Research Article

TRANSPOSITION OF THE SEGREGATIONIST COLONIAL SYSTEM ON SOCIAL HOUSING: CASE OF THE DIAR EL MAHÇOUL-ALGIERS CITY

Archi Rym Merzelkad-Hallal1,*, Kahina Merzelkad-Nedjai2

1PHD in architecture heritage and urban planning, University Blida-1, Institute of architecture and urban planning-Algeria.
2PHD in International Law from the University of Mondes France, Grenoble, France.

ABSTRACT

The French colonial system in Algeria was a political system based on the establishment of political, economic, social and cultural domination of the colonists over the colonized people (G.Pervillie, 1975). In concrete terms, it resulted in the establishment of a set of discriminatory norms tending to grant privileges to European settlers to the detriment of Algerians in all areas of social life. This organized discrimination was at the origin of a visible social inequality that materialized through spatial segregation aimed at separating Algerians from settlers (T.Guillope, 2020).

In fact, the European districts benefited from infrastructures that almost systematically included public services in a high quality designed urban environment. While the Algerian neighbourhoods benefited from very little public investment. The juxtaposition of this discriminatory notion on the architectural and urban design of the district of Diar El Mahçoul is a perfect illustration of this, which makes it an ideal case to be examined in this article.

Keywords: Diar El Mahçoul, Discrimination, Segregationist transposition, Social housing

Introduction

During the 1950s, Algeria faced a major housing crisis due to the increase in precarious and anarchic urbanization. Slums (86,500 inhabitants) have settled on large unoccupied plots of the city, at the bottom of the ravines, on the sides of the hills and on all the land that is difficult to construct. (Architectural Information Bulletin, 1984).

Faced with this proliferation of a very uncontrollable habitat, France had decided to build housing for the benefit of Muslims on municipal land including regrouping cities (kinds of wooden shacks with corrugated iron roofs), rehousing cities, HLMs and large social complexes (Cohen et al, 2003).

Aware of the seriousness of this housing crisis, Jacques Chevallier (former Mayor of Algiers during this period) was convinced that the solution for Algeria lay in the integration of Muslim communities in the large so-called European cities (Jean Jaques Deluz, 1979). J. Chevallier launched a major housing construction operation, large parts of which were intended for Muslims. (Jean Jacques Deluz, 1979).

To best accomplish this mission, J.Chevallier called on Fernand Pouillon to build three cities: Diar El Mahçoul, Diar Es Saada and...
Climat de France. (Jean Louis Planche, 2005) These latter represented rapid and relevant responses to the emergency rehousing of the Algerian population in the slums. In this article, we will focus mainly on the study of the city Diar El Mahçoul.

Indeed, the Diar El Mahçoul city (1954) includes 1600 dwellings on a plot of 11 ha. It is a city divided into two parts and separated by a boulevard: the upper part called the "high comfort" district for Europeans and the lower part called "medium comfort" for Muslims (Fernand Pouillon, 1968). This insignificant separation between these two neighbourhoods responds to a colonial policy of segregation based on an ideology of hierarchy and domination between the two communities. Especially since this colonial policy is visible in terms of the layout of spaces, since the high comfort district benefited from spacious and quality housing. While the accommodations of the average comfort were cramped and did not suit the demographic needs of the Muslim population.

Based on the observation of this presumptive discrimination against Algerians, the objective of this article is to examine the extent of spatial segregation and the inequalities in the design of social housing between Muslims and Europeans during the fifties.

We will try in this study to determine to what extent the Diar El Mahçoul city is a perfect transposition of the discriminatory colonial policy through social housing in Algeria. By emphasizing the architectural and urban aspects, this original research will allow us to demonstrate that discrimination can result in conceptual and architectural inequality in social housing, which a priori is a fundamental right.

This article is divided into four parts; the first addresses the analytical and methodological framework of the study, followed by an overview of the concept of segregation during colonization, then the analysis of the case study. As for the fourth part, it will include a discussion of the research results and a conclusion.

Methodology

The study conducted in this article required interdisciplinary methods including a legal-sociological approach in order to understand and explain our starting postulate (the notion of segregation in the colonial system). An archive search was carried out on the city of Diar El Mahçoul in order to acquire the plans in original condition. These metric data will be reproduced by software and then analyzed to be discussed in the results. A morphological type analysis seems important to us to put the city Diar El Mahçoul in its urban context. The morphological analysis must therefore include a breakdown by reading level: the city, the building and then the housing.

