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THE PROTECTION OF COLONIAL HERITAGE IN THE FACE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DYNAMICS (CASE STUDY OF DOWNTOWN AIN-BEIDA-ALGERIA)

Abstract: Algeria has a rich heritage due to the succession of various civilizations on its territory. However, the authenticity and cultural significance of its built heritage is being lost. The historic center of Ain-Beida, in particular, has undergone unplanned changes leading to inconsistency and lack of integration. To understand the factors that have led to the degradation of its architectural and urban framework, we have analyzed the urban policy and heritage management of the city, as well as the urban dynamics that have occurred in its historic center. Our analysis shows that the deterioration of the colonial legacy is a result of the urban strategy adopted by the Algerian state, the circumstances of the country, and the proliferation of urban dynamics. These changes have had a significant impact on the physical and functional aspects of the colonial buildings. In Algeria, the succession of multiple civilizations on its territory has given it a strong heritage potential. Lately, the built heritage tends to lose its authenticity, its symbolic and cultural dimension. The city of Ain-Beida, its historic center has continued to sketch images of inconsistency and lack of integration following anarchic mutations. Faced with this observation, we aim to focus on the factors that have led to the alteration of its architectural and urban framework. To do this, this contribution opts for a methodology which, on the one hand, is focused on the examination of the urban policy of the city and on the management of the heritage, and on the other hand, on the analysis of the urban dynamics occurred on its old center. The result of the analysis showed that the urban strategy adopted by the Algerian state through its legal arsenal and its institutional approaches, in addition to the circumstances of the country, translated by the opening of the market, and which led to the proliferation of urban dynamics, all played a role in the deterioration of the colonial legacy which was exposed to profound changes in its physical and/or functional aspect.

Key words: heritage, historical center, incoherence, mutation, urban dynamics, the city of Ain-Beida, degradation, colonial building

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Introduction

The concept of heritage was created during Western modernity in the 18th century, according to Samiha Hanene (2016, p. 3). The idea was first introduced in Italy (Karima, 2009, p. 22), where it was primarily focused on protecting ancient buildings and works of art. During the early 1800s, a policy for managing heritage was established in response to acts of destruction and vandalism following the French Revolution. This policy was later expanded, particularly after the two world wars, as it became increasingly important to preserve the symbols of the past for future generations.

Heritage refers to everything that provides evidence of the past, revealing the history, culture, and memories of a nation. It is often associated with the need for preservation because of its significance. It is visible evidence of a people's past and cultural identity, including their traditions and customs. Heritage is considered a valuable treasure of humanity, charged with a spiritual message that should be passed on in all its authentic richness to future generations. That's why it is crucial to preserve and enhance it. As UNESCO stated in the World Heritage Convention, "the loss, through deterioration or disappearance, of any of these eminently precious properties constitutes an impoverishment of the heritage of all the peoples of the world". Therefore, it is essential to take effective and serious action to protect it.

The world community has recognized the significance of preserving cultural heritage and has established international bodies such as UNESCO, ICOMOS, and ICCROM to manage this priceless legacy. These organizations aim to establish scientific, administrative, legal, and financial measures that member states must consider to safeguard their heritage. They also set international standards for the preservation, restoration, and management of the cultural environment, improve the quality of conservation practice, and raise public awareness about the importance of preserving cultural heritage. There have been several meaningful charters for heritage conservation, including the Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments (1931), the Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (1964), and the International Charter for Archaeological Heritage Management (1990). In addition to these organizations, the associative movement has played a pioneering role in enhancing heritage by raising public awareness about the significance of cultural assets.

Numerous developed countries have been paying attention to protecting their heritage assets, resulting in serious policies in place. In these countries, both civil society, organized into associations, and the state, with an effective legal system, have an increasing awareness of heritage. Algeria, like many other countries in the world, has a rich cultural heritage of historical and symbolic value with diverse architectural, urbanistic and archaeological heritage from various civilizations throughout its history. Spread across the entire country, Algeria's heritage potential dates back to various eras, including pre-historic Tassili and Ahaggar, ancient cities like Timgad, Thévest, Hippone, Cirta, etc., remains of Arab medinas such as Algiers and Tlemcen, Kabylean villages, and numerous colonial centers inherited from the colonial period. Many historic sites have been classified as World Heritage Sites.

In Algeria, the concept of heritage was first introduced during the 19th century when the French colonization began. Since then, many ancient and Arab cities have been destroyed. The colonial period has had a significant impact on the structuring of Algerian

space, with most towns being designed around a colonial core, which still serves as the city center today. Unfortunately, on the eve of independence, the cultural sector responsible for preserving heritage, especially the colonial heritage, did not receive adequate attention from political decision-makers and various institutions in charge of promoting it. Despite the presence of some legislative texts aimed at safeguarding it, it has only remained as a memory and a memorial marker.

Due to the lack of interest from the Algerian state, the majority of its heritage is deteriorating rapidly for various reasons. Firstly, natural factors, climate and human behavior are causing damage to these colonial sites. Secondly, there is a lack of awareness and sensitivity towards the importance of this heritage. As a result, it has not been able to withstand the pressures of urbanization. It is imperative that the Algerian state take steps to address this situation and prioritize the preservation of its heritage. To gain a better understanding of the issues at stake and the circumstances that led to the deplorable state of the built environment of colonial centers, it would be useful to re-examine and analyze its place in the current urban context.

In Algeria, just a few years after gaining independence, urban inflation occurred due to significant urban dynamics. Algerian cities, like many other cities around the world, are experiencing unparalleled urban development, which has led to a surge of issues such as excessive land consumption, urban dysfunction, and the deterioration of the natural and built landscape. These problems are now characteristics of today's living environments. The present-day urban development is the result of population growth and demographic dynamics, as well as the absence of planned and controlled management, which has given rise to urban images that reflect nothing but disorder and informality. These problems have had irreversible effects on the city's built colonial heritage, which has begun to lose its symbolic and historical dimension, as well as its cultural identity. In other words, changing cultures and lifestyles, demographic growth, market liberalization, and the urban policy adopted in general, particularly those related to the management of built heritage, have all contributed to the deterioration of this heritage.

