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Craft entrepreneurship. A transitional space between tradition and modernity

An analysis of employment dynamics in the wilaya of Bejaia

Naima Malek[1*], Souad Boudache[2], Hocine Ifourah[3]

[1]University Abderrahmane Mira of Bejaia, Faculty of Economic, Commercial and Management Sciences, RMTQ Laboratory, (Algeria)
naima.malek@univ-bejaia.dz

[2]University Abderrahmane Mira of Bejaia, Faculty of Economic, Commercial and Management Sciences, RMTQ Laboratory, (Algeria)
souad.boudache@univ-bejaia.dz

[3]University Abderrahmane Mira of Bejaia, Faculty of Economic, Commercial and Management Sciences, RMTQ Laboratory, (Algeria)
hocine.ifourah@univ-bejaia.dz

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Abstract:

Entrepreneurship plays a central role in shaping the productive fabric and attracting investment, and is recognised as a crucial driver of economic and social development. It stimulates the labour market through its effects on job creation, competition, economic enrichment and innovation, while also bringing social benefits such as improved well-being. In this context, craft entrepreneurship plays a particularly important role in achieving overall local development objectives and in regional dynamics.

Our contribution seeks to highlight the role of craft entrepreneurship in local development in the Bejaia region in terms of job creation.

In order to answer our questions, we took a two-pronged approach: a conceptual approach, marked by a review of the literature on craft entrepreneurship and its role in local development, and an empirical approach, through the analysis and processing of data on craft sectors and their contribution to job creation in the wilaya of Bejaia from 1998 to 2024.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, Craftsmanship, Local development, Job creation*

Jel Classification Codes : *L26, L89, O12, J23*

[*] ***Corresponding author***

1. INTRODUCTION:

Entrepreneurship plays a central role in shaping the productive fabric and attracting investment, and is recognised as a crucial driver of economic and social development. Indeed, it stimulates the labour market through its effects on job creation, competition, economic enrichment and innovation, while also bringing social benefits such as improved well-being (Belattaf M & Ziane L, 2014). In this context, craft entrepreneurship plays a particularly important role in achieving overall local development objectives and in regional dynamics. It promotes low-investment job creation, enhances local activities, generates income and develops skills and know-how through vocational training. In addition, it stimulates initiative and independence, while meeting the needs of populations and structures for craft goods and services (Taleb N, 2023).

Contrary to what one might think, the craft sector is not a sector of the past. It is constantly evolving and undergoing continuous updates to keep up with the times. It has considerable potential for sustainable development. Far from being outdated, it continues to drive forward its momentum, taking into account the demands of today's markets in terms of innovation and modernity, while maintaining a strong and, above all, very close link with ancestral know-how and local materials (Kofler I & Walder M, 2024).

In the wilaya of Bejaia, this sector is characterised by a wide variety of activities, ranging from working with fabric, wool and leather to processing various materials, or even integrating fully into the artisanal agri-food sector (the Directorate of Arts and Crafts, 2025). This diversity reflects not only cultural richness, but also specific socio-economic dynamics shaped by recent changes in the labour market, public policies and societal transformations.

1.1. Problematic:

It is within this context that our contribution seeks to assess the importance of employment in the local craft sector in the Bejaia region. Through this research**,** we aim to provide answers to the following question: **Is the craft sector likely to be a key sector in terms of job creation and local development dynamics in the Bejaia region?**

1.2. Research hypotheses:

In order to provide some answers to our problem, we make the following assumptions:

- We start from the assumption that the craft sector in the region under study is in decline. The sector in question is struggling to find its place in contemporary economies. Indeed, in our view, the decline of the craft sector is probably due to a lack of integration with current realities on the ground and a failure to take into account consumer demands in the era of globalisation and digitalisation.

- Craftsmanship is increasingly perceived as a sector of the past, entirely disconnected from a market that tends to demand more innovative and modern products, but at the same time without breaking with the ancestral practices and know-how that characterise craft products.

1.3. Objectives of the study:

By combining quantitative data with a qualitative analysis, the aim is to contribute to a better understanding of the changes taking place in craftsmanship in Bejaia, while

highlighting the challenges of modernisation, professional inclusion, particularly for women, and the promotion of heritage skills in a context of rapid change.

At the same time, the aim is to identify sectors that are growing or declining and to propose courses of action for the sustainable and inclusive revitalisation of the local craft sector.

