

COLONIAL PROJECTION ON THE PUBLIC BUILDINGS OF THE WEST-ALGERIAN: SHARED INHERITANCES

Moulai-Ahmed MOULAI-KHATIR^{*}, Ratiba Wided BIARA

Department of Architecture, University of TAHRI Mohamed-Béchar,
Rue de l'indépendance B.P 417, 08000 Béchar- Algérie.

Abstract

At the dawn of independence, the Algerian cities inherit public buildings bequeathed by French colonialism. Sidi Bel-Abbès, city of the West-Algerian, glorifies of a good number of these legacies, which still functional. The maintenance, the rehabilitation, or the reconversion of these public and collective buildings are the subject from now on of important operations in the structuring of the bel-abbessien urban space, with same to direct the socioeconomic dynamics of the city. Precisely being interested in the evolution of this type of buildings inherent in the Bel-abbessien territory, prone to whatever the operation of safeguarding, this article wants to be to include/understand the forms of functional change and/or formal which affected these buildings? Causes at the origin of these transformations? And if the policies of safeguard and safeguarding of the public buildings are in agreement with the undergone changes? To be done, we will proceed from the start by an identification of the public buildings inherent in Bel-Abbèsien urban fabric going up to the colonial period, for then passing to a reading various touched having changes these buildings.

Keywords: Sidi Bel-Abbès; Public buildings; Architectural heritage; Colonial period; Evolution.

Introduction

During more than half a century of independence, the traces of French colonial urban planning in Algeria are still evident in a large part of its western Algerian cities in view of the fact that "The city planning, which indicates the policies of installation on the territorial and urban levels and underlies the existence of a policy and instruments of this policy (town-plannings)" [1] is the tool which gave to French colonialism, in Algeria, the means of reorganizing the preexistent medinas or to make new cities on the Western urban model imported from Europe (as was the case of the city of Sidi Bel-Abbès). "It is thus natural that in the urban actions on the Algerian city, of yesterday and today, one finds the artefacts of the models of installation which governed the urban dynamics of the Western City" [2].

The urban structures of bel-abbessien urban space, are punctuated by a good number of public buildings inherited from the colonial town planning dating from the XXth century, and which fill grinds functions (administrative, educational, commercial, of health and assistance...). From downtown area, into the suburbs, these buildings knew evolutions which differ, from one building to another, and depend on many parameters according to the uses which theirs are intended and the policies applied. Their safeguarding started only since the last decade faults of initiatives, regulation and unavailability of the qualified human means and the financial resources sufficient for that. The studies carried out on this heritage in the cities of

* Corresponding author: moulai-ahmed@hotmail.fr.

Eastern Algeria [3-6] have shown the same observations on the maintenance and conservation of public buildings that have persisted since the colonial city.

The comprehension of the formal and functional modes of evolution of these buildings would allow to evaluate, initially, the capacity of the latter to be adapted to the economic, political changes and which affect the Algerian city, and in the second time, to know the extent of the formal and/or functional transformations which these categories of buildings have seen since independence in our days within the Petit-Paris.

And thus which were these forms of functional and/or formal changes which affected these buildings? And which were the causes at the origin of these transformations and changes? Are the policies of safeguard and safeguarding of the public and collectives buildings, in Sidi Bel-Abbès, in agreement with the changes and transformations which these last underwent?

Methodology

Encircle the evolution of the equipment of the city bequeathed by French in Algeria will pass, after identification, by a historical approach lavishing the important moments of the evolution of the public buildings within the town of Bel-Abbes. And finally by a comparative study between the original state of the buildings and that current on the morphological and functional level.

The cartographic analysis and the questioning of documents referring to the history of the city since independence until today will leave room to observations In-Situ which related to the noted actual position of these buildings. A comparison between the function and the initial state of the building with its actual position will enable us to analyze and distinguish the various interventions and/or effect of the urban actions which touched these buildings [7-11].

The beginnings of the city of Sidi Bel-Abbès

After that "the plans of the Prudon captain were accepted as a whole, although their evaluation was higher than the preceding one, and constructions started" [12]. Since 1847, the town of Sidi Bel Abbès occupies a surface of more than 42 hectares. It has an enclosure bored with four doors according to the cardinal points, and of the zones of equipments whose functions were reserved for the military uses, like civilians [13, 14]. In table 1 gives an idea on the surface and the function related each to equipment within the city in this era.

