

The Residential Choice of Informal Neighborhoods: between Motivations and Factors (Case of El Manchar Neighborhood in Constantine)

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Abstract

The city is a very large and densely populated urban unit in which most human activities are concentrated, which are essentially based on the identification and satisfaction of needs, in particular the search for an appropriate type of habitat. Through this work which deals with the factors and motivations of the residential choice, allow us to better understand the logics of the residential choice and its relations of existence of a popular type of housing with a particular physiognomy which never ceases to be fully displayed. Our method was based on a quantitative and qualitative approach following a field survey in EL Manchar, one of the informal neighborhoods in Constantine.

Key words: Residential choices, factors and motivations, logics choices, el manchar neighborhood, Constantine

INTRODUCTION

The city is a very large and densely populated urban unit in which most human activities are concentrated, which are essentially based on the identification and satisfaction of needs, in particular the search for an appropriate type of habitat.

According to the universal human rights amendment "everyone has the right to move freely, to choose his residence within a state ..." Addressing housing choices is still a subject of debate in academic and professional, especially when it comes to finding an appropriate type of habitat. Through this article we will address the issue of residential choice in informal settlements. These later have caught the attention of several researchers and specialists. They have contributed, each in his field, to shed light on this complex urban and social reality as it is still poorly known because of the deformations conveyed by a certain number of pictures: the causes of the genesis and the proliferation of this type of habitat, its relations with the city, the economy and the social within the urban system.

In Algeria, informal housing represents a major concern given its scale, according to the Ministry of Housing, there are 544,202 informal dwellings in July 2003, and this figure rose to 549,000 in 2006. This type of housing has continued to proliferate. Increased despite the many attempts by the state to slow down or even eradicate this phenomenon by transferring / relocating the population to new towns for populations occupying municipal / state-owned bases. According to the president of the NCAE, Algeria has more than 1 million informal constructions in 2016 (almost half for 10 years), which puts us in front of a constraining reality because this particular physiognomy habitat.

Like all Algerian cities, Constantine is characterized by a continuous proliferation of informal housing influenced by certain factors such as: rural exodus, population growth, economic and political factors ... etc. There are several informal neighborhoods such as: the city of bentellis, the city of el bir, Ben chergui and el manchar... these neighborhoods are distributed according to occupancy logic which remain summarily poorly identified.

In this work, we are wondering about the relationship between residential choice and the formulation of "informal housing". Through the case of El Manchar, one of the informal settlements within the city of Constantine. Our question

is: What are the factors and motivations for choosing this type of housing by households? What are the logics of choice specific to this type of informal housing?

In order to answer these questions, we opt for an analysis that allows us to establish the logics that households establish in making their decisions to live in an informal neighborhood despite its illegal status.

METHODOLOGY

The objective of this article is to identify the factors, the reasons and the logics specified to the residential choice of households, after effective installation in an informal neighborhood. However, the approach we are developing is based on the concepts developed by (CLARK and ONAKA 1983), (CATHERINE BONVALET 1998) and (RERAT, 2010 and 2012). Following the multidisciplinary option that we propose in this work is not only through the aesthetic-formal or historical dimension of the process of occupation, or not the understanding of the social practices that have built this particular way of living. But through understanding the logics of residential choice in this informal neighborhood.

This exercise highlights quantitative and qualitative approaches according to the principle of mixed methods (RERAT, 2010). Initially, a field survey is carried out based on a standard questionnaire essential for capturing the different social situations and practices that come together over time in the social and mental construction of the inhabitants within these territories. The survey is a directive type (there is a standard questionnaire on which the interview is based). This survey is a method of collecting information in order to understand and explain a whole series of variables covering the three major dimensions of lifestyle: living, meeting, using. That we have combined with the criteria of residential preferences.

Our survey, carried out at El Manchar neighborhood, among 124 households, or 10% of the total population of the district. In parallel, and to avoid any interference concerning the first reasons and factors that contributed to the proliferation of this type of habitat in Algeria during the post-colonial period such as the rural exodus, the population growth ...; We were interested only in households that settled in el manchar in the recent period between (2005 to 2016) and which represents 37 households compared to the 124 households selected and enumerated at the start of work. This approach has made it possible to identify the logics of the residential choice of an informal neighborhood in Constantine over the past decade.

RESIDENTIAL CHOICE IN EL MANCHAR: a systematic decision-making process

"The residential choice depends on the needs and preferences of households following the opportunities and constraints of the real estate market (price level) and by the resources and restrictions linked to the households themselves" (Patrick RERAT 2012). In our work, and following the approach developed by the same author, the decision-making process for residential choice in El Manchar requires the study of several characteristics, the profile of which we have analyzed (age, type of household, socioeconomic status, socio-professional categories, etc.), the trajectory (the life history of the neighborhood households), the spatial practices of the households (professional activities, activities carried out during free time and social networks).

Also, on one hand, and to understand the residential choice of this neighborhood, we involved a multitude of criteria. To study the latter and according to Patrick Rerat (2010), three angles are possible: the satisfaction of households, their aspirations and the motivations underlying their move. We diagnosed the logic of the move through location, occupation status and type of accommodation.