1.4. Methodology adopted:

In order to answer our questions and verify our hypothesis, we took a two-pronged approach: a conceptual approach, involving a review of the literature on craft entrepreneurship and its role in local development, and an empirical approach, involving a longitudinal analysis of job creation in several craft sectors between 2014 and 2024, highlighting the social, economic and structural dynamics at work. The aim is to identify major trends in order to confirm the hypothesis of decline in this sector.

1.4. Previous studies:

To support this work, we relied on previous research in this area:

- The study conducted by (Gassa A and Benguettaf A, 2024) aimed to determine the contribution of Algerian crafts to strengthening national cultural identity. This analysis emphasized the indispensability of traditional industries and crafts, as they reflect an ancestral cultural heritage passed down through generations. They allow for the preservation of traditions, customs, and know-how while adapting to the current imperatives of modernization, competitiveness, and employment. The authors stressed the importance of traditional and artisanal industries for safeguarding Algerian cultural identity. They represent a crucial ancestral heritage for developing creativity through artisans, who are key players in this sector, thus contributing to the dynamic of transmitting cultural values while participating in local and sustainable development.

- (Laoudj O, Krim Y and Bouchetara M, 2024) explored the cluster approach and its potential impact on innovation and entrepreneurship in the Algerian craft sector. The case study focused on artisans in the Wilaya of Constantine, specializing in brass, and artisans in the Wilaya of Batna, specializing in jewellery production. The authors emphasized the importance of creativity and innovation in the craft sector to support economic development. Innovation will enable artisans to adapt to the demands of the global market while preserving traditional and artisanal know-how. Therefore, it is crucial that they adopt new techniques and production processes. Furthermore, the authors concluded that adopting the cluster approach is likely to help the craft sector, which suffers from instability, improve its competitiveness.

- (Bondyra K, Dziekanowska M & herudzinski T, 2023) conducted a study in Poland exploring the contours of women's entrepreneurship in the craft sector in rural areas. The authors affirm the contribution of craft businesses to rural development, particularly those established by women. These businesses are likely to strengthen human capital through skills development and social capital through the social networks and collaborations they foster. The authors emphasized the need to strengthen cooperation among local stakeholders to propel women's crafts as a driver of rural development. They argue that it is essential to focus on vocational training and structured craft apprenticeships, while also emphasizing the recognition of women-led craft trades.

- (Titouche R, 2019) argues that crafts play a vital role in local development. In this sense, artisans are key players in this development thanks to the social networks they cultivate and their deep roots in the local community, fostered through their expertise and integration

into the local cultural heritage. It is within this context that the author affirms the crucial importance of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage so that it can play a decisive role in the future and be passed down from generation to generation.

2. Theoretical framework:

2.1. Definition of craft products:

Craft products cover a wide range of goods made from various materials. This diversity makes it extremely difficult to provide a satisfactory definition of the material content, production technique and functional use of craft products (Kofler I & Walder M, 2024). And yet, for all sorts of reasons, importers, exporters, customs services, tax authorities and trade development organisations require a usable definition of these products.

Although there is no definition universally accepted by all countries, there is, however, a definition adopted by the 44 countries participating in the Symposium on Crafts and the Global Market, organised jointly by UNESCO and ITC in Manila (Philippines) in October 1997, which is worth considering. In this sense, craft products have been defined as goods made by craftspeople, either entirely by hand or with the aid of hand tools or mechanical devices. The definition emphasises that direct manual intervention remains predominant in the production of the final product. There are no specific quantitative limitations on the manufacture of handicraft products. In addition, they are based on the use of raw materials from sustainable resources. The specificity of craft products lies in their distinctive characteristics: utilitarian, aesthetic, artistic, creative, cultural, decorative, functional, traditional, symbolic or even essentially significant (UNESCO, 1997; Laoudj O, Krim Y & Bouchetara M, 2024).

Craft products related to the upkeep, installation, maintenance and repair (of transport equipment, household appliances or electrical appliances, for example) do not fall within the above definition.

Handicraft products can be classified into broad categories. These categories correspond mainly to the materials used, or a combination of materials and techniques. The six main categories are: basketry; leather; metal; pottery; textiles and wood. Other categories could correspond to various additional materials of animal, mineral or plant origin covering other materials used in the production of handicrafts that are specific to a country or region, rare or difficult to work with, such as stone, glass, ivory, bone, horn, scales, shells (UNESCO, 1997; Gassa A and Benguettaf A, 2024).