Table 1. Projects and their surface [12]

	H. A. C.		H. A. C.
Quartier d'infanterie pour trois bataillons	1 48 50	Conseil de guerre	» 18 »
Quartier et établissement d'artillerie	» 71 50	Cercle des officiers.	» 16 »
Parc à fourrage et magasin à orge.	1 48 50	Tresor et poste	» 16 »
Parc aux bestiaux pour 550 têtes. » 71 50	» 71 50	Corps de garde et violon, logement de portiers-consignes, magasin à poudre, magasin de projectiles, salle d'artillerie, contact. de cartouches, château-d'eau.)	» 4 »
Hôpital militaire pour 500 malades. 2 » »	» 40 50		
Magasin des effets militaires	» 22 50	<i>Bâtiments civils :</i>	
Magasin aux vivres	» 45 »	Gendarmerie et prison civile	» 50 »
Manutention et accessoires	» 18 »	Tribunal civil	» 21 »
Logement et bureau du sous-intendant.	» 25 »	Bureau arabe	» 8 »
Hôtel du commandant de la subdivision	» 20 »	Eglise.	» 12 »
Bureau et logement du commandant de place	» 50 »	Presbytère	» 8 »
Pavillon pour 70 officiers.	» 15 »	Mairie	» 12 »
Pavillon pour 2 officiers supérieurs » 22 50	» 27 »	Écoles	» 8 »
Casernement du génie	» 18 »	Services financiers.	» 24 »
Magasin et atelier pour le fer.	» 90 »	Ponts et chaussées.	» 40 »
Ouvriers et voitures.	» 22 50	Théâtre.	» 7 68 »
Prison militaire		200 lots à bâtir, dont 80 de 5 ares 60 cent., et 120 de 4 ares.	» 10 »
		Marché couvert	

Table 1 shows that the total surface area determined for the establishment of the military buildings was more important than that given to the civil public buildings at the beginning of the establishment of the city, and it is only until the XXth century that the surface occupied by the public buildings intended for the civilians will become larger.

The first public buildings of the city were exclusively intended for the soldiers and to the European colonists. It is only as from the XXth century that the public buildings are intended to the natives, such as the schools for the natives "Thus Henri-Louis-Paul Petit built the medersa of Algiers, inspired by the mosque of the navy, the médersa of Tlemcen, as well as the hotel of the Algerian dispatch ..." [15].

The socioeconomic dynamics of the city

The dynamics and the socio-economic activity of the town of Bel-Abbès (Table 2) were strongly influenced, even after the independence of the country, by the provision of public equipments within the city as in all the area "Various structuring vectors of the Bel-Abésienne society contribute to it, in particular in the fields of public education and deprived, in Arab language, of scouting, the sports, the culture, the theatrical expression..." [16].

Table 2. Demographic trends of the area of Sidi Bel-Abbès [16]

Année	Européens	Musulmans	Total
1837	431		
1849	516		
1850	855		
1851	1234		
1852	1728		
1853	2177		
1854	2585		
1856	3968		
1857	4334		
1858	4629	822	5451
31/12/1859	4618	641	5259
1862	5101	2349	7450
1867	7588		
1872	12417		18593
1877	18202	19464	37666
1906			26400
1936			51000
1948	34500	29900	64000
31/10/1954	31279	41706	72985
1958	37000	64000	101000
15/11/1959	39200	64760	103960

The presence of the widespread various functions in the urban space of the city such as those administrative, formation-teaching, trade, sport-leisure, health-assistance, or those of provisioning, and transport support the' increase in population just as the economic output in the metropolis [17-21].

Topicality on the colonial architectural production characterizing Bel-Abbès in this period

The identification of the intrinsic public buildings in the town of Sidi Bel-Abbès started by the delimitation of the bel-abbèssien colonial space on the basis of two charts 1 and 2 succeeding, represented by the Figures 1 and 2 and going back from 1949 and 1962 [22].

