

The Social and Solidarity Economy in Kabylie: The Modernity of an Institutional Legacy The Case of Sahel Village

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Abstract

This article asks how far the category of the social and solidarity economy (SSE) can account for territorial development dynamics in the villages of Kabylie. The literature is divided between a continuist reading, which treats Kabyle SSE as the reactivation of long-standing mutual aid practices (Perret and Achir, 2014), and a critical one, which stresses the historical dismantling of local solidarity institutions and the instrumentalization of the contemporary associative movement (Zoreli, 2015, 2023). Drawing on the case of Sahel village, documented through our own fieldwork, we show that village organisation operates as a collective enterprise of general interest, endowed with deliberative governance, a mutualised fund and a codified contribution regime, and that it has been producing since 1967 the infrastructure that public authorities fail to supply. We map the canonical principles of the SSE onto observed practices and analyse village financing as a hybridisation of reciprocity, redistribution and market exchange, articulated with three forms of social capital. The limits of the model are then examined: constrained participation, dependence on the diaspora, the relative invisibility of women, and the absence of legal status.

Keywords: social and solidarity economy; village committee; village fund; local development; social capital; Kabylie; Tizi-Ouzou.

Introduction

The social and solidarity economy (SSE) designates a set of organisations, cooperatives, mutuals, associations and foundations. whose operation rests on limited profit distribution, democratic governance, a collective purpose, territorial embeddedness and citizen mobilisation. It is neither a charitable economy, which would substitute benevolence for entitlement, nor a work-integration economy reduced to a transitional sector leading towards the market: it proposes a recomposition of the relationship between the economic and the social (Eme and Laville, 2004). Forged in a European context, the category has since spread to the countries of the South, where it encounters forms of collective organisation that largely predate it.

Kabylie, is in this respect, both a privileged and a paradoxical field site. Privileged, because the *tajmaët*, the deliberative village assembly, has modernised into the village committee without losing its normative authority, and continues to produce collective goods out of mutualised resources. Paradoxical, because a society whose nineteenth-century observers praised the pervasiveness of its spirit of association and solidarity (Hanoteau and Letourneux, 1893) is today sometimes invited to relearn solidarity from imported models.

Two readings structure the literature. The first, exemplified by Perret and Achir (2014), places Kabyle SSE within a continuity: *tiwiza*, the village fund and migrant remittances would be the earlier forms of a solidarity economy that contemporary vocabulary is merely rediscovering. The second, developed by Zoreli (2015, 2023) from a critical-theory standpoint, rejects this continuity: colonisation, nation-state building and globalisation successively demobilised local solidarities, while the associative movement born of political pluralism has come up against a law that swallows the very right it grants, against bureaucratic constraints and against strategies of partisan capture. Yet both readings share one finding: the real locus of the Kabyle solidarity economy lies at village level rather than in the officially registered association.

The research question may therefore be stated as follows: to what extent does the economic organisation of the Kabyle village belong to the SSE, and what are the conditions and limits of its effectiveness in matters of territorial development? We draw on the case of Sahel village, in the municipality of Bouzeguène, as documented during the fieldwork conducted for our doctoral research (Kara, 2024). The village belongs to a municipality ranked fourth in terms of wealth and listed among the localities whose development requires specific state support; according to the chair of its committee, it receives only one municipal development plan every five to six years; it has nonetheless completed, since 1967, most of its infrastructure by its own means. The article first builds the theoretical framework, then sets out the approach, presents the case and discusses its implications.

1. Theoretical framework: the SSE between scholarly category and situated institutions

1.1. Genealogy of the category and constitutive principles

The SSE is heir to an intellectual tradition worth recalling, since it is against this tradition that practices observed elsewhere are implicitly measured. Drawing on Lavoué, Jézequel and Janvier (2010), Perret and Achir (2014) retrace the historical shift in France from corporative solidarity to solidarity organised around redistribution: the solidarist associationism of the 1830s and 1840s, born despite the Le Chapelier Act; the golden age opened by the 1848 revolution; the solidarist current accompanying the birth of the social state; the expansion of redistributive solidarity during the post-war boom; and the return of associationism after the 1960s, as the welfare state met its financial limits.

