Potential and limits for creating a place brand as tool for territorial development in Chefchaouen, Morocco.

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Abstract:

Place brands appear worldwide as new kind of political tool for local development at different geographical scales. This article explores the potential to create a place brand as tool for territorial development in a rural area of Morocco via a case study approach. Results show that successful place branding not only depends on place identity and local assets, but also on the macro-environment and strong partnerships. Regional autonomy, a delimitation of the target area, political unity and leadership are crucial factors. Morocco offers opportunities for place branding, but until now seems to be mainly limited by the uncompleted regionalisation and decentralisation process.

Keywords:

Place branding, territorial development, local governance, cooperation, Morocco, case study

Acknowledgement

1. Introduction

Since the beginning of the 1990es, place brands appear worldwide at different geographical scales (nations, regions, cities). Within an increased competitive economy, many places have adopted marketing techniques to attract tourists, companies and skilled people and to find markets for their export products (KOTLER and GERTNER, 2002). In general, place brands are initiated and financed by governments, as tool for differentiation and economic, socio-cultural and political development of places. Place brands express an intention to manage places in a more business-like manner, with a new entrepreneurial style of local government and economic development (HARVEY, 1989; KAVARATZIS, 2005). Thus, they are not just a matter of economy, but strongly linked to public goals and agencies (BELLINI *et al*., 2010). Furthermore, place brands aim at enhancing local cooperation or, vice-versa, labelling existent clusters (DONNER *et al.*, 2014; KASABOV and SUNDARAM, 2011). Place brands reflect a combination of marketing and public and political management tools. Therefore, the creation and implementation of place brands involve participation of multiple stakeholder groups, as public organisations, NGOs, enterprises, investors, residents or tourists (HAKINSON, 2004; BECKMAN and ZENKER, 2012). These stakeholders then can actively engage in the branding process and give their own place brand meanings instead of staying passive groups; the term *co-creation* fits well in this context (KAVARATZIS, 2012).

If place brands are applied to rural regions, they generally aim at endogenous development and target key sectors, such as agriculture and/or tourism, by adding value to typical local food products, particular landscapes or cultural heritage. Those features then are main components for differentiation.

We explore the potential to create a place brand as tool for territorial development in a rural area of Morocco, the province of Chefchaouen. The focus on Morocco is motivated by the ongoing regionalisation and decentralisation process, started in 1971 and reinforced in 2010 by an 'advanced regionalisation plan'. The big challenge for Morocco is to close spatial disparities between strong demographic and socio-economic urban centres and underdeveloped rural, mainly agricultural, areas. The advanced regionalisation plan is supposed to lead to an integrative and

sustainable development of the entire country.[1] Particularly, territorial development shall be reached via the valorisation of specific regional assets, the mobilization of local actors, the participation of citizens and associations within large projects, and the reinforcement of the attractiveness and competitiveness of the regions within a context of market liberalization (EL ANSARI, 2009; BOUJROUF and HASSANI, 2008). Local resources and heritage then are expected to become key concepts of endogenous development and a driving force for public-private cooperation (EL ANSARI, 2013). Hereby, typical local products (*produits de terroir*) play an important role, exposing the influence of French visions on territory-based development (LANDEL, 2011; KOOP *et al.*, 2010). It is also here that the place branding finds its potential applicability.

2. Research context

Place branding

Although the concept of place branding has got increased attention in practice and theory in the past two decades, research that focuses on place branding in Africa is sparse, '*almost non-existent*' (OSEI *et al.*, 2011). However, the potential and need for branding African countries have been recognized in literature (WANJIRU, 2005; ANHOLT, 2005 and 2006; CALAS *et al.*, 2011; OSEI *et al.*, 2011; FREIRE, 2014). Several arguments are brought forward. First of all, creating single nation brands in Africa could counteract the '*continent brand defect*', where the continent is considered as a homogenous mass instead of individual countries (WANJIRU, 2005). Each African country is therefore responsible to develop a unique competitive identity (ANHOLT, 2006). Second, place branding than could also contribute to disperse the pessimistic image often associated with the African continent in general - Africa's negative 'halo effect' (OSEI *et al.*, 2011; MARKESSINIS, 2009) - and in return highlight assets and opportunities for export, investment and tourism of single countries. A third potential benefit from branding African countries lies on its influence on the diaspora. Here, place brands could motivate the diaspora to invest more in their home-countries or even lead to a remigration of skilled people, to reverse the brain-drain (WANJIRU, 2005). Fourth, creating strong place brands and enhancing images of

