

THE PRACTICES OF PUBLIC SPACES IN TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOODS: CASE OF THE ARGOUB DISTRICT, CITY OF M'SILA-ALGERIA

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Highlights:

- public space is the place of social and spatial transaction;
- public space is the showcase of human settlement since ancient cities;
- the illicit use of public space can change its vocation as a place of rest and leisure to a repulsive place;
- public space is a symbol of urban changes.

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Abstract. Public space seems to have become one of the key elements of local development policies. As such, our study will focus on a traditional neighborhood called Argoub located in the center of the city of M'sila in Algeria, the public spaces of this neighborhood have long been the fundamental structure and the filter of reading of the neighborhood, they have deteriorated and to remedy this problem, the Observation shows that the public space in this district is distorted and its use for heterogeneous purposes than those previously planned, but this diversion of use continues to fragment the public space and reduce it to an obstructed space. The local authorities have carried out limited urban improvement of these spaces to perpetuate and improve their urban quality.

This study aims to measure the quality of these spaces, to clarify the notion of traditional public space, and to identify its different practices. For this research, we chose as a methodology recurring observation reinforced by situational observation, while taking into account the urban and historical context of this district. Without permanent control from local authorities, illegal interventions by residents in the spaces in question have completely changed the alleys into stifling spaces used only for transition and not for social interaction.

Despite the limited intervention of urban planning services to safeguard the urban fabric network and revive traditional public spaces, the ongoing change practices by residents have had a negative influence on the urban landscape of the neighborhood in general. As such, we will be faced with the following challenges: security, physical and visual quality, and economic attractiveness must, at the end of planning, require a real global reflection on these different urban forms so that their management is coherent and thoughtful. In this regard, the obvious question is: what practical measures should be taken to respond to the problems of landscape and spatial qualities of these spaces and contribute more generally to their sustainability?

Keywords: Argoub, M'sila, neighborhood, public spaces, practices, quality of these spaces.

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1. Introduction

Public spaces, as we know them today, began to take shape during the middle Ages, evident in the remnants of medieval streets and squares found in city centers. These vibrant areas were hubs of commerce and craftsmanship, contributing to urban life and animation. Bassand (2001) emphasized that public space serves as the backbone of urban production, ensuring the homogeneity of the urban fabric and fostering social cohesion. The unity of public space is rooted in its long history, as different practices have shaped its development over time. Despite the com-

plex landscapes and temporal shifts, public spaces remain critical to urban history.

The creation of streets, alleys, and squares over centuries reveals major stages in urban history. Today, the term "public space" is viewed from multiple angles, whether aesthetic, cultural, or technical. Philosophically, Arendt (1961) described public space in *The Human Condition* and *The Crisis of Culture* as a space of interaction, though the concept gained broader use in the human and social sciences starting in the 1960s. In the social sciences, public space evolved in two main directions. Habermas (1988) viewed it as a space for debate within a community

or society, where individuals use reason to critique state power. This definition evolved as urbanization progressed, prompting historians like (Farge, 1979) to argue that public space also belongs to the masses, not just elites.

Urban planners, such as Ildefons Cerdà, Lynch, and Camillo Sitte, defined public space more materially, as outdoor spaces that are framed by built environments. However, the legal status of public spaces has remained ambiguous, often seen as residual spaces in modern urban ideologies. Public space plays a foundational role in urban development, linking different parts of the city together while promoting social cohesion. These spaces whether public squares or communal gathering places serve as areas for interaction and use, regardless of ownership or formal designation within the public domain.

Historically, public spaces have shaped city development, with two main principles emerging: property rights and behavioral practices. The evolution of these spaces is deeply embedded in the history of human settlements.

In ancient Greece, the acropolis, theater, and agora formed the core of public space, with the agora serving as the first example of a multifunctional public area for religious, commercial, and administrative activities. The agora of Miletus is one prominent example, with Greek cities like Samos and Miletus following a regular grid layout.

In Roman cities, the Forum served as the central public space, continuing the traditions of the Greek agora. Positioned at the city's core, the Forum was the focal point for social and political life, surrounded by public buildings and marked by its large size. The urban plan featured narrow, unaligned streets and irregular blocks.

Medieval cities maintained the importance of public space, with squares around key public buildings like markets, churches, and palaces. These cities, often contained within defensive walls, displayed relatively regular plans that echoed the urban layouts of antiquity.

In Islamic cities, public space was organized hierarchically, separating public, semi-public, and private areas. Streets served as public spaces, while alleys and dead ends led to semi-private and private spaces. The radial-concentric layout of cities like Samarkand highlighted the separation of religious and commercial centers from peripheral residential zones.

During the Renaissance, public space became central to urban organization. Squares were designed as artistic objects, showcasing public buildings such as theaters and palaces. Michelangelo's design of piazzas is a prime example of this period's emphasis on the aesthetics of public spaces.

