



# International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science

e-ISSN: 2544-9435

Scholarly Publisher  
RS Global Sp. z O.O.  
ISNI: 0000 0004 8495 2390

Dolna 17, Warsaw,  
Poland 00-773  
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## ARTICLE TITLE

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(WESTERN ALGERIA)

## ARTICLE INFO

Faradji Khalid, Meziani Aicha, Belgrana Rachida. (2024) Rehousing, as Mechanism for Urban Renewal and Eliminating Precarious Housing in Tissemsilt City (Western Algeria). *International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science*. 4(44). doi: 10.31435/ijitss.4(44).2024.3068

## DOI

[https://doi.org/10.31435/ijitss.4\(44\).2024.3068](https://doi.org/10.31435/ijitss.4(44).2024.3068)

## RECEIVED

24 October 2024

## ACCEPTED

30 November 2024

## PUBLISHED

14 December 2024

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# REHOUSING, AS MECHANISM FOR URBAN RENEWAL AND ELIMINATING PRECARIOUS HOUSING IN TISSEMSILT CITY (WESTERN ALGERIA)

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## ABSTRACT

The city of Tissemsilt (formerly Vialar), one of the colonial urban centers built in the agricultural areas of Western Algeria, has witnessed significant demographic and urban growth due to its location and its natural and agricultural potential, which qualified it to play a role in attracting people and jobs, especially after its administrative promotion to wilayat status in 1984. This has affected its urban landscape due to the growth of its housing stock, which is deteriorating due to its age and fragility, especially the old ones and those that were illegally built at the end of the 1970s and 1980s on public lands. that are uninhabitable, i.e. candidates for demolition because they cannot be rehabilitated in order to raise their level of well-being regardless of their legal nature, represent more than a quarter of its total housing stock (3324 dwellings spread over 28 sites), according to a census carried out by the Ministry of Housing and Urbanization in 2007.

This article aims to study the current situation of precarious housing more than 17 years after its census, especially in the city center, and to study the spatial and social implications of the urban renewal process adopted by the state to improve the face of the city of Tissemselt and upgrade its urban environment through rehousing and the recovery and reconstruction of real estate, and to achieve this end we used theoretical and quantitative approaches to analyze the policy of eliminating precarious housing that raised much controversy since its adoption. To achieve this goal, we used theoretical and quantitative approaches to analyze the policy of eliminating precarious housing, which has raised a lot of controversy since its adoption.

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## KEYWORDS

Precarious Housing, Rehousing, Urban Renewal, Tissemsilt City

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## CITATION

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## Introduction.

Fic development, the phenomenon of the spread of precarious housing, whose inhabitants are unaware of the extent of its danger, and some see it as a temporary solution to draw the attention of the concerned authorities to obtain comfortable housing that meets all the requirements of decent housing, while various countries of the world have found themselves unable to manage the urban sphere .

At the international level, many international conferences were held with the aim of reducing the issue of precarious housing to develop development plans and programmes in line with the requirements of the times and harnessing all available resources and capabilities to achieve the desired goals(Listerborn 2023), such as

the establishment of the United Nations Population Fund, an international development agency established in 1972 to research population issues and problems, including food needs, Education, etc., paying attention to the needs of the poor group of the population (Shirvani Dastgerdi and De Luca 2019), supporting the capacity of countries to use population data to develop policies and programmes to combat poverty and considering the most needy population as the main target of the special support provided by the Service Provision Fund (Beer, Bentley et al. 2016), where it initiates family planning and birth control programmes for marginal neighbourhoods (Ghasemi 2012). The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR 1991) was established by ECOSOC resolution in 1985 to fulfil the monitoring functions assigned to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights states: 'The States Parties to the present Covenant recognise the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions, and will take appropriate steps to ensure the realisation of this right, recognising the importance of international cooperation based on free consent' (Committee on Economic and Social Rights).

To achieve this goal, in 2007, the State launched a special programme of its own: the census of precarious housing, which refers to housing that is uninhabitable, i.e. a candidate for demolition because it is not possible to rehabilitate it in order to raise its welfare level, regardless of its legal nature (Salamani and Boutabba 2019).

The fragile housing stock in Algeria has reached about half a million dwellings, representing 8% of the national stock (Lamri, Boudier et al. 2020), distributed throughout the national territory, but heavily concentrated in cities. The city of Tissemsilt in western Algeria, like the rest of the country, benefited from the census and registered more than a quarter (27%) of its housing stock, distributed between old neighbourhoods, especially the centre, and the informal neighbourhoods established in the 1980s and 1990s, the census phase was followed by the demolition and relocation to new sites, but the authorities faced resistance from the population, especially the owners who live in the city centre.

Through this article, we try to evaluate and analyse the outcome of the policy of eradicating slum housing, which included a census, demolition, rehousing and land reclamation programme, and study the spatial and social implications of the urban renewal process that the city of Tissemsilt benefited from, more than seventeen years after its census. We will also try to find out how the local authorities acted in the face of residents' resistance and what alternative solutions they found in the sites whose residents refused demolition and relocation, what role the rehousing sites play and to what extent they are integrated into the city.

