

## **Tourism and staging of landscapes in protected areas: Between conservation, use and sustainable development, Case of El-Kala region in the North East of Algeria.**

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### **Abstract**

There are Algeria sites and natural and cultural landscapes of high quality, often unknown in Europe: it is the case in particular in the area of El-Kala located in the extreme northeast of the country, the border with Tunisia. This space has been classified "protected area" through these very rich potential in terms of biodiversity (flora, fauna) and also in many natural ecosystems: lakeside (a wetland of international repute complex included on the Ramsar List) forestry, marine; climate; major outstanding natural sites and landscapes; historical and archaeological monuments, which require investment, particularly in terms of value creation and preservation and especially with the presence of its national park and nature reserve world heritage by UNESCO in 1990. This label would initiate development sustainable tourism in the region by highlighting its ecological and historical heritage and awareness for the preservation and promotion of heritage.

This research attempts to analyze the current situation regarding the natural region of El Kala to identify the potentials and strengths that can be developed to promote tourism becomes the vector of the global economy, a tool revitalization of territories, an opportunity for sustainable development and a means to preserve biodiversity, natural ecosystems and cultural heritage and to define the challenges and opportunities for the future of this region.

**Keywords:** *Landscape, Tourism, Heritage, Protected area, Sustainable development, Preservation.*

## **1- Introduction:**

Algeria is a vast country of contrasts with the specificities of its different bioclimatic regions, ecological, geomorphological and its ecosystem diversity, specific landscape and cultural: the Sahara is one of the largest deserts and most beautiful with its landscapes, mountains, oases, its ksours and classified national parks (Tassili and Ahaggar) universal Heritage, 1200 km of coast is distinguished by their resorts, their idyllic beaches, their idyllic coves and wonderful caves, chains mountainous, other sites offering magical landscapes and exceptional views. On the importance of these advantages plus other peculiarities of geomorphological, climatic and cultural. Algeria is undoubtedly a richly endowed with tourism potentials country. All these qualities give to a diversified investment in tourism to attract visitors throughout the world and also meet the needs of domestic and foreign tourists.

In this millennium goal of our country is to develop all forms of tourism to create competition and improve services especially as tourism investments in Algeria in urban majority (business travel and tourism). Furthermore, the promotion of tourism in Algeria is based on the exploitation of its potential in this area. However, one may wonder what consists the tourist image of Algeria? This country holds genuine products enabling it to stand out. It has the assets and huge potential in terms of tourism, should they be rationally exploited, would make one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world.

Today, the growing attraction for protected natural areas, as a showcase for wildlife, but also as spaces supports tourism activities. The intensity of the summer use of these spaces is a testimony to their appeal. In terms of image and landscapes, these spaces are considered one of the leading tourist destinations of the regions in Algeria. This fact naturally raises the question of the region's potential and actual tourist numbers: what is it really the tourist offer available in protected areas? How to describe it? What are the landscape and tourism assets for the development perspective of sustainable development and tourism?

Through this research we are committed to analyze the protected area of the El Kala region in the province of El Tarf in Algeria Northeast. This region is one of the outstanding sites for the natural, cultural and rare species. It contains a rich and unique biodiversity, a variety of animal and plant species, natural ecosystems (lake, lagoon, marsh, ocean, forest, dune) include in the national park of El Kala, which arouses our interest in the importance of natural and ecological areas and natural and cultural landscapes, recognized wealth, protected and valued.

## **2 Methodological elements:**

In this work, we chose to combine and articulate several methods to know the different components of the park and the quality of its environment and its remarkable scenery. The collection of data for this analysis has various different sources and means:

- The mobilized data analysis method that requires the territory to acquire all the knowledge available on the protected area of El Kala. This method overcomes completely data on natural, historical and archaeological already known (presence of species or remarkable natural areas, historical sites ...). Moreover, these data are often integrated into the perimeters of protection and / or inventory available and dispersed across branches, public services of the state and municipalities covering the territory of the park.
- These data are supplemented by surveys of various local stakeholders to hear their views on the state of the site, its development trends and sensibilities.
- In addition, the visual interpretation method that helped us identify areas by examining, reading and interpretation of the most accurate and recent data from or depicted on maps of the INC (National Institute of Cartography), BNIDER (National Research Department for Rural DEvelopment) the aerial photographs and Google Earth map covering the territory of the park. This phase harvesting and consultation of data precedes the work of investigations and field verification to reduce the scope and save time required for inventory.
- The foundation of this study is complemented by the work of the field by making systematic and repeated course for a detailed knowledge of it, throughout this study, conducting a photographic survey, tracking the views and observation and perception of the current landscape of the park, checking on ground places we know well when presenting old information (yet they have an ecological, landscape and cultural? environmental quality?), to provide significant precision and proven knowledge of the strengths of the region.