The industrial era brought a new approach to public space, with Baron Haussmann's redesign of Paris addressing industrial needs and public health concerns. However, the rise of new transportation modes contributed to the exclusion of pedestrians from public spaces, leading to a decline in their use. Modern urbanism, shaped by the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (ICMA) and the Athens Charter, emphasized functional zones in cities,

though critiques emerged in the mid-20th century. Authors like Jane Jacobs (*The Death and Life of Great American Cities*) highlighted the importance of public spaces in urban life and criticized the mistakes of 1950s urban planning. Public spaces became central to new urban thought, with efforts in the 1970s to reintroduce them in large housing projects or redevelop city centers to accommodate diverse urban practices. According to Gehl (2011), he insists on the importance of the social dimension of public space, emphasizing that the quality of the urban environment profoundly influences human interactions. Its approach is based on daily tasks such as walks, strolling in the open air, spontaneous interactions through meetings and games which strongly depend on the urban setting and its attractiveness. As it also shows that good planning of public space promotes the social activities of users and strengthens the social fabric, collective well-being and vitality of cities.

According to Habibi et al. (2024), the problem of urban demography has reduced social cohesion and caused social problems to appear in large cities. By studying the effects of social participation in the process of designing and organizing urban spaces in order to increase cultural values; to improve public well-being and benefit society as a whole, the researchers opted for a community design approach, which harnesses social capital and collective wisdom for the social sustainability of the city, according to them, the key to success lies in a participatory approach through the revitalization of social sustainability and the integration of local skills and knowledge in the design of urban public spaces with an emphasis on community initiatives, because participatory design creates a potential platform for problem solving and sustainability urban. The results of this study showed that people's participation in the design is crucial to increase convergence among participants. This study highlights the importance of social participation to improve the quality of urban spaces and achieve the social sustainability of the city.

In Algeria, rapid urbanization has led to fragmented and incoherent urban growth, with public spaces often neglected or repurposed for construction (Guettiche & Baziz, 2021). Urban parks, which are crucial for improving quality of life and fostering social interaction, have been particularly important in this context (Guneroglu & Bekar, 2022; Luo et al., 2020). Ensuring the protection of these spaces, especially in older neighborhoods, is essential for maintaining urban identity.

2. Objectives of the study

This study aims to:

- Clarify the concept of public spaces and their different spatial and social practices in the neighborhood.
- To know the reality of these spaces and the role they play.
- To propose practical solutions to preserve them from these changes over time.

3. The importance of the research topic

The strength of the research lies in the novelty it brings to scientific research by addressing little-explored points in the field of traditional urban spaces and their relationship to modern urban planning, which we explain through the following points.

The traditional Arab city in the classical period, in particular, in the 11th centuries and was maintained until the 19th century. It was characterized by a strong spatial structure, based on the existence of a center, powerfully organized around the mosque. It is all around the latter that urban economic activities are gathered (specialized markets and caravanserais where wholesale trade is held). It is this structure of the old city, which is subject to only minimal transformations. This is how the old city such as (medina, casbah) maintains artisanal activities in its traditional public spaces by creating animation in the latter.

The lack of interest in traditional public spaces, including in Arab cities, and their role in daily life reflects private urban spaces (e.g. case study) due to the private lifestyle and presence of the mosque as a public space. The various social interactions within traditional public spaces have changed and become primarily places of transit, due to several factors, including the massive movement of population from the outskirts of cities to the interior due to religious and ethnic conflicts, the deterioration of the security process and the change of housing to another housing, which led to the absence of social cohesion and negatively affected the form of these spaces and various social and spatial practices.

Traditional public space constitutes a facade for the centers of ancient cities because it is the core of the modern city with its various components, because it constitutes a complex spatial pattern which reflects its true face, hence the recent interest in carrying out research on this topic and how to integrate the urban and architectural elements of these spaces into modern urbanization with the aim of forming a spatially and functionally integrated urban fabric, creating harmonization between them and the modern designed spaces based on a unified international approach standards.

The vocabulary of the Arabic language is almost devoid of the term public spaces, despite its physical existence, and this term has started to appear recently in some academic research. The illicit uses of these spaces as a place of exhibition or appropriation with the aim of including them in private housing other than their true function considered as a symbol of exchange and social cohesion.

4. Meaning of public space

Public space designates “an open public place consisting of all of an empty space and the buildings that surround it” (Merlin, 2004). In technical sciences (architecture, town planning, urban engineering) public spaces constitute urban development issues, “Hollows” and “Voids” of the built urban fabric, and this in a “Causal relationship between spatial order and social order” (Toussaint & Zimmerman,

2004). On the aesthetic level: the public place, “Is an environment offered to man, it must be significant as it must have a strong expression. It must have amenities for the perceptual sense” (Lynch, 1976).

