

FIRST GRADUATED WOMEN ARCHITECTS AND URBANISTS IN EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN EUROPE 1900-2000. THE CASES OF CYPRUS, GREECE, AND TURKEY

PRIMERAS ARQUITECTAS Y URBANISTAS TITULADAS EN LA EUROPA DEL MEDITERRÁNEO ORIENTAL (1900-2000). LOS CASOS DE CHIPRE, GRECIA Y TURQUÍA

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Abstract

This paper provides an overview of the history of the first women graduates in architecture in Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey. Based on a review of digital archives and secondary sources written by local researchers, the aim of this research is to contribute to the dissemination and valorisation of women's work and contributions to the history of modern architecture. The three countries under study constitute one of the most interesting European peripheries from the point of view of architecture, but also from the point of view of gender studies and women's history. Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey, with their peculiarities and differences, condense in their recent history the political and cultural milestones that clearly show the direct link between the advance of democracy and women's rights. Similarly, all this has an impact on architecture and urban planning; from the type and focus of projects and plans that are developed as a priority, to the people who are recognised and validated by architectural culture and its historical narrative. The research reveals the barriers and

alliances of the first generations of women who studied architecture in Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey. It also reveals certain trends in the way the profession is practised, almost always linked to the sociopolitical context of the country and the percentage of women in the profession, among other considerations. Working for public institutions is seen as a priority working environment from which many of them have been able to make great contributions to their countries, developing infrastructures, public facilities and regulatory frameworks to improve spatial standards. Housing and heritage conservation are two areas in which these generations of women have been particularly active, some of them becoming international references in this field.

Keywords: women in architecture; Cypriot women architects; Greek women architects; Turkish women architects; gender equality; women's history; first graduated women architects; South-Eastern European women.

Resumen

Este artículo ofrece una panorámica de la historia de las primeras mujeres graduadas en arquitectura de Chipre, Grecia y Turquía. A partir de la revisión de archivos digitales y de fuentes secundarias escritas por investigadoras locales, el objetivo de esta investigación es la de contribuir a la divulgación y puesta en valor del trabajo y aportaciones de las mujeres a la historia de la arquitectura moderna. Los tres países objeto de estudio constituyen una de las periferias europeas más interesantes desde la óptica de la arquitectura, pero también desde los estudios de género y la historia de las mujeres. Con sus particularidades y diferencias, Chipre, Grecia y Turquía condensan en su historia reciente hitos políticos y culturales que revelan con claridad la conexión directa entre el avance de la democracia y los derechos de las mujeres. Análogamente, todo ello tiene su impacto en la arquitectura y el urbanismo, desde el tipo y enfoque de proyectos y planes que se desarrollan de forma prioritaria, hasta quienes son las personas reconocidas y validadas por la cultura arquitectónica y su relato histórico. La investigación revela cuáles fueron las barreras y alianzas de las primeras generaciones de mujeres que estudiaron arquitectura en Chipre, Grecia y Turquía. Es posible observar también ciertas tendencias sobre el modo de ejercer la profesión, casi siempre ligadas al contexto sociopolítico del país, y al porcentaje de mujeres dentro de la profesión, entre otros aspectos. El trabajo desde las instituciones públicas se aprecia como un entorno laboral prioritario desde el que muchas de ellas lograron realizar grandes aportaciones a sus países, contribuyendo en el desarrollo de infraestructuras, equipamientos públicos y marcos regulatorios a favor de la mejora de estándares espaciales. La vivienda y la conservación del patrimonio constituyen dos ámbitos de trabajo donde estas generaciones de arquitectas se desempeñaron activamente, llegando algunas de ellas a ser referentes internacionales en la materia.

Palabras clave: mujeres en la arquitectura; arquitectas chipriotas; arquitectas griegas; arquitectas turcas; igualdad de género; historia de las mujeres; primeras arquitectas graduadas; mujeres de Europa sudoriental.

1. INTRODUCTION

The history of European women shows considerable differences and peculiarities depending on the geographical, cultural and political context. As a consequence of the heterogeneity that has characterised the European reality over the last hundred years, the history of women in Europe is particularly diverse. The traditions and cultures of architecture and other fields of spatial planning reflect this diversity and have had a significant impact on the timing and nature of the gradual incorporation of women into these disciplines in each of the European countries. Similarly, each national context has determined the opportunities women have had in architecture, what kind of jobs they have accessed, as well as their progression, recognition and consolidation within the profession.

Despite this heterogeneity, it is possible to group the European countries into subregions that share certain similarities either in terms of their contemporary national history, architectural culture, or the situation of women in the 20th century. This article addresses the case of three Southeastern European countries (Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey), where the process of formal incorporation and consolidation of women in the fields of spatial planning and design took place in historical contexts and architectural cultures that were significantly different from those found in the rest of Europe.

Greece, Cyprus, and Turkey, despite their local particularities, could be considered a relatively homogeneous group within the context of Southern Europe, consistent with the political, cultural, and architectural context of the Eastern Mediterranean during the 20th century. While the history of women architects of these three countries also shares common traits with most of the rest of Southern Europe¹, the experience of women architects

1. Among other similarities, the history of women architects in Southern Europe in the 20th century was largely shaped by particularly conservative societies, with little

in the last century has undergone different realities, rhythms, and cycles. Spain and Portugal could form another possible cluster, both because of their geographical proximity and because of parallels in their recent history (Novas-Ferradás et al., 2020). Italy would be a unique case, not only among the Mediterranean countries, but also in Europe as a whole. The history of women in design and spatial planning in Italy is quite heterogeneous, depending on the region, the specific field within the disciplines related to architecture, or the historical period. In some fields, such as product design, the reality of Italian women has been closer to that of women in Scandinavian countries. However, in terms of achieving civil rights, such as access to university or women's economic emancipation, Italy is closer to other Southern European countries (Fernández et al., 2016).

Within the European, or even global, history of women in architecture, Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey can be considered as an interesting unit of study because of their main common feature: they constitute the South-Eastern periphery of Europe, which has significant implications beyond geographical aspects. On the one hand, this geographical characteristic has consolidated political and cultural differences between these countries and the rest of the region, which have influenced architectural culture in general and the trajectories of women in these disciplines in particular. On the other hand, the peripheral status and some historical periods of isolation have contributed to an additional lack of knowledge about the already invisible history of women in the fields of architecture.

Depending on the perspective or the historical moment in which they are analysed, Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey are part of a region that has operated as a frontier or as a bridge between Europe and Asia; in short, between Western and Eastern cultures. Situating research on the history of women architects in this region during the 20th century allows us to reflect on the impact of sociopolitical contexts on the advancement of equal opportunities between women and men, both in times of progress and in times of backlash.

industrialisation, a strong influence of religion, and periods of dictatorship, some of which lasted for decades.

As an expression of the society of each time and place, architectural fields in Europe have been defined according to a great heterogeneity of successive artistic trends, economic cycles, and political contexts. This whole secular process has given rise to different ways of understanding what it means to be an architect, what training is required to become one, or even what the specific role and competencies of architectural fields are in society. The history of women in these disciplines has been shaped by these and other assumptions within local architectural cultures that have facilitated or hindered their incorporation into the profession. This article is therefore organised chronologically, with a kind of benchmark section on the first half of the twentieth century and a series of notes on the major historical milestones that have significantly influenced the reality of women in architecture in each historical period.

