

The liberalisation of public transport in Algeria: between economic realism and social demands. Case of Constantine

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Date of receipt: 30/01/2022, Date of revision: 28/02/2021, Date of acceptance: 12/03/2022

Abstract

Transport planning in Algeria has gone through three key stages: state monopoly, liberalisation, and roll-back towards state in engagement. Several Algerian cities have benefited from this reorganisation through the creation of several private or public transport operators.

Like other Algerian cities, Constantine has not escaped the negative effects generated by this liberalisation since 1988. These effects remain to this day.

This paper retraces the repercussions generated by the liberalisation of the transport sector through a diachronic study, which will allow us to see the evolution of this policy within a sector as sensitive as that of transport through its different organizational and functional aspects and its impact on the modes of travel of users.

Keywords: Liberalisation, Transportation, Public transport, Actor, Constantine

ملخص

لقد مر تخطيط النقل في الجزائر بثلاث مراحل رئيسية: احتكار الدولة والخصوصية أو تحرير القطاع للخواص والعودة إلى مشاركة القطاع مع الخواص وإعادة استرجاع الدولة لحصتها السوقية. استفادت عدة مدن جزائرية من عملية إعادة التنظيم هذه من خلال إنشاء العديد من شركات النقل الخاصة وعمومية.

لكن قسنطينة، شأنها شأن المدن الجزائرية الأخرى، لم تفلت من الآثار السلبية الناجمة عن هذا التحرير منذ عام 1988 ولا تزال هذه الآثار قائمة حتى يومنا.

في هذا المقال نتتبع الآثار الناجمة عن خصوصية قطاع النقل من خلال دراسة دياكرونية تتيح لنا رؤية تطور هذه السياسة داخل قطاع حساس، مثل قطاع النقل من خلال جوانبه التنظيمية والوظيفية المختلفة وتأثيرها على طريقة التنقل في الوسط الحضري.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التحرير، النقل، النقل العام، الجهات فاعلة، قسنطينة

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1. Introduction

The problems of transport and especially its financial aspect is among the most important aspects of urban policy. The situation of urban transport in Algeria is not so different from that in many other developing countries (accelerated urbanisation, use of private cars, lack of attractiveness of public transport, pollution, informal transport, etc.) (Boubakour, 2008, p. 2). Urban transport is diverse in terms of the relationship between the different organisations (private and state operators) and the offer it makes to the population. This is what makes this sector so special. In Algeria, the liberalisation of the transport sector was promulgated by the law n°88-17 of May 10, 1988, relating to the orientation and organisation of land transport. This law aimed at giving a completely new orientation to the transport model by bringing in economics actors. This marks an important threshold, essentially by giving away the voluntarist policies carried out by the Algerian State since its independence. (Amarouchene, Boulkroune, & Doulet, 2017, p. 111). In fact, the urban transport sector has gone through several stages, ranging from a total state dominate to its virtual withdrawal.

This article examines the policy of transportation, we attempt to explain the chronological phasing of its unfolding:

- From 1962-1988: the state ruled over the public transport sector.
- From 1988-2001: following the adoption of a new policy under the sign of a market economy, the transport sector opened up to the private sector, after the promulgation of Law 88-17 of 10 May 1988 on the orientation and organization of land transport.
- From 2001 to present day: after the deregulation of the transport market and with the introduction of Law No. 01-13 of 7 August 2001, the State returned to the transport sector.

While shedding light on its most visible effects at the national level, but especially at the urban level, notably in the city of Constantine, the question that we ask ourselves is how this transport policy has affected the transport sector and the daily movement of the population of Constantine, and what were its consequences?

Constantine, a metropolis with a million inhabitants, is located on a site with exceptional characteristics. Indeed, all communication routes converge towards it, which gives it a certain territorial attractiveness. Due to its unique situation, it serves as a crossroads for the Eastern part of the country. In recent years, Constantine has undergone massive urbanisation and growth, which has led to several problems related to the transport effort and the population's need for travel and urban mobility. A diachronic study and an inventory of the different problems undergone by the transport. Hence, this paper will go through each of these periods identifying at each period the actors and the management being undertaken to face the different problems encountered.

2. Methodology

It is a basic research aiming at developing the knowledge of transport policy from the regulatory state to the liberalisation of the sector which was initiated in Algeria

by the year of 1988. We try to explain the consequences of this policy by identifying the impacts on the state of the transportation fleet and the way people travel.

The fieldwork was mainly located in the wilaya of Constantine, where we were able to collect quantitative data. This data was obtained after several interviews and requests from the Constantine transport department.

The first step was to identify the different periods of liberalisation that the transport sector has experienced. For this, a brief review was necessary to understand the history, the chronology, and all the formalities initiated in favour of this policy. We were interested in the work of Amrouchene, which looked at the state-ordered liberalisation operation in the 1990s by proposing a chronological phasing. Boubakour examined the dynamics of change in urban transportation policy, followed by Cherrad's work, which identified the actors and modes of management of this policy, all with a focus on the city of Constantine.

As a second step, we gathered the necessary data from the transportation department in Constantine, this data contained all the actions that took place in planning the transportation sector of the wilaya, we also conducted one to one interview with some actors. This data was in the form of quantitative data which represented the number of operators, the number of buses, and the number of served lines. A qualitative study was also conducted to know the state of the transport fleet and the quality of service that these operators offered to the Constantine's population.