The contemporary sequence extends this demand: Frère (2009) theorises its new solidarist spirit as an alternative to wage society, one that promotes the singular way in which each society lives out solidarity and inscribes it in the wider world, social innovation there installing new institutional arrangements rather than merely repairing the shortcomings of existing provision.

Perret and Achir (2014) identify five principles: limited profit distribution, democratic governance, a general or collective purpose, territorial embeddedness and citizen mobilisation, to which may be added managerial autonomy and the primacy of people and labour over capital. Eme and Laville (2004) describe the SSE as a social ecology that grounds economic activity in an account of social and environmental interactions, and derive from it two features: the joint construction of supply and demand, and the hybridisation of economies. Laville (2003) recalls that the associative form, while it contributed to the birth of the social state, has also been put to functional use by the state apparatus; Favreau (2003) identifies the two risks that threaten the SSE: instrumentalisation and substitution. In concrete terms, the SSE covers the heterogeneous registers surveyed by Perret and Achir (2014): solidarity-based proximity services, solidarity finance, local exchange trading systems and fair trade.

The question of transferring the category beyond its space of formation is raised by Baron (2003), who shows that development may build on the key associations of the solidarity economy provided these are not mere replicas of imported institutions, an invitation to treat solidarity forms in the South as autonomous configurations rather than as incomplete versions of a European model.

1.2. Reciprocity, redistribution, market exchange and social capital

The most productive framework is Polanyian in origin. Following Polanyi (1944), Lavoué, Jézequel and Janvier (2010) recall that exchange is governed by three modes: the market, which claims to operate without regulation; redistribution, which ties the bond to a political authority; and reciprocity, which acts to sustain the relationship. The SSE does not substitute one principle for the others but proposes a situated recomposition of the three. Reciprocity points to the anthropology of the gift: Mauss (1925) established the threefold obligation to give, to receive and to return; Maunier (1927), investigating ritual exchange in North Africa, verified these principles on the Kabyle *tawsa* and showed that it amounts neither to a contribution towards expenses, the host family collecting up to three times the sum disbursed, nor to self-interested exchange, since breaking the cycle brings contempt and the rupture of social ties rather than legal sanction; the MAUSS current, within which Zoreli (2017) situates his analysis, makes the gift a paradigm alternative to utilitarianism. Eme and Laville (2004) accordingly define proximity services as services that, from a reciprocal impulse, jointly construct supply and demand and combine market and redistributive principles; the issue then becomes their sustainability.

A final distinction must be drawn between horizontal solidarity, understood as the self-organisation of individuals to solve shared problems, and vertical solidarity, constituted by the corrective action of the state (Perret and Achir, 2014). This distinction becomes central where, as in rural Kabylie, vertical solidarity is virtually absent.

To characterise the relationships that carry these solidarities, the social capital literature offers a well-tested instrument. Coleman (1988) shows how social relations contribute to the production of human capital while identifying the risk of relational closure; Putnam (2000) treats social capital as an attribute of communities; Granovetter (1985) recalls that economic action is embedded in networks of relations, a proposition all the more forceful where the

economic sphere has never been institutionally separated from the political one. The World Bank (2000) distinguishes three forms of ties: *bonding* ties, horizontal, uniting individuals of identical status and tending towards the closure Coleman describes; *linking* ties, vertical, which Angeon, Caron and Lardon (2006) describe as requiring reaffirmation through reciprocal transactions that compel the continuation of exchange; and *bridging* ties, connecting distant agents such as the village member who has emigrated, and making it possible to obtain better state services or to access certain markets. Loudiyi, Angeon and Lardon (2004) associate these with three registers: living together, producing together, organising together. Perret and Achir (2014) show that the village committee belongs to the productive-group category, endowed with a shared, finalised purpose and with common rules (the *lqanoun tadarth*) whose transgression exposes members to financial penalty or exclusion; Perret and Abrika (2013) establish that distant ties with the emigrant community are essential to territorial development, the committee acting, depending on the case, as a substitute for or a complement to the state.

