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## **Territorial Governance and Public Support Mechanisms as Drivers of Regional Entrepreneurial Development: A Theoretical Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

Territorial governance is rapidly becoming the most important factor concerning regional economic development and the performance of entrepreneurial ecosystems. While the role of entrepreneurship as a driver of innovation and employment and the bringing about of economic diversification is well documented, its development is dependent on the quality of institutional environments and the public support systems that are available. In emerging and peripheral areas, where structural bottlenecks inhibit private sector development, governance systems are critical for establishing the basic frameworks for entrepreneurship. The objective of this article is to design a theoretical model that examines the nexus of territorial governance, public support systems, and entrepreneurial development at the regional level, using the Southern Provinces of Morocco as a case study.

This study takes a conceptual approach and relies on the findings of extensive studies that dealt with the literature of governance, regional development, and entrepreneurship and institutional theory. Using Governance Theory, New

Regionalism Theory, and Institutional Theory, the article proposes a model whereby territorial governance mediates the institutional and policy entrepreneurship nexus. The model identifies five critical dimensions of governance: the quality of the public administration, the business environment, the public finance, and the public-private partnership.

The findings suggest that good governance of public administration positively enhances entrepreneurial development through improved coordination and integration of institutional frameworks, and through the improvement of access to resources, increased confidence of investors, and the elimination of administrative barriers. Regional support programs such as the Regional Investment Centers (CRI), the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH), Intelaka, Forsa, and Awrach enhance the development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem by integrating the public finance, the institutional framework, and the enhancement of human capital.

These measures hold particular significance for Morocco's Southern Provinces, where entrepreneurship is increasingly

being considered a strategic tool for economic diversification, regional competitiveness, and sustainable development.

The proposed theoretical model illustrates how territorial governance acts as a catalyst to strengthen entrepreneurial ecosystems and induce regional economic transformation. Furthermore, it posits that the quality of governance impacts varying degrees of entrepreneurship development, innovation, economic diversification, resilience of the territory, and sustainable development of the region. By placing governance and entrepreneurship together in a single theoretical framework, the study focuses on aspects of regional development and territorial entrepreneurship that are under-researched.

The article closes with a presentation of the policy implications that stem from the model and addresses the future lines of research related to the empirical verification of the suggested order of causal relationships. The model also provides a solid starting point to address the need for governance models that channel development through entrepreneurship in the neglected peripheral spaces of the world and the new regional economies.

**Keywords:** Territorial Governance; Entrepreneurial Development; Public Support Mechanisms; Morocco's Southern Provinces; Regional Competitiveness.

## 1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship has been shown to be the key component of economic growth, innovation, job creation, and an increase in competition among regions. Economic diversification, social progress, and the advancement of technology in both developed and developing countries can be attributed to the entrepreneurial spirit within that nation. As important as the individual entrepreneur may be, the entrepreneurship of a certain region heavily relies on the institutional frameworks and the forms of governance. The developing entrepreneurial ecosystems of regions also depend on the public arrangements that support and strengthen entrepreneurship.

The idea of governance on a territorial scale has gained traction in the past two decades among scholars interested in regional development and the study of entrepreneurship. Within the realm of developing regions, governance on a territorial scale is concerned with the coordination of public, private, civil, and local institutions in the service of a shared goal of development. Unlike the traditional, top-down, region-based development focus, governance on a territorial scale is concerned with collaboration, engagement, institutional flexibility, and management of strategically important

resources. Regarding the interest of developing regions that are undergoing economic restructuring, governance on a territorial scale and the flexible arrangements of institutions highly impact the entrepreneurial climate and the willingness of potential investors.

An efficient governance system will positively impact an entrepreneurial environment as a result of decreased bureaucratic barriers, greater accountability, increased legal and financial certainty, improved infrastructure, and reduced transactional costs. The developing entrepreneurial ecosystems of regions and the competitiveness of regions are highly dependent on the quality of governance. In addition to the quality of governance on a territorial scale, supportive public arrangements are integral to stimulating entrepreneurship within a region (Laajini & Tadjousti, 2025).

Globally, governments introduce various programs that generally seek to enhance the ability to innovate. These programs enhance the ability to initiate small-scale businesses and simplify access to finance. These programs are especially important for developing and peripheral regions, where the constraints of the region's structure are most felt. Publicly offered programs help negate market shortcomings and lessens the obstacles to initiating small-scale businesses, consequently encouraging the active engagement of the region's economy.

Morocco's regional and national development strategies aim to strengthen the economies of the respective regions through the promotion of small-scale business initiatives. In the last decade, multiple reforms focusing on the promotion of small-scale businesses and the strengthening of the regional economy were initiated. Examples of these initiatives are the Regional Investment Centers (CRIs), the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH), Intelaka, Forsa, and Awrach. Collectively, these initiatives aim to strengthen the regional economies of Morocco by strengthening the local small-scale business ecosystems and focusing on employment.

These initiatives are important, especially in the Southern Provinces of Morocco. These provinces are strategically located in the national development plans. Because of their position, the southern provinces have received large public investments in improving infrastructure and attracting investment. These public investments have focused on improving the diversity of the economy. Investments have been made to improve the physical and social infrastructures of the region and to improve the economy's focus and diversity in the fields of logistics, tourism, fishing, and renewable energy. All these improvements, public and private, have not

been able to eliminate the concentration of the population and the economy. Improvement of public investment and public governance is required to promote small-scale businesses.

The lack of research focuses on small-scale businesses and public investments in peripheral regions. There have been multiple research studies that focus on small-scale businesses and large organizations. There is still not much investment in the combination of governance of the territories and public investments. There is still a research gap on peripheral territories and their governance and public investments.

Most studies consider governance and public policies, access to finance, the business climate, etc., in isolation. The interconnectedness of these areas is often overlooked. Thus, contemporary research lacks integrated theoretical models on how institutional and governance components shape entrepreneurial ecosystems.

This article attempts to fill this gap, creating an integrated model of regional governance, public supportive instruments, and regional entrepreneurship. The model posits governance, institutional support, access to finance, and the business climate as fundamental elements to growing entrepreneurial ecosystems. Focusing on the Southern Provinces of Morocco, this article joins the discourse on territory entrepreneurship and regional development, offering insights to public policy, development agencies, and entrepreneurship researchers on peripheral regions.

