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Assimilation, Association, And Modernism In The Urbanism Of The French Third Republic

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Table of Contents

Abstract

The regime of settler-colonialism present in Algeria during the French Third Republic (1870-1940) facilitated a certain mythos of Republican French renewal. Given the value French culture places on aesthetics, the colonial architecture and urban forms in French colonies was treated quite seriously. the intense political conflict and directed acculturation which characterised European imperialism, the colonial city brings many of the interactions between culture and politics into sharp relief. This thesis adds to the previous literature concerning colonial urbanism by examining the colonial ideologies embedded within Le Corbusier's master plans for Algiers. His work remains influential and controversial within architecture and urban theory. Using a comparative approach this thesis contends that colonialism, and specifically racialized colonial violence, is inseparable from Le Corbusier's work.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Introduction

The architectural theorist Wolfgang Braunfels viewed the component features of the built environment as signs of "power, wealth, idealism, even the misery of its builders or their contemporaries" (Braunfels 1997). In other words the buildings we design have both functional and cultural characteristics. Furthermore, the built environment is also political; architecture is frequently used to communicate the ideals valued by the ruling governmental regime. However, on a larger scale, interventions into urbanism have the capacity to reorder the sociopolitical interactions between a city's inhabitants.

As a hub of social, economic, and cultural activities, cities lend themselves intuitively to multidisciplinary study. The cultural and political intersections of the built environment remain an important subject of research within the disciplines of history, sociology, and anthropology, as well as the contemporary fields of study concerned with Modernity or Colonialism. Given the intense political conflict and directed acculturation which characterised European imperialism, the colonial city brings many of the interactions between culture and politics into sharp relief. Given the value French culture places on aesthetics, the colonial architecture and urban forms in French colonies was treated quite seriously. The regime of

Table of Contents

settler-colonialism present in Algeria during the French Third Republic (1870-1940)

facilitated a certain mythos of Republican French renewal. Urban designers and

colonial planners had accumulated accolades and secured many prestigious

designs in the colonies. They projected upon their proposals in Algeria the imagined

geography of a wilderness waiting to be civilized by French *colons,* not unlike

American tales of Manifest Destiny. Colonial administrator and Marshal of the Third

Republic Hubert Lyuatey referred to Algeria as " an excellent testing ground for

energy, rejuvenation and fertility" (Lyautey 52). Building on this idea of the colonies

as an urban laboratory, this thesis adds to the previous literature concerning

colonial urbanism by examining the colonial ideologies embedded within Le

Corbusier's master plans for Algiers.

Research Question

Le Corbusier, born Charles-Édouard Jeanneeret in 1887, was a naturalised

French designer and urban planner who designed a series of urban plans for the

city of Algiers between 1931 and 1942. While none of his plans for Algiers were

ever built, they nonetheless provide a unique insight into how colonial actors

channeled the ideologies of French colonialism into the built environment. As one of

the preeminent French architects of the twentieth century, much of Le Corbusier's

Table of Contents

work has had a profound impact on the fields of urban planning and architecture to this day; in 2016 seventeen of Le Corbusier's architectural pieces were inscribed to the World Heritage List. Due to this level of influence over global planning practices it is necessary to further examine his work from a critical perspective. Not one to shy away from controversy, Le Corbusier pushed boundaries in the architecture of Western Europe. His work outside of the region, particularly his plans for Algiers, cannot be uncoupled from the colonial milieu in which they were conceptualized. This thesis answers several questions: In what manner would Le Corbusier's proposed city affect indigenous Algerians? What can Le Corbusier's theoretical writings tell us about French ideologies of colonialism? What does a closer examination of his writings tell us about metropolitan French life during the twentieth century?

I argue that while Le Corbursier's proposal for Algiers were not conceptualized within either the Assimilationism of the Associationism model of colonial urbanism, the Modernist designs were firmly centered within colonial ideologies of European supremacy. Despite Le Corbusier's view that this standardized approach to urbansim presented a clean break with the French architectural establishment, his master plan for Algiers actually resembles aspects of both Assimilationist and Associationist planning practices and discourses. If

Table of Contents

anything, Le Corbusier took the notion of colonial governance through design into its next stage.

French Approaches to Colonialism: A Theoretical Frame

French colonialism is often examined within the framework of Assimilation and Association, which are differing strategies of colonial governance regarding indigenous people. These terms are not employed uniformly throughout scholarship of colonial France; colonial historian Martin Lewis notes that legal, cultural, and political definitions of these terms are often incongruent and confusing. He declared: " It is easy to show that this latter term first appeared in the literature of French colonialism as a proposed alternative to 'assimilation', but it is equally true that the two words did not long remain different (Lewis 1962).

In 1895 French legal theorist Arthur Girault wrote the about Assimilationist approach, "If it is hoped to be able to inculcate them with our ideas and our customs, then one works zealously to make them into Frenchmen" (quoted from Lewis 1962, 120). Many advocates of Assimilation considered it the duty of France to propagate the "civilized" French culture abroad. This notion, referred to as the "mission civilisatrice" or literally the civilising mission, was used to justify countless acts of violence against indigenous populations.

Table of Contents

Despite being frequently categorized as a more benevolent approach to colonization, the doctrine of Association also resulted in negative outcomes for indigenous populations. As the 19th century ended, many colonial administrators asserted that the vastly different political, socioeconomic, and physical conditions of the colonies necessitated a policy of respect and preservation towards native cultures. Association refers to colonial policies and attitudes which gradually became the preferred approach of the metropolitan French public during the early 1900's; by 1927 Association had been integrated into the educational training for colonial civil servants. Betts (1962) relates a politician's comments regarding Association, 'A colonial system cannot survive unless it is operated from within by the natives who are supposed to benefit from it.'" (31). Other influential advocates for reforming French colonialism (Jules Ferry, Albert Sarrut) emphasize the domain of economic development regarding colonial policy. By integrating colonial subjects into the circulation of capital and extracting natural resources from colonies, Associationists believed a French social order could be cemented without violent means of suppression. Gwendolyn Wright's (1991) examination of Indochina, Madagascar, and Morocco contends that Assimilationist and Associationist doctrines are exemplified in the urban interventions of French colonialists. Paul Rabinow (1989) outlined the manner in which the French understanding of the

Table of Contents

social environment is linked to colonial interventions in the built environment. Both Wright and Rabinow also consider colonial urbanism to be emblematic of Modern life with Wright noting that colonial administrators and designers often sought to reorder society to be in line with principles derived from advancements in science and industry (Wright 1991, 5). Attempts at standardizing the oscillating conditions of colonial cities were widespread, but they rarely produced the colonial regime's intended outcome.