1.3. Reading Kabyle society: scientific perspectives and the architecture of solidarity

The analysis of Kabyle institutions is structured by traditions whose assumptions must be made explicit. Roberts (2005) identifies two parent perspectives: the institutional-historical perspective, stemming from Hanoteau and Letourneux (1893), to which we owe our knowledge of village *kanouns*; and the structural-sociological perspective, grounded in segmentary theory. A third, genetic-structuralist perspective is developed by Bourdieu (1974 [1958]). Zoreli (2023) finds them inadequate, since none opens up a development alternative, and proposes, within a critical-theory approach, a constructivist-solidarist perspective: Kabyle egalitarian associationism was patiently built so that a society of houses could exist. It is on this ground that the author holds that Kabylie retains a solidarity spirit that is displaced yet still alive.

The architecture described by these works takes the form of a series of nested levels (Servier, 1994; Lacoste-Dujardin, 2002), the most widespread of which Camps (2007) terms a kind of village republic. At the base, *axxam*, the extended family working an undivided landholding, a regime that, as Bourdieu (1974) notes, discourages any individual secession. Then *taxaɣɣvut*, the lineage, endowed with a council that rules on the support to be granted to families in need. Then *adrums*, bringing together neighbouring *tixaɣɣvin* that share a fountain, a burial ground and meeting spaces. Then *taɣɣart*, the village, endowed with the *tajmaet*, an assembly holding prerogatives, a deliberative council and a set of by-laws, and serving equally as the public space of village life (Hanoteau and Letourneux, 1893). Then *learc*, a grouping of villages linked by an eponymous ancestor, jointly managing *souks* and *zaouiās*, the latter operating as free hostelries providing hospitality and mediation. Finally *taqvilt*, a contingent confederation. The law governing this whole is human rather than revealed: the *lqanoun tadarth* rests on an oral custom, *llâda*, adapted under the name of *taârfit*, both grounded in the equality of rights and duties among village citizens (Adli, 2010).

Table 1 — Levels of nesting and forms of solidarity in traditional Kabylie

Structure	Nature	Forms of solidarity mobilised
<i>Axxam</i> (extended family)	Basic unit; undivided landholding	Collective labour, shared meals, clan solidarity (<i>soff</i>), mutualism at life-cycle events (birth, circumcision, marriage)
<i>Taxaɣruvt</i> (lineage)	Branches of a common stock	Gifts in kind, voluntary labour, council ruling on support to be granted
<i>Adrum</i>	Neighbouring <i>tixaɣruvin</i>	<i>Tiwizi</i> for harvest and building, compensation for livestock losses, mutual aid among women
<i>Taɣdart / tajmaet</i>	Deliberative assembly and regulatory body	Redistribution (<i>timecɣet</i>), upkeep of common goods, house-building for the destitute, contributions in equal shares
<i>Lɛarc</i> (tribe)	Villages linked by an eponymous ancestor	Joint management of <i>souks</i> and <i>zaouiās</i> , reciprocal exchange, free hospitality, mediation
<i>Taqvilt</i> (confederation)	Contingent structure	Defensive solidarity between villages

Source: compiled by the authors from Zoreli (2023), Perret and Achir (2014), Hanoteau and Letourneux (1893) and Adli (2010).

