

OPTIMISATION OF TOURISM GOVERNANCE APPROACHES FOR RURAL AREAS IN SOUTHERN MOROCCO: MISSED OPPORTUNITIES AND PITFALLS

Andreas Kagermeier¹
andreas@kagermeier.de

in cooperation with

Lahoucine Amzil²
houcine_amzil@yahoo.fr

Brahim Elfasskaoui³
elfasskaoui@yahoo.fr

Preliminary remarks on the methodical approach

The contribution is the result of a binational German-Moroccan research cooperation. In addition to the knowledge and experience of the three researchers involved, it is based on concrete findings from a joint research project. The contribution is the result of a binational German-Moroccan research cooperation funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, BMBF). In addition to the knowledge and experience of the three researchers involved, it is based on concrete findings from a joint research project. At the heart of the project stood two workshops with representatives from different stakeholder groups in the case study regions of Souss-Massa and Drâa-Tafilalet in spring 2019.

A series of qualitative expert discussions were held in advance with representatives of groups of actors relevant to the topic of destination governance.

This included face-to-face interviews with representatives at the **national level**:

- 1) Ministry of Tourism (Ministère du Tourisme, de l'Artisanat et de l'Economie Sociale et Solidaire, Direction Tourisme Rural) as the responsible legal body for the framework conditions on tourism policy.
- 2) SMIT (Société Marocaine d'Ingénierie Touristique) as the public national institution for the development of tourism products that is therefore able to initiate innovative approaches.

¹ Trier University – Germany / Université des Trèves – Allemagne

² FLSH-Université Mohammed V Rabat, Maroc

³ Université Moulay Ismaël Meknès, Maroc

- 3) CERKAS (Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Kasbahs du Sud de l'Atlas) as part of the Ministère de la Culture is responsible for the rehabilitation and restoration of the local architectural heritage (kasbahs et collective granaries [Igoudar]), which form the tourist image of the destinations as tourist attractions in the Moroccan South of the Atlas.
- 4) ANDZOA (Agence Nationale pour le Développement des Zones Oasiennes et de l'Arganier).

At the **regional level**, preliminary talks were held with:

- 1) Representatives of regional offices of the central government
 - a) Regional/provincial delegates of the tourism ministry as the responsible stakeholders for provincial and regional tourism conditions, including the control instance for quality assurance and the possible initiator of innovation policies. In the Souss-Massa region this included the Délégation Régional du Souss-Massa (at the same time Délégation Provinciale d'Agadir). Since the regional level has not yet been established in the Drâa-Tafilalet region, representatives from the provincial levels (Délégation Provinciale de Tourisme de Zagora, Ouarzazate, Tinghir and Errachidia) have been contacted.
 - b) Provincial/regional divisions of the Ministry of Agriculture and Waters and Forests (Drâa-Tafilalet). The Ministry of Agriculture plays an important role in Morocco. In the Drâa-Tafilalet, the Offices Régionaux de la Mise en Valeur Agricole (ORMVAT) have taken different approaches to stimulate investments in the tourism sector, including the commercialization of regional agricultural products for tourism purposes (e.g. Route de Miel, Festival des Roses in the M'goun and Dadès valley, Route de Dattes, Pays de Saffron).
- 2) Representatives of public regional institutions:
 - a) Conseil de la Région as the body of political representatives at the regional level.
 - b) Administration of the Council of the Region. Economic Development Division.
 - c) Société de Développement Régional du Tourisme (SDR) established in spring 2019 as a regional agency which directly intervenes in tourism-related investments.
 - d) CRT (Conseil Régional du Tourisme) Souss-Massa / CPT (Conseils Provinciaux du Tourisme) of the provinces in the Drâa-Tafilalet region, as the official federation of tourism professionals at the regional provincial level (dominated by bigger hotels and agencies), which focuses on the promotion of the destinations in close interaction with the provincial and regional tourism offices. No CRT has

been established yet in the Drâa-Tafilalet region. For this reason, representatives from the CPTs were contacted.

3) Representatives of NGOs:

- a) RDTR (Réseau de Développement Touristique Rural Marocain as the key NGO in the Souss-Massa region that focuses on the development of quality and sustainability-oriented tourism in rural tourism. The network of micro-entrepreneurs and academics receives a certain degree of support from the regional political level and works in close cooperation with the Conseil de la Région.
- b) Local associations that endeavor to engage in tourism projects in the Drâa Tafilalet Region since there exists no NGO on the regional level, the Groupement d'Intérêt Economique (GIE) Majhoul Partners and the Fédération Locale du Tourisme Durable Taouz.

All interviews were conducted by the three authors themselves (in most cases with at least two authors present). The central goal of the preliminary talks was to identify the different positions for the orientation and the course of the workshop. The contact persons at the expert talks were also included in the two workshops in the two case study regions. Since the number of participants in the workshops should not be too large in order to enable intensive interaction and sufficient articulation by each participant, the side of the smaller private sector stakeholders could only be filled with a few selected representatives.

Since one of the focal points was the inclusion of smaller private-sector actors in destination governance and their views had to be represented in a corresponding manner. Therefore project staff held additional qualitative personal discussions with representatives of this group of actors in the run-up to the workshops:

- 1) In the Souss-Massa region, 27 face-to-face interviews were held with smaller private tourism players (with audio documentation and partial transcription). In view of the more intensive structural interdependence in the Souss-Massa region, greater attention was paid to the interaction between the actors.
- 2) In the Drâa-Tafilalet project region, which is characterized much more by individual activities, in which the network relationships and the innovation-oriented activities are even more rudimentary, 45 shorter discussions were held with smaller private-sector actors.

Some of the provisional findings were reflected in the workshops as additional input from the perspective of smaller private-sector tourism players. The findings make it clear that the Drâa-Tafilalet region is characterized by the extensive isolation of actors at the local and partly at the pro-

vincial level. There is only very rudimentary awareness of the need for cooperation. In contrast, opinions in the Souss-Massa region were marked much more intensively by the need for cooperation – but at the same time by significantly higher expectations of state, institutional and civil society actors.

In addition to the representatives of the various groups of actors already listed above, several representatives of national universities (Agadir, Rabat, Tanger), the IRCAM (Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe) and two university professors from France and Germany were also involved in the two workshops. Their function was, on the one hand, to bring an overarching perspective to the discussions and, on the other hand, to accompany the workshop phases in subgroups.

Methodologically, the workshops can be viewed as a modified form of focus group discussions. The three authors set appropriate impulses. The process as well as the interactions and articulations were received and documented in parallel – especially by the three project employees – in participatory observation.

