

A TYPOLOGICAL IDENTIFICATION OF THE LARGE HOUSING ESTATES OF 1950S IN ORAN. EXPLORING THE THREE - DIMENSIONAL APPROACH



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Abstract: In Algeria, the city of Oran is home to around fifty large housing estates built in the 1950s-1962, designed according to ethnic diversity, amalgamated location between the city center and the surrounding suburbs accompanied by facilities with a metropolitan influence, also known as modern housing estates, witnessed a revolutionary trend never seen before in Algerian society in particular, living in shantytowns. However, they suffer fierce criticism associated with their monotony and similar design, leading to their stigmatization and marginalization. This article aims to identify typological diversity across three dimensions, architectural, urban and social, using ethno-architectural analysis, comparing inhabited surveys, semi-directive interviews and photographs to highlight the particularity and typological characteristics of a sample of large housing estates in Oran. The results obtained by this study reveal that the typologies vary according to the dimensional criteria raised, highlighting their diversity and richness.

Keywords: large housing estates, typologies, three-dimensional, ethno-architectural, inhabitant.

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Introduction

With the influx of labourers, followed by the further expansion of family immigration [1] and the rise in Algerian families 77.3%¹, the housing problem started to manifest in 1946. Consequently, the construction of housing for the majority was initiated in the suburbs of Oran [2], leading to the emergence of the 'large housing estates' a novel model of social housing mandated in 1949 [3] to be implemented across metropolitan France and the French colonies. A chance emerged to transform the city of Oran into a contemporary metropolis, by transitioning from unsanitary and unstable housing to innovative and comfortable dwelling, in line with the prevailing societal movement of that era. An innovative architectural style and a vibrant social environment emerged between 1950 and 1962, culminating in a significant milestone in Algeria's colonial housing history. Conceptualized as self-governing municipalities with cultural, health, educational, and economic amenities [4], these towns often resulted from a crisis that required public policy intervention. They were mostly perceived as catalysts for social and cultural change [5], but in other cases, they were seen as catalysts for social and cultural transformation. Initially, these towns appeared unaffected by the political system, which is prevalent in Western democracies like France and Italy but is exported by the metropolis to Algeria [6]. The housing stock primarily consists of dwellings constructed in the adjacent suburbs for the two separate populations, with a small number located in the central city.

Contrary to what we are used to hearing about a test laboratory, the large housing estates were first initiated in the French metropolis, the country of origin, before finally arriving in Algerian soil, the country of importation [7], designed by world-renowned architects such as Pouillon Candilis and Simounet, specialists in social housing, who carried out large-scale housing projects in the major Algerian cities (Oran-

¹ DEMONTÈS Victor, L'Algérie économique: la population algérienne, t. 2, Algiers, Impr. algérienne, 1923, 498p. (based on data from Augustin Bernard's Enquête about habitation of algerian's indigènes (1921)); quoted by KATEB Kamel, Européens, "indigènes" et Juifs en Algérie..., op. cit., p.183).

Alger, Annaba), as well as major construction companies that were responsible for the territorial and technical development of several large housing estates, including the Algerian company Chauffour-Dumez and the Algerian company Léon Ballot, one of the factors that ensured the large-scale production of housing. The title of this period of cooperation is "The Algerian Saga" [8], the complexity of which is linked to the different contexts in which they were built [9].

However, from the 2000s onwards, fierce criticism seemed to be at its height, with all the large housing estates in Oran beginning to be seen as identical banal creations, the source of all the evils of society - delinquency, prostitution, theft, crime - a superficial and unscientific discourse that dragged on and stigmatized their development, or even delayed a possible heritage strategy, already envisaged in some cases overseas, witness to a social, urban and architectural history of a particular period that will not be repeated [10], an approach that illustrates this inscription of GEs in time [11]. The large housing estates in Oran are neither classified as heritage nor considered valuable architecture. This is due to the need to identify their diversity and uniqueness, some of which are hidden. This question raises concerns given its quantitative importance, which reaches 20% of the housing stock [12]. The vice-heritage approach has strengthened the protection of the architectural product as a whole, and the issue of conserving social housing is of greater concern to some agents of the architectural and heritage production space [13].

