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The Importance of Stakeholder Involvement in Promoting the Cherchell Aqueducts as Tourist Attractions: Current Situation and Prospects

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Abstract

The Roman aqueducts in Cherchell, built in the second century AD, are a remarkable engineering achievement that spans over 130 kilometers and has historical significance. Today, the aqueducts have five easily accessible bridges. However, there is a lack of coordination among stakeholders involved in managing the cultural heritage in Cherchell.

The 2014 strategic plan aimed to safeguard and enhance archaeological monuments and historic buildings by promoting and advertising the Cherchell aqueducts. The Protection and Enhancement Plan for Archaeological Sites with their protected zones (PPMVSAZP) focuses on tackling tourism through various measures and attributes.

Two methodological techniques were used for this case study: Researching accounting values through design (RtD) and the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach. Consulting examples of Gallo-Roman aqueducts in France allowed for a critical comparison of strategies required for managing development projects with all stakeholders.

The main focus of this paper is to establish a critical analysis of the current situation by situating dysfunctions in the collaborative relationships between different stakeholders. The paper aims to emphasize how stakeholders, community organizations, and professionals can work together to designate, enhance, and manage the case study, proposing an efficient collaborative assessment as a potential opportunity for the future.

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Keywords

Heritage Values; Stakeholders; Citizen Participation; Decision-Making

1. Introduction

Since Algeria became independent in 1962, territorial and urban planning has prioritized development criteria related to housing and productive economic sectors. The institutions mentioned above were completely separate from any conservation policy regarding historical heritage, resulting in a conflicting correlation between environmental preservation and urban planning. (Chennaoui, Y, 2014).

During the period from 1962 up to 1998, the actions known as "conservation and enhancement of the monuments and historic sites" remained sterile because they were related to an isolated episode, being limited only to the identification, indexing, and classification of the property. These actions remain extremely essential from the point of view of conservation; no work has been done towards the urban requalification of this listed heritage. The placement of archaeological remains on fallow land in Algeria had a negative effect: it separated the historical

property from its reference context, which led to incomplete testimonies. The people expressed a lack of interest in the relationship between the site or monument and its global environment, which are equally important as the property's intrinsic qualities.

The property was separated from its reference context due to this attitude. These archaeological remains became incomprehensible fragments, incapable of enhancing the present or, particularly, providing the contemporary with a character that could make them recognizable. (Chennaoui. Y, 2014).

Archaeological zones can be managed through the Protective and Enhancement Plan for Archaeological Sites and their protected zones (PPMVSAZP). This issue is defined in executive decree N°03-323 dated October 5th, 2003, and it involves the creation of the Protection and Enhancement Plan for archaeological sites and their protected zones. The PPMVSAZP creates a regulation that governs the development and protection of archaeological sites and their zones of protection. The conservation goals and context form of the historic site are both taken into account by this preservation plan. (Aoudia Benali. L, Chennaoui. Y; 2017).

The 2014 plan for the protection and enhancement of the archaeological sites and monuments of Cherchell included a project to promote and present the aqueducts to the public. The current policy emphasizes integrated conservation of the archaeological sites within the territorial, social, and economic levels, as outlined in the directing plan for archaeological and historical zones for the horizon 2025 and the related laws and decrees. (Schéma Directeur des Zones Archéologiques et Historiques, 2007). The executive decree N: 03- 324 of October 5th, 2003, related to law 98/04 of June 15th, 1998, establishes the methods for the protective and enhancement plan of the archaeological sites and their zone of protection, known as PPMVSA. (Aoudia Benali. L, Chennaoui. Y; 2015).

In order to address the issue of tourism, the Protective and Enhancement Plan of Archaeological Sites (PPMVSAZ) incorporates a range of strategies and attributes into its guidelines: (See Figure 1)

1. **Cultural Tourism Management:** The objective of the strategy is to manage cultural tourism in a manner that maximizes the attraction of archaeological sites while promoting sustainability practices and conservation.
2. **Tourism development regulation** includes guidelines for assigning land for tourism projects, with a particular focus on conducting thorough studies around archaeological monuments, which are considered sensitive locations. This approach aims to promote sustainable tourism development.
3. **Preservation of Landscapes and Views:** This approach underscores the significance of protecting landscape and visual integrity, acknowledging the visual component's significant role in the conservation of the site as well as its cultural heritage.
4. **Integrated Conservation and Development:** This plan aims to align activities on the site in a manner that promotes its utilization for socio-cultural and economic growth while also protecting the integrity of the monument and its landscape for future generations.

