



## Public interventions regarding pastoral activities in the argan-tree area in Morocco: continuity and changes

Jean-Paul Dubeuf, Thierry Linck, Saïd Chatibi

### ► To cite this version:

Jean-Paul Dubeuf, Thierry Linck, Saïd Chatibi. Public interventions regarding pastoral activities in the argan-tree area in Morocco: continuity and changes. Livestock Policy, Cirad, 2020, 978-2-87614-762-1. hal-03694488

**HAL Id: hal-03694488**

**<https://hal.inrae.fr/hal-03694488>**

Submitted on 13 Jun 2022

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

# Public interventions regarding pastoral activities in the argan-tree area in Morocco: continuity and changes

Jean-Paul Dubeuf<sup>1</sup>, Thierry Linck<sup>2†</sup> and Saïd Chatibi<sup>3</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

Morocco has to face major agricultural development issues. In the early 2000s, production was dependent on weather conditions and rainfall, and markets and marketing channels were disorganized or chaotic with growing external trade deficits and poor infrastructures. The previous agricultural policies had failed and the government decided to build a new strategic plan, the Green Morocco Plan (GMP).

The objective of this chapter was to analyze how this new policy has been implemented in a southwestern region of Morocco with important economic, social and economic stakes, the argan-tree area. We will specifically consider the projects supporting livestock in several districts where it significantly interacts with other agricultural activities. A large proportion of the population is still poor, especially in mountains, oases and Southern arid areas.

## DUALITY OF INCENTIVE POLICIES PROMOTING AGRICULTURE THE TWO PILLARS OF THE GREEN MOROCCO PLAN

Until 2008, Morocco based its agricultural strategies mainly on irrigation and increase of the production of milk, cereals, red meat, etc. The previous plans had been often unsuccessful with a loss of competitiveness and food safety, which decided the government to build an ambitious plan, a very innovative approach in Africa. GMP has become the main framework in favor of agriculture, and a national priority for the economic development of the country; one of its objectives has been to reduce the trade deficit (MAP, 2015).

GMP is structured in two pillars like those of the European Common Agricultural Policy. Pillar I refers to large farms and aims to make modern agriculture more competitive and export-oriented in a globalized world. Subsectors based on irrigation such as citrus, olive oil, dairy, sugar, poultry, red meat, gardening are enhanced.

---

<sup>1</sup> INRA-LRDE, UR 45, 20250 Corte, France; jean-paul.dubeuf@inrae.fr

<sup>2</sup> INRA-SAD PAYSAGE, 35042 Rennes, France (deceased)

<sup>3</sup> IAV, Rabat, Morocco; s.chabiti@iav.ac.ma

For Akesbi (2011), a positive aspect is that GMP has been implemented to make agriculture a national priority. However, he emphasizes that the objectives of Pillar I, based on the expertise of international American consultants, have ignored the social, economic, environmental realities of Morocco. The development of irrigation for export crops could cause the over use of water resources and thus reduce food safety in the country. Although, Pillar I covers only 20% of the lands, it is more endowed financially and represents the real priority of the government.

Pillar II is dedicated to the fight against poverty and to solidarity, and it promotes small-size farms in the ill-favored mountains and arid areas. It is mainly based on local terroir products (e.g. honey, local olive or argan oil, cheeses, mutton, goat meat, aromatic plants, saffron, prickly pears). The strategy of Pillar II is to support “hundreds of thousands of farmers to have an access to the market economy by creating adding value and the adequate management of natural resources” (Conseil Général du Développement Agricole, 2009). The target population is estimated at 600,000–800,000 families (with an average of 3.5 to 8 livestock units and less than three hectares). Its watchwords, mainly based on the directions given by the international organizations and summed up in the Millennium Development Goals, are oriented to the “transitions to food safety in a changing climate” (UNO, 2015).

The four main objectives of Pillar II for mountain and oasis agriculture are officially: i) Promote quality products, ecosystemic services and synergy with tourism thanks to the development of ecotourism by geographical indications, labels and local solidarity; a legal framework on quality and origin identification labels has thus been established (Bendriss, 2010); ii) Manage and develop natural resources for a more productive but also more sustainable agriculture; iii) Give priority to Pillar II projects in sustainable territorial development approaches; and iv) Professionalize and aggregate smallholder farms by creating cooperatives and collective organizations to give them access to the market.

