



The downturn of the societal place of the Algerian woman expressed in the architecture of Algiers

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ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses the changing societal position of Algerian women over time, influenced by cultural, social, and political factors and how it is expressed in the city's architecture. While women have played important roles in preserving Algerian culture, challenging gender norms, and participating in resistance movements, they have also faced gender-specific challenges. The thesis highlights how the relationship between women's position and architecture in Algiers has been complex, with traditional dwellings reinforcing gender roles and patriarchal structures through separate living spaces for men and women.

The lack of representation of women in public spaces and the design of buildings and public facilities with men as the primary users further reinforce traditional gender norms. This thesis also notes the influence of colonial architecture in perpetuating Orientalist stereotypes of Algerian women, and the subsequent desire for a distinct national identity and women's empowerment in post-independence Algerian architecture.

Today the downturn in emancipation is clearly visible in the city of Algiers and its architecture. Arabization and the tension to find national identity continues to oppress women in Algiers to this day. The thesis aims to analyse the expression of women's development in architecture from before 1830 to after decolonization in 1962, in order to understand the changing social position of Algerian women.

PREFACE

As a Dutch-Algerian woman raised in a Western country, I have been fortunate to have the freedom to express myself and explore the world without the constraints of societal expectations.

Growing up, I was always aware of my Algerian heritage and the struggles the country faced. I was raised with stories of my grandmothers, who enjoyed more liberty in the past than Algerian women do today. The limitations imposed on women in a conservative society inspired me to explore my roots and understand where I come from. In this thesis, I aim to honor my roots and the women who have shaped my identity, while delving into the past to gain a deeper understanding of Algerian women's history and their challenges. Although I strive to maintain an objective and factual approach, I cannot help but bring my personal experiences and perspectives into my research.

As an Algerian woman living in a Western country, I have had the opportunity to witness first-hand the stark contrasts between the freedoms I enjoy and the restrictions that women in Algeria still face. This has motivated me to study Algerian women's history, culture, societal norms, and architecture in order to better understand the challenges they continue to endure.

Through my research, I hope to shed light on the struggles and achievements of Algerian women, past and present, and contribute to the ongoing discourse on gender equality and women's empowerment. I aspire to use my profession to make a difference and continue the legacy of the strong and resilient women in my family.



Figure 1,2. Both of my grandmothers

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INTRODUCTION

Algiers is the capital city of Algeria, a country located in North Africa. It is situated on the Mediterranean coast, and has a population of approximately 3 million people, making it the largest city in Algeria. The city's history dates back to the 10th century when it was founded by the Berbers, an ethnic group indigenous to North Africa. They are believed to be the original inhabitants of the region (Hsain Ilahiane, 2017). Since the 9th century BC, it has been ruled by various powers, including the Phoenicians, Romans, and Ottomans. In the 19th century, Algiers became a key center of resistance against French colonization and was ultimately incorporated into the French Empire in 1830. The city gained its independence along with the rest of Algeria in 1962 (Windrow, 2013). Algiers is known for its stunning Mediterranean coastline, historic architecture, and vibrant cultural scene, including its music, cuisine, and arts. It is also an important commercial and economic hub for the region, with a bustling port and significant industries in sectors such as oil and gas (OPEC Bulletin, 2012).

Algeria has a rich history when it comes to equality and independence. It includes equality between different ethnic groups such as the Berbers, Arabs and French, as well as gender equality. Algeria has always been ruled by various powers. Independence and creating its own identity have always been a struggle for Algiers up to this very day (Algeria - World Directory of Minorities & Indigenous Peoples, 2015). After independence, my grandmother used to go to the beach in shorts and could go out much more than she can now. Women are now having to fight for equality in Africa's largest country (OECD | Social Institutions and Gender Index, 2023). Today the downturn in emancipation is clearly visible in the city of Algiers and its architecture. Segregation in public spaces such as in waiting rooms at the doctor's or in the town hall has increased a lot. The perceived decline of women's emancipation in Algiers is also visible on the beaches, where women no longer wear uncovered clothing (Turshen, 2002).

Yet Algiers gradually became more and more emancipated up to the decade following decolonization in 1962. Since the 1980s, all this progress was reversed and women were confronted with all kinds of limitations in the city. In the decade after decolonization and during the civil war of the 90s, something happened that has continued to oppress women in Algiers to this day. The societal place of the Algerian woman changed. What happened? How did it manifest itself in the city, its public buildings, and the dwellings? How has the societal place of the Algerian woman been expressed in the architecture of the city of Algiers during and after colonization?

The research is supported by articles and books that provide diverse perspectives on women in the male-dominated Arab world, as well as on the development of the city of Algiers, its public buildings, and traditional dwellings. A key focus of the research is the changing image of Algerian women, which was established during colonialism through Orientalist iconography. This research will be explored through literature and theory, complemented by interviews¹.

The research will be structured into different time periods, including pre-colonization (before 1830), the colonial era, and post-colonization (1962-now), with a focus on the cultural and historical factors that have shaped the position of women in Algerian society. Ottoman rule in Algeria serves as the starting point because it shows the cultural background that influenced the development of women's position. Other topics addressed will include political and historical context, cultural situations, and the position of Algerian women during that period. The thesis will also analyse the expression of women's development in the architecture of Algiers, ranging from large urban scale to public buildings, the Arab house typology, and the harem.

The thesis will highlight the shift in the social position of Algerian women and its impact on post-colonial architecture, including the decline in women's emancipation and the representations of women in architecture. The prominent issue that arises in this context is Algeria's ongoing challenge of defining its own distinct identity. The question "How has the societal place of the Algerian woman changed and been expressed in the architecture of the city of Algiers during and after colonization?", is highly relevant and useful to the field of architecture and architectural history. Architecture is not just about creating functional structures but is also a reflection of the social, cultural, and political values of a society. The architecture of a city can reveal much about the social position of women in that society, as their roles and status are often reflected in the design and layout of buildings. By examining the architecture of the city of Algiers during and after colonization, and specifically looking at how the societal place of Algerian women has been expressed in this architecture, researchers can gain valuable insights into the cultural and historical factors that have influenced the status of women in Algerian society over time. This knowledge can inform future design practices and help architects create more inclusive and equitable spaces. Additionally, exploring the intersection of architecture and social history can offer new perspectives on the discipline of architectural history and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the role of architecture in shaping and reflecting societal values.

¹ Interviews and conversations with female members of my family from different generations

PRE-COLONIZATION (BEFORE 1830)

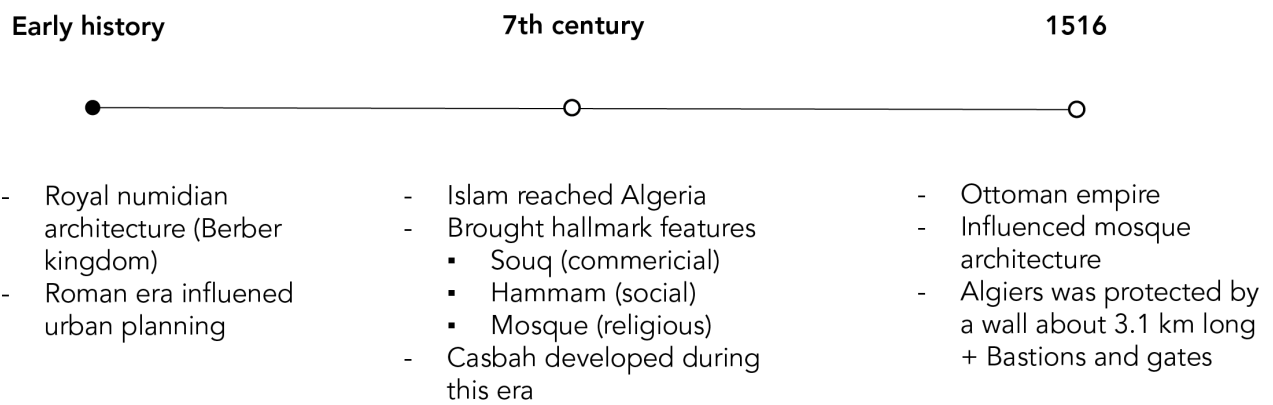


Figure 3. Timeline Algiers, Early history – 1516 (Ouibrahim, 2023)

2.1 Political and historical context of Algeria

Algiers was shaped by a diverse mix of influences, including Berber, Arab, Ottoman, and European traditions. The city was a major hub of trade and cultural exchange in the Mediterranean, and its unique position at the crossroads of different civilizations made it a melting pot of diverse cultural influences. One of the most significant cultural influencers in Algiers was Islam, which had been introduced to the region by Arab conquerors in the 7th century. Islam played a central role in the daily life and cultural practices of the city's inhabitants, with the mosque serving as a key gathering place for religious and social activities (Mcdougall, 2017). In addition to Islam, the Berber and Arab tribes of the region had their own distinct cultural traditions, including music, dance, and cuisine. These traditions were often fused with Islamic customs, creating a unique cultural blend that was specific to the region (Mcdougall, 2017).

