Homes, interrupted

Housing policies in colonial Algeria

Thierry Guillopé
31 July 2021

Public housing projects in French Algeria often sought to further the social and political aims of the colonisers. But residents weren’t always prepared to play ball.

The uninterrupted growth of bidonvilles (shanty towns) and the regular unveiling of public housing projects from the late nineteenth century onwards are part of the dynamic that shaped the social and political life of Algeria’s urban centres, large and small, between the 1920s and 1960s. [1] By examining the housing conditions of Algeria’s inhabitants during this period, we can grasp the material and social context of everyday life at a time when colonial rule was being continuously chipped away.

This approach also allows us to study very diverse social groups – both in isolation and via their interactions – that historiography has largely tended to examine through separate lenses (e.g. ‘European’ or ‘Algerian’ workers, political activists, the clergy, and so on). Such insights into social housing policy can additionally offer a fresh perspective on colonial reformism and the subsequent counter-revolutionary war waged by the French army. In turn, we can equally gain an enriched understanding of the lived experiences of colonization and the ensuing War of Independence.

Public housing began in the late nineteenth century with HBMs (habitations à bon marché or ‘low-cost housing’). From 1950 onwards these were superseded by HLMs (habitations à loyer modéré or ‘moderate rent accommodation’) and cités indigènes (‘indigenous housing estates’). Until around 1960, municipalities and administrators regarded the mass construction of housing as one of the cornerstones of urban rationalization, land-use planning, and colonial reform. The army, which began intervening in this area after 1954, introduced a counter-revolutionary dimension to such construction efforts.

In tandem, a historical anthropology of this period – which takes into account both the long-term evolution of everyday practices and the brusque changes linked to the war and to specific local contexts – can afford us a better understanding of the pace and, in most cases, the brutality of the lifestyle changes imposed on city-dwelling Algerians, most of whom were workers living in poor quality accommodation. [2] Europeans, meanwhile,
lived in starkly contrasting accommodation.

The history of housing in Algeria is – as is often the way with such subjects – a long story. Throughout the country, housing supply was characterized by shortages and disparities, which were only exacerbated by the growing rural exodus among Algerians; although to a much lesser degree, this phenomenon was mirrored among European settlers. The accessibility of HBMs and later HLMs (whether built by public agencies or private companies) was strongly determined by a person’s standing in colonial society. In other words, it was better to be European and solvent.

While being on the voting register wasn’t a legal imperative, it would most likely bolster one’s chances of being granted housing by the public authorities. Knowledge of the relevant social infrastructure and administrative communication channels, coupled with flexibility to relocate and the requisite to be living in a nuclear family group, were factors that excluded various sections of the population. Thus, non-French speakers, single workers, and extended family units were largely denied the opportunity to obtain HBMs and latterly HLMs. When it came to cités indigènes, the criteria and protocols for securing accommodation were shrouded in uncertainty. Such discrepancy between the rules prescribing – often in vague terms – those who were nominally entitled to housing (‘large families’, references to income level) and the reality of who actually received it, warrants further investigation.

We do find local variation in the number of construction projects and people’s relative chances of being allocated housing. Such variation is sometimes marked, depending on relations between municipalities and urban populations and, even more so, between Europeans and Algerians. The make-up of institutional governing boards is also a factor. Successive waves of housing construction and allocation saw profound changes in the urban structures of colonial cities, individual circumstances, and forms of colonial contact. Public housing policy also influenced the dynamics of urban segregation, whether by aggravating or attenuating the divide. These are the evolutions we shall mainly focus on here. [3].

**Social housing policy as a means of strengthening colonial rule**

The early 1920s saw two dynamics go head-to-head, like runners in a sprint race: population growth and the creation of a social housing policy. On the one hand, urban populations boomed, primarily fuelled by the rural exodus of Algerian workers. On the other hand, public authorities (i.e. local councils, central government, financial delegations) and private conglomerates (i.e. public limited companies, cooperatives, building societies) finally took advantage of social legislation allowing them to construct HBMs.

