

# The Appropriation of Privative Space as a Satisfier: Case Study in Daboussi Algiers

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## Abstract

As the city branding is getting more important on worldwide scale, visual pollution is spreading all over our country, partially caused by spatial transformation in housing. This research aims to study privative space appropriation in Algiers mass housing, by conducting a social survey among 50 residents, in the district of Daboussi, Algiers. Looking at the phenomenon as **satisfier**, key-concept in Max-Neef's human needs theory. The conducted investigation through a non-participatory observation, the inventory of physical objects in privative spaces and the interview, reveals physical and symbolic markings, each fitting with a specific satisfier. All this data is then classified into exogenous or endogenous satisfiers.

Among the results of this work, designed privative space in mass housing appears as exogenous satisfier (privacy inhibiting satisfier), and the appropriation (experienced space) represents a way to switch this exogenous character into an endogenous one.

This analysis helps in defining the outline of a better-adapted typology to our society.

**Keywords:** Privative space; Obstruction; Mass housing; Max-Neef's human needs theory;

## 1. Spatial appropriation and human needs:

Appropriation is best described as how space is invested. Beyond works where this concept is presented as control and identification mode (Serfaty, 2003); or physical and symbolic markings (Birou, 1997/Veschambre, 2004/Xinmou, 2009), where this concept is analysed in his theoretical nature, in this work, we have to consider the meta-significance of this notion: the question here is not about the identification of appropriation, but it concerns the causality of the term, why do we appropriate spaces? Cross-referenced reading where appropriation is used in practical way (Depaule et Noweir, 1986), (Saighi, 2005), (Tebib, 2008), (Rouidi, 2011), (Grolier, 2013), (Benlakehal, 2014), can bring to light some elements: appropriation become practical when it is associated to the concept of needs. Individual appropriates spaces in order to meet his own needs.

Since modern architecture has shown its limitations, the concept of human needs is used with caution in architectural discourse, even though this concept is behind a great number of reflections in our field, it is never the crux of the matter.

In 1943, Abraham Maslow suggests his hierarchical pyramid where human needs are limitless. This theory was the basis of modern architecture, and was criticized due to its cultural-evicting broad character. Since then, many theories have been developed in different fields: in psychology (Maclelland, 1961 - Pourtois & Desmet, 1997 - Rosenberg, 1999 – Portier, 2009), and nursery (Henderson, 1964 – Abdellah, 1968). The assessment of these theories shows that each situation corresponds to a certain logic of needs configuration. In 1991 Manfred Max-Neef, a Chilean economist, developed the human scale development theory. According to Thierry Groussin<sup>3</sup> this theory is the most efficient operational tool so far.

## **2. The human development scale theory**

Max-Neef thinks that all human beings on the planet have similar finite needs. What changes is the way to meet those needs according to everyone's culture and era. The author distinguishes between need and satisfier.

The satisfier is not the economic good and it does not have a physical shape, but, there is a relation between satisfier and economic goods as the later have direct influence on the efficiency of the former.

There are two major categories of satisfiers: exogenous and endogenous. Exogenous satisfiers are *“imposed, induced, ritualized or institutionalized. In this sense, they are satisfiers which have been traditionally generated at the top and advocated for all”* (Max-Neef, 1991). This type of satisfier is grouped into four categories:

- Violators or destructors are satisfiers of a paradoxical effect. In order to satisfy a given need, they not only eliminate the possibility of its satisfaction, but they also jeopardize the adequate satisfaction of other needs.
- Inhibiting satisfier though they lack the aggressiveness of violators they seriously impairs the satisfaction of other needs
- Pseudo-satisfiers give impression of satisfying a given need. *“They may annul, in the medium term, the possibility of satisfying the need they were originally aimed at”*. (Max-Neef, 1991)

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1 on : [www.base.socioeco.org](http://www.base.socioeco.org), Thierry Groussin, « Le développement et les besoins humains fondamentaux selon Manfred Max-Neef »

- Singular satisfiers: as its name suggests, satisfy a single need and are, and they have no influence on the satisfaction of other needs. *“They are very characteristic of development and co-operation schemes and programs”*. (Max-Neef, 1991)

Endogenous satisfiers, on the other hand, are synergic: it means the ability to satisfy various needs simultaneously. To explain this concept, the author illustrates this situation by comparing between the mother breast-feeding and the mechanical way: while the first process provide satisfaction to subsistence, protection, affection and identity, the second one only satisfy subsistence need.

