

Tourism development and promotion project of El Mechouar Citadel: Issues and limitations

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Abstract

This paper examines the conservation process of the monuments of the Medina of Tlemcen, by their tourism development and their integration into daily life through the assimilation of tourism operations and strategies that have been put in place to support these projects in Tlemcen. The Medina of Tlemcen is one of the exceptional Muslim cities, in terms of space organization, cultural and architectural heritage. It has established itself as a unique city over the centuries. Therefore, the Medina offers the most important historical monuments of Islamic urban planning in Algeria, which can still be seen at the beginning of the 21st century, although the onslaught of modern urban planning and social and economic changes have revealed that these buildings are unsuitable for present-day urban life. El Mechouar Citadel, one of the greatest archaeological and historical monuments in Tlemcen, offers an architectural richness that highlights the outstanding artistic and technical creativity of the different dynasties that succeeded each other in Tlemcen. In the late 1990s, several initiatives were launched to enhance its value and eventually lead to its restoration. However, these projects never succeeded in developing it as a tourist destination and integrating it into the socio-economic life of the local inhabitants and users. Indeed, tourism associated with the historical monuments of the Medina of Tlemcen can be an effective and sustainable alternative to protect and inherit the Algerian cultural heritage, while meeting the economic needs of society.

Keywords

Development, El Mechouar, Tourism promotion.

1. Introduction

Today, the conservation of built heritage has become multidisciplinary (Dresco, 2015) and aims to ensure the protection of this heritage and its integration into the socio-economic activities of the inhabitants. This new culture of heritage conservation is defined by its interest in the economic and social aspects of tangible heritage and how it can contribute to enriching and improving the daily lives of inhabitants and visitors (Benhamou and Thesmar, 2011).

Indeed, the greatest challenge of the 21st century is to integrate built heritage into a process of economic and social development that allows it to become a key factor for the community (Pickel-Chevalier, 2011).

The values of built heritage have become a major topic of discussion for most stakeholders in heritage management, especially as we face the new challenges of the 21st century, including the failure of the economic system, the impacts of the energy crisis and the devastating effects of climate change (Hamel, 2012).

Heritage is no longer only linked to the past but is open to the dynamism of the future due to the emergence of a new architecture that embraces the value of old and new, as well as the value of modernity and tradition. A heritage isolated from any use that is part of the present or the future is a heritage in danger of disappearing. Rather, it must be the subject of continuous creation and evolution (Powell, 1999).

We can create heritage by adding new ideas to old ones. We must not only protect and conserve it, but also evolve and enhance it. Heritage atrophies without the active participation and support of the public. That is why concern for heritage must go beyond the circle of experts in ministries and the heads of public institutions, and it must involve all the inhabitants of our towns and villages. The heritage approach then becomes a social and creative process, based on the values of individuals, institutions and societies (Palmer, 2009).

Today, cultural heritage can be considered as a lever for local development, it is a strong attraction factor in terms

of tourism; one only has to look at the correlation between heritage sites and tourist attendance in regions and cities to be convinced of this (Idir, 2014).

Tourism is widely perceived as a positive force for cultural heritage conservation (Marcotte and Bourdeau, 2010). Tourism can capture the economic characteristics of heritage and use them for its conservation by creating resources, developing education and influencing policy. It is a key economic issue for many countries and regions, and can be an important factor in development when successfully managed (Lemaitre, 2015).

Many countries have recognized the importance of exploiting any growth potential they have and of not neglecting any sector of activity. As a result, tourism and cultural heritage have taken a prominent place in many countries, including the more developed ones. These two sectors contribute in particular to economic growth: they are important sources of foreign exchange earnings and income, but also have great potential as sources of employment.

To exploit these opportunities, economic powers such as the United States and France have not hesitated to invest massively in the development of heritage and tourism activities. Similarly, several developing countries have done the same and have succeeded in attracting millions of tourists each year. Our neighbours, Morocco and Tunisia, have made tourism one of their main sources of foreign exchange.

Today, in Algeria, the ravages of man and nature are destroying historical and cultural sites. Ancestral trades are devalued and denigrated and are in danger of disappearing.

In Algeria, the contribution of tourism and heritage to economic development remains negligible to the extent that it does not even appear in the national accounts. Tourism is reported to contribute very little to GDP (1.7% in 2004) and its foreign exchange earnings are negligible (\$200 million in 2006). As for the number of tourists, the official figure for 2005 is 1.443 million, of which only 441,206 are foreigners, mainly French, Italians and Germans, and more than one million Algerians

living abroad. In 2004, Algeria received 1,234,000 people, including 369,000 foreigners, compared with 865,000 Algerians living abroad. Algeria remains a lagging destination in the Mediterranean region (Guerariria, 2015).

