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Settlement of Populations in New Cities in Algeria: A Field Study in the New City of "Ali Mendjeli"

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Abstract:
The experience of new urban communities, or "new cities," represents an urban planning solution to the problems of major cities and their overpopulation. It is a necessary measure to alleviate population density. The short-term objective is to transform the lifestyles of relocated residents from their previous living conditions to a more modern and planned urban lifestyle. In the long term, the goal is to achieve adaptation processes in the new urban environment. Adaptation, along with challenges related to stability and forming new social relationships that align with the nature of the new urban community, are significant challenges in establishing and developing new ies

Keywords: *Settlement, Urbanization, New Cities, Algeria*

I. INTRODUCTION

Due to urban expansion in the 21st century, scientific and technological development, along with advancements in communication and transportation, and the accumulation of capital, cities worldwide are facing crises related to increased demand and housing needs. This has led to the spread of informal and slum areas, increased pressure on service and educational institutions, traffic congestion, and various structural transformations that have posed numerous spatial and urban challenges and environmental degradation. Consequently, countries have adopted strategies to construct new cities and urban communities to enhance social life and achieve well-being for residents. Today, new cities have become an architectural model emulated by urban expansion in countries with the material and technological capabilities to establish such advanced urban settlements, equipped with diverse and integrated facilities and services within a coordinated and developed urban network, as well as redrawing the population and urban map.

Chapter One: Study Fundamentals

1. **Problem Statement:**

We live today in a dynamic and changing world where innovations and achievements accelerate in all fields. This has placed societies directly in the face of multiple and complex challenges on various social, economic, cultural, political, and even urban levels, especially amid the transformations cities and capitals are undergoing due to the wave of urbanization sweeping across countries, in addition to the repercussions of population explosion. This situation has made planners and decision-makers face significant difficulties in achieving progress, welfare, and optimal utilization of human capital. Regarding urban and developmental alternatives to solve the problems of these cities, various countries have adopted the new city policy as a central strategy within urban planning mechanisms in the context of sustainable urban development. The establishment of new cities in Algeria represents a new generation of developmental urban projects within the urban policy, situated at the heart of the demographic and urban dynamics experienced by Algerian society. Furthermore, it is a new approach to spatial planning and urban organization, as well as the redistribution of the urban environment. However, the issue raised is that these projects have been treated as construction or housing projects in their structural sense, not in their settlement concept, which includes the human and social aspect. Therefore, the main concern has shifted not necessarily towards creating new cities but focusing on the growing interest in resettling populations within the social process resulting from their displacement to establish a new urban lifestyle.

From here, the topic of settling populations in new cities becomes clear, especially concerning the challenges facing this process and its nature, as well as understanding the settlement patterns of migrants and their attitudes towards social adaptation, and their attempts to recreate their previous lifestyle in the new urban environment. This leads us to question :

- What factors influence the success of the settlement process in new cities?

  This will address aspects related to:
- How does the dynamics of social interaction among residents affect the success of the settlement process?
- Does the attachment to the previous place of residence influence the settlement process in new cities?

2. **Study Hypotheses:**

The above questions are addressed through the following hypotheses:

General Hypothesis: The success of the settlement process is linked to the adaptation of residents to the new urban environment.

This hypothesis includes the following main points:

- Establishing social relationships among residents in new cities contributes to their adaptation.
- Severing ties with their previous place of residence contributes to the success of the settlement process.

3. **Study Importance :**

The importance of this study lies in its social aspect and its multiple dimensions. The settlement process is a necessary mechanism for developing new cities, and the success of this experience is linked to creating a socially stable and self-sufficient new urban community. The study aims to monitor the settlement patterns of migrants, understand their attitudes towards social adaptation, and examine the nature of their social relationships in the new urban environment.

4. **Study Objectives :**
5. To identify factors associated with the success of the settlement process in new cities.
6. To understand the extent of residents' attachment to their previous place of residence and its impact on their adaptation to the new environment.

To explore factors related to migrants' adaptation to new cities and their integration into the new urban life.

