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Archive journal

During the Algerian Revolution the French colonial regime designated large areas as *zones interdites* (forbidden zones), which consisted of free-fire zones for French military air and ground forces, and were to be cleared of any living beings. Hundreds of thousands of Algerians were forcibly evacuated from the forbidden zones and transferred into militarily controlled camps dubbed the *centres de regroupement*.

Based on private and institutional archives, including the French Service cinématographique des armées (SCA), the exhibition at Archive Kabinett, curated by Samia Henni, features certain aspects of the massive forced resettlement of civilians, and disclosures the ways with which the French colonial regime attempted to divert the military purpose of the camps in the aftermath of a medial scandal of 1959.

It unfolds the intrinsic relationships between planning, architecture, military measures, colonial policies, and the designed production and distribution of visual records. Today, the SCA is called the Établissement de communication et de production audiovisuelle de la défense (ECPAD, or Office of Communication and Audio-Visual Productions of Defense), and is still active in warzones where the French army is involved.

Discreet Violence: French Camps in Colonized Algeria

SAMIA HENNI

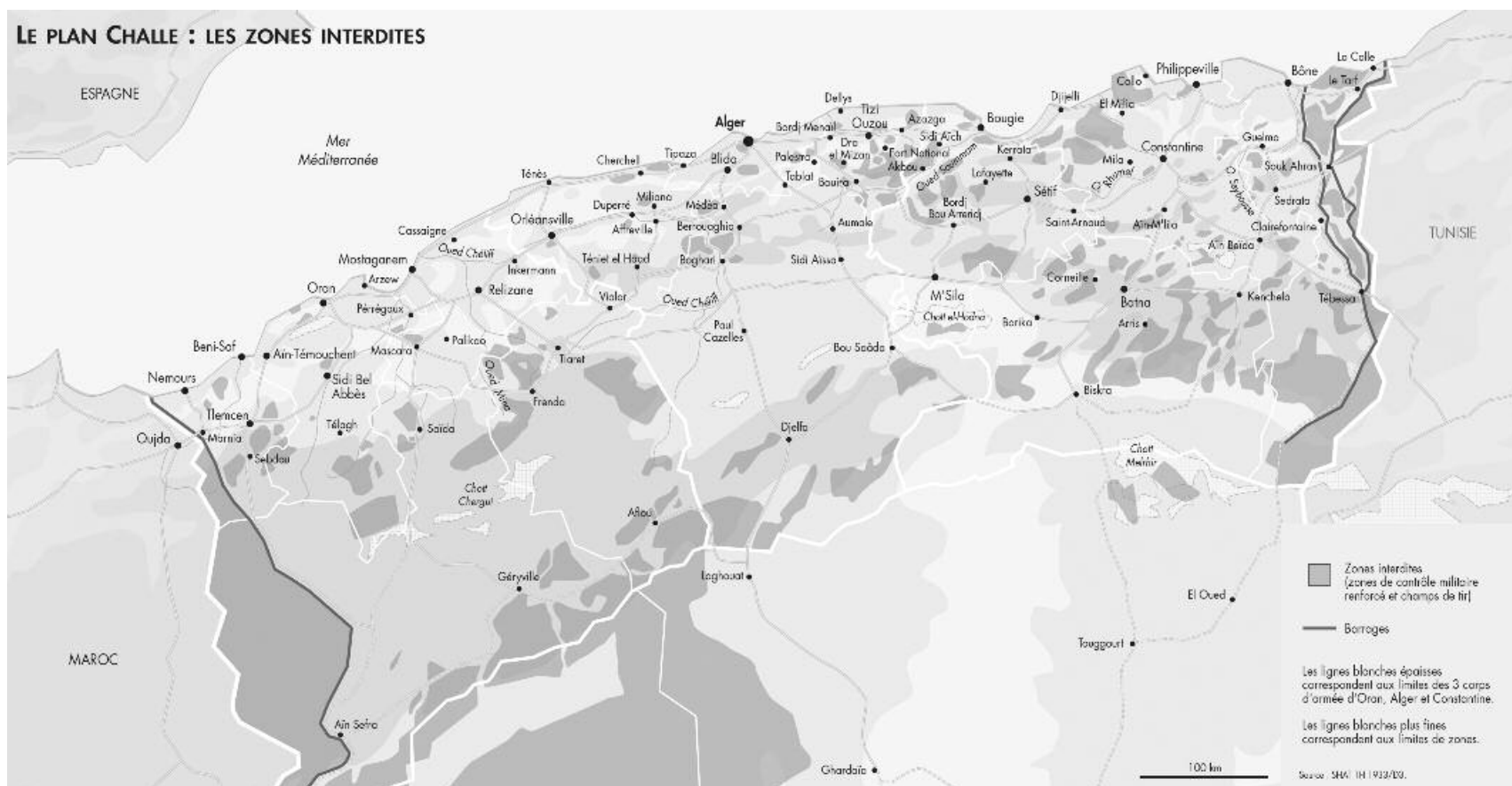
To oversee the activities of the Algerian rural population and to impede the moral and material support of Algerian militants and liberation fighters, the French colonial regime created new regions, departments, districts, and municipalities during the Algerian Revolution (1954–1962) in Algeria under French colonial rule—which began in 1830. This administrative reorganization was coupled with the strategic designation of new regional centers designed to address pressing security issues and to facilitate regional communication and the enforcement of French regulations.