Faced with this observation, this study focuses on the Algerian experience in terms of the enhancement of the real estate heritage and its integration into the socio-economic life of the inhabitants and users (development of tourism of the built heritage) through the case of the medina of Tlemcen. This particular medina has an important heritage potential (70% of the Arab-Muslim heritage is located in Tlemcen).

However, the various local actors have not been able to take advantage of this potential to develop cultural tourism. Thus, the development of tourism is similar to the safeguarding and promotion of heritage resources by local decision-makers, architects, craftsmen, etc. This correlation also implies the elaboration of several stages (feasibility, economic studies, diagnostics) and the use of different tools and instruments (tourism development plan, local development plan, etc.).

In recent years, the rehabilitation and restoration of historic buildings has been used to initiate tourism projects, which in turn ensure the continuous and permanent maintenance of these buildings. Furthermore, the enhancement of heritage promotes the relationship between tourism and heritage. The tourism development of heritage properties raises many questions, which mainly concern the tourism development processes, the resources mobilised, the actors involved, the tools and methods used.

Thus, this research work focuses on understanding the process that occurs when architectural heritage is used for tourism. Furthermore, it aims to understand the strategy put in place to organize these operations in Algeria, to identify the deficiencies that cause these buildings to be neglected and finally to demonstrate that the conservation of monuments is nowadays necessarily considered as a tourism potential.

2. Tlemcen between heritage and tourism strategies

In Tlemcen, history is very present and deeply rooted in architecture. We can therefore discover vestiges from very diverse periods: from prehistory to the rock shelters of Ouzidane, which offered the best living conditions to prehistoric man who settled there permanently. The Roman civilization presents through the inscriptions on the minaret of the mosque of Agadir, which testifies to the rigor of the Roman builders, Islam is present throughout the territory of Tlemcen, there are wonders, including the Great Mosque located in the city centre, El Mechouar the Almoravid Citadel, the Great Basin, the tomb of Sidi Abou Mediène, Mansourah (Khelifa, 2011).

The Arab-Muslim civilization has undoubtedly had the greatest impact on this region for a long time at the crossroads of the reign of the dynasties that ruled the Maghreb (Idrissides, Almoravids, Almohads). Each of them left their mark by erecting buildings, some of which, preserved to this day, bear witness to the degree and refinement attained by Muslim civilization (Benouis et al., 2017). However, and despite the large budgets mobilized, including for the record, 15 billion centimes invested for the rehabilitation of the Medina of Tlemcen and the restoration of dozens of sites including Mansourah, Bâb El Karmadine, the state of the Medina and its buildings is disastrous (Gadirri, 2015).

Since the end of the festivities of Tlemcen, capital of Islamic culture, in 2011 (the title of capital of Islamic culture is awarded for one year by the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ISESCO), the promotion of historical monuments is no longer on the agenda of decision-makers. There is a total absence of civic culture, and citizens seem to attach no importance to this heritage. However, historic monuments and sites are undeniable assets for the promotion of tourism and culture. These monuments, which bear witness to the prosperous past of the region and its civilizations, are more than ever in need of protection and rehabilitation. Tlemcen is a crossroads where different civilizations con-

verge. A unique region that identifies with its own identity. An identity that is its strength (Lachachi, 2002). Due to this cultural diversity, this metropolis has all the tourist assets with high potential: cultural tourism through the richness of its heritage (Necissa, 2017).

However, several questions arise:

- Is there a strategy for the tourism development of heritage buildings in the Medina of Tlemcen as tools for the development and promotion of cultural and heritage tourism?
- Are there legal and institutional bases that facilitate the development of tourism and the integration of heritage buildings into the socio-economic life of residents and users?
- Does the current valorization of heritage buildings respect in its approach the sustainability of the built heritage of the Medina of Tlemcen?

To answer these questions, the following hypothesis is suggested:

The action of the public authorities through the institutions responsible for administering the heritage considers that beyond the historical and cultural values that the heritage conveys and that justify its conservation, it can be attributed an economic value, created by its enhancement. This enhancement of the heritage can be considered as a tool for the promotion of cultural tourism. Today, this tourism is the sector that gives significant value to our heritage.