Through recent research into the future of this modern colonial architectural heritage, we want, using this article, to share the elements dissected to take account of the diversity of the four essential historical, social, urban and architectural dimensions, whose reflection on heritage should be given some limits based at least on its four headings [13]. Beyond the conclusions drawn from the typological diversity that we have gradually rediscovered through the ethno-architectural approach, the case study makes it possible to break with the criticisms of their repetitive monotony. A solid base of data has been developed to understand the concept of large Algerian housing estates better in order to make rational and objective decisions about their trajectory, which can be fulfilled and sustainable in the face of heritage approaches whose commitment begins first with identification, knowledge, protection, and enhancement [14].

In addition to proposing a reflection aimed at incorporating everyday, ordinary life into the heritage approach, this research on six large housing estates in Oran aims to alter the typically static perception of the banal, concealing immensely rich characteristics and activities... Reference [15]. The questions pertained to their relationship with their current residence and the modifications they had implemented before or during their relocation. The study residences were chosen using the quota sampling technique.

Materials and Methods

This research work is grounded on the empirical ethnoarchitectural approach, which allowed for direct field tests to confirm the previously formulated premise. Drawing on a representative sample of six exemplary large housing estates, volumetric, aesthetic, structural, and socially diverse features are examined despite variations in location within the city (city center/suburbs). An examination of the data acquired by an investigative instrument, including surveys, semi-structured interviews as the primary data gathering method, specifically intended to investigate responses to indirect enquiries [16], and images of exteriors, collectively known as "ethno-architectural surveys". This survey is a method that enables data collection with a quite reasonable degree of validity [17]. During the field study, criteria and sub-criteria were developed and organized into a typology to define the main geographical areas. Table 1 displays the primary criteria and sub-criteria for each dimension to determine the typologies of the large housing estates. It demonstrates their uniqueness, which aligns with an architectural component and a wider societal rationale [18] that can be considered a national legacy, seen as a contextual architectural heritage that fuses modern architecture with local architecture in large Muslim housing estates.

Table 1. Criteria and sub-criteria for large housing estates typologies (source: authors, 2023)

Architectural dimension	Urban dimension	Social dimension
The location of spaces (served, serving)	Perception	Dynamic social environment
		<i>Daily activities such as the market</i>
		<i>religious festivals</i>
Conviviality	layout	Income level
<i>Defined surfaces</i>	Size and shape	Education level
<i>Degree of transformation</i>		
Access to dwellings	Mode of access	Category of communal areas appropriation
		<i>Behaviour</i>
		<i>Sociability</i>
Window types	Number of dwellings	<i>Original inhabitants</i>

We are currently observing the third generation of residents in the various large estates, with a notable predominance of young residents aged 28, representing 50% of the sample, and middle-aged people up to 45, who make up 35%. Those aged 70 and over make up a smaller proportion, at 15%. The field survey included perspectives from all three generations (older people, adults and teenagers). It ensured balanced representation between genders (male/female) and between tenants and homeowners during the semi-structured interviews, which were organized at the time of the cell surveys and at the time of the national religious holidays, which began with key questions combined with secondary questions in order to clarify the purpose of the interview [19].

Case study

Oran has a strong identity, reflected in its rich and diverse architectural heritage. These traces of the past help to make Oran a modern city: Oran, on the contrary, is a city without suspicion, in other words, a completely modern city [20]. The large housing estates of the 1950s were created with the help of several project managers, a harmonization that bears eloquent witness to the joint efforts of these personalities. The work of locating and identifying the initial corpus of large housing estates from 1950-1962 is an essential stage that precedes the phase of selecting and analyzing large housing estates for a diversified typological identification (Table 2). To this end, two waves of large housing estate construction have been identified, showing the richness of their diversity.

