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Architectural History and the Colonial Question: Casablanca, Algiers and Beyond

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The last decade has seen an explosion of scholarly works dealing with colonial architecture and town planning, a domain previously marginal in the historiography. In any case it has aroused the attention of ever more numerous researchers, a fact that has stimulated this attempt to take stock of it, by drawing on cases studied by this author in his own work. The exploration of colonialism now constitutes a significant field of doctoral research, of studies associated with the identification and protection of built heritage, and tends to mould new images in the history of architecture from the last few centuries. In actual fact, the innumerable works on the twentieth century — the subject here — comprise only a fraction of all the studies concerning nearly five centuries of colonization, if the beginning of the colonial era is identified with the discovery of America and the establishment of the first European trading posts in Africa.

This explosion of research might be seen as resulting from a series of factors. First, there is evidently independence, a process now pursued since some sixty years ago, and the emancipated nations' recovery of their own histories, which has passed through the

Fig. 1. *The Sidi Othman district, Casablanca, a vertical development of the low-rise housing schemes of the 1950s, view in 1999 (Photo: J.-L. Cohen)*

stage of creating institutions and programmes for research and for heritage protection. Second, there is the expansion of historical research through ever more numerous doctoral training programmes. Third, there is the development of research strategies establishing colonial and post-colonial experiences and discourse as objects for theoretical consideration. Last but not least, there is the powerful force of nostalgia for empires, which takes hold not only of people in previously colonizing nations, but often also those in previously colonized ones, a force that often comes about with tourism's turning of the whole world into entertainment.

The combined mass of this ever-increasing quantity of analyses might thus, in itself, be viewed from the standpoint of sociology of sciences or of intellectual history. Those fields already have their own established and layered histories, as is shown by the bibliography of research, which must often include works from the colonial period, which despite ideological biases being unquestionably apparent, are often indispensable given their empirical content. By any reckoning, the convergence of work by researchers coming from countries previously colonized and from those in the metropolitan states has brought about the creation of new regional or national histories, which pinpoint the ways in which power, knowledge and forms circulated.

A brief typology of these studies will enable us to discern clearly the different groups of problems dealt with in research into the British, French, Italian or Spanish empires — to mention just the most considerable, Russian and Japanese colonial ventures still remaining relatively in the dark.[1] Investigations into styles, set within quite a long-established line of thought, have been totally transformed by works such as Mark Crinson's on Victorian orientalism in India.[2] Works on architectural typology have found their model in Anthony King's research into the bungalow's misadventures across the world.[3] Relationships between undertakings at home and those conducted in colonized territories have been explored, for example, in the case of the French in Morocco, by Paul Rabinow and Gwendolyn Wright, whilst as for an overview, Hélène Vacher examined the town planning system.[4] Italy's way of operating in Libya has been researched by Mia Fuller and Francesco Cresti.[5] Studies taking account of major cities in the colonies not simply as expressions of their rulers' policies, or as some remnants of forgotten kinds of architecture but also as complex sites of exchange are proliferating. I shall also mention here my own studies of Casablanca and Algiers.[6] In addition, some towns that had remained virtually unknown — like the capital of Erytrea, Asmara, subjected successively to Italian and then Ethiopian rule — have been rediscovered and carefully researched.[7] New syntheses of history, like that supervised by Jean-Luc Pinol, are inevitably collective works. They have completely integrated such studies into the mainstream and now provide truly global perception of urban history.[8] Nevertheless, really comparative viewpoints remain exceptional, and in fact are only indirectly focused in this direction, by means of the empirical juxtaposition allowed by collective works. Jeffrey Cody's various studies of American architects' activities across all five continents are an interesting attempt to grasp the ways in which professional strategies were inflected locally, but currently they are unique.[9]

The methods used in these studies are often those drawn from the history of architecture, or of town planning, or of gardens. But other disciplines have also contributed to the field of research into colonial space, as understood in all its

Fig. 2. *The place Emir Abdelkader, formerly place Bugeaud, built in the 1860s, Algiers, view in 2002 (Photo: J.-L. Cohen)*

Fig. 3. *The boulevard de la Gare, now boulevard Mohammed V, Casablanca, created 1917–25, view in 1920 (Collection J.-L. Cohen)*

Fig. 4. *Jules Voinot and Marius Toudoire, Post Office, Algiers, 1907–10, view in 2002 (Photo: J.-L. Cohen)*

dimensions. This has, of course, been the case of anthropology, whose concepts have allowed a revitalization of historians' language, or of comparative literature, colonial ventures having been mirrored in an intense creation of fiction. Edward Said's analyses of scientific and literary descriptions constructed in order to fabricate the corpus of 'orientalism' have been undeniably productive, within an especially rich production of theory by Britons and Americans.[10] The other side, one resulting from visual representations, notably photography and cinema — whose zenith is contemporary with the golden age of colonization, between the end of the nineteenth century and the Second World War — has only recently become the object of progressively more numerous analyses. Thus architecture is no longer perceived according to its own history's methods only — derived from architecture's conception, its material implementation and its usage — but is fitted into a dense network of semantic exchange.

