

เลอ คอร์บูซีเอร์ และการวางผังเมือง “แพลนโอบุส” สำหรับเมืองอัลเจียร์

Layering Modernity : Le Corbusier and his ‘Plan Obus’
planning on Algiers

ศุภาศัย วงศ์กุลพิศาล

นักศึกษาปริญญาโท ภาควิชาประวัติศาสตร์และมนุษยศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยวอชิงตัน ซีแอตเทิล

Supasai Vongkulbhisal

MS. Arch in History and Theory student, University of Washington, Seattle

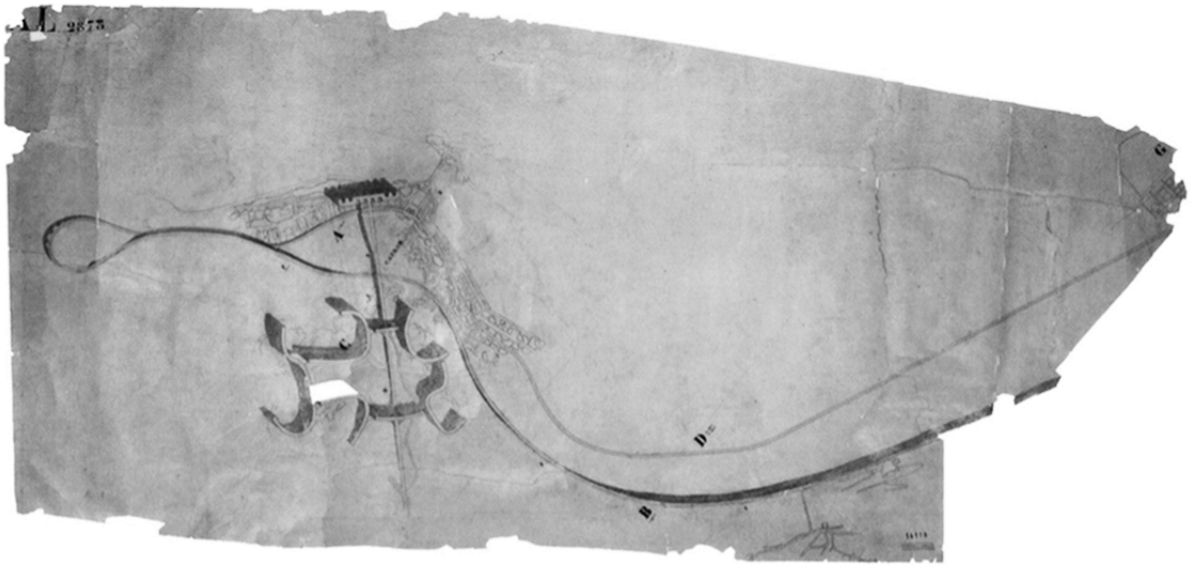
คำสำคัญ : เลอ คอร์บูซีเอร์ ;
อัลเจียร์ ; แพลนโอบุส ;
ลา วิล คอนเทมโพเรน ;
ลา วิล ราดูส ; คตินิยมแบบ
ตะวันออก ; ลัทธิล่าอาณานิคม

Keywords :

Le Corbusier ; Algiers ;
Plan Obus ; La Ville
Contemporaine ;
La Ville Radieuse ;
Orientalism ;
Colonialism

บทคัดย่อ

“สถาปนิกและนักประวัติศาสตร์ได้จำแนกผลงานในช่วงชีวิตของเลอ คอร์บูซีเอร์ ออกเป็น 2 ช่วงหลัก นั่นคือยุคปีเริ่มต้น จากการออกแบบ Maison Dom-ino (ค.ศ. 1913) ไปจนถึง Villa Savoye (ค.ศ. 1929) และในยุคหลัง เริ่มตั้งแต่ อาคารชุด Marseilles block (ค.ศ. 1946) ขยับขยายจนไปถึงการออกแบบผังเมืองและวางผังอาคารต่างๆ สำหรับเมืองหลวงอย่าง Chandigarh (ค.ศ. 1952-1965)” การจัดแบ่งช่วงการทำงานของเลอ คอร์บูซีเอร์ ออกเป็น 2 ยุคนี้ถูกกล่าวถึงโดยศาสตราจารย์ Mary McLeod ตีพิมพ์ลงในบทความเรื่อง Le Corbusier and Algiers ในวารสาร Oppositions เมื่อ ค.ศ. 1980 คำแถลงการณ์ด้านสถาปัตยกรรมของเลอ คอร์บูซีเอร์ ในยุคแรกนั้นแสดงออกถึงความชื่นชมในการออกแบบด้วยระบบเครื่องจักรและโรงงานอุตสาหกรรม เพื่อตอบสนองการขาดแคลนด้านที่อยู่อาศัยของเมืองช่วงยุคหลังสงคราม จึงเป็นเหตุผลที่ทำให้งานออกแบบของเลอ คอร์บูซีเอร์ มีเอกลักษณ์เฉพาะตัว ในยุคเริ่มต้นอาคารของเลอ คอร์บูซีเอร์ ถูกจำกัดอยู่บนพื้นฐานของความเป็นเหตุเป็นผล ฟังก์ชันถูกออกแบบให้สอดคล้องกับการใช้งาน ตั้งอยู่บนพื้นฐานของระบบพิกัดคาร์ทีเซียน (Cartesian) และมีหลักการมากพอสมควร หากแต่ในช่วงยุคหลังการออกแบบของเขาได้ถูกปรับเปลี่ยนไปในทิศทางตรงกันข้าม ผลงานต่างๆ ได้ถูกอธิบายเพิ่มเติมด้วยอารมณ์ความรู้สึก มีความเป็นกวี ลื่นไหล และมีการลงรายละเอียดด้านวัตถุมากยิ่งขึ้น การเปลี่ยนแปลงที่เห็นได้ชัดนี้เองได้สร้างขนบรูปแบบใหม่ๆ เพิ่มเติมให้แก่ Modern



Plan Obus

From : Manfredo Tafuri, *Le Corbusier, Plan Obus 1931, Alger* [Online], accessed 14 December 2015. Available from <http://laboratoireurbainsmeinsurrectionnel.blogspot.com/2012/01/m-tafuri-la-crise-de-lutopie-le.html>