After the workshops and the return of the participants, the three authors and the three project employees held short, retrospective personal interviews with all participants (partly via Skype). The findings generated in the process were also incorporated into the formulation of the contribution.

The mix of methods was supplemented by content-analytical processing of different sources on the topic of destination governance as well as publicly accessible representations of the different actors.

1 The Arab Spring as a trigger for new governance approaches

Within the Arab world, the Kingdom of Morocco is regarded as a relatively stable country in which the royal family – which claims to be descended from the Prophet Mohamed – is seen as a guarantor of stability (cf. Dugge 2012). For a long time, Morocco was run in a relatively centralized and autocratic manner, even if steps towards a cautious strengthening of a democratic foundation have been made since the late 1990s (for more details, see e.g., Reifeld/Rais 2017). Especially after the accession to the throne of the currently ruling King Mohamed VI in 1999, there was a spirit of optimism in the country towards increasing rule of law and democratization (Lang 2001, p. 28). However, those hopes have only been partially fulfilled.

In February 2011, when the movement known as the Arab Spring, which originated in Egypt and Tunisia, manifested itself in corresponding

demonstrations in Morocco, this discourse on democratization was revived. Unlike in neighbouring countries, the legitimacy of the government, and in particular of the monarchy, was not called into question, at least not publicly. King Mohammed VI reacted quickly to the demonstrations and in a speech on 9 March 2011, he held out the prospect of a new constitution (Mohammed VI 2011). This new constitution (Royaume du Maroc 2011b) was adopted in a referendum in July 2011 by an overwhelming majority (cf. Bank 2011). At the same time, governance approaches (known as *Bonne Gouvernance*) were also prominently discussed and plans for “advanced regionalization” (*Régionalisation Avancée*) were laid down (Royaume du Maroc 2011b, p. 1904). As part of the *Régionalisation Avancée*, Article 135 of the 2011 constitution granted these regions the status of independent legal entities under public law (*personnes morales de droit public*) (Royaume du Maroc 2011b, p. 1923).

In the second half of 2011, a commission appointed by King Mohammed VI elaborated the structure and tasks of these future regions (Royaume du Maroc 2011a). The fact that the 12 new regions were only created in 2015 after intense debate was an indirect sign that the proposal was not without controversy, in terms of its design and the proposed tasks (see Figure 4). The areas of responsibility of the regional councils (*Conseil Régional*) are comparable to those of German state parliaments. They were described as follows in an analysis by the representative of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Morocco: “En premier lieu, se trouve le Conseil régional. Il est présidé par le Président du Conseil régional qui dispose d’une administration régionale autonome. Les prérogatives du Conseil régional sont multiples mais peuvent être regroupées en 3 catégories: le Développement économique, la Formation continue et le développement rural” (Rais 2017).

This demonstrates the principle of subsidiarity as an important anchor of governance. At the same time, the relationship to the existing hierarchically structured top-down institutions had not been clarified. Until now, there have been outposts of the respective central government ministries in Morocco at all administrative levels (regional, provincial, municipal). This means that there are double structures featuring offices that answer directly to the central government in addition to democratically legitimised institutions at the spatial level.

The German version of the analysis by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation is clearer: “On the one hand, the king (at the suggestion of the cabinet) continues to appoint a ‘Wali’ for each region as his deputy; on the other hand, there is the ‘*Conseil Régional*’, elected by free elections, whose president formally corresponds to a German minister president. At the hierar-

chical level below, i.e., the provinces or prefectures, the Ministry of the Interior appoints a secretary – on behalf of the king and more or less under the Wali. Its counterpart on the parliamentary side is the president of the ‘*Conseil Provincial*’ or ‘*Conseil Préfectoral*’. And finally, a similar polarisation can be found on the lower, the municipal level: Here, too, the governor appoints a ‘*Pascha*’ in the small towns or a ‘*Caïd*’ in rural communities, while those in the city and municipal councils are assigned ‘mayors’ (‘*Président de la commune*’)⁴ (Reifeld/Rais 2017).

Despite the beginnings after the Arab Spring, there are signs that the persistence of the traditional top-down structures clearly still has an effect. This parallelism of structures is also reflected – with negative consequences – in the area of destination governance, as the following section will demonstrate.

2 The principle of subsidiarity in Germany

The transformation of governance approaches in Morocco away from relatively autocratic patterns towards more democratically based and regionalised approaches implicitly evokes the organisational structures in Germany, as a federal state. Accordingly, the basic approach of the principle of subsidiarity in Germany should be briefly outlined. This also formulates a reference for the presentation of developments in Morocco.

The principle of subsidiarity focuses on self-determination and personal responsibility. According to this paradigm, the responsibility for tasks should lie as closely as possible with the actors who are confronted with these tasks. The prerequisite is having the ability to master the challenges that arise. In the political context and in the action of public administration, the principle of subsidiarity means that responsibility initially lies with the local authority that is confronted with the task as directly as possible (Panizza 2019, p. 2). In principle, the responsibility to act lies with the lowest possible administrative level. Only when institutions at this

⁴ Original German version: (English translation by the author) “*Zum einen setzt der König (auf Vorschlag des Kabinetts) nach wie vor für jede Region als seinen Stellvertreter einen ‚Wali‘ ein; zum anderen gibt es den durch freie Wahlen gewählten ‚Conseil Régional‘, dessen Präsident formal einem deutschen Ministerpräsidenten entspricht. Auf der Hierarchieebene darunter, also den Provinzen bzw. Präfekturen, setzt das Innenministerium – im Auftrag des Königs und quasi unter dem Wali – einen Gouverneur ein. Dessen Pendant auf der parlamentarischen Seite ist jeweils der Präsident des ‚Conseil Provincial‘ bzw. ‚Conseil Préfectoral‘. Und eine ähnliche Polarisierung findet sich schließlich auf der unteren, der kommunalen Ebene: Auch hier werden durch den Gouverneur in den Kleinstädten ‚Pascha‘ bzw. in ländlichen Kommunen ‚Caïd‘ eingesetzt, denen in den Stadt- und Gemeinderäten ‚Bürgermeister‘ (‚Président de la commune‘) gegenüber stehen“.*

level have neither the skills nor the resources to take on a task (e.g., defence) is this transferred to a higher level.

With respect to the administrative structure of the Federal Republic of Germany (see Fig. 1), this means that the municipal level (municipalities, cities, districts) takes on as many tasks as possible under its own responsibility. This includes (albeit not as a mandatory task) the provision of tourism infrastructure and the marketing of municipal tourism offers. Interaction with other actors at the municipal level (the local population, NGOs, private-sector service providers) is a central element. Anchoring the political responsibilities at the municipal level is thus supposed to guarantee direct responsibility towards other actors in the given sphere of activity. The same applies to employees of municipal tourism institutions/organisations, which are also directly responsible for their actions to the political actors at the same level.

