

Urban transport lines and their role in the reintegration of marginalized neighborhoods. Case study of the Old Town of Mila City, Northeast Algeria

Nedjla Gherabi¹, ✉  0000-0001-5480-0714

Nabila Bounemour¹

Yasser Dib¹

¹ Institute of Urban Techniques Management, Larbi Ben M'hidi, Oum Bouaghi University, Algeria

✉ Corresponding author: nedjla.gherabi@univ-oeb.dz

Summary

The transport sector has seen significant development in recent years. Algerian cities, like other cities in the world, have grown and expanded their geographic area, and the population has increased as well, leading to increased demand for transportation. However, this increase and growth have not been accompanied by development in the policies adopted in organizing transportation and its means.

The city of Mila, like other Algerian cities, suffers from several problems, including marginalization, which dominates several neighborhoods. This is characterized by isolation and difficulty of access to an area or region within the city, and results from several internal and external factors. What has worsened the situation in these neighborhoods is that they are victims of urban development tools and planning policies, along with poor management and organization of transportation and traffic movement. This has deepened the crisis, depriving them of mobility and vitality, and has led to their continued marginalization and isolation from other neighborhoods in the city.

The objective of this research is to implement innovative solutions and proposals for the marginalized neighborhood, aimed at fostering balance and harmony while ensuring its integration into the dynamics of development through the enhancement of public urban bus transportation.

Keywords

urban transportation • marginalization • urban reintegration

1. Introduction

Transportation is one of the most important, sensitive, and vital sectors in the field of development. Its importance lies in the ease of movement of individuals. Transportation also plays a major role in organizing space. The transportation network of all types is an effective regional tool that contributes to linking urban centres with other neighborhoods, creating interaction and integration between them, and promoting the integration policy. The efficiency and density of transportation within the urban area are among the indicators that determine the degree of development of countries] Gherabi et al. 2024[. In addition to housing and work, urban transportation is one of the pillars of daily life for city dwellers.

Mila is a historic city in Algeria dating back to before the Roman era. It is located in the eastern part of the country and is characterized by a strategic location, as it lies between the Upper Constantine Plains and the hilly chain. This has made it a transit area to the north, which has created an urban dynamism within it that requires good transportation systems and means to facilitate mobility. However, like most Algerian cities, it suffers from several problems in the transportation sector [Gherabi and Lifa 2024]. The most important of these problems are traffic congestion, lack of security and comfort, damage to infrastructure, in addition to the marginalization of some neighborhoods and the lack of coverage of the urban transportation network for all city neighborhoods. Urban expansion has emerged as a defining phenomenon in cities worldwide over the past few decades. This trend has resulted in significant increases in urban areas, accompanied by diverse daily movements and transportation patterns. Consequently, this has altered the nature of the relationship between the city center, its outskirts, and its neighborhoods [Gherabi and Lifa 2024].

Urban expansion is an essential requirement imposed by the urban mobility of the city, but it was accompanied by many problems, some of which are related to the spatial and functional connection with the urban centers, which created an obstacle to the progress of cities to achieve balance and integration. This does not happen except with the appropriate and balanced distribution of infrastructure and ensuring mobility and accessibility for the residents of these neighborhoods. Therefore, urban public bus transportation is one of the most important factors in integration and achieving accessibility between different sectors and neighborhoods of the city [Lifa 2024]. Mila is a city in the middle of the eastern region of Algeria. It was established in 1984 as the capital of the Mila province, despite not being functionally prepared for this role. This has created significant spatial imbalances in the city's structure, leading to marginalization of neighborhoods scattered on the outskirts of the city. These neighborhoods have significantly strained planning and development efforts due to their lack of public facilities, infrastructure, and essential urban amenities. In addition, urban public bus transportation comes as an effective element in integrating these marginalized neighborhoods through the extension of urban transportation lines, which contribute to reducing the phenomenon of marginalization and reviving a functional dynamic within the neighborhoods. From this perspective, we deemed it appropriate to articu-

late the central issue of the topic in the following main question: **What is the role of urban public bus transportation in reintegrating marginalized neighborhoods in the city of Mila?**

In addition, to answer these questions we must study the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. Urban public transportation is one of the optimal strategies for creating interaction and spatial dynamics in the urban environment, especially between different neighborhoods.

Hypothesis 2. The development of small public facilities within the neighborhood and the provision of urban transportation to reach major facilities is one of the most important solutions for integrating marginalized neighborhoods.

2. Materials and methods

This research paper is primarily based on a field study using a descriptive-analytical approach. The study analyzed the current situation of the city as a whole, and then some typical marginalized neighborhoods were selected [Lifa 2024] with the focus on the old town of Mila, which suffers from isolation and marginalization.

The study analyzed the infrastructure and superstructure of the old town, identifying all its assets and shortcomings. Based on this analysis, possible interventions were identified to find immediate solutions that could be translated into scenarios for the reintegration of the marginalized neighborhood. Various methods were used, including numerous field trips, interviews with residents to assess their needs, and the use of geographic information systems (GIS) to create maps and drawings.

