



International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science

e-ISSN: 2544-9435

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

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ARTICLE TITLE

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SOCIETIES: THE CASES OF NEW KSOUR OF MZAB AND THE
VILLAGE OF AIT EL KAID

ARTICLE INFO

Timhadjelt Sabiha, Gueliane Nora. (2024) Citizen Participation in Traditional Algerian Societies: The Cases of New Ksour of Mzab and The Village of Ait El Kaid. *International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science*. 4(44). doi: 10.31435/ijitss.4(44).2024.2869

DOI

[https://doi.org/10.31435/ijitss.4\(44\).2024.2869](https://doi.org/10.31435/ijitss.4(44).2024.2869)

RECEIVED

19 October 2024

ACCEPTED

02 December 2024

PUBLISHED

06 December 2024

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CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN TRADITIONAL ALGERIAN SOCIETIES: THE CASES OF NEW KSOUR OF MZAB AND THE VILLAGE OF AIT EL KAID

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ABSTRACT

The concept of citizen participation emerged towards the end of the twentieth century as part of the new democratic paradigms of the Western countries of America and Europe. However, citizen participation is an ancient principle that has guided the political, economic and social management systems of many ancient indigenous social groups. The aim of this paper is to examine the concept of citizen participation and the mechanisms implemented in the management of the environment and daily life in traditional Algerian societies, through the study of two cases: the experience of the new ksour in the M'Zab in Ghardaïa, and the project to classify the village of Ait El Kaid as a protected sector in Tizi Ouzou. The results of this study reveal the particularities of the participatory processes in each case, such as *tajmaat* in the Kabyle villages and *twiza* in the process of building the new ksour, while highlighting the similarities and differences specific to each.

KEYWORDS

Algeria, Citizen Participation, Traditional Algerian Societies, New Ksour, Ait El Kaid, Twiza

CITATION

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Introduction

Citizen participation is a fundamental principle of sustainability in all sectors and has prompted discussions across various scientific fields. However, the definition on which all disciplines agree pertains to a process involving tools and mechanisms that enable citizens to contribute to, or be informed about, decisions, actions, and projects that have a direct impact on their environment (Zerarka, 2021). The notion of citizen participation varies according to the institutional and cultural contexts in which it occurs. Therefore, it is essential to understand its conceptual and theoretical foundations before considering its practical applications. It would be impossible to define the concept of participation without addressing its conceptual connections to democracy and politics (Minfegue, 2016) and its aspects related to citizen involvement in actions undertaken for the collective benefit (Tremblay, 2009). Referring to Sherry Arnstein's 1969 study, citizen participation is approached from two different perspectives: the representative perspective and the participatory perspective. (Aylett, 2010). In representative democracy contexts, citizen participation often involves information and consultation processes. These processes constitute a form of symbolic participation where citizens with less political influence can express their opinions and make their needs known to leaders, although their participation often has only a limited impact on the decision-making process. (Arnstein, 1969; White & Langenheim, 2021). From this perspective, associations are key actors that facilitate and enrich citizen participation in participatory sciences by mobilizing,

educating, and supporting citizens in their engagement (Albertini, 2014; Millerand, 2021). Moreover, in the participatory democracy model, citizen participation plays a key role in promoting civic engagement. For individuals to be fully engaged citizens, they need to develop strong connections with their community and feel a sense of identification with its residents. This identification goes beyond simple residency; it involves a sense of membership and responsibility for the collective well-being of the community (Trabelsi, 2016). Citizen engagement refers to all the practices employed by individuals to contribute to and build links within their community. It involves the actions¹, skills, and knowledge that connect citizens to their society, laying the foundations for collaboration and cooperative attitudes (O'Neill, 2006). Beyond discussions in Western contexts regarding citizen participation, other forms of participation naturally emerge from social groups (Perret & Paraque, 2012). These local forms of participation are deeply rooted in traditional societies and stem from the ancestral knowledge and practices of native peoples (Zerarka, 2021).

In Algeria, certain ancestral practices of participatory management in vernacular societies, rooted in mutual aid and self-management, continue to endure today, notably in regions such as Kabylia and the M'Zab. In these areas, there are structures that represent a form of local governance of public affairs, such as the *tajmaat*² or the council of notables (*la 'yan*), which make it possible to mobilise citizens (Assam, 2022; Chirifi, 2015; Gueliane, 2019; Perret & Paraque, 2012; Zerarka, 2021), as well as the *Twiza*, « *thiwizi* » in Berber, refers to helping or supporting, embodying a form of mutual aid, hard work, or voluntary effort that represents a widespread social practice across Algeria and the Maghreb. It signifies a type of citizen participation where community members collectively mobilize to assist each other during challenges and unforeseen circumstances (Adad, 2012; Gourine, 2013; Gueliane, 2019a; Maunier, 1926; Mimouni, 2003; Scott Lepkin, 2004)

Methods.

