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Effect of life experiences on Houses: The Cypriot (Case /Culture)

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Abstract

The cultural differences in architecture and the analysis of the relationship between culture and architecture have both gained great attention in the recent years. The island of Cyprus has been through many invasions and migrations since ancient ages. Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots formed the Republic of Cyprus which left behind a number of migration stories after the wars IN 1963 and 1974. The Green Line divided the island into two as north and south, and between the years of 1963 and 1974 nearly 500,000 people were forced to migrate across the island. Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, who lived through the difficulties of clashes, war and migration together but shared the same geography and nature, have been close neighbors for many years and adopted different aspects of the rich cultures of many nations that visited the island throughout history. This paper tries to analyse the structure of old Cypriot houses in the Arabahmet region of the Turkish Cypriot part and on Ledra Street in the Greek Cypriot part, and aims to highlight the similarities in Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot cultures, from an architectural point of view.

Keywords: Cyprus; Culture; Immigration; Cypriot houses.

1. Introduction

The island of Cyprus went through numerous occupations and migrations from the oldest date ever known onwards. The island, after the Roman, Byzantium, and Lusignan eras, was taken over by the Venetians in 1894. After the Ottoman occupation started in Nicosia in 1570, the island survived through World War I and II, and in 1878, it was taken over by the British, from whom the island had inherited a wide range of culture and many valuable historic buildings. Many stories of migration were told after certain wars that took place within the Republic of Cyprus amongst the Greeks and the Turks, who lived together between the dates 1963 and 1974. "After the historic incident of establishing the buffer zone between the north and the south by an English soldier named Vartan Malyan in 1974, 500 thousand people were forced to migrate within the island. Meanwhile, people were migrating to Turkey, England, and Greece, and also some from Greece and Turkey to Cyprus. (Basri, 2009)

The disasters and wars, which forced individuals to abandon their homes or countries to find safer places to survive, have been long lasting issues. Despite this, the international societies seem to have only started worrying about it and started looking into the island's tragic history. Today, under the title 'Emigration Studies', appears a research program called 'Forced Emigration Studies' established by anthropologists such as Loizos, Harrell-Bond, Malkki and Hirschon within the middle of the previous century. Related researchers of the date such as Colson (2003) seemed to find the word 'refugee' as misleading and limiting in terms of law and international political arrangement, hence, they chose to use the title 'Forced Migration Studies' instead of 'Refuge Studies'. Eventually in June of 2011, some statistics were provided by the United Nations High Commissioners of Refugees (UNHCR) and according to the data, from the end of 2010 onwards, there seem to be 43.7 million of displaced people on earth and 15.4 million of them were identified as refugees. However, the largest group numbered as 27.5 million was identified as 'internally displaced persons' (IDP) "(Bilsel, 1993)

Undoubtedly, the seemingly best examples to give for 'internally displaced persons' are the people who were forced to leave their homes during the wars between 1963 and 1974, and also the Turkish and the Greek ones who were forced to move across the green line border to the north and south in 1974. However, one cannot declare that there is a cultural difference between the people within the same island just because they were identified as Greeks and Turks in the south and the north sides of the map. These people lived through the difficulties of wars and migration together and shared the same heritage of culture and civilization, as well as the same geography and nature, breathing the same air for many years, living out their lives as neighbours. It has also been scientifically stated that Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots seem to have similar DNAs. Such study and fact were found through various tests and declared by a DNA expert called Dr. Erol Baysal in 1990 when he was working with Turkish, English and Greek assistants on the DNAs of 116 Turkish Cypriots, 303 Greek Cypriots and 174 Turkish individuals to find out about the Thalassemia disease and such an interesting study was completely rejected and found invalid by various groups at the time. (Haematol, 1992) In the Changing Priorities within Urban Design: the Symposium of Urban Design II and Applications, an individual uses, changes and gets influenced by the natural and artificially made physical environment that he/she lives in; hence, the behaviours of people attempting to shape their environments form what we call "culture" (Hazan, 2012) emphasizes the importance of the environment lived in in regards to culture.

In a study by the Cyprus Neurology and Genetic Institute; research was carried out to determine the descendants of the Greek Cypriot community from the Middle Eastern Mediterranean. The aim of the research was to understand the

differences and similarities of both the Greek and the Turkish Cypriot communities. According to the research, the majority of the Cypriots come from a single genetic pool of Cyprus origin. It was concluded that both the Greek and the Turkish Cypriots, whose Y chromosomes were examined, came from the common lineage dating before the Ottoman period. (Heraclides , Bashiardes , Dominquez , Bertoncini , Chimonas , Christofi ,2017)

A great amount of mechanisms that reflect the human-nature relationship is related to culture. Architecture, as a compound of culture, is a solid form of the effects of culture that is conceptualized over a specific structure.

