Local initiatives, public policies and the development of tourism in the rural Morocco: A 15 year perspective on development initiatives in rural tourism

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Abstract

There are demands and potentials for a promising development of rural tourism in Morocco, but due to a lack of organisation up until 2000, the offer has remained limited. A tourist boom is currently underway countrywide, with numerous projects developed rather anarchically and involving a multitude of actors with a focus on heritage and local products.

This tourism is generating great hopes as a tool to increase cash income, particularly in marginalised areas. The development of rural tourism requires a territorial approach. Based on several case studies we hypothesise that the success of a rural tourism project is bound to the degree of appropriation by local people. It prompts two questions: (i) what are the relationships and the articulations between top-down and bottom-up initiatives? (ii) Is this tourism venture conducted according to a territorial logic: are all the stakeholders equally involved in planning, developing and commercial activities across the rural tourism continuum? These case studies are representative of the national context in terms of actors' involvement, project planning, partnership, stakeholders, and relationships between initiatives at the regional level. In addition, the provisional conclusions drawn from this can be used to follow further development of this activity.

Keywords: governance, heritage, rural tourism, government policy, Morocco, local products, local identities

Introduction

There is no doubt that Morocco has a great potential for commercialization of rural tourism products. With appropriate development and promotion, this potential could be used to put Morocco on the cultural and discovery tourism market. Rural tourism could be promoted to accompany the development of coastal tourism (currently favored by tourism officials) by increasing its attraction in comparison to its Mediterranean competitors, but also to distribute the

direct benefits of tourism more evenly in rural areas and contribute to local human and socio-economic development [1].

These two reasons are behind the current enthusiasm for the development of this activity. The first refers to the Moroccan Ministry of Tourism's interest in alternative forms of tourism (the 2002 strategy of rural tourism), while the second explains the local associative movement to accompany or encourage small initiatives that have been put in place to attract tourists and offer a minimum number of services.

The involvement of these two levels (state and local) raises questions about governance and links between top-down and bottom-up actions. In this paper, we hypothesize that the level of success of a rural tourism project is above all, related to the degree of appropriation by the local population [2], [3]. This will be the first point of discussion.

Moreover, numerous stakeholders at different levels, from local to international, sometimes lead to inconsistencies or even conflicts of interest that weigh down initiatives [4]. In addition, the implementation of rural tourism requires a territorial approach, which underlies the Ministry's development of the "*Pays d'Accueil Touristique*" (PAT) or Tourism Destination Area [5]. The problems associated with this approach will be the second point of discussion.

Two cases, that are fully representative, will be used to discuss these two points: 1) the region of Chefchaouen in the Rif Mountains and 2) a project that spans the Atlas Mountains in the South. Both are representative of the various project managers, implementation conditions, partnerships, stakeholders, linkages between top-down and bottom-up initiatives, local products (*produits de terroir*). But first, it is essential to describe the rural tourism boom that has taken hold in the Moroccan countryside throughout the country.

1. Rural Tourism Fever in Morocco

There is a keen interest in the various opportunities to host tourists in rural areas and thus the activity is spreading rapidly and often spontaneously both on the demand and on the offer side. Currently, reliable figures of tourist involved in the activity are unknown because there is no system or method for evaluating or tracking demand at this time. In a 2002 study for the Ministry it estimated the number of actual rural tourism consumers in Morocco at 650 000 people and forecast an increase to 2 900 000 in 2010 [6]. Although these numbers have not yet been attained, a real demand exists as well as an offer that is becoming progressively more organized.

The case of the region of Chefchaouen illustrates the precocity of the demand. By the mid-90s, individuals and groups visiting Chefchaouen were prolonging their stays to go hiking in the back country, or even to stay in improvised accommodation in private homes. Then, came small groups of tourists arriving in Morocco by cars who had planned their route to the south with a stopover in Chefchaouen in order to go on treks that have since become "classic." The program of these hikes is developed alongside young city guides, local development associations, or restaurant and accommodation professionals. Today, the interviews conducted indicate that each

year more than 5000 people journey to the region and stay there at least one night. Even if difficult to confirm, this number is significant considering that rural tourism continues to lack the structure and commercialization that would make it fully operational.

Thus throughout Morocco a downstream demand has set off the process. However, while the richness of the culture and the landscape, sometimes enhanced by a park or nature reserve, is an attractive feature, the proximity of main departure points is the determining factor. The process has taken hold particularly from the following departure points: Agadir Ida-ou Tanane (Western High Atlas), Essaouira (country), Marrakech (High Atlas), Chefchaouen and the resorts in the north (land of the Jbala), Rabat (Oulmès and Casablanca), Rabat, Fez and Meknes (Middle Atlas). These departure points serve mainly as redistribution points for foreign tourists who did not specifically come to visit rural destinations. This is especially the case for large international tourism resorts (Agadir or Marrakech) that create far-reaching tourism areas.