However, on the other hand, the decision-making process relates in particular to the way in which households find accommodation in el manchar. Concerning our case study and from this angle, we tried to identify and concretize the logics according to the idea asserted by Authier (1998). He identifies two main logics, «the real estate market, and the family network». Households are not equal when it comes to this logic according to their endowment in economic (income, heritage), cultural (capacity to process information, for example) and social (knowledge network) (Boterman 2012). In el manchar, we detected other logic of specific residential choices: economic, professional, institutional ...etc.

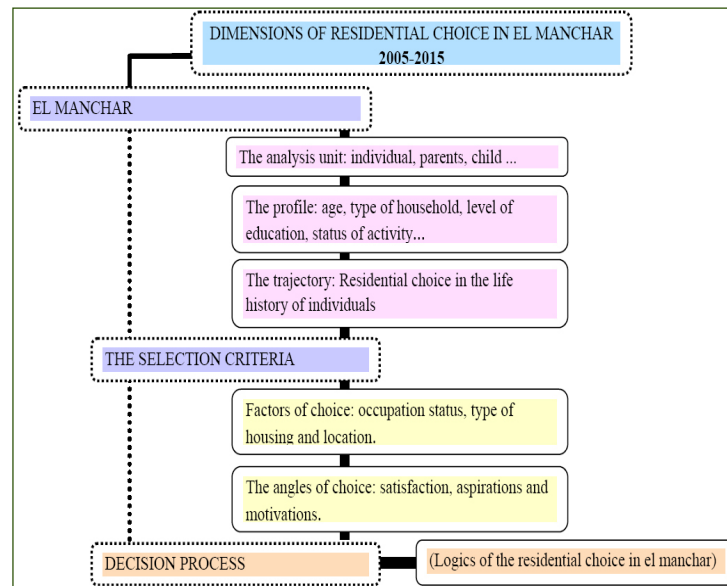


Figure 1. Residential choice dimensions in el manchar (following the method of Patrick RERAT 2010)

INFORMAL NEIGHBORHOODS IN CONSTANTINE: complex phenomenon and constraining reality

The city of Constantine has experienced fast urbanization resulting in two forms: planned urbanization which is represented in the housing program made by the State (in the form of collective housing - NUHA¹-), in order to resolve the inability in terms of housing and unplanned urbanization which is the result of the movement of a rural population who abandons the countryside to live in urban areas, in search of a more suitable life and a much coveted comfort. This unplanned urbanization has produced a type of housing with a particular appearance of “informal housing”.

A multitude of expressions are used to designate the phenomenon of informal occupation of space in Constantine. In his work in 1989, A. HAFIANE worked on the lived space of wild and anarchic urbanization, as a phenomenon causing the proliferation of a type of habitat for which he used several names: “illegal, slum, precarious...”. “The perception that dominates this form of urbanization is that, most often, of a projection of the image of the slum, spontaneous habitat, to any spatial form produced in an informal setting.” (A. HAFIANE 1989). He also asserted that “this approach, which is based on a duality of the urbanization process, gives informal productions a character of precariousness and spontaneity by reference to a determined spatial framework”. Generally, informal housing according to JEAN PAUL LOUBES², is the type of housing “which does not follow established standards, which is not subject to strict or official rules” This very general definition, is not enough to take into account the complexity and the different forms that a practice whose weight is considerable in the formation of the city.

The development of informal housing in Constantine and its emergence as a dominant form of production of the built environment and as the dominant housing of the Algerian population was recorded before 1962 with the massive population growth of the city from 1954 onwards. Under the influence of multiple factors such as: war, regrouping and development of the population. “The beginning of a process of rural exodus, it was not until 1954 that the bursting of spatial structures resulted in an expansion of informal housing.”³

The colonial administration does not begin the precision of an urban policy until through the application of French urban legislation and the development of a master plan for Constantine (PUD 1960), this plan deals with the question of informal housing in relation to under-integration into colonial urban forms, this type of housing has become in relation to this legislation an illicit and illegal form due to its non-compliance with regulated housing forms.

1 new urban housing area

2 Jean Paul Loubes affirms that the informal: “escapes any supervision, forecasting, planning, control, evaluation of institutions, this phenomenon can no longer be regarded as a deviation at the margin. It has become a major way of living in many countries”

3 Hafiane Abderrahim le défi de l’urbanisme « habitat illégal dans la ville de Constantine » p 98

After independence, Constantine experienced a continuous proliferation of the urban fabric influenced by certain factors such as (urbanization, rural exodus, population growth, economic and political factors ... etc.). There are more than a dozen informal settlements distributed according to occupancy logic that remains to be considered. This city contained 83,515⁴ dwellings in 2008 including 19,287⁵ informal dwellings or 23% of the total housing stock.