Finally, additional categories could be considered when different materials and techniques are used at the same time. This may include, for example, decorative items and fashion accessories, jewellery, musical instruments, toys, or works of art (UNESCO, 1997; Souami D, 2013).

2.2. Characteristics of the artisan and the craft activity:

Craftsmanship, a fundamental economic sector in many societies, plays an essential role in socio-economic development, particularly in rural areas and developing countries. The artisan, often perceived as a creator, is at the heart of this activity. However, modern craftsmanship goes beyond simple manual production to include commercial, collaborative

and management activities that shape the identity of this sector (Gassa A and Benguettaf A, 2024).

Traditionally, artisans are skilled individuals who carry out manual activities, often in small family businesses. According to UNESCO, the term "artisan" is not limited to those who produce goods in a traditional manner, but also encompasses craft enterprises which, although not actively involved in production, specialise in areas such as research, commercial negotiation or product design (UNESCO, 1997).

Craftspeople generally use tools and machines in a production process where human intervention remains central (Bardhan A, Bhattacharya A, 2023). Craft activities include a wide range of trades: pottery, textiles, metalwork, jewellery making, and more. These activities differ from industrial production in their creative dimension, customisation and small scale (Souami D, 2013).

Furthermore, one of the main characteristics of craftsmanship is the intimate relationship between the artisan and their product. Unlike automated industrial processes, the artisan retains direct control over all stages of production, enabling them to guarantee unique quality and personalisation (Baron, R. A., 2004). This flexibility is essential, as it allows the artisan to adapt to specific customer needs while respecting traditions and craft techniques.
Another important feature is the importance of small craft businesses and collaborative structures. Although craftsmanship is often associated with family or individual businesses, many modern craft businesses have organised themselves into cooperatives or informal networks to share resources, access larger markets and overcome economic challenges (Alvarez, S. A., & Barney, J. B, 2007). These collaborative structures help to strengthen the sector's resilience to economic uncertainty and preserve traditional skills while meeting the demands of the global market.

Indeed, craftsmanship, much more than a sector for the production of goods, is an important source of income, social inclusion and preservation of cultural heritage. In many parts of the world, craftsmanship represents a path to economic independence for individuals, particularly women and young people, who are often excluded from the formal labour market. This sector is essential for local development, as it creates small-scale jobs while maintaining a link with local culture and promoting the development of the local economy (Belattaf M & Ziane L, 2014; Souami D, 2013).

In addition, crafts play a crucial role in preserving cultural traditions. Handicrafts, often perceived as unique works of art, contribute to a country's cultural identity while meeting international demand for authentic and personalised products. This sector is also an important driver of tourism, as many visitors seek to purchase handicrafts that are typical of a region or country (Gassa A and Benguettaf A, 2024; Phillips, W., Indar, D., & Thorne, E, 2017).

In the current context of globalisation and the rise of digital technologies, craftsmanship must adapt to a global market while retaining its identity and specific characteristics. Competition from industrial products and changing consumer tastes represent major challenges for artisans. However, this globalisation also presents opportunities, including the possibility of accessing international markets through digital platforms and the promotion of unique craft products (Ba A, 2006).

Artisans are increasingly involved in sustainability and ethical production strategies, which allows them to differentiate themselves in a global market where environmental and

social awareness is becoming a factor in consumer choice (Laoudj O, Krim Y & Bouchetara M, 2024).

2.3. Areas of craftsmanship:

According to the nomenclature of Algerian craft activities, there are three areas of activity (Souami D, 2013; Laoudj O, Krim Y and Bouchetara M, 2024; Titouche R, 2019):

a) **Traditional crafts and arts and crafts:** Traditional crafts and arts and crafts are any mainly manual, sometimes machine-assisted, manufacture by a craftsman of utilitarian and/or decorative objects of an artistic nature that enable the transmission of ancestral know-how. Crafts are considered arts and crafts when they are distinguished by their authenticity and exclusivity.
b) **Craft production of goods:** Craft production of goods, or modern utilitarian craftsmanship, refers to any manufacture of everyday consumer goods that do not have a particular artistic character, intended for households, industry and agriculture.
c) **Service production crafts**: Service crafts are all activities related to services, particularly in artistic maintenance and restoration, excluding those governed by specific legislative and regulatory provisions.

