
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Algerian Socialism and the Architecture of *Autogestion*

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In a series of essays published in 1966 as *L'arceau qui chante* [*The Arch That Sings*], the architect Abderrahman Bouchama outlined a new path for a post-revolutionary Algerian architecture. Bouchama's text responded to ambitious efforts to construct a revolutionary socialist state immediately following Algeria's independence in 1962. Significantly, President Ahmed Ben Bella's policies of *autogestion*, or self-management, aimed to fuel the reallocation of property, the redistribution of resources, the restructuring of labor, and the redefinition of national culture, efforts that encouraged a radical rethinking of architecture and the construction industry. While Bouchama was certainly the most prolific architectural theorist at the time, his writings and built projects might be productively set in dialogue with contemporaneous efforts by Anatole Kopp, Pierre Chazanoff, and Georgette Cottin-Euziol to articulate what I argue was a provocative architecture of *autogestion*.

Algeria's brief experiment with *autogestion* imagined a path towards socialism rooted in the new nation's revolutionary origins, even as it repositioned the Maghrib as a defining center for Afro-Asian and pan-Islamic solidarity, an impulse that was articulated powerfully in Bouchama's writings. Attending to this episode suggests the critical importance of provincializing Marxist architectural theory and practice, a project that requires paying closer attention to important strands of anti-imperialist struggle within Marxist theory and praxis that operated outside of its familiar centers.

In a series of essays published in 1966 as *L'arceau qui chante* [*The Arch that Sings*], the architect Abderrahman Bouchama¹ elaborated his new vision for a post-revolutionary Algerian architecture rooted in and inspired by the independence struggle: 'In the midst of the nationalist struggle, the lines of a specific architecture thus began to take shape, for which the primary motivation was the struggle itself and its principal foundation, the culture and patrimony characteristic of our people' (1966: 10). Bouchama's call to arms emphasized the revolutionary potential of architecture in the recently established People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, founded in a reassessment of past architecture and conjoined with new efforts to 'launch a resolute assault from an authentically avant-garde position' (11). Bouchama's call for an avant-garde Algerian architecture was more than merely rhetorical insofar as the successful revolution that was understood to have inaugurated the new nation provided the very terms for articulating its future. Indeed, the architect was not alone in claiming independent Algeria as the vanguard and epicenter of an ongoing global, anti-imperial struggle, a political and historical position that necessitated a radical rethinking of architecture and aesthetics.

Bouchama offered this call to arms in the wake of the protracted battle for Algeria's independence, which unfolded in response to the slow violence of colonialism (Nixon, 2011), which began with France's military conquest of

Algeria in 1830 and continued with an aggressive politics of settler colonialism, along with related large-scale territorial transformations, including the redefinition of areas along the coastline as administrative *départments* of France rather than overseas colonies. On November 1, 1954, the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN; National Liberation Front) proclaimed armed resistance to the colonial state, effectively launching what would become an eight-year war, although it was not acknowledged as such by the French government until 1999. By the end of the war, hundreds of thousands of Muslim Algerians² had been displaced thanks to accelerated waves of migration from rural areas, where the fighting was initially focused, as well as the forced resettlement of residents undertaken by the French military. The official collapse of French Algeria in July 1962 was also accompanied by the mass exodus of European Algerian residents. The sudden departure of 90 percent of the 'pieds-noirs' — as residents of European origin in French Algeria came to be known — had momentous effects, including the virtual gutting of the construction industry and the departure of the vast majority of practicing architects.

Even after independence was officially certified, violent reprisals continued, whether in continuing attacks by the Organisation de l'Armée Secrète (OAS), the far-right paramilitary group still intent on reinstating French hegemony, or in violence directed towards the so-called *harkis*, Muslim Algerians who were targeted as collaborators with the French. As the FLN transitioned from an organization of militarized resistance into the sole governing party and state institution, internal struggles for power accompanied

the myriad challenges of nation-building. Given this tumultuous situation, it is perhaps not surprising that few major construction projects were realized during Ahmed Ben Bella's three-year rule, from September 1962 until June 1965, when Houari Boumediene abruptly seized power in a military coup. Indeed, architectural production under Ben Bella has long been overshadowed by the monumental landmarks Boumediene commissioned in the late 1960s and early 1970s from leading international architects, including a series of hotels undertaken by Fernand Pouillon as well as designs by Kenzo Tange and Oscar Niemeyer for new universities and sports facilities (**Figure 1**).

Ambitious efforts to construct a revolutionary socialist state immediately following independence nevertheless had far-reaching political, institutional, and architectural implications, even if they were never fully realized as planned. Inspired by Yugoslavia's third-way socialism and its system of self-management, Ben Bella formalized Algeria's own system of *autogestion* in a series of decrees issued in March 1963 that were understood to provide the foundational, institutional, and ideological framework

for Algerian socialism. The focus of a concerted publicity campaign by Ben Bella's government, *autogestion* aimed to fuel radical, but incremental, transformations, both economic and cultural. As had been the case in the USSR and Maoist China, Marxism was a potent source harnessed by politicians and intellectuals to authenticate the revolutionary founding of Algeria and consolidate an emergent state ideology. Far from simply parroting existing models, however, Algerian socialism took shape in response to particular historical contingencies and investments.

While Abderrahman Bouchama was certainly the most prolific architectural theorist at the time, his writings and built projects might be productively set in dialogue with contemporaneous efforts by Anatole Kopp, Pierre Chazanoff, and Georgette Cottin-Euziol to articulate what I argue was a provocative architecture of *autogestion*. While Kopp is certainly the most well known of these figures, his work with Chazanoff in Algeria has received little sustained analysis, and the efforts of Cottin-Euziol have only begun to be recovered in a short biographical essay by Assia Samai Bouadjadja (2008). Bouchama has

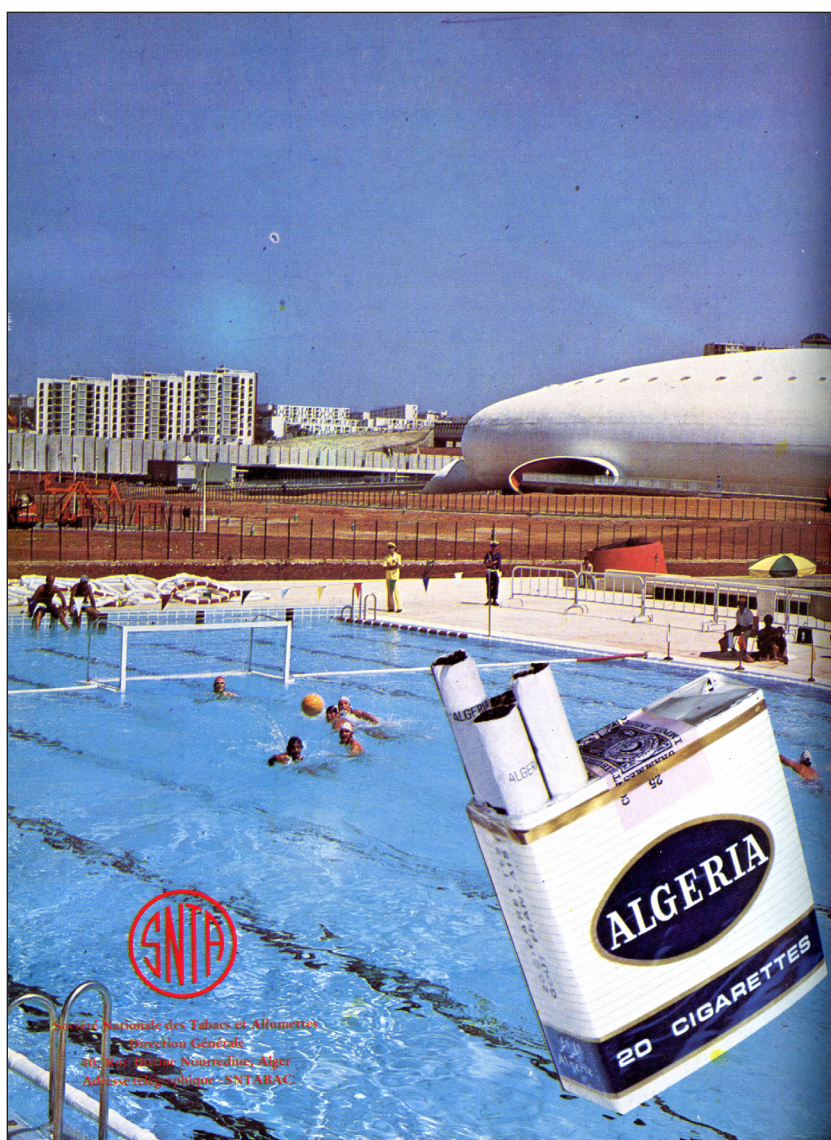


Figure 1: Oscar Niemeyer, Salle omnisports at the Parc Olympique du 5 Juillet 1962, Algiers, 1975, featured in an advertisement for Algeria cigarettes, 1976. From *Révolution africaine*, 670 (22–28 December 1976).

