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
+48 226 0 227 03
editorial_office@rsglobal.pl

ARTICLE TITLE	DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL TIES IN URBAN SPACE AND THEIR MANIFESTATIONS IN EVERYDAY LIFE INTERACTIONS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY IN EL-WIAM NEIGHBORHOOD – LAGHOUAT
ARTICLE INFO	Zobiri Khayra Nour. (2025) Dynamics of Social Ties in Urban Space and Their Manifestations in Everyday Life Interactions: An Ethnographic Study in El-Wiam Neighborhood – Laghouat. *International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science*. 2(46). doi: 10.31435/ijitss.2(46).2025.3536
DOI	https://doi.org/10.31435/ijitss.2(46).2025.3536
RECEIVED	25 January 2025
ACCEPTED	12 March 2025
PUBLISHED	30 April 2025
LICENSE	The article is licensed under a **Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.**

DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL TIES IN URBAN SPACE AND THEIR MANIFESTATIONS IN EVERYDAY LIFE INTERACTIONS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY IN EL-WIAM NEIGHBORHOOD – LAGHOUAT

Zobiri Khayra Nour
University of Algiers 2, Algeria.
Laboratory of Socio-Anthropological Analysis for Regional Development (LASADET)
ORCID ID: 0009-0005-8252-2017

ABSTRACT

This article examines how social ties are formed within new urban spaces in Algeria, through an ethnographic field study conducted in the El-Wiam neighborhood of Laghouat city. The importance of this research stems from the transformation of neighborly relations and social interactions in the context of rapid urbanization and population diversity, which raises questions about the nature of relationships within the modern urban neighborhood.
The study aims to understand how everyday social relations are constructed and reshaped within the neighborhood, and what factors influence them. A qualitative ethnographic approach was adopted, using participant observation and in-depth interviews with a purposive sample of 32 participants from diverse age and cultural backgrounds.
The findings revealed that neighborly relations are characterized by reservation and superficiality, and are shaped more by geographic and symbolic belonging than by physical proximity. Digital media play an increasing role in reproducing unstable relationships, and public and private spaces are used in unbalanced ways depending on gender and generation. The study concludes that social ties in the urban neighborhood are socially produced and remain fragile amid socio-spatial and digital transformations.

KEYWORDS

Social Ties, Urban Space, Everyday Life, Symbolic Interaction, Ethnographic Approach

CITATION

Zobiri Khayra Nour. (2025) Dynamics of Social Ties in Urban Space and Their Manifestations in Everyday Life Interactions: An Ethnographic Study in El-Wiam Neighborhood – Laghouat. *International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science*. 2(46). doi: 10.31435/ijitss.2(46).2025.3536

Introduction.

Algerian cities have undergone profound structural transformations in recent decades, affecting various socio-spatial dimensions due to the accelerated pace of urban expansion, internal migration, and the decline of traditional lifestyles. These changes have led to the emergence of new urban neighborhoods such as the El-Wiam neighborhood in the city of Laghouat, which brings together residents from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. This has resulted in patterns of living and interaction that differ from those that prevailed in traditional neighborhoods. In this context, social ties within the urban neighborhood are no longer built on stable kinship or geographical foundations; rather, they are produced through complex daily interactions shaped by material and spatial conditions, as well as cultural and symbolic contexts. These ties intertwine patterns of proximity and isolation, solidarity and closure, participation and caution.

According to contemporary sociological approaches, the urban space is now viewed as a social product that is not defined solely by its architectural design or physical structure, but is shaped through daily practices, symbolic interactions, and the use of public and private spaces, in addition to the increasing influence of digital media in redefining the relationship between the individual, the place, and the community. Furthermore, the

urban and economic characteristics of the El-Wiam neighborhood — such as vertical housing, building density, and limited public spaces — directly affect patterns of interaction among residents and pose additional challenges to building strong or sustainable social ties.

Understanding social relations within this type of space requires more than merely observing superficial interactions; it demands delving into the depth of everyday life, tracing symbolic rituals, and examining the individual and collective strategies that residents employ to build trust, adapt, or negotiate presence and belonging. Here, digital media gain particular significance, not only as tools for communication but also as mechanisms that reshape the maps of social interaction and open up new possibilities for proximity or distance within the same neighborhood. These complex transformations in the nature of social ties lead us to pose the following problem: *How are social ties formed and manifested in daily interactions within an urban neighborhood?* (with El-Wiam as a case study).

To address this central question, the study focuses on the following main research question:

How are social ties constructed and redefined in the El-Wiam neighborhood, and how are they manifested in the residents' everyday lives?

From this main question, the following sub-questions arise:

1. What is the nature of the relationships between neighbors and residents of the neighborhood?
2. How are public and private spaces used to strengthen or undermine these relationships?
3. What is the impact of affiliations and identities on shaping interaction networks?
4. How do digital media reshape social ties?
5. What daily practices express social closeness or isolation among residents?

First: Significance and Objectives of the Study

• **Significance of the Study:** The significance of this study stems from the nature of the topic it addresses, the methodological approach it adopts, and the geographical and social context it explores. In light of the profound transformations that the Algerian urban fabric has undergone in recent decades, it has become necessary to understand how social ties are produced and redefined within new residential spaces that are not based on traditional kinship or territorial belonging but are built through diverse and complex daily interactions. The importance of the study is manifested on two levels:

At the scientific level: This study represents a contribution to the development of urban sociology and the sociology of everyday life by focusing on the social tie as a cultural and interactive product that goes beyond classical structural explanations and is interpreted in light of daily practices and the meanings individuals assign to their lived space.

At the field level: The study provides an in-depth ethnographic description of a newly established urban neighborhood in Algeria (the El-Wiam neighborhood in Laghouat), which makes it possible to document the lifestyle within a multi-layered urban space and to understand daily interactions and residents' strategies for building or reshaping their social relationships. This can benefit researchers, urban planners, and decision-makers interested in urban housing and social relations in cities.

• **Objectives of the Study:** This study seeks to achieve a set of integrated knowledge-based and field objectives, which can be summarized as follows:

1. To understand how social ties are constructed within the El-Wiam neighborhood by observing and analyzing the daily practices of residents in a complex urban space.
2. To analyze the dynamics of social interaction in the neighborhood and to monitor the role of public and private spaces, social occasions, and daily rituals in producing social closeness or isolation.
3. To explore the impact of digital media (such as Facebook and WhatsApp) on reshaping patterns of interaction and relationships among residents.
4. To highlight the cultural and social disparities within the neighborhood and to analyze the impact of geographical, cultural, and economic affiliation on the nature of social ties.
5. To provide an in-depth ethnographic description of the lifestyle within the neighborhood, documenting lived experiences, social symbols, and informal interactions that reveal an invisible social structure.
6. To contribute to the development of the ethnographic approach in Algerian sociological studies through a field application to a real-life case, adapting participant observation and in-depth interview tools to local specificities.

Second: Definition of Key Concepts

This study revolves around analyzing the structure of social interaction within the urban space through an ethnographic approach to residents' daily lives. This necessitates clarifying a set of central sociological concepts, most notably: social ties, urban space, everyday life, and social interactions — as analytical keys for understanding the transformations in lifestyles within modern neighborhoods.

