

Diffusion of the Centrality and Emergence of New Polarities According to the Commercial Structures in Algeria - Case of the Northern Sector of the City of Constantine

Dr. HAMMOUD Naima

Salah Boubnider University, Constantine 3, Institute of Urban Management

Abstract

In the face of a galloping demography and rapid development, urban space is undergoing a new organisation. This has led to considerable changes in the structure of activities and has fostered the emergence of new inter-urban relationships. The core that is commonly referred to as the city center has become less attractive because it cannot endure the backlash of the periphery where the phenomenon of demographic growth has become unavoidable for multiple reasons (urban expansion, decongestion, deferral of growth....) from large cities to small centers. Hence, the periphery tends to detach itself from the central core by instituting a framework of life and exchanges that is in contrast with the old urban organization scheme. This new form of urban territory planning represents in fact the targeted purpose of the paper in question through the study of the Northern sector of the city of Constantine, which is classified in the top position of the Algerian urban hierarchy.

INTRODUCTION

From the base of the hierarchy to the top strata through to the mid-sized classes, the changes' marks are distinctly apparent in both the space and the built environment.

At the top of the hierarchy, symbolized by the large cities, we are witnessing a new organization that is gradually taking shape and becoming more widespread. This is the phenomenon of centrality, which no longer remains the prerogative of the central core but is steadily reaching the periphery. Formerly, it was the original urban centers that held the reins of command by virtue of their infra-structural and financial potential. Today, the situation is quite different. The peripheries, which were for a long time restricted to residential functions, are taking on new functions thanks to the appearance of numerous businesses and other amenities that are largely releasing the peripheral population from the traditional center. This has generated new types of flows; the periphery has accordingly undergone a revival of interest and has become an urban pole on an equal footing with the other sectors of the city. It combines the residential function with the commercial and service function.

The spatial reflection of these functions has led to a territorial organization that henceforth assigns a compelling functional predominance to the periphery. Therefore, the latter is individualized by new attitudes amongst the population and progressively tends to withdraw from the city center in order to acquire certain goods of common, or even anomalous type.

In a bid to demonstrate and analyze this new trend in spatial configuration, we are interested in a case study in the city of Constantine, more precisely its Northern sector, where the phenomenon of the shift in centrality seems to be more and more asserted. Before undertaking a more in-depth analysis of the criteria that have promoted the emergence of such an organization, our approach consists primarily of presenting and briefly describing the city of Constantine from a geographical, demographic and economic point of view.

CONSTANTINE THE REGIONAL METROPOLIS

The Demographic and Business Weight of the City

The city of Constantine is one of the largest cities in Algeria either by its demographic weight of 448374 inhabitants in 2008 located in residence, or by the potential of the business infrastructure it owns: 23463 commercial establishments.

This represents 67.8% of the total number of traders in the province of Constantine according to data from the Department of Competition and Prices of the province in 2020.



Figure 1. Map representing the situation of Constantine in Algeria.

The Geographical Location of the Sector Under Study

Our study sector is located in Northern Constantine, covering an area of 778.31 hectares, with a percentage of 14.15% for the overall surface of the commune of Constantine estimated at 5500 hectares according to the Monograph of Constantine 2000.

The Northern sector of the city is surrounded by:

- The borders of the master plan of development and urbanism in the North and East
- El-Gamas district in the southeastern part.
- The districts: Sidi Mabrouk and El-Kantara in the South.
- The railroad in the Western part.

The Subdivision of the Northern Sector of the City into Districts:

In order to facilitate the research and analysis of the sector in question data, the sector was divided into several districts according to the type of housing, the density and the natural and human limits as shown on the following map:

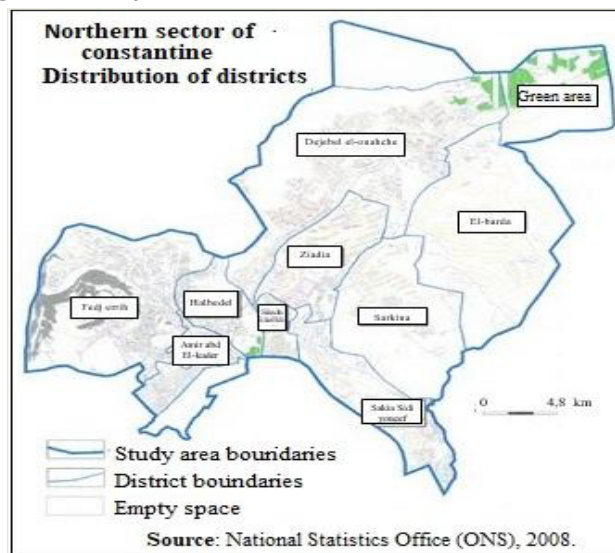


Figure 2. Distribution of the Districts of the Northern Sector of Constantine

DEMOGRAPHICS

Housing and Population

Based on the results of R.G.P.H of the year 2008, our study sector has a total of 74251 inhabitants out of a communal total of 448374 inhabitants, i.e. 16.53%. This figure does not take into account the number of people living in the slums that have recently been demolished such as Fedj-errih and Tenoudji. As for the number of dwellings in the area, it is estimated to be 10357 units and concerns only the constructions existing in 2004. In other words, the number of demolished slum dwellings is not accounted for as the following figures show:

Table 1. The Northern sector of Constantine: Distribution of Population, Housing and Density by Districts

Districts	Surface (hectares)	Population		Population density inhabitants/ hectare	Dwellings		Housing density Houses/ hectare
		number	%		number	%	
Djebel-el ouahche	165,6	10603	14,28	64	2022	16,29	12
El-barda	129,5	453	0,61	03	107	0,86	0.82
Ziadia	47,72	11909	16,02	250	1976	15,92	41
Sarkina	86,4	1314	1,77	15	352	2,84	4
Saada khelkhal	11,52	3534	4,75	307	440	3,54	38
Sakia sidi Yousef	54,35	18399	24,74	339	3361	27,07	62
Halbedel	28,6	12934	17,40	452	1615	13,01	56
Amir abd el-kader	22,9	10513	14,13	459	1926	15,51	84
Fedj errih	139,41	4692	6,30	34	615	4,96	5
Green space Free space	92,31	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total	778,31	74351	100	95	12414	100	16

Source: Based on data from the General Census of Population and Housing (R.G.P.H), 2008

Housing and Population Density

Two Patterns Characterize the Human Occupation in the Northern Sector of Constantine

-High density is apparent in the districts relatively.

-Very low density is typical of districts under construction and in the slums.

Economic Aspects

Based on the field survey of a sample of 4000 inhabitants (i.e. 5% of the total population) the Northern sector of the city of Constantine is defined by a very poor employment rate. Only 30% of the population is declared active. In parallel to this situation, the sector is significantly under-represented in terms of major economic units, which has a negative impact on the employment profile in this sector. Thus, the only way out is in the tertiary sector (trade and services), which manages to absorb an appreciable number of unemployed people. This economic sector -however fundamental it may be- is worthy of study and analysis, particularly in terms of trade.

Study of Commercial Structures in the Northern Sector of Constantine

The study that we plan to carry out involves the entire Northern sector of Constantine with the exception of two districts, namely Fedj-errih because of its irregular design (slum) which is ephemeral by definition as well as El-bardha district whose commercial function is in an embryonic state.

Distribution of Commercial Activities in the Northern Sector

By definition, any commercial activity has direct links with the localized demand in residence, the appearance of such or such activity is expected to be profitable and naturally meet the needs of the populations.

Based on this principle of appearance, the distribution of commercial activities is determined by population density. In the Northern sector of Constantine, the distribution of commercial activities as it appears reflects the predominance of food-type commercial activities, which are used on a daily basis and which do not require a specific customer base.

In this way, we find food shops (groceries, bakeries, fruit and vegetables, pastry shops, etc.), crafts (carpentry, blacksmiths, tailors, mechanics, etc.) and domestic commercial equipment (household goods, furniture, etc.).

The numeric predominance of these types of businesses is summarized in the following table:

Table 2. Distribution of the Alimentary and Non- alimentary Trades in the Districts of the Northern Sector

Districts	Alimentary trades		Non-alimentary trades		Total
	nombre	%	nombre	%	
Djebel el-ouahche	353	30.35	552	36,43	905
Sarkina	50	4.29	72	4,77	122
Ziadia	58	4.97	80	5,29	138
Sâadakhalkhal	99	8,52	131	8,59	230
Sakiasidiyoucef	86	7,36	90	5,95	176
Amir abd el-kader	379	32,63	483	31,89	862
Halbedel	138	11.88	107	7.08	245
Total	1163	100	1515	100	2678

Source: Field investigation, 2020.