This space, which extends on more than 811ha puts forward more than 78 public buildings, dating from the French period, distributed in a homogeneous way in space of the city. Except that certain buildings which were located, in the periphery of the city since their functions require it, are currently found surrounded by residences of collective and individual dwellings. Among these buildings we can quote the railway station of Sidi Bel-Abbès located in

the district says Perrin Lagare, Northern part of the city, and the Olympic stadium, municipal ex-stadium, located in the South-eastern part of the city within the district say Hai El Badr.

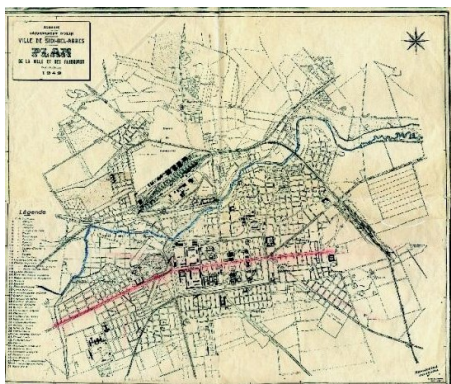


Fig. 1. Sidi Bel-Abbès, Plan of the city and its suburbs 1949

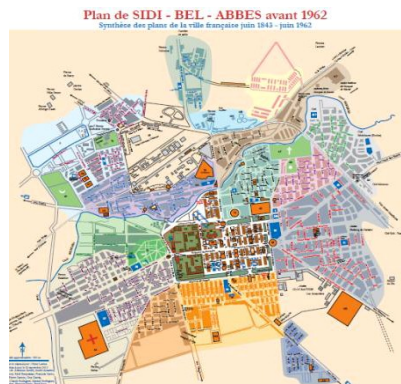


Fig. 2. Plan of Sidi Bel-Abbès before 1962

The Figure 3 as for it, reflects according to the site of the buildings a concentration of the functions in the downtown area. Which, on the one hand, gathers, the work places of many civils servant coming from the districts bordering, and besides; offers in addition many services for which the townsmen for of express a daily need, namely: libraries and theaters, or of the sporting, even medical buildings.

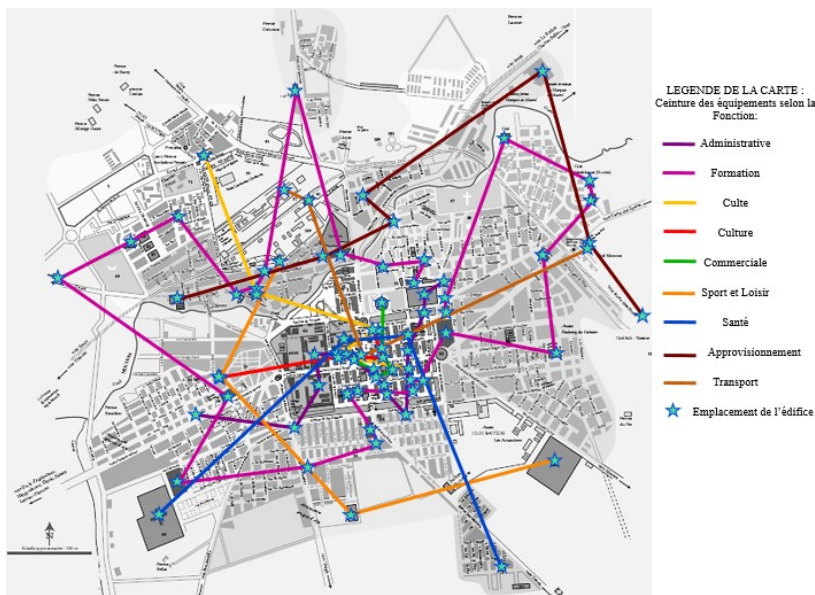


Fig. 3. Site of the public and collectives buildings in the city of Sidi Bel-Abbès

The locations of the city's buildings and public facilities, reflecting the concerns of colonial urban planning, makes that the buildings that fall under the education and training function are located in the heart of the city centre and in the adjacent northern and southern districts (Fig. 4). The buildings that have affected the administrative office or of health and assistance gather in particular, with the downtown area and in the southern bordering districts. The buildings equipped with a commercial or pertaining to worship function are present forces

some with the downtown area and in the districts located in the North of colonial fabric. The buildings dependant on transport or of provisioning is present only in the districts North of the city. The buildings assigned to the sport and leisure is found in the Southern districts, whereas those which are affiliated with the cultural functions are present only within the downtown area.