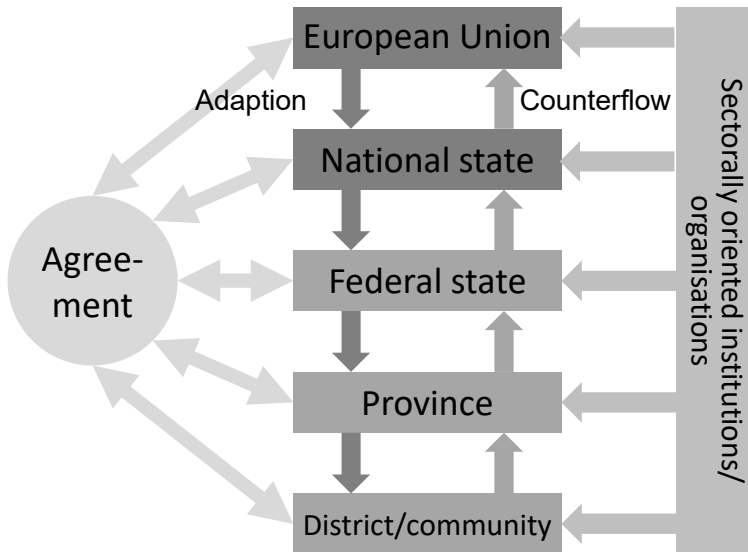


Fig. 1: Counter current principle as a central component of subsidiarity in Germany (Source: The authors)

In the case of tasks that go beyond the municipal level and for which regional authorities covering correspondingly larger areas of activity are responsible, it is true that smaller regional authorities must on the one hand adapt to higher-level demands. At the same time, they must also be included in the formulation of these demands – in the sense of the counter-current principle. The basic principle of balancing interests and understanding in the interplay between the different levels is therefore crucially

important. This applies up to the supranational level of the European Union, for which the principle of subsidiarity was explicitly noted in the Maastricht Treaties (Höffe 1997, p. 26).

This basic principle extends to tourism in Germany as well (see Fig. 2). In view of the federal political structure of the Federal Republic of Germany (similar to Austria and Switzerland), tourism is primarily the task of the federal states (or cantons). It is seen as part of regional economic development (Freyer 2011, p. 383). Responsibilities at the federal level are limited to national tasks. At the federal level, tourism promotion is seen as a cross-department task, with the Federal Ministry of the Economy (BMWi) taking the lead. One overall national task – foreign marketing as carried out by the German National Tourist Board (GNTB) – is financed mainly by the ministry. Another example is the financing of the “tourism competence centre”, which is tasked with promoting innovation processes in tourism through interaction with tourism stakeholders at various levels. The German Tourism Association (DTV) is shown in Figure 2 as an umbrella association of federal state-level marketing organisations (LMOs) as an example of a central association that represents the interests of (different) regions at the federal state level.

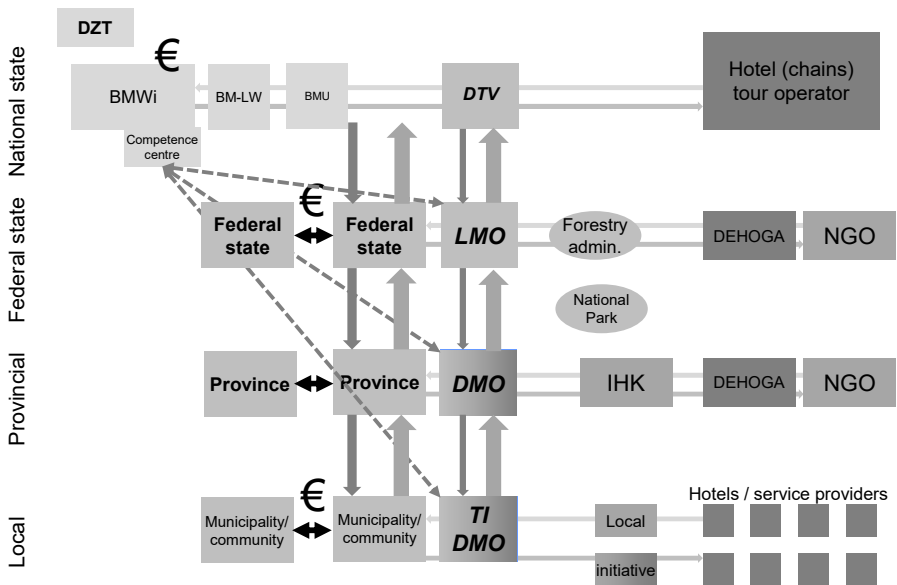


Fig. 2: Actor constellation in tourism in Germany according to the federal principle of subsidiarity (Source: The authors)

Constitutive for the federal principle of subsidiarity and the fulfillment of the respective tasks is the availability of self-generated funds at every level (symbolised by the € sign in the figure). Since federal states are responsible for regional economic development, they independently implement corresponding programmes for the marketing and development of tourism in their respective territory via LMOs. If a particular destination (e.g., the Eifel) crosses the borders of a federal state, the relevant states sometimes enter into inter-state cooperative agreements (without involving the federal level).

In the depiction in Figure 2, Germany's "government regions" (*Regierungsbezirke*) are shown below the level of the federal states; in Morocco, these correspond to what are known as "provinces" (while Germany's "districts" (*Kreise*), as democratically constituted administrative units, play no equivalent role). However, these administrative regional bodies (in spite of their relatively broad scope of both powers and territory) are not necessarily the ones that deal with tourism. It is often landscape units (e.g., the Moselle, the Black Forest) or travel areas (which may also span more than one government region, such as East Bavaria) that are marketed and managed accordingly as destinations, and thus in tourism represent the intermediate level between federal states and municipalities.

3 The principle of governance and the actor constellation in Morocco before 2015

As early as the French protectorate period from 1912 to independence in 1956 (as well as under the military administration of the southern parts of the country to a certain extent), a relatively strongly centralised administrative structure was implemented based on the French model (cf. e.g., Kagermeier 2012). Even after independence, the central government played a key role, although the governance constellation also showed autocratic traits in some cases.

Accordingly, the tourism sector has also been characterised by basic hierarchical patterns that were clearly influenced by the central government as a key actor (for more details, see Kagermeier et al. 2019). Figure 3 shows the most important actors related to tourism.

