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TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FACING THE THREATS OF URBANIZATION -THE CASE OF TAZA NATIONAL PARK- JIJEL PROVINCE, ALGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Heritage is a very broad concept as it has been expanded since its inception at different typological, chronological and geographical levels. It encompasses several formations ranging from an isolated object to a delimited site which have been recognized for their exceptional, universal values and their scientific, historical, aesthetic characteristics, etc. Classified heritage can be cultural or natural. Protected natural areas (PNAs) belong to the natural heritage. They are defined as terrestrial and/or marine areas that are delimited in order to ensure better protection against external factors that could disturb or interfere with the biodiversity they contain. Due to their intrinsic qualities, these protected natural areas require protection and tourism development measures.

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1. Introduction.

Protected natural areas (PNAs) belong to the natural heritage. They are defined as terrestrial and/or marine areas that are delimited in order to ensure better protection against external factors that could disturb or interfere with the biodiversity they contain (Clara, 2013), however, they are also at the crossroads of local and global dynamics. They are a space of interaction between local life and global tourist, residential and economic dynamics that make them a welcoming area for populations and activities that settle there temporarily or permanently. Ports are the place where a globalized economy connects with the sustainable development challenges that mark the hinterland (Ouelmouhoub, Samir, 2005). This is the local-global interface that is at the heart of the creation of coastal and marine protected areas, which is part of national objectives.

Reconciling and articulating endogenous and exogenous dynamics to the territories concerned is essential. Local acceptance of environmental projects of general interest is a major challenge: the failure of the first French offshore wind farm project in Veulettes-sur-Mer (Nadaï et Labussière, 2014) or the difficulties of local appropriation of marine or coastal protected areas (Cadoret et Beuret, 2016) have a cost. This challenge is economic (in terms of expenditure), environmental (non-implementation

or risk of ineffectiveness of protection measures) and social (breakdown of links between conflicting actors). Another challenge is the construction of territorialized sustainable development (Tugcu, Can Tansel, 2014), which combines general normative references and the taking into account of local specificities, which calls for the construction of conventional compromises at the territorial level (Bounar *et al*, 2013). More generally, it is a question of constructing a territorialized general interest (Blondy, Caroline, 2016), at the interface between local projects and desires and a supra-territorial general interest. This is a challenge for Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) (Denis, Hénocque, 2001), which aims in particular to integrate often opposing issues into common management and development processes.

In Algeria, the Regional Natural Parks (RNPs) offer privileged study grounds for these issues. PNRs are subject to contractual protection, with rules and guidelines negotiated and included in a charter. Existing primarily through missions to be accomplished and means attached to projects, PNRs have neither environmental police powers nor legal powers (Lajarge, Baron, 2011): However, the charter is a powerful tool because it is binding on planning documents and sets the guidelines for a sustainable development project approved by elected officials, who are committed to it. According to Lajarge and Baron (2011), RNPs are emblematic cases of sustainable development policies that promote the ecological general interest by limiting it to a chosen political perimeter. As a protected area, each PNR is an element of the network of a national land development policy (Laslaz, 2014), but it is also a territorial project: this dual local-global identity can be a source of tension, even conflict. In fact, obtaining the label involves, on the one hand, a territorial project led by local elected officials, and on the other hand, requirements set out by national bodies and based on the environmental general interest. How are compromises built? Their development gives rise to a real negotiation that we studied gradually for fifteen years in the case of the Golf Morbihan Regional Natural Park, then retrospectively and comparatively in two other coastal territories.

Among the effective means and measures that have contributed to the protection of natural resources and biological diversity, and whose success has been largely demonstrated, is the creation of protected natural areas commonly called Protected Areas (kadry, 2019). They gradually emerged in the wake of the first major international environmental protection commitments, which developed a conservationist approach to nature management. Today, protected areas are no longer simply an ecological issue, but are considered as coherent territorial spheres that can participate to varying degrees in the development of the populations living inside, near and beyond the protected area. Sustainable tourism, at the forefront of the world stage as an alternative development model for the preservation of protected natural environments, a tool for fighting poverty, and an instrument for sustainable development at the heart of new governance models, opens up an original conceptual framework that allows for new approaches to development based on the revenues from tourist consumption (Blamey, 2001).

- Better thought out and organized - likely to support initiatives that are part of an overall sustainable development project.

