

## RESEARCH ARTICLE



# The Governance of Territorial Networks of Organizations: Case of the Tangier-Tetouan-Al Hoceima Region

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**Abstract:** This work focuses on the governance of territorial networks of organizations in the Tangier-Tetouan-Al Hoceima region in Morocco. By examining this specific case, we seek to understand how regional governance structures influence collaboration and coordination between organizations operating in this territory. To understand this subject in depth, it is crucial to look at the governance of territorial networks of organizations, drawing inspiration from both international experiences and the specificities of the Moroccan context. Our research is based on a descriptive literature review beginning by defining the foundations of the governance of territorial networks, including the conceptualization of the term, their typological diversity, and their different forms, then by examining international experiences in governance, through the study of cases such as that of France, Italy, the Basque Countries, and the German model, and finally, by tracing the history of the development of territorial networks of organizations in Morocco, while highlighting the needs, trends, and potential of each of the entities making up the clusters.

**Keywords:** governance, organizations, network, TNO, Morocco

## 1. Introduction

The need for change and the evolution of modes of coordination of actors and the State representing the origin of the essence of a new management model which is territorial governance, either at the global level or at the Moroccan level. The latter can be made up of several components and brings together a set of typologies.

In general, territorial networks of organizations (TNO) designate the embodiment of a common doctrine related to networking heterogeneous organizations and creating synergies between them. However, the multiplicity of the network forms leads to ambiguity in their designation [1]. So, to better understand this subject, it is essential to question the governance of TNOs in terms of international experiences and the model adapted to the Moroccan context. The response to this problem can be addressed firstly by defining the foundations of the governance of territorial networks, namely the definition of the concept, their typology, and their form, secondly, by the presentation of international experiences in governance (the French, Italian, Basque countries, and the German model), and thirdly, by the presentation of the history of development of TNOs in Morocco, as well as the need for development of these networks through the identification of the needs, trends, and potential of each of the entities composing clusters.

The development of this models has motivated our research to apprehend the difference between the governance of each territorial network and to explain our motivation for a Moroccan model that can be installed in the north region, especially that the literature and

empirical research are not widely developed. This model can enhance and help improve the local development and share the good governance of TNO.

## 2. Literature Review

Before moving to analyze our study case, we need to understand the foundations of TNOs through an examination of the distinct types of governance and the typologies of TNO. Indeed, a vast amount of the literature has developed around the various forms of TNOs, and concepts have since followed one another in academic work and public action, leading to ambiguity in their designation.

Our research question will therefore be formulated as follows: How does the governance of TNO contribute to promoting the construction of collaborative networks of actors in the Tangier-Tetouan-Al Hoceima region?

Following the definition of the key terms, we will analyze the models of TNO and the international experiences around the world and establish the particularities and the common ground between them. We will finish by examining the Moroccan model, through its evolution and its consideration as an instrument for revitalizing industrial policy.

### 2.1. The foundations of TNO governance<sup>1</sup>

The beginnings of reflection on territorial governance refer to the search for new modes of organization and territorial management. It refers to local development and the involvement of different private and public actors, etc. The concept of

<sup>1</sup>In the rest of the article, TNOs refer to Territorial Networks of Organizations;

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governance (or “Governance”) appeared in economic sciences in the 1960s which developed the idea of “Corporate Governance”<sup>2</sup>, before being imported by political science, at the end of the 1980s, to designate the methods of governing urban areas.

Storper and Harrison [2] emphasize the territorial dimension in the analysis of governance. They highlight the heterogeneity of configurations. However, certain authors differently understand the territory. This is the case, for example, of Colletis et al. [3] who understands local governance as “a process of building compatibility between different institutional proximities uniting actors (economic, institutional, social, etc.) geographically close, with a view to resolving a new productive problem or more broadly, carrying out a local development project”. The introduction of the concept of territorial governance in political science reflects the desire to denounce the traditional top-down and centralized model, allowing the emergence of new modes of coordination of actors and intervention of the State.

### 2.1.1. Definitions

Through the analysis of the different definitions of the concept, we were able to detect the components that can be presented as follows.