Three institutions deserve attention. *Tiwizi*, an Amazigh term derived from the verb *iwiss* (to help), denotes the pooling of a collective's efforts and tools for works benefiting the community or one of its members (a fountain, paving, drainage, a dispensary, but also the harvest of an elderly person or an orphan) a form of cooperation attributed to the fact that Amazigh society knew neither slavery, nor serfdom, nor sharecropping (Perret and Achir, 2014). *Timecɣet* organises, at the opening of the ploughing season, the slaughter of oxen and the strictly equal distribution of the meat: Zoreli (2017) identifies in it a spiritual value, a reaffirmation of equality and the absolution of disputes, together with a humanising effect on the economy. *Tawsa*, finally, follows the logic of the agonistic gift. The decisive point is twofold: regulation is never delegated to a specialised body but internalised by structures that simultaneously discharge economic, political and cultural functions, what Zoreli calls the embeddedness of the socio-economic in the politico-cultural, in contrast with the separation characteristic of Western organisations (Eme and Laville, 2004); and assistance never takes the form of humiliating relief, procedures being designed so that recipients experience equality rather than inferiority.

1.4. Historical ruptures and the contemporary associative framework

This architecture did not pass through the last two centuries unscathed. The conquest of 1857 was accompanied, as Lacoste-Dujardin (2002) recalls, by destruction and looting that shook Kabyles even in their beliefs, while the sequestration of land undermined the mountain economy. Yacono (1992) shows that the French authorities weakened the traditional elites and brought forth others, the appointed chiefs abusing their powers and ruining local principles of social justice; he also reports that the craft school founded by Hanoteau in 1860, which was to operate on mutualist lines, was destroyed by its own pupils in 1871. Schooling,

emigration and military conscription produced what Sayad (1994) analyses as a rupture with the social environment. The net outcome is a shift from undivided to individual property, from barter and gift to market exchange, and from community solidarities to state-based ones (Zoreli, 2023).

The post-colonial period prolonged this movement. Doumane (1993) shows that economic modernisation went hand in hand with efforts to grind down communal structures, while Addi (2004) analyses the disappearance of the *'ayla* under the effect of agrarian policy and urbanisation. Zoreli (2023) draws on Latouche (2005), who distinguishes positive acculturation from negative acculturation leading to deculturation, the former producing territories in which new solidarities take shape by compensating for the failure of public authorities. The record of imported forms confirms their failure: Brabez and Bedrani (2015) show that the few surviving agricultural cooperatives hold no general meetings, pay no rebates and produce no accounts, their members regarding them as the property of the state or of their managers.

Algerian associative law has passed through two sequences. During the socialist phase, the informal *tajmaet* was supervised by the local cell of the party-state and the dual-approval rule of 1971 selected associations consistent with official orientations, Act No. 87-15 opening only a narrow space. During the liberal phase, Act No. 90-31 of 4 December 1990 established the right of association but hedged it with restrictions (administrative authorisation, prohibition of productive activities and of profit distribution, cumbersome founding formalities) to which Act No. 12-06 of 12 January 2012 added further constraints. Thieux (2009) documents the difficult emergence of an associative space of contestation; Zoreli (2015, 2023) derives from it a typology of three classes of obstacle: a law that swallows the right; disabling handicaps, whereby subsidies, premises and administrative procedures become levers of subordination, the opacity of subsidy allocation having given rise to repeated public denunciations; and handicapping incapacities, produced by the opportunistic behaviour that follows, extending to the diversion of donations denounced by partner NGOs. The two risks identified by Favreau (2003) are thus no longer risks but a lived reality.

This diagnosis contrasts with the sheer size of the associative fabric. Kara (2024) counts almost 1,910 associations in Tizi-Ouzou province alone in 2021, some 50% of which are village and neighbourhood committees. Zoreli (2023) resolves the puzzle by shifting the analytical gaze: it is the villages, whose democratic self-management shields them from attempts at capture, that constitute the effective seedbed of the solidarity economy. It is this hypothesis that we test here.

2. Methodological approach

This article proceeds by means of a single case study with a comprehensive aim, within a constructivist position and an interpretive epistemology: local development is approached as a social construction arising from the actions of situated actors, and the reasoning is inductive, moving from the particular case towards the context that contains it.