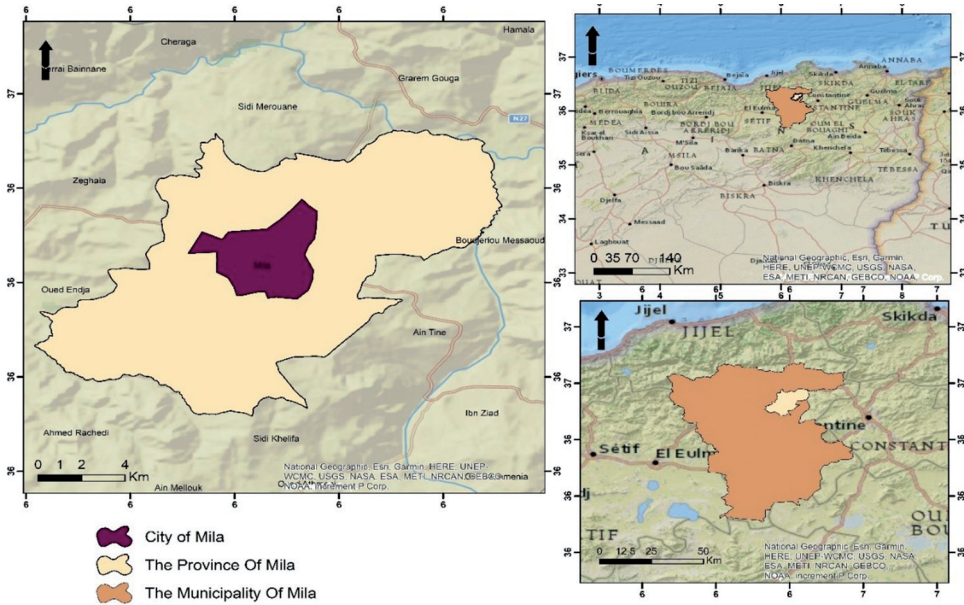
2.1. The Province and City of Mila

Mila Province is located in eastern Algeria. It was upgraded from a district headquarters to a provincial headquarters during the administrative division of 1984. It includes 13 districts and 32 municipalities, bordered by several provinces (Fig. 1). Its area is estimated at 3480.54 square kilometers. As for the municipality of Mila, it is the administrative capital of the province. It covers an area of 130.60 square kilometers, bordered by several municipalities, which gave it an excellent centrality thanks to its geographical location.

As for the city of Mila, it is located in the heart of the municipality. Its population in 2019 was 182,871, or about 91% of the municipality's population. It covers an area of 1,553.9 hectares. The city is a major attraction due to its availability of various facilities and equipment as it is the center of the province. It has great importance thanks to its strategic location, as it is a link between the Constantine Plateau and the Tell region. It is also crossed by an important road network: National Road No. 5, National Road No. 27, and National Road No77 [Directorate of Programming and Budget Monitoring, Mila, 2016].

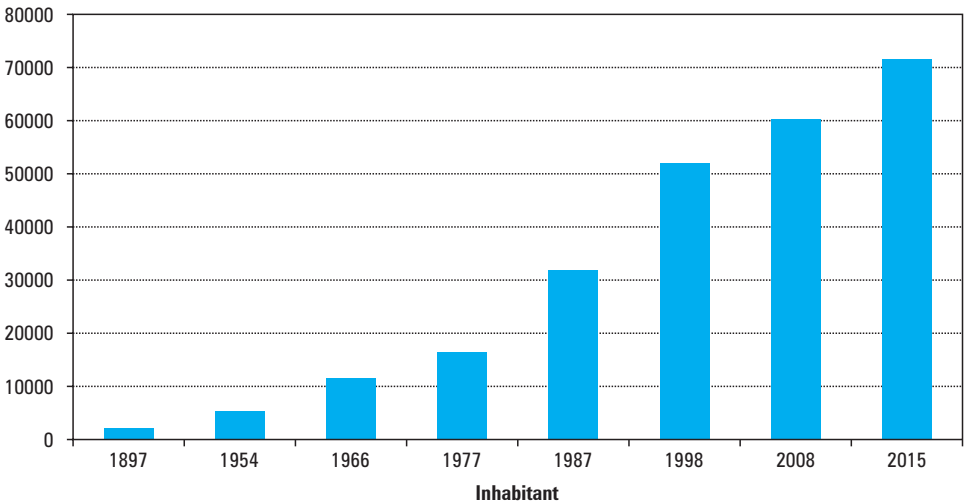
Mila City has witnessed a significant population growth after the administrative division of 1984, after it was appointed as a province and benefited from several development projects that led to its attraction of people from several neighboring areas and even from

other provinces. The population growth of Mila City has gone through several stages, as shown in the following graph (Fig. 2) [ONS and Directorate of Programming and Budget Monitoring, Mila, 2016].



Source: The administrative division of Algeria, 1984

Fig. 1. The geographical location of the city of Mila



Source: ONS and Directorate of Planning and Urban Development, Mila 2019

Fig. 2. Population growth in Mila City (1897–2015)

2.2. The Road Network and Public Bus Transportation Network in Mila City

Mila City has a road network of 113.30 kilometers, or about 53% of the road network in the province. The network is distributed as follows [Transport and Traffic Plan 2014]:

- National roads: 27.10 km
- Provincial roads: 29.60 km
- Municipal roads: 56.60 km

Public bus transportation is an important element in our study, as it contributes the largest share to the transportation process within the city. The bus depot of the urban public bus transportation system in Mila City consists of the following lines (Table 1).