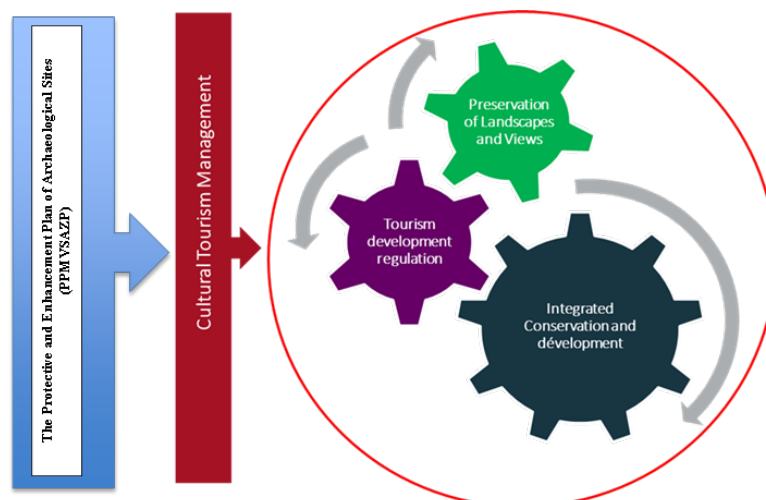


Figure 1: A diagram representing the connections between the various aims of PPMVSAZP. (Chennaoui. Y; 2024)

The PPMVSAZP is a tool for managing cultural tourism, regulating tourism development, and conserving archaeological sites' landscapes and visual integrity. These measures are designed to balance the benefits of tourism with the preservation and sustainable management of archaeological sites and their environs. (Aoudia Benali. L; 2008).

Our Paper is organized into six points. In this introduction, we have presented the background information of our research. The second chapter focuses on the major issue with the aqueduct of Chabet Ielouine. The methodology framework is addressed in the third chapter. The fourth chapter is dedicated to discussing the analysis and interpretation of the results. Finally, we propose an efficient collaborative assessment in the fifth chapter. In conclusion, we will be given some potential prospects for the future.

Five bridges of the aqueduct are easy to visit: 1. The Tizi N'Franco bridge; 2. The Oued Ielouine bridge; 3. The Oued Bellah bridge; 4. The Pointe Riad bridge; 5. The Oued N'Sara bridge. The Chabet Ielouine aqueduct in Cherchell offers a unique opportunity to relive the past and serve the present. Known for their historical value and integrity, the aqueducts can be repurposed for recreational purposes. (See Figures 2 & 3).



Figure 2: View of the Chabet Ielouine aqueduct in its rural area

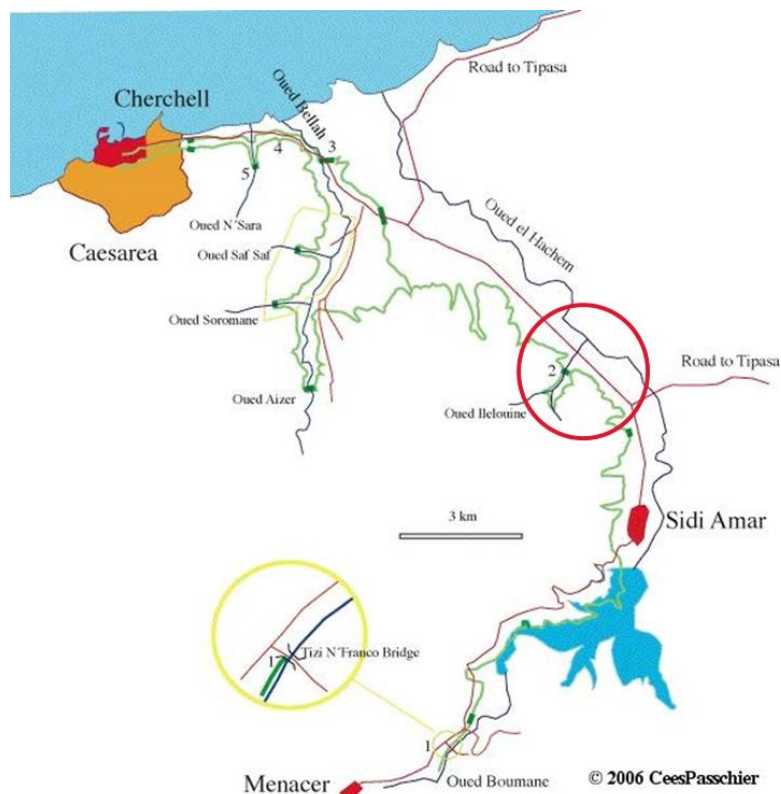


Figure 3: Geographical map showing the localization of the Chabet Ielouine aqueduct. (Ammari, A, Remini B, 2019).

