TUNISIA, 1940-1970:
THE SPATIAL POLITICS OF RECONSTRUCTION, DECOLONIZATION, AND DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the dialectical discourses of modernism and the vernacular in Tunisian architectural and urban projects, from the late French protectorate into the period of independence, 1940-1970. With a particular focus on issues of habitation and heritage, this project tracks the reorganization of social space in the reconstruction efforts of the postwar French colonial administration and the architectural and patrimonial discourses of the Tunisian nation-state that came into existence in 1956.

In an era that witnessed mass-scale land expropriations, rural-urban migrations, and popular anti-colonial sentiment, this project traces the material effects of Tunisians’ displacements and urban adaptations to their rapidly changing socio-political condition. Underscoring the dialectics intrinsic to the postwar notion of development, namely, tensions between formal and informal settlements, vernacular building traditions and prefabrication methods, and patrimonial preservation and erasure, this dissertation explores the ideological negotiations of architectural progress in the *longue durée* of decolonization.

Throughout this tumultuous period, social housing projects sprouted in parallel with the spread of *gourbivilles* (earthen dwellings) and *bidonvilles* (‘tin can’ towns) on the outskirts of Tunisia’s urban centers. Both colonial and postcolonial institutional and state-led reckonings with vernacular architecture forwarded not only modernist building agendas, but promoted primitivizing mythologies of local construction techniques, rooted in racist attitudes towards the purportedly backward *indigène*. Challenging the predominant historiographical narrative that presents the independence of 1956 as a stark political rupture, this dissertation instead demonstrates that the vestiges of urban and preservationist policy schemes remained ingrained, on an institutional level, from protectorate rule. How the spatial and political processes of
decolonization, nation-building, and development intersect with the ethics and economics of habitation undergirds this project.
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INTRODUCTION

*Tunisia Works*, published in 1960 by the Secretariat of State for Information of the Tunisian Government, presents an overview of the nation-state’s economic, industrial, and social objectives for the country. On the frontispiece, the words “Live, Produce, Work” are emblazoned below, reading *hurriya* (freedom), *nithām* (order), and ʿ*adāla* (justice). The national crest is laden with typical symbolisms, but hybrid imagery—a *hilāl* crescent moon and star representing Islam, a ship alluding to Tunisia’s maritime and mercantile histories, a scale of justice, and a lion in profile, common to many early modern European crests. None other than the President of the Tunisian Republic, Habib Bourguiba, proffers the introductory remarks to the text:

At home new ways of living are stimulating evolution and progress. The growing needs of the people postulate a rising standard of material and moral prosperity that can be achieved only by constantly increasing endeavor. Abroad, the old forms of political domination, based on relative military strength, are being replaced by the less conspicuous but equally powerful influence of economic power. The maintenance of national entity and dignity is impossible without real independence. And real independence is impossible without a modicum of economic power, acquired through labor and perseverance. The Tunisian authorities are fully aware of the extent of their duties and the limits of their powers. The Government has experienced the concrete implications of the ancient adage: ‘Policy is perforce dictated by the means at one’s disposal.’ The nature of power, however, has undergone far-reaching changes: though political genius will always remain valid, though diplomacy and commerce play predominant roles, and although military nations are still influential, the Future belongs to Industrious Peoples. This peaceful, creative conviction is the guiding thought of ‘Tunisia At Work.’

The rhetoric of modernity cited here—evolution, progress, prosperity, industriousness—is not unlike that of other recently liberated protectorates and colonies, echoing this rally cry for dignity. Within this statement lies an acute self-awareness to the economic duress and limitations faced by the country. It also speaks to a nation that, to use this metaphor of development, is conscious of its infancy, still mired in a web of geopolitical skirmishes while aspiring toward the

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goal of self-sufficiency, and later, autonomy. Still, questions linger: what constitutes “real independence”? How, in this global matrix of still unequal power structures, are economic and cultural autonomy to operate? And furthermore, what is the dialectical relationship of these power differentials to the supposedly new, (re)configurations of labor, space, and culture? If Tunisia has neither evolved, in social Darwinian terms, nor achieved progress, then what exactly, is the value of work, in constructing—and reconstructing—dignity and identity?

Puzzled as to why this book was published in English, and even more so, bewildered as to the audience to whom this book was addressed, I wondered what the broader political impetus and implications of the text were. Surely, this fits into a genre of postwar development literature, but the very telos of development and matter of audience still troubled me. Tunisia Works, the title professes—but for whom? A section on “Housing” further ensconced my curiosities, with its primitivist presentation of rural life in contrast to promises of modern dwelling. Yet is from this curious book, which I discovered buried in the basement stacks of Firestone Library at Princeton University, that the beginnings of this project unfolded, interestingly enough, for a seminar paper in a course questioning the historiography and patterns of urbanization in the so-called, monolithic “Islamic City.” For a country with such a richly layered palimpsest of histories—pasts that are still very much alive in the urban fabrics and lives of people—the question of modernization, development, and its disturbing characterization of underdevelopment, nevertheless hovered.

In Tunisia, both the French colonial legacy and nationalist movements for sovereignty and independence continue to shape the discourses of space and political power. Inequality—in all its forms and iterations—served as the foundation for anticolonial struggle, but forms of these inequalities persist in the cultural-spatial and politico-economic domains. While promising the

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2 Ibid., 56-61.
very undoing of these power differentials, the political economies of nation-building often replicated and reproduced much of these formations of inequity through the built urban environment. The arduous task of decolonization, in turn, produced new subjectivities, identities, and historical narratives, just as nationhood was constructed. As the rhetoric to decolonize ensured the uprooting of vestigial colonial presence—including excising the capitalist mechanisms of extraction and exploitation that wrought havoc on colonies—in policy and practice, however, the Tunisian nation-state apparatus quietly let much of these insidious forms continue. Insisting, as Cameroonian scholar Achille Mbembe reminds us, that the domains of the economic and cultural need not be bifurcated or dichotomized, this project seeks to understand the political economy of urban space and the notion of development as deployed in postwar and post-independent Tunisia.

But decolonization as it occurred in Tunisia repeated much of this cycle of economic dependence in spite of statehood and national autonomy, just as the Jewish-Italian, Tunisia-born critic Albert Memmi describes, with the intention of sustaining external assistance for the objective of national development through investment in the private sector. Employing

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3 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004 [Présence Africaine, 1964]), 56. “The colonial system, in fact, was only interested in certain riches, certain natural resources, to be exact those that fueled its industries…As a result the young independent nation is obliged to keep the economic channels established by the colonial regime. It can, of course, export to other countries and other currency zones, but the basis of its export remains basically unchanged. The colonial regime has hammered its channels into place and the risk of not maintaining them would be catastrophic.”


5 Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 2001), 6. “…all struggles have become struggles of representation…there persists the false dichotomy between the objectivity of structures and the subjectivity of representations—a distinction allowing all that is cultural and symbolic to be put on one side, all that is economic and material to be put on the other.”

6 Albert Memmi, *Decolonization and the Decolonized*, trans. Robert Bononno (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2006 [Kindle e-book version]), 1913. “‘Debt elimination,’ though generous in appearance, merely delays the problem. What prevents the poor from borrowing again, and continuing their cycle of dependence on rich countries?…On the contrary, it simply perpetuates inequality. Waiting for salvation from a colonial power, not a former colonial power is…illusory…”

Columbian anthropologist Arturo Escobar’s multipart definition,⁹ I see development as both an experience and form of sociocultural and economic production, and as a discursive means of representing the so-called Third World. In this study, I am interested in the ways in which the discourses of development and modernization worked together to forward cultural and urban policies that economically positioned the nation-state towards the West, often to the detriment of the local populations such discourses and rhetoric purportedly served. And out of these economic continuities resulting from development looms not only the widening global and local gap between rich and poor, but ultimately the fashioning of politico-economic and foreign policies that imposed dire spatial effects on Tunisian cities. Aid not only perpetuated debt, but also tended to seep into the pockets of the national bourgeoisie, as theorist Frantz Fanon would famously write.¹⁰

Another crucial premise of this project is the entangled relationship of three discrete but interrelated terms, and it is worth highlighting their distinctions here, as they will arise to complete the process of decolonization without sacrificing necessary external assistance. The Bourguiba regime experimented with a variety of formulas between 1956 and 1970, but its favored solution was renewed cooperation with the former colonial power on the basis of sovereign equality.”⁸

⁸ Michael Christopher Alexander, “Between Accommodation and Confrontation: State, Labor, and Development in Algeria and Tunisia,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Duke University, 1996), 9. “It [the state] used its control of natural resources and basic industries to provide inputs for private firms. It took on the tasks of creating an economic infrastructure that would encourage private sector expansion, and it established credit and trade politics that absorbed a considerable amount of the risk that private capital otherwise would have had to confront on its own.”⁹

⁹ Arturo Escobar, Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 10-11. Escobar treats development as a “historically singular experience, the creation of a domain of thought and action.” The goal of his text is to “examine the establishment and consolidation of this discourse and apparatus from the early post-World War II period to the present; analyze the construction of a nation of underdevelopment in post-World War II economic development theories; and demonstrate the way in which the apparatus functions through the systematic production of knowledge and power…”¹⁰

¹⁰ Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, 100-101. “For the bourgeoisie, nationalization signifies very precisely the transfer into indigenous hands of privileges inherited from the colonial period....At the core of the national bourgeoisie of the colonial countries a hedonistic mentality prevails—because on a psychological level it identifies with the Western bourgeoisie from which it has slurped every lesson. It mimics the Western bourgeoisie in its negative and decadent aspects without having accomplished the initial phases of exploration and invention that are the assets of this Western bourgeoisie whatever the circumstances. In its early days the national bourgeoisie of the colonial countries identifies with the last stages of the Western bourgeoisie....In its decadent aspect the national bourgeoisie gets considerable help from the Western bourgeoisies who happen to be tourists enamored of exoticism, hunting, and casinos. The national bourgeoisie establishes holiday resorts and playgrounds for entertaining the Western bourgeoisie. This sector goes by the name of tourism and becomes a national industry for this very purpose.”
repeatedly: modernism, modernization, and modernity. Modernism, when referred to throughout this dissertation, signifies the twentieth-century aesthetic movement responding to the conditions of modernization, though I also agree with Marshall Berman’s understanding of modernism as “any attempt by modern men and women to become subjects as well as objects of modernization,” but I believe that within this paradigm, agency has its limits. Modernization, then, pertains to the process by which states, societies, or cultures modernize through industrialization, modes of production, secularization, etc. Modernity simultaneously stood for the kind of aspirational, futuristic myth that would both fulfill the end-goal of the colonial mission civilisatrice, and paradoxically grounded the underlying endeavors of these anticolonial liberation struggles. While I do not take modernity to stand for some concrete product, I do take the multiple conceptualizations of modernity to have played an impactful part on the postwar and post-independence spatial politics of Tunisia.

What I want to suggest, at least from the title of this dissertation, is that the postwar reconstruction in Tunisia—in both the late colonial and post-independence contexts—necessitated not only fictive imaginings of the nation’s future, but also resulted in the path towards an equally fictitious so-called modernity, in the destruction and downplaying of certain pasts and the dispossession of peoples. The dialectics of architectural, urban, and cultural

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12 Ibid., 9-10. Contrary to Berman’s stance, my project admittedly does take on postmodernist qualities, though, hopefully not as dogmatic as described here: “I have argued that modern life and art and thought have the capacity for perpetual self-critique and self-renewal. Post-modernists maintain that the horizon of modernity is closed, its energies exhausted—in effect, that modernity is passé. Post-modernist social thought pours scorn on all the collective hopes for moral and social progress, for personal freedom and public happiness, that were bequeathed to us by the modernists of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. These hopes, post-moderns say, have been shown to be bankrupt, at best vain and futile fantasies, at worst engines of domination and monstrous enslavement.”
13 Johan Fornäs, *Cultural Theory and Late Modernity* (Sage Publications, 1996), 40. The chicken-egg philosophical stakes of this debate are highlighted here: “Are specific phenomena caused by modernization, or are they part of it, or both? Modernization is often said to produce effects like urbanization, secularization or aesthetic modernism, which are at other times seen as its parts. While modernity is the result of modernization that provokes modernisms, modernity is also the condition in which modernization appears and of which modernisms are necessary constituents. The interrelations between the modes of the modern are certainly very complex, but even to discuss them, they have to first be kept apart.”
construction and destruction embody the crux of this study. In disrupting the telos of grand narratives or historical (and oftentimes moralizing) accounts of social, cultural and technical progress, this dissertation questions the reconstruction and arguably, reinvention, of notions concerning Tunisian modernity from 1940-1970. Embedded in the reconstruction of a nation’s infrastructure and the discriminatory construction of a national patrimony, lies an acute political conflict over the rights of urban space, class, and cultural identity.

Critical Bibliography

Before outlining the various threads that weave the chapters of this dissertation, it will be fruitful to provide a brief analysis of the scholarly literature on the architectural history and urban planning of the Maghreb. Perhaps one of the first studies to seriously consider the architecture of colonization in the Maghreb is that of Foucault-trained architectural historian François Béguin,¹⁴ whose stylistic concept of arabisance abounds in the subsequent architectural literature, albeit problematically. Examining early twentieth-century colonial architectural studies like Victor Valensi's *L'habitation tunisienne* (1928) and Raphaël Guy's *L'architecture moderne de style arabe* (s.d.), Béguin's analysis accounts in part for the eclectic implementation of indigenous decorations and Italianate features in the facades of public and private buildings, but his term often carries the fraught connotation of pastiche. Éclectisme, a term so frequently conjured in the descriptions of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century architectural forms in the Maghreb, ultimately blurs and devalues the pluralism and cosmopolitanism of workers and the construction techniques they used. Scholarship that labels this phenomenon as a kind of hodge-podge bricolage tends to be reductive, rendering the very central but complicated

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questions of modernism and regionalism trite. French studies that survey the architecture of modern Tunis such as those by Juliette Hueber and Claudine Piaton, or Charles Bilas, typically invoke this term, but in dealing with the multicultural and multiethnic society that was early-twentieth Tunisia, one must be more attendant to the subtleties and nuances to the conditions of architectural production. Moreover, as will be argued in chapter one, Béguin’s characterization of postwar architectural reconstruction in Tunisia as an apolitical enterprise is not only misinformed but incorrect. Power and discourse—in all of their multiple manifestations—remains at the heart of spatial struggles in the postwar period and years following independence. And with those spatial and power struggles, decolonization brought about a confrontation with cultural values and identifications.

Unsurprisingly, Francophone scholarship has pioneered in architectural and urban studies on Tunisia. Yet, much of this architectural literature either takes on an unanalytical tone of colonial apologia or evades discussions of political inequities altogether by regurgitating historical chronologies and fixating on formalist, stylistic minutiae of buildings or architects’ biographies. This is not to rebuff the descriptive significance of such scholarship, but rather, this

15 Serge Santelli, “Serge Santelli Profile,” MIMAR (June 1981): 9-18; 9. “Within a political framework which has lately encouraged a search for national identity, architects in the Maghreb have felt inclined to adapt their production to an Arab Muslim esthetic in order to satisfy a perceived need on the part of the population to return to their sources. In Tunisia their language as become ‘Tunisified’: arcades, cupolas, columns and capitals of carved stone, coloured tiles and multiple irregularities of form for purely picturesque effects now cover the facades of new constructions. This language operates as a cosmetic decoration within spatial configurations that remain essentially European. Such ‘new’ Tunisian architecture in fact perpetuates architectural attitudes from the colonial era, when Moorish façades were put on buildings in order for imported typologies to be more easily integrated with the indigenous culture of the conquered country. Modern Tunisian architecture remains essentially Western in conception, with Moorish decoration on façades serving only to give an ‘Islamic’ touch to what is nevertheless still a shallow, ridiculous reproduction of the International Style. Moreover, this new type of habitat raises all sorts of contradictions in the way people actually live, often continuing traditional modes. It inevitably reveals a conflict between the way the architect conceives spaces, and the way they are actually inhabited by the users. Even though the medinas have been abandoned as ‘modern’ their decorative vocabulary nonetheless serves as a reservoir of forms for architects who come back in search of ornamental elements for their Moorish styles…” In my view, this is a rather reductive analysis of the stakes of regionalism in Tunisia.
stands as my own observations of much Francophone architectural history that does not do enough to fully historicize works and critique the conditions of architectural production. Focusing on Tunis, Jellal Abdelkafi\textsuperscript{18} and Serge Santelli\textsuperscript{19} neatly trace the growth of various neighborhoods as singular entities—the medina, the \textit{ville nouvelle}, and the \textit{cité populaire} or \textit{quartiers populaires} (or informal settlements)—but do not elaborate upon their permeability or interactions. Leila Ammar’s work provides useful urban plans of Tunis as it changed and grew from 1860 to 1935.\textsuperscript{20} Marc Breitman’s study of postwar reconstruction in Tunisia\textsuperscript{21} presents a formalist architectural analysis of the stylistic opposition of rationalism and tradition in the work of Jacques Marmey, one of the key architects of Tunisian reconstruction, but fails to consider the political implications of reconstruction for both France and the protectorate. Similarly, a recent monographic exhibit by the Cité de l’architecture et du Patrimoine in Paris showcased the work of Bernard Zehrfuss, the Chief Architect of Reconstruction in Tunisia, but again, follows Breitman’s acritical lead and presents a rather dispassionate, but depoliticized formalist account of urban reconstruction.\textsuperscript{22} Tunisian historian Paul Sebag\textsuperscript{23} laid much of the foundation for inquiries into the social and political development of modern Tunis from the protectorate period onward, but, as a historical study, his work does not explore the spatial complexities of these broader phenomena post-independence. Much of this literature tangentially engages with the nuances of French colonialism, but often fails to draw upon thinkers, writers, politicians and activists who experienced colonization firsthand. Such accounts stage histories that are clean and

\textsuperscript{18} Jellal Abdelkafi, \textit{La Medina de Tunis: Espace Historique} (Presses du CNRS, 1989).
\textsuperscript{19} Serge Santelli, \textit{Tunis: Le Creuset Mediterranéen} (CNRS Éditions, 1995). After working in the atelier of Louis Kahn, Santelli served as professor at the Institut Technologie d’Art in Tunis.
\textsuperscript{20} Leila Ammar, \textit{Tunis, d'une ville à l'autre: Cartographie et Histoire Urbaine, 1860-1935} (Tunis: Editions Nirvana, 2010).
seamless, which is profoundly troubling given that the temporalities they represent are anything but that.

Despite these innovative contributions, there still remains a discursive gap between Francophone and Anglophone accounts of colonial planning in North Africa. Harnessing poststructuralist and postcolonial theories that emerged in 1970s and 1980s, following the influential texts by Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak\(^\text{24}\) namely, the groundbreaking scholarship of Anthony King,\(^\text{25}\) Gwendolyn Wright,\(^\text{26}\) Zeynep Çelik,\(^\text{27}\) and Jean-Louis Cohen and Monique Eleb\(^\text{28}\) on Morocco and Algeria has shaped my own methodological framings. Understanding how modernism itself was conceived, deployed, and continually adapted in Tunisia—as a signifier of progress and as an instrument of legibility and control—bears much on these aesthetic concerns. In this vein, an exhibit held at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin, in 2008, entitled, “In the Desert of Modernity: Colonial Planning and After,” with scholarly contributions by key thinkers on colonialism’s architectures\(^\text{29}\) was one of the first of its kind to really consider the contradictions of modernist planning discourses, anti-colonial struggle, and slum proliferation in the 1950s and 1960s, yet the geopolitical emphasis of these studies—albeit with good reason—tends to lie on Morocco and Algeria. Tunisia remains repeatedly omitted from these broader historical discussions of urban change in the Maghreb.


Nonetheless, part of the motivation for this study arose from frustrations with the paucity of critical and discursive debates on the intersections of architectural development, the discourses of nation-building, and postwar politico-economic developmentalism. The works of Arturo Escobar and Timothy Mitchell help us to understand the the ways in which this post-1945 dream of development unfurls in the so-called Third World, gesturing to the mechanisms by which this discourse was deployed in North Africa. While architectural studies of the Maghreb of a more formalist nature are certainly worthy of investigation, it would seem dishonest to deny the dire impact that the political economies of habitation and heritage have on the peoples across the region today. Inasmuch as these preoccupations reveal how the discipline of art and architectural history is taught in France and in Francophone countries, it also demonstrates, perhaps, a collective resistance to a postcolonial retribution, or coming to terms with a very difficult past.

My intervention lies in bridging the literature and identifying policy-oriented continuities in the construction, regulation, and destruction of space in Tunisia, across its interpenetrating political landscapes of colonization, decolonization, and nationalism. And while this study strives to stand as a historiographical corrective in some sense, to show how the failures of colonization actually compounded the drastically steep difficulties of decolonization, it is, of course, by no means a totalizing account of those complex spatial and political dynamics of change during those fraught years, 1940-1970. Rather, a primary objective of this study is to unveil the ways in which this historical mark of independence was anything but a swift and clean transition of power. As Memmi astutely notes, this freedom came at the cost of poverty,

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corruption, violence, and disorder. Teetering between a self-proclaimed foreign policy of non-alignment and open acceptance of Western aid, Tunisia in the wake of independence was not at all invested in the ideologies of Pan-Arabism and only peripherally involved in the Pan-African movement, and for this complex web of tactical alliances and ideological leanings, the country remained an outlier of sorts. But as Memmi underscores, President Habib Bourguiba over time morphed into an autocrat, mimicking what was “most arbitrary about the colonial power.” Therefore, the country’s popular experiences of decolonization become even more compelling, given the reappearance and recycling of certain power structures. The bracketing or delimitation of these years is purposeful, as it is during these thirty years that we see the breakdown of the colonial protectorate regime, anti-colonial struggle, the birth of the nation and nation-building programs, and the institutionalization of global apparatuses for development.

More than anything, this project highlights the complicated entanglements of colonial institutions, nationalist ideologies, transnational economic networks and postwar developmentalism—all of which indelibly marked the built environments of the global South. With a focus on Tunisia, it demonstrates how the political project of nationalism purposely overlapped with the broader objectives of economic development and modernization. In concert with Escobar’s Foucauldian, “postdevelopment” critique of development, this dissertation shows how, with the rise of development institutions in the 1940s and 1950s such as the World

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31 Memmi, Decolonization and the Decolonized, 119.
33 Memmi, Decolonization and the Decolonized, 874.
34 Escobar, Encountering Development, xii-xiii. “… ‘postdevelopment’ arose from a poststructuralist and postcolonial critique, that is, an analysis of development as a set of discourses and practices that had profound impact on how Asia, Africa, and Latin America came to be seen as ‘underdeveloped’ and treated as such…postdevelopment emphasized the importance of transforming the ‘political economy of truth,’ that is, development’s order of expert knowledge and power.” Citing Gustavo Esteva (2009), Escobar notes the power of development as a discourse: “‘development failed as a socio-economic endeavor, but the development discourse still contaminates social reality. The word remains at the center of a powerful but fragile semantic constellation.’”
Bank, International Monetary Fund, and United Nations, the newfound Tunisian nation-state government willingly ensnared itself in the unsettling cyclical system of aid and debt. As the Cold War produced the very discourse of development, it arose as a legitimation point key to nations’ plans for material advancement, but in the process, Escobar argues, development became nothing more than the “top-down, ethnocentric, and technocratic approach, which treated people and cultures as abstract concepts, statistical figures to be moved up and down in the charts of progress.”

In inviting his audience to unmake development by deconstructing its discursive purview, he illustrates that the technocratic web of specialists—urban planners, economists, bureaucrats, strategists—actually fails to deal with the specter of underdevelopment. What will be shown in the chapters to come, is that in the case of Tunisia, the very populous—namely rural and urban working classes—which the rhetoric, programs, and state-apparatus of nationalism sought to modernize and address in the name of development, ultimately was underserved.

Central Questions

In doing so, my dissertation explores the dynamic and fraught applications of modernism and modernization programs in the built environment of Tunisian Sahelian, or coastal, cityscapes. Focusing on spatial and urban planning that took place in these coastal cities, 1940-1970, my project is an exploration of architectural production in an era that witnessed French imperial decline and the birth of the Tunisian nation-state. It is unique in its effort to understand the complex relationship between the unfolding of modernism in Tunisia and the gradual emergence of a distinct national consciousness, which grappled with notions of the vernacular. Even amidst Tunisia’s search for an autonomous, autochthonous architectural idiom, economic

interdependence with the métropole and a global economy continued following independence in 1956, especially enhanced by Tunisia’s economic strategy, which straddled the general ideology of non-alignment, but took direct advantage of a pro-Western orientation. Though it would be extreme to qualify these relations as neo-colonial, these internal and external power struggles gave way to colonial-era continuities, that carried over not only in the realm of bureaucracy, but also into the terrain of architectural and urban policy. The messy visual and political manifestations of these continuities in Tunisia's urban morphologies forms the core of this project.

Efforts to modernize all aspects of the new nation-state—including housing, civic buildings, urban development, and infrastructure—involved promises to eradicate poverty in part through new collective built forms. Physical modernization went hand-in-hand with the weighty, more ideological and politically complex task of decolonization. How these tensions of regionalist, and indeed modernist, dialectics were architecturally articulated in Tunisia—between imitation and invention, cultural continuity and deviation, métropole and colony, the so-called developed and underdeveloped nations—forms the backbone of my dissertation. And inasmuch as this study interprets the visual shifts of building styles and urban formations in modern Tunisia, it also seeks to deconstruct the predominantly Francophone historiographical narratives

36 Jacob Abadi, *Tunisia Since the Arab Conquest: the Saga of a Westernized Muslim State* (Reading, UK: Ithaca Press, 2013), 466. “Like most Third World leaders of the Cold War era Bourguiba chose non-alignment as his foreign policy orientation. In his speech on the occasion of the accreditation of Ahmed Mestiri as Tunisia’s first ambassador to the USSR, Bourguiba took the opportunity to explain what ‘non-alignment’ meant for his country. He said: ‘In Tunisia we have adopted a policy of non-alignment…Non-alignment does not simply imply that one is inhibited from passing judgment or adopting challenging positions if the national interest justice and equality so demand. The policy of non-alignment means a refusal to line-up automatically with one bloc rather than the other. It allows Tunisia to preserve her freedom of choice and objective judgment.’…He merely meant to use the Soviet option as a tactical maneuver to pressure the Western countries.”

37 Paul E. Sigmund ed., *The Ideologies of the Developing Nations* (New York; London: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 14-15. “The nationalists’ suspicion of the economic influence of the West is expressed in their theory of ‘neocolonialism.’ As developed by the radical nationalists, but also given wide credence among the more moderate group, this theory asserts that although political independence has been achieved, there are still links of economic dependence that vitiate the apparent autonomy of the new nations.”
on the subject—accounts that, as ideologically driven as my own study might be, nevertheless tend to frame architectural developments in this period in terms of the spread of knock-off imitation or aesthetic failures of an alternative, and implicitly lesser, modernity.

Questions concerning the entanglements of aesthetic forms, state custodianship and popular agency over the built environment in Tunisia remain unanalyzed. In compiling the visual accounts of architects and planners, governmental dossiers of technocrats, and institutional files, my project fundamentally demands a methodological intertextuality. That said, when I embarked on my project and preliminary research, I had loftier ambitions of tapping into the voices of Tunisians, to lend a greater sense of agency to the present-day problems of habitation and heritage that might be otherwise unheard. As Asef Bayat notes, it is, in fact, ordinary people of the Middle East that affect social change through their agency in urban public spaces. Bayat distinguishes between “street politics” (those contentions intentionally expressed between individuals or a collective and the authorities in the physical domain of the street) and the “political street” (the collective opinions of ordinary people shared broadly in public spaces).  

And so, taking cues from Bayat, in deconstructing development and highlighting the social, cultural and political practices of urbanites from below, it will be important to incorporate more hybrid methods—including local ethnographies—to capture the manifold subversive forms of resistance affecting power structures from above.

But as an art and architectural historian, I do not have the methodological tools or training to capture the more sociological and anthropological nuances of my research questions,

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39 Escobar, *Encountering Development*, 223. “The destruction of development, coupled with the local ethnographies just mentioned, can be important elements for a new type of visibility and audibility of forms of cultural difference and hybridization that researchers have generally glossed over until now. The subaltern do in fact speak, even if the audibility of their voices in the circles where ‘the West’ is reflected upon and theorized is tenuous at best.”
aspects that are crucial to a richer understanding of how people affect change and challenge the status quo, spatially. Nonetheless, these are potential trajectories, that could, although with great responsibility, push the ethical impetus of these political inquiries to the fore, and they remain unfulfilled scholarly avenues that a future edition of this project might follow. I realize that to truly resist prevailing top-down approaches in favor of more dialectical models that challenge rigid dichotomies, studies must be anchored in dialogical investigations, told from the perspectives of both spatial producers and consumers. However, this account, by virtue of the types of predominantly governmental and institutional archival sources referenced, is an analysis from the producers’ and authorities’ vantage point. While gesturing at the dilemmas and hardships faced from below, it is a telling of the failures of colonialism, institutional and ideological crises of nation-building, the promises of modernization, and the spatial effects and afflictions of development, as a phenomenon and as a discourse.

Given these central prongs of my project, though, I am wary that my analysis and hermeneutics run the risk of representing Tunisian cities as beyond hope, contributing to an already pervasive negative representation of African and Middle Eastern cities as ones that “do not work.”

Quite the contrary, the fundamental force that buttressed both this period of nationalist populism in Tunisia, from 1940-1970, is a supreme sense of hope, and it in turn is what propels my personal intellectual interest and investment forward. Agency—though tremendously invaluable to my ethics as a scholar and human being—is profoundly onerous to convey from the archives of those in power. Even so, I hope my telling enables us to historicize—and ultimately realize—the phenomena of urban dispossession and political change.

40 Abdoumaliq Simone, *For the City Yet to Come: Changing Life in Four Cities* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2004), 1. “African cities don’t work, or at least their characterizations are conventionally replete with depictions ranging from the valiant, if mostly misguided, struggles of the poor to eke out some minimal livelihood to the more insidious descriptions of bodies engaged in near-constant liminality, decadence, or religious and ethnic conflict.”
and point to future possibilities for subaltern rights and aspirations of Tunisians and all people of the so-called “developing” world to be recognized and acted upon.

Chapter Outline

My dissertation pivots around two historical moments—the postwar and post-independent—which chronologically divide my chapters. Chapter one concentrates on the spatial effects of the brief but tremendously consequential occupation of Tunisia during World War II. During this period, the capital of Tunis and coastal cities of Bizerte, Sousse, and Sfax were bombed by both the Allied and Axis Forces. Reconstruction efforts to treat these dommages de guerre were led by the Swiss-born, Grand Prix de Rome recipient and Chief Architect Bernard Zehrfuss (1911-1996) in the governmental division of Les Services d’Architecture et d’Urbanisme. His program reflected a desire to conceive of a new architectural modernism based less on traditional ornament or exterior decoration, and more on an abstraction of vernacular structural forms (e.g. arcades, cupolas, domes, etc.). In an attempt to reconstruct swaths of buildings, structures, and urban layouts that were lost during the war, Zehrfuss and his team responded to the call for an urbanisme d’urgence with what I refer to as vernacular modernism, borrowing from the work of Maiken Umbach and Bernd Hüppauf. Because of a remarkable shortage of funds, this team utilized the labor of Tunisian craftsmen and local materials to craft an abstracted vernacular that at once, suited the hygienic needs of the colonial establishment, and, at the same time, upheld the racist and ethnic divisions of associationist policies, which defined structures by their intended users—European, Mixed, or Musulman. Architecturally speaking, this period witnessed the onset of a proto-regionalism anchored in the belief that

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material progress could be forwarded through cheaper, more craft-oriented building modes. Of course, this does not deny the ever present tensions between construction methods based on craftsmanship, and those geared towards mechanization and a machine aesthetic. But perhaps what is most interesting about this chapter is its archival investigation of the institutional failures of reconstruction and the absolute breakdown of French colonial bureaucracy. Contrary to many narratives that portray French colonizers as a cohesive and immaculately organized force, this chapter exposes a moment when postwar colonial modernization goes awry. When the economic resources dried up, so too did the French will wither in maintaining its protectorate. Yet it is none other than Tunisians themselves who shouldered the unfathomable burden of this wreckage.

Meanwhile, in the 1940s, the architectural shortcomings of colonial institutions coincided with escalating nationalist fervor. Upset Tunisians grew more distrustful that they would ever be granted full equality under protectorate rule, and with these grievances, many became ever more receptive to populist nationalism. In this manner, both the task of political mobilization and the project of modernization come together in the work of Habib Bourguiba, who expanded his base of support during this period as well. Independence, Bourguiba asserted, could be achieved only through a gradual transition, by placing pressure on the French and reaching out to the international community. Without the physical and material wherewithal to sustain a violent overturn or rebellion, and with a dependence on French capital to continue its investment in development, Bourguiba’s strategy for the country’s modernization interests was not short-sighted. Yet the French still feared general resistance, and at the risk of being muzzled by French protectorate authorities, from March 1945 to September 1949, Bourguiba fled the country.

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to gather support from other Arab figureheads and even the United States. In his absence, however, the Neo-Destour Party’s Secretary General, Salah Ben Youssef, gained political momentum with a platform that was sympathetic to Islamic culture and Pan-Arab nationalism. It was also in 1946 that Tunisian workers unionized, forming the Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail (UGTT).

With this political backdrop in mind, chapter two transitions to the interstitial years before and after independence, dealing not only with the literal phase of nation-building, but also interlocking aspects of urban dispossession, housing and social reform, and economic development. In 1956, at least 400,000 hectares of the best agricultural land and fifty-five percent of capital were controlled by French interests. But by 1957, as a consequence of Tunisian independence and in retaliation for Tunisia’s support for neighboring Algeria’s struggle for independence, France reduced its aid significantly to Tunisia. Replacing France’s former role, the United States provided ample aid to Tunisia ($239.2 million from 1956-1961 alone), on the condition that the young nation pursue a path of liberal economic development.

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43 Ibid., 31. “While Bourguiba represented a Tunisian identity that was more ‘Mediterranean’ and more heavily influenced by European ideas and culture, Ben Youssef represented an identity that was more attuned to the Arab East and to traditional Islamic culture. He was also drawn to the kind of pan-Arab nationalism that was gathering steam in Egypt, Syria, Iraq and other portions of the Arab World.”

44 Ibid., 31-32. “The UGTT provided well-organized cadres in the public administration and in key sectors of the economy—public works, the ports, the railways, and the phosphate mines. As more of these workers became convinced that their independence was a prerequisite to real improvement in their pay and working conditions, they became more willing to move political demands to the top of their agenda and to serve as a striking arm for the Neo-Destour.”


46 Alexander, Tunisia: Stability and Reform in the Modern Maghreb, 70. “He opted instead for a form of state capitalism that encouraged and directed the growth of the private sector. In the late 1950s, the Tunisian government nationalized public transport and the ports, as well as water, gas, and electricity services. It began buying portions of the phosphate sector and established a central bank and three development banks…Despite these measures, the Tunisian economy deteriorated steadily over the first five years of independence.”
Nevertheless, France continued to bear its economic imprint on Tunisia despite these diplomatic ruptures, by the permission of none other than President Habib Bourguiba himself.47

Thus, chapter two considers the colonial continuities of the fledgling nation-state and its simultaneous liberal economic turn. In particular, special focus is given to the continuation of late protectorate’s urban policies of expropriation and demolition in President Bourguiba's 1957 decree promoting the mass destruction of districts of earthen, pisé homes called gourbivilles, where many urban migrants lived, particularly along Tunis’ peripheries. The state’s concerns to aestheticize urban space often came at the dire cost of underprivileged communities' living in bidonvilles, or ‘tin can’ districts, many of whom were left homeless by the state’s incapacity to build enough popular housing developments. This urgency was drastically exacerbated by a void of expertise and highly skilled personnel—many of whom left after independence—and meager funds to administer technical training48 in many professions required to enhance the country’s ailing infrastructure.49 Yet Tunisia was not alone in experiencing a proliferation of informal settlements, for parallel phenomena occurred in Algeria and Morocco as well. The Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne (CIAM), a conglomerate of largely European architects that unified in 1928, convened in 1953 in Aix-en-Provence to debate the global problematic of ‘habitat.’ Though CIAM’s Athens Charter urged functionalist urban planning schemes

47 Ibid., 91. Bourguiba apparently vetoed an idea proposed by the Arab League to pursue an economic boycott of France. He is also purported to have proclaimed to an angry crowd that he would cooperate with the French to defeat underdevelopment, at the height of the 1961 Bizerte crisis (when France sought to extend a runway at an airbase in Bizerte, leading to a bloody fight over this residual marker of its colonial power).
48 Memmi, Decolonization and the Decolonized, 220. “The consequences are generally disastrous. They include the emigration of the most talented, the educated, the technicians, who put their talent and skills to work elsewhere…Economic underdevelopment leads to technological and scientific underdevelopment…The gulf between rich and poor gradually grows wider.” See also Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, 53. “Today, national independence and nation building in the underdeveloped regions take on an entirely new aspect. In these regions, except for remarkable achievements, every country suffers from the same lack of infrastructure…A world of underdevelopment, a world of poverty and inhumanity. But also a world without doctors, without engineers, without administrators.”
49 Abadi, Tunisia Since the Arab Conquest: the Saga of a Westernized Muslim State, 437. “Much of the American aid, which the Tunisian government considered negligible, came in the form of technical advice in matters considered urgent.”
commensurate with modern life, it was less clear how this postwar European brand of functionalism was to be transplanted, translated or adapted to a colonial Maghrebi context. As an analytical tool to compare various cities’ urban realities—through a collage-like combination of plans, photographs, renderings, and press clippings—the grille or grid, developed by CIAM, allowed for the visualization of future solutions to the widespread, global phenomenon of rural-urban migration. But the language and discourse of CIAM’s postwar architectural dynamics on the ‘habitat’ are undergirded by discourses of primitivism and the dialectics of Fanonian desire.\(^{50}\)

Portrayals of gourbivilles and bidonvilles as both vernacular and primitive resulted in a troubling conflation of voluntary nomadism (pastoral or not), and those mass migrations which are brought about by famine, drought, and the general economic struggles and agricultural hardships of the countryside. Pejorative mythologies of rural and pastoral peoples (which emerged as the postwar academic discourse of “peasant studies”\(^{51}\)) living in the Maghrebi hinterland conveniently fit into an equally absurd and perverse myth of modernization. Across the rhetoric of progress and modernization programs of both the imperial apparatus and nation-state, we see primitivizing discourses prevail with regards to housing the masses. Here, this chapter examines how such oppositions were constructed in modernist architectural and urban experimentation. As Timothy Mitchell reminds us, the making of the self—in this case, the aspiring nation towards modernization—always accompanies the making of Otherness,\(^{52}\) or as it was embodied in Tunisia, in the deprecatory representation of rural life as chaotic, primitive, and potentially

\(^{50}\) Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967 [Editions de Seuil, 1952]).