garnered more attention, thanks to his success in landing high-profile commissions, especially after the 1965 coup. For the most part, however, his built work has been dismissed either as 'a personal interpretation of neo-Moorish style' (Kanoun and Taleb-Kanoun 2003: 255) or as derivative historicism devoid of serious engagement with contemporary realities (Deluz 2001: 187). It is certainly the case that theoretical reflections and small-scale interventions were privileged over monumental gestures in the immediate post-independence moment. However, the significant *essais* launched in these years encompassed a remarkably expanded field, including radical attempts to restructure the training and practice of architects and the construction industry as well as the sustained articulation of a post-revolutionary architectural aesthetics.

Materializing Self-Management

At independence, Algeria faced considerable challenges, including the virtual collapse of the economy, which had profound ramifications on architectural practice and the building industry. In addition to widespread damage to buildings and infrastructure caused by wartime violence, the vast majority of practicing architects had fled the country, innumerable construction projects had ground to a halt or were cancelled outright, and tens of thousands were left unemployed. By the end of 1962, 70 percent of firms active in the construction industry were no longer operating and unemployment had surged to record levels (Humbaraci 1966: 123; Bennoune 1988: 90).

One of the most pressing issues facing the new government was how it should adjudicate the myriad properties whose owners had fled the country. As early as August 1962, provisions were put in place to allow the state to take temporary control of all properties vacated by residents of European origin whose inactivity threatened the national economy. Shortly thereafter, abandoned agricultural, industrial, and mining installations with more than ten workers were required to establish their own management committees. At the same time, the state ordered a (temporary) ban on any new real estate transactions. From the outset, resolving the status of vacant properties (*biens vacants*) was understood to be a first step in the broader project of reconstruction and a concrete means of jumpstarting the nation's desired path towards socialism. Abandoned agricultural estates could thus be harnessed toward the goal of creating a collectivized sector, while simultaneously recognizing the centrality of rural populations to the new nation and its fledgling government, not only as the dominant majority but also as the symbolic heart of the Algerian revolution.

In March 1963, Ben Bella issued a series of proclamations allowing vacant agricultural estates and factories to be nationalized in more permanent terms under the banner of *autogestion*, or self-management. Designated farms and factories would be overseen by a series of new institutional bodies that would encourage direct involvement of the workers in decision-making processes. All workers actively employed in a given enterprise would constitute an *assemblée des travailleurs* (workers' assembly), which was instructed to meet three times a year. This provision for direct participation by individual workers most clearly

distinguished Algeria's self-management system from its Yugoslavian counterpart. The workers' assembly would elect representatives for a three-year term to a smaller *comité des travailleurs* (workers' council), which in turn would elect a *comité de gestion* (management committee), one of whose members would serve as president. Depending on the size of the enterprise, the *comité de gestion* would include as few as three or as many as eleven workers. As a mid-size body situated above the full workers' assembly, the workers' council aimed to provide an active counterweight to and check upon the relatively small *comité de gestion*. In addition to these representative groups, the state would appoint a director to serve as a liaison between the *comité de gestion* and the central government. Even given the director's role, the organizational structure of *autogestion* established a relatively decentralized system, with new rights and responsibilities vested in the hands of the workers and their elected representatives.

Algeria's system of *autogestion* was elaborated through close dialogue between Ben Bella and members of his first presidential council, especially Mohammed Harbi, editor of the FLN journal *Révolution Africaine*, and Michel Raptis, a founding member of the Trotskyist Fourth International. As Raptis himself explained, "the firms under self-management would be "nationalized," that is to say they would belong to the entire national community, but they would be "socialised," not "state-controlled" (1964; reprinted in 1980: 68). Although the emphasis on local, democratic decision-making at the level of the individual firm or factory was critical, these reforms applied only to entities and properties that had been previously owned by European Algerians. As a result, the new system of *autogestion* coexisted with a persistent private sector in many arenas, including numerous companies owned by French and other foreign entities that were still operating after independence. Although the March decrees were limited in scope, they attempted to provide a robust mechanism for encouraging the new nation's transition to socialism, an incremental process that aimed to galvanize momentum from the ground up. At the same time, *autogestion* was repeatedly framed as a means of translating revolutionary action into new institutions that would ensure the direct participation of the people, an impulse that likewise informed attempts to restructure architectural training and practice.

At independence, Abderrahman Bouchama was poised to play a leading role in such efforts, as one of only two Muslim Algerians — along with Ali Ben Smaïa — who was a member of the *Ordre des architectes*, the official professional organization that had long been active in French Algeria. French colonial policy had enforced profound disparities in educational access, and although a handful of Muslim Algerians had been trained at the *École des beaux-arts* in Algiers by 1962, none had received a degree in architecture (Colonna 1975; Mahammed-Orfali 2009). Bouchama's appointment after independence as president of the *Conseil provisoire des architectes d'Algérie* (Provisional Council of Algerian Architects), created to replace the *Ordre des architectes*, signaled a radical reorientation of the profession. However, Bouchama's concerted efforts to reimagine architecture's institutional

framework in the early 1960s drew upon his sustained architectural and political engagements that took shape decades earlier.

The son of a *qadi* (a judge in the Islamic legal system), Bouchama was born in Blida (now El-Afroun) in 1910. In 1933 he received a degree in mathematics from the University of Rennes, and he subsequently took classes in engineering at the Institut polytechnique in Nantes (Université de Rennes 1933: 5; Benamrouche and Gallissot 1998).³ When he returned to Algeria in the mid-1930s, he pursued private projects in collaboration with Ali Ben Smaïa, including several houses and a public bathhouse in Tlemcen that reportedly featured both 'Moorish and French baths' (La construction à Tlemcen 1936; Les permis de bâtir 1937). The most prominent of these early commissions was the Madrasa Dar el-Hadith (**Figure 2**), also in Tlemcen, which was initiated by Bachir al-Ibrahimi, a leading reformist *ulama*, in order to provide an intellectual home for the Association des ulama musulmans algériens (AUMA; Association of *ulama*). Founded in 1931, the AUMA aimed, as James McDougall (2006) has shown, to 'resurrect' an authentic Algerian Muslim society through religious, educational, and moral reform.⁴

Significantly, the construction of Dar el-Hadith unfolded at a fleeting moment of unity between competing nationalist organizations – including the AUMA and the Communist Party – that joined together, following the Popular Front's electoral victory in France in May 1936, to form the Congrès musulman algérien (Algerian Muslim Congress). Two months later, Bouchama was one of three Communist delegates who traveled to Paris, with other representatives of the Congrès, to present President Léon Blum with their formal demands, in which they called, unsuccessfully, for the elimination of separate administrative and legal strictures for Muslim Algerians as well as the extension of full rights of French citizenship for all (Charte

revendicative 1936). Although Bouchama joined the Parti communiste français (PCF; French Communist Party) in 1930 while he was studying in France, his political investments had solidified well before then. Young, well-educated members of the Algerian elite like Bouchama were instrumental in the initial stages of Communist organizing in Algeria, especially in Blida and Tlemcen, both cities with well-established populations of Muslim merchants, property owners, and professionals (Sivan 1975; 1976; Drew 2014). Like other leading Communists in Algeria in the mid-1930s, Bouchama was sympathetic to the *ulamas'* embrace of Arab-Islamic culture and education as a productive foundation for Algerian nationalism.

