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“Algiers and the Algerian Desert”: Decolonization and the Regional Question in France, 1958–1962

Muriam Haleh Davis*

Department of History, University of California, Santa Cruz

*Corresponding author. E-mail: muhdavis@ucsc.edu

This article demonstrates how Algerian decolonization played a key role in shaping the discipline of territorial planning (aménagement du territoire) in metropolitan France. A number of liberal economists, including François Perroux, articulated notions of economic space that eschewed the nation-state as a unit of analysis. In colonial Algeria, this discourse was subsequently adopted by officials who sought to integrate Muslim Algerians into the French Republic. Discussions on territorial planning in late colonial Algeria echoed debates in the United States regarding the “social uplift” of African Americans in the South, which also attempted to stem the rising tide of separatism. In the 1950s, liberal understandings of the relationship among cultural specificity, territorial scale, and economic development were challenged by a host of actors, including Algerian nationalists who espoused ideas that would later appear in the analyses of world systems theorists. After the victory of the Algerian FLN (Front de libération nationale) in 1962, discussions on regional identities provided an important tool for political claims on both sides of the Mediterranean. Moreover, techniques of territorial planning developed in Algeria were imported to the Hexagon in the aftermath of Algerian independence.

In early 1958, Stéphane Labauvie, an economist and professor at Toulouse I, addressed a pressing question: given Algeria’s legal status as three French departments, what would be its fate in the emerging European Economic Community?¹ In trying to understand Algeria’s ambiguous place in Europe, Labauvie invoked the work of the social Catholic economist François Perroux, who had warned that the European Common Market tended to reinforce existing economic centers, impeding a more equitable distribution of wealth. Perroux’s work was fundamental for regional economic theory in Europe after World War II and was also taken up by colonial officials and economic planners in Algeria. His notion of “growth poles” sought to remedy regional underdevelopment, insisting that decentralized investment would spur overall economic growth. Rather than viewing the nation-state as a “container” for the forces of production, he proposed the notion of “economic space” to capture the porous nature of exchange and the fact that these relationships

¹Stéphane Labauvie, “L’Algérie face à la communauté économique européenne,” *OFALAC: Bulletin économique et juridique* 219 (1958), 57–61.

did not map neatly onto political borders.² This model was attractive to myriad experts who sought to articulate new forms of spatial organization and question traditional understandings of the nation-state, whether that was in the guise of an integrated Europe, a federal solution for Algeria, or even attempts to fashion a Eurafrikan space that would join European and African territories.³

In light of Perroux's work, Labauvie asked why investors would choose to finance France's "African extension" rather than Europe's more lucrative, and industrialized, northern regions. He pressed readers to think about these two orientations together; France's future, he argued, was tied to an emerging "Eurafrikan orbit" and French planners needed to account for both its European and its Algerian commitments.⁴ Economists and colonial officials reflected on the twin concerns of European integration and decolonization as they tackled the issue of uneven spatial development in France and its Algerian departments. After World War II the policy of *aménagement du territoire* (territorial planning) attempted to remedy the centralization of capital by "spreading urban growth as evenly as possible across the entire surface of each national territory" in a Keynesian framework.⁵ While the region emerged as the predominant unit of analysis, discussions on spatial frames and territoriality in France, often rooted in interpretations of Perroux's work, were also informed by reflections on underdevelopment in colonial territories.⁶ Most notably, the theory of regional development—particularly its concern for how cultural differences might influence economic growth—informed debates on economic reform in Algeria during the War of Independence (1954–62).

Perroux's attention to the region was rooted in his desire to adopt a humanist approach to material organization. He had espoused a corporatist understanding of economic development in the 1940s before couching his analysis in the language of Keynesianism.⁷ His concern for the human aspects of development was a natural result of his social Catholic background; he was a founding member of *Humanisme*

²François Perroux, "Economic Space: Theory and Applications," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 64/1 (1950), 89–104.

³Since Algeria was an integral part of France when the Rome Treaty was signed, it enjoyed de facto membership of the European Community and benefited from the economic provisions of the treaty (except those applying to the Common Agricultural Policy). Algeria was denied any political participation in the EEC, however. For more on how the question of decolonization in Algeria influenced European integration see Megan Brown's *The Seventh Member State: Algeria, France and the European Community* (Cambridge, 2022).

⁴Labauvie, "L'Algérie face à la communauté économique européenne," 60.

⁵Neil Brenner, *New State Spaces: Urban Governance and the Rescaling of Statehood* (Oxford, 2004), 115.

⁶For works on *aménagement du territoire* as a discipline see Patrice Caro, Olivier Dard, and Jean-Claude Daumas, eds., *La politique d'aménagement du territoire: Racines, logiques et résultats* (Rennes, 2002); François Caron, ed., *L'aménagement du territoire, 1958–1974* (Paris, 1999), Vincent Guigueno, ed., *Dossier l'aménagement du territoire, Vingtième siècle: Revue d'histoire* 79 (2003); Marc Xesportes and Antoine Picon, *De l'espace au territoire: L'aménagement en France, XVI–XXe siècles* (Paris, 1997).

⁷Antonin Cohen, "Du corporatisme au Keynésianisme: Continuités pratiques et ruptures symboliques dans le sillage de François Perroux," *Revue française de science politique* 56 (2006), 555–92. A number of scholars have studied how social Christian ideas shaped the welfare state in France after World War II. See, for example, James Chappel, *Catholic Modern: The Challenge of Totalitarianism and the Remaking of the Church* (Cambridge, 2018); Denis Pelletier, *Économie et humanisme: De l'utopie communautaire au combat pour le tiers-monde (1941–1996)* (Paris, 1996); Philip Nord, *France's New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era* (Princeton, 2010).

et économie, a group that had been established in 1941 by the Dominican priest Louis-Joseph Lebret. Members fostered a reflection on how spirituality and Christian conceptions of justice could be used to articulate an economic orthodoxy that avoided the extremes of savage market capitalism or totalitarian communism. As Perroux argued in 1944, while liberal capitalism was incapable of addressing the cyclical crises of overproduction, Marxism was based on the unrealistic model of a homogeneous society. He thus concluded that “the community of labor is not merely an economic technique or process, it is the historical expression of a permanent human ideal.”⁸ Perroux connected the creation of this “community” to the question of territory, calling for economists to adopt a “human scale of analysis” by emphasizing the region.⁹

Perroux’s vision of the economy, which brought together humanist, developmentalist, and spatial concerns, was fundamental to discussions on territorial planning after World War II. These debates traversed the Mediterranean and were inscribed in broader discussions about racial and ethnic differences that underpinned the construction of the French welfare state. Much like African Americans in the United States, the inclusion of Algerian Muslims was predicated on economic reforms as well as the promise of “assimilation through integration.”¹⁰ Admittedly, the notion of integration had very different genealogies in the United States and French Algeria: in the former, it was invoked as a mechanism to address the deep inequalities and segregation introduced by Jim Crow policies in the South. In Algeria, however, politicians and economists encouraged integration as a policy that would acknowledge the cultural difference of Muslims. In their eyes, this reorientation would also enable Algeria to remain under French sovereignty.¹¹ Despite these significant differences, postwar planners in Algeria—much like their counterparts in the United States—paid particular attention to the role that psychological structures and family organization played in underdevelopment. A number of liberal economists, such as the Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal and the German-born American Albert Hirschman, tackled these questions in the United States and Europe.¹² Their work represented one set of responses to the global demands for

⁸François Perroux, texte d’une conférence faite à Marly le 19 Mars 1944, “L’économie originaire de la renaissance française,” 18, Archives of *Économie et humanisme*, Archives municipales de Lyon (hereafter AM Lyon), 183 II 131.

⁹*Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁰Karen Ferguson, *Top Down: The Ford Foundation, Black Power, and the Reinvention of Racial Liberalism* (Philadelphia, 2013), 8. In France, a number of measures that specifically targeted Muslims for positions in the civil service resembled affirmative action in the metropole. Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, 2006), 50.

¹¹There is a long-standing debate over the meaning of integration as well as the ways in which this vocabulary is able to break from the logic of white supremacy. Stanley argues that the definitions of integration “derive from both the meanings attributed to it by defenders and critics, and from practical attempts to secure it,” responding to critics who would prefer other concepts, such as “racial justice.” See Sharon A. Stanley, *An Impossible Dream? Racial Integration in the United States* (Oxford, 2017), 7. For an analysis of this term in the French context see Todd Shepard, “À l’heure des ‘grands ensembles’ et de la guerre d’Algérie,” *monde(s)* 1 (2012), 113–34.

