levels; secondly, the flats reduced costs, allowing the municipality to reduce rental prices.

The apartments proposed for this phase had been designed so as to have their own private entrance and access to entirely private yards: the ground floor units with a yard on the street frontage and the first floor units with yards located at the rear of the plot which would be accessed by a staircase leading from a balcony. By allocating a yard for each unit and by omitting common spaces such as staircases and corridors, this dwelling was closer to some elements of the local vernacular, even if the flat typology was a novelty for local culture. This is why the Rousos contended that his proposals were in tune with the “mentality and habits of the locals,” even as they reflected the needs of the period for providing a cost-effective shelter.

The flats could meet the needs of 5-member families as was the case in Omorphita. The bathroom was reinstated within the unit, as the locals did not share the medical officer's opinion that these facilities needed to be outside. Local materials were once again used, with stone being the main building component. In contrast to Omorphita, the first floor slab was replaced with reinforced concrete, which was considered more economical than structural timber and this small quantity of material required could be sourced. The flats were designed in free standing buildings which echoed garden city principles, but with a much higher density than Omorphita. The masterplan also included pedestrian paths and plants along with a municipal playground. The final drawings which were submitted in 1947 after various delays, proposed that only 40 flats be located on the site due to site limitations. The remaining 20 flats were built in another area, on the opposite side of the town center, once again in the vicinity of industrial areas.

In studying the plans for approval, the PWD criticized the municipality with regards to both the flat typology of the residences and the masterplan’s waste of space. The PWD insisted that the design of the two-storey semi-detached and attached housing which had been selected for Omorphita was a far better model than the flats, due to the open nature of the suburban setting, their efficiency, and cross ventilation in all the main spaces. The PWD was mostly worried about the many open spaces included in the master plan (pedestrian walkways and the spaces between the housing complexes), as they found them disproportionately large as compared to private gardens corresponding to each flat. The PWD tried to couch its concern in terms of practicality, stating the “maintenance of public spaces in small housing estates is problematic.” But it quickly tied its argument to its strategies for social control: “encouraging gardening, growing vegetables etc.” they argued, has a good moral influence on the tenants;” and more importantly, “it keeps [men] away from the coffee-house – that source of most of our troubles.” In other words: the debate on private gardens vs. public spaces was not merely a practical matter of maintenance, nor a mere question of how to facilitate family life and make “living at home interesting.” It came down to colonial anxieties of handling local aspirations and implementing social control.
The concept of developing the units as flats was also followed by the Famagusta Municipality based on the similar reasoning as above. The municipal engineer Stavros Economou was commissioned in 1947, by which time the cost of construction had risen by 20% as compared to the Omorphita “standard.” The flats were similarly arranged in small free standing two-storey complexes. In this case however, Economou designed three variations of flat so as to optimize for sunlight (Fig.9). As was the case with the Municipality of Limassol, the layout of the apartments was done in such a way that they would all have access to their own private yards. The yards were designed on the internal face of the plot of land, whereas the front gardens were given over for public use.

Figure 8: Plans of proposed Workers’ Houses for Limassol Town, 1945: Municipality of Limassol Archives, ΔΑ1/616.

As far as the construction was concerned, the use of local materials was once again the driving force. The pitched roofs, however were replaced by a flat slab of reinforced concrete, thus repeating the practice of building a hybrid structure of masonry and concrete as had been done by the Limassol Municipality. The materials required for this type of structure (concrete and steel) could now be easily supplied from the Middle East.
The Famagusta Municipality predicted that there would be a need for further expansion of workers housing in the town, and considered the designated 50 dwellings too small a number to cope with demand. It therefore developed a masterplan for 150 residences, based on the aforementioned typologies, on the outskirts of the city center.\textsuperscript{67} The masterplan included shops, a community center, a sports ground, and parks. The government refused to view the masterplan as a whole, highlighting that such a scheme would create “an undesirable heavy density of population for an outer zone.” It also recommended that it would be more beneficial to build houses instead of flats in the area which was assigned to the 50 dwellings and that more land are should be given towards providing gardens than public spaces, as they had also suggested in the case of Limassol.\textsuperscript{58}

The municipal housing projects of the 4 largest towns were finally completed in 1950, whereas Paphos, the smallest municipality remained out of the program, after an interim review that led the government to alter its proposal. The difficult economic circumstances of the period and the huge delays in approvals and discussions which caused also by the triangular cooperation between the municipalities, the local government and the UK resulted in the abandonment of the plan for an additional 110 worker homes.

