

The Requalification of Public Spaces: A challenge for Sustainable Urban Development

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Abstract:

The city's growth and rhythms, urban reorganization and transformation of spaces, changes in their uses, and the evolution of the daily practices of the city's social groups raise the question of the issues and interests raised by the requalification of public spaces in terms of their symbolic, esthetic, and functional value. The articles' findings are based on a case study of the Constantine city project "Modernization Plan of the Constantine Metropolis" (PMMC). This new development strategy is primarily based on a program of activities centered on the rehabilitation and upgrading of central urban spaces and the residential proximity of central districts, as well as the realization of internationally emblematic projects that would change the image of the city and bring it into the modern era. The results have demonstrated that it is a matter of concern that the ideal to be achieved should be urban public spaces that are not based on a closed single principle but rather on an open system resulting from the interaction of all actors united. Conviviality and citizen participation are key words for urban modernization and development projects.

Keywords: public space; requalification; revalorization of cities; sustainable development; urban analysis approach.

Introduction

Integrated approaches to sustainable urban development are formulated in different ways for various reasons, which are rooted in the history, culture, and ways of doing things in different countries. Over the last two decades, there have been several new and traditional approaches to poverty alleviation, urban regeneration, health promotion, community economic development, culture, and the environment. Each of these experiences contributes to the development of these integrated approaches to sustainable urban development. After decades of rigid urban planning in Algeria, a new era is beginning. The urban project, which has emerged in many countries, is also being introduced in Algeria, albeit slowly, but on very different scales. In 2006, a new law was enacted as part of the policy of regional planning and sustainable development. It is law n°06-06 of 20/02/2006 concerning city orientation. It is implemented in the context of deconcentration, decentralization, and proximity

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management. This law has several components. Concerning the urban component, its objectives are the control of urban growth, the correction of urban imbalances, and the restructuring, rehabilitation, and modernization of the urban fabric to make it functional. Concerning the social component, it aims, among other things, to fight against the deterioration of life in the districts and promote and preserve hygiene and public health. In terms of management, it aims to promote good governance by reaffirming, among other things, the responsibility of public authorities and the participation of the associative movement and citizens in the management of their city Bachar (2016).

Thus, the urban project is making a timid entry into Algerian planning, aiming to become strategic. Moreover, the pioneering urban projects in Algeria are the Grand Project in Algiers and the modernization projects of the four metropolises, most notably the Constantine Metropolis Modernization Project (PMMC).

Like most grand urban projects in the world, the Grand Urban Project of Constantine was born following an urban crisis in the city and is a response to the needs of modernization and development. This major project benefited from strong political support that wanted to mark its passage but also develop its city. It had a vision that fell into the category of the global.

With this in mind, we have outlined a problem that will be presented later, aimed at basing the design of urban development projects on identifying and “activating the urban potential” of developed sites. This problem consists of “activating the resources” offered by the urban environment, which seems corresponding to the profound aim of sustainable development. As we will try to show, this problem is perfectly adapted to the design of sustainable urban renewal projects. Moreover, it leads to the integration of development projects into the urban renewal processes of territories.

1. The Urban Project as a Tool for Sustainable Territorial Renewal

The use of the notion of project in the discourses and practices of urban policy actors dates back to the 1970s Ingallina & Dupuy (2002). This concept was mobilized to oppose functionalist urbanism or regulatory urbanism. As a lever for local public action, the urban project shapes the city, whether in the way in which the actors construct the challenges of urban policies, in the nature of the objectives defined therein, or in the methods of implementing these policies Pinson & Vion (2000).

The rise of the urban “project” as an operating mode for producing the city has been a paradigmatic change in urban public action for more than three decades. While the urban project is an instrument of governance and mobilization of stakeholders around the strategic objectives of urban renewal and improvement of the population's living environment, the shift in the focus of the urban project is not a new phenomenon. However, the changeover from plan planning to project planning is not a smooth process given the uncertainties and constraints that weigh heavily (political support, strategies and logic of actors, urban and financial uncertainties, social acceptance, etc.) Kheireddine & Zouiten (2021).

