

Mapping Cultural Continuity and the Creation of a New Architectural Heritage in the 21st Century: The Case of Ksar Tafielt, M'Zab Valley

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Abstract : The M'zab architecture has preserved its identity that was able to endure for centuries conserving practically the same way of life and the same building techniques since the 11th century. Even more, the newly built ksar Tafielt is also designed to meet the local tradition. In 1996, a community led project was initiated to build a "new ksar" named Tafielt based on a traditional form of community-led cooperative housing. It is a unique experience in the field of community housing that reproduces traditional architectural patterns while addressing contemporary ways of life with their expected modern comfort. This research is based on the hypothesis that the process of producing ksar Tafielt is culturally responsive to a conservative community that was characterized by certain values which were transmitted to this ksar manifesting as cultural continuity. It aims at investigating what type of cultural continuity manifests itself in the co-production of ksar Tafielt and the way the settlement and its houses are produced and inhabited, as well as the new emerging values and adaptive transition in social relations. The research methodology is based on a combination of questionnaires, in depth interviews, photography, and site visit to record and demonstrate how these buildings respond to peoples' needs. Post Occupancy Evaluation (POE) is also employed in order to understand the lessons that can be learned from this project. Finally, this study proves that the cultural continuity that was transmitted from the Ibadi community is still manifested in ksar Tafielt, which provided strong religious bonds and a strong sense of community. The research findings have resulted in a number of lessons and principles that can be learnt from the project of ksar Tafielt which can inform future practices of housing provision and design in Algeria and other countries.

Keywords : community-led cooperative housing, conservative community, cultural continuity, post occupancy evaluation

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