

The Economic and Social Development of the Moroccan Sahara

An analysis of the development of the Southern Provinces in the context of Morocco's political future

Rohini Muralidharan
SIT: Culture and Society
Spring 2009

Advisor
Saloua Zerhouni

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Acknowledgements.....	3
Background to the Research.....	4
Introduction	6
Historical Background.....	7
The Actors and Their Strategies.....	10
The Status of Development: Programs, their Successes and Setbacks.....	17
Looking Towards the Future: A Development Plan for the Next Ten Years.....	27
Fitting Development Into the Political Puzzle.....	32
Conclusion: The Future of the Moroccan Sahara and the Moroccan Kingdom.....	36
Works Cited	37
Interviews	38
Appendix A.....	39
Appendix B.....	40
Appendix C	41
Appendix D.....	42

The Economic and Social Development of the Moroccan Sahara

Rohini Muralidharan
SIT Culture and Society
Spring 2009

Advisor - Saloua Zerhouni

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the associations and agencies that opened their doors to me and gave me a firsthand look at their work. Furthermore, I would like to specifically thank Abdellatif El Ouarouar and Abdellah El Hairach who were kind enough to show me around and make me feel welcome in Laayoune. Finally, I would like to thank my advisor Saloua Zerhouni for her guidance in my research and presentation of this independent study project.

Abstract

The purpose of this analysis is to examine the development that has occurred within the Moroccan Saharan region since the end of Spanish colonization in 1975. In particular, this research focuses upon more recent developments in the region, starting with King Mohammed VI's 2002 decree establishing the Agency for the Development of the Southern Provinces and continuing to the modern day. The area known as the Moroccan Sahara constitutes the region starting with the city of Guelmim in the north and ending with the Mauritanian border in the south. This paper will begin by providing a historical background to the Saharan region that includes both the socio-economic and political history of the land. It will then examine the economic and social developments that have taken place within the region and the various state and non-state actors involved in the process. Finally, this analysis will conclude with a look into the effects that development has and will have upon the land, the region, the people and the political future of Morocco.

Background to the Research

Introduction to the Investigation

My original interest in the Saharan region began before I came to Morocco when I studied the Western Sahara case from an international legal perspective in an international relations course at my home institution. Following the lectures we received regarding the region, I found the development of the Sahara particularly interesting and decided to look further into the economic and social advancements that the region was making. My academic background in international relations provided another motivation for pursuing this subject matter as the Saharan region is area for the study of both conflict resolution and models of development. Finally, my desire to discover the Sahrawi culture and people provided additional inspiration in pursuing this project.

Methods

The research for this investigation was primarily conducted through interviews with the agencies and associations involved in developing the Saharan region. Most of these interviews were conducted in French and have been translated to English by the researcher. A majority of my meetings with organizations took place in the city of Laayoune and pertain to the Laayoune-Boujdour region. These interviews are supplemented by informational pamphlets and brochures that each organization provided, with the greater part of this material written in English. Any additional background information or research was found through established academic Internet databases. Due to the nature of this analysis, a majority of the research conducted focused upon the individuals working at development actors within the region.

Ethical Considerations

As a novice researcher, I took into consideration ethical issues to the extent of my abilities. Interview subjects who could either speak English or had access to an English translator signed the written consent form I prepared. With those subjects who could not speak English or did not have

access to a translator, the purpose and mission of my research was explained in its entirety and full verbal consent was obtained. All the individuals involved in my research were adult professionals who work within the field of development with recognized institutions. Individuals' privacy will be respected unless they indicated otherwise with either verbal or written consent. A copy of the completed project was also offered to all individuals involved in my research.

Limits of the Investigation

The two largest challenges faced by this investigation were the language barrier and the limited amount of time allotted. With regards to the first challenge, a majority of the interviews were conducted in French and translated by the researcher. Thus, while the general opinions and ideas of the individuals have been maintained, the presentation of this research is limited by the fact that the researcher is not an official translator. Possible interview subjects were also limited to those professionals involved in agencies and associations, because of the inability of other individuals to speak fluently in English or French as well as the absence of an Arabic translator. The limit of time seriously restricted the number of agencies and associations that could be represented in this investigation. In particular, the constraint of time limited the scope of research to predominantly the Laayoune-Boujdour region of the Sahara, where I was able to conduct interviews over the course of a week. The other two regions, Guelmim-Es-Smara and Oued-ed-Dahab-Lagouira, receive less attention in this investigation due to my inability to interact firsthand with the individuals working in these regions. For future investigations, this research could be enhanced by the presence of an official translator and by a longer project time frame.

Introduction

Following the end of colonization, many territories have faced the immense question of development; how to build an infrastructure where formerly there was none. Among these territories is the Western Sahara, known in Morocco as the Southern Provinces, a region that was and still continues to be disputed between the Polisario Front and the Moroccan government. This region, after coming under the control of the Moroccan Kingdom, saw the implementation of many development projects. The Sahara region has particularly made large strides in the past decade following the establishment of the Agency for the Promotion and Economic and Social Development of the Kingdom's Southern Provinces in August 2002. This agency, along with other state and non-state actors have converged efforts in order to put into effect projects to advance the status of the region. Of the many areas of development, the most significant progress has taken place in the areas of the fishing industry, urban development, and education. Due to the advancements made in these areas over the past decade, a basic infrastructure exists in nearly all the major cities of the South. Now, in looking towards the future, the development strategy of many actors seems to be evolving to build upon this foundation.

A new theme in the region's development has been investing in local populations such that they can invest in themselves. This strategy has the dual effect of integrating the Saharan region with the rest of the Kingdom while establishing a level of economic and social independence for the local population. Considering this socio-economic scheme what does development of the Moroccan Sahara imply for the political future of the region? Furthermore, what do these developments suggest for the political future of Morocco as a whole? The current strategies for development, with their focus upon both integration and regionalism, have laid the groundwork for an autonomous Moroccan Sahara within a more decentralized, but well-networked Moroccan political system.

Historical Background of the Moroccan Sahara

From Pre-colonial Times to the End of Colonialism¹

The Moroccan Sahara is made up of the three regions of Guelmim-Es-Smara, Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra and Oued-ed-Dahab-Lagouira and shares a southern border with Mauritania. The region first saw contact with the outside world in the 4th century BCE when trade occurred between the Saharans and Europeans. The region was officially discovered by the Portuguese in 1346 and in 1476 the first trading post was set up in the Sahara. True interest in the region, however, did not occur until the nineteenth century when in 1884, the Spanish government signed a protectorate over the coastal area of the region. By 1934, Spain had extended its control over the rest of the region including the towns on Tarfayah, Guëra and Smara. Spanish control over the Western Sahara was challenged by the newly independent state of Morocco in 1957 and then by Mauritania, which had also just achieved independence, in 1960.

