

The Emergence of Domestic Architecture: The New Archetypes of Interior Design between Immutability and Dynamism in the Homes of North Algeria

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Abstract—*The design of the Algerian house aspires to major changes of accommodation through the arrival of exogenous spatial models. The influence of globalization on the quality of the interior architecture, which is intended to be contemporary, is deeply disrupted. The objective is to identify new spatial arrangements that emerge following the confrontations deployed by architectural patterns from elsewhere which seek to introduce hybrid models borrowed from another cultures.*

Using a semi-directive survey and participant observation, the analysis of mobility sequence occurring in distribution spaces, in a representative sample of 300 detached houses throughout north Algeria has revealed the crystallization of a specific controversial spatial adjustment in contemporary design. This is due to the interaction between the distribution spaces and domestic social practices; it translates the experiment conducted by the inhabitants, varying between ephemeral strategic measurements and sustainable tactical devices.

1. INTRODUCTION

Apart from a few projects [6, 31], [18] and [32], the detached house in Algeria has not been studied to any great extent. Nevertheless, this type of house constitutes one of the essential driving forces of the rapid urbanization in this country. At the same time, the construction of housing estates (called Z.H.U.N in Algeria) and informal housing groups constitute the two other lines of this increasing urbanization, characterizing many Algerian cities and metropolitan areas.

Involving important socioeconomic issues in the links between different social groups, the mushrooming of districts with detached houses in the suburbs of big cities has contributed to an uninterrupted urban sprawl and to consolidating the image of the city. In spite of its scale and visibility, this complex phenomenon does not seem to stir up the curiosity of researchers.

However, the significant changes and evolution which Algerian cities have undergone since independence, in 1962, has not spared the universe of the single family home. During that period, the population soon settled in the housing stock that previously belonged to Europeans. It was a laboratory situation, termed “vacant properties” that Safar-Zitoun [30] described in the case of the city of Algiers. Other northern cities of the country (Oran, Constantine, Annaba, Tlemcen, etc.) are part of this dynamic deep change, which saw the houses which had been re-occupied by the new dwellers undergo an in-depth re-appropriation.

The impact of such processes has been highlighted through research in many contexts throughout the world [31, 27] and [28]. Accumulated knowledge of the humanities and social sciences during the second half of the past century has revealed the complexity of ways of living and therefore the coexistence of several registers of everyday life reality in the inhabited spaces of urban societies being re-founded / reconstructed, such as the various international examples presented by Segaud [31]; the Algerian big cities, in particular metropolises, join this dynamic of transformation and reformulation of cultural codes in which the current modes are translated in their ambivalence. Faced with such difficulty, the universe of the private home becomes the object of transversal interdisciplinary approaches that mobilize and cross numerous tools of investigation and analysis.

Empirical research has attempted to clarify the different dimensions of ways of living by considering the terms of structuring and spatio-temporal partition of the individual dwelling, including traditional dwellings [4-7], [24-25] and [26]. The density of the inhabited space is restored through the various couples structuring the appropriation of the space: female / male, nature / culture, sacred / profane, dirty / clean, wet / dry, beneficent / maleficent, etc. Other studies have

approached the house from the point of view of a domestic auto-production without external influence [3] or from the revelation of the strong contextual connection between architecture and housing.

2. METHOD AND OBJECTIVES

This contribution is part of an interdisciplinary research project striving to understand the forms of interaction between space devices and social practices that take place in the house. In this context, the inhabited space is perceived as a catalyst that enables the functional connection between the various daily activities that occur inside the house. Likewise, the configuration of the house results from the implementation of diverse scenic situations that translate the choice of the dweller for appropriate solutions adapted in relation to his lifestyle. Indeed, the arrangements made constitute negotiations engaged by the actor to optimize the relationship between spatial conveniences and socio-cultural propriety.

Consequently, the aim, broadly speaking, is to Fig. out the strategies of arrangement in the formal expressions that constitute the north Algerian single-family home. At this point, the relevant observation can be performed, at all times, by revealing archetypal symptomatic situations of a “*crystallized social behavior*.” Seeking neither to model nor construct a typology of the house, the approach will try, in fact, to apprehend the forms of mixes or hybridization integrating two models of different origins [22-23].