• **Social Ties:** Social ties refer to multiple forms of relationships that allow the individual to be part of the social fabric. Serge Paugam argues that the social tie cannot be reduced to a single dimension; rather, it varies among kinship, similarity, proximity, and belonging, each of which generates different patterns of solidarity or fragility (Paugam, 2008, p. 21).

• **Urban Space:** Urban space is understood as the geographical domain that hosts social life. It goes beyond being a mere physical setting to become a symbolic space that produces relationships and meanings and reflects and reproduces class structures (Authier, 2007, p. 13).

• **Everyday Life:** Everyday life is the domain where the simplest and most recurrent social practices manifest, yet they are the most significant, as they reveal the meanings that individuals assign to their actions within the prevailing social system (de Certeau, 1984).

• **Social Interactions:** Social interactions are the reciprocal actions between individuals in their daily lives through which they define themselves and construct meanings. They represent the stage upon which social roles are performed according to the context (Goffman, 1959).

Third: Sociological Approaches Sociological theories constitute a fundamental analytical tool for understanding the dynamics of social ties within the urban space. Through approaches such as the production of space, symbolic interactionism, social capital, and the sociology of everyday life, it becomes possible to deconstruct the complex dimensions that shape the fabric of daily relationships in urban neighborhoods.

• **Theory of the Production of Space — Henri Lefebvre** The "Production of Space" theory developed by Henri Lefebvre is one of the most significant theoretical contributions to understanding the relationship between space and social relations. Lefebvre asserts that space is not merely a physical framework or the result of pure urban planning; rather, it is a complex social product composed of three interrelated dimensions: the conceived space (linked to discourses, authorities, and institutions), the lived space (as experienced and practiced in daily life), and the perceived space (as used by individuals) (Lefebvre, 1991). Accordingly, urban space cannot be understood solely through its geometric structure but must be analyzed through the daily actions and practices that give it meaning and constantly reshape it. In the context of El Weam neighborhood, this approach allows for interpreting how the neighborhood is reproduced as a social domain through daily uses, rituals, and the symbols exchanged among residents.

• **Symbolic Interactionism — Erving Goffman** Symbolic interactionism relies on understanding society through the meanings individuals assign to their behaviors and interactions in daily life. Erving Goffman presents a dramaturgical conception of interaction, viewing each individual as performing a "social role" before a specific audience, using what he calls the "Front" to influence others (Goffman, 1959). These roles change according to context and situation, employing various strategies to build impressions and maintain social image. Applying this perspective to El Weam neighborhood makes it possible to understand how social relationships are practiced within public and private spaces, and how residents interact in spaces such as markets, mosques, or social media, through mechanisms in which everyday symbolism emerges and social status and belonging are redefined.

• **Social Capital — Bourdieu and Coleman** The concept of social capital is linked to individuals' access to resources through their social networks. Pierre Bourdieu defines social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). Meanwhile, James Coleman connects social capital to the effectiveness of collective action, arguing that social relationships create obligations, trust, and mutual expectations that facilitate coordination and joint action (Coleman, 1988). In the urban neighborhood, social capital takes various forms; it may be embodied in neighborly relations and mutual assistance, or participation in religious and social events, but it may also erode due to distancing or lack of trust among residents. Exploring these ties in El Weam neighborhood reveals the extent of residents' connectedness or separation and how they mobilize social relationships to strengthen their status or benefit from neighborhood resources.

• **Sociology of Everyday Life — Michel de Certeau** The sociology of everyday life, as developed by Michel de Certeau, focuses on the "ordinary daily practice" of individuals as a form of symbolic resistance and re-creation of meaning within the social system. In his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau

distinguishes between the "strategies" employed by authorities and institutions to organize life, and the "tactics" used by ordinary people to adapt to or circumvent these strategies (de Certeau, 1984). Thus, everyday life becomes a field for hidden social creativity, where individuals reinterpret and use space in unexpected ways. From this perspective, it is possible to understand how El Weam residents invest in public spaces (such as the mosque, market, street, café, garden, etc.) and develop specific interaction patterns that enable them to build social relationships or negotiate their boundaries.

4. Previous Literature In recent decades, the sociology of urban space has witnessed increasing interest in studying social ties within the context of rapid urban, economic, and cultural transformations. Various theoretical and empirical approaches have addressed this topic: some have focused on the crisis of social bonds in the context of modern individualism, while others have analyzed the changing patterns of relationships within new neighborhoods. These studies provide an important analytical foundation for understanding how social ties are formed and their impact on daily life within changing urban spaces.

Ferdinand Tönnies' study (2018) addressed the structural conflict between the "community" (*Gemeinschaft*) characterized by cohesive natural ties and the "society" (*Gesellschaft*) based on contract and rationality. The main question was: *How does the nature of relationships (natural or rational) influence the structure of society and individuals' behavior?* Tönnies used a comparative approach between rural and urban contexts, but without fieldwork; instead, he developed a philosophical–social theoretical framework. The results showed that natural will constitutes the basis of community, whereas rational will relies on interest and utility, which transforms the nature of human relationships and leads to the disintegration of traditional ties. The significance of this study lies in its theoretical foundation for the concept of social bonds and urban transformation. (Ferdinand Tönnies, 2018)

Serge Paugam (2008) conducted a theoretical analytical study on the concept of the social bond, drawing on the works of Durkheim, Tönnies, and Simmel. His main problem was the difficulty of grasping the notion of social ties in modern societies. He asked: *What are the sources and types of social ties in the age of individualism?* This was not an empirical study but rather a conceptual analysis. Paugam classified social ties into four types: filiation, organic participation, elective participation, and citizenship. He concluded that the stability of an individual's urban life depends on their ability to weave stable ties. The importance of this study lies in renewing the treatment of the social bond as an independent sociological variable. (Paugam, 2008)

Mustapha Boutefnouchet's study (1984) aimed to analyze the evolution of family structures in Algeria, within a doctoral thesis that asked: *How have economic and social transformations affected the structure of the Algerian family?* The researcher adopted a historical–analytical approach, collecting data from previous observations and analyses without direct field tools. The results showed that the Algerian family has gradually shifted from the extended type to the nuclear one under the influence of economic change and individuals' financial independence. The study also highlighted that the family remains a key actor in constructing social ties. Its significance lies in confirming the dialectical relationship between broader social structures and the family as the primary space for social relationships. (Boutefnouchet, 1984; Boutefnouchet, 2004)

Hocine Ait Addi (1999) examined the transformations of the Algerian family and social ties by addressing the problem of the crisis of the social bond in the context of modernity and urban transformation. He used an analytical sociological approach without direct field application, relying instead on analyzing phenomena such as rural exodus and the housing crisis. He concluded that kinship ties have receded in favor of contractual relationships, especially in major cities, and that modernity has generated independence in the political and economic spheres without equivalent cultural cohesion. The study's importance lies in revealing the crisis of social identity in contemporary Algerian society. (Addi, 1999)