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[1] http://www.lemag.ma/Regionalisation-avancee-consecration-des-valeurs-de-la-democratie-participative_a62489.html and http://www.aujourdhui.ma/une/faste-train/decentralisation-les-12-chantiers-de-la-regionalisation--96933#.U3IwQ6GKDrd

developing countries may also be an opportunity to differentiate and add value to their export products and lead to '*protected margins*' (ANHOLT, 2005), thus preventing an increasing competition between poor supplier nations that goes hand in hand with tighter margins. With regard to Africa, several sectors have been identified as business and branding opportunities, as retail, agriculture, tourism, real estate, sports and manufacturing (OSEI *et al*., 2011). Finally, place branding could be a medium to valorise and promote the rich cultural heritage of places belonging to the African continent, which in total has more than 60 UNESCO recognitions as world heritage sites (CALAS, 2011; FREIRE, 2014). Culture and heritage are not only important cornerstones of places' identities, but also enhance the attractiveness and competitiveness of tourist destinations.

For the analysis of the place branding preconditions and process in Chefchaouen, we build on the theoretical framework *Success Factors of Place Marketing*, developed by RAINISTO (2003), which has been tested empirically via four case studies of city branding in Northern Europe and the USA. This framework highlights the evolutionary character of place brands and looks for processes at different action levels: a macro-level representing the larger political, economic and societal context, a meso-level as playing field for organisations, and a micro-level for small groups or individuals. Action at the macro-environmental level positions local development within a global marketplace and process coincidences. The micro-level puts emphasis on behaviour of small groups or individuals who take practical actions to develop place identity and image and to organise planning groups consisting of individuals such as local officials, external consultancy, or members of the business community. It is supposed that a charismatic individual or a political party is needed to lead the place branding initiative. The meso-action level fits with our specific interest in describing the interrelations between organisations or larger groups: cooperation between the public and private sector, and agreement and consistency among political parties or decision makers, which are particularly context-specific.

Territorial development

In line with regionalisation processes, decentralisation of power and globalization, many regions in the world nowadays are responsible for their own development. They are obliged to create a competitive identity and advantage (MALECKI, 2004; KITSON *et al*., 2004). At the same time, the importance of regions as drivers for economic development and growth has been widely

recognized in theory and practice (PORTER, 2003; PIKE *et al.*, 2006; SCOTT and GAROFOLI, 2011; EU Cohesion Policy). However, a majority of approaches regarding development concentrate on macro-economic variables and processes, while development does not only depend on larger economic factors; it is also strongly influenced by processes taking place 'on the ground', in specific regions (SCOTT and STORPER, 2007).

In general, there is no consensus on what local and regional development exactly is. Definitions and concepts are changing over time; they depend on specific places and on broader political and economic processes, and they are socially determined by groups (STORPER, 1997; PIKE *et al.*, 2007). Also, the initial focus on economic development and growth has broadened, now including political, social, cultural and environmental dimensions. Furthermore, different kind of local development approaches exist, with different governance forms, including various stakeholders and addressing various targets (PIKE *et al.*, 2007).