Thus, in this work, different methods were used to address these questions and this hypothesis:

- Thematic approach: this stage allowed to grasp the various concepts necessary to understand the problem; "Heritage", "Tourism development", "Cultural tourism" and "Rehabilitation".
- Inventories of actual and potential heritage resources: an inventory of Tlemcen's physical heritage was developed based on an operational process that involved different phases (metric survey, taking photos, etc.). This work aims to establish an overview of the actual situation of the architectural heritage, making it possible to identify the elements that express it.
- Surveys of local heritage actors: the collection of information from lo-

cal actors was carried out in the form of semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Open and closed questions were asked to the actors surveyed (Directorate of culture, Directorate of tourism, architects, etc.).

- Exploratory study: this stage of the research focused on the approaches and processes of tourism development in the heritage buildings of the medina of Tlemcen through the analysis of the touristification project of the Citadel of El Mechouar, former royal residence. This stage first focused on the different uses and transformations that this monument has undergone. It then addressed the process undertaken for its tourism development from 2010 to be ready to host the events that took place in Tlemcen, capital of Islamic culture in 2011.

3. El Mechouar Citadel

El Mechouar is the ancient citadel built by Yaghmoracen, which later became the official residence of the Zianides, kings of Tlemcen. Due to its considerable size and numerous functions, the citadel played an important role in the different periods of the evolution of the city of Tlemcen. Over the years, it has been a political, economic, religious, but also military center, worthy of its etymology "the place of mouchawara" or "advisory council" (Marçais, 1903).

"The Kings of Tlemcen have a palace with splendid buildings, very high pavilions, gardens decorated with cradles of greenery, and admirable both for the taste with which the plants and flowers are arranged, and for the symmetry and correct proportions that prevail in their distribution and arrangement" (Bargès, 1859).

The El Mechouar Citadel is a monument of great historical value in the Medina of Tlemcen and this monument is the result of a unique alliance and combination of the techniques and construction methods of the different dynasties that occupied the region. The structure is surrounded by an enclosure that gives the site a special character.

Several religious, military and civilian buildings are among the components of the fortress:

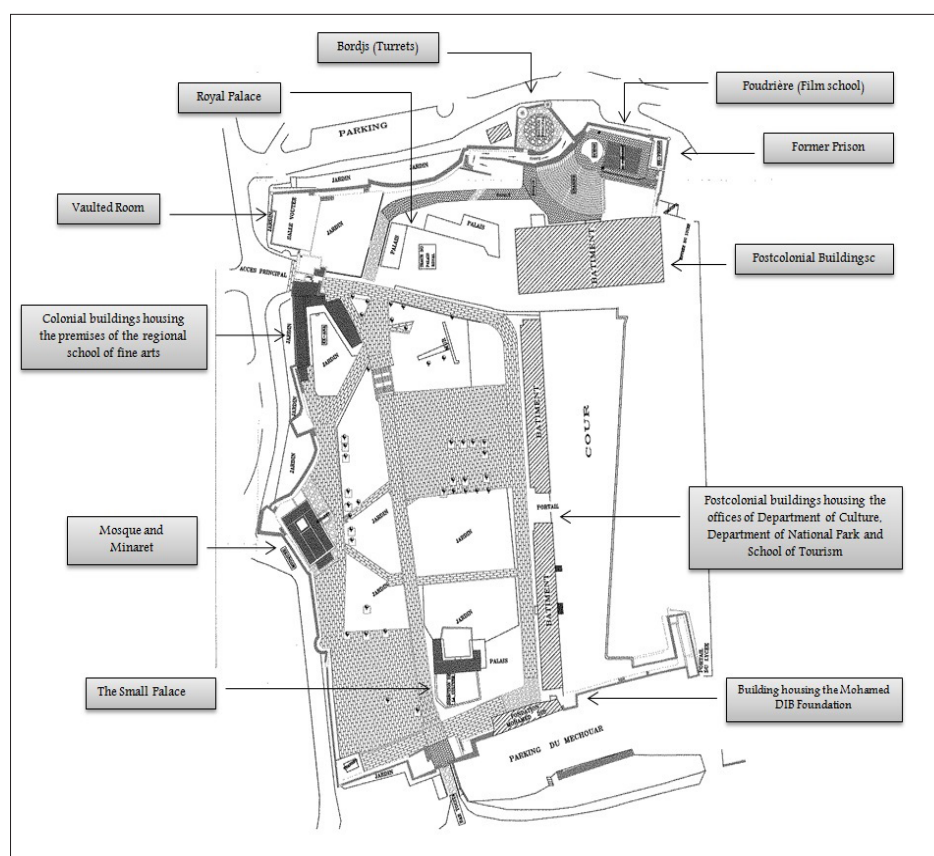


Figure 1. Overview of the actual site of El Mechouar Citadel (Source: ARCADE BET).