The empirical material consists of data gathered on Sahel village in the course of our doctoral research (Kara, 2024). Three techniques were combined: documentary collection, bearing in

particular on the analysis of village by-laws; semi-structured interviews with the chairs and members of village committees, with association presidents, local elected representatives and administrative officials; and in situ observation. Sahel village was selected purposively, on three criteria: the effective completion of projects by civil society's own means; membership of a municipality classified as poor or disadvantaged; and the rural, mountainous character of the territory. It belongs to a set of six villages studied, alongside Tawrirt, Ait Aicha, Tirourda, Aourir Ouzemour and Amokreze, which makes it possible to check the singularity of the case through internal comparison. This material is placed in dialogue with the work of Perret and Achir (2014), of Zoreli (2015, 2023) and with the general literature on the SSE and social capital.

Three limitations must be stated. Collecting data on financing proved difficult for someone external to the village community, which lengthened the enquiry and restricted the number of villages studied. The amounts relating to Sahel's projects were not disclosed, which rules out any monetary assessment of the investment effort and requires reasoning on the nature and chronology of the works. This reticence being itself a significant social fact. Finally, and inherently to the interpretive approach, the third limitation lies in the fact that the conclusions proceed from our own reading of the data, which may be interpreted otherwise.

3. Sahel village: anatomy of a solidarity-based village economy

3.1. Territory, governance and institutional environment

Sahel village is located in the municipality of Bouzeguène, some 70 kilometres east of Tizi-Ouzou, bordered by the villages of At Wizgan, Tawrirt and Hidjeb, and known for the farmland running along the Asif n Sahel river. Its institutional environment is marked by a structural weakness of public intervention: the municipality is ranked fourth in terms of wealth according to the classification of the Directorate of Local Administration and appears on the list of localities requiring specific state support published by Executive Decree No. 22-301 of 8 September 2022; the village benefits from only one municipal development plan every five to six years. This scarcity is not peculiar to Sahel: at provincial level we documented low rates of expenditure of the allocated budgets, attributable to opposition during land acquisition, to the absence of cadastral records and to bureaucratic obstruction. The village has moreover acquired recent visibility: named the province's cleanest village in 2019 (Aïssat Rabah competition), it hosted the itinerant Raconte'Arts festival the same year.

Governance is articulated at two levels. The village committee, a modernised form of the *tajmaet*, constitutes the deliberative and executive body; eleven associations are also active in the village, six of them engaged in the annual cultural events, with a biannual meeting chaired by the committee to review activities. The by-laws set the hierarchy unambiguously: the village committee is the supreme authority, and any initiative to create a cultural, religious, sporting or social association is placed under its authority. This clause inverts the usual relationship between registered association and informal community: the legally recognised structure is subordinated to the customary institution. It is precisely this that protects the village from the partisan capture described by Zoreli (2015): since the committee's legitimacy does not derive from administrative approval, it cannot be withdrawn

by administrative means. The chair frames the village's purpose in terms that overlap with the vocabulary of the SSE: equity, listening, a voice given to all, balanced and sustainable development, inclusion. The project selection process confirms this: citizens state their needs in open meeting, the elected members of the committee rank them, and the list is submitted to the assembly for approval.

3.2. An unbroken chronology of collective achievements

What is distinctive about Sahel is the antiquity and continuity of its dynamic: the first projects date from 1967 and the momentum has been sustained despite the renewal of generations.

