

Neighbourhood Ties in New Residential Areas: A Systematic Review of Theoretical Approaches and Field Studies

روابط الجيرة في الأحياء السكنية الجديدة

-مراجعة منهجية للمقاربات النظرية والدراسات الميدانية-

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ملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى مراجعة منهجية للأدبيات السوسولوجية الجزائرية التي تناولت روابط الجيرة في الأحياء السكنية الجديدة، باعتبارها مؤشراً على التحولات الاجتماعية الحضرية. اعتمدت الدراسة على تحليل ثمانية مقالات علمية منشورة خلال العقدين الأخيرين. وركزت المراجعة على الأطر النظرية والمنهجيات المعتمدة والنتائج الأساسية للدراسات السابقة. أظهرت النتائج أن معظم البحوث تستند إلى مفاهيم الرابطة الاجتماعية والتماسك المجتمعي، مع إبراز أثر التخطيط العمراني ونمط السكن على العلاقات الجيرانية. كما كشفت عن تراجع واضح في روابط الجيرة والتضامن التقليدي داخل الأحياء الجديدة. ويُعزى هذا التراجع إلى غياب الفضاءات المشتركة وعدم تجانس السكان و بروز النزعة الفردانية. خلصت الدراسة إلى ضرورة إدماج البعد الاجتماعي في سياسات السكن والتخطيط الحضري، والدعوة إلى تكثيف الدراسات الميدانية لفهم تحولات العلاقات الجيرانية في الجزائر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الجيرة، روابط الجيرة، الأحياء السكنية الجديدة، مراجعة منهجية، العلاقات الاجتماعية..

Abstract:

This study aims to conduct a systematic review of Algerian sociological literature addressing the topic of "neighbourhood ties" in new residential areas, considering them a vital indicator of quality of life and social transformations in modern urban spaces. The study adopts a systematic review methodology to analyse eight (8) academic articles published in Algerian journals over the past two decades. The review focuses on the following themes: the theoretical

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frameworks employed, the methodologies used in previous field studies, and the key findings of the research.

The review reveals that most studies rely on concepts of social cohesion and community solidarity, with varying references to the impact of urban planning and housing types (horizontal/vertical) on the nature of neighbourhood relationships. Some studies indicate that new residential areas in Algeria suffer from weak neighbourhood ties and a decline in traditional forms of solidarity, alongside the emergence of individualistic behaviours and social isolation.

The study concludes that neighbourhood ties in new residential areas are experiencing a noticeable decline due to intertwined urban and social factors, including the absence of shared spaces, population heterogeneity, and the fragmentation of common cultural references. It recommends reintegrating social relationships into housing and urban planning policies and intensifying field-based sociological research to monitor these transformations.

Key words: Neighbourhood, neighbourhood ties, new residential areas, systematic review, social relations.

Introduction:

Social relationships are among the vital elements influencing individual stability and well-being in urban environments. Among these relationships, "neighbourhood ties" or neighbourly relations represent one of the most important forms of local social interaction, gaining heightened significance amid rapid urban changes. With the shift from traditional neighbourhoods to new residential areas—often characterised by standardised and vertical urban planning—legitimate questions have arisen about the fate of neighbourly relations in this context. New residential areas have become a testing ground for daily social interactions, examining their potential for cohesion or, conversely, their tendency to produce isolation and social fragmentation.

Urban design and morphology significantly influence community life and structure. The urban form is a product of human activity and thus strongly impacts social interaction, which is one of the most critical elements in urban planning. In addition to providing living spaces, housing should also offer areas for the growth and development of community life. Therefore, the spatial organisation of a residential area serves as a strong indicator of its social environment. In recent decades, particularly since the 1990s, rapid urban expansion and borrowed Western ideas have led to the emergence of high-rise buildings as part of mass housing projects. The goal of this growth was to meet the increasing demand for housing in urban areas. However, these modernist spaces often disregarded the surrounding environment and population, leading to

developments disconnected from their context. Planners and designers overlooked the importance of human scale and the needs of the end-users. Gradually, traditional residential areas—closely tied to human interaction—were replaced by fragmented and introverted structures. Building such neighbourhoods presents contemporary challenges, and no solution can be considered ideal in such cases.

This paper attempts to analyse the relationship between spatial design, urban form, and social relations to foster a socially cohesive community. It also seeks to establish a connection between the social and cultural aspects of society and spatial engineering in terms of form and design. The study documents and examines the relationship between the architecture of the built environment and human behaviour concerning designed spaces.

This study aims to conduct a systematic review of theoretical approaches to the concept of neighbourhood ties, with a critical analysis of prominent field studies conducted in recent decades, focusing on new residential areas. It seeks to highlight the extent to which urban design, housing policies, and cultural and social factors shape or weaken neighbourhood ties.

