The associative social innovation as a vector for sustainable territorial development: the case of five non-governmental organisations in the Greater Maghreb

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Abstract:
Many solutions are proposed to improve people's living conditions, and social innovation (SI) often appears as an attractive option. This new axis of innovation is particularly relevant in the field of sustainable territorial development (STD), which can be approached as a collective action and a coordination of individual actions, whose characteristics are set by the framework of a world that will change and evolve in an unpredictable way as the actions are implemented, and whose main objectives are the protection of the environment, the development of economic activities and the improvement of local social living conditions. This observation leads to a new research perspective. Indeed, research on this topic has been largely limited to social innovation in the public sector. On the other hand, it would be judicious to show interest towards the associative actor, because of its proximity to the citizens and its local efficiency, and to combine its contributions to the concept of social innovation, in order to take into account all the problems inherent to the improvement of the living conditions of the populations and the sustainable development of the territories. Thus, this article aims to show how social innovation can contribute to sustainable territorial development. Based on a qualitative study, our investigation presents the results of a multi-case study whose data collection was enabled by semi-structured interviews with five non-governmental organisations (NGOs), each operating in one of the countries of the Greater Maghreb: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania. This article shows that social innovation is structured in networks, within which social actors share representations, distribute responsibilities or roles, and establish rules or standards, allowing the circulation of information, the distribution of resources and the decision-making process in order to satisfy social needs and expectations not covered by the market and/or the State, in favour of vulnerable populations, and also to contribute sustainably to the development of the territories in which it is implemented.

Keywords: Social innovation, sustainable territorial development, territory, co-construction.
JEL Classification: O35
Paper type: Empirical research
1. Introduction:

The concept of social innovation is increasingly present in political, scientific and public debates worldwide. It is a notion that is receiving particular attention from researchers, policy makers, governments, international organisations and other actors who are working to find new channels (products, services, ideas, processes, practices, etc.) and to redefine existing ones in order to meet social needs and expectations not covered by the market and/or the state, in favour of vulnerable populations. The aim of this new type of innovation, which has emerged since the 1970s in the context of crises and the rise of citizens' movements and demands, is to create a dynamic of inclusive and equitable socio-economic development combined with organisational and institutional change in an attempt to achieve comprehensive and sustainable social change. Moreover, within the framework of this research work, we will, first of all, review literature concerning the different conceptions of social innovation, starting from the one centred on the individual to the one oriented towards the environment (territory), while emphasising the transversal aspect of this concept.

In order to consider SI as a sustainable solution to social problems, we have explored in parallel works dealing with sustainable development as well as those dealing with territorial development, and it emerges that it is important to combine these two concepts to create a broader and more integrated vision, namely sustainable territorial development (STD).

Indeed, territorial social innovation, as an approach to STD, has two major characteristics. Firstly, it is developed through a bottom-up approach based on the solidarity and collective dynamics of local actors, which favours the possibility of action of civil society initiatives. Secondly, it leads to a modification of the vertical links between actors, and consequently of governance, which allows the establishment of a new system of local actors favouring the multiplication of citizen initiatives and their participation in the elaboration of public policies and local services. These two characteristics call into question the major place occupied by the actors of the social and solidarity economy (SSE), more precisely, the associative actor, due to its territorial proximity and foothold, as a vector of STD.

In this perspective, we will explore the nexus between SI and DTD through the study of five associations in the Greater Maghreb, each representing one of the five countries. A qualitative study based on semi-structured interviews to verify the relevance of all the notions mentioned in our literature review but also to shed empirical light on the link between the two previously mentioned notions, by evoking the following concepts: Territory, governance, social capital, sustainability, SSE (through the associative actor). Thus, we will be able to answer the following main question: How does social innovation, through the associative actor, contribute to sustainable territorial development?

We will initiate the empirical part of our research by outlining the specificities of each organization with a view to answering our main question and verify our upcoming assumptions.

2. Sustainable territorial development through socially innovative NGOs

Over the last few years, the debate on the role of innovation in local and regional development has increasingly focused on social innovation. Since the end of the 1980s, IFRESI (Institut Fédératif de Recherche sur les Economies et les Sociétés Industrielles) in Lille (France) has played a leading role in this new orientation, through the theorisation of Integrated Area Development. But what does social innovation mean and how does this process contribute to sustainable territorial development?
2.1. Social innovation: a cross-cutting concept

The term 'social innovation' was first used by Taylor (1970), according to Cooperreider and Pasmore (1991). However, it appears from our exploration of the literature that Gabor (1970) approached the subject jointly from a (territorial) development perspective and the notion can be studied from two main angles: individual-centred social innovation and milieu-orientated social innovation.

2.1.1. The individual-centred Social Innovations

According to Taylor (1970), SI means new ways of doing things with the explicit aim of addressing social needs, e.g. poverty and delinquency (Taylor, 1970,70). The cooperation between different actors is a prerequisite for the creation and production of social innovations, but not an integral part of it. Indeed, Taylor (1970) does not ask the question of the SI process (creation/design, implementation/implementation, diffusion). For the latter, thus, social innovation seems to concern only the results of the process.

According to Chombart de Lauwe (1976 in Fontan, 1998, p.17), the SI is « ... an action allowing the creation of new social structures, new social relations, new modes of decision. This action (...) is born of an awareness of the transformations to be made in society. It is rooted in the individualised, then collectivised, measurement of the gap between a de facto situation, deemed unacceptable or unsatisfactory, and a desired or desired situation ». Hence, SI leads to a new social organisation that not only solves social problems as cited by Taylor (1970), but also fulfils a social ideal.