### **Methodology.**

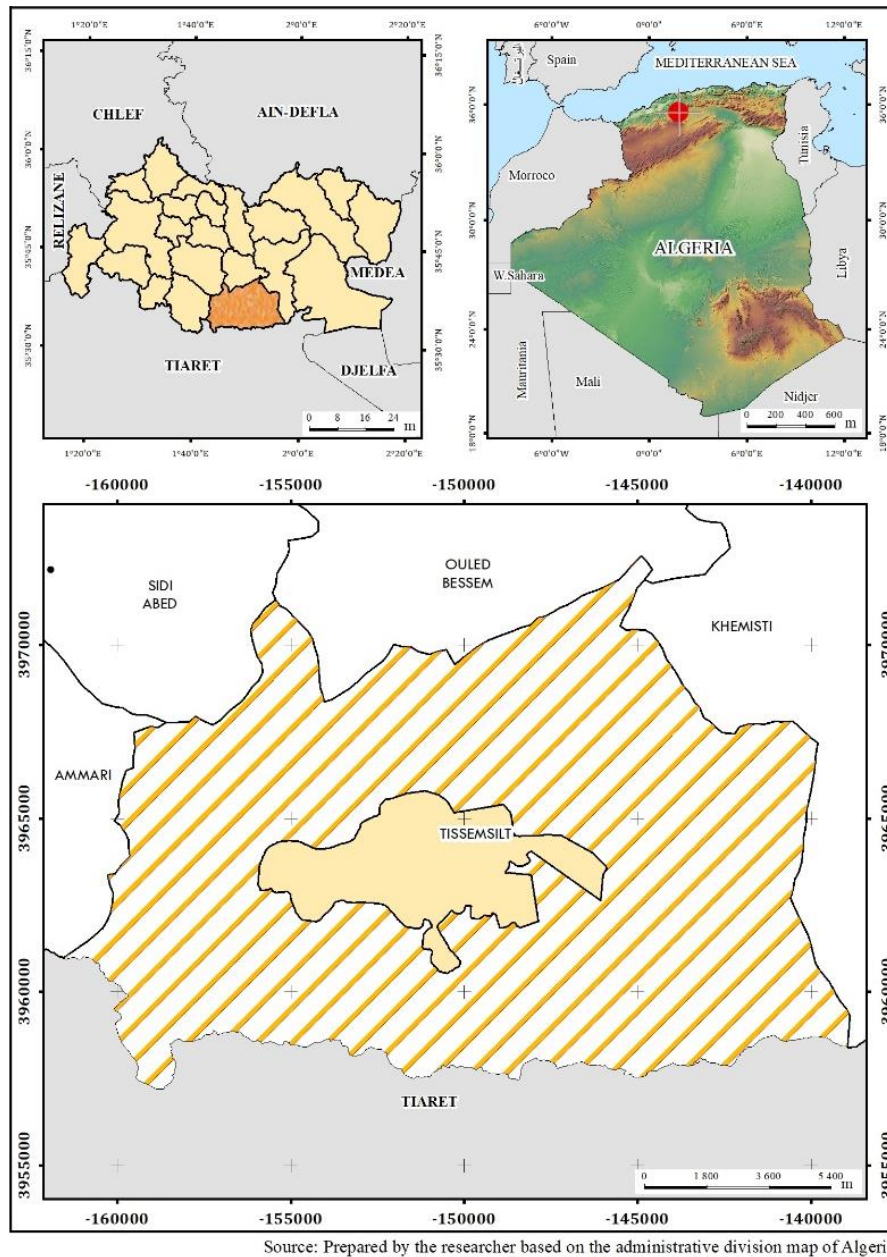
To address this topic, we chose two sites for the study, the first case representing the city center (the colonial quarter), which reflects two different architectural styles, the European style that was inhabited by settlers and still maintains its identity, and the traditional style directed at the locals, and the second case study represented by the Halil Abdelkader neighborhood, an informal neighborhood established on public lands in the 1990s with unhealthy building materials, where the authorities intervened in this neighborhood and demolished it and re-housed its residents in a new neighborhood. In this study, we relied on multiple sources: Observation, field survey, questionnaire, interview, statistical and technical data. We conducted a field survey of the fragile urban fabric in Tissemsilt in order to identify the land use, its development, the level of equipment and the design of housing. Participatory observation with the elderly helped us to understand the circumstances of the emergence of these fragile fabrics, and with other residents to understand the drivers of urban expansion on the outskirts of the city and the strategies adopted by the residents.

We also conducted direct and indirect questionnaire interviews with a number of predominantly male heads of households, randomly selected, representing 200 of the 400 households in the rehousing sites in the Laura neighborhood and 63 of those who refused to relocate. The questionnaire consists of a mix of closed, multiple-choice and open-ended questions, and touches on a number of aspects related to The number of households and their social characteristics (geographical origin, throne), population movements and motives, dwellings and their equipment, and changes in them, as well as occupations practiced by both sexes and their changes. The results of the field investigation were used and distributed according to the logical sequence of the content of the article.

### Case study.

#### 1.The city of Tissemsilt, a flat location with multiple assets

The city of Tissemsilt is located in western Algeria and is the main center of the municipality, which also includes three secondary urban complexes (Beni Maida, Um El Alou and Ain El Karma), bordered to the north by the municipalities of Oulad Bassam and Sidi Abed, to the south by the state of Tiaret, to the east by the municipality of Khemisti, and to the west by the municipality of Amari (Fig 1).



*Fig. 1. Location of Tissemsilt City*

The city of Tissemsilt belongs to the fertile Sarsou plain, known as a granary in the colonial period, located in the Agdam region, tucked between the southern foothills of the Luncheres in the north and the Wassel River in the south, its location made it a meeting point between a hardened mountainous region and a flat plain, and it is connected to several national roads (14 and 19), most importantly National Road 14, which links it to Tiaret in the south and Algiers in the north, and National Road 19, which links it to Chlef and Guelizan in the east.



## 2. Tissemsilt City, multifaceted reconstruction and continuous population growth

The region of Tissemselt has witnessed the succession of different civilizations, and has been known by several names, including the name (Vialar), which was given to the nucleus of the colonial center completed on the land of Beni Maida during the French occupation, formed at the beginning of its reconstruction from four neighborhoods populated by three distinct communities: The European community in the colonial center known as "Village espagnole", the Jewish community in a peripheral neighborhood to the south, and the locals distributed in two separate poor neighborhoods (Village Neigre), each community has its own place of worship (church, synagogue and mosque).

