

The Municipal Development Plan: an Empirical Study on the Assessment of the Involvement of Stakeholders in Morocco Case of Tangier and Assilah

LAGHZAOUI Fadoua

Professor at the Faculty of Legal
Economic and Social Sciences of Tangier,
University Abdelmalek Essadi, Tétouan

HIBA Amine

PhD Student at the Faculty of Legal, Economic and Social Sciences of Tangier
University Abdelmalek Essadi, Tétouan.

Abstract

As part of the reforms undertaken by the Moroccan government in the past decade, Morocco has opted for the adoption of a new strategic approach to the exercise of local authority. This new visionary approach is marked by the establishment of municipal development plan on nation-wide territorial grounds. This presentation aims to offer an analysis and evaluation of the involvement of stakeholders in the process of a participatory and consistent planning founded on a strategic vision that defines, circumscribes and delimits the effective roles of local authorities, epitomized by the established framework of Municipal Development Plan (MDP.) This is meant to study the illustrating attributes and illuminating variables of success and failure that emerge during the development as well as the implementation of Municipal Development Plan. In the context of restructuring public action, where municipal managerial approaches and governance practices are rather standardized through collective and participatory action, the focus is on the problematic question of how reports about local stakeholders' actions and the significant relations between them are defined, structured and established, which are generally assumed to be underrepresented. The initial results offer ample chances to provide a generic definition of strategic planning in its territorial dimensions and to highlight its implications at the level of implementation in the public sector, namely in defining the new roles of local authorities. Yet, it is important, on the other hand, to look at how the construction of evaluation variables and analysis tools affect the way all the dimensions involved in the process of territorial strategic planning, as epitomized by the MDP , shape up its significance.

Keywords: Assessment, strategic planning, local community, local stakeholder's involvement, Municipal development plan (MDP)

1. Introduction

Within the globally emergent context of the modern State, it has Become Necessary to rethink the relationship between the different actors who are involved in defining and exercising local authority in public institutions. This new approach, which is characterized by the evolving discourses of partnership, is founded on the positive involvement of a plurality of economic and social players and the active participation of multi-centered government actors. To say it differently, the shift into the partnership model of the modern State is marked by the elimination of the classical analysis of power relations between authorities and decision-makers, which is based on established hierarchy and standard bureaucracy in its official and administrative affiliations. That is to say, it rather favors and privileges a networking analysis where a plurality of actors positively interacts and efficiently collaborates in a double-edged process of procedural decision-making and effective public action. The local authorities' adoption of a participatory strategic approach (PSA), which is aimed to achieve the goals of municipal development planning, turns out to be a complex act of public action where local actors, who could either help with the success or lead to the failure of the process of development, do not show an open understanding of the MDP and its concrete ramifications on effecting positive changes. It was, therefore, necessary to rethink ways of governing the relationship between stakeholders in their management styles at the local level.

2. Problematics

2.1 Participatory strategic planning at the end of territorial governance

The Kingdom of Morocco has been positively engaged in the development of a vital process of decentralization of its political institutions and promotion of an effective act of decocentration of its administrative bodies ever since the independence. In fact, decentralization can be fully successful if it is systematically accompanied with a substantial improvement of local authorities 'good governance practices and if it consistently enhances local actors' capacity building in significant ways. The major translation of the will of the public authorities to introduce a strategic approach to the management of the public sector is confirmed by the new text which aims to reinforce the amendment of the municipal charter in a way that invites municipalities to develop their Municipal Development Plan as a systematic approach of the "PSP"¹ in order to reaffirm the role of local actors as project owners in the process of decision-making.

Local officials and State agents keep interacting at the local level to carry out the mission entrusted to them. But these two types of actors argue differently as they have different perspectives. As for the agents of the civil service, it is administrative culture which eventually prevails as the logical making of regulations requires talking to local government. This is while, for local elected officials, however, we often hear more and more about a managerial culture from which a professional logic emerges as an immediate consequence to confirm local public management as a strategic tool of good governance.

The success in the business world of strategic planning methods gives us a clear idea about how officials and consultants' offices reflect on the positive intervention of local authorities to rearrange and transfer public action into a set of wealthy decisions.

2.2 Our Research Objectives

In this paper our choice has rested on the study of the different attributes and diverse variables defining the involvement of stakeholders in the development of MDP. We have chosen to work on two urban municipalities: The city of Tangier and the town of Assilah while developing their Municipal Development Plans. This research is intended to identify some fundamental qualities that generally define the main features of a territorial actor, and that show the various aspects of relations between different actors at interplay, the underlying implications of which is to determine levels of motivation and strategies of organization characterizing participatory strategic planning. It is also meant to confirm our research objective which is to examine the variables involved in the evaluation of stakeholders whose implementation of the MDP are affected by factors of either success or failure. To address the issue in question in this article, a descriptive study was drawn from the data collected so far.

