

Evaluation of public policies: What place is occupied in the southern countries?

Case of the kingdom of Morocco

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Abstract— Public Policy Evaluation is a relatively recent practice, which remains surrounded by some uncertainty. To this day, it is at the centre of an important debate on its status, objectives and methods. Is it an objective knowledge or a social construct? Crossing several disciplines, theory and practice, academic and political circles, as well as the diversity of the environment in which it is practiced. PPE is confusing because of its composite nature. Moreover, the actors involved in the evaluation (administrators, researchers, consultants, etc.) do not all have the same conception of its role. The objective of this paper is to shed light on this concept of evaluating territorial public policies not globally but in an area that lacks both lighting and other factors: the southern countries, while taking the example of the Kingdom of Morocco. How is public policy conceived in Morocco? And what is the place of evaluation on the institutional as well as on the concrete level?

Index Terms — Public Policy Evaluation, Assessment practice, Public Management, Territorial development.

1 INTRODUCTION

After the Second World War, the practice of evaluation became widespread in Anglo-Saxon countries (United States, Canada, and New Zealand) and in Northern Europe. These are the countries that are now at the forefront of evaluation, as proved by the number of programs, budgets and its influence on public decision-making. There are also international organizations such as the World Bank or the European Commission, which make extensive use of evaluation.

Compared to the latter, France has experienced a late development in this area. It was not until the 1970s and 1980s that evaluation emerged as a tool for modernizing the state¹. In the 1980s, evaluation was mainly entrusted to the General Planning Commission. Then the stimulus came from Michel Rocard's government in the late of 1980. The former Prime Minister signed a circular on February 23, 1989 dealing mainly with the renovation of the public service.² This marked an important step in the history of the reflection carried out in France on public service and state reform. In addition to the guidelines concerning the renewed industrial relations policy (more dynamic staff management, development of social dialogue); the policy of developing responsibilities (implementation of service projects); a duty to

evaluate public policies; the policy of reception and service towards users, also included the duty to evaluate public policies.

Even today, the weight of evaluation in American public action is much greater than in Europe.

These two examples are part of the northern countries if we refer to the division of former German Chancellor Willy Brandt who designated a boundary between North and South and assumed the existence of an imaginary line that includes the countries of the North being generally considered more industrialized and economically richer; while the countries belonging to the South, are generally considered less economically developed and more impoverished.

This raises questions about the place of the evaluation of public policies in these types of countries. For this, and using the example of the Kingdom of Morocco, the analysis will be based on the answers of three questions:

- What are the characteristics of Morocco as a one of the southern countries?

¹ Verheijen Tony J.G. « L'administration publique en Europe centrale et orientale : apparition d'un modèle sui generis ou avatar des traditions européennes ? », Revue française d'administration publique, 2003/1 (n°105-106), p. 95-108.

² <https://www.vie-publique.fr/eclairage/21987-evaluation-des-politiques-publiques-instrument-de-la-reforme-de-letat>

- What is the status of the practice of EPP at the institutional level?
- What is its status as well on the concret level?

lic management, starting with a new division of Moroccan regions.

2 PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY AREA: MOROCCO

At the extreme northwest of Africa, in front of the European continent, is located the Moroccan Kingdom. Morocco is one of the Maghreb countries of which it is the most western country. With its 446,550 km², Morocco still claims Western Sahara, as well as the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla located on the Mediterranean coast³.

This country is one of the states whose management of their territories has recently undergone several notable and noticeable changes, such as advanced regionalization.

2.1. Focus on the general situation in the country⁴

Geopolitacally, Morocco occupies a threatened position. The resources of the Atlantic Ocean bordering Morocco and Spain, such as fish and hydrocarbons, are the source of Spain's desire, supported by the European Union. In the East, the borders with Algeria are still closed, which is only the visible part of the more complex diplomatic issues. Finally, in the south, disputes remain with Mauritania, and the status of Western Sahara is still not defined by the United Nations.

In Economic terms, and based on 2018 data, despite the fact that Morocco has considerably diversified its economy and moved up the range, it remains highly dependent on agriculture. The 2016 drought reduced the Kingdom's growth to 1.6% but it is expected to rebound to 4.8% in 2017 thanks to an excellent cereal season.

