

I. Introduction

Tamesloht is a village of around one thousand households, situated 20 kilometres south-west of the city of Marrakesh. It is easily accessed: a good flat road across pleasant countryside links the village to the city.

The monumental *kasbah* in the middle of the village was host to Mohammed V during his passage through the area and serves as a reminder of the region's glorious past. The *zaouia*, the *marabouts* (commemorative mausoleums) and the water towers seen in the village recall the community's former religious importance and advanced building techniques. Extensive olive plantations and the variety of crafts that hail from the village speak of its prosperous days.

This formerly affluent district is today home to an underdeveloped community living on the poverty line. The challenge to address the situation has been taken up by an outsider, who took it upon himself to preserve the remains of those better days. He was not commissioned by anyone, has no personal link to the village, and does not even have much time, yet he has 'taken up the cause of Tamesloht'.

II. Contextual Information

a. Historical background

The history of Tamesloht dates back to 1563, when the village was founded by Chérif Abdallah Ben Hussein el Hassani, an important historical figure who has become almost legendary. The 'man of 366 skills' transformed the locality into an organized community, which increased in strength and wealth until it reached its height during the nineteenth century. One of the main olive producers of the Haouz plain, the village became widely renowned for its important agricultural activities and the variety of its crafts.

During the 1960s the Moroccan state introduced a number of modernization policies across the country, but these were concentrated on the major cities. Left to its own devices the Tamesloht community failed to keep up with the new era, and thus began a process of deterioration in the production sectors as well as in terms of cultural and architectural heritage.

Over the past ten years Tamesloht has been noticed by a number of visitors – mostly foreigners – who have been attracted to the village's potential for tourism. The *kasbah*, for instance, extending over 2.5 hectares, appears to have everything that would be needed to accommodate a prestigious hotel. However, this former stronghold of local rulers is today divided between various heirs, and their internal disagreements, as well as the property's subjection to certain laws of the Ministère des Habous et des Affaires Islamiques, do not favour such an investment.

In 1996 Amine Kabbaj, a Marrakesh-based architect, became acquainted with the village. His interest in Tamesloht outlasted that of other would-be investors. To him, the good accessibility of the village combined with its variety of distinctive features seemed very much to favour the establishment of a development programme.

First, a general approach needed to be defined; and it was decided that a seminar would be a good way of bringing together decision-makers and experts, who would hopefully initiate an organized strategy. With this objective in mind, documentation was prepared and presented to various ministers. One *Chargée de Mission* noticed the dossier when it was presented to the Royal Cabinet, and brought her support to the project. These efforts were rewarded in 1998 when a successful seminar took place, bringing together influential people including two government ministers, representatives of various government agencies, national and international experts, other NGOs and representatives of the community.

The widespread enthusiasm that followed this seminar led to the creation, in March 1999, of the Association Tamesloht 2010. A year later, the names of many of its influential members disappeared from the association's statutes, and were replaced by members of the community itself.

b. *Local architectural character*

The rural district of Tamesloht is situated in the Haouz plain, with the High Atlas mountains visible on the horizon. It has an area of 20,000 hectares. Centred on its landmark *kasbah*, the village spreads over 150 hectares. The *kasbah* itself is a 'city within a city', housing public, private and service quarters. Its features include richly ornamented wooden ceilings, suspended gardens and a music pavilion. Adjacent to the *kasbah* is the mausoleum of its founder, Abdallah Ben Hussein, the only historical asset which is maintained by the community. Today the *kasbah* is in a degraded condition and is partially inhabited by various heirs to the founder.

Some sixteen *marabouts* are spread throughout the village; these gather together three main types of religious architecture. The village also has an important hydraulic heritage, in the form of water towers (dated to 1863) and *khetarras*, or underground networks. It also features twenty-eight traditional *maâsras*, used for the production of olive oil; of these, seventeen are still in use, half of them having undergone rudimentary mechanization. All are in a neglected condition.

Around these historical monuments an anarchic urban development has grown up. A mixture of traditional housing, new buildings and poorly installed infrastructure (power cables, pylons, etc.), it constitutes a seemingly chaotic urban environment. Infrastructure is insufficient, the water supply and electrical networks are incomplete, and sewage systems are totally lacking.

Traditional rural houses in this region are usually of one storey, with a flat wooden roof, and built in adobe, clay and *pisé* (a mixture of clay and rubble). The massive walls of these

houses stand on foundations made of rubble. These building techniques are still practised, but most recent structures are made from cement-based materials and on smaller plots of land than used to be the case.