When the Madrasa Dar el-Hadith opened in 1937 (**Figure 3**), newsreel footage praised the project as testament to France's respect for Islam, ignoring the reformist and overtly political aims shared by al-Ibrahimi and his architects (L'inauguration de Dar el-Hadith 1937). In its program and its aesthetics, Dar el-Hadith was intended to simultaneously enact and symbolize, in concrete architectural form, the *ulamas'* project of Arab-Islamic cultural revival. Prominently located in Tlemcen, a city renowned for its historic monuments, Dar el-Hadith took full advantage of its corner location, opening onto the street in a series of repeated bays featuring paired horseshoe arches surmounted by *zellij* tilework mosaics and inset with distinctively patterned wooden *moucharabieh*. While the building included a lecture hall, theatre, library, and offices on its upper floors, the ground floor featured a prayer hall that employed broad arches and the strategic use of light to create a sense of expansiveness within the building's relatively constrained volume (**Figure 4**).

Dar el-Hadith provided a resonant and overtly politicized platform from which to challenge colonial structures of education, in and beyond the realm of architecture.⁵ The building itself was a product of Bouchama's travels



Figure 2: Abderrahman Bouchama and Ali Ben Smaïa, Dar el-Hadith Madrasa, Tlemcen; postcard, c. 1937. Collection of the author.



Figure 3: Inauguration of Dar el-Hadith Madrasa, Tlemcen, photograph, 27 September 1937. Collections of Dar el-Hadith.



Figure 4: Prayer hall, Dar el-Hadith, Tlemcen, 2013. Photograph from *Dar el-Hadith*, 2013; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x279JV1Wf9Y>.

to Morocco and his discussions with masons and craftworkers there, as the architect later recounted in his essay, 'L'arceau qui chante' (1960). At the same time, it served as a prominent demonstration of architectural expertise that persisted alongside and at moments in direct dialogue with varied strains of modern architectural production in French Algeria during this period. Not only did the construction site provide work for artisans and builders, but it also functioned as a training ground, perhaps most notably for Bachir Yellès, who would later study painting at the *École des beaux-arts* in Algiers before being appointed the school's director at independence. In particular, Yellès assisted with the elaborate stuccowork framing the *mihrab* in Dar el-Hadith's prayer hall (Mohammed-Orfali

2009). His 1948 portrait of an artisan from Tlemcen bears witness to largely overlooked architectural practices in French Algeria that were fueled in part by the emergent nationalist movement (Figure 5).

Bouchama's experience at Dar el-Hadith directly informed both his writings, to which I will return, and his professional activities after independence. Within the framework of the new socialist state, institution building was conceived as a distinctly revolutionary project, one that extended to state-sponsored cultural institutions, including the *École des beaux-arts* in Algiers. In February 1963, shortly before Ben Bella formalized the new policies of *autogestion*, Bouchama outlined a plan, in collaboration with an architect from Uruguay, whose surname



Figure 5: Bachir Yellès, *Portrait d'un artisan de Tlemcen*, 1948. Musée National des Beaux-Arts, Algiers.

was Chifflet, that aimed to facilitate the rapid training of Algerian architects. In addition to loosening entrance requirements, Bouchama and Chifflet proposed a condensed curriculum that would shift the focus from theory and composition to practical training, first on the construction site and finally in a year-long apprenticeship with a practicing architect. What they described as a 'speculative curriculum' was intended to create a new cadre of home-grown architects committed to the 'promotion of independence' (Bouchama and Chifflet in Chebahi 2013: 293).

Bouchama and Chifflet's proposals aimed to initiate an active process of decolonizing the leading colonial institution for architectural training, from which Bouchama himself had previously been excluded. Notably, their 'speculative curriculum' anticipated criticisms and pedagogical reforms that would later be embraced in response to the events of May 1968 at the *École des beaux-arts* in Paris. While aiming to accelerate the training of indigenous architects and encourage the rapid expansion of the available pool of professionals, the new emphasis on practical training raised broader questions about the very definition of professional architectural practice. Bouchama and Chifflet's proposals did not precisely echo Frantz Fanon's insistence that technical experts, including architects, directly engage citizens in a shared project of nation-building (Fanon 1963: 201). Nevertheless, they did productively challenge the hard and fast lines separating design from construction, architecture from building, and the professional architect from the construction worker.

Algeria's singular status on the global stage as a revolutionary exemplar also inspired a wave of in-migration. International Marxists and fellow travelers — often referred to in disparaging terms as 'pieds-rouges' — arrived

in droves, keen to aid in building a post-revolutionary society (Simon 2011). Architects, educators, and professionals of varied stripes figured prominently amongst them. Some, like Georgette Cottin-Euziol, were European Algerian in origin but nonetheless adamantly committed to Algeria's autonomy. Born, like Bouchama, in Blida (El-Afroun), Cottin-Euziol earned a diploma in architecture at the *École des beaux-arts* in Paris in 1956. Upon her return to French Algeria, she launched an active practice, notably designing a housing complex and several medical clinics in Algiers and its suburbs. In 1961, as the conflict grew increasingly violent, Cottin-Euziol fled to Geneva, where she remained in exile until her return to Algeria in 1963 (Samai Bouadjadja 2008). In addition to designing several hotels for the Ministry of Tourism under Ben Bella, Cottin-Euziol was responsible for the reconstruction of the University of Algiers Library, which had been the target of firebombs by the OAS weeks before Algeria officially claimed its independence (Figures 6 and 7).

As it was conceived in the decrees of March 1963, *autogestion* seemed to offer new possibilities for architects. In a letter written the following month to the editor of *Al Chaab* (The People), an official organ of the FLN, Cottin-Euziol suggested that Ben Bella's new policies should be extended to architecture. She argued that if medicine was to be nationalized, architects charged with designing medical facilities should be as well. The sure means of guaranteeing that the new nation's buildings would 'be made for the good of the people' was to institute a new cadre of state architects, an effort Cottin-Euziol offered to lead (ADBdR 138 J 507a). Although she was unsuccessful in her appeal, she did become a core instructor at the *École des beaux-arts* in Algiers during the academic years 1963–64 and 1964–65 (Chebahi 2013: 303–4). In this context, Cottin-Euziol would have been aware of Bouchama's proposals for the school and his broader architectural activities. However, the courses she offered did not take up Bouchama and Chifflet's call to arms directly, cleaving as they did to a familiar pedagogical emphasis on theory, composition, and *concours*.⁶

Well beyond the more delimited spheres of architectural training and professional practice, *autogestion* aimed to ensure the revolutionary transformation of structures of ownership, distribution of resources, and organization of labor. While the effects of these changes were most immediately evident in large agricultural estates, targeted efforts were undertaken to restructure the construction industry and housing production along similar lines (Laks 1970).⁷ The first high-profile experiment in this vein was undertaken at Oued Ouchaya, a sprawling *bidonville*, or shantytown, on the outskirts of Algiers. In November 1962, Ben Bella's new minister of social services invited Anatole Kopp and Pierre Chazanoff, two architects attached to the Bureau d'études et de réalisations urbaines (BERU) based in Paris, to lead the effort in restructuring the existing community at Oued Ouchaya, using funds allocated to reduce unemployment.

Kopp figured prominently among the revolutionary supporters who flocked to Algeria shortly after independence. Born into a Jewish family in the Soviet Union, Kopp



Figure 6: Photograph of the University of Algiers Library in the midst of rebuilding, Algiers, 1963. Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône, Marseille.



