POSTCOLONIAL UTOPIAS IN THE CONTEXT OF CYPRUS

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This paper examines linkages between utopia, politics, and tradition in postcolonial Cyprus; an island characterized both by rapid processes of nation-building and intense internal socio-political tensions. Casting the spotlight on a 1968-73 international design competition for a major Government complex, the paper investigates the history and politics of the competition brief, submissions, and jury processes, to uncover the different attitudes towards modernity, modernization and tradition being advanced by Government officials and designers. Contemplating the project’s aspirations to nationhood as a strategy for overcoming Cyprus’s dystopian realities of the time, the paper reflects on it as a practice of utopia.

INTRODUCTION: POSTCOLONIAL ARCHITECTURE AS A PRACTICE OF UTOPIA

This paper examines linkages between utopia, politics, and tradition, in postcolonial Cyprus; an island characterized both by rapid processes of nation-building and intense internal socio-political tensions. The spotlight is on a 1968-73 international competition for the design of a major complex of Government offices—the largest public building and bureaucratic mechanism constructed in postcolonial Cyprus. We contemplate postcolonial architecture in Cyprus as a practice of utopia, in the following sense: If we accept a definition of utopia NOT as a place that does not, or cannot exist, but rather, as way of thinking and imagining through which society contemplates its aspirations, or shapes “perfected images of itself” we can then treat utopia as a “social imaginary” which embodies “transformative power.” Although this understanding of utopia can be traced back to 19th and early 20th century ideas of progress, modernization, rationalization and development, it received new meanings in the cold-war and postcolonial environment and throughout various decolonization processes.

In order to understand postcolonial architecture in Cyprus as this kind of utopian practice, we first contemplate the complex realities against which such practice emerged. Specifically, we contemplate the processes of decolonization and nation-building in the particular context of Cyprus, and also the realities of an intense internal political conflict that formed a palpable backdrop for nation-building efforts. In this context, the Government’s and architects’ attempts to nurture nationhood and social unity can be seen as a utopian practice: they were advancing a perfected image of a society in hopes to transform it. In other words: If we discuss nation-building in Cyprus and the particular architectural competition as practices of utopia, it is not to dismiss them as unrealistic, but to contemplate the way they aspired to mobilize alternative dynamics that would overcome the dystopias of the present.

By focusing on an architectural competition, whose implementation was ultimately cut short by yet another conflict and war that divided the island, the paper aims to relate postcolonial architectural practices to the way local society conceptualized an idealized self. The paper’s mapping of the utopian in its tangible formulations, has a twofold goal: to reject a singular notion of utopia as an idealized and unrealistic vision which aims to transcend the existing, in favor of an understanding of utopian thinking as a practice which is “immanent in the present.”
1960's CYPRUS: DOMESTIC CONFLICT, DEVELOPMENT AND NATION-BUILDING

The end of British colonial rule in Cyprus and the founding of the Cyprus Republic in 1960, brought a new State Constitution, which had to carefully balance power between the majority Greek population and the Turkish population of the island (the latter approximately representing 18%). Internal affairs were quite difficult: Not only because the colonial period, and Britain's "ill-thought out withdrawal strategy" had left unresolved tensions among the ethnic communities of the island, but also because the attempts to carefully tiptoe around the dynamics and desires of the two main communities on the island, sometimes nurtured various types of resentment regarding the distribution of political and administrative powers. Internal complexities were made all the more difficult because the "guarantor powers" of Britain, Greece and Turkey were given significant powers (including the right of military intervention). Overall, the end of colonialism, left Cyprus with two British military bases, opposing nationalist sentiments related to either Greece or Turkey, and many other influences by various actors operating within the Cold War context.

