Foreign aid for rural development: village design and planning in post-independence Morocco

Michele Tenzon a and Axel Fisher b

aSchool of Architecture, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, UK; bFaculté d’Architecture La Cambre Horta, Université libre de Bruxelles, Bruxelles, Belgium

ABSTRACT
During the late colonial era and after independence, international organizations engaged in donating foreign aid to Morocco. The United Nations’ technical assistance initiatives engaged in ambitious schemes targeting the rural realm. Among them, the Lalla Mimouna community development project (1957–1965), the Projet Sebou (1963–1980), and the Programme d’habitat rural (1967–1972). All three projects were concerned about the physical rural environment, which is assessed in this article on a common scale: the village. Given that they each focus on the geographical area of the Gharb plain, these projects offer a cross-section over the entanglements between their supporting international organizations’ policies and the disciplinary expertise of village planning and design. After providing an overview of the development agendas of the aforementioned UN bodies, we discuss each of the case studies on the basis of unpublished archival material. Then, we discuss the overlaps in the UN bodies’ development ideologies in relation to the ideologies inherited from the colonial era, and their selective appropriation by Moroccan polities. Finally, we argue that whereas planning practices were highly sensitive to the shifting paradigms of international aid organizations, village design remained relatively autonomous. This raises questions concerning the capacity of the disciplines of planning and development studies to carry out their emancipatory missions.

KEYWORDS
Village planning and design; rural Morocco; development aid; UN technical assistance; community development; rural modernization

Introduction
Throughout the late colonial era, the early decades of independence, and up to our days, different international organizations engaged in foreign aid to Morocco. In the 1950s to the 1970s post-independent Global South, international bodies linked to the United Nations (UN) system introduced development visions where a soft and participative path to modernization alternated with centralized modernization policies. The latter implied a drift towards the industrial sector, the mass-production of housing, and the centrality of the urban realm in the expert debate.

In Morocco, a country that was under French Protectorate until 1956, the Marshall Plan and the World Bank had financed the construction of large housing schemes in the outskirts of major industrial cities to replace the mushrooming bidonvilles, or slums in English, and the provision...
of large scale mobility and service infrastructures. The funds were channelled through the Special funds for European countries’ Overseas territories of the Economic Cooperation Administration and the Mutual Security Act in 1951 and 1953, respectively. However, after Morocco became independent in 1956, UN bodies worked in collaboration with Moroccan institutions to implement ambitious schemes focused on the rural realm. Much of the scholarship dedicated to architectural and planning expertise in Morocco has concentrated on the colonial era, and less so on the post-war period, with an almost exclusive focus on the urban realm. This is exemplified by Ward’s seminal essay on the emergence of global planning expertise in the so-called developing world. Yet, a growing body of scholarship acknowledges how ‘at the turn of the 1950s, the developing world dwelt, by a large margin, outside of cities and urban settlements’.

This paper deals with three post-war Moroccan rural development programmes, which are connected by the technical assistance provided by the UN, first through its Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance (EPTA, established 1950), and later the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, established 1965). The community development project for the municipality of Lalla Mimouna (1957–1965), the Projet Sebou (1963–1980), and the Programme d’habitat rural within the PAM 68–72 campaign (1967–1972), eventually involved the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) Investment Center at the FAO’s technical cooperation department (established 1962), the FAO’s World Food Programme (WFP, established 1961, and after whose French name, Programme alimentaire Mondial, or the PAM campaign was tagged), and the World Bank’s International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD, established 1944). While the two first experiments were conducted exclusively in the Gharb region, an agriculturally rich coastal plain north-west of Rabat, PAM 68–72 was a nation-wide campaign which comprised detailed programmes and schemes focused on that very same area.

Indeed, all three projects eventually engaged with the physicality of the rural environment on a common scale: the village. While their primary focus was not necessarily the physical transformation of the rural built environment, their holistic nature entailed the mobilization of the village not only as an abstract social and economic institution but also in its physical materiality and its spatial relationship with the rural landscape. The Lalla Mimouna scheme and the Programme d’habitat rural both involved planners and designers from Moroccan public planning and design authorities directly concerned with the physical form of the village settlement unit. In contrast, the Projet Sebou relied on different expertise, but still developed complex scenarios of transformation for the Gharb area’s villages that eventually influenced planning practices in the region for the following decades.

Together with recent scholarship dealing with post-war architectural and planning expertise in the Global South, this paper builds on the shift of focus from the biographies of the global expert to that bodies and policies, considering the architectural culture of bureaucracy where the figure of the ‘master-architect’ gradually lost its ‘paramount role’. Post-independence development schemes supported by international funding offered new work opportunities for Western experts, whether

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2 Bossuat, “Territoires d’Outre-Mer.”
3 Abu-Lughod, Rabat; Rabinow, French Modern; Wright, The Politics of Design; Taylor, “Planned Discontinuity”; Cohen, “Il gruppo maroccanino”; Cohen and Eleb, Casablanca; Eleb, “An Alternative to Functionalist Universalism”; Avermaete, “Framing the Afropolis”; Estienne, “L’aménagement comme stratégie professionnelle.”
4 Dethier, “Soixante ans”; Dethier, L’urbanisme d’un pays pionnier; Chaouni, “Depoliticizing Group Gamma”; Clark, “Comment Devenir.”
5 Ward, Transnational Planners.
6 Dutta et al., “Introduction,” 19.
7 Kirdar, Structure of United Nations; Lopes, “Should We Mind,” 124.
8 Avermaete, “Coda”; Lagae and De Raedt, “Editorial.”
from the ‘free world’ or the Socialist bloc.9 Within the Cold War context, where American and Soviet-inspired expertise, as well as British and French, contended over expertise markets and cultural influence, global experts offered operational solutions which rendered political issues technical. However, the discussion of architectural and planning schemes in such contexts is not exhausted by their entanglements with geopolitical agendas, or their reduction to the mere staging of ‘visible politics’.10 The unity of place and purpose among the case studies discussed in this paper offers, in the first place, a privileged perspective to track the major differences, overlappings and points of contention in the UN’s, the FAO’s and the IBRD’s development policies over time. Moreover, and this is the main point this paper wishes to discuss, it allows us to question the entanglements of the disciplinary expertise of village planning and design within such a policy context.

