The Complexities of Inclusive Participatory Governance: the case of Moroccan associational life in the context of the INDH

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Abstract. This article examines the liberalization and reform process that has been championed by the Moroccan monarchy since 1999. After the coronation of Mohammed VI, special attention has been given by the state to terms such as "participation", "good governance" and "gender equality" and several reform programs have since been launched. The aim of this article is to concentrate on the local level in which these reforms and official discourses are put into practice and are (re)adapted. In order to narrow the scope of analysis, this paper concentrates on the process of inclusion of new social actors (female NGO leaders) into the participatory sphere, using the case of the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH) that was launched in 2005. My aim is to show that inclusive participation is being promoted at a micro social level but that, at the same time, it has got many different and seemingly contradictory facets.

1. Introductıon

Since the coronation of Mohammed VI in 1999, after close to forty years of rule by his father Hassan II, the question of "change" has not only been at the core of the official discourse but has also attracted the attention of political analysts as well as national and international journalists. Most

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interpretations of this "change" have focused on the prospects of Morocco's transition from an authoritarian regime to a democratic one. This approach was nourished by the so-called "liberalization process" launched during the 1990s, but particularly promoted by the new King[1] who openly stressed the importance of human rights and freedom of speech as well as using terms such as "participation", "decentralization", "good governance" and "gender equality" in his public rhetoric. Shortly after 1999, the expectations for political transition in the country were generally high (Vermeren, 2001; Saas, 2001).

Over ten years later, while some voices - highly encouraged by the official discourse - continue to interpret the "change" that Morocco is currently undergoing as a promising path towards democracy (with a dynamic civil society, free elections, and reforms towards more gender equality), many analysts are stopping short of concluding that Morocco is in a period of democratic transition (Catusse and Vairel, 2003). Several local newspapers denounce the strengthening of the monarch's power, increased cooptation of civil society actors and repeated actions to stifle the press.[2] The "change" that the State is promoting, they argue, is merely an instrument or a façade used to strengthen the socio-political status quo.

While most of the studies dealing with this question have generally been limited to top-down approaches, which have either focused on the limits of the so called "transition process" or have over-idealized its

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[1] Morocco is a constitutional monarchy in which the monarch shares the power with a government formed partly by representatives of the leading parties in parliament. The King's legitimacy largely rests on his religious role as The Commander of the Faithful and his descent from the Prophet's Mohammed family. He is the head of state, the commander in chief of the armed forces and controls the most important ministries of the country (namely the Ministries of Interior, of Religious Affairs and of External Affairs). He is empowered to appoint the country's prime minister and to dissolve the legislature. This makes him a crucial (if not the only) actor in most strategic decisions that are taken by the state.

[2] In February 2010, when *Le Journal Hebdomadaire* - one of the most critical Moroccan weekly newspapers - was shut down, Benchemsi, editor in chief, of another weekly newspaper wrote : « Our country is undergoing a dangerous regression (…) Freedom of speach in Morocco? It existed in 1999, after Mohammed VI's accessing the throne (…) But while the central power evolved and gained more 'self-confidence, this openess shrunk year by year. Today, it only hangs by a thread, an increasingly thin one ». *Tel Quel*, nr.410, 4-12 february 2010.

democratizing potential, this article takes a more bottom-up approach[3], focusing on the local level in which reforms and official discourses are put into practice and are (re)adapted. My aim is to show how - underneath the above-mentioned macro political tendencies - change does occur at a micro social level. At the same time, I will also show that this change has got many different and seemingly contradictory facets. By doing this I am not giving change a normative connotation by defining it, for instance, as "a process towards more democracy". Rather than try to describe "what we would like this process to tend towards", I concentrate on the "here and now" (Zaki, 2008: 158). Such an approach helps analyze what lies beyond predefined categories such as those of 'democracy' and 'authoritarianism' and enables us to concentrate on the many mechanisms that lie behind the production of political orders, thus, highlighting their hybrid character.[4]

In order to narrow the scope of my analysis, I am going to concentrate on the process of inclusion of new social actors[5] into the participatory sphere which has been defined by Cornwall and Coelho as "a distinct arena at the interface of state and society" with "a semi-autonomous existence" in which "contestation as well as collaboration" take place between heterogeneous participants who act inside "participatory sphere institutions" (2007: 1-2). The creation of these kinds of spaces has been greatly promoted by global contemporary development politics, and governments have been encouraged to integrate them into national policy making. This tendency takes its roots in the deep conviction that "involving citizens more directly in the processes of governance makes better citizens, better decisions and better government". It contributes to improving the understanding between citizens and the state in the process of public policy building and that it guarantees access to social services for vulnerable and poor populations (Cornwall, Coelho, 2007: 4-5). In this context a great emphasis has been put on including under-represented sectors of society into the participatory sphere; as in the case of women[6] for example.