Not everyone sprang into action in the same spirit. City councillors in Constantine (such as Ammar Hammouche, Paul Genon, Maurice Laloum, and Henri Lellouche) were extremely energetic, while those in cities such as Blida were not remotely proactive. Governor General Maurice Viollette launched a policy of ‘indigenous housing’, whereas his predecessor Théodore Steeg appears to have spectacularly ignored the question; certain financial delegates (such as Charles Lévy and Jean-Marie Guastavino) took up the
mantle with particular gusto. [4] However, the late 1920s saw mounting irritation give way to stinging criticism of the slow rate of progress and modest nature of the housing being built for Algerians. This was voiced by councillors such as Abdelhak Belaggoun in Constantine and the communist Amar Ouzegane in Algiers, as well as by financial delegates such as Abdennour Tamzali.

The logic underpinning the construction of social housing during the 1920s and 1930s survived throughout the colonial period. Generally speaking, private construction increased only modestly (except between 1925–1935), with property returns lower than in metropolitan France. [5] Although HBM and HLM accommodation was not officially reserved for Europeans, given that insolvent Algerians were de facto excluded, such housing largely served to anchor French mainlanders in Algeria. This was particularly true of those in civil service and military roles. [6]

The very few HBM construction companies which did have ‘indigenous’ managing boards, and were intent on building housing for this section of the population, failed to get these construction projects off the ground. [7] The aims around which HBMs were conceived, despite their evolution over time, remained fundamentally constant: populating Algeria with Europeans and yoking to France subjects who were increasingly resistant to colonial rule – particularly following the Congrès musulman algérien (Algerian Muslim Congress) and Popular Front of 1936, and even more so in the aftermath of the 1945 massacres around Sétif and Guelma (in the Constantinois region). The period between 1920 and 1950 saw the creation of a whole assemblage of administrative units, financing circuits, ideological frameworks, and housing research methodologies, as well as construction protocols that differed according to colonial status.

A special so-called ‘indigenous housing’ policy, very cursory in scope, was drafted for Algerians from the latter third of the 1920s onwards. This housing was primarily intended to offer workers stable accommodation close to farms on the outskirts of colonial villages, with the aim of decelerating migration to cities; yet in total, fewer than 500 single-room houses were built in villages such as Bordj Menaiel, Isserville (modern-day Issers), Rivet (modern-day Meftah), Staouéli, Marnia (modern-day Magnhnia), and Mondovi (modern-day Drean). The principal champions of such housing were the financial delegates Charles Lévy and Albert Dromigny; the former was an influential miller from Sétif, the latter the longstanding president of the Confédération générale de l’agriculture (CGA, Algerian General Confederation of Agriculture). In the cities, cités indigènes (‘indigenous housing estates’) comprising several hundred dwellings were designed and built following a pilot scheme with ‘Bel Air’ estate in Sétif, on which construction began in 1923. By the end of the 1930s, the estate had swollen to 370 small houses. [8]

Maison-Carrée. Photo by Chaumot via Wikimedia Commons.

Over in Philippeville (modern-day Skikda), construction was completed on a one-hundred-dwelling cité indigène in 1937. [9] The cité indigène of Maison-Carrée (modern-day El Harrach), comprising over 200 small houses, was unveiled on 12 March 1938.

[10] Similar estates were constructed at the very end of the 1930s in Guelma and Constantine. The handful of housing estates built for ‘indigenous’ mine workers were of
such poor quality that they fell into disrepair almost immediately, as exemplified by the phosphate miners’ estate in el-Kouif (close to Tébessa). [11]

**Public housing policy, hygiene, and urban segregation**

Making urban spaces more hygienic was the professed aim of public housing projects in Algeria. Underlying this, however, we also find imperatives of security, control over urban inhabitants, and the standardization of city space. In Algiers, the *Comité de Défense des intérêts du Haut-Télemly* (Committee for the Defence of the Interests of Haut-Télemly), chaired by Charles Vial, expressed ‘concerns about indigenous conurbations, particularly from a hygiene perspective’. [12] Following his election to the city council in May 1929, and as celebrations of the Centennial of the French conquest of Algeria were gearing up, Vial pushed for the creation of the colonial capital’s inaugural *cité indigène*. His stated aim was to ‘get rid of [the] hotbeds of disease’ represented by what he termed the ‘shacks’ of Boulevard Gambetta and Cité Bisch. [13]

Stamp for the Centennial of the French conquest of Algeria. Photo by Post of Algeria from Wikimedia Commons.

