

Phenomenon of Rural Exodus and Its Impact on Urban Society

ظاهرة النزوح الريفي وتأثيرها على مجتمع المدينة

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Abstract:

Navigating through the urban landscape while addressing the daily challenges prompts the fundamental question: Where does the city begin? Its influence is pervasive, reaching beyond its borders and extending into the mountains. The city serves as a fertile ground for exploring a myriad of questions and dilemmas, both specific and broad, that pertain to Algerian society and its sociological underpinnings. Urban spaces often become the epicenters for studying social phenomena, allowing researchers to delve into the dynamics of these environments and their widespread impacts.

The rural exodus emerges as a quintessential example of such phenomena. It provides valuable insights into the dynamics between rural and urban areas, facilitating an understanding of the shifts observed during transitional periods, particularly notable in the 1990s. This era was pivotal in transforming Algeria's urban landscape, enhancing our comprehension of its realities and the key stakeholders involved.

Keywords: Rural Exodus; Urbanization; Urban Society; Sociological Impact.

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1. Introduction:

The drive towards urban migration, whether temporary or permanent, is a fundamental human impulse that activates across most societies, including Algeria. Algerian society has experienced a multitude of transformations- social, cultural, and economic- that have significantly influenced its familial and social structures. Among these transformations, the rural exodus is particularly noteworthy. It has been a persistent social phenomenon that has followed individuals and groups throughout their lives and continues to manifest in various forms and trajectories today.

This migration represents a geographical movement of individuals and groups from one locale to another within the same society. It is crucial to distinguish between geographical mobility, which entails a physical shift from one geographic area to another, and rural exodus, which is perceived as a socio-cultural transformation in the lives of migrants. This transformation often enables migrants to attain a level of social existence in the receiving communities that was unattainable in their original locales.

The significance of studying the rural exodus is underscored by its role as one of the pivotal social phenomena linked to the genesis of human societies, attracting extensive scholarly interest due to the profound social implications it engenders within societies. This interest has expanded the discourse surrounding the topics of rural exodus and internal migration more broadly. To enrich our discussion, it is essential to reference pivotal field studies that have addressed the rural exodus:

2. Field Studies:

The analysis of the transition from rural to urban settings has been extensively explored in various studies. Among the seminal works is "The Polish Peasant in Europe and America," published in 1916 by Thomas and Znaniecki. Another significant study is by Pierre

Bourdieu and Abdelmalek Sayad, titled " The crisis of traditional agriculture in Algeria" (Bourdieu & Sayad, 1964, p. 77). In the Arab context, several studies underscore the impact of rural exodus across different communities.

For instance, Janet Abu Al-Ezz's study "The Adaptation of Rural Migrants in the City: A Case Study of Cairo" (Mansour, 2001, p. 361), and the National Center for Social and Criminal Research's examination of migration to Cairo, focusing on its motives and impacts (Mansour, 2001, p. 368), are particularly noteworthy. Similarly, Abdelkader Al-Kassir's "Migration from Rural to Urban Areas: A Field Study in Morocco" (El-Kassir, 1992, pp. 105-179) provides critical insights. In Algeria, the phenomenon of rural exodus is intricately linked with other significant societal changes such as urbanization (El-Tijani, 2000, p. 35), social transformation (El-Swaidi, 2000, p. 71), industrialization (Boumakhlof, 1991, p. 820), and shifts in economic policy. (Ben Achenhou, n.d, p. 4)

This enriched historical context provides a profound backdrop for our investigation, elucidating the transformative shifts experienced by the agricultural sector and society at large during a pivotal era marked by milestones such as independence, the agricultural revolution, and industrialization. These transformations manifested in diverse responses to the subsequent developments of that time, painting a complex tableau of societal evolution.

3. The City as a Field of Study:

This scholarly curiosity dates back to ancient civilizations, with early human writings exploring "the city" through diverse lenses, from Greek philosophical musings to the detailed accounts of cities by travelers, highlighting their architecture, gates, and the theoretical frameworks they inspired. The works of Ibn Khaldun through to the intellectual ferment of the Renaissance, which significantly bolstered statistics and population science, management of urban centers, and social reform initiatives, laid the foundational stones for urban sociology's theoretical edifices. The French and English schools made substantial

contributions to this body of knowledge, enriched further by Herbert Spencer's theories on social Darwinism and organic evolution.