The rest of the article is structured as follows. The first section presents the bases of territorial governance. The second section explains the significance of public policy and entrepreneurship support in regional development. The third section investigates the governance and institutional concerns of entrepreneurial ecosystems. The fourth section advances the proposed model and related heuristics. The article finishes with the discussion on theory, public policy, and research.

## **2. Territorial Governance: Conceptual and Theoretical Foundations**

Territorial governance features prominently in the investigation of regional development, public policy, and economic geography. Governance becomes an essential factor for overcoming the challenges of territorial performance and competitiveness as regions begin to compete for investment, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Modern frameworks for regional development recognize that economic development is neither a passive nor a solitary outcome of supply and demand. Economic development is a result of institutional

context, policy and stakeholder alignment, and the collaborative will of the stakeholders concerned.

Territorial governance is integrative. It combines public and private governance, and includes governmental and non-governmental institutions, enterprises, and communities. It is a more participatory way of governance, and seeks to manage territory by optimizing the resources and conditions for equitable economic and social development. Territorial governance is particularly important for the development of entrepreneurial systems of a region, particularly for optimizing resources, and for minimizing or eradicating institutional barriers that negatively affect the investment and growth of enterprises (DHOUMI et al.,2024).

The most relevant and important theories to the study of territorial governance are Governance Theory, New Regionalism Theory, and Institutional Theory. To a large extent, these theories enable the study of the interaction of governance systems and entrepreneurial development and competitiveness of regions.

### **2.1 Governance Theory**

Governance theory developed in conjunction with the weaknesses of the traditional systems of government. In the case of classical public service, the focus was on the state and the monopolization of decisions, whereas in the case of governance theory, the emphasis was on the networks, collaborations and partnerships of different actors. The perspective is that the problems of contemporary society cannot be resolved by a government acting alone and require the involvement of public, private, and civil society actors.

The concept of governance refers to the manner in which decisions are made, executed, and evaluated, as well as to the systems and structures that enforce the rules and norms that govern the activities of various actors within a specific region. Effective governance systems foster an environment characterized by transparency and accountability, active participation, and collaboration, and encourage the formulation and implementation of strategic plans, all of which improve developmental outcomes.

The theory of governance, within the context of entrepreneurship, refers to the fostering of an environment that encourages the practice of entrepreneurial activities. The regulation and the public administration of entrepreneurial activities are influenced by the construction of a regulatory environment, administrative frameworks, the promotion of public and private investments, the construction of public infrastructure, as well as the provision of financial services.

Effective governance systems stimulate entrepreneurship by diminishing uncertainty and costs and promoting investments (Gouz et al., 2024).

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In areas with distinctive socio-economic conditions, like the Southern Provinces of Morocco, multi-level governance is essential in matching the needs of local entrepreneurs with specific national development strategies. From that perspective, Governance Theory outlines the importance of the interaction of institutions on the ground, the involvement of relevant agents, and the role of the public sector in forming entrepreneurial ecosystems and the growth of local economies.

## **2.2 New Regionalism Theory**

During the late 20th century, scholarship responding to the expanding global significance of regional economic development, New Regionalism Theory became an important addition to the field of economic development. Traditional regional development theories associated the economic development of regions with the development of transportation or the concentration of industry. New Regionalism focuses on the development of regional institutions, networks, innovative systems as well as the regional governance in the competitiveness of a region.

This framework sees regions as active economic spaces, and not just as administrative units. It recognizes the capacity of regions to foster innovation, attract investments and promote entrepreneurship. In this framework, the active cooperation of the various factors such as industries, public agencies, universities, research centers and civil society, plays a crucial role in the formal and informal, locally created innovative systems, which enhance competitiveness.

Central to New Regionalism is the idea of regional assets. They can be concrete, such as resources and infrastructure, or they can be relatively abstract such as social capital, quality of institutions, community and regional identity, and collaboration. Those regions which are able to effectively

gather and mobilize their assets are more likely to achieve sustained economic growth.

Endogenous development is also central to the New Regionalism Theory. Rather than external investments and centralized interventions, economically successful regions rely on their own resources, capacities and stronger institutions. Within this framework, the transformation of regional systems into economic activities and the mobilization of latent regional resources is the primary focus of entrepreneurship.

For economically peripheral regions, the New Regionalism Theory has the most utility. The interpretation negates the thesis that distance equates to the position of areas as economically peripheral. It suggests that the economically peripheral areas may gain competitiveness by resourcefully managing their unique regional resources and enhancing their local governance. This interpretation is quite applicable to Morocco's Southern Provinces. The strategic resources, refined governance, and targeted investments provide novel entrepreneurial initiatives and potential regional changes (Ibourk & Raoui, 2022).

As a result, New Regionalism Theory shows how territorial governance supports entrepreneurship by creating innovative means of reinforcing local networks and improving regional competitiveness.

## **2.3 Institutional Theory**

Institutional Theory contributes to the complexity of analysing the interaction between governance and entrepreneurship. This theory states the behaviour of economies is largely a product of the institutional setting of economic activity, which includes formal and informal rules and regulations and expectations of a culture. Institutions build the structure in which economic activity occurs, create the incentives to act, and lower the uncertainty confronted by economic participants.

The formal institutions are laws and regulations, the systems of rights to property, the laws and structures of finance, and the organizations of government. The informal institutions are the social and cultural norms and values, traditions, trust, and the collective beliefs of a society. These various institutions set the boundaries for entrepreneurship activity in the economy by the resources and constraints afforded to entrepreneurs and the opportunities presented to them.

According to the Institutional Theory, in contexts of advanced, stable regulations, transparent governance and effective legal and public policy frameworks,

entrepreneurship is more likely to flourish. On the other hand, lacking institutional frameworks, with bureaucratic, regulatory and corruption inefficiencies and poor service provision, entrepreneurship is unlikely to flourish and investment is more likely to be dissuaded.

This theory applies well to the understanding of the public support mechanisms for entrepreneurship. These are institutional frameworks that attempt to eliminate market failures and enhance entrepreneurship, and are most successful in the context of the institutional frameworks in which they are embedded and not solely through the resources they provide.