Methods of Inquiry and their Limitations

In this thesis I employ a three step qualitative research design in order to bring to light the problematic implications of Le Corbusier's designs for Algiers. First, I consult a number of primary and source materials including books, essays, and illustrations by Le Corbusier in order to establish the intellectual and aesthetic influences on his design philosophy, as well as the manner in which he conceptualized his design philosophy. He did not see cities as settlements; rather, he conceptualized urban form as works of art that have a functional component. Seemingly innocuous sentiments like this manifested in his urbanism frequently, although when put in place they had many unforeseen outcomes.(Chapter One).

Table of Contents

Next, drawing largely from the anthropological work of Wright and Rabinow, I describe changes to the colonial built environment in terms of the restructuring of power relations and inequality. I establish the historical context of Algiers (spanning from initial colonization in 1830 to the early years of the Vichy regime) as well as several other French colonies. Examining the changing the colonial policies of the Third Republic and their subsequent effects on the built environment contextualizes the ideological drivers of colonial urbanists (Chapter Two and Chapter Three).

Finally, I return to the subject of Algiers. The Fondation Le Corbusier has not digitized the entirety of Le Corbusier's work, including the draft documents which were submitted to the municipal authorities of Algiers. Le Corbusier's edited manuscripts have been published over time, but perhaps more important to this discussion is his monograph on the city, *Poésie sur Alger,* which was completed in 1942 and details his failed proposals for the city. I focus on this document, supplementing some of the lapses in data with other texts written by Le Corbusier. Using a comparative approach I demonstrate that colonialism, and specifically racialized colonial violence, is inseparable from Le Corbusier's work (Chapter Four).

In S*ecurity Territory, and Population,* Michel Foucault points out that by examining power structures, one may catalyze "further analysis of overall society" (Foucault 1977). Even in our so-called postcolonial world, it is imperative to be

Table of Contents

aware of the ways in which our daily lives are influenced by larger powers, and furthermore this research serves as a grave portrayal of the potential dangers of social planning. Given the persisting popularity of his work within urban planning theory, Le Corbusier serves as a cautionary tale for professionals in the built environment.

Chapter One: The Urban Theory of Le Corbusier

As one collaborator once described, Le Corbusier was Swiss by birth, yet French by choice. Le Corbusier was one of the first true famous architects, and the first to understand this dual role of designer-celebrity. He is known for his private homes, his urban plans, his furniture designs, his paintings, and his written contributions to urban planning theory.In addition to writing prolifically, he also used his considerable social capital to advance his design philosophy. His work remains influential, if not controversial within architecture.This is due in part to his influence on the popularity of urban renewal policies throughout the United States, and in part to his allegedly unsavory political leanings. Several of his ideas concerning urban

Table of Contents

design changed throughout his career, but they remained rooted in a minimal universalist approach to the built environment.

Le Corbusier is heavily associated with the Modernist and International architecture movements that originated from Europe in the 20th century. Some of his greatest completed works now serve as patrimonial heritage for France, his chosen homeland. Despite this compelling connection to Metropolitan France, Le Corbusier was a prolific traveler. He traveled all over the world and worked across several continents; his plan for Algiers, which he desperately pursued for thirteen years of his life, was never approved. Many scholars of the man cite the Algiers plan as a changing point in both his career, but also his design.

In his late teens, Le Corbusier began to design private homes after an art teacher encouraged him to become an architect. Having had no formal training in architecture, Le Corbusier's early building designs were largely influenced by traditional Swiss chalets and architectural texts he researched at the library (Journel 2015).

From 1907 to 1914, Le Corbusier spent several years traveling Western Europe and the Mediterranan region to further educate himself on architecture (Le Corbusier 1991). Several buildings Le Corbusier saw during this time influenced his design sensibilities late into his career, such as The Charterhouse of Ema in Italy

Table of Contents

(**Figure I**). He found this monastery in Italy fascinating due to the juxtaposition of the expansive common areas and minute individual quarters, a motif later paralleled in Le Corbusier's residential housing plans (Serenyi 1967).

For nearly two years, Le Corbusier worked as a drafter in the Paris studio of architect Auguste Perrett, who would introduce Le Corbusier to the use of concrete as a medium for both construction and design. Perrett was a controversial architect at the time as many of his designs eschewed "ornament" and instead emphasized the constructed nature of buildings by utilizing simple materials like concrete or terra cotta (Le Corbusier 1991). This minimalist, material-centered style of architecture has become associated with both the Modernist architecture movement as well as Le Corbusier himself.

Conversely, Le Corbusier harbored controversial opinions concerning the prominent architectural style in France at the time, the Beaux-Arts style which was prominent throughout Western Europe in part due to its sponsorship by the French state. Le Corbusier was disillusioned with Beaux-Arts architecture; the Neoclassical and Baroque forms (see **Figure II**) studied at Beaux-Arts struck him as contrived, busy, and derivative. He claimed that the lack of progress in this institution was sowing seeds of doubt among the future architects of France (Le Corbusier 1991).
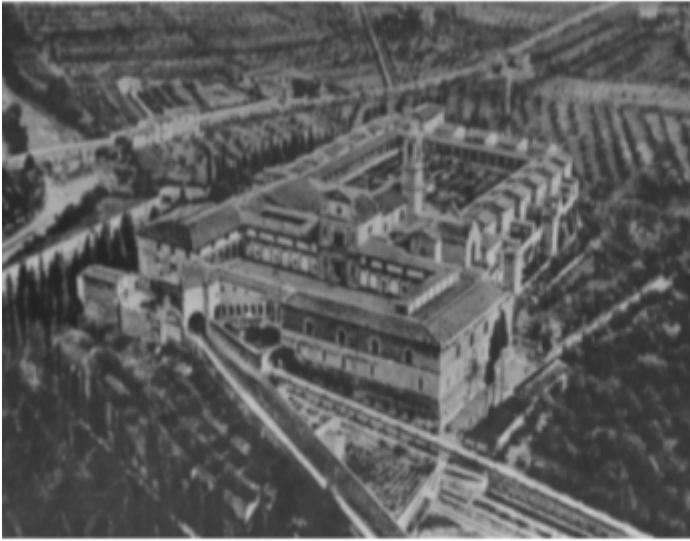
Table of Contents