The rationale behind Pillar II has been inspired both by models successfully developed in France (they “could keep on helping Morocco to develop faster and in a more useful way” and help to create organizations related to land management, payments for environmental services [Conseil Général du Développement Agricole, 2009]), and by the watchwords and methods proposed by the main international organizations (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD], World Bank, European Union...). The strategic orientations of all these institutions have influenced the guidelines of projects by using concepts such as scaling up, business planning, policy mix, or top-down instructions such as participation, collective organization, which do not necessarily match the actual practices implemented. Developing geographical indications, scaling up pilot microprojects could be relevant but all these approaches are very new for actors, including the administration, who could face difficulties in applying them to their own contexts.

To improve coordination between the several administrations and to work at a more territorial level, Morocco has decided to reorganize its institutional framework. It created new agencies and offices, e.g. the Agency for the Development of Oasis and Argan-Tree Area (ANDZOA, created in 2010 it covers 40% of the national territory, coordinates the local actors and boosts territorial development), the Agency for the Development of Agriculture (ADA), and the National Agency for Agricultural extension (ONCA). All these structures manage projects supported by the National Initiative for Human Development Support Project (INDH) decided by the King in 2005 with an allocation of several billion Moroccan dirhams (MAD). They also coordinate projects financed by international organizations such as IFAD, the World Bank, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the European Union through the Accompanying Measures (MEDA) program with funding to support regional initiatives. The involvement of the French Cooperation in the development policy is also strong, including scientific and technical cooperation. The number and diversity of new institutional actors is not only the answer to coordination needs but could also mirror the power struggles and different approaches of the Moroccan State.

## HISTORICAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT OF THE ARGAN-TREE AREA

### The argan-tree area, a complex and diversified agrarian system

The argan forest is an endemic woody formation in Southwest Morocco (provinces of Essaouira, Taroudant, Agadir, Tiznit). Its surface area is officially 871,000 hectares (Figure 1) but these data are old and do not take in account the observed degradation and loss of density of the trees.

Historically, humans have occupied and enhanced this region for many centuries. The traditional agrarian system is very complex and characterized by complementarities between crops, picking and processing argan nuts, and livestock (mainly small ruminants for meat). Among these activities, picking and processing argan nuts to make oil has developed dramatically after 1990 to face the growing demand of European cosmetic companies.

### Plurality of land tenures and their historical basis

Until the early 1950s, the French protectorate regime defined the agrarian policy differently from what had occurred in Algeria, as settlements for Europeans had not been developed (Bouderbala, 1999). Most Moroccan lands were ruled under a legal regime based on Islamic law, the Charia. The Dahir (royal decree) of April 24, 1919 is still in effect; it confirms a pluralistic land tenure including State properties, classic registered private properties, and traditional tribal or indigenous properties. The private *Melk* and the collective properties, among them the collective (*mouchaa*)

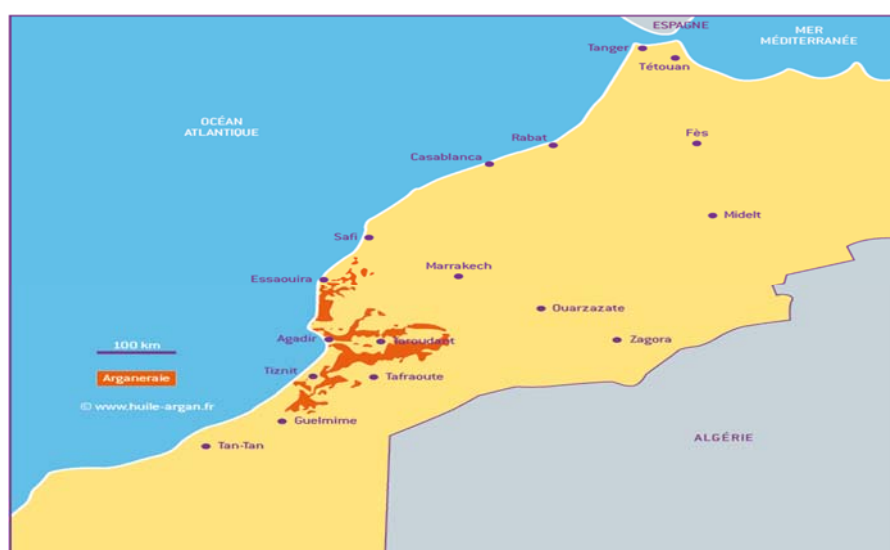


Figure 1: The argan-tree area in Morocco

rangelands and the inalienable lands dedicated to foundations and charities (*habous*), share these tribal lands.