Parallel to this civil territorial reorganization, a military territorial “zoning” was designed. The entire territory of colonized Algeria was gradually permeated with modifiable infrastructures and hermetic cobwebs of checkpoints, watchtowers, military posts, border fortifications, minefields, and electric fences, all of which enabled constant counter-revolutionary military operations. The French army progressively allocated particular areas of the territory of Algeria to one of three main military categories: *zones opérationnelles* (“zones of operations”), *zones de pacification* (“pacification zones”), and the *zones interdites* (“forbidden zones”).

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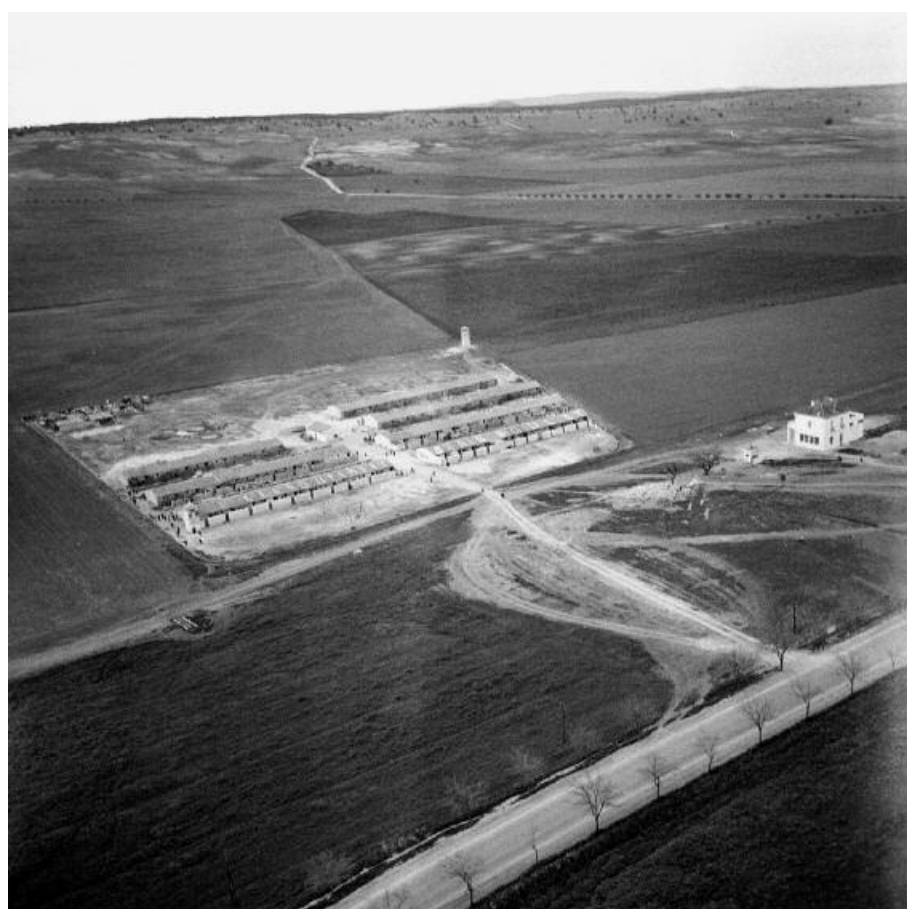


← French military mission in the Aurès, Region of Constantine, Algeria, September 1955 © Cuny, Claude; Pascucci, Bernard / Service cinématographique des armées (SCA) / Établissement de communication et de production audiovisuelle de la défense (ECPAD), Paris.



↑ Map of the forbidden zones and the Plan Challe prior to July 1959. From Guy Pervillé, *Atlas de la Guerre d'Algérie: de la conquête à l'indépendance*, with cartography by Cécile Marin (Paris: Editions Autrement, 2011), 36–37.

