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## DECENTRALISATION AND ITS PARADOXES IN MOROCCO

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in B. Driesken, F. Mermier and H. Wimmen (ed.), *Cities of the South*, London, Saqi Books, 2007, p. 113-135

The recent institutional and political reforms of the Moroccan local government offer interesting sites to investigate the possible articulations between urbanism and the exercise of citizenship in the age of globalisation. Through their analysis we can question the nature of power relations and competing forms of legitimacy within the city. The new Communal Charter adopted in October of 2002 provides a series of reforms which are both deeply grounded in Moroccan urban history - and its political stakes in the nation - and greatly inspired by contemporary norms of 'good governance'.<sup>ii</sup>

In an introductory part of this chapter I'll present the national and ideological context in which the new reforms of decentralisation are introduced. This will clarify the main issues at stake in the idea of decentralisation in Morocco. In a first part I'll show how the new local charter is inscribed in a long history of political relations between the centre and the governance of the city. The elements of change introduced by this law do not alter the weight of the control from the central power. Secondly, I'll compare two authoritative local figures and their evolution, the Mayor and the Wali in order to question the political resources given by technical competencies (combined with the support of the king) and by elective legitimacy. In the last part we'll see nevertheless, through the analysis of the last elections, that the cities, in a context of globalisation, remain a political scene where the struggle between representation and technical competence are still played out.

At first, let us examine the context in which the new law was adopted and put into practice. 'The Reform of the Moroccan State' has been inscribed in the public agenda since the publication in October 1995 of reports of the World Bank blaming the system of education, administration, and economic strategy of the Kingdom. It specifically targeted its administrative structures. This

document, and the declaration of the King following its publication<sup>iii</sup>, marked the starting point of a series of reforms<sup>iv</sup>. In terms of administration, a national program on governance was developed since 1996 under the co-ordination of the Minister of Economic Planning with support from the UNDP<sup>v</sup>. The formation in April 1998 of a government headed by socialist-party leader Abderrahmane Youssoufi accelerated the program's dynamic. The themes of private and public decentralisation evoked in a general manner were the main theme of the 7<sup>th</sup> national colloquium on local communities in 1998. According to reformers and official authorities, they are explicitly inscribed in a plan of democratisation<sup>vi</sup>. They are also promoted by donors who encourage decentralisation reforms in Morocco. At the same time of the UNDP program, in November 2001, USAID financed its own diagnostic study on the 'local capacity for good governance'. In the same year, the French government implemented a 'Programme d'appui à la decentralisation au Maroc'.

This chapter will show that the 'decentralisation', which is at stake in these reforms, concerns less the local elected authorities than local institutions whose power is derived from the national government. This increases the competition between two kinds of local institutions. Power is transferred to the local representatives of the central power, more than to local voters. In Moroccan institutional history, largely influenced by the French tradition, the representatives of the central power are called '*déconcentrées*' and the second ones, the elected authorities, '*décentralisées*': 'Decentralisation' refers here to the transfer of competencies – and resources – to local *elected* authority, while '*deconcentration*' is the term used to refer to administrative decentralisation: the transfer of competencies inside a single state administration, from its national level to its local level. This is a central point to understand the logics and paradoxes of contemporary reform of city governance in Morocco, especially as regards its outcomes on citizenship.

No Moroccan city can claim to participate in any major way in the control and management of the global economy, to go back to the quasi-canonical definition of the 'global city' proposed by Saskia Sassen.<sup>vii</sup> It is the large coastal strip that stretches over 250 kilometres around Casablanca that best fits this definition. With 20% of the population, the city's economic and financial centre – its 'CBD' (Central Business District) – houses the activities of the "high" service sector.<sup>viii</sup> The city was affected in different manners – positively and negatively – by the reorientation of Morocco's political economy, especially the structural adjustment programs put into place in

1983 and the integration into a free market economy with the European Union and with the United States (initiated by partnership accords signed in 1996 and 2004 respectively). This has accelerated Morocco's economic integration in the 'global market.'

However, different Moroccan cities partake in a globalisation process that has mostly taken on two forms: First, we note the major transformations that the urban fabric is undergoing because of economic changes, most notably via the privatisation process, the European off-shoring and the opening up of economic borders and customs. This has specifically affected the Moroccan labour market, the professional activities of city-dwellers, and the regulations concerning these - the number of citizens without work and social welfare increased.<sup>ix</sup> This contributed also to the increase of urban population and the extension of *bidonvilles* (shantytowns) in the periphery of big towns. Secondly, Moroccan cities do not escape the wave of reforms carried out more or less on a global scale and in the scheme of international development agencies working toward 'better urban governance.' This leitmotif is sufficiently broad to adapt to a variety of measures that cover a range of directives that are often inconsistent and that give rise to multiple and contradictory discourses. The city is designated as a target for reform without clearly defining its areas. 'The city' is supposed to show coherence, or at least a degree of autonomy. The developing agencies regularly refer to four attributes to define the territory of the 'ideal' and 'globalised,' if not 'global,' city: 'competitiveness' in the global market, 'liveability and decent quality of life' for the poor, 'good governance', and 'bancability'<sup>x</sup>. Behind the technical and economic jargon, however, lies a political question of power and its sharing. In this sense, it is as much the definition of citizenship (and the ability for the inhabitants to take part in the politics of the city) as the conditions of its exercise in an urban context that are questioned in relation to local leadership and decentralisation. In their actions, the reformers privilege most often safety and economic 'efficiency' to other concerns and invoke a developmentalist paradigm that has shown its limits long ago ('market now, democracy later').

The reforms of the local government were implemented in this context. The Moroccan Parliament ratified a new Communal Charter on October 3rd, 2002. This text, which replaced the one from 1976, apparently puts the local communities - notably at the municipal level - at the centre of a vast plan for territorial administration while the Municipalities have for decades been relegated to the margins of both administration and 'urban development.' In reality, however, the liberalisation of the domestic economy associated with a rapid growth of cities slums has

‘economised’ the urban question. The imperative to decentralise economic policies and to encourage private investment was reinforced and this deprived Municipalities of many competencies. ‘Controlling and developing’<sup>xi</sup> still remain the main leitmotifs of Moroccan urban policies.