This academic buildup reached a pinnacle with the German school, particularly through Max Weber's theory of rationality, positing the city as the quintessential realm for rational social actions, paralleled by Karl Marx's distinction between urban and rural settings as reflective of the intellectual versus manual labor divide. (Roncayolo, 1990, p. 82)

The definitive crystallization of urban sociology was achieved through the pioneering efforts of the Chicago school in America, which positioned the city as a distinct analytical subject. The seminal work of scholars like Park, Wirth, Thomas, and Znaniecki on the Polish Peasant, drawing inspiration from the German school, spearheaded a unique theoretical orientation known as the ecological approach. This approach meticulously explores the dynamic interactions between urban and rural areas, providing a multifaceted understanding of the urban phenomenon from several vantage points. (Boumakhlof, 2001, p. 82)

A - Ideal Types: Introduced by Max Weber, the concept of the 'ideal type' serves as a conceptual model encapsulating the general characteristics a studied phenomenon may exhibit. This model is an extensive abstraction, not necessarily manifesting in reality but employed as a methodological tool to facilitate the analytical comparison of actual phenomena against this idealized framework.

B - Dualities: The examination of the city and countryside as dichotomous entities has varied among scholars, who have employed this duality to contrast different societal structures. Weber's juxtaposition of traditional and rational societies, Becker's sacred versus secular societies, Durkheim's mechanical versus organic solidarity, Redfield's folk versus urban societies, Cooley's primary versus secondary groups, and Sorokin's familial versus

contractual societies, all illustrate the diverse ways in which urban and rural dynamics have been theoretically explored.

C - Criteria: These characteristics are employed to draw distinctions between urban and rural settings:

- **Single Criterion:** This approach uses a single characteristic, such as population size, to differentiate environments. The threshold defining rural versus urban can vary by country, influenced by differing statistical standards.
- **Multiple Criteria:** This more comprehensive approach contrasts urban and rural environments through various attributes, including social mobility, community size, internal group dynamics, and the professions prevalent within these communities.

D - The Rural-Urban Continuum: This concept examines the relationship between rural and urban environments as a continuum, rather than in isolation. This perspective is central to our discussion, challenging previous methodologies that focused solely on segmented aspects of this relationship.

Efforts to systematize sociological theories within the domain of urban sociology have led to the classification of theoretical endeavors and interpretations of urban social phenomena into distinct theoretical frameworks: the psychological, social, ecological, cultural, normative, and technological approaches. These frameworks each illuminate a fundamental dimension of urban existence, ecological, social, cultural, normative, and technological, highlighting crucial aspects of urban life. Understanding these dimensions necessitates considering their interplay, as they collectively contribute to a comprehensive explanation and comprehension of urban social phenomena. Notably: (Boumakhlof, 2001, p. 82)

- **A:** There is a harmonious integration among these approaches, with no inherent contradictions; instead, each complements the others by covering different facets of urban life. This synergy underscores the complexity of urban issues and the necessity of a multidimensional analysis to grasp the full scope of urban dynamics.
- **B:** These theoretical approaches often intersect, sharing and reinforcing certain concepts, which indicates a rich exchange and integration of ideas within the field of urban sociology.

4. The Phenomenon of Rural Exodus:

The rural exodus, also recognized as internal migration, involves the movement of populations from one geographical region to another, as defined by geographers (El-Shafei, 1965, p. 105). This migration can be dissected into three categories:

- Quantity:** This type typically involves family units, thereby categorizing it as collective migration, distinguishing it from individual relocations.
- Quality:** This aspect examines whether the relocation results in a change in social status for the migrants, categorizing the move as either vertical (status-changing) or horizontal (status-maintaining).
- Time:** This dimension addresses the duration of migration, determining whether it is temporary or permanent. A migration is considered temporary if the migrant plans to stay in the urban area for only a limited period; conversely, it is deemed permanent if there is no set timeframe for return to the rural area.

