

Urban Production In The Steppe Zone Of Western Algeria: The Role Of Local Actors In The Face Of National Urban Legislation

Case of a peripheral district (SidiHadjBouhous)
in the city of Bougtob (province of Bayadh)

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Received: 11/01/2023; Accepted: 06/08/2023; Published: 01/09/2023

Abstract

Since its Independence, Algeria has experienced widespread urbanization on its territory, although differentiated by the pace and manner in which it is achieved.

The Algerian authorities have established a legal framework to alleviate the urban anarchy represented in the illegal neighborhoods scattered on the outskirts of cities, including those of the steppe (city of Bougtob, wilaya of Bayadh).

However, these laws neglected the socio-tribal specificities of the steppe region, which gave local actors (especially elected officials) the opportunity to circumvent them by using administrative tricks to meet the needs of their voters.

Here, we tried to dissect the process of extension of the city of Bougtob on a peripheral space (SidiHadjBouhous district), by contacting its current and previous local officials and by making semi-directive interviews also with other actors such as land speculators and notables of the city.

Keywords: steppe zone, local actors, urban legislation, urbanization, extension process.

Tob Regul Sci. [™] 2023 ;9(1):5263 - 5269

DOI: doi.org/10.18001/TRS.9.1.365

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Introduction:

The process of rapid urbanization that Algeria experienced after its independence exerted increasing pressure on large and medium-sized urban centers, resulting in the emergence of marginal neighborhoods that led to many functional and social problems.(Bousmaha, Zeraib, Benhassine, & Kouba, 2021).

In order to organize the process of increasing urbanization, the Algerian authorities have adopted a legislative approach represented in the elaboration of urban and development plans on the different scales (PDAU: master plan of development and urbanism at the level of a city; POS: land use plan at the level of a neighborhood) as well as individual documents that frame the construction, demolition and modification of buildings represented essentially by (building permit, subdivision permit, demolition permit to name only the most important) (Kadri, 2018).

However, these laws did not take into account the regional economic and social specificities of the South Oran steppe, which strongly influenced the nature of land transactions and the tribal base on which they take place. This tribal background is also the basis of close relations between citizens and local elected officials who are the immediate or strongly involved managers of land and construction affairs according to general land or local rules emanating from local urban and development plans.

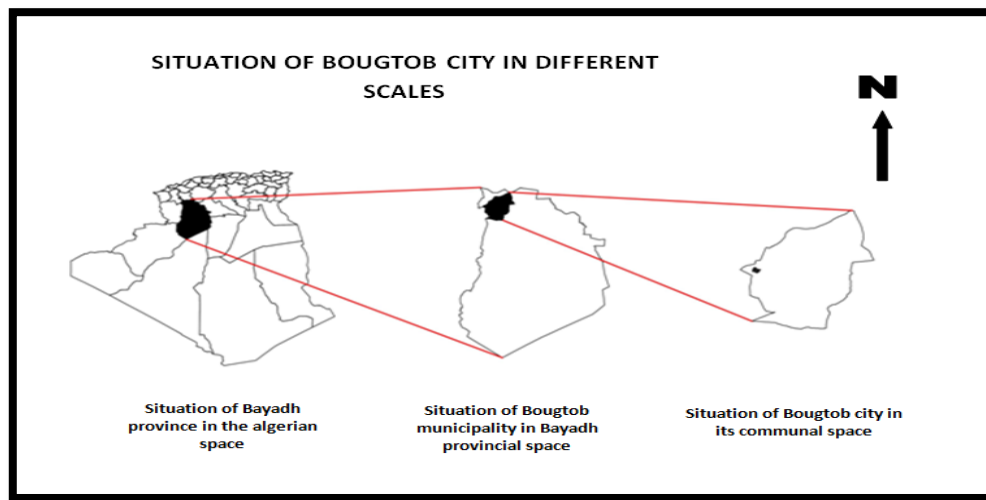
These socio-cultural specificities constituted the referential bases leading to the creation of a peripheral district (village of SidiElhadjBouhous) bypassing the various development and urban planning plans, through the installation of a rural group in juxtaposition with the urbanizable perimeter of the 1992 master plan of development and urbanism and gradually integrating it into the urban perimeter of the agglomeration of Bougtob.

