

# Territorial Attractiveness, a Lever for the Metropolization of Constantine

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## Abstract

Constantine, the third-largest city in Algeria, a pole of convergence and command over the entire North East region, is now exposed to new development challenges imposed by globalization. A phenomenon that causes the cities to be dragged into a global competition between them is, where the logic of competitiveness, attractiveness, and Urban Marketing is developing.

This article presents the context of Constantine's metropolization and attempts to reflect on the attractiveness and competitiveness that are omnipresent at different scales in its territory, through an analysis of the city's development indicators.

The objective is to highlight the various factors of Constantine's attractiveness and demonstrate that the use of a major Urban Project could be the appropriate solution to consolidate its attractiveness and consolidate its status as a regional metropolis.

Our approach is based on a "Diagnostic Analysis" or "Territorial Diagnosis", drawn up based on the SWOT matrix. The objective is to achieve very detailed knowledge of the territory which will allow us to identify the keys and the competitive advantages that it has as well as its limits. And beyond the identification of opportunities and threats, it will constitute a tool for prospective and decision support for public action.

**Keywords:** Attractiveness, Constantine, Territorial diagnosis, Metropolization, Urban project.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, under the influence of globalization, many cities have been engaged in a metropolization process, which forces them to enter into a logic of territorial competition.

From now on, a metropolis is no longer just a large city measured by its size, density, and diversity of populations and activities, nor by the range of urban functions and top-of-the-range facilities that it brings together, but is measured above all by the influence that it exerts on the territories that surround it and by its capacity to generate an economic dynamic between itself and the urban entities that it polarizes.

The majority of cities that have set themselves the goal of metropolization raise the stakes of influence, image, and attractiveness to assert themselves in a context that goes beyond their territory, and do everything possible to have the best offer in terms of services, land, and jobs to attract more investments, inhabitants, tourists...

This new situation has given rise to new forms of governance and new dynamics of transformation in the very manner of urban production and management of cities (Figure 1).

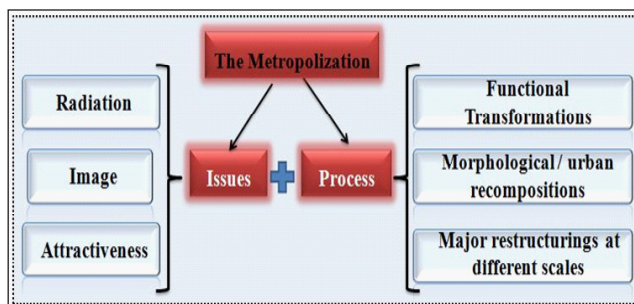
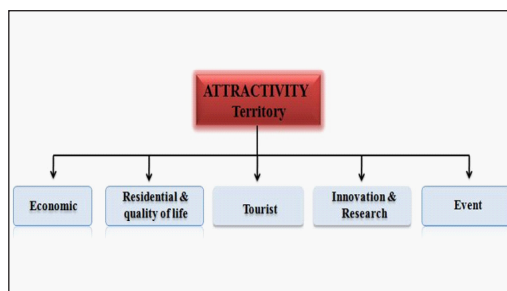


Figure 1. The process of metropolization (Author, 2018)

In this context, the notion of territorial attractiveness has become essential to the evaluation of the performance and dynamics of cities, and one of the priorities of regional planning policies (CUSIN & DAMON, 2010). Attractiveness is not only conceived as a means of entering the sphere of development, but it is also a powerful lever for the development, (re)dynamization, and revitalization of territories (BOURGAIN & al 2010).

According to Ascher (2008), attractiveness consists in attracting certain social groups that stimulate the local economic development of the territory. It can be explained as *“the capacity of a territory to offer actors conditions that convince them to locate their projects in their territory rather than in another”* (HATEM, 2004). (HATEM, 2004). In other words, it is *“the capacity of a territory to attract and retain populations and companies in a context of increasing international and national mobility”* (ETD, 2005). (ETD, 2005).

Thus, measuring the attractiveness of a city means evaluating its sphere of influence, and its capacity to generate movement. Beyond its economic functions, a territory must offer well-being and quality of life to its inhabitants through the diversification and enrichment of economic and social activities in the territory based on the mobilization and coordination of its resources and energies (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Attractiveness Factors (Authors)

Constantine and all cities are exposed to these new development challenges imposed by globalization. However, despite the presence of all the necessary factors to develop its attractiveness and the emergence and success of a competitiveness cluster (the importance of structuring projects undertaken during the last decade, and the massive arrival of a new type of activities related mainly to the tertiary sector, even the higher tertiary), its experience in terms of competitive strategies proves limited and the city finds it difficult to confirm its positioning on different scales and is faced today with many problems that contribute to reducing its area of influence and limit its influence.

