

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: DWELLING IN DIPLOMACY: DESIGNING
A PERMANENT PLACE FOR A
TEMPORARY COMMUNITY

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The U.S. Department of State deploys hundreds of American diplomats into embassies abroad. With temporary posts, diplomats and their families are transplanted into unfamiliar, foreign contexts. While protecting Americans abroad, this mobile and dynamic population attempts to find stability and security in a temporary environment.

This thesis examines the crossroads of culture and architecture through the implementation of a new United States embassy in Algiers, Algeria. As diplomats and locals attempt to absorb one another's culture, they can face a sense of displacement. U.S. embassies can expand from a purely political context to one that creates community between Americans and Algerians. It explores the built environment's role in mitigating physical and social displacement and maintaining security. With globalization, preserving identity while blurring the boundaries between cultures becomes a challenge. By integrating community, foreign policy and security,

architecture can create a platform for cultural assimilation resulting in a truly global society.

DWELLING IN DIPLOMACY: DESIGNING A PERMANENT PLACE FOR A
TEMPORARY COMMUNITY

by

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List of Abbreviations

DAO – Defense Attaché Office
FBO – Office of Foreign Buildings Operations
FSO – Foreign Service Officer
FSN – Foreign Service National
OBO – Overseas Buildings Operations
SED – Standard Embassy Design

Introduction: The Importance of Embassies

“Embassies are unique architectural subjects. Perhaps no other public buildings are of such symbolic importance: much more than our domestic public buildings, their appearance establishes an image of the American government and people”

– Daniel Patrick Moynihan (June 12, 1981)

Through the belief that nation-states will and should act in their own-self-interest toward the goal of self-preservation, the diplomacy of the world was born.¹ Since the early years of the Italian Renaissance, countries today continue to expand their breadth across borders near and far. With this, the U.S. has the opportunity to simultaneously absorb and disperse into foreign cultures, creating a new and dynamic condition, a global culture. As the movement towards cross cultural cooperation has matured, the embassy as an architectural typology has matured simultaneously, giving the U.S. a formal platform for diffusing its democracy into nations around the world. The United States takes advantage of this by maintaining over 280 diplomatic facilities worldwide.² With embassies and representative personnel abroad we continue to test the reach of U.S. foreign policy. Embassies are responsible for fighting terrorism, protecting U.S. interests, and implementing foreign policy initiatives that support a freer and more secure world.³ There is no doubt that

¹ Elizabeth Gill Lui, Keya Keita, and Jane C. Loeffler, *Building Diplomacy: The Architecture of American Embassies* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2004) 18.

² Alex Tiersky, Alex and Susan B. Epstein, “Securing U.S. Diplomatic Facilities and Personnel Abroad: Background and Policy Issues,” *Congressional Research Service* (2014): 1, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42834.pdf>

³ “What We Do: Mission,” U.S. Department of State, accessed September 10, 2018, <https://careers.state.gov/learn/what-we-do/mission/>.

embassies also play a key role in growing the economy, especially in developing countries. Diplomatic missions abroad provide the opportunity to secure investments and broaden access to the market. Although commendable and necessary in several regards, these pragmatic functions of the embassy typology neglect perhaps the most important responsibility of diplomacy: building relationships and respect of *people* across national borders. Diplomacy retains more than just monetary value. In the era of globalization, U.S. embassies become even more symbolic, representing a commitment to deepening bilateral relations.⁴

As rapid advances in information and communication continue to reframe the concept of distance, embassies as a typology have been challenged. Some argue that with the possibility of e-mails and phone calls around the world, diplomacy can be handled through the digital world. When direct contact is necessary, similar rationale can be applied with the ease of flying anywhere in the world in less than 24 hours. For reasons such as these, diplomatic missions around the world are often the first to be cut off from government spending, as it is difficult to justify spending money abroad when it is needed domestically. However, these arguments do not completely discredit the idea of the embassy and what it continues to represent. In reality, the quality of information (such as the political climate, the state of the economy, or even the well-being of community) being gathered and relayed is not the same when given on a digital platform. As communication between cultures already has its challenges, the digital world can amplify such challenges. A government with physical presence

⁴ Moira Gallaga, "Do We Still Need Embassies?" *The Diplomat*. September 4, 2013, <https://thediplomat.com/2013/09/do-we-still-need-embassies/>.

in country, that is diplomats living amongst the community, is more likely to get an accurate assessment of local opportunities, risks and developments.⁵ There are no sources of information as consistently valued as eyes and ears of those on the ground, thus reinforcing the importance of our personnel abroad.⁶

The social and cultural implications that accompany diplomatic missions often play a supporting role to political and economic endeavors. However, as we strive for a more inclusive and empathetic society, the U.S. must take advantage of the opportunity created from diplomacy. The approach must focus on the experience and integration of people, building better lives for diplomats and their local colleagues. As Elizabeth Lui states in her book *Building Diplomacy*, “Our embassies tell a story of who we are in relation to the world at any given time and place.”⁷ Therefore the architecture of our embassies not only comes to represent national values but also provides a place in which we can blur the boundaries between national borders. As a result, we can strive to understand our differences and use them for meaningful collaboration.

This thesis explores the embassy typology through the lens of our diplomatic relations with Algeria. The current diplomatic mission, located in the capital city of Algiers, exists on the outskirts of the city, like many other diplomatic missions built in the late 20th century. As we work to strengthen the assimilation of our diplomats with the local culture, this thesis goes further to explore a model for embassies of the

⁵ Gallaga, “Do We Still Need Embassies?”

⁶ Ric Smith, “Embassies Can Shape Policy,” *Lowy Institute*, March 17, 2016, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/debate/do-embassies-still-matter>

⁷ Gill Lui, *Building Diplomacy*, 21.

future. By inserting the embassy into the rich urban fabric of capital cities, we are not asserting dominance over the host nation. Instead, the new embassy typology quite literally integrates our diplomats with the local community, mitigating displacement while continuing to foster meaningful diplomacy. Thus, our embassies evolve from a symbol of isolation and dominance to one of collaboration and community.

Chapter 1: The Embassy Typology

“Embassies and consulates serve as the front door for U.S. diplomacy. The safety and security they provide to our personnel are the first priority, but they must also reflect our national values of openness and ingenuity. Embassies and consulates must exemplify the best of American architecture, environmental stewardship and innovation.”

- Secretary of State John Kerry (November 2013)

Defining an Embassy

In its simplest sense an embassy is defined as “a diplomatic mission headed by an ambassador.”⁸ A common misconception when referring to embassies is that it is the building or buildings occupied to conduct diplomatic business. However, as the definition suggests, an embassy more accurately refers to the mission itself. As missions can vary depending on the country, the principal mission outlined by the U.S. State Department includes “representing America abroad and responding to the needs of American citizens living and traveling around the world.”⁹ More specifically, our objectives in Algeria include expanding our security and military partnership, growing economic and commercial links, and building educational and cultural ties between Algerians and Americans.¹⁰ Given that the embassy is the broad

⁸ Geoff Berridge and Alan James, “embassy,” *A Dictionary of Diplomacy* (2nd ed. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) accessed October 20, 2018. <https://search.credoreference.com/content/title/macdiplom?tab=entries>.

⁹ “What We Do: Mission,” U.S. Department of State.

¹⁰ “U.S. Embassy Algiers.” U.S. Department of State, accessed October 3, 2018, <https://dz.usembassy.gov/embassy/algiers/mission/>.

term designated to the mission, the chancery generally refers to the physical building, usually comprised of private and secure office space, in which the U.S. conducts diplomacy. The embassy residence compliments the chancery on the compound and provides living quarters for the ambassador and his or her family. It is not unusual for part of the embassy residence to double as an event space for formal diplomatic events.¹¹ In addition, embassy compounds can also include consular buildings. Although these spaces can be incorporated within the ground floor of the chancery, the consulate can also exist as its own independent building. Consulates represent a more public realm of the embassy as they often include visa and passport services dealing directly with locals.

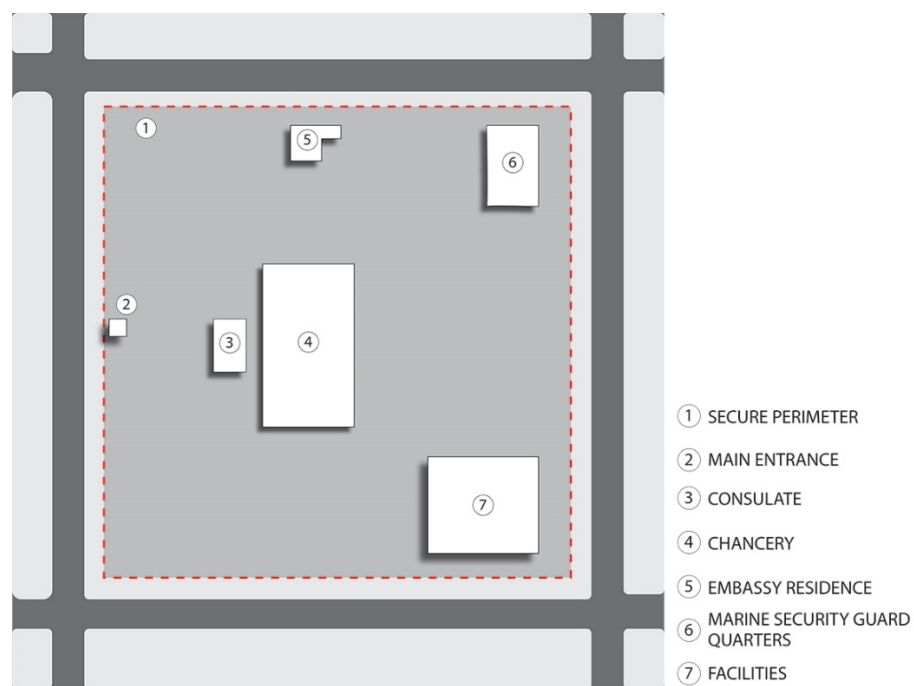


Figure 1. Diagrammatic layout showing an embassy compound. Buildings are on a single plot of land and have different functions and programs (Source: Author)

¹¹ Gill Lui, *Building Diplomacy*, 19.

Consulates can also exist outside of the embassy compound. Most often they are ancillary government offices in cities other than the capital.¹² Often times our missions abroad refer to embassy compounds, rather than just embassies, due to several buildings occupying the same plot of U.S. soil. The embassy of a country therefore can come to include not only physical buildings on the compound but also the less tangible missions that we maintain with the host nation.

When considering embassies and their typology, it is also necessary to consider the meaning of diplomacy, as the two are inherently connected to one another. Diplomacy is defined as the “principle means by which states communicate with each other, enabling them to have regular and complex relations.”¹³ This suggests that the notion of diplomacy focuses on the communication system of embassies and the larger global society. As stated previously, U.S. embassies are symbols of our country and its current values. Thus, architects can shape that image in support of communicating and supporting such values through the built environment.

A Brief History

The history of U.S. diplomatic relations began in 1789 with an agreement between George Washington and the Sultan of Morocco. At this point, America set out on its mission to find friends in the world and establish itself as a world power.¹⁴

¹² Shawn Dorman, “Foreign Service Work and Life: Embassy, Employee, Family,” *Inside a U.S. Embassy* (April 2011): 69.

https://www.afsa.org/sites/default/files/iuse_country_team_local_staff_role.pdf

¹³ Berridge, “diplomacy” *The Palgrave Macmillan Dictionary of Diplomacy*.

¹⁴ Gill Lui, *Building Diplomacy*, 17.

Since then, U.S. diplomacy continues to grow and evolve in response to the realities of international relations. Although U.S. diplomatic missions existed since 1789, it was not until the 1920's that the United States realized the need to expand its representation abroad. Likewise, after World War I, the U.S. had the funds to do so. These early efforts of diplomatic expansion were sparked largely by businessmen and women seeking opportunity in countries abroad. Thus, Congress passed the Porter Act in 1926, creating the Foreign Service Building Commission and propelled our presence abroad as a publicly funded endeavor.¹⁵

The next major period of growth in U.S. diplomatic presence occurred after World War II, between 1946 and 1960. During this time, the State Department financed most of its projects abroad with foreign debts accumulated from World War II. For example, funds were generated by lend-lease settlements, the sale of property, and war assets agreements.¹⁶ With minimal congressional oversight at the time and available government funds, the U.S. was in an ideal position to expand its influence across the world through the built environment. The post-war political climate complimented the state of the U.S. economy, allowing for open embassies with minimal security requirements. Thus, this period of diplomacy sponsored a time of architectural innovation and experimentation.¹⁷ However, this period would soon give way to a drastic transformation in policy and security.

¹⁵ Jane C. Loeffler, *The Architecture of Diplomacy: Building America's Embassies* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 9.

¹⁶ Loeffler, *Architecture of Diplomacy*, 4.

¹⁷ Loeffler, *Architecture of Diplomacy*, 4.

The transformation from open to closed embassy architecture began with the 1985 Inman Report and continued through the turn of the century. In response to the 1983 embassy bombing in Beirut, Lebanon, the Secretary of State's Advisory Panel on Overseas Security released a report recommending several security improvements in embassies abroad and a building program to renovate and replace those that were at risk.¹⁸ The report referenced setbacks and general perimeter defense as well as internal spaces designated to the separation of Foreign Service Officers and Foreign Service Nationals.¹⁹ The Inman Report serves as the first step towards securing U.S. embassies abroad, especially those in the Middle East. Soon after the Beirut bombing, terror struck diplomatic architecture again in 1998 with bombings in Kenya and Tanzania (fig. 2). These two devastating embassy bombings came to redefine how the U.S. physically built its missions abroad.²⁰ With concerns of safety and security following the bombings, it was no surprise that the U.S. worked towards implementing new security standards. According to such standards, mostly concerning co-location of U.S. government personnel and setbacks, the Department of State found that 80% of overseas facilities did not meet security standards.²¹ This marked the first time that security standards were mandated by the government instead of simply recommended.

¹⁸ Federation of American Scientists, "The Inman Report: Report of the Secretary of State's Advisory Panel on Overseas Security," accessed November 3, 2018. <https://fas.org/irp/threat/inman/part12.htm>

¹⁹ Federation of American Scientists, "The Inman Report."

²⁰ Loeffler, *Architecture of Diplomacy*, 260.

²¹ Tiersky, "Securing U.S. Diplomatic Facilities", 8.

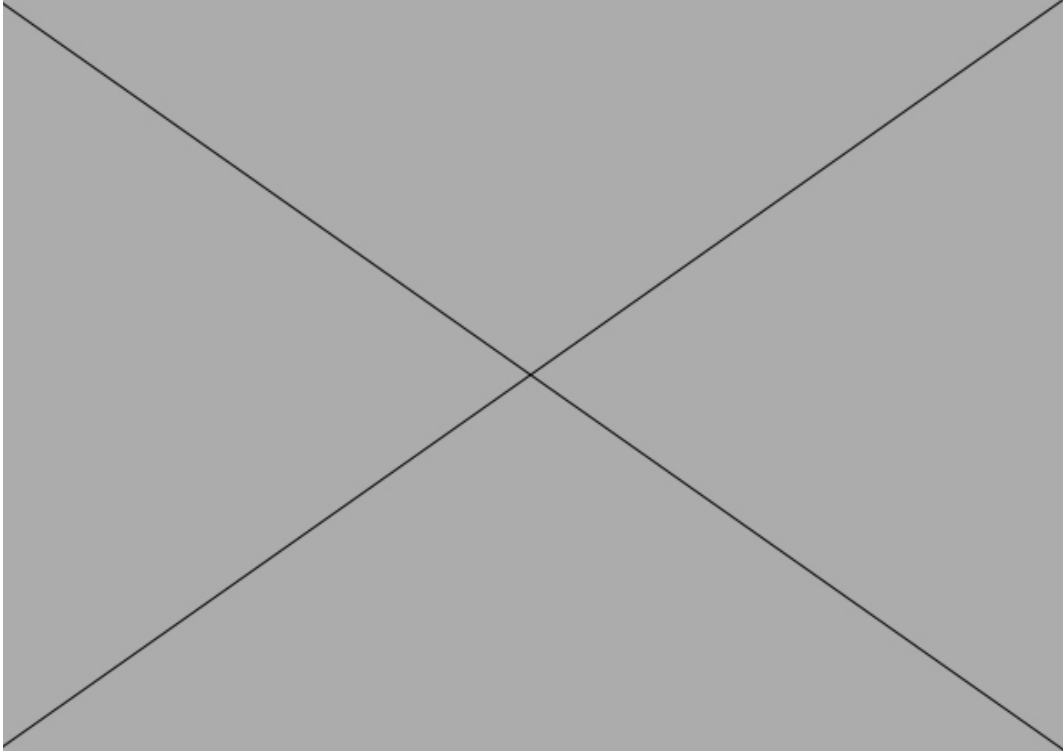


Figure 2. Destruction from the U.S. embassy bombing in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. (Source: U.S. Department of State)

In 1999, following the bombings, the U.S. began its \$21 billion embassy construction program, one of the largest investments in foreign presence yet.²² This initiative focused on replacing embassy facilities abroad, targeting those that were specifically at risk of terrorist attacks. Although the September 11 attacks did not spark this change, they reinforced and validated the policy change. In this period of embassy construction, safety was the primary concern, causing convenience, culture, and aesthetics to be secondary. Soon after the attacks, officials formalized requirements under Standard Embassy Design (SED – see diagram). SED created a building template for all U.S. embassy construction to follow.

²² Tiersky, “Securing U.S. Diplomatic Facilities”, 9.

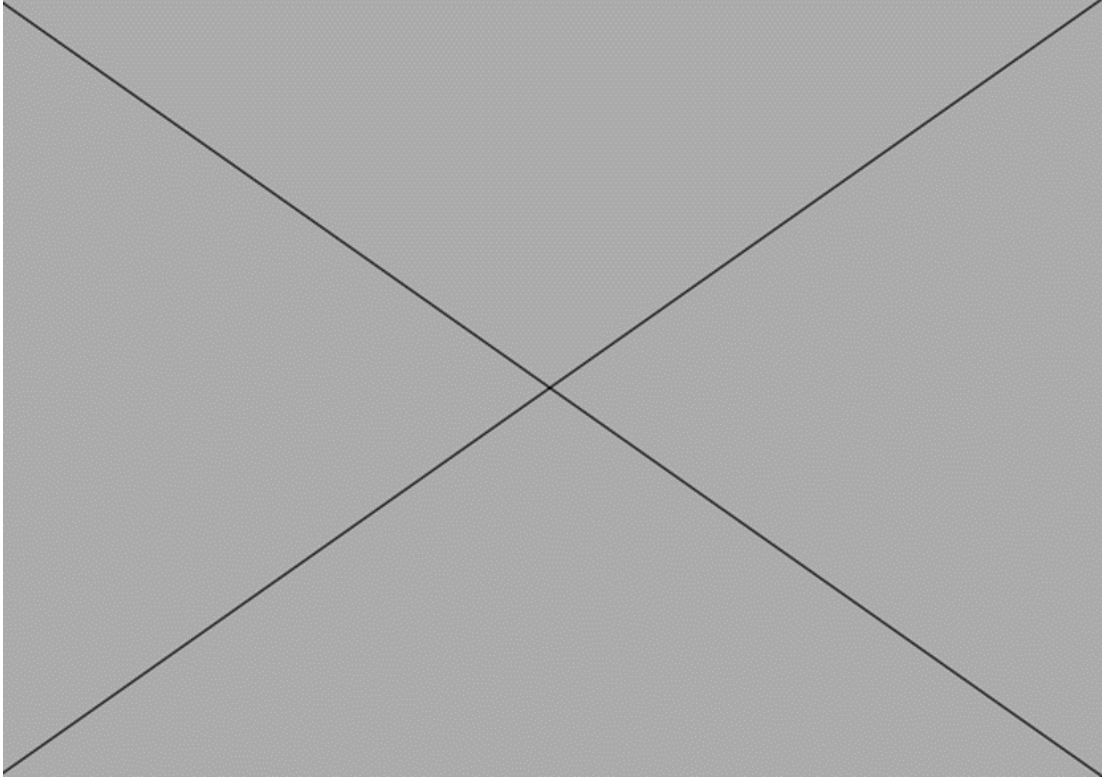


Figure 3. U.S. Department of State Standard Embassy Design Components. All embassy compounds were to have the eight prototypical facilities on the compound, often calling for large isolated sites. (Source: Government Accountability Office and U.S. Department of State)

It included small, medium, and large variations to accommodate different sized posts.

The mandate also prescribed fixed schedules and costs for efficiency. Although there is something to be said of the efficiency and practicality of SED, it nonetheless produced mundane and bland architecture that failed to respond to the surrounding context.²³ With embassies designed specifically for defensive purposes, the connection to the public realm of their typology began to struggle, calling for yet another policy reform.

As the U.S. moved from embassies in the 1960's that were perhaps too open to those of the early 2000's that were perhaps too closed, current efforts start to

²³ Loeffler, *Architecture of Diplomacy*, 279.

bridge the gap. As the U.S. continues to expand its influence in countries abroad, leaders realize they must align national interests with broader goals of security and economic stability.²⁴ Striving to become more conscious and informed designers, legislation incorporates strict criteria into the design of embassies. Thus, there is a challenge of designing according to the political realities of security while also maintaining the optimism that diplomacy was founded upon. As the issues of openness and security remain relevant, leaders continue to refine the principles for designing safe and meaningful diplomatic architecture. In 2010, the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) transitioned from SED to Design Excellence. Under Design Excellence the OBO ensures that “every project serves the interests of U.S. diplomacy, meets or exceeds the highest quality industry building standards as well as mandated security standards, and provides the best value to the U.S. taxpayer.”²⁵ As these standards are still in place today, it is evident that the OBO and the political climate are working towards providing safe and secure environments for our diplomats. However, while safe and secure environments may take priority, designing welcoming places that are responsive to local culture bring value and meaning to diplomatic architecture.

²⁴ Gill Lui, *Building Diplomacy*, 18.

²⁵ Tiersky, “Securing U.S. Diplomatic Facilities”, 9.

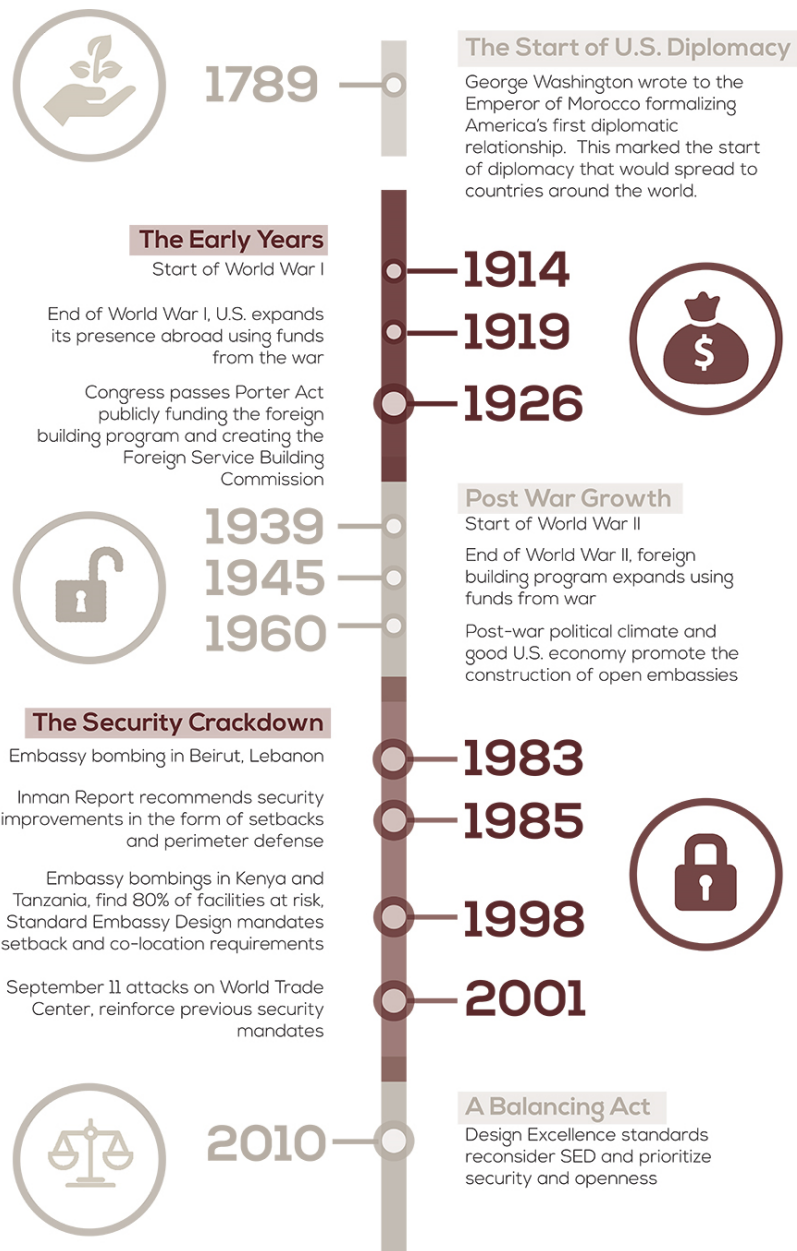


Figure 4. Timeline showing major events that led to embassy security and design reform (Source: Author)

Site Considerations of Embassies

Site selection of U.S. embassies abroad remains one of the most important considerations of diplomatic missions. However, through the several transformations that policy and architecture has seen in the last century, site selection, as expected, remains a largely debated topic. Following the 1998 bombings, the new legislature set forth by the Foreign Building Operations (FBO) demanded that new facilities be built on large enough sites to accommodate all non-military U.S. government personnel in one place. It also required a setback of at least 100 feet from the embassy compound perimeter.²⁶ Although the 100-foot setback appears to be arbitrary when considering embassy compound security, research shows that “there is a significant drop of overpressure during a bomb blast at a distance greater than ninety feet.”²⁷ Simultaneously the 100-foot setback allows for the construction of blast resistant buildings at reasonable costs, eliminating the need for extremely thick walls. Although other standards and guidelines have changed, especially between those in SED and Design Excellence, the 100-foot setback requirement remains consistent. What has changed however, is the necessity that all government agency personnel be located on site. Under this rationale, embassy compounds found themselves occupying extremely large sites, resulting in embassies located in remote areas outside of cities.

²⁶ Tiersky, “Securing U.S. Diplomatic Facilities”, 9.

²⁷ Loeffler, *The Architecture of Diplomacy*, 261.

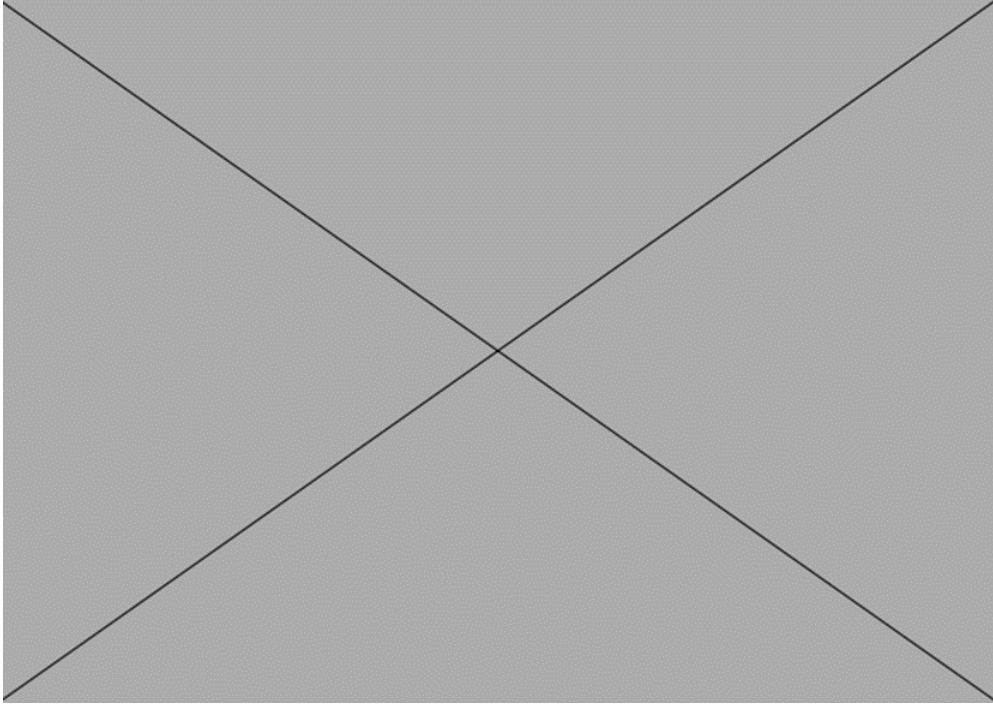


Figure 5. Key Security Standards illustrate the importance of site selection (Source: Government Accountability Office, U.S. Department of State, and Nova Development)

Shortly after the implementation of SED, officials realized the implications that accompany remote locations, including inaccessibility. When considering the impacts on diplomats and locals employed within the embassies, recent design guidelines acknowledge that social and cultural interaction amongst diplomats and locals are vital to the success of diplomacy. Standard Embassy Design contradicts this by promoting remote locations. In reality, some diplomats find suburban locations to be cumbersome. The distance and physical barriers that suburban locations present make parts of their missions abroad more difficult.²⁸

²⁸ “Global Diplomacy and Design: Security at U.S. Embassies,” Buildings, last modified March 3, 2008, <https://www.buildings.com/article-details/articleid/5784/title/global-diplomacy-and-design-security-at-u-s-embassies>

Embassy Program at a Glance

With the many different functions and services that embassies require, the program that they entail is quite complex. In addition to representatives of the Department of State, embassies can include offices of other U.S. government agencies including the Department of Defense, the CIA, and the DEA to name a few.²⁹ However, perhaps its most important function involves assisting traveling American citizens. By definition, the embassy provides an open door to any American citizen needing assistance or help while abroad. Likewise, as office buildings, they differ from ordinary projects due to the nature of their clients. Embassies have clients in several different disciplines and across several different cultures. As a later chapter will analyze the specific programmatic elements of an embassy, it is important to acknowledge that although compounds are not as open as a public park, cultural institution or a public library, they are seen and enjoyed by many people. This includes not only American citizens but people of the local community and other diplomatic officials.³⁰

Art is another major programmatic element that embassies have implemented in recent years. Art in Embassies, a program within the U.S. Department of State, is a public-private partnership between several international participants including artists, museums, galleries, universities, and private collectors.³¹ The program creates the opportunity for cross cultural dialogue and understanding through art exchanges. Simultaneously, art exhibitions in embassies can increase national and international pride amongst diplomats. Not to mention, having familiar art in embassies can make diplomats feel more at home in an otherwise foreign environment.

Chapter 2: People within the Embassy

“Architects in the past have tended to concentrate their attention on the building as a static object. I believe dynamics are more important, the dynamics of people, their interaction with spaces and environmental condition. We must learn to understand humanity better so that we can create an environment that is more beneficial to people, more rewarding, more pleasant to experience...Building should serve people, not the other way around

- John Portman, “The Architect as Developer” (1976)

While embassies abroad provide the opportunity to interact with several different demographics and cultures, Foreign Service Officers, Locally Engaged Staff (Foreign Service Nationals), and Marines find home in the embassy compound. As this thesis seeks to improve the living and working environment of the U.S. embassy in Algiers, it is important to consider the social implications of the people involved in this challenging line of work.

Foreign Service Officer



SUEMAYAH, 31

18 months in Algiers, (6 months left)

2 previous posts

English, Arabic, French, Spanish

Lives 2 miles away in 4 story walk up

Plans multi-cultural events and head of public affairs

Figure 6. Profile of Foreign Service Officer (Source: Author)

According to the U.S. Department of State, “the mission of a U.S. diplomat in the Foreign Service is to promote peace, support prosperity, and protect American

citizens while advancing the interests of the U.S. abroad.”³² From the moment that Foreign Service Officers accept this responsibility they simultaneously agree to four conditions of employment: flexibility, public support of U.S. government policies, worldwide availability, and carrying firearms.³³ To enter the Foreign Service one must be an American citizen between the ages of 20 and 59. Likewise, one must pass the foreign service written exam, oral assessment, and physical assessment, and receive a background security check and top secret clearance. Although there is no specific educational requirement, most people that serve have a bachelor’s degree or higher.³⁴ These requirements begin to demonstrate the difficult road leading to a career in the Foreign Service, one that is warranted given the challenging lifestyle.

Life as a Foreign Service Officer can sometimes be over simplified, resulting in notions that diplomats maintain grandiose lives in exotic parts of the world. These ideas, however are myths as they do not represent the entirety of the lifestyle. In reality, diplomats live a rugged and challenging life as they are transplanted into foreign living and working environments with goals of protecting American citizens and preserving diplomacy.³⁵ They must respond to unpredictable posts and

³² “Foreign Service Officer,” U.S. Department of State: Careers Representing America, accessed October 14, 2018. <https://careers.state.gov/work/foreign-service/officer/>

³³ “Acceptance of the Four Conditions of Foreign Service Employment,” U.S. Department of State, accessed October 14, 2018. <https://careers.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Four-Conditions-FS-Employment.pdf>.