From an accessibility point of view, “The ideal scheme of a public space is that of having no particular function, of being accessible to as many roles and behaviors as possible” (Billid, 1988). From a usage point of view, the public square is exclusively public; it is the scene of a multitude of individual or collective practices that encroach on the space it covers, which influences the quality of this space. “The quality of this space is very often called into question by appropriation practices that tend to close it off and privatize it” (Ghomari, 2004).

From the point of view of spatial practices the two thinkers, this was discussed by Bilodeau (2023) according to Henri Lefebvre and Jane Jacobs in their work in urban studies, and according to they share a common point which refers to the concept of living and analyze the living space as a set of place practices and an explanatory variable of social transformations; they also have the same conception of the nature of space occupation. By this, what is meant is the way of living in a space, the fact of appropriating it, of making it ours. They argue in favor of increased participation of residents in the planning processes that concern them.

5. Method

According to Rose (1984), it would be inappropriate to attribute to a theory the failure in the treatment of a problem if the theory is not suitable for the type of problem considered. So we opt for the recurring observation that is an analysis approach based on direct factual and monovalent observations, it consists of submitting photo or video documents to the interpretation of experts by also having them react to the comments or interpretations of those who preceded them (recurrent). According to Amphoux (2004), where he presents this particular technique which fits like that of the commented routes, in the register of the methods of qualitative and sensitive approaches to the analysis of the space in question. The author of this approach asked the question: why this approach technique?

Adoption of a classic survey technique, by directly asking users or owners their opinion. According to him, the methods, which rely on direct questions or observations; this technique is based on inverse characteristics.

Firstly, according to this approach we will submit photos or video to the interpretation of experts by explaining the problem to them and avoiding direct and frontal questioning.

Secondly: the recurrent observation approach that we practice is interpretative through which we did not seek to prove the veracity of such a phenomenon in a hypothetic-deductive logic (Hypothesis cause result), but sought to understand it, to name the spatial or social practices of the space in question which have become habitual. The interpretative logic consisted at this level in recomposing

facts recited by users. So it's more of an understanding than an explanation of a phenomenon.

Thirdly: it is necessary to cross-reference the different interpretations, by analyzing the redundancies. To better understand the different practices in these public spaces and the causes of the current state of these spaces, we will reinforce recurring observation using the research interview technique in order to cross-reference the opinions of experts in the field (city managers and engineers and various stakeholders). For that and to apply this method, we presented our problem on two spaced occasions, reinforced with photos of public spaces in the neighborhood under study, to 20 experts (multidisciplinary design offices and city management administrators) and (07) technical services of the municipality who participate in the management of the city. We then took and analyzed their different points of view in order to better understand these spatial practices the opinions of which are specific to each discipline.

Application of the method:

We have submitted photos and the map of the Argoub entity; with experts (multidisciplinary study offices and teachers from the University of M'sila specializing in city management) and authorized technicians from the technical service of the municipality of M'sila, these people were interviewed and responded on a pre-established questionnaire which contains open questions on the history of the Argoub district and the various development or rehabilitation operations which have been carried out in this district. As this questionnaire included closed questions relating to the different practices of public spaces including the neighborhood being studied. This operation was applied twice in order to better understand the state of the neighborhood and name the spatial or social practices of its public spaces. At the end of this operation, we crossed the different interpretations, analyzing the redundancies and points of agreement between the interviewees, which we took into consideration in our research.

The people consulted are:

Technical management of the town hall of the commune of M'sila.

- Heritage service: 01 architect and 01 senior technician in city management.
- Project monitoring service: 03 technicians.
- Town planning department: 02 city management engineers.

(12) Teacher-researchers from the city management institute of the University of M'sila.

(08) Multidisciplinary design offices between town planning, architecture and city management are located in the city of M'sila and know the Argoub district well.

6. Typo morphological analysis of the case study

6.1. History of the Argoub district

The Argoub district is located in M'sila city at coordinates 34.6052° N latitude and 4.5420° E longitude. At a distance

of 250 km southeast of Algiers. The district's origins trace back to its occupation by the French in 1840, marking a significant point in its historical development (Figure 1). Its architectural fabric is traditional, the streets are narrow and winding, the houses are built from compacted clay blocks, using gypsum as a laying mortar and the roofs are trunks of palm trees and trees covered in fine earth mortars used as cement.

Currently, the majority of houses which constitute the main urban facade are renovated in reinforced concrete, except those which overlook the Oued Ksob were the first buildings which have recently undergone a facelift as part of the policy of improvement urban.

Through the reading of the history of this district and the comparison of the various plans of its spatial evolution, we noted that the mesh of the traditional urban fabric was almost the same one and that the grid road remains unchangeable (Figure 1).

The district has kept its old character, its architectural quality combined with the spatial configuration of its urban fabric. The richness of the urban heritage is threatened by the invasion of reinforced concrete, which threatens its existence and its harmony. On the spot, it is found that old dwellings had been demolished, and that construction sites had begun to appear, which imposed a profound spatial change.

