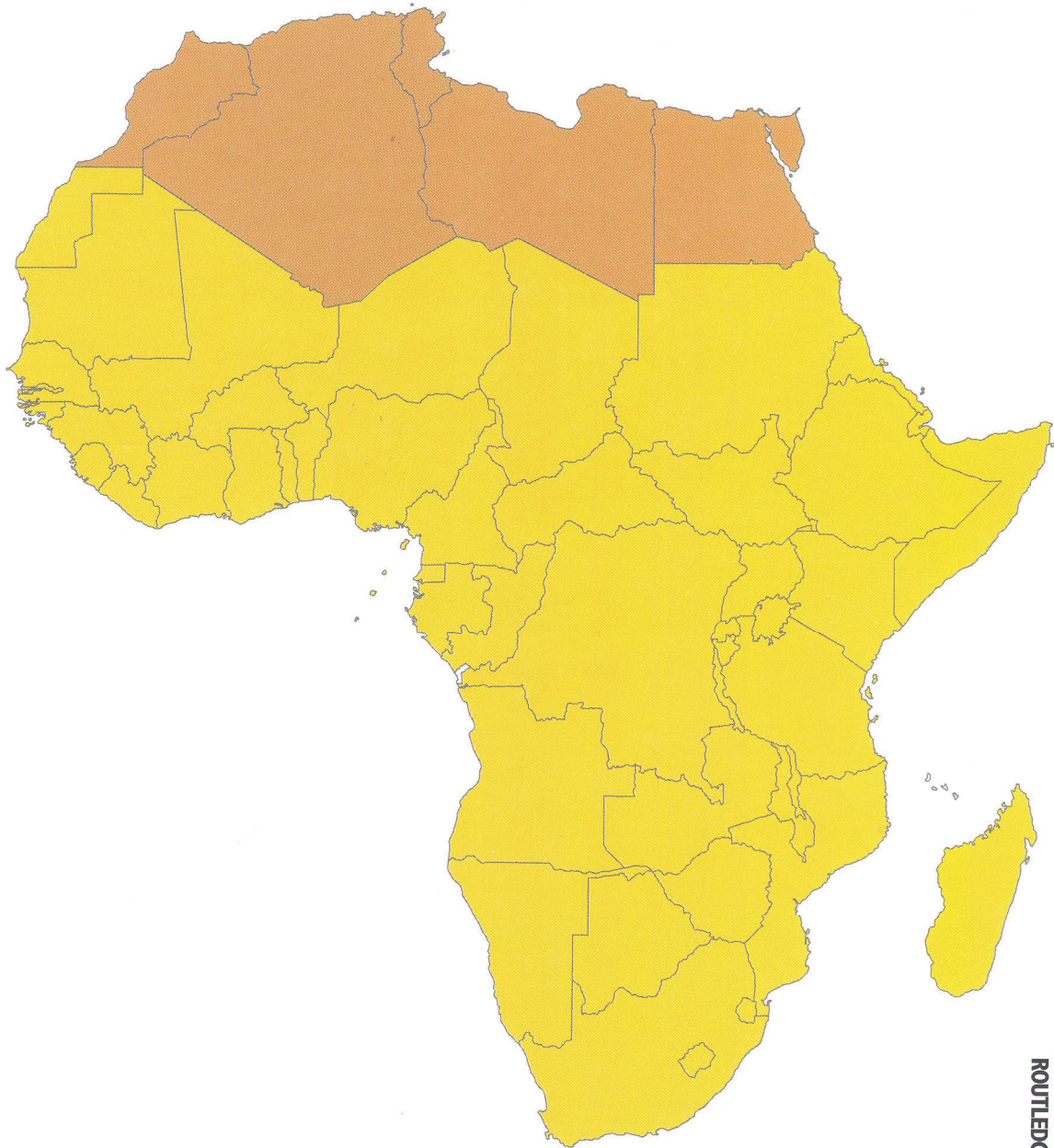


Edited by Carlos Nunes Silva

# Urban Planning in North Africa



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## Chapter 9

# Postcolonial Urban Changes of a Colonial Village: Ain Arnat, Algeria

Said Madani and Abderrahmane Diafat

### Introduction

In the last decades, Algeria has experienced significant demographic growth and a rapid process of urbanization due mainly to rural migration to its main cities. Confronted with this fast and uncontrolled urbanization, Algeria's largest cities have implemented new forms of planned urban expansion, although in most cases largely unsuccessfully. A key feature that characterizes this recent urban growth process in Algeria is certainly the demographic and physical growth of its largest cities, those with over 50,000 inhabitants, in the northern part of the country. But since the 1980s, this demographic and urban growth process has been mostly due to the expansion of small towns located on the outskirts of these main cities and in other parts of the country as well (Chadli and Hadjiedj, 2003).

Since the administrative reform of 1984, based on the law on the territorial organization of the country, small urban centres were promoted to new administrative status (*Commune* and *Daira*) and attracted the attention of public administration authorities due to their potential role in the national territorial policy, whose aim was to rebalance the urban network of Algeria. Within this new approach, new administrative duties and tools were given to those smaller urban centres in the lower tiers of the urban network. Confronted with this new development approach, chosen by the state, many small towns also experienced fast demographic growth and the growth of their urbanized areas.

The aim of the chapter is to contribute to the debate on the process of urban change in colonial hometowns in contemporary Algeria. The analysis is centred on the case of Ain Arnat, one of the first villages created by the Compagnie Genevoise. The chapter comprises four main parts. After the introduction, the first part develops a review of Ain Arnat's background, starting with the Swiss Colonial Settlement in Algeria. The second part presents the city of Ain Arnat and explores the city's postcolonial changes in different periods. In the third and fourth parts, planning tools and intermunicipality as a new planning approach are discussed. Finally, the chapter concludes with recommendations and guidelines for further research.