At the focus of research on the city and urban development and renewal, the urban project has been apprehended by researchers but also by practitioners. We are thinking

here of works focusing on the normative approach (Masbounji, n.d.; Panerai, 1999); analytical and genealogical (Haumont, 1993; Ingallina & Dupuy, 2002; Toussaint & Zimmermann, 2001); actionist Pinson (2004, 2009), sociological (Martouzet, 2018) or outright critical postures of the Project ideology Genestier (1996, 2001).

The urban project has a polysemic definition, but the one that seems the most revealing is the one put forward by Pinson (2009): it is an approach that makes the urban project an instrument for mobilizing actors through a process of constitution and valorization of resources. It is an approach that places the actor at the heart of the implementation process. It is a notion that covers the different scales of the urban project (district, city, or metropolis).

The interest in undertaking an urban project approach is far from being obvious to many actors. As a result, a project may emerge gradually from a reflection, a situation, or a space. It can also have difficulty being formalized when it does not seem essential Courcier (2003). There have also been many experiences of urban projects that have not been completed or that have experienced difficulties during implementation due to incomprehension between the actors or the risks related to funding.

2. The urban project as a challenge on a large scale

Intended as major operations to revitalize city centers, economic and social regeneration, or urban renewal of urban districts (building the city on the city), urban projects are subject to urban planning, socio-economic, cultural, and environmental requirements. Indeed, the implementation of the urban project is not an easy task given the complexity of the logic of the stakeholders and their expectations.

The magnitude of the challenge consists of bringing the urban project to a successful conclusion while creating the necessary conditions for considering the socio-economic, urbanistic, environmental, and cultural aspects. Moreover, urbanistic errors are the costliest to correct. In other words, it is a matter of dealing with parameters where the human, technical, and economic aspects interfere, and which, moreover, evolve in time and space.

Thus, in addition to the dilemmas of "influence vs. gentrification" and "metropolis vs. proximity," other dichotomous pairs characterizing the complexity of urban projects could be identified, such as "short-term vs. long-term logic" or "preservation of the natural environment vs. economic development." This complexity is at the heart of another paradigm, that of sustainable development, according to which it is necessary to integrate the ecological, economic, and social dimensions of development, take into account the short and medium term, and articulate between spatial scales Agyeman & Evans (2003).

3. Material and methods

The findings in this article are based on a case study. The case study is recognized as one of the most widely used research methodologies for researchers taking a qualitative approach. (Yin, 1994). By using case studies, researchers can focus on a particular phenomenon and uncover key elements or knowledge (Saunders et al., 2009), this

research presents a case study that focuses on the management of a participatory urban project as a public space, studying the case of the Bardo urban park in Constantine, Algeria. Case studies are extensively used because they can offer insights that could not be achieved with other approaches and are considered a useful tool for the preliminary or exploratory phase of a research project.

There are various categories of case studies. Yin (1994) identifies three, namely exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory case studies. This research is based on an exploratory case study that aims to explore any phenomenon in the data that serves as a point of interest. In this case study as well, a preliminary fieldwork and a small-scale data collection may be conducted before research questions and hypotheses are proposed. A pilot study is considered as an example of an exploratory case study (McDonough, 1997; Yin, 1994), and notes that it is crucial in determining the protocol that will be used.

The main research method used during the case study was unstructured focus groups to understand the state of the project, where group discussion is freer to discuss the state of the project in order to assess the production and consumption patterns, either in terms of use practices or the overall image produced by the project. The goal is to assess performance in order to understand the role of inter-communalities in the implementation of real strategies in this field and to support local initiatives that contribute to sustainable development independent of urban renewal projects. This is to consider the interactions and interdependencies among the different physical, natural, economic, and social elements. The focus groups were carried out between the different stakeholders of the project: the project leader, the management, the project managers, the citizens, the users, and the researchers involved in the study.