Figure I. Photograph of *The Charterhouse of Ema*. Serenyi 1967

Figure II : Photograph of The Grand Palais in Paris. Girault 1900

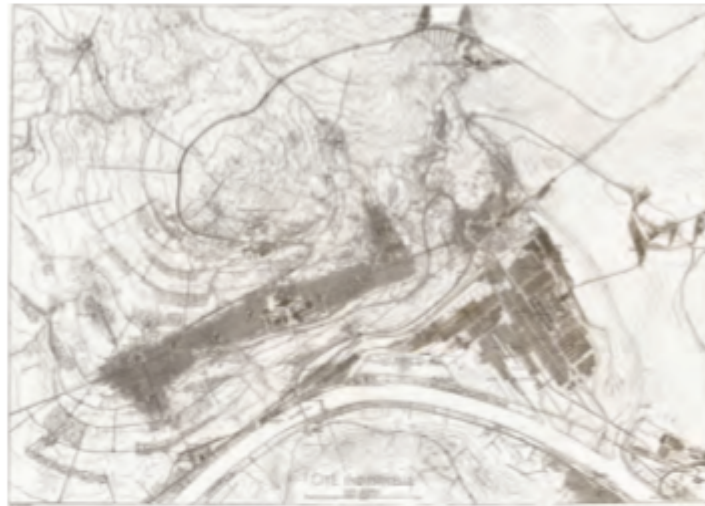Figure III: *Cite Industrielle*. Tony Garnier, 1917

Table of Contents

As I discussed in a previous chapter, France at this time was experiencing a collective apathy towards itself.The Beaux-Arts movement resembled the general malaise of the French government establishment: unwilling or unable to generate innovative solutions, caught in eternal embrace with a romanticized vision of own creation.

On a different leg of his creative pilgrimage around Europe, Le Corbusier met with a Beaux-Arts graduate who shared some of his disdain for the institution. Tony Garnier was a high achieving product of the Beaux-Arts system, and he received the prestigious Prix de Rome to undertake advanced architectural studies at the *Académie de France* in the Italian capital. Garnier's work was met with contempt from the *Académie* because instead of a sketch of a piece of classical architecture, his project instead took the form of a comprehensive city plan (Rabinow 1989). Garnier's *Cité Industrielle (***Figure III**) was primarily concerned with the social issues that a city would face due to industrialization.This approach undermined that of the Beaux-Arts, which proposed architecture was the pursuit of "harmonious monumentality" (Rabinow 1989, 220). This departure from the norms of French architectural practice inspired his colleagues and subsequent cohorts of Prix de Rome recipients to also bend the rules of the *Académie de France,* and cemented Garnier among the canon of modernist architects*.*

Table of Contents

Le Corbusier praised the *Cité Industrielle* as a prime example of "the French genius of scientific planning" and his later work incorporated many of Garnier's innovations (Le Corbusier 1991). The separation of the city into functional zones (for example separate industrial zones, commerce zones, and residential areas) as well as the recommendations regarding growth and the question of preserving historic quarters influenced Le Corbusier and urban theory as a whole. The city was built around an industrial center, and consisted of additional residential, administrative, and healthcare-orientated zones. In Garnier's *Cite Industrielle*, the urban form is designed around the needs of the residents as opposed to the historical centers of religious or state authority; churches and law enforcement facilities are notably absent from the design.

Heavily influenced by the rate of technological advancement in his lifetime, Garnier subscribed to the belief that the emergence of an industrial working class would restructure society in a way that would render "overt forces of order" obsolete (Rabinow 1989, 231). Rabinow (1989) describes the template of the *Cité Industrielle* as an attempt to demonstrate the spatial viability of technologies of governmentality; as opposed to simply a collection of buildings where people live, Garnier had realized that a city's physical form could be manipulated to influence the lives of its inhabitants (232). For Le Corbusier, the refusal of cultural institutions

Table of Contents

such as Beaux-Arts to change with evolving social conditions constituted an act of

hypocrisy. Noting the impact of Garnier and his peers, he claims that the "ivory

tower" of Beaux-Arts is "doomed" (Le Corbusier 1991, 11). Galvanized by a

renewed sense of artistic fervor, Le Corbusier began to expand on his vision for a

new architecture.

Shortly after the First World War Le Corbusier settled in Paris and opened an

architecture studio. In his writings from the era he says much of his time following

the war was spent considering the "industrial and economic problems" of the period

(Le Corbusier 1991, 11). Some of the language he uses to describe this period

resembles revolutionary socialist rhetoric: "A Great Epoch has begun...Industry,

overwhelming us like a flood towards its destined ends, has furnished us with new

tools adapted to the new epoch" (Le Corbusier 1991, 11). While these early forays

into written theory affirm the notion that social conditions are affected by the built

environment, Le Corbusier stressed the importance of architectural form and urban

form in solving the emerging social conflicts.

Having achieved moderate notability in the Parisian art scene by pioneering

the "Purism" movement of painting , Le Corbusier and his colleague Amédée

Ozenfant began a publication called *L'Esprit Nouveau* to circulate their avant garde

philosophy.The first issue began by saying "A great epoch which is animated by a

Table of Contents

new spirit has opened: The spirit of construction and synthesis directed by clear

purpose" (Le Corbusier 1991). It was during his editorial stint that he adopted the

name Le Corbusier, his grandfather's nickname. Even in this phase of creative

expression centered on paintings, concepts arise that will be revisited throughout

his work in the built environment. The Purists viewed the concept of a piece as the

only meaningful metric to judge it upon, and they claimed that art had an inherent

hierarchy, with decorative arts at the bottom and the human form at the top. Many of

Le Corbusier's paintings were strikingly simple depictions of industrial objects in

what could almost be called a technocratic reinterpretation of cubism.