It did not take long for conflict to surface. The first outbreak was in 1963, when the Turkish Cypriots reacted against the Greek Cypriot President's proposal for constitutional amendments titled "Suggested Measures to Facilitate the Smooth Functioning of the State and Remove Certain Causes of Intercommunal Friction." The Turkish Cypriot Vice-President rejected them, perceiving them as an effort by the Greek community to achieve unification with Greece. By 1964, the Turkish Cypriot officials withdraw from their Government positions and the T/C population turned to enclaves, leaving to the Greek Cypriots the control of the Government and central administration. (Fig.1) This was the first time the two major ethnic communities were divided along geographical lines. Ethnically unified territories of various sizes were scattered all over the island in urban and rural areas. Notably, the Nicosia historic center, the main site of urban violence, was divided for the first time in half.

From 1964 onwards, the two communities followed different political agendas with Turkish Cypriot community reaching out to Turkey for political and economic support; and Greek Cypriots relying on the political bonds with Greece. In 1967 a second violence outbreak led to shootings and killings, to Turkey's military involvement and Greek troops withdrawal from Cyprus to avoid war. After this incident Turkish Cypriots announced the institution of separate administration named 'Provisional Turkish Cypriot Administration" and in 1968 inter-communal talks where initiated in search of a settlement of the Cyprus Problem.

Even in the midst of tensions and conflict outbreaks, the young Cypriot State embraced the postcolonial dream of nation-building from its very inception. Not only because there was, despite the tensions, a certain degree of euphoria about replacing the discredited colonial structures; but also because the goal to "safeguard economic and social progress" appeared as a way out of local restraints and conflict. A series of five-year "development plans" emerged, the first being unveiled between 1962-66, the second between 1967-71 and the third between 1972-1976. These development projects, embraced by both state and
private actors, did not simply aim to reshape the economy and infrastructure of the country; but they also aspired to nurture the creation of "good citizens." In the case of Cyprus, where different groups repeatedly resorted to violence to express drastically different views on the country's future, the nurturing of citizen pride had a particular appeal. The Development plans were looking ahead into a future beyond conflict, where different parts of Cypriot society would jointly enter modernity. As the economic minister stated in 1968, the Government was committed "to shape, despite the political anomalies of the past a highly efficient administrative machinery through the creation of conditions which would ensure and raise the standard of the Services." Actually, it was common for Government officials to address the public by presenting modernization and development as a means of transcending social and cultural differences, attacking simultaneously separatist trends:

"From the very outset, when the preparation of the Development Plan was initiated, it never occurred to us that Turkish community could remain aloof to, and away from, the progress of our small county. At the time when big countries with millions of people are forced to integrate, the Turkish Cypriots' insistence on separation and isolation, leading as it does to their economic stagnation, constitutes flagrant anachronism. For this reason the Plan encompasses a unitary Cyprus and is based on the unflagging support of the productive classes and of the whole of the Cypriot people." 

The following pages examine precisely one of the Government's modernizing gestures—namely its efforts to overall the Government administration service—to contemplate the larger sociopolitical aspirations that accompanied it. The spotlight is cast on the design of the Master Plan of Government offices in Nicosia, which was part of the second 5-year development plan—announced in 1968, right after the 1967 conflict. In the first months of 1968, the Cyprus Government announced—through the network of its embassies and architectural magazines—an international competition for the design of Government office complex in Nicosia. This competition was in many ways the greatest architectural and cultural event of the time. The implementation of the largest public building and bureaucratic mechanism ever constructed in Cyprus that would house almost all the ministries and Government services and departments in one single complex, was primarily the manifestation of the desire for decolonization and for creating a modern nation state. In extension this competition became an international statement of the young state's active commitment to modernization.

