

Evaluation of the actual protection zone of the UNESCO site Casbah of Algiers: current inconsistencies, and need to preserve its integrity

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Abstract: The issue of safeguarding historical centres included in the UNESCO World Heritage List and their surroundings from negative impacts caused by pressure of the urban dynamic is important as well as topical. This article addresses this problem through an evaluation of a buffer zone as a means of strengthening protection around a historic site and its context, while maintaining its integrity. Through a case study of the UNESCO site of the Casbah in Algiers, we have tried to prove our hypothesis that, in the case of an urban historic site, the delineation criteria for the buffer zone, which is usually based on the property's isolation and protection conditions, should be made in relation to, and in favour of, the articulation of the old with the new, allowing for the integration and insertion of the cultural urban property into the urban dynamic of the town.

Our assessment of the actual protection zone around the Casbah has brought to light several inadequacies concerning the establishment of its perimeters, which undermine the main objective of reinforcing the cultural value of the site, its structural and visual integrity as well as that of its surroundings. Because of this, a revision of the protection zone's perimeter is strongly recommended so as to strengthen protection around the UNESCO site of the Casbah in Algiers and maintain its exceptional value

Keyword: Buffer zone, historic site, historic urban site, the Casbah of Algiers, integrity

Evaluación de la zona de protección real del sitio de la UNESCO Casbah de Argel: inconsistencias actuales y necesidad de preservar su integridad

Resumen: La cuestión de salvaguardar los centros históricos incluidos en la Lista del Patrimonio Mundial de la UNESCO y sus alrededores de los impactos negativos causados por la presión de la dinámica urbana es importante, así como de actualidad. Este artículo aborda este problema a través de una evaluación de una zona de amortiguamiento como un medio para fortalecer la protección en torno a un sitio histórico y su contexto, mientras mantiene su integridad. A través de un estudio del sitio de la UNESCO de la Casbah en Argel, hemos tratado de probar nuestra hipótesis de que, en el caso de un sitio histórico urbano, los criterios de delimitación para la zona de amortiguamiento, que generalmente se basan en el aislamiento y la protección de la propiedad. Las condiciones deben establecerse en relación con, y en favor de, la articulación de lo antiguo con lo nuevo, permitiendo la integración e inserción de la propiedad cultural urbana en la dinámica urbana del pueblo.

Nuestra evaluación de la zona de protección real alrededor de la Casbah ha revelado varias deficiencias en relación con el establecimiento de sus perímetros, lo que socava el objetivo principal de reforzar el valor cultural del sitio, su integridad estructural y visual, así como la de su entorno. Debido a esto, se recomienda encarecidamente una revisión del perímetro de la zona de protección para fortalecer la protección alrededor del sitio de la UNESCO de la Casbah en Argel y mantener su valor excepcional

Palabras clave: Zona de amortiguamiento, sitio histórico, sitio histórico urbano, la Casbah de Argel, integridad

Avaliação da área de proteção do sítio da UNESCO Casbá em Argel: inconsistências atuais e a necessidade de preservar a sua integridade

Resumo: A questão da salvaguarda dos centros históricos incluídos na Lista do Património Mundial da UNESCO e nas suas áreas envolventes, e os impactos negativos causados pela pressão da dinâmica urbana, é uma temática importante e atual. Este artigo trata

desse problema através da avaliação de uma área envolvente, como forma de fortalecer a proteção em torno de um sítio histórico e do seu contexto, enquanto modo de manter a sua integridade. Através do estudo de caso do sítio classificado pela UNESCO, Casbah em Argel, testou-se a hipótese de que, no caso de um sítio histórico urbano, os critérios de delimitação das zonas envolventes, que geralmente são baseados em imóveis isolados e na proteção da propriedade, as condições devem estabelecer-se em relação com, e a favor, da articulação do antigo com o novo, permitindo a integração e a inserção da propriedade cultural urbana nas dinâmicas do lugar.

A nossa avaliação da área de proteção em torno da Casbá revelou várias deficiências em relação ao estabelecimento dos seus perímetros, o que prejudica o principal objetivo de reforço do valor cultural do sítio, a sua integridade estrutural e visual, bem como as áreas envolventes. Devido a isso, uma revisão do perímetro da zona de proteção é fortemente recomendada para fortalecer a proteção das áreas envolventes do sítio da UNESCO, Casbá em Argel e manter o seu valor excepcional.

