New socio-spatial reconfigurations in the city of Constantine, the case of residential areas
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Abstract: Summary Nowadays, the Algerian city experienced strong urban dynamics under the impulse of a rapid urbanization, a rising living standards of the population and changes in their social and economic needs. It has to be noted that the opening of Algeria on the world economy from the 2000s, has amplified the various private investments through the cities, generating thus, various forms of socio-spatial reconfigurations neighborhoods. Through the case study of two housing estates of the city of Constantine, we will hopefully try to trace the foundations of this reconfiguration that manages to change the structure of these neighborhoods and generates new centers throughout the city. It seems to us that these are excellent indicators as to the claim of a right to the city of Constantine.

Keywords: socio-spatial reconfigurations, housing estate, residential area, building, villa, centrality

I. Introduction
Since the 90s, the city of Constantine knows significant urban growth, generating considerable territorial dynamics. The withdrawal of the state in the 90s, the promulgation of the law on land orientation N° 90-25 and the opening of the Algerian economy to world trade from the 2000s have made that amplify the pace of these dynamics. We are witnessing thus an emergence of new centers in the city through new economic activities polarized in individual housing estates in the city (our topic) and new structuring of these same neighborhoods prompting a new socio-spatial recomposition. Originally, this reconfiguration is produced by private initiatives of the inhabitants of these old estates owners or newly arrived, who through a series of socio-spatial strategies, manage to change the structure of these neighborhoods and generate new centers across throughout the city.

II. Objectives
This research is devoted to clarify the foundations of this new socio-spatial recomposition and its effects on the emergence of new centers in the city of Constantine, following further polarized economic activities in the individual housing areas, to quote the housing estates.

III. Methodology
To capture the main aspects and foundations of this new socio-spatial recomposition in the housing estates of the city of Constantine, we opted for a quantitative and qualitative approach, developing a field survey based on questionnaires and exploratory talks to highlight aspects of the phenomenon of interest that we would not have thought at first. The survey targeted experts, researchers with a good knowledge of the problem studied, the actors directly involved (residents, users and traders). We also tried a direct observation of places with photo shoots, statements and plans.

IV. Site selection
Our choice fell on the city of Constantine, which was since ancient times, throughout the French colonization to the present day, the capital of eastern Algeria and future Capital of Arab Culture 2015. This importance has been favorable to attract convergent migration from neighboring towns , mid-sized cities for the majority (Ain Fakroun, Ain-Milha ...) known to be "cities importers", cities with large commercial development (trade wholesale and retail clothing, furniture, appliances, spare parts consumption ..), thereby Constantine becomes a point of strategic convergence across the eastern regions of Algeria. Migration to the city of Constantine are very old, their numbers have increased from the 40s (F. Benatia, 1980) and this convergence has largely affected the strategic areas of the city subdivisions mainly residential in character with a strategic location, to the center of the city, or to major roads leading directly to medium-size cities mentioned above.
Our interest has focused on two different estates that are invested by people from the region or migrants from small towns, to include:

- Estate of Sidi Mabrouk (very old), dating from the colonial era (50s) and close to the city center, located in the north-east of this latter.
- Estate of BOUSSOUF (fairly new), created in the 90s, following the withdrawal of the state and the law on land orientation, positioning in the southwestern part of an important area of the city, the National Road 05.

V. Socio-spatial reconfigurations and misuse of the residential function

New reconfigurations in housing estates studied through the city of Constantine, are so diverse that we cannot tackle them through the only spatial aspect, their basis is primarily social, economic and even cultural, but with very little respect the regulations. This latter limits building heights to 11.5 m, (3 levels: ground floor + 2 with accessible terrace) to preserve the general skyline of the built environment and the homogeneity of the whole.

However, the reality on the ground is all different, the rule is often not respected and the original residential function is turned away for an operating profitability. Therefore, individual houses become multi storey “villas”, levels exceeding the 3 level (as prescribed), designed in fact as a block of flats. This aspect seems to be accepted in the mentality of the inhabitants. The number of levels built depends on the number of flats planned, it can reach 4 and even 5 levels which seriously alters the original appearance of the individual “villa”.

These different forms of appropriation and residential strategies are generally expressed by the owners according to socio-economic and even cultural needs. These practices are guided by influences and gradual changes that affect people's attitudes and sometimes correspond to the habit mentioned by the sociologist Pierre BOURDIEU; habitus is primarily a product of history, it generates individual as well as group practice, according to the diagrams generated by the history, it ensures the presence of past experiences (P.BOURDIEU, 1977). The estates analyzed in the city have an incoherent skyline, a mosaic of individual houses with distinct shapes and volumes ranging from single detached house (see figure n°1) to the large multifunction villa exceeding three levels (see figure n° 3) where the residential character gradually disappears in favor of commercial and service activities installed at the ground floor or occupying the entire building.