At the macroeconomic level, the budget deficit has been reduced to -3.5% of GDP, public debt has been stabilised and inflation is moderate. But unemployment is still the scourge affecting the working population.

Despite these dysfunctions and problems, Morocco is still in the process of developing while defining new public actions to be applied throughout the country, such as the modernization of pub-

2.2. The advanced regionalization and the territorial development conception

Since 2015, Morocco has opted for a new model of advanced regionalization as part of a decentralized democratic state and has made a qualitative leap forward in the process of democratization of society.

This new conception of regionalisation requires elected local and regional authorities with democratic legitimacy and equipped with the necessary mechanisms to strengthen the participation of citizens, both men and women, in the management of public affairs. Within the framework of this project, the region's role is to contribute to economic, political, social, cultural and environmental development, with the objective of reducing disparities between regions.

Morocco today includes 12 administrative regions divided into wilayas; the latter are subdivided into provinces and prefectures, as well as urban and rural municipalities. For Morocco, Western Sahara is now "integrated" into the administrative division of the national territory with two regions (Laâyoune-Sakia El Hamra; Dakhla-Oued Ed-Dahab), although a portion of the territory is controlled by the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic.

The question is, does every region has an instance specialized on the assessment management of its territorial policies? Could be this the main reason of the inequal gap noticed between the regions?

3 INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE ASSESSMENT PRACTICE

First, institutionalization is a set of rules and mechanisms, which provides a framework for the systematic use of evaluation in the design and implementation of public policies⁵.

These mechanisms are of several types:

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³ Flory Maurice, Le Tourneau Roger, Trystram J.-P. L'Afrique du Nord : État des travaux. In: *Revue française de science politique*, 9^e année, n°2, 1959. pp. 410-453.

⁴ L'analyse de la situation économique du Royaume : « Cycles de croissance économique définis dans un intervalle temporel entre 1956 (l'indépendance du Maroc) et 2019, en perspectives jusqu'à 2020 – 2030 », Hind Abdessadak & Anas Saidi, Paris, 2019.

⁵ Alkin M. (2004) *Evaluation: Tools for Improving Policy and Practice*. Sage Publications. Edited by Dyer S., Clark J., Giger P., et al. (2012).

- , Organizational structures;
- , Legal clauses;
- , Cognitive processes;
- , Normative processes etc.

Institutionalization is not an objective in itself, it aims to create all the conditions conducive to the practice of evaluation: , Predictability of evaluation (avoid sporadic evaluations, data collection requirements); , Professionalization of evaluation (existence of qualified staff within the administration, universities and private firms); , Cooperation between the actors concerned; , Promotion of the evaluation culture and the acceptability of evaluation⁶.

In Morocco, the inadequacies of evaluative practice were forcefully highlighted in the fiftieth anniversary report, which highlighted, at the time, the structural deficits of the Kingdom's development trajectory ("the nodes of the future")⁷.

Since then, references to the evaluation of public intervention as a tool for improving and readjusting public action have been made at various levels⁸:

- The 2011 Constitution (Articles 1, 12, 13, 101, 156, 156, 168, 146.),
- Royal speeches, State bodies (Parliament, Court of Auditors, consultative bodies, citizen participation, role of the Economic and Social Council, evaluation in regions, Higher Council for Education and Training).

As a precision over time, the institutionalization of the practice of public policy evaluation has gone through three phases:

- Awareness: Following an awareness of the absence of evaluation in the public policy design process, the integration of an evaluation approach into public projects (PNAP, CNEP) marked the beginning.
- Attempts at institutionalization: As a result of actions taken in this context, there have been attempts at institutionalization,

⁶ From consilium to advice: A review of the evaluation and related literature on advisory structures and processes. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2012(136), 5–29.

⁷ Institutionnalisation de l'Évaluation au Maroc: Bilan et perspectives, Mohamed MAHDAD Directeur de la Gouvernance, Forum International Francophone de l'Évaluation Marrakech, 14 décembre 2016.