Many Algerian towns, including Ain-Beida, a medium-sized city located in the high plains of eastern Algeria, have undergone socio-economic dynamics and urban management policies that have disfigured their urban and architectural appearance, particularly in their old centers, the colonial cores. The Ain-Beida town center, initially conceived as a compact, homogeneous entity, is gradually being assimilated by the surrounding fabric, with new buildings on the historic site pulverizing and even declining its old center. Therefore, the focus of this study is on the heritage aspect of the old center, the beating heart of the town of Ain-Beida. The study aims to put an end to all the habits and irresponsible interventions that are damaging the architectural and urban framework of these colonial centers. The interest of the subject stems from a revealing and bitter observation of a historic center abandoned both by its inhabitants and by the public authorities who neglect its historical and cultural values. Today, these centers are reclaiming the acts of aggression and informal intervention that have contributed to their degradation. Through this study, the aim is to understand the circumstances of the city's urban development that have led to the degradation of the heritage landscape, both urban and architectural, of its colonial center. In other words, the aim is to examine the various dynamics that have led to its spatial and functional reconfiguration.

In order to achieve our research objective, we aim to understand the mechanisms of urban production in the city that have had an impact on its old town center. Our main questions are as follows: What has caused the built environment of downtown Ain-Beida to lose its heritage and historical value? Who is responsible for managing, preserving, and enhancing the built heritage? Is the legislative framework capable of safeguarding these colonial centers.

Methodology

Our work is divided into two phases to meet the research objective and address the questions posed. In the first phase, we have opted for a qualitative research approach based on document analysis. Through this approach, we aim to study the history of urban policy in Algeria, focusing on the urban reality and heritage issues. Our study will be divided into three parts. First, we will focus on the making of the urban in Algeria, including new regulations and the colonial legacy. Then, we will study the city's urban context through the various instruments that have guided its urban development. Lastly, we will focus on the issue of urban and architectural heritage protection in the Algerian city management policy, while also examining the Tunisian and Moroccan experience in preserving and enhancing their heritage. In the second phase, we will focus our analysis on the impact of these regulations on the urban dynamics that have taken place, and the profound metamorphoses undergone by the colonial center of Ain-Beida. This will lead to a reconfiguration of the spatial and functional aspects that call into question the colonial heritage of the town center. We will conclude our work with a discussion of the results.

Results

Documentary analysis: the history of urban policy in Algeria – urban reality and heritage issues

Algerian city between a colonial heritage and a new regulation

Urbanization has a long history in Algeria, dating back to ancient civilizations. However, it was previously done randomly without proper planning. During the colonial period, the government adopted a French-inspired urban policy resulting in civil urban planning. This was marked by the law on "plans for the development and embellishment of cities" in 1919 and made applicable in 1922. Later, several planning tools were introduced such as the "plan of alignment and reserves", "the plan of development, extension and embellishment", and the law that provides for the master plan of urbanism in 1958. Despite these efforts, new urban extensions were mainly developed in an anarchic manner.

The legislation that was put in place to regulate urban planning has failed to achieve its intended purpose as it has not been properly enforced. The lack of compliance with the regulations has had a negative impact on the city's urban landscape. On the eve of independence, an urban crisis emerged that resulted in the deterioration of urban functions and degradation of the social and environmental aspects. In response, the PUD was created in 1958 and the PUP in 1974 as the only urban planning and production tools available in Algeria at that time, (Tawfik & Belkacem, 2017, p.2), within the framework of the Constantine Plan.

In addition to these two tools, the law of 31 December 1962 introduced a number of modifications to the urban planning tools created during the period of colonization. These include the law relating to communal land reserves and land in the public and private domain (Ibid, p: 2).

It is important to note that a specific law has played a crucial role in the process of urbanization throughout the country. However, this law has resulted in the rapid consumption of land and the waste of valuable and fertile agricultural land. In the mid-1970s, the state launched a new urban planning instrument called ZHUNs and ZIs. This instrument was created as part of the state's policy to promote economic and social development, while also addressing regional imbalances. Despite these ambitious goals, the city has not witnessed the desired outcomes on the ground. Instead, the city has experienced unprecedented expansion and environmental degradation on all scales.

In response to the economic crisis that affected Algeria towards the end of the 1980s, the state adopted new political and socio-economic reforms. These reforms were later implemented as part of the market economy policy, which included the availability of the free land market and questioning the concept of individual property. To implement these policies, several laws were announced, including the Law of Land Orientation 90/25, which was constituted by the POS and the PDAU. The primary objective of this law was to fix the technical consistency and legal regime of the land heritage, with Article 2 stipulating the preservation of the environment, natural surroundings, landscapes, and cultural and historical heritage. However, an analytical reading of the urban policy followed by the state reveals that while Algeria has a robust legal arsenal of texts and rules, the lack of rigorous application is evident in the current urban situation. The absence of a long-term strategy, combined with urbanization often carried out in emergency situations with economic programs, has led to the deterioration of the urban image of the city and the degradation of its architectural and landscape heritage.