The research is based on a documentary review of primary and secondary resources on women in architectural fields in each of the countries that are part of the sub-region under study. Depending on the country, information was drawn from digital archives, literature written by local authors², or a combination of both types of sources. Going deeper into the second half of the twentieth century, given the lack or scarcity of women architecture graduates in these countries before, the article aims at contributing to the dissemination of the history of women architects in Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey. Through notes of a selection of biographies and contributions of women related to the fields of design and spatial planning, this study provides visibility and outlines the history of the first graduated women architects in these three Eastern-Mediterranean countries.

The research results show that, despite the common characteristics mentioned above, the history of women in architecture is not homogeneous within this group of countries. Among others, there are significant differences in terms of when and how women enter formal education, their

2. At large, and compared to other European countries, including the Mediterranean regions, there is hardly any local research and publications on the history of women architects in Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey. Most of the work of the local authors used as a documentary basis for this article has a pioneering character in their respective countries. Some of the documentation reviewed is only available in Greek or Turkish, and it was necessary to use AI translation applications to elaborate this research.

integration into the profession, the types of activities in which they excel or tend to be employed, or the degree of feminisation of the disciplines of spatial planning and design in each country.

2. FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

The end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century in Europe were characterised by important territorial and economic transformations. The decline of colonialism and of some monarchies or empires coincided with the advance of the industrialisation process, which already showed clear differences among European countries. In general, the countries of Southern Europe began this process later than Central and Northern Europe and, with the exception of certain regions of Northern Italy and Spain, industrialisation was either non-existent or very weak. However, the rise of the bourgeoisie and the growth of cities had an impact on architectural fields, from the appearance of new architectural styles³ or new housing regulations⁴ to the emergence of new disciplines such as urban planning, landscaping, or industrial design.

Although modernity brought major reforms to higher education in Europe, training for architectural practice remained particularly diverse (Garrouste, 2010). In some regions, traditional training through historic guilds or even informal training was still maintained. In others, the education of architects was institutionalised through schools or academies of fine arts, while in some countries architectural studies were incorporated into the new polytechnic schools, which often had their origins in military engineering training. Among other social and personal conditioning factors, the field of knowledge in which each country or region placed official architectural studies had consequences for women's access to such training.

3. Eclecticisms and the *Art Nouveau* style had relevant national expressions in some Southern European countries: Spain (*Modernismo*), Italy (*stile Liberty*) and Portugal (*Arte nova*). These bourgeois styles were particularly prevalent in areas and cities with greater industrial development or greater contact with other industrialised regions of Europe, such as Istanbul and Thessaloniki (Pons & Cegarra, 2016).

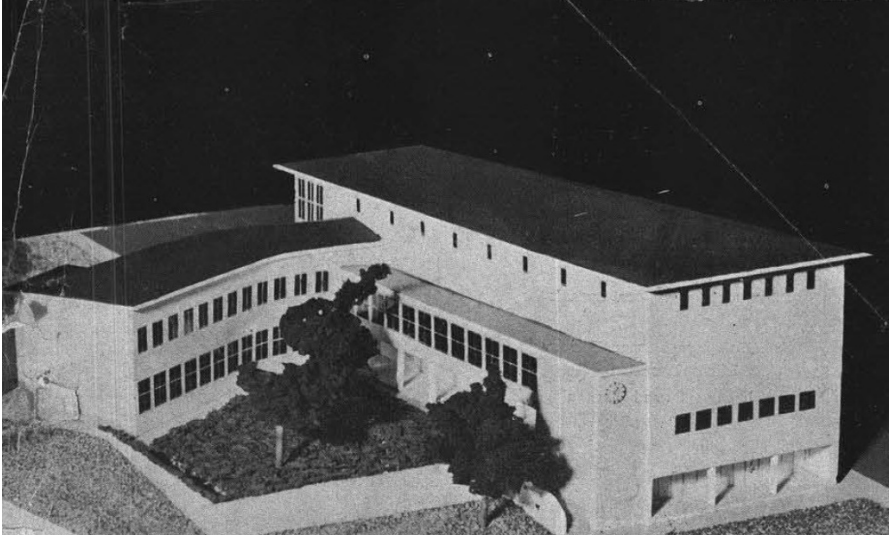
4. The 1901 *Woningwet* in the Netherlands and the Housing of the Working Classes Act (1890) in the United Kingdom are two of the main representative ones.

A period of internal reforming undertaken by the Ottoman Empire in 1908 made it common for well-off young women in Istanbul to study abroad, usually art or literature. However, the attainment of social and legal rights for women, as well as equal access to higher education, did not come to Turkey until 1923, with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey and its ambitious plan to modernise the country. Women were admitted to formal architectural training in Turkey in 1928⁵, following a policy of coeducation and the establishment of the Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul. However, the number of women architects in the 1930s and 1940s was negligible because, despite reforms, women's education was still heavily influenced by ideological restrictions from the earliest stages of their education, and very few managed to gain sufficient training and knowledge to pass the admission exams (Erkarslan, 2007).

According to Meral Ekinçioğlu's research for the MIT Aga Kahn Documentation Centre (2016), Leman Tomsu (1913-1988) and Münevver Belen (1913-1973) became the first women architecture graduates in Turkey in 1934, followed by Leyla Turgut (1911-1988), who graduated in 1939 and soon became the first woman professor at the architecture department of the Academy of Fine Arts. These first graduated women architects received considerable support from the authorities, who were keen to promote the modern and professional image of Turkish women. They received many public commissions, although most of them were small buildings in rural areas or small towns, mainly in Anatolia (Figure 1).

5. In 1914, the Inas Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi—the first university for women students in Turkey—was opened in Istanbul with a focus on the teaching of artistic disciplines. Unlike its male counterpart, it did not include the teaching of architecture (Erkarslan, 2007).

Figure 1. Photograph of the model of the Şehremini Community Centre designed by Leman Tomsu, 1938



Source: *Arkitekt*, (93), 1938, 253–256

The beginning of the professional careers of this first group of Turkish women graduates in architecture coincided with the period of exile of the Viennese architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky (1897-2000) in Istanbul between 1938 and 1940. Although she was not an architect born or trained in Turkey, and her stay in the country lasted only two years, the figure of Schütte-Lihotzky is appropriate in the context of this article, given her important contributions and the potential influence she could have had on the first generations of Turkish women architects. According to the Turkish-German researcher Burcu Dogramaci, Schütte-Lihotzky was commissioned by the Ministry of Education to develop a school building model for pre-school and primary education that would contribute to the process of promoting literacy and education in the more rural areas of the country, as promoted by the Government of the Republic of Turkey.

