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The Opportunities of the Inter-Municipal Strategic Alliances in Algeria

By Dr. Chenane Arezki

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This paper presents the results of a survey administered via a questionnaire, drawn from the theoretical foundations of strategic alliances. The questionnaire, then, is divided in two sections. The first section provides a profile of respondents and develops methodological elements mobilized in the investigation. The second section gives details about the main results.

Keywords : *strategic alliances, algeria, sustainability.*

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The Opportunities of the Inter-Municipal Strategic Alliances in Algeria

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Résumé- L'objectif de cette contribution est d'évaluer l'opportunité des alliances stratégiques intercommunales en Algérie, en apportant une réponse précise à la question de savoir si les alliances stratégiques intercommunales sont un outil efficace pour réduire voir même éliminer les incohérences du découpage territorial actuel en Algérie.

Cet article rend compte des résultats d'une enquête administrée via un questionnaire, tiré des fondements théoriques des alliances stratégiques. La première section dresse le profil des personnes enquêtées et développe quelques éléments méthodologiques mobilisés dans l'enquête. La deuxième section détaille les principaux résultats obtenus.

Mots-clés : *alliances stratégiques, algérie, développement durable.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this contribution consists of assessing and evaluating the different opportunities of the inter-municipal strategic alliances in Algeria by providing an accurate answer about their utmost relevance in reducing or even eliminating the current territorial division's incoherence in Algeria.

Therefore, such this article gives an account of the results issued after a survey based on the theoretical grounds of the strategic alliances. Thus, the first section deals with the targeted people's profile and it is concerned with some methodological elements supplied in the survey. However, the second section details and provides the main results which have been brought out.

1- The enquired people's profile and a methodological element

This first section aims at drawing, as a first step, the enquired people's profile. Then, it attempts to

provide some methodological grounds that have mainly supported our survey.

a) *The enquired people's profile*

Our survey has been submitted to the whole municipals of the four enquired wilayas. Thus, people that have answered our survey, have been represented in the chart below and it is to note that the elected people come firstly followed by the services' heads, the technical staff, the mayors and at last come the general secretaries.

If we divide our sample into elected and non-elected staff, it's possible to notice that half of the participants are elected while the other half are not. Besides, their points of view are different; the first category leads the needs and the real facts of the territory, however, the second deals with the way transiting the different decisions and the centralized logics of the state.

II. A METHODOLOGICAL ELEMENT

In order to get an accurate answer to our survey, we have preferred to lead an enquiry via a survey which is submitted to a sample representing Algerian territorial communities such as the four wilayas of the north of Algeria, given that, such areas are characterized by a high density of population and a variable relief that is most of time related to the type of mountains. In addition, the whole municipals of the four wilayas have been enquired by submitting our survey to, at least, one elected or non-elected person in a municipal.

We have, further to the failure in our first attempt to enquire all the Algerian municipals via a numerical questionnaire, decided to strengthen our survey with a representative sample of four wilayas. Therefore, it seems that most of the municipals have neither internet site nor an e-mail that may be useful for interchanging. In addition, our attempts to hold direct entertainments with the minister of interior as a go-between with the whole Algerian municipals have been unsuccessful.

It is to notice that our sample, which is made up of four wilayas and led beside 172 municipals, has been exhaustively enquired. Then, the number of answers per a municipal varies from one to another; we have addressed 250 questionnaires and received back 204 answers estimated to an increased rate of 81, 6% .

The widening of our sample to the whole country would enable to undertake sophisticated processing methods namely the analyses to principal components. It can also lead to interesting classifications.

The selected processing is limited to a sorting out of the head results without details. Furthermore, our attempts to bi-varied analyses, via a system of correlation between variables, have not led to any significant results. Thus, we have limited our study to a simple mono-varied analysis.

It is to mention that our analysis is quite original and unique in the Algerian scientific frame as according to our references, few studies have mobilized this kind of step for such a question. The perceptions and the methods of the local actors are little explored and the empirical analyses are so lacunar. Such thesis suggests improving our knowledge of the field and highlighting the Algerian local development facts.