Figure 9: Workers’ Housing Scheme, Proposed types of houses, Famagusta Municipal Corporation, 1947: \textit{State Archives, Cyprus, SAI 580/1945}. 
Conclusion

The worker houses that were created in the aftermath of the Second World War and before the end of colonialism only “scratched the surface” of the housing crisis in Cyprus, but they created a catalyst for advancing many different visions of social reform. These visions were tied to colonial efforts to project principles of the logic of welfare state, and simultaneously, to manage and control their colony. These visions were also tied to municipalities’ aspirations to modernize their urban territories and embrace modernist social and aesthetic agendas. Emerging in a period when trade unionism was increasing and nationalist demands for self-determination were about to surface, these social visions and the design of social housing they advanced demonstrate how notions of hygiene, standardization, rationalism and orderliness, where tied to conceptions of peaceful lifestyles, and social order, that would steer clear from worker riots and ethnic tensions. These conceptions of a house, or of family life and urban life were neither singular nor simple. The failures of some housing schemes to materialize, and the repeated modifications of later schemes show that there was a constant negotiation of notions of efficiency, domesticity, economy, and modernity.

1For the socio-economic and political reasons that created the various urbanization waves from the interwar period until the end of colonialism, see Michael Attalides, Social Change and Urbanization in Cyprus, A study of Nicosia (Nicosia: Social Research Center, 1981), 49-97; and Simoni Angelides, “The Cyprus economy under British Rule (1878-1960), ” in The Development of the Cypriot Economy, from the prehistoric period to the present day, ed. Vasos Karageorghis and Demetrios Michaelides (Nicosia: University of Cyprus and Bank of Cyprus, 1996), 209-223.

2Between 1931 and 1946, urban population rose by 53.6%. By the time the British left Cyprus in 1960, urban population rose by another 78.1%. Cyprus Census of Population and Agriculture 1946, 3; and Cyprus Census of Population and Agriculture 1960, Vol. 1, 6.

3Acting Governor to the Secretary of State for the colonies, 24 October 1944, State Archives, SA1 849/1944/1/N, 36.

4Extract from Commissioner Nicosia’s August Report, 16 September 1946, State Archives, SA1 849/1944/2/N, 234; Extract from Commissioner Limassol’s Confidential monthly Report (for Sept. 1946), 7 October 1946, State Archives, SA1 849/1944/2/N, 242; Pancyprian Federation of Labour, an interview with the Attorney-General, 3 October 1952, State Archives, SA1 1656/1952/1, 16-23; and Report of a Sub-committee of the Committee appointed to review the Housing Problem in Cyprus, State Archives, SA1 1656/1952/1, 128-138.

The first workers housing schemes in Cyprus came from recommendations submitted by the Wages Commission appointed as a result of this strike. Controller of Supplies to MESOCO, 5 June 1944, State Archives, SA1 705/1944, 22-24.

These debates are imprinted in the internal governmental correspondence relative to the housing problem. See for example: R.H. Macartney, The office of the Architect, P.W.D. to the Director of P.W.D., 31 March 1944, State Archives, SA1 705/1944, 1-3; Commissioner Limassol to Colonial Secretary, 29 April 1944, State Archives, SA1 705/1944, 13-14; and Commissioner Nicosia and Kyrenia to Colonial Secretary, 31 July 1944, State Archives, SA1 705/1944, 41-42.