In most cases, the local populations are open to these innovations and seize opportunities for additional income. International NGOs and donors have shown a great interest in supporting and accompanying this process. They may be directly from the State (European Union, Spain, Italy, and France) or rely on NGOs funded by the states. To this, the multitude of actors involved throughout this process is added. In addition to international NGOs, the role of local development associations, the Ministry of Tourism, regional development agencies and local authorities must also be acknowledged.

In this way informal tourist territories are progressively being created throughout Morocco in the periphery of official international tourism destinations [7]. Whether in the North, the South Atlantic or the Pre-Atlas and the Atlas, touristic areas are organized and structured around a variety of guest houses, rural accommodations and inns—often not given a classification, that is not officially listed. In the area close to Essaouira, 90 establishments were counted, of which 29 had been officially documented and only six classified. Around Chefchaouen dozens of guest houses are open year round.

It should be noted that this phenomenon is at various stages of progress throughout Morocco and four cases can be distinguished based on recent developments:

- Destinations already officially registered in territories being structured by the Ministry of Tourism, where demand and offer are becoming more organized and are increasing (region of Chefchaouen, the Middle Atlas, Ida-ou-Tanane, and the Western High Atlas).

- Destinations with a dynamic underway: dispersal of accommodations, formalization and integration into the Ministry program not yet completed. This is the case for a number of regions, such as the countryside of Essaouira.

- Destinations with strong potential that benefit from the proximity of large departure points and have a strong presence in regional programs and projects, but where the tourism dynamic has not taken off due to a lack of appropriation by the local populations (region of Oulmès).

- Destinations where international initiatives converge and are able to mobilize local actors who have emigrated, without indicating that the success is the same everywhere (a tourism development program in the southern mountains linked to an international initiative).

2. Public Action and Local Authorities

The proposed framework highlights the three major categories of actors: the state and its external services, international organizations and local businesses. Hence, there is a need to analyze their interactions, which will be done using two case studies: Chefchaouen and the Atlas mountains in the south.

2.1. Chefchaouen: multiple stakeholders at the local level

Early demand

Historically, tourism officials in Morocco were focused on seaside resort tourism complemented by the "Imperial Cities" cultural product and secondarily the desert tours [8]. It was not until 2000 that that Plan Azur, an ambitious tourism recovery strategy based on seaside tourism, was associated with niche products and alternative forms of tourism [9]. Meanwhile an informal demand highlighted the desert and rural sectors, and the State had to integrate these two components as well as a growing demand for national tourism into their strategy. Thus in the development of rural tourism in Morocco local initiatives have often preceded that of the State taking into account their direct and induced effects. The region of Chefchaouen is chronologically the first destination where rural tourism was popular and it serves to illustrate the succession of local actions and those of the State.

The countryside of Chefchaouen is a region that is already on the rural tourism market. A part of the Province of Chefchaouen, of which the small city of Chefchaouen is the capital, the region encompasses a geomorphologic entity (limestone ridge) and covers virtually the entire territory of the Rhomara tribe. The area is a geographical coherent territory with a strong cultural identity and a variety of potentials. Of a major interest is the Talassemtane National Park, which is one of the most forested areas in the country (cedar, cork, Algerian oak, black pine and the only natural fir in Africa) and was classed by UNESCO in 2006 in the Intercontinental Biosphere Reserve of the Mediterranean [10]. It is located near Tangier and the coast of Tetouan, a departure point for clients looking for a cultural and discovery product, and easily accessible from Rabat and Casablanca. In addition, the newly built Mediterranean route, known as the *rocade*, opens access to the north and the coast even further.

The region has a number of assets and benefited very early on from a spontaneous demand that did not come about from an advertising campaign. The main tourist clientele, who frequent the region the most, inevitably pass through Chefchaouen, a stopover city and the main departure point for hikers and green tourism lovers. The city has a sufficient capacity for accommodation (550 beds) and a host of unclassified family pensions.

Thus an area is beginning to emerge in concentric circles around the city with a high density of potential, establishments, accommodations and high-traffic trails, corresponding to areas where various activities were undertaken in partnership with local stakeholders and NGOs (see Map 1).

Local initiatives

This tourism demand interests local actors in the region. The flow of tourists in the region has generated a response from local actors who have risen to the occasion.

The diversity of these initiatives is particularly noteworthy [11]. Young official guides working in the city, or others less legal, capture a part of this demand by being organized (fax, phone, and website) and receiving requests to organize tours. Tourism professionals, such as restaurant and hotel owners, co-organize group excursions with guides. Residents of some of the more frequented villages have improvised makeshift accommodations for tourists arriving in small groups. These accommodations are of course organized in partnership with the young guides. In several villages rural homeowners rise to this occasion: rural accommodations are created, renovated and/or restored from old houses [12], [13].