Descriptive Representation Of The Study Area:

Like any scientific research of geographical dimension, the delimitation of the study area through the cartographic tool is an essential way to highlight all the characteristics underlying the phenomenon studied directly or indirectly.

Map of Bougtobin various scales

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Problematic:

To take charge of the successive rushes of the rural masses without transgressing the rules of urban planning and construction emanating from the approved instruments of urbanism, the local authorities of the commune of Bougtob have adopted mechanisms adapted to the specificities of steppe populations whose main activity is sheep farming while respecting the legislation in force aimed at the functional and aesthetic organization of the agglomeration of Bougtob.

How have local authorities dealt with these lawless practices in the context of new instruments and laws?

How effective are these solutions in the face of the requirements of local development and socio-economic alternatives that are imposed on the inhabitants of these neighborhoods?.

Methodology:

To monitor and diagnose the issues underlying the urban production process outside urban plans, we adopted for a precise methodological approach based on the relevant tool in this type of research which is the semi-directive interview. this tool allowed us to make direct contact with the actors involved of which we chose a sample distributed as follows:

- Local administrators
- Current and previous elected officials
- Heads of tribal fractions
- Inhabitants of the district concerned (SidiHadjBouhous)

Thus, and in parallel to deepen our analyses, we consulted the various urban planning documents and technical and scientific studies that affect the agglomeration of Bougtob such as:

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- The various theses, reports, articles (e.g. Hadeid. M.)
- The various territorial and communal plans (PDAU 1993, PDAU2012,...)

Sedentarization Prior To Urban Planning Instruments:

Newly promoted to the chief town of daïra, the inhabitants of the former commune already maintained close relations well intertwined with the rural world, which makes rural behavior and appearances habitual. Thus, local officials of autans, are not accustomed to rigorously apply any urban planning standards. These business conditions have profoundly affected all the repercussions of the exodus to the agglomeration of Bougtob.

On the other hand, nomads located relatively far from the agglomeration are unable to confine themselves to the urban outskirts because of the "Arch." ownership of land traditionally used as a course. This forces them to incur the negotiations of land speculation.

Administrative Measures:

The installation of a rural housing group:

Following the recurrent episodes of drought of the 70s and 80s, the South Oran steppe was undergoing the metamorphoses undergone by the activity of agro pastoralism. Its main manifestation was the initiation of the rural exodus to the former agglomerations of the region at first. This trend was changing considerably towards the newly promoted small agglomerations following the administrative division of 1984.

These conditions benefited the resident population of the Bougtob agglomeration, but gradually the small agglomeration was unable to meet the socio-economic needs of the new urban dwellers, whether in terms of jobs, services or housing.

The slowing down of this phenomenon was an urgent priority for the local authorities has returned us the former P.A.P.C of the time MrChikhaoui AEK who saw the solution in the palliative treatment of the exodus, and this by installing a buffer zone in which the ruined nomads make the stopover and can exercise a new form of intensive livestock and small livestock trade.

Promotion to the status of secondary agglomeration:

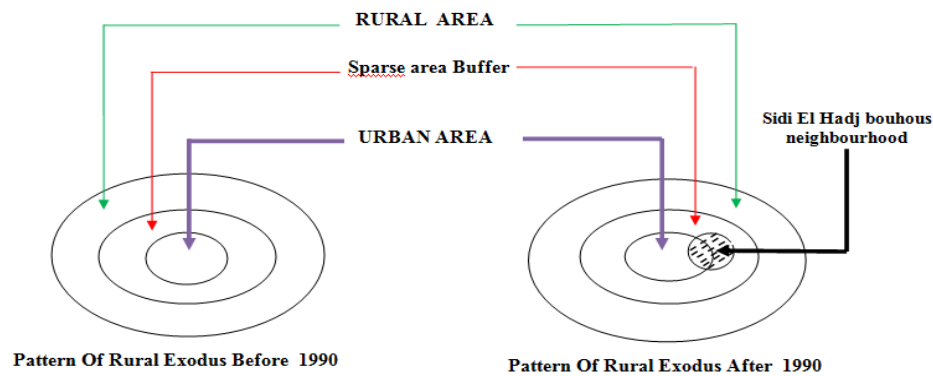
At the end of the 80s, Algeria experienced political changes bringing new mechanisms of legislative production and decision-making in the different sectors of the state.

