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# A PROCESS OF TERRITORIALIZATION IN THE NEW URBAN HABITAT ZONE OF SERKINA: THE CASE OF COLLECTIVE SOCIAL HOUSING

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## ABSTRACT

The Serkina new urban habitat zone (ZHUN Serkina) is one of the four new housing zones in the city of Constantine. In our article, we will try to focus on the territorial integration (socio-spatial integration) of the inhabitants of this ZHUN, by favoring a 'bottom-up' approach, which pay the main attention to the experiences of the inhabitants and their degree of territorialization. The study based on observation technique and a questionnaire survey of a sample of 109 households. In other words, we will try to clarify each individual's ability to forge specific relationships with the space in which are lived.

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## KEYWORDS

Housing Area, Urban, Serkina Systems, Space, Lived

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## 1. INTRODUCTION.

Under pressure from the housing crisis, the Algerian government resorted to this type of urban planning «functionalist», which provided rapid solutions thanks to standardization and prefabrication processes. This led to the emergence of large housing estates, followed by new urban housing zones (Z.H.U.N.) in Algerian towns and cities, which are currently experiencing huge dysfunctions that are symbols of nuisance and degradation, inflicting discomfort and exhausting daily constraints on occupants.

«These discomforts are diverse: isolation, anonymity, lack of contact, distortion of neighborly relations, but even more crucial is the creation of a climate of insecurity and anxiety in the face of difficulties caused by the management and control of community spaces (the illicit appropriation of these spaces)»( ) Thus a quality of life that can be described as mediocre.

Constantine, like all Algerian cities, has benefited from six (06) new urban housing zones, two (02) of which have not been completed (EL Menia and El Berda) and four others have been completed, as follows: Boussouf, Djebel Ouahch, Serkina, Zouaghi Slimane, and five (05) large complexes: 20 Aout, 05 Juillet et Boudjenana, Sakiet Sidi Yousef, Daksi Abd Salem, Ziadia.

In our study, we will focus on the territorial integration of the inhabitants of this ZHUN, by favouring a «bottom-up» approach, paying particular attention to the experiences of inhabitants and the extent to which they are territorialized, with a view to testing its capacity to produce a suitable urban environment for its residents, which will also stimulate the successful integration of the ZHUN's (Naceur and Farhi, 2003) residents.

## **2. THE BIRTH OF LARGE HOUSING ESTATES IN ALGERIA.**

The large housing estates originated in the ZUPs; an urban planning tool used mainly in France for large housing developments.

In its attempt to eradicate the housing crisis, Algeria had opted for the large housing estates used by European countries for reconstruction after the massive destruction of the Second World War. The heavy industrialization of the building industry was a means of production to cover the very high demand, which had turned into an acute crisis.

Therefore, the situation imposed by the lack of land and the complexity of the site, the fact that newly built neighborhoods are increasingly isolated from the old urban fabric. So physically detached, they are experiencing real difficulties in functioning.

It wasn't until the 1970s that the Algerian government decided really takes charge of the housing problem. Numerous projects with hundreds of housing launched throughout the country to meet the very high demand. At the time, Algeria opted for the heavy industrialization of collective housing.

The socialist option meant that the state had to take care of all the needs of society.

Housing, this basic need assured largely for all Algerian families, whatever resources they had at their disposal. The beneficiaries completely excluded from any financial participation, paying only the rents, which were very modest in any case. As a result, many large housing estates were building on the outskirts of towns.

Constantine was one of the towns suffering most from the housing crisis, so a large number of large housing estates were built (20 Août 55, 5 Juillet 62, Boudjenana, Daksi, Ziadia, Sakiet Sidi Youcef, ...).

Most of these «planned» neighborhood is, built on the outskirts of the city, are under-equipped because they were building under pressure from the housing crisis and for an undemanding population. In Constantine, as in most Algerian cities, these industrialized, typical urban fringes have the same uniform, often gloomy appearance, with no distinction made for regional or local specificities, so much so that it is difficult to recognize one city from another on the basis of its fringe.

Many large housing estates were building hastily under the pressure of demographic growth. Their developers could only deliver housing and educational facilities, the other equipment and fittings would have to wait, sometimes decades. Even so, foreign companies responsible for building and finishing these large-scale, «turnkey» projects had not done any better. For a long time, the remains of the building site had covered Leftovers of the worksite. In winter, the inhabitants waded through veritable quagmires, and in summer, these are vast stretches of desert at the foot of the buildings, with clouds of dust rising up from them - another aspect of the living environment.

However, they have essentially appeared in two different phases and two different contexts:

### **1.1. The first phase (1958 – 1975)**

After independence, only a few large apartments collective housing type of HLM were completed in certain outlying districts such as Filali, Bosquet, and les chemins des dames (Bouchama).... This was the «carcass» operation, so the state had merely completed that work abandoned by the colonial administration (as part of the Constantine 1958 plan). After under the pressure of the housing crisis, the Algerian government has opted for a new phase in the construction of public housing, the Algerian government has opted for a new phase in the construction of accommodation collective, or «the major developments of the post-independence period».

It therefore built the following districts on the immediate outskirts of the city of Constantine: 20 Aout, 05 Juillet and Boudjenana, Sakiet Sidi Yousef, Daksi Abd Salem, Ziadia.

### **1.2. The second phase «ZHUN(s)»: Serkina, Boussouf, Zouaghi, and Djebel Ouahch (1982 – 2000).**

A circular issued by the Ministry of Public Works and Construction, Department of Planning and Urban Development. Was sent by the Minister of Public Works to the walis on 19/02/1975. With the aim of creating new urban housing zones (so-called urbanization zones).

