

The contribution of cultural landscapes in the building and the delimitation of territories. Case of cultural parks in Algeria

Sofiane Messaoudi

Assistant Lecturer
Department of Architecture, University of Bejaia, Algeria.
messaoudi.univ.bejaia@gmail.com

Youcef Chennaoui

Professor, Research Director
LVAP Laboratory, Ecole Polytechnique d'architecture et d'urbanisme, Alger, Algeria.

Nadia Messaci

Professor
Directress of the International Algerian School of Paris, France.

Abstract

Cultural landscapes have acquired today unprecedented importance, especially for their decisive role in the building of territories. The material and immaterial cultural and natural attributes are so privileged, and that in view of the various civilizational challenges that societies face currently. This interest in cultural landscapes is noticeable in Algeria through the creation of cultural parks. Their peculiarity lies in the fact that they highlight a new way of delimiting, oriented more toward cultural values which are inseparable from their natural environment. This approach combines so several categories of heritage to ensure complementarity and consistency to stakeholders. Five cultural parks currently exist in Algeria, they occupy considerable areas and are characterized by the presence of a rich cultural heritage, ancestral and often very well preserved, consisting of traces of various ancient or prehistoric civilizations, oral expressions, songs, customs and traditional crafts. This communication aims to make a contribution on the understanding of the creative process of cultural parks in Algeria and measure the role of cultural landscapes in their delimitation.

Keywords: *Cultural landscapes, Building of territories, Algeria, cultural parks, delimitation of the territory*

Today, more and more tools of heritage protection and management are created, they include territories constantly larger and heritage resources even more diversified, specially immaterial (Argounes, 2007). The notion of cultural park is no exception to this reality

because it is strongly in line with this vision that tends to generalize. This way of making territories combines so several categories of heritage in order to ensure complementarity and consistency to stakeholders. This Communication aims to contribute to the understanding of the creative process of cultural parks in Algeria, and verify the role of cultural landscapes in their delimitation. This, by the analysis of the law 98-04 on the protection of cultural heritage, which governs, and by the proposal of a methodological process for their delimitation. Our results are presented according to a structure that has three chapters.

Chapter 1: Cultural landscapes in Algeria

Algeria is the largest country in Africa with an area of 2.381.741 km²; most of which is occupied by the Sahara to the south. It also has other very diverse reliefs in the North, such as steppes, uplands, plains and a coastline of about 1200 km. It has a rich cultural and natural heritage, evidenced by the legacy of the many civilizations that succeeded; Numidian, Phoenician, Roman, Muslim and others; as well as the variety of its biodiversity and its natural environments that recover several bioclimatic zones. Cultural landscapes vary then from a region to another, from north to south, from east to west, depending on the relief formations, climate, vegetation cover and the culture of the people who occupy them.



Figure 1: City of Ghardaïa in the northern part of the Sahara (Yann, A.B, 2016)



Figure 2: The royal tomb Mauritanian to the north (Yann, A.B, 2016)



Figure 3: Cultural landscape of Ghoufi (ANDT, 2016)



Figure 4: A village in Kabylie in northern of Algeria
(Yann, A.B, 2016)



Figure 5: The oasis of Timimoun in the southwest
(Yann, A.B, 2016)

Chapter 2: Cultural parks in Algeria

The notion of cultural park is not easily defined today because it consists of two words including two major categories of properties, namely:

- Park: which generally represents a delimited space for the protection of fauna, flora and natural environments (Eg: national park, maritime park,...) (Larousse, 2006)
- And Cultural: with its tangible and intangible dimensions.

The definition of this concept was discussed at the First World Conference on Cultural Parks, organized by the National Park Service of the United States at Mesa Verde, between 16 and 21 September 1984 (Cultural survival, 2011). The interest of this conference was focused more towards the recognition and protection of indigenous peoples, well integrated in their natural environment in order to preserve their various ancestral activities and traditions. However, UNESCO had taken position in 1972, with the adoption of the Paris Convention, recognizing the mixed World Heritage which combines between production of man and nature.

Another definition, of the US law, which defines "cultural park" as "a definable area which is distinguished by historic resources and land related to such resources and which constitutes an interpretive, educational, and recreational resource for the public at large" (Us legal definition, 2011)

Currently, the denomination Cultural Park is not very used in the world, except the urban cultural parks with artistic character, which are usually found in urban areas; or national parks with cultural character; or natural and regional parks, existing more in France, which include also the economic development of these territories. They have even inspired Norway, which created its first natural and cultural park in 2007.

We can finally say that the term 'cultural park' can be considered as any form of territory encompassing within its limits remarkable natural and cultural resources which are strongly

linked, expressing common values that can be shared and recognized by the people that occupy it.