4. Study area

The city of Constantine occupies a central geographical position in the region (fig. 1.) This is a process that requires both continuity and rupture. Constantine straddles two major natural areas: the mountainous Tell to the north and the High Plains to the south. This favorable geographical position has enabled it to become a crossroads on a regional scale, capturing the various flows resulting from a spatial organizational device, the center of a circle whose radius links it with Annaba, Skikda, Jijel, Sétif, Batna, and Guelma, varies between 100 and 150 km. Situated at the intersection of the 5 main communication axes, the central pole of the regional socio-economic dynamics, Constantine is almost unique in its genre. The city, the antique one, is built on the site of an oppidum. It is isolated from the rest of its physical environment because it is limited to the north and east by the Rummel and its gorges and to the west by a large escarpment (fig 2.) (fig 3.).

Fig 1. Geographical position of Constantine (study area) in Algeria



Source. Google Maps (2021), authors treatment.

Any foreigner who has visited the city of Constantine will undoubtedly notice the wealth of tourist potential, both natural and cultural. The rock is renowned for the Rhummel Gorge and remains a significant part of its identity. This natural image, which is the pride of Constantine's inhabitants, is disfigured by the informal districts, heterogeneous conglomerates clinging to the sides of the old rock.

To requalify the urban spaces, the local authorities have opted for a renewal to provide the city with a renewal to provide the city that a business center which will have a certain economic impact in place of the current Bardo, located on the left bank of the Rhummel. This site, natural heritage, presents many Its potential must be maximized, especially in terms of landscaping, to maximize its potential. Economic changes are shaking up established urban identities and certainties. Renewing them implies requesting the foundations and poses challenges to decision makers today, both sociological in terms of population and political in terms of methods of dealing with this type of issue.

The Bardo site has been chosen to become a new point of attraction for urban life. Its renewal would establish a new urban continuity, extending the center to the south of Constantine. The creation of this center would be the first public act in the creation of a mixed urban area of about ten (10) hectares. The architectural image of the new business center is essential given the expected effect of influence. Furthermore, large facilities such as the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao have become attractive and renowned cultural centers of reference for activities, events, and synergy between the two cities, as well as synergy between different urban components.

Fig 2. Fig.3 Overview of the Constantine city center



Source. Google (2021), authors treatment.

The Bardo area has a key role, especially for its central urban layout. The Bardo is an area with a hinge function located between the historical and the modern city, with a spatial mediation role between the urban parts.

Due to its extensive conformation, it is located near all the main districts of the city. For this reason, the naturalist area is the green heart of the city, becoming the "Urban Park" of Constantine.

In fact, the city could offer an extraordinary amount of green in this large area.

The integration of the park into the urban environment requires studies of the site, which include a set of projects that are interdependent.

The site of the Bardo is privileged because of several factors, namely the richness of its historical heritage, as well as its situation in relation to the city center, being a meeting point between the bridge of "Sidi Rached" and the viaduct of "Trans Rummel".

The Bardo, whose name derives from the Spanish Prado, which means garden, is located on the edge of the ancient city walls but was its immediate suburb before becoming its extension. An extremely accessible space, it was occupied as soon as the city walls were destroyed, and has only recently been liberated, allowing this extraordinary panorama of the conjunction between the city, the Rummel, and its emblematic bridge, the Bridge of Sidi Rached, to finally reappear.

Bardo is one of the largest shanty towns of Constantine that the urban actors of the city are planning to develop and transform in a fundamental and lasting way. Given its location in the Centre of Constantine, this central space is part of the modernization plan of Constantine.

Fig 4. Situation of the BARDO park in relation to the city center



Source. Google Earth (2020), authors treatment.

