

The Moroccan Civil Society: An Attempt to Overcome the Crisis through the Openness to Principles of Good Governance

Mohamed Ait Oujaa

University Mohammed V- Rabat, Doctorate Candidate

Doi:10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n2s1p325

Abstract

This article aims at first glance to study the extent to which associative and institutional discourse has contributed in advancing the civil society in Morocco as an important institution fully independent of the state and based on a number of social and civil structures. To this end, the concept is defined and discussed in the first part of this article along with the elements and components upon which this latter is based, being voluntary, free choice, and respecting the legal regulatory and the constitutional legitimacy. The second part of this article reviews the onset of the Moroccan civil society prior to the state and the developments it has witnessed ever since in organizing and framing society, catering for its needs and later on co-existing with the State after this latter failed to eliminate it. Last but not least, the third part of this article treats 'governance' as a concept devoted in a context of democracy. It also opens to considering modernization and opening up to governance as the main reasons the civil society was successful in its attempt to overcome crises in times fragility and incapacity dominated all levels. The results of this article show that Morocco is considered one of the leading countries in the South through the implementation of 'governance' and 'modernization' and its opening to the community's activities by virtue of the political transformation which the experience of power has known in the country in the early nineties.

Keywords: Morocco, Civil Society, Good Governance, State, Democracy, Power

1. Introduction

A number of sociological studies and research have emphasized that the civil society has come to be one of the focal pillars involved in the construction of the Rule of Law in different regions despite the historical, ethnic and gender differences. Perhaps, one of the inherent reasons which have forecasted the civil society in this position is the regression of the Rule together with the parties participating in the management of public affairs. Of course, this matter reflects on a number of research questions: How is the concept of the Moroccan civilian society defined? To what extent it is developed? What are its principal components and information? Last but by no means least, what are its most important characteristics?

2. Objectives and Methodology of the Study

2.1 Objectives of the Study:

The aim of the present study is to provide a theoretical overview to the understanding of the Moroccan civil society and its attempts to overcome the different crises it is faced with. In fact, the study further branches into three main objectives. First of all, the paper seeks to define the concept of the civil society and survey the manifestations of its development as well as its controversial relationship to the state. A further subsidiary objective involves the emphasis on the role which good governance plays in the modernization and advancement of the Moroccan civil society. Last but by no means least, the paper also seeks to define the activities of the Moroccan Civil society in relation to those of a Non-formal Education Associations taken as a models.

2.2 Methodology of the Study:

All scientific work requires the use of a methodological approach which would allow the researcher to collect, interpret and analyze the data s/he has gathered. However, in the context of this article, we have felt that in order to meet the objectives of the paper, we had to decide on one specific methodology. That is, we have opted for a purely theoretical methodology, one which promises to deliver a better description and overview of the situation at stake. Therefore, the

study has rather taken a theoretical turn, one which prepares the grounds for the coming work which in turn will tackle the practical part in exploring the data and its analysis. Subsequently, we have felt that the latter should be left for future accounts in a separate article to complete the one at hand.

3. The Concept of the Civil Society

3.1 A Definition:

It is a system founded on societal, civilian, and peaceful structures fully independent of both the rule and the state. The origin of this society goes as far back as to the emergence of the capitalist society and the development of the liberal political intellectualism in Europe, which acknowledges Individualism, Popular Sovereignty and Human Rights.

As for the Arab world, the concept of the civil society has circulated through the growing interest in Antonio Gramsci's (1991) writings in addition to the departure of some of the pioneering reformist intellectuals to European countries. In fact, many Arab researchers have defined the concept including Dr. Saad Eddine Ibrahim (1995) to be "a group of free voluntary organizations which fill up the public sphere between the family and the state to achieve the interests of its members committing to the values and standards of respect, compromise, tolerance, and the sound management of diversity and disagreement". Therefore, the concept excludes the primary social institutions such as the family, the tribe, and the clan as well as non-governmental institutions but remains in the domain of civil society and non-governmental institutions which are active on volunteer work.

