

The Impact of Territorial Intelligence on Local Development: Case Study of Tunisia

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Abstract

This paper tackles the question of the impact of territorial intelligence on local development, mainly in the most disadvantaged regions, in a context of globalization and crisis, more precisely the post-revolutionary situation of Tunisia. Given the ambiguity of the notion of local development in the Tunisian context, the interest of our research concerns the understanding of the dimensions related to this concept and the enrichment of the literature available on the subject. As the subject was briefly discussed, an exploratory study was imposed on us through a qualitative analysis based on six semi-structured interviews with public project promoters and a rather restrictive documentation obtained, describing projects carried out in collaboration with the State in order to ensure the desired development. For this purpose, theoretical proposals on this subject have been formulated. The results of our research show the immediate consequences of the revolution of January 14th were first of all a success in terms of individual freedoms and in the establishment of democratic transition institutions. But the positive effects were not at all levels. Several reforms must be taken into consideration, including the introduction of good governance principles and the establishment of a territorial intelligence system, on the other hand, by ensuring the circulation of relevant information between local actors. These results, with respect to this mode of development, are more convincing given the field of research, a State in the phase of renewal..

Keywords: Local development, Territorial Intelligence, Tunisian revolution, governance, Information and Communication, Local actor.

Introduction

The evolution of economic contexts and the opening of borders, in addition to new spatial planning concerns are leading government policies and businesses to identify new approaches to local development. This last basic concept is based on the pooling of natural, hardware and economic resources (Grefe, 1984; Houée, 1996; Benko, 2001). That is why territorial intelligence as a new device for the management of territoriality (Toronjo, 2007) appears to be essential for a thorough understanding of the territory. This process is described as an information and communication system for the creation of territorial contents.

Indeed, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) contribute to the creation of an enabling environment for the corporation of skills, the exchange and the dissemination of knowledge between local actors (Bertacchini, 2004). The practice of territorial intelligence makes it possible to irrigate the local economic fabric in information in order to enable it to be more and more competitive (François, 2008). We paid particular attention to the inherent problems that led to the break-up of the old Tunisian political regime and the revolt of the people. This article further examines the factors leading to socio-economic disparities and flagrant imbalance at different levels. We want to demonstrate the importance of territorial intelligence to ensure local development, mainly in the most disadvantaged regions, within the current context of globalization and crisis.

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It seems interesting to study the reasons that led to the collapse of the former Tunisian political regime and the results following this disruption. Our research proposes an in depth study the following problem: what are the consequences of territorial intelligence on local development, particularly in the Tunisian context?

1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

In this part, we will discuss the phenomenon to be studied, namely the Tunisian revolution of January 14th, 2011, the factors that triggered this reversal and the appropriate solutions proposed by the previous work to ensure local growth in this crisis context.

1.1 The Factors Triggering the Tunisian Revolution

In Tunisia, like in other Southern countries, the macroeconomic and social policies implemented have been concentrated in favorably endowed areas with resources. This has caused imbalances and regional and territorial disparities (Bessaoud, 2007). The prerequisites of the revolution were, first of all, the division of the territory into two main regions: the northern part of the country where most of the economic activities of the population were concentrated, and the rest with a negligible economic fabric and a much smaller population. Secondly, The triggers of these protests are the result of regional disparities, particularly between the capital and southern regions. The most sensitive areas are those of southern Tunisia, which generated some civil and political pressure as well as social unrest caused by high unemployment and inequality (Haddad and Bouzaida, 2013). The neglect of the State towards these regions has led to the revolt of Gafsa mining area, which is hard hit by unemployment and poverty.

This situation has led to a situation of ecological imbalance and desertification, which has resulted in environmental degradation and a decrease in the rents perceived by citizens. Following these various constraints and the consequences of the Tunisian revolution, a major problem that emerged was the scarcity of resources in the country (Haddad and Ben Slymen, 2011). This complexity has made it even more difficult for decision-makers to minimize the disparities between Tunisian regions. Lastly, the popular uprising against the regime erupted from Sidi Bouzid region on January 14th, 2011, mainly carried out by young people who expressed their dissatisfaction with the precarious conditions in which they lived (Labiadh and Pecqueur, 2012). The aims of the Protestants were freedom, equality, democracy and social justice. The situation became unbearable for them.