Under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act (CDWA) of 1940, Britain subsidized development projects in the colonies, across the colonial empire. See for example, Njoh, Planning Power, Town planning and social control in colonial Africa, 60.

The lack of comprehensive town planning legislation and the provision of planning schemes related to the fact that not many British resided in Cyprus, and native urban areas of local population usually did not attract so much attention; besides, up to WWII the Island was perceived as a less valuable colony. Regarding town planning in Cyprus see Costas Georgiou, British Colonial Architecture in Cyprus, (Nicosia: En Tipsis, 2013), 42-47.

In inter-war period council houses on cottage estates was the dominant type of housing in UK, as over 1 million of such houses were constructed, while the council flats counted about 100,000 units, developed mainly in London. In 1940s too this type of development continued on suburban estates and limited blocks of flats were built mainly on bomb sites. See Matthew Taunton, Fictions of the city, class, culture and mass housing in London and Paris, (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2009), 141; and Patrick Dundleavy, The Politics of Mass Housing in Britain 1945-1975, A study of Corporate Power, and Professional Influence in the Welfare State, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 35.

In New Delhi such housing was provided for lower ranking workers and clerical staff. See Jyoti Hosagrahar, Indigenous Modernities, Negotiating architecture and urbanism, (New York: Routledge, 2005), 147.

Especially in East and Central Africa until WWII this kind of housing was well established, as British preferred African men “to retain ties to the land.” This type of housing was also provided for armed forces, mines and plantations. See Harris and Hay, “New Plans for housing in urban Kenya, 1939-63,” 195-202; and Home, “From barrack compounds to the single-family house: planning worker housing,” 330-336.


R.H. Macartney was a young architect working in Cyprus since 1939, and was responsible for a variety of housing projects for government officials. See Kenneth W. Schaar, Michael Given, George Theocarous, Under the clock: colonial architecture and history in Cyprus, 1878-1960, (Nicosia: Bank of Cyprus, 1995), 82-86.


Commissioner of Nicosia and Kyrenia to Colonial Secretary, 31 July 1944, State Archives, SA1 705/1944, 41-42.

Regarding trade union rise in Cyprus see Attalides, Social Change and Urbanization in Cyprus, 58.

Commissioner of Nicosia and Kyrenia to Colonial Secretary, 31 July 1944, State Archives, SA1 705/1944, 41-42; and Th. Dervis, Mayor of Municipal Corporation Nicosia to The Commissioner Nicosia, 5th September 1945, State Archives, SA1 849/1944/2/N, 76.

Governor of Cyprus to the Secretary of States for the Colonies, 24 July 1944, State Archives, SA1 705/1944, 38-39.


R.H. Macartney, The office of the Architect PWD to the Director of PWD, 16 April 1944, State Archives, SA1 705/1944, 5-6; and Director of Public Works to Colonial Secretary, 21 April 1944, State Archives, SA1 705/1944, 12.

Regarding the Hostel’s response to the climate the PWD stated: “The Hostel has been planned so that all the bedrooms face approximately to the West. It is considered that on the whole this aspect is the most pleasant for use all the year around. It neither gets the cold winds in the winter, nor the worst of the summer heat, it also gets the cool night wind in the hot weather...The distance between arms is about 60 feet, resulting in an angle of light from the roof of one arm to the ground floor window sill of the adjacent arm of approximately 24 degrees, which is very generous.” See R.H. Macartney, The office of the Architect PWD to the Director of P.W.D., 16 April 1944, State Archives, SA1 705/1944, 5.

According to 1946 statistics, the population density in the Old town of Nicosia within ramparts was 66.8 persons per acre, and the proposed plans show that this was more or less maintained by projects. See Cyprus Census of Population and Agriculture 1946, 2.

Acting Governor to Secretary of State for the colonies, 24 October 1944, State Archives, SA1 849/1944/1/N, 33-37.

Ibid.

See for example, Home, “From barrack compounds to the single-family house: planning worker housing,” 330, 339-340.

Ibid., 340.