Doubtless the dynamic of the current situation may best be apprehended when it is inserted into a larger picture so as to enable an understanding of its sources. If I stay with the case of France, which is better known to me than other cases, studies of colonial architecture have passed through several stages since the beginning of the twentieth century. In the earliest period, the conjuring-up of 'colonial styles of France' was set during the 1920s within an ensemble of triumphalist narratives which were nothing other than arguments accompanying imperial undertakings, and which very directly influenced the creation of architecture and applied arts, as was revealed by Exposition des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, in 1925.[11] Essential to rendering colonial endeavours visible and even entertaining, the colonial sections in exhibitions and *ad hoc* mass spectacles, such as that in Paris in 1931, have without question been dealt with more than has any other part of the entire colonial corpus. To return to the lines along which some historical and critical arguments have developed, it is important to notice the degree to which dissident voices were rare at that time.[12] The only exception seems to have been the colonial 'counter-exhibition' in 1931, organized by the Parisian Surrealists, at avenue Mathurin Moreau, in a building exceptional for other reasons, in that it consisted of the re-erected version of the Soviet Pavilion built at the 1925 Exposition Internationale by Konstantin Melnikov ...

One had to wait for the historical and ethnographical work on living conditions in Western, Central or North Africa and the Saharan regions, only begun after the Second World War, for the appearance of any change in reference points, and for the end of reduction to decorative characteristics. In the case of Morocco, in parallel with research into traditional housing in the North of the country, carried out by the Spanish, the Kasbahs in the South, studied by several ethnologists, directly influenced housing projects for 'natives', such as those by Georges Candilis and Shadrach Woods at Casablanca in the early 1950s.[13] From now on it was less a matter of vocabularies of ornament than of spatial arrangements and volumetric configurations that moved towards a less narrative and more abstract kind of architecture, but also towards one more mindful of local lifestyles. Candilis's knowledge of Berber housing and Aldo van Eyck's interest in Dogon housing are characteristic of the new attitude demonstrated by young architects, following the initiative of creating Team 10, whose focus of interest shifted towards vernacular construction.[14] André Ravereau's research into dwellings in the urban oases of the M'Zab, located in Algerian Sahara, would extend the Moroccan investigations.[15]

Fig. 5. *Georges Candilis, Shadrach Woods and Vladimir Bodiansky, 'Honeycomb' residence for Muslim workers, Casablanca, 1952 (Collection J.-L. Cohen)*

With decolonization would come the time of denunciations and critical analyses. But the first critical analyses — François Béguin's on the phenomenon of 'Arabizing' in North Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century — did not see the light of day until the mid-1970s.[16] It is also at this moment that French urban policy began to be examined, but still in relatively over-simplifying texts. A truly scholarly approach was then only made possible thanks to the opening up of governmental archives, such as the specialist section of the Archives Nationales located at Aix-en-Provence, and above all with the gathering together and classification of individual architects' and planners' collections, which enabled a new generation of research, of which *Architectures françaises outremer*, published in 1992, would be the first sign.[17] From this moment onwards, innumerable Masters dissertations, doctoral theses and research reports would begin to pile up, first of all in France, but also, since the last decade of the

Fig. 6. *The fortified wall of the old town, c. 1780, Casablanca, view in 1998 (Photo: J.-L. Cohen)*

twentieth century, in universities throughout the Saharan regions. From this point of view, the holding of the conference *Alger, lumières sur la ville* at Algiers in 2002 marked a real threshold, not only through its very occurrence, but also through the now dispassionate view of history that became apparent there.[18]

A question arises at this point. Does research into 'colonial' architecture constitute a separate branch within architectural history, which would then imply a kit of methodologies and hypotheses of its own? The idea of 'exported' architecture once seemed to offer the promise of a more objective gaze, due to being founded on a seemingly objective vision of a displacement, or 'disorientation',[19] of architectural culture.[20] I would rather suggest here the concept of architecture *in a colonial situation*. Analysis of the corpus of such architecture presupposes fairly solid prior knowledge and implies certain methodological precautions.

Anthony King has emphasized that research into any colonial situation presupposed at the same time knowledge of the local pre-colonial society, knowledge of the colonizer's society at home, and that of the colonized society.[21] Such a triad should also be taken into consideration for research into architecture and town planning, or else one will risk passing by the signification of the projects and executed designs under analysis. It is impossible to understand the meaning of a colonial building unless it is slotted into these three typological and/or aesthetic series, which comprise local architecture with its own history, architecture as practised or known by its designer from the dominant power, and executed projects contemporaneous with it.