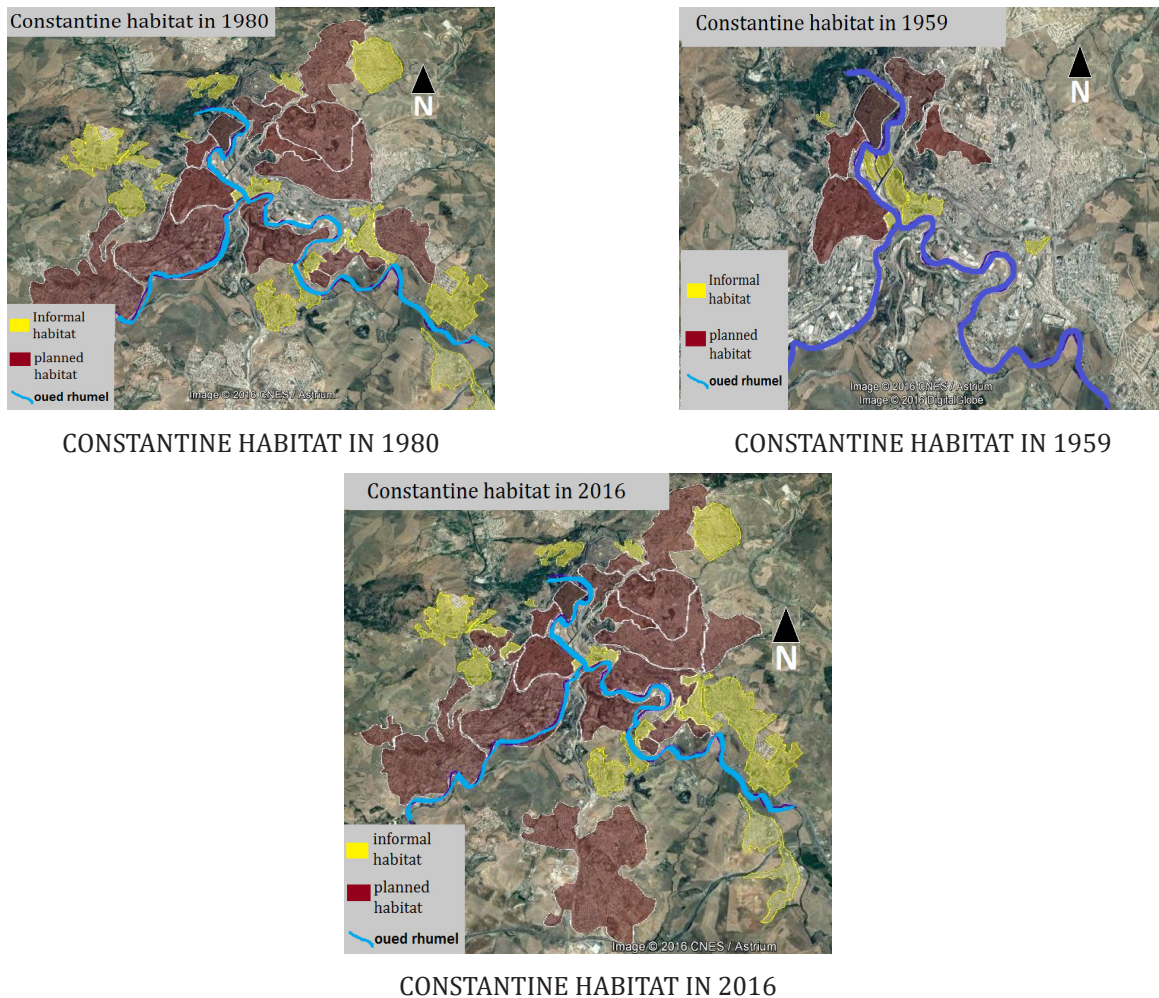


Figure 2. URBAN EVOLUTION OF CONSTANTINE Source: Abderrahim Hafiane + the author

EL MANCHAR NEIGHBOURHOOD: an example of an informal settlement inside the city

One of the objectives within the framework of post-graduation courses in urban planning within our department is to understand the city as an organism and structure, in its components and its complexity, and to encourage questions about the major issues. "There is not a description or a theory of urban phenomena, but more questions about urban policies" Ben Abbas Samia declared that all urban policies combine, according to the modalities and variable proportions, three urban logics which are: Colonial, state, and universal. Constantine and during the colonial period experienced urban mutations which combined with a strong rural exodus and the constitution in town of a large urban underclass which would install its slums. In this period the city was expanding outside of the rock, the indigenous citizens were expelled outside, built their first informal cells in the EL-MENCHAR site, which was originally an agricultural land of private property (agricultural land of Ben Fraj and land of Ben Takok). This neighborhood is located from 1 km away the city center, in the southwest of the city of Constantine.