Vial’s stance on the ‘indigenous’ shanty settlements located on the edge of his constituency can be understood as the interplay of two phenomena: the fear of contagion and a wider strategy of eviction. Both of these can be found in other colonial Algerian cities, as well as on the French mainland. [14] Algerian notables also played a part in council debates like these: in Oran, it was stated that ‘the indigenous housing environment is a major concern for Muslim councillors’, who were said to be keen to save the ‘indigenous subject from the slum’ and ‘provide him with a salubrious, well-ventilated, and sun-filled dwelling’. [15]

Councillors, architects, and landlords debated whether or not it was desirable to encourage ‘contact’ between Europeans and Algerians. This was a debate that rattled on – buttressed by sometimes inconsistent stances – until the 1960s, without ever truly being resolved. While cités indigènes kept their residents separate from the rest of the population, not all HBM and HLM adhered to this logic. In December 1934, 2,000 residents of the under-demolition Marine neighbourhood – both ‘Europeans and Algerians alike’ – had to be rehoused in the Messageries Maritimes conglomeration. [16] Owing to the poor state of preservation of the relevant documents, it is not possible to know what ensued. In Constantine, between the mid-1920s and mid-1930s, the municipal HBM office approved housing applications from 97 heads of households classed as ‘European’, 103 classed as ‘Jewish’, and 41 classed as ‘Muslim’. [17]

Ultimately, both in the discourse adopted by the authorities and in practical forms of implementation, we find variations from project to project, from city to city, and over time. In this respect, housing policies were not fuelled by systematic segregationist thinking; rather, they were to a large extent organized around a strong, tangible hierarchy in terms of the kinds of accommodation available to ‘Europeans’ and ‘indigenous’ populations respectively. [18] In most cases, the locations chosen for HBM apartment blocks and houses and cités indigènes were dictated by property development opportunities. In addition to this, the few basic social interactions that Algerians had with
Europeans – invariably restricted to the workplace, where the former were subordinate to the latter – did not foster partnerships between Algerians and Europeans within private HBM and HLM construction companies.

The desire felt by many to keep their distance from other ‘communities’, and the striking income gap between Algerians and Europeans, are other key factors behind the divides we see in Algeria’s colonial cities. It should also be noted that while urban spaces could be strongly segregated, even within the same city the situation varied from area to area. In Algiers, the very middle-class, very European Télemly was a different prospect to Marine, a working-class area with a heterogeneous population. Over in Constantine, the racially diverse, blue-collar Sidi Mabrouk was a far cry from petit bourgeois Bellevue, despite both areas being largely made up of HBMs. As for identifying differences at the level of individual streets and apartment blocks, any such endeavour is still a nascent field in the urban history of Algeria.

**Living as an Algerian: everyday life under the eye of the authorities**

For my mother and me it was a major eye-opener because it was the first time we’d lived in that kind of accommodation, which was normally reserved for Europeans. My mother was pleased when she realized that she was going to have a decent-sized kitchen, her own toilet, and running water. But she was a lot more reticent when she saw the bathroom, and especially the shower. She announced that, personally, she was sorry, but she couldn’t give up the traditional hammam. My dad laughed at this speech, saying he’d been expecting that response from her. The next day, I went with him to the market and then made my own way back with the shopping, because I already knew the area from the first time we’d stayed in Algiers. [19]