In sum, our main question focuses on the relationship between attractiveness and metropolization. In this sense, does territorial attractiveness constitute a lever for metropolization? What are the assets that Constantine must develop to strengthen its attractiveness? And what is the strategy adopted and implemented to meet the new competitive challenges?

This article attempts to reflect the attractiveness and competitiveness omnipresent at different scales in Constantine, through the analysis of factors worthy of advancing and mobilizing the development cycle of this city. And to demonstrate that the use of a major urban project could be the right solution to consolidate its attractiveness and consolidate its status as a regional metropolis.

The analysis is drawn up according to a Diagnostic Analysis, allowing to identify the keys and the competitive advantages of its territory as well as its limits.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research approach adopted to highlight the different factors of the attractiveness of Constantine is a deductive and multidisciplinary approach, based on an analysis-diagnosis or territorial diagnosis. Defined by the interministerial delegation for regional planning and attractiveness (Datar) as *“an inventory of the situation in a given area, listing the problems, strengths, weaknesses, expectations of people, economic, environmental and social issues, etc.; it provides explanations of past developments and assessments of future developments.”*

It is a form of qualitative evaluation, which will provide a very detailed knowledge of the territory, and which, beyond the identification of opportunities and threats, will make it possible to establish facts to make a judgment on a situation, and will constitute a tool for prospective and decision support for public action.

Our objective is to collect, through the analysis of the city, the reading of its environment, and the understanding of its reality (territorial diagnosis), the necessary data to establish the SWOT matrix (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), which will allow us to identify the current positioning of the city, to bring out its assets, opportunities, strengths, and weaknesses.

This diagnosis which concerns the analysis of the data of the territory of Constantine in all its components and the analysis of the implemented urban policies will allow us to identify the various stakes related to the social, economic, and urban fields, and to bring out the possible axes of development which will determine the future of this territory.

In this context, the SWOT analysis represents a specific data bank that could provide considerable help and guide the decision in strategic urban planning choices.

This qualitative diagnosis will be supported by fieldwork consisting of a series of interviews with key actors in political and technical decision-making.

## Sampling

The survey population was a convenience sample. Six semi-structured interviews were conducted with institutional actors selected based on their active involvement in the process (Table 1). The analysis grid defined brought out three main types of information:

- Vision of the territory for each actor (characteristics, issues, and obstacles...).
- Programmatic choice and conditions for the success of an attractiveness project.
- Programmed actions and implemented projects.

**Table 1.** Field survey sample (author)

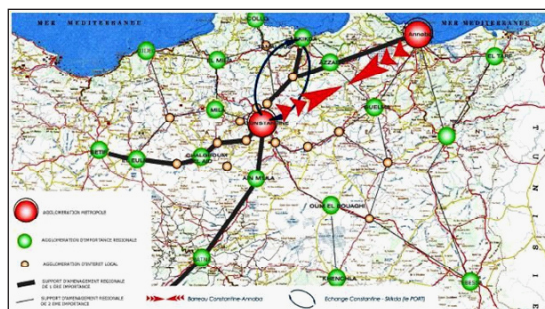
Catégories questionnaires	questioned	Organisations
<b>Territorial leaders (local authorities) 06 questionnaires</b>	Policy makers / local actors / authorities	- Representatives and Executive Directors of the different organizations, representatives of the local authorities.

Thus, the approach chosen is hybrid, combining exploration and qualitative content analysis. Thus, numerous back and forth between field observation, content analysis of the various urban planning documents, territorial plans (SNAT, SRAT, SCU, PPMCM), and the actors interviewed were necessary to build a chain of justifying arguments that allowed us to establish the SWOT analysis table.

## Presentation of the City of Constantine

The third city of the country, Constantine occupies a privileged natural site and acts as a crossroads city due to its geographical position. It is located in the center of the Algerian East at about 437 km from the capital Algiers, and 245 km from the Algerian-Tunisian borders. It is equidistant from the coastline in the north and the Aures massif in the south, some 100 km from the coastline.

It is in a buffer position, and at the center of a circle that connects it with the metropolis (Annaba) and the five major cities of the East (Skikda, Jijel, Setif, Batna, and Guelma), and is the **node** and the place of intersection of the five major axes of communication North-South and East-West (RN 3, 5, 27, 10, 20, 79 and the motorway connection East-West), in addition to its rail and air network (Figure 3).