The decomposition of the built frame can be carried out according to the plot, the system of public spaces and the built system.

6.2. Factors of choice of the Argoub urban entity

The neighborhood is chosen for the following reasons:

- By virtue of its location in the center of the city.
- It is the oldest neighborhood in town.
- Persistence and durability of its architectural and urban character.
- Structured by the meeting of two important axes in the city.

7. Literature review

In our research, we have analyzed previous studies which have focused as a whole on urban forms in old towns (streets alleys, squares, squares, squares and public gardens) according to Allain (2004) "these urban forms have undergone transformations of scale and nature which make them more complex than ever". These studies will bring richness to our research and help in the thematic understanding of the analysis approach, as they will allow us to open a window to determine the importance of the study carried out which constitutes a key factor in the development of research and exploration issues of the case study. Among these studies, the following are highlighted.

The First study is based on urban morphology (Allain, 2004). We have limited ourselves to the points that have a close relationship with our study. These points are

summed up in urban forms and their meanings in the global urban system. The study focuses on an analytical approach and the different forms of public spaces that interest us in our research.

According to the author, this complex urban reality, which can be analyzed at different levels of scale and from several points of view, crosses disciplinary boundaries. Urban studies have favored the morphological approach by putting the question of urban forms at the center of their concerns.

The author (Allain, 2004) asked the question, how to study and understand urban forms without worrying about the historical conditions of their appearance? It shows that the urban form is the visual and partial manifestation of the urban system and one of its most important elements. According to him, the morphological study is the key to understanding urban forms, and that the urban form is always perceived. This is the position of Camillo Sitte and Raymond Urwin. The author has come to the conclusion that the different urban forms are now at the forefront of the concerns of planners and legislators. These studies have enabled us to understand the theme and the analytical approach.

The Second study is entitled Logic of design and process of production of urban public space (Hanocq, 2005) whose author demonstrates that the evolution of what he will call “urban public spaces”. This work has focused on the potential evolutions of urban public spaces, under the combined pressure of factors that he perceives as fundamentally underlying the development of so-called post-industrial urban societies. The author has attempted to demonstrate the concepts and concrete models of organization of urban public spaces through some ancient Western cities.

The factors he has identified and retained are taken as paradigmatic principles that open up a vast field of investigation. In the conclusion, the author spoke about the social and spatial practices of public spaces in the city of Liege. In the latter, the morphological analysis has allowed the author to arrive at well-founded and better-supported results.

8. The quality of public spaces according to Agenda 21 (Sustainability of public spaces)

A sustainable public space is a public place that has been designed to conserve resources and protect the environment. It is also a place that makes people feel safe, comfortable, and welcome. Sustainable public spaces come in many guises. These include urban gardens, pedestrian-friendly sidewalks, public parks, bicycle route systems, and more. When designing such spaces, we should consider how they operate, and how we can maintain them without harming the environment. This means we should develop them in a way that reduces or eliminates waste and pollution, and uses environmentally friendly materials to construct them. Public spaces are an essential part of any healthy city. They provide a place for people to gather, interact with one another, and engage in social activities. They also contribute to the quality of life by providing

opportunities for leisure, recreation, relaxation, and work.

According to Chouillou (2021), the dimensions of the quality of public space according to Agenda 21 are summarized as follows: Promote economical and renewable use of resources in public spaces. Promote local development and the attractiveness of the territory through public space. Ensuring a living environment and urban comfort in public spaces. Improve the local environment through public spaces. The criteria for the quality of public spaces can be summarized in the following points: accessibility, economy of use, management, security and environmental quality.

- **Accessibility:** Accessibility ensures the ability of everyone, regardless of disability, to have access to public spaces that are open to the public. According to Larousse Character of a place which is accessible and readable from a signage point of view.
- **The economy of use:** Rational and economical use of the components of public space in a renewable way (resources of public spaces) and the reuse of local materials in the event of urban intervention on the physical aspect of these spaces.
- **Management:** It is management or all of the techniques for organizing resources which are implemented for the administration in order to manage public spaces.
- **Security:** Among the security techniques, we naturally find video surveillance and the specialization of human surveillance (personnel specialized in this field) who monitor the control of the use of public spaces.
- **Environmental quality:** The sustainable development of urban space aims to improve the quality of life, to bring well-being to the local population for a prosperous city in the long term. This quality of life will be obtained thanks, among other things, to improving the quality of public space. According to Chouillou (2021), for a more qualitative approach to the environmental design of public spaces, it appears necessary to promote articulation between scales of reflection. The integration of users in the design process appears to be the solution for, on the one hand, adapting public spaces to needs, and on the other hand, addressing local environmental issues. This would make it possible to design spaces with better quality of use and better environmental quality, particularly in terms of noise, air pollution, thermal comfort and nature in the city. According to Mehaffy (2021), The New Urban Agenda – highlights the importance of public space and its role in achieving human health and well-being and the physical and mental health of city residents, this study proposes to focus on the specific health and happiness objectives linked to public space. The results, although only the beginning of a much longer process, require the establishment of other framework agreements in this Urban Agenda that aim to improve the well-being, health and happiness of humanity in the future.