All the data obtained was used to analyze and characterize the relevant environment by studying various aspects, identifying and classifying all the natural potentials, cultural and landscape. These data are presented and analyzed thematically in order to provide a clearer picture and reliable of the study area.

## **3- Territorial context and analytical approach to the El Kala National Park: Characteristics and general data.**

The region of El-Kala, is a typically Mediterranean region, including the national park of the same name. Located at the end North East of Algeria, near the East side of the Tunisian

border. The El Kala park occupies a geostrategic position between the semi arid region of North Africa and the humid region of northern Europe. It has been a National Park in 1983 by Presidential Decree No. 462/83 and world biosphere reserve in 1990 by UNESCO. The mission of the park is clearly defined in the status of national parks (Decree No. 458-83) whose main purpose of its creation is the preservation of the diversity of its heritage as heritage for future generations. It extends over an area of 76,438 ha, almost one third of the wilaya of El Tarf, making it one of the largest national parks of Algeria. Differently to the great parks of North American or African, the national park of El Kala is inhabited. The population living on its territory has 77,000 Inhabitants (Study day, Algiers 27 October 2011, National Center for Studies and Analysis for Population and Development: CENEAP).

This park is one of the most prestigious protected areas of the western Mediterranean, with a juxtaposition of different and interdependent ecosystems understand more varied natural and cultural groups as historical and archaeological sites, lakes, mountains, forests, dunes, rivers, and a large coastline. Unlike national parks in other parts of the world as is the case in the US, Canada, and Europe where their territories are characterized by large homogeneous ecological units, the El Kala park is a mosaic of ecosystems and diverse and varied backgrounds on a relatively small territory. These rare features giving it a high biological and ecological value recognized in the Mediterranean and globally. The geographical area of the park extends in the administrative territories of nine cities which six are located entirely within the natural area. This is El-Ayoune, Souarekh Ramel ELSouk, El-Kala, Ain Assel, bougous. As against the other three towns namely ELTarf, Bouteldja and Berihane, the park occupies only a small part.

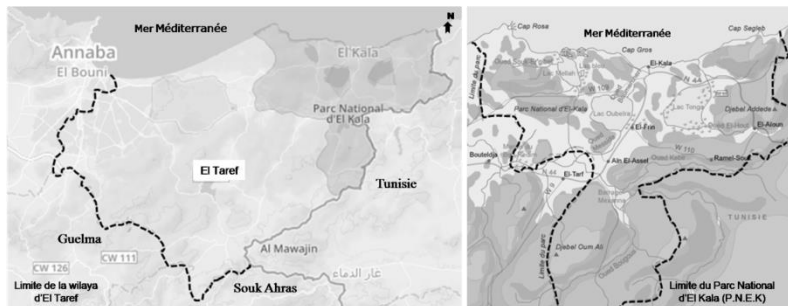


Figure.1 Location National Park of El Kala in Algeria

#### 4- Analysis of the surrounding landscape of the national park: From landscape concept to the analysis of space and landscape diversity.

Although the term landscape is the backdrop to our everyday lives and belongs to everyday language, but this leitmotiv experienced today importance in the world especially in the sense of World Heritage Sites of UNESCO (areas protected). Thus, the landscapes are at the heart of problems related to environmental protection, land use and urban planning. The importance of this theme is the opportunity to contribute to the attractiveness of regions for their development. This image capital, especially in protected areas have shown very long regeneration and motivation of tourism practices.

