

## **Local Governance and Tourism Development: An Approach to Achieving Sustainable Development in Algeria**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to explore the role of local communities in Algeria in promoting sustainable local development through the activation of tourism resources within the framework of local governance, which ensures participation, transparency, and accountability in decision-making. Tourism is considered one of the main pillars of local development in modern economies, as it contributes to diversifying financial resources, enhancing the capacity of local communities to support developmental projects, and developing the economic and social infrastructure at the local level.

The study focuses on the strategies and mechanisms adopted by local communities to support active tourism institutions, whether through direct funding or by providing administrative and fiscal facilitation, enabling the enhancement of tourism resources and increasing the financial capacities of local communities. Conversely, these institutions constitute an important financial source that allows local communities to contribute more effectively to sustainable development and achieve a tangible impact on the local society.

The study also provides practical recommendations aimed at improving the efficiency of tourism resource management, strengthening local strategies to ensure sustainable development, and achieving a balanced sustainability between economic, social, and environmental dimensions.

**Keywords:** Local communities and governance, sustainable local development, tourism resources, economic and social sustainability

**JEL Classification:** H70, O18, L83, Q01

### **Introduction**

Emerging economies face significant challenges in achieving sustainable economic and social development, making local communities a central actor in driving development at local and national levels. These communities are in direct contact with the needs of the local population, which requires them to adopt rational and effective policies to manage resources, stimulate investment, and maximize the utilization of available potentials to achieve comprehensive and integrated development.

In Algeria, tourism resources represent one of the most important means of supporting local development due to their capacity to diversify revenue sources and strengthen the financial capabilities of local communities, allowing the funding of multiple development projects that contribute to the development of economic and social infrastructure. Optimal utilization of these resources, however, requires an effective local governance framework that ensures transparency, accountability, and community participation in decision-making and enhances the capacity of local institutions to plan and implement efficiently.

The main research question of this study emerges:

How can local communities in Algeria activate tourism resources within the framework of local governance to promote sustainable local development and ensure an effective balance between economic, social, and environmental dimensions?

To fully address this study, the following axes will be explored:

1. Local communities in Algeria and their role in tourism development.
2. Determinants and mechanisms of local development in Algeria.
3. The role of tourism resources in enhancing local development in Algeria.

### **Axis One: Local Communities in Algeria and Their Role in Tourism Development**

Local communities are the fundamental building blocks of any local political system, with their importance varying in practice from one country to another, depending on the legislation and

laws that govern them, as well as the powers granted to them. Before delving into the concept of local communities, it should be noted that their designations differ among countries based on the degree of reliance and implementation methods. In some countries, they are referred to as “local administration” to distinguish them from the central administration, as their activity is limited to local affairs. In other countries, the term “local governance” is used, reflecting the role of these bodies in effectively managing local community affairs.

In this study, the term “local communities” will be used, in line with prevailing legal texts in Algeria, which reflect this classification within the framework of “local governance.” This governance forms the basis for organizing local tourism development, as effective local governance ensures the strategic allocation of tourism resources to achieve sustainable development in Algeria. Thus, the central role of local communities in implementing tourism policies that support sustainable local development can be understood, contributing to enhancing the economic and social capacity of these regions.

### **First: Definition of Local Communities**

Local communities are public local bodies entrusted with the task of managing local facilities and developing the local community, aiming to elevate the administrative and executive level of local institutions and providing them the opportunity to make decisions and set policies related to local facilities and services. (Hassan, 1992)

They are also defined as elected bodies from the members of the local unit, either elected fully or partially, or locally selected by the central administration to manage all or part of local facilities and affairs. They have legal personality, independent financial liability, local divisions, and are subject to oversight by the central authority. (Al-Jundi, 1987)

Local communities are also defined as geographically divided units of the state’s territory, being independent bodies in provinces, cities, and villages, managing the affairs of these units appropriately and enjoying legal personality and financial independence. (Al-Sheikhli, 2001)