#### 2.1.1.1. Network and governance

Marshall [4] is the first author to be interested in the functioning of territorial networks of companies, namely industrial districts in 1919. The network is considered as a hybrid organizational form which will eventually approach cooperation (hierarchy) or the market (competition).

Several works have attempted to understand the nature of inter-organizational relationships within a network. Thus, the network is considered as a form of governance [5] where the network would coordinate itself and self-organize without significant intervention. Governance is then understood as bringing together “the organizational forms and processes through which activities are directed in a domain”.

#### 2.1.1.2. Formal governance and/or informal governance

Jones et al. [6] attempt to propose their own definition of network governance. They then specify that “network governance involves a selected, persistent, and structured set of autonomous firms (and public agencies) engaged in the creation of products or services, based on implicit and not finalized contracts to adapt to environmental and environmental contingencies to coordinate and guarantee exchanges. These contracts are cemented socially and not legally” [6]. They favor social governance and indicate that network governance refers to “coordination characterized by an informal social system rather than by bureaucratic arrangements between firms and formal contractual relationships”.

In other studies, on governance, Dyer and Singh [7] note the existence of two dimensions: a first dimension of formal and normative governance characterized by contractual arrangements and institutional links. A second level relates to informal (social) governance based on trust, embeddedness, and reputation.

#### 2.1.1.3. The territorial dimension

We had to wait for the work of Storper and Harrison [2] which highlights the spatial dimension in the analysis of governance. Likewise, Mendez and Mercier [8], who takes up the work of Colletis et al. [3], understand local governance as “a process of

building compatibility between different institutional proximities uniting actors (economic, institutional, social, etc.) geographically close, with a view to resolving a new productive problem or more broadly, carrying out a local development project” [3]. This definition goes beyond the regulation of relational behavior but emphasizes the institutional dynamics of territories [3].

#### 2.1.1.4. Heterogeneous actors

Ehlinger et al. [5] indicate that TNO governance is “a hybrid form of market and non-market relationships aimed at adapting, coordinating, and controlling exchanges between autonomous and heterogeneous entities through complex regulatory mechanisms of a transactional and relational nature, economic, and social”. This definition highlights the heterogeneity of the actors making up the networks, as well as the importance of ensuring management and coordination between the members of the network [5]. At the same vein, steering the TNO has become an inescapable imperative to ensure cohesion between the often-heterogeneous objectives of the various stakeholders and to guarantee that their interests are considered [9].

To sum up, we would conclude that the governance structure of TNO mobilizes and coordinates actors to drive a collective strategy [10].

### 2.1.2. Typologies of TNO governance

After analyzing the different terms, we will present the typologies of TNO governance, which are the local firm, the associative governance, the territorial governance, and the partnership governance. These types are divided using the power and the influence of the actors in the network.

#### 2.1.2.1. The focal firm

Territorial networks are guided by a “strategic center” [11], a broker [12], a focal firm [13], a pivot firm, or even an actor, trigger, etc. These definitions mean the same reality, namely the presence of an actor who is the manager, coordinator, and facilitator of relationships and who influences the structural, relational, and cognitive dimensions of the network.

This mode of governance is characterized by an asymmetry of powers and roles between the focal firm and the other members of the network. This reduces the complexity of the network by allowing a return to regulatory mechanisms closer to hierarchy in the sense of Williamson than to the market [5]. However, the centralization of powers is the essential source of tensions, divergences of interests, or latent conflicts. The adoption of the competitiveness cluster policy puts the strict existence of this mode of governance into perspective, particularly due to the representativeness of the industry/research/training triptych which characterizes their mode of governance.

#### 2.1.2.2. Associative governance

Associative governance is based on the principle of balance of powers. Each member of the network organized in an associative form is supposed to know how their normally elected representatives govern the organization. This mode of governance is the dominant model in industrial districts identified by Marshall [4] but also in Italian districts.

This mode of governance involves the integration of the interests of complementary or divergent stakeholders, which poses a problem in exogenous networks in which differentiated actors coexist. Thus, as Ehlinger et al. [5] point out, “the recent evolution of territorialized networks towards more complex and more deliberate forms requires thinking about forms of governance that better integrate the diversity of actors and the particularities of public actors” [5].