For Lallemand (2001), practices that support so-called excluded populations are considered social innovations. These practices are based on an Anglo-Saxon approach « ...empowerment, which is based on the fact that individuals, alone or in groups, can acquire the capacities to achieve the necessary transformations». SI builds on the potential of individuals and includes a learning process designed to acquire knowledge and new ways of working together. Therefore, the participation of users is a necessary condition for it to happen, while creating networks with different partners.

2.1.2. The Milieu-Orientated Social Innovations

The SIs discussed here differ from those focused on the individual mainly in the purpose of the changes they want to bring about. Those focused on the environment aim at developing a specific territory to improve the quality of life there. All the studies reviewed show the existence of two approaches: the development approach (territory) and the consumption approach.

The development approach: In order to consider SI as a sustainable solution to social problems, we have explored simultaneously the literature on sustainable development and the literature on territorial development, and it appears that many authors (Serva, Andion and Lévesque, 2006; Rochman, 2008; Proulx, 2006) propose to combine these two concepts in order to create a broader and more integrated vision, namely sustainable territorial development.

There is a strong consensus that the use of SI is imperative to find solutions to the interrelated challenges of global and sustainable development. As the STEPS Centre’s (2010) manifesto on innovation, sustainability and development makes clear, despite significant scientific and technological advances, « poverty is deepening, the environment is in crisis and progress towards the UN Millennium Development Goals has stalled ». The manifesto considers that SI has the potential to generate large-scale, sustainable social welfare while preserving the environment.

For Gueron (1984), the SI evokes a new mode of governance, a new division of labour or a new collaboration between institutions to ensure a better quality of life.

Other researchers seem to have opted for a territorial development approach. First, Gabor (1970) sees SI as a tool to counter urbanisation, pollution, crime and corruption, economic...
inequality and violence. Social innovations aim to develop a “new social arrangement”, a “new equilibrium” and even consist of technical innovations (e.g. the electric train) or laws (e.g. the law for environmental protection).

King (1984) suggests four categories of SI that are essential for sustainable territorial development:

- The SIs related to the regulation and achievement of economic objectives (e.g. productivity growth, improvement of the education system, fight against poverty...);
- The SIs designed to protect the environment and ensure the sustainability of natural resources (e.g. reforestation, economic energy production, hydroelectricity management, recycling of materials);
- The SIs in the policy area (e.g. decentralisation, regionalisation, communication and cooperation with different groups);
- The SIs at the supranational level (e.g. new forms of international cooperation, reorganisation of international science and technology relations).

According to Moulaert and Nussbaumer (2008), the participation of civil society organisations in the construction of new forms of territorial cooperation has fostered more democratic forms of governance (in particular bottom-linked governance), opening up the range of economic activities to social services and culture, stimulating entrepreneurial attitudes towards new forms of enterprise (social and solidarity enterprises), socially innovative forms of work organisation, and relationships of solidarity between citizens and actors within and beyond the territories.

In fact, territorial social innovation, tackling territorial development, features two major characteristics. On the one hand, it is achieved through a bottom-up approach grounded on the solidarity and collective dynamics of local actors, which fosters the potential of civil society initiatives to act. On the other hand, it involves a revision of the vertical links between actors, and therefore of governance, enabling the emergence of a new system of local actors favouring the multiplication of citizens' initiatives and their participation in the formulation of public policies and local services.

The consumption approach: For Gershuny (1983), the SI is the central element in explaining the effects of technological change on the lifestyle of a population and the economic structure. Gershuny (1983) defines the SI as the modification of a society's consumption patterns to ensure its well-being.

To sum up, the concept of SI seems to cover both the innovative solution to economic and social problems and the process of developing this solution. This process is characterised by the collaboration between different actors, including users, during the creation phase of the SI (definition of the problem, identification of causes and solutions) and the implementation phase (financial participation, exchange of material and technical resources, use of expertise, exchange of information, training). The processual importance of this collaboration between local actors implies a strong link between social innovation and the territories where it is implemented, through a contribution to their development.

3. Territory and sustainability: an entanglement for a sustainable territorial development.

By a curious shift in perspective, economic growth has quickly become synonymous with development, whereas development refers to much more than economic growth. A neoclassical economist above all suspicion, François Perroux, had already made this clear in his definition of development, which remains unsurpassed even today: « Development is the combination of mental and social changes in a population which render it capable of making its overall real product grow cumulatively and sustainably » (Perroux, 1969, p 190); and he added « These are organs of general interest which transform the growth of an industry or activity into the growth... »

