

# From national park to cultural park an Algerian experience

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**Abstract:** The status of National park was adopted in Algeria in 1921, during French colonisation, within the framework of the forestry law in force. It was renewed as is, after 1962 by independent Algeria and placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture, in its general forestry directorate. In 1983, it was redefined in the first national law on the environment, then, from 2011, in that of protected areas, within the framework of sustainable development. All Algerian national parks are created under the forestry regime and agricultural administration, with the exception of a single case where they are attached to the cultural sector: that of Tassili and Ahaggar, both located in the extreme south of the Sahara, including the Tuareg customary domain of Kel Ajjer and Kel Ahaggar. A particular case, linked to the process of administrative construction of the Saharan space. It is following the adoption of paradigm of sustainable development and a new law on the protection of cultural heritage, that this particularism has disappeared, with the introduction of a new legal category of protection, called “*parc culturel*”, based on the principle of “indissociability” between culture and nature, an innovative notion which has not yet acquired the conceptual force necessary to achieve the required stabilization and social appropriation, hence the difficulty of its translation into operational tools.

**Keywords:** national park; cultural park; indissociability; rock paintings and engravings; Tassili N’Ajjer; Ahaggar

## 1. Introduction

“*Parc culturel*” is an expression which appeared, for the first time in the Algerian legal lexicon, in 1998. It was introduced by law 98-04 on the protection of cultural heritage. The Algerian legislator understood it as a legal category for the protection of geographical territories, whose natural and cultural elements are “indissociables”, and considered simultaneously. Until then, we only knew the status of national parks.

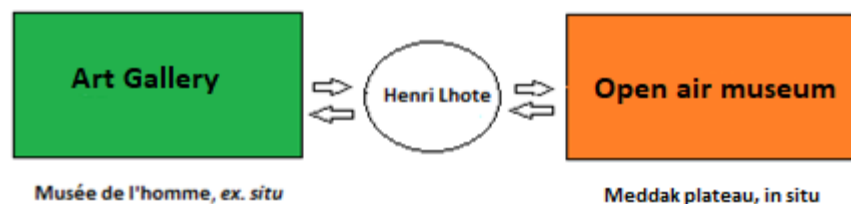
Article 38 of Law 98-04 states: “Sont classés comme parcs culturels les espaces caractérisés par la prédominance et l’importance des biens culturels qui s’y trouvent et qui sont indissociables de leur environnement naturel”. This definition, vague and imprecise, does not refer to any case law register or an agreed glossary, nor even to an implementing regulatory text, which would have supplemented or reinforced it. Its only strength comes from the word “indissociable”, which seems inspired by the idea of nature/culture “interaction”, which governs “cultural landscapes” in UNESCO terminology [1]

The translation from the “*parc national*” mode to that of “*parc culturel*” is not related to a question of coherence or adaptation to the new conceptual, methodological and terminological tools of the landscape approach (cultural landscapes), different from the environmental approach (national parks), but constitutes the result of a long development process, related to a specifically Saharan historiography [2].

In this contribution we have attempted to reconstruct the essential stages of this process, to grasp its relevance and understand its ultimate translation into a cultural park, through a set of political, environmental, social and economic factors, considered from a double perspective: colonial (1830–1962) and national (post 1962).

The subject is treated according to a multidisciplinary approach, starting from a scientific and institutional positioning, which places us in the role of resource person and stakeholder [3]. Methodologically we introduced the subject with a historical reminder of national parks in Algeria and their integration, in 1983, into the first national law on the environment, which established the status of national parks, in its meaning environmental, then, in 2011, that of protected areas, within the framework of sustainable development.

The subject revolves around three essential elements, which have dominated the issue of Saharan protected areas: “la Mission Lhote” [4], “Le roman tassilien” [5] et “le Plateau du Meddak” [6]. These three elements are the cornerstone which served to create, in 1972, a specific area: the “parc national du Tassili”, the format of which was designed from a double perspective: first, under the aspect of an open-air museum, which conserves and presents, “in situ”, a “permanent collection” of rock paintings, then in the form of an art gallery, which exhibits and sells, “ex situ”, reproductions of rock paintings, made by artists (**Figure 1**). We insist here—using metaphor—on the distinction between museum and art gallery, to clearly situate the commercial dimension of the equation, in which H. Lhote functions as “gallery owner”. It is he who prepares the exhibitions, organizes the openings and the sale of products, draws up the communication plans and ensures relations with the public and customers [7].



**Figure 1.** Tassili national park : A double perspective format.

The transition from “parc national” to “parc culturel”, beyond its technical-legal aspects, constitutes a political act of rupture with the dichotomous “museum-gallery” vision of Tassili and the announcement of a new perspective of deconstruction-construction, in the light of the new paradigm of sustainable development.

## 2. National parks in Algeria

### 2.1. Northern Algeria

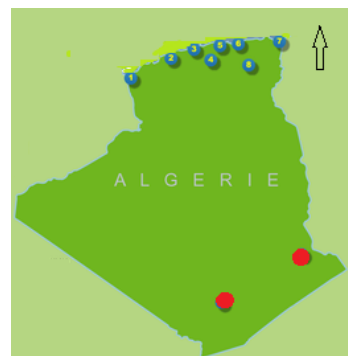
In 1921, colonial France introduced the concept of a “parc national” to Algeria, around forty years before its official recognition in Metropolitan France. National parks were created by a decree taken by the general government of Algeria in 1921 [8], in response to pressure and lobbying, exerted by foresters affiliated with the Tourism Club de France (TFC), within the Association of National Parks of France

and Colonies. They were established, not with the aim of protecting nature, but with the aim of promoting tourist activity.

Thirteen national parks were created between 1923 and 1931 [9]. After independence of Algeria, in 1962, they will be placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture, in its forestry segment, while remaining in the legal status of 1921, allowed by a national law which renews French legislation [10]. In 2008, the geographer and specialist in biodiversity conservation policies, protected areas and political ecology, Estienne Rodary considered that: "... in North Africa particularly, parks are marginal: the 13 Algerian parks are small size and serve mainly as vacation spots" [11].

