

READING APPROPRIATION OF PUBLIC SPACES THROUGH EVERYDAY PRACTICES: AN OBSERVATIONAL APPROACH IN THE CITY OF JIJEL, ALGERIA

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INTRODUCTION

- * **Context:** Public spaces in northern Algerian city centers are defined by a colonial urban legacy that often conflicts with contemporary local practices.
- * **Research problem:** Originally designed for colonial needs, these spaces now face socio-spatial disengagement as current use patterns shift away from the original design intent
- * **Objective:** To understand the socio-spatial specificities of public space appropriation in Jijel, identifying the mechanisms behind attraction, avoidance, or selective use.

MAIN RESULTS

Physical quality alone does not ensure appropriation:

Zone 03, despite high spatial potential, suffered from weak social safety and limited commercial activity, whereas Zone 02 showed stronger appropriation due to active commerce and bus stops (Figure 03).

Appropriation is climate-sensitive: Heavy Rain suppresses recreational use, leaving only necessary activities.

“Thursday legacy”: Thursday remains culturally perceived as a weekend day, with higher grouping levels than other weekdays, despite the 2009 shift to Friday–Saturday (Figure 2).

Space influence practice: “stopping points” stimulate gatherings.

Practice influence space: Users re-appropriate spaces, e.g., children using vegetation areas as playgrounds.

Gendered dynamics: Male-dominated “points of arrest” create discomfort for women, leading to avoidance of certain areas.

For vulnerable groups, perceived social safety outweighs physical condition.

Safety over aesthetics: Lively spaces are preferred over clean deserted ones.

METHODOLOGY

A mixed observational methodology

Multicriteria observation

Floating observation

Research protocol

Phase 1: Selection of socio-spatial indicators from literature (e.g., Gehl, Whyte, Jacobs) adapted to the local context through an internal consensus.

Phase 2: Detailed analysis of sixteen indicators over twenty days (, accompanied with floating observations.

Temporal Selection: Observations were conducted between 16:30 and 18:30. This slot was chosen because preliminary data (Kouras 2022) showed that social activity and recreational practices peak after the *El Asr* prayer, coinciding with the end of the workday and post-nap rhythms.

Spatial selection: El Emir Abdelkader Avenue (Zone 02) and the APC Zone (Zone 03). These samples were previously selected over a preliminary analysis of the colonial center public spaces (Kouras 2022):