In addition to the claims made by both Morocco and Mauritania, a third group also sought for control of the Western Sahara. The native inhabitants of the region, identified as the Sahrawi, began to resent foreign occupation of what they thought of as their land. In the opening years of the 1970s, a nationalist movement, under the name of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro, began to lead a revolt against the occupying power. The group, more popularly known as the Polisario Front, is a “politico-military organization” that sought to win independence for the Western Sahara region and which continues to actively strives toward this end.² The independent state created by the Polisario would be known as the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic (SADR).³

¹ Adapted from "Western Sahara," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, (Encyclopædia Britannica Online, 2008), <<http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9076666>> (5 May 2009).

² "Polisario Front," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, (Encyclopædia Britannica Online, 2008), <<http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9060623>> (5 May 2009).

³ "Polisario Front"

The year 1975 signified a critical turning point regarding the economic and social future of the Moroccan Sahara region. The ruling Spanish power withdrew from the region and Morocco, under the rule of King Hassan II, claimed the territory to be part of the kingdom, an addition which then made up about 60% of Morocco's national territory.⁴ With the king's proclamation, the Southern Provinces came into existence.

The Beginnings of Development: 1970s and 1980s

When the Spanish colonizing power withdrew from the Sahara, it left the region economically and socially behind the rest of Morocco. Thus, it became the objective of the Moroccan government to make up for the "deficits accumulated by a long Spanish presence on the territory."⁵ Ranking high among these deficits were two basic problems of infrastructure: access to water and access to electricity. Between the years 1975 and 1985, the region saw the creation of more than 1,300 wells with the city of Laayoune alone witnessing the emergence of 786 new wells.⁶ During this same time period the production of electricity grew by a factor of six, from two million KWA in 1975 to 12 million KWA in 1985.⁷ The decades immediately following the creation of the Southern Provinces witnessed the beginnings of development as a regional infrastructure developed to provide basic resources to the people.

Another indicator of early development in the Moroccan Sahara was the changing status of public services within the region. In particular, the groundwork for basic health and education was established during these early years. When Morocco inherited the territory of the Sahara, it inherited also a nonexistent healthcare system. The focus, therefore, of initial health policy in the region was towards building basic health facilities and services. The year 1983 saw the creation of Hospital of

⁴ Younes Jabrane, Agency for the Promotion and Economic and Social Development of the Southern Provinces of the Kingdom, Interview by the author, 21 April 2009, Rabat, Morocco

⁵ Smaïl Kouttroub, "Agenda 21' in the Southern Provinces: the Challenge of Sustainable Development," Moroccan Sahara, <http://moroccansahara.net/page.php?IDA=63>, (accessed 20 April 2009)

⁶ Henri-Louis Védier, Une Volonté Plus Forte Que Les Sables (Paris: Editions ESKA, 2008) 45

⁷ Védier 55

Laayoune which provided both general surgical care as well as more specialized care, such as gynecology, pediatrics, dermatology, and ophthalmology.⁸ The government also began an important vaccination campaign starting in 1980 with the goal of eradicating all the illnesses that had previously plagued the region.⁹ With regards to the educational system, in the first ten years of the Southern provinces' existence, the number of enrolled students in the region increased by a multiple of six.¹⁰ During this period, the government also created the Institute of Applied Technology in Laayoune to advance the development of specialized professionals.¹¹

Under the rule of King Hassan II, the Moroccan Sahara began a long journey on the road towards development. In the ten years following the creation of the Southern Provinces, the government began to establish the basic infrastructure that the region had severely lacked pre-1975. The true boom in regional development, however, did not occur until King Mohammed VI came to power and created the Agency for the South (Agence de Sud) in 2002.

Creation of the Agency for the South

On March 6, 2002, King Mohammed VI announced his intention to create an agency with the special purpose of addressing development in the three regions that compose the Southern Provinces.¹² Following this declaration, on September 19th, the Agency for the Promotion and Economic and Social Development of the Southern Provinces of the Kingdom was signed into existence under the supervision of the Office of the Prime Minister. The creation of this agency signifies an important event in the history of the development of the Moroccan Sahara; following 2002, the region's growth has taken on a greater significance in the larger scheme of regional and local development.

⁸ Védier 143

⁹ Védier 146

¹⁰ Védier 152

¹¹ Védier 156

¹² Meriem Aouad, "Agency for the Promotion and Development of the Kingdom's Southern Provinces: an Agent of Local Development," Moroccan Sahara, <http://moroccansahara.net/page.php?IDA=91>, (accessed 20 April 2009).

The Actors and their Strategies¹³

A region's advancement requires the efforts of many individuals and institutions. In the case of the Moroccan Sahara, the actors involved in the development scheme can predominantly be divided into two categories: (1) state and (2) non-state actors. The following section reviews the primary actors in each of these categories and the part they have taken in the economic and social development of the Sahara.

Mechanisms of the State

Agency for the Development of the South

The Agency for the Promotion and Economic and Social Development of the Southern Provinces of the Kingdom (Agency for the South) is perhaps the most important state actor involved in the Moroccan Sahara's development process. The specific mission of the Agency focuses upon three primary objectives: (1) to study and propose projects of economic and social development in the South, (2) to financially engineer projects that the agency could support through partial or full funding, and (3) to provide a follow-up and an implementation of programs.¹⁴ The work of the agency covers the three regions of Guelmim-Es-Smara, Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra and Oued-ed-Dahab-Lagouira, which consist of nine provinces, 87 communes and approximately 800,000 inhabitants.¹⁵ According to representatives of the Agency, investment in these Southern Provinces is an important venture because of the large distance between this region and the economic centers of Morocco.¹⁶ Thus, it is important to foster economic development to create centers of growth within the Sahara. In 2004, the Agency focused its efforts towards creating and carrying out a very specific development plan. Known as the

¹³ The agencies and associations described in this section are predominantly those which I was able to contact and meet with. Please note that there are many more organizations involved in the development process and those that are described here focus primarily upon the Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia Hamra region where I conducted a majority of my research.