## 2.2. Sahara

In 1972, the first national park in the Saharan region was created: The "parc national du Tassili" [12], then in 1987, the "parc national de l'Ahaggar" [13]. Contrary to tradition, these two parks were placed under the supervision of the culture ministry, attached to the sub-directorate of Monuments and Historic Sites, for their archaeological wealth, mainly in engravings and rock paintings (**Figure 2**).



**Figure 2.** In Blue, national parks relating to the agricultural sector. In red, the Tassili and Ahaggar national parks, which depend on the culture sector.

Why create national parks in the desert region and what link with archaeological dimension, especially rock paintings and engravings? This question is fundamental, when we know, that in 1972 there was a law, in this case l' "Ordonnance 67–281 relating to excavations and the protection of historical and natural sites and monuments", which governed the archeological domain. Its article 78 states : "Peut être considéré comme site et monument naturel tout paysage ou lieu naturel présentant un caractère artistique, historique, scientifique, légendaire ou pittoresque qui justifie sa protection et sa conservation dans l'intérêt national". This provision applies perfectly to the two cases of Tassili and Ahaggar, but it was not retained, although it was, in 1979, for the rupestrian site of Oued Djerat, near Illizi, which was classified as a "historic site", under Ordinance 67–281 [14].

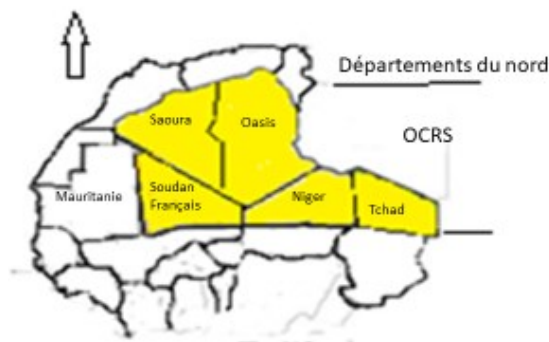
To answer these questions, we must necessarily place ourselves in the Saharan historical context, by examining the first Algerian-French cooperation agreements, concluded following the Evian agreements of March 1962 [15]. France intended to stay in the Sahara to continue to exploit the resources of the subsoil and continue its atomic experiments.

### 3. Historical context of the Sahara

#### 3.1. The OCRS (1957–1961)

To ensure its presence in the Sahara [16], colonial France had created, in 1957, three years before Algeria's independence, a territorial structure, called "Organisation Commune des Régions Sahariennes" (OCRS), whose object is : "...la mise en valeur, l'expansion économique et la promotion sociale des zones sahariennes de la République Française et à la gestion de laquelle participent l'Algérie, la Mauritanie, le Soudan, le Niger et le Tchad" [17]. The objective of this new structure was to separate the Sahara from the rest of Algeria. It replaces the former "Territories du Sud" [18].

Two new departments were created: The "Oasis" and the "Saoura". They were detached from Algeria, which will become a riparian and non-sovereign country of the Sahara, a simple stakeholder, in the same way as the other states bordering the Sahara. The OCRS is a form of territorial organization which does not have an organic signification. It is a functional structure, envisaged as an economic space, an object of exploitation and valorization (**Figure 3**). The OCRS was dissolved by decree on 26 May 1963 [19].



**Figure 3.** In yellow, the extension zone of the common organization of the Saharan regions (OCRS).

#### 3.2. The Sahara: An archaeological nomens land

While in the northern part of Algeria, the transfer of sovereignty between France and Algeria was carried out within the framework of pre-existing legal mechanisms and administrative instruments, in addition to technical support, provided for by cooperation agreements, particularly in the field of education and culture, the Sahara found itself, in fact, outside this process, because it was not part of a clear administrative structure and legal framework. The two department of Saoura and Oasis were part of the functional configuration of the OCRS.

We reproduce here a declaration of Roland Cadet, one of the Evian negotiators, during the sixth session devoted to the Sahara. It expresses the French position regarding the Sahara : "L'Algérie n'a jamais étendu sa souveraineté sur les territoires du Sahara. Ses occupants ou conquérants ne s'y sont jamais installés, que ce soit les Romains ; Vandales, Byzantins, Turcs. Les deux territoires n'étaient réunis sous la même souveraineté que lorsque la France a occupé le Sahara. C'était alors une terre

sans maître et aucun lien historique n’existait entre l’Algérie et le Sahara [...] Le Sahara se distingue de l’Algérie parce qu’il est vide...” [20].

This declaration does not refer to contingent political considerations, linked to the Evian negotiations, it referred to a pre-established cartography of a Sahara, fabricated from scratch by France, on a set of scientific and technical data which denied the historical reality of the Sahara and its attachment to Algerian territory. The Evian discussions on the Sahara were based solely on economic exploitation. For France, the word “Sahara” meant the two departments of Oasis and Saoura, considered in the economic and military logic of the OCRS.

### **3.3. Industrial Cooperation Organisation (ICO) and the saharan tourism Project**

In the Evian negotiations, France requested guarantees regarding the modalities of exploitation of Saharan resources, by suggesting the creation of a mixed Algerian-French technical organism, the “Industrial Cooperation Organisation” (ICO) [21]. It is within the framework of this organism that France is committed to granting Algeria financial assistance, over a period of 5 years, to carry out industrial projects. Among these projects, tourism was called upon in its industrial function, participating in a new concept of Algerian-French cooperation, promotion and economic development, in a strategy of opening up Saharan tourism to the international tourist market.

In the chapter relating to the tourist organization of the Algerian territory, the “Tourisme saharien” appeared in first place. This component was entrusted to a team of specialists, led by Antoine Frasseto (head of the information and documentation service at the OS then at the OCI) and his assistant, Jean-Pierre Peroncel-Hugoz, to which the prehistorian Henri Lhote was associated as a Saharan specialist in rock art [22].

It is, within the framework of this “Tourisme saharien” file and within this team of specialists, that the idea of a “parc national” was born, as a system of protection and enhancement of archaeological heritage Saharan. The idea of a “park” responded perfectly to the idea of a Saharan space, without organic consistency—archaeological Nomens land—as understood by the ex. OCRS. Henri Lhote is the main designer

## **4. The idea of the Tassili National Park**

It was Henri Lhote and Antoine Frasseto who launched the idea of a possible relationship between Saharan tourism development and the preservation and conservation of rock stations, by suggesting the “parc national” option. The idea of a national park was not dictated by environmental or ecological considerations, but was part of an economic project, calling on the industrial function of tourism, at a time (1962–1969) when the tourist sector had given priority to the inventory of tourist equipment and infrastructure inherited from colonization and the establishment of new tourism management and development structures. The year 1966 constituted a pivotal date for tourism, with the adoption of a national law and a tourist charter. Tourism is expected to open up to the international market, through the marketing of seaside and Saharan tourism products.