2.4. Crafts and local development:

2.4.1. The objectives of local development:

One of the main objectives of local development is to mobilise all the potential of a territory to boost productive activities and improve the standard of living of its citizens. The second objective is to develop local development projects that create synergy between:

- The potential of the area, in other terms its agricultural, industrial, tourist, cultural and ecological resources (OECD, 2023).
- Its human resources (dynamism and skills, entrepreneurial spirit and cultural wealth of the local population) (Titouche R, 2019).
- Its integration into regional planning guidelines (communication infrastructure, major economic guidelines) (Brunet, B, 1992).

2.4.2. The challenges of local development:

Revitalisation is the main challenge of local development, but there are other challenges that will take on greater or lesser importance depending on previous initiatives and the actors involved. These are the challenges of equity, democratisation and local development (Hamel P, 1990).

In the context of territorial revitalisation, local development focuses on the underdevelopment of urban areas and regions on the periphery of major economic centres. This issue can be approached from different angles. From this perspective, local development requires knowledge of local needs and specificities in order to establish a strategy for mobilising and enhancing local resources with the aim of improving the living and employment conditions of communities (Souami D, 2013).

Equity, on the other hand, represents the ability to produce a certain amount of social wealth. The concern for development in this context is to maximise the benefits for the entire population in place or to integrate traditionally excluded populations to ensure a more equitable distribution of wealth (Hamel P, 1990).

Democratisation consists as much of analysing and responding to needs as it does of preparing the population for a new reality, in this case that of shared responsibilities. (GJ Dral, Witte PA & Hartmann T, 2023). Sharing responsibilities means not limiting one's involvement to technical tasks, but expanding it to include information, decision-making and participation in planning.

2.4.3. The contribution of craftsmanship to local economic development and regional planning:

Craftsmanship is a fundamental component of the region. It is a major lever for maintaining the economic and social fabric, both in rural areas and in urban centres. Through its local roots, it plays an essential role in revitalising the region, strengthening social cohesion and boosting the local economy (Bellver DF, Prados-Pena M.B, Garcia-Lopez AM and Molina-Morino V, 2023).

In addition, craftsmanship actively contributes to the sustainable development of the region through several mechanisms. It contributes to the diversification of local economic activities – notably through the development of cultural tourism and the stimulation of local demand – thus generating stable income and a positive multiplier effect on the entire productive fabric. This dynamic also promotes higher skill levels, the development of professional and technical activities requiring a high level of expertise, and the promotion of entrepreneurship, particularly among young people and women (Bondyra K, Dziekanowska M & herudzinski T, 2023).

Furthermore, craftsmanship is part of national strategies for economic independence. It supports the integration of local industries, import substitution, the fight against waste through recycling and the use of local raw materials, as well as the maintenance of equipment and the preservation of heritage. It also contributes to exports, tourism activities and the satisfaction of people's basic needs for goods and services (Bardhan A, Bhattacharya A, 2023).

In the context of land use planning, the creation and proliferation of micro-zones for craft activities appear to be relevant measures for retaining populations, particularly in rural areas, and thus contributing to the reduction of rural exodus (Bondyra K, Dziekanowska M & herudzinski T, 2023).

Finally, craft businesses play an important role in mobilising private savings. Due to their light structure, small size and low capital intensity, craft production units are mainly financed by the personal savings of their founders. These activities therefore enable savings to be effectively channelled into productive uses rather than consumption, thereby strengthening the foundations for endogenous local development (Titouche R, 2019).

2.4.5. Craftsmanship, a source of regional balance:

Located throughout the territory, in both urban and rural areas, craft businesses are an essential pillar of local development. Through their strong roots in communities, they actively participate in the economic structuring of territories and play a key role in their balance. In rural areas, craftsmanship is a strategic sector, whose presence is essential for maintaining local services and, more broadly, for the very future of these often-fragile areas (Belattaf M & Ziane L, 2014; Blanchard G, Albert-Cromorias A, 2021).