The Ministry of Tourism in the capital plays a key role. This ministry also has subordinate branches in each province, known as "*Delégations Provinciales du Tourisme*" (DPT). Branch staff are also directly subordinate to the Ministry of Tourism and managers are also delegated directly to the provinces for a limited period of time. Accordingly, DPT staff are also primarily accountable to the central government, with one of the central tasks being the collection of overnight stay information from service providers and oversight of hotels and their classification. However,

other key tasks typical of DMOs (Bieger/Beritelli 2013), such as the external and internal marketing of the destination – including creating tourism awareness, promoting cooperation, and coaching and supporting service providers in overcoming challenges, e.g., in the area of product innovation or quality management – fall outside the original scope of DPT tasks. As a result, a gap has opened up, and many crucial DMO tasks are not officially anchored in the organisation.

Marketing abroad is carried out centrally by the “*Office National Marocain du Tourisme*” (ONMT), which also reports to the Ministry of Tourism. The “*Société Marocaine d'Ingénierie Touristique*” (SMIT) acts as the operational arm of the ministry. As a strategically and operationally oriented tourism development agency, it is also responsible in particular for the development of sun & sea tourism resorts, and has branch offices in the provinces. In addition, the SMIT also took on some operational tasks (in coordination with the relevant department of the ministry) when, in the course of Vision 2010 (Royaume du Maroc 2001), the “*Tourisme Rural*” (tourism in rural areas) was given more attention for the first time. Based on corresponding French approaches, “*Pays d'Accueil Touristiques*” (PAT) were supposed to be set up in rural areas nationwide (Royaume du Maroc 2002, pp. 144 f., Kagermeier 2014). With the participation of the SMIT, “*Maisons du PAT*” were then built in some pilot regions to function as a kind of gateway to the region (comparable to visitor centres in national or nature parks). However, since SMIT was not responsible for the operation of the facility, there were problems with the question of sponsorship, so some “*Maison du PAT*” have been built, but do not fulfil the function of visitor centres or destination marketing and management organisations (DMO) (Berriane/Aderghal 2012; Berriane/Moizo 2014). Accordingly, the PAT concept that was initiated top-down has meanwhile been tacitly abandoned to a large extent.

In addition to the Ministry of Tourism, with branches in the provinces, the activities of a number of other ministries in rural areas also affect tourism development. Figure 3 shows an example of the “*Initiative Nationale pour le Développement Humain*” (INDH), which is subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior and which, in addition to infrastructure projects, also conducts activities to create non-agricultural income opportunities in rural areas.

The “*Agence Nationale de Développement des Zones Oasiennes et l'Arganier*” (ANDZOA), which is assigned to the Ministry of Agriculture, places a spatial focus on the economic development of the oases of the Moroccan South (thus represented in the case-study region of Drâa-Tafilalet) as well as the endemic Argan stocks (in the Souss-Massa region).

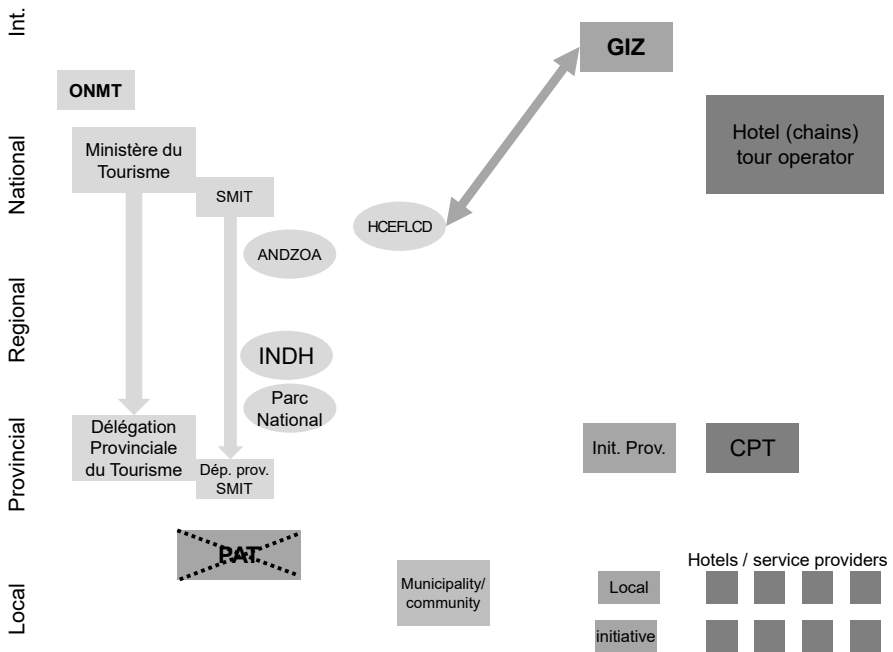


Fig. 3: Actor constellation in tourism in Morocco before regionalisation (Source: The authors)

The “*Haut Commissariat aux Eaux et Forêts et à la Lutte Contre la Désertification*” (HCEFLCD; referred to as “*HC Eaux et Forêts*” in the figure) was originally founded as a classic forestry agency. In the meantime, it has also taken on functions in part as a national nature conservation authority. Accordingly, it intervenes with measures designed to protect against forest and soil degradation in the mostly state-owned forest areas. The same applies to the national parks (“*Parc National*”), which are subordinate to the HCEFLCD; these are also much more focused on the protection of flora and fauna – and less on tourism – than their Central European counterparts. The HCEFLCD is often also the official partner for development projects (represented in the graphic as a counterpart to the German GIZ); this also applies to projects that are explicitly related to tourism (cf. e.g., GIZ 2017). It can thus be stated that in Morocco before regionalisation, there were a large number of parallel structures for the support of rural areas (as well as tourism there). Nevertheless, the coordination between the parallel branch offices of the respective ministries can be described as suboptimal.

In contrast to the top-down ministerial bureaucracy, democratically legitimised institutions were hardly present at the subordinate spatial level for a long time. The municipalities in rural areas conduct very few activities, and they only have very limited financial resources of their own. This means that their actions are largely dependent on central government allocations or implementation programmes. In view of their limited budget, they also only have limited human resources available, which of course also limits rural areas' ability to hire specialists in the field.