In a report, entitled “Propositions pour un plan d’aménagement”, transmitted to the Algerian authorities by the “Tourisme saharien” team, it is proposed to place the areas with rock paintings and engravings under the legislation of “parc national”. An option which would make it possible to regulate the tourist flow, thanks to adequate regulations and sworn guides [23].

#### **4.1. The tassili national parc**

In 1968, H. Lhote was commissioned by the Industrial Cooperation Organization (OCI) to think about about a “parc national” project. He designs it exclusively for Tassili. A year later, he was contacted by the Ministry of National Education to translate this project into regulatory text (cf.23). In 1972, the project was taken up in a presidential decree, under the title: “Creation du parc national du Tassili et de établissement public chargé de sa gestion” [24]. This decree was proposed by the Ministry of National Education (1969) and instructed by the Ministry of Information and Culture (1972), after advice from the National Commission for Cultural Property [25]. The cultural Ministry, however, has no responsibility with regard to fauna and flora and even less with regard to national parks. It received the supervision of the “national park” but without its attributions, placing itself as a simple administrative attachment structure, without legal effects.

#### **4.2. A tourism project**

By opting for the status of “parc national”, H. Lhote was inspired, not by the definitions set out in international conventions, that of London in 1933 or Algiers in 1968 [26], relating to the conservation of nature and natural resources, but on the definition of national parks, in their forest tourism version, as understood in the decree of 1921, which did not provide for any system of protection of natural resources and even less of cultural and archaeological properties.

As designed by H. Lhote, the “parc national du Tassili” consisted of the establishment of tourist facilities along the rock stations, already inventoried and documented. This involved establishing a map of developable areas, trails, water points, refuges, hotel relays, areas to visit, those to be developed and those to be protected, and to set up a network of guard posts at entry and exit gates.

A plan designed in the logic of the route, along the rock stations. H. Lhote himself was on site, in Djanet, for the development work, in particular the rehabilitation of the Assakao track, for the creation of a circuit automobile, which would then allow access, via a series of ramps, to the different rupestrian sites of the Meddak plateau (cf.23).

The route is subject to a control and surveillance system, at the “entry and exit gates”, not requiring the mobilization of qualified personnel, relying on the local recruitment of drivers, guards, cooks, donkey drivers, camel drivers and guides. The guarding and surveillance of the sites, due to their operational nature, constitute the cornerstone of the institutional. Which would, undoubtedly, explain that the seat of the establishment (administration) was fixed in Algiers and not in Djanet.

### 4.3. Why the Meddak plateau ?

The first article of the 1972 decree states : “Sont classées en parc national, sous la dénomination de “parc national du Tassili”, les parties du territoire de la commune de Djanet, wilaya des Oasis, désignées sur le plan au 1/2000.000ème annexé au présent décret” (**Figure 4**). The “parc national du Tassili” only covers the “territory of the commune of Djanet”, corresponding to the Meddak plateau. The legislator did not follow the word “Tassili” with the qualifier “N’Ajjer”, to mark the distinction, while maintaining confusion. More correctly, this territory should have been called “Meddak National Park”.



**Figure 4.** In red, the Tassili N’Ajjer (138,000 km<sup>2</sup>) and in blue the Meddak plateau (4000 km<sup>2</sup>).

Why was the national park limited to the commune of Djanet, corresponding to the region of Meddak? The rest of Tassili, i.e., more than 90% of the surface area, whose rupestrian stations have been identified, recorded, or even published by H. Lhote, is not concerned by this regulatory text. The idea of reducing the “parc national du Tassili” to the Meddak plateau comes from the prehistorian Henri Lhote. This idea would be linked to questions of exploitation rights for the rock paintings of the Meddak plateau, the place where the first Lhote mission was carried out, between February and July 1956.

H. Lhote called this mission: “La Mission Lhote”, to distinguish it from other missions, which are only successive extensions, but which do not have the same political and economic importance. For the other missions, he preferred to speak of “the other Tassilis”. After the success of the first mission [27] and its recognition by the Pavillon de Marsan exhibition in Paris, in 1957–1958, the Meddak plateau was erected in a high place of rock art, considered as a fortress that must be protected.

### 4.4. The narrative of Meddak

Through a gigantic propaganda and advertising effort, H. Lhote managed to put a Saharan space—the Meddak plateau— under bell (mise en musée), by extracting it, subtly, from its ecoregional matrix, the Tassili N’Ajjer, to make it the tangible support of a rupestrian novel, of which he will be the author. It is a bestseller with its chapters, paragraphs and illustrations, written in a reduced format: The Meddak plateau, and a reading grid, traced on the route of the stations traveled, since the rise of the Akbas of

Assakao or Tafilalet, stopping at Tan Zoumaitek then continuing towards Tamrit, Djabarren, Sefar before going down towards Djanet.

Each rock station is a chapter of the story. To disturb this order is to affect the quality of an accomplished work. Once the scene was set, it remained to establish the mythical framework with its actors dressed in stone: Gods and goddesses, giants and other chimerical characters: The “Grand dieu Martien”, the “diablotins, les “juges”, the “bœufs polychromes”, “l’Archer à la tête emplumée”, the “danseurs filiformes” and “la caverne de l’Oryctérope”.

#### **4.5. The labelling of “works”**

The first Tassili mission (February–July 1956) was followed by a major exhibition at the Pavillon de Marsan in Paris, inaugurated on 27 November 1957 and extended until March 1958. It had great success and worldwide impact. Around 200 reproductions were exhibited, over an area of 1500 m<sup>2</sup>, accompanied by a 64-page catalog, illustrated with black and white and color plates and distributed in 20,000 copies. The exhibition welcomed nearly 100,000 visitors, including the public, politicians, diplomats, academics, artists and special correspondents from newspapers, radio and television stations around the world (cf.23).