Indeed, the accelerated urban development in the big Algerian cities and the ever more numerous modes of articulation towards the Western societies, have resulted in an increasingly deep acculturation in the ways of living. The main consequences of this dynamic consists, firstly, in altering the 'traditional' model based on a form of introverted house, closed to the outside and organized around a patio [7] and, second, the spread of a "Western" architecture with a rather extroverted configuration of space with much less centralized and "controlled" internal distribution.

In this last case, a more or less pronounced trend towards the specialization of rooms appears on the functional level. At the same time, there is the virtual disappearance of the "Woust-Ed-Dar" (patio) in newly built homes. Therefore, research on the habitat cannot fail to take into account this dynamic by trying to understand the emergence of a new archetype that reconstructs the shape of the Algerian house in an unprecedented way

The approach taken in this paper is to focus the gaze of the researcher on socio-spatial practices in relation to the experience of the family. However, in practice, all the components of the house are not considered. Thus, the adjustment of rooms (living room, bedrooms, kitchen, guest

sitting-room, etc.) and their appropriation are not the subject of the analysis presented in this paper.

Indeed, the choice made here has been to focus on the distribution space in relation to the conduct of daily activities and behavior of the inhabitants within the house. The investigation focused on a set of randomly chosen individual homes in five towns in northern Algeria. The corpus consists of houses in a residential area, “Table 1”. Three hundred houses were studied, having a diversified "social coloring" (popular, average social status or higher). The cities in question were: Algiers, Oran, Constantine, Sidi Bel Abbes and Annaba, taken with their respective neighborhoods. The analysis also resorted to the use of a hundred house plans, together with schematics of movement and internal displacement.

Table 1: Distribution of Houses by district in the five northern towns of Algeria.

Algiers	Oran	Constantine	Annaba	Sidi-Belabbes
Les Annassers 12	Sidi El Bachir 16	El Kantara 16	En Nedjma 10	Les Amamas 14
Beau-Fraisier 12	Es-Saada 15	Saint Jean 09	Affrانيا 07	Cité Bellat 12
Casbah d'Alger 05	Ibn Sina 05	Bellevue 08	Vieille ville 08	Montplaisir 04
Chevalley (Alger) 08	El Makkari 04	Sidi-mabrouk 08	Orangerie 08	Faubourg Bugeaud 07
Cité Sellier 05	El Hamri 05	Boudraa Salah 07	Sidi Brahim 06	Gambetta 08
Dier el Mahgoul 08	El Badr 04	Bienfait 07	Belaid Belkacem 07	Les amandiers 05
Les Fusillés 07	Es-Seddikia 08			
Les Dunes 05	El Menzeh 04			
Mustapha (Algérie) 05	El Othmania 08			
Riadh Feth 05	Bouamama 08			
Total 72	Total 77	Total 55	Total 46	Total 50

This spatial configuration of connection and junction coupled to an encoded / implied gestural aspect has been called “*transitional space*” by some authors [22]. In the Algerian cultural context, forms of appropriation and use of these specific areas are rich in meaning.

3. REAPPROPRIATION OF SPACE AND DIFFUSE TRAFFIC

Distribution of functions, the regulation of practices and the socio-cultural interactions [18] within houses have a decisive importance in that they constitute, in fact, a fundamental vector of the spatial composition of the domestic universe. This dimension includes, especially, 'operated movement patterns' that are adopted by the inhabitants and are registered in their system of representation. It is a testimony of a systematic formal organization based on a system of values and representations.

From the beginning, after having crossed the threshold of the door (first filter), the observer cannot fail to note the dichotomy separating the male public world of the street and the female world, which occupies the private internal sphere. In this last case, the space of "intermediation", it is a space that acts on the internal geometry of the house leading to, for example, spatial pre-eminence of the served spaces (dining room) dissolved in the serving spaces (kitchen); it appears in all its variety and its complexity by taking the shape of three specific configurations.