9. Results

9.1. Urban and historical context of the district

The district is located on a site with a relatively low slope towards the East (Oued Ksob). It is located in the center of the city and limited by:

From the south: via the slaughterhouse and Oued Ksob (Figure 1).

From the East: by the same Oued.

From the North: by the street leading to the Djaafra, district.

From the West: by the rue de Boussaada and the roundabout which is a point of convergence of two important axes connecting the avenue Mustapha Ben Boulaid from the North to the South and the boulevard du Colonel Amirouche from the East to the West.

The spatial evolution of the city of M'sila has gone through 03 important phases in its history (Figure 2) characterized by a massive exodus of population towards the center and surroundings of the city; this is due to sociological and security conditions which have imposed this situation.

The Argoub district was built at the beginning of the 18th century in the image of Arab-Islamic cities. Characterized by a very dense and hierarchical vernacular organic fabric; composed of narrow streets, winding alleys, dead ends and small squares which have sudden entrances and which bear the name of "rahba" and surrounded by constructions closed on the outside and often open on the

inside and overlooking small courtyards, small places of worship which are located inside the district was both the religious and political center.

Reading the history of this neighborhood showed us that its residents experienced social coexistence within the framework of mutual respect. The comparison of the different plans of its spatial evolution allowed us to note that the network of the traditional urban fabric was almost the same and that the road network remained unchanged. In the decade (1990–2000), the phenomenon of the monopolization of public space in this district increased following a massive exodus of families coming from localities bordering the town of M'sila, these new occupants are become the main participants in the various changes in the urban fabric by disregarding in their actions the rules and principles of respect for the rights of others. Thus everyone is forced to comply with the decisions and desires of the inhabitants who preceded them in the occupation of the land and without respect for the rules of construction and urbanization; this partly explains the dynamics and the vernacular aspect of the traditional urban fabric.

In the decade cited above, we illustrated a symbolic decline of traditional public spaces particularly in the Argoub district, which led to a major change in the spatial practices of public spaces in which security logics have limited free access for daily users, which has led to lower attendance, particularly at night. From this perspective, traditional public spaces lose their diversity and unexpectedness.

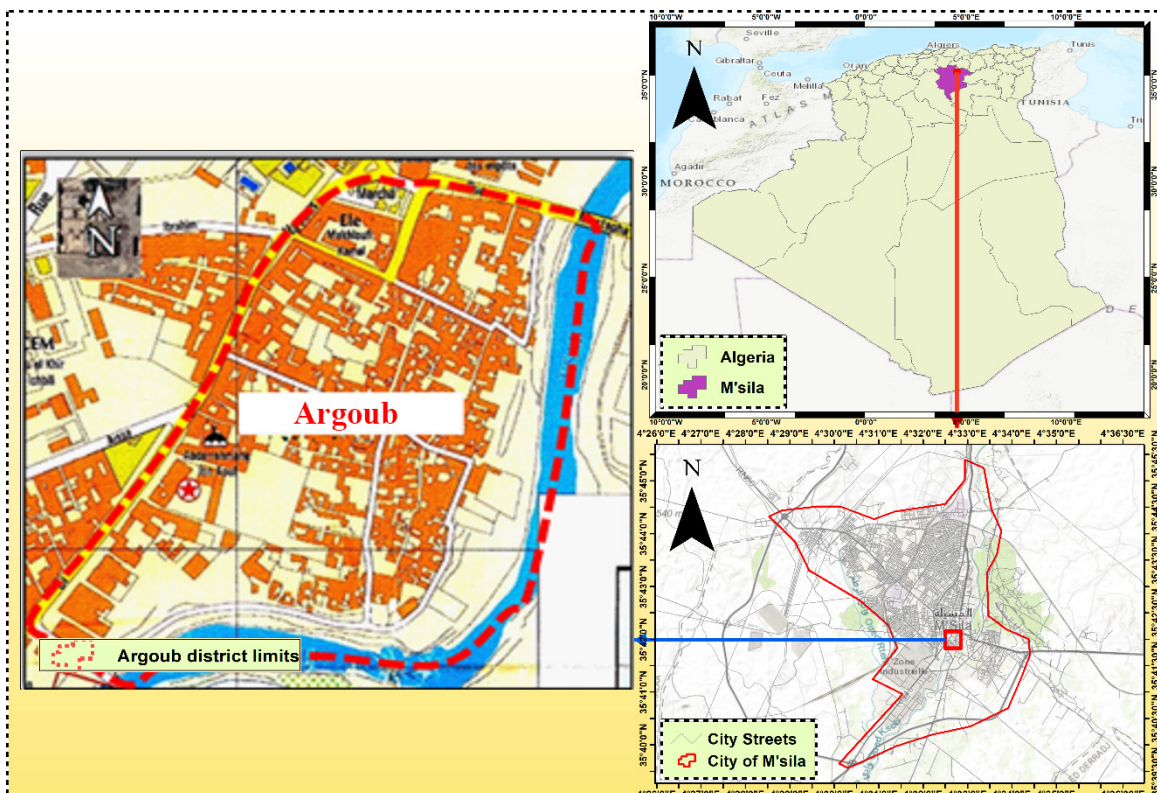


Figure 1. Map of the city of M'sila (source: map of the city of M'sila processed by the authors)