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of a nation and the anarchic developments into an organized development» (Perroux, 1969, p 205).
Thus, Jean (2015) emphasises that the notion of territorial development marks a radical break with the logic of regional development and is not yet based on a stabilised theoretical construction. It stems from the hybridisation of the concepts of development and territory, which are two phenomena that the literature has great difficulty in making intelligible. Therefore, the territory cannot be reduced to its scale, but is rather defined by its mode of organisation and by the way in which the component actors coordinate (Jean, 2015). In fact, «the territory is above all a construction of actors with the aim of solving a productive problem» (Pecqueur, 2000).
In this perspective, the territorial development reflects:
«The recognition of the strong link between the dynamics of development and the multiple characteristics of the territories in which they take place. This concept recognises the localised nature of the actors and the use of this reference in their interactions; finally, it also recognises the emergence of this reality which facilitates, between local wills and the more global political incentives, a coherence of actions and actors which builds the territory» (Jean, 2015, p : 296).
In the field of territorial development, we can also mention the emergence of several corollary notions that are now fashionable, including the concept of sustainable development (SD). Like territorialisation, this latter notion corresponds to a response to political voluntarism. It has a threefold intention: to encourage the active participation of the population in decisions and public actions relating to their living environment; to carry out concerted and contractualised actions on projects; to respond globally to the conflicts that cities face without dissociating social issues from employment, housing, consumption and the environment (Minot, 2001).
In this context, the most documented definition of SD is that contained in the report "Our Common Future" : «Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs».
The first dimension concerns the duration of development. Secondly, the emphasis is on social equity, to be established between and within generations. A third dimension to be taken into consideration is respect for the natural systems that sustain us. This is what is commonly considered as the three components of sustainable development.
Hence, the question of the applicability of SD remains unclear. Indeed, none of these reflections has shed any light on the questions concerning the operationality of the concept. The combination of the SD approach with that of territorial development is one of the solutions currently proposed to circumvent this limit of the operationality of SD.
Otherwise, if environmental and territorial approaches are part of a critical logic of the old development models and offer research avenues to think and establish new development models, they nevertheless have limits, which have favoured current reflections on a development mode that is both territorial and sustainable.
In the course of these alternative reflections, sustainable territorial development (STD) is conceived as a hybrid solution between the two territorial and sustainable approaches. This hybridisation is justified by at least two arguments (Rochman, 2008):
- Conceptually, the two notions (territorial development and sustainable development) seem to be ambiguous or partial with regard to the issue of sustainability;
- The need for the construction of the concept of sustainable territorial development is also motivated by the observation that some development initiatives can be territorial without being sustainable or conversely focus on the main components of sustainability and hide the economic and social viability.
Thus, the STD implies a reconceptualisation of development, based on a double logic: the definition of a territorial project involving local actors in its design and implementation and in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.
4. The voluntary sector: a socially innovative laboratory for a STD.

Based on the theoretical contributions mentioned above, we consider that social innovation allows us to «reflect the initiatives taken to respond to social expectations» (Bouchard, 2007), to needs that are insufficiently or incorrectly met, without necessarily creating new ideas, but rather a different conception. It is being developed either within the framework of activities abandoned by the market or the State, suggesting interstices as spaces for innovation, or in partnership with the State and local authorities. Finally, it is territorialisated and is part of collective dynamics that require a partnership-based governance (Richez-Battesti, 2009).

However, situating social innovation in the context of activities left behind by the market or the state, or in relation to partnerships, facilitates the bridge with non-profit organisations, which are components of the SSE. Thus, associations would produce social innovations to meet a demand that the state cannot satisfy directly. Some of them would also respond to a demand that the market could not satisfy. We find here the justification that Weisbrod in 1995, later adopted by Laville and Nyssens (2001), gives to the existence of associations in relation to the double failure of the State and the market in its capacity to respond to social demands. In addition, as Bouchard (2007, p. 142) reminds us, we cannot ignore the political dimension of the commitment of «social actors to bring about a change in society», which also justifies the fact that SSE structures are particularly conducive to social innovation.

Considering this close link between SSE and territory, we can postulate that SSE organisations are able to produce positive effects for the territory as a whole and condition its development process. This contribution of SSE actors can be considered both from the point of view of the production of wealth and from the point of view of the satisfaction of the needs of the population. In this sense, we will focus in our empirical study on the contribution of the associative actor in sustainable territorial development within the context of the Greater Maghreb, considering the case of one association per country.

5. The case of 5 socially innovative associations in the Greater Maghreb striving for sustainable territorial development.

5.1. Hypothesis

In the previous part, we presented a review of the concepts of sustainable territorial development and social innovation and the dimensions associated with them. In doing so, we have identified the main theoretical avenues related to these concepts as well as their conceptual definitions. This review also allowed us to highlight the link between social innovation and the components of sustainable territorial development. These considerations led to the formulation of several research hypotheses concerning the influence of social innovation in sustainable territorial development:

H1: The Achievement of the STD stems from the consideration of the territory as a suitable framework for social innovation.

H2: the associative actor, through its potential for social innovation, contributes to sustainable territorial development.

H3: this potential for social innovation leading to STD depends on the adopted associative governance.

H4: Social capital, through social networks, helps to accumulate social innovations for STD.

In order to verify these hypotheses, a methodological approach was privileged, in accordance with the objectives of our research.
5.2. Selected Cases

Due to the nature of the issue under study and to the kind of data we are looking for, we have chosen a qualitative approach in our empirical research. We have selected the case study method in order to be in a position to grasp and assess in detail the role played by socially innovative associations in sustainable territorial development in the Greater Maghreb.