Since the middle of the 1990es, the territorial development paradigm has appeared in France and in Europe, taking into account not only a national, but worldwide competitive environment. The territorial approach aims at making places more competitive and attractive. It introduces new forms of governance via a coordination and cooperation of multiple actors (also with the participation of the civil society) and includes top-down as well as bottom-up approaches (BAUDELLE *et al.*, 2011) Governance can be defined as "the production of rules by actors to regulate the economic, productive, social etc. system" (ANGEON and HOUÉDÉTÉ, 2006). Local actors then *socially construct* their territory, in contrast to a given, historically-administrative delimited territory (LELOUP *et al.*, 2005). While earlier development approaches were seeking for an optimal allocation of resources, now the identification, creation and valorisation of specific territorial resources, being different from those of competitors, become important (PECQUEUR, 2000 and 2001; CÔTÉ, 2003). Territories then are considered as places with own particular histories and identities. Heritage and local assets are used as elements for cooperation and as drivers for the construction and sustainable development of territories (FRANCOIS *et al.*, 2006; LANDEL and SENIL, 2009). Related empirical examples are origin-labels as Geographical Indications for agricultural products; however, transversal strategies such as collective regional branding are also heavily used. Increased mobility, particularly in forms of tourism and leisure, can particularly offer opportunities for the development of rural areas, often combined with agricultural models (SKURAS *et al.*, 2006; ZHANG *et al.*, 2007). Rural development has then

changed into a 'multi-level, multi-actor and multi-facetted process' (VAN DER PLOEG *et al*., 2000). Also, the OECD New Rural Paradigm 2006 has shifted from sectors to *places* and from subsidies to investments in *local specificities*, thus highlighting the heterogeneity of rural areas (WARD and BROWN, 2009).

The territorial approach has been incorporated in regional development policies in France (called *Aménagement du territoire*) which traditionally implicated a national centralised planning form, thus top-down. Nowadays, policies aim at 'tailor-made' development measures for multiple and different territories. This can be captured in the term of *projet de territoire* defined as transversal project and strategy based on a territorial diagnostic, (unique) assets and visions and elaborated by the territorial actors themselves, i.e. resulting in territorial development.[2]

French visions on development are important with regard to the Maghreb countries, including Morocco, as development in these places has been influenced by French thoughts since their independence and even transferred via Franco-Moroccan decentralized cooperation projects (LANDEL, 2011; KARZAZI, 2013; OECD document 2011). While early industrial development approaches were not successful and later local, bottom-up development concepts were not adapted by national policies in the Maghreb, territorial development is an interesting option for these countries (KOOP *et al.*, 2010). The objective to make territories more competitive and attractive based on specific resources and to integrate them in a global economy is particularly important for Morocco as it has opened its economy. Also, a mobilization and valorisation of specific territorial identities and resources seem to be adequate for the development of rural marginalized areas, as it takes into account local actors and their specific sociocultural and endogenous conditions. This strategy is currently followed within the national agricultural development plan (*Plan Maroc Vert*). However, in general, territorial development in the Maghreb countries has until now been limited by a poorer degree of decentralization, a lack of regional administrative and financial autonomy and an insufficient integration of non-public actors (KOOP *et al*., 2010).

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[2] Centre d'Études et de Prospective du Ministère de l'Alimentation, de l'Agriculture et de la Pêche (2010) : http://www.agreste.agriculture.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf_AE2030_Politiques_d_amenagement_du_territoire.pdf

Linking place branding to territorial development

Here, we propose to link place branding to territorial development policies by defining three common key elements. The first one is the *local-global dimension*, inherent in the objective of the territorial development approach to make places more attractive and competitive in a globalized economy. This perspective is also characteristic for place brands. Local-global relationships may occur by exporting higher value-added local products and attracting international investors and tourists. The second element is a particular *territorial governance form* with a multi-actor participation and cooperation, which corresponds to the French vision of a territory as a social construct and the multi-stakeholder approach of place branding. The third element concerns the identification and valorisation of various *specific local resources for differentiation*, which may lead to cross-sector synergies, e.g. between agriculture and tourism. This is inherent in place brands as they are umbrella brands, covering a wide range of place-specific assets (a place as a whole with its specific identity, its different products, services etc.). Therefore, an identification and selected choice of specific valuable assets is needed for place branding and done on the basis of a strategic analysis of the territory.

The three key elements build constituents for the following analysis. Special attention is paid to the governance and cooperation among multiple actors taking place at the meso-level in order to learn and to understand what happens in between the macro and micro-level, assuming that it is there that an explanation for the success or failure of a place brand can be found.