The Ottoman Empire also left a significant cultural imprint on Algiers, with Ottoman architecture and design elements visible in many of the city's buildings and public spaces. The Ottoman governors and military elite also brought their own cultural practices and traditions with them, further enriching the city's cultural landscape. Algiers before 1830 was part of the Ottoman Empire, which had controlled the city since 1516 (BenHamouche, 2003). The Ottoman Empire was a powerful Islamic state that spanned three continents and existed from the late 13th century until its dissolution after World War I. The political context of Algiers during this time was characterized by a complex system of governance, in which power was divided among several different groups. At the top of the political hierarchy were the Ottoman governors, known as Deys, who were appointed by the Ottoman sultan and were responsible for administering the city. However, the Deys were not the only power brokers in Algiers. The Janissaries, a powerful military elite composed of Ottoman soldiers, also wielded significant influence, as did the local Arab and Berber tribes (Mcdougall, 2017).

In addition to these groups, there were also various European powers vying for influence in Algiers. The city was a major center of piracy and trade in the Mediterranean, and European powers such as France, Spain, and England had established diplomatic and commercial relations with the city. However, these relationships were often fraught with tension and conflict, as European powers sought to protect their interests and influence the political situation in Algiers (Mcdougall, 2017).

The political context of Algiers before 1830 was characterized by a complex web of competing interests and power dynamics, both within the city itself and among external actors seeking to exert influence. The architecture of Algiers has always been the expression of identity and power. During this period the cultural context of Algiers was characterized by a rich mix of different cultural influences, each of which contributed to the unique character of the city and its people (Mcdougall, 2017).



Figure 4. Map of Algeria with Wilaya² of Algiers marked (Ouibrahim, 2023)



Figure 5. Wilaya of Algiers with the Casbah and City of Algiers marked (2011)

² Wilaya: Wilaya is an Arabic term that refers to a geographical administrative division used in several countries, primarily in North Africa and the Middle East. In Arabic-speaking countries, a wilaya is typically a region or province that is further subdivided into smaller administrative units, such as districts or municipalities. In Algeria, there are 58 wilayas, each with its own capital city and local government. Wilayas are often responsible for various aspects of governance, including economic development, education, healthcare, and public services, within their respective regions (BenHamouche, 2003).

2.2 Urban development of Algiers and its architecture

Algiers has been under the rule of various powers, including the Phoenicians, Romans, and Ottomans, each of which contributed to the city's distinctive architectural styles and building techniques. The city was established by the Arab Zirid dynasty in the 10th century, a Sanhaja Berber dynasty that governed the central and eastern Maghreb region of modern-day Algeria, and was initially known as Al-Jaza'ir, which denoted the islands along its waterfront; during this time, it functioned as a small port and its prosperity was linked to that of North Africa as a whole under the successive rule of Arab dynasties (Zeynep Çelik, 1997).

In the 16th century, the Ottomans made Algiers the capital of Algeria, solidifying its status as a significant center of power in the region. The settlement of Algiers was a strategic port city that served as an important center for trade and commerce, and its urban development was marked by the construction of defensive walls, mosques, public baths, and other notable architectural landmarks (Zeynep Çelik, 1997).

Algiers' urban structure began to take shape during the Ottoman period. The Spanish and Portuguese had already established themselves in the region, and the Ottomans saw an opportunity to expand their influence and gain control of this vital coastal city. Two parts of Algiers emerged; Upper Algiers on the hill and Lower Algiers which developed along the coast. Upper Algiers was mainly residential and private. Lower Algiers contained public buildings such as the governor's house, the main mosques, and the markets. It developed as a commercial, military, and administrative quarter. We now know this as the old city, the Casbah (BenHamouche, 2003). One of the most significant developments in Algiers' urban structure. The Casbah included a complex system of narrow alleys, courtyards, and public spaces. The Casbah was also home to numerous palaces, mosques, and other significant buildings, many of which were adorned with intricate tilework, stucco, and other decorative elements. The Casbah was surrounded by a wall during the Ottoman Empire (BenHamouche, 2003).

Outside of the Casbah, the city was characterized by a mix of different building styles and techniques. The city's historic architecture included a mix of styles, including Berber, Arab, and Ottoman, as well as elements of European architecture introduced by traders and diplomats from France, Spain, and other European powers (Mcdougall, 2017).

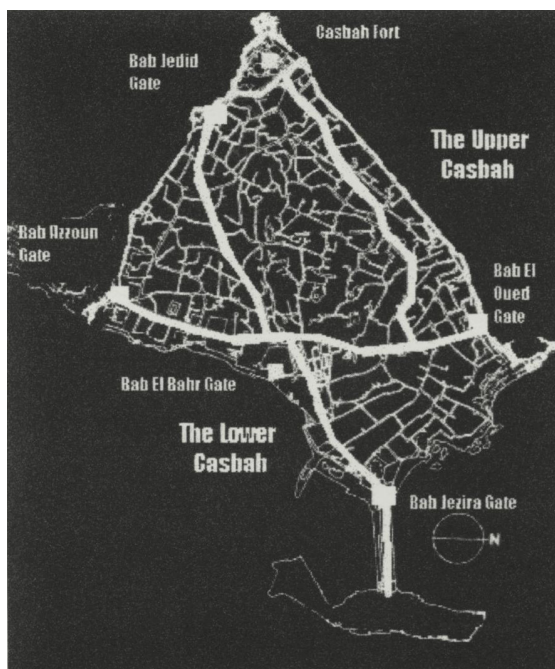


Figure 6. Upper and Lower Algiers (BenHamouche, 2003)



Figure 7. The city wall (BenHamouche, 2003)

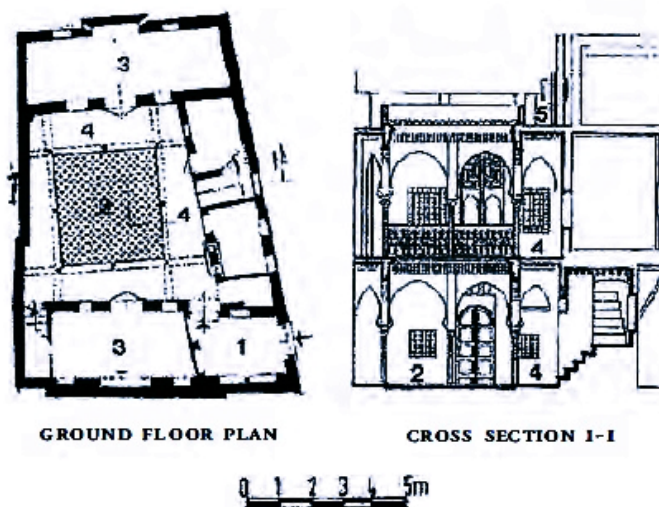
Overall, the urban development of Algiers was shaped by a mix of different cultural influences, each of which contributed to the unique character of the city's built environment. The city's historic architecture and urban layout continue to be an important part of its cultural heritage, and many historical buildings and public spaces have been preserved and restored in recent years.

2.2.1 The harem typology

The home is an 'inviolable space' (Zeynep Çelik, 1997). It is closed off from the street and got developed around its interior court with waterworks and tiles. Privacy became a guiding factor and resulted in the emergence of interior domestic architecture. Regardless of the income level of the family or the size of the building, the houses of the Casbah were organised around a court surrounded by arcades. Access to the court was indirect and reached through several labyrinthine halls. The upper floors contained the main rooms, all of which opened onto the arcade. A staircase led to the roof terrace, which often had a cistern to collect rainwater. These tanks are used to collect and store rainwater for tasks such as washing clothes and cleaning floors (Karabag & Fellahi, 2017).

Within the Arab house, a separate space for women of the family can be found. This space is called the harem. The harem architectural style originated during the Ottoman period when the governors, known as Deys were in power in Algeria, as it was common for them to have multiple wives in their household, and as a result, separate living space was created for each wife, ultimately leading to the development of the traditional home. The bathhouse, or hammam, also originated during this period and was also an important part of women's lives, as it provided a space for socializing and relaxation (Alloula, 1986).

The Sqifa is a space situated just beyond the entrance door of a house where male guests are received and awaits their invitation to enter the interior spaces. Its primary purpose is to ensure privacy, particularly for women. The Sqifa incorporates a unique strategy for the hierarchy of women, featuring small openings in its two walls. These openings allow women to discreetly observe those inside without fully revealing themselves (Karabag & Fellahi, 2017).



