Institute: Urban management techniques

University of Oum El Bouaghi

Module: Initiation to town planning 2

Course N **07: Urban network in Algeria**

Mme: Guemini Nassira

**Urban network: Definition**

An urban network refers to the interconnected system of cities, towns, and other urban areas within a region or country. It encompasses the physical, economic, social, and cultural linkages between these urban centers, including transportation networks, communication infrastructure, trade routes, and flows of people, goods, and information. Urban networks play a crucial role in shaping regional development, economic growth, and social interactions by facilitating the exchange of resources, ideas, and opportunities between different urban nodes within the network.

In the context of Algeria, an urban network refers to the system of cities and towns within the country and the connections between them.

Algeria, like many countries, has a network of urban areas that **vary in size, function, and importance**. This network includes major cities such as Algiers (the capital), Oran, and Constantine, as well as numerous medium and smaller towns and urban centers.

The urban network in Algeria plays a significant role in the country's development and economy, serving as centers for industry, commerce, education, healthcare, and administration. Transportation infrastructure, including roads, railways, and airports, links these urban areas together, facilitating the movement of people and goods throughout the country. Additionally, Algeria's urban network influences patterns of migration, employment, and urbanization as people move between rural areas and cities in search of opportunities.

The economic and social transformations that Algeria has experienced in recent decades have led to significant changes in the geographical distribution of its populations The demographic transition from a traditional rural to a modern urban society is considered as the most striking fact. The urbanization movement has significantly strengthened in conjunction with administrative promotions and industrial settlements throughout the country.

**Urbanisation: Definition**

Urbanization refers to the process by which an increasing proportion of a population resides in urban areas, leading to the growth and expansion of cities and towns. It involves the migration of people from rural to urban areas, as well as natural population growth within cities themselves.

Algeria is the largest country in Africa with a total size of approximately 2,381,741 square kilometers, it is ranked as the 10th largest country in the world and the largest country in Africa.

It comprises three major geographical zones: the **coast and the Tell in the North**, **the Highlands**, and **the Sahara** in the South. With an average density of around 12 inhabitants/km2 in 1998 and close to 15 inhabitants/km2 in 2008.

In 2008, the population of the North was estimated to be about 21.5 million, which gives a density of 209 inhabitants/km2. At the same time, about 3.2 million inhabitants and a population density of 1.64 inhabitants/km2 were registered in the South. The Highlands, with 30.75 inhabitants/km2, took an intermediate position.

This unequal population distribution is even more emphasized at the level of provinces or municipalities. Nearly 70% of the population lives in metropoles and large cities. Population densities in large cities are higher, particularly due to industrial activities.

However, how is “urban” defined in Algeria?

According to Act 06-06 (2006), a **concentration** is defined as urban if it has an agglomerated population of at least 5000 inhabitants.

According to article number 4 of the above act, any urban concentration with a minimum population and administrative, economic, social, and cultural functions can be considered a “city.”

Act 01-20 (2001) links the definition of urban settlements with regional planning and sustainability. In doing so, the act introduces a range of conceptual definitions, including **metropole**, **metropolitan area**, **big city**, **new city**, and **sensitive urban zone**.

On the other hand, Act 06-06 (2006) defines the concepts of a medium-sized city, small town, and urban concentration and indicates in article number 5 that cities can also be classified based on their functions and influence on the local, regional, national and international level, as well as on their historical, cultural and architectural heritage.

Classification of urban settlements according to Acts 01-20 (2001) and 06-06 (2006) ([***Loi n° 01-20 du 12 décembre 2001 relative à l’aménagement et au développement durable du territoire* 2001**](https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0760/12/3/174#B36-socsci-12-00174); [***Loi n°06-06 du 20 février 2006 portant loi d’orientation de la ville* 2006**](https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0760/12/3/174#B37-socsci-12-00174)).

| **Law** | **Typology** | **Definition** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 2001-20 | Metropole | Urban concentration with a total population of at least 300,000 inhabitants, with developing regional, national, and international functions. |
| Large city | Urban concentration with a total population of at least 100,000 inhabitants. |
| 2006-06 | Medium-sized city | Urban concentration with a population between 50,000 and 100,000 inhabitants. |
| Small town | Urban concentration with a population between 20,000 and 50,000 inhabitants. |
| Urban concentration | Urban settlement with an agglomerated population of at least 5000 inhabitants. |

SNAT is partly based on a coordinated action within the neighboring provinces shaping nine programming regions (North Centre, Northeast, Northwest, Highlands Centre, Highlands East, Highlands West, South East, South West, and Hoggar Tassili regions). According to article number 41 of Act 87-03 (1987), each region has more provinces that share similar geomorphological characteristics and/or demonstrate complementarity (relationships) in the use of natural resources and cooperate in their planning and development activities.