Rachid Hamdouche (2009) conducted a qualitative study using interviews with a group of Algerian youth to explore their perceptions of changes in social ties. He asked: *How is Algerian society transitioning from traditional to modern ties?* The sample included an unspecified number of young people. The results were divided into three patterns of relationships: traditional, modern, and hybrid. The researcher concluded that youth experience a state of tension between the local and the general, and that the social bond has become fragile and unstable. This study is significant for its focus on youth as a sensitive indicator of social transformation. (Hamdouche, 2009)

Continuing Previous Literature Nouria Soualmia (2015) conducted an anthropological field study in the El-Hadhabat neighborhood in the city of Arzew, focusing on neighborliness as one form of social bonds. The study posed the question of the nature of ties between neighbors and how they are affected by urban changes. The researcher used a socio-anthropological approach and interviews as the main data collection tool, with a sample of 32 families. The findings showed that neighborly ties are influenced by economic and cultural factors, the type of housing, and the length of residence in the neighborhood. These ties tend to weaken in affluent areas but strengthen in working-class communities. The significance of this study lies in its documentation of one of the subtle forms of bonding in a transforming urban society. (Soualmia, 2015)

Talha El-Bachir (2006) carried out a field study in the city of Laghouat on the impact of traditional tribal structures on social division within the urban space. The study addressed the question of whether traditional structures continue to influence Algerian cities, especially amid urbanization. The researcher used a questionnaire as the main tool, with a sample of 300 families distributed across old and new neighborhoods. The results showed the persistence of some traditional practices in new neighborhoods, such as kinship-based marriage and communal meals, while modern relationships gradually prevail. The importance of this study lies in revealing the overlap between traditional and urban structures in producing social bonds. (El-Bachir, 2006)

I. Methodology (Méthodologie)

1. Adopted Approach: Qualitative Ethnography

The ethnographic method was adopted as the central choice for this study because it allows for direct field immersion in the residents' daily lives and precise observation of interaction patterns within the neighborhood. Ethnography provides a detailed description of the social life patterns of a specific group, focusing on the values and meanings individuals attribute to their behaviors. It is primarily used in anthropology and sociology, especially with the development of the Chicago School, which placed significant emphasis on daily life in urban settings (Dahan, 2017; Hamdawi, 2020).

Ethnography relies on participant observation, long-term immersion, and data collection through live interaction, analyzing it through a thematic and narrative approach concerned with the meanings and symbols embedded in daily interactions (Khalil, 2016). Fieldwork is considered the cornerstone of ethnography; Marcel Mauss defined it in his seminal work *Manuel d'ethnographie* as a complex process that includes systematic note-taking, inventory, and social analysis of cultural practices and daily behaviors based on observing the lived context (Mauss, 1967, pp. 15–20).

Thus, choosing this method is not merely a descriptive option but an attempt to uncover the deep structure of relationships within the urban neighborhood from the participants' own perspective, without imposing ready-made theoretical frameworks.

2. Study Setting: El-Wi'am Neighborhood – Laghouat

El-Wi'am neighborhood is one of the recently established districts in the city of Laghouat. It has experienced rapid development within a few years, making it one of the city's prominent urban spaces. It is characterized by high population density, with a large population primarily residing in collective housing blocks, which has turned it into an active consumption center contributing to the neighborhood's commercial vibrancy. Spatially, it is bordered to the north by Hay El-Maqam, the university, and Hay El-Mahafir; to the east by Hay 1er Novembre (Spanish Quarter); to the south by the industrial zone; and to the west by Hay Douana and Hay 800 Logements (AADL). Internally, it includes sub-districts, the most notable being Hay El-Mousalaha and Hay Douana.

3. Study Sample

This study relied on a purposive sample consisting of 32 participants from El-Wi'am neighborhood in Laghouat city. They were selected qualitatively to represent the social, cultural, and generational diversity that characterizes the neighborhood and to ensure the plurality of voices and experiences. The sample included men and women from various age groups, such as youth, retirees, housewives, university students, and workers from different sectors, in addition to individuals originating from diverse geographic backgrounds within Algeria. Care was taken to include both new and long-term residents of the neighborhood to understand differences in perceptions of neighborliness and strategies of integration or isolation within the urban space. In-depth interviews were conducted with them, complemented by participant observation in daily life, which enabled the researcher to capture the dynamics of social interaction, patterns of space usage, and the symbols and meanings associated with belonging and participation. This sample made it possible to construct an

accurate ethnographic portrait of El-Wi'am neighborhood, revealing the transformations of social ties amid the caution, symbolism, and transient relationships that characterize contemporary urban life.

4. Research Tools and Techniques

An integrated set of qualitative research tools was employed, consistent with the requirements of the ethnographic approach. The main tools included:

- **Participant Observation**: Practiced by the researcher on a daily basis through continuous presence in neighborhood spaces, recording social rituals, collective movements, and everyday language used (Al-Jawad, 2011).
- **In-Depth Interviews**: Conducted with a purposive sample covering various categories of residents—youth, women, retirees, new residents, and long-term locals—to explore their perceptions of relationships within the neighborhood (Ibrahim & Al-Shannawani, 1988).
- **Field Notes and Daily Diaries**: These constituted the primary ethnographic documents the researcher relied on to build context and document immediate impressions and emotions (Bonte & Michel, 2011).
- **Key Informants**: Carefully selected based on their social roles within the neighborhood, they provided the researcher with detailed insights into the symbolic and cultural transformations within the social fabric (Ibrahim & Al-Shannawani, 1988).

5. Researcher's Positionality

The researcher assumed dual roles as a participant observer and as a social actor within the neighborhood, while maintaining an analytical distance that respects local cultural specificities. This positioning helped build trust with participants and facilitated immersion in daily rituals without influencing the course of social relationships or imposing external representations upon them (Khalil, 2016; Edgar & Sedgwick, 2014). This approach was inspired by pioneering works such as William Foote Whyte's *Street Corner Society*, where the observer became a true participant in the field (Al-Jawad, 2011).

6. Data Analysis

A thematic analysis was employed to identify recurrences, patterns, and contradictions within participants' statements and behaviors. Additionally, narrative analysis was used to uncover the symbolic meanings embedded in daily rituals and practices (Soualmia, 2015). The researcher manually coded observations and interview transcripts in the field notebook, identifying the "main themes" related to patterns of interaction, with special attention to the temporal, spatial, and emotional dimensions within the neighborhood.

Particular emphasis was also placed on deconstructing everyday language as a producer of meaning and an indicator of the transformation of social ties, as suggested by Clifford Geertz and Richard Hoggart in their works on cultural ethnography (Edgar & Sedgwick, 2014; Hamdawi, 2020).

II. Results

1. The Nature of Neighborly and Community Relations

The field data, drawn from in-depth interviews and participant observation in the El-Wiam neighborhood of Laghouat, reveal that neighborly relationships are marked by varying degrees of closeness and detachment. This reflects the complex social fabric of newly developed urban spaces. Between forms of intimate neighborliness based on symbolic exchange and limited assistance, and others characterized by coldness, reserve, and isolation, a clear transformation emerges in the meaning of "being neighbors."