¹⁴ Aouad

¹⁵ Younes Jabrane, Interview

¹⁶ Younes Jabrane, Interview

Global Program for Development 2004 – 2008, the program aimed to coordinate the efforts of both the public and private sector in developing 226 projects with an endowment of 7.2 billion DH converging on the following seven axes of development¹⁷:

- (1) Housing and urban development
- (2) Fishing villages
- (3) Water and environment
- (4) Infrastructure
- (5) Tourism and the craft industry
- (6) Agriculture and livestock farming
- (7) Proximity actions and studies

Of these seven areas of development, the projects involved in water and environment, infrastructure and housing and urban development receive the largest share of the Agency's budget.¹⁸

The Agency maintains its position as a public organization involved in the development of the Southern Provinces meaning that it is not solely responsible for any direct economic activity that takes place. As a public actor, the Agency does not monetarily profit from any of the projects in which it participates. Instead, with its program for development, the Agency for the South plays more of a supportive accompanying role, partnering with various ministries, associations and international organizations to converge all the actors involved in the development process.¹⁹ The general development strategy of the agency appears to have the dual objective of catering development to the needs of the region and at the same time integrating the region into the rest of Morocco. This strategy is exemplified by a current project to construct a multisport facility in Laayoune (see Appendix A). The two prominent partners involved in the construction of this project are the Agency for the South and the Ministry of Youth and Sports.²⁰ This example demonstrates the convergence of efforts between the

¹⁷ El Hihi Brahim, Agency for the Promotion and Economic and Social Development of the Southern Provinces of the Kingdom, Interview by author, April 28, 2009, Laayoune, Morocco

¹⁸ Aouad

¹⁹ Younes Jabrane, Interview

²⁰ Lahbib Aidid, Agency for the Promotion and Economic and Social Development of the Southern Provinces of the Kingdom, Interview by author, April 25, 2009, Laayoune, Morocco

regional actor (Agency for the Development of the South) and the national actor (Ministry of Youth and Sports). In this development model, the national actor partners with the regional actor because of the Agency's understanding and knowledge of the land. Likewise, the Agency works with the national ministries in order to integrate the region with the rest of the Kingdom.²¹ Generally speaking, this dual strategy of regionalism and integration seems to be the principal outlook of the Agency for the South.

Agency for Social Development²²

The Agency for Social Development (ADS) was created by the Moroccan government in 1999 with the purpose of supporting national efforts in the fight against poverty and the movement towards sustainable and stable development of the country. The ADS intervenes in development at four specific levels: (1) the formation and reinforcement of capacities, (2) social and urban development, (3) support of human development, and (4) revenue and employment generating activities. Created with the intent of decentralizing the government's development efforts, the agency works regionally with separate programs for each of the sixteen regions that make up the Moroccan Kingdom. In the Southern Provinces, the 2002 establishment of a regional program in the Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra region marked the beginning of ADS work in the Moroccan Sahara, followed by the Guelmim-Es-Smara region in 2005 and the Oued-ed-Dahab-Lagouira region most recently in 2007.²³ With each of these regions, the ADS has partnered with local and national actors to put forth projects to improve the socio-economic status of the people. In the region of Laayoune, for example, the ADS is currently involved in over forty projects, ranging from road construction and urban housing projects to the organization of an International Youth Forum on Peace.²⁴ The agency contributes a total of 28.72 million DH to the projects taking place in the three regions that make up the Southern Provinces.

²¹ Younes Jabrane, Interview

²² Adapted from "Agence de Développement Social," Pamphlet, Agency for Social Development

²³ "La Coordination Régionale: Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia," Agence de Développement Social, <http://www.ads.gov.ma/index.php?id=811&lng=0>, (accessed 7 May 2009)

²⁴ "La Coordination Régionale: Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia"

In the early years of its existence, from 2001 to 2004, the ADS employed a strategy known as the “guichet” approach, which sought to lay the foundation for the agency’s greater objectives. The design of the initial development plan served to make the agency and its mission known, while also studying and responding to financial demands and working with those who expressed an interest in partnering with the agency. This “guichet” approach, however, favored organization which were more organized, well-equipped and in a better position to demand the support of the agency. Impoverished regions, on the other hand, where associations were predominantly underdeveloped, lacked the same access to ADS. Therefore, in 2005, the agency adopted a new strategy which focuses upon a more territorial approach to development. With this new plan for development, the ADS strives to work more closely with territorial actors to gain a better knowledge of the land and thereby achieve a more sustainable development. Furthermore, the territorial approach aims to equip the agency’s partners with the tools and knowledge needed to manage the development and engineering of projects. In addition to this development strategy, the ADS also hopes to match local level development with the local democratic process in order to reinforce the larger national democratic process.²⁵ In other words, the agency is working to tie political developments to socio-economic developments so as to further democracy throughout the nation.

Center for Regional Investment (Laayoune)²⁶

The third main state actor in the development of the Moroccan Sahara is the Center for Regional Investment (CRI). In the Southern Provinces each of the three regions has its own CRI, however in this analysis the focus will be upon the Center in the Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra region. Created by the Kingdom in 2002, the CRI serves the primary purpose of developing, consolidating and promoting investment in the region. Some of the Center’s more specific objectives are to aid in the creation of businesses and microenterprises, to facilitate partnerships between various social actors, to promote

²⁵ Lecture by Najib Guedira, Center for Cross Cultural Learning, April 8, 2009

²⁶ Adapted from “La Région de Laayoune Boujdour Sakia El Hamra,” Pamphlet, Center for Regional Investment

regional products on a national and international scale and to research potential national and international investment partners.

Currently, the major areas of investment in the Laayoune-Boujdour region are the fishing sector, the tourist industry, and agriculture and breeding. The Center focuses upon the aspects of each of these economic sectors that set the region apart from others. For example, where agriculture and breeding is concerned, the CRI highlights camel, caprine and ostrich breeding as activities that are unique to the land. In addition to this strategy of attracting investment, the Center also has a program to aid entrepreneurs in the creation of their own businesses and another to collect information that will allow investors to make a successful investment in the region. The Center's general strategy for development concentrates on both attracting investors to the region and stimulating business within the region.

Non-State Actors

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have played just as important, if not more important, of a role in the Moroccan Sahara's development process. These organizations, typically in the form of various associations, are the work of local populations and strive to better the livelihoods of the people of the region. Since there are hundreds of NGOs working in the area of the Southern Provinces, this analysis will focus upon a specific network of associations working in the city of Laayoune.²⁷

Réseau Sources Saguia Al Hamra²⁸

The Réseau Sources Saguia Al Hamra (RSSH) is a network of associations in the city of Laayoune that came together in July 2004 to coordinate their work and consolidate their activities. An underlying theme throughout all of these associations is the advancement of sustainable development in the region. In addition to this common goal, the network also hopes to make advances in the areas of association coordination, environmental protection, Saharan ecotourism, Hassani (Sahrawi) cultural

²⁷ The descriptions provided in this section are only a sample of the types of non-state actors currently working towards socio-economic development in the Moroccan Sahara.

