

## Morphological Problems of the Urban Space and Their Impact on the Quality of Daily Social Life of Urban Actors in the City Zaatcha Street in Biskra as a Case Study

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### Abstract

This study aims to identify the morphological problems of the urban space and their impact on the daily social life of individuals in the city. This is due to the nature of the urban space and some indicators that reflect the type of morphological form, which may have either a negative or positive effect on individuals' ability to use and benefit from it. We have taken Zaatcha Street in the city of Biskra as a case study. In this research, we relied on the descriptive method and used the participant observation tool to collect the required information. We also selected a convenience sample of residents and users of Zaatcha Street. After collecting and analyzing the data, we reached results that answer the main research question, indicating that the nature of the urban space significantly affects the quality of daily life for city residents.

Keywords: Urban morphology, urban space, urban actors.

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1. Introduction:

The urban space has always been and will continue to be subject to social morphology. The space is the result of changes and mutual solutions, i.e., the interactions between humans and the environment in which they live. It no longer represents just the natural and physical framework but has also become the place subject to human intervention and needs. Therefore, every society must produce its own space. Nevertheless, the urban space may, in turn, impose a certain type of daily social life lived by each actor within it in all its details, through the morphological features that characterize it. For this reason, we aim through this research paper to address the problems of the morphology of space, its formation, and its impact on the quality of daily social life of urban actors in the city, taking Zaatcha Street in the city of Biskra as a case study. We presented the study by addressing the following elements:

1. The Problematic
  2. Research Questions
  3. Reasons for Choosing the Topic
  4. Importance of the Topic
  5. Study Objectives
  6. Key Concepts
  7. Previous Studies
  8. Study Results
2. The Problematic:

Social life within the urban space is composed of ways of living, lifestyles, behavior patterns, and social relationships that form individuals within society. This gives the space distinctive characteristics that differentiate it from other spaces. Thus, the morphology of this space—with its components, elements, and social and economic conditions—may impose on urban actors certain types of spatial construction and patterns of social interactions and behaviors that enable them to adapt to it and benefit from it in the right way that provides them with comfort in utilizing the features of this space.

Any use or misuse of the urban space may positively or negatively affect their quality of life, as they encounter on a daily basis many conditions within this space that reflect on the shaping of their daily lives. Therefore, through this study, we aim to answer the following question:

How can the problems of spatial morphology affect the quality of individuals' daily social life in the city, specifically on Zaatcha Street in Biskra?

Sub-questions:

1. What are the morphological characteristics of Zaatcha Street?
2. What are the morphological indicators of Zaatcha Street that affect the quality of individuals' daily social life in the city?
3. What are the physical forms of Zaatcha Street that affect the quality of individuals' daily social life in the city?

3. Reasons for Choosing the Topic:

- The novelty of the topic
- The topic's relation to the field of sociology
- Addressing a type of urban problem that affects daily social life in the city

4. Importance of the study:

The importance of the topic, which is the impact of spatial morphology on the quality of daily social life in the city, lies in its ability to shed light on the consequences produced by the shapes of neighborhoods and streets in the city on the quality of daily life. It also shows how these forms may cause many positive or negative factors that may enhance or hinder the daily activities of city residents, which in turn may reflect on society as a whole.

5. Objectives of the Study:

- To identify the morphological characteristics of Zaatcha Street
- To identify the morphological indicators of Zaatcha Street's location that affect the quality of individuals' daily social life in the city
- To identify the physical forms of Zaatcha Street that affect the quality of individuals' daily social life in the city

6. Previous Studies:

First Study: The Role of the Urban Dimension in Evaluating Quality of Life from the Perspective of Urban Sustainability in the New City of Ali Mendjeli – Constantine, authored by Fouad Ben Ghadban and others. It is a scientific article published in the Algerian Journal of Anthropology and Social Sciences, Issue No. 93, in the year 2021.

This article aims to explore the role of the urban dimension in evaluating the quality of life within the framework of urban sustainability in the new city of Ali Mendjeli in Constantine, by tracking the imbalances and deficiencies that affect the living environment of residents despite its recent development.

The study is based on the development of an analytical model that enabled the identification of indicators that measure the urban dimension through a questionnaire conducted on a sample of 500 families distributed across various residential units in the Ali Mendjeli neighborhood in Constantine.