Concept of segregation in colonized land

The term segregation comes from the Latin segregare which means to separate an animal from the herd. Juxtaposed to the urban field, it designates the desire to set up a spatial-social separation between two social groups. This territorial segregation is schematized in the form of a barrier, a wall, a boulevard or zoning which aims to prevent a mix or social homogeneity.

Beyond this simple territorial conception of segregation, the definition of the latter refers to the thorny question of the cause and the type of process leading to this separation. Is spatial segregation the result of a political will to divide based on a rational criterion social, ethnic, economic and social? Or is it based on the desire of a social category to establish itself in a specific space in order to distinguish itself from the whole of society?

2 Ressources de géographie pour les enseignants, www.geoconfluences.ENS-lyon.fr
During the colonial period, the spatial segregation put in place by France responded to a declared political ideology of sidelining and excluding Algerians from society. This desire for hierarchization and domination of France over Algerians was at the origin of a process of discrimination which materialized in inequalities in the architectural and urban design of social housing.

Diar El Mahçoul is also an emblematic illustration of what has been called "the double cities". These aimed, beyond the reduction of slums inhabited by the "Muslim" population, to integrate the latter alongside the European population to lessen its resistance to occupation (Amrane D, 1991).

Diar El Mahçoul is a large complex called "double city" built for two distinct populations: the European population, on the one hand, living in the "high comfort" part and the Muslim population, on the other, living in the "medium comfort" part. (Ahmed Yacine SMAIR, 2020).

From then on, and in the colonial context which was theirs, the choices made by the architect and the decision-makers of the time inevitably fell within the scope of a segregationist policy. Starting from the idea that the "Muslim" population was not ready to live in the same type of spaces and did not require the same level of comfort as the European population, this integration came up against the existence of two clearly distinct identities, with different morals to which we responded by discrimination inscribed in the building (Pelletier J, 1959).

As for the architect F. Pouillon, he tried to fill the design inequalities imposed by the client, by bringing a social and humanist character to the city of Diar El Mahçoul. Thus shaking up the concepts of the orthodoxy of the architecture of his time.

On the basis of the scientific collection mentioned above, many researchers have tried to highlight the reality of this segregation. The following analysis will allow us to highlight this disaggregation, in its most apparent aspect: housing.

4. Analyse du cas d’étude
Situations géographique

The city of Diar el Mahçoul is located in the municipality of El Madania in the wilaya of Algiers. It is limited to the north by the boulevard Khalifa Oulmane, to the east by the Riad el Feth complex, to the south and west by the boulevard de la Zouaia and the suburban residential area. The city covers a surface area of 11 hectares crossed by a 30m lane planned for the regional urban plan of the region (Fernand Pouillon, 1968). The topographic complexity of the site (the hills overlooking a large garden) required the earthwork of 100,000m2 of land.

Figure 1. Location map quoted Diar El Mahçoul. Spring: Official website Google Maps / wilaya of Algiers—municipality of El Madania.
Figure 2. Cité Diar El Mahçoul, high comfort (background) and medium comfort (foreground). Spring: Revue chantiers, revue illustrée de la construction en Africain du Nord, N°23, Alger, 1956.

**Genesis of the city**

In 1951, the number of Muslims reached a very high rate. Population. The assessment of the housing operations carried out until 1954 shows that these do not meet the needs estimated by the municipality (Municipal review, 1954). This situation, considered a social danger, worried the colonial authorities (Msgroi-dufresne, 1986). This is how J.Chevallier called on F.Pouillon to respond quickly to this housing crisis in Algiers. Especially since the latter had a good experience in Marseille and had the reputation of building housing in record time. The construction costs proposed by Fernand Pouillon were also significantly lower than the current price, with a requirement for the quality of execution (Bernard Felix Dubor, 1986). From then on, between 1953 and 1957, he created three cities in Algiers, notably that of Diar El Mahçoul: the city of the promise kept (Arabic translation, Fernand Pouillon, 1968).