Study Methodology:

The study relied on the descriptive approach, which includes observation, survey, analysis, and interpretation, to gather as much descriptive theoretical information as possible about the phenomenon of settlement in new cities. This approach was also used in the field aspect by analyzing the information obtained during the processing of the questionnaire to confirm or refute the hypotheses.

6. **Conceptual Clarification :**

6.1. **Settlement:** It is the process aimed at relocating populations from one place to another as part of a population policy aimed at balancing population distribution. It also refers to a social process seeking to establish a community in its new environment and create an atmosphere that encourages investment. There are various settlement patterns, including:

- **Spontaneous Settlement:** This is related to the voluntary movement of populations from one area to another.
- **Forced Settlement:** This occurs due to natural disasters or political reasons.
- **Voluntary Settlement:** This involves voluntary migration of groups from an old area to a new one to settle around investment projects.
- **Planned Settlement:** This results from a deliberate, pre-planned process, often associated with national development projects serving political and social objectives, and can involve selecting specific groups or relocating entire communities.

6.2. **Stages of the Settlement Process:**

- **Conceptualization Stage:** Decisions are made at the national level, defining the main objectives of settlement and the nature of the settlement process.
- **Planning Stage:** Priorities and objectives are set, along with the nature of resources, organizational structure, and economic and social work programs

C. Implementation Stage of the Work Plan: This occurs when groups move to the new area. At this point, the effectiveness of social engineering becomes evident in addressing adaptation issues, as economic success is not limited to the establishment of infrastructure alone but also relies on social success in motivating individuals to be productive.

6-1-3. Settlement Pattern of Planned Communities: It is an integrated construction process that involves changes in the original environmental and cultural conditions, aimed at developing and improving human and economic resources and raising the social level. This pattern of resettling selected groups of people is the prevailing model in many planned community projects worldwide due to its need for specific social and economic regulations. This is done through a well-studied plan that identifies the necessary human, economic, technological, and organizational resources required to establish these communities and determines the stages of implementation and monitoring.

6-2. Urbanization: A way of life that includes economic, social, cultural, and political components, provided that this way is embodied in patterns of thought and behavior that can be described as urban thought, i.e., urban behavior. The lifestyle is defined through the relationship of the population with their surrounding environment and their attempts to benefit from it. It is linked to the social structure as a whole, influencing all aspects of life in society. It is also a process that affects the social systems that form the social structure and is closely related to the prevailing value system. It takes shape in light of people's ideas, traditions, and customs and influences the determination of their behavior patterns according to these values. It is also defined as the spread of urban behavior patterns and ways of thinking, meaning the spread of the characteristics and traits of city and urban life among a group.

6-3. Urbanism: "A type of adaptation to a new community life following a change in lifestyle from one pattern to another." It is a pattern of behavior, and no doubt, all behavior is purposeful and regulated. Thus, urban behavior patterns, their rules, and goals are necessarily phenomena derived from the prevailing norms and systems of the urban structure.

6-4. Social Adaptation: The modification of behavior according to the conditions of social organization, group traditions, and the dominant culture in society.

6-5. Urban Integration: The ability of the (individual–family) to live in the city and participate in its various economic, social, cultural, and political activities. According to "Lodri," for collective participation and integration to occur, all residents must show their belonging to the city as a shared interest. He believes that the problem of collective life, especially regarding participation in political life, lies in the collective integration of the inhabitants of a local community. Urban integration takes on a cultural dimension, which is the internalization of collective ideals and shared urban values that organize collective life, essentially based on neighborhood, coexistence, cooperation, and respect; and a social dimension, which is entering into interdependent relationships with others through the exchange of benefits within formal institutions based on the division of labor.

6-6-1. New Cities: A community with specific components in terms of building social and economic systems, particularly related to the ecological and political factors necessary for its survival. This community was created through planned human will to achieve primarily economic and social objectives, aiming to overcome the problems posed by the old community, which emerged due to population increase, material shortages, or the disruption of social relationships.

6-6-2. Foundations for the Emergence of New Cities:

- Providing employment for the majority of the population.
- Ensuring service integration and completion before relocating the population.
- Achieving integration among various groups and different organizations.
- Ensuring public participation in developing the new community.

Second: The Field Aspect of the Study:

1-1. General Scope of the Study: The new city of "Ali Mendjeli."