¹²As Surkis argues, the unequal legal and economic status offered to Muslims had long been predicated on family structures and understandings of sexual practices. Judith Surkis, *Sex, Law, and Sovereignty in French Algeria, 1830–1930* (Ithaca, 2019).

racial justice and decolonization that reflected on struggles in Africa and the United States in a relational framework.¹³

Governor General Jacques Soustelle, the architect of the policy of integration in Algeria, saw territorial reorganization as inseparable from the social evolution of Muslims. His 1955 development plan was never fully implemented, but in 1958 the appointment of Paul Delouvrier as delegate general, and the introduction of an ambitious development plan, offered new opportunities for planners to introduce growth poles through industrialization. Perroux's framework served another purpose in Algeria: it effectively undermined claims for Algerian nationalism, helping to integrate Algeria into France (and by extension Europe) as an "economic space." De Gaulle's commitment to bolstering French influence prioritized France's European engagements, particularly after Algerian independence in 1962. Yet the regional turn in planning nevertheless shaped the political imagination of various actors in France and Algeria who opposed official nationalist narratives. Moreover, the expertise developed under the Constantine Plan played a key role in shaping metropolitan understandings of *aménagement du territoire* after decolonization.

Racial liberalism and the regional turn

The adoption of a Keynesian welfare state after World War II signaled a new conception of economic planning in which the state was responsible for creating a dynamic market economy out of the autarkic structures bequeathed by the interwar period. After the Great War, French planners were increasingly aware that inequality was expressed not only through class divisions, but also in the spatial imbalances among regions in a single country. In the 1930s they looked to similar trends in the south of the United States, as well as Britain, even if the political will to implement these programs would have to wait until the 1950s. Modernizing technocrats viewed decentralization as necessary for economic growth, fashioning the discipline of *aménagement du territoire* on the belief that "geographical space should be the organizing framework for the growing governmental intervention in social, economic, and cultural affairs."¹⁴ The term is difficult to translate into English, but Michael Keating defines it as "an integrated view of spatial development, incorporating economic development, land use planning and infrastructure provision."¹⁵

This iteration of territorial planning signaled a shift from the reactionary regionalism that had been propagated by planners during the Vichy era, who had adopted

¹³Eschen documents how internationalist anticolonial discourse played a key role in fashioning radical black politics after World War II. See Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937–1957* (Ithaca, 1997). Gerald Horne explores the connections between the United States and Kenya in *Mau Mau in Harlem: The U.S. and the Liberation of Kenya* (New York, 2009). For an account of how anticolonial movements can be seen as an example of "world making" that simultaneously sought to reshape racial hierarchies and the dominant economic systems see Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton, 2019).

¹⁴Olivier Dard, "La construction progressive d'un discours et d'un milieu aménageur des années trente aux années cinquante," in Caro, Dard, and Daumas, *La Politique d'aménagement du territoire*, 65–77, at 73–4.

¹⁵Michael Keating, *The New Regionalism in Western Europe: Territorial Restructuring and Political Change* (Northampton, 1998), 49.

decentralization as a tool to expel the unruly working classes from Paris.¹⁶ The main organisms that were associated with territorial planning—namely the General Commission of the Plan (CGP) and the Service for Territorial Planning (under the rubric of the Ministry of Reconstruction and Urbanism)—were created in the years immediately following World War II. In 1947 Jean Gravier wrote *Paris et le désert parisien*, which became the bible of postwar decentralization.¹⁷ Gravier had worked closely with Perroux on the editorial board of the journal *Civilisation* before the latter recruited him at the Fondation française pour l'étude des problèmes humaines (FFPEPH), where Perroux had been secretary general from September 1942 to December 1943.¹⁸ As Sara Pritchard explains, invocations of the “French desert” in the Hexagon served not only to criticize the centralizing tendencies of the French state, but also to highlight the need to develop France in the context of European integration.¹⁹

The imperatives of *aménagement du territoire* shifted under the Fifth Republic, giving increased importance to the southern shore of the Mediterranean during the Algerian War. Modernizing technocrats sought to secure France's place in a dynamic European space, paying greater attention to underdeveloped regions that were peripheral to urban centers.²⁰ They therefore worried that Algeria would serve as a break on overall economic growth. Economists in the United States expressed a similar fear as they debated how to integrate black Americans into broader social and economic structures. American experts who adopted this approach, a form of racial liberalism, relied on a top-down strategy of social engineering and expressed confidence in the ability of New Deal policies to overcome southern racism and introduce social uplift among African Americans.²¹ Postwar discussions on Muslim Algerians in France shared many of these commitments, even if anthropologists and economists shied away from explicit discussions of race after the Holocaust, which were replaced by discourses on culture.²² This tendency was expressed in the UNESCO approach to antiracism, which displaced questions regarding racial domination onto the domain of family structure and

¹⁶Voldman's work stresses the continuities between the Vichy regime and the Fourth Republic, showing that planners sought to fashion a *dirigiste* method that was not Pétanist after 1945. Danièle Voldman, *La reconstruction des villes françaises de 1940 à 1954: Histoire d'une politique* (Paris, 1997), Ch. 5.

¹⁷Jean François Gravier, *Paris et le désert français: Décentralisation, équipement, population* (Paris, 1947).

¹⁸Isabelle Couzon, “Les espaces économiques de François Perroux (1950),” *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines* 2/9 (2003), 81–102.

¹⁹Sara B. Pritchard, “‘Paris et le Désert Française’: Urban and Rural Environments in Post-WWII France,” in Andrew C. Isenberg, ed., *The Nature of Cities: Culture, Landscape, and Urban Space* (Rochester, 2006), 175–92.

²⁰Brenner, *New State Spaces*, 116.

²¹Ferguson, *Top Down*; Walter Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and America's Conscience: Social Engineering and Racial Liberalism, 1938–1987* (Chapel Hill, 2014); Charles Mills, “Racial Liberalism,” *PMLA* 123/4 (2008), 1380–97; Daniel Geary, “Racial Liberalism, the Moynihan Report and the ‘Daedalus’ Project on ‘The Negro American,’” *Daedalus* 140/1 (2011), 53–66. The 1956 Moynihan report exemplified the pervasive concerns regarding the links among family organization, psychology, and poverty. Some historians have argued that despite the stated intentions, New Deal policies in many cases intensified racial segregation. For an overview of these debates see Gavin Wright, “The New Deal and the Modernization of the South,” *Federal History* 2 (2010), 58–73.

²²Alana Lentin, “Replacing ‘race’, historicizing ‘culture’ in multiculturalism,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 39/4 (2005), 379–96. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Race et histoire* (Paris, 1952).

compartment.²³ As Deborah Thomas has argued, the idea that there was a “culture of poverty” became increasingly popular after World War II in the United States, and was bolstered by “psychological understandings of personality development, identity formation, and the influence of frustration and aggression on behavior.”²⁴ French planners and colonial officials expressed similar concerns regarding the capacity of Algerians to integrate in the French nation and economy. In so doing, they identified Algerian culture as a domain for reform, remaining hopeful that economic liberalism and the introduction of a market economy would be able to smooth the sharp edges of racial difference.

In metropolitan France, Eugène Claudius-Petit, the minister of reconstruction and urbanism after World War II, was one of the first politicians to translate the intellectual principles of territorial planning into practice. From 1956 to 1977 Claudius-Petit also directed SONACOTRA (Société nationale de construction de logement pour les travailleurs), which managed the housing and social integration of Algerian workers in France.²⁵ Amelia Lyons has convincingly shown how the organization’s housing policy relied on colonial expertise, which brought imperial techniques for introducing segregation to the metropole.²⁶ Claudius-Petit adopted Perroux’s strategy by supporting the establishment of “growth poles” (*pôles de croissance*) as “concentration[s] of productive agents, organized resources, and technological and economic capacity” that would ultimately provide more aggregated economic benefits than decentralized development or models of balanced growth.²⁷

Perroux’s work departed from conventional approaches that advocated for a general equilibrium and also rejected static or “Euclidean” notions of space. The nation-state, he argued, was closer to Ernest Renan’s understanding of a “spiritual principle.”²⁸ While “banal space” created “the illusion of the coincidence of a political space with economic and human space,” Perroux advocated for a polarized and heterogeneous understanding.²⁹ The concept of growth poles depended on an abstract understanding of economic space in which certain firms or industries exercised dominance and gave rise to polarization. For Perroux, economic space

²³For the transnational—and indeed, transcontinental—flows of ideas that underpinned the so-called UNESCO approach to race see Todd Shepard, “Algeria, France, Mexico, UNESCO: A transnational history of anti-racism and decolonization, 1932–1962,” *Global of Journal History* 6/2 (2011), 273–97.