Long before the establishment of the Ministry's program the area had a number of touristic establishments. A form of homestay was already popular in some villages since the early 90s. But it was a very improvised offer, leaving much to be desired in terms of hygiene, comfort and quality of life (villages of Khizana and Azilane; Bni Maala or Imourassen).

The situation will change when the numerous and active local development associations in Chefchaouen integrate rural tourism into their activities. With support from international NGOs they organize short courses and some have created ecotourism clubs that plan and test routes and treks. Still others receive groups travel groups organized by European associations. One of them has initiated the construction of a rural accommodation six hour walk from Chefchaouen, and intends to accommodate groups sent by foreign associations for responsible tourism circuits. Two associations appear to be strong supporters of tourism development due to their backing by international donors. Both have made rural tourism a priority in their activities and hope to be able to diffuse their activities through networks of village associations with whom they carry out projects. The Talassemtane Association for Environment and Development (ATED) works for environmental protection and for them rural tourism represents a means to improve the income of local people, which could help reduce anthropogenic pressures on the forest, particularly on the Moroccan fir (a threatened endemic species). The Local Development Association of Chefchaouen (ADL) focuses on rural development and it has also identified tourism as an activity to accompany development.
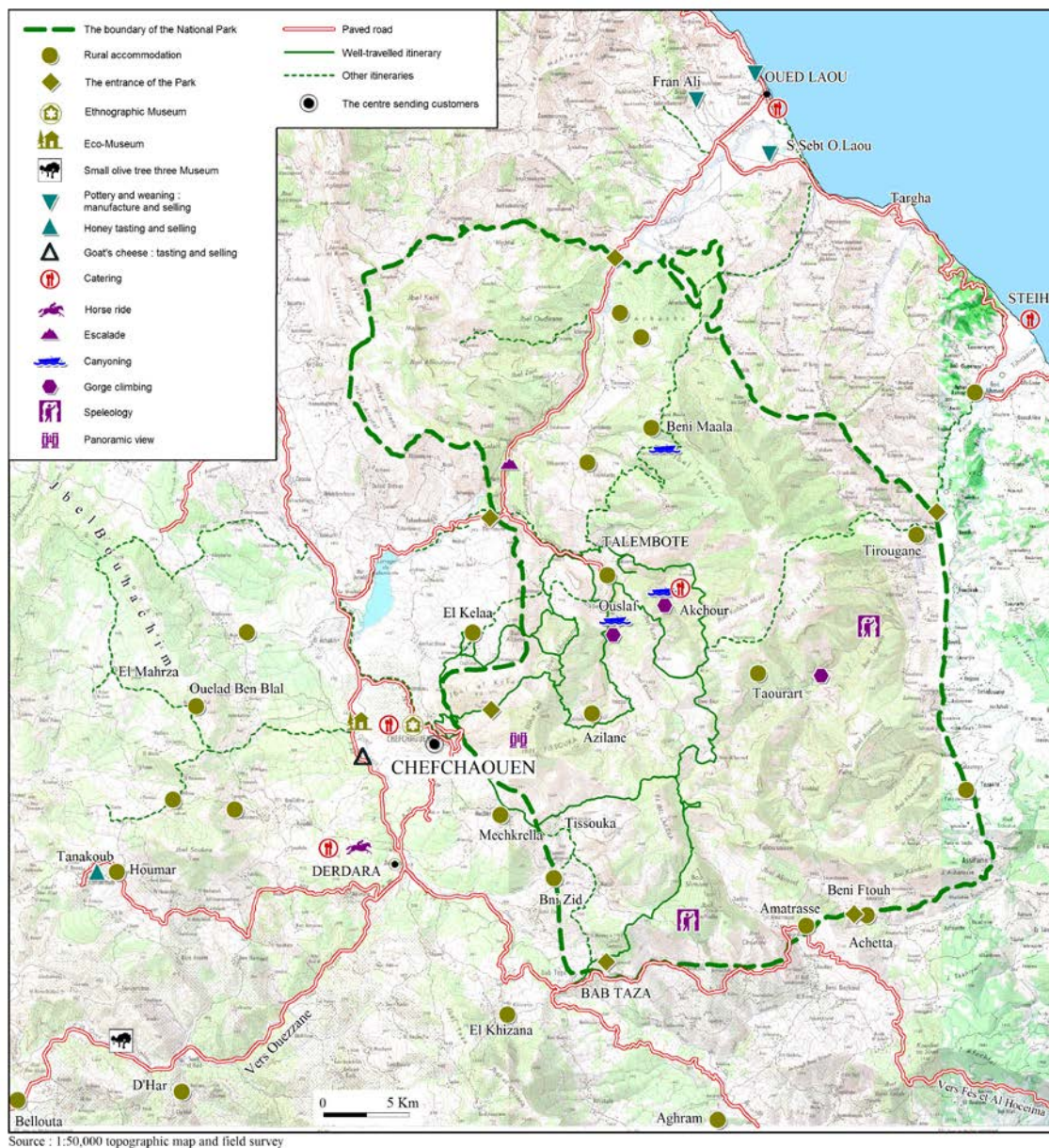
Map 1: Chefchaouen tourist destination and its hinterland

Quickly perceiving the value of this activity and in response to requests from associations, many small projects have arisen to create rural accommodations. Local investors have become improvised rural accommodation and inn managers, such as the investor from the region who opened an inn (Derdara), which serves as a starting point for hiking, walking or riding in the mountains. In summary, a fever has taken hold of Chefchaouen and its region. All strongly believe in rural tourism and hope it will provide a way to generate additional revenue locally but individually based enterprises remain very fragile.