The hanging of the 200 reproductions responded to the scenography of a fantastic narrative universe, built around a central character “Antinéa”, from the myth of Atlantis, in a game of composition, where the incredible fictional story is embedded in a real territory, in the Virginian tradition: The “Grand dieu Martien” of Sefar, the “Dame blanche du Sahara », the two “Venus” of Tamrit, the “Guerrier grec”, the “Amazones” of Sefar (cf.23).

Fascinated, French President R. Coty declared “Il faut envoyer cette exposition dans les capitales étrangères, ce sera de la bonne propagande française”. A. Malraux, writer and art critic said : “c’est l’une des expositions les plus marquante du demi-siècle ... je tiens vos travaux pour une œuvre d’intérêt national (cf.23). Scientists were offended by the dishonest use of archaeological documentation, but nothing more, in the face of a powerful lobby created around a journalistic, artistic and diplomatic world, which saw it as a propaganda opportunity with great promotional scope. The “perfect and finished work” was not to be altered.

In August 1956, H. Lhote was in Paris to present the first results of the mission. In addition to the tasks of storing and organizing the mass of documents and objects brought back from Tassili, in the basement of the Musée de l’Homme, most of its activities consisted of communication and marketing actions, in a kind of design around the fantastic and the spectacular, to captivate attention on the Tassilian discovery. A major promotional campaign followed. Contacts are being made almost everywhere, proposals for exhibitions, conferences, reports and publications. He wrote periodicals, articles on the shipping and sale of reproductions; he signs exclusive contracts with publishers and newspaper directors. In September 1956, he organized a press conference in Paris in which he announced the organization of a major exhibition, at the end of Tassili’s first mission (cf.23).



#### **4.6. Copies or artistic works?**

In the first Lhote mission, the inventory and survey operations were not designed with a view to restoring reality, in the sense of the historical document, to make it an archive, like photography. It was about carrying out artistic composition work. The copies obtained are not faithful reproductions of the originals, but the result of a life-size montage of shapes, colors and lines, corrected and adjusted, after cleaning and wetting the painted walls, following the effects of shadow and colored light and completed with gouache or watercolor, in the tone of the surrounding rock. An operation in several stages, which requires proven dexterity and know-how.

The final product is a work of artist, the reflection of his mental representation, his psychology and his inspiration of the moment. Paper reproduction rolls represent a material which has the value of an expographic and not a historical document. They cannot be used scientifically, due to their volume and their own identity (of the compositions).

### **5. The creation of the Tassili national park (1972)**

#### **5.1. The decree of creation**

The title of the decree creating the “*parc national du Tassili*”, in 1972 is very subtle: “*Creation du parc national du Tassili et de établissement chargé de sa gestion*”. This formulation, quite original, combines two categories of definitions, which relate to two distinct legal areas:

The “*parc national*”, which necessarily falls under the agricultural sector and the forestry code and “*the “établissement chargé de sa gestion*” “, which falls within the remit of the cultural sector, under the legislation on historical and natural sites and monuments. An institutional dichotomy which will affect the structure of the regulatory text, relieving it of all its restrictive effects.

The notion of “*parc national*” is not transcribed in the regulatory text, it is implicit, as is the forest code, which does not appear among the visas. Only Ordinance 67–281 relating to excavations and the protection of historic and natural sites and monuments and Ordinance 66–62 of 26 March 1966 relating to tourist zones and sites are mentioned as legal references.

The term “*classification*” in Article 1 does not refer to any legal reference, which would guarantee a certain opposability. Article 2 states that “*le classement en parc national comprendra la protection des sites préhistoriques situés à l’intérieur du parc, des gravures et peintures rupestres, ainsi que de la flore et de la faune résiduelles (cupressus dupreziana), mouflons et gazelles*”. This provision is contradicted by article 21 of the same text, which emphasizes that “*toutes les stations recensées de gravures et peintures rupestres feront l’objet d’un classement conformément à l’ordonnance n° 67–281 du 20 décembre 1967*”. Here, the “*classement*” applies to historical and natural sites and monuments and not to fauna and flora, which fall under the forest code. There is confusion between the two legal registers.

Article 3 states : “*Toute modification des limites du parc national du Tassili sera précédée d’une enquête et sera décidée par la commission nationale des monuments et sites*”. This article is equivocal and anachronistic, in the sense that the National

Commission for Sites and Monuments is an organ of Ordinance 67–281; which has no authority over the creation or delimitation of national parks.

Articles 4 and 5 are even more ambiguous, regarding the delimitation of the park. It is indicated in the first that “Le bornage du parc national sera effectué de façon visible, afin d’éviter toute contestation dans l’application de son règlement. Il pourra être fait appel, à ce sujet, aux services du ministère des travaux publics et de la construction.” In the second, it is specified that “Le ministre des travaux publics et de la construction assurera l’établissement des plans d’urbanisme et la coordination des études préalables à la mise en valeur de la zone périphérique, aux moyens d’accès et de circulation à l’intérieur du parc”. Reference is made here to the physical delimitation of the park, which is similar to a regulated signage system, to manage access and circulation within the park. We can understand this aspect of development, in the sense of controlling the tourist flow, but it is inconceivable to consider, from the same perspective, plans which fall under the town planning code. There is confusion between tourism development plan and territorial development plan.

A completely new vocabulary is introduced in article 5, that of the “zone périphérique”, which necessarily assumes the existence of a “zone centrale”. In 1972, these two expressions did not yet appear in the national legal lexicon [28]. The “Tassili National Park” does not have nature conservation objectives, it is a tourist development project, based on the mapping of the rock stations of Meddak, whose linear geometry (route), cannot correspond to a radiocentric structure, like those of the central and peripheral: This is conceptual and operational nonsense.

## 5.2. The bias of cultural/natural dichotomous system

The problems resulting from this dichotomous culture/nature system were circumvented by the introduction, in the regulatory text, of a chapter (chapter IV), entitled “Mesures particulières concernant la protection de la flore et de la faune résiduelles dans le parc”. This chapter provides:

- Water and forest services “prendront toutes les dispositions qu’ils jugeront utiles pour la conservation et la protection des espèces protégées et, le cas échéant, pour leur développement. Ils pourront déléguer leur pouvoir au directeur du parc, qui veillera à l’application des mesures de protection” (Art.22),
- “Les infractions aux dispositions du présent décret seront sanctionnées conformément aux dispositions de l’ordonnance n° 67–281 relative aux fouilles et à la protection des sites et monuments historiques et naturels” (Art. 29),
- “Les infractions à la réglementation de la chasse et à la protection de la végétation seront punies suivant la législation du code forestier” (Art. 30).

