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The public policies in favor of Geographical Indications in Morocco: Mental models, appropriation by the actors, and impact on innovation and local dynamics

Jean-Paul Dubeuf¹

Abstract – The governance and efficiency of the public Policy in favour of the Geographical Indications (GI) in Morocco for creating value and fighting poverty in rural back countries are analyzed. From the certification projects in two Northern and South Western regions, the reports of several participative workshops and individual interviews, the GIs in Morocco appear to be more an official communication support of image than an operational tool of development. Considered as “modern” innovations by themselves and generally top – down administrative initiatives, the GI projects have difficulties to be understood by the professional actors and are little connected to specific and realistic economic local economic objectives and the changes in urban demand. Including the GIs in a broader discussion on the general governance of 2nd Pillar of the Green Moroccan project is one of the proposed suggestions.

Keywords – Rural Development, Public Policies, Morocco, Geographical Indications, Governance, Mental models.

INTRODUCTION, OBJECTIVES AND METHOD

The Public Authorities in Morocco have been developing for several years an incentive policy to develop geographical indications, promote local “terroir” products and thus help to improve the income of rural populations. They present these approaches as an important component of the policy of the 2nd Pillar of the Green Morocco Project in favor of local products.

Our objective was to identify the mental models, references and paradigms, the balances of power and the implicit or explicit objectives that underlie the initiatives and projects of Geographical Indications¹. To do this and understand how they have impacted the valorization of these products, we have analyzed the existing documentation and specially the programmatic official (CGDA, 2009, Amigha, 2007, ANOC, 2010,) documents and organized opened interviews with several private or public actors and reported collective meetings and participatory workshops organized by the local public services to improve the governance and implementation of their projects where we have attended. All the observations were reported in a synthetic document (Dubeuf, 2015)

The certification projects have been studied in two regions: In Northern Morocco (Tangiers – Chefchaouen), with the development project of the

goat milk sector and the certification of the « Ajbane Chefchaouen » cheese; in the Argane tree area (South Western Morocco), with two initiatives, the PGI Argane oil, the first certified one in Morocco, and the certification project of the kid meat, presently being renegotiated in the Essaouira Province,



Map 1. Localization of the studied Geographical Indications

RESULTS

The stated objectives of the public authorities were to increase the value and the quality of the products by promoting the implementation of new labels; but we observed also that the local marketing conditions and their relations to the production systems have been little considered:

The narrowness of the market of the Chefchaouen cheese made with goat milk has been confirmed by several testimonies. The low level of local consumption of dairy products, the competition with similar products made with cow milk at a much lower price, explain this situation. These reasons are all reservations to limit the potentialities of dairy goat products and about the relevance of a Denomination of Origin as proposed by the authorities, when since 20 years, the market has not met the expected growth respecting to the undertaken investments.

Regarding the Argane PGI, most of the volumes of oil are today commercialized in bulk in Europe to be used as raw material in cosmetic. In no way under these conditions, Argane oil is a resource; for these cosmetics companies, it is only an image and an argument to sell their products but they could substitute it by other “ethic”, exotic components. The objective of the PGI and its possible role as a lever for local development (associated to tourism and craft) is neither defined nor discussed (Amigha, 2007) while suggestions could be deepened to promote a specific commercial development and position the oil produced and packaged locally by cooperatives.

For kids, the hypothesis is that a future PGI could help to increase production, improve herd management and trade meat on emerging urban markets and is associated to a standardized slaughtering and

¹ Protected Denomination of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI)



new packaging. This would mean professionalization and specialization (Dubeuf et al., 2014). But the local family organization of the rural world, the coexistence between several agricultural, craft or other activities, local production systems or the collective management system of rangelands (Agdal) had been little studied until recently and not considered to prepare PGI specifications (ANOC, 2010) and had to face several critics. A new recent labeling scheme is now discussed. It has associated more narrowly local Haha Berber populations which has enabled to rewrite specifications integrating more the local practices, the traditional management system and on a smaller areas (the area of the Haha community only).

The 2nd pillar of the Green Morocco Project is a structured policy as defined by Muller (1990), dedicated to small holders and hinterlands which the GI's measures are one of the components. An agreement between UE and Morocco has been firm in 2015 to mutually protect the GIs and the strategy developed by Morocco is influenced by the French and UE visions (M.A.P.M Maroc/M.A.A.P. France, 2010). Besides the initiatives are generally from administrative top - down origin and the local professional organizations are generally associated only once the project has begun, and their orientations decided without their contribution.

This could explain the observed difficulties for the actors to appropriate these certifications. Distrust or even hostility was often perceived from the small and medium farmers which could be the consequence of these starting conditions. Besides, the complex and often ambiguous articulation between the foreign GI concepts and the rooted ones of «roumi/beldi²» and «Hourr/Mzaour³» which has been still not much studied (Jabiot, 2013) could increase some misunderstandings about the several underlying logics.

New dynamics associating more the local actors could open up favorable prospects as observed for the kids but more business planning for monitoring the objectives on the markets would be necessary.

DISCUSSION AND PROSPECTS

These results have confirmed and specified those of previous studies that have analyzed globally the Green Morocco Project such as Akesbi, (2011) who has underlined its productivist orientations, standardized approaches, an opaque and cumbersome governance, ambiguities and contradictions between the 1st and 2nd Pillar. Today the Geographical Indications in Morocco would be first the copy and paste of foreign more or less successful stories applied without enough reflexivity. The classical dominant model of progress, dominated by public authorities is still present with their (wrong) faith that any technical progress or commercial liberalization would lead to a social progress. The background to promote specialized models and systems is still considered as the only efficient ones. Most of the GO project drivers consider still that the local actors of the rural areas are generally ignorant because without education and could become competitive only by integrating technical external innovations; the local practices have been little articulated with the technical innovations in the GIs specifications. Consequently, the GIs are today in Morocco

more a communication support of image than a tool for development and their impact on local economies is still very low. Mobilizing them to develop effectively Moroccan hinterland would probably require including them in a necessary larger discussion on the governance of the public policies in favor of rural areas in Morocco. The impact of GI's policy is directly linked to this of the all 2nd pillar. The scattering of funding is for example a consequence of this characteristics accentuated by political client manners which limit the impact of these programs. Although these programs are globally well endowed financially, the absence of documented business like approaches could lead to failures. More detailed formulation of the objectives of the projects, their steering organization and the ways the actors could more efficiently participate could favor their successes.

The diversity of local products in Morocco, their local roots with different qualifications than those proposed now by the GI's policy could also help to build a specific approach more adapted for the new stakes of the changing Moroccan context and perhaps to other Southern countries.

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² Literally « Roman » to name an European/local

³ Pure/false