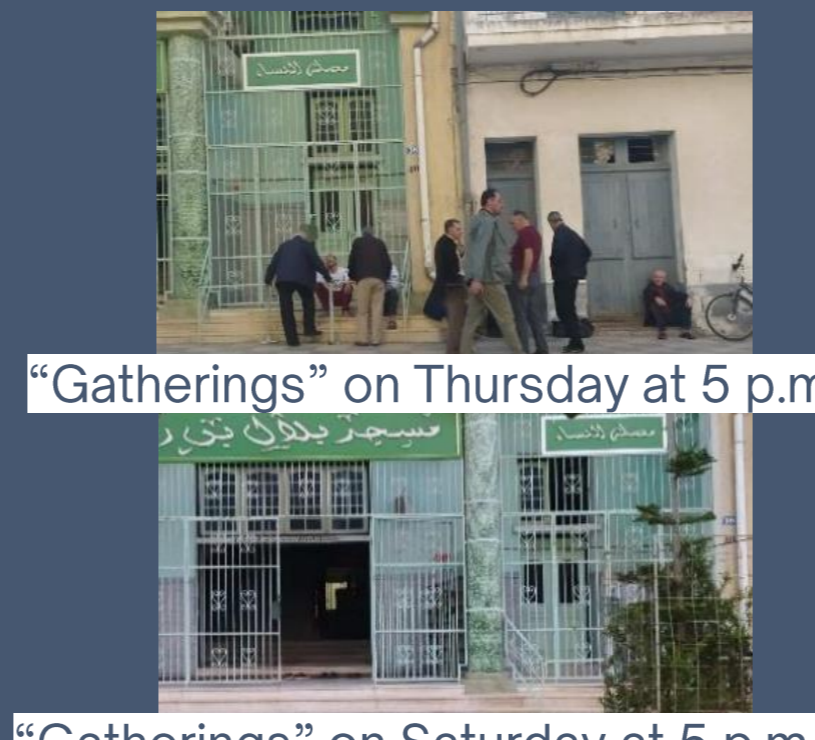
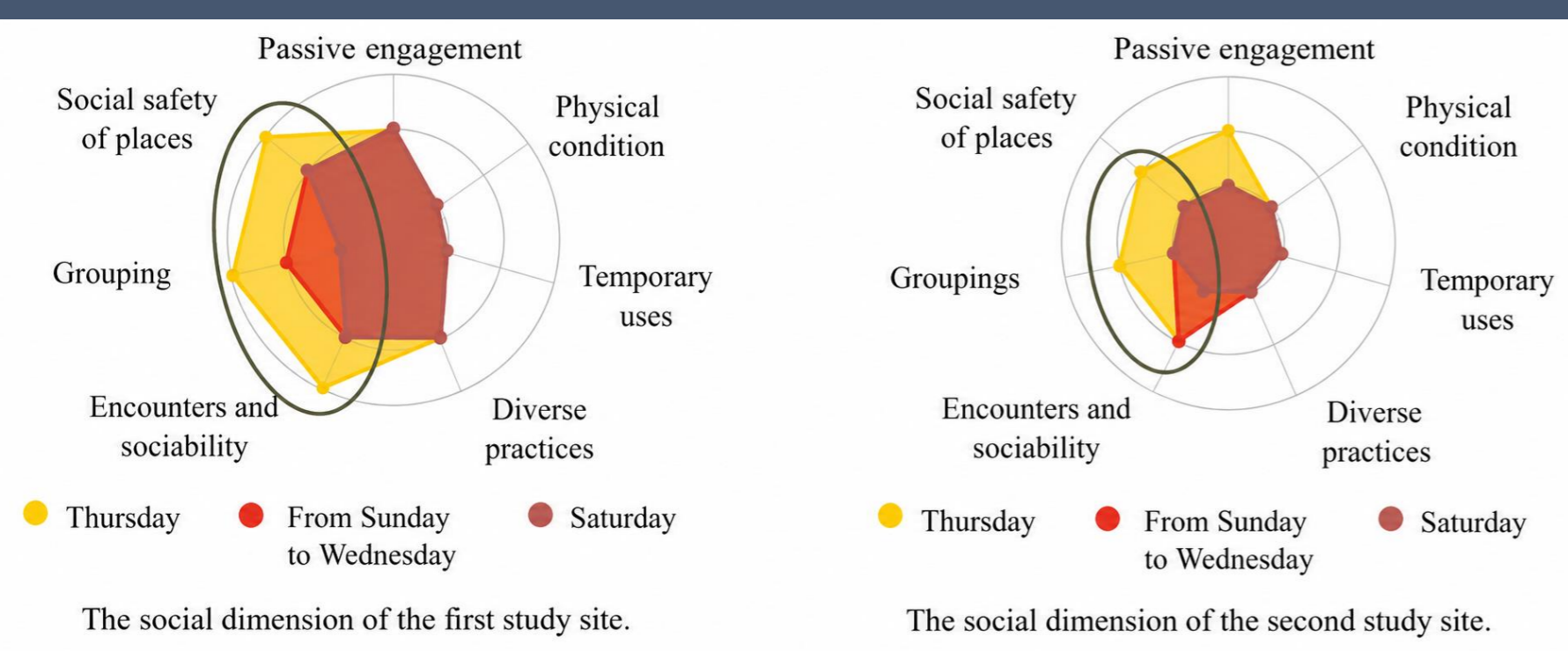
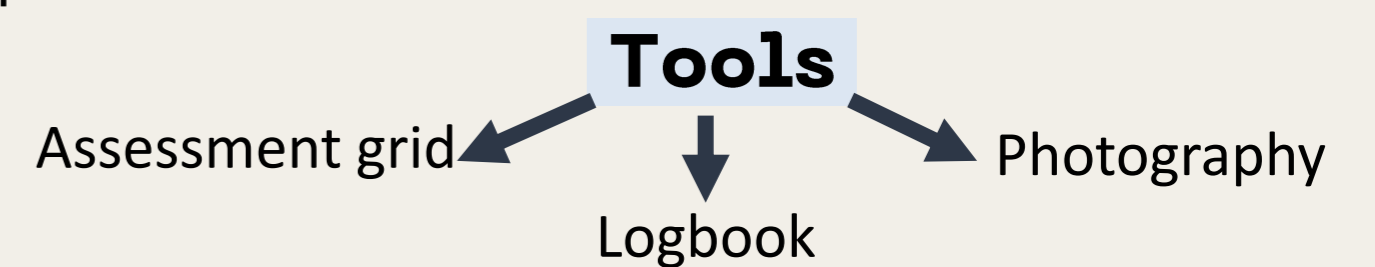


Figure 2: Evolution of social dimension indicators across the days of the week.