A longitudinal study was chosen to analyse these data over several periods: before liberalisation in the 1980s, during liberalisation in the 1990s and after liberalisation in the year 2000. This research was carried out over a long period using the same sample at each phase (the evolution of the number of operators and buses) to describe their evolution, characteristics, and consequences.

3. Chronology of the liberalisation of the transport sector

Inspired by the chronology that Amarouchene established to explain the evolution of this liberalisation. He highlighted the key stages that the sector has gone through. Its impact has profoundly reshaped the sector, and this influence persists to this day in terms of organization and operation. The analysis of this operation allowed him to understand the source of the dysfunction and the damage to the sector. He sequenced this evolution into three chronological phases. This phasing was projected onto the situation of the transport sector in the city of Constantine.

3.1. State dominates actor and difficulties of operators

The transport system in Algeria until 1962 was a colonial legacy and property. Urban transport was limited to the city, with private European companies acting as transporters. In Constantine, they provided urban transport through agreements with the municipality (one of them, Barat) (Cherrad & Benmachiche, 2017, p. 159) and owned about twenty buses. According to Cherrad, the city had nearly 140,000 inhabitants in 1945 and was already expanding beyond the rock with the development of various suburbs (El Kantara, Lamy, Sidi Mabrouk, Saint-Jean, Bellevue,) (Cherrad & Benmachiche, 2017, p. 159). With independence and the departure of the colonial private operators, the exploitation of this sector was

entrusted to certain former workers of the colonial company. In 1966, the city had 245,600 inhabitants (Cherrad & Benmachiche, 2017, p. 159) and the demand for transport was increasing while the bus fleet was ageing.

Since independence from 1967 to 1979, the management of urban transport has been entrusted to the municipal transport boards (RMT)¹ of the country's largest cities. This is a legally and financially autonomous company with a board of directors. The municipal transport of Constantine (RMTC)² was created in 1967 (Cherrad & Benmachiche, 2017, p. 160) (Ferrari, 1999). It had about 50 buses in its fleet, but over time, its fleet was reduced from 44 buses in 1974 to 28 buses in 1979 (Cherrad & Benmachiche, 2017, p. 160). In addition, the company operated two urban stations (Boumezou and Krikri), both located in the center of the city, offering ten and four lines, respectively (Cherrad & Benmachiche, 2017, p. 160). This fleet of vehicles is supposed to ensure the daily travel of the inhabitants of Constantine, who numbered 34,500 in 1977, spread over an area of 2,600 ha. This spatial development gave rise to new extensions (Gammas, Riad, 5 Juillet, etc.) which were not equipped with means of transport. As a result, only 60% of the city of Constantine was covered by a transport system. At that time, meeting the population's need for transport began to show signs of weakness due to the advanced age of the rolling stock, a lack of maintenance due to the scarcity of spare parts, and a deficit in the company's financial flow due to the practice of low fares for customers. To address this, the dissolution of the RMTC and its replacement by the municipal transport authority of Constantine (RCTC) (Cherrad & Benmachiche, 2017, p. 160) were established in the late 1970s. In 1979, the status of the company changed and was aligned with the socialist management manuals of the companies (presence of control and a supervisory board composed of a representative of the APC, the consumer defence association, the trade union council, and the transport management) (Cherrad & Benmachiche, 2017, p. 160). This initiative was carried out and established by the state to extend socialism and was accompanied by a renovation and expansion of its rolling stock, which in 1980 consisted of more than 75 buses (Cherrad & Benmachiche, 2017, p. 160).

From a general point of view, before the 1987 liberalisation, all Algerian medium-sized cities, as well as the larger ones, had set up their own public transport systems. For the most part, these operators had a quasi-monopoly in the transport market (Boubakour & Bencherif, 2013, p. 92). The state-designated itself as the sole promoter and main carrier within an economic activity. The peculiarity of this period is that the centralizing state dominated the public transport sector, which was run by two national companies: S.N.T.V³ and S.N.T.R⁴. In 1983, in a move towards

¹The municipal transport boards (Régie municipale des transports)

²The municipal transport of Constantine (Régie municipale des transports de Constantine)

³ National Passenger Transport Company (Société Nationale de Transport de Voyageurs).

decentralisation-regionalisation, the restructuring of S.N.T.V gave rise to five regional companies: T.V.C⁵, T.V.E⁶, T.V.O⁷, T.V.S.E⁸, T.V.S.O⁹.

This period was marked by the scarcity of means of transport. These public companies, which were financially supported by the state through the local authorities, did their best to provide some public service. Some operators tried to diversify their activities in order to improve their situation and compensate for operating losses. A wide range of activities were launched, the creation of a driving school, the acquisition of a driving test circuit, and the creation of a suburban transport line (Boubakour & Bencherif, 2013, p. 92). Despite these initiatives and efforts, these enterprises continued to register financial difficulties.

This state monopoly situation was characterised by a period of funding difficulties, which led to a lack of investment in the modernisation of networks and fleets, as well as insufficient supply and low coverage of public transport. As a result, the authorities have not been able to meet the growing demand for transport in the country. For this reason, the liberalisation of the transport sector was enacted to address this difficult situation.

The end of the 1980s was marked by the economic crisis and the free fall in the price of oil, which weakened the national economy. In the 1990s, Algeria abandoned the policy of a planned economy and turned to a market economy. This had an impact on the structure and function of the different sectors.