THE INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICES, AND ITS VISIONS OF NATIONHOOD

"Despite the intercommunal strife among some sections of the community, Cyprus is struggling to develop a more stable and equitable form of Government and a coherent national identity. As a symbol of its desire to exemplify this new order, and to gather together a scattered administration, the Cyprus Government sponsored in 1970 an international competition for the design of new offices to contain all ministries and departments on a site outside the walls of Nicosia, its capital city."
This description from the *Architects’ Journal* of 1973 sums up the architectural competition’s entanglement with postcolonial Cyprus’s political context. In the early years of 1970s when the *Architects’ Journal* was written, Cyprus society was witnessing, yet again, domestic conflicts, as competing visions of postcolonial futures took on different forms: some held onto ideas nationalistic aspirations related to the mainland of Greece or Turkey; others became proponents of non-alignment policies; or others, professed the establishment of two separate administrations. This internal turmoil—a legacy of colonial history—was becoming all the more complex in the 1970s. The aspiration to a “stable and equitable form of Government and a coherent national identity” mentioned in *Architects’ Journal* was in stark contrast to such “internal anomalies.”

**SEEKING A “NEW ORDER”: THE COMPETITION BRIEF**

On the surface, the competition reflected the Government’s effort to eliminate the aging Government buildings (often inherited from the colonial administration) which were “insufficient and in many cases, inappropriate for its good operation and the better public service.” The re-housing of the expanding state machine was to be deployed in a more centralized manner. As the competition Brief stated:

“It is hardly necessary to enlarge [sic] on the obvious difficulties the Government has had to face as the result of the dispersal and chronic insufficiency of the adapted buildings or on the heavy burden of maintenance and repair and rent changes... The accommodation to be provided is to serve principally the need of a centralized Government Administration.”

Prepared by an ad hoc Committee of Government officials, the competition Brief, which was given to the finalist architects who were invited to take part in the competition (see below), aspired to put almost all Government buildings on one site and under “one roof.” The concept of centralization was coupled with an idea of efficiency both in terms of the workplace and in terms of the broader Government operation. The efficiency of the Government workers was to be ensured by “uplifting the quality of the public offices” and by providing “better working conditions which will further improve the efficiency and provide better public services.” The efficiency of the broader Government operation was to be promoted by taking into account such factors as similarity of “function, accommodation requirements and standards” and “interrelationships” among different types of administration and corresponding ministries.

The goals of efficiency and centralization reflected a vision of a single, unified modern administration; an idea of a bureaucratic mechanism, whose different parts would be centrally coordinated for the public’s better service and local society’s benefit. Even if centralization and functionality were crucial to the Brief as ideas, their exact nature remained unclear. This is evident in the very way various titles were conflated in different Government records and reports on the competition: For example, the Brief of 1968 was titled “Master Plan for Government offices” whereas the final Report of the Government Committee (1969) spoke about the “Ministerial Buildings Complex.” Each of the titles reflected different attitudes...
towards the nature of the intervention. The title "Ministerial Building complex" gave priority to the Ministries, emphasizing thus the political aspect of the administration and the connection with the head of the state—who was the ultimate coordinator of the Ministries. Alternatively, the title "Master Plan for Government offices" emphasized the "executive role of the Civil Service, a role of offering equal service to the citizen irrespective of his social or ideological orientation."24

The idea of reinforcing the role of a postcolonial central power was of course not peculiar to Cyprus’s nation-building practices. It was a way of ensuring the coherence of national identity in contexts that were characterized by intense (multi-religious, and multi-linguistic) diversities.25 So, the idea of gathering the administration was in some ways also an idea of overcoming conflict among competing social voices in the local society.

MAPPING A NEW ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM AND RESPONDING TO THE COLONIAL PAST

The "new order" being sought by the competition was not only imagined with respect to the bi-communal conflicts in Cyprus. It was also set against the background of its recent colonial past and the State’s decolonization efforts. Granted, the new independent State’s was committed to a concept of modernization that resonated with the colonial project. Simultaneously however, the new state aspired to distance itself from colonial traditions and structures.

The new Government was in search of a new bureaucratic system to reflect the new political and administrative realities shaped after the colonial era. This search was not easy given that colonial structures were vividly present in the life of the new state: Colonial laws were still in effect, administrative practices still followed in the former colonial Government departments and old buildings were still in use. For some years after the independence, the state promoted new legislation and sought to increase the efficiency of the civil service, to meet the central Government’s local and international aspirations. In the new administrative environment the power was distributed on two levels: The Head of the State and the Ministers’ Council, on the one hand, and the Civil Service on the other. Both of these needed to constitute major landmarks in the capital city, and were strategically positioned, as we will see below.