To this aim, we first provide an overview of the shifting and competing development agendas of the UN, FAO and IBRD by drawing from recent scholarship. Secondly, on the basis of fresh and unpublished archival material, we discuss each of the case-study experiments in chronological order. In doing so, we introduce each case-study within the Moroccan historical context and outline the respective roles of the international organizations and experts involved. Then, we discuss the interest of framing village planning and design experiments against the shifting rural development paradigms of international aid organizations. In the conclusion, after discussing the overlaps between the development ideologies of the UN bodies from the persisting colonial era ones onwards, and their selective appropriation by Moroccan polities, we contend that planning issues in rural development, as might be expected in urban planning, are highly sensitive to such paradigms, whereas village design maintains a relative autonomy towards them. This raises questions about the capacity of planning and development studies disciplines to carry out their emancipatory missions.

**Convergent and competing development paradigms in the 1950s–1970s UN development system**

In the Cold War context, the US-president’s Point Four Programme had a twofold underlying agenda. Development was advocated as an alternative to socialism in the Third World.11 The US Technical Cooperation Administration entrusted with carrying out the programme very much relied on the idea of small-scale action, grassroot participation, decentralization and ‘self-reliance’, which coalesced in the so-called Community development approach, considered as a convincing non-socialist solution to potential unrest in rural regions.12 The programme was also expected to open business opportunities for the US whilst appearing as a UN achievement.13 Hence, the UN promptly established the EPTA. On the other hand, ‘Community development’ also conveyed a strong anti-colonial ethos, as it questioned ‘dependency from governmental authorities’.14 Despite the fact that ‘participative’ policies of rural modernization had been conducted in both British and French colonies along the lines of community development, late-1940s French political leaders, for instance, feared both the interference of the UN and the potential of its technical assistance to serve US economic penetration in their colonial holdings.15

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9De Raedt, “Shifting Conditions”; Stanek, Lukasz. *Architecture in Global Socialism: Eastern Europe, West Africa, and the Middle East in the Cold War*, Princeton University Press, 2020.
10Avermaete, “Coda”; Crinson, “The Powers that Be.”
11Nustad, “Development Discourse,” 16.
12Unger, *International Development*, 58, 107; Richardot, “Le Maroc,” 175.
13Bossuat, “Territoires d’Outre-Mer.”
14Richardot, “Le Maroc,” 175.
15Chauveau, “Participation paysanne”; Latham, *Right Kind of Revolution*, 71–2; Bossuat, “Territoires d’Outre-Mer.”
Throughout the 1950s, community development became ‘the primary rural development strategy at the UN’, encompassing a set of possible actions requiring a low intensity of capital in the fields of education, sanitation, health, agricultural extension, housing, support to handicrafts and small-scale industries, as well as basic road, irrigation and electrification infrastructures. In Africa, the expansion of the community development mantra was favoured by its endorsement by the Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA, established 1958 in Addis Ababa), which discussed the issue in its first session, held dedicated meetings, and organized expert workshops. By the end of the decade, ‘it was hard to find a developing nation without a community development program of some scope’, and Morocco was no exception.

In the late 1960s, however, the UN’s Community development programmes came under increasing criticism for failing to tangibly fulfil their promises. Among the solutions envisaged, ‘agricultural intensification measures began to receive more attention from the Western international development community’, in particular within the FAO and the World Bank. In the early 1950s, the FAO initial favoured ‘small-scale, low-modern approaches to rural development’ akin to the EPTA’s Community development doctrine, but gradually shifted to ‘productivity-centered, technology-driven ones’, even though the focus on small-scale farming persisted. When it launched its Freedom from Hunger Campaign (FFHC) in 1960 to redistribute food production surpluses from Western countries to underdeveloped ones, the FAO was still structurally weaker, in both financial and operative terms, than other UN agencies and funds active in the field of rural development.

The World Food Programme (established 1961), jointly sponsored by the UN and the FAO, granted the FFHC an operational capacity and ‘the authority to initiate action and provide emergency food aid’. The weaknesses of the WFP’s organizational principle partially contributed to its attractiveness. In fact,

\[\text{it was the FAO’s ‘standard practice’ that a ‘local partner had to approve every program, provide the necessary logistical support, and designate […] assistants’ […]}, \text{ whereas other international organizations [such as the EPTA] sent their own staff and put them in charge directly.} \]

As a result, the FAO’s technical assistance efforts within the FFHC allowed its selective appropriation by undeveloped countries which could use the WFP’s food resources ‘in a way that fit their own goals rather than subscribing to an external interpretation of what rural development should be like’. While the FFHC was discontinued in the early 1980s, the WFP is still active today. The 1950–1960s’ focus on small-farmers, however, was substituted with one on the Green Revolution in the 1970s. In the meanwhile, from 1964, the FAO also collaborated with the World Bank, using ‘FAO personnel [at the Investment Center] to evaluate and supervise agricultural development projects that the bank would finance.’