Figure 7: Georgette Cottin-Euziol, Reconstruction of University of Algiers Library, Algiers, 1963. Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône, Marseille.

immigrated to France at a young age, where he studied briefly at the *École des beaux-arts* in Paris before shifting to the *École spéciale d'architecture* in 1935 and later MIT. In 1936, Kopp joined the PCF, and his political engagement in the following decades led to him being barred from the *Ordre des architectes* (Prévot 2015; Falbel 2008).⁸ Chazanoff had also passed through the *École des beaux-arts* in Paris, where he was attached to André Lurçat's studio in the mid-1930s. He first crossed paths with Kopp while they were both working with Paul Nelson, Charles Sébillotte, and Roger Gilbert on a postwar rebuilding project in Noisy-le-Sec. Although Kopp and Chazanoff's work in Algeria was made possible by their affiliation with BERU, Kopp had reportedly engaged in FLN actions in France during the war for independence (Cohen 1990). His subsequent engagement in Algeria unfolded alongside his sustained exploration of post-revolutionary Soviet architecture that would culminate in the publication in 1967 of *Ville et révolution*.

At Oued Ouchaya, Kopp and Chazanoff's project privileged the renovation of existing housing, the provision of collective amenities, and the construction of coordinated infrastructure (Figure 8), in stark contrast to colonial planning policies that had focused almost exclusively on demolishing *bidonvilles* and displacing their residents into new housing estates located elsewhere (Crane 2017). Early on, the decision was made to recruit local inhabitants who were organized into a de facto construction collaborative.

In this way, the Oued Ouchaya project attempted to provide employment opportunities for residents that would simultaneously serve as professional training with the goal of improving their long-term employment prospects (CAA XXe, 225 IFA 03; Medam 1974: 103). Significantly, in at least one instance, residents pushed the architects to revise their initial proposals, successfully convincing them that the adjacent polluted stream (*oued*), long used as an open sewer, should be canalized.

At Oued Ouchaya, Kopp and Chazanoff (1968a) attempted to materialize *autogestion* not only by including future residents in the construction process, but also by strategically setting aside spaces that could be altered later in response to the community's changing needs. Reportedly, over a thousand local residents were hired to undertake all aspects of construction (Figure 9), from the extensive terracing of the sloping site to the erection of new buildings (Djebar 1963). Recognizing that they would be relying heavily on untrained workers, Kopp and Chazanoff took care to ensure their designs could be realized primarily by using manual labor and, as much as possible, materials that were available locally. Nearby abandoned manufacturing plants, recently restructured as self-managed entities, became major suppliers of construction materials for the Oued Ouchaya project. At the same time, Ben Bella's policies of *autogestion* facilitated the acquisition of land and the loosening of regulations that had previously controlled the construction process



Figure 8: Anatole Kopp and Pierre Chazanoff, photograph of Oued Ouchaya, Algeria, construction photograph, 1963–64. Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine/Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Paris.



Figure 9: Workers on the construction site at Oued Ouchaya, Algeria, c. 1964. Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine/Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Paris.



Figure 10: Anatole Kopp and Pierre Chazanoff, Oued Ouchaya, Algeria, 1962–64. Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine/Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Paris.

under the colonial regime. Over the course of two years, around five hundred existing dwellings were renovated, largely by way of providing access to new water lines and sewer systems, and close to a thousand new dwelling units were constructed (**Figure 10**). In December 1964, Ben Bella inaugurated Oued Ouchaya, which he described as an exemplary 'chantier socialiste', with grand ceremony (Djebar 1963).

Kopp and Chazanoff also played an important role in Ben Bella's nation-wide campaign to expand educational access, especially in rural areas, in order to redress the willful failures of the French colonial administration in

this regard. In the Kabylia region, they designed a series of standard school types at different scales as well as model teacher dwellings that could be adjusted to fit the needs of an individual community (**Figure 11**). Concerted efforts ensured that the new schools would not rely on foreign companies for their production. As much as possible, workers were recruited locally, and the responsibility for manufacturing key building components was distributed across seven abandoned factories in the region that had been reconstituted as self-managed cooperatives. One of these was responsible for producing concrete structural members, another for all carpentry work, and a third for

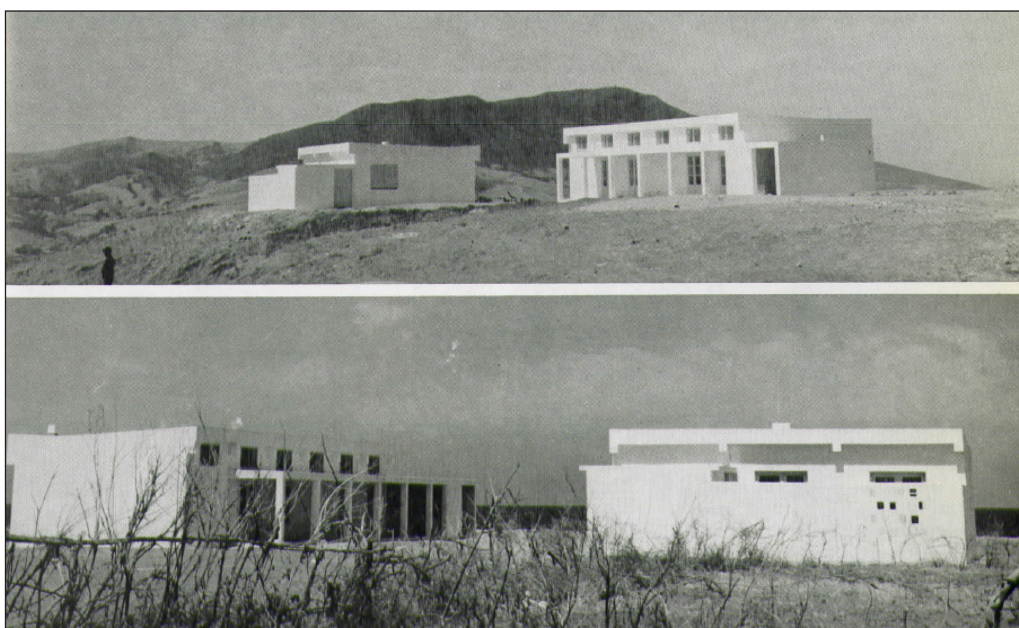


Figure 11: Anatole Kopp and Pierre Chazanoff, model schools in Kabylia, 1964. From Kopp and Chazanoff (1968b).

other interior furnishings (Kopp and Chazanoff 1968b). Kopp and Chazanoff thus used their architectural experiment in *autogestion* to restructure the industrial production of building materials on a territorial scale.

The policies of *autogestion* initiated by Ben Bella inspired attempts to envision the radical restructuring of architecture, from the provision and manufacturing of building material to the reorganization of labor and structures of training. From the outset, however, no clear consensus emerged regarding the best path forward. Rather than relying upon systems of industrial production and prefabrication that frequently had the unintended consequences of making jobs obsolete, which would have dire consequences in post-independence Algeria where unemployment and underemployment were widespread problems, Kopp and Chazanoff insisted on using local materials as much as possible and adjusting their designs to facilitate construction by unskilled workers (1968a: 22). Cottin-Euziol would later question these strategies, given the fact that industrialized construction processes were not new to Algeria, even if they were direct legacies of the colonial regime and the systemic inequalities it enforced (ADBdR, 138 J 507b). Although Bouchama's proposed 'speculative curriculum' was never fully implemented at the *École des beaux-arts* in Algiers, its emphasis on apprenticeship and on-site training had an important echo in experimental projects like the renovation of Oued Ouchaya, where some residents gained not only improved dwellings but also new skills in construction.

