INTRODUCTION

Beyond the Shadow City

On the comparatively infrequent occasions when historians have turned their attention to urban landscapes deemed to be shantytowns, they have generally echoed the rhetoric of architects, planners, and state authorities, who have routinely framed such sites as aberrant, unplanned developments that stand apart from the city proper and are worthy of attention only insofar as they represent problems to be solved. Consider, in this regard, a photograph from the archives of the architect Shadrach Woods, taken from the roof terrace of the now iconic housing complex designed by Woods and his colleagues in the early 1950s in the Carrières Centrales district, an area of Casablanca better known to its residents as Karian Sentra (fig. I.1). Captured from this elevated vantage point, the photograph positions the bidonville—the francophone equivalent of the shantytown—as the foil to and catalyst for new constructions designed by architects. Situated in the image as distant backdrop and indistinct horizon, the bidonville is framed as the shadowy underbelly and material antithesis of the modern city, here concretized in newly completed housing blocks. Indeed, the black-and-white tonalities of the photograph further dramatize the overtly racializing terms of the defining opposition between pristine, white concrete walls and dark, densely packed constructions that seem to dissolve into an illegible mass.

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This photograph lays claim to ready legibility insofar as it stages a familiar and seemingly fully comprehensible scene, one that poses the triumph of new construction against the looming incursions of apparently unplanned, unauthorized, and illegal shacks. Indeed, the design solutions in the foreground are framed as the desired and perhaps even inevitable answer to what lurks in the distance. Here a redoubled process of abstraction is operative, first in the logics of an architecture built upon the abstraction of material forms of living and second in the strategic staging of the normative city, defined in opposition to a shadowy landscape fixed as absolute alterity. To begin with this photograph is to alight midstream, encountering Casablanca at a moment when the very idea of the bidonville had long been consolidated and seemingly ubiquitous urban landscapes like this one were the focus of accelerating debates on an increasingly global scale. What is remarkable, however, is the degree to which the spatial, material, aesthetic, and ideological oppositions staged in this photograph continue to shape accounts of architecture and cities in and well beyond Casablanca. *The City in the Shadow of the Shantytown* questions these ready presumptions by examining how the bidonville emerged as a significant component of the colonial city and became a critical site of its liberation.

Even the photograph preserved in Woods's archive might provide fodder for such rethinking. Taken from a section of roof that gives way to an open balcony, the photographer's precarious perch permits a raking angle of view into the far distance. This vantage point refuses to grant the iconicity staged in official photographs published in the architectural press showcasing this experimental housing project designed by Woods and his colleagues in ATBAT-Afrique, the North African wing of the Atelier des Bâtisseurs (builders' workshop).[1] Invariably, this cluster of three buildings, each offering a different typology conceived as coordinated instruments of cultural assimilation, were framed as an autonomous development emphatically isolated from its urban surroundings—images that have proven generative for these buildings' more recent recuperation by historians. Despite the evident density of urban inhabitation, the city captured in this photograph is eerily quiet, devoid of people. Traces of occupation and perhaps ongoing construction might be glimpsed by way of a table seemingly abandoned near an entrance to the building on the left, while ladders and construction debris are piled nearby. In these ways, even as this photograph stages an overtly racializing architectural confrontation, it telegraphs its own

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partial perspective, inscribed in a sideways glance onto sedimented terrains of habitation that resist completion. Indeed, this scene seems to anticipate the inevitable recreation of these spaces that will be realized through their future occupation and reappropriation. In this sense, the photograph points to a key aim of this book: to reexamine urban landscapes that have long been disregarded or taken as self-evident as a critical foundation for the broader unraveling of architectural and conceptual enclosures that continue to haunt scenes like this one.

In recent decades, the bidonville, like similar developments in cities around the world, has been acknowledged as a significant urban phenomenon and ubiquitous built landscape. However, it has rarely registered as a development worthy of investigation in its own right—an orientation and habit of mind that this photograph vividly encapsulates. I begin with this photograph as an invitation to grasp in this image and in the urban landscape it depicts the seeds of an undoing that is simultaneously historical and conceptual. How might we better understand this scene and the urban writ large if we shift our attention to register the presence of structures and lives that have been overshadowed, both literally and figuratively, by remarkably persistent visions of architecture? Taking off from these questions, *The City in the Shadow of the Shantytown* unsettles deeply engrained conventions of representing, conceptualizing, and understanding the urban by providing the first critical history of the bidonville, a significant thread within planetary histories that have yet to be written.