1. Research Problem and Questions:

While neighbourhood ties in traditional societies played a pivotal role in building solidarity and mutual aid networks, modern residential areas have witnessed a clear decline in this aspect. The core problem emerges in the following questions:

1. To what extent do urban and social changes affect the structure and quality of neighbourhood ties in new residential areas?
2. What are the general characteristics and trends in Algerian studies addressing neighbourhood ties in new residential areas?
3. What theoretical approaches are adopted in Algerian studies to understand neighbourhood ties?
4. What are the key social and urban factors influencing neighbourly relations, as identified in these studies?
5. What is the nature of neighbourhood ties (strong, weak, formal, etc.) in new residential areas, as described in Algerian studies?

Theoretical Background: Multiple Approaches to Understanding Neighbourhood Ties

1. The Social Concept of Neighbourhood:

Traditionally, "neighbours" are understood as individuals sharing a limited spatial area, typically the same street or neighbourhood. However, sociologists have noted that this spatial sharing does not always equate to strong social relationships. Bell and Berger (Bell & Berger, 1977) distinguished between "residential neighbours" and "social neighbours," where the former refers to proximity, while the latter relates to the quality of interaction and mutual support.

2. Neighbourhood as Social Capital:

According to Putnam (Putnam, 2000), neighbourly relations exemplify "social capital," fostering trust, mutual reliance, and cooperation. The decline of these relations is considered an indicator of social fragmentation and weakened civic participation.

3. Structural vs. Interactionist Approaches:

3.1. The Structural Approach assumes that neighbourhood ties form within a specific socio-urban structure (Wellman, 1999), where population density, neighbourhood layout, and shared spaces play a role in determining interaction quality.

3.2. The Interactionist Approach (Goffman, 1963) focuses on daily behavioural patterns and the meanings individuals assign to their relationships, emphasising symbolic and cultural dimensions.

4. Urban Approach and Social Systems:

Forrest and Kearns (2001) (Forrest & Kearns, 2001) propose a framework for understanding neighbourhood ties as networks of interactions supported or constrained by public policies and the physical environment. Thus, neighbourhood design, service availability, and local governance all influence the quality of neighbourly relations.

5. Concept of New Residential Areas:

New residential areas are defined as housing complexes comprising several smaller zones connected by institutions and service facilities within a 1,000–1,200-meter radius. A smaller residential unit, or "neighbourhood unit," is an integrated group of housing clusters with homogeneous characteristics, extending beyond geographical terminology. It includes homes, cultural institutions, and daily service facilities such as schools, parks, shops, and playgrounds. Determining population density aims to assess residents' access to open spaces, ensuring lighting, ventilation, and quality of life.

Other researchers define new residential areas as modern housing structures made of concrete and steel, characterised by massive architectural styles that meet residents' needs. These areas are often marked by overcrowding and the proximity of buildings,

leading to a lack of tranquillity at the housing, building, and neighbourhood levels. Most definitions highlight the social diversity within these areas, creating new forms of social relations and residential groupings that open avenues for further research.

According to Faris Al-Hini (2009) (الهيبي، 2009), new residential areas are housing zones that include conditions making them viable urban entities, such as social relations like acquaintanceship, visits, and shared activities, which define the neighbourhood's boundaries.

Mohamed Ahmed Abdullah (1975) (عبد الله، 1975) defines new residential areas as urban dwellings that vary from one environment to another due to climate and regional characteristics. Humans shape their environment, and the environment, in turn, shapes them, as daily practices and habits are influenced by the cities they inhabit.

Sociologists describe new residential areas as urban models that, at a certain stage, responded to societal needs, albeit minimally, allowing for gradual improvements over time.

In another analysis, (روايحي، 2020), in her doctoral thesis titled "The Social and Urban Characteristics of New Urban Areas," considers urban residential areas as a series of social, economic, and urban transformations since independence, representing radical changes and persistent problems.

6. Reasons for the Emergence of New Urban Residential Areas:

The emergence of new urban residential areas is attributed to several factors, including:

1. The state's failure to elevate the performance of Algerian cities to create harmonious and comfortable environments, coupled with slow urban growth compared to rapid demographic growth, directly impacts urbanisation.
2. The exacerbation of the housing crisis due to accumulated deficits in housing programs and related facilities.
3. The disproportionate focus on industrial and agricultural sectors, neglecting urban transformations and demands.
4. The transformation of Algerian cities, previously marred by slums, with new urban areas representing a new philosophy for developing urban centres with modern housing structures.
5. New urban areas emerged as a response to distortions in the real estate market, catering to those outside the formal market and producing diverse urban forms, including illegal constructions and makeshift housing.