Theorizing a Post-Revolutionary Architectural Aesthetics

The program of *autogestion* was adopted as an economic and institutional framework intended to bring the Algerian revolution to fruition by accelerating the new nation's path to socialism. From the outset, questions of culture and history were understood to be central to the project of nation-building, one that was deeply interwo-

ven with the rewriting of history and the revalorization of the Algerian people, particularly industrial and agricultural workers (CNRA 1962; see also Carlier 1997). The potential for self-management to produce a new society was initially embraced with much enthusiasm by many artists and intellectuals. The artist Denis Martinez reportedly composed a collage that featured 'representative tools and products of *autogestion*', which was prominently displayed at an industrial fair in Algiers with the label, '100% Algerian' (Blair 1969: 84). In 1963, the European Algerian poet Jean Sénac wrote 'Citoyens de beauté' ['Citizens of Beauty'], an ode to Che Guevara inspired by his visit to Algiers. His poem offers a poignant vision of the liberatory potentials, both political and sexual, of *autogestion*, especially in this often-cited passage:

Oh, you are beautiful like a *comité de gestion*.
Like an agricultural cooperative
Like a nationalized mine. (1999: 403)

Although the particular inflection of homosexual desire and revolutionary transformation articulated in Sénac's poem was distinctive, it nonetheless captured the optimism and sense of promise that Algeria's experiment with *autogestion* inspired.

Bouchama's writings from this period expressed similar enthusiasm. Indeed, in 'L'arceau qui chante', an essay that was presumably written while he was imprisoned during the war for independence, he articulated what is likely the first sustained attempt to theorize a path forward for an explicitly decolonial Algerian architecture. This text would provide the initial kernel for his 1966 book of the same title, which included the original essay along with a new preface and three additional chapters. By the time the book was published, Ben Bella's policies of *autogestion* had already begun to be dismantled by his successor, Houari Boumediene. The book, however, was clearly a product of an earlier moment, not least given its fervent

reference to the March decrees of 1963, which Bouchama credited for providing new fuel for rethinking national culture and a future path for architecture: 'from today forward, it is for the workers, these authentic producers, that we must build' (1966: 59).

Three decades earlier, in the mid-1930s, the architect had actively participated in efforts to unite divergent strands within the nationalist movement, at a moment when the investments of the *ulamas* in cultural reform seemed to resonate readily with those of the nascent communist movement in French Algeria. After World War II, Bouchama had redirected his activism to the international peace movement while serving as a member of the central committee for the Parti communiste algérien (PCA; Algerian Communist Party), founded in October 1936 in the wake of the Congrès musulman algérien.⁹ In 1950, Bouchama led the Algerian delegation to the second Congrès Mondial des Partisans de la Paix in Warsaw, where he delivered a speech entitled, 'Le Colonialisme est un germe de guerre' ['Colonialism is a seed of war'] (Figure 12). Arguing that colonialism should be understood as war in an institutionalized guise, Bouchama encouraged a new solidarity between the global peace movement and anti-imperialist struggles around the world in the following call to arms:

Denounce, unmask, and isolate the colonists, the authors of war and oppression. Force them to disarm and to retreat, and we will contribute to this effort with all our might. Algerians realize that they have precious allies around the world: oppressed peoples, anti-imperialist forces, and proponents of Peace. (1950: 10)¹⁰

While offering an impassioned defense of Algeria's struggle for autonomy and self-determination, Bouchama framed Algerian nationalism as an integral component of broader global struggles. The architect's serious engagement with the Communist Party and the peace movement gave his nationalist commitments a decidedly international orientation at this juncture, one that also pushed him to consider, in a preface to a book published in 1951, the connections between Algeria's situation and the history of the Russian tsars' domination of Islamic culture in Uzbekistan (Bouchama 1951).

Shortly after the FLN declared armed opposition to the colonial state in November 1954, the PCA was declared illegal and effectively dissolved. In 1956, when Bouchama was preparing to travel to Stockholm to participate in another meeting of the Conseil mondial de la paix, he was arrested and interned for the rest of the war (Rahal 2010: 172; Hadjères 2014). In January 1960, 'L'arceau qui chante' was published in *La nouvelle critique*, the PCF's cultural review, in a special issue dedicated to Algerian culture. Like many other contributors – notably fellow Communist activist Sadek Hadjères, as well as literary figures such as Kateb Yacine, Mohammed Dib, Mouloud Ferouan, and Assia Djebar – Bouchama was deeply engaged in rethinking the cultural legacies of Algeria and the Maghrib as well as their future potentials.

In his essay, Bouchama reflected on his experiences designing Dar el-Hadith in Tlemcen and the building's indebtedness to lessons gleaned in Morocco. He described his visit as a revelation, one that recast the surviving minaret of the 14th-century Mansourah Mosque near Tlemcen and its distinctive arches as the precolonial source for an architectural tradition rooted in Algeria by way of al-Andalusia. In his narration, the palm trees of the Saharan oasis inspired the design of arcades so beautiful they seemed to sing (1960). While the Alhambra served as a defining touchstone and exemplar throughout the essay, Bouchama insisted on the Maghrebi roots of its aesthetic: 'In the heart of el-Andalus, [the Arabs] managed to recreate this symphony of palm groves without which they wouldn't have been the same. The arch that sings is truly Arabic' (1960: 143).

Bouchama's investments in the Alhambra were likely fueled not only by his trip to Morocco in the mid-1930s but also by the extended experiences of his friend Bachir Yellès in Spain, where he was the first Algerian artist in residence at the Casa de Velázquez in Madrid, from 1952 to 1953 (Mahammed-Orfali 2009). As Eric Calderwood has recently argued, 'al-Andalus' became the focus of concerted attention and strategic reinvention in the 1930s, when 'a Spanish way of talking about Morocco', notably inaugurated by key figures affiliated with Franco's regime, 'became a Moroccan way of talking about Morocco',



Figure 12: Photograph of Abderrahman Bouchama delivering a speech at the Congrès Mondial des Partisans de la Paix, Warsaw, Poland, 1950. From Bouchama (1950). Collection of the author.

thanks to the efforts of leading members of the nationalist movement in Morocco who were increasingly invested in its Andalusian heritage (2018: 9).¹¹ In this context, architecture provided key evidence of such long-term historical continuities. In 'L'arceau qui chante', however, Bouchama strategically displaced the defining lines of influence from 'al-Andalus' and Morocco to Tlemcen and the Saharan oases of Algeria.

In addition to shifting the established narrative of influence and affiliation between Spain and the Maghrib, Bouchama's essay began with a pointed critique of the conventional understanding of Islamic architecture as primarily decorative:

Many imagine that Moorish art is limited to the interlace of its arabesques, the coloring of its mosaics, the delicacy of its carvings or the meticulousness and variety of its paintings. Sometimes they go as far as considering the coolness of patios, the magnificence of arcades, the pleasant greenery of interior gardens, or the gentle murmur of fountains. But, in their eyes, it always remains an art of decoration and of superstructure. All of this leads to serious errors. (1960: 141)

The extensive writings by Georges Marçais, a preeminent scholar of North African architecture in the early 20th century, provide a prime example of such an approach and one with which Bouchama would have certainly been familiar.¹² In influential publications like *Les Monuments arabes de Tlemcen* (1903), co-authored with his brother William Marçais, and *L'architecture musulmane d'Occident: Tunisie, Algérie, Maroc, Espagne et Sicile* (1954), Georges Marçais had been instrumental in excavating artistic affiliations between the Maghrib and Islamic Spain and in articulating a new and influential understanding of the shared inheritance of 'hispano-mauresque' architecture (Oulebsir 2004).¹³ As Marçais observed at the very outset of his essay on the aesthetics of Islamic art, 'whether the material employed is stone, stucco, wood, ceramic, or metal, Muslim decoration ... is conceived as a veneer and, above all else, it meets the definition we have given to decoration: a superficial embellishment of form' (1945–46: 31–32).