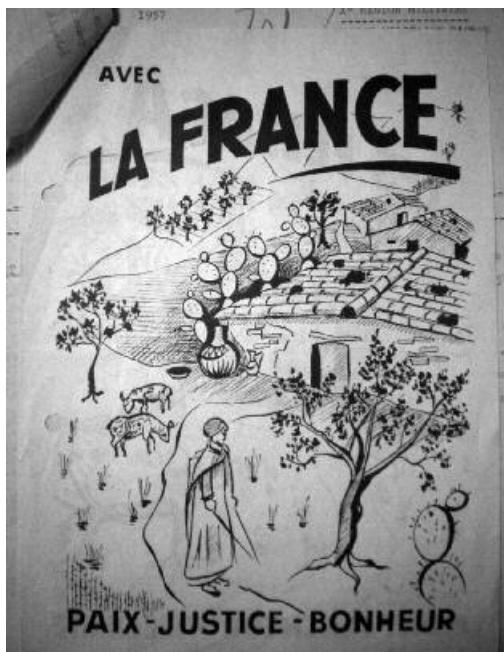
↓ Camp de regroupement in Boulet overseen by the Section administrative spécialisée (SAS, or the Specialized Administrative Section), Region of Oran, Algeria, February 1958 © Cuny, Claude / SCA / ECPAD.



↓ The construction of forbidden zones and the defensive line called Ligne Morice along the Algerian border with Tunisia, October 1959 © Beauvais, Gérard / SCA / ECPAD.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



↑ Pamphlets of the French military Action psychologique (“psychological action,” or simply propaganda) in the *camps de regroupement* © Service historique de l’armée de terre (SHAT), Paris.

Within the zones of operations, officers were ordered to utilize any possible means to restore national security. In the militarily controlled zones of pacification, the army employed *action psychologique* (“psychological actions”) against civilians, who were coercively administered, supervised, and indoctrinated, as well as being induced to collaborate with the army. And finally, there were the forbidden zones, sectors designated to be cleared of any living beings—including animals—and consisting of free-fire areas for French military air and ground forces. The prohibited regions were frequently isolated places; they comprised not only immense woodlands and highlands, but also vast, inhabited rural areas from which Algerian civilian populations were relocated en masse to secure a “national-security” zone for the French army.

These various hypothesized territorial categories spawned frequent spatial misunderstandings and demarcation conflicts between the civil and military authorities involved. The French civilian administrative subdivisions consisted of departments, districts, and municipalities, while the systematic military *quadrillage* (“grid system”) was composed of zones, sectors, subsectors, quarters, and subquarters. The military grid system was intended to mesh with one of the aforementioned military objectives: operations, pacification, or the safeguarding of forbidden zones. The most unmistakable directive was to empty the forbidden zones, forcing civilians to leave their homes, villages, and arable lands. This military operation not only damaged countless existing villages and uprooted numerous Algerian peasants, but also engendered the establishment of what the French army termed the *centres de regroupement* in Algeria under French colonial rule.

With the issuing of the first centralized military policy of 1957, under the command of General Raoul Salan, official documents stamped “secret” or “secret-confidential” or “top-secret” began to regulate the creation of the forbidden zones and to normalize the forced resettlement of the civilian populations; this was particularly the case with the construction of the defensive perimeter known as the Morice Line. Named after French Minister of National Defense André Morice,

the Morice Line sealed off Algeria’s eastern and western borders with neighboring Tunisia and Morocco in order to prevent human movement and material exchanges. Running approximately 450 km along the border with Tunisia and 700 km along the border with Morocco, the Morice Line triggered a rapid and massive expansion of the camps. In 1958, the military Plan Challe fortified the Morice Line with additional electrified wire, minefields, barriers, and checkpoints—systematic counterrevolutionary measures that intensified the imposed evacuation of civilians from the forbidden zones. The number of the camps thus continued to increase throughout the course of the Algerian War of Independence.

On 17 February 1959, more than four years after the onset of the Algerian Revolution on 1 November 1954 (All Saints’ Day), Michel Rocard, a young Inspector of Finances in French Algeria—who later served as Prime Minister from 1988 to 1991 under President François Mitterrand—submitted a confidential document, *Rapport sur les camps de regroupement* (*Report on the Regroupement Camps*), to Paul Delouvrier, the newly appointed Delegate General of the French Government in Algeria. In this 1959 account, the twenty-eight-year-old Rocard denounced the outrageous conditions of the French colonial “*regroupement* camps in which a million villagers are parked, more than half of them children.”¹ The report was leaked to the media in France, who belatedly revealed the existence of the militarily controlled *camps de regroupement* (roughly translated as “regrouping camps”) in Algeria that until then had been kept secret from national and international public opinion. In 2003, Rocard published his report in a book titled *Rapport sur les camps de regroupement et autres textes sur la Guerre d’Algérie* (*Report on the Regroupement Camps and Other Texts on the Algerian War*). Among the reasons that prompted Rocard to publish his 1959 report on the camps over four decades later was (as he said) the alarming invasion of Iraq in 2003. Using the examples of the fiascos of the war in Algeria and the violence inflicted during the forced civilian relocations, Rocard attempted to demonstrate the impossibility of solving political problems by purely military means, as had occurred in colonial Algeria.