Methodology:

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This study follows a systematic review methodology (Systematic Review) to analyse scientific literature. The steps included:

Inclusion Criteria: Studies focusing on neighbourhood ties in new residential areas or recent housing projects, employing quantitative or qualitative methods. Eight key studies were selected.

Review Type: Systematic review of Algerian studies.

Sources: Algerian Scientific Journals Platform (ASJP).

Keywords Used:

- "Neighbourhood ties"
- "Social relations in new residential areas"
- "Urban housing"
- "Urbanisation in Algeria"
- "Social life in housing projects"
- "Collective housing"

Inclusion Criteria:

- Studies published between 2016 and 2024 addressing social/neighbourhood relations in new Algerian residential areas.
- Written in Arabic.

Table (1)
Final Number of Included Studies: 8 Algerian academic studies.

Title	Author	Year	Research Questions	Method/Approach	Sample/Field	Main Findings
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Representations of Neighbour Relations within Vertical Buildings in Desert Cities: Between Tradition and Modernity , A Field Study in Berriane, Ghardaïa	Tarek Touati (Ziane Achour University , Djelfa, Algeria) & Faiza Tunisian (Amar Telidji University , Laghouat, Algeria)	2016	To what extent is the new form of buildings accepted in the Algerian desert community, and what criteria led to the construction of neighbour relations in these areas?	Descriptive method (qualitative and quantitative approach)	A group of residents in apartment buildings in the eastern part of Berriane city (40 individual)	- Weak social relations in vertical communal housing. - Architectural design's impact on neighbour relations: - Old neighbourhoods provide a sense of comfort, belonging, privacy, and family meetings, harmonising with residents' needs. - New collective housing lacks these human dimensions, weakening social ties. - Need for housing reflecting cultural identity. - Superficial neighbour relations in apartment buildings. - Family structure shift: Nuclear families
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						have emerged due to modern collective housing, reducing kinship ties and family harmony.
Social Ties and Neighbour Relations in New Housing Areas	Mariam Baaïch	2021	What are the real and effective reasons behind the gradual decline of social ties in new residential areas?	Quantitative analytical method	568 housing district in Berraki, consisting of collective housing in apartment buildings	One of the main causes of the decline in social ties is the heterogeneity of the residents and the lack of social structures that organise and frame their lives.
Neighborhood Relations in the Urban Environment: Between Urbanization and Ruralization	Lukman Redaf	2018	How does environmental change affect urbanisation patterns, and the impact of urban change on neighbour relations?	Qualitative method	Review of previous literature	- In rural areas, neighbourly relationships are based on shared values and strong personal connections, with individuals closely tied to a network of social relationships. - In urban settings, most individual interactions

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						occur at secondary levels, leading to isolation, unfriendliness, and limited relationships.
Neighbour Relations Between the Hammer of the Past and the Anvil of the Present	Asli Saad	2016	- What is the nature of neighbour relations today? - What are the reasons for the weakening of neighbour relations today? - Can solutions be found to strengthen neighbour relations?	Descriptive method	Field study in the 700 housing district in M'sila	Weak neighbour relations.
Neighbour Relations in New Urban Housing: A Study of Celebrations and Events	Fawaz Abidi & Nadia Miftah	2022	What is the nature of neighbour relations during celebrations and events in the new urban housing district?	Descriptive method	700 housing district in Souk Ahras, Algeria	The length of residence in the neighbourhood does not affect the tendency to engage in positive behaviours during holidays and events with neighbours.
Neighborhood	Noria Soualmia	2013	How are neighbour	Descriptive method	Field study in an urban	Social relations

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Groups within Urban Areas: A Field Study in an Urban Neighbourhood in Oran			relations formed in the studied neighbourhood? - What are the characteristics of individuals who strengthen neighbour relations? - What are the conditions for individuals to form small groups within the neighbourhood?		neighbourhood in Oran	within the neighbourhood are characterised as secondary, superficial, temporary, impersonal, and utilitarian.
The Reality of Neighbour Relations in the New City of Ali Mendjeli	Sabah Laknouch	2018	What is the nature of social relations in these high-rise residential complexes? How does this form contribute to reducing interaction between neighbouring residents in urban society?	Descriptive method	The New City of Ali Mendjeli	The city instilled fear, caution, and a sense of distance from those around us, robbing us of warm relationships, including with close neighbours. The return to old housing is essential to regain such past relations.