The site reserved for the Government office complex was the old colonial secretariat, an area that was state owned by that point and situated between the Presidential Palace and the city center, in close proximity to both. (Fig2) Just by virtue of its location in the city the site responded to the Competition’s requirements to create an interface between the state and the people between a sovereign central Government and the local society. But there was actually much more to the choice of that particular site: It was, after all the area of the colonial secretariat! Following the recommendation of the ad hoc Committee that was appointed to prepare the competition Brief, the Ministers Council allowed the clearing of all colonial buildings. Thus the very site of the competition reflected aspiration to negate colonial structure. The site of the new complex—the epitome of the new State’s administrative apparatus
was to rise up on the ruins of the colonial secretariat! The tabula rasa for the new built complex was emblematic of a new beginning that the new State aspired to create (new administrative machine, new symbols), by negating the colonial past.

The Government's attitude towards colonial structure was not always consistent with what has been described above. An altogether different strategy was employed in the choice of site for the other major administrative center, intended for the head of the state and the Ministries Council. The Presidential Palace was to re-appropriate the former British Government House. The new head of the state was to re-use the former Governor's Palace—a colonial symbol par excellence—still bearing all the traces of Colonial tradition and Colonial rule in its architectural form and its history. It was considered fitting, it seems, to refashion a symbol of colonial oppression in terms of a new mode of democratic governance—as if in an effort to subvert the colonial past. The action of applying new meaning to the same architecture was in metaphorical terms a statement of victory of the colonial state, and it can also be understood as a reinforcement of the post-independence euphoria initiated by the success of the anti-colonial struggle. Furthermore: Given the internal conflicts that were marking the very emergence of the young Cypriot State, one may argue that the very reposition of this center of power (Presidential palace) in the former colonial symbol was also a reaffirmation of the importance of a centralized and unitary state.

Two major landmarks of administrative power in the capital city, two radically different strategies! The Government complex would raze colonial structures to the ground and rebuild; the Presidential palace would opt for a strategy of adaptive reuse. This underlines the young state's ambivalent relationships to the colonial past (and traditions.) Either way, both buildings shared a similar goal: To reaffirm the significance of a centralized state.

RECONCEPTUALIZING LOCAL AND ITS TRADITIONS

From the very early stages of the competition, the president of the ad hoc Committee and General director of the Ministry of Communications and Works was skeptical of considering submissions by Cypriot architects. It was made clear that Cypriot firms would increase their chances at making the finalist short list if they formed collaborations with international firms. This was only one of the indications that Government was determined to prove the international character and standards of the competition.

There initial call to architects to enter the competition was publicized widely around the world. The Government utilized its network of embassies and some of the well-known international journals and architectural magazines such as: RIBA Journal, Architects' Journal, L' Architecture d'aujourd'hui, and the Greek architectural magazine Architektoniki, to spread the message. The call was effective as it attracted 204 candidates: architects, architectural firms and teams in different countries. The candidates responded to a short questionnaire, using Greek or English language, in order to establish their
experience with similar projects providing information, which formed a simple database. This database was used later as the source for compiling various lists, before coming up to the final selection of the second stage contestants.

The ad hoc Committee created a shortlist with 15 candidates (10 from UK, 2 from Canada, 1 from Israel, 1 from Italy), but it felt it could not arrive at a final decision without external input about of international architectural scene. Thus the committee invited the British architect and planner, Arthur Ling, Head of the Department of Architecture and Civic Planning of University of Nottingham, which was already collaborating with the Department of Town Planning, and Housing of Cyprus for making Urban Plans for Cyprus cities and towns.\(^{28}\) Arthur Ling was invited as a consultant for the Competition committee and would later get another invitation to join the final Jury.