It occupies a strategic location relative to the city of Constantine, supported by several features, namely:

- Located south of the city of Constantine, at a distance of about 13 km.
- Positioned on road axes :
    - Provincial road No. 101, which cuts through and divides it into northern and southern parts, forming the main structural axis of the new city.
    - National road No. 79, which passes nearby.
    - The East–West highway, which passes to its north at a distance of 4 km.
    - "Mohamed Boudiaf" International Airport, located east of the city, facilitates connections with other cities, provinces, and even abroad.

Therefore, the new city of Ali Mendjeli was established through the master plan for development and urbanization drawn up in accordance with Law 90/29 dated December 1, 1990, concerning the definition of planning and development tools, aiming to relieve pressure on the parent city.

The master development and urbanization plan for the Constantine urban agglomeration was approved in 1998 under Executive Decree No. 98/83 dated February 25, 1998, noting that the plan appeared in 1994.

1-2. Spatial Organization of the City of Ali Mendjeli: In order to control the organization of the city and to ensure a balanced distribution between the population and the various facilities and services, the city was divided into neighborhood units (*unité de voisinage*), which are residential groups, planned and spatially organized, ensuring the smooth running of various residential and recreational functions. These are accompanied by other productive and service activities that support the established residential function.

1-3. Specific Scope of the Study: Work on neighborhood unit 06 began in 1993. It is located in the northeastern part, close to the urban center and activity area and the axis of provincial road No. 101. The construction lasted 7 years, after which the population began to settle. Its area is estimated at 40.37 hectares (2.7% of the total area of the city). The number of programmed housing units is 3101, of which 1701 have actually been built, and the rest are under construction. (*Report from OPGI*).

3. The Sample:

The study was conducted on families selected from the specific area of the study (UV06), which includes four neighborhoods: the 329-housing neighborhood, the 92-housing neighborhood, the 490-housing neighborhood, and the 290-housing neighborhood—the latter being where the research sample was determined. It is an irregular random sample at a rate of 10%, i.e., 29 houses, selected through random drawing. It is worth noting that five houses were uninhabited, in addition to four questionnaires that were lost and not recovered. Thus, we had 20 questionnaires for analysis.

Third: Analysis of the Field Study Results

Axis One: Personal Data

1. **Age:**

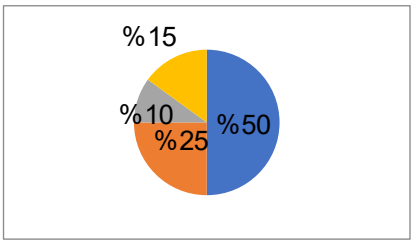


Figure No. 01: Age Group

From the data presented in Figure No. 01, it is clear that the research sample included both youth and middle-aged individuals. The age group 20–29 years accounted for the highest percentage, estimated at 50%. This is the youth category, which is considered the main driving force in society and its development. The other categories pertain to middle-aged individuals, or more precisely, heads of households.

Gender:

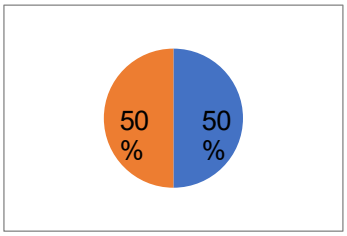
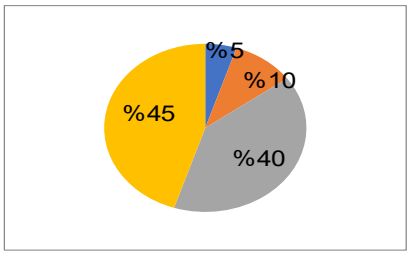


Figure No. 02: Graph Showing Gender

Figure No. 02 shows that the research sample included both genders (male and female) equally. Each has their own role in the study community, and their perspective on the subject of the study differs accordingly, reflecting a diversity of viewpoints and realities.

