Managerial Approach for the Reconquest of Public Space, Case of Constantine City and Its New Town Ali Mendjeli

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Abstract: Talk about urbanization consists in studying the city and the elements of urban fabric. Fundamental component of the urban environment and its image, the public space is the backdrop on which are articulated other urban functions. The master of its management, its production, its environmental dimension and its urban organization constitute the major challenge of the work on the city within the framework of the requalification of urban spaces. Algeria is experiencing a rapid urbanization where the Algerian city escapes to policy makers and planners revealing dysfunctions of the urban elements such as public space. From the old town to the present city through the colonial one, the public space has taken different forms reflecting the concerns of the society that gave it birth. After independence, the Algerian city has experienced rapid growth supported by the realization of dwellings through the great sets where public space is overshadowed. Today, faced with the problem of the reconquest of public space, many urban improvement operations are carried out in the context of sustainable development through an adequate managerial approach of the city especially in the city of Constantine with its traditional core, colonial fabric and its new town Ali Mendjeli.

Keywords: public space; environmental dimension; old town; sustainable development; managerial approach; city of Constantine.

I. Introduction

This paper focuses on the urban public space in Algeria. Overshadowed by policy makers and town planners, the urban public space in Algeria no longer plays its role of fundamental component of the urban fabric. During the colonial period, the design of urban public spaces responded to the needs of European society obeying to the logic and the living of the settlers. Following the independence, facing the housing crisis, urban public spaces are designed using residual spaces after the dwelling occupancy. This approach has given rise to public spaces that are neglected, poorly designed and not consistent with the theoretical principles and the role that the public space has to play (or must play) in the urban fabric causing social problems and deterioration of the image of the city. To face this reality, Algeria has decided to take over public spaces through the operations of urban improvement. This paper argues that the success of these actions requires knowledge of the city (Constantine), fundamental requirements of project management and a sociological survey conducted among users.

II. Use and Practical of Public Space

Facing the effects of contemporaneity, public space knew significant changes as for its use, its environment, its dimensions, its treatment…. With the increase of the vehicle use, public space accommodated a new use, which transformed its use, its dimensions, its treatment…, generating negative effects on the urban environment [1]. If certain foreign countries has managed to master these changes, others such as Algeria, are facing problems where public spaces and their treatment escape to the decision makers, to the designers, to the citizens…. Indeed, public space in Algeria knew problems where its design, its environmental quality, its materialization, its treatment, its management… are relegated to the second plan considering the most pressing challenges to which the country is facing. These problems of public space result in the lack of taking in charge, management, design, environmental treatment…. such as: the absence of differentiation in the treatments of spaces, of signalling to ensure a segregation between pedestrian and mechanical flows, the non-respect of the hierarchy principles of public spaces facilitating their appropriation and contributing to structure the city and to ensure the safety and its image.

III. Public Space Between Old City and New Town

Today, Constantine, city of bridges and the eastern capital of Algeria is suffering from pollution and degradation of public spaces (old and new) touching even the recent public spaces built in its new town Ali Mendjeli (Figure N° 1 and N°2), whose design was supposed to be done in the context of sustainable development and
environmental protection. Moreover, the situation of Constantine’s public spaces is critical pushing the authorities to think and to undertake effective actions in order to find the appropriate solutions for these problems.

**Figure 1: Urban public space of the medina**

**Figure 2: Urban public space of the new town**

Thus, with the A.P.W "Assemblée Populaire de la Wilaya" (city council) and in collaboration with the Commission "aménagement du territoire et urbanisme " (urban planning and urbanism) of the city of Constantine, a survey\(^1\) -in March, 2014- was carried out among the citizens of this city concerning public spaces, their state even after the operation of the urban improvement experienced by this city. The report supported by the survey reveals what follows [2]:

- The absence of positive impact of the urban improvement;
- Nullity of actions and operations;
- The absence of quality in the results of the urban improvement work especially on the environmental quality;
- Dissatisfaction of the inhabitants as to the result of the urban improvement in particular environmental quality at the level of their districts;
- The non-appropriation of improved spaces;
- The non-accession of civil society because there is no dialogue or participation process of the citizens in the operation, this neglect gives them a feeling of discomfort, insecurity, faintness and great frustration;
- Inexistence of the specifications worked out by the control of work;
- Space cutting in areas and inconsistency of the interventions;
- The inexistence of coordination between the various actors generating a discordance between their various actions;
- A restricted operational culture towards the great operations that include the urban improvement work on public space, also, with the logic of the great operations.

### IV. The Summary of the Results of the Survey

Concerning public spaces, the survey shows the following points:

#### A. Not Equity

Public spaces do not exist and even if they exist, several districts have no public space. The inhabitants complain about the long way that they must make to go there: the public spaces are far from the places of residence. For this reason, the 34% of surveyed people answered that the access is difficult in these spaces (graph n° 1). In addition, the average time put to reach that point is 15 minutes, but it should be noted that a significant number of 25, 5% make a ride of more than half an hour to arrive at these spaces (graph n° 2).

**Graph N°1 Accessibility**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Easy</th>
<th>Difficult</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access 1</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Graph N°2 Time to Reach Public Spaces**

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\(^1\) This survey was done by two 2\(^{nd}\) year PhD student in sustainable urban project management, its questionary was divided in two parts: the first part was about concertation and public spaces, the second one concerned accessibility and disabled people. The surveyed persons live in Constantine city. In the end, more than three hundred people were surveyed (62 % of them were men).
**B. Discomfort and Insecurity**

Transport, circulation and the immediate environment of these spaces constitute the major difficulty that the citizens are facing (graph n° 3). Safety is one of the principal causes, which make the access difficult to public spaces especially for women.