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16Immerwahr, Thinking Small, 55.
17Milhaud, “Développement communautaire.”
18Immerwahr, Thinking Small, 166.
19Immerwahr, Thinking Small, 166; Unger, International Development, 109.
20Unger, International Development, 109.
21Unger, “International Organizations,” 6.
22Ibid., 5.
23Staples, Birth of Development, 111.
24Unger, “International Organizations,” 6.
25Ibid., 4.
26Unger, International Development, 112.
27Staples, Birth of Development, 120.
The World Bank engaged with development and technical assistance in underdeveloped countries when the European Recovery Programme took over its initial tasks in support of European post-war reconstruction, especially through its International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). As a result, being part of the UN by law, but not factually, the World Bank soon became an ‘implacable development rival’ of the UN. Its approach initially focused on urban housing and house ownership, but soon took a departure from the social agenda of the UN, favouring projects which targeted an increased productivity and which, in contrast to the FAO, included hydraulic energy and transportation infrastructure, and a ‘technology-centric, top-down’ approach, according to the so-called modernization theory which dominated throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Rural poverty and agricultural development emerged on the Bank’s agenda only in the late 1960s, when it realized that containing rural exodus was an efficient means to fight urban poverty, and that promoting employment could ‘generate development, not the other way around’. In fact, this took off when, around 1972, the World Bank made the ‘site and services’ approach one of its major strategies of ‘slum upgrading’. Overall, the three international bodies pursued different agendas through different means, but often acted in parallel in the same country, and occasionally collaborated on single projects, as was the case in Morocco.

The Lalla Mimouna community development programme

Lalla Mimouna, a rural settlement of 1700 inhabitants located atop a small hill 30 kilometres north of Souk el Arbaa, was chosen in 1958 to develop the first village development programme carried out in the Gharb valley since Moroccan independence. This location, jointly agreed upon by the Moroccan government and the EPTA experts, was to serve as a pilot experiment of community development in the Moroccan countryside. A second pilot project was also supposed to be conducted in El Kella des Sraghnas, north-west of Marrakech, but never came into existence. In accordance with the UN community development doctrine, the approach was meant to be replicated in a large number of localities over the following decade within a national community development plan, making Lalla Mimouna a prominent testing ground for post-independence rural development policies.

This scheme, set out in a context of political instability and harsh political struggles for hegemonic power and independence, had raised big hopes of agrarian reform and generous redistribution of colonial-held lands within the Moroccan peasantry. Morocco historically gravitated within the US sphere of influence, but still adhered to the Non-aligned Movement from its first meeting (Belgrade, 1961). Hence, there may have been interest from different Moroccan parties to welcome UN-supported community development as a means to exhibit a balanced position towards the Cold war poles of influence, but also as a low-risk bet on a low-cost development scheme which, on one

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28Unger, *International Development*, 63.
29Browne and Weiss, “UN Development System,” n.p.
30Ibid., n.p.
31Ibid., n.p.
32Kwak, *World of Homeowners*, 213; Unger, *International Development*, 63, 138, 139; Nustad, “Development Discourse,” 16.
33Unger, *International Development*, 63, 137, 139; Kwak, *World of Homeowners*, 213; Latham, *Right Kind of Revolution*, 170.
34Kwak, *World of Homeowners*, 195.
35Kater, *Community Development*, 23, 26, 54.
36Richardot, “Le Maroc,” 186; Kater, *Community Development*, 40.
37Azzou, “La présence militaire américaine au Maroc.”
hand enabled some procrastination over agrarian reform, and on the other could potentially yield relevant political benefits, should it be successful.

Despite the scant information on the Lalla Mimouna scheme gathered from published written material, which is limited to a succinct article by Honoré Nespola, a French architect who had been active in Morocco since 1951, and few brief comments by Jean Le Coz (1920–1991), an influential French geographer who wrote a two-volume monograph on the Gharb, the photographs and blueprints retrieved from the Photothèque of the ENA – École Nationale d’Architecture of Rabat and an unpublished UN debriefing report, it is possible to reconstruct the physical aspect of the development plan.38 In addition, in 1964, the UN produced a short film, A light for Lalla Mimouna, documenting the development experience as part of the UN Television series ‘International Zone’, which bears witness to the relevance of this project within the institution.39

The starting point of the Lalla Mimouna development scheme was a UN study mission conducted by two EPTA experts, a senior expert, Jean B. Richardot (1911–2005), a French-US binational and early UN official, who was later replaced by John B. Bowers (1912–2004), an educationist and former British colonial official to Sudan,40 and his assistant Fouad R. Faraj, a former national responsible for community development in Lebanon, to explore the possibilities and challenges of community development. The latter were supported by two additional experts paid by the Dutch development aid programme; Frans L. Schmidgall (1920–1998), a rural sociologist, and Adrianus Kater, an anthropologist who would later dedicated his PhD dissertation to the Lalla Mimouna experiment.41 In April–May 1959, while discussions around the national community development plan stagnated, an implementation scheme for Lalla Mimouna was hurriedly drafted to satisfy political pressure, encompassing 18 prioritized actions across the entire rural commune.42 In October 1959, a participatory meeting with experts of different local administrations including the Service de l’urbanisme, the Moroccan technical bureau responsible for urban and regional planning in the country established under the Protectorate, representatives of the Lalla Mimouna’s population and the UN experts, was held. The implementation phase started in 1960 when Faraj laid out the project’s social and economic aims and its financial plan, and was entrusted by the UN to coordinate its implementation. In parallel, a team of Service de l’urbanisme urban planners coordinated by the French architect, Nespola, designed the agreed upon communal facilities and public spaces as well as a masterplan for the village extension.