The results showed the effectiveness of the indicators used, as they allow for the evaluation of the quality of life experienced by residents. The study also revealed that the level of satisfaction remains a problematic issue due to differing perspectives on living conditions and the residential environment, as a result of an urban layout that was planned without considering the principles of a sustainable city that ensures quality of life for the elements of the urban dimension.

This study is related to the current study in that it examines the quality of life in the city and focuses on the urban dimension in terms of impact. We have benefited from this study in building the problematic, formulating the questions, and adopting the methodological procedures necessary to obtain accurate information.

## 7. Key Concepts:

### 7.1 -The Concept of Urban Morphology:

The first to use the term "morphology" was Émile Durkheim in the sociological field, stating: "Life as a whole is based on the initial form taken by the human community on Earth." Social morphology, therefore, is considered the science concerned with studying population formations, the forms and material structures of societies, their components, geographic distribution, internal and external migration, housing patterns, and residences. According to Marcel Mauss, social morphology is the study of the structure of society in terms of its external physical appearance, including population, its composition, distribution, culture, and movement through internal and external migration from rural to urban areas (Benchouia, 2024)

According to Atef Ghaith's "Dictionary of Sociology," morphology is the study of form and structure. Morphology can include the study of physical, linguistic, or social structures. The term, according to Maurice Le Boiac, means "the science of form," which is a part of biology and studies the form and structure of living bodies and the formation of new shapes and structures.

As urban scholars and thinkers have engaged in city planning and urban geography, expressions like "the relationship between humans and their natural environment" emerged. New components such as "spatial variation of the earth's surface" were used. Urban areas, especially in the Western world, became highly significant. Urban morphology or the internal structure of the city became a fertile field for urban analysis. This study is related to three changes: the city's plan, land use or building function, and the architectural style of the buildings. Although each of these three variables seems independent, they are interlinked to produce a distinctive urban appearance (Gaith, 2008).

Urban morphology focuses on studying the patterns of housing and streets, the form of urban construction, and the overall shape of the city. Therefore, morphology can be defined as the study of the form and components of a city from an urban perspective, such as buildings, roads, and

architectural styles, along with urban aspects like population changes and technological development levels of housing.

It also refers to the general appearance of the city, which changes over time throughout its long history. Cities go through many morphological stages, each with characteristics, patterns, and architectural forms that distinguish one stage from another. These stages represent the cultural heritage that reflects the urban culture of the city's inhabitants during that time and manifests in the urban fabric of the city through the master plan, including the network of roads and transportation, land use distribution, and detailed plans that define plot shapes, building designs, and architectural art (Benchouia, 2024, pp. 108-125).

Operational Concept: By urban morphology, we mean the interaction between the external form and the urban function, which results in the external appearance or visual form of the city.

#### 7.2 -The Concept of Urban Space:

Space or place is a geographical term that falls within the scope of geographical studies in terms of identifying its topographical, physical, climatic, and other geographical characteristics. It is also of interest in economic studies, as space or place is a vital element for economic activities—whether agricultural or industrial—in terms of distances and natural barriers separating the locations of raw materials, production sites, labor availability, and marketing and consumption areas, in what is known as the economics of space.

Space has also gained the attention of sociologists, considering that the physical spatial elements have clear effects on the social structure, behaviors, attitudes, and even on cultural aspects and social systems. This is due to the interaction of humans with their environment, their adaptation to it, and even their struggle with it to shape it according to their needs in order to ensure the continuity of their lives.

Thus, we observe that each society has a set of social relations that distinguish it from others and create a kind of bond among people that enables them to transform the natural environment and give it function and meaning. Every utilized or inhabited space carries with it a set of human activities connected to it. This is evident in the city, which is a meticulously constructed space where a large number of people and interconnected activities are concentrated. Therefore, space clearly reflects the social structure that constitutes its foundation. The settlement of social groups and the establishment of decision-making institutions are not random. The spatial embodiment of the city provides the necessary elements for studying its social organization.

Space imposes certain types of relationships and contributes to changing them. In other words, spatial changes significantly contribute to bringing about social and cultural transformations, especially at the level of residential space concerning the family, and at the level of the street, neighborhood, city, and region.