Movement ซึ่งถูกกล่าวถึงในการประชุม CIAM ครั้งที่ 4 ภายใต้หัวข้อ Athens Charter ใน ค.ศ. 1933 Siegfried Giedion ได้กล่าวถึงพัฒนาการของการศึกษาการออกแบบผังเมืองว่า “ได้พัฒนาจากการออกแบบโดยคำนึงถึงเพียงแต่ฟังก์ชันและประโยชน์การใช้สอยของสถาปัตยกรรมเพียงอย่างเดียวไปเป็นการรวมเอาองค์ประกอบอื่นๆ เข้าร่วมด้วย เช่น สุนทรียภาพ บริบททางสังคม และชีววิทยา” เขายังได้กล่าวอีกว่า “การพัฒนาไปถึงขั้นสูงสุดของสถาปัตยกรรมโมเดิร์นในครั้งนี้เป็นไปได้เนื่องจากการสร้างความสัมพันธ์เชื่อมต่อกับสถาปัตยกรรมในอดีตและมรดกวัฒนธรรมโบราณ (Hellenic heritage)” การค้นพบในครั้งนี้สร้างความเปลี่ยนแปลงครั้งใหญ่แก่เหล่าสถาปนิกและนักออกแบบผังเมืองของศตวรรษที่ 20 เนื่องด้วยเป็นการสร้างมุมมองที่ต่อต้านคตินิยมสรผสมผสาน (eclecticism) ความฟุ่มเฟือยในการออกแบบตกแต่งของสถาปัตยกรรมในยุคก่อนหน้า ดังนั้นการศึกษาผลงานต่างๆ ของเลอ คอร์บูซิเอร์ ในช่วงยุคหลังจะสามารถแสดงให้เห็นถึงแรงผลักดันที่ส่งผลต่อการออกแบบของเขาให้เปลี่ยนแปลงไปจากยุคแรก นั่นคือ จากการออกแบบซึ่งมีลักษณะเป็นเส้นตรงไปสู่การออกแบบที่มีลักษณะเป็นเส้นโค้งมากขึ้น

ในช่วงรอยต่อระหว่าง 2 ยุคนี้ ได้แก่ ระหว่าง ค.ศ. 1929 จนถึง 1945 เป็นช่วงที่เลอ คอร์บูซิเอร์ ได้รับความผิดหวัง เนื่องจากถูกปฏิเสธผลงาน Plan Voisin ที่เขาเสนอต่อรัฐบาลฝรั่งเศส เขาได้เสนอให้ออกแบบและแบ่งส่วนพื้นที่เมืองปารีสใหม่ตามฟังก์ชันที่แท้จริงของเมือง ในช่วงเวลาดังกล่าวเลอ คอร์บูซิเอร์ ได้ศึกษาแนวทางการออกแบบผังเมืองอย่างหนักและมองหาพื้นที่แห่งใหม่เพื่อที่เขาจะสามารถทดสอบความรู้ความสามารถของ

สถาปัตยกรรมแบบโมเดิร์นได้อย่างเต็มที่ เป็นช่วงเวลาเดียวกันกับที่เขาเข้าร่วมขบวนการสหการนิยม (Syndicalism) และเดินทางไปเยือนสหภาพโซเวียต ประเทศแถบอเมริกาใต้และแอฟริกา ซึ่งทำให้เขาได้เข้าใจแนวความคิดของสถาปัตยกรรมพื้นถิ่นได้เป็นอย่างดีและลึกซึ้งยิ่งขึ้น การเรียนรู้เรื่องใหม่ๆ อย่างเรื่องวัสดุธรรมชาติและชีววิทยานี้เองทำให้เขาสามารถเพิ่มเติมฐานความรู้เข้าไปในทฤษฎีโมเดิร์น การค้นพบนี้ช่วยให้เขาเปลี่ยนความคิดจากในยุคเริ่มต้นที่ว่า “สถาปัตยกรรมโมเดิร์นเพียงอย่างเดียวมีความสามารถมากพอที่จะเปลี่ยนแปลงสังคมได้” ฐานความรู้ใหม่ที่เลอ คอร์บูซีเยร์ ค้นพบในช่วงนี้ได้ถูกกล่าวถึงในบทความที่เขาเขียนและตีพิมพ์ลงใน *La Ville Contemporaine* (ค.ศ. 1922) และ *La Ville Radieuse* (ค.ศ. 1933) ในรูปแบบของข้อเสนอเรื่องการวางผังเมืองสำหรับเมือง Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo และอย่างยิ่งในการวางผังเมือง Algiers ซึ่งต่อมาได้พัฒนาแนวความคิดนี้มาใช้ในการวางผังเมือง Chandigarh ใน ค.ศ. 1946 ถึง 1965

ดังนั้นการศึกษาวิจัยในครั้งนี้จึงมีความตั้งใจที่จะศึกษาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่าง Plan Obus ผลงานด้านการวางผังเมืองของเลอ คอร์บูซีเยร์ ซึ่งถูกสร้างขึ้นเป็นรูปธรรมสำหรับเมืองแอลเจียร์ เมืองหลวงของประเทศอัลจีเรีย ระหว่าง ค.ศ. 1931 ถึง 1942 และหลักการออกแบบผังเมืองซึ่งตัวสถาปนิกได้ตีพิมพ์ออกมาเป็นหนังสือชื่อ *La Ville Radieuse* ใน ค.ศ. 1933 การวิจัยครั้งนี้เน้นความสำคัญในเรื่องการเปลี่ยนถ่ายและพัฒนาทางความคิดสำหรับการวางผังเมืองในอุดมคติในช่วงเวลาที่ต่างกัน จากครั้งแรกซึ่งตีพิมพ์ในชื่อ *La Ville Contemporaine* เมื่อ ค.ศ. 1925 และการกล่าวถึงการออกแบบเมืองในครั้งที่ 2 ใน ค.ศ. 1933 ใน *La Ville Radieuse* โดยใช้แนวความคิดที่ถูกพัฒนาขึ้นเป็นจริงในการออกแบบเมืองแอลเจียร์ เพื่อทำความเข้าใจพัฒนาการทางความคิดด้านการออกแบบผังเมืองของเลอ คอร์บูซีเยร์ นอกจากนี้การวิจัยในครั้งนี้ยังแสดงให้เห็นถึงมุมมองอื่นๆ จากทฤษฎีที่ได้จากการออกแบบเมืองแอลเจียร์ อันได้แก่ คตินิยมแบบตะวันออก (Orientalism) และเรื่องลัทธิการล่าอาณานิคม (Colonialism) อีกด้วย

Abstract

‘Architects and historians have traditionally divided Le Corbusier’s career into two phases : the early years from the Maison Dom-ino (1913) to the Villa Savoye (1929) and the later period beginning with the Marseilles block (1946) and culminating with the master plan and capital complex of Chandigarh (1952-1965).’¹ This statement was written by Mary

McLeod in the article “Le Corbusier and Algiers” published in *Oppositions* in 1980. Le Corbusier initial manifestoes express an affinity for the streamlined machine age, a response to the postwar shortage of urban habitations. It created an identity for his architectural design to be rational, functional, Cartesian, while also being abstract. In contradiction to this approach, the second phase of his work paid greater attention toward the primitive and organic roots of architecture. This significant shift led to “a new tradition”² adding to the principles of Modern Movement discussed in the Fourth CIAM congress, the Athens Charter, in 1933. Siegfried Giedion identified the development of these urban studies that they progressed from the purely functional tendencies in architecture to a comprehended integration which included elements such as aesthetic, social, and biological. He furthermore indicated that “the full evaluation of this new, independent platform had been helped immeasurably by the contact with the past and our Hellenic heritage.” This new discovery had vastly changed the perspective of architects and urban planners of the 20th century regarding their reactions against eclecticism and lavish stylistic excesses of the architecture in the former period. Hence, studying the projects built during Le Corbusier’s later years will reveal the influences in his design which shifted from the first phase to the second phase—from rectilinear planning to poetic and plastic evocation.