Five associations were selected for our empirical study, each from a country in the Greater Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania). They operate in key social sectors (education, training, cultural activities, care for vulnerable people, protection and promotion of heritage) and are recognised for their real contribution to community work. They were approached to participate in our survey by two means: direct contact (for 1) and a recommendation from our network (for the other 4). The 5 associations are the following:

**Mouvement les citoyens**: Les Citoyens is an independent and non-partisan Moroccan association, founded in May 2016 by civil society actors, from the economic, social, cultural and associative fields, who gathered together after having noticed that the development model had reached its limits and that it was necessary to support the state in responding to several key issues. The main objective is to work to improve the ‘Better Living’ and ‘Acting Together’. The association works on the re-establishment of the social debate, and tries to give everyone the conviction that they are able to participate and bring their voice to the local and national public debate. Moreover, a new vocation is added to the work of the association which, through its national tour, seeks to identify and map the emergence, detecting successful initiatives/projects/activities which will be the object of modelisation in order to facilitate their reproduction and adaptation in several territories, but also to identify and bring together the different actors of change. In this sense, the organisation adopts the following functioning:

The organisation mainly focuses on: youth, women (through capacity building) and the territory (especially by accompanying the actors of change in marginalised and problematic territories). And so the flagship initiatives of the movement, which fall within the framework of the act thank, are:

- The café citoyen which targeted the 12 regions of Morocco (more than 56 cities in the Kingdom) with the main objective of unleashing the energies of young people, discussing the issues at stake for them and for their territory and coming up with appropriate recommendations.
- The Café Citoyen/Training which complements the Café Citoyen talks with various capacity building trainings in order to create a structured network of national leaders (through the concept of "citizen ambassadors").
- The “RA’ED” programme was launched with the HEM Foundation in partnership with the Heinrich Böll Foundation as a free training program for young leaders across Morocco.
- The “Moucharaka mouwatina” program aims to encourage the implementation of mechanisms and tools for a governance sensitive to youth and gender so that they can
fully play their roles as actors of change. It aims to operationalize, by youth and women, mechanisms of participatory democracy in the Casablanca-Settat region.

**Santé Sidi El houari organisation** : it was created in 1991, approved in 1992, and is located on a historic, which is composed of two old buildings, the Camp hospital built in 1838 by the French colonial army and the Ottoman baths built in 1708 by the Bey Mustapha Bouchelaghem. They are located in the historic district of Sidi El Houari in Oran, and discovered by a group of citizens in 1991, in ruins in a state of abandonment and advanced degradation. The work of the association is driven by the achievement of its main objectives: Participation in the refurbishment of the educational facility, raising awareness about heritage preservation, qualified and specialised workforce ready to access the rehabilitation sites, professional integration into the labour market, development of a sense of citizenship, opening up to new perspectives, empowerment, strengthening the skills of craftsmen, organising internships for university students in architecture and civil engineering.

And it contributes to the safeguarding of the national tangible and intangible heritage through:

L'école chantier of professional training in traditional heritage professions: was created in 2003 from the idea of a "chantier école" to a school recognised by the state, which consists of establishing a training class on a historic site to benefit young people who have no school or social prospects, by training them and giving them a profession that they will develop through practice, at the same time as it allows the historic site to be rehabilitated. This concept integrates training in several crafts: stone cutting and traditional masonry, blacksmithing and ironwork, carpentry and woodwork, sewing, electricity and plumbing. And it's, socio-cultural centre of animation and education for citizenship. In addition to these two structures, there are three others: The Ibda3com audiovisual centre: specialised in ICT (information and communication technologies), especially as this is a very trendy area for young people seeking to express themselves, particularly through photography, the media, social networks, etc; The centre for the professional career development: Mainly for young people excluded from the school system, living in the disadvantaged areas of Oran, namely, Sidi El Houari, Ras El Ain, Les planteurs, El Hassi but also for university students who are lost and do not manage to insert themselves socially and economically and therefore this centre offers them a complementary training through capacity building, especially soft skills. And the inter-associative resource centre: after 30 years of experience in the associative world, SDH decided to create this structure to be able to share all of its achievements with other associations but also to learn from other experiences, which represents for the association a real alternative to solve several problems of the society.

**We Youth Organisation** : WeYouth (WYO) is a Tunisian non-profit organisation established on 28 March 2013 by a group of young Tunisians. The organisation is located in Sfax and follows a purely project-based approach. In other words, the organisation's strategic planning enables to build a project portfolio that aims to achieve the organisation’ objectives: Equip young people with skills and capacities to empower them to take up leadership positions, create a national youth umbrella organisation that advocates for youth participation in decision-making, improve the socio-cultural environment and promote a sustainable culture of civic education and volunteerism, engage effectively with national and international youth movements.

Therefore, the key projects of the association are:

- ‘Takwine’ is a project based on the shortcomings of Tunisian university students who struggle to find their first job. The observation was the lack of soft skills in their curriculum and therefore it was crucial for the association to boost the training of young students with skills beyond theory, while offering them a unique concept of its kind in Tunisia which is an electronic platform where students can submit their resumes to receive a score reflecting the importance of the profile.
- ‘Youth for democracy’, which in its first version, was presented as a summer academy aiming to strengthen the capacities of young people from marginalised regions (Ihencha, Bir Ali, Skhira...). These trainings were closed by a Hackathon of projects where the winners benefited from nano-funds. And the most important impact of this project is the creation of a motivated civil society and an important civic engagement, mainly through associations, which have been created in the different rural beneficiary areas. In its second version, the association focused on the need to rebuild a trust relationship between young people and civil society organisations, through the appointment of ambassadors with the same values as WYO, so that it could be represented throughout Tunisia in order to be able to address several specific local issues.

- Jhar is an idea to remedy the content of Tunisian television, described by the association as "télépoubelle". The content no longer meets the expectations of the citizen and so the idea was to use social networks for this purpose by proposing shows ('nahkiw jhar' for news in a sarcastic way, 'hdite jeunesse' to discuss taboo issues, dosa grinta' to shed light on small civil society initiatives that need funding or simply a boost), challenges with a strong civic engagement in partnership with the most famous influencers in Tunisia (who invite their followers to join the different challenges) and documentaries that respond to the interests of the citizens.