### Ain Arnat: Background

#### *Swiss Colonial Settlement in Algeria*

In 1853, a financial group created the Compagnie Genevoise des Colonies Suisses de Setif (Geneva Company of the Swiss Colonies of Setif). One of its goals was to establish in Algeria villages populated by Swiss nationals. Switzerland has never possessed colonies, but some of its nationals have tried their chance in Algeria. The Geneva-based company of Swiss colonies of Setif obtained, by Decree of Napoleon III, 20,000 hectares of land near Setif. The company remained active for a century, until its expropriation in 1956 by the French government. With this huge territory, the Company became one of the largest private land owners in Algeria. Among the 20,000 hectares granted, 10,000 were immediately made available to the Company and, at the end of 1855, it had built a village of 50 houses occupied by almost 400 Swiss settlers. As an incentive, in exchange of each settlement built and populated, the company received a fraction of additional land (Lützel Schwab, 2006).

The colonization plan prepared for the Geneva Company was located on the Highlands of Setif. The French administration appointed the location of villages and monitored their construction plans. Each village was founded on land of 2,000 hectares, and was to be composed of 50 houses and every house had to have three bedrooms – a specific accommodation to the farmer and his family. Once a village was built and inhabited, the French government erected a church and a school.

This large company benefited from a special indulgence because its failure could discourage other companies and capital investment in Algeria. However, the company decided to abandon gradually the European cultures, and started to cultivate all land on which it could find natives, Arabs, citizens, interested to become tenants. In doing so, the Swiss were following the example of the British in their colonies.

In his report to Prince Napoleon on 19 December 1858, the Governor General, while talking about this company, states: ‘La Compagnie Genevoise has neither built nor populated or cultivated sufficiently. It was treated as if it had well done everything in a remarkable way. We could not push further our liberality without offending both the principles of fair justice and the true interests of the country’ (Shurer, 1985).

#### *Ain Arnat: The Foundation of the City*

Among the 600 human settlements established during the colonial period, 280 became cities and villages in the 1930s, a century after colonization started (Madani and Diafat, 2002). These urban centres created during the colonial period as villages later became small cities of about 20–50,000 inhabitants. Between Setif and Algiers, the fast demographic growth originated the development of several cities along the RN5, one of them being Ain Arnat. Its creation goes back to 1853.