III. THE SURVEY'S RESULTS

The presentation of the results will be made by a thematic headline as it has been conceived in the questionnaire. The first heading deals with the limits and the challenges of the current territorial division in Algeria. However, the second heading concerns the implementation of inter-municipal strategic alliances in Algeria. This heading suggests also assessing the knowledge of actors in this kind of instruments greatly used in well-developed countries. Beside, the third heading attempts to discuss the most adapted methods in the implementation of these strategic alliances within the local communities. Moreover, we attend to deal with the legal and the financial mechanisms that would facilitate the implementation of these inter-municipal cooperation. Finally, the last heading will discuss the other instruments that may strengthen the logics of a sustainable local development within the Algerian municipalities.

a) *The limits and the challenges of the current territorial division in Algeria*

The current territorial division in Algeria, in other words, the administrative division has gathered only 12, 3% of satisfaction among the enquired people while 88,2% among them have shown dissatisfaction. According to a cross chart that highlights the link between the function and the satisfaction as regards the current division, it would be noticed that the non-elected staff is as dissatisfied as the elected one.

It is to mention beyond that the rate of dissatisfaction is a little bit increased among the non-elected; an unexpected result in regard to the function of these people. It also seems that the level of education, which is more satisfactory among the non-elected comparing to the elected, would explain this difference

in the location of the current inter-municipal territorial division limits in Algeria. The dissatisfaction of the local actors is firstly interpreted by the failure of the current division consistency, by the weakness of the prerogatives attributed to the elected and mainly by the lack of means at disposal. However, the size of the municipalities comes at last.

Most of the elected staff focus on the weaknesses of the municipal code that left only some lacunar fringes of laborer while the non-elected insist on the incoherence factors and on the lack of means to justify the current division limits.

Other factors are underlined by the enquired people to explain the current division limits as they have been mentioned below:

- *A freezing caused by some echelons upper than the municipal namely the daïra, the wilaya which are judged as disturbing factors. On the other hand, some people consider that the municipal popular assembly is devoid of its importance because of the interference of the other stages of order and command such as the wilaya, the daïra...etc.*
- *The divisions do not respond to any sociological referent nor to any economic considerations; some people notice the weakness of the social homogeneity within the territorial entities.*
- *The authorities of the municipal popular assembly are quite limited in addition to the hierarchic control of the wali and the lack of competences among the elected.*
- *Absence of both economic and social equality among the rich and the poor municipalities. Thus, some elected mention the weakness of equity; some municipalities are naturally wealthier than the others; any profit has been taken from the resources.*

In front of the current territorial division limits in Algerian municipalities, the enquired people either elected or not are in their majority of 82, 8% optimistic for the new territorial division. It is to mention that the non-elected staff is more positive for a new division than the elected one, an unexpected result that may be justified by the technical misuse of local development instruments by some elected having a deficient training (most of them have only reached high school level).

Thus, the new division is hoped to solve the problems relating to public services and equipment (50, 5%), to remedy the shortness of the means at disposal of municipalities and to promote new activities. Moreover, the creation of new resources within the municipal cannot be considered without solving the current problems in management, equipment and means.

Other raisons are arisen to justify the necessity to implement a new territorial reform such as:

- *Facing any new challenges of the territorial competition.*

- *Maintaining infrastructures and creating new ones.*
- *Responding the citizens' expectations well and in a hurry.*
- *Remedying the social and the economic inequality among municipalities.*
- *Keeping more local democracy.*
- *Improving strategic activities at the inter-municipal level.*
- *Providing more human and financial resources.*
- *Providing much freedom in acting for the elected.*

b) *The opportunity of the Algerian inter-municipal strategic alliances implementation*

The inter-municipal strategic alliances are a sort of a municipal cooperation mostly achieved and enabling the municipals to keep lasting relationships in building new resources. Such alliances are greatly taken into account in well-developed countries particularly in the European ones as in France and Germany. While, in under-developing countries, such instruments remain less developed because of the lack of a decentralization process. Within the Algerian context, some inter-municipal forms of management have already existed and still existing; most enquired people (65,7%) seem to know the strategic alliances between the municipals. Furthermore, the non-elected staff is well informed about these alliances because most of them have reached university, however and unexpectedly, almost a half of the elected do not know them.