Bouchama's extended ode to the arch that sings offered a pointed rejoinder to such reductive frameworks. The full import of this argument emerges even more forcefully, I would suggest, when read in dialogue with the architect's contemporaneous reflections, in *Mouvements pensants et matières* (1968), on the fundamental effects of matter and movement on the shaping of space and especially the dynamics of thought. Published in 1968, the book brought together a series of related reflections, the earliest of which was written in Tlemcen in 1942, although the majority dated from the author's extended imprisonment during the war for independence. The poetic language of the text enacts the very thought processes it aims to analyze in a flow of interwoven observations written almost as if by stream of consciousness. In this sense, the text vividly demonstrates not only its arguments, but also the ability of thought to transcend 'barriers and barbed wire'

(1968: 5), as Bouchama poignantly notes in the prefatory dedication he penned to his son from the Camp de Bousset in 1958.

Although the lack of clear references makes it difficult to identify the architect's key interlocutors, he was deeply engaged in materialist philosophy and the implications of relativity and physics for dialectical materialism.¹⁴ Bouchama was likely attuned to the debates then surging in France, in response to those that had emerged earlier in the Soviet Union, regarding the relationship between quantum physics and dialectical materialism (Cross 1991). While the architect likely had access to this discussion as it unfolded in the pages of *La nouvelle critique*, his writings cleaved closely to the Leninist articulation of dialectical materialism: 'Matter in movement, or, as they say, "energy," is the common substance of everything'. Continuing this line of thought, Bouchama asserted that, 'subject to an incessant struggle ... at any moment, things will find their equilibrium in the same universal and coherent system' (11). The architect's insistence that the most aesthetically refined arches would sing underscored the potential of even stone and brick to reveal their internal vibrations and to give voice to the ceaseless flux of energetic matter.¹⁵ At the same time, the emphasis placed on the arch posed a strategic challenge to the assertion that Islamic architecture was merely decorative, insofar as the arch, as it was framed by Bouchama, resisted any absolute bifurcation between the tectonic and the decorative, between structure and superstructure. Understood in relation to the architect's extended reflections on dialectical materialism, 'L'arceau qui chante' explicitly rejected reductive readings of 'l'art mauresque' that were well established in French colonial discourse while asserting a tacitly Marxist rereading of Islamic architecture.

The themes outlined in Bouchama's essay from 1960 formed the point of departure for the expanded book-length version, although the architect's argument shifted substantially in response to the radical rupture of independence. The original essay was republished with a fresh ending, in which Bouchama placed new emphasis on 'our Arab-Islamic people who, from Agra to Cordoba, still find these artistic treasures and a serendipitous sensibility profoundly rooted and latent in themselves' (1966: 21). This expanded frame opened the memory of al-Andalus and the Maghrib onto a broader geography of affiliation extending to South Asia. While Bouchama's sustained activism in the Communist Party and the peace movement had long encouraged his understanding of Algeria's nationalist project in relation to broader internationalist struggles, *L'arceau qui chante* spoke even more directly to calls for Afro-Asian and pan-Islamic solidarity articulated in response to the non-aligned movement. In the early 1950s, Bouchama had worked closely with Malek Bennabi on another short-lived attempt to unite competing nationalist parties into the Front national démocratique algérien (Sivan 1976; Drew 2014).¹⁶ In 1956, Bennabi published his reflections on the Bandung conference, in which he argued that Islam was ideally situated 'to be the bridge between races and cultures, a crystallizing force, an essential catalyst for the synthesis of an Afro-Asia

civilization today, and for a universal civilization tomorrow' (1956: 282). Bouchama would articulate a similar proposition in *L'arceau qui chante*, where he envisioned a future Algiers transformed into a radiating center of the 'Maghrib, of Africa, and of the entire Arab world' (1966: 72). While a sprawling new university would serve as an important point of orientation, the city would culminate in a monumental 'Allée du Paix', dedicated not to an empire or a ruler, but to the 'only hero that exists in this country, the People' (70).

Whereas Bouchama's original 1960 essay is focused on the recuperation of past heritage, the 1966 book provides a detailed denunciation of the destructive legacies of French colonial capitalism in Algeria and an impassioned articulation of a new path for post-revolutionary architecture in and beyond the nation. The architect called for a definitively socialist architecture as the logical outcome of successful revolutionary struggle and a critical means of redressing the vast economic and social disparities that were the defining outcomes of French colonialism, vividly embodied in the dramatic contrasts between luxury villas and ubiquitous *bidonvilles* like Oued Ouchaya (1966: 50). In Bouchama's view, however, the March decrees created an entirely new potential for architecture by ensuring that 'no one may speculate on land or buildings, nor influence the state machine in favor of his own sordid calculations' (58). Bouchama certainly overstates the extent to which the self-management system transformed property ownership, given the limited scope of its application. Nevertheless, here he begins to theorize an architecture of *autogestion*, informed by a dynamic Arab-Islamic architectural inheritance, while simultaneously addressing the needs of workers, the emancipation of women, and the education of children (59–60). Housing, in particular, would no longer be merely a profit-generating mechanism, but a product firmly in the hands of the laborers who constructed and occupied it (58) – a possibility that Kopp and Chazanoff's project at Oued Ouchaya attempted to realize.

In fact, in their essay, 'Pour une architecture', published in *Révolution africaine* in February 1965, Kopp and Chazanoff responded directly to Bouchama's earlier attempt to theorize a path for Algeria's post-revolutionary and post-colonial architecture while discussing their experiences at Oued Ouchaya. Here they argued that architects should play an instrumental role in constructing Algeria's new socialist society, particularly by balancing the necessity to provide employment opportunities with the possibilities of industrial techniques of construction. Kopp and Chazanoff referenced Bouchama's 1960 version of 'L'arceau qui chante', praising his critique of French colonial architecture. At the same time, however, they launched a blistering denunciation of his proposed new designs: 'The palaces of Grenada or Samarkand, the Great Mosque of Tlemcen bear witness to the artistry of Arab builders of the past, but it is not in copying their formal qualities, or in using this or that detail detached from its context, that one can create contemporary Arab architecture'. Kopp and Chazanoff acknowledged that they could not deny the existence of 'a national tradition' and 'the legitimate desire of a people to reconnect with

its deep cultural past, to rediscover in its history and customs lessons for the problems of today'. However, rather than turning to history, new architecture in Algeria should articulate a path towards socialism through material and programmatic strategies rather than symbolic forms (1965: 11). By implication, such an approach would have universal application.

In his 1966 book, Bouchama would insist, in terms markedly similar to those used by Kopp and Chazanoff, that 'the architect must certainly always think in terms of stone and brick, iron and concrete, material possibilities and technical possibilities, immediate needs and functional necessities' (1966: 74). Indeed, questions of materiality registered, as I have suggested, on multiple levels. Whereas Bouchama addressed questions of form and the legacies of history head-on in his extensive writings, Kopp and Chazanoff failed to acknowledge the degree to which their designs for Oued Ouchaya revealed their own indebtedness to historical models. In particular, the vaulted roofs and abbreviated *brises-soleils* that defined the new housing units at Oued Ouchaya echoed a well-established architectural vocabulary employed by Le Corbusier in projects like the Roq et Rob housing studies from 1949, or by his self-professed acolytes in French Algeria, like Roland Simounet, who used similar forms in his designs for emergency housing at Djenan el-Hassan and the Cité Montagne (**Figure 13**), the latter of which was located not far from Oued Ouchaya. As much as Kopp and Chazanoff read – or misread – Bouchama's call to arms as merely the superficial replication of past forms, their vision of socialist architecture for Algeria unwittingly revealed its own provincialism, insofar as it was squarely rooted in a more recent French colonial architectural past.

As these early attempts to theorize a post-revolutionary socialist architecture for Algeria suggest, the lines between national culture, international solidarity, and universalizing aspirations were difficult to parse. In Kopp and Chazanoff's view, Marxism could be seamlessly translated to the Algerian situation, aside from minor concessions that would need to be made for its relative lack of industrial capacity. Indeed, the international aspirations of Marxism readily projected an unquestioned universalism. Although Kopp and Chazanoff's essay began with a passing reference to the ravages of war, neither the colonial roots of this struggle nor Algeria's specifically post-colonial situation were addressed directly. In his political activism and his writings, Bouchama took a distinctly different tack, one predicated on sustained engagement with the possibilities Marxism might offer for a systematic critique of imperialism and its entanglements with modern capitalism. In the process, Marxism's universalizing presumptions were subject to challenge and an even more pointed unmooring.

