

Tourism, Local Communities and Environmental Governance: Analysis of the Souss Massa Nature Park Governance in Morocco

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Although it has been proven and well integrated in many states, the bottom-up development approaches and the participation of the local population are very recent orientations in Morocco. In this very centralized state, the process is still slow and difficult to implement. However, the new territorial and environmental challenges require local governance where the local community needs to be more involved in decision-making and planning for environmental protection. Through the analysis of the national environment strategy, this paper sheds light on the integration of environmental governance in the Natural Park of Souss Massa (PNSM) in South-west Morocco linked with tourism actors. Indeed, the development of responsible and ecological tourism takes part in this new orientation and makes it possible to federate several actors with the aim of protecting and safeguarding the natural environment. It highlights the environmental governance mechanisms and frameworks proposed to the local community to participate in the implementation of the strategy. A field study made it possible to recognize the various points of view and the aspirations of the local population to participate in the environmental management of their fragile and threatened space.

Keywords: *Ecological Tourism, Environmental Governance, Protected Areas, Local Governance, Strategy, PNSM.*

Introduction

In Morocco tourism is a crucial sector. Its development raises several problems, especially in the protected areas. The pressure on lands offering the best views and conditions for receiving tourist flows is a threat to these ecosystems, especially in a developing country with a nascent environmental awareness, and several economic and social development priorities. However, Morocco seems to be displaying a strong commitment to a sustainable policy, just like the global infatuation with this path.

Indeed, today's world has recognized the significance of protecting the environment and keeping the ecosystem for the benefit of the world and future generations as well (Reid Walter et al. 2005). The world's concern about marine, forest, and wildlife degradation has prompted the global world to take serious decision to set up protected areas and to mitigate the extinction of certain species (Cheung et al. 2009). The intensive use of the ecosystem can lessen the

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chances of future generations to take advantage of their natural, social and economic resources (Chapin III et al. 2000).

Recognizing and protecting certain special areas in any given country is not new but it dates back to the nineteenth century and to the notion of “paradise” highlighted by the Kahn dynasty in Asia whereby a large number of areas were protected for ceremonial hunts, but today’s purpose has altered to incorporated natural processes per se (Rogers and Laffoley 2011). Most countries protect endangered species and areas for the sake of its citizens, environment, and tourists. A crucial number of tourists, recently, have become interested in spending their holidays surrounded by green spaces and endangered animals (Reid Walter et al. 2005). Nature-based tourism has, therefore, assisted many parts and facilitated the recognition and protection of the wildlife and nature for economic purposes (Chan et al. 2012, Daniel et al. 2012, Moyle et al. 2017).

In fact, the increase in the number of visitation to certain protected areas has encouraged many governments either to take the full responsibility of managing the areas or to pass it to private corporations with ready-managed plans to improve the services in the protected areas and to increase the visitations as well (Steven et al. 2013). The increase in the number of visitors, domestic and international tourists, encourage the setup and emergence of new tourist activities to attract the attention of nature-based and non-nature-based tourists to spend more time in the destination and to discover more facts concerning nature-based tourism (Torland et al. 2015). Also, the number of visitors in parallel with the stable economic situation can absolutely strengthen and boost the conservation activities and the management of the protected area (Steven et al. 2013). In this vein, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (UN 1992) highlighted the significance of nature-based tourism and its sustainable execution to mitigate poverty and promote the protection of the environment (Cantoni and Rignall 2019).

Nature-based tourism cannot achieve its targets without optimal strategies, including the creation of Natural Protected Areas (NPA) (Boege 2008). The reliance in these areas is on rationally profiting from the availability of the natural resources encompassing wild species populations, habitat, and the different aspects of the bio-cultural heritage (Carámbula Pareja et al. 2013). According to UNEP-WCMC and IUCN (2016), there are more than 217,155 protected areas worldwide with 14.7% of terrestrial surface and 4.7% of marine areas. However, tourism can be a menace to natural protected areas if it not to be planned and managed and if certain conservation objectives are not to be respected (Deguignet et al. 2014).

Morocco is not an exception as more efforts have been made to improve the industry and to increase its revenues. Tourism attracts the attention of local and international tourists and is considered as one of the most significant and strategic sectors in Morocco. The latter is featured by its natural and cultural assets that prompt more than 11 million tourists who spend about MAD 62.3 billion annually to consider it as an interesting destination (Observatoire du Tourisme Maroc 2017). It is also one of the jobs’ providers with 515,000 direct jobs in 2016, which is approximately 5% of jobs in the overall economy due to its significant contribution to boosting wealth, mitigating unemployment and

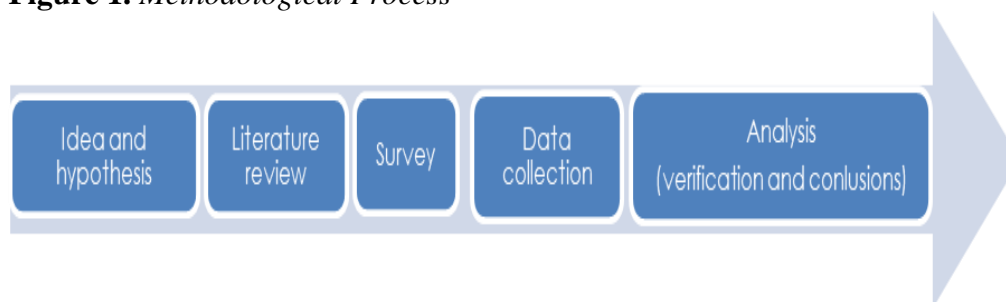
poverty in different Moroccan cities that witness the arrival of thousands of tourists weekly and millions of visitors annually (Observatoire du Tourisme Maroc 2017). When the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was adopted in 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit, Morocco was one of the pioneer countries to ratify the convention and the King of Morocco emphasized in his speech in 2009 the importance of preserving the environment and urged the government and the decision-makers to implement a new policy aiming at protecting the environment and expand the green zone in the country as well. Also, the organization of COP22 in Morocco reveals the real procedures taken by Morocco to protect its environment and protected areas.

The emergence of an environmental consciousness as well as the launch of an environmental governance policy are the main subjects of this study. After a literature review that sheds light on tourism, the environment and the different relations between these two fields, this study presents the context of the birth of an environmental governance in Morocco, including its different aspects, actors and tools before explaining, through the case of the Souss Massa National Park, the results of this field study on the perception of the local community and the environmental governance in this protected ecosystem.

Concept and Research Methodology

The study of governance puts us first and foremost in front of the obligation to analyze the system of actors and stakeholders in the territory of our study. It is, in other words, a space featured by confrontation, struggles, and formal and informal negotiations. From this point of view, our initial hypothesis is that the divisions of governance in the Souss Massa National Park are caused by divergent stakeholder visions and the lack of synergy. The second hypothesis is the failure to make PNSM a flagship ecotourism product which is the outcome of these disputes.