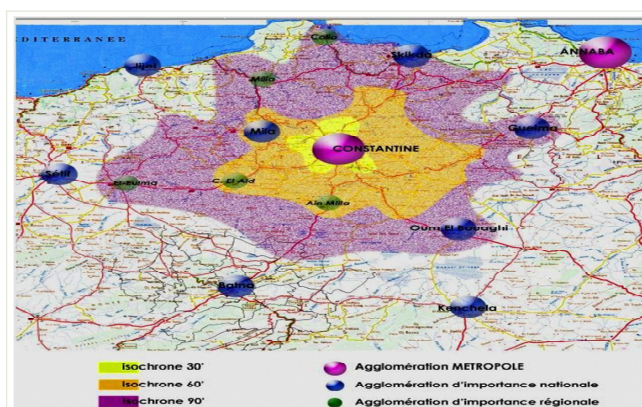
**Figure 3.** Constantine in the urban framework of the Northeast region (SCU, 2007)

## Identification of the City's Attractiveness Factors

Constantine is the only regional metropolis that is located in the interior of the country (all the others, Algiers, Oran, and Annaba, are in a different situation), which maintains close relations with its region. It is at the heart of a dense and balanced urban framework, made of large cities and other medium and small cities. And it is its inter-regional relations, its dominance in the Eastern region that makes it play the role of principal, the center of dynamics and movement.

The approach to its importance in the national and regional arena can be explained by the different roles and functions it fulfills for itself and its region and can be analyzed in terms of administrative status, socio-economic and socio-cultural polarity, and "regional" standing. For this reason, and in a non-exhaustive way, we will rely on these criteria to carry out a "reading" to define the aura of the metropolis.

- **Administrative status and demographic growth:** Constantine has great responsibilities towards a territory that extends far beyond its administrative limits. As the seat of a regional military command, it concentrates a large number of tertiary and higher tertiary facilities that are used by the cities in its area of influence (headquarters of public and para-public administrative bodies with regional competence, military hospital of international standing), and which participate directly or indirectly in reinforcing its attractiveness (figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Constantine in its territory (SCU, 2007)

It also represents an important receptacle for a large proportion of the population, estimated at 976,000 people in 2010, with a density of around 428 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> and a rate of agglomeration that has reached more than 95% (a sign of urban overcrowding), and is still encouraging new settlements that are looking for a better living environment and comfort that only the big city provides (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Population evolution of the wilaya of Constantine

Years Space considered	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Growth Rate Average Annual
Constantine	483 000	485 510	488 035	490 570	493 125	495 690	0,5% an
Urban area Without. Constantine	242 620	252 600	262 580	273 010	285 125	295 575	4,02% an
Urban area Total	725 620	738 110	750 615	763 580	778 250	791 565	1.8% an
Outside - urban area	134 750	138 390	141 885	145 160	149 900	154 395	2,9% an
<b>Total wilaya</b>	<b>860 370</b>	<b>876 500</b>	<b>892 500</b>	<b>908 540</b>	<b>928 150</b>	<b>945 950</b>	<b>1,8% an</b>
% Constantine in urban area	66%	65%	64%	64%	63%	62%	
% Urban area on total wilaya	84%	84%	84%	84%	84%	84%	

**Source:** (DPAT Constantine, 2002)



- **Socio-economic pole**, beyond its commercial influence on its region since the most distant history (City of crafts, and capital of the fabric trade), Constantine is the place of establishment of important industrial, social and cultural structures.

It is one of the first and most important poles of the mechanical industry in Algeria (Oued Hamimine and Ain Smara), and the regional and national headquarters of important economic organizations covering a wide range of sectors mainly by the units of food and pharmaceutical industries, textiles, building materials ... and services which allows it to concentrate a level of economic command quite high (Figure 5)



**Figure 5.** Specialized Potential of the City (SCU, 2007)

However, the analysis of its investment climate brings out many negative aspects that hinder the development of the latter (inadequacy of the banking network, hotel structures, expertise offices, accounting, cleaning companies, security companies ...).

- **The university function**, Constantine is distinguished above all by its university character that has ended up overshadowing its other regional functions. The development of the University in the city remains unparalleled in terms of training offers (in quantity and quality), which was reinforced in 2015 with the project of the **University City** (Saleh Boubnider) with its 44,000 teaching places.

