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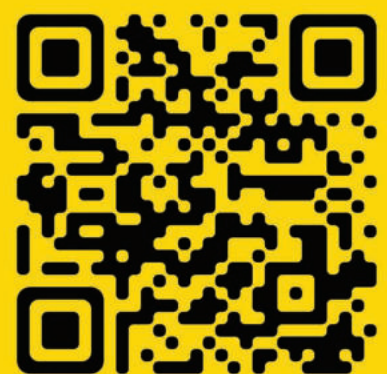
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Impact of citizen participation on the tourism development of a region: case of Kabyle villages, Bejaia

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Abstract. Kabylia is a region of Algeria located on a mountainous part of the Mediterranean basin; it has a vernacular heritage with recognized socio-cultural, environmental and architectural qualities. Thanks to its assets, the development of tourism in the region will bring economic dynamism to the region. These villages are home to associations that used to exist under other names (Thajmaat, village committees). In this paper, we examine the real contribution of village associations to village tourism and the importance that citizen participation can have in a decentralized decision-making scheme.

Keywords. Kabylia, associations, thajmaat, tourism, citizen participation

1. Introduction

Tourism in Algeria is viewed as a solution to revitalize the country's economy. In this context, a new political approach has emerged at the central level, through the Tourist Development Master Plan (SDAT), which at the local level is based on various criteria including citizen participation. This instrument takes care of national issues and leaves local communities to deal with issues related to their scale. This paper aims to show some experiences of citizen participation in this tourism policy.

Through this field exploration, we also aim to show the shift from a highly centralized tourism policy to a policy based on local actions. Through the choice of four associations, we show also the complexity of planning tourism and its overlapping with other sectors of socio-economic activities: culture, heritage, agriculture...

The field of study is therefore based on four village associations in the Kabylia region, which has particular characteristics of social organization and a mountain landscape.

2. An economy almost exclusively based on oil revenues and highly centralized

Algeria's economy has been dependent on hydrocarbon resources since the independence [1] and its policy during this period was highly centralized and rigid. At the beginning, the exploitation of this one generated an important source of income which brought the country the impression of being on the right track for an accelerated development, but this

enthusiasm was stopped dead by the collapse in the price of a barrel (the counter-oil shock) of 1986. [2,3] In addition to the fragility of this resource from an economic point of view, its overexploitation, being a non-renewable resource, will lead irretrievably towards its disappearance. Reserves are running out and the country must find new resources and thus reinvent itself.

3. The SDAT, a transition to economic tourism

The current policy, which should lead to a change in the type of economy, seems to favor the tourist component, it is redesigned towards a rediscovery of international tourism as a solution to this crisis. [4,5] The main objectives of this new policy are to *"improve macroeconomic balances, trigger spillover effects on other sectors and help socialise trade and openness at both national and international level"*. [6] It is in this perspective of development of this sector, that the government has set up an arsenal of legal texts likely to contribute to the development of tourism, and this, through an approach which is translated by the elaboration of a **Master Plan of Tourist Development « SDAT 2030 »** [7,8] ; this scheme was adopted by the government in 2008. The SDAT is instituted by law 01-20 of 12 December 2001 relating to the planning and sustainable development of territory and, is a variation of the National Land Use Plan, initially projected up 2025 and then updated and reassessed up 2030. For this, adequate tourism planning will undoubtedly allow the country's tourism economy to flourish. *"Indeed, tourism planning provides a future plan or perspective for the country's tourism activity or sector within a well-studied and accurately defined period of time with the aim of achieving rapid and long-term tourism development."* [9]

The aim of this master plan is to make tourism one of the engines of economic growth and, at the same time, to stimulate the other economic sectors through a knock-on effect. It will also be a question of enhancing the historical, cultural and religious heritage, with the additional objective of integrating the concept of sustainability into all stages of tourism development and thus improving the image of Algeria in the long term. [6,10] Indeed, since Brundtland report in 1987 entitled "Our Common Future", sustainable development has been a concept used in almost all fields, and tourism has not escaped it. Sustainable tourism is therefore the key word in Algerian tourism policy. [8,11] In this master plan are therefore lists various forms of tourism that can promote this development, such as mountain tourism, solidarity tourism, cultural tourism, community tourism (...) and thus compensate for the mass tourism that is seaside tourism.