\(^{51}\) Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*, 123. Citing Richard Critchfield’s anthropological, descriptive realism account of an Egyptian peasant named Shahhat, Mitchell makes note of George Foster’s foreword which traces the transition of the descriptor “folk” to “peasant” after World War II.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 14. With respect to the Egyptian countryside against the backdrop of Egypt’s nationalist movements, Mitchell draws attention to rural people’s being represented in terms of “…the violence of the peasantry, its resistance to change, and its reluctance to accept authority, whether expressed in great rebellions or in everyday forms of refusal.” These characterizations become even more hyperbolic, with Egyptian peasants judged as being duplicitous, uneducated, distrustful, selfish, etc. (131).
transgressive. Systematic demolition of the present, through the demonization of the urban peasant, also allowed for the creation of myths of the past and those of the future as well.  

Chapter three investigates how the rural-urban population flux affected not only the re-appropriation of abandoned buildings and quarters (notably across the entirety of the Maghreb), but also probes into the role of the state, economic developmentalism, and its formation of a preservation and patrimonial discourse. How then, is the nation to be construed and constructed in this political-economic process of modernization? How does the selective production of a past, strategically serve the present? This chapter explores this dialectic of the ideologies of the ancient past and modernized nation, and shows how this dialectic was put to use in forwarding development projects and a heritage and tourism scheme. Bourguiba’s desire to uphold and promulgate the nation’s ancient heritage of Mediterranean civilization—namely that of the Phoenicians and Romans—went hand in hand with his economic interests to orient the country toward Western markets and capital flows. The Western slant in Bourguiba’s identitarianism—revealed through actions like abolishing religious charitable endowment habous lands, or denouncing the fast during Ramadan—coincided with the onslaught of an authoritarianism that molded its national identity by way of the abandonment of cultures and traditions deemed counter to the cause of modernization. As a nation that outwardly positioned itself as being politically aligned with Western economic development, contrary to non-aligned nations like

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53 Memmi, *Decolonization and the Decolonized*, 657. “Culture is also a bond, a social cement, a communal site, a refuge from the wretchedness of existence, a beacon and escape valve. But this exclusive anchorage—to a reconstructed past or the splendors of a hypothetical future, the excessive valuation placed on the past and unreasonable expectations for the future, navigation between phantoms and myths, an archaic golden age and a glorious future—leads to the same result: the destruction of the present.”

54 Memmi, *Decolonization and the Decolonized*, 220. “A tour of Algiers reveals the crumbling structures in the poor quarters, which clash with the handsome buildings inhabited by the nouveaux riches, and previously by Europeans. The absence of a large working class, preventing the formation of a sufficiently robust labor movement, leads to old-fashioned paternalism rather than relative social justice…”

Egypt,\textsuperscript{56} for instance, Bourguiba sought to distance Tunisia from socialist ideological leanings and marginalize Islamic tradition. This chapter reveals the ways in which this national socio-economic platform and heavy investment in the private sector worked in tandem with the patrimonial priorities of the initial institutions for heritage protection and preservation. Just before independence, plans had been laid out to protect archaeological sites, with the ambition of promoting a tourism industry; this demonstrates once more how easily these continuities in policy pass from the colonial era to the so-called postcolonial. Tourism exploded in the 1960s.\textsuperscript{57}

And with the creation of the Association de Sauvegarde de la Médina (ASM) in June 1967 (modeled in part after France’s ‘Loi Malraux’ of 1962 for protecting patrimony), certain timeworn areas of Tunis’ medina received the privilege of preservation while others were neglected. One case study explores the significant conservation of the affluent resort village just north of Tunis, Sidi Bou Saïd, in 1973. This chapter questions the self-evidence of heritage in Tunisia, illustrating how the very construct of heritage often services broader strategies for economic development while bolstering the legitimacy of nationhood, and that, more often than not, the voices of certain social strata are suppressed in its making.\textsuperscript{58} Another central paradox of

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\item Alexander, \textit{Tunisia: Stability and Reform in the Modern Maghreb}, 33. “He saw Nasser as a self-aggrandizing egomaniac who manipulated pan-Arab rhetoric and other political leaders to bolster Egypt’s interests and his own stature.”
\item Kenneth Perkins, \textit{A History of Modern Tunisia} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 152. “…the Société des Hôtels Tunisiens Touristiques (SHTT) may well have compiled the most successful record of all the approximately 160 state-run enterprises created in the 1960s. Between 1965 and 1967 alone, investments in SHTT projects more than doubled, from 6.5 million dinars to 13.8 million, and the pace of growth quickened in the years that followed. The SHTT selected pristine Mediterranean beaches on the island of Jerba and along the east coast, in the Sousse-Monastir area and around Hammamet, at the base of the Cap Bon peninsula, as locations for the construction of its first luxury hotels…Planners correctly calculated that European tourists would flock to high-quality resorts whose profitability would stimulate significant private investment in tourism. The construction of hotels and the establishment of companies to manage them did attract considerable capital from abroad…”
\item Ibid., 154. “The holiday packages that brought most of this new wave of tourists to the country usually included a foray into a medina and a tour of an archaeological site, but the exceedingly unfamiliar atmosphere of the former, the sublime movements of the latter, and the aggressive sellers of cheap, pseudo-artisanal souvenirs at both more likely contributed to reinforcing stereotypes than to refuting them…From the middle of the 1960s until the
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this moment however is that national development, though built on the rhetoric of autonomy and self-determination, in reality is almost entirely reliant on external market flows and forces, and one of economic dependency. In the case of preservation in Tunisia, in what ways does the nationalist fabrication of a strictly Mediterranean heritage actually reinforce former colonial imaginings of the protectorate? This latter third of my dissertation illuminates the complicity and ambivalence of the post-colonial nation-state, and how the translations of utopic, state-sponsored rhetoric into programmatic aestheticization and the invention of patrimony, both conveniently served the economic policies of undergirding Tunisia’s position of alignment and clashed with the ever-growing crises of habitation.

My project poses a challenge to both Eurocentric and Tunisian narratives of nationalism and modernization, both of which mistake the moment of nation-state formation as a stark rupture with the colonial condition. As with many North African cities, Tunisia's urban nodes served as the grounds for modernist spatial experimentation, which remained pervasive into the years following independence, rendering such temporal divisions somewhat arbitrary with regard to architectural development. By challenging the colony/postcolony divide, it prompts us to reconsider how continuities and contradictions emerge out the interface of multiple discourses of modernity and contested urban realities, toward the construction of both the past and the future.

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59 Memmi, Decolonization and the Decolonized, 234. “For lack of anything better, governments promote folklore, arts and crafts, and tourism. As for tourism, it’s better to be a servant than to go hungry. Even in Tunisia, which is often cited as an example for its recent success against poverty, at least a third of its revenue comes from the tourist industry. But these are dead ends. For they perpetuate the artificial character of the economy of these nations and maintain their dependence on the developed world, whose obsequious or rebellious clients they have become, instead of moving toward relative independence, which demands the courage of breaking with established structures and moving resolutely toward the future.”

60 Alexander, Tunisia: Stability and Reform in the Modern Maghreb, 33. “By the mid-1950s, the scramble for allies in the developing world, and the rise of the non-aligned movement, made the US and its allies more willing to support Tunisian independence in return for Bourguiba’s commitment to an explicitly pro-Western foreign policy.”
CHAPTER ONE

Urbanisme d’Urgence:
Postwar Tunisian Modernisms & Revisionist Reconstructions

Introduction

That is also why the experience of the last war was so decisive…it reminded them [the colonized] of the possibility of aggressive and free action…The colonized, it is true, hesitates before taking his destiny in his hands. –Albert Memmi

Writing in his scathing account of colonization’s cruelties and inequities, The Colonizer and the Colonized (1956), Albert Memmi identifies World War II as a critical juncture for Tunisians, albeit one pregnant with both hesitation and possibility. Occupied by German and Italian Axis forces from November 1942 to May 1943, Tunisia’s Sahelian (coastal) cities of Bizerte, Tunis, Sousse, and Sfax suffered considerable destruction, particularly in their infrastructures and public works (Figures 1.1-1.3). Declared a French protectorate since the Treaty of Bardo was signed in 1881, Tunisia during World War II had been colonized in fact on two fronts—by both the extant French colonial administration and the invading Axis troops. French Resident General Charles Mast (Figures 1.4-1.5) would later proudly describe Tunisia, in its execution of an urbanisme d’urgence, as “the first of the French colonies to be torn away from the Germans [and] the first territory which raised the great question of reconstruction.”

Beginning in June 1943, the following Provisional French Government hired a team of young architects to assess and take inventory of the damages in these cities. In the years that followed, this cosmopolitan, and professionally and educationally diverse team comprising Bernard

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63 Resident General Mast, Introduction, Bâtir (1945).
Zehrfuss (Chief Architect of Services), Jacques Marmey (Director of Studies and Works), Jason Kyriacopoulos, Lu Van Nhieu, Jean Le Couteur, Jean Drieu la Rochelle, and Paul Herbé would design an expansive œuvre of civic structures to remedy, in part, much of this wartime loss. All were graduates of the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. With their working quarters literally founded above the kitchen of the Dar El Bay Palace (the seat of governance), the new service was dubbed “le perchoir” (perch), hovering over the ground floor. In echoing Memmi’s aforementioned observation, this postwar era brought with it a glimpse of the prospect of colonial emancipation, however pregnant with hesitation. And yet, the question remains: what do these postwar hesitations look like architecturally? How are they manifest in the built environment? This team of architects leading reconstruction built in a manner that was conscious of Memmi’s forewarning, of the “possibility of aggressive and free action” on the part of the colonized amidst this political climate of decolonization.

Reconstruction efforts in Tunisia—like the historiography thereof—were both problematic and incomplete. Francophone studies that shed light on this period of transition (most prominently among them, those written by Marc Breitman) tend to cast the architectural production of the era as bridging ‘tradition’ and ‘rationalism.’ While this characterization retains perhaps some formal accuracy, such polarizing terms become muddied when examining


66 This polarized discourse runs deep in the historiography of the Maghreb. Benjamin Rivlin, “Cultural Conflict in French North Africa,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 306 (July 1956): 4-9; 5. “…the problems of independence are fundamentally the problems of adjusting traditional ways of life to the conditions of the modern industrial world—a process which inevitably leads to clashes in values, in social orientation, in the matter of goals, means, and techniques. In short, it leads to cultural conflict.” Roger Le Tourneau, an urban historian of the Maghreb, similarly describes the religious purists as diametrically opposed to modern life: “[They] are obsessed with the past; they wish for a return backwards much more than for an adaptation, and do not try to envisage a future of the Muslim community in terms of modern realities. They are willing to use modern means of communication, like the press or radio, but in a spirit resolutely devoted to the past.” See Roger Le Tourneau, “North Africa: Rigorism and Bewilderment,” in Gustave E. von Grunebaum ed., *Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 253. For counterarguments to these assertions,
both the buildings and individual persuasions of the architects and technocrats involved. Moreover, when we consider the afterlives of these structures, it becomes increasingly apparent that the realities of dwelling frequently conflict with the interests of design. There is a stark distinction to be made between modernist forms embellished with local ornamentation (e.g. a plan for a villa that happens to have mashrabiyya windows, like in the work of early twentieth-century Tunisian architect Victor Valensi, cited in the Introduction), for example, and historical forms which are moderated through the lens of modernist abstraction (e.g. a plan for a public market that follows the funduq form, but is constructed with reinforced concrete and a linear sensibility. It is these two scenarios that the historiography often conflates, leaving Maghrebi architecture to suffer the fate of falling under the imprecise and vague headings of “éclectisme,” “arabisance,” or “fantaisie.”

The term hybridity is yet another reductive and oft-invoked descriptor in this secondary literature; in much postcolonial theorization, the hybrid is able to unsettle the deep-seated power differentials entrenched in colonial relations. The scholarship reveals a great deal of slippage between the formal and postcolonial or emancipatory definitions of hybridity. Pushing back against these readings, I believe the postwar reconstruction in late colonial Tunisia should be discussed in terms of its negotiations, tensions, and the political and civil strife which these foreign architects and technocrats sought to quell.

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As I will demonstrate throughout this chapter, this transitory phase of reconstruction in Tunisia is marked by a disconnect between rhetoric and reality, material funds and material realizations. In the métropole the discourse of reconstruction was obsessively concerned with the possibilities offered by industrialization and modern progress, but it was also mindful of the need to preserve salvageable structures. Architecture held a curative capacity for social cohesion and reconstitution; it bore the heavy burden of moral responsibility, encompassing the possibility of reconciling functionalism with humane concerns. But this new reality brought with it a paradigm shift: namely, the critical transition from “housing machine” to “habitat.” With their input excluded, habitat projects of this period across North Africa were designed without the consultation or participation of colonial subjects. It is these interstitial areas of ambivalence, disconnect and discrepancy that I am most interested in. In critiquing the binary logic of modernism (and that of its historiography), this chapter also seeks to highlight that this phase of reconstruction—with its heightened consciousness in choosing architectural forms—would lay the foundations for future debates that would arise in the regionalist discourses of nation-building.

French architectural historian François Béguin, who coined the term *arabisance* in the 1980s to characterize the eclectic incorporation of indigenous décor in the façades of French

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colonial buildings in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco, has left a considerable impact on the Francophone scholarship dealing with Maghrebi architecture; examples of what he would deem *arabisant* can be found in the work of early twentieth-century French architects, like Paul-Auguste Baron or Victor Valensi, operating for a mostly European settler colony clientele (Figures 1.6-1.7). His neologism is perpetuated in the literature, though, it is often conflated with notions of *éclectisme*, pastiche\(^73\) and the colonial picturesque.\(^74\) Speaking of the 1940s and 1950s, Béguin describes the work of Zehrfuss and Marmey in particular as *arabisance modernisée*. “Among the public buildings constructed at the time, many express a new variant of *arabisance: a modernized arabisance*, since it is reminiscent of the formal trends that appeared with the Modern Movement; a ‘depoliticized’ *arabisance* since it does not seem to have been prompted by any administrative directive.”\(^75\) This paper not only probes into the historiographical perpetuation and implications of the term ‘*arabisance,*’ but it also challenges Béguin’s wrong predication that postwar reconstruction in Tunisia—what he qualified as ‘*arabisance modernisée*’—was devoid of political import.

Tunisia remained a French protectorate after the war (having gained independence only in 1956), and to deny that the reconstruction program was somehow divorced from the political, and hegemonizing objectives of the métropole, is fundamentally specious. What this

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\(^{73}\) “Pastiche” in no way possesses a fixed meaning. Stemming from the French *pastiche* or the Italian *pasticcio* can hold abundant subtexts: parody, quotation, allusion. There is in fact a distinction between pastiche and parody, wherein the former term implies conformity and little room for creative intervention, and the latter is afforded a degree of adaptation.

\(^{74}\) In its original usage, the term “picturesque,” was most commonly applied in descriptions of paintings and designs of gardens and landscapes; the picturesque ultimately promoted an aesthetic or sensibility that was contrary to the urban, or urban space. In colonial contexts, the picturesque, I would argue, also becomes a mode of ordering, of display; it transforms an otherwise ordinary space into one especially made for consumption.

\(^{75}\) Béguin, *Arabisances*, 73-75. “Parmi les bâtiments publics qui furent édifiés à cette époque, beaucoup expriment une nouvelle variante de l’arabisance: une arabisance modernisée, puisqu’elle n’est pas sans rappeler les tendances formelles apparues avec le Mouvement Moderne; une arabisance ‘dépolitisée’ puisqu’elle ne semble pas avoir été incitée par une quelconque directive administrative.”
Francophone literature overlooks (perhaps unconsciously) is that these architects acted as participants in forwarding the French ideological policy of associationism, which held that the indigenous populations could never be fully assimilated because of their cultural and ethnic difference. As a new tactic for rule that stressed regional, religious, and ethnic specificities of communities, associationism, it was thought, would minimize social disruption and maximize the submission to colonial governance. In this vein, the architects considered here are hardly the champions of egalitarianism or protagonists of postwar reconstruction that the literature depicts them as. With that in mind, it might be fruitful to reconsider Jean-Louis Cohen’s insight that the architectural forms and policies often floated “horizontally” among the colonies and protectorates. The visions for reconstruction in Tunisia were undeniably shaped by the architectural goings-on and formal debates in Morocco and Algeria. For example, in Morocco, Albert Laprade researched rural dwellings in the Atlas Mountains, which were then adopted for modular, industrially reproducible units designed for recently urbanized rural migrants to Moroccan cities. Citing the cubic volumes of casbahs and fortified granaries, modernists of the Maghreb clung to these referents as legitimate vernacular models for contemporary collective housing.

Though the language of the projects of Zehrfuss, Marmey, and their colleagues suggests their reconstructionist visions were cautiously aware of the Tunisian context and environment, their plans clearly exhibit the continued grip of the colonial apparatus on the Tunisian populace.

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Segregation runs rampant in their housing schemes, not unlike Le Corbusier’s Obus projects for Algiers or the ethnic zoning of neighborhoods in Henri Prost’s 1920s Casablanca.\(^79\)

Quickly shifting urban demographics became an urgent problem to deal with as well. Mass rural-urban migrations occurred in the last decade of protectorate rule, although many rural emigrants returned to the bled (villages). In the southern zone of the country, and particularly in the semi-desert steppes, depopulation was the marked trend from 1946-1956, in part due to the instability of agricultural production.\(^80\) This led to an unforeseen surge of informal settlements, particularly on the outskirts of Tunis (e.g. the mix of so-called bidonvilles and gourbivilles of Djebel Lahmar, Taoufik, Melassine, En-Neja, Saida Manoubia, Zitoun el-Djerbi, and Bel Hassan).\(^81\) This migratory flux was inarguably a widespread phenomenon throughout North Africa.\(^82\) Algiers, by comparison, faced its own urban boom after the war.\(^83\) Colonial demographic documents reveal that this population explosion, especially among autochthonous...
groups, worried the administrations.\textsuperscript{84} Yet it was partially due to this unexpected urban growth that reconstruction efforts fell tremendously short of their initially projected plans.

And yet, stylistically, the architecture defining postwar Tunisia often oscillated between the forward-looking rhetoric of modernism and a program based on the rootedness of place. Forms and typologies directly borrowed from both a vernacular and Islamic building vocabulary were expected to respond to not only the needs and dire repercussions of wartime destruction, but to various patterns of social life. In Tunisia’s postwar reconstruction program we see the architects’ genuine grappling with the very weighty socio-political stakes of vernacularism.\textsuperscript{85} It would appear that Béguin’s notion of \textit{arabisance modernisée} could potentially be compared to Kenneth Frampton’s critical regionalism, in which the core principles of the Modern Movement are meant to align with the building practices of a particular cultural locus.\textsuperscript{86} Both Béguin’s and Frampton’s respective concepts emerged in 1983—and however complicated and fraught the two terms might be—I think the claim can be asserted that this team of architects self-consciously confronted the questions of style and form within a specific locality. Recently, scholarly inquiries have shifted in this vein, towards an examination of ‘Mediterranean modernism’—a

\textsuperscript{84} \textit{État des opérations du plan de modernisation et d’équipement à la fin de 1950} (Paris: Commissariat Général du Plan de modernisation et d’Équipement, 1951), 7. “Cette progression s’est poursuivie au cours des dernières années, notamment au sein des éléments autochtones de la population, et c’est aujourd’hui un bloc de 21,5 millions d’habitants dont il s’agit d’assurer la promotion, sur le plan économique comme sur le plan social. On connaît l’ampleur et la valeur de l’œuvre déjà réalisée par la France, dans le passé, en Afrique du Nord; on sait aussi que c’est grâce à ces efforts et aux résultats remarquables qui en sont découlevs que les trois pays d’Afrique du Nord on pu, tout particulièrement depuis la fin des hostilités, connaître un essor économique et social exceptionnel. Cette évolution récente n’a été possible que grâce à l’appui financier considérable que la métropole a pu consentir, en faveur de ces pays, notamment au cours des dernières années. Elle laisse toutefois subsister encore un déséquilibre important entre le développement économique et social de ces pays, d’une part, et leur progression démographique, d’autre part.”

\textsuperscript{85} Umbach and Hüppauf, \textit{Vernacular Modernism}, 9. “…the term ‘vernacular’ expressed a tension between the closed domestic sphere and the public sphere. Vernacular referred to the endemic, signifying characteristics of belonging to a specific region, of ethnic qualities, of a disease restricted to, or of a language spoken in, an area with discernible borders. To ‘vernacularize’ used to be a verb for adapting to or making someone adapt to the specificity of a region, to make the person feel at home.”

modernism that “responds to program with cues derived from vernacular buildings so as to infuse spatial and material concerns with context and culture.” However genuine their attempts to conceive of or contrive a regionalist building mode that remained true to the particularities of Tunisia’s people, culture, and landscape, these postwar architects were aware of the impending end of empire and its attendant tensions.

Despite this specter of colonial influence, World War II rendered Franco-Tunisian relations far more precarious. The chief motivation underlying reconstruction—staving off the real potential for civil unrest—forwarded the overt goal of sustaining and giving shape to an already fragile protectorate. With the nationalist Neo-Destour movement gaining momentum in the early 1940s, as well as a significant following from both urban and provincial elites, Resident General Charles Mast recognized this growing anticolonial sentiment and pursued a policy bringing the Tunisian élite into the Government. General Charles de Gaulle declared in December 1943 that “we out to move towards making the administration of Tunisia a Tunisian administration.” Reforms were subsequently made, specifically in delivering greater access of education to Muslim populations. Partially due to the changing matrix of political power, we can witness the beginnings of an architecturally self-determining nation-state with postwar

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88 Over the course of the 1920s, the Destour or “Constitution” nationalist movement established support in the interior of the country. But in the next decade, these more provincial politicians appeared outmoded by the European-educated, populist-leaning activists who formed their own campaign in 1934, called the Neo-Destour. By 1937, the Neo-Destour built a strong base with over 432 branches throughout the country. Alexander, Tunisia: Stability and Reform in the Modern Maghreb, 27-28.
89 Lisa Anderson, The State and Social Transformation in Tunisia and Libya, 1830-1980 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 227-232. Ben Youssef's support base lay primarily with religious groups and authorities, as well as the commercial communities in Djerba, from which he hailed. His brand of nationalism drew heavily upon the rhetoric of Arab nationalists in the Middle East, whereas Bourguiba's expounded upon the secular liberalism of France. Their respective constituencies reflected different sets of interests, resulting in clashing ideologies.
reconstruction. But alongside self-determination lies a real questioning of how a Tunisian selfhood or regional identity could or should look like, and by extension, how established social values might transform; how these reimaginings of the self translated into new spatial reconstructions is the focus of this chapter.

The Occupation

The war has set off the new era of movement, an end to stagnation, new undertakings so vast as to encompass architecture and urbanism. What is the architecture of war? The withdrawal of factories far from places of vulnerability. The evacuation of civilian populations far from the military zones. The problem has two faces: the urgency of doing ‘whatever,’ so long as it is done—those are instructions coming from our leaders, and they are right to do so. The other is the ‘WAY OF DOING IT,’ the art if you will—in this case the architecture…Through these laboratory tests, to be able to finally show the leaders the tangible proof, the valuable contributions of technical realisations which point out the path towards the legitimate forms of development which will frame the country in peacetime. —Le Corbusier

From mid-November 1942, nearly 15,000 German and 9,000 Italian troops occupied two beachheads in the area connecting the two strategic ports of Bizerte and Tunis. For the next seven months, cities stretching along the coastline from north to south—those of Bizerte, Tunis, Sousse, and Sfax—were struck by bombs of both the Allies and the Axis. While British and US troops began a North African campaign with the intent of using Tunisia as a launch-pad to invade Sicily, German and Italian forces captured Tunisia and occupied the country. Bizerte in particular maintained an especially critical position in terms of its naval facilities, but it is also

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the city that experienced an acute blow. With tanks, dive bombers, and artillery, the Axis forces pushed those of the Allies to retreat after several defeats. Tunisian historian Paul Sebag notes that in spite of the bombers targeting of military posts, casualties in civilian areas were very common, leaving many Tunisians homeless. With such a profound blow of destruction, it becomes difficult to comprehend the generative potential of destruction, as Le Corbusier has framed it in the epigraph above.

Swaths of these coastal cities were left to deal with the wreckage and rubble of conflict. Jean Mons, the Resident General of France in Tunis, described the infrastructural destruction in vivid detail, though the worried emphasis is placed on the economic cost of this damage on the métropole, not Tunisia or Tunisians:

A few figures enable us to measure the damage done to equipment. The enemy had blown up 119 road bridges and viaducts. The useful tonnage for transport by truck had plummeted from 9,000 tons in 1940 to 1,000 tons in 1943. The destruction of 235km of railroad line and of 69 railroad bridges had made the whole of the railway network impracticable: it has lost more than 12,000 cars. The electric power stations of Tunis, Bizerte, Sousse and Sfax had been destroyed by the enemy...Added to this serious damage done to public equipment was the demolition of 16,700 buildings, the dispersal of important artisanal, industrial, commercial and agricultural material, whose importance was capital to the economic life of the Regency.

From the archives of Bernard Zehrfuss, many pictures document the rubble and damages in the southern Tunisian town of Sousse (Figure 1.8).

On the outskirts of Bizerte, the communal districts of La Corniche, La Pêcherie, as well as the village of Menzel-Djemil were largely destroyed between December 3rd, 1942 and May 7th, 1943. As the city was officially declared prohibited (interdite), local inhabitants were evacuated, and many took refuge in Tunis, Ferryville, and surrounding villages. Notably, the

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95 Sebag, Tunis: Histoire d’une ville, 524.
prohibition to reside in the city was extended even after the war. In spite of these restrictions and the prevalence of barbed wire, at nightfall looters reportedly scavenged for intact materials from the rubble (e.g. pipes, windows, doors, furniture, etc.). In a governmental brochure, it was estimated that “the subsequent devastation due to the war has doubled the number of buildings rendered unusable.” Prior to its devastation, Bizerte had been a port city of major economic and military importance; after the war, Bizerte remained a key focus of the French protectorate government, as nearly 14 billion francs were allocated to modernize the French naval base.\textsuperscript{97} Bizerte would continue to serve French interests even beyond independence, resulting in the bloody Bizerte crisis of 1961, after which the port was finally ceded to Tunisian hands. To deal with the growing number of displaced Tunisians, a new city of Zarzouna, removed from the commercial port and south of the channel, was conceived in 1944 (this will be further explored in the latter part of this chapter).\textsuperscript{98}

In the area of greater Tunis, the zone delimited by the sea and lake Bahira in addition to parts of Carthage and La Marsa were significantly damaged on November 19\textsuperscript{th}, 1942 and May 7\textsuperscript{th}-8\textsuperscript{th} 1943, respectively.\textsuperscript{99} Areas mostly affected were those of the \textit{ville européeenne}, due to its proximity to military aims like stations, factories, the port, and storage facilities. The old walls of the Kasbah, Rue d’Italie, and the Central Station were shaken by explosions, while the building

\textsuperscript{98} Noureddine Dougui, Hédi Bouaita, Abdeouahed Braham, Mourad Ben Jaloul, \textit{Bizerte: Identité et mémoire} (Association de Sauvegarde de la Medina Bizerte; L’Univers du Livre, 2005), 32-33. Interview, “Bernard Zehrfuss: Doit-on déjà penser au Tunis de l’an 2500?” \textit{La Presse}, 1952, p.3. Even Zehrfuss explains in this interview that it was not his decision of where to relocate or reposition Bizerte, but that of economists, politicians and the state: “Ou même lorsque j'étais architecte-conseil de la ville de Tunis, après la guerre, ce n'était pas à moi de dire qu'il fallait déplacer Bizerte, détruite par les bombardements, mais c'était le rôle des économistes, des politiciens, du gouvernement...Un architecte fait un plan, il fait la ville qu'on lui demande de faire.”
of the Douane completely collapsed. At Jebel Djellous, nearly ten thousand French rifles and ammunitions were engulfed in flames, as German weapons were doused with gasoline and burned.\textsuperscript{100} The city of Tunis underwent twenty-five raids in which a total of seven hundred bombs fell on the city, killing and injuring nearly 1,700 people, and leaving hundreds of buildings ravaged (Figures 1.9-1.10).\textsuperscript{101}

Sfax too suffered continual bombardments in those few wintery months. The aerial view of the city is striking, with its distinct quarters visibly defined, including: a ‘railway zone’ (zone ferroviaire) on the northern periphery bordering Moulinville, the extant Arab city, and the industrial district.\textsuperscript{102} In November 1942, fifty-four bombs targeted the railways and the railway station, and in December, another thirty bombs razed much of the harbor and port. On January 5\textsuperscript{th}, 1943, the power plant was partially destroyed as well. In that timeframe, most of the civilians had been evacuated, though the last bombings of Sfax would take place on April 4-5\textsuperscript{th}, 1943, demolishing the Triaga road and the arteries leading to El Aguareb and Tunis.\textsuperscript{103}

By late 1944, the damage in its totality had been assessed by local experts (expertise locales) and architects who evaluated the destruction with tables indicating each damaged building’s mode of construction, the parts that were damaged, the breakdown of recuperable materials. From this baseline assessment, buildings were then subdivided into buildings that had

\textsuperscript{100} “Comment, le 7 Mai 1943 et la même heure, après six mois de durs combats, où les nôtres farouchement accrochés, aux djebels eurent une lourde part, Bizerte et Tunis furent Liberées,” La Dépêche Tunisienne, Dimanche 7 Mai 1944, 4.
\textsuperscript{101} Sebag, Tunis: Histoire d’une ville, 525.
\textsuperscript{102} “La Reconstruction de la ville de Sfax,” La Dépêche Tunisienne, Samedi 15 Juillet 1944, 9. Echoing the French Orientalist scholarship on North African cities, Sfax is described in terms of its disorder. “L’agglomération de Sfax est, sans doute, celle de la Tunisie qui présente le caractère le plus marqué. L'aspect de la ville, vue d'avion, est saisissant. Le tracé affecte la forme d'un immense éventail ayant comme centre la ville europénne, vaste cité d'affaires, conçues sur une trame géométrique vers laquelle se dirigent toutes les voies de pénétration...Le développement rapide de la ville s'est malheureusement, effectué d'une façon, désordonnée dans ce cadre exceptionnel. Sa croissance économique extraordinaire s'est faite au mépris des règles les plus élémentaires de l'urbanisme, de l'esthétique et de l'hygiène. Les nouveaux quartiers de la ville se sont en effet localisés dans une zone ferroviaire, la vieille ville arabe, le part et le quartier industriel.”
\textsuperscript{103} “La Reconstruction de la ville de Sfax,” La Dépêche Tunisienne, Samedi 15 Juillet 1944, 9.
been completely destroyed, partially destroyed, and those that could be repaired. Of the 16 million Francs allocated for the reconstruction efforts, the funds were divided as follows: Sousse received the greatest amount of funding, followed by Bizerte and Sfax with equal shares, and lastly by Tunis. Twenty-six contrôles civils and territoires militaires had been sieged in acts of war. A report from September 1944 indicates that 16,700 buildings were damaged or destroyed, with a breakdown by city: Sousse, with 2,151 buildings; Gabès, with 1,590; Bizerte, 1,265; Tunis, 1,225; Sfax, 905 (of which the proprietors are divided by 5,750 French, 10,600 Tunisians, and 350 allies the majority of whom are Anglo-Maltes). In a decree issued by General Mast on March 23rd, 1944, owners of registered buildings affected by war who received the copy of their title, would additionally receive a new copy of the Conservator Property land grant. A central service was created to assess property damages and grant credit from banks for the reconstruction of buildings for residential, commercial, or industrial use. The Beylical decree of July 17th, 1947 specified that the compensation losses issued were to be identical to the

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104 See “Urbanisme et Reconstruction, États des Lieux des Dommages” from Protectorat Tunisie, Cabinet Technique, Reconstruction-Urbanisme Rapports (Janvier 1944-Août 1946), Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN), 2MI/1490. “Des équipes d’architectes d’opération ont été envoyées dans chaque agglomération sinistrée avec mission de fournir des renseignements très précis sur les dommages de guerre subis par les constructions. Ces architectes ont rempli différents tableau indiquant pour chaque bâtiment le mode de construction, la partie endommagée, la nomenclature des matériaux récupérables, etc…Les constructions ont été divisées en trois catégories: immeubles complètement détruits-immeubles partiellement détruits-immeubles réparables. Ces observations ont été portée à la fin de la mission de ces architectes sur les plans de ville à grande échelle teintée indiquant les dommages subis.”

105 See “Travaux des Communes et des Centres,” from Protectorat Tunisie, Cabinet Technique, Reconstruction-Urbanisme Rapports (Janvier 1944-Août 1946), Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN), 2MI/1490. Le programme de reconstruction (1944) prévoyait un crédit total de 16 million suivant le détail ci-après: Bizerte 2.000.000; Sousse 3.000.000; Sfax: 2.000.000; Tunis: 1.000.000.”

106 See “Secrétariat Général du Gouvernement, Service des Dommages de Guerre (Mois de Septembre 1944),” from Protectorat Tunisie, Cabinet Technique, Reconstruction-Urbanisme Rapports (Janvier 1944-Août 1946), Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN), 2MI/1490.


108 Sebag, Tunis: Histoire d'une ville, 525.
reconstruction of destroyed property (Figure 1.11). To help finance this recovery, in 1948, the French government issued a credit of five billion Francs for the reconstruction of overseas territories, though the only parties that partook of this budget were Tunisia and Indochina. To respond to this fragmentation and mass destruction, architects were called upon to fulfill their obligations and construct a new future for Tunisia out of the rubble of the past (Figure 1.12), not unlike those reconstruction efforts executed throughout Europe.

That the Second World War re-shaped the very question of modernity is undeniable. Both sides of the Mediterranean mutually informed how postwar cities would be reconceived and rebuilt. The so-called “social question” concerning urban blight and decaying conditions for the working class in Europe that occupied the minds of architects and social reformers throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, took on new political dimensions. Issues of class conflict, which had long dominated discourses of the early twentieth century, were downplayed to instead give rise to social mobility. For example, Le Corbusier’s Ville Radieuse or Radiant City, presented at the Brussels meeting of CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne) in 1930, consciously reworked the design of housing such that high-rise units would do away with social class segregation schemes, thereby paving the way for an urbanism that facilitated a classless society. The Atlantic Charter of 1941 specifies that social welfare ensured “for all, improved labor standards, economic advancement and social security,”

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109 Ibid.
110 “Les seules parties prenantes sont actuellement la Tunisie et l’Indochine, l’Algérie présentera peut être quelques demandes…Le Gouvernement ne semble pas décidé à consacrer immédiatement plusieurs milliards à l’Indochine. La Tunisie pourrait donc, semble-t-il obtenir pour elle la quasi-totalité du crédit.” Protectorat Tunisie, Cabinet Technique, Dommages de guerre (Folio 241, Crédits de reconstruction), Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN).
111 For more on this, see G. Rimlinger, Welfare Policy and Industrialization in Europe, America and Russia (New York: Wiley, 1971), or J. Alber, Some Causes and Consequences of Social Security Expenditure Development in Western Europe, 1949-1977 (San Domenico, Italy: European University Institute, 1982).
and “that all men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want.” But as Florian Urban reminds us, social welfare operated as a double-edged sword, and instituting reform ultimately upheld certain self-interests of the social elites: “…oscillating between charity and domination…like any type of assistance, social welfare helped the underprivileged, but at the same time strengthened the rule of the dominant groups and restricted the receivers’ agency.” Welfare state provisions after the war extended to the built environment, where public services and civic structures would promise to fulfill the calls for economic redistribution. Schools, hospitals, universities, leisure or recreational complexes served this broader, holistic socio-economic program in post-war Western Europe, but how this architectural program of the welfare state would be executed in the colonial Maghreb would be a matter of debate.

“La ville dont je rêve”: Adaptation and Visions of a Vernacular Utopia

The city I often look for in my dreams is the exact site... of Tunisian architecture, the climate, Mediterranean customs, retaining its character while affirming its modernity... the porticoed streets reserved for pedestrians descending forth, punctuated by gardens and squares with fountains and bustling with cafés, craft shops leading toward neighborhood centers; the constructions would be varied and non-segregating; the public buildings and offices would be separated in such a way that there would be no dead zones; the outdoor markets would bring color; community life will assert itself through its social variety... the city of my dreams is the sister of that one, but my thought goes beyond this. –Bernard Zehrfuss

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116 Bernard Zehrfuss, “La ville dont je rêve,” signed 8.5.1977 (Fonds Zehrfuss 358 AA), Cité de l’architecture et du patrimoine (Centre d’archives d’architecture du XXe siècle), Paris. “Cette ville, j’en cherche souvent, dans mes rêves, le site exact... De l’architecture tunisienne, du climate, des coutumes méditerranéennes, elle conservera le caractère, tout en affirmant son modernisme... les rues à portiques réservées aux piétons descendent, à partir du point haut, jalonnées par des jardins et par des places agrémentées de fontaines et animées par des cafés, des magasins, des boutiques d’artisans, vers les centres de quartiers; les constructions seront variées et non ségrégatives; les bâtiments publics, les bureaux seront répartis de telle façon qui n’y aura nulle part de zones mortes; les marchés en plein air apporteront leur couleur et leur gaieté; la vie communautaire s’affirmera grâce à l’échantillonage social des habitants... La ville dont je rêve aujourd’hui est soeur de celle-là, mais ma pensée va plus loin.”
This wistful statement from the archives of Bernard Zehrfuss, detailing an idyllic Tunisian urban forum, reveals much about his own personal desires for developing the postwar afterlife of Tunisia. Full of life and livelihood, the city of his dreams embodied an unsegregated utopia in which the built environment actually promoted social harmony. For Zehrfuss, this conceptual unity is predicated on the imperial construct of Mediterranean consolidation, apart of which Tunisian vernacularisms constitute an essential component. This city of Zehrfuss’s dreams is not as mythical or romantic as the statement suggests, for this city reflects, in many ways, much of the contemporary architectural discourse on contextualism and space/time unity. As Sarah Williams Goldhagen and Réjean Legault cogently point out, the horrors of the war endowed contextual continuity and the notion of “place” with greater meaning. Zehrfuss was in the company of many other architects—the Smithsons, ATBAT-Afrique, and of course, Le Corbusier—who would subscribe to a locally inflected modernism that could forward social renewal following the ravages of war.

In reality these lofty projections of an alternative future would remain dormant aspirations; and yet, that is not to say that the postwar reconstruction enterprise was a failure. However, the sort of socio-cultural unity that Zehrfuss yearns for here—devoid of urban segregation—was not in fact achieved during his tenure as Chief Architect. While Zehrfuss’s building designs speak to a definite and delicate balancing of local building forms with imported materials and techniques of prefabrication, his urban plans and habitation projects testify to the

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espousal of a functionalist, modernist division of space, very much in line with urban precedents in Morocco which propagate segregationist schemas.