<sup>2</sup>Territorial governance as a new mode of territorial coordination, F. Leloup, L. Moyart and B. Pecqueur/Géographie, Économie, Société 7 (2005) 321–331.

2.1.2.3. Territorial governance

As we have been able to define it, territorial governance allows the involvement of different actors in the development of the territory. This concept emerged thanks to the decentralization of public structures. In fact, decentralization is the transfer of a range of competences, responsibilities, and resources from central to subnational governments [14].

However, if the transfer of skills took place, the resources did not necessarily follow. Territorial actors then find themselves needing to build new local resources. It is therefore necessary for territorial actors to coordinate to build new non-transferable resources to ensure the competitiveness of their territory [8, 15]. Mendez’s analysis makes it possible to identify three types of territorial governance:

- 1) **Private governance:** these are private actors, who manage the coordination and resource creation systems.
- 2) **Collective private governance:** it is a formal institution bringing together private actors.
- 3) **Public governance:** these are public institutions that coordinate between actors.

2.1.2.4. Partnership governance

The different forms of governance are rarely encountered, so we are witnessing an association between these different modalities, which amounts to partnership governance. Camagni [16] joins this conception through the notion of a local system of governance which must coherently bring together a community, a set of private actors, and a system of local public administration.

This modality applies to competitiveness clusters, has modestly appeared during the 1990s, and has gradually emerged starting from the early 2000s [17]. It is defined as: “the combination, in a given geographical area, of companies, training centers, and public or private research units, engaged in a partnership approach intended to generate synergies around a market and a technological or scientific field attached to it and must seek to achieve a critical mass to achieve competitiveness but also international visibility” [18].

2.1.3. The forms of territorial organizational networks

We will retain four forms relating to the new industrial and territorial organization and which have been widely debated in the literature. These are Italian-style industrial districts, Mr. Porter-style clusters, local productive systems (SPL), and Grenoble-style competitiveness clusters. Industrial districts bring together private actors (companies) without being labeled by public authorities and having strong three-dimensional proximity: spatial, relational, and organizational.

SPL brings together companies maintaining partnerships with local stakeholders. This relationship is ensured, very often, by the public authorities. Courlet and Pecqueur [19] conceive of these systems as a geographical concentration, characterized by specialization around a profession, with the objective of cooperation and coordination in the field of training and development of knowledge and more generally in terms of collective management of human resources.

If districts do not favor collaboration with other actors, clusters allow partnerships with universities, research laboratories, funding institutions, etc. This relationship is characterized by a strong geographical concentration of activities around a given area and which allows actors to implement strategies of pre-emption and absorption of key knowledge, skills, and specific resources sustainably and effectively [20].

**Table 1**  
**Collaboration of actors and structures of TNOs**

	Collaboration is first desired by the actors themselves	Collaboration is recognized and reinforced by public authorities
The partners are all companies	Industrial Districts	Local Productive Systems
The partners are various organizations	Clusters	Competitiveness clusters

The competitiveness clusters, for their part, were initiated by France with the aim of creating a dynamic of competitiveness with a regional vocation based on innovative projects. The management, coordination, and cooperation of the poles are ensured, unlike the clusters, by the State. Table 1 below presents a summary of the collaboration of actors and the structures of TNOs.

**2.2. International experiences with TNO**

The experiences we have chosen can serve as a reference for developing countries because of the success of their policies. In the Moroccan context, the choice of the French model is justified by the common history with Morocco which is inspired by French policies and measures despite the delay in the organization of clusters. Thus, the Italian and Spanish model are considered pioneering and precursor countries in terms of TNOs. Likewise, the case of Germany is justified by its innovative and federalist character.

2.2.1. The French model: Competitiveness clusters

The observation noted by Martin Mathews, researcher at the French Institute of Corporate Governance, at the Lyon School of Business and Management, who has studied the governance of several clusters in Europe and across the world, is as follows: France is the last major country in Europe to adopt clusters, taking the example of its European neighbors, Italy and Germany in the lead, and above all the only one to manage them in such a centralized manner. Around 80% of cluster initiatives in Europe come from governments, whether national or regional. But in most cases, the latter very quickly took a back seat, which does not seem to be France’s intention.