Living spaces were sometimes used in ways far removed from what the builders had anticipated, to the dismay of landlords and architects. [20] While HBMs were, at a minimum, equipped with electricity, a raised kitchen worktop (known locally as a *potager*) and usually supplied with mains gas, ‘indigenous housing’ came only with a raised worktop and a hearth for cooking. [21] The observation of local customs known as *qanoun* remained as strong as ever. The way sanitary facilities were used became an obsession for landlords, who submitted reports – almost always in frustrated terms – about the finished ‘indigenous housing’. One such estate was the one completed in 1934 at Isserville-les-Issers, a working village located at the entrance to Kabylia on the road between Algiers and Tizi Ouzou. In the spring of 1940, the *Gouvernement général* sought to compile a list of construction projects undertaken for the benefit of colonial subjects, so that this could be used for propaganda. Responding to this request, the local mayor commented that:

In terms of how much the indigenous residents appreciate the constructions, it’s hard to say. It doesn’t seem like they’ve grasped the benefits of having sanitary accommodation equipped with the most basic hygiene provisions. (It has been observed that sometimes the residents prefer to build a fire in the middle of the room and inhale the smoke instead of using a fireplace, or to relieve themselves...
Examples like this lack context, but they bring some important issues to light nonetheless. The first of these is that in Isserville and other similar cités indigènes, the new norms of everyday life introduced by ‘indigenous housing’ caused friction with age-old customs. Furthermore, the above report and several others confirm that administrative bodies, elected officials, and architects showed a keen interest in domestic goings-on, which constituted a veritable matter of governmentality. Both of these phenomena can be identified in metropolitan France and in other colonies during the same period; how they differ across settings – whether in subtle or marked ways – remains to be ascertained. [23]

Just focusing on Algeria, the interwar period also saw the visible demise of the hygienist ambitions from the early part of the century, which had sought to modify the lifestyles of the European working classes and particularly migrants from Italy and Spain. [24] This demise is probably due to the fact that, for the most part, these migrant classes were regarded as well-integrated, at least in terms of lifestyle. [25]

**Housing to ‘save’ French Algeria**

The 1940s saw very few construction projects, due to the wartime situation followed by a lack of capital to invest once peace returned, together with a shortage of building materials. By the mid-1950s, housing stock was falling into severe disrepair. This is true both of structures dating from the Ottoman era – of which the Kasbah of Algiers is but the most famous example – and of housing built for the popular classes from the late nineteenth century onwards, such as the Belcourt district in Algiers and the new town of Colonne Randon in Bône.

Houses in Sidi Fredj, Staoueli, Algeria. Photo by Andris Malygin via Wikimedia Commons.

At the same time, and against a dual backdrop of increasingly rapid population growth and the mounting clochardisation (a term coined by Germaine Tillon, roughly translating as ‘pauperization’) [26] of colonial society, more and more Algerians could be found living in bidonvilles. These shanty towns were sometimes located on the outskirts of urban areas, and sometimes in the city centre, such as the Mahieddine in Algiers, or the Beni-Ramassès quarter in Constantine. From the colonial capital to smaller urban centres, such ‘shacks’, which had hitherto been confined to the countryside, signposted the presence of Algeria’s poorest colonial subjects in areas considered as European.

In the early 1950s, and particularly during the War of Independence years (which saw a marked increase in migration from rural areas), there came a raft of construction initiatives and associated financing schemes. These included various grades of HLM accommodation; so-called logements millions (‘million housing’) and ‘Castor’ housing, as seen in metropolitan France; and ‘semi-urban’ housing specific to colonial Algeria. [27] At municipal level, many councillors were fully aware of the wide-ranging and hard-hitting problems brought about by this housing environment. In the immediate aftermath of the elections held in spring 1953, work began on some major construction projects. Much has
been written about the construction of the Fernand Pouillon estates on the slopes of Algiers during the tenure of Jacques Chevallier, who proclaimed himself to be waging a veritable ‘housing battle’. Though no less important, the construction projects undertaken elsewhere remain almost completely unknown; the same is true of their beneficiaries.