The reality of this neighborhood reflects the urban chaos resulting from random planning (where agricultural lands were sold at 10 AD per square meter). Ten years later (1977-1987), the housing crisis due to the imbalance between

⁴ National Statistics Office (RGPH 2008)

⁵ Same

supply and demand and the acceleration of the rural exodus to el manchar resulted in significant urban development. During this period the private land is sold totally and the square meter has reached 70 AD. According to the national statistics office the population in this period was 5,999 inhabitants. This figure was reduced to 4,210 inhabitants in 1998, this degradation due to the tremors of the Algerian security situation “the black decade”. Between 1999 and 2008 the state lands in the site were occupied illegally and without state control. In 2008 the population increased to 6,707⁶. Today and within the site boundaries, el manchar is marked by deep spatial and urban changes; some urban areas are undergoing massive depreciation. Currently we are talking about a popular neighborhood with an area of 18.11 ha, it is limited by the central cemetery to the north, the city Boudraa Salah to the west, the city Kadour Boumadousse and the national road n° 03 to the EAST, by Belhadaf land subdivision + Ciloc to the south + National road 27.

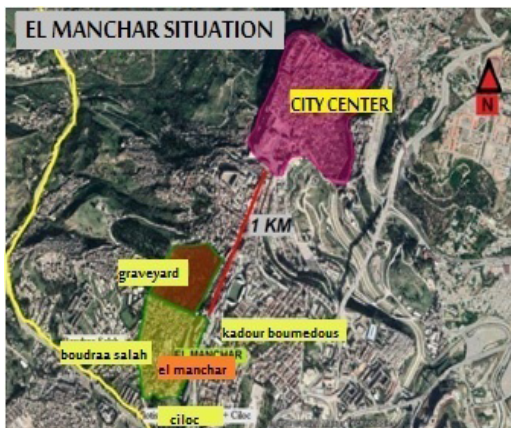
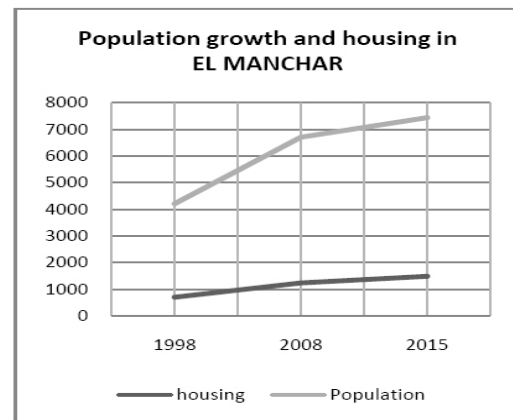


Figure 3. el manchar situation. (Source : author - Image background: Google earth 2015)



Graph 1. Population growth and housing in EL MANCHAR (Source : ONS+DUAC de Constantine)



Pictures 1. shows the black contribution of private owners in el manchar. Source : the author

LOCATION, STATUS AND TYPE OF HOUSING: three pillars of the residential choice of el manchar

Finding a suitable place of residence adapted to the needs and lifestyle of one household in relation to another is a great concern, because it is not easy to choose a place of residence that allows reassuring, practical and convivial living environment “Choosing your place of residence is a clever mix between the choice of heart and reason. Whether for family or professional reasons or for having fallen under the spell of a particular environment, the decision to settle must be carefully considered”.

The question of residential choice in El Manchar requires an informed look at the main factors that play a key role in helping the household to choose its accommodation. To do this, we propose to introduce elements that have been tested in other international experiences such as the experience of Catherine Bonvalet (1998) who pointed out three factors: the occupation status, the type of housing and the localization “.

In our case study, the housing occupancy status is necessary since remaining a tenant or becoming an owner is an act that seems to guide the choices in residential matters, if we take into account the fact that, combined with the location or the environment residential (Sandrine Gueymard 2006), occupancy status constitutes a form of social representation. Understanding these factors in el manchar requires more attention to the housing history, the financing system, socio-

6 National Statistics Office (RGPH 2008)

professional status ... "It is the combination of these different factors that has given individuals jointly a social position and a position residential. »(Catherine Bonvalet 1998).

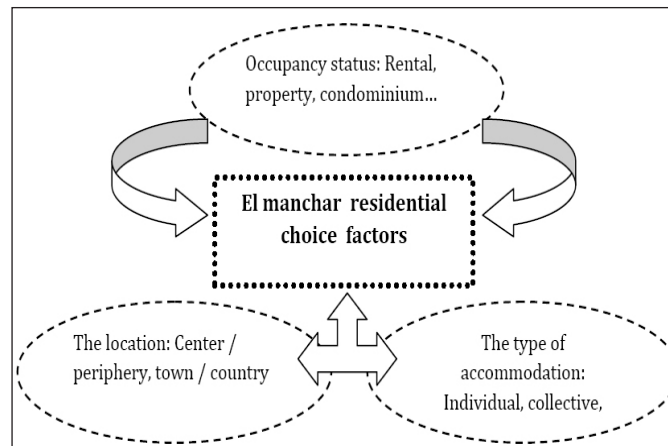


Figure 4. Residential choice factors for el manchar

The Location

the location of el manchar by its proximity to the city center (1 km), represents an important element for the relocation of households despite the problems experienced by this district either in relation to the vulnerability to the risk of landslides, the informal status of land or in relation to the degraded quality of life (lack of equipment, means of comfort, etc.).