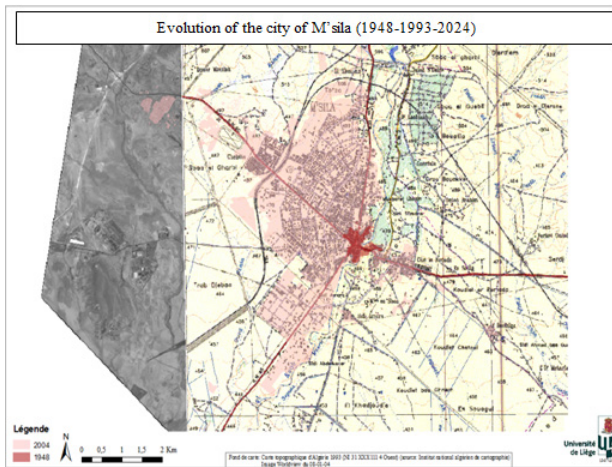


Figure 2. Map of the city of M'sila (source: authors by cooperation project between the universities of M'sila and Liège)

Their management by local officials has become difficult, which has amplified the state of physiognomic degradation of these spaces. Emerging spatial practices have resulted from the different uses of the space in question by the new residents and which manifest themselves through urban disorder which is the result of a practice of negligence and a carelessness revealing low social cohesion. According to Margier (2020), the way to secure urban space would be to erase any sign of disorder, to repress the slightest deviant behavior and finally to provide the image of a clean and safe space; and according to the same author, resident and ordinary practices contribute to updating or recreating the meaning of public spaces.

It is obvious that, in this way of understanding the phenomena of land appropriation, public space in general and neighboring outdoor space do not escape this logic. In this context, the neighborhood remained confronted with various problems of accessibility and dilapidation and unable to adapt to the needs of current life. This heritage is gradually being erased against its constantly evolving urban environment. Faced with this alarming deterioration, an awareness of the interest in preserving this architectural and urban heritage has arisen and has made it possible within the framework of state intervention in the form of improving urban living conditions in the district, in fighting against its growing impoverishment in order to meet the minimum requirements for quality of life in the contemporary city.

9.2. Factors of spatial, sociological and cultural change

- The apparent imbalance in social relations which have for a long time reflected a desire to live in common between the different occupants.
- An urban fabric disintegrated in the urban and technological dynamics of the contemporary city.
- The introduction of new materials into housing and construction methods that is inappropriate for the site.
- Unsuitable one-off interventions on the built environment.

- Overcrowding of the neighborhood.
- Moving of old families to new cities, to seek a better living environment.

This state of affairs has created significant challenges facing public spaces in the Argoub district.

- Illicit extensions to the detriment of the street or alley will negatively influence the fluidity and identification within the neighborhood, which will in the future imply a loss of elements of the mental image of the neighborhood among residents.
- The foreign qualified spatial practices which occurred in these spaces will make these arteries imperceptible spaces.
- Constant changes in the architectural and urban planning elements characterizing the neighborhood will create a heterogeneous urban fabric.

9.3. Position of the district in the urban framework

In the city, the district constitutes a point of attraction translated by the existence of the place of the martyrs as an area of influence and the other bordering facilities, which attract a significant flow of population coming from the different districts of the city (Figure 1).

9.4. Insert elements

According to city map (Ministry of Urban Planning, 2022), the district is bounded from the North and the West by two important axes which are respectively the two national roads 40 and 45 as well as the place of the martyrs which daily receives a significant flow of population from the different districts of the city. These elements strongly participate in the insertion of the district object of study in the city.

9.5. The urban fabric of the neighborhood

The urban fabric that characterizes the neighborhood is organic and compact, produced by logic of stratification. The community space changes character "from the most common to the most private" along a route that begins with the main axes of the city, which follows the streets of the districts, to finally end in the alleys or dead ends.

9.6. Typology of the built environment

The traditional layout of urban forms (streets, alleys, and squares or squares) highlights the street grid which has been established according to a gradual system starting from the street as a public space par excellence, passing through the winding alley which is a semi-urban space public, to finally arrive at the private space which is the impasse. The hierarchy of the network is homogenized on all the segments which are constituted by the islands.