The highlands of Setif figure as one of Algeria’s places that best combine safety and fertility. The temperature, considering the altitude of the territory (1,100 metres above sea level), appears to be low enough and does not reach, as in some other areas of Algeria, those high temperatures that were unbearable for Europeans.

The vast territory that constitutes the municipality of Arnat has rich and arable land; there are cereals in abundance as well as cattle and sheep, covering the plains. The industrial agriculture also has a chance of success, as it has had in all countries, and promises a certain income. The air is clean here, though quite fresh; approximately it looks like that of Switzerland in winter. (Monbaron, 1990: 52)

With this position in the heartlands of Setif, somehow privileged in terms of climate for the European colonizers, the city of Setif which was in 1830 a military post, including a small garrison, received a civilian population of about 1,200 people and became a military division.

Well located in the highlands and on flat land and only 9 km west of Setif, Ain Arnat is the central point of a vast fertile territory for agriculture. Before the arrival of the settlers, the site was farmland belonging to the Mahdadi family. Ain Arnat is the first founded village on the National Road RN5 (Route Nationale numéro 5) to Algiers. The vicinity of Roman ruins made this site even more attractive to the settlers. It was located at 27 km from the Roman ruins of *Caput Saltus Horreorum*, a wheat granary of ancient Rome.

The site of Ain Arnat was chosen in preference to another because they had discovered there some Roman ruins; this circumstance seemed to the Company a favourable sign of prosperity, the Romans had always shown great discernment in choosing the location of their localities. The Newspaper of Geneva “le Pays” of January 8, 1854 wrote that “... the settlers are happy in the Swiss colonies of Setif to where they emigrated last fall. They give the best information about their position and engage parents to join them. Stimulated by this success, the Company decided, in 1854, the construction of four new centres: COLIGNY now BOUHIRA, AIN MESSAOUD, MAHOUAN and EL OURICIA. By the end of the year 1854, five villages were built. Some industrious settlers in Ain Arnat opened a grocery store, a butcher. A weaver installed a workshop ... a small cigar factory was created ...”. (Camborieux, 1978: 164)

The village, made up of homes and buildings for agricultural usage, was designed around facilities (school, church, garden, and others) in a regular division of blocks. Single-storey buildings were aligned on both sides



of the street with agricultural facilities (stables, repair facilities) on the garden side. Later on, the Algerian autochthons built a *Douar*, a type of spontaneous rural house, on the northern side of the main street RN5.

In 1900, the village of Ain Arnat was administered by the municipality of El Ouricia. At the end of the nineteenth century, the population of Ain Arnat reached 298 people, including 55 French originating from the Alsace Département (Camborieux, 1978). Until 1962, the village experienced very little physical expansion and continued to develop according to a regular grid, while the *Douar* maintained its spontaneous structure. After independence, people from the surrounding areas began to settle in Ain Arnat and occupied the houses left by the colonizers or built new homes.

### **Ain Arnat: The Postcolonial City**

#### *Postcolonial Urban Changes since 1962*

During a long period after independence, small cities in Algeria were neglected in terms of development and planning policy. Before 1974, the tier of small towns in the national urban system was ignored by policy makers and by the national planning tools prepared during that period, although 70.6 per cent of the urban framework consisted of small towns (Cote, 1986). Associated with the fast and strong population and urbanization growth that marked Algeria after independence, as mentioned in previous paragraphs, the country experienced a generalized growth of its large and medium-sized cities due mainly to the intensive rural exodus that characterized the first years post-independence. The integration of these rural migrants was easier in small cities. In this initial period, Ain Arnat was not yet a municipality and came under the administrative control of the municipality of Ain Abessa.

#### *The 1987–1998 Period*

The promotion of Ain Arnat to the status of municipality and as a *Daira* allowed public investment programmes (housing programmes and public facilities) and the introduction of private crafts. Ain Arnat became the chief town of the *Daira*, and as such was selected for the creation of a business and warehouse area offering about 300 jobs and for the revitalization of the military camp and the airport.

The local authorities decided to make Ain Arnat the secondary centre of the city of Setif, where part of the population of Setif could find individual plots of land and public housing. They also provided Ain Arnat with a master plan known as a *Plan directeur d'urbanisme* (PUD) to direct its development and expansion to the north-eastern side and to the southern side of Ain Arnat.