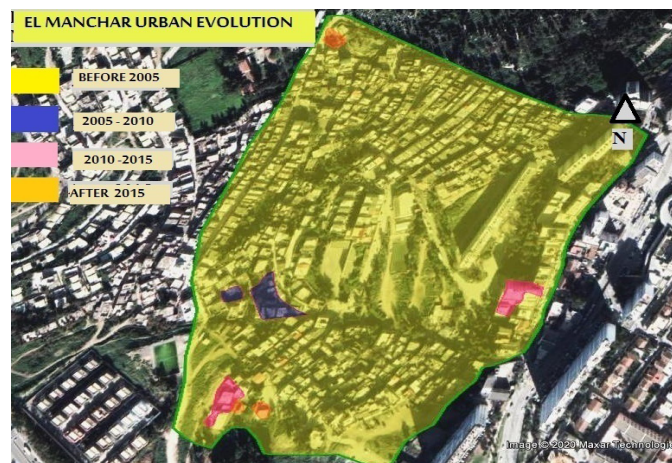
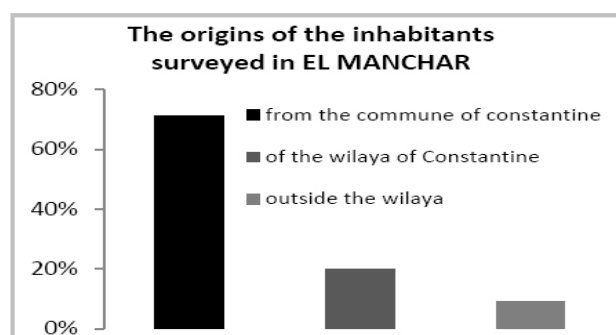


Figure 5. EL manchar urban evolution.(Source: author - Image background: Google earth 2015)

This neighborhood still receives many residents from the city of Constantine and the neighboring towns despite its high density (see the graph). The results of the survey show that about 71% of respondents are from the municipality of Constantine, 20% are from the state of Constantine, 9% from outside the state.



Graphe 2. The origins of the inhabitants surveyed in EL MANCHAR. (Source: field survey (author))

The majority of residents who have opted for this district declare their choice, it is related to:

- The proximity of el manchar to the city and its center.
- To the various services offered by the city of Constantine, as a regional metropolis in terms of: administrative, commercial, educational, health and work ... etc

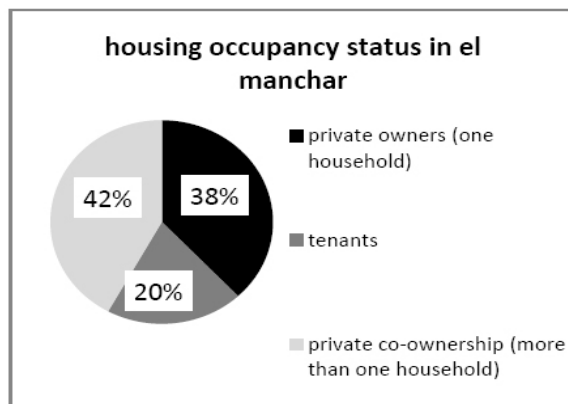
Understanding residential choice requires determining the tools and information methods used to find and buy housing or a lot of land. Generally, this is the role of real estate agencies whether in the context of renting or selling a home, real estate professionals can assist owners, especially when putting their property on the market.

Indeed, real estate agencies offer a rental management service helping owners to set the amount of their rents according to the benchmarks in force, but also to optimize the rental so that it is profitable. In our case of study, the dominant information tool is that of the contribution in black "the informal real estate market" managed by: private owners or residents in the neighborhood or even the family or friends network.

Occupation Status

The acquisition where the construction of a home has an important social significance is a fact of social representation. According to our investigations we were able to identify:

- 38% of the built heritage (individual dwelling) is occupied by private owners (deeds under private signature).
- At the same time, we have also observed 20% of the built heritage occupied by tenants with a rental price of around seven thousand Algerian dinars per month in 2016.
- The rest of the occupants, which represents 42%, live together within the same family (brothers, sisters, cousins, etc.) and have only one property deed.



Graph 3. Housing occupancy status in el manchar (Source: field survey (author))

The resident of El Manchar preferred to own it by private deed and buy a lot of land at a reduced price even outside the law and build his own home. In addition, home ownership brings present and future security for households and extended family members.