Until the 1960s, the city experienced little spatial expansion, which took place in a linear fashion along both sides of the main road. Spatial growth stagnated after independence until 1972, except for a few small neighborhoods far from the colonial center, located on the axis of the Algiers-Tiaret road (National Road No. 14), such as Ain el-Borg in the east, 20 August in the northeastern suburbs, and Qaimour in the southwest (Saadoun, 1989). The new neighborhoods occupied the land between the two Arab neighborhoods (Meziani 2023).

The vacant housing stock inherited from French colonialism contributed to housing a number of the region's inhabitants as well as immigrants, and thus covered housing production in this period. The inhabitants of the region as well as the new immigrants occupied the housing as well as the vacant warehouses and stables and turned them into residences and shops, as more than 35% of the old center's residents came from Ghardaia (Beni Mzab) and practiced commerce in the same places they lived in the city center, and a significant percentage also came from the smaller Kabyle region, especially Tizi Ouzo (26%) (field investigation, 2022).

During the **period 1972-1988**, construction activity picked up rapidly in line with the city's population growth, which reached a rate of 4.23% in the period **1977-1987**. It expanded to the south on an undulating site with a slope of about 6% thanks to housing programs, especially the new urban residential areas (320 dwellings, the Amal district to the south, 10 dwellings on the Tiaret road, the Saada district on the road leading to Bougara, as well as informal settlements on the outskirts of the city at the end of the 1970s. This period coincided with the administrative promotion of Tissemselt to the status of governorate in 1984, and thus benefited from individual housing programs in the form of housing subdivisions (119, 200 pieces, Dalas subdivision, etc.) and various urban facilities. It has also benefited from various urban facilities (administrative, health, educational and sports facilities). However, the housing occupancy rate recorded a high rate of 7.34 persons per dwelling in 1987 (DPBM 2019).

**In the period 1987-1998**, Tissemselt was affected by the security situation in the country and recorded the highest population growth rate of 6, 29%, as the Halil Abdelkader neighborhood attracted residents of nearby mountainous municipalities, especially the municipality of Thenia El Had (60%), Ksar El Chalaia and Bougara in Tiaret (20%), and Sidi Abed and Beni Lahcen (20%) (field investigation, 2022), increasing the production of informal housing in the city, especially in the southwestern region. In the southwestern region, the previously created nuclei (Hassan neighborhood (1014 dwellings), Larmoud neighborhood, and Halil Abdelkader neighborhood) expanded, which led to a slightly higher occupancy rate compared to the previous period, as it recorded a very high rate of 7, 53 people in the dwelling (Meziani 2023).

A new spontaneous nucleus appeared on high ground east of the Douar El Sharifa cemetery in 2004, and has continued to grow gradually to this day, but the occupancy rate has decreased slightly, with 6.81 people per dwelling in 2008. (Slum housing files)

Tissemselt has expanded uncontrollably during the last three decades, due to the population growth and its high rates compared to the national average, mainly due to the housing policy and the wave of migration from surrounding municipalities.

Tissemselt has witnessed a double urban expansion towards the nearby rural suburbs, both planned and spontaneous, as informal settlements expanded in the south, and the western entrance of the city witnessed planned urbanization towards the village of El Watat, with the construction of the maternity clinic, the Ain Lora neighborhood, the passenger land station, a subsidized housing project under construction south of National Road 14, and several investment activities north of it, centered on services for road users.

The city expanded in the northeastern axis, towards Ain El Karma, as the property between them was consumed for the Adel agency (800 housing units). This period also witnessed the construction of the Family Shop and Family Land project in the north of the complex, the expansion of university facilities in the east, and the settlement of the activity zone on State Road 17 south of the Adel 2 neighborhood (Maziani, 2023).

The area of the city has doubled in the last fifteen years, from 723 hectares in 2008 to nearly 1400 hectares in 2023. The sectors that have been included for the expansion of the city towards the secondary urban complex of Ain Karma and the scattered areas of Rahla and Aboun in the northeast, the secondary complex of

Beni Maida in the south, and the scattered area of Watwat in the west are still in the process of being developed. The master plan for the development and reconstruction of Tissemselt also proposed its future expansion towards the surrounding rural areas, which are regularly distributed around its main center, including Boumengoush in the far east, El Daya in the west and Ouled Youssef in the south, and the development of these villages and equipping them with the necessary education and health facilities to stabilize the population to create a kind of balance in the urban network, this trend will lead to the formation of a future urban complex by expanding the city on its near and far rural areas.