If we cannot deny the strategic importance of cities in the making of modern citizens, it remains that the urban framework produces social cleavages and forms of modern domination that we propose to examine through the prism of the transformation of local governance in Morocco. The recent forms of ‘decentralisation’ in Morocco pose questions to models of citizenship that are constructed or deconstructed in these urban spaces under profound change. The modalities and conditions of participation in public life are inscribed in a triple process: First, ‘municipalisation’, within the scope of the new Communal Charter, answers more to decisions ‘from above’ than to grievances ‘from below’. Second, the city that is defined by municipalisation is more the ‘urbs’ (the territorial perimeter) than the ‘civita’ (the political model). Finally, municipalisation introduces changes of scale. The re-positioning of the political centre determines and constrains the ‘municipalisation’ of the city - and the public representation of the city-dwellers. They are caught within the game of power among the authorities.

### **Decentralisation? The rationales of local public action reform**

Announcing the emergence of an urban government model centred around the ‘uniqueness’ of the city, the new Communal Charter - both strongly supported by the King and ex-opponent political parties such as the Union of socialist popular forces (USFP) - shows a reformist will. At the outset, it substantially transforms the landscape of the City Councils by fusing the Municipalities of the fourteen urban agglomerations of more than 500,000 inhabitants across the country. To understand what is at stake with the adoption of the new law, we need to look it within the history of decentralisation in Morocco.

Up until 2002 ‘Moroccan style’ decentralisation – in the strict sense of transferring power to local elected assembly – has been divided into four principal levels:

1 - The Local Council (urban or rural, the distinction being set by law)

- 2 - The Urban Community in certain agglomerations that federates the activities of multiple urban Municipalities
- 3 - The Prefecture or Provincial assembly with limited jurisdiction.
- 4 – The Regional Council that only attained local community status in 1996

The jurisdictions of these institutions are variable, and their respective constituencies are limited by authorities send by the national government causing overlap, redundancy, or conflict. Caïd, Pacha, Governors and Walis are appointed by the King to represent the central administration at different levels. Their ‘jurisdiction’ is rarely defined with any precision but as representatives of the King (and officials from the minister of Interior) they concentrate more powers and resources than the elected authorities. An extreme confusion exists among the multiple jurisdictions that plot, share, and trace out the contours of the urban political and administrative landscape. Far from appearing like a simple accident in the institutional history of Morocco, this state of uncertainty reflects a mode of government founded in large part on imprecise and shifting laws, of an arbitrary nature. This is an important tool in the security control of the state.<sup>xii</sup> It is difficult to obtain precise and up-to-date maps reflecting recent changes and maps of the various administrative perimeters are often lacking. Local officials sometimes appear to be ignorant of the precise definition of their jurisdiction. This reflects a tradition of censorship and withhold of information, especially when it's a matter of seeing, in images, the relationship between territory and politics, and even more so on an urban scale.

TABLE 1: Local communities in Morocco in 2002, before the reform of the Communal Charter<sup>xiii</sup>

Local communities	Legislative Branch	Executive Branch
Regions (16)	Regional council is indirectly elected by way of electoral college	The Wali, governor of the Province or Prefecture of the administrative centre of the region appointed by dahir <sup>xiv</sup>
Provinces (45) or Prefectures (26)	Provincial or Prefectorial Assembly elected by indirect, universal suffrage based on	Governor of the Prefecture or of the Province, appointed by the King

	councillors college and the professional colleges	
Urban Communities (14)	The Urban Community council includes the presidents of the urban Municipalities in the agglomeration, and their vice-presidents, members by right	The Wali, who is also in charge of overseeing its budget.
Local Councils (249 Municipalities and 1298 rural local councils)	City Council elected by direct universal suffrage	President of the local council, elected by the City Councils

As a supra-municipal community, comprised of presidents and vice-presidents of the urban Municipalities making up ‘the city’, the Urban Community was, before the introduction of this Communal Charter, responsible for co-ordinating transversal infrastructure projects such as highways, electricity, sanitation and sewage systems, trash collection, slaughterhouse management, etc. This formula was mostly used throughout the 1990s when, for security reasons, the agglomerations were divided into several municipalities. Between 1992 and 2003, there were fourteen Urban Communities in Morocco: Casablanca (grouping together 27 Municipalities), Rabat (5), Sale (5), Fez (5), Marrakech (5), Meknes (6), Skhirate/Temara (2), Tangier (3), Oujda (4), Safi (3), Tetouan (2), Agadir (4), Taza (2), and Kenitra (3). Depending on the places, the contexts and their principal players, the Urban Communities acquired, over the course of the 1990s, a variable degree of influence and importance in the governance of cities. For political reasons, the Urban Communities of Rabat and Casablanca were sites of intense political competition. But, their jurisdiction concerning community and public services were heavily shaken these last few years. With the generalisation of the concession of public utilities to private companies, they were partly stripped of their functions.

The Communal Charter of 2002 thus eliminates the Urban Community Council from the institutional architecture. It abandons the formula of cities divided into various Municipalities and reinstalls a system of a unified administration by ‘fusing’ the Municipalities. In the case of towns of more than 500,000 people this is done through the introduction of elected ‘arrondissement’<sup>xv</sup> councils.

From twenty-nine urban Municipalities in 2002, the agglomeration of Casablanca forms in 2003 only one unique Municipality with only one President for the City Council and with sixteen arrondissement councils with limited jurisdiction. It now has only 131 City Councillors compared to 1147 in the previous configuration.

The new Charter redistributes, at the margins of course, the resources and capabilities of the various local political institutions, especially in urban areas. This alters a threefold movement that has, up until this point, characterised the *raison d'être* of Moroccan 'decentralisation'.