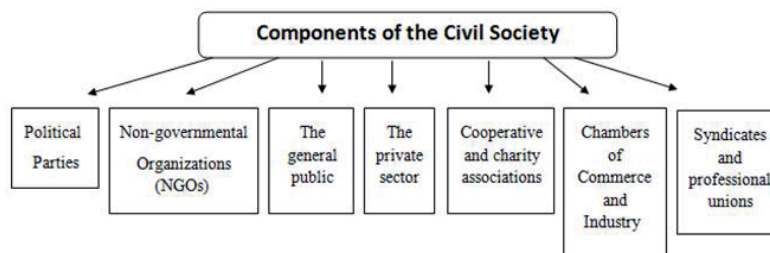
3.2 Elements and Components of the Civil Society:

Of the key pillars upon which the civil society is based are the following elements:

- Volunteering and free choice: community service is based upon the free contribution and the voluntary act without obligation and/or force.
- The independence of all external pressures, official or semi-official.
- Respecting the legal regulatory and constitutional legitimacy and all the laws governing the institutions of the state.
- Specializing in business and projects which benefit the local community in particular and the humane society in general.
- Integrating the civil society's work with the state through the research and investigation, providing the suggestions, the counseling, the declaration of constructive protest and the effective criticism with the achievement of comprehensive and sustainable development.

The civil society may lean on a set of components which can be identified as follows:

Diagram (1): Components of the Civil Society



From diagram (1), it appears following some authors that the civil society includes a wide range of components among which the political parties. However, the issue of the affiliation of these latter to the civil society raises lots of controversy. Whilst some incorporate it within the civil society as it serves the interests of citizens and acts on their behalves in representative institutions such as community, regional, and provincial councils, others, however, amongst which the researcher and doctor Hassan Qurunful, reject this proposal. To support that, Qurunful (1997) argues that most intellectuals agree that "syndicates, cultural and human right associations, and political parties constitute the most important elements of the civil society [...] it raises too many questions, So, it must be mentioned that there is no room to talk about the civil society within a specific community but only against the existence of bodies and various other systems.

Hence, we can say that contemporary societies consist of three levels: the first level includes the political power ruling and exercising all executive and legislative power which the constitution or the law vests in it. The second level consists of what could be called the political community which includes the political elite framed within political parties. Last but not least, the third level includes the civil society. It is important to point that each level of these establishes relationships of opposition and antagonism with the other levels” (Qurunful, 1997, 57).

Based on the aforementioned, Dr Hassan Qurunful's refusal to include political parties among the civil society is legitimately clarified, for political parties belong to a political community exercising all legal and illegal means to reach power. This, however, is inconsistent with the fundamentals and objectives of the civil society which work to serve the public interest in a democratic, transparent, and fair atmosphere.

4. Manifestations of the Moroccan Civil Society's Evolution and its Relationship to the State

To surpass and overcome this crisis, the civil society has recorded tremendous development due to positive roles and activities throughout time by adopting a group of social organizations which have actively contributed to the framing of the society, its protection from the State's oppression, and the rebellion against it or the catering for the society's successive burdens throughout ages. Therefrom, we find the institutions of the tribe, the Zaouia¹, the guild² as well as the educational institution; the Qur'anic School³. In this context, Mohammed Abed Al-Jabiri (1988) mentions:

“Up to the 1930s, the Moroccan society was framed by the tribe and the Zaouia. And there were only two intertwined social frameworks within which members of the Moroccan community, the tribe and the Sufi tradition, or the Zaouia, were enrolled. As for the state, it was a higher system drawing its power and effectiveness, and even its existence from the kind of relationship it establishes with the forenamed frameworks”.

Thence, four decades ago, the associative act and power in Morocco swung between conflict and confrontation. The beginning was of a human rights nature. The researcher Taoufiq Bouaachrine (2000) has reviewed these key steps in three positions characterizing how authority deals with the civil society's actors.

- a. **Confrontation:** this phase has lasted since the beginning of the seventies to the mid eighties. It was characterized by the direct clash with what used to constitute (the purpose of) an emerging youthful civil society and which was mostly linked in a degree or another to the opposing political parties, especially the leftist.
- b. **Competition:** in the mid eighties, the authority took notice of the growing interest in the institutions of civil society. Accordingly, it proceeded to create several associations, which it provided with material resources, promoting similar objectives and slogans as other private institutions of the civil society, appointed authority officials and capitalists as its heads to strengthen its influence in society (i.e. Association Bouregreg, Association Ismailites, Association Iligh, Association Angad and Association Ocean...). It is noticeable that these associations' activities have started covering all regions of Morocco to become a cover for many formal political activities.
- c. **Containment:** in the early nineties, the state's strategy towards the civil society changed after it had failed to eliminate it once for all and/or significantly compete with it. Thus, the state leaned towards containing the civil society and employing its institutions and their positions in the society. And so began the talk about its involvement in the preparation of governmental programs, the management of facilities, and the expansion of its presence and its symbols in formal activities and diverse mass media.