At the level of civil society, a number of smaller local tourism-related initiatives (often with a focus on sustainability) have emerged, particularly since the general political situation relaxed and the more autocratic elements receded in the 1990s. However, these initiatives mostly function in isolation from each other in their manageable local spheres of influence. In addition, since the implementation of Vision 2010, there have also been associations of (mostly larger) hoteliers at the provincial level, the “*Conseils Provinciaux du Tourisme*” (CPT). These are roughly comparable to the regional branches of the German Hotel Association (*DEHOGA, Deutscher Hotel- und Gaststättenverband*), but the CPTs are governed by a regional representative of the Ministry of the Interior). The focus of the CPTs is mostly on the interests of the larger hotels. At the same time, they only have minimal budgets and have not made any major impact – either in the areas of marketing or in the area of destination development. The (review of) hotel classifications – one of the DEHOGA's key activities in Germany – continues to be handled directly by the Ministry of Tourism (or its outposts in the provinces, the DPTs) in Morocco. In particular, smaller private-sector players in tourism (in the hospitality industry) in rural areas have been largely neglected by the traditional governance structures, and have failed to ever create a platform for their interests within the legal framework.

4 Implications of “*Régionalisation Avancée*” for tourism governance

Although the first decentralisation and regionalisation approaches started in the 1990s (cf. Kagermeier et al. 2019), a significantly more substantial and ambitious level was promised with the “*Régionalisation Avancée*” proclaimed by the central government after the Arab Spring. The new constitution granted regions the status of independent legal entities under public law (cf. Section 1); 12 of these new regions were designated in 2015 (cf. Fig. 4).



Fig. 4: Regional borders of Morocco since 2015 (Source: The authors, based on Royaume du Maroc 2018)

The following section traces the discourses and specific activities that have taken place since the introduction of the *Régionalisation Avancée* in light of the actor constellations addressed in Section 3, using the example of the two case-study regions: Souss-Massa and Drâa-Tafilalet. The findings were generated as part of the BMBF’s “*Governance Approaches for Sustainable Tourism in Southern Morocco (GAST Maroc)*” project, which employs two case-study regions to evaluate current governance approaches in Morocco’s tourism shaped by *tourisme rural* since the Arab Spring, and explore ways to optimise their capacity for innovation and sustainability.

4.1 Development in the Souss-Massa Region

The Souss-Massa Region is referred to as an “old” region, the core of which dates back to the first attempts at regionalisation in the 1990s (albeit with a much more restricted scope of responsibilities and significantly fewer resources). The regional administration is based in Agadir, a city

in which (coast-oriented bathing) tourism has played an important role since independence. It is therefore not surprising that in the rural hinterland of Agadir, there are also a large number of private-sector *Tourisme Rural* projects. A large number of smaller guest houses and rural *gîtes* have been built since the turn of the millennium, benefiting from the accessibility of Agadir. However, as a result of the basic principles of the governance approaches in Morocco presented in Section 3, there was a clear deficit with regard to the marketing of the rural product lines and coaching for smaller private-sector operators. While the (developed) bathing tourism product is communicated appropriately by the ONMT to target markets, or market communication and marketing itself is carried out by (inter)national hotels/hotel chains themselves, market access for smaller providers in rural areas is – despite an increase in options on booking platforms, etc. – much more difficult. Nevertheless, an association of larger service providers (mainly hoteliers of the coastal hotel industry) formed a “*Conseil Régional du Tourisme*” (CRT) early on in the Souss-Massa Region at the turn of the millennium as an option opened up by Vision 2010 (Royaume du Maroc 2001).

The smaller private-sector actors found this situation to be suboptimal, and therefore they formed a regional-level association – so far, the only one of its type in the country – the “*Réseau de Développement Touristique Rural*” (RDTR). The RDTR was founded in 2011, i.e., in the year of the Arab Spring, which certainly also was inspired by the spirit of optimism in the country at the time. In order to compensate for the areas of destination management not covered by the public sector, the RDTR set itself the following tasks according to a vote of its members:

1. Development of tourism routes as part of the overall tourism product development in rural areas;
2. Coaching/consultation/supervision and training of private initiatives to create tourism products and services (in the hospitality industry);
3. Development of an eco-label and certification of interested members as a contribution to the sustainability orientation in tourism, while generating a marketing advantage;
4. Promotion and marketing of tourism products and services in the rural area of the Souss-Massa Region (RDTR 2015, pp. 8 ff.).

The *Régionalisation Avancée* thus helped to strengthen another democratically anchored intermediate level between the national and the local level, with the *Conseil Régional* and the “*Président de la Région*” (comparable to a minister president in Germany) (cf. Fig. 5). The Souss-Massa Region has provided both the RDTR and the CRT with moral, organisational and financial support since their foundation.

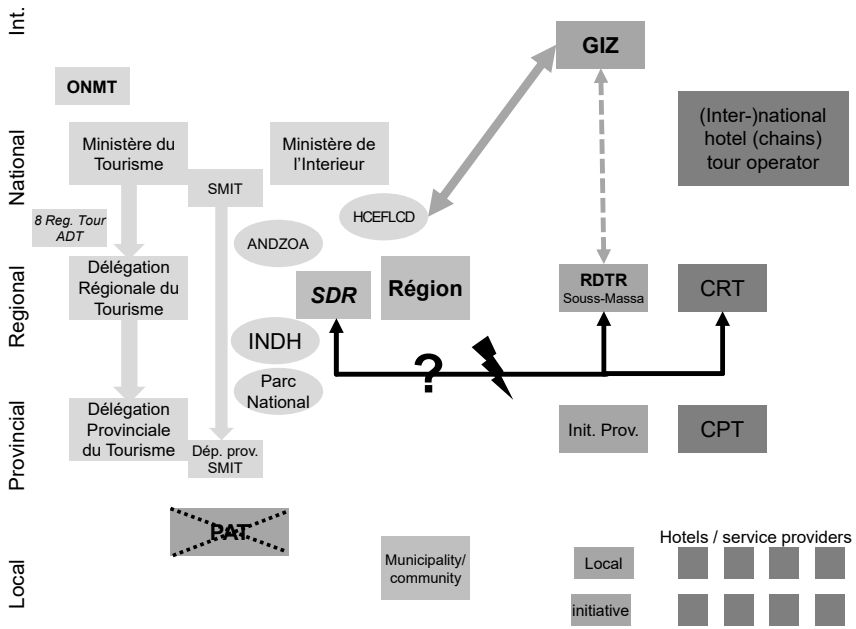


Fig. 5: Actor constellation in tourism in the Souss-Massa Region after regionalisation (Source: The authors)

Given that the regions are responsible for economic development and rural development, it is envisaged that they can set up regional development agencies, “*Sociétés de Développement Régional*” (SDRs). In light of the importance of tourism in the Souss-Massa Region, the establishment of an SDR responsible for tourism promotion was envisaged in an independent interpretation of the legal framework in 2017. Originally, it was intended that the majority of the shares would be held by regional actors in the region. The largest shareholder was to be the *Conseil Régional*, with a third of the shares (and thus votes), supplemented by the *Commune Urbaine d’Agadir* and the *Maison de l’Artisan*. At the same time, the central state institutions ONMT, SMIT, and the state-financed “*Caisse de Dépôt et de Gestion*” (CDG, a state-owned bank subsidising private investments via special conditions for loans) requested to be integrated into the SDR; this was also approved – though these together still had a minority share (Saber 2017b).

