

The Role of Urban Planning Tools: The National Spatial Planning Scheme and the Planning and Development Scheme in Achieving Sustainable Development

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Abstract

Urban planning tools (SNAT) and (PDAU) are essential instruments for regulating urban space and achieving sustainable development. The SNAT aims to guide national development through the fair distribution of resources and populations, and environmental protection, while the PDAU focuses on local land use organization, regulated urban expansion, and the protection of agricultural land. These tools contribute to achieving sustainable development through environmental (protection of natural

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resources), social (improving quality of life), and economic (optimal use of resources) dimensions. Thus, SNAT and PDAU form an integrated system for achieving balanced and sustainable urban development.

Introduction

The growing difficulties cities and urban areas in Algeria face, including fast urban growth, environmental deterioration, and greater need for resources and services, have underlined the need of efficient instruments to control and steer urban development. Aiming to strike economic, social, and environmental aspects, urban planning tools like the National Spatial Planning Scheme (SNAT) and the Urban Planning and Development Scheme (PDAU) are basic cornerstones in reaching sustainable development.

Focusing on the equitable distribution of resources and activities to guarantee balanced development across different areas, the SNAT is a thorough strategic framework for steering national policies connected to spatial planning. On the other hand, the PDAU is a local planning tool meant to control land use inside cities and metropolitan areas, therefore guaranteeing the availability of vital services and infrastructure required to improve the quality of life.

These tools seek to solve urban issues like fast population growth and environmental pollution by means of careful planning that combines present and future needs, therefore addressing the community and environmental needs. Thus, the SNAT and PDAU link national strategies to local implementation, therefore enabling cities to meet sustainable development objectives.

Given the growing difficulties cities and urban areas in Algeria face—such as fast urban expansion, environmental deterioration, and growing resource and service demand—it is crucial to create efficient instruments to control and direct urban development. Urban planning tools like the SNAT and the PDAU are seen as basic pillars in this regard for attaining sustainable development. But a key issue comes up:

To what extent can urban planning tools such as SNAT and PDAU address the growing urban challenges in Algeria and achieve sustainable development by balancing economic, social, and environmental dimensions, while ensuring effective coordination between national policies and local implementation?

1. Urban Planning Tools - SNAT and BDAU

1.1 National Territorial Development Plan (SNAT)

1.1.1 Definition of the National Territorial Development Plan (SNAT)

The paper for the SNAT offers various definitions, which we summarize as follows: It is the process by which the government declares its territorial planning policy to be followed over the next twenty years (Government of Algeria, 2010).

Beginning at the turn of the century and continuing until 2010, the SNAT was prepared under Law 02/10 dated June 29, 2001, which formalized its approval (Law No. 02/10, 2010). The paper has offered several definitions of the scheme in different plans, the most notable of which are:

This strategy clearly shows that we will not ever accept leaving our areas to chance or ignoring them. Every part of the national territory is a piece of national wealth; we must recognize the right of each of them to grow and flourish, but under the auspices of a thorough and regulated approach. The National Territorial Development Plan (SNAT) thus reflects a desire for our nation consistent with the great difficulties lying ahead. It differs from the antiquated methods of central planning, bureaucracy, and systems usually opposed to progress. By contrast, the strategy is founded on a consensus evaluation of the present state of our land as well as thorough consultations all around (Law No. 02/10, 2010, p. 06).

1.2 The Foundations of the National Territorial Development Plan (SNAT)

The plan is based on three foundations and three major challenges that Algeria must face:

- Demographic Challenge: This is a challenge deliberately planned for with the arrival of a large wave of job seekers (Chenikher, 2020, p. 203).
- Economic Challenge: This challenge has to do with competitiveness and regional qualification and runs parallel to the creation of a free trade zone and entry into the World Trade Organization.
- Ecological Challenge: This calls for the preservation of natural and cultural capital under circumstances of water and soil scarcity and instability, where competition is growing between resource use and sustainability.