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[3] As developed by Bayart (2008), one of the first to introduce the need to change the dominant analytical perspective and to move from the "top down" to a "bottom up" approach.

[4] This past decade, more and more political analysts have suggested the importance of such approaches. See Diamond (2002); Dabène, Geisser and Massardier (2008) ; Camau and Massardier (2008).

[5] Understood here as individuals engaged in organized activity

[6] Cornwall (2007: 1-2) argues that « development's emphasis on women's empowerment » has given rise to what she calls « empowerment-lite », a simulacrum that is inspired by feminist demands but does nothing to « address the

This trend has become particularly visible in Morocco after the implementation of the National Initiative for Human Development (known as INDH[7]) that was launched in 2005. This large-scale national project, initiated by the monarch, is aimed at improving human development by fighting poverty, illiteracy and social exclusion. In addition to allocating new financial resources for development, the INDH has been designed to enhance local participation and include more voices into the decision-making process. Thus, in this article I will mainly concentrate on the implementation process of the INDH which I will briefly present in the first part. In order to illustrate how the INDH has impacted on local associational life, I will then focus on the life story of Imane[8], a forty-one year old woman from Casablanca[9] who has become famous for leading an NGO[10] at the level of a suburban neighborhood. Through her career I will highlight some of the multifaceted changes that the INDH has brought about in local associational life.

2. The INDH: An Initiative Designed to Enhance National Development by Promoting Participation

"(…) upon reflection that has deepened during my travels and visits across different regions of the Kingdom (…) I have decided to inform you, today, of a question at the heart of Our vision of society, a question that concerns the nation as a whole: institutions, political and economic actors, trade unions, civil society and of course, families and all citizens. (…) by

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underlying structural inequalities and pervasive discrimination that roused feminists into action in the first place »

[7] As for *Initiative nationale de développement humain*.

[8] This is a fictional name chosen in order to preserve the anonymity of the person. For the same reason, the name of the neighborhood in which she lives and operates her NGO has not been given.

[9] Casablanca is Morocco's largest city as well as its economic capital. Its inhabitants represent 12% of Morocco's population and 25% of the urban population (Troin, 2002: 61). Furthermore 14% of all associations are said to be located in Casablanca (Association 2007 DABA, 2007: 32)

[10] Even though I use the term « NGO » in this article, I would like to highlight the fact that there is no clear line separating these organizations from State institutions : they are, for instance, highly dependent on grants from the State and close links exist between their leaders and State representatives. This aspect becomes particularly clear when looking at the INDH case.

> announcing an initiative that is both ambitious and innovative,
> called the National Initiative for Human Development".[11]

On May 18th, 2005 Mohammed VI presented the Initiative for Human Development (INDH) during a speech, set against the backdrop of a compassionate monarch traveling around his kingdom, sensitive to the needs and problems of his people. This initiative was clearly presented as a project built on the concrete and local needs of the inhabitants of the country: mainly the issue of poverty. It was also presented as being part of a much bigger social project aimed at developing the country and in which all national institutions and actors, including civil society and every citizen, were encouraged to take part.

This focus of Moroccan public policies on the "local level" is not new: efforts have already been made since the end of the 1990s to promote it as a central component of the implementation of reforms (Catusse, 2003). Through the INDH, though, particular emphasis is given to the local level as well as to policies that promote the inclusion of the public in the process of decision-making, reflecting more global trends of contemporary development policy that stress participatory and deliberative mechanisms as a core means of development work.[12]

More specifically, through the INDH, micro-projects are being elaborated, financed and implemented by local representatives of the State in close collaboration with elected council members and local NGO leaders. The organization of the INDH - which is highly territorialized - builds on a pyramid structure that includes, from the bottom, levels of decision-making in which NGO leaders are asked to represent the inhabitant's interests. In the first phase projects are designed by local NGOs, in some cases with the help of local authorities (mainly representatives of the municipal district or of the Prefecture[13]). These projects then go through a second phase in which local

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[11] Quote from Mohammed VI's May 18, 2005 speech in which he presented the INDH (the author's own translation). The full speech is available at http://www.indh.gov.ma/fr/article.asp

[12] Allal (2007: 285-286) shows very accurately how developmentalist terminologies and objectives were borrowed from international organisations such as the World Bank and the United Nations in order to give shape to Mohammed VI's new policies.