This paper explores the concept of citizen participation and aims to investigate its various forms and implementation in the Algerian context. To address this issue, we have focused on two case studies: the construction process of new *ksour* in the M'Zab region, specifically in the city of Ghardaïa, and the classification process of the village of Ait El Kaid as a protected area in the city of Tizi Ouzou.

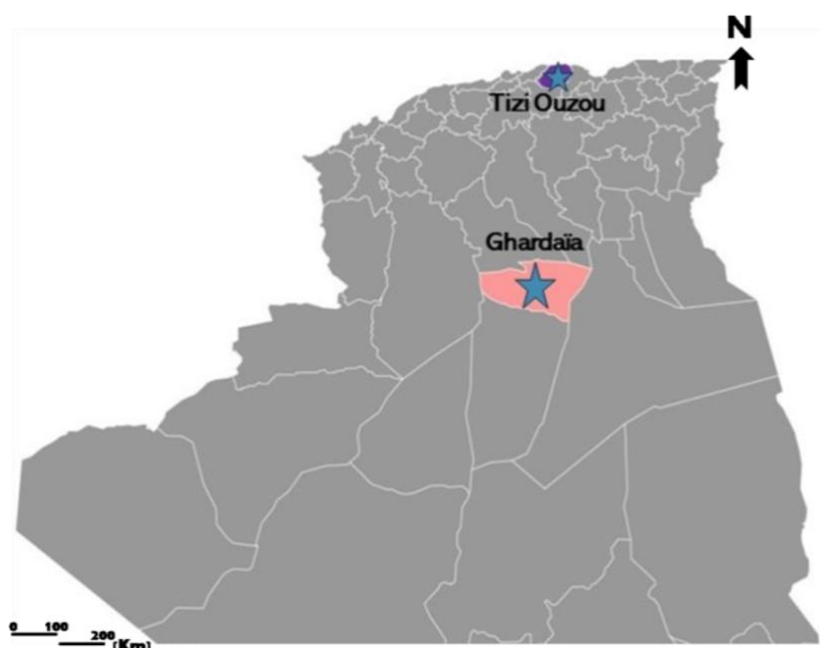


Fig. 1. Geographical location of the two case studies, the village of Ait El Kaid (Tizi Ouzou), and the new *ksour* of M'Zab (Ghardaïa).

Source: base map *Monographie of Ghardaïa, Planification direction*, edited by Gueliane

¹ These forms of citizen engagement can include various actions such as volunteering (Ughetto, 2011) or crowdfunding (Proulx, 2020)

² *tajmaat* refers, in its broadest sense, to the general assembly of men of the age of majority who have the right to attend village general assemblies (Bessah, 2014). In addition, *tajmaat* includes another narrow structure that refers to the people chosen by social consent in accordance with the value system of that village community to manage the village (Kinzi, 1998).

Firstly, we conducted a documentary study in which we gathered bibliographical resources on the topic of citizen participation, as well as archival materials, graphic documents, and the legal framework regarding protected sectors in Algeria, focusing on both case studies: the new *ksour* and the village of Ait El Kaid. Secondly, we conducted a field survey, including a large number of interviews. In the M'Zab region, the survey involved stakeholders such as project promoters, beneficiaries, building specialists, administrators, notables, and ordinary citizens. Regarding the village of Ait El Kaid, the survey encompassed three main stakeholder groups: public sector institutions like the Tizi Ouzou Wilaya Department of Culture, the architect responsible for developing the safeguarding plan for the protected sector, and members of the Ait El Kaid village committee. Finally, analyzing these sources, interviews, and documents helped clarify how citizen participation was implemented in our two case studies.

Study Context.

The first case study, focusing on the new *ksour*, is situated in the M'Zab valley in the town of Ghardaïa, approximately 600 km from Algiers. Originally occupied by the Mozabites, Zénètes Berbers who adhere to the Ibadist religion, the M'Zab¹ valley is renowned for its historic *ksour*. These structures boast exceptional architectural and landscape features, earning them recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1982. The solidarity fostered and formalized by Mozabite institutions has further contributed to the region's prominence.