2. The main issue of the aqueduct of Chabet Ielouine

The Roman aqueducts in Cherchell, Algeria were built in the 2nd century AD during the reign of the Roman Empire in the region. The purpose of their construction was to supply water to Cherchell (Ancient Caesarea of Mauretania) from the Zaccar Mountain range, which is 90 kilometers to the south. The aqueducts were a remarkable engineering feat, with a total length exceeding 130 kilometers and an elevation of up to 120 meters in certain areas. (Leveau. Ph, Paillet J. L ,1976).

The construction of the initial aqueduct in Caesarea (Cherchell) can be associated with Juba II's reign from 25 BC to 23 AD. The aqueduct, which spans a length of at least 45 kilometers, suffered recurrent structural damage due to the unstable terrain. (Ammari, A, Remini B, 2019). Thus, in the early part of the second century AD, several bridges were built, including the Oued El-Bellaa and Chabet Ielouine bridges located within the Oued Ielouine canyons. The Chabet Ielouine aqueduct, a 3-storeyed structure measuring 35 meters high and 137 meters long, is remarkably well-preserved, except for the collapse of two arches. (Leveau. Ph, Paillet J. L ,1979). At the same time, the Oued El-Bellaa aqueduct is in need of repair.

The aqueduct of Chabet Ielouine in our case study enables us to increase our understanding of the distant past of our forefathers, bring their memories back, and serve the present and future. The aqueducts of Cherchell are known for their significant historical value and high degree of integrity. Their physical presence is proof of the greatness of Juba II. (Leveau. Ph,1979). Today, we can attribute a recreational value to the aqueducts if we make them a place of enjoyment and relaxation. By exploiting and animating the site, their values can be promoted. By restoring the aqueducts, they can regain their status as primary landmarks in the countryside of Cherchell. (See figure 4).

Today, the remains of the Chabet Ielouine aqueduct are visible in the rural area of Cherchell. The tourist destination is well-liked. The aqueducts of Cherchell contain great heritage and landscape resources that should be brought together within comprehensive and integrated socio-cultural development strategies.