3. Methodology

Case study

As methodology, an in-depth case study of Chefchaouen in Morocco is carried out. It concerns a case study based on a collection of initiatives that work together towards territorial development. It connects these activities to place branding and to the nature of organisation and coordination within the area as well as to more remote governance processes (in particular the national development plan for agriculture, the *Plan Maroc Vert*). The case study is done in order to advance practical insights and theory on place branding as tool for territorial development. Case study has been defined as '*an intensive study of a single unit - a spatially bounded phenomenon - for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units*' (GERRING, 2004).

Accordingly, the case study of the province Chefchaouen enables to demonstrate the complex process of developing a place brand in a Moroccan region, and to show how local actors come together to cooperate, socially construct and develop a territory in this specific context.

Data collection

Events and activities taking place in Morocco and Chefchaouen have been identified. Two field visits have been done in Chefchaouen by the authors in 2013 and 2014. During the field work, 22 interviews have been performed with key stakeholders, as the mayor of the city Chefchaouen, the director of the agricultural ministry of the province, various non-governmental associations (NGOs), restaurant owners and cooperatives. Eight of these interviews were conducted in detail about developing a place brand, investigating the general opinion, a potential geographical scale, governance, financing, coordination, marketing-mix, and logo. The analysis of interviews was executed according to matching themes. Furthermore, network, cooperation and governance issues have been paid particular attention, being considered as major determinants for the success or failure of place branding in this area. Here, various initiatives of cooperation have been studied (e.g. *Chaouenrural, Les restaurateurs engages,* the cooperatives).

Research location

The province Chefchaouen is situated in the North of Morocco, in the Rif Mountains, and belongs to the region Tanger-Tetouan. The province is mainly rural, 90% of its 434.924 habitants living in the countryside. The capital of Chefchaouen is the city of the same name and unique urban commune with around 36.000 habitants. Living standards and infrastructure are highly contrasting between the urban area (the municipality of Chefchaouen) and the 27 rural communes - which are characterized by the culture and people living in the mountains, the *Jbala*. Also, the administration of the province has changed, as six communes originally belonging to Chefchaouen have become part of the neighbouring province Ouezzane in 2009. The main economic sectors of the province Chefchaouen are agriculture and increasingly tourism. Especially in the past two decades, the town Chefchaouen has become a popular tourist destination, famous for its medina, its surrounding nature, traditional handicrafts and the Mediterranean Diet (label UNESCO for immaterial heritage 2010). As the province has for a long

time been excluded from political life in Morocco, due to tensions with the central power of King Hassan II (1961-1999), it has conserved its specific tradition and culture. Some typical agricultural products from the province such as olive oil, goat cheese, dried fruits or honey are foreseen to be valorised and promoted within the PMV. However, as the Rif Mountains constitute the world's largest production area of cannabis, the province also struggles with the negative externalities and image of this cultivation.

A place brand *Chefchaouen* could be used to valorise and promote typical healthy food and eco-tourism services, to stimulate cooperation between local economic actors, to re-brand the area (image enhancement) and to develop a common territorial identity.

4. Results from the case study

The sequence of events and activities leading to a place branding project in Chefchaouen

As presented above, three levels of activities are important with regard to the creation and success of place brands: the macro-, meso- and micro-level. Table 1 offers an overview over the dynamic progress of events and activities leading to place branding in Chefchaouen.

Table 1: Time path of the events and activities leading to place branding in Chefchaouen

	Phase 1: **2000 - 2004**		Phase 2: **2005 – 2009**			Phase 3: **2010 - 2014**		
	2000	2004	2006	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Events in the macro-environment (1)	EU-Morocco Association Agreement, as legal basis for cooperation within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership program.	US-Morocco bilateral free-trade agreement.		Launch of the National *Plan Maroc Vert* to develop the agricultural sector, performed at regional level. Legal framework for quality signs of food products.	Worldwide economic crisis has a negative impact on external financial supports & tourism.	Start advanced regionalization plan (*Régionalisation Avancée*). National plan for tourism *Vision 2020*; objective to make Morocco one of the world top tourist destinations.	Arab spring: unlike in other countries, in Morocco rather leading to a continuation of internal reforms.	EU-Morocco free trade agreement for agricultural products, followed by negotiations for a Free Trade Area.