Firstly, since 1976 the institutional reforms concerning the local government have tended toward fragmentation and the multiplication of actors, institutions and urban territories. Following the violent riots of June 1981, Casablanca grew from one to five Prefectures, which duplicated and divided the municipal inter-urban institutions. These Prefectures cut up the territory and interfere with the jurisdiction of the Municipalities both spatially and in terms of responsibilities and political decisions. This division of Casablanca was also accompanied by other plans for the territorial control of the State, such as the completion of an urban highway that had the effect of practically slicing the metropolis in two and isolating the working-class neighbourhoods and the extensions of the southern periphery. From 1977 to 2002, we can thus count seven different territorial configurations in Casablanca.

TABLE 2 - 25 years of urban apportioning in Casablanca (1976 - 2002)<sup>xvi</sup>

Years	Wilaya of greater Casa	Urban Community	Prefectures	Municipalities	Rural Council	Local Councils	Total Local Councils	Region of greater Casa	Total of administrative units.
1976-1981	-	1		5					6
1981-1985	1	1	5	5					12
1985-1990	1	1	6	17	6+ 1°		23		31 + AUC
1990-1992	1	1	7	16	6		22		31 + AUC
1992-1997	1	1	7	27+ 1*	7		35	1	44 + AUC
1997-2002	1	1	9	29	6		35	1	47 + AUC + IRU



Added to this segmentation of the cities' administrative structures, there were many organisations - be they public or private, individual or collective, professional or development associations - intervening ad hoc in diverse areas of the cities. Nevertheless, the increase of actors involved in urban governance didn't lead to a dispersion of power but rather to a centralisation of decision-making. Almost all of the major decisions affecting urbanism during the last decades were made at the Palace. Two actors directly dependent on the Minister of the Interior, the Urban Agencies and the Wilaya became more powerful in the 1990s for the former and more recently for the latter, reinforcing the central power<sup>xvii</sup>.

Consequently, the Municipalities developed a strict dependence on the Ministry of the Interior and under its authority, the General Direction of the Local Communities (GDLC). This is the second major tendency that characterises the evolution of the urban government in Morocco, at least up until the adoption of the new Communal Charter. The same year that the Communal Charter of 1976 was promulgated, Driss Basri arrived at the head of the Ministry of the Interior. During his twenty years tenure, he established the politico-administrative network that defined the Kingdom's territorial administration. As Minister of the Interior between 1976 and 1999, he extended the influence of his ministry and created a web of complex formal and informal networks. The GDLC maintained a double supervision of the City Councils both budgetary and technical, and juridical. This strongly hindered the participatory and democratic potential of the elected Municipalities.

The local tax system, which mainly dealt with the regulation of licenses, urban taxes and the redistribution of TVA fees, depended essentially on the central government's redistribution of resources. This deprived the City Councils of any margin of autonomy. The lack of financial autonomy gave the local governments little space to negotiate the distribution of power in the Moroccan government. Rather than attempting a coup de force, the Local Councils preferred to draft their proposals and to plead their case with the Ministry or his local representatives. This was possible whenever the local council's board had the jurisdiction, political will, and logistical ability to do so. Geographical proximity and political support were often an advantage that played for example in the case of Rabat, but this task was clearly more arduous for the more modest and remote City Councils.

Local collectivities were also politically marginalized through the way the elections were organised. Local and national elections happened under the supervision of GDLC. Election

campaigns and the ballots were moments of mobilisation and designation 'from below' of members of City Councils as well as ways to control political and civil societies.<sup>xviii</sup> The means of control are plural and complex having evolved throughout the seven local campaigns that Morocco underwent since independence, incorporating physical and symbolic violence as well as political and economic pressure and cartographic manipulation. The result was that the candidates in the election seemed as much (if not more) dependent from their allies, well positioned within the leadership of the local communities, as from the choice of voters.

A third dynamic that intersects that of decentralisation and contributes to the multiplication of political actors in the city could be qualified as 'privatisation of the city.' On the one hand, non-public actors in the metamorphosis of urban configurations. This might include land or architectural operations or perhaps the indirect effects of economic activities. Urban space thus resembles a commercial space to be 'administered,' 'managed,' or 'profited from.' On the other hand, non-public or non-institutional actors who find themselves invested with responsibilities of 'public services' through delegation of administration duties or in the frameworks of local associations.

Entire areas of jurisdiction dealing with urban issues are transferred from the Municipalities to national or international private groups. Since the move towards privatisation in 1991, big international companies such as the 'Lyonnaise des Eaux', the Bouygues group and its Moroccan subsidiary company Bymaro, or more recently Vivendi in Rabat, Tangier, and Tetouan, have invested in urban utilities (here water supply).<sup>xix</sup> Their intervention-rationales were based on their own action plans and their private interests, and do not necessarily contradict public politics in terms of development and urbanism. Nevertheless, because they are not formally integrated into the larger urban project, their actions could incite conflict over the occupation and use of space. Their interventions draw new boundaries within the city, without necessarily taking into consideration the distinctions between the 'legal city' and the 'illegal city' or the legal status of space, and without any concern for egalitarianism. The city-dweller, barely the citizen, is first and foremost perceived as a 'client,' a 'consumer,' a beneficiary, or a voluntary member of associative action. In essence, the negotiations, discussions, and agreements relating to these contracts take place not only in a non-public manner, but also without any real association with local elected officials. Until their disappearance, the Urban Communities were, *de jure*, in charge of these kind of utilities, but they did not have, *de facto*, great latitude to interfere in the terms of

the contracts, which were most of the time studied by the Ministry of the Interior, the GDLC, and the director of state-owned or private concession companies, and negotiated directly at the Palace.