When compared to the number of inhabitants, the number of shops in the Northern sector of Constantine shows a heterogeneous distribution that reveals the imbalances between supply and demand, particularly in terms of the coverage of non-alimentary goods in the densely populated areas. This observation is also valid according to the comparison with the average situation in the sector under study, which has enabled us to highlight two diametrically opposed types of distribution

- Sporadic and random distribution concerning the interior residential areas where the alimentary trade and some crafts essentially appear (carpentry, sheet metal work, mechanics...etc)
- A much more specialized distribution typical of the main road leading to the heights of Jebel el Ouahch.

Attempt to Classify Districts Based on Commercial Structures:

The classification of districts on the basis of commercial activities is essential in more than one respect. It makes it possible to measure the economic importance of each sector in relation to the others knowing that the urban fact is at the junction of commercial activities and equipment. In the Northern sector of the city of Constantine, the hierarchy based on this principle is described below on the basis of the results of matrix n°1. It brings out five levels:

Level 1: corresponds to Djebel El-Ouahch district which is characterized by a preponderant degree of commercial equipment with 905 commercial premises and by a diversity of activity of 58 types. Hence, this district is at the head of the pack showing an important potential of interest because most of the premises are of non-food type and are likely to attract specific local or extra-local clientele.

Level 2: is defined by 862 commercial activities corresponding to 52 types with an equal share between non-food and food trade, giving the Emir abd el-kader district a moderate attractive role.

Level 3: is similar to the district SâadaKhalkhal which is defined by 230 commercial premises and by a combination of activities totalizing 30 types. This district is characterized by a better attraction capacity than the previous levels because the commercial density that symbolizes it is much more significant.

Level 4: defining two districts namely: Halbedel with 29 commercial types and SakiatSidiYoucef with 24 types. They are characterized by a reduced combination of commercial activities composed essentially of food shops intended to serve a neighborhood clientele.

Level 5: This level concerns Ziadia and Serkina districts, which remain poorly equipped urban areas and are therefore dependent either on other neighboring districts or on the city center.

Matrice n°1 Le secteur Nord de la ville de Constantine : Répartition commerciales par quartiers											
Activité commerciale	Les quartiers								Total	Rareté d'établissement	fréquence d'apparition
	djebel el-ouahche	Amir abd el-kader	Sâada khalkhal	halbedel	Sakia sidi youcef	Ziadia	Sarkina				
Alimentation générale									190	0,0052	7
Cosmétique									26	0.0385	7
Kiosque									25	0.0400	7
Coiffeur									62	0.0161	7
Restaurant									55	0,0182	7
Café									62	0,0161	7
Taxi phone									39	0.0256	7
Pharmacie									21	0.4760	7
Boulangerie									26	0.3850	6
Patisserie									26	0.3850	6
Tailleur									32	0.0313	6
Librairie									33	0.0303	6
Cordonnier									13	0,0769	6
vente K7									10	0.1000	5
Menuiserie									38	0.0263	5
Mécanicien									32	0.0313	5
Réparation d'électro ménage									18	0.0556	5
Bijoutier									13	0.0769	5
Ferronnier									22	0.0454	5
Dépôt									11	0.6909	5
Informatique+cyber café									18	0.0556	5
Laitier									10	0.1000	4
Boucherie									17	0.0588	4
Quincaillerie									13	0.0769	4
Pièces détachées									22	0.0454	4
Vente café									10	0.1000	4
Réparation des pneus									5	0.1666	4
Dentiste									8	0.1250	4
Medecin généraliste									6	0.1667	4
Douche									12	0.0833	4
Photographe									8	0.1250	4
Fruits et légumes									13	0.0769	3
semoule et derivé									12	0.0833	3
Habillement									6	0.1666	3
Meubles									14	0.0714	3
Électricien									9	0.1111	3
Décoration									7	0.1429	3
Avocat									5	0.2000	3
Bureau d'études									4	0.2500	3
Auto école									5	0.2000	3
Agence immobilière									3	0.3333	3
Vente matériels médicaux									3	0.3333	2
Tollenee									13	0.0769	2
Pompeie									2	0.5000	2
Dinanderie									2	0.5000	2
Salle des jeux									3	0.3333	2
Medecin spécialiste									3	0.3333	2
Lavage des voitures									5	0.2000	2
Imprimerie									4	0.2500	2
Société économique									3	0.3333	2
Vente des voitures									1	1.0000	1
dépôt des bouteilles de gaz									2	0.5000	1
Vente du bois									1	1.0000	1
Vente des oiseaux									1	1.0000	1
friperie									4	0.2500	1
Miroir et verre									6	0.1667	1
Accessoires des voitures									3	0.3333	1
Production de kachir									1	1.0000	1
Limmonaderie									1	1.0000	1
Production de ceramique									1	1.0000	1
Vente des montres									1	1.0000	1
Notaire									1	1.0000	1
Installation téléphonique									1	1.0000	1
Marché									1	1.0000	1
Centre commerciale									1	1.0000	1
Bureau des cours									1	1.0000	1
Nombre de types commerciaux	58	52	30	29	24	22	18				
Niveau	N1	N2	N3	N4		N5					