The urban planning instruments of the city of Ain-Beida, facts and findings of urban growth

Ain-Beida, a city in the country, has been shaped by various urban policies and legislation over the years. The first planned urban development (PUD) in 1966 failed due to administrative and technical challenges. The subsequent PUD in 1973, which coincided with the land reserves law, partially realized the state's goals, including the construction of 3,000 residences, 4 allotments, an industrial zone, and other facilities. However, this led to an irrational use of land resources. The PUD of 1988 aimed to improve the quality of urban living, with a focus on the regularization of informal urban areas, densification of empty spaces, and requalification of the existing fabric. The 1990 PDAU did not bring much change to the city, and illegal and precarious housing continued to proliferate due to land shortages. To address this, an inter-communal PDAU was proposed, but management difficulties have delayed its implementation to this day. (Tawfik & Belkacem, op cit, p: 5)

The available urban planning legislation has failed to meet the objectives of development, which has resulted in a dilapidated, disorderly, and anarchic state of the built environment of the city. This is especially visible in the city's old center, which reflects a state of banality and marginalization. The lack of awareness of the heritage value of the city's colonial legacy in the policy of urban management has led to a decline in the old center, which is no longer solely the responsibility of the state's political strategies. Other factors

have also contributed to this decline, resulting in the old center becoming a space that showcases a procession of urban and architectural phenomena.

The issue of protection of urban and architectural colonial heritage in the city management policy

It is important to note that when the concept of heritage was first introduced, the city was viewed as a heritage object only in terms of architectural designs. Later on, urban heritage was considered from a more holistic perspective, thanks to the works of Ruskin in England, Camillo Sitte in Vienna, and Gaustavo Giovannoni in Italy. With time, urban heritage has gained wider recognition, primarily due to the historical, social, economic, touristic, and scientific values that it represents. This heritage is significant on a historical and social level, as it can help reconstruct contemporary culture and identity. It serves as a reminder of the genetic imprints that help people recall their roots and origins. It acts as a bridge between past, present and future generations. A society that forgets its history and past, loses its identity, and recognizing and discovering heritage is thus crucial to the existence and destiny of a society. According to Hans Widmer, president of the National Information Centre for the Conservation of Cultural Property (NIKE), these monuments, as the name 'monumentum' (Latin) implies, act as auxiliaries to our memory. They assist us in remembering, and are thus vital to our collective memory as a society.

Once protected and properly managed, heritage sites can become a source of financial profitability and wealth. Investment in this field is closely linked to effective tourism management. From a scientific perspective, heritage assets serve as raw material and research laboratories that drive scientific advancement. They allow us to deepen our understanding of the history, evolution, beliefs, and traditions of human life. All of these values require a comprehensive appreciation for the importance of heritage preservation. A broad collaboration among all stakeholders is necessary as part of a global strategy aimed at implementing a cultural policy based on knowledge, preservation, and enhancement.

During the colonization of Algeria, the idea of heritage was first introduced. Today, this legacy from the past is under serious threat due to acts of "degradation, destructuring and even destruction" (Guy, 1998, p: 2) caused by economic pressures that are unconcerned with historical preservation, changing lifestyles, and other factors related to urban policy. Before independence, the State was mainly focused on the tasks of reconstruction. This meant that the regulations for protecting heritage were still those inspired by the colonial era (Boussaad and al, 2006). For a long time, the question of recognizing and legitimizing the country's colonial legacy remained unanswered due to ideological reasons. It only concerned the heritage of the Hafsid, Hammadid, and Marinid eras (Ibid).

In Algeria, most of the colonial heritage has fallen into disrepair, with many buildings and historic sites left uncared for. The old colonial centers, in particular, are in a state of neglect and decline. This is evident in the old town of Ain-Beida which, despite its symbolic and cultural significance, is now an anarchic urban landscape. Several researchers have raised concerns about this situation and stressed the importance of preserving this heritage in the country's history. Tewfik GUERROUDJ, in his article, highlights that these historic old town centers have a special symbolic dimension and serve as a support for collective memory. He further adds that these buildings and groups of buildings can act as spatial or historical landmarks, bearing witness to a by-gone era and the city's historical depth. They enable us to situate ourselves in relation to

a past that has left visible traces and continues to exert an influence on the present. The author emphasizes that this colonial heritage is representative of the country's history and its preservation and enhancement is essential.

The dilapidated condition of heritage structures, especially old colonial centers, is due to various factors. Firstly, colonial legacy is a painful reminder of domination, brutality, and torture. These colonial buildings are no longer considered cultural assets and heritage of national interest in terms of history, art, or archaeology. As a result, they are not maintained or protected and have fallen into ruin. Despite Algeria's ratification of the UNESCO Convention in 1973, participation in the "Euromed Heritage" program, and the Algiers Declaration, historic sites are still in a state of disrepair. These initiatives aim to enhance and protect the built heritage of Mediterranean countries and safeguard people's identities and heritage. The "Archimed" project in 2005, involving seven Mediterranean cities, focused on the renovation and conservation of old districts.

Despite several initiatives, the ancient fabrics of some urban centers continue to suffer from degradation due to various factors such as tertiarization of the site, departure of the population, uncontrolled renovation, socio-economic changes, traffic densification, and atmospheric pollution. Over the last few decades, political authorities and civil communities have become increasingly aware of the threats facing these urban centers, which possess significant heritage value. As a result, institutional and legal frameworks have been put in place to deal with this crisis situation.

After gaining independence, the Algerian government adopted a policy aimed at managing abandoned property, although it was limited in scope. Two key stages in the evolution of Algerian legislation should be highlighted. The first stage took place just before independence, when Ordinance no. 67/281 was issued on December 20, 1967. This ordinance dealt with excavations and the preservation of historical and natural sites and monuments (Djamel and Ouahib Tarek, 2009). It was based on colonial-era texts, with some modifications to reflect the country's sovereignty. However, despite the penalties stipulated by this ordinance, a large number of violations were recorded by both authorities and citizens. At the time, many monuments were neglected, not exploited, and not maintained properly. People perceived these monuments as a reminder of colonialism, which led to a lack of interest in them (Yassine, 2015). This law remained inoperative as historic residential centers were no longer considered as monuments in constant evolution (Fatima, 2015, *op cit*, p: 6).