²⁴Deborah Thomas, *Exceptional Violence: Embodied Citizenship in Transnational Jamaica* (Durham, NC, 2011), 60.

²⁵Amelia Lyons details his activities with SONACOTRA in *The Civilizing Mission in the Metropole: Algerian Families and the French Welfare State during Decolonization* (Stanford, 2013); for his reading of territorial planning see Benoit Pouvreau, “La politique d’aménagement du territoire d’Eugène Claudius-Petit,” *Vingtième siècle: Revue d’histoire* 79/3 (2003), 43–52; Romain Pasquier, “La régionalisation française revisitée: Fédéralisme, mouvement régional et élites modernisatrices (1950–1964),” *Revue française de science politique* 53/1 (2003), 101–25.

²⁶Lyons, *The Civilizing Mission*, 199.

²⁷Francois Perroux, *A New Concept of Development: Basic Tenets* (Paris, 1983), 100. Perroux, “Note sur la notion de pôle de croissance,” *Économie appliquée* 8 (1955), 307–20, at 309. For a study of the influence of this notion on economic analysts see J. B. Parr, “Growth-pole strategies in regional economic planning: A retrospective view,” *Urban Studies* 36/7 (1999), 1195–2215.

²⁸Perroux, “Economic Space,” 100.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 90.

could indicate a force field, economic plan (*l'espace plan*), or homogeneous aggregate (i.e. the relationship of a firm with surrounding structures). The nation-state, Perroux argued, had managed to give the false impression that these “diverse human and economic spaces are superimposable.”³⁰ Rather than viewing national (economic) space as located in a discrete territory, Perroux’s analysis advocated for the dissolution of state-centered economies in favor of a broader conception of European space.³¹

While Perroux’s early writings do not explicitly discuss the prospects for economic development in Algeria, he addressed the question of empire in his 1954 *L’Europe sans rivages*. He argued that the narrow interests of colonialism and the demands made by people of color called for a more expansive conception of Europe. Ominously, he wrote, “Europe will lose a part of herself if she does not look towards the seas.”³² In this vein, Perroux closely followed events in North Africa in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In 1958 he sought to establish links between the Institut de science économique appliquée (ISEA), which he founded in 1944, and the *centres sociaux* in Algeria, which were responsible for the education and social uplift of Algerian Muslims.³³ Two years later he published a special issue of the *Cahiers de l’Institut de science économique appliquée* dedicated to “Islam, the Economy and Technology.” This issue featured articles by colonial experts such as Jean Servier and Pierre Rondot.³⁴ In the introduction he wrote that “few problems were more timely than those posed by the confrontation between Islam and industrial civilization,” and presented the issue as exploring “how Muslim thought has adapted to economic imperatives” as well as the religion’s attitude to “the necessities of modern techniques.”³⁵ Perroux also brought together the reflections of a number of scholars working on Algeria in a 1962 volume entitled *L’Algérie de demain*, which was followed by the 1963 publication of *Problèmes de l’Algérie indépendante*, which he also edited.

Perroux therefore followed events in Algeria closely, and his theory of growth poles was adopted by French planners who attempted to industrialize the territory in the late 1950s, particularly in the establishment of *zones d’industrialisation décentralisée* (ZIDs).³⁶ Experts who sought to apply Perroux’s insights were

³⁰Ibid., 100.

³¹Couzon, “Les espaces économiques,” 91.

³²François Perroux, *Europe sans rivages* (Paris, 1954), 22.

³³Correspondance between the *centres sociaux* and Perroux, Jan. 1958, Institut mémoires de l’édition contemporaine (hereafter IMEC), Archives of François Perroux (PRX) 207.5.

³⁴*Cahiers de l’Institut de science économique appliquée* 106 (1960).

³⁵François Perroux, “Introduction,” *Cahiers de l’Institut de science économique appliquée* 106 (1960), 3–5, at 3.

³⁶Three ZIDs were found in Tizi-Ouzou, Bougie, and Beni-Saf and developed by SEZID (Société d’équipement des zones industrielles décentralisées), which were created in February 1960. Hartmut Elsenhans, *La Guerre d’Algérie 1954–1962: La transition d’une France à une autre* (Paris, 2000), 63. François Perroux’s influence can also be seen in the fact that his student, Gérard Destanne de Bernis, well known for the notion of “industrializing industries,” was an adviser to the Algerian Ministry of Industrialization in the late 1960s. Adamson goes so far as to argue that “it is only possible to make sense of Algerian industrial policy planning, and consequently its view of agriculture, if one refers back to the writings of Perroux.” Kay Adamson, *Algeria: A Study in Competing Ideologies* (London, 1998), 110.

nevertheless concerned that Algerian Muslims might not have the psychological capacities that would allow them to participate in industrial activities. Rather than viewing Algerians' preference for agriculture as a legacy of colonial policy, planners interpreted this behavior as a sign of backwardness which, they hoped, could be remedied through renewed efforts at integrating these individuals in the national economy. These tenants were part and parcel of the discourse of racial liberalism during the Cold War, notably redefining European "civilization" in terms of industrialization and economic modernization.³⁷

The coupling of regional economic theory and questions of civilizational capacities was also evident in the works of Albert Hirschman and Gunnar Myrdal. In *The Strategy of Economic Development*, published in 1958, Hirschman stressed that development was linked to the supply of entrepreneurial and managerial abilities rather than to natural resources or capital. Like Perroux, Hirschman advocated for "unbalanced growth," positing that the "trickle-down" effect between developed and underdeveloped regions would be stronger when there were no national borders to cross.³⁸ This position led him to call for a lessened focus on national sovereignty due to the economic "frictions" that invariably occurred between nation-states. His support for the forces of economic disequilibrium led him to raise the question whether "the response to such situations is not at times going to be destructive and whether the process that has been sketched is not therefore a rather risky affair."³⁹

Yet Hirschman nevertheless maintained that underdeveloped countries "already operate under the grand tension that stems from the universal desire for economic improvement oddly combined with many resistances to change." Blaming psychoanalysis for blinding people to the fact that the stresses and strains caused by development could be productive, he invoked Freud's interpretation of "difficulties, conflict, and anxieties" as "pathogenic agents."⁴⁰ Psychologists, he noted, had only recently "rediscovered" the productive role of conflict. Given the concurrent espousal of modernization theory and the geopolitical context of the Cold War and decolonization, Hirschman's use of psychological models to understand the process of development is telling. Even though he never specifies what kind of detonation could possibly arise due to the "explosive mixture of hopes and fears" in underdeveloped countries, the struggle for decolonization could not have been far from his mind in 1958. His take on the regional question thus echoed the belief that anticolonial revolt was a reaction to the destruction of traditional ways of life, a central component of modernization theory. It also effectively undermined arguments that these revolts were a political demand for national sovereignty.

The writings of Gunnar Myrdal similarly emphasized the cultural factors that were necessary for development. While by no means representative of the multiple

³⁷Isabelle Couzon mentions that Perroux (along with Jean-François Gravier) wrote for the journal *Fédération: Revue de l'ordre vivant*, which supported a decentralized conception of Europe in the name of "civilization," signaling a nostalgic vision of medieval Christian Europe. Couzon, "Les espaces économiques," 88.