Therefore, the aim of this written piece of work is to analyse and come up with conclusions about the Cypriot Architecture and how it links to culture. More specifically, the overarching goal is to find out about the similarities between the Turkish and the Greek Cypriot cultures by looking into local houses from an architectural perspective.

Since the cultural differences in architecture and the culture- architecture relationship have gained importance, a significant amount of research has been carried out on the topic in the recent years. In these studies, it was revealed that the architectural forms and especially the house configurations are affected by many values. House configuration is not only the result of physical factors but also of all socio-cultural factors. When discussing the factors that influence house forms, it would be useful to consider them as a physical component of an ideal environment. At the same time, houses can be considered as a physical mechanism to create and reflect the worldview. (Rapport, 1969). Houses reflect on culture in the best way possible. As stated below, the most used places in a traditional Cypriot house are open spaces such as yards and terraces. This paper will first be looking into open spaces within Cypriot houses:

2. The Walled City of Nicosia

Due to its geographical location and strategic importance, Cyprus was the focus of interest of various cultures and people. The island has been under the control of many different powers. In this respect, multicultural identity is one of the most important aspects in the traditional houses of the walled cities of Nicosia. (Gunce, Misirlisoy, 2019) The City of is one of the oldest settlements on the island. The walls that surround the city consist of eleven towers. After the year 1974, the city of Nicosia was split in half, forming a Turkish and Greek separation within an area called Arabahmet, which currently forms the south / south-west borders of each side. From that date onwards, this area lost its permanence and could only relate to Turkish side. The houses that we question are the ones located within the Arabahmet area in the north whereas the ones in the south are just behind the same spot in Ledra area. The far end of Ledra area leads into the Lokmaci checkpoint that gives access to the Turkish side. Hence, the houses in the Arabahmet area and the ones constructed upon Ledra Street are physically very close to each other and are all good examples of the traditional Cypriot way of living.



Figure 1 Map of Cyprus showing main cities and the north-south divide (Oktay2009)

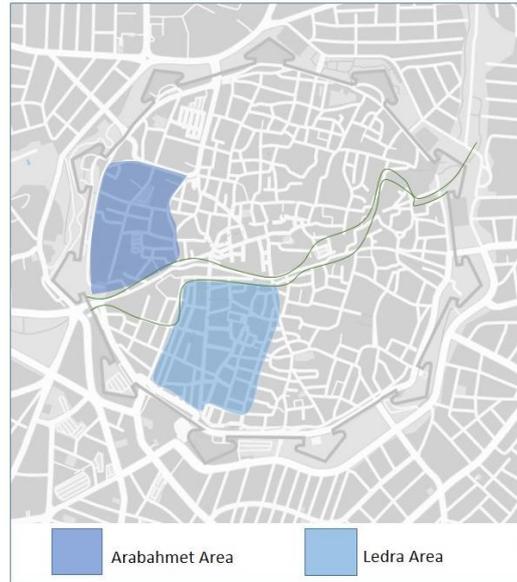


Figure 2 Map of walled city of Nicosia and showing Arabahmet Area and Ledra area (Developed by Author).

3. Culture

According to Edward Burnett Tylor 'Culture ... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.' That an individual uses changes and gets influenced by the natural and artificially made physical environment that he/she lives in; hence, the behaviours of people attempting to shape their environments form what we call "culture" (Hazan, 2012)

French anthropologist Marc Augé describes "the definition of culture as arising from historical practices in which people actively participate" While defining all cultures with its global meaning, Augé indicates that democratic idealism is against social segregation. (Kural, Dedekarginoğlu)

Culture- housing relationship

Religion, examined within the scope of socio-cultural factors affecting the housing design, is a phenomenon that affects and regulates human relations. There are also many studies done in the context of culture-housing relationship.