- WACE Women ambassadors for civic engagement was born out of a disconnect between young people (specifically young women) and local authorities, this project aims to strengthen the capacity of women through various training courses to take part in decision-making that concerns them, in this sense the association focused on territories located in the north of Tunisia, where the situation of women is very stereotyped (eg: the place of women is the kitchen ...).

- Tawassoul is a project that was set up by WYO with the United Nations Development Programme after observing an outbreak of violence and delinquency in several Tunisian regions, and the association focused on a critical region called Rbat in Sfax. This project has mainly targeted marginalised youth, through performances that take up notions of everyday life and are essential for social cohesion and equity.

Libyan Debate Club: It is an association that was founded ten years ago in Benghazi, with the aim of spreading the culture of debate and dialogue throughout all of Libya. The organisation's inception was targeting civil society institutions and political parties; recently, the club has targeted educational institutions with the idea that they could have a long-lasting impact. The main tasks of the organisation is to use debates as a tool to inculcate the values of effective dialogue, freedom of expression and acceptance of the other, thus achieving a certain development of the individuals and the society. And to promote equality and universality of development and its adoption as the basis for education, politics and science. The main projects of the NGO are:

- Joussour: which aims to raise citizens' awareness of the importance of their roles as electors via dialogue meetings between elected representatives and citizens to clarify several notions and procedures ignored by the concerned parties, in order to come out either with recommendations or with a deliverable aiming at a precise goal.

- Sawte attaghyir-Chababna younadir: It is the first training program in Benghazi that aims to train young people on dialogue and debate skills in Libyan universities, as well as enhancing personal skills such as critical thinking, public speaking skills, time management and research on scientific grounds. In addition, he seeks to help them establish debate clubs in these universities to be represented in local, national and international tournaments.

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Young Mediterranean voices: is a programme funded by the EU for intercultural dialogue, aimed to amplify youth voice in policy-making as global actors of change across Europe and the Southern Mediterranean region. Its main objetivo is to connect civil society, education and policy-makers by providing opportunities to open doors for young people to shape policy and media narratives.

Houboul watane association: Houboul Watan is an association created in 2013 that addresses several issues of the Mauritanian citizen, focusing on three main areas: health, environment and education. Its beginnings were aimed at a specific "Sebkha" commune in the city of Nouakchott, with the aim of improving the living conditions of the population of this territory. The association went gradually through different phases, where international organisations were interested in collaborating with it, in particular the French embassy and GIZ (the German international development cooperation agency) to start a first project on human rights which enabled local associations to be supported, and a second project which is a community animation and development programme (PADC) focusing on capacity building in the Brakna region and implementing activities which will enable citizens to be involved in institutional decisions. This led to the creation of consultation committees between local elected officials and associations in the commune, based on the observation that young people are less involved in the activities of their territory and therefore the PADC came to support the territorial contribution of citizens, and in addition to the Brakna region, the association addressed the regions of Gorgol, Trarza and Guidimaka. And still with the aim of ensuring a certain social cohesion on the target territory, USAID financed a project that the association had proposed, based on the study of needs on the ground, which concerns the personal development of young people, leadership and project setting.

5.3. Data Collection: A Methodological Triangulation

For data collection, we resorted to a methodological triangulation. This consists of using several means in order to have sufficient data for the study of a social phenomenon or human behaviour (Yana, 1993), which provides a better validity and reliability of the empirical enquiry conducted. Therefore, we have adopted 3 methods of data collection, as follows:

- Semi-structured interviews with the leaders of the five associations under study: The executive director of the association 'Mouvement les citoyens', the president of the association 'Santé Sidi El Houari', the president of the association 'We Youth Organization', the president of the association 'Libyan debate club' and the president of the association 'Houbou alwatan'. The interviews were 82 minutes long on average (the interview with the President of the 'We Youth Organization' lasted 1 hour and 55 minutes). The 5 interviews, the source of primary data, were audio recorded and based on an interview guide, with two main themes: Social innovation carried out by the association studied, particularly through innovative solutions for neglected social needs (inspired by the characterisation grid of social innovation issued by AVISE) and sustainable territorial development as a key aspect of social innovation as an outcome.

- Documentary analysis -to collect secondary data- : of several materials of the considered associations, mainly the websites, their pages on social media and the reports that were made available to us.

- Post-interview questions to the interviewees to further clarify some details, which constituted a second source of primary data.