Nevertheless, in the case of the concession of the state controlled corporation for electricity and water supply, the REDAL at Rabat – Salé, the elected City Councillors protested successfully against the first agreement signed with a luso-spanish consortium, in the name of the defence of citizens interests.<sup>xx</sup> Furthermore, Lamia Zaki shows that in shanty towns of Casablanca the elected officials intervened *a posteriori* in order to act as mediators between the Lydec society (the Lyonnaise des Eaux' subsidiary for electricity and water supply) and the residents refusing to pay their electricity bill.<sup>xxi</sup>

In terms of 'privatising' the city, it is important to mention the more and more visible intervention of local associations that are less present in the urban decision-making process than in the various forms of the implementation of public action.<sup>xxii</sup> The particular dynamism of neighbourhood associations participates in new forms of spatial appropriation.<sup>xxiii</sup> These associations are characterised by a great heterogeneity, among cities, among neighbourhoods and sometimes at the heart of a single large neighbourhood. The quest for an urban identity seems to be in all cases at the centre of the aspirations around which newly arrived individuals organise themselves. Despite its youth and its constraints, this urban local association movement was able to attain some successes. But it also suffered from a number of problems that limited its added value. The first kind of limits lays in the ambiguous attitude of the public powers vis-à-vis these neighbourhood associations. They are perceived as a means of compensating for the disengagement of state-controlled power and their place in the local government remains unpredictable, often rendering their actions transient. Added to this factor is the poverty of the material and human means at their disposal. Most of them assume a temporary character. Few succeed in equipping themselves with permanent structures. Finally, the omnipresence of the state has not disappeared in the popular representations. In the public imagination, the spaces outside people's homes are of the public order and are therefore the responsibility of public representatives, thus of the Local Councils.

From the security imperatives of the 1980s to the development imperatives of the 1990s and 2000s, the role of the Municipalities remains extremely minor. The Palace stays central in the initiation and control of urban policies. In this context, the adoption of the new Communal

Charter is more part of a broader course of reorganisation of the administrative structures in Morocco from above, than it is a response to the grievances of the local democracy.

### **Local leadership in transformation?**

In the previous part we have seen how the new communal charter was implemented in the context of a longer history of decentralisation that in fact gave little autonomy to local actors. In the following I will show how its implementation intervenes in the exercise of local leadership.

#### ***The invention of the 'Mayor': a new actor in the city?***

The new Communal Charter contributed to the reshaping of the urban political game and thus to the relations between city dwellers and their 'representatives.' Certain clues seem to point at a reinforcement of the power at the heart of the Municipality, and most of all in the hands of the president of its City Council.

On the one hand, the jurisdictions that the Communal Charter of 1976 assigned to the old Urban Communities of the fourteen cities are now transferred to the level of the new City Council. Thus, if the arrondissements of 2003 lose in power to the detriment of the new 'Municipality', the latter wins in power, in relation to the former jurisdictions of the Urban Communities. On the other hand, the Charter reduces the importance of the supervision of the Ministry of the Interior on the City Council only marginally since it modifies neither the principle nor the system. The preliminary control of legality is thus reduced to matters determined by the law. The delay within which the Minister of Interior has to sign for payment is also fixed. The text provides a reinforcement of the jurisdictional control on the acts of the authorities that supervise (control of the regional banking courts created by a new law on the control of public finances). Parallel to this, general inspectors of the territorial administration have been formed at Kenitra in order to 'control' the governors' actions. But no mission has yet been conferred upon the first promotion. In this context of political and technical reinforcement of the municipal jurisdictions, for the first time, journalists called the president of the City Council 'Mayor' when they were commenting on the elections of September 2003, as if a new function appeared in the urban government. The new Communal Charter extended the prerogatives of the president of the City Council. Article 7

of the 1976 Charter allowed the forced resignation of the president based on a two-thirds vote of the council members lead to the dismissal of many presidents between 1999 and 2001 but was abolished by the 2002 Charter. What's more, since the new Charter the cessation of the president's function automatically leads to the cessation of the board of the City Council. As a supplementary privilege, the 'president of the Local council becomes not only the executive authority of the Municipality, but receives, by law, from his majesty the King a dahir that provides him with his majesty's high recommendations'<sup>xxiv</sup>. This is not without importance in Morocco and adds to the legitimacy of the ballot the legitimacy of the royal seal.

The powers of Mayors in terms of police administration are from now on defined. Several political parties demand since long that the requisitioning of the public forces when the president demands for it becomes obligatory, but this demand remains dead letter. Many elected presidents and their councillors feel, therefore, powerless for lack of access to the police. They rely on the good will of the Prefecture for the execution of decisions.

The apparent reinforcement of the powers of Mayors went with a reformulation of the status of elected officials.<sup>xxv</sup> First, the plurality of offices is banned. Second, the elected officials must from now on prove to have a level of instruction equal to that of the end of primary schooling. This is a response to the criticisms that the locally elected have been subject to for a decade, accused of incompetence, corruption, or poor public finance administration.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Besides the dispositions that the new Charter introduced, the power of the Mayors became very limited due to the conditions of their election in 2003. The 2002 Local Charter introduces a new kind of ballot system: in the towns of more than 25000 inhabitants, the proportional representation was adopted replacing the previous 'first-past-the post' system. In constituencies of less than 25000 inhabitants, the first-past-the-post system was maintained.

Paradoxically, the local elections of 2003 highlighted the feeble political and territorial legitimacy of newly elected officials. The rate of abstention continues to rise. If the official participation was 75% in the 1997 elections, it dropped to 50% in 2003. In the big cities, the rate of participation did not surpass 47%. In the largest agglomerations, the concrete organisation of the election of the Mayors was controversial. A series of scandals during the elections compromised immediately their legitimacy. Due to both the ballot system and to the number of parties in the running (26), there was an extreme dispersion of votes. This explains that the designation of the president of the City Council among the councillors led to secret negotiations,

treasons and diverse alliances between the leaders and the parties aiming at the presidency of the large agglomerations. Because of this game, in the big cities, many candidates without popular support who ended up being elected.<sup>xxvii</sup>

It remains to be seen to which extent these new legislative and political rules of the game will play a role in the municipalisation of the city. The main indications point towards a situation of dependence of the Local Councils vis-à-vis the central administration. Nevertheless, because of the symbolic and political weight that Municipalities hold by virtue of being the representatives of the city and not of the 'parties of the city' we could imagine a new configuration of power relations in which the president of the City Council plays a more important role.