Furthermore, it is an absolutely basic necessity to avoid what I shall call the illusion of an overpowering State whose policies would shape the entire society, at least for French possessions. Colonies are not places of confrontation just between the colonizing state and local subjects. Political, technical and legislative space is much more complex because, at root, soldiers, missionaries and bureaucrats have essentially the same task, of protecting merchants, landowners and industrialists in their financial undertakings. Foucaldian paradigms, giving greater place to a sort of microphysics of colonial power, are often reductive, and it is the totality of the colonizing society's commissioning relationships which should be taken into account, not limiting oneself to research into colonial systems.
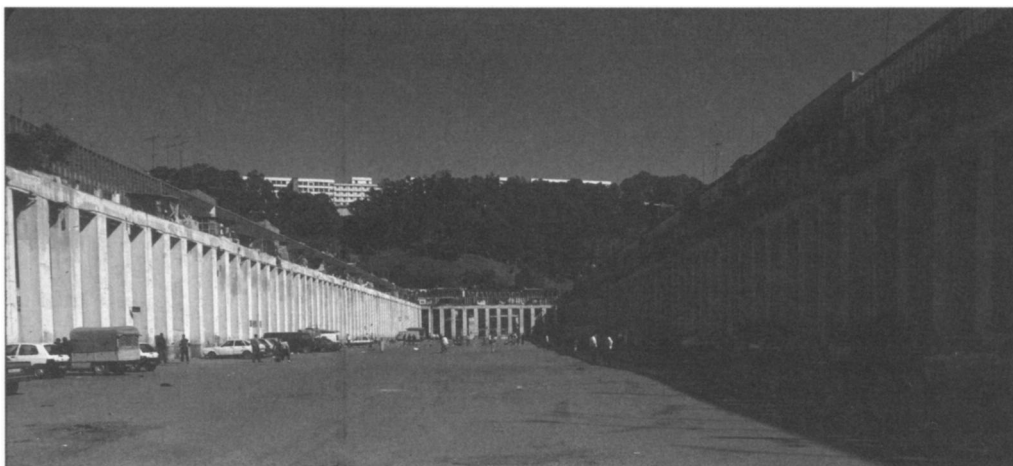
Fig. 7. *Fernand Pouillon, '200 Colonnes' housing scheme, Algiers, 1954, view in 2002 (Photo: J.-L. Cohen)*

Some methodological precautions must also be taken. The first consists in taking care to avoid abusing the metaphor of 'laboratory', something to which I myself have sometimes succumbed. Often fruitful, this metaphor discerns in projects undertaken in the colonies an experimental moment whose results only find their sense if exported again, this time back into the colonial powers' own countries. But this figure of speech can also obscure the reality of the process. An innovative undertaking is not inevitably an experimental one. It is only experimental if an explicit protocol exists for observing the activity and then re-evaluating its premises. It is therefore advisable to demonstrate the existence of such procedures rigorously.

As a second precaution, colonies are, just like areas back home, territories where *modernization* and *modernity* are each constructed and oppose each other, as distinct but parallel phenomena. Social modernization there does not necessarily occur in tandem with processes that are modern in aesthetic terms. Conversely, radical aesthetics can serve socially conservative policies, just as is the case — studies progressively demonstrate this more and more — of so-called 'developed' powers, the success of Functionalism in Nazi Germany being the most obvious case.

In third place, diachronic lines of continuity also need to be marked out, so as to avoid optical illusions caused by a narrow focus, where research is too limited in terms of length of historical period; but that is an indispensable precaution in any historical research. By way of example, it is enough to note that 1950s social housing programmes in North Africa cannot be appreciated in terms of their intentions and their practical deployment if they are only measured against contemporaneous undertakings in Europe. They have to be compared with the first industrial companies' policies or with philanthropic policies, such as were developed in the nineteenth century, and not only with those parallel with them in time.

Finally, without doubt the greatest methodological difficulty is that concerned with listening to the voice of those colonized. How can we take account of local reception of a town planning and of an architecture which signified at one and the same time both

Fig. 8. *Antoine Marchisio, housing scheme for Muslim workers, Ain Chock, Casablanca, 1945–50* (*Collection J.-L. Cohen*)

oppression and modernization, which thus gave domination (and often cultural repression) concrete form, yet which also brought hope of liberation, through glimpses of other potential ways of living? Here, the traditional corpus of architectural magazines, of architects' or administrators' letters and other writings, and of the local press (even though an extraordinarily eloquent source) are unable, on their own, to supply the material needed for such reflections. Investigation in the field, research into family letters or photographs, and the practice of oral history are indispensable, at least for investigations concerning the last century. In this field, again, questions raised by Paul Ricoeur about the relationship between history and memory have great relevance.[22] The analysis of colonial territories is not the exclusive right of historians who will themselves be in some way 'colonial', because they practise 'colonial history', but it can be carried out, as in my own case, by historians of modernity and of modernization using, among other things, colonial experience as a domain of observation. The first condition for any fruitful work in this domain is mistrust *vis-à-vis* any political narrative, consisting of idealizations still bearing an imprint of colonialist relics, whether of the superiority of imposed models or of a natural suspicion of anti-colonialist discourse against all forms of cultural imposition.