Fig. 2. New *ksar* of Tinemirine. Source: Gueliane, 2016, Béni Isguen

This solidarity and self-organization played a crucial role in the community's survival and in the establishment of new *ksour*, which were designed as extensions of the old towns and began construction in the 1990s. These projects include Tinemirine, Tafilelt, and Tawenza, which extend from the Béni Isguen *ksar*, and the Tinaâm *ksar* connected to Bounoura (Dris, 2012; Gueliane, 2019a; Gueliane, 2019b; Gueliane, 2018; Gueliane, 2017; Rezaei, 2021). These projects were intended to address the housing crisis in terms of both quantity and quality. A distinctive feature of these projects is the participatory citizen approach that has been integral from their inception. This approach facilitated the establishment of promoters with special status (such

¹ The M'Zab is characterised by the presence of a series of institutions: religious institutions linked to Ibadism, and customary institutions linked to Berber identity. The religious institutions include the imessourda and irwan, students of the religious sciences, whose role is to regenerate the religious elite. Then there are the 'azzabas, the body responsible for managing the spiritual, moral and social life of the town. All the 'azzabas of the M'Zab *ksour* form a confederal council, the Council of 'Ammi Saïd, which is the spokesperson for all the Algerian Mozabites and Ibadites (Assamaoui, 2008). For secular institutions, we have the taddart (the family council) made up of members of the same family. The taddart form the fractions - 'achiras - which, in turn, form the Council of Notables (*jma'a*) of a town. The notables of all the Mozabite towns are brought together in a single confederal council: Ba Abdarahmen el Korti, whose role is to manage social, economic and political life in the M'Zab.

as the Foundation Promoter, Association Promoter, SARL) to leverage and harness the social and financial resources of the Mozabite community.



Fig. 3. New ksar of Tafilelt, source: Gueliane, 2016, Béni Isguen

The second case study is the village of Ait El Kaid, located at an altitude of 617 meters on the Djurdjura mountain range, 43 kilometers south of Tizi Ouzou. This village represents a valuable traditional rural heritage for both the nation and its residents. Ait El Kaid's significance was officially recognized when it was added to the national list of protected areas in 2009 under government decree no. 09-40. Following this, a permanent conservation and development plan was established for the protected area, managed by the Tizi Ouzou Department of Culture and the Arts in collaboration with the Akretche architectural office.

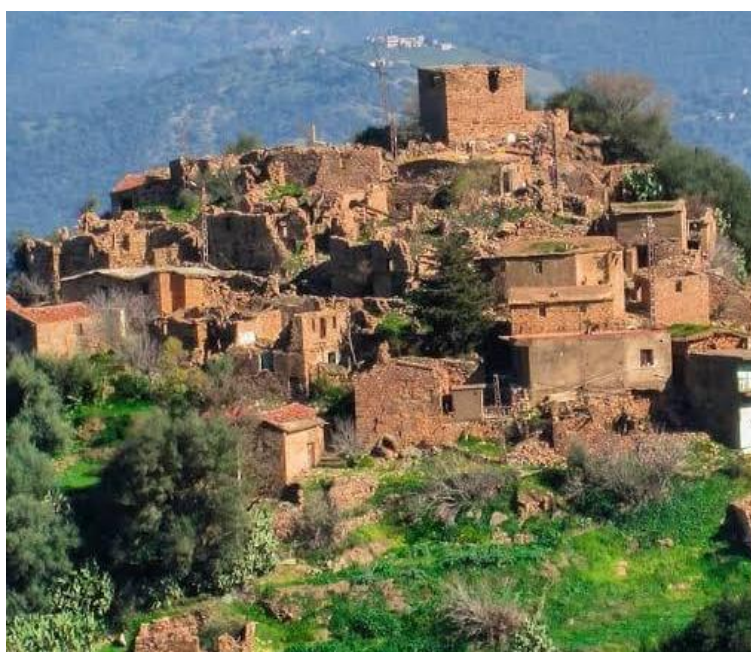


Fig. 4. Overview on Ait El Kaid village.

Source: Zanoune Mouloud, President of Ait El Kaid village committee

The spatial configuration of Kabylia villages, such as Ait El Kaid, is influenced by the site's topography (Aliane & Salhi, 2014). The village's initial nucleus was established on the summit of a rocky hill for defensive purposes, providing a strategic vantage point. However, as the original settlement became saturated, it led to the development of the present-day village of Ait El Kaid. These transformations are documented in the permanent conservation and development plan for the protected area of Ait El

Kaid(PPSMVSS Ait El Kaid, 2013), The following table lists the various extensions that have been built in addition to the original nucleus, with characteristics for each part.

Table 1. Stages of formation and evolution of the Ait El Kaid protected sector

First stage 1756	Creation of the first nucleus on the rocky mount
Second stage between 1756 and 1857	Crown shaped expansion
Third stage between 1857 and 1962	Linear expansion