In many emerging and peripheral regions, the market is insufficient in resolving structural constraints and institutions must supplement the more dominant role. Here, public institutions are crucial to provide the necessary infrastructure and services. Their efforts help develop and strengthen entrepreneurial systems.

In Morocco's Southern Provinces, public governance, public entrepreneurship support schemes, and public institutional frameworks and their influence on entrepreneurship can be analysed through the lens of Institutional Theory (MERROUN & EL GHRASLI, 2025). The Regional Investment Centers (CRI), the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH), Intelaka, Forsa, and Awrach, among others, openly show various public institutional strategies aimed at improving entrepreneurship, economic inclusion, and development in the respective territories. As such, the quality of institutions is a primary factor determining the effectiveness of entrepreneurial ecosystems and the competitiveness of the territory.

New Regionalism, Governance, and Institutional Theories, when synthesized, provide a comprehensive theory of the role of territorial governance in entrepreneurial development. They demonstrate the importance of institutional functionality, the mobilization of various actors, and a tailored set of public policies in relation to the design of entrepreneurial ecosystems and the promotion of sustainable development in the territory.

### **3. Public Policies and Entrepreneurial Development**

Over the past few decades, public policy has played an essential role in stimulating entrepreneurial activity and encouraging regional economic growth. Contemporary economic analysis suggests that entrepreneurial ecosystems are the result of inter-relationships between the people, the market, institutions, and a variety of networks. Governments

can be instrumental in the fostering of entrepreneurial ecosystems by addressing market failures and reduction in the barriers of institutions and access to resources and innovation.

The shift in the understanding of the role of entrepreneurship in economic growth and the generation of employment and competitiveness of a region has encouraged the public sector in many countries to develop targeted entrepreneurial support programs. These policies become particularly significant for peripheral and developing regions where structural limitations undermine the development of the private sector. Public policies strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystems and make a contribution to the resilience of the region and the sustainability of the development of the territory (El Atmani & Malainine, 2023).

In this respect, policies for supporting entrepreneurship, public policies for the development of territories, and public policies for the competitiveness of regions are three related and complementary dimensions of public policy that shape the entrepreneurial development of a region.

#### **3.1 Entrepreneurship Support Policies**

Policies for entrepreneurship support consist of public measures meant to stimulate business formation, enhance entrepreneurial growth, and positively impact the viability of entrepreneurial ventures. Such policies provide solutions to the common barriers, such as a lack of capital, poor management, lack of information, regulatory burdens, and poor market integration.

Traditionally, policies focused on entrepreneurship primarily concerned themselves with the provision of financial support through grants, subsidies, and loans. Today, policies of this kind are more integrated and emphasize the design of support services that go beyond financial support to include training, mentoring, incubation, networking, and innovation. This has come about due to the recognition that entrepreneurial success hinges on the right combination of financial, human, social, and institutional resources.

There are many goals of support policies for entrepreneurship. The first is to stimulate business creation and self-employment through reduced barriers and less risk. A second is to strengthen the potential for growth of businesses through the easier attainment of resources and access to markets. A third is to facilitate the creation of new fields and technologies, which enhances innovation as well as the dispersion of the economy. The last is the social inclusion of young people, women, and the vulnerable through a wider range of entrepreneurial opportunities (Robichaud et al., 2023).

Support for entrepreneurship in Morocco has become a strategic area of national development policies. The Intelaka, Forsa, and Awrach programs show the government's efforts to stimulate entrepreneurial activity and enhance economic inclusion. These programs seek to strengthen entrepreneurial ecosystems and stimulate economic development.

Adequate interventions are needed in the Southern Provinces of Morocco, where it is expected that entrepreneurial activities will play a major role in diversifying the economy and transforming the region. Therefore, such policies are vital for enabling and increasing entrepreneurial capability as well as for establishing new ventures that will be of economic value and sustainable in the long run.

### 3.2 Territorial Development Policies

Territorial development policies are designed to address and equal out the economic disparities between regions. These policies are meant to unify and improve the economy as a whole while recognizing where certain regions have growth potential that has yet to be realized. These policies work best when tailored to the strengths and challenges of a given region.

Policies of this nature are not one-dimensional as they aim to improve the potential of a given region in many different aspects of economic activity and quality of the life therein. Some of these policies may work toward the development of a region's infrastructure, ecosystem services, or human capital and also provide stimulation for investments and entrepreneurship.

Endogenous development is a key focus of territorial development strategies. Instead of waiting for and depending on outside investments, territories are encouraged to mobilize their own resources and capabilities. Within this context, entrepreneurship is extremely important, as it allows the region to harness their resources and focus on areas of the economy that will be most productive and valuable (Farhat & Darmame, 2024).

In Morocco, the importance of territorial development can be seen with the introduction of the advanced regionalization reforms and large-scale regional investment programs. One of the best examples of this in practice is seen with the New Development Model for the Southern Provinces, which focuses on investing in infrastructure and increasing the diversification of the economy for that region.

By investing in logistics, renewable resources, fisheries, tourism, and industrial infrastructure, public agencies aim to

foster conditions for sustainable regional growth in their jurisdictions.

Considered from this viewpoint, territorial development policies shape the structural prerequisites that allow entrepreneurial ecosystems to be built and to thrive. They enhance the attractiveness of the territory and strengthen economic relations, and help mobilize local resources for development.

### 3.3 Regional Competitiveness Policies

Regional competitiveness policies seek to improve the capacity of areas to draw in investments and innovations, create jobs, and compete in regional and global markets. These policies focus on the idea that regions are more or less competitive economic units that determine how well they are able to allocate and utilize economic resources, improve innovations, and create business-friendly policies.

Competitiveness is more than simply being economically productive. It measures the strength of innovations, the quality of institutions, the level of infrastructure, the quantity and quality of human capital, the effectiveness of governance, and the level of entrepreneurship. Therefore, a competitive region is one that is economically productive and efficient while socially and environmentally sustainable.

Entrepreneurship is the most important tenet of regional competitiveness policies. An effective entrepreneurial ecosystem nurtures innovations, creates businesses, and diversifies the economy, all of which improve competitiveness of the region. Entrepreneurial activities are the innovative and productive means of changing an economy by offering new and innovative goods, services, and business structures (ALLAMMARI et al., 2023).