³⁴ “A Day in the Life of a Diplomat/Foreign Service Officer/Specialist,” Princeton Review, accessed October 14, 2018, <https://www.princetonreview.com/careers/53/diplomat-foreign-service-officer-specialist>

³⁵ Megan Meline, “Foreign Service Life Disruptive for Families,” *NPR Morning Edition*, July 26, 2006, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5582909>

situations. FSOs must also be fluent in the official language of each post. As many FSOs maintain a long career with the Department of State serving at multiple posts, this means that some officers become fluent in several languages. As the power of non-governmental agencies is growing, Foreign Service Officers along with other employees of the embassy must be able to engage with a wider audience, reaching the locals, other diplomats, and members of their own embassy.³⁶ Likewise, because of their role and interaction with local government, FSO's can be seen as officials in the public realm rather than everyday people. While this accompanies the job, it nevertheless creates an interesting lifestyle to adapt to in a context outside of the United States. A career in the Foreign Service presents certain limitations but also presents opportunities. It is up to the individual to accept limitations like security and explore opportunities of friendship and education.³⁷ With the stressful and unique conditions of a career in the Foreign Service, the embassy of the future should empower U.S. diplomats to succeed in the work they do for the United States.³⁸

Families of Foreign Service Officers



SARAH, 56

3 months in Algiers (21 months left)
 6 previous posts with husband
 English, Spanish, some French
 Lives 3 miles away in single family house
 Professor, job hunting, son volunteers as English teacher

Figure 7. Profile of Eligible Family Member (Source: Author)

³⁶ George Argyros, Marc Grossman and Felix Rohatyn, *The Embassy of the Future* (Washington D.C: Center for Strategic and International Studies Press, 2007): 4, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/embassy-future>

³⁷ Dorman, "Foreign Service Work and Life," 71.

³⁸ Argyros, "The Embassy of the Future," iv.

To fully understand the lifestyle of a Foreign Service Officer, one must consider the role of their families. As some posts are more dangerous than others, families are sometimes restricted from accompanying FSOs. In some cases, spouses have access while children are forced to stay behind. Nevertheless, many of the posts around the world allow families of FSOs to accompany them. Such is the case for the embassy in Algiers. The stressful and unique conditions faced by FSOs can diffuse to families as well. In some cases, the transition is even more difficult. While diplomats have some regularity by working regular hours, families do not often experience the same level of consistency. Children and spouses of diplomats experience different environments as they can sometimes be isolated from both the embassy work environment and the local community.³⁹ In cases where the spouse of the Foreign Service Officer elects to continue their professional career abroad, they must sometimes battle complicated licensing restrictions. *A Guide to the Foreign Service*, created by the State Department to aid families of FSOs, mentions that “finding a job can be more challenging than it was before you entered the Foreign Service, and you may find it difficult to use your prior educational and professional experience.”⁴⁰ In other cases where spouses remain unemployed while abroad, the environment can affect their own morale as well as the morale of the Foreign Service Officer. Activities such as buying groceries, drying cleaning, or making doctor’s

³⁹ Meline, “Foreign Service Life Disruptive for Families.”

⁴⁰ Family Liaison Office, *A Guide to the Foreign Service*, (U.S. Department of State), 12, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/101170.pdf>

appointments can be difficult and time consuming when trying to balance a new language and culture.

The Department of State recognizes four stages of cultural adaptation that both diplomats and their families may experience. The ‘honeymoon’ stage describes the time where everything is new, exciting and exotic. This usually leads to the stage where aspects of living that were exciting and exotic, become irritating because they differ from what they are used to. In other words, families experience a level of culture shock. Once they begin to accept how things work in the host country, they cycle through the adaptation phase. Finally, the end goal is the adjustment phase, where the family is comfortable and has gained an understanding and appreciation of the host country.⁴¹ These factors present interesting and sometimes volatile living conditions for Foreign Service Officers and their families. This unique condition provides the opportunity to profile Foreign Service Officers and their families in hopes of shaping the built environment in ways that will aid the adjustment of Americans abroad.

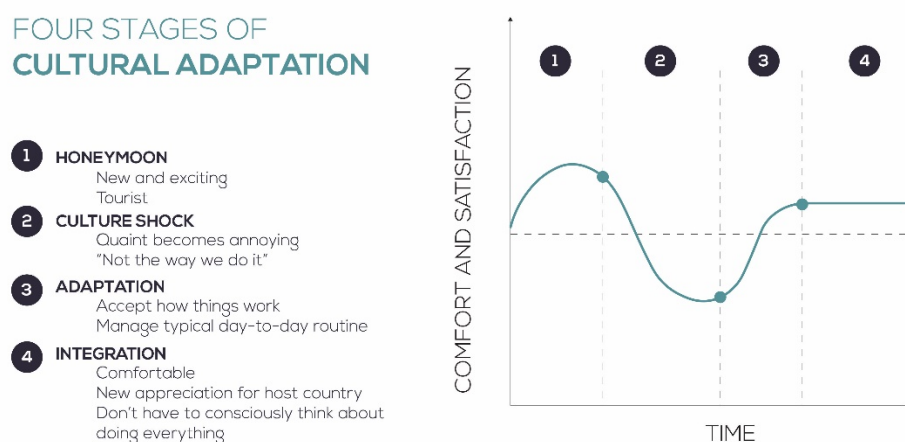


Figure 8. Four Stages of Cultural Adaptation. (Source: Author)

⁴¹ Family Liaison Office, *A Guide to the Foreign Service*, 14.

Locally Engaged Staff



SAMIR, 42

Born in Algiers
10 years in U.S. embassy
Arabic, French
Lives 30 miles away in family home, commuter
Expert in Algerian cultural affairs

Figure 9. Profile of Locally Engaged Staff (Source: Author)

Perhaps the most surprising element of the embassy employee demographic is that a majority of them are Locally Engaged Staff or Foreign Service Nationals (FSN).⁴² With 43,500 local employees working in over 270 U.S. posts abroad, Locally Engaged Staff add another dynamic to the culture of the embassy and its functions.⁴³

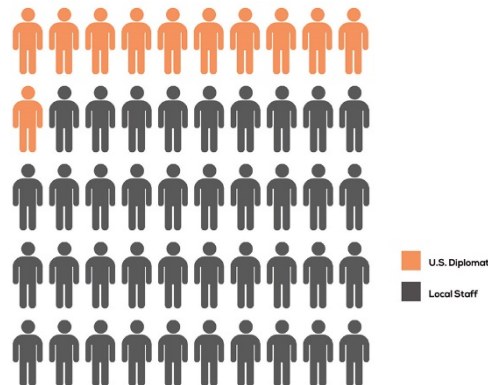


Figure 10. General demographics of embassy employees. (Source: Author)

As the name suggests, staff members are local employees working for United States missions abroad.⁴⁴ Contrary to FSOs, the U.S. does not provide Locally Engaged

⁴² “What is a U.S. Embassy?” Discover Diplomacy, accessed October 22, 2018. <https://www.state.gov/discoverdiplomacy/diplomacy101/places/170537.htm>

⁴³ Dorman, “Foreign Service Work and Life,” 74.

⁴⁴ Dorman, “Foreign Service Work and Life,” 71.

Staff with competitive pay, work benefits, or job security. Thus, local staff work within the embassy to “have the unique opportunity to observe the inner workings of a global superpower and its diplomatic machine.”⁴⁵ From one perspective, Locally Engaged Staff voluntarily label themselves as ‘foreigners’ into U.S. embassies in hopes of learning and experiencing the democracy of the U.S. From another perspective, Locally Engaged Staff provide important insight on the cultural, political, and economic conditions of the local community. All things considered, there is hardly a better advisor on what is happening on the local soil than the local staff.⁴⁶

Thus, the Locally Engaged Staff is irreplaceable when it comes to the success of U.S. diplomatic missions from a political and cultural context. They are able to connect our diplomats with host country representatives. The local staff also provides a level of permanence and continuity in the embassy work environment. Because of their more permanent positions, local staff members are able to preserve institutional memory of the embassy as Foreign Service Officers move from post to post every 2-3 years. This condition however surfaces the challenging component of their lifestyle, as they must prove themselves repeatedly as new U.S. officials cycle through.⁴⁷

Another unique condition that local staff often face is the idea that they must give their loyalty to a foreign government. Thus, emerges the issues of trust between Foreign Service Officers and Foreign Service Nationals. Trust between the two parties is imperative in order to maintain a successful diplomatic mission. The

⁴⁵ Dorman, “Foreign Service Work and Life,” 72.

⁴⁶ Dorman, “Foreign Service Work and Life,” 74.

⁴⁷ Dorman, “Foreign Service Work and Life,” 73.

element of trust reinforces the importance of face to face interaction in diplomacy. Having face to face contact with each other helps to develop trust and understanding.⁴⁸ However, this does not necessarily imply that communication between diplomats and locals is always easy. In fact, it can sometimes be the opposite. Although trust and understanding develop, because of the classified nature of work, Locally Engaged Staff often work on projects without transparent communication or access to the final product. Based on similar security requirements, diplomats and locals are often physically separated within the interior of the compound.⁴⁹ As security requirements and classified information challenge the relationship between Foreign Service Officers and Locally Engaged Staff, this thesis reconsiders the progression of interior spaces of the compound. As Locally Engaged Staff provide several advantages and enrich the culture of the embassy, it is vital that the architecture of U.S. embassies promote collaboration while acknowledging security issues.

The Military Presence



PEYTON,²¹

1 year in Algiers (6 months left)
First post
English
Lives in housing on embassy compound
Embassy Security guard

Figure 11. Profile of Marine Security Guard (Source: Author)

⁴⁸ Leon Weintraub, “Five Myths about the Foreign Service,” *The Washington Post*, July 20, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/five-myths/five-myths-about-the-foreign-service/2017/07/20/8aac2a4e-67f5-11e7-8eb5-cbccc2e7bfbf_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.0c5e2164e565

⁴⁹ Dorman, “Foreign Service Work and Life,” 72.

The U.S. military is another major demographic that is involved in the internal culture of the embassy. With increased concerns of safety and security in recent years, the U.S. has increased its military presence in embassies, especially after the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center.⁵⁰ While this thesis does not aim to assess the presence of military personnel in U.S. embassies, it does aim to acknowledge its role. Most embassies, including the mission in Algiers, have a Defense Attaché Office (DAO). The DAO can have representatives from more than one military branch including the marines, army, navy. For example, the mission of the Marine Corps Embassy Security Group's is to provide and train Marines for duty at designated U.S. diplomatic missions. Marines at the embassy compound protect personnel, classified material and U.S. property.⁵¹ As a whole, the military presence within the embassy represents the U.S. Department of Defense and advises the ambassador on military matters.⁵² With efforts to combat terrorism, the expansion of the pentagon's presence in American embassies can create friction amongst the embassy employees and the overall mission. Therefore, the military presence within embassies is one that should remain balanced. A common misconception concerning missions abroad is that the success of diplomacy is limited without a strong military presence. The 'big stick' policy of recent years has perhaps been too prominent. Instead, Leon Weintraub of *The Washington Post* claims that the military should be in

⁵⁰ Dorman, "Foreign Service Work and Life," 75.

⁵¹ "Marine Corps Embassy Security Group," Marines Official Website, accessed October 22, 2018. <https://www.mcesg.marines.mil/>

⁵² "What U.S. Government Agencies Work in U.S. Embassies?" Discover Diplomacy, accessed October 22, 2018, <https://www.state.gov/discoverdiplomacy/docs/208086.htm>

a supporting role to civilian agencies.⁵³ In other words, while important for security and force (when necessary), the military presence in U.S. embassies should complement the work of diplomats.

Similar to others involved in the operation of U.S. embassies, military personnel can face similar experiences of culture shock and adaptation. Depending on the post, military personnel can be dispatched with even shorter terms than Foreign Service Officers. Due to the extremely temporary nature of their work, military officials can serve at new posts without any formal cultural or linguistic training for the host country.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, the military presence plays a key role in the culture of U.S. embassies. As the U.S. will continue to face situations where armed conflict is inevitable, diplomatic architecture must consider the needs of the people that uphold safe environments for diplomacy.⁵⁵

⁵³ Weintraub, “Five Myths about the Foreign Service.”

⁵⁴ Weintraub, “Five Myths about the Foreign Service.”

⁵⁵ Argyros, “The Embassy of the Future,” 2.

PERSONAS OF U.S. EMBASSY - ALGIERS

FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER		SUEMAYAH, 31 18 months in Algiers, (6 months left) 2 previous posts English, Arabic, French, Spanish Lives 2 miles away in 4 story walk up Plans multi-cultural events and head of public affairs
LOCALLY ENGAGED STAFF		SAMIR, 42 Born in Algiers 10 years in U.S. embassy Arabic, French Lives 30 miles away in family home, commuter Expert in Algerian cultural affairs
ELIGIBLE FAMILY MEMBER		SARAH, 56 3 months in Algiers (21 months left) 6 previous posts with husband English, Spanish, some French Lives 3 miles away in single family house Professor, job hunting, son volunteers as English teacher
MARINE		PEYTON, 21 1 year in Algiers (6 months left) First post English Lives in housing on embassy compound Embassy Security guard
VISITOR		KHALIL, 70 Native to Algiers Local shawarma vendor Arabic, French Lives 5 miles away in government housing Seeking visa to visit his children in the U.S.
STUDENT		YASMINE, 15 From Oran, Algeria High school student Arabic, French Lives 1/2 miles away in Casbah Learning English in Embassy for 2 years

Figure 12. Users of the U.S. Embassy in Algiers, Algeria, including visitors and students. Profiles based on interviews. (Source: Author)

Internal Culture

The internal culture of U.S. embassies proves to be complex, as several key personas are involved in balancing diplomacy. The embassy environment entails a large mix of cultures and professions. Although communication between locals, diplomats, and military officials is not always easy, it is a significant aspect of a successful mission. Because posts are temporary, the dynamics of embassy teams

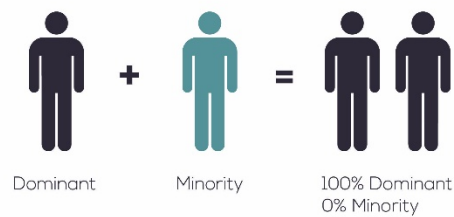
depend heavily on leadership and can vary widely from post to post and even from year to year.⁵⁶ Within this dynamic community, it is crucial to have trust and understanding between FSOs, their families, Locally Engaged Staff, military officials, and the local community. These relationships become a means of achieving amalgamation rather than acculturation and assimilation.

THREE TYPES OF CULTURAL INTEGRATION

ACCULTURATION

Typically occurs with political conquest or expansion

One culture replaces another

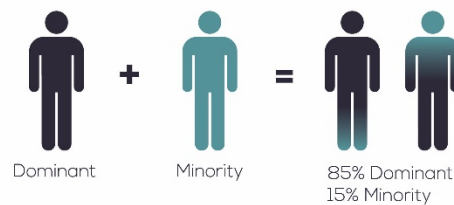


ASSIMILATION

Groups acquire basic habits and attitudes

Dominant culture only slightly modified

Minority culture preserves some identity



AMALGAMATION

Unique blending of cultures

No one culture is eliminated

Dominant culture transformed and expanded

Resulting culture distinct in each scenario

Both cultures equally important

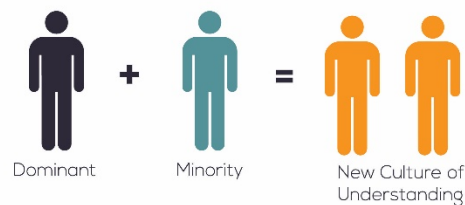


Figure 13. Cultural Integration. (Source: Author).

As this thesis aims at improving the living and working environments of the U.S. embassy in Algiers, it is crucial to consider and understand these varying personalities and their relationships with one another. As Jane Loeffler questions the

⁵⁶ Dorman, "Foreign Service Work and Life," 70.

hospitality of the embassy in Baghdad, she raises an important issue. At the end of the day, the structures that define U.S. embassies must not only be hospitable for conducting American diplomacy but should also be sensible to the *people* interacting within them.⁵⁷ It is the *people* that foster such valuable relationships that propel us into the future of meaningful diplomacy.

⁵⁷ Jane Loeffler, "Fortress America," *Foreign Policy*, no. 162 (2007): 56.
<http://www.jstor.org.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/stable/25462211>.

Chapter 3: Social Considerations

“For diplomats and their families, the idea of home takes on a different meaning. Rather than a house or a town, home becomes less tangible – perhaps a handful of friendships, a weathered teakettle, or a family Bible. Whatever home is, its essence must always be portable.”

- Megan Meline, family of Foreign Service Officer (July 2006)

Displacement

Diplomats’ idea of home differs from the typical American dream many are familiar with in the United States. Establishing a sense of belonging can be difficult when posts change every two to four years. Although the diplomatic community has the familiarity of one another to hold on to, physical displacement takes a toll on both diplomats and their families.⁵⁸ Figure 14 references the idea that diplomats are uprooted from their homes in the U.S. and transplanted abroad to form a new community. Although their experience is less violent than the typical notion of displacement involving war and conflict, it nevertheless can be disorienting.

⁵⁸ Meline, “Foreign Service Life Disruptive for Families.”

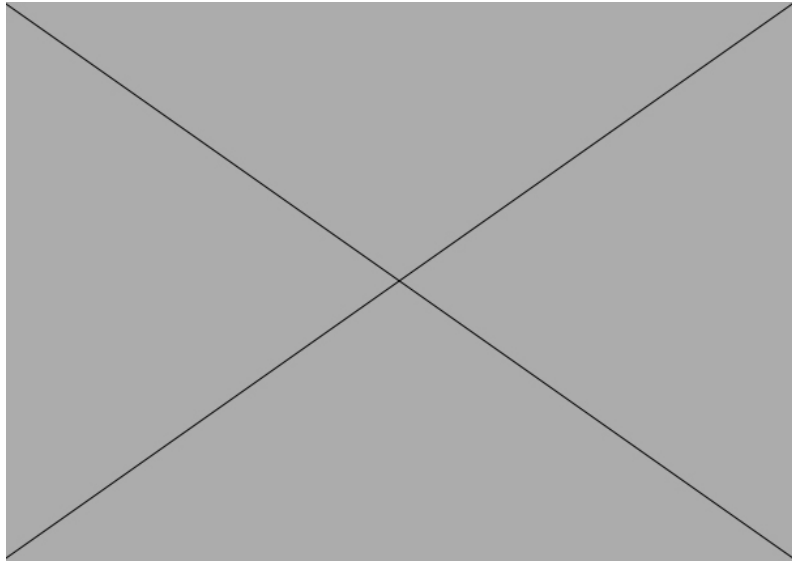


Figure 14. Displacement. (Source: artwork by Duy Huynh)

Diplomats face a constant influx of new cultural identities that sometime challenge their own American identity. For this reason, individuals who have served 10 years in the field rotate back to Washington D.C. for a period of familiarization with the American experience.⁵⁹ Just as transitioning to the culture of the host nation can be difficult, transitioning back to American culture poses challenges as well. In either case, diplomats attempt to find stability in a temporary environment, whether that be domestically or internationally. Likewise, diplomats are not the only ones to face a sense of displacement while serving at diplomatic missions. In Algiers, as Americans attempt to absorb Algerian culture, Algerians attempt to absorb American culture, potentially leading to emotional displacement rather than physical displacement. Regardless of the type of displacement, both parties attempt to preserve their own identity while assimilating to the other's. Designing space within the embassy to

⁵⁹ Suemayah Abu-Douleh, personal interview, October 20, 2018.

mitigate feelings of displacement can enhance the working environment and improve the quality of life in U.S. embassy compounds.

Temporary Posts

The posts of FSOs can range anywhere from two to four years. Generally, those new to the Foreign Service are assigned two-year posts in order to increase exposure and experience. In contrast, middle and upper grade officers can receive longer four-year posts. Longer postings tend to occur when there is a demand for unique talents at a specific post. Likewise, the Department of State limits the duration of posts to two-years for cases that involve difficult conditions or hardships.⁶⁰ Depending on the severity of local conditions, the Department of State may also recommend that diplomatic staff or dependents leave the foreign country, shortening some posts to less than two years. Furthermore, this can occur on a voluntary basis that allows families some flexibility or it can be an ordered departure in extreme cases.⁶¹

The temporary nature of the Foreign Service profession creates other social implications that affect communities. When considering the time required to plant new roots and become acclimated to a new environment, two years can feel extremely short. With a lot of time spent simply learning the new culture and finding a way around the new environment, while still balancing work, diplomats struggle to find time to get involved in the local community.⁶² Planting new roots that will soon be

⁶⁰ Glen H. Fisher, "The Foreign Service Officer," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 368 (November 1966): 74, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/stable/1036922>.

⁶¹ Tiersky, "Securing U.S. Diplomatic Facilities", 12.

⁶² Meline, "Foreign Service Life Disruptive for Families."

transplanted again creates the unique community of diplomats. To alleviate some of the challenges of a temporary environment, the diplomatic community maintains a strong culture that can be translated from post to post. The idea is that while diplomats may have to learn a new culture at new posts, they do not have to learn a new pattern of professional life.⁶³

Hardship Differential and Danger Pay

As living conditions abroad can be vastly different than those in the United States, the Department of State offers hardship differential and danger pay. In both cases, members of the Foreign Service are compensated based on the severity of their living conditions. Danger pay specifically provides additional compensation above basic compensation for service at posts where civil insurrection, terrorism, or war conditions threaten physical harm or imminent danger.⁶⁴ According to *The Washington Post*, 16% of posts worldwide are eligible to receive danger pay due to current active hostilities, high criminal violence and the real possibility of targeted kidnappings.⁶⁵ On the other hand, 67% of posts are eligible for hardship differential. Hardship differential compensation is broader and can be based on challenging health conditions, extreme climates, physical isolation, and difficulties in maintaining a healthy diet.⁶⁶ While the number of posts eligible for hardship differential naturally

⁶³ Fisher, “The Foreign Service Officer,” 76.

⁶⁴ “Danger Pay,” U.S. Department of State, accessed November 11, 2018.
https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=205&menu_id=75

⁶⁵ Weintraub, “Five Myths about the Foreign Service.”

⁶⁶ Weintraub, “Five Myths about the Foreign Service.”

decreases as sanitation improves and with the implementation of modern facilities, it is nevertheless important to consider exterior living conditions.⁶⁷

The Department of State provides basic compensation in 5% increments from 0-35%. The Department of State regulates the system by reviewing site conditions of individual posts periodically to make sure that compensation is offered only during necessary times. Thus, compensation levels are dynamic and can be removed or modified at any time.⁶⁸ In an ideal world, danger pay would cease to exist as conflict around the world diminishes. Diplomats serving at the post in Algiers currently receive a hardship differential compensation rate of 25%.

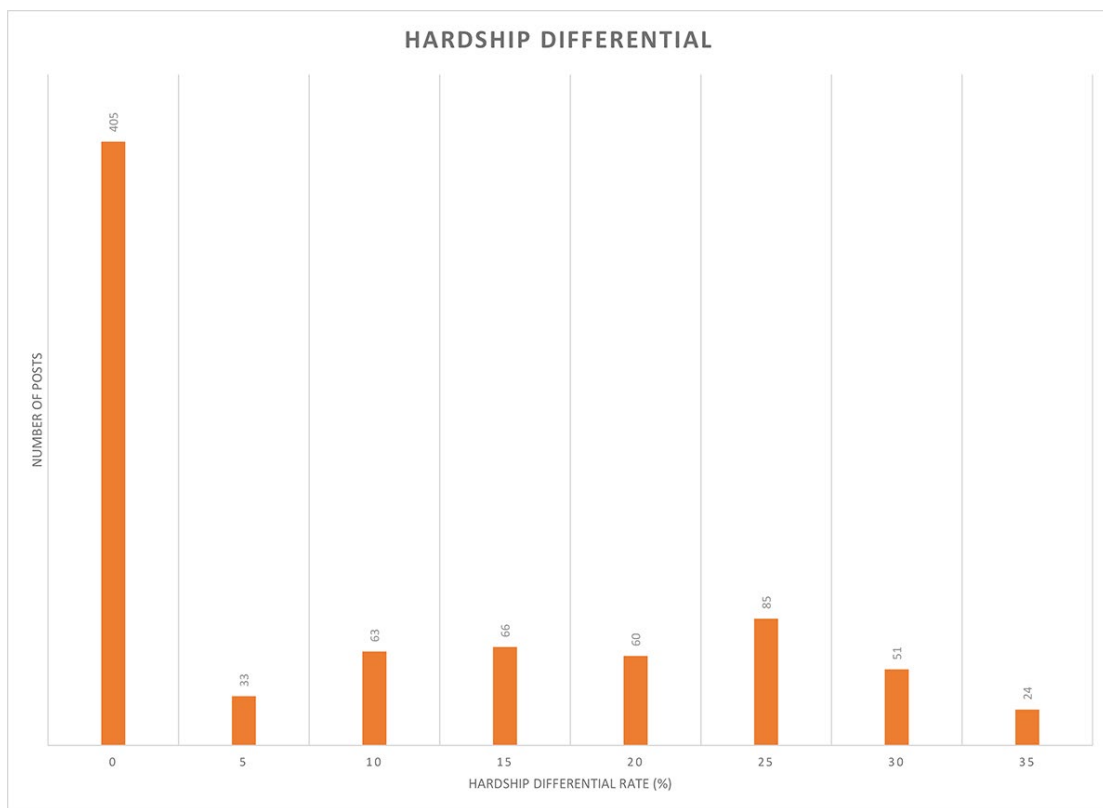


Figure 15. Hardship differential rates of all U.S. posts. (Source: Author).

⁶⁷ Fisher, “The Foreign Service Officer,” 75.

⁶⁸ “Danger Pay.”

This high rate of compensation reveals that living conditions in Algiers are difficult. While the Department of State acknowledges the difficult living conditions encountered due to the environment, they do not acknowledge hardships encountered due to the work environment.⁶⁹ The Department of State is doing a disservice to the diplomatic community by not considering their working environments. Natural light and ventilation, connection to the outdoors, and open office environments are just a few best practices of the corporate world. Complete enclosure and a lack of natural light (as seen in the current embassy in Algiers) works against healthy working environments. Nevertheless, this provides architects with the responsibility to design meaningful spaces that eliminate hardships caused by the quality work environments.

⁶⁹ “Post Hardship Differential,” U.S. Department of State, accessed November 11, 2018. <https://aoprals.state.gov/Web920/hardship.asp>

Chapter 4: Building Security

“Security is about more than building stronger or more formidable buildings – it is about providing decent workplaces and residences for diplomats as a part of an overall commitment to America’s overseas presence.”

- Global Diplomacy and Design (2008)

The Importance of Security

Security has always played a role in architecture. At a rudimentary level, architecture attempts to protect humans from the outside, whether that be from natural elements or other humans. By creating a sense of enclosure, architecture inherently creates the distinction between inside and outside, between those who can enter and those who cannot. Before the modern era, physical security was achieved through advantageous site selection in the landscape, as some of the most powerful civilizations were located along mountain tops and on isolated islands, or in some cases, both. As building technologies evolved, building security evolved to include more permanent fortification walls, as is the case in cities like Jerusalem and the Casbah of Algiers. Physical security has continued to evolve in more recent years becoming even more comprehensive and including various modern construction methods and technology.⁷⁰ Thus, this thesis examines the many layers of diplomatic security.

⁷⁰ Leonard J. Hopper and Martha Droge, *Security and Site Design* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2005), 2.

With unpredictable international conflict and recent spikes in terrorism, designing for security within U.S. embassy compounds is an absolute priority that cannot be ignored. Secure environments are not only the foundation for diplomacy, but also protect and help diplomats and American citizens abroad. Thus, rather than being about making concessions or appeasing enemies, diplomacy is a tool for national security.⁷¹ Changes in security standards have been apparent as the U.S. building program continues to fight between open and closed embassies. The U.S. embassy built in Dublin in 1964 was perhaps the last American embassy project that allowed the architect to prioritize design above all other aspects of an embassy including security.⁷² The reality of today's international policy warrants embassy design to prioritize security above all other design considerations. The challenge thus becomes designing for security without making it apparent to the viewers eye.⁷³ Simultaneously, as the outreach of diplomatic missions expands from the perimeter of the embassy compound, architects must balance security concerns while considering the community interaction required of the mission.⁷⁴

The Fortress Stigma

From 1998 through 2010, the language of diplomatic architecture became synonymous with fortress design. Fortification walls once used to protect entire

⁷¹ Argyros, "The Embassy of the Future," 3.

⁷² Loeffler, *The Architecture of Diplomacy*, vii.

⁷³ "Global Diplomacy and Design: Security at U.S. Embassies," Buildings, last modified March 3, 2008, <https://www.buildings.com/article-details/articleid/5784/title/global-diplomacy-and-design-security-at-u-s-embassies>

⁷⁴ Tiersky, "Securing U.S. Diplomatic Facilities," 1.

ancient cities found themselves surrounding U.S. embassy compounds, even within dense urban environments. Figure 16 demonstrates this evolution.

JERUSALEM, ISRAEL OLD CITY



Still surviving today, Jerusalem's Old City fortification walls provide a distinction between the old and the new. Although there are no security measures to enter, the fortification walls continue to concentrate pedestrian access and control visitors and inhabitants of the area.

LUCCA, ITALY OLD CITY



The recreational programming of the old city walls of Lucca, Italy demonstrate how fortification walls can be preserved while adapting them to the current needs of the public. Using their depth and providing recreational space activate the walls.

BAGHDAD, IRAQ U.S. EMBASSY COMPOUND



The U.S. embassy in Baghdad employs heavy perimeter walls reminiscent of cities like Lucca and Jerusalem. Embassy perimeters while prioritizing safety, can activate the streetscape and become more than barriers between the outside and inside.

LONDON, ENGLAND U.S. EMBASSY COMPOUND



The secure perimeter of the U.S. embassy in London is hardly noticeable. Fortification walls are replaced with landscape features that blend in with the surrounding environment, maintaining security while promoting openness and transparency.

Figure 16. Fortification walls evolve from protecting entire civilizations to protecting U.S. embassy compounds. (Source: Author).

This was the natural reaction to the series of embassy bombings in Lebanon, Kenya and Tanzania. Although the 2009 embassy compound in Baghdad is an extreme case study, it nevertheless demonstrates the stern stance the U.S. took on securing diplomatic missions abroad. The embassy compound in Baghdad is quite literally a compound, comprised of 104 acres of highly secured U.S. soil, housing 27 buildings including offices, apartments and recreational facilities. As figures 17 and 18 show, the design uses a sea of monolithic concrete with limited punched openings to achieve security.⁷⁵

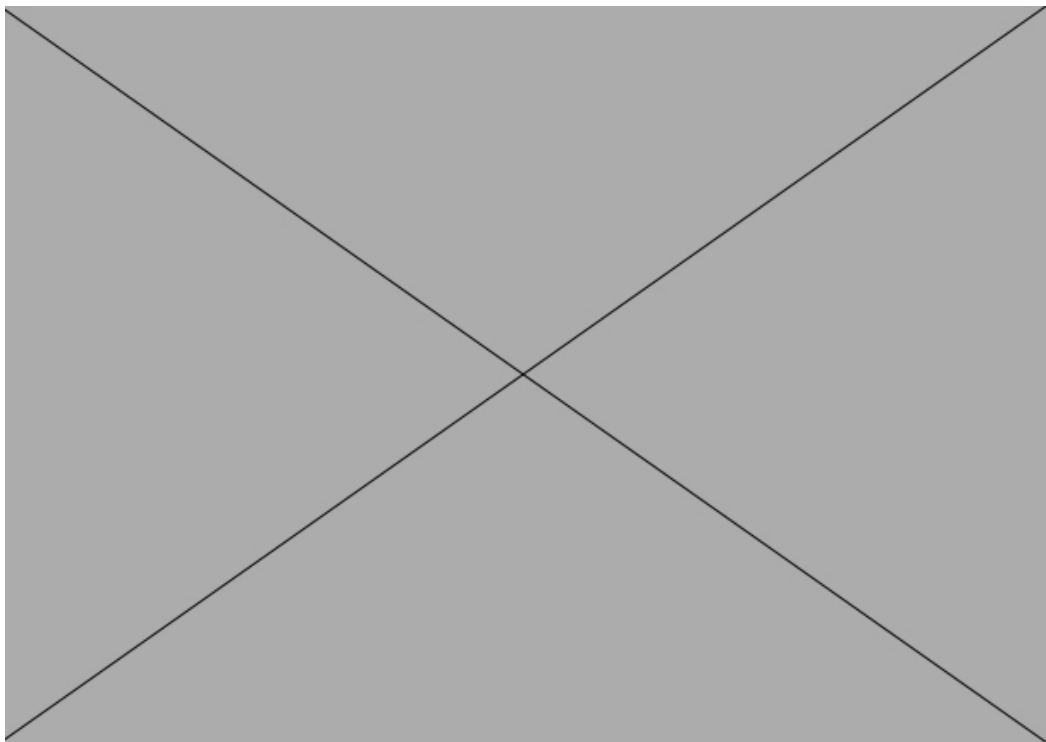


Figure 17. Blast walls surrounding the Baghdad embassy compound. (Source: *The New York Times*).

