

The organization of the territory in network and dynamic territorial attractiveness of companies: Case of the region of Rabat-Salé-Kenitra

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Abstract:

Today, with globalization, territories are open systems embedded in a highly competitive world. In this context of competitiveness, the territory, as a support for public action, plays a crucial role in the formation of its attractiveness of companies. In this sense, public action contributes to the formation of a territorial offer in an implant market, considered to be the place of confrontation between a demand for services and goods formulated by investors and an offer aimed at the attractiveness and anchoring of companies.

Through this research, we aim to understand the role of networking actors in the formation of the territorial attractiveness of companies. The aim is to show that, beyond the economic and financial factors, the networking of the various actors allows the development of territorial attractiveness.

To do this, we chose the Rabat Salé Kenitra region in Morocco as our fields of investigation. As the objective of the research is explanatory, the methodological approach adopted is qualitative in nature. We collected primary data from 15 semi-directing interviews with stakeholders involved in the formation of the territorial attractiveness of companies. The choice of actors was made on the basis of a generalized rule of determining the boundaries of networks, proposed by Doreian and Woodard (1994). The completion of our study allowed us to highlight that spatial proximity, territorial specialization, institutional and structural social capital and symbolic attachment to the territory favor the networking of actors and hence the development of the territorial attractiveness of companies.

Keywords: Network of Actors, Territorial Attractiveness, Public Action.

JEL Classification: R00

Paper type: Empirical research

1. Introduction:

The territorial attractiveness of companies plays an important role in the restructuring of the local economic fabric. Indeed, the establishment of enterprises at the level of a territory is the engine of its development through the role they play in creating jobs and absorbing unemployment.

The territory as a support for public action plays a crucial role in the formation of its attractiveness. It is built on a process of co-evolution between economic, social and institutional actors (Gomez, 2014). However, there are often territories that have several actors: institutes, universities, etc., but fail to fill the gap in the implementation of investments. Hence the predominant role of public policy actors, such as politicians and local governments, in implementing appropriate measures taking into account the networking of the various actors, in order to attract companies to establish themselves there.

We emphasize, in this scientific contribution on the networks of actors, they deserve to be analyzed deeply in order to identify the role that represents in the development of territorial attractiveness. Indeed, several researchers: Bazin (1998); Sallez (1995); Guesnier (2006), etc., have tried to understand the notion of attractiveness by going beyond the simple dichotomy territorial offer/business demand. These authors implicitly emphasize the existence of a dynamic relationship between the relationship, between the different actors and the formation of territorial attractiveness, without specifying the nature of this relationship.

First, we are interested in understanding the subtleties that surround the theoretical and definitional field of the network and its cross with the territory. After that, we present the sub-legislation that underpins our hypotheses and leads to the development of our conceptual model. We also present our methodological choices where we will present the phases of our investigation, as well as the contextual data of our field study, which is the subject of our empirical study. Secondly, we present the main results of the empirical study and their crossover with the theory.

2. Literature review and development of hypotheses

2.1. Actor network: explanations and delimitation

Interest in the network, particularly in management sciences, stems from a context marked by globalization that is pushing actors to cooperate and decentralization of decision-making. There is a phenomenon of branching out with the involvement of all stakeholders (Callon, 1989).

Borgatti and Foster (2003), define the network as a set of components linked by a set of links. These components (nodes) can be people, teams, organizations, concepts, etc. In view of this definition, even if we have a change of reality depending on the approached dimension of the network (social, economic and territorial), we have two components common to all forms of networks, namely nodes on the one hand that constitute interconnection points within the network allowing to receive and transmit the networks, and links on the other hand, which connect the different nodes and thus make possible the exchange of flows: information, goods, social relations, etc. (Assens, 1996).

Since the 1990s, several research studies have focused on the issue of diversity and the heterogeneity of actors and their impact on the functioning of networks. According to Ferrary and Granovetter (2009), the heterogeneity of the actors who make up the network plays a very important role in its performance. Indeed, this heterogeneity allows to have specific interactions within the network. Also, it helps to strengthen the resistance of the network in relation to warning tremors from the outside, in fact, some actors may be less sensitive and others can benefit. The heterogeneity of the actors in the network also allows for different skills and hence interactions conducive to the emergence and dissemination of innovation (Feldman and Florida,

1994; Veltz, 2005). This condition is very important in the case of territorialised networks of organizations (RTO): Technopoles, competitiveness clusters, clusters, etc.

However, the heterogeneity of the network does not always participate only in its performance, it can make the formation of a common vision very complex (Mendez and Mercier, 2006), because it sometimes involves divergent representations, actors of the network in relation to its performance (Frédouet and Le Mestre, 2005). Each actor, depending on his or her interest, values, culture and status, can express his or her own vision of how the network works, making it more difficult to coordinate between actors (Loubaresse, 2008). The heterogeneity of the network can also lead to an overlay of political, economic and social interests and objectives (Chabault, 2011), and thus cause tensions within the network (Provan and Kenis, 2008).