Regional competitiveness is increased by a variety of policies from public entities. These encompass incentivizing investments, building infrastructure, promoting innovations, sponsoring research and development, and creating business clusters. All of these attempts make regions more attractive to investments and business people.

In economically lagging regions, competitiveness policies are of great importance because the regions suffer from distance-based disadvantages, small market size, and poor infrastructure. Improving competitiveness in these regions means removing structural barriers and enhancing regional resources. An essential part of competitiveness strategies includes investment in transport networks, digital infrastructure, industrial zones, and mechanisms for supporting entrepreneurship.

In Morocco's Southern Provinces, regional competitiveness policies are integrated with Morocco's objectives of economic diversification and territorial integration. The Dakhla Atlantic Port, renewable energy, logistics corridors, and industrial development aim to make the region a pivotal economic centre for African markets. This investment increases the attractiveness of the region for entrepreneurship. Regional competitiveness policies create an ecosystem for entrepreneurial dynamism through economic, institutional, and infrastructural conditions that reinforce the resilience of the region and the long-term potential for its development.

#### **4. Public Support Mechanisms for Entrepreneurship**

Public support systems have been critical in developing entrepreneurship and advancing regional economic competitiveness across many jurisdictions. Emerging markets often exhibit structural challenges to entrepreneurship related to inadequate finance and skills, excessive bureaucracy, and a weakly developed formal economy. Because of these barriers, governments are beginning to implement programs to support entrepreneurship, encourage the establishment of businesses, and foster economic growth.

Public support is most warranted in peripheral areas where the combination of geographical isolation, low economic integration and market accessibility, and limited institutional frameworks discourage entrepreneurship. In these situations, support systems serve the dual purpose of financing and strategically developing the entrepreneurial and business ecosystems, and mitigating regional imbalances and helping low resilience regions. Providing capital, training, advisory services, and administrative assistance contributes to building an entrepreneurial and business-friendly environment.

In Morocco, the encouragement of entrepreneurship is a fundamental policy objective of the system of national development. Several public programs have been launched to stimulate the creation of businesses and jobs, and promote innovation and access to funding. The Regional Investment Centers (CRIs), the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH), Intelaka, Forsa, and Awrach, are among the most significant mechanisms. These combined efforts seek to improve the entrepreneurial environment in all of Morocco, including the Southern Provinces (Saadouni et al., 2025).

##### **4.1 Regional Investment Centers (CRI)**

Regional Investment Centers (CRI) are institutional frameworks geared toward promoting entrepreneurship and investments in Morocco. As part of integrated reform

initiatives, the CRIs were developed to strengthen the business climate by advancing the convenience of administrative procedures, improving the processes of making investments, and intensifying the governance of the economy at the regional level.

The main goal of the CRIs is to serve as the only investment facilitators. They provide business people and investors with the required information and instructions and assist them with project work and all administrative steps. The CRIs foster an amicable business environment by reducing the complications of bureaucracy and fostering better collaboration among public agencies.

In addition to providing administrative convenience, the CRIs have a substantial role to play in the development of the economy at the regional level. They take part in the identification of investment prospects, provide support for the promotion of priority sectors and project ventures, and facilitate collaboration among regional players. They strengthen entrepreneurial networks in their work and foster the competitive advantage of a region in the territorial markets.

In Morocco's Southern Provinces, the CRIs support the development of entrepreneurship in a number of sectors, including fisheries and aquaculture, tourism, renewable energy, along with logistics and industrial development. Their work mobilizes resources for investment and bolsters regional development initiatives.

The CRIs are the principal institutional framework that synthesizes the governance of a region with the entrepreneurial development of the region.

##### **4.2 National Initiative for Human Development (INDH)**

The National Initiative for Human Development (INDH), initiated in 2005, is a key effort for poverty alleviation, social inclusion, and an overall enhancement of the quality of life for all citizens. The INDH has assumed a vital role in the promotion of local economic development through the support of entrepreneurs, particularly those in vulnerable groups.

The INDH has a specific approach to human centred development which integrates social and economic aspects. Through the provision of financial resources, training, and capacity building and funding of projects, INDH encourages the establishment of income generating activities and local entrepreneurship.

The establishment of cooperatives, microenterprises, and community focused projects may be constituent components of the achievement of social and economic integration by the INDH. In these projects, the INDH strives to ensure that women, youth, members of the rural community, and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups have better and more direct access to financial resources.

In the Southern Provinces of Morocco, the economic focus of the projects funded by the INDH range from handicrafts to fishing and from agriculture to local services. This encourages the development of local economic participation and the enhancement of local resources. By addressing these projects, the INDH strengthens social cohesion and links entrepreneurship to the larger development needs of the community.

The INDH is a crucial method for the integration of social and economic activities through entrepreneurship in the process of social inclusion.

#### **4.3 Intelaka**

Intelaka is one of Morocco's signature programs designed to finance entrepreneurs. Launched in 2020, Intelaka was intended to make financing more available to entrepreneurs, small businesses, young project holders, and the self-employed. The initiative directly addresses the limited financial resources barrier to starting one's own business.

Intelaka uses partnerships between the state and the different layers of the banking sector to provide more favourable financing of lower interest rates, credit guarantees, and easier accessibility to credit than what is usually available in the market. These are used to stimulate business creation while offering some level of protection to the financial risks that accompany business creation.

Of particular interest are young entrepreneurs, start-ups, microenterprises, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Intelaka promotes the formalization of entrepreneurial activities and the growth of productive economic sectors by making financing more readily available.

Intelaka also offers more credit to financial institutions in order to strengthen their confidence in entrepreneurs and to stimulate entrepreneurial activity. The availability of credit contributes to the establishment of the business as well as investment, innovation, and greater competitiveness in the market (OUAZZOUZ & HARIZI, 2024).

In the Southern Provinces of Morocco, Intelaka has the capacity to contribute toward entrepreneurial growth in the

areas of great potential such as tourism, fisheries, and renewable energy, as well as other emerging service sectors.

#### **4.4 Forsa**

Forsa was created to expand self-employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. Compared to programs that focus exclusively on providing capital, Forsa uses an integrated model that includes funding as well as mentoring and training and technical support.