During this period Ain Arnat received new investment programmes (housing programmes and public facilities) allowing the realization of:

- in the north side: two allotments (109 plots and 283 plots)
- in the east side: 209 plots and 370 collective housing units
- in the west and southwest side: three allotments (30 plots, 50 plots, and 35 plots).

#### *The 1998–2008 Period*

One of the main events of this decade was the inauguration of the '8 May 1945' Airport in 2002. It surely contributes to the economy, not only of the city but also of the entire region. The paradox is that the airport is in a situation of turning its back to Ain Arnat city. The military barracks stand as a major barrier to the progress of the airport as they form a large block between the airport and the city and therefore prevent an easy and direct relationship between the two. Unfortunately, this situation is not advantageous to the Ain Arnat community who would have otherwise benefited from the proximity of the airport. Currently passengers are transported directly to Setif and to other destinations without transiting by Ain Arnat. The airport is bordered by the national highway on the southern side and the military barracks on the northern side and that situation constitutes a limitation to its future development. In addition, the limited current capacity of the airport (the



number of tracks, the terminal consistency, the maintenance workshops, and other services of the airport) means it cannot benefit from its position in a highly dynamic global competition for economic activities.

#### *The Displacing of Setif's Problems to Ain Arnat*

The case of the postponed delivery of 1,500 new housing units to substitute the informal settlements of Setif, a programme called Résorption de l'habitat précaire (RHP), continues to feed the debate in Ain Arnat and Setif. This postponement affects negatively hundreds of families living in difficult conditions. The main problem of this situation though is a shortage of water. The site selection was correct and the soil analysis revealed no anomaly. Thus the drilling of a well to supply drinking water to thousands of people on the site would fix the problem in question. However, a lack of equipment that was not initially planned for is a real problem:

You should know that most of the 1,500 housing units have been built without an approved master plan by the OPGI; the area has 450 social housing units with 85 per cent of the construction work already completed; 420 other units of the same segment have 75 per cent of the construction work already completed. That is not all, at least 300 assisted public housing (LPA) will soon be launched on the same site. (Beniaiche, 2013: 9a)

Some of the 2,670 apartments are under construction in the east side of Ain Arnat. With an average of five persons per family, a population of 13,350 inhabitants would mainly need a market, post office, clinic, administrative facility, and so on. According to the professionals in the field, there is a:

Need to work harder in order to have not only schools but also cultural and sports facilities. We can no longer put the cart before the horse. The consequences of such a policy are visible. The lack of coordination and communication between the various stakeholders in the implementation process undermines everything. (Beniaiche, 2013: 9b)

#### *The Post-2008 Period*

In 2008, Ain Arnat occupied an area of 242 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 43,552. It is crossed from east to west by a major axis, RN5, that connects two main metropolises, Algiers and Constantine. This axis is a main structural element at the regional and national level. It divides the municipality into two parts and plays a key role in the current and future structure of the town. This municipality of 24,200 hectares is characterized by an economy essentially based on agriculture (82 per cent) and partly based on crafts. The population density is 93 inhabitants per square kilometre. Administratively, Ain Arnat has the dual status of a municipality (*Commune*) and a *Daira*.<sup>1</sup> It lies mostly at the edge of the west gate of the city of Setif.

The city is composed of individual and collective housing, as well as various public facilities on both sides of the RN5. Nationally, Ain Arnat is known more for its Military Camp and its Helicopter Military School, which occupy a large area on the eastern side along the boulevard, and through the civilian airport. The city has become attractive in recent years, for example expressed in the high demand that characterizes the local real estate sector. According to the *Wilaya* territory development plan, known as *Plan d'aménagement du territoire de la wilaya* (PATW), the population of this municipality will exceed 65,000 inhabitants in the medium and long term. The city of Ain Arnat is planned to be part of the full projected development of Setif and to respond to its urban-economic expansion.