Social geography allows us to identify stakeholders, their spatial strategies and their actions in the territory to verify our hypotheses. The study uses qualitative and inductive research methods based on participatory observation and completed by a field study to complete our analysis. Scientific studies, the production of many administrations, associations and organizations along with a field investigation using a questionnaire for semi-structured interviews to collect data (opinions, feelings, judgments), to investigate the local community perceptions of tourism and environment governance in the natural parc are relied on. The sample is compound of 20 interviewees who reside in the park and investors working in tourism inside the park. Also, forty-five to sixty-minutes meetings took place in October and November 2018 and the interviewees expressed their point of views freely (Figure1).

Figure 1. Methodological Process

Source: Adapted from Berg (2007).

The questionnaire includes four categories of questions (Table 1). First of all, those concerning the interlocutors and then those concerning the different subjects of this work: ecological culture and the perception of environmental constraints, the perception of operational tourism activities in the parc and the perception of governance of the PNSM.

Table 1. Questionnaire Outline

General information	Gender Place of birth Place of residence Employment
Ecological culture and the perception of environmental constraints	Climate change consciousness Park ecosystem change conscicenceness Causes of these changes The importance of natural heritage and the obligation of its preservation Effectiveness of enviornment projects Stakeholder engagement Actions for the protection of the park The difficulties of environmental management
Perception of Operational Tourism Activities in the PNSM	The mportance of tourism The impact of tourism on the park Conficts of use and political conflicts in the park
Perception of governance of the PNSM	Actions in favor of environmental protection The actors involved the management approach The coordination of actions The effectiveness of the participatory approach The relations between the population and the management of the park The perception of the project governance in the field

Source: Elaborated by authors.

In addition, the thematic analysis was used to analyze the data collected. Answers were coded in order to make it possible to highlight the answers which concern the same previously defined topics. A reverification of the themes, after tests were done, in order to refine the themes and answers before making a report

took place. The development of the answers was also done by re-checking them, the situations and the facts that are reported by the respondents.

Ecological Tourism in the Protected Areas

Internationally, tourism is deemed as one of the most important growing industries and is featured by the tendency of tourists to visit certain destinations and by the ability of the destination to gratify the desires of the consumer while offering various products (WTO 2016). According to World Tourism Organization, the number of tourists, globally, has increased sharply between 1950 and 2015 as 25 million tourists traveled in 1950, 674 million tourists visited a different country in 2000 and more than 1186 million tourists traveled in 2015 (WTO 2017). Furthermore, World Tourism Organization in 2017 shed light on the benefits of the world from the industry that increased from 2000 million Dollars in 1950 to reach 1,260,000 million in 2015. World Tourism Organization (2016) also found that Asian, African and Latin American countries have to a large extent benefited from global tourism due to the avoidance of a great number of tourists by European and North American countries.

Tourists have become more concerned about the quality of life and the quality of the services offered by the destination. As a new trend, tourists are more interested also in discovering preserved areas and in a clean environment as well. Destinations tend multiple services and brands to charm the visitor and prompt them to spend more days in the host country. Over history, each destination used to offer just a particular product that interests particular tourists but the growing economy and the changeable tastes and competition led to the emergence of multiple-serviced products. Nevertheless, the outcomes of tourism can also be negative due to the disarrangement and massive exploitation of the field. Ioan (2013) revealed that between 1900 and 1990 devastating effects occurred in ecosystem in Europe that lost approximately 45% of its sand dunes, especially Mediterranean countries such as Spain, Italy and Portugal whereas the Alps which is visited by more than 50 million tourists annually lost its original natural charm owing to the construction of the infrastructure to satisfy the desires of the tourist.

Balmford et al. (2015) argue that nature-based protected areas around the globe receive more than eight billion visitors per year including iconic parks and those near the outskirts of some urban areas. These parks are of paramount significance to the ecosystem and the urban cities as they provide multiple services to the environment and the population as well (Balmford et al. 2003). Yet, the deterioration of the green zones and the decrease of governments' funding pushed the latter to seek efficient solutions throughout the transformation of certain parks and protected areas to the private sector (Eagles 2003). Further, protected areas managers consider tourists as potential harm seeking recreation regardless of the costs of affecting the ecosystem negatively and, thus, implement firm measures to guarantee the sustainability of the park or the protected space (Watson et al. 2014).

In addition, nature-based tourism cannot achieve optimal goals without the participation and contribution of tourists who should be sensitized regarding the

significance of protecting the environment as well along with practicing their favorite sports and activities in the host country to guarantee the protection of the environment and the cultural heritage simultaneously (López Bonilla and López Bonilla 2008). Nonetheless, some developing countries do not reveal serious concerns regarding the protection of the environment and are deeply interested in the revenues and lucrative benefits generated by the industry and cause the partial destruction of the protected area (Zhong and Liu 2017, Geffroy et al. 2015). Cañada and Gascón (2007) revealed in a study some of the negative effects of tourism on the environment including producing more waste, changing the land cover and land use, pollution, consuming more natural resources, urbanization, acquisition of lands by more investors interested the infrastructure rather than green zone, etc.

Concerns regarding the deductive relationship between the visitor and the park/protected area and the influence of the former on the latter prompted Blangy and Mehta (2006) to call for a different relationship based on motivation and mutual respect and the preserve of the environment. Weaver and Lawton (2017) also seek a crucial relationship between visitors and the park whereby the former should be encouraged to amuse themselves and to serve the ecosystem and park throughout being motivated agents able to contribute to the improvement of the eco-activities done by permanent employees. This contribution will absolutely help foster coexistence between the visitor and the environment in order to discard Budowski's (1976) conflict scenario.

According to a study conducted in 2015 by Balmford et al., more than eight million tourists annually visit certain protected areas globally and this tourism type generates more than 600 million dollars as revenues. Yet, massive tourism could affect ecotourism negatively if it is not to be well-controlled, especially during an international sports event that attracts millions of tourists interested in the game and in supporting their national teams (Eagles et al. 2002). Therefore, it is a dire prerequisite to generate laws capable of protecting the environment from some tourism-related activities that could deductively influence the ecosystem negatively (Marion et al. 2016). Governments should ensure the stability of the activities proposed by decision-makers and investors in the industry to create a balanced atmosphere that could benefit all parts (Das and Chatterjee 2015).

According to Blamey (2001) and Weaver (2008) "eco-tourists" are featured by their interests to spend time in anxiety-free atmospheres whereby they might feel the strength of nature and the primitive life of their ancestors, by their willingness to learn more about natural phenomena and to help their accompanying children, for parents, to benefit from nature and by their behavior (Cheng and Wu 2015) within the protected area which endeavors to sustain and preserve the environment. Further studies classified nature-based tourists into different types. Lindberg (1991) classified tourists into soft and hard ecotourists with the former interested mainly in short encounters and good services and this type is prevalent in most eco-parks. The second categorization classifies tourists into minimalist and comprehensive (Weaver 2005) with former preferring coexistence and the latter interested in a deep understanding of the setting and trying to well grasp the functions of the surrounding environment.

Weaver (2013) conducted a survey to measure the participation of minimalist and comprehensive tourists in “focused activism” and found out that 8% of the tourists who visited National Parks in the hinterland of Australia’s Gold Coast were interested in planting trees along with additional hard activities. Identical results were reported in previous surveys (Weaver 2002). Regarding “incidental activism”, the same surveys demonstrated that 75% of the participants were ready to engage themselves in such activities, including the pickup of trash (Weaver 2013). In this regard, the significance of ecological security for the tourism industry becomes a dire prerequisite.