The Austrian architect transferred and adapted her experience in designing and planning school architecture—gained during the years of the Weimar

Republic and her stays in the Soviet Union and China—to the economic, cultural, climatic and architectural context of Turkey. Schütte-Lihotzky's contributions were innovative not only in terms of building design, but also in terms of the decision-making process itself, introducing methods such as direct observation or citizen consultation to Turkey in order to better integrate the needs of users into the design of buildings (Dogramaci, 2019). The noticeable presence of women architects in the design and planning of basic rural facilities would be a constant in the decades to come.

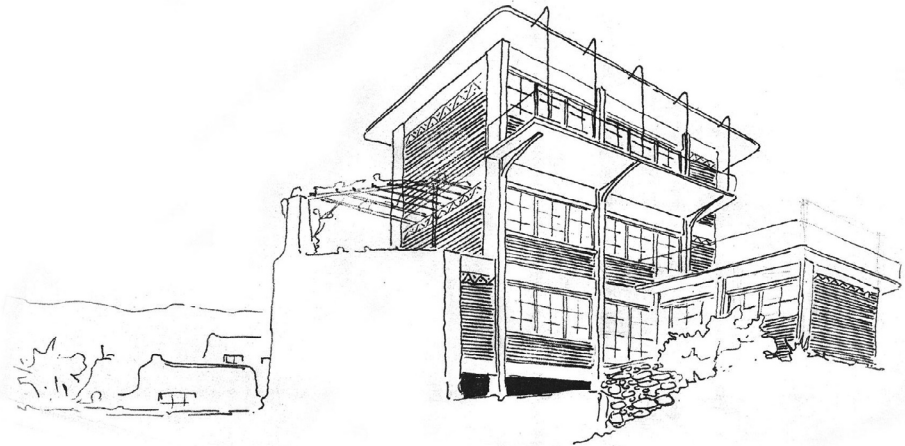
In the 1940s, a new group of women graduated in architecture, including Harika Alpar Söylemezoğlu⁶ (1918-2020), Mualla Eyüboğlu Anhegger (1919-2009) and Celile Berk Butka (1915-1984), who got their diplomas in 1942, Cahide Tamer (1915-2005), who graduated in 1943, and Leyla-Firuzan Baydar (b. 1924), who graduated in 1945. From the 1940s onwards, women architects' academic or public service careers were more often combined with private sector work in collaboration with their spouses, who were also architects or engineers. In addition to public buildings, as part of the civil service, the first Turkish generation of graduated women architects were involved in the urban development of many of Turkey's towns, and some, such as Eyüboğlu Anhegger and Tamer, specialised in the conservation, and later became pioneers in the enhancement of Turkey's architectural heritage (Ekincioglu, 2016).

In Greece, the beginning of the 20th century was a time of major political changes with implications for higher education in technical disciplines. Engineering training was formalised as university studies and institutions gradually ceased to be controlled by the military (Chatzis, 2000). In 1917, the School of Architecture of the National Technical University of Athens became the first institution for formal architectural education in Greece. According to the Digital Archive of Greek Female Architect 1923-1981, women were admitted to study architecture from the beginning, but only ten managed to graduate before the start of the Second World War. The first woman to hold a degree in architecture in Greece was Eleni Kanellopoulou (1901-1980), who graduated in 1923 and served most of her career in the

6. The name of this architect varies depending on the author; Erkarlan (2007) refers to her as Harika Söylemezo, while both Ekincioglu (2016) and the Harika-Kemali Söylemezoğlu Archive of the SALT Foundation use Harika-Kemali Söylemezoğlu.

Ministry of Transport. Other pioneers, such as Margarita Pipinopoulou, who graduated in 1927, and Alexandra Paschalidou-Moreti⁷ (1912-2010), who graduated in 1936, also worked in the public sector, which became the main path of professional development for the first Greek women architects. The exception was Ethel Prantouna (1914-1970), who graduated in 1934 and is considered the first female freelance architect in Greece, working mainly in the private sector (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Sketch of the single-family house in Lycabettus, designed by Ethel Prantouna and Faidon Kydionatis in 1938



Source: Digital Archive of Greek Female Architects 1923-1981

The number of women architecture graduates in Greece grew slowly during the war and post-war years, reaching 52 by the end of the 1950s. Some of the most relevant names of this generation are Marika Zagorisiou (1921-2013), Elisaveth Vakalopoulou (1924-2021) and Elli Vasilikioti-Nikolaides (1923-2016), who graduated in the 1940s; Anastasia Tzakou (1928-2016), Ekaterina

7. In the bibliographical sources consulted, the names of some of the first Greek women architects appear with a compound surname, the family name of these architects being joined to that of their husbands by means of a hyphen. Often the order of these two surnames is reversed, depending on the archive or document.

Doussi (1929-2016), Ioanna Benechoutsou (1934-2002), Fani Sotiraki-Aneroussis (1935–), Anastasia Diamantopoulou (1937–) and Souzana Maria Kolokytha-Antonakaki (1935-2020), who graduated in the 1950s. Like their predecessors, many of these women architects developed their careers in the public sector, where in the last third of the twentieth century they held important positions in the government, major city councils or other institutions involved in spatial planning (Figure 3). From the 1950s onwards, however, there was a slightly greater tendency for women graduates to work in the private sector, although almost never independently, but rather with their partners or as employees of large firms. In 1958, with the opening of the country's second school of architecture (School of Architecture of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, AUTh), the number of women graduates in architecture increased more rapidly, reaching 170 in 1965 (Digital Archive of Greek Female Architects 1923-1981, 2021).

Figure 3. Group of women architects from the Ministry of Transport and Public Works in the late 1950s. Standing from left to right: Sofia Devletoglou-Harisi, Ekaterina Doussi, Thais Roussou, and Fani Sotiraki. Seated from left to right: Aphrodite Tasoula, Olga Syggouriadou



Source: Digital Archive of Greek Female Architects 1923-1981

Until 2001⁸, all Cypriot architects had to be trained abroad, as Cyprus did not have its own school of architecture. Greece, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States have been, and still are, the main countries where Cypriot architects have traditionally been educated, or where they are currently supplementing their studies. There are no records of women practising architecture in Cyprus in the first half of the 20th century. Maro Efthimiadi Atzini⁹ (1937-1997), who is considered to be the first female Cypriot architect, began studying in Greece in the late 1950s, and it was not until 1960 that she returned to Cyprus and began to develop her professional career (Cyprus Architects Association, 2023; Tourvas & Riza, 2021) (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Architect Maro Efthimiadi Atzini at her drawing board



Source: Goethe Institut Zypern

8. See Faculty of Engineering at the University of Cyprus (<https://www.ucy.ac.cy/fac/?lang=en>)

9. The name of this woman architect appears in the sources consulted as both Maro Efthimade Atzini and Maro Efthymiades-Adjini.