This regulatory text opposes a “parc national”, which has no legal existence (absence of national park status) to a “office du parc national”, which only acts under the supervision of the ministry responsible for culture and the ordinance on history and nature sites and monuments.

In the “office du parc national du Tassili”, only the “directeur” occupies a central position, to ensure connections. Appointed by decree (without any condition of access to this position) (Art. 40), he is “responsable for police powers inside the park, he regulates access, circulation and parking of people and vehicles” (Art 41); he takes an

oath (Art. 42). The water and forest services “may delegate their power to the park director, who will ensure the application of protection measures” (Art.22).

The regulatory text of 1972 provided for operational measures of local scope (guarding, control, surveillance, etc.) but did not provide for any provision relating to the exploitation, particularly economic, of the rupestrian corpus, held by H. Lhote and the Musée de l’Homme (reproductions, publications, archaeological material).

This is a very serious problem, when we know that the “development plan” of the Meddak plateau, for the regulation of tourist flows, is based on the story of the novel: “A la découverte des fresques du Tassili”, which restores the itinerary of “La Mission Lhote”. A boon for the holders of exploitation rights. Added to this is the multitude of tourist agencies, obliged to take the same routes, for the sake of preserving cultural heritage.

## **6. Tassili N’Ajjer in the UNESCO Agenda**

Tassili N’Ajjer began to interest UNESCO in 1960, following the first files of H. Lhote. Several missions had been carried out to study the state of conservation of the rock paintings. They gave rise to several reports [29], accompanied by recommendations, including the inscription of the Tassili N’Ajjer plateau on the World Heritage List, due to the exceptional density of rock paintings and engravings, the remarkable conservation of ‘a lot of them, the wealth of prehistoric remains, but also by the beauty of the landscapes, the diversity of fauna and flora, with exceptional relic species. UNESCO’s perspective went beyond the framework of the “parc national du Tassili”.

### **6.1. A mixed world heritage site**

In 1982, Tassili N’Ajjer was inscribed on the World Heritage List as a mixed natural/cultural site, following the 4 criteria I, III, VII, VIII [30]. It includes all key rock art sites and landscapes, representing its natural beauty and all sites of biological and ecological diversity, which constitute the attributes of exceptional universal value. The rich cultural heritage (rock art and archaeological remains) and natural diversity (ecosystem, fauna, flora and wetlands) fully reflect the exceptional universal value. They are vulnerable to degradation caused by climatic phenomena and damage caused by visitors.

### **6.2. A MAB biosphere reserve (1986)**

In 1986, the Tassili N’Ajjer National Park received the UNESCO label as the first Algerian Biosphere Reserve in the MAB program. The other biosphere reserves are respectively classified from 1990. In Algeria the Biosphere Reserve was defined as a protected area by Law 11-02, of 17 February 2011, relating to protected areas within the framework of sustainable development.

## **7. The paradigm of cultural parks (1998)**

### **7.1. The first national environmental law (1983)**

The situation of the “parc national du Tassili”, created in 1972, remained unchanged until 1983, the date of promulgation of the first national law on the environment, which established a new status for national parks. Four years later, a new decree “Reorganization de office du parc national du Tassili N’Ajjjer” was issued [31]. It aligns with the new environmental law of 1983, by adopting its new status as a national park.

The new decree extends the area of the national park to the entire Tassili N’Ajjjer plateau, going beyond the logic of Meddak by joining the limits of the mixed site and the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

Article 3 of the new regulatory text states : “Le parc national du Tassili comprend les territoires correspondant au Plateau dit Tassili Azguer...” [32]. Although intended to be global, by associating nature and culture, the new definition of the national park is contradicted by several regulatory provisions.

Article 4 states that “Le Parc National du Tassili est classé pour ses richesses archéologiques et pariétales » and that “Il est placé sous la tutelle du ministre chargé de la culture”. The natural dimension is excluded, here, from the definition.

Article 7 stipulates that : “La mise en valeur du parc national du Tassili doit être réalisée conformément à la classification en zones prévues dans article 4 du décret n°8-458 du 23 juillet 1983 fixant le statut-type des parcs nationaux. La définition et la délimitation de ces zones font l’objet d’un arrêté pris par le ministre de la culture et du tourisme dans le cadre du plan d’aménagement du parc”. This provision has serious consequences due to its inconsistency.

Indeed, considering that national parks are “placed under the supervision of the Secretary of State responsible for forests and regional planning” (article 1 of the standard statute for national parks), and that they are “classified in accordance with the law relating to the protection of the environment” and “created by decree which specifies the territorial limits of the park, the plan and the headquarters of the park” (art. 2 of the standard statute of national parks), it is difficult to see how the Minister of Culture could sign, at the same time, an order which would define and delimit the zones provided for by the standard status of national parks. He has neither the skills nor the responsibilities.

The “Tassili N’Ajjjer national park” will never be subject to zoning, within the meaning of environmental law, for reasons of legal incompatibilities. This situation will remain unchanged until the creation of a new definition category: the “cultural park”, which will go beyond the classic meaning of national park to embrace a new meaning: that of an inseparability between cultural and natural heritage.

## **7.2. The Indissociability culture/nature**

Following a long expertise, carried out within the framework of UNESCO assistance projects, B. Bousquet, a French expert, carried out several missions to the Tassili N’Ajjjer national park, for diagnostic work in view of a park development plan. After around twenty years of field experience, he concluded that : “tout plan d’aménagement classique est inapplicable et synonyme de non développement et que l’étendue du parc (80 000 km<sup>2</sup>), la présence de foyers de vie et celle d’activités pastorales nomades soumises à des règles ancestrales, ne permettent pas d’enfermer la

notion de zonage dans le cadre de définitions trop étroites” [33]. The classic zoning of ecosystems (nature/culture) does not correspond to customary and traditional divisions. It would then be necessary to consider it differently, by integrating local populations and their ancestral knowledge into the equation.