Decree no. 68-88, issued on April 23, 1968, lays down the rules for occupying residential buildings. A group of occupants, known as a syndicate, is responsible for managing the common areas of the building. Also, Decree no. 76-146, dated October 23, 1976, requires all condominium owners to adhere to a standard set of regulations. These regulations, drafted by a notary, define the co-owners' personal status, specify the administration of the building, and establish the contribution of each co-owner to various charges. Furthermore, Act no. 81-01, passed on February 7, 1981, allowed the privatization of many apartment buildings managed through the condominium system. However, due to financial and management issues, this regulatory mechanism failed to achieve its objectives. Its ineffectiveness has led to the further deterioration of the buildings and their inability to reflect their heritage value.

In 1983, decree no. 8-684 was issued to address the issue of dilapidated and unsanitary buildings in urban areas. This decree allowed for renovation, restoration, and other interventions to improve the conditions of these buildings, without necessarily adhering to their original architectural and urban design (Ibid, p: 7). As a result, subsequent interventions were made by the inhabitants themselves, which often resulted in further reconstruction or redevelopment. In 1990, the law no. 90-29 was introduced to regulate the construction of buildings in urban areas and protect the built heritage (Fatima, 2015, op cit, p: 7). However, this law did not apply to colonial-era urban areas except for traditional historic sites such as medinas and ksour (Karima & Mohamed, 2011).

In response to the changes in the political landscape following the 1989 constitution and to address the needs of the community, the second step was the enactment of law no. 98-04 on June 15, 1998, which focused on the preservation of cultural heritage. This law has shown that the level of awareness and consciousness about the importance of enhancing heritage assets is growing. The legislation has two primary components. Firstly, the definition of heritage was expanded to include historic centers, leading to the creation of the safeguarded sector, which encompasses urban real estate complexes characterized by their predominance of residential areas. These areas are historically, architecturally, or aesthetically significant and require protection, restoration, rehabilitation, and enhancement (Fatima, 2015, op cit, p: 9). Secondly, a permanent preservation and enhancement plan was established, and the law emphasizes private property rights, as well as the establishment of a heritage financial aid fund.

Despite the new features introduced, the law has several difficulties and shortcomings that have hindered the achievement of the outlined objectives. These include delays in the production of implementing regulations, the absence of institutions for managing historic and archaeological sites and protected areas, and the lack of definitions for various operations and interventions on cultural and real estate assets. All these factors explain the current state of disrepair of Algeria's old colonial centers.

On the other hand, Tunisia has a long history of heritage development, which can be divided into two fundamental periods. The first began during the colonial period in the early 19th century, under the administration of the French Protectorate over the Regency of Tunis. At that time, the ruins of antiquity and Islamic architecture, representing the country's heritage assets, were placed under the management of the Department of Antiquities and Arts.

During the second period from 1956 to 1970, the Tunisian government did not prioritize the classification of historic monuments and sites, except for the Monastir Ribat which was classified in 1956. As a result, heritage management was left in the hands of scientists. Even though a thorough reorganization of heritage management institutions was carried out during this period, there were no legislative measures to support it. The Tunisian authorities abandoned heritage management because of a colonial ideology based on a vision of the past and a state policy geared towards economic ambitions in a spirit of modernity. However, a few years later, new voices emerged to highlight the need to integrate heritage into the country's economy. The early 1980s saw the promulgation of laws and decrees alongside the establishment of several national institutions, reflecting new legal reforms. The involvement of international bodies such as UNESCO and UNDP played a significant role in changing the attitudes of Tunisian politicians towards heritage

management. They were convinced of the importance of heritage as a source of progress and profit for the country.

Over time, heritage has become a key matter for the State. There's been a movement to involve several official players from different ministries such as housing, infrastructure, and culture to integrate heritage into economic circuits. This has led to a concerted policy for safeguarding, exploiting, and managing heritage, with the aim of developing tourism. To achieve this goal, the preservation of heritage is included in urban development plans under the town planning code. These plans are meant to protect "preservation zones" and "natural and cultural sites", as well as ensure compliance with heritage protection provisions. The State has emphasized the need to organize development programs that meet cultural, economic, and commercial objectives. In the 1990s, cultural institutions were overhauled and heritage was recognized by the State. This led to an extension of the management of heritage to include other sectors such as the economy, ecology, and tourism. Players in these fields, with their practical experience, have been able to contribute to the creation of legislative tools that are better adapted to the challenges of safeguarding heritage (Bacha, 2008).

During the colonial period, the French Protectorate was responsible for heritage conservation in Morocco, similar to what happened in Tunisia. They introduced town planning for reasons of military security and hygiene, which created a divide between the traditional Arab town and the European one. However, after gaining independence, Morocco did not have any regulations in place for heritage protection for a long time. It was only in 1980 that a law was passed to conserve historic monuments, sites, works of art and antiquities. Unfortunately, this law had some shortcomings. It only focused on building conservation, without taking the urban landscape into consideration, and it did not propose any procedures or methods for architectural and town-planning protection. The instructions dictated by this law were too broad and difficult to understand. There were no non-aedificandi servitudes or servitudes aimed at preserving architectural style.

In 1992, Morocco passed a second town-planning law in an attempt to solve the country's urban problems. However, the law failed to address the existing issues and made it even more difficult to manage heritage assets. The whole of Morocco has been affected by an urban crisis, which can be attributed to the colonial administration's outdated legislation on urban planning. Despite efforts to create institutions and services to manage urban problems, the country's urban planning remained inadequate. As a result, heritage assets suffered consequences. To tackle the urban crisis, Moroccan intellectuals stressed the importance of viewing the modern city as a heritage legacy. Heritage associations have since taken on the responsibility of influencing urban management departments to make better decisions. Although many safeguard plans have been created since the 2000s, the absence of a legal basis meant that these plans were not implemented. This resulted in heritage assets being subject to densification, change, and demolition operations. (Mouna M'Hammedi & al, 2018).