Cooperation and network activities at a meso-level (2)		UNESCO recognition as Intercontinental Biosphere reserve, in cooperation with Spain.	Creation of Association *Chaouenrural*, leading to a strategic cooperation between tourism and agriculture.	Start project of the *Restaurateurs engages*; cooperation between local restaurants and farmers. Elaboration of a Tourism Strategy for the province Chefchaouen.	Network of the four Emblematic Communities of the Mediterranean Diet: Chefchaouen-Morocco, Koroni-Greece, Cilento-Italy and Soria-Spain. Member of the Network of the Medinas in the Mediterranean.	
Activities at a micro-level (3)				Label UNESCO for Chefchaouen as Emblematic Community of the Med. Diet. Efforts to make Chefchaouen the first Eco-city of Morocco.	Plan to be recognized by UNICEF as Child-Friendly City.	Elaboration of an action plan for place branding of Chefchaouen by an external consultancy.

Source: authors

Regarding the history of these events and activities, one can note that there is a stepwise evolution, starting at the macro-level, going over to the meso and then to the micro-level. Accordingly, national policies and international agreements may be considered as preliminary for actions undertaken by smaller entities.

National development policies in Morocco

The *macro-environment* is in general marked by an opening-up of the country, namely by free trade agreements, regionalisation and development plans for specific sectors. Three tendencies seem to be particularly important with regard to our research interest.

First of all, Morocco has a long evolution regarding its political efforts for regionalization and decentralism. It started in 1971 and has led in 2010 to the 'advanced regionalization' plan (*régionalisation avancée*), based on the insight that a socio-economic development of the country cannot take place without a strong decision power at regional level, and without implicating various forces of the society.[3] This reinforced regionalization and democratization plan is supposed to lead to an integrative and sustainable development of the country. One of the big challenges of Morocco will be to close spatial disparities between strong demographic and socio-economic urban centres and peripheral rural, mainly agricultural regions (EL ANSARI, 2009).

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[3] http://www.lemag.ma/Regionalisation-avancee-consecration-des-valeurs-de-la-democratie-participative_a62489.html.

A second important national project has been launched in 2008, the Green Morocco Plan for agriculture (PMV, *Plan Maroc Vert* 2008-2020). Agriculture constitutes 19% of the total national gross domestic product (15% agriculture and 4% agrifood) and has an employment rate of about 43% of the total workforce (www.oecd.org). Especially in rural areas, where poverty is still high, 80% of the 14 million inhabitants depend on revenues from agriculture. For smallholders in these marginalized zones, the strategy of the PMV consists on collective and cooperating actions for valorising local heritage, more specifically on the protection and promotion of traditional territorial food products (*produits de terroir*) - by means of Geographical Indications like in Europe. In view of an increasing number of free trade agreements, these value-added products are mainly aimed for export and tourists.

Third, the development of the tourism sector is of upmost importance for Morocco and also relevant with regard to place branding. The country has become one of the principal destinations for European tourists and received more than 10 million tourists in 2013, 7% more than in 2012. With an employment rate of 500.000 persons (5% of the workforce) and 12% contribution to the national GDP, tourism represents the second most important sector behind agriculture.[4] The tourism development policy in Morocco is currently defined by the national plan *Vision 2020*, which started in 2010 and intends to make the country one of the world top tourist destinations and to attract 20 million tourists per year.[5] Therefore, several large programs are jointly developed by the government, the regions and the private sector.[6] Vision 2020 is also considered as key element within the process of regionalization and for territorial development, as it gives local governments the power to decide about the conception, management and governance of their touristic offer.

