

Socio-economic context of urbanization in Algeria

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Abstract

Since independence, a large migration movement from south to north, and from urban to rural areas has characterized Algeria, this led to an increase in urbanization rates from 31% in 1966 to 65% in the last census in 2008. . According to the latest estimates of the National Bureau of Statistics, this rate in 2018 was estimated at 70%, which is likely to rise to 85% by 2050. The most important reasons for urban growth in Algeria can be explained by the great demographic growth that Algeria experienced in the years 60 and 70, which led the population to move from rural to urban. This article aims to monitor the most important stages of urbanization in its social and economic context in Algeria from 1966 to 2008, by highlighting the most important urban imbalances, economic deficit and social deterioration in major Algerian cities, as a result of urban expansion of a backward nature, which represented a coherent response to the poor classes in order to search for work and housing, All this has faced obstacles, such as the economic crisis of 1986 and the political and security crisis of the 90s.

Keywords: urbanization, demographic growth, city.

Introduction

Since independence, Algeria has been characterized by a significant migratory movement. The latter has shifted the population from the south to the north and from the east to the center; so that Algeria has a high urbanisation rate of 31% in 1966 and it reached 65% in the last census in 2008. In 2018, the total resident population in Algeria reached 42.2 million inhabitants, and more than 70% of this population is urban, while this rate is expected to reach 85% by 2050.

This rise in urbanization in Algeria is the result of both a very strong population growth in the 1960s and 1970s and, to a certain extent, the displacement of the rural population to the regions with the best resources and the best connected to the economic market.

This has led to an imbalance in the occupation of the territory and which has been accompanied by an economic and social deficit in the big cities, due to a precarious urbanization which represents a coherent response of the poor classes to the challenges of underemployment, the housing and infrastructure crises that were accentuated by the economic crisis of 1986 and the security crisis in the 90s. The question that arises is *what is the impact of this precarious urbanization on the sustainable development of large cities?*

Socio-economic context of urbanization in Algeria:

The phenomenon of urbanization in Algeria can be characterized by six periods; each having very clear characteristics when compared with the other data of economic and social life. As a result, the urbanization rate, which was 31% in 1966, reached 65% in the last census in 2008.

1- First Period: Colonial Era

This period is characterized by modern urbanization, colonization developed port cities in order to facilitate exchanges with the metropolises; this modernity was supported by raw products destined for the metropolis, which transformed them into industrial goods.

Integral solidarity can be verified at different scales:

- It is profitable given the economic conditions since the cities have the role of regional metropolis, are close to the ports and have a transport network at their service.
- The profitability of operations is obvious.

This urbanization has remained low for a long time and the cities are inhabited more by Europeans than Algerians.

The first urban surge came into being in 1930 due to the economic crisis of 1929 which caused the number of unemployed to explode as well as a rural exodus of Algerians who had been turned away from the countryside to the cities because of the deterioration of living conditions.

These unemployed people are called upon to live on the margins of a system without employment and housing and are forced to live in conditions of exclusion and precariousness.

This policy of social inequality led to the appearance of the first slums in Algiers and Constantine and brought the urbanisation rate to 25% in 1954.

2- Second period: Independence and the mass departure of Europeans

With the mass departure of the European population in 1962, Algeria found itself practically at its independence with one urban dweller for every 3 rural dwellers, which is the stage that characterized European countries at the beginning of the 19th century.

This departure must have significantly reduced the country's trade balance. This also means that this departure has reduced exports of national savings. The urbanisation rate increased by 4.1 points in five years, compared with 2.3 points between 1954 and 1960 (6 years).

This new balance of power between the urban and rural masses must have increased urban-rural trade, with an additional injection into the monetary circuit and incentives for marginal production.

Solidarity has become stronger and more favorable with the departure of Europeans, which is a favorable element for the development of the country and the functioning of the urban economy (city-city relationship).

According to Brahime BENYOUCEF, this phase of rural exodus can be explained by essentially psychological reasons; To the extent that taking over the city meant the longed-for liberation from the harsh conditions of life in the countryside, from family dependence and from all forms of domination.