5.4. Data analysis and discussion

As the interviews were recorded, we were able to transcribe the statements of the interviewees. The data was then divided into themes and analyzed thematically (2 main themes and sub-themes –see the table below-) (also using the data collected during the
documentary analysis and the follow-up questions), in order to produce, manually, an overall analysis and synthesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NGOS THEMES</th>
<th>LES CITOYENS</th>
<th>SANTE SIDI EL HOUARI</th>
<th>WE YOUTH ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>LIBYAN DEBATE CLUB</th>
<th>HOBOUL WATANE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL INNOVATION</td>
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<td>RESPONSE TO AN UNMET OR INADEQUATELY MET SOCIAL NEED</td>
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<td>Mainly through the creation of spaces for dialogue, exchange and, above all, training, within the framework of a national tour of the organisation (Citizen’s Weekends).</td>
<td>• Tackle the lack of interaction between young people (especially women) and local authorities Through the WACE project explained above.</td>
<td>• Tackle the lack of interaction between young people (especially women) and local authorities Through the WACE project explained above.</td>
<td>• Spreading the culture of acceptance of the other.</td>
<td>• Capacity building for citizens.</td>
<td>• Creation of consultation committees between local elected officials and local associations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>« The diagnosis of the needs shows that citizens seek to express themselves, to make their voices heard, to assert themselves, to anchor themselves in society and to identify themselves through art, sport, the creation of innovative projects; needs other than the primary needs which, by stereotype, are generally associated to a vulnerable population. »</td>
<td>• Reduce and neutralize the different stereotypes on women.</td>
<td>• Reduce and neutralize the different stereotypes on women.</td>
<td>• Creating spaces of expression for everyone.</td>
<td>• Developing critical thinking skills among young people.</td>
<td>• Inclusiveness and take into account the minorities.</td>
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<td>GENERATION OF OTHER POSITIVE EFFECTS</td>
<td>The association enables young people to acquire a qualification and a profession and not just a simple training, which allows them to find a job and to be financially autonomous, a qualification that is based on soft skills, especially since these young people are not only school drop-outs but also societal and cultural drop-outs, and therefore they teach them to love themselves, to trust themselves, to appreciate the territory in which they are evolving and to take part in the development of this same territory.</td>
<td>« Our main targets are young people and women, who for us are the pillars of society that are crucial factors for future generations and their social and societal impact, so we can only generate further positive effects by addressing their needs. »</td>
<td>LDC is mainly based on capacity building projects/programmes for children, young people and elected representatives with a long-term vision that seeks to improve ‘the living together’.</td>
<td>« Capacity building of young people ensures not only profiles that meet the demand of the labour market but also a responsible and involved citizenry. »</td>
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| EXPERIMENTATION AND RISK TAKING | The association’s projects necessarily involve experimentation with a view to continuous adaptation and scaling up. | SDH has partners to carry out feasibility studies before starting any project, and then all its initiatives start with an Experimentation. | An approach that WYO believes is essential to be able to follow the evolution of the multiple needs of a territory’s citizens. | LDC’s vision and general strategy, based on specialisation in debate, requires a phase of experimentation for each new project, especially to gauge the PADC is a project that took a real risk - in Mauritania - in the first region of Brakna, which was initially the subject of an experiment, and then the

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### INVOLVEMENT OF THE CONCERNED

The diagnosis of needs is done directly with the concerned persons through the ambassadors of the 12 regions and the organisation strives to ensure that the response to this need comes from them.

SDH's work is initially based on responding to the needs of the citizens, who are continuously listened to and empowered to express their needs but also to propose an appropriate solution.

WYO identifies the ground of action as a market and therefore before starting any project, the association relies on a market study to detect the needs in question through surveys, interviews and focus groups for a direct involvement of the people concerned.

« We had never thought of planning and integrating training on critical thinking or non-verbal communication, all we wanted to do was instil a culture of debate to our society, but we realized through our evaluation system based on beneficiaries' feedback that we needed to develop a specific skills component. »

### SUSTAINABLE TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT

#### THE PERCEPTION OF TERRITORIALITY

The association focuses on three main axes: youth, women and the territory in order to contribute to the socio-economic development of the country: "We cannot talk about development without a territorial anchoring".

"Everything starts from the territory, that's where the citizen's expression starts from, and we evolve in different territories, so each one through the knowledge and the mastery of our territory will be able to contribute to the development of the latter through corrective actions and alternatives".

« With a proper mastery of our territory, we can easily fulfil some of the citizen's needs while involving them in the process. »

« The best approach to intervene in a territory is to knock on the doors of the citizens to invite them to our trainings, to ask them for the details of what is wrong - using a common language understood by everyone-, because after all, you have to understand them to have a territorial impact »

#### SOCIAL CAPITAL IN FAVOR OF A TERRITORY'S DEVELOPMENT

The citizens' organisation is in itself a network, via its ambassadors but also its various partners, which works on the development of individuals but also the dissemination of successful experiences in various fields.

"We are stronger in a network than on our own, but only if it is structured to achieve common goals. »

« The network is everything when it concerns the work of civil society in achieving a certain society development »

« the network enhances the capabilities (technical and financial) and the impact of the organisation»

### THE IMPACT OF SOCIALLY INNOVATIVE PROJECTS

- The dynamics created in the regions as a result of the citizen weekends (an average
- By targeting the development of citizen skills, and introducing citizens to the beaba of citizenship.
- Creating spaces for expression and

« The best way to realize a social impact is by a peer to peer learning and by taking into consideration the endogeneity within a territory »

The best way to seek to achieve development, according to LDC, is to have an educational system that encompasses other skills than the

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of 12 activities/region -urban and rural-) of 12 activities/region -urban and rural-)
- The enhancement and networking of emergences in order to encourage them to exchange good practices and increase their impact.
- The enhancement and networking of emergences in order to encourage them to exchange good practices and increase their impact.

action while preserving heritage.
- By initiating projects/solutions that respond to the ever-changing needs of the citizens.
- By initiating projects/solutions that respond to the ever-changing needs of the citizens.

classical ones, and therefore their work complements the institutional one through trainings on collective intelligence, critical thinking, public speaking...