The number of urban settlements increased by 65% between 1987 and 1998, although this growth was unevenly distributed across the country. About 80% of the new towns were in the three northern regions, and the Highland East, the latter region saw the greatest absolute and relative growth in urbanization during this period.

On the contrary, there were no new urban settlements in the Hoggar Tassili region.

The urban population also increased by 58% during this period, with more than 75% of the absolute growth concentrated in the three northern regions and the Highland East. The Highland regions exhibited above-average relative growth in their urban population, while the Hoggar-Tassili region’s high relative growth was not as visible due to its small local urban population.

In terms of urban network and the urban population growth, the former was slightly more dynamic, with population concentration mainly occurring in some Highland and southern regions.

**What changed during the next decade (1998–2008)?**

Compared to the previous period, there was a national-level slowdown in the growth of both urban network density and urban population. This trend was observed in almost every region, except for Hoggar Tassili regarding the number of urban settlements and the Southwest regarding urban population growth rate.

Furthermore, there was a tendency towards greater population concentration within the urban network. The majority of the new urban settlements (80%) and urban population growth (56%) were concentrated in the northern regions with average or under-average urban population dynamics.

This growth pattern was more spatially concentrated in terms of new urban settlements and less concentrated in terms of urban population than in the previous period. The North Centre showed one of the highest growth rates in the number of urban settlements but the lowest urban population growth rate. These tendencies may indicate a suburbanization process, with a spatial extension of urbanization around the capital city.

**The intensification of the urban frame through the transition from rural to urban**

Our analysis of a sufficiently long period shows that significant changes have oc-curred in the urban population in Algeria (Figure 2). Among the 748 urban cities regis-tered in 2008, 674 were rural settlements in 1954 which represent more than 90% of thetotal. In detail, the transition from rural to urban has been done in the following way(Figure 3): (1) Algeria had 74 urban settlements in 1954, (2) 62 rural settlements in 1954 became urban in 1966, (3) 75 rural settlements in 1966 became urban in 1977, (4) 236 ruralsettlements in 1977 became urban in1987, (5) 132 rural settlements in 1987 became urban in 1998, and (6)169 rural settlements in 1998 became urban in 2008.

**The Algerian urban structure has been enriched by 35 large cities (≥100 thousand**

**inhabitants), 42 medium-sized towns (between 50,000 and 100,000 inhabitants), 121 smalltowns (between 20,000 and 50,000 inhabitants) and 464 urban settlements (between 5,000and 50,000 inhabitants). These data confirm that the originality of the Algerian urban network lies in the predominant place occupied by small towns. In 2008, small towns accounted for more than 80% of the urban frame compared with 72.93% in 1987 and70.61% in 1977. Thus, the emergence of small towns (by transition from rural to urban) is an important component of urban growth in Algeria.**

**The Recent Urban Network of Algeria**

As a result of the urban development tendencies above, three distinct urban zones can be identified in contemporary Algeria. The Northern Coastal Zone had a high urban network density and population concentration, while the Highland Zone had a medium-level urban network density and population concentration. The Southern Saharan Zone, on the other hand, had a low urban network density and population concentration. Notably, each zone had a unique region that stands out: the North Centre which includes the capital city of Algiers, the Highland East, which has been the site of significant socio-economic development efforts since the war of independence, and the Southeast, where urbanization is closely linked to the growth of the oil and gas industry.

In terms of metropolitan areas, these are only found in the northern regions, with Algiers, Oran, Constantine, and Annaba serving as primary cities. A majority of the large and medium-sized towns are also found in the northern regions. While the population share of large cities was more dominant in certain Highland and Southern regions, the Hoggar Tassili region in the center of the Sahara Desert has no metropoles or large cities, and its primary city is a medium-sized town, Tamanrasset, which is home to more than 50% of the regional urban population. Interestingly, there have been no changes in the primary city status of these regions between 1987 and 2008, indicating the conservative character of the urban network.

.

A map of different colored circles

Description automatically generated