3. SECOND HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

According to Erkarşlan (2007), one of the first researchers to study the history of women architects in Turkey, the year 1950 was a turning point for Turkish women. The more conservative wing of the Democratic Party came to power, intensifying and accelerating the trend that had begun years earlier to end or limit institutional support for women's rights and gender equality. The Turkish women's movement was silenced until the 1980s, although most women's associations and groups remained active in one form or another. The sociopolitical environment in Turkey in the second half of the twentieth century had a direct impact on the situation of Turkish women architects and also on the dominant discourse on gender equality in the profession. Erkarşlan (2007) notes that Turkish women architects have never been particularly involved in feminist demands and that the dominant idea of the supposed gender neutrality of the profession did not allow for debates on gender inequality to be opened until 2002, when the first studies on gender equality in architecture in Turkey were published in the press. Thus, while women will continue to practise architecture in various forms in the second half of the century, their contributions and trajectories will not receive fair attention or recognition from the profession.

The aftermath of social and political change in Turkey can be clearly seen in the careers of some of the first generation of graduated women architects, particularly those who sought to become more autonomous in their practice. Harika Alpar Söylemezoğlu, for example, left the professional practice of architecture and urban planning in 1959 to teach at Istanbul University, and eventually turned to the world of fashion, opening her own clothing store in Istanbul in 1964. In 1959, Celile Berk Butka emigrated with her husband to the United States, where she worked for large engineering consulting firms until 1972. Berk specialised in the design of large hotel, commercial and office buildings, and some of her work can be found in cities such as New York, Detroit, Baltimore, Toronto, and Karachi.

Figure 5. Cahide Tamer on the dome of the Hagia Sophia Grand Mosque, Istanbul



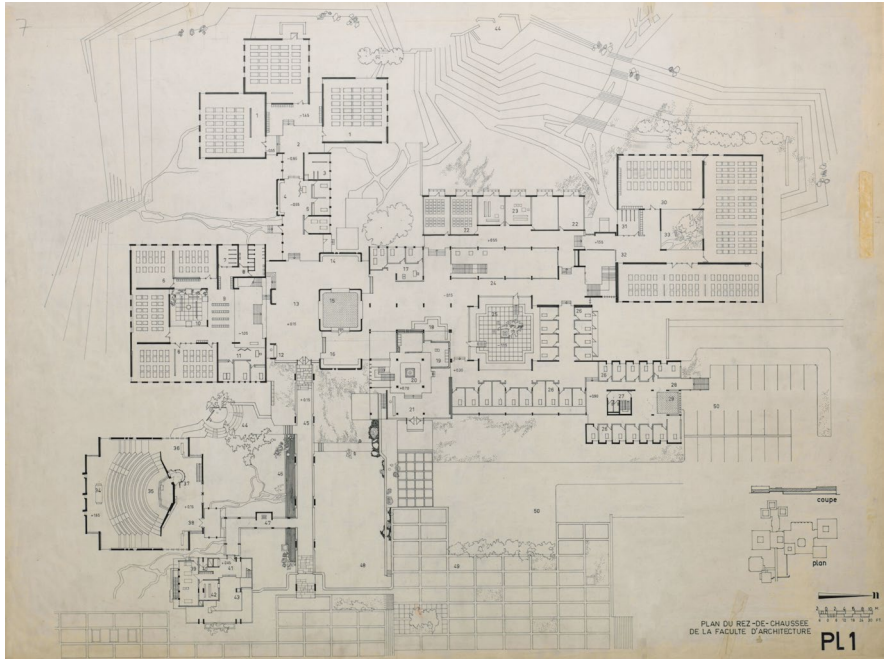
Source: Herstory Academic Database, İstanbul Kadın Müzesi

The impact was of minor importance for those first women architects who had more settled jobs, usually associated with national public institutions. Mualla Eyüboğlu Anhegger, who had trained in heritage restoration and conservation in the 1940s, was hired by the Supreme Council of Antiquities and Monumental Property in 1952, where she spent most of her professional career. From this institution, she was able to participate in the intervention of some of the country's most important heritage buildings, such as the Topkapi Sarayı Harem (1961-71) or the Hagia Sophia Grand Mosque in the 1980s. Cahide Tamer followed a similar career path at the Directorate General of Foundations, which she joined in 1956. Some of her most important projects include major monuments such as the Süleymaniye Mosque complex (1953-55) or the Fortress of the Seven Towers (1954-1970), for which she was awarded the Chevalier de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 1961 (Ekincioglu, 2016) (Figure 5).

The MIT Aga Khan Documentation Center's 'Women in Modern and Contemporary Territories of Turkish Architecture' collection, coordinated by Meral Ekincioglu since 2016, gathers the careers of a selection of women architects and urban planners, who could be considered the second generation of graduated women architects in Turkey, working in different fields

of spatial planning and design. Born between the second half of the 1930s and the 1950s, they all began their professional careers after the country's conservative drift had begun. One of the most representative architects is Altuğ Tanrıverdi Çinici (b. 1935), who graduated from Istanbul Technical University (İTÜ) in 1959 and set up an architectural practice with her husband, Behruz Çinici. Together they developed an important career that lasted well into the 2000s and included such major projects as the campus and buildings of Middle East Technical University (1961-1980) and the Ankara National Assembly Mosque (1986-1989), which won the Aga Khan Award in 1995. The Tanrıverdi-Çinici couple were innovators in residential architecture, taking the principles of the modern movement further in projects such as the Bin Evler Housing Complex (1971), incorporating a focus on sustainability and the participation of future tenants in decision-making (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Altuğ Tanrıverdi Çinici and Behruz Çinici's Middle East Technical University School of Architecture. Top: floor plan; middle: view of the main hall; bottom: view of the exterior spaces