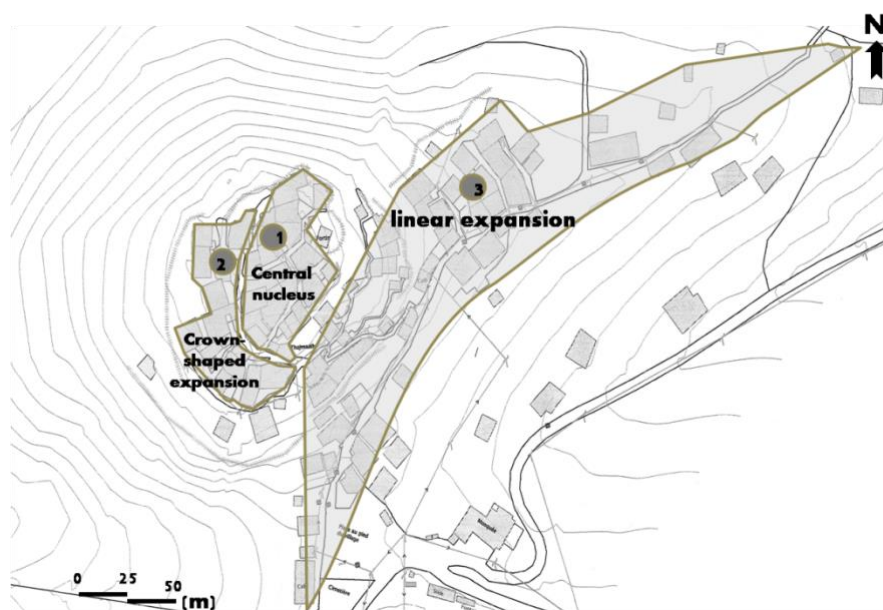


Fig. 5. Map of the spatial evolution of Ait El Kaid protected area.
Source: PPSMVSS Ait El Kaid, 2013. Phase II

The spatial layout of the village has been designed to meet the needs of its residents while preserving their privacy. Key features of the village include the streets, known as *aznik* or *avrid* in Berber, which follow a sinuous configuration that harmonizes with the natural topography of the site. The houses are aligned along these winding streets(Kaci, 2006)Furthermore, the *tajmaat*, which served as a meeting place in the village of Ait El Kaid, has fallen into complete disrepair (PPSMVSS Ait El Kaid, 2013).Finally, the houses are typical examples of traditional Kabyle architecture. They are square in shape, constructed from cut stone, and feature a double-sloped roof supported by a central wooden framework(Alili, 2013).They are divided into three distinct spaces: the large room, known as the *takaât*, reserved for the residents; the stable, referred to as the *addaynin*; and a loft above it, called the *taâriç* (Aliane&Salhi, 2014).

Results and Discussion: Forms of Citizen Participation Implementation.

Projects Background, Bottom-Up and Top-Down Initiatives.

The idea for the New *Ksour* projects came from the community itself. Although Tinemmirine (1995-2005) consisted of only 70 houses, it was the first New *Ksour* project. The Tinemmirine experience was unique, featuring architecture created without professional architects, designed by and for less affluent members of the community. The project started from scratch; in fact, when the president of the Twiza association, who was the promoter of the project, began working on it with the beneficiaries, there was considerable uncertainty about its feasibility. Tinemmirine's success was driven by the effort and determination of its residents and its promoter. The project also remained faithful to the construction« *orf* »¹of the region, Mozabite social values,

¹« *orf* » of construction is the traditional law that governs the construction of the ksour in the M'Zab.
See:(Berque, 2001; Cuperly, 1987; Gueliane, 2019 c; Morand, 1903; Müller, 2012)

and local know-how. Following the success of Tinemmirine, Béni Isguen undertook a similar endeavor, with an even larger project, Tafilelt (1997), comprising 1,050 housing units.

Compared to Tinemmirine, Tafilelt benefited from greater support and financial resources and was aimed at the town's middle and affluent classes. The project faced fewer financial constraints and adopted a more flexible approach. As a result, the construction was completed quickly, within a reasonable timeframe, and to a high standard. Consequently, the beneficiaries were satisfied with the quality and efficiency of the project's management. This efficiency has been maintained to the present day, with the project promoter continuing to oversee daily life in Tafilelt. The new *ksar* of Tinaâm (2008), a 600-home development annexed to Bounoura, was initiated at the request of Bounoura residents who had witnessed the success of Tinemmirine and Tafilelt. Tawenza (2004), a 400-home development also annexed to Béni Isguen, began as a social housing project and has since evolved into a new *ksar*.

The common feature of these projects is their organization from the outset, which was driven by community leaders who proposed and promoted their development. Beneficiaries were selected within the *achiras* (fractions), and these same groups organized meetings to present the projects to the residents and encourage their participation. At Tinaâm, it was the local notables who identified the need for a new *ksar*. Before construction began, a social survey was conducted among the *achiras* to gain a comprehensive understanding of the social and economic conditions of each beneficiary.

The classification of the village Ait El Kaid as a protected area¹ along with the creation of its permanent conservation and development plan, resulted from an official government decision. This decision highlighted the government's commitment to prioritizing heritage preservation and enhancement, as demonstrated by the promulgation of Law 98-04² on the protection of cultural heritage. This important legislation categorizes heritage protection into various types of cultural property, including urban and rural areas, archaeological sites, and historic monuments. Consequently, Ait El Kaid was included on the list of protected sectors in 2009 and designated as part of the nation's cultural heritage. Following this, the Department of Culture in the Wilaya of Tizi Ouzou began developing a permanent conservation and development plan for the protected area.