It replaced decree no. 58-1464 of 31 December 1958 (made applicable by decree no. 60-960 of 6 September 1960), which provided for the possibility of creating 'priority urbanization zones' (ZUP). In the meantime, it has proved advisable to define a transitional procedure while the legislation binging revised.

The ZHUN era was almost exclusive, starting in 1975, and the opening of construction sites spared no Algerian city. This procedure is the result of operational urban planning and has been a real driving force behind urban development in Algeria.

This new type of urban development is characterized by a break with the old centers and monotonous, repetitive architecture, highlighting the existence of two coexisting, non-complementary urban forms, that of the old fabrics and that of the Z.H.U.Ns.

More than 100 conurbations was been affected by the creation of more than 250 ZHUNs, covering a total area of 23,000 hectares and with a capacity to accommodate more than 650,000 homes.

### **2.1. Objectives of the ZHUNs:**

The ZHUNs, a specific operational urban planning procedure in Algeria, the New Urban Habitat Zone, will lead to major upheaval in urban growth. With the following objectives: the development of new reception capacities, it had to:

- Develop new reception capacities.
- Take account in its programmes of: deficiencies, deficiencies and the physical condition of the existing built environment.

- It should also provide a quantitative response to housing needs

The ZHUN procedure was compulsory for any development of more than 1,000 dwellings or, exceptionally, for a group of 400 dwellings or more. The main objectives of the ZHUNs were to:

- Develop the reception capacity of towns by:
  - \* Carrying out infrastructure works.
  - \* Identification of land suitable for urban development within the urban perimeter or in the extension zones provided for in the PUD implementation plan in the short and medium term.
  - \* Unblocking of operations foncière.
- Coordinate the planning of investments, particularly those included in the Urban Modernization Plan (PMU) concerning:
  - \* Infrastructure (VRD).
  - \* Superstructures (urban and housing facilities).
- Integrate housing developments into the existing urban environment by:
  - \* Wise use of the planned equipment.
  - \* Finding solutions to optimize functional relationships: travel to business parks, access to leisure activities ...etc.
  - \* Infrastructure planning that also takes into account certain needs of neighboring areas.
- The search for solutions to the problems of Algeria's new socio-physical space
- \* With regard to urban and architectural design, to look for solutions that may reflect a gradual maturing process of possible answers to the problems of the new Algerian space.
- \* With regard to urban and architectural design, to look for solutions that may reflect a gradual maturing of possible responses to the problems of the new Algerian space (BENAMEUR Amina Hadia, 2010).

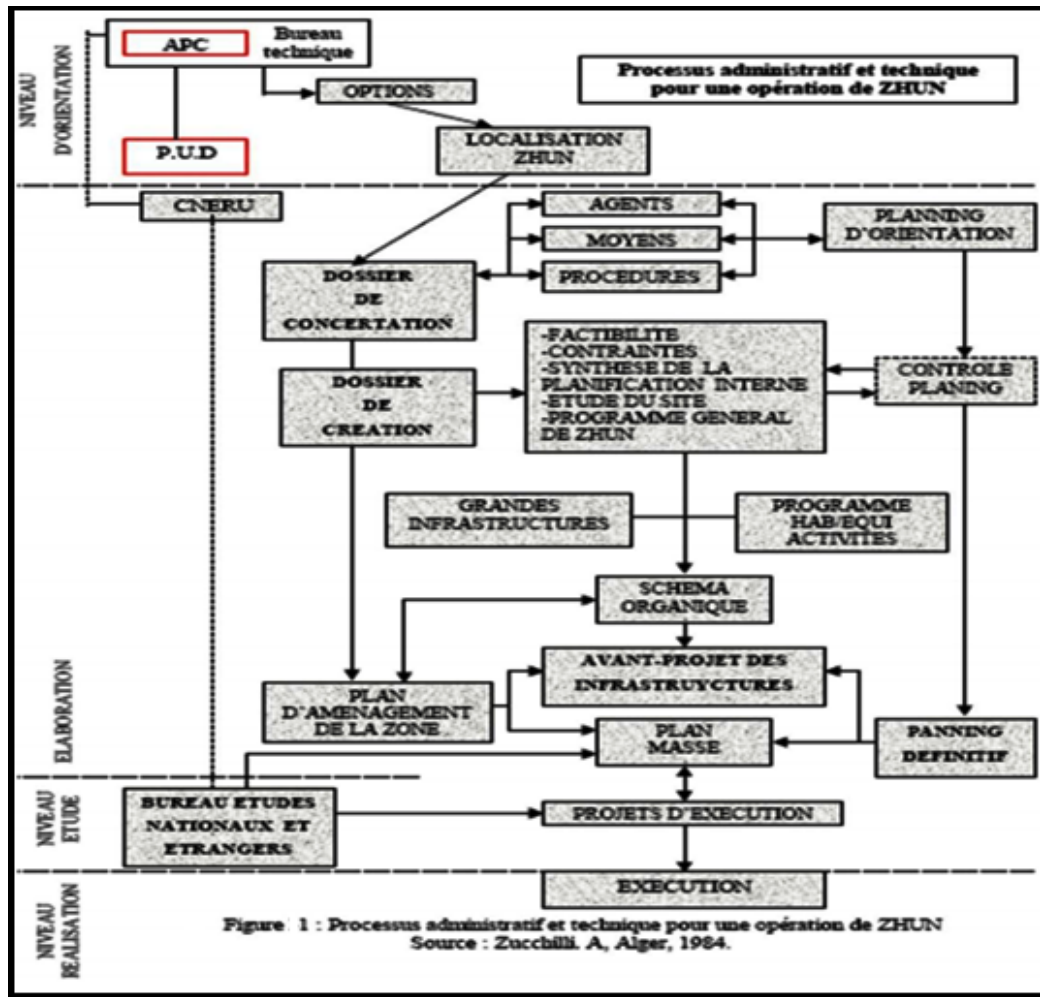


Fig. 1. Administrative and technical processes for a ZHUN operation. (Zucchelli, 1983)