In this theory, each satisfier must match with two shapes of need: existential and axiological. Existential needs are subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, creation, leisure, identity and freedom. Axiological needs correspond to four modes, which are being, having, doing and interacting. Satisfiers are the result of the crossing of existential needs with axiological ones.

### **3. Appropriation as satisfier:**

Appropriation is that cultural spatial adjustment / transformation way, therefore it can be considered as a satisfier. The spatial production of mass housing in Algeria can demonstrate Max-Neef's theory. *“housing in Algeria has always been a political issue, before being an urban concern”* (Seffadj, 2010). Indeed, our country facing a crisis has opted for quantitative consideration rather than qualitative one. Although spatial transformation prompt a visual pollution, it could only be a rightful response, facing an imposed-housing repression. While *“...endogenous satisfiers derive from liberating processes which are the outcome of acts of volition generated by the community at the grass roots level. It is this that makes them antiauthoritarian, even though in some cases they may originate in processes promoted by the state”*. (Max-Neef, 1991), spatial transformations represents this *“antiauthoritarian way”* in regards to political-featured produced architecture, consequently it can only be an endogenous satisfier.

### **4. Appropriation of privative space in Daboussi:**

Raymond and al. (1966) first used the expression of privative space, which designs all types of outdoor spaces (balcony, loggia, terrace, solar dryer)<sup>4</sup> in exclusive transitional relation with the habitation, in mass housing.

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<sup>4</sup> The balcony is a cantilevered slab, which emerges out of the façade, while the loggia seems embedded in the building. The solar dryer is characterized by its alveolar wall. The difference between all these privative spaces and the terrace is the size, the terrace is much bigger

#### 4.1 Study case presentation: Daboussi AADL district

Daboussi is a district situated in the municipality of Draria, in the southwest of Algiers. Our interest is about the AADL5 mass housing project. This one is composed of six blocks. The investigation was conducted in only one block because in 2013, only one block was occupied, another was handed over, and another was being constructed. (Figure 11).