Source: Salt Research Archive

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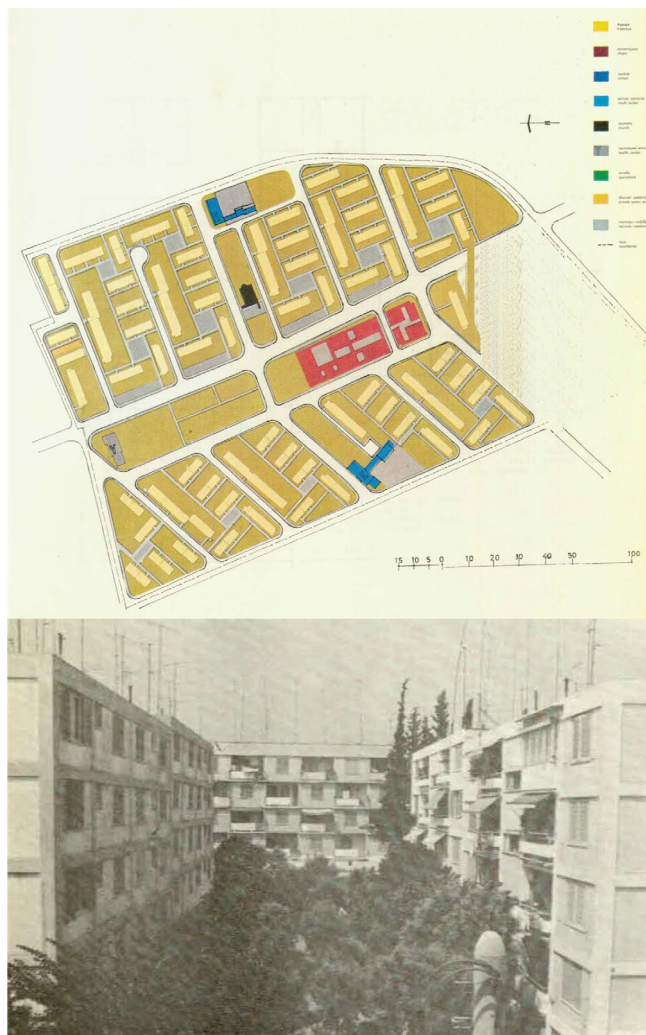
The university was a frequent working environment for this generation of women architects, where specialists in different fields of architecture can be found. Afife Batur (1935-2018), who graduated in 1958, developed her teaching and research career in the History of Architecture and Restoration Department at İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi until 1998, the same year she was appointed dean of the Istanbul District Chamber of Architects, a position she held until 2000. Ayla Ödekan (b. 1940) is also an eminent scholar in the field of history; after graduating in social sciences in 1965, she completed an MA in Art History at the University of Chicago (1967) and a PhD at İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi (İTÜ) in 1976. Focusing on research into Byzantine and Turkish architecture, Ödekan taught at several Turkish universities. Her career was recognised in 2006 with the Contribution to Architecture Award from the Turkish Chamber of Architects. In the field of architectural design, the figure of architect Gülsün Sağlamer (b. 1945), whose professional career is closely linked to Istanbul Technical University, stands out. In addition to being the institution where she graduated (1967), received her doctorate (1977) and taught (1977-2012); Sağlamer was its first and only female chancellor (1996-2004), and founder and first president of the European Association of Women Rectors (EWORA). Since her retirement in 2012, she has focused her activities on promoting gender equality in science and research, including providing expert advice to UNESCO and the European Commission, and is internationally recognised for promoting women's leadership in academia (Ekincioglu, 2016; EWORA, 2023).

Among this group of first graduated women architects identified by Ekincioglu (2016) are two female architectural historians who were pioneers in Turkey in addressing the gender perspective and equal opportunities in the fields of architecture and urban planning from an academic perspective. Aydan Balamir (b. 1953), who graduated in 1974, works as a professor in the Department of Architecture at Middle East Technical University and has received several national and international awards. With an extensive research career, she has been undertaking and supervising research on women in architecture since the early 1990s, and was one of the first Turkish academics to address this issue. Gülsüm Baydar Nalbantoğlu (b. 1956), educated in Turkey and the United States, began her research on the

gender dimensions of architecture and urban planning in the late 1990s, a line of research that she was able to develop mainly through international academic conventions and expert networks.

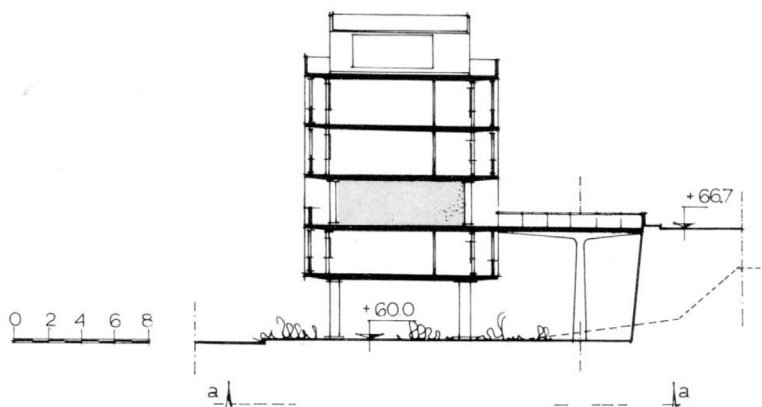
According to the Digital Archive of Greek Female Architects, the 1960s and 1970s in Greece were a period of reconstruction and modernisation of the country and of relative progress in terms of equality between women and men. These circumstances meant that women architects who had graduated earlier were able to pursue their careers in public administration, where they contributed to the improvement of urban areas, infrastructures, and facilities. Some even reached important positions, such as Ekaterina Doussi (1929-2016), who, from the late 1970s until her retirement, headed several departments in the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Settlements and the Environment. The contribution of the first Greek women architects to housing policy was also significant, including the role of Elli Vasilikioti-Nikolaides (1923-2016), who, in addition to her work as a high-ranking civil servant at the Ministry of Public Works, represented Greece on housing issues in various international bodies such as the UN Housing Committees, the International Union of Architects (UIA) and the European Economic Commission. One of her designs, the 'Asyrmatos' low-income apartment building in Petralona (1967), has become an icon of Greek housing architecture at the time. Vassilikioti-Nikolaides' work in housing policy has been recognised with several awards, including the United Nations Peace Medal (Figures 7 & 8).

Figure 7. Elli Vasilikioti-Nikolaides's Phoenix-Votsi residential complex in Kalamaria (Thessaloniki), 1962-67. It consisted of 67 residential buildings, medical centre, church, schools and a commercial block with offices on the 1st floor. Top: general masterplan; bottom: view of the open-air spaces between buildings



Source: Digital Archive of Greek Female Architects 1923-1981

Figure 8. Elli Vasilikioti-Nikolaides's 'Asyrmatos' social housing apartment building in Athens, 1967. Top: view of the access footbridge from the lower corridor; bottom: cross section of the building

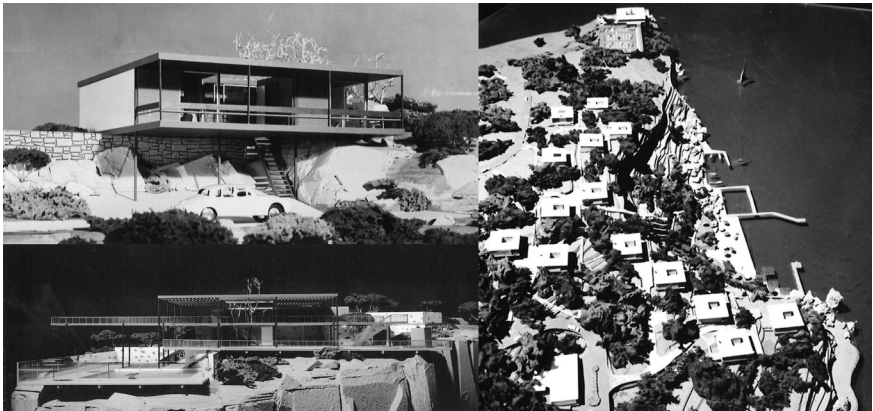


Source: DOMa Institution SA

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Uniquely, due to the importance of tourism in Greece, many of the contributions of the first graduated women architects working to preserve and promote the architectural heritage came from departments related to tourism. Marika Zagorisiou (1921-2013) became head of the Department of Traditional Settlements of the Greek National Tourism Organisation (EOT) in the late 1970s. Elisaveth Vakalopoulou (1924-2021) worked as a consultant to the government from the 1970s, advising on the protection of archaeological sites, historical monuments and protected urban areas, transferring the experience she had gained in Italy. The earliest Greek women architects also made important contributions to other national institutions. Anastasia Tzakou (1928-2016) worked in the architecture department of the National Bank of Greece in the 1960s, where she designed relevant large-scale buildings, including the Astir tourist complex in Mikro Kavouri-Vouliagmeni (1961). Tzakou was also one of the few women to teach architecture in the 1960s. Although she never gave up the freelance practice of architecture, teaching at the National Technical University of Athens became her main occupation, and in 1981 she became the first female full professor of architecture in Greece (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Anastasia Tzakou's 'Astir' tourist facilities in Mikro Kavouri-Vouliagmeni, 1960-1961. Top left: model of one of the tourist accommodations; bottom left: model of the building with the restaurant and leisure centre; on the right: model of the masterplan of the complex