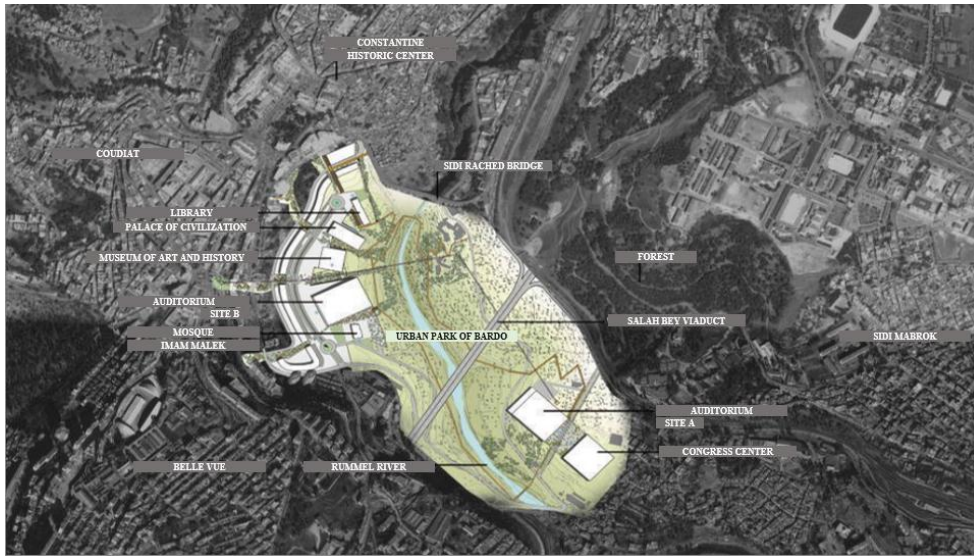
5. Results and discussion

For some years now, the discourse on the need to "remake the city" has been on the agenda of operations to improve urban spaces, but it is very rare that we ask ourselves the question about the meaning of the words "requalification" or "rehabilitation," which nonetheless guide city policies today. The requalification of an impoverished district or a degraded city refers to the action by which this district or this city regains its dynamics and its ability to fully play its functions as a fulfilled urban space. These functions may have been lost, as in the case of a historic town or a devitalized old district, where we seek to restore them; or they may have never existed, in which case we seek to create them.

The proposal for the requalification of Bardo Park, which includes an auditorium, a library, an art and history museum, and an auditorium, is intended to consolidate the natural environment of the Bardo Valley while revitalizing the historic center to create a unique cultural destination.

Among other features, this large-scale collective space provided for exceptional accessibility and the valorization of the site with the creation of a green park that would extend the existing forest chain to the center of the city. A true oasis in an urban center emplacement, this new destination aims to attract visitors from all walks of life while allowing city dwellers to take ownership of their exceptional natural and historical heritage.

Fig 5. Requalification proposal for Urban park of “Bardo”



Source: <https://www.cyberarchi.com/article/le-projet-de-pole-culturel-bardo-a-constantine-04-06-2014-15144/image-other-15144-03>

Requalification becomes a driving phenomenon that allows for the implementation of elements to ensure modernization. It will be based on the principle of attracting and focusing on metropolitan equipment and businesses. The expected result is the creation of strategic locations for attracting different economic operators, generating activities and being very attractive for the population. This is to say, how to reconvert by using one's potential and overcoming its constraints. This involves both elements of rupture and continuity, but the whole must lead to a city full of harmony, concordance, and multiple and lasting relations. sustainable and sustainable relationship.

In terms of environment and landscape, recreation, services, and image, the relationship between the city and the urban area will be more connected than in previous years.

6. Conclusion

Spatial and functional renewal is of crucial importance for the continuity and sustainability of society and spaces, as confirmed by a group of researchers and urban planning professionals, in particular, Schein (2005) who certifies that “Societies that do not renew their societies that do not renew their living environments are doomed to decadence” (cited in Françoise, 2006).

The ideal to be achieved would be urban public spaces that are not built on the principle of fracture but on union, designed for all people who, in some way or another, may have to experience this space.

The objective to be advocated is the free opening of public spaces because that is where real security lies in spaces that are really populated by individuals. An insecure space will be an empty space. In this perspective, linking cities are those that recreate the links between the different facets of the city (neighborhoods, nature, employment, and inhabitants whatever their age...). Conviviality and citizen participation are the key words for urban projects for modernization and urban development.

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