This full tribal ownership was, however, under the supervision of the state, in this case, the direction of indigenous affairs, a powerful administration controlling politically the rural tribes. After independence, its power was transferred to the ministry of the interior that reinforced its control over the population. The tribal collectivities were governed by an assembly of notables (*jmaa*), who managed the rules of collective ownership of land and conditions for its use, including identification of people entitled to use the land, inheritance arbitration, use management with the definition of the dates of enclosure periods in the collective sylvopastoral territories subject to temporary defenses (*agdals*), litigation management. Within tribal collectivities, these customary laws were generally applied and they were different from Islamic and French laws. These collective lands also allowed flexibility to climate risks and enabled people without land rights to survive and stay in the community.

Land tenure was both a guarantee of protection but also a heritage guardianship of the memory of collective knowledge and practices (Dubeuf et al., 2013). This system and its principles remain until today within the leading role of the ministry of the interior, whose strengthened omnipotence has been politically justified by the tensions between some communities and by the situation in Western Sahara.

## Present changes and transitions

The rain-fed mountain crops, and the arid and semi-arid areas have received little of the investments allocated to agriculture in Morocco. Around 75% of the poor in the country live in these regions including the argan-tree area. The literacy rate is low (around 10%) and emigration to large cities or Europe is high (Bouchelka, 2013).

Until the 2000s, most of the sylvopastoral and agricultural productions (above all argan oil but also saffron, prickly pear, carob, kid meat) were traded locally at local markets (souks), at a low price. Since then, other dynamics and tendencies have emerged. Argan oil dietetic and cosmetic qualities have attracted the industry and international companies, introducing globalized markets and competitiveness in the rural society. The development of agrotourism in Southern Morocco also introduced international standards (Bouchelka, 2013).

This development has paradoxically increased the precarious situation of rural populations with more individual attitudes, the loss of solidarity within communities, and the decreasing impact or disappearance of the *jmaa* institution when a community is de-structured. The inalienable community lands have thus been challenged, and many rights holders claim a permanent usufruct of their share of collective lands (Bouderbala, 2009).

In parallel, Morocco has faced important political changes and changed the relationship between citizens and public authorities. In 2011, the 'February 20th movement' has been the national expression of the Arabic Spring and consequently a new constitution was promulgated in July 2011, which strengthened pluralism and a more democratic organization of the Sherifian monarchy. These mutations had been initiated before these events with the emergence of a new genuine civilian society and the development of associations, collective forums, among others. These changes have deeply redirected political practices with an emphasis on partnership and participation, although some analyses considered them as a communication tool and not as factual (Planel, 2009).

## CHALLENGES OF PASTORALISM IN THE ARGAN-TREE AREA AND PUBLIC POLICIES

As in other Moroccan regions of rain-fed agriculture, the rural population of the argan-tree area has kept on increasing, but climate change in this arid area (less than 200 mm per year) has increased the intensity and frequency of drought periods, and thus the degradation of many sylvopastoral areas. In addition, the organized and systematic migration of many nomadic herds from Sahara to the collective lands competes with the local traditional herds.

The argan-tree area is not a homogenous territory. Around the large city of Agadir, for instance, the traditional systems have often disappeared; the complementarity between argan oil and goats has decreased, and the preservation of the forest has to compete with other activities such as irrigated market gardens in greenhouses or tourism. In other remote regions, the argan forests have faced rural exodus and the traditional indigenous organization has disappeared. The Forest Service complains that uncontrolled herds increase the degradation of the trees. However, in the regions where this organization remains strong, like in the Berber Haha area south of Essaouira, the ecosystem has been less degraded and goats are still the main source

of income along with argan oil (Bouchelka, 2013). The herd size varies from a few head to more than one hundred according to the number of trees and lands owned by the families. Nevertheless, the performances of goat rearing are very low: no reproduction control, high mortalities, low-growing rate of the kids, bad carcass conformation, local slaughtering for local consumption without sanitary and hygienic conditions, and limited extension services. In parallel, the development of a middle class of urban consumers could expand the market of goat meat, considered as a healthier diet than mutton; this is the reason why the Administration has supported the implementation of a project to organize the goat subsector in the region.