- Mosque and minaret.
- Building housing the Mohamed DIB Foundation.
- The Small Palace.
- Postcolonial buildings housing the offices of Department of Culture, Department of National Park and School of Tourism.
- Colonial buildings housing the premises of the regional school of fine arts (formerly the archaeology district).
- Former prison.
- Poudrière (Film school).
- Green Theater.
- Vaulted building.
- Royal Palace.

4. The approach of El Mechouar Citadel tourism development project

The approach established for the development of tourism in the El Mechouar Citadel consisted of five stages:

4.1. The Citadel as a tourist attraction

Within the framework of the preparations for the festivities of the official opening of Tlemcen, Capital of Islamic Culture 2011, it was decided that the ceremonial opening of this major cultural event would take place on 16 April 2011 in El Mechouar by officials and public authorities. Following this hasty decision, the Ministry of Culture proceeded, on 30 September 2009, to implement a wilaya (department) commission, which would be in charge of monitoring all the projects of rehabilitation and tourism development of the historical monuments of Tlemcen.

In addition to hosting the festivities, the officials of the Ministry of Culture hoped for the re-appropriation of the citadel by local residents and users, producing a positive image of the city and thus strengthening its attractiveness. The objectives for the public authorities were twofold: to rehabilitate and restore this glorious monument, and to create, find and develop a use for it that would allow it to reach a local and international audience.

4.2. Ensuring the feasibility of the citadel's tourism development project and determining the constraints and key points

The commission of the wilaya set up on 30 September 2009, had the arduous and difficult task of starting the development and touristification project of El Mechouar before the end of the current year. As a result of pressure from the project sponsors, the local heritage stakeholders abandoned any possible feasibility study, which could have completed and enriched a process, so that it would lead to the long-awaited and hoped-for results and objectives, and simply drew up a schedule and a rough estimate of the work, which was sent to the supervising ministry.

This stage should have ascertained the feasibility and viability of the project, from a technical point of view (specify whether the monument really needs restoration or whether it can only be conserved and protected), an administrative point of view (indicate the skills and experience to be presented by the candidate architects), a financial point of view (draw up a very detailed provisional budget, forecast the number of potential visitors, the expected income and the target clientele), a legal point of view (identify the current managers and users of the building), and an environmental point of view. If the feasibility and viability of the project were not proven, other scenarios could have been considered or the project cancelled. In addition, the project manager had the option of calling on an external service provider as he did not have the necessary technical expertise and sufficient time for such work.

4.3. Decision-making

In the absence of a detailed feasibility study, the project manager was not able to firstly decide whether the proposals of the public decision-makers were feasible and secondly, to engage hypotheses and scenarios for the reuse of the building. Thus, from a logical point of view, in this phase, the project manager should have formulated the possible orientations in terms of enhancement and reallocation of the site's buildings. For this purpose, he needed to rely on

solid arguments to justify scenarios.

Each scenario had to be evaluated in terms of its strengths and limitations, advantages and disadvantages. But none of this was possible because, once again, the political influence played a major role in the success of the project. Indeed, the organizer took hasty action in a purely political interest. His aim was to have the building ready for the inauguration of Tlemcen, the 2011 Capital of Islamic Culture.

As a result, the project manager chose the option "restore first, we'll see the results later", which is hardly a wise decision. It is absurd to wait for the outcome of the restoration to finally start thinking about a possible use.

4.4. The restoration and rehabilitation of El Mechouar Citadel

The study and promotion mission was entrusted to a qualified restorer architect, in accordance with the provisions of Executive Decree No. 03-322 of 5 October 2003. This decree stipulates that the project owner is required to entrust the execution of the project, which is the subject of the project management, to a duly qualified master architect specializing in the preservation and promotion of protected monuments and sites. The order was issued by the Ministry of Culture represented by its local directorate.

This study consisted of the following approaches:

4.4.1. Historical mission survey and research on El Mechouar Citadel

This phase aimed to inform the project manager and the contracting authority on the condition of existing structures through:

- The architectural survey: this work made it possible first of all to establish the plans, sections, facades and interior elevations of the various buildings that structure El Mechouar Citadel, then based on this field and cabinet work, the restoration architect was able to visualize and understand the different periods in the construction of the Citadel, its original organization, the different transformations that took place over the years.