The approach of the national development plan lets sustainable development be achieved across its three dimensions, therefore addressing the future challenges—demographic, social, and environmental concerns—which call for adaptation. This adjustment has to consider the following needs:

- Imbalances in the distribution of population and activities across the region and the activation of regional attractiveness, which can be accomplished by the development of infrastructure, the provision of services, and the preservation and enhancement of natural and cultural capital (Chenikher, 2020, p. 203).

1.3 Characteristics of the National Regional Development Plan

1.3.1 Central and Funding Character

The Algerian legislator has chosen central planning since it is required to carry out the basic principles of the national regional development policy and its sustainable growth. The state, being the main authority in starting and overseeing the national policy in the area of regional planning and its

management, is responsible for drafting the national regional development plan (Article 20 of Law No. 20/01, 2010, p. 10).

1.3.2 Obligatory Nature of the National Regional Development Plan

Unlike several central plans set by the Algerian legislator, which lacked a mandatory character and therefore made public administrations' dedication to them only a moral duty, the legislator also ignored this element in the law governing regional development and its sustainable growth. The Algerian legislator, though, fixed this problem by declaring the national regional development plan mandatory since its significance and to guarantee its efficacy in reaching its objectives. Article 2 of the law ratifying the national regional development plan specifies this: "All ministerial sectors, as well as regional communities, and national and local institutions, must respect the guidelines and principles of the national regional development plan and apply them when preparing their projects and plans." This indicates that the legislator has required all entities and institutions to carry out the national regional development plan (Article 20 of Law No. 20/01, 2010, p. 11).

1.3.3 The Preventive Nature of the National Spatial Planning Scheme (SNAT)

Among its goals, the national spatial planning policy seeks to protect ecologically and economically sensitive areas, shield populations and areas from the hazards connected with natural variations, the logical use and improvement of natural, historical, and cultural resources, and preservation for future generations. From this angle, it is obvious that a preventive strategy is more suitable than a remedial one for reaching these objectives. Among the ways to carry out the preventive part of this policy are spatial planning tools, especially the National Spatial Planning Scheme (SNAT). Furthermore, the planning system is usually a preventive strategy since it is rather important, especially in reaching environmental protection objectives, given the difficulty of restoring conditions to their natural state after environmental damage has occurred, if not impossible in certain situations (Dammouche, 2010, p. 11).

1.3.4 The Remedial Nature of the National Spatial Planning Scheme (SNAT)

The remedial character of the National Spatial Planning Scheme (SNAT) lies in its response to the difficulty of restoring balance between regions and different areas by means of rational exploitation of national resources, especially in the distribution of population and economic activities across all regions, as well as the appropriate judicial distribution of cities and human settlements. With 63% of the population living in the northern part, covering 28% of the land, Algeria is a very concentrated area, according to the 2008 General Census of Population and Housing. The High Plateaus, which make up 9% of the total area, hold 9% of the population. Conversely, the southern areas, which account for 87% of the land, draw just 9% of the people. With cities now home to 70% of the population, cities are seeing remarkable demographic growth defined by an increase in natural population growth and rural-urban migration (Law No. 20/01, 2010, pp. 05-22).

1.4 Objectives of the National Territorial Planning Scheme (SNAT)

The SNAT seeks to guarantee a coordinated organization of the national space inside a sustainable and competitive framework. It reflects and evolves the fundamental strategic directions for territorial planning and sustainable development; as stated in Article 8 of Law 20/01, it also acts as the reference framework for public authorities' activities. The SNAT, as per Articles 4 and 9 of Law 20/01, seeks to accomplish the following objectives:

- Creating favorable conditions for the development of national wealth and employment.
- Supporting and revitalizing rural areas, regions, and territories facing difficulties, with the aim of stabilizing their populations (Ferdi, 2021, p. 196).
- Promoting suitable distribution across regions and territories to support development pillars and means, especially aiming the reduction of pressure on coastal areas and major cities, while improving mountainous areas, high plateaus, and southern Algeria.
- Protection of ecologically and economically vulnerable areas and groups, and their enhancement.
- Protection of regions and populations from risks associated with natural fluctuations.
- Protection, enhancement, and rational use of heritage, natural, and cultural resources, and their preservation for future generations.
- Protection, restoration, and enhancement of national ecological heritage.
- Controlling the expansion of housing clusters and building a balanced urban structure helps to ensure suitable spatial distribution of cities and human settlements.
- Cohesion of national choices with regional integration projects.

Institutional support has come from the establishment of the National Council for Territorial Development and Sustainable Development to guarantee the accomplishment of the goals specified in the National Territorial Development Plan. Organizationally, it requires that the effects of different investments, facilities, and infrastructure on territorial development be taken into account, while setting all required policies and measures to guarantee its execution. It includes provisions for tools to examine how different investments, facilities, and infrastructure affect territorial development procedurally (Ferdi, 2021, p. 196).

1.5 Phases of Implementation of the National Territorial Development Plan

The implementation of the National Territorial Development Plan proceeds in two main phases

- First Phase: The state assumes responsibility for carrying out the "National Regional Development Plan" (M.W.T.) during this phase. The comprehensive character of the plan, covering the whole national territory, has assigned the state primary and direct responsibility for its execu-

tion until 2015, as it retains the original competence in this domain. The program of the Algerian government suggests that the national regional development plan is carried out in two phases. Particularly with regard to the state's administrative function during this period, the first phase, from 2007 to 2015, will see the ongoing regional development policy (Government of Algeria, 2008, p. 80).

- Second Phase: After having made the necessary investments for its regional development policies, the state takes on the role of evaluator and arbiter during this partnership phase. A wider spectrum of stakeholders will find more work possibilities during this phase as well. With a vision set for 2030, it runs from 2015 until the execution of the National Regional Development Plan. Apart from the official state machinery, this stage calls for the participation of other people including the private sector, civil society groups, and individuals. The national regional development plan offers a notable chance to define the participatory role of national and local stakeholders, both public and private, in renewing governance patterns and imagining new degrees of planning. This stage considers the need of training specialized human resources in regional planning, revitalizing regional consultation bodies, and guaranteeing adequate financial coverage to support these efforts (Government of Algeria, 2008, p. 81).

2. The Urban Planning and Development Scheme (PDAU)

2.1 Definition of the Urban Planning and Development Scheme (PDAU)

Under Law 29/90, dated December 1, 1990, as amended and supplemented by Law 05/04, dated August 14, 2004, the Algerian legislator created the PDAU, which encompasses the law on urban planning and development as well as its implementing regulations. Executive Decree No. 177-91, dated May 28, 1990, especially describes the processes for drafting, approving, and specifying the material of the papers pertaining to the PDAU, as modified by Executive Decree No. 317-05, dated September 10, 2005 (Law No. 90-29, 1990).

2.2. Objectives of the Urban Planning and Development Scheme (PDAU)

Preparing the PDAU aims not only to identify areas appropriate for urbanization depending on the urban fabric but also to designate areas needing protection. Among these sites are (Digiurbs Blog, 2012):

- Protection of Agricultural Land: The Algerian legislator has given agricultural land great importance in light of the ongoing population growth and the widespread encroachment on these lands without following the prescribed legal criteria and conditions in this respect.
- The Algerian legislator has underlined in several laws, including the Urban Planning and Development Law, the need to safeguard the environment and its natural resources. National development calls for a balance between the demands for economic growth on one hand and the

need to protect the environment and preserve the living conditions of the people on the other. The rigorous use of the "prior authorization principle" or the "environmental impact assessment principle" for every project connected to urban planning and development will help to achieve this.