Source: Digital Archive of Greek Female Architects 1923-1981

Souzana Maria Kolokytha-Antonakaki (1935-2020) had a career that differed markedly from that of most of her peers, as she spent her entire professional life as an architect at Atelier 66, the architectural office she founded with her husband Dimitris Antonakakakis (b. 1933) in 1965¹⁰. Kololytha-Antonakaki's prolific work falls within the framework of so-called 'critical regionalism' and includes internationally acclaimed projects such as House in Oxylythos (1973). During the 1970s and 1980s, she held important positions in national and international institutions related to the professional practice of architecture, such as the Association of Greek Architects (SADAS) and the International Union of Architects (UIA), among others (Atelier 66, 2023).

Developing professional practice from the private sector was much more common among what could be called a second generation of graduated women architects in Greece, born in the 1940s and 1950s and graduating in the 1960s and 1970s. The Digital Archive of Greek Female Architects compiles interesting biographies of the women architects of this generation, revealing a variety of ways in which they pursued the liberal practice of the profession. Many of these women architects founded architectural firms with their husbands and were co-authors of important projects in Greek architecture over the second half of the 20th century. Among others, Sevasti Karakosta (b. 1938), who graduated in 1961 (Figure 10), Zoe Chatzi-Michalopoulou (b. 1940), who graduated in 1962, and Paraskevi Noukaki-Babalou (b. 1946), who graduated in 1970, developed most of their professional careers with their male partners. Some of these women architects began their careers in public institutions or combined independent practice with part-time university teaching.

10. The firm was also founded by Efi Tsarmaki-Vrontesi, Denis Potiris and another pioneer of Greek architecture, Eleni Gousi Desilla (b. 1938). The architecture office was renamed A66 in 1986 under the sole management of the Antonakakis couple.

Figure 10. Sevasti Karakosta's Pomoni residential building in 11 Kapsampeli Street, Nea Filothei (Athens), 1963. Left: general floor plans and sections of the building; top right: view of the entrance and living area of the ground floor flat; bottom right: view of one of the facades of the building



Source: Digital Archive of Greek Female Architects 1923-1981

There were also some women architects who opened their offices with a group of colleagues, a formula that made it easier for them to access larger and more varied commissions. This was the case of Eleftheria Costopoulou-Paradelli (1942-2018) and Katerina Vei Spiropoulou (b. 1943), who graduated in 1966 and co-founded OMADA 1 Architects and Planners¹¹. The office, which operated from 1976 to 2020, developed urban and architectural projects that were innovative for their time, in particular their proposals for collective and single-family housing, in which they were pioneers in Greece in introducing the principles of sustainability. From the 1970s, the presence of women teaching architecture in Greek universities was consolidated. Vilma Chastaoglou-Martinidis (b. 1945), educated in Greece and France,

11. The firm was also founded by the architect Solon Xenopoulos, who worked there until 1987.

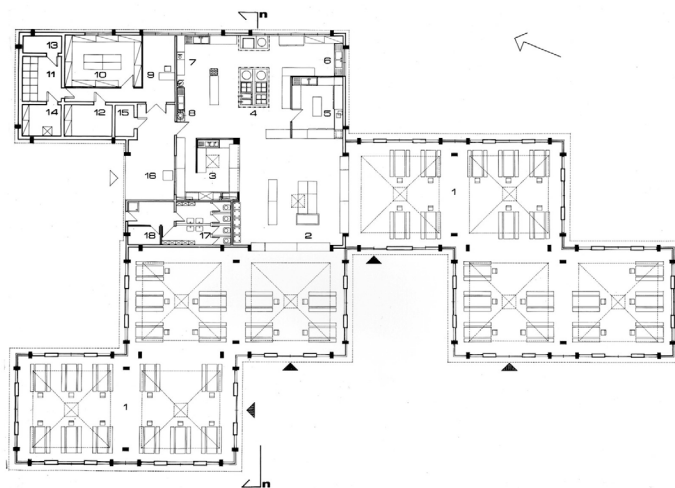
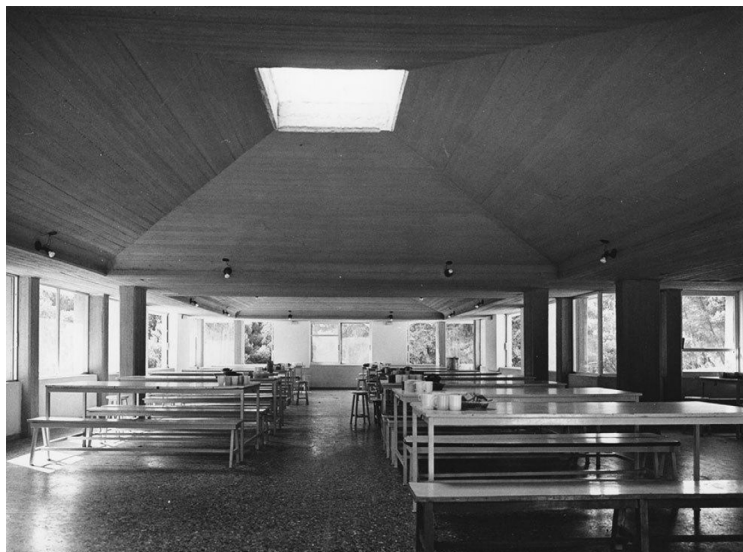
taught urban planning at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Figure 11) and conducted extensive research on historical Mediterranean cities. Helen Fessas-Emmanouil (b. 1943) taught architectural history at the National and Capodistrian University of Athens. Both retired in the 2010s and have been recognised as emeritus professors by their respective universities. The architect Agnes Couvelas-Panagiotatou (b. 1943), who set up her own practice after graduating in 1966, is an exceptional case among this generation of women architects. With a prolific career (Figure 12), it was not until the 1990s that the work of this architect achieved definitive international recognition, with a nomination for the Mies van der Rohe Award in 1998 for the project for the In-Situ Archaeological Museum in Naxos (Digital Archive of Greek Female Architects 1923-1981, 2021).