⁸ Évaluation des politiques publiques : une exigence de bonne gouvernance, Benahmed Mohammed, 14 février 2017.

which began with the development of strategic plans, accompanied by the development of information systems, budget referencing and a performance approach as well. To assign the task to specialists, the country has seen the creation of institutions dedicated to the evaluation of this field.

- Institutionalization of evaluation: As a practical step, Morocco under the Royal Vision, has dedicated special articles of the new and latest Moroccan Constitution of 2011 to the institutionalization and formalization of evaluation practice in Morocco. Moreover, there is no denying the active role of civil society in this context, which was aware of the inefficiency of public policies and the need to establish an effective evaluative system.

4 APPLICATION OF PUBLIC POLICIES ASSESSMENT: FACTS AND REALITY

In the concrete field, the State authorities, whose missions include the evaluation of public action, are various and numerous: the two Chambers of Parliament, the Economic and Social Council, the Corps of Inspectors General, the General Inspectorate of the HCP, some observatories⁹ ... These, producing information, indicators and knowledge useful for public action, nevertheless suffer from the deficit of a global and transversal approach to evaluation, except, perhaps, for the EESC, whose reports provide analyzes, discussions and recommendations of a strategic nature accessible to the general public¹⁰.

The Ministry of General Affairs and Governance attached to the head of the Government initiated, for him, in recent years, a reflection for the establishment of a national policy of evaluation but not followed by concrete effects in the field. Likewise, the 2014 Fiscal Year's Organic Text had called for ministerial departments to produce a "Departmental Performance Report" for use in parliamentary debate and evaluation. But, to our knowledge, no such report has been made to date.

What will happen after the Speech from the Throne? The head of government has already announced the creation of a national commission of evaluation of an interministerial nature but whose composition, missions and role remain to be defined. The establishment of this body could be a breakthrough in institutionalizing the evaluation function. Similarly, there is mention of the creation of a national evaluation agency, but the conditions of independence and neutrality necessary for any external evaluation according to internationally recognized standards should be guaranteed¹¹.

⁹ Understanding Evaluation Influence Within Public Sector Partnerships: A Conceptual Model. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 33(4), 532–546. Baizerman ML, Fink A and VeLure Roholt R (2012).

¹⁰ Le Maroc dans la mondialisation, Institut Royal des Etudes Stratégiques, Février 2009.

¹¹ L'évaluation de l'action publique au Maroc après le discours du Trône, Taoufiq BOUDCHICHE, septembre 2017.

5 ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS¹²

5.1. Important achievements to consolidate

- Constitutionalization of the evaluation of PPs;
- Existence of a kernel allowing a rise in power;
- Statistical systems in accordance with international standards;
- Diffusion of the performance culture (LOLF);
- Dynamics of the civil society (Creation at the initiative of the civil society of an annual day dedicated to the evaluation).

5.2. Important challenges to take up

- Lack of legal framework, methodological and deontological normative reference system;
- Absence of an impulse and steering structure (with the exception of the ONDH for human development policies);
- Confusion between audit and control on the one hand and evaluation on the other hand;
- Weakness of evaluative practice with respect to international standards;
- Insufficient publicity and discussion of works and studies that have an evaluative component.
- Lack of the general interest conscience and behavior instead of the personal one in the society and responsible actors.

6 CONCLUSION

While our society has been considerably transformed by the emergence of a more and more demanding citizenship, the issue of societal emergencies to be addressed and the complexity of the choices to be made require an engagement in a fruitful democratic debate on the evaluation. Public action to meet citizens' expectations for public services and to concretely integrate the princi-

ples of good governance and the correlation between accountability and accountability, now constitutionalized, in public policies.

Increasing situations of extreme poverty, social and economic disparities between regions, lack of governance of public services, unfinished sectoral strategies, limits of the State's financing capacities, our individual and collective responsibility imposes today, more than ever, change course and challenge us to revisit the relevance of public policy orientations, at local, regional and national levels, and thus promote the effective implementation of a culture of performance.

Today, we can not conceive of effective new public policies without first looking at the results obtained by the policies in force and questioning the relevance of the objectives and the strategic choices, the coherence and the efficiency of the actions and means implemented to achieve the objectives set and how to allocate human and financial resources among different actions.

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