All roads in the village apart from the access road are unpaved.

c. Climatic conditions, topography

Tamesloht is in a semi-arid area with a continental climate. Average temperatures range from 10° to 28°C. Precipitation is about 200 millimetres per year. At an elevation of 560 metres, the site is slightly hilly and formed by ancient fluvial deposits of the High Atlas mountains. The natural vegetation of the landscape has given way to olive plantations.

III. Programme

a. Conditions of programme formulation

In 1998 a seminar was held entitled 'Tamesloht 2010: Culture, Environment and Development of the Town', which gathered together government and local representatives and experts in various fields. The seminar resulted in the definition of an outline approach, summed up as follows:

- that restoration of historical monuments with indifference to their surrounding was inadmissible.
- that the economic development of the village had to be the top priority.
- that economic development should be based on and should enhance the cultural characteristics of the community.

The next stage involved the identification of the features and weaknesses of the village. Each sector was analysed independently, and this led to the formulation of a programme based on Tamesloht's potential and assets.

b. General programme objectives

The main objective of Tamesloht 2010 is to increase the awareness on the part of the public and private sectors, as well as the local community, of the great potential of the village and its surroundings. It aims to provoke, attract, facilitate and assist the village's involvement in a global development project. It hopes to become a pilot project and – with the partnership and support of the authorities and the community at local, national and international level – initiate a new model of sustainable development.

With the cultural features of the community being a vitally important aspect of the process, the project aims to improve the living conditions of the community through:

- revitalization of the economic sectors, i.e. olive and olive oil production, pottery and weaving.

- adaptation of infrastructures.
- revival of cultural and architectural heritage.

c. *Functional requirements*

Following analysis of existing conditions and the different production sectors, the architect's brief presented a summary of the surveys that would be needed, alongside general guidelines and an outline of strategies in each field. It also identified possible partners who might be involved in the project. The brief can be summarized as follows:

Surveys: to be carried out by universities and public or private institutions in order to define and prioritize projects. Subjects to be surveyed include: social and economical profile; existing and lacking public services; professional training needs; environmental issues; architectural and other heritage-related assets; existing methods of irrigation; plantations and olive oil production units; weaving techniques; tourist potential.

Infrastructure: to be implemented by public agencies. This programme includes the renovation of existing irrigation systems and provision for the optimal use of water resources; the completion of the partial electrical and water supply networks that already exist; and the implementation of a sewage system.

Restoration of architectural heritage: to be carried out with the Moroccan Ministry of Culture and private sector or international organizations. This programme includes the restoration of the *kasbah*, the sixteen *marabouts*, the water towers and abandoned *maâsras*, and the accommodation of an eco-museum.

Olive and olive oil production: in partnership with local cooperatives, related ministries and the private sector. Olive and olive oil production suffers from inappropriate irrigation, obsolete growing techniques and weak marketing. The programme for the improvement of production includes a quality analysis of the oil; the rehabilitation of traditional *maâsras*; the training of farmers and olive oil producers; the optimization of cooperatives' performance; provision for marketing, suitable pricing and quality packing; the creation of a Tamesloht label; and the creation of a 100-hectare model plantation.

Crafts: in partnership with local cooperatives, related ministries and the private sector. Pottery and weaving are important economic activities in the village. However, they employ obsolete techniques and are at the mercy of market conditions in Marrakesh. The revival programme involves introducing the makers to new techniques and giving them access to quality raw materials. The working conditions of the potters and the pollution they generate necessitate the introduction of new firing techniques and the creation of a 'potters' village'.

Other proposed strategies to promote the community include: definition and implementation of an urban development programme in order to control 'anarchic' building; the establishment of workshops for local and international students and artists; the development of cultural tourism; and the creation of a special programme of courses and professional training through the Ministry of National Education, NGOs and existing grant programmes.

IV. Description

a. *Project data*

The two well-organized seminars that took place on the development of Tamesloht resulted in the publication of numerous articles and an increased awareness of the village's assets on the part of the authorities. A programme addressing many aspects of the development was defined; following this, the association approached various public and private organizations with a view to securing their commitment to becoming involved in the project.

To date, the accomplishments of the association, working with its various partnerships, can be summarized as follows:

Infrastructures: The association has so far obtained the commitment of government agencies to complete the village's water supply network, scheduled for 2001, and to implement a sewage system, scheduled for 2002. The Office National de l'Electricité has written a letter of intention regarding the improvement of the electrical network, without committing to a deadline. A health-care programme is under way and a literacy course has started recently.