Participants' accounts indicate that neighborly ties are no longer necessarily built on mere physical proximity, but rather on a sense of shared cultural and social belonging. In this context, rapid, limited, and semi-digital interaction patterns prevail, reshaping the relationship between the individual and the local community.

A. Uneven Neighborliness: Between Intimacy and Isolation

The neighborly bond in El-Wiam exists on a wide spectrum of sentiments and practices, ranging from limited warmth to symbolic severance. Many women, such as a 46-year-old housewife, described relationships restricted to simple greetings and "Ramadan dish exchanges" without developing into deeper family ties. She stated: *"The relationship is normal… a hello and a smile, sometimes we exchange dishes, but there are no strong visits."*

A 21-year-old university student admitted that her relationship with her only neighbor does not go beyond necessities, adding: *"We're all in a rush… we barely meet at all."* Similarly, a young man confessed: *"I don't even know my neighbors' names… our relationship is just saying 'salaam alaikum.'"*

This "superficial neighborliness" reflects a shift from a supportive bond to a form of cold co-existence, not without caution and mutual suspicion. A 67-year-old retiree noted: *"Relations were stronger at the beginning, but as residents became more diverse, the bond weakened."*

B. Symbolic vs. Physical Proximity

The data further show that the notion of neighborhood is no longer confined to physical distance but has become "symbolic," linked to cultural or emotional belonging. A 52-year-old woman affiliated with a religious zawiya observed: *"People from the same region gather more closely together; you see closed circles… for example, our neighbors from Algiers don't mingle much."*

This indicates that the symbolic closeness of social ties (kinship, origin, shared memory) has become stronger than mere physical proximity within the same building. A young volunteer activist emphasized this trend, saying: *"People have lost the sense that this neighborhood is their community… so they remain strangers despite being geographically close."* Neighborliness, thus, has become a matter of identity and belonging rather than just physical co-location.

C. Standards of the "Good Neighbor" vs. the "Annoying Neighbor"

In the collective imaginary of residents, a "good neighbor" is defined as someone who *"does not interfere, respects privacy, and helps when needed."* A 44-year-old housewife expressed this sentiment: *"I feel the neighbors fear getting too close, as if privacy is more sacred than social warmth."* Conversely, an "annoying neighbor" is seen as intrusive, overly inquisitive, or disengaged from community interactions.

During a group interview, a 47-year-old father remarked: *"Even greetings have become cold; no one cares, no one initiates."* A 29-year-old young man added: *"A neighbor now sends an emoji instead of knocking on your door to check on you… as if neighborliness has turned into a stiff, symbolic relationship behind a phone screen."*

D. Conflicts and Informal Resolution Mechanisms

Despite the generally quiet nature of relationships, some conflicts do arise sporadically, often related to *"noise, children, parking, stairway cleaning, or the elevator,"* as highlighted in multiple interviews. A 27-year-old seamstress mentioned the existence of a WhatsApp group for communication, but noted that it is mainly used to send cold, formal remarks: *"We send notes about the elevator or lights, or to clean the stairs, but I rarely see any real interaction… there's emotional dryness even in the messages."*

Such disputes are rarely handled through formal institutions; instead, they are typically managed through "ignoring" or, at times, "the mediation of elders." However, the weak social ties make these informal mechanisms less effective. A 35-year-old teacher summed it up: *"There is a general sense of reserve… I wouldn't call it a rupture, but people avoid getting entangled in deep relationships, maybe out of fear of conflict."*

Residents' testimonies highlight the depth of this transformation: the "neighborhood" has become more of a residential space than a communicative one. Neighborliness has shifted from a warm, spontaneous bond to a programmed, symbolic, and fragile interaction. Many residents experience a state of "social invisibility," coexisting without truly connecting, living in a "social silence" despite crowded buildings. One mother remarked: *"I was sick for two weeks, and no neighbor noticed… I feel like I'm just a number in an apartment block."*

This portrayal is not merely a local snapshot but reflects a broader crisis in social ties within new urban spaces, where built structures outweigh the human element, and neighborliness is replaced by caution, communication by silent surveillance, and symbolic warmth by cold neutrality.

2. How Public and Private Spaces Are Used to Strengthen or Undermine Relationships

Based on ethnographic data collected during the fieldwork in the El-Wiam neighborhood of Laghouat, it becomes clear that public and private spaces are not uniformly or consistently used to strengthen social ties. Rather, their functions vary according to gender, age group, and residents' cultural backgrounds. These spaces play a dual role: on one hand, they offer potential arenas for renewing relationships and expanding interaction networks; on the other hand, they may—often indirectly—contribute to reproducing isolation and social distance within the neighborhood. This ambivalence becomes evident when analyzing the three categories of spaces: public, private, and hybrid.

A. Public Spaces: Between Co-presence and Symbolic Closure

Many respondents agreed that public spaces—such as the mosque, market, café, and street—still play communicative roles, especially for men. A retired man (67 years old) described the mosque and market as *"the only places where you can still find a word, a greeting, and a chat after prayer or while shopping."* Similarly, a middle-school teacher (35 years old) remarked: *"The mosque is the only space that brings people together sincerely, especially during Ramadan or Friday prayers; everything else is just incidental interaction."*

Conversely, cafés and streets are frequented mainly by a specific demographic—typically young men. One young man (19 years old) described these spaces as *"a refuge to escape routine, but not a place for real interaction."* These spaces remain limited in their capacity to foster deep connections, as they mostly facilitate brief courtesies and mere physical co-presence rather than actual symbolic integration.

Women, on the other hand, are largely absent from public spaces, except for occasional visits to the mosque, market, or hammam. A 27-year-old seamstress noted: *"The only social space is in front of the building's entrance… there are no real women's spaces, not even a place where women can gather without embarrassment or fear."*

B. Private Spaces: Symbolic Fortresses of Isolation or Exception

Within the private realm—especially homes, building entrances, and balconies—communicative practices are often limited and largely symbolic. Houses in the neighborhood are widely described as closed off to others. A 44-year-old housewife commented: *"Even the windows stay shut. Each woman is in her own home—no greetings, no glances, everyone in her own world."* Another added: *"The house has become a personal fortress, a refuge from others' gaze, instead of being a hub for social exchange."*

Some women use balconies as a symbolic channel for interaction—chatting while hanging laundry or watching children—which offers glimpses of a cautious, temporary female presence in the neighborhood. However, such initiatives tend to depend on pre-existing relationships or shared geographic and cultural origins. As one woman put it: *"I visit my neighbor on the third floor because she's from my region. Anyone else? I wouldn't even look her way."*

C. Hybrid Spaces: Seasonal and Ephemeral Interaction

Collective occasions—such as weddings, funerals, or Ramadan—serve as "temporary spaces" that allow for the suspension of social barriers and the creation of momentary, boundary-crossing interaction. One interviewee (34 years old) shared: *"I tried organizing a communal iftar during Ramadan, and people came, but it never happened again; it felt like a situational relationship only."* A university student noted that such moments *"bring people closer temporarily, but they don't create long-lasting or genuine ties."*

A group interview revealed that while these gatherings offer a degree of mutual recognition, they do not always succeed in generating enduring relationships. As a mother (43 years old) explained: *"We organized a Qur'an study circle to memorize and also to strengthen solidarity among us, but it didn't continue… good intentions alone are not enough; you need sustained commitment to build a relationship."*

This study highlights that spaces within El-Wiam are far from neutral; rather, they are imbued with social meanings and implicit rituals that determine who is allowed to exist and interact, and when. The public space is predominantly masculine; the private space is feminine but closed off; and collective occasions function as "suspended spaces" between temporary social closeness and ongoing distance. Instead of serving as tools for reinforcing interaction, these spaces often become mirrors of a subtle social fragmentation—where isolation is practiced as a way of life and as a symbolic defense mechanism against the other.