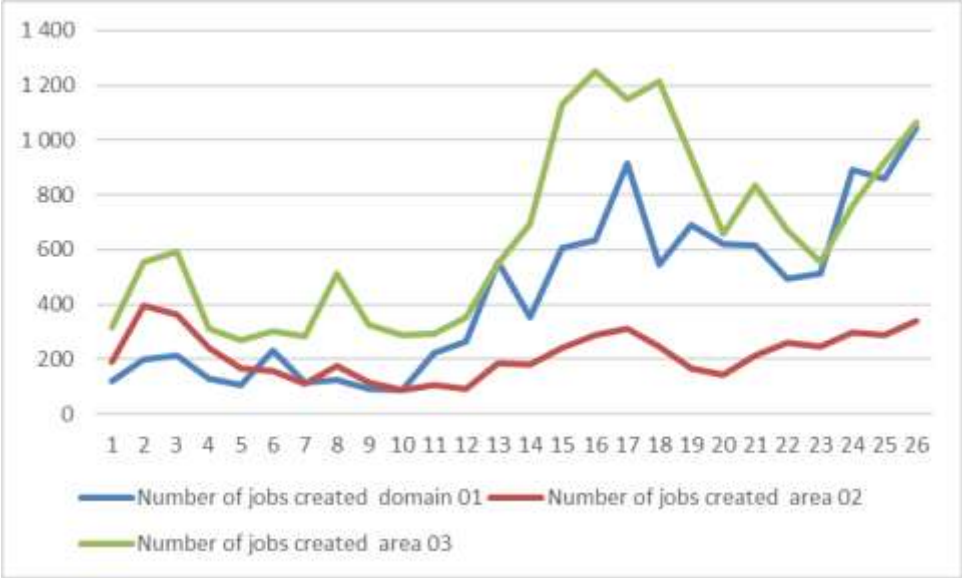
This dense and diverse territorial network provides a solid basis for promoting complementarities between urban and rural areas. It helps to reduce regional imbalances by

strengthening the resilience of territories, supporting local job creation and promoting more inclusive and sustainable development dynamics (Blanchard G, Albert-Cromorias A, 2021).

3. Analysis of job creation dynamics in the craft sector in the wilaya of Bejaia: findings from the field:

In order to understand the contribution of the craft sector to the economy of the Wilaya of Bejaia in terms of job creation, we used the database of the Wilaya's craft department. The advantage of this database is that it provides more or less accurate figures that give us an idea of the importance and place of this sector in the local economy and, by extension, in the development of this region. The data collected enabled us to identify the trend in this sector for the period 1998-2024 (see Figure.1).

Fig.1. Job creation dynamics in the craft sector in the wilaya of Bejaia: 2014-2024



Source: produced by the authors based on data from the Bejaia Directorate of Arts and Crafts, 2025.

3.1. Employment dynamics in the craft sector in the wilaya of Bejaia: realities and lessons learned in the field:

Figure 1 shows the evolution of the number of jobs created in the three areas of the craft sector over the period 1998-2024. These results reflect how different branches of the craft sector contribute, at varying rates, to local development through job creation. A process of gradual restructuring of the local productive fabric was initiated during this period, revealing the ability of crafts to adapt to economic and social changes in the region.

Economically, the figure shows that the three craft sectors followed different trajectories but converged towards overall growth from the 2010s onwards. This trend can be explained by the implementation of public policies to support local entrepreneurship, such as the ANSEJ, CNAC and ANGEM schemes, which encouraged the creation of micro-enterprises in the craft sector. Furthermore, the rise of the services sector, which is the most dynamic, reflects a refocusing of activities on high value-added sectors with a strong identity, such as arts and crafts and local processing, thereby contributing to the diversification of the regional economy.

From a territorial perspective, craftsmanship is increasingly establishing itself as a vector for spatial and social structuring. It's spread in rural and peri-urban areas of Bejaia promotes economic networking within the territory, the creation of local jobs and the development of local resources. This dynamic supports the retention of populations in their areas of origin and contributes to the fight against rural exodus. Craftsmanship is therefore emerging as a lever for endogenous development, combining tradition and innovation, territorial anchoring and openness to the market. Finally, the period from 2021 to 2024 marks a qualitative change: Bejaia's artisans are making greater use of the opportunities offered by digitalisation and short supply chains (online sales, cultural tourism, sustainable craftsmanship). These developments reflect the gradual integration of the craft sector into a resilient and inclusive local economy, where job creation is coupled with a strong cultural and identity-building function.