Table 1. Urban Public Bus Transportation Lines in Mila City

| Number | Departure | Destination | Garage exploitation | Capacity | Length of line [km] |
|--------|-------------|----------------------------|---------------------|----------|---------------------|
| 1 | City Center | DNC | 39 | 842 | 3 |
| 2 | | Kharba Al-Ulia | 16 | 338 | 3 |
| 3 | | Kharba As-Sufla | 13 | 250 | 3 |
| 4 | | Snaoua As-Sufla | 11 | 223 | 4 |
| 5 | | Snaoua Al-Ulia | 23 | 421 | 4 |
| 6 | | Sidi Es-Saghir | 35 | 739 | 3 |
| 7 | | Tiyaiba | 12 | 249 | 4 |
| 8 | | 240-apartment neighborhood | 23 | 534 | 5 |
| Total | | | 172 | 3,596 | 29 |

Through the study of the urban public bus transportation system in the city of Mila, some shortcomings were diagnosed that could affect the quality of the service provided in the field of urban public transportation, such as:

- The absence of stopping and waiting places along the line, except for some of them.
- The absence of urban transport stations within the city.

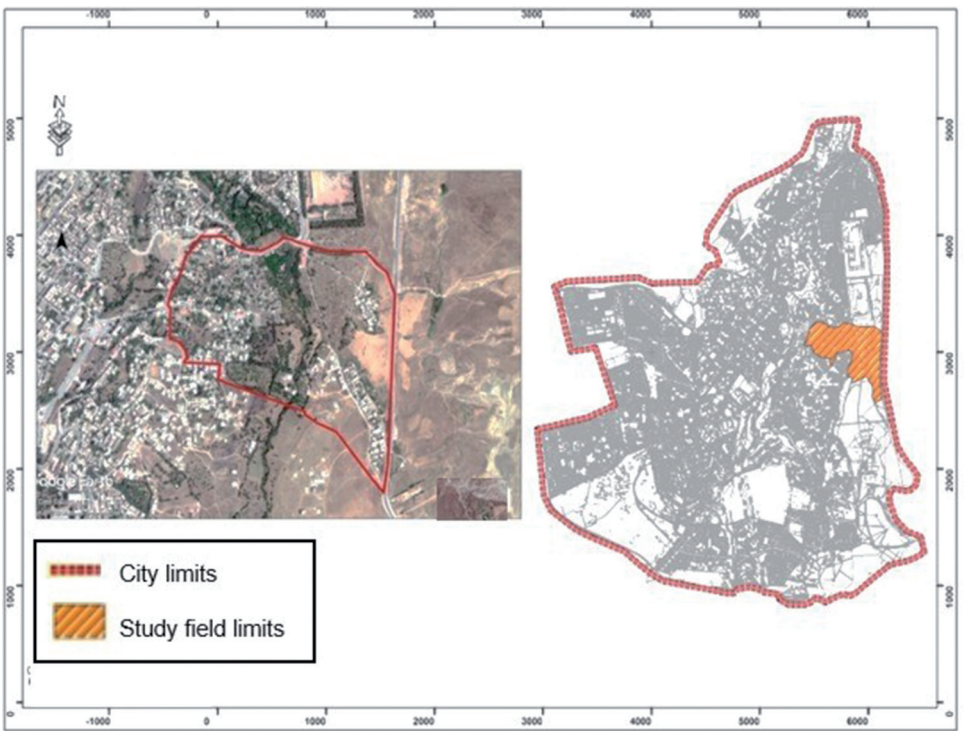
Some neighborhoods in the city suffer from a complete lack of urban public bus lines, which has significantly contributed to their marginalization. These neighborhoods also lack essential facilities and services, forcing residents to travel to other areas to meet their needs, where they encounter transportation challenges. Therefore, it is essential to establish urban public bus transportation within these neighborhoods.

2.3. The definition of the field of study

The field of study, which is considered the nucleus and one of the oldest neighborhoods in the city, suffers from significant marginalization and numerous problems at several levels. This study aims to identify the challenges faced by residents regarding urban public bus transportation. By highlighting these issues, we will propose appropriate interventions and solutions designed to integrate and improve marginalized neighborhoods. The goal is to develop an urban planning approach that aligns with the characteristics of the urban area and addresses its emerging problems.

2.3.1. The location of the field of study relative to the city of Mila

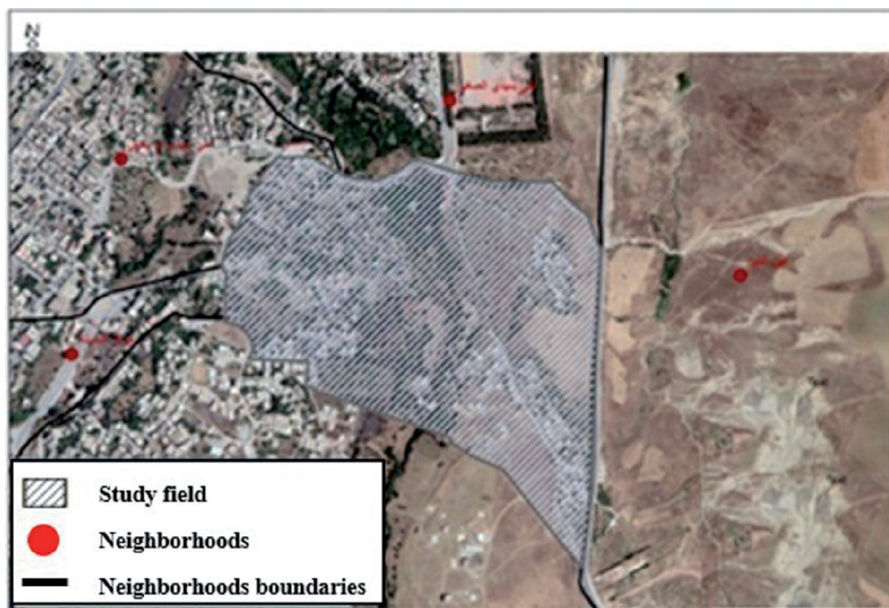
The field of study is the old town, which is located in the northeastern part of the city of Mila (Fig. 3). It is an important part of the urban fabric of the main settlement of the city of Mila, with an area of 35.9 hectares. It is characterized by an urban fabric that includes old single-family housing and a group of religious facilities, such as Sidi Ghanem Mosque, Rahman Mosque, and Bilal ibn Rabah Mosque, with a Quranic school next to it (PDAU Intecommunal, Mila).