- KEYS
- 1. Sqifa
 - 2. West-ed-Dar
 - 3. Room (bit)
 - 4. Covered gallery
 - 5. Terrace

Figure 8. Example of a Casbah House (Hadjri, 1993)

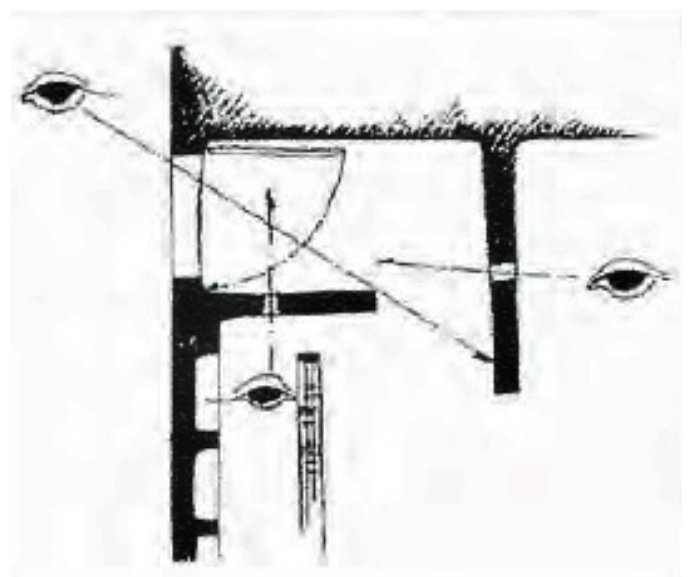


Figure 9. Sqifa concept (Hadjri, 1993)

2.3 The expression of women's position in architecture

There is a strong influence of Islamic traditions on social norms and etiquette in Algeria. Women must dress modestly, especially in rural areas. Algiers' urban layout is a classic example of the "Islamic city", featuring short and winding streets in its neighborhoods, as Islam influenced not only social and legal institutions but also urban planning by emphasizing gender segregation; public spaces such as streets were reserved for men while domestic spaces were designated for women, thus dividing places and functions in the "traditional Islamic city" (Zeynep Çelik, 1997).

Separated sections based on gender prevented physical contact between men and women and confined women's lives to their homes. This separation serves to limit women's mobility and interaction with the outside world, reinforcing their subordinate status in society (Alloula, 1986). Privacy became a guiding factor and resulted in the emergence of interior domestic architecture. The center of the house, the court, the setting for women's work and leisure. Access to the court was indirect and reached through several labyrinthine halls. The largest room of the entrance could be used by the man of the house to entertain his friends without interfering in the activities of the women.

Like the courtyard, the terrace was an essential part of the house, where women spent many hours of the day, working and socializing with their neighbors. The dense configuration of the casbah made it possible to move from one terrace to another and visit other houses without having to use the street. The roofs of the kasbah acted as an alternative public space that extended across the entire city. Unlike the courtyard and private rooms, the roofs opened up to the city, the sea, and the world. The appropriation of this space by the women of Algiers divided the casbah horizontally into two worlds: at the top, all over the city sat the women; at the bottom, the streets belonged to the men (Zeynep Çelik, 1997).

COLONIAL ERA

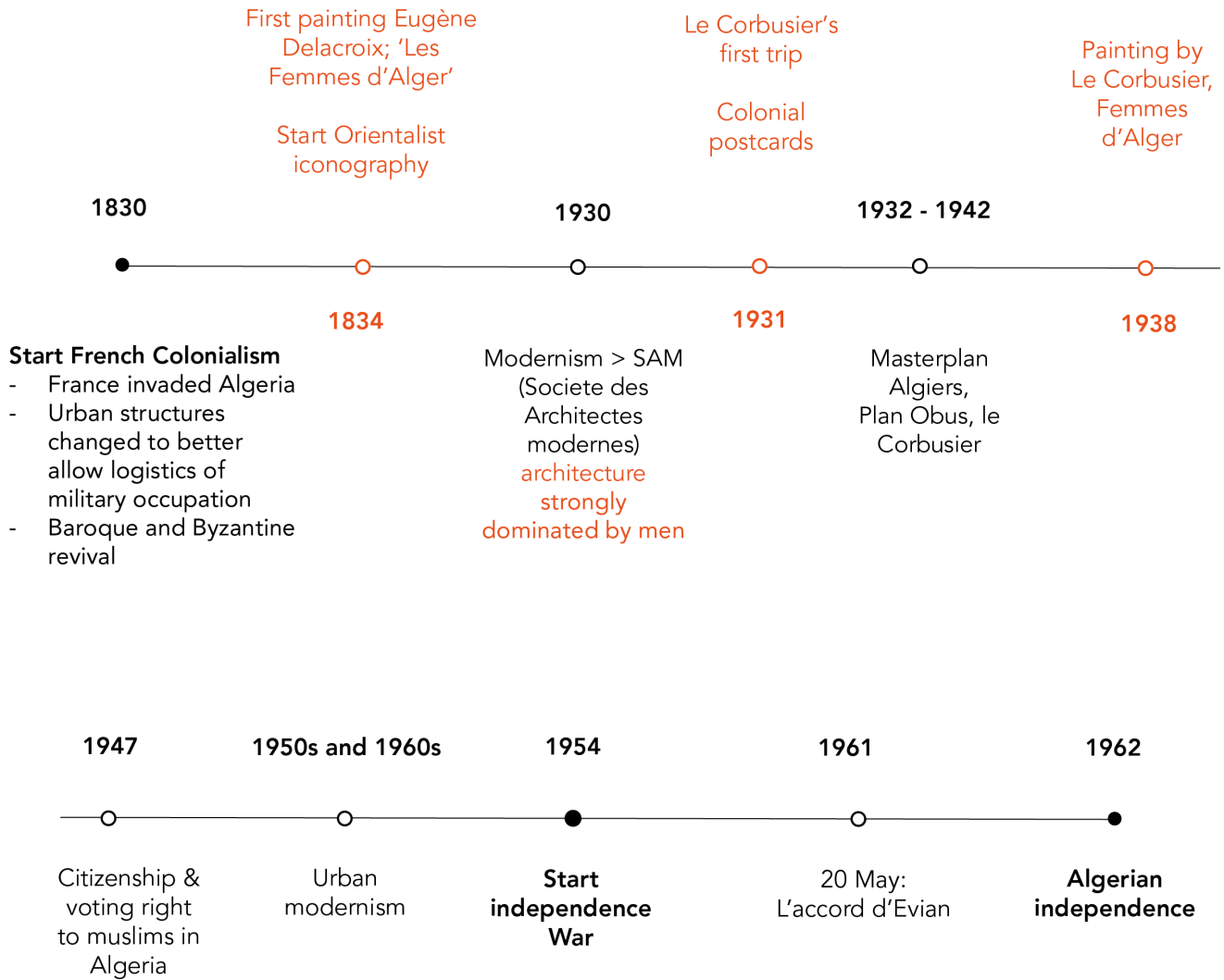


Figure 10. Timeline Algiers, 1830 – 1962 (Ouibrahim, 2023)

3.1 Political and historical context of Algeria and French Colonialism

Algiers was under French colonial rule from 1830 to 1962. Algiers was an important port city and commercial center for France. It had access to the Mediterranean Sea, which made it a strategic location for trade and military purposes. During this period, the political context in Algiers was characterized by a complex interplay of colonialism, resistance, and shifting power dynamics.

The French initially established a military regime in Algiers for a short while, which was quickly followed by a civil government in 1830. French settlers, who came to be known as *pieds-noirs*³, began to arrive in Algiers and other parts of Algeria in large numbers, taking over land and resources previously owned by Algerians. The French colonial government in Algiers was headed by a governor⁴, who had extensive powers over the region. The governor was assisted by a council of advisors, which included both French and Algerian members. However, the council was largely symbolic, and the governor had the final say in all matters (Gallois, 2013).

Throughout the colonial period, the French government sought to maintain control over the region through a combination of military force, economic exploitation, and cultural assimilation. French laws, language, and customs were imposed on Algerians, and the French government sought to erase Algerian culture and identity (Mcdougall, 2017).

During the French colonial period in Algiers, there were several different populations that coexisted in the city. The two most important to name to understand the situation:

- **Indigenous Algerians:** The indigenous population of Algiers was made up of Arabs, Berbers, and other North African groups. They had their own language, culture, and traditions, and often faced discrimination and marginalization under French colonial rule.
- **French colonizers:** French colonizers were the ruling class in Algiers during the colonial period. They had their own language, culture, and customs, and were generally wealthier and more privileged than the indigenous population.

In addition, other European colonizers, a Jewish community, and African immigrants including people from Senegal, Mali, and other West African countries were also populations living in Algiers at the time.

The cultural context in Algiers during French colonialism was marked by an attempt by the French to impose their language, religion, and customs on the indigenous Algerian population. This process of cultural assimilation was a key part of French colonial policy in Algeria.

French became the official language of Algeria, and French schools and universities were established to educate the Algerian elite in the French language and culture. Language became a phenomenon that separated the classes. French culture was promoted through the media, literature, and the arts, and French customs and values were imposed on Algerians in both the public and private spheres (Mcdougall, 2017).

³ *Pieds noirs*; (literally “black foot” in French) refers to French people of European descent who were born in Algeria during the French colonial period (1830-1962) and who migrated to France after Algeria gained independence from France in 1962. The term “*pied-noir*” is said to have originated from the fact that the settlers’ feet would become blackened by the rich Algerian soil (Mcdougall, 2017).

⁴ Some of the subsequent governors of Algiers: Bertrand Clauzel (1831-1835), Thomas Bugeaud (1840-1847), Charles-Marie Denys de Damrémont (1847), Henri d’Orléans, duc d’Aumale (1847-1848), Louis Eugène Cavaignac (1848-1851), Jacques Louis Randon (1851-1858), Aimable Pélissier (1858-1859), Jacques Louis Randon (1860-1864), Joseph Louis Michel Durieu (1870), Louis Tirman (1871-1873) (1881-1891), Charles Léon Célestin Jonnart (1898-1901), Jules Carde (1913-1915), Maurice Viollette (1925-1926) (Countries Ab-Am, n.d.)