In a post-revolutionary context, Tunisia has experienced large fluctuations, mainly in social and economic terms. The State and local actors have been obliged to put in place mechanisms where information and communication play a key role. Indeed, the process of territorial intelligence proves to be an excellent mean for the territory in order to flee the fragile situation. This allows the sharing of information and knowledge in order to increase the capacity to analyze conflicts and respect transparency, particularly in the politico-administrative and socio-economic fields (Theys, 2002). All local levels do not have the same capacity of access to development. The mobilization of all the available territorial powers and the structuring of the set of resources contribute to the success of the desired development policy (Bertacchini and Dou, 2001).

1.2 Territorial Intelligence

To cope with this situation of profound change, the public authorities and the local actors coordinated between a communication policy and the follow-up of a participatory and strategic approach (Haddad and Ben Slymen, 2011). The objective pursued through these actions is essentially to carry out the economic and societal rehabilitation following the period of uncertainty witnessed by the Tunisians. In this kind of situation, actors must act in such a way that the interests of the community prevail over those of the individual. The creation of a collective reference framework is necessary to overcome the inadequacies of disadvantaged regions. This practice leads to the approach of economic intelligence, applied to the territory that generates territorial intelligence (Raison, 1998). Communication is an art that one must know how to manipulate and use wisely so that information can be directed in the right way. This strategy must follow a plan established beforehand, and then, there will be a transformation of information into a concrete action that will be made operational. Indeed, information and communication systems play a major role in the construction of patterns, whose purpose is to give meaning to the strategic environment and lead to territorial intelligence aiming to create a development space.

Territorial intelligence is the science planning on guaranteeing the sustainable development of territories and whose target is the territorial community (Benadid et al., 2010). To enable the nation to be valued, the mechanisms of territorial intelligence are closer to those borrowed from economic intelligence devices and knowledge management. Indeed, it is a favorable coordination of the knowledge of the actors in a given space.

According to Bertacchini (2010), territorial intelligence represents collective intelligence skills specific to a territory or the culmination of a collective approach. This concept is not limited to a monitoring approach, but rather to a project attitude to anticipate the potential risks of ruptures that may affect the territory (Herbaux, 2006). The information and communication systems seem to play a major role if we consider that information is intended to give meaning to the strategic environment (Bulinger et Boutin, 2015). However, according to (Lacoste, 2002), in order to be able to take advantage of this information, the knowledge gained from certain information represents elaborate and useful information that must reach the receiver at the right time so that he can use it properly. Information and communication that emerge as a horizon in the approach to territorial intelligence (Dumas, 2014) must be handled with caution to prevent misinformation.

In some cases, the poor circulation of information due to the behavior of the actors who manipulate it can lead to the deterioration of the involvement in the process of countering threats. The information must be fruitful and bear « *a situational lighting allowing a reintegration and an understanding of the problematic situation* » (Mucchielli, 1993, p 49).

The aim is to prevent the population from being receptive to negative information. Thus, territorial intelligence must be able to conceive the best possible scenarios to enable the actors to know the right direction.

At this point, it is interesting to issue our first theoretical proposition and to verify it on the ground:

P1: Information and Communication Appear as A Predominant Horizon in The Territorial Approach and Economic Recovery Policies.

1.3 The Local Development

The process of local development is based on the agreement between the local actors obtained through the mutual recognition of members of the network towards the information exchanged (Bertacchini and Dou, 2001). The development policy should focus on a monitoring system, which can become a powerful learning tool leading to the endogenous development of local actors. The territorial surveillance system must involve two types of action: the systematic information transmitted to local actors and the protection of the territorial heritage. This powerful learning tool for territorial implementation is primarily intended for medium-sized cities (Bertacchini and al, 1999), the most economically and socially disadvantaged ones. Planning is a state of mind that seeks to establish the ideal partnership for the development of a region or a whole local identity. Indeed, local identity can be the keystone of development at the local level (Datar, 1999).