## Public policies promoting livestock in the argan-tree area

The Project of Promotion of (goat) Kids in the Argan-Tree Area (PPMVA) is a good example of the policy implemented in Morocco for remote areas. As for vegetable products, Pillar II is based on the development strategy of local terroir products or products of origin-linked quality. It has been inspired by the French experience (General Council for Agricultural Development of the Moroccan Ministry of Agriculture and Maritime Fisheries, French General Council for Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas, 2010) and procedures, which involve producers' organizations and the administration for product certification based on origin and quality characteristics.

The Moroccan laws have acknowledged geographical indications (GI), and the European Union and Morocco signed an agreement on GI in January 2015. The argan oil Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) is the first PGI in Morocco but the argan-tree area has other PGI products, e.g. olive oil, pickling Pear of Aït Baâmrane, Tyout Chiadma also certified by a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), or Taliouine Saffron (also PDO). The objective is to organize the producers and cooperatives in a production sector, to structure the value chains and fairly improve producers' incomes.

The starting point of the project has been the awareness of the Provincial Direction of Agriculture (PDA) in Essaouira that livestock is an important part of the agrosylvopastoral system of the argan tree area managed for centuries by populations who were simultaneously farmers, pickers and shepherds. In Haha tribal area, where the traditional system has been able to carry on well, PDA decided to initiate a project to certify the kid meat of the area. It mobilized the experience of the National Sheep and Goat Association (ANOC), which had organized producers' groups and defined the specifications of other livestock GI products in Morocco (Beni Guil lamb meat in Eastern Morocco, goat milk or *jben*), to undertake a project to certify kid meat. ANOC is a nationwide professional organization, created in 1967, which mainly consists in technical interventions based on groups of professional breeders. It works with about 40 groups of sheep breeders (2800 breeders and 418,000 head) and 12 groups of goat breeders (840 breeders and 75,000 head). Although it only concerns a small part of all the breeders, ANOC is considered as a model of livestock professional organization and an example for Northern Africa countries.

This certification project was included in a larger strategic one: PPMVA. It has many other well-identified objectives to improve all the value chain that relate to the professional organization of the breeders, goat nutrition and genetics, sanitary conditions and performances of the herds, pasture management, water supplies, building a controlled slaughterhouse, and organizing marketing (Table 1). Technology transfer and training are also a priority. The project was limited to 29 rural districts of Haha Berber area. PDA estimated the return on the project to 34 million MAD (3 million euros) for 634 additional tons of meat produced, and the creation of 200 jobs (50,000 work hours) for 17 million MAD (1.5 million €) invested in five years. The number of beneficiaries targeted in the document project was 22,740.

Table 1: Budget of the Project of Promotion of (goat) Kids in the Argan-Tree Area in Morocco in 2014

Operations		Budget (MAD/€)
<b>Breeders' organization</b>		
ANOC groups	2 groups (12,000 persons)	1,000,000/89,000
<b>Improvement of herd management</b>		7,010,000/623,890
Animal health		810,000
Buried water tanks (100 m <sup>3</sup> )	—	3,000,000
Truck for water transport	30	1,200,000
Building a pilot farm	2	2,000,000
	20	
<b>Goat meat marketing</b>		4,600,000/409,400
Slaughterhouse	1	2,000,000
Pilot market (souk)	1	500,000
Cutting room	1	1,200,000
Refrigerated truck to transport meat	1	700,000
Marketing organization	1	200,000
<b>Goat meat certification</b>		500,000/44,500
Market study	—	
Labeling		
Communication		
<b>Technology transfer and training</b>		600,000/53,400
<b>Other actions</b>		3,290,000
<b>Total</b>		17,000,000/1,513,000

Source: DPA / Plan Maroc Vert, 2012 ; MAD: Moroccan dirhams; €: euros

## First specifications for certification of the argan kid Difficulties, oppositions and recent development

ANOC (2010) prepared the first specifications under the control of PDA Essaouira (ANOC/ DPA, 2011). These specifications targeted initially only 114 breeders gathered



in a first group. In parallel, they proposed to extend PGI to all the argan-tree area and not solely to Haha's where most breeders came from. These specifications included a few references to the diversity of local production systems and ecosystems, and they did not mention the complementarities between goats and other activities like oil. The specifications have mainly insisted on the traceability and monitoring of the activity (birth and weight records, slaughtering certification). They also quoted sanitary and animal welfare conditions. However, the link to the origin was justified in a very general and implied way by the use of pasture without proposing specific local indicators (no references to *agdal*, for instance). By 2007, a collective mission of the French National Research Institute for Agriculture - Livestock Development Research Laboratory (INRA-LRDE) in Corte analyzed the weak points regarding the challenges of certification (Chatibi et al., 2007).