At the same time, the French sought to erase Algerian culture and identity. Muslims of Algiers were considered French subjects. The use of Arabic, the language of the majority of the Algerian population, was discouraged, and traditional Algerian customs and practices were denigrated as backward and primitive.

Resistance to French cultural domination was an important aspect of Algerian resistance to colonialism. Algerian intellectuals and artists sought to preserve and promote Algerian culture and traditions, often in opposition to French cultural influence. This resistance took many forms, from the development of nationalist literature in Arabic to the preservation of traditional Algerian music and dance. Algerian women played a crucial role in transmitting and preserving Algerian cultural traditions within their families and communities, passing down language, customs, and practices to future generations (Ibtissam Bouachrine, 2014).

3.1.1 The Orientalist iconography

The French invasion of Algeria in 1830 initiated a new regime of colonial rule that enabled artists such as Eugène Delacroix to travel to the region. However, many of Delacroix's representations of Algerian life are exaggerated or fictionalized, as is the case in this work.

"The Women of Algiers in their Apartment" is a painting made by the famous French artist, Eugène Delacroix. It was painted in 1834 and is now held in the Louvre Museum in Paris. The scene shows the interior of a harem, which is entirely imagined; the painter was never allowed to enter a harem during his time in Algeria. The image thus reflects a common Orientalist motif: the European fantasy of plentiful and unrestrained sexuality in the Near East (Noon et al., 2015).



Figure 11. Women of Algiers in their Apartment, Eugène Delacroix 1834 (Noon et al., 2015)

The painting has also been interpreted as a commentary on the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. At the time when Delacroix painted this work, Algeria had been recently conquered by France, and the painting can be seen as a representation of the French fascination with and domination of Algerian culture (Celik, 1992). Despite the painting's controversial history, it remains a significant work of art that continues to inspire and captivate viewers to this day. The *Women of Algiers* caused a sensation when it was displayed at the Paris Salon in 1834. Not only was it mentionable at the time for its sexual connotations, but also for the portrayal of opium, which at the time was only included in paintings of prostitutes. This painting was also notable because it was generally difficult to paint Muslim women, who were covered head to toe, but Delacroix was secretly able to sketch some during his travels to Morocco in 1832.

Also, the Swiss-French architect, Le Corbusier, was heavily influenced by Orientalist iconography during his time in Algiers, Algeria, in the 1930s. Orientalism refers to the Western fascination with Eastern cultures and the tendency to exoticize and romanticize them (Celik, 1992). This fascination was prevalent in the 19th and early 20th centuries and can be seen in various forms of art, literature, and architecture. In his work, Le Corbusier often incorporated elements of what has been described as "Orientalist iconography," this iconography includes a range of images and motifs, such as domes, minarets, arabesques, and calligraphy, which are often associated with Islamic architecture and culture (Celik, 1992).

Showing Delacroix's painting and some of Le Corbusier's work, have been intended to highlight the problematic nature of these Orientalist and Romanticist depictions and how they contributed to a distorted view of Algerian society and women during the colonial period. It's important to critically examine and contextualize historical representations of cultures and societies, including those depicted in art, to understand the complexities and nuances of their actual realities, rather than relying solely on romanticized or biased portrayals.



Figure 12, 13. Le Corbusier, sketches of Algerian women (Celik, 1992)

3.2 Urban development of Algiers and its architecture

The colonial era in Algiers was marked by significant changes in the city's urban development:

- 1830-1930; Fragmented reactions to ad hoc growth of the city of Algiers
- 1930-WW2; Attempts to bring order to the city through masterplan (such as plan Obus)
- End of the French rule: Concentration on the regional scale

The French colonisers transformed Algiers into a modern European-style city, with a layout and architecture that reflected French urban planning principles and aesthetic preferences.

The French colonial administration first focused on improving the city's infrastructure, including the construction of roads, bridges, and public buildings. The new structures were designed in a neoclassical style, which was popular in France at the time. The 'Place du Gouvernement', the central square of Algiers, was the focal point of this development, with many significant buildings such as the Governor's Palace, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Grand Mosque (Zeynep Çelik, 1997).

Another significant urban development was the transformation of the Casbah, the old Arab quarter, which was rebuilt in a style similar to French medieval architecture. The French aimed to make the Casbah more hygienic and easier to police, and the new design included wider streets, modern sewage systems, and the introduction of electricity. During the early 20th century, Algiers experienced a significant expansion of its urban area, with new neighborhoods and public buildings constructed in various architectural styles. Art Deco and Modernist buildings were built, including the post office, the train station, and the Museum of Fine Arts. These buildings reflected the changing tastes and influences of French architecture, as well as the development of new materials and technologies (Zeynep Çelik, 1997).

However, the French colonial administration's urban planning and architectural projects were not without criticism. Many Algerians objected to the destruction of traditional Arab buildings and the imposition of European-style structures. Additionally, the new infrastructure primarily benefited the European colonisers, while the majority of Algerians lived in poor and overcrowded conditions.



Figure 14. The 'Place du Gouvernement', the central square of Algiers ([Government Place, Algiers, Algeria], 1899)

3.2.1 Le Corbusier and plan Obus

During the French era, Le Corbusier was able to go to Algiers. He analysed the city and declared the Algerian street as an anonymous corridor. Life happens inside the house.

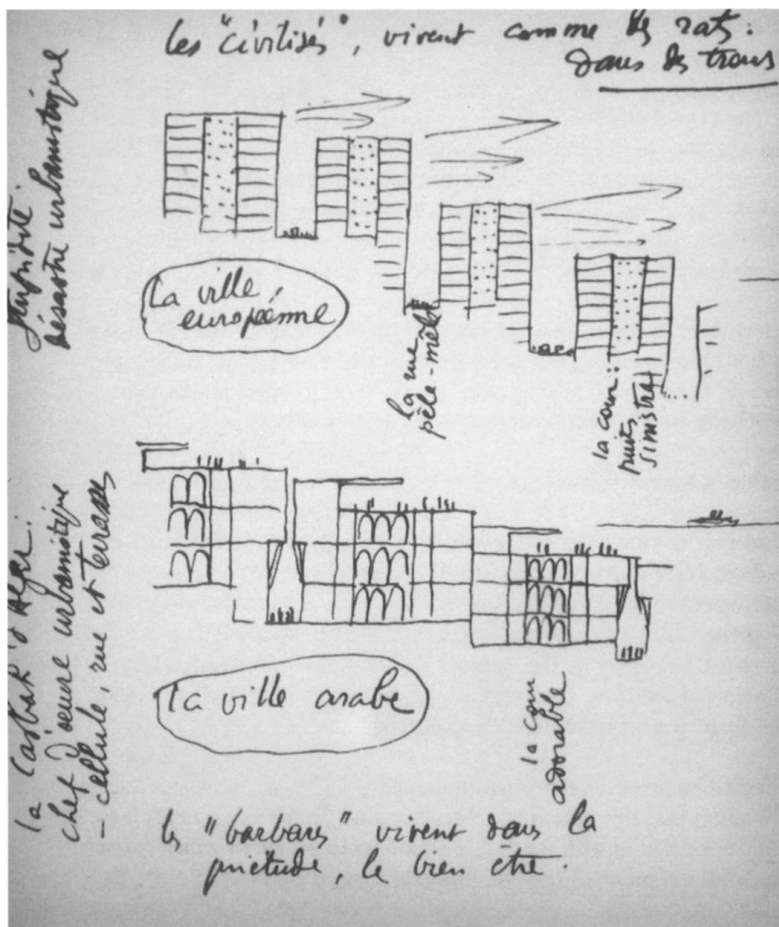


Figure 15. Le Corbusier, sketch comparing the European city with the Arab (Celik, 1992)

During his time in Algiers, Le Corbusier was commissioned to design a master plan for the city, which he called "Plan Obus." He was drawn to the traditional Islamic architecture of Algiers, particularly the white cubic houses and the labyrinthine streets of the Casbah. Le Corbusier believed that these traditional forms could be adapted to modern architecture, and he incorporated them into his plan.

However, Le Corbusier's interpretation of Orientalist iconography was not without controversy. His plan called for the demolition of much of the existing city, including the Casbah, which was seen by many Algerians as a symbol of their cultural heritage. Le Corbusier also envisioned Algiers as a "white city" and proposed the construction of high-rise buildings that would tower over the traditional low-rise structures of the city (Celik, 1992). This approach was seen by some as a form of cultural imperialism, as it imposed a Western style of architecture on a non-Western city.

Critics have argued that Le Corbusier's use of Orientalist iconography was problematic because it reinforced stereotypes about the East and ignored the complex cultural and political realities of the regions he was drawing inspiration from. They have also pointed out that Le Corbusier's designs often failed to account for the local climate, geography, and cultural practices of the regions he was working in, leading to buildings that were ill-suited to their environments (Iain Border, 2000).