Ling came up with his own list of 28 names, and later made a shorter list of 5 firms that he picked single-handedly. His criteria are not exactly clear, but he passed on evaluating Cypriot or Greek architects, arguing that the Committee was more qualified to judge them. This was of course peculiar as the Cypriot architects were in fact sometimes collaborating with well know international firms of the time (such as TAC, Maxwell Fry and James Cubitt among others). Nonetheless, the Committee, yielded to their consultant's position by creating a separate list of international teams collaborating with Cypriots—compromising in a way their own commitments to a 'scientific' process. What is most interesting is that this second list created by the Ad hoc Committee did not share any names with their first list.

Eventually, the Ministers' Council took exception to the ad hoc committee's deference for foreign expertise and expressed its desire to include Cypriot Architects in the design stage.\(^{29}\) In the end, the final shortlist strode a balance among the three lists that had been prepared: the Committee's list of 15 selections, the second Committee's list of 6 Collaborations between international and Cypriot architects, and Arthur Ling's personal favorites of 5 international firms. The Committee and the Government tried to tread carefully between the need to embrace local human resources while retaining an extroverted international outlook for the modern state, encouraging collaborations between local and international architects.\(^{30}\)

The six finalists were (1) Sir Basil Spence, Bonnington & Collins (UK) with J. & A. Philippou Bros (CY) (2)Studio Valle (IT) with Leptos-Davidian Design Group (CY). (3) James Cubitt, Fello Atkinson and Partners (UK) with St.Economou and N.Diamantinis (CY) and Ove Arup and Partners and MDA. (4) Kalogerar, Koulermos, Amourgis (GR) with Fry, Drew and Partners (UK) and K.G.Levas (CY). (5) The Architects Collaborative (USA) with F.Kolakides and Associates (CY). (6) Arieh Sharon (IL) with Vafeidis, Zemylas and Kythreotis (CY).

Given the high representation British architects on the shortlist (in the first selection 10 out of 15 firms were from UK) it is perhaps not surprising that the first two prizes were given to collaborations of British and Cypriot firms.
The winner that emerged from the 6 finalists was the team of Sir Basil Spence, Bonnington and Collins form the UK collaborating with the local firm Philippou Brothers. (Fig.3) What was most appealing to the Jury was this team’s introduction of a modular system. The modular system met the competition’s requirement of phased construction (explained mainly for financial reasons and the gradual transferring of Government departments) and satisfied functionality issues, at once. It was a clever interpretation of a self-consciously neutral technocratic (and uninspiring) brief, which did not enhance or prioritize any particular aspects of the architectural program. The module could be repeated as a functional and construction unit and, it could provide a certain degree of autonomy for different Ministries and Departments. It is as though it would emerge gradually out of the needs of the Government for office spaces. It could also create smaller groups connected internally with vertical towers that provided services and direct accesses minimizing long corridor spaces. As John Bonnington (project architect of the practice of Sir Basil Spence, Bonnington and Collins) explained:

“It is the intention of the Cyprus Government that the development should be phased over several years and for this reason we produced a modular development, with offices for individual ministries linked by vertical circulation and service towers. The various ministries “grow” from a traffic free pedestrian spine at first floor deck level, under which are two levels of access roads with parking for 2500 vehicles, so that pedestrian and vehicular circulation is segregated.”