³⁸Albert O Hirschman, *The Strategy of Economic Development* (New Haven, 1958), Ch. 10.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 208.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 209.

debates on underdevelopment and regionalism in the United States, his work was particularly important for French and European economists seeking to understand the American South. His 1958 *Rich Lands and Poor: The Road to World Prosperity* explicitly linked underdevelopment and calls for decolonization, while also making a methodological parallel between “international inequalities” and “regional inequalities within a country.”⁴¹ Rather than positing that racism was linked to underdevelopment, he described racist attitudes and economic marginalization as following a logic of “circular and cumulative causation.” Writing on the United States, he observed, “White prejudice and low Negro standards [of living] thus mutually ‘cause’ each other” so that if “either of the two factors should change, this is bound to bring a change in the other factor, too, and start a cumulative process of mutual interaction in which the change in one factor would continuously be supported by the reaction of the other factor and so on in a circular way.”⁴² As Mark Anderson has highlighted, the tendency to focus on the “deficiencies” of black culture, exemplified in Myrdal’s 1944 *An American Dilemma*, was instructive for the Moyhian report that viewed the roots of black poverty in African American culture and family structures.⁴³

The notion that racial oppression in the United States could be remedied through an attempt to be less “prejudiced” was rooted in Myrdal’s view of regional economic development. While he vehemently rejected that black Americans were biologically inferior, he also suggested that a rise in living (“wages, housing, nutrition, clothing, health, education, stability in family relations, law observance, cleanliness, orderliness, trustworthiness, loyalty to society at large”) would help lessen racial prejudice.⁴⁴ Myrdal thus positioned himself in opposition to black nationalist strategies for antiracism, which he viewed as fostering a form of “self-segregation.” He also rejected Marxist arguments that defined liberal capitalist development as a root cause of black underdevelopment. Although Hirschman and Myrdal were writing on the question of racism in the United States, these debates shaped how French officials understood the Algerian struggle for independence.⁴⁵

⁴¹Gunnar Myrdal, *Rich Lands and Poor: The Road to World Prosperity* (New York, 1957), 10. For a more contemporary study of the region as an “invented community” that transcends the South and focuses on the Southwest and the upper Ohio Valley see Andrew Needham and Allen Dieterich-Ward, “Beyond the Metropolis: Metropolitan Growth and Regional Transformation in Postwar America,” *Journal of Urban History* 25/7 (2009), 943–69.

⁴²Myrdal, *Rich Lands and Poor*, 17.

⁴³Mark Anderson, *From Boas to Black Power: Racism, Liberalism and American Anthropology* (Stanford, 2019), 188.

⁴⁴Myrdal, *Rich Lands and Poor*, 17.

⁴⁵Todd Shepard argues, “Self-serving comparisons between French efforts to ‘integrate’ Algerians in the face of terrorism and the ways that U.S. authorities responded to the nonviolent civil rights movement were constants in mainstream and right-wing French media.” Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, 2006), 60–61. For more accounts of how ideas regarding race and decolonization were formed in a crucible of American and African movements for liberation see Horne, *Mau Mau in Harlem?* While the UNESCO tradition of race thinking is often associated with postwar Europe, Anthony Q. Hazard demonstrates how American officials influenced these debates in *Postwar Anti-racism: The United States, UNESCO, and “Race,” 1945–1968* (New York, 2012).

The “Algerian personality,” integration, and territorial reform

Algeria provided a very different study from the United States in that debates on integration centered on whether the racial and cultural difference of Algerians—crystallized in the fact of Islam—could be included in French national space. For more than a century, the French state had established a regime of settler colonialism, constructing Islam as a racial category that structured access to citizenship and property in Algeria.⁴⁶ As planners sought to use economic development as a tool for integration in the 1950s, they often invoked Perroux’s notion that regional planning could help fashion an expanded conception of European economic space. This conceptual borrowing could be seen in the economic and administrative reforms proposed by Jacques Soustelle, the politician and ethnologist who was a partisan of integrating Muslims into France while respecting the “Algerian personality,” a phrase that was often used as a euphemism for Islam.⁴⁷ Soustelle had conducted extensive fieldwork in Mexico, where his observation that “natives imbued with liberal European ideas were able to rise to the top of Mexican society” had influenced his reading of the Algerian question.⁴⁸

During his time as governor general, Soustelle contributed to the territorial and administrative restructuring of the French empire. He played a key role in the 1956 negotiations over the *loi cadre*, which “broke with the centralizing tendencies of French rule” by giving elected assemblies in each territory new responsibilities.⁴⁹ This reform was designed to provide a gradual path towards self-government and decentralize political power away from the metropole, allowing for more internal control.⁵⁰ By transforming French empire into a federal system that included all of France’s overseas territories, Soustelle offered an important blueprint for reorganizing empire based on regional identities. While Soustelle had been a staunch Gaullist, he broke with the French president over Algerian independence. This led him to revolt against the former leader of Free France and join the Organisation armée secrète (OAS), a terrorist organization that carried out attacks to prevent the “loss” of French Algeria. As Soustelle declared in 1955, he believed

⁴⁶Muriam Haleh Davis, *Markets of Civilization: Islam and Racial Capitalism in Algeria* (Durham, 2022).

⁴⁷Stephen Tyre, “From *Algérie française* to *France musulmane*: Jacques Soustelle and the Myths and Realities of ‘Integration’, 1955–1962,” *Society of the Study of French History* 20/3 (2006), 276–96. In a radio broadcast in February 1956, Guy Mollet described the “essential task” of preventing bloodshed in Algeria as being tied to France’s ability to recognize and respect the Algerian personality and to realize total political equality among all inhabitants of Algeria. Quoted in Jean-Charles Scagnetti, “Identité ou personnalité algérienne? L’édification d’une algériennité (1962–1988),” *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 66 (2003), 367–84, at 373. Also see Henri Sanson, “Les motivations de la personnalité algérienne en ce temps de décolonisation,” *Annuaire de l’Afrique du nord* 6 (1968), 13–20.

⁴⁸Tyre, “From *Algérie française*,” 282.

⁴⁹Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960* (Princeton, 2014), 214.

⁵⁰Paul Isoard, “L’élaboration de la constitution de l’Union française: Les assemblées constituantes et le problème colonial,” in Charles-Robert Ageron, ed., *Les chemins de la décolonisation de l’empire colonial français* (Paris, 1986), 15–31. Algeria was not affected by the framework law as it comprised French departments. It is also important to point out that the French government still controlled the strategic domains of foreign affairs and defense.

that France was one and indivisible and “would no sooner leave Algeria than Provence or Brittany.”⁵¹

Soustelle explicitly disagreed with the colonial doctrine of assimilation, which sought to create an exact replica of French institutions and policies in colonial territories. He was convinced that “one could only assimilate that which is assimilable.”⁵² He thus advocated for a single electoral college that would allow Algerians to elect members of the National Assembly, and for reforming the deeply unfair double college system. Economically, he insisted that France would need to commit considerable investments to ensure that Algeria would be able to participate in the metropolitan economy. This view was popular among the army as it allowed France to maintain the Algerian territory, and also highlighted the cultural differences of the Algerian Muslim population. In many ways, this approach echoed Perroux’s critique of the widely held belief that France was a “political space which coincides more or less with a cultural space and with an economic space.” Integration, as proposed by Soustelle, allowed for cultural unevenness rather than uniformity and sought to recognize the specific racial and cultural characteristics of colonized peoples.⁵³

Soustelle laid out his vision for economic reform in the 1955 Soustelle Plan, which was never adopted. Yet these proposals presciently brought together the need for increased French investment and administrative reform. Understandings of spatial reordering and social evolution were closely linked for Soustelle, who believed that integration would encourage cultural and economic relationships that transcended France’s physical borders. Beginning with the claim that “integration is not uniformization,” Soustelle’s description of the relationship between regional entities and cultural differences is worth quoting at length. In front of the Algerian Assembly he claimed,

[M]etropolitan France, which is now so thoroughly integrated, was formed over the course of centuries by provinces where the weakness of communication systems made them much farther from Paris than Algiers is now, which had completely different currency and customs, and where the central power was weakly represented.

In the France of the Ancient Regime, an old mountainous region of the Midi had long risen up against royal authority, and spoke Occitan rather than French, even until recent times.

In the world of today, where the distances are contracted, and where the communication of thoughts is instantaneous, Algeria is much closer to the metropole materially and intellectually than Nîmes or Toulouse were to the Île-de-France two centuries ago.⁵⁴

Soustelle depicted metropolitan France as an elastic entity that could be expanded thanks to technological and cultural exchanges. Like regions in France that had

⁵¹Ministère d’État chargé des affaires algériennes (81F) 64, Discours prononcé par M. Jacques Soustelle, 23 Feb. 1955, 10, Archives nationales d’Outre-Mer (hereafter ANOM).

⁵²Quoted in Tyre, “From *Algérie française*,” 296.

⁵³Raymond E. Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890–1914* (New York, 1961), vii–ix.