3. Methodological Question

3.1 The study and the sample chosen element

As a major concern, the methodological choice of the sample under study focusses on the main elements that interact at the local level to shape up the MDP. We have recently noticed that the development of MDP at the urban district of Tangier to confront some difficulties has been founded on chess surpassing. Yet, another Moroccan urban community council such as Assilah could put into effect the law in force by developing its MDP. As we have already cited in the literature review and based on those visits to the above public decision-making sites, we have managed to find out that the problem lies primarily in the way the act of involving stakeholders is perceived. Therefore, the concept of participatory strategic planning and the success or failure of it links mainly to the complex interactions between different actors.

To question the assumptions which have not been taken for granted in this research, we have decided to choose two cities and to conduct a comparative analysis between two municipalities with a statistics sample which is unified. The city of Tangiers Sample was made of 50 actors, namely elected representatives and administration officials. The same thing was done with Assilah. This choice has been undertaken to represent some part of the population to be studied after having consulted some experts in local governance.

¹participatory strategic planning

2.2. The qualitative research methodology used

For the sake of reliability and sustainability, we have opted for the qualitative method to carry out this important study. The qualitative approach which is founded on using observation as a research strategy and making interviews as a scientific tool gives us more effective chances to collect as much information and data as possible. The qualitative survey as a mode of research will be chosen as a strategic tool to confirm the remarks after the exploratory phase of consistent investigation. The empirical phase in such a research as this is often achieved by conducting a questionnaire survey, which is a technical strategy of data collection which is based on interviewing as many people as possible in order to analyze the issues and problems raised.

Our research methodology is based on a multi-stage approach:

- Literature Review to enlighten the history of research in this field where the focus is on the examination of articles and books on territorial governance and strategic planning.
- Implementation of an interview guide based on 30 questions:
- Interviews with 50 local actors whose data will be collected and analyzed to identify
 - The characteristics of the actor concerned with the PSP (participatory strategic Planning)
 - The relation between the actors level of involvement
 - Factors that act as obstacles to the implementation of the MDP
 - Complexity sources for the application of the MDP
- The study of local governance and the attractiveness of companies in Tangier is based on the outcome of recorded interviews that were conducted with some territorial (economic and administrative policies) officials in the city of Tangier.

4. Results

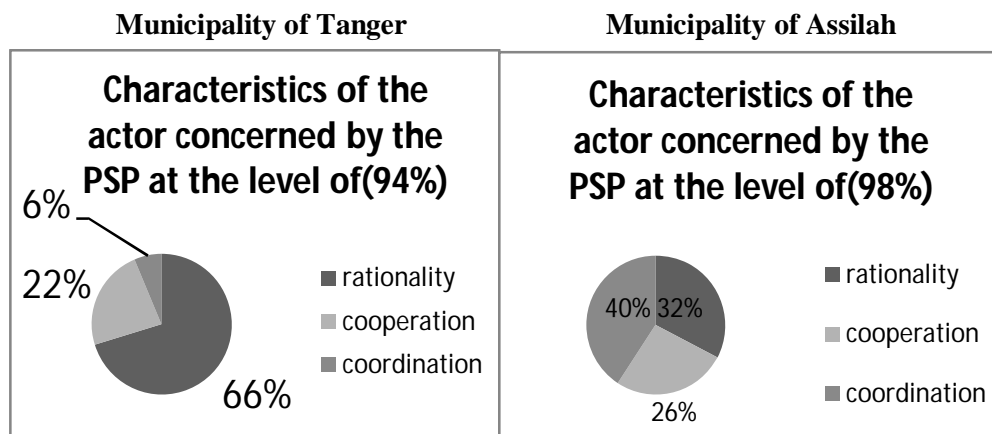


Figure 1. The characteristics of the local actors in two municipalities

The diagram charactering the actor’s variables above shows that 66% of actors in the urban district of Tangier, who get involved in the strategic planning process, have opted for rationality as the main feature of the actor. Cooperation comes next with just 22%. This is while coordination takes only 6%, which is a very small percentage. As for the town of Assilah, the characteristics of the actors shows that 40% getting involved in the strategic planning process, have opted for coordination as the main feature of the actor, after which comes cooperation with only 32%, whereas coordination takes the very low percentage of 26%.