While the involvement of the UN’s technical assistance provided a programmatic framework to the project, the physical design of Lalla Mimouna’s facilities was partly drawn from previous experiences carried out by the Service de l’urbanisme in the previous decade. In 1954, on the eve of Moroccan independence, Nespola had been involved in a village development programme for the Gharb and the Rabat region coordinated by the French landscape designer and urban planner Élie Mauret (1925–2019).43 In this programme, technicians had developed a rather experimental methodology to survey the area, to determine the location of rural service centres across the region, and to produce preliminary masterplans for each of them. This methodology entailed a close collaboration between the team of designers, rural engineers, local colonial authorities, as well as a rudimentary participatory process organized around so-called ateliers mobiles, mobile workshops

38Nespola, “Expérience de développement communautaire”; Le Coz, “Lalla Mimouna”. A copy of the UN debriefing report is held at the Archives of the Centre de Documentation Nationale – Haut-Commissariat du Plan in Rabat.
39Some footage of an early stage of the construction works are also available at the UN Audio-visual Library.
40“Obituary of John Bowers.”
41Kater, Community development, 8, 9, 36–7; Richardot, “Le Maroc,” 176, 182–3; Faraj, 4 ans de développement communautaire, 1, 4.
42Kater, Community development, 45 ff.
43Mauret, Pommeret, and Ringuelet, “Mise en valeur.”
which travelled across the region to present and eventually negotiate with representatives of the local rural population the design process outcomes. If Mauret’s initiative was, in some respect, naively conceived, it nonetheless attests to a significant interest from colonial technical bureaux in the last phase of French rule for localism and bottom up solutions which reverberated, as the Lalla Mimouna project shows, in the planning debate in the aftermath of independence.

The focal point of Lalla Mimouna’s scheme was the establishment of a crafts cooperative aimed at rallying the numerous textile workshops scattered across the village, carrying out the purchase of raw materials and tools, and establishing a quality label for the final products. According to Nespola, such a programme responded to the requests of Lalla Mimouna’s merchants and artisans while the surveys carried out by international experts merely confirmed the need to regroup shops and workshops. UN experts and Service de l’urbanisme technicians proposed transferring the existing artisanal ateliers to a new, better ventilated structure. However, the initial proposal to regroup all the workshops into a large building, allowing all artisans to ‘work together in a more effective cooperative spirit’, was eventually declined by the local population. As a result of further negotiations, a total of 36 single workshops, clustered around an open-air space, were finally built (Figure 1). Although we do not know who the representatives of the local community were and how their voices were gathered, Nespola’s emphasis on these negotiations testify to the designers’ participation to the project’s underlying community-driven agenda.

Next to the artisan centre, a new commercial hub gathered a total of 40 shops located along the main road for selling, among other goods, the craft cooperative’s products. The new main square (Figure 2) of the village was located between the artisan district and the old mosque, a religious centre of regional and interregional importance. One side of the village square, perpendicular to the row of shops and connected to it by a porch, was occupied by the community centre, a rectangular building with a front porch and a large room for meetings which could also serve as a cinema, and two service rooms. Eight houses for notables, a residential area, a school, and a series of structures dedicated to social gatherings (a café maure, and a women’s centre) or related to the artisans’ work (a garage and grinding mill) were also constructed.

If within international development aid institutions, the debate around the effectiveness of the community development formula was open, the contrasting assessments of the Lalla Mimouna project’s outcomes made no exception to such ambivalence. In his 1964 end-of-mission report, Faraj described the Lalla Mimouna pilot project in enthusiastic, though paternalistic terms. The results, he claimed, exceeded expectations, to the point where the six families who had left the village in the past five years had decided to ‘come back to Lalla Mimouna where they can make a much easier living’. He then continued by calling for a nation-wide replication of this approach:

If Morocco is interested in quickly solving the material, psychological and social problems of its villagers, the Community Development formula represents [...] the effective way to put an end to poverty, diseases, unemployment, and rural exodus and, in more general terms, to better the living conditions of these populations.

Along the same line, Richardot suggested that this experiment had inspired both the ambitious agricultural mechanization programme called Opération labour (1957) and the public works

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64Tenzon, “Mise en valeur et repopulation.”
65Nespola, “Expérience de développement communautaire,” 159.
66United Nations Information Centre, “Réveil de Lalla Mimouna.”
67Faraj, 4 ans de développement communautaire, 8.
voluntary service, *Promotion nationale* (1961–mid-1980s).\(^{48}\) Other commentators, however, were less enthusiastic and described the experiment’s scope as of limited reach. This was because of the insufficient collaboration and involvement of Moroccan political leaders and administrations,\(^{49}\) the lack of interaction with the surrounding region,\(^ {50}\) and because of the poor involvement and consideration of the local population.

Significantly, despite the different and not always enthusiastic appraisals given by experts on the Lalla Mimouna development scheme, its influence on the political debate on rural development in Morocco seems unquestionable. Maurice Méker, a former French colonial officer and UN expert for community development who presumably replaced Faraj for a short time, acknowledged in a report signed shortly after Faraj’s some of the above-mentioned shortcomings. Yet, Méker also

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\(^{48}\) Richardot, “Le Maroc,” 187.
\(^{49}\) Kater, *Community Development*, 101–3.
\(^{50}\) Le Coz, “Lalla Mimouna.”
advocated a systematization and integration of community development programmes in the Moroccan kingdom for the ensemble of the Rabat region, reviving the EPTA principle of a nation-wide community development strategy.\(^{51}\) In fact such a policy had been already approved in 1962 by the Ministère de l’Intérieur, Bureau du développement communautaire in Rabat as part of the Projet de programme triennal de développement communautaire en milieu rural along with the proposal to introduce the community-based development concept at the country level.\(^{52}\) The overall programme was suspended in 1963 and relaunched in 1964 as the Programme d’encouragement au développement communautaire dans la province de Rabat, and approved by the Ministère de l’Intérieur, with plans to extend community development studies to other 10 rural communes in the Rabat province.\(^{53}\)

The effectiveness of the Lalla Mimouna experiment in terms of the measurable improvements of working and living conditions of the village inhabitants is open to discussion. According to Aggregate, international development aid aimed less at improving living conditions than at setting a flow of Western capital and expertise in motion, and the Lalla Mimouna scheme could be read as confirming this viewpoint.\(^ {54}\) However, the project offers a perspective on the interactions between UN experts, who were definitely more concerned with the process of planning and strategic issues, and

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\(^{51}\)Méker, Proposition pour la définition.

\(^{52}\)Ashford, National Development, 220.

\(^{53}\)Kater, Community Development, 67.