3-Third Period: Demographic and Economic Urbanization

This period was marked by the imprints of the first and second periods, the first period inherited the modern organization of space, the second the installation of infrastructure and services, the effects of demographic changes and the increase in urban population appeared with a more economic character and also helped to implement government initiatives of a socialist character.

Demographically

The urban population increased from 3778482 in 1966 to 6867850 in 1977. The average annual growth rate of the urban population was more than 5%. This population represented 31.4% of the total population in 1966 and 39.5% in 1977.

The massive movement of the population reflecting this brutal surge in urbanization has resulted in a regional distribution of two imbalances, with the urban weight of the country's four main cities (Algiers, Oran, Constantine and Annaba) showing notable differences. In addition to this opposition, there is a second distinction between the coast and the interior: in 1977, coastal towns accounted for half of the urban workforce.

Table 01: Population growth in large cities between 1966 and 1977

Cities	Census		Increase%
	1966	1977	1966 /1977
Algiers	943551	1353826	43.5
Oran	327807	495462	51.1
Constantine	245621	345566	40.7
Annaba	162483	249353	53.5

Source: ONS1998

Nearly 6% of the Algerian population resident in 1977 changed their State of residence between 1966 and 1977, i.e. 573492 people, with the 9 States (Algiers, Oran; Constantine; Blida; Annaba, Ouargla, Becher, Tamanrasset and Laghouat) which recorded a positive migratory movement.

The three States of northern Algeria recorded a population increase significantly higher than the national average (from 4.3 to 4.7% against 3.2%), Algiers, Oran and Annaba recorded largely positive net migration 113000; 99000 and Annaba 44000. In addition to these States where net migration is positive, there are other States that record a strong migration deficit such as Jijel (-4.7%); Media (8.6%) and Guelma (-7.1%) due to their geographical location (steppe area, predominantly rural), these movements have led to a change in the age structure of the different populations considered. This net migration by age shows a marked deficit of young people of working age, while flows to attractive and developed States are compensated for by these same young people.

Table 02: Net migration of the 20-39 age group

Town Attractive	Balance migration	Town repulsive	Balance migration
Oran	20.7	Media	-12.25
Algiers-Blida	18	Guelma	-10.38
Annaba	12.01	M'sila	-7.59
Constantine	2.01	Jijel	-8.08
Ouargla	23.3		
Becher	6.89		

In 1974, there were 17,000 workers in the industrial areas of Arzew and Bettioua, of whom 8,000 were employed on the construction sites and the rest of those were employed in radii between 20 and 80 kilometres. The shipyards bring their workforce from the region of Sig, Mohammedia, Belabesse, Mascara and Relizanne.

On the economic front

With the implementation of the four-year plans (1969-1973) and (1974-1979), the concern to better control urban growth emerged. An industrialization policy is accompanied by a clear plan for a space policy that should contribute to redressing regional disparities; The first plan, which was based on industrializing industry, involved the large basic industrial complexes (steel, petrochemicals, industry, mechanics) inherited from colonization, which are the Tellian and coastal poles (Oran, Skikda, Algiers, Annaba, Constantine).

With these plans, industrialization efforts are continuing by diversifying locations, particularly through processing industries.

A continuation of special programs for States, departments and communes to bring together the good living conditions of households with the construction of housing and various public facilities the budget of the housing sector has increased from 5% to 13% in favor of the second plan, since Algeria experienced during this period, a demographic explosion and a significant rural exodus. To cope with this situation, the state has embarked on a programme for the construction of 100,000 units per year and 300 socialist agricultural villages (V. S. A) each village has 175 dwellings) to limit the rural exodus.

Between 1966 and 1977, the structure of employment changed considerably as a result of the industrialization policy under way. More than 240,000 industrial jobs have been created. The industrial sector accounted for 9.6% of total employment in 1966 and 17% in 1977.

The most massive gain was recorded by the Building and Public Works sector, where employment was multiplied by 5 due to the very type of industrialization chosen as priority was given to basic units (e.g. installation of large housing estates).