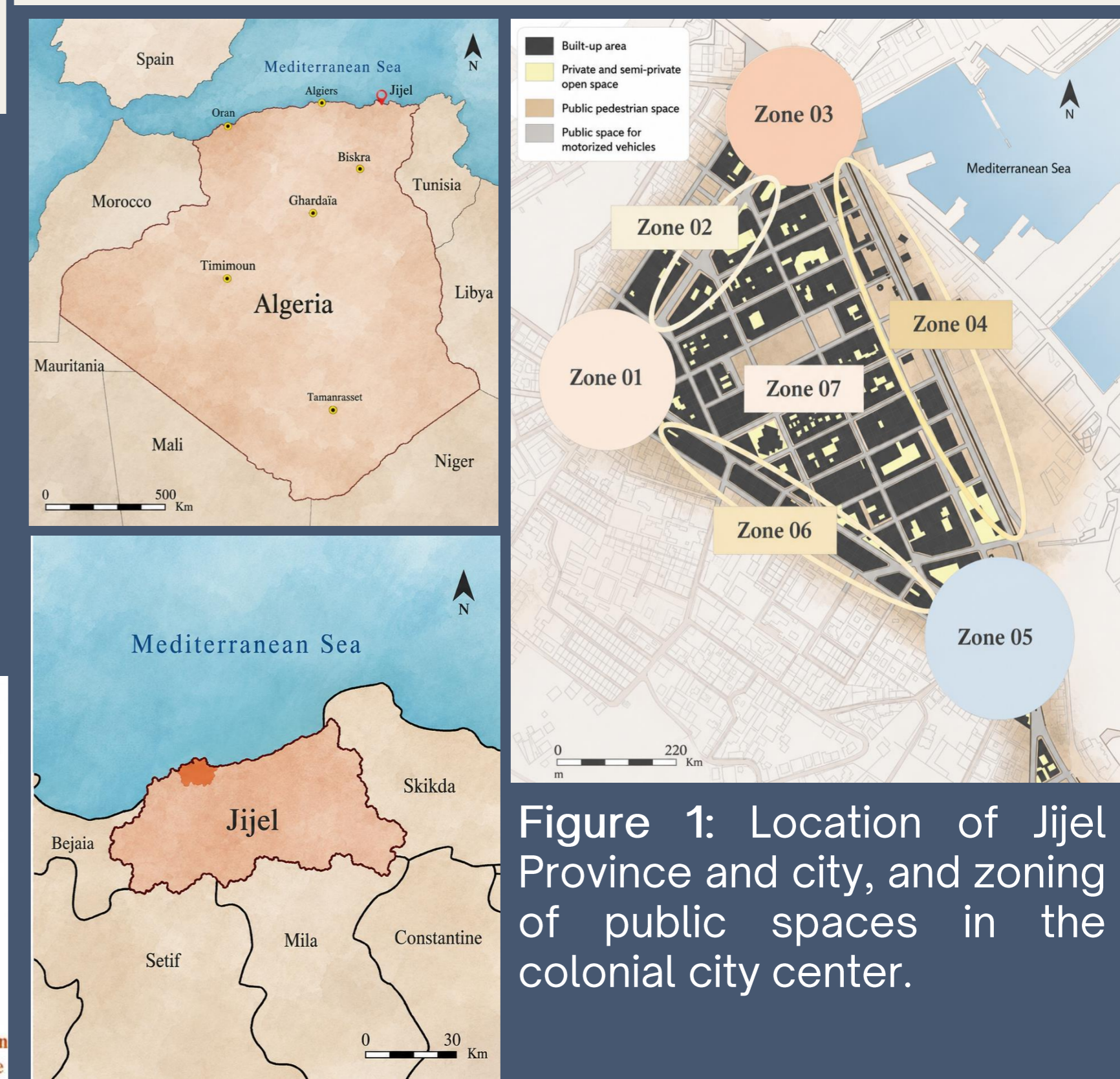


Figure 1: Location of Jijel Province and city, and zoning of public spaces in the colonial city center.