Observation of colonial areas informs us about the home countries — their élites and their strategies for modernization — of which these areas are, if not laboratories, then at least zones for experimentation. These situations, often anticipating policies only carried out later in Europe, in the case of France, were only possible because local power structures hardly left any room for democratic debate. Although there had been

intense debates from the beginning of colonization between the different European interests in play — civilian and military, private and public — the unequal representation of the local social groups would hardly allow them to question any measures regardless of whether or not these concerned them directly, and the vectors for their protests would often remain limited to petitions, at least until 1945. This is the case for the two cities on which I have spent time: Algiers, conquered in 1830 and colonized until 1962, and Casablanca, under protectorate between 1907 and 1956.[23]

Should all colonial urban spaces, however, need to be assimilated into a sort of 'heterotopia', as Michel Foucault invited us to, in his seminal essay of 1967 'Of Other Spaces'?[24] Doubtless this concept is entirely valid in order to give an account of certain places, such as closed or segregated districts, such as Albert Laprade's 'new indigenous town' at Casablanca. But it tends to underestimate the process under way in colonial society. The concept of 'hegemony', which Antonio Gramsci proposed adding to that of coercion in order to characterize the political situation of the Italian working class under Fascism, is as it happens fruitful, for it denotes la complex persistence of other forms of practice and of culture, and underlines the role of culture, in opposition to Foucault's emphasis on violence.[25]

Moreover, these two cases — Algerian and Moroccan — can be differentiated at this point. The policy followed at Algiers is that of a process of investment by the French in the pre-colonial town and of a tendency to exclude all the new Muslim population from the enlarged agglomeration, conceived as the capital of a 'colony to be populated by the French alone'. In the case of Casablanca (and of Morocco in general), eighty years later, the policy of the resident general Lyautey was quite different, and he took care to preserve pre-existing towns together with their populations, directing internal immigration towards 'new medinas' such as that of Casablanca. Moreover, the result of these policies is evident. In 1952, 60% of the population of Algiers was reckoned to be European, while they comprised only 20% of that in Casablanca. The very process of colonial development lies at the centre of the policy adopted by Lyautey in order to ensure the population's consent. The building of new towns is the translation into concrete form of the slogan he had conceived in order to win the Moroccans' hearts, and which was expressed as, 'a building site is worth three battalions'.