The El Kala coastal park has major tourism assets consist of the diversity and richness of its landscape heritage (natural and cultural), and the biodiversity of habitats, which explains its strong appeal. The quality of its landscapes is an awareness symbol for the region. In this context we will analyze and identify all the potentialities of the region

- **Wetlands:** The region of El-Kala is ranked among the most important wetlands in the world. It is characterized by the presence of a set of lacustrine ecosystems of international fame on the list Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. It works as marine water intakes (fish, crustaceans), mountain springs. Its lakes are considered the most important site for wintering bird Mediterranean. Given the originality and rarity of this important biodiversity, wetlands of the region, offer forms and varied floro-fauna composition and diverse undeniable ecological value, meriting attention and more action for their protection.

Table 1: Sites inscribed on the list of Ramsar..

Name of the wetland	date of classifying	profundity in meters	Areas (ha)	% at the park	Wetland Type
- Tonga Lake	04/11/1983	P. average 2,20	2.600	3.40	Coastal freshwater lake, marshes and alder
- Oubeira Lake	04/11/1983	04	2.200	2.87	Coastal freshwater lake. peripheral vegetation
- Mellah Lake	12/12/2004	06	840	1.12	Brackish water lake
- Bleu Lake	in 2006,	-	6	0.007	Small freshwater pond
-Aulne Ain Khiar	02/02/2001	-	180	0.23	Freshwater Marsh. forested peatland
- peatland of Black Lake	04/06/2003	0,5 m Of ground	05	0.006	Unwooded peatland
- Bourdim marshland	18/12/2009	-	11.25	0.02	Forested peatland

Source: Data listings of Ramsar wetlands

- **Sites and remarkable natural landscapes:** in the Park are several scenic sites, unique landscapes, stations of visual special interests forest landscape with picturesque panoramic views, tours.... Because now, the park is a tourist eco-oriented site, the development of tourism landscapes therefore requires reconciling these natural open spaces, protection of remarkable sites and the development of a tourist hiking (hiking, horse) and tour.
- **The wealth of flora and fauna:** The ecology research conducted since its inception have shown and identified as the flora of the reserve El Kala is very diverse with a number of 1264 plant species or 32% of the national flora and a number of 878 animal species, 38% of wildlife it houses the national scale. This biodiversity is classified uncommon or rare under worldwide standards (CITES and IUCN) and the Algerian lists (laws and decrees), it is considered as a reservoir of biodiversity in the Mediterranean region.

With its many wetlands (lakes, ponds, swamps, wet soils, alder ...) it offers wintering sites but also nesting migratory birds. These sites are home to 191 species of birds. The lake is the main Tonga North African nesting area for water birds some of which are endangered. This animal and plant diversity is a heritage worth preserving either for their rarity, their fragility, their originality, diversity or for their potential value, thus leading to the development and promotion of tourism discovery, observation and fishing.

- **The wealth in the marine ecosystem, dune and forest:** The marine ecosystem and coastal area of the park is marked by a high diversity of species and habitats. Its marine part is populated with flora and fauna that have their habitat Posidonia meadows and red coral reefs and many fish species. The coastline is also formed beaches and natural rocky coves, dunes populated by abundant and diverse vegetation, wooded landscape crossed by rivers that descend to the beach, sandstone cliffs and caves that are many species of nesting places of birds and offer landscapes of rare and unique beauty.

The forest ecosystem represents a little over half (57%) of the area of the wilaya of El Tarf, and 70% of the total area of the park which shows the great extent of the forest cover consists of forests altitude of Zeen oaks and cork oaks, forests of plains and low hills, plains of cork forests represented by small clumps of scrub type of matorrals woodland, riparian forests and alder groves of pine forests and non-wooded scrub.

The richness and diversity of the forest landscape is one of the best features of the park to diversify forms of tourism such as hiking and equestrian tourism, relaxation, hiking, discovery and tours.

- **Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage:** El Kala park has a cultural and historical potential of great values, remaining to this day witnessed various civilizations that succeeded in this region. Following a recent study in the region, the

sites discovered in the Park opens almost all prehistoric and historic periods: Paleolithic, épipaléolithique, proto, Punic, Roman, Byzantine, medieval, Arab and Ottoman and French. The number of historical monuments and archaeological sites is currently estimated at 164.