Relatively little progress was made in the transport and services sector. A transfer was made with agriculture, which employed 918,000 workers in 1966 and had only 692,000 workers in 1977, i.e. 29.6% in 1977 compared with 54% in 1966.

Employment has not made much progress; Start-ups have barely been able to cope with population growth, unemployment has not increased.

This industrial period of national growth and urban development is marked by the demographic and economic accumulation of larger cities and the expansion of small towns, while medium-sized cities have not undergone significant change.

4- Fourth Period: Administrative Urbanization (1978-1984)

In 1979, the development strategy changed course. Algeria officially committed itself to a policy of rebalancing the development strategy and upgrading agriculture and the rural world, promoting inland regions, and controlling urbanization (decentralization).

From the beginning of the 1980s, job creation gave the advantage to the tertiary sectors. As far as urbanization is concerned, the administrative division of 1984 doubled the number of communal capitals, which rose to 1503 communes organized into 48 States and 400 dairas.

The pace of urbanization remains at 49.6% (i.e. a gain of 9.6%), the form of urbanization is changing with a slowdown in the growth of large cities in favor of medium-sized cities and especially small towns.

Table 03: Evolution of population shares grouped by Cities by size strata (1966-1987)

City of	Grouped population		
	1966	1977	1987
More than 100000 inhabitants	44 .2	45.0	38.7

50 to 100000	15.5	15.5	16.4
Less than 50hab	38.3	39.5	44.9

This demographic decline in the large metropolises, particularly in Algiers, which recorded that 153415 inhabitants is complementary to its population in 1977, reveals above all the saturation of the existing urban settings and the repercussion of urbanization on the small agglomerations and countryside surrounding these metropolises, as well as the growth of small towns in the interior (Biskra 128000 inhabitants, Tebassa 107559hab, Bechar107000) which is explained by administrative employment.

Administrative urbanization succeeded in halting the large population movements towards the metropolises and industrial complexes of Tel, replacing them with a local rural exodus, which not only continued to flow from the countryside but also generalized anarchic urbanization throughout the territory.

5- Fifth period: 1987-1998

During this period, average annual urban growth fell significantly, from 5.5% between 1977-1987 to 3.6% between 1987-1998, but the urbanisation rate continued to increase, rising from 50% in 1987 to 58% in 1998. From 47 agglomerations in 1987, this number reached 185 in 1998. Those between 20000 and 50000 inhabitants saw their number multiplied by 2, from 38 to 79 for the same period; the economic situation and the security crisis have led to huge dysfunctions in terms of housing, employment and infrastructure in the big cities.

The Growing Housing Deficit

With the financial crisis due to the decline in hydrocarbon revenues and the structural adjustment policy, that has considerably reduced the budgets devoted to the housing sector and urban planning. The target of 100000 annual housing units from 1980 onwards has never been achieved, although the need has far exceeded this threshold and is still increasing, not only as a result of the deterioration of the stock but also as a result of the population explosion at the end of 1987.

The pace of construction slowed down as the domestic production of building materials was itself in deficit. This sector has also undergone a difficult evolution from 1988 onwards; an anarchic urban sprawl; Lack of amenities and communal amenities. (Housing is not finished is

not to remove adequate public and collective facilities, transport becomes a major problem and an increased factor of social and economic exclusion for the inhabitants of these complexes.) This development is also characterized by the social exclusion of the inhabitants of these dwellings and the emergence of illegal networks of transaction of state property and land.

Underemployment

The period of recession experienced by Algeria in 1985 following the oil crisis was characterized by an increase in the number of unemployed from 459018 to 1141,278 between 1984 and 1987. This number reached 1482000 unemployed in 1992, i.e. an unemployment rate equal to 23.8%.

Table 04: Structure of the unemployed by age group and sex in 1992 (number in thousands)

Age	Masculine			Feminine			Total		
	Staff	%	Unemployment rate	Staff	%	Unemployment rate	staff	%	Unemployment rate
15-19	383	28.4	66.6	29	21.6	58	412	27.8	65.9
20-24	490	36.3	44.3	72	53.7	44.7	562	37.8	44.3
25-29	233	17.3	25.2	23	17.2	1.5	256	17.3	23.8
30+	242	18.0	8.8	10	7.5	4.8	252	17.1	8.3
Total	1348	100	24.2	134	100	20.3	1482	100	23.8

Source: ONS.1994.