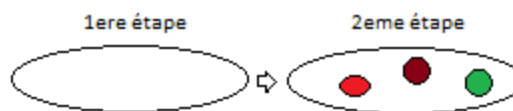
The idea then came to observe the Tassili park as the result of a process of humanization of space, understood as a cultural object and a collective work in constant recomposition, and as a historical product of the interrelations between populations, their activities, their mental representations and the environment they share: a territorial organism which has its metabolism, its rhythm and its function. It is from this perspective that it is now appropriate to design the rules of organization and management of space, considering that there is no juxtaposition of natural and cultural characters, but a dynamic process of integration of these characters in a global cultural sense. This system of indissociability between culture and nature invites a return to the reconstruction of the historicity of the place and a return to the historical process of humanization of space.

There are not yet theoretical bases that determine the approaches and guide the choice of planning, protection and management methods for these territorial system [34]. This is why we must return to traditional know-how, ancestral practices, spontaneous consciousness, the codifications of spatial systems, inherited cultural models, to find the elements of coherence and intelligibility of this territorial cultural system.

Going beyond the paradigm of rock art, the debate is now refocused on another space of reflection involving issues of biological and cultural diversity.

### 7.3. The cultural park: Notion of territory

Article 40 of Law 98-04 clearly defines the missions of the cultural Park: “La protection, la sauvegarde et la mise en valeur des territoires compris dans les limites du parc...”. In this definition, there is no mention of the protection of cultural and/or natural heritage. These are only “des territoires compris dans les limites du parc”. The word territory is used, expressly, in the plural: “territoires”, to indicate that the process of creating the cultural park is divided into two successive stages: a first stage of delimitation of the cultural park and a second stage of creation of “des territoires compris dans les limites du parc” (Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** Process of creating the cultural park: A first phase of delimitation of the park, by the declaration of the value of inseparability. A second stage (zoning) of creating territories inside the park.

Article 40, paragraph 2 provided for a general development plan for the cultural Park (PGA), as a “instrument de protection qui doit être inclus dans les plans d’aménagement et d’urbanisme...”. The PGA is, therefore, an urban planning document, not to be confused with the management plan, a tool specific to protected

areas. It is a planning and orientation tool which aims to go beyond the “dogmatic” approach to monuments and historic sites, avoiding the fossilization and fixity of the living tissues of the landscape.

#### **7.4. Adjustments and consistency**

The legal gaps and inconsistencies noted in Law 98-04, relating to the definition and characterization of cultural parks, had been examined at length, within the framework of two important discussion forums: that relating to an international cooperation program between the Algerian government and the GEF./UNDP concerning “the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the two national parks of Tassili N’Ajjjer and Ahaggar”, and that relating to the debates on the law relating to the National Development Plan of the Territory (SNAT) [35].

#### **7.5. The Government-GEF/UNDP project**

This project brought together experts in natural and human sciences, who shared their experiences and knowledge, throughout a process which spanned from 1999 to 2019 [36]. It was agreed to deepen reflection on the notion of culture/nature inseparability. Several workshops had been organized on the subject, in particular on the specific cases of Tassili N’Ajjjer and Ahaggar. The conservation of biodiversity was considered under the cultural prism, that of know-how and knowledge holders, which guarantees the preservation of biodiversity. The notions of values and attributes having been understood, it remained to translate them into legal and institutional tools and mechanisms, to ensure the mode of translation from the material state (nature) to the immaterial state (culture). It is at this level that the stumbling block lies, in the absence of conceptual and methodological bases, which explicitly determine the dividing line between the natural and the cultural.

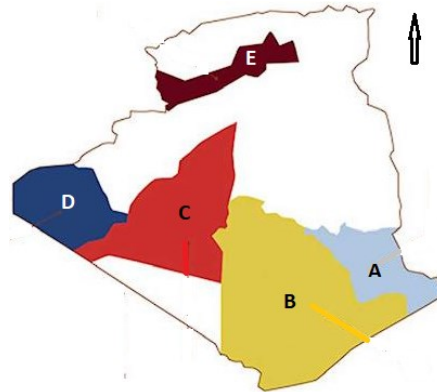
#### **7.6. The national territorial development plan (SNAT)**

The inadequacies noted in the implementation of Law 98-04 relating to cultural parks were filled by the law on SNAT, which conferred new spatial and territorial meanings on cultural and natural heritage. Thus, among the eight imperatives of territorial defense and security, provided for by the SNAT, the promotion of tangible and intangible cultural heritage has been established as a common denominator of national unity. The preservation and enhancement of the natural and cultural capital of the territory constitutes one of the three major requirements of the territorial organization and of the three major deadlines of the territorial organization, the ecological deadline.

The ecological system and the heritage system are placed among the six (06) articulation systems of the territory. Finally, the “Système patrimonial” is established as the foundation of identity and territory : “L’organisation spatiale du système patrimonial doit mettre en évidence la distinction entre le développement de l’espace géographique, qui colle à la réalité d’un découpage administratif et la création permanente du territoire par des hommes porteurs d’identités et de cohésion sociale” (SNAT, P.14). It is in the paradigm of territorial planning and not in that of the protection of cultural heritage that the cultural park has found its full legal recognition.

## 7.7. The network of cultural parks

Access to the concept of “parc culturel” results from a long diagnosis and a significant investment in capitalizing on knowledge and experience, which dates back to 1972, with the creation of the “parc national du Tassili” (PNT). Building on the experience acquired, three other cultural parks were created in 2008, the parks of Tindouf, the Saharan Atlas and Touat-Gourara-Tidikelt [37]. (Figure 6).



**Figure 6.** Network of Algerian cultural parks: A. Tassili N’Ajjjer (138,000 km<sup>2</sup>)—B. Ahaggar (633,887 km<sup>2</sup>)—C. Touat-Gourara-Tidikelt (38,740 km<sup>2</sup>)—D. Tindouf (168,000 km<sup>2</sup>)—Saharan Atlas. 63,930 km<sup>2</sup>).

### 7.7.1. The cultural parks of Tindouf and Touat-Gourara-Tidikelt

They were created, on the principle of the inseparability of culture/nature, to protect characteristic oasis spaces, which frame a true trans-Saharan cultural itinerary, marked by a whole series of material traces and still living traditions, expressed by groups and individuals possessing knowledge and know-how and transmitted orally in particular through crafts, architecture, music, dance, rites, customs and other social and cultural manifestations.