The networks of actors in general feed on exchanges with the outside world, which pushes them to expand the scope of their limits. But the larger the network, the more difficult it becomes to direct it, given the increasing number of interacting components. On the contrary, the more the network stops expanding, the more rigid the links between the actors causing the growth of a few nodes (Assens, 2003). This ownership of networks refers to the question of network control and individual autonomy. Promoting autonomy without taking into account control strengthens the involvement of actors and the development of initiatives, however this can lead to differences between actors and conflicts of interest. On the other hand, promoting control without taking autonomy into account has the privilege of promoting coordination and coherence of the network, but this, blocks the individual capacities of the actors.

2.2. The territorial aspect of networks

The notions of network and territory seem to be opposed for several reasons. First, the network by definition is characterized by its openness to its connection. Indeed, the network must expand to exist (Lauriol, et al., 2008). Conversely, the territory forms a real space with limits that respond to the logic of contiguity as opposed to the principle of network bursting (Lauriol, et al., 2008). For geographers, the boundaries of territorialized networks seem difficult to define. Indeed, these networks are constantly evolving and rarely coincide with the boundaries of their administrative territories (Krugman, 1991). Their limitations are based on several geographical and economic criteria, such as the specialization of actors (Breschi and Lissoni, 2001) and a sense of belonging (Camison, 2004).

Today, with globalization, we have a new paradoxical aspect of the consolidation of the two concepts territory and network, namely the co-location of actors in a territory. According to Marshall (1980), the ease of communication and exchange between distant places weakens the forces that maintain the location of firms, leading to the destruction of constraints related to space and time. This becomes more pronounced with the decline in transport costs and the context of globalization, which provide firms with the opportunity to separate themselves with localization constraints, or what Berger (2009) considers a phenomenon of "deterritorialization". Rallet and Torr  (2005) question the interest of co-location and thus that of associating the two concepts network and territory. Nevertheless, lower transport costs and globalization are not completely destroying borders. According to Veltz (2005), the boundaries of the territories form imperceptible obstacles, which still influence the activities of firms. According to porter (2000a), factors related to globalization, such as the development of new information and communication technologies, are not competitive advantages for firms, as they are now accessible to all.¹

¹ This concept illustrates the reason for the development of networks " *aspatiaux* » (Aquino ,2002) or " *a-territorial* (Loilier, 2010) in a context marked by lower communication and transportation costs. In this sense, the work of Torr  and Rallet (2002) criticizes the interest of co-location of actors in the same territory.

However, despite the paradoxical aspects of these two concepts, their associations in the literature remain very abundant. Indeed, this is fundamental to apprehend the anchoring of networks in the territory, and hence some related phenomena such as territorial attractiveness.

Paradoxically, there is a very important development of territorial organizations based on networking and co-location of actors, as well as a cross-cutting interest in the territorialization of economic activities, and hence the notion of territory (Chabault, 2007). Also, the associations in the literature of the network and the territory remain very abundant.

The association of these two concepts dates back to the 1950s, with neo-classical researchers such as: Alonso, (1964); Moses, (1958); Isard, (1956) and Perroux, (1950). These researchers were interested in highlighting classical theories of localization, through a few questions about the distribution of wealth (Teixeira, 2007). However, these theorists did not provide answers as to why there are agglomerations of economic activities and what are the factors behind these groupings. To deepen these aspects, it took until the 1990s that we had the first work on proximity to the French school of proximity (Pecqueur and Zimmermann, 2004; Gilly and Torre, 2000 and Rallet and Torre, 1995).

After apprehending the theoretical underpinnings of the network, we present in the following the relationship of the different forms of proximity with the networking of actors in favor of the territorial attractiveness of companies. This will allow us to identify our hypotheses and thus build our conceptual research model, which will be the subject of a qualitative investigation.

After apprehending the theoretical underpinnings of the network and its relationship with the territory, we present in the following the theoretical constructs at the end of which we will identify our hypotheses and thus build our conceptual model of research, which will be the subject of a qualitative investigation.

2.3. Development of hypotheses

2.3.1. Spatial proximity and networking of actors

Space economics specialists, including the models developed by Krugman (1991), have been interested in explaining the phenomena of agglomeration and the concentration of people and activities based on the economic forces involved and the financial externalities produced by a localization. "*It is desirable to live and produce close to a concentration of industrial production because of the lower price of products*" (Krugman, 1991). According to these approaches, space appears to be an economic vector in terms of distance and market. However, these analyses are far from complete, in part because they do not take into account informal, off-market relationships that may emerge due to geographical proximity. Several researchers, including economists, sociologists and geographers (Planque, 1991; Perrin, 1991; ...) highlighted the crucial role of informal exchanges and non-market relationships, arguing that spatial proximity facilitates the emergence of networks of actors. According to Askour (2019), spatial proximity allows the networking of actors by making interaction easier

To complete these theses, some researchers have highlighted the role of geographical proximity in informal, non-market relationships, which are responsible for the formation of networks of actors. According to Ter Wal and Boschma (2007), spatial proximity facilitates the exchange of knowledge, especially unspoken, requiring face-to-face contact. It is a factor of cohesion enabling the formation of cooperative relations and their sustainability. Indeed, geographical proximity fosters a climate of trust between actors, necessary for the development of non-market relations.