Like all countries in the world, Algeria has embarked on a policy of protecting biological resources through the creation and establishment of a national network of protected areas to ensure the safeguarding and sustainability of these excellent areas, while at the same time enhancing this natural capital through viable and sustainable activities that generate income and drive sustainable development.

2. What strategy for Ecotourism?

Since the publication of the Brundtland Report in 1987 and the organization of the Earth Summits in Rio, Johannesburg and more recently in Stockholm, the concept of "sustainable development" has mobilized many countries, from the richest to the poorest. Many researchers are passionate about this new paradigm and are trying to find solutions that combine ecosystem protection with socio-economic development (Erick Leroux, 2010). There are different forms of sustainable tourism:

2.1 Ecotourism.

The concept of ecotourism was first coined as "a travel concept that describes a trip to a natural area, with the specific focus on education and awareness of the environment." It is a significant form of sustainable tourism development that aims to minimize negative impacts on the natural environment for long-term preservation. Ecotourism or green tourism is based on organized visits for the observation and appreciation of landscapes and specific areas.

In the absence of a clear and recognized definition of ecotourism, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) attempt to describe it as:

"A form of tourism that aims to discover a natural environment while preserving its integrity, which includes an activity of interpretation of the natural or cultural components of the environment, which promotes an attitude of respect towards the environment, which is based on notions of sustainable development and which brings socio-economic benefits to local and regional communities."

At the national level, ecotourism is the responsibility of central government bodies. Their role is to inform, promote national heritage, highlight its specificities and universality, and position it at the international level (Caroline Blondy 2016). The involvement of administrative institutions as stakeholders in the commercial promotion of ecotourism is essential, as some actions go beyond the scope of intervention of local actors and promoters.

Ecotourism products are a mosaic of services and subsidiary products offered by a multitude of operators belonging to a region or locality. (Dayan, Léo, 2010). These operators are called upon to work together to establish communication and promotion programs. It is up to the operators to exploit the interest generated by the Internet and word-of-mouth.

3. Determining Ecotourism Potential in Algeria.

The development of ecotourism in Algeria is essential because the country has a large natural capital, which is not being managed and is subject to strong pressure to meet the needs of a growing population that is increasingly consuming natural resources. It is also justified by the fact that it will allow Algerian tourism to position itself in the high-end, high value-added segments and to improve the somewhat tarnished image (mass tourism) it enjoys today.

Regarding the development of the environment, Pierre-Charles Pupion observes that "The Aquitaine coastline, a mass tourism destination, is facing a major challenge: how to allow tourism to develop without destroying the resources, which are often fragile and the source of its attractiveness." He proposes to answer the question of why and how a tourist destination makes the development and preservation of natural resources a central element.

According to (Chebira, Boualem-Ammar and Bruno Sarrazin, 2015), a ranking of the modes of development of natural resources, sources of competitive advantages. It shows how the sustainable tourism policy is built within the framework of networks of public policy actors who manage natural resources and that the accumulation of functions and mandates makes elected officials the central node of the networks and that their ability to make people work together is a determining organizational competence for tourist destinations.

In 2006, the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Tourism Organization established a sustainable tourism development program specifying that any future program should be inspired by it and take into account the following twelve objectives for sustainable tourism:

- Take into account the advances in research in sustainable tourism and ecotourism with the implementation of tourism practices strongly linked to sustainable development in these three dimensions and more particularly to the preservation of ecosystems. Thus, the articles presented testify to the richness of research in sustainable tourism, from the issue of the reintroduction of wild animals on site, to the approach of sustainable tourism through the prism of system analysis and research on the protection of heritage and natural sites and their promotion, on the sustainable development of the natural resources of a tourist site.
- Design and implementation of the concept of ecotourism optimum.