In contrast to Kopp and Chazanoff's assertions, Bouchama's recurrent references to pan-Islamism and pan-Arabism seemed to assert a narrow nationalism, albeit one defined by religious, linguistic, and cultural affinities rather than a bounded nation-state. Particularly in his writings after his original 1960 essay, Bouchama reframed Algeria's architecture and national patrimony as

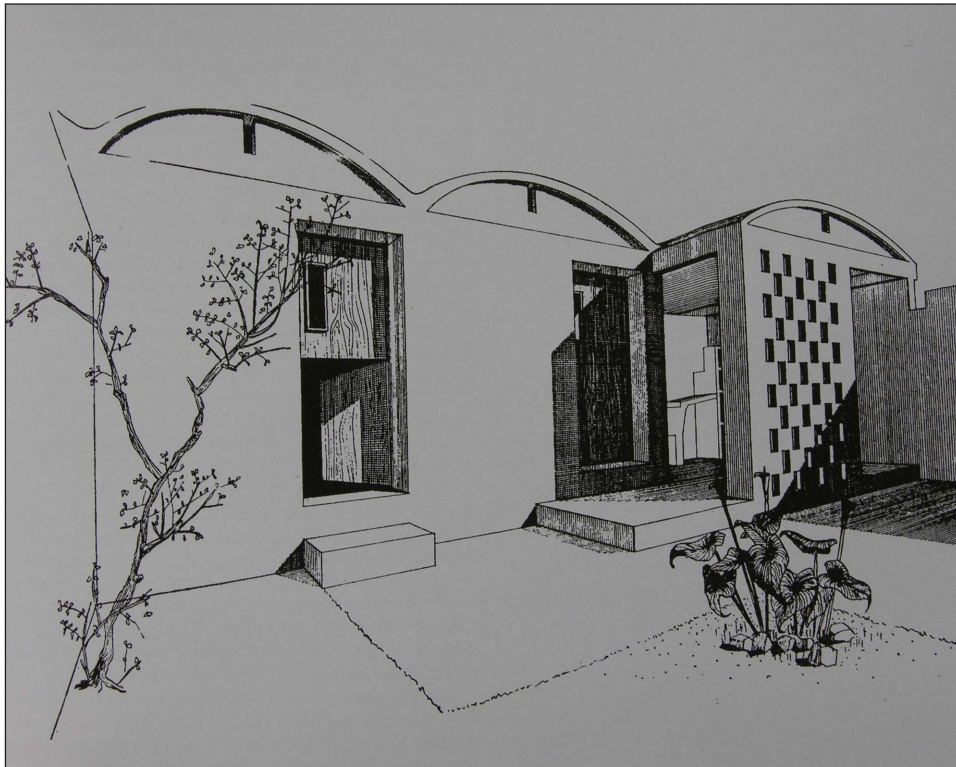


Figure 13: Roland Simounet, with Alexis Daure and Henri Béri, Study for Cité de la Montagne, Maison Carrée, Algeria, 1955–57.

part of a worldly inheritance, one described primarily in terms of a shared Arab-Islamic civilization. Cemil Aydin's rethinking of the idea of the Muslim world as global history might be useful in understanding the full import of Bouchama's argument. While it is clear that the architect was adopting Marxism to his own ends, particularly in his critique of conventional accounts of Islamic architecture, the resulting theorization of architecture was not simply a reiteration of received ideas in a slightly different accent. Following Aydin, we might understand Bouchama instead to have adopted pan-Islamic discourse as a means of articulating 'global ideas and values ... that did not originate in Europe' (2013: 160), perhaps most notably in relation to broad aspirations for anti-imperial internationalism. At the same time, Bouchama's insistent repositioning of Algeria as the radiating center of Arab-Islamic solidarity asserted a further move of strategic de-centering, by dislodging imagined political and cultural identities from their habitual anchors in Egypt and the Masriq. In this sense, Bouchama posed an important challenge to Marxism's universalizing presumptions by theorizing a socialist architecture defined by pan-Islamic globalism self-consciously articulated from the Maghrib.

The Ends of *Autogestion*?

In June 1965, Algeria's brief experiment with *autogestion* was brought to an abrupt end when Houari Boumediene ousted Ben Bella from power in a bloodless military coup. Ben Bella's policies quickly came under fire by Boumediene and members of his administration, who claimed that the self-management system had encouraged corruption across managerial ranks even as it had failed to dismantle capitalist structures. Two years later, in 1967, management committees were placed under the

direct supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture, a move that signaled the Boumediene administration's broader unraveling of the key institutions of *autogestion* as well as its attendant embrace of centralized state planning. Under Boumediene, Algerian socialism moved closer to the Soviet model, particularly in its embrace of state intervention and centralized control. The new administration decried Ben Bella's policies of *autogestion* as an overtly secular and Eurocentric version of socialism. At the same time, a narrower conception of Arab-Islamic culture was pushed aggressively to the fore as the defining essence of the Algerian state. Indeed, the poet Jean Sénac's forced resignation from the Union des écrivains algériens (Union of Algerian Writers), which he had helped to found, and his assassination in 1973 are sobering demonstrations of the rigidly paternalistic and authoritarian vision of Algerian socialism that emerged under Boumediene.

Georgette Cottin-Euziol continued to practice architecture in Algeria until 1978, although she was effectively denied further commissions from Boumediene's minister of tourism, who turned instead to French architect Fernand Pouillon to design a series of high-profile resorts along the Mediterranean coast. It is worth noting that Cottin-Euziol's work during this period was received with more enthusiasm in the architectural press in Poland than it was in France or Algeria (Cottin-Euziol 1968, 1970, 1974). Shortly after Boumediene seized power, Anatole Kopp taught briefly at the École des beaux-arts in Algiers in the fall of 1965 (Chebahi 2013: 304). He later had the opportunity to revisit his experiences in Algeria in the context of work undertaken by his students in Paris. In collaboration with Patrice Rauszer (1975), who had coordinated the provision of building materials at Oued Ouchaya and for the schools in Kabylia, Kopp contributed

to a new urban plan for the city of Batna, developed between 1969 and 1973, although Kopp's role was confined to consulting from a distance. In the preface he wrote for the published version of his student Djaffar Lesbet's thesis on Boumediene's ambitious socialist village program launched in 1972, Kopp admitted that his knowledge of the situation in Algeria was, in fact, quite limited (1983: 11).

In early 1980, *Techniques et architecture* published a special issue on architecture in Algeria, which featured an essay by Abderrahman Bouchama, 'Sur l'architecture algérienne'. Bouchama began by highlighting Algeria's long architectural history and its extraordinary monuments, while acknowledging that the debate had shifted considerably from the immediate post-independence moment, particularly given the current pressures of globalization in a nuclear age. Nevertheless, he asserted that abstraction derived from 'Arab-Islamic art' could provide new inspiration, as exemplified in his own designs for the recently completed Institut des sciences islamiques on the outskirts of Algiers (**Figure 14**). Vague references in his brief essay to 'social, agrarian, and cultural revolutions' echoed the language and ideology of the Boumediene era, devoid of the urgency and trenchant critique that marked the author's earlier writings (116). The rigid monumentality of the Institut des sciences islamiques, positioned as a domineering fortification along a major highway, offered up an almost caricatural set of references, from the minaret-like towers flanking its main entrance to the endless rows of arched windows mutely marching in locked step. In shifting from architectural outsider to a favored architect of the Boumediene regime, Bouchama also seemed to turn away from the challenges he had posed earlier to conventional architectural expertise, even as his calls for international solidarity subsided.