This layout is made up of houses that have an almost similar typology and an average surface area of 100 to 150 m² with certain homogeneity in the facades and heights. This mesh seems to be largely preserved, as one approach the heart of the district, the alleys become

narrower and the buildings are lower with a single floor in their majority.

9.7. Components of the Argoub district in public squares, alleys and dead ends

The streets have widths, which do not exceed in their majority 03 m, the lanes and the dead ends are sinuous whose width is variable between 1.5 to 02 m with generally blind walls and which open on the outside only by the back from home.

They are covered with dry stones and create shade in the hot season of the year.

The Place des Martyrs (Figure 3) is located north of the Argoub district and is part of its current urban fabric, as it is a crossroads and transitional place in the city, it is both institutional due to its proximity to civic facilities.

It is a meeting, relaxation and rendezvous space for several categories of male people. From independence until 1980 it was named as a place of memorial.

Currently it knows lesser events and festivities of this kind; however, its location near the town hall has made it a symbolic place, favored for the decoration and the attachment to the poles of the flags bearing the colors of the nation during periods of national holidays and visits from local officials.

The other functions, namely the display of goods and open-air shoe repairs, are practiced in an anarchic manner, which has a negative influence on the hierarchy of these sub-spaces and on the gentle mode of their use.



Figure 3. The public Place of the Martyrs (source: produced by the authors)

9.8. The Street System

- **The Street** is a winding space for pedestrian and mechanical traffic with a width that varies between 4 and 5 m covered with macadam, limited by walls that do not exceed the floor in most cases (Figure 4).



Figure 4. The street in the district of Argoub (source: produced by the authors)

- **The alley** is a more common space, it is surrounded by continuous walls in the form of a corridor created by the inhabitant in order to orient it and consume its space, which gives it a reassuring atmosphere (Figure 5).



Figure 5. The alley in the district of Argoub (source: produced by the authors)

- **The Dead end** is a closed private space surrounded by traditional houses and some shops, it is used only by the inhabitants who live there, as it is intended, to ensure access from the most common to the most private or vice versa, and not the crossing of the city from one end to the other its role is determining in the internal organization of the district (Figure 6).



Figure 6. The Dead end in the district of Argoub (source: produced by the authors)

10. Discussion

10.1. Hierarchy of the road system

The authenticity of the district is illustrated by its almost original urban fabric; the plan highlights a non-orthogonal street network with an irregular shape and different dimensions.

The evolution of the neighborhood over time has not influenced the meshing and hierarchy of this network, except in a few places where the state has functional hierarchy of these internal services has become insufficient following the evolution of the way of life and the growth of the resident population (Tables 1 and 2).

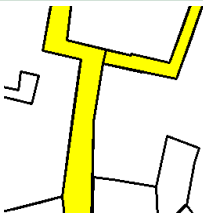

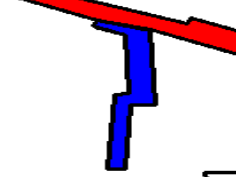

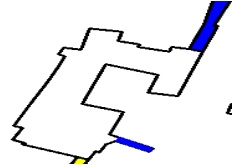

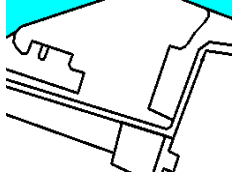

10.2. Legislative measures and their implementation

To better clarify the legislative context in which public space is managed, it is useful to refer to Algerian law no: 90-29 of December 1, 1990 relating to development and town planning, in particular article 31.

Table 1. Typology of public spaces in Argoub district (source: produced by the authors)

Types of public spaces	Area / m ²	Classification according to typology	Functions
Alley	1838.74 m ²	Semi-collective	Communication between families
Dead end	1749.99 m ²	Semi-collective	Corridor to deliver residents to their homes
The smallstreet	2333.95 m ²	Collective	Connect residential communities with secondary roads and thoroughfares
Private place	7578.83 m ²	Semi-collective	Organizes wedding parties, rest and picnics for neighborhood residents
The public square	1548.78 m ²	Collective	For all people inside or outside the neighborhood

Table 2. Spatial configuration and practice of public spaces (source: produced by the authors)

Types of public spaces	Form	Photo	Comments
Alley			It is in poor condition and needs to be paved over as it is narrow
Dead end			Undeveloped operated by residents as a service
Private place			Stone pavement, it suffers from a lack of green spaces
The public square			Is not equipped with the necessary facilities

Relating to land use and construction, the land use plan deals with the delimitation of public space as well as free space, without specifying the characteristics and layout of this space, this non-explicit reference can lead to any form of interpretation detrimental to the space in question. In this context, it is clear that the regulations regarding the control and management of practices exist, but their application, which must be the responsibility of local managers, has proven to be ineffective, which gives the impression of a lack of “let it happen” in public management and explains both the extent of the role of pressure groups and of the new arrivals who monopolize parts of public property. In this regard, it is obvious to judge that such diversity in the forms of spatial practices hardly excludes their encroaching character, which has transformed public

spaces as spaces of conviviality and cohabitation between different practices at a field of confrontation between users where relationships with these spaces continue to be determined by converging interests.