The employment situation has therefore deteriorated considerably since 1987 and young people find themselves in a situation of exclusion left to their own devices in an environment of deep crisis.

The new wave of rural exodus of several hundred thousand families who have left the villages to settle in the urban centers closest to the countryside has led to a high degree of urbanisation in the towns. In addition, the big cities have become; "a point of call for a resident population generating new demands".

Demographically

In terms of population, this decade has seen an increase in the urban population of more than 5.54 million inhabitants, 47% of whom live in large cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants and 7% in medium-sized cities with 50,000 to 10,000 inhabitants. Small towns with

10,000 to 2,000 inhabitants account for 26% of the urban growth and recorded the highest growth rate, averaging 6.95% per year during the period.

With the appearance of terrorism, each individual seeks to obtain pieces of land for the construction of shacks and hard houses, the number of shacks has increased from 22000 in 1985 to 89101 in 1997 in Algiers, i.e. an evolution of 405%.and a significant destruction of infrastructure throughout the territory during the years of terrorism with a deterioration of the living environment in the cities.

Table 04: Urban population growth between 1987 and 1998

	Urban population	Urban Growth	Growth rate
	1987	1998	1987-1998
5000a 10000	1514556	1509348	-5208
10000 to 20000	1273192	2711755	1438563
20000 to 500000	2279481	3434335	1154854
50000a 100000	1847611	2209748	362137
More than 100000	4505594	7098384	2592790
TOTAL	11420434	16963570	5543136

This crisis of terrorism has emptied the countryside; the big cities have been affected by this crisis, which has generated socio-urban problems hindering the process of urban modernization and sustainable development.

In terms of social and economic aspects

The social situation gradually deteriorated during the period 1985-2000. Household consumption per capita has fallen and unemployment has risen steadily since the beginning of this period, rising from 10.7% to 28%.

The rate of increase in job creation fell from 4.3% to 1.9% per year with a collapse of industry and construction, which was one of the sectors driving growth, this restructuring of the Algerian economy following the IMF's guidelines was accompanied by massive layoffs.

As a result, the flow of migrants to urban areas has led to an increase in unemployment and the development of informal activities, the rate of which rose from 25% in 1985 to 33% in 1997.

6- Sixth period: urbanization after the security crisis of 1998 until the last census in 2008

Since the end of the 1990s, although the increase in demographic pressure has slowed, urbanization has been reinforced by the rural exodus, accentuated by the security problems encountered in the Algerian countryside. Urban population growth persisted at rates higher than natural growth.

In the north, along the coast, this growth was increasingly directed towards small and medium-sized towns, while in the Highlands and the south, it was concentrated around large and medium-sized cities. Through the results of the RGPH 2008, we will try to identify changes in the distribution of the population and in the urban structure, which could potentially correct the existing imbalances, taking into account the socio-economic situation during the same period.

Demographically

This period saw an increase in the urban population of more than 5.54 million people. Of these, 47% lived in large cities (more than 100,000 inhabitants) and 7% in medium-sized cities (50,000 to 100,000 inhabitants). Small towns (10,000 to 20,000 inhabitants) accounted for 26% of urban growth and had the highest growth rate, averaging 6.95% per year over this period.

The gradual restoration of security and civil peace after 1998 has had an influence on the development of the urban network, which has been strengthened with the addition of 172 additional agglomerations, comprising 6 large cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants, 13 medium-sized cities (50,000 to 100,000 inhabitants) and 28 small towns (20,000 to 50,000 inhabitants).

The distribution of the urban population by State shows the predominance of seven States, which alone accounted for more than 35% of the country's urban population in 2008. These are the following States:

Wilaya	Population	Proportion
ALGIERS	2817868	12.53
ORAN	1343899	5.98
CONSTENTINE	836977	3.72
SETIF	788422	3.51
BELIDA	771706	3.43
DJELFA	760920	3.39
BATENA	684999	3.05

Source: Armature Urbaine, 2011; pp72.

https://www.ons.dz/img/pdf/armature_urbaine_2008.pdf

The hierarchical structure of urban areas remains largely influenced by the same cities inherited from the colonial era. Although their populations have changed, the most populous cities in 1966 remain unchanged in 1977, 1987, and 1998 and until 2008. This indicates a remarkable continuity in the hierarchy of cities, even 46 years after independence.