¹ Michel Rocard, *Rapport sur les camps de regroupement et autres textes sur la guerre d’Algérie* (Paris: Mille et une nuits, 2003), 13.



↑ French military search called “Opération Espérance,”
Region of Guergour, Soumman Valley, Algeria, June
1956 © Durr, Jacques / SCA / ECPAD.

↓ Military officers debating the strategy of *regroupement*
in the military operational sector of Saïda, Region of Oran,
Algeria, February – April 1959 © Flament, Marc / Fonds
privés / SCA / ECPAD.

↓ Robert Lacoste, French Resident Minister of the French
Government in Algeria and Maurice Lemaire, French Secretary of
State for Trade and Industry visit the oil fields in Hassi Messaoud,
Algeria, February 1957 © Michalowski, Zygmund / SCA / ECPAD.





The 1959 media scandal resulted in an unprecedented flood of photographs, figures, and descriptions documenting the forced resettlement of Algerian civilians on a massive scale. Alone the titles of the various articles—published simultaneously in both left- and right-wing French newspapers—are testimony to the alarming numbers involved and the precarious circumstances that the French army was inflicting upon Algerians: “Dans les camps d’Algérie des milliers d’enfants meurent” (In the Camps of Algeria, Thousands of Children Die); “Un million d’Algériens ‘regroupés’ par l’armée menacés de famine” (One Million Algerians ‘Regrouped’ by the Army Threatened with Famine); “Un million d’Algériens dans les camps: c’est la guerre” (One Million Algerians in Camps: Such Is War); “Un million d’Algériens parqués dans des camps de ‘regroupement’” (One Million Algerians Parked in ‘Regroupement’ Camps); “J’ai visité, près de Blida, les villages de regroupement” (I Have Visited, Near Blida, the *Regroupement* Villages); “Un million d’Algériens derrière les barbelés” (One Million Algerians behind Barbed Wire); “Algérie: un million de personnes déplacés” (Algeria: One Million People Displaced); “Un million d’Algériens de l’Atlas ont été rassemblés dans mille villages” (One Million Algerians from the Atlas Mountains Have Been Gathered in a Thousand Villages).² This figure of one million people—a unique and apparently preconceived number given by the French civil authorities—was in fact mere guesswork. In reality, the French army had lost count. As the Inspection générale des regroupements de population (IGRP, or the General Inspection of the Population *Regroupement*) admitted, it was clear that “by 1959 we had found ourselves facing a very serious situation: it had become impossible to quantify even approximately the volume of the displaced rural populations that had occurred since 1954.”³

The exact numbers of camps that were constructed during the war, of persons who were forced to leave their homes, and of devastated villages are still disputed to this day. One estimate for 1960 counted 2,157,000 such forcibly relocated persons.⁴ Another evaluation from 1961 considered that at least 2,350,000 people had been concentrated into military controlled settlements, and that an additional 1,175,000 people had been coerced to leave their original homes due to constant and violent military operations, meaning that altogether over 3.5 million people had been forcibly displaced.⁵ Another figure for 15 February 1962, just a few weeks before Algeria’s independence, reported that 3,740 *camps de regroupement* had been built in French Algeria since the outbreak of the Algerian Revolution in 1954.⁶

In the aftermath of the media scandal of 1959, planning “technicians,” as the military officers called them, became directly involved in transforming the permanent camps into what the army termed “villages,” as well as in designing new settlements for the forcibly relocated populations. Under the authority of General Charles de Gaulle and in prompt reaction to the public outrage, Paul Delouvrier⁷ launched an emergency resettlement program dubbed the *Mille villages* (One Thousand Villages). Delouvrier ordered immediate improvements in the development of the camps’ economic conditions. To this end, he established mobile teams comprised of a military officer and two skilled rural-planning professionals, which he called *Équipes itinérantes d’aménagement rural* (mobile rural planning teams).⁸ These were expected to study (a) the future of the regrouping process; (b) the economic viability of the camps; (c) the legal status of the occupied lands; (d) the administrative needs of the education and health-care sectors; (e) the extent of immediate assistance that was required; and (f) the military concerns of protection and self-defense.⁹