Urban dynamics of the city of Ain-Beida and the question of heritage of the colonial center

The city of Ain-Beida: a spatial crossroads in full urban dynamics

The urbanization of Algerian cities, including the city of Ain-Beida, has been a continuous process for several decades. As Pierre Lucain puts it, "The city is a living organism whose

growth is continuous, exposed to all hazards. It follows that its plan is never definitive but is continually remodeled and adapted to the changing needs of the community" (quoted by Karima, 2003, p: 7). Ain-Beida, formerly called Marciméni, has its roots in Roman times and was a transit region between the cities of Thevest and Cirta. It allowed for commercial exchanges between the sedentary population of the North and the nomads of the South. During the colonial period, the city was classified as the chief town of a full-fledged commune in 1868. After independence, the city was administratively attached to the department of Constantine (Saleh. 2009, p: 262) and became one of the chief towns of the wilaya of Oum El-Bouaghi during the administrative division of 1974. Nowadays, several neighboring communes depend administratively on the city of Ain-Beida, including Zorg and Berriche in the North, and F'kirina, Oued Nini, and Ain-Farhat in the South.

During the colonial era, the Army created the garrison village which had a classic military structure with wide boulevards oriented to the four cardinal points and a grid of streets intersecting at right angles. According to Jean-Claude, the village was designed with an orthogonal grid in a checkerboard or chessboard pattern, with streets that intersected at right angles and separated blocks of houses. The blocks of houses were mostly on the first floor, with sides of 50 to 60 meters, and a central square around which were grouped the church, the presbytery, the town hall, the post office, and the covered market. Claude further adds that, aside from the straightness of the streets, there was nothing that differentiated this village from any other of similar importance in Europe. The city of Ain-Beida is known for its history and cultural identity which make it a crossroads within the territory of the Algerian East. However, over time, it has lost its luster at all scales of urban life as can be seen in figure 1. Despite being one of the oldest daïras of Algeria and a homogeneous urban entity since its creation, the city of Ain-Beida has undergone profound changes and multiple upheavals, particularly during the period between 1970 to 1980, which has had significant consequences on its spatial and functional organization.

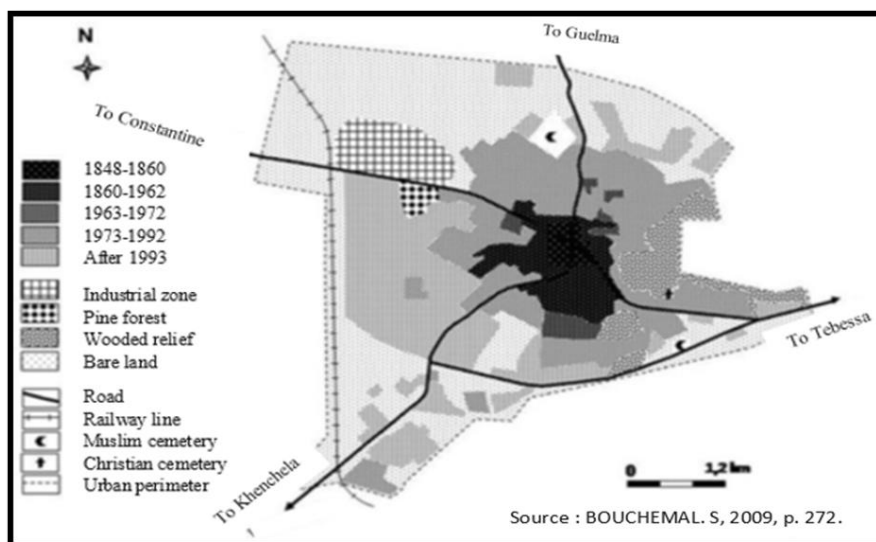


Fig. 1. The situation of the city in the urban framework of Eastern Algeria (Source: Urban dynamics and emergence of new peripheral centralities in Algerian cities (Houria, 2018, p:3))

Bouchemal Saleh, a planning expert, commented in a press article that defects in urban planning have a common origin. The defects are the result of a complex mix of factors related to the practices of urban planning actors such as residents, professionals, and managers, as well as urban policies that have failed to control the rapid urban growth caused by a booming population. This is an alarming observation as it demonstrates that several parameters have interacted to lead to this situation, which is characterized by urban disorder, landscape incoherence, and building degradation (Figure 2). Similarly, in his book, Claude Chaline points out that the city's transformation is mainly due to two driving forces - endogenous and exogenous factors. Demographic change is the basis of spatial dynamics, and the urban population has grown unexpectedly in recent decades. According to the forecast data offered by the statistical services of the Directorate of Programming and Budgetary Monitoring of the wilaya of Oum El-Bouaghi, the population of Ain-Beida, which was about 30000 inhabitants on the eve of independence, is currently estimated to be more than 150,000 inhabitants in 2019. Pendular mobility, also known as commuting, effectively leads to the lengthening of trips made and therefore promotes the phenomenon of urban sprawl. In Ain-Beida, the concentration of commercial and service activities and facilities in the city center has greatly increased the distances covered daily by the inhabitants, thus generating the phenomenon of urban sprawl and even a disjunction between the peripheral residential areas and the activity zones.