In these diagrams, we underline the importance of territorial governance, which confirms Algeria's desire to opt for a new model of territorial governance and thus put aside centralised decisions. We can cite as an example the "Capacities-Local Development" project, called "Cap-DeL - Participatory Democracy and Local Development". The Ministry of the Interior, Local Authorities and Regional Planning and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have promoted this program with the support of the European Union. This programme *"aims to strengthen the capacities of all local actors, at the communal level, public authorities, civil society and economic actors, with a view to achieving sustainable development of their commune and territory. It thus contributes to the improvement of governance, the strengthening of social cohesion, and the emergence of a local economy based on solidarity and diversity."*[12] The communes concerned by this program are ten (10).

This governance *"represents a new approach to functioning modulated by social evolution (...), This new political dynamic suggests an inversion of the origin of power which, from centralized, becomes decentralized."*[13] Indeed, in the SNAT, this notion of governance

is widely highlighted in one of the five guidelines, it advocates the participatory approach at all levels and all actors concerned. [14,15] It is taken up by the master plans, in particular the SDAT of Wilaya, which come into declination to the national plan and the SDAT 2030. This governance will give the possibility, in particular, to the ordinary citizen to participate in the management of the territory, and this, at different scales for the national interest. What is really happening on the ground?

In our case, we will tackle the study of a research axis relating to the tourism of Kabyle villages. We will try to highlight the importance of citizen participation (civil society) in the decision-making process, and this, through traditional structures or others related to the life of the village notably the socio-political institution of *Thajmaat*, the village committee or associations, knowing that the latter are actors of citizen and village governance. As stated in the UNWTO Declaration, “*encourage good governance, ensuring that all stakeholders, especially at the local level, are duly consulted and responsibilities are clearly defined*”. [16]

4. Socio-political and spatial structures of the Kabyle village

The societal community organization of the Kabyle village is focused on the family nucleus (or cell), which has developed into a confederation. This family nucleus (family institutional unit) is referred to as **Axxam** which also includes the habitat as a spatial structure, that is to say, this same term designates both, and the house and the household. This habitat shelters the father, the mother and the children, the age of marriage reached, the children in their turn become independent and build their own house next to that of the father, the family in the broad sense (several households) then consists of three generations, all under the authority of the grandfather, the "old man" (*amghar*) and all living in a large house called *L'hara*. Several *Axxam* form *taxrrubt*, this one represents a fraction of the whole, consisting of its *temans*, executive members of the assembly. The tamen is the representative of the family and usually the head of the family Following this logic of association, several *taxrrubt* constitute *adrum*, this one is the district of the village, whose grouping forms *taddart* (the village). [17]

The Kabyle society has chosen to settle, for defensive and other reasons, on the summits, at the level of mountain summits, slopes and ridges where daily life presents many practical difficulties. This choice led them to set up a policy of mutual aid between citizens to provide for daily needs. The village is managed by *Thajmaat* (village assembly), considered as a social structure but also spatial, because it represents both the management and the place of management. It is composed of the character of the *Amin*, supported by *temans*, an *oukil* and an *imam*. The grouping of several villages gives birth to the *Arch* (tribe) to end up in *Thaqbilt* which groups together several tribes (relatives and allies). [18]

5. What is governance? What is the place of the citizen in the decision-making process?

Governance is currently multi-level,[19] and is characterized by the involvement of state and non-state actors, particularly through the participation of the population in a decision-making process [20].

