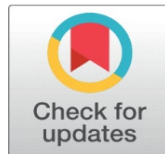


COLLECTIVE THINKING IN THE MANAGEMENT OF TERRITORIAL PROJECTS

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the methodology of collective thinking in the management of territorial projects within the Moroccan context. It traces the evolution of local decentralization and communal administration in Morocco, highlighting their significance in societal development. The study delves into the concept of collective thinking, distinguishing it from groupthink, and explores the principles, importance, objectives, and characteristics of project management. Furthermore, it details the five fundamental stages involved in managing territorial projects, from needs diagnosis and priority setting to resource assessment and project document drafting, emphasizing a participatory and analytical approach. The aim is to provide a comprehensive understanding of effective territorial project management through collective methodologies.

Keywords: Collective Thinking, Territorial Projects, Project Management, Decentralization, Communal Administration, Morocco

1. INTRODUCTION

The system of local decentralization in Morocco has undergone highly significant development, particularly through the adoption of a set of legislative frameworks concerned with the management of territorial spaces. These developments are in line with the historical transformations experienced by Morocco, from the period of the Protectorate to the attainment of independence in 1956. Immediately after independence, the concepts of the prefecture and province were adopted as the foundation of local administrative organization.

With regard to the administrations of territorial collectivities in Morocco, they were first addressed as a distinct concept in 2015 through the allocation of a specific chapter in Organic Law No. 113.14, specifically Articles 126 to 129, in addition to the existence of organic laws governing regions, prefectures, and provinces.

At the present time, communal administration constitutes one of the most important key pillars enabling public administration to keep pace with the various transformations witnessed by society. It is considered one of the primary mechanisms relied upon in the management of territorial spaces and development at all levels—economic, social, and cultural—given that communal administration is directly connected to citizens' daily lives. It also represents the institutional framework within which social life is organized in both urban and rural areas.

The territorial administrations in Morocco have experienced several developments aimed at improving the functioning of territorial collectivities and achieving significant results in the management and implementation of territorial projects. Such achievements can only be realized through reliance on a collective management methodology for territorial projects, which entails the establishment of a clear and well-defined plan for managing the projects of territorial collectivities. This approach depends, on the one hand, on experienced and qualified individuals who are closely connected to these collectivities, and on the other hand, on prior project planning through the identification of the stages that must be followed in the implementation process.

2. IMPORTANCE OF THE PRESENTATION

Through this presentation, we seek to examine the methodology of collective thinking in the management of territorial projects in Morocco, as well as to identify the stages and steps followed in this regard from the beginning of the project to its completion.

1) Research Problem

What is meant by the methodology of managing territorial projects?

2) Sub-Questions

- What is the methodology of collective thinking?
- What are the stages relied upon in the management of territorial projects?

3. ADOPTED METHODOLOGIES

- **Interpretive approach:** through explaining the methodology of collective thinking in territorial projects.
- **Analytical approach:** through analyzing the stages adopted in the management of territorial projects.

1) Research Plan

- **First Section:** The role of the collective thinking methodology in the management of territorial projects.
- **Second Section:** Strategic planning as a mechanism for territorial project engineering.

First Section: The Role of the Collective Thinking Methodology in the Management of Territorial Projects

In this section, we will address the concept of methodology and project management (First Requirement), followed by an examination of the stages of managing territorial projects (Second Requirement).

First Requirement: The Concept of Methodology and Project Management

The significant development in the business world has led to the creation of numerous tools and methodologies that support project management concepts and enhance their effectiveness. Consequently, organizations are required to select the methodology that best suits the nature of their projects (First Paragraph) in order to manage and organize them efficiently. This study focuses on project management in terms of its concept, objectives, and the distinctive characteristics that define it (Second Paragraph).

First Paragraph: The Concept of Collective Thinking Methodology and Project Management

No one can deny the importance of possessing teamwork skills, as they represent a fundamental key to success in most areas of life and work. They also constitute an essential component of project management.