In one article he penned for *L'Esprit Nouveau,* Le Corbusier tries to explain

how he perceives meaning from form; in his speculation, he imagines several

non-Europeans coming across a ball, and not recognizing it they assume it is of

godly qualities (Jeanneret & Ozenfant 1920). These editorials are important

because they reflect not only the grandiose personality of Le Corbusier, but also

how he viewed other cultures, races, and artists. It is evident in some of his writing

that Le Corbusier was insecure, if not disappointed, with the direction in which

French culture was proceeding. He discussed with a sort of envy Austrian trends in

interior design while in the same sentence accusing Paris of "academic lethargy"

Table of Contents

(Le Corbusier 1991). This demonstrates Le Corbusier's personal cultural hierarchy in which the French civilization is supreme.

These sentiments are visible in some of his writings about architecture as he began to experiment with formalist designs in the mid 1920s. For Le Corbusier architecture was "construction achieved by the triumph of intellect" and according to him this phenomenon of problem solving was a "microcosmic synthesis of contemporary history" (Le Corbusier 1991).

He published his first book *Towards an Architecture* in 1923, where he expanded upon some of his ideas concerning the built environment. This book gives us one of Le Corbusier's most quoted lines, "A house is a machine for living in" which highlights the formalism that his work is characterized by. Le Corbusier wanted to redefine the manner in which humans interacted with their surroundings (Le Corbusier 1931). He called not just for the simplification of architectural aesthetics, but for a complete restructuring of how the built environment is designed. Le Corbusier stated that he wished for Architects to become the elite of society, while also calling for diploma programs for architecture to be dismantled (Le Corbusier 1991, 14). While that statement could imply an insecurity in his non-traditional path to becoming an architect, Le Corbusier was not a modest man. He personally tasked himself with "the re-equipment of contemporary society" and

Table of Contents

saw his work as preparation for the "urgent problem...to be taken in hand" (Le

Corbusier 1991, 14).

An example of his ambition is 1922's *Ville contemporaine,* which was a

model city designed to house three million residents (Le Corbusier 1991). It was

presented at Salon d'Automne, an annual arts conference intended to balance out a

governmental event of the same type. One of the goals of this ultimately unrealized

plan was to construct massive steel and glass skyscrapers amid vast expanses of

greenspace. The rest of the city was separated strictly by function. A business

center was connected to the residential blocks by raised transportation avenues; a

separate level was proposed for pedestrian, automobile, and even air traffic (Le

Corbusier 1991). This concerted division of the city and affinity for high rise

construction became emblematic of Le Corbusier's work.

A revised version of the Ville contemporaine, called the Plan Voisin, was

proposed by Le Corbusier at the fourth International Congress of Modern

Architecture (CIAM) in 1933. This plan became the basis for the Athens Charter,

which was a highly influential document CIAM published. Architectural historian

Witold Rybczynski describes the negative results of the Athens Charter:

> Despite the poetic title, his urban vision was authoritarian, inflexible and
> simplistic. Wherever it was tried—in Chandigarh [a city in indian designed by
> Le Corbusier] by Le Corbusier himself or in Brasilia by his followers—it failed.
> Standardization proved inhuman and disorienting. The open spaces were

inhospitable; the bureaucratically imposed plan, socially destructive. In the US, the Radiant City took the form of vast urban-renewal schemes and regimented public housing projects that damaged the urban fabric beyond repair." (Rybczynski 1998)

Chapter Two: Assimilation and Genocide

An earlier draft of this chapter was a historical summary of the colonization of

Algeria by the French. However, the goal of this chapter is to describe how the

ideology of Assimilationism affected the built environment in Algeria. The invasion

and subsequent occupation of Algerian coastal cities by the French military had

negative consequences for both the housing stock and cultural sites of these areas.

Furthermore, the introduction of European-style land tenure, which James Scott has

noted is key to collecting taxes and making colonial subjects ""knowable"" to empire

(Scott 1999), initiated a period of land speculation which exacerbated the issues

colonization posed for indegnous Algerians.

The French colonization of Algeria started in 1830, as Charles X of France

was becoming increasingly unpopular amongst his subjects. Desperate to unite the

country behind him, he used a diplomatic scandal between the Ottoman regent of

Table of Contents

Algiers and the French ambassador as pretext for a punitive expedition. On July 4th

1830, the main defenses of Algiers had fallen, and the French captured the city. On