[13] A prefecture is a territorial and administrative circumscription led by a governor (designated by the King). The city of Casablanca is currently divided into 8 prefectures. Each of these units contain municipal districts that are managed by elected municipal or communal councils.

committees, which include elected members of the municipal or communal councils (*conseils communaux*), local representatives of the state as well as local NGO leaders, select a first set of projects to be supported through the INDH. After these first two phases, these projects must go through an additional selection process at the level of prefectural committees (*comités préfectoraux*) that are led by the governor and that also include civil society representatives (1/3 of the members of this committee). The entire process is under the supervision of regional councils and of the central committee, at the top of the pyramid, which is controlled by the Prime Minister.

An overall budget of ten billion dirhams has been allocated to this initiative for a period of 5 years (2006-2010). This sum is partially covered by the general budget of the State and by other donors such as local authorities, international organizations (the World Bank, the European Union etc.) and private donors (like the King of Saudi Arabia). In order to distribute this money on a nationally, special attention has been given to regions that have been identified as being particularly in need of support and development[14]: these are called priority sites *(sites prioritaires).* In the urban areas a total of 264 neighborhoods situated in 30 different cities (including 54 neighborhoods in Casablanca) have thus been selected. The overall budget allocated to the region of Greater Casablanca was 102 million dirhams (approximately 13.5 million US dollars).[15] Even though this sum might appear limited in light of the daunting social challenges that the city of Casablanca faces, it still represents a substantial step at the level of poor suburban areas that have been neglected during the past decades. The INDH has thus created new sources of revenues that can be redistributed at the local level through the work of local NGOs who have seen their annual budget rise considerably thanks to this financial input.

Special attention is given to the work of NGOs specialized in social issues, local development and in projects that target women and young people, and who promote activities that aim to generate revenues (better known as AGR for *Activités génératrices de revenus*) such as the production of honey, clothes and textiles or projects linked to the tourism industry.

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[14] Which leads, as Bono (forthcoming) argues, to a process of naturalization and territorialization of poverty, which does not, for instance, take into consideration the question of social redistribution nor the link between social inequalities and public policy orientations.

[15] Jafry, « Casablanca: le détail des projets INDH », *L'Economiste*, 15 septembre 2005.

Projects that have a strong educational background (literacy, craft or IT training etc.) also get special attention.

When talking to several people[16] involved in the selection process of the INDH during my fieldwork, it was also quite obvious that the gender component plays a central role in it: projects presented by women's NGOs or by mixed NGOs (that include men as well as women) are clearly favored. This tendency, which is particularly striking since women still represent a minority in local as well as national politics, has been reinforced by international standards that insist on gender equality and on the importance of women's inclusion in the process of development and decision-making. Furthermore, these standards have been repeatedly highlighted by King Mohammed VI in several of his speeches, as well as through substantial reforms such as the reform of the Family Code (known as *moudawana*).

It thus becomes clear from that the promotion of participatory sphere institutions – such as local NGOs for example – represents a central element of the implementation process of the INDH. Moreover, it shows that new spaces of participation (local as well as prefectural committees) have been designed in order to encourage deliberative mechanisms in which local NGO actors as well as representatives of local authorities are present. By insisting on the local dimension of development, this process aims to encourage the inclusion of small neighborhood-based associations that have historically played a secondary role in local politics. Furthermore, women, who were traditionally excluded from participatory sphere institutions, are now receiving special attention. Many examples show that this has led to the emergence of new actors who have gained considerable power through the process of the INDH; a change that the case of Imane will help us illustrate.

3. Imane's Career in Times of "Change": From Unemployed Graduate to Successful Political Candidate

Imane is one of those social actors who has greatly benefited from the INDH. She was born in 1969 in a poor suburb of Casablanca. Her parents moved to the city during the 1950s as part of the rural exodus that took place during that time. The neighborhood they settled in, which was at the time a semi-rural area with many farms, was adjacent to the city of Casablanca. The region has considerably changed since then: the fruit trees have disappeared;

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[16] Mainly persons in charge of the INDH at the level of the Prefecture and of the municipal districts, as well as NGO leaders involved in the selection process of the INDH

the continuous rural exodus has given birth to many shanty towns that spread all over the neighborhood and low income apartment buildings have been built by the State in order to offer inexpensive housing. For many years, the neighborhood received very little attention from authorities and was considered one of the poorest and most deprived parts of the city.

