

Local Communities in Algeria and the Consolidation of Community Memory

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Abstract

Local communities, and municipalities in particular, occupy a central position within the structure of the Algerian state due to the responsibilities and objectives entrusted to them. The financial, legal, and institutional capacities vested in municipalities enable them to promote comprehensive local development, meet the daily needs of citizens, embrace their aspirations, and preserve, protect, and promote their cultural heritage, values, and beliefs. Given the significance of community memory as a reflection of a society's authenticity, historical continuity, and rich legacy of heroism, glory, as well as the hardships and difficult periods experienced by previous generations, it constitutes a shared social consciousness that should neither be forgotten nor detached from its historical causes. Remembering both allies and adversaries, while drawing inspiration from the nation's historical legacy, strengthens social cohesion and national unity against all forms of discord, conflict, and particularly external threats and ambitions.

Keywords: Local Communities; Municipality; Historical Memory.

Introduction

Local communities in Algeria constitute the framework of local administration based on the principle of territorial administrative decentralization. They rely on two fundamental institutions: the municipality (*commune*) and the province (*wilaya*)² The municipality is recognized as the basic territorial unit of the State. Under the law, it enjoys legal personality and financial autonomy and exercises a range of powers and responsibilities granted to it by legislation, as stipulated in Articles 1 and 3 of Law No. 11–10 on Municipalities³.

Among its statutory responsibilities, the municipality plays a pivotal role in preserving both national and local memory. As the constitutional institution closest to citizens and directly responsible for the

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² Barakat, Rabia. (2021). *Local Communities as an Instrument for Achieving Sustainable Local Development*, p. 271.

³ Abbassi, Seham. (2021). *The Role of Local Communities in the Provision of Public Services in Algeria*, pp.

territory where historical events occurred and were shaped, its mission extends beyond administrative and developmental functions. It also fulfills important cultural, historical, and educational roles by connecting younger generations with their historical heritage.

The municipality performs this important mission through various mechanisms and instruments. This study examines its role in preserving and consolidating community memory, with particular emphasis on the practice of naming streets, public institutions, and public squares after historical figures and events.

Research Problem

What is the role of the municipality in consolidating community memory in the context of the contemporary technological and digital revolution?

Section One: The Position of the Municipality in the Algerian State

1.1 A Historical Overview of the Emergence of the Municipality

Local communities, including municipalities, comprise both urban and rural territorial entities. They are public-law legal entities that enjoy legal personality and financial independence. A local community consists of a defined population, an administrative organization, elected bodies, administrative institutions, and both human and financial resources⁴.

The municipality is a territorial unit whose geographical boundaries are precisely determined according to historical, socio-tribal, economic, and institutional considerations, with the objective of promoting cooperation, integration, and solidarity among the components of the region⁵.

The following summarizes the main stages in the evolution of the municipality in Algeria.

1. Municipality during the Colonial Period (1830–1962)

During the French colonial era, the municipality functioned primarily as an instrument for enforcing colonial domination and serving the interests of the European settler population. Mixed municipalities (*communes mixtes*), as explained in the explanatory memorandum to the Municipalities Law, were administered by an official from the colonial administration known as the Administrator of Civil Affairs, assisted by Algerian officials known as *caïds* (singular: *caïd*). The administrator was also supported by a municipal committee composed mainly of elected European members and a limited number of appointed Algerian representatives, particularly after 1919.

Alongside these mixed municipalities, there were municipalities with full administrative authority established in regions predominantly inhabited by Europeans. These municipalities essentially served as instruments of the French colonial administration.

2. Municipality during the Transitional Period (1962–1967)

Following Algeria's independence, the departure of the French administration created an administrative vacuum. To address this situation, the newly established authorities created provisional committees responsible for managing municipal affairs, each headed by a chairperson entrusted with the responsibilities of a mayor.

The government also reduced the number of municipalities to 676, a process commonly referred to as the municipal consolidation phase. As a result, the average municipality served approximately

⁴ Ahmed, Obeid Al-Rachidi. (2018). The Role of Local Government Administration in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Achieving Sustainable Development, p. 18.

⁵ Ibid., p. 23.

180,000 inhabitants, compared with the 1,535 municipalities established during the colonial period, which had been created primarily to reinforce French administrative control.

To support municipalities in fulfilling their responsibilities, the government established additional bodies, including the Committee for Economic and Social Intervention (CIES) and the Municipal Council for the Promotion of the Socialist Sector (CCAS)⁶.

The CIES consisted of local residents' representatives and technical experts whose primary role was to provide opinions and recommendations on municipal budget proposals. However, these committees were never established in many regions.

The CCAS, on the other hand, included representatives of the General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA), the ruling party, and the army. Its principal mission was to organize and supervise self-managed development projects.

3. The Foundational Phase of the Municipality

The 1963 Constitution, the Algiers Charter, and the Tripoli Charter played a significant role in highlighting the municipality's official status and recognizing its pioneering role within the Algerian state. Several factors prompted the authorities to expedite the adoption of a new Municipal Law:

- I. During the colonial period, municipalities operated under the French legal system, making it necessary to reform inherited institutions, including the municipality.
- II. The existing legal framework was incompatible with the philosophy of the newly independent Algerian state, which officially adopted a socialist orientation.
- III. The government sought to avoid prolonging the transitional period, which had resulted in considerable inconsistencies in the practical application of municipal administration.
- IV. Owing to its close relationship with citizens and its diverse responsibilities, the municipality was regarded as more influential than the province (*wilaya*) in addressing local affairs. Consequently, municipal reform was considered the logical starting point for broader institutional reform.