²⁸ Abdellah El Hairach, Réseau Sources Saguia Al Hamra, Interview by Author, April 23, 2009, Laayoune, Morocco

promotion and regional research. With these objectives in mind, the network participates in several activities to promote the Each of the associations involved in the Réseau caters to a specific mission in addition to the general ambitions of the network. The following is a list of some of the associations involved in the RSSH and the specific fields in which they work:

Association Sud pour Migration et Développement – support and assistance for migrants, alternative methods of local development, migration research

Organisation Marocain des Scouts et des Guides – scoutism, education, citizenship and alphabetization

Association Jeunesse Scolaire – education of the youth, orientation and support of young students

Association Sakia El Hamra – social economy, cultural development

Association Quartier Moulay Rachid – environment, environmental education, reforestation

Association Dadr – environment, socio-cultural development

Association Al Kods – social affairs, education, alphabetization

Forum Féminin – women’s skill levels, promotion of the native culture

Association Al Wahda – social, cultural and environmental activities

Association Aicha – rural development, environment

Association Marocain des Handicapées et de l’Enfance Démunie – rehabilitation, orthopedic care, professional skills training,

The associations involved in the network cover a vast range of development areas all working somehow towards the economic and social advancement of the region. The general strategy for regional development with these non-state actors appears to be a convergence of efforts. This unified approach is not limited to the associations involved in the RSSH. The Réseau also receives funding, support and recognition from the Agency for Social Development and the National Initiative for Human Development, demonstrating a partnership between the non-state and state actors. Furthermore, each of the associations comes with its own set of partners, further expanding the network of developmental actors. The Association Marocain des Handicapée et de l’Enfance Démunie partners with several international contributors including Gateway Medical Alliance of the United States and Irish Aid of

Ireland.²⁹ Consequently, in the non-state sector, the coordination of local efforts and associations with national initiatives and international actors is the formula for development.

The Status of Development: Programs, Their Successes and Setbacks

*You will not find a city like Laayoune in Sub-Saharan Africa.*³⁰

²⁹ Mohamed Chikhi, Association Marocain des Handicapées et de l'Enfance Démunie, Interview by author, April 25, 2009, Laayoune, Morocco

³⁰ Abdelhamid Ouali, Interview by author, April 21, 2009, Casablanca, Morocco

Considering the many actors who have invested in the development of the Moroccan Sahara, where does the region currently stand? What social and economic progress has been made? As of 2004, the three regions contributed approximately 4% to the nation's total production, amounting to a value slightly larger than 30 billion DH.³¹ While this figure may not seem to be large at all compared to national production rates, it represents a significant advancement in a region which previously contributed little to no production to national figures. The best way to assess the progress of the Moroccan Sahara is to examine three of the most important areas of development: the fishing industry, urban development, and education. An assessment of the development programs in these areas and an examination of the successes and setbacks of these programs will provide a better idea of the status of the region.

The Fishing Sector

The fishing industry is perhaps one of the greatest economic assets available to the Southern Provinces. Due to the region's unique placement along a 585 km stretch of coastline, fishing has become an economic base for the people of the Moroccan Sahara.³² The investments and developments in the fishing sector have attempted to structure the informal activities of fishers into a formal economy.

Projects

The principal project of development in the fishing sector has been the construction of fishing villages in the region. The Agency for the Development of the South describes these villages as "micro integrated development centers, fitted with all urban components structured around the fishing activity:

³¹ Mohammed Achemlal, "L'économie de la zone Sud marocaine," *Les Cahiers au Plan* 14 (2007) : 26

³² "Final Study of Laayoune," Haut Commissariat au Plan

housing, community equipments, business area, commercial area, and even tourist zones.”³³ The general objective of these fishing villages is to create the basic infrastructure necessary for a prominent fishing industry to thrive. In other words, the villages make accessible services and equipment to fishers that might not otherwise be readily available. Currently there are a total of ten fishing villages spread throughout the Southern Provinces, a project that incurs a global cost of 1,035 million DH.³⁴ The construction of these villages is the product of the joint efforts of the Agency for the Development of the South and the National Office of Fisheries.

In addition to the fishing village project, the industry has also seen more general projects of infrastructure development. The construction and improvements of ports within the Southern Provinces has the partial objective of improving access to the fishing industry and connecting the fishers of the South with the rest of Morocco and the rest of the world. In the region of Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra, the Center for Regional Investment invested in the extension of the Port of Laayoune (see Appendix B), the creation of a fish market in the Port and also the creation of the port of Boujdour, three projects which have had the effect of enhancing the fish industry.³⁵ With the same objective of connecting the fishing industry to the rest of Morocco, the Agency for the Development of the South participated in the construction of a 40 km road between Tarfaya and the fishing village of Amegriou.³⁶ Additionally, following a 1999 decision not to renew its fisheries agreement with the European Union, the Moroccan government has promoted “the establishment of a large national fleet of fishing vessels, fish processing plants and an export infrastructure” with a majority of this work concentrated in the

³³ “Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra: The Large Work Sites of the Region,” Pamphlet, Agency for the Promotion and Economic and Social Development of the Southern Provinces

³⁴ El Hihi Brahim, Interview

³⁵ “La Région de Laayoune Boujdour Sakia El Hamra,” Pamphlet

³⁶ “Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra: The Large Work Sites of the Region,” Pamphlet,

Saharan region.³⁷ The fishing village projects along with general infrastructure improvements have all worked towards the development of the Sahara's fishing sector.

Successes

The best way to measure the success of projects in the fishing industry is to examine the fish production the region is responsible for. The area of Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra alone, with 15,542 deep-sea fishermen, is responsible for producing 53% of the national fish supply at a value of approximately 1 billion DH.³⁸ The region contains the two major ports of Laayoune and Tarfaya, and now with the emergence of the port of Boujdour will take an even larger part in the fishing industry. When looking at the entire Moroccan Sahara, the fish production amounts to 621,000 of the nation's total 907,000 tons of fish, a value of 1.7 billion DH.³⁹ The three most significant ports of the region as a whole are spaced throughout the Southern Provinces at Laayoune, Dakhla and Tan Tan. Of these three, Laayoune is the premier port for sardine production in the world with Tan Tan following as the second largest sardine producer in the Kingdom.⁴⁰

In addition to the national statistics regarding fish production, another indicator of the success is the attraction of foreign investors to the region on account of the fishing industry. Norway, a nation leading Europe in its fisheries, has made several significant investments in the Sahara following the infrastructure developments made in the Moroccan fish industry. Morocco, more specifically the region of the Sahara, has been described as "a golden opportunity" for the Norwegian fisheries sector.⁴¹ Norwegian investments in the region include the construction of an ice packing plant for fish in Laayoune by the company Finsam, and the construction of modern coastal fisheries by the company

³⁷ "Norwegian industry to Exploit Sahrawi Fish Resources," *Liquid Africa*, July 14, 2004

³⁸ Hamditi Eloiaabane, Center for Regional Investment, Interview by author, April 28, 2009, Laayoune, Morocco

³⁹ Védier 170

⁴⁰ Védier 170

⁴¹ "Norwegian industry to Exploit Sahrawi Fish Resources"

Selfa Arctica.⁴² The fishing industry alone and the developments made within it have motivated these foreign actors to invest in Morocco. The ability of the industry, therefore, to spark foreign investment in the Moroccan Sahara is a large measure of the industry's success.