Educational Level :

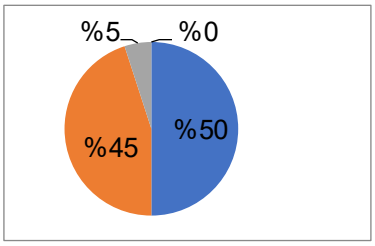
Figure 03: Educational Level of the Research Sample



According to the above chart, we observe a diversity in the educational level of the respondents. The highest percentage was recorded among those with a university-level education, followed by those with a secondary-level education. This adds significance to the research through their responsiveness to the questionnaire and achieving a greater level of understanding.

4. **Marital Status:**

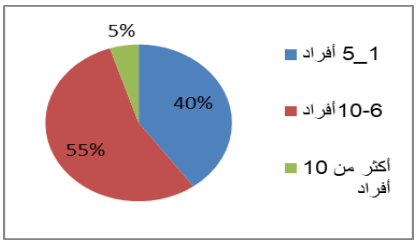
Figure 04: Marital Status of the Research Sample



The chart illustrating the marital status of the research sample shows that the respondents range from single to married, with a recorded case of divorce.

Here, we can observe the diversity of roles among the individuals in the sample within their families, and as a result, their responses to the study vary accordingly.

5. Family Size:



Through the data presented in Chart 05, it is evident that the study highlights an important characteristic of Algerian families, which is that they are typically extended families. The study showed that 55% of the total households have more than 6 members, while the rest of the sample consists of medium-sized families (less than 6 members). Additionally, the study revealed in later sections that most of the housing units for the individuals in the sample are of the F4_F3 type. Given the specific nature of Algerian society, its customs, traditions, and religious teachings, it is possible that the homes may feel cramped for the family.

Section 2: Data Related to Settlement in the New City

6. **Duration of Residence in the New City:**

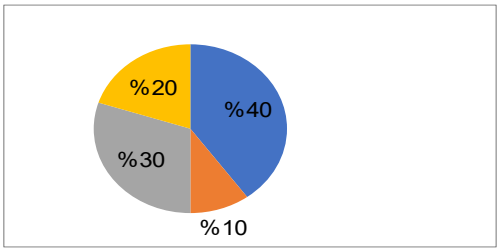


Chart 06: Duration of Residence of the Respondents in the New City

Chart 06 confirms that 75% of the research sample moved to reside in the new city more than 15 years ago, which is a sufficient period for residents to integrate into the new urban lifestyle, as they are among the first inhabitants of the new city. The remaining percentage has been living there for less than 15 years, which is also a reasonable period for settling in.

7. Type of Previous Resident

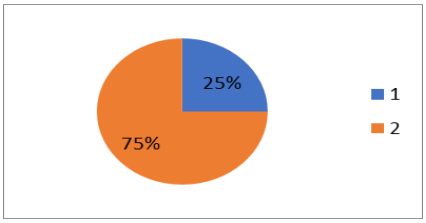


Chart 07: Type of Previous Residence of the Research Sample

By analyzing the data in Chart 07, we observe that 40% of the respondents previously lived in apartments within buildings, which is the same urban style prevalent in the new city. This means they are accustomed to living in this type of housing. The next percentage, 30%, indicates that their previous residence was traditional (Arab house), followed by 20% who lived in tin houses. None of these were accustomed to living in this style, which could present challenges in utilizing the internal and external spaces of the building. Finally, single-family homes were also recorded.

8. Suitability of Previous Residence:

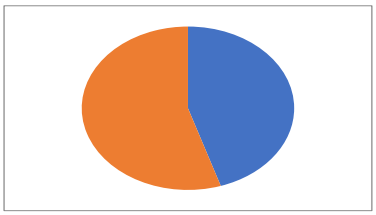


Chart 08: Suitability of the Previous Residence

According to Chart 08, 55% of the research sample stated that their previous residence was not suitable for living. Most of them justified this by mentioning that it was cramped and did not fit the size of their families. Another percentage indicated that the reason was its location in a slum area or its old condition. In both cases, the residence was deemed unsuitable. On the other hand, 45% confirmed that their previous residence was suitable, and their reasons for moving to the new city were unrelated to housing.