The first wave (1950-1958) was marked by the architectural richness and monumentality of the large complexes, with conceptual variations in the flats depending on their purpose (Muslim, European). The complexes of this first phase also came closest to the principles postulated by the architects of the Athens Charter in 1933, with the integration of elements that "make up" modern comfort.

The second wave (1958-1962) was clearly marked by the sobriety and informality of the façades. This period coincided with the adoption of the "Constantine plan", when the effort was multiplied with singular creations by universally recognized masterpieces (Fig.1).

Table 2. Identification sheet for the six main case studies

Large housing estates	L.H.E 1	L.H.E2	L.H.E3	L.H.E4	L.H.E5	L.H.E6
Year of construction	1951-1957	1957	1956-1958	1955-156	1959	1954-1956
Architect	Pierre Jean Guth	Justin Marie	Henri Désiré Cantie	Justin Marie	Jean Bedeau Andre Gomis V.Mialy D.Roman	Fernand Pouillon
Owner	HLM company	Algerian Cooperative Society for Muslim Housing	Municipal Housing Office HLM	Algerian Cooperative Society for Muslim Housing	C.I.A ² for C.I.L.O.F ³	HLM company
Housing category	H.L.M improved	Semi-urbain ⁴	Million	Semi-urbain	Million ⁵	H.L.M improved
Number of dwellings	580	376	602	254	520	614
Destination	Marine officers + civilian civil servants + workers from mainland France	Resettlement scheme for tenants of buildings in danger of collapse in the navy district	French social class	Algerian Muslims	Civil servants	Naval staff



1 L.H.E Dar Beida



2 L.H.E Sid el houari



3L.H.E Lescure



4 L.H.E la quiétude



5 L.H.E les falaises



6L.H.E Valmy

Fig. 1. Photographic images of the six large housing estates of the case study (source: authors + Oran archive)² Algerian real estate financing.³ Housing company for civil servants.⁴ Semi-urban' housing, specific to Algeria, was introduced at the end of the decade. This was a "much simpler type (...) designed to provide a decent flat for those living in the casbahs or gourbis with limited resources" Guillopé. 2023, p. 516.⁵ The so-called "million-franc" housing scheme, envisaged from the summer of 1954, was introduced in November 2. Expected to cost one million francs, it was designed as an intermediate range between the Logécos, which many people found too expensive, and the "basic economic housing" (LEPN), also known as "standard economic housing". Decree no. 54-1120 of 10 November 1954 (JORF-LD, 16 November 1954, p. 10793; see also the opinion of the Economic Council in its meeting of 8 March 1955, reproduced in the appendix dedicated to Regulatory Texts.

Results and Discussion

Spatial configurations on an urban scale (recurring mass layouts)

The compositional analysis of the ground plans in our corpus reveals three recurring typologies that have been attempted in this selection. These typologies are focused on the criteria of orientations described as guiding principles of the ground plan and the layout, distribution, and assembly of these plans to the extent that they exhibit variations.

The Tower and bar model

This model is very much in line with the standard definition and the image that immediately springs to mind for these housing developments built in France. Comprising low-rise blocks and a tower of over 17 storeys with bars, the ensemble forms a central island affected by an internal courtyard. The designers propose to open up panoramic views towards the immediate environment from the volumes created; this large-scale composition has made it possible to acquire the maximum number of dwellings known as the "million operations" which is the size of the large-scale operation comprising 500 to 600 dwellings. The orientation of this typology is identical, most often N/S or E/W (Fig.2).