Fig. 2. Degradation of the colonial building of the old center of the city of Ain-Beida (Source: author, 2022)

Residential mobility contributes to the dynamics of the city by setting space in motion and transforming its form and/or function. Homeowners may leave their homes due to changes in ownership status, location, type of housing or size. The development of the transport system, including means of travel and road infrastructure, is also a significant factor in driving the dynamics of the city. In addition, the migratory movement of the population from outside the city also contributes to the city's dynamics. In the case of Ain-Beida, its strategic location as an urban crossroads between several important cities in eastern Algeria, such as Tébessa-Constantine and Guelma-Khenchela, has led to a strong movement of the population from neighboring areas in search of better living conditions. This is due to the presence of services and equipment and the diversity of commercial activities, making the city a center of employment and a place of convergence of flows.

The parameters, whether they are endogenous or exogenous, have caused the urban reconfiguration of Ain-Beida city. The city has transformed from a compact and homogeneous entity to a dispersed and spread-out one. The old city center has undergone radical changes in its built framework. Many factors have contributed to the frequenta-

tion and polarization of flows towards the old center, which is considered as a space of interaction, attraction and urban animation. This has caused mutations in its physical aspect, and with the passing of years, there have been changes in the materials used and the architecture of the habitats. These changes have also affected the social and functional aspects of the city.

The city center of Ain-Beida: proliferation of urban mutations – what are the stakes for the protection of the urban and architectural heritage

The colonial core of Ain-Beida city is located in its old center. It was designed based on the European model, with a checkerboard plan. This type of plan has been used since ancient times as the most commonly used geometrical scheme for organizing colonized territories (Hinda and al, 2014, op cit). The constructions in this area have limited heights and are often residential in character, mostly on the first floor (as shown in figure 3). Being located at the intersection of the two main roads RN 10 and RN 80, the colonial core has a central position in the whole urban structure of the city. This gives it good accessibility and makes it a place of attraction for the resident population and visitors from outside (as shown in figure 4). Thanks to these favorable spatial conditions, the government adopted a market economy policy towards the end of the 1980s, which encouraged the massive installation of commercial and service activities in the area. This has led to an increase in land values and a high economic return, which in turn encouraged residents to make changes to their homes. As a result, a significant number of residences have undergone physical and/or functional transformations, which can be either partial or radical.



Fig. 3. The orthogonal layout of the roads in the colonial center of the city of Ain-Beida (Source: Ain beida history. Blogspot.com/p/blog-page_6.html)

In the case of partial transformations, the constructions undergo physical changes which are aimed at adapting to the new needs of the inhabitants. These changes can be made by adding rooms or elevating the frontages to create more space. For instance, additional rooms, garages, or commercial premises may be added (see Figure 5). Radical transformations, on the other hand, are often carried out to change the function of a residence to that of a trade or service. This can be achieved by constructing new buildings such as doctor's offices, company headquarters, administrative offices, etc. (Figure 6). Alternatively, the transformation may involve rebuilding new residential houses with modern styles and large surfaces (Figure 7). Unfortunately, whether partial or radical, these transformations have been carried out without considering the principles of integration with the old habitat. This has resulted in the appearance of heterogeneous architectural styles, with incoherent visual images that have negatively affected the appearance of the old center, which once had a special urban and architectural harmony.

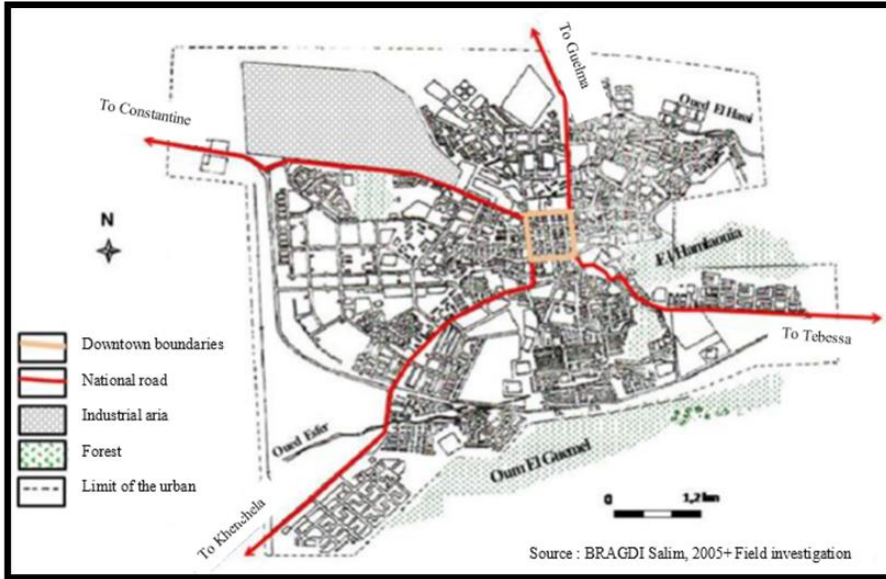


Fig. 4. The central position of the colonial core at the intersection of two national roads (Source: Houria, 2015, p: 81)



Fig. 5. Types of mutation carried out on the colonial building roads (Source: author, 2022)



Fig. 6. Conversion of residential buildings to administrative offices (Source: author, 2022)



Fig. 7. Conversion of traditional housing to modern architectural style (Source: author, 2022)

It is worth noting that there has been an increase in the number of symbolic and cultural facilities, such as churches, mosques, and festival halls, as well as administrative buildings like courts, APC, and gendarmerie headquarters. Additionally, there are educational, health, financial, and banking facilities. The garden 1er November and the square of martyrs serve as spaces to strengthen social connections among residents. Apart from these site and economic factors, there are also social factors such as inheritance issues and family unit changes that bring about changes in the colonial center's buildings. Furthermore, the city's road network, created during the colonial era, particularly in the old city center, has insufficient capacity for the ever-increasing number of cars. This results in traffic congestion and delays, making it difficult for residents to travel. All of these factors have contributed to a shift in the colonial center's residential character and a decrease in its population, giving rise to new dominant tertiary functions supported by the proliferation of trade and service activities.