3. Affiliations and Identities in Shaping Interaction Networks

In light of the ethnographic data collected during the study in El-Wiam neighborhood, Laghouat, it is evident that residents' diverse affiliations and identities play a decisive role in shaping the contours of social interaction networks—both in everyday relationships and during symbolic encounters. These identities do not function as secondary or neutral background factors; rather, they act as active social forces that redraw the map of proximity and distance, defining who is perceived as a "familiar neighbor" and who remains categorized as a "social stranger." This impact can be traced through four key dimensions: geographic origin, gender, generation, and religious affiliations.

A. Geographic Origin: Social Legitimacy and the Imagination of Belonging

One of the most prominent factors in the formation of interaction networks is geographic affiliation. Repeated testimonies indicate that local residents, or those originating from the same region (Laghouat city or its surroundings), enjoy stronger "social legitimacy" within the neighborhood, making it easier for them to

build friendly and stable relationships. A 52-year-old woman stated candidly: *"People from the same area gather together more… neighbors from other regions don't really mix much."*

By contrast, newcomers from other provinces or rural backgrounds often face subtle marginalization, which manifests as indifference or limited interactions confined to cold greetings. A 37-year-old resident confirmed: *"My closest ties are only with my neighbor from my original region… the rest, I don't even talk to."* Likewise, a young man (33 years old) explained: *"Geographic belonging is important… you feel like an outsider if you don't have people from your area in the building."*

This division does not take a violent or explicit form but is enacted through silent symbols and interactions that keep the "other" perpetually on the symbolic margins.

B. Gender: Hidden Networks for Women vs. Public Networks for Men

Gender identity plays a significant role in determining the nature and structure of interaction networks. Women, despite their limited mobility in public spaces, manage to weave hidden yet strong networks. These are expressed through exchanging dishes during special occasions, limited home visits, or brief gatherings at building entrances or on balconies. One woman noted: *"Back in the day, women used to share coffee and chat daily… here, each one is busy with her own life. But with someone I know from before, I still exchange even cooking recipes on WhatsApp."*

Men, on the other hand, tend to build their networks in public spaces, such as the mosque or café, but these relationships are often more superficial and less intimate. One teacher described this precisely: *"We meet at the mosque, greet each other, but there's no real interaction… it's like fulfilling an obligation, nothing more."*

The different positions that men and women occupy within the neighborhood reproduce the boundaries of interaction, granting each group designated communicative spaces that are imbalanced in terms of depth and impact.

C. Generation: The Prestige of Elders and the Isolation of Youth

Generational differences are clearly reflected in patterns of interaction within the neighborhood. Older residents enjoy a clear social prestige and are often consulted during disputes or regarded as symbolic references. Haj B. Ahmed (73 years old) nostalgically remarked: *"Back in the day, they would visit the sick; my friend told me… but when I got sick, no one came to check on me."* Despite the declining practical role of elders, their symbolic presence remains, albeit diminished.

Young people, meanwhile, experience a double isolation: partly due to the absence of dedicated spaces for them, and partly because of their inclination toward the digital world. One young man (25 years old) shared: *"Even greeting people is rare; I hardly talk to the neighbors… I go back to my old neighborhood just to feel at ease."* Another (a university student, 28 years old) admitted: *"The neighborhood has lots of residents, but the interaction is zero… we have a Facebook group, but there's no real connection on the ground—interaction is only online."*

This generational divide produces fragile connections, rearranging the neighborhood's social fabric into parallel lines that seldom intersect.

D. Religious Affiliations: Limited Symbolic Participation

Although no explicit sectarian differences emerge within El-Wiam, certain religious affiliations subtly shape interaction circles. For example, women affiliated with specific Sufi orders or religious zawiyas tend to show a greater inclination to participate in collective activities, such as Qur'an study circles or mutual visits. One woman (affiliated with a religious zawiya) said: *"We organized a Qur'an session during Ramadan, but it didn't continue… I felt that some were hesitant to get closer, as if religion itself has hidden layers of affiliation."*

Some accounts also indicated that interaction within the mosque is not always inclusive but may involve selectivity based on prior familiarity or geographic origin. This suggests that religion, despite its communal character, does not override other identities but intersects with them to reshape the boundaries of interaction.

These testimonies reveal that El-Wiam is not merely a residential unit but a field of subtle symbolic struggles, governed by identities and affiliations that dictate who has the right to interact and who remains in a state of "social invisibility." Between those who possess the symbolic capital of belonging and those relegated to the periphery of interaction, relationships are constantly redefined—sometimes in silence, sometimes through the symbolism of collective occasions. What appears on the surface as an organized and calm neighborhood conceals, beneath it, unequal interaction networks that are shaped by age, gender, belonging, and collective memory.

4. Digital Media and the Formation of Social Bonds

Based on the analysis of field data collected during the ethnographic study of El-Wiam neighborhood in Laghouat, it is clear that digital media — primarily Facebook and WhatsApp — have become an integral part of the structure of social interaction within the neighborhood. They have, in fact, emerged as a fundamental — and perhaps alternative — medium for real-life relationships. These platforms have not necessarily reinforced social ties; rather, they have reshaped them in diverse and sometimes contradictory ways: between facilitation and superficiality, openness and surveillance, sharing and isolation. This transformation can be traced through three main aspects: virtual neighborhood groups, the replacement of physical interaction with virtual connections, and women's use of digital media as a space for expression and interaction.