3.1.1. Traditional crafts and artistic crafts: a sector undergoing a gradual recovery:

After an initial phase marked by relative stagnation, traditional crafts and artistic crafts began a significant recovery in 2012, reaching the same level as the service sector. This steady growth reflects the direct effects of awareness-raising, training and formalisation initiatives targeting craft activities that were previously largely informal. This revival illustrates the potential of a better-structured local craft industry, capable of integrating into regional economic recovery dynamics.

3.1.2. The craft sector involved in the production of goods: Slow but steady growth:

Crafts related to the provision of craft services (repairs, small alterations, etc.) are proving to be the most stable sector. Although the number of jobs created in this sector is fairly modest, we note a regularity in job creation that rightly reflects a certain maturity in the sector in question, combined with a well-established integration into local economic circuits. However, the lack of strong growth could also signal a need for innovation, diversification or expansion of market opportunities.

3.1.3. Between diversification and territorial balance:

The convergence between fields 01, in this case traditional crafts and arts, and field 03 (service crafts) at the end of the period suggests a rebalancing between the different branches of crafts. This phenomenon reflects the rise of certain previously under-exploited segments and reflects a diversification of craft activities that can strengthen local economic resilience. The observed evolution of the traditional crafts and arts sector encourages us to think of crafts not only as a supplementary sector, but as a *structuring player in territorial development.*

3.2. Traditional crafts and artistic crafts: a rise in prominence and unprecedented potential:

It is interesting to note that this field (traditional crafts and artistic crafts) has been the most sought-after sector in recent years, according to statistics provided by the crafts department of the wilaya of Bejaia. This field is experiencing unprecedented popularity, to the point of becoming the sector of choice for artisans in the region. It seems that the rise of this sector is directly linked to the strong demand for traditional and artistic products. To this end,

and given its importance to the local economy, we will attempt to carry out an in-depth analysis of the sub-sectors or branches that make up the sector in question.

3.2.1. The artisanal food sector :

The data provided in Table 1 show the importance of the food sector in the area under study, namely the Wilaya of Bejaia. Analysis of the data on employment broken down by gender and year reveals and confirms the existence of structural dynamics in this sector, while also identifying socio-economic factors that may influence its variations.

Table 1. Change in the number of jobs created in the food sector for the period 2014-2023

Year	Men	Women	Number of jobs created
2014	9	62	263
2015	7	60	248
2016	8	42	185
2017	2	37	144
2018	19	32	189
2019	5	34	144
2020	11	36	174
2021	21	67	326
2022	24	54	289
2023	46	72	437

Source: Prepared by the researchers

The number of jobs created has grown and shown an upward trend for the period 2014-2023, rising from 263 jobs created in 2014 to 437 jobs in 2023, an increase of 66%.
Nevertheless, we can clearly distinguish three distinct phases:

- The first phase runs from 2014 to 2017, where we see a gradual decline in job creation, from 263 jobs created in 2014 to 144 in 2017. This contraction could be correlated with economic factors such as an economic slowdown and a decline in demand for these products.
- The second phase, from 2018 to 2020, shows figures varying between 170 and 190 jobs created, suggesting a period of stabilisation.
- The final phase runs from 2021 to 2023, where we see a spectacular increase with a historic peak of 437 jobs created in 2023. This probably reflects a post-crisis recovery in the sector corresponding to the post-COVID period, the emergence of incentive policies, and growth in demand for products in this sector.

As for the gender distribution of job creation in this sector, we note an initial dominance of female employment for the period from 2014 to 2017, with women accounting for more than 80% of jobs created. In our view, this is the result of a traditional structure that tends to be female-dominated in the food sector. Indeed, this sector has historically been feminised, particularly in the subsectors of artisanal processing, small food retail and catering.

Nevertheless, it is clear that a clear trend towards masculinisation has emerged since 2017. The number of men has increased significantly, from 2 in 2017 to 46 in 2023. This is the result of several combined factors :

- Firstly, the automation or mechanisation of certain tasks, which attracts more male workers;
- The expansion of the sector into technical logistics and industrial production segments;
- The direct effect of public policies promoting male inclusion in historically female sectors, or the migration of women to other sectors that are more valued or better paid.

3.2.2. Earth, plaster, stone and glass work:

The earth, plaster, stone and glass sector refer to ancient, highly technical manual trades related to construction, restoration and the production of decorative or functional materials. These are trades traditionally spread across craft industries, generally excluded from major industrial dynamics. However, these trades play a crucial role in preserving built heritage, passing on local know-how and ensuring the sustainability of natural materials.