To be effective, local development actions must be based on a territory with a monitoring system that would strengthen its capacity to mobilize the available local expertise and to promote its transferability between the actors involved (Bertacchini and al, 2000). Moreover, this process promotes local relationships while creating dynamics for new employment and integration opportunities for young people. Development potential is mainly based on trade capacity or on transferability. Indeed, according to (Lévy, 1997), the aspects that define the territorial growth emerge from the actors' capacity to cooperate, the validation of exchange of information and finally the exchange of skills.

The chronology of local development is inseparable from the political context and interacts with other dimensions of development, influencing spatial planning and decentralization. This type of growth emerges in a context of crisis, it cannot be modeled and one of these characteristics is that it proceeds from a mode of partnership governance. Ultimately, the processes of local development belong to a given place, time and social group (Vachon, 1993). This led us to issue our second proposal from the literature:

P2: Growing Enthusiasm for Local Development Surged In a Context of Economic, Social and Political Mutations Worldwide (Bercu, 2015)

In the next section, we will discuss the methodology chosen to solve our problem and present the survey device used.

2. Research Methodology and Investigation Device

Given the particularity of our research, we used a qualitative exploratory study using two collection tools. As a result, we conducted six semi-structured interviews with local development supporters. The respondents are mainly in the public sector; they are the most engaged in economic and societal recovery strategies in this post-revolutionary Tunisian context. Two of our respondents were among the actors who actively participated in the process of democratic transition and who were mainly involved in the fight against corruption. It seemed interesting to study the phenomenon through concerted projects that are, up to now, in the experimental phase. We explored the field of the investigation with a maintenance guide that had to be adjusted to compensate for the reluctance of some respondents to provide us with the information sought. We tried to go back and forth between the literature and the field of inquiry in order to ensure the validity of the content. The questions were reworded as they went along.

Interviews with these experts also allowed us to reshape the questions established at the outset to ensure the richness of the data collected. We also took into account secondary sources of data collection such as documentation. The latter concerns projects that the State is implementing with local actors to restore balance and bring back international investors. The aim of this multi-angulations is to better understand the concept of territorial intelligence and its link with local development, and to understand the ambiguity of this concept, notably in the context of the Tunisian revolution.

The sample is fairly homogeneous in the sense that it contains men, about the same age, in the same (public) sector, but with different levels of experience. The average duration of the interviews was approximately 60 minutes and the anonymity requirement of the interviewees was respected.

Tableau 1 Profile of Respondents

Respondent	Age	Kind	Sector	Experience
1	59	Man	Public	27
2	54	Man	Public	25
3	65	Man	Public: University Professor	30
4	50	Man	Public	20
5	52	Man	Public	22
6	60	Man	Public: University Professor	30

We were not able to provide any information about ongoing projects carried out by our respondents because they are issued from the State and are strictly confidential. The use of the NVIVO software to analyze the primary and secondary data collected seemed to us to be the most appropriate. This software participates in the organization of a corpus in themes and sub-themes (sentence words, paragraphs, etc.) (Stecq, 2014), the aim being to identify them according to the themes defined beforehand to assign them to categories created subsequently.

3. Results interpretation

In this part, we detail and interpret the coding data using the NVIVO software. The analysis of the collected data helped us, in the first place, know the perception of the actors compared to a very important date in the history of Tunisia, namely January 14th, 2011. For the majority, this date corresponds to a « popular revolt », « the fall and the end of Ben Ali », the break with the practices of the former authoritarian despotic regime, « a popular uprising » led by young people who proclaim essentially more ignorance of work, an acknowledgement calling for end to discrimination, acting between the different regions of the country. Based on concrete facts and on the analysis of the data resulting from the interviews with the respondents, the factors identified in relation to the problems are of socioeconomic, cultural, identity and political order.