Urban district of Tangier

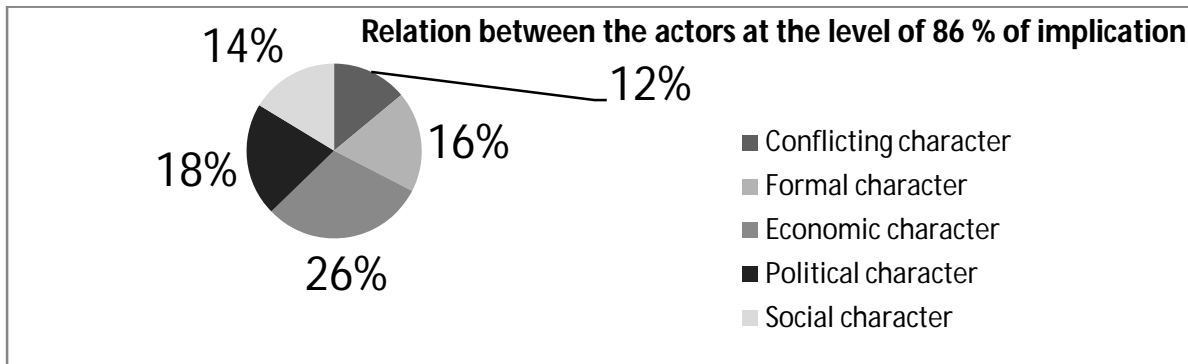


Figure 2. Relations between actors: Tangier urban municipality

As the diagram above shows, the interaction between actors can take many dimensions, 26% of which have an economic character. This is while the political dimension takes the percentage of 18%. The rest of the dimensions comes respectively as follows: 16% for protocol, 14% for the social and 12% for the conflictual relation in a rating of 86% of stakeholders who are involved in the process of strategic planning.

Urban municipality of Assilah

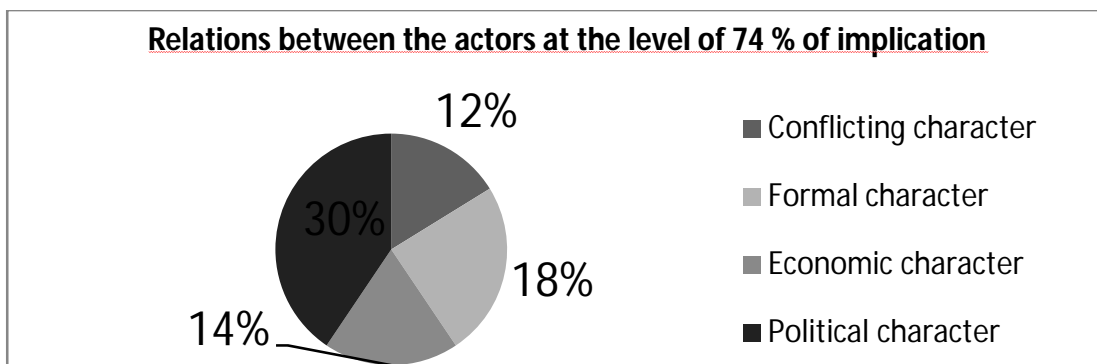


Figure 3. Relations between actors: Assilah urban municipality

The majority of respondents, who represent 72%, confirm their concern, a fact which relates mainly to financial constraints (48%), after which comes the organizational context with (12%), the political context with (8%), and eventually the technical context with only 8%, which, in turn, demonstrates a lack of training and competence. So we get to notice that the determining factor for the success of the MDP framework for the municipality of Assilah is the financial one.