Drawing upon these foundational documents and the experience of the transitional period, the political leadership represented by the Political Bureau of the National Liberation Front (FLN) prepared a draft Municipal Law. Following the political changes of 1965, the draft underwent extensive discussion, explanation, and enrichment by the FLN before being adopted by the Revolutionary Council in January 1967.

4. The Municipality under the One-Party System (1967–1990)

The Municipal Law of 1967 reflected the influence of two distinct administrative models: the French model and the Yugoslav model.

The influence of the French system is particularly evident in the broad scope of municipal powers and several aspects of administrative organization, largely as a legacy of the colonial period. The Yugoslav influence, by contrast, stemmed from their shared ideological foundation in socialism, the adoption of a one-party political system, and the priority given to workers and peasants in local governance and administration.

5. The Municipality under Political Pluralism (Since 1990)

⁶ Boudiaf, Ammar. *Op. cit.*, p. 129

This phase was characterized by the implementation of the principles established by the 1989 Constitution, most notably the abolition of the one-party system and the introduction of political pluralism.

Under this new constitutional framework, workers and peasants no longer enjoyed preferential status in electoral candidacy, reflecting Algeria's abandonment of the socialist political model⁷.

1.2 The Legal Framework of the Municipality

Following Algeria's independence in 1962, the country temporarily continued to apply the Municipal Law of 5 April 1884, inherited from the colonial period, until the promulgation of Algeria's first Municipal Law on 18 January 1967, in accordance with the 1963 Constitution, the first constitution adopted by the independent Algerian state.

Article 9 of the 1963 Constitution states:

"The municipality constitutes the fundamental political, administrative, economic, social, and cultural territorial community of the State."

Since then, several legislative texts have amended and expanded the powers and responsibilities of municipalities, including:

- **Ordinance No. 67-24 of 18 January 1967.**
- **Law No. 81-09 of 4 July 1981.**
- **Law No. 90-08 of 7 April 1990**, which defines the municipality as *"the basic territorial community possessing legal personality and financial autonomy."*
- **Law No. 11-10 of 22 June 2011**, as amended and supplemented by **Ordinance No. 21-13 of 31 August 2021**, which constitutes the current legal framework governing municipalities in Algeria.

1.3 Powers and Characteristics of Local Communities (Municipalities)

The principal responsibilities of local communities, particularly municipalities, encompass a wide range of social and developmental sectors, including health, transportation, public works, youth and sports, agriculture, tourism, employment and vocational training, education, industry, energy, water resources, postal and telecommunications services, urban planning and development, culture, commerce, religious affairs and endowments (awqaf), forestry, housing, and land reform⁸.

Like other public administrative institutions, Algerian municipalities possess a number of distinctive characteristics that define their role and functions. Their principal responsibilities include the following:

Preservation of Public Assets

Municipalities are responsible for preserving public property, including administrative, educational, and cultural facilities, as well as infrastructure such as dams, public utility networks, and other public installations. This responsibility includes maintenance, rehabilitation, repair, protection, and the provision of public facilities and equipment.

⁷ Boudiaf, Ammar. *Op. cit.*, p. 130

⁸ Lamir, Abdelkader. *Local Taxes and Their Role in Financing the Budget of Local Communities*, 2014, pp. 44–45.

Environmental and Urban Management

Municipalities undertake activities aimed at maintaining a clean and healthy environment. Their responsibilities include supervising and supporting waste collection services, cleaning and beautifying neighborhoods, combating communicable diseases, reducing pollution, protecting the environment, enforcing building regulations, and promoting sound urban planning and architectural development.

Social Services

Municipalities contribute to social welfare by facilitating access to housing, particularly for low-income and disadvantaged groups, while monitoring and supporting housing development projects. They also provide emergency shelter during natural disasters, distribute food assistance, support impoverished and disabled individuals, promote youth employment, and provide assistance to families with insufficient income⁹.

Administrative Autonomy

Administrative autonomy enables local authorities to exercise the powers necessary to carry out their responsibilities independently. Under this system, administrative functions are distributed between the central government and autonomous local authorities, while remaining subject to supervisory oversight by the central government.

This administrative autonomy offers several advantages:

- Reducing the administrative burden on the central government by decentralizing responsibilities.
- Accelerating decision-making on local affairs and avoiding bureaucratic delays.
- Better understanding and responding to citizens' needs than centralized administration.
- Promoting democratic governance through citizens' direct participation in managing local public affairs.

Financial Autonomy

Financial autonomy implies that municipalities possess their own financial resources and assets, enabling them to perform their legally assigned functions and satisfy the needs of their communities. Municipalities also enjoy the legal right to own and manage public property.

Article 60 of **Law No. 90-08 of 7 April 1990** provides that the Municipal People's Council, acting on behalf of the municipality and under the supervision prescribed by law, is responsible for safeguarding the assets and rights constituting municipal property.