9. Reason for Moving to the New City:

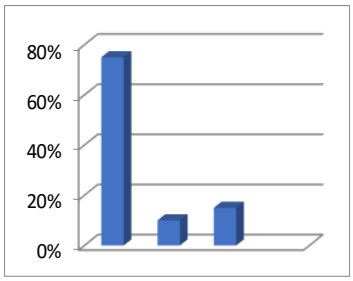


Chart 09: Reasons for Moving to the New City

As shown in Chart 09, 75% of the research sample moved to the new city by submitting applications for social housing, as they were experiencing overcrowding in their previous residences due to the large size of their families. They came from different regions both inside and outside the province, with some living in slum areas or locations at risk of collapse. 10% of the sample moved to the new city for work purposes and thus acquired housing there. The remaining portion of the sample mentioned that they moved to the new city voluntarily, either by purchasing a house or in search of a change of residence. One of the respondents stated that they moved to the new city to change their neighborhood.

10. Number of Rooms in the Current Residence:

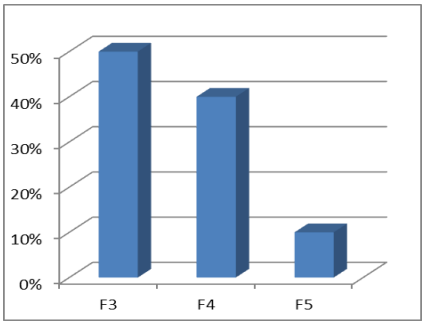
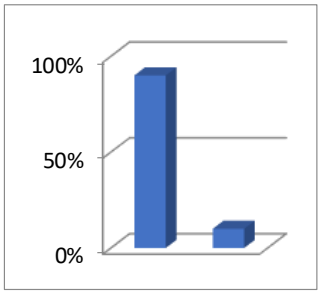


Chart 10: Types of Housing for the Respondents

The chart above shows that half of the sample owns homes of the F3 type, which is widely distributed in the research community and has the largest share of the total housing types available. However, it should be noted that this type often does not match the size of the Algerian family, which is extended, as confirmed by the previous results. This means that the issue of overcrowding remains a concern, especially as children grow older. Following this, the F4 type comes next at 40%, and finally, the F5 type at 10%, both of which are suitable for the Algerian family.

11. Suitability of the New Residence:

Figure 11: Illustrates the suitability of the new housing for the research sample

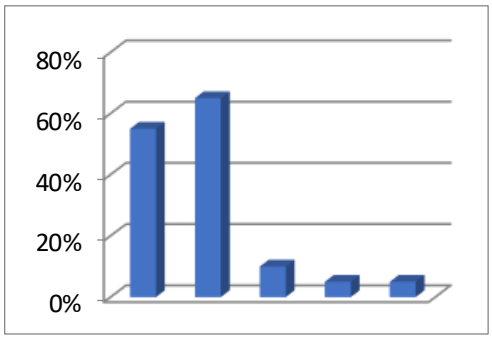


From Figure 11, we find that 90% of the research sample stated that the new housing is suitable, meaning it is better than the previous housing, which reflects a certain level of satisfaction with the new residence. The remaining percentage mentioned that it is unsuitable due to being cramped, meaning it does not accommodate the size of their families.

Axis Three: Data Related to Social Relationships with Residents in the New City

12. How the sample members got to know their friends and neighbors:

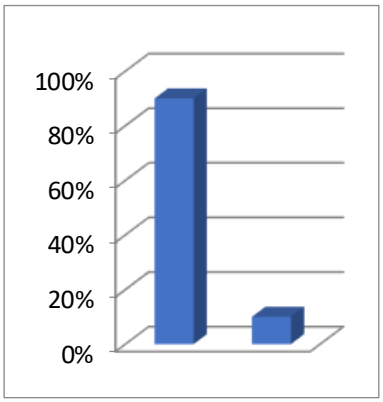
Figure 12: Illustrates how the sample members got to know their friends and neighbors



The above chart shows that the research sample members got to know their new friends and neighbors in various places, primarily within the neighborhood and the building. This is due to the frequent interaction among residents in these areas and their shared interests, which created opportunities to form new relationships. Other places, such as workplaces, cafés, and markets, were also mentioned, but to a lesser extent.