Several research studies highlight the effects of geographical proximity on the formation of relationships between actors. Some of these studies, based on quantification, have shown a correlation between the existence of spatial proximity and the formation of relationships between actors (Jaffe, 1989; Audretsch and Feldman, 1996). Other researchers (Zucker and Darby and Armstrong 1994), have directly studied the relationship between companies and

research organizations (laboratories, and universities), their studies have shown that business performance is linked to the maintenance of relationships with nearby research structures (Grossetti, 2000). In the same vein, studies carried out by Estades, Joly and Mangematin (1995) and Persais (2020) have shown the effects of spatial proximity in research contracts between companies and public scientific bodies in France.

This argument leads us to formulate the following hypothesis:

- **H1: Spatial proximity would encourage the networking of actors.**

2.3.2. Specialization and networking of actors

The work on the concepts of the Marshallian district (Becattini, 1992a), cluster (Porter, 1998, 2000) and other theories of economic specialization of territories (Krugman, 1991, Storper, 1995, 1999) have grasped the comparative advantage that some territories gained when specializing in an area of activity. This work explained the competitiveness of companies by local specificities such as a strong competitive dynamic, a level of production facilitating economies of scale and the wealth of information circulating between the actors in the sector in the territory. Indeed, the specialization of the territory is essential to its dynamism, both because it allows the development of economies of scale (referred to by Krugman) but also because it intensifies the possibilities of informal exchanges and the networking of actors (Daumas, 2004). The existence of a dominant central activity will encourage exchanges between actors and their networking. This specialization will form the image and foundation of the territorial organization by giving it its representativeness as an environment with a competitive advantage.

However, the concept of specialization can be debated depending on the situation of this specialization (at the level of the actors or the territory). Indeed, some highly specialized companies may have an interest in developing interprofessional relations in the context of the development of new processes or innovations, also the specialization of the territory can promote this process of networking especially in the context of structured forms of territorial organizations. This again underlines the importance of specialization in the formation of the network of actors and leads us to formulate the following research hypothesis:

- **H2: Specialization would encourage the networking of actors.**

2.3.3. Social capital and networking of actors

Coleman's research is an important reference on the concept of social capital, and considers social capital as the set of informal and formal (broadly) institutions that make it easy to connect between actors. It is an integration of social elements into individual action (Coleman, 1988).

Uphoff (2000) distinguishes between cognitive social capital that refers to the mental processes of individuals (values, norms, beliefs, etc.) that make actors predisposed to cooperation and structural social capital, i.e. all visible institutions in which actors act. Krishna (2000) refers to these two types of social capital by institutional and relational social capital, respectively.

According to Ledunois, Baudassé and Renault (2010), the components of institutional social capital (standards, values, common representations, etc.) are mobilized by actors as soon as they want to interact. Indeed, to have interactions, actors must have shared representations (customs, rules, ...). Also, this institutional social capital allows to organize and structure relations between actors by specifying their roles, their limits and their statutes. Talbot (2005), speaks of a process of liberation and coercion allowed by this social capital. According to Coleman, this capital allows for social action. It is the origin of the formation of relations between actors.

This argument leads us to formulate the following hypothesis:

- **H3: Institutional social capital would promote the networking of actors.**

We have explained before that networks adopt multiple configurations: merchants / non-dealers, heterogeneous / homogeneous. They associate various actors whose relationships are not exclusively related to economic activities and may find their origins in non-economic social ties (Granovetter, 1985). As discussed earlier, these relationships are facilitated by structural social capital, especially social and professional organizations (political parties, business clubs, executive associations, business clubs, Confederation of Companies, etc.). These networks formed by interpersonal relationships influence the possibilities of exchange and coordination. According to Becattini, 1990 and Asheim, 2000, these organizations allow companies to meet and improve their interactions by building the necessary reputation and trust.

These affiliations influence the networking of actors for the following reasons: First, because it affects the quality of the information exchanged, actors generally seek trusted sources of information, since it is often difficult to verify the source and reliability of the information that circulates and secondly because it allows to develop relationships of trust pushing the various actors of the network to act in the right direction (Granovetter, 2006).

This argument leads to the following hypothesis:

- **H4: Structural social capital would promote the networking of actors.**

2.3.4. Symbolic attachment to the territory and networking of actors

Since not all institutions are of territorial origin, the territory can sometimes intervene in their formation. The territory as a shared reference facilitates the creation of relationships, in fact, actors can share local cultural references, identities etc. by being from the same territory. This symbolic attachment to the territory is a psychological variable that has an emotional relationship of psychological proximity to the territory (Lacoeuilhe, 2000). In this form of belonging, the entrepreneur's attachment to the territory is based on very strong emotional bonds that resemble those of mother-children (Moulins and Roux, 2008 cited by Ismaili, 2012).