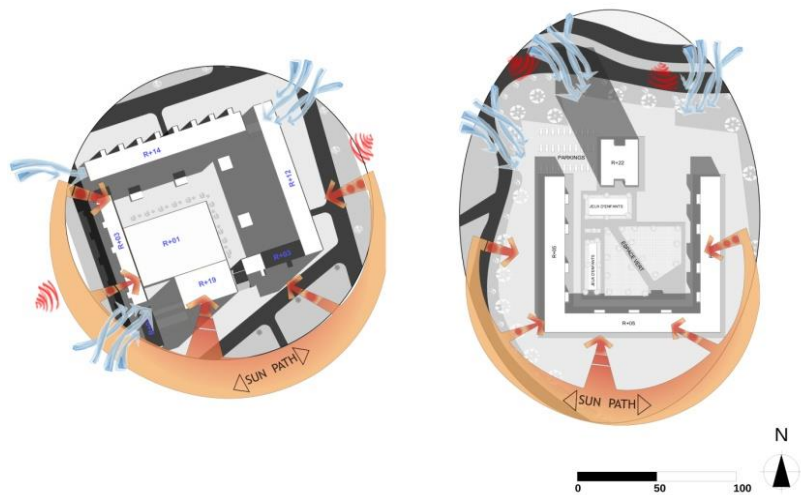


Fig. 2. *The mass plans of the Tower and bar model*
Lescure+Les falaises (authors, 2023)

The pavilion model

The pavilion model accounted for a significant portion of our corpus (60%), comprising a sequence of bars with identical shapes that ran parallel or perpendicular to each other and varied in orientation. This resulted in an expansion of the range of house designs implemented. These developments are of medium to large scale, often consisting of 200 to 600 houses, with the concept occasionally integrated into some of the bigger compositions. Since the direction of the different low-rise blocks (R+5) and their distance around each other result in very low or nonexistent masking effects, the sunshine factor was a genuine worry. Thus, this design deviates significantly from the conventional design of major developments, which involves different orientations for all the buildings and a maximum of 2 or 3 "typical" structures of the same height and surface area that would be replicated to form the project (Fig.3).

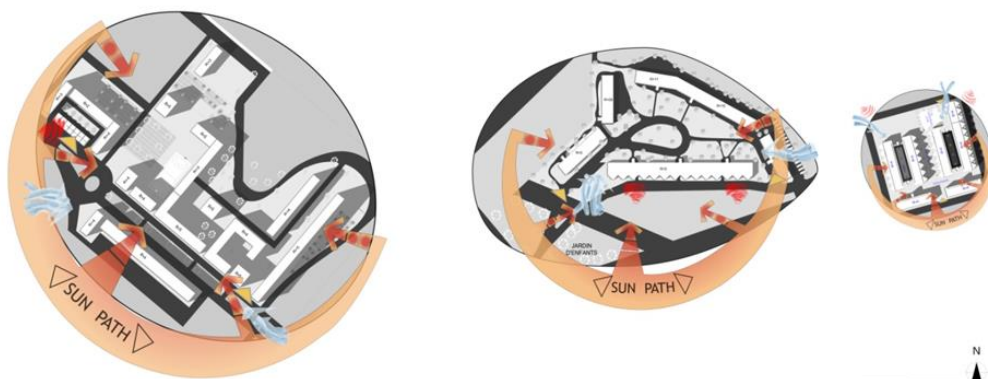


Fig. 3. *The mass plans of the pavilion model* Valmy +Sid el Houari+La quietude (authors, 2023)

The Hybrid model

The Hybrid model comprises a centrally situated huge structure, including a tower affixed to a long, curved bar, with equipment injected into the surrounding area from opposite sides of the plot. Three identical bars have been positioned at a locus in the northeastern direction. The northern side strip consists of two 4-storey structures strategically positioned to face about north and south, thereby maximizing the advantages of the winter sun and the summer sea wind (Fig.4).