3.2. Liberalisation of the transport sector and explosion of supply

The state and its public enterprises could no longer adequately meet the ever-increasing demand for transport. They were therefore unable to manage its management and operations despite the massive subventions they received during this period. In Constantine in 1985, private operators were authorised to provide service on certain lines to relieve the population of Constantine, which then had a population of 443 700 inhabitants and covered 3 285 ha. The presence of both operators (private operators and RCTC) in the transport system did not produce the expected result. Problems and disagreements arose regarding parking time at the different stations, the exploitation of the lines and many other conflicts. Although

⁴ National Road Transport Company (Société Nationale de Transport Routier).

⁵ Passenger transport from the center to Algiers and its region. (Transport de voyageurs du centre pour Alger et sa région).

⁶ Passenger transport from the east to Constantine and its region (Transport de voyageurs de l'est pour Constantine et sa région).

⁷ Passenger transport from the west to Oran and its region (Transport de voyageurs de l'ouest pour Oran et sa région).

⁸ Southeast passenger transport for the region of Ouargla, Ghardaïa, Djelfa, and Tamanrasset

(Transport de voyageurs du Sud-Est pour la région de Ouargla, Ghardaïa, Djelfa, et Tamanrasset).

⁹ Transport of travelers from the South-West to the region of Bechar, Adrar, Tindouf (Transport des voyageurs du Sud-Ouest pour la région de Béchar, Adrar, Tindouf).

the fact that the RCTC was replaced by the urban transport company (STU)¹⁰ in 1999, but this was not enough to solve the shortcomings that the company was experiencing at that time. Although the latter had reduced its costs, with a fleet of only 9 buses serving 5 lines. With an influx of private urban and suburban transporters numbering 642 with 769 buses (Cherrad & Benmachiche, 2017, p. 161), 70% of which serve the city, the RCTC is struggling to resist this reality and its presence has become just symbolic.

To solve this problem, the government launched a large-scale readjustment plan in 1994. The public transport sector was one of the first sectors to be included in this plan, giving it a priority for privatisation according to the guidelines set out in Law's 88-17 of May 10, 1988 (Andreff, 2009, p. 49). As a result, from the end of the 1990s until the 2000s, the private operator was the only carrier in the sector.

Indeed, this liberalisation, which began in the early 1990s, led to the gradual elimination of practically all the historical operators in all the country's cities. This transformation resulted in the emergence of a multitude of new private transport companies, many of which had only one vehicle and no expertise or training; they found themselves overnight in the field, which resulted in other problems, namely: lack of coordination, unfair competition, speculative pricing, etc. (Cherrad & Benmachiche, 2017, p. 161). If we analyse the data of the fleet, we notice the supremacy of vans and minibuses. In 2002, those with 10 to 29 seats represented two-thirds of the fleet, i.e., 66.77%, of a national total of 46 136 vehicles (coaches and buses) (Boubakour & Bencherif, 2013, p. 93). The characteristic of this new fleet is that these new transporters have a new vehicle (a rejuvenated fleet), even if important inequalities remain. In 2002, *« only 3.4% of the fleet of buses with 40 seats or more were less than 5 years old. In short, there are a few buses, generally at the end of their lives, and a large number of fairly recent vans and minibuses »*¹¹. (Boubakour & Bencherif, 2013, p. 93).

According to the figures of the transport department of the wilaya of Constantine, there were 642 private operators with 765 buses in 2003 in Constantine (Cherrad & Benmachiche, 2017, p. 161). The liberalisation of public transport was essentially achieved through the appearance of medium-sized family businesses that can also be described as artisanal transport, which Xavier Godard defines as *« the operation on an individual scale of public transport vehicles whose ownership is not concentrated but distributed among numerous owners. This operation can be integrated not only into the framework of the regulations in force, but also into more or less restrictive*

¹⁰The urban transport company (Société des Transports Urbains)

¹¹*« À peine 3,4% du parc d'autobus de 40 places et plus ont moins de 5 ans (en 2002). Pour résumer, on peut dire que l'on dispose de peu d'autobus, généralement en fin de vie, et d'un grand nombre de fourgons et minibus plutôt récents ».* Boubakour, F., & Bencherif, H. (2013). Evolution du transport urbain en Algérie: du mode artisanal à la régulation par l'Etat. *Revue géotransport (1-2)*, 91-103. Traduit par l'auteur.

*collective rules drawn up by a professional organisation. Even if there is sometimes a concentration of ownership, the methods of operating the vehicles are based on the initiative of the driver, who thus appears to be a manager of the land »*¹². (Godard, 2008, p. 11).

It has improved urban transport in quantitative terms¹³, with an increase in the number of vehicles in the public transport fleet, on average 1.2 buses per operator (Boubakour, 2008, p. 3). Compared to the pre-liberalisation scenario of the 1980s, the offer in terms of transport modes, nowadays, meet better the user's expectations. Travelling in urban, suburban, and interurban areas has never been so easy and relatively cheap (Boubakour & Bencherif, 2013, p. 93).