⁷⁵ Mark McDonald, “Must All U.S. Embassies Now Be Fortresses?” *The New York Times*, September 13, 2012, <https://rendezvous.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/13/must-u-s-embassies-now-be-fortresses/>

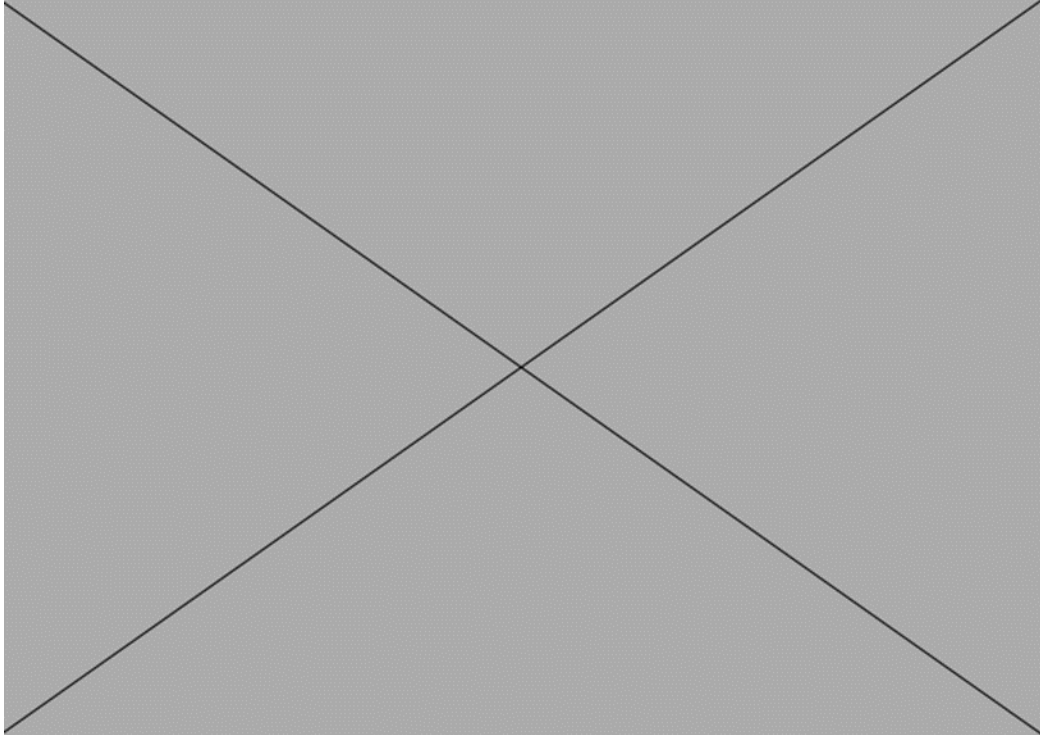


Figure 18. Housing units equipped with bulletproof glass within the U.S. embassy compound, Baghdad. (Source: *The New York Times*)

Even more importantly, sources estimate that it requires an additional \$2 billion a year for security and operational costs. Although investment in security is a priority, this investment starts to beg the question of how far to go. Stephen Walt, a professor of international relations at Harvard University points out, “Trying to blast proof everything may even be counterproductive, if the damage done to our global image is greater than the damage that violent radicals would do to a slightly less-fortified global presence.”⁷⁶ Recently however, the U.S. attempts to recover from this extreme approach, acknowledging that fortress design contradicts the openness and optimism of the American people.⁷⁷ The Design Excellence program of 2011 represents a

⁷⁶ McDonald, “Must All U.S. Embassies Now Be Fortresses?”

⁷⁷ U.S. Department of State Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, *Embassy Perimeter Improvement Concepts & Design Guidelines*. (Washington, DC: Rhodeside & Harwell, 2011), 7.

dramatic shift from the previous standards that promoted unapproachable, prison-like compounds.⁷⁸ This transition between design standards can perhaps best be seen in the new U.S. embassy in London, opened in 2018. Figure 19 reveals the contrast between the embassy compound in Baghdad, and the newly designed embassy in London. Simple decisions regarding materiality transform the London embassy into a transparent landmark within the urban landscape. It more importantly accomplishes this task while still abiding by current security standards regulated by the U.S.

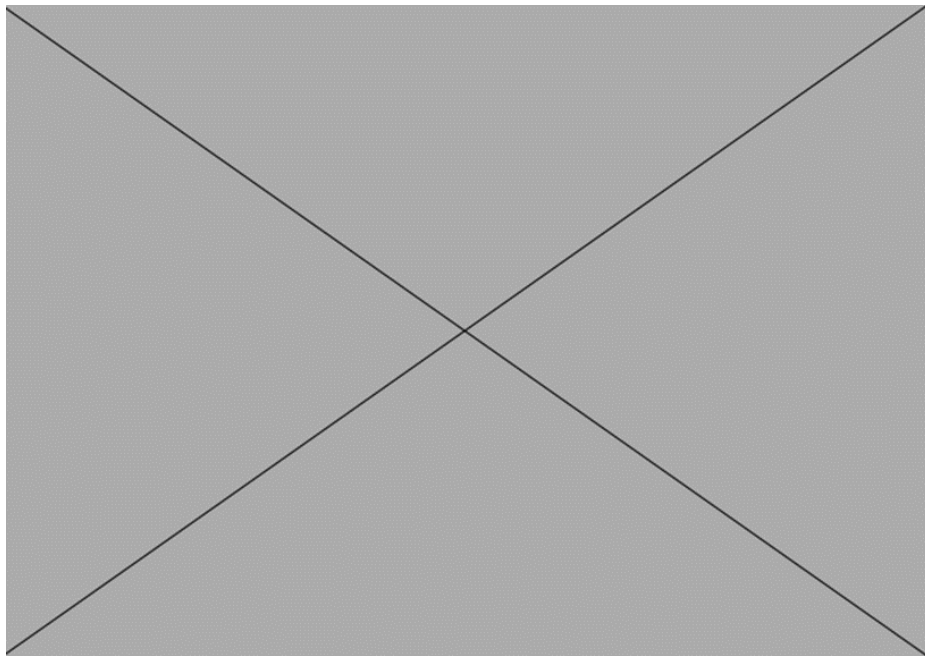


Figure 19. New U.S. embassy in London England. (Source: *The Washington Post*)

It is therefore evident that the U.S. is making efforts to mitigate the ‘fortress’ stigma that dominated U.S. embassies at the turn of the century. There is no question that security is a driving force when considering embassy design. However,

⁷⁸ Katie Watkins, “Does Architectural Excellence Put Embassies at Risk,” *ArchDaily*, last modified July 14, 2014, <https://www.archdaily.com/527363/does-architectural-excellence-put-embassies-at-risk>

standards of blast mitigation and perimeter safety do not have to result in windowless or ‘fortresslike’ solutions.⁷⁹

Layers of Security

A wholistic approach to designing U.S. embassies must consider the various layers of security. Diplomacy itself is the first line of America’s defense and engagement with the world.⁸⁰ It is a method for collaborating with foreign countries and for protecting American citizens. Embedded within mutual treaty negotiations, host nations must provide security for diplomatic facilities. However, when host nations are incapable or not fully committed to providing secure environments, U.S. facilities take security measures into their own hands and employ a layered approach to security.⁸¹ This approach contains three levels of defense. The first level involves elements like walls, fences, and revetments. This fundamentally means that there are also specified gates or entrances that control access to the embassy compound. The first level of defense is meant to keep intruders out, stall them, and/or keep them at a safe distance.⁸² This level almost always involves security personnel (usually marines) controlling each entrance and occupying small accessory buildings along the perimeter.

The second level of defense involves the envelope of the building, including walls, roofs, and any penetrations such as windows and doors. While the second

⁷⁹ Joseph A. Demkin, *Security Planning and Design: A Guide for Architects and Building Design Professionals* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2004), 16.

⁸⁰ Argyros, “The Embassy of the Future,” 4.

⁸¹ Tiersky, “Securing U.S. Diplomatic Facilities”, 1.

⁸² Demkin, *Security Planning and Design*, 6.

level of defense directly protects people of the embassy from natural elements, it more importantly secures the working environment. Functioning similarly to the first level, the building envelope also deals with vulnerabilities such as entrances and openings. Designing the building envelope of U.S. embassies therefore is one of the most challenging tasks of the architect. While designing an envelope that does not leak, one must also design an envelope that represents a more positive and welcoming image of the U.S. while still preventing intruders from entering.⁸³ Designing where openings occur within the envelope becomes extremely important. The security advantages of implementing a skylight rather than a curtain wall seems obvious, as there is less exposure to the public realm. This technique further lends itself to employing courtyards into embassy design, as is common in the Algerian vernacular. These seemingly simple design techniques become extremely important when attempting to secure the building envelope efficiently and effectively.

The third level of defense moves within the actual embassy building and involves not only physical barriers but also methods of construction. At this level of detail, one must design walls and doors to be strong enough to withstand, or at least delay, an intruder. This layer of security must also ensure that employees within the embassy have proper egress routes and can escape safely in case of emergencies.⁸⁴ All three layers of security overlap in their functions while working to maintain the safety of the U.S. diplomatic community.

⁸³ Demkin, *Security Planning and Design*, 7.

⁸⁴ Demkin, *Security Planning and Design*, 7.

U.S. EMBASSY LAYERS OF SECURITY

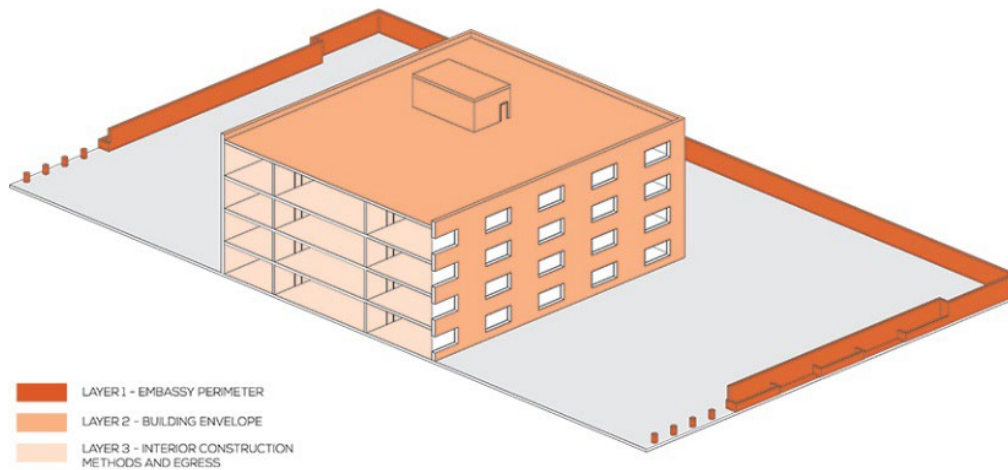


Figure 20. U.S. Embassy Layers of Security. (Source: Author)

As Figure 20 shows, the layers of security start from the exterior, the most public realm of the embassy, and move inward securing, the more intimate and private spaces used for diplomatic activities.

Complementing the various layers of security that emerge from the built environment is the notion of access, those who are allowed in and those who must stay out. The three classification zones within the spaces of embassies includes unrestricted zones, controlled zones, and restricted zones. Unrestricted zones are those areas which are most public. The design of these areas should encourage interaction without demanding additional levels of security⁸⁵. Unrestricted zones within the embassy include spaces such as lobbies, reception areas, libraries, and classrooms. While a baseline security clearance is required to enter the entire embassy compound, unrestricted zones should be the most open and transparent in

⁸⁵ Demkin, *Security Planning and Design*, 47.

terms of their access and function. Being the public face of the compound, local students and visitors are the primary users of these spaces. Controlled zones operate on the next level of security and require a valid purpose for entry. Thus, spaces like visa offices, administration offices, and passport services would fall under controlled zones of the embassy. People having access to these areas would include the embassy staff as well as locals and Americans seeking specific services. Lastly, restricted zones involve the most sensitive and private areas, requiring yet another level of clearance, greatly limiting access.⁸⁶ Such areas include the executive office where the ambassador resides and other high-profile office environments of the embassy including the defense attaché and various Foreign Service Officers.

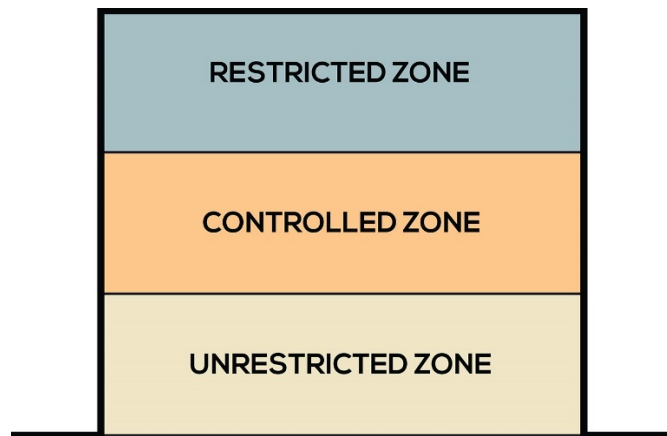


Figure 21. Vertical stratification of access zones within U.S. embassy compounds.
(Source: Author)

As is evident with the many layers and zones, security within an embassy compound can be extremely complex. With the various restricted and unrestricted levels of access, circulation patterns must be carefully resolved in order to provide an efficient and secure work environment.⁸⁷ Although the layered approach that U.S. embassy

⁸⁶ Demkin, *Security Planning and Design*, 47.

⁸⁷ Demkin, *Security Planning and Design*, 47.

design employs is complex, it is necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of Americans all over the world.

Urban Form as Security

This thesis explores the challenges and opportunities that are associated with inserting a new embassy compound within the dense urban fabric of Algiers. While embassy structures are important, they represent only one dimension of the future of embassy design.⁸⁸ Setbacks are perhaps the most challenging regulation that urban embassies must follow. The OBO mandates that new embassies have a 100-foot setback from the secure perimeter in addition to high perimeter walls, fences and anti-ram barriers.⁸⁹ This typically results in embassies that are objects in space surrounded by static, often overbearing concrete walls. Acknowledging the limitations set by this parameter, the U.S. code allows the 100-foot setback requirement to be waived in special circumstances. In order to waive the setback requirement, the Secretary of State must determine that security considerations permit and that it is in the national interest of the U.S.⁹⁰ While this is currently the only method for waiving the 100-foot setback, this thesis explores using urban form to satisfy the setback requirement.

According to the current model, fortification walls maintain the street edge allowing for limited access points. Within the perimeter walls, the chancery building

⁸⁸ Argyros, “The Embassy of the Future,” 4.

⁸⁹ Amanda Hurley, “Diplomatic Design: New U.S. Embassies Make an Architectural Statement,” *CNN News*, July 2017, <https://www.cnn.com/style/article/us-embassy-design/index.html>

⁹⁰ 22 U.S.C. § 4865.

is typically centrally located, accounting for the 100 feet of setback on all sides. Under these parameters, excess space exists between the secure perimeter and the entrance of the building. In their guidelines, the OBO addresses the excess space by introducing a series of plazas and courtyards (Fig. 22).

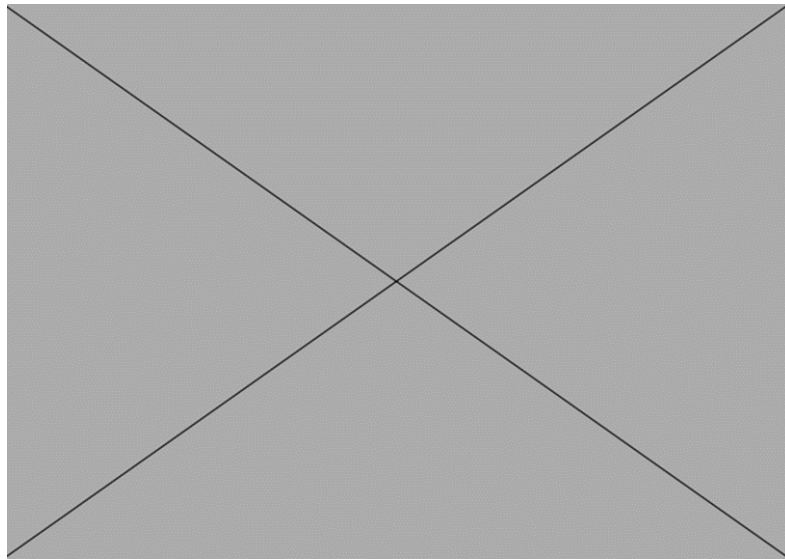


Figure 22. Zones of the Embassy Perimeter. (Source: U.S. Department of State Embassy Perimeter Improvement)

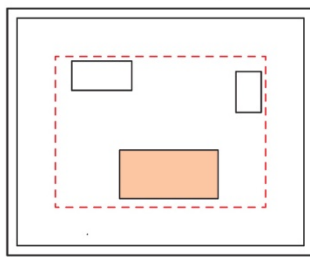
With 100-foot setbacks on each side of the embassy building, the area satisfying setbacks can grow to at least 40,000 square feet or roughly one acre. This does not consider the embassy building. When holistically studying the embassy compound, sites can get extremely large, measuring upwards of 15 acres.⁹¹ Thus this model, abiding by the tradition setback requirements, works best outside of dense urban environments, as 15-acre plots of land are often not available within the downtowns of capital cities.

While there are security advantages to the traditional approach of setbacks, there is an opportunity to adapt a new urban model, one that uses urban form as another

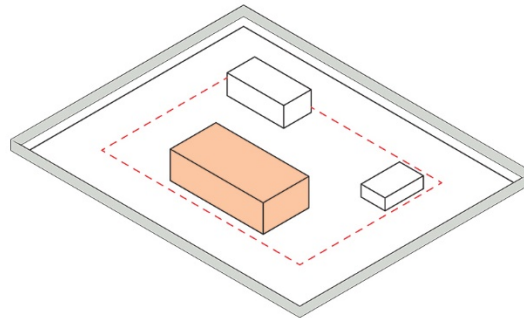
⁹¹ Hurley, “Diplomatic Design.”

layer of security. Figure 23 compares the traditional ‘wall building’ method with the proposed ‘urban form’ method. Rather than maintaining the street edge with unwelcoming perimeter walls, urban buildings can activate the street edge. Formed by simply extruding the mass of perimeter walls, accessory buildings that complement the collaborative nature of diplomacy can line the secure perimeter. Maintaining safety, the accessory buildings would have the standard security requirements mandated by the embassy. Increasing the urban infill between the public street edge and the chancery building provides an added layer of security.

TRADITIONAL APPROACH

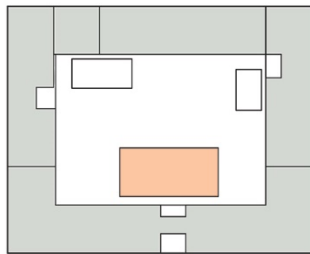


100-foot setback achieved with perimeter walls and open space. Embassy stands as object in space.



--- 100-foot setback
 ■ Embassy building

PROPOSED APPROACH



100-foot setback achieved with urban form. Embassy is embedded within the existing fabric while remaining secure.

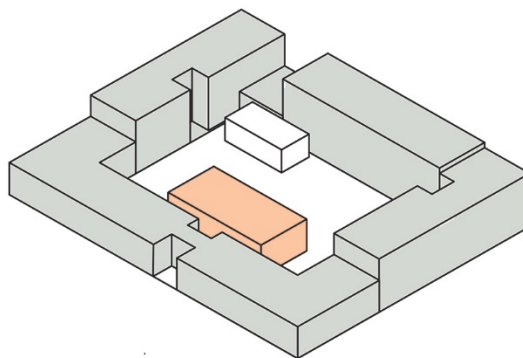


Figure 23. Using urban form to secure and activate the embassy perimeter. (Source: Author)

Under this approach, the embassy compound can be an extension of the urban fabric. It can begin to serve as a community asset, more specifically one that is integrated within the urban context of Algiers. This model not only takes advantage of valuable urban land, it also provides increased security and program from which the embassy can benefit. Simultaneously, this model can create security concerns as it provides an occupiable surface for trespassers to access. This model also contradicts the 6-meter clear zone regulated by OBO building standards. The 6-meter clear zone exists inside of the anti-climb walls, allowing security personnel to easier guard the perimeter. With these limitations, the ‘urban form’ approach serves more as a theory for embassy design. More importantly, the concept examined here is the idea that the perimeter does not have to be limited to daunting perimeter walls. This thesis explores how urban form and other edge condition treatments can be used in different ways to better integrate the U.S. embassy into the existing urban fabric.

Designing for Security

As security is an integral component of U.S. embassies abroad, it is the responsibility of the architect to integrate it with design, using it as an asset rather than a limitation. The OBO’s most recent design concepts for embassy design provide guidelines for considering security within the U.S. embassy in Algiers. The OBO acknowledges that each site must be analyzed carefully to develop appropriate solutions for the edge conditions. Edge conditions must be adequately protected while relating to the surrounding neighborhoods.⁹² Implementing urban form as a means for securing the

⁹² U.S. Department of State, *Embassy Perimeter Improvement*, 17.

embassy perimeter coincides with this guideline. Another aspect to consider when selecting a site in a particular community or neighborhood, as is the case in Algiers, is balancing security amongst other more public matters like transportation, availability of utilities, convenience, and even the symbolic significance within the community. Factors like access and visibility that typically make a site desirable can challenge physical security.⁹³ Likewise, other security protocols like pedestrian and vehicular barriers can be more than standardized concrete bollards. Although necessary, they do not have to be the dominant visible features surrounding the embassy compound.⁹⁴ Concealing them with more natural plantings and programming them as public features can soften the harsh nature of these security elements.

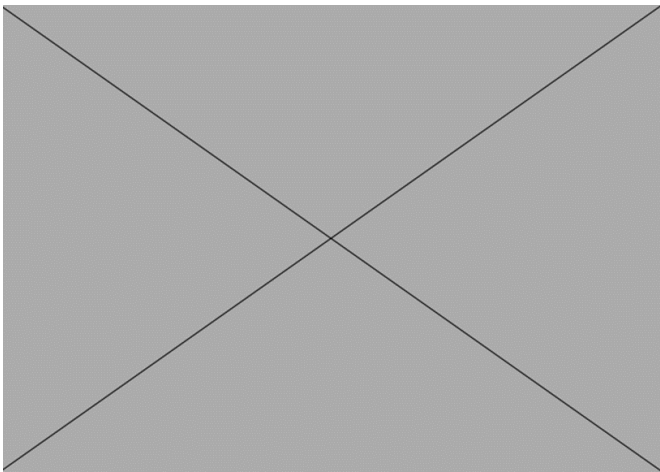


Figure 24. Perimeter Concepts. (Source: Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations).

The importance of security within diplomatic missions remains relevant as international conflict continues. Likewise, the site conditions and threat ratings for Algiers will differ from other countries around the world. However, the safety of

⁹³ Demkin, *Security Planning and Design*, 3.

⁹⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Embassy Perimeter Improvement*, 16.

American citizens around the world will remain a constant priority. When designing for security, one must understand the effects and consequences of design decisions. Such decisions, particularly those made about the perimeter condition, can drastically change the public perception of U.S. embassies.⁹⁵ Acknowledging the importance of security and using it as an asset rather than a limitation, can enhance embassy design. Thus, embassies can provide safe and meaningful environments for the people and express U.S. diplomacy.

⁹⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Embassy Perimeter Improvement*, 16.

Chapter 5: Architectural Characteristics Algeria and the U.S.

“Given the chance to serve a diplomatic role, could architects establish a language of discourse through which American architecture might speak to the world of American hopes and American strength?”

- Jane Loeffler (September 1990)

Demographic Overview

When developing diplomatic projects, it is especially important to consider the culture and architecture of the site and in this case, the country. Thus, this thesis must address not only the architectural characteristics of Algiers but also the demographics. It is important to understand the interaction between Algerian space and its people along with American space and our people. Simultaneously, because of the French colonization of Algeria from 1830-1954, French architecture is also relevant. A close examination of these various cultures is necessary to effectively project an image of the U.S. that best represents its people and its environment.

Algeria is in Northern Africa, occupying close to 1000 kilometers of the Mediterranean Sea coastline.⁹⁶ Algiers sits along the vast coastline on the Bay of Algiers. Although once occupied by France, many Europeans have fled since Algerian independence resulting in a current population that is 99% Arab-Berber. The other 1% represents those Europeans that remain from colonization.⁹⁷ Sunni

⁹⁶ “Country Profile: Algeria,” Federal Research Division, (Washington DC: Library of Congress, 2008), 8. <https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/cs/profiles/Algeria.pdf>

⁹⁷ “Country Profile: Algeria,” 9.

Islam is the official state religion, as 99% of the population are Muslims. Thus, the Arab-Berber culture is unique in that it combines Islamic faith with North African Berber cultural identification.⁹⁸ These seemingly mundane demographics are vital to further understanding the creation of space and architecture within the context of Algiers.

Algerian Culture and Architecture

As this thesis inherently explores how U.S. embassies define American architecture, it simultaneously explores the defining characteristics of Algerian culture and architecture. In 1962, after French colonialism, Algeria, and particularly the city of Algiers, were left in an interesting position. After years of occupation, many Muslim Algerians were left without a distinctly Algerian past, forced to surrender to French ways of living.⁹⁹ Finally escaping years of occupation, Algiers rightfully wanted to remove any and all signs of French colonialism within the city. This proved to be difficult however, being that some acknowledged that they were left with a large colonial city, one that propelled Algiers into the modern world of French urbanism.¹⁰⁰ As one may imagine, “French settlers and Muslim Algerians required fundamentally different built environments to correspond to their different cultures.”¹⁰¹ As the French introduced architectural typologies characteristic of

⁹⁸ “Country Profile: Algeria,” 10.

⁹⁹ Edward Behr, “The Algerian Dilemma,” *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 34, no. 3 (July 1958): 280, doi:10.2307/2605111.

¹⁰⁰ Henry S. Grabar, “Reclaiming the City: Changing Urban Meaning in Algiers after 1962,” *Cultural Geographies* 21, no. 3 (July 2014): 391, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/stable/26168581>.

¹⁰¹ Grabar, “Reclaiming the City,” 393.

France, Algerians attempted to preserve their existing Arab-Berber architecture. The result is a rich blend of European and North African architecture that comes to define the city today. Although Algiers continues the quest to reclaim the urbanism that remains from French colonialism, the remnants unavoidably become part of the city that cannot be erased.

Urban Scale – Reclaiming by Adaptation

At the urban scale, government officials have since attempted to take control of the public realm, renaming streets and public squares. Arabic names replace French names throughout the city at prominent boulevards and squares. Likewise, public spaces once occupied by statues of French heroes are now occupied with distinctly Algerian heroes or have simply been removed. This is the case of the Place du Gouvernement, later renamed the Place des Martyrs, to commemorate those sacrificed from the war on independence. Figure 25 and 26 begin to show the how space transformed before and after Algerian independence.

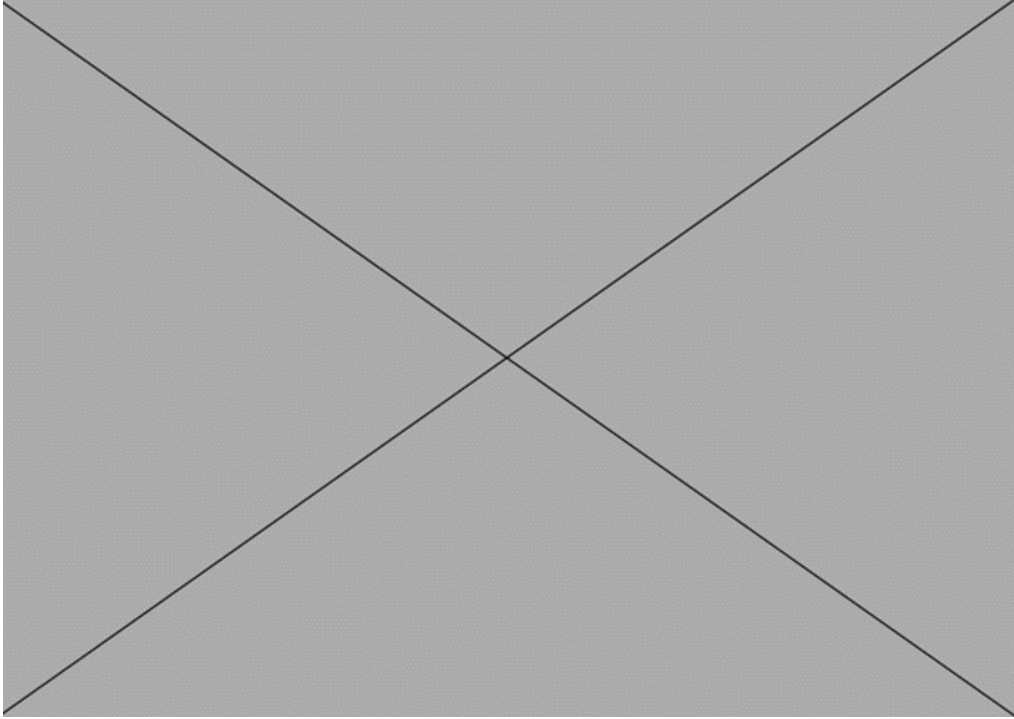


Figure 25. Place du Gouvernement (Place de Martyrs) under French rule, 1916. (Source: *Wikimedia Commons*).

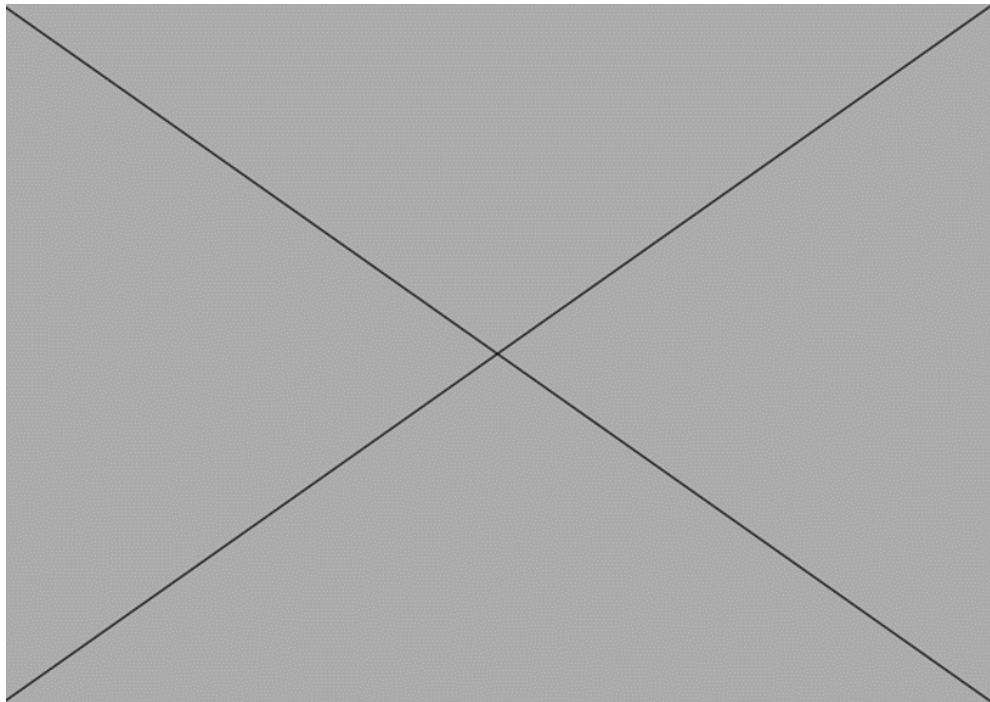


Figure 26. Place de Martyrs after Algerian independence, 2011. (Source: Mouh De Jijel, *Wikimedia Commons*)

The square was once dominated by a French statue of the Duke of Orleans. After independence, the statue was removed resulting in the Djemaa El Djedid, a mosque dating before French occupation, dominating the square on its eastern edge. This example reveals that symbolic value is designated to labels across the city. Thus, preserving the “urban picturesque” was less important than reshaping the memory of the city.¹⁰²

Although Algerians have not necessarily made drastic changes to the urban fabric, they are making efforts to reclaim their city through surface alterations, hoping to at least disguise the French colonial character.¹⁰³ Algerian urbanism did not typically prioritize such public spaces. However, because French urbanism created these important public spaces across the city, Algiers finds it important to redefine these spaces to build collective memory and a nationalism.¹⁰⁴ In addition, Algerians asserted an Algerian future by reclaiming not only public squares, but also other parts of the public and private realm including apartments, cafes, parks, and streets. During occupation, the French built high-rise social housing characteristic of modernism. As anticipated, the new housing typology did not suit the Algerian lifestyle. Therefore, to reclaim housing as their own, many Algerians modified the

¹⁰² Seth Graebner, “Contains Preservatives: Architecture and Memory in Colonial Algiers,” *Historical Reflections* 33, no. 2 (2007): 275, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/stable/41299412>.

¹⁰³ Grabar, “Reclaiming the City,” 391.

¹⁰⁴ Grabar, “Reclaiming the City,” 394.

spaces, dividing rooms and closing balconies to provide privacy that their culture and faith demanded.¹⁰⁵

Although French urbanism found its way across much of the city, there were nevertheless parts of Algiers that remain characteristic of traditional Algerian architecture and urbanism. Such is true of the Casbah, the old city occupying the western edge of Algiers. Luckily, the Casbah was spared during colonialism as the French saw it to be primitive, a rather exotic place full of mystery. For these very reasons (and others that will be addressed), the Casbah represented a Muslim Algerian society, one that existed before colonial rule and one that survives today.¹⁰⁶ Extremely narrow and winding roads along with the absence of large public squares, characterize the Casbah as a traditional Arab medina characteristic of northern Africa.¹⁰⁷ As the population of Algiers is predominantly Muslim, the Casbah prioritizes introverted domestic life. The limited public space existing within the extremely dense environment of the Casbah reinforces this idea.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Karim Hadjri, "Vernacular Housing Forms in North Algeria," (PhD diss., Joint Centre for Urban Design, Oxford Polytechnic, 1992), 66, Traditional Dwelling and Settlements Review.

¹⁰⁶ Grabar, "Reclaiming the City," 392.

¹⁰⁷ Hadjri, "Vernacular Housing Forms," 67.

¹⁰⁸ Grabar, "Reclaiming the City," 394.