Governance is therefore a system of actors and decisions at different scales (multi actors/multi levels). Its structure is composed of institutional, socio-economic and civil society actors. The latter can act in a structured way (in synergy with development actions) or in an unstructured way, and its involvement in decisions with local authorities gives rise to the notion of participatory democracy on a local scale. Indeed, “*local democracy self-administered by*

citizens and co-financed by a multiplicity of private actors and the associative movement in particular (Daguerre, 2011,3), it proves to be more effective than the omnipotent state." [21]

5.1. What about traditional governance?

The Kabyle culture is known for its mode of governance, autonomous and self-sufficient, which has persisted for centuries, this form of governance has never ceased to exist. [14] It is run by village committees or associations, formerly called *Tajmaat*. "*Many (associations) have seen their approvals blocked or frozen for months, even years, for reasons often not clarified. Nevertheless, these unspoken obstacles have never prevented the deployment of the associative network throughout the territory of Kabylia*". [22] This "survival" of this mode of governance can be explained by the "*lack of confidence of local populations in institutions*". [18]

Tajmaat was the "village assembly" [23], composed of the village chief, the *Amin*, as well as representatives of each family of the village, the *temans*, whose roles were, among other things, to manage the problems of the villagers and to enforce order in the village in accordance with its internal regulations. This regulation called "*l'kanoun n'thadarth*" still exists in certain village structures of Kabylia. Indeed, these are still subject to internal regulations compiled in a charter, reformable according to the needs of the villagers.

These assemblies are now structured in a different form but keep the same operating principles. They subsist either as an association or as a village committee. This one remains more or less official, it is thus only tolerated by the State,[23] which since the independence "*had unofficially allowed the village assemblies to be revived, believing to calm down this willingly rebellious Kabylia which had hardly been rewarded for its massive participation in the struggle for independence*". [24] In the past, "*in the region of Kabylia, the central authority was not content to control any associative emergence, but tried as well, through the local administration and the single party, to control the traditional socio-political organization of villages.*" [21] The Kabyle society embodies "*the spirit of association and solidarity*". [18] It is based on several values including mutual aid, *horma* (modesty), *enif* (pride), democracy... The current committees and associations follow the same approach, they participate not only in the various tasks of the daily life of the village on the social level (help to the poorest, conflicts and litigations), on the environmental level (cleanliness of the village), on the cultural level (maintenance of the traditions) but also work on the tourist promotion of it. They are composed of young people replacing the elders, the elderly and the village elders "*imgharen*". The anthropologist YACINE Tassadit, [25] specialist of the Berber world, speaks about a "male representation" of *Tajmaat*. It states that "*Each family is officially represented by at least one member, usually the oldest, who has the right to speak on its behalf, but others, including the very young, may attend public meetings. A family that has no men may nevertheless be represented by an older woman, usually menopausal. She attends the assemblies a little out of the way and only intervenes when it comes to a really important issue, especially concerning her family.*" The current particularity of the associations is that women are admitted to integrate the organization, whereas formerly, the assembly was composed only of men except in exceptional case. [24] We currently have associations composed mainly of women, whose main activity is handicrafts.

6. Methodological part

In this study, the methodological approach chosen is mainly based on a field survey that will allow us to assess the impact of citizen participation on the development of tourism in a region, specifically in traditional villages of Kabylia. The collection of data from people

directly involved in the tourism activity (associations, management...) is the main goal of this work. The realization of this database will make it possible to understand the role of associations in this type of development. We conducted a qualitative study based on semi-structured interviews, informal interviews and on site observations. This allowed us to better understand the role of each stakeholder.

7. Presentation of case studies:

In this paper, we will try to present examples of involvement of the civil society, and this, through some actions carried out by associations of villages, in order to put in tourism of the places and the products of the soil. We chose a representative study sample of three associations, all located in the wilaya of Bejaia, in Algeria. They undertake actions in various fields, namely ecological (waste collection), social (mutual aid), administrative (bureaucratic procedures), political (elections, April 20), historical (November 1), cultural (festivities), tourist (Yennayer, Adheryis,) and agricultural. The wilaya has a very important associative movement (700 associations in all registers). (SDAT W, Béjaia)

The first association studied is that of the village of *Aguemoune Nath Amar* located in the commune of *Thaourirt Ighil*, दौरا of Adegkar. It has collaborated for the contest of the village and the cleanest neighborhood of the wilaya of Bejaia which has also won the first prize in the first edition of October 2020. The second is the association of fig growers in the town of Beni-Maouche, a regional pioneer in the production of figs, and organizer of a festival in his honor, it advocates among other things for the labeling and marketing of the dry fig. As for the third, it is the association of the village of Djebba located in Beni Ksila, it has made known the village by its rehabilitation but also by the popularization of the *adheryis day*.