First: Facebook and WhatsApp Groups — Between the "Digital Neighborhood" and Symbolic Belonging

Various testimonies point to the widespread use of digital media within the neighborhood, especially through WhatsApp groups dedicated to buildings or the entire neighborhood, as well as unofficial Facebook pages. A young employee (33 years old) noted: *"Facebook is very important. We have a group where we report problems like water cuts or lighting issues, and sometimes it sparks discussions, but it rarely translates into real-life interaction."* Another respondent (42 years old) stated: *"We use a WhatsApp group to report problems and shortcomings in the neighborhood that need to be addressed, but the interaction is very weak… people think they have communicated just because they sent a message."*

These digital groups are mostly used to share notices, warnings, and sometimes gentle or harsh criticisms, as well as to exchange greetings on special occasions. However, they often lack deeper emotional interaction. A housewife (27 years old) observed: *"I write 'Good morning' or send a note, but I feel a coldness even in the messages… there is emotional dryness even in the words."* Some of these groups do foster a symbolic sense of belonging, as individuals feel they are part of a collective — albeit a fragile one — while others use them as tools for surveillance or exclusion. As one young man remarked: *"In the group, the neighbor laughs and comments, but in reality, he doesn't even return your greeting… it's strange."*

Second: From Physical to Virtual — The Dominance of the Screen over Neighborliness

One of the most significant transformations observed in the study is the replacement of real-life relationships with virtual ones, particularly among the youth. A young man (19 years old) said: *"There is a WhatsApp group for the neighborhood; I share announcements, photos, but there is zero interaction… many don't respond at all, or just a simple reply… the neighbor you see joking in the group acts like he doesn't know you in real life."*

Several respondents noted that some conflicts originate in the digital space and then spill over into real-life interactions. One participant recounted: *"A minor problem started with a comment on Facebook and turned into tensions within the building… people have become overly sensitive and take things very personally."* This slippage from virtual to real illustrates how digital media not only isolates but also reproduces conflict and tension in new, more ambiguous forms — sometimes more harmful than traditional disputes. Collective surveillance and misinterpretation of intentions through impersonal text can turn these platforms into spaces for silent reproach or symbolic exclusion.

Third: Women and Digital Media — A Symbolic Space for Freedom... Under Surveillance

Several women's testimonies indicate that digital media have become an important symbolic space for them, primarily used to communicate with family, keep up with neighborhood news, or create new connections within cautious boundaries. A housewife (44 years old) explained: *"I use WhatsApp and Facebook mostly with family… the neighborhood group is quiet, or just pictures… there is neither warmth nor laughter."*

Yet, this digital sphere is not free from constraints, as it is subject to indirect social monitoring. Another woman noted: *"Even the neighbor prefers to send you an emoji rather than come see you… even words are weighed now… there is a fear of being misinterpreted."*

Although digital platforms provide women with an opportunity to express themselves beyond the constraints of the public space or the closed household, this "symbolic liberation" remains fragile and framed by social anxieties about exposure or moral judgment, especially in conservative contexts. Thus, these media simultaneously serve as tools for emancipation and instruments of social control.

This study demonstrates that digital media are reshaping social bonds in El-Wiam neighborhood not merely as communication tools, but as alternative spaces for relationships, belonging, and identity. However, these digital connections often remain fragile, superficial, marked by reservation, and prone to symbolic

rupture at any moment. Neighbors exchange virtual greetings while passing each other in silence in real life; "digital communities" are built without intimacy and without real bridges to daily life.

Here, digital media are not merely technical tools; they constitute a new symbolic system of social relations that redefines the very meaning of neighborliness, belonging, and social presence. They may bridge technical distances but deepen emotional gaps.

5. Residents' Daily Practices Expressing Social Proximity or Isolation

The daily practices of the residents of El-Wiam neighborhood in Laghouat reflect a complex mix of patterns of social closeness and cautious isolation. Relationships are not exercised as an automatic extension of neighborhood or shared residence, but rather managed according to a flexible, selective logic shaped by context, gender, cultural backgrounds, and the nature of modern urban transformations. Analyzing the diverse field testimonies reveals three main sets of practices that illustrate this oscillation: limited proximity practices, explicit isolation practices, and hybrid strategies that blend outward politeness with deep-seated reserve.

First: Practices of Proximity — Symbolic Rituals with Defined Boundaries

Despite the prevailing atmosphere of reservation and closure that characterizes life in the neighborhood, certain daily practices still retain their function as symbolic expressions of social closeness. Food exchange, especially during Ramadan, tops these practices. A housewife (44 years old) remarked: *"In Ramadan, the tradition of exchanging dishes (tasting plates) continues… we send and receive, but it rarely leads to a visit or a long conversation… it's just a sign that we haven't forgotten each other."* Another common expression of closeness is participation in funerals and weddings, which create temporary opportunities for exchanging courtesies and reinforcing a kind of "obligatory social capital." One resident (47 years old) stated: *"We attend weddings and events, but rarely does the contact continue afterward… it's like a social service with an expiry date."*

Women, too, still practice some visitation rituals, although limited and carefully chosen. A woman (52 years old) affirmed that she *"only visits her closest neighbor, usually in the afternoon, bringing a light coffee… this way we maintain closeness without getting too entangled in each other's daily details."* Even children play a role in reproducing certain ties among families through group play in courtyards or building entrances. As one mother observed: *"When children play together, some interaction begins… talking about school, illness, or retrieving their belongings… but these remain fleeting relationships."*

Second: Practices of Isolation — Withdrawal from the Neighborhood as a Social Space

These limited signs of closeness are countered by explicit behaviors of isolation that deepen the gap between residents — primarily retreating indoors and neglecting basic forms of communication like greetings. A young man (29 years old) noted: *"Some neighbors don't even say hello… we live next to each other as if in a hotel, just sleeping and leaving."*

Added to this is the growing reliance on cars instead of walking within the neighborhood, which makes spontaneous encounters rare. A university student (21 years old) said: *"Everyone gets in their car, exits through the back gate… I don't even see my neighbor or know whether they're home or not."* Even social occasions, traditionally a chance for integration, have become more "exclusive" or isolated. One woman (35 years old) mentioned: *"Some people hold their weddings in distant halls and don't invite the neighbors… they say: this is my wedding, I want it with those I know only."* Inside the home, the extensive use of smartphones has created a type of internal disconnection, as even the family itself becomes fragmented between screens and virtual conversations. As one mother described: *"Even when we sit together as a family, each one is on their phone… no talk, no warmth."*

Third: Hybrid Strategies — Soft Interaction Masking Caution

One of the most striking insights from the interviews is the widespread use of hybrid strategies: superficial interaction without actual involvement. One young man described this as "cold courtesies," explaining: *"The neighbor smiles at you and says good morning, but if you need him for something important, he disappears… the interaction here is strangely cold."*

A woman (27 years old) confirmed that some neighbors show friendliness in digital groups or during chance encounters, but never initiate real visits or tangible support. She said: *"She smiles at you, but you feel she's built a wall between you… even if you're sick, she won't come over — she might just send you a message or a flower emoji on WhatsApp, if at all."*

Many social relationships in the neighborhood appear to be based on a "minimum level of communication" that ensures the avoidance of conflict but does not produce genuine trust or solidarity. A retired man (67 years old) described it as: *"There's a kind of 'silent coexistence'… everyone respects the other, but without warmth, without depth."*

These daily practices reveal a state of "push and pull" between the desire to maintain the image of the neighborhood as a cohesive community and the fear of becoming entangled in relationships that might burden daily life or open the door to surveillance and interference. Between exchanging dishes and attending social occasions, and the complete absence of visits and the tendency to retreat behind closed doors, the residents of El-Wiam live within a delicate balancing system in which social relationships are conducted according to a logic of "symbolic sufficiency," without evolving into real solidarity or deep belonging.