Figure 27. Dense, inward looking residential fabric of the Casbah sponsors limited public space compared to areas outside of the old city. (Source: Author).

Likewise, since the 1990's there has been a city-wide decrease in public gardens.¹⁰⁹

Parks were sold by the government for the construction of villas and other private projects. This again reveals the insignificance of vast public spaces within the Algerian culture.

As the home of the federal government, embassies, and many cultural events, Algiers, not surprisingly, attempts to create a singular national identity. Although justified by years of oppression under French rule, it is rather unrealistic to designate Algiers as a homogeneous entity. It is instead more accurate to strive for a unified

¹⁰⁹ Grabar, "Reclaiming the City," 399.

national identity, one that acknowledge the diversity of the people and architecture and nevertheless remains united.

Neighborhood/Residential Scale – The Courtyard House

Defining Algerian culture and architecture continues at the neighborhood scale, specifically considering the role of the medina housing. Courtyard houses are one of the dominant housing typologies found in Algerian medinas. Courtyard houses can best be understood through the progression of space, including the entrance (*sqifa*), the courtyard (*west-ed-dar*) and the surrounding interior spaces. Contrary to American houses, Algerian courtyard houses have one entrance, also known as the *sqifa*. The *sqifa* creates an intentional and concentrated transition between the public and private realm. It functions as the space where guests await permission to enter inside the house. Aligning with traditional values of hospitality in Algerian culture, the *sqifa* is typically covered and well decorated.¹¹⁰

The courtyard, or *west-ed-dar*, is perhaps the biggest and most important space, usually square or rectangular and centrally located. A loggia or arcade typically surrounds the courtyard allowing for a transparency between the courtyard and the interior of the house. The *west-ed-dar* is the heart of the house, functioning as a multi-purpose space for social and religious events. As Islam is the official religion of Algeria, the courtyard house is a direct manifestation of the inward-looking Algerian culture. Privacy, particularly of women and children, is important to the Islamic faith. The central courtyard thus provides outdoor space to women and

¹¹⁰ Hadjri, "Vernacular Housing Forms," 72.

children without exposing them to the public realm. This can be compared to the free-standing house that is characteristic of U.S. suburbs.

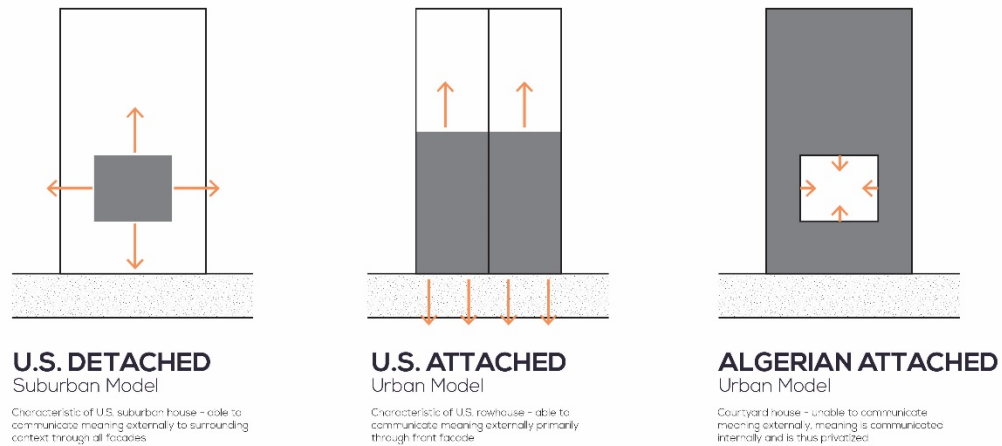


Figure 28. Diagram comparing the outward looking free-standing house with the inward-looking courtyard house. (Source: Author).

The last major programmatic piece of medina houses includes the remaining support spaces surrounding the courtyard. These support spaces are less rigid in form and can be irregularly shaped when compared to the courtyard. As Figure 29 reveals, the form of the courtyard takes priority over the shape of the support spaces. This results in a series of irregularly shaped houses with somewhat regularly shaped courtyards.



Figure 29. Irregular shape of house versus the regular form of the courtyard.
(Source: Author).

This organization creates a series of small and intimate cells around the central courtyard, allowing for the separation of program. It also allows for the accommodation of extended family within the household as most houses are three stories.¹¹¹ Figure 30 also shows that the support spaces open to the courtyard rather than the exterior walls.

¹¹¹ Hadjri, "Vernacular Housing Forms," 68.

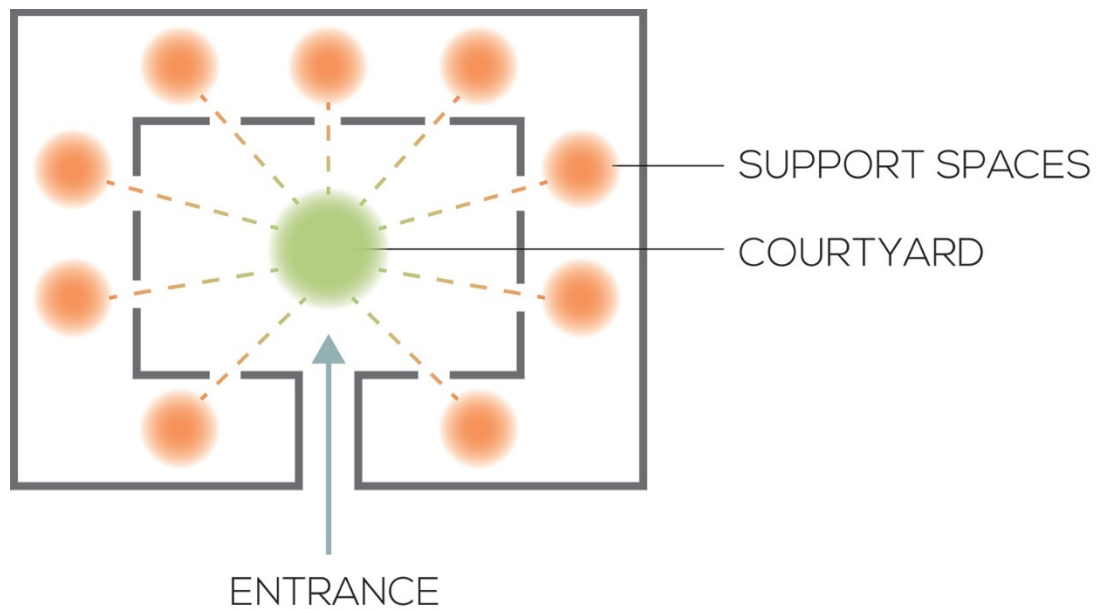


Figure 30. Support spaces gain access to the outdoors through private courtyards on the interior rather than the public yards on the exterior. (Source: Author).

In fact, few windows exist along the exterior walls, limiting views from the street and maintaining privacy. Openings that do exist along exterior walls tend to be small or covered with lattice decorations. Such qualities reiterate the important distinction in Algerian culture between public and private.¹¹² As a result, the main facades of the courtyard houses generally remain modest, meaning wealth is expressed through the size and interior decoration of the house.¹¹³

Detail Scale – Building Techniques

Details of Algerian architecture shed light on building techniques and decorations that can be applied to embassy design. As part of the Mediterranean coastal climate, building techniques of Algiers must respond to environmental factors, particularly addressing hot temperatures that dominate much of Africa and the Middle

¹¹² Smith, “The Crumbling.”

¹¹³ Hadjri, “Vernacular Housing Forms,” 68.

East. In response to the climate, Algiers can be characterized by its thick white-washed walls. As Figure 31 details wall details can be particularly massive measuring anywhere from 18-30 inches thick.¹¹⁴ This contrasts a typical wall thickness in the U.S. measuring at 6-12 inches thick. In addition, walls are built with stones and terra cotta bricks, giving them an extremely high thermal capacity.

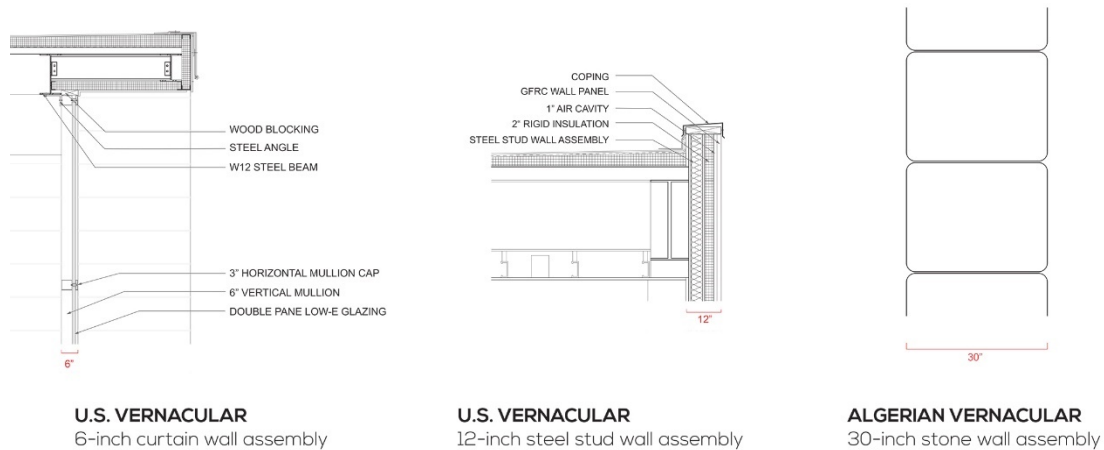


Figure 31. Comparison of wall assembly between U.S. and Algeria courtyard housing. (Source: Author).

Their white color reflects 70% of solar radiation, providing more comfortable living conditions in the extremely hot temperatures of summer.¹¹⁵ The thick walls and courtyards found across the traditional city also contribute to the tranquility and safety felt within Algerian vernacular architecture. The interior and exterior conditions that courtyard houses create can be compared in figure xx (white exterior warm interior diagram). As light reflects off of the white-washed walls it creates a

¹¹⁴ L. Adli-Chebaiki and Chabbi-Chemrouk, “Vernacular Housing in Algiers: A Semantic and Passive Architecture,” *International Journal of Design & Nature and Ecodynamics* 10, no. 2 (2015): 163, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.735.1669&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.

¹¹⁵ Chebaiki, “Vernacular Housing,” 163.

blank canvas. On the other hand, the small amount of light allowed to penetrate the building envelope due to the limited number of openings, creates a contrastingly warm interior.¹¹⁶ Thus, the seemingly mundane detail of the thickness of walls creates cool and quiet environments that relate to the inward-looking Algerian culture.

Algerian architecture also utilizes moucharabiehs. Moucharabiehs are decorative screen-like elements that allow light penetration while still maintaining privacy. Figure 32 and 33 shows how they may be used to filter light while obscuring public views into the private realm. Used in the proposal of the new Algerian Parliament building, moucharabiehs also serve as a decorative element, incorporating complex geometric patterns typical of Arab cultures (Fig. 32). A view from the interior of a moucharabieh screen demonstrates the interesting patterns of diffused light that interior spaces receive (Fig. 33).

¹¹⁶ Chebaiki, "Vernacular House," 172.

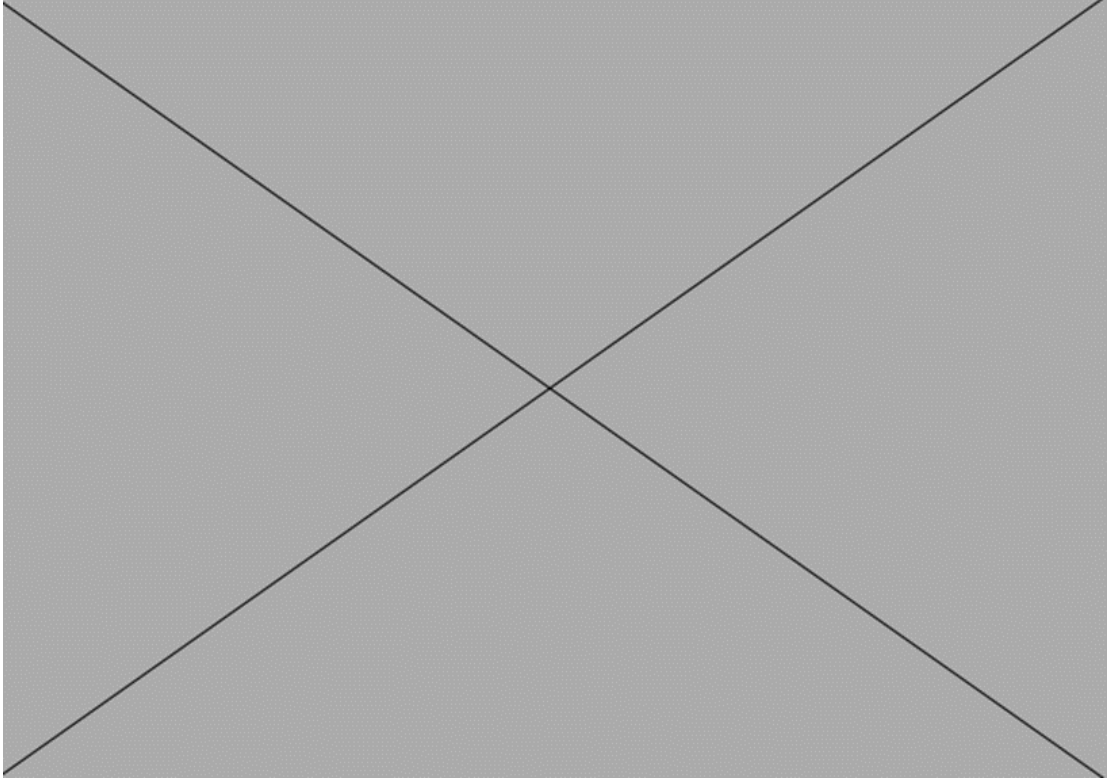


Figure 32. People's National Assembly. View from the entrance of honor. (Source: Bureau Architecture Mediterranee).

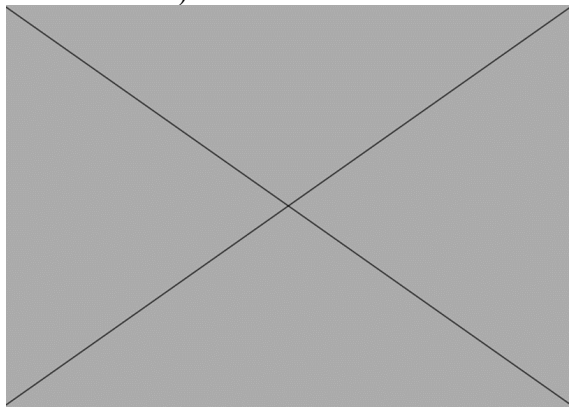


Figure 33. Gardens of the Alhambra, 1899. (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

This thesis acknowledges that condensing Algerian culture and architecture to a few key concepts is challenging. However, for the purpose of this thesis, a broad understanding of the most prominent architectural details and elements of urbanism is relevant and necessary for designing within the context of Algiers.

Remnants of the French

As this research has already suggested, France had and, in some ways, continues to have an immense impact on Algiers as it stands today. In fact, because of the strong French colonial presence between 1830 and 1954, it is impossible to consider Algeria's architecture and culture without also considering the impacts that the French imposed. Although hardly any Europeans remain in Algiers today, much of the built environment that they created survives.¹¹⁷ Before occupation, Algeria was an established, fortified medina city characteristic of North Africa. The French arrived in 1830 with the intent of building a new France. The result was wide boulevards, sidewalk cafes, and European apartment buildings throughout downtown, along the coastline and abutting the Casbah. The expansive boulevard along the water front was particularly important as it enhanced the planning of adjacent areas and unified the water front.¹¹⁸ They further introduced a new sidewalk culture to the streets of Algiers through exact replicas of French cafes and bistros.¹¹⁹ This created interesting conditions where the new and the old city collide. As seen in Figure 34, the French used public space (Port Said Garden) to stitch together new French urbanism with traditional Algerian haphazard planning.¹²⁰ This created a dualism in

¹¹⁷ Grabar, "Reclaiming the City," 389.

¹¹⁸ Celik Zeynep, *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations: Algiers under French Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 65, <https://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft8c6009jk&brand=ucpress>

¹¹⁹ Behr, "The Algerian Dilemma," 280.

¹²⁰ Zeynep, *Urban Forms*, 65.

the urban fabric, contrasting the narrow and winding streets of the Casbah with the straight and expansive boulevards of the French city.¹²¹



Figure 34. Public space (gardens and boulevards) stitch together the old and the new urban fabric. (Source: Author).

Even after independence, the city lacked trained Algerian architects and planners. As a result, they hired foreign architects and planners, particularly Europeans, to rebuild their city, an act that expanded the breadth of modernism within the once traditional city. As a result, the city saw the birth of the apartment building, meant to house mass quantities of people. Although this type of housing was effective for

¹²¹ Sonia, Beghoul, “The Uses of Tradition in Building National Identity in Algeria,” *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 6, no. 1 (1994): 58, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/stable/23565874>.

accommodating the mass movement of Algerians back to the Algiers city center after independence, the modern apartment building lacked and even neglected climate and privacy considerations that traditional Algerian housing acknowledged. Rather than erasing elements of French urbanism, which would have been nearly impossible, Algiers instead used it as a resource and adapted it to their needs. One such example is the transformation of balconies to loggias. Algerians transformed the exterior space of French housing, the balcony, into interior privatized space, the loggia. This transformation internalized the outdoors, allowing Algerians to reclaim privacy while keeping French residential architecture.¹²² It is evident that under French rule, Algerian cultural and social considerations were excluded from the new urban environment. Nevertheless, many elements of urbanism that the French introduced to the Algiers remain in the city today, contributing to its current character. It can even be argued that there is a certain nostalgia for French occupation, as cafes and bistros have naturally become embedded within Algerian culture.¹²³ This suggests that while there may be several negative aspects of colonialism, a positive outcome may be the sharing of culture and architecture, creating the rich environment that Algiers is known for today.

American Culture and Architecture

Similar to Algeria, the U.S. has had many different cultures influence its architecture. The U.S. is perhaps even more complex due to its wide range of immigrants from all over the world that have been welcomed for many years. For

¹²² Beghoul, "The Uses of Tradition," 58.

¹²³ Grabar, "Reclaiming the City," 397.

these reasons, it is difficult to define American culture and architecture. Many people spend lifetimes attempting to define such a subject. Therefore, this thesis attempts to simplify the notion by examining general characteristics at three scales, urban, residential, and detail.

Urban Scale – Public and Recreational Space

Many Americans value public and recreational space. Furthermore, as the world attempts to be more health conscious, public and recreational space only increases in importance and value. Cities like Chicago, New York, and Boston find great success in their network of public green space.

LINCOLN PARK, CHICAGO



Source: Wikimedia Commons

CENTRAL PARK, NEW YORK CITY



Source: Wikimedia Commons

BOSTON COMMONS, BOSTON



Source: Wikimedia Commons

Figure 35. Large parks embedded within dense American cities reveals the importance of recreation space in the American culture. (Source: Wikimedia Commons).

Access to green space within U.S. cities sponsors not only a healthy living style but also sponsors social interaction. Many parks contain both passive and active programming. With active programming such as baseball fields and amphitheaters, athletics and the arts provide opportunities for people to socialize while enjoying the outdoors. Likewise, the passive programming of parks allows for a balance between socialization and contemplation.

Neighborhood/Residential Scale – Parks and Rowhouses

The value of outdoor public space perhaps continues at the neighborhood and residential scale. While cities benefit from large parks like Central Park and Lincoln Park, smaller scales of green space are typical at the neighborhood scale. For example, Savannah, Georgia employs a strong network of green spaces that span the historic part of the city. This green network gives each neighborhood access and even unwritten ownership of a smaller scale park.

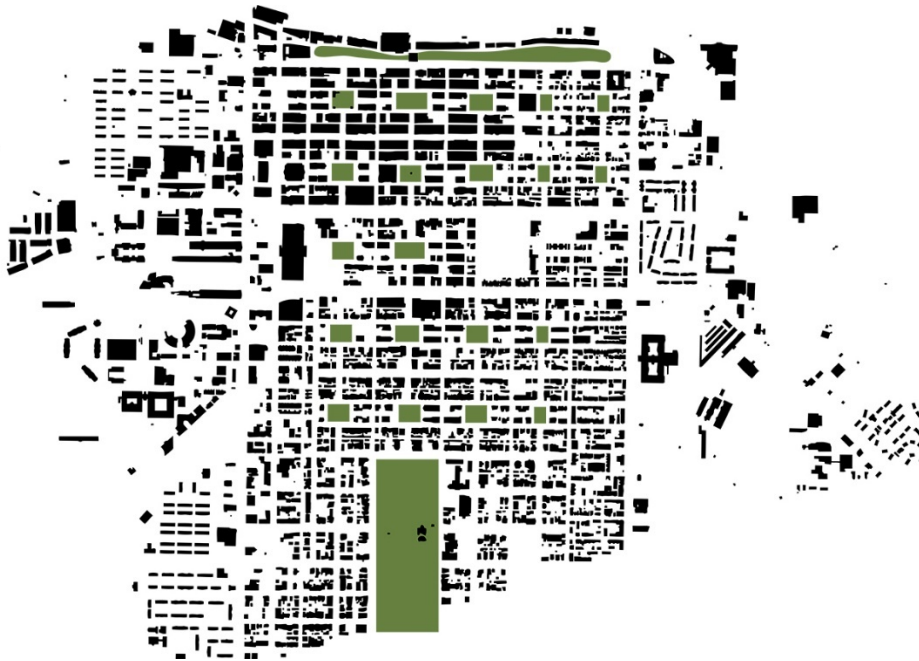


Figure 36. Savannah, Georgia green network. (Source: Author).

At the neighborhood scale, one must also consider residential architecture. Just as the courtyard house dominates residential urban fabric in Algiers, the rowhouse dominates residential urban fabric in many American cities. For example, one can find entire blocks of rowhouses in cities like Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington DC. This urban typology reveals important notions of American culture. The rowhouse typology became prominent in American cities during the early industrial age. With urban populations rapidly growing, the rowhouse became a

rational architectural response to the social and economic pressures felt in American cities.¹²⁴ With shared party walls and fewer window openings, rowhouses were cheaper to build than detached units. Likewise, smaller and more compact lots saved on land costs, a factor particularly important to the growing merchant class of the time.

The social conditions that the rowhouse creates however is perhaps even more important than its efficiency as a residential typology. With narrow lots abutting one another and limited backyard space, this quite literally opened the door for the stoop culture that exists today. The stoop culture simply involves residents and friends relaxing and socializing on the front steps of rowhouses, as seen in Figure 37. Stoop culture reiterates the importance of social interaction in the American culture.

Differing from the inward-looking culture of Algiers, Americans look outward from their detached house or rowhome.

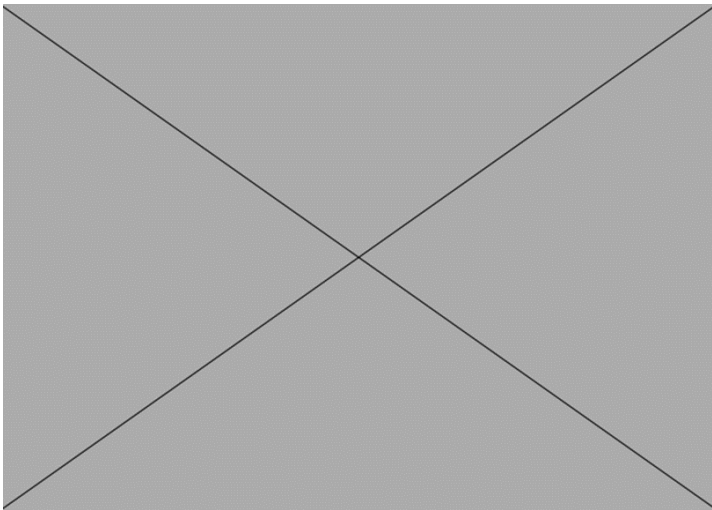


Figure 37. American stoop culture. (Source: New York Times).

¹²⁴ Robert Alexander, "Baltimore Row Houses of the Early Nineteenth Century," *American Studies* 16, no. 2 (1975) 75, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/stable/40641142>.

Detail Scale – Building Techniques

At the detail scale, building techniques characteristic of the U.S. reiterate the outward looking tendency of the American culture. With glass skyscrapers dominating U.S. skylines, it is evident that transparency and openness are important. However, transparency and openness would not have been possible without technical advancements like the curtain wall and the steel frame.

Even though Chicago has been credited as the birthplace of the steel frame, the more important takeaways are the changes it brought to American architecture. With the implementation of the steel frame, modern American office buildings were able to take on a new level of openness and transparency.¹²⁵ The steel frame created the open plan, allowing for a more flexible use of space. With the open plan, open cubicles rather than closed offices populated office buildings. The steel frame also proved crucial to envelope design, in particular the curtain wall. With the strength and durability steel, glass facades were able to be hung from the steel frame. This advancement in building technology meant that buildings could have a seamless wall of glazing, providing daylight while also promoting transparent culture.

While this chapter only examines a few of the many aspects of American culture and architecture, elements like the rowhouse and the steel frame come to represent fundamental cultural ideals. By examining American culture and architecture at the urban, neighborhood, and detail scale, the trend of an outward looking culture that values outdoor public space become evident.

¹²⁵ Colin Rowe, “The Chicago Frame,” *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976), 91.

Balancing the Standards

One of the challenges of U.S. embassy design concerns the insertion of American culture and architecture into a foreign environment. Embassies naturally attempt to showcase American culture and architecture in hopes of creating a positive and powerful image throughout the world. The question then becomes how to effectively integrate American architecture into a foreign landscape while still responding to existing site and cultural conditions. This thesis employs an exploration of the cultural balance between two architectures: the U.S. and Algeria. Diplomacy thus creates a third culture, one that is more complex than simply combining American and Algerian culture. The third culture is the culture and language of architecture. It is rather an accumulation of practices that serve to bridge the cultural gap. As diplomacy continues, as it has with Algeria since 1962, the third culture is translated across generations, spanning longer than the temporary posts of embassy employees.¹²⁶

One lesson that can be learned from the French occupation of Algeria is the power of people and government. During colonization, the French people and government were able to shape the appearance and meaning of place within the city of Algiers. Likewise, placemaking in French Algiers had the power to shape the behavior and customs of people, as seen through the adoption of the café culture.¹²⁷ As Grabar argues, the built environment is a lingering and insidious symbol of power.¹²⁸ While

¹²⁶ Fisher, "The Foreign Service Officer," 76.

¹²⁷ Grabar, "Reclaiming the City," 404.

¹²⁸ Grabar, "Reclaiming the City," 406.

this may often be true, the build environment is more importantly a symbol of people and our impact on one another.

Chapter 6: Precedents

“As long as the source is good, I steal. Not in the sense of taking away from another architect – he is not poorer because of a theft but is in fact more influential. We copy, borrow and derive motifs from other architects. Artists have always quoted other artists.”

- Robert Stern

U.S. Embassy: London England

The OBO completed the U.S. embassy in London early in 2018. The new London embassy set a new paradigm in embassy design. The building gives priority to transparency, openness and equality, contrasting some of the negative aspects of SED design in the 1980's. The new embassy represents ideals of the American government and the American people.¹²⁹ Similar to the aim of this thesis, the embassy inserts itself within downtown London. Taking advantage of the dense urban environment, the project takes place on the River Thames in the Nine Elms district, an industrial zone planned for redevelopment. The site selection of the embassy thus provides the mission with access to water, a dense urban environment, and rich cultural significance, fusing urbanism, architecture and the landscape together.¹³⁰ The site also contributes to the redevelopment of the area, revealing the ability of U.S. diplomatic missions to serve as economic catalysts in host nations.

¹²⁹ Kieran Timberlake, “How can we build an embassy that reflects the core values of democracy – transparency, openness, and equality – is welcoming, secure and highly sustainable,” Kieran Timberlake, accessed October 16, 2018, <https://kierantimberlake.com/pages/view/88/embassy-of-the-united-states-of-america/parent:3>

¹³⁰ Kieran Timberlake, “How can we build an embassy.”

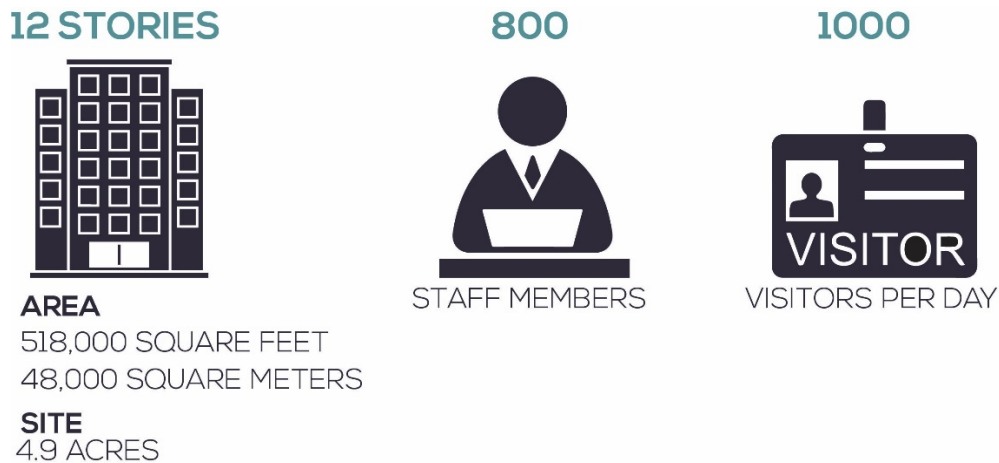


Figure 38. U.S. Embassy London key statistics. (Source: Author).

The 12-story, 48,000 square meter structure sits on a 4.9-acre site and houses 800 staff members while accommodating roughly 1000 visitors per day.¹³¹ A series of spiraling curves create the form of the building. The curves begin at the site edges and continue inward, forming a nucleus at the main lobby (Fig. 39).

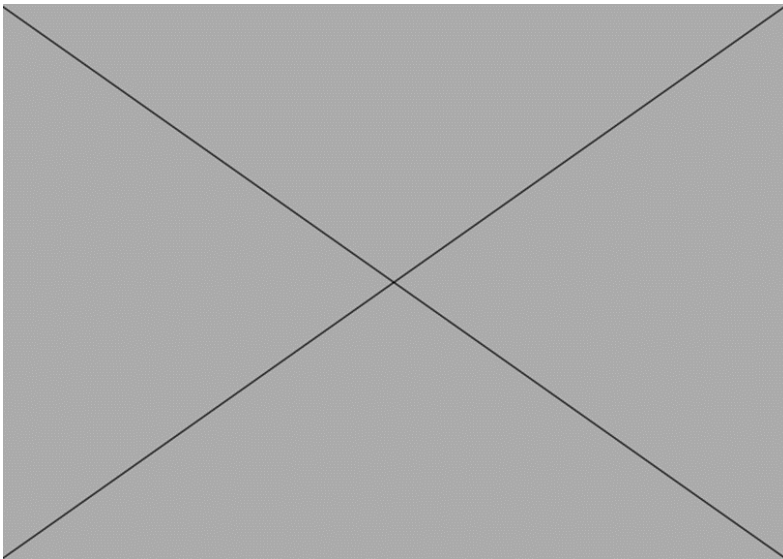


Figure 39. Diagram of the series of spiraling curves and circulation. (Source: Copyright Kieran Timberlake).

¹³¹ Sheena McKenzie, “A \$1 Billion Glass Cube: The Embassy that Trump thinks is a Bad Deal,” *CNN*, January 12, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/12/europe/us-embassy-london-intl/index.html>

The form takes the shape of a transparent crystalline cube set on a monumental colonnade. The glass façade, perhaps characteristic of an American office building not only promotes a level of transparency but is also a high performing façade. It is made of laminated glazing with an ethylene tetrafluoroethylene (ETFE) outer envelope. The transparent film is specifically shaped to reduce glare and solar gain.¹³² The façade thus allows a generous amount of light penetration while being responsive to the environment. The high-performing façade therefore provides comfortable interior environments while being sustainable.

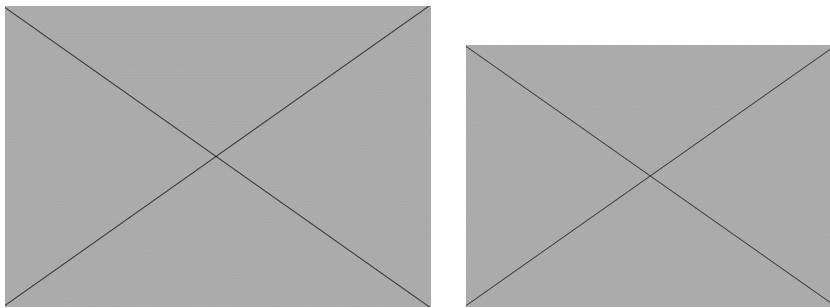


Figure 40. (left) Embassy crystalline façade. (Source: Copyright Kieran Timberlake)
Figure 41. (right) Upper floor garden interacting with crystalline façade. (Source: Copyright Kieran Timberlake)

Perhaps one of the most successful elements of the London embassy is the perimeter and associated landscape. The embassy is particularly revolutionary because it welcomes the surrounding community while maintaining functional and security requirements. As the street section in Figure 40 reveals, the landscape design satisfies the setback requirement, incorporates anti-ram barriers, and integrates the building within the landscape. While the bioswale has clear environmental functions,

¹³² Kieran Timberlake, “How an we build an embassy.”

it more importantly serves as a barrier, one that can stop moving vehicles from driving through the meadow and into the building.¹³³

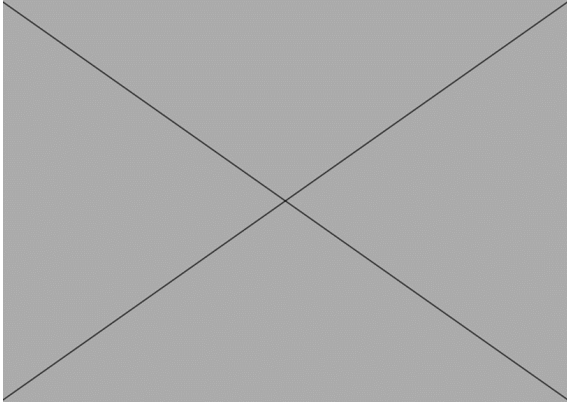


Figure 42. U.S. embassy in London, section through meadow showing bioswale, public seating, and proposed plaza. (Source: *Harvard Design Magazine*).