The term "rural exodus" is preferred over "internal migration" to emphasize that the migrants maintain ongoing connections with their rural origins, thus they do not entirely sever ties with the rural lifestyle. Although some studies do not explicitly distinguish between these terms, they recognize rural exodus as a significant aspect of internal migration

(Braudel, cited in Saidouni, 2000, p. 25). This term was notably discussed by the English researcher Graham, who associated "rural exodus" with the broader phenomena of internal migration, the neglect of rural regions, and the depopulation of villages. (Bourdieu & Sayad, 1964, p. 13)

Abdellatif Ben Achenhou refers to "rural migration" as a total abandonment of agricultural activities, with migrants transitioning into different environments and possibly into non-agricultural activities.

This transition can be either partial or complete, defining the scope and impact of the migration on both the origin and destination settings (Bourdieu & Sayad, 1964, p. 179). This nuanced understanding of rural migration highlights the transformative effects on both individual migrants and their communities, reshaping socio-economic landscapes in both rural and urban areas.

5. The Importance of the Rural Exodus Phenomenon:

The rural exodus phenomenon, as a significant form of migration, yields profound demographic, social, and economic consequences (Jabali Ali Abdel Razzaq, 1984, p. 315) that influence both rural and urban landscapes. Research focusing on rural exodus, which often highlights the city as the primary arena of investigation, consistently underscores the persistent presence of the countryside in urban formation.

Indeed, cities do not merely exist in isolation but rather evolve in relation to the surrounding rural areas and their networks of villages (Braudel, 2000, p. 25). The impact of rural exodus on Algerian cities is manifold: it has been a constant companion through various developmental phases of the city, significantly influencing its evolution and sculpting its contemporary character. Moreover, it facilitates the interaction of new social actors within the urban environment, allowing for an in-depth exploration of these interactions and their myriad outcomes.

The 1998 census underscored a pivotal demographic shift in Algeria: the urban population reached 16,966,937, constituting 58.30% of the population, surpassing the rural population which stood at 41.70%. This marked the first census where urban inhabitants outnumbered their rural counterparts, highlighting significant shifts in population structure and distribution that underscored the substantial impact of the rural exodus during the 1990s. This surge in urban population was propelled by several factors, including the residual impacts of colonial policies, widespread poverty and diseases that exacerbated mortality rates and diminished living standards post-independence.

Consequently, these conditions spurred a higher birth rate and drove rural inhabitants towards urban centers in search of employment opportunities. This migration gave rise to the initial shantytowns and indigenous neighborhoods, significantly depopulating rural areas as residents congregated in provisional camps. This wave of migration saw approximately 2,157,000 people, or a quarter of the population, relocating to urban areas. (Bourdieu & Sayad, 1964, p. 13)

Such phenomena, while common in various formerly colonized nations, had distinctive impacts on the agricultural futures of each, with varying degrees of intensity, as evidenced in places like Morocco. (El-Kassir, 1992, p. 179) Policy responses to urban challenges have addressed the rural exodus predominantly by focusing on its immediate effects rather than its underlying causes and stages. This has led to a lack of comprehensive policies that consider the phenomenon's multifaceted nature: its historical, economic, political, and social dimensions.

Consequently, the complex situation stemming from the rural exodus has often been oversimplified into what many urban planners, policymakers, and some scholars describe as the 'ruralization' of cities. This perspective views the city as a vast village, culturally and

socially, shaped significantly by the rural lifestyles of the migrants who face challenges integrating into the modern urban fabric.

This viewpoint, which positions the phenomenon as a source of urban issues requiring resolution, is not unique to Algerian studies but is a common perspective in urban studies globally. Economically, the shift of a portion of the rural workforce into urban areas has impacted both agricultural and livestock production significantly. Simultaneously, this migration has spawned a new class of unemployed individuals and job seekers in urban centers, introducing new socio-economic challenges that necessitate strategic responses to the diverse and complex economic pressures now facing the cities. (Abdallah, 1997, p. 239)

6. The Rural Exodus Phenomenon and Its Relation to Urbanization:

Mustafa Omar Al-Tayr articulates a nuanced perspective on urbanization, emphasizing, "Although modernization is a global phenomenon, the urbanization of Arab society does not merely replicate the experiences of other societies. Some of its material aspects might resemble what has occurred and is occurring in contemporary Western societies". (El-Tayr, 1994, p. 90)