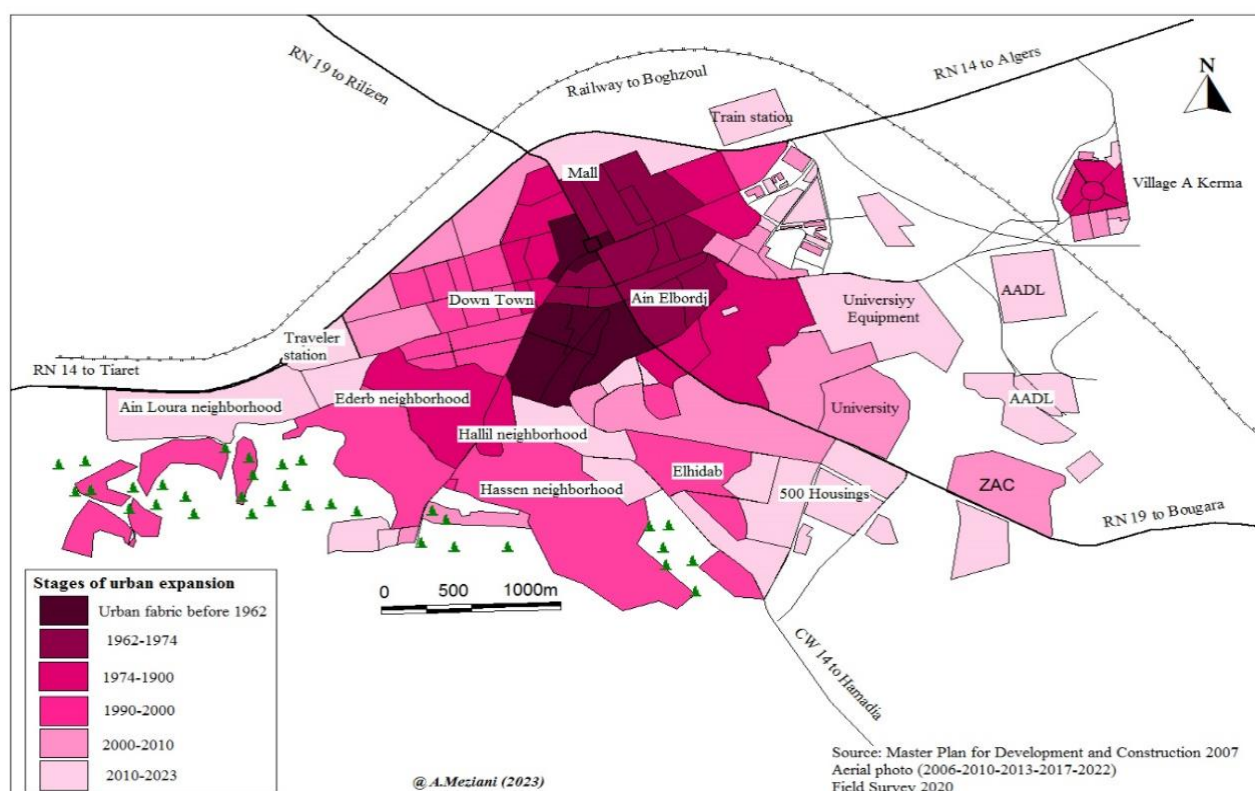


Fig. 2. Stages of urbanisation of Tissemselt City

This overview of the city allows us to discover how its components are formed and the connections between them. The urban development of Tissemselt was carried out in parallel with the construction of roads towards the eastern axis, while moving away from the old center, which reflects, on the one hand, the reduction of its importance in the city and, on the other hand, the existence of natural or human constraints that guided this expansion.

### 3.Mechanisms of intervention in the elimination of precarious housing: Demolition and replacement in the Halil neighborhood and total rejection of the process in the city center

The study of the urban fabric of the city enabled us to make a general inventory of the expansion process that took place in many stages, represented in the old nucleus with a regular shape, but in a deteriorated state, while the new extensions around this center are devoid of cohesion and harmony between the various urban elements (Meziani 2023), as the urban fabric in general suffers from disruption and lack of continuity and functionality between the inherited colonial fabric and modern construction, and the general view of the city witnesses a comprehensive architectural poverty (Ghasemi 2012). The city of Tissemselt is witnessing a deterioration in its urban landscape, despite the various real estate and urban policies adopted by the state and the repeated attempts to improve the face of the Algerian city and upgrade the urban environment in general, especially the repeated attempts to eliminate this housing, restore the prestige of the city and ensure a quality of life for its inhabitants, which is one of the objectives of the 2007 census to eliminate precarious housing,

which refers to those dwellings that are uninhabitable, that is, candidates for removal because no rehabilitation process can be carried out to raise their welfare level, regardless of their legal nature and include:

1. Completed buildings with mixed materials (tin type)
2. Buildings completed without structure
3. Buildings made of damaged earthen tiles: in the form of palaces, which are specific to the south and high steppe regions only

The process was entrusted to mayors (Those who were at the end of their tenure include) to appoint committees, and these committees were not at the level that would allow them to distinguish marginal housing from informal housing (because they were not specialized on the one hand and did not receive good training on the other), so the census results were exaggerated across the country, especially since the committees appointed by the heads of municipal people's councils. The process was accompanied by a socio-economic census of the concerned population (Ghasemi 2013), which was done through a questionnaire, and the buildings were finally numbered, followed by the work of the studies office to complete the technical file by topographically lifting the fragile sites and identifying the houses to be demolished and copying their numbering on the plans. Had the process been reversed, the field results would have been much better.

After the completion of the process across the country, the number of housing counted was shocking (412,000 nationwide), because the project was aimed at demolition and rehousing, which is why the ministry requested new data collected in the field more than nine months after the end of the process, in order to try to reduce this figure, such as:

1. Determining the legal nature of the sites.
2. Determining the urbanization area of the counted fragile housing.
3. Determining the degree of fragility, which includes determining the number of dwellings that must be removed and the number of dwellings that can be rehabilitated. This is a tacit admission that the results of the census are limited and even exaggerated and exceed the ministry's ability to complete the project, which is mainly demolition and rehousing.

### 3.1 Spatial distribution of precarious housing in Tissemselt

The local authorities counted approximately 3324 precarious dwellings spread over 28 sites (Table 2), most of which are located in the central neighborhoods of the city, while some sites are scattered on the outskirts of the city. These are the buildings that spread in the city in the 1990s, during the critical security period, as Tissemselt attracted people from the nearby mountainous areas in search of security, and its rural areas in search of stability and employment in the second and third sectors.

*Table 1. Spatial distribution of precarious housing counted in 2007 by neighborhood*

N	Location Name	Number of households	Number of buildings	Cottage	Hut without structure	Poor soil	Number of inhabitants
1	Shaabuye District	161	131	6	125		869
2	Kemur Ahmed District	48	40		40		229
3	Ben Sahla Abdulkadir District	36	31		31		166
4	Al Saba'a Neighborhood	76	53		53		344
5	Soykat Ahmed St.	35	29		29		179
6	Kabaz El Gelali St.	26	18	1	17		126
7	Brothers Hamdi St.	19	15		15		98
8	Boyes Ali St.	21	16	4	12		98
9	Dandan Abdelkader St.	9	8		8		58
10	Sweikat Masoud St. (City Centre)	5	4		4		27
11	Atoum A.A. St. Q - City Centre	11	11	8	8	3	45
12	Ben Masoud Lakhdar St. (City Centre)	5	5		5		34
13	Morsi Yamina St.	34	28		28		198
14	Zafan Abed St. (City Centre)	10	8		8		53
15	Chaouki Abdelkader St.	11	10		10		72

