

**Architectural changes and exchanges:
Moroccan livings in Brussels' traditional houses and
western furniture in the riads of Marrakech**

Ghita Barkouch, architect, PhD researcher
Laboratoire Analyse Architecture
Faculty of Architecture, Architectural Engineering and Urban Planning
Catholic University of Louvain
Address: Rue du Glategnies, 6 – Bte T1.01.01 7500 Tournai, Belgium
E-mail : ghita.barkouch@uclouvain.be

In the current situation of major immigration issues, the question of housing arises more than ever. Beneath the social, economic and legal questions raised by identification, access and right to housing for immigrant populations, and from a purely architectural point of view, this research raises an underlying question on the adaptation of non-native ways of residing to native housing types.

Every inhabitant has a technical-industrial rationality (Gagnepain, 1990; Le Gall, 1998; Pleitinx, 2019; Jarry, Le Gall and Osiurak, 2016) that enables them to produce their habitat, either by furnishing or transforming the premises, or by defining their use and delimiting the location of their activities.

In the case of immigrant dwelling, intercultural exchanges are occasions when the architectural skills of the inhabitant, including their capacity for adaptation and invention, are best observed. By examining the case of the installation and use of the Moroccan living room in traditional Brussels houses (Fig. 1-2) and those of the western livings in the riads of Marrakech, this research aims to describe, explain and highlight the architectural adaptations and inventions, both formal and functional, that result from the meeting and hybridization of initially foreign dwelling habits and housing types.

Based on a Mediationist Theory of Architecture (Pleitinx, 2017, 2019), this research contests the socio-professional definition according to which architecture is a profession but considers it to be more of a rational and technical skill, comparable to language, society and law (Gagnepain, 1990). While considering the inhabitant as an “author” of their habitat, this research is most interested in “inhabiting practices” (Cailly and Dureau 2016, Rosselin 2002). It therefore differs from research in sociology of habitat, in which the inhabitant is seen more as a “social actor” and the habitat as the issue and the result of political struggles (Sauvage 1992), if not a place of projection and consolidation of identity (Dibbits 2009, Levin 2015, Segaud 2010).

The general objective of this research is to reflect on the architectural competence of the non-native inhabitant, which is revealed in their ability to adapt and reinvent the native habitat. The research proposes to study, describe and explain the architectural operations through which non-native inhabitants adapt, transform, reinvent the native traditional habitat, and the uses they make of it. It aims to highlight the adaptations and architectural inventions (both formal and functional) produced by inhabitants by identifying innovative schemes and emerging practices that could be advantageously reproduced.

How do Belgian residents in Marrakesh and Moroccan residents in Brussels arrange and use the typical housing in their host country? Do they maintain or change their traditional housing patterns? To what extent does their way of residing deviate from the traditional local residential norms? Finally, what new architectural features emerge as a result of architectural exchanges? These are the general questions raised by this research.

By taking into account the ability of inhabitants to adapt a habitat, this research does not pretend to provide architectural recommendations for the integration of immigrants. On the contrary, considering cultural exchanges (i.e architectural) as an occasion for potential invention, it intends more to identify and promote innovative arrangements and emerging practices so as to stimulate collective intelligence.

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Figures :

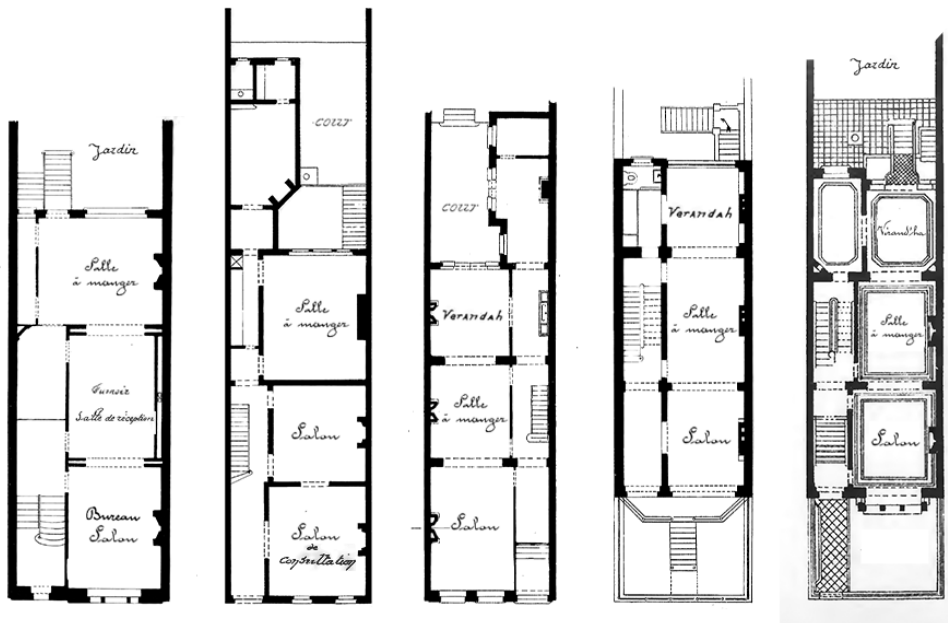


Fig. 1 :
Main floors “beaux étages”
of Traditional Brussels
houses.
Fernand Salmain, *L’album
de la maison moderne*, 1908-
1913.

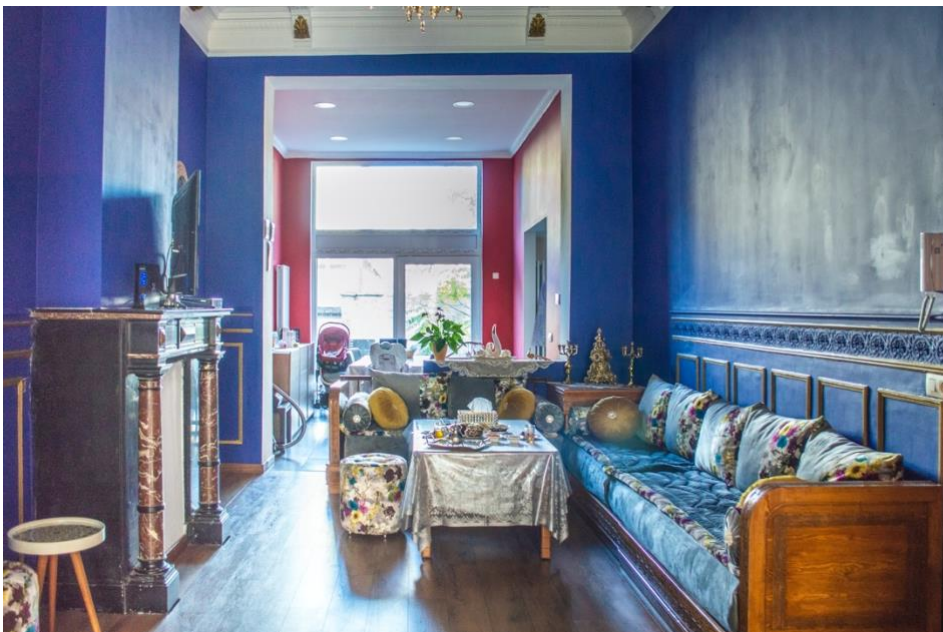


Fig. 2 :
A Moroccan living “sedari”
in a traditional Brussels
house in Schaerbeek,
October, 2019.