Financial autonomy allows municipalities to prepare and manage their budgets independently within the framework of the State's economic policy, thereby ensuring that local financial independence remains consistent with national economic development objectives.

1.4 Challenges Facing Municipalities

Municipalities encounter numerous challenges in implementing their local development strategies. The most significant include:

⁹ Boujahfa, Rachid. The Reality of Local Communities in Algeria between Limited Local Financing and the Challenge of Local Development, 2020, p. 24.

a. Low Revenue from Local Taxation

The local taxation system generates relatively limited revenues for municipal budgets despite repeated calls for its reform and strengthening. Likewise, income derived from municipal property remains insufficient because of the limited quantity and unequal distribution of municipal assets across different provinces.

b. Limited Territorial Size of Some Municipalities

The small geographical size of certain municipalities restricts their ability to generate adequate local resources. A sufficiently large territory and a substantial population are generally considered important prerequisites for sustainable local financial and economic resources.

c. Poor Financial Management

Weak financial management is one of the primary causes of limited municipal self-financing. In many instances, the financial powers granted by law to municipalities or provinces have been exercised in ways that do not serve the public interest. Such practices include excessive spending on non-developmental expenditures, embezzlement of public funds, collusion between contractors through fictitious invoices, and fraudulent or non-existent public procurement contracts.

d. Insufficient Non-Tax Financial Resources

Municipalities often suffer from limited non-tax revenues, making them heavily dependent on local tax income and financial transfers from the central government.

e. Promoting High-Performing Local Communities

An important contemporary challenge is the establishment of objective and performance-based criteria for evaluating and encouraging successful municipalities, thereby promoting efficiency, accountability, and excellence in local governance¹⁰.

Section Two: The Concept of Community Memory

Contemporary debates concerning the teaching of history, the preservation of historical monuments, the commemoration of prominent historical figures, and the various ways of remembering the past are far from being arbitrary or purely symbolic. Rather, they all revolve around the concept of memory, which constitutes one of the most significant foundations of social cohesion and unity, as well as a key element in shaping the cultural and civic identity of individuals and societies¹¹.

The growing scholarly interest in historical memory is reflected in the expanding body of research within the fields of social sciences, political science, cultural studies, sociology, and history. Numerous scholars have examined historical memory as a distinct field of inquiry, proposing diverse theoretical interpretations and advocating innovative approaches capable of keeping pace with rapid technological and intellectual developments.

Community memory forms the foundation of historical consciousness and the core of a society's value system. It plays a decisive role in shaping both individual and collective identity and serves as a safeguard for social cohesion. Therefore, in order to highlight the municipality's role in consolidating historical memory, and consequently strengthening and preserving national identity, it is essential to examine the concept of memory, the reasons for its growing importance, and the mechanisms through which it can be preserved and promoted.

¹⁰ Boudlal, Ali. "Local Communities between Structural Constraints and the Requirements of Sustainable Development," 2021, pp. 93–94.

¹¹ Gusevskaya, N., & Plotnikova, E. Historical Memory and National Identity.

2.1 The Concept of Historical Memory

Some scholars regard historical memory as synonymous with history itself. However, this interpretation does not accurately reflect the relationship between these two concepts. Although they have long been closely interconnected, they are not identical.

In ancient times, the primary function of history was perceived as preserving collective remembrance—that is, safeguarding the memory of past events from oblivion. Historians were expected to record events and derive moral and political lessons from them. Nevertheless, historical records documented only a limited portion of what actually happened to societies and were often selective, subjective, and influenced by the perspectives of those who produced them¹².

Historical memory may therefore be regarded as an indispensable element for the continuity and survival of society, since it represents the shared foundation upon which communities are built and through which they define their identity.

It should also be emphasized that collective memory is not universal or homogeneous. Rather, it consists of the historical memories of distinct social groups, ranging from small local communities to entire nations. As societies become larger and more complex, greater efforts are required to construct, preserve, and transmit a shared collective memory¹³.

History should therefore remain connected to the concerns and challenges of the present while reconstructing the past in ways that are meaningful for contemporary societies. This perspective has encouraged historians to focus increasingly on reconstructing everyday life, in contrast to earlier historical approaches that concentrated primarily on abstract historical patterns, major political events, and the histories of states and ruling elites.

2.2 Memory as a Field of Study and Research

The Emergence of the Concept in the Early Twentieth Century

Interest in **historical memory** increased significantly following the Second World War, largely as a response to the devastating consequences of the two World Wars, which profoundly shaped the history of the twentieth century.

Scholars increasingly recognized that the political behavior of societies is influenced not only by political institutions but also by social and psychological factors. Within this framework, memory came to be understood as serving the needs of the present rather than merely preserving the past. Instead of functioning solely as a repository of historical facts, memory became a means of interpreting contemporary reality¹⁴.

Accordingly, memory is viewed as an emotional experience rooted in both real and imagined recollections. As such, it is susceptible to processes of interpretation, manipulation, transformation, selective remembrance, and forgetting¹⁵.

¹² Vico, G., Taylor, J., & Miner, R. C. The New Science. Yale University Press, 2020, p. 480.