International aid interests

International donors and developers showed very early a strong interest on this activity. Various projects and activities initiated by international NGOs are part of the effort to develop rural tourism. Thanks to assistance obtained from the Spanish Foundation IPADE and the Junta de Castilla La Mancha, ADL organized a training program to award a professional qualification in rural tourism. Twenty-one young people from Chefchaouen were trained as guides, as well as receiving teaching for first aid and organization of local tours [14]. It is through this same support that ADL was able to publish an inventory of resources and tourism potentials in the Province of Chefchaouen.

One of the most ambitious projects in support of rural tourism in the region seems to be the project "Participatory development of forest and forest periphery areas in the province of Chefchaouen" funded by the European Union within the framework of MEDA II. The program's priorities include the signposting of several hiking trails, contracted to ATED, and supporting the implementation of the Talassemtane National Park. Today, a new Spanish association, the ACTLC (Catalan Association for Leisure and Culture) is present and deeply involved. It initiated the creation of an association dedicated exclusively to rural tourism "Chaouen Rural," which with its help has renovated rural accommodations, provided training to home owners in welcoming tourists and also provides marketing, while also offering hikers a customized program of discovery tours. Recently, a joint venture with a park located in Tunisia was initiated by IUCN as a part of o wider program aimed at developing a network of ecotouristic destinations in the Southern Mediterranean [15].

2.2. The intervention of the State: the Tourism Destination Areas of Chefchaouen

The proliferation of projects and initiatives that has been triggered in the Chefchaouen region is not without the help of decision-makers, both at the local and central level (Ministry of Tourism). Still, the most interesting initiative is advocated as part of the national strategy of rural tourism: the concept known as the "*Pays d'accueil touristique*" (PAT) or Tourism Destination Areas, offering options at the regional and local levels. This concept takes over for the previous local initiatives and raises the question of the relationship between top-down and bottom-up actions.

The PAT concept

Given the need to share skills and potential, the PAT has its own identity and its boundaries are defined on the basis of the elements that distinguish it from its neighbors: physical and cultural unity but also diversity of products [16]. It must be located near a departure point and be given a specific label. It comes mainly from a local desire for tourism development in the territory, and requires support as well as organization for development and management. For this reason, the PAT must have various institutional organs and rely on a specific organized activity: identification of routes, courses, workshops or interactive discovery of local culture, a calendar of traditional events, ethnographic and eco-museums, and promotion of rural heritage. It requires appropriate tourist facilities and furnishings: a Tourism Destination Centre or Heritage House (*Maison du Pays*), rural accommodations, restaurants and tourist signs. In summary, a PAT is a

territory that is not a region, a province or a municipality. It can be a part of the first two or it can span two or more municipalities (above all it is a project territory).

However, a PAT cannot come into existence unless local actors show a strong will to work collectively to build together an image by making items that can part of the local heritage ("patrimonialization") and tying all of this to a quality label, which is still to be defined. They must also organize the accommodation, restaurant and entertainment offer, promote it through targeted communication and sell it via operational channels that already exist for the marketing of the Moroccan product.

Attempts to build a rural tourism product

The Chefchaouen PAT was the first to be implemented by the Ministry of Tourism in 2003. And this pilot project will have to integrate and bring together all existing initiatives and strategies that are not yet connected. After eight years of existence, the Chefchaouen PAT still lacks visibility.

One of the strengths of a PAT is the opening of the Tourism Destination Centre, a showcase for tourism in the area and a headquarters for the management, as well as housing the managers, providing activities, and managing and developing the PAT. Currently, this emblem of the tourism offer is severely lacking in visibility and efficiency.

Overlapping actions of multiple stakeholders causes visibility to suffer: Around the same time that the Ministry of Tourism created the Tourism Destination Centre in the city center, the High Commission on Water and Forests created a Centre for the National Park at the entrance to the Park above Chefchaouen. The goal of the first is to promote the destination as a whole, while the latter deals only with the Park, none of the office is clearly indicated and both locals and tourists are often confused with that situation. The division between these two Administrations works against a strong integrated promotion and image of the Chefchaouen tourism destination. Faced with this lack of coordination of actions from above, guides, rural accommodation owners and other agents of local tourism are powerless and do not know how to react. Further, personal interests, ancient conflicts between administrations and local tug of war for power and access to financial support have prompted and maintained rivalries that work against the collective interest.