⁵⁴“Discours prononcé par M. Jacques Soustelle,” 23 Feb. 1955, 11, ANOM 81F/641.

resisted centralization, Algeria, too, would be absorbed by the Republic through the intermediary territorial unit of the region. Soustelle claimed the local forms of organization developed in Kabylia caused him to “think of our little communes of Auvergne, Lozère, or le Gard.”⁵⁵

While Soustelle’s understanding of the region differed in many ways from that of Perroux, particularly in his insistence on maintaining a French Algeria, his efforts at territorial and administrative reform nevertheless reflected the postwar drive towards decentralization. His conviction that economic development needed to be accompanied by territorial decentralization was particularly evident in his call to reform the mixed communes (*communes mixtes*). Introduced under military rule in 1868, the mixed communes were specifically designated for regions with a Muslim majority. The Saint-Simonian thinker Ismayl Urbain considered them to be a “hybrid” structure that would help natives evolve and adopt the European norms of cultural practices and private property.⁵⁶ During the transition to the Third Republic, they came to symbolize the victory of *colons* and relegated indigenous Algerians to a different administrative structure from the regions that had a majority of European inhabitants. These “indigenous” territorial structures, organized around a fictitious “common interest” between colonizers and colonized, thus represented the native Algerians’ inability to enjoy the normal property rights accorded to French citizens.⁵⁷ They gave concrete—and spatial—expression to the temporality of assimilation in which Algerian Muslims would eventually be made into Frenchmen.

Soustelle advocated replacing these units with locally based communes that were smaller in size and more democratic in nature. This decentralization would address the issue of under-administration, but it also provided a language of grievances that did not challenge French rule. In comparing Algeria to Alsace–Lorraine, Soustelle claimed that one of the obstacles to economic development was that Algerian farmers were unable to conceive of the collective life of the territory beyond their own village.⁵⁸ He thus identified the commune as a territorial unit that would allow Algerians to express economic and political injustice on a level that was wider than the village and yet did not focus on France itself. It is unclear whether Soustelle ever directly read or cited Perroux’s work, but he espoused the ambient belief that the nation-state was an insufficient model for understanding economic forces and an obstacle to integrating Algeria into an emerging European economic space.

A decree on 28 June 1956, which was not fully put in place until independence, subdivided the existing departments of Algiers, Oran, and Constantine, creating

⁵⁵Jacques Soustelle, *Aimée et souffrante Algérie* (Paris, 1956), 79.

⁵⁶Osama Abi-Mershed, *Apostles of Modernity: Saint-Simonians and the Civilizing Mission in Algeria* (Stanford, 2010).

⁵⁷Christine Mussard, “Réinventer la commune? Genèse de la commune mixte, une structure administrative inédite dans l’Algérie coloniale,” *Centre d’histoire de sciences Po* 27/3 (2015), 93–108. Collot underscores the need to introduce social evolution through territorial reform, quoting the decree of 2 January 1957, which stated, “The exercise of responsibilities will permit the progressive and rapid training of real elites.” Claude Collot, *Les institutions de l’Algérie durant la période coloniale: 1830–1962* (Paris, 1987), 136.

⁵⁸“Une conférence de M. Jacques Soustelle,” *La nouvelle revue française d’Outre-Mer* 8–9 (1956), 373–7, at 377, ANOM 81F/641.

over a thousand new communes. Moreover, the three northern territories were subdivided into fifteen departments after a series of centralizing reforms introduced from 1956–8 under the Fourth Republic when the violence of the war was at its peak.⁵⁹ These gestures at federalism were eliminated with the return to power of de Gaulle in 1958, however.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the understanding of the commune as territorial form developed at the beginning of the French Revolution in order to extend the rule of universal reason; abolish the conservative, feudal tendencies of the past; and create “new French citizens” also informed the reorganization of economic space after 1958.⁶¹ This was the case even as planners invoked the commune for quite different purposes in Algeria than in France. René Lenoir, a functionary who grew up in Algeria and became an inspector of finances in 1958, cited Alexis de Tocqueville, arguing that “communal institutions are to liberty what schools are to science.”⁶² He thus concluded that Algeria would need a thousand communes in order to have the optimal number of inhabitants (between eight thousand and twelve thousand) per commune. Yet he proposed that the Algerian commune play a greater role than its counterpart in France. Whereas in France the commune did not control economic matters, Lenoir argued that in Algeria it was to have a “general mission” to intervene in all domains. In a similar vein, a report by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated, “an elementary political cell, (the commune) permits, in a restrained framework, the rapprochement and the coexistence of communities. Finally, the development of Algeria, and notably of the disinherited zones, cannot be accomplished except to benefit the Algerian populations and with their active help. The commune should be the catalyst of the development of the country (*le ferment de la mise en valeur du bled*).”⁶³ In this framework, communes were a top-down means of introducing pervasive economic and social change. Subsequently, the memo also claimed that the commune would provide a “school of democracy” that would encourage “the correct use of liberties” as well as “the training of a qualified elite.”⁶⁴

In the context of French Algeria, territorial decentralization and discussions on the regional question introduced a form of political belonging that officials hoped

⁵⁹These debates also continued after independence when the *ordonnance* of 18 January 1963 defined the Algerian commune as “the basic political, administrative, economic and social territorial collectivity.” Raham notes that this definition borrowed from the French model in that it adopted the principle of autonomy, which he defines as a *brassage* of the French and Algerian systems, despite the opposition in their ideological orientations. D. Raham, “Genèse et évolution du maillage territorial en Algérie: Le cas de l’est algérien,” *Revue sciences humaines* 20 (2003), 29–48, at 40.

⁶⁰Shepard, “À l’heure des ‘grands ensembles,’” 126.

⁶¹Romain Pasquier, *Regional Governance and Power in France: The Dynamics of Political Space* (Basingstoke, 2015), 25. Wakeman describes how social engineering, and the quest to create man “as habitant and consumer” as well as “technologist and producer,” was central to the territorial planning of Toulouse. Rosemary Wakeman, *Modernizing the Provincial City: Toulouse 1945–1975*, (Cambridge, 1997), 144.

⁶²René Lenoir, “La mise en route de petits travaux fournirait de l’emploi à la population algérienne,” *Le Monde*, 3 March 1960, ANOM 81F/176.

⁶³“Commission rôle et structure de la commune,” rapport général, Comité des affaires algériennes, Ordre du jour, 18 Jan. 1961, Archives du Ministère des affaires étrangères (hereafter MAE), Secrétariat d’État aux affaires algériennes (hereafter SEAA), 51.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

would lessen the temptations of the nation-state. The 1957 Champeix Project, for example, proposed creating a number of autonomous regions in Algeria, which officials viewed as a way of making the Algerian personality “disappear.”⁶⁵ Marc Lauriol, a professor of law at the University of Commerce in Algiers and a deputy in the National Assembly, proposed a different plan. He called for an “integration nuanced by a personal federalism” that would recognize Muslims as a “personal and not territorial entity.”⁶⁶ He suggested proportional representation for Algerians in the Republic as a form of “personal federalism” that would respect the particularism of Muslims, open the door for a “voluntary” evolution (*évolution volontaire*), and reassure the European Community that Algeria would remain an integral part of France.⁶⁷ According to Lauriol, this strategy spoke to the fact that Algerian Muslims were “dominated by the influence of Islam.”⁶⁸ He noted that because of their attachment to traditions, the Muslim population had “not participated, in the majority, in technical and economic transformations.”⁶⁹ This language—which identified the cultural mores of a minority as an obstacle to the overall economic growth of the nation—closely resembled the arguments of American social scientists writing on African Americans in the South.

Soustelle’s vision of integration accounted for the Muslim identity of Algeria’s indigenous inhabitants while simultaneously working against separatist or nationalist sentiments.⁷⁰ In recognizing the “specificity” of Algerian Muslims, he proclaimed, “Let’s follow ... the rules of the Qur’an: one has to be polygamous and the marriage of France will not be a good marriage unless it is a marriage with all the interested parties, and not only with Algeria.”⁷¹ Soustelle’s embrace of territorial and political and integration thus brought together racialized understandings of Algerians and the spatial frame of the region to elide nationalist claims during the War of Independence.