Figure 11. Vilma Chastaoglou-Martinidis and her colleague Nikos Kalogirou in 1989 during their lectures on urban planning at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki



Source: Digital Archive of Greek Female Architects 1923-1981

Figure 12. Restaurant at a children's summer camp in Penteli (Athens), designed by Agnes Couvelas and Panagiotis Kargados in 1975. Top: view of the interior of the dining hall; bottom: general floor plan



Source: DOMa Institution SA

In the 1980s, the professional careers of a group of slightly younger female architects began to take off, working in a wide variety of fields. One of the most outstanding careers is that of architects Morpho Papanikolaou (b. 1955) and Rena Sakellaridou (b. 1955), both internationally trained, who graduated in 1981 and founded the SPARCH studio a year later. The extensive work of this pair of architects has been the subject of numerous exhibitions and publications and has received national and international recognition, particularly since the late 1990s after their collaboration with Mario Botta on the design of the headquarters of the National Bank of Greece. Another representative of this group is Nelly Marda (b. 1954), who has combined the work at her own architecture office with teaching at universities in Greece and the United Kingdom, becoming a professor at the National Technical University of Athens in 2004. In the field of teaching architecture and urbanism, Constantina (Dina) Vaïou (b. 1951) and Anastasia (Sasa) Lada (b. 1946) were the first in Greece to introduce the gender perspective into their teaching and research work at the architecture schools of Athens and Thessaloniki, respectively, from the late 1980s onwards. According to the Digital Archive of Greek Female Architects 1923-1981, by the end of the 20th century, the majority of students in the Greek schools of architecture were women, with more than 70% at the School of Architecture of Athens (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Covers of two publications on gender in spatial planning edited by Anastasia Lada. Left: *Teaching Gender, Diversity and Urban Space* (2009); right: *Μετα-τοπίσεις. Φύλο, διαφορά και αστικός χώρος* (*Dis-Locations: Gender, Diversity, Urban Space*) (2009)



Source: Anastasia Lada

The 1960s and 1970s were a period of political instability for Cyprus. The country's declaration of independence in 1960 was followed by years of conflict between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities, which ended with the partition of the island in 1974. For the first generation of Cypriot women architects, these two decades were the beginning and consolidation of their careers, although there is little documentation and still incipient research into the work of this group of women architects who opened the doors of the architectural profession to women in Cyprus (Cyprus Architects Association, 2023). According to the exhibition *Frau Architekt*, which was held at the Goethe Institute in Nicosia in 2021, the

first generation of graduated women architects in Cyprus consisted of a group of five foreign-educated women. In addition to the aforementioned Maro Efthimiadi Atzini (1937-1997), there would be Solmaz Feridun, who graduated in Turkey in 1961, Eleni Romanou Demetriadou, who graduated in 1969, Androulla Demetriou, who graduated in Greece in 1970, and Sevim Altan, who graduated in 1972.

In the course of this paper research, two digital records were found in which Androulla Demetriou developed educational architecture projects sponsored by the Ministry of Education and Culture in the 1990s: the Elementary Public School in Kiti (Optimumce, 2016) and the Nareg Armenian School in Larnaca (Wikipedia Foundation, 2023). More information about Solmaz Feridun can be found in her own statement on the website of her husband and partner, Arif Feridun (2021). Born and trained as an architect in Turkey, Solmaz Feridun and her husband set up an architectural practice in Cyprus and received several commissions during the early years of the Republic of Cyprus. However, the inter-communal conflict that began in December 1963 forced the couple to leave the country, settling first in Germany, then in the UK, and finally in Turkey. Solmaz Feridun developed her career from Ankara, combining work in the Ministry of Public Works, where she supervised the design and construction of educational facilities and became Deputy Director of the Department of Architecture, with freelance practice with her husband. After retiring, she conducted independent research on rapid construction technologies and was a lecturer at the Eastern Mediterranean University in Cyprus from 1992 (Feridun, 2021) (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Androulla Demetriou's elementary public School in Kiti, ca. 2000



Source: Δημοτικό Σχολείο Κιτίου

Among the first graduated women architects in Cyprus, there is a later group, those born between the late 1950s and early 1970s, who continue to be educated abroad and who have some of the most significant careers and contributions to contemporary Cypriot architecture. Margarita Danou (b. 1965), trained in London, established her office in Nicosia in 1990, becoming one of the first women in Cyprus to run a solo architecture practice. Danou's work has received awards and recognition since the beginning of her career. In the 1990s she was a runner up in the European Architectural Competition EUROPAN 3 for the city of Campi, Italy (1993), was distinguished in various local and international competitions, and won the first prize for the design of the museum and monumental complex at Liopetri Barn (1994). The author of numerous private residences, Danou has also designed public spaces and infrastructures, as well as commercial buildings. She has been nominated four times for the Mies van der Rohe Award (DANOS, 2020) (Figure15).

Figure 15. Margarita Danou's CYTA Footbridge in Limassol, 2013 (EU Mies Award 2015)



Source: European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture

The conservation of Cyprus' historical heritage has been one of the fields of specialisation of several of the pioneers of this second generation of Cypriot women architects. A noteworthy example is that of the architects Antonia Theodosiou and Nasso Chrysochou (b. 1964) who, only a few years after graduating, were awarded the Europa Nostra Award for their joint work on the restoration of a traditional house built on Hellenistic tombs in Nicosia (1995). This heritage intervention project represented Cyprus in the field of architecture at the 1997 Biennale of European and Mediterranean Countries. Antonia Theodosiou, graduated in 1986, has developed her professional career around the conservation of architectural heritage and the enhancement of traditional building techniques such as drystone construction and earthen architecture. She is currently Board member of ICOMOS-Cyprus and expert member of the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Earthen Architectural Heritage. Nasso Chrysochou (b. 1964), who graduated in architecture in the United States in 1986, with specialised postgraduate training in heritage conservation in Italy and the United Kingdom, has run her own architectural practice since 1992, developing a large number of projects in the conservation of historic buildings and monuments, most notably the restoration of the Panagia tou Sinti Monastery, for which she received another Europa Nostra Award in 1997 (BRAUa, 2023; Frederick University, 2023b; Guérin, 2011) (Figure 16).

Figure 16. A view of the interior of the Panagia tou Sinti Monastery in Pentalia, which was restored under the supervision of Nasso Chrysochou between 1994 and 1998



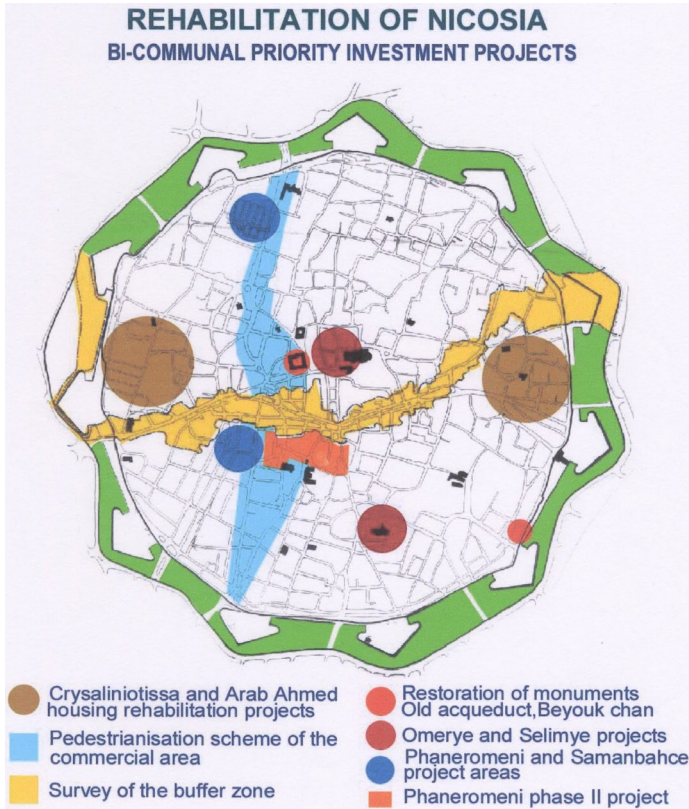
Source: Αψίδα, Cyprus Tourism Organisation