Management and development of the PAT is non-existent due to the absence of a key person in the PAT and the PAT Centre: the Director. In theory, the Director is a local development officer and not an administrative officer. His appointment should not depend on the formalization of the PAT, but rather precede it to act as the facilitator for its establishment. The Delegation of Tourism in Tetouan decided to appoint a facilitator of rural tourism from among its newly recruited staff. However, in addition to his profile being inadequate for the position and his office being in Tetouan (70 km north of Chefchaouen), he does not hold the title of Director of the PAT Centre. Again, this signals a lack of coordination among the Ministry, the municipality, and the region that ensures his remuneration.

One reason for the dysfunction is the large number of stakeholders involved in rural tourism initiatives. The development of rural tourism in the countryside of Chefchaouen involves: the Ministry of Tourism (the Ministry, Delegation, CRT), the High Commission of Water and Forests (National Park), the Province (economic service), the Municipality of Chefchaouen, the Development Agency for the North (ADN), the Social Development Agency (ADS), the EU (GEFRIF project initially, followed by MEDA II), the association Movimondo (Italy), the association ACTLC (Catalonia) and its "subsidiary" association "Chaouen Rural", ATED, ADL, the rural accommodation owners, local guides, the members of the population directly concerned and those offering tours whether local or not.

The consequences of these simultaneous interventions are various. The challenges and strategies of each are not always consistent, for example, the differences between the Ministry of Tourism and the Forestry Administration in terms of the Talassemtane National Park. The various ministries are often involved in territorial units whose boundaries do not always coincide. There are also many redundancies in the actions taken by each, for example, training guides and marking routes. A certain amount of competition (inevitable and mostly in commercialization) can be observed among international NGOs, local associations, guides and rural accommodation owners. Finally the governance problem has become quite acute because with this multitude of actors. It is no longer possible to know who does what, for what purpose, on whose behalf or with what legitimacy. This situation is not peculiar to Chefchaouen, it creates a lot of frustrations amongst the local population who get discouraged after a while and withdrew its supporting from rural tourism initiatives [17].

2.3 The role of international cooperation

The southern side of the High Atlas and the western edge of the Anti-Atlas (see Map 2) represent a different region and a different model of rural tourism development. Unlike Chefchaouen, the initiative to introduce organized tourism comes from the exterior. The demand already existed here since these areas have been long frequented by buses and all-terrain vehicles common to classic group tourism. However, the originality of the approach and the reason for the choice of project sites was not related to the presence of early hiking tourism, but rather the project managers.

A project initiated from the exterior

While this area still represents local development based on tourism, it comes from an international effort involving a multitude of partners with a delegation of roles and responsibilities down the chain. The initiative came from the European Union who launched a pilot program of co-development based on rural tourism. The coordination was entrusted to the French Development Agency (AFD), with the objective of contributing to local development in regions of origin of Moroccans residing in France in order to curb emigration. In June 2003 a contract was signed in which the AFD delegated the project to the Moroccan Social Development Agency (ADS). The ADS has charged the execution of the project to Migration and Development (M&D), an association created in France by Moroccan emigrants with a delegation to Taliouine.

The original intention was to create 21 rural accommodations with a budget of over 2 million Euros (with accompanying measures and subsidies to investors representing 30% of the project, capped at €70 000).

Map 2: Location of housing projects of M&D association

The project targeted emigrated investors exclusively making it necessary to search for migrant families willing to invest in an activity that was at that time still largely unfamiliar. The integration of potential investors is the main reason that the establishments go beyond the territory typically covered by M&D. The spread of the territory is thus due to investments in several provinces, including Tiznite, Taroudant, Ouarzazate, Agadir, and Marrakech (see Map 2).

To date, 18 projects have come to fruition of a total of 21, but only 10 are functioning, and for some only with serious difficulties. This inconsistent picture contrasts with the dynamic already described in the region of Chefchaouen, and calls attention to the fact that the initiative has been a failure despite the intervention of reliable donors and efficient development agents.

Limited appropriation by local actors

There are a number of reasons for this low success, but most of the constraints and obstacles come from the fact that local actors do not actually take ownership of projects that are imposed from outside.

The choice of M&D was justified because the project was aimed at emigrants. Although the NGO has a long experience in providing basic infrastructure to villages and mobilizing villagers through a network of associations, it was unprepared for designing tourism projects. The fact that the project is intended for Moroccans residing or having resided abroad has caused frustration for others, especially among influential persons who compete with these emigrants. Moreover, in most cases it is not the migrants who have benefited from this program that manage the projects, but rather their parents, which amplifies the frustration [18].