13. Continuation of the respondent's relationships with friends in their previous place of residence:

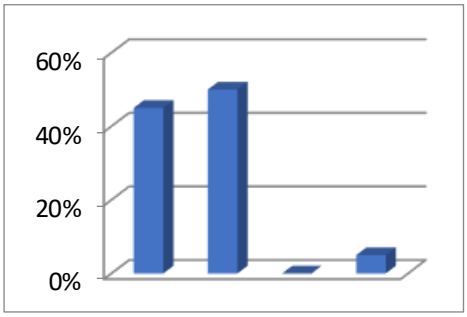
Figure 13: Illustrates the continuation of the respondent's relationships with friends in their previous place of residence



An analysis of the data in Figure 13 shows that the majority of the research sample—90%—reported that they still maintain friendships from their previous place of residence. This indicates that they remain connected to their original home through these friendships and ongoing communication. The remaining percentage, however, reported having cut ties with their former friends.

14. The nature of the respondents' relationships with their neighbors:

Figure 14: Illustrates the nature of the respondents' relationships with their neighbors



From the figure above, we find that half of the research sample confirmed that their neighborly relationships are positive. It is noticeable, however, that there is some caution in these relationships among residents, driven by a fear of potential conflicts. Additionally, 45% stated that their relationships with neighbors are good, while 5% reported having no relationship with the other residents at all.

15. Respondents' visits to their neighbors in their previous place of residence:

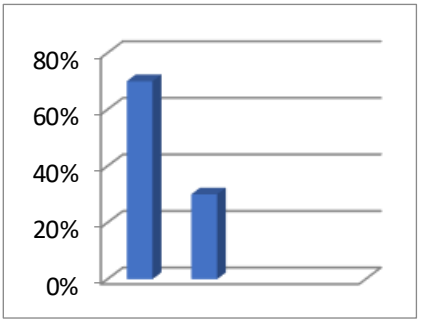


Figure 15: Illustrates the respondents' visits to their neighbors in their previous place of residence

From the data in Figure 15, we observe that 70% of the research sample still visit their former neighbors and maintain relationships with them. This indicates the continuation of social ties despite the change in place of residence. Meanwhile, 30% reported having cut ties with their former neighbors.

Analysis of Results in Light of the Hypotheses

Result 01:

The study, in regard to the characteristics of the research community, revealed that the individuals in the sample had relocated to the new city from various areas within the Wilaya of Constantine, with a large proportion coming from the city center, as well as some from neighboring provinces. They obtained their housing by applying for social housing due to overcrowding and the inadequacy of their previous housing to accommodate their families—especially since most families, as the study shows, are extended (6–10 members).

Result 02:

The study confirmed a degree of adaptation by the residents in the new urban environment, as they established social relationships with other residents of the building and neighborhood, mainly in the form of neighborly and friendly ties. This was facilitated by the length of residence, which for most ranged over ten years—an adequate period for settlement and adaptation. Additionally, the current housing was seen as more suitable compared to their previous residence, reflecting the relative success of the resettlement process, despite certain shortcomings, such as the inadequacy of F3 housing units for the size of Algerian families—especially as children grow older. This is particularly relevant given Algerian social customs, traditions, and Islamic teachings. Moreover, although neighborly relations among residents were described as good or positive, they remain somewhat superficial and limited, due to fears of conflict and unfamiliarity between neighbors. This is seen as a natural outcome of physical proximity.

Result 03:

The study also found that, although residents maintain ties with their previous place of residence through ongoing friendships and neighborly relations, this has not negatively impacted their adaptation to the new city. Rather than relying solely on past connections, they have built new relationships within the new urban setting. While these new ties may not yet match the depth and warmth of old ones, they still represent an effort to integrate into the new environment.

Result 04:

The resettlement conditions related to the physical environment were generally good and suitable for residents. However, the social relationships—especially neighborly and friendly ties—remain cautious or reserved.

Conclusion:

The existence of a new city is inherently tied to the development of a new community, built on comprehensive planning principles. It represents a new structural model for a local society, created based on a deliberate plan aimed at resettling people after their displacement from their original environment to a new local setting. This is done by providing all the necessary means and requirements for living, and by fostering a social environment in which new relationships can be formed to enable adaptation. These new social relationships are the key factor determining the success of the resettlement process.

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