This liberalisation reveals the financial fragility of these small enterprises and their lack of professionalism (Boubakour, 2008, p. 3). In addition, the increase in the number of almost unqualified operators, as well as the number of vehicles in general, has led to an overcapacity of the fleet, with all its effects of congestion, air pollution and noise. This significant increase in supply has taken place without any real control or monitoring, and without any accountability for compliance with the requirements of a specification. A large number of private operators have developed in all cities in the country. Hundreds of them now exist in a single city. In Algiers alone, there were about 4 000 operators in 2008 (Boubakour & Bencherif, 2013, p. 93). This fragmentation of the offer has, of course, some negative consequences for the implementation of any urban transport strategy.

Several studies¹⁴ have shown that some of these operators do not respect the lines assigned to them, switching to more profitable ones. This is an informal transport practice that consists of changing the bus route assigned by the Wilaya Transport

¹²« Désigne l'exploitation à une échelle individuelle de véhicules de transports public dont la propriété n'est pas concentrée mais répartie entre de nombreux propriétaires. Cette exploitation peut s'intégrer dans le cadre de la réglementation en vigueur, mais aussi dans des règles collectives plus ou moins contraignantes élaborées par une organisation professionnelle. Même si l'on a parfois une concentration de la propriété, les modalités d'exploitation des véhicules reposent sur l'initiative du chauffeur qui apparaît ainsi comme un gestionnaire du terrain ». Godard, X. (2008). Le transport artisanal dans les villes méditerranéennes. *data form UR (1st author) DEST Projet NINRETS proceedings*, 114.

¹³« From 1988, the year of liberalisation, to 2002, and in terms of passenger transport alone (not including taxis), the national fleet increased by 266%, from 12,600 vehicles to 46,136 vehicles of all types ». (Boubakour & Bencherif, 2013, p. 93).

¹⁴Various analyses have been carried out by Prof. Boubakour on the transport systems in some Algerian cities and have revealed the existence of numerous dysfunctions due to the phenomenon of overcapacity. He also revealed that the average filling rate of buses is estimated at between 35% and 50%. He highlighted the distrust that exists in the rotation system and took as a case study the city of Batna, where he noticed a slackening in the 3rd group of rotation of the bus lines that connect the urban station with 1200 housing units.

Directorate (DTW)¹⁵ to operators. As a result, part of the population is deprived of transport. This creates an imbalance in the transport offer causing an imbalance in the spatial and temporal coverage of the city. This dysfunction and the degradation of public transport have been conducive to the use of private cars, the number of which has increased significantly. The development of informal transport, such as clandestine taxis, has also been favoured by this situation (Boubakour, 2008, p. 4).

3.3. State as a regulator actor

This alarming situation has seen the return of the public authorities as regulatory actors to stop the negative effects of this deregulation. This liberalisation has certainly contributed to improving the sector in terms of quantity, but without improving the quality of transport as a public service. In the sense that it did not meet the minimum requirements in terms of safety, regularity of service, and user comfort.

This role as a regulatory actor in the field of transport is also justified by objectives linked to sustainable development. On the issue of sustainable development and environmental protection, it is important to note that the Algerian regulatory system is now reasonably advanced in terms of legislation¹⁶. This new transport policy was accompanied by very large public investments in transport, the creation of urban and suburban transport establishments (ETUS)¹⁷, the setting up of a governance tool and the encouragement of groupings of urban transport operators. The rise in the price of oil per barrel at the time greatly favoured the launch of large-scale investment projects. The state deployed great means and launched large-scale projects and work sites in the fields of public works and transport, intending to influence the way Algerians move. Boubakour highlighted these different projects. *"The opening to traffic of the east-west motorway, the reinforcement of the network and the opening of new motorways around the capital, the commissioning of the Algiers metro (2009), the launch of numerous tramway projects in big and medium-sized towns, the rehabilitation of the railways and the development of high-quality rail*

¹⁵Wilaya Transport Directorate (Direction des transports de la wilaya)

¹⁶ Law n°03-10 of 19/07/2003 relating to the protection of the environment within the framework of sustainable development, Law n°04-09 of 14/08/2004 relating to the promotion of renewable energies within the framework of sustainable development, Law n°01-20 of 12/12/2001 relating to the planning and the sustainable development of the territory Law n°02-08 of 08/05/2002 relating to the conditions of creation of new cities and their development, - Law n°06-06 of 20/02/2006 carrying law of orientation of the city, Law n°01-13 of 07/08/2001, carrying orientation and organisation of the terrestrial transport within the framework of sustainable development, Law n°01-14 of 19/08/2001 relating to the safety and the road prevention.

¹⁷Urban and suburban transport establishments (Etablissement public de transport urbain et suburbain)

transport."¹⁸ (Boubakour, 2008, p. 9).