The debate over the separation or reconciliation of different sections of the population, through the intermediary of public housing policies, remained a feature of discussions about construction projects. At the start of the 1950s, René Montaldo, a politician from the Algiers region and president of the departmental HLM office, established one of the principles that would guide policy over years to come. Speaking before the Congrès de l’habitation et de l’urbanisme d’Alger (Algiers Congress for Housing and Urban Planning), which he was chairing, Montaldo said:

> It is vital to avoid any kind of racial ‘compartmentalization’ here, an approach which is entirely artificial and always reprehensible. Through our directives we should facilitate a politics of contact, predicated on getting to know each other better, becoming more practiced at this, and thereby developing a deeper mutual affinity [. . .] [It is imperative] to pursue a politics of contact and, evidently, to reject the creation of ‘medina’-style housing estates which stem from an outdated logic of ethnic grouping. [28]

As well as setting the direction for future construction projects, this little-known yet influential politician cemented the term ‘contact’ – a halfway house between political rhetoric and social mission statement – in debates about Algeria’s future. [29] Nevertheless, over the same period, the construction of cités indigènes pressed on. These include the estate in Blida, consisting of 190 dwellings, which was decided on in 1949 and completed in 1952, and those in Sétif and Batna (both decided on in 1951). [30]

View of Blida, Algeria, in 1891. Photo by Élisée Reclus via Wikimedia Commons.

**Plans for Algerian ‘development’**

New housing associations were born, such as the Compagnie immobilière algérienne (CIA) – a semi-public company founded by the Gouvernement général in 1954 with French financial backing. The War of Independence that broke out in November 1954, rather than heralding a sea change in the way social housing was produced and allocated, primarily served to radicalize existing logics. In this context, the goal of ‘contact’ was sometimes expressed through the term cohabitation (‘living together’). [31]

With the outbreak of the war, some construction companies began specializing in HLM accommodation for Algerians. One such example is the Société Coopérative Musulmane Algérienne d’Habitation et d’Accession à la petite propriété (SCMAHAPP, the Algerian Muslim Cooperative for Housing and Small Home Ownership), founded by Colonel Sebbane in 1955. Others specialized in HLM accommodation for military employees, such as the ARMAF from 1955–1956 onwards. If we just focus on Sétif, examples include the Orléans housing estate built by the CIA, featuring 180 dwellings, on which construction
began in April 1958 and was completed in August 1959, and the SCMAHAPP’s Diar El Boustane housing estate (203 dwellings, initiated in 1957 and completed in 1960). [32]

Neither the names of these companies, nor their statements of intent, tell us much about the actual beneficiaries of the housing. Five out of the twenty-three cooperative members involved in the Diar El Boustane housing estate in Blida (on which construction began in around 1959, under the aegis of the SCMAHAPP) can be seen to have ‘European’ surnames. [33] Ultimately, while the stance of the SCMAHAPP’s managing board was clearly pro-French Algeria, we have no knowledge of what led those individuals to receive credit through its interim.

This building buzz was tempered by the slowing down, and even the grinding to a halt, of progress on construction sites as a result of wartime events (including attacks by the National Liberation Front (FLN), and the deaths of workmen at the hands of the French army). Potential candidates for housing were systematically subjected to thorough social and political checks. The former checks were also common to metropolitan France, while the latter seem to have been more specific to Algeria. Yet this by no means stopped communists and independentists from being granted HLM accommodation. One such example is the young maths teacher and communist Maurice Audin, who from July 1956 rented an apartment reserved for university staff from the Algiers HLM office. [34] The apartment was located in Rue Gustave Flaubert, in the Champ-de-Manoeuvre district of the city. Another example is the independentist Saïd Ben Ali Amrani, a member of the Parti Populaire Algérien (PPA) (Algerian People’s Party), who was housed by the same HLM office in an apartment block close to the Kasbah. [35] For the month of January 1953 at least, Amrani is recorded as living in the Boulevard de Verdun accommodation.