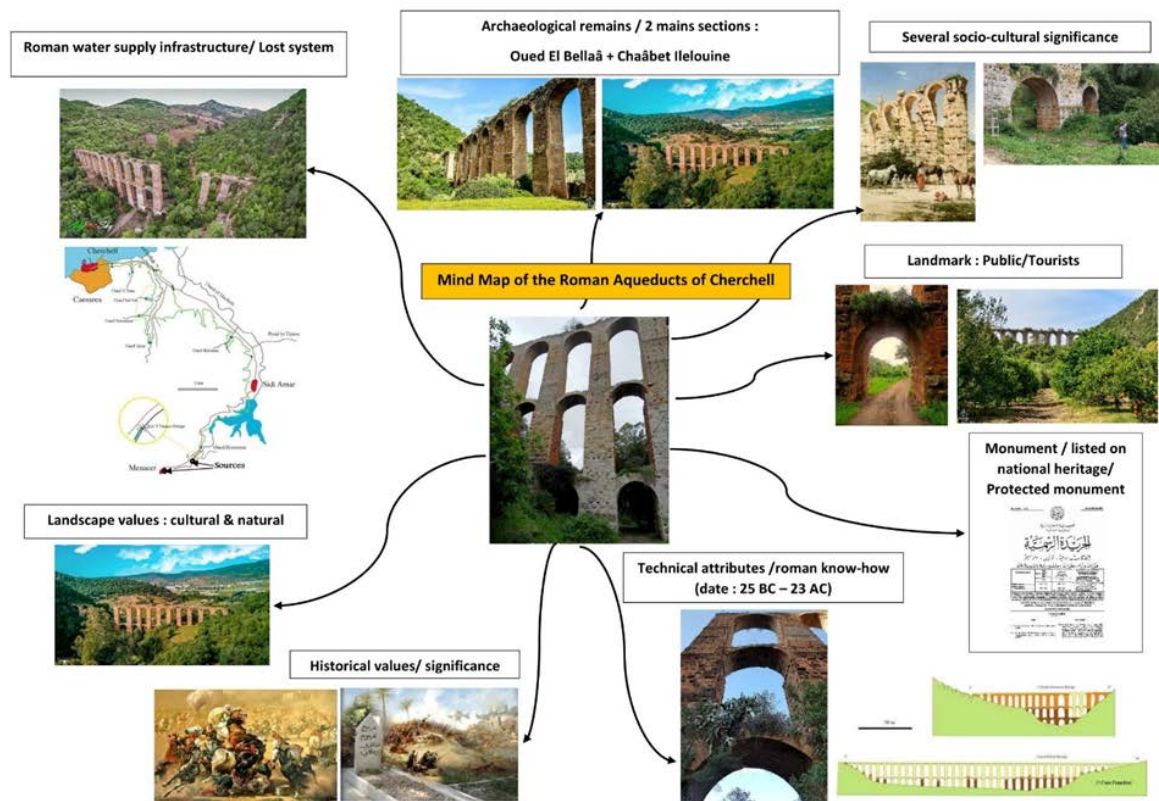


Figure 4: Mind Map of the different values of the Roman aqueducts of Cherchell. (Chennaoui. Y; 2024)

The PPMVSAZP is aimed at managing cultural tourism, promoting sustainable practices, and conserving archaeological sites. The guidelines cover land allocation for tourism projects, with a particular emphasis on sensitive locations like archaeological monuments. The plan also emphasizes the importance of protecting landscapes and views, acknowledging their role in the site's cultural heritage. The plan for conservation and development is designed

to promote socio-cultural and economic growth and preserve the monument's landscape for future generations. The PPMVSAZP aims to balance the advantages of tourism with the conservation and sustainable management of archaeological sites and their surroundings. (See figure 5).

Our purpose will focus on identifying the main actions to recommend within a global and integrated strategy. Integration is the process of involving and participating all stakeholders in the management of cultural heritage, as well as the association movement, through consultation and citizen participation.

The city has ambitious plans for further urban development in the future. One of the primary objectives is to attract more investment and tourism to the city, which will aid in the creation of new jobs and enhance the local economy. The proposed projects involve building new hotels, shopping centers, and cultural centers. Cherchell's identity is characterized by its rich cultural heritage and traditional architecture. The cultural heritage is valued by the local authorities and they have taken measures to preserve and promote it. (Collectif. AA. VV, 1994).

The intrinsic values of the aqueducts of Cherchell and the numerous possibilities offered by their use make it impossible to circumvent the question of their presentation to the public. (See figure 4). Cherchell's PPMVSAZP plan has practical stakes in areas such as economics, culture, social issues, and education. We explain them as follows:

- Increasing the added value of the site: The exploitation of the archaeological site as a tourist resource is regarded here as a valuable resource. This action will certainly bring tangible economic benefits to the local communities. By playing an educational role, it leads to increased profitable business activity. The cultural heritage has been enhanced by the growth of cultural tourism, which replaces largely balneal tourism developed during the seventies. As a provider of employment and wealth, it is indeed an economic factor of development.
- Cultural heritage protection as a societal pillar is crucial. The display of archaeological sites helps preserve the community's cultural identity. Society perceives and establishes its identity through the reflection of heritage, which functions as a 'reflective mirror'. The archaeological site incorporates the sociocultural dynamics of users by meaningfully defining entertaining and enlightening activities. Heritage values will be spread through this educational endeavor.



Figure 5: Museographic project for the Oued El Bellah aqueduct. (CNERU, 2014. P 128)

3. The methodology

We decided to combine the approaches of "Research through Design" (RtD) (Conversano et al., 2019) for the evaluation of values in the design of projects-actions of tourism development of our aqueduct with that related to the recommendations on the "Historic Urban Landscape" (HUL). (UNESCO, n d) & (ICOMOS, 2011).

It was essential to follow an integrative methodology that takes into account the specificities of each approach while promoting synergy between them. By combining these two approaches, it was possible to better take into account the dimension of values in the design of historic urban landscapes, by involving all stakeholders and using design as a research and mediation tool. This had enriched the HUL approach by integrating the contributions of research through design.