The last association is a social enterprise named IZOURANE Algeria, which was founded by three young women, who have taken on the mission of socially and economically revitalizing more than 500 isolated villages. This company works mainly on two axes, the development of eco-tourism products and the renovation of old buildings. Its first pilot village, in terms of renovation, is the rural complex of *Kalaa Ait Abbas* classified as a "safeguarded sector" in 2015. The company has two components, the commercial component of lucrative interest involving tours, or tourist stays in the old building renovated to discover a forgotten heritage thus boosting the local economy through the participation of hosts, guides, restaurateurs... As for the second, non-market component, it concerns the apprenticeship part or the reintegration into traditional trades.

We based our paper on a qualitative study essentially through semi-structured interviews with administrations and associations.

7.1. The village Aguemoune Nath Amar: Winner of the contest of the "cleanest village

The commune of *Adekar* is composed of three communes, *Adekar*, *Béni Ksila* and *Taourirt Ighil*. The latter is home to two traditional villages: The village *Cheurfafa* and the village *Aguemoune Nath Amar*. It has eight associations which are active in the social, economic and tourist fields: Two (02) for *Cheurfafa* and six (06) for *Aguemoune Nath Amar*. The associations of the latter are headed by the village committee, whose financial participation is not negligible. These associations were born from a need to create a contact with the administration, and thus be structured in an administrative way.

The village is headed by a village committee still in service, which oversees the six associations. The village has its own regulation called "*El Qanun*", it is established on the basis

of the maintenance of order but also on the basis of the needs of the villagers, since the society aspires to more and more important needs, *"El Qanun"* is revised every year.

Towards the end of January 2019, the wilaya of Bejaia launched the contest of the cleanest village, with the participation of 107 villages and a dozen neighborhoods, and the results were not published until October 2020 due to the health situation of COVID 19 and the citizen movement (Hirak) that delayed the results. All the work done during this operation is the result of the efforts of the villagers, community service, and financial support from the diaspora.

This type of events is recorded in other wilayas. Among them, we can cite the competition Rabah AÏSSAT *"Prize of the cleanest village in Kabylia"* initiated by the wilaya of Tizi-Ouzou, including the commission "health, hygiene and environmental protection". As a reminder, the initiative to reward the cleanest village in the wilaya was taken in 2006 by the late Rabah Aïssat, ex-P/APW of Tizi-Ouzou.

7.2. The village of Béni Maouche: Labeling of the dried fig

The commune of Béni-Maouche, known for its history, fought the French colonists during the revolution and unfortunately recorded 1074 martyrs. According to the mayor of Béni Maouche, the commune is made up of 32 villages, 14 of which have more or less kept their traditional character (06 villages in ruins and deserted and 08 villages where new constructions and traditional constructions cohabit). It is home to the village of El Jabia, where the film "The Forgotten Hill" was shot. This village has the characteristic of having retained its traditional character.

It is important to note that the wilaya of Bejaia was one of the ten wilayas delegated in the CapDEL programme, and the commune chosen is that of Béni Maouche. During an interview with the P. APC of Béni-Maouche, he informed us that two wilayas among the ten have been excluded from the program, those of Bejaia (Béni Maouche) and Tizi-Ouzou (Tigzirt). Still and according to the same interlocutor, several unsuccessful attempts have been submitted to restart the procedure with the authorities, but in vain.

The commune encompasses a movement of more than 50 associations of a social, cultural, agricultural, environmental, sporting and religious nature. The one we will study in this article is that of the "fig growers of Béni-Maouche", which is more agricultural in nature but which also deals with economic, social and environmental aspects. It was created in 2009 by the farmers of the region and the commune, under the advice of experts from the European Union, to accompany the process of labelling the dried fig of Béni-Maouche.