Table 2 — Chronology of works completed by the Sahel village committee (1967-2023)

Period	Works completed	Financing
1967-1973	Drinking water supply over 9 km; mosque; primary school; livestock shed	Village fund + voluntary labour; school financed 100% by public authorities
1980-1981	New 9 km water main; library; health post; playground	Village fund + voluntary labour; equipment from the municipal assembly
1985-1986	Opening of a 5 km track; construction of fountains	Village fund (100%) + voluntary labour
1990-1999	Two sewerage networks; refurbishment of the village square; paving of alleyways; martyrs' memorial; cemetery shelter; 3 km track	Village fund (100%) + voluntary labour; memorial 40% co-financed by the municipal assembly
2016-2019	8 fountains and refurbishment of the older ones; decoration and paving of alleyways; drainage channels; waste sorting centre	Village fund (100%) + voluntary labour
2022-2023	8 retaining walls; renovation of sewerage; painting of public buildings; children's roundabout; mosque repairs; 4 boreholes from 24 to 72 m	Village fund (100%) + voluntary labour

Source: compiled by the authors from the fieldwork (Kara, 2024, Table V.03).

Three observations emerge. First, the primacy of water: as in all the villages studied, water capture is the first project undertaken, whatever its cost, because of summer shortages; fountains, initially drawing points, have become monuments whose refurbishment still figures among recent priorities. Second, the widening scope of intervention: the 1967-1999 sequence concerns basic infrastructure, the 2016-2023 sequence quality of life and the environment, which overlaps with the criteria of the cleanest-village competition. Third, the marginal character of public contribution: only the 1968 school and the 1998 memorial involved public funding, the Municipal People's Assembly confining itself elsewhere to contributions in equipment.

3.3. The village fund and the contribution regime

What makes this chronology possible is the village fund, which Perret and Achir (2014) describe as the village's public treasury and in which we distinguish five sources.

Table 3 — Resources of the Sahel village fund

Resource	Terms in Sahel	Nature and economic logic
Contributions	50 DZD per month per resident, men, women and children included, i.e. 600 DZD a year; 4,000 DZD a year for natives residing elsewhere in Algeria; 50 euros a year for emigrants	Compulsory, permanent, set by the village code; codified reciprocity
Levies	Exceptional contribution decided by the committee where funds fall short on a project already under way	Compulsory, one-off, calibrated to the need
Donations	Contributions from emigrants and benefactors; the main resource for large-scale projects	Exceptional; gift logic, correlated with the committee's perceived seriousness
Fines	Penalties for breaches of customary rules: absence from the assembly or from workdays, environmental offences, challenges to decisions	Compulsory, continuous; maintenance of order as much as financing
Income-generating activities	Sale of half the olive oil from collective landholdings, the other half going to the volunteers who harvest it (Bessah, 2019); prickly pear festival; Raconte'Arts festival; cleanest-village prize	Market and redistributive resource; valorisation of collective assets

Source: compiled by the author from the fieldwork (Kara, 2024, Tables V.08, V.09 and V.10).

Two features distinguish Sahel from the other villages in the sample. The first is the contribution base: where most villages levy the contribution on adult men, thereby reproducing the male composition of the *tajmaët*, Sahel applies a universal individual base including women and children; the unit amount is modest, but the base is broad. The second is the valorisation of collective landholdings: the equal split of the olive harvest between the fund and the volunteers constitutes a form of inverted sharecropping, in which voluntary labour is remunerated in kind and collective assets are converted into monetary resources without being alienated, *tiwizi* articulated to a market outlet. To this must be added the non-financial contributions recorded: materials, machinery, food for the workdays, voluntary labour, technical expertise, mobilisation of relations with the administration, free tuition for pupils; the reciprocal share of financing, invisible in the accounts yet decisive in the final cost.

The completion of projects rests on the direct involvement of inhabitants, the municipality intervening only secondarily. The committee assumes the entire cycle, including the operation and maintenance of the works, a point often neglected although it constitutes the principal factor of sustainability: maintenance is carried out on collective workdays, and some projects give rise to the salaried recruitment of a village worker paid by the fund, a case of local job creation financed by mutualised resources that is a marker of social enterprise in the strict sense. The mobilisation mechanism nonetheless calls for precise qualification: we observed that some committees summon villagers by name and keep a rota, absence exposing the individual to a fin, a practice we term compulsory volunteering (Kara, 2024). The scale documented through the analysis of by-laws (see also Bessah, 2019) provides for 250 to 500 DZD for unjustified absence, 200 DZD for a false excuse, and 5,000 to 10,000 DZD for challenging assembly decisions. Participation therefore falls less within European associative volunteering than within a sanctioned civic obligation, resting on an accepted normative order.