The year 2005 saw the creation of urban and suburban transport establishments (ETUS) in major cities, which marked the return of the state as a regulatory actor in urban transport. The first were those of Oran, Constantine, Annaba, Sétif, and Batna. The one in Algiers (ETUSA) was preserved during the deregulation of the public transport sector. This initiative was extended to all 48 wilayas, with the objective of each wilaya's chief town will have its own transport establishment. The majority of the large communes in the wilayas now have a local urban public transport operator. Each operator now has access to 30 new 100-seat buses. The aim is to encourage private operators to compete with each other by establishing a comparison effect that improves the quality of service, which Boubakour describes in his article as "benchmarking" (Boubakour & Bencherif, 2013, p. 101), to encourage private operators to group together in the future. Today, this project of grouping urban transport operators has not been approved because the solution has not yet been identified. Indeed, it is difficult to convince all the operators because some would see a considerable reduction in their income in the event of consolidation. In 2004, like the other cities of the country, Constantine benefited from having its own public transport company (ETUSC)¹⁹, which started operating one year later. The state initially allocated 28 buses to it. It was based on the public company of travellers' transport (TVE)²⁰ (Boubakour & Bencherif, 2013, p. 162). It had a competent staff, which it inherited from TVE, and an apprentice training programme was set up for recruits. ETUSC is characterised by its modernity, its punctuality, its quality of service and the cleanliness of its buses. It seduced the population of Constantine, who preferred to take advantage of these services to the detriment of the private operators because it was able to impose itself on this metropolitan public transport system as a regulating actor. Even though the number of private operators is much higher than that of ETUSC. In 2013, the transport department of the wilaya of Constantine counted 54 buses belonging to a public company, which served 16 lines and transported more than 6 million users (6,212,401)²¹, compared to 2 249 buses owned by private operators and covering 188 lines (Tab.01).

¹⁸ « L'ouverture à la circulation de l'autoroute est-ouest, le renforcement du réseau et ouverture de nouvelles autoroutes autour de la capitale, la mise en service du métro d'Alger (2009), le lancement de nombreux projets de tramway dans les grandes et moyennes agglomérations, la réhabilitation du rail et le développement de transports ferroviaires de haute qualité. ». Boubakour, F. (2008). Les transports urbains en Algérie face aux défis du développement durable: sur les problèmes rencontrés et les solutions proposées. CODATU XIII, 12-14. Traduit par l'auteur.

¹⁹ By executive decree n°04-386 of 28 November 2004.

²⁰ The public passenger transport company (Société publique des transports des voyageurs)

²¹ Direction des transports de wilaya de Constantine, Décembre 2013 (bilan de l'année 2013)

Table 1. Number of buses in the city of Constantine 2013-2020.

	2013	2017	2018	2020
Number of operators	1 409	1 421	1 392	1 365
Number of buses	2 303 of which 54 ETUSC	1 857 of which 54 ETUSC	1 852 of which 54 ETUSC	1 113 of which 54 ETUSC
Number of lines	188	185	186	192
Number of lines used	187	183	184	153

Source: Transport Directorate of the wilaya of Constantine, Report 2013-2017-2018-2020.

In Constantine, public transport plays an essential role in the movement of the population, accounting for 57.84% of all motorised trips made by the population (Ghenouchi & Debache, 2018, p. 176). We notice that the number of private operators has decreased between 2013 and 2020 from 2 303 operators to 1 113 operators. Approximately 49% of this fleet has been reduced after the study established by the wilaya's transport directorate, which demonstrated the obsolescence of the rolling stock belonging to private operators. According to the 2017 balance sheet, 60% of this fleet is over 10 years old (Tab.2). Most of these vehicles provide inter-communal and rural connections, which means part of the wilaya of Constantine is not covered by the lines allocated to ETUSC. The citizen has been held hostage by these transporter's unprofessional behaviour: non-coordination between the different operators in the lines and common stations; different journey times from one day to the next; unregulated frequency of passage of the buses at each station; unfair competition between the different operators, and so on. In addition, the dilapidated state of these vehicles causes discomfort among users, who abandon these means of transport in favour of private vehicles and clandestine taxis. However, this situation and these practices are also observed in the urban environment of the city, where the cohabitation of private operators and ETUSC has regenerated the same effects recorded during the liberalisation of the transport sector. Between competition and price speculation, the private operators have not lacked ideas to dethrone ETUSC from its quasi-monopoly in this sector: repeated strikes that only the user is the victim of these actions. There are other factors to explain this decline, such as the introduction of minibuses and autocars with 35, 50, and 100 seats in the transport system (Ghenouchi & Debache, 2018, p. 176). In 2015, with the completion and commissioning of the tramway in the city of Constantine, some destinations were removed for organisational reasons, and the abandonment of many lines saw their financial benefits decrease.

Table 2. Distribution of the fleet according to the age of the vehicle

Bus	Iner-wilaya	Urban	Inter-municipal	Rural	Total
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Less than 5 years	86 or 25%	273 or 14%	10 or 6%	07 or 4%	376 or 20%
5 years- 9 years	135 or 41%	174 or 15%	40 or 22%	18 or 9%	367 or 19%
10 years- 14 years	54 or 17%	100 or 9%	22 or 12%	26 or 13%	202 or 11%
15 years- 19 years	19 or 6%	242 or 21%	57 or 33%	105 or 53%	423 or 23%
20 years- 24 years	35 or 11%	185 or 16%	28 or 16%	42 or 22%	290 or 16%
Over 25 years	02 or 1%	177 or 16%	19 or 11%	01 or 1%	199 or 11%
Total	331 buses	1 151 buses	176 buses	199 buses	1 857 buses

Source: Transport Directorate of the wilaya of Constantine, April 2017, Bakiri,2021.