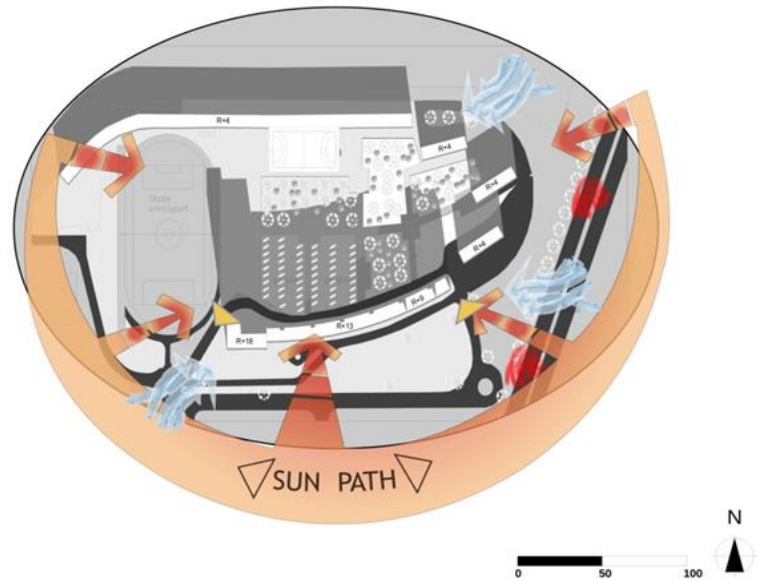


Fig. 4. The mass plan of the hybrid model of Dar el Beida (authors, 2023)

Spatial configurations on an architectural scale (plan of recurring dwellings)

The "Semiramis" plan⁶

This typology has found wide expression in Oran [21]. The characteristics of this type of flat are linked first and foremost to local requirements, as it was designed for the conservative indigenous population. Access to the different flats is via the corridor. The principle organization of the flat plan places the service spaces directly at the entrance. It pushes the service spaces to the rear, where the circulation spaces of Semiramis are less visually exposed, and the high walls preserve the inhabitants' privacy to a greater extent [22]. Unlike the spatial distribution of the concentric open-air courtyard found in the traditional Muslim house, this typology provides for separating the courtyard from the other spaces, thus losing its traditional organizational and structural role. The windows have been drilled into the walls on a reduced scale to maintain privacy and allow people to see without being seen (Fig.5).

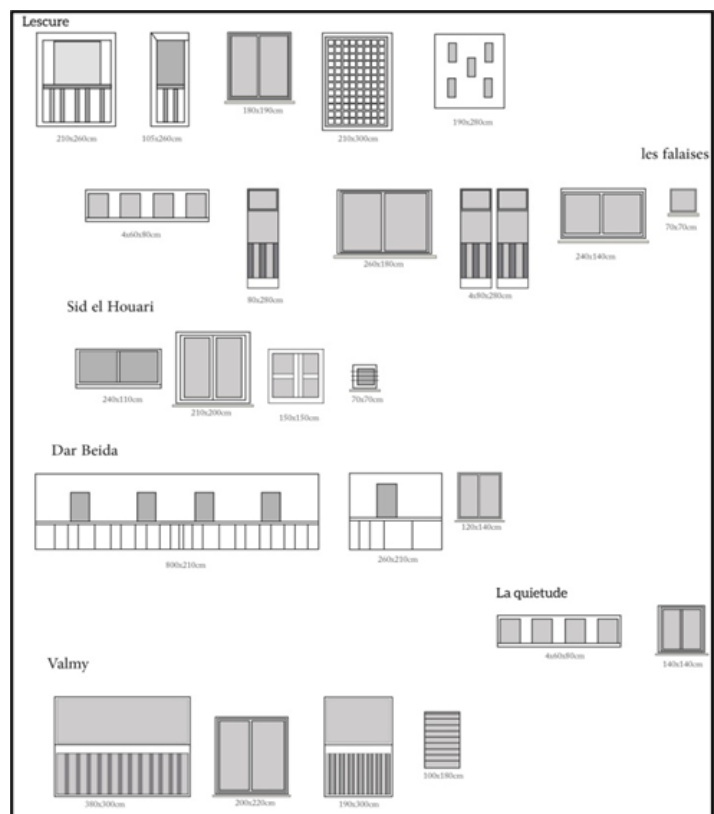


Fig. 5. Survey of type of windows for each case study. Oran (authors, 2023)