During this period, the trends observed previously have continued. The proportion of the population living in urban areas continued to increase to about 66 per cent. At the same time, although the growth rate of the urban population has decreased to 2.9%, it remains higher than the natural growth rate, which continues to decline (1.6%). For the first time, a negative average annual growth rate of the rural population of -0.46 was recorded. (Armature Urbaine, 2011).

Socio-economic

After a phase of development focused on large structures, Algeria is becoming aware of the heaviness of its productive apparatus through private investment, which can play a role in national economic development; Algeria is showing the desire to resort to SMEs and SMIs, and to a de-collectivization of land, not to say privatization. A confirmed macroeconomic stabilization is due to the increase in hydrocarbon prices; this period is characterized by a growth in the working population and urban population, which means an incomparable growth in the basic needs in terms of employment, health, education, food and housing.

The labor market

The high levels of public spending and the various employment support mechanisms mobilized since the end of the 90s, brought the unemployment rate down to 11% in 2008; But it remains somewhat misleading, since it does not include the vulnerable employed population (or precarious employment) such as non-permanent employees, apprentices and family workers, as well as all informal jobs (street vendors, craftsmen without premises) In 2008, this fragile employed population represented 56.2%.

The rise in unemployment predominates among young people, with a strong gender disparity, with female unemployment exceeding 40% for the 15-19 and 20-24 age groups, while male unemployment is 38.1% for 15-19 year olds and 23.5% for 20-24 year olds. Despite the

economic recovery and the heavy investment involved, the effects were not yet reflected in the reduction of massive youth unemployment.

In 2008, the level of education is considered one of the important factors that can determine the probability of entering unemployment in the 1980s. More women academics are unemployed than those with a lower level.

The distribution of employment by activity structure has changed considerably and raises the following observations:

- A predominance of trade and administration
- Employment in agriculture has fallen due to the reduction in the agricultural population; this change is due to investment in the non-agricultural sector, which has encouraged a rural exodus of labor.
- The construction sector remains very efficient; it has increased from 10.44% in 2000 to 15.1% according to RGPH data from 2008, due to the improvement in various economic indicators, which has pushed Algeria to embark on major infrastructure projects. It can be said that the service and construction sectors have helped to absorb unemployment, and are qualified as the sectors providing employment.

Development of informal employment

The demographic transition that began in the second half of the 1980s was characterized by an increase in the labor force, whereas it was generally stable in the 1970s and 1980s. This late and rapid demographic transition means that this period corresponds to an unprecedented increase in the working-age population, which has been accompanied by an economic and social deficit in Algeria's major cities due to a precarious urbanization that did not have a Western character but presents a coherent response of the poor classes to the challenges of underemployment. The housing and infrastructure crisis, which was exacerbated by the economic crisis of 1986 and the security crisis of the 1990s.

Towards the end of the 1990s, the massive migration flow to urban agglomerations and the high level of unemployment in the formal sector developed an informal urban sector where employment is characterized by high flexibility and precariousness.

Estimated in 1985 at 25% of total employment excluding agriculture, it rose to 29% in 1992 and 33% in 1997. It is estimated over the past decade, more precisely in 2010 at 45.6%.

These percentages reflect the fragility of the Algerian economy in general and more specifically the dysfunction of the labor market. The latter has lost a large share of structural employment to the detriment of informal employment.

Unemployed young people are moving towards the informal market, and more specifically young people whose level of education has not gone beyond secondary school.

In terms of housing

At the end of the 1990s, urban planning in Algeria took a crucial turn, marking significant changes compared to the previous period. This period saw the emergence of a policy focused on the massive production of housing in various forms, introducing innovative concepts such as Participatory Social Housing (LSP)⁽¹⁾ and Rent-to-Own (AADL)⁽²⁾.