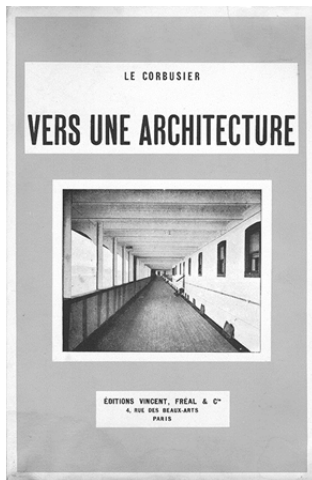
The stage in-between these two historical marked periods, 1929-1945, was marked by Le Corbusier’s disappointment with the refusal of the French government to respond to his Plan Voisin, an urban planning proposal based on a clear division of functions for Paris, and a fewer architectural commission he received. During this period he devoted a great deal of time to city planning theoretical studies and was thus looking for a new setting in which he could develop his modernist ideology to its full potential. This period coincided with his participation in ‘Syndicalism’ and the opportunity to visit the USSR, South America, and Africa where he subsequently absorbed indigenous building concepts. The new philosophy of natural subject matter

and biological form added another layer to his understanding of modernity. It helped strengthening his earlier ideological position that modern architecture alone had not have enough potential to initiate the social reform. The new discipline established during this interval is exemplified the progression in his writings from *La Ville Contemporaine* (1922) to *La Ville Radieuse* (1933), in a form of the proposal urban plans for Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, and especially a plan for Algiers, and later became concrete in the plan for Chandigarh (1946-1965).

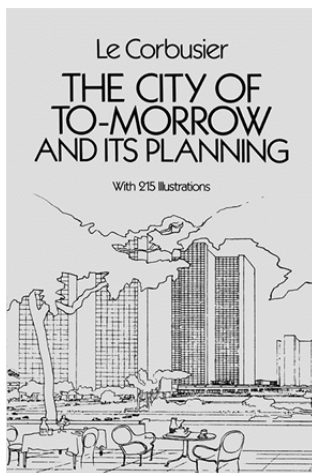
This research paper examines the close relationship between the ‘Plan Obus,’ the series of master plans Le Corbusier drew for the capital city of Algeria, Algiers, between 1931 and 1942, and his urban design arguments presented in the book *La Ville Radieuse* in 1933. It studies the degree of transformation between the two major urban-design ideologies of Le Corbusier proposed at different points of time - *La Ville Contemporaine* (1922) and *La Ville Radieuse* (1933) - by using the master plan of Algiers as a key to understand the progress in Le Corbusier’s design. The plan of Algiers will also be used as a concrete demonstration that supported the architect’s urban design statements in the same publication. In addition, this research paper aims to study the urban planning proposal on Algiers through which Le Corbusier shaped his new urban planning theory at the same time as it reflects certain facets of Orientalism and Colonialism.

On Sunday, July 22nd, 1934, a goodbye note to Algiers was written by Le Corbusier :

Now the ‘De Grasse’ is on the open sea. Algiers drops out of sight, like a magnificent body, supple-hipped and full-breasted, but covered by the sickening scabs of a skin disease. A body which could be revealed in and its magnificence, through the judicious influence of form and the bold use of mathematics to harmonize natural topography and human geometry. But I have been expelled, the doors have been shut in my face.³



Le Corbusier, *Vers une Architecture*, 1923.



Le Corbusier, *The city of to-morrow and its planning*, 1971.



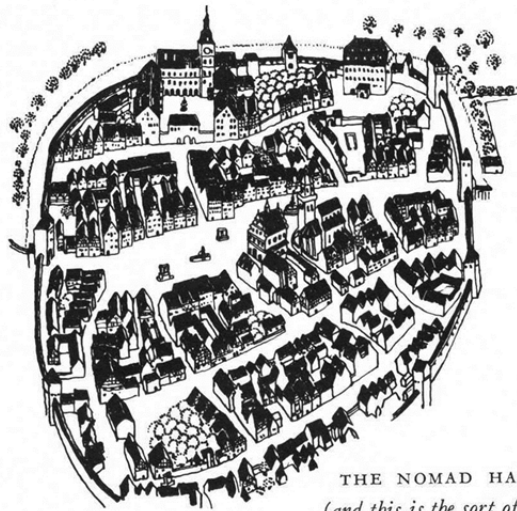
Le Corbusier, *La Ville Radieuse*, 1933.

This message not only addresses the desperate feeling of lost hope for Algiers of a Swiss- born French architect ; Le Corbusier, but also it emphasizes the underlining insights that reflect the remarkable shift in his urban design principles. This alteration denotes a significant point of his career since it adds another layer to his meaning of Modernity. Architects and historians have traditionally divided Le Corbusier’s career into two phases : the early years from the Maison Dom-ino (1913) to the Villa Savoye (1929) and the later period beginning with the Marseilles block (1946) and culminating with the monuments of Chandigarh (1952-1965). In categorizing these two phases, the first is labeled as rational, functional, Cartesian, abstract—an embodiment of the streamlined machine age ; and the second, in contrast, is considered more emotive, poetic, plastic, and material—an evocation, despite the application of modern technology, of more primitive or organic roots.⁴ In the years between these two periods architects faced questions regarding their former ideological justifications : to reconsider the social premises promised by the Modern Movement. Hence, in order to search for a new language, Le Corbusier joined the transition of the ‘grand tour’ in heading to South America, Moscow, Spain, Morocco, and, in 1931, Algiers, seeking a new balance between modernism and the vernacular architecture.

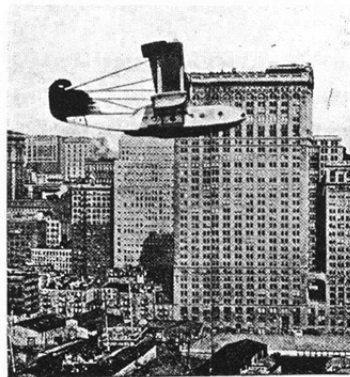
The historical circumstances of the time also shaped these transformations. Many European architects had hoped that the efficiency, optimality, and expanded output of modern architecture would solve the class conflict and social division. However, their faith was undermined by a financial crisis in 1929 and subsequent rise of Fascist and Nazi Empires in Italy and Germany in the 1930s. Due to the refusing French government responded to the Plan Viosin, Le Corbusier decided to turn to the French reactionary politics of the Regional Syndicalist Movement. It is in this context that the Algiers project which Le Corbusier had been working on from 1931-1942 can be seen as an initial attempt to tackle his failure to resolve the dual dilemma ; the machine-aged form was insufficient to optimize the mass production and the serious restriction on its poetic



THE NOMADS' CAMP



THE NOMAD HAS TAKEN ROOT
(and this is the sort of small town or village
which so delights the town planner !)