### ***The Advent of the 'Techno-Wali': Relocation of the Control of the Central Government and New Models of Leadership***

Parallel to this fragile emergence of the 'Mayor' in the 2000s, another personality imposed itself in the politics of the city, with a technocratic legitimacy and not a representative one. Over the past decade, the regional Walis started to speak on behalf of the city and assumed the main decision-making on all matters of urban administration and/or policies. Walis are regional governors appointed by the King. Even if they hold important executive powers at the local level and are appointed by the King, they claim to be politically neutral, an idea strengthened by the media. This contributes to the 'depoliticisation' of the local political arena.

Up until the mid 1990s, the Wilaya institution slowly develops, without real legal existence, co-ordinating the various activities of the urban authorities. The King refers to them for the first time in 1981, when, after urban riots, he pointed out that the 'Wali', as governor of the main Prefecture of the region of Casablanca, had to co-ordinate the action of the various Prefectures and Provinces of the region. Alongside this de facto creation of the first Wilaya, it was decided to increase the number of Prefectures in this town. The creation of Wilaya was generalised in all the regions between 1983 and 1997, a fact that was strongly related to security measures and political control of urban population. For instance, after violent riots in December 1990, the cities of Fez, Marrakech, and Meknes, were divided into many Prefectures and endowed with a supra-prefectorial structure, the Wilaya, in charge of co-ordination. Beyond the co-ordinating function, the Walis intervene mostly in terms of safety and especially in serious situations such

as after the popular uprisings, as guarantors of the public order at the local level, representatives of the Ministry of Interior, in the service of whom they are all recruited.

Despite the gradual generalisation of the 'Wali' title, Moroccan law remained, for more than twenty years, silent about both the status and the power of the Walis. They only legally existed because of a ministerial decree of 1983 granting Walis power as governors, a decree kept 'secret' and unpublished in the *Bulletin officiel*. This decree attributes three missions to the Wali: 'maintaining the public order,' 'urbanism' and 'economic and social development.'

An important step, when it comes to city governments, is taken in the institutionalisation process of the Walis in the early 2000s, still without legal codification. In January 2002, the regional Wali finds himself endowed with particular prerogatives in a royal letter about the 'decentralised management of investment'<sup>xxviii</sup>. This letter conferred them important and new functions: they are in charge of the decentralised management of investment and of 'economic and social development.' In particular, the letter ordained the creation, under their supervision, of Regional Investment Centres (RIC), that centralise the services for economic operators, Moroccan or foreign, interested in local investment.

Politically, the role of the Walis was clearly affirmed in the last few years. The royal letter followed the departure of the former minister of the Interior, Driss Basri, in September 1999, and the nomination of new governors. This brought a new generation to the head of the Wilaya whom the media will call 'Super-Wali' or 'Techno-Wali'. On July 27th, 2001, seven out of nine Walis appointed are, for the first time, from outside the services of the Ministry of the Interior. These are graduates of the best French schools, engineers and often heads of important public or private offices in the Kingdom, some of whom having participated in the privatisation program.

The day after their nomination, the newspaper headlines speculated about the mark these Walis would be leaving: 'A 'dream team' of Walis to shake up the administration,' 'Walis' new look,' 'Walis-management,' 'private bosses for the public.' The accent in these expectations and collective representations is on their ability to manage the city according to the 'rules of private management'.<sup>xxix</sup> Keeping in mind the social origins of most of them, they cannot rightly be considered outsiders. Nevertheless, like the new minister of the interior, Driss Jettou, they embody a new generation of political men, close to the Palace - also often in business-, promoting a certain 'technocratisation' of the policies and politics of the city.

This apparent reversal of the Palace's priorities, through the reform of the Wilaya institution, showed its limits in the local election of 2003. The elections were considered arduous for the authorities and the Palace. The 'Islamist' party of justice and development (PJD) displayed its ambitions, after its remarkable scores at the 2002 legislative elections. Its leaders emphasised their local and urban electoral base.<sup>xxx</sup> At that time the so-called 'Techno-Walis' were relieved of their duties and replaced, except in Marrakech, by individuals from the Ministry of the Interior. In general, since 2002, the prerogatives of the Walis increased, in the cities combining security and economic imperatives. This economic and security function reduces the possibilities for the intervention of several ministers at the city-level through the delegation of ministerial powers, and reinforces the territorialisation of the central State.

Even though the Walis do not have much power in legal terms, the question is whether they will cede some of their powers of decision-making to 'Mayors'. This being, as Manichean as it is, the alignment of the fates of the Wali and the Mayor these last few years in Morocco suggests conflicts of authority and jurisdiction between these political actors in the city. Far from announcing the end of politics, this contributed to a reinvention or a reorientation of the modes of political action.

### **Reinvestment of the Local Arena? The Election Strategies of the PJD**

In this last part, I will show, through the examination of the attitude of the Islamist Party of Justice and Development (PJD) over the course of the last electoral consultations, how the technical argument can go together with representative legitimisation and cannot simply be considered as a 'resurgence of the democratic temptation (...) in face of the inability of the political class to fully carrying out its role.'<sup>xxxi</sup> The PJD appeals to a strategy of the conquest of national power (the party remains loyal to the monarchy) through the conquest of local powers. In this way the false alternative between a representative legitimacy and a technological legitimacy is broken.

The results of the local elections in 2003, as the Minister of Interior presented them on a national scale, are misleading if we don't pay attention to what happened at the level of the city. In terms of candidacies, the PJD was absent from 82% of the electoral districts. Therefore, if it appears in



11th position on the national level, it reveals itself to be the second electoral force of the kingdom in medium sized cities.