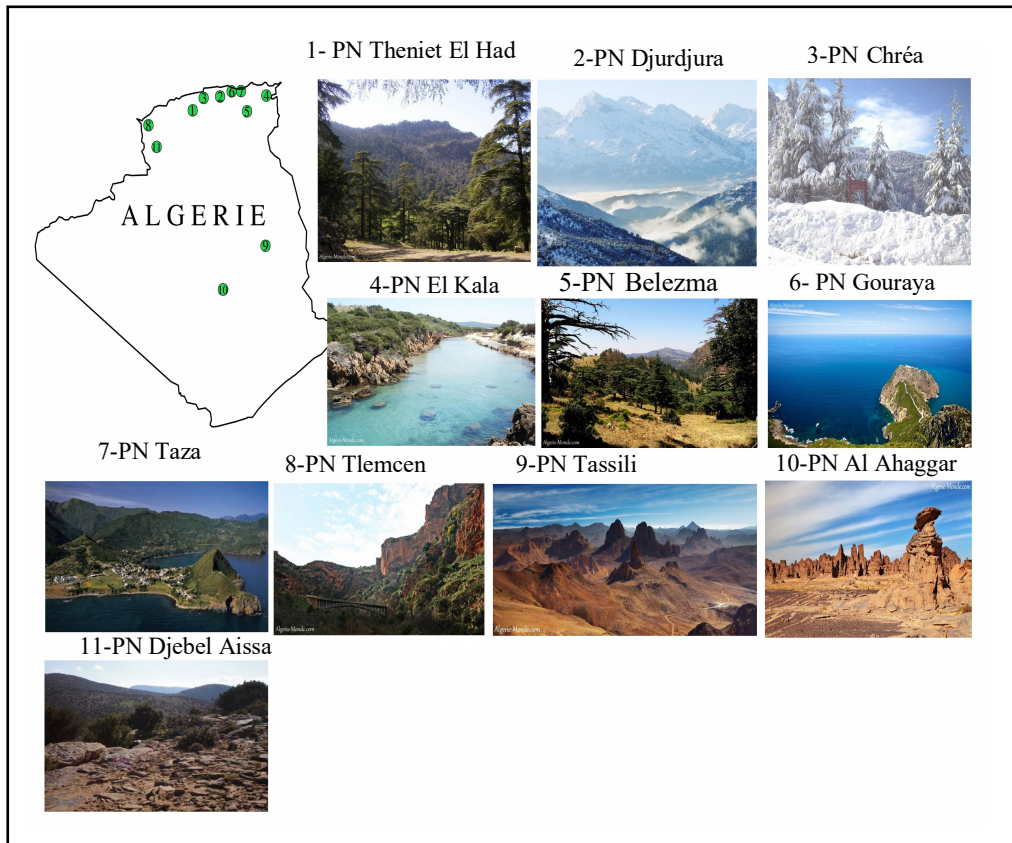


Figure 1. Distribution of National Parks in Algeria.
 Source: Jijel Province Tourism Directorate 2022.

National parks are the most important link in the conservation of the national network of protected areas. The national parks that exist in Algeria are represented in all the ecological sectors of the biogeographic domains of Algeria.

4. Jijel Tourism and National Park.

The Mediterranean region, until the COVID-19 crisis, was the world's leading tourist destination with several hundred million visitors per year from Europe and other continents. All types of tourism are concentrated there with all forms of infrastructures, including the models that were born there such as labelling. Tourism is particularly important for economic development there (Chaoui, 2013). In addition, the Mediterranean basin is recognized as a biodiversity hotspot. This means that there are many plant and animal species concentrated there, most of which are rare and threatened due to the concentration of urban, industrial and agricultural areas with high negative impacts and obviously due to the importance of tourist infrastructures, especially on the coastlines (Pierre Pech and Imene Diaf; 2022). The Province of Jijel with its 120 km of practically virgin coast (1/10th of the Algerian coastline), with its cornices, among the most beautiful in the world, its mountainous reliefs, with a fauna and flora as rich as they are varied, wetlands and natural parks containing many rare species and other sites still, is incontestably a Province richly endowed with environmental potential likely to be the object of an environmental tourist activity. The Taza National Park is located in the northeastern part of Algeria, in the wilaya of Jijel. It is located 30 km west of the Province's capital. It is located about 12 km west of Jijel, 50 km east of Bejaia and 60 km north-east of S tif. It extends over 30 km from east to west and 29.3 km from north to south. It opens onto the Mediterranean for a length of 31 km. Located entirely in the Province of Jijel.