WE ARE NO LONGER
NOMADS: WE MUST
BUILD TOWNS

The Nomad

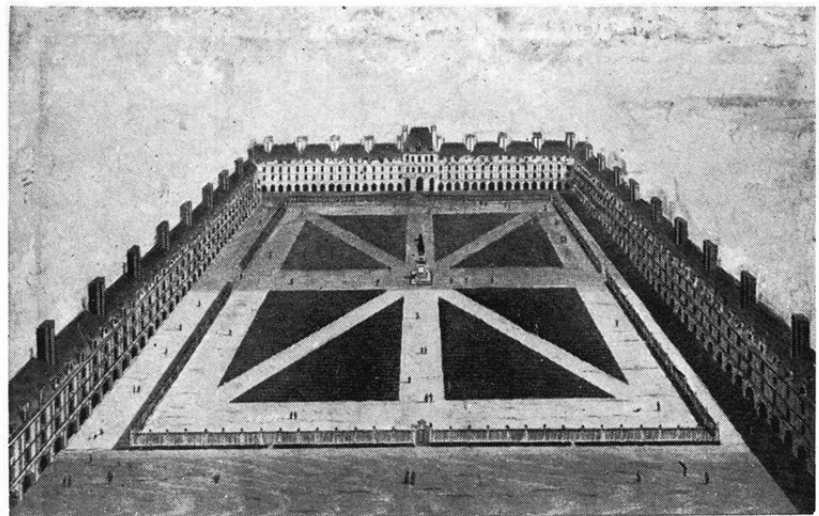
From : Le Corbusier,
La Ville Contemporaine,
1925.

expression, posed by the Modern Movement. He now admitted that technocracy alone could not produce the necessary economic and political reorganization. "We must,"

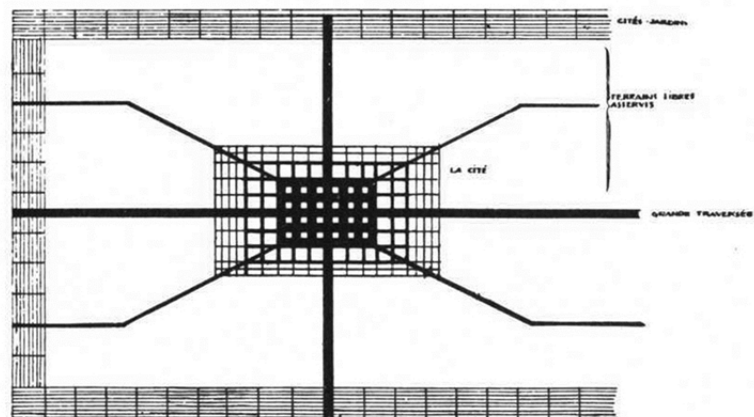
he proclaimed in 1930, “carry the fight for our cause straight from the drawing board into the papers and periodicals” and “call for action.”⁵ The results of this challenge to architects later appeared in the publication, *La Ville Radieuse* (1933), which illustrated the elements of a doctrine of urbanism that could be used as the basic design methodology for a post machine-age civilization.

Above : Classification
From : Le Corbusier,
La Ville Contemporaine,
 1925.

Below : System Diagram
From : Le Corbusier,
La Ville Contemporaine,
 1925.



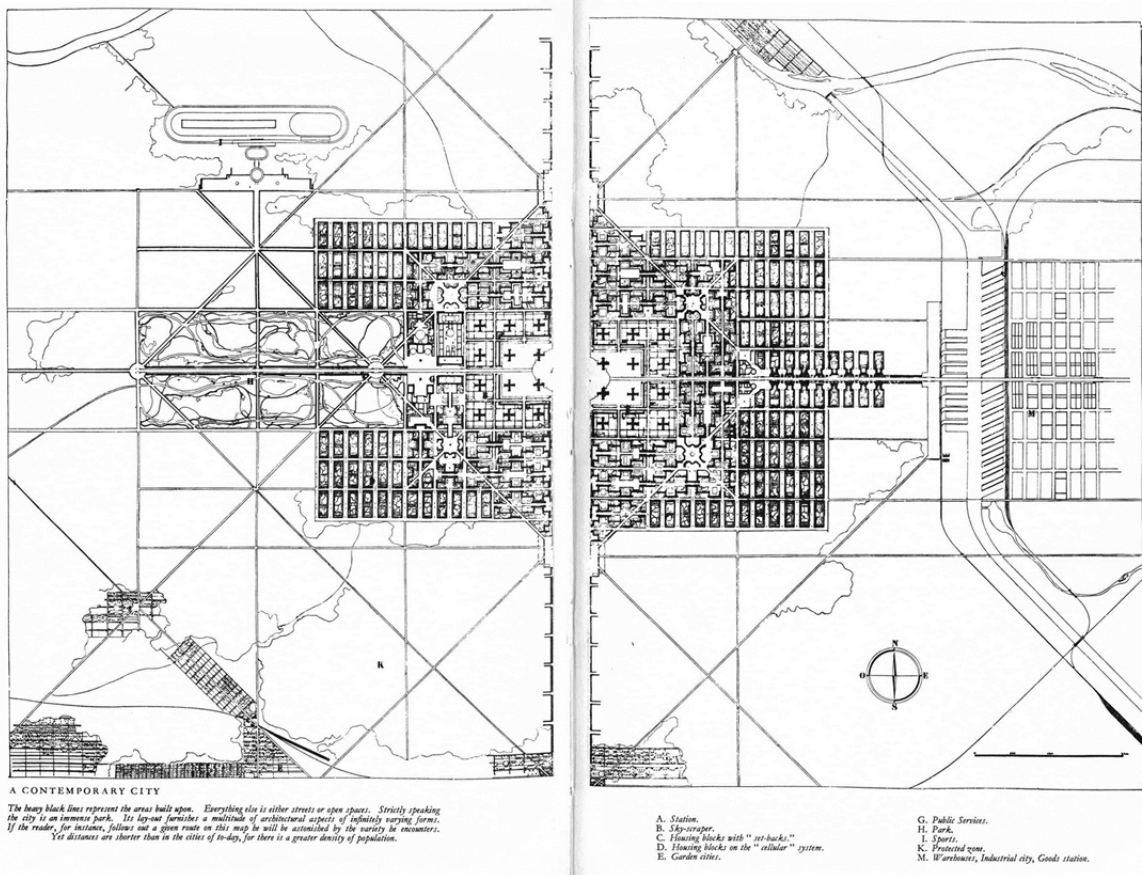
PARIS : THE PLACE DES VOSGES



COULEUR

SYSTÈME PRÉCONISÉ
 RÉSEAU DES RUES

A diagram showing the relative importance of streets in a great city. The black lines give the width of the streets. This system, which indicates what is needed under the new conditions, is absolutely contrary to the present state of things (see the diagram at the beginning of this chapter).