### 3. THE BIG ENSEMBLES AND ZHUNS REALIZED IN THE CITY OF CONSTANTINE

The result of planned urban development, the ZHUNs in Constantine, have come to fill the gaps in a site in search of land to build on, to the east and north by housing estates: Daksi, Sakiet Sidi Youcef, Ziadia and Djebel El Ouhech, Serkina. To the south-east, with the more peripheral extensions of city's 20 Août, 5 Juillet and Boudjenana, city of Boussof and finally Zouaghi Slimane (see table 01).

Table 1. ZHUNs and large housing estates in the city of Constantine (DJERMOUNI, 2015).

The big ensembles and ZHUNs realized in the city of Constantine	Surface area (ha)	Nbre of Housing	Population	Steps
Djebel Ouahch	66	1 408	9 940	1982/88
Boussof	211	6 221	38 000	1982/90
Serkina	89	1053	-	1982/90
05 juillet 1962 et Boudjenana	15	320	2 240	1975/86
20 Aout 1955	15	1 039	-	1976/83
Ziadia	33	1 400	11 200	1975/87
Daksi	70	1856	-	1970/85
Ain el Bey (Zouaghi)	-	1914	-	-
Sakiet Sidi Yousef (la BUM)	35	2000	16100	1978/88

They are programmed take a place near the city of Constantine, on the immediate outskirts, which will shape the expansion of the city of Constantine (map no. 01). Their implementation should enable intended to bring urban growth in the city of Constantine out better control

« The important number of homes planned, shows that, at this moment, Constantine was looking for a solution to its housing crisis within its urbanization perimeter. As a result, every piece of land suitable for any receive of programmed when to have solicited. Similarly, all the construction processes when to have used: from heavy prefabrication in several modes, tunnel prefabrication.

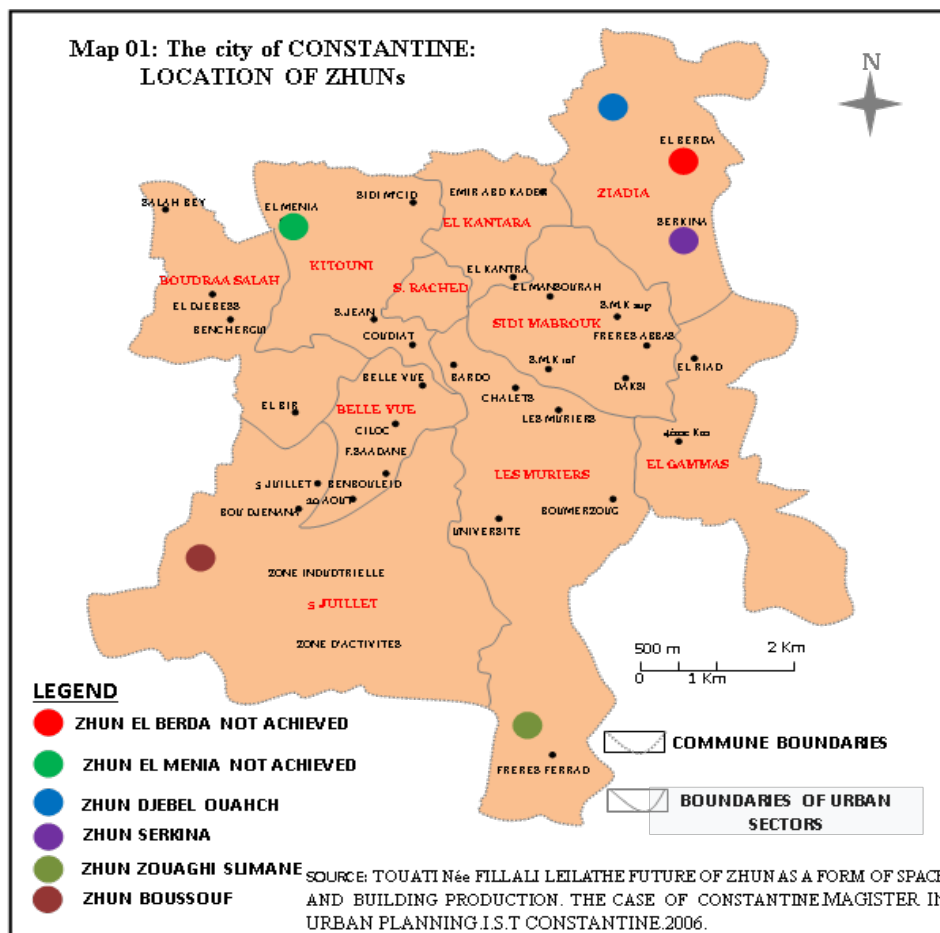
to collective and individual housing in the form of chalets and self- construction of communal housing estates and RHP sites, in finished or evolving housing» (Fatiha, 2007).