¹³ Halbwachs, Maurice. On Collective Memory (Heritage of Sociology Series, 1st ed.). University of Chicago Press, 1992, pp. 37–67.

¹⁴ Adorno, Theodor W. "The Meaning of Working Through the Past." In Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords, Introduction by Lydia Goehr. Columbia University Press, 2005, p. 448.

¹⁵ Filippova, Elena I. "History and Memory in the Age of Dominant Identities: An Interview with Pierre Nora, Historian and Member of the French Academy." Journal of Ethnographic Studies, 2011, pp. 75–84.

Toward the end of the twentieth century, the study of historical memory underwent a significant transformation. Following the emergence of synthetic history, historians increasingly turned their attention to the study of mentalities—systems of collective representations and beliefs that characterized past societies. Consequently, historical memory became one of the central themes of historical research.

The Development of the Concept in the Early Twenty-First Century

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, research on historical memory entered a new phase characterized by important conceptual debates. One of the principal challenges identified by scholars was the lack of conceptual clarity surrounding the notion of **memory** itself, together with the absence of well-defined criteria for determining what should legitimately constitute an object of memory studies.

This conceptual ambiguity has encouraged researchers from various disciplines to refine theoretical frameworks, develop more rigorous methodologies, and explore new perspectives capable of explaining the complex relationship between memory, history, identity, and contemporary society¹⁶.

2.3 Historical Memory and Identity

The concepts of historical memory and identity are closely intertwined and mutually reinforcing. Preserving historical memory constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for the self-determination of individuals and for strengthening the cohesion of social groups.

Identity is constructed through an understanding of a nation's history, its present condition, and its envisioned future. Consequently, historical memory serves as a key factor in the formation of both individual and collective identity.

This relationship is further supported by the view that identity—whether ethnic or national—is a form of political imagination grounded in cultural memory¹⁷. Accordingly, any deliberate distortion or manipulation of historical memory for political purposes ultimately represents an attack on collective identity itself.

From this perspective, national identity emerges as an essential component in determining the historical trajectory of a nation. It is simultaneously a product of the past and a projection toward the future. Therefore, cultivating national identity through positive historical narratives and representations can significantly contribute to strengthening national integration and social cohesion.

2.4 Strategies for Consolidating Historical Memory and National Identity

Several strategies may contribute to strengthening historical memory and reinforcing national identity, including:

- National history curricula should encompass the historical, political, and artistic dimensions of state symbols while fostering respect for them among citizens.
- History education at all educational levels should devote greater attention to prominent national historical figures, the formation of the state, and its historical development.

¹⁶ Wendt, G., Krzywatzek, F., Mehler, D., Pestel, F., & Trümse, R. "Entangled Memory: Toward a Third Wave in Memory Studies." In *History and Theory*, Middletown, 2014, pp. 24–44.

¹⁷ Assmann, Jan. "Memory Culture." In *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*. Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 111–147.

- School history lessons should place particular emphasis on the cultural heritage, traditions, and historical values of the nation, while also promoting understanding of the cultures and histories of other communities living within the country.
- During classroom instruction and extracurricular activities, students should be encouraged to explore their family history by constructing family trees and examining family archives and historical records.
- Since films, television programs with historical themes, and school textbooks are among the principal sources through which young people learn about history, educators should also encourage the use of a broader range of historical resources, including historical novels, scholarly books, newspapers, magazines, and specialized historical publications.
- Educational institutions should organize visits to museums, historical monuments, memorial sites, and other places of historical significance to strengthen students' connection with their national heritage.
- Local history should receive particular attention within extracurricular activities. Students should study the history of their region, city, town, or village, compare its past with its present, and appreciate the achievements of their local community and nation. Examining historical events reflected in the surrounding environment provides valuable educational opportunities and strengthens students' awareness of their historical and cultural heritage.

In essence, memory enables societies to live in the present while remaining conscious of the experiences and lessons of the past. Although the past cannot be changed, it should never be forgotten, for remembering it is essential to preserving identity, strengthening social cohesion, and guiding future generations¹⁸.

Section Three: The Role of the Municipality in Consolidating Community Memory

The municipality plays a pivotal role in preserving both national and local memory, as it is the constitutional institution closest to citizens and directly responsible for the territory where historical events took place. Its mission extends beyond administrative and developmental functions to encompass cultural, historical, and educational responsibilities that connect younger generations with their historical heritage. The municipality's contribution to preserving **community memory** and strengthening national identity may be summarized under the following dimensions.

3.1 Preservation of Historical Monuments and Heritage Sites

Restoration and Maintenance

In coordination with the competent authorities—particularly the Ministry of Mjahideen and Rights Holders and the Ministry of Culture—the municipality is responsible for constructing, restoring, and maintaining memorials, martyrs' cemeteries, caves used during the liberation struggle, and former colonial detention and torture centers. These sites are preserved as living testimonies to Algeria's colonial past and struggle for independence.

Protection of Tangible Heritage

¹⁸ Jaara Chikfa, "The past is in the past, but we should never forget" An explorative study of memories of the Algerian War of Independence among the young Algerians in France, spring 2023

Municipalities are also responsible for protecting archaeological and historical sites located within their territorial jurisdiction by preventing their alteration, destruction, or encroachment. Such sites should be incorporated into local development plans and land-use schemes as protected historical landmarks whose historical value must be preserved.