In Algeria, they are referred to as municipalities and wilayas. The municipality is the basic territorial community of the state, enjoying legal personality and independent financial liability, established under law. (People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria, 2011) The wilaya is the state’s territorial community, enjoying legal personality and independent financial liability, serving as a decentralized administrative unit and providing a space for implementing solidarity and consultative public policies between territorial communities and the state, contributing to

economic, social, and cultural development, environmental protection, and improving citizens' living standards. (People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, 2012)

The application of the territorial community system aims to achieve several objectives (Freijat, 2016):

- Achieve democracy and popular participation in governance.
- Promote economic, social, and political development at the regional level.
- Distribute responsibilities and burdens between the state and territorial communities.
- Avoid administrative standardization while respecting local specificities.
- Achieve fair distribution of financial burdens among regions.

## **Second: Characteristics of Local Communities**

Local communities are characterized by a set of features, mainly:

1. **Administrative independence:** This results from recognition of the legal personality of local communities, requiring a degree of local autonomy. Administrative independence means establishing bodies with all necessary administrative powers, distributing administrative functions between the central government and independent local authorities, under a supervisory system by the central authorities. (Marghad, 2005)

Advantages of this independence include: (Lamir, 2014)

- Reducing the burden on the central authority due to the number and variety of its functions.
  - Avoiding delays and accelerating decisions related to local interests.
  - Achieving the principle of democracy through citizens' direct participation in managing local affairs.
2. **Financial independence:** Recognition of legal personality requires that the local unit has independent financial liability, distinct from state funds and other local units, enabling self-financing of development projects within its competence and budget. (Ben Dine, 2016)

## **Third: Resources and Competences of Local Communities**

Law No. 11-10 related to municipalities and Law 12-07 related to wilayas similarly confirm that municipalities and wilayas are responsible for managing their own financial resources, which include:

- **Own financial resources:**
  - Resources from taxes and fees (tax revenues and charges).

- Resources from operating and investing local facilities (property income).
- Grants and loans.
- **External financial resources (external funding):**
  - State grants.
  - Local loans.
  - Other resources.

Territorial communities are assigned important developmental roles aimed at meeting local needs by improving living conditions and creating investment-attractive conditions. The municipality's scope includes local development, urban planning, basic infrastructure, social facilities, sanitation, education, health, environment, and economic investments. The wilaya's scope includes agriculture, irrigation, economic facilities, infrastructure, vocational training, social activities, and housing. (People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, 2011)

The Algerian Constitution grants a special status to elected local communities, reinforced by organizational laws granting them powers and competences, ensuring they address local community needs and development. Political pluralism has allowed the emergence of elected local councils, enhancing local dynamism and representing a modernization policy based on utilizing various resources to serve public development goals. (Aaraj, 2011)

## **Axis Two: Determinants and Mechanisms of Local Development in Algeria**

Despite the importance of local development in economic thought, social studies, and government policies, its real value is realized when theoretical and conceptual frameworks are translated into concrete field projects reflecting the practical aspects of developmental decisions, embodying the state's political will to achieve sustainable development and improve local areas. (Ben Dine, 2016, p.16)

### **First: Concept of Local Development**

Local development is defined as the process through which effective cooperation is achieved between citizens' efforts and public authorities (the state) to improve the economic, social, cultural, and civilizational levels of local communities from the perspective of enhancing quality of life in a comprehensive system. (Marghad, 2006, p.7)

It is also defined as a modern concept of social and economic work in specific areas based on social and economic sciences, aiming to create civilizational change in thinking, work, and life through raising local environmental awareness, with participation in planning, preparation, and

implementation by all members of the local environment at all levels, both practically and administratively. (Al-Nabii, 1993, p.23)

In Algeria, it is defined as: “Regional development of areas formed by municipalities and wilayas, potentially within the framework of regional programming, also as local economic development based on productivity, resource renewal, and effective local management, with quality guidance and targeted training plans according to various competencies.” (People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria, 2010, p.106) It encompasses the competences assigned to local communities to carry out tasks at the regional level within legal and regulatory texts and national programs. (Ben Dine, 2016, p.17)