**Vernacular Reckonings**

By May of 1943, Tunisia had been recently liberated and M. René Mayer, then the Minister of Public Works, had been preoccupied with the problem of reconstruction in Tunisia. After the two met in Algiers that spring, Zehrfuss was hired by the Résidence to study the weighty tasks of reconstruction. Their meeting in Algiers underscores the flow of bureaucratic structures and ideas across the French colonial Maghreb. Having attended the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts (atelier Pontremoli) from 1928-1939, and winning the Premier Grand Prix de Rome in 1939, Zehrfuss served as a Lieutenant in the war until 1942, engaged with the F.F.L. A fresh young architect, he was initially hired as the Architect en Chef du Gouvernement Tunisien, in 1943, and from 1945-1948 he served as Commissaire Adjoint à l’Habitation et au Tourisme.120

For Zehrfuss, an examination of a Tunisian vernacular architecture necessitated an approach that was hybrid both in its analysis and methodology. Often straddling ethnography and geography, postwar French architectural discourse strained to define the notion of habitat, which had almost comparable usage with terms like *logis* (dwelling), *machine à habiter* (machine to inhabit) or *fonction d’habiter* (residential function).121 But locating the vernacular went far beyond semantics, and indeed, this confused terminology actually reflects a civilizational concern or implication for what it means to build, inhabit, or dwell. Bernd Hüppauf and Maiken Umbach assert that far from being stable or concrete collection of forms, or a reductive

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120 “Notice Biographique de M. B. Zehrfuss,” (Boîte 70, Fonds Zehrfuss 358 AA), Cité de l’architecture et du patrimoine (Centre d’archives d’architecture du XXe siècle), Paris.
traditionalism, the vernacular must be understood as a construct that is part and parcel of modernism. Their term, *vernacular modernism*,\(^{122}\) can help elucidate the ways in which Zehrfuss instrumentalized and modeled regional forms in Tunisia. Rather than thinking of these terms as discrete markers of the ‘vernacular’ or ‘modern,’ I instead want to forward the idea that the mutually informing spatio-temporal modes and praxes of Zehrfuss’s kind of vernacular modern, gesture toward the typologies and contextualisms in the aforementioned “city of his dreams.”

In particular, his readings of the country’s built history offer insights to his architectural repertoire. Delivering a speech to the Institut Technique du Bâtiment et des Travaux Publics, Zehrfuss himself recognized the value of Tunisia's many historical layers, though unlike his colonial administrative predecessors, he seemed to rhetorically place the country’s Roman and Islamic imprints on equal grounding (the printed text shows parallel images of the amphitheater of El Djem and the cemetery at Kairouan) (Figure 1.13). “We cannot speak of Tunisia without invoking its past, a prestigious past marked by the quality of grand civilizations of which the most striking are the Roman and Muslim civilizations. The number of Roman cities constructed number more than one hundred and fifty based on excavations to date; this gives an idea of the exceptional importance of the Romans' urbanistic efforts.”\(^{123}\) Referencing such Roman sites as the amphitheater at El Djem, the city of Carthage, Bulla Regia, or the theaters and temples of Dougga, Zehrfuss forefronts this heritage, but later notes that Tunisia's “...Islamic cities and

\(^{122}\) Umbach and Hüppauf, *Vernacular Modernism*, 8. “In investigating ‘vernacular modernism,’ we not only face the difficulty that the two constitutive concepts—modernity and the vernacular—are notoriously fluid. They are also difficult to correlate due to a categorical difference. The vernacular denotes particularism and, by extension, a specific attitude of sensitivity to place, whereas modernity denotes both a historical period and a general mental disposition...Vernacular modernism is better understood in terms of praxis. In other words, its significance is best captured by examining its role in those cultural fields that participate in the construction and performance of space and place.”

monuments are perhaps the most important lessons.”

He prizes the Great Mosque of Kairouan as “the summit of Islamic art in the Mediterranean” while also praising the “harmonious proportions” in the architecture of the town of Gabès with its palm pilotis, or that of Hergla, with its fisheries and marabout, or Sidi Bou Saïd where every home overlooks the sea. “Toute cette architecture est vivante, humaine, et son échelle exacte.”

Attentive to the ubiquitous presence of Islam in Tunisia's urban landscape, he notes that “the majority of the important cities possess Islamic foundations, like Tunis, Sfax, Kairouan, Mahdia, and Monastir”; this landscape reflects the palimpsestic layering of numerous generations.

Zehrfuss identifies the various components that make up the city's urban zones—from the surrounding ramparts, to living quarters, to the commercial zones or suqs (where streets maintain unity based on the existing trades and products sold).

In his discussion of this architectural heritage, Zehrfuss also considers “rhorfas” (sic. ghorfas)—aerated, vaulted rooms used for the storage of grains, olives, and cheese. His appropriations of vaults, cupolas, mashrabiyya or brise-soleil produced a culturally legible abstraction of vernacular forms that echoes Le Corbusier’s analytical breakdown of Algiers’ vernacular dwellings or Michel Écochard’s studies of customs and habitus of both rural

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124 Ibid., 4. “…ses villes et ses monuments musulmans sont peut-être encore plus riches d'enseignements.”
125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
127 Ibid.
129 “In the Casbah of Algiers…every house…has its terrace at the summit, from where the view extends to the distant horizon. Where family life takes place in…its open air (the patio and its galleries), where one lives with the benefits of architecture—to be quite truthful, the benefits of Arab culture—which makes of us, colonizing architects, the barbarians.” Le Corbusier, “Le Lotissement de L’Oued-Ouchâïa à Alger,” L’architecture d’aujourd’hui no.10, (1933), 117.
Moroccans, and Georges Candilis and Shadrach Woods’ fervent interest in the *bidonvilles* of Morocco as urban environments to be emulated.

Even in his own collection of personal photographs (now housed at the Cité de l’architecture et de patrimoine, in Paris), one can see Zehrfuss’s preoccupations with and surveys of Tunisian vernacular domestic architecture. Not unlike Le Corbusier, who turned to indigenous Algerian architecture for inspiration, Zehrfuss examined Tunisia’s indigenous dwellings as well, pooling essential similarities together instead of recognizing the differences in domestic variation. An aerial view over Metameur (in southern Tunisia, near Médenine) exhibits the impressive honeycomb-like, layered effect of the *ghorfas*, which are built enclosing a communal courtyard (where, during periods of conflict, livestock could be safely gathered) (Figure 1.14). Similarly, Zehrfuss took prodigious photographs of the *ghorfas* in Médenine and the earthen, clay homes of Matmata. In Bizerte, he photographed the prevalent earthen or *toub*

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134 Hédi Ben Ouezdou, *Découvrir la Tunisie, de Matmata à Tatouine: Ksour, jessour et troglodytes* (Tunis, 2001), 37-41.
135 “Matmata,” *L’architecture d’aujourd’hui*, no. 20 (Octobre 1948), 56. “L’agglomération de Matmata est située dans une chaîne montagneuse de moyenne altitude à proximité de Gabès. C’est un exemple étonnant d’urbanisme et qui rejoint par certains côtés la doctrine de Le Corbusier, en ce sens que le sol est planté et libre de toute construction, la totalité de celles-ci étant enterrée: c’est ainsi que la vue d’ensemble de Matmata offre l’image d’une palmeraie étendue, très vallonée. Ce n’est que par avion ou en s’approchant de la ville que l’on aperçoit une multitude d’étranges cratères dont chacun est une maison d’habitation. Les habitants ont profité d’une topographie assèx mouvementée et d’une nature de sol favorable pour creuser chacun leur habitation en ayant soin de ménager au niveau du rez-de-chaussée de celle-ci une entrée accessible de l’extérieur par une galerie couverte ou un chemin encaissé. Toutes ces habitations sont sur plan circulaire: au centre un large patio autour duquel sont disposées les différents pièces: chambre, magasin, étable. Il existe même à Matmata une mosquée construite suivant les mêmes principes.” See also Udo Kultermann, *New Directions in African Architecture* (New York: G. Braziller, 1969). Kultermann suspects that this type of dwelling dates to prehistoric times.
(brick) *gourbi* homes; in form, a *gourbi* house typically follows the courtyard plan and can be characterized as a low, irregular structure, often with a sloping, thatched roof.\(^{136}\)

It is clear that in these photographs we see Zehrfuss’ interest in understanding the social patterns of Tunisian habitation, but his photographs are indicative of a broader appeal among French architects concerning vernacular architectures of what was commonly dubbed the “intertropical zone.” J.H. Calsat, writing in the special 1945 ‘France d’outre-mer’ issue of *L’Architecture d’aujourd’hui*, notes the problems in adapting building techniques to a given climate, and bemoans the difficulties this presents to European dwelling.\(^{137}\) Calsat singles out the troglodyte forms from Tunisia, which he reappropriates into something that might essentially be equivalent to a hyper-linear, subterranean, rock-cut structure, whose façade commands an almost temple-like gravitas (Figure 1.15).\(^{138}\)

In a 1952 interview with *La Presse*, Zehrfuss himself commented that, “the architect must ‘stick’ to current needs...It is essential...that aesthetics should not leave reality.”\(^{139}\)

Through his own assessment, in trying to understand the local aesthetics and presumed reality of Tunisians’ everyday life and needs, Zehrfuss and his team sought to create a vernacular

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\(^{136}\) Serge Santelli, *Medinas* (Tunis: Dar Ashraf Editions, 1992), 151-152. See also Serge Santelli and Bernard Tournet, “Évolution et ambiguïté de la maison arabe contemporaine au Maghreb: étude de cas à Rabat et Tunis,” in Catherine Bruant, ed., *Espace centré: figures de l’architecture domestique dans l’Orient méditerranéen*, Cahiers de la Recherche Architecturale 20/21 (Marseille: Editions Parenthèses, 1987), 48-55; 49. The *gourbiville* districts came into being spontaneously in the 1930s and 1940s, in the immediate surrounds of Tunis as well as other coastal cities; the plots of land upon which these *gourbis* were built were generally state-owned or bear an unclear legal status, and they were occupied by rural migrants. See also Marcel Larnaude, “L’habitation rurale des indigènes en Tunisie,” *Annales de Géographie*, vol.34, Issue 192 (1925): 560-563; 561.


\(^{139}\) Interview, “Bernard Zehrfuss: Doit-on déjà penser au Tunis de l’an 2500?” *La Presse*, 1952, p.3.
modernism that would trump prefabrication methods. Ultimately, the modernist utopian rhetoric that defined the postwar era belied the still colonial condition in 1940s and early 1950s Tunisia.

*Expertise Locale and the Place of Prefabrication*

The Provisional government mandated that Tunisian architects and *expertise locale* be involved in the country’s reconstruction. A monthly report from the General Secretary of Government reveals that “Commissions d’expertise locales” were formed in September 1944, particularly in surveying and evaluating the war damages to urban infrastructures. The team’s five-year development plan was to be carried out in stages: clearing the refuse; reconstructing ravaged public buildings; rebuilding communal facilities; rehousing according to typological habitations; new works reserved for individual use; applying an urban plan with gradual expropriation of state land according to zone (Figure 1.16). Yet in the interest of urgency, the time and labor involved in training a new echelon and generation of local experts risked, in the minds of administrators, coming at the expense of the sinistrés, or victims of war. To speed the building process along, the administration favored prefabrication methods that ensured standardization, modularity, and most importantly, timeliness.

140 “Notes sur chaque procédé de préfabrication,” in Protectorat Tunisie, Cabinet Technique, Reconstruction (Constructions préfabriquées), (Décembre 1944-Juin 1949), Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN), 2MI/1419. “Conclusion: Procédé rapide et économique, mais peu confortable, convient mieux pour les bâtiments industriels que pour les bâtiments d’habitations.”
141 See “Secrétariat Général du Gouvernement, Service des Dommages de Guerre (Mois de Septembre 1944),” from Protectorat Tunisie, Cabinet Technique, Reconstruction-Urbanisme Rapports (Janvier 1944-Août 1946), Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN), 2MI/1490. “L’évaluation se fait par une Commission centrale d’évaluation; mais les Commissions d’expertise locales ont reçu, en Tunisie, la charge d’effectuer une première évaluation préalable. L’évaluation se fait grâce à l’établissement de séries de prix.”
Regardless of the construction methods or materials chosen, skilled labor was of vital necessity. In the Order by the Commissioner for Housing and Reconstruction from January 22, 1948 concerning the activities of architects, experts and technicians in the reconstruction of property damaged by acts of war, article two called for local Tunisian representation in the formation of a reconstruction committee consisting of architects licensed under the Commissioner of Reconstruction and Housing who had received their diploma from the government. Though Tunisian workers certainly were employed on site in the construction of new facilities and infrastructure, archival dossiers rarely account for their individual names. There was an underlying urgency for local skilled labor. The Director of Public Instruction, G. Gaston, wrote in a pamphlet from 1943 that “…war and destruction pose, more acutely than ever, the problem of technical training. Tomorrow, we must reconstruct and to do so, we will need to find specialized technicians and labor.”

To involve locals in their country’s reconstruction, Zehrfuss and Jason Kyriacopolous were charged by G. Gatson with building a technical training school (c.1943-1947), employing Tunisian construction apprentices. The team’s first project, a school of Muslim girls, was also constructed by a group of apprentices working under master masons; its vocabulary of thin, brick arches would be replicated in subsequent structures. Architects and administrators both envisaged a “local workforce that was capable of ensuring the realization of reconstruction.”

As Maxime Rolland, the Director of the Centre de Formation Professionnelle du Bâtiment (Vocational Center for Building), indicated in 1948, Tunisian masons and laborers found fierce

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144 Breitman, Rationalisme, Tradition, 131.
competition against Italian masons, who were often preferred for their mastery and history in the trade, especially in projects in Tunis or other cities. Rolland, in the same note to the Resident General, recommended that Tunisian masons retreat to the interior, or rural regions of the country. This can be seen, without question, as a discriminatory measure to keep a class of skilled Tunisian masons and artisans from mobilizing or ascending socially and economically in an urban sphere. *Expertise locale* is good and beneficial, the administration declared, insofar as it does not pose a threat to the existing social-economic order.

That Zehrfuss played into this pragmatism is undeniable; both materials and labor were extremely restricted and limited. One can read from the plans of his civic buildings his interest in distilling characteristics of utility, simplicity and austerity into smooth, linear and curvilinear forms. Among the other structures produced in this period—notably, his public market of Tebourba, primary school in Metameur (Figure 1.17), medical clinic in Sbeitla, all from 1946—we see a repetition of forms. Sustained throughout his projects are rectangular, single-story façades punctuated with cupolas/qubba, porticoes, tempered arches, and arcades. Black and white photographs of these buildings display the sharp contrasts of light that intrigued the team of architects. Zehrfuss’s chief aim was to carefully marry the principles of modern design with local building traditions:

It is important to stress this adaptation. From an urbanistic point of view, it was necessary to take the country’s customs and traditions into account. It was impossible, when we undertook our work, to rigorously apply the doctrine of the Charter of Athens, which,

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146 “Note à l’attention de Monsieur le Résident Général, par M. Rolland, Directeur du Centre de formation professionnelle du Bâtiment, signalé au Résident par M. Bertholle (Tunis, le 4 Février 1948).” “Toutefois les jeunes apprentis éprouvent des difficultés à leur sortie du Centre pour se placer à Tunis et dans les grandes villes de la Régence où ils rencontrent la concurrence des maçons italiens particulièrement avertis des techniques de leur métier et très prisés par les entrepreneurs. M. Rolland incite-t-il ses élèves à chercher du travail dans l’intérieur.” Protectorat Tunisie, Cabinet Technique, Reconstruction (Constructions préfabriquées), (Décembre 1944-Juin 1949), Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN), 2MI/1419.
however, my collaborators and I firmly believe in. The important point was, first to introduce a few essential ideas, and especially, to carry them out. From an architectural point of view, our capacities were conditioned by the availability of the materials...By applying traditional methods of construction, we were able to use, to a maximum, the local work force. This was a starting point, but it is clear that we have tried to bring to our studies, on every occasion, new elements and improvements; we think that, thanks to this method, we might manage, without troubling public opinion in the country, to construct, in the near future, architectural ensembles designed in accordance with the best principles of the time.  

Jacques Marmey similarly asserted his preference for local materials in an interview from 1987, just shortly before he died: “I have no style. I never had the idea, except to use materials wisely—to build with good materials in the cheapest means possible and to take advantage of the sunlight.” Evoking materiality was essential to his building practice, and although reinforced concrete had been imported in postwar Tunisia—he admired Le Corbusier’s use of it in his Cité radieuse in Marseille—it never became his material of choice. In Morocco as in Tunisia, Marmey’s professional practice relied heavily on the expertise of the “ma’alem,” local masons and craftsmen (Figure 1.18). Their familiarity with ‘noble materials’—stone, cedar wood, earthen bricks—guided multiple construction decisions. “I would go like a mahlem [sic] to choose my stone and wood,” states Marmey, “we would install our makeshift offices on site. Designs to be executed were reworked and corrected on the spot, according to the dimensions

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149 Ibid., 13. When asked about his attitudes towards architects and theoreticians like Gropius, Niemeyer, and Le Corbusier, Marmey replied: “Ils ont beaucoup apporté. Parce qu’ils on fait une architecture raisonnable, qu’ils n’ont pas cédé à la facilité. Je prends un exemple. En Tunisie on a importé le béton armé. J’ai évité de construire en béton armé parce que je n’en connaissais pas la technique. Si on fait en béton armé, il faut à mon avis le faire avec franchise. La première fois que j’ai été éclairé sur ce point c'est en voyant à Marseille la maison de Le Corbusier qu'on appelle la maison du fada [Unité d’Habitation]. Chose remarquable! Il a su utiliser le béton comme Le Perret d’ailleurs. En Tunisie, il n’y a qu’un bâtiment en béton qui vaille, celui du Ministère de l’Intérieur. Parce que le béton y est utilisé avec franchise. Mois, j’aime affirmer les matériaux. Je veux que quand un maçonn fait un produit on sent la pierre dessous. C’est ce que j’ai voulu au Lycée de Carthage.”
and shapes of the materials.” \(^{150}\) Other materials appear in their structures as well, such as rubble (moellons), hollowed bricks (briques creuses), plaster, hydrated lime (chaux hydraulique), non-hydrated lime (chaux grasse), cement, mounting rails (fers profilés). Overall, the scarcity of materials, and skilled artisans and craftsmen, were just some of the many issues that these architects confronted. \(^{151}\)

Marmey’s preference for local methods and materials demonstrate his affinity for minimalist aspects of the Modern Movement. Prefabrication, he stated in an interview with Tunisian architect Tarek Ben Milad, left little creative room for the architect, who often yielded out of necessity to the engineer and technician. \(^{152}\) French urban historian Jacques Berque describes this desire to balance quality and quantity: “The heart of the problem is in effect the technique. It is question of exchanging the dicey and stylized grasp that the artisan exerts over the material, against the mastery that assures modern producers the art of quantity.” \(^{153}\) While both Marmey and Zehrfuss favored the use of indigenous materials and the employment of local artisans, it appears quite plainly that Zehrfuss and his team struggled to moderate a balance between the colonial administration’s insistence on timely, mass produced output and catering to demand based on what they had in hand.

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\(^{152}\) “La façade et après,” La Presse, 16 Février 1983, 4. “Je trouve aussi que Le Corbusier, Niemayer et les autres ont fait de très belles choses. Mais pour dire vrai, ça ne m’a pas beaucoup tenté. On y a trop recours au pré-fabriqué. Cela ne laisse pas suffisamment de champ à l’architecte qui, à certain égards, n’intervient plus avec efficacité et cède souvent le pas à l’ingénieur et au technicien.”

One such building that veers away from any vernacular citation is the Ministry of Interior, designed by Zehrfuss and Kyriacopoulos in 1945. Now a vigilantly guarded structure blocked off with barbed wire along Avenue Habib Bourguiba,\(^{154}\) this six-story structure spanning two blocks was designed to house the services of the Public Security of the Protectorate (Sécurité publique du Protectorat). The frame of the building, composed of prefabricated reinforced concrete slabs (*caissons*) lends a certain rhythmic quality to the façade. It is considered one of the first examples of ‘rationalist’ architecture executed in Tunisia.\(^ {155}\)

Other reconstruction projects had followed this vernacular modern, though in a rather scattered development plan throughout the country. In Tebourba,\(^ {156}\) just south of Bizerte, Zehrfuss and his team designed plans for ‘indigenous’ resettlement following a functionalist schema (Figure 1.19). These civic projects—in particular, the combined market and housing complex in Tebourba—exhibit a sustained rectangular, single-story façade punctuated with cupolas/*qubba*, porticoes, tempered arches and arcades. Schools in Metameur and Tunis (built between 1943-1947) embody the team’s stylistic engagements with indigenous forms (e.g. arches, transverse arches, ordinary and barrel vaults, etc.), and a resulting preparatory college, now at the Place du Leader in Tunis, exhibits the plan of a typical Arab *funduq*, or hostel for merchants and goods (Figure 1.20). In both schools, a porticoed walkway with entrances to the various workshops (e.g. masonry, metalwork, carpentry, plumbing) frames an internal courtyard. This, combined with the pierced claustra bricks enabled breezy ventilation.

\(^{154}\) I tried to photograph the building in October 2013. Within a few minutes of taking a several shots of the structure, I was approached by Tunisian police officers and security personnel, asking me to delete each picture of the building.


\(^{156}\) See “Travaux des Communes et des Centres,” from Protectorat Tunisie, Cabinet Technique, Reconstruction-Urbanisme Rapports (Janvier 1944-Août 1946), Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN), 2MI/1490. “Tébourba—Le Service d’Architecture et d’Urbanisme étudie un projet de recasement d’élevant à 1.000.000.”
Prefabrication construction methods, however, though seemingly more cost- and time-efficient than traditional building methods, did not offer easy or necessarily better solutions. For example, the leaky thermal insulation posed a major problem for residential buildings.\textsuperscript{157} Nevertheless, the prefabricated house type was touted by many contemporaries of the time, such as Maxime Rolland, the Director of the Centre de Formation Professionnelle du Bâtiment mentioned earlier. The rural parts of Tunisia offered a fertile testing ground for the use of modular forms. Rolland sought to proffer a more “advanced” alternative to other types of rural housing, particularly the \textit{gourbi}.\textsuperscript{158} Following a very social Darwinian and evolutionary logic of development, Rolland called this new form \textit{La Maison Minima Tunisienne}, or the Minimal Tunisian House (Figure 1.21). Labeling the \textit{gourbi} an “anachronistic habitat,” Rolland boasted that the \textit{Maison Minima}, in keeping with standards of hygiene, would reduce unemployment. With round vaulted rooftops and a courtyard plan, the Maison Minima retained, in a minimalist and abstracted fashion, structural aspects of local residential architecture. By contrast, the orientalizing \textit{Maison du Génie} (Figure 1.22),\textsuperscript{159} designed by the Commandement et Direction Régionale de Tunisie, presents a simple, cottage-like dwelling made of prefabricated materials, with a minaret in the distance, gesturing toward the notion that modern dwelling and traditional

\textsuperscript{157} “Notes sur chaque procédé de préfabrication,” in Protectorat Tunisie, Cabinet Technique, Reconstruction (Constructions préfabriquées), (Décembre 1944-Juin 1949), Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN), 2MI/1419. “Aucun procédé de préfabrication n’est encore vraiment au point en Tunisie. Nous nous trouvons en présence non de vraies maisons préfabriquées, mais d’astuce de préfabrication. Les plus gros défauts relevés sont la mauvaise isolation thermique et le manque d’étanchéité. Le prix de revient élevé atteignant presque celui d’une maison bâtie selon les procédés ordinaires.”

\textsuperscript{158} “La Maison ‘Minima’ Tunisienne, pour servir de contribution au programme du recasement rural, par Maxime Rolland, Tunis,” Protectorat Tunisie, Cabinet Technique, Reconstruction (Constructions préfabriquées), (Décembre 1944-Juin 1949), Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN), 2MI/1419.

\textsuperscript{159} “La Maison du Génie en Matériaux préfabriqués, Commandement et Direction Régionale de Tunisie.” Protectorat Tunisie, Cabinet Technique, Reconstruction—Constructions préfabriquées (Décembre 1944-Juin 1949), Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN), 2MI/1419. “Dans les dix jours qui suivent, des équipes travaillent à la chaîne, exécutent les crépis extérieurs et dans l’ordre normal, intérieurement: les plafonds, le dallage, la pose des conducteurs électriques et des conduites d’adduction et d’évacuation, les revêtements en carrelage, la garnissage des ruines de petaux inutilisables, le mastique des joints de panneaux, le tyrolien teinté constituent l’enduit définitif—la vitrerie et la peinture des…la pose des motifs décoratifs extérieurs s’effectue en même temps que les travaux visés dans le présent paragraphe.”
cultural practices are not mutually exclusive. But the same argument for the necessary evolution of Tunisians is located in the margins of the drawing (Figure 1.23), which shows a progression of architectural—and by insinuation—cultural life; a tent of animal hide leads to a thatched hut, which then elevates to an identifiably Islamic building with horseshoe arches and a crennellated rooftop, and finally culminating in a flat-roofed, linear, and modern structure constructed from prefabrication parts. Sir William Chambers (1723-1796),160 Marc-Antoine Laugier (1713-1769),161 Gottfried Semper (1803-1879),162 and Le Corbusier163 have all deployed this myth of evolutionary progress in architecture. A similarly linear and modernist structure is indicated in a different drawing, executed in Algiers from 1945, envisioning a simple realization, “Tunisie 1945” (Figure 1.24).

Rolland stressed too that the architects overseeing the proliferation of the Maison Minima should not deign to consult Tunisian experts:

The Maison Minima is at the forefront of Reconstruction and Housing Services...The rural house is already, in most cases, a house reduced to its simplest expression. Its materials, labor, and work the cheapest possible. The arrangement is suitable. It addresses, more than one might think, the profound aspiration of stakeholders who would be happy to have the means to replace the archaic gourbi.[...]The rural architect, we believe, will have to adapt to the traditional ways in order to inspire and improve, while sparing himself the advice of experienced Tunisians. We are confident that the buildings meet the regional climatic conditions. The result of our investigation posits that iron is not involved in the Maison Minima.164

164 “La Maison ‘Minima’ Tunisienne, pour servir de contribution au programme du recasement rural, par Maxime Rolland, Tunis.” Protectorat Tunisie, Cabinet Technique, Reconstruction (Constructions préfabriquées), (Décembre
For Rolland, seeing the *Maison Minima* to fruition would require the use of locally available materials (e.g. adobe, *toub* bricks, limestone, plaster, olive branches, etc.), while tempering imposed building standards with local expertise. “The workforce will be recruited among the locals. Everywhere one can find a ‘Bennai,’ the man who knows masonry and often takes the knowledge of his ancestors. Needless to say the laborers, the *fellah* and agricultural workers are skilled and courageous.”\(^{165}\) Such statements bespeak of a certain underlying sentiment of civilizing the so-called ‘noble savage.’ *Expertise locale* would be useful and pragmatic for the administration, it would appear, as long as local experts knew their place, amidst the broader apparatus of prefabrication.

The key was to not only reconstruct rural Tunisian dwellings in a modernizing way, but to also modernize and reorganize *rurality itself* through prefabrication. But how can the rural, with all of its grim associations, become modernized in North Africa? To carry out such a colossal task, French architects looked to the American example of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), which sought to ameliorate infrastructural and architectural decay that had worsened considerably during the Great Depression.\(^{166}\) The Atelier des Bâtisseurs (Builders’

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\(^{165}\) Ibid. “Les matériaux seront ceux généralement utilisés: pisé, toub, pierres tuffeuses, pierre calcaire, briques grossièrement cuites, briques séchées au soleil, pierres plates de couvertures, branches d’olivier, perches, palmes, etc…Pour les liants, il faudra remettre en exploitation les fours à chaux et à plâtre existants, qui sont nombreux mais trop souvent éteints. La main-d’œuvre sera recrutée parmi les gens du pays. Partout on peut trouver un ‘bennai,’ homme qui sait maçonnier et qui tient souvent sa science de ses aîeux. Inutile de parler des manoeuvres, le fallah et l’ouvrier agricole sont adroits et courageux.”

Workshop, also known as ATBAT) of Le Corbusier, begun in 1945, and subsequently joined by Vladimir Bodiansky, Michel Écochard, André Wogensky, Georges Candilis, and Shadrach Woods, would travel to the US from September 1945 to April 1946 to investigate the TVA’s strategies of developing the housing and infrastructural areas of rural Tennessee. Later, in 1949, Bodiansky and Candilis would direct the North African branch of ATBAT, dubbing it ATBAT-Afrique, the work on which would be concentrated in Morocco. What is particularly interesting however, is that the administration in Tunisia was also at work, heavily investigating the TVA’s means of Taylorized, streamlined modernization. Manufacturing standards, machinery used in construction, as well as standardization of models, were all points from the work of the TVA and American National Housing Agency that the administration in Tunisia sought to realize.167

Thus, the role of the American industrial production in the reorganization of Tunisian rural space168 cannot be overemphasized enough, for it would have tremendous consequences on the country’s housing crisis writ large. What the archival evidence demonstrates is that the TVA projects was the way in which they were hybrid designs, incorporating multiple elements of infrastructure, urban planning, and architectural development at the same time. ATBAT was in part modeled after the TVA’s example, employing engineers and architects together, to realize a more holistic view of any given area and project. 167 “Tendances Générales des Methodes Américaines de L’habitation et de L’urbanisme,” from Protectorat Tunisie, Cabinet Technique, Reconstruction—Dossier général (Septembre 1943-Décembre 1946), Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN), 2MI/1417. “Choix des standards de fabrication, organisation du travail, machines à débit rapide, autant de points qui marquent le triomphe de la technique américaine. La préparation en usine et en chantier permet la réalisation et l’installation rapide des projets de la ‘National Housing Agency,’ organisation centrale groupant sous une même direction tout ce qui a trait à la reconstruction. Effort également d’intégration les usines de préfabrication se joindront les chantiers producteurs des matières premières nécessaires et aussi les ateliers mobiles de montage. Standardisation des modèles, industrialisation des procédés de production, la modernisation de l’outillage, l’emploi massif du bois pour les constructions légères, la recherche constante de l’abaissement du prix de revient, sans que le confort et les conditions de salubrité et de vie agréable en souffrent. Tels sont les apports de la technique à l’œuvre entreprise. Les résultats, tels ceux obtenus dans la Tennessee Valley Authority, dans la réalisation de cités jardins préconisées à l’origine par l’architecte français Le Corbusier, font foi de leur importance. Il apparaît incontestable que l’ampleur des résultats obtenus, encore qu’ils n’apparaissent que comme une solution américaine à un problème américain puissent donner à un pays étranger un bénéfice certain. Pour la Tunisie, nous ne pouvons pas étudier les perspectives ouvertes sans considérer les résultats déjà obtenus, avec des moyens évidemment plus faibles que les moyens américains.”

168 “La Maison ‘Minima’ Tunisienne, pour servir de contribution au programme du recasement rural, par Maxime Rolland, Tunis,” Protectorat Tunisie, Cabinet Technique, Reconstruction (Constructions préfabriquées), (Déembre 1944-Juin 1949), Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN), 2MI/1419. “A l’exemple de ce qui se fait dans la vallée du Tennessee je conçois très bien un matériel d’État: camions, madriers, échelles, qui roulerait suivant les besoins.”
prefabrication presented itself as a capitalistic opportunity to optimize productivity, and Tunisian building expertise was useful and deemed worthy only insofar as it could be utilized and exploited in the service of creating a modern, clean order to postwar life.

“Crise du logement”: Hygiene and Habitat in the Service of Reconstruction

Habitation—its concomitant problems and potential societal repercussions—troubled the métropole, greatly, both within France and extending into its colonies. The so-called “crise du logement,” or housing crisis, did not merely affect war-ravaged Tunisia, but rather can be seen as a constant postwar preoccupation to politicians and administrators. Recent scholarship reminds us that addressing these urban problems involved often messy spheres of influence—flowing back and forth, between the metropolitan center and the colonies, and among the colonies themselves169 (e.g. the French ambassador in Algeria consulted with the protectorate administration in Tunisia in 1947, concerned with the handling of the ever-pressing crise du logement).170

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170 “OBJET: Crise du logement,” Lettre de L’Ambassadeur de France Gouverneur Général de l’Algérie à Monsieur le Résident Général de la République Française en Tunisie (Alger, le 6 Mar 1947).” Protectorat Tunisie, Cabinet Technique, Habitat, Dossier général (Mai 1945-Decembre 1947), Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN), 2MI/1413-414. “Il m’a été rapporté que votre Protectorat avait consacré un effort important pour la construction d’habitations dans les agglomérations urbaines, en vue de remédier à la crise du logement née des destructions de guerre et de l’accroissement de la population. En Algérie sévit également une crise grave du logement, et il apparaît de plus en plus, qu’une solution doive être recherchée sur le plan Gouvernemental, puisqu’aussi bien les activités privées n’ont pas encore été amenées à s’intéresser à cet état de fait. Désireux de faire bénéficier l’Algérie de l’expérience déjà acquise par vos services dans ce domaine, je vous serais reconnaissant de vouloir bien me faire par des réalisations qu’elles ont effectuées ou envisagées. Je serais notamment désireux d’être renseigné sur la réglementation mis en œuvre, l’importance des programmes, leur répartition géographique, les organismes chargés de leur exécution, la forme et le montant des contributions financières ou d’autre ordre à la charge des collectivités, les modalités d’amortissement des capitaux investis, les conception technique des constructions, ainsi que la durée assignée aux travaux. Il me serait particulièrement agréable de recevoir ces renseignements dans les meilleurs délais qu’il vous serait possible, en raison de l’importance primordiale que revêt cette question en Algérie.”
But by 1946 a specialized bureaucratic unit, the ‘Commissariat à la Reconstruction et au Logement,’ was created to streamline the process of reconstruction, with particular attention devoted to housing. In Tunis, by 1950 Le Fonds d’Aide à la Construction d’Immeubles d’Habitation (F.A.C.I.H.) was instituted to speed the construction of residential complexes, financed through government grants, proceeds of the sale of real estate, and credit institutions.\textsuperscript{171} The surveyed estimate of dwellings significantly damaged amounted to approximately 8,000, whereas the total number of completely uninhabitable homes totaled 18,000.\textsuperscript{172}

The seemingly innocuous notion of ‘habitat,’ as it was used with reference to housing, particularly that of the working class, dominated social science discourses of the prewar colonial Maghreb. Inasmuch as colonial social housing programming throughout the Maghreb served needs of shelter, it also functioned as a politics of landscape and boundaries, to control the movements and migrations of people—rural, urban, nomadic and otherwise. The magistrate A.H. Sabatier, in 1936, distinguished between the “population of European origin requiring a European-style habitat, if not quite identical to the European type characteristic of the populations of the Mediterranean basin,” and the “Arab population” requiring “a habitat of special layout and construction.”\textsuperscript{173} This differentiation of habitation types along ethnic and racial lines defined the majority of social housing programs in the 1930s and 1940s, but addressing the very real and dire shortage of adequate dwellings did not merely serve the colonial authorities, but these building programs served to stave off migration waves of North Africans to France. Augustin Bernard, writing on behalf of the Comité Algérie-Tunisie-Maroc in 1930, bemoans the mass migrations of the Algerian Kabyle populations to France from the

\textsuperscript{171} Sebag, Tunis: Histoire d’une ville, 526.
\textsuperscript{172} Gérard Blachère, “Reconstruction and Housing,” Tunisia 54: Encyclopédie Mensuelle d’Outre-Mer, Special Issue (1954): 168.
perspective of hygiene and that the only ‘solution’ to this implied pestilence is for adequate housing to be constructed:

From this point of view of hygiene, health and the future of indigenous peoples it must be judged and condemned that Kabyle emigrate to France. Doctors and hygienists are unanimous in reporting hazards in this respect…All doctors of colonization, in their reports, deplore their helplessness in the presence of tuberculosis in the homes of the indigènes and attribute the origin to the role of germs by workers returning to infect the métropole. The exodus of North African natives in France has political, economic, social, moral disadvantages of all kinds. ‘The fewer the indigènes leaving for France, says a report, the better it will be; the dangers are as serious for France as for us’…From a purely sanitary view, ‘there would be, said Dr. Raynaud, a remedy which would suspend the authorization of indigènes to go to France, until the moment that industrialists and entrepreneurs that use the work force organize to give our Muslims hygienic housing and healthy food, making them immune to lung infections which they succumb so easily.’

Bernard’s report explicitly says that if ‘hygienic housing’—logements hygiéniques—is prioritized, then migration waves would be reduced, and by extension, France would remain unscathed. Government documents from December 1944 illustrate the prevalent anxieties about the proliferation of bidonville or gourbiville settlements and specifically the habitat indigène. Keeping workers, and workers’ housing clean, was essential for the protectorate’s and the métropole’s goals of “housekeeping.” A wartime study from the Tunisian Institut des Belles Lettres Arabes describes in detail how crucial not just cleanliness, but material ‘modern’

174 Augustin Bernard, La Main-d’œuvre dans l’Afrique du Nord, Rapport au Comité Algérie-Tunisie-Maroc (Paris: Editions du Comité du Algérie-Tunisie-Maroc, 1930), 29-31. "C’est aussi au point de vue l’hygiène, de la santé et de l’avenir des populations indigènes qu’il faut se placer pour juger et condamner l’émigration kabyle en France. Les médecins et les hygiénistes sont unanimes à en signaler les dangers à ce point de vue...Tous les médecins de colonisation, dans leurs rapports, déplorent leur impuissance en présence des progrès de la tuberculose chez les indigènes et en attribuent l’origine à l’apport de germes par les travailleurs revenant infectés de la métropole...L’exode des indigènes nord-africains en France a des inconvénients politiques, économiques, sociaux, moraux de toutes sortes. ‘Moins il partira d’indigènes en France, dit un rapport, mieux cela vaudra; les dangers sont aussi graves pour la France que pour nous’...Au point de vue purement sanitaire, ’il n’y aurait, dit le Dr. Raynaud, qu’un remède: ce serait la suspension du régime actuel autorisant les indigènes à aller en France, jusqu’au moment où les industriels et les entrepreneurs qui utilisent cette main’d’œuvre se seront organisés pour donner à nos musulmans des logements hygiéniques et une nourriture saine et abondante, les mettant à l’abri des infections pulmonaires auxquelles ils succombent si facilement.’"