Attachment to the territory is fuelled by nostalgic ties and is rooted in the past (cultural, family or personal) (Divard and Demontrond, 1977; Kessous and Roux, 2007; 2008), thus allowing to have an emotional confidence with individuals of the same territory. According to Guerin-Pace and Filippova (2008), these relationships, which stem from territorial attachment, form essential relational networks for the individual. For Reix (2008), the investor chooses to establish himself where his links are developed in order to access a diversity of resources necessary to create his business (information, opportunities, financing, advice, etc.).

In this form of belonging, the territory has a magnetic effect (territorial attractiveness) (Sencébé, 2004) on the companies that refer to it (Azouaoui, & Ismaili, 2015). This relationship between these links rooted in the territory and the territorial attractiveness of companies will be analysed at a later date.

This argument leads us to formulate the following hypothesis:

- **H5: The symbolic attachment to the territory would encourage the networking of actors.**

2.3.5. Network of actors and training of the territorial attractiveness of companies

Several researchers (Garofoli, 1992, Bergman and Feser, 2000, Camagni and Maillat, 2006) have highlighted the existence of local specificities related to the effects of relationships between individuals and between organizations that explain the choice of location of companies and the construction of territorial attractiveness. As a result, it is in our interest in this research to focus our analysis on the "network" as a mediating variable of our conceptual model.

Our conception of the "network" as a mediating variable means the development of socio-economic links between actors (networks of actors), individuals or corporations. The "network", whose formation is influenced by the socio-economic backgrounds in which the actors belong (Bakis, 1993), brings together all the relationships developed by economic and

social actors. In short, it is the reticular representation in which individuals or organizations are linked together for their social and economic activities (Planque, 1991). According to Le Boterf (2004), network formation stems from a *"necessary mobilization of collective intelligence in the face of complex situations to be managed; in the search for coherence and convergence of actors' contributions in decentralized structures; in the emergence of a culture of interactivity; in the fact that it is simply becoming more and more impossible to act competently by remaining isolated and without cooperating with others."*

According to Pirronea and Thouément (20014), the most appropriate way to understand attractiveness is to draw a physical analogy with gravitational phenomena, since an attractive territory has sufficient "weight" to exert a centripetal force on its environment under centrifugal pressure. Thus, the attractive territory stimulates external socio-economic actors, including the population, to settle there just as much as it encourages the actors already settled there not to leave. In the managerial context of the construction of this attractiveness, the territory must be considered as "a dynamic element of territorial strategies" (Hernandez 2006). According to Chevalier (2003), *"no single actor can master decision-making; acknowledging the complexity of the problems and the existence of multiple powers."* Therefore, the construction of attractiveness as a territorial strategy, must be thought collectively, actors with a diversity in terms of skills, must work beyond political, cultural and geographical boundaries (Grenier, 2008). Networking all of these actors, as a form of governance, helps to maintain and improve the attractiveness of the network's territories (Gomez, 2009). According to Colletis et al. (2001), this consideration of the network as a form of governance per se, referred to above, means *"a process of building compatibility between different institutional proximity between actors (economic, institutional, social, etc.) geographically close, with a view to solving a productive problem."* In terms of territorial components, the role of the network in the formation of territorial attractiveness confronts the idea that the determinants of the competitiveness and attractiveness of a territory are based more on the built components linked to human activity than on natural data.

For companies, the concept of the network leads to extremely varied adaptations in their organization. Thus, the network as a tool for researching efficiency by companies, responds first to a quest for organization optimized for their economic role. It is a means of managing competition combining competition and cooperation of actors. Indeed, it is the strategies of "co-optation", that is to say the search for competitiveness in a cooperation report, that will guide the positions of companies within the networks (Carluer, 2006). According to Offnet and Pumain (1996), the two main trends influencing network organization are technical complexity and support for social relations. In the first case, companies will seek partnerships to complement their limited capabilities to deal with complex technical production problems. Social relations are the second most common influence of networks. Indeed, economic actors are part of a "middle" environment, where they rub shoulders with many actors who will form their social networks (Granovetter, 2000). The formation of these relational networks by the various private and public actors allows the emergence of a system of collaborative governance (Ansell and Gash, 2007). According to some economists, geographers and sociologists, these networks are explanatory factors in the creation of the attractiveness of the territories by acting on the choice of new companies. Relationships with others guide companies' competitive strategies and location choices. (Storper, 1999). In light of these findings, we support the following hypothesis:

- **H6: The networking of actors would influence the territorial attractiveness of companies.**