Likewise, the civic plaza and surrounding park make the embassy a community amenity. Figure 43 demonstrates how the embassy redefines oppressive barriers and perimeter walls by involving a natural water feature around the building. This concept can be found in the OBO's *Embassy Perimeter Improvement Design Guidelines*.¹³⁴ Although the water feature is fundamentally a moat, it nevertheless enhances the public perception of the U.S. embassy compound. Simultaneously, the internal gardens resemble American landscapes, an element that familiarizes embassy employees while integrating American strategies in the English context.¹³⁵

¹³³ Oliver Wainwright, "Fortress London: The New US Embassy and the Rise of Counter-Terror Urbanism," *Harvard Design Magazine*, June 2016, <http://www.harvarddesignmagazine.org/issues/42/fortress-london-the-new-us-embassy-and-the-rise-of-counter-terror-urbanism>

¹³⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Embassy Perimeter Improvement*, 68.

¹³⁵ Kieran Timberlake, "How can we build an embassy."

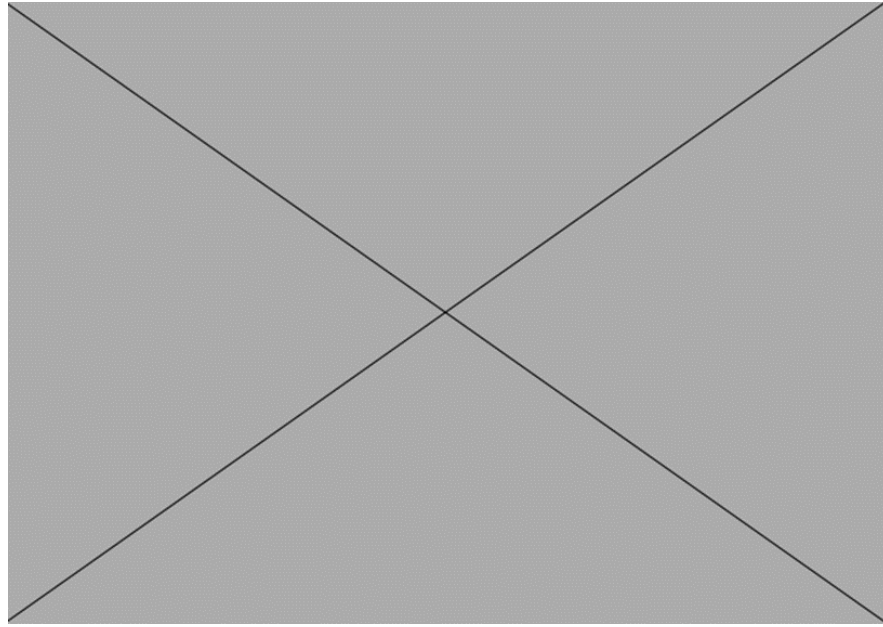


Figure 43. New London Embassy benefits. (Source: U.S. Department of State, Copyright Kieran Timberlake).

Even though the new U.S. embassy in London serves as an ideal precedent in terms of the openness of its perimeter, it nevertheless communicates accurate notions of U.S. diplomacy. Instead of employing intrusive perimeter walls to designate the embassy as an inaccessible object in space, the landscape design achieves security requirements through topography changes and natural elements like garden walls and water features.¹³⁶ While the threat analysis and site conditions of Algiers may not allow for such openness, one can still learn from the principles. Making the U.S. embassy a community asset is an idea that should be employed across cultures and across nations. The new London embassy is therefore a valuable precedent for new embassy design. Many of its elements reveal that location and embassy design have the potential to promote inclusion and openness rather than exclusion and hostility.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Watkins, “Does Architectural Excellence.”

¹³⁷ Watkins, “Does Architectural Excellence.”

U.S. Embassy: Mexico City, Mexico

The new U.S. embassy in Mexico City, Mexico is set to open in 2022 with construction currently ongoing. The embassy will occupy an 8.5-acre site located in the New Polanco District of Mexico City. As the Department of State reports, the design of this new embassy provides a secure, modern, and sustainable platform for U.S. diplomacy.¹³⁸ However, the most compelling aspect of this embassy design is its responsiveness to the local culture. By using contextually appropriate and durable materials, the embassy reveals a meaningful understanding of the local culture, an element crucial to U.S. embassy design.¹³⁹ The plan of the embassy revolves around a large open-air atrium, as seen in Figure 44.

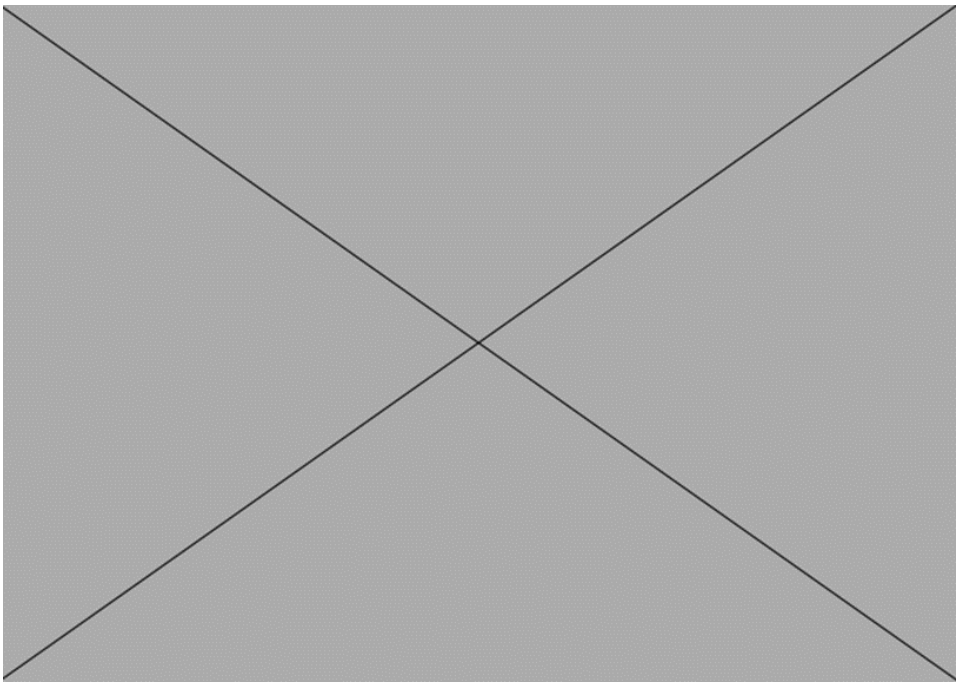


Figure 44. Atrium (Source: MARCH)

¹³⁸ “Fact Sheet – U.S. Embassy Mexico City Ground Breaking,” U.S. Department of State, accessed November 22, 2018. <https://mx.usembassy.gov/fact-sheet-u-s-embassy-mexico-city-ground-breaking/>.

¹³⁹ Tiersky, “Securing U.S. Diplomatic Facilities”, 10.

This large open-air atrium has several advantages. Similar to courtyard houses characteristic of Algerian vernacular architecture, the atrium responds to the warm climate of Mexico City while providing outdoor access for people of the embassy. The warm and intimate spatial quality of the atrium references the scale of the surrounding residential neighborhood.¹⁴⁰ This is accomplished by the use of a local material palette. In addition, the combination of small punched openings alongside large curtain walls suggests the relationship between the public and private areas of the embassy compound.

Although this embassy is in a completely different part of the world, it nevertheless provides ideas and principles that can be employed in embassy design across the world. One of the goals of this embassy is to not only minimize the impact on the environment but to also minimize the impact on the surrounding community. Although the project budget approaches \$950 million, the U.S. reports that construction projects of this scale can contribute \$1.4 million per month to the local economy. Furthermore, the project estimates that 2,500 people will be engaged in the construction of the new embassy, including 1,200 local workers.¹⁴¹ This emphasizes that U.S. embassy projects do not always have to negatively impact the local government and community. One of the interesting programmatic pieces that the embassy introduces is a resource center that provides space for student research and recreation. The project goes even further to incorporate the local community and

¹⁴⁰ “Fact Sheet – U.S. Embassy Mexico City.”

¹⁴¹ “Fact Sheet – U.S. Embassy Mexico City.”

visitor experience by designing welcoming environments. Figures 45-47 show the vision of the approach, main entrance, and waiting area.

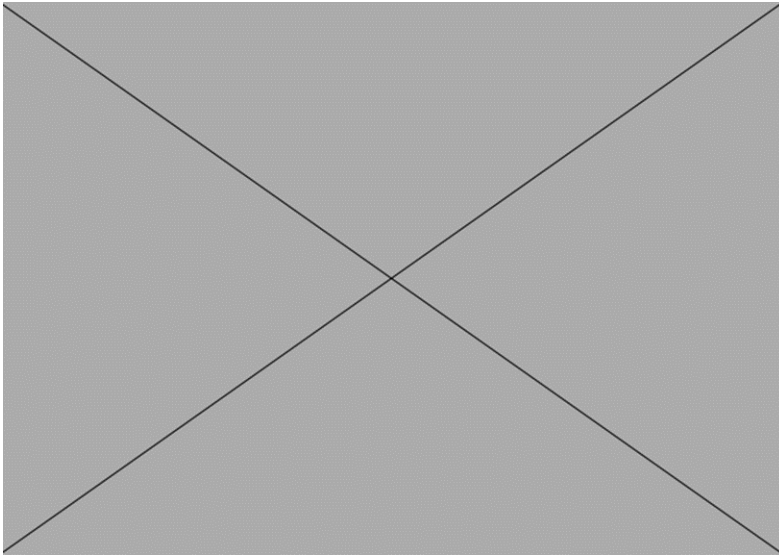


Figure 45. Pedestrian approach to U.S. embassy Mexico. (Source: MARCH).

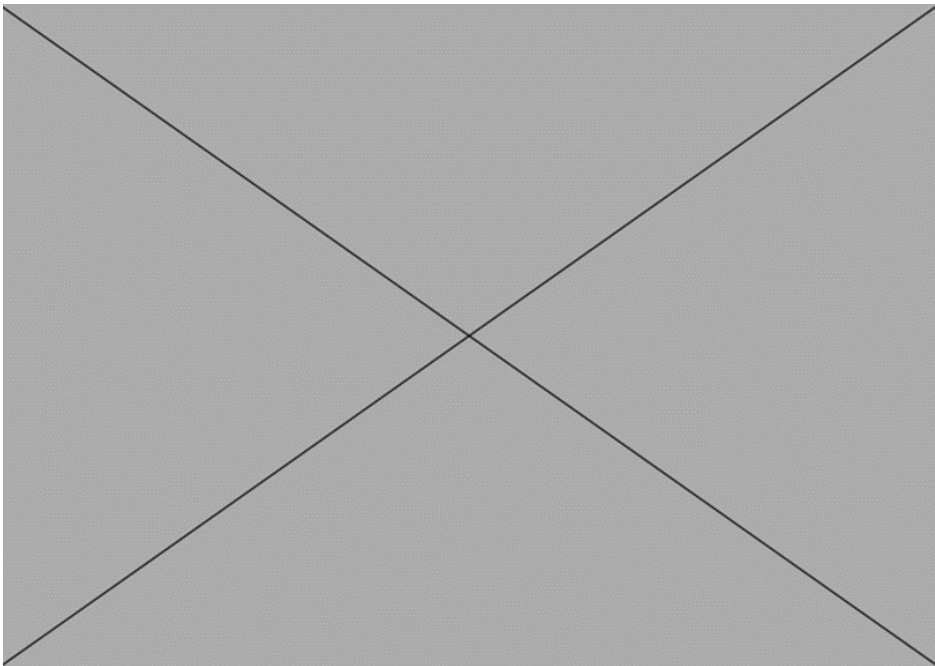


Figure 46. Main Entrance. (Source: MARCH).

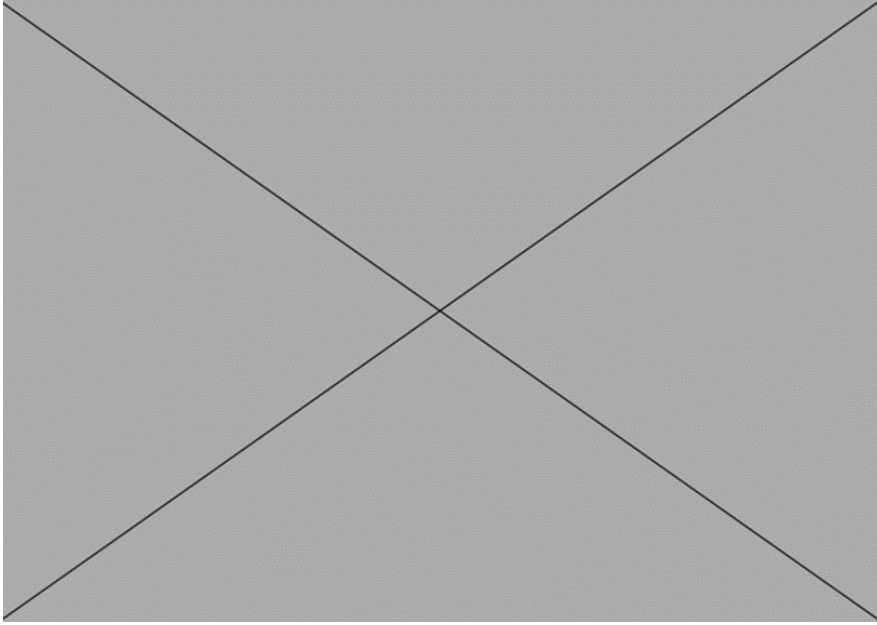


Figure 47. ACS Waiting Area. (Source: MARCH).

By definition, locals will interact with these spaces the most. The visitor's experience is prioritized with a continuous material palette and clear connections between the interior and exterior of the building.

The U.S. embassy in Mexico is relevant to the embassy design in Algiers. With similar climates, the use of an atrium or courtyard is perhaps the most applicable element. Other elements, like the visitor's experience and use of local materials also prove to be relevant.

U.S. Embassy: Tunis, Tunisia

The U.S. embassy in Tunis, Tunisia has a similar context and culture as that of Algiers. As a neighboring country of Algeria, also located along the Mediterranean Sea, this U.S. embassy faces similar climatic challenges and cultural conditions as Algiers. Designed by Tai Soo Kim Partners, an architecture firm based out of

Hartford Connecticut, this U.S. embassy is unique because it was one of the first embassies to be designed and completed in the 21st century.¹⁴² Thus, the project follows Standard Embassy Design and not Design Excellence. The embassy was moved outside of the urban center and onto a 21-acre site. The goal was to create a secure compound that also reflected the spirit of democracy. However, it has since been determined under the Design Excellence standards that moving the embassy to the outskirts of urban centers is counter-productive (Fig. 48). The surrounding multi-lane roads pose accessibility issues as they separate the site from its context.



Figure 48. U.S. Embassy in Tunisia is located 6 miles from downtown, removing it from the dense urban environment of the capital city and creating challenges of accessibility. (Source: Author).

¹⁴² BL Harbert International, “U.S. Embassy Compound Tunis, Tunisia,” accessed October 20, 2018, <http://www.blharbert.com/projects/u-s-embassy-compound-tunis-tunisia/>

The master plan of the embassy compound focuses on including distinctive Tunisian architecture and motifs in the 115,000 square foot development. TSKP incorporates the spirit of classical Tunisian design through the interior organization of a series of courts. As seen in Figures 49 and 50, these courts provide natural lighting and protection from the sun that coincides with the Tunisian climate.

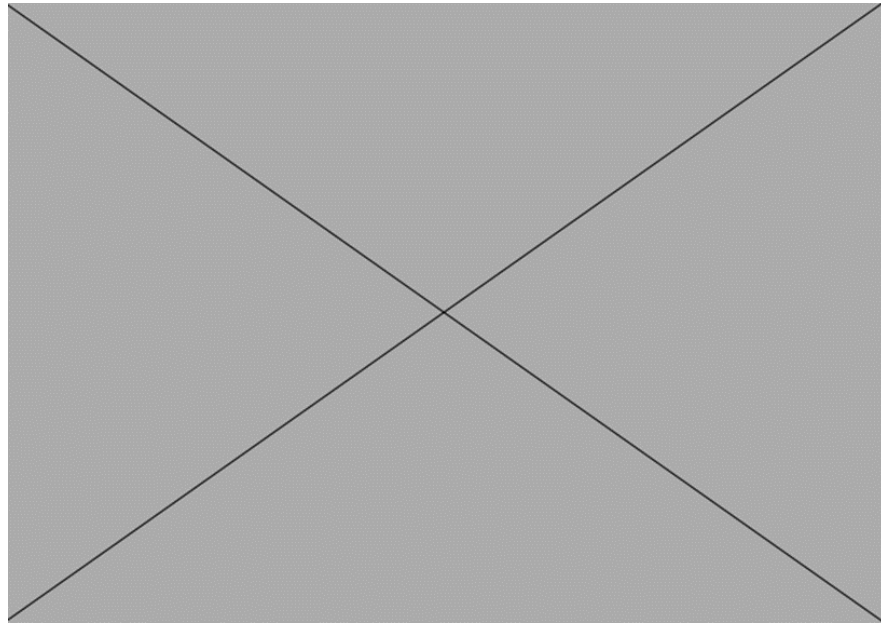


Figure 49. U.S. Embassy Tunisia Interior Central Corridor. (Source: TSKP Studio).

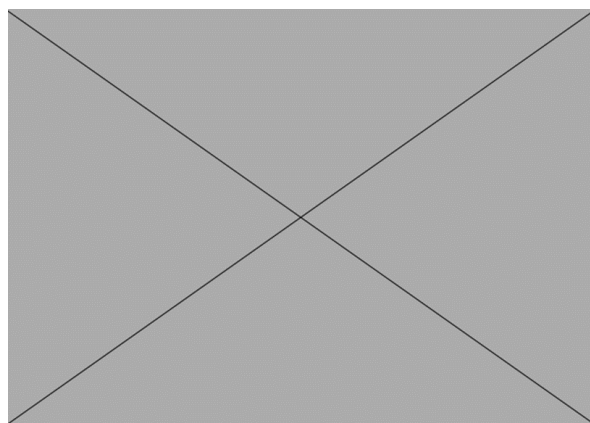


Figure 50. U.S. Embassy Tunisia Interior Entryway Ceiling Design and Skylight Feature. (Source: TSKP Studio).

CRJA was hired as the landscape architects of the embassy compound. Their design creates a large park, with the chancery building being the focal point at the end of the main axis. Accessory buildings including warehouses and the Marine Security Guard Quarters (MSGQ) stem off the main axis. This organization emphasizes the chancery as the main object and creates an arrival sequence that incorporates a series of outdoor hardscapes and softscapes (Fig. 49). The landscaped garden also employs geometric patterning that is characteristic of Islamic architecture. The garden deals with challenges of irrigation and stormwater management through a series of water features and olive tree groves.¹⁴³ Overall, the garden and park use self-sustaining plant materials, showing a level of responsiveness to the local environment. Similar to the U.S. embassy in Mexico, this embassy also utilizes local stone and tile work.

¹⁴³ “U.S. Embassy Tunis, Tunisia,” CRJA, accessed November 22, 2018, <http://crja.com/project/u-s-embassy/>

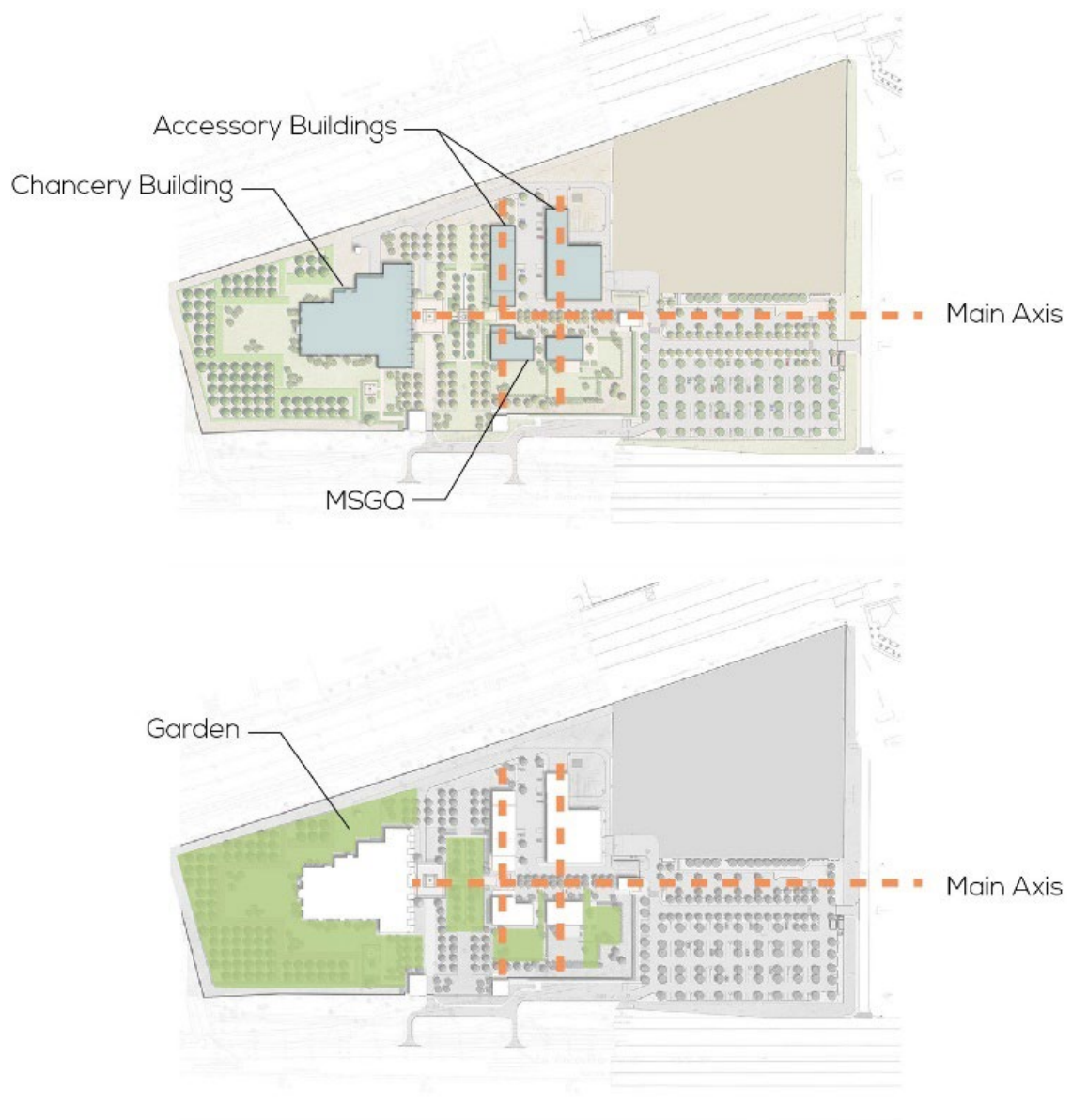


Figure 51. U.S. Embassy Tunisia Site Diagrams. (Source: Author).

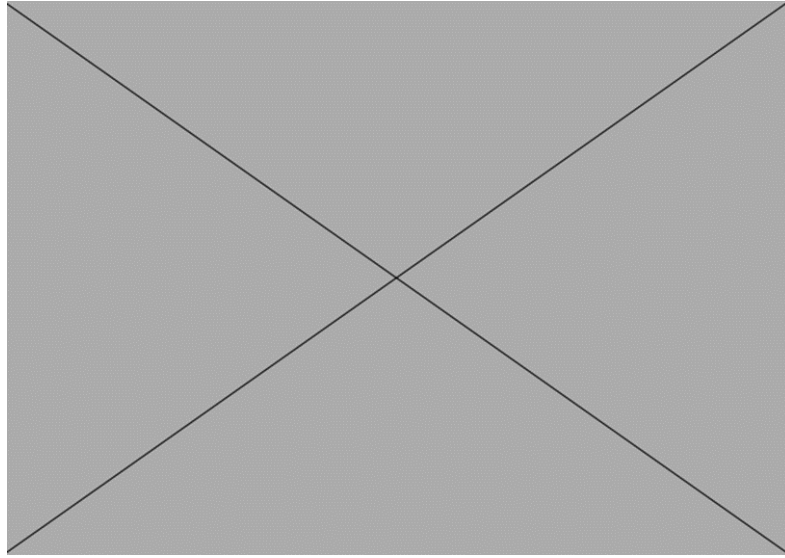


Figure 52. U.S. Embassy Tunisia Central Water Feature. (Source: CRJA).

The U.S. embassy in Tunis serves as a learning tool for the site selection of U.S. embassies. Although the embassy compound can still provide acceptable environments for embassy employees, the U.S. embassy in Tunis lacks the urban context that promotes meaningful diplomacy. However, this embassy does well to draw from architectural characteristics of the host nation while maintaining U.S. standards. As Americans value outdoor space, it becomes a challenge to incorporate exterior spaces when a 21-acre site is unlikely in a dense urban environment.

The former analysis examines existing and proposed U.S. embassies. They provide programmatic precedents for a U.S. embassy. It is also important to look to Algerian vernacular architecture in order to understand how space is created and buildings are decorated.

Algerian Vernacular: Villa Abd-el-tif

The Villa Abd-el-Tif provides an example of Algerian vernacular architecture. Built originally in the 17th century, the villa has since been renovated and restored in

1907 and more recently in 2005. With these renovations, the villa has gone through several uses. It was originally a traditional Algerian residence, then became a residence for European artists during colonization, and now functions as an exhibition space for artists. The main programmatic elements of Algerian vernacular allow for the versatility of the space. Common in many precedents, particularly those located in warm climates, is the courtyard. The Villa Abd-el-tif proves to be no different, with a central courtyard (*west ed-dar*) functioning as the heart of the house. The courtyard space is closely connected with the culture and climate of Algiers, heating and cooling adjacent rooms as well as providing a safe and tranquil outdoor environment.¹⁴⁴ The central location of the courtyard and strategic placement of openings in the building envelope allow a passive ventilation system to cool the interior of the house. The villa is oriented to take advantage of the north-east prevailing winds of Algiers and the Mediterranean Sea.

¹⁴⁴ Chebaiki, "Vernacular Housing," 156.

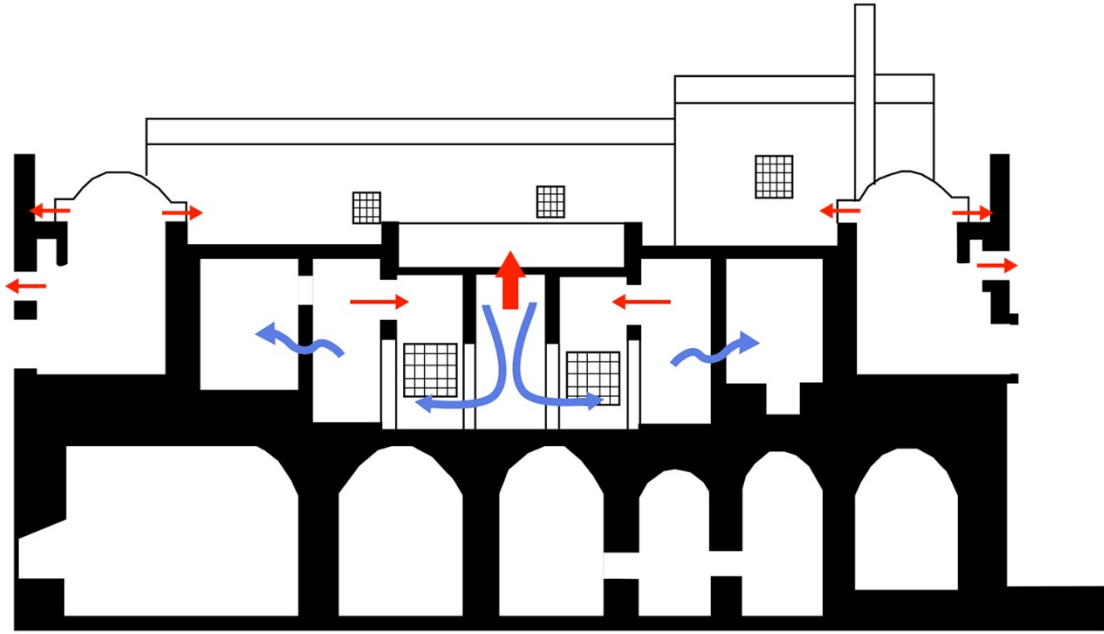


Figure 53. Villa Abd-el-tif air flow diagram. (Source: Author).

As the plan organization suggests, the central courtyard is the heart of the house, with all other support spaces surrounding it including gallery spaces, the kitchen, and a series of alcoves topped with cupolas (*k'bou*), as seen in Figure 54.

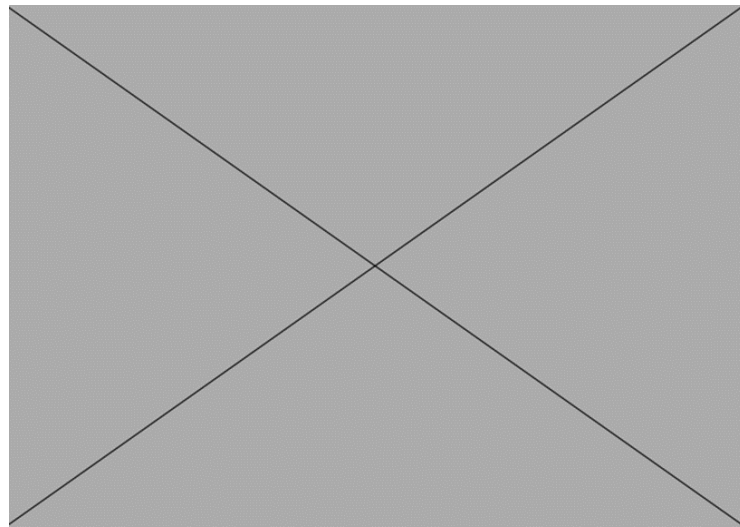


Figure 54. Villa Abd-el-Tif First Floor Plan. (Source: Chebaiki, "Vernacular Housing").

The spatial organization is not only relevant to the climate of Algiers but also to the organization of U.S. embassies. U.S. embassies must separate private and public spaces while accommodating a collaborative office environment. Utilizing the central courtyard as an organization element is an opportunity for the U.S. embassy in Algiers to respond to the climate and existing vernacular architecture forms.

The space created by the central courtyard provides another opportunity for embassy design. The colonnade created around the courtyard receives good amounts of natural light and ventilation. As a result, these spaces are used as gallery spaces, housing the art of local artists. Many U.S. embassies house both American art and art of the host nation. Thus, the support spaces created by the courtyard of residential architecture can be translated to U.S. diplomatic architecture. The Villa Abd-el-tif employs sustainable ventilation systems and traditional spatial organization typical of Algerian architecture, two principles crucial to understanding and designing in Algiers.

Algerian Vernacular: Grand Mosque of Algiers

The Grand Mosque of Algiers is perhaps one of the most recent landmarks to join the Algiers skyline. The mosque was designed by German architects KSP Jurgen Engel Architekten and completed in 2012. Costing around \$1.1 billion, the project was a priority for the Algerian government, serving as catalyst for the future development of Algiers.¹⁴⁵ Perhaps its most iconic element is the 265-meter minaret that pierces the skyline, as seen in Figure 55 and 56. The minaret thus creates a

¹⁴⁵ Aidan Lewis, "Building the world's tallest minaret," *BBC News*, January 27, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-30677073>

landmark that can be seen throughout the entire city. On the other hand, the presence of the grand stone walls along the street edge create a landmark in the new urban development of the city, as seen in Figure 57. Thus, the complex holistically maintains a strong presence at both the pedestrian scale and the urban scale.

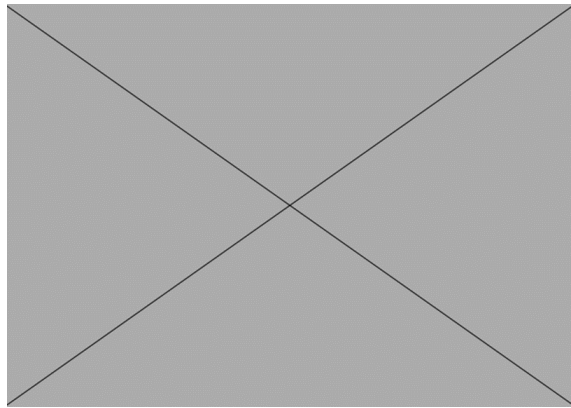


Figure 55. Minaret of the Grand Mosque piercing the sky of Algiers. (Source: KSP Jurgen Engel Architekten).