175 See “Realisation du programe d’urbanisme, Etat des projets à la date du 31 Decembre 1944.” Protectorat Tunisie, Cabinet Technique, Reconstruction-Urbanisme Rapports (Janvier 1944-Août 1946), Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN), 2MI/1490. “La plan régional de Tunis est fixé dans ses grandes lignes, sur 980 demandes d’autorisation de bâtir, 870 ont été accordées en tenant compte des priorités. Le cas très urgents sont particulièrement ceux de la Hara et de l’habitat indigène (suppression des bidonvilles, dont le nombre s’accroît). L’insalubrité de la ville augmente.”
amenities—a “European W.C.”, curtains, beds, dishes—are for the social Darwinism of creating the évoluté, for the advancement of an evolution:

We have already signaled some introduced improvements to the primitive plan, thanks to some preliminary trials. […] better living conditions created new needs that may greet the appearance as a sign of certain social progress, in the sense of a life more in keeping with the laws of physical hygiene and morality…Unanimous and urgent desire for the European W.C. now appears necessary in a home where cleanliness has become possible. One also sees an improvement in furniture: some have beds; dishes in the land of Nabeul, are more elegant and abundant. Some windows have checkered cotton curtains. Utility boxes/chests have better appearance and are kept in order. No doubt, the results are not the same for all: some housewives are attentive while others are not. No doubt, these households are chosen among older workers in the field, or specialists more educated and better educated. And again, this kind of social evolution would not have been possible, to this degree, in other living conditions. Finally, note that even at the points where improvements are desired, users can recognize progress. Those whose soil is cemented suffer from cold in winter, but appreciate the cleanliness and ease of maintenance. All are happy, under the asbestine tiles, and feel safe from the terrible fires of gourbis that haunt our memories and exempted continual repairs and the demand of stubble.¹⁷⁶

Thus, discourses on habitation and cleanliness can be seen as a part of a much larger extension of the mission civilisatrice, exercised to its fullest. By expunging any residual traces of

¹⁷⁶ “Experiences Rurales: Essais d’Habitation ouvrières,” Institut des Belles Lettres Arabes (IBLA), no. 32 (4th Trimestre, 1945): 439-448. “Nous avons déjà signalé quelques améliorations apportées au plan primitif, grâce à des essais préliminaires. Malgré jout, il ne pouvait être question en une affaire aussi délicate d’atteindre du premier coup à des solutions définitives. Une expérience de plusieurs années permet, au moment de reprendre les travaux, d’envisager de nouveaux progrès. Il a été question des perfectionnements à apporter à la toile. La difficulté à réaliser un foyer pratique pourrait aussi amener à modifier la porte d’entrée, afin de rendre la cuisine totalement indépendante des pièces habitées. Celle des maisons qui a été réalisée sur ce plan a donne toute satisfaction. Il semble que la porte latérale dans l’enceinte de la cour suffise à assurer le minimum de discrétion nécessaire; il devient donc possible de réaliser une entrée directe dans le corps de logis principal. Signalons enfins que l’accoutumance à des conditions de vie meillures a peu à peu créé des besoins nouveaux dont on peut saluer l’apparition comme le signe d’un progrès social certain, dans le sense d’une existence plus conforme aux lois de l’hygiène physique et morale: désir de pièces plus vastes, et surtout plus large, permettant une circulation plus aisée pendant la nuit, quand les nattes sont dépliés pour le repos des dormeurs. Désir unanime et pressant de W.C. à l’européenne, qui paraissent maintenant nécessaires dans une maison où la propreté est devenue possible. De fait, la tenue excellente de ces maisons frapperait l’observateur le moins attentif. On voit s’améliorer le mobilier: certains ont des lits; la vaiselle, en terre de Nabeul, est plus abondante et soignée. Quelques fenêtres ont de petits rideaux de cretonne à carreaux. Les coffres ont meilleure apparence et sont tenus en ordre. Sans doute, les résultats ne sont pas les mêmes pour tous: il est des ménagères attentives et d’autres qui le sont moins. Sans doute encore les ménages installés dans ces maisons sont-ils choisis parmi les anciens ouvriers du domaine, ou des spécialistes davantage instruits et mieux éduqués. Encore reste-t-il qu’une telle évolution sociale n’aurait probablement pas été possible, au moins à ce degré, dans d’autres conditions de vie. Remarquons enfin que, même sur les points où des améliorations sont souhaitées, les usagers savent reconnaître un progrès. Ceux dont le sol est cimenté souffrent du froid en hiver mais apprécient sa propreté et sa facilité d’entretien. Tous sont heureux, sous la plaque d’éternit, de se sentir à l’abri des terribles incendies de gourbis qui hantent toutes les mémoires, et dispensés des continuelles réparations que demande le chaume.”
earthen building materials and by introducing the “needs” of the household, we see how the imposition of contrived domesticity and superficial amenities are supposed to fuel the so-called ‘desire’ for ‘progress.’ The thought, roughly, was this: if one could transform and reconstruct the habitation of the Tunisian worker, one could thereby control and contain his or her desires, needs, and habitudes; the goal here is to transform the Tunisian into an évoluté, an individual who has “evolved” from his or her natural state. In so many ways this echoes prevalent anxieties in France, not just about the postwar housing crisis that was happening back in the métropole, but about what cleanliness in the home, and by extension, the nation, was to symbolize. Kristin Ross perceptively observes that in postwar France—a country that was simultaneously having a dirty and violent war with independence-seeking Algeria—the idea of maintaining a clean home was metaphorically tantamount to cleaning the nation. Ross explains this “ideologeme of hygiene” as follows:

A chain of equivalences is at work here; the prevailing logic runs something like this: if the woman is clean, the family is clean, the nation is clean. If the French woman is dirty, then France is dirty and backward. But France can’t be dirty and backward, because that is the role played by the colonies... If Algeria is becoming an independent nation, then France must become a modern nation: some distinction between the two must still prevail. France must, so to speak, clean house; reinventing the home is reinventing the nation. And thus, the new 1950s interior: the home as the basis of the nation’s welfare; the housewife—manager or administrator and victim, occupying a status roughly equivalent to the évoluté or educated native in the colonial situation—efficiently caring for children and workers.

Controlling the hygiene and habitation of the worker’s environment, in postwar colonial Tunisia, meant containing the risk for disease and thus, circuitously, protecting the health of the métropole. Michel Écochard’s “Habitat Charter,” would accord with these calls for a “gradual

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transformation of lifestyle.”

For Zehrfuss, sites of habitation should respond to social needs; there is a great sense of urgency and responsibility in his message. And yet, from archival dossiers, it appears quite plainly that the distribution of funds was drastically skewed in favor of building dwellings for the European population (mixed as it was). The question that remains is twofold: Whose needs were upheld and valued, and how were those needs constructed? The work of Łukasz Stanek illustrates that, in the wake of the war, the concept of “needs” gained traction in debates among French authorities, as “a cognitive framework employed in empirical research studies; as a theoretical postulate which describes the deep structures of subjectivity of inhabitants; as an operative concept for architects and urban planners; as a normative tool regulating entitlements of various strata of population; as a critical concept debunking the normalization of these entitlements; and as a political means for a speculation about an evolution of new plural subjectivities ‘from users to inhabitants.’” Stanek explains that the postwar work of French social ethnologist Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe (1913-1998), especially his study, Logement et comportement des ménages dans trois cités nouvelles de l’agglomération parisienne (1957), identified the so-called ‘fundamental needs’ that housing typologies should incorporate for modern-day dwellers: the need for space; the need for those spaces to be adapted to the

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179 Monique Eleb, “An Alternative to Functionalist Universalism: Écochard, Candilis, and ATBAT-Afrique,” in Sarah Williams Goldhagen and Réjean Legault, eds., Anxious Modernisms: Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture (Montreal; Cambridge, MA; London: Canadian Centre for Architecture and MIT Press, 2000), 56; 68. “What is implicit in this debate is that one’s attachment to a habitat anchored in culture is linked to the slow development of certain countries relative to others, which for these architects was impossible to express. Écochard, aiming to satisfy ‘for all, the needs of light, space, hygiene, rest, education, and work,’ also engaged in this schizophrenic approach, using modern theory as the basis for projects designed for Europeans, and ethnological or regional criteria for projects designed for others.”

180 Interview, “Bernard Zehrfuss: Doit-on déjà penser au Tunis de l’an 2500?” La Presse, 1952, p.3. “La formule d’habitation des hommes est mauvaise. Les architectes proposent des solutions qui sont plus du ressort d’une certaine esthéticisme que d’une vue réelle du problème social. La termitière peut être jolie, comme la Cité Radieuse de Le Corbusier à Marseille, mais au point de vue social...Il ne faut pas perdre de vue que la société a une grosse responsabilité en matière d’urbanisme.”

structure of the nuclear family; the need for space to be partitioned by function (e.g. sleep, leisure, hygiene, etc.); and finally the need to be freed of financial constraint (e.g. that rent would be low enough to enable families to purchase amenities and appliances for convenience in the home).

Arguably, in line with Kristin Ross’s observations, the path towards modernization also entailed transforming inhabitants into consumers, for the ability to ‘inhabit’ necessarily involved aspects of consumption.

The recasement, or resettlement of victims, was no simple affair. Victims who survived the turbulence of the war, but were uprooted or dispossessed of their homes as a result of the destruction, quickly had to find lodging of an alternate kind. One document distinguishes the variety of problems that each city faced: in Tunis, residents were moved temporarily to the port area; in Bizerte, many refugees fled to Tunis, but the remainder had to be sheltered in barracks; in Sousse, people sought help from nearby towns and villages.

Moreover, despite ample budgetary provisions only a fraction of the recasement units were actually realized. In 1945, documentation reveals that out of the 294 housing units to be built to rehouse approximately 1800 people, eleven of those construction sites were dedicated for European units, whereas only six were designated for Muslim inhabitants. The same document

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183 “Le Recasement des Sinitrés en Tunisie,” Secretariat Général du Gouvernement, Commissariat à l’Urbanisme à l’Habitat et au Tourisme (Tunis, le 6 Août 1945). Protectorat Tunisie, Cabinet Technique, Sinistres—Dossier général (Juin 1943-Avril 1949), Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN), 2MI/1416. “Le problème du recasement des sinitrés en Tunisie ne s’est vraiment posé que dans les 4 grandes villes, particulièrement visées par les bombardements, Tunis, Bizerte, Sousse, et Sfax. Dans chacune de ces villes il s’est présenté sous un aspect particulier: à Tunis, il a été limité au transfert des habitants de la zone portuaire dans les autres quartiers, l’opération n’a pas présenté de trop grandes difficultés, chacun ayant trouvé à proximité un nouveau logis et ayant, de ce fait, subi le minimum d’incommodité; à Bizerte, la ville a été entièrement évacuée par les germano-italiens, les bizertins ont cherché refuge à Tunis, principalement, où la capacité de logement est devenue très vite insuffisante malgré la bonne volonté de tous et un certain nombre de réfugiés ont dû être hébergés dans les casernes; à Sousse, la population a reflué vers les nombreux petits centres des environs où chacun a pu trouver asile dans des conditions souvent précaires mais suffisantes, néanmoins, en considération des événements; à Sfax, presque tous les habitants ont autour de la ville un jardin et une maison qu’ils habitent normalement, venant chaque jour pour leur travail dans l’agglomération, le recasement n’y a donc donné lieu à aucune difficulté particulière.”
shows that in Sousse, out of thirty-two housing units to be constructed, only sixteen were allocated for Muslims (Figure 1.25). Again, in Sfax, the list displays six new apartment complexes to be built, of which the entirety of thirty-six apartments were reserved for Europeans; its aerial view of the ville Européenne was deemed, at the time, to be most striking.\textsuperscript{184} In the year 1946 alone, he was tasked with constructing six hundred logements to be spread across multiple cities throughout the country.\textsuperscript{185} By 1948, the problem had grown so dire that an entire issue of L’architecture d’aujourd’hui was dedicated to the problem of “L’habitation tunisienne.”\textsuperscript{186}

Primarily active in inter- and postwar Europe, CIAM (founded at the Château of La Sarraz, Switzerland, in 1928) mapped crucial propositions for experimental housing prototypes and urban planning models in the Athens Charter of 1933.\textsuperscript{187} Zehrfuss subscribed to the general tenets of the association, outlined in the Charter: “(1) to give expression to the contemporary architectural problem; (2) to represent the modern architectural idea; (3) to bring this idea into technical, economic, and social circles; (4) to see that the problem of architecture is recognized.”\textsuperscript{188} CIAM comprised a group of European architects, dominated largely by the head

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\item \textsuperscript{184} “Sfax,” \textit{L'Architecture d’aujourd’hui}, “France d’Outre-Mer,” 3:16 Année (Septembre-Octobre 1945), 46.
\item \textsuperscript{185} “L’agglomération de Sfax, est, sans doute, celle de la Tunisie qui présente le caractère le plus marqué. L’aspect de la ville, vue d’avion, est saisissant. Le tracé affecte la forme d’un immense éventail ayant comme centre de la ville Européenne, vaste cité d’affaires, conçue sur une trame géométrique vers laquelle se dirigent toutes les voies de pénétration. Le long de ces voies faisant transition entre la limite périphérique de la ville et les immenses champs d’oliviers, s’étendent les habitations particulières au nombre de plus 12.000, constituant une sorte de gigantesque cité-jardin, dont les dispositions, dictées uniquement par les traditions, sont très heureuses (emplacement des maisons, volumes, clôtures, couleurs).”
\item \textsuperscript{186} In a document from 1946 listing the architectural programme for recasement, the cities and villages in which these new structures were to be built is listed as follows: Tunis, Bizerte, Béja, Tebourba, Sousse, Sfax, Medjez El-Bab, Mateur, Pont du Fahs, Bou Arada, El Aroussa, Goubellat, Sedjenane, Souk El Arba, Tabarka, Kelibia, Gromba, Sidi Bou Zid, Bir Meroua, Zbiba Chouat, Djeufenne, Oued Zarga, Ousseltia, Zana, Souk Ben Romdane, Foundouk Djedid.
\item \textsuperscript{187} See this issue, \textit{L’architecture d’aujourd’hui}, no.20 (October 1948).
\item \textsuperscript{188} Le Corbusier, “Le Discours d’Athènes: AIR-SON-LUMIÈRE,” \textit{L’architecture d’aujourd’hui} 10 (1933): 81-89.
\end{itemize}
of the group, Le Corbusier (1887-1965), and conceived of itself as an avant-garde collective to pose architectural solutions to social problems. Consisting initially of twenty-four architects from eight European countries, the group’s ‘La Sarraz Declaration,’ declared their “conception of building as well as their professional duty to society.” In explicit terms, the aims of CIAM were fourfold: to have a forum by which to convene and share new formal building methods and urban planning strategies; to challenge the Beaux-Arts and neoclassically focused academic establishment of architecture; to use the group as a platform to cultivate a new clientele of technocrats, municipal governments, and international organizations; and lastly, to standardize building practices universally.

Sustaining autonomy within architecture, and yet, ensuring that its discipline and practice remain synchronous with the socio-economic requirements of the times, was to be one of the association’s primary goals. At the 9th International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM 9), which took place in Aix-en-Provence in July 1953, the group attempted to graft its functionalist discourse and urban reform proposals onto the Maghreb, with studies concentrating on Algeria and Morocco. Addressing the anthropological concerns of

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193 Zeynep Çelik, “Bidonvilles, CIAM et grands ensembles” in Jean-Louis Cohen, Nabila Oulebsir and Youcef Kanoun, eds., *Alger: Paysage urbain et architectures 1800-2000*, (Paris: Imprimeur, 2003), 186. Architects sought to fuse the codes of urbanism and design philosophy prescribed by the movement in order to recreate traditional modes of living in Algeria. The C.I.A.M. study had influenced Roland Simounet’s housing complex at Djenan el-Hassan (1956-1958), a low-income housing complex for Muslim communities. Cohen and Eleb, *Casablanca*, 317. GAMMA (Groupe d’Architectes Modernes Marocains) organized as a branch of C.I.A.M. For this 1953 conference, C.I.A.M. members studied the everyday living patterns and traditions of rural Moroccans, who had dispersed to city’s edges. This was just one segment in what was intended to be a part of a broader analysis of cities in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.
Though the Maghreb was long perceived as the testing ground for French urbanists, it is important to take note of stark objections, from within the colonies, of this experimentation. The Union de la Propriété Bâtie de Tunisie expressed its grave concerns for the application of urbanism appropriate for the métropole, in Tunisia, stating that this grafting is “singularly dangerous.” The problem of housing in Tunisia, it states, is in part due to its burgeoning population: “it is possible and necessary to address the matter of housing in Tunisia on a substantially different plan than that of the métropole.”

Among the social housing units realized, the collective dwellings of Moulinville, just northeast of the port of Sfax are striking outliers (Figure 1.26). Designed by Zehrfuss, Drieu, and Kyriacopoulos, these thirty-six, three-storied structures were built in the zone d’extension in a standardized mode of building, reminiscent of the uniform, modernist, loggia-equipped units built in postwar Europe. Lacking arches, cupolas, courtyards, or cultural-typological markers, these types of apartments would set the stage for future social housing projects like El Menzah, outside of Tunis in the 1950s (Figure 1.27). In this period as well, the same team constructed approximately forty-eight social housing complexes in a different sector of Sfax, called Picville (Figure 1.28).

\[195\] “L’Union de la Propriété Bâtie de Tunisie,” Protectorat Tunisie, Cabinet Technique, Dommages de guerre (Fevrier 1944-Novembre 1949), Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN), 2MI/1415. “Le problème du logement est de ces matières. Que la Métropole, dont la démographie est étale, puisse se permettre une législation qui affecte principalement les générations montantes, cela peut se concevoir à la rigueur des choses. Mais que l’on veuille s’inspirer de cette législation pour régir la matière dans un pays comme la Tunisie, qui voit le flux de sa population monter avec cet élan qui révèle les statistiques, cela apparaîtra contre nature, sans profit pour la Métropole et manifestement contraire aux intérêts de la Tunisie. La première conclusion qui s’impose sera qu’il est possible et nécessaire de traiter la matière du logement en Tunisie sur un plan sensiblement différent du plan métropolitain.”
\[196\] A fruitful comparison might be drawn between El Menzah and Fernand Pouillon’s Cité Diar el-Mahsul, constructed outside of Algiers, 1954-1955, or Roland Simounet’s Algerian complex of Djenan el-Hasan.
Through its advocacy of new, formal regional planning strategies and standardization methods, CIAM sought to remedy the problems of urban life (e.g. urban density, housing shortages, hygiene, etc.) by responding to social needs. One of the Athens Charter’s supporters, Josep Lluís Sert, affirmed modernism’s Mediterranean associations:

Every country has a timeless architecture which is generally termed vernacular, not in the sense as understood in architecture schools, which means regional, but rather vernacular of the lowest class, classified according to the economic means at their disposal...The pure functionalism of the ‘machine à habiter’ is dead...197

Taking cues from Sert, Bernard Rudofsky, curator of the 1964 Museum of Modern Art exhibit, “Architecture without Architects,” would announce to the Royal Institute of British Architects:

I hope I don’t have to assure you that vernacular architecture is no more for copying, adapting, and adopting than historical architecture. Its lesson, if any, lies elsewhere...modern architecture pointed southward, like a sunflower. As a young man, the puritan LeCorbusier [sic] discovered the humanizing influence of the Mediterranean, the sea that, in death, literally claimed him as its own. In the 1930s, J.L. Sert prematurely proclaimed modern architecture as a triumph of the Mediterranean.198

This demonstrates the longstanding mythologization of the Mediterranean in the construction of, and service to, the project of modernism.

Bizerte-Zarzouna: The Limits of Reconstruction and Justice

Nowhere are these functionalist imperatives more evident than in the urban plans for rebuilding the destroyed port city of Bizerte. Of the Sahelian coastline cities, Bizerte exhibited the greatest need for restructuring; from a statistical map, one can observe the distribution and density of planned programs devoted to rehousing and urban decongestion in Bizerte (Figure 1.29). Archival dossiers indicate that the new city, to be named Bizerte Zarzouna, included a zoning scheme dividing military, industrial (e.g. zones ferroviaires, zones portuaires, etc.),

commercial, governmental and living quarters. In all planning of industrial sites, expropriation was commonplace. The so-called *agglomérations musulmanes*—marked under an entirely different subheading, including *zone de protection*, *zone d’extension*, and a cultural and administrative center—were intended to be distinct from and yet adjacent to the opposing quarters (Figure 1.30). Drawn up in 1945 by Jacques Marmey, Bernard Zehrfuss, and further developed by A. Demenais, the plan for Bizerte Zarzouna was defined by a central axis, upon which the commercial and governmental quarters were lined. The architects targeted building up the industrial zone in particular, with a concentrated effort in creating traffic routes that would connect the flow between Tunis and Bizerte.

Jacques Marmey’s regional Contrôle Civil of Bizerte Zarzouna is possibly the most often cited construction in the literature of Tunisian architectural history (Figure 1.31). With its layered arches, brick *brise-soleil* that mimic the effect of a *mashrabiyya*, the building’s frontal and posterior façades create a gridded, but linear composition. Using modern construction

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techniques, but local materials, the structure is composed of stone masonry walls and ceramic slab floors. This predilection for prefabricated forms and repetitive modularity can also be seen in the somewhat classicizing school complex (groupe scolaire) built in the same timeframe.

The Cité Ouvrière of Zarzouna was slated to have 35 new houses with 37 new housing units for the cost of 13,300,000 Francs. Here, the architects made a conscious choice to revert to the indigenous “ghorfa” building type, because these structures, with their round, vaulted roofs, do not require iron beams and wood for internal framing, which were apparently running scarce and at a premium.

Yet the scheme was perhaps too grand in its conception. Of the master plan, only the worker’s district, the market, and the contrôle civil were actually constructed and realized. As in nearly all the ville nouvelles, indigenous neighborhoods suffered the most at the expense of reconstruction plans. One government report asserts that indigenous neighborhoods only suffered, “des dégâts très localisés (very localized damage)” and that the indigenous residents would be forced to rebuild their dwellings, respecting, of course, the new “servitudes of urbanism.”

Moreover, French colonial surveillance of Tunisians’ media and communications

203 “Bizerte-Zarzouna,” L’Architecture d’aujourd’hui, “France d’Outre-Mer,” 3:16 Année (Septembre-Octobre 1945), 44. “Il n’était pas possible, en première urgence d’envisager l’édification d’immeubles locatifs à plusieurs étages, en raison de la pénurie de certains matériaux tels que bois et fers de poutraison et de charpente. C’est ainsi pour cette raison que la première tranche de maisons familiales, en cours de construction est réalisée à rez-de-chaussée, avec couvertures voûtées dites “Rhorias” [sic] qui ne nécessitent pas de charpente. (Une maison témoin, de cette conception, a été édifiée à titre expérimental à Medjez-El-Bab. Les enseignements tirés de cette reconstruction sont mis en application dans les réalisations de Zarzouna).”
204 “Recasement des Populations Sinistrées de la ville de Bizerte.” Protectorat Tunisie, Cabinet Technique, Reconstruction—Bizerte et sa Région (Avril 1944-Mars 1946), Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN), 2MI/1426. “Les quartiers indigènes n’ont subis que des dégâts très localisés: le Gouvernement a décidé de laisser les habitants reconstruire dans les quartiers déblayés en respectant les nouvelles servitudes d’urbanisme… Les opérations d’expropriation des terrains comportant des immeubles démolis de l’ancienne Bizerte doivent être menées parallèlement à celles du recasement. Il a été prévu le rachat de 83.000 m2 de terrain qui permettront la
picked up on the plans’ overwhelmingly unpopular disapproval. In an anonymous editorial from 1946 in the Tunisian Arabic newspaper *Nahda*, entitled “La grande injustice de Zarzouna,” (‘The Great Injustice of Zarzouna’), a local wrote that:

…the government expropriates the people of Zarzouna, for the purpose of creating a new city and working city. These confiscated lands are, however, very fertile, from about 1,500 Tunisian families who live there and have orchards. They had already seized *Habous* land, and uprooted olive trees, they built roads and houses occupied by Jewish and foreign refugees…The plan of Zarzouna is one of the evils of the former Secretary General of Government.  

With such a strong public condemnation of the frequent expropriations that went into reconstruction, and an administrative shift and subsequent dissolution of the Department of Urbanism and Architecture, it is no wonder that the remainder of the plans for Bizerte Zarzouna went unfinished. Today, the market of Bizerte Zarzouna has been transformed into housing units.

**Conclusion: Ambivalent Futures**

*Breitman, Rationalisme, Tradition, 135.*
Zehrfuss and his team resigned from their posts in January 1946, but the burdens of reconstruction remained. They had grave differences of opinion with the bureaucracy and inner hierarchy of the colonial administration. In a bold and strongly worded letter to the Secretary General, dated October 19, 1945, Zehrfuss protests:

I have gathered in Tunisia, a team of Architects (16 currently) of very great value, of which there is no equivalent in France. The team and I are currently imprisoned in an Administration faithful to its routines and its old methods. This paralyzes us…we do not have the opportunity to really exercise…effective management of our work…You have seen the great disorder that exists because engineers…only depend on local authority.

General Mast indicated his outright dissatisfaction with the output of Zehrfuss and his team in a letter from December 1945 addressed to the General Secretary of Government, asking instead for a viable candidate who could perform at the desired pace and design in “an architectural style appropriate to Tunisia.”

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208 “Rapport No. 2 sur L’urbanisme et la Reconstruction (le 9 Decembre 1946),” Protectorat Tunisie, Cabinet Technique, Reconstruction—Dossier général (Janvier 1947-Décembre 1949), Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN), 2MI/1418. “J’ai constitué en Tunisie, écrit-il, une équipe d’Architectes (16 actuellement) de très grande valeur et comme il n’en existe actuellement aucune en France. Cette équipe et moi-même sommes en ce moment emprisonnés dans une Administration fidèle à ses routines et à ses vieilles méthodes. Ceci nous paralyse d’une part; d’autre part, connaissent contre profession et les responsabilités qu’elle exige, nous n’avons pas l’occasion de l’exercer réellement, n’ayant pas l’occasion de l’exercer réellement, n’ayant pas la direction effective de nos travaux… Vous avez pu constater le grand désordre qui existe du fait que des ingénieurs…ne dépendent que de la seule autorité locale.”

209 “Lettre le Général Mast, Résident Général de France à Tunis, à Monsieur le Secrétaire Général du Gouvernement (11 Decembre 1945),” Protectorat Tunisie, Cabinet Technique, Reconstruction-Urbanisme Rapports (Avril 1945-Octobre 1947), Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN), 2MI/1413-414. “Ainsi que je vous l’avais indiqué le 6 Décembre à la suite de l’inspection effectuée le 5 Décembre, à Bizerte, il est indispensable de modifier l’organisation et la composition du Commissariat à l’Urbanisme en vue de la mettre à même de réaliser effectivement, à la cadence voulue et dans un style architectural adapté à la Tunisie la reconstruction des villes endommagées par la guerre. Je vous prie en conséquence de vouloir bien étudier la réorganisation des services du Commissariat et me proposer le plus tôt possible les modifications utiles. Par ailleurs, j’estime qu’en raison des réalisations insuffisantes du Service de l’architecture et de l’urbanisme, il n’y a pas lieu de renouveler le contrat de
These squabbles by men in positions of colonial power had very real consequences on lay Tunisians. By that point, the primary dilemma was reduced to finances, and the métropole sought to defray the expenditures of reconstruction by a stark eighty percent. Much of what was subsequently executed by way of reconstruction happened through privatization. One government report stated that, to the man of the street, the word “Reconstruction” bears no value for the common good, and instead is synonymous with “the building of homes and shops for private use.” Far from being an egalitarian enterprise, reconstruction gained the reputation of a pursuit for elitist, and ostensibly white, “needs.” Not only did racializing ethnocentrist readings of indigenous architecture play into policies for housing and urban development, but these policies fed into already fraught class tensions too (e.g. Italian masons being chosen for reconstruction).
jobs over Tunisian masons; Tunisian workers being pushed to the countryside, despite migration flows to the city, etc.). The economic dimensions of this Reconstruction—with a capital ‘R’—resulted in widespread socio-political and spatial repercussions for the whole of the country, and gave birth to a new set of grievances that would feed the desire for all forms of autonomy.213

Nearly a decade after Bernard Zehrfuss and his team assumed their roles in reconstruction, the same problems of style and typology persisted in the French colonial government’s perceptions of future directions for Tunisian architectural practice. Gérard Blachère, the Tunisian Commissioner for Reconstruction and Housing laid out his critique of both local construction materials (e.g. dried earthen bricks, thatched roofs, lime whitewash) and the implementation of exported building techniques in a dossier from 1954: “This anarchic construction is none other than the Moslem traditional building; this method is used for all 'medinas' especially the outer quarters of the Tunis medina...yet, neither tropical constructions nor constructions erected according to the European method are suitable in Tunisia.” 214 Such a statement speaks to uncertainties that endured regarding future modes of building in Tunisia. Blachère's comments more broadly reflect the kinds of formal ambivalence of modernist architectural discourse that developed in the Tunisian protectorate, situated somewhere between a begrudging surrendering to the typologies of ‘anarchic construction’ and an admittance to the incompatibility (and failures) of transplanted European building strategies. This type of ambivalence is directly at odds with the optimism brought about by the social welfare policies of the postwar economic boom, the consumerism and production of which offered people prospects

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213 Ibid. “Nos Territoires de l’Afrique du Nord souhaitent de la part des pouvoirs centraux, politiques et administratifs, un concours efficace, une attention au moins égale à celle dont bénéficient les métropolitains. L’essor économique—agricol, industriel et commercial—des trois Territoires en serait grandement facilité. Ces doléances s’appliquent tout particulièrement à la Reconstruction, problème d’ailleurs intégré dans celui plus général des Utilités immobilières, dont le développement domine l’expansion économique, aussi bien pour le logement que pour les locaux industriels et commerciaux.”

214 Gérard Blachère, “Reconstruction and Housing,”168.
for upward social mobility. Indeed, the utopian, forward-looking rhetoric exuded in architectural periodicals of the era, such as *L’Architecture d’aujourd’hui* and *Les Chantiers nord-africains*, journals lauded the French architectural culture executed and exported overseas.

As this chapter sought to demonstrate, the tensions of regionalist and modernist dialectics were architecturally articulated in the postwar building program of Tunisia—between imitation and invention, cultural continuity and deviation. Running counter to mainstream modernism’s obsession with production and technology, the postwar architectural projects of Tunisia veered toward an almost phenomenological sensitivity to the contextual, atmospheric specificities of light, landscape, and texture. Zehrfuss, Marmey and their team of architects engaged with Tunisian vernacular forms and produced a repertoire of public buildings that was self-consciously mindful of the cultural context at hand. Ultimately, reconstruction was a piecemeal and fragmentary endeavor. And yet, however short-lived their period of production in Tunisia, Zehrfuss and Marmey would carry a lifelong preoccupation with questions of spatial and contextual identity; and indeed, their mark would be studied by future Tunisian architects²¹⁶ and revered by the country’s postcolonial heritage institutions (the Association de Sauvegarde de la Médina). While the team’s projects exhibit their grappling with concerns of a fractured, pluralist, cultural identity, as architects of the state they nevertheless negotiated with the socio-political demands and professional obligations of consolidating and cohering the grip of the French métropole on its quickly seceding, self-determining protectorate.

CHAPTER TWO
Gridding the Gourbiville:
CIAM, Primitivism, and the New Nation’s Quest for Dignified Dwelling

Introduction

The modest outlook that can be felt by way of instinctive empathy for the needs of remote peoples and cultures, as well as in Le Corbusier’s Capitol of the newly founded city of Chandigarh in India, can be expressed also in the “grilles” of a “Bidonville” in the middle of Algiers. “Bidonvilles” are those districts born of jerry cans and irregularly incurred waste. Such a “bidonville” is examined by P.A. Emery and his friends, to find out what can be learned from these randomly scattered, self-made sheets of metal and wooden huts. It was found that the people who flocked from the Sahara, the Atlas, from Morocco and Tunis for the sake of acquiring bread to Algiers, also in these ‘slums’ understood it as the simplest means of carrying out their lifestyle habits according to their environment… A hut in Cameroon has more aesthetic dignity than most prefabricated houses. Thus we observe in the cultural life of the West, a significant decrease in the purely rationalistic attitude, and on the other hand, the desire of primitive peoples to appropriate our methods of production.—Sigfried Giedion

Inciting his reader’s empathy and pity in a 1953 newspaper editorial on “Habitat: Universalism and Regionalism,” from the Zürcher Zeitung, Sigfried Giedion (1888-1968), the Swiss art and architectural historian and Secretary-General for the Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne (CIAM), calls attention to the questions of how architecture can conform to the environmental and cultural norms of a region (Figure 2.1). With the dire living conditions of both rural and urban areas scattered across the Maghreb, the caption of his editorial

speaks to the urgency of the broader global problematic of “habitat,” that also happened to be the theme of CIAM’s 9th International Congress which convened at the École des Arts et Métiers in Aix-en-Provence, France, from July 19-21, 1953. From the Atlas Mountains in Morocco, to other so-called “remote” and far-off villages nestled in the Sahara, stretching between Algiers and Tunis, people make do with the realities and material constraints of their environment. Singling out the *bidonville*, or ‘tin-can’ towns constructed mostly from metal refuse, Giedion underscores the grim quality of life quite prevalent throughout the entirety of postwar North Africa, but he also cites the work of architect Pierre-André Emery (1903-1982) and his team, consisting of Jean de Maisonseul, Louis Miquel, Jean-Pierre Faure, and Roland Simounet. CIAM-Alger, a branch of the central CIAM leadership, collectively sought to understand the “the problem [of human habitation]…in its total reality: its forms, its multiple expressions, and its life.”²¹⁹ The “grilles” to which he refers are the grids—initially developed by Le Corbusier in 1946²²⁰ and then later refined by the ASCORAL group²²¹ in 1947 for CIAM’s 7th Congress in Bergamo, Italy, in 1949—that serve as an analytical, synthetic method for comparing projects of

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²¹⁸ “Modern Architects Hold First Postwar Congress,” *Architectural Forum* 87 (November 1947): 65. “When the International Congress of Modern Architecture assembled in Bridgewater, a sleepy little English riverport, it could count among the delegates men in whose hands lay a major part of the rebuilding of Europe. These men had all been the architectural revolutionaries of the Twenties. Now they had stepped forward to official positions in the reconstruction program of a dozen countries…The seven-day Congress heard reports from 18 nations, among which were new members from India, Cuba.”


²²¹ Sigfried Giedion, *A Decade of Contemporary Architecture* (Zurich: Editions Girsberger, 1954), 32, 35. “The Bridgewater Congress authorised the French Group of ASCORAL to develop this line of thought and at the end of the same year (December 29th, 1947) ASCORAL together with the English Group of MARS, produced a communiqué on the CIAM GRID, as a method for setting fort the development of the Athens Charter…When therefore Le Corbusier put forward the ASCORAL GRID as a method of presenting the ‘eventail des problèmes’ (an unfolding fan of problems) we decided that this was a tool that could be employed to illustrate these essential points of any problem, with the minimum of explanation. The ASCORAL GRID would leave each Group the greatest liberty to present whatever seemed its most vital and interesting aspect of planning and civic design, and thus an adoption of this GRID would enable CIAM to be informed of the most urgent problems in each country, presented in a readily comprehensible and comparative manner.”
varying regions (Figure 2.3). The matrices of these grids were not merely fragmented representations of realities—compiled through plans, renderings, photographs, newspaper clippings—but they were the apparatus through which the re-mapping of cities could be imagined and eventually take effect. Finding universal solutions to accommodate the future needs of cities was the chief purpose of the grid. The very modes of comparison that the tool of the grid permits, in turn enable the universalizing of an exotic reading of cities and types of dwelling—from South Asia to North Africa to West Africa. Out of the forty grids presented in CIAM 9, many were solely proposed for non-Western countries with accelerated rates of migration—Algeria, Morocco, India, Cameroon, and Jamaica. Packaging and modularizing their reaffirmed spirit of ‘contemporary consciousness’ on a universal scale would prove to be a more difficult task.

Moreover, CIAM’s postwar architectural discourse—seldom recognized as being part and parcel of a formative colonial legacy—played a distinctive role in reframing new aesthetic

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222 Pedret, “CIAM and the Emergence of Team 10 Thinking, 1945-1959,” 72. “The grid was touted as a ‘thinking tool during inception,’ as a check list of relevant considerations, as a method of presenting and transmitting information in a graphic manner, as a time saver. As a method of presentation, therefore, it dictated the way one thought about the city. In its usefulness as a tool for implementing the Charter of Athens, however, it forced a particular structure of thinking about the city because it required planners to organize the city along analytical lines…They conceived of it as being the logical outcome from the Charter of Athens that had provided CIAM with the principles for modern urbanism: the grid was to provide the tool for its realization.” Pedret notes there was some discord among CIAM members who were concerned that the grid overly schematized cities, and that the grid should not be classified solely according to function, but also with regard to regional scales like the quarter or sector.

223 Ibid., 130, footnote 14. “Projects from these countries were ‘Volta River, Gold Coast’ by Glower and Garrett; ‘Bidonville Mahieddine’ by CIAM-Alger (presented by Emery); ‘Nomad Housing’ by CIAM-Alger/Oran (presented by Mauri); ‘L’Habitat au Cameroun’ by CIAM France (presented by representatives of the École des Beaux-Arts); ‘L’Habitat marocain ou l’Habitat pour le plus grande nombre au Maroc’ by Bodiansky, Candilis, Kennedy, Piot, Woods, Ecochard, Godefroy (presented by Ecochard and Candilis); India, ‘Study of Low Cost Housing [Chandigarh]’ by N.S. Lhamba; Jamaica, ‘Approach for a Development Plan for Jamaica,’ by John Holness.”

224 Giedion, A Decade of Contemporary Architecture, “Reaffirmations of the Aims of CIAM: Bridgwater, 1947,” 22-23. “We, the CIAM architects from many countries, in Europe, America, Asia and Africa, have met at Bridgwater after an interval of ten years. These have been years of struggle and separation during which, as a consequence of the threat of Fascist domination, political, and economic and social questions have taken on a new significance for everyone. At the same time technical progress has been accelerated by intensive scientific research and the needs of war production. The technique of planning has also moved forward as a result of the experience some countries have gained in social organization. We are faced with an enormous task in rebuilding the territories devastated by the war as well as in raising the standard of life in undeveloped countries where great changes are now taking place....”
concepts for the built environment that circulated between colonies and métropoles. What remains unexplored in the scholarship on CIAM is its fraught relationship to the realities of colonialism and how such discourses of primitivism often undergirded many modernist planning schemes in the Maghreb. We need to understand CIAM’s interventions as an acknowledgement of high modernism’s colonial interventions and failures, but in their practices the group nevertheless displaced its anxieties onto the abstract figure of the primitive. Modernists of the European avant-garde were drawn to the plain, whitewashed cubic forms of North African architecture inasmuch as they were attracted to, for example, the strengths of African sculpture. A later offshoot of CIAM, Team X, would praise the geometry in domestic architecture of places as disparate as Mali, Yemen, Turkey, and the Greek Islands. Though Timothy Mitchell reminds us that the staging of the modern requires the non-modern, I want to complicate the implicit binaries therein.

This chapter will historicize the political and policy implications of this seemingly innocuous term, “habitat,” against the backdrop of this shifting postwar milieu on both sides of the Mediterranean. As Emery himself noted in 1971, “only an exhaustive analysis of CIAM’s various activities, its declarations, its publications…can allow us to form a clear opinion of its influence on architecture and town planning.”

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225 Gwendolyn Wright, “Building Global Modernisms,” Grey Room no. 7 (Spring 2002): 124-134; 125. “We usually forget that modernism came into being in a world framed by colonialism, where visions for improvement and innovation overlapped with and often caused brutal destruction. In the colonial world as elsewhere, modernism was, and remains, at once a universal ambition, a transnational operation, and myriad local variations.”


much of this dense archival material from the CIAM Archives at the Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture (GTA) at the Swiss Federal Polytechnic (ETH) in Zürich. By examining the dossier on the 1953 CIAM meeting on Habitat, we might arrive at an understanding of how notions of the primitive and perhaps more specifically, the évolué, permeated housing discourses in both the French and Tunisian contexts.

While the rhetoric remained just as utopian as ever, this period, from 1949 to about 1960 marks a stark shift in attitudes, from those that privileged the universalizing of functionalism and the so-called International Style\textsuperscript{231} to those that emphasized a regionalism defined by the contexts of climate, and ethnic and racial difference. At the meeting in Bergamo and thereon, many modernist architects and planners pushed to challenge a Le Corbusian approach to town planning, instead backing a vision of city development that was culturally and historically sensitive to matters of place. Though the International Style and its attendant modernist architectural culture prevailed in parts of the globe, the mass-produced, one-size-fits-all machine dwellings\textsuperscript{232} were never totally international.\textsuperscript{233} Modernist visions still sought to impose the serial block as a means to deal with uncontrollable rural-to-urban migration, but the problems of place—and race—were ever recurrent.