By 'breaking down' the functions, the ‘module’ combined many qualities that were appealing in the eyes of the Jury. For one, it appealed to their anxieties about the cost and technical success of what was possibly the largest public building in Cyprus. Furthermore, it emphasized issues of functionality and flexibility that proved key in Jury deliberations:

“This proposal is very well presented with a conviction and consistency which are carried into the details of the project. Its functional arrangements are good; providing the accommodation required in a way which ensures the maximum flexibility in use without wasteful corridor space and good working conditions…”

The British firm of Sir Basil Spence, Bonnington and Collins already possessed a proven record of its commitment to a rational scientific and comprehensive approach, which aspired to encompass large and small-scale aspects of the project simultaneously. Bonnington at least articulated his design philosophy as follows:

“In practice my ideas are generated against a background of functional arrangements and circulation patterns. Simultaneously I try to develop an organizational background that can embrace the relationship of spaces, structural framework, and service systems… The process is likely to continue from large scale functional arrangements to the smaller intimate aspects of design, such as the furnishings…”

The winning's team proposal incorporated the aspect of flexibility on two levels: not only in the way it phased construction, (mentioned above), but also in the way it conceptualized the office organization. The winning submission provided alternative solutions of office typologies "cellular, open plan or
landscaped, depending on requirements" to meet the variety of needs of Government departments and services and also to accommodate future changes.

Bonnington had consistently supported in his practice and writings that "self-sufficiency in building is often too much to aim for, or to expect. Inherent in the design should be opportunities for adaptation or extension." The goal was to balance the functional aspects of the building and the users' fluctuating needs by introducing the concept of architecture as framework. This idea maintained a degree of flexibility. Similar ideas applied to another competition entry he had coordinated for his firm: the Kuwait National Assembly, proposed by Basil Bonnington and Spence in 1972, this project, which initiated Bonnington's relations with the Middle East experimented with phased construction and expandability. Both in Kuwait and in Cyprus, completeness and sufficiency were replaced by a system and organizational background "facilitating extension and reorganization."

The idea of architecture as a flexible framework allowed the accommodation of varying needs without compromising the scientific commitment to steer clear of individualistic caprices: As Bonnington stated:

"I will not sacrifice the disciplined relationships of space, framework, and systems merely to cope with every individual requirement, because I believe that people and processes are bound to change from initial intentions and that buildings should be able to cope with different future needs and requirements."

In this manifesto-like statement, Bonnington summed up his modernist sensibilities. His preoccupation with abstract concepts such as program, structure and functionality justified Modernization project and its power to transcend cultural contexts, local preferences and traditions. His emphasis on architecture "quality" as the only description of architecture that carries "real meaning" can explain also his rejection of any visual references to tradition as irrelevant to architecture's role and the universal nature of modernism: Speaking about his projects in Middle-East, Bonnington declared:

"We have very strong objections to overlaying an Arabic veneer on our buildings... The only exceptional occurrence of local historical reminiscence is with the planning of some of our housing schemes where observance of traditional life-style patterns is vitally important both inside of the dwellings and outside with the provision of courtyard gardens. But even then the architectural character derives directly from the method of construction and functional requirements such as sunshading. With other building types there is little historical relevance: there were no multi-storey car parks, office blocks, or stock exchanges. In Europe we do not design those (multi-storey parks, office blocks buildings in historical styles and there is no reason why we should do so in the Middle East."

Even as he spoke strongly against any references to tradition—Bonnington's proposals for both Kuwait and Cyprus show some response to climate and condition and to other aspects of local culture along with a certain emphasis on the design of public space. Open and public spaces in the project were treated as spaces where pergolas, pools, fountains and plantation acted as climate controlling devices—thus rationalized into functional and not just aesthetical elements. Nevertheless the overall effect of these spaces alludes to an aestheticization of local culture, as the description of the project implies: "The solution was based on a traditionally Middle Eastern form of introverted courtyards, shady internal gardens, and rooftop pergolas". It seems that the design's flexibility and modularity—which express
rationalism and scientism—and in its ephemeral public spaces—which celebrate everyday life—advanced an argument against monumental architecture. In the case of Kuwait Bonnington states: ‘...the site would provide a place which people... might enjoy rather than a monumental edifice to circumnavigate,’ and it seems that the same goal was advanced in the proposal for Cyprus where the ‘main feature of the scheme is a central ‘agora’, which rises through five stories with hanging gardens and flying bridges...’ The central ‘agora’ it can be related to the same intentions that lied behind the Kuwait National Assembly project: the creation of public space dedicated to the people of the city in the heart of an administrative center.