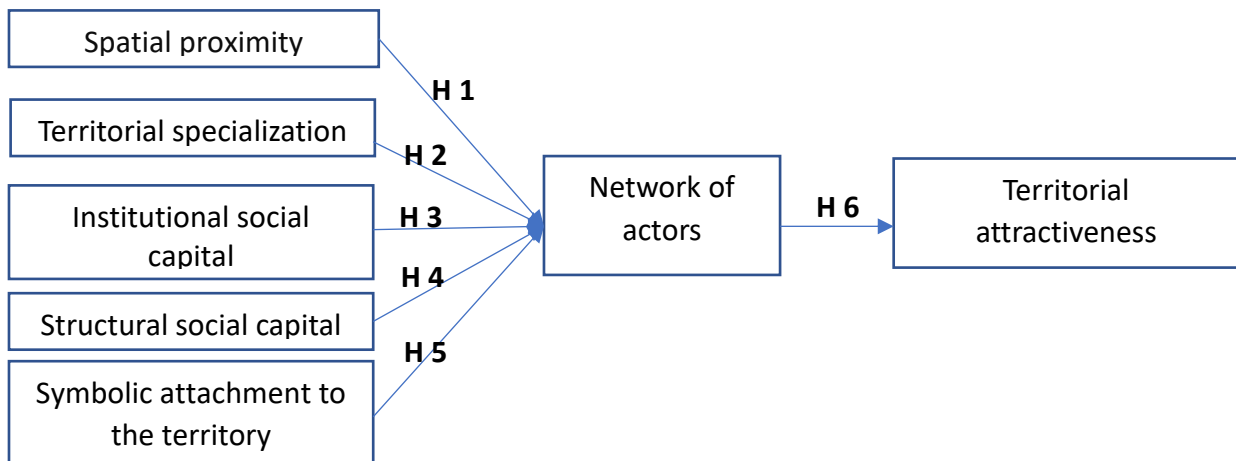
3. Research methodology:

3.1. Conceptual design of research

As previously explained, the formulation of our hypotheses was done in a two-pronged way. The first concerns the influence of five variables (spatial proximity, territorial specialization, institutional and structural social capital and symbolic attachment to the territory) on the creation of networks and the second is aimed at the influence of these networks on the creation of territorial attractiveness.

From these hypotheses comes our conceptual model, which is as follows:

Figure 1: Research model



Source: Authors

3.2. Study ground

We chose the Rabat Salé Kenitra region in Morocco as our fields of investigation. The choice of this regional subnational level is guided by two reasons. First, the regional level allows us to study attractiveness according to Hatem's "meso" approach (2004), by apprehending territorial dynamics and existing synergies. Secondly, in the Moroccan context, this regional level brings together all the categories of actors involved in the formation of the territorial attractiveness of investments (institutional actors, economic actors, research actors...). Otherwise, if one reasons in terms of proximity, the region can be seen as the best placed territorial level that allows us to understand proximity. Indeed, the role of the region as a territorial organisation generally complements the central and national arrangements for development of the attractiveness of investments in Morocco.

The Rabat-Salé-Kenitra region covers an area of 18,194 km², representing an area of 2.56% of The Moroccan territory. It has three prefectures: Rabat, Salé and Skhirate-Temara and four provinces: Kenitra, Khémisset, Sidi Kacem and Sidi Slimane. The number of municipalities is 114, of which 23 are urban and 91 are rural, or about 7.6% of all municipalities in Morocco. It is ranked 2nd after the Casablanca-Settat region, with a share of 13.53% of Morocco's total population and a density of 251.8 inhabitants per square kilometre.

3.3. Introducing the research methodology

In the context of this research, it is privileged that our epistemological positioning follows an interpretivist posture. As the objective of the research is explanatory, the methodological approach adopted is qualitative in nature. The qualitative methodology allows for a close anchoring with the interviewees, a richness and character encompassing a lot of data, a strong explanatory power of processes and a better strategy of discovery and exploration (Huberman and Miles 2005). In terms of data collection, we collected primary data from 15 semi-directing

interviews (see Table 1). We have targeted the actors involved in training the territorial attractiveness of companies. The threshold of saturation of responses was reached at the 12th interview. No new information or themes emerged from the data collected. In addition, three other interviews were conducted based on the statements of the interviewees, in order to have a better representativeness. Indeed, our objective is not limited to saturation but also targets the inclusion of nodes based on a generalized rule for determining network boundaries proposed by Doreian and Woodard (1994). This snowball-based approach is based on two main phases: the first phase focuses on determining the core of the network through a nominalist approach. The second phase of node inclusion is based on a realistic approach, based on the statements of the actors constituting the core of the network, having been included in the first nominalist phase. The categories of actors targeted are local authorities, support agencies, research actors, site developers and funding agencies.