Palavras-chave: Áreas envolventes, sítio histórico, sítio histórico urbano, Casbá de Argel, integridade

Introducción

During the last forty years, interest in the conservation of cultural properties has seen an unprecedented development throughout the world. The concept of heritage, in general, and of urban heritage in particular, is one of the major themes developed in several works written on this subject: (Feilden and Jokilehto 1998; Larkham 1996; Rodwell 2007). An important number of historical sites has been listed by UNESCO as the cultural heritage of mankind and, as such, should be protected. This has led to a series of protection plans being put into service worldwide in order to assure the preservation of these historic properties. In this context, the buffer zone stands out as an important tool in strengthening protection around these sites and in maintaining their integrity.

In fact, during the last twenty years, several historic sites, inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List, have been through many difficulties caused by the construction of several controversial projects in their immediate surroundings which have been judged harmful to their integrity.

In this context, several projects can be cited: the extremely controversial Pelli-Cajasol Tower in Seville, Spain (Fernández 2013:118-129; Salmeron 2013: 142-157), the bridge over the River Elbe undertaken by the town of Dresden in Germany and which led to its exclusion from the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2009 (WHC,33COM7A.26.S,2009), the historic centre of Vienna and the Wien-Mitt urban development project (WHC,2002, Dec.26COM,21B.35) to name but a few.

This article focuses on the preservation of historical urban sites, with an evaluation of the buffer zone as a pertinent tool in strengthening the protection and safeguard of these historical, World Heritage urban sites, which are exposed to intense urban pressure.

The concept of the buffer zone, and an evaluation of its effectiveness at historical sites, inscribed on the World Heritage List, has been the subject of many studies. Those of Peterson 2005; Gillespie 2012; Trau, Ballard and Wilson 2014, can be cited as examples.

Taking as a case study the Casbah of Algiers, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, our article puts forward a critical analysis of the actual protection zone around the site, examining not only its role in protecting the site's integrity, but also its compliance with the recommendations laid down by UNESCO.

Our article hinges on the following hypothesis: if the concept of the buffer zone is to remain a protection plan of considerable interest, for maintaining the outstanding value of a World Heritage site, then, its delineation criteria, which are usually based on its isolation and registration conditions, should depend on an approach that favours the articulation of the old with the new (Geovannoni 1995), and allows for the integration and insertion of the urban cultural property into the urban dynamic while respecting its historical identity.

The Casbah of Algiers is Algeria's most emblematic site. It has been classed by UNESCO as a World Heritage site since 1992, in accordance with the criteria II and V. The important richness of the Casbah lies in the phenomenon of historical stratification, which goes back to the 4th century B. C and of which the last colonial phase was the most overwhelming (Cresti 1993). However, despite being subjected to colonial transformations and seismic hazard, the upper part of the Casbah of Algiers still maintains its integrity. On the whole, the aesthetic characteristics, the materials used and the architectural elements have kept their original aspect. In addition, the Casbah bears witness to a remarkable authenticity, not only in its urban form, its architectural typology and the materials of construction used (marble, bricks made from raw earth, mud or lime plasters, stone or wood), but also

in its usage (habitation, commerce, worship) and its folk tradition.

The question of the safeguard of the historical site of the Casbah of Algiers, and its integration with the Metropolis, has been the subject of several studies, notably those of Lesbet 2006; Abdulac 2003; Driss 2005; Whc 2010-2015. All these works underline the historical and cultural importance of the Casbah site and have warned against the process of degradation and impoverishment which is still ongoing despite the efforts made by Algeria during the last three decades.

Methodology

Our methodology is one of critical analysis, which compares the actual buffer zone with the guidelines set down by UNESCO, on the basis of the following steps:

- A review of the concept of the buffer zone and its evolution as laid down in the UNESCO texts.
- An analysis of the protection zone around the historical site of the Casbah, as defined in the safeguard plan (PPMSVSS), and its evaluation, in relation, not only to the logic behind the establishment of its perimeters but also to the guidelines set down by UNESCO, with the aim of using it as a tool to reinforce the protection and integrity of the site.
- Finally, this article aims to put forward several recommendations which could, not only address the shortcomings highlighted through our research, but also offer an integral and effective approach to urban conservation of the Casbah with regards to its urban environment.