We note that the methodological approach of "Research through Design" (RtD) (Conversano et al., 2019) focuses on the design process as a means of research. It involves the creation of project-actions through experiments by participation in workshops that allow for the exploration of values, significance, and impacts in project design.

Related to the literature review of this subject, the values that we can recognize for our aqueducts of Charchell are: (Conversano, I. Del Conte L., Mulder, I. 2019).

1. Value of human well-being.
2. Value of presence.
3. Value of responsibility.
4. Value of sustainability.
5. Value of Trust.
6. Value of accountability and transparency.
7. Value of inclusiveness.

In this context, the accounting values in the design of our action proposal can be understood as elements that influence design decisions, such as sustainability, aesthetics, and social impact. The various recommendations made during the meetings of the people's assembly of the commune of Charchell with the associative movement were collected for the years 2010 to 2019. They were used as a working basis for the organization of an educational brainstorming workshop at the beginning of 2020 at the EPAU (Ecole Polytechnique d'Architecture et d'Urbanisme).

In sum, the combination of the two approaches ensured that these steps were completed on this timeline:

1. The identification of the values of the aqueduct of Chabet Ilelouine began with the recognition of the main values that are derived from both approaches. What had included in preponderance aesthetic, cultural, social, and landscape values for our case study.
2. Comparative analysis with other foreign aqueducts located in France allowed us to establish points of convergence between the situations and thus recognize the positive points of good practices. Current initiatives for the valorization of Roman aqueducts are multiplying through several significant projects in France. The choice had been made to consult the case of the project for upgrading the aqueducts of Saintes in Charentes-Maritimes in Aquitaine. The community of Saintes had worked on an ambitious project to promote tourism in the Gallo-Roman aqueducts. The second case concerned the aqueduct of Vorgium at Carhaix in Finistère. The latter contributed to the understanding of Roman construction techniques and the development of these infrastructures. This project involved collaborations between researchers and local institutions to document and promote the history of aqueducts.

This stage of our project allowed us to discern in these initiatives the collective commitment to preserve and enhance the heritage of Roman aqueducts, Integrating tourism, education, and environmental aspects.

3. The proposal of project-actions through evaluation and feedback was possible thanks to the implementation of evaluation mechanisms to collect feedback on opinions given on the projects-stocks. The different opinions were confronted by the exchange and the debate during the participatory workshops in brainstorming organized with the

main stakeholders. This was a privileged step in our reflection because we had to ensure that the solutions proposed met the expectations and values of the local communities.

By integrating these two approaches, it was possible to develop solutions for designing coordination actions between the different stakeholders that not only had to meet contemporary requirements but also respect the cultural and historical heritage of our aqueduct.

4. The analysis and interpretation of the results

The combination of the approach (RtD) and the approach (HUL) in a design project required a carefully planned methodological approach, taking into account the challenges already mentioned.

As a reminder, the practical objective of this combination of these two approaches was for us a means to better take into account the dimension of values in the design of historical urban landscapes, by involving the stakeholders and using design as a research and mediation tool.

Our research's initial goal was to designate a dashboard for the various stakeholders who contributed directly or indirectly to the tourism valuation of our case study. (see figures 6 & 7)

Algeria's cultural heritage is being protected by a diverse set of stakeholders with varied functions and responsibilities. Notable stakeholders included:

1. The Ministry of Culture and Arts is responsible for ensuring the maintenance and enhancement of cultural properties in Algeria. The establishment of laws, legislation, and strategies is intended to safeguard and preserve cultural heritage sites and monuments.
2. OGEBC is the Algerian government agency responsible for overseeing the management of protected cultural heritage properties. The OGEBC, which falls under the Ministry of Culture's jurisdiction, is in charge of managing and conserving listed archaeological and historical monuments and sites, which are situated inside protected areas.
3. The National Centre for Archaeological Research (CNRA) is tasked with conducting archaeological research, carrying out excavations, and safeguarding archaeological sites and artifacts. This institution is responsible for conducting field surveys, excavations, and documentation of archaeological sites in Algeria.
4. Local authorities, including municipalities and regional authorities (APC and APW), are responsible for managing and conserving cultural resources in their specific regions. Their collaboration with national institutions involves overseeing the maintenance, preservation, and development of local heritage monuments.
5. In Algeria, there are many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that work diligently to preserve and advance cultural heritage.