Indeed, France has placed the triptych: innovation-attractiveness and competitiveness at the heart of its industrial strategy. Thus, since 2002, it has tried to implement a new policy to support the economic development of territories<sup>3</sup>. The policy of French “pôles de compétitivité” (FCC) was launched in 2004 with an officially announced strategic goal to strengthen the industrial potential of France, to create favorable conditions for the emergence of new competitive activities, and thereby to improve the attractiveness of local territories and to prevent delocalization [21]. The territory is therefore an inherent variable in the operation of these networks [22]. This initiative will result first in the creation of seventy-one (71) competitiveness clusters, between 2004 and 2008, and in the consolidation of this policy during a second phase, called “Pôles 2.0”, and initiated for 2009–2011.

These competitiveness clusters are geographically distributed in a balanced manner with a high concentration of global clusters in the

<sup>3</sup>This policy was conducted by the Interministerial Committee for Territorial Planning and Development (CIACT);

**Table 2**  
**SWOT matrix analysis**

Strengths	Weaknesses
1) Pre-existing collaborations (e.g., Minalogic, Lyon Biopôle, and Aerospace Valley) 2) Real enthusiasm, media coverage 3) Financial support from the State 4) Diversity of fields of activity	1) Ambiguity of objectives (French competitiveness or regional planning/industrial rescue) 2) Proliferation of the poles 3) Cumbersome administrative processes 4) Structural weakness of the French SME network
<b>Opportunities</b> 1) Increased collaboration between multinationals, innovative SMEs, start-ups, public and private training, and research institutes generating innovations. 2) Stimulation of private R&D spending, insufficient in France 3) Increased dialogue with foreign counterparts (clusters)	<b>Threats</b> 1) Intellectual property management 2) Place given (or not) to SMEs. 3) Absence of competitive positioning study 4) Little scientific advice 5) Absence of competitive positioning study at international level

South-West (Aquitaine and Midi-Pyrénées) and the South-East (Rhône-Alpes and Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur). At the economic level, these poles have been distributed according to their economic weight, and their international visibility, namely:

- 1) Seven (7) global competitiveness clusters: Aerospace Valley, Finance Innovation, etc.,
- 2) Ten (10) competitiveness clusters with a global vocation: Axelera, i-Trans, etc.,
- 3) 54 National competitiveness clusters: Minalogic, Cosmetic Valley, etc.,

The internal dynamics of these centers and their interaction with the external environment are presented in a synthetic manner in the SWOT matrix in Table 2.

Regarding the question of funding, the French government is generous. In fact, the budgetary envelope dedicated to the financing of the centers by the State was set in 2005 at €1.5 billion for a period of 3 years (2006–2008). After a positive evaluation of the first phase, the State increased the amount to 1.5 billion euros for the launch of the second phase which, according to the DGCIS, will include<sup>4</sup>:

- 1) Strengthening the animation and strategic management of the divisions (performance contracts);
- 2) New financing methods (innovation platforms);
- 3) The development of the growth and innovation ecosystem of each pole (private financing, better territorial synergies).

In addition to the financing granted, the clusters benefit from tax incentives such as exemptions from tax on profits, professional tax, and property tax contributions, as well as reductions in social charges. As for the governance of the clusters, the central administration like the Interministerial Delegation for Territorial Planning and Competitiveness (DIAC) or the General Directorate of Competitiveness, Industry, and Services (DGCIS), at the Ministry of the Economy, Finance, and Employment marks their predominance. Likewise, the associations, as their own legal entity standing for each cluster, play a determining role in their animation (coordination and cooperation with other French or foreign clusters, selection, and evaluation of research projects, communication between clusters, etc.) [18].

### 2.2.2. The Italian model: Technological districts

In 2002, the Italian government decided to launch technological districts based on the rapprochement between the

<sup>4</sup>DGCIS: General Directorate for the Competitiveness of Industry and Services in France;

industry-research-university triptych, a model which aims to create a tool for scientific, economic development, and regional planning. It organizes the initiatives taken by the government since 1970 by betting on sharing the management of research and development with other actors, in particular local authorities (regions), and by decentralizing the implementation of the creation of the district, to which the provinces and municipalities can be associated with.