Source: Authors' own study

Fig. 3. The location of the study area relative to the city of Mila

The field of study is surrounded by a group of neighborhoods, bordered by Sidi Sghir neighborhood to the north, Ain Tine neighborhood affiliated to Azzaba municipality to the east, Snaoua Al-Oula neighborhood to the south, Sidi Bou Yahia neighborhood and the city center to the west. The neighborhood is an important transit point for the northeastern part of the city, as the national road No. 79 passes by its borders, and it is also a connection point between Sidi Sghir neighborhood and Snaoua Al-Oula neighborhood, according to what the following map indicates (Fig. 4).



Source: Authors' own study

Fig. 4. The location of the study area relative to the neighboring neighborhoods

The location. Knowing the location allows us to identify the characteristics of the study area and to know the extent to which the land is capable of receiving various forms of urban interventions, such as the construction of roads, the establishment of transportation and communication networks, and various basic networks.

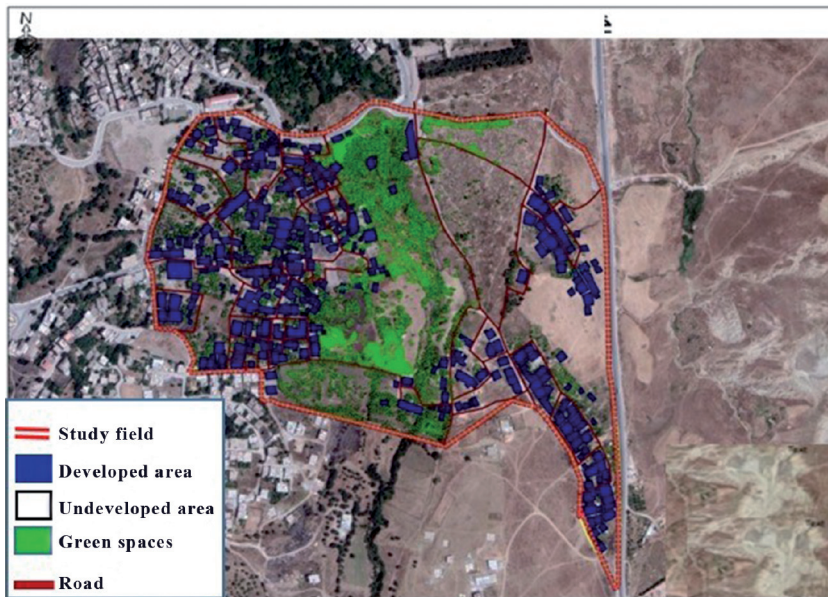
Topography. The study area is located in the northeastern part of the city of Mila. It is a region with good topography, with an altitude of 435 to 403 meters. The location of the neighborhood helps in the construction and development process, and the construction of various roads and networks (PDAU Intercommunal, Mila).

Slopes. The study area is located in the northeastern part, with a slope of (0–5%). This means that the area is relatively flat, with a gentle slope. This makes it a good location for construction and development, as it is easy to build roads and other infrastructure. (Topographic Map of Mila Province).

2.3.2. Developed and undeveloped area

The study area consists of individual dwellings in a small proportion compared to the areas covered by forests and open spaces (Fig. 5).

- **Developed area:** It represents 23.07% of the study area, where it consists of individual dwellings and religious facilities represented by three mosques and a Quranic school.
- **Undeveloped area:** It represents 76.93% of the study area, where it includes various green spaces, roads, and vacant land.