It is necessary to mention the difficulties we encountered in our combined methodological approach, which need to be improved in the future. We bring them here through the following points:

1. The different objectives of each approach:

We have noticed that the objectives of the (RtD), which focus on experimentation and innovation through the design process, may sometimes conflict with the HUL's objectives of preserving and preserving historical and cultural values. It was therefore crucial to find a balance between the attributes of heritage conservation and economic development through tourism for our case study.

2. Complexity in integrating values with each other:

The integration of book values in design (RtD) with cultural and historical values (HUL) requires a thorough understanding of these values. This proved to be difficult for us to explain to stakeholders. Thus, cultural values can be subjective and vary between communities according to their degree of aspiration and affect or instructive level, while design values (RtD) can be more technical and functionality-oriented.

3. The participation of all stakeholders:

The engagement of different stakeholders, including local communities, cultural heritage protection authorities, architects, and tour operators, is essential but has been difficult to manage. Each of these parties had different expectations and priorities, which complicated the collaborative process.

4. Time and resource constraints:

We noticed later, that the projects that combine the (RtD) and the (HUL) required more time credit and more human and financial resources than we had been able to organize in a single brainstorming workshop in 2020. This is motivated by the need for extensive research and continuous iteration that we must organize in several participation workshops. This has been an obstacle for us, especially in our academic context which had not allowed us to design several participatory workshops at this given the tight deadlines or limited budgets related to our project research.

Assessing the impact of solutions developed within this combined framework proved difficult, as we did not have the means to evaluate results ex-post. We also found that the success criteria could vary between the two approaches, making the evaluation of results complex and subjective.

Following our comparative analysis undertaken between our case study and some examples of tourist valorization projects of the Gallo-Roman aqueducts in France, we recognized that the success is based on several key stakeholders, such as:

- Local communities: Entities such as the Saintes Agglomeration Community play a crucial role in launching ambitious valorization projects. These initiatives aim to discover the historical heritage and to integrate the remains into attractive tourist paths.
- Heritage preservation associations: Organizations such as the Society of Archaeology and History of Charente-Maritime contribute to the research and documentation of aqueducts, enhancing their visibility and historical importance. Researchers and academics: Academic studies on aqueducts, such as those on their impact on urban and social development during the Roman era, enrich the understanding of their value and facilitate their promotion.
- Tourism stakeholders: Tourism professionals, including guides and travel agencies, participate in the promotion of aqueducts by integrating them into a variety of tourist offerings, thereby attracting a wider audience.
- Implementation projects: Specific initiatives, such as the integration of aqueducts into golf courses or hiking trails, offer an innovative approach to attracting visitors while preserving the heritage.

These stakeholders work together to transform the Gallo-Roman aqueducts into attractive tourist destinations while preserving their history and integrity in the landscape. The promotion of aqueduct-related tourist sites, as well as their facilitated accessibility thanks to tourist infrastructure, contribute to their attractiveness.

By combining these different aspects, the Gallo-Roman aqueducts in France have succeeded in becoming popular tourist destinations, attracting a wide audience in search of history, culture, and discovery. (Gauchon Ch, 2010).

In relation to our study case, we posit that the lack of appreciation for the ChercHELL aqueducts can be attributed to various factors, such as the lack of financial resources and political determination to carry out restoration and tourism development projects. This has been the case since the implementation of the strategic plan of the PPMVSAZP in 2014.

In recent years, it has been recognized that public authorities in Algeria have prioritized traditions and customs over archaeological legacy, which belongs to a different category of intangible cultural assets.

In addition, we have seen that the general public shows minimal interest in these remains of the ChercHELL aqueducts, primarily because of the challenges associated with accessing and incorporating them into the local tourism offerings. (*Schéma D'Aménagement Touristique – وزارة السياحة والصناعة التقليدية*, n.d.)

Furthermore, the absence of media promotion and advertising activities across several platforms of information and communication exacerbates the marginalization of the Charchell aqueducts.