After the bomb attacks in Casablanca, May 16th 2003, the PJD adopted a low profile. Despite the protest of the party's basis, its leaders chose to concentrate its presence in only 18% of possible electoral districts and in only half of the arrondissements of the cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants, where they could effectively expect important victories. None of the main party representatives ran in the elections. In general terms, they only supported 3.48% of the candidates. This strategy of auto-limitation paradoxically reinforced the PJD's representative legitimacy. They make use of some impressive local victories in the districts where they ran as examples to prove their putative electoral force and their efficient and tangible territorial inscription in the city. But, the party's attitude is interesting in many other ways too, especially because its leaders as well as its local candidates (re) politicise the urban arena and the Municipality. They emphasised a political project based on proximity, associated with urbanity and contributed, to the rehabilitation of the Municipal councils. They, therefore, inscribed themselves in a legal pattern that uses structures of representation, neglected by other partisan groups, to impose themselves on the political field.

In developing a theory of urban territorial representation, the PJD turns the local administration into a politicised arena. The elites and the militants of the party pretend to establish anew the municipality at its 'right' value and they criticise and condemn what they consider as a 'misuse' of representative institutions<sup>xxxii</sup>. Their elected officials or candidates emphasise furthermore their own capacity to control their territory, notably through organising protests. Finally, the leaders of the party present their final candidates as spokesmen in terms of 'trustees', trustworthy representatives, autonomous in their judgements because of their abilities and expertise and not influenced by pressures from up or below.

In addition, in order to conquer the Municipality, these leaders rely on a strategy emphasising their capacity to produce information and to master technical projects. Expertise, or at least the knowledge, or technical savvy, becomes a weapon or a resource in political competition. In this way the discussion is situated in the 'technical' domain to avoid a political conflict, but at the same time the technical confrontation takes a decidedly more political turn. The party assert to prepare a diagnostic for each city where it has elected representatives and its deputies in the parliament fought particularly hard for the reform of the Communal Charter as a priority matter.

Its leaders disqualified their political opponents, locally elected officials, or decentralised authorities by questioning their abilities. Commenting on the new text of the law, a municipal councillor from the PJD in Fez affirms: 'the text demands that the president of the municipality has a certain level of education. But this isn't convincing, because what is asked for is simply an elementary school certificate! The expectation would have to be raised to a Bachelor's degree or more. Among the obstacles [to commune politics] there is the ignorance of the elected officials. It's a big obstacle.'<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Their 'technocratic' or 'technical' partners sometimes share this feeling. The governor of the urban agency<sup>xxxiv</sup> in Fez affirms, on the eve of the adoption of the new Communal Charter: 'For city planning: there too the Municipalities have an essential role to play. They deliver the building authorisations. But in practice, we do all the work and they who receive the payment. They are the ones who spend the taxes. We are a public services organisation. We sell public services: ideas and documents. But for free.'<sup>xxxv</sup> He insists that his skills, and those of his colleagues, are just the opposite: 'There is a bit of everything: architects, engineers... but mostly architects. (...) It's a big advantage, the weight of competence, when you speak. It's not like those who let other people do the talking.'

This competition among the urban political actors, whose jurisdictions are blurred and mixed, illustrates the importance of asserting their abilities, or contesting the validity of others' abilities. The PJD depute from Fez cited above is an economics professor and defies the 'Techno-Walis' in this field: 'The Wali have a lot of other things going on. The logic of development must come from investment. Its agents are not made for this, though. They should concentrate on security issues. There's a new vision: the 'manager'... But it's just for show: Who's going to handle the files?'

The PJD is far from being the only political group to be interested in urban affairs. The parties from the 'national movement', mainly USFP and Istiqlal, have since long claimed to be representative of the cities' inhabitants and to have competence in its governance. Furthermore, many candidates and local officials are strongly anchored in the territoriality of their action. What is remarkable about these last elections is the strategy ostensibly displayed by the PJD, leading to a reconsideration of the political arena in big Moroccan cities. This is clearly different from the schema of a local political arena emptied of its politics and solely in the hands of technicians. The idea that the PJD produces a modernisation of the modes of urban governance is

exemplary expressed in an article of the French speaking magazine *Jeune Afrique l'Intelligent* about the PJD mayor of Meknes: 'The administrative structure of Meknes has been rationalised. The four Municipalities were grouped into one, which has improved its efficiency by simplifying procedures. And already the residents are benefiting: The creation of one office that deals with building permits ("a first!") has added to the drastic reduction of the delays for permits from "several weeks to sometime less than 24 hours". This certainly plays its role in the real estate boom that the city is experiencing. (...) In all domains, the Belkora team has adopted a 'quality measure' that conforms to the ISO 9001 (sic.) adopting management indicators and personnel training. (...)'<sup>xxxvi</sup>

## Conclusion

Contemporary transformations of urban leadership in Morocco can lead to two avenues that certainly merit further thought and investigation:

First, we need to underline the extreme fragmentation of legitimate territories in the city. There are constituencies for campaign elections; there are the territories of the Prefecture and of the Wilaya that extends in theory far beyond that of the Municipality; there is the field of far more localised associations such as the domains of the companies providing electricity or water, trash collection or reliable transportation. This complexity of territories interferes with the exercise of citizenship. The city is, on the one hand, a space for mobilisation, and protest, where power is fought for, but the struggles for power also play on the level of policy making as I showed in this analysis of the processes of municipalisation.

Second, in the Moroccan cities, the relations between political actor and public action are undergoing a transformation. The decentralisation process and the inherent institutional and political rationales affect on the one hand, the strategies adopted by groups and individuals who exercising or claiming power and, on the other, the tools and rationales for public action. The weight of the centralisation and the lack of public resources limit the political competition and the extent of public action.