Source: Researchers' work based on the town planning and development plan

Fig. 5. Developed and undeveloped area

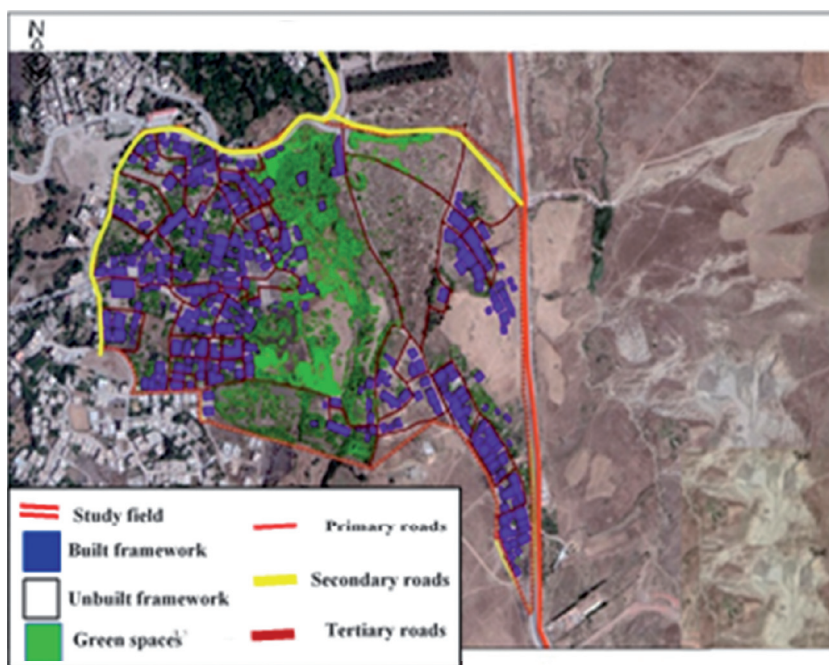
2.3.3. Equipment

It is essential that infrastructure be distributed evenly among urban sectors so that residents can access them. The farther the distance between the dwelling and the infrastructure, the higher the demand for transportation. The neighborhood clearly suffers from infrastructure shortages, as it lacks primary schools, health centers, and service facilities, etc., where the percentage of infrastructure within the neighborhood was estimated at 1.54% of the total infrastructure of the city. This created marginalization of the neighborhood and differences between it and other neighborhoods, which forces residents to move from their place of residence to other neighborhoods to benefit from various services and to meet their various needs, from work, study, shopping, treatment, etc., but the absence of urban transportation in all its forms is a problem, too, as it increased the marginalization of the neighborhood. (Google Earth 2019).

2.4. Road network within the study area

The road network is like an artery for any city or neighborhood, and it is one of the most important factors that help in opening and laying urban transport lines. The road network for the study area is classified as follows (Fig. 6) [Road Networks Service, Mila, 2019].

- **National roads:** They consist of an extension of the national road number 79 in the eastern part of the study area.
- **Urban roads:** They consist of the urban road towards Sidi Sghir, with a length of 1 km. Its physical condition is good; it is double-lane and has a sidewalk with a width of (2.5–3 m).
- **Tertiary roads:** They consist of roads that connect housing to urban roads. We find them inside the neighborhood and most of them are narrow.



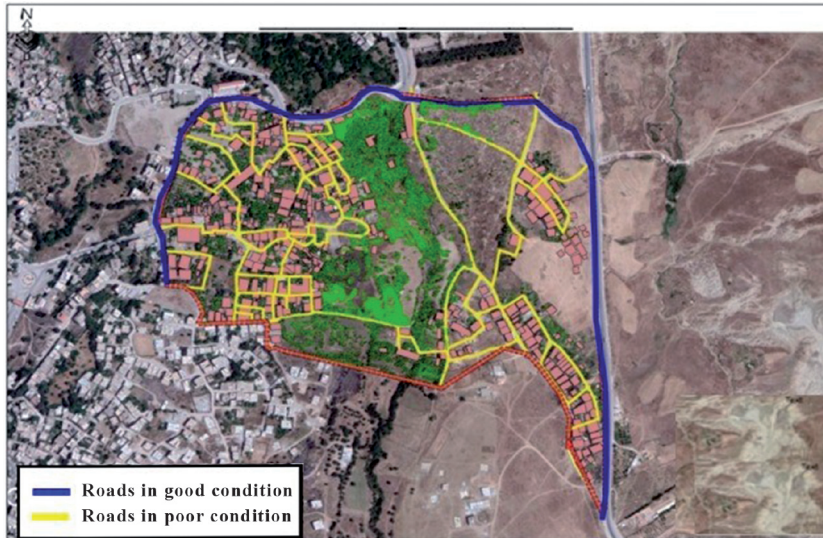
Source: Researchers' work based on information from the Directorate of Public Works

Fig. 6. Types of road networks

Road conditions

The primary roads are characterized by their good condition, as they accommodate the highest volume of vehicular traffic and the most substantial mechanical movement. Consequently, their maintenance is ongoing and continuous.

This also applies some urban roads. As for the roads of medium condition, these are often secondary roads. As for the tertiary roads, they are of poor condition, unpaved. Their function is to connect housing to secondary and urban roads (Fig. 7) [Road Networks Service, Mila, 2019].



Source: Researchers' work based on information from the Directorate of Public Works

Fig. 7. Road conditions

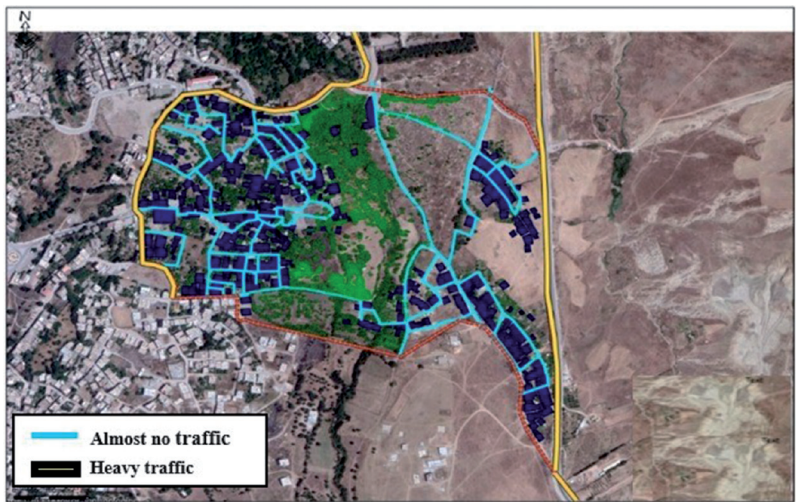
3. Problems with the road network in the study area

The main problems that residents of the study area face in terms of the road network can be summarized as follows:

- Almost complete absence of secondary and urban roads.
- Lack of sidewalks and their development.
- Difficult car access in some cases due to the narrowness of the roads and their poor condition.
- The majority of roads are paths and tertiary roads.