This was labelled by decree of 22 September 2016 granting the distinctive sign of recognition of the quality of the agricultural product: geographical indication (GI) of the "dried fig of Béni Maouche". In an interview with the newspaper, Omar Bekouche, secretary general of the Beni Maouche association, said: *"We have been working on this project for 20 years. This recognition will bring added value to the producers of a whole region composed of 21 communes."*

7.3. Djebba village: rehabilitation of the village

The village of Djebba is located in the commune of Béni Ksila, which has several tourist potentialities thanks to its geographical position (sea and mountain). It also has a vernacular architecture, still intact and integrated, imprinted with the authenticity of the various villages of the region. There are about ten of them in the commune, some of them in ruins and others in a more or less degraded state. Currently, most of the villages are deserted; we can cite the example of the village of *Thimri n'mansra*, which is uninhabited but reserved for livestock (as stables) for the owners who have left the village, as well as the village of *Bicher*, which is

occupied only during the summer period and which has the advantage of having preserved its authenticity.

The village we will study in this article is that of "Djebbla". This village has been rehabilitated for tourism purposes, thanks to the *Tajmaat N'Djebbla* association, which initiated this project. Indeed, about twenty houses (Photos 1 and 2) have been rehabilitated with the financial help of NGO II, which is a support programme for Algerian development associations and the wilaya of Bejaia. From the beginning, this association contributed to the development of the project, from its registration to the work of putting it into tourism. This rehabilitation also took place thanks to the financial support of the NGO II and the commune of Béni K'sila. The NGO II programme was launched in September 2006 and is a continuation of the NGO I project, carried out between 2000 and 2004, and consists of strengthening the capacities of the national associative movement. The association, created in 2006, is made up of inhabitants of the village who wish to preserve their heritage and especially to make it known.



Photos 1 and 2. Showing the restoration of the house and alleyway siding, in Djebbla.

Source: Author, 2012

7.4. The Kalaa N'ait Abbas

The N'ait Abbas citadel is located in the commune of Ighil Ali, it is nestled on a rocky plateau which culminates at more than 1000m of altitude offering a view on the mountainous summits which give off an unequalled quietude. It is accessible only by a track dating from the colonial period. The citadel was made up of four quarters that housed the Ouled Hamadouch, the Ouled Yahya Ben Daoud, the Ouled Aïssa and the Ouled Chouarickh (Charles Farine, Wikipedia). It is naturally protected by the precipices which surround it but also by the walls of the houses which were used as ramparts. Bastion of the insurrection of El Mokrani, the Kalaa is a place full of history.

8. Results and discussions

8.1. The contribution of the associative movement in the village of Aguemoune Nath Amar

Thanks to the work carried out by the inhabitants under the supervision of the associations, the village won the 'first prize for the cleanest village'. Since winning this prize, the village of Aguemoune Nath Amar has received a lot of media attention and is visited weekly by tourists who come to discover the village and the tourist potential of the Adekar region. This village is ahead of its time, as it houses a waste sorting centre that is topped by a belvedere point offering a breathtaking view of the neighbouring mountains, and it has also acquired a public

lighting system that is entirely self-financed by funds from locals and the diaspora. The houses, for their part, are all supplied with drinking water and their connection was the work of the villagers. These associations have also provided the alleys with paving stones, wall signs, decorations such as paintings and murals and plants along the alleys. (Photos 3 and 4) The association stresses the importance of female participation in these activities, both on the decision-making and labour sides.



Photos 3 and 4. showing the lining and decorations of the alleys.

Source: Author, 2022

8.2. The contribution of the associative movement to the commune of Beni-Maouche

Despite its reputation for its historical importance and its cultivation of dried figs, tourism was underdeveloped in the commune of Béni Maouche. Nevertheless, it should be noted that since the labelling of the local product, this commune is increasingly visited. The association of fig growers of Béni Maouche (AFBM) organizes, in collaboration with the commune, the festival of the dry fig, it is the 18th edition; it is thanks to this festive event that the commune is distinguished. It should be noted that another local product is highlighted at another festival, namely "Secssou Oudheryis", which is in its third edition in the commune of Béni Maouche.

