

Perceptions and Spatial Realities: Women and the City of Limassol

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Abstract : Women's relationship to the post-industrial city has been defined by a reciprocal relationship between women's identity and urban form. Women's place within the social structure has been influenced by often limiting conditions set by the built environment, and, concurrently, women's active role in social processes has definitively impacted urban development. Cities in Cyprus present unique locations for urban investigations pertaining to gender because of the country's particular urban history: unlike most prominent European cities that have experienced approximately five hundred years of urban growth spurred by industrial development, Cypriot cities did not begin to form until the end of the Ottoman occupation that occurred in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Consequently, Cyprus' urban history is distinctive in that it coincides with international awakenings towards gender equality. This paper is drawn from a study of a contemporary urban narrative of Limassolian women and aims to elucidate spatial and perceptual boundaries that are inherent, constructed and implied. Within the context of this study, gender - in its socially constructed form - becomes a tool for reading and understanding the urban landscape, as well as a vehicle to impact the production and consumption of space. The investigation evaluates urban changes through the lens of women's entry into the workforce which is a profound event in the social process and consequently explores issues of space and time, connectivity, and access, perceptions and awareness. A narrative of gendered urbanism has been derived from semi-structured interviews where the findings are studied, organised, analysed and synthesised through a grounded theory approach. These qualitative findings have been complemented and specialised by a series of informal observations and mappings.

Keywords : boundaries, gender, Limassol, urbanism

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