Yet, what is it, in Giedion’s view, that links these vastly disparate geographies? It is the myth of the primitive that not only stands in to connect these places but actually forwards the evolution-driven and racializing threads in regionalist discourses on ‘habitat’ and ‘habitation’ as

\textsuperscript{231} Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, The International Style (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1995 [1932]), 50-51. “In part the principles of the international style were from the first voiced in the manifestoes which were the order of the day…This new conception, that building is science and not art, developed as an exaggeration of the idea of functionalism…The doctrine of contemporary anti-aesthetic functionalists is much more stringent. Its basis is economic rather than ethical or archaeological. Leading European critics, particularly Sigfried Giedion, claim with some justice that architecture has such immense practical problems to deal with in the modern world that aesthetic questions must take a secondary place in architectural criticism.”

\textsuperscript{232} This is Le Corbusier’s idea for a house as a “machine for dwelling.” Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture (New York: Dover Publications, 1986 [1927]).

\textsuperscript{233} Urban, Tower and Slab: Histories of Global Mass Housing, 2.
well. In his editorial essay, Giedion recalls Le Corbusier’s multi-sector, administrative capitol complex of Chandigarh in the Punjab, lumping the poverty-stricken context of India with that of wholly different North and West Africa. Giedion admires CIAM-Alger’s anthropological approach to inquiring on the vernacular, it seems, in part, because of its potential to derive some notion of how dignity can be restored to rapidly urbanizing, but not yet fully industrialized countries. His remark concerning a “hut in Cameroon” not only captures an important dialectic in postwar modernist construction between materiality and dignity, but it also reflects a historical moment marked by a pivotal shift in attitudes away from the prominence of the machine aesthetic and towards so-called “primitive” building modes and typologies.234 What this suggests too is a self-reflexive moment for Modernism, with a capital ‘M,’ looking inward onto itself, finding that its modular frames, standardized iron posts, and cold characterless cement are in fact, devoid of dignity.

Without resorting to cultural or moral relativism, how can dignity be restored, if it is presumed to be lost? How can dignity be restored to modern dwelling, and secondly, how can this recovery happen in places where the social, political, and economic risks of undignified dwelling could pose serious repercussions and run the ultimate risk of failure? For Le Corbusier, the standardization of building and methods of prefabrication was a revolution in and of itself, but he boldly forewarned the palpable prospects of upheaval and socio-political revolution, if architecture served only the few and not the many.235 For other staunch modernists quelling the

234 Jonathan Hale, “Edited out of contemporary theoretical discourse yet central to the way we think about architecture: Primitive,” Architecture Review Quarterly Report vol. 8, no. 1 (2004): 9-12; 9-10. “…so-called ‘primitive architecture’ has often been referred to as providing a kind of prelapsarian, purified form of life, free of the supposedly contaminating influences of contemporary society. The fact that the architecture of a mythical past is often illustrated by examples taken from a less-than-mythical present-day elsewhere—a south-sea island, African village or French fisherman’s shack—only highlights the problematic nature of these attempts to find support for contemporary radicalism within a conservative tradition.”

ubiquitous ‘crise du logement,’ or housing crisis, was the means and the ends to stave off revolutionary fervor and transform society through the built environment. In this manner the politics of labor and class were equally bound up with colonial spatial divisions; as Paul Sebag argues, the insufficient housing for laborers in countryside farms or mining villages actively contributed to the overcrowding and slum proliferation in the Tunis medina. With anticolonial movements gaining popular momentum in these urban nodes across the Maghreb, and the specter of decolonization becoming ever more real, the restoration of dignified dwelling for the masses posed tremendous consequences for the political mobilization of rapidly urbanizing, but increasingly discontent North African peoples.

Let us not be entirely seduced by Giedion’s outward sympathy with so-called ‘primitive’ architecture. This curiosity with the ‘primitive’ is a prevailing and recurrent discourse, with a long history as an origin myth within the architectural historiography. Architects and architectural historians have deployed in their writings the descriptor of ‘primitive’ all too easily,
as architectural historian Adrian Forty has recently acknowledged.\(^{239}\) Giedion’s essay gestures at a much larger, complicated network of multidirectional flows of desire and admiration that is so fundamental to both the conditions of colonialism and modernity. Primitivism, in the sense of Giedion’s usage, can be characterized as an affinity for peoples thought to be living a simpler existence than those in the West.\(^{240}\) But if we scrape away at the superficial semantics, we find an encoded, fraught trace of Fanonian dialectics,\(^{241}\) whereby through the mechanisms of racism inculcated in the colonial experience, the colonized emulates their oppressors and the colonizer desires the colonized subject. In his *Space, Time, and Architecture* (1941), Giedion poses his space-time conception as a means to unify and fulfill the emotional and spiritual needs of humanity through spatial sensitivity (which depends on place) and consciousness of the contemporary moment, or zeitgeist.\(^{242}\) The sentiments he expresses, therefore, demonstrate modern architecture’s uncomfortable but nonetheless conflicted linkages to the histories of the non-West, which for him, do not bear witness to the passing of time. For Giedion, the “hut in Cameroon” retains its dignity precisely because of its primitivist timelessness. In a paradoxical way, modernism’s futuristic obsession with time recedes into the backdrop, while the presentist allure of place and context instead take center stage, becoming the new point of emphasis.

Only recently have the annals of architectural history confronted this unsettling underbelly of modernism—the blatant segregation, extraction, manipulation, and destruction of

\(^{239}\) Hale, “Edited out of contemporary theoretical discourse yet central to the way we think about architecture: Primitive,” 9. Hale states that in opening a conference on the “Primitive” in architecture, Adrian Forty demonstrated “the apparent comfort and casualness with which the term is deployed in architecture, in contrast to the deep unease which seems to accompany its use in just about every other academic discipline…this continued currency has much to do with the historiography of architecture as the term has, since the late eighteenth century, gradually embedded itself in the fabric of architectural discourse as part of its own creation myth.”
\(^{241}\) Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*.
space—the spatial and territorial burdens which were brought to bear on indigenous peoples. Walter Mignolo best describes these phenomena as constituting the “darker side of modernity.” What can be said about an architectural organization that, in its transcribed meeting minutes, publications, and pamphlets, rarely acknowledges the spatial conditions and political infrastructure of colonization? Imperial inscriptions of power and knowledge define the preconditions for primitivism itself. Furthermore, if modernity fundamentally encompasses the non-modern, and vice versa, then critical debates about modernity must historicize and complicate these reductive binaries. What Giedion’s epigraph reveals to us is more than just simply a romanticized primitivism and desire to appropriate the formal characteristics of non-Western modes of building. His statements reflect the ultimate irony of this architectural discourse: that, at the height of modernism’s fixity on context and place, some of the most seismic demographic dislocations and migrations were well underway in the Global South.

1953-1954

In the Maghreb, the year 1953 is noteworthy on several historical accounts: it is just one year before the outbreak of the eight-year Algerian War of Independence in 1954, and just three years before both Tunisia and Morocco actually gained political independence from France in 1956. As the last chapter demonstrated, Tunisia in particular had been ravaged by the weight of wartime destruction, and in May 1945, the French air raid over Setif, Algeria, massacred thousands of Algerians, as a brutal punishment by the French for Muslim riots against the

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capture and deportation of the nationalist leader, Messali Hadj. In 1952, in Morocco, protests in the bidonvilles on the fringe of Casablanca were violently suppressed. And on December 4, 1952, the leader of the trade union federation U.G.T.T., Ferhat Hached, was murdered, escalating the already brewing tensions between the French administration and the mobilizing nationalist Neo-Destour movement.

Within the modern movement in architecture, the year 1953, and the 9th CIAM meeting on ‘Habitat’ held that year, has been portrayed in the scholarly literature as one in which a visible ideological rift and generational shift occurs among architects of a modernist persuasion. Those born in the 1880s, considered peers of Le Corbusier, defined their architectural practice and visions for the future differently than those born in the 1920s. Moreover, this meeting holds great significance as the last to be attended by Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius. It was one of the most widely attended, with over five hundred members present hailing from thirty-one

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247 My colleague and fellow urban historian, Dr. Nora Lafi, recounted to me in Rabat, the horrors that her grandmother faced in Setif as the raid happened.

248 Georges Candilis, Bâtir la Vie: Un architecte témoin de son temps (Gollion: Infolio, 2012), 193. “Une période troublée, prélude à l’indépendance, avait commencé à assombrir le Maroc. Les Européens, qui n’étaient plus en sécurité, ne se risquaient pas hors de leur quartier. Ils s’armaient…Toutes les activités étaient pratiquement interrompues, et il n’y avait plus de travail dans le bâtiment.” See also Marion von Osten, “Architecture Without Architects—Another Anarchist Approach,” E-Flux Journal, No. 6 (May 2009). See also Charles William Olson, “Decolonization in French Politics (1950-1956): Indo-China, Tunisia, Morocco” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Northern Illinois University, 1966). “After Ferhat Hached’s murder, the French newspapers denounced the crime. France-Tireur said the crime was the result of the senseless policy followed in Tunisia by Robert Schuman and Jean de Hauteclouque: the arrest of Tunisian ministers, ultimatums to the bey, intimidations and threats. Combat was worried about the consequences. Ce Matin-le-Pays wrote that the bloody events in Tunisia were not the activities of ‘isolated and irresponsible elements,’ but that France was facing a ‘well-orchestrated conspiracy with international ramifications.’ Le Figaro expressed similar views…1952 was, indeed, a critical year for both France and Tunisia, and France did not emerge from the tribulations with an untarnished image…the government engaged in devious methods to obtain the bey’s signature to two decrees, treating the ruler not like a partner of France but as a character from some opetta.”


250 Suzanne Frank, “John Voelcker: Redefining His Place in Team 10 and Post-War British Architectural Culture,” ARQ: Architectural Research Quarterly, vol. 16, no. 1 (2012): 59-73; 60. “…John Voelcker realised that the old guard of CIAM were not sympathetic to what he regarded as the more humane utterances of younger aspirants like Jacob Bakema and Aldo Van Eyck.”
countries. Indeed, because CIAM had reached its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1953, it was stated in the meeting minutes that leadership was to be redirected by the younger members. This younger generation of modernist architects and theorists would produce publications ranging from Aldo van Eyck’s writings on the Dogon in Mali, to Bernard Rudofsky’s renowned Museum of Modern Art exhibition, *Architecture Without Architects* (1964). Although Giedion, Gropius and Le Corbusier fancied themselves apolitical technicians, it would be erroneous to deny the centrally political act of designing future social order.

Thus, the 1950s in general bear witness to not only the unraveling of empire, but also to an obsession in how to control and retain empire and ultimately learn from it. And therein marks the shift in attitudes of this North-South network of cultural exchange, a remarkable disruption that necessitated that the aesthetic and functionalist discourses of modernism be reevaluated.

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251 Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960*, 228. Pedret, “CIAM and the Emergence of Team 10 Thinking, 1945-1959,” 130. “CIAM 9 was also characterized by a degree of internationalism unknown to previous CIAM congresses, which added to the awareness of new realities among the members of this hitherto Western-European-based organization. New member groups attending included, in addition to Ireland, Finland, and Portugal still listed as groups in formation, Canada (under the auspices of former MARS member Welles Coates), Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, India, and Israel.”


254 In a letter to Le Corbusier, September 4, 1933, Giedion describes their strictly technical role and expertise. GTA Archives, Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH)-Zürich, Giedion Folder: “Question of principle=Technicians or politicians? Two solutions: 1. The Congress is technicians. We explain that we want to resolve problems on a technical basis (as we have). 2. The Congress is politicians, like the ‘Leva Fronta’ in Prague…One must profess onself clearly against capitalism. Consequences: 1. Technicians: the only possibility to have an international influence at the moment. But when true social development becomes really effective we will be turned out instantly, without a doubt. 2. Politicians: Impossible for us to have an influence without anyone important at the moment. Only means to have influence in a socialist situation.”

255 Avermaete, “CIAM, Team X, and the Rediscovery of African Settlements: Between Dogon and Bidonville,” 253. “In these grids there was no reference to pure forms, appealing aesthetics, and rich architectural traditions, but rather to the messy everyday urban environment—the bidonville—that emerges from poverty and necessity. Presenting the ordinary and often despised reality of the bidonville as if it were a valuable urban environment was perceived by modern masters such as Le Corbusier and Gropius as the crossing of an important boundary. Indeed, some of the old guard CIAM architects perceived this presentation as a negative deviation from CIAM’s original goal that encompassed the delineation of radically modern and universal design solutions.”
Predictions of these shifting, and increasingly urbanizing population flows concerned colonial demographers and planners since the early twentieth century, but in the Maghreb, the question of how to resettle formerly rural or pastoral peoples gained urgency. How could notions of locality in habitats—or the everyday patterns of vernacular dwelling and living—infect the built environment and enforce modern habitudes or lifestyles?

Though many members outwardly demonstrated leftist tendencies, CIAM’s relationship to the complex political dynamics of its day is by no means straightforward. As Eric Mumford and Annie Pedret have noted in their thorough studies of CIAM, one should be careful not to overgeneralize the group’s political commitments. Nevertheless, it is a fruitful venture to inquire into the complex relationships between the institutions of modernism, and their increasing postwar desire for an architecture that was more attuned to nature, enabling a return to simplicity and purity. But how this Mediterranean vernacular intersects with the subtexts of primitivism—and by extension racial divisions endemic to colonial and imperial rule—is embedded in the discourses on habitation.

CIAM’s widespread discursive influence within this postwar ethos should not be underestimated. Although Tunisia did not have a CIAM chapter or delegation, like CIAM-Alger or ATBAT-Afrique, Bernard Zehrfuss—the Chief Architect leading the country’s reconstruction efforts—was a member of CIAM (Figure 2.4). In this photograph, Zehrfuss is pictured with fellow modernists, Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, and Marcel Breuer, in Paris, planning the UNESCO headquarters in 1952.

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258 Von Osten, “Architecture Without Architects—Another Anarchist Approach.” “In essence, Modern city planning has always been bound to colonialism and imperialism—many large-scale technical developments were even tested and realized on colonial ground. Colonial modernity not only created global political and economic structures, pressing for the adoption of the nation state and capitalist forms of production, accompanied by oppression, exploitation, and the systematization of racial divisions…”
Tunisia occupies an interesting and otherwise unexplored position in this entangled narrative of modernism in the Maghreb, and what happens there architecturally is not unconnected to phenomena occurring in Algeria and Morocco; while distinct in their socio-economic circumstances, these countries share many similarities in terms of migratory and settlement patterns. President Habib Bourguiba’s platform strove to implement what he considered to be ‘progressive’ modifications to the new nation’s building and construction program. Wrestling with the quasi-failures of Zehrfuss’s postwar bureaucratic obstacles and ultimate underperformance, Bourguiba’s outlook on housing projects aligned with Giedion’s remarks, to appropriate and actualize European “methods of production.” Alongside a rampant and almost militant operation of dégourbification—razing the earthen gourbi ramshackle shelters of rural migrants built on the outskirts of Tunisian cities—the chief aspiration of Bourguiba’s new administration remained increasing the number of social housing complexes. But in the wake of independence, the crise du logement was accompanied by a crise économique. Physical changes to the built environment became even more scarce, due to the economic hardships facing the new nation, among them the proletarianization of the migrant peasants, coupled with unemployment, not to mention the nation’s residual fiscal dependence on France. The post-

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259 Miossec, “La politique d’habitat en Tunisie depuis l’Indépendance,” 20-21. “Le renforcement des classes transitionnelles, moyennes et aisées, principalement en ville a eu pour conséquence une forte poussée de villas et plus du tiers des logements citadins est constitué de logements de type moderne (villas et appartements). Les opérations de dégourbification, de réhabilitation visant à la résorption de l’habitat insalubre et rudimentaire ont été efficaces puisque ce type d’habitations ‘chute.’ […] Progrès incontestable mais ce type de logement (qui recouvre une grande diversité de formes: gourbi, maamera et autre abri en pisé; kib et autre abri en branchage; tente; baraque; ghorfa de type Matmata; logements dans un local non destiné à l’habitation) “abrite” encore aujourd’hui plus de 100,000 ménages soit près d’un Tunisien sur dix.”

independence exodus meant that foreigners from the country took their money with them; this too went hand in hand with divestment from the Tunisian economic system.\textsuperscript{262}

What this historical juncture demonstrates is the muddled interface and interplay of messy\textsuperscript{263} modernities: a modernist vision of progress deployed in the Protectorate that was later appropriated in Tunisia’s nascent nationalist ideology—\textit{dégourification} providing the clean canvas for modernist social housing and apartment buildings, to be constructed as a \textit{tabula rasa}. What is most disturbing in this Darwinian framework, that also penetrates deeply in the discourses of CIAM-Alger and ATBAT-Afrique, is the slippage between a regional vernacular, on the one hand, and the spatial conditions and agricultural limitations and displacements of indigenous peoples set up by colonization which in turn led to the proliferation of \textit{gourbis} and \textit{bidonvilles}. Yet, in both Protectorate and Bourguibist Tunisia, the goal remains the same: to transform the urbanized countryman into an \textit{évolué}, an individual who has “evolved” from his or her naturally “backward” state. In so many ways this echoes prevalent anxieties in France, not just about the postwar housing crisis that was happening back in the métropole, but about what cleanliness for the \textit{home}, and by extension, the nation, was to symbolize.

“Architecture for the Greatest Number”:

\textsuperscript{261} Ibid., 38. “La crise économique survenue au lendemain de l’indépendance résultait de plusieurs facteurs: la fuite des capitaux du fait de l’appartenance de la Tunisie à la zone franche; le refus des milieux d’affaires locaux en dépit des incitations fiscales d’assurer leur fonction dans le processus d’accumulation; la détention par la bourgeoisie coloniale et des monopoles français d’une partie importante de l’appareil de production. La conjuration des causes liées à la dépendance financière et économique de la Tunisie par rapport à la France et des causes internes nécessitèrent l’intervention de l’Etat et le choix à partir de 1960 d’un nouveau modèle de développement.”


\textsuperscript{263} Donna V. Jones, “The Prison House of Modernism: Colonial Spaces and the Construction of the Primitive at the 1931 Paris Colonial Exposition,” \textit{Modernism/Modernity}, vol. 14, no.1 (January 2007): 55-69; 63. I am very hesitant to use the term mimesis, because of its associations with mimicry. One has to be cautious as it belies agency.
The most urgent problem next to food and health is the provision of dwelling.

The dwelling is the unit of habitation whether it be for single persons old or young, married couples old and young, families with children, etc…

Technically we are to be asked to build millions of dwellings.

It must be stressed that this is not a numerical problem alone.

The multiplication of dwellings is limited by several conditions—sociological, economical, geographical, political and plastic.

Any architectural or town planning proposals which ignore these conditions and do not give MAN HIS IDENTITY fail to meet the requirements of LIFE.

This identity is to be found in the dwelling itself—in the residential unit—in the community unit—in the town and in the region—in other words in all stages of multiplication. 264

Concluding its 9th Congress in Aix-en-Provence (Figure 2.5), the subcommittee affirmed the minimum requirement for any modern dwelling, that it must reflect the identity of man. The Congress had been convened on the grounds that dwelling itself—habitation—required a wholly new set of directing architectural principles or structure of living. While certain members, like Pierre-André Emery, stressed the importance of the right to dwelling (droit à l’habitation), others, such as the British offshoot, the MARS group emphasized the need to recreate the immediate surroundings of the dwelling itself, putting forth the notion that a “primitive African or Asian society” will require a different one from a “more materially advanced society.” 265

Defining what exactly ‘habitat’ would mean for new theorizations and actualizations of future


urban design, remained murky, but for many, habitat manifested itself in traditional settlements in non-Western locations and cultures.  

Intended as a sequel companion to the urban functionalist principles (e.g. dwelling, work, recreation, transportation) outlined in Le Corbusier’s *La Charte d’Athènes* (1943), the *Charte de l’Habitat* (Charter for Habitat) treated the urban form as a life-sustaining and life-giving organism or body. For its creators, CIAM’s proposed *Charte de l’Habitat* conceived of the habitat as “…a cell of a socially organized body…the cell without the body loses all significance.” The cellular home, thus, operates to support and fulfill the requirements of the larger social body.

Formulated at a 1952 meeting in Sigtuna, Sweden, Le Corbusier and Sert affirmed a primary distinction between the *Athens Charter* and the proposed *Charte de l’Habitat*, with the latter’s recourse to biological and evolutionary terminology. Elisa Dainese has argued that this revised concept of habitat generated new temporal and spatial aspects, pertaining to the potentials for transformation and adaptation within the framework of the cell and the holistic social body. Challenging the machinist fixations of early CIAM thinking, a revitalized design for new cities and their residential neighborhoods could only be found in the cellular model, which allows for permeability that the strict zoning of functionalism did not. An archival report

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266 Pedret, “CIAM and the Emergence of Team 10 Thinking, 1945-1959,” 108-109. “Tyrwhitt argued that in English ‘habitation’ is associated with the more limited sense of ‘dwelling’ as a house or the place where one lives and suggested that they use the term ‘habitat’ in English documents. The Swedish members also found the French word logis ‘too limited,’ but ASCORAL member Wogensky preferred it to habitat, because it did not bring with it theories from sociology, ‘human geography,’ and political economy that were attached to the other term. He argued that ‘habitation’ was closer in meaning to logis, or dwelling…but suggested that it also includes the individual and the collective, and all the extensions of dwelling: commercial, sanitary, educational, social and administrative services….The concept of habitat emerged as a response to the contemporary problem of the mass or ‘great number.’ According to the Bâtir group there seemed to be a consensus that the central issue was how best to house whole populations, especially the great numbers of rural people around the world who, because of rapid industrialization, had migrated to cities to settle in slums or build shantytowns.”


on the “Synthesis of Major Arts—The Role of Aesthetics in the Habitat,” from the CIAM 9 meeting, notes that the living cell “contains the embryonic state of all life functions, and these functions are developed and expanded by forming the community social grouping.” Biological metaphors set out to expand on material needs, but it was clear that a shift in thinking about architecture’s societal and cultural implications lay on the horizon with new CIAM members, and that the rhythms of migration, the translocations of identity, and the possibilities for a humane neighborliness would have to be reckoned with in new planning models.

Le sens plastique—or sense of plasticity—marks a drastic change in this rhetoric, to effectively humanize the urban crises confronting modern cities. Michel Écochard (1905-1985), the archaeologist later turned urban planner in French mandate Syria and Lebanon, wrote a manifesto-like statement entitled “Habitat for the Greatest Number: the Problem as it Stands in Relation to the Charte de l’Habitat,” alongside a photograph of an “inhabited pavement in Bombay,” in Contribution à la Charte de l’Habitat: CIAM 9, Aix-en-Provence, 19-25 Juillet 1953 (Figure 2.6). His remarks begin by problematizing the ruralization of the town. With farmers and shepherds fleeing the remains of a drought-stricken countryside, their inability to “progressively assimilate,” threatens the equilibrium of the town, Écochard states, through the

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269. “Synthèse des Arts Majeurs—Rôle de l’Esthétique dans l’Habitat,” GTA Archives, Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH)-Zürich, CIAM IX folder. “Nous ne discutons pas le rôle de la peinture et de la sculpture dans l’habitat mais nous nous occupons de susciter chez l’architecte et l’urbaniste le sens plastique de la ville contemporaine que nous essayons de dégager suivant les tendances essentielles retenues après étude de ces grilles. Avant toute chose il sera indispensable pour l’équilibre de l’homme de lui donner le sentiment que tout a été conçu pour lui et à sa dimension. Il aura ainsi un sentiment de repos, de confiance et de bien être. Ceci implique la recherche d’un ordre nouveau conditionné par notre époque caractérisée par la série machiniste qui engendre le grand nombre…La recherche de la plastique architecturale devra toujours rester à l’échelle humaine et tout en définissant exactement les éléments fonctionnels saura exprimer ses aspirations et désirs spirituels. La cellule d’habitation contient en état embrionnaire toutes les fonctions de la vie, ces fonctions sont développées et élargies par le groupement social formant la communauté. Chaque quartier constitue une autonomie de vie reliée et intégrée au reste de l’agglomération. Cette nouvelle conception assouplit la notion courante du zoning qui séparait toutes ces fonctions.”

disruptions posed by haphazard outskirts with unsanitary quarters, which will inevitably congest major arteries of transport. “These populations are blind and are carried away by a tidal wave that they are unable to control.” The divisive functionalist boundaries in cities were now deemed injurious to the psyche, even disorienting.

Plasticity, in this revised narrative, now served as the corrective to the stunted urban development in North Africa:

In some countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia) undergoing rapid development, where different degrees of development are difficult to predict in time, a revolutionary urban framework was adopted. This solution...with the whole hierarchy of public and social services, allows with great flexibility by adapting itself to the needs of life, the expression in volume, of the urban evolution.

The evocation here of such a Darwinian evolutionary discourse is not new, especially with respect to the broader Maghreb. As the urban landscapes of Fez, Oran, or Sfax undergo largescale transformation, so too must its people evolve with these spatial permutations. With increased population densities, the need for spaces to be allocated and defined, according to a functionalist model, will be ever more complicated. And in this light, it seems that the strict orthodoxy of functionalism is at direct odds with the flexible attributes of spatial and aesthetic plasticity. How can the realities of mobility and demands for place-ness, or rootedness, be reconciled?

In an interesting turn, the formal discourses of plasticity collide with those teleological preoccupations of time and progress. The unpredictable pace and formations that modernity

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271 Michel Écochard, “Habitat pour le plus grand nombre: position du problème par rapport à la Charte de l’Habitat (Habitat for the Greatest Number: Problem as it stands in its relationship to the Charter),” L’Architecture d’aujourd’hui 48 (July 1953).
272 “Synthèse des Arts Majeurs—Rôle de l’Esthétique dans l’Habitat,” GTA Archives, Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH)-Zürich, CIAM IX folder. “Création de trame évolutive: Dans certains pays (Maroc, Algérie, Tunisie) en cours de développement rapide, où les différents degrés d’évolution sont difficilement prévisibles dans le temps une trame évolutive urbaine a été adoptée. Cette solution, qui va de la plus petite cellule de base fermée sur l’extérieur, au grand Building, avec toute la hiérarchie des services publics et sociaux, permet, avec une grande souplesse, en s’adaptant toujours aux besoins de la vie, d’exprimer en volume l’évolution urbaine.”
takes on, in the colonized domain, requires that new, more plastic, architectural standards be defined. In the frontispiece to a 1954 issue of *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui* on ‘Habitation collective’ (Figure 2.7) which uses the horrifying visual metaphor of a slave ship to broach the subject of overcrowding it comes as no surprise that the plans for collectively housing masses of humanity, and in particular—racialized, bodies of the Other—within that future vision. But the totalized Other is not the only scrutinized figure undergoing an evolutionary change. In the issue’s introductory essay, written by the Greek, Azerbaijan-born Georges Candilis (1913-1995), the author notes that responding to the needs of the *grand nombre* necessitates that architecture itself undergo a changing, evolving frame, and that space be reconfigured with formal plasticity:

*Today, the trame is a new evolving reality. The gridded ground plane, which certainly has its special plastic and spatial expression, bears in itself a future evolutionary wealth. Another trend of the new era: the search of harmonic relations between the built volumes and open spaces; the search for SPACE in the ground plane becomes, more and more, for architects, the primordial disquiet and the collaboration between it and the artists (painters, sculptors, colorists) appears indispensable…*  

These ideas concerning the harmonious pairing of the built form and the open space enveloped by constructions, are not at all novel, and neither is the call for an artistically integrated approach to architectural design. Jean Alazard, a Professor of the Faculty of Arts in Algiers and Director of the city’s Musée National des Beaux-Arts, references the strong links between painting and architecture, citing Auguste Perret’s avowal that architects and painters must work collaboratively.  

In a push to revolutionize the discipline of architecture, the frame functioned...
as a new theoretical concept that would conjoin spatial and aesthetic concerns. And if the frame
could somehow jive with the latent emotive expressions of the environment, then habitation
might be fully actualized.

On a fundamental level, however, CIAM 9 confronted not only the basic tenets of
functionalism, but also the problem of dwelling that paralleled a surge of inquiries into the
redefined, but equally unsettled, role of the architect. The issues wrought by the ‘great number’
posed major challenges to the stipulations of the Chartre d’Athènes. Here, we can see a schema
drawn in the CIAM 9 meeting, linking the figures architect and engineer, navigating the vagaries
of ‘spiritual factors’ on one axis, and ‘material factors’ on the other, through architectural
programs (Figure 2.8). A schematic diagram from the same 1954 issue of L’Architecture
d’aujourd’hui, describing the four functions outlined in the Chartre d’Athènes, renders the mixed,
often overlapping necessities of humanity—living (habiter), working (travailler), commuting
(circuler), and cultivating body and spirit (cultiver corps et esprit) (Figure 2.9). Another
schematic diagram positions an amoeboid shape representing the halves of ‘the great number’
and ‘the builders,’ divided by various stages/obstacles in development, such as conception,
technique, diffusion, legislation, finance, where the axes are history, man, and discovery (Figure
2.10). The relationship between architect and client is explicated here (Figure 2.11), without the
interference of the young (who “know nothing, no one has told them anything”), the man in the
street (“lives in confusion, swamped with knowledge”), the enlightened public, public snob

horizontales, des espaces nus, beaucoup de sobriété et de grandeur dans les proportions. La décoration était réduite
au minimum et on faisait peu volontiers place à la peinture et à la sculpture…Il y a donc aujourd’hui une tendance
évidente à revenir à une tradition qui fut la gloire de notre Moyen-Age. Auguste Perret constate que l’occasion n’a
jamais été aussi favorable: ”Aucune architecture n’a été mieux faite que la nôtre pour la collaboration du peintre. Je
dirai même que cette collaboration me semble non seulement souhaitable, mais nécessaire. Qu’est notre architecture
sinon une structure, une charpente si vous voulez, qui soutient des surfaces, c’est-à-dire des remplissages? Une seule
loi s’impose: respecter les points d’appui, peindre les vides, les rempilages. Ainsi firent toujours les Grecs, les
Romains, les Gothiques, qui ne placèrent peintures ou sculptures que dans les métopes ou dans les espaces en dehors
des structures.””
(“thinks he knows everything”) and the technicians and indirect consultants (who “know NOTHING of our research”). Not surprisingly, “the ARCHITECT remains the sole creator.”

This crisis of the architect—and the discipline of architecture at this time—is narrated so as to parallel the crisis of humanity writ large. Through aerial photographs, the study compares the distinct forms of the problem of *le plus grand nombre* in places as disparate as Canton, China, where residents live in boats on the Pearl River, or *bidonvilles* on the island of Zanzibar (which are compared to the *bidonvilles* of North Africa and the “slums” of Chicago)²⁷⁵, or Calais, France, where miners of the city have long lived in ill-suited conditions (not to mention the present-day hardships facing desperate refugees and migrants) (Figure 2.12). The primary solution proposed to allow for residents of the world to flourish is the framework, or *la trame*. Citing examples by Écochard in Morocco, created by his team within the Service d’Urbanisme du Maroc, the frame is posed as a means of containment, while allowing for a certain plastic, circulatory movement; the red, hexagonal honeycomb units traced onto the publication itself reinforces the notion of cellular confinement that is found in nature, recalling the industriousness and work-centered lives of honeybees. Therein lies an odd contradiction in CIAM’s effort to identify the formal relationship between regulatory, yet liberating plasticity and the restricted containment of bubbling, fast-growing populations. Moreover, Candilis and the modernist establishment represented by CIAM, set up a seemingly incompatible rapport between humanity’s freedom—the cultivation of body and spirit—and entrapment in the cogs of capitalism and the reduction of humanity to labor.

Between the natural labor of a productive honeybee and the wholly unnatural enslavement of humanity within a slave ship, what can we make of CIAM’s schemata, its habitation design and attitudes on labor, forced or otherwise? How do these prescriptions on modernist, organized dwelling fundamentally limit, constrict, and proscribe types of indigenous habitation? And at the most basic level, what are the implicit politics and ideologies within these CIAM-oriented schemas convey about the relationships between order, dwelling, labor, and domination? And if functionalism, as a planning methodology, serves as the metaphorical grease that keeps the wheels of capitalism in perpetual motion, what happens to people—socially and functionally—when those divisive barriers between work, commerce, leisure, and transport dissolve?

The discourses on ‘habitat’ and habitation in general attempt to reckon not only with this morphing relationship between countryside and town, but between humanity, living, and labor. With respect to rural parts of the colonies, primitivizing conceptions re-emerge in the ways that newly urbanized migrants of rural hinterlands are imagined. For Écochard, these peoples have to be ‘assimilated’ so as to sustain a socio-cultural ‘equilibrium’.276 The ‘poor land-workers’ about

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276 Michel Écochard, “Habitat pour le plus grand nombre: position du problème par rapport à la Charte de l’Habitat (Habitat for the Greatest Number: Problem as it stands in its relationship to the Charter),” L’Architecture d’aujourd’hui 48 (July 1953), text translated in both French and English. “These important masses do not have the strictest minimum required for the dignity of the couple or the maintenance of the body, even as compared to the way of life of their respective places of origin. Some are country folks of a relatively fair standard while others are poor land-workers having emigrated to avoid starvation, still others are shepherds with millenary traditions who, have no more reason to live in the desert due to the under-price selling of caravan camels or because of the drought. There may be but a slight difference between this population and the one already existing in the town. Such was the case with new American cities where the new arrivals had the same origin as the already existing population. In other cases the difference may be of importance and reflect not only on the standard of life but on race and the religion. If this contribution is slow and gradual, a progressive assimilation will take place and will, therefore create a problem. If, on the contrary, the new arrivals come (l’apport est brutal), a lack of equilibrium will take place, in the life of the town as well as in that of the new citizens. How? In the life of the town, by the creation of haphazard outskirts with unsanitary quarters which will interrupt with transport, and congest the main arteries. In the existence of the new arrivals, by complete disorientation created by the change of habitat, or even in some cases, by the disappearance of the habitat itself. Outside of that, can one imagine the bewilderment of the man who has lived all his life under a tent and who suddenly finds himself in a factory, and who, after the unlimited space of his open-air existence is compelled to face the overcrowding and promiscuity of these suburban quarters.”
whom Échochard speaks are characterized in terms of their implied incivility, numbers that lead to congestion of urban and suburban space, and their status as an unwelcome nuisance that has to be tempered. The land-worker who now becomes a factory worker, can no longer cling to his tent-dwelling traditions, Écochard suggests, or else he might disrupt the otherwise untainted urban landscape.

In this same issue of *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* in which Écochard describes his concerns for a racialized, class-clashing migrant population, a study by the French-Ukrainian engineer Vladimir Bodiansky (1894-1966) provides a biography of a 30 year-old Moroccan man named Hadou Sahraoui, told to illustrate how the bidonville takes shape (it is unclear whether this is a fictitious caricature or not, as the surname Sahraoui literally means, “the one from the Sahara”) (Figure 2.13).277 As a peasant from Tafilalet, Sahraoui’s region has become overwrought by drought, aridity, and hunger, and so in pursuit of prospects for a better life, he abandons his country home for the promises of Casablanca. Unable to find accommodations in the medina, he builds his tent in the suburbs (les faubourgs), which eventually turns into a shack after trying to impart some permanence to his newfound home. And without training or a trade of his own, Sahraoui must find a means to earn a self-sustaining wage. Nonetheless, according to Bodiansky’s narrative, Sahraoui marries a woman from his hometown and brings her to the bidonville, where their offspring attend a Quranic school founded within settlement. And so the cycle repeats itself.

If, according to the writings of CIAM members, dwelling endows humanity with its identity, then the Maghrebi bidonville—in its derelict, jerry-built infirmity—by extension

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produces incivility, indecency, criminality.\textsuperscript{278} One’s habitat, so they thought, was reflective of a larger, dynamic organic structure that would inevitably change over time; habitat represented the interplay between a dwelling and the surrounding setting, and the core of the city. As the next section will explore, the grille, or grid, became the principle diagrammatic means to think through the question of how best to mold identity in the age of migration.

\textbf{ATBAT-Afrique and CIAM-Alger: Grilles to Thwart Bidonvilles}

The ‘habitat’ has been the fundamental factor of well-being and of spiritual evolution of the human race, its constant amelioration constitutes the satisfaction of the mission of builders.—Vladimir Bodiansky\textsuperscript{279}

And if there are no more cities, we return to savagery.
—Roger Vailland and Shadrach Woods\textsuperscript{280}

The Casablanca-based, multidisciplinary group of planners, engineers and architects, ATBAT-Afrique (1949-1966),\textsuperscript{281} was led by Vladimir Bodiansky, Marcel Lods, Michel Écochard, and later to be joined by Georges Candilis (1913-1995), the Irish-American planner Shadrach Woods (1923-1973), Serbian Alexis Josic (1921—) and French engineer Henri Piot. Its predecessor, ATBAT (Atelier des Bâtisseurs), originating in Paris from 1947 and lasting to 1966, had come about from a desire to integrate various experts of design, engineering, and construction in order to cultivate stronger relationships between architects and engineers.\textsuperscript{282}

\textsuperscript{278} These types of associations between humanity’s character and urban forms are not new. Sheila Crane argues that in Marseille, the \textit{taudis municipals}, or municipal slums, were bulldozed on the basis of syphilitic outbreaks and criminal behavior. Sheila Crane, \textit{Mediterranean Crossroads: Marseille and Modern Architecture} (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 119-122.

\textsuperscript{279} Vladimir Bodiansky, quoted in Alison and Peter Smithson, “Collective Housing in Morocco,” \textit{Architectural Design} (January 1955): 2.


From 1946 to 1952, Bodiansky, Candilis and Woods had spent time working on Le Corbusier’s Unité d’Habitation in Marseille, a massive, polychromed, concrete block of housing units, and one of the most singular monuments of Le Corbusier’s career.\textsuperscript{283} Between the beginning of their collaborations and the late 1960s, Candlis-Josic-Woods would design approximately 40,000 dwellings in France alone,\textsuperscript{284} such as their 160 housing units in the 1957 Bon Secours complexes (Figure 2.14) or 1959-1966 La Viste dwellings (Figure 2.15) both in Marseille, or their 131 housing units at Cité du Soleil in Avignon, from 1961-1969 (Figure 2.16) where children can be seen playing in the roughage and waste surrounding the pristine, new units. In Oran, Algeria, their 1954-1955 housing units would serve only the European communities (Figure 2.17). As Jean-Louis Cohen and Tom Avermaete have duly noted, the types of questions that Candilis, Josic, Woods, and Bodiansky raised in their work in colonial territories had immense consequences for the future directions and theoretical concerns of CIAM, and the political practice of architecture generally.\textsuperscript{285} It was their generation of architects that brought questions of functionalism southward, as a part of a broader discussion of how this discourse can be mapped onto the urban slums and so-called insalubrious housing blocks of cities throughout the Global South.