A fundamental concept in the analysis of processes for structuring colonial urban space is that of regulation. Many simplistic notions have dominated in the analysis of urban structures, identifying axial or centralized figures as those of domination, stressing the strict prescriptiveness of their plans. On this point it is advisable once more to underline that while colonialism was certainly founded on armed and legalized violence, such violence was not an end in itself. The first task of the military has always been the protection of the traders and, after the initial episodes during which the conquered territories are fortified, it is rather the logic of speculation that determines urban development. Algiers and Casablanca were conceived for business and, although repressive considerations were never totally forgotten, notably in the laying out of Casablanca's roadways so as allow the intervention of troops there, it is rather in terms of *regulation* that urban management operates. In some way it is a matter, as in some respects in towns back in the home country, of creating conditions such that the 'capitalist collectivity' gains something from the planning process.
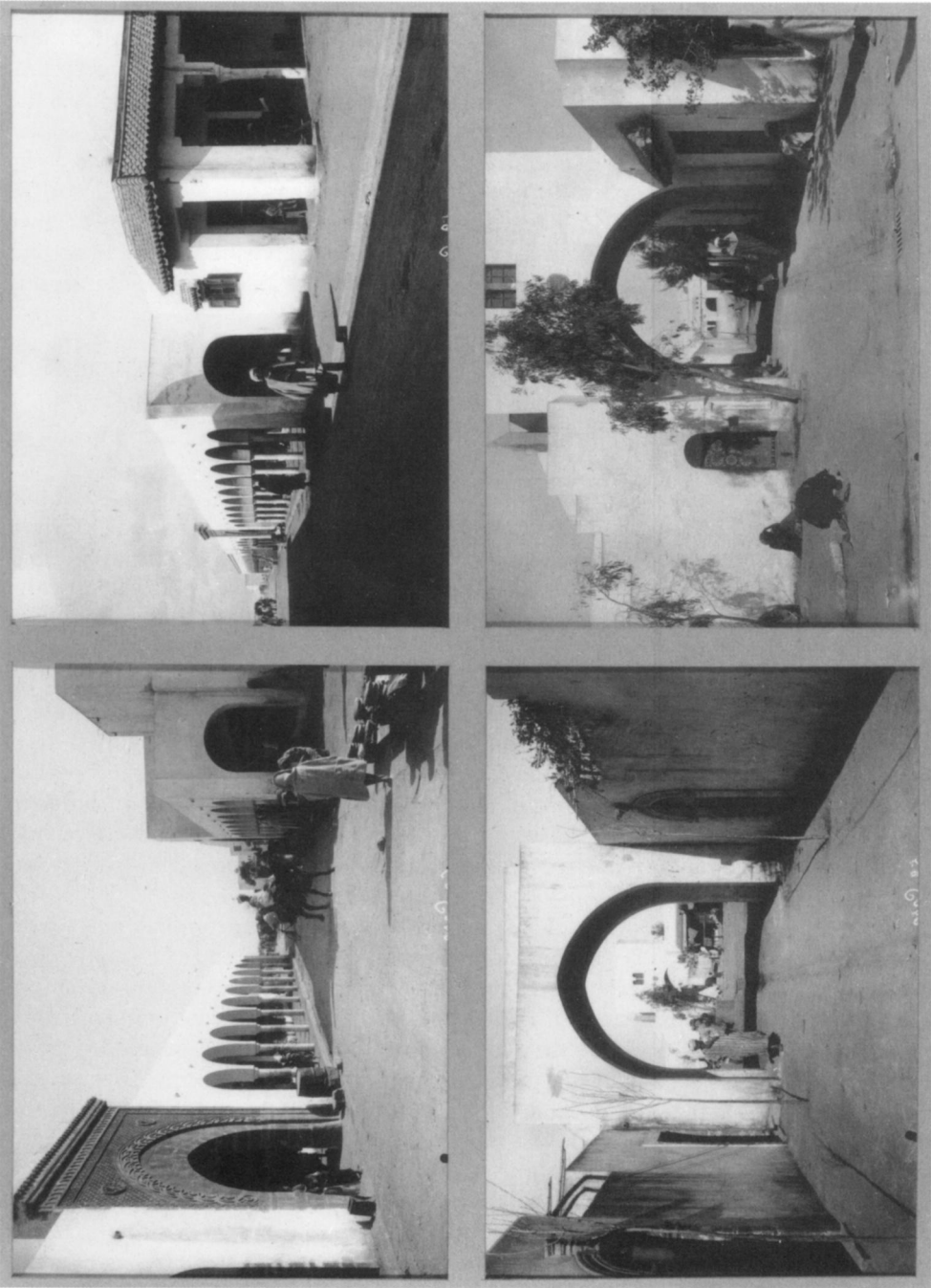
Fig. 9. Albert Laprade, 'New indigenous town', Casablanca, 1922 (Collection J.-L. Cohen)
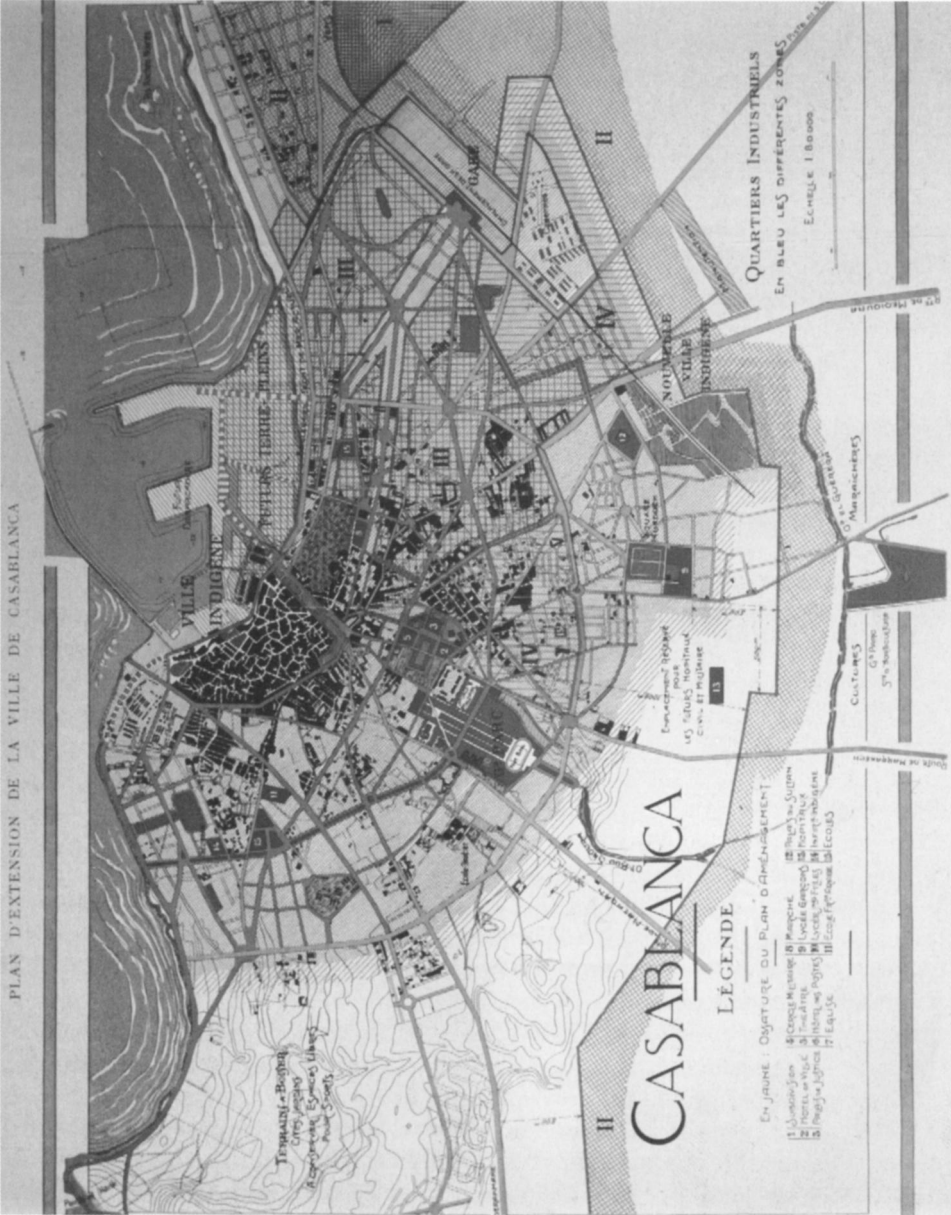
Fig. 10. *Henri Prost, extension plan, Casablanca, 1917, published in* France-Maroc, *15 August 1917 (Collection J.-L. Cohen)*