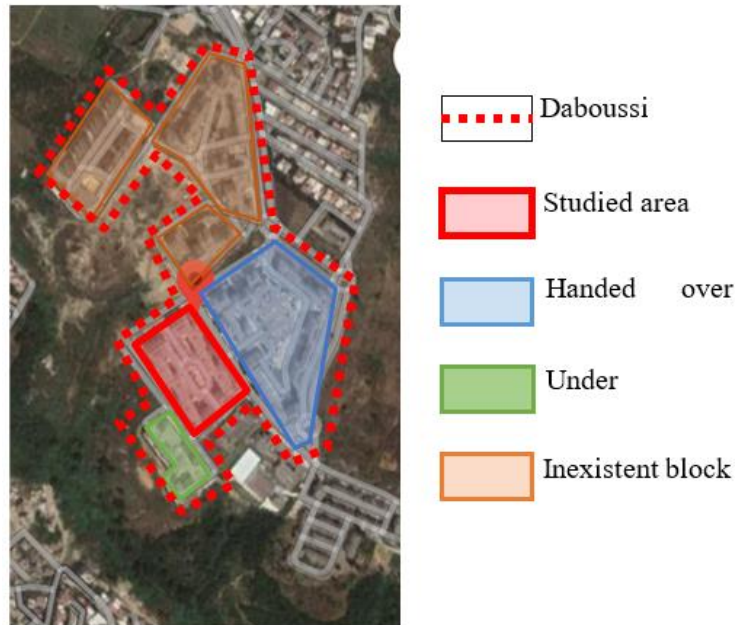


Figure 1: Daboussi district blocks, Authors 2019

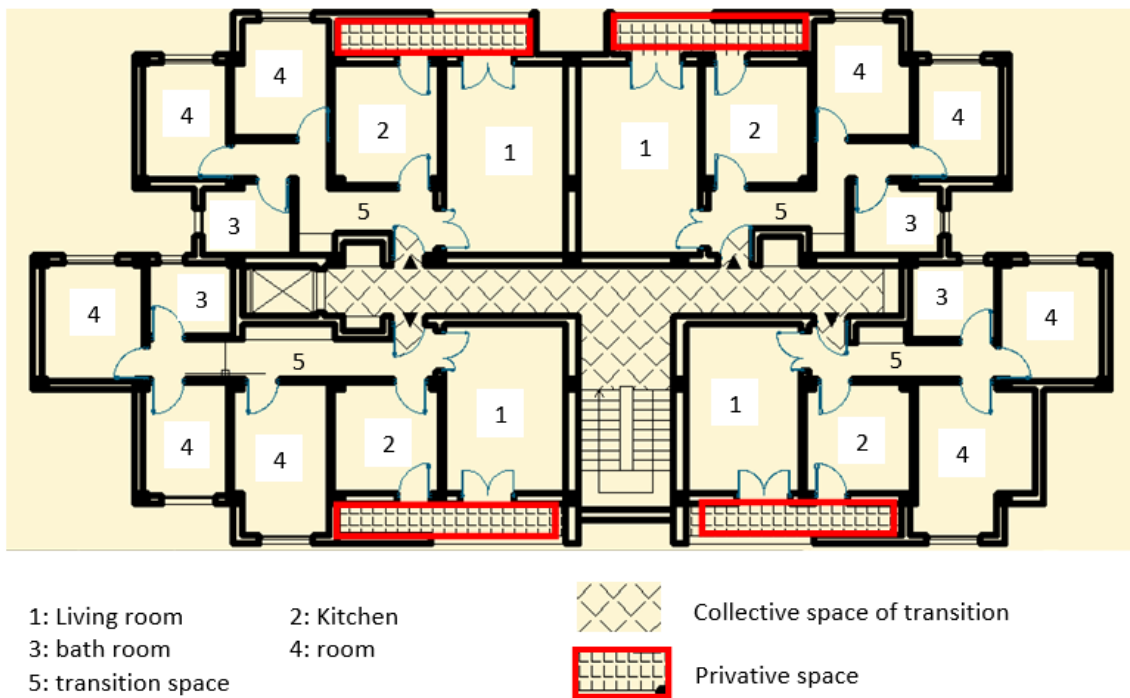
There are two flat types according to how many rooms are in the habitation (T3 or T4), and each habitation have only one view. We can notice the same spatial organization for both types of habitation (Figure 12).

We took contact with the designer of this project<sup>6</sup>, to understand his conceptual guidelines. First of all our concern was about the shape of the privative space. The designer was facing a mono-oriented façade, and this is why he thought to combine the loggia with the solar dryer space to constitute a single merged privative space, in a double relation with the kitchen and the living room. This combination is clearly readable on the façade.

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5 AADL: Agence d'Amélioration et de Développement du Logement. It is an agency for the development of mass housing (the prime contractor of the project)

6 ZERARGA subcontractor



There are two flat types according to how many rooms are in the habitation (T3 or T4), and each habitation have only one view. We can notice the same spatial organization for both types of habitation (**Figure 12: grouped flats and spatial composition**)

ZERARGA subcontractor and Authors 2019

The designer thinks that privative space is the place where you can dry your laundry, and on the other hand, it is designed as a space where you can relax, just like the extension of the living room, as a matter of the fact, we can define it as an “outdoor living room”

After that, we suggested to the designer to imagine the elimination of the privative space, for the designer this elimination is disturbing: the privative space boosts his creativity when designing the façade. This is how he can create the balance between full and empty, privative space is an elementary piece in harmonious façade composition.

To preserve this façade, designers decided to place all dishes on the top of the building, hoping that this action will help reducing the “*post occupancy anarchy*”.

#### 4.2 State of privative space in Daboussi:

In the previous section, designed privative space appears as a combination between a supposed use and a major factor in the morphological composition of the project. Now, the identification of the appropriated privative space helps us to know if the residents of this spatial frame have appropriate their privative spaces according to the designer’s vision.

Appropriation is detected through markings: “...there cannot be appropriation without space markings; it goes with all appropriation forms” (Veschambre, 2004). There are two kinds of markings: physical and symbolic. Observation, statement and interview were used to state those markings.

- Non-participatory observation:

Besides observing people practicing the space in all spontaneity, this first step enables us to become more familiar with the area under-study. The followed protocol was to observe people during two weeks, and record every activity happening in the privative space on schematic sketches. Each activity is described, noting the hour and the actor’s nature doing this action. Photos are taken to witness objects existing in this space.

- The statement:

At this stage, the purpose was to list all objects in the privative space. The idea was to photograph those physical markings, but on field, only one person agreed with this procedure. The statement then was identified by filling up a table with objects existing in privative space.

The interview:

Marking interpretation needs to interview the dwellers of this investigated spatial frame. In this case, a semi-directive interview was conducted among 50 randomly chosen residents, until information saturation. The investigation took place in the central courtyard from 9 am to 4-6 pm, through communication with passersby. The duration of the interviews, varied from 30 minutes to 90 minutes according to respondents hurry. Discussed subjects were about the use of the privative space, the use of the physical markings, and the validation of observed praxis. Interview helps in interpreting the markings as well as bringing up new praxis to light. All this data was then classified in the following table.