Imane went to university after finishing school and studied law for three years like most of her friends in the neighborhood.[17] After graduation in 1994, she remained unemployed for five years. Her situation was by no means exceptional since during the 1990s Morocco entered a phase of rising unemployment, mainly of young university graduates.[18] Fortunately, in 1999 an international foundation decided to settle in the neighborhood. Its aim was to promote female literacy and to offer different forms of training (mainly handicrafts) for the women of the area. The members in charge of the foundation hired Imane as a local coordinator and in turn, she hired all her unemployed friends as teachers. This position as local coordinator helped Imane *discover* associational life. In 2002, along with her female friends and colleagues she created the first women's association in the neighborhood to counter the many male dominated NGOs in the area. She became the president of this association, which had very similar objectives to those of the foundation that had hired her, but she received almost no financial aid and thus its activities remained very limited. In 2004 she co-founded a local network of NGOs and was elected as its president but still did not receive much financial support.[19]

She first heard about the INDH through a local paper shortly after the King's official announcement in 2005. In fact, the news circulated widely amongst NGOs active in her neighborhood.[20] The INDH was heralded as a new opportunity for change and the beginning of a new era in

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[17] As Vermeren (2002: 328) explains, starting in the 1980s, a massive rush towards law studies took place since it was considered as a good way to get employed by the State. But by that time this discipline had already started to lose its prestige.

[18] These rising unemployment rates are linked to structural adjustment policies implemented by the IMF and the World Bank and launched in Morocco during the 1980s. For more details on the structural impacts of these new policies see Destremau and Signoles (1995).

[19] Until very recently, international donors had shown very little interest in supporting NGOs located in suburban areas like those described here in Casablanca.

[20] While the King's speech triggered great hope in Imane and her colleagues, local representatives of international organisations such as the UNDP and the World Bank, showed similar enthusiasm for what they interpreted as an opportunity to finally get work done (Allal, 2007: 285).

which local NGOs would get more attention and support. Indeed, a few weeks after the announcement, Imane received a phone call from the prefecture encouraging her to devise one or more projects in order to apply for incoming INDH grants. As one of the rare women active as an NGO leader in the area and as the president of the local NGO network, she was also asked to represent the neighborhood's associations in the prefectural committee of the INDH which is headed by the governor and sits above the local committee (headed by the president of the district council) in the pyramidal structure described earlier. Regular meetings with other NGO representatives and the governor as well as other representatives of the State followed. During these meetings, Imane was able to substantially develop her social network by making contacts with local representatives of the State.

Eventually, all her projects were accepted and by the end of 2007, Imane's NGO had been allocated a total aid grant of more than 400,000 dirhams[21] to develop four different projects: literacy as well as aerobic classes for women, handicraft training, remedial courses, and IT classes. In 2008 these funds were mainly used to renovate and equip a building that had been donated to the district by a private constructor and that is now used to run all the projects. It became a multi-purpose center for women and young people, offering literacy classes, handicraft and catering training as well as IT classes and self-empowerment workshops. The main beneficiaries of the center (approximately 500 persons a year) are women and young people living nearby, either in one of the many shanty towns or in the low-income apartments. While the district takes care of all electricity and water bills, Imane has been appointed as the director of the center, and the other members of the NGO, her friends, all teach in the new center as well as helping to manage it. In return, all get a monthly salary.[22]

By the spring of 2009, a couple of months before the June municipal elections, Imane had acquired a high level of popularity in the neighborhood, thanks to her ongoing work and to the new center she was directing since the end of 2008. Moreover, in the 2009 elections, political parties were particularly keen on attracting female candidates after a new form of quota was introduced: in each district an additional list, restricted to women, was attached to the standard list of candidates (mainly composed of men[23]).

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[21] Approximately $52,000 US dollars.

[22] Around 2000 dirhams (approx. $240 US dollars) per month for the teachers.

[23] During the 2003 municipal elections only 4.91% of all candidates were women, whereas in 2009 women represented 15.7% of all candidates.

Many political parties invited Imane to be one of their local candidates. She chose to run with the current president of her municipal district who was favorite to win these elections. She led the women's electoral list of the district in which four female NGO leaders were represented, while the president led the "normal list" composed of local notables (entrepreneurs and merchants) as well as a few NGO leaders. Imane's party won the elections and she was one of the many members of her electoral list who got a seat in the district's council, thus contributing to the national increase of women's representation in municipal and communal councils from 0.54%, after the 2003 elections, to more than 12%, after the 2009 elections.

Imane's example helps illustrate how, during this last decade, new actors who were not part of the traditional local notability have been able to not only climb the social ladder but also become part of the local decision making apparatus as political actors. In fact, her career is by no means exceptional. It reflects several changes that have become apparent in today's Morocco: the increasing number of local associations coupled with a growing percentage of female NGO leaders; the inclusion of civil society actors into the decision-making process and their entering the political sphere as local members of the municipal councils. Even though this process had started before the launch of the INDH (most actors who joined the initiative were already active as NGO leaders), Imane's career illustrates how the implementation of the INDH has clearly had a strong impact on this evolution. Through the INDH, new resources were injected into the local associational sphere and this contributed significantly to the strengthening of local NGO actors. Furthermore, the participatory approach of the INDH helped create new spaces that encourage collaborations between NGO leaders, local members of the municipal council and local representatives of the State.