It is thanks to the publicity operated on the dried fig, through these demonstrations, that the notoriety of the commune of Béni-Maouche was made and thus to start this tourist dynamics of the commune.

8.3. The contribution of the associative movement to the village Djebbla

From 2009 onwards, the village organises, during the months of February and March, a cultural event synonymous with the beginning of spring, during which tourists are invited to a meal based on "couscous Aderyis", an intangible cultural heritage of the region. According to the association *thajmaat n'djebbla*, the event experienced a certain enthusiasm on the occasion of the 4th and 5th editions which took place respectively in 2013 and 2014, where the presence of nearly 3500 visitors was recorded in 2014. This event allowed tourists to visit the village, to have a traditional lunch, and to attend animations, galas, as well as exhibitions and sales of local products and handicrafts, and at the end to attend conferences exposing the Kabyle heritage. During this event, the marketing of local products made it possible to obtain an income that will be used for future interventions.

Unfortunately, the momentum generated during these events to attract visitors has waned considerably. We have thus noted the non-completion of the works planned by the

project and have noticed some degradation of the rehabilitated houses due to lack of maintenance. There was a disconnect between the aspirations and the objectives to be achieved.

8.4. The contribution of social enterprise on Kalaa N'ait Abbas

The company 'Izourane Algérie' has organised two editions of work-schools in the Kalaa for the rehabilitation of old buildings. This work-school experience is focused on training participants in heritage preservation, thus creating human and cultural exchanges among the local population. During these two editions, we noted a societal dynamic within the village, making the participants actors of change. Indeed, when work sites are carried out, the company calls on villagers who contribute voluntarily to the operation to learn or take up the trade of mason or others. Women are not excluded: training courses and workshops for rural women are organised, mainly in the field of handicrafts. This is how the Izourane company accompanies and trains villagers in the tourism sector. Before intervening on the buildings, the Izourane team had to go through a process of impregnation and awareness-raising to federate the entire community of the Kalaa, which is why this project is co-designed with the local population. According to one of the members of the company, the sponsorship by the village association is a major asset as it is better accepted by the villagers. Once the training site is completed, the village will be autonomous in terms of tourism, thanks to the various training courses carried out.

Among the projects of this company, the treasure hunt is one of the programmes it has developed to promote one of its destinations, namely Kalaa N'ait Abbas. It is a playful way of introducing history to the general public (children and adults) and thus attracting their attention throughout the stay.

This company has set itself the objective of restoring the place of heritage through its rehabilitation and popularisation, thus enabling villagers to remain in the area and encouraging expatriates to return.

9. Summary of the different actions and results

The contribution of the associations in the development of their village:

Table 1. showing the associations studied

Village	Association	Denomination	Result
Aguemoune	Aguemoune	Ecological	Development and embellishment of the village
Nath Amar	Nath Amar		
Ath-Maouche	Figuiculteur	Agricultural	Labelling the dried fig of Béni Maouche
Djebbla	Djebbla	Cultural	Rehabilitation of the village to promote tourism
Kalaa N'Ait Abbas	Izourane	Social enterprise	House renovation and tourist circuit

10. Conclusion

We have just illustrated through this associative dynamic a process of putting into tourism a local product (dried fig) and a place (Kabyle village). These actions show the importance of solidarity and citizen involvement in all decisions and development actions. These associations and social enterprises are diverse, cultural, agricultural and ecological, but we note that it is not necessary for the association or other organisation to have a tourism name to develop this sector in the villages. These events and celebrations encourage the creation of a

union not only between the different actors but also at different levels. In conclusion, this new governance, set out in the SNAT and in the other planning schemes and instruments, more specifically the SDAT, at territorial level remains an opportunity to carry out governance at local level and thus for involving civil society in decision-making.

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