Central to the French military doctrine of the construction of the *camps de regroupement* were the Sections administratives spécialisées (SAS, or Specialized Administrative Sections). These extraordinary army units were deployed in rural areas in order to carry out both military and civilian assignments. In one sense, the SAS officers’ military missions entailed the gathering of intelligence, the diffusion of propagandistic information, the ensuring of law and order, and the direct control of the civilian population. By contrast, their civil functions were to provide social, economic, educational, sanitary, and medical facilities, as well as to organize and build the militarily controlled camps called the *centres de regroupement*. Similar units also subsequently served in urban areas in order to cope with the alarming numbers of *bidonvilles* (slums; literally “can-towns”) in addition to accomplishing most of the aforementioned civil-military responsibilities; these divisions were named the Sections administratives urbaines (SAU, or Urban Administrative Sections). By the end of 1961, twenty SAUs existed in the urban neighborhoods inhabited by the Algerian population (including in the Casbah of Algiers), and more than seven hundred SASs were spread across the vastness of Algeria’s countryside and the immense Sahara.

² Archives of the Service Historique de l’Armée de Terre (hereafter SHAT), SHAT 1 H 2485 D 2. Newspaper clippings, 1959.

³ SHAT 1 H 2030. J. Florentin, Bataillon’s Chief of General Inspection of the Population *Regroupement*. *Les regroupements des populations en Algérie*. Algiers, 11 December 1960, p. 13.

⁴ Pierre Bourdieu and Abdelmalek Sayad, *Le déracinement : La crise de l’agriculture traditionnelle en Algérie* (Paris: Edition de Minuit), 13.

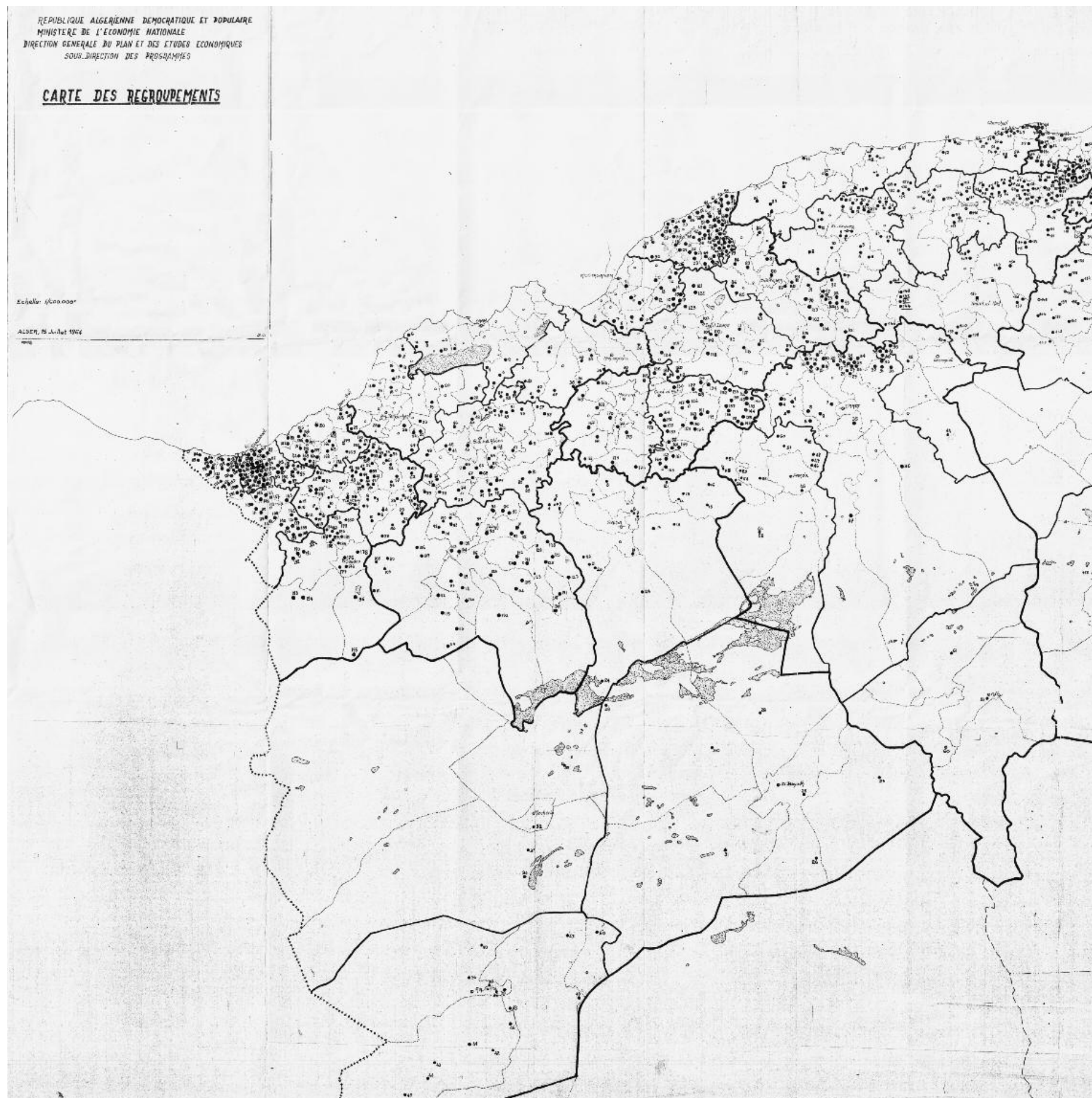
⁵ Michel Cornaton, *Les camps de regroupement de la Guerre d’Algérie* (Paris: L’Harmattan), 122–123.