3.2 Naming Public Spaces and Preserving Urban Memory

Naming Streets and Public Institutions

One of the municipality's most important responsibilities is the naming of streets, public squares, schools, cultural centers, and other public facilities after martyrs, freedom fighters (*mujahideen*), leaders of popular resistance movements, and other distinguished historical figures. This practice transforms history into an integral part of citizens' everyday lives and turns the urban landscape into an open historical record.

Murals and Memorials

Municipalities also contribute to historical remembrance by establishing memorials and commemorative spaces, such as municipal museums dedicated to martyrs and veterans of the liberation struggle. Municipal libraries may likewise allocate dedicated sections for local archives, historical photographs, and artifacts—including weapons and tools used during the resistance against colonial rule.

3.3 Cultural Activities and the Commemoration of National Events

Celebrating National and Historical Anniversaries

Municipalities organize official and community celebrations commemorating significant national events, including:

- **1 November** – Anniversary of the Outbreak of the Algerian War of Independence;
- **5 July** – Independence Day;
- **19 March** – Victory Day;
- **19 May** – National Student Day;
- **18 February** – National Martyrs' Day;
- **11 December 1960** – Commemoration of the December Demonstrations;
- **17 October 1961** – National Day of Migration and Remembrance;
- Anniversaries commemorating local resistance movements and historical events.

These commemorations reinforce historical awareness and strengthen citizens' attachment to their national heritage.

Conferences and Academic Events

Municipalities frequently organize, sponsor, or cooperate with other institutions in hosting conferences, seminars, and public lectures led by historians, researchers, surviving veterans of the liberation struggle, and organizations representing the revolutionary family. These events examine the history of the region and highlight its contribution to Algeria's national struggle, including the

role played by local tribes and communities in supporting popular resistance movements and the War of National Liberation.

3.4 Documentation and Preservation of Living Memory

Recording Oral Testimonies

In cooperation with organizations concerned with revolutionary history and national memory, municipalities support programs aimed at recording and preserving the oral testimonies of veterans, elderly citizens, and eyewitnesses to historical events before these invaluable sources are lost. Such testimonies constitute essential primary sources for future historical research.

Supporting Historical Publications

Municipalities also contribute to the publication and dissemination of books, monographs, and local historical studies documenting the history of municipalities, tribes, villages, and regions. These publications are distributed to municipal and school libraries to facilitate public access and academic research.

3.5 Educational Role and Intergenerational Transmission

Educational Historical Tourism

Municipalities play an important educational role by organizing and facilitating school visits to local historical sites and monuments. These educational excursions strengthen students' sense of citizenship, national belonging, and appreciation of their historical heritage while creating meaningful connections between younger generations and their community's past.

3.6 The Legal and Legislative Framework for Preserving Memory

The legal framework governing municipalities grants them both the authority and the practical instruments necessary to implement national legislation relating to historical memory and cultural heritage. Consequently, municipalities constitute the primary public authorities responsible for safeguarding both the tangible and intangible dimensions of memory at the local level.

Municipal Law (Law No. 11-10)

The Municipal Law constitutes the principal legal instrument empowering municipalities to intervene in matters relating to culture, history, and the urban environment. Its relevant provisions include:

- **Article 120** provides that the Municipal People's Council is responsible for identifying and naming inhabited areas in accordance with the applicable legislation and regulations, particularly those concerning martyrs and freedom fighters. It is therefore responsible for naming residential districts, public facilities, and all roads located within the municipality's jurisdiction.
- **Article 121** stipulates that municipalities shall cooperate with the State in preparing and celebrating national holidays, as provided by existing legislation, and in commemorating historical events, particularly those associated with the War of National Liberation.
- **Article 122** requires municipalities to encourage and promote cultural and sporting activities, with particular emphasis on commemorating national occasions and historical anniversaries associated with community memory.

Municipal Libraries and Reading Facilities

The law also obliges municipalities to establish and manage public libraries. Within the context of preserving historical memory, these libraries may dedicate specialized sections—such as "History and National Memory Collections"—to serve as primary reference centers for local residents and researchers interested in the history and heritage of their communities.

Preservation of Local Archives and Monographs

Municipal cultural institutions serve as repositories for preserving historical manuscripts, archival records, tribal and local community documents, and publications documenting popular resistance movements and the Algerian War of Independence within the municipality's territory.

Sponsorship of Intellectual and Cultural Activities

The municipality's statutory responsibility for promoting cultural heritage provides it with the legal authority to organize historical competitions for schools, reading circles devoted to historical literature, seminars, and public lectures featuring historians and researchers. These initiatives contribute to preserving national memory, strengthening historical awareness, and safeguarding national identity against historical distortion or erasure.

3.7 Naming Mechanisms (Executive Decree No. 14-01 of 5 January 2014)

Executive Decree No. 14-01, which establishes the conditions and procedures for naming public institutions, places, and buildings, constitutes the principal legal basis governing both the National Committee for Naming and Renaming and the Provincial Committee for Naming and Renaming.

Competence in Naming Public Spaces

The Municipal People's Council, acting through the Provincial Naming Committee, participates in deliberations concerning the naming of streets, public squares, and other public places.