Thus, the first space takes the shape of a *barlong* hall up to 2 meters in width, "Figure1". By contrast, the second Fig. is organized according to a linear path taking the ordinary appearance of a long, narrow corridor, "Fig. 2". Finally, the last device is presented as a hybrid and ambivalent result linking the two previous forms "Fig. 3".

This formal trilogy highlights the know-how of the inhabitants in the organization of the reception (entrance) and corresponds to their knowing how to live, inscribed in the habitus and daily lives [4]. It is essential here to underline that the spatial configurations do not proceed from recommendations or from preliminary building regulations. Besides, choices are not the result of normalization action prescribed by the principles of interior design, comfort, and wellbeing that might be imposed, either by the architects, or by the State. Nevertheless, these specific features represent the basis of architectural types as an "act" which will be examined later in the article.

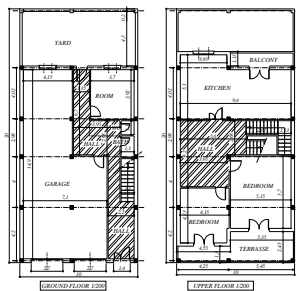


Fig. 1: House plans by M.B (Oran- Ibn-Sina District).

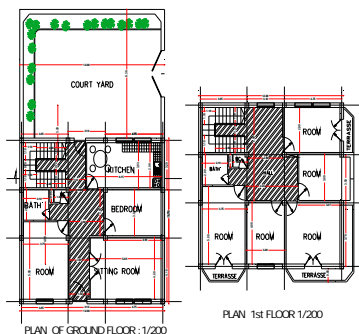


Fig. 2: House plans by KJ in Algiers (Diar-El-Mahsoul District).

The distribution space suits the following two spatial configurations. On the ground floor (left), it is linear (adjacent to the garage), whilst on the upper floor there is a type of lobby-lounge (right).

The width of the intermediate space is recommended on the basis of the large number of openings.

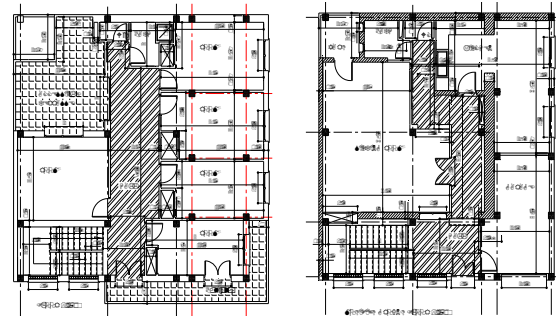


Fig. 3: House plans by Z.A in Oran (El-Othmania district).

The hierarchy of distribution space is respected in a spirit of ostentation within the ceremonial sitting room on the ground floor. On the first floor there is a significant width of 2.50 m. This gives it a dual purpose; that of a hall and a well-lit distribution

4. MODES OF ORGANIZATION AND ADJUSTMENT OF THE CIRCULATORY SPACE

It was important to draw up a table of areas used for traffic, showing the importance of their uses, as transition spaces. The analysis of the table below, "Table 2", is rich in lessons in that it helps to highlight the level at which the courtyards (*El-Haouch*), clearances, and the halls are suited to insure the organization and the composition of the internal spaces of the house.

Table 2. Example of the spatial configurations of the transition area of 12 houses from 4 districts in Algiers.

District	Investigated Houses	Configuration of the circulatory space according to the organization charts of spatial relations							
		Court yard	Corridor	Hall	KITCHEN	Lounge	Sitting room	Terrasse	Bed room
01	01	V	V	/	/	/	/	/	/
	02	V	V	V	/	/	/	V	/
	03	V	V	V	V	V	/	/	/
02	04	V	/	V	/	/	/	/	/
	05	V	V	V	/	/	/	/	/
	06	/	V	V	/	/	/	/	/
03	07	V	V	V	V	V	/	/	/
	08	V	V	V	V	V	/	/	/
	09	/	/	V	V	V	V	/	V
04	10	V	V	V	V	/	/	/	/
	11	/	V	V	/	V	/	/	/
	12	/	V	V	/	V	/	/	/

As for the kitchen, it comes in second position to show that its spatial arrangement, with regard to all the functions surrounding it, favors a desired movement. In the same logic of shifting and gaps between the planned function and the real use, the lounge, which is in principle exclusively intended for guests, takes on a second role; it is often transformed into an intermediate space, its nature differing from one house to another. More sporadically, the living room, the terrace, and the dining room are sometimes used as places of passage.