**Graph N°3 Comfort**

**C. Management and Maintenance**

The best way of promoting and improving the accessibility to public spaces is to make them safe, to change citizens’ mentalities by ensuring animation and attractivity through ongoing maintenance actions of this type of spaces. It is also question to reduce the circulation and organize transport in order to decrease the distance between these spaces and residences without forgetting parking areas beside these spaces (graph n° 4).

**Graph N°4 Citizens’ suggestions**

**V. Concertation and Public Space**

The fieldwork revealed the fact that the inhabitants are ready to take part in the operations of urban improvement of their public space: they propose several participative initiatives in the form of real actions led by associations of district in order to improve their space of life. They express a frustration as they are totally out of this important project concerning their space which is it gradually taken from them.
VI. Environmental Dimension

The law 03-10 of July 19th, 2003 relating to the environmental protection within the sustainable development sets up the PNAEDD “Plan National d’Action Environnementale et de Développement Durable (National plan of environmental action and sustainable development)” introduced legislative dispositions about protection of the living environment with a classification of spaces of leisure, parks and any space of collective interest. In this law, we find that the protection of the environment in a context of sustainable development aims to:

- Fix the basic principles and rules of environmental management;
- Promote a sustainable national development by improving the living conditions and working to ensure and guarantee a healthy living environment;
- Prevent any pollution form or negative effects on the environment by guaranteeing the safeguard of its components;
- Restore the damaged areas;
- Promote for a rational ecological use of available natural resources and the use of more suitable technologies;
- Strengthen the information with mediatisation, the sensitizing and the participation of the public and the different actors to the protection measures of the environment.

VII. Proposals and Suggestions

The taking into account of environmental dimension is guaranteed by the overall improvement of the environmental quality of spaces of life…. Only the urban planning of green spaces can improve and guarantee the quality of urban ecosystem by attenuating the problems of harmful effects and stress. At the level of the residential areas, the green screens in the form of dense and tight vegetation [3], can constitute landscapes embellishing the urban space while creating a microclimate and ensuring the soundproofing. Gazonnement and plantation of trees can contribute to the absorption of dust, and the attenuation of the microbes.

- Energy and climate: supporting an adequate urban planning, energy effectiveness by taking in consideration topography, orientation and green species (contextualization);
- Water: a good water management processes makes it possible to decrease the extension of the networks and the building oversizing. Such a management process contributes also to the quality of public spaces:
  - Allow the natural infiltration of rain water and to slow down their streaming;
  - Implement techniques for the treatment of waste water and the re-use of rainwater.
- Displacement: to develop public spaces which support means of soft transport [4];
- Biodiversity and landscapes: conceive green spaces giving them a function and an ecological maintenance procedures;
- Waste: optimize installations to facilitate and improve the collection of waste;
- Polluted soils and sites: reinvest spaces in wasteland (evident depollution);
- Noises and harmful effects: take into account sound dimension in the installations and materials used for the horizontal and vertical coatings;
- Risks: preserve the sectors with strong ecological value (slopes, wooded surfaces…) and to take into account the exposed areas to the various risks (flood, update…);
- Project management and management: provide control of work (supervision and services decentralized of the state) with managers [5] specialized in the management of public spaces who master the following requirements:
  - Take part and attend the development and the refinement of the project from the mental idea to the operational exploitation of the site;
  - Collect and processing the data whether economic, social, political, architectural, urban, environmental, scientific and cultural of the concerned site;
  - Know, understand and implement the bases of the PMBOK (Project Management Body of Knowledge), Conventions and recommendations of the international organizations as well as the charters, laws and other legal texts in relation with the project site and the implication of all actors;
  - Give an opinion based on deontology principals relating to the management of public spaces while being based on the ten (10) fields of project management and on a sustainable urban development vision;
  - Are able to collaborate, mobilize and put in synergy all the required professionals by the operational chain which will be indicated to them (landscape town planners, architects, managers, engineers, administrators, planners) as well as the groups of population (citizens) in order to propose to the users and to the public authorities several assumptions of project related to the principles of public spaces management and to the possibilities, the resources and the local needs (project stakeholders and communications management);
- Understand the history of the site and the techniques of construction employed, in order to define the identity of it, to take into account different measures relating to contents, the surrounding and the landscape in which it is integrated (project integration management);
- Conduct the project as a complex system which associates human, financial and technical resources (project human resource, cost and procurement management);
- Understand the process of conduct, of control, of development, of construction and project management "stage of diagnosis, stage of assembly, stage of preliminary studies, stage of file constitution, stage of installation and the stage of management" (project scope management);
- Understand and give an opinion about the technical of maintenance and future management techniques in order to ensure the environmental sustainable dimension by ensuring the global management of the concerned site.

VIII. Conclusion

Initially the causes of the destructuration of the Algerian public space are related to the country’s history especially colonization. The latter introduced new public spaces generating social, cultural confrontation between the two models: traditional and colonial. Today, the lack in managing public spaces is essentially linked to political choices: first, all the government's efforts are focused on how to solve the problem of the housing crisis, secondly, the threat of public space for authorities if it should play its full role in the establishment of a democratic state. So the urban improvement operations done by the authorities do not meet the expectations of citizens and their results are not satisfactory. The will to control the movement of population and the absence of communication project management between the citizens and the authorities (project main stakeholders) constitutes the main obstacle to produce suitable urban space. Moreover, these barriers can be overcome if the management of such projects is based on the application of the 10 fields of project management without forgetting the international and the local experiences’ results of similar projects that we must take in consideration keeping in mind that the context is never the same (history, traditions, culture,…).

References