**Table 7: physical and symbolic markings. Authors 2019**

Non-participatory observation	The statement	The interview
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Display tapestry and bedding to the sun</li> <li>• Children playing</li> <li>• Man holding a cup of black coffee/tea</li> <li>• Man smoking cigarettes</li> <li>• Woman/man observing the neighborhood</li> <li>• Woman hanging/bringing back laundry</li> <li>• Woman/man talking in the phone</li> <li>• Woman maintain plants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closet</li> <li>• Air conditioner</li> <li>• Dish</li> <li>• Pets</li> <li>• Toys</li> <li>• Vegetables stock</li> <li>• Water stock</li> <li>• dryer</li> <li>• Plants</li> <li>• Shoe cabinet</li> <li>• Bulky items</li> <li>• Security steel bars</li> <li>• PVC sliding window</li> <li>• curtain</li> <li>• additive guard rail</li> <li>• “Tabouna” device<sup>7</sup></li> <li>• Gas bottle</li> <li>• trash</li> <li>• awning</li> <li>• ceramic wall tiling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a booth space</li> <li>• break space</li> <li>• a watch/control space</li> <li>• additive space for future extension</li> <li>• Sheep sacrifice space</li> <li>• Traditional cooking space</li> </ul>

The assessment of this data shows us that some markings have no relation with the conceptual spirit of the privative space: air conditioner and the dish have nothing to do with the studied area. We do not watch TV in air-conditioned privative space. During the interview, we noticed that only twelve persons placed their dishes on the top of the building as conceived. Those people were bothered about this praxis, and preferred to place their dishes in the privative space, but the orientation of their façade does not match with the orientation of the dish. Due to a mono-oriented façade, people were forced to do this . Three persons placed their dishes on the wall of the bedroom in order to optimize the connection with the satellite; and the others have it in the privative space. The air conditioner have nothing to do with privative space, but its emplacement is in relation with the living room. In some cases, there are several air conditioners according to the number of rooms in the habitation. Respondents stated the convenience of placing the air conditioner and the dish in privative space. It is easier to set those devices and to maintain them there than any other place

The bulky items (ladder, broom, bucket, bicycle) are in the privative space because of the lack of storage space in the habitation. The closet and the shoes cabinet highlight this lack, but, even though this arrangement is for having a nice and clean house, it doesn't concern the privative space. On the

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<sup>7</sup> This is a traditional cooking device: it consists of three-legged gas cooker with its gas bottle

one hand, we feel that people do not care about the appearance of their privative space, and on the other hand interposing plants is partially for aesthetical reasons.

Through the interview, it appears clearly that privative space is associated with relaxation.

Most of the respondents (84%) are dreaming about having a space where they can sit in, take coffee, enjoy the beautiful weather...etc, but through our observation, we noticed that these praxis are done standing even by the guard rail or by the window. Some male respondents told us that taking coffee/tea or smoking a cigarette while the goldfinch is singing was the most pleasant relaxation moment. The possession of this bird is also a social cultural affiliation.

The “Tabouna” device, the trash and the vegetables storage are in relation with the kitchen. Over the interview, all of the respondents considered the spatial relation between the kitchen and the privative space as a good thing. A respondent told us how her relative is suffering because she has to transport the “Tabouna” device from the kitchen through the living room to be able to cook traditional dishes. The same inconvenience is noticed when trash is evicted to privative space through the living room. The relation between the privative space and the living room is not founded on its usage. For the designer the privative space is the extension of the living room where people relax. Relaxation here is the same either it took place in the privative space or the window, so it don't have a special link with the living room. In fact, the living room spatial potential is weakened when creating a transition through it.

Laundry drying have no specific strings with the inner space; it has relation with the location of the washing machine, and the orientation of the space. One respondent told us about arranging a hanging dryer in the bedroom window because sunlight lasts there more than it does in privative space, and sixteen other respondents show dissatisfaction about the orientation and the height of their privative spaces when asked about laundry drying. They would arrange a hanging dryer elsewhere, but the exposition to the sun light is the same everywhere

Other remaining markings such as Security steel bar, PVC sliding window, curtain, additive guard rail, ceramic wall tiling, awning, future extension and control space, participate in several logics of protection of the space, as detailed in the table below.