### **Second: Principles of Local Development Policy in Algeria**

Local development policy in Algeria is based on the following principles: (Sharifi, 2008, pp.14-15)

- State intervention, giving the state a leading role in economic and social development nationally and locally as the representative of society and citizens’ will.
- Popular participation through effective involvement in preparing, implementing, monitoring, and guiding programs and plans.
- Reliance on planning to build and implement development programs nationally and locally through centralized planning in the form of centralized programs, regional planning as non-centralized sectoral programs, and municipal development plans.
- Achieving fairness in costs and rights through income distribution and taxation, improving social and cultural living conditions.
- Regional balance, considered a main focus in Algeria’s economic and social development strategy, based on the belief that social progress is achieved only through balanced growth across all parts of society.

### **Third: Role of Local Communities in Enhancing Local Development in Algeria**

Legislation regulating territorial communities in Algeria, from charters and constitutions to municipal and wilaya laws and development plans, emphasizes the economic importance of territorial communities as basic units of the state, including in economic development. The primary goal of local development is to raise and improve citizens’ living standards, which requires development prospects at the local level, forming a basis for local economic development dynamics, focusing on several areas, primarily supporting local investment, developing agricultural activity, and exploiting tourism resources. (Salawi, 2011, p.22)

### **A- Supporting Local Investment**

Direct investment is a form of local investment aimed at wealth accumulation and creating more employment opportunities. This type of investment includes:

- Investment by local administration, such as financial investment in the stock market, partnerships with public or private operators in specific projects, establishing or contributing to companies.
- Private local investment by economic actors, local or foreign, which should be encouraged by creating a favorable investment climate. Governments support private local investment through specialized bodies.

### **B- Developing the Agricultural Sector**

Many countries adopt strategies to increase agricultural productivity in local communities and support sector development due to its importance in addressing poverty and food insecurity. Agriculture serves as a foundation to promote economic and social development and reduce poverty and malnutrition rates. (Rahmani & Ousini, 2002, p.9)

### **C- Exploiting Tourism Resources:**

Tourism plays an important role as it provides local administrations with a source of funding for various development projects, depending on the tourist sites these areas possess, which attract domestic and international tourists, as well as the extent of individuals' participation and their effective contribution to achieving this goal. Therefore, it is necessary to cultivate a tourism culture among individuals, to preserve tourist sites, and to serve tourists, all in service of various development interests. (Slawi, 2011, p. 23)

## **Fourth – Development Programs in Algeria Since 2000**

After Algeria demonstrated an acceptable record in implementing the Stabilization and Structural Adjustment Program with the support of international financial institutions and made some progress in applying economic reforms, it returned to the path of development and public spending.

### **A. Economic Recovery Support Program (2001–2004):**

An initial budget of 525 billion DZD was allocated, later reaching a final budget of approximately 1,216 billion DZD after adding new projects and evaluating most previously programmed projects. The program focused on activities supporting institutions, productive agricultural activities, enhancing public facilities in irrigation, transport, and basic

infrastructure, improving living conditions, local development, and human resources development. (Moukani, 2014, p. 115)

### **B. Complementary Growth Support Program (2005–2009):**

The initial financial allocations were estimated at 8,705 billion DZD (114 billion USD), including allocations from the previous program (1,216 billion DZD), plus additional programs, bringing the total budget by the end of 2009 to 9,680 billion DZD (130 billion USD). (Allam, 2015, p. 6)

### **C. Five-Year Development Program (2010–2014):**

This program falls within the dynamics of national reconstruction initiated ten years earlier with the Economic Recovery Support Program launched in 2001 according to the resources available at the time. The public investment program for 2010–2014 required expenditures of 21,214 billion DZD (286 billion USD), covering two components:

- Completion of major ongoing projects, especially in railway, roads, and water sectors, with a budget of 9,700 billion DZD (130 billion USD).
- Launching new projects with a budget of 11,435 billion DZD (approximately 156 billion USD). (Daden & Bentahine, 2012, p. 183)

### **D. Economic Growth Consolidation Program (2015–2019):**

A budget of 22,100 billion DZD (280 billion USD) was allocated to finance various development projects under the Growth Consolidation Program. The government required these investments to reflect on citizens' purchasing power and instructed ministers to clean up their programs while the Ministry of Finance prepared a report assessing the impact of loans on revenues and employment. The Accounting Council was tasked with closely monitoring the spending of these funds to prevent corruption.