\(^{54}\)Dutta et al., “Introduction.”
the Service de l’urbanisme’s designers and planners whose duties were almost exclusively technical. While the diminished importance attributed to physical design by development experts trained in social sciences can eventually be attributed to a disciplinary bias, by confronting Nespola’s account with those of other actors directly involved in the project implementation, the role of ‘master-architect’ clearly becomes diminished. Nonetheless, if Nespola’s claim does not suffice to convince us that the Service de l’urbanisme was particularly influential in advocating a community approach to village development, it proves, at least, that public planning and design bureaux had openly embraced its rhetoric and attempted to give physical form to the plan’s aspirations.

Just a few years before the Lalla Mimouna scheme, Hassan Fathy’s New Gurna village (Egypt, 1946–1952) had also relied on ‘self-help’, though founded on self-construction. Unlike in Lalla Mimouna, however, New Gurna pursued the revival of an alleged vernacular style as a potential national style at the service of an independent Egypt national identity in the making, which was absent from the Moroccan agenda. Instead, Lalla Mimouna shares a glaring ‘white-cubedness’ with yet another coeval scheme, that of the standard rural schools for Algerian Kabylia designed by Anatole Kopp (1915–1990) and Pierre Chazanoff. The former occurred in the much more radical context of president Ben Bella’s autogestion policy. The photogenic aesthetic of Lalla Mimouna must have been useful in serving the interest of King Hassan II on his very mediatized 1962 visit to the Gharb’s village inauguration, allowing him to politically capitalize on an initiative he had not initially been involved in.

The Projet Sebou

In parallel to establishing a political consensus around the country-wide extension of community development principles to the Moroccan countryside, the Gharb valley witnessed the beginning of a new project which steered the debate towards a different direction. Partly in response to a violent flooding event which occurred in 1963, and which led to the temporary displacement of tens of thousands of inhabitants, but also in continuity with colonial projects of agricultural intensification of the valley, an ambitious plan was launched. This was the Projet Sebou, which aimed at redefining the entire hydraulic infrastructure at the regional scale. In the meantime, the Moroccan political context had also evolved. King Hassan II (r. 1961–1999) pursued his consolidation and stabilization policy, heading the government from 1961 to 1967, laying down a new constitution in 1962, and repressing political opposition.

Within this frame, The Projet Sebou dealt with the entire hydrographic basin of the Sebou river, covering an area of 40 000 km2. It proposed three key measures within the horizon of the year 2000: the construction of several dams upstream along the Sebou tributaries; the setup of a surface irrigation network paired with marsh reclamation infrastructures; and rural electrification. In terms of agricultural planning of the Gharb’s 300 000 ha agricultural land, the Projet Sebou aimed to optimize the marshlands, irrigate dry lands, and intensify commons where staple and fodder crops (sugar cane, rice, sugar beet, cereals, cotton, fodder) would be introduced or favoured to supply the national market (Figure 3). Canning and processing factories would be developed to upgrade

55Avermaete, “Coda.”
56Mitchel, Rule of experts.
57Crane, “Algerian Socialism.”
58Lazarev, “Le Projet Sebou”; Oved, “Développement régional intégré.”
59Lazarev, “Le Projet Sebou”; Lahlou, “Le Gharb d’aujourd’hui.”
the agricultural sector from mere subsistence to agro-industrialization and, wherever applicable, citrus growing for export would be supported.

The Projet Sebou included a 5-year preliminary study phase titled the Mission Sebou, and which was supported by the UNDP and the FAO. The expected outcome of this phase was a loan request to the World Bank’s IBRD. The Investment Center at the FAO’s technical cooperation department was entrusted by the UN’s Special Fund with coordinating and implementing the project and liaising with the World Bank through its appointed director Georges Oved (1921–1992). The UNDP funded a team of international experts and their equipment for conducting the study, while the Moroccan government, through the Ministry for Development, established a cooperation agency and appointed a co-director. Recurringly modified and extended over the following decades, the Projet Sebou was supposed to end in 1980, but a second phase of works, the Sebou II Project was approved by the World Bank in 1974 along the same lines of funding infrastructure and concluded in 1984.

Rural sociologists and geographers who analysed postcolonial Moroccan so-called Politique des barrages (dam politics), of which the Projet Sebou represented one of the flagships, underlined that the scheme was in substantial continuity with the vision proposed by the French administration during the Protectorate. In this sense, the Projet Sebou, similarly to many development policies in the aftermath of independence, established an ambiguous relationship with late colonial policies. On one hand, it perpetuated the long-lasting fantasy of irrigating one million hectares in Morocco, a plan that was formulated in the 1930s in order to relaunch colonial agriculture. On the other hand, the project was based on a nearly utopic faith in the capacity to prompt social change by reforming rural institutions.

Indeed, while the influence of World Bank consultants had steered the focus of the Projet Sebou almost exclusively on the large scale, the reports produced by the study committee show the

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60 Lazarev, Politiques Agraires.
61 Lazarev, Politiques Agraires; Ministère du D éveloppement, Note sur l’aménagement intégré.
62 Popp, Effets socio-géographiques; Pérennès, L’eau et les hommes.
attempt to match hard-lined infrastructural modernization with instances linked to the village scale and to the reform of traditional social and physical structures. On various occasions, UN experts emphatically acknowledged ‘the vitality of the jemaas [...] the traditional villagers organisations’. The development scheme, they affirmed, cannot ignore that ‘traditional society offers to individuals a guarantee that new economic structures will not be able to ensure for a long time’.

Such a claim had precedents in late colonial progressive reforms, which had proposed to ‘put the jemaa on the tractor’ maintaining that technological improvement was the main trigger of change. The Projet Sebou experts, however, advocated an institutional reform and suggested transforming the jemaa into a Société de Développement Villageois (SDV; village development association). Restructuring the jemaa would allow it to meet new objectives such as organizing agricultural intensification, administrating the redistribution of rural land, and ensuring the provision of public services. In the words of UN experts, the modernization of rural institutions entailed the ‘passage from the “tribal douar” to the “modern village”, allowing to exploit the indisputable human potential of the actual structures’.