Présence
 Absence

Source: d'après les données de terrain, 2020

Figure 3. Commercial Distribution by Districts in the Northern Sector of Constantine.

Spatial Mobility According to the Diversity of Commercial Activities:

After studying the commercial structures according to their diversity and their distribution in space, it is now necessary to emphasize the flows generated by these structures in order to identify the mobility that characterizes them.

The study of this component is based on a questionnaire targeting the place of purchase of consumer goods and their diversity as shown in the following table:

Table 3. Places of Purchase of Commercial Goods in the Northern Sector

Places of purchase Types of trade	Northern Sector (on site)		City center		Neighboring districts		Total
	number	%	number	%	number	%	
Alimentary activities	4134	70	902	15	874	15	5910
Clothing and personal equipment	18	02	820	80	188	18	1026
household equipment	1320	41	1186	37	724	22	3230
Productive artisanal activities	876	50	720	41	152	09	1748
Artisanal repair activities	2372	62	706	19	744	19	3822
Service activities	4256	58	1782	24	1306	18	7344

Source: Field survey, February 2003

If we scrutinize the figures in table 4, we notice that the acquisition of commercial property can be adjusted to the nature of the commercial asset being sought. Thus, the North sector is characterized by the presence of short-range flows, as these are activities that are easy to acquire because they are omnipresent in the neighborhood and do not require long trips.

In the field of clothing, we see another dynamic in which the city center is in the lead, since it captures more than 80% of the population flows.

As for the acquisition of domestic equipment, the situation is mixed. The flows are directed towards the city center and the neighboring neighborhoods with approximately 41% and 37%.

As far as handicrafts are concerned, the Northern sector is regaining its independence and offers a range of handicraft activities capable of satisfying the local demand.

Clientele Travel Reasons

They are Defined According to Several Principles

The centrality that tends to characterize the Northern urban sector of Constantine is influenced by the diversity of the existing structures. These are endowed with a significant number of commercial alimentary, artisanal and service activities.

The central effect of the study area is also explained by the distance and the range of choice. These two criteria argue in favor of the Northern sector of the city. In this area, the population has access to the full range of products offered for sale in the city center, and at considerably lower prices.

Nevertheless, the predominance of the city center remains unquestionable when it comes to the acquisition of specialized commercial properties for periodic use.

The supremacy of the city center also remains unchallenged in the area of commercial properties with a high scarcity of establishments and space, the appearance of which is conditioned by a minimum level of clientele, below which the activity runs the risk of disappearance.

CONCLUSION

The organization of space in the middle of large Algerian cities has undergone profound changes. These changes concern the morphological aspects of the built environment, the distribution of commercial activities as well as the spatial mobility between districts.

The new inter-urban relationships that have emerged over the last ten years show that the classic scheme that opposes the original center and the periphery is far from being a reality. The periphery is in the process of organizing itself into a zone that is more or less autonomous from the city center.

The contribution of the commercial structures and the equipment in place is undeniable in this new organizational logic. The strong presence as well as the variety of equipments implanted in the periphery in a quite short lapse of time have generated flows within the periphery itself. This has created a new dynamic that allows the periphery to adopt a role other than that commonly referred to as a sleeping city.

The Northern sector of the city of Constantine is in line with this new process of urban organization for the acquisition of goods of common and sometimes even of anomalous consumption.

This new form of urban territorialization remains almost general and concerns, as it were, all cities regardless of their position in the urban hierarchy.

REFERENCES

1. National Statistics Office (ONS): General Census of Population and Housing (R.G.P.H), 2008.

Citation: Dr. HAMMOUD Naima. *Diffusion of the Centrality and Emergence of New Polarities According to the Commercial Structures in Algeria - Case of the Northern Sector of the City of Constantine*. *Int J Innov Stud Sociol Humanities*. 2022;7(8):175-181. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20431/2456-4931.070817>.

Copyright: © 2022 The Author(s). This open access article is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) 4.0 license