Historical Priority

The Decree requires that absolute priority be given to the names of martyrs of the War of National Liberation, deceased mujahideen, leaders of popular resistance movements, and national and local historical figures. This requirement aims to prevent arbitrary or inappropriate naming practices.

Approval Procedure

Following deliberation by the Municipal People's Council, the naming proposal is submitted to the Governor (*Wali*) and the competent provincial authorities for final approval. This procedure ensures that the naming of public spaces remains subject to State oversight, thereby safeguarding the historical significance of national symbols.

Powers of the Municipal People's Council

The Municipal People's Council possesses the authority to deliberate upon and approve the naming of streets, public squares, and other public places, including assigning the names of martyrs, freedom fighters, and distinguished historical personalities, in coordination with the relevant supervisory authorities.

3.8 Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage (Law No. 98-04)

Law No. 98-04 establishes the general legal framework for the protection of movable and immovable cultural heritage and assigns specific responsibilities to local authorities, including municipalities.

Article 9 – Protection Plans for Historical Sites

When a historical or archaeological site—such as former detention and torture centers, caves, or fortifications—is officially classified as protected heritage, the municipality must incorporate the site into its urban planning and land-use instruments. Municipalities are also required, in cooperation with the regional Directorates of Culture, to identify and inventory the historical monuments and archaeological sites located within their jurisdiction.

Article 20 – Emergency Intervention Powers

Municipalities are required to take immediate protective measures whenever a historical monument is threatened by deterioration, destruction, or unauthorized encroachment. They must also refrain from issuing construction or demolition permits that could adversely affect protected historical areas.

Where a historical monument or memorial is exposed to imminent danger, the Mayor is legally empowered to order the immediate suspension of any work or infringement and must promptly notify both the competent judicial authorities and the Directorate of Culture to ensure emergency protection.

Article 38 – Preservation of Memorials

Article 38 expressly provides that the maintenance, management, protection, and security of memorials and martyrs' cemeteries constitute a legal responsibility of local authorities (municipalities and provinces), acting in coordination with the external services of the Ministry of Mujahideen and Rights Holders.

Protection of National Symbols

The Law further prohibits municipalities from authorizing commercial, recreational, or urban development activities that could undermine the dignity or integrity of martyrs' cemeteries or historical memorials. Municipalities are likewise required to ensure their permanent protection through appropriate security arrangements.

3.9 Legislation Concerning Mujahideen, Martyrs, and National Memory

Issues relating to the memory of the War of National Liberation and earlier popular resistance movements are governed by a comprehensive legislative framework that actively involves municipalities in its implementation.

Among the most important legal instruments is Law No. 99-07 concerning Mujahideen and Martyrs, which provides that:

1. State institutions, including local authorities, are legally required to protect the symbols of the Algerian Revolution, preserve martyrs' cemeteries, maintain memorials and former detention and torture centers, and where appropriate convert them into museums or protected historical sites.

2. Article 64 establishes, under the authority of the President of the Republic, a Supreme Council for National Memory, entrusted with preserving, promoting, safeguarding, and enhancing Algeria's national memory.

3.10 Development Plans and Urban Planning Instruments (PDAU and POS)

Municipal planning instruments also contribute significantly to the preservation of historical memory.

The Master Plan for Urban Development and Planning (PDAU) and the Land Occupancy Plan (POS) require municipalities to classify historical sites, martyrs' cemeteries, and archaeological monuments as **protected areas**, thereby prohibiting construction or urban expansion that could compromise their historical integrity.

3.11 Financial Control and Funding Mechanisms

Municipal Budget

Municipalities are legally authorized to allocate financial resources within their annual operating and investment budgets for:

- the maintenance and restoration of historical monuments and memorials;
- the acquisition of historical books and archival materials for municipal libraries;
- the financing of activities commemorating national holidays and historical anniversaries.

Mandatory Budgetary Allocations

The municipal accounting framework includes dedicated budget lines for:

- "Celebration of National Holidays and Commemorative Events"; and
- "Maintenance and Restoration of Cultural and Historical Heritage."

Consequently, the Financial Controller and the Governor (*Wali*) may refuse to approve a municipal budget that fails to allocate sufficient resources for the maintenance of martyrs' cemeteries and historical monuments.

Common Fund for Local Authorities (FCCL)

Municipalities with limited financial resources may benefit from special grants provided by the Common Fund for Local Authorities (FCCL) to finance major memory-related projects, including the construction of municipal museums dedicated to the liberation struggle or the restoration of former colonial detention and torture centers.

Accordingly, the Algerian legal framework has transformed the protection of historical memory at the municipal level from a voluntary cultural activity into a binding legal obligation. Failure to fulfill these responsibilities may result in administrative or legal accountability for locally elected officials, thereby establishing municipalities as key implementing institutions within Algeria's national strategy for preserving historical memory.

3.12 Practical Impact of Executive Decree No. 14-01 of 5 January 2014

In 2014, a nationwide survey identified more than 80,000 unnamed public spaces, including public institutions, urban spaces, and facilities. Following this assessment, a series of administrative and operational measures were implemented, resulting in significant progress in the examination and approval of naming proposals and in the installation of official nameplates by provincial and municipal committees.