1. -The concept of buffer zones in the texts of UNESCO

The principle of creating a zone or defining a border as a measure to safeguard cultural property has been part of cultural heritage law since the 1930s. The idea of protecting an area around a monument [1] ; i.e. the protection of the surroundings and the context of the cultural property, was mentioned in the Athens Charter of 1931 and was thereafter integrated in different heritage legislation throughout Europe: France, Italy, Portugal etc. Since then, no further expansion or extrapolation of the concept occurred in the official texts of UNESCO until the 1970s.

The concept of buffer zone appeared briefly for the first time in the guidelines drawn up at the heritage convention in 1979 (WHC/2 1978). In fact, put forward as recommendations to States Parties at the convention, UNESCO suggested to its member states that they should, as far as possible, indicate in the registration documents the buffer zone surrounding the property:

“Whenever necessary for the proper conservation of a cultural or natural property nominated, an adequate

“buffer zone” around a property should be foreseen and should be afforded the necessary protection. A buffer zone can be defined as an area surrounding the property which has an essential influence on the physical state of the property and/or on the way in which the property is perceived; the area constituting the buffer zone should be determined in each case through technical studies, Details on the size and characteristics of a buffer zone, as well as a map indicating its precise boundaries, should be provided in the nomination file relating to the property in question” (WHC/2 1978, 6)

In 2005, in article 103 of the guidelines, UNESCO underlines the characteristics necessary for a buffer zone to ensure the correct preservation of the cultural property but it still remains non-compulsory (WHC.05/2, 2005, N103, 25). Furthermore, UNESCO defined the buffer zone as an area that must mark the boundaries of the proposed property so as to ensure additional protection. This area must: *“Include the immediate setting of the nominated property, important views and other areas or attribute that are functionally important as a support to the property and its protection.” (WHC. 05/2, 2005, N 104, 25)*

In addition, UNESCO states that registration documents must include:

- a-Details of superficies, characteristics and authorized use of the buffer zone together with a map including its exact demarcation.
- b-A report which clearly outlines how the additional protection offered by the buffer zone would benefit the cultural property (WHC. 05/2, 2005, N 105, 25).
- c-An explicit declaration in cases where no buffer zone exists (WHC. 05/2, 2005, N 104, 26).

The work carried out by experts under the auspices of ICOMOS [2], notably the recommendations of the Xian declaration in China (The Declaration of Xi’an, ICOMOS, 2005, 3), and the conclusions of the reunion of World Heritage experts in Davos, Switzerland ICOMOS (Whc-08/32 COM/7.1,2008,2.) allowed for greater clarification of the concept of a buffer zone differentiating its values from those of the world heritage property.

Based on recommendations made by experts, UNESCO officially defines the buffer zone as:

“clearly delineated area(s) outside a World Heritage property and adjacent to its boundaries which contribute to the protection, management, integrity, authenticity and sustainability of the outstanding universal value of property. Although and World Heritage buffer zones are not regarded as part of the inscribed World Heritage property, their boundaries and relevant management approaches should be evaluated, approved and formally recorded at the time they are proposed by a State Party. Where buffer zones are defined, they should be seen as an integral component of the Sate Party’s commitment to the protection and management of the World Heritage property. The functions of the buffer zone should reflect

the different types and levels of protection needed to protect the outstanding universal value of the World Heritage property”(Whc-08/32 COM/7.1,2008,8.)

In addition, experts have outlined a number of criteria to follow when defining a buffer zone. These include:

- An analysis of the characteristics, universal value and integrity of the heritage property so as to best recognize its outside problems.
- The demarcation of the buffer zone (s)
- An analysis of the zone's positive potential
- The application of both national law and local regulations/legislation pertinent to buffer zones.
- The guarantee of an effective implementation of the mechanisms pertinent to buffer zones (Whc-08/32 COM/7.1, 2008,7).

2. Algerian legislation concerning the national heritage and the concept of buffer zones

In Algeria, with the enactment of the bill 98/04 on June 15 1998, the protection of heritage sites took a significant step forward. In fact, this law brings a more complete and innovative approach to heritage protection than the previous one, which was based on texts from the colonial period.

The bill 98/04 allows for greater definition of the cultural heritage and includes adequate protection measures. The cultural heritage is thus classified into tangible cultural heritage (movable and non-movable) and intangible cultural heritage (Art 3 bill 98-04, June 1998). Continuing this classification, the immovable cultural heritage now includes monuments and archaeological sites, both in urban and rural areas, which have historical value and are situated in a conservation region that acts as a new protection measure.