III. Discussion

First: Discussing these findings in light of the theoretical framework

In light of the theoretical framework adopted in this study, it becomes clear that the findings from the fieldwork in El-Wiam neighborhood — Laghouat — deeply intersect with contemporary sociological approaches that have addressed the relationship between space and social relations, foremost among them Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space. This theory formed an essential interpretive backdrop for analyzing how social ties are formed within urban space. The ethnographic data confirmed that space in El-Wiam neighborhood is not merely consumed as a physical or architectural entity, but rather produced daily through residents' various practices: from the use of balconies, entrances, and courtyards, to the presence in mosques or markets, and even the employment of digital media. This daily, repeated interaction is what grants the space its social meaning, transforming it from a mere physical structure into a semantic domain saturated with symbols, relationships, and representations. This aligns perfectly with Lefebvre's (1991) argument that urban space is socially produced within a triad: conceived space, lived space, and perceived (practiced) space — a triad whose manifestations are clearly observed in El-Wiam neighborhood, where the official conception of the neighborhood as a modern, organized space intersects with the complex daily experiences shaped by residents' cultural and identity-based particularities.

At the level of daily interactions and mutual representations, Erving Goffman's symbolic interactionist theory provides rich interpretive tools for what was documented regarding relationship patterns in the neighborhood. According to the study, social interactions tend to be superficial and temporary, marked by performative traits. Individuals present themselves through carefully controlled "social fronts" that consist of brief greetings, ceremonial congratulations, WhatsApp messages, or even exchanging Ramadan dishes — yet these do not evolve into deeply intimate interactions. Such practices can be understood as "social performances" enacted by individuals within the "neighborhood stage," exactly as Goffman (1959) described, where neighborly relations are not so much expressions of genuine integration as they are calculated performances to manage impressions and avoid excessive friction or entanglement in relationships. This explains the general reserve, interactional coldness, and preference for symbolic rather than substantial engagement.

Furthermore, the concept of social capital, as developed by Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman, helps deconstruct the reasons behind the weak solidarity within the neighborhood. According to Bourdieu, social capital consists of the sum of material or symbolic resources made accessible by participation in a durable network of social relations. Coleman, in turn, argued that social relations facilitate coordination and cooperation and produce trust and mutual commitment. From this perspective, El-Wiam neighborhood demonstrates a clear erosion of social capital, as its residents lack robust or enduring networks that would allow for resource exchange or trust-building. Interviews revealed that many relationships are built on caution and reservation and are managed from a calculated social distance — a dynamic that hinders the emergence of effective cooperation or genuine solidarity. Even in public spaces — such as the mosque or café — interaction remains limited, sporadic, and shaped by a logic of "cautious coexistence" rather than collective participation.

This social insight gains additional depth when viewed through the lens of Michel de Certeau's sociology of everyday life. De Certeau advocated reading social reality through the minutiae of daily details as forms of symbolic resistance and the reproduction of meaning within dominated spaces. The study showed that residents of El-Wiam, despite signs of declining relationships, still devise subtle "tactics" to manage their social existence: women communicating across balconies, neighbors preferring digital courtesies over face-to-face encounters, or young people retreating to the digital sphere as a symbolic realm of belonging. These daily strategies reflect what De Certeau (1984) called "tactics of everyday life" — the small acts individuals use to interpret or circumvent the social system. Thus, everyday life in El-Wiam is not merely repetitive routine but a realm for symbolic creation, negotiation of belonging, and the continuous reshaping of the relationship with space and community.

In sum, the theoretical framework employed in this study clearly complements the field results. Each theoretical approach — whether concerned with the production of space, representation of interaction,

interpretation of social capital, or analysis of daily details — contributes to unpacking the complexities embedded in urban interaction networks. The findings revealed that social ties in El-Wiam neighborhood are neither ready-made nor "natural," but rather produced through an ongoing process of interpretation, maneuvering, and symbolic negotiation within a complex urban context where culture, space, technology, and identity intersect.

Second: Discussing previous studies in light of the results

In view of the field findings regarding El-Wiam neighborhood in Laghouat city, the observed transformations in the nature of social relationships within the urban space resonate theoretically with Ferdinand Tönnies' work, which distinguished between *Gemeinschaft* (community) based on intimate ties and *Gesellschaft* (society) based on contractual and rational relationships. This duality is clearly evident in El-Wiam neighborhood, where neighborly relations are not built upon solidarity or intimacy but rather on caution and cold courtesy. This reflects an actual shift from the logic of "community" to that of "society," as depicted by Tönnies (2018). Although residents coexist within a shared space, they struggle to build a collective sense of belonging, tending instead toward isolation and vigilance, making the neighborhood a space for physical cohabitation without genuine social cohesion.

These observations reinforce what Bougheas (2008) offered in his analysis of the social bond, noting that modern societies suffer from increasing fragility of ties due to rising individualism and that traditional bonds based on kinship and organic participation have receded in favor of selective and temporary ties. Residents' testimonies in El-Wiam confirmed that their relationships are often formed within narrow circles of geographic or cultural belonging, while broader community participation is largely absent, whether in neighborhood governance or communal events. This selectivity in forming ties reflects the dominance of the "weak symbolic bond" over the stable "participatory bond," as Bougheas predicted, deepening the crisis of belonging within modern urban spaces.

In another context, the study's findings on the limited role of the family in forming interaction networks within the neighborhood — despite the persistence of certain kinship traditions — align with what Boutfnouchet (1984) found in his analysis of transformations within the Algerian family. He demonstrated that the family shifted from an extended to a nuclear pattern due to socioeconomic changes but still plays a crucial role in building trust and primary relationships. In El-Wiam, it was observed that social relations are often founded on prior familial or geographic extensions, yet these ties fail to generate a wide interactive network, remaining confined within hesitant boundaries — highlighting the retreat of the family as a central actor in organizing urban life.

These reflections also intersect with what Hocine Ait Amara (Houari Addi, 1999) described as the crisis of the social bond in modern Algeria. Addi noted that urbanization created economic independence for individuals but failed to produce parallel cultural cohesion. The study results showed that residents physically coexist yet lack symbolic identification with the neighborhood as a community, often preferring to revert to their old geographic and cultural references in their interactions. It is as if the urban space has failed to create a new collective identity. Many participants expressed feelings of loneliness or isolation despite the density — a precise reflection of what Addi described as "incomplete urbanization."

When analyzing the position of youth within the neighborhood, the field results strongly support what Hamdouch (2009) concluded — that the youth segment suffers from weak social ties due to the tension between local references and modern values, and the absence of intermediary mechanisms that could reintegrate them into the social fabric. Many interviewed young people expressed their isolation and their use of digital media as an alternative to real relationships, creating a kind of "symbolic presence" that remains intangible within the neighborhood. Notably, this segment, despite its demographic weight, is socially marginalized and torn between attachment to the digital space and nostalgia for old neighborhoods that offered them a pattern of lost intimacy.