The assistance for unemployment was “a secondary but not a less important justification for launching” the housing scheme. See, Acting Governor to the Secretary of State for the colonies, 24 October 1944.

Record of meeting held at the Colonial Secretary’s office, 8 September 1944, State Archives, SA1 849/1944/1/N, 12-23.

The subsidies would reach the 1/3 of the value of the houses including the cost of land. See, Workers’ Housing Scheme for Nicosia, State Archives, SA1 849/1944/1/N, 66.


Schaar, Given and Theocharous, Under the clock, 90.

See, Blueprint of proposed Workers Cottages, PWD Cyprus, 30 November 1944, State Archives, SA1 849/1944/1/N, 48; Specifications of materials for the approved “standard” working-class home, State Archives, SA1 849/1944/1/N, 48A; Hosagrah, Indigenous Modernities, 165.

At that time, only 41.9% of households had access to electricity in towns, and only 10% in the entire country.

Resuscitation of the Building Trade, Colonial Secretary to All Commissioners, 10 April 1944, State Archives, SA1 613/1943, 23-25.

Specifications of materials for the approved “standard” working-class home.

General Aspects of the Housing Problem in the Colonial Empire, Papers on Colonial Affairs, December 1943; and Circular Letter from Oliver Stanley, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Colonial Governments, 16 December 1943, State Archives, SA1 613/1943, 17-17a.


Workers’ Housing Scheme for Nicosia, 12 January 1945, SA1 849/1944/1/N, 58, 66.
The Office of the Director of L.R.& Surveys to Colonial Secretary, 21 May 1945, State Archives, SA1 849/1944/2/N.133.

For the influence on the question of hygiene in British architecture see for example Paul Overy, *Light, air and openness: modern architecture between the wars*, (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 2008).

The Omorphita Project was briefly discussed in Schaar, Given and Theocharous, *Under the clock*, 88-90; some further discussion appears in Georgiou, *British Colonial Architecture in Cyprus*, 230-233.

For the way these regulations effected the Cypriot towns see, Socrates Stratis “Σχέσεις μεταξύ δημοσίου και ιδιωτικού, και του ρόλου της τοπογραφίας. Η Παραγωγή του Κυπριακού Δομινον Τοπιού” [Relations between public and private and the role of topography. The Production of the Cyprus Built Landscape], *Arxitektonika Themata* [Architectural Issues], 41(2007), 66-71.


The use of an amalgam of styles, local and imported was well established in other colonies too, like in India and south-east Asia. See Jan Morris, Charles Allen, Gillian Tindall, Colin Amery, and Gavin Stamp, *Architecture of the British Empire*, (London: George Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986), 44.


For information about the tenants and the criteria of their selection see Press Communique, Applications from prospective tenants under the Nicosia Workers; Housing Scheme, State Archives, SA1 849/1944/2/N, 178; Governor of Cyprus to the Secretary of State for the colonies, 9 May 1946, State Archives, SA1 849/1944/3, 30; and Extract from Part II of the Development Report, Housing, SA1 849/1944/3, 22-26.


A Ten-Year Programme of Development for Cyprus, 1946.

Housing Schemes, 12 February 1946, State Archives, SA1 819/1944/3, 9-11. The severe critique of the projects led the led the government to issue a written statement in its defense. See Workers’ Housing Scheme Defended, State Archives, SA1849/1944/1/N, 86-88


Governor to the Secretary of the State for the Colonies, 11 July 1946, State Archives, SA1 849/1944/3, 42-44.

Nicosia Housing Scheme, State Archives, SA1 1111/1945/2, 32.

Workers’ Housing Schemes at Larnaca and Famagusta, 12 July 1948, State Archives 580/1945, 92-94.

Workers’ Housing, Report by the Municipal Engineer Nikos Rousos, 16 October 1945, Municipality of Limassol Archives, ΔΛ1/616, 3-9.

Ibid.


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Famagusta Municipal Housing Scheme, State Archive, SA1580/1945, 50.

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