⁶ Ibid., 121.

⁷ After his experience in Algeria, Paul Delouvrier was appointed General Delegate of the Metropolitan Region of Paris between 1961 and 1969, and then Prefect and Deputy Director of the Aménagement du territoire (Spatial Planning) between 1966 and 1969. Delouvrier is considered to be the father of the *villes nouvelles* (new towns) in France.

⁸ SHAT 1 H 2030 D 1. Paul Delouvrier, Directive no. 3.444 CC, *Regroupement de Populations*, 24 April 1959.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 2–3.



↓ Map of the *camps de regroupement* in Northern Algeria, 1962. The map was produced by the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria after Algeria gained its independence from France. Each point represents a *camp de regroupement* that the French army had created. Courtesy of Michel Cornaton.





↑ Personal photographs of Pierre Willemin documenting the shooting of the French propaganda film about the Algerian Revolution entitled *Au-delà des fusils* (Beyond Guns) and directed by Gérard Renateau and produced by the SCA in 1960. Pierre Willemin did his military service as cameraman for the SCA and went to Algeria in 1960 to shoot *Au-delà des fusils* © Pierre Willemin's private archives.



↑ Preparation works for French nuclear tests, Centre saharien d'expérimentations militaires (Saharan Centre for Military Experimentations), Reggane, Algerian Sahara, January 1960 © Varoqui, Raymond / SCA / ECPAD.



↑ Operation "Gerboise rouge," French Saharan Center for Military Experimentations, Reggane, Algerian Sahara, December 1960 © Lacoste, Sapirstein / SCA / ECPAD.

The French appellation, *centre de regroupement*, not only poses translation problems, involving as it did both the displacement and concentration of civilians in extrajudicial detention and within an enclosed and surveyed space, but it also entails precisely that which it is not. The terms "concentration" and "camp" were appositely circumvented in official military nomenclature and, as a result, by the majority of the French media and in the subsequent history books. In 1957, Maurice Papon, the General Inspector of Administration in the Extraordinary Mission in Eastern Algeria and the Prefect of the Department of Constantine—who was convicted in 1998 of crimes against humanity for his participation in the deportation of Jews in Bordeaux to concentration camps during the Second World War—rigorously requested the immediate suppression of the word "camp" from all road signs in the Algerian department under his authority.¹⁰ In Constantine (in eastern Algeria), where Papon was in charge of both the civil and military authorities, he banned any use of the word, ordering: "the term 'camp' will have to disappear from the terminology."¹¹ The term *regroupement* seems to have a purely military sense, however, in that it coincides with the meaning of "concentration." According to one dictionary of the French language, *regroupement* is the action of "re-grouping," which means: "1. To group, to unite anew (what was dispersed): *To regroup officers of an army...* 2. To group (dispersed elements), to gather. à To reassemble: *To regroup the populations.*"¹² "Concentration," logically enough, is the action of concentrating, which means, according to the same dictionary, "to gather in a center. MILITARY: *The concentration of troops in an area of the territory.* à Grouping, roundup, regrouping. SPECIAL: *Camps de concentration.*"¹³

In the course of the Algerian Revolution, as well as in its aftermath, a sprinkling of staged visual representations of the forced relocation of the Algerian population in the *camps de regroupement* were overtly displayed and broadcasted, and in even rarer cases also show armed officers in uniform, guard towers, and barbed wire, with echoes of the recently ended Second World War (and notably the French taboo of the Vichy regime).