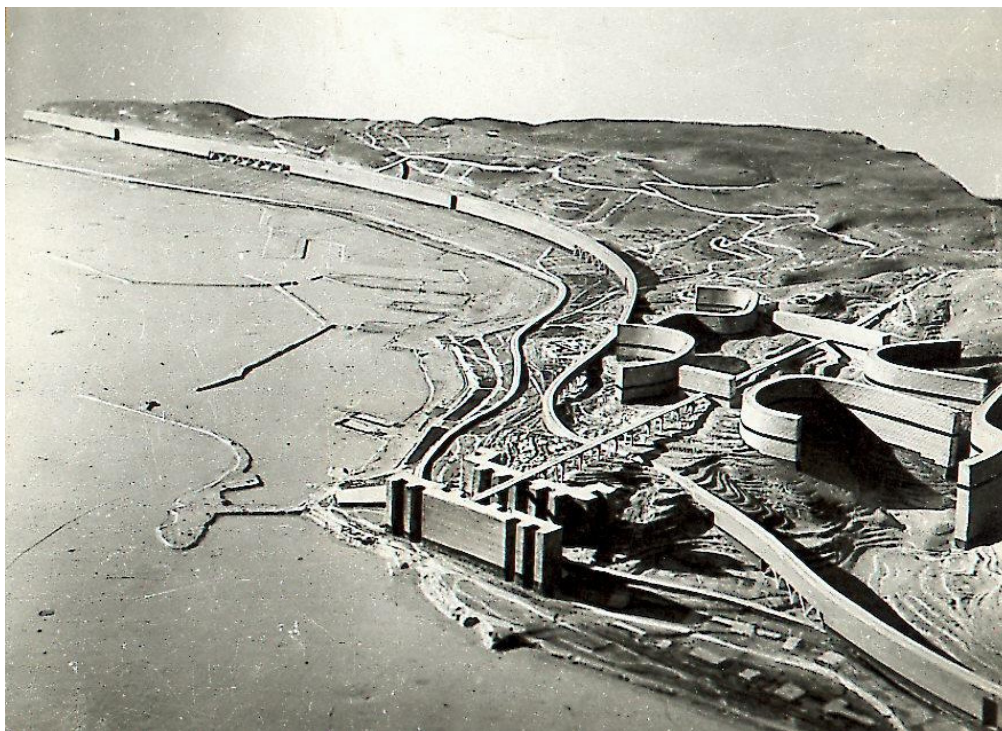


Figure 16. An impression of plan Obus (Lucien Hervé, 2020)

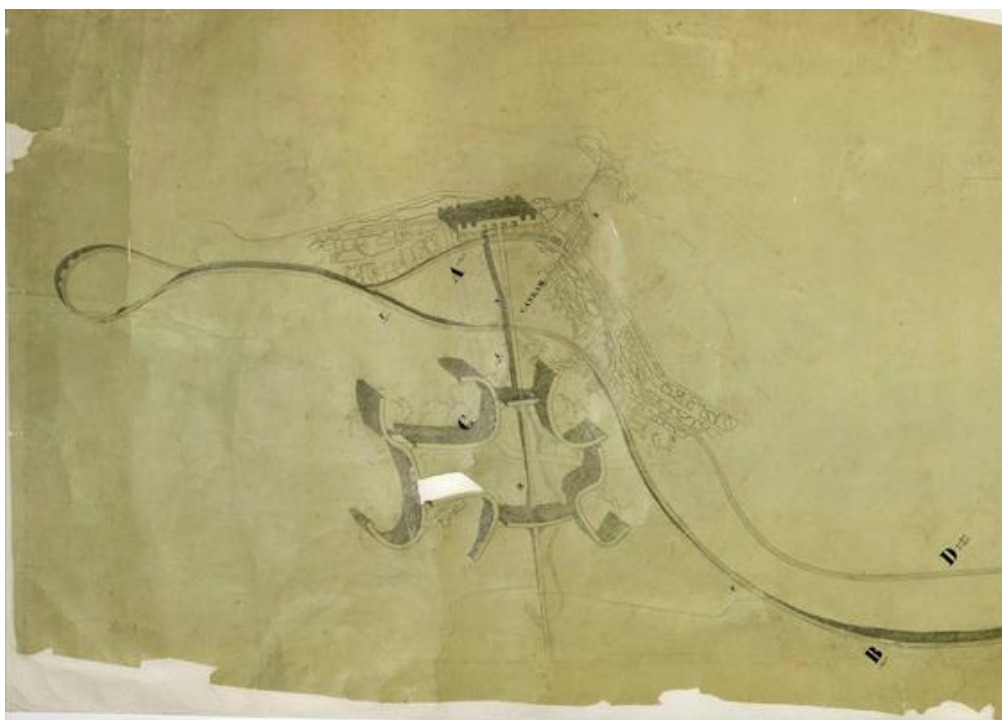


Figure 17. The plan Obus in map with not much left of the Casbah (Lucien Hervé, 2020)

3.3 The expression of women's position in architecture

The position of women in colonial architecture in Algiers is complex and multifaceted, as it is influenced by a variety of cultural, social, and political factors. One way in which women's position is expressed in colonial architecture is through the design of private and public spaces. In many cases, colonial architecture in Algiers was designed to reinforce gender roles and patriarchal social structures. For example, private homes were often designed with separate spaces for men and women, with women's quarters being located in the rear of the house and men's quarters in the front. Public spaces, such as markets and cafes, were also often segregated by gender, with women's sections being located in more secluded and private areas.

Another way in which women's position is expressed in colonial architecture is through the use of decorative elements and symbolism. For example, many colonial buildings in Algiers feature ornate balconies and window grills that were designed to protect women from the prying eyes of men. These decorative elements also served to reinforce the idea of women as fragile and in need of protection (Karabag & Fellahi, 2017).

Women's position in colonial architecture is expressed through the absence of their voices and perspectives. The 'Société des Architectes Modernes' (SAM) played a significant role in the development of Algiers architecture during the colonial era. The architects and planners who designed colonial buildings in Algiers were overwhelmingly male, and their designs reflected their own perspectives and priorities (texte, 1936). Women's perspectives and needs were often ignored or marginalized in the design process, leading to buildings and spaces that were not always conducive to their well-being and autonomy.

When the French colonized Algiers, they brought with them a different set of cultural and aesthetic values, which were reflected in the architecture of the city. As mentioned earlier, the architecture of Algiers has always been the expression of identity and power. The French colonial architecture in Algiers often emphasized grand public buildings, such as government offices, schools, and museums, which were designed to showcase French power and prestige. In this context, women were often depicted in public spaces, such as statues and murals, as symbols of the exotic and sensual "Orient," reinforcing Orientalist stereotypes of Algerian women as exotic and erotic.

Women played an important role in the resistance to French cultural domination in Algeria during the colonial period. While the colonial policies of the French in Algeria aimed to assimilate Algerians into French culture and suppress their indigenous culture, Algerian women, like Algerian men, resisted these efforts and sought to preserve and promote Algerian culture and traditions. Algerian women played a crucial role in transmitting and preserving Algerian cultural traditions within their families and communities, passing down language, customs, and practices to future generations (Ibtissam Bouachrine, 2014).

The separation between men and women, a common societal norm in Algeria during that time, did impact women's roles in resistance to French cultural domination. Algerian society was largely patriarchal, and women faced gender-specific challenges such as limited access to education, restricted mobility, and societal expectations that prioritized their roles as wives and mothers (Ibtissam Bouachrine, 2014). However, despite these challenges, many Algerian women found ways to actively participate in the resistance movement and contribute to preserving and promoting Algerian culture. They contributed to the preservation and promotion of Algerian culture and traditions, challenged gender roles and norms, and actively participated in various forms of resistance against both Algerian and French oppression. Despite facing gender-specific challenges, Algerian women made significant contributions to the resistance movement and played an important role in the broader struggle for Algerian independence and cultural identity.

The impact of colonialism on the status of women in Algiers was complex and multifaceted. French colonial policies led to the suppression of traditional forms of women's education and employment and the imposition of French gender norms and dress codes. This led to an emergence of a new generation of Algerian women who were active in politics and social reform movements and challenged traditional gender roles and expectations.