Micro-level activities

Activities for place branding in Chefchaouen at a *micro-level* can be described as various single efforts to create distinguishable features, based on specific local assets (e.g. labels for the Mediterranean Diet, as eco-city and as children-friendly city). These activities even include the elaboration of a business plan for place branding, developed by an external consultancy; although

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[4] http://www.tourisme.gov.ma/fr/tourisme-en-chiffres/chiffres-cl%C3%A9s
[5] http://www.lavieeco.com/news/actualites/tourisme-le-maroc-determine-a-atteindre-les-objectifs-de-la-vision-2020-27657.html
[6] http://www.maroc.ma/fr/content/tourisme

this plan has not been implemented. Here, the vice-president of ATED, a local development association, stated:

> "*There are many ideas, but it remains difficult to realise them*" (interview on 13 June 2014).

Several persons were asked about who could lead a branding initiative. Interviews show that there is neither consensus about this issue nor confidence in a specific person or institution to play a leading role.

> "*It is impossible to manage a brand and to be member of it at the same time, so there is a need for someone who is independent*" (vice-president of ATED, on 13 June 2014)
>
> "*Someone who knows well this area and the tourism sector*" (sales representative of Chaouenrural, association for rural tourism, on 11 June 2014)
>
> "*Such an initiative could come from the public side, but must be appropriated from below*" (member of association for local development, ADL, on 12 June 2014)
>
> "*This should be initiated by public institutions, later result in cooperation between public and private partners*" (the mayor of the municipality of Chefchaouen, on 11 June 2014)
>
> "*This should be initiated and managed by both public institutions and private sector*" (a restaurant owner, on 17 June 2014)

Examples of cooperating initiatives

Cooperation and networking actions at the *meso-level* take place within a local and international context. In order to better understand the cooperation mechanisms, four different examples of joint actions are presented: two examples of horizontal (private-private), international and cross-sectoral cooperation (*Chaouenrural* and *Les Restaurateurs Engagés*), and two vertical (public-private), sectoral development projects, one for the agricultural sector and one for tourism.

The first one, *Chaouenrural* (www.chaouenrural.org), is an association founded in 2008. It has originated from a pilot project running from 2003 to 2008, financed by the Spanish ACTLC (*Asociación Catalana para el Tiempo Libre y la Cultura*) in cooperation with the local association AREA (*Association Rif el Andalous pour la protection du patrimoine*), with the aim to develop the rural tourism in the area of Chefchaouen. *Chaouenrural* consists of a network of initially nine rural guest houses, who work together with cooperatives of local food products (*produits de terroir*) and handicrafts. An information point in the town of Chefchaouen ensures the marketing, sales and logistics of the products and services offered, as stays in the guest

houses, transport, guides, rural touristic or thematic activities, restauration and visits as well as expositions of the cooperatives. By this, local assets are promoted and intersectoral cooperation and synergies in form of agro-tourism stimulated. However, today only 3 houses still participate and the socio-economic impact of *Chaouenrural* is limited, as tourism offers just a complementary activity for rural house owners and the tourist flux is restricted to the summer months. In addition, since 2009, the number of tourists at *Chaouenrural* has considerably decreased, which may be due to the economic crises, but also to the end of the pilot project.

The second example, *Les Restaurateurs Engagés*, is a project that has been initiated in 2009 by the local association AFHTA Chefchaouen (*l'Association pour l'Humain, Terroirs et Alternatives*) with the financial support of the French non-governmental organisation GERES (*Groupes Energies Renouvelables, Environnement et Solidarité*). The aim of this initiative is to reinforce the agro-ecological system. The approach consists of valorising local assets by certifying agricultural products and selling them with added-value in local restaurants and guest houses. Short distribution channels are preferred for ecological reasons. In 2014, eleven farmers and six restaurants have taken part. Although some of the participants are highly dedicated and involved in other initiatives or networks as well, the initiative as a whole suffers from insufficient participation and also from a lack of financial means for marketing. In addition, the financial support of GERES ended in 2014, thus the continuation of the project is endangered.