- The Urban Planning and Development Law itself, together with its implementing rules or other legal documents governing this field, has underlined the need of safeguarding areas with cultural and historical legacy. Any building activity in areas with cultural and historical legacy, such as archaeological sites and historical monuments, is absolutely forbidden as they are deemed a vital component of the national heritage (Iqlouli & Rabah, p. 240).

2.3 Procedures for Preparing the Master Plan for Urban Planning and Development (PDAU)

When preparing the PDAU, a series of procedures must be followed, as outlined below:

According to Article 24 of Executive Decree No. 91-177, which outlines the procedures for preparing and approving the PDAU, and according to Article 24 of Law No. 29-90, every municipality in the national territory is required to cover its area with a development and urban planning plan. (Government of Algeria, 2010)

Conducting a deliberation by the municipal council or the relevant municipal councils.

Each municipality must be covered by a guiding development and urban planning plan, the draft of which is prepared at the initiative of the mayor of the municipal council and under their responsibility, in accordance with Article 24 of Law No. 29-90, amended and supplemented by Executive Decree No. 317-05 dated September 10, 2005.

In order to implement the initiative of preparing this plan, the municipality undertakes the initial procedures or the preparatory phase for its preparation, which includes announcing the project in accordance with the provisions outlined in the presidential decree (Decree No. 236-10, 2010) concerning the organization of public procurement. This is followed by the preparation of the terms of reference for conducting the study, after which the contract is awarded to a qualified consulting firm.

Notification of the Deliberation.

The relevant regional governor (Wali) is informed of the deliberation under Article 03 of the same Executive Decree No. 91-177, which outlines the procedures for preparing the PDAU, its approval, and the content of related documents. The deliberation is then published for one month at the headquarters of the relevant municipal council or the concerned municipal councils.

Article 05 of the same decree states that if the PDAU spans the territory of two or more municipalities, the heads of the municipal councils may delegate the responsibility of drafting the plan to a public institution shared among the municipalities (Government of Algeria, 2010).

All public administrations and state services operating at the regional level must be consulted in line with Article 08 of the same Executive Decree No. 91-177, which sets the procedures for preparing the PDAU. These cover the ministries of urban planning, agriculture, economic organization, irrigation, transportation, public works, buildings and heritage sites, postal and telecommunications services, the environment, urban development, and tourism. Executive Decree No. 05-317, 2012. Moreover, Executive Decree No. 12-148, Article 02, dated 28/03/2012, which amends and supplements Executive Decree No. 91-177, included the ministries of industry and investment promotion.

From the date the approved project plan is communicated via the deliberation of the municipal council or relevant municipalities, these bodies have 60 days to give their opinion. Article 09 of Executive Decree No. 91-177 states that if no response is given during this time, their opinion is deemed favorable.

The president of the municipal council may optionally consult other organizations should it help the study's advantage. The law has designated these entities as the leaders of local associations, professional organizations, Chamber of Agriculture, and Chamber of Commerce. Within 15 days of receiving the communication, these recipients must indicate their readiness to help in the drafting of the PDAU and to name their representatives should they verify such readiness.

Conducting the Public Inquiry.

The draft plan is open to a public inquiry under Article 10 of Executive Decree 91/177 following the 60-day period. The president of the appropriate municipal council or the presidents of the pertinent municipal councils will decide on this for 45 days of public availability, which includes:

- Identifying the location or locations where the public can consult the draft plan.
- Appointing the investigating commissioner(s).
- Setting the start and end dates for the inquiry period.
- Defining the procedure for conducting the public inquiry.

Article 11 of Executive Decree 91/177 states that the decision submitting the P.D.A.U to the public inquiry has to be published at the offices of the relevant municipal council or the affected municipal councils for the whole inquiry period. The competent governor must also get a copy of the decision.

The inquiry register is closed under Article 13 of Executive Decree 91/177 following the 45-day period. The investigating commissioner, who within the next 15 days gets ready a report on the inquiry's closure, must sign this register. The full inquiry file and its findings are then sent to the president of the relevant municipal council or the presidents of the affected municipal councils.