Yet not all planners believed that decentralization could ensure the evolution of native Algerians; some saw the territorial principal as incompatible with Islam *tout court*. One memo by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the “organic division of public powers seems in contradiction with the juridical traditions under which several countries—and especially Islamic countries—have lived.”⁷² Others referenced the intractable nature of Islam in calling for the creation of autonomous regions centered on Alger and Oran (Bône and Bougie were also floated as possibilities), which would allow for a bi-communal governance equivalent to that in

⁶⁵SEAA 15, “Bilan des solutions institutionnelles qui ont été proposées pour l’Algérie,” n.d., no author, MAE. For more on Marcel Champeix see Martin Evans, *Algeria: France’s Undeclared War* (Oxford, 2012), 157–9. For an account of various spatial partition plans see Arthur Asseraf, “A New Israel: Colonial Comparisons and the Algerian Partition That Never Happened,” *French Historical Studies* 41/1 (2018), 95–120.

⁶⁶“Éléments d’une solution d’intégration,” Mission d’études, 1, n.d., MAE SEAA 15.

⁶⁷“Projet de M. Lauriol, Professor a Alger,” 2, n.d., MAE SEAA 15.

⁶⁸Marc Lauriol, *Le fédéralisme et l’Algérie* (Paris, 1957), 12. Also see Marc Lauriol, *L’Algérie angoissée* (Algiers, 1956).

⁶⁹*Le Monde*, 17 Jan. 1958.

⁷⁰Alain Herbeth, *Jacques Soustelle: L’homme de l’intégration* (Paris, 2015).

⁷¹“Une conférence de M. Jacques Soustelle,” 377.

⁷²“Les conditions de l’équilibre politique de l’état Algérien,” Mission d’études, 14, n.d., MAE SEAA 15.

Cyprus, where the Greek and Turkish populations shared the island.⁷³ The question of territorial division, however, raised the issue of how to isolate the European minority from the Muslim majority—an all but impossible task given the demographic realities. In Algeria, the regional question was inseparable from debates regarding the religious and racial specificity of the Muslim population.

The Constantine Plan and poles of development

Attempts to introduce territorial planning in Algeria intensified under the Fifth Republic. In October 1958, Charles de Gaulle announced the Constantine Plan, an ambitious attempt at economic and social development. It was headed by Paul Delouvrier, who had cut his teeth working with Jean Monnet on European integration before his arrival in Algeria. It also directly addressed the need for territorial decentralization. The General Commission of Territorial Planning (Commission général d'aménagement du territoire) was one of the five main commissions of the Constantine Plan, and it included the subcommissions for technical infrastructure, urban planning, and economic vocations for different regions.⁷⁴ Drawing attention to the excessive concentration of infrastructure in the capital, Jean Saint-Germés, a professor at the University of Algiers, invoked the work of Gravier, writing, "We will soon be able to speak of an 'Algiers and the Algerian desert' as we speak of 'Paris and the French desert.'" ⁷⁵ In an earlier article on European Integration he had compared Algeria's underdevelopment to the southwest regions of France, claiming that economic integration was a necessary complement to political integration. These concerns had informed the creation of the CADAT (Caisse algérienne d'aménagement du territoire) in 1956, which was designed to implement a policy of territorial planning, "promote a new life in the interior territories," and spur industrial development in a Eurafrikan framework.⁷⁶ Considered to be the ideal tool of economic and social development, CADAT explicitly sought to avoid the "errors" committed in Europe in the nineteenth century by avoiding industrial concentration.⁷⁷

The president of CADAT, André Derrouch, claimed that organization's mission was to "facilitate and accelerate urban expansion by the choosing, acquisition, and

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴The head of this commission was Camille Bonnome, the general inspector for the Ministry of Construction, who went on to write *L'urbanisation française* in 1964.

⁷⁵M. Saint-Germés, "Le problème de l'eau," *Terre algérienne*, 29 June 1960, 1, Centres des Archives nationales algériennes (hereafter CANA).

⁷⁶André Jacomet, "Le développement africain," Institut d'études du développement africain (Alger), July 1960, MAE SAE 184. According to Nassima Dris, colonial strategies for spatial planning remained in place until 1968. DATAR was inherited by the CNERU (Centre national d'études et de recherches appliquées en urbanisme) in 1980, and the Bureau d'études des techniques d'architecture et d'urbanisme (ETAU) under the Ministry of Public Works and Construction. For more works on territorial planning in Algeria during the post-colonial period see Nassima Dris, *La ville mouvementée: Espace public, centralité, mémoire urbaine à Alger* (Paris, 2002); Nora Semmoud, *Les stratégies d'appropriation de l'espace à Alger* (Paris, 2001); Marc Côte, *L'espace algérien: Les prémices d'un aménagement* (Alger, 1983). Jean-Claude Brûlé Abed Bendjelid and Jacques Fontaine, eds., *Aménageurs et aménagés en Algérie: Héritages des années Boumediène et Chadli* (Paris, 2004).

⁷⁷"Aménager le territoire: Un outil, CADAT," *Bulletin de la Caisse d'équipement pour le développement de l'Algérie* 3 (1961), 17–24, at 17, ANOM, Bibliothèque (BIB AOM) 20327/1962.

organization of parcels of land where villages and apartment buildings will be constructed, or where industrial enterprises will be constructed.”⁷⁸ While a public institution, it was modeled on the private sector; according to Derrouch, this organization would blend the supple and rapid actions of private enterprise with the discipline that exemplified public service.⁷⁹ CADAT’s principal goal was not only for designated zones to attract large-scale industrial projects, but also to create “satellite” cities connected to them.⁸⁰ Consistent with the doctrine of territorial planning in Europe, planners hoped that the introduction of regional social centers and agricultural initiatives would help combat the existing sociological disequilibrium.⁸¹

One of the questions fiercely debated by theorists of the regional question was whether it was possible to compare the forms of underdevelopment that plagued the global South to poorer regions in Europe. René Mayer, the secretary general for territorial planning in Algeria, argued that underdeveloped regions such as the Mezzogiorno or Corsica had much in common with the Third World. He advocated a policy in which judiciously chosen poles of development would act as a “lever” to spur economic growth. Echoing Perroux’s work, he believed this would be more effective than simply dividing up the national space in a regional framework.⁸² Yet unlike in Corsica or the Mezzogiorno, planners in Algeria had to marry the principles of regional planning with the policy of “pacification” employed by the French Army.⁸³ Because of the war’s extreme violence, industrialists demanded terms far more favorable than would have been possible in France. Salah Bouakouir, an Algerian functionary who worked on the Constantine Plan, worried that the government’s granting of monopolies set a dangerous precedent and that CADAT’s activities were leading to speculation in the real-estate market.⁸⁴ Agriculturalists had their own concerns; members of the Algerian Union of the General Confederation of Agriculture (Union algérienne de la confédération générale de l’agriculture, CGA) claimed that the positioning of zones earmarked

⁷⁸André Derrouch, “La caisse algérienne d’aménagement du territoire,” *Institut d’études du développement africain*, Numéro spécial (1960), 9–20, at 19, MAE SEAA 184.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Three kinds of zone came under its purview: industrial zones adjacent to urban areas (*zones industrielles suburbaines*), industrial zones that had geographic advantages such as ports (*zones industrielles à affectation spéciale*), and three large “decentralized” industrial zones (*zones d’industrialisations décentralisées*—ZIDs) at Rouiba-Réghaia (near Algiers), Duzerville (near Bône), and Sainte-Barge du Tlélat (near Oran).

⁸¹“Rapport de la sous-commission des problèmes humains,” Commissariat général au plan, Nov. 1958, ANOM 81F/2255.

⁸²“Buts et méthodes de la planification régionale,” 23 Jan. 1962, Archives nationales (AN), Archives du Plan de Constantine (F/60) 4021.

⁸³Henni demonstrates how the organization of space and the built environment was central in the strategy of pacification employed during the Algerian War. Samia Henni, *Architecture of Counterrevolution: The French Army in Northern Algeria* (Zurich, 2017).

⁸⁴Comité économique, réunion No. VII, 19 April 1960, Délégation général, gouvernement en Algérie, Algiers, 29 April 1960, ANOM, Cabinet Delouvrier (14CAB) 24.

for development did not account for the quality of the soil and were subsequently harmful for agriculture.⁸⁵

A report submitted to the Superior Council of Territorial Planning noted that of the 322 approved firms, 221 projects were in progress, eighty-four were being studied, and seventeen had been abandoned as of 30 June 1961.⁸⁶ This meant that 4,203 of a predicted 23,000 jobs had been created and a mere 36 percent of the total investments had been realized. The geographical division of these investments was equally concerning. Some 47 percent of the investments were located in the five-kilometer coastal band along Chéragas. One-half of all the investments realized were around Algiers. A report by the Ministry of Energy and Industry concluded that the results of decentralization had been poor. It noted that only 5 percent of the realized investments were located in the hinterland. The other 95 percent were split between Algiers, Oran, and Bône. Even worse, in Algiers and Oran, the industrialists tended to stay as close as possible to the city itself. The problems were multiple: zones that did not already have a tradition of heavy industry found it difficult to find adequately trained labor, the supplementary costs of transportation of material were extremely high, and the question of security was omnipresent. All of this made Algeria much less attractive to investors. The report stated, "The policy of decentralization cannot succeed unless several enterprises are created at the same time in the same place and with advantageous conditions."⁸⁷ In short, even as the French government offered substantial incentives for French industrialists in Algeria, this did not suffice to lure private investors.