Thus, after this era of major road layout, which saw the construction at Algiers, from 1860 onwards, of the exceptional Boulevard de l'Impératrice, a kind of Parisian Rue de Rivoli, set down above the Mediterranean, the arcaded streets of the Prost plan for Casablanca inaugurated another approach. It was no longer a matter of any total visual control of urban space, in which each building would be subordinated to an overall design, but rather a matter of modification, in which the individuality of buildings was encouraged, so long as they respected 'constraints' (*servitudes*) such as the inclusion of arcades or such minor regulations as the setting of balconies and decorative features on the façade. These differences are explained at the same time by the divergence between Lyautey's policy and those of Algerian governors, and by the aesthetic opposition of the ideal of legible, classical horizontality at Algiers against the model based on variety used at Casablanca. Moreover, in terms of urban layout, the Prost plan inaugurated the use of functionalist zoning and of urban regrouping within the French empire, as already practised in Germany, but which would remain unknown in legislation back in France itself practically right up to the 1940s.[26]

The corpus of colonial buildings also allows us to test the validity of the fruitful notion of spatial arrangement (*dispositif*), which takes account of adjustments between spaces and practices, insofar as colonial space is characterized by the invention of urban and architectural types or by the refinement of pre-existing ones. Among the figures most often encountered in this way are orthogonal grids, much loved by the military in every age; the term *quadrillage* — the French word referring at once to repressive 'control' (usually by police or military) and to any squared pattern overlaid onto paper, fabric (check) or street plan — was used here as elsewhere to indicate operations of systematic repression. Parade grounds, military camps and, generally speaking, places used for marshalling the populace are as typical of colonial towns, as are the forms of residential blocks developed to ensure separation of masters from servants, a feature which certainly echoes solutions devised in the Paris of the Second Empire.

These urban schemes are set in their own time in two respects. At one level, they never cease during this time to celebrate the highpoints of the conquered people's history, in order to turn them into an architectural display, for local or tourist use. Hence the Arabizing kinds of architecture in Algiers, conceived in order to give 'local colour' to a city in which visitors searched for this in vain. Features used at Tlemcen, a town where the mark of Andalusia is particularly strong, provided the sought after forms. In the case of Casablanca, public buildings are not so much associated with the history of Moroccan monuments but instead copy one of the features characteristic in Moroccan towns, namely the interiority of houses, whose façades are white and silent, ornamentation being restricted to around the inner courtyard and the rooms inside. Another way in which might be put forward as to how projects were set in their own time is when they were conceived as evolving ones. The 8×8 metre grid devised at the beginning of the 1950s by Michel Ecochard for building the low-rise districts of 'Muslim' housing was not thought of as an endpoint, but as the foundation from which the populace would finally gain access to the modern mass housing to which, moreover, those representing them aspired.[27] What followed was to prove Ecochard right, and districts of an undeniably urban character were erected right on top of the original courtyard houses. The only difference lies in the fact that the functionalist *barres*

Fig. 11. *The boulevard de l'Impératrice, Algiers, 1860s, view in 2002 (Photo: J.-L. Cohen)*

Fig. 12. *Storeys added to the low-rise housing grid, Casablanca, view in 1989 (Photo: J.-L. Cohen)*

(long slabs) dreamed up initially have been replaced by rows of smaller blocks (*immeubles à l'alignement*).

These representations of past and future cannot be detached from the intense mythical production that is associated with colonization. Modern colonies extended into the media age, whether this was a matter of magazines illustrated by lithography, then by photography, for Algeria, or by cinema, for Morocco, where the French landing in 1907 was filmed by one of the Lumière brothers' technicians. Such mythical productions are at once for local and more distant usage, contributing to the increase in the floods of immigrants travelling towards North Africa. And pictures of built projects played no minor role — far from it — in support of such a discourse. Slogans such as 'Alger la blanche' (White Algiers), with touristic connotations, or Casablanca as 'ville-champignon' (mushrooming city) or 'ville de l'énergie' (city of energy), equivalent to a kind of French Far West, would be dealt out over decades. At the same time, colonization had no qualms about celebrating itself and encouraged buildings that could support it. Such is the case, for example, in 1930, at the celebration of a century of colonization, when the modernist architect Léon Claro built above the Casbah the 'Maison indigène du Centenaire' (Native House of the Centenary), in the manner of a pavilion from a World Fair inserted into the city as if to mark the distance separating the housing 'discovered' by the French in 1830 from their own subsequent achievements.[28]