The interview guide developed summarizes all of the themes that originate from the research model established in our literature review. This guide allowed us to collect the lived experiences and interpretations of the respondents representing the various target organizations and actors, according to their representations of reality. The different themes addressed in our semi-structured interview guide are:

- General presentation of the actor and his relational network;
- Detection of the interviewee's perception of stakeholder networks;
- Relating stakeholder networks to spatial proximity;
- Relating stakeholder networks to territorial specialization;
- Relating stakeholder networks to institutional social capital;
- Relating networks of actors to structural social capital;
- Relating stakeholder networks to symbolic attachment to the territory; and
- Relating the territorial attractiveness of companies to stakeholder networks.

Once the first version of this interview guide had been drafted, three tests were carried out separately in order to test it and validate or correct the questions. This phase allowed us to detect ambiguities and omissions in the questions. Following these different tests, changes were made to the survey tool with the aim of improving the collection of information (through the coherence and understanding of the different themes addressed) but also to facilitate the synthesis work later on.

In order to process the data collected, we have chosen the thematic analysis method of content. Thus, we proceeded by a transcription and transcript of all the interviews, and then to the coding of the verbatims using the NVIVO software. This technique allowed us to have a systematic interpretation of the speeches and to collect in depth the representations of the actors interviewed.

Table 1: Research hypotheses

| Organization | Function | Maintenance number | Duration |
|--|--|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Ministry of Industry, Investment, Trade and Digital Economy | Director | E1 | 1h50min |
| Regional Investment Centre (IRC) | Head of the Single Window | E2 | 2h10min |
| Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Services | Head of division | E3 | 1h30min |
| Moroccan Investment Development and Export Agency AMDIE | Director | E4 | 1h20min |
| General Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises CGEM Rabat- Salé-Kenitra | Managing Director | E5 | 1h50min |
| Region | Elected Head of division | E6 E7 | 2h05min 1h20min |
| Prefecture | Head of division | E8 | 2h/10min |
| Local Communities | 2 Presidents reunited in one interview | E9 | 50min |
| Developer and Business Park Manager in Industry, Offshoring and Tourism (MEDZ) | Marketing Director Territorial | E10 | 2h20min |
| Atlantic Free Zone in Kenitra | Park Director | E11 | 1h30min |
| Technical Center for Vehicle Equipment Industries (CETIEV) | Training manager | E12 | 1h05 |
| Investment bank | Investment Officer | E13 | 50min |
| Morocco SMEs | Director | E14 | 1h50min |
| Moroccan Association for Industry and Automotive Trade (AMICA) | Secretary-General | E15 | 1h45 min |

Source: Authors

4. Results and discussions:

4.1. Results on the networking dynamics of territorial attractiveness actors

Spatial proximity reflects the distance between actors (organizations and individuals), measured in terms of cost and time (Gilly and Torre, 2000). It is a localization condition often addressed by actors (Pecqueur and Zimmermann, 2004). This proximity should not be confused with the metric distance between the actors, it is characterized by a relativity that depends on several aspects: physical as well as the topography of the territory and social nature relating to the existence of infrastructures and means of communication and transport. It can have a positive or negative dimension depending on the representation of the actors, it is this character of relativity that gives meaning to this proximity. According to Torre (2009), there is a big difference between proximity and the potential of proximity. Indeed, in case of no intentional mobilization by the actors we are not in a case of proximity but in a case of potential proximity. The attitudes of the interviewees show that spatial proximity is involved in the emergence and development of networks. According to 64% of respondents, this proximity is a factor of cohesion influencing the networking of actors.

"Our proximity policy is reinforced by the establishment of several regional branches, which allows us to be close to companies. We also have sub-branches in areas that have a high

concentration of businesses or a large area. *The choice of an office in Kenitra is justified by the current high concentration of companies in this province" E5.*

"The creation of our institution's branches at the regional chambers of commerce justifies our structure's interest in proximity. The choice of chambers of commerce is justified by the need for physical proximity to these actors, in order to be able to coordinate our actions in favour of regional attractiveness" E14.

This result is consistent with the research of Torre (2009), which considers that spatial proximity has an important role in the dynamics of exchanges between actors, as well as in the repetition of connections and interactions. Indeed, it fosters a climate of trust necessary for the development of non-market relations. This trust between actors allows the information to be validated without having to validate the informants beforehand, which is an extremely valuable time saving, a factor of competitiveness. **As a result, the hypothesis on spatial proximity is moderately accepted (H1).**

Regarding territorial specialization, empirical results have shown that this variable plays a part in the emergence and development of networks. In fact, 71% of respondents consider specialization to be a factor influencing the networking of actors involved in the process of territorial attractiveness of companies

"Relationships between actors cannot emerge without a chain logic. The success of the Atlantic Free Zone model has clearly demonstrated the importance of specialization. This specialization must be general and must also include research actors to develop an innovation dynamic" E5.

"I think the specialization of some of the territories in the Region has yielded very good networking results. In Kenitra, we have an automotive ecosystem that emerges on its own. Today, we want to stimulate this in other territories of the region, especially in Rabat for the development of the offshoring trades" E6.