As cities are always the scene where the political and socio-economic interactions of society take place, the state has developed instruments of urban regulation aimed at responding to the

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challenges of deformations due to land speculation and construction anarchy that cities were experiencing in this period of state confusion.

Among these



instruments are two local plans, the first at the municipal level of distributive vocation of space in four sectors:

- urbanized area
- urbanizable sector
- Area of future urbanization
- Non-urbanizable sector

The second (P.O.S) at the district level essentially aims to determine local building densities (C.O.S and C.E.S).

Urban Plan Of The City Of Bougtob Before And After 1990

the PDAU of Bougtob, approved in 1993 by the popular assembly wilayale of Bayadh, gave the status of secondary agglomeration to the rural group SidiHadjBouhous, recommendation so much requested by the PAPC at the time reported us the secretary general of the daïra of Bougtob.

This status made the SidiHadjBouhous group a priority in terms of projects to open up and locate major facilities such as primary education or health.

Integration into the urban perimeter:

The construction of a considerable number of rural settlements in the S.H.B. group, the construction of paved roads, and the injection of school and sanitary facilities have attracted already urban inhabitants in a new growth trend of this neighborhood long connoted nomadity,

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a quality that the nomads themselves practice different strategies of sedentarization to be able to escape.

This new trend significantly increased the number of residents by adding new forms of construction and even behaviour.

The consumption of urban land following the horizontal extension due mainly to the type of habitat coveted by the extended family that promotes confinement and conservation, a concern that cannot be treated in a type of collective or vertical housing.

Conditions met for the updating of the first P.D.A.U of 1993 to meet the new requirements of the city of Bougtob and especially that of the district of S.H.B. which is, this time (PDAU 2012), promoted into a peripheral district.

The problems of the district will be dealt with, in the new statute, through the perspective of urban morphology and economy, problems of rural labor difficult to integrate into the urban labor market with the exception of the construction sector which does not require a high qualification of workers.

These workers, to reach their place of work, make, morning and evening, a commuting movement house-site producing a landscape altering the city and the district of S.H.B.

The integration of the S.H.B as a peripheral district makes the space that separates it from the city like a considerable urban void. In its vision of urban morphology, the new PDAU consists in considering this space as a land base for the extension of near and future urbanization.

Results:

The successive modifications of the legal status of the SidiHadjBouhous group and their inherent consequences such as the location of housing and services have made it a district of the city. however, this district despite its attachment to the urban fabric lends itself to the morphology of the city, the immaturity of the tertiary sector including commerce, is manifested by an intra-urban dysfunction with different repercussions especially the migratory movement to and from the city center working hours in a context of qualitative and quantitative insufficiency in means of transport.

Discussion:

Based on the above analysis while emphasizing the national and general character of urban legislation in a very heterogeneous territory such as that of Algeria, the implementation of local plan directives, in steppe zones, is systematically clashed by the socio-tribal regime which favors

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the interests of the individuals of the tribe to the detriment of the proper functioning of the urban system.

Local officials have told us that local urban plans are not adapted to the local specificities of steppe households, which creates difficulties in their application which, in their opinion, justifies the use of other populist manoeuvres to meet the specific requirements of their electorate, which is none other than the members of their tribe.

Recommendations:

This study has shed light on the different processes contributing to urban production through the issues and objectives expected by the various actors, whether institutional or social; and to develop feasible plans that take into account local realities, whether natural or socio-economic. Reasons why we would like to recommend the rectification of the previous measures in the preparation of these local plans so that they comply with local specificities, namely:

- adopt diffuse urbanization to:
 1. meet the need for spacious housing for different uses (including livestock care).
 2. Avoid the construction of apartment buildings that is not suitable for the confinement of the steppe family.
- The involvement of the social partners in the various stages of drawing up local urban plans.

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