This type of housing, therefore, corresponds well to the desired objective: to provide affordable housing with a high level of modernity and comfort so as not to create a financial imbalance for the head of the family. The surface areas are identical in the two programmers', 2 and 3 rooms in the majority (T2=36.81m²,

⁶ Conceived by architect George Candilis, this is a model of social housing specifically created for the Algerian and Morocco people. It maintains a formal architectural layout resembling a tripod with pathways and incorporates a traditional courtyard at the back of the residence. The serviced areas are prominently displayed in large sizes.

T3=48.87m², T4=65.87m²), all of which face both sides of the building, so they benefit from a dual orientation that allows them to receive maximum light and sunlight. A single architect's design of identical accommodation for two different housing estates with the same purpose does not inspire any transformation or modification⁷ (Fig.6).



Fig. 6. Survey of a dwelling T2, T3, T4 of Sid el Houari and la Quietude. Oran (authors, 2023)

Logécos plan⁸

This is a typology that first existed in the French metropolis and was transported to Algerian soil, keeping the same dwelling surface areas⁹ T3 = from 48 to 67 m², 4P = from 53 to 68m, established by a decree of 16 March 1953 "Dwellings must have electric lighting and equipment, including at least an installed shower, a sink and a washbasin, WCs must be installed inside the dwelling; possible derogations (absence of existing technical networks)" [23]. This type includes the large Lescure and Les Falaises developments, which were designed in an era of technical modernization but also with hygiene in mind [24]. Housing of the "economical and family" type will enjoy all modern conveniences and benefits from dual orientation. The living rooms face south and west and are magnificently exposed, while the kitchen is equipped with a drying rack to protect it from the sun, separate from the living room. The walls of the facades are made of white ashlar, pierced by large picture windows, a symbol of openness (Fig. 5). However, investigations and surveys have revealed two types of modification: additions to the landing and extensions to the kitchen, removing the drying room to acquire a few extra square meters. The second is the introduction of new interior spaces by adding partitions, given that the space is large. These two types of action, the first one privileges to exploit wasted space, while the second involves the independence of each space (Fig.7).

⁷ The observations and interviews carried out in 2023 for this type of housing reveal no major changes to the housing, which results from a development designed to meet the needs and lifestyle of the local population from the outset.

⁸ Economic and family, it is a type of housing managed by a low-rent housing organization (HLM), public or private, that benefits from partial public funding, direct (subsidy) or indirect, Dictionary la rousse 2015. la petite "economic" property ("Logécos" formula).

⁹ Inter-ministerial order of 17 March 1953, art. 5 (JORF-LD, 18 March 1953, p. 2562).



Fig. 7. Survey of a dwelling T3, of Lescure and Les falaises Oran (authors, 2023)

Improved HLM plan

Pouillon is a prime example of this. In the Valmy housing estate, intended for the families of naval personnel on duty at the Lartigue naval air station, the flats have 1-5 rooms plus a kitchen, toilet and shower room. They all have a double aspect based on a North-East, North-West / South-East, South-West layout. The "day" and "night" areas are also clearly separated, with the living area first and the dining area at the back of the home. Adding a bedroom to the living room means we can choose between an extra bedroom or a larger living room. This housing configuration aims to offer households freedom in the layout of their homes. This is an example of an innovative architectural concept, reflected in the "flexibility to modify" of the plans, enabling flats to be converted, enlarged or reduced in size in the future without having to undergo major alterations. Despite the same purpose, the spatial distribution is well thought out and nuanced (Fig.8). No changes were made to the accommodation in these two housing estates, given the generosity of the space and the modern comforts.