The concept of tourism environmental and ecological security stems from ecological security (Zhou et al. 2015) and is based on offering clean and sustainable tourist destinations to boost the revenues of the industry (Yang et al. 2018). Scholars have so far relied on different measures while studying the ecological security of the tourism industry throughout shedding light on regions (Yin and Zheng 2017, Zhang and Qiu 2014), cities (Li et al. 2013), provinces (Cheng and Yue 2011), grasslands (Lu et al. 2008), wetlands (Li et al. 2012), mountains (Li et al. 2010), and forests (Zheng et al. 2015). Ecological security of tourism takes into consideration as aforementioned the lucrative benefits and revenues besides the conservation of the ecosystem so as to guarantee the rehabilitation of vegetation, the conservation of water, and controlling the loss of soil and sand, especially in areas characterized by mass tourism (Jin and Liu 2016).

The economic and social needs of any given country push the latter to consider tourism as a crucial pillar in the economy (Mao et al., 2016) due to the increasing number of employees hired in the sector (He et al. 2010). Nevertheless, the massive exploitation of the ecosystem by tourists, especially reckless tourists, endangers the stability of the environmental system and its security (Zhang et al. 2016). A number of studies were carried out in countries interested the development and security of the ecosystem, such as China and Australia, (Wang et al. 2012, Jia and Feng 2012) to measure the impacts of tourism on the ecological system. Scholars argue that ecological degradations are not apparent and emerge in middle stages (Liu and Zhang 2009) and the intervention of decision-makers and managers is a prerequisite to mitigate the negative influences of the visitor on the ecological system.

Environmental Governance: Literature Review

Globally, the risky status of the ecosystem is an incentive that united countries to consider feasible measures to protect the environment and limit their bleeding. In this regard, environmental governance has become a necessity to reduce the damage and effects of human beings on the environment. However, the limited resources of many governments, particularly in underdeveloped countries, to implement real measures and meet certain standards, led to the intervention of non-governmental and non-profit organizations along with private managers, as aforementioned, to help guarantee the achievement of certain goals (Guttman 2015). The bulk of studies, germane to environmental governance, highlight the

role of many non-governmental and non-profit organizations in democratic and developing countries in addressing core topics related good environmental governance (Bartley et al. 2015, Auld 2014).

In fact, after a long period of scarcity of issues related deductively to tourism and environmental governance (Buthe and Mattli 2011), many researchers focus on environmental governance and gave an abundant work on the field. In fact the available literature incorporates laws that aim at protecting the ecosystem and improving the social and economic standards of the local community in general (Guttman et al. 2018). The lame implementation of real steps to stop environmental bleedings was behind the emergence of the great role of the private sector to guarantee an utter implementation of governmental laws (Vatn 2018). Pressure on public budgets and the priority given by developing governments to other sectors and industries were behind the neglect and the inability of many governments to execute the existing laws and to adjust the constitutional laws to enable the private managers, NGOs, and non-profit organizations to interfere (Baron 2013).

Furthermore, environmental governance cannot accomplish specific targets without the existence of effective structures (Koimann 1993). Governance structure encompasses actors that simplify the interaction between the different institutions and actors, including economic, social and civil society actors (Vatn 2015). Economic actors involve private managers and corporations who take the full responsibility of a park or a protected area and offer payable services to the visitor interested in spending enjoyable experience in the park (Bromley 2006). These economic actors intervene to maintain a clean atmosphere regardless of the number of tourists and even engage tourists in ecological activities to sensitize them about the significance of protecting the environment (Vatn 2018). Political actors encompass parliamentarians and political leaders responsible for determining and transferring the management of the protected area to private corporations while civil society actors involve political parties and different non-governmental organizations that function as intermediaries between political and economic actors (Hodgson 2007).

Well-established environmental governance does not rely solely on public institutions and actors, but it is also based on private corporations throughout the privatization of land and water (Bromley 1991). Privatization of land is considered as an old process though more than 80% of the land is still owned by governments (Agrawal 2007). The latter has recently initiated a process of getting rid of budget burdens and cuts either by selling large hectares of lands or signing long-term exploitation contracts with private companies, corporations and foreign investors to enhance the services offered to domestic and international tourists and to maintain a pollution-free atmosphere (Cotula 2012). Further, privatization of land does not involve merely the leakage of lands to private corporations, but it also includes “land trusts” (Logan and Wekerle 2008). The latter are non-profit organizations that receive donations and grants from different sources with the objective of conserving and protecting the environment while providing free services to visitors. Hodge and Adams (2012) argue that “land trusts” is “a policy that represents a direct state intervention to push back the operation of the private land market and override the interests of individual owners in order to promote

collective action in support of public policy objectives”(Hodge and Adams 2012: 476).

Nevertheless, Perrot-Maitre (2006) argues that the core idea behind privatization is attracting tourists and visitors in addition to protecting the environment, but this objective has not yet achieved and turned to be a trade. Wunder (2005) also indicates that privatization has become payments for ecosystems services and deprived the lower class of benefiting from payable protected areas and parks. On the other hand, Milder et al. (2010) demonstrate the high costs of investing in protected areas for the sake of managing the sector and meeting the required objectives. In 2009, investments in projects to improve the infrastructure mounted to approximately 23.5 billion USD for the sake of protecting water services, biodiversity and enhancing landscapes to attract more visitors (Milder et al. 2010).

Table 2. *Actors Typology*

	Endogenous	Exogenous/Allogenus
Frame	Living environment	strategic field
Relation	The actor identifies with space, at home, his locality consubstantiality (Raffestin), geographicity (Dardel)	Distancing and indifference, stranger
Space nature	The substrate, a living memory, generator: civilizational crucible	Product, an action field, an issue, support: physical or economic object
Example	The native of a locality or region	Bank, promoter, company
Attitude	Closing, protection	Opening
Economical attitude	Consumerism	productivist
Intervention	Involvement from the interior	External intervention

Source: Belhedi (2002) (translated from French).

Therefore, environmental governance is conditioned by the system of actors and the logic of the various stakeholders. Its success, as well as its failure and congestion, are conditioned by the nature of the system's relations. Two broad categories of actors according to their mode of appropriation, relationship with the setting, and position in the adopted strategy were identified by Di Méo (1987) and cited in Belhedi (2002), as shown in Table 2. The first category encompasses the endogenous actors who are residents whose space is above all a living environment that allows them to identify themselves. The second category involves exogenous actors with an external relationship with space which represents rather a strategic field for exploitation and production. The boundary between these categories is not obviously watertight. An actor can have both positions simultaneously and can also shift the positions. A promoter can claim both positions at once while putting one at the service of the other. It is in this context that Di Méo sheds light on a transitional actor who is to a large extent considered as a double-faced actor (Belhedi 2002).