4. Discussion

4.1. Is the Kabyle village an organisation of the social and solidarity economy?

Setting the observations against the grid of SSE principles yields a high, though not complete, degree of correspondence.

Table 4 — Mapping SSE principles onto practices in Sahel village

SSE principle	Translation observed in Sahel	Correspondence
Limited profit distribution	No private appropriation of surpluses; income from collective landholdings and festivals reallocated to projects; wage labour confined to operating staff	High
Democratic governance	Deliberative assembly, public statement of needs, ranking by elected members, final approval by villagers	High, subject to the composition of the assembly
Collective purpose	Production of non-market goods: water, sanitation, roads, health, public reading, waste	Very high
Territorial embeddedness	Strictly village-level perimeter; resources and beneficiaries coincide	Very high
Citizen mobilisation	Mass volunteering, collective workdays, associations subordinated to the committee	High, but backed by a sanctions regime
Managerial autonomy	Decisions not subject to administrative approval; financing almost entirely endogenous	Very high
Legal recognition	No legal status for the committee; occasional creation of a parallel association in order to open a bank account	Low or absent

Source: compiled by the authors from Perret and Achir (2014) and the fieldwork.

The discrepancy is concentrated in the absence of legal status. The village committee is an organisation of the social economy without the legal form of one. It performs the functions of a collective enterprise (collecting resources, investing, operating facilities and employing salaried staff) without legal personality, in many cases without a bank account of its own, and without the capacity to be party to a public contract. Perret and Achir (2014) already noted the coexistence of three categories of committee: those registered as associations, those that are not, and those that have created a parallel association in order to hold an account. This hybrid arrangement is a workaround, not a recognition.

4.2. Resource hybridisation and forms of social capital

The Sahel case offers an almost canonical illustration of the hybridisation described by Eme and Laville (2004), except that the weighting is unusual. The reciprocal resource is dominant and structuring: codified contributions, levies, diaspora donations, voluntary labour, contributions in materials and expertise. It is institutionalised, written into the village code, backed by scales and enforced by sanction. This is far removed from the spontaneous solidarity of neighbourliness: it amounts to an obligatory reciprocity, an analytical category distinct from those ordinarily employed. The redistributive resource is weak and intermittent; it is not absent, since we documented elsewhere arrangements in which the committee launches the project and the municipality completes the budget, as in Tirourda where the committee contributed 950,000 DZD of a total cost of 1,194,750 DZD, but it intervenes downstream of citizen initiative. The usual relationship is here reversed: it is not the local authority that solicits the participation of inhabitants, but the inhabitants who solicit the authority's supplement. The market resource, finally, is emergent, olive oil, prickly pears, tourism induced by the festival and by the label, and the sale of sorted waste in neighbouring villages. It marks a qualitative shift from an economy of contribution towards an economy of territorial resource valorisation, encouraged by the cleanest-village prize (up to 9,000,000 DZD).

The three forms of social capital are clearly distributed. *Bonding* capital constitutes the bedrock: the village assembly, compulsory membership of the social body, and the sense of territorial belonging that we identified as a major determinant of involvement, the village being described as one large family; it is *bonding* capital that makes possible the completion of projects at reduced cost and within short deadlines, substituting trust for contractual control mechanisms. *Linking* capital, weak in Sahel where the committee acts almost autonomously, appears denser elsewhere: in Abi Youcef, committee chairs consult elected representatives to draw up the list forwarded to the *wali*, the committee then playing the interface role described by Perret and Achir (2014). *Bridging* capital, finally, plays a decisive part: the diaspora contributes 50 euros a year and, through its donations, constitutes the main source of large-scale projects, these euro transfers making it possible to obtain dinars at a rate above the official one (Perret and Achir, 2014) and extending beyond money. In Tawirt, the waste management scheme was designed on the basis of advice that emigrants sought from experts in France; to which is added the opening to external networks through the festival and tourism.