This university function is also reflected in the medical aspect provided by the CHU, which contributes to the strong attractiveness of the city. Constantine is at the center of the "health region" with capacities and an offer both important and very diversified and enjoys an important health infrastructure that operates on a very large radius that goes far beyond the scale of the wilaya (the military hospital, radiotherapy service ...) and covers the entire eastern region.

- **On the cultural level**, Constantine contains important cultural potentialities due to its ancient vocation (cultural and religious center, large exchange market of great tradition). However, compared to its other functions, it does not produce any attractiveness in its region but remains a mark of urbanity and a relative development thanks to a certain number of institutions and organizations supported by a network of associations.

Constantine is therefore a place of concentration of knowledge and intelligence of a multiform nature, has undeniable qualitative advantages, and important competitive capacities that are declined in multiple activities and constitute an important asset for the development and success of metropolization, but this does not overshadow a large number of shortcomings and perversions in many areas that affect its positioning at different scales.

### **Synthetic Analysis of the Strategic Tools and Policies of Attractiveness of Constantine**

The beginning of a process of metropolization has led to the emergence of a new institutional framework and urban management in Algeria, which focuses on the establishment of a comprehensive strategy for the development of the city in the long term, in accordance with the objectives and guidelines of territorial development instruments.

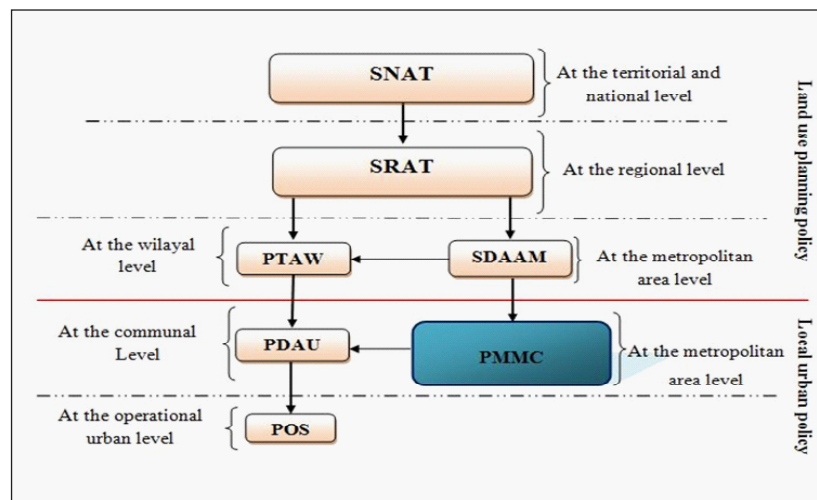
At the top of the hierarchy the SNAT 2025 whose main objective is the political and institutional redeployment based on decentralization and regionalization, and which relies on the creation and strengthening of attractiveness and competitiveness, through the territorial redeployment of major infrastructure, the modernization of the urban system,

improving the quality of service, the realization of structuring facilities and infrastructure development multimodal. The challenge is to make the bi-pole Constantine-Annaba cities with metropolitan functions in the Maghreb.

These guidelines are applied at the regional level at the level of program regions, following the specific prescriptions of the SRAT 2025 established for each region, proposing a framework for consolidating and strengthening territorial policies and support for the implementation of new strategic tools for regional planning and development through and structuring of projects at sufficient economic and social scales.

Upstream of these strategic tools comes the Master Plans for the Development of Metropolitan Areas (**SDAAM**), whose objectives are specific to Constantine and are based on the coherence of sectoral policies and strategies through the creation of the “system areas” necessary for its internationalization, based on services and functions of the tertiary sector, structuring facilities and efficient infrastructures. This is followed by the urban coherence plan (**SCU**) which represents a tool for coordination, articulation, and coherence between all projects, plans, and studies relating to the city.

During the same period, Constantine experienced the birth of its urban modernization program (**PMMC**), a transformation process with a strategic scope that aims to extend Constantine’s area of influence outside the territory of the urban grouping (regional metropolis) and to make the city competitive and attractive through innovative projects that are supposed to impose the evidence of a qualitative transformation that will allow presenting the showcase of a modern Constantine. (LAHLOUH, 2012) (Figure 6).



**Figure 6.** Articulation and regulatory links between urban planning tools (LAHLOUH, 2011)

## Spatial Dynamics and Major Territorial Development Projects

The event of Constantine Capital of Arab Culture in 2015 represented an opportunity for the city to continue its development momentum through the implementation of structuring projects totaling 75 operations (OGEBC, 2015).