Their goal is to have clients develop their ideas and entrepreneurial projects. Forsa helps clients build their projects and business sustainability through funding and support are provided. Forsa uses coaching, mentoring, project incubation, and entrepreneurial training.

Forsa has come to be recognized for its entrepreneurial support services. They have acknowledged the barrier lack of funding provides to starting a business; however, they also know that even after funding is provided there does not guarantee success to the entrepreneur. Along the project development process, Forsa helps clients with technical, managerial, and strategic issues.

Forsa helps diversify the economy by funding enterprises in various sectors. It helps create jobs by funding projects entrepreneurial projects and developing self-employment in youth and potential entrepreneurs. Balancing funding with support and services helps develop the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Forsa helps strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem by funding projects and developing self-employment in youth and potential entrepreneurs.

Forsa has a comprehensive support model that helps develop the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

#### **4.5 Awrach**

Awrach was developed as a public employment and economic integration initiative. It was developed to create jobs and integrate the economy, and to develop initiatives for the improvement of the local economy.

While the main aim of the program is job creation, it also helps to support the development of entrepreneurship through positive changes in labour market participation and employability.

This program funds temporary employment, community development, and local economic activity. Awrach attempts

to provide unemployed people (mostly youth) with a work opportunity, gain new skills, and help them to integrate into the labour market.

Offering new opportunities through work, community projects, and local economic initiatives, Awrach enables unemployed young people to gain skills and work experience, and to develop networks and relationships that improve the prospects for engaging in entrepreneurship.

By supporting projects that extend the services of community and local development, environment and infrastructure maintenance, and management, Awrach provides positive regional impacts. Projects such as these improve the development of the infrastructure and the social and economic foundations needed for growth in entrepreneurship.

Awrach helps to improve economic participation and the empowerment of young people in the Southern Provinces of Morocco where job creation is of top concern. Even though the program is not really an entrepreneurship program, the development of human capital and regional improvement are important to the entrepreneurship support program.

When considered as a whole, the combination of Awrach, Forsa, Intelaka, and the CRI, and the INDH, are public support services that deal with human, financial, social, and infrastructural service needs. They help develop the regional entrepreneurship services that are the core public services (Brahim, 2023).

## **5. Governance Quality and Entrepreneurial Development**

The quality of governance is acknowledged as critical to developing the entrepreneurship and competitiveness of a region. Entrepreneurship reflects individual effort and creativity, but success is reliant on the system and rules surrounding the entrepreneur. The quality of governance will affect the framework within which institutions operate, the clarity of administrative procedures, the ease of resource access, and the attractiveness of a given area for investment and business creation (MTIRAOUI et al., 2024).

The positive effects of governance will create a stable framework for economic activities, increase the confidence of investors, enhance the right allocation of resources, and facilitate the economics of governance. On the contrary, the negative effects of governance will cause an administrative burden, increase the costs of transaction, create institutional inertia, and demotivate entrepreneurial activities. Thus, the quality of governance will define all entrepreneurial ecosystems and the economy of a given region.

In the context of regional development, the quality of governance encompasses many elements, including how well the institutions operate, how positive the business environment is, how easy it is to access finance, how efficient the administration is, and how well the public and private sectors work together. Understanding the effects of these elements is important to explain the entrepreneurial development of a region, especially in developing and remote areas such as Morocco's Southern Provinces.

### **5.1 Institutional Environment**

The institutional environment is made up of the formal and informal rules and regulations, as well as organizations and norms, that dictate the economic activities of a certain area. Institutions reduce the uncertainty in economic interactions and provide the framework for business activities. An adequate institutional environment provides the predictability and order that reduce the entrepreneurial risks and encourage the investment.

There is legal and regulatory predictability, as well as transparency and accountability in a sufficient institutional environment. All of these factors together improve the certainty of the informal rules that provide social order, and encourage the investment as well as the innovative entrepreneurship. All of the risks and uncertainty associated with entrepreneurship are reduced.

Formal institutions are the legal and regulatory systems, as well as property rights, courts, and systems of finance and administration. Informal institutions contain the social values and norms that provide order, as well as culture and trust. These combine to provide the rules and order that determine the entrepreneurship of a society as well as the success of its business.

In most developing countries, the quality of the institutions is a measure of the effectiveness of the entrepreneurship support programs and regional development strategies. The regions with better quality institutions provide the areas with the higher levels of entrepreneurship, investment, and sustainable business.

In the Southern Provinces of Morocco, the assimilation of institutional reforms with policies of advanced regionalization and promotion of investment, coupled with the strengthening of the institutional environment, provides better context for entrepreneurial initiatives and economic diversification.

## 5.2 Business Climate

The business climate describes the amalgam of economic, regulatory, administrative, and market business and investment conditions. It is vital to entrepreneurial development and business formation, as it affects the costs, risks, and potential of economic opportunities available to citizens.

Business climates that foster regulatory simplification and bureaucratic transparency, and that provide efficient, fair public services and community infrastructure, in addition to protective laws for investors, set conditions that favour business formation and growth. On the other hand, inefficient services, uncertain bureaucratic and institutional regulations, and unfair competition negatively affect investment and entrepreneurial activity.

The business climate is the first order of competitive business concerns for most entrepreneurs. A business environment that fosters competition and gives access to the necessary economic resources of financing, community infrastructure, and services frees the entrepreneur to devote time and other resources to business concern issues such as innovation, marketing, and growth strategy instead of bureaucratic compliance and procedure.

Improving the business climate has been a priority for many governments, as a competitive business environment attracts economic investments. Simplified regulations and services that incorporate technology to improve transparency and reduce processing times have a direct positive effect on the promotion of business formation and growth.

A more attractive Southern Provinces business climate, with its growing strategic economic sectors and the necessary community infrastructure and support services, will draw more international and domestic investors. It is now postulated that tourism, fishing, renewable energy, logistics, and other industrial activities will flourish first with business growth.

## 5.3 Access to Finance

Many view access to finance as the most important contributor to entrepreneurial development. Financial resources are needed for starting ventures, making investments, innovating, growing, and sustaining businesses over time. Many entrepreneurial projects that have economically strong justifications go uninitiated due to a lack of potential financing.