Despite the introduction of urbanization instruments and legislative procedures, these collective housing programmes were very late in coming to fruition and were roundly criticised. The significant gap between the initial projects and their very incomplete realization of the ZHUNs (low level of equipment due to delays in completion and the diversion of certain areas from their initial function) has led to major dysfunctions within the Constantine conurbation. The long delays in building basic facilities in the ZHUNs mean that they are not fully functional; they are entirely dependent on the city center, reducing them to dormitory towns. They encourage ZHUN residents to use the qualified old town centers for their social and commercial needs.

Delays in completion are clearly due to the large number of player's involved and economic operators involving low management and weak coordination between project owners (OPGI, APC ...) and prime contractors. The completion of these projects, which had initially designed to form genuine outlying districts of Constantine, is a major challenge, cannot be achieved by sectorial interventions that are, moreover, uncoordinated or difficult to coordinate, unlike in the case of industrial estates.

However, the ZHUN(s) procedure has helped to guide urban growth and, in particular, to reduce urban sprawl and the consumption of high-quality agricultural land by grouping together housing programmes.

Finally, the adoption of such a property policy seems to respond to concerns about modernity, speed of completion and its social nature .



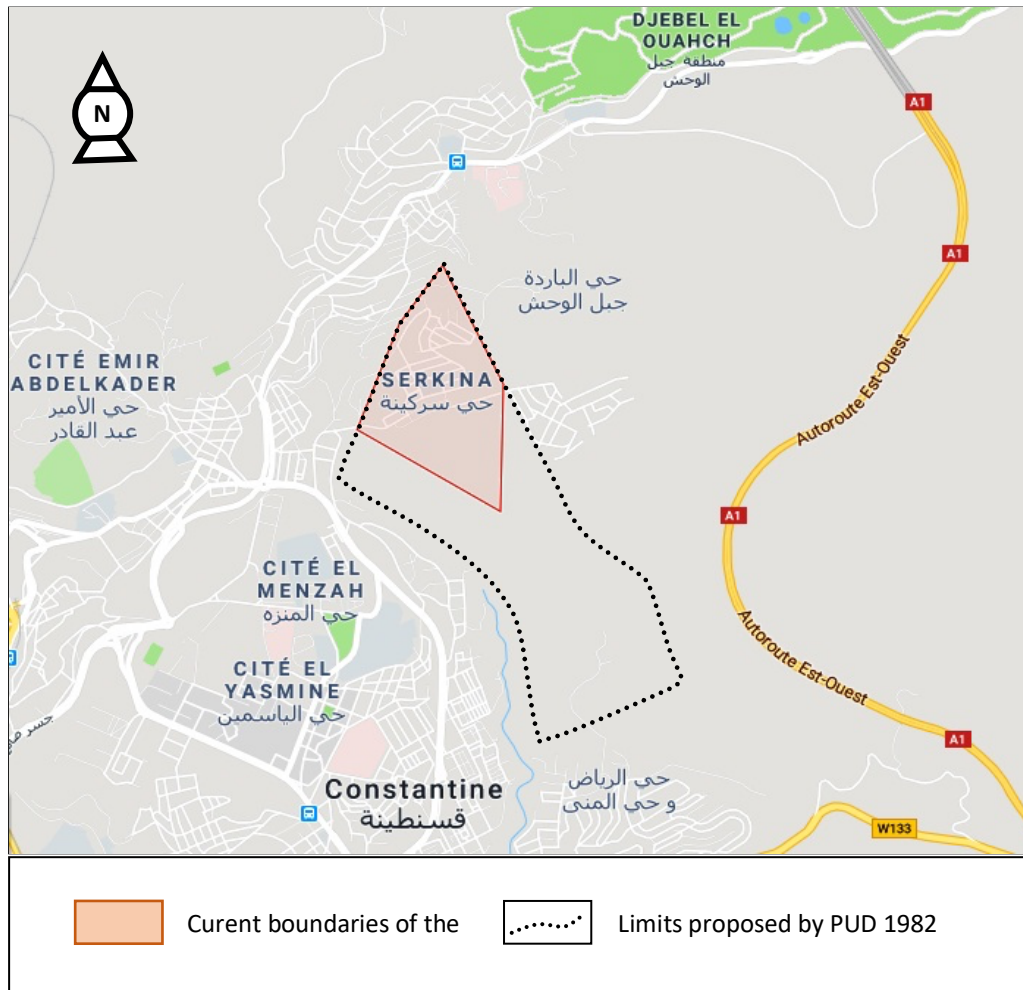
Map 1. The city of Constantine location of ZHUNs. Source: (Leila and Safiddine-Rouag, 2006)



### 3. ANALYSIS OF ZHUN SERKINA.

#### 3.1. Presentation of ZHUN SERKINA.

The ZHUN SERKINA is a new urban housing zone, programmed in the 1982 Master Urban Plan, to accommodate 10763 homes and 64500 habitants, with a surface area of 201 ha. However, for reasons that are not known, it stopped at just 89 ha and 1053 homes. (Satellite image 01).