> *"The financing of this project is already finished"* (project coordinator, on 12 June 2014)
> *"There is no visibility, no marketing, because there is no money for doing that"* (idem)
> *"The restaurant owners don't want to increase prices for their menus"* (idem)
> *"We would like to have more engaged restaurant owners"* (engaged restaurant owner, on 16 June 2014)

Third, public-private partnerships take place within *the national Plan Maroc Vert*, which is performed at regional and provincial level. Here, farmers' cooperatives and unions are created in order to stimulate cooperation, to label territorial products and increase production outcomes. Public support is given in form of various trainings with regard to organisational and commercial, plantation and quality issues and by financial means for infrastructure and material. This year, results of the PMV will be assessed by the number of products per region that have entered in a qualification process for Geographical Indications. Interviews in the Chefchaouen province have demonstrated that the national top-down strategy of the PMV is not without hurdles. Interviews

show that the farmers' motivation to cooperate seems to be limited as potential benefits are not obvious for them, and distribution continues to take place via conventionalized channels.

> *"The idea was not clear in the beginning, and people didn't know what a cooperative is"* (member of a cooperative, on 17 June 2014)

> *"The idea of the Agricultural Ministry to develop Geographical Indications is a little bit forced"* (member of a union of cooperatives, on 18 June 2014)

> *"Cooperatives are not motivated to become member of the union, there is no assimilation. They are used to sell directly, in the stores. There is no link between the cooperatives and the union"* (member of a union of cooperatives, on 18 June 2014)

Fourth, another example of public-private cooperation is *the tourism development strategy for Chefchaouen*. Here, the local association ATED (*Association Talassemtane pour l'Environnement et le Développement*), in partnership with the Spanish foundation ETEA for cooperation and development and financed by public means of the *l'Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo* (AECID) has elaborated a tourism strategy for the province Chefchaouen. ATED has brought together various public and private stakeholders, such as members from other local associations ADL - *Association de Développement Local*, from the municipality, the commune Bab Taza and the private sector.[7] The complete strategy has been presented at the Commissariat of Tourism in Rabat. It is considered as an exemplary strategy, a pilot project in Morocco, including amongst others the creation of thematic circuits with rural houses in the province, and trainings for people active in the tourism sector. In addition, several tourism information boards and an information office in Chefchaouen town have been established; however, the office is closed for financial reasons. The tourism strategy for Chefchaouen has until now not been implemented. As the project coordinator explained, this is due to cooperation and federation problems among tourism actors, and above all, to the question of governance.

> *"Everything has been done to elaborate the tourism strategy, but now, nobody feels responsible to realise this project"* (interview on 17 June 2014)

This is also related to the question of political unity. Here, obstacles result from the fact that public actors such as the municipality, the provincial council and the ministries have heterogeneous competences and responsibilities. The difficulties appear at one hand at a level of

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[7] Cf. document Diversité & Développement 2012, *Stratégie du Développement du Secteur touristique dans la province de Chefchaouen.*

sectors: a representative for agriculture is present (the director of the DPA, *Direction Provinciale d'Agriculture*), but one for tourism is missing. On the other hand, the geographical scale presents a problem as the administrative units, i.e. Chefchaouen town and the province, do not correspond to the predominant mountainous culture of the Rif, the *Jbala*.

> *"The problem is that each chain has another representative: e.g. the tourism chain has the Ministry of Tourism, the agricultural chain has the DRA and DPA, and then you have the craft chain… It is thus a problem of federation"* (project coordinator of the tourism project directed by ATED, 17 June 2014)

> *"The Moroccan State does not finance anything that isn't directly connected to the PMV. But a financing could be possible by the Provincial Council"* (director of the Direction Provinciale de l'Agriculture, on 13 June 2014)

> *"Not only Chefchaouen is important, but Jbala"* (rural house owner, on 14 June 2014)

5. Discussion

Despite the gap in literature on place branding in Africa, potential benefits for branding in this geographical area have largely been recognized, such as developing a unique, competitive identity for differentiation or adding value to local material and immaterial assets both for export and attraction of tourists and investors. Therefore, this article has raised the question about the potential and limits of creating a place brand as tool for territorial development in the rural Moroccan province Chefchaouen. Factors for success or failure have been studied, building on previous research and theory in place branding literature. One of the main preliminary observations has been that place brands can be considered as a new entrepreneurial style of local government and economic development; hence claiming an active political commitment but also engaging other stakeholder groups. This policy view on place brands has allowed linking them to territorial development and considering them, in a French perspective, as *projets de territoire*.