Entrepreneurs have need for varying types of financial resources throughout the life cycle of their business. These financial resources may include personal funds, loans, venture capital, funds from the public, grants, guarantees, and other financing resources. The availability and support of these resources are important to the level and extent of entrepreneurial activities.

In most peripheral areas financial resources are especially scarce. The absence of financial centers, limited banking infrastructure, risk averse investments, and lack of collateral, may restrict access to capital. In such situations, public mechanisms have a major role in addressing financial market failures and catering to the needs for entrepreneurial support.

Finance access may include the availability of capital, financial literacy, trust in institutions, regulatory environments, and the capability of forming a sound business proposition. Thus, an effective financing system integrates financial resources with advisory services, mentoring, and entrepreneurial support.

Examples of government attempts in Morocco such as Intelaka and Forsa are provisions to improve financial access to entrepreneurs by decreasing the financial barriers and improving funding availability. Such government attempts markedly improve the entrepreneurial ecosystems of the areas of Morocco that are attempting to change the structure of their economies to be more diverse and to foster an increase in the activities of the private sector.

## 5.4 Administrative Simplification

Administrative simplification is defined as the reduction of bureaucratic tangles, as well as streamlining the processes that regulate economic activity. It is an objective of reforms designed to improve the business climate and increase the level of entrepreneurship that are being implemented worldwide.

Highly intricate administrative processes impose a significant economic burden. Long wait times to receive approvals, over-documentation, excessive interfacing with multiple bureaucracies, and a poorly defined legal framework led to business inactivity and economic inefficiencies. These factors explain the failure to launch a business, especially for small first-time business owners with limited economic and human resources.

Administrative simplification is aimed at solving the aforementioned problems with legal reforms, standardization of the procedures, digitalization/process automation, and a one-stop administrative service. These measures translate into

lower transaction costs, increased transparency, and better service.

The digitalisation of processes is critical to all the simplification efforts. Electronic business registration, electronic business licenses, digital tax filing, and integrated digital service systems greatly ease the relationship of entrepreneurs with public bureaucracies and are simplifications of substantive business processes that simplify administration.

There are many positive economic effects of administrative simplification that are particularly needed in areas that are attempting to transform their economies and are bringing down the barriers to doing business. These governance reforms strengthen entrepreneurial initiatives, improve the confidence of investors in the area, and improve the competitiveness of the area.

The Southern Provinces of Morocco are a good illustration of the positive effects that the simplification of administrative processes can have on public services and the Regional Investment Centers, which improve the efficiency of the public administration. Such reforms encourage entrepreneurship by making investing and doing business simpler and easier.

### **5.5 Public–Private Partnerships**

Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs) are collaborative frameworks that engage public and private sectors to achieve development targets that are not feasible for one sector to achieve alone. In entrepreneurship, infrastructure provision and sustenance of innovation and regional economic development have made such partnerships salient.

PPPs harness public resources and planning through integration with private sector capital and know how. This integration allows regions to leverage development funds, and facilitate the rapid deployment and execution of projects (Loukili & El Hamma, 2025).

Within entrepreneurial ecosystems, public–private partnerships create positive ecosystems through their investments in innovation, business incubators, training, industrial infrastructure and supportive technology platforms. All these positively impact the entrepreneurial ecosystem and develop the capability of entrepreneurship.

Given the public and private integration of resources and investment, the partnerships assist in the structuring of previously under-resourced and peripheral regions.

In Morocco’s Southern Provinces, logistics, renewable energy, fisheries, tourism and infrastructure development illustrate the growing prominence of partnerships and the public and private sectors. Within these partnerships, initiatives support the entrepreneurial ecosystem and strengthen the capability of entrepreneurship and regional sustainability.

The quality of governance is most directly related to entrepreneurial development through the combination of effective institutions, good business environments, accessible financing and low administrative burdens. Collaborative governance models also contribute. These dimensions establish the base for the emergence of dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystems and sustainable regional development.

## **6. A Theoretical Model Linking Governance and Entrepreneurial Development**

The model developed in this study attempts to integrate governance factors that influence regional entrepreneurial development. The model utilizes Governance Theory, New Regionalism Theory, and Institutional Theory. It posits that entrepreneurial development cannot be viewed only as a function of individual traits and market openings, but should also consider the level of governance structures, the state of institutional arrangements, and the degree of public support available in a given territory.

The model (see Figure 1) contains two main interrelated latent constructs: Territorial Governance and Regional Entrepreneurial Development. Territorial Governance is positioned as the most central and main channel through which governance factors are assumed to affect entrepreneurial outcomes. Regional Entrepreneurial Development is the main target variable of the model, illustrating the potential of the territory to promote entrepreneurial activities and develop the regional entrepreneurial system for sustained economic growth.

The left side of the model presents five governance-related factors that are assumed to be the most important constituents of territorial governance. The first factor, Institutional Environment, refers to the state of formal and informal institutions that govern the processes of economic engagement. Factors such as the stability of the regulations, the effectiveness of the institutions, legal certainty, transparency, and accountability are included in this construct. An improved Institutional Environment is likely to enhance the quality of governance by reducing uncertainty and promoting entrepreneurial activities.

The second factor is Business Climate, which includes the economic and regulatory conditions that affect the ease of doing business and investing. This construct encompasses the quality of the entrepreneurial environment, which includes the efficiency of regulatory frameworks, accessibility of markets, the quality of physical infrastructure, and the degree of confidence of investors.

It is believed that a conducive business environment can generate favourable conditions for economic growth, which helps positively impact Territorial Governance.

Access to Finance is the third element, and concerns the provision and accessibility of adequate financial resources to firms and entrepreneurs. This includes access to loans, public funding opportunities, investments, financial guarantees, and financing schemes for entrepreneurship. The accessibility of finance is a key component of governance, as it has an impact on the ability of entrepreneurs to turn their ideas into productive businesses.

The fourth element is Administrative Simplification. This pertains to the streamlining of administrative procedures and the removal of unnecessary bureaucracy. This element captures simplification of business registration, digitization of public services, a reduction in administrative time lags, and improvement of service standards. Administrative Simplification positively impacts the effectiveness of governance through a reduction in the cost of doing business and ease of doing business.