#### 3.2. Spatial structuring of the Serkina ZHUN: The built environment in the Serkina ZHUN.

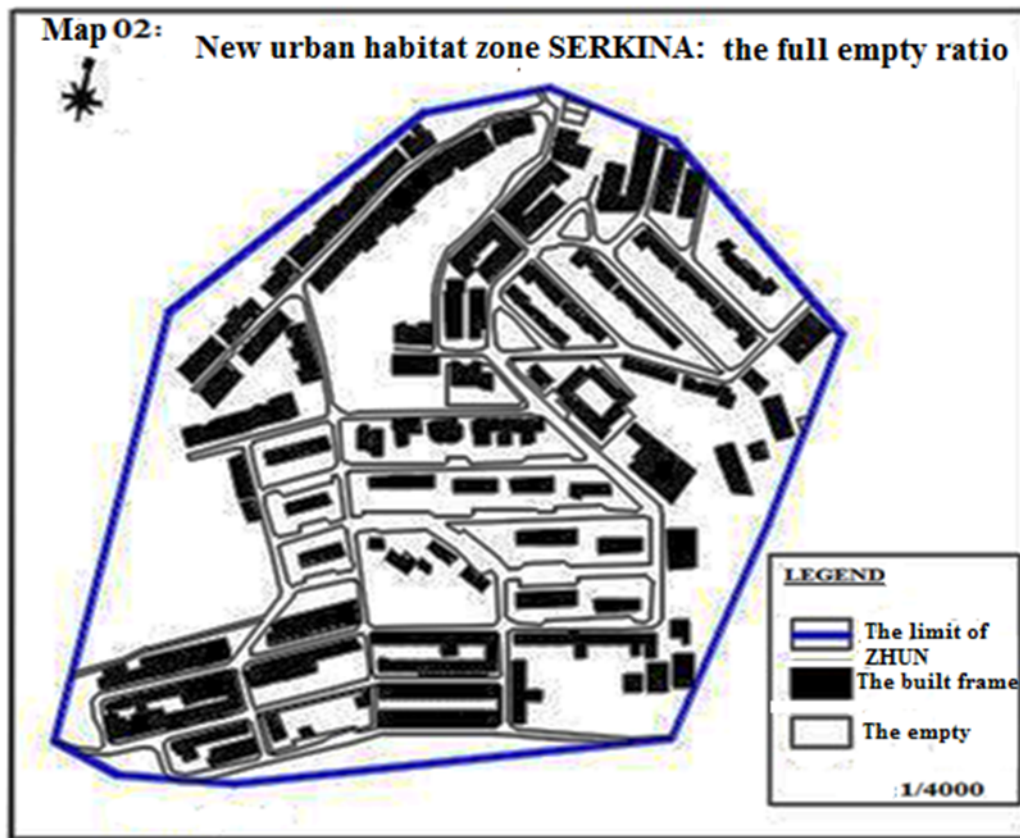
Between collective and semi-collective housing, we have 711 OPGI homes (so-called social housing), and the rest is individual housing.

In terms of floor space, the housing estates making up the Z.H.U.N offered 'F3 dwellings of 60 to 70 m<sup>2</sup>, designed for families averaging six or seven persons'.

The lack of landmarks and the endless layout of identical blocks make it very difficult to find your way around the estate. Because all the buildings look the same to visitors. Collective housing therefore varies between six and five levels, depending on the model adopted, with different percentages.



*Photo 1. The stereo-typical, repeated or standard model*



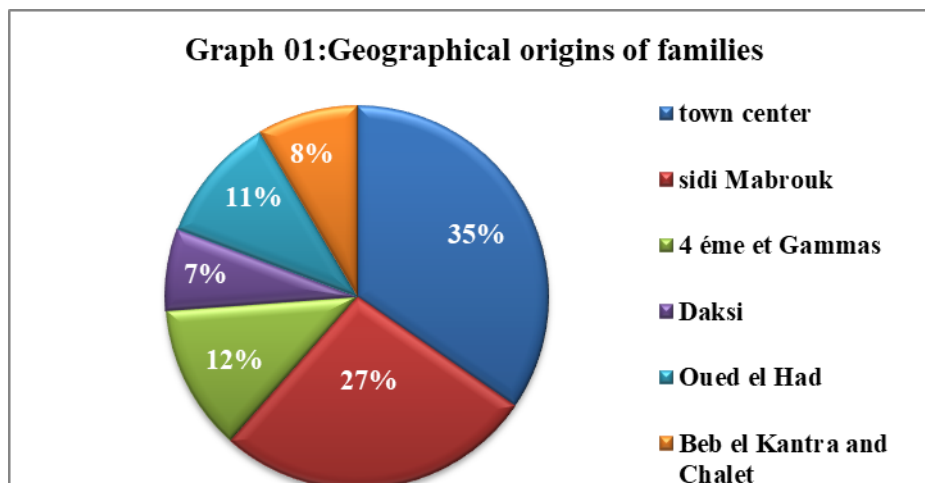
*Map 2. New urban habitat zone SERKINA : the full empty ratio(Master Urban Planning Plan (PUD) of Constantine, 1982)*

#### **4. THE SERKINA ZHUN: MASSIVE OCCUPATION, HETEROGENEITY AND SOCIAL DISTORTION: geographical origins as a source of conflict.**

The mode of occupation in the Z.H.U.N. was both massive and accelerated. Overnight, the occupier of the Z.H.U.N. finds himself in a city that he shares with a few hundred other habitants who are complete