The 'technocratisation' of the local elite is part of a long and well-studied history of the domestication and diffusing of dissent, after the expression of Mohammed Tozy.<sup>xxxvii</sup> This tends to partially neutralise the political game, by weakening the elected officials and by diminishing

the scope of representative legitimacy. Nevertheless, local leadership cannot be totally removed from urban representation. We saw this with the appointments and the dismissals of the ‘Techno-Walis’ and with the electoral success of the PJD. This forces us to reconsider the link between politics and policies and to question the relation between what happens on a local scale and what happens on a national scale. The weight of centralist history in the deployment of the local Moroccan communities remains a determining factor in terms of the relation between citizenship and urbanity but the political arena of the globalised city can not be considered as emptied of *politics* and solely in the hands of *policy* makers.

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<sup>i</sup> This chapter is based on the Moroccan part of a larger research that was conducted between 2000 and 2003: Emile Lebris (ed.), *Les Municipalités dans le champ politique local. Effets des modèles exportés de décentralisation dans la gestion des villes en Afrique et au Moyen Orient*, Report for the GEMDEV-ISTED / Program PRUD, February 2004. For a summary of the results see: [http://www.isted.com/programmes/prud/syntheses/Atelier\\_D/Emile\\_LeBris.pdf](http://www.isted.com/programmes/prud/syntheses/Atelier_D/Emile_LeBris.pdf). For a summary of the Moroccan part see: Myriam Catusse, Raffaele Cattedra, M'hammed Idrissi Janati, 'Municipaliser les villes ? Le gouvernement des villes marocaines à l'épreuve du politique et du territoire', Claude De Miras (ed.), *Intégration à la ville et services urbains au Maroc. Apport du programme PRUD à l'analyse de l'urbanisation au Maroc : Gouvernance, services collectifs et compétences urbaines*, INAU/IRD, 2005, p. 313-361.

<sup>ii</sup> Cf. UN-Habitat, 'La Campagne Globale pour la bonne gouvernance', [www.unhcr.org/govern/frintro.doc](http://www.unhcr.org/govern/frintro.doc)

<sup>iii</sup> See the Speech by the King Hassan II at the opening of the Parliament's Fall Session in 1995.

<sup>iv</sup> For a description of the various initiatives, see Khalil Ben Osmane, 'La Réforme administrative otage de la réforme de l'Etat', in *La Nouvelle Gouvernance au Maroc, Administration du Maroc*, bulletin scientifique annuel de l'observatoire marocain de l'Administration publique, n°4, pp. 11-20.

<sup>v</sup> The program is entitled '*Programme National de Gouvernance et de Renforcement Institutionnel*' (National Program for governance and institutional reinforcement). Cf. PNUD, *Etude sur la Reforme de l'Administration en Relation avec le Processus de Décentralisation et de Déconcentration*. PNUD/ Ministère de la Prévision économique et du plan du Maroc, Direction de la Programmation. Programme National de Gouvernance et de Renforcement Institutionnel, 2002.

<sup>vi</sup> The web site of the official Maghreb Arab Press proposes a paper about the decentralization confirming the explicit democratic goal of the project. See 'La Décentralisation, Bilan et perspective', [www.map.co/ma](http://www.map.co/ma).

<sup>vii</sup> According to Saskia Sassen's approach of the "global city": a new type of metropolis, centre of command of the international capitalism, born in a double paradoxical dynamic: the over diversification in manufacturing all over the world and the centralization of the globalized coordination, forecasting and management, Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, Princeton University Press, 1991.

<sup>viii</sup> Cf. Abdelkader Kaioua, *Casablanca. L'industrie et la ville*, Tours, URBAMA, Communauté Urbaine de Casablanca, (Fascicule de Recherches n° 31), 1996.

<sup>ix</sup> Cf. Myriam Catusse, 'La réinvention du social dans le Maroc ajusté', in *REMMM*, n°105-106, 2005, p. 221-246.

<sup>x</sup> Concerning the urban policies of the World Bank and its focus on decentralization of urban management see Annick Osmont, *La Banque mondiale et les villes; du développement à l'ajustement*, Paris, Karthala, 1995 and for a sharp analysis on the 'good urban governance' rhetoric, cf. Patrick Haeringer, 'Les mots d'Istanbul', in *Vivre autrement*, juin 1996.

<sup>xi</sup> According to the terms of Mohammed Naciri, 'Territoire: contrôler ou développer, le dilemme du pouvoir depuis un siècle', in *Maghreb-Machrek*, n° 164, 1999.

<sup>xii</sup> Cf. an analysis of these policies in the book by Abderrahmane Rachik, *Ville et pouvoirs au Maroc*, Casablanca: Afrique Orient, 1995.

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<sup>xiii</sup> Source: Raffaele Cattedra, Myriam Catusse and M'hammed Idrissi-Janati, 'Municipaliser les villes ? Le gouvernement des villes marocaines à l'épreuve du politique et du territoire', *op. cit.*, 2004, p. 355.

<sup>xiv</sup> A *dahir* is a Royal act. It can be legislative or administrative. It has the force of law.

<sup>xv</sup> The 'arrondissements' are administrative subdivisions of great cities comparable to French cities like Paris, Lyons or Marseilles.

<sup>xvi</sup> Source : Raffaele Cattedra, *La Mosquée et la Cité. La reconversion symbolique du projet urbain à Casablanca (Maroc)*, Doctoral dissertation, University of Tours, 2001.

<sup>xvii</sup> For a description of the genesis of the Urban Agency of Casablanca, cf. Rahal Moujib, *L'Agence urbaine de Casablanca*, Casablanca, Afrique-Orient, 1989 and for an analysis of the roles of the Urban Agencies in city planning and political control of the town, see Abderrahmane Rachik, *Villes et pouvoir au Maroc*, *op. cit.*, 1995.