4.3. Tensions, limits and prospects

Four tensions circumscribe the reach of the model. The first lies in the constraining character of participation: compulsory volunteering, fines and the penalty for challenging decisions raise a question of compatibility with the principle of free membership, which lies at the heart of the legal definition of an association. One may see in this, with Zoreli (2023), the persistence of a normative order guaranteeing the effectiveness of solidarity; one may equally see a constraint that makes dissent costly. That the committee should be designated the supreme authority is not neutral: village democracy is deliberative on ends but authoritarian on means.

The second lies in gender. The historical *tajmaet* is a male assembly, and the exclusion of women from the deliberative body constitutes a structural limit in light of the democratic principle. Sahel displays a sign of change (the contribution base includes women and children) but the available data do not establish whether this contributory inclusion is accompanied by deliberative inclusion. The literature further reports cases in which associative action becomes the vehicle of women's economic emancipation, such as the creative recycling workshop run by APAM in Ain El Hammam (Zoreli, 2023): the articulation between village committees and women's associations remains an open field of enquiry.

The third lies in dependence on the diaspora: the sustainability of the model is indexed to the persistence of a tie that weakens across generations, which makes the growth of local market resources less a supplement than a necessity of diversification. The fourth lies in the absence of institutional recognition, with concrete effects: inability to contract, difficulty of access to funding, accounting opacity. The refusal to disclose amounts signals a mistrust that is not without foundation in a context where the associative field has historically been subject to control: such opacity protects autonomy, but forecloses evaluation and comparison.

Two orientations, which we advanced at the close of our doctoral work, are thereby supported: developing a community-based approach to local development by associating village committees with policy design, which would strengthen ownership of projects; and granting the village an institutional status, which would bring decision-making closer to citizens and forestall the tensions inherent in the municipal framework. Granting the village a status would not amount to creating a new institution, but to giving legal existence to an organisation that already functions as a collective enterprise of general interest, and would make it possible to establish what we have termed a mixed coordination, articulating a vertical public perspective with a horizontal societal one (Kara, 2024). This would nonetheless presuppose the settlement of three questions (free membership, equal treatment of male and female villagers, and accounting transparency) which are precisely those that the law of the social and solidarity economy was historically designed to answer.

Conclusion

The study of Sahel village qualifies the two dominant readings of Kabyle SSE. Against a strictly continuist reading, it must be recalled that Kabyle solidarity institutions were profoundly transformed by colonisation, state-building and globalisation, and that the

associative movement born of political pluralism has broadly failed to keep its promises. Against a strictly critical reading, it must be observed that a village organisation has produced in Sahel, without interruption since 1967 and largely without public support, the whole of the basic infrastructure and services of a mountain community, and continues to do so while extending its scope to the environment, the living environment and tourism development.

What is at stake in Sahel is neither the survival of a tradition nor the importation of a model, but the permanent reconfiguration of a system of action. The village fund, universal contribution, sanctioned volunteering, the equal split of the collective harvest, the subordination of registered associations to the customary body, the conversion of a festival into an economic resource, so many devices articulating older principles to contemporary stakes. It is in this precise sense that one may speak, with Perret and Achir (2014), of the modernity of tradition, provided this is understood not as the persistence of a legacy but as its continuous reworking.

The reach of these conclusions remains circumscribed by the monographic character of the study. Three extensions appear necessary: systematically comparing territories with strong citizen involvement and those where it is lacking, in order to isolate the conditions of possibility of the dynamic; examining the place of women in village bodies and the articulation between committees and women's associations; and finally assessing the effects of legal recognition of the village on the very autonomy that today constitutes the strength of these organisations, for it cannot be ruled out that the institutionalisation which would make them fundable is also the one that would make them capturable.

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