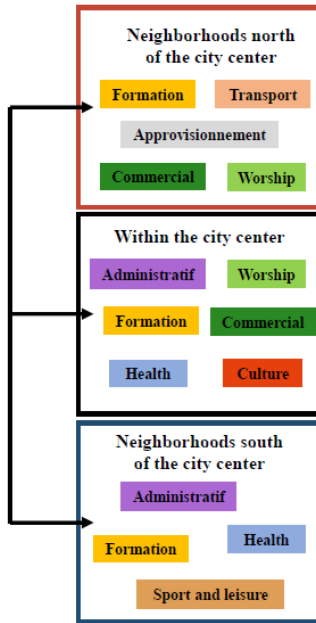


Fig. 4. Distribution of the public buildings in the bel-abbésien urban fabric

Thus the administrative office constitutes 17.9% of the total of the public edifices of the city. Education and training present and constitute more than 37% of the total of the buildings. The worship with 6.4% of the total of the buildings, the commercial function with 9% of the total of the buildings, the cultural function, of sport and leisure, health and assistance and provisioning are respectively of 5.1% of the total percentage of the buildings, and finally the function of provisioning which, like the trade, is to 9% (Fig. 5).

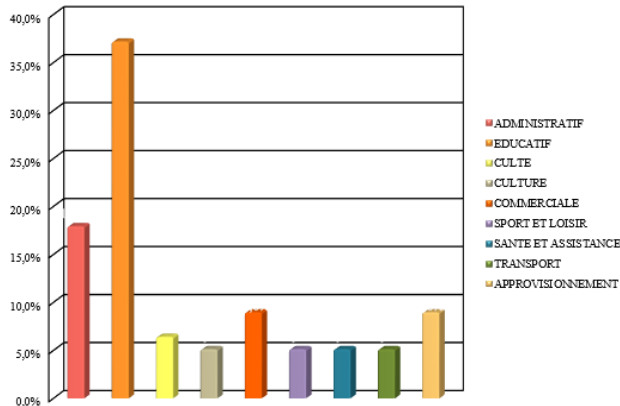


Fig. 5. Percentage of the public buildings present in Sidi Bel-Abbès.












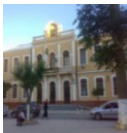
The orthogonality of the plan of the city, traced by French colonialism, allowed the passage of the tram within the city forwarding by many these places and public buildings which organize and structure today space dynamics of the townsmen.

Glances on the architectural dimension of the buildings

As of the independence of the country, the public buildings bequeathed by French colonialism, were recovered then adapted, and by the state and the townsmen "Spaces and places which are not neutral as the place of the Government or the boulevard of the Republic, of the public buildings like the hotel of Stations, constituted the urban and architectural scene of recovered freedom." [17]. In Sidi Bel-Abbès, 70% of the whole of the buildings are still functional with a variety of 9 functions on the whole, to see Figure 3.

The analysis of the Figure 3 made it possible to draw up the Table 3 which collects the whole of the buildings according to their category, their date of construction, the original function and that current.

Table 3. Administrative category of the public buildings in Sidi Bel-Abbès.

Building category	Original Function	Localisation / Placement	Date of construction	Plan of the building.	Observation after 1962	The building before 1962	The building after 1962
A D M I N I S T R A T I V E	Sous-Préfecture / Sub-Prefecture	Faubourg Négrier actual Street El Badr.	1875		Still exists, actual Résidence wilaya		
	Hôtel des Finances / Finance Building	City center (Boulevard Didouche Mourad).	1933		Still exists, actual centre des impôts.		
	Hôtel de ville / City Hall	City center (Street Benali Bekhaled).	1879		Still exists actual Siege A.P.C		
	Tribunal Civil / Civil Courthouse	City center (Street Bendida BelAbbès and Street Boukhari Larbi).	1882		Still exists actual Palais de la Justice.		