3.1. Traffic in the study area

The traffic in the neighborhood is almost non-existent. Residents rely on their own vehicles to get around, despite the narrowness of the roads, or on foot. They can use the public buses from the Sidi Sghir neighborhood coming from the north to reach the city center, but this requires exiting the urban road towards Sidi Sghir. Public transportation within the neighborhood is completely absent (Fig. 8) [Transport and Traffic Plan 2014].

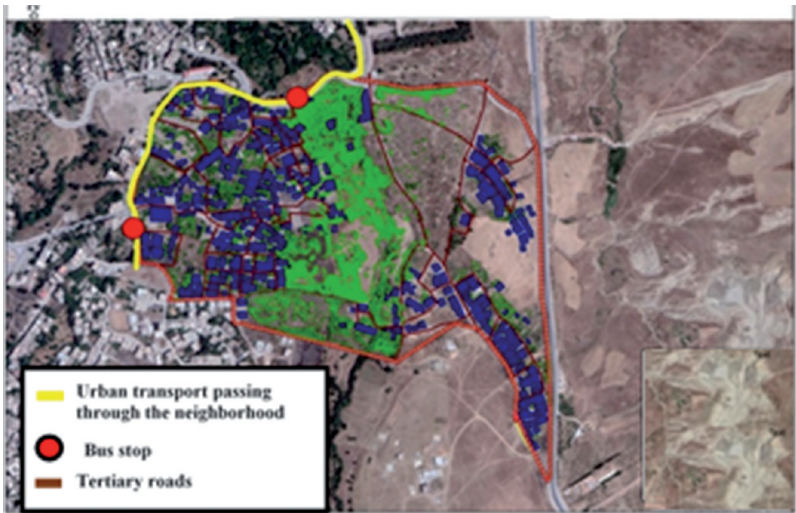


Source: Researchers' work based on information from the Directorate of Transport, Mila

Fig. 8. Traffic in the study area

3.2. Urban transportation within the study area

The study area suffers from the absence of a bus transportation network. The majority of residents rely on walking to the edge of the neighborhood and using public buses from the Sidi Sghir neighborhood. Bus stops are also absent (Fig. 9) [Transport and Traffic Plan 2014].



Source: Researchers' work based on information from the Directorate of Transport, Mila

Fig. 9. Diagram of traffic flow in the study area

3.3. Population density of the study area

The population of the study area is estimated to be 9107 people on an area of 74 hectares, with a population density of 123.06 people per hectare. This is a very high density compared to other neighborhoods [Directorate of Programming and Budget Monitoring, Mila, 2016].

The analytical study of the area revealed the following major problems that the residents of the neighborhood are facing:

- High population density with a lack of infrastructure and essential facilities (schools, healthcare centers, etc.).
- The absence of public transportation lines, such as buses.
- The absence of urban roads that pass through the neighborhood.
- All roads within the neighborhood are paths and secondary roads that are not properly developed.
- The narrowness of the paths and roads, which makes it difficult to access, even for private cars.

4. Results and discussions

4.1. Intervention in the study area

Based on the findings of the previous analytical study of the area, it is evident that residents of the old Mila neighborhood are facing significant challenges, particularly in terms of marginalization and a lack of essential facilities. Additionally, the absence of public transportation hinders the neighborhood's connection and integration with other areas, as well as with Mila as a whole. This situation is exacerbated by the inadequacy of the public urban transportation fleet, particularly buses [Lifa 2024]. After the analytical study of the factual conditions in the neighborhood and our identification of the various problems facing it, we decided to propose an urban project that addresses them [Bounemour and Dib 2020].

4.2. Nature of the project

The project is a set of urban interventions at the neighborhood level. These interventions are aimed at re-integrating the marginalized neighborhood through development and introducing facilities that serve the needs of the residents of the neighborhood in particular and the city as a whole in order to improve the level of urban life within the neighborhood.

4.3. Project goals

The project aims to create a space that will improve the lives of the residents in various aspects and according to their current and future needs through:

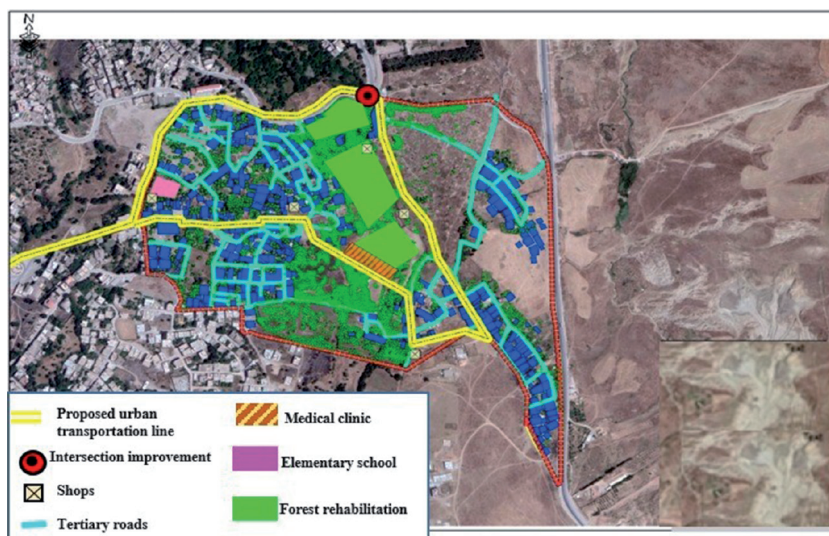
- Integration of the neighborhood with the rest of the city's neighborhoods.
- Re-structuring and developing roads.