TABLE 2. Working with earth, plaster, stone and glass

YEAR	Men	Women	Number of jobs created
2014	27	1	104
2015	38	1	144
2016	22	1	85
2017	27	0	100
2018	18	0	67
2019	5	1	22
2020	11	1	44
2021	8	2	37
2022	7	1	30
2023	7	0	26
2024	11	1	44

Source: Prepared by the researchers

Employment in this sector between 2014 and 2024 experienced a period of expansion in 2015. The sector saw a drastic decline between 2016 and 2019, falling by 85%, indicating a severe contraction in the market, which is likely due to a decline in public orders or the ageing of skilled craftsmen without replacement.

The period from 2020 to 2024 saw relative stabilisation at around 30 to 44 jobs, without returning to the level reached in 2016. These results reveal a sector in difficulty that is struggling to recover and remains vulnerable.

The gender structure of employment in this sector reveals a clear male predominance, with no female presence in 2017, 2018 and 2023. In 2021, we note a slight upturn, but this increase does not mark the beginning of a trend. These data illustrate the sector's resistance to inclusion dynamics, which is at odds with professional equality objectives. The low resilience of this sector can be explained mainly by gender stereotypes that are deeply rooted in the construction and heavy materials trades.

3.2.3. Wool working and related products:

Ancient crafts related to wool working are rooted in the ancestral practices of rural regions of Algeria, such as the Wilaya of Bejaia. They constitute an undeniable part of the country's intangible heritage, but are unfortunately threatened with extinction due to the modernisation of production and consumption patterns. Several field studies have shown that this sector is predominantly female-led. It suffers from low institutional recognition, a lack of market structure and a lack of technical and financial support. The following table shows the dynamics of the wool and related products sector for the period 2014-2024 and allows us to verify the accuracy of these findings.

TABLE 3. Wool processing and related products

YEAR	Men	Women	Number of jobs created
2014	0	3	11
2015	0	5	19
2016	0	0	0
2017	0	1	4
2018	0	2	7
2019	0	1	4
2020	0	1	4
2021	0	3	11
2022	0	0	0
2023	1	2	11
2024	2	4	22

Source: Prepared by the authors

Activity in this sector appears to be subject to irregular cycles, probably influenced by one-off local initiatives or limited-duration projects. Job creation has fluctuated considerably, peaking in 2024 with 22 jobs. No jobs were created in 2016 or 2022. The annual average is 82 jobs, reflecting low productive density.

As for the distribution of jobs by gender, women occupy the top spot with 78% of jobs recorded over the entire period. No men are recorded for the period from 2014 to 2021, except for one individual in 2023 and two individuals in 2024. These results converge with our previous findings, revealing a sector that is strongly polarised around the female gender and a cultural identification of this sector with women.

Ultimately, the main finding, at least for the period 2016 to 2022, which saw no job creation, is the relative vulnerability of this sector. This sector is a good indicator of the tensions that can exist between tradition and modernity. The fact that it is dominated by women can be both a strength in terms of transmission and localised know-how, but also a hindrance if it remains confined to unpaid domestic work. Furthermore, the fact that the products of this sector suffer from low economic value is a major handicap to their integration into the formal market. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the public authorities are working to revive and rehabilitate this sector within the national economy through

cooperatives, entrepreneurship training programmes for women and heritage labelling of products.

3.2.4. The fabric craft sector:

Fabric work, a key component of textile crafts, is traditionally linked to domestic production by women. In the Algerian context, it is a potential lever for the economic inclusion of women and the preservation of cultural know-how.

TABLE 4. Fabric work

YEAR	Men	Women	Number of jobs created
2014	7	111	437
2015	5	101	392
2016	1	87	326
2017	9	74	307
2018	6	74	296
2019	2	70	266
2020	2	52	200
2021	8	114	451
2022	6	112	437
2023	8	113	448
2024	11	90	374

Source: Prepared by the authors

The results shown in the table indicate that, for the period studied, the fabric sector remains dominated by women, who generated a significant number of jobs, with an average of 365 new jobs created during the period studied. Women represent on average more than 85% of the sector's workforce, confirming its historically and socially feminised nature. The data show a period of strong activity from 2014 to 2016 (437 to 326 jobs), followed by a gradual decline reaching a low point in 2020 with 200 jobs created, a period that coincides with an unfavourable economic climate marked by the COVID-19 health crisis. A clear recovery in activity is recorded from 2021 onwards, with a maximum of 451 jobs, stabilising at a high level until 2023. A slight decline is observed in 2024 with 374 jobs, but this level is neither alarming nor critical.