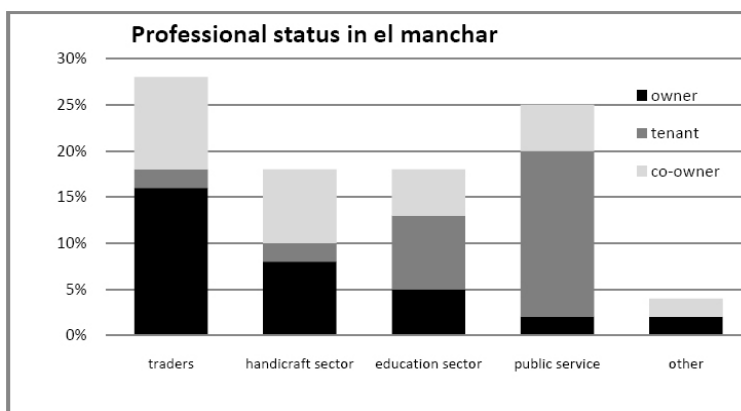
In parallel with these results, the choice of housing depends essentially on the economic resources of households. Catherine Bonvalet (2005) shows that it is according to his income and his family situation that the resident will use the logic to choose the city center or the outskirts acquire his home or remain a tenant...

She also mentioned that according to economic theory, households will position themselves throughout their trajectory according to the evolution of their income and their family situation.

In our case study, we analyzed the financial criterion and the professional status of the households surveyed and its relationships in the delimitation of the employment status. The results show that:

- 18% of households are traders, whose monthly income is between 60,000 and 30,000 Algerian dinars. 6% are owners, 2% are tenants and 10% are co-owners.

- 18% of households work in the craft sector, with monthly incomes ranging from 60,000 to 20,000 Algerian dinars. 8% of which are owners, 2% are tenants and 8% are co-owners.
- 18% work in education, with monthly income between 70,000 and 40,000 Algerian dinars, 5% are owners, 8% are tenants and 5% are co-owners.
- 25% work in the public service, with monthly income between 50,000 and 20,000 Algerian dinars. 2% are owners, 18% are tenants and 5% are co-owners.
- Finally, the remaining 4% have monthly incomes between 50 thousand and 20 thousand Algerian dinars. 2% are owners, 0% are tenants and 2% are co-owners.



Graph 4. PROFESSIONAL STATUS in el manchar (Source: field survey (author))

The Type of Accommodation

The case studied is characterized by the existence of a single type of housing - individual - of suburban character. In this section, we have recorded a major preference for individual housing over collective housing. The households of el manchar therefore opted for this choice for the following reasons:

- The size and the greatness of the individual dwelling in relation to the accommodation in the collective dwelling.
- Allow a guarantee for children to build higher floors later.
- Ensure a source of income for the head of the household and his offspring through the exercise of a liberal or professional function (store, trade ...).

On the other hand, we found that only 20% of respondents opted for collective housing.

THE MOTIVATIONS OF RESIDENTIAL CHOICE

In its decision to move, the household must know their satisfaction, clearly define its aspirations and reflect on the motivations underlying the move. These three elements represent the angles of a residential choice. In this work we will highlight the residential motivations which are “the realization of aspirations given the constraints that frame and guide them” (Rerat P., 2010, p.59), that is to say the reasons that push el manchar households to make the decision to change housing and live in an informal neighborhood. These motivations make it possible to take into account the decisions, practices and actions of individuals.

According to Clark and Onaka (1983), the move can be forced or provoked (loss of housing), it can be linked to changes in the structure of the household (creation or dissolution) or in the size of the household (reduction or growth). It can be linked to professional life (new job, start of training, etc.) or to mobility (mode of transport, distance). On the other hand, the household is always looking to improve its residential situation and its quality of life. In el manchar, we dealt with three categories of reasons: housing characteristics (size, layout, cost and occupancy status), neighborhood characteristics (services, living environment, tranquility, social composition) and accessibility by relationship to the workplace, businesses, schools, family and friends.

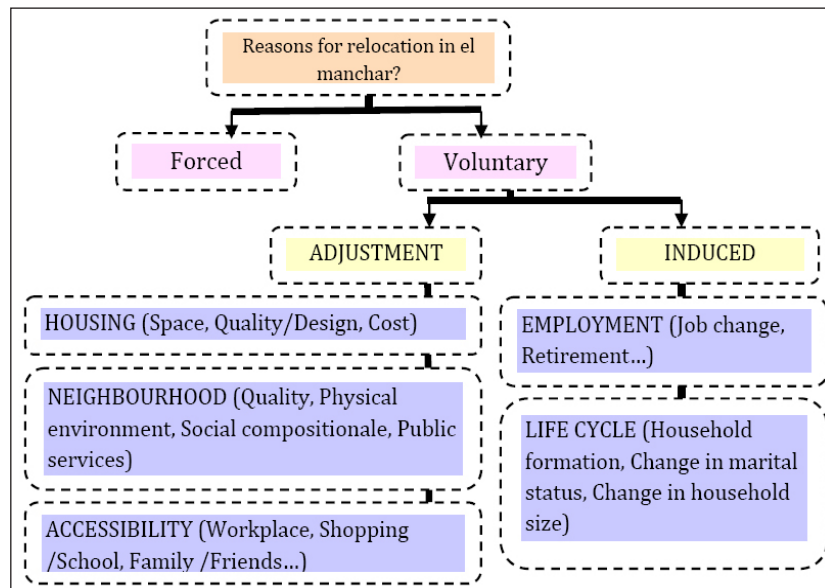
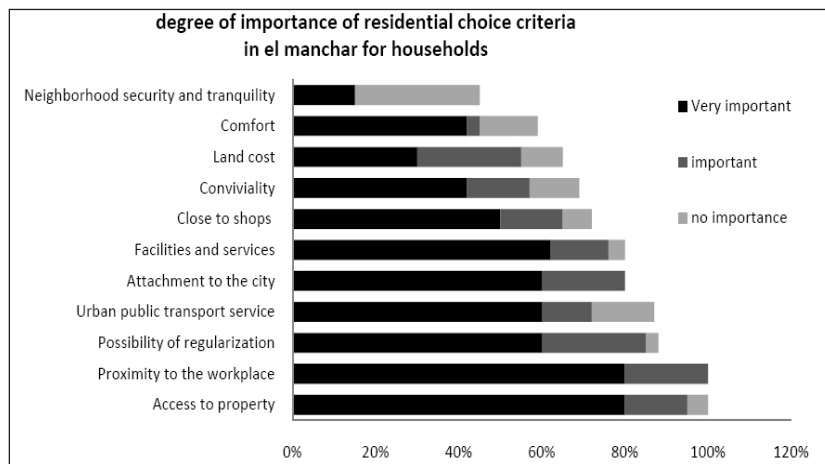