The idea of the ‘agora’ and its attempt to hint at a notion of a local tradition, however vague, was the one aspect of the proposal faced the Jury’s criticism (together with the ‘dominating’ presence of the vertical service and circulation towers) as not “appropriate for a building of this nature or for Cyprus.” (Fig.4) The introduction of an introvert public space of this scale explains the proposal’s lack of concern for designed out-door public spaces. Instead the whole complex was placed inside a uniform natural landscape, which in way related the building to the neighboring dry river. However the Jury considered this uniform treatment of open spaces as a negative and proposed an adjustment (which in fact was the second-prize’s strong point):

"...the approach of the building from the east has a similar landscape treatment. Here it seems less appropriate than on the riverside and it would be an improvement if more urban approach treating the area in front of the building as a public piazza with some paved areas rather than a front garden. In this way a better relationship with the city is likely to be established."

It is obvious that the Jury found the technocratic aspects of Bonnington and Philippou proposal appealing, but had a different take on the formal aspects of the design and the design of public space. With their comments, they emphasized the need for an administrative building to have a neutral character. In addition they made vague references to what was or was not ‘appropriate’ for Cyprus, reflecting an anxiety about the power of visual references and disguised symbolism.

The Basil-Philippou proposal was unanimously selected for the winning prize. In their concluding remark the Jury projected perhaps its own desires on the results of the competition, hoping to see the creation of a “meeting point for the people” of Nicosia and Cyprus recalling the dream of unified state. (Fig.5)

NATION-BUILDING, AND UTOPIA

The architectural competition for the Government offices in Cyprus is a practice of Utopia in the sense that it aspired to an idealized vision of a modernized State and a coherent nationhood. The Government (and architects’) efforts of promote a new order, crystallized into a search for efficiency and centralization of the national administration—and this was also in line with the Government’s search of a new role in local and international level. In the context of decolonization processes, the Government was
searching for a new bureaucratic system to reflect the new political and administrative realities shaped after the colonial era, aiming to replace the discredited colonial past. The clearing of the colonial secretariat to make room for the erection of a new administrative center reflected this negation of the colonial, and was also in accordance to the Government efforts to establish a new democratic interface between the state and all its citizens. The new administrative complex was to symbolize the Government's commitment to a shared nationhood, even if this meant sidestepping internal, political and social conflicts.

The architectural competition for the Government offices in Cyprus can be framed as a practice of Utopia in the sense that it merged the aspirations of nationhood with social unity and promoted the idealized vision of a unified society as a counter to the dystopic reality from which it emerged. The competition was announced and performed right in the midst of conflicts, divisions, armed clashes and danger of war that threatened the new state's existence and endangered the decolonization and modernization efforts. It projected a unified vision for the future believing in the "self-transformative power of a modern society and its capacity to transform" trying to mobilize alternative dynamics, promoting universalism, cosmopolitan consciousness and scientism, to overcome the dystopias of the time. In a saturated political environment the competition's emphasis on internationalism and scientism was celebrating modernization and nation-building with a postpolitical vision of the future that also refashioned ideas of local tradition in an attempt to distance it from politics.