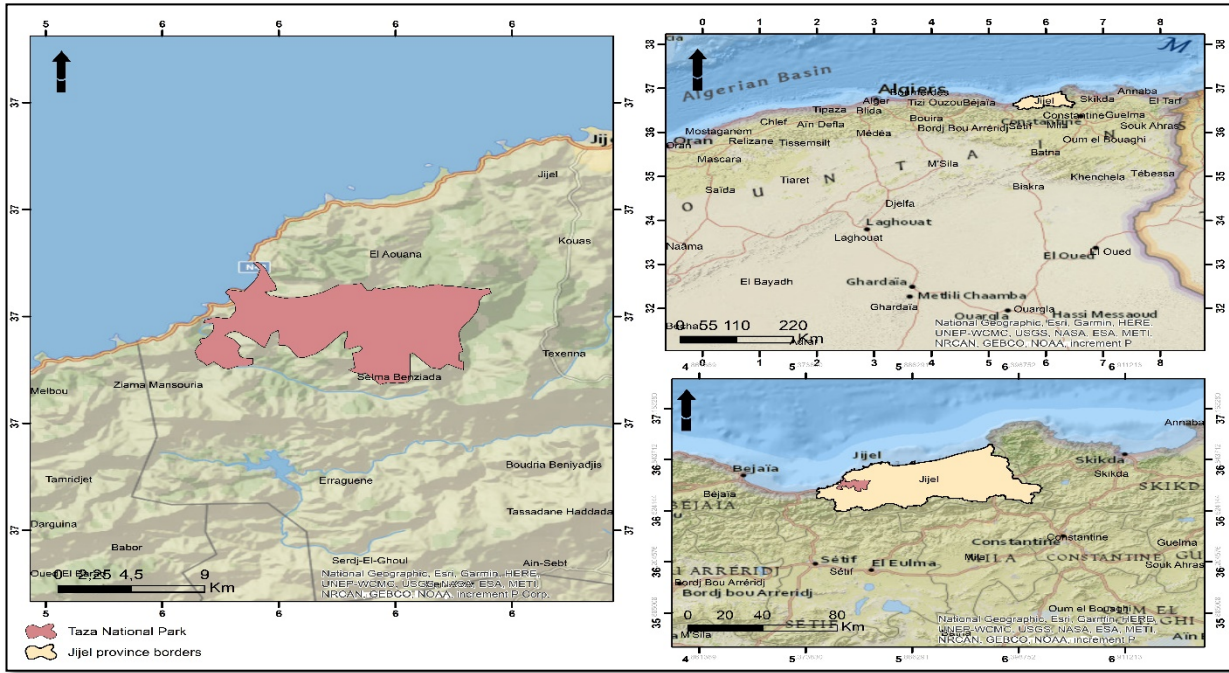


Figure 2. The location of the Taza National Park Jijel – Algeria.
Source: Administrative divisions of Algeria in 1984.

The proposed regulation takes into account traditional practices since most activities will remain authorized (agriculture, pastoralism, commercial activities, etc.), but will be subject to a special regime set by ministerial order n°358/SPM/DPPF/88 fixing the zoning and conditions of intervention in the Taza National Park, in order to ensure the preservation of the natural heritage. This order, in application of the master plan for the development of the Taza National Park, divides the park territory into five management classes according to the level of ecological complexity, diversity, specific richness and the presence of rare and/or threatened species.

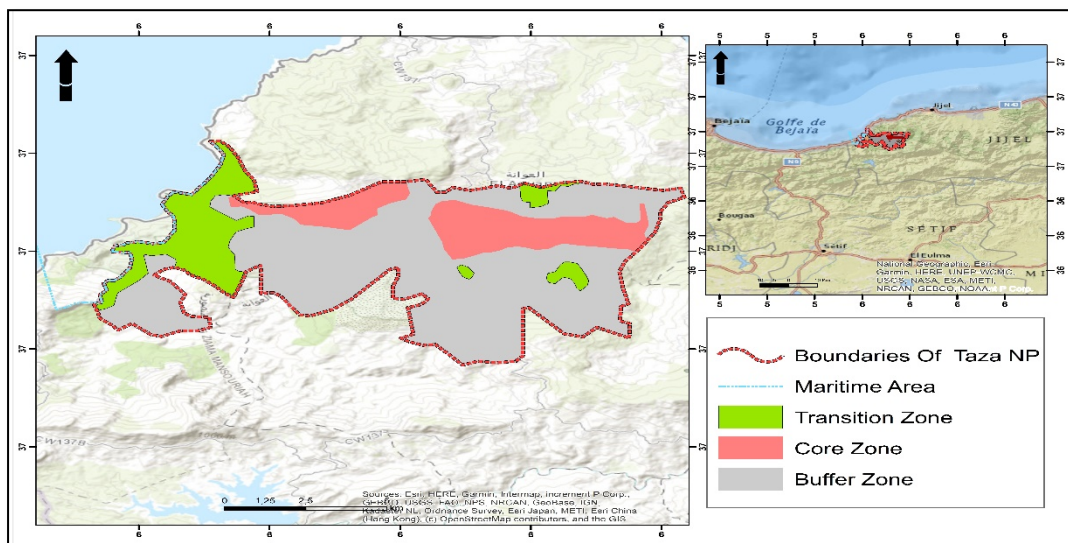


Figure 3. Taza National Park.
Source: Parc national Taza, Jijel 2022.