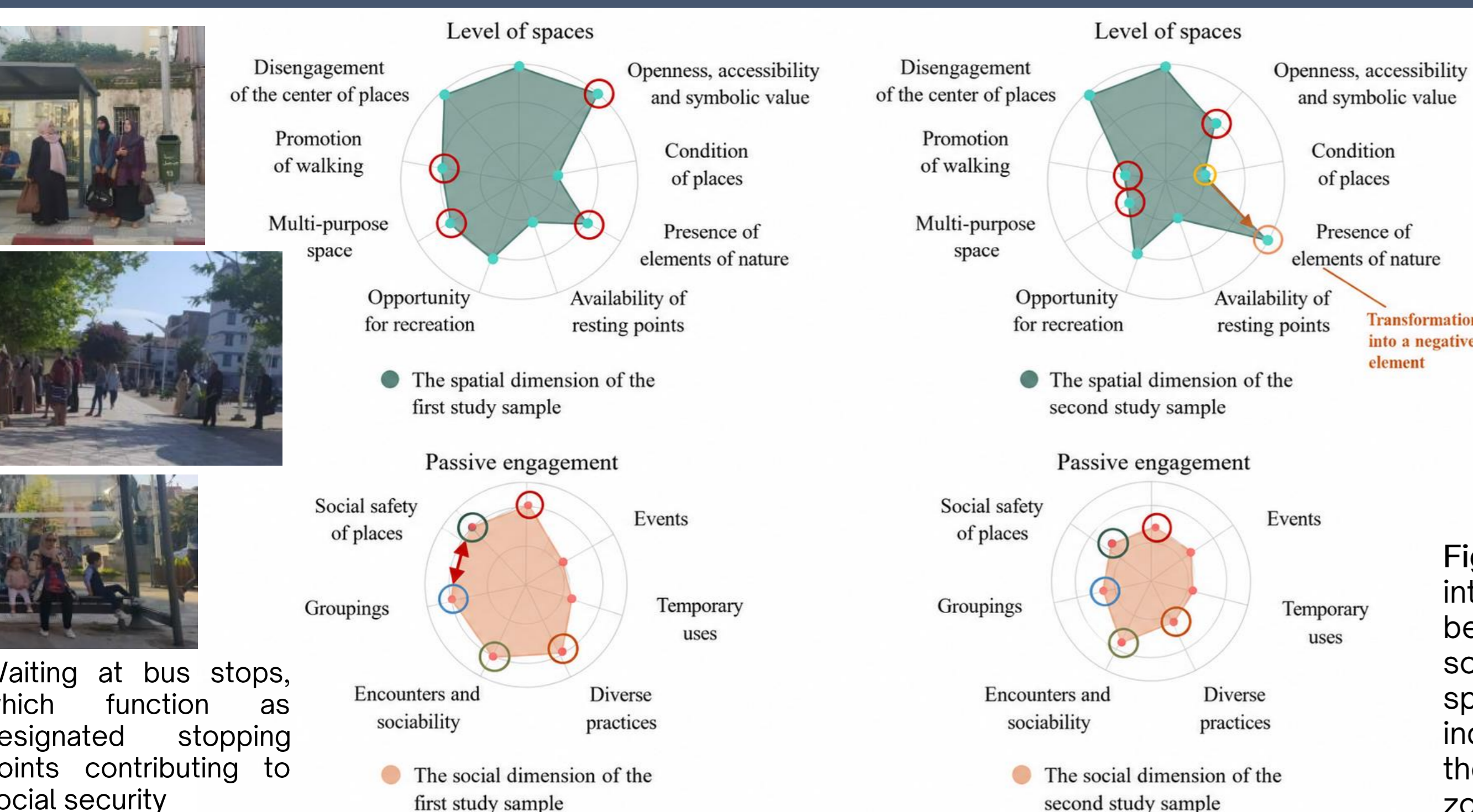


Figure 3: The interrelation between social and spatial indicators in the two zones..

CONCLUSION

Appropriation is not determined solely by physical attributes but by a combination of spatial conditions, perceived social meanings, temporal rhythms, and a collective memory that continues to organize social life