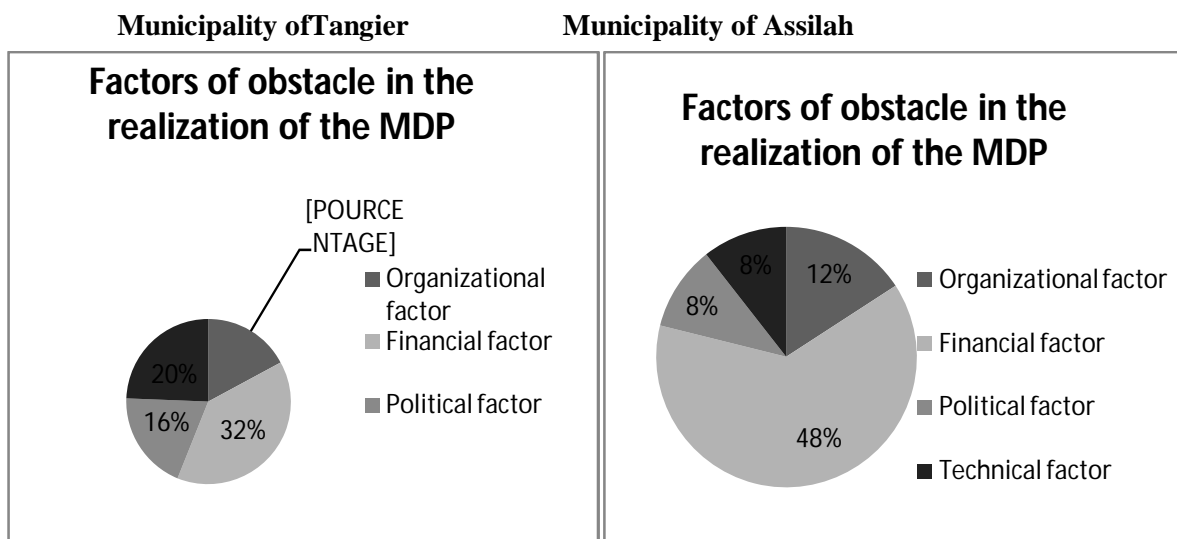


Figure 4: The factors of obstacle to realize the MDP urban district of Tangier and Assilah.

The majority of respondents, namely 82%, say they are really concerned, a fact which is related mainly to financial constraints (32%), after which comes the technical background (that is to say, training and competence) with (20%), and the political context with a percentage of 16%. This is while the organizational context takes just 14%. So, we get to discover that the deciding factor which determines the success of the MDP framework for the town of Tangier is the financial one. In contrast, the majority of respondents in the case of Assilah, 72% say they are concerned, a fact which is related mainly to financial constraints (48%), after which comes the organizational context with (12%), the political context with (8%), and finally the technical context which takes just 8%. So, we notice that the determining factor for the success of the MDP framework for the municipality of Assilah is the financial factor.

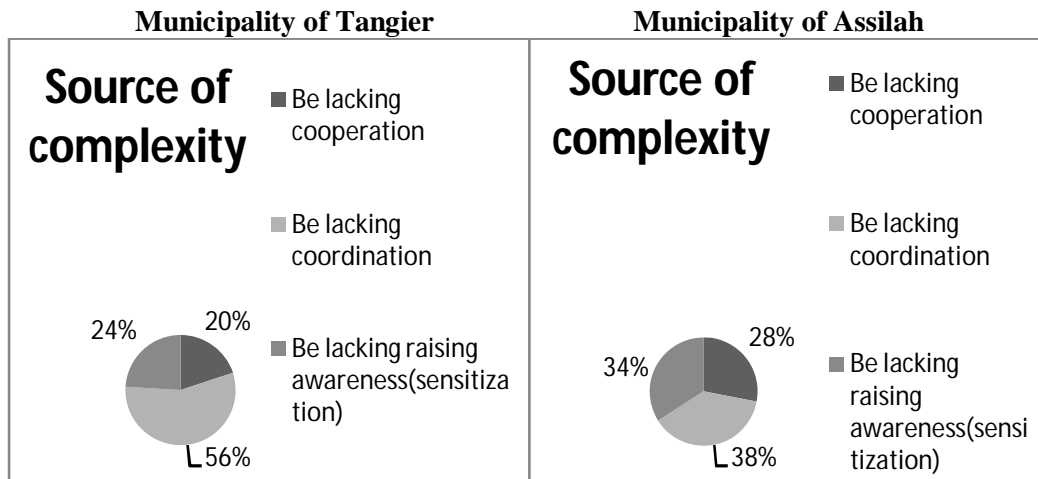


Figure 5. complexity Source for two municipalities

All the respondents (100%) say that the complexity of participatory strategic planning is primarily related to problems with coordination which takes (56%), after which comes the lack of awareness with (24%), and finally lack of cooperation between stakeholders with (20%). All the respondents (100%) say that the complexity of participatory strategic planning is primarily related to problems with coordination (38%), after which comes lack of awareness (34%), and finally lack of cooperation between stakeholders with (28%). The same thing applies to the town of Assilah. In fact, the source of complexity lies mainly in the element of coordination between actors as indicated by the cross descriptive analysis given.

Discussion

The study shows that the different actors' rationality, cooperation or coordination as well as their decision making style in their real life and work settings do not differ from those who are imagined and constructed in theory. The rationality of actors emerges as a response to a heterogeneous environment, which is relatively hostile, in order to face a decision where strong impact on the territory's future is noticeable. This rationality is favored by a territorial and organizational context which is little formalized by written rules and procedures and low expression of power relations between the territorial actors. This rationality generates strong satisfaction among local actors who are involved in the implementation of the PSP in their decision making process. This result is explained by the high degree of stakeholder involvement and by an absence of conflict as well.