❖ **The so-called core zone.** This zone, which has diverse landscapes and particularly rich biodiversity, is classified as a strict reserve and is therefore subject to stricter protection measures. These are the dense high-altitude oak forests of Guerrouch and the geomorphological site of Djebel Taouenart. It covers an area of 2,091.6 ha and consists mainly of the following landscapes:

- ✓ Closed landscape of cork oak, Zéen oak, Afares oak. Semi-closed landscape of cork oak, Zéen oak.
- ✓ Semi-open landscape of cork oak.
- ✓ Scrubland and rocky terrain landscape.

❖ **The core zone consists of two sub-zones.**

1. Primitive or Wild: With a total area of 926.7 ha, it consists mainly of:

- ✓ Closed landscapes of Zéen oak and Afares oak.
- ✓ Semi-closed landscapes of cork oak and Zéen oak.
- ✓ Scrubland landscapes.

2. Low growth: With an area of 448.4 ha, it is mainly represented by the following landscapes:

- ✓ Semi-closed landscape of cork oak.
- ✓ Semi-open landscape of cork oak.
- ✓ Scrubland landscape.
- ✓ Scrubland landscape on rock outcrops.
- ✓ Grassland landscape.
- ✓ Agricultural land landscape.
- ✓ Bare land landscape.

❖ **The Buffer Zone.** This is the largest zone in the park. It covers an area of 14,819 ha and is represented by the following landscapes:

- ✓ Closed cork oak landscape.
- ✓ Closed Zéen oak landscape.
- ✓ Closed cork oak-Zéen oak landscape.
- ✓ Closed Afares oak landscape.
- ✓ Semi-closed cork oak, Zéen oak, and cork oak-Zéen oak landscape.
- ✓ Scrubland landscape.

❖ **The Peripheral Zone.** This zone covers an area of 233.5 ha and is mainly distributed in the recreation and leisure area (along the coast) and in urban areas. It is represented by the following landscapes:

- ✓ Semi-closed cork oak landscape.
- ✓ Scrubland landscape.
- ✓ Scrubland on rocks landscape.
- ✓ Scattered dwellings.



Figure 4. Biodiversity of PNTaza.

Source: Parc national Taza, Jijel 2022. Parc national Taza, Jijel 2023.

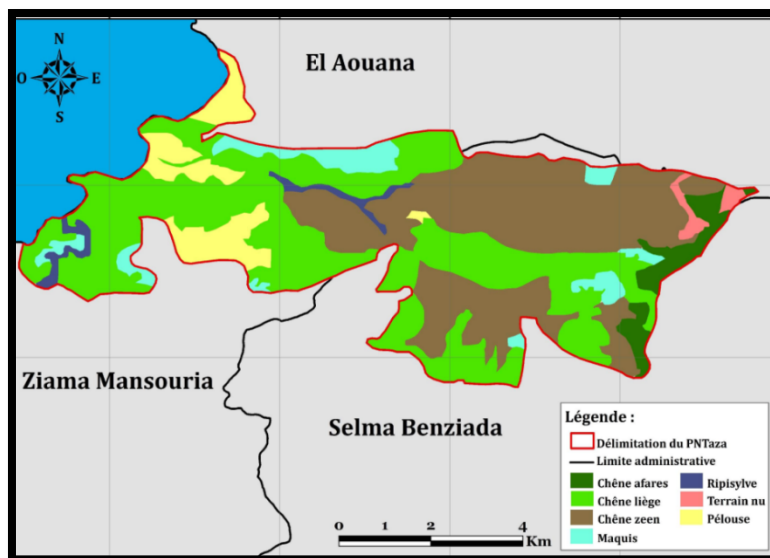


Figure 5. Boundary demarcation of PNTaza.

Source: Parc national Taza, Jijel 2022.

To answer the research question, our approach is to present the methodological choices made to meet this objective, then to present the results of our analysis before discussing them and concluding.

5. Conceptual Choices, Data, and Methods.

5.1 Conceptual Choices.

From a conceptual point of view, we have chosen to take a critical approach to tourism and nature conservation. As Bruno Latour (2008) writes, the scientific approach is a construct, and it is important to question how discourse is constructed. The critical approach consists of exploring the unsaid, what the facts hide, and therefore the documents that carry public policies as well as the stakes and objectives implied by the actors considered.