Article 14 of Executive Decree 91/177 states that the plan, the survey record, and the findings produced by the investigating commissioner are sent. It is sent to the pertinent governor after the

mayor of the relevant municipal council approves it by decision; the governor then gets the opinion of the relevant provincial council within 15 days (Droit Foncier Blog, 2015).

2.4 Final Approval of the Master Plan for Urban Planning and Development (PDAU)

The last approval stage comes after all the prior processes. Article 15 of Executive Decree 91/177 states the PDAU is approved together with the provincial council's opinion under Article 27 of Law 90/29 as follows:

- By decision of the governor for municipalities with a population of less than 200,000 residents.
- Jointly decided by the Minister of Urban Planning and the Minister of the Interior for municipalities with a population between 200,000 and 500,000.
- By executive decree for municipalities with a population of over 500,000 residents.

2.5 Content of the Master Plan for Urban Planning and Development (PDAU)

The PDAU is realized under a system accompanied by an orientation report and reference graphical documents as per Article 17 of Law 29/90. Executive Decree 177/91, Articles 1 and 17 bis, as amended and supplemented by Executive Decree 05/317 in 2005, offer more information on this orientation report and the graphical papers. Furthermore, Article 17 of Executive Decree 177/91 adds rules particular to every area since it is a regulatory framework. The material thus comprises:

2.5.1 Guiding Report

This indicates the overall path of urban policy and the possibilities for urban growth. It acts as the preparatory stage for the execution of this strategy.

2.5.2 Organization that Defines General Rules Applicable to Each Area According to the Divided Sectors

- Developed sectors
- Sectors suitable for development (medium and short-term)
- Sectors designated for future development (long-term)
- Sectors unsuitable for development

This company outlines the policies relevant to every occupied area inside the aforementioned sectors, including the greater land allocation and the general density produced by the land use plan. It also includes:

- Easements, areas included in the plans
- Intervention zones in urban fabrics
- Specific building conditions within certain parts of the national territory.

2.5.3 Graphical Documents

These include the following plans:

- Current constructed framework plan

- Developed, suitable for development, future development, and protected sectors
- Easement plan
- Equipment plan highlighting roadways, drinking water supply lines, and public area facilities (Yazid Arabi, 2015, p. 84).

A. Plan for Defining Areas and Lands Exposed to Natural and Technological Hazards, and Special Intervention Plans

Article 17 cited above makes it obvious that preparing the regional development and urban planning master plan calls for a thorough and exacting study respecting a set of laws to guarantee citizens' safety (Yazid Arabi, 2015, p. 84).

B. Review and Amendment of the Regional Development and Urban Planning Master Plan

The regional development and urban planning master plan review or amendment is conducted using the same approach and processes as the initial approval. This review or amendment can only take place for particular reasons, which are as follows:

- If the sectors intended for urban development are approaching saturation.
- Should the evolution of the circumstances or the surroundings conflict with the goals of urban planning initiatives or the urban infrastructure of the municipal area.

C. Areas Subject to Intervention

The plan divides the relevant region into specific sectors as follows:

- Developed sectors
- Sectors planned for development
- Future development sectors
- Sectors that are non-developable

This classification is based on Article 16 of Law 29/90, dated 01/12/1990.

D. Legislation

It offers the fundamental land use rules, including those for land occupation, protection of agricultural lands, and significant infrastructure sites (Digiurbs Blog, 2012).

3. Sustainable Development

The idea of sustainable development has developed to seek social and economic development by including three spheres: economy, society, and the environment. Many nations, including Algeria, have embraced this idea, working to enhance the social, economic, and environmental domains in order to reach what is called sustainable development.