Returning to neighborly relations in their everyday dimension, the findings of this study directly converge with those of Nouria Soualmia (2015) in her ethnographic research on the El-Hadhab neighborhood. She revealed that neighborly ties have become conditioned by economic and cultural determinants, taking on a more selective than solidaristic nature. Testimonies from the residents of El-Wiam neighborhood corroborate this trend, expressing the idea of *"symbolic courtesies"* that rarely extend beyond greetings and the exchange of dishes during Ramadan, without developing into organic, supportive relationships. Moreover, although women do express a desire for social interaction, they face socially closed spaces and lack suitable female-friendly environments for meaningful engagement, which reproduces neighborliness within visible yet ineffective boundaries.

Finally, the study's observation of the continuing presence of tribal or regional affiliations in shaping interaction networks within the neighborhood affirms what Talha El-Bachir (2006) concluded in his study on the impact of traditional structures in the urban context of Laghouat. He noted that traditional practices—such as kin-based marriage and gatherings based on common origin—remain present, albeit symbolically, in new urban neighborhoods. In El-Wiam, there is clear evidence of residents closing themselves off within *"regional circles,"* indicating that the traditional structure continues to frame relationships within the neighborhood. This happens not through direct authority but through representations of identity and belonging that are reproduced daily within the lived urban space.

Through this discussion, it becomes evident that the study's results align with the broader body of literature that has examined the transformation of social bonds in Algeria. However, they also add a deeper ethnographic dimension that reveals the subtle details of daily life, showing how social relations are practiced in hesitant, fragmented, and symbolic forms within a complex and hybrid urban space like El-Wiam.

IV. Conclusion

This ethnographic study of the El-Wiam neighborhood in Laghouat demonstrates that the modern urban space in Algeria is no longer merely an architectural or geographical framework but has become a complex social field that is reproduced daily through practices, interactions, and symbols. The research findings show that social ties within this neighborhood are not formed automatically or along traditional lines but are constructed selectively, cautiously, and temporarily, in light of factors that increasingly weaken a sense of belonging, such as cultural diversity, generational differences, and the transformations associated with vertical housing models. The study further reveals that neighborliness is no longer an intimate relationship as it was in traditional neighborhoods but has become conditioned by social distance, geographical origin, and implicit affiliations.

Through limited symbolic interaction and the growing use of digital media, the social bond within the neighborhood is being reshaped in a fragile balance between physical coexistence and symbolic detachment. Thus, the urban space in El-Wiam produces a new form of *"wavering belonging"* that is not based on deep solidarity but rather on courtesy, caution, and the pragmatic use of social ties. The theoretical approaches—especially Lefebvre's production of space, Goffman's symbolic interactionism, Bourdieu's and Coleman's social capital, and De Certeau's sociology of everyday life—have provided precise analytical tools for understanding these transformations.

The study further underscores the importance of the ethnographic method in urban sociology, as it allows for an in-depth immersion in the fine-grained details of everyday life, capturing what remains unseen in quantitative analyses or formal structures. The study recommends creating genuine urban spaces for interaction that foster trust and belonging and restore the collective dimension in the planning of new neighborhoods. It also opens avenues for future research focusing on the interaction between digital and physical spaces and on the impact of gender and cultural dynamics in shaping the social bond within the transforming Algerian city.

REFERENCES

1. Edgar, A., & Sedgwick, P. (2014). *Mawsu'at al-nazariyya al-thaqafiyya: al-mafahim wa-al-mustalahat al-asasiyya* (Trans. M. Al-Jawhari & H. Al-Jawhari). Cairo: National Center for Translation.
2. Ibrahim, Fathia Mohammed, & Al-Shanwani, Mustafa Hamdi. (1988). *Madkhal ila manahij al-bahth fi 'ilm al-insan (al-anthropologia)*. Riyadh: Dar Al-Mareekh.
3. Al-Jawad, Mustafa Khalaf Abd. (2011). *Nazariyyat 'ilm al-ijtimā' al-mu'āsir* (Vol. 2). Amman: Dar Al-Maseera.
4. Boutefnouchet, Mustafa. (1984). *Al-'ā'ila al-Jazā'iriyya: al-tatawwur wa-al-khasā'is al-hadītha* (Trans. Ahmed Damri). Algiers: University Press Office.
5. Bonte, Pierre, & Izabel Michel. (2011). *Ma'jam al-ethnologia wa-al-anthropologia* (Trans. Misbah Al-Samad). Beirut: Al-Mu'assasa Al-Jami'iyya lil-Dirasat wal-Nashr wal-Tawzi' "Majd".
6. Tönnies, Ferdinand. (2018). *Al-Jamā'a wal-Mujtama' al-Madani* (Trans. Na'il Al-Hariri). Dubai: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies.
7. Hamdawi, Jamil. (2020). *Al-anthropologia al-thaqafiyya bayn al-nazariyya wal-tatbiq*. Nador-Tetouan: Author's Publications.
8. Hamdoush, Rachid. (2009). *Mas'alat al-rabāt al-ijtimā'ī fi al-Jazā'ir al-mu'āsira: imtidadiyya am qutī'a?* Algiers: Dar Houma.
9. Khalil, Samir. (2016). *Dalīl mustalahāt al-dirāsāt al-thaqāfiyya wal-naqd al-thaqāfī*. Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub Al-'Ilmiyya.
10. Dahan, Maryam. (2017). Al-muqāraba al-ithnūghrāfiyya: ta'rīfuha, mumayyizātuha, taqniyātuha, wa-'alāqatuhā bi-dirāsāt al-jumhūr. *Majallat Tarikh Al-'Ulum*, 8(1), 31–43.

11. Soualmia, Nouria. (2015). *Al-rābit al-ijtimā'ī al-hadari: dirāsa sūsyū-anthropologia lil-'alaqāt al-ijtimā'iyya bayna al-jīrān fi hayy al-Hadhab bi-Arzew – Oran* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Oran).
12. Talha, El-Bachir. (2006). *Al-bunā al-taklīdiyya wa-'alāqatuhā bi-taqseem al-majāl al-ijtimā'ī fi al-majāl al-hadari: dirāsa maydāniyya bimadīnat al-Aghwat* (Master's thesis, University of Algiers 2).
13. Addi, L. (1999). *Les mutations de la société algérienne: Famille et lien social dans l'Algérie contemporaine*. Paris: La Découverte.
14. Authier, J.-Y., Bacqué, M.-H., & Guérin-Pace, F. (2007). *Le quartier: Enjeux scientifiques, actions politiques et pratiques sociales*. Paris: La Découverte.
15. Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241–258). New York: Greenwood Press.
16. Boutefnouchet, Mustafa. (2004). *La société algérienne en transition*. Algiers: Éditions OPU.
17. Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94(Supplement), S95–S120. https://doi.org/10.1086/228943
18. de Certeau, M. (1984). *The Practice of Everyday Life* (S. Rendall, Trans.). Berkeley: University of California Press.
19. Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
20. Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The Production of Space* (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.). Oxford: Blackwell. (Original work published 1974)
21. Marcel, M. (1967). *Manuel d'ethnographie*. Paris: Editions Sociales, Collection Petite Bibliothèque Payot.
22. Paugam, S. (2008). *Le lien social*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France (PUF)