Consequently, these specifications faced the opposition of several main actors of the argan oil subsectors (e.g. the Interprofessional Association for PGI Argan Oil [AMIGHA], the Forest Services, the Network of Associations of the Argan-tree Area Biosphere Reserve [RARBA]). For them, goat farming was responsible for forest degradation and they were against the use of the argan tree words for products other than oil in the same area. In parallel, the association of rights holders of Haha argan area questioned the legitimacy of ANOC, considered as external to the area, and insisted on the traditional importance of goats in their own district, and the need to integrate the traditional organization of Haha area in the specifications. Consequently, the Administration adjourned the PGI project and entrusted the preparation of new specifications to Haha rights holders. Several discussions have included ANOC to define new specifications, a more restricted geographical area, and probably to change the name of the future quality and origin label from argan kid to kid from the Haha argan-tree area.

## DISCUSSION ON THE IMPACTS OF PUBLIC INTERVENTIONS PROMOTING CROP AND LIVESTOCK AND THEIR CONCEPTUAL MODELS

Pillar II of the Green Morocco Plan to which belongs the program promoting livestock in the argan-tree area is a structured policy as defined by Muller (1990). The reports of several discussions with the actors and the analysis of the project documents have enabled specifying the impacts of these policies. At a general level, our observations have confirmed some previous ones such as the works of Akesbi (2011) who underlined its productive orientations, standardized approaches, and a rather unclear and cumbersome governance of the Green Morocco Plan with ambiguities between Pillars I and II.

For kids, the hypothesis was that a future Protected Geographical Indication label could help to increase production, improve herd management, and that this would mean professionalization and specialization. However, this approach has largely

ignored the difficulties of the local actors to appropriate this type of certification. Distrust was often perceived by medium-size livestock farmers. The latter considered that the project was originally of the top-down administration type, and that the orientations had been decided without their initial contribution. In addition, the complex and often ambiguous meanings attached to the Northern GI concepts compared to the rooted ones of *roumi* vs *beldi* (European vs local) and *hourr* vs *mzaour* (pure vs false) could increase misunderstanding (Simenel, 2010; Jabiou, 2013). The classical dominant model of progress is still present with the (wrong) belief that any technical progress or commercial liberalization would lead to social progress. The background to promote specialized models is still considered as the only efficient way, ignoring the local knowledge and expertise of small breeders, considered as ill informed.

Regarding more specifically PPMVA project for kid meat, a benefit-cost analysis of the investments in this project undertaken for a larger comparative study (Dubeuf et al., 2014) for IFAD gave interesting conclusions (Francescutti, 2014): The planned investments were appropriate for around 1500 breeders, which is much lower than the 21,740 beneficiaries announced in the project. With a target of 1500 breeders, owning medium-size herds of 20 to 60 head, the study enhanced that the project could enable easily an increase in incomes of 600 €/family only by increasing the growth rate of kids and decreasing mortalities. These observations show a lack of business planning, documented discussion and monitoring on the objectives of the project.

Another implicit hypothesis based on the aggregation around local leaders and groups of professional breeders is that this nucleus will be the basis for development of all the community. However, only the members of these groups received technical extension services and very few services were dedicated to the majority of small-size goat farms.

## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS

In spite of these difficulties, the awareness of the Moroccan government and its resolve to enhance these ill-favored areas has significantly increased; Morocco belongs today to the Adelboden Group (multi-actor think-tank on the development of mountain areas, created after the 2002 international conference in Adelboden, Switzerland). However, project governance and monitoring must be improved with a more effective involvement of the population. Although the projects are well endowed financially, the absence of well-documented businesslike approaches could lead to failure and most funding and subsidies could be wasted. A more detailed formulation of the objectives, developing prospective views with steering organizations and the ways the actors could more efficiently participate could lead to their success.