On the other hand, we also notice that humans shape their space to suit their perceptions of social relationships, culture, and specific needs by adapting physical spatial elements to these needs. Simultaneously, they try to adapt to the space itself. Thus, the adaptation process occurs in both directions—modifying the space as much as possible within available means, and adapting to it as well. However, once this space is formed, it becomes an environment with specific characteristics and acquires new mechanisms that it imposes on humans. This leads them once again to develop new patterns of social and cultural relations suited to the new environment. In other words, the environment created by humans turns back on them. This applies precisely to urban space—or the city (Boumakhlouf, 2001, pp. 51-53).

### 7.3 -The Concept of Daily Social Life:

The sociology of daily life deals with the specific manifestations of human practices as they regularly appear, day after day, in the environment of different majority groups within a given society. Its unit of analysis is the activity of a rational type, which includes both explicit and implicit interactions. Durkheim presents a dual equation regarding daily life: “We will call things ordinary and self-evident if they generally appear that way, and we will label others as pathological or abnormal.” In this context, the sociology of daily life takes into account, as its subjects, activities that may belong to ordinary things.

The sociology of daily life is not just another branch of general sociology based on declared values; rather, it is a sociology that refrains from judging the different values within society. It allows for the clear description of everyday existence, such that general sociology and its various branches turn the ordinary, self-evident topics into the core of their subject matter. Therefore, we observe that in daily life—or the everyday—conflicts, tensions, ideological developments, changes, transformations, and crises occur. It is likely that in the framework of the sociology of daily life, the dramatic indicators of sociological research stages are most apparent, particularly when the daily life of a specific individual becomes the subject of social events. (Miloudi, 2023, pp. 141-180)

Thus, we conclude that daily life is a term used to refer to the way in which a person, individual, group, or society typically lives or behaves, how they think and feel on a daily basis. The idea involves self-definition and how people conceptualize their relationships with the world and others. The concept of natural daily life can encompass the social and psychological rules behind behavioral choices, thoughts, and beliefs.

Daily life can also be described as mundane life or the routine life that follows the succession of days in the year—or as life that is generally natural and habitual.

Moreover, the pattern of daily life is influenced by various factors and differs depending on the social, economic, political, cultural, and other influencing environments.

Operational Concept:

Quality of life is not merely about numerical and statistical data, but rather a reflection of a lived reality in which the needs of the population and individuals are the most important. The state of well-being and satisfaction is the relationship between the individual and well-being—a subjective rather than objective interpretation of the quality of intertwined relationships between individuals and their spatial social environment.

Operational Concept of Urban Actors:

They are all individuals who use urban space, regardless of the type of use.

8. Methodological Procedures:

8.1 -Fields of the Study:

**Spatial Field:** The spatial field is represented by Zaatcha Street in the city of Biskra, which has an estimated length of 1500 km<sup>2</sup> and a width of 25 meters. It is the main street located in the center of Biskra and is classified as part of National Road No. 03, which connects Batna and Biskra from the north, and Biskra and Ouargla from the south. It is also considered a passage area to the Ziban region. Traffic flows in both directions, completely separated by a central island. Pedestrian movement is ensured on both sides by wide sidewalks and covered walkways to protect pedestrians from the sun's rays, due to the hot climate that characterizes the area. The street passes through residential areas.

**Human Field:** The human field of the study includes the residents and passersby along Zaatcha Street, including local inhabitants, road users (pedestrians and vehicle drivers), and owners of commercial and administrative shops located on the street.

**Temporal Field:** This study was conducted during the time period from 08/09/2024 to 30/10/2024.

9. Study Method:

In this study, we relied on the descriptive method, through describing the morphology of the Zaatcha Street area and the social daily life within it.

10. Data Collection Tools:

In this study, we relied on participant observation to monitor the daily life on Zaatcha Street by following the lives of people and describing their relationship with the urban environment, their interaction with it, and their influence by it. We also relied on simple observation to describe the external appearance and building formation of Zaatcha Street.

11. Study Results:

11.1 -Answer to the First Question: The Morphological Characteristics of Zaatcha Street:

The building patterns on Zaatcha Street are somewhat similar in both their shapes and contents. In terms of shape, they are similar in their exterior appearance, as they are almost

homogeneous in architectural form and construction materials. The same applies to the roofs, with most buildings having two or more floors.

As for content, the houses differ in their internal layouts—some houses consist of a single room, while others have multiple rooms. Additionally, the rooms themselves vary in size from one house to another.

The urban, social, and spatial composition of Zaatcha Street is one of the key factors that provide the most suitable identity to its urban character. The diversity in basic economic and social activities has led to different uses and exploitations of the area, giving it a distinctive morphology.