Even if the association already had a good understanding of Moroccan migration to Europe, it had to turn to the already known migrants and not to others wishing to invest in the sector or to those who were already familiar with the rural tourism. This led to difficulties in convincing Moroccans in France to invest in their villages in a sector that was not yet well known nor developed. At the same time, the association had to convince isolated villagers to accept these investments and the arrival of tourists in their lives.

A field survey of two villages (Tagmoute and Aourest) located in the region of Taliouine illustrates these difficulties. The two villages have benefited from the same program supported by M&D and have each had an inn created. The first seems to have accepted the construction and tries to benefit, while in the second the project has been blocked by a systematic rejection of the project.

In Tagmoute, the village association has agreed to educate the inhabitants to accept the inn, located at the entrance of the village. The manager of the inn is a farmer in the village who always directs visitors to the cooperatives.

In the second, a conflict has quickly arose between one village association, approached by M&D and headed by a relative of the emigrant who invested in the project, and another association managed by the chairman of the village council, a man of power but not an emigrant. Conflicts between these two associations have resulted in power struggles at the local level with consequent judicial actions, which affect the future of the project. Today, the inn operates without the permission of local authorities.

These conflicts within the village are also found between inns located in different villages, which hampers operation and in particular marketing. It is likely that these conflicts would have been lightened if the projects were based on existing local initiatives instead of being dictated from above and managed according to external concepts and criteria.

M&D has made efforts in promoting, signposting and training, but has also demonstrated a degree of amateurism in the field of selecting projects holders and marketing. We return later to the effects of this type of project implementation on territorial construction of the project.

A bleak outlook

The overall outcome of this project (Table 1) is bleak. To avoid mentioning establishments the results have been grouped according to the three areas ("Lands") used by M&D to construct the product. This will be discussed further later on. Establishments are relatively small, but still

acceptable for this type of accommodation (average capacity of 20 beds). But it is the employment and returns that are striking: a total of 18 employees (one employee for more than 11 beds), 18 customers per bed/year and a turnover of 191 dirhams per customer. Data on the number of nights is missing, but it seems that number of visits, an indicator of success, is quite low, indicating an unattractive and unsustainable product. Attention should be drawn to the large disparities among the three regions and among establishments. The Land of Roses is clearly the most productive with 44 visitors per bed/year and 202 dirhams per visitor. But this elevated performance has little impact in terms of employment. The Land of Roses is in the middle of the tourist area in the region of Ouarzazate, the main receiving area for desert and mountain tourism. Within this set of data, there is an establishment that sets itself apart due to its location in the middle of an oasis (Agdz oasis) and its management by a university graduate, parent of an emigrant investor.

Product	N° of establishments	N° of beds	Permanent employees	Seasonal employees	Clients – 2009	Revenues – 2009 (in MAD)
Land of Safran	4	77	6	9	857	123 100
Land of Roses	3	55	7	8	2500	505 120
Land of Argan	3	70	5	6	415	95 890
Total	10	202	18	23	3772	724 110

Source: Field Survey – 2010

Table 1: Brief summary of M&D rural tourism project

This is a reminder that the criterion for site selection of these projects was more focused on the availability of emigrants who supported the project than on the suitability of the area or the availability of human resources at the management level. When these two conditions are met, as in the case of the hotel in the Agdz oasis, the project has every chance to succeed.

The selection criterion (emigrant investors) also generates problems for building a territory since migrants, once back in their home villages are often marginalized by those who did not had the chance to migrate, are no longer fully integrated in the social local network and often outside the core of the local power. It can be said that their migrant status has led to a kind of "*deterritorialisation*" [19].

3. Attempts to build a territory

3.1. Territory projects without project territories

Rural tourism is spreading throughout Morocco, and as has been pointed out often spontaneously at the level of demand or offer. It has not developed in the same way as classical tourism via successive plans since the late 60s. Indeed, this new form of tourism would benefit more from being seen as a system, while classical tourism is often treated as a sectorial activity. The first involves a multitude of actors different from those usually interested in the second. First and

foremost it is a local initiative. This means that its development must be controlled locally, its capital based on the promotion of local products and its management strictly local. Initiatives for implementing rural tourism are more about local development in peripheral or marginal areas than about classical tourism models. For all these reasons, a territorial approach should be used in implementing rural tourism. In this paper, we believe and support the dynamic of tourism development through a territorial approach [20], [21]).

As it has been defined above, the PAT requires a territorial unit that is not defined by administrative or natural criteria. In this definition, we must consider the places of interests for tourism and infrastructure, but the main criterion remains the tourism actors and their drive to come together to build a project territory. The first step in identifying this territory is a learning process that involves bringing people together to build a product to make it a tourist territory. This process should lead to identification of the territory, an area that emanates from a base and continues to evolve because its boundaries are not meant to be fixed.