July 5th the Ottoman governor of Algiers, Hussien Dey, was exiled while French

generals formed a military government. This occupational government sent out a

notice assuring the freedom to practice Islam and the protection of "property,

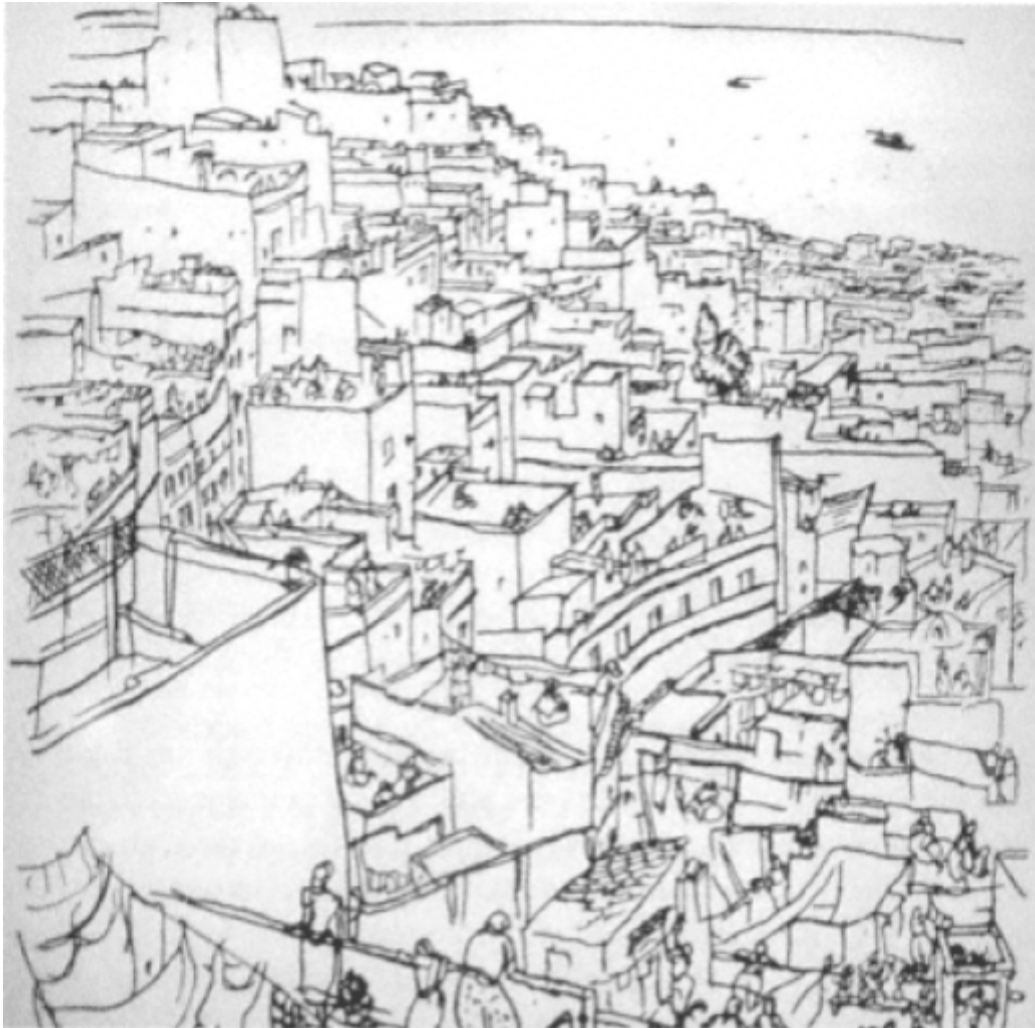business, and industry" to the residents of the Algiers. The protections were

Figure IV- The Casbah of Algiers as sketched by Charles
Brouty, 1935.

Table of Contents

disregarded by French troops, who subsequently raided the Casbah, or "old city"
(Figure IV).

The soldiers desecrated places of worship, looted homes and businesses,
and killed approximately 400 people (Ruedy 2005, 48).

Because of initially lukewarm support towards active colonization in mainland
France and persistent indigenous resistance outside of the occupied coastal cities,
the French sought to extend the sphere of French control in rural Algeria by making
power-sharing agreements with local tribal leaders (Prochaska 2002). After a
significant rebellion was initiated by one of these French affiliates, French troops
initiated a violent expansion of occupied territory. Abd al-Qadir is perhaps the most
famous of these resistance fighters, and he is now remembered as a national hero
in Algeria. The French undertook a ruthless "pacification" campaign, which some
scholars now refer to as a genocide (Bennoune 2002, 40). Despite the use of total
war tactics like famine and civilian massacres, much of the French establishment
viewed the pacification campaign as a means to deliver "civilization" to the region.

In 1833 the French government sent a commission to Algeria to write a
report on the possible benefits of colonization. The final report claimed that

Table of Contents

colonization would benefit France in several ways, including deescalating the

growing discontent amongst the urban working classes in France (Bennoune 2002,

35). France annexed the occupied territories in 1834, which set off the speculative

land rush. The military leadership at the time had already begun seizing large tracts

of land from local landowners for their private benefit (Ruedy 2005, 52). The French

also tried to change parts of society in rural areas by issuing laws designed to

fracture tribes and institute private property, although the titles distributed to

indigenous peoples were often useless. Estates were divided into fractions of a

square meter with the largest portions often going to settlers (Bennoune 2002, 44).

Parallel to the suppression of resistance fighters was the influx of European

settlers and the passage of land into European hands. From 1841-1851 the

European population in Algeria nearly quadrupled, while European land ownership

grew from 37,000 hectares to 132,000 hectares (Ruedy 2005, 69). As much as fifty

percent of these *colons* were not French and they did not have much money;

instead they were from Spain, Italy, and other economically stagnating regions

along the Mediterranean. Many of the descendants of these immigrants would later

be granted French citizenship (Ruedy 2005, 69). The settlers viewed the military

government in Algeria as an impediment to their business expansion efforts. In

1848 Algeria was incorporated into French territory as three *départments.* This

Table of Contents

reclassification is significant because it changed the way in which French people in the metropole understood the colonization process, as well as giving the Europeans settlers the rights of a French citizen (Ruedy 2005, 71).

The settler colony has the goal of the elimination of native populations for the benefit of the colonists; this goal was never fully achieved in Algeria as the majority of hard labor was done by native Algerians, despite the steep casualties the indigenous peoples were subjected to (Sessions 2013, 179). Prochaska (2002) notes the harsh labor conditions that native Algerians were often forced into:

> "After subduing the native inhabitants of Bone, the next step in creating a colonial city was to seize the land and take control of the natural resources... Booty, plunder, the extraction of minerals and other wealth easily obtained gave way only overtime to the kind of... back-breaking colonization entailed in farming and town-building; road, railway, and port construction; in short, to the kind of colonial exploitation the French like to call mise en valeur." (Prochaska 2002, 63)

Also indicative of the settler-colonial regime is the actual legal status of Algerians. They were considered French subjects, although they could not receive the full benefits of citizenship unless they renounced Islam and agreed to live by the French civil code (Prochaska 2002). This uncompromising policy of assimilation subsequently fell out of popularity with colonial administrators in other parts of Africa and indeed across the breadth of the French colonial empire. This shifting of

attitudes coincided with (or perhaps was influenced by) a period of economic and political stagnation in France, which was most visible in its urban centers. The economic cost that Algeria posed to France motivated several legislators to advocate for a colonial model wherein colonies paid for themselves. Before he was prime minister, Albert Sarraut exercised an influence over colonial politics in France and advocated for a colonization model based on economic expansion (Thomas 2005) .