In addition, for archaeological zones located in urban areas the new regulations define the Protection and Development Plan of Archaeological Sites (PPMVSA) [3] as a management tool. The Permanent Plan for the Protection and Development of the Conservation Area (PPSMVSS)[4] provides a regulation for the historical urban centres built within the conservation zone.

Even though experience has shown that both the PPMVSA and PPSMVSS cover satisfactorily the problem of protection and safeguard within the conservation area, the question of buffer zones on the outskirts of heritage sites seems to have been left out. In fact, only in the PPMVSA do the regulations impose the definition of a protection zone on the creation of an archaeological site. This zone must be included in the urban development plan which must in turn respect the requirements prescribed by the PPMVSA (Art 2 and 3 of the executive decree N°03-323). In the PPSMVSS, the question is overlooked and no guidance is given even

for historic-urban sites inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

—*The Permanent Plan for the Safeguard and Valorization of the Casbah of Algiers. (PPSMVSS)*

The Permanent Plan for Safeguard and Valorization of the protected sector of the Casbah of Algiers is an instrument for management, protection and valorization which was established and delimited by executive decree N05-173 on May 3rd 2005. The perimeter of the protected sector of the Casbah covers an area of 105 hectares and spreads over four communes: the commune of the Casbah , the commune of Bab el Oued, the commune of Oued Koreiche and the commune of central Algiers.

In fact, the perimeter of the safeguarded sector include the UNESCO World Heritage site, covering an area of 70 hectares, and a surrounding protection zone of 35 hectares, reaching a total surface area of 105 hectares [Figure1].

The PPSMVSS, as a safeguard plan, is, in essence, patrimonial with regard to the protection and valorization of the safeguarded sector in reality, the terms of reference of its regulations reflect the conservation objectives for the historic site and its urban form.



Figure 1.- Limit of the conservation area of the Casbah of Algiers. sr PPSMVSS of the Casbah of Algiers

3. Critical evaluation of the protection zone around the historical site of the UNESCO property, The Casbah

In the preceding paragraph, we have seen that the perimeters of the PPSMVSS of the Casbah encompass those of the UNESCO site, itself, as well as a so-called protection zone. Consequently, in the present chapter, we are going to examine the criteria used to trace the perimeter of the safeguarded sector, and evaluate to what extent it conforms to UNESCO guidelines.

—Discussion of the methodology in elaborating the PPSMVSS

In order to reach the main objectives, principally, the conservation of the UNESCO property, the harmonious development of the historical centre and the preservation of its historical and archaeological values, the designated officials of the PPSMVSS adopted a methodology based on a typo-morphological reading of the historic site. This approved method (C.N.E.R.U. 2010) included an assessment of the decomposition of the urban fabric in its basic subsystems: land parcels, buildings, railway lines and open spaces, from which a map of the homogenous zones could be drawn up.

Nevertheless, it can be said, without quoting directly, that the officials of the PPSMVSS, used an approach based on the Theory of Permanence in order to control the interventions carried out by the Italian-French team in the urban historical zones (Spigai and Levy 1989). This can be confirmed in the graphic documents appended to the PPSMVSS, which contain all the basic points of this approach [5].

However, although the use of these two methodologies, that is to say, a typo- morphological reading and the Theory of Permanence, remains justified, it does, in our opinion, come up against an important methodological contradiction.

In fact, these two methodological approaches, used in the elaboration of the PPSMVSS, are based on an understanding of the origin and transformation of anthropic organisms as to identify permanent structural elements, carriers of site memory, and of the urban form (Sculz 1980; Nora 1986; Clementi 1990; Spigai 1995). This procedure, it should be noted, begins with the origins of the urban organism and continues up to present day or, at least, upto when the town became fortified at the end of the nineteenth century or the first half of the twentieth century. It can be seen, then, that any diachronic assessment carried out within the framework of the PPSMVSS, such as in the project proposal or in the final presentation report, is limited to, or even blocked within, the perimeter of the safeguarded sector of the Casbah. A perimeter that, it must be said, was previously fixed by executive decree [6] two years before the launch of the first phase of the PPSMVSS.

At this point, all interest in using the typo- morphological method, with its diachronic reading, diminishes since all historical and structural permanence of the site is in fact truncated and alienated from their own contextual relationship. This has clearly affected the value of the protection zone integrated within the framework of the PPSMVSS.