Restoration of architectural heritage: The architectural features of Tamesloht included in this project consist of the *kasbah*, sixteen fairly small *marabouts*, and the historical water towers. The survey of the *kasbah* has begun and is to be completed by the end of 2001. Its music pavilion has been surveyed and its restoration cost-estimated. Two *marabouts* have been surveyed and a research project on all sixteen *marabouts* has been scheduled. A first report on the village water towers resulted in the Ministry of Culture commissioning an expert on old water systems to study the hydraulic heritage of the village. A project to restore the *marabouts* and the music pavilion has been presented to an Italian grant programme. The Ministry of Culture's representative stated the ministry's intention to secure financing for the restoration of three of the *marabouts*. As regards the *kasbah*, some of the most endangered parts have so far been repaired, namely a section of wall that had been affected by water infiltration, and the ceiling of a second-floor room.

Olive and olive oil production: The olive plantations of the rural district of Tamesloht cover an area of 4,212 hectares. Through an agreement with a government office, the association has obtained a modern olive press and secured a five-year training programme for farmers regarding plantation maintenance, different techniques of trimming and appropriate irrigation methods, to be practised over 500 hectares of existing plantations. The association has organized information campaigns and coordinated the training of farmers. The association is in possession of the press and has to manage its use and expenses, while it remains the property of the government. The press will be operable in the next production season, starting in September 2001, and will introduce local producers to the advantages of new production techniques. A group of twelve trimmers has been introduced to various trimming techniques; each trimmer will be able to trim fifteen hectares in four months. So far, within this agreement, 138 hectares of plantations have been treated.

Pottery: Pottery is produced in some eighty workshops. The production is of poor quality and the potters' income very low. The potters' quarter was once on the outskirts of the village, but chaotic urban development has resulted in an unwanted proximity to residential areas. The cheapest possible material – old tyres – is used for firing, which is highly polluting. Over the past two years the association has worked closely with the potters in order to identify their needs and problems, and to find ways of improving the quality of their production. Their major problem is their inappropriate working conditions: most potters wish to leave the premises, but they have no means to do so and the cooperative is poorly organized. A project has been formulated to relocate the craftsmen in a 'potters' village', where new techniques and firing methods could be introduced to improve the quality of the craft. The association has located a 10-hectare piece of land suitable for this purpose and has proposed it to local authorities. The sale of the land is currently being negotiated by the district and the provincial authorities. The association is now trying to find a partner to finance the construction of the 'potters' village'. The Minister of Crafts has promised assistance, and a Moroccan bank is considering possible involvement. A collaborative project with the Office of International Cooperation of Piedmont Region, Italy, has scheduled a training programme for young craftsmen and the marketing of their products in Italy.

Weaving, embroidery: There are a number of weaving workshops, and many young women practise embroidery in their homes. However, these craftswomen had been using cheap materials and producing poor designs. In 1998 Amine Kabbaj showed these village crafts to a Marrakesh-based French textile designer. She carried out an extensive examination of local production, which is related in a research report on village crafts. In the process, and through private financial assistance, the association repaired the weavers' looms and bought an additional loom for training purposes. The designer then selected one weaver and a number of embroiderers, commissioned them and started their training. An increasing number of embroiderers are now working with her. She provides them with first-rate raw materials, and the improvement in the quality of their production has been remarkable. An embroiderers' cooperative was subsequently created. The designer has very recently rented a weaving workshop within the village and hired twelve craftswomen, who will be trained to meet her high standards. The association has presented local products to the Minister of Crafts, as well as a number of local and foreign exporters.

Other: Following the seminar on Tamesloht, in 1999 the Ministère de l'Aménagement du Territoire, de l'Environnement, de l'Urbanisme et de l'Habitat commissioned a study of the urban development of Tamesloht. Associati Consultants (Kabbaj's architectural firm) submitted a proposal, but this was rejected in favour of a Rabat-based firm. The ministry has, however, instructed that the association should be an advisor to the project. Reportedly, the project has not been progressing.

Evolution of design concept

In the first stage, an exhaustive programme was drawn up for the revitalization and development of the community of Tamesloht, which included guidelines on infrastructural, economic and architectural interventions. A seminar was organized in order to encourage the authorities to launch an official development project. Although the seminar presented

Tamesloht's assets and gained the support of a number of influential people, none of them actually committed to the project.