Morocco's Environmental Policy in Protected Areas

Morocco is ranked as one of the pioneer countries concerned with the protection and implementation of server measures related to the preservation of the environment and signed the Convention on Biological Diversity (CDB) on 13 June 1992 and ratified it on 21 August 1995 in order to express its international commitment to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity, and to adopt and to implement measures to promote access to genetic resources and fair and equitable sharing benefits arising from their use (Ministry of Energy and Environment 2015).

The last decades have also witnessed the execution of several environmental reforms to maintain a sustainable environment and to encourage the visits of nature-based tourists (Nahraoui et al. 2011). Morocco's 2020 vision regarding tourism aims at reaching 20 million tourists and decision makers took into account nature-based tourism to strengthen the pillars of the tourism industry and to attract the attention of more domestic and international tourists (Bouzahzah and El Menyari 2013). Morocco was categorized amongst the top ten best climatically conscious countries besides Denmark, Sweden, and Belgium and the best country in Africa according to the Climate Change Performance Index (Kousksou et al. 2015). This classification is based on several criteria such as CO₂ emissions, the development of renewable energies in addition to climate policy (Galli 2015). This environmental policy was behind the dire concern to host COP22 in Marrakech in November 2016.

Morocco's ecological policy generated flourishing accomplishments involving the protection of the 11 national parks in Toubkal, Al Hoceima, Eastern High Atlas, Ifarne, Iriqui, Khenifiss, Khenifra, Souss-Massa, Dakhla, Talassementane and Tazekka (Adnani et al. 2018). Decision makers in the country took further measures to demonstrate the willingness of the country to contribute internationally to the protection of the planet. 2001 witnessed the set-up of Mohammed VI Foundation for the Protection of the Environment, by the king of Morocco, and it is to a large extent concerned with environmental education, protecting coastal areas, revealing the significance of responsible tourism, and restoring historical gardens (Environment Department 2014).

The country also extended its efforts to preserve the ecosystem throughout relying on extra procedures germane to renewable energy to generate clean energy and mitigate its reliance on fossil energy by generating 42% of the country's needs from renewable sources by 2020 and 52% by 2030 (Kousksou et al. 2015). "Noor 1" project is the first achievement of the country to increase the production of clean solar energy (Cantoni and Rignall, 2019) along with the construction of 13 wind farms in different Moroccan coastal cities and the intention to set up six more wind farms by the end of 2020 (Allouhi et al. 2017). In fact, the implementation of an effective ecological policy has affected Morocco's environment and economy positively due to the crucial increase in the number of foreign investors and tourists who basically seek nature-based tourism (Observatoire du Tourisme Maroc 2017).

The PNSM (National Park of Souss Massa)

Protected Areas are essential tools for combating the loss of biodiversity. They also represent a source of human well-being through many ecosystem services such as tourism, recreation, and livelihood. The diversity of actors in these spaces, administrations, public institutions, and national and international associations, creates ambiguity owing to their complexity, functions, and roles of each part. Also, the diversity of the projects is very astonishing and the gap between the speeches and the number of projects without results is utterly shocking.

According to Law 22-07, the protected area refers to any land, area and/or sea which is geographically defined, duly recognized, and specially developed and managed for the purpose of ensuring the protection, maintenance, enhancement of biological diversity, and the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage with its enhancement, its rehabilitation for sustainable development, and the prevention of its degradation.

From 1942 to 1991 many national parks appeared like Toubkal in 1942, Tazekka in 1950, Souss Massa in 1991, Iriki in 1994, Ifrane in 2004 and Khnifiss in 2006. The identification of these sites and their important values in the ecosystem urged the emergence of environmental policy in 1996 which identified the sites of interest in biology and ecology (SBEI) and identified almost all the natural ecosystems in the country.

Indeed, Morocco signed and ratified in 1995 the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), adopted at the Rio Summit, and showed a fervent willingness to preserve biodiversity and to ensure an equitable distribution of benefits derived from the use of biological resources. The 1996 Biodiversity Action Plan and Protected Areas conception is a road map for the conservation and rehabilitation of the natural environment in the protected areas and other sites of Biological and Ecological Interest (SBEI).

Presentation of the PNSM

The PNSM was set up on August 8, 1991 (Decree No. 2-91-518 of 26 Moharram 1412). It extends over 33800 ha (65km long and 5km wide) along the Atlantic coast, between 7 municipalities in the prefecture of Inzegan Ait Melloul, and the provinces of Chtouka Ait Baha and Tiznit. The protected area in the intersection of two eco-region areas are defined by WWF as steppes, northern Saharan forests and Mediterranean dry forest of acacias and Argan trees. It is also the core area of the Arganeraie Biosphere Reserve (ABR) that was recognized by the UNESCO in 1998 and Birdlife International classified also the region as an important bird area.

The PNSM is a unique natural habitat rich of different endemic, rare or threatened species of fauna and flora. Indeed, this ecosystem, located between two wetlands, incorporates 300 rare plants and species including Argan forests, many mammals (30 species: fox, jackal, hare, deer, porcupine.), and 360 bird species

The PNSM is near the fast-growing metropolis of Agadir with many medium-sized cities. The population density, the anthropogenic action, urbanization, and intensive agriculture are factors that disturb the balance of this ecosystem. Also, the coast of Agadir is known to be the second tourist destination in Morocco receiving more than 700,000 tourists every year. It is a coastal tourist area which is deemed as a source of revenue for the region and the local population and whose spatial development is very greedy in space and place of great attraction for activities due to its threat to the protected space (Bonin and Idllalène 2015).

Legal and Institutional Framework of the Park Management

The Dahir of 1934 was the first piece of copyright regarding the protected areas in Morocco. The legal framework was latterly expanded by other texts in order to better respond to the international environment principles of the protection of natural heritage. The 22-07 Law classifies the protected areas into biological reserves, nature reserves and natural Parks. Decision-makers in the country, through this law, design the guidelines to protect the environment and they also determine the framework of the economic activities. The concern regarding preservation and protection is largely linked to the local population's well-being.

Table 3. *The Legal Framework of the PNSM*

Text	Regulated domain
The Dahir of October 10, 1917	The conservation and exploitation of forests
The Dahir of April 11th, 1922	Fishing in continental waters
The Dahir of July 21, 1923	The police of the hunt
The decree 3 November 1962	of the Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform and the permanent regulation of hunting
The Dahir of September 11, 1934	The creation of National Parks
The Dahir of 17 December 1976	the publication of Conservation on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
Decree No. 2-91-518 of 8 August 1991	establishing the PNSM
Decree No. 2-93-277 of 28 January 1998	The general regulation of the PNSM and organizing its development

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The park obeys a nominative list of legislative texts (Table 3). Its management is ensured by the Park Service within the Regional Directorate of Water and Forests and the Fight against Desertification of the South-West region. Its management is the subject of a specific regulation. The park team is made up of 20 people from the Office of Water and Forestry and the Fight against Desertification HCEFLCD and a head of the eco-development office in the Ministry of Agriculture.