The main objectives of these substantial financial allocations were:

- Stimulating demand to mitigate the effects of contractionary policies and achieve economic recovery and growth support.
- Reducing unemployment rates and supporting new job-creating activities.
- Combating poverty and related issues, achieving social justice, and improving social conditions.
- Achieving regional balance, local and regional development, and improving public services.



Analysis of the results achieved under the economic recovery policy shows modest outcomes compared to the resources used, as the hydrocarbons sector remains a major component of GDP, and growth outside this sector remains weak despite relative improvement, falling short of desired expectations. (Bournane, 2015, p. 225)

### **Third Axis: The Role of Tourist Resources in Promoting Local Development in Algeria**

Algeria possesses diverse tourism potentials and natural beauty, including mineral water centers with various therapeutic, bathing, or relaxation properties. Therefore, these resources must be utilized to achieve sustainable local development and gradually reduce dependency on the oil sector, which is always subject to price fluctuations.

#### **First – Relationship Between Local Development and Tourism Development**

Tourism development refers to providing facilities and services to meet tourists' needs and desires and also encompasses certain tourism impacts, such as creating new jobs and new income.

Tourism development is a contemporary issue for many countries, aiming to increase real individual income and thus constitutes one of the main sources of national income. It also involves comprehensive civilizational development of natural, human, and material resources, making tourism development a means of economic development (Ben Farj, 2009, p. 96). Tourism activities affect citizens' living standards and cultural levels by raising living standards, improving lifestyles, and providing recreational and cultural facilities, with positive effects in learning about other cultures (Meziani, 2009, p. 61). Therefore, local tourism development cannot be understood in isolation from overall tourism development. (Ben Farj, 2009, p. 96)

The tourism sector is an additional resource if properly utilized, contributing to financing local communities and economically activating them through job creation. The success of the tourism sector depends on the awareness of society members and local officials in protecting tourism assets. Municipalities are responsible for preserving natural sites and monuments due to their historical and aesthetic value and take all measures to expand tourism capacity and encourage stakeholders to exploit it. Tourism development goals are usually defined in the initial stages of planning, including:

- Improving the balance of payments.
- Achieving regional development, especially creating new jobs in rural areas.
- Providing infrastructure services.

- Increasing income levels.
- Increasing state tax revenues.
- Providing new job opportunities.
- Offering recreational and leisure facilities for local populations.
- Protecting and satisfying social needs of individuals and local communities.

### **Second – Algeria’s Tourism Master Plan Project**

Algeria adopted a tourism development strategy up to 2025, based on the 2025 Tourism Master Plan, which is part of the National Spatial Planning Plan 2025. It is among the most important laws enacted after Law 03-01, serving as the strategic framework for tourism policy in Algeria. It aims to provide a vision for short, medium, and long-term tourism development (2009–2015–2025), improve Algeria’s tourism image abroad, and attract investments for marketing the tourism product (Zghaib & Mirzaq, 2012, p. 9). Algeria also reformed its system for training tourism professionals with international organizations, particularly the World Tourism Organization, focusing on training all sector actors: specialists, experts, hotel staff, and tourist guides.

The 2025 Tourism Master Plan identifies five vital aspects for tourism development: (Winan, n.d., p. 29)

- Algeria’s tourism destination plan.
- Tourism excellence poles.
- Tourism “quality” plan.
- Public-private partnership plan.
- Establishing a financial policy for the tourism sector to facilitate access to funds for various activities.