POST-COLONIZATION (1962-NOW)

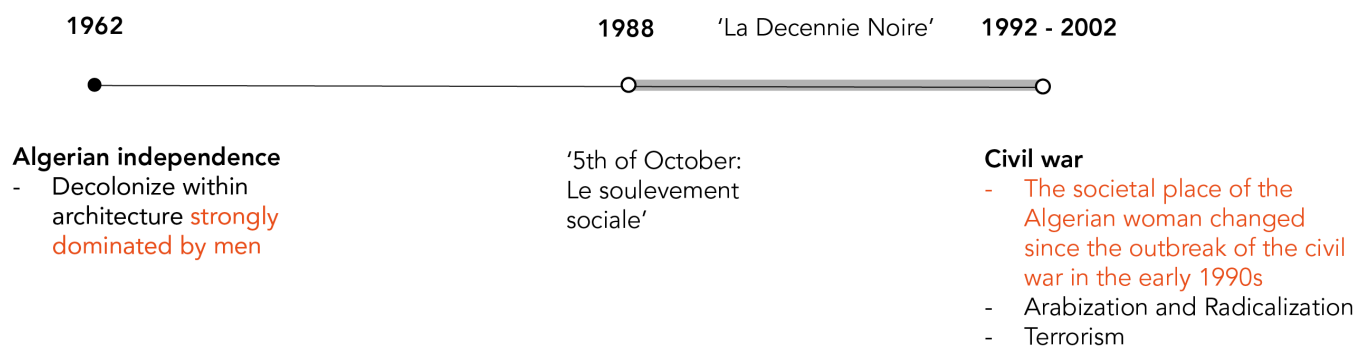


Figure 18. Timeline Algiers, 1962 – 2002 (Ouibrahim, 2023)

4.1 Political and historical context of Algeria

Despite the effort of the French to maintain control over Algiers, Algerians continued to resist French rule and fight for their independence. The struggle for independence ultimately led to the end of French colonialism in Algeria and the establishment of the independent Algerian state in 1962. After gaining independence from France in 1962, Algeria went through a period of political turmoil as various groups vied for power and influence. The country was led by the National Liberation Front (FLN), the organization that had spearheaded the fight for independence. However, within the FLN, there were divisions between those who had fought in the armed struggle and those who had not, as well as between those who wanted a more socialist and egalitarian society and those who were more conservative (Mcdougall, 2017).

In 1965, the first elected president Ben Bella was overthrown in a coup led by his defense minister Colonel Houari Boumediene, who became the country's new president. Boumediene implemented a socialist agenda, nationalizing industries, and redistributing land, but also cracked down on political opposition and limited freedoms of speech and association (Professor Marina Ottaway et al., 1970). After the end of the Algerian War of Independence, the country underwent significant changes in its cultural landscape. With the establishment of a new government and the adoption of a socialist ideology, Algeria's cultural policies were reoriented towards the promotion of a national identity that reflected its Arab and Islamic roots.

The cultural context of Algiers after 1962 was marked by a desire to assert a distinct national identity that reflected the country's rich cultural heritage while also promoting a vision of social and political progress. One of the most significant cultural developments during this period was the emergence of a vibrant literary scene that sought to express the experiences and aspirations of the Algerian people. The work explored themes such as identity, memory, and resistance. In the visual arts, artists drew inspiration from traditional Islamic art forms and Algerian folk art to create works that celebrated Algerian culture and heritage. In literature and art, female writers and artists used their works to highlight the unique struggles and triumphs of Algerian women. They explored issues such as gender roles, patriarchy, and the challenges faced by women in a conservative society (Alloula, 1986).

4.1.1 Independence war and the early 70s

The Algerian resistance to French colonization was fierce, with several uprisings and rebellions throughout the colonial period. The most famous of these was the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962), which saw the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) fighting against French forces for independence. The Évian Accords, which were signed on March 18, 1962, recognized the sovereignty of Algeria as an independent state, ending French colonial rule in Algeria. It outlined provisions related to issues such as citizenship, protection of minority rights, and future cooperation between France and Algeria (United Nations, 1965). The accords also included provisions related to the return of Algerian refugees and prisoners of war and the integration of the FLN forces into the Algerian army.

The Algiers Referendum of July 1, 1962, was a crucial event in the process of Algeria's independence from France. It was held to allow the Algerian people to express their voice on whether they approved or disapproved of the Évian Accords, which had been signed between the French government and the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) on and outlined the terms for Algeria's independence. The referendum was seen as a pivotal moment for the Algerian people to determine their own destiny and exercise their right to self-determination. Algerian people turned out in large numbers to cast their votes. The result was an overwhelming majority in favor

of the accords, with an estimated 99% of the votes cast in favor of accepting the terms of the Évian Accords. This outcome was seen as a clear mandate from the Algerian people for the country's independence from France (United Nations, 1965).

During the referendum, women in Algeria were allowed to vote, but their participation was relatively low. This was partly due to social and cultural norms that limited women's engagement in public affairs. The referendum took place in a context of political turmoil and violence, which may have further hindered women's participation. Despite these challenges, some women in Algeria did participate in the referendum and cast their votes. Their participation was seen as a significant step towards women's political empowerment and a symbol of their desire to contribute to the country's future.



Figure 19. Women at the referendum in Algiers – 1 July 1962 (Riboud, 1962)

In 1962, the National Liberation Front (FLN) formed the first government of independent Algeria, led by Ahmed Ben Bella. The new government faced many challenges, including rebuilding the country's infrastructure, creating jobs, and establishing a new political system. The government also had to deal with opposition from conservative Muslim groups, who were opposed to the secular nature of the new state. After independence, the government created a gap between the Berbers and the Arabs which could be called more 'Western' and progressive vs 'Eastern' and radical, respectively. During the inauguration of Place des Martyrs, Ben Bella declared in his speech, "We will be faithful to Arabism, we will follow Arabism, for we are more Arab than anything else". This statement initiated a prolonged era of oppression for the Berber minority (Grabar, 2013). During this period, the government introduced a range of social and economic policies aimed at improving the lives of ordinary Algerians. These included land reforms, nationalization of key industries, and investment in education and healthcare. However, these policies faced

significant challenges, including corruption and mismanagement (Professor Marina Ottaway et al., 1970).

Despite efforts to get rid of it, French cultural domination remained a powerful force in Algerian society even after independence. The struggle for independence was not only a political struggle but also a struggle for the preservation and promotion of Algerian culture and identity. The cultural legacy of French colonialism in Algeria is still felt today, with French culture and language continuing to play an important role in Algerian society. Algiers experienced a period of significant change during this period. The city became a hub for African and Arab cultural expression, with artists, writers, and musicians from across the continent and the Middle East gathering in the city to exchange ideas and collaborate (Grabar, 2013).

The early 1970s were a time of optimism and transformation for Algiers and Algeria as a whole, as the country worked to build a new future following centuries of colonial rule and exploitation. The Algerian government launched a series of ambitious development projects aimed at transforming Algiers into a modern, thriving city (Grabar, 2013). These projects included the construction of new housing developments, commercial centers, and cultural institutions, as well as the expansion of the city's transportation infrastructure. The early 1970s also saw significant social and political transformations in Algiers and throughout Algeria. The country's socialist government, led by President Houari Boumediene, pursued a policy of nationalization (most notably the nationalization of the oil and gas field in the Algerian Sahara) and economic development that aimed to reduce poverty and inequality and build a more just and equitable society (Professor Marina Ottaway et al., 1970). One of the most notable projects of this period was the construction of the Houari Boumediene Airport, which opened in 1979 and became a major hub for air travel in North Africa. Its construction helped to position Algiers as an important regional center for trade and commerce (Mcdougall, 2017).



Figure 20. La rue Michelet, Algiers 1970, the thriving years of Algiers (Barthelemy, n.d.)

4.1.2 The Early 80s and the Civil War – ‘La Decennie Noire’

After the death of President Boumediene in 1979, Algeria faced a new wave of social and political unrest, driven by rising unemployment, inflation, and a sense of political disillusionment among young people. This culminated in ‘Le Soulevement Sociale’ on 5 October 1988, also known as the Black October protests, a series of demonstrations and riots that took place across Algeria, which were brutally suppressed by the government (Bonner et al., 2014). Despite the government’s efforts to suppress the protests, the demonstrations continued for several weeks, marking a significant turning point in Algerian history. The protests led to the introduction of multi-party politics and the adoption of a new constitution in 1989, which provided for greater political freedom and civil liberties. However, the transition to democracy was not smooth, and Algeria continued to experience political violence and instability throughout the 1990s (Bonner et al., 2014).

The Algerian civil war was a conflict that took place in Algeria from 1991 to 2002. The conflict began after the Algerian government canceled the second round of elections, which the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was expected to win (Bonner et al., 2014). The cancellation of the elections sparked outrage and protests, which soon turned into an armed insurgency by various Islamist groups against the government. The war was marked by brutal violence, with both sides committing numerous atrocities against each other and against civilians. The violence during this period was characterized by indiscriminate bombings, massacres, and kidnappings. The conflict resulted in an estimated 200,000 deaths and the displacement of millions of people (Ajami, 2010). The Algerian government eventually emerged victorious in the conflict, largely due to its brutal tactics, which included widespread torture and extrajudicial killings. However, the victory came at a high cost, as the conflict left the country deeply divided and destabilized, with many of the underlying issues that led to the war remaining unresolved.

The term “*décennie noire*” (which translates to “black decade” in English) refers to the widespread feeling of despair and hopelessness that many Algerians experienced during this period. The violence and instability had a profound impact on the country’s social and economic fabric, and it continues to shape Algerian politics and society to this day (Khattab, 2015).

In the post-civil war era, Algeria has been led by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who came to power in 1999. Bouteflika has sought to promote stability and economic development, but his rule has been marked by allegations of corruption and lack of political freedoms. In 2019, mass protests erupted against Bouteflika’s bid for a fifth term in office, leading to his resignation and the appointment of an interim government (Professor Marina Ottaway et al., 1970). However, political tensions and economic challenges remain in Algeria.