The French law of 3 April 1955 declaring the state of emergency allowed the French authorities to "take all measures to ensure control of the press and of publications of all kinds, as well as radio broadcastings, screenings of films, and theatre performances."¹⁴

Accordingly, texts, images, audio sequences, films, theater pieces, and any information about the Algerian War of Independence, including the *camps de regroupement*, were by law subject to control, censorship, seizure, penalties, and police measures.¹⁵ To this end, a propaganda office called the *5e bureau* (Fifth Bureau) provided tactical information aimed at influencing people's attitudes, beliefs, emotions, motives, values, and behaviors. This campaign of psychological warfare also included the visual and textual representation of the *camps de regroupement* prior to the media scandal of 1959, an effort that continued until the office's dissolution in February 1960.

The Fifth Bureau supervised and guided the textual and audiovisual productions made by the professional army photographs, cameramen, and filmmakers hired by the French Service cinématographique des armées (SCA, or Cinematographic Service of the Armed Forces), which still exists today under the name of Établissement de communication et de production audiovisuelle de la défense (ECPAD, or Office of Communication and Audiovisual Productions of Defense). The SCA's teams covered key events, such as the French Generals' putsches of 1958 and 1961, and produced propaganda material on particular topics, including the *camps de regroupement*.

Among the undeclared motivations of the French bloody and protracted war in Algeria was the protection of France's economic interests in the Algerian Sahara, which consisted not only in exploiting natural resources (oil and gas), but also in conducting nuclear tests in the Algerian desert. The French authorities detonated their first atomic bomb, called *Gerboise Bleue* (Blue Jerboa, named for a tiny jumping desert rodent), in the Algerian Sahara on 3 February 1960; the second, *Gerboise Blanche* (White Jerboa), on 1 April 1960; the third, *Gerboise Rouge* (Red Jerboa), on 27 December 1960; and the fourth, *Gerboise Verte* (Green Jerboa), on 25 April 1961; others continued even after Algerian independence in 1962 and until 1966.

¹⁰ Interview with Michel Cornaton by Samia Henni, 18 May 2013.

¹¹ Cited in Charles-Robert Ageron, "Une dimension de la guerre d'Algérie : les 'regroupements' de populations," in *Militaires et guérilla dans la Guerre d'Algérie*, by Jean-Charles Jauffret and Maurice Vaïsse (Brussels: André Versaille Editeur, 2012), 236.

¹² "Regroupement, Regrouper," *Le Nouveau Petit Robert: Dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue française* (Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 1993), 2143.

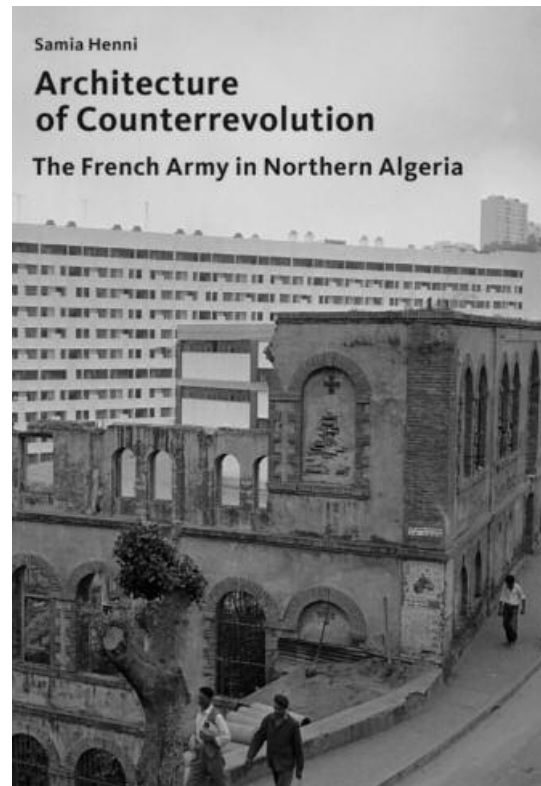
¹³ "Concentration," *ibid.*, 482.

¹⁴ Law no. 55-385 of 3 April 1955, Article 11.

¹⁵ This strict control did not prevent a few Algerian and French filmmakers from directing movies during and about the Algerian War of Independence.



↑ Aerial photographs of the camps de regroupement in the military operational sector of Saïda, Region of Oran, Algeria, February–April 1959 © Flament, Marc / Fonds privés / Établissement de communication et de production audiovisuelle de la défense (ECPAD), Paris.