- Health Status and Pathological Di-

agnosis of the Citadel: the purpose of this study was to define the state of the buildings, propose their authorizations and finally prepare the necessary execution files for the Citadel's touristic promotion project.

- Materials and techniques studies for their implementation: in addition to the architectural survey and pathological diagnosis, a materials survey was initiated to determine the nature of the construction materials of the various buildings of the citadel, as well as their state of conservation and ageing.

Due to this preliminary work, the restoration architect was able to:

- Understand the architectural evolution of the citadel and determine the dimensions and proportions of the various buildings within it;
- Determine the different structural pathologies of the Fortress;
- Acknowledge building materials and ornamental elements;
- Establish an accurate database of the current state of the buildings.

4.4.2. Conservation status mission and recommended measures

Based on the architectural, pathological and material surveys, the project manager prepared a report to inform the project owner about the series of measures to be undertaken for the Citadel's touristic promotion project.

4.4.3. Work follow-up and project supervision

The architect had to obtain the approval and authorization of the project owner before starting the renovation work, who ensured that the project was feasible on the basis of the results: the diagnosis, the work program and the estimate of the work. Subsequently, the project owner, with the assistance of the restorer architect, selected four companies, which were entrusted with the work to enhance the site.

4.5. Occupation and use of the citadel after its rehabilitation

After hosting the festivities of "Tlemcen, Capital of Islamic Culture" throughout 2011 and arousing enormous enthusiasm from local and foreign visitors, the monument experi-

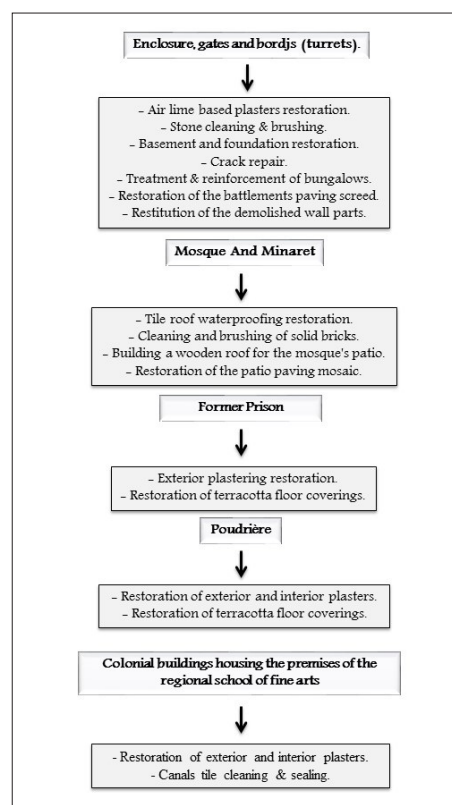


Figure 2. Interventions carried out during the tourism development process of the El Mechouar Citadel (Source: Authors).

enced a drop in tourist numbers from 2012 due to the end of the festivities but also to the fact that the restored buildings were not used for tourism purposes.

4.5.1. The mosque

This royal mosque was built by King Zianide Abu Hamou at the beginning of his reign. The fortress of El Mechouar functioned as an independent entity within the city, with all urban services, so the king authorized the construction of this royal mosque,



Figure 3. Overview of the Citadel Mosque and Minaret (Source: Authors).

it was also intended for the many princely hostages held in the citadel (Baba-Ahmed, 2007).

Today it is used periodically as an art gallery and exhibition space for Tlemcenian artists. We consider that the temporary assignment of the museum function to this building constitutes a real loss of its historical and architectural values.

In the absence of official statistics on the number of visitors to this monument, we have taken it upon ourselves to determine, through a counting operation conducted over several months, the number of visitors to these places. We found that the building attracts barely a hundred visitors a month, and this can be explained by : The lack of tourist interest in the artistic works displayed inside the mosque, the lack of a guide and reception staff to meet the needs of visitors, the lack of courtesy on the part of staff, an artistic offering that is far removed from the theme and vocation of the premises, the lack of signage providing visitors with complete and succinct information, the lack of adequate and unhealthy lighting conditions due to high humidity and bad odors.

Finally, we can state that the sole and primary objective of the stakeholders involved in this building, and in particular the project owner, was to restore the building to its post-colonial state and eliminate the additions that turned this space into a Catholic chapel because, according to the political decision-makers, it was urgent to remove all traces of colonial presence from this monument and not to preserve it by involving it in a major tourism development process.

4.5.2. The Mohamed Dib Foundation's building

Mohammed Dib (1920-2003) was born in Tlemcen and is a French-speaking Algerian writer, author of novels, short stories, poetry, theatre and children's stories. He occupies a special and eminent place in Algerian heritage. The Mohamed Dib Cultural Association is housed in a two-story structure with a wooden roof.