The financing for the realization of these operations was taken care of by the land credit of Algeria and the industrial bank of North Africa (Menaa Souham, 1998). The program initially included 1,200 dwellings, and in its final version, the architect created 1,497 dwellings, including 925 “medium comfort” (Cohen et al, 2003).

**Location of the city**

F. Pouillon places 19 buildings on the northern part of the land on a rocky ridge overlooking Algiers, intended for Europeans and establishes 19 other buildings on the southern part of the land intended for Muslims. The location of the buildings in the medium comfort side is denser with an estimated 50% of the land area (of the lower part) the rest left for the market and squares.
The district is mainly organized around the market and the outdoor spaces, which follow one another on two different heights. These spaces of very restricted dimensions, without open views and sunlight of habitations that are too close to each others and poorly lit (Boukabara kenza, 2001). While for the high comfort side (the upper part) due to its location is a less dense, less closed, it dominates the bay of Algiers. The district is structured around an upper square bordered by the market and a lower square open to the sea. This district characterizes by open spaces on the city's landscape and the treatment of scale. Indeed, this concept of scale manifests by the size of the squares, the esplanades and the monumental staircases. (Boukabara kenza, 2001).

Buildings

In both neighbourhoods, the varying sizes and heights of the buildings offered a multitude of housing types ranging from one room to five rooms. The large apartments were located in the European Quarter, while the smaller apartments were located in the Muslim Quarter (Cohen et al, 2003).
Housing

The principle of spatial organization is identical for all the accommodation in Diar El Mahçoul, despite a difference in the surfaces. All the accommodations grouped together at the level of the entrance area. They are equipped with a loggia and benefit from two orientations (except semi-underground accommodation). Floor plans reveal considerable variation. For example, an apartment in the European section had an entrance hall, a living room opening onto a large patio and an independent kitchen. On the other hand, simple comfort accommodation has an interior patio and a living room with kitchenette in a corner.

Thus, in this research we have chosen to analyse three samples of apartments F1, F2 and F3. Our choice guided by the availability of information in the two districts, in order to compare their architectural characteristics.

One-room apartment (F1):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spaces</th>
<th>High comfort (European)</th>
<th>Medium comfort (Muslims)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Habitation room</td>
<td>12,60 m²</td>
<td>4,89 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>13,68 m² (with stay)</td>
<td>2,14 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom</td>
<td>3,24 m²</td>
<td>1,34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOILET</td>
<td>2,16 m²</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution space</td>
<td>7,56 m²</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>39,24 m²</strong></td>
<td><strong>08,37 m²</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 06. Table one-room apartment (F1), city Diar El Mahçoul. Spring: Author, 2023.

Figure 07. Plan one-room apartment (F1), city Diar El Mahçoul. (On the right four medium comfort apartment, on the left a high comfort apartment). Spring: Reproduction author, 2023.
Two bedroom apartment: (F2)
Appartement deux pièces: See below two housing models.

Model 1 two-room apartment (F2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1 two-room apartment (F2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spaces</td>
<td>High comfort (European)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room</td>
<td>12,60 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay</td>
<td>22,68 m² (with entrance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>02,60 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom</td>
<td>03,42 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOILET</td>
<td>02,16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution space</td>
<td>Included in the stay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>43,46 m²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 08: Table model 1 two-room apartment (F2), city Diar El Mahçoul. Spring: Author, 2023.

Model 2 two-room apartment (F2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 2 two-room apartment (F2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spaces</td>
<td>High comfort (European)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room</td>
<td>11,52 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay</td>
<td>13,97 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dining room</td>
<td>10,06 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>05,01 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom</td>
<td>03,32 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOILET</td>
<td>01,24 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution space</td>
<td>08,87 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>55,00 m²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 09: Plan model 1 two-room apartment (F2), city Diar El Mahçoul, (On the right two medium comfort apartment, on the left a high comfort apartment). Spring: Reproduction author, 2023.

Figure 10: Table model 2 two-room apartment (F2), city Diar El Mahçoul. Spring: Author, 2023.
Figure 11. Plan model 2 two-room apartment (F2), city Diar El Mahçoul, (On the right two medium comfort apartment, on the left a high comfort apartment). Spring: Reproduction author, 2023.