Setbacks

Despite the successes brought to the Southern Provinces by the fishing villages and other infrastructure projects involved in the fishing industry, certain difficulties still stand in the way of development. Of these, the main setback of the fishing industry is a development that runs somewhat contrary to the traditional Sahrawi culture. The local Sahrawi people are traditionally a nomadic population and are not accustomed to the habit of fishing.⁴³ What this means is that the projects involved in developing the fishing industry have also included a training of the local population to take part in the economic activity. While this is beneficial in its potential to generate revenue for the region, the question of cultural values is brought into conflict. When a traditionally nomadic population is introduced to a stable economic activity such as fishing, how can it be assured that other traditional cultural characteristics are maintained? The non-state actors working towards developing the region cite the preservation of Sahrawi or Hassani culture as one of their primary objectives. The threat the fishing industry poses to this preservation can be regarded as one of the biggest setbacks in the development of the region.

Urban Development

An underlying theme in all of the development plans in the Moroccan Sahara has been the urbanization of the region. The population growth of the region has likewise been matched by a growth in the cities with the establishment of several urban centers along the Saharan coast. The overarching ideology behind urban development has been to generally improve the standard of living for the

⁴² "Norwegian industry to Exploit Sahrawi Fish Resources"

⁴³ Hamditi Eloiaabane, Interview

inhabitants of the region. The primary goal of urban development is to create decent housing conditions for all.

Projects

With the main objective of improving housing conditions for the local population, the eradication of slums and shantytowns by 2009 has become a specific goal of the government's urban development plan. The Agency for the Development of the South, in an effort to work towards this end, initiated a New Urban Planning and Housing Program of the Southern Provinces, a project which would create 140,000 housing units at a cost of 4.5 billion DH.⁴⁴ The ADS has also claimed a stake in the region's urban development by accompanying a self-help housing project that provides plots of lands upon which local populations are provided with the tools to build their own houses.⁴⁵ This project, which is also funded by the Agency for the Development of the South, Ministry of Housing, Town Planning and Space Layout, the Municipal Council of Laayoune, Al Omrane Al Janoub Company and Wilaya of the Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra Region, looks to empower households originating in the slums by supplying each with housing plots, building materials and up to 30,000 DH of financial assistance.⁴⁶

Concurrent with the plan for slums clearance, regional urban development also concentrates upon the establishment of community spaces. Thus, part of the urban development program in the region involves the construction and creation of public squares and green spaces. In the city of Laayoune, a Green Space project is currently underway to provide a public space for social meetings and leisure (see Appendix C).⁴⁷ Urban development in the region has also had an effect upon rural areas as can be seen by the creation of the Hassan II Square in the Rural Commune of Tah. This project, at a cost of 950,000 DH, established an important public meeting place for the population of the rural

⁴⁴ "Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra: The Large Work Sites of the Region," Pamphlet

⁴⁵ Lecture by Najib Guedira, Center for Cross Cultural Learning, April 8, 2009

⁴⁶ "Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra: The Large Work Sites of the Region," Pamphlet

⁴⁷ Lahbib Aidid, Interview

community.⁴⁸ Between the eradication of slums, urban housing projects, and plans for green space and public square development, urbanization has begun to take foot in all the major cities of the South.

Successes

Since the implementation of urban development projects in the region, many of the slums and shantytowns have been eliminated and replaced by new housing projects. In the Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra region, more than 10,000 families have been placed in new housing facilities on account of the projects sponsored by various development actors.⁴⁹ Also in the region of Laayoune, the program Al Ouda has established 3,000 housing facilities while the program Al Wahda created 9,031 lots in the city.⁵⁰ The actualization of these housing projects demonstrates the successful attainment of urban development plans in the region. The shantytowns and slums in the region are also on the road to fully disappearing.⁵¹ Furthermore, the ability of public spaces to provide the local population with a community meeting place demonstrates the success of Public Square and Green Space programs. In the city of Laayoune, these communal spaces have become popular hangout spots for the local communities and are viewed by the people as spaces for social congregating.

Setbacks

Though the process of urbanization has taken root in the major cities of the South, there remains to be a few problems within the urban development scheme of the region. First, and foremost the Moroccan Sahara's transformation from a rural to urban population took place during a short period of time (over the course of the past three decades). The local population, therefore, has not been fully capable of adapting its behavior to the spatial constraints of an urban center.⁵² The people of the region have had to make the very quick transition from rural to urban, a change which can sometimes leave

⁴⁸ "Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra: The Large Work Sites of the Region," Pamphlet

⁴⁹ Merzak El Mehdi, Agency for Social Development, Interview by author, April 28, 2009, Laayoune, Morocco

⁵⁰ Védier 107

⁵¹ Védier 111

⁵² Achemlal 28

gaps in the urban development project. While urbanization has provided the physical materials necessary to launch the region's many housing and public space projects, it has not invested as much in adapting the local population to urban ways of living.

As with the fishing industry, the issue of local culture comes to the forefront when regarding the Sahara's urbanization. In taking the native population and placing it in an urban setting, how can the preservation of the culture be maintained? For a traditionally nomadic culture, urbanism conflicts with ancient Sahrawi practices and customs. The urban development of the region could be a setback for the local populations if their ways of living and traditional cultural values are not adapted for survival in a modern urban setting.

Education

One of the most significant areas of Saharan development has been in the area of education. As a key lever for local empowerment and the future success of the region, education has taken on an important role in the development policies of the Southern Provinces. Each of the three regions has pursued specific educational development plans with the hopes of creating a literate, well-educated population with the ability to carry the Moroccan Sahara into the future.

Projects

From a regional standpoint, both the Oued-ed-Dahab-Lagouira and the Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra regions have specific projects dedicated towards the cause of education. In the region of Oued-ed-Dahab-Lagouira, the general plan for educational development proposes a greater amount of language-based learning in schools, the use of multimedia and technological equipment in middle and high schools, the programming of new educational branches and options in response to the socio-economic needs of the region, and a plan for reforming the educational system in order to achieve higher rates of matriculation at each educational level.⁵³ The program for Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El

⁵³ Védier 158

Hamra hopes also to implement new technology in its school system and is currently in the process of constructing a technical high school with Internet access and three industrial studios in Laayoune as well as a middle school with Internet access in Boujdour.