The impact of these measures is illustrated in the following comparative table.

Year	Named Public Spaces	Unnamed Public Spaces	Installed Nameplates	Nameplates Not Installed	Numbered Building Entrances	Unnumbered Building Entrances
2015	93,941	66,963	91,957	179,492	1,070,449	852,217
2023	257,740	89,122	352,710	223,219	4,945,310	1,844,223

Table 1. Comparative indicators for the implementation of Executive Decree No. 14-01 between 2015 and 2023, illustrating the progress achieved in naming public spaces and numbering buildings following the Decree's adoption¹⁹.

Section Four: A Case Study of the Municipality of El Oued: Street Naming as a Means of Preserving Community Memory

The newly installed street nameplates in the Municipality of El Oued immediately attracted my attention. Their modern design and widespread presence—from one street to another—made them impossible to overlook. This prompted me to stop and reflect upon their content, eventually leading to discussions with groups of young people gathered around these signs. Together, we read and discussed the names they displayed. In what follows, I present my observations of what may be described as an open-air historical museum, freely accessible to everyone on a daily basis without any entrance fees or administrative barriers.

4.1 Location and Historical Background of the Municipality of El Oued

The Municipality of El Oued is located approximately 650 km southeast of Algiers and constitutes one of the municipalities of El Oued Province, Algeria. Commonly known as Oued Souf or the "City of a Thousand Domes," it serves as the provincial capital. The city is distinguished by its desert environment and tourism potential, characterized by a desert climate with mild to cold winters and hot summers.

In 1984, Algeria implemented a nationwide administrative reorganization that established El Oued Province (Province No. 39). Consequently, the Municipality of El Oued became the administrative capital of the newly created province.

Among its statutory responsibilities, the municipality contributes to the preservation of community memory by commemorating national holidays in cooperation with local authorities, organizing cultural activities, and naming public squares, educational and administrative institutions, and especially major streets after historical figures associated with Algeria's national struggle.

¹⁹ interieur.gov.dz

4.2 Street Naming in the Municipality (Case Study)

During the past two years, the Municipality of El Oued has undertaken an extensive street-naming initiative, resulting in nearly 100% of the municipality's streets being officially named. Blue street nameplates have been installed throughout residential neighborhoods, displaying the names of martyrs, female martyrs, and deceased veterans of the Algerian War of National Liberation.

To examine this initiative more closely, a sample was selected from one neighborhood within the municipality. The sample consisted of 15 streets bearing the following names:

1. Abdel Salam Kadri (1930–1960)
2. Ibrahim Mokhtari (1912–1958)
3. Abdelhafid Jebali (1925–1960)
4. Mohamed Soltani (1940–1960)
5. Abdelkrim Hassani (1939–1960)
6. Mabrouk Ben Houd
7. Ahmed Reguai (1933–1960)
8. Massouda Baj ("Mariam")
9. Abdallah Wattwat (1934–1959)
10. Abdelhafid Zerbit (1912–1959)
11. El Aid Jreibi (1899–1959)
12. Derbal Khriss (1933–1959)
13. Idris Ben Achour (1920–1960)
14. Larbi Hammoudi (1938–1959)
15. Djilani Sawadiqia (1929–1959)

Analysis of the Street Names

Several observations emerge from this initiative:

- The naming of streets represents one of the municipality's practical responsibilities in preserving **community memory** and commemorating local historical figures.
- Beyond its commemorative function, street naming also serves an important administrative purpose by identifying and organizing the municipality's urban and cadastral infrastructure.
- The initiative reflects the implementation of national and local government policies concerning the preservation of historical memory.
- To better understand the historical significance of these names, an effort was made to collect biographical information about each martyr. Information was obtained through consultation with the Directorate of Mujahideen and Rights Holders of El Oued Province, interviews with the historian Saad Ben El Bachir Ammara, and searches of publicly available historical sources.

The information collected is summarized in the following table.

Martyr	Year of Birth	Date of Martyrdom	Place of Origin	Remarks
Idris Ben Achour	1920	July 1959	Tamerna El Jadida – Djamaa	Information obtained ²⁰
Derbal Khriss	1927	1959	Oum El Tiour – El Meghaier	Information obtained
Ahmed Reguai	1931	22 August 1960	Oum El Tiour – El Meghaier	Information obtained
Ibrahim Mokhtari	1912	1958	Oum El Tiour – El Meghaier	Information obtained
Abdallah Wattwat	1934	1960	Oum El Tiour – El Meghaier	Information obtained
Abdelhafid Jebali	1925	28 January 1960	El Oued	Information obtained
Larbi Hammoudi	1938	1959	Hassani	Information obtained
Abdelkrim Hassani	1939	20 January 1960	Hassani	Information obtained
Abdelhafid Zerbit	1912	1959	Trifaoui	Information obtained
Ahmed Soltani	1938	1 February 1957	Trifaoui	Information obtained
Djilani Sawadiqia	1929	1958	Hassi Khalifa	Information obtained
El Aid Jreibi	1899	1959	El Meghaier	Information obtained
Massouda Baj ("Mariam")	7 May 1933	1957	Chlef	Information obtained
Abdel Salam Kadri	1930	1960	—	Information not available
Mabrouk Ben Houd	—	—	—	Information not available ²¹

Table 2. Summary of biographical information on the martyrs whose names have been assigned to streets in the Municipality of El Oued²².