Chapter Three: Associationism

To paraphrase colonial architect Henri Prost, one had to live in Paris at the turn of the twentieth century and see the decay of urban life first-hand in order to fully understand the "anguish" with which people lived (Wright 1991, 17). Suffering a humiliating defeat during the Franco-Prussian war, France was falling behind the rest of Europe in a spectacular way. Despite the installation of electricity throughout Paris, the City of lights was plagued by poverty and disease. The industrial suburbs on the outskirts of the city had death rates up to five times that of the affluent 9th arrondissement (Merriman 2009). The overall mortality rate was much higher in France than in any of its immediate neighbors; France soon experienced an increase in suicide as well, as Emile Durkheim famously examined (Wright 16). This

Table of Contents

social unrest, along with the political ineffectiveness of the Third Republic's

parliamentary regime, and the technological innovations facilitated by the industrial

revolution left many middle class French people feeling alienated in their own

country (Merriman 2009, 16). An example of the political stagnation can be seen in

a 1902 law passed by French legislators which mandated that large cities formulate

public health regulations (Wright 1991,16). This law was first proposed in 1866 by

Jules Sigfried, but as it lacked an enforcement mechanism the law did little to

change the material conditions of French cities. Catholic pundits, socialist

reformers, and even militant anarchists all called for broad changes to society,

although they rarely agreed with each other on the specific methodology of

implementing the ideal ordering of social, political, and economic factors.

It is from these conditions that French intellectuals began thinking of the

desired social cohesion in relation to changes made to the urban environment

(Wright 18). For young architects and urban reformers, the opportunities in

mainland France offered little prestige or professional development.The colonies

represented a chance to prove one's skill not only in terms of aesthetics, but also in

regards to the growing interest in the social conditions of the city (Wright 19). The

colonial opportunity to disregard the stagnation of the metropole may have played a

Table of Contents

hand in shifting the official colonial policy from an assimilationist position to a slightly more hospitable, yet still highly problematic associationist policy.

Assimilation was rooted in the assumed cultural supremacy of European nations over colonized nations, and it was enacted by overt military force. Associationism, as the other school of thought was known, called for the respect and preservation of indigenous cultures. It is important to note that the driving factor behind associationism was not sympathy towards colonized people; by reducing the amount of military force required to maintain control over colonial populations, the colonial project could be greatly streamlined (Wright 75). By 1920, associationism was incorporated into the curriculum for colonial civil servants of France and it became the de facto policy going forwards (Thomas 2005).

Associationism is associated quite closely with Hubert Lyautey, whose highly-decorated career in the French Army spanned 52 years and several continents. Lyautey oversaw massive colonial reforms in Indochina and he was named the first French Resident-General in Morocco from 1912 to 1925. His influence on French colonial politics was profound, in part due to his prolific writing upon the subject. Gwendolyn Wright and Paul Rabinow have each written detailed accounts of French colonial urbanism in Indochina, Madagascar, and Morocco during the shift towards associationism.

Table of Contents

The inhabitants of French territories in Southeast Asia were diverse in language, culture, and history; yet French Indochina was originally administered under the assimilationist model of colonization for thirty years (Rabinow 1989, 148). The architecture chosen by governors-general during this period were ostentatious, costly and often crude replicas of Parisian buildings, which did little to instill a sense of enthusiasm for the colonizing project among the few *colons* who did move to Indochina. The colonial government spent millions of francs on highways, trains, and public works projects in an attempt to demonstrate the power of French civilization. Despite this infrastructure built in an attempt to enhance French economic interests, the exploitation of Indochina's natural resources would not begin in earnest for several more decades, as the government struggled to assert political and economic control over the region.

Lyautey began to understand the benefits of associationism first hand. The traditional walled village of northern Vietnam was small, close knit, and operated with relative autonomy (Wright 1991,164). He realized that by cultivating a positive relationship with these communities, he could expand French influence further into the countryside, potentially bypassing the decades of counterinsurgency that has plagued Algeria. This is significant as it demonstrates the shifting role of the traditional urban forms in colonial policy. Instead of regarding Indochinese

Table of Contents

architecture as primitive barriers to French control, Gallieni saw the strategic and

political value inherent to the form (Rabinow 1989, 148). Despite the overtly

associationist speeches of the governor-general Albert Sarraut, French Indochina's

urban reforms were practically destined to fail. Nearly half of the French population

in Indochina was employed by the state by the year 1900, a grand level

administrative bloat which relied on high tax rates on the indigenous majority in

order to stay afloat (Wright 19991, 194). To facilitate the collection, transport, and

Figure V- National Museum of Vietnamese History. Constructed 1958. Image from Museum website.

Table of Contents

security of these taxes several thousand public buildings that featured aesthetic allusions to local architecture were built across Indochina (Figure V).

The 1920s finally brought a governmental planning agency whose most notable achievements came under the direction of Beaux-Arts trained Architect Ernest Hébrard. Under Hébrard, the major cities of Indochina were divided into zones based on both function and social class (Wright 19991, 214). While ostensibly protecting the cultural heritage of Indochinese subjects, Hébrard's zones excluded these same people from the prosperity an influx of foreign investment brought over the decade. Agrarian Indochinese peoples were relocated by force en masse to work in industrial rubber farms and rice plantations in severe, inhumane conditions. Makeshift settlements sprung up around cities, as displaced Indochinese people sought out a way of making a living. There is an obvious disconnect between the alleged cultural respect rendered in the manner of architectural form and the abhorrent violence the colonial state employed against non-European subjects. Violence in the colonies became unpalatable for many French colonial actors, including Lyautey.