During our fieldwork, we noticed that the majority of the rehabilitated

buildings of the citadel are transformed into simple administrative or cultural headquarters, unlike in other countries, such as Tunisia and Morocco, where the reuse of historic monuments as restaurants, cafés and accommodation is strongly encouraged. This type of establishment perfectly ensures the regular and permanent maintenance of the monuments and even generates significant profits, which could finance other tourism projects for historic buildings.

Although we are aware that profits and gains are not the primary objectives of a rehabilitation operation, it is worth considering these opportunities, which have confirmed their effectiveness for several years now. (Lebon, 2009).

4.5.3. The Small Palace

This residence consists of two pavilions covered by a wooden roof. From 1986, it was occupied by citizens until their evacuation after it was decided to transform the historical monument into a cultural structure.

This building is one of the most beautiful in the citadel and can attract a significant number of visitors if it is reused for cultural and/or economic activities. It can be an important economic source that can guarantee its maintenance, if it is open to entertainment, the organization of shows and the development of shops and catering facilities. The desire to assign the restored buildings of the Medina of Tlemcen to purely administrative func-

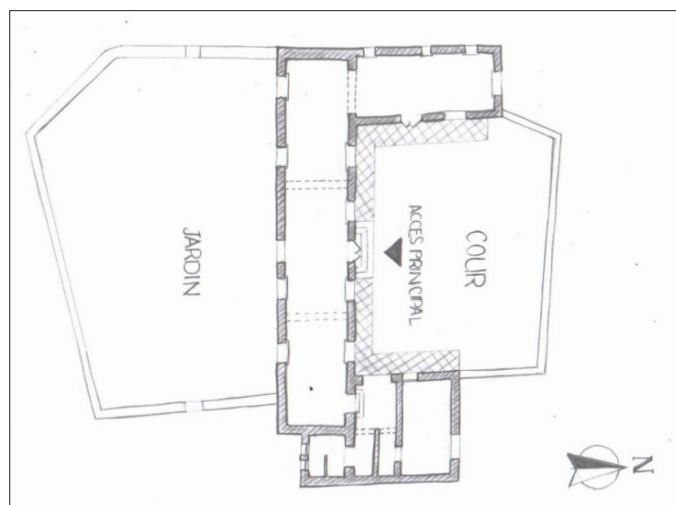


Figure 4. Plan view of the Small Palace (Source: Authors).

tions often leads the promoters of these projects to consider that the reuse of historic buildings for administrative purposes is the best possible preservation for these buildings, as it reduces the number of visitors and slows down deterioration, which is totally contrary to the idea of preserving historic monuments as we have shown previously.

4.5.4. Colonial buildings the premises of the regional school of fine arts (formerly the archaeology district)

These pavilions date from the colonial period; they are located next to the western enclosure of El Mechouar. Following the restoration of this pavilion, it houses the premises of the Regional School of Fine Arts, an activity that enhances and reflects the values of the site.

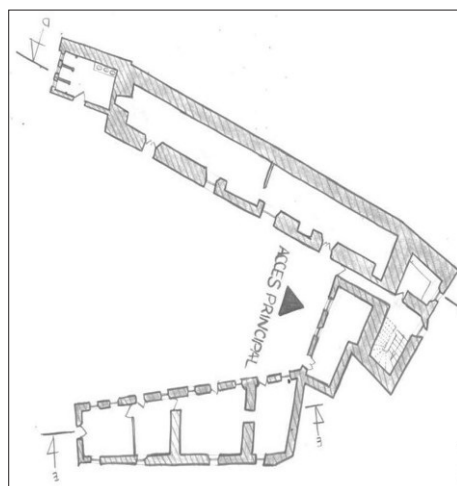


Figure 5. Plan of the French colonial construction process (Source: Authors).

4.5.5. Former prison

Located alongside the north-eastern enclosure, it consists of two levels. This prison has undergone several modifications, such as widening and strengthening the walls. It consists of a ground floor structure and one floor.