In an attempt to rethink their primary modes of spatial analysis, ATBAT-Afrique was tasked to thwart the growth of bidonvilles, or shantytowns, throughout Morocco. Yet, instead of taking a mainstream approach that would support clearing these slums, the members of ATBAT-Afrique espoused a more ethnological stance, viewing these settlements and dwellings as retaining much of the daily practices and spatial layout of rural habitats in the Maghreb, thus

\textsuperscript{284} Avermaete, \textit{Another Modern: the Post-war Architecture and Urbanism of Candilis-Josic-Woods}, 43.
\textsuperscript{285} Ibid., 47. “Their non-western experiences became catalysts in focusing the attention on the need for a reassessment and a redefinition of pre-war CIAM concepts.”
offering useful information in the redesign of new quarters. These architects maintained that traditional dwelling culture was embodied in the forms of the shelters, with echoes of the layout and typology of courtyard homes in the Atlas Mountains. Without question, these bidonvilles represented—and continue to represent to this day—the focal intersection of spatial, symbolic, and political struggles.

Similarly, CIAM-Alger, led by architects Roland Simounet and Pierre-André Emery, would concentrate on the housing crisis in Algeria, proposed the Mahieddine grid, based on the bidonville of the same name outside Algiers. The Mahieddine grid mapped the sanitation hazards of the settlement which originated as a park in 1928, demonstrating the ways with which the individual homes were structured and used. The architects exhibited design proposals for new housing units that would eventually replace the bidonville. The study encompassed five principle issues: urban planning, legislative measures, social habits, construction techniques, and the plastic arts. But the settlement patterns were not rejected wholesale; in fact, at first glance, one might even go so far as to characterize CIAM-Alger’s assessment of Mahieddine dwellers and their living spaces, as humanizing:

Here, under the poverty of the used materials, the house is a spontaneous expression of life. It is molded on the human being, breathes with him and preserves, even in its rotting carcass, the dignity of living lines and proportions. But contemporary life implies techniques, which, for reasons of economy, lead to standardized structures based on Western conceptions (échelle occidentale de vie). In an era when a mechanized civilization is permeating the whole world, will the Oriental be able to avoid being caught up in the machine and preserve unspoiled his primitive freshness? It is up to us to provide the basic and indispensable structural elements, which can afford to these people the

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287 Çelik, “Learning from the Bidonville: CIAM looks at Algiers,” 74. Jean-Claude Isnard, “Les problèmes du logement dans l’agglomération algeroise, École Nationale d’Administration,” Section Économique et Financière (December 1949). “In 1954, its exclusively Muslim population was 7,398. Bidonville Mahieddine’s origins go back to the aftermath of World War I. Jean-Claude Isnard states that it was declared unsanitary (insalubre) by a municipal decree on November 18, 1941. He also points out that its population grew by 3,200 (177%) from 1941 to 1949 [...] The bidonville Mahieddine was demolished in 1958 to give way to a low-cost housing project and a sport center. The villa Mahieddine, classified as a historic monument, was left in ruins.”
288 Ibid., 70.
possibility to give new expression to their own traditional conceptions. And perhaps in that creative expression we too shall find ourselves again. Nevertheless, this passage from the Mahieddine Grid archive is troubling and deserves scrutiny. For fear of the corrupting influence of mechanization, and by extension modernization, the end goal for the architects here towards the so-called “Oriental” is to give the structures that would sustain dignity and maintain purity—“primitive freshness.” Local building traditions, it seems, have been corrupted, by “Western conceptions” of living. To fully alter the lifestyle of the local Mahieddine inhabitant would be to taint it. But, all of this preservation of cultural purity is only meant to truly service one entity—the self-interested European technocrat—so that he might rediscover his own purpose. What is also fascinating here is that the rhetoric of the évoluté becomes subdued, for it is mechanization that is sulllying the habitudes of the bidonville dweller. With emphasis placed on their Muslim identity, their Islamic manners, customs, and way of life are to be sustained, just within a “carcass” that is no longer rotting. And while Zeynep Çelik argues that CIAM-Alger sought to “learn from the bidonville,” I believe ultimately there is no ambiguity that for CIAM-Alger, the habits of the inhabitants of Mahieddine were considered debased, vulgar, and primitive, and Islam as such was a marker or stand-in for these deficiencies. For, as Çelik herself admits, the CIAM-Alger grid

…slipped every now and then into the mainstream colonialist and Orientalist discourse…It was full of contradictions, and, while giving a complicated picture of the bidonville, it also recycled some of the most tired clichés about Muslim society. Not surprisingly, these centered on women and religion…Religion was deemed crucial for an understanding of the squatter society.

Most of all, their aims were self-serving, fulfilling the need for Europeans to “find [them]selves again.” This is the very paradox of the CIAM-Alger and ATBAT-Afrique architectural

ethnology, as it presents us with the bind of the colonized—damned if he or she aspires to assimilate and “evolve,” and damned to terminal stasis should he or she retain his/her “fresh” way of life. Such a discourse does not seek to elevate a people, but to chastise and demote them.

Sprouting up on the outskirts of urban centers well before the Second World War, the encroachment of these bidonville informal shacks was ubiquitous well into the 1950s, throughout the Maghreb. In Morocco, it was estimated that roughly ten percent of the urbanized populations resided in bidonville settlements, as in parts of Salé outside of Rabat, or Ben M’sick.\(^{292}\) Since independence, Algeria has sought to promote certain policies, through public financing, that would curb the spread and growth of new bidonvilles.\(^{293}\) In Tunisia, gourbivilles, or earthen equivalent of the bidonvilles, rapidly grew in the country’s urban coastal centers, especially in Tunis, Sousse, and Sfax.

Active from 1951 to 1955, much of ATBAT-Afrique’s work concentrated on restructuring the bidonvilles by first laying gridded utilities and infrastructure, and then building one-story courtyard houses. Through a display of collages, renderings, and site photographs, ATBAT-Afrique’s grid attempted to document the living conditions of young Moroccans. As Eric Mumford explains, the idea of ‘habitat’ had to be thought of as evolving with the changes of the local climate and technology, as a process of evolving toward more “advanced” housing solutions like the Unité d’Habitation.\(^{294}\) What Mumford fails to mention is that this evolution was geared as much toward the residents themselves as it was towards the dwellings.


\(^{293}\) F. Salhi, Marché du travail, crise du logement et grande entreprise. Le cas de la sidérurgie à Annaba-El Hadjar (Algérie). Thèse de 3\(^{e}\) cycle (Université de Paris XII, Institut d’Urbanisme de Paris, 1983).

If we look at the forms and photographs of ATBAT-Afrique’s signature collective housing dwellings, the Carrières Centrales (Figure 2.18), built in 1953 outside Casablanca and adjacent to one of the largest bidonville settlements (Figure 2.19), we can see where this proselytizing to the unevolved Maghrebi migrant appears. In the grids proposed at the CIAM meeting in Aix-en-Provence, where a group of fifteen architects working in Morocco—including Candilis, Échohard, Élie Azagury, Pierre Mas, and Gaston Jaubert—exhibited architectural renderings alongside photographs comparing the spatial differences posed by medinas, bidonvilles, and new sites like the Carrières Centrales. As a subsidiary collective of CIAM, the Groupe d’Architectes Modernes Marocains, or GAMMA, had been founded in 1951 at the CIAM Hoddesdon congress. Architects working and designing in Morocco in the 1950s, formed the backbone of this group, like Jean-François Zevaco, Henri Tastemain, Jean Chemineau, and Élie Azagury.295 Headed by Échohard’s Service de l’Urbanisme, the Carrières Centrales comprised two types of collective housing buildings—the Cité Horizontale (low-rise patio houses) and the Cité Verticale (high-rise patio houses). Many such projects featuring the same types of semi-duplex developments, followed the French Protectorate’s policy of ethno-cultural specific housing, with varying degrees of privacy and spatial divisions within the home: Jewish, European, Mixtes, and Muslim (Figure 2.20). The captions for the initial exhibit of La Cité Verticale read as follows:

The casbahs of the Sahara, the ksours, fortified villages in the Atlas mountains, and the collective granaries-citadels all reflect a tendency according to which the persons live close to one another, respecting the privacy of the families, but nevertheless always managing affairs of collective interest by common consent.296

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295 Jean-Louis Cohen notes that although there is no official GAMMA archive, many of the documents pertaining to the group’s activities are housed at the Ministry of Housing in Rabat, under Henri Tastemain’s name. See Jean-Louis Cohen and Monique Eleb, Casablanca: Colonial Myths and Architectural Ventures (New York: Monacelli Press, 2002), 317-318.

296 Cohen, “The Moroccan Group and the Theme of Habitat,” 63-64.
Candilis too likened this form of housing to the fortified *casbahs* and *ksours* of the Atlas Mountains, and suggested that these bastions of white cubical unit were somehow synchronized with the collective way of life in those rural Moroccan villages. In this issue of *Forum*, perhaps playing on Le Corbusier’s 1925 publication, *Vers une Architecture*, the vernacular casbahs and ksours are praised, so long as they acquire some ‘organization’ (Figures 2.21). Each unit consisted of two rooms, a bathroom, a kitchen contained within the patio, which functions to trap and filter sunlight to the interior rooms.\(^{297}\) In many of the photographs, one encounters the towering, stacked white cubes in the backdrop, with usually groups of children playing in front of the building, gazing back at the photographer, or in some cases, these photos capture in a demonstratively moralizing way, how the new residents’ traditions (e.g. a *hijab*-clad woman, for instance), disorder, or inurbane character contrast with the order imposed on them (Figure 2.22). With the unaffordable cost of the monthly rent in these units, few migrant families living in the bidonville could actually settle in the Carrières Centrales.\(^{298}\)

ATBAT-Afrique also envisioned sleek, linear interiors in their architectural models for the semi-duplex units (Figure 2.23). Midcentury furniture—round upholstered stools, angular countertops and coffee tables, and beds with cylindrical pillows—all play into the desire for these migrant families to become modern *in and through their dwelling*. One bedroom interior features a magazine cut-out of a clearly Western-dressed woman, seated on one midcentury stool and reveling in the unit. A bidet in the bathroom testifies to how hygiene could be enforced through the built form. A booklet within the Candilis archival files, called *Basic Elements of Grouping Possibilities* (Figure 2.24) articulates how this functionalism within the apartment unit could engender a new ordering of peoples’ socializing patterns, as in the case of the Unité

\(^{297}\) Cohen and Eleb, *Casablanca: Colonial Myths and Architectural Ventures*, 335.

\(^{298}\) Von Osten, “Architecture Without Architects—Another Anarchist Approach.”
d’Habitation in Marseille. Another text from the same archive, published by Georges Candilis himself entitled *Planning and Design for Leisure* [*Recherches sur l’architecture des loisirs*], describes the role of leisure in the design of cities (Figure 2.25).299

From the interior of the semi-duplex apartment unit to the exterior urban landscape beyond, the inhabitants’ movements, and day-to-day, cyclical flows of life are conceived of in terms of a holistic, industrialized Eurocentric urban experience. The *trame*, or grid, referred to previously, very much was part and parcel of this schema to reorganize and modernize Maghrebi dwelling and living. Candilis himself expounds on the frame as serving multiple purposes: to define and locate the spatial surfaces and volumes of the environment; to allow for efficiency through prefabrication and enabling avenues for further industrialization; and to map out a network of pipes and lines for sanitation systems.300 In essence, the frame permits an understanding of dwelling as part of an urban, systemic apparatus, with not just homes, but shops, offices, schools, streets, and other elements integral to any urban space (Figure 2.26). For Candilis, the grid is the very tool that empowers the industrialization of planning.301 As written

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299 Georges Candilis, *Planning and Design for Leisure* [*Recherches sur l’architecture des loisirs*], Translation into English, James C. Palmes (Stuttgart: Karl Krämer Verlag, 1975; Band 9 der Reihe ‘Dokumente der modernen Architektur’), Le Centre d’Archives, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Paris (236iFA, 201/5). “The permanent, continuous, diversified and increasing presence of leisure in men’s lives, impregnates and transforms even the conception of the art of building, undermines the established hierarchy of values of the past and implies the predominance of facilities in future realizations. This new perspective is bringing new forms of human groupings, new conceptions of life, of work and of communications, which demand a fresh attitude to architecture and urbanism. This major phenomenon of contemporary civilization calls for research into, and the discovery of, a new architecture: the architecture of leisure.”


301 Ibid. See also Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 4. “On the national level France retreats within the hexagon, withdraws from empire, retrenches within its borders at the same time as those borders are becoming newly permeable to a whirlwind of economic forces—forces far more destructive of some received notion of ‘national culture’ than any immigrant community could muster. The movement inward—a whole complex process...that Castoriadis, Moran,
in their statement of principle, ATBAT-Afrique members maintained their mission in constructing a sense of ‘home’: “It is impossible for each man to construct his house to himself. It is for the architect to make it possible for the man to make his house a home.”

One can sense the oscillation in Candilis’ rhetoric, often shifting between contextually specific conditions and a search to satisfy the universal needs for the whole of humanity: “Throughout the years ATBAT has studied the problems of ‘habitat’ for the greatest number in all its aspects and peculiarities. It has not arrived at an all-round solution, but one solution for each case. It has found many solutions to many variants, but the spirit of search remains the same, the spirit of the greatest number with its laws and its disciplines.”

Upon Giedion’s request to organize a CIAM-sponsored trip to Morocco, Écochard, the Director of Urbanism in the Protectorate from 1946 to 1952, accepted the task. But Écochard admits that the greatest challenge to the architect and planner in Morocco, was to curb the unprecedented growth of the major cities and sprawl of the bidonvilles. The only way he saw fit was to find ways to industrialize, and therefore, urbanize the rural centers: “…all of the problems of town planning have to be solved here too, such as the creation of centers for the processing of agricultural products in the countryside, in order to stabilize the rural population and thereby avoid excessive expansion of some cities.” In Tunisia as in Morocco, the perception of rural

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303 Alison and Peter Smithson, “Collective Housing in Morocco,” 2.
misery was quite prevalent among writers in the late Protectorate, with the symbol of that impoverishment embodied in the *gourbi*.

As it turned out, methodological tensions concerning ways to resolve *le plus grand nombre* would spur the splintering of CIAM into sectarian architectural factions. Alison Smithson, the spearheading force behind Team 10, remarked how the North African grids caused much discord among the CIAM 9 participants, though the grids promised a “new language of architecture generated by patterns of inhabitation.” In particular, she called attention to how the Moroccan housing developments put forward in 1953 challenged modernist tenets: “In North Africa, *espace, soleil* is plenty, and in the settlements, verdure…white cubic forms, private spaces adjoining the dwellings, the clarity of the *partis*: the Four Functions mattered and you could say still made sense.” For Team 10, the virtues of functionalism still merited respect and consideration, but the *tabula rasa* approach of CIAM, with its little regard to the role of the contextual past or historicism in the construction of place, could no longer be tolerated.

With the Smithsons’ introduction of their new theory of “urban reidentification” discussed at the CIAM 9 meeting, they proposed that a freer notion of order might be conceived that would enable inhabitants to reconnect with their places of living. Inspired in part by the studies of the Chicago School of sociology, which dealt with working-class neighborhoods in Chicago, the Smithsons felt urban reidentification involved the reorganization of ‘human associations’ or relationships:

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305 Miossec, “La politique d’habitat en Tunisie depuis l’Indépendance,” 17. “…l’aspect des maisons du moins chez les riches, tend à transformer un peu la physionomie de certaines rues, à leur donner un air de ville (…) elles sont plus largement ouvertes sur la cour et plus claires; l’électricité, l’eau courante parfois, achèvent de donner à certaines d’entre elles un aspect d’aisance et de confort, un aspect bourgeois, mais il faut posséder beaucoup d’oliviers ou avoir été fonctionnaire…”


308 Smithson, *Team 10 Meetings*, 12.
This grille is concerned with the problem of identity. It proposes that a community should be built up from a hierarchy of associational elements and tries to express these various levels of association (THE HOUSE, THE STREET, THE DISTRICT, THE CITY) algebraically. It is important to realize that the terms used, Street, District, etc. are not to be taken as the reality but as the idea and that it is our task to find new equivalents for these forms of association in our new, non-demonstrative society. The problem of reidentifying man with his environment cannot be achieved by using hierarchical forms of house-groupings, streets, squares, greens, etc., as the social reality they presented no longer exists. In the complex of association that is a community, social cohesion can only be achieved if ease of movement is possible and this provides us with only second law [sic], that height (density) should increase as the total population increases, and vice versa. In a large city with high buildings, in order to keep ease of movement, we propose a multi-level city with residential ‘streets-in-the-air.’ These are linked together in a multi-level continuous complex, connected where necessary to work and to those ground elements that are necessary at each level of association. Our hierarchy of associations is woven into a modulated continuum representing the true complexity of human association. This conception is in direct opposition to the arbitrary isolation of the so-called communities of the ‘Unité’ and the ‘neighborhood.’ We are of the opinion that such a hierarchy of human associations should replace the functional hierarchy of the ‘Charte d’Athènes.’

In many ways, it was these Maghrebi sites that rekindled the focus of their grille on urban re-identification, emphasizing the association that a community develops, from the house, to the street, and on to the district, and city, to reconnect inhabitants with their environment. Placing greater value on handcraft and vernacular modes of building, this more holistic, outwardly anthropological and more communitarian approach of Team 10, constituted an affront to CIAM’s technologically propelled or rationalist-driven analysis. Seeking to close the already widening gap between architectural expertise and vernacular experiences, their design experiments were more invested in the aesthetic sensibilities of the everyday, in what was deemed popular. Yet this difference of outlook on what constitutes proper building technology gave way to a great ideological schism between Team 10 and old guard CIAM. The difference in attitudes towards slums could not have been sharper, yet the power and responsibility of the

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architect to orchestrate humanity’s reidentification—and above all, their identity—remained much the same.

Arguing that a shantytown, in its structural shape, iterations, and even construction methods might reflect the customs and habitudes of its dwellers, the members of Team 10 regarded that some aspects of these shantytowns might be preserved and even replicated in new structures. However for old guard CIAM members, slum clearance was a matter of absolute necessity, for only this could literally pave the way for hygienic living and dwelling. At the heart of many of these debates was the search for a modern architecture that could tap into the aesthetic values of the local, while still oscillating between the universal and the contextual.

What has been little debated in the scholarship is the slippage between the vernacular and the bidonville in CIAM records, and how an essentializing discourse of the ‘primitive’ permeates the descriptions of both types of living and building conditions. Do any formal linkages actually exist between the construction traditions of vernacular rural dwellings, on the one hand, and urban bidonville settlements on the other? Ethnographers and anthropologists might argue that certain cultural habits or patterns contribute to the parallels between these conditions of building. Indeed, a wide scholarly vocabulary has sought to label traditional settlements and dwellings, including, but not limited to, such terms as “indigenous,” “tribal,” “primitive,” “folkloric,” and “popular.” And as Jean-Paul Bourdier and Nezar AlSayyad have noted, much architecture throughout the globe would not be considered indigenous because of its usage of imported parts

and materials. But knowing where to situate the informal settlements of the bidonville—architecturally, politically and historiographically—has always been the sore, uncomfortable spot of modernism’s colonial baggage. Throughout the Maghreb in this critical juncture of tremendous transition, the spatial politics of habitation in the urban nodes were inextricably linked to impasses and problems of housing development in rural governorates and areas. As we will explore in the following section, the primitivization of an urbanized peasantry—a transitional and racialized class of peoples—continued in the modernization projects of the so-called postcolony, which undeniably inherited much of this colonial baggage as well.

“A Healthy Home”: Gourbis, Bourguibisme and the Postcolonial Primitive

In a campaign speech delivered on November 1, 1959, at Metlaoui, a phosphate mining village in southwestern Tunisia, President Habib Bourguiba addressed local workers, calling upon them to put trust in the newly formed nation-state government to improve their lot while deploiring their living conditions in gourbis, or hollow, earthen structures (Figure 2.27):

Individual prosperity is dependent on collective prosperity. Individual leisure cannot be surrounded by collective misery. An enterprise cannot be successful unless its workers are satisfied with their lot...when an employer exploits his workers and destroys the results of their labour, the State is responsible for establishing order...I have told you of these governmental policies so that you might realize that the State upholds the interests of the working class. Its attention is given to the poor and to the weak. It gives them work, a just salary, a more noble life. But this noble life needs a healthy home too. It is unbelievable that a labourer works all his life hoping to build a tiny home or that an employer accepts the services of a man for ten or twenty years without helping him to

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314 Ibid., 6.
live elsewhere than a *gourbi*. We have decided upon a project: homes will be built and the cost will be shared by the beneficiary, the employer and the State. The working man will have a healthy home.”

Bourguiba’s political platform was clearly rooted in paternalistic promises to provide ‘a more noble life’ and a ‘healthy home’ for these Tunisian workers and villagers (Figure 2.28); such promises bolstered his claims to continue governing this fledgling nation-state (declared independent from France just three years prior in 1956). Between 1956 and 1970, these insalubrious *gourbivilles* were systematically destroyed. A national census of population and housing was conducted in May 1966, attributed the spread of informal settlements to migration flows. For Bourguiba, the squalor of Tunisian workers’ compounds went hand in hand with fiscal exploitation of former colonial industries (e.g. mining companies, farms, etc.). Efforts to modernize all aspects of the new nation-state—including housing and urban development—entailed a simultaneous process of cleansing and eradicating poverty and its urban imprint. Yet *dégourbification*, advertised as the enabler of an incontestable progress, actually was a practice that continued from the Protectorate. Elevating the status of the farmer and worker alike, for

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319 Miossec, “La politique d’habitat en Tunisie depuis l’Indépendance,” 17-35. “Le renforcement des classes transitionnelles, moyennes et aisées, principalement en ville a eu pour conséquence une forte poussée de villas et
this new national project, essentially appropriated the colonial myth, transforming the common Tunisian man from the *fellah* to the *évolué*.\(^{320}\) Though very different from his contemporaries such as President Gamal Abd El-Nasser of Egypt, or President Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal, Bourguiba, like them, deemed this peasantry to be the dispossessed proletariat.\(^{321}\)

Yet in its conception, modernity also necessitated economic self-reliance and conviction in political autonomy (Figure 2.29). But in this historical moment just following independence, what was the archetypal ‘healthy home’ of a Tunisian worker supposed to look like, and how was it to be achieved architecturally? What exactly constituted this vision of Tunisian architectural modernity,\(^{322}\) and how did architects of the era attempt to execute this vision? And

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\(^{320}\) M. Pierre Berthault (Ingénieur agricole, Commissaire du Crédit Foncier de France près le Crédit Foncier d’Algérie et de Tunisie), *La Propriété rurale en Afrique du Nord (Conférence donnée le 4 mars 1936 à l’Institut National Agronomique)* (Alençon: Imprimerie Alençonnaise, 1936), 22. “Rien de semblable en Afrique du Nord, où nos éléments ruraux ne forment qu’une minorité à côté de la masse indigène. Mais l’exploitation européenne est presque toujours plus étendue que celle des indigènes voisins. Elle est à un stade culturel plus évolué. Presque partout le colon est pour l’indigène le guide, l’initiateur aux méthodes nouvelles. La propriété européenne, bien que ne formant qu’une minorité, a donc un rôle social spécial, un rôle d’élite sociale, de cadre moral, mais un rôle social qui ne rend pas facile néanmoins le progrès rapide chez l’indigène, car l’Islam demeure une barrière formidable qui sépare les deux psychologies, les deux mentalités, les deux civilisations. L’Islam, avec les préoccupations et le statut de la famille qui en découlent, fait que les besoins de l’indigène demeurent différents de nôtres. Il oriente ses cultures avec des conceptions autres que celles de l’Européen. Sa maison reste primitive. Ses besoins, par ailleurs, n’ont pas crû d’une façon sensible. Son matériel agricole reste rustique et peu coûteux. Il en résulte que ses immobilisations, ses frais généraux, sont restés réduits, et qu’un rendement faible, qui paraît un rendement de famine, lui permet de vivre, alors qu’avec un rendement double même, le petit colon français, qui a à amortir les frais de constructions de ses bâtiments et son matériel agricole qui a en vêtements, en nourriture en frais d’éducation de ses enfants, des dépenses beaucoup plus lourdes, n’équilibre plus son budget. La supériorité de la propriété indigène en période de bas prix de produits agricoles, devient ainsi inévitable en zones pauvres sur la propriété française, grevée de charges beaucoup trop lourdes, difficilement compressibles, car il n’est désiré, ni socialement, ni au point de vue du standing national, qu’on donne au Français qui colonise l’Afrique du Nord l’idéal de la vie primitive et trop âpre du fellah.”


\(^{322}\) Modernity was not just fashioned in opposition to traditional architectural concepts. “All this has had a profound effect on the Tunisian conscience, torn between Oriental and Western tendencies—terms which until now have reflected the opposition between medieval traditionalism and the modern world. A new concept has entered the
perhaps most importantly, was the ‘working class’ always the key patron in mind, or were other interests upheld in spite of the working classes’ dire lodging needs? In a case not dissimilar to the Carrières Centrales of Casablanca, the housing projects constructed for these displaced gourbiville dwellers in many instances could not afford to maintain the costs of this newly coerced living standard and support the kind of lifestyle stipulated from the government above.

Opérations Gourbis

Urban historian Paolo Colarossi identifies two types of “self-built” habitat projects that developed in the protectorate period—the gourbiville and the “periurban self-built habitat.”

With the rapid influx of rural-urban migrants (fleeing poverty caused in part by infertile crops) as well as European manual laborers (mostly Italians, Maltese and Spaniards), a “self-built habitat” policy was enforced in the early 1930s to allay the housing shortage (Figure 2.30). Even though the official housing market was an unviable option for lower-income families, this community of urban poor was essentially coerced to build for themselves. By contrast to other ethnic groups in colonial Tunisia, mostly French settlers had access to the units of the picture which, highlighted by the rivalries displayed at Bandung, adds to the complexity of North African questions.” Gaston Lionel Franco, “Tunisia Faces the Future/La Tunisie Devant son Avenir” Le Monde Économique (Paris; Tunis, June 1956), 5.


325 Freund, “Labor and Labor History in Africa,” 4. Freund comments on studies examining labor migration patterns in former colonies. “…the migration cycle seemed profoundly destabilizing. It militated against community and family life and blocked the necessary intensification of labor productivity. The migrant worker of the 1940s and 1950s…was often a militant and uncontrollable worker, deeply disturbing to the vision of the social planner.” Labor migrations posed both political and social problems for the urban planner.
Habitations à Bon Marché (HBM). The urban/rural divide was exacerbated by class politics; Tunisian urbanites (in Arabic, baldiyya, denoting the middle class or bourgeoisie) referred to those from desert villages as Afaqi (those from beyond the horizon).

The gourbiville districts came into being spontaneously in the 1930s and 1940s, in the immediate surrounds of Tunis; these plots of land were generally state-owned or bear an unclear legal status, and they were occupied by rural migrants who built earthen, pisé, or toub (brick) structures. In form, a gourbi house can be characterized as a low, irregular structure, often with a sloping, thatched roof (Figure 2.31). All in all, these settlements emerged from the city’s physical and spatial lack of sufficient infrastructure to accommodate a burgeoning influx of rural migrants.

State-sponsored efforts at razing the gourbis—dégourbification—formally issued in a decree on March 16, 1957 (which was effectively a strategy for collectively forgetting or erasing

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326 Direction des Domains et de la Colonisation, *La Colonisation en Tunisie* (Bourg: Imprimérie Victor Berthod, 1931), 68-69. “Si les résultats de la colonisation officielle au point de vue de la mise en valeur du sol tunisien ressortent clairement du simple examen des chiffres, on peut dire aussi qu’en ce qui concerne le peuplement français les résultats ne sont pas moins importants. Il n’échappe à personne que le peuplement français de la Tunisie constitue une œuvre vitale du Protectorat. Cette œuvre a été poursuivie parallèlement par la colonisation rurale et la colonisation urbaine […] Les habitations à bon marché ou familiales sont occupées par leurs attributaires dès leur achèvement. En de nombreux points, et notamment dans la banlieue des villes, la construction des H.B.M. est complétée par l’implantation de lots suburbains ou de petite culture. Ainsi ouvriers, petits employés et fonctionnaires français désireux de s’établir définitivement en Tunisie, se voient offrir les plus grandes facilités d’installation. Pour eux, désormais, l’heure de la retour dans la Métropole.”


328 Santelli, *Medinas*, 151-152. See also Serge Santelli, Bernard Tournet, “Evolution et ambiguïté de la maison arabe contemporaine au Maghreb: étude de cas à Rabat et Tunis,” in Catherine Bruant, ed., *Espace centré: figures de l’architecture domestique dans l’Orient méditerranéen* (Editions Parenthèses), 49. “…à Tunis les quartiers de Saïda Manoubia et Melassine se sont réalisés progressivement le long des rives inondables du lac Sedjoumi au début des années quarante. Dans les deux villes, la population d’origine rurale a évidemment reproduit un habitat de type rural (en Tunisie: le gourbi, d’où le mot gourbiville donné à ces quartiers spontanés) utilisant des matériaux précaires: toub pour le gourbi en Tunisie […] Le gourbi est compose d’une pièce rectangulaire à laquelle on accède par une porte basse s’ouvrant sur le milieu de la pièce. De chaque côté de la porte, se trouvent, un espace de repos constitué par une banquette maçonnée sur laquelle on déroule des nattes pour dormer, et un espace de rangement qui fait face au précédent, pouvant server de cuisine.”

the imprint of impoverished modes of living) went hand in hand with methods for "beautification" (embellissement). Planning operations entailed both selective preservation of certain districts and treating problems that contributed to urban decay, e.g. mal-logés (poorly housed populations), îlots insalubres (unsanitary neighborhoods), and bidonvilles (shanty or “tin can” towns).

But, the stigmatization—and primitivization—of the gourbi dwelling type and gourbivilles precedes nationalization. Low-cost housing initiatives had existed in Tunisia even under the Protectorate, though they were somewhat limited financially. The Habitations à bon marché (HBM) societies were established in Tunisia in 1919. For Tunisian workers mining in the southern region of the valley of Medjer, for example, a housing program was undertaken in 1937 intending to re-house approximately 244 people, though the Second World War had interrupted construction plans. Hygiene—and the path to modern living with all its amenities—lay at the center of these concerns.

We had to contend with reconstruction in a rational plan and with the best methods, of which were less uncomfortable than the gourbis [...] The goal was to offer the worker to leave the gourbi, a house more spacious and easier to keep clean, without unduly transforming the habits and way of life that had a long and sustained tradition. The adopted plan comprised of two principle pieces, permitting the separation of the rooms of the parents and children. A small kitchen forms at a right angle at the extremity of the

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[^330]: Çelik notes that the first French law on “urbanisme” from March 14, 1919 called for state regulation of growth and investment in “beautification” (embellissement). See Çelik, *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations: Algiers Under French Rule*, Chapter 2. She also highlights that this French discourse on squatter settlements traces back to the 1930s, in reference to the bidonvilles of Algeria (especially El-Kattar, one of the first bidonvilles to emerge outside of Algiers).


building. A second shed is reserved for some goats, which previously shared the gourbi with its owners […]333

Gourbis, as toũb mud brick dwellings, were deemed ‘primitive’ habitations. By introducing modern living, not just in terms of infrastructure (e.g. running water, electricity, etc.) but in terms of modern interiors, replete with furniture and other trappings of Western living spaces, as though these fixtures might in turn bring about a social evolution.

From 1954 onward, Opérations Gourbis was a Protectorate campaign (Figure 2.32) opposing the growth of gourbivilles. In the 1950s, the Service d’Architecture et d’Urbanisme was integrated with the activities of the Commissariat à l’Urbanisme, l’Habitat and Tourisme.334 Gérard Blachère, the Official Commissioner for Reconstruction and Housing in the early 1950s, mentioned in the first chapter, described the lack of sturdiness posed by these gourbi homes:

…the poorest part of the population has the habit, since they have given up their nomadic life, of providing cob walls or walls of dried stone in their dwellings, the roof being made of boughs, covered with a layer of clay whitewashed with lime. If these buildings are rain-proof and fairly cool in summer and warm in winter, they have, on the contrary, many disadvantages, apart from the considerable risk of fire; it should be remembered that these buildings have a single room, scantily separated by blankets, that the floor of beaten earth does not allow the interior of the house to be properly cleaned, and that the building is at the mercy of floods and even of a fairly strong stream. The builders customarily plant their buildings, without regard to their surroundings, so that the agglomerations so constituted cannot be properly repaired nor improved; frequently, it is impossible to lay out roads, streets, sewer pipes, etc.335

The criticisms of *gourbivilles*’ unplanned nature bear echoes of Orientalists’ attacks on the médinas of North Africa, as being anarchical, disorganized, or crowded.

Bourguiba’s ideological rhetoric of progress, which dominates his writings well into the 1960s, has to be seen within the larger framework of reorienting Tunisian ways of life. Bourguiba’s modernization program fundamentally entailed repositioning Tunisian attitudes towards Islam; this runs completely counter to nineteenth-century, Orientalist understandings of *patrie*, which bear fundamental links to Islamic ways of life. Bourguiba’s strong dislike for Nasser’s brand of pan-Arabism meant that Tunisian political progress would be defined along different lines, ones which did not conform under any Arab heading; Tunisia joined the Arab League somewhat belatedly, in 1958. Fearing the negative economic impact of nationalization, Bourguiba steered the country from complete isolationism, counter to what occurred in Nasserite Egypt. The ideology of *Bourguibisme* promoted the notion that forward-moving progress on the one hand, and a clinging grip to Muslim values and religious practices, were not only mutually exclusive but also antithetical to the end goal of modernization (e.g. the August 1956 decree abolishing polygamy; the January 1960 decree calling for the abrogation of work abstinence during the holy month of Ramadan).

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336 André Demersemann, “Formulation de l’idée de Patrie en Tunisie de 1837 à 1872,” *Revue IBLA*, no. 114 (1966), 134. As Demersemann has illustrated, the most palpably identifiable roots of any notion of ‘motherland’ or *patrie* (*watan*, in Arabic) emerged in nineteenth-century Tunisia. “Pour l’ensemble du peuple, le mot ‘watan’ ne signifiait pas autre chose, qu’un territoire possédé par des musulmans à protéger contre les entreprises de ceux qui ne l’étaient pas. Qu’on nous comprenne bien, nous ne nions pas pour autant l’existence d’un sentiment patriotique. Tout ce que nous voulons faire remarquer, c’est qu’il était étroitement confondu à cette époque avec son expression islamique.”


Muslim, does not intend to live in isolation, closed off from society, a perspective that is incompatible with our deep desire to live in close communion with modern life. Our path in this domain consists of being open to other cultures, especially Western culture, in order to take hold of reality. Thus, our country, while remaining true to its cultural past, will have forged the tools of its future. French culture is one of the largest and richest of the modern world and our tribute to the academics here bear witness to what we owe to thinkers like Descartes, Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau and many others..."341 This “openness” touted by Bourguiba—not dissimilar to the economic liberalization policies of infitah promoted by Egypt’s President Anwar Sadat—might bring about the “reorientation of Tunisia toward the West [which] would represent progress and prosperity, the very objectives that an independent Tunisia aspired to.”342 At the heart of Bourguibism lied a project of “cultural synthesis [la synthèse culturelle],” or a complete cultural renewal, which entailed a re-writing of history.343

Even so, the cultural program of Bourguiba’s administration ranked relatively low in the list of priorities for the new nation-state. Regarding housing needs, Bourguiba proclaimed:

341 Discours de Habib Bourguiba, L’Action, 17 décembre 1956. “La Tunisie dont la tradition est essentiellement arabo-musulmane entend ne pas vivre en vase clos et devenir une société fermée, perspective incompatible avec notre profond désir de vivre en étroite communion avec la vie moderne. Notre voie en ce domaine consiste à avoir des fenêtres ouvertes sur les autres cultures, en particulier sur la culture occidentale, afin d'avoir prise sur le reel. Ainsi notre pays, tout en restant fidèlement à son passé culturel, aura forgé les instruments de son avenir. La culture française est l'une des plus grandes et de plus riches du monde moderne et l'hommage que nous rendons aux universitaires, ici présents, porte témoignage de ce que nous devons à des penseurs tels que Descartes, Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau et bien d'autres..."


343 Driss Abbassi, Entre Bourguiba et Hannibal: Identité tunisienne et histoire depuis l’indépendance (Aix-en-Provence; Paris: IREMAM-Karthala, 2005), 18. “La vision bourguibienne a fixé son projet futur sur ‘la synthèse culturelle” et son pendant linguistique dans l'objectif d'un renouveau culturel national...Si l’objectif de l’arabisation de l’enseignement a été posé dès le départ, l'échec de l’expérience socialiste, à la fin de l’année 1969, précipite les dirigeants vers une arabisation hâtive et immédiate à partir de 1970...Avec davantage d’appels à la langue arabe et d’ancrage dans l’espace musulman, le ‘national” surgit sur le devant de la scène en éclipsant la ‘synthèse culturelle,’ et le culte de la personnalité de Bourguiba atteint, à ce moment, son apogée.” This historiographical legacy of Bourguibism lends an ideological coherence to the scholarly corpus. The historical record tends to burnish Bourguibism, following the leader’s political trajectory, stopping just at independence; this trend can be seen most notably in the narrative constructions by Muhammad Sayah, a pivotal member of the Parti Socialiste Destourien (PSD) office between 1964-1987, whose writings trace Tunisian nationalism through the thread of Bourguiba’s life and political works in the Neo-Destour.
“Substantial progress has been made in sanitation and housing construction, particularly for lower and middle-income families…The fact that the government is working to build a modern, progressive nation explains why its prestige has remained intact in spite of the heavy responsibilities it has had to shoulder. Tunisia’s progress in every area during the last ten years…is visible to the naked eye; every Tunisian senses it and sees it all around him.”

Dubbed as a sign of ‘progress,’ the national project of *dégourbification*—the demolition of the old *ghorfas* and *gourbis* constructed by this disenfranchised, and otherwise homeless class—contributed to the much grander task of modernization, stalling the specter of so-called underdevelopment. *Dégourbification* had ramifications for the transformation, and merging, of the countryside as well as the urban centers. At the height of these systematic *gourbiville* demolitions, many homeless inhabitants hailing from the Sahelian steppes and other regions of the hinterland, often fled to the center of the medina in Tunis, as opposed to the usual formation of a perimeter around the city. As Paul Sebag admits, internal demographic shifts occurred within Tunis; for example, part of the native Muslim Tunisian population deserted the city center for the prestige of the suburbs, seeking an “apartment or a villa with electricity, plumbing, or running water, abandoning the patio, open house of their fathers.”