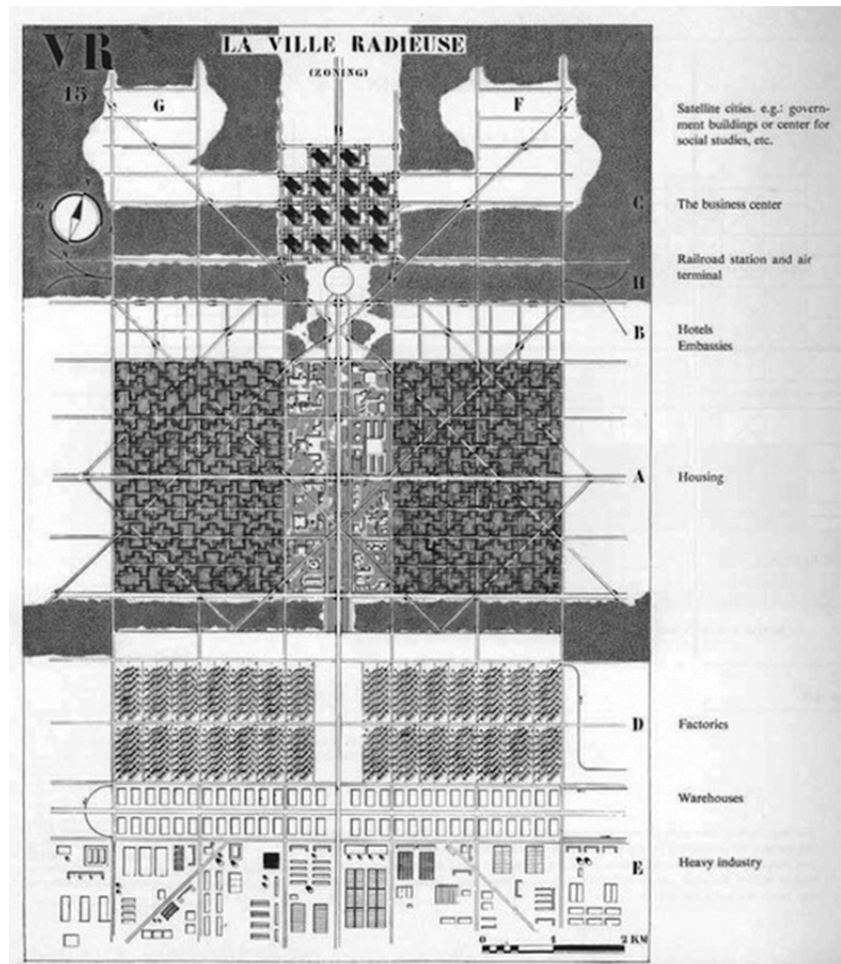


Urban Master Plan for
a Contemporary City
From : Le Corbusier,
La Ville Contemporaine,
1925.

This research paper will examine the close relationship between the 'Plan Obus,' the series of master plans Le Corbusier drew for the capital city of Algeria between 1931 and 1942, and his urban design arguments presented in the book *La Ville Radieuse* in 1933. It will study the degree of transformation between the two major urban design ideals of Le Corbusier proposed at different points of time - *La Ville Contemporaine* (1925) and *La Ville Radieuse* (1933) - by using the master plan of Algiers as a key to understand the progress in Le Corbusier's design. The plan of Algiers will also be used as a concrete demonstration that supported the architect's urban design statements in the same publication. In addition, this research paper aims to study the urban planning proposal on Algiers through which Le Corbusier shaped his new urban planning theory at the same time as it reflects certain facets of Orientalism and Colonialism.

Master Plan

From : Le Corbusier,
La Ville Radieuse, 1933.



The Beginning of his Voyage.

The first model of Le Corbusier's urban studies originally appeared at the Salon d'Automne in Paris in 1922 as a proposal for social housing representing architects responsibility for the housing questions during the nineteenth century, a period when the absence of the legal constraint generated the discussions on the issue of city's congestion. 'La Ville Contemporaine' or the City of Three Million, was an urban form study promoting a high density, high-rise residential, and administrative core for an elite to be surrounded, beyond a green belt, by an extensive band of low density suburbs.⁶ According to a foreword of the publication

printed in 1925 in conjunction with its presentation in a diorama at the Paris World's Fair, Le Corbusier expressed his vision on three fundamental levels ; the town, the city, and geometry. The author stated that a town could be no longer used as a tool to apprehend a newly emerging condition of living, since it lacked order and was ineffectual. On the other hand, a city represented a human creation that worked directly against nature to protect people and provide work. Meanwhile, people used geometry as a base to define the environment and ponder the world within. Since, it was argued that 'geometry' was a celebration of mathematics and resulted in the creation of machines, Le Corbusier thus declared 'the age in which we live is therefore essentially a geometrical one ; all its ideas are oriented in the direction of geometry.'⁷ His statement illustrated the existence of a new urban spirit of order and uniformity by applying this geometric principle to the contemporary city.

By 1929, the language of the Modern Movement, seen in white planar surfaces, simple cubic forms, flat roofs, and strip windows, was widely used in relation to the ideology of rationalism and functionalism. It was passed along through the academicism of the Beaux Arts though it retained the sense that it was a form of propaganda for leftist views.⁸ However, not every commission articulated by the machine-age formation guaranteed the most efficient, economical, or suitable response to a rapidly increasing population. Moreover, the modern architectural practitioners also imposed a strong opposition on the poetic expression of a Modern vocabulary, however they did not make clear of its form and ideological justification. This inconsistency led Le Corbusier to an urban design re-investigation that later created an alteration in his approach. The shift in perspective is characterized by his own reply in 1929 to Karel Teige, the Czech critic. Rejecting *sachlichkeit* (the new objectivity) and his own former prescription "the house is a machine for living," he declared, "the function of beauty is independent of the function utility."⁹ Henceforth, he and many of his contemporaries elevated the poetic and artistic with

an implicit emphasis on a search for a new, more intuitive formal approach.

Prior to his travel to Istanbul and Western Asia minor in 1911, the beginning of Le Corbusier's embrace of Orientalism was initially seen in his manifestation, starting from his 'grand tour' travel notes and sketches, which were later published under the name of 'Voyage d'Orient' in 1966. Le Corbusier developed a definition of the 'Orient' through literature, travel accounts, and paintings, and are evident in his use of Charles Brouty's drawings of the Algerian Casbah, the city postcards, and the painting of Eugene Delacroix's *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1834) in *La Ville Radieuse*.¹⁰ Regarding his sketches of Istanbul and Algiers viewed from the sea, he had mapped the harmonizing notions of the built forms and nature in his mind and compared them to what he had constructed back in Europe. Indeed, he surpassed the typical formulas of Orientalist descriptions by reading the urban form analytically. He studied the careful placement of monuments as an urban topography that resulted in "summits formed by really enormous mosques" as well as their relationship to each other in the calculated composition of the skyline.¹¹ All these impressions created within him an idea of consonance with nature.

Le Corbusier had no opportunities in urban design practice until 1931, when he was fortunately invited by a group of citizen named "The Friends of Algiers" to give a public speech on the issues of "The architectural revolution achieved by modern techniques" and "How the architectural revolution can solve problem of urbanization in big cities."¹² On this centennial celebration of French policies in Algiers, he had an important opportunity despite a concern that the administration of Mayor Brunel of Algiers, had entirely demolished the area called Quartier de la Marine. This problematic site would provide a perfect opportunity for Le Corbusier, in providing a new unencumbered ground in the heart of a historical city. Referred to his first ideal-building from scratch - this new experimental project could provide the new norm for modernism. Hence, a year after his first visit

Algiers, he submitted the '*Plan Obus*' or 'the shell,' a name which implicated its natural scheme, as a first proposal to the city.



Postcard view of Algiers
women on the terrace

From : Le Corbusier,
Algiers, 1931.



The city of Algiers

From : Le Corbusier,
La Ville Radieuse, 1933.

