5 Concluding Remarks

The discussions presented in this volume demonstrated the potential of the analysis focused on architectural evidence in the study of sociocultural and economic transformations of Prehistoric Cyprus. As a cultural artefact, architecture provided an effective data set for analysing sociocultural narratives[1] and preliminary exploring the formation and reproduction of cultural identities, social ideologies and economic developments of the early communities inhabiting the island from the Late Aceramic Neolithic until the end of Middle Bronze Age Cyprus.

In the past, the studies focused on the architectural remains of ancient Cyprus created a bias in favour of the monumental architecture of the Late Bronze Age period, which certainly produced a large number of well-preserved buildings and settlements (see § 1.2.4). Yet, the evidence we have on the Prehistoric built environment of the island represents an important resource, one that continues to grow thanks to new excavation and survey projects as well as ongoing studies, which are progressively dismantling the Classical perspective and understanding of architecture only as a collection of shapes,

1 See Love 2013a, 755; Watkins 2004; Banning, Chazan 2006; Hodder 1990, 30; Fisher 2014a; Robb 2010; Bloch 2010.

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-685-5/005

forms and design.[2] This volume stressed the exigence of approaching the analysis of the prehistoric built environment of Cyprus with consideration of the complex interplay between society and space. From a methodological point of view, the multi-scalar approach adopted in this research has provided an apt framework for broadening the existing discussion about architectural data of prehistoric Cyprus and has enabled the examination of transformations in the use and concept of space and related socio-cultural implications at individual and community levels. The integration of evidence at the increasing scale of analysis offered a functional data set to investigate the dynamic relationship between the built and social environment of Prehistoric Cyprus and contributed to a less static understanding of buildings, agglomerations and settlement patterns (see Letesson, Knappet 2017). What emerged from the arguments presented, is that buildings and agglomerations were more than static products, they – instead – were implicated in a dynamic process and were an integral part of the spatiality of early communities of the island.

From a theoretical perspective, the analysis of architecture offered an effective data set to delineate aspects of transformations at the household and settlement scale. These transformations are attested in the development of building techniques, including mudbricks manufacture and plaster pyrotechnology (see § 2.2) as well as in the emerging specialisation in building activities and in the organisation of supra-household labour, as discussed in Chapter 2. A new perception of the domestic space developed over the course of Neolithic and Chalcolithic Cyprus; dwellings progressively become the core of social activities and identity, not just shelters (see § 3.1). This change is materialised in the increasing distinction between the individual/interior house space and the communal/exterior space, as exemplified by the introduction of courtyard houses during Early Bronze Age Cyprus (see § 3.1.1). New building types were constructed to respond to the transforming exigencies of these early societies, with the definitive passage to the rectangular architecture in the Prehistoric Bronze Age Cyprus. Changes in the organisation of settlements included the progressive appearance of spaces for communal activities (see § 4.1) and more pronounced segregation between working and domestic spaces in Middle Bronze Age settlements (see § 4.2). The making of these transformative built environments, with their contextual peculiarities, materialised the gradual emergence of new forms of social organisation. Social structures, which were not exclusively based on individual households, but also on extended groups, emerged and cooperated in the conduction of communal activities. It

2 E.g. Webb 2009; Fisher 2023; Papaconstantinou 2010; Kearns 2011; Manning et al. 2014.

is possible that in some cases cooperation and coordination acted as unifying forces, which enabled the balance of social tension, in other cases, mechanisms of increasing privatisation likely prevailed, contributing to emerging social inequalities, especially at the end of the Prehistoric Bronze Age Cyprus (see Webb, Knapp 2021).

As stated in the preface, this book does not pretend to have exhausted the subject, instead, in the writing up of the three core chapters of the volume, the arguments were selected to focus on specific research themes and to approach them from a diachronic perspective. Although the arguments exposed did not go through an in-depth examination of single contexts but remained at a more general scale, the work presented tried to not underestimate the importance of single settlement histories and contributed to the delineation of a range of potential avenues for examining socio-cultural trajectories, by using architecture as a key data-set of cultural evidence.

There is, of course, great potential for further diachronic and comparative approaches based on the integration of macro and micro analyses on materials, technologies, architectural forms and social spaces. This will enable the examination of patterns of transformations in the insular communities at a larger scale. What is important, is the reliance on systematic and detailed – possibly standardised – data description. Luckily, in recent years, numerous sites have been published in great detail, and the results of earlier excavations are re-assessed and progressively made available.[3] The production of this implemented architectural record offers countless potentials and may have a number of important implications for future studies concerning the socio-cultural and economic trajectories of early communities in Cyprus.

3 E.g. Bombardieri 2017; Frankel, Webb 1996; 2006a; Peltenburg et al. 1991; 1998; 2003; 2019; Swiny et al. 2003; Sneddon et al. 2002; Webb 2020.