Although Algerian legislation, concerning the launch of the Permanent Plan for safeguard and valorization, meant that the official delineation of the safeguarded sector had to be set down before the start of the study, in our opinion, it should nevertheless be left as a prerogative of the PPSMVSS the right to include a modified proposition or rectification of the perimeter of the safeguarded sector, based on the results of deep historical analysis, would help mitigate certain flagrant inconsistencies and ensure a better protection of the historic value of the site.

Such a step could have important implications, especially in the following examples, which have been excluded from the protection zone within the present frame work of the PPSMVSS:

- The route of the North-south matrix, its formation and extension beyond Bab el Oued and Bab Azzoun.
- The fortification system of the Casbah, including the two forts that have disappeared and those that are still standing.
- The potential archaeological zone, bordering the perimeter of the official safeguarded sector.
- The remarkable view, relating the town, the historic site, and the sea.

—Formal Configuration of the Protection Zone

An examination of the formal configuration of the protection zone within the boundary of the safeguarded sector shows variable widths, ranging from a minimum of a few metres to a maximum of 355m [Figure2].

In fact, on the north side of the Casbah, the width of the protection zone is zero metres, which means that the perimeter of the safeguarded sector is equal to the UNESCO site. Then, from a width of 80 metres at the Serkadji prison, it increases steadily to 355 metres at the interior of the Ali Khodja barracks. On the south side of the safeguarded sector, the width of the protection zone varies from 45 metres to 60 metres, reaching a maximum width of 150 metres at Bouzerina market.

This raises, the following question: Does this variation in the width of the protection zone correspond to the protection demands of the UNESCO site at the Casbah?

An assessment of the perimeter trace of the safeguarded sector, and its protection zone, reveals several ambiguities and inconsistencies which favour a negative response to our investigation, or , at least, confirm the opinion that the

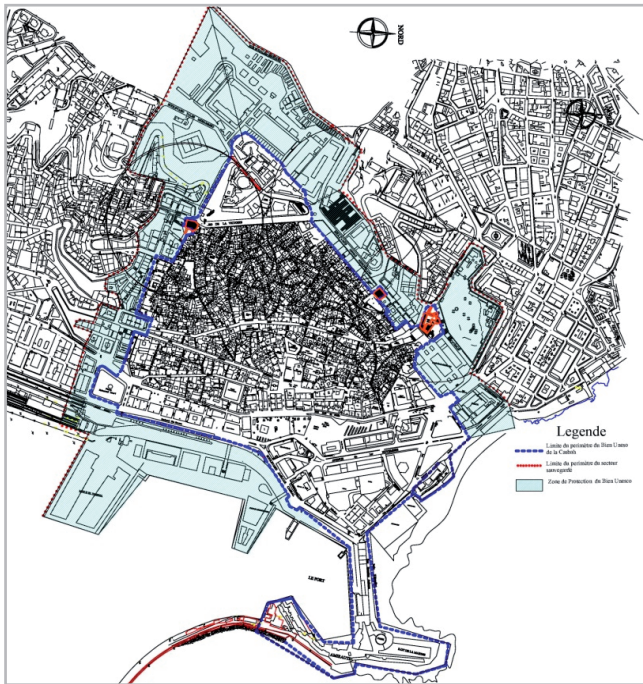


Figure 2.- Graphic representation of the protection zone integrated in the safeguarded sector of the Casbah. Sr. author. Ap. Format autocad.

question of protection at the site has not been of paramount importance for the delineation of the protection zone. This can be seen by the fact that the perimeter trace of the protection zone is almost non-existent in several key places where the provision of a conservation easement is legally mandatory; such as, in the case of monuments, classed as national heritage. In this light, several cases can be cited as examples:

At the Sidi Abderrahmane Mosque [Figure 3], where the perimeter of the safeguarded sector overlap with the UNESCO site; at the eighth and ninth bastions, rare representatives of the pre-colonial Ottoman defensive system and classed as cultural heritage; and at the listed building of the Serkhadji Prison where protection regulations foresee a conservation easement of 200 metres around each site [Figure 4]. This becomes even more

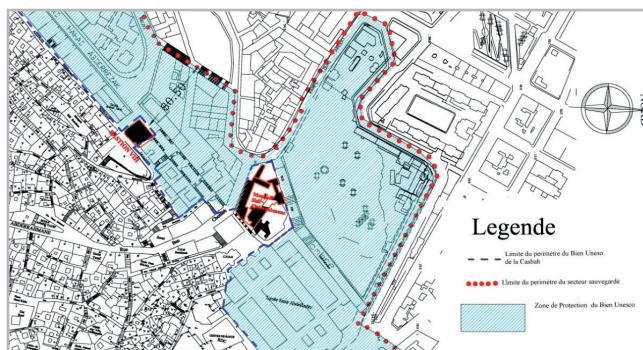


Figure 3.- Width of the protection zone in relation to the listed monuments: The Sidi Abderrhman Mosque, and the Bastion VIII: Sr. author. Ap. Format autocad.

problematic considering that the rules and regulations of PPSMVSS of the Casbah stress that the provisions laid down by the legislations in articles 20-26 of act 98-04 of appendix n°02 still apply, even though no conservation easement can be found in the graphic annexes.