As part of the BMBF’s “*Governance Approaches for Sustainable Tourism in Southern Morocco (GAST Maroc)*” project, a workshop was planned for February 2019 that would bring together representatives from

the municipal, regional and central government levels from different spheres (politics, public administration, civil society organisations, and the private sector) and have them discuss the development of tourism governance, focusing on stimulating innovation capacities and consequently sustainability. During the talks in autumn 2018 in preparation for the workshop in autumn 2018 with potential participants, it became clear that the SDR was seen as an option to institutionally round out the further development of tourism in rural areas and to give that development a permanent foundation.

It also became clear that there was a clear division of labour between the two existing organisations – the CRT and the RDTR – and the newly founded SDR. Given that the organisations had grown historically and still had their specific focus, a single overarching DMO was seen as inappropriate. Rather, the distribution of DMO tasks to the three relevant regional institutional actors according to their specific abilities and capabilities was seen as a future option (cf. Fig. 6). In light of its role as a regional business development agency, the SDR could have taken the lead in developing a tourism strategy and being responsible for its implementation. With the secure finance base by the shareholders, it would have been assigned the role of guiding investments in tourism infrastructure in rural areas and, if necessary, providing financial support to smaller private-sector actors on behalf of the region. The role of the CRT as an association of mainly larger hotels could have continued to include exter-

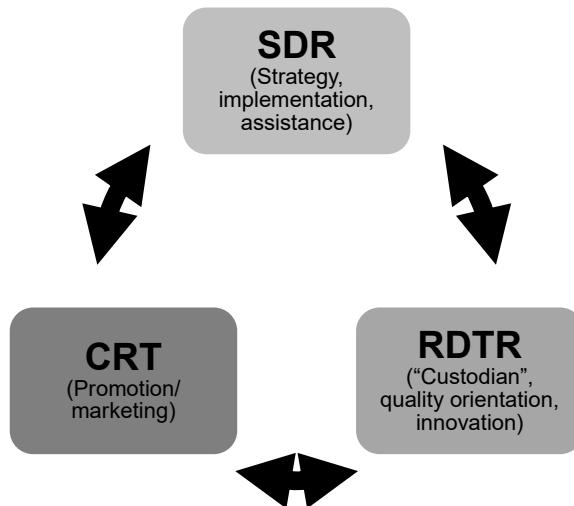


Fig. 6: Possible allocation of tasks to the various institutional tourism players at the regional level in the Souss-Massa Region (Source: The authors)

nal marketing (including showcasing the region at international tourism exhibitions). In accordance with the approach as a custodian in the area of capacity building and quality orientation, it would have been conceivable – in the sense of the optimal coordination of tasks – for the RDTR to focus on coaching, consulting, support and training of private activities. Its approaches to (eco-)quality labels could also have been further developed, so that the RDTR would concentrate on the majority of the tasks that had not been performed by the other two actors. The structure of the RDTR as an association of small-scale private operators of tourist products and services would have made it the ideal body for interacting with private actors.

Conversely, it had also become clear in the run-up to the workshops that the tasks of the SDR also extended into areas that had so far been covered by branch offices of central government institutions; these included the SMIT and the DRT in particular, but also the ANDZOA and the INDH. The regional actors did not see any signs that, as a result of the *Régionalisation Avancée*, powers and resources would also be transferred from the central state institutions to the regional level in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. This made it clear that, in addition to the parallel structures within the central government's ministerial system, there was no clear interaction between the regional and central government levels based on the idea of subsidiarity as a result of regionalisation, but rather additional parallel regional structures. Nevertheless, a lot of hope was placed in the founding of the SDR at that time, and individuals were already being mooted as potential managing director of the organisation by people who had previously been active in tourism in the region.

At the same time, it became clear that there were intense discussions behind the scenes in 2017 and 2018 about the design of the SDR to be founded, such that its founding was postponed several times (cf. e.g. Saber 2017a). It also became clear that the Ministry of the Interior was involved in the process and also set priorities based on promoting beach tourism (Le Matin 2018). After intense “behind-the-scene” activities, some actors in the region became very confused when in January 2019, an experienced senior official from the central government was appointed Managing Director of the SDR. Much of his career had been in the paramilitary-organised HCEFLCD, and he had no significant prior connection to tourism. It became known that in the meantime – in addition to the Moroccan Ministry of Tourism – the Ministry of the Interior had also become involved and (through its regional representatives, the Wali of the Souss-Massa Region) in the SDR (Saber 2019a). The regions originally conceived after the Arab Spring according to the bottom-up concept

of subsidiarity were thus once again placed under the control of the central state. To a certain extent, this can be seen as a rollback of democratisation and regionalisation approaches.

Originally conceived with a central focus on small-scale tourism in rural areas of the Souss-Massa Region, the financial focus – with MAD 120 million (\approx €12 million) – was now on subsidising the renovation and upgrading of the (sometimes outdated) coastal hotels (Saber 2019b). Half of the subsidies were provided by the central state Ministry of Tourism, which also ensured its influence. At the same time, it has become clear that the goal of the SDR is not so much the development of tourism in rural areas, but rather the stabilisation and expansion of volume tourism business – in line with the quantitative growth targets of Vision 2020 (Royaume du Maroc 2011c, cf. e.g., also Kagermeier et al. 2019). This line of action has been reinforced in 2022, in an effort to recover from the Covid-19 crisis (cf. Laabid 2022; Laviéco 2022; Raqui 2022).

It seems almost improper that in the summer of 2019, the SDR was given the task of taking over an artificial shopping centre for beach tourists that had gone bankrupt. The “*Medina Coco Polizzi*”, which is based on a traditional Moroccan medina, has been taken over for MAD 16 million (\approx €1.6 million). For this purpose, the share capital of the SDR was increased by this amount to make the transaction possible (Saber 2019c). This activity is also clearly aimed at bathing tourism in Agadir.