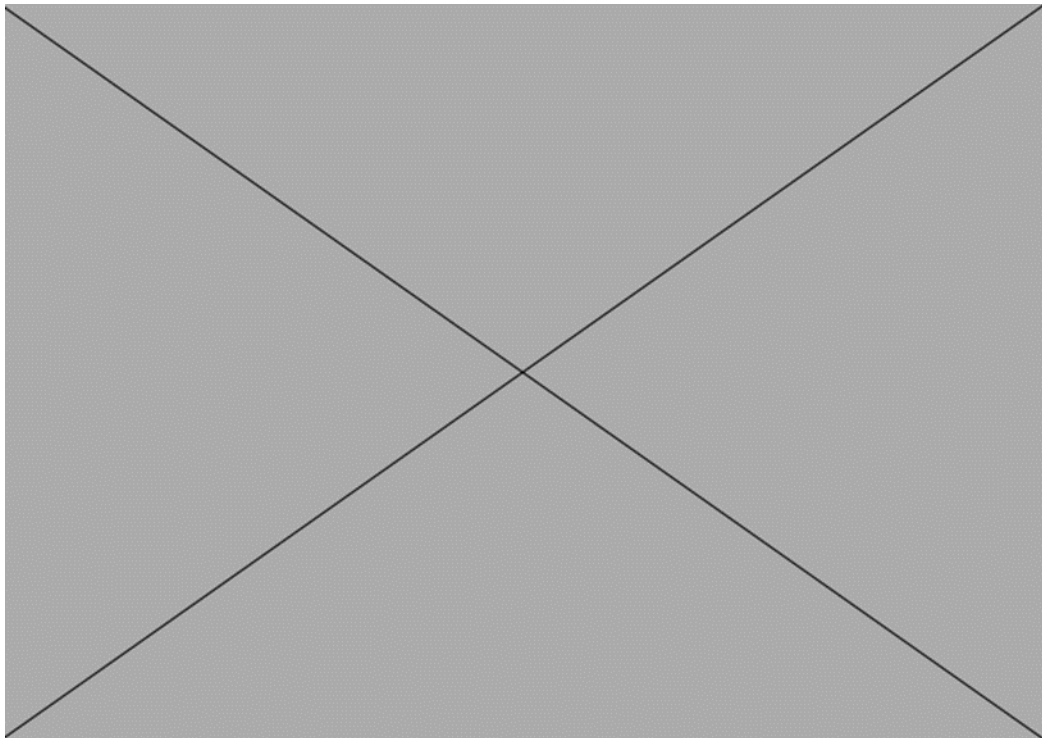


Figure 56. Southwest view of the mosque under construction. (Source: CSCEC Algerie).

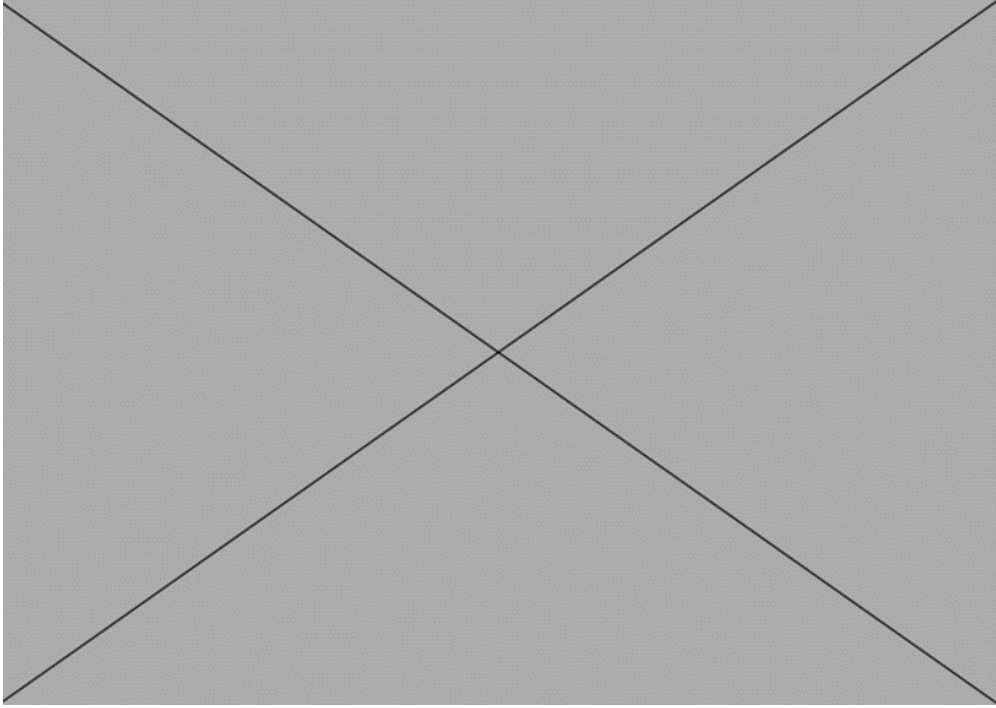


Figure 57. Southwest corner of Grand Mosque. (Source: KSP Jurgen Engel Architekten).

The program of the mosque creates interesting relationships between the public and private realm, incorporating both interior and exterior spaces. The plan is organized along a main longitudinal axis, running parallel to the Bay of Algiers. The mosque also sits atop a plinth, strengthening its relationship to the sea while creating a strong distinction between the site and neighboring highways.¹⁴⁶ More importantly, it serves as a nucleus for religious, cultural, and educational events with an estimated 120,000 visitors a day.¹⁴⁷ This is important as it asserts itself as a community asset. Combining religious, cultural, and educational functions ensures that the site is used daily. The site separates its religious and institutional functions with outdoor park

¹⁴⁶ Edwin Seda, "Grand Mosque of Algiers," ArchiDatum, last modified April 29, 2015, <http://www.archidatum.com/projects/grand-mosque-of-algiers-ksp-juergen-engel-architekten-gmbh/>

¹⁴⁷ Seda, "Grand Mosque of Algiers."

space. The public nature of the park unifies the two major programs. Likewise, Figure xx reveals how the educational and cultural facilities on the southern edge serve as a buffer between the busy city and the more relaxing park.¹⁴⁸ Here, the architects play close attention to the perimeter condition of the complex, maintaining a strong street edge while providing more intimate outdoor spaces.

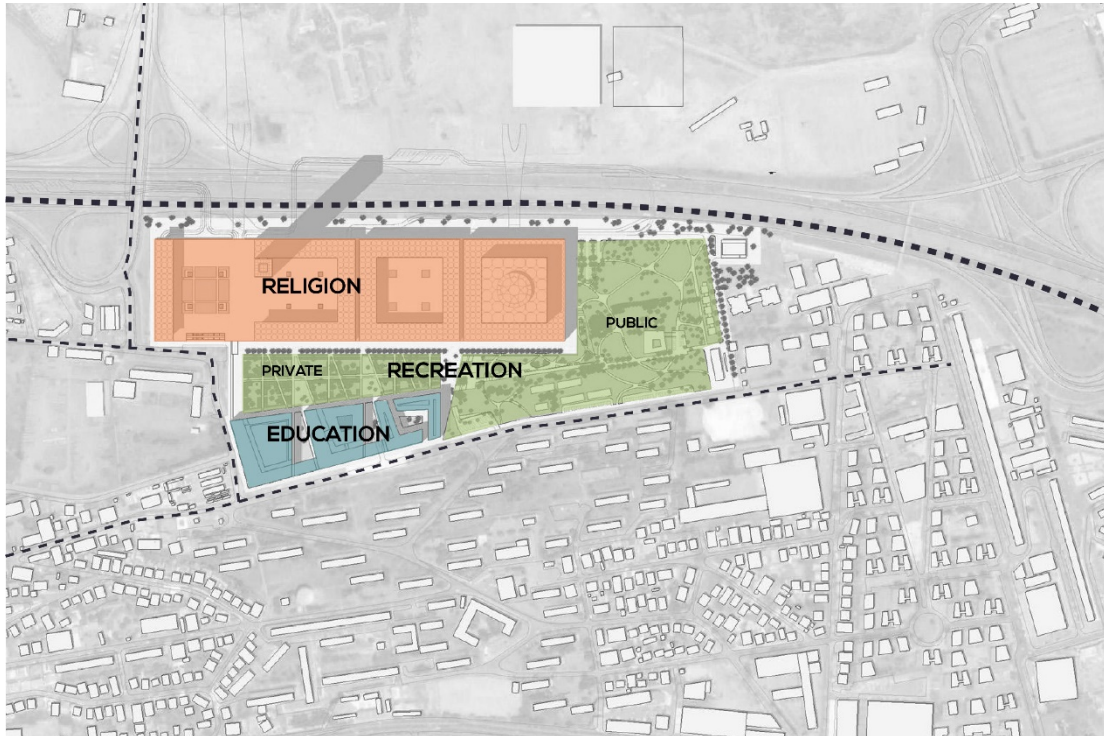


Figure 58. Grand Mosque of Algiers Site plan. (Source Author).

The program of the complex is further broken down into areas of contemplation on the west end and areas of congregation on the east end. The sequence of spaces, visible in plan and section (Fig.59) become increasingly private and intimate as one moves east towards the prayer and imam rooms.

¹⁴⁸ Anders Noren, "Mosque of Algiers by KSP Juergen Engel Architekten," *Design Magazine for Middle East and North Africa*, November 16, 2009, <http://desmena.com/2009/11/mosque-of-algiers-by-ksp-juergen-engel-architekten/>

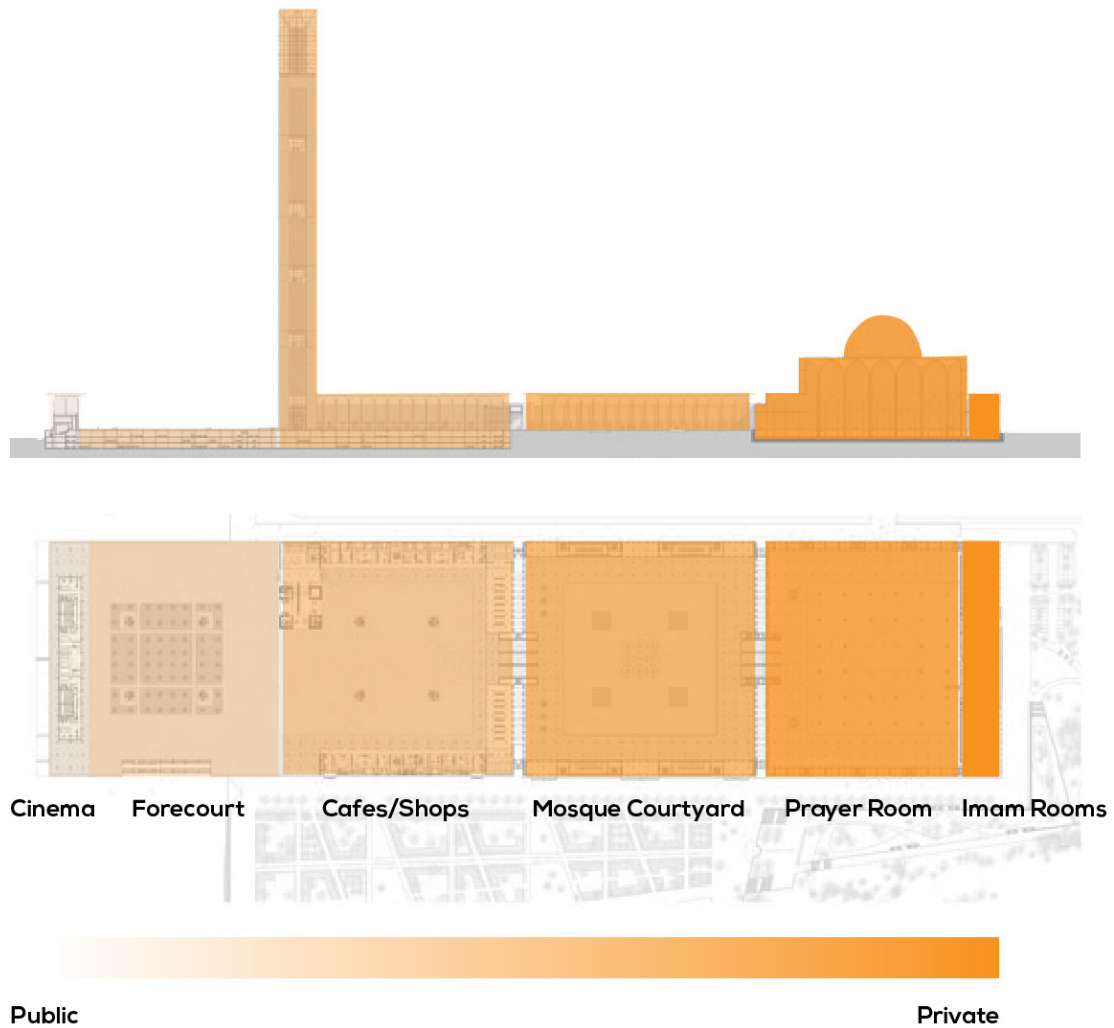


Figure 59. Diagram of privacy sequence of the Grand Mosque of Algiers. (Source: Author).

Although this precedent is deeply rooted within a religious context, one can learn from the spatial sequence it utilizes. The series of courtyards used to transition between public and private spaces is a strategy that can be deployed in embassy design. This mosque complex also explores the idea of using urban forms, in this case the educational buildings, as a buffer from the existing urban core. As this thesis

explores edge conditions within an urban environment, the Grand Mosque of Algiers is a relevant case study. Although security concerns are not paramount as they are in the design of U.S. embassies, creating a safe environment is nevertheless a goal of urban projects, particularly those within a religious context.

Chapter 7: Site Analysis

“Each site represents a new opportunity for place-making, as well as a new opportunity to demonstrate American ingenuity and sensitivity to local conditions.”

- OBO, Embassy Perimeter Improvement Concepts and Design Guidelines (June 2011)

Site selection is perhaps one of the most important aspects involved in U.S. embassy design. Important security benefits can be achieved through site selection. Proper placement of the building within the site and a careful location of building occupants and functions can minimize exposure threats.¹⁴⁹

Site Selection Algiers, Algeria

Criteria / 10		Adjacent to Casbah		Les Fusilles Station		Mont Plaisant	
CONTEXT	 Urban Density	10	High Density	10	High Density	2	Low Density
	 Safety & Security	1	High crime due to unoccupied buildings	8	Existing security with neighboring embassies	10	Remote site, landscape as security
	 View of Water	9	1/2 mile from coast	9	1/2 mile from coast	6	1.5 miles from coast
ACCESS	 Historic Significance	7	Adjacent to World Heritage Site, protected by UNESCO	1	Vacant Site, flatlands of coast	1	Unbuilt site
	 Pedestrian Access	8	Removed from main road, small scale streets	8	Main roads, existing infrastructure	2	Busy surrounding roads, steep topography
	 Public Transportation	8	0.25 mile from proposed Metro	10	0.25 mile from Metro	1	No public transportation nearby
PROXIMITY	 Vehicle Access	5	Removed from main road, small scale streets	9	Access to major roads on 3 sides	5	Access to major road on 1 side
	 Community Amenities	7	Palaces, mosques, national museum, schools, hospitals	7	Schools, mosques, hotels, grocery, hospitals	3	Surrounded by residential neighborhoods
	 Pulic & Recreational Space	9	1/4 mile Prague Garden, 1/2 mile soccer field	10	Adjacent Park Djenane Damerdji, 1/2 mile Botanical Garden	6	Small neighboring parks, space to design more
PROXIMITY	 Other Diplomatic Missions	1	2.5 miles from 'Embassy Row'	1	2.5 miles from 'Embassy Row'	2	1.5 miles from 'Embassy Row'
	Total	65/100		73/100		43/100	

Figure 60. Site Selection Matrix. (Source: Author).

The most important criteria that informs the site selection of this U.S. embassy can be grouped into three categories: context, access and proximity. Context refers

¹⁴⁹ Demkin, *Security Planning and Design*, 14.

to the physical characteristics of the landscape and the density of the built environment. Access applies not only to those working within the embassy but to visiting members of the community as well. Proximity examines the existing amenities and therefore the opportunity to connect to the local community. The three major drivers within these categories are urban density, pedestrian access, and the availability of community amenities. Urban density is important to the location of U.S. embassies as it allows them to contribute to the civic and urban fabric of the host city.¹⁵⁰ This is a major concept that this thesis explores. Likewise, pedestrian access should be heavily considered as embassies face many visitors, including locals and Americans. Likewise, vehicular access is crucial to the functional aspects of the embassy. Lastly, community amenities including schools, community centers, and mosques to name a few, are considered as they sponsor an activated environment. With surrounding community amenities, the U.S. embassy can also become an amenity. Under this criteria, two viable sites were selected, one located adjacent to the Casbah and the other located around the Les Fusilles metro station.

The two sites lay along the Algerian coastline, having access to the Mediterranean Sea within a half-mile. As the Algiers coastline works towards revitalization, the new U.S. embassy can function as a symbol of diplomacy and of foreign investment.¹⁵¹ Both sites are partly vacant, decreasing the amount of demolition needed in the densest part of Algiers. When compared to one another, the

¹⁵⁰ Tiersky, "Securing U.S. Diplomatic Facilities", 10.

¹⁵¹ Madani Safar Zitoun, "The Development of the Bay of Algiers: Rethinking the City through Contemporary Paradigms," *Built Environment* (1978) 36, no. 2 (2010): 213. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23290066>.

Les Fusilles site provides better opportunities for access, amenities, and public space while also posing fewer security concerns than the site adjacent to the Casbah.

Current U.S. standards dictate that new diplomatic missions abroad must be built with a 100-foot setback from the street.¹⁵² Thus each site must be large enough to satisfy the setback requirements. The Casbah site is 197,443 square feet totaling 4.53 acres while the Les Fusilles site occupies 400,389 square feet totaling 9.19 acres (Fig. 61 & 62). Considering the 100-foot setback, 6-meter clear zone, and anti-ram barriers that are required, the Casbah site quickly diminishes in size, proving to be too small to satisfy the embassy program. Likewise, the Casbah site requires the demolition of several buildings (Fig. 63). This compares to the Les Fusilles site that is vacant aside from a parking lot (Fig. 64).

¹⁵² 22 U.S.C. § 4865.

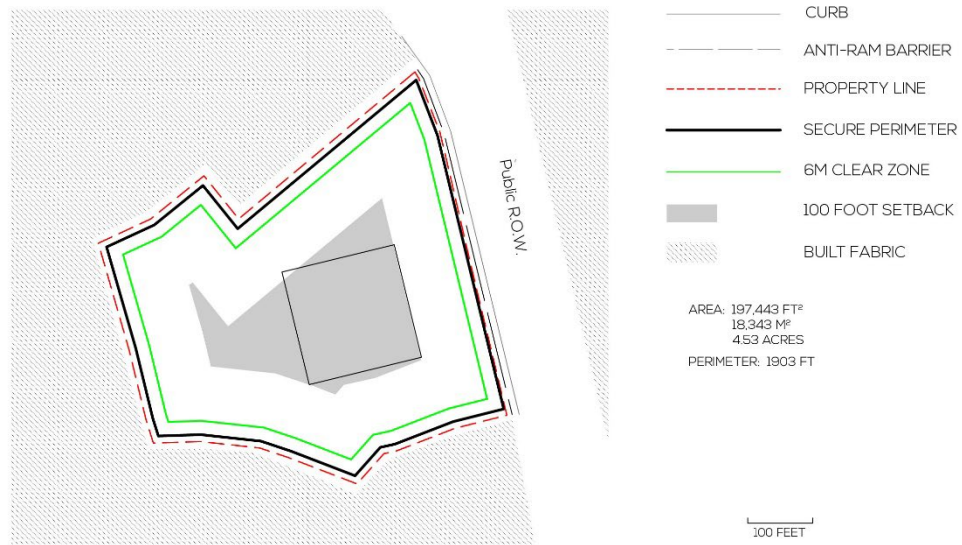


Figure 61. Casbah site diagram. (Source: Author).

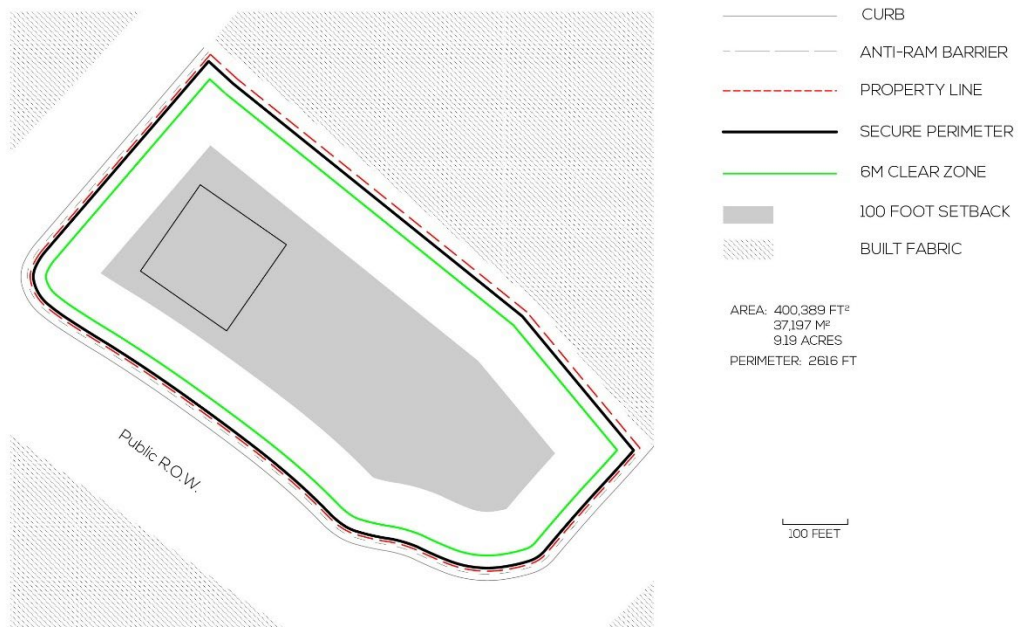


Figure 62. Les Fusilles site diagram. (Source: Author).

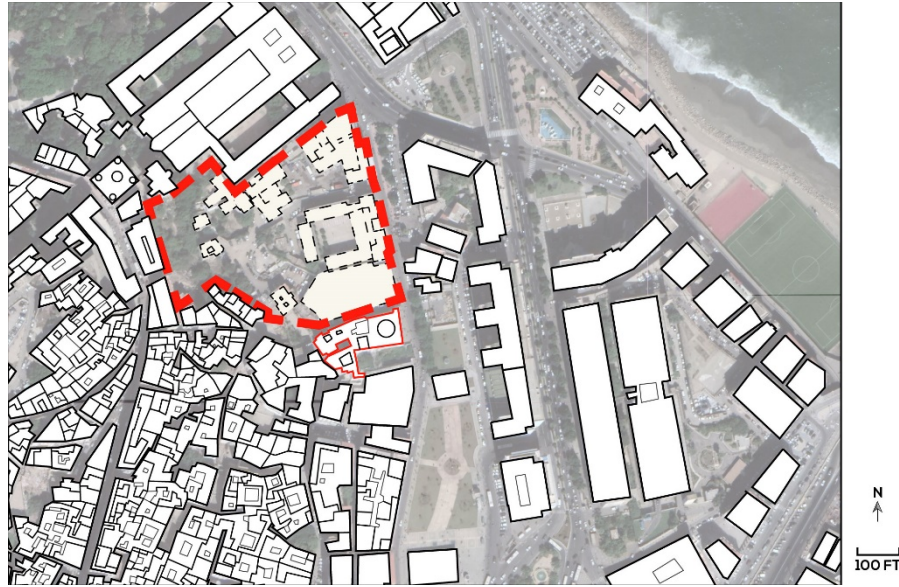


Figure 63. Demolition plan of Casbah site. (Source: Author).

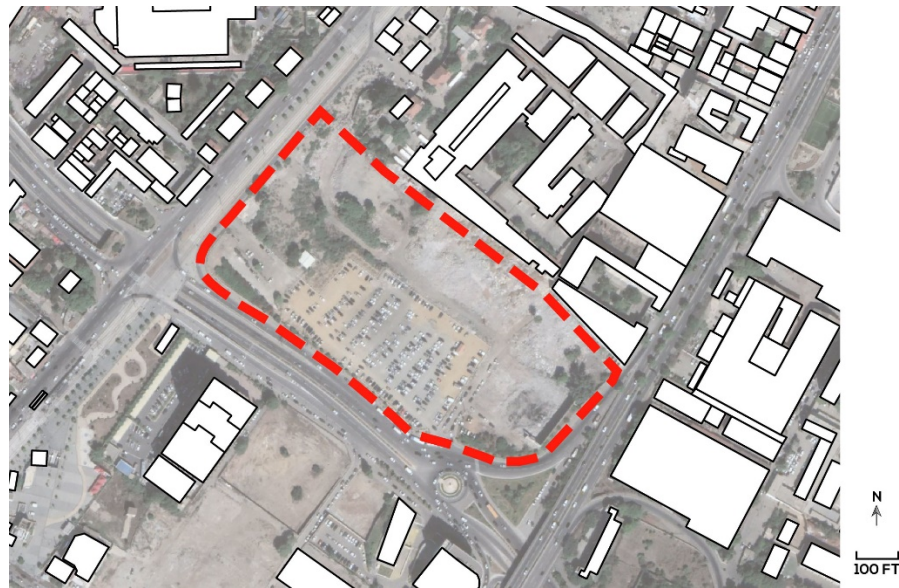


Figure 64. Demolition plan of Les Fusilles site. (Source: Author).

Because Algiers exists amongst the Atlas mountain range, one must also consider the topography of the two sites. As the Casbah was once the fortified part of the city, it is located on the mountainous part of the coast. There is a 100-foot elevation change

between the eastern edge of the site and the western edge. The topography continues to climb with the dense residential fabric of the Casbah climbing up the mountain. Although the change in elevation can be viewed as a design opportunity, it poses strong security concerns. With other buildings potentially having access and views to the top of the embassy site, the Casbah site becomes less desirable. On the other hand, the Les Fusilles site exists on the lowlands of the coast and has much flatter topography, relatively. The minimal change in topography minimizes concerns of security from buildings up above.

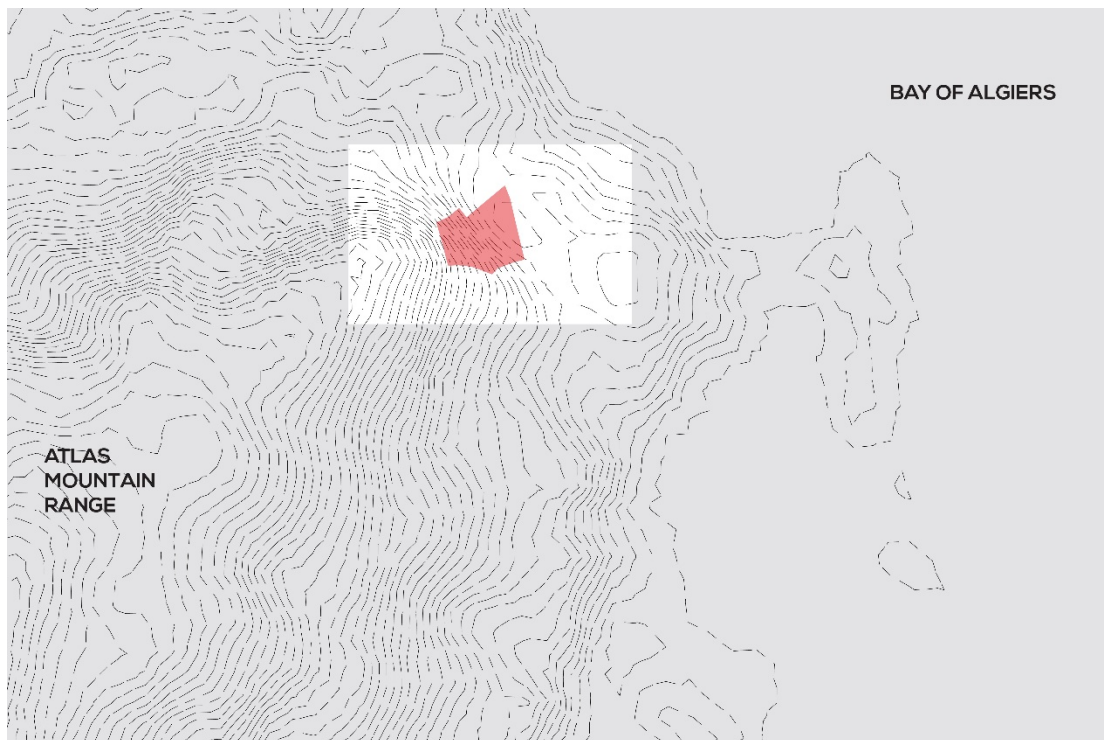


Figure 65. Casbah Site Topography. (Source: Author).

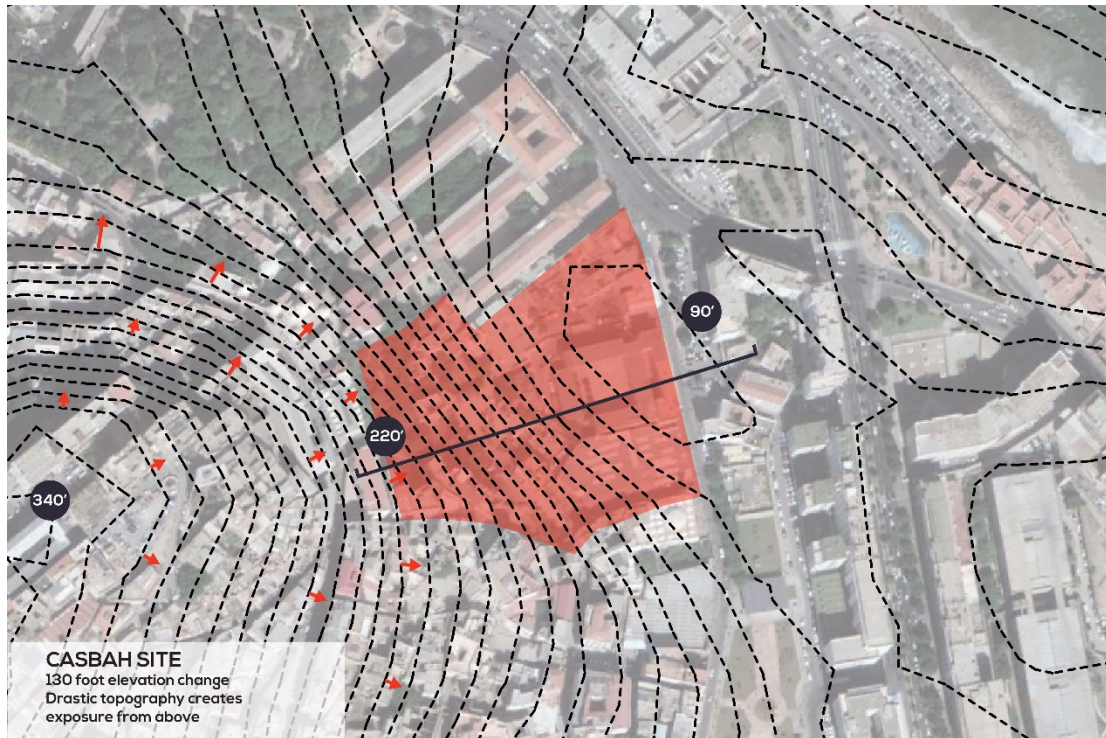


Figure 66. Casbah Site Topography Creates Security Concerns. (Source: Author).

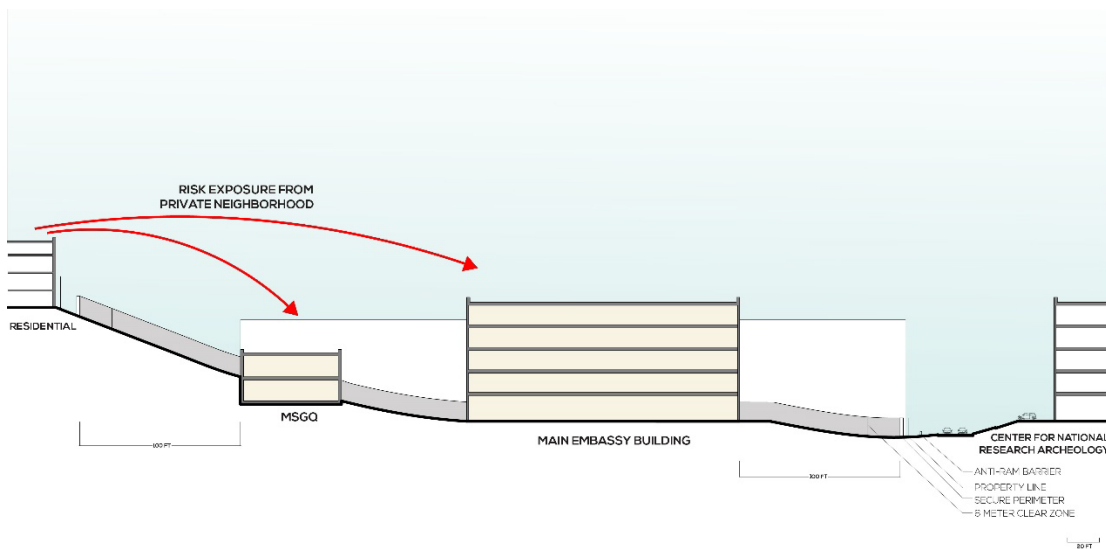


Figure 67. Casbah Site Section. (Source: Author).