- (1) Cité Sellier, (2) Diar el Mahçoul,
- (3) Les Dunes, (4) Mustapha

√	intermediate space
/	Absence of the intermediate space in the indicated houses

It seems clear, through this brief presentation, that the interior of the house is crossed by a dynamic of places that integrates and controls the various flows and associated action sequences specific to different moments of everyday life in motion. In fact, the intermediate or transition spaces can be used as a prolonged stopping place, and places with specified functions, on the contrary, can serve as a basis for movement. Given the circumstances and the diverse temporalities, social and cultural practices change spaces, while these spaces also experience various uses.

This flexibility in the relationship between micro-spaces prefigures as a space marked by weakening the boundaries between parts that were previously separate. Thus, it is plausible today to see modes of communication between the reception rooms (*Sala*) and kitchens; this relationship is characterized by a larger opening between these spaces. For the middle and upper classes, the kitchen has become a "kitchen laboratory" with an "American Bar", opening onto the formal lounges.

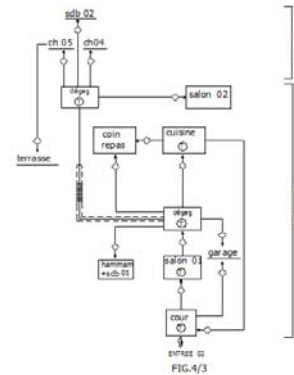
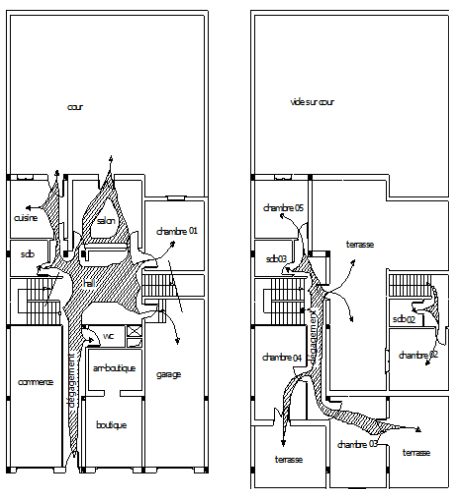


Fig. 4. Schematic representations and flow diagrams used in the analysis of transitional spaces (the case study of an L.M. house in Sidi Belabbas).

As it transpires between the lines, through the above developments, the space may take the form of a variety of devices corresponding to spatial planning practices and multiple inhabitant paths, "Fig. 4". However, movement always remains the most important thing in this place characterized by a certain versatility. From this point of view, we can compare it to the traditional central courtyard of the old "Haouch", which was a space of passage for the inhabitants, at the same time as being a place used for various activities by the women and a play area for the children [19].

The analysis of observable elements emanating from this development system recognizes the simultaneous effectiveness of a concentrated beam of social, cultural, ritual and symbolic determinants, involving a plurality of uses of circulatory spaces according to the variety of sequences of daily life. This complex dynamic will be a part of differentiated spatial configurations: a corridor used as a place of passage; a hall without any special furniture and a living room equipped with a system of "hardware" (furniture, objects) and specific symbolic elements (decorative patterns and different signs of belonging) "Fig. 5".

The survey has verified the close relationship between the facilities and the new interior design archetypes, through the spatial arrangements of the individual dwelling on the one hand, and on the other hand, the rapidly changing lifestyles. Indeed, these houses have shown that each historical period registers its marks on the arrangement of interior space patterns favoring a specific intermediate space and traffic type, according to a new archetypal image. For example, the emergence and proliferation of TV sets in the domestic world did not fail to cause profound effects on family relationships and a reconfiguration/functional reinterpretation of the interior spaces of the house.