As a result of the consolidation and enhancement work, this part of the citadel was recessed from all activities and closed to visitors, which accelerated the degradation process due to the presence of humidity and capillary moisture rise. In February 2014, the Minister of Culture decided that its area would be occupied by the administration of the National Centre dedi-

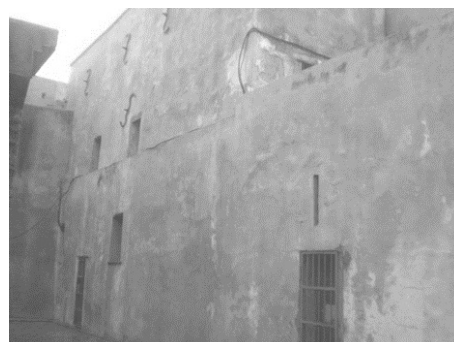


Figure 6. Overview of the Prison (Source: Authors).

cated to traditional Algerian costume and folk practices.

However, this decision worsened the already critical situation of the building, as new users have made numerous changes to the interior of the prison to better adapt it to the requirements of its new function.

4.5.6. Poudrière (Film school)

The Poudrière is a rectangular building with a double gabled roof covered with red terracotta tiles. In 2011, the Poudrière became a traditional and modern dance studio, but since then, all activity has ceased, for the sole purpose of ensuring better preservation of the building. This situation can be explained by the vision of the initiators of this project towards the safeguarding of the monuments of the Medina of Tlemcen; they consider that the best preservation consists in restoring the monument and then closing it to any visit.

4.5.7. Vaulted building

It was converted into an exhibition gallery of the National Centre for the Interpretation of Algerian Traditional Costume and Popular Practices.



Figure 7. Overview of the Poudrière (Source: Authors).

The building was constructed by the French, on the north-west side of the monument. It has long served as a stable for the French army. It is a large vaulted enclosure with a terrace accessible via the footbridge of the northern enclosure. From the 2000s, it was transformed into a traditional restaurant. However, it was closed at the end of 2009.

Currently, it is being transformed into a museum space with a didactic vocation for the national center for the interpretation of Algerian traditional costumes and popular practices.

4.5.8. Royal Palace

This palace is the result of a succession of constructions, destructions and transformations of the original palace, probably built in the 14th century; it was the official residence of the Zianid kings. The architecture of this palace resembles that of the public buildings of the time, a set of open spaces structured around courtyards, more or less large and separated by a peristyle (Ibn Khaldun, 2010).

In 2010, the palace was rebuilt following archaeological excavations and historical research. The restored palace is composed of four wings around a patio containing an inner garden and a lake; it occupies an area of about 4,000 m².

The building also houses exhibitions on traditional clothing. It is used as an annex to the National Centre for the Interpretation of Algerian Traditional Costume and Folk Practices. A ticket for 200 DA (\$1.70) entitles the visitor to visit the temporary exhibitions as well as access to the interior of the building, which is considered one of

the masterpieces of Arab-Muslim architecture in Tlemcen.

5. Results and discussion

The aim of this research work was to analyze the local heritage policy for the development of tourism in the heritage buildings of the Medina of Tlemcen, including the El Mechouar Citadel in Tlemcen, the most emblematic monument of the city.

Based on the hypothesis presented at the beginning of the paper, it is important to determine whether or not the following criteria was met:

5.1. Building awareness

On the basis of the first analysis, it appears that this criterion was not met during the revaluation project of the building. Indeed, new functions have been adapted for the many restored buildings; from the cult function to the museum function (the Mosque of the Citadel was transformed into an exhibition space), from the dwelling to the administrative function (the small Royal Palace transformed into an annex of the Heritage Property Management Office), from the ritual purification places to the storage rooms (latrines transformed into a storeroom), from the fortification to the commercial function (Bâb El Magana transformed into a ticket office). Its transformations are generally carried out without any assistance and without prior studies or reflections on the possible uses of the restored buildings.

The procedures analysed are characterised by the absence of previously defined reuse scenarios. It is well after the completion of the restoration work that local heritage actors realized the necessity and urgency of assigning functions and activities to the monuments. This decision, which was aimed at better preserving the newly restored buildings, only intensified the damage caused to this heritage, its effects extending over several levels:

- The support structure has been destabilized, particularly for the prison, where there is abuse due to its transformation into an administration that receives a large number of employees and visitors on a daily basis. The Mosque of the citadel is also not immune to its



Figure 8. Overview of the Royal Palace (Source: Authors).

disruption due to the installation of a wooden roof for the patio, which has caused cracks in the walls.

- Due to insufficient maintenance due to a lack of financial means, the disorders are treated superficially: the symptoms are tackled rather than the causes (sealing of cracks, partial repairs, resumption of loose coverings, etc.).

Moreover, all these new readjustments, carried out without prior studies, feasibility studies and reuse scenarios or hypotheses upstream of the re-evaluation project, have led to unsustainable results, thus threatening the stability of hundred-year-old structures.