### 7.7.2. The Saharan atlas cultural park

It was created, on the same principle, around archaeological and historical values (rock engravings, ksour, sites and monuments) and their relationships with the landscape and natural resources. Beyond the heritage interest of this space, the cultural park constitutes a measure of preservation of a mental space, in its general configuration: systems of routes and organization of transhumance on the southern foothills of the Saharan Atlas, which allowed, for millennia, one and ecological balance, by maintaining and reproducing the cohesion of an aggregate of communities.

## 8. Conclusion

To further deepen knowledge on “parcs culturels”, in the sense of the inseparability of culture/nature, the approach consists of observing, firstly, the experiences of countries creating cultural landscapes, particularly those with a strong customary tradition (New-Zealand, Australia, Canada, etc.), to draw useful lessons and then reflect on the mechanisms best suited to the Algerian reality, then solicit key stakeholders and actors to build a new approach to governance, which favors structures horizontal and networked, multi-sectoral and multi-organizational, in a perspective of

partnership and shared decision-making. In this vision of the cultural park, we must distinguish the act of management from that of governance. The first acts directly on the physical entities of nature and culture (protected spaces, natural and cultural monuments and sites, archaeological sites, etc.), by summoning the required concepts and protocols, while the second intervenes on the systems of relationships between actors and stakeholders, to guarantee the preservation of cultural values and the integrity of the landscape, in a multi-scale and multi-actor vision. The statutory form of the public administrative establishment (EPA), which until now ensured the exercise of public missions, falling under the central administration (the cultural park offices), is today insufficient to contain the approach landscape, shared between public and private, calling for the construction of a governance model based on partnership and shared responsibility. Governance that links responsibility and commitment of key players, in negotiation protocols and collaboration charters.

**Conflict of interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

## References

1. Category adopted by the World Heritage Committee (UNESCO) at its 16th session, held in Santa Fe, United States, in 1992, as “Combined works of man and nature”. It was introduced into the Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the 1972 World Heritage Convention.
2. In colonial imagery, the Sahara is perceived as an empty space, without historical consistency, a *Nomens* land. The absence of Roman, Vandal, Byzantine or Turkish traces did not allow colonial France to establish an administrative structure for the territory based on historic heritage.
3. Betrouni Mourad: Director of research in Quaternary geology and prehistory at the center for prehistoric, anthropological and ethnographic research (CRAPE), since 1978, then at the national center for prehistoric, anthropological and historical research (CNRPAH), since 1993. Director of the Tassili National Park Office (OPNT), between 1998 and 2000, then director of cultural heritage at the Ministry of Culture, between 2003 and 2017.
4. Henri Lhotse’s first Tassili mission, carried out between February and July 1956 on the Meddak plateau. He will call it “La Mission Lhote”, to distinguish it from other missions.
5. The Tassilian novel is well told in the work “Discovering the frescoes of Tassili”, by H. Lhote. It is written in the register of expedition and the hero’s journey, in the manner of the Homeric epic, which exalts passions and imagination, giving rise to the “Tassilian passionaria”.
6. The Meddak is an element of the Tassili N’Ajjjer plateau, which extends over approximately 4000 km<sup>2</sup>. It corresponds to the occupation area of the Kel Meddak tribe. It is located in the commune of Djanet, today established as a Wilaya.
7. The exhibition at the Pavilion Marsan, at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris, reportedly earned him 13 million old francs. Information according to Monique Vérité, in her 2010 publication : “*Henri Lhote, one aventure scientifique au Sahara*”, Paris : Ibis Presse, 430 p.
8. Order of February 17, 1921 : Art. 1er: « Les forêts ou parties de forêts que leur composition botanique, leur beauté pittoresque ou leurs conditions climatiques désignent pour être des centres d’études scientifiques, de tourisme ou d’estivage pourront être constituées en parcs nationaux ». Art. 2 : « Les parcs nationaux pourront englober des terrains communaux ou particuliers, mais ceux-ci ne seront soumis à aucune réserve ou restriction quelconque sans l’assentiment formel des propriétaires ». Art. 3 : « La constitution des parcs nationaux sera prononcée par arrêté du gouverneur général pris en Conseil de gouvernement ». Art. 8 : « Pour favoriser l’installation des centres d’estivage et d’hôtels dans les parcs nationaux, des concessions de lots à bâtir pourront être accordées pour 99 ans sur le sol domanial dans l’intérieur des parcs nationaux ».
9. The national parks of : Diar-el-Oued (28.8.1923), Ouarsenis (16.04.1924), Gouraya (7.8.1924), Akfadou (20.1.1925), Les Planteurs (7.12.1925), Chréa (3.9.1925), Djurdjura (8.9.1925), Taza (3.9.1927), Baïnem (8.11.1928), Edough (21.11.1928), Aïn N’s our (24.4.1929), Babors (12.1.1931), Mahouna (27.7.1931), Theniet-el-Had (03.08.1932).