<sup>xviii</sup> For a political history of elections in Morocco, see Mounia Bennani Chraïbi, 'représenter et mobiliser dans l'élection législative au Maroc', Mounia Bennani Chraïbi *et alii* (ed.), *Scènes et coulisses des élections. Les législatives de 2002 au Maroc*, Paris, Karthala, 2004, p. 15-53.. In the same book, Lamia Zaki, Victoria Veguilla and Mounia Bennani Chraïbi analyse, in their respective papers, micro electoral mobilisations in neighbourhoods of Casablanca or in Dakhla in the South of Morocco to show how politics from 'below' are the fruits of interactions between local strategies of various social actors and political constraints from the centre who exercises strong means of control on candidates and voters.

<sup>xix</sup> As regard the privatization of water supply in casablanca and rabat, see Sinda Haoues Jouve, *Vingt ans de politique d'assainissement à Casablanca : enjeux, acteurs et limites. 1976-1997*, un-published doctoral dissertation, Institut Français d'Urbanisme (Champs sur Marne), Université de Paris VIII, 1999, Béatrice Allain-Mansouri, *L'Eau et la ville au Maroc. Rabat-Salé et sa périphérie*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2001 and Claude de Miras and Julien Le Tellier, 'Le Modèle marocain d'accès à l'eau potable et à l'assainissement. Casablanca et Tanger-Tetouan', Claude de Miras (ed.), *Intégration à la ville et services urbains au Maroc. Apport du programme PRUD à l'analyse de l'urbanisation au Maroc : Gouvernance, services collectifs et compétences urbaines*, INAU/IRD, 2005, p.163-190p. 219-254.

<sup>xx</sup> Cf. Béatrice Allain Mansouri, 'La Délégation du service privé de la gestion de l'eau potable au Maroc : le cas de Rabat-Salé. La quête de la bonne gouvernance', Claude de Miras (ed.), *Intégration à la ville et services urbains au Maroc*, *op. cit.*, p.163-190.

<sup>xxi</sup> See the chapter IV of Lamia Zaki, *Pratiques politiques au bidonville, Casablanca (2000-2005)*, Doctoral dissertation, Institut d'Etudes Politiques, Paris, 2005.

<sup>xxii</sup> Cf. the analysis of Aude Signoles on the reshaping of public action, in the domain of urban policies (in the arab world): "Les pouvoirs publics ont apparemment recours à des dispositifs d'actions distincts vis-à-vis de ces deux acteurs privés : des partenariats peu formalisés dans le cadre des associations, des contrats de délégations dans le cas des entreprises ». Elle souligne toutefois que dans certains cas, comme celui de l'écologie au Liban, les rapports entre associations et politiques urbaines tendent à s'institutionnaliser. Aude Signoles, 'Réforme de l'Etat et



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transformation de l'action publique', Elizabeth Picard (ed.), *La Politique dans le monde arabe*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2006, p. 247.

<sup>xxiii</sup> On the development of neighbourhood associations in the city of Fes, see Mohammed Ameer and Abdelaziz Filali Belhaj, *Développement urbain et dynamiques associatives : rôle des amicales dans la gestion des quartiers urbains*, 1997 and Mohammed Ameer, 'Les Associations de quartier, nouveaux acteurs en milieu urbain marocain', Pierre Signoles *et alii* (ed.), *L'urbain dans le monde arabe : politiques, instruments et acteurs*, Paris, CNRS éditions 1999, p. 339-354.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Law 78-00, art. 30.

<sup>xxv</sup> Cf. Amal Mecherfi, 'Autonomie et développement local dans la nouvelle charte communale', *La Nouvelle Charte communale, vers une collectivité locale citoyenne*, éditions de la REMALD, n°44, 2003, p. 11-20.

<sup>xxvi</sup> On the dismissals of many local councillors in 2000 see by instance Myriam Catusse, 'Affaires, scandales et urnes de verre à Casablanca. Les ambiguïtés de la démocratie locale à l'ère de la *bonne gouvernance*', in *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord*, CNRS éditions, 2000-2001, vol. XXXVIV, p. 279-306.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Cf. Myriam Catusse, 'Les Coups de force de la représentation', Mounia Bennani Chraïbi *et alii* (ed.), *Scènes et coulisses des élections. op. cit.*, p. 69-104.

<sup>xxviii</sup> See the Royal Letter to the Prime Minister on Investment Management Devolution, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2002.

<sup>xxix</sup> According to one of these 'technowalis', Driss Benhima, wali of Casablanca (2001-2003), "Dans le monde actuel, le cadre de définition de la gestion publique est celui de l'entreprise", in Driss Benhima, 'Mes ambitions pour Casablanca', in *Maroc Hebdo International*, n°490, 14-20/12.2001. For a Mayor's point of view, see also « Gouvernance de la ville : l' élu manager s'exprime », in *Labyrinthes*, n°10, August/September 2004, p. 34-35.

<sup>xxx</sup> On the strategy of the PDJ leaders during the 2003 electoral campaign, see Myriam Catusse, 'Les coups de force de la représentation', *op. cit.*, 2004

<sup>xxxi</sup> According to an interview of the specialist of Islamist mobilisations in Morocco, Mohammed Tozy, given to *La Vie Economique*, July 2001.

<sup>xxxii</sup> For a description of the various discourses about the local arena, see Myriam Catusse, 'Les Coups de force de la représentation', *op. cit.*

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Interview, November, 9<sup>th</sup> 2002.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> The urban agency is a technical institution, created in the 1980s, taking care of the production and application of urban planning projects.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Interview, November, 10<sup>th</sup> 2002.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Jacques Bertoin, 'Meknès, la vitrine du PJD se lézarde', *Jeune Afrique L'Intelligent*, June, 22<sup>th</sup> 2005

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Cf. Mohammed Tozy, 'Les enjeux de pouvoir dans les « champs politiques désamorçés » au Maroc', Michel Camau (ed.), *Changements politiques au Maghreb*, Paris, CNRS éditions, 1991