Figure 6. Classification of reasons for household resettlement in el manchar (following the method of W.A.V. Clark and Jun L. Onaka 1983).

Analysis of the survey results shows that households base their choice of accommodation not only on the basis of functional criteria, such as proximity to employment or public transport, but also on criteria of comfort and social (calm, family presence, security, etc.). In this work we classified three categories of reasons: housing characteristics, neighborhood characteristics and accessibility; so it is simply not a single motivation, but a combination of motivations that explains the residential choice in el manchar.



Graph 5. Degree of importance of residential choice criteria in el manchar for households. (Source: field survey(author))

Motivation in Relation to Housing Characteristics

This category comes first. The inhabitants of el manchar attached great importance to the characteristics of housing through access to property, the cost and the possibility of regularization, the results of our survey showing that:

- Home ownership is very high and represents (100%).
- The devaluation of the cost of land in this area has led (67%) of the inhabitants to opt for this choice.
- The possibility of regularizing real estate assets also contributed to this residential choice (100%).

Accessibility

Compared to:

- Attachment to the city of Constantine (81%)
- Proximity to the workplace (76%).

- Proximity to shops (30%).
- Urban public transport service (76%).

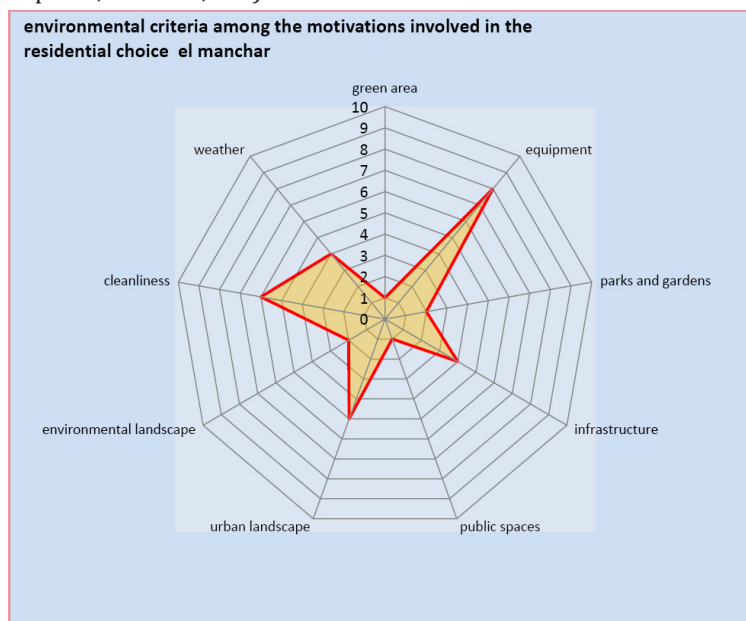
Motivation in Relation to the Characteristics of the Neighborhood

- Friendliness “the presence of the family plays a significant but less predominant role in the residential choice of el manchar” (62%).
- Equipment and services (89%).
- Comfort (62%).
- Neighborhood safety and tranquility (56%).

Environmental Criteria Among the Motivations Involved in the Residential Choice

The environment and its quality is an essential element for households to choose their places of residence. To affirm this importance, we organized evaluation cells ranked from 0 to 10 according to the majority responses of the households surveyed. We have tried to understand the logic of households to measure their choices.

According to our survey, we underlined that the sanitized neighborhood is taken much more into consideration in the choice of the residential location of households rather than the search for specific environmental amenities, such as green spaces and parks. Thus, households would be ready to pay to have their houses close to urban infrastructure and services (roads, schools, hospitals, markets, etc.).