With regard to urban planning and public policies related to spatial planning, three women architects from this generation of Cypriot pioneers deserve special mention. Athena Aristotelous-Cleridou (b. 1954) qualified as an architect in 1977 and then studied town planning in the UK. Since 1978 she has worked for the Cyprus Ministry of the Interior, where she has been involved in the formulation of public policy on housing, urban planning and the protection of architectural heritage. In 1995 she was appointed head of the Conservation of Cultural Heritage Unit, from where she launched numerous initiatives and regulations aimed at protecting and enhancing the cultural heritage of Cyprus (EHHF 2018).

At the local level of public policy, Athina Papadopoulou (b. 1965) has been working in the Urban Planning Department of Nicosia Municipality since 1999, developing the city's master plan, a project she has been directing since 2010. Together with other professionals, including a number of women architects and planners such as İlkay Feridun or Angi Petridou¹², she has contributed to the preservation of the architectural and urban heritage of the Cypriot capital. The Nicosia Master Plan, which was also developed as part of the peace and reconciliation process between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities, won a Europa Nostra Award (2005) and an Aga Khan Award (2007) (BRAUb, 2023) (Figure 17).

12. Agni Petridou led the Nicosia Master Plan team between 1996 and 2010.

Figure 17. Plan of the Bi-communal priority investment projects, Nicosia Master Plan



Source: European Heritage Awards Archive

Lora Nicolau (b. 1957), trained as an architect and urban planner in Greece and the UK, has worked on urban planning from both a professional practice and academic perspective. During the 1990s she worked in London as an urban planner for international consulting companies and as a lecturer and researcher at several universities. In the early 2000s she settled in Cyprus, where she works as a freelance urban planner and assistant professor at Frederick University (Frederick University 2023a). Despite the increase in the number of women architects pursuing independent careers,

the second generation of Cypriot graduated women architects still tended to work in couples or with male colleagues. This was the case, for example, with Margarita Kritiotti (1964-2022), Eleftheria Serghidou (b. 1965), Maria Charalampides (b. 1968), Elena Parouti (b. 1971) or Maria Akkelidou (b. 1970) (Brown & Burns, 2024).

4. CONCLUSIONS

This review of the trajectories of the first graduate women architects in South-Eastern Europe shows how sociopolitical conditions have had a particular influence on the advancement of women's rights, which in turn have allowed for the progressive participation of women in professions traditionally considered to be male domains. While this could be considered common to almost all countries, the specificity of the recent history of Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey makes it possible to see more clearly the direct impact of the sociopolitical context on the reality of women architects, on the architectural disciplines themselves and, more generally, on the principle of equal opportunities.

It is noticeable how the absence or weakness of democratic structures in the states hinders the advancement of women in the field of architecture. On the one hand, the creation of public schools of architecture seems to be associated with an increase in the number and diversity of women entering the profession. On the other hand, the establishment of government departments aimed at developing public policies related to spatial planning and design seems to contribute to the career paths of the first generations of women graduates in architecture.

Public administrations were not only the first working environment for many of the first generations of women graduate architects, but, unlike the private sector, they also offered them stability, a degree of autonomy—both with regard to their spouses and to sociopolitical circumstances—and the opportunity for professional development, with many of them reaching positions of the highest responsibility. One possible explanation for this may lie in the working conditions generally offered by the public sector. This is one of the conclusions of recent quantitative studies (Sánchez de Madariaga et al., 2022) on the situation of women architects, which show that flexible

working hours, maternity leave and other legal instruments that facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life are highly valued by female architects.

Although employment in the public sector offered certain advantages for early Greek, Cypriot and Turkish women architects, especially when processes of democratic deterioration or a reversal of women's rights policies were initiated, this research also concludes that there may have been a degree of gender segregation, both horizontal and vertical. Although the new democratic governments, especially in the case of Turkey, promoted the figure of the professional woman as a symbol of progress and modernity, women architects concentrated on and led certain types of projects and areas.

In all three countries, the relevance of some of the first women architects is common to departments more closely associated with cultural areas than with purely technical ones. The role of these first generations in the tourism promotion departments stands out, where they were responsible for studying, protecting, regulating and promoting the rich architectural and archaeological heritage of their respective countries. The Ministries of Education or Health were also departments in which the first female architects to graduate in Cyprus, Turkey and Greece carried out important work. Some worked as planners of health or education infrastructure, others developed regulations and standards for the design and construction of these and other facilities.

The local archives and authors consulted highlight that, even within the public administration, there was a tendency for women architects to be commissioned for less visible projects. It was common to assign them to design small and rural facilities. While this tendency may have led to a lower visibility of women architects' careers, it also highlights the importance of the work of the first generations of women architects in the development of democratic infrastructures and the emerging welfare state in Greece, Turkey and Cyprus.

It is also concluded that few Greek, Cypriot and Turkish women have managed to practise architecture alone in the private sector. Those who have done so tend to combine the free practice of architecture with other employment, usually university teaching, and have tended to focus on the design of private residential buildings. Within the private sector, large architectural or urban planning projects appear almost exclusively in the careers of those women architects who have developed their professional paths with their

male partners, through groups of architects, or working for large companies in the sector. The research also shows that the progress and consolidation of democracy is directly linked to a higher proportion of women architects working in the private sector.

As noted above, it is notable that a significant number of the first generation of female graduates in architecture have achieved high levels of professional recognition and advancement in a wide range of areas of professional practice, including at an international level. This could be related to the comparatively high socioeconomic background of many of these women, who were able to enter what was for most of the 20th century an elitist profession. It could also be connected to the significant number of Turkish, Greek and Cypriot women who were educated abroad, mostly in the UK but also in the US. While this would be expected in Cyprus, given the absence of national schools of architecture until the first decade of the 21st century, leaving the country to obtain a professional degree and postgraduate training at a prestigious English-speaking university abroad seems to have been a common route for many generations of architects in these countries throughout the 20th century.

A certain tendency to develop professional careers in certain areas can be seen in the careers of both those architects who have worked in the public sector and those who have worked in the private sector. In any case, there is a relationship between many of these women architects and areas of architecture and urban planning that are directly related to the quality of life of citizens and the support of everyday life. Among other areas, the first generation of graduated women architects in Greece, Turkey and Cyprus, tended to specialise in housing policy and design, heritage preservation and regulation, university teaching, planning and design of everyday life public facilities, and urban planning.

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