There is a lack of information about the Algerian civil war compared to other conflicts. During the time of the conflict, the Algerian government severely restricted access to foreign journalists to the country, and local journalists faced severe censorship and persecution. As a result, there was limited media coverage of the conflict, which meant that information about what was happening on the ground was not widely disseminated. The Algerian government has also been reluctant to release official documentation related to the conflict, which can make it more difficult to piece together what happened during the war (Ghanem, 2021).

The Algerian civil war remains a sensitive and divisive issue in Algeria today, and there may be reluctance among some parties to discuss or provide information about the conflict. Today, Algeria remains a relatively stable country, but the legacy of the civil war continues to be felt, particularly in the form of ongoing social and political tensions (Ghanem, 2021).

4.2 Urban development of Algiers and its architecture

Algiers experienced significant urban development and architectural changes after the country gained independence from France and the subsequent civil war. The Algerian government embarked on a massive urbanisation program aimed at modernising the city and improving the living conditions of its inhabitants. This involved the construction of new housing complexes, infrastructure projects, and public buildings such as universities, hospitals, and government offices.

One of the most significant urban development projects was the construction of the Martyrs Memorial complex, which commemorates the Algerian war of Independence. The complex includes a museum, a mosque, and a monumental sculpture that towers over the city (Hadjri & Osmani, 2004).

The architecture of Algiers also underwent significant changes during this period. The government commissioned new public buildings designed by both Algerian and foreign architects. Oscar Niemeyer had a big impact due to his involvement in designing several large-scale public buildings, including universities and institutes (such as Bab Ezzouar and the Faculty of Law at Ben Aknoun), as well as the Olympic complex '5th July'. There was a significant focus on constructing educational buildings, especially those for higher education, which helped reinforce the capital's position as a metropolis with a full range of international-level services (Hadjri & Osmani, 2004).

During the civil war this period, many public buildings and infrastructure projects were put on hold, and some were even abandoned. The conflict also led to the destruction of many historic buildings in the city center. However, since the end of the civil war, the government has resumed its efforts to modernize the city and improve its infrastructure (Grabar, 2013). One example is the construction of the new Algiers metro system, which is one of the most modern and efficient in Africa.

Still, political chaos remained and it had a negative impact on the city's development after the optimistic period in the 1970s. The lack of maintenance and control over the city has allowed corruption and disregard for regulations to take hold, resulting in a chaotic and unorganized urban environment.

Algiers is dealing with challenges, namely a lack of coordinated planning and regulation around development and land use (Hadjri & Osmani, 2004). As the regulations have fallen by the wayside, it seems that many people have taken advantage of the situation to build and develop as they see fit, often without consideration for the impact on the broader community. The issue of people taking the piece of land in front of their house and turning it into a front yard is a good example of this. The government tolerates this because it helps people to maintain the space, but it can also create problems for neighbors. Another unregulated practice is building extra floors onto houses to accommodate growing families which is understandable but can also have unintended consequences such as subsidence and strain on local infrastructure and resources. These examples illustrate the challenges of balancing the need for development with the need to protect the interests and well-being of local residents. Without a coordinated and thoughtful approach to urban planning and regulation, it can be challenging to achieve this balance and to ensure that development is sustainable and beneficial for all (Hadjri & Osmani, 2004).



Figure 21. Martyrs Memorial complex (Mehni, 2006)



Figure 22. Olympic complex '5th July', named after the Algerian Independence Day (Vince, n.d.)



Figure 23. Algiers today... (2002)

4.3 The expression of women's position in architecture

The Algerian War of Independence had a significant impact on women's status in Algiers and throughout Algeria, as they actively participated in the struggle for independence. This helped challenge traditional gender roles and expand women's rights. During the war, women worked as nurses, teachers, and fighters, and many were involved in organizing and leading protests and demonstrations (Rohloff, 2012). This paved the way for greater political participation and representation for women. Although women were allowed to vote in the 1962 referendum, their participation was relatively low due to logistical challenges in accessing polling stations in some remote areas.



Figure 24. FLN female bombers. From left to right amia Lakhdari, Zohra Drif, Djamila Bouhired et Hassiba Ben Bouali (La Pointe, 1957)

However, the 1968 refusal of legislation proposed additional rights for women signaled the beginning of a shift toward reduced emancipation. Men who ruled Algeria saw women as tools to maintain power and didn't want laws that encouraged women's potential. As a result, women continued to face discrimination, violence, and significant challenges in achieving equality and empowerment. In 1984, the Algerian government introduced a Family Code that decreased women's rights and reinforced the power of husbands, including the right to divorce unilaterally and evict their ex-wives (Turshen, 2002). The code also treated all women as minors in various aspects of their lives, including education, work, marriage, divorce, and inheritance. Secret negotiations occurred between political and religious leaders, and the code demonstrated the government's willingness to sacrifice women's rights to maintain power.

During the civil war, women in particular suffered the greatest terror as extremist groups imposed strict interpretations of the Islamic law that restricted women's freedoms and rights (Turshen, 2002). This led to forced marriages, forced veiling, and sexual violence against women. Women were often used as pawns in the conflict, and the war had a significant impact on their economic and social status, causing many to lose their homes and livelihoods. The FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) discouraged women from working outside the home and they pushed for the creation of separate public transportation and beaches for women and men (Turshen, 2002). The

security situation and the threat of violence posed risks to women's safety, leading to reduced participation in the formal workforce and staying at home for safety reasons. Women were expected to return to the domestic sphere. The design of households reflects the trend of women staying at home more often, indicating that there hasn't been much change in this regard. Despite significant social progress made by women in Algeria, conservative groups like the FIS viewed women's advancement as a threat to national and social stability (Turshen, 2002).

After the civil war, efforts were made to rebuild and reconstruct areas affected by the conflict. This has involved the construction of new buildings and infrastructure, including residential, commercial, and public buildings (Hadjri & Osmani, 2004). The role of women in shaping Algeria's cultural heritage and identity, including in architecture, has been recognized, and there has been renewed interest in preserving and promoting traditional Algerian architecture (Ibtissam Bouachrine, 2014). This may include integrating women's contributions to the field.

CONCLUSION

By looking at Algiers through different periods in time; Pre-colonization (before 1830), the colonial era, and Post-colonization (1962-now) and by looking at cultural and political factors the main question; "How has the societal place of the Algerian woman changed and been expressed in the architecture of the city of Algiers during and after colonization?", could be answered.

Algiers has experienced a range of cultural and historical influences, including Ottoman and French colonization. The legacy of French colonialism is still evident in the city today, with many residents speaking French and the city's architecture and cultural institutions reflecting French influence. The image that was portrayed of women during the colonial time influenced women's position in Algiers. The Orientalist portrayal of women during colonial times in the iconography of the Orient had a significant impact on women's position in Algiers, both during the colonial period and in present-day Algeria. It reinforced power imbalances, justified colonization, eroded Algerian women's agency and cultural identity, and perpetuated harmful stereotypes. While progress has been made, the effects of Orientalist iconography are still evident in present-day Algeria, and efforts to challenge and dismantle these legacies continue to be important for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in Algiers and beyond.

After gaining independence in 1962, Algeria faced significant challenges in defining its own identity and culture. While there was a period of cultural and political progress in the 1970s, the rise of radicalism and Islamism in the 1980s marked a significant turning point. Conservative groups saw emancipation as a threat to national and social stability. These movements challenged the secular nature of the Algerian state and contributed to a widening cultural gap between different groups within the country. We can certainly say that in the decade following decolonization and during the civil war, a division opened up that oppresses women in Algiers to this day.

This process of Arabization included promoting traditional gender roles, which emphasized the idea of women as being primarily responsible for the home and family, and men as the breadwinners and protectors of the family resulting in a reinforcement of patriarchal norms and expectations regarding women's roles in society. As a result, the architecture of dwellings and public spaces in Algiers during this period often reflected and reinforced these patriarchal gender roles. Gender-segregated areas in households are still noticeable, with women's spaces typically relegated to the private sphere, such as kitchens and courtyards, while men's spaces were considered the public domain. This segregation of spaces based on gender reflects societal norms that confined women to the private realm of the home and limited their access to public spaces.

Public spaces in Algiers were also often designed with a male-centric perspective, with limited consideration of women's needs and activities. This included the design of public squares, streets, and other urban spaces, which may have been less accommodating to women's mobility, safety, and social participation. Additionally, conservative interpretations of Islamic values and dress codes may have influenced women's access to public spaces, with expectations for women to adhere to modesty standards and restrict their movements in public. After the civil war, a lot of women felt unsafe. This is also visible in architecture today.

Initially, it was expected that the decline in emancipation would be evident in Algiers' architecture from early history to the present day. However, the decline in emancipation is not readily in the physical architecture and design approach but rather in the altered patterns of usage. While housing design has not undergone significant changes, the use of architecture does reveal a decline in emancipation. Women's present-day anxieties lead them

to spend more time at home, resulting in a continued focus on kitchen design and spaces traditionally occupied by women. This trend is also observable in the use of public spaces, which are relatively underutilized by women. Streets are predominantly occupied by men, public spaces such as waiting areas are often gender-segregated, and male-only restrooms are common.