10.3. Factors of change in spatial practices of public spaces in the Argoub district

According to Merlin et al. (2015), “in this type of traditional neighborhood, the ordinary practices and functions of public spaces have undergone profound modifications”. In the same title they say that these spaces are much more linked to the issues commercial, artisanal and cultural activities. Their management is subject to local authorities according to the rules in force; on the other hand, the

dead ends and small alleys have been taken care of by the inhabitants themselves, because the cleaning services cannot access them.

If we consider that this small urban entity represents the same characteristics of an Arab-Muslim city, as such by aligning itself with the work of Raymond (1990).

On the management and control of these spaces, it confirms that according to the same author "What differentiates the public and the private in these (Arab-Muslim) cities is therefore the form of the control exercised rather than the legal nature of the spaces and further, and the public domain would therefore be the residue of the private space, dissolved in something vague, a kind of common sociability".

In our study area, these public spaces are considered in some ways as residual spaces constantly threatened by the practices of grabbing and privatization for the benefit of residential space in community or individual form. According to Raymond (1989), "The notion of public space could not be used by the authorities concerned in such a way as to enable them to fully control the development of urban systems at the global level of the city, as well as at the more limited level of the residence", but at the same time, for this purpose, they have initiated an improvement intervention which can be summed up in the renovation of some facades and the renovation of the sanitation, drinking water supply and electrification networks.

Through the discussions that were made with the local officials, we noticed their desire to save this district which is in a state of degradation and which threatens ruin, under the pretext that it is the support of an Arab-Muslim historical architecture and of typical spatial occupation, and to camouflage the traditional aspect of the urban facade, the local authorities have built passageways in arcades along the facade which overlooks the Place des Martyrs. This operation is considered insufficient by the residents to enhance their piece. Because an urban form only makes sense if it meets the practical or spiritual needs of the people who use it. In this regard and as a prerogative, it is not only a question of adjusting an urban act to a space of economic vocation or to a kind of function or activity.

Above all, it is a question of formulating a common principle between the state and the owners on which we intend to base the urban entity that we are building.

The phenomenon of population growth and urban sprawl of the city of M'sila as a city like all Algerian cities and which are accompanied by problems related to the relocation of residents of houses in dilapidated condition, the case of our neighborhood, have played an important role in these various changes experienced by our district and in particular its urban public spaces.

The scientific novelty in this research is manifested through the changes in public spaces in the neighborhood under study had a decisive impact on the process of spatial organization of the city, which requires a revitalization of the latter and which must first pass through increased attention to the qualities of these spaces. In light of the

above, governance thinking can enable managers to reflect on the managerial issues of urban development, not only in terms of tasks and efficiency, but also in terms of social interactions and multiple complementarities.

We are called today to invent a new mode of management supported by a new mode of reasoning and planning.

11. Conclusions

The use of the method made it possible to reveal the urban qualities of its public spaces and to guide such a future conservation or enhancement operation while taking into account the history and logic of the formation of this urban entity as well as the interactions of all processes which present great complexity and link forms to their social context. In the absence of permanent control from local authorities, illegal and unstudied interventions by residents on the neighborhood's built environment have completely changed the appearance of public spaces, making the alleys a stifling space used for transition and not social interaction.

As part of the interviews that we conducted with the various managerial officials of the city of M'sila, as well as the authorized persons of the technical services, after having presented our problem and the objectives of our research using a diagram interview that we have already prepared. According to the elected representatives of the A.P.C of M'sila, it turned out that the work carried out in the commune since independence in 1962 until today has been limited to one-off works such as the renovation of a part of the sanitation and drinking water supply networks without taking into account illegal extensions to the detriment of public space.

The experts' reflections focus on the novelty of the concept of public space and on the ambiguity of its legal status which is relegated to the status of residual outdoor space, and on the non-common vocabulary of city managers and stakeholders, in addition to that social and spatial practices not studied can harm public spaces in particular; aggravate their deterioration and contribute to their decline, for this purpose; the physical and visual quality of these spaces is completely distorted.

To remedy the worrying situation of public spaces in this district, an urban intervention through a rehabilitation operation becomes necessary, as such the local authorities must carry out an effective, serious, and participatory management policy (residents, local communities) that demonstrates the essential place that these spaces must have in our cities and which takes into consideration the challenges that seem important to us: the security of these spaces which must be managed through an administration which aims to maintain, permanent and effective control of these spaces to ensure their visual, morphological and landscape qualities and their economic attractiveness, this can only be achieved through a true global reflection on the hierarchy and categorization of these different urban forms so that their management is coherent and thoughtful.

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