![Figure n°1: Example of unmodified individual villa, (Source: authors, 2013)](image)

The Sidi Mabrouk Estate had a double appropriation; the first fairly old, dating from the times of post independence through an ownership of spaces, due to socio-economic needs strategies. Incrementing the living space becomes imperative with the expanding family or son’s marriage; one must say that the situation of the country has imposed such act (which is perceived throughout the city). The second mutation appears strongly in the 2000s, following the opening of Algeria on the global economy, which allowed investment traders from neighboring wilayas, known for their business growth. These actors, who can be called “new rich”, have successfully modified the functional aspect of the neighborhood through demolition-reconstruction operations while expanding commercial and service activities. The proximity of the city center has amplified this reconfiguration, unlike Boussouf estate. The field investigation revealed that more than 70% of all buildings in Sidi Mabrouk are of mixed-use (residential and commercial), 12% for services use while only 18% were not affected by the change (see figure n°2).

On the other hand, the estate of Boussouf, most recent in its creation (the 90s) is going to experience acts of appropriation in a less complicated and less intense strategy, the applications for the permit to build a new house deposited at the concerned authorities, are designed from the outset, with great flexibility and respect of regulations, while supporting any further transformations. Thus, the license once obtained, changes are initiated and the house turns for a multifunctional building or service without compliance.
This development is also affected by these acts of appropriation, but less so than Sidi Mabrouk, more than 59.7% of the buildings used for housing, 36.9% were of mixed-use (residential and commercial), and then 3.4% for service use (see figure n°2).

A. Multifunctional building villa (commercial and residential)

The case of the two estates, Sidi Mabrouk and Boussouf show a range of multifunctional buildings (villas), where the residential character gradually changes with the installation of shops on the ground floor, the multiplication of mixed-use storey (residential and commercial or service) showing a vertical elasticity and luxurious building materials which reflect the financial capacities of the owners (see figure n° 3).

B. Demolition / reconstruction phenomenon: The commercial building or bazaar

The analysis of this reality is perceptible only into the estate Sidi Mabrouk; which buildings are the oldest, dating from the colonial era and not readying for any change. These cases reflect the misuse of the law and the speculation by new migrants from neighboring cities, buying up lands or houses for sale with exorbitant prices (see figure n° 4) to demolish and rebuild them later in a modernized and more cost effective style.

The skyline of the neighborhood and its image are found deformed between villas which have preserved their original appearance of limited height, pitched roof covered with red tiles characterizing the initial appearance of the whole estate and the other houses (Rebuilt after demolition) heights exaggerated, crushing neighboring villas (see figure n° 5).
However, the essential concern of this operation/reconstruction demolition is in fact the financial profitability, these houses become large bazaars, commercial spaces for sale of luxury items (clothing, household ...) (see figure n° 6).

These practices can also affect the function of the whole construction, in favor of new service activities (Private clinics, private schools, banks, company headquarters, party halls ...) (see figure n° 7 &8), which is noticeable in two cases, 12% for Boussouf against 3.4% for Sidi Mabrouk. In this case, the house becomes a service building or even private equipment, where space utilization is maximized and the limits of the plot often exceeded.

We must remember that in the specification of the estates, the upper floors are only for residential purposes; whereas the ground floor for garages but unfortunately the reality on the ground is in complete contradiction with the regulations. Neither the 90-29 law of 01/12/1990 on the planning and development nor the decree 91/175 of 28/05/1991 on the modalities of exercise in urban planning and architecture will permit such transgression. It must be said that the lack of judicial review by the relevant authorities only amplifies these activities.
VI. The emergence of new business centralities.

The city can be defined as a relatively important, dense and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals (Louis Wirth, 1938) also, the city cannot be separated from its urban functions, "a city exists only by human activities that go through it" (Ricardo Bofil, 1995) and it is this interaction that generate functional centrality to the whole urban area. It should be noted that the centrality is mainly seen as "a multifaceted concept that manifests itself by specializations more or less marked in the use of space and buildings and by the existence of frequentation flows having their own specificity and contributing to the overall excitement of the city, taken as a service production and contacts " (Claude Chaline, 1990).

The city center, the city of Constantine is characterized by its density, good accessibility and intensity of services provided; it generates a significant centrality at the urban scale, an inescapable pole of attraction that attracts considerable external customers. It includes 93% of administrative facilities (with Coudiat Aty) and 14% of the business on total trade of the city.

The new socio-spatial reconfigurations in the estates of the cities mentioned above, enabled the emergence of new spatial and functional dynamics in the organization and functioning of the city, a new structure is set up giving birth to new secondary centers with commercial nature located in the estates of the city of Constantine, namely Sidi Mabrouk northeast and southwest Boussouf (see Figure n°9) that extend their area of influence to compete with the city center. Our interest in this research is not about the service industry or business activity in itself, but much more its impact on changing urban form of the city and new forms of centrality it generates.

Figure n°9: New centralities, Source: Constantine D.P.A.T + personal treatment

VII. Conclusion

These spatial practices have shown some kind of overtaking and sprains over regulations without effective authority control. The major concern of these new private players in the city is primarily a financial profitability, satisfaction and functional needs of utilities under the influence of socio-economic as well as cultural and personal aspirations constraints. Through their strategies, the private players are able to give rise to new spatial reconfigurations and new emerging centralities, especially that the proximity of the city center and the main national Road favor and allow these practices; and these are excellent indicators as to the claim of a right to the city (H. LeFebvre, 1974).

 VIII. References

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