The creation of a protected area is a complex process that involves multiple stakeholders and institutions. Typically, it starts at the local level, with cultural departments working in collaboration with local residents and associations. The project is then reviewed and approved by the wilaya and its associated agencies, and subsequently by the Ministry of Culture and the Arts, along with the various institutions under its authority (Foukroun, 2018; Timhadjelt, 2024)

The proposal to create a protected area may originate from local authorities or a local association. However, the key actors in the process of establishing protected areas and developing conservation plans are the government authorities. They initiate the classification process by reviewing the proposals, appointing a qualified architect to prepare the permanent conservation and development plan for the area, and then approving the plan once the study has been completed (Mazouz, 2015; Timhadjelt et al., 2023).

In 2012, the first stage³ of the plan for the protected area Ait El Kaid was approved. The firm responsible for its design focused on assessing the condition of the village and established a scale to measure the deterioration of the traditional houses, ranging from those best preserved to those completely destroyed. This phase also included a series of emergency measures to address the deterioration of the houses. The historical and social study was published in the final report of the plan (Stage 3), which details all the work required to restore and enhance both the houses and the village of Ait El Kaid. This phase is currently under review for approval.

¹The safeguarded sectors are a system for protecting and enhancing Algeria's heritage, grouping together urban and rural areas with certain characteristics predefined by Law 98-04 on the protection of cultural heritage. These areas are managed and protected by permanent conservation and development plan for the protected area which, as stipulated by Executive Decree no. 03-324, are a document setting out the general rules for conservation management and protection measures.

² Law no. 98-04 of 20 June 1998 on the protection of cultural heritage, recognises traditional villages and rural heritage under the heading of 'rural ensembles', considering them in article 41 of this law to be immovable cultural assets, like '*traditional villages and agglomerations characterised by their predominance of residential areas, and which, because of their homogeneity and their historical and aesthetic unity, are of historical, architectural, artistic or traditional interest, thus justifying their protection, restoration, rehabilitation and enhancement*'.

³ Permanent conservation and development plan for the protected area is drawn up in accordance with the following stages: a first stage diagnosis and emergency measures, a second stage historical and typological study and preliminary draft and a third stage which is the final drafting.

The Process of Building New *Ksour* and The Classification of Ait El Kaid.

The idea for the new *ksour* projects led to the establishment of promoters with a distinct status. In Tafilelt, the Amidoul Foundation was created and co-financed by six businessmen and notables from the town of Béni Isguen. The Amidoul Foundation's services included a social committee composed of elected representatives from different *achiras* (fractions), responsible for promoting the social dimension of the project and serving as an intermediary between the developer and the residents. In Tinemmirine and Tawenza, the projects are managed by an association called the Twiza Association whose members are the beneficiaries. The association is responsible for land acquisition, organizing work with architects and builders, collecting funds for low-income owners, purchasing building materials, and participating in various meetings with local authorities and residents (Adad, Aiche, 2013). At Tinaâm, the promoter was SARL Tinaâm, which included not only professionals but also an administrative council based on Bounoura tradition. This structure aimed to ensure consultation, transparency, and representation of the population in the project's management. The council was also responsible for facilitating communication between the managers and the beneficiaries and, above all, for dealing with an uncooperative administration. SARL Tinaâm served as both the project promoter and a voice for the residents, reflecting a community-oriented project. The managers effectively utilized community resources to ensure the project's success. They proposed that an Administrative Council would prevent the SARL's technical department from being bogged down with social management tasks, which were better handled by the representatives of the fractions. This unique status of the project promoters enhanced their community character. The residents and administrators recognized that this was not merely a construction project but the realization of a social initiative.

Once the developer had been chosen, the next step was to designate the beneficiaries. In this context, the construction of the projects was preceded by extensive social work carried out by the *achiras* and the developers to select and adapt the residents to the program. In Tinemmirine, the population was selected by the *achiras* of Béni Isguen based on the financial situation of each family. They chose the ten most needy families from each *achira*, including seven from Béni Isguen. The list of beneficiaries was then provided to the president of the Twiza Association, who organized a meeting to explain in detail the project process, the roles of each beneficiary, and their financial commitments. In Tafilelt, the vice-president of the Amidoul Foundation stated that when the project idea was conceived in 1997 and presented to the residents of Béni Isguen, a social committee was established. This committee, attached to the Amidoul Foundation and composed of notables from Béni Isguen, was responsible for selecting the future residents. Beneficiaries were chosen by consensus among the various *achiras*, which were best informed about the socio-economic conditions of their members. The Social Council intervenes if a beneficiary is unable to pay their share. In such cases, the committee works to establish a payment schedule tailored to the beneficiary's situation or seeks assistance from donors or the *achiras* to find a solution. The council also acts as a guarantor to creditors and promotes social interaction between beneficiaries and their wealthier relatives. Additionally, the committee serves as a mediator between the residents and the Foundation's technical department, which is responsible for designing, building, and managing the project, ensuring effective communication. Similarly, in Tinaâm, the SARL's committee of notables reviewed applications individually, selecting the most in-need individuals from each *achira* while aiming to include a diverse range of social strata in the project.