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Nevertheless, these grandiose visions belie the grim physical realities of displacement and dislocation. The disciplinary repression of spontaneous settlements was written into new planning codes; the law of February 4, 1976, for instance, declares the construction or the installation of barracks a punishable crime. To make matters worse, the housing demand far outpaced construction timelines. In 1956, nearly 100,000 people who had migrated from rural regions to the outskirts of Tunis lived in these spontaneously constructed gourbivilles, often built illegally on land of the habous or indigenous religious foundation. From 1960 to 1965, five such gourbivilles were demolished in Tunis, to be replaced by a new housing scheme, proposing the construction of 180,000 new buildings, of which only 104,000 were actually realized (about 80% allocated as private housing and only 20% popular housing). Ahmed Kassab has analyzed state attempts to control irregular and illegal gourbivilles, attempts which
First off, demolition was a costly endeavor. For example, the *gourbivilles* of Mellassine and Djebel Lahmar (“Red Mountain”), outside of Tunis (Figure 2.33), were left untouched out of a lack of funds. Even out of the *gourbis* that were razed, the urban poor residing in squatter settlements similar to the *gourbivilles* are overtly resistant to externally imposed transferal schemes; these new outposts usually become sequestered ghettos. These dislocations of Tunisians continued well into the 1970s. Social housing developments, it was assumed, would stunt the growth of spontaneous settlements. In 1975, the Ministry of Housing attempted to remove inhabitants from the Djebel Lahmar slum, not far from the University of Tunis. A new residential neighborhood called Cité Ibn Khaldun (Figure 2.34) was constructed, but was built however with little regard to the sociological needs of families, particularly

352 Charles Correa, “Urban Housing in the Third World: the Role of the Architect,” in Renata Holod, ed. *Architecture and Community: Building in the Islamic World Today* (New York: Aperture, 1983). See also Le Monde Économique, “Tunisia Faces the Future/La Tunisie Devant son Avenir” (Paris; Tunis, June 1956), 95. See also “Cité Ibn Khaldun.” “The Ibn Khaldoun settlement was conceived as a pilot project for the relocation of the population of two squatter settlements in the outskirts of Tunis. The first phase, consisting of the construction of 1,500 units (out of 5,100 projected units) for low-to-middle income residents, was completed in 1974. The chosen site was next to the squatter settlements. Three types of dwelling units were developed ranging from a two-room house on one level to a five-room house organized on two levels and set around a courtyard. The units were assembled in a variety of ways to form articulated linear blocks with an average density of 40 units/ha. The basic structure is load-bearing brick walls and reinforced concrete frame. All exterior surfaces are covered with cement plaster.” [www.archnet.org](http://www.archnet.org) (Accessed 2/14/13 4:33 PM)
concerning the spatial requirement of privacy. With the urbanized population of the entire country rising to nearly sixty percent by 1984, it became increasingly difficult for urban areas to support these burgeoning birth rates.

The selectivity over which gourbivilles to leave alone versus which to demolish points to the unsettling, discriminatory class and racialized politics at play in the postcolonial state. Bourguiba uses the language of insurgency to characterize the threat posed by the “slums and grottoes” to the state authority, calling upon the extraction of “shady elements, which at night, out of the holes of slums and grottoes of the hill of Sidi-Raïs-Ali, operate in the capital, transgress the laws, disturb public order and sustain a climate of insecurity.” For Bourguiba, the construct of modernity would not only place dignified living within reach of these so-called delinquent or unscrupulous peoples, but these ideologies would form the very basis of his housing policy. Yet as these newly urbanized ruralites, bedouins, and nomads settle in the city or along its peripheries, their perceived failures to successfully integrate in society were

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356 H.R.T. Davies, “Regional Planning in Tunisia,” Geography, vol. 74, no. 3 (June 1989): 255-259; 255. “The 1980 survey records much higher figures than the national average (1.0) for households living in shanties (gourbis) in Tunis (2.6), Sousse (2.1), Sfax (2.6) and Monastir (2.3), emphasizing the economic attractiveness of these Gourvernorat to many Tunisians. Yet the increasing urbanisation has not in many areas led to a decline in rural population.”

357 Santelli, Tunis, 109. “...éléments louches, qui la nuit venue, sortent des trous des taudis et des grottes de la colline de Sidi-Ali-Raïs pour évoluer dans la capitale, transgresser les lois, troublant l’ordre public et entretenant un climat d’insécurité.”

358 Fredj Stambouli, “Tradition et Modernité à Travers les Processus d’Urbanisation en Tunisie,” Les Influences Occidentales dans les villes Maghrébines à l’Époque contemporaine: L’urbanisation au Maghreb Systèmes culturels et systèmes urbains, Actes du Colloque d’Aix-en-Provence, Mai 1970 (Centre de Recherches et d’Études sur les Sociétés Méditerranéennes: Editions de l’Université de Provence, 1974), 266. “N’est-ce pas souligner aussi que de pareilles attitudes constituent un test d’intégration à la vie urbaine, intégration d’autant plus aisée que le groupe bénéficie déjà de traditions citadines, à l’inverse des casuels. Ils sont d’autant plus intégrés, qu’ils se perçoivent comme appartenant à une élite consciente de ses origines urbaines. Ils s’affirment d’autant plus, qu’ils s’opposent à ces bédouins déracinés ‘anarchiques et peu éduqués,’ et s’ils déclarent ne pas fréquenter les autres quartiers ou ne pas rendre souvent visite à leurs voisins, ce n’est pas parce que leur réseau de relations est pauvre et qu’ils se perçoivent comme des étrangers isolés, dans une ville à laquelle ils n’arrivent pas à s’adapter; c’est bien au contraire parce qu’en tant qu’élite, ils sélectionnent leurs amis et tiennent en dédain les bédouins des quartiers périphériques qu’ils connaissent vaguement et dont ils parlent avec un langage coloré, fortement significatif.”
demonized and criminalized by a state that in turn failed to provide adequately for a shiftingly dynamic, but sedentarizing population.

**Conclusion: Inhabiting Contradiction**

Policy implications of this seemingly innocuous term ‘habitat’ abound in the shifting postwar milieu, on both sides of the Mediterranean. In Tunisia, the dialectical processes of gourbi construction and dégourbification continued well into the 1980s. From 1975 to 1984 alone, the average annual growth rate of informal settlements remained steady at 3%, which over time resulted in about 1.3 million rudimentary dwellings by the mid-1980s. The Caisse Nationale d’Epargne Logement (CNEL), created in 1973, and the Société Nationale Immobilière (SNIT) in 1974, were together tasked with allocating finances for new social housing complexes. And although educational reform occupied a cornerstone of Bourguiba’s political agenda, the qualifications and vocational training required on the part of laborers and workers to execute these projects remained minimal. Nevertheless, the ideological rhetoric of evolution and

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360 Boubekeur, *Économie de la Construction à Tunis*, 89. “Dès lors, l’enjeu que constitue la réduction des coûts de la construction appelle des transformations du travail tel qu’il est pratiqué aujourd’hui sur les chantiers et rend urgent des solutions appropriées en matière de formation professionnelle. Mais sur ce plan, l’industrie du Bâtiment en Tunisie se heurte à une double difficulté: la main d’œuvre dans sa presque totalité ne possède aucune qualification et l’encadrement bien que formé ne répond pas aux besoins réels des chantiers.”
rationality seeped into nearly every sector of life, suggesting that Tunisians had yet to ‘evolve’ in a manner appropriate for a postcolonial modernity; even in architectural training programs in the early nation-state, students were encouraged to understand the problems of the environment in a ‘rational manner.’ Paired with an aerial view over the Tunis medina, as a starting point, a brochure of the École Nationale Supérieure d’Architecture in Tunis (Figure 2.35) highlights the professionalization of architects through model-making and methodologies that very much parallel CIAM functionalist principles, inferring that the progressive evolution of the architect must parallel that of the nation.

But the primitivizing discourses that undergirded the extermination of informal settlements point to the threat that mobile or nomadic populations posed to the nation-state. The discourses on ‘habitat’ and habitation in general attempt to reckon not only with this changing relationship between countryside and town, but between humanity, living, and labor. As Abdellah Hammoudi reflects on Pierre Bourdieu’s *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie* (1963), it is the forced encounter with colonial capitalism that burdens the Algerian peasant.\(^{361}\) By redesigning the urbanized peasantry’s *habitus*—or manner by which an individual interacts with his environment—through land ownership, consumption, and values of capitalist living, control and domination over this precarious demographic can then be exercised. To this day, *bidonvilles* remain a hotpoint in Maghrebi politics; the “Ville sans bidonville programme” instituted by the Moroccan government with support of the World Bank,\(^{362}\) seeks to eliminate *bidonvilles* in Morocco completely.


This notion of the vernacular intersects with the subtexts of primitivism—and by extension racial divisions endemic to colonial and imperial rule—363—are embedded in the postwar architectural discourses on habitation. Many CIAM delegations desired to understand the bidonville as a vernacular architectural typology (all the while failing to address the colonial beginnings of such informal settlements). But this globally engaged impulse in the 1950s, I think, reflects a very real introspective moment of crisis for the Euro-American architectural avant-garde. Inasmuch as the grid sought to provide a prefabricated identity for an urbanized dweller, it was a tool that also served to expand the role of the architect as orchestrator and enforcer of order against the backdrop of tidal waves of global political change. As I have sought to demonstrate, much of this discourse on habitation attempts to reconfigure what it is to be a consuming human in a capitalist apparatus. But gridding, or rationalizing, the gourbiville, it would seem, remains as mythical an endeavor as the encroaching threat of the gourbi is, itself.

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363 Von Osten, “Architecture Without Architects—Another Anarchist Approach.” “In essence, Modern city planning has always been bound to colonialism and imperialism—many large-scale technical developments were even tested and realized on colonial ground. Colonial modernity not only created global political and economic structures, pressing for the adoption of the nation state and capitalist forms of production, accompanied by oppression, exploitation, and the systematization of racial divisions…”
CHAPTER THREE
Decolonizing Patrimony:
Institutions, Nationhood, and the Construction of Heritage in Bourguiba’s Tunisia

Introduction

In the spring of 2014, I stumbled upon a rather heated debate on the page “Pour la sauvegarde de la Medina de Tunis.” The page, as an auxiliary social media platform of the Association de Sauvegarde de la Médina (ASM), promotes public dialogue about architecture and preservation in Tunisia today. The debate, however, was prompted by a group member’s seemingly straightforward, innocuous question: “Sauvegarder l’architecture coloniale, pourquoi?” This incited a range of responses: “Parce que ça fait partie de notre identité” replied one participant, while another followed up with the question, “Pourriez-vous la définir cette identité? Et dire comment l’héritage colonial s’y intègre?” This clash of opinion reveals not only a lively public discourse and discord regarding cultural patrimony but it illustrates the ethos of contestation and politics of preserving a marred colonial memory that is still fraught, fifty-nine years after independence. Where and what role nostalgia plays a role in the politics of preservation and in the construction of heritage remains yet to be seen.

Some critical, guiding questions might push us to think about the cultural stakes of patrimonial heritage: what is the nature of the value of consecrated architectural structures? What kind of collective investment do such conservation projects require, and how did preservationist interests shift before and after independence? Concerned with how the past is interpreted, reflected upon, and ultimately represented, these discussions foreground the sense of urgency regarding not only what Tunisian identity, or Tunisianité, means for contemporary Tunisians, but how this identity is to be constituted through the preservation of a very palimpsestic history of
terrestrial conquest, and a more recent colonial past. For architectural historian Nabila Oulebsir, the Arabic term “turāth” aligns closely to the connotation of patrimony, which pertains to material and spiritual heritage. How then, can we “decolonize” this turāth or patrimony if the structures containing it, defining it, maintain a colonial framework? And when it comes to heritage formation, or heritage creation, when and under what circumstances are memories instrumentalized, or silenced, for purposes other than serving collective interests? And how in the process of doing so, does the built environment and the preservation thereof, mold national identities?

In this chapter, I will present a critical overview of the construct and construction of heritage in Tunisia as it evolved from this postwar era of transition to the 1970s. While the institutional framework for preservation methods in Tunisia is rooted in residues of French colonial preservationist tactics, the seemingly impossible act of “decolonizing” patrimony entails not only an empowering act of re-appropriation, but also requires a strategic historical revisionism that re-narrates iconographies defining the newfound nation-state. Even following independence, strained but deep-seated economic entanglements continued to bind not just Tunisia and France, but Tunisia and the world at large. These entanglements bore the marks of developmental policies fashioned according to a new political economy, and by extension affected the formation of preservation practices and a different set of cultural priorities for

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365 Perkins, A History of Modern Tunisia, 130. “Bourguiba had masterfully employed the rhetoric of nationalism to mobilize hundreds of thousands of ordinary Tunisians behind the readily comprehensible demand to end French rule, but with independence fiery anti-colonial speeches lost most of their currency. To move from that achievement to the construction of a viable, prosperous, and modern state required convincing those same Tunisians of the merits of social and economic ideas that had taken a back seat during the campaign against the protectorate regime—ideas whose value they did not always find inherently obvious and that rarely enjoyed the breadth of support national liberation had.”
366 Ibid., 142. “Bourguiba’s permission for the Algerian Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) to establish camps inside Tunisia—a decision designed in part to outflank ben Yusuf, who had maintained close relations with the FLN since its inception—strained independent Tunisia’s rapport with France, leading to the suspension of promised economic assistance between 1957 and 1963. Only the infusion of substantial aid from the United States prevented the withholding of French funds from crippling the reforms already under way.”
Tunisia. But with the onset of independence, newly formed preservation institutions began to treat objects and sites in a more integrated approach with respect to the surrounding urban space. This was a strategic practice that was, in part, adopted due to the rapidly changing demographics and shifting socio-economic makeup of Tunisian cities. Nevertheless, I would contend that postcolonial preservationist practices very much reflect the conflicting desires of multiple publics and competing—and sometimes clashing—nationalist narratives.

Early on, French administrators concerned themselves with the protection of historic monuments. Throughout the nineteenth century, and as notions of nationalism developed, so too did collective attitudes about how best to cultivate and act as caretaker of the material past; these debates enabled the emergence of a specific type of dominant discourse regarding heritage, which was then to be promulgated by the state. Preservationist advocacy groups, like the Société pour la Protection des Paysages de France (SPPF; founded in 1901) or the Touring Club de France, along with syndicats d’initiative (civic-tourist development organizations) emerged in the fin de siècle, supporting the preservation of rural and urban landscapes. Museums, museology, and the near institutionalization of international expositions, operated as other modes through which notions of national identity and narratives of progress became naturalized.

Just one year before Tunisia became a French protectorate, the Ministry of Education sent an archaeological mission led by Beaux-Arts-trained architect Henri Saladin (1851-1923) to the country to document its ancient heritage, and again, in 1885 under the Department of Public Instruction, to record Islamic architecture in Tunis and Kairouan. This led to the first legislative text establishing the classification of buildings in 1886. Cataloging an inventory of Tunisia’s built heritage in the nineteenth century was not so much an effort to preserve these monuments, but an effort to amass and acquire antiquity, and construct a narrative that engulfed

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territories beyond France’s geopolitical borders, in the vein of Napoleon’s famed documentarian and encyclopedic, multi-tome publication of the *Description de l’Égypte* (1809-1829).\(^\text{368}\) Tunisian scholar Maryam Bacha has explored the protectorate administration’s vested interest in conserving the “Arab” sūqs and instated laws.\(^\text{369}\) Indeed, across the French colonized Maghreb, early twentieth-century colonial administrators feared the degradation of established artisans’ production of local and regional crafts, in response to the rising impact of mechanization and industrial corporations. Hamid Irbouh’s important study of how French art and craft education in protectorate Morocco forwarded a colonial agenda of cultural hegemony, provides an insightful account of the ways in which vocational trade schools and their pedagogies constructed value judgments about Moroccan visual culture.\(^\text{370}\) Prosper Ricard, a colonial official known in Morocco to have implemented a program to resuscitate waning artisanal production in 1918, trained his follower, Jacques Revault who would arrive in Tunisia in 1932 to head a similar service within the Office des Arts Indigènes.\(^\text{371}\) As will be discussed later, these institutionalized programs for craft production even extended to the cultural and segregationist politics of the urban environment. For instance, a decree had been issued in 1915 to order those living in the Tunisian coastal city of Sidi Bou Saïd on how to preserve architectural aspects of homes—

\(^{368}\) Patrick Young, “A Tasteful Patrimony? Landscape Preservation and Tourism in the Sites and Monuments Campaign, 1900-1935,” *French Historical Studies*, vol. 32, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 447-477; 456. When sites were assessed for their anticipated or actual levels of dilapidation, they were typically categorized as either *sites-paysages*, archaeological ruins, urban ensembles, or natural reserves. The guiding principle that protected some places over others was this potential a given site had to become what Young calls “tasteful patrimony”: “Those sites recognized in the campaign were the ones deemed to possess the greatest appreciable value beyond utility or local attachment or usage, namely, a historical and/or aesthetic significance that connected them symbolically to larger collectivities of nation or region…it was instead a patrimonial landscape more available for collective identification and consumption. What made it ‘tasteful’ was the conviction, universal among landscape advocates, that France’s natural setting was uncommon both for its seemingly limitless variety and for its overarching harmony…” See also K. Walsh, *The Representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Post-Modern World* (London: Routledge, 1992).


façades, public spaces or alleys, iron gates, etc.—in a manner that blended with the existing environment. Architectural aesthetics and the selective preservation of specific areas over others—here as elsewhere in the French colonial Maghreb—served as an exclusionary tactic to remove local strata from the spaces and political affairs of the *colons*. But these visual markers and historical layers of the urban landscape often occupy sites of long-lasting tensions, especially in the narration of plural histories.

However, the active push for urban preservation did not gain traction until the destruction that afflicted Tunisia following World War II, and in many ways, one cannot speak of preservation practices in Tunisia today without acknowledging the consequential successes and failures of reconstruction. As discussed in chapter one, Tunisia’s Sahelian cities of Tunis, Sfax, Bizerte, and Sousse—all of which were occupied by German and Italian Axis forces from November 1942 to May 1943—suffered considerable destruction, particularly in their infrastructures and public works. Initially, the team of architects hired to reconstruct the structural foundations of the protectorate concentrated their efforts on restoring basic infrastructure, such as clinics, administrative buildings, or, resettlement housing. For Chief Architect Bernard Zehrfuss, the vernacular took on a discursive role, and his readings of the country’s built history offer insights to his team’s architectural repertoire. Yet for Zehrfuss, the deeply layered histories of Tunisia offered a wealth of structural exemplars upon which to derive inspiration, from such Roman sites as the amphitheater at El Djem, the Phoenician city of

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372 Besim Hakim ed., *Sidi Bou Said: Structure and Form of a Mediterranean Village* (Emergent City Press, 2009 [1978]), 15-16. Even in the early twentieth century, the architectural integrity of the village was threatened by an increase in traffic to the area, in part due to the late nineteenth-century construction of a railway linking Sidi Bou Saïd and La Marsa.

Carthage, or its expansive and widespread legacy of Islamic monuments. It is in this postwar moment—on both sides of the Mediterranean—that we see a proto-regionalism emerge from anxieties of future cultural loss, and the beginnings of what would become an almost canonical narrativization of Tunisian heritage, dialectically in relation to the modern.

But as chapter two sought to elucidate, Tunisian cities continued to urbanize at alarming rates in the postwar and post-independence years. In accommodating these rural migrants, the built environment became ever more burdened by the great spatial demands and structural risks placed on existing infrastructure. A rural exodus followed the droughts of the 1960s that lasted for several years, with economic liberalization only accelerating the process of mass migrations. Land speculation and housing policies put in place to help already affluent classes have engendered these peri-urban habitats. Low-income families residing in these decrepit conditions were neither provided with adequate infrastructural services, nor were they afforded the opportunity to relocate to other parts of the city.

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375 Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, 144. “Between 1955 and 1959, 170,000 Europeans—roughly two-thirds of the total—left the country. Among them, in the first eighteen months alone, were 8,000 French functionaries…Some settlers left because they could not, or did not wish to, cope with the adjustments necessitated by independence. For others, the businesses in which they worked closed down or government restrictions made it difficult for them to earn a living.” For more on the changing demographic matrix of cities, see Jean Poncet, “Sycrétisme urbain en Tunisie,” in *Les influences occidentales dans les villes maghrébines à l’époque contemporaine* (Aix-en-Provence: Centre de Recherches et d’Etudes sur les Sociétés Méditerranéennes, 1974), 237-246.
376 H.R.J. Davies, “Regional Planning in Tunisia,” 255. “Most developing world countries report an increasing degree of urbanisation, Tunisia is no exception. Less than 30 percent of the population was urbanised in 1956, rising to 60 percent in 1984. The 1980 survey records much higher figures than the national average (1.0) for households living in shanties (gourbis) in Tunis (2.6), Sousse (2.1), Sfax (2.6) and Monastir (2.3), emphasizing the economic attractiveness of these Gouvernorat to many Tunisians. Yet the increasing urbanisation has not in many areas led to a decline in rural populations.”
How this shifting socio-cultural composition of Tunisian cities not only influenced preservation policies, but also birthed revisionist narratives of the heritage of the nation-state constitutes the crux of this final chapter’s investigation.

Redefining Patrimoine in the Postcolony

Without question, historic preservation—and the political and public mobilization needed to preserve structures and sites deemed worthy—intrinsically evokes the notion of collective memory (or memories) and the plural publics that bring about such interventions to preserve. There exists a thorough and rich body of scholarly work on French cultural patrimony, emerging in the 1980s amid growing academic writings within what would become known as memory studies, a subfield that would revive Maurice Halbwachs’ (1877-1945) ideas on the social construction of collective memory. Recent scholarship in France, undertaken by scholars such as Dominique Poulot, Jean-Pierre Babelon, and André Chastel, has sought to trace how changing social and power structures, from a prominent aristocracy to a nation-state form, have protected and even honed the idea of what constitutes patrimony as such. Public monuments served as a “witness to history and a work of art,” embodying collective testimonial to memories and ideas.\textsuperscript{378} Not necessarily a concrete masterpiece or treasure, patrimoine, Poulot contends, in its most banal sense, can be equated too with the legacies of objects and structures surrounding us—buildings, landscapes, heirlooms, archival holdings, etc.\textsuperscript{379} The significant work of Pierre Nora on the translation of the lieu de mémoire into idealized, mythologized vessels of French


nationhood.\textsuperscript{380} As Nora asserts, these sites of memory serve to “stop time, to inhibit forgetting, to fix a state of things.”\textsuperscript{381} But in the postcolony, at what point does the act of \textit{forgetting} become a collective desire?

The French concept of \textit{patrimoine}—a construct of comparable clout to that of ‘heritage’—carries a weighty sense of duty or responsibility, in maintaining the past and a nation’s inheritance. Heritage, Poulot describes, can be recognized by the value, documentary or aesthetic, ascribed to objects through their evaluation by any combination of actors—be they experts, politicians, or the public at large. How this process of identifying what sites or objects constitute patrimony in colonial and, postcolonial, contexts deserves particular attention as it begs innumerable questions regarding the ascription of historical, documentary, and aesthetic values. As Elizabeth Campbell Karlsgodt rightly points out, notions of \textit{le patrimoine} which emerged during the French Revolution are wholly different than the connotations of the term debated in France during the 1940s, and in turn contrast with cultural currencies of the term that later developed in the 1970s and 1980s.\textsuperscript{382} When the term was invoked in the 1940s, it usually denoted a collection of fine art, landmarks, antiquities, buildings and monuments. Amidst the destruction and debris of the Second World War, the needs for a standardized and centralized policy of patrimony became ever more pressing.\textsuperscript{383} Much of French patrimonial policy took shape under the four years of the Vichy regime, implementing codes that were proposed in the interwar period and later instantiated in the postwar years; key traditionalist thinkers included Jérôme Carcopino and Louis Hautecoeur, who promoted the position that the state is the chief

\textsuperscript{381} Ibid. (1986), 15.
\textsuperscript{383} Ibid., 12.
caretaker of a nation’s cultural heritage. Subsequently, the provisional government of Gaullist bureaucrats sustained legal measures that underscored the protection of French national riches, entailing excavation sites, museum collections, and historic preservation. With these varying sites and structures in mind, it becomes apparent that patrimony stands as a flexible, and easily manipulated concept. In 1947, the Fourth Republic reinstituted a law dating back to 1942, which mandated that all new commemorative monuments undergo a process of approval by the state, so as to standardize the aesthetics not just of monuments and their political inscriptions but also public spaces. But the question of how iterations of patrimonial preservation models were grafted onto colonial contexts, and subsequently, how postcolonial Maghrebi nations repurposed, refashioned, or reinvented these same notions, has not yet been sufficiently explored.

Heritage Construction as an Alignment Strategy in Independent Tunisia

Saving and maintaining buildings not only permits the physical reconstruction of historical structures, but it also enables a certain reconstitution of the past. The process of patrimonialization has led to the rediscovery of cultural wealth, to be reflected upon and cherished by future generations. Subsequent conservation efforts, though seemingly well-intentioned and beneficial for the local populations, exhibits some less savory aspects of what Karlsogd dubs *patrimania*, defined in her words as “a condition in which cultural and political

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384 Ibid., 264.
385 Ibid., 274. Karlsogd explains that the provisional ordinance of 1945 maintained policies that were in place from 1941, declaring the advisory role of councils and monitoring of museums through *fonctionnaires* (civil servants).
387 Karlsogd, *Defending National Treasures*, 275.
figures succumb to opportunism in their pursuit of cultural acquisitions—not for personal gain but for the institutions they serve.”

Preservation ideologies and actions serve state and private institutions on multiple levels, and sometimes the public itself: cultural (e.g. public or national celebrations, commemoration of historic events); economic (heritage tourism); and environmental (sustainability of building materials; curbing traffic and urban sprawl). What is the preservationist interest in “buildings as history” in Tunisia, for instance?

Despite the growing prominence of heritage across the world today, Laurajane Smith provocatively claims that there is in fact “no such thing as heritage.” Pointing to its fundamentally discursive attributes, in the ways that it is written and discussed about in the public, Smith gestures towards the mechanisms and political principles that render heritage a constructed concept. Taking cues from John Urry, Smith underscores that heritage is a set of cultural practices, which regulate and cohere certain shared values. What she coins as an “authorized heritage discourse”—to be differentiated from this baseline understanding of heritage—constitutes a hegemon, “privile[ing] monumentality and grand scale, innate artefact/site significance tied to time depth, scientific/aesthetic expert judgment, social consensus and nation building.”

Inherent within this discourse is a division between those who are empowered to speak about or for a certain narrative of heritage, and those who are either wholly disenfranchised or unable to assert similar claims.

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390 Karlsgodt, Defending National Treasures, 4.
391 Milligan, “Buildings as History: The Place of Collective Memory in the Study of Historic Preservation,” 105-106. As Milligan asserts, public perception of the authenticity and historicity of a given building is constantly changing from the shifting present; it is subjectively determined. In this way, value is intrinsically bound up with collective memory. She states, “Contemporary historic preservation is inherently entwined with collective memory because of its concern with protecting elements of the historic built environment collectively deemed worthy.” (111)
396 Smith, Uses of Heritage, 11.
What interests us at the historical juncture of post-independence Tunisia, are the political and economic objectives the State pursued in the development of a national heritage agenda. Institutions—both national and international—serviced these broader goals of President Habib Bourguiba’s economic alignment with the West.\footnote{Perkins, \textit{A History of Modern Tunisia}, 140. “Instead, the Bourguiba government won praise for its assault on ‘outmoded traditions’ and its expansion of education and enhancement of the status of women. These social policies, coupled with Bourguiba’s unflinching Cold War alignment with the West, helped to secure the economic assistance of the United States, which touted Tunisia as a model for other developing countries, comparing it particularly favorably with Arab states that had sacrificed social progress to revolutionary politics.”} In her analysis of the globalization of heritage as a concept, Aurélie Gfeller provides an intellectual history of the term’s shifting meanings since the 1972 World Heritage Convention held by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).\footnote{Gfeller, “Negotiating the Meaning of Global Heritage,” 486. “During the last two decades, international and global historians have shown how Cold War rivalries shaped not only the production of artistic and literary goods but also their diffusion, perception, and (re)appropriation. The gist of these works is that cultural production and management during the Cold War cannot be understood independently from the battle between competing ideologies and rival foreign and military policies. Yet the field of immovable cultural heritage conservation—which was primarily archaeological and architectural heritage conservation during this period—remained largely impervious to Cold War dynamics.”} Gfeller demonstrates that World Heritage categories have expanded beyond the conventional, canonical confines of archaeological sites, monuments, art works, etc., but have come to include what she appropriately dubs “cultural landscapes” (e.g. sites that include natural wonders in addition to modern, rural, and industrial architecture) drawing on the work of art historian W.J.T. Mitchell on the relationships between landscape and imperial power structures.\footnote{W.J.T. Mitchell, ed., \textit{Landscape and Power} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 5-34.} While Gfeller contends that cultural heritage conservation policies remained impervious to and unaffected by Cold War dynamics,\footnote{Aurélie Elisa Gfeller, “Negotiating the Meaning of Global Heritage: ‘Cultural Landscapes’ in the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, 1972-1992,” \textit{Journal of Global History}, vol. 8 (2013): 483-503.} what we will see, however, is that preservation practices were indeed motivated by these geopolitical realignments.
“La ville est malade”:

*Secteurs Sauvegardés, the Loi Malraux, and Preservation of the Medina*

In Tunisia, preservation practices which developed not only in tandem with the shifting global politics of alignment and non-alignment, but as a direct consequence of—and potential solution to—the country’s dire domestic economic constraints. The Tunisian state apparatus, as will be shown subsequently, molded a notion of heritage that was pliable enough to be deployed for strategic political and economic purposes.

To gain a clear sense of the measures that brought about the institutions and economic incentives for heritage and preservation policies in Tunisia, we must turn to postwar France, where the art theoretician, novelist, and Minister of Cultural Affairs, André Malraux (appointed by President Charles de Gaulle in 1959), and his vision of French cultural policy that would spread in Tunisia as well. Malraux’s clout stems from his instrumental part in shaping and establishing the legal and bureaucratic body of patrimonial preservation in postwar France. At a time, during the so-called “Trente Glorieuses,” when French society found itself in the midst of a crisis of national identity, the specter of a unifying, French cultural heritage capable of providing such direly needed republican cohesion, receded further from the realm of possibility.

Though France remained embroiled in the Algerian War of Independence and met the struggles with its decolonizing protectorates, Malraux’s legacy is keenly felt across the former colonies as well. As Herman Lebovics illustrates, Malraux’s personal involvement with the colonized global South runs deep: while he wrote anticolonial journalistic pieces and novels set in Indochina, he also plundered the Khmer temple of Banteay Srei in Cambodia’s Angkor

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401 Philippe Poirrier, “Heritage and Cultural Policy in France under the Fifth Republic,” *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, vol. 9, no. 2(2003): 215-225; 221. “From the French Revolution to the present day, the State in France has used the heritage as a means of nation-building. But the sense of what is being protected—moving from historical monuments to heritage—has undergone a profound evolution...This article shows the degree to which the State has influenced the evolution of the notion of heritage.”
region. What Malraux’s law of 1962—the “Loi Malraux” as it would be called—secured was the state’s capacity to appropriate, in collaboration with private funding partnerships, in a rather hegemonic fashion, the spaces and forms that would be renewed and reframed for France. However, by stressing façadisme—the prescription for material surfaces and façades of buildings to be kept in pristine condition—it is clear that his law would re-narrate France’s past so as to generate an alternate image of France, and its future.

Beginning in 1966, heritage preservation became grouped under the administrative umbrella of the Institut National d’Archéologie et d’Art (INAA). Tunisian urban historian Jellal Abdelkafi marks this phase as a period during which the country and the Ministry of Culture faced a crisis of national identity, and were tasked with crafting a national culture. It is with this in mind that the importance of the Loi Malraux for Tunisia cannot be underestimated, for it was to shape the foundation of one of the country’s preeminent post-independence preservation institutions: the aforementioned Association de Sauvegarde de la Médina (ASM), founded in 1967, the first of its kind in North Africa. By the late 1960s, the general consensus among elites was that their beloved medina was ailing; ‘la ville est malade,’ they worried. Apart from

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404 Ibid., 63.
406 Sémia Akrout-Yaïche, ed., *Tunis Living Heritage: Conservation and Creativity, Association de Sauvegarde de la Médina (1980-2012)* (Tunis: ASM, 2012), 35. “By the 1960s, it had become apparent to heritage specialists in Europe and the Mediterranean that the protection of historic cities had become far more than a question of restoring great monuments to their original glory. Under the impact of the thinking behind legislation like the Loi Malraux of France, a new approach emerged: the treatment of valued historic urban fabric as a complex unity, requiring a multidisciplinary approach and hence institutions which could think and operate holistically. Forty-five years on, the creation of the ASM by the Municipality of Tunis was clearly a farsighted move. The questions raised by the association—about the meaning of the medina for the citizens of Tunis, about the processes at work in the decline and renewal of the built fabric—remain as relevant today as they were in the late 1960s. It should be stressed that the institution was the first of its kind in Tunisia and the Arab states; its format and strategies were to be adopted elsewhere in its home country and much examined abroad.”
centuries-old courtyard homes and infrequently repaired structures, the health of this sick city was largely fading due to its equally suffering dwellers; a census from the mid-1960s revealed that more than sixty percent of those living within the medina’s walls earned less than eighty dollars per month. A later survey, conducted from 1975, noted that the at least 22,000 lodgings in the medina were in dire need of repair, and that another 5,000 faced certain demolition. Yet the call for rehabilitation is less grounded in humanitarian good will, and more motivated, instead, by the aestheticization program of the Tunisian state.

Malraux’s influential essay, Les voix du silence (1951), elucidates his conception of the musée imaginaire, whereby the space of the museum functions to provide the voice—effectively a coherent narrative—speaking for the collective, “silent” objects. Hannah Feldman has recently analyzed the ways in which Malraux’s schema effectively removes objects and their accompanying spaces from their historical contexts, thereby silencing certain temporalities; in effect, objects are rendered immortal, timeless. As she explains, Malraux would position the “image itself as a conduit to naturalize, if not produce, the model of an eternality freed from the constraints of time or place, as cultural policy.” The task at hand was to reimagine not only the spatial and historical narrative of French culture, but to reconstruct, and, essentially restrict the publics and peoples associated with that cultural space. At the instance of his appointment as Minister of Cultural Affairs, his chief responsibility was to render “the masterpieces of humanity, and especially that of France, available to the largest number of Frenchmen; to secure the largest audience for our cultural heritage; and to prioritize both the works and the spirit that

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408 Ibid., 432.
409 Feldman, From a Nation Torn, 24-25.
410 Ibid., 34.
Malraux’s fixed emphasis on preserving those Parisian landmarks and neighborhoods that would boost the claims of France’s sovereignty and cultural preeminence, paralleled those very same modes of selectivity undergirding urban preservation principles in Francophone contexts as well.

In universalizing art and culture, Malraux would essentially extricate aesthetics and heritage writ large from their political and indeed, colonial, realities. Cleverly dubbing him the “traveling salesman of French culture,” Lebovics highlights that Malraux’s brand of cultural diplomacy services unabashedly reincarnated aspects of the longstanding mission civilisatrice. Indeed, in 1959, Malraux traveled to Martinique and Guadeloupe, speaking to Aimé Césaire on the shared fraternity between France and its Caribbean colonies (which voted to remain with France). In 1960 he would visit Fort Lamy in Chad and in 1966, Senegal, where he met with President Léopold Senghor. Speaking to President Nehru in India, Malraux hoped his humanist desires for cultural heritage would reach the future of Indian culture: “‘It’s a question of making the past of India present, as nobly as possible, for the greatest number of Indians. It isn’t easy but it isn’t insurmountable.’”

Similar to Malraux’s assertion, it is this coalescence of the past and present visions of heritage that crystallized a sort of state-authorized heritage narrative, leading to preservation policies and priorities.

With the collaboration of Malraux and Pierre Sudreau, the freshly appointed minister of construction and urbanism, the more decrepit urban spaces of France were to receive a complete renovation. Of course, this was practically an impossible task. By December of 1961, Malraux

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412 Lebovics, Mona Lisa’s Escort, 170-172.

413 Ibid., 172-173.
called for France’s architectural patrimony to be restored, not just for decorative purposes but because the buildings themselves often contained structural threats. A law dating back to 1852 had been reinstituted at the time, beseeching owners and landlords to “keep the façades of the buildings in a good state of cleanliness.” It is this repurposing and adaptation of previous legislation to serve the needs of the present, which demonstrates historical links to nineteenth-century preservation practices established among others, by the architect Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (e.g. his seminal text, *Dictionnaire raisonné de l’architecture française du XIe au XVIe siècle* (1854-1869).

Feldman argues that this heightened preoccupation with exterior embellishments and material surfaces must be seen in correlation with the whitewashing and maintenance of an ethnically “white” Paris, to the exclusion of quickly growing numbers of North African communities in France. The existing and future decay of certain Parisian *quartiers* presented a national threat, Malraux told the National Assembly in 1959. Preservation, as it was carried out by Henri Prost and other technocrats, can be seen as having paradoxically forwarded a cause antithetical to its underlying ambition—loss and erasure. Malraux’s fixed emphasis on preserving those Parisian landmarks and neighborhoods that would boost the claims of France’s sovereignty and cultural preeminence.

When this law was first applied to the Marais quarter in Paris, dilapidated and run-down areas which were designated for preservation for their stated aesthetic or historical value, were dubbed *secteurs sauvegardés*; the law requires that each *secteur sauvegardé* must “conserve, restore, and enhance an area by the re-instatement, modernization or demolition of buildings

414 Feldman, *From a Nation Torn*, 46. This law had resurfaced on 7 May 1936. Feldman indicates that the language specified “*ravalement*” (cleaning the façade with washing, repainting or chiseling).
with a view to the transformation of living and working conditions.**415 This segment from the
stated law demonstrates that demolition went hand-in-hand with preservationist measures, and
that re-formation and transformation could only be engendered through destructive actions.

While this is true of France, it is also characteristic of the very cyclical and layered
processes of demolition and preservation in Tunisia. What policies were developed to
reconstitute or reform the built legacies of Tunisia’s cities? As Jellal Abdelkafi asks, in what
ways do safeguarding policies serve the needs of inhabitants? How have preservationist
measures changed since decolonization, how might priorities have shifted in light of
globalization, and in this light, how do we define the relationship between architecture’s
aesthetic value and its potential for material value as well? Furthermore, how do these values
frame cultural and built heritage as a means of defining Tunisian nationhood?

Jacques Berque, the eminent historian of colonial North Africa, wrote that the Maghreb’s
cities in the interwar period were becoming “monsters”**416 due to their population influxes. His
explanation—so hyperbolic in its disgust—is worth a closer look not just for its rampant racism,
but also for its illustration of a very real urban crisis for which there seemed to be no immediate
solution. As discussed in the previous chapter, the gourbi home became increasingly widespread
in the mid-twentieth-century Tunisia. Sociological studies conducted early in the ASM’s
preliminary evaluations confirmed that many structures in the medina had become oukalisés or

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Planning Institute 59 (1972): 357-362; 360.
Faber and Faber Limited, 1967), 185. “In North Africa, as elsewhere, during the period we are concerned with,
many great cities were turning into monsters. By the mid-thirties they gave their inhabitants, and also the authorities,
the impression that they were defying the laws of normal growth. They aroused pessimism, as well as enthusiasm;
their dizzy rate of growth was fascinating and yet terrifying. Now one’s neighborhood is what protects one from the
monster…This is the case in North Africa where every town was being invaded at this period by a population whose
homelessness was as characteristic as the irregularity of their resources.”
had undergone a process of *oukalisation*.\(^{417}\) That is to say, these cells that open onto a private, enclosed courtyard would operate much in the same way as a *funduq* or caravanserai (often located adjacent to markets), temporarily accommodating not just seasonal workers, but travelers, merchants and the like. The result of this overcrowding in the medina had essentially rendered such formerly transitory spaces as permanent residences of landless migrants to the city.\(^{418}\)

By 1961, President Bourguiba organized a colloquium to address the possibilities for rehabilitation or destruction. As urban ethnographer Justin McGuinness succinctly recounts the situation, “demolishing the past was the order of the day.”\(^{419}\) But the ASM’s mission in ameliorating such squalor was set out in its collaboration with an Atelier d’Urbanisme (AU) which sought to devise a revised master plan for the medina. Options included tunneling under the medina to open it to traffic flow, or building over extant structures.\(^{420}\) Yet, both in Berque’s outright Orientalist, and dehumanizing descriptions of midcentury North African cities and in

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\(^{417}\) Eckert and El-Kefi, “L’Espace traditionnel de la ville de Tunis la médina et les deux Rbat faubourg ou gourbiville?” 218. “Si ce processus global a pu être qualifié de *gourbification*, le mode d’utilisation de la maison traditionnelle de Médina par les locataires immigrés sera appréhendé à travers le concept de l’*oukalisation*…L’ukāla, dans une médina traditionnelle, est une structure d’accueil. Organisée morphologiquement comme le sūq—dont la différencie essentiellement l’absence de cheminement: c’est un sūq en cul-de-sac—elle participe de l’espace masculin ouvert de la cité. Les cellules qui ouvrent sur le patio tout en longueur de ce sūq tronqué fonctionnent à l’instar de tout ensemble de cellules de sūq: il s’y déroule une activité masculine. Si ailleurs, celles-ci dormir, de l’hébergement nocturne d’hommes seuls, voyageurs ou ouvriers saisonniers, qui n’ont pas droit de cité dans la médina. Certains funduqs fonctionnent de la même façon.”