First: The Concept of Collective Thinking

Collective thinking is a psychological phenomenon that occurs within a group of people whose desire to maintain harmony and conformity among group members leads to irrational or ineffective decision-making mechanisms. In such cases of groupthink, the team or institution proceeds automatically, developing a false collective sense of security while, in reality, becoming vulnerable and fragile. As a result, the group persists in its current course of action without giving due consideration to emerging risks, without discussing alternative scenarios, and without exploring other possible courses of action.

Second: The Concept of Project Management

Project management refers to the organization of individuals, resources, time, and all inputs with the aim of accomplishing a defined task or achieving a specific objective within constraints related to time, specifications, and budget.

Management is a necessity for any collective effort. The mere availability of raw materials, machinery, labor, financial resources, and other inputs is not sufficient to establish a successful project. Rather, there must be effective management that sets the objectives the project seeks to achieve, formulates the policies and procedures necessary to attain those objectives, and establishes timelines and schedules to reach the desired goals. This is followed by the distribution of tasks, the organization of responsibilities, and the delegation of authority, with clear definition and specification of roles for each individual involved in the project. Management responsibilities also include providing material and moral incentives to motivate project staff to exert their maximum effort in performing their duties in the best possible manner.

Equally important is the monitoring and control of the various activities and tasks carried out throughout the project. This involves comparing actual performance with planned outcomes in order to assess the level of conformity, identify deviations, analyze their causes, and take corrective measures as necessary, while also preventing similar deviations in the future.

4. IMPORTANCE OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Projects are generally established with the aim of generating profit, earning revenue, or providing services. Effective project management contributes significantly to improving the quality of work. Its importance can be summarized as follows:

- **Measuring project success or failure:** This is achieved by comparing the results obtained with the objectives that were defined prior to the start of the project.
- **Work control and supervision:** Monitoring and supervising activities to ensure that work is proceeding along the correct path is among the most important factors contributing to project success, stability, and continuity, provided that established standards are adhered to.
- **Financial management of the project:** Also known as cost or expense management, this involves ensuring that the project operates within its predetermined budget in order to achieve the desired profits.
- **Risk management:** Most institutions, whether profit-oriented or service-based, may face various difficulties during their operations. Therefore, alternative solutions must always be available to address potential problems and to prepare for unforeseen circumstances, enabling the organization to overcome crises safely.
- **Achieving success in the market:** The project manager must constantly strive to assert control over the field of activity, pursue progress and success, and identify the best methods to achieve competitiveness and leadership within the market.
- **Fostering a spirit of competition:** This is achieved through effective leadership, such as dividing employees into teams, clearly communicating objectives, and encouraging them to perform at their best. Linking these efforts to a time-bound plan helps develop employees' ability to work under pressure and contributes significantly to overall success.
- **Organizing internal operations:** One of the primary roles of project management is to lead the project in an organized and structured manner, establish internal policies and work plans, and ensure that employees adhere to them to facilitate the achievement of project objectives.

5. OBJECTIVES OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Project management aims to achieve a set of objectives that can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Minimizing project-related administrative risks as much as possible.
- 2) Securing the appropriate and necessary resources for the project.
- 3) Building an effective project team to carry out project tasks.
- 4) Preparing the project plan and assembling the resources required to perform its functions.
- 5) Monitoring and controlling project activities and performance.
- 6) Providing periodic reports to senior management or project stakeholders regarding progress.
- 7) Closing the project upon its completion.
- 8) Reviewing lessons learned, understanding them thoroughly, and benefiting from them in future projects.

6. DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A PROJECT

A project can be defined by the following distinguishing characteristics:

- 1) It achieves the required level of quality.
- 2) It is implemented within budgetary limits.
- 3) It is completed by a previously specified deadline.
- 4) It is carried out by a temporary organizational structure.

In general, a project is a specific task with a clearly defined objective that requires diverse resources and must have a sponsor or primary client. A project may be long-term or short-term, large-scale or small-scale, and, most importantly, it inherently involves a degree of uncertainty.