A Record of Algiers in La Ville Radieuse

The presentation of the Plan Obus of Algiers was inserted in *La Ville Radieuse* in a section entitled ‘Decisive Demonstration’- providing a concrete example of his urban principles along with other plans for different cities such as Paris, Geneva, Moscow, and Barcelona. The presentation of Algiers in this section reveals the step-by-step process of Le Corbusier’s mental mapping, which subsequently transformed into a concrete design proposal. It begins with a ‘Letter to a Mayor’ in which the architect expressed his belief that Algiers would become a city of great destiny and mark another cardinal point within the Mediterranean linked to Paris, Barcelona, and Rome. Le Corbusier placed the city on an axis that would link Algiers to its Mother nation, France. At the same time, he proposed removing the Quartier de la Marine from its existing site, thus opposing an initial proposal of Henri Prost and re-situating it as the end of the axis with a concern for creating a powerful face for Algiers. Furthermore, he criticized the slowness of life dominated by Garden City planning and expressed his obsession with the remarkable sight of the Algiers harbor, by proposing a 150-meter high elevated highway would connect the harbor with the residences of Fort-l’Empereur, located on the high ground accessible by a bridge spanning over the Casbah.¹³

His interest in the relationship of city planning and humanistic psychology was initially found in his description of Algiers, where he stated :

The view from Fort-l’Empereur is stupendous : one of the world’s most remarkable sights : the Atlas, the Mediterranean, the Kabylia mountains. It is possible to build there in such a way that every housing unit benefits from these incalculable advantages. Speaking in city-planning terms and therefore in human terms, I have called these elements the basic pleasure.¹⁴

The following section of the documentation of Algiers was combined with Le Corbusier’s sketches, photos, and poetic

statements that the architect entitled “Witnesses.” One of these statements - “O inspiring image! Arabs, are there no peoples but you who dwell in coolness and quiet, in the enchantment of proportions and the savor of humane architecture”¹⁵ - was written beside an image of Arab women living their ordinary lives in serenity. His impression of Muslim architecture was previously found in a number of his early villas, such as the Villa Jeanneret-Perret (1912), Villa Favre-Jacot (1912), and Villa Schwob (1916). These projects were inspired by Ottoman houses in terms of their interior organization around a central hall, their simple spaces and massing, and their blank street facades.¹⁶ By acknowledging this new acquaintance, Le Corbusier saw an overtly contradiction with his earlier principles established within the frame of European civilization. He referred to those cities as places where civilized people are hold up like rats, meanwhile hailing the architectural stratification of Arab cities. As Le Corbusier acknowledged they made brilliant use of the upper terrace that formed the roof of the entire city and employed a strategy that helped narrow the streets where : “not an inch is wasted.”¹⁷

Another significant element found during his first glance from the sea toward Algiers was the powerful profile of the city set against a spectacular landscape of sea and mountains. The figure was stretching ten miles along the western edge of the Baie d’Alger with the Kabylie Hills and Atlas Mountains. Thus, because of its land edge and the port opened as a vast white amphitheater to the sea, Le Corbusier praised this as “the most beautiful in the world.”¹⁸ This fascination formed his later ‘organic’ fundamentals in the Plan Obus series, particularly the curving line of the *Viaduct* structure associated with the topography of Algiers. Another influence on his urban design ideology was portrayed in Le Corbusier’s examination of Eugene Delacroix’s *Les Femmes d’Alger*. This painting displayed his interest in Islamic women and their position in a Muslim family. Le Corbusier’s attitude to women was already well established in 1929 in his introduction to Josephine Baker who he described as “the most erotic woman he had ever known.” As claimed in

Brain Ackley's *Blocking the Casbah*, Le Corbusier was taken by the beauty of women and returned to Paris with a notebook full of nude studies of them and several indigenous postcards of "native" women. It has been suggested that the elegant curves of the Plan Obus, previously uncharacteristic in his work, derived from the fleshy forms of Algerian feminine beauty.¹⁹ Having women as one source of inspiration was revealed through the application of a bowing gesture and the humanistic-scale re-balancing in his design of Fort l'Empereur.

The last section of the planning Algiers documents was the 'Plan Obus' which was divided into three successive phases dated 1931-1932, 1933, and 1934. Although the Plan Obus was never executed in any tangible way, it occupied Le Corbusier's time for eleven years without any official appointment or commission from the French authorities. The Plan Obus was an outcome of his collective experiences of Algiers and his previous urban design studies. His new plan for Algiers still inherited his former design essences : congregating a dense concentration of residential and business quarters to permit the freeing of terrain of parks and recreation, eliminating the corridor-street, separating pedestrians and vehicular circulation, considering housing as a collective entity, and implementing the large-scaled communal amenities. Based on Le Corbusier's writing and illustrations in *La Ville Radieuse*, the Plan Obus consisted of three major components listed as follow ;

The first element is the *cite d'affaires*, functioning as a new business district, assigned to be in the Quartier de la Marine, the cape of Algiers locating at the tip of Casbah. The old Quartier de la Marine that had distinguished the city into halves would be demolished and replaced with a new function. According to caption of the version 'C'20 in 1934, Le Corbusier still maintained the idea rooted from his 'La Ville Contemporaine's (1925)' urban design principle regarding to condense all the business areas together and unite them within certain core area of the city. The architect explained his operation on the business city, 'it provides Algiers with

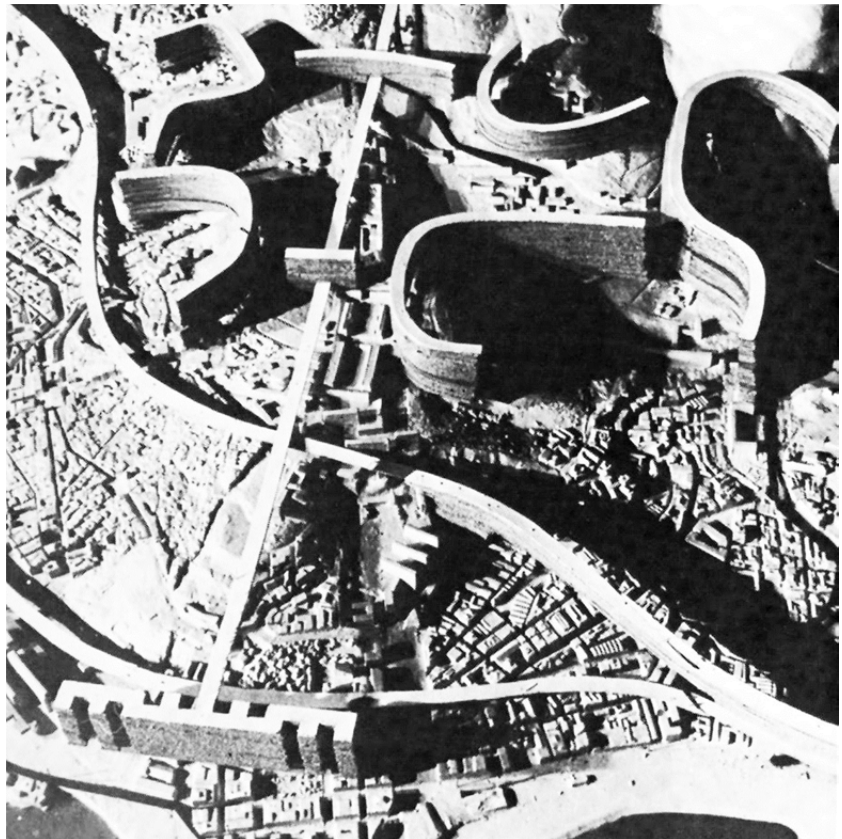
the fundamental, essential elements of its civic life : the civic center.'