Once the population had been selected, work began. For Tinemmirine, beneficiaries were not only required to make a financial contribution but also to participate in *twizas* every Friday. Only after accumulating 120 *twizas* would they be permitted to occupy their homes. During these *twizas*, unskilled residents performed basic tasks to reduce the need for paid labor. As a result, "beneficiaries were able to save approximately 25% of the total cost" (Adad, Aiche, 2013, p. 54). During the *twizas*, beneficiaries had the option to be replaced; in some cases, all members of a family and other friends participated in the building process. The aim of the *twizas* was not only economic but also to foster connections between beneficiaries and their new neighbors. Organizing the *twizas* in this manner helped establish a sense of community among residents even before they occupied the *ksar*. For those unable to perform physical work, a family member could take their place, or the beneficiary could be excused from participation provided they contributed in other ways. Women, who could not participate directly in the building work, "supported the process by preparing and financing meals for the participants" (Adad, Aiche, 2013, p. 55). At Tafilelt, once the list of beneficiaries had been established, the Amidoul Foundation moved on to the administrative procedures and the preparation of applications (such as building permits and applications for financial aid). The project was designed in close collaboration with the developer and its social unit. The plans for Tafilelt are based on the old plans for the town of Beni Isguen (a typical plan for traditional residences in the M'Zab region), adapted to the current context. The project began

gradually, with an initial phase of 50 homes. Once on site, the project took on a new form, with the original variant adapted to the actual constraints of the location. The choice of materials and construction systems was made on site. As soon as the first phase of the project was completed, the promoter conducted an evaluation campaign to assess the completed homes, with the results being used to make improvements to the project. Throughout the project, the Foundation set up a training school to teach construction techniques and manual skills. Additionally, the promoter provided the beneficiaries with necessary communication channels to better share information and stay informed. In Tinaâma, once the land parcels had been distributed, the residents participated in designing their homes in collaboration with the project's architects. Throughout the project, the promoter organized field meetings to enable people to follow the progress of the work. Beneficiaries could also visit the site individually or with their families. Once a year, the promoter organized a meeting to give an overview of the project, explaining the progress, the problems and constraints encountered, and the solutions envisaged. At Tawenza, the design process was carried out in collaboration with the local population, the developer would propose an initial sketch to the beneficiary, who would then modify it as required. The final plan, once validated, was returned to the promoter again, who checked that it complied with the *orf* of construction, and then worked out the structural system of the house. During construction, the beneficiaries had the right to visit the site at any time and inspect the work.

Finally, the funding of these projects also reflects significant creativity in managing and utilizing the resources of both the community and the state. In Tinemmirine, a mixed funding system was adopted, involving both residents and the state. This collaborative approach allowed multiple stakeholders to contribute to the financing of the project, resulting in affordable homes (Adad, 2008). In this way, a fund was allocated by the Ministry of Solidarity under the progressive housing program, with the responsibility for servicing managed by the commune (Adad, Aiche, 2013). Another important point to note is that the promoter's work was performed on a voluntary basis, including free planning, monitoring, and management of the project throughout its entire duration. Additionally, it appears that the notables and *achiras* of Béni Isguen took special care of the very poor, including those who could contribute nothing, such as the physically disabled and widows (Adad, Aiche, 2013). In Tafilelt, the vice-president of the Amidoul Foundation confirmed that, to initiate the Tafilelt project, the Foundation had utilized interest-free loans from Mozabite businessmen to provide the necessary "working capital" (Adad, 2011, p. 28), time to receive some state aid and contributions from local residents. With the exception of this fund, Tafilelt's financial structure is essentially based on two actors. First, the beneficiaries, «generally $\frac{3}{4}$ of the sum of the house is paid by the beneficiary himself», and, secondly, the National Housing Fund (CNL)¹, which contributed an average of $\frac{1}{4}$ of the sum of the house. «It's important to point out that the government's help was invaluable in this project, which saw some homes financed up to half their cost» (Bouali-Messahel, 2011, p. 7). To facilitate payment for the house, particularly for low-income families, the total sum is often divided into four installments, or even more in certain social cases. For example, if beneficiaries "unable to pay the first installment, which is one-quarter of the total amount, the Amidoul Foundation's social committee approaches benefactors to request assistance. The final installment is initially covered by the promoter, and the beneficiary is then required to repay this amount according to a payment schedule based on their income" (Adad, 2011, p. 29). Part of the project was executed through *twizas*, which involved community efforts for common areas, afforestation, green spaces, and cleaning.