A program translated by the realization of a new hotel and cultural facilities, urban improvement operations, rehabilitation of existing infrastructures, improvement of transportation networks, and tourist attractiveness. A territorial communication approach that has helped to convey a favorable image of the city to a wide audience.

This new form of urban production imposes a qualitative transformation and aims at three objectives: urban remodeling, improvement of transportation networks, and tourist attractiveness through a sum of structuring projects and emblematic operations that will in turn trigger other projects of various dimensions allowing to restructure and requalify urban spaces and revive the economy.

This strategy of intervention by the project is the second experience of the Urban Project in Algeria after that of Algiers. The equipment and infrastructures that constitute it are characterized by their large scale, and are divided into two types:

- Projects of communication and transport infrastructures, the cable car (capacity of movement of 2.000 passengers

per hour and constitute a tourist asset of quality), the Tramway (which generated a great operation of urban renewal), the Transrhmel (with the ambitious architecture “signal”), the Multimodal Station, Motorway infrastructure, Highway Es-Ouest/ Constantinois section... and which had the heaviest share of investments and whose realization with required financial commitments and important land provisions

- The major urban projects generating new centralities with urban renewal operations and development of unused sites, such as the University Pole, the Bardo Viva-Cité, luxury hotels, theaters, the lighting of the city, the national research center in biotechnology ... Equipment engines whose presence has generated transformations at different scales, and which has participated in an acceleration of urban change and an enhancement of the image of the city in a context of competitiveness (Figure 7).



**Figure 7.** Major structuring projects and their anchorage in the Constantinian territory

(Author, on Google Earth map background),

However, do these ambitious projects bring real answers to the development of the city's attractiveness?

The officials interviewed are unanimous about the ability of these projects to engage a new dynamism for the city. For the Director of Public Works: *"I think that this project with political connotation, has managed to give certain originality to Constantine generating new social, economic data with high urban quality."*

In reality, this spatial deployment has a tremendous capacity to drive and participates in the dynamics of the formation and structuring of the urban area of Constantine and reveals the potential of a metropolization action.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Qualitative Diagnosis of the City of Constantine and its Territory: SWOT Matrix**

The qualitative analysis of the territory and the strategic tools specific to Constantine have given us a global and summary image of its territory and have highlighted the endogenous and exogenous factors of its development.

At the end of this analysis, a strategic reading based on the SWOT matrix is essential to highlight the advantages and factors that are useful for its attractiveness but also the competitive constraints that are unfavorable (Table 3).

The city's assets, presented as strengths, should be used as triggers for an attractiveness strategy, while weaknesses should serve as a starting point for developing the latter.

In this context, the SWOT analysis represents a specific data bank that could provide considerable help and guide the decision in strategic urban planning choices.

**Table 3. The endogenous and exogenous factors of the territory of Constantine in relation according to the SWOT method (Author)**

Strengths	Internal Approach	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A variety of attractive capital</li> <li>- Remarkable geostrategic location, in the geometric center of the Eastern region.</li> <li>- An exceptional site, historical wealth, architectural and urban heritage</li> <li>- Convergence node of a major communication network</li> <li>- Concentrates a large number of tertiary and higher tertiary sector equipments.</li> <li>- Central pole of the regional socio-economic dynamics with sectors that produce wealth.</li> <li>- A center of excellence for its scientific development and its major public research and higher education institutions.</li> <li>- Military command seat</li> <li>- Mechanical and pharmaceutical industry clusters.</li> <li>- Regional and national headquarters of important economic organizations</li> <li>- Important concentration of population which allows the development of a labor force and a consumer market</li> <li>- Large-scale structuring facilities: airport, cable car, tramway with its extension, Transrhmel, universities, multimodal station, airport.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Problems of dysfunction due to the concentration of almost all functions in the center.</li> <li>- Inappropriate investment climate.</li> <li>- The insufficiency of basic infrastructures: banking network, hotel structures, places of relaxation, parking lots.</li> <li>- Development of unemployment, poverty.</li> <li>- The paucity of services provided to companies: expertise offices, accounting.</li> <li>- The degradation of the built environment of the old city.</li> <li>- Lack of cultural and leisure facilities.</li> <li>- Degradation of the city's image (built environment, green spaces...)</li> </ul>
Opportunities	External approach	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A strong political will for the development of the city.</li> <li>- Launch of the Modernization Project of Constantine PMMC</li> <li>- Event Constantine capital of the Arab culture</li> <li>- The creation of new research and higher education clusters is an opportunity to develop and strengthen links with businesses (training/employment).</li> <li>- The implementation of public actions stimulating the sustainable development of Constantine.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Uncontrolled urban sprawl</li> <li>- The degradation of the natural and agricultural heritage.</li> <li>- The acceleration and lack of control over the urbanization of Constantine in its inter-municipal context.</li> <li>- Non-completion of several projects.</li> <li>- Failure of strategic tools to meet all predefined objectives.</li> <li>- The absence of an overall strategic vision for the territory</li> <li>- Voluntary, centralized, and not very participatory actions</li> <li>- The lack of coordination between the different actors and sectors</li> <li>- Absence of the concepts of partnership and mixed economy.</li> <li>- Lack of consultation with citizens</li> <li>- Lack of conditions for private entrepreneurial initiative.</li> <li>- Lack of land reserves and sprawl at the expense of agricultural land.</li> <li>- Extent of sprawl at the expense of agricultural land.</li> </ul>