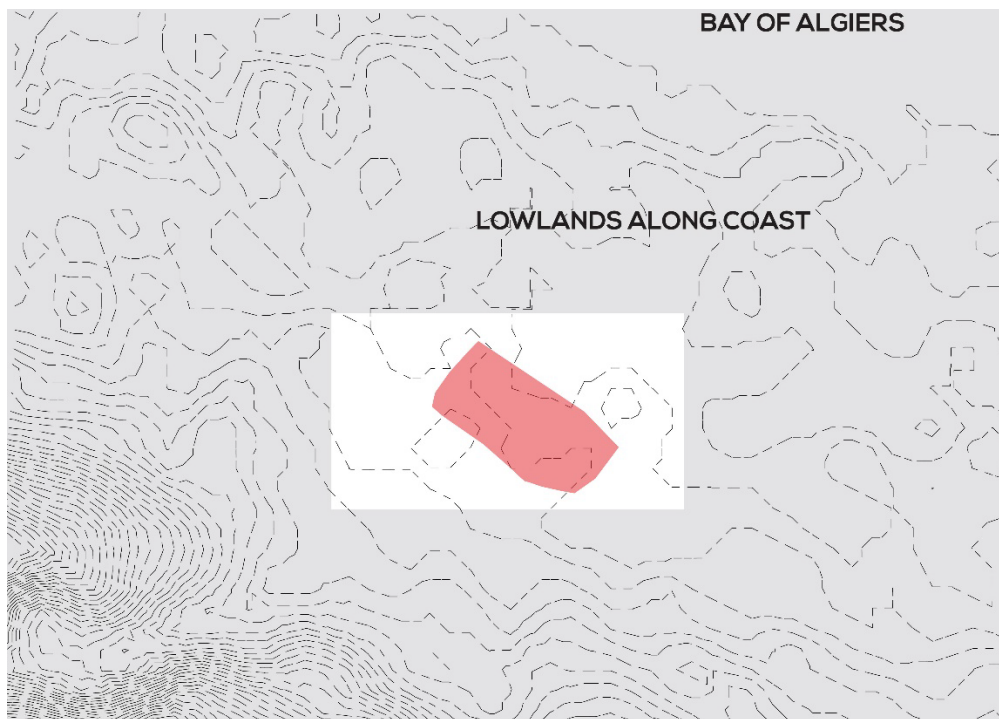


Figure 68. Les Fusilles Site Topography. (Source: Author).



Figure 69. Les Fusilles Site Topography Mitigates Security Concerns. (Source: Author).

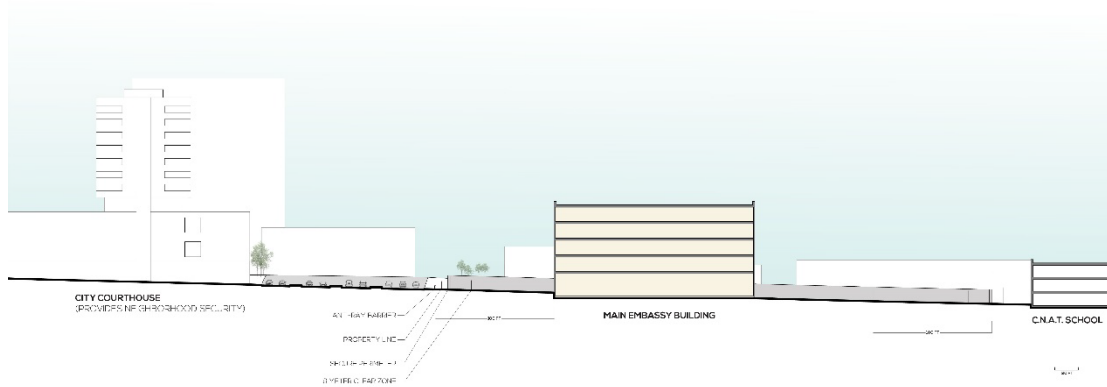


Figure 70. Les Fusilles Site Section. (Source: Author).

Although both sites exist in a dense urban environment, have good pedestrian access, and existing community amenities, the Les Fusilles site provides a safer environment. With major roads providing smooth vehicular traffic and a metro stop and train station nearby, the Les Fusilles site is accessible to the surrounding community and those that commute. The Les Fusilles site also has a wide range of cultural resources including three schools, the city courthouse and various mosques all within a half-mile radius. Furthermore, as public and recreational space is a priority within the American culture, the Les Fusilles site provides access to several parks including the adjacent Park Djenane Damerdji and the Botanical Garden. As this embassy seeks to become a community amenity the existing network of parks is an asset of the Les Fusilles site.

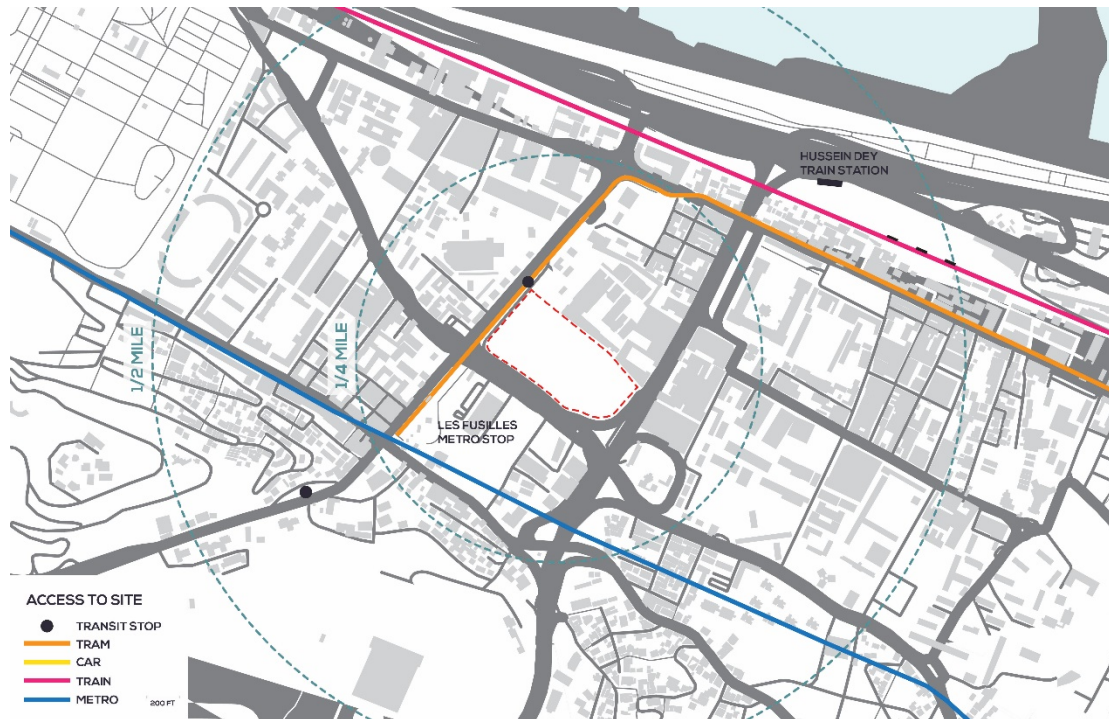


Figure 71. Circulation around site. (Source: Author).



Figure 72. Surrounding Amenities. (Source: Author).



Figure 73. Parks. (Source: Author).

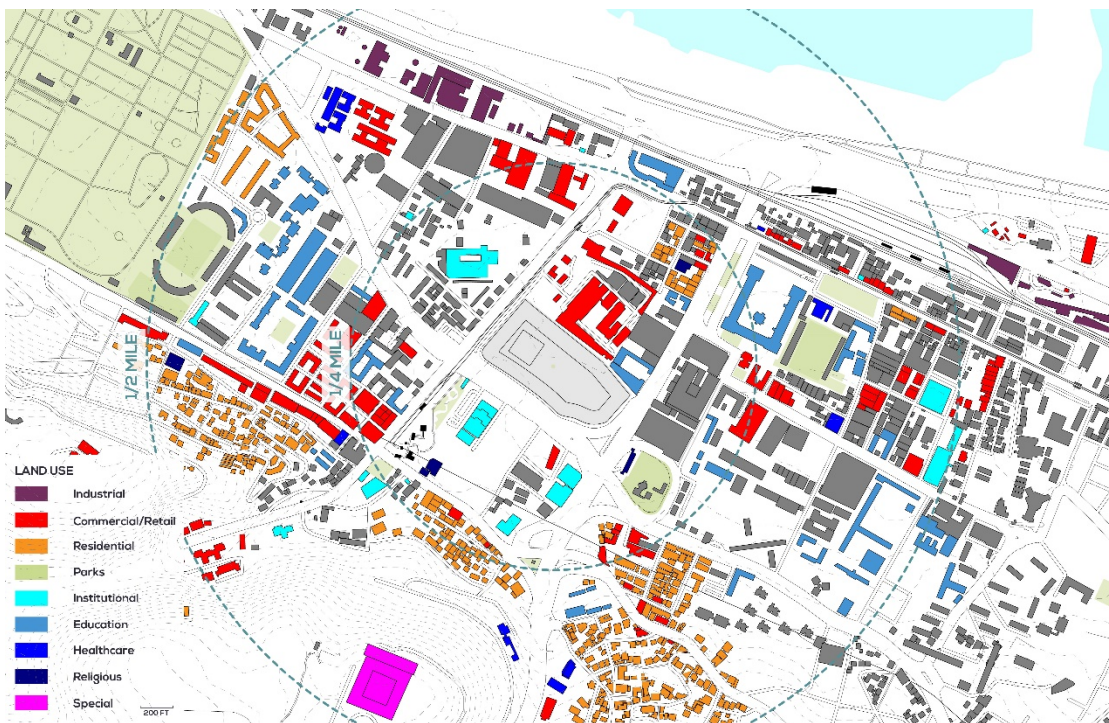


Figure 74. Land use. (Source: Author).

Chapter 8: Programming an Integrated Embassy

“Until the day when we fully engage the arts, sciences, and the humanities in their ability to transform human thinking and values, we will succumb to control by the cruder acts of violence, egotism, and ignorance”

- Elizabeth Gill Lui (*Building Diplomacy*, 2004)

This thesis explores strategies to enhance the working environment of U.S. diplomats and Locally Engaged Staff while also integrating the embassy into the local community and cultural context. While the embassy site will satisfy the 100-foot setback and maintain a secure perimeter, the distinction between the public and private realms of the embassy will be crucial to its functionality and security.

The Public Realm

To promote a truly integrated diplomatic mission, both interior and exterior spaces should feel open and transparent while still being secure. The new embassy will include collaborative spaces that reinforce the collaborative nature of international relations. Programmatic elements that will reinforce a connection to the community include art exhibition space, classrooms, a research center, an auditorium, a library, and a multi-purpose room. The new embassy in Mexico City, Mexico introduces a research center similar to the one being proposed. These spaces aim at engaging local students as there are three schools within a half-mile radius. These spaces will serve as assets to the community as they are learning spaces for both Americans and Algerians. Although these spaces are the most public part of the embassy compound, they nevertheless must meet security requirements. Referencing

the layers of security in Chapter 4, these areas would be considered unrestricted zones. This means that once employees and visitors are initially screened upon entering the secure perimeter, they are free to access any of these spaces. Figures 75 and 76 detail the first and most public layer of the embassy program.

THE PUBLIC REALM

LAYER 1

	Quantity	Square Feet	Total Square Feet
Security			
Marine Offices	1	5,000	5,000
Security Checkpoint	1	1,000	1,000
Subtotal			6,000
Public Receiving Areas			
Courtyard	1	9,000	9,000
Lobby	1	5,000	5,000
Waiting Area	1	1,000	1,000
Cafe	1	500	500
Art Gallery	1	500	500
Subtotal			16,000
Learning Spaces			
Classrooms	3	1,000	3,000
Library	1	2,000	2,000
Multi-Purpose Room	1	2,000	2,000
Research Center	1	2,000	2,000
Auditorium	1	1,000	1,000
Subtotal			10,000
Public Departments			
Public Diplomacy	1	6,700	6,700
Consular Services	1	4,000	4,000
Community Liason	1	2,000	2,000
Conference Room	1	1,000	1,000
Press Room	1	1,000	1,000
Subtotal			14,700
		Total	46,700

Figure 75. Public Realm Layer 1 Program Data. (Source: Author).

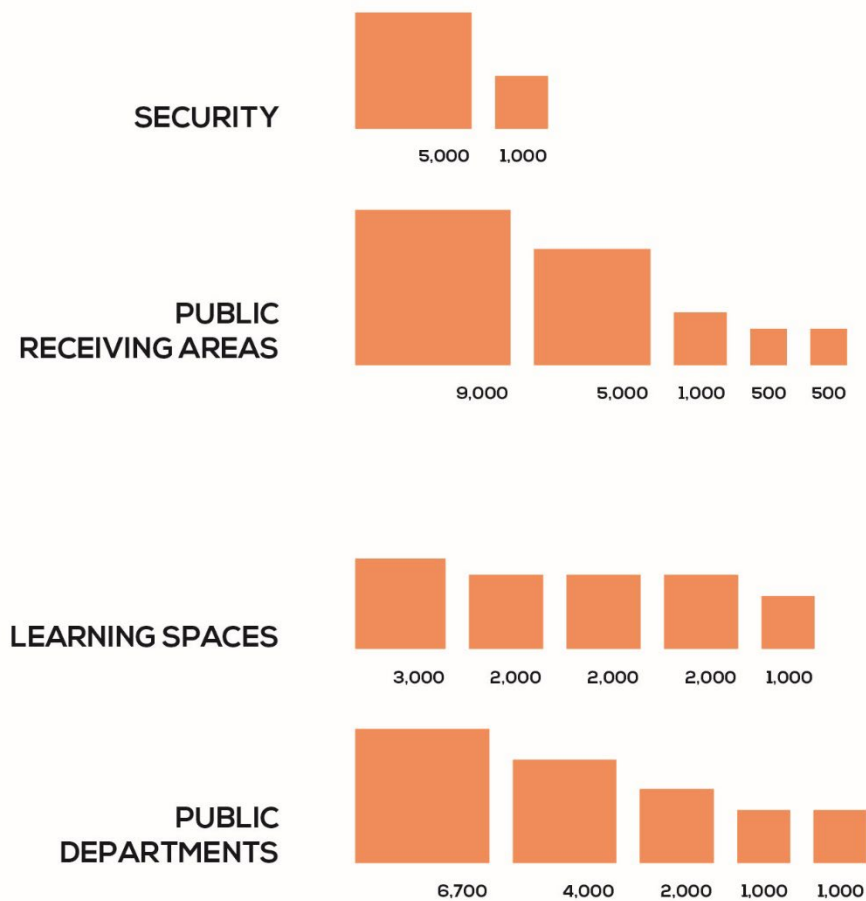


Figure 76. Public Realm Program Blocking. (Source: Author).

The Semi-Private Realm

The semi-private realm of the embassy includes food services and wellness. Regarding security, these areas are controlled, meaning that they are not completely unrestricted in access. In other words, one must have a purpose and be granted access to these areas. Food services, including the cafeteria and break room, exists in this layer of the program because of its users. The social aspects of food services warrant it to be in the most public realm. However, for security reasons, diplomats and Locally Engaged Staff must remain protected, especially during leisure time. The wellness unit also exists in the second layer. Its purpose is to provide health services

to both embassy employees and American citizens seeking medical help. Because of the private nature of healthcare, the wellness unit needs to have a level of screening. However, it is not necessary for it to be amongst the most protected spaces of the embassy. Furthermore, to encourage a healthy environment, the wellness unit has its own courtyard, providing a more intimate outdoor space. Figures 77 and 78 detail the second layer of the embassy program.

THE SEMI-PRIVATE REALM			
LAYER 2			
	Quantity	Square Feet	Total Square Feet
Food Services			
Cafeteria	1	2,000	2,000
Kitchen	1	800	800
Storage	1	300	300
Break Room	1	200	200
Subtotal			3,300
Wellness			
Health Unit	1	5,200	5,200
Courtyard	1	1,000	1,000
Office	2	200	400
Subtotal			6,600
Support Spaces			
Facilities	1	15,600	15,600
Storage	1	1,800	1,800
Restrooms	1	800	800
Subtotal			18,200
		Total	28,100

Figure 77. Private Realm Layer 2 Program Data. (Source: Author)

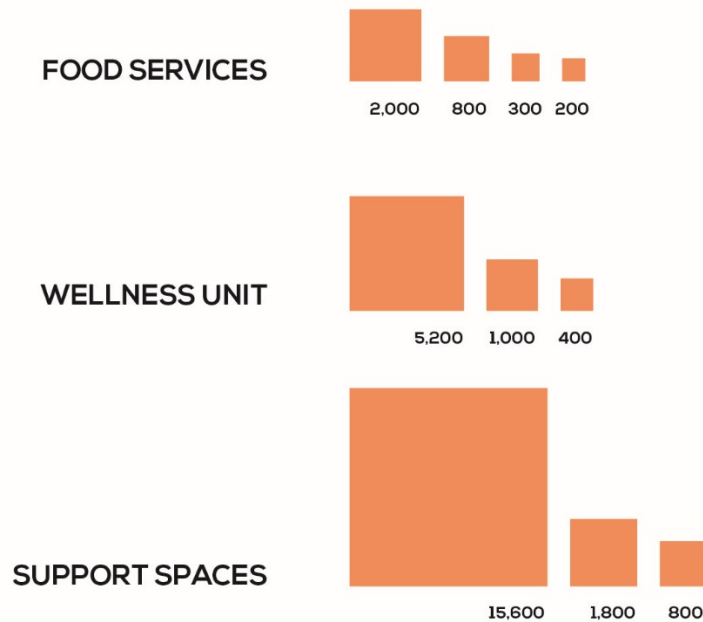


Figure 78. Semi-Private Realm Program Blocking. (Source: Author).

The Private Realm

The third layer of embassy program includes the office space occupied by both U.S. diplomats and Locally Engaged Staff. This layer receives the highest level of security and therefore access is restricted. With restricted access, one must either be an employee or obtain specific permission for entering. Either way, one must pass through another layer of security clearance. This section of the embassy experiences the least number of visitors. However, with Locally Engaged Staff working alongside diplomats, collaboration is crucial to the success of diplomatic missions. Thus, these spaces serve as a platform for collaboration. Seemingly mundane yet necessary programmatic elements that will reinforce this collaboration include conference rooms and shared work spaces. The program of the current embassy generally

separates diplomats from the locals. The current model makes further distinctions by providing U.S. employees with formal offices and locals with cubicle work spaces, suggesting a clear hierarchical order. The new embassy will restructure the office environment to provide a more cohesive work space that promotes trust and collaboration, even amidst the inevitable hierarchy that exists in the office environment. Figures 80 and 81 detail the third and most private layer of the embassy program.

THE PRIVATE REALM

LAYER 3

	Quantity	Square Feet	Total Square Feet
Private Departments			
Office Work Space	1	20,000	20,000
Defense	1	5,000	5,000
Conference Rooms	4	1,000	4,000
Foreign Services	1	2,500	2,500
Politics and Economics	1	2,500	2,500
Agriculture	1	1,500	1,500
IT	1	1,200	1,200
Administration Office	1	1,000	1,000
Total			37,700
Executive Section			
Ambassador	1	5,000	5,000
DCM	1	2,500	2,500
Lobby	1	500	500
Security	1	500	500
Total			8,500
		Total	46,200

Figure 79. Private Realm Layer 3 Program Data. (Source: Author).

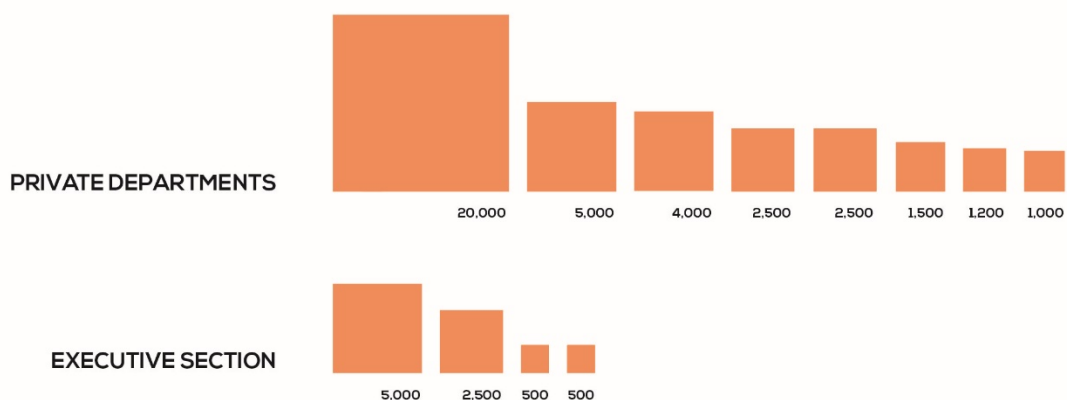


Figure 80. Private Realm Program Blocking. (Source: Author).

PROPOSED PROGRAM

U.S. EMBASSY, ALGIERS

	Square Feet
PUBLIC REALM (LAYER 1)	
Security	6,000
Public Receiving Areas	16,000
Learning Spaces	10,000
Public Departments	14,700
Total	46,700
SEMI-PRIVATE REALM (LAYER 2)	
Food Services	3,300
Wellness	6,600
Support Spaces	18,200
Total	28,100
PRIVATE REALM (LAYER 3)	
Private Departments	37,700
Executive Section	8,500
Total	46,200
Net Total	101,000
Factor	1.45
Gross Total	146,450

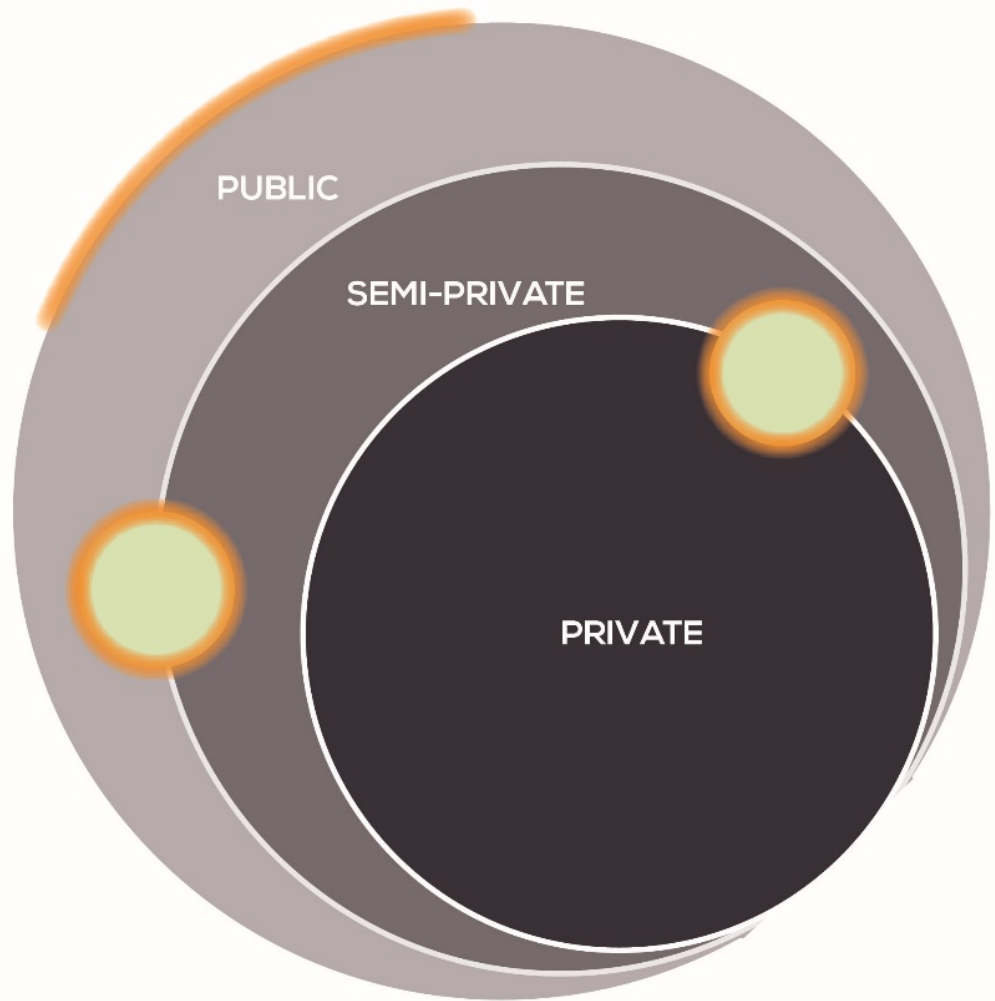
Figure 81. Proposed Program Data. (Source: Author).

Many of the programmatic elements listed in Figures 72-77 currently exist within the U.S. embassy in Algiers. This thesis does not suggest removing any of the functional aspects that currently exist. Rather, this thesis works toward introducing new cultural program pieces while improving the collaborative work spaces of U.S. diplomats and locals. As the Locally Engaged Staff and community interaction are crucial to understanding the host nation, it is vital that the embassy environment reinforces respect, collaboration, and transparency. This level of understanding will not only improve the working environment of the embassy but will also sponsor the success of U.S. missions abroad.

Program Studies

With the proposed program seen in Figure 81, this thesis explores the relationship between public and private spaces of the U.S. embassy in Algiers. The outward-

looking culture of the U.S. promotes a more public nature of the embassy environment while concerns of security promote a more private environment. Likewise, the inward-looking culture of Algeria sponsors a more private environment. This creates an interesting juxtaposition between public and private space and further between the American and Algerian cultures. This interaction creates an opportunity to learn about and understand one another's culture. Understanding one another's culture is the first step towards enhancing the global society for which we strive.



CONCENTRIC ORGANIZATION

Opportunity for interaction
 Many access points (security)
 Limitation for courtyards
 Public realm given greatest visibility



Figure 82. Concentric Program Organization. (Source: Author).

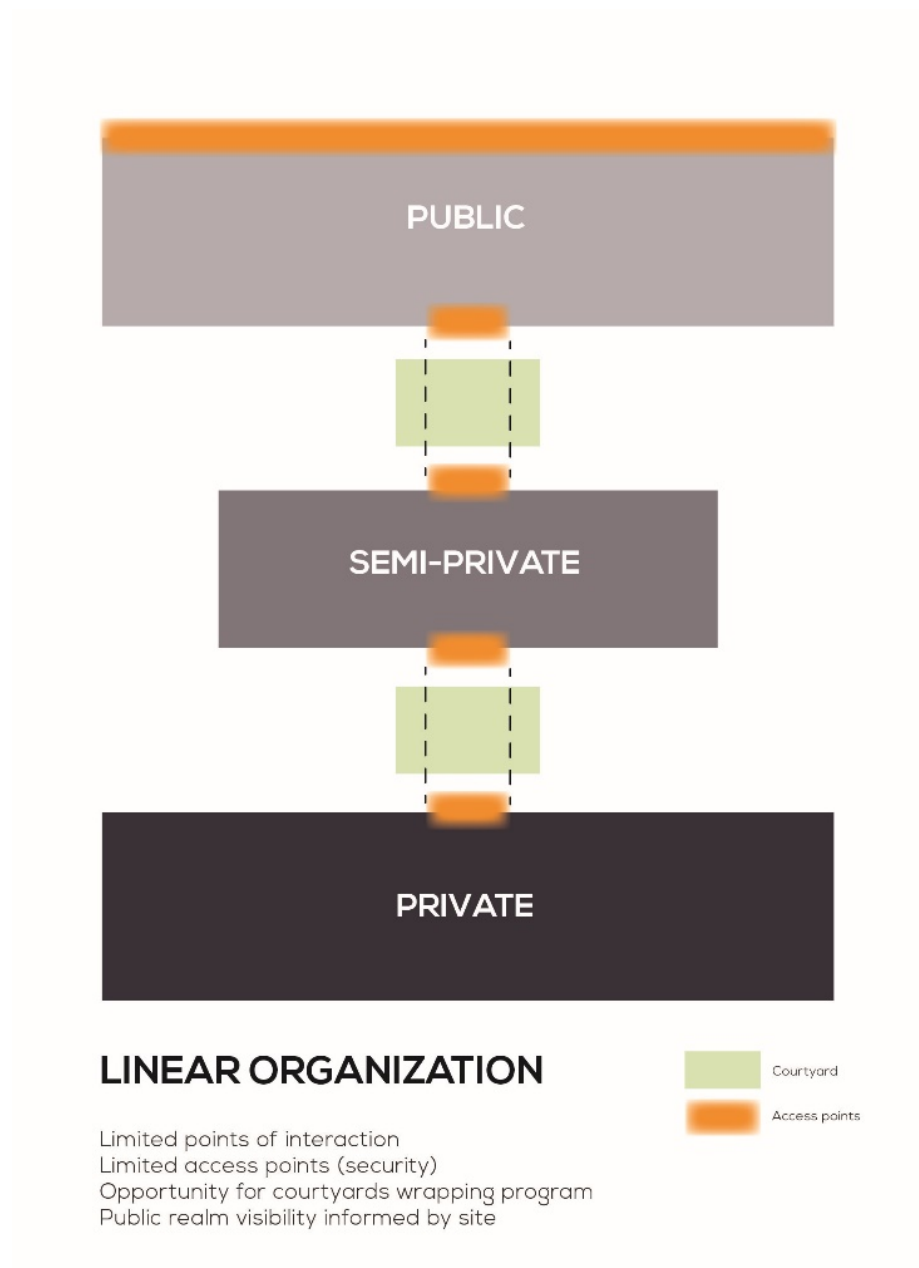
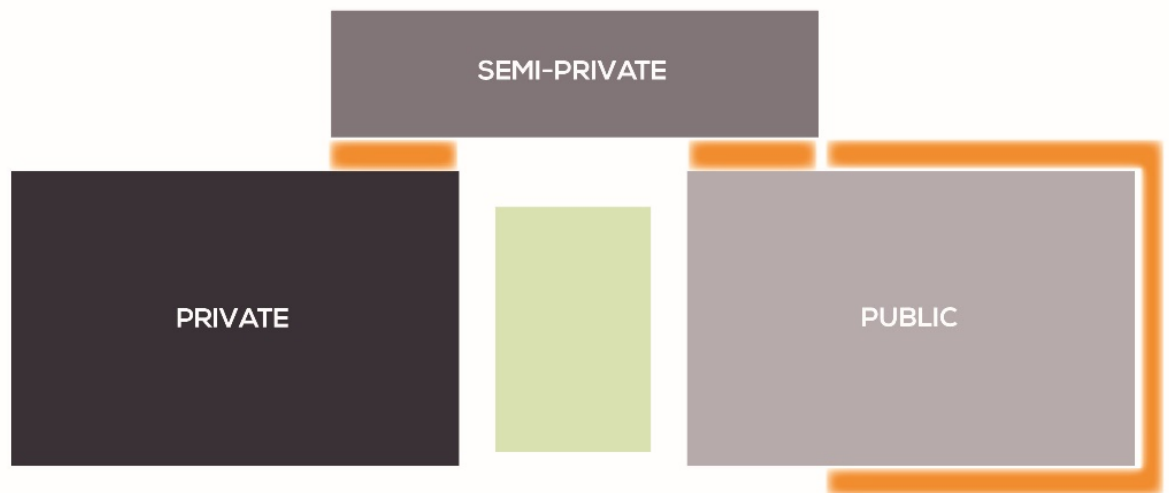


Figure 83. Linear Program Organization. (Source: Author).



LAYERED ORGANIZATION

Disconnects public and private - visual connection
 Limited access points (security)
 Opportunity for central shared space



Figure 84. Layered Program Organization. (Source: Author).

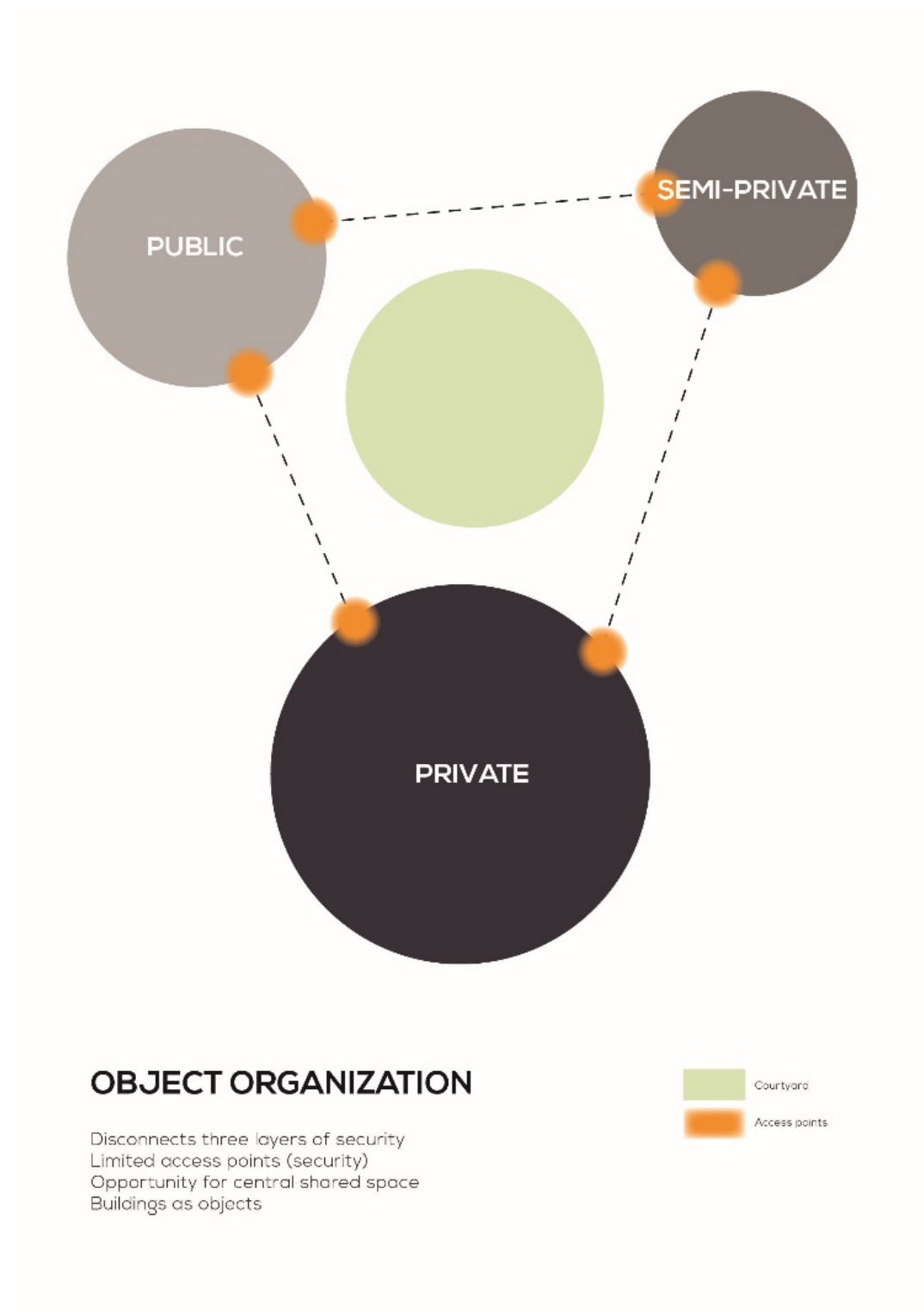


Figure 85. Object Program Organization. (Source: Author).