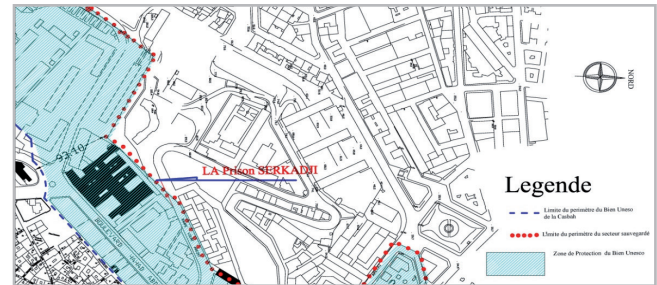


Figure 4.- Width of the protection zone in relation to the listed monuments: the Serkhadji Prison building. Sr. author. Ap. Format autocad

In brief, a study of the boundary formation of the UNESCO site protection zone shows several inconsistencies in relation to the direct Objective and its application. This has led us to reason and ask the following question: as it stands in the PPSMVSS, can this protection zone really be considered a buffer zone?. In order to answer this question, we must first double check criteria of the protection zone with reference to:

- Legislation, that it is to say, the regulations established by The Party States of UNESCO during the registration proposal on the World Heritage List.
- Compliance with recommendations established by the World Heritage Committee and its advisory bodies, concerning the establishment of buffer zones.

—Compliance of the protections zone in relation to the texts of UNESCO

• Legal Framework

First of all, it must be stated that, since the documents relating to the property’s registration with the WHC (WHC 13/37.COM/8D) do not mention the creation of this protection zone, it can be conferred that it has not been recognized, by Algeria, as a buffer zone. Therefore, and in absence of a management plan for the UNESCO property, adopted and officially transmitted to the global forum, no explanation has been given by Algeria to this date. Moreover, since Algeria has already approved a protection zone, with an area 35 hectares larger than the UNESCO site, there has been certain confusion, concerning the status and role of this extra band around the property. In fact, in its comments on Algeria’s 2009 report concerning the state of conservation of the property [7], transmitted to UNESCO, the World Heritage Committee interpreted this discrepancy in surface difference as the presence of a buffer zone: «The report indicates that the area of the safeguarded sector covers the totality of the perimeter classified at the

national level and inscribed on the World Heritage List, that is 70 ha to which are added 35 ha of buffer zone. Although numerous maps are included in the report, the State Party has not yet transmitted a «topographical or cadastral map clearly indicating the boundaries and area of the inscribed property» as requested by the World Heritage Committee.» (Whc32 Quebec 2008).

Finally, no mention, or indication of the existence of a buffer zone, figures on the final cadastral map sent to UNESCO by Algeria, indicating the exact boundaries of the World Heritage site. Therefore, according to international legislation, it can be concluded that the uncertainty surrounding the legal status of the protection zone at the UNESCO property remains, and, consequently, the problem of the creation of the buffer zone, to reinforce protection at the historic site, still stands.

•UNESCO Recommendations for Buffer Zones

For UNESCO, the establishment of an effective buffer zone must allow for the preservation of the cultural value of the heritage site and its framework, its physical and visual integrity as well as the prevention of potential risks or threats which could affect it.

With respect to the safeguarded sector of the Casbah, an examination of the demarcation line of the protection zone, shows that it fails to fulfil these objectives. In fact, our analysis shows that in relation to the criterion:

—1) In relation to the criterion of the value of the cultural property, its importance and the conditions of the upkeep of its integrity:

To the north of the heritage site, it can be noted that, on the PPSMVSS, only the Marengo Garden is inserted within the boundary lines, excluding the Arsenal region on the outskirts of Bab el Oued, which has been recognized for the quality of its urban form and is, therefore, an integral part of a potentially important archaeological zone. This zone is also important for the view, from the top of the site to the bottom (ab el Oued zone), establishing a visual link of the Casbah with the sea [Figure 5].