Graph 6. Environmental criteria among the motivations involved in the residential choice el manchar (Source: field survey (author))

The environmental constraints are perceived in the study site under a single order which is the urban; the households have excluded the natural order (floods, landslides) and the anthropogenic order (clean neighborhood, without a foul odor, without open sewers, without animal excrement). In their residential choices, individuals would indeed favor more avoidance of repellent elements, the search for physical quality obviously intervening more in the choice of the location of residence.

TYPES OF LOGICS IN EL MANCHAR: interweaving of factors and motivations for residential choice

Understanding a choice does not only involve taking an interest in people’s resources and constraints, but also taking into account the contextual elements that structure decisions, the reasons given by individuals, interactions with other people, personal stories. And family ... Yves Grafmeyer (2010) underlines in this regard the importance of “studying the choices in situation”, that is to say by taking into account all the contextual elements of the choice.

On the basis of the interviews in el manchar and following the cross-referencing of the results found in the research on the factors and the degree of importance of the motivations of choice, five (05) residential logics were identified for the studied district:

1) Economic logic: according to our survey, the choice of this district is linked to household income (prices are affordable for them). to el manchar and during our investigation, B-Ahmed affirms this reality: "I live here for 10 years, I am a tenant, I have no chance to buy a home, on the other hand, the rental is monk expensive compared to other places, yes it is very difficult to adapt with this situation the rental price is 10,000 DA is almost a third of the" (civil servant 45 years old, married with 3 children).

2) Mainly professional logic: generally it is the relationship between distance, proximity between housing and function (job).... The households of el manchar give importance to the geographical location of the district in the city of Constantine and its proximity to workplaces. On the other hand, the dominant professional status in the district is commerce and crafts (where the majority of households worked in its premises built in the ground floor) a 50-years old married man with 4 children, living in a housing of R +2 declares that: "I am a trader, I have a food store at home (three premises on the ground floor for rent), I don't find any problem".

3) Mainly family logic: The choices are linked to the original location in a neighborhood, to the existence of a family property, or to the family's network of acquaintances. According to (Gotman 1999) the residential space has a relation with the family history "The residential space is neither completely independent of the family history, nor reducible to the principal accommodation and the residential practices can only be understood located in the history of the lines to which they are attached". Bonvalet (1993) considered the existence of the family in a space close to his experiences during childhood and therefore his visions of the future in terms of housing. In El Manchar, certain trajectories are in fact part of family continuity both from the point of view of location and occupation status. A 40 years old man, a teacher, married with 3 children, declares that: "I lived with my two brothers, each of us having his own floor, yes this accommodation originally belonged to my father, yes, I have good relations with my neighbors, and one of them is already my cousin".

4) Institutional logic: This logic is linked to people who benefit from social housing or another form offered by the state. In our case, the state decision appeared through the 08-15 regularization law setting the rules for bringing constructions into conformity and their completion. A household manager (48 years old trader married with 3 children) told us that he bought his home (without deed) in 2006, "I submitted a complete file for the regularization, and finally this file is accepted, yes, of course, I'm very satisfied it's better than living in black ". Another 60-year-old household manager, retired living with his wife and 4 children, informed us that he bought the land in 2006 with a private deed from a private owner at a very reasonable price (3000DA per square meter). This person also told us that he is in the process of regularizing his housing status.

5) Real estate market logic: The residential choice is not only the preference for a specific accommodation, but even more the specialization of practice and representation in the territory. One of the new research concerns is the "Housing / real estate market" duality. It is good to develop new ways of reading housing and the city, making it possible to discern the effects on the uses and urban functioning of a series of societal changes profoundly affecting social formations. In our case it is totally the informal real estate market (managed by informal promotions; private owners or residents in the neighborhood)

CONCLUSION

According to our study carried out on the informal neighborhood of el manchar in Constantine, we were able to answer the questions raised in this work.

The results show that households' residential choices lead them to reside in informal peripheral housing connected to the city center and to the services that offer it, to urbanize all spaces (even the least suitable), to opt for access to the ownership of an individual detached dwelling by a deed under private signature and outside the law to guarantee their present as well as the future in terms of housing (one floor for each household of the same family) or another source of income through the exercise of a liberal or professional function.

Households in this neighborhood choose their residence according to three categories of motivation: in relation to housing characteristics, neighborhood characteristics and accessibility. Households have neglected the environmental

aspect in their choice of residence. At the same time, the intersection of the factors and motivations for residential choice has identified five logics of choice: economic logic, predominantly professional logic, predominantly family logic, institutional logic, real estate market logic.

the choices made by households in terms of occupation status, type of housing, or location are not subject to real estate market rules, each household would be assigned to a specific location and occupation status, depending on their socio-professional category, their position in the life cycle, family, etc.

Land (cost / nature) plays a key role in the choice of residential property in El Manchar. These residential choices are also part of a complex relationship to land and property policies, which will require households to adapt their decisions to their situations and needs, but also to the offer. The regularization of land tenure is the driving force behind the production of informal housing.

In the end, Residential choices contributed to the continuation of the existence of this type of habitat through informal logics that are not official or legalized by the state (informal decision process / contribution in black) but well planned and reflected on by neighborhood households.

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