The cultural factors that encourage citizens to approve and participate in this new mode of development that emerged during the discussions are: feelings of identity and belonging to the territory, the adoption and sharing of common values, defending human rights and supporting freedom of expression, the strengthening of the autonomy of the people and finally, the anchoring of the principle of trust in the mode of governance of the new regime.

This is consistent with previous writers who support the idea that culture is a dynamic factor of development linked to creativity and the production of goods and services. In addition, heritage culture supports territorial progress in its social and community dimension (Lecour and al, 2014). To conclude with this factor, culture is perceived as an economic input equivalent to knowledge that refers to individual and collective performance by generating innovative dynamics (Liefoghe, 2010).

To sum up, following the analysis of the data from the discussions, the strategies that were put forward by the interviewees are:

- Promote business creation and investment promotion, mainly international trade
- Optimize the presence of the favorable conditions required to enable actors to generate more activities and employment opportunities

On the other hand, the potential or priority solutions are as follows: the leaders must put in place all the necessary measures to restore the safety which is a condition required to allow economic and socially permissible takeoff and accelerate major structural reforms. Apply changes in the administration, particularly the territorial administration, by transferring more competences to the regions, in addition to the reform of the banking system, the tax system, the customs system and local taxation. There is a need to improve the investment code (which has already taken place) by enacting the implementation of legislation. Moreover, it is necessary to ensure better governance and an effective fight against corruption. Finally, it is important to establish the institutional government bodies provided in the constitution, in particular the one related to sustainable development. Apart from the strategies chosen by the local authorities, the lack of coordination between the actors and their expertise does not make it possible to perform the best use of local resources. These statements are in line with those of previous authors such as (Godet and Pacini, 1998) or (Gaudin, 2002), who insist on the importance of the organizations of local actors and the pooling of their efforts and their implications on the questions engaging the environmental constraints.

At this stage of the interpretation, we can demonstrate that it is fundamental to introduce a culture of territorial governance capable of joining the interests of the stakeholders and to organize a toolbox of means and resources to give answers to democratic political crises such as the case of Tunisia in 2011. The objective is to achieve concrete, even immediate results in the short term.

One of the interviewees focused on the implementation of imported governance practices without taking into account the realities and the specifications of each region and each country. Indeed, these comments converge with the literature, where the authors' opinions are generally contradictory: there are those who defend the idea that good governance, as defined by a modernist vision, is the only appropriate solution to the current problems of environment and the complexity of the globalization. For others, on the contrary, governance is far from being an effective solution because it only highlights the powerlessness of the community in the face of increasingly unmanageable trials (Theys, 2002). The problems that can hinder the completion of the process are the perceived dysfunctions in the exchange and reliability of information.

Another condition identified through our research is the personality and expertise of the bearer of this process. In other words, governance requires a good captain to navigate the world. The lack of communication leads to the failure to take into account the needs of each region of the territory. The last aspect studied is the notion of territorial intelligence; its objective was to understand how this device would ensure local development. All respondents, without any exception, agreed that territorial intelligence is a very good initiative. However, this concept can only be achieved if prerequisites are put in place, particularly through the plan proposed by the constitution. But the device of territorial intelligence cannot be sufficient; the collaboration between actors is primordial to ensure the desired development. Several forms of collaboration were proposed by the interviewees, including public-private partnerships and the privatization of large enterprises. Indeed, in a context of crisis and with the aim of giving impetus to local development, territorial intelligence could appear as an effective solution, nevertheless insufficient (Pautrat, and Delbecq, 2008).

The interest in the proliferation of collaborations and the profusion of local actors prove to be inescapable in order to achieve this development and improve territorial economic performance. Public-private partnerships are an excellent way to meet the expectations of local development, such as improving the quality of life, creating jobs and increasing investment. This collaboration combines the expertise of the private sector and the involvement of the public sector which, given its belonging to the State, works for the permanent satisfaction of the citizen and the development of territories.

To summarize our main results, we first found that culture and the sense of belonging to the territory are key success factors in involving the territorial actors in the development process. Secondly, in addition to the reforms that need to be put in place, it is essential to establish governance institutions for development. Finally, the territorial intelligence system and the good flow of information could emerge as effective solutions in a crisis context, such as the case of Tunisia at the present time, by serving as means for the search for local competitive advantage. The interpretation of the data from the semi-structured interviews and the documentation corroborates the same results and allowed us to verify our research proposals.