Today, the media highlight examples like those of Imane. She is frequently interviewed and two newspapers reported about her work, presenting her as a great model of "change", local activism and what "Moroccan women are able to achieve". Local authorities have become eager to introduce Imane to their visitors and keen on showing them the work of her center that the last time I met her, she could not help but complain that "the place has become like a tourist attraction. Whenever the president of the district or the governor receive official guests, they bring them here!" But, while Imane is presented as an example of success, a closer look at the empirical realities of her career sheds light on hidden sides of this new era of "change".

4. Who Participates? Inclusive Participation and Its Limitations

To begin with, it is important to take a closer look at who participates in the INDH process, and who does not; who is considered to be the most suitable representative of the neighborhood, and who is not. It seems obvious that the particular attention Imane enjoyed when the INDH was launched resulted, in part, from her many personal traits and accomplishments. She is known for being an energetic woman who has a proven ability to lead an NGO. Furthermore she holds a university degree and is well-connected and well-known in the neighborhood where she grew up. Also, through her work as local coordinator of an international foundation, she had become well-connected at the local level through regular meetings with local authorities, especially with elected representatives of the municipal district. In 2003, she even actively supported the campaign of the current president of her district who then started supporting her work.

However, actors who do not possess the same background, or who do not have the same level of education or number of contacts as Imane, experience more difficulties when trying to participate in the INDH process. I will illustrate this by presenting the case of Siham[24], a thirty-three year old woman, who lives not far from the multipurpose center Imane manages. Siham is the president of a women's club that offers literacy classes and handicraft training for women in the *Youth House*[25] of the neighborhood. She would like to transform her club into a proper NGO with proper bylaws and an independent status[26] but she is still hesitating since she knows that this process is going to take a long time, cost her a lot of energy and might not even succeed. Some of her friends have already tried this and have failed. In the meantime, Siham clearly envies all those NGO actors of the neighborhood who, like Imane, are currently receiving substantial help for their activities. Getting funds from the INDH seems completely inaccessible for her even though her club is in urgent need for sewing machines and she would love to be able to apply for a grant.

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[24] This is again a fictitious name.

[25] *Youth Houses* are under the supervision of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. These are clubs and NGOs which have no proper surroundings but can be hosted in institutions which usually offer classrooms, a library and in some cases even a sports field.

[26] As a club working in the *Youth House*, she needs the approval of the director of the House before every activity she does and all income generated by the club belongs to the House.

When Siham is not busy teaching women in her neighborhood how to read and sew, she is active in the Islamist organization called *Al-Adl-Wal-Ihsan*.[27] This association, although tolerated by the State, is not recognized as a legal structure and its activities are closely watched by the authorities. In practice, no authorization is given to its members who intend to create a legal and formal structure such as an NGO. Hence, its members have to find ways to get around these obstacles.[28] Presently, they remain effectively excluded from the current promotion of NGO activities.

In fact, even though the State encourages the creation of new associations, they are also highly controlled entities that have to conform to predefined rules. The legislation that is applied to NGOs has known two changes since 1958, when the Law on Public Liberties was issued. In 1973, changes paved the way for a higher degree of control by the State, but the new law of 2002 "strikes a balance between an opening up toward civil society and the maintenance of 'soft' state control" (Bergh, 2009: 47). At the very top of the ladder, the Ministry of Interior oversees NGO activity while at the bottom it is the *mqaddem*[29] who keeps a close eye on an NGO's daily activities, taking part, for example, in general assemblies, conferences and festivities that are organized by associations. Furthermore, a central database designed to contain all the information about each association was launched a few years ago. From this point of view, we could argue that the growing number of NGOs signifies a greater control over society by the state.

This control starts with the process which social actors have to go through when planning to create an association. Members of an association have to submit a declaration to the local authorities, who then issue a provisional and later a final receipt which gives the association a legal status. In practice though, every future executive member of the NGO has to go through an inquiry process led by the *mqaddem* and local police authorities. It is only after passing this hurdle that the receipt can be issued. In some of the cases that were presented to me during my fieldwork, this process had taken up to nine months and in some other cases, authorities had refused to

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[27] *Al Adl Wal Ihsane* (Justice and Charity) is a Moroccan Islamist movement. Its founder, Abdesslam Yassine, was kept under house arrest for many years for openly criticizing King Hassan II. He was released in 2000 by Mohammed VI. Even though this association is tolerated it has no legal status.