In terms of the various PATs created or under way in Morocco, the preliminary studies emphasize the necessity for identification and collective construction of a tourist territory, while this was completely left out of the implementation process. Implicitly PATs correspond to provincial rural tourism officials. This means that the proposed PAT should correspond to an administrative area with fixed boundaries while assuming that all socio-territorial components of the province are involved and support the project, and that is contradictory.

This is then very far from being a project territory built from the bottom-up that evolves gradually with the increase in demand and the participation of new actors.

This applies to all PATs, created or still in development. The M&D project is no exception since the territorial component is virtually absent despite the spatial clustering of accommodations in three "Lands". There were no alternatives since the first criterion of the projects was the presence of a migrant ready to invest. Also the territorial dimension should come into play well before the product design phase by basing its territory creation on the complementarities among sites, but also on the connections and networking between potential project managers. Even with the shared labels of "Land of Saffron," "Land of Roses" and "Land of Argan", these inns have nothing that groups or connects them while the managers of these establishments complain about the lack of awareness and the lack of a collective dynamic in the project territory. This accounts for the marketing difficulties and low returns observed in these establishments.

3.2 A significant capacity for bottom-up tourism development

Other than the M&D projects, which have had no territorial impact thus far, an impact can be observed wherever initiatives are more spontaneous and locally run leading to positive developments. Through project leader's strategies in various areas we are indeed witnessing bottom-up territorial construction that is emerging in an informal, real context and that also contributes to a more efficient dynamic initiated by local populations.

Whether in the tourism destinations of Chefchaouen, Essaouira, the Middle Atlas, or in the oases the owners of guest houses and inns begin actions that become a part of the actions of a number of other stakeholders. All of this converges and becomes a bottom-up tourism implementation that is both unexpected and uncoordinated, but is successful in attracting tourists in these areas.

These small initiatives, which are neither covered by a development plan nor by any sort of action plan whatsoever, provide combined accommodation capacities of close to a thousand beds per region. Given the flexible nature of guest houses, the multifunctionality of rooms in a Moroccan house and the possibility of group rentals, this capacity could be doubled.

Unlike hotels, these guesthouses are open all year round and employ a permanent staff, mostly from the local area. Each structure employs at least three people: one for the housekeeping, one for cooking and one for child care and maintenance. In addition, these numbers may increase during high season. They also offer a restaurant on site that serves local products promoting local Moroccan cuisine, popular with tourists. In addition to local jobs, food is also supplied locally, which suggests positive returns for the village economies.

These initiatives are not limited to simple houses for family or commercial use. Complexes with between 100 and 300 beds are beginning to emerge in certain areas, especially around Essaouira.

These settlements result from spontaneous individual initiatives and involve a certain architectural research that is not limited to the simple reproduction of models inspired by the architecture of southern Morocco, but also incorporates local architecture. This includes the use of local materials, which contributes to the preservation of local heritage and "savoir-faire". It works efficiently against disappearance of local skills threatened but ever growing urbanization as well as negative impacts of globalization.

These accommodations are generally concentrated in the immediate countryside of regional capitals within organized areas of concentric circles (see Map 1). The progressive construction of this territory is also due to the tourist circuits resulting from local initiatives or travel agencies based in major cities. The circuits on the market are organized by theme and often correspond to the layout of the routes and the nature of sites to visit. The richness of the offer is clear and it is only the beginning of an evolving process, which is what makes it so remarkable.

Dynamic diffuses from the capital to the immediate peripheral areas first and then further into the interior of the region. This confirms that a departure point close to the clients plays an important role in the development of rural tourism. It also serves as a reminder that rural tourism can only be initiated from a central core, a starting point for diffusion of the phenomenon that will spread through a territory and eventually grows.

The processes observed in the region of Chefchaouen are found throughout Morocco where there has been progressive bottom-up building of tourism territories that are recognized and supported by populations and project leaders. The State's actions to structure and develop rural tourism have been built over top of these existing territories, with the State encompassing the territories

and trying to fit them into administrative units (Province), which makes them lose their initial coherence.

3.3. Heritage and globalization

The construction of a virtual image of the destination and local reinvention

Only three PATs have been officially launched: Chefchaouen, Ida Ou Tanane and the Middle Atlas. But other unlabeled destinations exist across the country and operate more informally. This is the result of various actions carried out by small projects and it is the owners of accommodations who are the real actors behind shaping a tangible image of the destination.

These owners show a certain degree of imagination and professionalism in building customer loyalty and finding ways to extend visitor's stays (from adding local products to their restaurant menus, organizing excursions and visits to cooperatives, offering introductory courses in local activities and trades, to providing local body-care treatments, oriental dance classes, introduction to local cuisine and crafts, playgrounds for children, and theme evenings). Some owners also offer hosting of seminars, conferences, and scientific and cultural events within their establishments. They try to maximize existing services and activities in the area, which mainly consist of water sports, hunting, and various hiking options. The concept of rural tourism thus extends into the types of tourism known as "niche tourism" that complement the range of activities in rural areas.