#### *The Urban Structure of Ain Arnat*

The urban structure is based on a grid system where the RN5 is the main axis of centrality, a hyphen between the two parts of the town and a connecting point of the other axis. However, the discontinuity of urban spaces along this structural axis is very noticeable and the historic centre and new extensions are not well articulated. Among the components structuring the city are two types of street: the main street and the secondary streets.

'Main street' is a general term used to represent the very first developed commercial street or district in a small colonial town. When the city grows, the main street becomes the heart of the city centre. From its start,



it was not only a consumer market place for people to go shopping or a place to meet and chat, but also a place crystallized with some fine architecture, a place of intimate human scale, and with its own sense of time and space. It is a part of the collective memory for the city.

The RN5 is the main street in all the planned cities crossed by this road that generated the rest of their urban form (Figure 9.1). The cluster of planned cities around the main national road was affected by the fast demographic and urban growth process that Algeria faced during the last couple of decades. The RN5, as the major spinal column for the national economy of Algeria, provided such cities with multiple economic opportunities which became responsible for the intense commercial activity in the respective centres (Figure 9.2).



**Figure 9.1** The main street of Ain Arnat

Source: The authors, 2015

This main street crosses the city from east to west. It is a wide boulevard lined by contemporary buildings of two and three storeys, apart from the southern side of the *Douar* with its poor architecture. This street plays a dual role, a structural one and as a connecting point to other streets.

The existing facilities, such as high school, the municipality headquarters, recreational area, *Daira*, mosque, among others, were designed with fences along this boulevard. Predominantly the plots are all occupied with garages, some of them transformed into stores, with the urban activities mainly located on the ground floor.

Among the four north-south secondary streets crossing the main boulevard, three of them are part of the structure of the northern side of the city, while the fourth street crosses the south side.

The first axis, through the 251 individual housing units and the *Douar*, is a wide street bordered by buildings with various sizes and forms, with the ground floor transformed into commercial premises, repair shops, and carpentry workshops.





**Figure 9.2** In the main street of Ain Arnat all ground-floor plots are occupied by commercial activities

Source: The authors, 2015

The second axis (*Daira* – RN5) forms a loop around the colonial historical core. The buildings bordering this axis are composed of two types of old and new structures. The old type is primarily stables, sheds, repair facilities, dilapidated homes with only a ground floor. The second type includes new facilities such as the town hall, office of the political party FLN, commercial centre (Souk El Fellah), *Daira*, school, stadium, tax office, youth centre. This street does not play its structural role to the full due to the fences that border it.

The third axis (RN5, CFPA ‘Le centre de formation professionnelle’ for girls) is bordered by buildings with no specific appearance (arcades and developing business premises).

The fourth axis (RN5 – 283 individual housing units) oriented north-south comprises two parts. The first part limits the constructions to two and three levels, in a continuous order, with garages on the ground floor, some of them transformed into shops, whereas the existing facilities are enclosed by fences bordering this axis. The second part crosses the 283 individual housing units, limiting the constructions to two and three levels, in continuous order, with a particular treatment on the façades and urban open spaces (arcades and alignment of a series of business premises).

#### *Housing in Ain Arnat*

The housing policy in Algeria is characterized by a large involvement of the state, whose aim is to provide shelter for all. In the first 20 years after independence, public investment was concentrated on the industrial sector and gave little attention to the housing sector. The consequence of this policy was a severe housing shortage starting at the end of the 1970s. By the early 1980s, the occupancy rate per three-room housing unit



reached seven persons, and the shortfall in public housing was set at 1 million units. In 1992, the shortage had become critical and had risen to 2 million housing units. The shortage had resulted in an average occupancy rate of 8.8 persons per unit, comparatively one of the highest in the world (Table 9.1).

With the new policy set up in the 1990s, the housing issue and its design were given more attention and care by the Algerian authorities. The size of the apartments varied from one to three rooms, due to financial restrictions. With the direct grant given to the middle-income groups, the size of the house to be built is at least three rooms. According to Nait Saada (2000: 9):

In this later case, the users are involved in the design and construction process, while in the social housing the concerned public corporations may organize design competitions among architects on local or national basis. This new context brings some improvements in the design requirements as far as the way of life of the users and local physical and climatic conditions are taken into account.