[28] Usually by encouraging people who are not affiliated to *Al-Adl* to create such a structure for them

[29] A representative of the State who is appointed at the local level in order to act as an interface between citizens and the State as well as keep an eye on everyday life in the neighborhood.

deliver the provisional receipt. Through this process, actors that are not deemed "suitable" are filtered out and thus excluded from formal participation. This is particularly the case of actors who, like Siham, are part of officially non-recognized or restricted movements.[30]

This distinction between "suitable" and "non-suitable" social actors also appears through the INDH selection process. No clear instructions have been issued on how to choose the members of the local and the prefectural committees that select the projects funded by the Initiative. This choice appears to be mainly guided by non-transparent processes where actors are already known to local authorities and who fit into the promoted profile of civil society actors are favored, as in the case of Imane. Being part of these committees enables NGO leaders to highlight their own projects whereas NGOs who are not represented are less likely to succeed in getting their projects financed.

Thus, beyond Imane's personal experience as well as resources that clearly favored her during the INDH selection process, more political issues were also at stake. If Imane receives so much attention it is also because her association is not only specialized in addressing social problems, particularly women's issues, but also because the organization presents itself as having no political agenda. It becomes clear that if the State is promoting NGO activities and opening up the participatory sphere, it is also the State who keeps a close eye on these organizations while defining who is allowed to take part in this process and who is not. Whereas some actors are strongly encouraged to participate, others are *de facto* excluded. This raises the crucial question of representation, which is supposed to be standing at the core of the participatory sphere promoted by the State. Representation, in this context, is rather partial as well as selective.

5. The Redistribution of Power within the Associational Sphere

Imane's career as a female NGO leader clearly illustrates how, from a gender point of view, some women have been able to transgress structural inequalities and enter a participatory sphere in which they were traditionally marginalized. In fact, it is only since the end of the 1990s that women have

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[30] The Human Rights Watch (2009) report on freedom to create associations in Morocco states that in addition to members of *Al Adl Wal Ihsane*, some human rights associations that defend Sahrawi and Amazigh populations as well as some associations that support the rights of unemployed people and of Subsaharan immigrants are subject to the authorities refusal to regularize their status. The report issued by the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (2008) on freedom of association in Morocco insists on very similar conclusions.

become increasingly active at the level of local NGOs[31], a trend that has become much more visible since the INDH was launched. It becomes clear then that a redistribution of power, in which women are included into deliberative mechanisms, is taking place. However, this redeployment of power does not mean that inequalities are disappearing. While new forms of inequality are indeed surfacing, some authoritarian patterns of leadership seem to have been consolidated.

New forms of inequality exacerbating inter-associational conflicts

As we have seen before, the INDH process is a highly selective process. Whereas some actors are included in it, others remain excluded (either because they lack the right resources or because they do not fit into the profile of a "suitable" NGO leader). The inequalities that arise from this have been additionally exacerbated through the substantial financial input that came with the INDH and the much increased competition between associational actors eager to get their slice of the "INDH-cake". While such competition, which fosters creativity and innovation, might have a positive impact on the quality of services that are offered by local NGOs, it also makes inequalities more apparent and has a negative impact on NGO leader's willingness to work with each other.

Indeed, most NGO leaders in the neighborhood (especially women) do not appreciate Imane and show more willingness to act against her than to work with her. This became particularly evident when, in January 2007, Imane tried to create a local network of female NGO leaders theoretically aimed at strengthening female participation in the region and creating a strong enough group that would be able to push for reforms at the local level. Most women attending the presentation meeting showed great reluctance to join this network. Why, they asked themselves, is Imane creating this network? Is this a ploy to strengthen her own position in the area as the head of a women's social network? This suspicion even pushed one local female actor to try to create her own women's counter-network. To this day, neither of these two projects has succeeded and no women's network, that might have been strong enough in order to push for reforms, has been created.

The strengthening of authoritarian patterns of leadership

Even before the implementation of the INDH process, Imane, who is known for being hot-tempered and authoritative, was already the main decision-

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[31] To be distinguished from national NGOs in which women, through their action inside feminist organisations, have been very active since the second half of the 1980s.

maker of the NGO to the point that most people referred to it as "Imane's association". She acted as the main founder and main representative of the organization and, even if internal meetings were taking place on a regular basis, no real deliberative process was actually taking place. Imane's monopoly on power in the association is by no means exceptional; most micro-NGOs I encountered during my three years of field research in Morocco showed similar practices comparable to those depicted by Joseph (1997: 58) when she describes women's organizations in Lebanon like little shops[32] in which the leader is not only the head of the organisation but also its founder, benefactor and main decision-maker. As Joseph argues, these NGOs therefore reproduce hierarchical and authoritarian processes that prevail in men's organizations.