Therefore, within the framework of the original programme, the association has since taken each of the elements of the project independently and tried to obtain public or private support and partnership. It has concentrated its activities on initiating and assisting the development process, the practical implementation of which is down to the interactive relationship between new partners and the community itself.

c. *Origin of technology, materials, labour force*

In terms of physical and architectural implementation, little has thus far been accomplished. The work on infrastructure will be carried out by government agencies in accordance with local standards. The restoration of some of the architectural assets will, most probably, be carried out by an Italian architect within an Italian grant programme.

The programme brought to the farmers is being implemented by a local government agency. A training programme for potters is under way through Italian cooperation. The French textile designer has used local weaving and embroidery techniques to obtain the highest standards.

d. *Origin of professionals*

The stated mission of Association Tamesloht 2010 is:

- to safeguard the *kasbah* (to which other architectural assets have been added for practical reasons).
- to study and implement procedures in agriculture and crafts in order to develop the rural district.
- to study and assist the implementation of procedures for social, cultural and industrial development.

Members of Association Tamesloht 2010 who have provided their professional expertise are:

- Associati Consultants, architectural firm.
- Abdelaziz Benchekroune, agricultural technician.
- The local cooperatives of farmers, embroiderers, weavers and potters.

Institutions and private partners involved in the project are:

- Monuments Historiques de Marrakech, Moroccan Ministry of Culture.
- Casa Velasquez, Madrid, specialists in historical hydraulic systems.
- University of the Sorbonne, Paris (department of Histoire et Gestion du Patrimoine Français et Européen).
- Office Régional de Mise en Valeur Agricole du Haouz (OMRVAH).
- Mohamed El Faïz, University of Cadi Ayyad.

- Brigitte Perkins, textile designer.

V. Construction Schedule and Costs

a. History of project

- 1998 October, first seminar; test of weavers and embroidery products; training of embroiderers and marketing of their products (ongoing); research project with the Sorbonne University.
- 1999 Restoration of weaving looms and acquisition of a new loom for training purposes; March, creation of Association Tamesloht 2010, for an unlimited duration; November, second seminar.
- 2000 March, general assembly formed, with membership of local cooperatives; first report prepared on water towers; July, inventory of water resources by experts in historical hydraulic systems; November, five-year agreement with OMRAVH for the training of olive producers; December, acquisition of olive press; surveys of the *kasbah* begin (ongoing); surveys of two *marabouts* and the music pavilion in the *kasbah*.
- 2001 March, submission of a partnership project to the Office of International Cooperation of Piedmont Region, Italy, for the restoration of the *kasbah* by an Italian architect; April, research project for all *marabouts* begun; consultant for sewage system nominated; quality analysis of olive oil – sample sent to France; May, literacy programme started; acquisition by the district of 10-hectare site for the ‘potters’ village’; creation of a weaving workshop in the village.

The schedule of the project in the near future is as follows:

- 2001 September, harvest season – new olive press will be used; water supply network to be completed; survey and cost-estimation of the *kasbah* to be completed.
- 2002 Implementation of sewage system.

b. Total costs and main sources of financing

The association has secured funding from a number of private donors, who have financed the organization of the seminars, rented the local office space, hired a clerk based in the village, etc.

The first seminar expenses were MAD 350,000, all donated (MAD 10 = USD 1). The second seminar cost MAD 200,000, all donated.

A donation allowed the repair of the weaving looms in all workshops for MAD 30,000. Surveys of the *kasbah* and the study of water resources have been commissioned and financed by the Ministry of Culture. Training of olive producers has been carried out within

an agreement by OMRVAH. The limited restoration and repair of an endangered part of the *kasbah* was made possible by renting the location for movie production.

Future infrastructure improvements are to be financed by the Office National de l'Eau Potable and the Office National de l'Electricité.

VI. Technical Assessment

a. Functional assessment

Through publications, seminars and direct appeals, the association has contributed to the increased interest of the authorities in the project. Although the government authorities, apart from the Ministry of Culture, have not committed to any specific programme, they have brought their formal support whenever needed.

The association has become a facilitator between the public sector and the local community. It assists, organizes and coordinates various projects without necessarily being involved directly in their actual implementation. It also makes demands to public agencies on behalf of the community. It has so far obtained the commitment of government offices to complete the water supply and sewage system, scheduled in 2001/2002.

The programme to restore the architectural heritage has benefited from the collaboration of the Ministry of Culture and Sorbonne University for surveys and research projects. In Morocco the restoration of historical monuments is usually carried out by the private sector. Proposals have been presented to European grant programmes, and reportedly some agreements are under way. Minor repairs and restorations have been implemented in highly endangered sections of the *kasbah*.