The increase of the housing stock in Ain Arnat reflects the importance of housing programmes (allotments, urban densification of empty plots, new collective housing units) in this period. In order to avoid elevators, the apartment blocks were built multi-storey but limited to four or five floors. This type of buildings has a similar shape with a monotonous layout, regardless of the topography or the local climate. The traditional ways of using living spaces were not taken into account.

**Table 9.1 The housing stock and the occupancy rate (number of persons per dwelling) in Ain Arnat**

Commune	1987		1998		2008	
	Housing units	Housing occupancy rate	Housing units	Housing occupancy rate	Housing units	Housing occupancy rate
	2,170	8.16	4,122	7.50	6,361	6.75

Source: PDAU, 2010

### Urban Planning in the Post-independence Period

#### *Urban Planning in Algeria: The Tale of an Unsuccessful Process*

Introduced by colonial legislation in 1958, the PUD (*Plan d'urbanisme directeur*) is a tool for urban planning – an urban master plan. It is a colonial inheritance that continued to be applied until 1990, but it was only in the late 1970s that the Algerian cities were outfitted with a PUD. During the first two decades of independence Algeria lived in what is known as public ‘vacant property’.<sup>2</sup>

The need for new urban areas for housing was felt only in the mid 1970s. The first urban plans tended to simply approve the buildings already built and other actions already taken. The objectives of these urban plans were reduced to purely technical aspects. Indeed, the PUD was not a real planning tool in these first decades after independence. In reality, it was the municipal development plan known as *Plan communal de développement* (PCD) and the plot subdivision procedures that were Algeria’s real and effective urban management tools.

The PCD is a financial programme designed to meet the emergency needs of people, especially in terms of facilities. It is the step that allows combining, in a coherent framework, all proposed local actions, developed and managed by the municipality and funded by central resources (Zucchelli, 1983). But the establishment of financial mechanisms requires another instrument for land control. The fundamental text that initiated a process of planned growth of the Algerian city was Ordinance Number 74.26, of 20 February 1974 on the creation of land reserves for the benefit of the municipalities, followed by several decrees and presidential or ministerial circulars. These planning laws are particularly important in so far as they largely conditioned the process and current forms of urbanization.



Indeed, land subdivision in the urban areas for individual housing is a direct continuation of this policy of land reserves. The constitution of land reserves is an obligation. It concerns all Algerian municipalities, which must prepare an annual land acquisition programme. This programme must be approved by the *Wali* as defined in the respective PUD.

It is in these circumstances that the first major subdivision operations were initiated, somewhat unevenly, in the late 1970s. Urban plans, however, would be prepared only in the early 1980s. They defined, in addition to the urbanized area, the lands assigned to individual housing, collective housing, and facilities financed by the PCD.

Programmes were set up on an administrative basis. The centralized decision-making process made the local authorities a simple instrument in the implementation of these programmes. Economic crisis brought political reform in the 1990s, which was followed by radical changes in the national economic and political systems, namely the transition from a planned economy to an economy based on the principles of the market economy.

In November 1990, new land legislation (*Loi d'orientation foncière*) was approved that introduced the privatization of land and the liberalization of land transactions, which brought new actors to the urban sphere. To encourage the private sector to invest in housing, the government proposed legislation that would allow private contractors to compete with public enterprises and have access to building materials that were exclusively for public housing. The private sector was also encouraged to produce locally some of the building materials needed, in order to compensate for market shortages, contributing on the other side to the reduction of the cost of importing those materials. By the early 1990s, some Algerians in the private sector had begun producing bricks, ceramic tiles, and steel rods.

A new master planning tool called the *Plan directeur d'aménagement et d'urbanisme* (PDAU) was introduced in the Algerian urban legislation replacing the PUD. The aim behind it was the introduction of a new policy in the use of urban space. According to Djermoune (2014), the PDAU stresses the development dimension instead of the physical planning dimension. In its content, as defined by the Executive Order establishing procedures for its preparation and approval, it is supposed to determine the dominant land use and, where appropriate, the nature of activities that may be prohibited or subject to special conditions and the general density expressed by the land coefficient. The PDAU introduced the requirement to develop a land-use plan known as the *Plan d'occupation du sol* (POS). This means that it intended to put an end to the kind of urban planning practised until then, considered to be a bureaucratic procedure in its development and implementation. But beyond the law that regulates more than it plans, it is in its practical implementation that we shall measure its impact on the city and its ability to initiate a process of shaping the urban environment.