Architect Amos Rapoport (Rapapor, 1969), an expert on culture and architecture, described culture in three complementary perspectives in human-environment relations; the first is the way of life of a typical group, the second is cognitive schemes made up of symbolic codes, and the third is the perspective that defends culture's adaptation strategy to survive in terms of ecology and resources. Rapoport has explained the relationship between culture and human behaviour by separating the culture extensively into components. He explained the process from abstract to physical the relationship between culture and human behaviour, world view, beliefs, values, images or schemes, and lifestyles. House design and architecture forms get affected by many values. (Turgut, 1990)

4. Traditional Cyprus Houses

In addition, a traditional Cypriot residence is constructed in three main sections that are open, closed, and partially open. When one takes into account the findings of the research done in the past about the traditional Cyprus houses, it's inevitable to see that in such a typology, the courtyard is the most used area within the Cypriot way of living. Therefore, the courtyard as the big open space forms the residential unit as a smaller closed space. There usually are two big rooms to form the main closed section. One of the rooms is used as the 'living space' to keep warm during the short but difficult winter times and also to keep cool during the hot summer season, functioning in many ways through its design. On the other hand, the second room within the closed section not only functions as another living area but also as a space to stock food. Moreover, there is yet another open area located in-between the open and closed sections of the house to control the sunlight that comes in. (Philokyrou, 2020)

Mediterranean Climate

Similar to the other Mediterranean countries, Cyprus is hot and dry in the summers and cold and a little showery in the winters. The western and sometimes the eastern breeze cool down the summertime warmth but usually, all areas get complete sunlight most of the year. A traditional Cyprus residence is particularly constructed with the local climatic in mind to maximize comfort. (Özataç 1996) In Cyprus settlements, the reaction to heat resulted in regional solutions similar to the problems of living in environments that would have difficulty in climatic conditions. The houses were grouped close to other shadows from the sun. (Okta, 2001)

5. Ways to Analyse Buildings

When it comes to the study of analysing buildings, the construction of the open and closed sections that directly influence the way of living should be taken into account as a whole. Cultural permanence is not possible without a criterion of an outdoor area or without a systematic measure of an indoor section.

First Comparison (Looking into the Porch):

As seen in photo I and II, the little porch / terrace is the only open section seen from outside the house and is fairly decorated with flowers to give it a pretty appearance. Usually, the big open areas at the back of the house are for family members to eat comfortably and/or to spend time peacefully. The Greek Cypriot house located upon Ledra Area (photo I) and the Turkish Cypriot ones in the Arabahmet area of Nicosia (photo II) seem to be good examples of such a tradition.



Second Comparison (Looking into the Backyard)

As we mentioned the significance of the backyard within old Cyprus houses, it is also crucial to be hospitable in the Cypriot culture; it is a tradition in Cyprus (whether Greek or Turkish) to sit to sit and eat altogether around a table located at the backyard to shape a traditional hospitality. As it can be observed in the pictures below, it is important to keep half of the backyard in shade with an appropriate cover on top. When we look at the Greek Cypriot house (photo III) and the Turkish Cypriot one (photo IV), we realize how the backyard is particularly designed to serve the best way it could.



Third Comparison (Looking at the Stairs in the Backyard)

In the photos V, VI, VII, and VIII, we can see good examples of a traditional Cypriot backyard. If we look carefully at the backyard and analyse the construction from there, we can see that there are dissimilarities at each rise of the house. These different rises help the backyard to function in more than one way; for instance, parents are able to hold up an endless conversation at one side whilst their children play safely in the other end of the backyard without being hindered by the construction. Moreover, in duplex Cyprus houses, there is usually a staircase in the backyard that also leads to the top floor where bedrooms are placed. Such a staircase within the backyard is almost always embellished with flower pots to keep the colourful outlook alive in general. It is quite noticeable that both Turkish and Greek Cypriot households tend to enjoy planting and potting their flowers around their homes.

	
<p>Ledra Area -Photo V (Sah2018)</p>	<p>Arabahmet Area -Photo VI (Sah2018)</p>
	
<p>Ledra Area -Photo VII (Sah2018)</p>	<p>Arabahmet Area -Photo VIII (Sah2018)</p>

5. Conclusions

Most of the mechanisms that reflect the relationship between people and the environment are culturally related. House designs in general are the result of all socio-cultural factors. In conclusion, all kinds of values, whether corporeal or incorporeal, formed by one nation during an historical period are passed onto the following one to form what we call culture as a whole. We have come across such cultural quality in each photograph that we took during our time in both Turkish and Greek Cypriot backyards for our study. Although it is accepted that religion is a phenomenon that affects and regulates human relations, social-cultural factors are more effective in terms of house designing. Sharing the same nature, geography, climate and years of experience encourage people to follow similar designing rules without considering which religion they believe in or which language they are speaking. To be hospitable, both civilizations seem to make the effort to serve their visitors the best way they could. Prompting the window panes, entrances, and staircases with flowery pots is something very meaningful since it happens to be a cultural permanence in time.

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