For these interviewees, the presence of actors from the same field of activity is not seen as a competitive source, but rather as an opportunity to develop networks with other actors in the territory (associations defending the interests of the subsidiary, institutional services, etc.), and also to benefit from the image of this territory in this field of activity. These results are consistent with the research of Daumas (2004), and Comet (2006) on the building sector in France, where strong specialization positively influences the networking of actors. Our results are also consistent with the work of Storper (1999) and Porter (1990) on clusters, which consider the existence of a dominant core activity as the foundation of the cluster, giving it its representativeness as an exchange environment between actors and holder of a competitive advantage favoring its attractiveness. These results can be explained by the fact that belonging to the same economic subset and complementarity make cooperation easier and hence the formation of networks. Actors belonging to the same type of activity are more able to develop formal commercial and economic links based on contracts, sectors, etc., and also to the development of Marshallian and technological externalities, which are conducive to the development of attractiveness. **As a result, we validate the hypothesis on territorial specialization (H2).** Not with standing, induced specialization can also be a trap in the event of an economic reversal and a sharp decline in the specialization of the existing territory (Camagni, 2005). This was mentioned by a large portion of respondents, as the quotes below reveal:

"MEDZ's site development policy is not very specialized. Based on our experience without this area, we believe that high specialization can be destructive for an industrial area in the long run, especially when it is caused" E10.

"I don't think you have to specialize the whole territory in one area, it's very risky. It is always necessary to leave a generalist area to absorb the shock in case the speciality of the

territory is no longer favorable (departure of the locomotive or a collapse in the market of the sector concerned ...) E4.

Moreover, according to these actors, specialization is more beneficial for the territory when it is spontaneous and linked to a vocation of the territory. These results are consistent with pioneering work on Italian districts: Bagnasco, 1977; Becattini, 1979, 1987 and Brusco, 1982.

"Specialization based on the territorial vocation allows an important territorial dynamic to emerge. It is in this sense that we try to condition the specialization of the sites that we develop by the vocation of the target territory" E10. "Specialization must be promoted according to the vocation of the territory in order to ensure the sustainability of the activity. Networking in this case, develops in a very spontaneous way" E4.

Regarding social capital, 93% of respondents consider the sharing of institutional social capital to be a factor of cohesion enabling the networking of actors. *"Generally, investors have a misrepresentation of the administration. This means that the majority of SMEs do not go through MAROC SME when setting up their businesses» E14.* This result is consistent with the research results of Ledunois, Baudassé and Renault (2010), in the context of Industrial Parks Suppliers in France. Indeed, when we have a division between individual and organizational actors, components of institutional social capital (norms, values, common representations, etc.), they become more able to interact and coordinate their actions, through shared habits, a legal system, etc. Also, such frameworks allow to organize and structure relations between actors by specifying their limits, their roles, and their statutes. This is part of a process of liberation and coercion enabled by the institutional proximity Talbot (2005). **As a result, the hypothesis on institutional social capital is highly accepted (H3).**

Moreover, for structural social capital, the empirical results of our research showed that 71% of respondents consider that networking is favored by belonging to labelled networks (political parties, business clubs, professional associations, etc.).

"We have set up an industrial association at the Atlantic Free Zone to weld the various industrial units together. They have set up several projects together, including the signing of a protocol that prohibits the recruitment of workers from other industries in the area. They also organized several joint forums» E11.

"In this sense, the AMICA association of automotive professionals plays a very important role in connecting the various actors in this sector. If an investor wants to invest in tire production, before choosing an installation site, he will ask AMICA if there are producers of cars, motorcycles who are present on site interested in his product" E15.

These organizations allow actors to meet and improve their interactions by building the necessary reputation and trust. These results can be explained by the fact that actors are looking for trusted sources of information, as it is generally difficult to examine the source and reliability of the information that circulates. Also, this type of proximity allows to develop relationships of trust pushing the different actors of the network, to act in the right direction. **As a result, we validate the hypothesis on structural social capital (H4).**

Furthermore, the empirical results of our research have shown that 57% of respondents consider that relations between actors do not necessarily stem from symbolic attachment to the territory. Indeed, the links derived from this attachment do not form relationship networks essential for attractiveness. *"Today, attachment to the territory is not as valuable as it used to be. Investors develop relationships in several territories, not just one. If, you find that many investors from the city of Kenitra choose to implement their projects in their city, it is not because of an emotional attachment to this city, but rather because of its attractive potential marked by low labour costs and a strategic geographical location" (E3).* Also, investors do not necessarily choose to establish themselves where their links are developed. This is part of the notion of multiple territorial membership. Contrary to the representation of Sencébé (2004) which considers that each individual is inserted into a single configuration of belonging, called

"lived space" and Champenois (2008) which speaks of the non-choice of location. **As a result, the hypothesis on symbolic attachment to the territory and moderately accepted (H5).**