Despite its evident contradictions and limitations, the architecture of *autogestion*, as it took shape in the brief period immediately following Algeria's independence, adopted strategies set in motion by Ben Bella's March decrees by focusing primarily on incremental interventions that aimed to galvanize active participation from the ground up and to assert a definitive break with architectural practices and aesthetics from the French colonial era. In projects like Cottin-Euziol's rebuilding of the University of Algiers Library as well as Kopp and Chazanoff's Oued Ouchaya, renovation and repair were privileged over monumental gestures. According to Jean-Jacques Deluz, Bouchama also followed this path by leading an extensive 'repair operation' for the numerous elementary schools in Algiers that had been summarily torched during the final stages of the war (1988: 123).¹⁷ While economic scarcity and insecurity certainly were important factors, the desire to leverage new construction for the 'promotion of independence' was also critical. Concerted efforts were made to encourage the new nation's autonomy by reducing its reliance on international investment and overseas manufacturing, or by expanding opportunities for its citizens to gain employment and professional training.

The self-management system in Yugoslavia, which inspired the initial articulation of Ben Bella's system of *autogestion*, had quite different effects on architecture, which might help to bring the situation in Algeria into clearer relief. As Maroje Mrduljaš (2018) has shown, the reforms adopted in Yugoslavia, beginning in the 1950s, encouraged the development of new architectural typologies, perhaps most notably in the form of experimental schools and kindergartens as well as the proliferation of innovative cultural centers. Over time, the architect assumed an important position in mediating between the ideology of self-management and the construction of new social



Figure 14: Abderrahman Bouchama, Institut des Sciences Islamiques d'Algier [Islamic Institute of Algiers], Caroubier, Algeria, 1972–77.

infrastructures, as well as ‘between the pragmatic means and the ethical goals of socialist modernization’ (2018: 41). Above all, Mrduljaš emphasizes the expanded agency of architects and urban planners, as well as the burgeoning of integrated design and a wide range of professional organizations, which together gave the architect unusual latitude and influence. By contrast, not only was the architecture of *autogestion* in Algeria a more fragmentary, ephemeral, and decidedly non-monumental undertaking, but it also tended less to successfully consolidate expertise than to question its agency by challenging prevailing conventions separating architecture and building, as well as the professional architect from the construction worker.

Certainly, however, the disparities in Algeria between aspiration and reality, theory and practice, were considerable, as was especially evident at Oued Ouchaya. Significantly, the limited employment opportunities these early ‘chantiers socialistes’ provided fell far short of ensuring the desired shift of the means of production into the hands of the workers, at the same time that calls to radically reconceive the architect’s role were never fully realized. At Oued Ouchaya, residents were employed to rebuild their community, but they remained merely wage laborers, rather than active participants in the ownership or management of the resulting development. While inroads were made in restructuring factories serving the construction industry under the umbrella of *autogestion*, deeper conflicts emerged over the precise stakes and terms of a post-revolutionary architectural aesthetics in and beyond Algeria.

Nevertheless, the experiments and debates that emerged during this brief period have broader significance for a global history of socialism and its relationship to architectural theory and practice. The history of post-independence Algeria certainly echoes the broader, defining shift from radical African socialism to Leninist-Marxism that has been observed across the continent in the decades following independence (Glaser 2007). Although it was rife with contradictions and failures, Algeria’s brief experiment with *autogestion* imagined a path towards socialism rooted in the new nation’s revolutionary origins, at the same time that it repositioned the Maghrib as a defining center for Afro-Asian and pan-Islamic solidarity, an impulse that was articulated most powerfully in Bouchama’s writings. Attending to this episode suggests the critical importance of provincializing Marxist architectural theory and practice, a project that also requires paying closer attention to important strands of anti-imperialist struggle within Marxist theory and praxis that operated outside of its familiar centers. While providing a new vantage point onto the myriad ways in which Marxism was translated into new geographies, attempts to theorize and concretize an architecture of *autogestion* aimed first and foremost to articulate a Marxist universalism from elsewhere.

Notes

¹ Although the architect’s first name often appears, especially in French language publications, as ‘Abderrahmane,’ I use ‘Abderrahman’ throughout this essay as the spelling most frequently adopted by the architect himself.

² Despite their limitations, I use the terms ‘Muslim Algerian’ and ‘European Algerian’, adapted from Todd Shepard’s work (2006), to describe the population of French Algeria, to underscore the claims of Algerian affiliation made by both groups, while acknowledging the important distinctions enforced by the French state, particularly in relation to rights of citizenship.

³ Neither Ben Smaïa nor Bouchama received degrees in architecture, although Bouchama later claimed to be the sole Muslim Algerian architect at independence. His son, Elias Bouchama, joined Leon Claro’s atelier attached to the École des beaux-arts in Algiers and later became the first Algerian to receive a diploma in architecture from the École des beaux-arts in Paris in 1964 (Chebahi 2013: 190).

⁴ The Association of *ulama* (AUMA) was founded in Algiers in 1931, by a group of *ulama* associated with shaykh Abd al-Hamid Ben Badis. Bachir al-Ibrahimi would later become the de facto leader of the Association of *ulama* in 1942 and the organization’s elected president in 1946.

⁵ In an interview published in 1938 in the weekly newspaper, *Oranie populaire*, Bouchama met the journalist on the steps of Dar el-Hadith, strategically positioning his building as an appropriate setting from which to launch an impassioned critique of the colonial administration’s failure to provide schooling for Muslim Algerian children (Guitard 1938). In this interview Bouchama echoed his earlier, forceful call to expand educational opportunities ‘to the oppressed masses and especially to girls’ (Le congrès musulman algérien 1936).

⁶ Several of the *concours* projects that Cottin-Euziol offered her students did diverge from conventional architectural typologies, as they included a housing project, a post office for a mid-sized town, and a center for maternal and infant care (Chebahi 2013: 303–4).

⁷ Building material production facilities were amongst the sectors most rapidly brought under the *autogestion* system, especially in and around Algiers (Porter 2011, 515).

⁸ Kopp left the PCF in 1968, in response to the Soviet Union’s invasion of Czechoslovakia.

⁹ On the broader links between the Parti communiste algérien and the international peace movement, see CAPP (1950) and Sivan (1976: 184–85).

¹⁰ A portion of Bouchama’s speech also appeared in both French and Arabic in CAPP (1950: 4–5).

¹¹ I am grateful to María González Pendás for pointing me to Eric Calderwood’s work.

¹² Georges Marçais taught archaeology, with a focus on Islamic material from the medieval period, at the Université d’Alger. He was particularly invested, like Bouchama, in the monuments of Tlemcen, where his brother, William Marçais, who had trained at the École des langues orientales in Paris, had briefly served as the director of the madrasa beginning in 1898.

¹³ *L’Architecture musulmane d’Occident* drew on earlier work by Henri Terrasse (1932), focused on similar concerns, although Marçais notably narrowed his focus specifically to architecture.

- ¹⁴ The architect later returned to similar concerns in Bouchama (1976).
- ¹⁵ The following observations in *Mouvements pensants et matières* resonate closely with the underlying assumptions advanced in 'L'arceau qui chante': 'Dans les lignes, les surfaces et les espaces les plus parfaits, règnent les matières les plus denses et les plus différenciées et les mouvements les plus internes et les plus variés. Toute géométrie qui négligerait de tels aspects ou les passerait sous silence, prétextant on ne sait quelle idéalisation nécessaire, ne serait qu'une géométrie désossée, abstraite' (1968: 254–55). ['In the most perfect lines, surfaces, and spaces reign the most intense and the most individuated materials as well as the most innate and varied movements. All geometry that neglects such effects or passes over them in silence, claiming who knows what essential idealization, would only ever be an ossified, abstract geometry'].
- ¹⁶ In 1963, Ben Bella appointed Bennabi his minister of higher education after his return from Cairo, where he fled during the war.
- ¹⁷ I have yet to uncover documentation of Bouchama's efforts in this regard, but they would certainly be a fruitful focus for further research.

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Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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