This statement underlines the unique trajectory of urbanization in Algeria and other Arab countries, distinguished primarily by the context of foreign domination and control. Such external influences have shaped urbanization not as a natural progression of societal development but as an imposed evolution. The aggressive tactics employed by settler colonialism deeply impacted the societal structure of Algeria, introducing a form of urbanization distinct from those observed in other nations. (Bourdieu & Sayad, 1964, p. 44) Following independence, the dynamic of urban development not only persisted but intensified under the direction of the state. Leveraged by significant capital derived from hydrocarbon revenues, the Algerian government embarked on ambitious social development projects.

The material transformation associated with urbanization during this period was marked by substantial societal changes. These included a shift in production patterns, an increase in rural exodus and urbanization (Sari, 1993, pp. 241-251), widespread dissemination of state education, and the expansion of social housing projects like Z.H.U.N, which followed the completion of the Constantine Plan of 1958. This transformative era is viewed as a pivotal period that contributed to a fundamental restructuring of Algerian society post-independence. Prior to French colonization, Algeria's social structure was predominantly agricultural. However, the colonial period did not succeed in establishing a robust industry-based economy but rather focused on developing an export-oriented economy reliant on a single resource.

Hussein Ben Yesaad reflects on this comparison, noting, "Just as the products of the land, especially vineyards, played a role in developing the Algerian economy similar to that of cotton in Egypt, and coffee and sugar in Brazil (Benissad, 1982, p. 9), the true movement towards industrialization in Algeria began only with the advent of the modern independent state, which dedicated its efforts to laying the foundations of a modern industrial system." Abdelkader Jeghloul emphasizes the state's strategic economic vision post-independence: "The confirmed ambition of the state is to construct a modern national economic base that facilitates self-reliance while circumventing the widespread adoption of capitalist relations.

The aim of this vigorous industrial initiative is to stimulate the rest of the national economy, particularly agriculture, to align with this development" (Jeghloul, 1993, p. 224). In the wake of independence, the industrial sector in Algeria expanded into critical areas such as iron and steel production, mechanical engineering, and petrochemicals. This expansion was instrumental in establishing major industrial centers like Arzew and El Hadjar, marking a significant milestone in Algeria's industrial landscape.

Despite facing several challenges such as maintenance issues, management inefficiencies, scarcity of financial resources, and a surplus of unqualified labor, the industrial sector in Algeria has significantly expanded its workforce. It now plays a crucial role in contributing to the national gross income and energizing foreign trade, effectively transitioning the production model from a traditional agrarian-pastoral base to a contemporary industrial and service-oriented framework.

This evolution also marks a transformative shift from traditional family labor to waged economic labor, thereby catalyzing complex patterns of social and professional mobility across the nation. The migration of Algerian farmers from their villages to urban centers, a movement initiated by the colonial administration's aggressive campaign to expropriate their lands, signifies the first significant wave of rural migration in the history of Algeria.

This initial wave was succeeded by two additional migrations; the first aligned with the nascent years of independence, predominantly involving rural inhabitants and refugees from neighboring nations such as Tunisia and Morocco. The subsequent wave was closely tied to the early stages of industrialization. Abdelkader Jeghloul observes: "Following independence, a second migration wave emerged, presenting the challenge of filling the void left by the colonizers and entering spheres that were previously inaccessible, while also leveraging the benefits of newly acquired modernization. The third wave was synchronized with the beginning of industrialization". (Jeghloul, 1993, pp. 225-226)

This phenomenon of rural exodus, driven by an unequal distribution of job opportunities, along with disparities in social, health, and educational services, continues to shape societal dynamics to this day. The economic and social development strategies embraced by the modern state have spurred an increased demand for education (Zarhouni, 1994, p. 229), altering its function from merely supplying the local French administration

with functionaries and civil servants to preparing a cadre of professionals required by various sectors such as industry, agriculture, and services.

This educational shift aims to produce a skilled workforce including engineers, technicians, doctors, pharmacists, teachers, and educators, aligning with the nation's developmental goals. The migration from rural areas to urban centers during the 1990s was marked by its urgent and compelled nature, triggered by a series of security incidents. The decisions to migrate were made hastily, leading to phased urban settlements that varied according to the economic conditions of the time, profoundly influencing the types of housing that became available to migrants.