The international Competition for the Government offices in Cyprus—the major architectural event of its time—was a utopian practice, not because it promoted an unrealistic vision to transcend the existing but because its idealized vision of a unified modern nation, aspired to transform the present. The aspirations of the competition embodied a critique of the present that looked into the future with a kind of "utopian energy." This look to the future—to paraphrase Douzinas's distinctions between utopia and "utopianism"—was characterized by threads of both the necessary and impossible, both the liberating and the oppressive.
Fig. 1. Turkish Cypriot enclaves after 1963-4 conflicts. Source: Stella Soulion. *Fettered Independence: Cyprus, 1878-1964, Map supplement*, Minnesota Mediterranean and East European Monographs, 16. Minneapolis, (Minn: Modern Greek Studies, University of Minnesota, 2006).
Fig 2. The Competition site rested between the center of the city (up right corner) and the Presidential Palace (down left corner), Digital Collage.
Fig. 3. The First Prize model in public exhibition after the announcement of the results of the competition, ©Department of Land and Surveys, Cyprus
Fig 4. First Prize physical model (up) and perspective drawing of 'agora' the central public space, illustrated in "Competition: government offices, Nicosia; first prize Sir Basil Spence, Bonnington & Collins", Bauern & Wohnen, vol. 29, no. 3, (1974 Mar.), 129-132.
Fig 5. The project of Basil Spence, Bonnington, Colls and Philippou Bros and its relation to the city, Digital Collage of model photo on aerial photograph of 1963, ©PIO Photographic Archive.

NOTES & REFERENCES


5 “Some of the major sources of constitutional tension were the provisions of the 70:30 ration in the public service, the separate majority vote in parliament, the establishment of separate municipalities, and the right of the president and vice president to veto decisions of the Council of Ministers and the Parliament”. Joseph S Joseph, “The London and Zurich Agreements,” in Britain in Cyprus Colonialism and Post-colonialism 1878-2006, ed. Hubert Faustmann and Nicos Peristianis. (Mannheim [Germany]: Bibliopolis, 2006), 458.

6 For an analysis of Cyprus' passing from colonial power system to Cold-War dynamics, see Oliver P., Richmond, “Decolonization and Post-Independence,” 535-559.

7 Makarios Memorandum to the Turkish Cypriot Vice-President Dr. F. Kucuk. Cited in Joseph S Joseph, “The London and Zurich Agreements,” 462.


9 For a description of the events that followed the Greek-Cypriot president Makarios constitutional amendments, see Stavros Panteli, The making of modern Cyprus: from obscurity to statehood, (New Barnet: Interworld, 1990), 196.


12 Makarios's great emphasis on education for example is related to this concern within development policies. See PIO Press release 28/2/1973, 4.

13 See “Address by the Minister of Finance Mr Renos Solomouides at the Panceyprian Civil Servants Trade Union Congress held today,” PIO 7/4/1968, (Nicosia: PIO), 3.


17 See “Address by the Minister of Finance Mr. A. Patsalides before the House of Representatives on the Budget for 1971”, PIO, 28/1/1971, (Nicosia: PIO), 17.

18 See the press release of the announcement of the competition prizes by the President of the Jury, P.M. Kazamias, PIO, 6/6/1973, (Nicosia: PIO), 1.

19 See “Master Plan for Government offices: The Brief: For the use of the Architects selected to submit plans and proposals”), PWD Archive 38/68/3 (Nicosia: PWD), 60-62.

20 In January 1968 a Committee by government officials was formed to organize the competition procedure and collect the necessary information needed throughout the process. Chief of the Committee was the General Director of the Ministry of Communication and Works (Mr. P. Kazamias) and other members were the Director of the Department of Public Works (X. Ioannides, Architect) and a representative of the Planning Bureau (R. Griffith –Engineering Advisor). The Accountant General (A. Ioannides) and Director of the Department of Town Planning & Housing acted as advisors.

21 Only the Foreign ministry and a few other departments were left out of the competition brief.


24 See “Address by the Minister of Finance Mr. Renos Solomonides at the Pancyprian Civil Servants Trade Union Congress held today” PIO, 7 Apr 1968. (Nicosia: PIO), 1.


30 In the final stage of the Competition submitted proposals 6 teams.


33 A. Philippou confirmed the importance of comprehensive design in the winning entry. Interview with Panayiota Pyla, Nicosia, May 2010.


35 Ibid., 409.

36 Ibid., 410.


39 Ibid., 410.

40 Ibid., 411.


43 “Kuwait National Assembly competition” Building design, p.16.


45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.
47 See A. Liakos, “Utopian and Historical Thinking”, 20-57.


49 Ibid.
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