In Tinaâm, in addition to government financial assistance, residents are responsible for paying for their own homes. Payments are made in several installments over three years, based on the resident's preference, whether monthly, quarterly, or otherwise. The promoter has adopted an individual approach, tailoring payment schedules to the economic resources of each beneficiary. Consequently, the payment plan can be adjusted if a beneficiary encounters financial difficulties during the project. Regarding assistance from the *achiras*, it is not the responsibility of the beneficiary to request aid; instead, the process is automatic. This system is one reason a member of each *achiras* is elected to the SARL's administrative board. In Tawenza, residents made payments in two stages. The first stage involved acquiring the land lot, paid in 12 installments. The second stage covered the houses, with payments aligned with the progress of construction. To address the beneficiaries' needs and limited financial means, two housing options were proposed: the first, at 95 m², was designed for widows, the disabled, and very poor families, while the second, larger option at 110 m², required a higher contribution and was aimed at middle-income families. In addition to state aid, the most disadvantaged, such as widows and women without legal guardian, received support through donations from benefactors. In these cases, the

¹ The National Housing Fund is an industrial and commercial public body created in 1991. website: <https://www.cnl.gov.dz/page/aboutus>

president of the Twiza association personally approached affluent members of the beneficiary's *achiras* to solicit help in covering their installments.

In the case of protecting the heritage of the village of Ait El Kaid through the establishment of its protected area and Safeguarding Plan, the key players include the Ministry of Culture and its regional offices, such as the departments of culture and arts at the wilaya level (Timhadjelt, 2024). This actor plays a crucial role in demonstrating the government's commitment to local action. The goal is to involve all stakeholders in the civil community, including local citizens. However, it is important to note that their actions are guided by specific legislative texts and citizen participation schemes introduced by the Department of Culture and Arts (Kessab, 2019). Within these legal frameworks, citizens are regarded either as members of local authorities or as civil society actors with the right to propose sites for classification. However, the specifics of the mechanisms for their participation often remain vague or undefined.

Regarding the creation of the protected sector in Ait El Kaid, the Department of Culture of Tizi Ouzou has demonstrated its commitment to involving the village's citizens by engaging the village committee. According to the head of the Cultural Heritage Service of the Department of Culture and Arts of the wilaya of Tizi Ouzou, "*The citizens are the soul of the village, but it was challenging for us to communicate with all the villagers at once, so we asked the president of the village committee to assist us*". In the social structure of Kabyle villages, the village committee serves as a contemporary version of the traditional *tajmaat*, playing a crucial role as a representative of the community. It actively promotes development, addresses the diverse needs of the local population, and represents the voice of all village citizens to public authorities on matters of direct concern. However, some practices related to the *tajmaat* may have evolved or disappeared, adapting to various contexts and circumstances (Assam, 2022).

The Ait El Kaid village committee is an association made up of 15 members elected from local residents. These members have demonstrated a strong commitment and interest in the overall development of the village and the well-being of its inhabitants (Timhadjelt, 2024). In an interview with the president of the village committee, he confirmed that he and the other committee members are selected through consultations with the village's citizens and local inhabitants, as part of a representative democratic process that emphasizes a bottom-up approach. In this role, the village committee has acted as a coordinator between government institutions, such as the Tizi Ouzou wilaya's Department of Culture and Arts, and the citizens of Ait El Kaid. The committee facilitated meetings between these two groups to consult with citizens about their needs and interests concerning the village, as well as to inform them about the process of classification as a protected area. Additionally, the committee played a key role in organizing an awareness-raising workshop led by the Department of Culture and Arts to educate citizens on the heritage values of the traditional village.

As a result of the village committee's effective contribution to the initial process of classifying Ait El Kaid as a protected area, its president and several members were invited by the Department of Culture and the Arts to join the wilaya commission for cultural assets. This commission, which is crucial for the classification of a site as a protected area, includes the following permanent members: the wali or his representative, the wilaya director of culture, and the directors of various culture-related sectors within the wilaya. It also comprises three representatives from associations specializing in cultural heritage. The village committee, representing the citizens directly, is the sole member of this commission from the local community, underscoring its vital role in decision-making regarding the preservation of local cultural heritage. The president of the village committee emphasized the critical role of citizens as volunteers in enhancing the protected area, including activities such as vegetation removal, road paving, and the construction of gas and drinking water networks, all carried out in a spirit of partnership and solidarity. Additionally, he highlighted that these efforts are funded through a crowdfunding initiative by the village's residents, with even the village committee's capital coming from citizen donations. This demonstrates their active involvement and ongoing support for local preservation and development initiatives.