Yet the economic shortcomings of decentralization did not dampen the political effects of this policy or lessen the appeal of territorial planning. Instead, by emphasizing the importance of the region, planners provided a language that was appropriated by multiple groups in order to express their dismay at the uneven spatial benefits of economic development. In addition to the disparities between the coastal and southern regions of the country, the western areas were generally more prosperous than territories to the east. An anonymous letter sent to the general delegate of the government in Algeria in 1959 dramatically expressed the sentiment that planners had overlooked the city of Philippeville (present-day Skikda) in northeastern Algeria. In all capital letters, the correspondence was entitled "Philippeville—Martyred City—Forgotten City—Sacrificed City." It claimed not only that had Philippeville endured some of the most brutal violence of the war, but that the Constantine Plan continued to ignore its port in favor of the larger complexes at Bône, Arzew, and Algiers:

One spends to help certain regions, or to the detriment of others, without reflecting, even though we carefully measure [the investment] for some regions, in the interest of the country, we should divide these resources

⁸⁵CANA, "L'Union algérienne de la C.G.A. s'est préoccupée de la sécurité des campagnes des personnes et des biens," *Terre algérienne*, 2 Feb. 1959, 1. This seems to confirm Lefeuve's argument: "For numerous Algerian enterprises, the state [was] an indispensable client that the political conjuncture made much more accommodating." Daniel Lefeuve, *Chère Algérie: Comptes et mécomptes de la tutelle coloniale, 1930–1962* (Saint-Denis, 1997), 391.

⁸⁶"Rapport au conseil supérieur de l'aménagement du territoire," Direction de l'énergie et de l'industrialisation, 10 Jan. 1962, AN F/60/4021.

⁸⁷"Rapport au conseil supérieur de l'aménagement du territoire," Direction de l'énergie et de l'industrialisation, 10 Jan. 1962, 13, AN F/60/4021.

more equitably so that all of the populations can benefit from the Constantine Plan and receive that which has been promised to them through the industrialization of Algeria.⁸⁸

While this sentiment partially stemmed from the plan's tendency to focus on heavy industry, the letter also expressed a local identity based on economic marginalization. In the late 1950s and early 1960s a range of actors—from French farmers to Algerian Berbers—invoked the regional question to make claims on the French and Algerian states.

The regional question and the struggle for classification

Proponents of decentralization had likened Algeria to other underdeveloped European regions, but Charles de Gaulle flatly rejected this vision. Speaking to French soldiers in the Algerian city of Blida in late 1960 he declared, "It is in vain to pretend that [Algeria] is a province like our Lorraine or our Provence ... It is an Algerian Algeria that, each day, becomes more Algerian than it was the day before."⁸⁹ His ethnic conception of the nation ultimately departed from Soustelle's policy of integration as he saw Islam as the primary reason why Algeria could not be a French territory, regardless of its political status.⁹⁰ Ironically, he shared this conviction with many Algerian nationalists, who also rejected the regional lens for understanding the economic underdevelopment of the territory.

The author of a memo in the archives of the provisional government for the Algerian Republic (GPRA) from the summer of 1961 was adamant that there was an important difference between regional and national planning. In the first case, it noted, Algeria was considered an integral, albeit poor, part of France. In the national lens, however, the dualist structure of the economy came into view and revealed the ethnic and economic disparities within the territory itself. It was by making Algeria into a "distinct economic entity" that Algeria's underdevelopment would be best addressed. The report stated, in no uncertain terms, that the plan's accent on regionalism was tied to its essentially colonial character: "The evolution of the French political attitude that has gone from the policy of integration to that of association by auto-determination has not given rise to an analogous evolution in the domain of economic policy."⁹¹ The question of economic scale was central to a definition of colonialism since determining a unit of analysis had the ability to obscure (or highlight) Algeria's status as a colony rather than three French departments. An important complement to the FLN's political strategy was the diagnosis of Algerian underdevelopment in a national frame.

In this way the memo quoted above was a precursor to the world systems theory that became popular in the 1970s and which, as Immanuel Wallerstein notes, "makes the unit of analysis the subject of debate."⁹² For authors committed to a

⁸⁸"Philippeville, ville martyre," letter sent to general delegate of the government in Algeria, Algiers, 9 Dec. 1959, ANOM 81F/2019.

⁸⁹"Blida, 10 Décembre 1960," 3, ANOM 81F/26.

⁹⁰Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, 77.

⁹¹CANA, "Plan de Constantine: observations et analyses," 23 June 1961, Archives du GPRA 037.03.001.

⁹²Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Essential Wallerstein* (New York, 2000), 139.

center–periphery model, such as Samir Amin, the transfer of value from the periphery to the center is necessarily eclipsed by a regional focus.⁹³ World systems theory thus highlighted that a focus on regional underdevelopment obscured the need to think about the global patterns of capital accumulation that were conditioned by colonialism. For more radical thinkers, decolonization necessitated that economists employ a new framework for thinking about the relationship between economic underdevelopment, territorial scale, and empire.

This is not to say that all Algerians shared the vision of the GPRA. Some were optimistic that that decentralization would indeed bring concrete benefits to Algeria. Mohand Noureddine, the president of the African Berber Movement, proclaimed the following in 1960:

Municipal organization will be one of the essential bases for the new order of things ... It will essentially refashion man. It concerns putting him above the producer and the classic citizen, of enlarging his horizon, his comprehension, his practice of Western life and humanity. These are the kinds of concrete tasks that we assign to the commune once it has been liberated from the state centralism that has petrified it. The commune allows the state to play the role of a referee and compensator once it has abandoned Napoleonic centralization.⁹⁴

Noureddine posited a link between the rescaling of space and the remaking of men, accepting that the commune would encourage a more evolved (and Western) humanity that had been stifled by the Napoleonic state.

Algerian nationalists also faced challenges by Berber militants who rejected the dominant narrative that viewed the nation-state as rooted in an Arab and Islamic identity. In addition, the colonial state had fabricated a “Kabyle myth,” which portrayed Berbers as more civilized and modern than their Arab counterparts. These underlying factors contributed to the so-called Berber crisis of 1949, as well as the insurrection that led to the birth of the country’s first opposition party in 1963, the FFS (Front des forces socialistes). In his reflections on regionalism, Pierre Bourdieu pointed to the example of Berberism, arguing that claims to regional particularity were encouraged by colonial policies.⁹⁵ While often studied as an ethnological or anthropological discourse, the Kabyle myth was also expressed in blueprints for economic planning. In the predominantly Berber region of Tizi-Ouzou, planners assumed that the inhabitants were by nature more entrepreneurial than other Algerians. In discussing why Tizi-Ouzou had been chosen for industrialization, they argued that the area offered a promising work force: “Kabylia can offer industrialization a considerable reserve of labor of *good quality*, and its population, which

⁹³Samir Amin, *Accumulation on a World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment* (New York, 1974); Amin, “Accumulation and Development: A Theoretical Model,” *Review of African Economy* 1 (1974), 2–26.

⁹⁴Mohand Noureddine, “La commune, cellule vivante de l’Algérie future,” *Dépeche quotidien*, 28 April 1960, ANOM 81F/176.

⁹⁵Pierre Bourdieu, “L’identité et la représentation,” *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 35 (1980), 63–72, at 66. Robert notes that from the 1970s onwards, the Berberist movement has been “portrayed as analogous in essential respects to the Breton and Occitan movements in France.” Hugh Roberts, *The Battlefield, Algeria 1988–2002: Studies in a Broken Policy* (London, 2003), 37.

is intelligent and entrepreneurial, *should be able to progressively provide the workers that are needed for its development.*⁹⁶ Colonial planners drew on racial knowledge when determining which regions were suitable for industrialization. Moreover, the Algerian state's insistence on a centralized Jacobin identity after independence in turn fueled various culturalist and even separatist opposition movements after 1962.⁹⁷ Berber regionalism—which has been a major movement of political contestation in Algeria—can only be understood in light of these colonial policies and the articulation between racial classifications, regional identities, and economic policies.