The case study has shown that Chefchaouen has good preconditions for developing a collective place brand for several reasons. First, national policies increasingly give importance to the territorial level via regionalization and decentralization as well as to global exchanges through free-trade agreements and agricultural or tourism development plans. Moreover, the study has revealed a large amount of valuable place-specific assets in the target area, such as the medina, a beautiful unspoiled nature, typical food, and crafts. There are a lot of single efforts to valorise and promote these assets. Chefchaouen is also engaged in various international cooperation projects,

mainly within the Mediterranean area. The commitment of local authorities and associations is high and several (cross-)sectoral cooperating projects have been initiated. On the one hand, the interactions at a local and small-scale level as *Chaouenrural*, *Les Restaurateurs Engagés* and the *tourism strategy* initiated by ATED; and on the other hand, the large-scale public-private cooperation within the national *Plan Maroc Vert* via cooperatives and unions. All these initiatives are exemplary as they demonstrate a beginning of cooperation and coordination for valorising place-based assets at various geographical scales. However, a deeper analysis regarding the meso-level, including cooperation and partnerships, leadership and political unity, has revealed a number of barriers.

First, cooperating initiatives very often depend on external financial support and come to flag if this backing stops. The multiplicity of funds and initiatives by international NGOs or authorities make people always waiting for new development projects and support; they limit their involvement in coherent and collective strategies as place branding. Two of these projects, *Chaouenrural* and *Les Restaurateurs Engagés*, have demonstrated a potential to develop cross-sectoral cooperation in the target area, by bringing together farmers, rural house owners, restaurants and tourists. Cross-sectoral cooperation at a local level is thus possible and this kind of initiatives could be embedded in a larger project as a place brand, but until now, these projects have a limited scope and strongly depend on external financial support by international NGOs and donors to be implemented and successfully continued.

Second, many local actors do not seem to have incorporated benefits and principles of cooperation; even less if the motivation comes from public side (*Plan Maroc Vert*). However, this engagement of private stakeholders is needed for place branding.

Third, there is neither consensus nor confidence in a particular instance that could play the role of a leader for a collective place brand. This may partly be due to a general distrust towards public governance forms rooted in the political history of the country, as the relations between kind Hassan II and the Rif area were particularly tense.

Fourth, the geographical and administrative area of Chefchaouen does not contribute to unify actors for building a place brand. A coherent governance structure is missing in the target region, as fields of responsibilities at sectoral, administrative and geographical level are divergent. Moreover, the different mind-sets and world-views seem to hinder coordinated action between the urban centre and bordering rural districts.

6. Conclusion

Altogether, the failure of place branding in Chefchaouen mainly resides in the complexity of internal and external relationships and responsibilities. For successfully building a collective place brand leading to territorial development, problems such as insufficient regional decision power and financial autonomy, resulting from the yet uncompleted regionalisation and decentralisation process, dependence on external international funding as well as the absence of trust in cooperation and in public interventions in the economy, need to be solved.

This shows that place brands cannot simply build on planning, visions, logos, a places' identity or assets, but must be understood in a more integrative manner, as they are embedded in complex geographical, relational and institutional systems, claiming for political guidance and an active commitment and cooperation of various stakeholder groups.

With regard to policy implications, it would be important to further advance the regionalisation in Morocco and to give local governments more administrative and financial autonomy; and to liberate people from their dependence on external funding. Place brands then could be used in a flexible and context-sensitive way for territorial development. This seems to be quite useful as they fit with current development aims of the country, namely the enforcement of tourism and agriculture via the valorisation of local assets. Place brands would offer a chance to create synergies between these two key sectors, which until now are treated in separate national policies. Furthermore, exchanges between policy makers, place managers and academics, and the already existing decentralised interregional cooperation projects offer chances to come to a deeper understanding of complex local development issues. In any case, further research is needed in other Moroccan regions and, especially also, on the role of and need for international NGOs as donors for new local initiatives.

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