## References

- Akesbi N., 2011. Le plan Maroc Vert : une analyse critique. Question d'économie marocaine, Rabat, Morocco
- ANOC, 2010. Référentiel technique de l'élevage caprin, document technique, 30 p
- ANOC/DPA, 2011. L'IG « chevreau de l'arganeraie », document de projet, 28 p.
- Bendriss K., 2010. Cadre législatif et réglementaire des signes d'origine et de qualité au Maroc; ministère de L'Agriculture et de la Pêche maritime. [www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/olq/documents/morocco/file/BENDRISSI.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/olq/documents/morocco/file/BENDRISSI.pdf)
- Bouchelka M., 2013. Mutations du nomadisme et impacts sur les systèmes pastoraux ; le cas de l'arganier. In : Actes 2e Congr. Intl. l'Arganier, Agadir, déc. 2013
- Bouderbala N., 1999. Les systèmes de propriété foncière au Maghreb, le cas du Maroc in CIHEAM *Cah. Options Méditerran.*, **36** : 57
- Chatibi S., Casabianca F., Bouche R., 2007. Éléments d'analyse de la situation du chevreau de l'arganier ; extraits du rapport de mission des 13 et 14 mai 2007, 14 p.
- Conseil général du développement agricole, ministère marocain de l'Agriculture et de la Pêche maritime, conseil général français de l'Alimentation, de l'Agriculture et des Espaces ruraux, 2010. Actes Sémin. Terroirs et Origine : Leçons d'une lecture croisée des expériences du Maroc et de la France pour une Méditerranée durable, 10 mars 2010
- Conseil général du développement agricole, ministère marocain de l'Agriculture et de la Pêche maritime, 2009. Le pilier 2 du plan Maroc Vert. De la stratégie à l'action. Pour un développement solidaire et durable de la Petite Agriculture prenant en compte les spécificités des montagnes et des oasis, 38 et 48
- Dino Francescutti, FAO Investment Centre, 2014. Business assessment and cost-benefit analysis for pro-poor small ruminant development based on the IFAD-IGA cases studies. IFAD-IGA Scaling-up successful practices on sustainable pro-poor small ruminant development, Dubeuf J.P. Coord., 272-333, [www.iga-goatworld.com/uploads/6/1/6/2/6162024/scaling-up\\_successful\\_practices-part03.pdf](http://www.iga-goatworld.com/uploads/6/1/6/2/6162024/scaling-up_successful_practices-part03.pdf)
- Direction Provinciale de l'Agriculture / Plan Maroc Vert, 2012. Presentation PPMVA, Programmation document DPA Essaouira / Green Morocco Plan
- Dubeuf J.-P., 2013. The impact of qualification of Argan oil and kid of the argan tree area. ANR Mouve Project note, 17 p.
- Dubeuf J.-P., Bendapudi R., Bhandari D., Capote J., Carrasco-Sanchez R., Daskiran I., Guimares V., et al., 2014. Scaling up successful practices for pro-poor development projects involving goats: First outputs of a comparative study. *Small Rumin. Res.*, DOI: 10.1016/j.smallrumres.2014.02.002
- Jabiot I., 2013. Beldi-roumi : qualification fluctuante de produits et d'êtres vivants à Chefchaouen (Rif occidental, Maroc). In: Intel. Conf. Anthropology in Morocco: discourses, encounters and networks, University of the Basque Country, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Espagne, 21-22 nov. 2013, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvgemTu1K2w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvgemTu1K2w)
- Moroccan Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries-MAP, 2015. [www.agriculture.gov.ma/pages/la-strategie](http://www.agriculture.gov.ma/pages/la-strategie)
- Muller P., 1990. Les politiques publiques. PUF, Paris, France, 127 p. (coll. Que sais-je)
- Panel S., 2009. Transformations de l'Etat et politiques territoriales dans le Maroc contemporain. *L'espace politique* (7) : 2009-1
- Simenel R., 2010. Beldi /roumi : une conception marocaine du produit de terroir, exemple des Aït Ba'amran ; Hesperis-Tamuda, n° spécial Patrimoine et patrimonialisation au Maroc, **45** : 167-176
- United Nations Organization, 2015, [www.unmillenniumproject.org/goals/](http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/goals/)