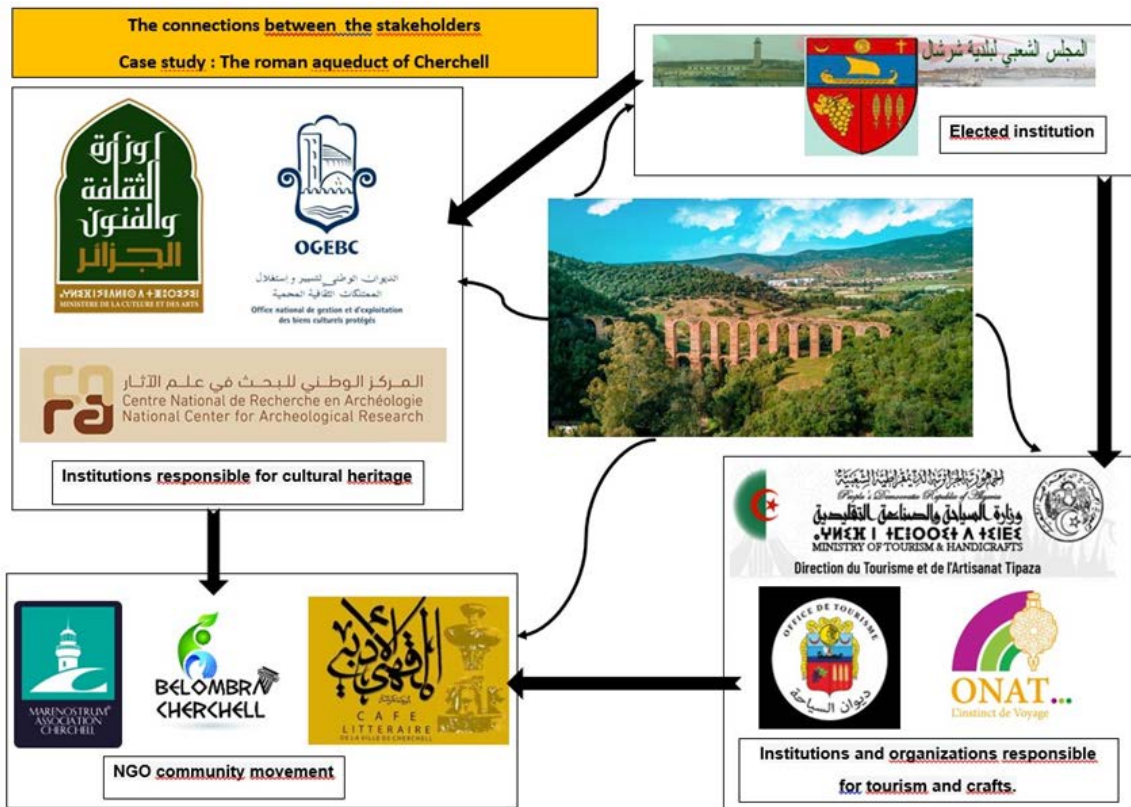


Figure 6: Mind Map of the identification of the various stakeholder's connections (Chennaoui, Y, 2024)