Following the publication of the government decree concerning the creation and delimitation of the protected area, the Department of Culture and Arts of Tizi Ouzou launched the development of the Ait El Kaid Protected Area Preservation and Enhancement Plan. Legally, this plan involves two main consultation mechanisms: consultation sessions organized by the director of culture in collaboration with the presidents of the people's assemblies of the concerned wilaya, with participation from various stakeholders, including citizens or their representatives. Additionally, the safeguard plan must be submitted for a 60-day public survey, allowing stakeholders to provide their opinions and observations. However, current legislation lacks detailed guidance on the practical implementation of these consultation procedures. (Décret exécutif n° 03-324 du 9

Chaâbane 1424 correspondant au 5 octobre 2003 portant modalités d'établissement du plan permanent de sauvegarde et de mise en valeur des secteurs sauvegardés (PPSMVSS, 2003)

To clarify the situation, we consulted the architect in charge of the design office commissioned by the Tizi Ouzou wilaya's Department of Culture and the Arts, he ensures a professional and specialized approach to all technical, architectural, and legislative aspects crucial to the success of the Ait El Kaid conservation plan, in collaboration with another qualified architect and expert from the Ministry of Culture and the Arts. During our interview with the architect, it was noted that citizen participation has been integrated into the second phase of the conservation plan. In this phase, the architect was tasked with studying the historical development of the village, including its origins and foundations from both social and physical perspectives. Due to the limited documentation available on the village, the architect relied on local residents for his social and historical study. He investigated the origins of the local population, the village's name, and its formation and transformations over time. However, he observed that *"the involvement of all concerned is very diverse. Local residents and property owners within the protected area show interest based on their sensitivity to culture and history, but above all, their understanding and awareness of the significance and importance of classifying the village as a heritage site"*. The architect responsible for the Ait El Kaid conservation plan also consulted with the members and president of the village committee. Despite this, the Committee President noted that *"this consultation is not official due to the lack of legal provisions and official regulations"*.

The citizen participation mechanisms implemented for the classification of the village of Ait El Kaid and the development of its conservation plan are centered around information and consultation. Our field survey revealed that only a minority of citizens were directly consulted by the Department of Culture and the Arts during the village's classification phase, as well as by the architectural firm during the drafting of the conservation plan. However, citizen consultation was facilitated through the village committee, which acted as a mediator between the citizens and the key stakeholders involved in the project, namely the Department of Culture and the Arts and the architect responsible for the conservation plan.

Conclusions.

Through the study of two different cases, the new *ksour* project and the Ait El Kaid village classification project, both similarities and differences in citizen participation in Algeria were identified, as well as their implementation in these distinct contexts. In the case of Ait El Kaid, the classification decision was made by the government through a "top-down" approach, driven by institutional processes and governed by a legal framework. In contrast, the new *ksour* projects emerged from decisions made within local community institutions and deliberative forums. Consequently, the nature of the relationship between beneficiary citizens and these projects has varied, affecting their level of engagement and sense of ownership.

In the new *ksour* projects, the "bottom-up" approach employed from the outset has led to active citizen participation. Beneficiaries have shown significant interest and commitment to ensuring the success of their projects, with the administration serving primarily as a secondary actor, called upon only when necessary for administrative steps or funding. In contrast, the Ait El Kaid village classification project involved citizens primarily through institutional participation mechanisms. Only the members of the village committee were actively involved, representing the associative movement and local citizens in meetings of the Wilaya Commission for Cultural Heritage. Other participating citizens experienced what could be described as symbolic involvement. They contributed by providing historical information about the village during the classification phase and serving as guides for the authorities during both the classification and the development of the safeguarding plan.

The presence of a village committee in the Ait El Kaid classification project, along with a social committee that includes representatives from various factions and special-status figures such as SARL promoters, associative leaders, and foundation heads, all recognized notables in their town, greatly facilitated collaboration among the project stakeholders. The outcomes highlight the critical mediating role played by these organizations in ensuring effective citizen participation across the various projects.

The type and terms of financing provide important insights into the level of cooperation among the various stakeholders involved in the projects. The financing system for the new *ksour* projects illustrates the promoters' ability to mobilize both state and community resources effectively. This approach not only helps to keep the cost per square meter as low as possible but also supports vulnerable groups. The mobilization of community resources has been crucial, as the project and its promoters would otherwise have had significantly fewer financial resources at their disposal. In contrast, the initial financing for the Ait El Kaid village classification project came directly from government authorities due to its institutional nature. However,

citizens, guided by the village committee, are organizing participatory financing initiatives to carry out maintenance and enhancement work on the village. This approach reflects the strong civic involvement and commitment of Ait El Kaid's residents.

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