According to the decree of the park (Decree No. 2-93-277), a park advisory committee was created under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture and

chaired by the Minister or his representative. The committee gives its opinion concerning the development plan of the park and its projects before their approval by the relevant ministry department. It brings together all the actors of the institutional territory, local authorities, public authorities, the elected officials, and the representatives of the external services of the various ministries working in the field of tourism, agriculture, fishing, equipment, urbanization, Ibn Zohr University and all individual or associative actors whose competence in the conservation of natural resources is recognized. The secretariat of the committee is given the management of the park.

The Park Governance and Collaborative Approach

In 1995, the park management plan (1998 implementing decree n°2-93-277 of 28 January) distinguished a traditional activity zone and three resource protection zones (public forest land conservation zones). This distinction incorporates areas of the conservation of natural resources (8200 ha) and rehabilitation of the environment, species, scientific research and ecological monitoring, natural resource management areas (6300 ha) for rational management and the development of natural resources with the local communities (Beekeeping, grazing, nature tourism, etc), areas of traditional use (18800 ha) for the promotion of human activities in the spirit of sustainable development (traditional agriculture, extensive livestock farming) and then areas with special use (500 ha) that include villages and tourism infrastructure.

The PNSM is also a model and a pilot experience in the management of protected areas. The PNSM is involved in numerous international cooperation agreements that rely on local development associations but also on the quality of the administrative staff. Sustainable development projects and initiatives were carried out with local development associations to create income-generating activities and promote biodiversity (beekeeping, shellfish farming, bird watching, park guides, Argan cooperatives). In addition, the first tourism development plan allowed for the construction of the tourist infrastructure, picnic areas, an eco-museum, and an information center.

Several organizations intervene in the management and governance of the PNSM including the Department of the Environment which is in charge of the national policy on environment and sustainable development, the Department of Maritime Fisheries that is responsible for the management of marine protected areas for fishing, the Department of Equipment and Transport, concerned with the management of the public maritime domain, the National Institute for Halieutic Research (INRH), as a scientific institute dedicated to research regarding sea environment, and the Office of the HCEFLCD as the administrative authority which takes the responsibility of the establishment and management of protected areas (Table 4). The degree of intervention of each actor is different. HCEFLCD's institutions and the Local Water and Forest administration, on which the institution of the park depends, is both a major managerial and financial institution. Forest engineers and agronomists work alongside experts and administrators in the external services of other ministries.

The local authority directly supports the actors concerned by the protected area. The governor and the elected local district council as well as the Royal Gendarmerie are involved in the management of the park and ensure the application of the law. In addition, several NGOs besides the local community and the region through the regional council (CR) and the regional council of tourism (CRT), and the provincial council of tourism (CPT) are involved in different projects within the park. They provide both financial and technical support to different projects that aim to safeguard and enhance the ecological, economic and social development of the local population. Partnership and collaboration are very broad, given the diversity of actors and institutions.

Table 4. *Typology of the Actors of the PNSM*

Quality	Level/Mission	Actors
Exogenous	International funders and supporting organization	FEM / UNDP, European Union, UNDP, GEF, Aquitaine region, French Development Agency AFD (Boutot, 2011) , Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), Catalan Agency for Development (ACCD), OrganismoAutónomo Parques Nacionales (OAPN)
Exogenous	NGO's	GIZ, SEO / Birdlife, The ETEA Foundation is the Development Institute of the Loyola University of Andalusia
	Compagnies	Tour operators, Travel agencies, Hotel Chains, investment funds...
Exogenous and Allogenic actors	National	HCEFLCD, Ministry of tourism, SMIT, Ministry of finance, ministry of agriculture, ministry of interior, ONMT
	Regional	Wali, CRT (SRL), Consultative Committee of the National park, Regional direction of agriculture (DRA), Directorate of Equipment, Transport and Logistics Hydraulic Basin Branch, Al Omran, regional delegation of fisheries, Representative of the National Agency for the Development of Oasis Zones and Argan (ANDZOA), INDH, regional delegation of tourism/ RDTR, ADS/ University
		Travel agencies, transportation companies, hotels.
Endogenous and transitional actors	Provincial	Governor, CPT, PAT (SDL), DP/SMIT, regional delegation of tourism/ Travel Agencies,
		Travel agencies, transportation companies, hotels.
	Local Community	local communities administration and authority, PNSM, HCEFLCD
		Population Jemaa., local association Cooperative, guides, hotels, restaurants

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Besides, several actors intervene to guarantee the management of different projects and programs like the Apiculture Program that seeks the promotion of the floristic and the Saharan bee and the revival of the local population through the creation of four beekeeping units, two cooperatives, and the training of the

beneficiaries and their financing. The project was carried out in partnership with the beekeeping cooperative of Souss, FEM/ UNDP and GTZ. The second program is gender approach and the fight against illiteracy and the promotion of handicrafts in Timzilt including the support of a local association and thirty women. POCTEFEX is the third program under the auspices of the European Union. The project includes the “DRAGO” project, which aims to improve the quality standards for tourist services and the development of responsible tourism activities.

Nature tourism is the fourth project and includes principally the project of the discovery of the Saharan fauna and bird watching, whereas the ecotourism routes in Messguina and Tamri is the fifth and is based on an agreement and cooperation with Germany. The sixth project is Education Related to Environment (ErE) by AGRN-PRONALCD and approximately involves twenty associations. The Project brings together the PNSM with the RAPNADD and COPErE with several stakeholders such as the Park (PNSM), Regional Academy of Education and Training (AREF-SMD), the Association of Teachers of Life and Earth Sciences (AESVT), the Association of Sciences of Life and Earth of Souss (ASVTS), the Association of Souss Nature and Development (ASND), the Association of Qualified Actors of Rural Development (AAQDR) and the Association Tilila. The project was funded by the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the Micro-Financing Program of the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

Legal Frameworks and the Importance of the Local Population in the Management of the Protected Areas

The orientation of Morocco through the 2020 framework of the Master Plan for Protected Areas insisted on the improvement of the effectiveness of the protected areas. In fact, we can read that “*..the actual management of officially established protected areas requires approaches and tools, developed in line with the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources, and the development needs of local populations. These approaches must also be developed as part of a shared vision for the conservation and management of the national natural heritage*” (Aghnaj et al. 2013).

Another strong point of general context is the concern regarding the economic and social situation of the local population, living in and around the protected areas. A real intention exists to develop a partnership. Also, there are efforts to implement a participatory approach with national education and NGOs active in this field to strengthen the network of National Parks by sharing information and experiences, communication and transparency and by implementing the protected areas’ communication strategy.

Law No. 07-22 on Protected Areas states different elements regarding the management of the protected area. In section one regarding the development and management plan, the 19th article insisted on the importance of the existence of a management and development plan. It is based on the initiative of establishing a competent administration related to the local population. The same section describes in detail the components of the protected area, the objectives, the strategy, and the programs as well as the impact indicators and estimated financial

needs on a five-year basis. It takes clearly into consideration the local population indicating in the same vein that the project should consider specific measures and restrictions to ensure the conservation of the protected area as well as the zones in which agricultural and pastoral activities or other activities are authorized by the administration and not involving harmful impact on the protected area. Local authorities and administrations are also involved in the process. It is clearly identified in the second section (Article 24) that local communities and the population should be involved not only in the design of the project but also in the management of the protected area.