16	Ben Moumen Mohamed Emgran St.	12	11	3	8		63
17	Ain El Hajar Neighbourhood	55	41	41			301
18	Halil Abdelkader St.	243	183		183		1099
19	Hay Ben Tamar Ahmed	255	212	4	208		1186
20	Ain Elbarg District	295	205		205		1520
21	Ghalem Ahmed District	412	295	29	266		2161
22	Kav Seyed Mohammed Ben Tamra	316	247		50	1	1663
23	Ben Chergui District	352	251		166		1758
24	Sidi El Houari District	424	366		59		2353
25	Hassan Abdelkader District	1274	1014		108		6664
26	Ain Loreh District	83	65		22		489
27	Mazraat Naga Z	23	21		10		133
28	First of November Street (City Centre)	7	6		6		42
<b>Total</b>		4258	3324	96	1679	4	22028

Source:(DRAC 2022)

### 3.2 City center, precarious housing in the eyes of the law, real estate wealth in the eyes of its owners:

The city center of Tissemsilt is one of the most important settlement centers established by the French colonialists in agricultural areas with high agricultural yields, where the colonialists attached housing units to production units to attract the European element, so the architectural style adopted is the European style, with its checkerboard plan, wide roads and various public equipment, especially administrative.

The colonial center in Tissemsilt has preserved its architectural identity, through the shapes of the houses, their height, and their building materials, especially bricks, but it has lost its solidity, as it has become fragile due to the lack of maintenance by its residents on the one hand and by the local authorities on the other hand, as no rehabilitation or renovation operations were carried out on it, which lost the city's harmony and cohesion. The old center is surrounded by a number of informal and precarious neighborhoods, especially the Constantine project housing and the vacant residential barn, which is mainly represented by stables and barns that were left by the colonialists, and occupied by residents of the region after independence, and some others who came to the region and engaged in trade, especially from Ghardaia (Beni Mزاب) and Tizi Ouzou (Kabylia).

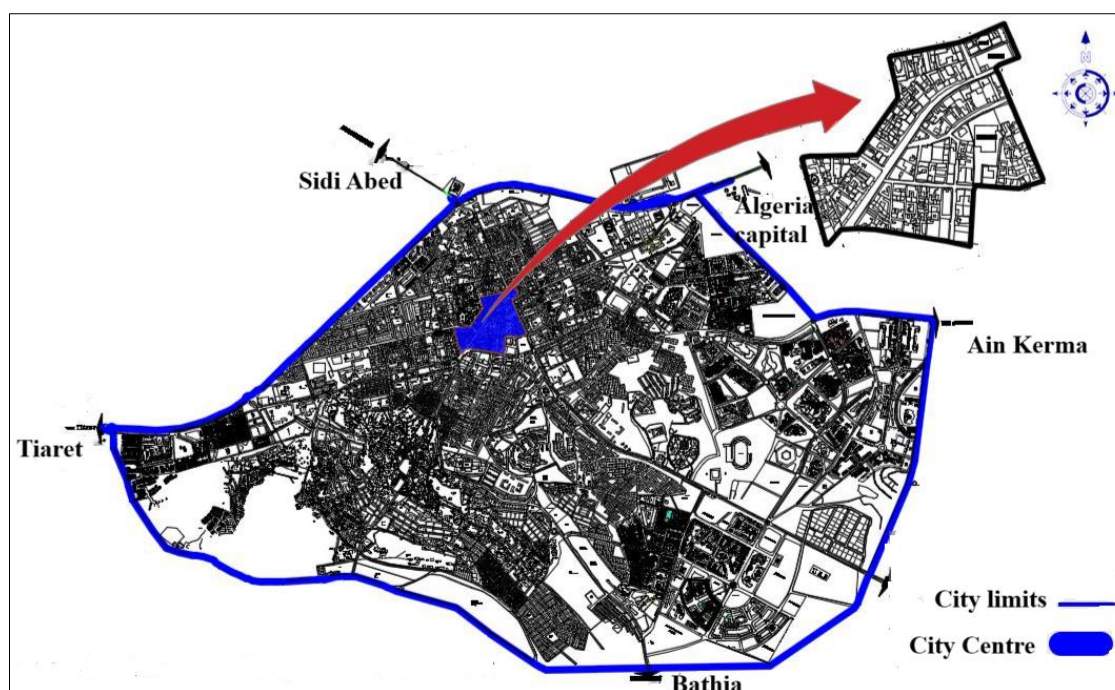


Fig 3. City center, location



Although the ownership of these dwellings belonged to the state under the Vacant Property Law No. 66-102, they were transferred to the occupants under Law No. 81-01 on the transfer of state property, while some remained unresolved, especially those built under the Constantine Plan, where more than half of the residents only have unregistered customary contracts (field investigation, 2022). The legal nature of the city center residences did not motivate their residents to rehabilitate them, and local authorities were unable to demolish them due to the owners' attachment to the site and large spaces more than the building itself, as well as due to their common ownership, especially with regard to inheritance (24%), and multiple heirs, especially from Ghardaia and Tizi Ouzou (Field Investigation, 2022). Nearly half (44%) of Tissemselt city center's housing stock (Figure 1.2) is in danger of collapse, especially the Constantine Plan housing, which lacked proper housing standards at the time, compared to European buildings, which accounted for only 8%.