The critical approach to tourism is part of this theoretical current and concerns the economic, social, and environmental aspects of this activity (Mouad S, Djouamaa S., 2011). The economic and socio-spatial stakes of this industry are interpreted as a reflection of unequal relations and neoliberal

dynamics (Boualem Kadri, Maria Bondarenko and Jean-Phariste Pharicien,2019). Critical approaches to tourism question the economic relations of domination engendered by this industry in its neoliberal context (Lee, Donna, Mark Hampton and Julia Jeyacheya, 2015). Somewhat earlier, in the field of nature conservation, the critical approach was developed notably by political ecology (Gautier and Benjaminsen, 2012; Rodary, 2015; Chartier and Rodary, 2016). Nature conservation strategies reflect the relations of domination between dominant and dominated countries (Rodary, 2015). The rise of nature conservation was initiated by the colonial powers in Africa or in a context of historical justification for the protection of portions of space to the detriment of native Amerindian populations in the United States (Rodary, 2008). Political ecology examines the political use of the nature conservation strategy, particularly within states (Meghzi,2015) notes that "the movement to create protected areas [...] and the constitution of the administrations in charge of these spaces are the concrete translations of a sectorization of conservation". This is part of an institutional framework that reflects stakes and power strategies (Idir, Mohamed Sofiane, 2013).

The critical approach used here concerns nature conservation and tourism by focusing on a territory that combines these two issues. For the critical approach, strategies, particularly those of public policies, are inseparable from the contexts and economic, political, and environmental determinants. Tourism is a complex object that has repercussions on space (landscapes, organization of communication infrastructures, social and economic transformations, often dispossession of these portions of space by the inhabitants, and of course environmental impacts). In the case at hand, it is a question of analyzing a tourist development project in a territory that is labeled as a national park with even an international label, that of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

5.2 Methods and Data.

The exploration of the forms of nature conservation and tourist infrastructure in the Taza National Park is based on two data sets. First, we present the actual structures of conservation and tourist facilities using data from the scientific literature, as well as those available from the Ministry of Land Use Planning, Environment and Tourism (2008). We present the data describing the characteristics of the natural context of the study area and its nature conservation issues in a qualitative way from the publications identified in the scientific literature on this subject, and we present the data concerning the state of play of tourist activities.

5.3 Results.

The Taza National Park, between tourist potential and richness of natural heritage, local development and environmental preservation.

The TNP was created in 1984 by the executive decree of 03/11/1984 n° 34/348 and it has been classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2004 (Mohamed Rouibah, Salah eddine Doumanghi, 2013). As part of the protected areas whose international label attests to the high heritage value both on the natural and cultural level, it covers an area of approximately 2807 hectares and a marine area with a surface area of 9600 ha and a marine area with a surface area of 9600 ha. The Taza NP is a mountainous area with relatively low altitudes. Altitudes above 800 m constitute 11% of the total area; they increase near the sea, to the West, where the highest altitudes are found for the summits of Djebel Bou-Rendjes (1066 m) and El-Kern, the highest summit with 1121 m. (Chabbi Karima,2012)The relief, characterized by steep slopes and significant differences in elevation, is structured in chains oriented from West to East. The slopes are characterized by the predominance of the class above 25% (i.e. 80% of the total area). The northern exposure dominates in the Taza NP. (BNEF, 1986) The average minimum temperatures of the coldest month (m) vary between 6.1°C and 8.1°C. The maximum temperatures of the hottest month (M) are between 30.2°C and 34.8°C. The dry period lasts from 3 to 5 months. The study area is characterized by a high relative humidity (80%) which favors the establishment and maintenance of a fairly significant floristic diversity. The Emberger pluviothermal quotient (Emberger,1955) calculated in several stations varies between 110 and 124 which places the park in the humid to subhumid bioclimatic zones with variants with mild and hot winters. The analysis of the park's flora revealed the presence of some 417 species belonging to 260 genera and 66 botanical families. The Asteraceae (54 species), Fabaceae (37), Poaceae (34), Lamiaceae (26) and Brassicales (24) are the best represented families with more than 20 species each. The endemism rate is 12.47% (52 species) or about

21% of the endemic species of Algeria, of which 4 are specific to the park. The number of rare and very rare species was estimated at 120 taxa, representing a rate of 28.77% of the park's flora (Amiche, 2015).