In addition, smaller measures to increase the attractiveness of excursion areas in the hinterland of Agadir are also being tackled. Ultimately, however, these are aimed more at increasing the attractiveness of day trips for beach tourism than at independent tourism development in rural areas (Boulahya 2019). In addition to signposts for hiking routes in the Ida-ou-Tanane area (which have already been implemented several times; Amzil 2009), a new internet platform (parallel to those of the RDTR and the CDT) was also created (Saber 2019d). A reactivation of the PAT concept, which failed in the 2000s, is also being considered (for more details, see Kagermeier 2014). There seems to be a repetition of a basic mistake made at that time, i.e. with investments (in signage or information centres) being implemented “from above” in the regions without first clarifying the permanent financial responsibility for their upkeep.

With the focus on investment measures to promote beach tourism, it is to be expected that the RDTR will be marginalised in its role as custodian for the needs of small-scale private actors in tourism in rural areas. The dominance of the SDR, which is now ultimately under strong central government influence again, does not suggest the ability of balanced in-

teraction among the three regional tourism organisations to develop. At the same time, branding is once again focusing more strongly on bathing tourism in Agadir. Ideas emerging from the region itself, or creating an overarching umbrella brand for the entire region (or even across regions, including Essaouira) such as using the endemic argan tree as a USP to market the area as the “*Pays d’Argan*” (Elfasskaoui 2009, Aboutayeb 2011) have not yet been taken up by the SDR (Saber 2019d).

In the Souss-Massa Region – in part due to the intensive intervention of the Ministry of the Interior – the original hopes associated with the *Régionalisation Avancée* for a reorientation of regional tourism policy and tourism promotion, which were more bottom-up and thus also dependent on the needs of the small-scale actors in rural areas shaped by space, have not come true. Once again, an opportunity to reorient tourism governance has been missed.

4.2 Development in the Drâa-Tafilalet Region

Moving on from the rather negative preliminary evaluation of tourism governance in the Souss-Massa Region, this section traces the developments in the Drâa-Tafilalet Region. The Drâa-Tafilalet Region is a “new” region, the subregions of which were administered before 2015 from Agadir (Drâa subregion) and Meknès (Tafilalet subregion). The region has no major dominant centre and can be characterised as a rural area.

From a tourism point of view, the region includes a large part of the pre-Saharan part of Morocco south of the High Atlas, with its river oases, (semi-)arid mountain ranges and desert areas, including some sand dunes as part of the Saharan Erg Occidental. In addition to other nature-oriented types of tourism, tourist activities are primarily characterised by classic round-trip tourism (Weiss 1998), desert tourism (Biernert 1998), and hiking and trekking tourism (Lessmeister 2008). In addition to the natural beauty, the material cultural heritage of the earthen building architecture south of the High Atlas along the “*Road of the Kasbahs*” (Popp/Elfasskaoui 2017) has been a particular source of attraction for tourists for a long time. Accordingly, the region has been developed for tourism since the time of the protectorate – initially even with intensive government involvement (Kagermeier 2012). Small-scale accommodation and gastronomy establishments dominate the entire region. Compared to the relatively established NGO activities of the RDTR in the Souss-Massa Region, the initial hypothesis at the start of the project was that the process of innovation-oriented tourism development in the sample region of Drâa-Tafilalet was still in the embryonic stage.

Due to the peripheral location and a tendency towards marginal economic development, a large number of programmes for economic stabilisation have been implemented in the region for a long time, in which tourism is often assigned an important role as a regional economic factor. Figure 7 shows the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), an institution of development cooperation, as an example of actors specifically active in the region that were involved in the “*Program Oasis Tafilalet*” (POT) (Royaume du Maroc/UNDP 2015). The *Centre de Sauvegarde et de Réhabilitation du Patrimoine Architectural des Zones Atlasiques et Subatlasiques* (CERKAS) is also active in the region as a department of the Ministry of Culture. Its area of responsibility is the inventory and protection of the material cultural heritage of the mudbrick building architecture in the region. At the same time, this cultural heritage represents an important tourist attraction factor. The *Offices Régional de Mise en Valeur Agricole* (ORMVA), outposts of the Ministry of Agriculture, also have references to tourism projects in their approach to developing oasis management – especially in the river oases of the Tafilalet and the Drâa. Therefore, the (predominantly) top-down oriented structures in this peripheral region were even more numerous and showed even more parallel areas of influence than in the Souss-Massa Region.

Since colonial times and up to today, the region has been shaped by the two larger centres of Errachidia (Tafilalet) and Ouarzazate (Drâa). In addition, other towns founded during the protectorate (Tinghir, Zagora, Midelt) have been elevated to the rank of provincial towns since independence. Even before the region was founded, it was foreseeable that, given the lack of a clearly defined single regional centre, at least a bipolar structure would emerge. Taking into account the other secondary centres in the region (Kagermeier 2012), one must even speak of a rather polycentric structure of the region (but with relatively small centres). Errachidia, as the capital of the Tafilalet, was made the seat of the regional administration.

Overall, the Souss-Massa Region is largely characterised by a Berberophone population (Amazigh; Popp 1990). The Drâa-Tafilalet Region is also characterised by larger areas with a majority Berberophone population (especially in the Drâa valley). In contrast, the river oasis of the Tafilalet features more Arabic-speaking populations. At the same time, the current dynasty of the Alaouites originates from there. The main town of Errachidia is also named after the first Sultan of the Alaouites in the 17th century, Mulay ar-Rashid. Without wanting to overinterpret this aspect, the partially polarising discussion that has been going on since the region was founded could also have its roots in such traditional segmentations.

The polarising tendencies since the region was founded are reflected on the one hand at the level of the ministerial branch offices. As a result, it has not yet been possible to establish a seat for a DRT at the regional level, since several DPTs claim this position for themselves. A CRT has not yet even been established at the level of large hoteliers, since the CPTs continue to act autonomously in the individual provinces (see Fig. 7).

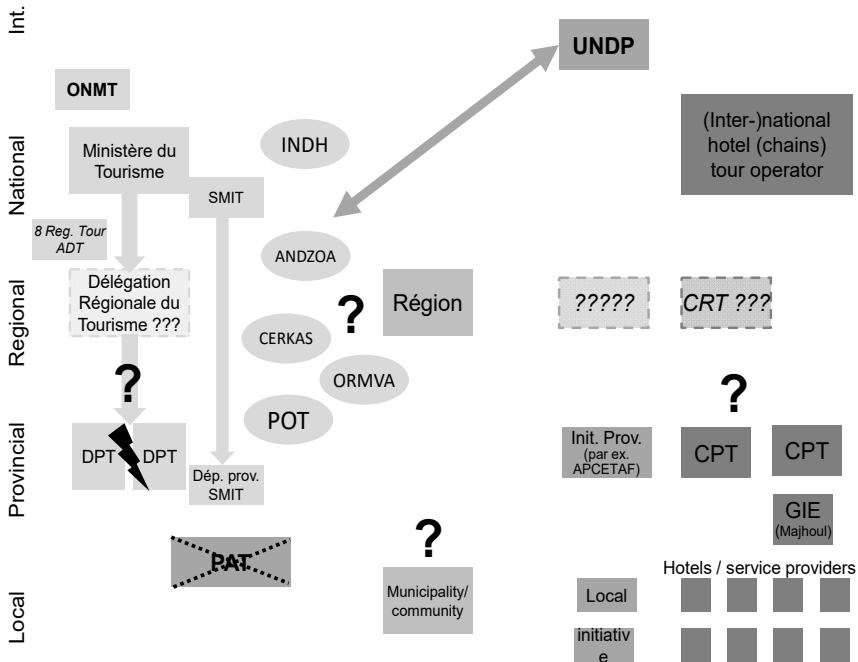


Fig. 7: Actor constellation in tourism in the Drâa-Tafilalet Region after regionalisation (Source: The authors)