3.1 Concept of Sustainable Development

The phrase "sustainable development" started to attract much notice after the World Commission on Environment and Development released the Brundtland Report in 1987. This paper defined sustainable development as: "Development that satisfies the present needs without compromising the capacity of future generations to satisfy their own needs." Many nations around the world, during the Earth Summit in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Gélinier, 2025, p. 22), agreed on the definition of sustainable development as: "Development that reconciles environmental, economic, and social development, creating a balanced and effective circle among these three pillars." It is environmentally feasible, economically efficient, and socially fair. It guarantees economic viability without compromising social objectives, which include fighting poverty, unemployment, inequality, and striving for justice, by means of natural resource and ecosystem respect and support of life on Earth (Deeb & Mehna, 2009, p. 489).

3.2 Sustainable Development in Algeria

Algeria has built institutional, legal, financial, and internal systems during the last five years to guarantee the incorporation of environmental and developmental issues into the decision-making process. Among these mechanisms are especially the State Secretariat for the Environment, a General Directorate with financial independence and public authority; the High Council for the Environment and Sustainable Development, a consultative body presided over by the Prime Minister; and the National Economic and Social Council, an advisory institution.

In keeping with the execution of the 21st Century Agenda, several notable projects have been undertaken in the framework of development activities in past years. Among other things, poverty reduction, demographic transition management, public health protection and promotion, human settlement improvement, and environmental issues included in decision-making processes have all seen significant outcomes from these initiatives. On the other hand, it has been said that Algeria's attempts to carry out the 21st Century Agenda have been hampered by major barriers, especially financial ones, questions about access to technology, and the lack of effective information systems (Bakdi, 2016, p. 14).

3.3 The Relationship Between Urban Planning Tools SNAT and PDAU in Achieving Sustainable Development

From the above, it is evident that there is a complementary relationship meant to combine strategic vision with pragmatic execution. While PDAU acts as an executive tool offering a thorough and current database to assist well-informed decision-making at both the local and regional levels, SNAT outlines policies for regional balance, spatial justice, and the protection of natural resources, setting out the main strategic frameworks at the national level. Multi-level planning helps to improve the sustainability of development by means of integration; SNAT guarantees the consistency of national policies

with the general objectives of sustainable development; PDAU provides correct data on land use, population, and infrastructure to help these policies' execution.

The safeguarding of natural resources shows especially this cooperation. While the BDAU allows the identification of environmentally sensitive areas and the careful planning of interventions, the SNAT sets the strategic priorities for environmental conservation. The combination of these two instruments guarantees a balance between economic, social, and environmental aspects by improving planners' capacity to make informed decisions depending on analytical data. Success of this partnership, therefore, depends on efficient stakeholder coordination to guarantee the congruence of national policies with local plans and use of modern technologies like Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to improve planning accuracy. Thus, the sustainable urban vision that guarantees a fair distribution of resources and balanced growth at all levels is fundamentally dependent on the relationship between SNAT and BDAU.

Conclusion

Key pillars in sustainable development in cities and urban areas are urban planning tools including the National Territorial Development Plan (SNAT) and the Land Use Plan (PDAU). Aiming at balancing and rationally organizing the use of natural and human resources, they are strategic tools considering environmental, social, and economic aspects.

These tools help to create a roadmap that guides urban development in a sustainable way, therefore conserving environmental resources, enhancing quality of life, and promoting equality of opportunity across several areas. They offer a complete picture that takes into account integrated urban development together with the preservation of agricultural land, biodiversity conservation, and the reduction of the adverse consequences of climate change.

These tools are not just for planning; they also involve the creation of strategies for adapting to future changes including economic and technological transformation as well as the rising population needs. Thus, the effectiveness of these tools relies on using a thorough approach founded on correct information, which promotes cooperation among all parties involved, from local governments to civil society and the business sector.

At last, one could argue that the National Spatial Development Plan (SNAT) and the PDAU are more than simply technical tools; they reflect a way to realize a sustainable urban vision whereby urban planning guarantees a better future for both present and future generations by serving both people and the environment.

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