Conclusion

In this paper, we discussed the factors that triggered the Tunisian revolution. Our objective was to try to understand the consequences of territorial intelligence on local development in a context of crisis, more precisely, the post-revolutionary one. After lengthy negotiations with the persons concerned and the observations in the field of the investigation, we concluded that the immediate consequences of the revolution of January 14th were, first of all, a success in terms of individual freedoms and in the establishment of democratic transition institutions. But the positive effects were not at all levels. Unfortunately, on the economic and social level, the expected results have not been met and this has followed a collapse of the State's authority. Moreover, the necessary structural reforms have not yet emerged, particularly as a result of frequent political leeway. These events have led to a situation of ecological imbalance and desertification, which has led to an environmental deterioration and a decrease in the rents perceived by citizens (Haddad and Bouzaida, 2013). The expected results were unsatisfactory and run counter to the objectives pursued by the protestants. These various constraints have emerged following a major problem, which is the scarcity of resources.

The State is currently facing a crisis situation, but we remain optimistic about the future of our country. The government, in collaboration with several public and private stakeholders, and the contribution of the civil society also doubled efforts by introducing laws and a policy able to join the interests of each party through a common culture and sense of belonging to the territory which groups them. Indeed, the evaluation of a public policy consists in developing value judgment on a public intervention from several angles of approaches such as consistency, relevance and efficiency in order to improve the value. To conclude, territorial intelligence and public-private partnerships are closely linked, in the sense that this combination acts in order to satisfy a common need, namely local development. This association requires the emergence of information and communication technologies, the transfer of knowledge, the exchange of know-how and the implementation of an integrated development strategy. The latter is designed to draw on the environmental and economic forces of the community (Soto and Ramsden, 2014).

In order to shed light on our problems, the qualitative study that was conducted has enabled us to note that the adequate exploitation of the processes related to the territorial intelligence system is a compulsory transition with the advent of digital technology in the world. As a result, an ICT deficiency may prove to be a rather penalizing error, since a territory is a complex, fuzzy and evolutionary according to Edgar Morin's theory (2005).

The current context is increasingly favorable for an open communication that cares about the stakes of the various actors (Mucchielli, 2005). Finally, our analysis allowed us to address this issue and understand in depth the actions to be taken to ensure local development while interpreting the thoughts of our research subjects. We also analyzed another source of secondary data describing projects carried out in this framework. The results of our research have thus verified our two theoretical propositions that cover both the importance of territorial intelligence and the dimensions of local development.

The choice of the Tunisian context was primarily intended to better understand the ambiguity of the phenomenon of territorial intelligence and to study a concerted case of a nation that tries to escape from a local crisis,

and thus achieve the desired development. However, our research has certain limitations, notably on the methodological level. First, the cases have been studied by convenience, specifically depending on the only opportunities that have presented themselves to us. Then, we had some difficulties accessing the ground because of the unavailability of the respondents and the reluctance of some of them to provide us with the required information and to express their opinion in a completely objective way.

This mistrust led to a reduction in the reliability of the transcribed data and increased the level of subjectivity in the rewording of the comments related to this topic. In order to overcome certain limitations, it would be wise to continue the investigation in order to enrich it. Several avenues of research seem interesting to explore. First, it would be interesting to expand to specific sectors such as tourism and to focus on innovative projects.

Second, it would also be attractive to study a gathering of actors with different cultures and customs and the possible consequences on local development like public-private partnership. We believe that a territorial unit of this kind can give rise to efficient local projects and promote a mode of training adapted to local realities. Then, from a methodological point of view, it would be beneficial to carry out a quantitative study in addition to the qualitative one in order to exploit their complementarily and generalize the results by aiming at a much larger sample. Finally, it seems interesting to use other qualitative methods such as the focus group to confront people from both public and private sectors and to analyze the interactions between them.

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