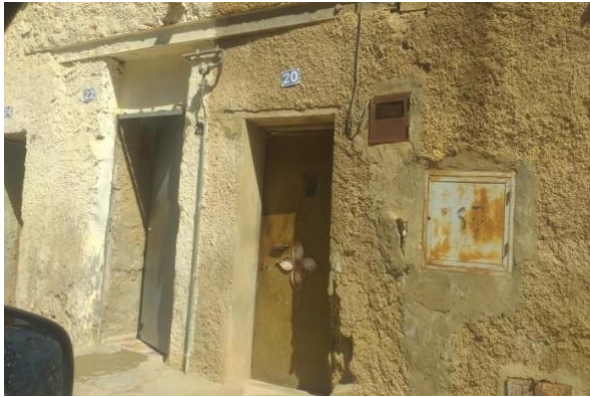
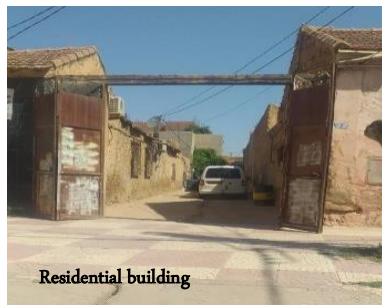


Photo 2: Structurally unstable housing on Ben Messaoud Lakhdar Street in the city center. Source: 2023 field investigation



Photo 1: Collapsing housing on November 1st Street in the city center

In the colonial period, the precarious dwellings counted in the city center were used as stables or hangars, some of which are currently abandoned and others are used as garages or shops, characterized by large areas, in some cases exceeding 400 m<sup>2</sup>, which were ceded by the state property to the occupants. The city center also has buildings that include several dwellings connected by narrow alleys (Photos 3-6).



Photos 3-6: Barns, apartment buildings and shacks in the city center

The housing in the city center was counted as fragile housing in 2007, despite the fact that it is of a legal nature, the location is buildable and the neighborhood is equipped with various equipment and networks, especially roads, which made real estate prices very high compared to other neighborhoods (Tissemselt Municipality, 2022), which made the local authorities fall into confusion and fail to differentiate between The crisis is primarily a crisis of terminology, which makes us wonder what the ministry meant by fragile housing when it adopted the project, is this classification subject to the technical criterion or is it just an administrative procedure, meaning are all the sites counted really fragile sites whose housing needs to be removed or can they be intervened with other operations?

Some neighborhoods in the city of Tissemselt have benefited from urban improvement operations, especially the city center, which cost the state budget significant amounts of money for the construction of external development, public lighting, roads and green spaces, and then their dwellings were counted as fragile and require removal and then recovery of the property to build other buildings, as if the vision from the beginning was not clear and the project was not well studied, given its urgency and inaccuracy, and the technical and human resources were not sufficiently allocated as mentioned earlier.

When carrying out relocation operations, which were frequent, because the housing programs intended to absorb precarious housing (RHP), which are of a public rental nature, were not all at once, the local authorities in Tissemselt encountered the resistance of residents who refused to demolish and relocate, and thus refused to replace their individual housing with collective ones, to move from the city center to a suburban neighborhood. From the city center to a neighborhood in the suburbs, residents also refused to replace their large-sized dwellings (400 m<sup>2</sup>) with small ones (75 m<sup>2</sup>) with collective housing instead of individual ones with privacy, as well as paying monthly rent in favor of the Real Estate Promotion and Management Bureau, especially since their dwellings, despite their fragility, are very expensive and are wealthy for them. The residents of the city center believe (according to the field investigation) that their houses are indeed old and fragile, but they need rehabilitation rather than demolition, which is why they are resisting the administrative decisions.

The city center also suffers from the issue of joint ownership of dwellings (most of which are in shi'a). The emergence of heirs with this type of ownership from different regions with different origins (Beni Mizab, Ghardaia, Djelfa, and Tribes) (field investigation, 2022) has made it difficult for the municipality to settle the legal status of these dwellings to this day, as there is no farda contract defining the heirs and guaranteeing their rights (Tissemselt Municipality, 2024). The fact that the counted dwellings are privately owned (regardless of the title deeds held by the residents), although more than half of them are in poor condition, and the mismanagement by the local authorities, who left the decision to relocate in the hands of the residents to demand very high financial compensation in exchange for their relocation, made it difficult to intervene in the urbanization of the city center. Instead of eliminating these collapsing dwellings, they were produced thousands of times, as we found, according to our field investigation, that more than 89% of the dwellings suffer from cracks in the walls and ceilings and moisture inside the dwelling, and 13% of them suffer from water leakage and internal ventilation issues.



*Photos7-8: Cracks and dampness inside city center residences.*

*Source: 2022 Field Investigation*

The resistance of the owners has affected the progress of the development and reconstruction tools, especially the land occupation plan for the city centre, which has not passed the public inquiry stage for ten years, due to the objection of the residents regarding the demolition and replacement of this site (Directorate of Construction, Architecture and Building of Tissemselt Province, 2024). The programme for the elimination

of slum housing had to study the various situations that the administrators may face on the ground, as the property owner has every right to refuse the relocation process, especially if the neighbourhood provides everything the residents need, especially if it is a city centre, not to mention the difference between the area of the dwelling to be demolished and the area of the new dwelling. However, this situation has caused the urban fabric to deteriorate for more than 13 years.

### 3.3 The policy of eliminating precarious housing is an opportunity to demolish informal settlements and reclaim public real estate

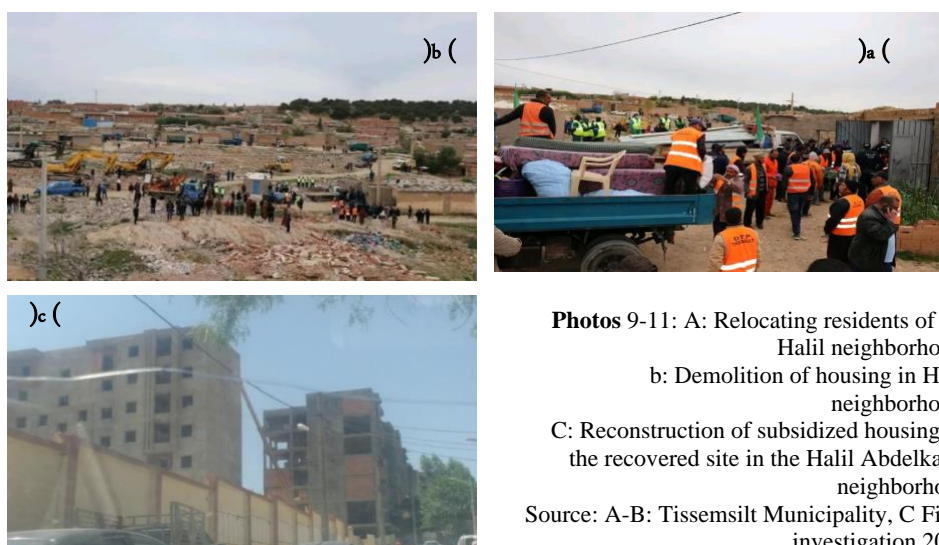
In 1987-1998, which coincided with the security crisis in the country, the city attracted people from the neighbouring mountainous areas from inside and outside the state.