The architecture of Algiers has always been the expression of identity and power. Which reflects on women and their position. With all the different populations that coexist in the city, there has always been this tension to find its own identity. Arabization and the tension to find national identity continues to oppress women in Algiers to this day.

There is a need to create spaces that are safe, accessible, and inclusive for all genders. This includes considerations such as providing gender-segregated spaces for privacy, ensuring adequate lighting and visibility, and incorporating features that consider women's needs in public spaces such as waiting rooms. Today, many young people in Algiers are still searching for their own identity and grappling with the legacy of colonialism and political upheaval.

EPILOGUE - Future of Algerian architecture

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) releases its Global Liveability Ranking every year, which ranks 172 cities worldwide based on factors such as stability, healthcare, culture and environment, education, and infrastructure. In 2022 Algiers was ranked 4th “worst city” in the world according to The Economist (The World’s Most Liveable Cities, 2022).

In recent years, there have been renewed efforts to address issues such as stability, healthcare, culture and environment, education, and infrastructure and promote women’s empowerment and rights. Women’s rights organizations and activists have been working to challenge gender-based violence and discrimination and to promote women’s political participation and representation. The Algerian government has also taken steps to promote gender equality, including adopting laws that criminalize domestic violence and promote gender parity in politics. Overall, while the impact of radicalization and terrorism on women’s position in Algiers has been significant, there have also been efforts to address these issues and promote women’s empowerment and rights.

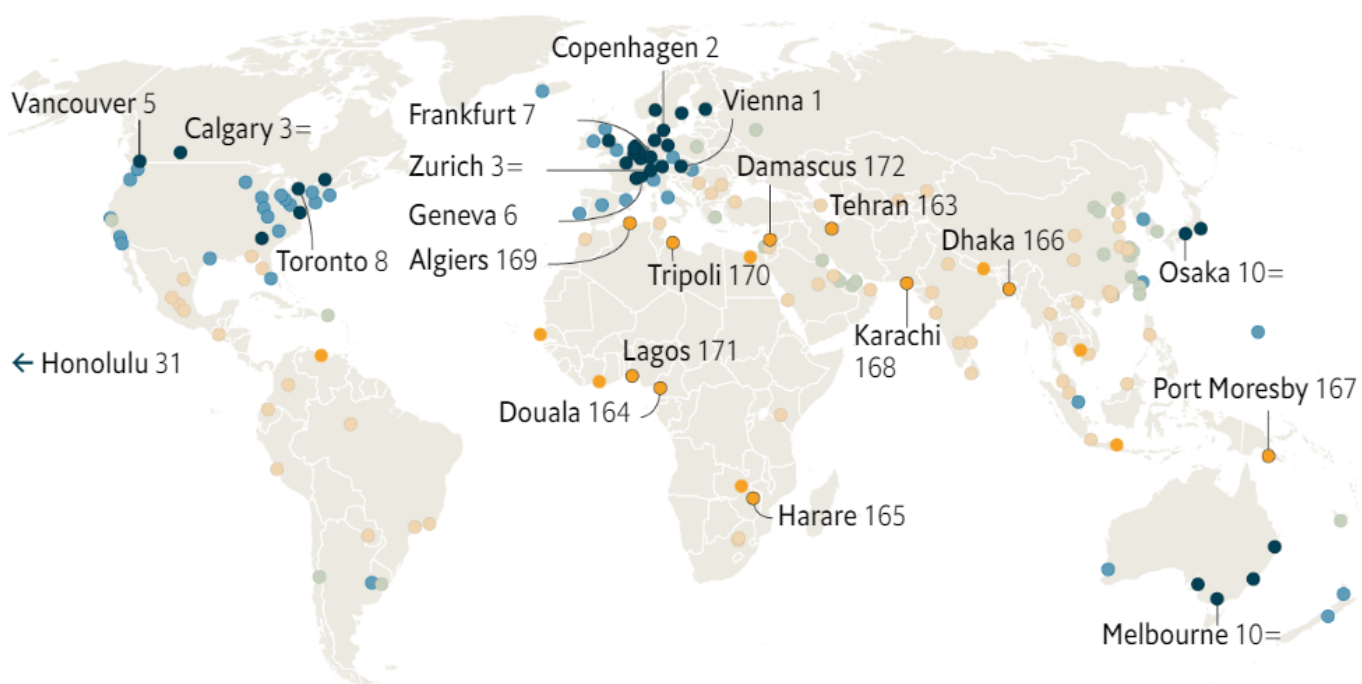
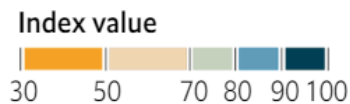
My mother was born in 1973 and grew up in Algiers. She always tells me about her childhood and how she and her family often went for picnics to the beach. Algiers was a beautiful and much more free an open city during this decade. When asked about the prospects for the city of Algiers and its future development in terms of urban and social progress, she responded by saying, “There is indeed hope, but significant political changes would need to occur for this hope to materialize, and unfortunately, I don’t see such changes happening anytime soon.”

Recent events clearly show the need for change. The Arab Spring refers to a series of protests and uprisings that occurred in several countries in the Middle East and North Africa region, including Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, Bahrain, and other countries, beginning in late 2010 and continuing into 2011 and beyond (Britannica, 2015). In Algeria, those in power made all kinds of concessions, ranging from the dismissal of unpopular officials to constitutional amendments, to avert the spread of protest movements in their country (Britannica, 2015). This shows that making a difference today is very difficult and the voice of Algeria’s population is not being heard, which is frustrating.

The protests were largely driven by widespread dissatisfaction with authoritarian rule, corruption, economic inequality, lack of political freedoms, and other grievances, and were fueled by social media and other forms of communication. It was a significant cultural, political, and social development in the region, as it led to major changes in the political landscape and had far-reaching consequences on the societies and governments of the affected countries (Britannica, 2015). The protests were largely driven by youth and included a diverse range of participants, including women, students, labor unions, and civil society organizations.

Women played a prominent role in the Arab Spring protests, both as activists and as participants. Women’s participation in the protests varied across countries and contexts, but in many cases, women were at the forefront of the demonstrations, advocating for political reforms, democracy, human rights, and gender equality. The consequences of the Arab Spring are still being felt today, with ongoing political, social, and economic changes in the region. For women, the Arab Spring had both positive and negative effects. While women’s participation in the protests and their demands for greater gender equality and women’s rights were seen as a significant step forward, the aftermath of the uprisings also posed challenges. In some cases, the political transitions that followed the Arab Spring did not result in meaningful gains for women’s rights, and women faced continued discrimination, violence, and

City liveability index, March 2022
Rank out of 172, 1=most liveable



Rank	City	Index Value
Most liveable	1 Vienna	99.1
	2 Copenhagen	98.0
	3= Zurich	96.3
	3= Calgary	96.3
	5 Vancouver	96.1
Least liveable	172 Damascus	30.7
	171 Lagos	32.2
	170 Tripoli	34.2
	169 Algiers	37.0
	168 Karachi	37.5

Figure 25. Global liveability Ranking, March 2022 (The World's Most Liveable Cities, 2022)

marginalization. However, the Arab Spring also brought attention to gender issues and create opportunities for women to push for greater gender equality and inclusion in post-revolutionary societies (Britannica, 2015).

Overall, the Arab Spring was a significant cultural and political development in the Middle East and North Africa region, and women played a prominent role in the protests, advocating for their rights and greater gender equality. The protests brought attention to important social and political issues, including the role of women in society, and continue to shape the ongoing changes in the region.

Another recent event, the situation concerning women's rights in Iran has remained a cause for concern with ongoing developments. Iran enforces strict dress codes for women, mandating them to cover their hair and wear modest clothing in public. Violations of these dress codes can result in fines, harassment, or even arrest by the authorities. A tragic incident that sparked protests across Iran occurred on 16th September 2022 when a 22-year-old woman named Zhina, also known as Mahsa Amini (Zhina is her Kurdish-banned name in Iran), died. Just a few days earlier, she was forcibly arrested for allegedly not complying with the discriminatory mandatory hijab laws (Demand Justice and End the Bloodshed in Iran, 2022). The protests that followed were met with harsh actions by the authorities, and Amnesty International collected evidence of the unlawful use of force, including bullets, tear gas, water cannons, and truncheons by the security forces. Moreover, protesters are being sentenced to death after sham trials, and some have already been executed (Demand Justice and End the Bloodshed in Iran, 2022).

The protests in Iran are not solely about Amini's death and the compulsory headscarf, but also stem from anger over inequality, corrupt politicians, and degrading treatment by the 'vice police.' Women's rights activists and protesters are advocating for greater freedom of choice, equality, and dignity for women in Iran, pushing for reforms and changes to discriminatory laws and practices that limit women's rights and freedoms (Iran Tries to Reimpose Strict Dress Codes for Women after Protests, 2023).

These events could be inspiring for Algerian women as they serve as powerful examples of resilience and determination in the face of challenges. There is a noticeable sense of resilience among Algerians to build a society that embodies their values and cultural heritage. This includes creating space and opportunities for women, both literally and metaphorically. However, it is frustrating that societal divisions persist and the government has the power to shut up the population, making change challenging. Nevertheless, there is a glimmer of hope that change will eventually come.

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