Such a transition had direct consequences on physical planning and entailed the rethinking of the relationship that the village had with the rural landscape. Each association was assigned a surface of cultivable land of approximately 500 hectares to be subdivided in individual family farms of five to six hectares. This exploitation unit, which included, in addition to the arable surface, an area reserved for the creation of a new village or the extension of an existing douar, became the basic unit into which the study proposed to subdivide the Gharb landscape. Each SDV functioned as a rural cooperative, with each recipient of redistributed land being compelled to become a member of the cooperative.

To implement this programme, Projet Sebou agronomists, hydraulic engineers, and planners developed a plan for transforming the Gharb Valley rural landscape based on changes observed at the scale of the exploitation unit and subdivided into stages: (1) survey of the existing context; (2) land property reorganization and improvement of dry farming (years one to five); (3) first irrigation phase (years five to ten); (4) complete irrigation (years ten to 25). In this multistage process, the boundaries of land properties, the cultivation programme whose details were defined by the contrats de culture (cultivation contracts), and the location of the village within the exploitation unit would change according to advancements in the provision of infrastructures.

In the atlas of maps published in 1970, a sample scenario was proposed for the spatial transformation of an exploitation unit on the Sebou’s left bank (Figure 4). Within the exploitation unit assigned to each SDV, the scenario foreseen by Projet Sebou experts entailed a reorganization of farming areas and their physical relation with the built areas. In the first phase, criteria such as soil quality and flooding risk were taken into account. In the example illustrated above, the dry farming improvement phase would lead to the relocation of one of the two douars in the SDV perimeter to a nearby area at lower hydrogeological risk and the extension and boundary rectification of the other douar. In the long term, the fine scale of drainage and irrigation canals

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63 Lazarev, “Le Projet Sebou.”
64 FAO, Projet Sebou, 20.
65 Berque and Couleau, “Vers la modernisation du fellah.”
66 The expression “mettre la jemaa sur le tracteur” is attributed to Jacques Berque, although we were not able to find a direct reference in his extensive written production.
67 FAO, Projet Sebou, 24.
68 Le Coz, “Troisième âge agraire,” 413.
69 Royaume du Maroc, Atlas du Bassin.
would allow agricultural intensification and the planned extension of built areas with the addition of a new village.

The scenarios elaborated by the Study Committee defined a situation in which irrigation and drainage networks, land consolidation, and contrats de culture imposed a comprehensive land usage scheme and a rigid control over people and their milieu within a tightly confined sector.

**Figure 4.** Stages of evolution of an exploitation unit on the Sebou’s banks. Redrawn by the authors on the basis of: Royaume du Maroc, *Atlas du Bassin du Sebou*, vol. 1, plate 29b.
An approach that sociologists and rural experts such as Jean-Jacques Pérennès and Herbert Popp have criticized for its ambition to regulate every aspect of landscape transformation and to offer detailed, rigid long-term scenarios that inevitably failed to account for unpredictable variables.70 However, while UN experts proposed relocating the village within the exploitation unit, merging separate douars or creating new ones in previously uncultivated areas, the proposed plans only indicated recommended village boundaries in order to limit the dispersion of dwellings into cultivable areas71 but never engaged with the design of the built areas.

The Projet Sebou was, by far, the largest and best funded rural development project which saw the involvement of international institutions in collaboration with Moroccan technical bureaux in the region. As such, the fact that architects and planners were not directly involved in the project despite the relevance that village reform had for the overall plan attests to a changed attitude of development experts towards issues such as rural housing. The projects implemented, again thanks to the further involvement of the FAO, at the end of the 1960s seemed to compensate for such shortcomings. Although this could be interpreted as a realignment to late colonial and early post-independence attitude towards the involvement of architects in rural development, the changing national and international contexts determined a relevant shift in the way their disciplinary role was interpreted.

The Programme d’habitat rural: PAM 68–72

In 1967, while the Projet Sebou was still concluding its funding application to the IBRD, the Moroccan government elaborated a 5-year rural housing programme at the national level, the Programme d’habitat rural, tagged PAM’68–72 after the Programme Alimentaire Mondial (World food programme, established 1961 and launched 1963) to which it applied for support. The FAO provided $13 million mainly in food and technical assistance by the UNDP.72 The aid consisted in paying a voluntary labour force with food rations following a model that the Moroccan Kingdom had already adopted with the 1961 Programme de Promotion nationale. In addition to such fundings, the Moroccan government invested another $18 million in studies, supervision staff, and building materials.73

This Moroccan contribution included the establishment of the CERF, the Centre d’expérimentation de recherche et de formation (Centre for experimentation, research and training) in 1967 to rethink the national urban planning framework in view of implementing PAM ‘68–72.74 It basically served as a suggestion box to the Direction de l’Urbanisme et de l’Habitat (DUH) to which it was attached within the Ministry of Interior, and was headed by a French engineer, Alain Masson (1927–2013), and mainly composed of young French technicians.75 As for the UNDP technical assistance, a single Czech planner, Jan Kratochvil, was detached to the DUH and the CERF.76

The programme’s ambition was to build 60,000 new dwelling units and renovate 30,000 units, covering 20% of the estimated housing needs for rural areas in the programme’s 5-year period of

70Pérennès, L’eau et les hommes; Popp, Effets socio-géographiques.
71Royaume du Maroc, Atlas du Bassin.
72Johnson, Urbanization in Morocco, 117.
73Masson, “Urbanisation et Habitat,” 139.
74Masson, “Urbanisation et Habitat”; Johnson, Urbanization in Morocco; Dethier, “Soixante ans”; Clark, “Comment devenir”; Hensens, “Le CERF 1986–1972.”
75Masson, “Urbanisation et Habitat”; Johnson, Urbanization in Morocco.
76Kirdar, Structure of United Nations, 70, 289; Kratochvil, Rapport final; Masson, “Urbanisation et Habitat,” 135, 140.
activity. The priority was granted to areas where major drainage and irrigation perimeters were already underway. This choice went in the direction of rationalizing resources and prioritizing integrated development over sectorial interventions. In the Gharb, 14,750–15,500 units were foreseen, for example 25% of the entire programme for new units. To decide where the houses should be built, whether as new rural settlements or to consolidate existing ones, the CERF developed a theoretical planning framework for rural areas, the Précis de Ruralisme, and a dedicated planning tool, the SAR Schéma d’Armature Rurale (rural settlement network scheme).