The fifth element is Public-Private Partnerships. This describes the extent of cooperation among public agencies and private sector representatives. This partnership aids in the provision of resources, the construction of infrastructure, support for innovations, and the execution of diverse policies. It is expected that public-private cooperation will improve Territorial Governance, by providing better stakeholder engagement and positive impacts on developmental activities.

The impact of these five governance-related constructs on Territorial Governance, which serves as a mediating variable in the framework, is depicted in Figure 1. The model theory is that the quality of governance at the territorial level is positively impacted by a stronger institutional environment, a better business climate, a higher level of access to finance, greater administrative effectiveness, and better public-private partnerships.

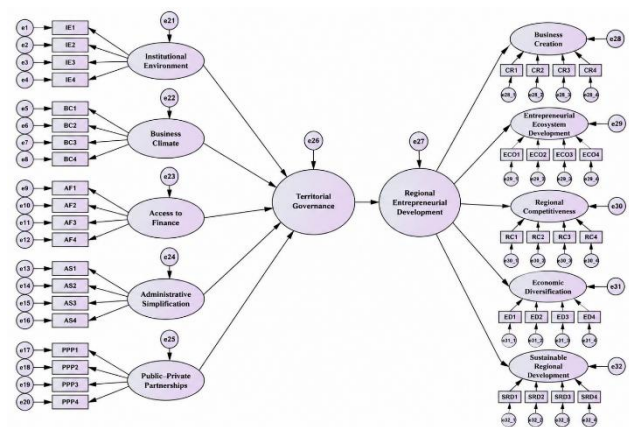
The model also presumes that Territorial Governance has a positive impact on Regional Entrepreneurial Development. Robust governance helps shape entrepreneurial ecosystems

that include supportive institutions, available resources, systematic policies, and investment opportunities. Governance catalyses entrepreneurship, business development, and innovation, as well as the diversification of economies.

Five main development outcomes associate with Regional Entrepreneurial Development of the model's right side. The first outcome is Business Creation, the development of new economic and entrepreneurial ventures. The second outcome is the Development of Entrepreneurial Ecosystems, the strengthening of networks, institutions, support systems, and entrepreneurial skills in the area. The third outcome is Regional Competitiveness, the ability of the region to foster innovation and investment and to be able to compete in national and international markets.

The fourth outcome, Economic Diversification, is the creation of new ways of doing business in different economic sectors. The fifth outcome, Sustainable Regional Development, is the benefit of effective governance and entrepreneurship over time in the economic, social, and spatial development in a region.

The model suggests a strong connection between the level of entrepreneurship and the quality of governance. The combination of effective institutions, good business climate, available financing, and low bureaucratic and governance barriers develop the conditions that favour entrepreneurial activities and the economic transformation of a region. The proposed model is an exhaustive theoretical contribution to the role of governance in entrepreneurship-based regional development in the emerging peripheral regions, especially in the Southern Provinces of Morocco.



**Figure 1.** Proposed theoretical model linking territorial governance and regional entrepreneurial development.

## 7. Policy Implications for Morocco's Southern Provinces

The theoretical framework presented in this article describes the importance of territorial governance and public support structures in developing regional entrepreneurship. The analysis shows that entrepreneurship should not be seen as a solitary individual economic activity, nor should it be seen as an economic process that is spatially disaggregated and separate from the quality of the institutions, the quality of governance, the permeability of financing, and the collaborative networks of stakeholders. As such, several policy recommendations can be formulated for the Southern Provinces of Morocco (Ibourk & Raoui, 2022).

The first of these recommends that governance should be the main focus of the regional development endeavours. Well-functioning governance reduces the level of risk for potential stakeholders, and as the potential risk of engaging in entrepreneurial activity is reduced, the level of institutional and entrepreneurial engagement increases. Reforms should focus on the improvement of transparency, the rationalization of the legal and regulatory frameworks, and improvements in the administrative frameworks. These efforts should be geared toward the establishment of an environment that is protective and supportive of business initiatives, both from within Morocco and from foreign countries.

The second of these is that the focus of regional development should be the improvement of the entrepreneurial climate. Though reforms to improve administration and the solicitation of increased investment have yielded some positive results, regulatory reforms should focus on the simplification and rationalization of the regulatory frameworks, the reduction of administrative red-tape, and the acceleration of responsiveness. Further, the improvement of the digitalization of public services and the implementation and expansion of one-stop administrative services should improve the interface of public services to entrepreneurs.

The third policy recommendation is that entrepreneurial financing mechanisms should be increased and diversified. Though recent programs such as Intelaka and Forsa have improved access to financial services, additional programs may be needed to address the needs of entrepreneurs in more isolated regions. Start-up funding with new financing methods, guarantee schemes, and venture capital actively supports the development of enterprises in the region.

Fourth, improved territorial governance fosters better coordination of all public institutions and private actors, universities, financial institutions, and civil society. Collaborative governance is the foundation of every

entrepreneurial ecosystem. Regional authorities should focus on such partnerships to the extent they further the sharing of knowledge, the fostering of innovation, and the mobilization of resources.

Fifth, focusing on the Southern Provinces of Morocco, the patterns of entrepreneurship should align with the Southern Provinces' economic potential. Fisheries and aquaculture, renewable energies, tourism, logistics, and Maritime and blue economy services all contain opportunities for business expansion and entrepreneurial growth. Public supports should be directed to these resources and support the fostering of ideas and the development of value chains.

Sixth, the focus should be on development of human capital. Successful entrepreneurship is the result of finance, management skills, technical skills, and innovation. To achieve this goal, the focus needs to be on training and education in entrepreneurship, mentoring, and constructive interventions to develop the preparedness and competitiveness of entrepreneurship in the region.

Seventh, public-private partnerships should be the most sought out and used mechanism for the goal of regional transformation. Fully collaborative public/private partnerships are the most effective means of resource mobilization to eliminate the gaps that result in the peripheral nature of the region.

Finally, strategies to promote entrepreneurship should be integrated into the overarching regional development strategies. Rather than separating entrepreneurship from the other elements of planning and building infrastructure in the region, public authorities should focus on integrating entrepreneurship into the strategies of regional development.

This type of cohesive strategy would be beneficial to the contribution of entrepreneurship to the long-term sustainability of regional resilience and development.