Recasting Modernity's Shadows

This book invites a reorientation to histories, places, and people that have long been hiding in plain sight, in the overlooked interstices between new constructions, or in the gaps between ambitious master plans extravagantly rendered for public presentation and the messier processes of implementation and reappropriation on the ground—especially acts of city-building that were strategically overlooked or actively erased from view. In my thinking through these dynamics and the reorientations they require, shadows loom large. As sociologist Réda Benkirane has observed, "Official urban planning has long considered [the bidonville] a 'ville en négatif' [a city in negative (reversal)] and the average Casablancan has long seen his co-citizen as 'someone who lives behind the sun.'"[2] Building

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on Benkirane's observations, Katarzyna Pieprzak has argued that the bidonville "becomes the city's suspended, dark, or unreal other, an invisible other that is made to disappear in plain sight."[3] While Pieprzak turns to a remarkable series of artworks that might allow for reparative disruptions of such habitual mappings, I aim to bring newly into focus living landscapes, their representations, and their multifarious and even multi-species builders and inhabitants.

The association of living landscapes deemed to be bidonvilles as a kind of shadow city resonates in significant ways with the writings of decolonial scholars who have posited colonialism as the darker side of modernity and coloniality as the shadowy underbelly of systems of knowledge that fueled European expansion from the sixteenth century onward. As Aníbal Quijano argued in his initial theorization of these ideas, coloniality is based on the social classification of racialized categories.[4] In this sense, the shadowy side of modernity is entangled in colonialism and the racial frameworks that structure the hierarchies of power on which it has been founded. Indeed, as Achille Mbembe has argued, "Race has been the ever present shadow in Western political thought and practice, especially when it comes to imagining the inhumanity of, or rule over, foreign peoples."[5]

While tethered to situated places and shifting historical moments, modernity's shadows are less spatial than epistemological. Indeed, coloniality describes a matrix of power and modes of thinking that have proven their durability long after political regimes of colonialism have ostensibly been dismantled.[6] Nevertheless, for Walter Mignolo in particular, it is deeply significant that the understanding of modernity's constitutive relationship to coloniality was first theorized in the former colonies of Latin America and the Caribbean, by Quijano and others who began to articulate a liberatory project that has found its echoes in wide-ranging writings and actions. Mignolo argues that such a project must necessarily be oriented "both to uncovering the illusions of modernity, progress, and development by revealing its darker side, coloniality, and to imagining and working toward possible futures that the very logic of modernity/coloniality made and contributed to obscuring."[7] The shadowy side of modernity thus emerges as a shape-shifting haunting, predicated on "a simultaneous logic of disavowal and dependency."[8] It is in this sense that coloniality provides a critical framework for questioning and rethinking prevailing conceptions of the bidonville as a kind of shadow city.[9]

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This book is situated in what has become a seemingly well-trodden terrain of investigation. Indeed, what we might describe in retrospect as architectural history's colonial turn initially took shape, in no small part, in relation to the Maghrib. A rich body of scholarship laid bare the formative role that strategic projects of large-scale territorial and urban restructuring played in the process of colonization, from strategic demolitions by French military engineers shortly after the invasion of Algiers began in 1830, to the now iconic experiments in mass housing that were undertaken over a century later, in the 1950s, like those celebrated in Woods's photograph.[10] Significantly, the work of Governor-General Hubert Lyautey and architect-planner (*architecte-urbaniste*) Henri Prost in the years following the establishment of the French protectorate in Morocco in 1912 inspired the understanding of the colonies as a laboratory for modern architecture and even for the modern bureaucratic state tout court.[11]

This initial diffusionist model continues to find its echoes, even in the face of critiques of concepts like "colonial modern" that have been offered as a revised framework for tracing the varied ways modern architecture was shaped through its articulation within and beyond colonial territories. Considerable attention has been paid to the multidirectional influences, echoes, and aftermaths of projects mediated by cultural appropriations and often predicated on "learning from" the bidonville, "vernacular" structures, and "local" cultural practices.[12] In turn, a set of familiar debates about the relative weight given to "functionalist" and "culturalist" concerns predominates, a framework that unconsciously privileges a narrow understanding of the architectural field while also taking for granted and effectively reifying a similarly restrictive strand of architectural discourse.[13] In these discussions, the influence of colonial ethnography has often been referenced in passing, although the historically shifting intellectual, epistemological, and institutional frameworks within which architectural projections and urban projects unfolded remain to be more fully unpacked.[14] The prevailing sites of interest—master planning initiatives and discrete building projects—have remained remarkably consistent, as has the limited attention given to the agency of beings other than architects and planners. Even when multifaceted appropriations of architectural and urban projects by residents have been considered, the generative authority of the architect-planner has been left largely intact.[15] Recent studies have productively shifted attention from discrete