To deal with this large number of operators, which is still growing, the state has proposed the creation of an organizing authority to ensure functional and tariff integration, better governance, and compliance with the specifications by all operators. The project has been in gestation for a long time, but it has recently been achieved. The establishment of the Algiers Urban Transport Organizing Authority, on the other hand, is under Law n°01-13 of August 7, 2001, on the orientation and organization of land transport in the context of sustainable development. It has been effective since 2015, according to Executive Decree No. 12-109 of March 13, 2012, and amended by Executive Decree No. 12-190 of April 25, 2012, on the creation of urban transport organizing authorities in the wilayas of Algiers, Oran, Constantine, Annaba, Sétif, Batna, Sidi Bel Abbès, Mostaganem, and Ouargla. The authority has the task of organising and developing public passenger transport within an urban transport area (Article 5)²².

In the middle of the 2000s, local authorities chose to set up new modes of transport to break with this urban public transport policy based entirely on the bus, which had generated numerous inconveniences of all kinds. Therefore, the arrival of the metro, tramway, and cable car projects as heavy capacity modes were seen not only as a solution to the transport problems in Algeria, but also as a means of responding to the population's demand, re-establishing the balance between offer and demand (Merzoug, 2017, p. 2), and bringing the peripheral districts closer to the city center. In Constantine, the installation of these transport infrastructure is also part of the modernisation plan of the Constantine metropolis (PMMC) and a sustainable

²²These guidelines are taken from Article 5 of Executive Decree No. 12-109 of March 6, 2012.

development policy. The cable car of Constantine links the north-eastern part of the city to the city center. The resident population is estimated at between 50,000 and 70,000 inhabitants, spread over five districts: Bab El Kantara, Emir Abdelkader, Ziadia, Djebel Ouahch, and Sidi Mabrouk. The choice of this mode of transport is the most appropriate and most favourable for this part of the city. Indeed, this area is known for its rugged terrain, and the use of this mode of air transport has a certain advantage, as it does not contribute to traffic congestion and does not require the redevelopment of the places crossed. In addition, it is a soft means of transport and does not generate noise or pollution. The particularity of this line is that it crosses a vertiginous landscape (the Rhumel gorges, Sidi Mcid Bridge), which gives it a tourist vocation. The aim of this equipment was to fight against the marginalisation of certain areas.

The characteristics of the Constantine cable car are that it connects the city center via the Tatache Belkacem station to Ziadia via the Emir Abdelkader station, thus linking the Constantine University Hospital (CHUC) in its path. On a linear of 1 517 serving 3 stations, this route is divided into two sections:

- The first one is 425 meters long and connects the city center to the CHUC hospital (Tatatche Blkacem Station-Hospital Station).
- The second one is 1 093 meters long and connects the hospital to Ziadia (Hospital Station-Emir Abdelkader Station). This station is also a bus stop that provides a link between the various districts. This point provides the adjacent population with intermodality in their daily travels.

It consists of 33 cabins, each with 15 seats (11 seated) and an estimated passengers' number of 2 000 per hour. The Constantine cable car was put into operation in June 2008. It has been a great success since the first years of its operation, with the wilaya's transport department recording more than 2 million passengers in 2011. But following successive stoppages for maintenance reasons, the frequentation rate has decreased over the years (Tab.03). The maintenance shutdown in 2016 coincided with the change of management and operation of ETUSC to the Algerian Cable Transport Company (ETAC)²³. On April 2, 2018, the shutdown for a major renovation operation was completed within 16 months, but it has still not been put back into operation due to the sudden halt of half the construction for unknown reasons.

Tabel 3. Number of passengers carried by the Constantine cable car 2013-2018

Year	Number of travellers
2013	1 286 600
2015	1 935 900
2016 (Jan- Feb- Dec)	484 818
2017	1 995 511
2018 (Jan- Fev- Mar)	592 617

Source: Transport Directorate of the wilaya of Constantine, Report 2013-2017-

²³Entreprise de Transport Algérien par Câble

2018-2020. Bakiri, 2021.

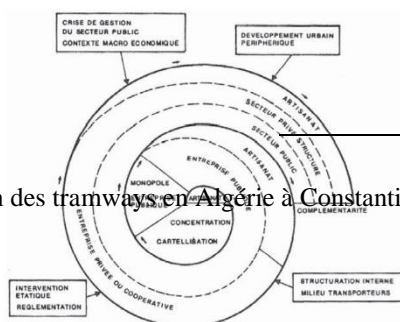
The idea that the state had to solve the problems related to transport and decongest the city by soft means of transport and essentially facilitate the movement of the population through the territory of the city was to connect the north of the city to the city center by cable car and the city center to the south of the city by tramway.

Indeed, the Constantine tramway, the first section of which was started in 2008 and put into operation in July 2013, was followed by two sections put into operation in June 2019 and October 2021. In the end, the tramway connected two important poles of the city (Mother City-New City Ali Mendjeli) and an estimated population of 40,000 in Constantine and 280,000 in Ali Mendjeli according to the RGPH 2008, serving in its passage several facilities and infrastructure (universities and directions). An ultimate, a sustainable and an urban means of transport, it has taken a long time for being fully operational in Constantine. In fact, its delivery was made in three stages:

- The first one, delivered in July 2013, covers a length of 8.1 km and connects the city center of Constantine to the suburbs of Zouaghi, with an average of 20 000 passengers per day and serving 10 stations;
- The second one will start operating in June 2019 on a 7 km stretch serving five stations. The terminus is extended to the northern gateway of the new town of Ali Mendjeli. This section has made it possible to temporarily meet the transport needs of the resident population of the new town;
- The last one has been put into operation in October 2021. The section is about 3.3 km long and leads to the University of Constantine 02, the Ali Mendjeli bus station and the commercial center Ritej mall, which serves five stations.