Examples of cultural parks in Algeria

Today, Algeria has five cultural parks; they occupy considerable areas and are managed by the Ministry of Culture. They are characterized by the presence of a rich natural heritage, but also cultural, often ancestral and very well preserved, consisting of various oral expressions, songs, customs and traditional crafts. The first park created is the Tassili n'Ajjer in 1972 with an area of 138.000 km², located southeast; it contains exceptional prehistoric rock art among the most important in the world, nearly 15,000 drawings and engravings, that is why it was listed as a World Heritage by UNESCO in 1982 as a mixed property (World Heritage List, 2016).

A second park was created in 1987 to the south, the Ahaggar, with an area of 633.887Km². Three other parks will be created later in 2008:

The park of Atlas Saharien, with an area of 63.930 Km².

The park of Touat- Gourara-Tidikelt, with an area of 38.740 Km².

And the park of Tindouf with 168.000 Km².

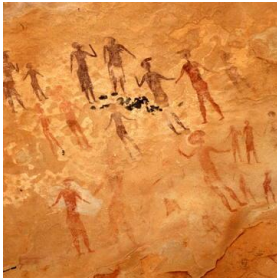


Figure 6: Cave art of Tassili N'ajjer (World heritage list, 2016)



Figure 7: Landscapes of Tassili N'ajjer (Yann, A.B, 2016)

Chapter 3: Elements for understanding the creative process of cultural parks in Algeria

In Algeria, the cultural parks are created according to the law 98-04, which is the principal law on cultural heritage protection. This new instrument of heritage management, which was proposed by the economic and social national council (Kabouche, 2011), is added to

the several other already existing. Its peculiarity lies in the fact that it puts forward a new way of delimiting a territory, more oriented towards cultural and natural values shared by the population occupying it.

Given the law 98-04, the creation and delimitation of the cultural park imperatively requires the involvement of several actors, represented by the ministries of culture, spatial planning, forests, local communities and environment (Law 98-04, art 39). It also has a general plan of development that must be included in the development plans and town planning; it replaces also the zoning plans for the concerned area (Law 98-04, art 40). This reflects the complexity that can have this operation in its effective application; given the multiple resources potentially contained in a territory, but also the difficulty of delimiting its spatial extent.

This raises two questions: what are the elements that justify the creation of cultural parks and how to delimit them?

To solve it, it is essential that we understand the definition of this concept which is must for any creative project. So they are "spaces characterized by the predominance and importance of cultural properties situated therein and that are inseparable from their natural environment" (Law 98-04, art 38). This means that the creative action is justified primarily by the significant presence, in an area, of remarkable cultural attributes, material and immaterial, like urban or rural ensembles with high heritage value, historical sites and monuments, oral expressions, knowledge and traditions which are strongly linked to their natural environment.

This inseparable link is important, insofar as it expresses the veritable meaning of cultural properties (Montillet, 2000); they can't have the same value and the same evocation without their multiple contexts, including natural.

The definition provided by this law tells us about the foundations of the creation of cultural parks; only, it does not provide sufficient details about the process and the criteria for their delimitation; these points had to be clarified and supplemented by other application regulations that, to date, have not been developed.

Our methodological approach for delimiting cultural parks

Faced with this insufficiency, and to provide for the creation of new cultural parks, we proposed a methodological delimitation process for the Algerian case. It is based on a comparative analysis of examples from two categories of protected areas, which are closest to our concept. It concerns national parks (example of Calanques national park in France and Gouraya National Park in Algeria) and regional natural parks, listed also as protected

landscape (Ramade, 2008) (example of RNP Doubs, France and Switzerland). This process includes three steps:

1. Identify in area study some zones which are characterized by the predominance and the concentration of cultural properties, material and immaterial, expressing common values shared by the people of this territory.

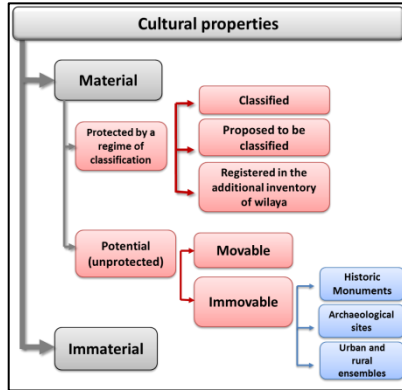


Figure 8: Categories of cultural properties to be identified (Messaoudi, 2012)

2. In second, make maps of all other attributes (forest heritage, landscapes, wildlife, wetlands, agricultural zones, tourism potential areas, littoral and relief) (Benoît, Deffontaines, Lardon, 2006), identified and evaluated in advance, and proceed to their superposition to appreciate their order and degree of presence.

The superposition of the resulting maps should generate a zone of converging interests (Franconie, 1993) which will be delimited exactly following this basic rule: Take the strongest and the nearest limits to the cultural attributes.

The designation of the strongest limits is done in rapport to three points:

- Firstly, from limits convenience accesses (roads)
- Then, from landscapes limits
- And finally from limits of administrative division.

In the other hand, the designation of "nearest limits" is rather determined by reference to his physical rapprochement of cultural attributes, in term of distances.