- Creating new spaces for meeting and attracting residents to the neighborhood.
- Upgrading the quality of urban life within the neighborhood.
- Providing facilities that will serve the residents of the neighborhood.

5. Proposed interventions (concept plan)

The interventions consist of (Fig. 10) [Bounemour and Dib 2020].

- Urban rehabilitation: This intervention aims to improve the infrastructure and facilities of the neighborhood, including the construction of schools, healthcare centers, sports facilities, and urban roads.
- Urban restructuring: This intervention aims to improve the layout and circulation in the neighborhood, including the widening and improvement of narrow paths and roads, and the construction of new public transportation lines.
- Urban reintegration: This intervention aims to integrate the neighborhood with the rest of the city, including the creation of new spaces for meeting and attracting residents to the neighborhood.



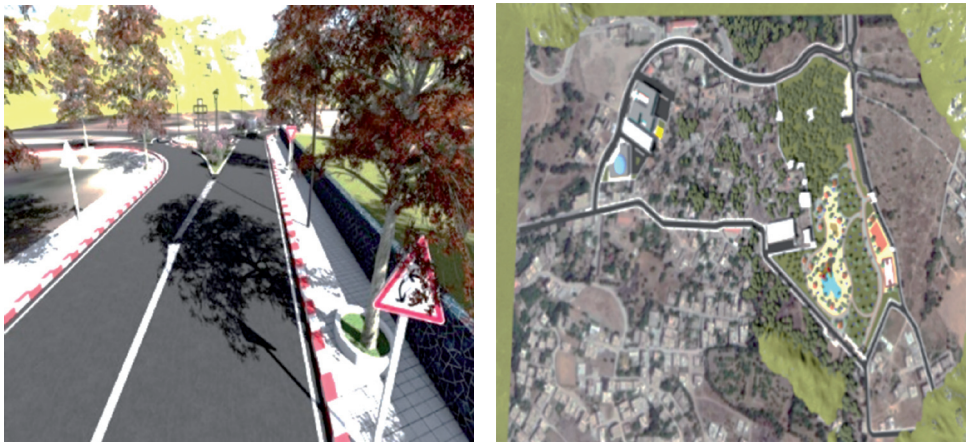
Source: Authors' own study

Fig. 10. Conceptual diagram

5.1. Urban restructuring

It consists of restructuring various urban roads that pass through the neighborhood and creating bus stops inside the neighborhood and road intersections.

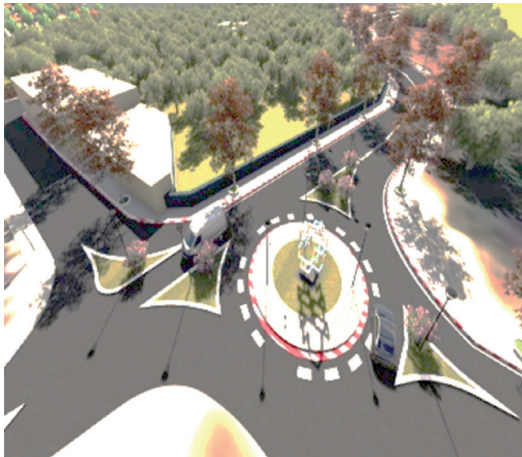
Roads. All roads inside the neighborhood are third-class roads that lack urban development, distributed irregularly throughout the neighborhood. Therefore, we have redeveloped them by widening them to 3 meters in both directions and by adding sidewalks, parking spaces, and traffic lights.



Source: Authors' own study

Fig. 11. Simulation of the urban road development of the neighborhood

Intersection. Rehabilitation of the roundabout located in the eastern part of the neighborhood by placing traffic lights to regulate traffic, as it is a meeting point for national road number 79 with the urban road of the neighborhood.



Source: Authors' own study

Fig. 12. Improvement of the intersection

5.2. Reintegration

Urban public transportation line and urban station:

The intervention consists of opening an urban public transportation line by bus, which connects the city center to the neighborhood. The urban line number 09: 'Mila Old Town – City Center' with a well-equipped departure station, modernized stops with appropriate lighting for safety and clear view and urban furniture that matches it, from garbage containers and seats (Fig. 13).



Source: Authors' own study

Fig. 13. Transport line route: City center – Mila Old Town

5.3. Number of proposed buses

The number of buses required for the line can be determined using the following relationship:

$$\text{Average number of seats per person} = (\text{Number of buses} / \text{Population}) \times 1000$$

To ensure satisfactory coverage within the neighborhood, the average number of seats per person should be greater than 30 seats per 1,000 inhabitants. Therefore,

$$(30 \times 9,107) / 1,000 = 274 \text{ seats}$$

By providing three SNVI buses with 100 seats per bus, for a total of 300 seats, the coverage within the neighborhood would be satisfactory.

Urban rehabilitation: It consists of the stopping points of the line (Table 2).

The following images simulate the proposed stops for the urban line connecting the City Center to the Old Town neighborhood (Fig. 14).

Table 2. Proposed stops on the proposed urban line

| Name | Stop |
|---|------|
| In front of the Brothers Meglaoua Hospital | 1 |
| Near the municipal park | 2 |
| Near the Sonelgaz headquarters | 3 |
| Located at the entrance to the neighborhood | 4 |
| Near the Bilel ben Rabah mosque | 5 |
| Near the entrance to the forest | 6 |
| Located in the middle of the housing units | 7 |
| Near the southern entrance to the forest | 8 |
| Near the proposed primary school | 9 |
| Near the proposed treatment hall | 10 |



Source: Authors' own study

Fig. 14. Simulation of the development of parking spaces

Urban transport station. A proposed urban station for public bus transportation was proposed on an area of 126 m², equipped with seats and waiting areas and bus arrival and departure timetables (Fig. 15).