Even informally, their sales force is efficient given the opportunity offered by the Internet. The lack of professional and structured promotion is significant for non-official destinations that have not yet benefited from development projects and state promotion. To make up for this effect, project leaders (accommodation and activities) are investing in the Internet to promote and market their business. They also use other means such as guides or local tourist magazines, travel agencies and distribution of posters or leaflets in the city hotels, kiosks, phone shops, or even in the Provincial Delegation of Tourism. With this multitude of actions, a virtual image of the destination has been built and is now being efficiently promoted.

Finally, although operating in the informal sector, accommodation owners, associations and the population contribute to build a local product with an image and specific products all directly connected to the global system without relay or intermediary.

This connection to the world of local socio-economic and cultural systems also leads to patrimonialization processes that are intensified in response to globalization.

Building an heritage through others eyes

The notion of heritage recurs in a number of fields related to tourism in Morocco, particularly in: cultural and rural tourism; the taking into account of natural or human-influenced landscapes; comparison with the past, memory and history; and discussions on local development in rural areas that take into account socio-economic legacies and know-how "*savoir-faire*". Until recently, heritage and its safeguarding were concerned mainly with historical monuments,

architectural legacy, particularly dynastic architecture, historical centers of old cities, and some urban cultural components (such as Andalusian music). Thus it was predominantly concerned with urban heritage while now the attention is moving elsewhere [22].

Taken by a true "heritage fever" development actors leave the city to understand the heritage building process under way in the countryside. In the debate, the reflection is not limited to the natural or cultural landscapes, but has also included territories, trades, practices and crafts as well as pilgrimages and religious events. This is mainly due to the growing interest in heritage as a tool for local development within national and international institutions, and as various ethnic identity related phenomena triggered by the ever growing weight of globalization.

Throughout the study areas, forgotten or trivialized products, trades and "savoir-faire", will be rediscovered after an external request to be recognized as a heritage. Based on obvious value in the eyes of local people, these heritages are at the center of important issues that will not necessarily lead to direct benefits for the populations [23].

However when conveyed abroad this heritage process may also blur the images. Strongly present in the design of most guest houses and inspired by earth made buildings becoming more widespread in Morocco and spreading a more standardized and de-territorialized style. This heritage that is revisited by outsiders with the expansion of the kasbah style to all regions of Morocco, creates confusion in a country where the local and regional cultural properties are very strong.

Conclusion

At the end of this analysis, deliberately limited to two case studies, lessons can be learnt from the first 15 years of rural tourism in Morocco.

The development of rural tourism involves a multitude of actors from the local to the international levels. These actions follow one another in time, overlap in space and, despite good intentions, have many inconsistencies and dysfunctions related to the profusion of actors and governance issues. The relationships between "top-down" and "bottom-up" approaches are quite complex and often generate misunderstandings and frustrations, while appropriation of projects by communities and local stakeholders is a necessary and imperative condition for success.

In addition to the technical aspects, the relationship between what is imposed from above and what comes from below are essential in the construction of tourist destination territories. The primary criterion remains the tourism stakeholders and their willingness to build a project territory together. In the majority of cases, the collective construction of a territory to host tourists has been disconnected from the process of implementing state programs. The PATs implicitly fall within the provincial boundaries, and are managed by the Provincial Delegation of Tourism although it has neither the skills nor the capacity to work on territorialized local development being a very different approach than that of the classic sectorial tourism management which is their strong point.

Moreover, far from being distinct, autonomous tourist destinations with their own clients, the PATs are seen as auxiliary products to nearby major existing tourist destinations and future sea resorts.

Nevertheless, dynamics for PAT construction exist here and there, often coming from the local level that lends them to tourism implementation by the territorial approach. The numerous initiatives carried out by local actors multiply the number of accommodations, sometimes concentrated and organized in networks in the country, to offer a diversity of tourist destinations: Chefchaouen, Essaouira, Ifrane, Immouzer Ida or Tanane, Agadir, Marrakech. Destination territories do exist and operate as such, in an informal way, carried and supported by individual and private initiatives.

At this stage of analysis, one can hypothesize that from a sectorial vision, tourism could be disruptive to local farm economies. By taking into account the recreational value of natural resources and by symbolically appropriating the territory, tourism stakeholders, both operators and customers, are in a position of opposition with farmers and rural people in general, who exhibit a legitimate indigenous territoriality through a sense of identity and actual appropriation of its resources. Rural territories used by tourists become divided and the local population gradually loses control over them. Where the farmer sees resources that underpin his rationale for existing, the tourist sees recreational spaces and scenic, exotic landscapes, and the tourism operator sees a potential for economic development. This contrast in perception is one of the elements that can lead to tourism being rejected by local populations.

This is the reason that the importance assigned to local communities and their perceptions in any territorial creation of a rural tourism product is vital and indispensable to ensure sustainability.

Acknowledgements

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