District governance is administered by several actors, namely the State, university, industrial group, etc., the central actor of which remains the MIU<sup>5</sup>, which maintains control of the process by which it dialogues with the regions within the framework of a national steering “committee”. Each actor expresses his or her point of view on the area of expertise as shown in the following:

- 1) Ministry of Productive Activities : Responsible by the law for Development and transfer of technology
- 2) The regions : Main local pilot with legislative competence for the implementation of the technological district, respecting certain requirements and conditions set by the ministry.
- 3) Confindustria: Participation in drafting projects.
- 4) The universities: Public research + Mandatory presence according to the Ministry of Instruction (Education), University and Research (MIUR).

This policy allowed Italy to acquire DIs distributed in an unbalanced North/South manner. Thus, seven districts in the north compared to only three districts in the south. The eleventh Italian technological district is that of Integrated Intelligent Systems, born from a partnership agreement between MIUR and the region of Liguria in September 2004.

### 2.2.3. The Spanish model: The case of the Basque country<sup>6</sup>

Since the 1980s, the Basque government has become aware of the need for the strategic choice of cluster policy as a lever for competitiveness and growth. Thus, three phases characterized the development of the clusters. In fact, the first period begins in 1980 with restructuring and affecting the development of technological infrastructure and strategic and technological planning. Then, the second phase which began ten years later (i.e., 1991) was marked by the strengthening and diversification of the industrial fabric. Finally, the period from 2001 to 2010 oriented towards innovation and excellence.

<sup>5</sup>Ministry of Instruction (Education), University and Research;

<sup>6</sup>The Spanish Basque Country is made up of an autonomous region, Eus kadi, comprising three provinces, and Navarre.



This strategy allowed the Basque country to generate 45% of GDP through the thirteen clusters present on its territory. In the same context, the performance indicators of the Basque clusters on a social and economic level are exemplary. For example, the GDP per capita is 31,314 EUR compared to 23,063 euros of the Spanish average<sup>7</sup>. To explain this performance, four characteristics specific to the Basque country are identified:

- 1) Involvement of public authorities (Monitoring and control);
- 2) Appropriate public financing limited to subsidies capped by decree at a maximum of 60% of operating expenses and 50% of investment expenses;
- 3) Precise identification of the field and perimeter of intervention;
- 4) Development of clusters with an international vocation through the implementation of a quality approach (creation of international quality standards, the “HEGAN 9000” standard).

The experience of the Basque model today constitutes an international reference and a source of inspiration for several countries.

#### 2.2.4. The German model

The German model favors networking of actors whatever the geographical scale. In this article, we will focus on the “Kompetenznetze Deutschland” initiative or the competence networks. This initiative, the main actor of which is the German Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Technology, and whose objective is to promote networking and the regional anchoring of Germany’s skills. Indeed, public authorities want the development of modern technologies and the transfer of knowledge, taking the triptych route: attractiveness-competitiveness-international visibility.

The importance of the Kompetenznetze Deutschland initiative lies in the richness and diversity of its competence networks which are estimated at 113 Kompetenznetze, including almost 50% of the networks operating in innovative technology. Something which explains the technological advancement made by German industry over its European neighbors. The density and distribution of skills networks, in a balanced manner throughout the territory, explain the success of German cluster policy.

The financing mechanism is based, unlike the Basque country and the French model, on autonomy and the networks do not benefit from any specific financing. The clusters are therefore financed through regional funds (from the Länder), member contributions, European funds, ERA-Net, Fraunhofer company, industry participation, various calls for tenders (on thematic projects). The different international experiences that we have presented constitute rich models which deserve to be a source of inspiration to developing countries in an era where research and technological innovation have become the determining factors of growth and competitiveness.

### 2.3. TNOs in Morocco

After exploring the various aspects of the TNOs, and the international experiences around the world, we will move to present the Moroccan case by analyzing its evolution, and it can be an instrument for revitalizing industrial policy. Poonjan and Tanner [23] have declared that establishing an environment stimulating innovation and local development is conditioned by establishing an economic and institutional regime. In that objective, we will study the case of TNOs in Morocco.