In the Gharb, one of the works carried out in the framework of the PAM programme overlapped with previous planning schemes elaborated two decades earlier by the Service de l’urbanisme under the French Protectorate. Souk el Tleta was one of the new villages designed by Michel Écochard, the head of the Service de l’Urbanisme from 1946 to 1952, as part of a plan to decentralize industry and offer alternative job opportunities in the countryside to contain rural exodus by maintaining the population in the countryside. Écochard’s proposal consisted of developing a small-size residential and productive settlement unit (Figure 5) in which two residential typologies, villas for Europeans and compact houses for Moroccan workers were juxtaposed with an industrial area and an administrative centre. The village was intended as

a centre for the transformation of agricultural products where only some technicians and guardsmen would [permanently] live: being a seasonal industry, the idea [was] not to resettle the workforce but to leave them in the nearby douars, in proximity of their usual workplaces.

While the street layout of Écochard’s scheme was finally implemented, little was realized of the functional programme he had in mind. Out of the six deep plots dedicated to industry, only one was occupied and neither the detached villas nor the workers’ houses were built. In 1971, on the area of four vacant lots, a project was outlined as part of the PAM program for the construction of a residential district (Figure 6). Subverting Écochard’s idea, a rectangular grid of road was overlapped on the original layout and 181 houses and an L-shaped building for shops clustered around an open space were built.

This and other interventions attest to the parting from both the objectives of pre-independence village design in the Gharb, hinged on a vision of rural economic and social change driven by complementary seasonal employment in decentralized and spatially disseminated small industries, as well as from the premises implied in the infrastructure-driven approach of the Projet Sebou. PAM’s schemes, instead, focused exclusively on the provision of standardized housing. Overall, the PAM’s vast scale and ambition had posed fascinating methodological challenges in terms of planning, design and construction. The CERF conceived a transferable and replicable methodology for identifying those rural centres that required an increased housing stock through PAM. The approach, explicitly inspired by Walter Christaller’s (1893–1969) central place theory and perhaps by François Preroux’s (1903–1987) growth pole theory too, classified each settlement in an examined rural area according to a hierarchical scale, from the most remote and under-equipped to the most connected to major urban centres and well provided with collective facilities (Figure 7). The resulting analysis informed the related Schéma d’Armature Rurale (Rural framework scheme),

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77 Dethier, L’urbanisme d’un pays pionnier.
78 “Une action,” undated typewritten report; Dethier, L’urbanisme d’un pays pionnier, 396.
79 Bauer and Hamburger, Précis de ruralisme.
80 Kratochvil, Région du centre; Kratochvil, Schéma d’armature rurale.
81 Forichon, “L’aménagement des campagnes Marocaines.”
82 Kratochvil, Rapport final; Dethier, L’urbanisme d’un pays pionnier; Bauer and Hamburger, Précis de ruralisme.
83 Masson, “Urbanisation et Habitat”; Brejon de Lavergnee, “Schémas d’armature.”
Figure 5. Master plan for Souk el Tleta du Gharb, 1948. Photothèque ENA Rabat.

Figure 6. PAM-assisted Programme d’habitat rural, residential district in Souk el Tleta du Gharb, 1971. Photothèque ENA Rabat.
whose aim was to re-balance the network wherever suitable, in order to provide an optimal level of services at the optimal travelling distance to the concerned rural populations and areas.

Kratochvil, the only UNDP planning expert from a socialist country we could track in 1950s–1970s Moroccan rural planning, claimed that this approach was based on a participative method involving all the public authorities and responsible parties concerned. Yet, apparently, it did not involve the concerned population.\(^8^4\) Similarly, other authors report that PAM 68–72 relied on methods of community development’, implying a continuity with early post-independence schemes.\(^8^5\) Whether the term here merely designated labour-intensive planning implementation efforts, or anything more ambitious, and the concrete connections between the Lalla Mimouna experiment and the PAM is open to further inquiry. CERF’s approach has indeed been qualified as ‘empiric’ and culturally biased\(^8^6\) and as a vain attempt to contain rural exodus. Indeed, the scattering and dilution of the building effort into 50–100 houses per settlement\(^8^7\) and the partial practical achievements – by 1972, only 20,000 new houses had been built and 3000 renovated in all Morocco\(^8^8\) – weakened the project’s initial ambitions. Overall, while local participation and anthropological approaches to rural planning was one of the CERF’s trademarks,\(^8^9\) the normative nature of its proposed regional planning schemes points to a different epistemological posture.

\(^8^4\) Kratochvil, Rapport final.
\(^8^5\) Dethier, “Soixante ans,” 51; Masson, “Urbanisation et Habitat”; Naciri, “Politique urbaine.”
\(^8^6\) Brejon de Lavergnee, “Schémas d’armature,” 84–5.
\(^8^7\) Naciri, “L’habitat rural.”
\(^8^8\) Masson “Mes années”; Naciri, “Politiques d’habitat rural.”
\(^8^9\) Clark, “Comment ‘devenir.”
Conclusion

The existing scholarship on UN and other international organizations’ development policies has provided a framework for situating the rural development experiments examined in this paper within a wider context. However, these studies’ indebtedness to social sciences all too often forgoes delving into a more detailed discussion of the actual rural planning and design schemes. Conversely, apart from the aforementioned stream of scholarship, much architectural and planning history downplays the influence of global policy trends against ongoing debates within the discipline, or at most within the country’s political and historical context.