Discussion

Our comprehensive study on the concept of heritage has revealed its various and significant values that are based on criteria of antiquity and aesthetics. Over time, these values have expanded to include social and economic dimensions. The importance of these values necessitates their communication, highlighting the complexity of preserving heritage and the resources required for it. It is worth noting that in the Maghreb countries, the notion of historical heritage was previously limited to pre-colonial sites, specifically the traditional Arab medinas. However, in recent decades, colonial fabrics have been recognized as heritage assets that bear witness to the history of the people (Daniel Pini). It was only in the 1990s that scientific research was launched to advocate for the preservation of the architectural and urban legacy of the colonial era in Mediterranean countries. This resulted in the inclusion of several cities on the national and universal heritage lists, including the medinas of Tunis, Algiers, Fez, Cairo, Aleppo, Marrakech, and Damascus (Galila Elkadi).

The delay in classifying colonial heritage sites as worthy of safeguarding has contributed to their deterioration. The ideological conflicts between indigenous civilizations and the West also played a role in the delay of recognizing and protecting these sites. The demographic growth, urbanization, and migration trends have also led to the densification of colonial sites, changes in their architectural settings, and the impoverishment of their living environment. This has also resulted in the depopulation of the original inhabitants, leading to the emergence of dilapidated housing. Although some measures have been implemented to address this problem, they have not been successful in solving the issues at hand. In Algeria, heritage protection and preservation efforts have mainly fo-

cused on pre-colonial sites. It was only later that colonial sites were recognized as symbols of history. Unfortunately, this recognition came after many of these historic sites had been destroyed beyond repair. A critical analysis of Algeria's heritage preservation efforts reveals a lack of emphasis on its protection. For instance, only 120 sites and monuments were included on the national heritage list in the 40 years after independence, compared to 384 sites and monuments during the 132 years of colonisation.

Although significant progress was made at the global level, particularly during the 1980s, when many international organizations and associations paid close attention to the extent and richness of Algeria's heritage, the country was still haunted by the ideology of colonialism. According to this ideology, any heritage from that era was considered a useless and embarrassing burden that hindered development and modernity and represented nothing more than vandalism and discomfort to people's spirits, leading to its deterioration. It was not until the end of 1988, when the political arena was opened up, that civil society was able to organize itself in the form of political or cultural associations. Since then, the issue of identity has become a priority, leading to concrete action aimed at preserving the heritage while seeking to put an end to the practices that are causing it to deteriorate. However, the lack of rigorous legislation meant that for years, the state of the heritage remained far removed from safeguarding operations.

In 1998, a new law was introduced to protect cultural heritage and to show the State's commitment to preserving it. Prior to this law, there was little interest in protecting or promoting heritage, and historic centers were not recognized as assets until this point. This delay in classification has contributed to these areas becoming dilapidated and associated with squatter settlements and shanty towns. The lack of resources and delayed legal action in drafting and applying laws have led to many historic sites and monuments falling into ruin or being demolished. Additionally, financial aid for heritage was not available until the end of 1998. Furthermore, the lack of communication and consultation between the Ministry of Housing and Town Planning and the Ministry of Communication and Culture has negatively impacted the management of heritage assets.

The situation is similar to that of Tunisia's historic centers, where the colonial legacy accounts for a significant portion of its heritage assets. After gaining independence, the ruling elite saw the preservation of heritage as a return to modernity. This resulted in major spatial and functional transformations of certain buildings in historic centers to align with the projects of the modern city. Unfortunately, this thinking also led to the advanced deterioration of existing housing. Due to the population's migration to the outskirts, old town centers have become commercialized, where residential homes have been converted to craft workshops, clothing and shoe sales, etc. This depopulation of old town centers, which has caused socio-spatial segregation, is the root of several factors, such as the deterioration of buildings that no longer meet the new demands of city life, and the change in Tunisians' social lifestyle expressed by the breakdown of the traditional family, which has given way to the nuclear family preferring independent housing.

Many old colonial districts with historical and cultural significance have lost their charm and are in danger of being ruined or have already been partially or completely demolished. They are now being used as garbage dumps, causing inconvenience to the residents. To address this situation, the government has initiated an economic and social regeneration program for old town centers with high heritage value. The President of this program stated that the new policy of rehabilitating old buildings will have

positive effects, not only on the urban environment by improving infrastructure and maintaining old buildings, but also on the residents' quality of life. The interventions will provide a favorable framework for launching new economic and social activities in the redeveloped districts. To achieve this goal, a budget has been allocated to finance a range of measures, including improving the urban infrastructure (sewerage, roads, public lighting, etc.), rehabilitating public spaces, enhancing cultural heritage by renovating historic buildings, promoting economic, commercial, and craft activities, setting up tourist circuits, and renovating housing.

A recent study conducted in 2018 on heritage in Morocco found that multiple interventions on the built heritage have resulted in its destruction, specifically in the colonial centers of Casablanca and Rabat, which hold significant heritage value. The total or partial changes to buildings have caused severe architectural deformations. Forceful practices have led to the conversion of residential buildings into office blocks, with additional floors being added. These interventions have caused changes in the perception of the property, and the mental image of the city is disrupted in the collective identity of the community. These old buildings account for 10% of the country's total housing stock and are mainly used for housing purposes. However, they rarely receive any rehabilitation programs. A report by the Conseil National de l'Habitat (National Housing Council) shows that "more than 60% of these buildings are in poor condition, and 15% are in danger of falling into ruin. They are poorly equipped, poorly maintained, over-densified, or over-exploited." As a result, they are occupied by poor people. The delay in political intervention to preserve these historic structures, particularly housing, the lack of maintenance, poor restoration, the installation of networks, the status of land ownership, the lack of funding, etc., are all factors that have contributed to their deterioration.