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buildings to the territorial scale in order to trace how architecture became a privileged military instrument of settler colonialism and counterinsurgency operations, but they nonetheless retain a focus on architecture's efficacy as an ideological weapon wielded largely from above by state actors and institutions, including architects and planners.[16]

The City in the Shadow of the Shantytown poses a series of questions that shift the lines of inquiry. Rather than simply filling in the overlooked gaps between what are now among the most iconic landmarks of modern architecture, modernity's deep entanglements with coloniality and racial capitalism require a thoroughgoing rethinking of our objects and terrains of analysis. To this end, I have found Frantz Fanon's reflections to be an important point of departure. The bidonville was central to Fanon's theorization of how settler colonialism's violent and overtly racializing spatial segregations were predicated on enclosure and containment—that is, how the very idea of race as a zone of nonbeing materialized in the built landscape. At the same time, while drawing on his firsthand experience of the war for independence in Algeria and the sustained trauma it induced, Fanon identified the bidonville as a generative site for anticolonial revolution.[17] What might be described as the Fanonian paradox of the bidonville is both the focus of my analysis in the pages that follow and a foundational theoretical framework for this project. Indeed, the bidonville—as the subject of obsessive documentation and projection, as a living landscape of inhabitation, and as an endlessly shape-shifting concept—is both an artifact of coloniality and a formative site of decolonial thinking and action.

Shifting the focus or the center of gravity from the city to the shantytown might provide a starting point, but a simple reversal is not sufficient. Instead, this book poses a series of questions, focusing attention on threads of inquiry that allow intersecting yet distinct views onto the evolving entanglements of city and shantytown. Despite endless claims that the bidonville is external to the authorized city or a built landscape that is not properly urban, these were mutually constitutive terrains and conceptual frameworks that require a concerted reconsideration not only of the bidonville but, even more importantly, of the urban. To this end, Fanon's thinking about the disenclosure of the world, as further elaborated by Achille Mbembe, informs my examination and questioning of the ever-tighter bounding and enclosure of people, spaces, and more-than-human entities through which urban landscapes deemed to be bidonvilles

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were produced.[18] In this sense, situating the city in the shadow of the shantytown is a means of challenging and actively dismantling what have become defining conceptual and perceptual enclosures.

Situated Histories and Planetary Horizons

From the outset, the act of describing a given built landscape as a bidonville anticipated and authorized its targeting, control, and seemingly inevitable dispossession. The power of the term thus lay in its application rather than in any consistent reality on the ground; no matter the specific circumstances of a given site's development, its designation as bidonville recreated it as such. External definitions were, however, challenged at every turn. Significantly, residents in Morocco described their communities as *karian*, a Moroccan Arabic, or Darija, term for quarry that asserts a radically different relationship to the materials, ecologies, and built landscapes than those embedded in the term *bidonville*, whose layered references to castoff products of industry I explore in depth in chapter 2.

Indeed, *bidonville* is merely one of many terms and conceptual categories that are routinely taken at face value when built landscapes described as such enter the discussion. A foundational task of *The City in the Shadow of the Shantytown* is to excavate how such categories and the habits of mind they encouraged initially emerged, were given weight through their repetition, and often continue to be mobilized, despite their insufficiencies. Architectural historian Swati Chattopadhyay has aptly described such a tendency as "a peculiar form of discursive haunting, an inability to overcome the limitations of urban historiography." While Chattopadhyay was referencing the habitual reliance on "the formally and discursively unraveling city," long after it might be possible to understand urbanization as a coherent process defined by legible boundaries or stable centers, her provocation has much broader implications.[19]

Rather than simply fixing terms and definitions, it is important to consider their historical emergence, the constellations of associations they engendered, how meanings shifted over time, and the effects such frameworks have had on both buildings and inhabitants. In this regard, I am attentive to Ariella Aïsha Azoulay's observation that "the imperial enterprise is reproduced through its taxonomies, which generate, accumulate, and distribute differences along a triple dividing line encompassing the *temporal, spatial*, and *differential*."[20] Such taxonomies are readily absorbed and reproduced through their

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