Source: Authors' own study

Fig. 15. Simulation of the development of the urban transport station

5.4. Proposed equipment

The neighborhood is in the state of near-complete lack of equipment. We have therefore decided to put in place some equipment that will help to reduce marginalization and meet the primary needs of residents without having to go to other neighborhoods or the city center.

5.4.1. Health Center

A health center is proposed to be placed within the neighborhood to reduce the need for residents to travel to hospitals and health centers outside the neighborhood. The center will be located on an area of 255 m² (Fig. 16).



Source: Authors' own study

Fig. 16. Health center development

5.4.2. Elementary school

Due to the high population density within the neighborhood and the absence of elementary schools, it is proposed to build an elementary school to meet the needs of the residents and achieve self-sufficiency without the need for residents to travel to other neighborhoods (Fig. 17).



Source: Authors' own study

Fig. 17. Elementary school development

5.4.3. Meeting spaces

Rehabilitation of the squares along the main road that passes through the study area and supporting them with multi-service stalls that meet the needs of residents and visitors. The goal is to create a dynamic movement within the neighborhood and attract residents from different other neighborhoods (Fig. 18).



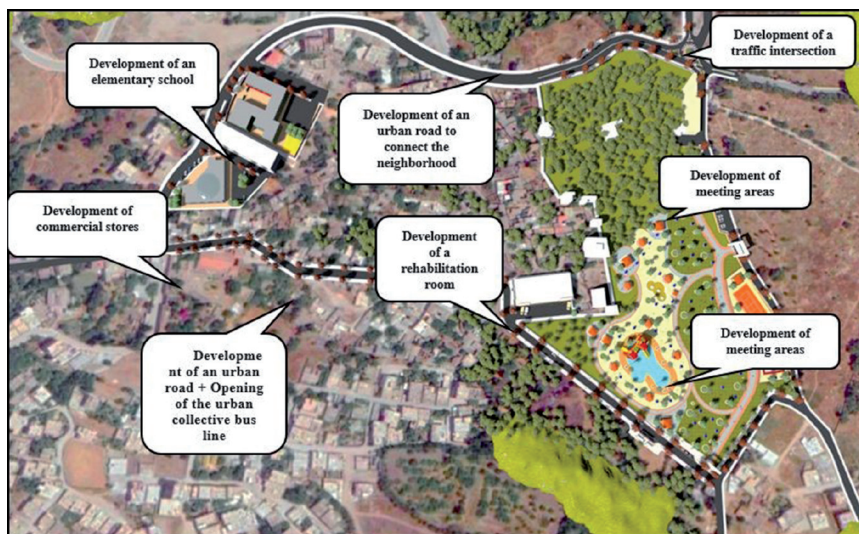
Source: Authors' own study

Fig. 18. Development of meeting spaces

5.5. The master plan

Consists of various proposed interventions to improve the current situation within the neighborhood and integrate it with other neighborhoods using public bus transportation. Based on this logic, we made several proposals that would create change, focusing on the following [Bounemour and Dib 2020] (Fig. 19).

- Opening a public bus line to create movement from the neighborhood to other neighborhoods to create interaction and integration for the neighborhood.
- Placing equipment within the neighborhood to eliminate marginalization.
- Rehabilitating areas for residents to meet and create dynamism within the neighborhood.
- This is all to reintegrate the neighborhood with other neighborhoods and the city center and create dynamism between.



Source: Authors' own study

Fig. 19. Master plan for the neighborhood

6. Conclusion

Through the interventions applied to the study area, we created a balance for the neighborhood and integrated it with the city center and other neighborhoods. This was done by highlighting and activating the role of public bus transportation in eliminating the exclusion and marginalization that the neighborhood suffers from and trying to integrate it and connect it with other neighborhoods and the city center by providing public bus transportation, providing various necessary and essential equipment within

the neighborhood, and providing attractive areas for residents within the neighborhood, in order to create movement and dynamism.

The problems identified in the study area: The study area suffers from several problems as it is considered one of the marginalized neighborhoods in the city despite its proximity to the city center.

- The neighborhood suffers from the complete absence of public urban bus transport.
- The roads inside the neighborhood suffer from great deterioration and lack of maintenance.
- Infrastructure is absent except for religious facilities.
- Deterioration of the dwellings, especially the old ones.
- The absence of various networks such as a natural gas supply network.
- The overabundance of waste and dirt.
- The absence of lighting poles.

Recommendations for improving the urban transportation sector in the city of Mila: In order to improve and develop the public urban transportation sector in the city of Mila in general and the neighborhood in particular, a number of recommendations should be taken into account at all levels, including:

- Distributing facilities in a balanced manner across the city's neighborhoods to avoid marginalization of any sector or neighborhood.
- Providing good management of the urban transportation system in the city and giving it full attention, as it is an important element from the economic and social point of view.
- Providing continuous monitoring of private operators and providing them with periodic training.
- Working to improve the bus fleet.
- Introducing new management mechanisms, especially with regard to the superstructures and their improvement and preparation in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

Through the study of the situation inside the marginalized neighborhood, we came up with a set of recommendations that could lead to a radical change in the neighborhood and elimination of the marginalization crisis that is taking place there. This can be achieved through the implementation of these recommendations and the enhancement of the public urban transportation system by buses, as transportation is a modern technological asset and it plays a crucial role in the prosperity of cities.

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