Lyautey's time in Indochina ended in 1897, yet his experiences there impacted his subsequent philosophy towards colonization. Lyautey would once again reckon with issues of racial policy, land speculation, and the role urbanists

Table of Contents

had in extending colonialism during his three year tour of duty in Madagascar

(Wright 1991 and Rabinow 1989). He was tasked with pacifying the southern third

of the island by the French Governor, Joseph Galleni. By expanding public services

like hospitals, schools, and post offices to the countryside, Lyautey sought to

portray the colonial state as a friend to indigneous ways. Personally planning two

provincial capitals in southern Madagascar, Lyautey took great pride in the

traditional architectural forms he chose for civic buildings serving indigneous people

(Wright 1991, 260). Lyautey envisioned a colonial cityscape in which Europeans

and indigneous groups lived apart from each other, which he saw as a measure to

maintain order (Lyautey 1927).

Gallieni realised the value of French rule emulating that of the Merina dynasty which

previously ruled Madagascar . He issued an order appropriating the former royal

palace and tombs as historical sites while also moving his troops into the former

residence of the prime minister. A smaller residence in the royal compound became

the home of the *Académie Malgache,* a research institute charged by Gallieni to

study the cultures and history of Madagascar (Wright 253). These indications of

respect towards the traditions of Madagascar were in many ways symbolic, as

Gallieni's government proceeded in distributing millions of acres of land into the

hands of European plantation owners and industrial interests.

Chapter Four: Analysis Le Corbusier's Algiers

Despite completing the manuscript in 1942 Le Corbusier delayed the publication of *Poésie sur Alger* until 1950, presumably taking eight years to dwell on his failure to redesign Algiers. In this book he discusses his thirteen year body of work concerning Algiers, during which he drafted and submitted to the city government seven master plans free-of-charge. It is with a bitter sarcasm that he relates his approach to the design of a master plan; the book is really more of a argument on behalf of his "poetic" design than a detailed technical document. Le Corbusier states in the introduction that he views urban planning as "an expression of a society's vitality" (Le Corbusier 1950, 3). This sentiment implies that the master plan suggested by Le Corbusier for the city of Algiers did not aim inherently to improve the lives of residents, but rather to demonstrate to the world the glory of French civilization. In Le Corbusier's master plan Algiers fell upon an axis with Paris and was in fact situated as a polar city across the Mediterranean from Rome and Barcelona. Referring to Algiers as the "face of French Africa", Le Corbusier saw the city as the heir to the civilizations of the Phonecians, Romans, and notably vague

Table of Contents

"Musllm" (Le Corbusier 1950, 40). However, he posits the splendor he is after can only be achieved within the reign of one thought (presumably his).

He begins his treatment of the physical city by praising the Casbah, the walled medina built by the Ottomans. Le Corbusier (1950) saw his master plan as a way of rectifying the previous half century of European demolition (17). In what he attributes to "instinct", the plan called for massive arterial byways to be "cut" through the homes and streets of the neighborhoods near the sea, right up into the rocky heights that overlook the city. He objected to the prevalence of apartment blocks in Algiers based upon the lack of greenery, space and scenery. He wanted palm trees planted throughout the marine quarters, and he envisioned a complete development of the heights into a residential area fit for three hundred thousand people (**See Figure IV**). This projection separates the inhabitants into "European" and "Muslim" areas, again making spatial prescriptions to broadly generalized populations. Zoning was a key component of Le Corbusier's master plan, albeit this zoning was primarily focused on land use, with density and development more of an afterthought. Also present in Le Corbusier's plan was a revitalised transportation system. However, in a characteristically over ambitious fashion, Le Corbusier planned not only for segregated pedestrian and automobile traffic corridors but also elevated platforms for use by personal airplanes.

Table of Contents

The indigenous populations of Algiers were to be contained within the already crowded casbah, and additionally Le Corbusier's transportation was off limits to Algerians, allegedly in order to reduce traffic congestion (Le Corbusier 1950, 64). This demonstrates an approach towards native policy that was "associationist" in that the traditional forms of the medina were to be retained, although the broader need for housing and economic development within indignous communities were to be ignored. Additionally, the medina was likely to be preserved as a tourist attraction. These transportation arteries linked the residential villas in the heights to the "Cité d'affaires", a business park centered on the maritime quarter. These corridors completely bypassed the casbah, as well as the worker's housing underneath. The marine quarter itself was to be revamped with much of the pre-colonial buildings being demolished for the business centers; only the palaces and the Grand Mosque were to be preserved. This again shows the intention of priming Algiers as a node of European capitalist power, wherein only those structures which would enhance the prestige (and therefore facilitate economic activity) were retained.

Although none of Le Corbusier's plans for Algiers were ever built, it is possible to consider the words of the urbanists who were actually in charge of the spatial development of the city. Documents from the *Congrès International De*

Table of Contents

L'Urbanisme Aux Colonies Et Dans Les Pays De Latitude Intertropicale from 1931,

a planning agenda proposed by noted colonial architect Henri Prost in 1936, and

the decade's worth of revisions Le Corbusier made to his plan were compared. The

documents were chosen because they originate from a relatively condensed range

of time in the colonial period and they also will give insight into the way in which

mainstream French urbanists approached planning in the colonies.

  The *Congrès International De L'urbanisme Aux Colonies Et Dans Les Pays

De Latitude Intertropicale* was intervened in 1931 in Paris as part of a six month

long colonial exposition that aimed to mark a century of French rule in Algeria. For

the printed collection of reports, the group secured Marshall Hubert Lyautey to write

the preface; like in the rest of France, the Marshall's legacy as an empire builder

elevated him to a hero in the eyes of these urbanists (Royer et al. 1932). Lyautey

remarks upon two issues which defined his career: indigenous policy and urbanism.

According to Lyautey urban planning " is of the same family as the Indigenous

policy" (Royer et al. 1932). Lyautey goes on to stress the importance of preservation

in regards to urbanism; this seemingly beneficent attitude towards indigenous

architectural forms was rooted in Orientalist ideology.

  Edmond du Vivier de Streel acknowledges the complex importance of urban

forms in the lives of residents. Consistent with the philosophy of the *mission*

Table of Contents

civilisatrice, he saw urbanism as linked to the "destiny" of "evolving peoples" (Royer et al. 1932). Expanding upon the role of the colonizer, de Streel praises a law put in place by Lyautey which prohibited the integration of indegnous populations into European neighborhoods and vice versa (Figure VI).

Figure VI- Aerial photograph of Algiers circa 1935. Note the visible seam between of the casbah (on the right) and the French quarters (on the left). (from Çelik 1997).