Similarly, the perimeter trace shows several inconsistencies with regard to the morphological structure of the existing urban fabric because factors of the site's structural integrity have not been taken into account.. There is, undoubtedly, a problem with the perimeters of the ramp at Arezki Louni, because, its markings on the PPSMVSS have not considered the formal unity of the shared band. Consequently, we are faced with an irregular situation concerning the urban facade on this road. In spite of their shared typo-morphological unity, the first forty lineal metres of the facade are regulated by PPSMVSS while the remaining distance is managed by the town planning laws of the PDAU.

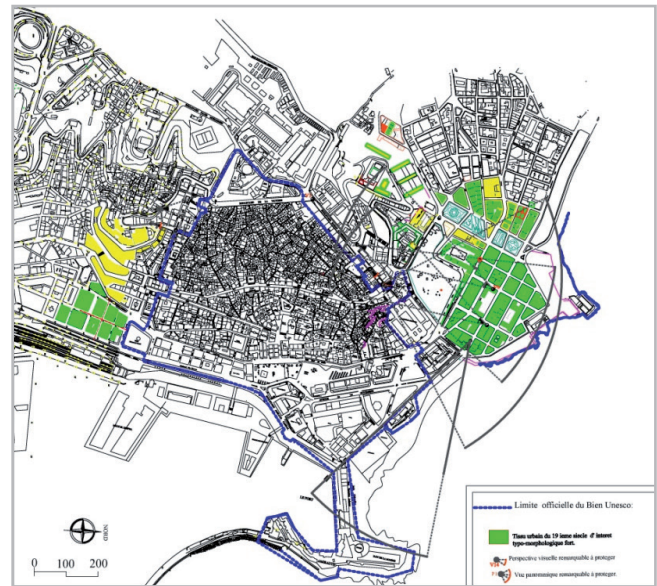


Figure 5.- Heritage values in the buffer zone at the UNESCO site. Sr. author. Ap. Format autocad

The same critic applies to the east side of the Casbah, as shown on the PPSMVSS. It can be noticed that the delineation of the protection boundary was undertaken, regardless of the fact that they share location and formal unity. For example, the islands, made by the route of Debih Cherif Road, which form a typo-morphological unit, have been divided independently of their unifying criterion. The same is true for La Place Montpensier (itself, a unified urban figure) where a portion of the square is integrated within the safeguard plan while the rest remains the responsibility of PDAU-POS.

—2) Consideration of the risks and potential threats to the heritage site and its setting:

Analysis shows that these factors have not been taken into account; In fact, the width of the protective zone is inadequate at its fringe regions, and where the safeguarded sector comes into contact with the European town, especially on its two transversals, Palais du Dey-Bastion 23 and the Bd Ourida Madad is inadequate.

Furthermore, the protection zone has had no effect in the Bellili district [8], a much degraded area, characterized by its formal heterogeneity, and where uncontrolled reconstruction can harm the integrity of the World Heritage property [Figure 6].

The same can be said of the degraded area opposite to the Sidi Abderrahmane Mosque, which is subject to reconstruction as laid down in the recommendations of POS N°12 of Bab el Oued.

—3)The cultural value of the setting of the heritage site:

The same observation can be seen in the criteria concerning the evaluation and protection of the cultural value of the



Figure 6.- Advanced state of degradation of the built environment in the south-west area Bellili district. Sr. author

surroundings and its significance as an extra guarantee in reinforcing the integrity of the historical site. Indeed, a study of the final presentation report of the PPSMVSS initially shows, that historical research and identification of cultural values, were directed only towards the historical site, itself. This means that the identification and protection of certain elements of the historical urban landscape — a large amount of which is actually in ruins or has completely disappeared — have not been undertaken. In this context, the identification and valorisation of the remains of the pre-colonial fortification system can be cited as examples: the link between the Empereur Fort (Bordj Sultan Kalassi) with the citadel, the aqueduct system and the Diar El Fahs network.

—4) Visual integrity of the UNESCO heritage site and its setting:

Analysis of the PPSMVSS and its regulations shows that it has not provided any solutions, or even assumed responsibility for, the problem of visual integration at the Casbah site.