The Southern Provinces as a whole has engaged in a program of encouraging higher education. Though the region itself does not have a university level institution, for those students who decide to pursue a post-secondary education, the government provides free transportation to and from universities, grants to pay for tuition fees and free housing.⁵⁴ All these efforts are part of a project to make higher education a more attractive and lucrative option for the students of the region. There also exists a territory-wide interregional literacy program which has been an investment of 4 million DH and aims at decreasing illiteracy rates within the Sahara.⁵⁵

Success

Since the institution of various projects and programs geared towards the advancement of education in the Moroccan Sahara, regional figures have improved significantly. The Oued-ed-Dahab-Lagouira region has an 88% success rate for students receiving their primary studies certificate, 60% for students completing middle school and 70% for those passing their baccalaureate exam.⁵⁶ In the Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra region, the age group between 0 and 6 years has a 98.9% enrollment rate, with 97.1% for the ages of 6 to 11, 94.8% for the ages of 12 to 14 and 76.3% for the ages of 15 to 17.⁵⁷ More generally speaking, the number of students enrolled in institutions in the region has grown from 841 in 1980 to 16,634 in the year 2006, demonstrating a doubling growth.⁵⁸ The rate of

⁵⁴ Hamditi Eloiaabane, Interview

⁵⁵ "Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra: The Large Work Sites of the Region," Pamphlet

⁵⁶ Védier 158

⁵⁷ Védier 159

⁵⁸ Védier 159

scholarization in the Guelmim-Es-Smara region has also proved to be high with a rate of 96% in primary studies and 80% in secondary studies.⁵⁹

The Southern Provinces as a whole have also seen improved educational conditions when compared with national Moroccan figures. The regional illiteracy rate for the population 10 years and older was 29.7%, a number measuring far less than the national average of 43%.⁶⁰ Another indicator of educational development is the region's low rates of uneducated youth. For population between 9 and 15 years, only 8% in Laayoune-Boujdour and 14.5% in Oued-ed-Dahab-Lagouira of this age group is not enrolled in a school, compared to the national average of 23%.⁶¹ The Moroccan Sahara has also seen a great advancement in the number of students who pursue a bachelor's degree in a university institution, a figure which has increased by a factor of 27 between 1983 and 2006.⁶² Aside from these statistical indicators of the educational system's success, a more important development is the return of university-level students back to the Saharan region. Though the lack of a university-level facility in the South requires students to commute to northern universities, a majority of these students end up returning to work in the Sahara region.⁶³ Unlike the brain drain problem that areas of underdevelopment may typically face, there appears to be a great interest among the local population to work towards the development of their region.

Setbacks

Due to the large levels of enrollment the Moroccan Sahara has seen in the educational system, the largest setback in this area of development has been the erection of establishments to accommodate students. A representative of the Haut Commisariat Au Plan described the situation as a particularly large problem at the middle school level, where the number of establishments versus the

⁵⁹ Védier 160

⁶⁰ "Final Study of Laayoune"

⁶¹ Védier 162

⁶² Védier 161

⁶³ Hamditi, Eloiaabane, Interview

population density of the region creates an imbalanced relationship (see Appendix D).⁶⁴ Though the number of students in the region of Laayoune between 1999 and 2006 increased from 11,187 to 16,364, the number of establishments (14) stayed the same.⁶⁵ If the growing number of students is not matched by an equal increase in the number of institutions, the educational development of the region will be seriously hindered.

Additionally, although the government invests in projects to accommodate students pursuing a higher education, the absence of a university in the Saharan region is a serious setback. One of the primary reasons development in the region is important is because of how far it is from the region's economic centers. Consequently, educational development should take into account the large distance between the Moroccan Sahara and the educational centers of the North. Though state projects aim to make a university level education more accessible, it is still geographically inconvenient for the majority of students in the Southern Provinces.

Looking Towards the Future: A Development Plan for the Next Ten Years

⁶⁴ Cheikh Mohamed Maoulainine, Haut Commisariat Au Plan, Interview by author, April 29, 2009 Laayoune, Morocco

⁶⁵ Védier 159

When asked the question “Where do you see the Moroccan Sahara ten years from now?” an interviewee responded “If you go to the *cimentier* (cement manufacturer), you will find a long line of people waiting.” This thought captures, in many senses, the current path that development that the Saharan region is taking. With buildings and structures going up all over the region, it is highly evident that the Southern Provinces are experiencing a period of great growth and expansion. Without a doubt, the next ten years will continue on the path of structural development as initiated by the first three decades of growth. However, in looking forward towards the next decade, what will have to take place in the region to ensure a development that truly benefits the local population and satisfies all the actors and parties involved?

A Change in State Strategy: The 2009- 2012 Plan

In the early years of its existence, the Agency for the Development of the South devised its first plan for development, the Global Development Plan 2004 – 2008, with the intention of establishing a true infrastructural foundation in the Moroccan Sahara. Of the seven axes of development, the three areas which received the largest portions of the Agency’s budget were water and the environment (32%), housing (23%) and infrastructures (22%). Each of these areas focuses very specifically on structural development and foundation building in the South. The main path of development taken during this first five year period flowed from the government to the people with the Agency partnering primarily with other state actors in determining and coordinating projects within the Region. In the area of infrastructure, a project to strengthen and rehabilitate the road linking Laayoune and Dakhla exemplifies this top down development approach. The project to improve this road, which cost 20 million DH, has six partners: the Agency, the Ministry of Equipment and Transport, the Ministry of the Interior, the Province of Boujdour, the Regional Council of Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra and the

Provincial Council of Boujdour.⁶⁶ As discussed earlier, the strategy behind these types of partnerships was both integration of the region with the Kingdom, and regional independence in enabling local actors who know the territory. Technically speaking, this dual strategy represents both top-down and bottom-up approaches with the partnership between national ministries and local councils. However, all the partners involved in this infrastructure project are state actors. In this sense, much of the initial development plan of the Agency can be considered groundwork and foundation projects enacted and funded by the government.

Now that this initial phase of development has for the most part taken root, the Agency is in the process of altering its development strategy for the next four years. The development plan for the years 2009-2012 focuses more upon projects enacted through the “social economy.”⁶⁷ The social economy represents a part of the economy that is neither public nor private, but rather represents a range of community and non-profit organizations. Now that the basic foundation has been laid in the Moroccan Sahara, the Agency for the Development of the South hopes to work more closely with non-governmental organizations to incorporate them in the economic development of the region. One of the primary initiatives of this new plan will give local associations the opportunity to present project plans to the Agency to gain state funding and support.⁶⁸ This new approach to development challenges the former top-down approach by allowing the plans for development projects to originate with local non-governmental actors. When thinking about a strategy for the next decade, the 2009 – 2012 Plan and this bottom-up approach will better integrate both state and non-state actors into the development process.

Bottom-Up Approaches of Other State Actors

Agency for Social Development

⁶⁶ “Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra: The Large Work Sites of the Region,” Pamphlet

⁶⁷ El Hihi Brahim, Interview

⁶⁸ El Hihi Brahim, Interview

The ADS, just like the Agency for the Development of the South, also underwent a change in its original strategy. As described earlier, the agency transitioned from a “guichet” approach to a more territorial approach. The purpose of this change was to enact a policy that better allowed underrepresented, underdeveloped regions to work in conjunction with the ADS on development projects. For the years 2008 – 2010 hopes to further evolve this territorial approach to take into account the National Initiative for Human Development by working towards a sustainable development that will be based on the specific needs of a territory. A prominent part of this territorial approach is empowering local populations with the skills necessary to take manage and control the engineering of their own projects. The territorial approach supports a bottom-up style of development because it seeks to give local populations the necessary skill sets such that they can be the architects of their own development. One project in particular that exemplifies this idea of empowerment is the International Forum on Social Economy and Solidarity in Laayoune, an event that was organized with the help of the ADS.⁶⁹ Bringing together the various associations working for social advancement in Laayoune, the forum served to organize the efforts of the very actors who will be affecting the region’s development. This event also validated the importance of the social economy as a non-state actor in the region. Another example of the ADS philosophy of empowerment is the self-help housing project that the agency, in conjunction with the Agency for the Development of the South, is helping to put forth. The underlying mission of this project is to equip the local population with tools and knowledge necessary to construct their own houses. The work of the ADS, particularly with the new territorial approach, serves to allow local populations to be take control of their region’s destiny.