Interestingly, the implementation of the INDH process led to a reinforcement of this tendency inside the NGO headed by Imane. Shortly after Imane received the approval concerning the projects she had presented to the INDH, problems[33] arose inside the association and her control over the organization started to be put into question by some of the other members of the NGO. During a few weeks, Imane even lost contact with most of the members of the association. Angry, but also quite worried, she rewrote the NGO bylaws with the help of a lawyer friend. Initially, the text stipulated that the president was elected for a period of three years until a general assembly could be held in order to elect a new president or decide to keep the old one. The text also said that the other executive members had the power to organize an exceptional meeting before the end of three years in case they did not agree with the current president. Imane's friends had never used that right before but the conflict that arose when the INDH entered the picture made Imane fear that she could lose control over the NGO, and, by extension, over the resources that had been allocated to the association.

The new text she wrote, a few months before the annual general assembly was going to be held, contained substantial changes. From now on, she decided, the president of the association was going to be elected for a period of ten years. The president also had the power to choose the members of the executive office as well as to dissolve it. The day Imane informed me

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[32] The main difference in the organisations I dealt with for this article compared to the NGOs studied by Joseph is that their leaders do not come from priviledged social classes.

[33] It is not clear what the main origin of this internal conflict was, but it seems that it was a mix between personal conflicts as well as disagreements caused by the fact that Imane, by entering the INDH process, had dragged the association onto a new level of responsibility.

about her decision she almost seemed a little embarrassed: "Do you think" she asked me "that I am too authoritarian?" I hesitated before giving her an answer but chose to say yes. "If I don't do that" she explained "they are going to destroy all the work I have been doing these last years, they are not ready yet to manage on their own the huge sum of money that the INDH gave us. They gave this money to me, it is my work that made that possible and I won't accept to see all my efforts reduced to nothing because of them. I won't give them this possibility".

In order to get ready for the incoming general assembly, Imane convinced other acquaintances of hers to join the NGO and if necessary to replace her opponents which, by the day of the assembly, formed a minority and had no choice but to accept the changes she had introduced in the bylaws. Unsurprisingly, these were adopted and Imane was elected president with a 10 years mandate. From now on, the former hierarchical structure and personalized style of decision-making of the NGO was clearly reinforced and sanctified by new written internal regulations that gave all power to the president for a period of 10 years.

6. The INDH Opening Up New Channels of Negotiation

It is rather unclear how the local and prefectural committees actually function and to what degree they effectively encourage the active participation of NGO leaders that are taking part in them. While many of my interviewees stress the fact that "everybody's opinion is being taken into consideration", others insist on presenting these councils as spaces in which participation is merely staged and where decisions are effectively taken by the Prefecture under the supervision of the governor. But beyond this question, it seems rather clear that these committees have opened the door for more informal and indirect negotiations between NGO leaders, political actors and representatives of the State.

The multi-purpose center Imane is currently managing was inaugurated in 2008 after it had been allocated to her NGO at the end of 2007. Before that, Imane's NGO did not have a proper location where its members could meet and organize activities. Several other NGOs in her neighborhood also found themselves without a proper space to work from. This situation is all the more difficult considering that international as well as national donors prefer giving grants to NGOs that have their own proper

location.[34] Imane as well as most NGO leaders in the neighborhood turned to the president of the district council, who had been elected in 2003 and had promised a solution, for assistance. However, he had never been able to deliver on his promise. By mid-2007, after having tried fo three years to convince the president to help her, Imane still did not have a location and was showing some clear signs of frustration**.**

By the summer of 2007 she decided to change strategies. The INDH had already been launched, she had been allocated a substantial budget in order to finance her projects and she had been chosen as one of the members of the prefectural committee, which is headed by the governor. As a member of this board, she had the opportunity to meet the governor during several meetings. She decided to organize a big party in June 2007 to celebrate the end of the school year with the beneficiaries of her NGO. More than 1000 people were invited that day and almost 1500 people came. The celebration took place in the newly built stadium of the neighborhood where, right in the middle of the stage, Imane had installed a big poster reading in Arabic and in French "The Initiative for National Human Development" and next to it a picture of the King had been placed. A cooking contest was organized for the women, a dance performance was shown and music was played. Imane had invited the governor as well as the president of the district to attend. Both came and both congratulated the women. Both left after an hour. Everybody seemed very happy and joyful.