In rural Morocco, the Lalla Mimouna community development programme was a clear offshoot of the EPTA community development programme, though its conclusion in 1965 occurred when priorities in both Morocco and international bodies had already shifted. The Projet Sebou’s initial study phase fits into the FAO’s 1960s focus on agricultural intensification paired with rural development actions focused on the small farmer, and was eventually granted IBRD funding even if it did not perfectly fit into the World Bank’s large-scale infrastructure policy trends at that time. The Programme d’habitat rural, supported by the local appropriation of the WFP, was reminiscent of EPTA community development doctrine insofar as it relied on the idea of labour-intensive development, but echoed coeval ideas within the World Bank.90

Nevertheless, as Avermaete points out, ‘the focus on the granting of “design and planning aid” produces an imbalanced perspective that might suggest that those who are receiving aid did so helplessly and passively’.91 The available sources offer very little information from which to build an argument on the reception by their final recipients of the schemes discussed here. However, a number of circumstantial facts suggest, if not as hard evidence then at least as hints for further inquiry, that the EPTA, FAO and World Bank’s shifting development ideologies were selectively and opportunistically appropriated by Moroccan politicos.

Within the ‘structurally inchoate’ UN development system, ‘duplication and competition remain the dominant characteristic’, caught in the vice between two diverging but not mutually exclusive development ideologies.92 The ‘urge to modernise’ relying on capital-intensive, large-scale, infrastructure-driven, and centralized modernization was in constant conversation, Immerwahr claims, with the soft, participative, process-driven and labour intensive ‘quest for community’.93 In post-war Morocco, not only did the EPTA’s, the FAO’s and the World Bank’s approaches to development operate at overlapping times, they were also simultaneously at play in single schemes. Moreover, the examined schemes show a partial indebtedness to development ideologies and practises inherited from the colonial period: in Lalla Mimouna to the Service de l’urbanisme and Mauret’s approach to rural planning; in the Projet Sebou, to Berque and Couleau’s late colonial progressive rural modernization policy; in the PAM 68–72, to the Service de l’urbanisme and Écochard and Forichon’s industrial dispersal strategy.

The three case studies examined here illustrate different concerns alternatively at stake in village planning as opposed to village design. Lalla Mimouna, with its focus on the provision of collective facilities clearly reflects the EPTA’s community development aspiration to foster the transition from subsistence towards market economy. Its architectural expression, conscious or not, offers a photogenic scenery to capitalize the political benefits of the operation, but its primary concern

90 Waterston, Planning in Morocco, 44.
91 Avermaete, “Coda,” 476.
92 Browne and Weiss, “UN Development System.”
93 Nisbet, Quest for Community; Immerwahr, Thinking Small.
was to stage this programme in the local topography, while blending generic issues of rural modernization such as habitability, hygiene and comfort in a generic vernacular tradition. The Projet Sebou, insisting on the optimal relationship between rural settlements’ built-up area and social organization on one hand, and agricultural fields and production on the other, manifests a turn towards rural intensification supported by the combined action of infrastructure-driven works and an ambitious land reform. The villages’ physical layout, however, were quite simply outsourced, as if irrelevant to the project’s strategic objectives. Finally, the PAM’s intrinsic limitations, where housing modernization with restricted financial means alone was entrusted with the entire responsibility for instigating rural modernization, forced the SAR planning schemes into a top-down approach and obliged detailed village layouts to mimic vernacular street patterns.

In all three cases, village planning shows responsiveness to the more or less declared agendas of their funding bodies, the first quite fluidly translating the latter’s strategic objectives in functional programmes, making ‘spatialized politics’ most vividly palpable. However, village planning in post-war Morocco has been confronted with one of its inherent limits, lack of control on the political level of decision-making. Their architectural expression, instead, is much less eye-catching and has less far-reaching agendas than that of other coeval schemes designed in other countries of the Global South. Hence, village design, while inevitably integrating their funding bodies’ programmes in facts on the ground, relishes a relative autonomy towards international rural development paradigms but also a disputable relevance to wider societal issues. Designers such as Faraj and Nespola, or the CERF, made a genuine, and perhaps naïve, effort to sedulously improve the living conditions of their targeted end users. Even if ‘it would be hard to argue that for governments in developing countries, architecture mattered more than, say, antibiotics, contraception, hydro-electric dams, fresh water, energy, roads, etc.’, village design and rural architecture still demonstrated their power to tangibly embed emancipatory values and improve individuals’ quality of life.

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Notes on contributors
Michele Tenzon is research associate at the School of Architecture, University of Liverpool. He is part of the research project ‘The architecture of the United Africa Company: building mercantile West Africa’ and his main focus is the architectural production associated to the creation of palm oil plantations in the Congo river basin. In his most recent research works he investigated rural landscape modernization and village design in colonial and post-independence Morocco and in postwar Italy.

94Crinson, “The Powers that Be.”
95Levin and Feninger, “The Modern Village”; Aggregate, Architecture in Development.
96Dutta et al., “Introduction,” 14.
Axel Fisher is tenured associate professor p.t. at the School of Architecture La Cambre Horta, Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB). He is an architect by training, scholar, educator and editor, and holds a PhD in architectural composition (Politecnico di Milano 2011). His main research interests revolve around twentieth-century rural planning and village design in relation to modernization policies (www.modscapes.eu). He has been the editor-in-chief of the academic journal CLARA Architecture/Recherche from 2014 to 2021. He has co-edited the book African Cities Through Local Eyes. Experiments in Place-Based Planning and Design (Springer, 2021, doi:10.1007/978-3-030-84906-1).

ORCID

Michele Tenzon http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8501-9429
Axel Fisher http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9020-4805

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