This means that during the final delimitation, it will issue to designate the strongest limits between all the existing attributes, then, select those nearest to cultural properties. The role of cultural landscapes is, in this case, determinant in the final delimitation of cultural parks.

3. The last phase is the definition of delimitation criteria that contributed to the creation of the proposed cultural park; then, represent its final limits, with precision, on a synthesis map.

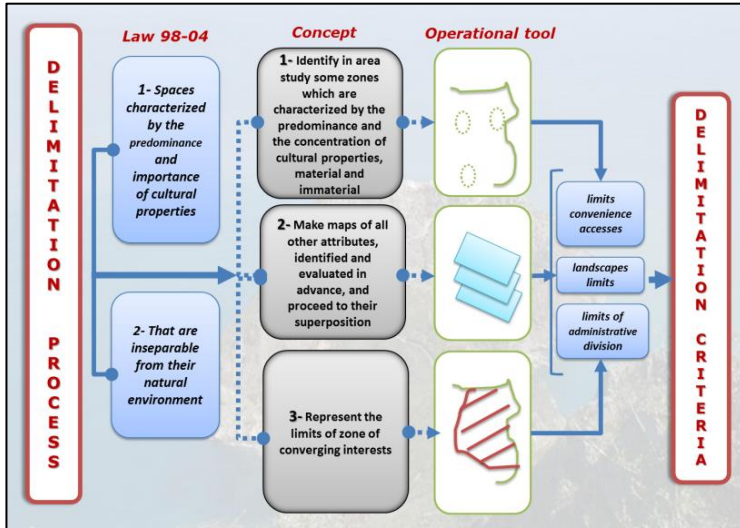


Figure 9: Delimitation process of cultural parks (Messaoudi, 2012)

The criteria for delimitation

The selected criteria can be divided into four categories (Messaoudi, 2012):

1. Natural Attributes

- Physical environments:

Geomorphological consistency: the physical criterion is very important and often decisive in the final delimitation of the cultural park. Future limits must have a geomorphological consistency, from the point of view of major formations of relief (such as valleys, lowland,...) and of their principal characteristics (altitude, slope, ...)

- Hydrography, Vegetation, Wildlife:

Environmental consistency: this criterion means that environmental attributes must have certain homogeneity in relation to the hydrographic network, vegetation cover and wildlife. These three factors should form a coherent ensemble.

2. Cultural attributes

- Cultural sites and properties:

Concentration of cultural resources: essential criterion in the creation and delimitation of cultural parks, through the identification and analysis of areas where are concentrated remarkable cultural properties, especially material. This criterion actually defines the central part of the park.

- Intangible Heritage:

Sense of belonging: it is the feeling expressed by the citizens or by the officials of municipalities that make up the study area. The purpose of this criterion is to measure attachment and identification of the population towards an immaterial aspect (legend, major event, language, traditions,...)

3. Landscapes

- Landscape consistency: that is to say that the proposed cultural park must have homogeneity of views of landscapes during the final delimitation, including units and sub units landscapes. Also, it can integrate other landscape units of various types, but the essential is that the ensemble must be coherent.

4. Tourism Potentials

- Importance and accessibility to tourist resources: this criterion corresponds mainly to interest tourist areas already identified in the territory.

These criteria concern the terrestrial environment; but if the cultural park includes a maritime part, other criteria may be added. We cite as an example: the criterion breaking of slope of the continental shelf (used for Gouraya National Park in Algeria which corresponds to the 100 m isobath). This limit may be extended, in case there would be a remarkable presence of a natural or cultural heritage (Islands, presence of interest marine flora and fauna, presence of wrecks or traces of ancient remains,...).

AS A CONCLUSION: What contribution of cultural landscapes in the delimitation of cultural parks?

Cultural landscapes are extremely important in delimiting cultural parks, especially if there is presence of areas with high concentrations of population. In southern Algeria, the natural element is the most dominant, because there are very large desert expanses with little human presence. In this case, it's the administrative and geomorphological criteria (physical limitations mainly related to the components of relief) that are most determinants.

However, more one goes to the north, where the concentration of people and cultural attributes is important, the association of cultural and natural heritage, and therefore of cultural landscapes, becomes stronger. Like the traditional villages in the region of Kabylie in north of Algeria which are well integrated to the mountains of Djurdjura and Babors that contain them. In this case, it's the natural heritage that will be associated with cultural heritage and not the inverse.

The study that we conducted on the concept of cultural park allowed us to really measure the degree of difficulty and complexity in making a territory including several actors and various types of resources. The methodological process that we have proposed for their creation and delimitation aspires to rediscover and enhance the sense of belonging of populations in their territory, by redefining new limits, which would not be summarized to simple administrative divisions, but by the expression of a desire to share common values, transported initially by the cultural references of this territory. Then, we can talk about Algerian model; which could constitute, in the current context, a strong and lasting foundation for any development and enhancement of territories.

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