This type of structure requires specific planning because the tramway is a public transport system with its own right-of-way (TSCP). « *The tramway project thus tends to reorganise the urban space and even inscribe its urban directives. A new spatial framework is emerging, but not without raising many questions about its urban and landscape production* »²⁴. (Redondo, 2012, p. 15). Additional developments were generated during its passage, consisting of the development of outdoor spaces, the creation of pedestrian areas and the embellishment of the tramway line with greenery, the planting of trees, the installation of a new type of urban furniture and more reliable public lighting. It can be said that the tramway, with the redesigns that it sets up along its route, is giving a new image to the city of Constantine, with an aesthetic refreshment. Several requalification and rehabilitation

²⁴ « *Le projet de tramway tend ainsi à réaménager l'espace urbain, voire à y inscrire ses propres directives urbaines. Une nouvelle trame spatiale se dessine alors en filigrane, non toutefois sans amener de multiples interrogations, tant sur sa production urbanistique que paysagère* ». Redondo, B. (. (2012). Tramway et territoire: quel urbain en perspective? *Revue Géographique de l'Est* 52(1-2), 1-16. Traduit par l'auteur.



Source: X. GODARD, 1987, p13.

Extrapolating from this perspective, we can deduce that in the course of its evolution, a transport system is able to pass through a so-called artisanal period before evolving into a more contemporary phase. In which an urban transport system will reach high thresholds of complexity. It is in this logic that the Algerian transport sector has developed in a spiral shape: from the state/dominant actor towards the private/dominant actor and then the return of the state as a regulating actor. It is orchestrated as follows: from local historical operators to private operators within a system that has evolved quantitatively but in parallel to show its decline and its deficit in terms of competence, qualification, and management.

Therefore, this deregulation has led to an overabundance of private operators switching the market shares in terms of capacity to 94.8% for the private sector while the public sector falls to 5.1%. Currently, there are 1 365 private operators (Tab.01) in the wilaya of Constantine without counting the 3 974 taxis.

While transport plays a vital economic role, it must also expand employment opportunities and enable users to use the city's resources, such as education, care, and recreation. However, the concerned authorities are struggling to reconcile transport supply and demand. In Constantine, during our survey at the transport department, we recorded an equipment rate of 0.5 buses, equivalent to 100 seats per 1,000 inhabitants. This rate is considered insufficient when more than half of households do not own private vehicles.

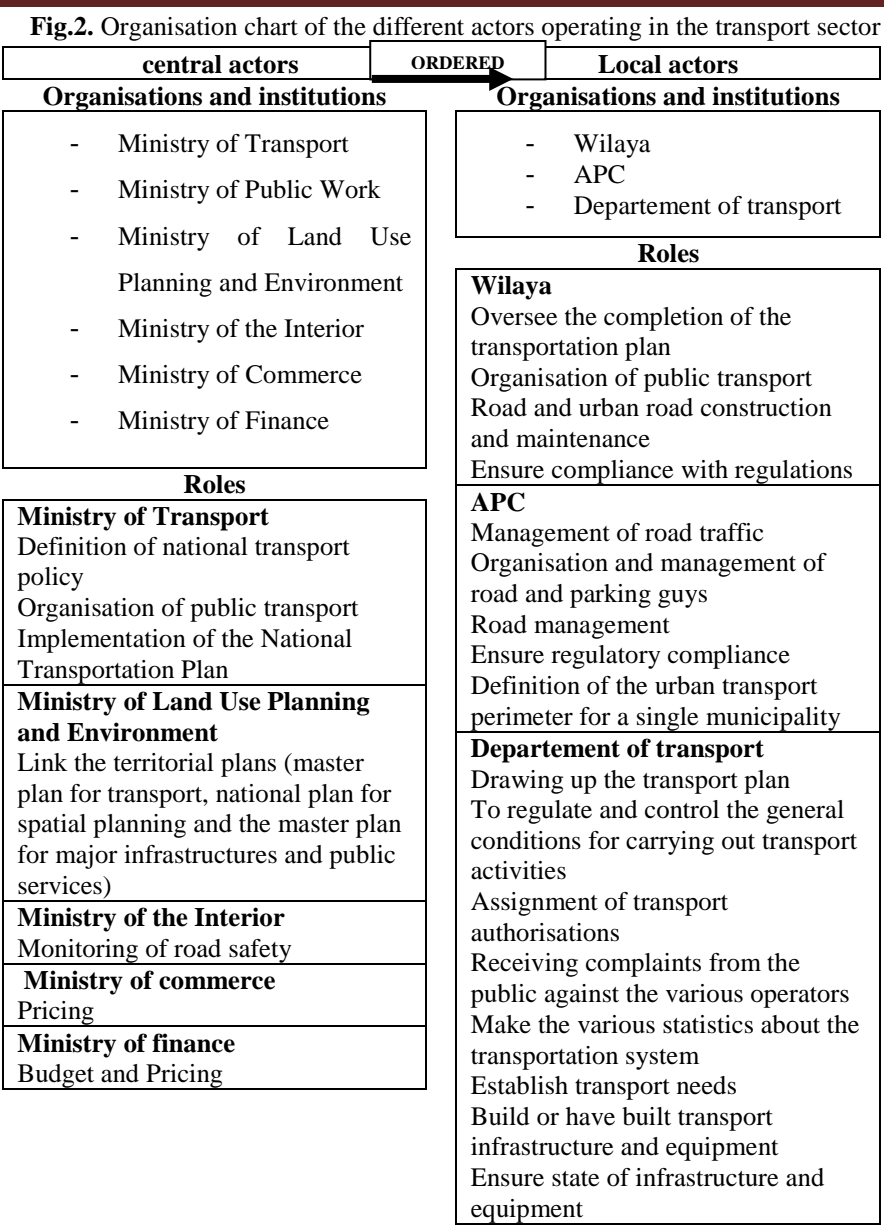
This situation is far from being mastered because the exploitation is mainly carried out by micro-enterprises (family businesses) of the artisanal type (1 vehicle per operator). This dispersion of operators aggravates this dysfunction since the responsibilities of the organisation, control, and administration are particularly difficult to assume.