Two months later, I had a long talk with Imane. She was clearly very excited: after many years of waiting she had finally received a concrete promise by the president of the district for a proper location for her NGO. Smiling exultantly, she explained to me why things changed so rapidly: "It is all because of the party I organized. That is the reason why I organized it and invited the governor to come. I wanted him to see the quality of our work as well as our capacity to gather people (…) he told me that he was very impressed (…) did you see how many people came? No one else in the neighborhood is able to gather as many people. (…) Before he left I told him about our problem with the location and he said that he was going to help us get one. The president was standing next to him and heard everything". A few weeks later, when a private constructor donated a building to the district, it was allocated to Imane's NGO.

Hence, Imane's new strategy was to change interlocutors and find a new person in charge that could help her get a location. This was clearly

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[34] Imane lost an earlier opportunity to get such an aid grant after the donors realized that the association did not have a location.

made possible through her involvement in the INDH process, which not only enabled her to meet the governor but also gave her an adequate set of arguments that she could display during the party in order to prompt the governor to answer her demands. In line with the INDH leitmotifs, she displayed her ability to organize big social gatherings and to mobilize people (especially women) around these activities while reaffirming her commitment to the INDH through the poster. Through this strategy she was able to gain the governor's support that prompted the president of the district to give her a proper location. This in turn enabled her to finally realize all her projects and offer a space in which women of the neighborhood were able to gather and receive literacy classes and handicraft training.

But more interestingly, it seems that Imane's achievements as well as her shift of interlocutors, from the president of the district to the governor, were noticed by the other NGO leaders in the neighborhood. I met some of them, a few months after Imane had inaugurated "her" new center. They were discussing the case of another female leader, Leila, who had become president of a women's NGO in 2006. Less successful than Imane, she was a member of the local INDH committee, headed by the president of the district, and had been allocated an INDH grant in order to finance one project of preschool teaching. She clearly seemed tense and frustrated that day. She had been waiting for months to get a location in order to be able to realize this project and still had not gotten an answer from the president of the district. Hamid, a young NGO activist, analyzed the situation this way:

> "You don't understand how things function. See Imane, why did she get the center? Because she went directly to the governor. That's why. Whereas you are still sticking to X [the president of the district] and hoping for his help. (…) You have to understand that with the president it is only about politics, political calculation, that's what is crucial for him. You have to free yourself from him."

This quote seems particularly interesting when looking at the formal organization of local political power in Morocco. In fact, even though most power rests in the Monarch's hand, it is supposed to be "shared" between the monarchy and elected political representatives. This duality is also present at the local level. On the one hand, we have the district councils (*conseils d'arrondissement*). The citizens elect their members during municipal or communal elections (the two last ones were held in 2003 and in 2009). On the other hand, there is a whole hierarchy of local authorities (known as *mqaddem*, *bacha*, *qaïd*, etc.) who ultimately report to the governor who is appointed by the Monarch. The first set of institutions (district councils for

example) get their legitimacy from an electoral process that already suffers from citizens' mistrust towards a political elite that is commonly perceived as being corrupt and incompetent as well as spurred by its own private interest. The second set of political actors is legitimized through the power and the will of the King himself. Therefore, Imane's shift from the elected representative to the governor seems to be rather telling. It appears that, while promoting participation, recent reforms have also led to an increase in the governor's importance and to a weakening of elected political leaders, thus contributing to undermining core elements of political representation.

This sheds further light on the fact that even if the State seems to be disengaging itself from some of its core duties (education, poverty reduction, etc.) when integrating private actors into the implementation of public policies, it does not, in fact, lose much of its control. If the State seems to be disengaging itself from certain public policies (as it is the case in several other countries in the era of neo-liberalism), leaving the space for private actors such as NGOs to take over its duties, the State is actually – as Hibou (1998, 1999) argues - integrating and co-opting these same actors into the state system through a mode of governance that Weber called "the discharge". Not only does the State not lose control through this process but, as the above mentioned example clearly illustrates, it actually redeploys itself through different means, thus gaining even more control.

Conclusion

Imane's example helps us underline the highly ambivalent character of the "change" taking place today in Morocco and highlights the complexities of inclusive participatory governance. The INDH contributes, on the one hand, to allocating new resources to vulnerable populations and providing them access to social services through the help of local NGO leaders. It creates spaces in which negotiations between society and the state can take place, opens the door for new participants and encourages a process of power redistribution between men and women by promoting women's participation. On the other hand, this same process creates new forms of inequality (between those included and those excluded from the INDH process for instance) and contributes to the strengthening of authoritarian patterns of leadership. Furthermore, the same process that encourages participation can also be used to control participants and weaken actors who do not fit into the state's conception of "suitable" civil society representatives. Finally, while promoting NGO participation, the same INDH process seems to be weakening other forms of participation, as is the case with elected political actors for example. This ostensibly weakens

representative forms of rule. Hence, it seems that processes that enhance participation go hand in hand with processes that may also be weakening it.

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