This process will gradually deepen and consolidate itself as the structuring and management of the adopted living space, at some point, will not fail to influence the attitudes of

individuals and family groups. Over time, the internalization by the latter of incorporated innovations in the previous prevailing space devices enters the realm of possibility. Indeed, the dweller will adopt rules of moral and ethical conduct [9-10-16] in relation to each situation in which he controls the inhabited space (shown / hidden, open / closed). Even if he resists, he cannot completely escape the order of inscribed modernity in the forms and uses of the living space.

Moreover, it is important to note here the absence of paradigm outlined in the instrumental procedures in architecture and urbanism. Whether at the technical, institutional, or legal level, development in the design of the house through administrative or professional consultants is "improvised" and operates on the basis of a reified and standardized conception of behaviours and social relations. Therefore, no assessment or development of intervention methods on related space modes of living is possible.

In this light, the formulation of various forms of home improvement and changes previously observed in the intermediate space is inconceivable. In fact, the building permit, for example, is reduced to a simple legal document granting the permission to build. From this point, spatio-temporal innovations within the house become inoperative in such a context. In this case, such a shift expresses a latent conflict between architectural rules and the actual reality of the dwelling. However, certain rules crystallize this opposition: Respect for the plot background, the court or the back garden; maintaining regulatory height of the house following a reducing formula of space ($L = h / 2$, 'L' is the width of the street and 'h' the height of the building); the intervention of urban regulations that sometimes try to stem the spatial transformations performed, particularly work done on the facades and the conversion of garages into commercial premises.

Nevertheless, despite these regulatory tendencies aimed at imposing some order, people mobilize their own skills in order to establish a specific architectural archetype based on the co-presence of various space solutions. The case of circulation areas addressed in this paper clearly explains this phenomenon.



Fig. 5: The wealth of ornamentation in the cramped hallway shows the architectural ostentation displayed by one of the

inhabitants in Sidi-Mabrouk (Constantine). The abundant use of fine ceramics ornamented with floral or geometric patterns in the halls of some houses in El-Hemri (Oran) (example right) recalls the "Moorish courtyard."

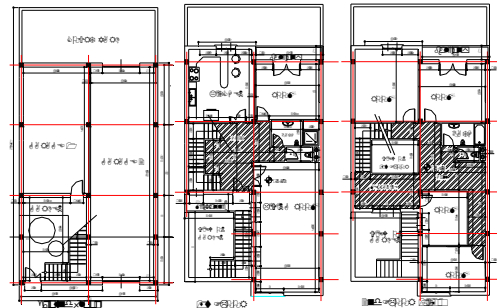


Fig. 6: The house in Hai Zitoun by T.A. Distribution spaces on the first and second floor furnished in the form of mezzanines offer a traditional central courtyard resembling the Haouch type houses.

5. CONCLUSION

The developments presented here clearly demonstrate the sustainability of traditional modes of appropriation of space in the context of accelerated modernization, like the one that Algeria has been going through for over half a century (the colonial period is not taken into account). The facts presented and analyzed inform us about the sensitivity of the area of housing, a careful and attentive knowledge of the current system of representation of the people in relation to the movement patterns involving forms of articulation, organization and development of specific interiors.

This brief incursion into the sphere of movement patterns and corresponding spatial configurations shows the importance of the ways of living in the architectural project design approach. However, examination of educational programs for architects, but also the research programs do not seem to pay much attention to this inescapable reality of contemporary design.

In practice during interventions, the living experience of the individual inhabitant is simply ignored. Most often, the house is imagined and made without any consideration being taken of future users in its design. However, this entire dynamic should result from a long and in-depth investigation into the practices and representations of the domestic world which is one of the main moving forces in social relations.

The most visible consequence of this mismatch between lifestyle and interior design is characterized by an aspect of marginalization in the field of architectural education in Algeria. Interdisciplinarity between sociology, anthropology and architecture allows us to dissect the secrets of Algerian home design. Empirical and operational research linked to the knowledge of the lifestyles of the inhabitants in their every movement must not deny the production of the universe of the house by the architect, based on an exploratory approach and apprehensive socio-spatial experience of the

inhabitant. We cannot produce a living space such as a house while being in a state of total amnesia.

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