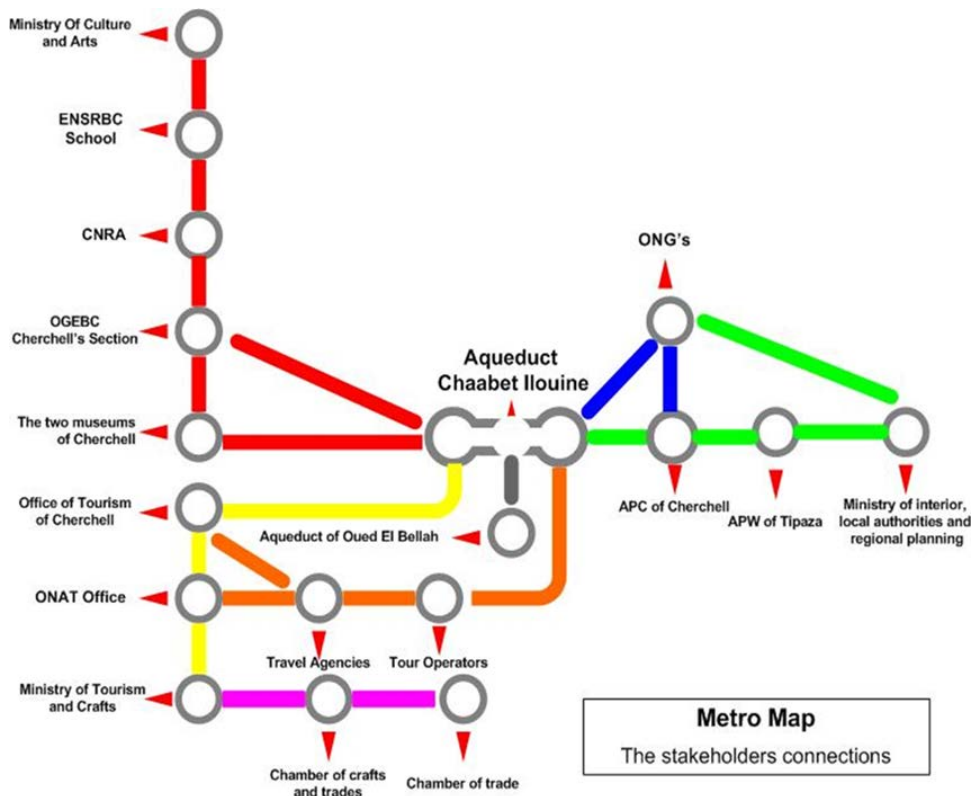


Figure 7: Metro Map showing the different stakeholder's connections. (Chennaoui, Y, 2024).

5. For an efficient collaborative assessment

The case study of the Chabet Ielouine aqueduct highlights how important it is to coordinate with the different stakeholders in cultural tourism. Establishing cohesive policies and strategies for cultural tourism requires

collaboration between private businesses, local communities, government authorities, and local and regional authorities. The preservation of cultural heritage and the promotion of its socio-cultural significance necessitate collaboration among the directorate of the culture of the Wilaya of Tipaza, the two museums of Cherchell, and the OGEBEC's Cherchell office, which is responsible for the management of historic and archaeological sites and monuments.

The promotion and provision of services related to cultural tourism must be undertaken by private stakeholders, such as hotels, travel agencies, tour guides, and tourism enterprises. There is a possibility that this could lead to the creation of a variety of high-quality tourism services and the encouragement of a positive visitor experience. The preservation of cultural authenticity, the equitable distribution of economic benefits from tourism, and the preservation of a harmonious relationship between visitors and the local community are all significantly influenced by the local communities that reside in close proximity to the archaeological site of the Chabet Ilelouine aqueduct.

It is important to involve the National Observatory of Civil Society (ONSC) when establishing a comprehensive coordination approach between tourism promotion and cultural heritage conservation organizations. The promotion of cultural tourist destinations requires the involvement of the tourism offices of Cherchell and Tipaza, as well as mass media. In order to achieve common objectives, cooperation and collaboration are necessary for heritage conservation. The key to having effective and open communication is communication and engagement, which also ensures that all stakeholders participate in the decision-making process and establish trust.

In order to conserve heritage, stakeholders need to show mutual respect for each other's roles, knowledge, and expertise by acknowledging their contributions and valuing their input. The shared responsibility of heritage conservation should be acknowledged by all stakeholders, including government agencies, local communities, NGOs, and experts. To guarantee that every perspective and voice is acknowledged and valued, it is crucial to prioritize inclusivity and diversity in relationships.

The preservation of heritage often calls for a long-term commitment, and stakeholders need to be adaptable and flexible in their strategies. Through cultivating these relationships, it is possible to ensure that heritage is preserved in a sustainable manner for both present and future generations, knowledge is shared, and diverse perspectives are considered.

6. Conclusion

Local communities that live near cultural heritage sites are important stakeholders in regional or nearby communities. Their active participation and engagement greatly contribute to the long-term preservation and effective management of cultural resources. In addition to helping to preserve intangible cultural treasures, they also facilitate the dissemination of local knowledge and traditional customs. Algeria's cultural heritage is protected, conserved, and enhanced through collaboration and cooperation between these stakeholders.

Finally, we would say that any strategy of valorization of the archaeological sites is in fact a dynamic type for which the shutter of identification then of management must be equipped with capacities and tools that remain necessary to the realization of its territorial and economic enhancement.

As a conclusion, it seems that any strategy of enhancement of archaeological sites is a fact of dynamic type for which the identification and management sections must have the powers and tools that are still necessary to achieve its territorial and economic requalification. All parties involved in the archaeological site must engage in ongoing consultation and participation. To maximize the cultural, environmental, and tourism resources of an area, it is necessary to involve economic and social stakeholders in creating significant offers.

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Ethics approval

Not applicable.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no competing interest.

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