Various associations have expressed their concern over the deconstruction of colonial heritage sites. The Moroccan government has implemented a rehabilitation policy to improve the state of their deterioration and preserve their cultural and historical value. This policy has been in place since the 1980s and was further strengthened in 2000 with the creation of a legislative basis for heritage preservation action. These historic colonial sites are an important part of a country's cultural identity and authenticity. They are often classified as national heritage or heritage of humanity of universal value. Therefore, special attention must be paid to them to preserve their tourism potential and as a source of development. European countries have made significant progress in safeguarding their heritage. Spain, for example, has adopted rehabilitation as a form of intervention in old buildings dating from the 19th and 20th centuries. The Land Law provides two types of planning tool: special protection plans for areas of great historical interest, and special internal reform plans for the urban fabric. These initiatives aim to preserve the existing fabric of buildings and public spaces, while also improving the basic structure of the district. Madrid, for instance, benefited from such initiatives in 1981.

Various experiments have been conducted to balance preservation and conservation. In 1986, Barcelona adopted an ordinance to improve and restore historic sites and buildings constructed before 1932. Over time, other contemporary interventions have been introduced in old city centres aimed at revitalizing run-down housing areas by combining them with modern social and cultural practices. Seville has proposed social housing projects that reinterpret old plot typologies with contemporary design, intending to revitalize run-down neighbourhoods while encouraging people to stay put. The idea is to change the

perception that old housing is always linked to impoverishment and urban decay (Carlos Gotlieb). In Barcelona, there is a proposal to set up a cultural circuit in the oldest part of the city, combining the creation of contemporary facilities in old converted buildings with new spaces to open up the district, instead of constructing new buildings. In addition to the cultural rehabilitation programme, Spain initiated a project to improve substandard housing by demolishing entire blocks and creating public spaces and new housing, while consulting with the town's residents. Recently, the importance of protecting the heritage of old town centres has emphasized the need for a dialogue between new urban forms and pre-existing ones, to develop new approaches to pre-formalisation in the preparation of conservation plans (Carlos Gotlieb).

In France, the government has been focused on rehabilitating existing housing as part of their urban policy since 1975. This policy has been extended to the large-scale social housing estates built in the 1960s. The aim is to maintain a diversity of housing types in towns and cities, encourage residential mobility, and limit urban segregation. This policy generates significant economic activity for the country by mobilizing regulatory and financial resources to improve existing housing. The idea of "building the city on the city" rather than rebuilding on the ruins of the past was not known in France until the 1970s, in response to the demolition of insalubrious districts in city centers. It's worth noting that after World War II, there was a trend in France to demolish substandard housing and replace it with new buildings. This led to the loss of the social and economic mix of historic urban centers, where the resident population left the heart of the city and moved to the outskirts. It wasn't until the Malraux Act of 1962 that these depopulation practices came to an end, with the creation of safeguarded sectors and property restoration areas. This law recognized old town centers as heritage sites with significant architectural and urbanistic value, which led to the protection of the historic centers of Paris, Lyon, and Lille. This political awareness was supported by the community movement, which denounced the traumas caused by new construction. Associations played a crucial role in raising awareness among local players and residents of the historical and cultural significance of these sites.

In recent years, cities have taken on the responsibility of managing all urban regeneration projects while considering the expectations of local residents. In Italy, the definition of historic heritage has expanded to include urban centers with significant historical value. Italian urban planners have focused on the concepts of rehabilitation and redevelopment. Their goal is to intervene in built-up areas that are unsuitable for housing without altering the identity of the neighborhoods. Since the 1990s, the management of historic city centers has been guided by urban regeneration and requalification programs. These programs aim to resolve infrastructure and facilities shortcomings and undertake a process of morphological and functional regeneration in social housing areas that were built during the post-war period. Urban regeneration programs seek to transform run-down areas and brownfield sites by integrating public and private resources and balancing the requirements of various players. All these approaches to safeguarding and protecting ancient fabrics, based on various experiences, should serve as a source of inspiration for Algeria. They can learn about heritage management based on its specific characteristics. Heritage management requires a review of the entire system on which the Algerian state relies to enhance its heritage in institutional, legal and financial contexts. This can only be achieved through a set of procedures established as part of a rigorous strategy based mainly on the consolidation of legislation, consultation between different sectors, the

search for sources of funding, and training in heritage management. Promoting heritage is considered a long-term investment.

Conclusion

The current state of urban and architectural heritage in Algeria is in a critical condition due to various factors, including ideological, political, economic, and social issues. The controversy over colonial buildings inherited from the past has caused significant ideological debate in Algeria. The question of whether these buildings should be considered part of the country's historical and national heritage was widely debated during the period leading up to the country's independence. This is because the population perceived these buildings as a painful reminder of Algeria's colonial history, which hindered their restoration and preservation efforts. The Algerian Government's delay in adopting policies to protect and enhance the urban and architectural heritage of old town centers, even four decades after independence, has led to a deterioration of the built environment. Despite the availability of a legal framework supported by laws and decrees, the absence of their application texts, slow implementation in certain cases, and lack of rigorous application of these regulations have contributed to an altered situation of the urban and architectural framework of the old centers.

Various economic and social factors have contributed to the current state of the built heritage of old town centres. These factors include the opening up of the market, demographic pressure, and changes in people's lifestyles. As a result, the colonial buildings have undergone significant changes and new buildings have emerged. Therefore, it is no longer the sole responsibility of the State to protect the built heritage. Civic associations must also raise community awareness about the value of this heritage for the city's present and future development. In addition to its scientific and cultural value, this heritage can also drive the local economy. Algeria can learn from successful experiences in managing its heritage assets to bring progress at every level.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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