On the whole, the results indicate governance quality and the mechanisms of public support represent critical factors in the promotion of entrepreneurial ecosystems and the sustainable economic transformation of the Southern Provinces of Morocco.

## 8. Future Research

Despite this study being the first to formulate a comprehensive and cohesive model of the interlocking frameworks of territorial governance and entrepreneurial development, the door is left open on several accounts for further research. The model presented here should not be treated as fully developed

but as a provisional theoretical base to be built upon by empirical and applied research in the future.

The first of these accounts involves the application of research using quantitative techniques to properly frame the model. For example, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) could facilitate research to understand the links among the components of the institutional framework, business climate, ease of access to capital, ease of administrative procedures, public coordination and cooperation, territorial governance, and regional entrepreneurial development. This type of research would generate statistical data on the nature and importance of the links proposed.

The second of these accounts involves the empirical analysis of regional governance. Future research should look to create and utilize specific measures of the regional governance mechanisms and their impact on entrepreneurial ecosystems. This could provide some valuable information on the role of governance on entrepreneurial development in the Moroccan context.

The third account involves qualitative research. Governance mechanisms and the context of where they are implemented can be better understood by using this approach. This research can identify challenges that are masked by quantitative research.

The fourth account involves looking at the public support initiatives of CRI, INDH, Intelaka, Forsa and Awrach in isolation. These initiatives are important to the Moroccan entrepreneurial system, but little has been done to analyse their impact at the level of entrepreneurial development. Best practices and areas needing improvement can be discerned from comparative evaluations.

Fifth, researchers could study the impact of digital governance on the development of entrepreneurship. The digitalization of the public service, the automation of administrative procedures, and the digitalization of the financial systems are changing the way entrepreneurs interact with the institutions. The impact of digital governance on the establishment of enterprises, innovation, and the competitiveness of digital governance is critical to this line of research.

Sixth, future research may focus on the examination of specific entrepreneurial ecosystems in the Southern Provinces of Morocco. Research in specific areas such as renewable energies, fisheries and aquaculture, logistics, tourism, and the maritime sector may lead to the identification of governance mechanisms and their impact on entrepreneurial activities.

Seventh, adding international comparative research would further enrich the existing body of work. Studying the interrelationship of governance and entrepreneurship in other peripheral regions in Africa, Europe, and the emerging economies would make it possible to identify the common denominators as well as the specific contextual variables. The value of the proposed theory would also be enhanced.

Finally, research would focus on the interrelationship of entrepreneurship and governance in the long term and the resiliency of a system. In regions facing economic volatility as well as environmental shifts and technological disruption, the study of governance systems and the support of entrepreneurial ecosystems to promote adaptability and resilience will be of greater value.

In conclusion, the research pathways proposed in this article will open new avenues in the understanding of territorial governance and entrepreneurial development. Building on the theoretical, empirical, and practical dimensions, future research has the potential to increase the understanding of entrepreneurship in the Southern Provinces of Morocco as a means to promote sustainable regional development (MANNI, M., 2025).

## **9. Conclusion**

Entrepreneurship has been key in shaping innovation, job creation, and competition in a region's economy. Developing entrepreneurship has been traditionally viewed as a function of the entrepreneurship of single actors. More often, studies place emphasis on the role of governance quality, the effectiveness of institutions, and public support in the entrepreneurial ecosystem and the sustainability of regional growth. Given the above, this article aimed to create a theoretical model that conceptualizes the role of public support and territorial governance in the entrepreneurial development of regions. This is specifically modelled for the Southern Provinces of Morocco.

Utilizing Governance Theory, New Regionalism Theory and the Institutional Theory, the study centered territorial governance within a broad framework that included governance and entrepreneurial result influencing factors. The study examined the quality of governance as a multidimensional framework that incorporates the institutional setting, the business environment, financing, administrative procedures, and public and private partnerships. These dimensions create conducive environments for the activities of entrepreneurship, the inflow of investments, the creation of innovations, and the diversification of the economy.

According to the theoretical model presented in this article, efficient governance of a region enhances the entrepreneurial development of that region by facilitating improved cooperation of the relevant actors, the removal of institutional obstacles, the provision of necessary resources, and enhancement of the attractiveness of the region. This model illustrates how governance creates dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystems that facilitate the establishment of businesses, encourage innovation, enhance the competitiveness of a region, and foster sustainable changes to the economy. The model further underscores the vital role public support plays in an entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Programs such as the Regional Investment Centers (CRI), the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH), Intelaka, Forsa, and Awrach demonstrate examples of positive public action that have the potential to alleviate systemic barriers, create new modes of opportunity for the entrepreneur, and amplify the economic capacity of a community. Such programs are even more vital in peripheral areas of a region where the entrepreneurial market may be stunted by market and other institutional failures.

There is perhaps no better case study on the issues of concern to this research than that of the Moroccan Southern Provinces. Recently, the region has undergone a significant economic metamorphosis from strategic public investments and the construction of large infrastructure and the supported reforms of decentralization and state-sponsored entrepreneurial programs. Still, issues of remoteness, thin markets, and economic monopolies persist and adversely affect the relative progress of other regions. The outcome of this research in a theoretical sense is that the level of state governance is a determinant of the entrepreneurial capacity of a community and of the issues they face.

The research is valuable to entrepreneurs and their support organizations, as well as to community and regional planners and governance systems. The research adds to the existing literature on governance and entrepreneurial systems by considering them together and at the community and regional level, as well as the state level. The research makes a significant and novel contribution to the literature on governance systems.

The framework indicates that institutional effectiveness, the business environment, access to finance, administrative burdens, and public-private interaction are elements that constrain the entrepreneurial spirit and regional competitiveness.

In the Southern Provinces of Morocco, the future of prosperity will more the combination of resources than the availability of resources. There needs to be effective governance that will transform resources into opportunities of sustainable development. Regional entrepreneurship acts as the dominant driver of regional development. Governance of an area provides the necessary base for the entrepreneurial ecosystem of that area. The competitiveness of the area will be further enhanced by more effective governance and supportive structures.

The theoretical framework of this article aims to suggest parameters for future, empirically based, developments. It strives to contribute to the various debates of governance and entrepreneurship within the peripheral and emerging regions.

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