Center for Regional Investment

A significant effort of the Center for Regional Investment in the Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra region has been to encourage entrepreneurship and the establishment of local businesses. A

⁶⁹ “La Coordination Régionale: Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia”

pamphlet published by the Center advertises to the local population the possibility to “Create your business in 24 hours.”⁷⁰ The CRI offers to play an accompanying role to any entrepreneurs interested in starting their own business as part of an initiative to stimulate local business. Since 2003, the Center has assisted in the creation of 1,143 businesses. The CRI has also participated in the regional implementation of national programs for entrepreneurship. The Moukawalati program, for example, which has the objective of helping unemployed individuals to create micro-enterprises, has provided funding to 17 projects in the Laayoune-Boujdour region.⁷¹ The entrepreneurship, at its very root, epitomizes the idea of bottom-up development as it encourages a smaller scale, local development. By encouraging the creation of local businesses and instituting programs for entrepreneurs, the CRI gives the local population the opportunity to stake their own claim in the development process.

Overcoming Development Setbacks

Most of the setbacks involved in the Development of the Southern Provinces center around the clash between regional expansion and the local population’s culture and traditions. In the case of both the fishing industry and the urban development plan, the main difficulty in establishing projects was determining how the local population would have to adapt to these schemes. More importantly, these projects presented the larger more difficult question of how to preserve the traditional Sahrawi culture in the face of development. The new bottom-up strategy that the Agency for the South, ADS and CRI have all begun to employ calls for a greater involvement of the local population in the engineering of projects. With the responsibility of development design placed in the hands of the people, the local population has a greater ability to adjust and adapt schemes so as to protect traditional values. Furthermore, the 2009 – 2012 plan of the Agency for the South places a specific emphasis upon supporting the projects of the social economy. Many of the non-governmental organizations and associations working in the Moroccan Sahara region place a high importance upon the preservation of

⁷⁰ “Le Partenaire Idéal Pour Réussir,” Pamphlet, Center for Regional Investment

⁷¹ Hamditi Eloiaabane, Interview

the Sahrawi culture. The Réseau Sources Saguia Al Hamra, for example, states as one of its founding objectives the protection of the Sahrawi culture and heritage.⁷² With a growing focus upon the social economy as an actor in the region's expansion, associations dedicated to the preservation of the local culture can have a greater say in development plans.

With regards to the setbacks in the area of education, the developmental participation of the social economy can also help to alleviate some of the problems caused by institute shortages. In the RSSH, three of the associations are dedicated to work in the field of education: Organisation Marocain des Scouts et des Guides, Association Jeunesse Scolaire, and Association Al Kods. At the Association AlKods, I witnessed an English class of 25 students who were preparing to take their baccalaureate exam.⁷³ Classes like these can supplement the formal educational system and make up for some of the shortcomings currently seen in economic development. In particular, with the greater role of the social economy, these associations will have the legitimacy and resources to enhance the educational development of the region.

Fitting Development into the Political Puzzle

⁷² Abdellah El Hairach, Interview

⁷³ Visit to Association AlKods, April 23, 2009

Underscoring all of the economic and social advancements made in the region is the uncertain question of the political future of the territory. The past thirty years of development have been paralleled by a dispute between the Moroccan government and the Polisario, an organization striving for the independence of the Moroccan Sahara. From the Moroccan perspective, the best resolution to the conflict would be the implementation of the Autonomy Project, an initiative developed by the government in 2007. The Polisario, however, rejected this solution refusing to negotiate a settlement that did not carry out the referendum originally set up by the United Nations to allow the inhabitants of the Sahara decide their political future. Considering the current trends and strategies of development, can autonomy be viewed as a more attainable solution to the conflict?

The Autonomy Project

Background to the Initiative

Formally known as the “Moroccan Initiative to negotiate an autonomy statute for Western Sahara,” the Autonomy Project was first proposed when the Moroccan government submitted a document to the United Nations on April 11, 2007.⁷⁴ The initiative, generally speaking, hopes to create within the Sahara a region in which the local population of the Sahara will govern themselves, however, under the larger jurisdiction of the Kingdom. The proposed autonomy would give the Moroccan Sahara power over the following areas⁷⁵:

- (1) local administration, local police force and jurisdictions
- (2) economic development, regional planning, promotion of investment, trade, industry, tourism and agriculture
- (3) region’s budget and taxation
- (4) infrastructure projects, such as water, hydraulic facilities, electricity, public works and transportation
- (5) social sector including housing, education, health, employment, sports, social welfare and social security
- (6) cultural affairs

⁷⁴ Abdelhamid El Ouali, Saharan Conflict: Towards Territorial Autonomy as a Right to Democratic Self-Determination (London: Stacey International, 2008) 141

⁷⁵ El Ouali 145 - 146

(7) environment

The Moroccan state, on the other hand would retain control in the following areas⁷⁶:

- (1) attributes that might be associated with sovereignty (i.e. the national flag, the national anthem and the currency)
- (2) the position of the King as Commander of the Faithful
- (3) national security, external defense and defense of territorial integrity
- (4) external relations
- (5) the Kingdom's juridical order

With this division of powers, a Saharan autonomous region would have the opportunity for self-governance under the greater jurisdiction of the Moroccan state.

Development's Place in the Autonomy Project

*Regionalism was the first step. Autonomy will be the next.*⁷⁷

Hamditi Eloiaabane

Center for Regional Investment in Laayoune

The general strategy of development undertaken in the region of the Moroccan Sahara converges both state and non-state actors in both an integrationist and regionalist approach. To begin with, the dual development strategy of integrating the region with the state and developing the region's economic and social independence serves to reinforce the underlying principles governing autonomy. The general basis for the creation of autonomy is similarly a level of independence within a region paralleled by the overarching state presence in certain jurisdictions. Furthermore, the bottom-up approaches to development have established a greater degree of social and economic independence with the people designing projects for their region's development. To a large degree, the investment taking place in the Sahara "confirms the fact that these Provinces are already experiencing, at both the economic and social levels, the dynamics of autonomy advocated by Morocco."⁷⁸ The jump between the current aspects of autonomy experienced by the region and the establishment of an autonomous

⁷⁶ El Ouali 147

⁷⁷ Hamditi Eloiaabane, Interview

⁷⁸ Larbi Hanane, "Internal Autonomy: A Lever for Economic Development," *Southern Morocco Newsletter* (2009):

45

region lies in the transfer of local economic and social power to local political governance. This transition could be made if local authorities considered “initiation into local democracy by embracing participative approaches that involve local populations in meeting the needs, in setting up local projects and in developing relations of cooperation.”⁷⁹ Considering the local-level projects that are already taking place as a part of the greater bottom-up development strategy, the region appears to be ready for an initiation into the democratic process through autonomy.