6. Characteristics of Tourist Activity.

Administratively, the Taza National Park is composed of three (03) municipalities: El-Aouana-Selma Ben ziada- Ziama Mansouriah. These municipalities belong to two (02) Dairates: El-Àouana-Ziama Mansouriah. The population living near the park is concentrated in the main towns of the coastal strip, namely: Aftis, Taza, Chr ea.

According to the censuses of the two municipalities of El-Aouana and Ziama Mansouriah, the population of the park is estimated at 2731 inhabitants. (Tourism Directorate, Jijel). It should be noted that there is an imbalance in the distribution of this population in the different localities within the park territory; the localities with a strongly hilly relief (meditas located in the mountainous regions) and far from the main communication routes (T'boula, H'babcha, K'sir-Hmimas, Tifraouene, Bouserfane, Nechma,...) are practically deserted. On the other hand, the localities whose main town is crossed by a national road network and which are an obligatory passage to reach the capital of the province (Jijel) such as the localities of Aftis, Taza and Chr ea have, relatively, a high population density, but unbalanced in relation to the occupation of space which is reflected in particular by a concentration of the population at the level of the main town of the municipality.

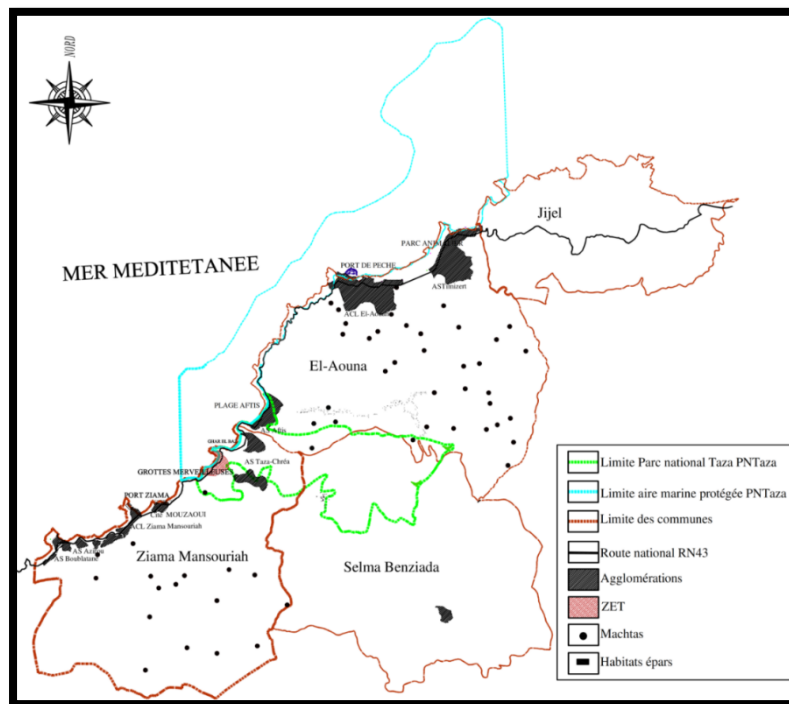


Figure 6. Urbanization of PNTaza.

Source: Parc national Taza, Jijel 2022, Authors.

It is reported that only three towns, Aftis, Taza and Chr ea, are partially inhabited, while the localities or mechtas: Nechma, K'sir-hmimas, Tifraouene, T'Boula and Hbabcha, are still deserted despite a few cases of inhabitants returning. The income of the local population: The few jobs available are temporary or seasonal and limited to cork harvesting, public works, small-scale fishing, and recreational fishing. Of the 600 hectares of agricultural land, only 32 hectares are cultivated as small family farms consisting of fruit trees and market gardening. In addition, there is a small-scale livestock sector: poultry farming, rabbit farming, and beekeeping, carried out in a traditional manner. (PNT, 2021). This imbalance is explained by the almost abandonment, especially by the young population, in the mountainous areas, of economic activities of an artisanal and agricultural nature which, moreover, in the current state of affairs, are not financially rewarding. Moreover, this social desertification, observed during the last decade, is not only linked to tradition, to the ancestral rural exodus, or to economic

factors, but also to security aspects. It should be noted that efforts are being made by the agricultural and forestry services of the municipalities of El-Aouana and Ziama Mansouriah, within the framework of the national agricultural development programme (PPDR), to encourage the return of populations to their mechtas of origin.