In terms of the gender distribution of jobs, the same observation applies as for the previous sector, where there is a clear predominance of women. However, men show a slight increase in 2023-2024, suggesting a possible beginning of the sector's opening up to more mixed participation.

The fabric sector in Bejaia is characterised by its resilience, its strong potential for the inclusion of women, and its ability to bounce back from crises. However, it remains vulnerable to economic uncertainties and is structurally under-exploited. It is clear that a policy of structuring, professionalisation and commercial promotion, strongly supported by the public authorities, is essential in order to make this sector a sustainable lever for local development.

3.2.5. Leatherworking :

Leather is one of the raw materials with high added value potential: leather goods, luxury crafts, traditional products (slippers, belts, bags, etc.). The leatherworking sector is a marginal sector characterised by low job creation, a total lack of sustainable momentum and the virtual exclusion of women.

TABLE 5. Leatherworking

YEAR	Men	Women	Number of jobs created
2014	0	0	0
2015	2	0	7
2016	3	0	11
2017	0	0	0
2018	0	0	0
2019	2	0	7
2020	0	0	0
2021	0	0	0
2022	0	1	4
2023	2	0	7
2024	1	0	4

Source: Prepared by the authors

The results shown in the table clearly indicate that for several consecutive years from 2014 to 2021, the rate of job creation in this sector has been virtually zero, suggesting that this industry, despite its long history in Algeria, suffers from a lack of investment, transmission and structuring, making it extremely vulnerable. Moreover, even in years when jobs were created, such as 2016 and 2023, the figures remain extremely low and negligible, confirming the very residual role of this sector in the local economy.

Furthermore, the leather sector is highly male-dominated and not very inclusive, with 47 of the 48 jobs recorded being held by men and only one woman appearing in the 2022 data. This clearly reflects a cultural perception of the leather sector as a male profession, which requires a strategy for the inclusion of women in the profession in question.

3.2.6. The craft sector for various materials:

The " various materials" sector encompasses a variety of raw materials and activities: wooden objects, metal, recycling, plastics, and contemporary craft creations.

TABLE 6. Working with various materials

YEAR	Men	Women	Number of jobs created
2014	3	4	26
2015	8	4	44
2016	6	6	44
2017	3	2	19
2018	5	0	19
2019	3	3	22
2020	5	5	37
2021	3	7	37
2022	4	1	19
2023	10	2	44
2024	5	6	87

Source: Prepared by the researchers

The data shows that the sector generated a total of 398 jobs during the period studied. The trend is relatively moderate but steady, with some fluctuations depending on the year. The years 2015, 2016, 2022, 2023 and 2024 were the most dynamic years, with a significant peak in 2024 when 87 jobs were created. Conversely, 2017, 2018 and 2022 saw fairly significant declines, with only 19 jobs created.

The sector is relatively inclusive of women, which is promising. Of the 398 jobs created, approximately 159 are held by women, representing nearly 40% of total employment in this sector, which highlights the importance of women's inclusion in this sector relative to the other sectors already studied. In addition, although the presence of women is irregular and uneven, it holds potential for the feminisation of the sector, which can be encouraged by well-targeted public policies and incentives.

4. CONCLUSION:

Analysis of the craft sectors in Bejaia over the last decade reveals a mosaic of situations: some trades are holding their own, reinventing themselves or opening up to new profiles, while others are in decline due to a lack of innovation or institutional recognition. This diversity of trajectories challenges us to change our perspective.

Craftsmanship is not a sector of the past: it has strong economic, cultural and social potential, provided it is supported by differentiated policies adapted to local realities. This involves modernising production chains, structuring sectors, but also preserving the identity of craftsmanship by integrating women as central actors in this renewal.

Finally, to make craftsmanship a driver of regional development, it is essential to think of it as a space of transition: between tradition and innovation, between social inclusion and economic development. It is not just a question of preserving skills, but of projecting them into the future, in the service of a more resilient, equitable and sustainable local economy.

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