Tourism development has thus become a national priority and a strategic choice, considered both a driver and a tool for growth. National awareness of tourism as a vehicle for economic and social development requires the development of a strategic framework and vision for 2030, supporting the objectives outlined in this plan.

### **Third – The Role of Tourism in Local Development in Algeria**

Tourism development is an integral part of local development, as there is a direct relationship between tourism development and local development. Developing tourism destinations and complementary services locally is part of the general strategy adopted by decentralized local

authorities, including the Tourism Directorate and local communities, to achieve regional development.

The tourism sector offers multiple advantages, including tourism revenue through residence tax, profit tax, and professional activity tax, which serve as financing mechanisms for local budgets to reinvest in local development through direct and indirect job creation. Tourism development involves interconnected processes with multiple elements working together to optimally utilize tourism resources by providing essential tourism services such as hotels, travel agencies, parks, and mineral baths. (Lkhedari & Bounour, 2013, p. 15)

### **A – Tourism’s Role in Employment**

One of the main features of the tourism sector is its contribution to creating permanent or seasonal jobs, particularly in tourism institutions such as hotels, travel agencies, and tourist guides. Indirect jobs also emerge in sectors like agriculture, food industry, handicrafts, and construction due to tourism.

Tourism relies primarily on labor, contributing to reducing unemployment. For example, luxury hotels require two employees per room; any new hotel room creates a new job. Vehicles used in transportation require at least two operators, and travel agencies and restaurants also create employment. Restaurants, in particular, require skilled labor like cooks and waitstaff.

Handicrafts and hobbies also play an important role in tourism, generating significant income through the sale of crafts and souvenirs, and attracting tourists while creating new job opportunities. (Bouamoucha, 2012, p. 37)

### **B – Role of Tourism Excellence Poles in Supporting Local Development**

A tourism pole is a cluster of tourism villages in a specific geographical area equipped with accommodation, entertainment, and tourism activities in cooperation with regional development projects, focusing on a primary theme (desert tourism, leisure tourism, health and therapeutic tourism). These poles are located in:

- Northeastern excellence pole: Annaba, El Tarf, Skikda, Guelma, Souk Ahras, Tebessa.
- North-central excellence pole: Algiers, Tipaza, Boumerdes, Blida, Chlef, Djelfa, Médéa, Bouira, Tizi Ouzou, Béjaïa.
- Northwestern excellence pole: Mostaganem, Oran, Aïn Témouchent, Tlemcen, Mascara, Sidi Bel Abbès, Relizane.
- Southeastern excellence pole: Oases, Ghardaia, Biskra, El Oued, El Meniaa.
- Southwestern excellence pole: Touat, Guerara, Ksour Roads, Adrar, Timimoun, Béchar.

- Greater Southern excellence pole: Tassili, In Guezzam, Illizi, Djanet.
- Greater Southern excellence pole: Hoggar and Tamanrasset.

Defining excellence poles allows broad regional tourism growth, serving as focal points and catalysts for tourism development in programmed areas, referencing the regional spatial planning plan. The objective of establishing these seven poles is to stimulate tourism spread across the national territory. (Bouamoucha, 2012, p. 138)

### **C – Role of Tourism Taxation in Local Development**

Taxes are compulsory payments related to specific activities. A tax is defined as a monetary obligation imposed by the state or its representatives on individuals' funds, irrevocably and without compensation, used to cover public expenditures (Baha & Mansour, 2016, p. 256). Tax revenue and fees are important sources for local communities as they constitute a primary funding source, consisting of direct and indirect taxes (Ben Amara, 2010, p. 2).

In tourism, institutions such as agencies and hotels contribute to two types of taxes, shared by municipalities, wilayas, and the local communities' solidarity and guarantee fund, collected by the tax directorate:

#### **1. Professional Activity Tax:**

A direct tax established by the 1996 Finance Law, replacing the industrial and commercial activity tax and non-commercial activity tax (Baha & Mansour, 2016, p. 257). It applies to any activity within the municipality, whether industrial, commercial, or non-commercial (People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, 2015, p. 105). The rate is 2% under Article 222 of the 2015 Tax Law, distributed as follows: 0.59% to the wilaya, 1.3% to the municipality, and 0.11% to the local communities' joint fund.