The El Kala region is renowned throughout the Mediterranean for its quality and rarity of its rich coral marine fringe that is the object of export to other countries. Every year during the month of August, it celebrates the coral festival, bringing together fishermen, craftsmen and other tradesmen. Coral Day is also an opportunity to show and sell many products used in jewelry and decoration, and other objects with coral worked as pipes that have international fame and other souvenirs made of wood heather superior, seen as another richness of the region.

- **Urban Ecosystem:** The protected area within a highly urbanized area with a spatial distribution of the population is heterogeneous with high densities are displayed to the north (123 inhabitants / km<sup>2</sup>) and the lowest are in the South (53 ha / Km<sup>2</sup>). These urban areas are constituted by a set of cities and areas scattered juxtapose different natural ecosystems in the fleet, causing a human pressure on its natural resources, cultural and landscape.

## 5. Vulnerability and threats to the protected area:

Considering the results obtained by its ranking (Biosphere Reserve), its management and protection (laws, decrees, orders), but the national park of El Kala always aware of the various and complex problems of assaults, disappearances, alteration, modification etc ....

Next, interviews conducted with the various managers of the park, it was found that these problems are caused mainly by the lack of human and financial resources available to the park (the displacement means, course materials, biological stations in areas of interest, geographic information system: GIS, inadequate training and retraining of all staff). Also, the diversity of supervisory authorities (forest conservation, environmental management, management of agricultural services), and therefore the decision centers unnecessarily complicates the management and always weakens the effectiveness of conservation measures. Adding other weaknesses like: the lack of a development plan management, and the absence of a coherent zoning based on studies.

In addition to these different problems, several threats exacerbate the degradation of natural and cultural environment boil down to natural factors (repetitive fire), human factors (clearing, overgrazing, intensive crops of water used for irrigation, fishing , logging, mining sand continental dunes, coral poaching, pollution from wastewater and landfills, uncontrolled urbanization). In addition, the risks associated with the expansion of basic infrastructure: roads, urban, suburban or rural, housing, electrification, water supply,

sanitation, recovery of rainwater (dams and hill), the passage of the East-west highway through this vulnerable area, beach tourism and its negative impacts (the accumulation of solid waste on the beaches and around the forests).

### **6- Tourism in protected areas of El Kala park: Between Reality, challenges and prospects.**

Despite many undeniable potentialities park, tourism occupies only a secondary place in the economy of the region. It has a small weight in the national tourism. These great tourist potential and unique assets in Algeria have not been taken care of in an efficient manner; it is simply a national and family tourism. The tourist offer in the Park is represented by an uncontrolled tourism, poorly regulated and dominated by a summer seaside mass tourism and uncontrolled. This type of tourism is just spread out over the summer, between mid-June through August period. It is mainly concentrated in the coastal strip to the north, or is of exceptional beauty and nationally renowned beaches that attract every year a considerable number of summer visitors.

Unlike potential, and traffic flows (74,457 arrived in 2012 under the direction of tourism in the province of Tarf), the tourism infrastructure in the region is not consistent. The structures receptions and hotel infrastructure is inadequate, which presents imbalances on several scales. Most of the hotel facilities are of the type popular class, or poor attendance. They are concentrated in the coastal strip of the municipality of El Kala; the total number of 12 hotels, including 03 hotels is classified and is distinguished by the quality of their services. These hotels are divided into two categories: Spa hotels with a number of 08 and an accommodation capacity of 757 beds; and urban hotels in number 05 and a capacity of 268 beds. Two other hotels should be functional soon; they are located in Cape Bon and remain the best, especially as development work from the beach adjoining it.

Given that demand far exceeds supply, the reception capacity is insufficient at hotels and other structures (camping, camp rudimentary type of paintings ...), another type of accommodation in the private, as informal activity. Tourists have turned to other forms of accommodation and approaching private hosts who offer their premises, apartments, villas for rent.

The offer of tourism in the protected area is also reflected in the existence of a Brabtia zoological park, which covers an area of thirty hectares. This space includes a diversity of fauna and animals of all species can't claim an international rank. This park is considered one of the most visited protected areas of this equipment consists of several relaxation areas, leisure and rest and equipped with street furniture being partially damaged. Lately, this zoo has undergone rehabilitation, to help develop and improve the tourism offer in the



park and meet the needs of the local population and visitors. This new infrastructure includes wild animals brought from Africa and Asia. It is built on the site of the old animal park that housed several species of wildlife in the national park of El Kala, but remained abandoned for several years.