In the run-up to the designation of the 12 new regions, the members of the Drâa region (which belonged to Souss-Massa before 2015) decided in 2014 to form a sub-structure for the RDTR, which would in future be active in the Drâa-Tafilalet Region (RDTR 2015, pp. 7 f.). However, it has not been possible to transfer the (positive model) of the RDTR to the Drâa-Tafilalet Region (or to any other region in Morocco). On the one hand, small-scale private-sector tourism actors in the Tafilalet sub-region were not prepared to expand their sub-regional level – such as the *Groupement d'Intérêt Economique (GIE) Majhoul Partners* founded as an outcome of the POT programme – or at the provincial level – such as

the *Association des Promoteurs de l'Ecotourisme du Tafilalet* (APECTAF) – to integrate active organisations into an overarching regional context. After 2015, the individual former RDTR members in the Drâa subregion also fell out so badly that the RDTR, or any comparable organization, has not continued to exist there to this day.

Over the course of preliminary discussions, the workshop in the Drâa-Tafilalet Region in February 2019, and the follow-up talks, it became clear that the process of forming a (new) region from different provinces of other former regions was much more complicated than expected. In the discussions and interactions between the actors, it was clearly expressed that the internal regional quarrels and jealousies between the two subregions (as well as within the subregions) were profound and that the region had not yet “found” itself.

For tourism governance, this means that most activities still take place at the (established) provincial level. The envy apparent between the various provinces/sub-destinations hinders orientation towards a regional level and the establishment of regional structures, so governance approaches at the regional level do not yet promise any prospect of success.

At the same time, in the course of interactions during the workshops, it also became clear that the redundancy of activities and responsibilities between the different spheres is even more pronounced than originally assumed. It also became clear that most of the institutional players in the public sector act largely in isolation from one another. This means that the Ministry of Tourism, its operational arm (SMIT), the Ministry of the Interior (INDH), the Ministry of Agriculture (ANDZOA, ORMVA), the Ministry of Culture (CERKAS), and the Nature Conservation and Forestry Administration (HCEFLCD, National Park) are working relatively independent of one another.

It also became clear that a large number of projects to promote tourism had been launched in the past. In many cases, as often happens in countries of the Global South – but certainly not only there – the projects collapse after the funding ends. This applies in particular to the Drâa-Tafilalet Region, which is relatively peripheral even in Morocco, and has been the site of various development partnerships. It was impossible to find evidence of a systematic build-up of different donor institutions in different time phases. At the same time, the sensitivities of the residents of the Drâa-Tafilalet Region are often still geared towards basic infrastructural facilities (paved roads, drinking water, electricity).

At the same time, there is still very little awareness on the part of local political actors that tourism development in rural areas often depends on

advance payments from the public sector. Insofar as this is recognised to any extent, responsibility is projected almost automatically onto the central government level. Several centuries of authoritarian, hierarchical characterisations of the state still run deep in the bones of a large number of actors.

Summary and conclusion

The reorientation from traditional top-down approaches to a stronger bottom-up orientation with more intensive involvement by small-scale private sector actors and NGOs, as well as a stronger anchoring in civil society overall, represents the central challenge for governance in tourism. Based on a large number of expert interviews and two workshops with the actors in two regions selected as case studies in Morocco, it is evident that the various parallel structures of the central state show high levels of intractability and inertia, which perpetuate the parallel top-down structures that have developed over decades.

The decentralisation and democratisation approaches that were reinvigorated ten years ago after the Arab Spring have been paid lip service by representatives of the central government. However, this is hardly reflected in the concrete actions of these institutions and organisations. In particular, the dominant role of the Ministry of the Interior in Morocco as a supervisory and oversight body (*Tutelle*) continues unabated. This thwarts regional initiatives towards more egalitarian destination governance and perpetuates traditional forms of control.

Despite the officially propagated *Régionalisation Avancée*, which actually aims more strongly at the counter current principle, a largely hierarchical top-down orientation still dominates. The central government institutions assume that they will continue to maintain their concentration of decision-making power, financial resources, and powers. This would turn regionalisation into a papered-over federalism with a pseudo-democratic coating. Apart from the overall situation regarding the central state, however, there was also only a very rudimentary willingness to cooperate and a much stronger identification with smaller spatial units – especially in the Drâa-Tafilalet Region. The idea that an umbrella brand for the Moroccan oasis landscapes, profiling the subregions (e.g., the individual river oases) as travel areas, could be a sensible approach at the regional level is not yet present among the actors due to the lack of nationwide awareness.

In summary, it can only be said that the hopes that sprung as a result of the Arab Spring of new governance approaches – approaches that would spur innovation and sustainability, and thus improve competitiveness –

would develop or emerge have not yet been fulfilled. On the contrary, it seems that this time, again, the hopes that were placed on reform approaches that were committed to the principles of subsidiarity and a stronger democratic anchoring have not been (yet) fulfilled.

The actors based in civil society in the Souss-Massa Region may have wanted to exploit the opportunities presented by the central government too dramatically, and were accordingly put back on a shorter leash. And after decades of hierarchical top-down governance, most of the actors in the Drâa-Tafilalet Region have not yet seen the opportunities offered by lateral cooperation – including the opportunities that require a willingness to compromise – and thus they fail to perceive regionally structured bottom-up options appropriately. With respect to innovation and adaptability to market challenges and thus the future competitiveness of tourism in rural Morocco, the only conclusion of this article is to see a missed opportunity.

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Funding Appendix:

The project underlying this report was funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, BMBF) under the grant number 01OH18013. The responsibility for the content of this publication lies with the authors.

SPONSORED BY THE



Federal Ministry
of Education
and Research