Aspects of Mobilization and Strategies of the Park's Inhabitants

The demographic pressure on the park is very important. The population could be estimated to reach 28,000 inhabitants in 2018. In 2008, the area knew a high density (62 inhabitants per km²). Eight Douars (tribes) witnessed the presence of about 4000 inhabitants, 2010 was located inside the park, and another 25 with 22,800 inhabitants (Harif et al. 2008) were mainly engaged in traditional agriculture and traditional fishing activities. In the park, 65% of the land is owned by the private sector and the local communities and 35% is a forest area. Food agriculture on small plots of land with traditional means is the most common process. The traditional mode is governed by ancestral traditions of water use and conflict management between residents. Therefore, usage conflicts are born from over-crowding of tourism in Sidi Rbat and the coastal strip from Sidi Ouassai to Aglou, the illegal use of coastal cliffs for the construction of caves (Figures 3 and 4), grazing and the collection of mussels causing the destruction of the reefs. (Thibaud 2010).

The population is therefore very active in this area. Although *Jemaa's* traditional management is concerned with *Douars*, local NGO's and cooperatives have emerged recently, revealing the awareness of the locals to find new frameworks for dialogue and relations with the various exogenous stakeholders. Indeed, there are about ten associations and cooperatives that emerged in the mid-1990s. Their main objectives are the economic and social development of the inhabitants as well as the protection of the environment. The creation of cooperatives came later in the mid-2000s, following the launch of the INDH (National Initiative for Human Development) to respond to the need to improve the economic and social conditions of the local population. They operate mainly in the production of Argan oil, livestock, and tourism.

These new structures are highly sought-after by the park management body and international NGOs. The need for concerted management where local communities are consulted and mobilized is the desired approach to sustainable site protection. Indeed, through our survey, members are mainly attracted by the economic interest of the project. They observe the actions of funders and partner support organizations that can enable the economic and social advancement of members. Having benefited from several support programs and training on ecology, protection of the environment, local flora and fauna, the production, the

promotion and the sale of tourist products as well as ornithology equipment, the partnership seems very beneficial and profitable.

Figure 3. *Cave Rooms in the Cliffs*



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Figure 4. *Ruin in Souss Massa Estuary in the Natural Park*



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Tourism in the PNSM

A few kilometers from the second tourist's destination in Morocco, the PNSM is not far from the influence of Agadir. It receives 739,447 tourists and has a capacity of 39020 beds (Observatoire du Tourisme Maroc 2017). As a seaside destination, tourism in Agadir is mainly based on the traditional 4S with mass tourism that relies on hotels from Western Europe and Benelux. Although the countryside of Agadir is rich in natural and cultural assets, tourist activities are limited to excursions from Agadir to the cities of Taroudant, Tiznit, and Tafraouat.

Ecological tourism is developing little by little but is still stammering like niche tourism activities that attract enthusiastic tourists interested in trekking, bird watching, surfing, recreational fishing, geo-tours, and bike tours.

According to a study from Wurzburg University, the PNSM receives around 100,000 visitors per year and many excursion destinations for the urban population of Agadir. The lack of data regarding the visits hides the reality that the park remains a very close and important excursion area for tourists from Agadir hotel-clubs and other types of accommodation. However, the lack of reception facilities (hotel, restaurant, etc.) and free access to the park is a sign that this activity generates only very limited benefits and even negative effects. Excursions are generally sold by hotels, travel agencies or carriers to individuals and groups and rarely integrate the products and tours developed at the Park, except some lunch and guiding services which are optional. In order to enhance the local potential and create an impact on the park and benefits for the local population, two animal reserves were created for the acclimatization of antelopes and red-necked ostrich in view of their introduction into their Saharan biotopes.

Tourist Strategy in the Area

The Regional Development Plan (PDR), adopted in 2017, considers tourism as a crucial economic development factor in the region but also insists largely on the revival of the seaside product with a multiproduct offer. It also insists on the need for the enhancement of the hinterland through the development of nature, culture, and religious tours and it is the same vision launched in 2019 by the Regional Development Corporation (SDR).

The 2010 tourism vision was accompanied by rural tourism development strategies. The implemented devices are very diverse. The creation of the CPT (Chtouka Ait Baha) in 2005 and the set-up of the PAT (Chtouka Ait Baha) in 2019 aimed to unify the actors of tourism in mixed structures alongside the institutional actors to prepare the design and the realization of the projects of the territory and programs designed in RDPs (regional development programs). This device has been replaced, as part of the 2020 Vision, by the National Development Program. Also, integrated mountain areas and oases (Qariati) program designed by SMIT was launched. It advocates the creation of SDR regional development company and SDL local development company that will replace respectively CRT and CPT.

Nevertheless, it seems difficult to set up neither the PAT nor the CPT. Both projects did not manage to make an impact on the territory despite the great propaganda and projects of the first years of their inauguration, including the development of ecotourism activities in the park and a project of 1000 bed in Tifnit. Qariati program failed to start, unlike the eco-Resorts. Initiated by the SMIT, the PNSM eco-resorts is a project which aimed to reach 4000 beds (lodges, hotels and tourist residence on the seafront) on several spots with shops, a nautical and marine center, and a discovery park center. It is a major tourist development project that covers 1000 ha on 7 sites inside the park at SidiToulal, Tifnit, Douira, SidRbat, SidiOuassay, SidiBoufdail, and Issourh (see Figure 2).

On the other hand, HCEFLCD is very active. It launched, in consultation with the CPT and the CRT in Agadir, various procedures and actions including the discovery of the Saharan fauna of the park and the launch of a bird watching itinerary. To start with, the discovery of the Saharan fauna in the park was behind the discovery of two animal reserves and a coastal area. Its boundaries start in the Rokein information Center and end in Tifnit. It is a 25 km route to visit the Addax antelope in Rokein and the Oryx antelope reserve and Dorcas gazelles in Arrouais. The itinerary covers the coastal area of Ait Amira, the fishing village of Tifnit and the coastal area of Tifnit-SidiRbat where it is possible to observe birds (the bald ibis).

Under the leadership of the CRT and the management of the Park, an ethical charter was developed for travel agencies that are responsible for organizing the excursion. Visits are made during the week, except Tuesdays and Sundays, in the form of a pedestrian tour or safari in 4x4 cars or on minibuses. It can be organized during a half day which will include exclusively the visit of the two animal reserves, or a full day with the visit of the reserves followed by a meal in the area and a visit of the dam or the city of Tiznit. The morning of Sunday is devoted to nationals and locals with a discounted rate (50%) and access to the only reserve of Rokein, with the possibility to make it with minibuses instead of 4x4 vehicles. In that case, visits should be made in groups of at least 12 minimum participants.

However, the limited number of agencies that market the product, the lack of communication, the complexity of the planning and the organization of visits are so far responsible for hindering the development of this product. Admittedly, the management of the entrances to the reserves is done exclusively at the level of the offices of the direction of the Park, whose premises are not in the park. Travel agencies and individuals must purchase tickets in advance. The commissions on sales remain not really attractive.