Resolving the Political Conflict

Though development strategies well establish the groundwork for the autonomy project, the problem remains to be the Polisario’s rejection of autonomy as politically viable solution. Yet, the regional autonomy appears to be gaining a new and different sense of legitimacy as the world moves toward globalization. Michael Keating, of the European University Institute, describes this globalization as a significant factor affecting regionalism with the exposure of regions to global markets. Therefore, Keating argues, “Regional autonomy is seen not merely as a matter of jurisdictional freedom within the state, but also as a governing capacity in the context of global markets.”⁸⁰ This argument provides a new look at the traditional definition of autonomy. Traditionally, an autonomous region derived power in political terms, a relationship described by Professor John Loughlin as “the greater the involvement in national policy-making, the greater the degree of autonomy.”⁸¹ Yet with the emerging presence and dominance of globalization a regional autonomy’s power can now be defined by how much it takes part in and influence global markets. If the economic and social development of the Moroccan Sahara equips the region with the tools necessary to emerge on the global market scene, it will strengthen the appeal of autonomy as a resolution to the conflict.

⁷⁹ Hanane 45

⁸⁰ Michael Keating, “Rethinking the Region: Culture, Institutions and Economic Development in Catalonia and Galicia,” *European Urban and Regional Studies* 8, no. 3 (2001): 220

⁸¹ John Loughlin, “Regional Autonomy and State Paradigm Shifts in Western Europe,” *Regional and Federal Studies* 10, no. 2 (2000): 29

Conclusion: The Future of the Moroccan Sahara and the Moroccan Kingdom

Development in the Moroccan Sahara illustrates several political relationships that are taking place within the Kingdom. First and foremost, the development scheme reveals a Morocco that is becoming ever increasingly well-networked. The partnerships between all the actors involved in the development process demonstrate the connections and alliances that are being formed between regional and national, and state and non-state levels. Yet, at the same time strategies have reinforced

the capacities of local actors to define their own agendas and institute their own projects for economic and social growth. This form of independence, particularly considering the growing importance of the global market, is laying the foundation for the institution of an autonomy project in the Sahara. The future state of the region appears to be the Moroccan Sahara as a regional autonomy with the Moroccan Kingdom as more of a decentralized power maintaining ties to the region through social and economic networks. If development strategies continue on their present path and autonomy is achieved, the Moroccan Sahara will emerge as not just an important part the Moroccan Kingdom, but an important regional power in the world.

Works Cited

Achemlal, Mohammed. "L'économie de la zone Sud marocaine." *Les Cahiers au Plan 14* (2007) : 26.

Aouad, Meriem. "Agency for the Promotion and Development of the Kingdom's Southern Provinces: an Agent of Local Development." Moroccan Sahara, <<http://moroccansahara.net/page.php?IDA=91>> 20 April 2009.

El Ouali, Abdelhamid. Saharan Conflict: Towards Territorial Autonomy as a Right to Democratic Self-Determination. London: Stacey International, 2008.

"Final Study of Laayoune." Haut Commisariat au Plan.

Guedira, Najib. Lecture. Center for Cross Cultural Learning, Rabat, Morocco. 8 Apr. 2009.

Hanane, Larbi. "Internal Autonomy: A Lever for Economic Development." *Southern Morocco Newsletter* (2009): 45

Keating, Michael. "Rethinking the Region: Culture, Institutions and Economic Development in Catalonia and Galicia." *European Urban and Regional Studies* 8, no. 3 (2001): 220.

Kouttroub, Smaïl. "'Agenda 21' in the Southern Provinces: the Challenge of Sustainable Development," Moroccan Sahara, <<http://moroccansahara.net/page.php?IDA=63>> 20 April 2009.

"Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra: The Large Work Sites of the Region." Agency for the Promotion and Economic and Social Development of the Southern Provinces.

"La Coordination Régionale: Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia." Agence de Développement Social, <<http://www.ads.gov.ma/index.php?id=811&lng=0>> 7 May 2009.

"La Région de Laayoune Boujdour Sakia El Hamra." Center for Regional Investment.

"Le Partenaire Idéal Pour Réussir." Center for Regional Investment.

Loughlin, John. "Regional Autonomy and State Paradigm Shifts in Western Europe." *Regional and Federal Studies* 10, no. 2 (2000): 29.

"Norwegian industry to Exploit Sahrawi Fish Resources." *Liquid Africa*. July 14, 2004.

"Polisario Front." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 2008. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 5 May 2009 <<http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9060623>>.

Védier, Henri-Louis. *Une Volonté Plus Forte Que Les Sables*. Paris: Editions ESKA, 2008.

"Western Sahara." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 2008. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 5 May 2009 <<http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9076666>>.

Interviews

Aidid, Lahbib. Agency for the Promotion and Economic and Social Development of the Southern Provinces of the Kingdom. Interview by author, April 25, 2009, Laayoune, Morocco.

Brahim, El Hihi. Agency for the Promotion and Economic and Social Development of the Southern Provinces. Interview by author, April 28, 2009, Laayoune, Morocco.

Chikhi, Mohamed. Association Marocain des Handicapés et de l'Enfance Démunie. Interview by author, April 25, 2009, Laayoune, Morocco

El Hairach, Abdellah. Réseau Sources Saguia Al Hamra. Interview by Author, April 23, 2009, Laayoune, Morocco.

Eloiaabane, Hamditi. Center for Regional Investment. Interview by author, April 28, 2009, Laayoune, Morocco.

Jabrane, Younes. Agency for the Promotion and Economic and Social Development of the Southern Provinces. Interview by author, April 21, 2009, Rabat, Morocco.

Mehdi, Merzak El. Agency for Social Development. Interview by author, April 28, 2009, Laayoune, Morocco.

Maoulainine, Cheikh Mohamed. Haut Commisariat Au Plan. Interview by author, April 29, 2009 Laayoune, Morocco.

Appendix A



Multisport Facility in Laayoune
Picture taken by Rohini Muralidharan
April 25, 2009

Appendix B



Port of Laayoune
Picture taken by Rohini Muralidharan
April 26, 2009

Appendix C



Construction Site of a Future Green Space Area
Picture taken by Rohini Muralidharan
April 25, 2009

Appendix D