Its features appear more clearly on the map than on the physical ground. On the map, Zaatcha Street appears straight and takes on a uniform and regular shape, reflecting the combined influence of factors such as location, transportation, and the history of the area. The urban cluster appears through its composition as an integrated urban form. Its buildings are similar in size, shape, height, organization, age, and function. The variation in its functions or functional specialization depends on its strategic location as a main street in the city and the center of its internal activity. It is characterized by building density and traffic density, which give it movement and liveliness, making it the commercial center or heart of Biskra.

Among its most prominent features is the ease of access from all directions, supported by various means of transport. The street is also connected to the ends of major roads and largely determines the types of economic activities within it. Major commercial stores are established there, which in turn encourages the presence of other services beyond commercial ones, such as companies, accountants, lawyers, doctors, and others who benefit from the location and ease of access.

This usually leads to an increasing demand for various commercial activities on this street and intense competition to obtain properties for setting up shops or offices, which in turn leads to high property prices for houses and shops on this street.

#### 11.2 -The Impact of Zaatcha Street's Location on the Quality of Daily Social Life in the City

Answer to the Second Question: Morphological Indicators of Zaatcha Street that Affect the Quality of Daily Social Life for Individuals in the City:

These can be addressed through several indicators, the most important of which are:

– Traffic Flow Indicator within the City: Zaatcha Street is characterized by heavy traffic due to its strategic location and the presence of numerous shops, small institutions, lawyers' offices, notaries, etc., leading to significant traffic congestion, especially during peak hours. It becomes difficult for any individual, whether a resident or passerby, to find parking to make a purchase. Constant traffic also causes noise disturbances for local residents, especially during sleeping hours.

- Urban Appearance Indicator: The architectural style of this street is marked by individual buildings, mostly made of cement. They almost all have the same classical facade and are typically two stories high. The ground floor is often rented or used for shops and commerce, while the first floor is used by lawyers, doctors, and various offices.
- Public Facilities Area and Capacity Indicator: The street has various public facilities that are sufficient for the local residents of the area.
- External Planning Indicator of the Residential Street: As for external planning, it can be considered average. Although the street is considered one of the best areas in the city, it lacks several external improvements such as proper sidewalks, lighting, building facades, and the presence of some old buildings that require renovation, etc.
- Facilities Provision Indicator on Zaatcha Street: Zaatcha Street contains various essential facilities needed by users of the area.

### 11.3 Reflections of the Physiological Character of Zaatcha Street on the Quality of Daily Social Life of Individuals in the City

The study of the relationship between social structure and the physical environment—especially the material image that characterizes the social structure of a particular society within a defined physical environment—in light of population patterns, services, population density, and more, allows us to observe the interaction between the actors in this area and their surrounding physical environment. These actors include both the local residents of the street and the passersby, road users, and beneficiaries.

For this reason, we will provide an overview of the daily life events experienced by these actors in this urban space as follows:

First: Population density and congestion due to its distinguished location, as well as the presence of various commercial shops, in addition to offices of lawyers, doctors, and pharmacies.

Second: Traffic congestion as it is a major crossing area, a main road connecting the Ziban area with the city, and it also has several intersections and passages to secondary roads leading to many neighborhoods and other streets in the city.

Third: The noise resulting from car sounds and the hustle and bustle of pedestrians and shoppers causes disturbance to the local residents and disrupts their comfort.

Fourth: The pedestrian sidewalks, which are considered a complementary part of the road designated for pedestrian traffic, aim to separate pedestrian movement from vehicle movement, thus providing a safe refuge for pedestrians. Although the main purpose of sidewalks is to provide a safe environment to protect pedestrians from traffic hazards, they may be used for other purposes, such as displaying goods from commercial stores, being reserved by cafes and restaurants, and other activities that obstruct pedestrians, forcing them to walk on the vehicle lanes.

In addition, the passages on Zaatcha Street are irregular and uneven, making it unsafe for people with special needs to cross.

Fifth: Pedestrian crossing signs are ground markers that provide guidance to pedestrians crossing the road, by designating pedestrian lanes and marking them on roads leading to and within intersections. In areas where there are no intersections, these signs, which are supposed to legally designate pedestrian crossings, are unclear and invisible to passersby, posing a danger to both pedestrians and drivers.

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