Colonies are also situated within the modernizing of the colonial powers themselves. Indeed, the, material and cultural investment, made overseas, finds its way back to the home country in various forms. Staying with the issue of managing urban form, it is from Lyautey's experience in Morocco that the fundamental planning principles that passed into French law during the Vichy period (and were perpetuated afterwards) were borrowed. Later, it was at Algiers that the instrument for measuring urban density, the floor area ratio (meaning the ratio of built area in respect to ground area), was discovered, in advance of being applied in French legislation only in the 1960s. Finally, when France in her period of great modernization embarked upon the policy of housing schemes (*grands ensembles*), and then that of new towns, she at last found some of her models to the south of the Mediterranean.

In terms of training professional élites, as much engineers as architects, the colonial 'detour' was often essential. In this way Henri Prost's career was shaped decisively by his voyage to Morocco, which allowed him to design the regional plan for Paris in 1928. It was the same for many of the architects active in Africa in the 1950s. Until the mass exodus back to France of a large part of the technical professionals in the colonial civil service (*cadres techniques de la colonisation*), prompted by each colony gaining independence in the 1960s, the journey overseas exposed engineers and administrators to other practices and often, especially after 1945, to some more modern techniques and procedures than in the home country.

Nothing, however, would be further from the truth than to present this organization (*dispositif*) like a sort of octopus whose head would be in the homeland whilst its tentacles were on the colonial fronts. Experiences and forms also circulated from one colony to another, and between empires. Lyautey's thoughts about potential strategies for Saharan North Africa were changed drastically when he discovered the British form
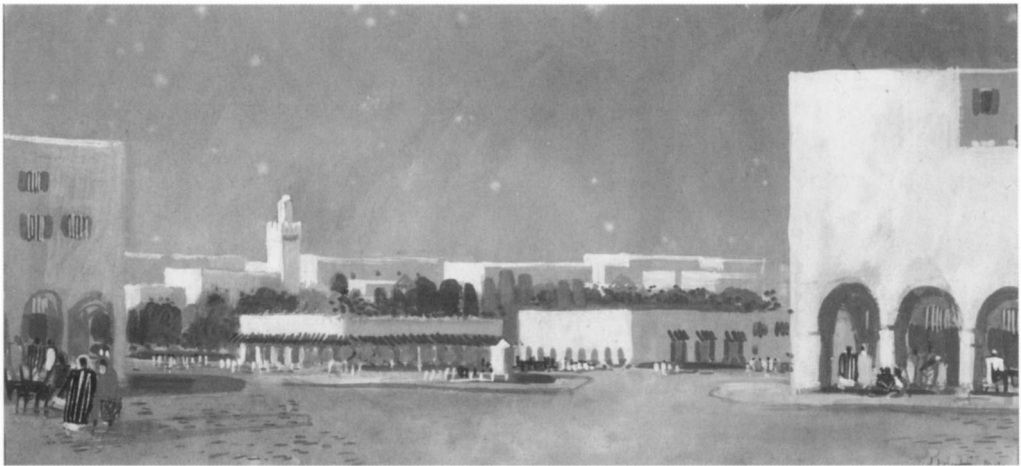
Fig. 13. *Alexandre Courtois, proposed transformation of the entrance to the old town, Casablanca, 1944 (Collection Alexandre Courtois, Bayonne)*

Fig. 14. *Léon Claro, Native House of the Centenary, Algiers, 1930, view in 2002 (Photo: J.-L. Cohen)*

of government for India, which led him to the model for the Moroccan Protectorate.[29] In turn, parts of Moroccan legislation and regulations would be taken up again, at the same time by the French in the context of their mandate over Syria and Lebanon and by the Italians in Libya, as Mia Fuller has established.[30] Rather than a centralized scheme (*dispositif*), it was thus more a network that linked these territories together, and all the

Fig. 15. Louis Miquel, 'Aérohabitat' housing scheme, Algiers, 1952, view in 2002 (Photo: J.-L. Cohen)

Fig. 16. Jacques Guiauchain and Auguste Perret, Palais du Gouvernement, Algiers, 1930–33, view in 2002 (Photo: J.-L. Cohen)

more so since other poles exerted far from negligible effects. Even before the Second World War, the presence of the United States — symbolic but also, increasingly, concrete, through economics and politics — was far from being a marginal phenomenon. At another level, towns in North Africa did not escape, after 1945, the impact of forms coming from Brazil or from Scandinavia, which transformed plastic expressions and ways of dwelling.