Indeed, besides an indication of the general volume of the safeguarded sector, as is set down in the official article of construction (USS1, art 1.6), the PPSMVSS shows

no research work or identification, establishment or recommendation for a conservation easement, regarding the perspectives or the outstanding panoramas, from the interior of the site towards the outside or vice versa. Thus, on one hand, there is an interruption of the physical and visual relationship of the Casbah with its context which is well-described in the project proposal and has turned out to be the principal cause of the town's isolation [9] . On the other hand, in the conservation report, presented to UNESCO, Algeria evaluated the Casbah as having “a partial visual integrity”, the actual configuration of the protection zone is inadequate in meeting all the imperatives of its visual integrity [10] , especially in the northern zones, towards Bab el Oued, where an important visual field exists between the top part of Algiers and the bottom, which needs to be managed, enhanced and protected.

Conclusion

A study of the configuration of the protection zone of the safeguarded sector around the UNESCO site of the Casbah has allowed us to highlight the following points:

- An absence of any explanation justifying the delineation of the protection zone and its establishment. Furthermore, this protection zone has not been officially recognized by Algeria as a buffer zone in accordance with Unesco texts.
- Incoherences in the perimeter trace. We have seen that the protection zone does not meet the criteria recommended by UNESCO, concerning the establishment of an adequate buffer zone, especially as a measure to reinforce the protection of its cultural value and authenticity, as well as its visual and structural integrity. In fact, the boundary of the actual protection zone remains unjustifiable in certain cut-off regions, such as the Arezki Louni Ramp, Bab El Oued and the Dehib Cherif Road, where, at least, the typomorphological unity, or the protection of views to and from the UNESCO site, should have been considered.
- Lack of consideration in identifying or conserving elements of the urban historic landscape and its important views which constitute the framework or context of the historical property.

In our opinion, the origin of these weaknesses, brought to light by our research, is the protectionist attitude, underlining the heritage spirit and its approach at the heart of the protection plan (PPSMVSS), itself a product of the heritage code, which has always underlined protection perimeters (isolation). From this point of view, even if this protective vision remains useful and beneficial with regard to an isolated cultural property, a monumental complex or a landscape, to extrapolate it, entirely, to an urban heritage site is problematic.

In conclusion, in the case of an urban cultural property, the delineation criteria of the buffer zone as well as the

imperatives for reinforcing protection of the cultural property, must in our opinion, favour an articulation of the old with the new allowing for the integration and insertion of the cultural property within the urban dynamic of the town while respecting its historical identity. An objective that could be reached, on condition that Algeria adopts an holistic approach to the urban conservation of the UNESCO heritage site (WHC-15/3-COM/7B), based on a conservation process that would integrate, even reconcile, the principles of patrimonial management within the context of urban planning in Great Algiers.

Notas

[1] The concept of protection of borders based on the demarcation of the protection zone around historical or natural listed monuments. This measure, carried out metric measurement (a range of 500, 200m) or visibility or co-visibility allowing the aspects of the protected sides to be maintained.

[2] ICOMOS (The international Council of Monuments and Sites) is a nongovernmental organisation with its headquarters in Paris, France.

[3] The executive decree N°03-323 of 05 October 2003 concerning the establishment of the Protection and Development of Plan of Archaeological sites (PPMVSA).

[4] The executive decree N°03-324 of 05 October 2003 concerning the establishment Permanent Plan for the Protection and Development of the conservation area (PPSMVSS).

[5] It concerns maps n°37 to 41 in the graphic index of the PPSMVSS of the safeguarded sector of the Casbah in Algiers. In: C. N. E. R. U. 2010. PSMVSS of the Casbah in Algiers, Annexes, Alger, Final Edition.

[6] Exécutive decree n°5-173 of 9-5 2005, op.cit.

[7] The report of the State Party (Algeria) submitted to the World Heritage Centre on the 30 of January, 2009 giving information about the state of advancement of the permanent plan <http://whc.unesco.org/fr/soc/661>

[8] The protective regime for the surroundings of the two listed monuments in this zone: the Bastion VIII and the fragment of the enclosure at the site of the citadel which allowed protection to extend to an important part of this problematic district.

[9] PPSMVSS, proposal report op.cit, p 166.

[10] The UNESCO World Heritage Convention for culture and nature, periodic monitoring exercise for Arab sites inscribed on the World Heritage List, presentation of periodic reports on the applications set down at the World Heritage Convention for the Casbah of Algiers, July 2000, p 17. <http://whc.unesco.org/>.

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Artículo enviado el 27/02/2018

Artículo aceptado el 20/11/2018