10. Law No. 62-157 of December 31, 1962 tending to the renewal, until further notice, of the legislation in force on December 31, 1962.
11. Estienne Rodary. 2008. File No. 8: African national parks, a lasting crisis. In Héritier S. (dir.), Laslaz L. (dir.), Arnould P. (pref.). National parks around the world: protection, management and sustainable development. Paris. Ellipses, p. 207- 226. (Carrefour's. Les Dossiers).
12. Decree No. 72-168 of July 27, 1972 creating the Tassili National Park and the establishment responsible for its management and Decree No. 87-88 of April 21, 1987 reorganizing the Tassili National Park Office.
13. Decree No. 87-231 of November 3, 1987 creating the Ahaggar National Park.
14. Oued Djerat site was classified as a "historic site" in December 1979, under Ordinance 67-81 relating to excavations and the protection of historical and natural sites and monuments. This site has 75 rock engraving stations with 4000 figures spread over around thirty kilometers, as well as rock painting stations.
15. The Evian agreements "Accords d'Evian" are the result of the Algerian-French negotiations for the independence of Algeria. They were signed on March 18, 1962 in Evian-les Bains, Switzerland.
16. In 1956, the discovery of two oil fields in Edjeleh and Hassi Messaoud and a gas field in Hassi R'mel (Algerian Sahara), required colonial France to consider a new strategic approach: the "petroilization of the Sahara".
17. Law No. 57-27 of January 10, 1957 creating a Common Organization of the Saharan Regions. This law put an end to the regime of the "Southern Territories", replaced by two new departments: The Oases (capital Ghardaïa) and Saoura (capital Colomb-Bechar), which escape the sovereignty of Algeria.
18. At the beginning of French colonization, the Sahara was called "Southern Territories", a territorial organization, created by the law of December 24, 1902, which divided the Sahara into four districts (Ain Sefra, Ghardaïa, Touggourt and Oasis (themselves subdivided into circles and annexes). These territories were placed under the authority of the Governor General of Algeria. Under military administration, with a military commander, placed at the head of each. Officers of "indigenous affairs", like the old Arab offices, were appointed to manage indigenous affairs and command a special police force, "platoons of méharists".
19. During the Algerian-French negotiations, the declaration of General de Gaulle, in September 1961, in a press conference: "« La question de la souveraineté du Sahara n'a pas été considérée, tout au moins elle ne le doit pas l'être pour la France », had allowed the resumption of negotiations, which led to the Evian agreements. The OCRS was then dissolved and the two departments of Oasis and Saoura returned to Algeria.
20. The sixth session of Evian negotiations devoted to the Sahara (Wednesday May 31, 1961).
21. Intergovernmental organism was created in 1965, as an extension of the former "Organisme Saharien" (OS) which continued to ensure the material and financial management of its services
22. Prehistorian of rock art, Henri Lhote (1903-1991), wrongly considered to be "l'inventeur du Tassili" and made famous by his exhibition "Prehistoric Paintings of the Sahara", at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris and especially his work "A la découverte des fresques du Tassili", translated into sixteen languages and republished several times
23. M. Vérité, 201. -Henri Lhote, une aventure scientifique au Sahara. Ibis Press, Paris, P.425.
24. Supra [12]
25. Articles 128 and 129 of Ordinance No. 67-281, of December 20, 1967, relating to excavations and the protection of historic and natural sites and monuments, establishing a national commission for monuments and sites under the Minister responsible for the arts.
26. The 1933 London Convention on the conservation of fauna and flora in their natural state, which came into force in 1936, provided the first consensual definitions of « national park » and « strict nature reserve ». The Algeria Convention was adopted in 1968, by member states of the OUA; It came into force in 1969 but has not been systematically implemented due to « financial constraints » in the newly independent African countries.
27. This mission was carried out under the aegis of the Paris Museum of Man and the high patronage of the Governor of Algeria J. Soustelle (ex. Deputy Director of the Museum of Man), with the support financial of the CNRS, the scientific and moral guarantee of Abbé Breuil, the Saharan Research Institute (IRS) and the Directorate of Fine Arts of Algiers.
28. We must go back to the London Convention of 1933 and the definitions established by the IUCN (World Conservation Union), to find these two expressions: the "central zone" where strict regulations protect the environments (fauna, flora, landscape) and the "peripheral zone", a sort of buffer zone, less strict in terms of protection.

29. UNESCO Report 1968, n°1108.BMS/RD/CLT. UNESCO Report 1975, n°3191.RMO/RD/CLT. Proceedings of the International Seminar on the conservation of the rock paintings of Tassili, Tassili National Park Office (OPNT), 1978. UNESCO Report 1985, CLT-85/WS/. UNESCO Report 1986, studies and documents on cultural heritage n°13.
30. Criterion “I”: represent a masterpiece of human creative genius; criterion “III”: offering an eminent example of a type of construction or architectural or technological ensemble or landscape illustrating a significant period or periods of human history. Criterion “VII”: represent remarkable natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance. Criterion “VIII”: be eminently representative examples of the major stages of the earth’s history, including the testimony of life, of ongoing geological processes in the development of terrestrial forms or of geomorphological or physiographic elements having great meaning.
31. Decree No. 87-88 of April 21, 1987 reorganizing the Tassili National Park Office.
32. The boundaries of the Tassili Azguer National Park are: -in the East: the border strip with the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya; -in the South-East: the border with the Republic of Niger up to Oued Tafessasset in the West; -from the South-West to the North-West: the limit follows the Edombo mountains to reach the cliff at the height of Tin-Enouar, a cliff which extends to Amguid; -To the North, the limitation of the massif corresponding to the contact zone between the plateau and the ergs, materialized by the Illizi-Amguid track to the West, and the Illizi-Tarat track to the East; -The ergs of Admer and Tihodaine form bordering areas and are integrated into the Park.
33. Bernard Bousquet, 1992. Guide to the national parks of Africa (North Africa West Africa). Delachaux-Niestle. Discovering the Tassili N’Ajjjer National Park. UNESCO, 1989 (Slideshow).
34. Rafael Winter Ribeiro, 2013. Nature and culture in the world heritage list: the experience of Rio de Janeiro... Vertigo. Electronic journal in environmental sciences. Special issue 16. Veronique Zamman. 2017. The cultural landscape, between preservation and development. The institutional issues of heritage recognition of the landscape of Rio de Janeiro. Geographic Information (Vol.81) pp.94-120.
35. Law No. 10-02 of June 29, 2010 approving the National Territorial Development Plan ‘(SNAT).
36. This project recommends an approach based on the development of new forms of local governance which make it possible to assess the consequences of ecological instability on desert ecosystems and to propose more effective measures for managing biodiversity and to combat the threats and dangers of loss of this biological diversity. Objectives: Strengthening institutional capacities and establishing basic infrastructure. Implementation of Collaborative Management agreements. Promotion of Ecotourism. Information, Education and Communication. Monitoring and assessment of biodiversity. Development of management plans. Support for sustainable Eco development.
37. Executive Decree No. 14-03 of January 15, 2014 establishing the status of the national office of the Tindouf cultural park (JO No. 3 of January 22, 2014). Executive Decree No. 14-04 of January 15, 2014 establishing the status of the national office of the Saharan Atlas cultural park (JO No. 3 of January 22, 2014). Executive Decree No. 14-05 of January 15, 2014 establishing the status of the national office of the Touat-Gourara-Tidikelt cultural park (JO No. 3 of January 22, 2014).