Second Requirement: Stages of Managing Territorial Projects

The management of territorial collectivities is not carried out in an arbitrary manner; rather, it is based on prior and well-defined planning conducted by the persons entrusted with this responsibility. Territorial projects are managed through the adoption of five fundamental stages, which will be presented and examined individually in this section. These stages are as follows:

- **First stage:** Conducting a diagnosis of needs and available capacities
- **Second stage:** Establishing and ranking the development priorities of the commune
- **Third stage:** Identifying priority projects and activities
- **Fourth stage:** Assessing resources and estimated expenditures over a three-year period
- **Fifth stage:** Drafting the project document and establishing a monitoring and follow-up system

This process begins with the preparation and launch phase and ends with the approval of the draft Communal Action Program. Each of the five stages will be explained separately according to the following framework: objectives, activities, prerequisites, implementation methods, expected results, and the tools and support mechanisms to be used, as outlined below.

7. PREPARATION AND LAUNCH PHASE

The preparation of the Communal Action Program is carried out within one or more sessions chaired by the President of the Communal Council, with the mandatory presence of members of the executive bureau and the participation of:

- Chairs of the standing committees
- The Council Secretary
- The Governor of the Prefecture or Province, or his representative
- Representatives of decentralized services of central administrations (by invitation of the Governor)

The President of the Council may also, on his own initiative, invite any person whose presence is deemed important, including members of the Equality, Equal Opportunities, and Gender Approach Committee.

1) Objectives Sought

The objective of this phase is to establish the institutional, organizational, and methodological framework necessary for the preparation of the Communal Action Program. This includes:

- Establishing conditions that enable the preparation of the Communal Action Program through the integration of the gender approach, the environmental dimension, and sustainable development
- Committing to the adoption of these approaches from the earliest activities and throughout all stages of the process of preparing the Communal Action Program
- Raising awareness and mobilizing local stakeholders and partners to enable them to contribute effectively and to take ownership of communal planning tools that are gender-responsive and that integrate environmental and sustainable development considerations

2) Planned Activities

The preparation and launch phase requires the mobilization of institutional, technical, and managerial capacities, as well as analytical and planning capabilities, in addition to the integration of gender and environmental dimensions.

3) Prerequisites

In order to formulate a vision that integrates the gender approach, the environmental dimension, and sustainable development, it is necessary during this phase to ensure:

- The preparation of a technical guidance note related to the gender approach and the environmental dimension, as well as a memorandum explaining and contextualizing sustainable development goals for territorial collectivities
- Raising awareness among the concerned stakeholders (public institutions, private sector, and civil society) to ensure their effective involvement and organization within networks that enable them to unify efforts and resources within a collective action framework

4) Expected Results

The main expected outcomes of this phase include:

- The decision by the Communal Council to prepare the Communal Action Program, while taking into account the integration of the gender approach, the environmental dimension, and sustainable development
- The activation and operationalization of the Equality, Equal Opportunities, and Gender Approach Committee, as well as the communal body responsible for environmental issues
- The preparation of the technical guidance note related to the integration of the gender approach and the environmental dimension, its alignment with sustainable development goals, and its dissemination to the concerned stakeholders
- The establishment of a timetable for the preparation of the Communal Action Program
- Official communication announcing the launch of the process of preparing the Communal Action Program
- The preparation of a training plan related to gender mainstreaming, environmental integration, and sustainable development, as well as the provision and mobilization of qualified trainers

5) Tools and Support Mechanisms to Be Used

The main tools and support mechanisms associated with this phase include:

- Organic Law No. 113.14 relating to communes, and Decree No. 2.16.301 defining the procedure for the preparation, monitoring, updating, and evaluation of the Communal Action Program, as well as mechanisms for dialogue and consultation in its preparation
- The methodological guide on integrating the gender approach into communal action programs
- The technical guidance note related to the integration of the gender approach, the environmental dimension, and the Sustainable Development Goals
- Awareness-raising workshops and training modules

- Appropriate communication tools aimed at awareness-raising and facilitating meetings and discussions

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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