The methodological approach of the PDAU is no different to that applied in the PUD. It was from the demographic forecast of the municipality for the short, medium and long term that needs for housing and public and private facilities were calculated. Still referring to the standard-facilities grid, the proposed urban structure was organized hierarchically in urban units following a base unit of 1,250 inhabitants, a neighbourhood unit of 5,000 inhabitants, and a neighbourhood of 15,000 inhabitants (Djermoune, 2014). This was the same abstract process as that applied in the PUD process. The land remains a simple neutral area that must support programmes based on quantities and standard needs. Meanwhile, the part of the plan that is effectively implemented follows the housing occupancy rate, known as the *Taux d'occupation par logement* (TOL), and the land occupancy rate, known as the *Coefficient d'occupation des sols* (COS), based on the number of people defined for each of the neighbourhood unit levels considered in the plan.

The POS intends to be more attentive to the defining aspects of the urban space, of its structure and shape. Indeed, in its Article 31, the Law on Planning and Development concerning the development of land-use plans notes that it 'establishes ... urban form, the organization of construction and land use rights ..., defines the minimum and maximum amount of authorized building ..., sets out the rules on appearance [and] defines public space ...' (Law No. 90-29: 1411). Thus, in strictly legal terms, the POS wants to be more operational and close to the spatial reality of the city (Djermoune, 2014).

#### *Urban Planning in Ain Arnat*

The evaluation of the area needed for the future urban growth of Ain Arnat was based on a forecasted rate of demographic growth, with a density of 40 housing units per hectare for Ain Arnat, and 20 housing units

per hectare for secondary cities, but it did not take into account the part of deferred urbanization. In fact, the development proposals of the PDAU have taken into account the possibility of receiving a good portion of deferred urbanization from Setif without targeting land reserves with agronomic qualities.

The proposed area to be urbanized, known as the *Secteur à urbaniser* (SAU), in the centre of Mahdia, confirms that it is this centre that could absorb the growth of the city of Ain Arnat in the future. In addition, it is surrounded by land classified as areas with a medium potential for urban development. The proposed area to be urbanized (SAU) is important for the centres of Khalfoune and Timelouka, although they are surrounded by fertile land (high and good potential) compared with centres located north of the municipality whose agricultural lands are classified as of medium potential. For the Bouhira centre, although it is a crossroad centre that should be promoted, the PDAU provided no mechanisms for its promotion.

### **Intermunicipality as a New Planning Approach in Ain Arnat**

Intermunicipality, as a new planning approach, aims to control the economic and spatial interaction between municipalities and to ensure complementarities in order to meet their development needs.<sup>3</sup> Intermunicipal cooperation as a tool for progress would enable territorial boundaries to dissipate in favour of a wider regional vision. The proposed intermunicipal master plan, the PDAU, is part of a sustainable development project, whose aim is to enhance the attractiveness of the whole territory.

#### *Intermunicipality between Ain Arnat and Setif*

During the last decade, Setif took a significant step in the construction of ambitious projects in all sectors, a qualitative step to join the rank of major cities and to become a metropolis with higher-level urban facilities. Other structural facilities are planned or are already under construction, which will have a positive impact.

According to the diagnosis made, the municipal territory is becoming too narrow. Setif developed and expanded into the immediate surrounding areas and there is now a deficit of free areas for its future urban expansion. The periphery of an urban and industrial centre as Setif, which will probably reach the status of a metropolis, is an issue that needs to be addressed, by assigning it a new role in its wider region. Setif should play the role of a vehicle for the spreading of development across its hinterland, transferring its excess of development, in the sake of balance and rationality, giving up the role of suction pump for disadvantaged populations and small urban centres. To do this, the rural population should be integrated and involved in the development process. It is this new and complementary socio-economic space around Setif that needs to be consolidated.