7. The City as a Subject of Social Representations:

The exploration of social representations of the city can be traced back to the work of Jodelet Denise, particularly her insightful examination of Paris's image in her seminal article "La ville représentation socio-spéciale." This study delved into how Paris is perceived by its residents, employing a methodology where respondents were provided with maps of Paris.

They were asked to annotate these maps with their personal routes and attach pre-defined attributes to various neighborhoods. This innovative approach not only illuminated the personal and collective perceptions of the urban landscape but also highlighted the complex layers of identity and memory that residents associate with their urban environment.

8. Rural and Urban Characteristics:

Social science researchers, particularly sociologists, are dedicated to pinpointing the distinct characteristics of societal patterns, which not only aids in their systematic analysis but also bestows a layer of scientific legitimacy to their studies. In one of the widely accepted

classifications of societal phenomena, communities are divided into rural and urban categories.

These categories are often considered as diametric opposites, representing distinct forms of societal organization. However, the attempt to differentiate these community types encounters complexities, as numerous cities exhibit a blend of rural traits and urban life characteristics. Similarly, some villages may display urban-like features in their activities and infrastructure.

Research conducted globally underscores the absence of a definitive boundary between villages and cities, revealing a continuum where rural and urban characteristics intermingle and influence each other (El-Khashab, 1976, p. 62). To advance beyond theoretical disputes and gain a deeper understanding of each community type, researchers have endeavored to identify and articulate the key traits and characteristics distinguishing rural from urban communities. It is crucial to acknowledge, however, that delineating rural from urban characteristics—and noting their differences—is a task of descriptive science, devoid of any normative judgments that might favor one over the other. Scholars have diligently worked to delineate rural and urban areas by focusing on a set of distinctive characteristics. Among the most significant classification criteria are those proposed by "Sorokin" and "Zimmerman": (Ouda, 1998, pp. 70-71)

A - Population Size: The fundamental distinction between rural and urban areas often begins with population size, a criterion employed by many countries, including Algeria, in their administrative divisions. This classification typically portrays villages as smaller and less populated compared to urban communities, suggesting an inverse relationship between ruralness and population size, while urbanity and population size are directly proportional. (Abd El-Moneim Nour, 1978, p. 92)

However, reliance solely on this criterion can be misleading, as numerous villages around the world, despite having large populations, maintain a rural character and continue predominantly agricultural activities.

B - Population Density: Population density is another metric used to differentiate between rural and urban communities. This involves considering the number of people relative to a specific area and includes factors such as housing type (vertical vs. horizontal), geographic space distribution, and the extent of inhabitable versus uninhabitable areas. The surrounding farmland area of each village also plays a role. Despite these considerations, density alone proves to be an imprecise measure, as some densely populated villages still retain pronounced rural characteristics.

C - Difference and Homogeneity: Rural communities are often characterized by a higher degree of homogeneity and cohesiveness, influenced by kinship and other underlying social factors. In contrast, urban communities are typically more heterogeneous, showcasing a broader diversity in nationalities, professions, and occupations.

This diversity in urban areas manifests in various social norms ranging from collective behaviors to customs and laws, reflecting the rich tapestry of urban society as noted by Sorokin and Zimmerman. (Abd El-Moneim Nour, 1978, p. 99)

D - Social Stratification and Mobility: Urban environments are marked by a distinct hierarchical stratification and a fluidity in social mobility, enabling residents to ascend from one social level to a higher one with relative ease. On the contrary, rural communities often exhibit a rigidity in social mobility, where upward movement is less dynamic.

T.L. Smith highlights that while the remnants of a closed class system are less perceptible in the urban stratification, in a village, the familiarity among residents means an individual's family status can significantly influence and define their social position (Abd El-

Moneim Nour, 1978, p. 101). Recognizing the importance of social mobility, Sorokin and Zimmerman have extensively explored it from various perspectives, including:

- _ Migration from rural to urban areas and from one urban area to another.
- _ Movement from one profession to another.
- _ Ascension or descent on the social ladder.
- _ Movement from one place to another within the city.