Project scope documents on housing – which was increasingly factored into the wider objectives of Algerian ‘development’ and ‘modernization’ – reflect a striking continuity of opinion on the part of the authorities. [36] The need to reform the colony after 1945 in order to prop up an ever more fragile colonial order (see, for instance, the 1947 Plan d’action communal) and the outbreak of war in 1954, accelerated the elaboration of plans that prioritized the construction of housing. While Algerian political leaders did occasionally allude to improving the housing environment, they took little action to develop this policy line. [37]

It was in the wake of the aforementioned plans that the ‘Plan de Constantine’ emerged. Sometimes referred to as the Plan de développement économique et social en Algérie (Plan for Economic and Social Development in Algeria), the plan was launched by de Gaulle in September 1958. It included proposals for the construction of 222,000 dwellings for one million people, fewer than half of which were ultimately completed. By way of example, Sétif saw construction begin on multiple housing estates: Cité CRS (212 dwellings, 1960); Cité des fonctionnaires (66 dwellings, 1961); Cité Ciloc (132 dwellings, 1961); Cité des Remparts (66 dwellings in 1960; 121 dwellings by 1963); and Cité Cenestal (313 dwellings, 1967). [38] This massive social investment by the metropolitan French state was, even more so than initiatives from past decades, intended to snuff out political unrest among the Algerian population.

After July 1962, housing policy was divested of its colonial nature. Nevertheless, social disparities continued to feature just as prominently. Further continuities can be found on
the level of urban planning, as well as logics governing the construction and allocation of social housing. The history of Algerian social housing policy from the end of the First World War up to independence is, fundamentally, framed by an increasingly sharp tension between reluctance to invest on the one hand, and the need to stamp out social, urban, and colonial unrest on the other. These urban policies were, on the whole, conceived to strengthen and reassert the social status quo, and latterly (to an increasing extent) the colonial status quo. The engineering of society and the urban fabric were thus entwined with the colonial aims of peopling and ‘pacification’.

For those in search of housing, the overriding concern was to change or stabilize the course of their life stories. In this respect, there are abundant examples of how the practices of residents - both in their domestic habits and through acts of anti-colonial engagement - defied the ambitions of those who built and managed social housing.

Translated and edited by Cadenza Academic Translations.

Footnotes

1. The author particularly wishes to thank Jean-Pierre Frey, Didier Guignard, and Antonin Plarier for their kind and astute readings.

2. For a focus on housing and practices of residents, particularly during the War of Independence, see Alban Bensa and François Pouillon, ‘La maison kabyle existe-t-elle? Une entreprise fugace de reconstruction’, Sensibilités 2 (2017): 152–61 (on the production conditions and republications of Pierre Bourdieu’s 1969 article ‘La maison ou le monde renversé’).

3. For a detailed presentation of the sources, see information box n° 1 in the French version of this paper


7. Examples include ‘Dar Essalem’ and ‘Le Foyer musulman’ in Algiers (respectively founded in 1934 and 1935) and ‘La Maison familiale’ in Constantine (founded in 1938 and headed up by Mohammed Chérif Bendjelloul, who was also the leader of a movement to reform the political rights of Algerians). The former two quickly fell inactive, while the
latter was refused approval by the Ministère de la Santé publique, on the grounds that there were already too many HBM cooperatives in Constantine.


12. *L’Écho d’Alger*, 1 April 1929, 3. Translator’s note: Our translation from the French. Unless otherwise stated, all translations of cited foreign language material in this article are our own.


17. Note from Pierre Arripe (inspector at the Service de la Mutualité et de la Prévoyance sociale of the Gouvernement général) to the president of the Commission administrative d’enquête sur les événements qui se sont déroulés à Constantine du 3 au 6 août 1934 (Administrative Inquiry Commission on the Events that Unfolded in Constantine Between 3 and 6 August 1934), n.d. [attached to a letter dated 15 September 1934], 9H-52, Gouvernement général de l’Algérie collection, ANOM; data produced as part of an inquiry into the anti-Semitic riots in Constantine).