Fig. 8. Survey of a dwelling T3, T4 of Dar Beida and Valmy. Oran (authors, 2023)

Spatial configurations on a social scale (the expression of inhabitants)

Based on interviews with residents and two years of observations, a proposal has been made for a social typology about the different areas of the large housing estates, broken down into three categories:

Discreet social housing

Discreet social housing includes the two major housing estates, Valmy and Dar el Beida (Fig.9), which are now inhabited by non-sedentary military families who are not native to the city of Oran. 80% of the interviewed population reported that the residents' experience is characterized by secrecy: "We cohabit but remain not acquainted with one other; this is due to the state's responsibility for the upkeep and administration of the large housing estate". They intend to depart for their extended family outside Oran during religious holidays. Veschambre argue that the appropriation of housing is associated with identity and symbolism, characterized by its tangible, consistent, and demonstrative implementation manner [25].



Fig. 9. Communal spaces in the two large housing estates (Valmy, Dar Beida) (authors, 2023, 7 p.m.)

Intense social housing

Lescure, la quietude, and Les Falaises housing estates are characterized by a vibrant and lively social life, which is highly valued for its distinctive influence on the intellectual development of the residents. The primary factor that led to the development of this typology is the significance of identity within the cohabitation of various categories of inhabitants who contribute to the formation of diverse values in acquiring and utilising shared areas. "We can see that the relationship between societies and their spaces, places, and territories has a strong identity dimension", Di Méo¹⁰ observes (Table 3).

Table 3. Summary table of the survey carried out at the three locations (authors, 2024)

Criteria	Dynamic social life	Income level	Level of education	Type of appropriation of communal spaces	Original inhabitants
Large housing estates					
Lescure	Strong	Low	Medium	Singular	70%
Les falaises	Strong	High	High	Authentic	85%
La quiétude	Strong	Low	Low	Modest	95%

The courtyards in the three large housing estates embody a unique act of appropriation by the inhabitants. This co-ownership IU enhances the reputation of the estates by fostering a positive utilization of the space and promoting a vibrant social life. This is evident not only daily but also during religious festivals when the courtyards serve as exceptional venues for appropriation (Fig.10). Most of the interviewed residents originate from the expansive housing estates, which have existed since the 1960s-1970s, following the departure of the French social class. However, a few residents of the quiet area have continued to live on the premises even after gaining independence. This can be attributed to their relatively low income and level of education, as is characteristic of the native population. Conversely, on the cliffs, many residents are productive farmers with a substantial income, which is seen in the genuine use of the community spaces¹¹.

¹⁰ DI MÉO, Guy. L'identité: une médiation essentielle du rapport espace/société. *Géocarrefour*, 2002, p. 175.

¹¹ In 2022, the wali of Oran redecomposed LES FALAISES as the most robust and well-preserved huge ensemble in Oran.



Fig. 10. Common spaces in the three main areas during festive religious events
(Lescure, les falaises, La quietude) (authors, 2023)

The social ghost

The observed and investigated realities reveal a typology of a large housing estate devoid of vitality and liveliness. This typology is not only influenced by its location in the old Oran (formerly a shanty town) with insufficient facilities and a cemetery that serves as an obstacle facing the large housing estate (Fig.11). Additionally, 70% of the interviewed residents do not hail from this area, resulting in a lack of identity value, nostalgia, and militancy. Consequently, the absence of appropriation of the various common spaces can be justified.

"I have recently relocated to Oran, where I work and spend my days outdoors, so I am unfamiliar with the residents. The area is tranquil, with everyone confined to their peaceful residences. Even during periods of weakness, I choose not to venture outside to prevent potential conflicts with the inhabitants". Extract from an interview with a 36-year-old male resident of Mascara town.

The absence of recreational spaces, street furniture, and diverse landscape elements, such as trees, vegetation, and tiny squares, elucidates the lack of vitality in SID el Houari, mirroring the loss of spirit among its inhabitants.

"Regrettably, our former residents, who were single families, have left this large housing estate, which met the standards of social diversity, justice, citizenship, equality, and solidarity. New arrivals value this type of housing more than residents born in the complex. I intend to maintain a pristine appearance, particularly in the courtyard where we interact socially". Extract from an interview with a 71-year-old man.