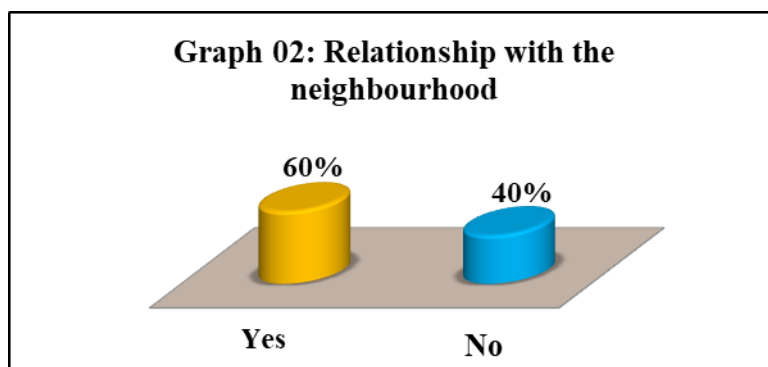
strangers to him. Even before the residents get to know each other, the first signs of deterioration are already appearing in the communal areas. What's more, the high concentration of residents makes it difficult to get to know each other (Naceur and Farhi, 2003)



*Graph 1. Geographical origins of families*

According to graph 01, households from the town center and Sidi Mabrouk are in the majority, accounting for 62% of families surveyed (35% and 27% respectively), after the 4th and Gammas with 12% and 11% and 8% and 7% respectively for Oued El Had, Bab el Kantra and Daksi.

This explains the many discomforts generated by the anonymity and lack of contact. In this city, contact is limited to the block's neighbours, and relations are superficial. (See graph 02). Moreover, neighbourhood relations are superficial, as shown by the 60% of residents who said that they have good neighbourly relations, but which are occasional and 40% of respondents who have.

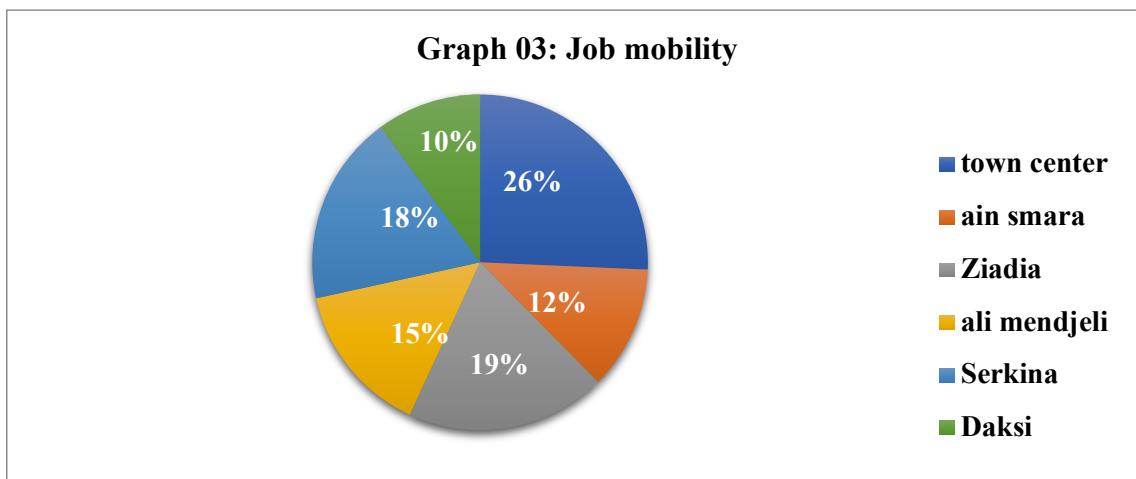


*Graph 2. Relationship with the neighbourhood*

### 5. THE ZHUN SERKINA: A VERITABLE DORMITORY TOWN.

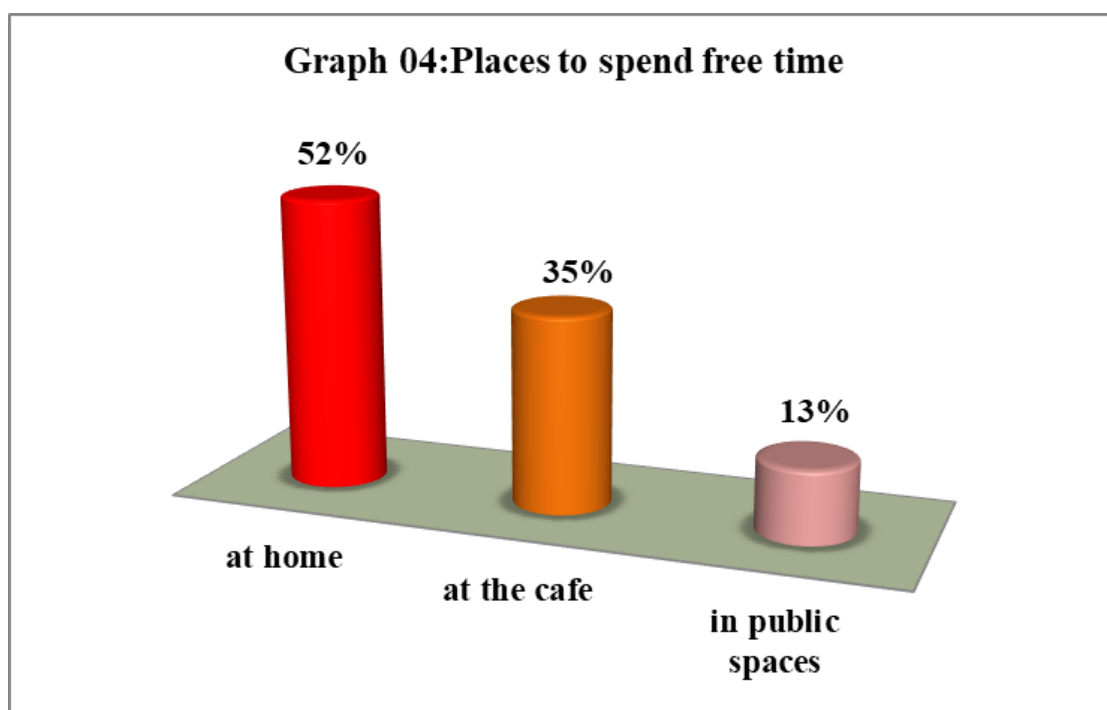
The absence of commercial or other meeting places further accentuates the anonymity of the ZHUNs. An analysis of the facilities at Z.H.U.N Serkina shows it designed solely as a residential area, with a clear separation from the amenities and work areas, and devoid of any entertainment or atmosphere.