The Reality of Neighborly Bonds in New Social Housing Neighborhoods	Djilali Atta Allah & Mohamed Boumakhlouf	2023	- How are neighbourly bonds formed in new social housing areas? - What are the starting points individuals rely on to build stable and organised neighbourly relations?	Quantitative and qualitative methods	Field study in the 1026 housing district in Gaza	Neighbourly bonds are formed through shared needs that can only be achieved through participation, solidarity, interaction, and cohesion, ensuring continuity and a better life for all.
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Presentation and Discussion of Results:

1. Theoretical Trends:

- Most studies indirectly relied on concepts of social capital and community cohesion.
- References to modernisation and urbanisation theories (urban vs. rural relations).
- Mentions of the impact of urban planning and housing types (vertical/horizontal) on relationships.

2. Methodological Approaches:

- Varied between qualitative, quantitative, and descriptive methods.
- Fieldwork focused on areas such as Ali Mendjeli, Briyan, Baraki, Oran, and Ghilizan.
- Sample sizes ranged from small to medium, mostly under 100 individuals.

3. Common Findings:

- Most studies indicate weak neighbourhood ties in new residential areas.

- Modern urban design weakens social interaction (lack of shared spaces, excessive privacy).
- Collective housing has led to nuclear families and the fragmentation of traditional neighbourhood structures.
- Population heterogeneity and fear of others limit the formation of strong relationships.
- Occasional interactive behaviours (during holidays) are superficial and temporary.

4. Points of Convergence and Divergence:

- Agreement on weak social ties and the negative impact of collective housing.
- Some studies (e.g., Djilali Attallah) emphasise building neighbourhood ties based on shared needs.
- Others (e.g., Sabah Lakhnouch) advocate for a return to traditional housing to restore relationships.

5. Methodological Limitations:

- Lack of explicit theoretical frameworks in some studies, despite implicit concept use.
- Focus on vertical housing, with limited comparative analysis of different housing types.
- Reliance on geographically and socially limited samples reduces generalizability.

Inference

The review reveals that neighbourhood relationships in new residential areas in Algeria are significantly declining, due to urban factors (neighbourhood design), social factors (heterogeneity, individualism), and cultural factors (family structure transformation). Despite numerous studies, there is still a need to deepen theoretical and field research on the sociology of neighbourhood relations to better understand the dynamics of social change in new urban spaces.

1. Urban Planning and Its Relationship with Neighbourly Relations

Most studies, such as Dempsey et al. (2011) (Dempsey et al., 2011), confirm that urban

design directly impacts neighbourhood relationships. Open-designed neighbourhoods, with shared green spaces and pedestrian paths, encourage meetings and interaction. In contrast, vertical buildings, closed entrances, and narrow corridors reduce opportunities for interaction among residents.

2. Cultural and Social Diversity

In multicultural or economically mixed neighbourhoods, a decline in the quality of neighbourly interaction has been observed, particularly in the absence of social integration programs (Blokland & van Eijk, 2010). On the other hand, in neighbourhoods with social and cultural homogeneity, relationships have been more stable.

3. The Impact of Time and Length of Residence

Some studies (Lupi & Musterd, 2006) show that the length of residence is an influential factor; neighbourly relations tend to deepen over time. New neighbourhoods where residents have lived for less than 3 years generally show lower levels of interaction and neighbourly support.

4. Technology and Modern Lifestyles

Although digital communication tools may facilitate some interactions, excessive reliance on them has led to a "decline in direct physical interaction," especially among young people (Hampton & Wellman, 2003) (Hampton & Wellman, 2003).

5. The Role of Community Institutions

Several studies indicate that the presence of neighbourhood associations or local programs to encourage meetings improves trust and cooperation (Kearns & Parkinson, 2001) (Kearns & Parkinson, 2001). These institutions play a crucial social intermediary role in new neighbourhoods, which often lack deeply rooted traditional ties.

Recommendations

- Adopt urban designs that encourage daily interactions (e.g., plazas, wide sidewalks, parks).
- Reduce the vertical height of buildings and distribute facilities evenly to strengthen the sense of belonging.

- Design shared entrances and corridors that enhance spontaneous meetings among residents.
- Support local associations and provide resources for organising neighbourhood activities.
- Integrate cultural and linguistic integration programs in mixed neighbourhoods.
- Provide incentives for residents to participate in neighbourhood improvement initiatives.
- Conduct longitudinal studies to track the evolution of neighbourhood relationships over time.
- Deepen the study of the impact of digitalisation and remote work on neighbourly interaction.
- Integrate qualitative approaches to understand the symbolic meanings of neighbourly relations in Arab societies.

Conclusion

The review indicates that neighbourly relations in new residential areas are undergoing complex transformations, influenced by urban, social, and cultural factors. Although urban change does not necessarily imply a decline in neighbourly relations, the absence of social planning makes strengthening these bonds a challenge. Integrating the social dimension into housing policies and encouraging interaction within new neighbourhoods are essential for building more cohesive and humane cities.

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