6.1. Agriculture. The agricultural sector is characterized by landlocked and highly fragmented land, with agricultural land being divided into small gardens around each building. It is a traditional subsistence agriculture dominated mainly by annual forage crops, market gardening and mountain fruit tree cultivation.

6.2. Tourism. Employment opportunities in tourism are so far reserved exclusively for men. Some men become restaurant or hotel employees, while others become restaurant owners. In addition, transport services, crafts, traders, souvenir sellers and the construction sector benefit from tourism. There are strong seasonal fluctuations in tourism figures (the high season is from May to September).

6.3. Threat of urbanization. The Taza National Park is subject to various threats that make it increasingly vulnerable, most of which stem from human activity: tourism, illegal logging, and urbanization. On the other hand, despite the regulations in force on protected areas, local development actions and planning instruments (Lifa,2024) developed by neighboring municipalities tend not to comply with national legislation on PAs. These two problems disrupt rational and appropriate management of Taza National Park.

What actions can be taken to protect the Taza National Park from the threats of urbanization?

Tourismification and Agriculture.

The impact of urbanization on the park is the artificialization of the environment, pollution by household waste, the degradation of the landscape due to the height of buildings and power lines.

The encroachment on the Taza National Park at the level of the secondary agglomeration of Aftisse is done by residential areas in the form of individual housing, and basic necessities.



Figure 7. Tourism development in Taza.

Source: Authors 2022.

7. Discussion and Conclusion.

The Jijel coastline, a tourist development program designed to meet a development project with little connection to nature conservation issues.

The province of Jijel has 19 tourist expansion zones, 6 of which have already been the subject of feasibility and development studies: Ras El Afia, Les Aftis, El-Aouana, Tassoust, Sidi Abdelaziz and Oued Z'hour.

The study undertaken by ENET in 1984 delimited 19 tourist expansion zones confirmed by the executive decree 88/232 of 5-11-1988 declaring the ZETs. These ZETs are currently practically virgin but partially threatened by illegal urbanization.



Figure 8. ZET threatened by illegal agriculture and urbanization in Taza.
Source: Authors 2022.

8. Sustainable Tourism in Taza National Park.

Taza National Park currently operates under a medium-term management plan with several strategies, the main ones being:

- Conservation of heritage through the acquisition of equipment to develop socio-economic activity while ensuring the preservation of resources.
- Monitoring of natural resources and involvement of local residents in the development of the region by preventing risks.
- The strategy to be implemented in four points.
- The need for technical personnel.
- The necessary material resources.
- Efforts to be made towards local authorities and inhabitants.
- Ecotourism projects.

On the environmental conservation side, NP managers are working to redefine conservation strategies. For practical reasons, they are learning to combine conservation activities with economic development, as the traditional way of approaching conservation as strict "protectionism" is proving increasingly inadequate and new avenues need to be opened up in order to achieve objectives.

For years, conservationists have established and managed protected areas with very little involvement from the people who lived in or around these areas. Due to radical changes that have affected the situation in many countries, particularly in developing countries, approaches to protection have had to change.

General Conclusion.

The objective of this essay was to briefly present the different forms of tourism in order to distinguish them from each other and finally see how ecotourism best meets the expectations of consumers in terms of sustainable development. However, it also turned out that ecotourism could be a source of problems and that, despite the image of "sustainable tourism" it enjoyed, it could generate impacts just as damaging as conventional tourism.

In Algeria, as in all countries of the world, natural sites occupy an important place in the constitution of its cultural heritage, hence several places considered as earthly paradises are part of it. Our explanation of the concept of ecotourism has demonstrated that the latter includes an ecological activity, a sufficient economy and a viable environment. These are the three fundamental values of sustainable development.

Regarding the hypothesis of the remarkable place of ecotourism in the Côte de Saphir, it is closely linked to the probability of the response of the components of the latter to the indicators of ecotourism. In order to verify the place of ecotourism in the Côte de, we carried out an assessment of the situation where we found that the province of Jijel has a natural and cultural aspect of exceptional universal value, which should contribute effectively to the economic and environmental development of the region. The chosen case study "The Taza National Park" affirmed its willingness to develop the eco-tourist activity by undertaking developments that can serve as a basis for the development of this activity. The study carried out on the PNT allowed us to approach a number of points, which brought us

on the one hand clarifications on the concept of ecotourism, and on the other hand, a partial confirmation of the hypotheses initially put forward.

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