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First of all, let's start with the social needs to which the five associations studied respond and which make them innovative in their work in order to contribute to a better citizen's living conditions. Of course, the needs evolve over time but this was more noticeable in the case of the Santé Sidi El Houari association, rather than the others which are more or less recent. The main mission of the five associations is to meet social and socio-economic needs that are not or are poorly met by the state/market, for the benefit of disadvantaged people, mainly young people. They all seek to compensate for a major decline in public schools in the Greater Maghreb, especially when it comes to young people's skills, through capacity building. They all give great importance to soft skills, particularly leadership, public speaking and civic engagement. The ‘citoyens’ movement, through its national tour in Morocco, "week-end citoyen", offers young people from different region-specific training and they themselves have expressed this need, and it is the same principle for the other organisations that believe in the importance of a participative approach and co-construction in order to propose adequate and personalised solutions. To maximise this, we youth organisation gets close to young people, targeting places where they like to gather and chat; cafés; to initiate contact with them but also to start the diagnosis of needs which is the starting point of effective resolutions. Furthermore, the Santé Sidi El Houari association opts for a different working strategy, as its main and most socially innovative activity is the "école chantier", which is a free/state-recognised vocational training entity in Algeria, while inculcating parallel skills that are essential for quality profiles. Moreover, to monitor the evolution of the needs of the target population, in this time of health crisis linked to covid 19, SDH has set up awareness-raising campaigns that have targeted, mainly, local leaders in order to face the resistance of the population, while opting for seminars and online training throughout the period of containment, but at the same time the association was short of funding for certain projects that were put on hold. This switch to digital is a light at the end of the tunnel for the other four associations as well, who consider this use of online events to be essential but less effective than the normal mode.

Libyan debate club, for their part, initiated their presence on the ground in Benghazi on the basis of simple findings, such as lack of expression spaces, the fear of youth to speak out, the absence of critical analysis among young people... hence the need to train and empower them in this regard. A fear of expressing their opinion, which, in Mauritania, has reinforced the rupture between young people, local authorities and local elected representatives. A situation that pushed the Houboul watan association to dig for the specificities of this problem by approaching the different stakeholders.

The diagnosis of the needs of the citizens was indeed carried out by the 5 associations, opting for a participatory approach involving all the stakeholders, in order to determine the real needs
but also to propose the right solutions while following the evolution of these needs. According to the President of 'We Youth Organisation', « young people need to have their voices heard, they are better than any other actor at expressing the real need and they already imagine how they can address it but all they need is a boost ». 

The 5 associations interviewed were able to give a correct definition of the concept of social innovation. They were even able to differentiate between normal projects/actions and those that corresponded to the latter concept (which we kept in the presentation of the associations). We even encountered associations that organise hackathons of socially innovative projects (SDH and WYO) and 'les citoyens' who respond to the social innovation process through real attempts to realise innovation clustering: « The closing of each Café Citoyen is done through the meeting with successful socially innovative emergences/initiatives which, through our work as a think-tank, we try to model and integrate into our cartography in order to be able to spread them later, while adapting them to the specificities of the target territory ». In Benghazi, LDC struggled with a very critical decade in Libya and the impetus for such projects - see below - represents an extraordinary social innovation.

6. The main results

The organisations in question, through their socially innovative projects/initiatives, believe that they automatically contribute to the development of the target territory, while according a considerable importance to the territorial anchorage - see table below -, a territorial development that cannot be dissociated from the qualifier sustainable, according to the interviewees. A sustainable territorial development which, admittedly, remains difficult to quantify by civil society organisations, due to the lack of financial resources, but which is reflected in the socio-professional insertion of beneficiaries, the improvement of their living conditions as well as the reduction of inequalities, unemployment and poverty.

To talk about successful socially innovative projects, our interviewees used more or less the same ingredients of the social innovation recipe contributing to sustainable territorial development, namely:

**The perception of the territory**: the main finding revealed from our interviews is that social innovation depends considerably on territorial specificities, which must be taken into consideration during the different phases of co-construction of innovative solutions that will have an impact on the development of a territory. According to the President of the association We Youth Organisation, « The territory is a favourable ground for social innovation, it is only a matter of properly exploiting it with all its components in order to provide a boost ». Hence the confirmation of our hypothesis :

✓ H1: The Achievement of the STD stems from the consideration of the territory as a suitable framework for social innovation.

**The associative governance**: this is defined, in the report of Olivier Sampeur about associative governance, as « a set of good behaviours that enable the leaders of non-profit organisations to rely on efficient and clear organisations to carry out their functions serenely ». 

The 5 organisations consider it crucial to have a governance based on democracy, transparency and a participatory approach in order to implement socially innovative actions. For our part, we have identified three main types of associative governance.
Table 2: Governance types of the interviewed organisations

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Association</th>
<th>Type of governance</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
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<tr>
<td>• ‘Les citoyens’</td>
<td>A mixture of militant governance and professionalized governance.</td>
<td>Involvement in the public debate regarding a specific issue while coming closer to the formalisation of the mechanisms of a company with a tendency to reduce volunteering.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• We Youth Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Santé Sidi El Houari Association</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Houboul watane</td>
<td>Tightened governance</td>
<td>Omnipresence of a leader (usually the president) who is in charge of decision-making and therefore other internal stakeholders (volunteers, employees) are left out of this process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Libyan debate club</td>
<td>Militant governance</td>
<td>Organisations with this type of governance often seek to engage in public debate while seeking to influence public policy and have a concrete impact on society.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The authors

And with reference to the five cases studied, the type of associative governance that is least conducive to the process of social innovation is tightened governance that limits co-creation both internally and externally. Hence, the confirmation of the hypothesis:

✓ H3: this potential for social innovation leading to STD depends on the adopted associative governance.