E - System of Social Interactions: The social fabric of any community is intricately woven with various elements, among which the system of social interactions among its members stands paramount. Observers have noted that in urban settings, individuals engage more frequently with a broader spectrum of people.

These interactions are often impersonal and transient, primarily driven by short-term mutual interests. In contrast, rural settings are characterized by more sporadic and intimate interactions that tend to be longer-lasting and deeply personal, sometimes leading to enduring disputes. Attempting to distill the essence of urban characteristics, Wirth provided a comprehensive outline of what defines a city: (Abd El-Moneim Nour, 1978, p. 10)

- _ Cities are marked by their large populations.
- _ Urban areas show higher densities of populations.
- _ Cities are dynamic spaces characterized by continuous growth, often adopting secular and rationalistic traits.
- _ Urban centers are melting pots of diversity, containing a mixture of races, classes, and social groups.

- _ In cities, secondary relationships predominate, where interactions are less personal and more functional.
- _ Urban life is largely governed by formal social characteristics, where law and institutional frameworks play a significant role.

Conversely, Lynn Smith in his exploration of rural sociology, describes the defining traits of rural societies as follows: (El-Johari & Shakri, 1996, pp. 258-259)

- _ **Occupation:** Dominantly agricultural, influencing the social, cultural, and psychological makeup of the community.
- _ **Community Size:** Typically smaller with fewer inhabitants.
- _ **Population Density:** Generally lower, tailored to the demands of agricultural activities.
- _ **Natural Environment:** More pronounced and defining, fostering distinct community traits.
- _ **Social Inequality:** Less variation among individuals, with a greater degree of similarity.
- _ **Class Division:** Minimal differences with a narrower gap between the highest and lowest rungs of the social ladder.
- _ **Social Mobility:** Characterized by weaker social ties and a higher degree of isolation.

9. Results and Impacts of Migration from Rural to Urban Areas:

The transition from rural to urban settings catalyzes profound and diverse impacts on both the source rural communities and the destination urban areas. This migration significantly influences population dynamics, altering size, distribution, and demographic composition across several axes, age, gender, occupation, class, and educational level.

In rural settings, migration tends to strip these communities of their most vibrant and productive young populace, leaving an imbalance with a higher proportion of the elderly and very young. This demographic shift poses challenges but also provides potential relief from unemployment and can elevate overall living standards through remittances and enhanced economic opportunities.

In urban realms, the influx of people, while injecting economic vitality, can strain infrastructure and lead to urban sprawl. This expansion often precipitates environmental degradation as burgeoning neighborhoods may lack adequate urban planning and essential services such as robust housing, efficient transportation systems, and adequate public utilities. Furthermore, the underdevelopment of health, educational, and recreational services in these rapidly expanding areas can foster the proliferation of various social ailments.

At the family level, the movement from rural to urban environments is a critical process with the potential to disrupt traditional family structures profoundly. It can lead to the disintegration of familial units, alter relationships among family members, and erode the bonds that hold traditional family systems together. This transformative shift in family dynamics reflects the broader social adjustments that individuals and communities must navigate as they transition from rural to urban lifestyles.

10. CONCLUSION:

Sociology, as an academic discipline, has faced notable challenges in securing its foothold within the Algerian academic landscape (Gharid, 2004, p. 67). Despite these hurdles, the field continues to diligently work toward the generation of comprehensive, cumulative scientific knowledge. Focusing primarily on urban studies, sociology confronts a pivotal phenomenon that plays a critical role in the urbanization process: the rural exodus.

This phenomenon is not merely a backdrop but a dynamic force that has been integral to all phases of urban development in Algeria. It interacts profoundly with and is influenced by the multifaceted layers of the nation's economic, social, political, and cultural fabric.

The study of the rural exodus reveals that this type of migration was not a deliberate, planned process but rather a compelled adaptation to circumstances. It emerged during a tumultuous period in Algerian history, marked by abrupt and forceful changes reminiscent of the colonial era. This migration has left a lasting imprint on the entire fabric of Algerian society, affecting both rural origins and urban destinations. It represents a broad, transformative shift that has redefined the societal landscape.

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