In terms of the olive and olive oil production improvement programme, the association has eased and helped OMRVAH's action in the district, which has been appreciated by the government office. The results should be visible in the next production season.

The relocation of the potters is in its early stages, although much effort has been put into this. The acquisition of the land has been a big achievement for the association.

The association has helped in the significant improvement of the quality of local embroidery and the empowerment of embroiderers.

A programme for adult literacy has recently been started through the volunteer work of a native of the village.

b. Long-term viability of the project

Tamesloht 2010 relies on the coordinated actions of the association and its partners, and the relationship of trust it builds with the community. It would appear that there is sufficient determination to bring meaningful results in the future.

VII. Users

a. Description of those who use or benefit from the project

The district of Tamesloht has a population of 17,133, in 2,471 households. The village itself is home to 4,758 people in 1,000 households. In total 41.3 per cent of the population is aged under fifteen, and the rate of illiteracy is above the national average of 75 per cent. The population is increasing at 3–4 per cent a year.

The average annual income of the district is about USD 1,000 per household (minimum wage USD 140 per month). Most of the population works in the city of Marrakesh and commutes daily. The community has reportedly lost its sense of identity and unity over the years, and the various cooperatives that exist (potters, weavers, farmers, etc.) have become weaker.

b. Response to project by clients, users, community, etc.

The association has been loudly publicizing the conditions, problems and potential of Tamesloht to the authorities, to the European community and to private investors, this has resulted in significantly increased awareness of the village among these bodies, and in many of them lending their support. With regard to the community itself, however, it has proceeded more gently; according to the association a gradual and ongoing process is necessary to build up a trusting relationship. The association is slowly attracting members of the community, and some locals have volunteered to collaborate. So far, most of its contacts with the community have been through local cooperatives, of farmers, potters, weavers and the newly created cooperative of embroiderers.

A report by French researchers has assessed the impact of the textile designer. Almost all the embroiderers – all of whom are women – have been eager to work with her. It would appear that women and young people are more inclined to take advantage of the new opportunities now available, and are more willing to adapt themselves to new ways of working. With their high levels of participation, these groups have created the association's most effective programmes. As a result they enjoy a substantial increase in their income, which has reached some USD 800 per month.

Architectural professionals and members of the 'intelligentsia' are sensitive to the 'cause' of the project and to the historical importance of the village. They see it as deserving attention and appreciate the merits of the association, whose role is perceived mainly as facilitating the community's access to the opportunities available in the public and private sectors as well as through international channels.

VIII. Persons involved

Zoulikha Nasri, Chargée de Mission at the Royal Cabinet, supported the project at the very beginning.

Saïd Mouline is the director of the Direction de l'Architecture at the Ministère de l'Aménagement du Territoire, de l'Environnement, de l'Urbanisme et de l'Habitat. He is the honorary president of the association and has brought his support to the project.

Amine Kabbaj, architect with Associati Consultants and president of the association, is the initiator of Tamesloht 2010. Associati organized the seminar and provided documentation and the general guidelines. It has also participated in the survey of the *kasbah*.

Moulay Zaghloul Essaydi, one of the heirs of the *kasbah*, is the vice-president of the association. He lives in part of the *kasbah* and is responsible for a family cooperative of olive plantations. He is the representative of the district.

Abdelaziz Benchekroune is the treasurer of the association. A former agricultural technician at the Ministry of Agriculture, he has been involved in a number of associations since his retirement. He signed the agreement with ORMVAH.

Five representatives of local cooperatives are members of the association.

Faïssal Cherradi is a supporter of the association. He is an inspector at Monuments Historiques de Marrakech, part of the Ministry of Culture. The survey of monuments and the commission of Casa Velasquez to consult on the water systems have been under his direction.

Patrice Cressier from Casa Velasquez, Madrid, carried out the inventory of water systems.

Mohamed El Faïz from the University of Cadi Ayyad, Marrakesh, in collaboration with Associati Architects, prepared an initial report on the water towers.

Brigitte Perkins, a Marrakesh-based French textile designer, is commissioning and training embroiderers and weavers.

Louis François Larnaud of the Sorbonne University, Paris I, department of Histoire et Gestion du Patrimoine Français et Européen, organized research programmes in the village.

The Slaoui Foundation finances the association office and staff in Tamesloht.

Homeyra Ettihadieh
May 2001