**Source:** Author (2021)



## **Constantine's Attractiveness Indicators**

Constantine has some properties that allow it to be located at the top of the country's urban hierarchy. An amalgam of several parameters carrying dynamism namely, a remarkable geostrategic situation, an attractive capital, endowed with a viable economic substratum, is a central pole of the regional socio-economic dynamics because it concentrates a great number of equipment of the tertiary and higher tertiary, being crossroads of the various exchanges in the region, it remains a big center with regional radiation and preserves certain supremacy on its region.

The qualitative analysis of some of the projects undertaken revealed that most of these projects are concerned with social, economic, urban, and territorial issues, and will certainly be able to organize the city's internal territory to improve its use, quality and functioning, reinforcing its attractiveness and bringing about a long-term structural change.

Moreover, the majority of the actors interviewed about the city agree that Constantine has all the necessary assets to reinforce its attractiveness and confirm its status as a regional metropolis in the first instance and a Maghrebian one in the long term.

## **The Constraints of Attractiveness: A Failing Territorial and Urban Management**

Constantine certainly has undeniable qualitative advantages, but also accumulates a large number of shortcomings and perversions in many areas, particularly urban, due to its population growth, its strong polarization, and the extent of its area of influence.

And even if it seems clear that the strategy adopted aims to set in motion a metropolization dynamic thanks to the projects undertaken, they cannot by themselves ensure this role, and there are many constraints on the development of this strategy.

Firstly, the approach adopted was not thought out integrally, since the majority of projects were thought out, or even decided individually, to respond to specific problems; they were then adopted as part of this global approach.

This approach is also criticized for the lack of consultation with the population on the future of the city, and the failure to take into account the various actors present in the urban area in the conduct of projects, in addition to the absence of notions of partnership and mixed economy capable of assuming the carrying of large-scale projects, as well as the failure and instability of structures and management systems, and the lack of clearly defined development strategies and attractiveness.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The metropolization of Constantine is a major challenge to improve the competitiveness of the entire eastern region of the country, and beyond to compete with the major cities of the Maghreb.

These metropolitan ambitions require the implementation of a territorial attractiveness offer based on investments of metropolitan rank, and the exploitation of the potential of its territory for the benefit of the local quality of life.

Drawn up based on the territorial diagnosis, the SWOT matrix brought out the assets and important territorial resources that the city offers in different areas (natural, socio-economic, living environment...) and revealed that there is a strong will of the public authorities to develop its attractiveness through a functional transformation based on a global and strategic project relying essentially on a consequent multimodal infrastructural support and an innovative conception centered on the Urban Project as an innovative tool in the urban reflection, as well as an element of recomposition of the urban landscape.

However, despite the importance of the projects undertaken, the objective of attractiveness seems to have been hampered by a series of constraints and threats identified at the level of the approach used (lack of consultation, lack of coherence of the territorial structures ....).

Thus, to make a success of metropolization, the development actors must embark on a planning process that links the external attractiveness and internal cohesion of the territory, and they must reflect on the content of a genuine metropolitan project that cannot be limited to a few major structuring projects, but must initiate, encourage and accompany the dynamics that appear to be sources of modernization of structures and practices, and must be supported by an effective network of actors, a framework for multidisciplinary consultation, a negotiated vision, and a culture of urban marketing.

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**Citation:** LAHLOUH Manel, LABII Belkacem. *Territorial Attractiveness, a Lever for the Metropolization of Constantine*. *Int J Innov Stud Sociol Humanities*. 2022;7(3):43-52. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20431/2456-4931.0703004>.

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