Observations and Findings from the Sample

²⁰ Ben El Bachir Ammara, Saad. Dictionary of the Martyrs of the Oued Righ Region – El Oued Province. Dar Houma, Algeria, 2015.

²¹ Ta3limkom Blog.

²² Prepared by the researcher.

The analysis of the selected sample yields several important observations regarding the role of street naming in preserving **community memory**.

a. Availability of Historical Information

Biographical information was obtained for the majority of the martyrs—may God have mercy upon them. However, the available information was often incomplete, imprecise, and poorly organized. It appears to have been accumulated gradually from different sources without systematic documentation, indicating the need for better organization and standardization.

b. Lack of Information on Some Martyrs

For several martyrs, no reliable information could be found, even through internet searches. This may be attributed to various historical and practical circumstances. One of the principal reasons is the absence of an official national database or digital repository containing authenticated information on Algeria's martyrs. Most of the available information consists of local initiatives or personal efforts that lack official recognition or legal authority.

c. Beyond Symbolic Street Names

Naming streets after martyrs and deceased *mujahideen* serves to honor their sacrifice and preserve their memory. However, such names remain merely symbolic if citizens, particularly younger generations, are unable to learn about the individuals behind them. Additional efforts are therefore required to make these historical figures better known. One practical recommendation is to complement street nameplates with Quick Response (QR) codes, allowing citizens to access comprehensive biographical information through smartphones.

d. Establishment of a National Historical Database

A comprehensive and officially recognized national database should be developed to document martyrs, *mujahideen*, major battles, and historical sites. Such a database would provide reliable historical information for researchers, educational institutions, and the general public while ensuring consistency in commemorative practices across the country.

e. Representation of Local and National Figures

The analysis revealed that many of the martyrs whose names were assigned to streets originated from outside the municipality. This should not be viewed negatively. On the contrary, it reflects the fact that the sacrifices made during the Algerian War of National Liberation belong to the entire nation, thereby strengthening national unity and reducing regional or tribal divisions.

Nevertheless, assigning the names of local historical figures may have additional educational value because they are often better known to local communities through family, social, or historical ties. Such familiarity may strengthen citizens' emotional attachment to their local history and deepen the impact of **community memory**.

f. The Prominent Role of Young People

Most of the martyrs included in the sample were between 20 and 30 years of age, and many occupied positions of leadership during the liberation struggle. Their example offers an inspiring message to contemporary youth by demonstrating that young people are capable of assuming significant responsibilities and making extraordinary sacrifices for their country.

This observation also conveys an important message to policymakers: young people possess the capacity to contribute meaningfully to public life and should therefore be encouraged rather than

marginalized. Recent reforms, particularly those relating to Algeria's electoral legislation, reflect a growing recognition of youth participation in public affairs.

g. Recognition of Women's Contribution

The presence of a female martyr among the street names highlights the significant contribution of Algerian women to the War of National Liberation. Women fought alongside men in resisting colonial rule, demonstrating that national sacrifice transcended gender, age, and social background.

Accordingly, commemorative naming practices should remain inclusive, recognizing all individuals who contributed to Algeria's liberation, irrespective of gender or other personal characteristics.

h. Enhancing the Practical Use of Street Names

To maximize the practical benefits of these street names in citizens' daily lives and improve communication between public administrations and the public, several measures are recommended:

- Integrate officially approved street names into Google Maps and other digital mapping platforms.
- Update civil registration and residential address databases to reflect the officially adopted street names.
- Encourage the systematic use of official street names in postal services, correspondence, parcel delivery, and other public and private communication systems.

i. Recommendations for the Design and Content of Street Nameplates

To further strengthen the educational and commemorative value of street naming, improvements should be made to both the content and visual design of street nameplates. These enhancements may include providing concise historical information, incorporating digital technologies such as QR codes, adopting standardized visual identities, and ensuring greater readability and accessibility for both residents and visitors. Such measures would transform street nameplates from simple navigational tools into effective instruments for preserving and transmitting **community memory**.

Proposed Design for Street Nameplates

To enhance the educational value of street naming and promote community memory, the following design options are recommended:



- **Option 1:** Include a **QR Code** providing access to detailed biographical information about the historical figure.



- **Option 2:** Include both a QR Code and inscriptions in Tamazight (Tifinagh script).



- **Option 3:** Include a QR Code together with inscriptions in Arabic, Tamazight (Tifinagh), and English.

- Text: Reflective white lettering to improve visibility under both daylight and nighttime conditions.
- Border: White border measuring approximately 1 cm in width.

The information should be arranged as follows:

- Top section: Arabic text using the Noto Naskh Arabic GE SS TWO font.
- Middle section: Tamazight (Tifinagh) text using the Noto Sans Tifinagh font.
- Lower section: English text using either Arial Bold or DIN.
- Right-hand side: A QR Code measuring approximately 8 × 8 cm to 10 × 10 cm, allowing easy scanning with a smartphone.

These specifications provide an appropriate balance between aesthetic quality, readability, accessibility, and the educational function of the sign, transforming it into an effective tool for preserving and promoting community memory.

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