In technical terms, colonial operations contributed overall to the development of modular and prefabricated construction methods. At certain moments through the nineteenth and in the beginning of the twentieth centuries the equipping of Africa used up a significant proportion of iron produced in France. Among the new technologies tried out in Saharan North Africa, one should highlight a use of concrete advanced for its time, which resulted in some works whose echo would be discernible, such as Auguste Perret's Wallut warehouses in Casablanca, his first attempt to execute thin shells.[31] Nevertheless, in the realm of metallic construction, Algiers was further advanced and some very large blocks were erected there with steel frames.[32] This does not mean that concrete was absent from the Algerian landscape, and the gigantic Palais du Gouvernement built in 1930 by Jacques Guiauchain with Perret is an example of this, but one particularly interesting because it also incorporated movable partitions.[33]

The range of vocabulary used in these towns was extremely open, and the absorption of new architectural languages was as rapid there as pluralism had been inclusive in the nineteenth century. If a strand of classicism endured until the 1930s, as is shown by the town hall at Algiers by the Niermans brothers,[34] the successive variants of the neo-Moorish style were so complex that one could even read there a chronicle of modernization, with explicit quotations from existing buildings stylized as in the 1920s, comparable with patterns disseminated by the Exposition des Arts Décoratifs of 1925.[35]

But without doubt it was on the modernists that the effect of the colonies made itself felt most. This was not a specifically French phenomenon and it is well known that the discovery of Mayan temples was significant for Frank Lloyd Wright in the conception of his concrete houses in California. The criticism made in 1927 — at first friendly and humorous, then overtly racist — of the Weissenhofsiedlung at Stuttgart as being an 'Arab village' was not unique,[36] and Le Corbusier's cuboid estate at Pessac would be called a 'Moroccan village' (cité du Maroc) by its neighbours.[37] It should be noted anyway that Le Corbusier directly felt the effects of colonization, through his numerous but frustrating stays in Algiers during the 1930s, which would have specific effects upon his work. The plastic forms of the little Sidi Brahim mosque seen at El Atteuf in the M'Zab in 1931 would become one of the sources for his thick, but perforated, wall in his chapel at Ronchamp, twenty years later.[38] In the second post-war period, projects by young architects active in North Africa recycled elements from local architecture, as with Candilis, or with the Swiss, André Studer, who mixed his observations on Berber mud brick villages with those of Arizonan pueblos. Their projects would have a direct impact upon CIAM's discussions at Aix-en-Provence in 1953. In parallel, when the Roman Adalberto Libera was developing his housing estate project for INA-Casa at Tuscolano, his discovery of the horizontal grids in Ecochard's houses and in Moroccan towns (which he called, derisively, 'INA-Casba'), played a decisive role.[39]

Fig. 17. *Marius Boyer, Asayag building, Casablanca, 1930, view in 1994 (Photo: J.-L. Cohen)*

Colonial policies continued to cast their shadow after Independence. After the end of coercion, hegemony continued, by means of ongoing institutions and legislative structures and the extended and sometimes renewed presence of technicians in planning and construction. The first post-colonial enterprises were themselves often direct responses to the policies followed by the occupying powers. An example of this approach would be the project for the new centre to the east of the Bay of Algiers designed by Oscar Niemeyer in the 1920s, as if to balance the French administrative districts in the West. And the fact that Le Corbusier measured the extent of his structure for the Chandigarh plan as much by relating it to the scale of Lutyens' Raj Path at New Delhi as to the axis of the Champs-Élysées in Paris is striking.[40] He introduces here a different triad from that suggested by Anthony King, in which the liberated nation's project is only intelligible as a reaction to colonial space and space back in the colonizer's homeland ...[41]

Through a more subtle interpretation of the spatial transformations and the architectural culture of previously colonized nations and through an understanding of

certain continuities between colonial and post-colonial situations, research in this field is contributing to shape another history of contemporary architecture. Programmes developed in this field of study are particularly important. Still often negative, the perception of the colonial legacy is changing, as heritage strategies connected with their resulting built fabric are taken into account by cities and states. A double movement is thus established, in which studies by groups coming from the previous dominant powers and those by groups coming from states whose independence dates back half a century often converge.

In his *Race et Histoire* (*Race and History*), Claude Lévi-Strauss wrote, as early as 1952, an appeal against ethnocentrism and what he called 'stationary' history, noting that the development of research 'tends to spread out in space forms of civilizations that we had been to imagine as spread out in time'.[42] Such an analysis relativizes the concept of 'progress' and shows that it is neither necessary nor continuous, and that certain narrative forms of architectural history as coherent or hierarchically ordered movement are henceforth obsolete. The forms through which modernity is manifested may thus be reconsidered by means of studying the body of colonial works, which shows that such forms were contemporary with European or North American developments except when, at certain points, they preceded the latter. They can no longer be thought of exclusively as the product of a process of diffusion, but equally as one of an almost simultaneous dynamic of the emergence of new concepts and forms. Yet it is doubtless impossible to delineate the overall picture of all this.

NOTES

1 The situation around ten years ago can be studied by reading the special issue of *Design Book Review*, 29–30 (Summer-Fall 1993).

2 Mark Crinson, *Empire Building: Orientalism and Victorian Architecture* (London, 1996).

3 Anthony King, *The Bungalow: the Production of a Global Culture* (London, 1984).

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