The neighbourhood of Halil Abdelkader is one of the spontaneous neighbourhoods that emerged and expanded in this period, due to rural migration. In the 1980s and 1990s, the neighbourhood had only a few dwellings, but in the absence of control and follow-up by the authorities responsible for construction, the number of dwellings increased to 183 dwellings housing 243 families, built without a permit on public land belonging to the state, with an area of 5 hectares.

The marginal informal neighbourhoods have attracted people from the mountainous areas in search of security and employment in the third sector, and these sites have attracted various social and professional groups such as merchants and employees ((Field investigation, 2022), due to the availability of good free real estate and security in Tissemsilt at that time. According to the field investigation, we found that 60 per cent of them came to Tissemsilt in search of security from the municipality of Thania El Had, and 20 per cent came from Tiaret from the municipalities of Ksar El Chalala and Bougara, due to the proximity of the two municipalities to Tissemsilt, and others from Sidi Abed and Beni Lahcen. Others from Sidi Abed and Beni Lahcen moved in the 1980s because of the expulsion factors in their former areas of residence, such as the tightness and multiplicity of family members, and the rural life in which the necessities of life, such as work, transport. etc.

According to the field investigation, more than 38 per cent of these dwellings are housing more than two families in the same dwelling.

Residents resorted to building in this neighbourhood on state-owned land with unhealthy building materials, due to the absence of strict urban control, and built their houses illegally by freehold acquisition of public land, despite the lack of the most basic requirements for living in these peripheral neighbourhoods, such as connection to various networks, and thus benefited from free services by hacking electricity and drinking water without paying any bill (field investigation, 2022). The census of precarious housing included informal housing built without documents on state land, although it does not meet the conditions of precariousness in terms of the solidity of the ground and building materials. However, the rehousing process enabled the state to recover the looted real estate and rebuild it according to the mechanisms of development and reconstruction in an orderly manner, as if the census was an outlet for the local authorities to eliminate such buildings that distort the urban landscape of the city.



**Photos 9-11:** A: Relocating residents of the Halil neighborhood, b: Demolition of housing in Halil neighborhood, C: Reconstruction of subsidized housing on the recovered site in the Halil Abdelkader neighborhood  
Source: A-B: Tissemsilt Municipality, C Field investigation 2022



In 2013, the inhabitants of the Halil Abdelkader neighbourhood were relocated to the Ain Lora neighbourhood with a 400-housing project designed to absorb precarious housing, while the recovered property was used to build a new housing project in the form of subsidised housing for a specific social group.

### **3.4 Rejection of demolition and rehousing, a motive behind the renewal of housing on the identified public sites**

The local authorities in Tissemselt were confronted with the reality that some residents (10 families) refused to demolish and relocate, refused to replace their individual dwellings with collective ones, refused to move from the city centre to a suburban neighbourhood, refused to replace a spacious dwelling with a narrow one, and refused to pay a monthly rent in favour of the Real Estate Promotion and Management Bureau



*Photo No. 7: Renovation of counted dwellings in order to evade demolition and relocation in Halil Abdelkader neighbourhood*  
*Source: Field Investigation 2022*

Some of those who refused to demolish their homes have made alterations to their homes (Photo No. 7) in order to stay in the neighbourhood and to obtain a title deed under Law No. 08-15, because they were built on state-owned land, accounting for 11% of the total population of Halil neighbourhood. However, 18% of the residents who moved to the Laura neighbourhood still believe that their demolished houses are good and solid, but they complied with the decision of the local authorities, which reflects their regret that the process was not sufficiently studied, and they would have preferred to be provided with subsidies to rehabilitate and repair their houses rather than producing new collective housing, which could have been used to answer the housing deficit suffered by Tissemselt for years, an opinion shared by almost half of the displaced residents.

According to the mentality of the citizen, he believes that rehousing will move him from being an owner to a tenant.

## **4. Spatial and social implications of rehousing programmes**

The city of Tissemselt has witnessed an important urban expansion due to the housing policy, especially urban renewal, which has led to the development of peripheral neighbourhoods, the development of commercial services and the revival of population movements, which has helped to stimulate local mobility

### **4.1 Rehousing programmes: Increasing the production of housing and urban real estate in Tissemselt**

The city of Tissemselt, like other cities, especially the provincial capitals, benefited at the beginning of the third millennium and to this day from important housing programmes of various types and formats (Table



2), but the largest share was allocated to public rental housing for low-income people, which reflects the state's strategy to provide public housing through the five-year programmes (2004 - 2000) and (2010 - 2005). (2000) and (2010-2005). During this period, 3374 housing units were completed, and production increased slightly in the last two five-year programmes (2014-2010) and (2019-2015), estimated at 4898 housing units, due to the allocation of housing projects for urban improvement and the elimination of precarious housing.