\(^{418}\) Ibid., 220. “La présence d’un quartier traditionnel d’ukālas près des sūqs d’une part et l’extension de l’*oukalisation* vers la partie basse de la médina d’autre part posent le problème de l’ancienneté et du rythme de ce processus qui a entamé l’ensemble de la vieille cité: l’*oukalisation* comme expression d’un processus d’immigration qui va en s’intensifiant. Il est par ailleurs notamment le fait de paysans sans terre qui, arrivés en ville, grossissent les effectifs d’un sous-prolétariat que la ville, à son tour, rejette vers un mode d’existence d’allure traditionnelle, faut de structures d’accueil intégrant et urbanisantes: c’est une ville économiquement sous-développée, sans industries.”

\(^{419}\) Justin McGuinness, “Political Context and Professional Ideologies: French urban Conservation Planning Transferred to the Médina of Tunis,” *The Journal of North African Studies*, 2:2 (2007): 34-56; 38. “…a new nation was being constructed, the médina was a phantom from the past, and the vision of the architecte de la Présidence, Olivier Clement Cacoub, resolutely modernist.”

Bourguiba’s intentions to raze parts of Tunis’ medina, articulate a vivid testimony to the classist perceptions of elite Tunisians at this seemingly out-of-hand socio-urban phenomenon.

At the beginning of these ventures in preservation, the focus lay in taking preventative measures to ensure that architectural elements of historical, noteworthy buildings would not succumb to collapse, and later on, the emphasis was placed on preserving the urban fabric as a whole. According to the mission statement, the stated goal of the ASM set to repair and protect architectural gems, while better integrating these structures in their surrounding urban spaces, but through the eyes of the médinas’ inhabitants. This strategic inclusion of the locals’ concerns and perspectives is tremendously important, for in the preservationists’ minds such advocacy attends to cultural sensitivities.

The ASM’s mission statement claims to “work towards the protection of traditional urban ensembles, historical monuments and all objects of cultural heritage character and conduct any action likely to ensure the preservation and enhancement of the médina [of Tunis].” As the brainchild of the Governor-Mayor, Mr. Hasseb Ben Ammar, the initiative sought to protect the médina of Tunis, “a pillar of Tunisian identity” which had long been socially devalued and left to decay. From 1970 to 1974, a project of preservation—Sauvegarde et mise en valeur de la Médina de Tunis en vue du développement—was undertaken at the behest of UNESCO as a combined cultural and economic effort. The central tenets and objectives of the ASM outline this culture-preserving, economy-boosting enterprise to:

- promote public awareness of urban heritage and safeguard structures based on a thorough knowledge of the medina; preserve and restore monuments in the medina, adapting them to newer functions; promote the restoration of houses and buildings in the historic

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422 Statute of the ASM, 29 August 1967: “d’œuvrer pour la protection des ensembles urbanistiques traditionnels, des monuments historiques et de tous les objets à caractère de patrimoine culturel et de mener toute action susceptible d’assurer la préservation et la mise en valeur de la Médina.”
districts of Tunis by providing technical assistance and advice to their owners; provide technical coordination between municipal departments and other agencies working in the historic neighborhoods of Tunis; sensitize, train and mentor stakeholders in the Medina and promote small businesses by combining the artisans to site remediation and restoration.423

Such preservation successes as the 1973 rehabilitation project of the quaint resort village, Sidi Bou Said424 or the 1983 rehabilitation project of the former Jewish Hafisia Quarter425—both of which won the Aga Khan Award for Architecture—tried to attend to not just structural problems but to the spatial needs and sensitivities of the inhabitants themselves.

However, the populist rhetoric was yet again very different from the reality of the initial rehabilitation efforts, and many people felt excluded from the bureaucratic and planning schemes of the ASM. One informant complained: “There was no contact with the population. It was an affair between the Tunisois political apparatus and the technicians…it was the planner who took

423 “Sensibiliser le public à l’importance du patrimoine urbain et promouvoir les idées de sauvegarde en se basant sur une connaissance approfondie de la Médina; Préserv er et restaurer des monuments dans la Médina et les adapter à de nouvelles fonctions; Promouvoir la restauration des demeures et des immeubles situés dans les quartiers historiques de Tunis en apportant aide technique et conseil à leurs propriétaires; Assurer la coordination technique entre les services municipaux et autres organismes travaillant dans les quartiers historiques de Tunis; sensibiliser, former et encadrer les intervenants dans la Médina et promouvoir les petits métiers en associant les artisans aux chantiers de réhabilitation et de restauration.”

424 In 1980, the project won the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, lauded “for the efforts over a long period of time by a community toward the conservation of their village. Based on true understanding of the architectural values of the village, legislation has been enacted controlling maintenance, expansion and vehicular circulation, and the sense of place has been kept. Sidi Bou Saïd has retained not only the picturesque quality of a village, but its very essence.” In reality, the old public squares and narrow alleys were preserved so as to protect a former romantic urban landscape, very much in conflict with the circulation needs of the people. Renata Holod and Darl Rastorfer, “Sidi Bou Saïd,” in Architecture and Community (New York: Aperture, 1983), 106. It is unclear who the actual craftsmen of the renovation project were. It seems that much of the labor and craftsmanship came from Sidi Bou Said itself. But the owners generally do not receive loans or aid from banks in renovating their homes. Credit loans are possible through the Caisse Nationale d’Epargne Logement (CNEL) but these are usually restricted to the construction of new buildings.


425 “Hafisia Quarter,” The Aga Khan Trust for Culture. “The planners have succeeded in maintaining a harmonious relationship with the scale and construction of the old neighbourhood as well as the nearby modern structures. The project failed, however, as low-income housing. Local political forces made the housing available to shopkeepers, artisans, white-collar workers, executives and professionals to the complete exclusion of the local poor. The jury found the project to be "a noteworthy attempt to deal with the problem of urban public housing in a sensitive and humane fashion." They pointed out, however, that it was flawed "physically in its detailing and execution, and socio-economically in its inability to cater for the needs of the lower-income residents of the medina."
on the responsibility for interpreting surveys, he was supposed to reconstitute the meanings of the population.”

The disconnected and possibly ill-informed architect-planner did not escape accountability. Pervasive into the 1990s, demolition within the medina continued, with the so-called Oukala Project—the destruction of homes deemed unsafe in the medina, which coerced more than 1200 families to housing developments on the outskirts of Tunis. Speaking to an informant, McGuinness notes that the ASM discourse on urban enhancement fed into the broader state-approved heritage policy on cities:

In 1990, the Ministry of the Environment was created, and in talking about environment, this led on to pollution, assainissement, urban environment and medinas...so you came back to the things the ASM was talking about. Today, for example, the Ministry of the Interior has a budget for the enhancement (embellissement) of cities. So there was a return to the real world as against the ideology, which consisted in saying that a New State was being created...the logic of instauration (creation, establishment) of Bourguiba, versus that of maintaining things.

According to Ellen Micaud, part of the initiatives to beautify the medina were jumpstarted by the vast touristic agenda of Minister Ahmed Ben Salah. In 1972 and 1975 were similar analyses executed to evaluate the conservations needs for the Casbah of Algiers and Fez, respectively. As we will now explore, this larger politics of conservation would reveal a built

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427 Ibid., 47.
428 Ibid., 48.
429 Micaud, “Urbanization, Urbanism, and the Medina of Tunis,” 437. “We may suppose that it was the actual presence of busloads of tourists in the medina that prompted the Tunisian elite to take another look at this quarter.”
430 Jellal Abdelkafi, “Evolving Medinas,” in Marcello Balbo, ed., The Medina: the Restoration and Conservation of Historic Islamic Cities (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 75. “In 1969, the Casbah Atelier and the Comedor, or the Permanent Committee for the Study, Organization and Development of Greater Algiers, whose stated purpose was to accord emergency priority to upgrading the city’s slums and substandard housing, so that ‘the inhabitants can live in decent conditions and reintegrate the Casbah back into the city. In 1973, the Association of the Friends of Historical Monuments of Cairo, which would prepare intervention projects in Fatimid Cairo and determine the scope of sectors to be placed under protection.’”
431 Sheila Crane, “Making Mute Arches Sing: Abderrahman Bouchama and Post-Revolutionary Architecture in Algeria,” Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review, vol. 20, no. 1, IASTE Conference Abstracts (Fall 2008), 53. Paper unpublished. Crane draws upon the rarely cited writings of Frantz Fanon, L’An V de la revolution algérienne (1959). One such critic, Algerian architect Abdelrahman Bouchama published just one year prior to the ASM’s formation—in 1966—a group of essays called L’Arceau qui chante (The Arch that Sings). As a response to the Charte d’Alger of 1964, Bouchama promoted the idea that “silenced” buildings should rather sing, the
heritage policy adopted in Tunisia that remained fixated on an aesthetics of embellissement—not necessarily intended for those who dwell among these rehabilitated structures—but for a discourse of nation and identity that is constructed from without.

Mise en valeur and the Staging of Ruins: Archaeological Tourism

The musée imaginaire of Malraux echoed throughout Tunisia as well. Indeed, just before the break of independence, there were parallel concerns regarding the retention of the mise en valeur,\textsuperscript{432} intrinsically connected to façades, in Tunisian heritage sites. Even in the waning years of the French protectorate, the complete or partial reconstruction of monuments—and maintaining this sense of mise en valeur—was fundamentally intertwined with touristic opportunism. In 1953, the Principal Architect of Historic Monuments Alexandre Lézine, an architect of Russian background,\textsuperscript{433} expounded in his Notes sur la Consolidation des Monuments Historiques de Tunisie, his prescriptions for the preservation of ancient sites such as: the Roman amphitheater of El-Djem (e.g. repairs to the antique stone masonry, particularly in the walls); the casbah of Sousse (e.g. repairs to the towers, walls, and enclosures); the eighteenth-century palace of Dar Ben Abdallah in Tunis (e.g. installation of new hardwood floors; repairs to the tiles); the Baths of Antonin at Carthage (e.g. reconstruction of vaults by the method of locking and enhancement of and re-articulation of past forms. Steering away from the high modernist notoriety of such contemporary nationalist projects like Chandigarh or Brasilia, Bouchama sought not merely to just replicate traditional architectural structures, but to dialectically rethink the future built environment in relation to the existing one.


\textsuperscript{433} Faiza Matri, Tunis sous le protectorat: Histoire de la conservation du patrimoine architectural (Tunis: Centre de Publication Universitaire, 2008), 409. Lézine acquired his diploma of architecture in 1937, and he joined the ‘corps de bâtiments de France’ in 1948.
suspension of reinforced concrete); the Chapelle d’Astérius, from the 7\textsuperscript{th} century CE (e.g. reassembly of parts of the chapel; removal and installation of mosaics); Dougga (e.g. the construction of an Office of Tourism and housing on site for the conservator; “exemple de construction moderne au cœur d’un site antique”); the ninth-century Aghlabite basin of Kairouan (e.g. repairs due to bombardments); and finally, the aqueduct of Zaghouan (e.g. a consolidation of rubble at the base, which lies adjacent to a busy road).\textsuperscript{434} He cites the necessity to implement new buildings for touristic use, while not yielding to trends of pastiche and still remaining sensitive to the character of the existing architecture and site at hand:

We must say two words on one of the most difficult problems that sometimes arises for the architect of historic monuments; new constructions may be forcibly built in the direct vicinity of ancient monuments, such as guard houses, tourism reception centers, local museums, etc….We must banish any idea of pastiche in these realizations. The real tradition of art is to live with the times; slavish copying of works from the past is proof of powerlessness. It is of course necessary to remain in harmony with the old elements of the site where we built. This effect can be obtained by the material and color used and not by the copy of forms.\textsuperscript{435}

What Lézine and his superiors back in France were most anxious about was how a visual and aesthetic harmony, and in particular, qualities such as “good proportion,” “sobriety” and “vertical linearity,” could be ensured in the face of new constructions around extant historical sites. Lézine elaborates on his considerations for the outward appearances of historic sites:

It is necessary to distinguish the problem, in the particular case of new constructions in the Medina, where limitations of style were justly imposed. The building façade of a particular style then constitutes a real archaeological reproduction. This must be limited to areas where similar recreations are really needed. The development and the mise en

\textsuperscript{434} Alexandre Lézine, \textit{Notes sur la Consolidation des Monuments Historiques de Tunisie} (Direction des Antiquités et Arts de Tunisie, 1953), 7-8. For each site, specific repairs were required and outlined.

\textsuperscript{435} Ibid., 5. “Dison deux mots d’un des plus délicats problèmes qui se posent parfois à l’architecte des monuments historiques: celui des constructions nouvelles qu’on peut être contraint d’élever immédiatement à proximité de monuments anciens: maisons de gardiens, centres d’accueil de touristes, musées locaux, etc…Il faut bannir toute idée de pastiche de ces réalisations. La véritable tradition de l’art est de vivre avec son temps, la copie servile des œuvres du passé n’ayant jamais été qu’une preuve d’impuissance. Il est bien entendu nécessaire de rester en harmonie avec les éléments anciens du site où nous construisons. Cet effet peut être obtenu par la matière et la couleur employées et non par la copie des formes.”
valeur of monuments or ruins is of great importance in a country that wants to see increased interest to tourists.\textsuperscript{436}

Referencing the authority of the \textit{Manuel de la Technique des Fouilles Archéologiques}, which was compiled in 1937 by archaeologists who convened to develop a standardized approach to the management of excavations sites, Lézine emphasizes the necessity of showcasing (\textit{mettre en valeur}) the monuments in such a way that the surrounding areas—whether museums or garden spaces—do not detract attention from the sites themselves.\textsuperscript{437}

Neither recourse to pastiche nor superimposed modernism per se were encouraged.\textsuperscript{438} Against this backdrop, we see the seeds of the packaging of the built environment as heritage, to serve a projected tourist industrial complex. Archaeology and tourism work hand in hand.\textsuperscript{439}

\textsuperscript{436} Ibid., 6. “Il y a lieu de distinguer le problème précédent du cas particulier des constructions nouvelles dans certaines Médina où des servitudes de style ont été justement imposées. La constructions de façades d’un style déterminé constitue alors une véritable restitution archéologique. Encore faut-il se limiter aux zones où de semblables restitutions s’imposent vraiment. L’aménagement et la mise en valeur des monuments ou des ruines a une grande importance dans un pays qui désire voir s’accroître son intérêt touristique.”

\textsuperscript{437} Ibid., 7-8. Lézine references the \textit{Manuel de la Technique des Fouilles Archéologiques}, which was compiled in 1937 by archaeologists who convened to develop a standardized approach to the management of excavations sites. In an almost literal nod to the nineteenth-century debates between the interventionist-leaning Viollet le Duc (1863; 1872) and the very hands-off preservationist, John Ruskin (1849), Lézine takes on a very Ruskinian position: “the architect believes that repairs to an ancient monument should remain invisible to not change its appearance.” See also Lézine, 5: “…retrouver les techniques et l’outillage du passé, rechercher et remettre en exploitation d’anciennes carrières, analyser et reconstituer la composition des mortiers, former des cadres et des ouvriers.” On the theoretical discussion of historical authenticity or historicity of place, see Gregory Ashworth and John E. Tunbridge, “Heritage and Tourism: Between Practice and Theory?” in Jaime Kaminski, Angela M. Benson and David Arnold, eds., \textit{Contemporary Issues in Cultural Heritage Tourism} (New York: Routledge, 2014), 23. “It was only with the development of a heritage paradigm that the focus shifted decisively from objects, sites or events to their purpose in contemporary uses and their outcomes. Structures, sites and places are seen as vehicles for the transmission of historicity, contributing to many contemporary social, political and economic needs. It is the fashioning of some representation, a key word, of past in the present from selected relics, memories and histories.”

\textsuperscript{438} Jean Verrier (Inspecteur Général des Monuments Historiques de France), \textit{Notes sur la Consolidation des Monuments Historiques de Tunisie} (Direction des Antiquités et Arts de Tunisie, 1953), Introduction. “Les conseils qu’il donne à ce sujet, notamment pour assurer l’harmonie de ces constructions avec l’édifice ancien, sans faire de pastiche, sont des plus judicieux d’autant plus qu’il en a fait une réalisation personnelle, parfaitement réussie, à Dougga, où le centre d’accueil indispensable, construit au milieu même des ruines, a été adossé au rocher et en partie enterré, ce qui le rend peu visible de quelque point que soit le visiteur des ruines, et élevé dans une architecture sobre et de bonne proportion, dont les lignes verticales s’associent harmonieusement, sans ce confondre, avec les nobles vestiges antiques.”

\textsuperscript{439} Even to this day the Ministry of Culture works very closely with both the Agence de Mise en Valeur du Patrimoine and de Promotion Culturelle, and the National Tourism Office.
Mediterraneanism in the Service of Development

When the country gained independence in 1956, priorities shifted, and, cultural programming and preservation projects took a backseat. With the subsequent heavy economic blow from Western divestment in the country, President Habib Bourguiba’s modernization plan sought to compensate for this economic plight through an agenda focused on industry, technology, and business. But what happens when patrimony is controlled for ulterior purposes, for audiences other than those who live side-by-side with the structures slated for rehabilitation? How, and under what terms, is historic preservation in Tunisia, and the Maghreb generally, politically and economically justified?

This modernization program entailed a fundamental repositioning of Tunisian attitudes towards Islam. Bourguiba’s strong dislike for Nasser’s brand of pan-Arabism meant that Tunisian political progress would be defined along different lines, ones which did not fall under any Arab heading.440 Fearing the negative economic impact of nationalization, Bourguiba steered the country from complete isolationism, counter to what occurred in Nasserite Egypt.441 The ideology of Bourguibisme promoted the notion that forward-moving progress and a clinging grip to Muslim values and religious practices, were not only mutually exclusive, but also antithetical to the end goal of modernization (e.g. the August 1956 decree abolishing polygamy; advocacy for women’s rights; the January 1960 decree calling for the abrogation of work abstinence during the holy month of Ramadan).442 Part of the religious purging was forwarded through educational

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441 Michael Clark, “Bourguiba Bars Nationalization: Tunisian Chief Says Foreign Capital Has Nothing to Fear—Praise for Nasser Faint,” Special to The New York Times, August 20, 1956. “‘In some fields,’ he said, ‘nationalism is justified and even necessary. I refer to the railways and to transport facilities of vital interest to the people.’ But, faced with an economic crisis and an almost total absence of investment capital, Premier Bourguiba also stressed his belief in the sanctity of private property. ‘I solemnly declare that foreign capital has nothing to fear,’ he said. ‘On the contrary, we are prepared to encourage investment with guarantees and tax exemptions. The Government has no intention of nationalizing undertakings.’”
funding, which remained an essential pillar of Bourguiba’s nationalist reforms.\textsuperscript{443} This “openness” touted by Bourguiba\textsuperscript{444} was meant to bring about the “reorientation of Tunisia toward the West [which] would represent progress and prosperity, the very objectives that an independent Tunisia aspired to.”\textsuperscript{445}

This change in orientation is mirrored in Bourguiba’s patrimonial policies as well. The official heritage discourse that Bourguiba outwardly touted was one of Mediterraneanism, a contrived discourse that even emerged in the interwar context, to unite that métropole and colony in a way that strategically served the interests of continuous European investment.\textsuperscript{446} Indeed, many of the country’s cultural producers displayed outward, uncompromising allegiances to an ancient, pre-Islamic past, resurrecting and repurposing figures from Carthaginian times, like Hannibal, to carry the torch of Tunisia’s modernity. Apart from Bourguiba, Sadok Chaâbane, a

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\textsuperscript{443} Ali Houissa, “Tunisia: Libraries, Archives, and Museums,” \textit{Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences} (Taylor and Francis, 2010), 5260-5277; 5262. “Since the earlier years of independence, the new regime’s top priorities have been to reforms education and encourage culture, and it has set aside a sizable portion of its operating budget for that purpose. Schooling became compulsory, free, and state-guaranteed between the ages of 6 and 16. By the 2006 school year, primary, secondary, technical and vocational schools had a total enrollment of close to 2.5 million.”

\textsuperscript{444} Discours de Habib Bourguiba, \textit{L’Action}, 17 décembre 1956. “La Tunisie dont la tradition est essentiellement arabo-musulmane entend ne pas vivre en vase clos et devenir une société fermée, perspective incompatible avec notre profond désir de vivre en étroite communion avec la vie moderne. Notre voie en ce domaine consiste à avoir des fenêtres ouvertes sur les autres cultures, en particulier sur la culture occidentale, afin d'avoir prise sur le réel…Ainsi notre pays, tout en restant fidèle à son passé culturel, aura forgé les instruments de son avenir. La culture française est l'une des plus grandes et de plus riches du monde moderne et l'hommage que nous rendons aux universitaires, ici présents, porte témoignage de ce que nous devons à des penseurs tels que Descartes, Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau et bien d'autres…”


\textsuperscript{446} Clement Henry Moore, \textit{Tunisia Since Independence: the Dynamics of One-Party Government} (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965), 39. “Tunisia—and possibly the Maghreb—would modernize more successfully, the new elite hoped, because, if less numerous, it considered itself to be better educated and its people to be more évolué than the downtrodden Egyptian fellah. When Bourguiba returned from Cairo in 1949, the romantic attitude of a few of the Neo-Destour leaders towards the Orient fell out of fashion…In the columns of \textit{Al Mabahith} (1944-1947) the French-trained Arabists of the Neo-Destour placed Tunisia in the context of Mediterranean civilization. Not only could the emerging nation look back with pride at the relics of its Carthaginian, Roman, and Arab periods. It could also continue its tradition of cultural interdependence with other Mediterranean nations and assimilate the best of civilization from each. The Mediterranean perspective gracefully allowed Bourguiba to pursue a policy of cooperation with France without fear of losing Tunisia’s identity. When he subsequently asserted that it was more to Tunisia’s benefit to cooperate with an advanced country like France than with Egypt, such an un-Arab view was nonetheless in accord with the Mediterranean image. Tunisia identified with the mainstream of classic civilization and shared a vision of interdependent free nations.”
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Carthage, an emblem and treasure from a dominant discourse of Mediterraneanism, trumped those narratives lauding an Arabo-Islamic past. The city and its ruins had been the inspiration of mythical, romanticized musings and travel writings by François René de Chateaubriand (1768-1848) over the course of his stay in Tunisia.\footnote{Bacha, Patrimoine et Monuments en Tunisie, 21-22. “…il consacrera plusieurs pages à décrire les sentiments que lui avaient inspirés les paysages grandioses: sa fascination pour le destin tragique de Carthage et sa hantise du temps qui pass transparaissent dans sa prose aux accents romantiques et enthousiastes…Chateaubriand avait attaché au site de Carthage des sentiments romantiques qui allaient connaître une grand fortune, au point de devenir des stéréotypes, régulièrement repris par les voyageurs postérieurs.”} In addition to its associations with a glorious antique past, Carthage symbolized too the memory of Saint Louis, among other notable leaders such as Dido or Hannibal. With the Presidential Palace seated quite emblematically at the base of the archaeological site of Carthage, both Presidents Bourguiba and Ben Ali anchored their leadership in exalting this Phoenician residue of Tunisian history. The adoption of Carthage as the site of the primary seat of governance demonstrated a nationalistic and diplomatic strategy that promoted the idea of Tunisia as a decidedly European cultural entity.\footnote{Abbassi, Entre Bourguiba et Hannibal: Identité tunisienne et histoire depuis l’indépendance. See also Driss Abbassi, “Modèles identitaires proposés aux jeunes dans la Tunisie postcoloniale (1956-2006): Entre nationalisme arabe et imaginaire méditerranéen,” 3èmes Rencontre Jeunes & Sociétés en Europe et autour de la Méditerranée, (24-26 October 2007; Marseille: Céreq).} This parallels the context of Kemalist Turkey, where the trend of historicism, along with the usage of the Arabic script, was jettisoned so as free the country of its Oriental—and Ottoman—baggage and to make way for a new visual course and, ideological direction for the
Republic. Mythologies of Tunisia’s preeminence in the history of a Mediterranean were foundational for Tunisia’s national memory. Particularly under Ben Ali’s regime, framings of national identity were reinvented with this “Mediterraneanism” at the forefront. It is this myth of Mediterraneanism—this origin story—which seemed to efface ethnic, racial and cultural difference, in Tunisian nationalist imaginaries. This construction of national identity not only aligned with his economic development strategy, but it projected an image of the country that ideologically suited the interests of western investors.

The discourse and social imaginaries of Mediterraneanism produced very real economic and spatial consequences for the country. As a keystone of Tunisia’s economy since the regimes of Bourguiba and Ben Ali, tourism has played a central role in defining developmentalist policies that were sown in the late protectorate era. Since the 1960s, the tourism infrastructure has been at the forefront of the Tunisian National Development strategy, for obvious objectives of economic growth and foreign investment. With mostly government initiatives, and some private investors as well, the State functioned as the operator, marketer, and proprietor of not just the tourism industry, and the promulgator of an official narrative of cultural heritage. In order to ensure western enthusiasm and consumption of Tunisia’s patrimony, the State apparatus adopted

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453 Here I am indebted to a talk given by Professor Martin Baumeister (German Historical Institute, Rome), entitled “Mediterranean Metropolises: Urban Transformations, Urban Imaginaries, and the Lure of Mediterraneanism,” at the EUME Summer Academy at the École de Gouvernance et d’Économie in Rabat, September 2014.
a politics of reformism, which in essence, tried to superficially brand Tunisia as a nation that is foremost modern, democratic, and progressive. However, as many scholars have rightly pointed out, these reformist principles fly in the face of Tunisia’s historically dictatorial, authoritarian regimes.\(^{456}\)

Focus on the rehabilitation of historic sites across the Mediterranean intensified in the late 1960s not only due to a growing discourse on the preservation of cultural heritage that gained momentum in southern Europe, but also as a response to rapidly escalating migrations to urban areas.\(^{457}\) UNESCO’s aim in 1972 to enact “an effective system of collective safeguard of the cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value,”\(^{458}\) was part and parcel of a larger developmentalist discourse that grew out of the international institutions formed in postwar period. Without adequate fiscal resources allocated to renovate whole areas of medinas along the southern Mediterranean, in many cases, only certain buildings or residential riyads received restoration treatments, while other parts of the same medina further decayed from hyperpopulation and overuse, to become near slums.\(^{459}\)

**Beautifying Sidi Bou Saïd**

Long prized as a quiet, serene seascape village, Sidi Bou Saïd has been known since the early twentieth century as a *zone touristique* for its natural coastline beauty. But the city's urban structure shares patterns typical of most North African cities. For example, the congregational

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\(^{459}\) URBAMA, *Présent et avenir des Médinas, de Marrakech à Alep* (Tours, 1982).
mosque and its adjacent sūq occupy the focal points of the town, with its white residential districts mushrooming down the hill.

Even in the early twentieth century, the architectural integrity of the village was threatened by an increase in traffic to the area, in part due to the late nineteenth-century construction of a railway linking Sidi Bou Saïd and La Marsa.\footnote{Besim Hakim ed., \textit{Sidi Bou Said}, 15-16.} So, in 1915 a decree was passed outlining what and how architectural aspects (e.g. facades, public spaces, homes, etc.) were to be preserved. Any additional ornament or color to be further implemented must accord with traditional building customs and blend in with the existing built environment.\footnote{Ibid., viii.} Into the Second World War, Sidi Bou Saïd maintained its reputation as a popular summer residence for the wealthy and more often than not--foreign--Tunis residents; in the 1940s, nearly sixty percent of the land was owned by Italians who developed small plots purchased from Frenchmen.\footnote{Raymond E. Crist, “Land Tenure in Tunisia: Inter-and Intra-national Implications,” \textit{The Scientific Monthly}, vol. 52, no. 5 (May 1941): 403-415.} In 1953, another decree was passed—the Décret de Protection des Sites—prioritizing the preservation of small villages. By the 1960s with the rise of mass tourism and subsequent erosion of the land beneath the village, this threat became all the more palpable.\footnote{Renata Holod and Darl Rastorfer, “Sidi Bou Saïd,” in \textit{Architecture and Community} (New York: Aperture, 1983), 106.} Retaining the spatial intimacy and these \textit{milieux de mémoires}, or environments of memory in the city, became of the core of this preservationist discourse.\footnote{See Pierre Nora, “Between memory and history: les lieux de la mémoire,” \textit{Representations} 26 (Spring 1989): 7-25. See also Paul Sant Cassia, “Tradition, Tourism and Memory in Malta,” \textit{The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute}, vol. 5, no. 2 (June 1999): 247-263.}

But after the project which commenced in 1973 led jointly by the Tunisian government and the UNESCO \textit{Projet du Parc National de Carthage}, the key architectural elements—domed structures, replete with vaults, archways, ironwork windows, whitewashed facades and carved
wooden doors—were preserved so as to maintain the aesthetic appeal of the city. In 1980, the project won the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, lauded “for the efforts over a long period of time by a community toward the conservation of their village. Based on true understanding of the architectural values of the village, legislation has been enacted controlling maintenance, expansion and vehicular circulation, and the sense of place has been kept. Sidi Bou Saïd has retained not only the picturesque quality of a village, but its very essence.” In reality, the old public squares and narrow alleys were preserved so as to protect a former romantic urban landscape, very much in conflict with the circulation needs of the people.

In their assertion that rehabilitation can enhance a city’s re-signification as a symbol for national identity, Anton Escher and Marianne Schepers put forth that tourism-oriented preservation has to “guarantee that visiting the medina also appeals to local residents and that its image does not become characterized by mass tourism. The medina was not declared formally as zone touristique.” In the case of Tunis or any other city for that matter, purely executed historic preservation does run the risk of rendering the revitalized urban landscape a museumified zone, or worse, a cultural ghetto. If Tunisians are not integrated into the new architectural spaces, they become no more than sites for touristic consumption. Some architects imply that preservation, serves “toxic,” nationalistic purposes, snatching life from the heart of a city, whilst eradicating or glossing over important physical evidence of certain histories.

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465 It seems odd that the judges would use this word—“picturesque”—which has very fraught and complicated French colonial resonances.
466 Recipient of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 1980; Aga Khan Trust for Culture.
467 Anton Escher and Marianne Schepers, “Revitalizing the Medina of Tunis as a National Symbol,” Erdkunde, bd. 62, h.2 (April-June 2008):129-141; 133. These zones touristiques were identified as such by the Journal Officiel de la République Tunisienne (JORT).
To conclude, the late Islamic art historian Oleg Grabar argued that the motivations underlying certain preservation schemes are directly linked to an array of technical, social, economic, ideological and aesthetic concerns.\footnote{Oleg Grabar “Symbols and Signs in Islamic Architecture,” in Renata Holod, ed. \textit{Architecture and Community: Building in the Islamic World Today} (New York: Aperture, 1983).} This chapter began by pointing to a seemingly impossible paradox: can the patrimony of the postcolony ever be \textit{decolonized}? Bourguiba’s economic vision for his beleaguered nation necessitated a refashioning of Tunisian identity along the lines of a suspiciously neutralized Mediterraneanness, thereby creating the illusion of connectivity with Europe through the suppression of any Islamic identity. But what I hope to have shown is that such ideological visions for developmentalist progress and modernization have not superseded the needs of Tunisians, who continue to this day to confront the country’s difficult histories. Years after Bourguiba’s rule, the ever-widening disparities of wealth may be feeding new forms of urban resistance. Although heritage, is, in fact, a construct, Tunisians today are engaged in a lively discourse that seeks to unearth and unfurl palimpsests of imagined mythologies, and re-narrativize the patrimony of their forbearers to be preserved, constructively, for the future. Decolonizing patrimony may entail a more necessary, and more challenging, act of decolonizing nation-state political ideologies.
CONCLUSION

As I casually strolled in the neighborhood of Cité Omrane, a Muslim-specific social housing project built on the outskirts of Tunis in the 1940s by the French husband-wife team G. Glorieux and L. Glorieux-Monfred, I could hear the baaing of sheep all around me, as it was October 2013, just before Eid al-Adha, the Islamic festival of the sacrifice. Admiring the undulating curves of the modernist rooftops, occasionally snapping photographs, I was suddenly confronted by a man. “What are you doing here?” he asked in French. “I’m a student studying the architecture of this area,” I replied defiantly in my Egyptian Colloquial Arabic. Out of his pocket, he pulled out a badge, “I am a police officer and I strongly urge you to leave this neighborhood immediately.” Stunned, I realized he was a plainclothes policeman, probably planted in working class quarters to detect suspicious activity among their residents. Feeling apprehensive about my personal safety and somewhat threatened, I took his advice seriously and walked back to the more populated medina shortly thereafter. While I never found out why that neighborhood had been under watch, I assumed this was just an isolated incident.

A few weeks passed, and I decided to see the 1950s era social housing complexes of El-Menzah, again, on the outskirts of the city. Within minutes, a bona fide policeman approached me yet again and a similar conversation transpired. Why were these seemingly ordinary, quotidian, and might I add peaceful neighborhoods the target of intense state surveillance, I wondered. On a related note, what intelligence did these officers know that I was not privy to?

471 Zeynep Çelik, “Speaking Back to Orientalist Discourse,” in Jill Beaulieu and Mary Roberts, eds., Orientalism’s Interlocutors: Painting, Architecture and Photography (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2002), 35. “…the Cité Musulmane el Omrane in Tunis repeated the whitewashed houses with courtyards, but no openings to the exterior, now utilizing vaults on roofs. The architects (G.Glorieux and L. Glorieux-Monfred) organized the site plan according to a relaxed orthogonal street network that allowed for a certain flexibility in the positioning of individual units and their collective massing. If Cité el Omrane formulized the principles for residential patterns, another Tunisian project dating from the same period, the mosque and market in Bizerte, articulated the essence of community center for the population…The persistence of this pattern in the new residential projects for the indigenous people reinforced the sociocultural duality already existing and already nurtured in the colonial cities…”
I tell this anecdote to shed light on the irony of these housing projects’ afterlives. Intended in their inception as modernist symbols of colonial social order, these developments—as housing predominantly working-class peoples—are now the potential sites of transgression, resistance, and political mobilization. It is from these apartment units and streets that the values of society are shifting; from the places of habitation and dwelling, the notions of belonging are being challenged and reconfigured. Earlier that year, in February 2013, Chokri Belaid, a human rights lawyer, activist and open critic of the religiously conservative Ennahda Party, had been assassinated by an unknown individual in El-Menzah, the very same complex where Belaid once lived, that I myself had visited. Not only do my encounters reveal the pervasiveness of the post-revolution state security apparatus, but they indicate how class and cultural politics continue to play out in the residential street. It is, after all, in the public realm in front of the governor’s office in Sidi Bouzid, where the fruit seller Mohamed Bouazizi immolated himself with paint thinner on December 17, 2010, literally igniting with him the angst, fear, and frustrations of millions across North Africa and the Middle East. *Tunisia Works*, so the pamphlet cited at the introduction of this dissertation, but since the bread riots of 1980s and especially in recent years, Tunisians cannot find enough work at all. It would seem that the grand dreams of national development fell short of their lofty aspirations.

Undoubtedly, people have awoken to the widening disparities in wealth incurred with modernization. In the wake of the so-called Jasmine Revolution and Arab Spring, Tunisia is still

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472 Gregory White, “A Political Economy of Tunisia’s Infitah to the European Community, 1969-1987” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1993), 47. “The benefits of the infitah went to the upper classes, fueling opposition to the status quo from labor, the religious establishment, rural areas, and disaffected youth. Indeed the enhanced development of a state security apparatus in the 1970s and 1980s mirrored the advancement of the infitah strategy and was needed to respond to bread riots and opposition protests in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s.”

reinventing its own many identities from within, and still redefining its relationship with Islam, France, and the world, fifty-nine years after independence. Undergoing tremendous political and cultural change, at home and in the street these negotiations prevail. The stakes of progress and development—once championed by Bourguiba as the keys to complete autonomy—are still hotly contested issues.

Nowhere is this political struggle on the discourses of modernity, heritage, and development more violently clear than in the horrific attacks that occurred in March and June 2015, at the National Bardo Museum in Tunis and a beach resort in the southern city of Sousse, respectively. The Bardo, the former palace of the Bey turned repository for the nation’s Greco-Roman and Punic mosaic treasures, and the silky beaches of the Sahel coastline—both heralded at the height of nation-building as emblems of Tunisia’s Mediterranean heritage and identity—now signify to some radicalizing constituents as the residual markers of foreign incursion.

Since the devastation of World War II, rising urban poverty levels, insufficient social housing projects, and the criminalization of the urban poor have remained persistence threads in the governmental and institutional discourses on urbanism and modernization in Tunisia. Crippled by the bureaucracy of the French protectorate administration, Zehrfuss and his team ultimately achieved an incomplete, proto-regionalist reconstruction of Tunisian cities. And while gourbis are certainly less common in the urban peripheries of Tunisian cities today, the habits of self-building are nevertheless ever-present throughout the country and North Africa writ large. The construction of a specifically Mediterranean heritage for Tunisia, as begun by the late protectorate administration, carried through Bourguiba’s administration and fit neatly into his own infitah brand of economic liberalization and development, positioning the country toward the West, careful not to completely annihilate ties with France in particular. But social housing
and heritage preservation in the service to the overall purpose development, also necessitated widespread destruction and displacement, remaining a source of conflict and tension to many locals in various regions. Tunisia, like many countries of the Global South, is enmeshed in a cyclical web of debt, and its attendant, euphemistic structural adjustment programming instantiated by postwar international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. The political economies of development controlling the growth and renewal of local urban space are still, to this day, very much linked to larger, global political economies of capitalism.

Amidst this destruction and reconstruction of the built environment, however, lies the political will of a people to effect change. While the project of decolonization remains inarguably unfinished on the level of the street and the international stage, we are witnessing radical changes and a moment in which the mechanisms of these power structures are being exposed and challenged, speaking truth to injustices of the urban environment that have been perpetuated for far too long.
FIGURES
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