The second component, the *redent* located at Fort-l'Empereur. is considered to be the most significant implementation the designer applied on Algiers. Subsequently, it became an important tool that shaped his new urban design theory. Regarding the initiation of the curving forms, he explained the three main influences which inspired the occurrence of these organic architectural shapes ; to be able to view broad horizons in all directions, to find the lowest-lying point on the undulating site in order to increase the real volume of the buildings, and to respond to the landscape's invitation properly. This resulted an event of a plastic creation as Le Corbusier mentioned in writing, 'response to horizons carries further ; response to winds and sun is truer.'²¹ Hence, the curving forms of the five *redents* at Fort l'Empereur superseded the carefully configured rectilinear setbacks of Ville Radieuse.

Thirdly, the *viaduc* placed along the coast line containing fourteen residential floors underneath the highway. These levels were firstly planned to be the free slot that Le Corbusier believed it would be filled little by little with the homes of the working class that can shelter as many as 180,000 people. With the automobile lanes placed on the rooftop, the *viaduc* did not just recall Le Corbusier's admirations on speed and machinery that he had published in *l'Espirit Nouveau* (1920-21), although it responded back the current fashion of horizontally extended garden cities by the construction of "*vertical garden cities*."

In a way related to his scheme for "La Ville Contemporaine," a city for three millions inhabitants, Le Corbusier designated the areas of Algiers that would serve the citizens during working hours and resting hours into two dense concentrations - the residential quarter, Fort l'Empereur, and the business quarter, Quartier de la Marine - in order to provide generous open space for parks and recreation. Other key concepts were applied to the Plan Obus, such as the elimination of the "street-corridor," the separation of pedestrian and vehicular circulation, the creation of a collective identity for

housing based upon an individual cell, and the implementation of large-scale communal accommodations. However, the shift from Le Corbusier's "La Ville Contemporaine" to "La Ville Radieuse" can be seen in a change from static planning to more dynamic planning using organic qualities. This organic idea can be seen in residences that could evolve due to their growth the agglomeration of the dwellings within the city infrastructure (the *viaduct*), and the new planning ideology that integrated the climate and geography of Algiers.



Fort-l'Empereur
From : Le Corbusier,
La Ville Radieuse,
Algiers, 1931-1932.

Toward a new Application

The manner in which ideas have been conveyed from the first publication of Le Corbusier's doctrines on the city, *La Ville Contemporaine* (1925), to the second publication, *La Ville*

Radieuse (1933), reflect a prominent challenge in his design career. The master plan of Algiers, Plan Obus, was an issue at this crucial moment, since the Obus project fundamentally challenges the former static, Cartesian plans though what might be termed its organic qualities : evolutionary growth, additive cellular structure, responsiveness to climate and geography.²² The new concept of organic integration - seen in the symbiosis of man, architecture, and the landscape - was formed due to a creation of the Quartier de la Marine, the Fort l'Empereur's *redents*, and the *viaduct*. This aspect was described in the foreword of his exhibition plates at the 1930 CIAM Congress in Brussels : "This, it seems to me, is the only way to approach life. In the years that followed, these theories on the Radiant City were brought into direct context with material reality : my plan for Algiers, for Stockholm, for Barcelona, for Nemours, etc., etc."²³

Many major principles were also inherited from the first urban design experience to the second - such as, to clear out the historical and unhealthy part of the city and to wholly rebuild the old site with a modern method. However, in *La Ville Radieuse* (1933), the central core of the cityscape had been switched from the business district to the pre-fabricated apartment compounds called 'les unités' which provided accommodation for everyone, not only for the privileged as in *La Ville Contemporaine* (1925). The size of the new apartment complex was based upon the needs of each family. The second radical shift found in the new plan was a result of Le Corbusier's engagement with nature during the early years he spent traveling. The impact of these travels can be seen in a focus on sunlight and air-ventilation in the diagrams showing the axis of maximum solar radiation for each city. Le Corbusier argued that : "such a diagram should be the first undertaking of the city planner and the first act on the part of authority. It is a key."²⁴ Another significant shift was the attention he paid to the topography, hence, in *La Ville Radieuse*, all the buildings were lifted five meters above the ground and supported on pilotis, as he preferred that the ground plane should be given back to

pedestrians and nature. This idea was inspired by the impact of topography he saw in Istanbul and West Asia minor.

In addition, the design of the building complex had been re-formed with a new strategy for ‘*redent*’ blocks that he first explored in the Algiers plan. This new strategy employed a recessed pattern that was intended to eliminate “street-corridor,” however the new version of the setback also lessened the uniformity of the overall master plan and brought the buildings closer together - almost like the Islamic alleys in the Casbah. Additionally, when looking at the overall master plan, the supplemental orthogonal and diagonal paths were added to fulfill the extension defiance in *La Ville Contemporaine* (1925). With these changes and the loss of the green belt wrapping around the city, the municipality had a larger opportunity to expand and connect with other cities. In his articles for Plans regarding *La Ville Radieuse* book, Le Corbusier condemned the concentric organization of the Ville Contemporaine as static and proposed that the Ville Radieuse have a linear organization that would permit “organic growth” and the “biological development” of the city.²⁵

Lastly, the most prominent feature found in Le Corbusier’s new theory was a humanistic notion that began with the design of ‘*a cell*’ as a basic fundamental unit in both the human body and the town plan. He also explored this concept in the curving structures that were derived from the bends in the Amazon River viewed from the air - such as, in the long *viaduct* in the Obus sweeping along the coast from Hussein-Dey to Saint-Eugene, the five *redents* of Fort l’Empereur - and from the forms of robust Algerian woman.²⁶ All these perceptions led Le Corbusier to notice of his style changing. A new layer of thoughts was added to his urban design disciplines by opening to more abstract solutions and finding an answer in nature. He also explained this new awareness in his own description more “dynamic.”²⁷

A New Layer of Modernity

Le Corbusier's urban planning theory did not only address the remarkable shift in his career path by engaging human psychology and a natural orientation in his design, but also it marked the new expectation regarding the revision of Modernity by following a Syndicalist perspective. In contrast to the rules of Capitalism and its planning, the historian Peter Sterns delineates three major points of syndicalism : complete hostility to the existing capitalist order ; a belief that economic rather than political means - notably the general strike - was the only successful way to attack this system ; and a vague conception of a future society with a decentralized power structure organized into local economic units directed by the producers themselves. The vagueness of the objectives was intentional : syndicalist action was to be the result of practical experience, an immediate, pragmatic response to the needs of the moment rather than an impression of a pre-established social theory or plan.²⁸ Therefore, all the practices and the master plans Le Corbusier tried to achieve with various regions were proof of his ideal that the Modern Movement had a larger definition and could possibly solve the broken functions of society through an architecture inspired by utopian socialism.