The policy of eliminating precarious housing in various Algerian cities (Lamri et al., 2020) has contributed to increasing the pace of housing production in the city of Tissemsilt, which benefited from a large housing quota of 4272 housing units to absorb precarious housing (RHP), exceeding the number of 3324 dwellings estimated in 2007, distributed on several sites according to the 2007 census, which is equivalent to a quarter of the city's housing stock. Three sites were demolished (Halil Abdelkader, Hassan Abdelkader and Sidi El Houari), which were actually informal settlements built in the late 1970s and early 1980s, which grew and expanded in the 1990s. The inhabitants of the three sites were rehoused in the Ain Lour and Safah neighbourhoods.

The demolition and rehousing process has not ended to this day, despite the fact that more than 13 years have passed since the process began.

The real estate was recovered and directed to the construction of a subsidised housing project (under construction), while the real estate recovered from the demolition of the Hassan Abdelkader neighbourhood (March 2021) was directed to the construction of a 900 public rental housing project (under construction).

*Table 2. Housing construction in the municipality of Tissemsilt, according to its format during the five-year programmes (2009-2005) (2014-2010)*

Type	Public Rental	Social Contributory	Development	Subsidised Retirement	Public Housing	Elimination of precarious	Rentals	Rural subdivision	Total
Tissemsilt	8170	416	375	570	611	4272	800	64	15278

**Source:** Tissemsilt Housing Directorate (2020)

The remaining housing stock from the project to eliminate precarious housing was used to build public rental housing, due to the discretionary right granted by the Ministry to the governor to distribute this programme, due to the increasing demand for rental housing by citizens in the first place, especially since Tissemsilt, like other states in the country, left the decision to relocate in the hands of residents who cling to their homes because of their strategic locations, according to their opinion.

#### **4.2 Rehousing and urban renewal catalysed population and housing movements in Tissemsilt**

Housing policies in the 1970s created the first signs of population movements in Tissemsilt, driven by rural migration on the one hand, the emergence of informal neighbourhoods such as Darb in the south-west, and housing programmes on the other. Housing production through residential subdivision mechanisms and new urban residential areas were concentrated in urban centres. The new urban residential areas in Tissemsilt received rural residents who settled there for work, especially in industry and third sector activities, which was a direct cause of the high population growth rates in the city. The city of Tissemsilt attracted residents of the mountainous areas during the critical security period, who settled on the outskirts of the city in informal neighbourhoods, especially the Darb neighbourhood, which expanded and new informal neighbourhoods were established in the 1990s, such as Hleil Abdelkader, Hassan and Sidi El Houari near the Islamic cemetery southwest of the city. 60% of these IDPs came from the municipality of Thania El Had, 20% of them came from Sidi Abed and Beni Lahcen, it has also received residents from the municipalities of Tiaret, especially Bougara and Ksar El Chalala (20%), who have settled in these informal neighbourhoods.

The policy of eradicating precarious housing, which was particularly targeted in Tissemsilt to eliminate informal housing on the outskirts of the city, has contributed to stimulating population movements towards the new suburbs, especially the Ain Lora neighbourhood at the north-western entrance of the city and the Safah and Sid Khalifa neighbourhoods in the south-east. These neighbourhoods received the inhabitants of informal neighbourhoods that were removed and replaced with public rental (900 dwellings) and subsidised housing

programmes. In addition to providing decent and comfortable housing for their owners, the rehousing sites have created a kind of social integration and decentralisation by providing all the facilities and equipment needed to integrate with the urban fabric of the city, through good coverage by public and private transport, especially as it is close to the land station.

#### **4.3 Reshaping residential space at relocation sites as a form of adaptation**

The field investigation proved that more than 90% of the relocated residents are satisfied with their new housing despite the shortcomings of these neighbourhoods, especially the lack of regular maintenance of the neighbourhood, the hygiene issue related to household waste and the absence of collection containers, the lack of external development and the lack of green spaces and children's play areas. As for the housing spaces, most residents believe that they are designed in a way that is not suitable for the size of the family on the one hand and lack privacy and small space, and the interior design of the housing was done with ordinary building materials, especially since most relocated residents have rural backgrounds and the local authorities did not take into consideration the number of families per dwelling when demolishing and relocating, one new dwelling was delivered for every one that was demolished, thus the issue of cramped conditions still persists in rehousing sites to this day.

In order to integrate and accept the new housing spaces, the residents reworked them to suit their situation, such as refurbishing the interior with modern building materials such as tiles and doors, re-plastering the sanitary rooms with ceramics, and expanding the dwelling to fit the number of people, including balconies for bedrooms and kitchens, ... So it is necessary to take into consideration the number of family members, the customs and traditions of the population and the region in general while building such collective housing.

#### **Conclusions**

The policy of eliminating precarious housing, adopted by the Algerian state in 2007 through the census of precarious barns eligible for removal, in order to rehabilitate the urban fabric of cities and improve the urban environment and its inhabitants, has produced urban real estate on the outskirts of Tissemselt and allowed its urban expansion, through the production of housing and various accompanying equipment. At the same time, it failed to rehabilitate the city centre, due to the resistance of the inhabitants and their refusal to demolish and relocate for multiple reasons, most of which revolve around the special real estate nature of these dwellings, especially the communal ones.

The rehousing sites in Tissemselt have helped improve the standard of living of the residents, some of whom have accepted them but have reworked their spaces to suit their needs and number, such as interior renovation using high-quality building materials and expanding the dwelling by adding balconies to rooms and kitchens, while others reject them despite their stay in them because they are still attached to their former dwellings, which they see as larger and more comfortable for families despite their shortcomings, and the idea of moving from owner to tenant still overwhelms many of them.

Although the city benefited from a large housing project (4272 dwellings) for the purpose of eliminating precarious sites that endanger the lives of residents because they are threatened to collapse on them at any time, the local authorities left the decision to relocate in the hands of the residents and did not find another alternative mechanism that suits both parties, making the urban fabric continuously deteriorating for more than 17 years. Doesn't this critical situation require a bold policy and strict measures to identify these dwellings and remove them completely instead of the partial demolition that took place in some locations, so that we don't end up producing illegal housing instead of the ones that were demolished, and intervene in the city centre through renovation and rehabilitation.

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