In this context, Ain Arnat is seen and defined as a relay, a valve on the west side. It is a space with multiple assets that requires reconsideration of its position by reinforcing investment, both public and private. Ain Arnat is a municipality with a high potential for agriculture, with a useful agricultural area of about 16,830 hectares, which represents around 83 per cent of the municipal territory. An agricultural vocation mainly oriented towards cereal production, market gardening, foraging crops, cattle, and sheep, the agricultural sector represents only a small share of the local economy (Zbilah, 2010).

Industry represents only approximately 17 per cent of the local economy, which means a relatively small role in the local economy. There is a business area called *Zone d'entrepôts et d'activités* (ZEA) located in the southwest part of the city. Land plots for industrial use remain highly desirable but the extension of the ZEA may not be done at the expense of agricultural land. A project for a new ZEA in the Mahdia agglomeration offers opportunities to locate new industrial investments in the future.

Regarding Ain Arnat as an entrance, or west gate, to the town of Setif, a city that contains land reserves for development and which could greatly serve to solve the issue of locating various projects resulting from the economic expansion of Setif, seems to be now the key political option. At the same time, Ain Arnat can offer the conditions to house part of the population expected to be attracted by the new socio-economic opportunities, including agriculture and activities compatible with agriculture and services.



### Conclusion

In sum, the chapter shows how a small colonial settlement evolved over a period of almost two centuries to become a small centre at the beginning of the post-independence period and how it has changed over the years since then, making it today neither a suburb nor a complete city in Setif's area of influence. Through the case of Ain Arnat, the history of urban planning in the colonial and postcolonial periods in Algeria can be illustrated. As the evidence provided shows, it has been largely a history marked by successive planning failures, as happened in other cities in Algeria in the same period or in North and Sub-Saharan Africa more generally.

Ain Arnat is not using all its potential. Considering the constraints with which Setif is confronted, Ain Arnat is the natural and preferential pole for the extension of that main city. Ain Arnat's assets are greater than its problems and the city deserves an ambitious project to make it a good example in a changing territory, one that could make it a benchmark for other similar cities in the country.

To conclude, and based on the historical evidence compiled and on the discussion made in the chapter, a number of recommendations for the future can be made. Among others, the following are urgent and indispensable:

- The PDAU and POS must be designed in broader consultation with all stakeholders.
- The procedures to prepare and implement planning instruments are complex and inadequate and therefore they must be simplified and rationalized.
- The time horizon for the approval of planning instruments must be agreed in advance and should depend on the study and on the size of the urban area.
- Binding rules and procedures to support coherent needs felt by citizens in terms of quality of life and urban aesthetics should be provided. Coherence and coordination is required in all stages of the planning process.
- Suitable devices and mechanisms must be provided to implement the PDAU and the POS.
- Preventive measures to avoid illegal and undesirable land-use changes should be provided.
- Measures to fight illegal constructions should be introduced.
- Ex-ante, ongoing, and post evaluation of the impacts of planning proposals and actions should be initiated.

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## Notes

1 *Daira* is an administrative district. The *Wilaya* is divided into *Dairas* and each *Daira* includes a number of municipalities. The *Daira* is administered by a chief of a *Daira* who assists the *Wali* in the application of laws and regulations and ensures the proper functioning of the administrative and technical services in the municipalities constituting the *Daira*.

2 Just after the independence of Algeria, in 1962, there was a massive departure of settlers abandoning their premises and buildings. The decree of 18 March 1963 defined the vacant property as premises, buildings or portions of buildings that were the subject of a 'vacancy ascertainment' before the publication of this decree. The premises, buildings or portions of buildings, whose holders of occupation rights have not exercised that right during a period of two consecutive months at any time since 1 June 1962. In other words, the buildings or portions of buildings whose owners have ceased to perform their obligations or have ceased to assert their rights of ownership, for more than two consecutive months, at any time since 1 June 1962.

3 'It involves a number of local authorities, or municipalities, in proximity to one another, which join forces to work together on developing and managing public services, amenities and infrastructure or on service delivery, to better respond to the needs of their users and with the aim of local development' (Council of Europe, 2008: 7).