Samia Henni
Architecture of Counterrevolution
The French Army in Northern Algeria

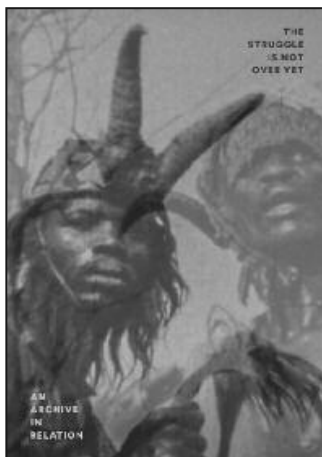
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Architecture of Counterrevolution examines the intersection of French colonial policies and military counterinsurgency operations in architecture in Algeria during the Algerian Revolution (1954–1962). In the course of this bloody and protracted armed conflict, the French civil and military authorities profoundly reorganized the country's vast urban and rural territory, drastically transformed its built environments, rapidly implanted new infrastructures, and strategically constructed new settlements in order to keep Algeria under French rule. The colonial regime planned and undertook not only tactical demolition programs but also developed new structures in order to facilitate the strict control of the Algerian population and the protection of the European communities of Algeria.

Samia Henni's study focuses on the politics of three interrelated spatial counterrevolutionary measures: the massive forced resettlement of Algerian farmers; the mass-housing programs designed for the Algerian population as part of General Charles de Gaulle's Plan de Constantine; and the fortified administrative new town planned for the protection of the French authorities during the last months of the Algerian Revolution. The aim is to depict the *modus operandi* of these settlements, their roots, developments, scopes, and impacts, as well as the actors, protocols, and design mechanisms behind them.

Samia Henni was born in Algiers, Algeria. She is an architect and an architectural historian and theorist who works at the intersection of architecture, planning, colonial practices, and military operations from the early nineteenth century up to the present. She received her Ph.D. in History and Theory of Architecture from the ETH Zurich (with distinction, ETH Medal). She is currently a Lecturer in History and Theory of Architecture at Princeton University's School of Architecture.

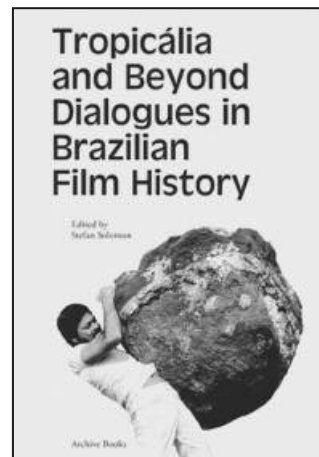
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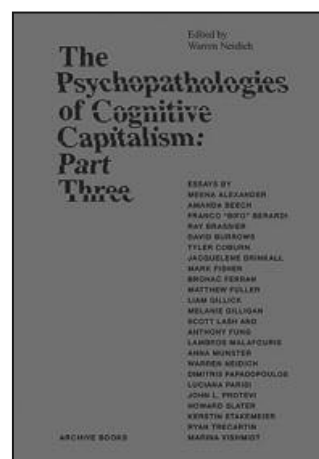
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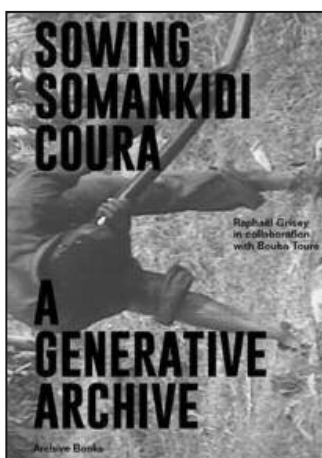
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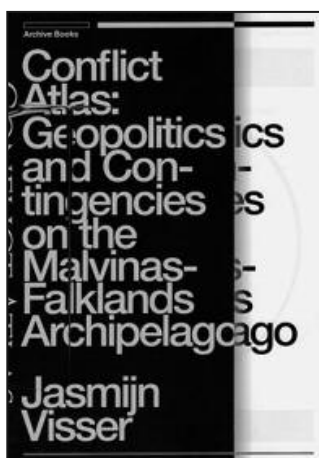
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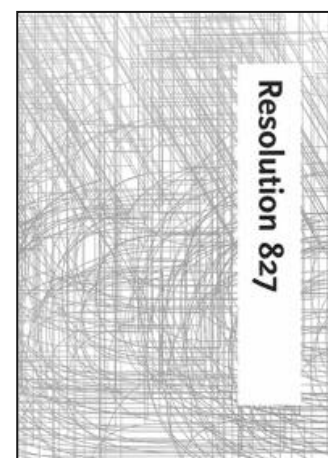
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