Data from the field showed us that 63% of employees work outside the Serkina ZHUN (Constantine city center, the town of Aïn Smara, the new Ali Mendjeli town, Cité Daksi) and the remaining 37% in the ZHUN and Cité Ziadia.

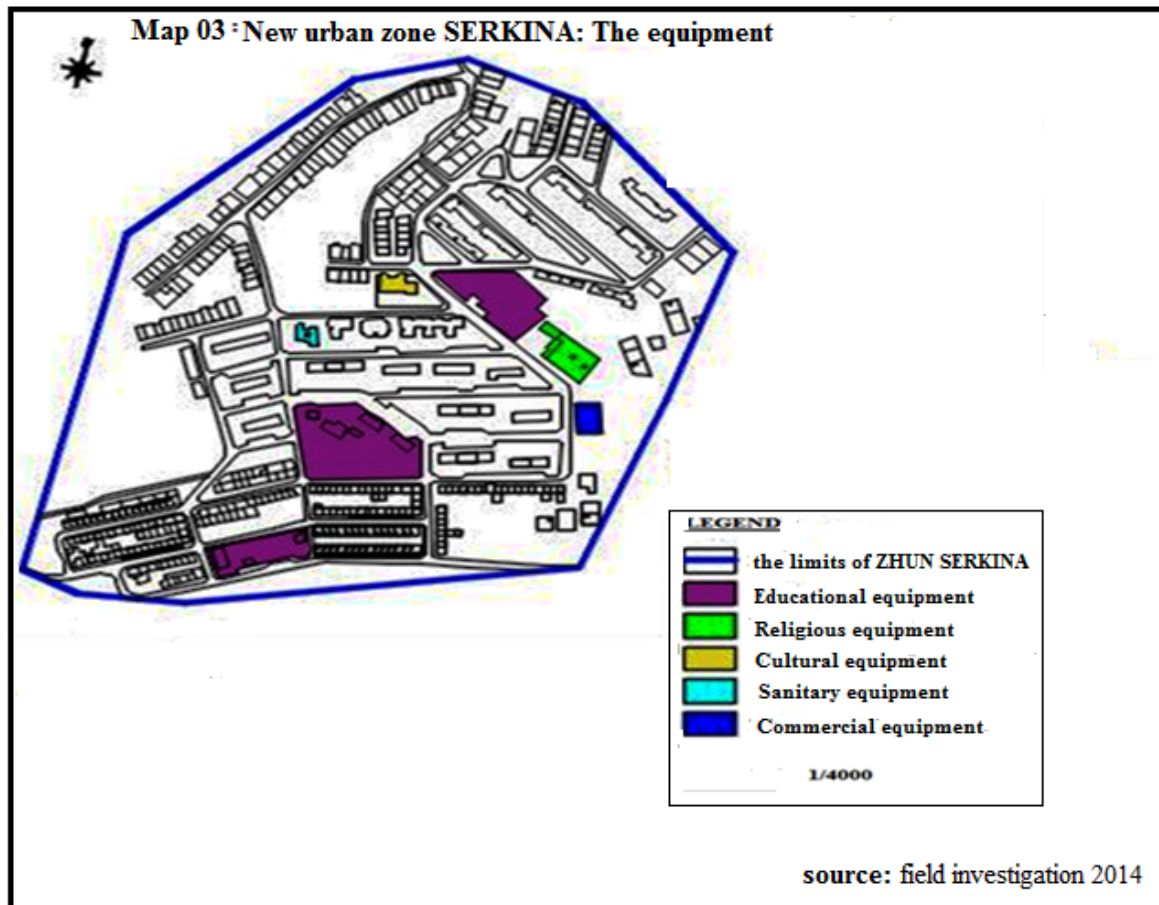


*Graph 3. Job mobility*

It should also be noted that 52% of heads of household said they would rather spend their free time at home than in the undeveloped public spaces of the ZHUN. As a result, residents are more likely to withdraw into their own homes. (See graph 04).