4.2. Results on the influence of the network of actors on the territorial attractiveness of companies

The actors involved in the process of building the territorial attractiveness of companies are formed by several categories: private and public actors, individual and organisational actors, which differ in size, outlook and history. The data collected at the level of our empirical survey, showed that for all respondents, the networking of all these actors is very important, because it allows the spout of social and economic performance and thus maintain and improve the attractiveness of the territories of the network. *"We don't have major actors and smaller actors; we work with all the actors. Because we consider the formation of attractiveness as a collective work" E6. "We are working in cooperation with the Ministry of Trade, Investment and Digital Economy to attract potential and strategic FDI to the country. We are often asked to attend the various trading meetings with foreign investors" E2.* This network dynamic allows the company to anchor at the territory level and to improve the sustainability of its implementation. *"The municipality of Ain Attiq does not really manage to keep the companies on site ... the companies of this municipality have not been able to develop relations with the other actors in this territory. This does not guarantee a certain sustainability of their location" E8.*

The cause most mentioned by the actors met, to explain the place of the territorial relational network in the formation of the territorial attractiveness of companies, is that of cooperation for the search for complementarity. Indeed, the actors involved in the process of attractiveness will seek partnerships to compensate for their limited capacity to cope with the complexity of the process of the formation of territorial attractiveness. These results are consistent with the research of Gomez (2006), Antonelli (2003) and Grenier (2008). Indeed, in order to build the attractiveness of a territory's enterprises, it must not be seen as a mere receptacle of activities, but as a dynamic element where the actors concerned with a diversity in terms of competence, must work collectively by going beyond political, cultural and geographical boundaries. In this sense, the network as a form of governance influences the territorial attractiveness of companies, mobilizing relational and coordinating forms to attract and facilitate the implementation of new activities. **As a result, the hypothesis on the influence of networking on the territorial attractiveness of companies (H6) is highly validated.**

Table 2: A cross between variables and percentage of positive and negative attitudes towards the relationships between variables

| Hypotheses | Relationships between variables | Number of verbatims | Frequency of verbatims | Number of respondents with a negative attitude | Number of respondents with a positive attitude |
|------------|--|---------------------|------------------------|--|--|
| H1 | Spatial proximity / Actor Network | 50 | 27% | 36% | 64% |
| H2 | Territorial Specialization / Actor Network | 30 | 16% | 29% | 71% |
| H3 | Institutional Social Capital / Actor Network | 25 | 13% | 7% | 93% |
| H4 | Structural Social Capital / Actor Network | 35 | 19% | 29% | 71% |
| H5 | Symbolic attachment to the territory / Network of actors | 15 | 8% | 43% | 57% |
| H6 | Network of actors / Territorial attractiveness | 32 | 17% | 0% | 100% |

Source: Authors

5. Conclusion:

In this study, we analyzed the role of the territorial relational network in the construction of the attractiveness of the territory. We have demonstrated how the organization of local actors into a network can make a territory attractive, through the emergence of different interactions between actors located in a territory. We can conclude that spatial proximity influences the formation of networks of actors involved in the formation of territorial attractiveness, but is not a sufficient condition for their interaction and coordination. Indeed, when there is a unique mobilization of spatial proximity between the actors of territorial attractiveness, we may be faced with a situation of simple colocation or agglomeration. Moreover, territorial specialization, institutional and structural social capital, and symbolic attachment to the territory constitute cohesion factors that allow the networking of actors involved in the formation of territorial attractiveness. We have also shown that the network, as a mediating variable, is able to explain territorial attractiveness, through the coordination mechanisms it allows and the relational forms it mobilizes to attract and facilitate the establishment of new activities.

On the managerial level, the completion of this research in the Rabat-Salé-Kénitra region has allowed us to highlight that the development of territorial attractiveness would also pass-through other avenues of action than those based on traditional public interventions, based on supply and demand. Indeed, the actors of public action involved in the process of developing territorial attractiveness, must be able to be part of a networking process by displaying their social, relational and institutional capital. This requires the creation of territorialised networks of organizations that drive economic channels such as clusters. Indeed, some actors may be geographically close and ignore each other's ignorance. Secondly, to develop the links between these networks with little or no ingrained in the territory, and the various actors of the territory (management institutions, funding agencies, local authorities, etc.). This requires the creation of collaborative governance building entities at the level of these networks. Indeed, these funds sometimes appear above ground and would require a process of territorialization through their connection to the various local institutions present at the territory level. In addition, in order to develop links between actors in favour of attracting investment, the creation of local

professional organisations such as clubs and associations must be promoted. These organizations allow individuals to meet outside the company, which allows to develop individual relationships and ultimately the formation of the company's networks. Also, it is necessary to encourage meetings such as forums, allowing project owners to connect with different partners who will provide the necessary means to the successful completion of the business project (financing institutions, land and premises offerers, etc.).

In the framework of future work and to better verify the relevance of our research proposals, it would be appropriate to measure the impact of managerial approaches that promote networking among actors on the territorial anchoring of companies. Indeed, it is not enough to attract companies, but to keep them in the territory.

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