Chinese companies have largely won public contracts for housing construction in Algeria. In particular, the Chinese state-owned group has won several major contracts in Algeria: the construction of the Great Mosque of Algiers, the AADL housing, the International Conference Centre of Club des Pins, as well as the responsibility for the construction of a large part of the east-west highway, football stadiums such as that of Nelson Mandela in Baraki (Algiers), highways and roadblocks. Local public groups have also had an important share in the construction sector in Algeria.

This policy has helped to relatively alleviate real estate pressure, thanks to a significant increase in the delivery of new housing, leading to a noticeable decrease in the housing occupancy rate. This rate increased to 6.4 persons per dwelling in 2008, compared to 7.1 in 1983. In terms of distribution, rural and social housing make up the majority of housing built, accounting for 42% and 29% of the total, respectively. Despite all these achievements, the housing crisis persists in Algeria's major cities with the expansion of precarious housing that is becoming the refuge of the poorest, settling in appalling health and security conditions, sometimes without access to electricity, running water or sanitation networks. These slums, which have sprung up without order, pose a major challenge to public authorities, who are confronted with their uncontrolled and illegal growth. The right to housing is undermined by the

(1) Participatory social housing. The addition of the L.S.P. formula in the housing policy advocated by the Algerian State is established for the reinforcement of the first systems of State aid for home ownership to citizens accumulating a household income between 30,000 and 60,000 DA.

(2) Rent-purchase is granted to any person who does not own or has not owned a property for residential use, who has not received financial aid from the State for the construction or acquisition of a dwelling and whose income level does not exceed five (5) times the minimum wage.

movement of people from urban to rural areas and by the natural growth of cities (new births and deaths), thus creating a complex and disturbing dynamic.

Since the 2000s, laws promoting sustainable development have been enacted, accompanied by new tools to reinforce existing ones. An examination of the texts related to planning reveals a diversity of instruments at the territorial and urban levels whose objective is to strengthen spatial planning, urban planning, social policies and environmental protection.

Deterioration of Algerian cities

In addition to the growth of the urban population, which is the result of the natural growth of the population, there are the effects of a rural exodus which has resulted in the arrival of new urban dwellers, who have changed the physical and spatial framework of the country and favoured new urban housing areas, with a high densification and over-occupancy of residential premises, a deficit in housing and community facilities. Unregulated popular disease characterized by difficulties in schooling children and poor employment opportunities.

All these phenomena have led to a process of regression of the city and which increasingly resembles rural areas because of the practice of anti-urban behavior. Among the behaviors conveyed by these populations from the countryside:

- Throw garbage out the window.
- Ignoring the rules of good neighbourliness.
- Urinating in streets and stairwells.
- Damaging public gardens, stadiums and green spaces.

These behaviors are aggravated by the inability of the municipalities (as structural agents) to manage themselves and the lack of coordination between the various public works departments and the lack of companies involved in the joint works; Poor or non-existent street lighting, dusty roads in summer and muddy in winter, dilapidated shoes and sidewalks.

Conclusion

The deterioration of the city leads to informal employment, to difficult living conditions such as the regression of activity and an explosion of the commercial branch; it can even influence the built environment through non-compliance with the architectural rule and the lack of equipment, not to mention the deterioration of the environment.

The analysis of economic and socio-urban changes in Algeria from the colonial era to 2008 reveals that urbanization, although it has recorded a remarkable quantitative evolution, has had little effect on the dynamics of economic and socio-cultural development among the negative phenomena observed:

- An increase in unemployment in urban areas.
- Increasing the number of urban poor, great inequalities according to social groups – urban planning anarchy with unsightly real estate construction.
- Excessive importation of consumer goods, from other cities and other regions or countries) to satisfy the local market.
- An increase in school dropout and exclusion.
- An aggravated deterioration in the state of health of the urban population (respiratory allergies).
- The absence of the citizen and the associative movement in the various design and implementation projects to give its opinion.

The implementation of a genuine sustainable development policy by the public authorities makes it possible to reorganize the city to correct social and spatial inequalities.

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