The studies seen in Figures 82-85 examine potential relationships between the three layers of program of the U.S. embassy. These studies emphasize access points between the programs as they will involve various layers of security. This program works towards providing collaboration through the overlapping of public, semi-private, and private, Collaboration between the community and amongst the embassy employees will promote an inclusive environment and bridge the gap between cultures.

Chapter 9: Design Proposal

Urban Scale

The urban strategy of this design proposal aims to connect people to the embassy via public transportation while also connecting the existing assets of the site. After site selection and analysis, three main assets were identified in the community, the Botanical Garden, the Les Fusilles metro stop and the Sablette Seaview Park. Figure 86 shows the relationship between the existing assets.

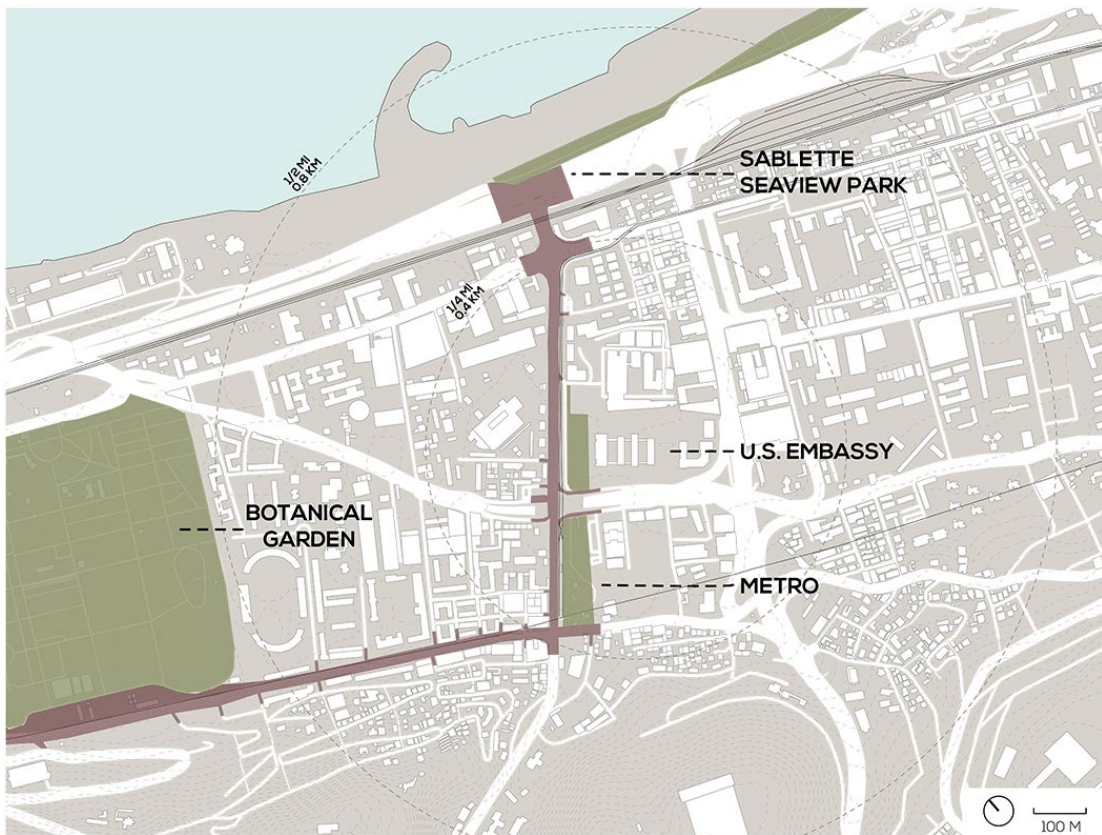


Figure 86. Connecting Assets. (Source: Author).

As Figure 86 shows, the new U.S. Embassy of Algiers is located along the critical path from the Botanical Garden to Sablette Seaview Park. Sablette Seaview Park is currently being revitalized by the city, giving Algiers public space along the

waterfront. In order to continue the notion of public space, the design proposal extends the public space of the Les Fusilles metro stop onto the site, occupying the western edge. By doing so, this enhances the circulation from the metro stop to the newly revitalized waterfront. This also reinforces the idea that the U.S. Embassy is not imposing on the existing urban fabric.

This design proposal also analyzed the built edge of the urban fabric surrounding the site. The urban fabric of Algiers possesses two different kinds of edges, wall and building.

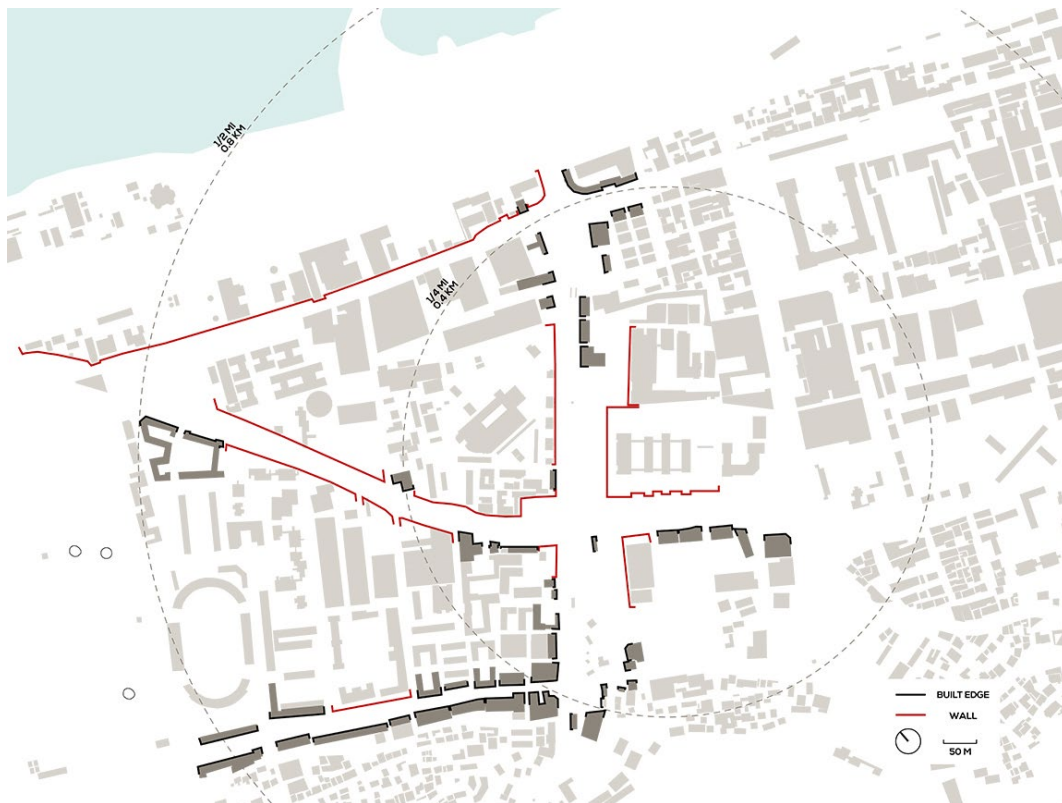


Figure 87. Built Edge vs Wall. (Source: Author).

As Figure 87 shows, the fabric of this area of Algiers is unique and diverse concerning edges that are formed by buildings versus edges that are formed by walls. As U.S. embassies require a walled edge, this diagram reinforces the idea that the

perimeter wall is less impeding in this context. In fact, it contributes to the diversity of the public realm of Algiers.

This proposal aims to enhance the perimeter condition of the U.S. embassy, making it more welcoming and interactive than the typical walled condition addressed earlier in Chapter 4. Figures 88-90 show the design of the different perimeter conditions around the site.



Figure 88. Public Seating Perimeter Condition. (Source: Author).



Figure 89. Public Plaza Perimeter Condition. (Source: Author).

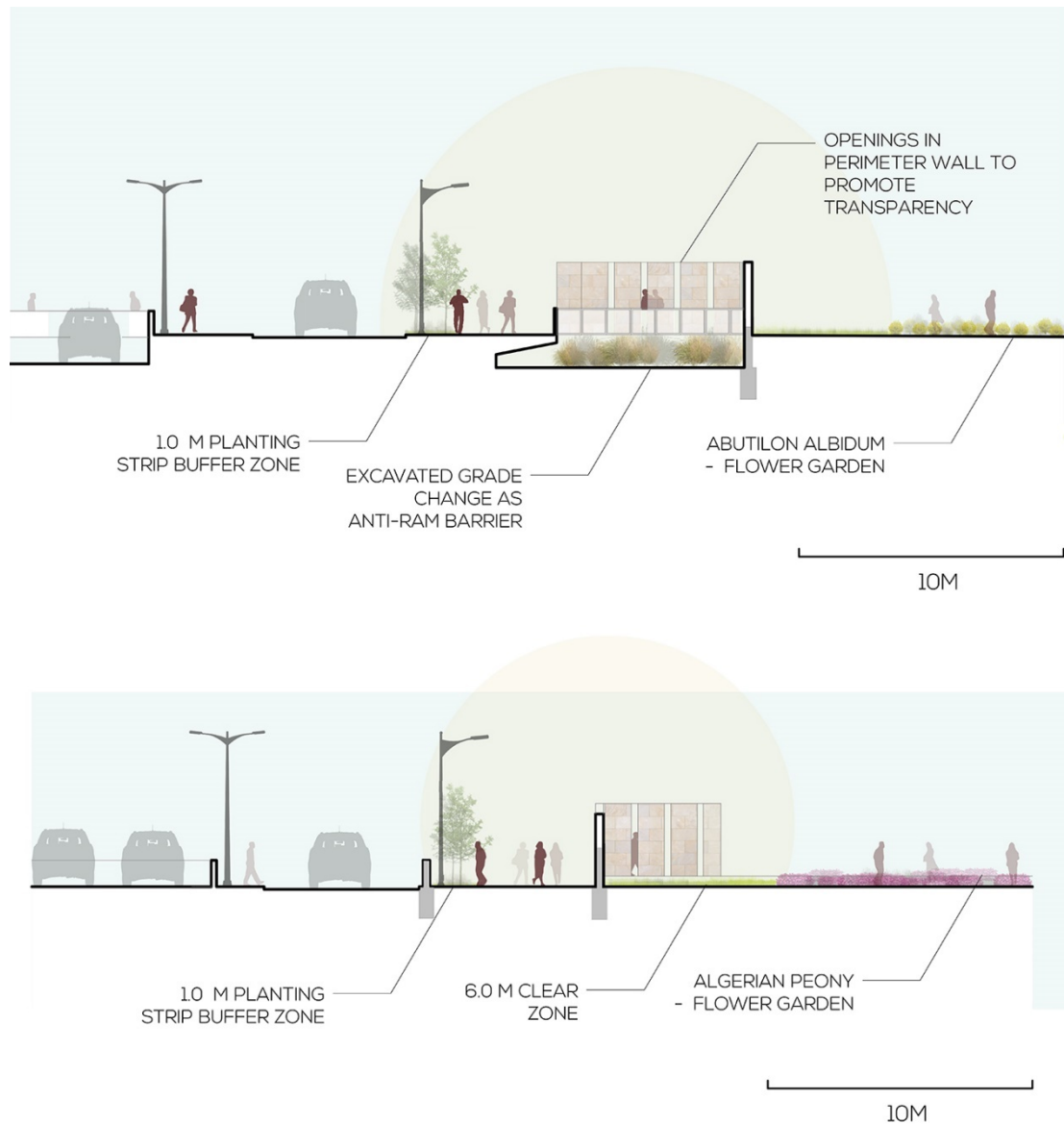


Figure 90. Transparent Wall Perimeter Conditions. (Source: Author).

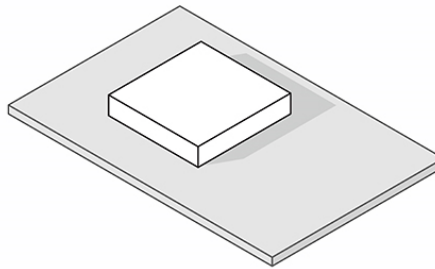
The different perimeter conditions use grade changes, varying levels of transparency, and native plants in order to promote a more welcoming edge to the U.S. Embassy.

Building Scale

A four-step process creates the massing of the design proposal.

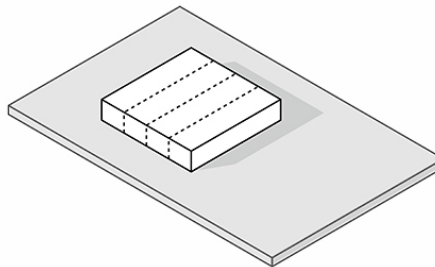
DEFINE

One building typically centered on site.



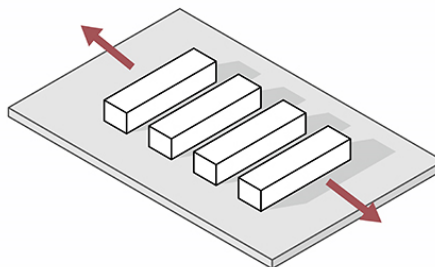
ORGANIZE

With security concerns, distinguish between public and private functions.



VENTILATE

Thin buildings bring light and air through all zones while remaining secure.



RECONNECT

Links create a series of courtyards that connect buildings, establish hierarchy, and connect users to nature.

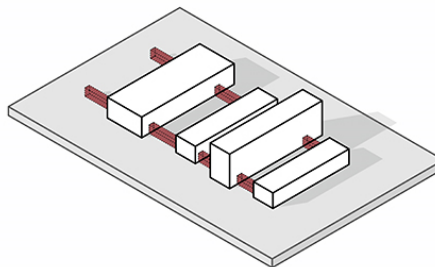


Figure 91. Building Massing Diagram. (Source: Author).

By creating four distinct masses, the links provide the security to the different buildings, a crucial component of embassy design. The links also provide a sense of

threshold, a component that is typical of Algerian architecture. Figure 92 shows the site plan of the design proposal.

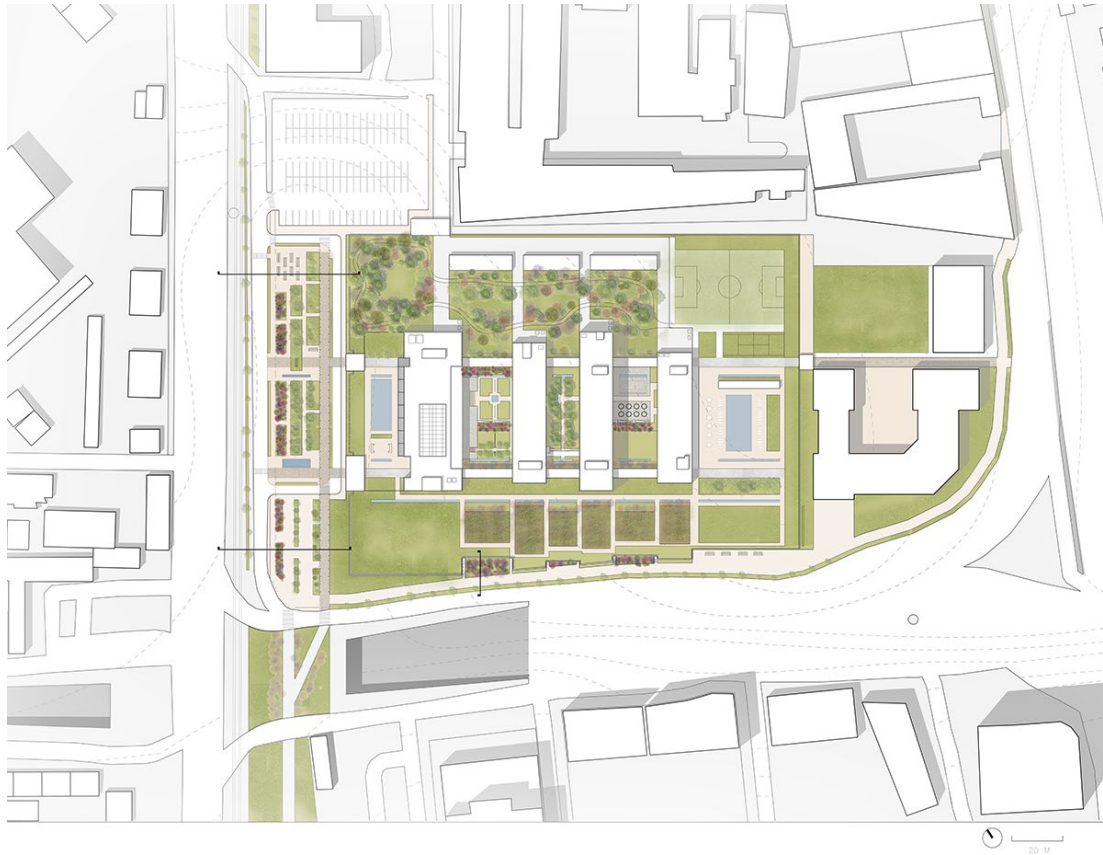


Figure 92. Site Plan. (Source: Author).

The urban strategy and massing create a series of layers that one passes through when moving from the western edge of the site to the eastern edge of the site.



Figure 93. Embassy Approach from Public Plaza. (Source: Author).

Although the U.S. embassy does not utilize the entire site, the design proposes that an American school and gym be located on the eastern edge. These two buildings are close to the embassy but not within the secure perimeter. This allows embassy employees to be near the school their kids attend and while also getting the opportunity to have social interactions in the gym located just off the site.

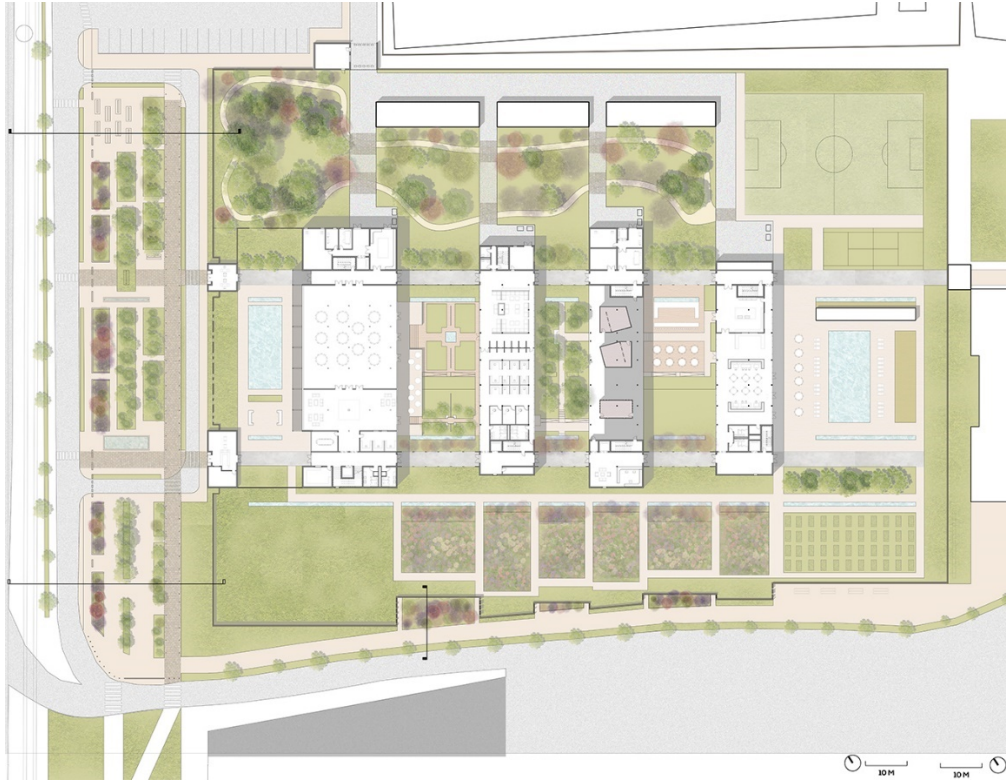


Figure 94. First Floor Plan. (Source: Author).

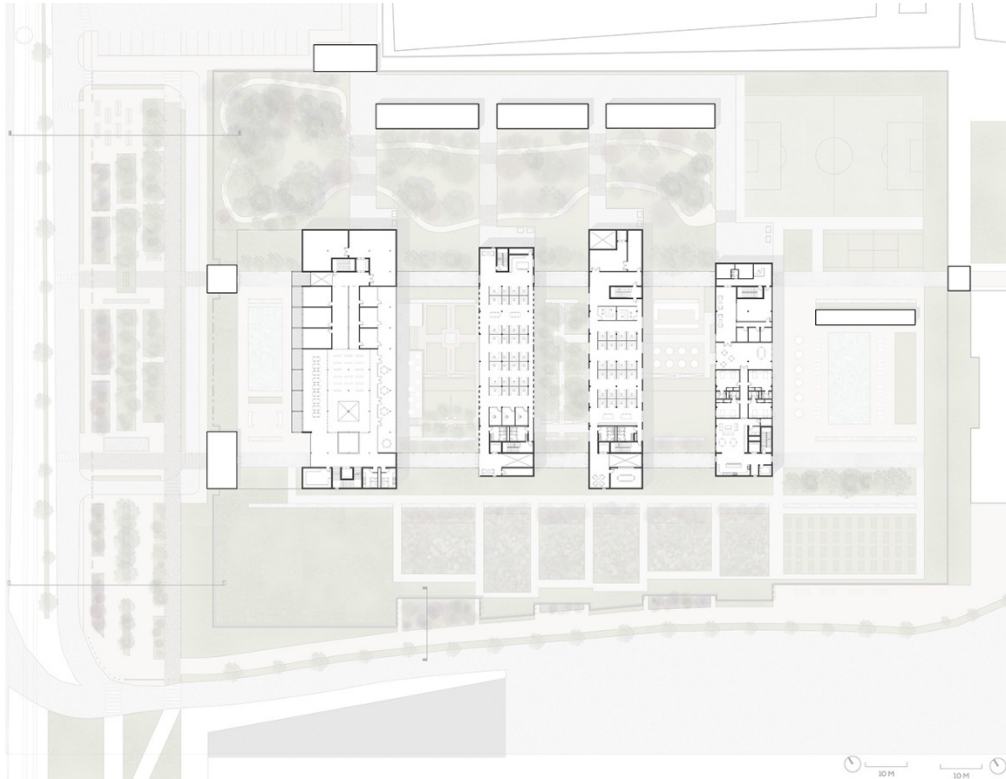


Figure 95. Second Floor Plan. (Source: Author).

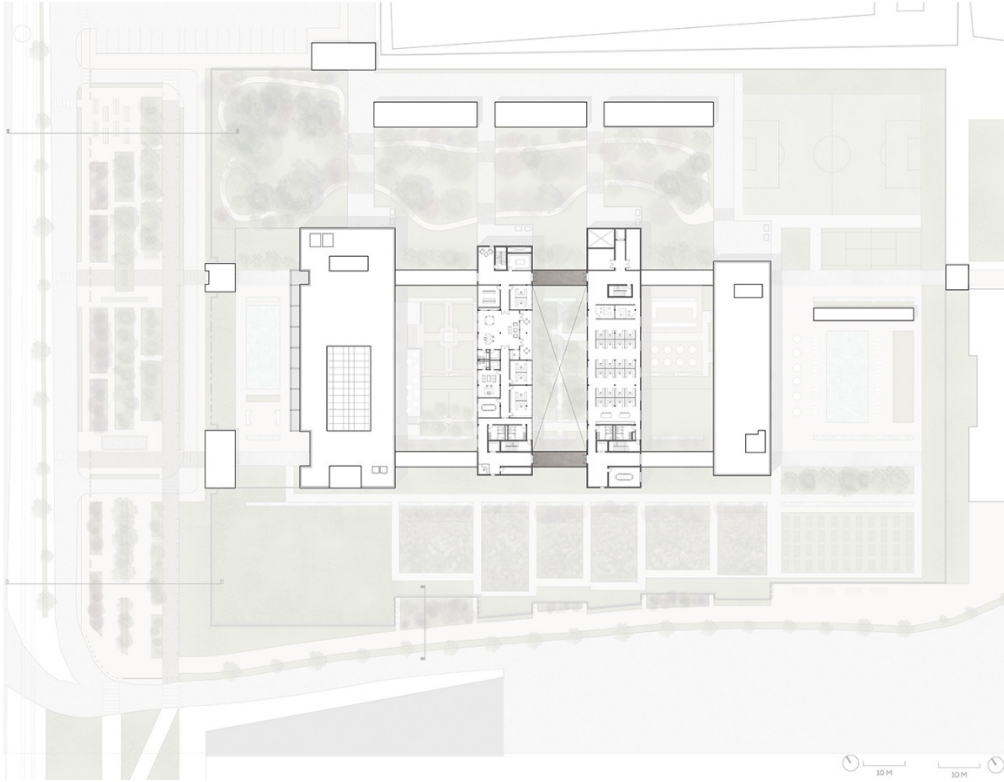


Figure 96. Third Floor Plan. (Source: Author).

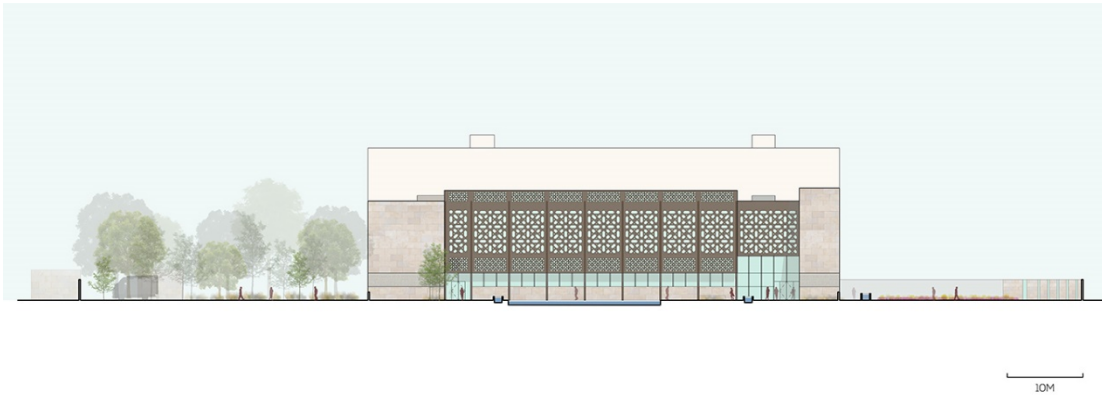


Figure 97. West Elevation. (Source: Author).



Figure 98. South Elevation. (Source: Author).

As the floor plans and elevations show, each building and each space within the embassy is connected with a courtyard. Figure 99 describes the courtyards and their intended functions. By creating a series of courtyards, each one can provide a different experience. Figures 100-106 demonstrate the different experiences and functions.

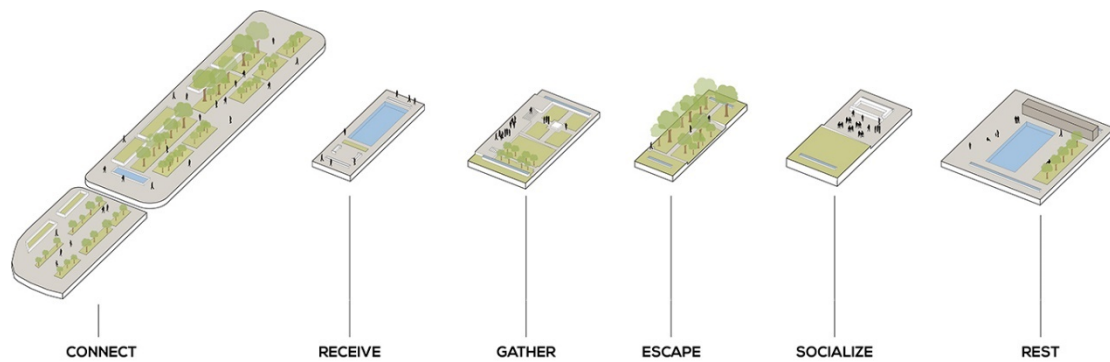


Figure 99. Courtyard Functions. (Source: Author).



Figure 100. Section Perspective. (Source: Author).



Figure 101. Main Receiving Court. (Source: Author).



Figure 102. Event Courtyard. (Source: Author).



Figure 103. Consular Waiting Room. (Source: Author).



Figure 104. Link. (Source: Author).



Figure 105. Escape Courtyard. (Source: Author).



Figure 106. Embassy Café. (Source: Author).

Detail Scale

As one progresses through the building from the western edge of the site, the program becomes more private. Thus, the first building is the public building

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2 PLY ROOF MEMBRANE
25 MM THERMAL/VAPOR BARRIER
75 MM CONCRETE SLAB
50 MM METAL DECKING
W12 X 50 STEEL MEMBER
VAV MECHANICAL DUCT
CEDAR WOOD CEILING FINISH
CMU BACK UP WALL
50 MM THERMAL/VAPOR BARRIER
LIMESTONE CLADDING
LIMESTONE WINDOW LINTEL
LIMESTONE WINDOW SILL
W6 X 25 STEEL MEMBER
HSS8 STEEL COLUMN
STEEL CHANNEL SCREEN SUPPORT
ALUMINUM SCREEN
STEEL BEARING PLATE
DRAINAGE PIPE
CONCRETE FOOTING
POLISHED CONCRETE FLOOR FINISH
CONCRETE SLAB ON GRADE

WALL AND SCREEN DETAILS

The screen detail (Fig. 107) is based off Algerian tile patterns. The three additional options provide the opportunity for Algerian craftsmen to be involved in the building process.

One of the challenges that this design proposal faces is a question of what is ‘American’ versus what is ‘Algerian.’ Only after studying and analyzing the architecture of both cultures can one find a balance that truly represents the open and transparent values of the United States.

Conclusion

“As long as people look to the U.S. for world leadership and as long as embassies reflect America’s self-image and its commitment to other nations, the architecture of diplomacy will continue to matter.”

Jane Loeffler (The Architecture of Diplomacy, 1998)

The importance of embassies to people as an architectural typology reveals itself at several scales. At the global scale, embassies present a tangible image of the U.S. and its global influence. Embassy architecture provides a snapshot of not only distinct architectural details but also inherently reveals social and political elements of the American culture and identity. With an increasingly global society, the image that U.S. embassies transmit to the world becomes even more important. The way embassies are perceived amongst the local community and amongst other nations around the world can influence diplomatic relations. Thus, diplomatic architecture must represent ideals and principles we wish to share with the world, particularly the open and transparent nature of U.S. democracy.

At the national scale, embassies represent a collaborative endeavor between two different entities, in this case the United States and Algeria. The challenge becomes preserving our cultural identity while learning and growing intellectually about another cultural identity. On one hand, due to differences in cultures, diplomatic missions can reveal interesting elements of an American culture that might otherwise go unnoticed. On the other hand, the understanding of another nation can create sensitivity and awareness, supporting a more effective method of diplomacy.

At the community level, diplomatic architecture addresses the people. Embassies provide secure environments for U.S. citizens. Simultaneously, they serve as a platform for helping local citizens with various travel or educational needs. As this thesis reveals, U.S. embassies can break through the isolated fortress stigma and become a public amenity. Embassies can become a part of the urban fabric while also functioning as a beacon of hope for peace between nations.

At all scales, diplomatic architecture represents the idea of sharing and collaboration. Fundamentally, embassies share architectural language. On a deeper level, embassies must examine the creation of space between different cultures. As this thesis explored, the U.S. and Algeria employ different ways of creating space and different ways of using space. As with all other typologies of architecture, embassies reveal the character of space as a reflection of different cultures. Therefore these differences result from different social, topographic, and climactic factors, just to name a few. Diplomatic architecture thus functions as a vehicle for understanding space and people, a condition that is crucial for creating a built environment that will span across many cultures and generations to come.

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