#### **2. Value-Added Tax (VAT):**

Partially allocated to local communities, applied to the sale of real estate and services. Rates were amended by the 2017 Finance Law to 17% standard and 7% reduced (People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, 2016, p. 13). VAT represents 80% of state tax revenues, with the remaining 20% distributed 10% to municipalities and 10% to the joint fund. For imports, 85% goes to the state budget and 15% to the joint fund. Events such as sports, cultural, or artistic activities organized under national or international cooperation are exempt, encouraging foreign visitors and increasing tourism revenue, benefiting local communities.

#### **3. Single Fixed Tax:**

Article 282 bis of the 2007 Finance Law established a fixed tax replacing income tax, covering gross income tax, VAT, and professional activity tax, distributed as: 50% state, 40% municipality, 5% wilaya, 5% joint fund (People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, 2006, p. 4). Later amended to: 49% state, 0.24% Chamber of Commerce and Traditional Industries, 0.01% National Chamber of Traditional Industry, 40.25% municipality, 5% wilaya, 5% joint fund (People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, 2014, p. 6).

Applicable to individuals conducting commercial, industrial, or craft activities with annual revenue not exceeding 30 million DZD (Finance Law, 2015), this tax is an important local resource, helping cover deficits and contribute to local and national development. Craftsmen and youth support programs are exempt for six years in areas targeted for development. (People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, 2017, p. 67)

#### 4. **Residence Tax:**

Tourism institutions, especially hotels, pay a residence tax imposed by local communities to fund their budgets, cover deficits, and support local development. Established under Law 02-97 (Finance Law 1998), the tax is per person per day of stay, ranging from 50 to 60 DZD, up to 100 DZD per family. For hotels with three stars or more, the rates per person per day are: 200 DZD for three stars, 400 DZD for four stars, 600 DZD for five stars. Exemptions apply to those covered by social security funds. Collection is done by room lessors, hotel owners, and proprietors of facilities housing spa or mineral water tourists, paid under their responsibility to the municipal treasury. (People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, 2008, p. 10)

### **Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that sustainable tourism development constitutes a fundamental strategic option for achieving local economic revival in Algeria. With the rapid and growing expansion of the tourism industry, the importance of investing available tourism resources becomes evident to ensure balanced and sustainable development across various regions, particularly those with untapped tourism potential. Accordingly, achieving this goal requires a set of decisive measures that local authorities must adopt:

- **Optimal utilization of tourism resources:** Local authorities should adopt effective strategies to exploit the tourism resources at their disposal, contributing to balanced regional development and improving living standards in less-developed areas.

- **Increasing tourism awareness:** It is essential to intensify efforts to raise citizens' awareness of the importance of tourism and its role in promoting economic, social, and cultural development at the local level. This requires educating and informing local communities to ensure the sustainability of the tourism sector.
- **Developing tourism infrastructure:** Local authorities must work on improving and developing tourism infrastructure, especially in areas with significant tourism potential, such as building hotels and recreational facilities. This infrastructure plays a pivotal role in creating new job opportunities, reducing unemployment, and enhancing the living standards of local residents.

In this context, the importance of tourism in enhancing the financial autonomy of local authorities and funding sustainable development projects becomes evident. However, much work remains to be done, both in terms of improving coordination among relevant stakeholders and providing training and capacity building for local personnel in the tourism sector. Local governance must also be improved through the application of transparency and accountability principles, ensuring the sustainability of tourism projects and positive interaction with all local actors.

This research highlights the urgent need to establish integrated strategies for tourism development that encompass all economic, social, and environmental dimensions. In doing so, local authorities contribute to achieving sustainable development that balances the interests of the environment, society, and the economy.

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