#### 2.3.1. Evolution of TNOs in Morocco

CESE [24] presented an assessment of territorial governance in Morocco, in which he noted that the development of this experience is dependent on responding to fundamental problems: first, there is the problem of financing, which is manifested in the inadequacy of the financial resources allocated to local authorities, and secondly, the failure of control mechanisms, especially with the introduction of new management and innovation tools at the level of the organization of management methods. CESE [24] also raised the issue of inter-organizational coordination systems and tools, which is reflected in the lack of a mechanism for implementing the general principles of territorial governance (free administration, the pre-eminence of the region, the principle of subsidiarity, differentiation, and progressiveness . . .). These weaknesses are the result of poor territorial governance by public authorities in the development and implementation of projects [25].

Ammar [26] confirms that despite the constitutional, institutional, and legislative reforms in terms of consecrating the foundations of territorial governance, the implementation of these reforms aimed at establishing transparency and ethics in public management constitutes a major difficulty.

In fact, public management is based on the French model because State structures are obliged to implement a formalized performance approach [27]. However, Morocco has become aware of the need to rethink its industrial policy and modernize its logic into a network logic [28]. A reorientation which will result, firstly, in the establishment of the concept of “competitive Morocco” in the 1990s, then, in 2005, by the establishment of the “emergence plan” which inaugurates a new stage in the development process of this strategy, by creating favorable conditions to network stakeholders and create the synergies necessary to boost territorial dynamics, and finally, the “Industrial Acceleration Plan (PAI) 2014–2020” with the objective of consolidating the foundations of the industrial structure and improving the performance of the competitiveness clusters already in place [18, 29]. This “clusterization” policy has allowed Morocco to be a pioneering country compared to the Maghreb countries [30].

#### 2.3.2. TNOs in Morocco: Instrument for revitalizing industrial policy

Through the analysis of international models, we have noted that the experience and good practices of the countries promote the good management of clusters by favoring an integrated and multidimensional approach, which demonstrates the following characteristics.

First, the French model highlights the role of associations as a distinct legal entity making it possible to regulate and energize clusters with a view to completing and ensuring reliable performance management. Then, the Italian model involves different actors and is based on a centralization of powers by the MIUR and a decentralization of implementation. As well as an innovative approach based on the implementation of synergies between territorial governance actors. The model of the Basque countries does not lack innovation by focusing on the quality approach to promote clusters with an international vocation. Finally, the German model favors the networking of actors and the use of a dual approach to governance: strategic and operational.

Morocco, for its part, is trying to focus on a partnership approach to boost its territory; however, it remains insufficient given the importance of the problems facing the Moroccan cluster governance mode. Our work will therefore constitute a line of reflection about Moroccan clusters by focusing on the region of Tangier-Tetouan-Al Hoceima, for reasons of geographical proximity, with a view to identifying the needs, trends, and

<sup>7</sup>OECD, INSEE, European Union, Eustat, 2010;

potential of territorial networks (Districts, SPL, etc.), as well as the needs in terms of inter-unit coordination.

### 3. Conclusion

TNOs, contrary to what an “angelic” [8] presentation of things might lead us to believe, are objects that need to be governed. As Lauriol et al. [31] remind us, the territory is not a natural concept, but a construct, an TNO, which is located on a territory, is also an object to be constructed, otherwise said to manage, and manage.

Therefore, to conclude, the governance of TNO is of paramount importance to ensure that the Tangier-Tetouan-Al Hoceima region remains and progresses as a region of the future, given its remarkable current development. Key areas of intervention to support local development include training, institutional capacity building, sharing of good TNO governance practices, environmental preservation, development of economic partnerships, promotion of the economy social and solidarity, as well as the promotion of local culture.

It seems relevant to us to complete this theoretical vision by understanding the empirical reality of TNO governance. We also plan to open the “black box” of this concept by understanding the empirical realities. This will be the subject of the rest of our research work through a questionnaire that we have designed.

### Ethical Statement

This study does not contain any studies with human or animal subjects performed by any of the authors.

### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to this work.

### Data Availability Statement

Date sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created in this study.

### Author Contribution Statement

**Balla Marouane:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Project administration. **Hicham El Ahmadi:** Resources, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Project administration.

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