When we compare how residents have appropriate their privative space with the designer's vision, we can see many lacks and insufficiencies. People prefer set their dishes in the privative spaces. The privative space is indeed used in drying laundry, but respondents have many caveats about this. The designer sees the privative space as an outdoor living room and through observation and interview, people use the privative space for this purpose, but not in the same way the designer defines the



relaxation. If people would share the designer opinion, there would be physical markings for this praxis.

Now we have to establish the relation between markings and needs according to max-Neef’s theory. Satisfier designation has to consider two forms of needs, axiological and existential. At this stage, only interacting mode is considered, since our goal is to identify the relation between the satisfier and its interacting space. The other remaining axiological needs are not valuable for this phase. The purpose here is to locate the synergic satisfiers in exclusive relation with the privative space as interacting mode; so the following table contains satisfiers classified according to the different types reviewed previously.

**Table 8 : markings classification according to satisfiers types. Authors 2019**

	Existential need	Interacting mode	Satisfier and marking
Singular satisfiers	Protection	The inner space and outdoor	The air conditioner is the new way of prevention from the weather.
		Privative space	The awning is considered for some respondents as a protection from the weather, for few other cases, it is a protection from their upper neighbors
		Privative space	Security steel bars are a protection from rubbery on the one hand, and on the other hand, they prevent little children from falling over just like the additive guard rail
		Outdoor in relation with the kitchen	Putting away the Trash in the privative space slow down the process of decomposition, the main reason behind the bad smell of garbage
		Privative space	The obstruction of the privative space through the utilization of the curtain is a satisfier for the protection of intimacy
		Inner space	The privative space as additive space for future extension is a protection for the children. In Algeria, it is common for married children to live with their parents. In this case the habitation is reorganized to make this situation possible by extending the inner space and eliminating the privative space
		Anywhere	Vegetables and water storage are both satisfier for the need of protection
	participation	Outdoor	The sheep sacrifice is a religious affiliation
	Leisure	Outdoor	Relaxation is translated by several markings (a man observed taking coffee/ tea, smoking a cigarette, booth space); many respondents think that the privative space is a breaks-taking space.
		Inner space and outdoor	The dish is also a marking referring to the need for leisure
Synergic satisfiers	Protection - participation	Outdoor	Cleaning and storage (through Display tapestry and bedding to the sun/ Woman hanging or bringing back laundry / dryer / closet / shoe cabinet / bulky items) are satisfiers for both physical and mental health prevention. Those two satisfiers are also a social affiliation feature (Baudrillard, 1969)
	Protection-leisure	Privative space	The obstruction of the privative space using the PVC sliding window is a protection for privacy. This obstruction system have an aesthetic potential (compared to the curtain). Thirty-seven respondents thought PVC sliding window beautiful.
		Spaces exposed to dirt or to humidity	The ceramic wall tiling have two purposes: a protection for the space from getting dirty, and a decorative function

	Participation -plaisir	Outdoor	Pets stated in the privative space are mainly the goldfinch. This praxis is in relation with relaxation, but also is a way for cultural affiliation
		Privative space in relation with kitchen	Most of women in Algiers (in Algeria) possess the “Tabouna” device, which is necessary for the setting of traditional dishes. This praxis is in relation with the subsistence need as well as the participation one
		Indoor or outdoor spaces	Plants represent, in the same time, a passion and a hobby for the person taking care of those beings, and also, a way to decorate and garnish the space. Both are satisfiers for the need of leisure, but the first one correspond to the “being mode” the other fit with the “doing mode”

As we can see in the interactive mode column, there are several interacting spaces: some satisfiers can be placed anywhere, others only need relation with outdoor and have no specific relation with privative space (air conditioner and dish)

Synergic satisfiers interacting with privative space are in fact, the basic conceptual potential to develop a synergic design

## 5. Conclusion

On fieldwork basis, we can see that there is a stark contrast between the privative space design logic, and its praxis. The designer based his design on different exogenous satisfiers:

- Privative space as laundry dryer or relaxation zone are both singular satisfiers. There are many deficiencies in their designs that are highlighted through the interview.
- The privative space as a satisfier for the morphologic composition, which is completely offset of any praxis, is a pseudo-satisfier that starts from external concerns to individuals.
- The obstruction of the privative space is a protection for intimacy. We can say that the designed privative space in this case is an inhibiting satisfier to intimacy

To switch this exogenous character into endogenous, we have to consider those deficiencies as potential conceptual guidelines in order to produce a livable architecture rather than a sculptural one.

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