20. On this topic, and in a different colonial situation, see Vanessa Caru, *Des toits sur la grève. Le logement des travailleurs et la question sociale à Bombay (1850–1950)*,
21. While the apartment blocks of Algier’s Messageries Maritimes conglomeration were equipped with mains gas (L’Écho d’Alger, 11 January 1935, 3), such was not the case for those planned by the municipal HBM office in Guelma at the start of the 1930s, since the city did not have a gasworks (Head of Credit Division at the Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations, ‘Note complémentaire pour la Commission d’attribution des prêts’, 12 February 1934, 19771106-30, ANF).

22. Letter from the mayor of Isserville-les-Issers to the deputy prefect of Tizi Ouzou, 26 April 1940, 915-3, ANOM.


24. Maurice Phéline, Contribution à l’étude des habitations salubres et à bon marché: la question à Alger (Mascara: P. Muselli fils, 1911), see particularly 20–3.


27. Logements millions, regulated by a circular dated 22 October 1954, were also known by the term ‘Logements Économiques Normalisés’ (‘standardized economical housing’); such housing was of a mediocre quality due to the requirement that it must not exceed a million francs. ‘Castor’ dwellings were built by their future occupants with the aid of public funding; almost 100 were constructed in Algiers, 350 in Oran, 50 in Constantine, and a few dozen in Saida, Bône, Philippeville, and Sétif (‘Note sur les “Castors”’, n.d. [circa 1957] in 91-1K-952, ANOM). ‘Semi-urban’ housing, regulated by a decree dated 20 May 1959, was intended for Algerians living either on the outskirts of cities or in small villages; its specifications and cost were inferior even to those of the logement million.

president of the Fédération algérienne des organismes d’HLM (Algerian Federation of HLM Organisations); the previous year, he had served as vice president of the Fédération des maires d’Algérie (Algerian Mayoral Federation). For the information on René Montaldo, I conducted an interview with his son, Jean Montaldo, on 14 September 2018.

29. The history of this term (its first appearance and usage) in Algeria during the colonial period, and that of its entrance (directly or indirectly) into the historiographic debate at the start of the 2000s, remain to be established (see especially Théauté Blanchard Emmanuel, ‘Quel “monde du contact”? Pour une histoire sociale de l’Algérie pendant la période coloniale’, *Le Mouvement social* 236 (2011): 3–7.

30. Letter from the deputy prefect of Blida to the prefect of Algiers, 17 August 1950, 917-58, ANOM; sessions of the city councils of Batna, 3 May 1951, and Sétif, 20 December 1951, IBA-ADC-109, ANA.

31. See the various case studies brought together by the Secrétariat social d’Alger in *À la recherche d’une communauté. La cohabitation en Algérie* (Algiers: Éditions du Secrétariat social d’Alger, 1956).

32. Samaï-Bouadjadja, *Sétif. Patrimoine architectural*; for our purposes, see pages 119 (Orléans housing estate) and 137 (Diar En-Nakhla estate).

33. ‘Aide financière du département aux sociétés coopératives d’HLM ou non – Demande de la SCMAHAPP – Tableau récapitulatif’ (Financial aid granted by the department to HLM cooperatives – Request from the SCMAHAPP – Summary chart), n.d. [November 1959], 5K-92, Archives de la Wilaya d’Alger (AWA).


35. ‘Notice individuelle de renseignement concernant Amrani Saïd ben Ali’, n.d. [January 1953], 93-4238, ANOM.

36. Marie-Luce Desgrandchamps and Damiano Matasci, ‘“Civiliser, développer, aider”. Croiser l’histoire du colonialisme, du développement et de l’humanitaire’, *Histoire@Politique* 41 (May–August 2020) [online].


38. Samaï-Bouadjadja, *Sétif. Patrimoine architectural*, pages 85 (Cité CENESTAL), 88 (Cité des fonctionnaires), 104 (102 and 103 dwellings), 105 (Cité CRS), 142 (Cité des Remparts) and 144 (Cité CILOC). The dates given here refer to when the accommodation was completed; this list is not exhaustive. CRS = Compagnie républicaine de sécurité (French special mobile police force); CENESTAL = société anonyme de construction d’HLM du Centre et de l’est-algérien (HLM construction company for central and eastern Algeria); CILOC = Caisse immobilière de location (Rental Property Fund).