In Constantine, the fleet consists of 1 857 vehicles, 61% of which are operated in the urban area of the city of Constantine, compared to only 9.1% for inter-communal travel. The comfort and quality of service on board these vehicles have deteriorated significantly over the years. This situation is reflected in particular by the obsolescence of buses. Today, the average age of buses varies between 10 and 19 years old (60% of the fleet exceeds 10 years of age (Tab.2)). Add to that, the failure to comply with the specifications assigned by the transport department to the operators (failure to comply with the routes and stops and failure to comply with the stopping time and journey time). These informal behaviours penalize the user and deprive him, in most cases, of a means of transport.

In addition, by looking at the role of the different actors in this sector, we were explained during our interviews with the various organizations concerned (Wilaya, APC, and Transport Department) that its organisation is characterised by the dispersion of competencies between many ministries and regional authorities, resulting in overlapping competencies, prerogatives, and differences in objectives for the transport sector. In order to understand the roles of these organisations within this sector, we have separated the different institutions into two groups of actors according to their hierarchies and influences: central and local actors. We then identified the missions and competencies of each organization to explain and demonstrate the different disparities that exist in this sector (see the organisational chart of the different actors operating in the sector (Fig. 2)).

This multiplicity of competence gives rise to a multiplicity of objectives, each organisation working in order to achieve its objective without taking into account the other expectations or objectives that the other institutions have drawn up. Moreover, this diversity of actors is not conducive to building a coherent and harmonious regularity because the different ministries impose different development strategies and guidelines to be followed for each local organisation. These directives were taken in a punctual manner, i.e., central decisions that did not necessarily correspond to the real situations of each city. This lack of coordination and consultation between the various parties leads to other sources of dysfunction and irregularities that prevent the creation of regulations that promote the development of this sector.

This decentralised and uncoordinated policy was the result of several failures that became generalized in all Algerian cities and which were responsible for the implementation of these territorial programmes in such circumstances, notably the incoherence between urban planning and transport planning. The increase in supply was the first effect of deregulation. This major expansion has been done without real coordination with the needs and evolution of urban travel. This scenario can be explained by the complexity of the urban problems in Algerian cities, as well as the absence of an urban policy able to organise urbanisation and transport.



Source: Produced by the author on the basis of interviews and regulatory texts

To solve these problems generated at this time, the state has implemented a new transport policy, approving several regulatory texts under the sign of sustainable development to modernise the transport system. Among these regulatory directives is the creation of an urban transport organising authority, to overcome the fragmentation of the actors and create good coordination between them. Concerning Executive Decree no. 12-109 of March 6, 2012, establishing the organization, operation, and missions of the Urban Transport Organising Authority (AOTU), the

objective was to stop these decision-making centers that exist in urban transport and put together a functional organization that meets the different requirements. In Constantine, this authority is still not installed.

In the same logic, several structuring projects in the field of transport modes have been initiated across the national territory. Namely, the cable car, the tram, and the metro. The aim of these new modes of transport is to respond to the supply of transport and to facilitate the movement of people and improve their living conditions.

However, given the different situations that this sensitive sector has experienced, urban public transport was not conceived as a project designed to improve the transport conditions of city dwellers in the long term, but rather as an emergency project to solve the problems encountered in the immediate future.

5. Conclusion:

The most significant development in the urban transport sector is its openness to private investment. Its objectives were twofold: on the one hand, to reduce youth unemployment; on the other, to provide a public service, to increase the supply of the network and to cover areas not served by transport.

However, this liberalisation was done in haste to meet the needs of the population, that is, to put on the market a quantitative offer at the expense of the qualitative aspect. This has led to several organisational and functional malfunctions whose most visible effects persist to this day. Their impact was directly felt on the quality of service offered to users. This deregulation was the factor that led to the use of the automobile as an obstacle to the development of sustainable mobility.

This has forced the authorities to rethink a new policy to put in place more adequate mass transport systems (metro, tram, and cable car) and the establishment of a real organising authority (AOTU). whose objective is to improve the quality of service and organise urban transport. This approach can be considered as an action towards a sustainable policy and would restore the importance of the well-being of the user and introduce it into the decisions of the various future transport projects.

In conclusion, the establishment of good governance requires coordination between various private and public actors, taking into account the specificities of each urban context. This reinforces territorialisation and makes it possible to build a policy that improves urban transport.

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