The analysis of the three-dimensionality of the six major housing estates revealed the identification of three distinct typologies of these estates based on clearly established criteria. The data collecting approach we will employ is "ethno-architectural surveys". Including urban typologies characterized by their size, shape, purpose, and number of residents, it is evident that the shapes were mostly varied by the tower block and bar type, facilitating the integration of green areas. Ultimately, various models that were preferred by the political figures of that era, namely the diverse project owners, extended outside the HLM office. Two other models were proposed: the pavillonnaire, characterized as an unstructured open urban model, and the hybrid model, which integrates the above-described models with a balanced urban layout and includes many amenities. A reimagined version of the traditional house, with the courtyard patio as the key organizational element, the "Semiramis" style is designed for the conservative Algerian populace, whose spaces are somewhat limited. The Logécos "economic family" low-cost housing model has surface areas that precisely match those of the metropolitan low-cost housing model. All three- and four-bedroom flats in this model are designed with a double orientation to ensure optimal sunlight exposure for the dwellings. In the spatial dwelling, an enhanced low-cost housing concept created by famous architects for navy personnel and their

families, the east-facing bedrooms receive morning light. At the same time, the living spaces get maximum sunlight during the middle of the day. Conducting a comparative analysis of the facades has enabled the determination of the number of bay models associated with the intended use of the extensive complex. Within Muslim housing, the typical number of windows per project ranges from 2 to 4. Several expansive home developments within European housing, such as les Falaises, Valmy, and Lescure, feature a range of 3 to 6 distinct types of openings.



Fig. 11. *Common space in the large housing estate of Sid el Houari (authors, 2023, 11 a.m.)*

The extensive housing development's social structure was an essential factor in comprehending and analyzing it. Three social typologies, characterized by varying degrees of apparitional, discreteness, and liveliness, were identified. These typologies were examined based on how both native inhabitants and newcomers appropriated communal places.

Conclusion

Additionally, this study enabled the creation of typologies for large housing estates that go beyond the typical towers and bars commonly associated with them [26]. Contrary to popular belief, large housing estates are not uniform and standard but rather distinct from one another, shaped by the cultural background of the architect who designed them and by particular societal logic with diverse profiles (native, European, working class, etc.). In other words, these estates are architecturally tailored to the intended population, influenced by the introduction and inspiration of new ideas. A prime example is the "Semiramis" design, initially conceived by the architect Candilis in Morocco, drawing inspiration from the architect Justin Marie. It serves as a reflection and is an excellent example of modern architecture adapted to the local context. A comprehensive examination of the activities at the urban master plan level has allowed us to comprehend better the incentives and mechanisms implemented and the selection of building orientations, prioritizing solar gain for the whole building envelope. The diverse floor designs, characterized by their different sizes and shapes, rendered each project a distinct phenomenon. These tools are used to strategically design a well-defined area tailored to the operation's scale and function to establish a cohesive urban structure that aligns with the ideals of the contemporary movement.

Ultimately, considering the meticulous observations and extensive conversations with residents, it becomes evident that the social impact is unique across all major housing complexes. Some of the changes and positive appropriations made by the residents are highly intense, and their sociability plays a crucial role in establishing and sustaining the social impact. This highlights the development of a heritage, particularly through the appropriation of the space and the existing social practices. The non-sedentary population influences the discreteness of the premises. It can be observed that a majority of tenants dominate the social dimension, resulting in disrupted and less anticipated appropriations and sociability. Consequently, this directly affects the original social aspect of the large housing estates. Finally, the social ghost, characterized by its geographical position, has become a distinct social enclave and significant housing estate, isolated from the rest of the city. However, nowadays, the major housing estates in the suburbs have become fully

integrated into the urban structure of the new city, except for those in the Intramuros. Consequently, many of its residents have left the area and been replaced by non-Oranians seeking employment in the big city.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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