Table of Contents

This document is rife with references to the "primitive countries"; and much of the commentary centers the needs of european emigrants over the native populations, namely concerns of "health" and components of economic activity such as wide avenues. In a section written by Prost, urbanism is framed as an essential component in developing the morality of a colonised region (Royer et al. 1932). By equating European colonization with an objective morality, these urbanists are enthusiastically propping up what Michele Lamprakos referred to as "dependent capitalism" (Lamprakos 1992).

In regards to Algiers, the *Congres* saw development as intrinsically linked to the "colonizing work" (Royer et al. 1932). After a summary of the urban interventions undertaken by the French since 1831, the document briefly outlines a plan for development adopted in 1923 (Royer et al. 1932). Partially in reaction to a post-war boom in real estate speculation and partially in response to an unexpected population increase, the plan emphasizes circulation and health considerations. This is achieved through the cross city arterial boulevards that one might expect from the French, as well as the displacement of around 15,000 residents (Royer et al. 1932). The casbah was considered overcrowded and difficult for the French to regulate. Therefore, plans were made for *banlieues* to be built on the edges of the city for the increasing Arab population.

Table of Contents

In addition to his participation in the *Congrès,* Prost also published a plan for the regional development of Algiers about five years later in *Urbanisme : Revue Mensuelle De L'urbanisme Français.* Despite being much shorter in length, this document revisits some of the issues that were brought up in 1931 and expands upon them.

He begins by describing the aforementioned real estate expansion in light of the population increase of 75% from 1914 to 1935 (Prost 1936). He then outlines the negative effect that this rapid, unmanaged development could have on the safety of these new buildings. Additionally, he criticizes the new developments as potentially limiting tourism for the city (Prost 1936).

Prost praised the municipal plan as a safeguard against the "massacre of one of the most beautiful Mediterranean sites" which was "clairvoyant" in its implementation (Prost 1936). Prost also acknowledges the difficulty of formulating a regional plan, noting both the vast, uneven terrain and the coordination between interdependent municipalities.

The document stresses zoning and density planning as integral to the success of the region, and calls for six main areas for future planning: circulation and traffic, regional zoning codes, slum sanitization and relocating displaced residents, the construction of housing for indigous workers, preserving open space

wherever possible, and revitalizing the maritime port. He presses for a system of

highways and belt roads to be adopted to facilitate access in and out of the city.

This technical summary still makes apparent a few important factors. The

indigenous Algerian is considered in this document as a source of labor, which

while essential to the economic interests of the French ruling class must remain

separate from civilized society given the cultural and religious differences between

the two entities. Furthermore, while the sanitization effort is not discussed in depth,

the fact that relocation is mentioned in the same section indicates a top-down

approach that European settlers would likely object to. This plan seeks to

strengthen and expand the capitalist reach into the hills surrounding Algiers, with

the native settlements acting not as residences but as revenue earning tourist

attractions. The economic viability of Algiers was essential, as Prost saw it, to the

city's role as the "capital of North Africa" (Prost 1936).

Conclusion

Le Corbusier's master plan for Algiers is futuristic and wildly ambitious even

with today's technological advancements; it is also contrived from within and for the

Table of Contents

benefit of white supremacy and capital. Le Corbusier traveled prolifically around the globe during his life, working in places as far apart as Brazil, Soviet Russia, and even India; yet for thirteen years of his life, Algiers was one of his main inspirations. If his master plan had been implemented, it is likely the Casbah of Algiers would be engulfed by European development much in the same way Rabat's old city was subject to "museumification". His plan differed from the adopted proposal in form, yet ideologically both projects sought to expand French influence over North Africa, benefiting European society through the exploitation, oppression, and destruction of indigenosu peoples and customs.,

While the political underpinnings of his work are still the subject of debate, Le Corbusier was friendly with Petain's Vichy government and also associated with the first group of French fascists, Le Faisceau des Combattants et Producteurs (Brott 2013). This group was formed from several smaller, sometimes ideologically opposed political groups. Georges Valois, the founder of the party, advocated violent revolution to oust the bourgeois democracy and install a dictator. In 1927, the newspaper of Le Faisceau published a feature length story about Le Corbusier's *Plan Voisin.* For Valois, the plan proposed by Le Corbusier described the ideal fascist state (Figure VII). There were also similarities in the ways in which the two men described the social conditions and the origin of these conditions; each also

Table of Contents

advocated for the undoing of the status quo (Brott 2013). Le Corbusier gave a slide-show lecture to the party a few months later where he explained his ideas for "rebirth of Paris" (Brott 2013). Fraternizing with reactionaries is not an isolated incident in terms of Le Corbusier's political activities. Dr. Alexis Carrel was a Nobel Prize winning physician who's 1935 best seller *Man, the Unknown* advocated for the strategic killing of select demographics; he was later placed in charge of Vichy France's eugenics program (Donadio 2016). Carrel and Le Corbusier were fairly enthusiastic about each other's work; Carrel even managed to have Le Corbusier appointed to the board of this program, the French Foundation for the Study of Human Problems, as a technical advisor.

During the Third Republic, both French urbanists and colonial administrators gradually came to see the social conditions of the city as something that could be changed by intervening into the material world. Lyautey and Prost believed their actions were humanitarian, despite rising urban unemployment and homelessness. Although these figures conceived their urbanism as reforms to the violence of early colonialism; Association, they claimed, was a solution to the growing unrest in colonized territories. Le Corbusier positioned himself as a radical reformer as well as a fan of the traditional architecture of Algiers. Yet it would be impossible to complete his version of Algiers without disproportionately negatively affecting

Table of Contents

non-European residents. The urbanism practiced and conceived within the colonial world, by benefactors of colonialism, would only perpetuate violence against the non-dominant population.

Despite "decolonization", other arrangements of power relations are still based on strict regulation to aspects of the built environment. These relations must continue to be evaluated, criticized, and refined to ensure that human suffering is no longer considered to be an auxiliary consequence of 'justified' actions.

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Table of Contents

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Table of Contents

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Table of Contents

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Table of Contents