The most known form about the inter-municipal strategic alliances remains the inter-municipal cooperation as the simplest one. Then, comes at the second position the inter-municipal establishment being a well-advanced form of cooperation and the inter-municipal union which consists on an intermediate structure between the cooperation and the creation of an inter-municipal establishment.

Most of the enquired municipals (79, 4%) have never implemented any inter-municipal strategic alliances whether with a form of a cooperation, a union or an inter-municipal establishment. Nevertheless, a quarter of municipals (16, 7%) have implemented a strategic alliances form. In fact, it is mainly a temporary and a short-term inter-municipal cooperation that aims at solving punctual problems such as forest fire or any natural disaster.

Therefore, the cooperation is limited to share some technical means (rolling stocks such as lorries and engines). Besides, there are some cooperation forms which are a bit advanced but they cannot be considered as strategic alliances such as the common management of the wastes, the creation of an inter-municipal road, the creation of an AEP or an electric network for the border inhabitants of two municipals, the census of poor people .etc. Then, the financial means are supplied either by the municipal budget or by a guardianship of the state or the wilaya.

Most of the enquired people (88, 2%) consider that the inter-municipal strategic alliances represent a good tool to promote the local sustainable development; both the elected and the non-elected have a positive and even an optimistic perception concerning the opportunity that can be provided by the strategic alliances to the local development. Besides, several raisons are underlined to justify the importance of the alliances:

- *Sharing the means between municipals.*
- *Focusing on the territorial complementarity.*
- *Multiplying opportunities by combining the efforts.*
- *Reaching more efficiency and optimizing the management.*
- *Sharing inter-municipal experience, mutual assistance and sympathy.*
- *Creating a positive common dynamics.*
- *Sharing and exchanging expertise and skills.*
- *Improving the public service functioning.*
- *Solving land matters as it is a crucial factor slowing down the projects.*
- *Stopping the inter-municipal inequities; the poor municipal can derive a profit from a developed dynamics.*
- *Optimizing the results by minimizing the efforts.*
- *Encouraging the suitable governance.*

While the people, who consider that the inter-municipal strategic alliances are not able to promote the local development and the territorial division, rely on the following arguments:

- *Absence of a cooperation tendency.*
- *Everyone is supposed to find out his development areas.*
- *The potentials are different from a municipal to another; absence of complementarity.*
- *Absence of the will to cooperate.*

c) *The implementation of the Algerian inter-municipal strategic alliances methods*

In fact, our inquiry reveals that current legal framework is slightly adapted to inter-municipal strategic alliances. Therefore, most of the local development actors consider that the municipal code is adapted to inter-municipal alliances.

Moreover, according to most of the enquired people (73%), in spite of their importance in keeping cooperation between municipals, there are not any legal instrument which stimulate the inter-municipal strategic alliances.

Thus, the theories that deal with the new institutional economy (North, 2003, Williamson, 1994) have put forward the institutional incitements as an utmost factor to assess any economic development. Then, the institutions are considered as a set of formal and informal rules that efficiently contribute to the regulation of the economic agent's behavior. The

empirical studies have confirmed these theoretical intuitions by highlighting the efficient link between the institutional quality and the economic performance.

Therefore, the connection of these institutional theories to our problematic reveals clearly that the strategic alliances that exist among the municipals are determined by both the formal and the informal rules established by the state, which has to change the municipal code in aid of the inter-municipality. Besides, through an incitement system, a real culture of cooperation and sympathy would be kept by the state between the Algerian municipals. Thus, without incitement, any sustainable development would not be guaranteed via the inter-municipal strategic alliances.