This table indicates in particular the change to us of vocation which took place from the city with military vocation at the mercantile city (of which the agricultural produce are the principal sources of revenue of the townsmen). The presence of buildings of provisioning, such as cellars with wines and silos and flour mill for the storage and the transformation of durum wheat, realized in this period, are the principal elements justifying the new vocation.

The various styles adopted at the level of the architecture of these buildings expresses a prototype of the colonial production in Algeria, as in Bel Abbès via: neo-classic style, the style néo-Moorish, the style art déco and international modern style (Figs. 6, 7, 8 and 9).



Fig. 6. A.P.C of Sidi Bel-Abbès



Fig. 7. P.T.T of Sidi Bel-Abbès



Fig. 8. School Bousselham Abdelkader



Fig. 9. Planetarium of Sidi Bel-Abbès

Results and Discussions

Functional and formal changes of the public buildings dating from the XXth century in Sidi Bel-Abbès

Since independence, until our days, not fewer than forty public buildings going back to the colonial period, either more than 50%, were dedicated or to a radical change of function, or with a demolition, even with the abandonment. Thus for cultural reasons, economic or political one, the buildings fixed with a functional change are affiliated with administrative typology, pertaining to worship, or health, and education (concerning seldom the schools).

The figure 10 presents the various percentages of buildings prone to the conservation or the functional change. Among the administrative buildings, 57.1% could preserve their initial function, 28.6% changed function and 14.3% demolished. More than 48% of school buildings could preserve their initial function, 20% were transformed and 20% demolished the 12%, remaining were almost abandoned. The pertaining to worship buildings, five buildings in total, underwent all of the changes, they either were transformed, given up or demolished. The buildings related to the culture could preserve their functions and uses without null transformation or demolition, which testifies thus to the interest carried to the safeguarding of these buildings.

The physical and formal changes significantly touched the public buildings inherent in the town of Bel Abbès, especially those which concern the administrative office or pertaining to worship. These changes relate to the extension of their influence in the piece of land which they

occupy or extension of dimensions of interior spaces (enlarging of the offices or prolongation of the spans for the prayer in the places of worship). In addition to that, the old market the large one, located at the North of the downtown area, and built by the architect Marcel J. MAURI with a modern style, underwent a reconversion and currently occupies the function of planetarium, which is a function of leisure, destiny not only to the adults but also to a young public. We also could note certain deteriorations of the various decorations and ornaments covering the frontages of the buildings, and which have as a leading cause temperature variations and the bad weather which the town of Bel-Abbès knows annually.

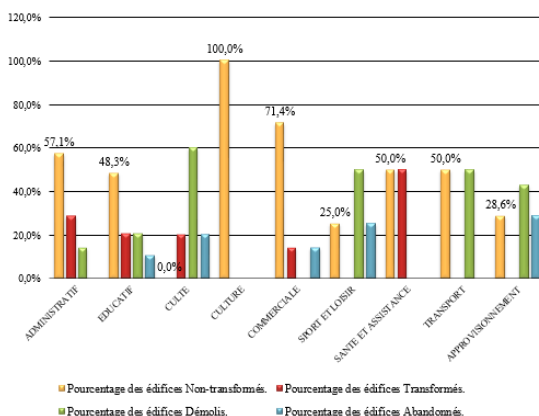


Fig. 10. Percentage of the public and collectives buildings not-transformed (indicated), transformed, demolished or given up in Sidi Bel-Abbès

Operations of safeguards and rehabilitation of the public and collectives buildings dating from the colonial period in Sidi Bel-Abbès

According to the Encyclopedia Universalis, "it is undeniable that the population has needs and that the public authorities like the economic actors or social tend to satisfy them. The utility services are thus supposed to meet the needs for the life in society." [18]. The public buildings related at the colonial period fill of the functions which the bel-abbessienne population needs, because this one could follow the new tendencies and changes as regards practice of space, and currently integrate the daily life of the townsmen of the algerian Petit-Paris.

"Shortly after independence, the principal national institutions had taken as sits those of the old colonial equipment " [19], and could profit in Sidi Bel-Abbès from an special attention which made it possible these buildings to be still used until our days and of which some exceed the century of use by bel-abbéssiens society (Fig. 11).