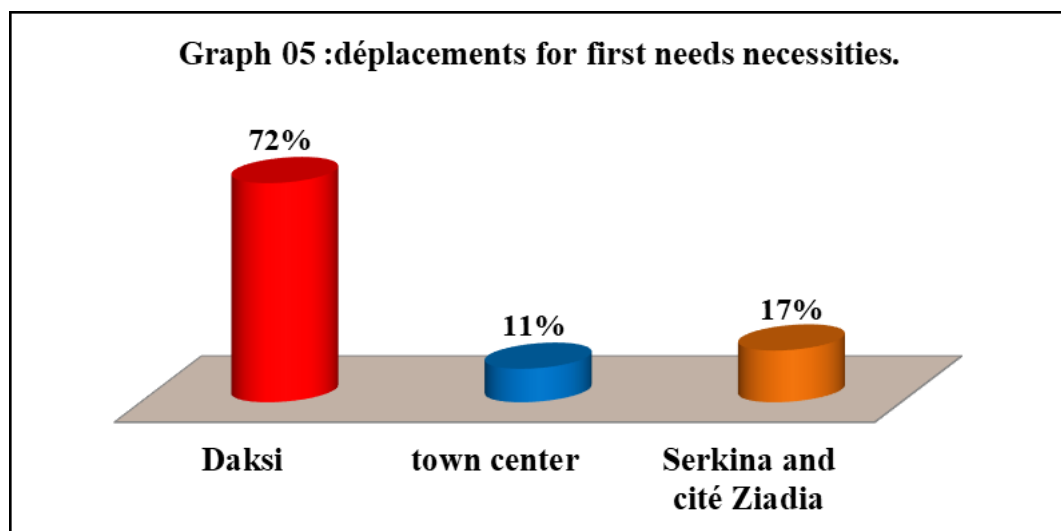


Apart from 1st and 2nd cycle school facilities, all other daily or weekly needs relating to food, clothing, healthcare and services are not satisfied. As for existing facilities, some of them are incompatible with residents' needs. (See Map 03)



*Map 3. New urban zone SERKINA; the equipment*

This lack of services in the Z.H.U.N. Is forcing occupants to move around, even for first necessities. There are frequent trips to the DAKSI estate, which reduces to a reduction in residence times within the cities and hinders the consolidation of neighbourhood ties. (See graph 05).



*Photo 2. Covered market not functional*



## 6. INADEQUACY OF SPACES OUTSIDE THE GROUPING: IN SHORT, A POOR QUALITY OF LIFE.

In Algeria, the amount of open space per habitant is a regulatory constraint imposed on developers. For the correct layout of a residential space, it is valued at 75m<sup>2</sup> per dwelling, or 12m<sup>2</sup> per inhabitant (Zucchelli, 1983). In addition to the lack of facilities, the spatial configuration of the outdoor spaces makes it difficult to appropriate and use them in any way.

The housing estates making up the Z.H.U.N, formed by a set of blocks designed as simple repetitive elements, separated from each other and spread over vast areas that are difficult to identify from a statutory point of view. The lack of distinction between private and public domains creates confusion in usage (Newman, 1997) and confuses controls. The same goes for the sheer size of the area, 89 hectares in the Serkina city area, reinforcing the loss of their quality and identity as urban spaces (Norberg-Schulz, 1985).

«This confusion of use of outdoor spaces has meant that they are very limited in terms of ownership, apart from a few spaces adjacent to the blocks, gardened by some of the occupants of the first levels. Neglected, they have ended up being spaces whose degradation we accept by depositing rubbish or rubbish» (Naceur and Farhi, 2003)

Despite its structural importance, landscape, social and urban, public urban space in the Serkina ZHUN, is poorly defined, without appropriate allocations and destinations, in addition, they are residual spaces or urban wastelands with no means of selecting and controlling accessibility. As a result, they are transit points for a wide range of people from outside the housing estates, increasing the risk of intrusion and theft. This makes outdoor spaces a source of anxiety for residents. Easily accessible, they become gathering places for the marginalized. They are used by teenagers from the city or even strangers with dubious practices such as alcohol and drug abuse, card games, etc.

Other open spaces in the ZHUN are also considered unsuitable for development, due to the natural constitution of their soil or their steep slopes.

The concepts of streets, squares and plazas have been abolished. In fact, it is difficult to tell them apart in the ZHUN, even if they exist in a haphazard manner, in the absence of a search for an overall composition, or urban coherence, in traditional towns, for example. (See photos 3, 4, 5, 6).

Photo n° 03



Photo n° 04



Photo n° 05



Photo n° 06



*Photos 3, 4, 5, 6: Undeveloped open spaces for green areas, car parks or Children's play areas.*

## 7. CONCLUSIONS.

The deterioration observed in the Serkina new urban housing zone reflects the unsuitability of the residents for this urban form, which are reflect in the discomfort experienced, the rejection of outdoor spaces and the withdrawal of residents into their homes. Massive occupancy in the Z.H.U.N, and without regard to the socio-cultural levels of the occupants, has distorted social relations. Spatially, this has not led to any real territorial integration of the residents.

The social mix in this ZHUN has encouraged the emergence of a climate of mistrust towards others (a feeling of insecurity). Poor accessibility has meant that Serkina becomes an urban enclave. The lack of equipment, with the exception of 1st and 2nd cycle for schools equipment, has meant that the daily and weekly needs of habitants have not found, particularly in terms of food, clothing, healthcare and services. As for existing equipment, some of it is incompatible with the needs of inhabitants.

The equipment and exterior spaces in Z.H.U.N. must designed to encourage contact and the meeting of occupants and strengthen social links, to ensure a better quality of life and encourage people to integrate more easily.

Redevelopment operations existing of outdoor spaces in the Z.H.U.N. would be preferable to make it easier for residents to take ownership of them. These would be operations inexpensive and easy to apply by integrating appropriate street furniture elements in terms of open spaces.

This would create smooth transitions between the public and private domain, and, at the same time, contribute to accessibility selection mechanisms.



«As well as, places for leisure and contact in the form of concerted actions (playgrounds, sports fields) can be inserted into open spaces through simple improvements»(Zouari, 1996).

This is likely to encourage young people to rally around the issues of their estates and defend them against aggression from external negative agents. These operations would also prevent these young people from engaging in acts of violence or delinquency by keeping them busy with useful work (Khaled, 1991).

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