Though there are some instruments that stimulate the inter-municipal sympathy, the inter-municipal economic projects are still lacunar. Thus, these implemented instruments concern the following:

- The sympathy municipal fund and the guarantee fund of local communities provided for by the law n°11-10 of June 22nd, 2011 (JO°37 of 2011)
- The set of many delegations and municipal aerals, chapter 2, article 133 of the municipal code.
- The inter-municipal PDAU.

In fact, the local actors put forward many forms of inter-municipal strategic alliances adapted to the Algerian context. They are namely the inter-municipal PDAU, the inter-municipal unions, the inter-municipal companies (IMC) and the municipal alliances belonging to the same daïra.

Therefore, the inter-municipal strategic alliances are intended by the enquired people within the fields that they judge prior. The first field concerns the environment as about 69, 1% of the elected and the non-elected people are engaged in a strategic alliance. Then comes the economic field about 16, 2% while arrives the social field at the third position about 9,8%.

The priority given to the environment, particularly the managing of wastes, leads us deal with such field within the last chapter of our thesis. Moreover, this sector is suffering from many constraints damaging the resources, the landscapes and the whole nature. Thus, the environmental politics 'lacunars are supposed to be made up within the inter-municipal strategic alliances.

These cooperation are already efficient by the creation of the inter-municipal technical burying centers. Nevertheless, such inter-municipality that is detailed in the following chapter seems to be elementary; its practical field and effects are quite limited. It is therefore necessary to be engaged in the alliances in order to achieve a real territory project such as the 21 areas agendas which are carried out within most of the European municipalities in conformity with the Rio Summit for environment recommendations, hold in 1992.

The inter-municipal strategic alliances would not be established unless the financial means are provided; many tools have already been supplied in different countries. Therefore, they consist on transforming the usual tax to an inter-municipal tax (such as the professional activity tax) or transforming the state grants. Thus, the enquired local actors are about 39, 2% for a new inter-municipal state grant while about 14,7% are for the deduction of the usual municipal taxes. It is to notice that an important portion of the municipals are in wait and depending on the state budget; the fact that points to the lack of dynamism and the weakness of the municipals capacities to create new resources.

d) *Other territorial division instruments in Algeria*

Beyond the inter-municipal strategic alliances, there are other instruments which enable the division of the territory. Thus, they consist either on a new administrative division (such as the increase or the decrease of the number or the size of the territorial communities, municipals, wilayas, areas, etc.) or on the rationalization of the local taxes management and recovery or on the municipal code reform which concerns the decentralization of the prerogatives or on the creation of new instruments such as the development agencies. Therefore, all these options are reviewed within the last chapter which deals with the different scenarios that are introduced in the country.

Half of the enquired people are aware of the existence of such alternatives while the other half are far from mastering the intended options; it is to underline the faillure of the local elected people as for keeping a local sustainable development instruments and stakes.

Finally, the inter-municipal strategic alliances are determined as an instrument that really provides an opportunity to resuscitate the municipals development through a municipal borders reconfiguration that must be flexible so as to achieve a better coherence and a strong cooperation in acting.

In fact, the alliances offer an appropriate softness for the territorial innovation and creativity as they stimulate the inter-municipal sympathy and cooperation field and encourage competition among municipals. It is therefore a new territorial approach based on coordination principals and local resources enhancement. Nevertheless, such inter-municipal strategic alliances would not be improved unless there is an incentive formal and informal institutional framework.

IV. CONCLUSION

According to this communication, it is likely to affirm that the Algerian local development actors are for the implementation of inter-municipal strategic alliances as a necessary mean of the territorial reconfig-

uration since they remedy the current division defaults (as it has been proclaimed within our surveys).

These inter-municipal strategic alliances are determined within a new territorial reconfiguration approach that we tend to develop in the first chapter of our contribution. It is therefore a territorial approach that offers the means to overcome all the difficulties inherent in a new territorial division. In fact such alliances represent a soft tool to make up the previous division shortages ; the optimal size of the communities is not taken into account given that the question of size varies according to the finalities and the problematics raised by the communities and since the globalization is still bothering the territorial competition.

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