"Work of restoration and rehabilitation of the old frame of the town of Sidi Bel-Abbès, launched in 2013, particularly aimed certain equipment going up to the colonial period" [23]. The Management of the Town planning of the Architecture and the Construction of Wilaya had entrusted the task of investigation and technical diagnosis of the old frame to the service of the technical control of the building sites of the city (Fig. 12). They thus provided details on the current use of construction, a summary description of the building concerned, comments on the nature of the deterioration of the building and the probable causes of degradations, to be able to pass thereafter to the operations of rehabilitation and restoration to be undertaken on these buildings.

The safeguard and the safeguarding of these buildings, not touching only the function of the building, but also the elements which compose it such as its structure, its ornamentation, and it accesses, integrate also work in collaboration for the safeguarding of the inheritance in Algeria, such as Euomed and Réhabimed, which apply to the inheritance and the inheritance

known as colonial, the principles and suitable methods for their safeguard and maintenance (Fig. 13). "Thus, this method comprises five stages with knowing the political orientation, the diagnosis, the strategy, the implementation of the plan (action) and the follow-up" [24].



Fig. 11. Bank of Algeria of Sidi Bel-Abbès – archive picture [22] on the left and actual photo on the right

MISSION DE DIAGNOSTIC TECHNIQUE DU TISSU URBAIN DE LA WILAYA DE SIDI BEL ABBES
IDENTIFICATION DE LA CONSTRUCTION : SEGE DE LA DAIRA Date : 11-02-13
 ADRESSE: Rue De Médine, De La Mecque Et Rie Benchohra Yahia
 WILAYA: SIDI BEL ABBES DAIRA: S.B.A COMMUNE: S.B.A SECTEUR: ILOT: 

AT INVESTIGATION ET ETAT DES LIEUX
USAGE DE LA CONSTRUCTION (+)

Logement :	Scolaire :	Commercial :
Administratif :	Hospitalier :	Industriel :
Socioculturel :	Sportif :	Réservoir d'eau :
Autres (à préciser).		

DESCRIPTION SOMMAIRE :

Age approximatif : COLONIAL	Vide sanitaire	Oui	Non <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Nombre de niveaux : R+0	Sous-sol	Oui	Non <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Nombre de joints de dilatation : • En élévation :	Eléments extérieurs indépendants (escaliers, auvent, passage couvert)		
• Infrastructure :			

Fig. 12. Data sheet relating to the diagnosis of constructions of the colonial period in Sidi Bel-Abbès (D.U.C.H Sidi Bel-Abbès).



Fig. 13. Comptoir d'Escompte of Sidi Bel-Abbès (left) and Commercial building of Sidi Bel-Abbès (right)

Vis-a-vis the urban dynamics, the socio-economics ones and policies which brought multiple facets to the organization of the city, public buildings inherited from the colonialism in

Sidi Bel-Abbès not undergone that with half impacts and repercussions of the latter owing to the fact that not fewer than 66% of these buildings are still active. If the pertaining to worship buildings of the city saw a drastic evolution, those of the cultural functions could remain active in their totality. These results can be comparable with the fact that the maintenance of these buildings conditions the good performance of urban space, and also returns to the appropriation of these buildings by the various actors and users of the city. The military and commercial vocation of which Sidi Bel-Abbès was intended to fill since her creation by French colonialism has perdurer and makes that these public buildings continue to function and play their part in the urban space of the city.

Conclusion

This article puts forward the relation that maintains the public and collectives buildings dating from the colonial period with current urban space of Sidi Bel-Abbès. Because the latter could adapt to the changes and transformations of the economic systems and policies of the city. The equipment and public buildings dating from colonialism, having survived until our days, are the articulations of the urban structure and the urban space of the city. They are also in the middle of the economic and social blooming of Sidi Bel-Abbès.

However, their ageing is accompanied by deterioration of urban functioning and also by its landscape and aspect degradation. The safeguarding and the maintenance of these buildings must be governed by a regulation which puts not only the protection of the public and collectives buildings in priority, but also takes part in the protection of an inheritance says “Shared Inheritance”.

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