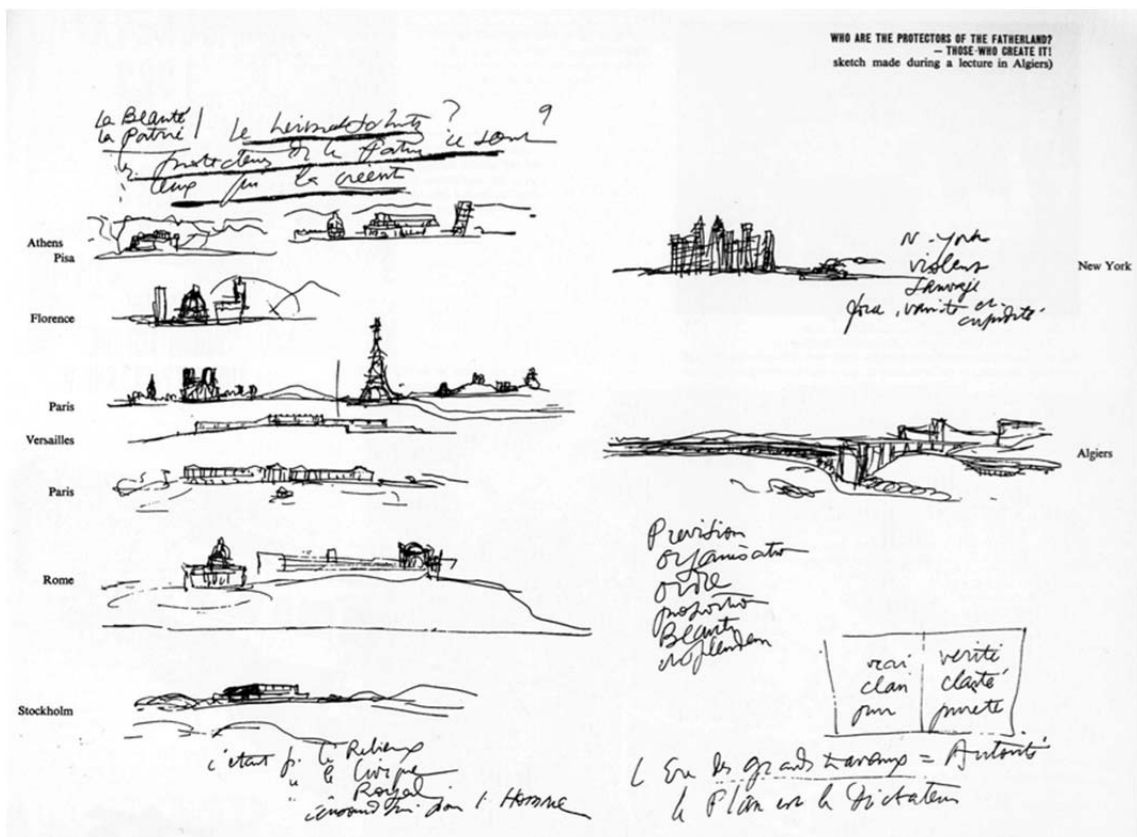
By focusing on the issues of Colonialism and Orientalism, the attempt of Le Corbusier in the plan for Algiers was not only a one-way cultural and architectural transfer from the Motherland of France to the colonial country of Algeria. It also created a reverse characteristic transmission in which the French designer received the influences from the vernacular architectural design of the Orient and applied them with his new commissions and design philosophies. To give a specific illustration, Le Corbusier had collected and brought back the new experiences from his grand tour of the Orient including a trip to Algiers, memorized the design strategy of Muslim Architecture, and later established his own urban design theory called *La Ville Radieuse*. The publication also incorporated the materials he gathered during those years such as photographs

and postcards of Algiers' city scene and women. Although Le Corbusier never had a chance to concretely deliver his urban planning ideas during the 1930s and 1940s. He finally got a chance in 1950s to translate his urban strategy on a grand scale in the construction of the Union Territory of Chandigarh in India in 1947.

In the work of Le Corbusier, 'La Ville Radieuse' represents as a new formation that was inspired by the experiences and knowledge the architect gained during his travel and this added another layer on top of his earlier ideas of urban planning, 'La Ville Contemporaine.' His first premise, to find a new mean for Modernity, was achieved with the back-to-nature realization and the dynamic forms he acquired during his search. The meaning that the architect found at the end of his journey in Algier was noted the end of the section on the Obus Plan : 'Who are the protectors of the Fatherland? -Those who create it!'²⁹

Who are the protectors of the Fatherland?

From : Le Corbusier,
La Ville Radieuse,
Algiers, 1933.



¹ Mary McLeod, "Le Corbusier and Algiers," in *Oppositions Reader : Selected Readings from a Journal for Ideas and Criticism in Architecture 1973-1984*, ed. K. Michael Hays (New York : Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 489.

² Stanislaus Von Moos, *Le Corbusier, Elements of a Synthesis* (Cambridge : MIT, 1979), 211.

³ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City ; Elements of a Doctrine of Urbanism to Be Used as the Basis of Our Machine-age Civilization* (New York : Orion, 1967), 260.

⁴ Mary McLeod, "Le Corbusier and Algiers," 489.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ James Dunnett and Thomas Deckker, "Le Corbusier and the city without streets," in *The Modern City Revisited* (London : Spon, 2000), 15.

⁷ Norma Evenson, *Le Corbusier : The Machine and the Grand Design* (New York : George Braziller, 1969), 37.

⁸ Mary McLeod, "Le Corbusier and Algiers," 489.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Zeynep Celik, "Le Corbusier, Orientalism, Colonialism," in *Assemblage* (Massachusetts : The MIT Press, 1992), 61.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City ; Elements of a Doctrine of Urbanism to Be Used as the Basis of Our Machine-age Civilization*, 228.

¹³ Ibid., 229.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 230.

¹⁶ Zeynep Celik, "Le Corbusier, Orientalism, Colonialism," 59.

¹⁷ Ibid., 230.

¹⁸ Mary McLeod, "Le Corbusier and Algiers," 491.

¹⁹ Brian Ackley, "Blocking the Casbah : Le Corbusier's Algerian Fantasy," in *Bidoun Projects* (n.p. : Bidoun Magazine, n.d.) [Online], accessed 20 March 2015. Available from <<http://www.bidoun.org/magazine/06-envy/blocking-the-casbah-le-corbusiers-algerian-fantasy-by-brian-ackley/>>

²⁰ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City ; Elements of a Doctrine of Urbanism to Be Used as the Basis of Our Machine-age Civilization*, 258.

²¹ Ibid., 159.

²² Mary McLeod, "Le Corbusier and Algiers," 493.

²³ Ibid., 156.

²⁴ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-Morrow and Its Planning*, trans. Frederick Etchells (London : Architectural, 1971).

²⁵ Mary McLeod, "Le Corbusier and Algiers," 493.

²⁶ Ibid., 497.

²⁷ Ibid., 499.

²⁸ Ibid., 490.

²⁹ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City ; Elements of a Doctrine of Urbanism to Be Used as the Basis of Our Machine-age Civilization*, 261.

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