Regarding bird watching itinerary, the PNSM is a hot spot for identifying rare and endangered birds. Migratory bird passage routes and wetlands, rich in a variety of valuable species, attract several travel agencies and bird watching specialized tour operators. However, local agencies are not very attracted to this niche that needs a lot of knowledge, specialist bird guides, and professional observation equipment. Few Moroccan agencies offer tours but usually on demand. The activity remains, therefore, little organized and largely dominated by an informal activity and organized by enthusiasts, encompassing guides.

Nevertheless, the PNSM is included in the programming of all ornithology specialists. They essentially incorporate American, English and Dutch clientele. This is the case for Rockjumber and Birdingbriks which offer an annual program with stages in Souss Massa. The commitment of some of these tour operators allows the financing of some projects like that of the backup of the Bald Ibis in collaboration with SEO Birdlife by financing the surveillance and by collaborating with the guides of the park.

The individual clientele seems very important, given the large number of guides who confirmed the organization of two trips a day during the high season. The guides are indeed an essential element in the organization of bird watching trips. Indeed, 18 native guides from the villages of the park accompany the

visitors. Part of them is gathered in El Oued Association of Guides of the Souss Massa National Park. A large part of them also set up a cooperative of the park's guides. They frame two types of hikes, including a nature discovery circuit whereby the tourist crosses a distance of 2 to 5 km on foot or on donkeys and a bird watching tour that takes place along the route of the park between Binzaren and SidiRbat for 3 km. The trip allows the observation of water birds from the mouth of the Oued Massa and the guides offer their service and rent the necessary equipment (binoculars and long views). In collaboration with the Park and ARGAT, sixteen guides participate in on-site scouting tours and receive information and documentation from the Park to be able to manage the product and ensure an optimal tour for the clientele.

Accommodation in the PNSM

The approved accommodation in the park is limited to a few units, not exceeding eight, with a capacity of 163 beds with the possibility of extra beds. Ksar Massa Hotel with the dune inn, both located in Sidi Rbat, dominates 53.33% of that capacity and the majority of the accommodations are authentic and well integrated into the local frame. The others take the form of a modern style detached house converted into a cottage, an inn or a residence. In the south, between Aglou and Mirleft beaches outside the perimeter of the park, several waterfront accommodation units are used by foreign and Moroccan customers during the summer holiday. They consist of hotels, cottages, villas, and houses proposed for rent. Twenty-four accommodations listed on Airbnb platform are identified. They are composed of surf camps or home-stay accommodation or converted cave rooms (see figure 3). They vary in quality and comfort. The majority of these accommodations are concentrated in Tifnit and SidiRbat on the littoral band. In the south of the park, these kinds of accommodation are more numerous and only two accommodations are part of the Rural Tourism Development Network (RDTR)¹ that adopted the Quality and Environment Ethical Charter.

Local Community Perception of the Governance of the PNSM

The study of the setting of the local population in the governance of the park essentially must consider the analysis of the local perception of actions in the park. To do this, this field study targeted different actors among the local population (Table 5). A 30% is based on reasoned scaling method where variables like the tourism activity of the interviewees (60.6% of the cases), and their indigence and nativity at the PNSM (89.76% of the interviewees). 70% of the sample considers

¹Rural Tourism Development Network (RDTR), is the only association to bring together local tourism players from the rural world in Morocco. In 2015, this association created the first Quality and Environment Charter in Morocco and a labeling system for its members. The Network were initiated in collaboration with the General Council of Isère and the Tétraktys association, the discovery tour of the region, in 8 days, across the coast, the dunes, the plains and mountains. This tour allows the discovery of the region with a stage at the PNSM to observe the fauna and flora of the region and visit the fishing village of Tifnit and the Park.

themselves involved or beneficiaries. The sample consists also of 98.2% of males; women are not well represented because of the dominance of males in the activities. Two women who cultivate crops in the valley were interviewed informally.

Table 5. Sample Composition and Nature of Interviewees

	Interviewee	N=30	Nature	Type
Innkeeper	2	6.6%	1 native 1 resident	Endogenous/Allogenuous
Restaurant	2	6.6%	1 native 1 investor	Endogenous/Allogenuous
Guides	10	33.33%	Natives	Endogenous/Transitional
Walk/ donkey ride monitor	2	6.6%	Natives	Endogenous
Cooperatives	2	6.6%	Natives	Endogenous/Transitional
Woodsman	2	6.6%	1 native 1 resident	Endogenous Exogenous
Inhabitant	10	33.33%	6 natives 4 residents	Endogenous Endogenous
Total	30	100%		

Source: Elaborated by the authors

The analysis of the questionnaires revealed the participation of 49.25% of primary school 33.52% of secondary school and 5.5% of high school graduates. An 11% of the interviewees were illiterate. Also, guides and walker/donkey ride monitors confirmed receiving different training sessions in ecological tourism and bird watching, offered by the park, GIZ, Seo/Birdlife, and GOMAC. They learned while accompanying visitors in their infancy. The rest of the sample has no training in the field.

Ecological Culture and the Perception of Environmental Constraints

The perception of ecosystem fragility and climate change among all respondents is of paramount significance. All residents are aware of the landscape changes around the park and the growth of the population, the intensive agriculture and the new constructions. The guides recognize the importance of natural heritage and the need to preserve it. They showed concerns regarding the changes in the ecosystem where they live and are aware of the threats that might affect the environment. An interviewee said, *“The Douars grow rapidly and we have started to experience an uncontrolled population explosion and different problems emerged”*.

Indeed, all villages have problems with wastewater and waste. Some black spots really perplex the population and prompt them to question the effectiveness of certain projects and the involvement of certain local stakeholders in the

management of household waste. The anthropogenic pressure of the local population itself complicates the situation due to pollution and the use of agricultural methods and extensive breeding that affect the environment negatively. A forester confesses that *“some inhabitants overgraze their goats everywhere. We are always forced to watch and drive them out”*.

While some areas in the park are dry, the best spots and especially those located on the shoreline are subject to another kind of exogenous pressure. In fact, some sites like Tifnit, Sidi Ouassai and Aglou in the south are sought by tourists. The interviews and the field survey show lands devoted to tourism or real estate projects. They are subject to several conflicts between the urban agency, the park and the local population. Hotel chains and real estate investors made this space their preferred target. The mobilization of NGOs such as GOMAC and Birdlife stopped mega-projects but illegal construction is a shocking reality and a risk to the environment.

Generally, the interviewees are aware of the risks that threaten the park's ecosystem. Unanimously, they reveal the importance of a new policy which should respect their social and economic needs. They also feel the difficulty of the management of the environment. Neither the local authorities nor the management of the park can stop this negative process. An inhabitant said that *“managers also responsible for the degradation of the situation. They lost credibility and the population does not trust them either”*.

Perception of Operational Tourism Activities in the PNSM

The majority of the interviewees in the park (86%) do not ignore the importance of the development of the tourism sector in the park. The majority uses tourism to earn extra income besides agriculture or other activities. *“There is not much to do. Those who work in tourism are lucky. In the villages, you can only see mainly seniors and children. Poverty pushes young people to go to Agadir to work”*, said a young man at the entrance of the park.