5.2. Innovation and creativity

The extent to which this upgraded heritage has contributed to the economic and social development of the Medina of Tlemcen and its region through its promotion as a tool for tourism development has encountered many difficulties, which have limited the prospects for reuse and have directed decision-makers towards functions such as museums, exhibition spaces and libraries, but unfortunately these are such unprofitable activities and so attractive for tourism.

This observation can be explained by:

5.2.1. Political decisions and the necessity to complete the work before the beginning of Tlemcen's festivities as the Capital of Islamic Culture 2011

The time for politics is not the time for heritage. The former is hasty, incoherent and zapping. Whereas the second is patient, persevering and stable (Lebon, 2009).

We can think of no better way to illustrate the role that politics played in launching and managing the citadel rehabilitation project than with this quote. It should be noted that in the context of such projects carried out in Europe or neighboring countries. The person who initiates such a project is not necessarily the same person who will inaugurate it when the time comes.

The decision of the Ministry of Culture that this building should be ready

for the inauguration of Tlemcen Capital of Culture 2011 had a major impact on the final results. Indeed, the initiator acted hastily in a purely political interest; to strengthen the capacity of the State - if it so wished - to protect and enhance its heritage and to affirm to visitors and guests of this event that the city of Tlemcen can compete with other cities in neighboring countries in terms of heritage and cultural wealth. The preservation of Tlemcen's heritage became secondary at that time.

5.2.2. No global approach

There is no comprehensive and global intervention strategy, as there are specific safeguarding projects on the different buildings. Successful restoration necessarily involves its management in all its complexity.

5.2.3. Lack of awareness of operational complexity

There is a lack of awareness of the complexity of tourism development operations, which makes it possible to organize the stages of this process (a real political will to implement and evaluate the interventions), to identify the specific tools needed for such an operation and to define the strategies that need to be implemented to ensure the success of this process.

5.2.4. Lack of legal texts promoting the development of tourism for restored buildings

While new legislation has been promulgated, such as Law No. 98-04, on the protection of cultural heritage, which appeared to be a real change in the cultural and political context, refers only to two means of safeguarding historic buildings: the restoration of buildings (Article No. 02. Decree 83-684 of 26 November 1983) and classification (Ordinance No. 67-281 of 20 December 1967). The lack of a legal and regulatory framework, which defines the procedure for tourism of historic buildings, has led to very mixed results from the projects for the preservation of the El Mechouar Citadel.

Consequently, the fact that we have to refute our hypothesis concerning the safeguarding and promotion of the architectural heritage by giving it an

economic value and considering it as a tool for the promotion of cultural tourism, shows that this aspect is not taken into consideration by national safeguarding policies. Not all protective measures defined in legislation and applied by heritage actors guarantee an effective and efficient management of our heritage.

6. Conclusion

The El Mechouar Citadel is the symbol and reminder of the influence of Tlemcen throughout the Maghreb in the 13th and 14th centuries. It is a masterpiece of Arab-Muslim architecture, a major monument of the local and national built heritage and has been one of the main tourist attractions of Tlemcen and its region.

This rich heritage constitutes a social and economic entity that can ensure a sustainable development of the Medina through the promotion of local heritage as a vector of economic and cultural development, in particular through the promotion of cultural tourism.

In examining the results of the El Mechouar rehabilitation and tourism development project, we found that the various actors in this building had never thought about and planned a reallocation of the restored buildings for tourism and profit-making purposes. This project, like those carried out in the Medina of Tlemcen within the framework of the festivities of Tlemcen Capital of Islamic Culture 2011, is carried out and developed without any strategy, offering a global and integral approach capable of converting its sites into major cultural tourism sites with national and international influence.

All the renovation projects are aimed above all at restoring the buildings to their original state so that they can be ready for this event, without worrying about their future after the festivities are over, as we have stressed on several occasions. It is very sad to invest so much money, effort and time without its buildings being a real tourist attraction, which can ensure that their values are maintained and passed on to future generations. The concept of implementing tourism has not been included at any stage of the conserva-

tion process.

Such limited results can be explained by a conservation process that is not very well explained due to the lack of guidelines and steps for such a project. Furthermore, the project was carried out without the support of local associations for the protection and enhancement of heritage, which are considered key partners. They could act as mediators and relays between the project promoters and local residents and future users.

Finally, the specificities of the Medina of Tlemcen, its economy and tourism potential, were not taken into consideration. Consequently, the new uses of the citadel buildings do not, to a large extent, reflect the particular characteristics of this site.

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