Three-room apartment (F3):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spaces</th>
<th>High comfort (European)</th>
<th>Medium comfort (Muslims)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Room 1</td>
<td>15,12 m²</td>
<td>10,08 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room 2</td>
<td>12,60 m²</td>
<td>10,11 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay</td>
<td>17,64 m²</td>
<td>10,23 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dining room</td>
<td>07,56 m²</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>07,56 m²</td>
<td>04,84 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom</td>
<td>03,78 m²</td>
<td>02,34 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet</td>
<td>02,16 m²</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution space</td>
<td>11,88 m²</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>78,30 m²</strong></td>
<td><strong>37,60 m²</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 12: Table three-room apartment (F3), city Diar El Mahçoul. Spring: Author, 2023.

Figure 13. Plan three-room apartment (F3), city Diar El Mahçoul, (On the right a medium comfort apartment, on the left a high comfort apartment). Spring: Author, 2023.
Results and discussion

The two districts of the diar el mahcoul city, built next to each other and separated by a boulevard, have undeniable differences in their architectural and urban designs. In view of our problem and the results of the case study, we find a real inequality accentuated by spatial segregation.

The morphological reading of the two neighborhoods allows us to understand the presence of a conceptual approach. This approach that F. Pouillon uses in the two neighborhood categories (simple and high comfort) but on different scales. Especially since the segregation of the two neighborhoods manifests itself at different points:

The establishment of the two districts does not have the same location, in the European part located in the North on the ridge, facing the sea and benefiting from an excellent perspective towards the city of Algiers. As for the Muslim part, it is located to the south in a ravine and facing the highway.

The public space is materialized by the concept of centrality, one of the concepts of composition of F. Pouillon's projects (Merzelkad-Burgel, 2011). In Diar el Mahcoul this concept is visible in the high comfort district by the existence of two squares (a large one defined by the market and a secondary one overlooking the sea) which are connected by a small portico under the building. In the average comfort district, centrality is represented by a central courtyard which plays the role of a market for the inhabitants.

The configuration of the accommodation varies from one apartment to another, the comparison study of the two neighborhoods clearly shows a disparity in design. A one-room apartment (F1) in the European section with an area of 39,24 m², had an independent room, an open kitchen/living room, a separate bathroom/WC and entrance hallway. On the other hand, in the medium comfort apartment with a surface of 19.37 m², it had a small bedroom, a living room with a kitchenette and bathroom / toilet.

The apartment (F2), model 2 in the European section with a surface of 55 m², had a bedroom, a living/dining room, an independent kitchen and a bathroom separate from the toilet and an entrance hallway. On the other hand, in the medium comfort apartment with a surface of 18.73 m², it had a small bedroom, a living room, a kitchen, bathroom / toilet and a small entrance.

The three-room apartment in the European part with an area of 78,30 m², is accessible via a corridor. It has two bedrooms, a living room with a small integrated but independent kitchen. The bathroom and toilet are in continuity and form two spaces separated by a partition (a space in another space). The three-room apartment in the Muslim part with an area of 37,60 m², is grouped around a patio, which distributes the living areas, bedrooms, kitchen and water point (bathroom and WC) to the entrance. In this apartment the kitchen is not independent, it is integrated with the living room which implies a loss of surface for the living room.

The results of the confrontation of the two social districts (medium and high comfort), are indeed convincing and clearly demonstrate the presence of an inequality in the architectural and urban design. This discrimination is strongly accentuated by the arrangement of the two neighbourhoods (top-bottom) which concretizes the existence of a voluntary spatial segregation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study of the Diar El Mahcoul city allowed us to affirm that spatial segregation clearly contributed to the concretization of a colonial ideology. The objective of this discriminatory policy was to favour the
European population to the detriment of the Muslim population through social housing.

This is how the cohabitation between these two populations, created a gap in architectural and urban composition, resulting in the establishment of a social hierarchy that continues to condition the evolution of this city to this day.

References
1. Ahmed Yacine SMAIR, « Identités, morales et participation citoyenne dans un grand ensemble colonial à Alger », thèse de doctorat, Université des Sciences et de la Technologie d’Oran Mohamed-Boudiaf (Algérie), texte v-1 def ahmed yacine smair.pdf, 24 P.
4. Bulletin D’informations Architecturales, Supplément au n° 85, Avril 1984, 1 P.
habitat, Université de Saad Dahleb-Blida, 2010.