The park also was equipped with a terrain specially designed for the practice of equestrian sports, with cafeteria, restaurants, exhibition stands and sale of handicrafts.

A large number of visitors, including families of this region and neighboring towns move, daily, during weekends and school holidays to this place of curiosity, leisure and entertainment to contemplate and discover the different wild animal species in the park.

Within this space, there is an amusement park Brabtia Land which is spread over an area of 4 hectares with a capacity of 4,000 people. It is equipped with play areas, rides, Kiosk, cafeterias, restaurants and other useful spaces, plus an extension for a tourist village with 100 Bungalows.

According to the Employment and Tourism Directorate, jobs in the tourism sector to the natural park are seasonal. These activities are mainly commercial and service during the summer season, on the beaches, or in tourism-related activities: transport, entertainment and recreation, sale of handicrafts mostly informal. The revenue generated by this activity is concentrated at the accommodation, catering, trade in general, including handicrafts.

With the new tourism strategy in Algeria, based primarily on the development of regions and territories, including natural areas and protected areas, which is the space of the future for the promotion of various forms of tourism, the wilaya El Tarf, has lately experienced a dynamic tourism development, where significant projects proposed. The elaboration of the Scheme tourism development director (SDAT), considered the main project for the recovery and development of the sector. This tool will facilitate a homogeneous development of all tourism infrastructure planned with a rational use of space. And the development of tourism expansion zones (ZET), to interest and attract potential investors.

From this analysis, tourism remains in its informal majority, and tends to push hard at various levels: urban planning, water pollution, ecosystems (dunes, flora and fauna) ... those consequences are felt with negative effects protection of the environment that is opposed to the principles of sustainable development.

In addition, the current supply of public use activities and infrastructure is unevenly distributed in the Park, mostly located along the coastline, which supports the highest levels of environmental impacts, while the interior is yet to develop, particularly south of the park, with a great ecotourism potential. It also appears that other tourist attractions of the region are not well developed. The natural environment, wildlife and explore the historical sites of

the region does not have a significant attraction and this is largely due to lack of information and publicity; in addition to the condition of poor conservation of existing ones. However, all its tourist potential can not be exploited without adequate reception facilities, and promotion and information strategy for the site.

In light of the analysis of the evolution of tourism in the region of El Kala and the strengths and constraints, the solution for the protection and exploitation of existing resources and their sustainability for future generations can be in the context of sustainable development through the establishment of advocacy, partnership and consultation involving (decision makers, operators, local communities, ONG ....) to develop the most appropriate strategy, which ensures firstly setting the effective protection of the protected area and secondly to promote various types of tourism (the sea Ballad, sea sports, tourism hiking, tourism Hydrotherapy, ecological tourism, scientific tourism, tourism of discovery and relaxation, cultural tourism and events ...) which will be diversified and sustainable, based on the many potentialities in the region.

#### **Summary:**

The National Park EL KALA is among the territories the greatest tourist potential in Algeria. Since its creation in 1983, the Park is working on the recovery of this space, with a desire to reconcile preservation of natural and cultural heritage and the maintenance of human activities and local cultures. The park has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting development of tourism on its territory despite its low dynamic in comparison with its undeniable potential that has.

The analysis of the most remarkable elements of the protected area or to their fragile nature, unique, or vulnerable to their rarity and symbolic value, has given us a better readability of the different potential offered by these areas in terms of tourism and the tourism reality that exists and prospects of its development.

Despite its tourist attractions, the protected area is exposed to damage and loss due to several weaknesses and threats. Knowledge of these factors is necessary to establish the area of conservation obligations protected as potentially at risk deposit and an opportunity to develop to promote various forms of tourism may constitute poles of attraction and create economic benefits for the region.

These forms of tourism to consider in the protected area should be based on sustainable development, respectful of the quality of sites, the balance of economic, social and leisure activities, limiting the impacts of tourism activities on the middle of the park, with awareness of different stakeholders in the protection and preservation of nature, respect for society, traditions and cultures. It is an educational approach must be systematic.

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