The park is an attraction and can potentially be an ecological spot. *“The park attracts a lot of tourists and Moroccans too. We have Germans, Dutch and French. It's very diverse,”* explains a guide. Thus, the development of accommodation, guiding and birds' watching, trekking, donkey riding, etc., can absolutely benefit the park and the population as well. Some guides have developed their activities; they have websites, Tripadvisor pages and they rely on social media to deductively attract customers. They have improved their background knowledge and abilities, especially in terms of languages. The others work with the customers of the hotels or they wait for the customers at the entrance of the park in SidiRbat, SidiBinzaren or in the south of Massa.

According to the guides, efforts were made to prepare the visits in the park, but unfortunately, certain necessary repairs were neglected as the installations and machines are no longer operational. *“The kiosk of the park's guides is always closed. It's not connected to electricity. An eco-museum was built next door, but it is also closed. It never opened its doors. It's a real mess”*, said a guide. Another one explained the cause and said that *“no guide can stay at the kiosk. Everyone*

should work to feed his family. A day without work is a loss as we have no fixed salary. We are paid per visit and we get 450 MAD per day and 350 MAD for a half day. Some guides are obliged to do two jobs to support the needs of their families. Among our group, there are farmers, drivers, gardeners, fishermen, etc”.

According to the guides, the lack of expertise in the field does not help the development of tourism. They are, of course, all on the ground and no one has the skills or the profile to be able to organize and manage a tourist activity from an office. Therefore, the activities are controlled by travel agencies and the park which created the tours, the animal reserves and fixed the tariffs. *“Visits’ management is not well done. Groups of travel agencies and tour guides come from outside and make visits freely. You see, the entrance to the park is free and everyone can get inside,”* according to a guide.

Another cooperative employee pointed out that the ministry and the local council strive to attract investment and promote tourism development. *“The most striking remark is that everyone wants more and more tourists,”* said an inhabitant who was met in the fields of the valley. The same point of view is shared by all the interviewees. Also, certain questions were asked by the interviewees who focused on the perils of constructing more hotels and infrastructure in the park on the ecosystem. One of the guides said that *“they want to construct big hotels and have more tourists. Isn’t this a threat to the environment? The big hotels will need space and a lot of water for the pools... I do not think this is how we are assumed to protect the park’s natural resources. The dam has already caused a lot of changes”.*

The interviews reveal the need for financing and supporting the projects. The respondents do not hide their desire to develop projects related to accommodation, transportation, and human capital. The sentence the interviewees repeated mostly during the interviews was: *“We need funding to launch tourism projects”.*

Perception of the PNSM and Local Governance

All the interviewees exhibited enthusiasm and excitement. They indicated the importance of the intervention of national and international actors to guarantee the progress of the park and its survival. *“We were consulted by the park (He refers to the park managers). GTZ / GIZ created the association and the cooperative. We went through a lot of training. However, the equipment are obsolete and must be renewed. The first ones were not of good quality”,* said a cooperative member. Another member continues by saying that *“the impacts of the actions are weak. These are periodic actions; they consult us for a moment and then they leave. There is a lot of money, and the foreign associations give a lot of money, but we do not receive anything.”*

The analysis shows that the participatory approach is operational but lacks depth and impact. Communication is established through local associations, cooperatives, and elected officials but does not really solve problems and does not generate a beneficial effect for the community. The population feels marginalized. Some cultural social projects were canceled by the park like the construction of a soccer field and many other activities. *“We suffer from the absence of a vision that protects the interests of the citizen. The real problem is negative mindset. We also*

suffer from the lack of a complete long-term vision,” said a student who is very active in the field.

Indeed, the relationship between the park and tourism stakeholders is complex. Each part needs the other but this is not the case. The guides, for instance, feel they are under total pressure and have no space for dialogue to express their viewpoints. They want to take advantage of tourism and pay attention to the fact that their opinions do not upset the management of the park and lead to the blockage of the launched projects. However, they also feel they are merely tools in the hands of managers. *“They have the expertise of the officials. They do not know the real needs of the population. In addition, their attitude towards the population is disdainful. They always think that they are superior to us,”* said a cooperative member.

This situation is widely linked to other local political conflicts. Very often, the respondents mention the disappointment of the representatives in their district. The interviewees even speak about the hostility of the elected elite towards the policies of biodiversity preservation. In this sense, the crisis of local politics in Massa reveals the congestion of local affairs and blockage in the socio-economic development projects because of the conflicts between the political groups inside the district council. This is the case with regard to the use of land for construction. The crisis of representation and legitimacy goes beyond the right to use and collective lands. In this way, the inhabitants and the native dwellers criticize the management of pasturing in the areas, the agricultural space and the building policy in their villages. The conflict between residents is also another concern of the local population. The conflict between the population because of goats and camels grazing in the park as well as the illegal construction of caves and the collection of mussels is a serious concern.

Furthermore, the analysis of the implementation of the strategies, in the discourse of the interviewees, reveals that the institutions are unable to coordinate. Efforts and resources are scattered due to the lack of tools to channel them. With a plethora of institutions, commissions, and committees, communication is scarce. The carried out actions are also inefficient and some of them have environmental costs. This is the case of real estate, residential and tourism projects included in SMIT's plans and approved by the park direction and HCEFLCD.

As a result, the local population does not positively perceive the regulation of the park and the projects. They are dictated by exogenous factors and illegitimately monopolized without consideration of the needs of the appropriate holders. The majority thinks, also, that the laws benefit only foreign investors without considering the local population. Consequently, a sense of disappointment and inferiority is prevalent among the local population.

Conclusion

This study focuses on the governance of the PNSM as a coveted protected area and the perception of the population regarding the strategies and regulations in this space. The study responds to a specific time and spatial context and cannot be

generalized to other spaces. However, it focuses on the weaknesses of governance in an environment of great ecological and environmental value.

Despite the mobilization of a large number of actors and the dissemination of programs and actions, the park witnesses a perilous pressure and greedy activities in the setting. Certainly, the projects and the proliferation of urbanization, as well as the socio-economic changes in the villages, are issues which complicate governance in the PNSM. The actions carried out there have shown their limits, despite the existence of a plan to develop the area. Indeed, tourism and other activities are unorganized and even are done illegally and uncontrollably and they result in several conflicts and dysfunctions.

The efforts in recent years to promote effective collaborative environmental governance have thus become stalemated. Thus, the difficulties in involving these communities should find a more adequate framework. The created associations and cooperatives in the park receive little and sometimes no support from the population and the projects do not seem appropriate to them.

Moreover, the place of the local community in the environmental governance of a protected area like the PNSM reveals the insufficiency of the actions and the mode of the chosen regulation. The field study showed rising awareness of environmental issues and climate change. It also shed light on the various actors and the actions undertaken in this area. Tourism as a newcomer undercuts several questions and the analysis also indicated the different conflicts of use in this environment. The local population seems to be shelved in an embryonic environmental governance policy.

The path of good environmental governance should overcome these complications and lead to the construction of relations with more effective communication between the different stakeholders. Similarly, the logic of time-limited projects must be supplemented by long-term projects aiming at the empowerment of the local population. These could be research orientations that need to be explored.

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