According to Bourdieu, the rescaling of economic and administrative space allowed the region to appear as a “struggle of classification” (*lutte de classement*) that fought not only to obtain material goods, but also to define regional identities.⁹⁸ This was certainly true in Algeria, even if the deployment of the region during the war ultimately backfired: not only did Algeria win independence, but Corsican and Breton ethnic nationalists subsequently looked to Algerian decolonization as a model, adopting the framework of internal colonialism to make sense of regional underdevelopment.⁹⁹ The historian Robert Lafont, who wrote on various regionalist struggles in Europe, began his 1967 work *La révolution régionaliste* by highlighting the importance of decolonization in Algeria. He wrote,

Will we ever measure the extent of the trauma that the war of Algeria inflicted on France? The atrocities of a war can be forgotten, unfortunately, very quickly in the relief of peacetime. The whole nation was absurdly stuck in the myth of a French Algeria, forced to accept that one slaughters in its name to uphold this myth. And then one day, everything collapses: Algeria is independent.¹⁰⁰

Insisting that regionalism was no longer a romantic and reactionary notion, as it had been in the nineteenth century, Lafont concluded that the Algerian experience brought to light an alliance between centralized authoritarianism and expansionist capitalism. Even more fundamentally, he believed that the Algerian War made it necessary to rethink the very idea of France.¹⁰¹ From the 1950s to the 1970s, the notion of internal colonialism brought together critiques of uneven economic development, the excessive centralization around Paris famously highlighted by Jean-François Gravier, and calls for cultural as well as linguistic recognition.

⁹⁶Note sur le projet de zone industrielle décentralisée à Tizi-Ouzou,” no author, n.d., ANOM 81F/965, emphasis added.

⁹⁷For more on the production of the “Kabyle myth” see Patricia M. E. Lorcin, *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Race in Colonial Algeria* (London, 1995).

⁹⁸Bourdieu, “L’identité et la représentation,” 65.

⁹⁹Pervillé asks about the meaning of colonization, noting that the category was not applied to Alsace-Lorraine after the treaty of Frankfurt when Germany annexed the French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. Guy Pervillé, “Qu’est-ce que la colonisation?,” *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 22/3 (1975), 321–68, at 321. The notion of internal colonialism has a longer genealogy that goes back to Vladimir Lenin’s writings on Russia as well as Antonio Gramsci’s analysis of southern Italy. Robert J. Hind, “The Internal Colonial Concept,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26/3 (1984), 543–68.

¹⁰⁰Robert Lafont, *La révolution régionaliste* (Paris, 1967), 18.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 19.

As Lafont's writing shows, Algerian decolonization was an important reference for militant regionalists in Europe. Peasant farmers in Brittany explicitly drew on references to the Algerian FLN and demanded their own "Breton plan," expressing jealousy over the scope of the Constantine Plan in Algeria.¹⁰² They not only drew political parallels with Algeria, but also employed certain tactics of the FLN.¹⁰³ The FLNC (Fronte di liberazione naziunale corsu), a group that sought Corsican independence, adopted its name and tactics from the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN).¹⁰⁴ In the early 1960s small farmers across France expressed their discontent in a series of uprisings, which the eminent rural sociologists Henri Mendras and Yves Tavernier explained in terms of decolonization; they noted that thanks to the Constantine Plan, certain metropolitan farmers had "discovered" their own underdevelopment, provoking them to revolt.¹⁰⁵ Perroux's discourse of poles of development and regional economic planning was at base a program for economic development, but it also prompted new struggles for the recognition of regional identities on both sides of the Mediterranean.

* * *

In 1960 Paul Delouvrier left Algiers for Paris, resigning from his position as the general delegate of the French government. After his brief time in Algeria, he embarked on the project that would come to define his career: the establishment of the *villes nouvelles*. These towns, located on the periphery of Paris, reimagined the spatial organization of postwar urban development, seeking to decentralize the concentration of housing and amenities. Many of the experts who worked under Delouvrier had gained early career experience in colonial territories, most notably Algeria. French colonial expertise therefore helped fashion the techniques used in metropolitan development initiatives.¹⁰⁶ This was especially the case for economists trained in territorial planning. Michel Marié, a sociologist who contributed to the Constantine Plan called this experience a "technological and administrative breeding ground" that was decisive in fashioning the discipline of *aménagement du territoire* in the metropole.¹⁰⁷ He highlights that the experience of the Constantine Plan was essential for many experts who later contributed to regional planning in mainland France, particularly those who worked for DATAR (Délégation interministérielle à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'attractivité régionale), the national agency for regional policy created in 1963. Unsurprisingly, Perroux's notions of poles of development was one of the guiding

¹⁰²Matthew Wendeln, "Contested Territory: Regional Development in France, 1934–1968" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 2011), 334–6.

¹⁰³Ibid., 242.

¹⁰⁴Jean-Pierre Santini, *Front de libération de la Corse: De l'ombre à la lumière* (Paris, 2000), 20.

¹⁰⁵Henri Mendras and Yves Tavernier, "Les Manifestations de Juin 1961," *Revue française de science politique* 12 (1962), 647–67, at 668.

¹⁰⁶Sabine Effosse, "Paul Delouvrier et les villes nouvelles (1961–1969)," in Jean-Eudes Roullier and Sébastien Laurent, eds., *Paul Delouvrier un grand commis de l'État* (Paris, 2005), 78.

¹⁰⁷Michel Marié, *Les terres et les mots: Une traversée des sciences sociales* (Paris, 1989), 32.

logics of the organization's activities in the 1960s.¹⁰⁸ Olivier Guichard, a high-ranking technocrat who had worked on the development of the Sahara with the OCSR (Organisation commune des régions sahariennes) became the first director of DATAR in 1963. In responding to the question why he had been nominated to head the initiative, Guichard explained that after working in the Sahara, it was now time for him to tackle the French desert ("Après le désert tout court, le désert français").¹⁰⁹ This statement clearly indicated that his time in the Algerian desert had prepared him to tackle the metaphorical "French" desert created by the excessive concentration of capital in Paris. The second director of this agency, Jérôme Monod, had also been involved with economic planning in Algeria before attempting to "transform" the geography of France through territorial planning.¹¹⁰

The vision of *aménagement du territoire* is often said to be a typically French discipline.¹¹¹ Perroux's writings on the concept of economic space are also generally situated in a European context, as an important complement to the establishment of the European Economic Community. Yet these discussions tend to overlook how decolonization in Algeria played a role in providing tools to address the questions of spatial and economic marginalization in the Hexagon. In both mainland France and Algeria, experts looked to psychology and sociology to address the allegedly cultural resistance to development, which would in turn assure the integration of Muslims in a market society. This liberal approach to race—which drew an increasingly thin line between economic planners and social engineers—denounced separatist aspirations in the name of integration, both in the United States and in France. Perroux's attention to the multiple scales of economic activity, and his foregrounding of the region, were particularly controversial in Algeria, where the territory's official status as three French departments led many to label the conflict a civil war. In response to this conflict, the Constantine Plan deployed and developed the discipline of *aménagement du territoire* in the face of Algerian nationalism. Despite the metropolitan focus of many works on territorial planning, the relationship between spatial units and social engineering, most dramatically witnessed in a war of decolonization, was central for the construction of the French welfare state in the 1960s.

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¹⁰⁸Ibid., 32. For an anthropological study of these *villes nouvelles* also see Beth Epstein, *Collective Terms: Race, Culture, and Community in a State-Planned City in France* (New York, 2011).

¹⁰⁹Olivier Guichard, le père fondateur de la DATAR, "Territoires en mouvement 6 (2012), 13.

¹¹⁰For more on his understanding of territorial planning see Jérôme Monod, *Transformation d'un pays: Pour un géographie de la liberté* (Paris, 1974). Monod also published his letters sent from Morocco and Algeria in *Le déchirement: Lettres d'Algérie et du Maroc, 1953–1958* (Paris, 2008).

¹¹¹Giles Massardier, "Aménagement du territoire," in Romain Pasquier, Sébastien Guigner, and Alistair Cole, eds., *Dictionnaire des politiques territoriales* (Paris, 2020), 39–45.

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