Cooperation and / or coordination between actors takes its full manifestation depending on the rationality, consistency and logic pursued by the actors in the realization of their interests whether they should be common or individual. Such cooperation between stakeholders is visible in the actions they positively take. The study also shows the players that there is no one right way and hence can only make decisions when possible and according to a set of circumstances. In fact, a strong belief in the success of strategic planning among actors of local authority is confirmed. The ability of the municipality to deal with the challenges raised by all stakeholders, in both cases, that of Assilah as well as that Tangiers, is also established. The conflict created by the different collected data affirms a very correlative image between all the variables used in this study.

Indeed, the processing of the results of the survey as well as those of the cases studied helped provide information and outcomes that confirm our assumptions as well as all some other theoretical contributions.

However, such information and results, which are reliable in the current form and context, may not necessarily be so in the context of other cities and territories including rural municipalities. Planning is a process and a set of tools that contribute to the organization and coordination of the strategy implemented. Its main role is to establish a strategic vision based on cooperation between different actors.

Indeed, experience has identified significant needs for skills in the planning field. Too many actors are involved, but in the field, the training program is often developed for an elected multitude. In other words, inaccurate skills and the role of each actor confuse the map of the choices to be made. Similarly, the length of the process and its slow implementation hamper the effectiveness of the MDP. This work has revealed the importance of participatory strategic planning and its complexity at the same time. This complexity arises from the scope of the problems of coordination and cooperation between the different local actors who keep interacting in multifaceted ways.

Building on the results from the empirical study, strategic planning depends mainly on the involvement of stakeholders. In fact, the factors that predetermine the relationships between these actors are coordination and cooperation. However, interaction between all the actors remains relational in nature. This work confirms that the success of strategic planning is closely linked to the involvement of stakeholders. Coordination and cooperation are crucial, but the financial factor and the technical one, which involves training and competence, are also essential. The political factor as well as the factor of conflict which emanates from the divergence of interests between actors, are also important. All these factors are important to strategic planning and therefore its success. But, according to the interviews, respondents remain very optimistic about the success of strategic planning and they are convinced of the ability of Moroccan towns to meet the challenges of complexity.

The conclusions made show that the involvement of stakeholders is necessary to the success of MDP. Indeed, most of those that were analyzed address this concern, but in an environment where financial constraints do virtually exist, conflicts between actors restrain premium or common interests and subordinate them to personal advantages. As is demonstrated below, the outcomes of this study suggest that real improvement opportunities do exist although it is important to note that strategic planning is yet complex enough to implement effectively and practice successfully.

References

- BARON, C. (2003), La gouvernance : débat autour d'un concept polysémique, *Droit et Société*, 54, 329-351.
- CROZIER M. and FRIEDBERG E., (1997), *L'acteur et le système, les contraintes de l'action collective*, Seuil, Paris.
- CHIA E., et al., Comment étudier (analyser) la gouvernance territoriale ? Mise à l'épreuve d'une grille de lecture [en ligne]. Disponible : <http://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/docs/00/62/11/69/PDF/MT2010-PUB00031591.pdf> (consulté 10.11.2015).
- HURON David. (1998), *Le management public local*, L.G.D.J, paris.
- MINTZBERG H., (1994), *Grandeur et décadence de la planification stratégique*, Dunod, Paris.
- MISSAOUI, A, (2003) *la planification stratégique participative et la problématique du développement de la ville d'Agadir*, iscae.
- PASCAL CHAUCHEFOIN, (2001) *L'élu et le Manager : quelle gouvernance territoriale dans l'économie mondialisée?*, revue cairn, Flux n° 46,
- PAQUIN M., (1994), *la planification stratégique dans le secteur public* », tiré de *management public : comprendre et gérer les institutions de l'Etat*, presses de l'université du Québec.
- PORTAL Eric. (2002), *la planification stratégique dans les collectivités territoriales françaises : analyse empirique et essai de typologie*, L.G.D.J, 2002, paris.
- ZERGOUT Saïd, (2007), *Les démarches stratégiques des collectivités territoriales : une vue d'ensemble*, Une version initiale d'une partie de cette étude (section 1 à 3) a été publiée dans le n° 751, *Revue Marocaine d'Administration Locale et de Développement ou REMALD*, (Rabat, Maroc), pp. 39 à 71.