The agility: « If communities are a rich lever of innovation, exploiting their creative potential is a challenge for organisations », according to Crespin-Mazet et al. (2019). Indeed, in a context of changes and evolution of social needs, associations must learn to deal with this uncertainty as simply as possible and strengthen their ability to understand and exploit with the least possible effort the problematic situations they encounter in order to propose the most appropriate solutions, according to the President of the Algerian association Santé Sidi Elhouari.

The proximity: The 5 interviewees underlined the importance of spatiality in the implementation of socially innovative projects. Furthermore, the reduction of physical distances between people interacting or living in the same place leads to the creation of common norms and the strengthening of social ties, as it is a vector of cohesion. According to Edward T. Hall (1978), proxemic parameters, which are meaningful but vary from one culture to another, must be considered in a perspective of social change. In this sense, our interviewees all confirm the ability of civil society organisations, more than any other actor in the ecosystem, to provide the most convincing, adequate and socially innovative solutions.

Thus, our following hypothesis is confirmed:

✓ H2: the associative actor, through its potential for social innovation, contributes to sustainable territorial development.
Furthermore, the executive director of ‘Les citoyens’ stressed the importance of the territorial affiliation of one of the members of the project implementation team in order to facilitate the co-construction of solutions.

The social capital: as mentioned in Table 1, networking is a driver of social innovation facilitating innovation clusters, mainly through the exchange and sharing of good practices within associations’ networks. This supports our last hypothesis:

✓ H4 : Social capital, through social networks, helps to accumulate social innovations

For STD.

The human capital: According to Valentina Teslenko (2021) « it is necessary for the chain of formation of new knowledge for the innovation economy. The country’s innovation activity depends on the knowledge and skills of the population » and this is in line with the statements of our interviewees who link the potential of social innovation with the knowledge and the know-how of the key people in the association.

The specialisation: This ingredient was highlighted by the president of the Libyan debate club, who links the fostering of social innovation to a strategy of specialisation, meaning that a non-profit organisation should focus on a specific social issue and not spread its efforts too widely. However, this is by no means a magic recipe. Social innovation in the Greater Maghreb countries remains a challenging task. Problems and challenges, both internal and external, hinder the path of socially innovative actors and interfere with the realisation of their projects. According to our field study, 4 problems are the most recurrent and concern the 5 associations, namely: understaffing, lack of involvement of public authorities, lack of citizen involvement and lack of scientific research on associative work. Secondly, we have problems that concern 4 out of 5 associations, i.e. the lack of financial resources and the lack of trust between the citizen and the local actor (association or territorial authority). Finally, there are problems expressed by 3 associations out of 5: the lack of qualified human resources, the political instability of the country and the lack of collaboration between the different actors of the ecosystem.

All of the five associations confirm that they have encountered one of the above-mentioned problems and that at least one of their projects was not carried out because of these obstacles. According to the President of the Santé Sidi Elhouari association, « One of our flagship projects on capacity building for young people, which focused on soft skills, came to an end due to a lack of funding ». And for the president of the Libyan association, « the political situation that the country has experienced since 2011 has meant that the associative action has come to a halt for a good period ».

As with all these issues, the 5 associations are constantly seeking to progress and evolve in order to improve and maintain the sustainability of what they offer, through continuous evaluation and monitoring involving all the stakeholders, through a participatory approach that is rooted in a socially innovative process.

7. Conclusion

This article was an opportunity to shed light on a concept that is in vogue but remains poorly known. In this sense, we have exploited the existing literature and supported this with fieldwork to explore the different factors that make social innovation work towards sustainable territorial development in the Greater Maghreb. Given the scarcity of available literature on this issue, we intended to contribute to overcome this deficiency in the framework of our empirical research, particularly by focusing on the context of the Greater Maghreb.

We therefore began our research with a literature review, highlighting the various conceptual and theoretical proposals concerning the concept of social innovation. Then, in order to consider the repercussions of social innovation on a territory in terms of development, we explored the two concepts of territorial development and sustainable development in order to come up with
a single key concept that is imperatively linked to the implementation of social innovation on a territory. An effective implementation through a crucial actor of the social and solidarity economy which is the associative actor, to whom we have been interested in our empirical study, by opting for a methodological triangulation in order to collect data: Intense semi-structured interviews, documentary analysis and post-interview questions. Thus, the analysis of the data was carried out according to a thematic analysis.

This analysis enabled us to concoct a recipe for social innovations in the Greater Maghreb that contribute to sustainable territorial development, such as: taking into account the various characteristics of each territory, the nature of the governance of the association carrying the socially innovative project, proxemic considerations to foster co-construction, the relevance of qualified human resources, the importance of social capital through the established networks, the agility and the specialisation of the organisation to monitor the evolution of the social situation on a territory...

This field study led our research work towards an answer to our major question while affirming the different hypotheses we had previously formulated.

On the other hand, our research work has some weak points, taking into account the nature of the issue and the prevailing context in the Greater Maghreb, which we will point out: firstly, the absence of a quantitative approach, secondly, the rather small sample size and thirdly, the absence of direct observation (except in the case of the Moroccan association “les citoyens”). Addressing these shortcomings would be one of the objectives of our future research, especially with regard to the quantitative aspect of the study, as we consider it very important to assess the contribution of social innovation in terms of responses to social needs neglected by the state and/or the market.

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Associative social innovation as a vector for sustainable territorial development: the case of 5 non-governmental organisations in the Greater Maghreb

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