5. The Modernization of the Moroccan Civil Society through an Opening up to Governance as a Reliable Bet

This openness did not come in a natural context indicating the beginning of the state's faith on the ability of institutions of the civil society to contribute in the management of public affairs, but in a context of disability at first by addressing the major issues Morocco began to encounter in the nineties and which constituted a direct consequence to the results of the eighties' structural schedules.

To advance the civil society in Morocco, it has been relied on good governance, the participation of the citizen, and the promotion of the institutions. So, what do we mean by governance and good governance? It is an old concept.

¹ Islamic monastery.

² It is a name given to an “organizational” gathering of artisans with a secretary on top of each craft.

³ The school which used to teach fundamentals of religion and Sharia.

Shortly, it has evolved and has been associated with exercising the political authority and its managing to the community's affairs and resources through mechanisms and institutions which participate in the decision-making. Governance consolidates the principle of the accounting and transparent participation.

Governance does only exist in the light of democracy and popular sovereignty. It requires the existence of an integrated system of both political and administrative accountability of the officials in their public jobs, the institutions of civil society and the private sector.

5.1 Activities of the Civil Society in Morocco and the Dynamics of the Associative Work: the Case of Associations:

Morocco has achieved a remarkable development in the dynamics of associative work as it is considered one of the leading countries in the South through its opening on the community's activities by virtue of the political transformation that the experience of power has known in Morocco in the early nineties as well as the maturity, the dynamism and the quality of social mobility with which a group of national cadres has been characterized. Therefore, the increase in social demands, the implicit or explicit objection to the state's monopoly on the management of many economic and social sectors, and the changes which have characterized the management of public policies are all favorable factors in the unique launching and the dynamics which the civil society has known in our country.

The law has pointed out that the association is an agreement between its constituents. This does not mean that this agreement will remain confined to the members constituting the association but can go beyond to include the members outside the association, for they can participate and join the agreement through their enrollment in it.

Associations branch out into various types the most important of which are political (parties and organizations with political overtones), professional (trade unions and federations), developmental (environmental), human rights, and cultural (Qur'anic school). Nowadays, Morocco hosts more than 30.000 associations with multiple origins and diverse goals.

Table (2): the geographic distribution of associations across the national territory:

Region	Number	Percentage	Region	Number	Percentage
Rabat-Salé-Zemmour- Zaer	3805	15%	Fes-Boulmane	1231	5%
Grand-Casablanca	3558	14%	Gharb-Chrarda-Beni-Hsen	1012	4%
Souss-Massa-Daraa	3238	13%	Tadla-Azilal	905	4%
Meknes-Tafilalet	2168	9%	Taza-Hoceima-Taounate	785	3%
Tanger-Tetouan	2152	9%	Chaouia-Ourdigha	574	2%
Oriental -Rif	1997	8%	Guelmim-Es-Semara	271	1%
Marrakech-Tensift-Haouz	1508	6%	Laayoune-Boujdour	166	1%
Doukkala-Abda	104	5%	Oued-Eddahab-Lagouira	58	0%

Source: Guide de Citoyen, Association Daba, a Booklet by Telquel, n°263, mars 2007, pp, 32.

If some methodological remarks, which mainly consist of a systematic collection of data, statistics and standards having been adopted in the preparation of this table, are not overrode, it is crucial to note that in return this data is very important as it will help in understanding both the positioning and presence of associative work in Morocco in terms of the numbers and also its effectiveness in some of the regions.

The overwhelming observation which we shall stop at in our reading to this table concerns the overriding concentration of associative work in both regions of Rabat and Casablanca, followed by the Souss-Massa-Daraa region. However, some regions such as Taza (3%) and Chaouia (2%) suffer from a weakness in terms of associative work while no record of its presence is noted in the Oued-Eddahab region.

The paradox, which we note from the induction of the data in the table above, is that associative work constitutes only modest proportions in the regions which suffer from developmental difficulties while it is considerably present in the regions to which many possibilities and opportunities are made available. Perhaps, the leverage of this developmental work is ascribed to the presence of a kind of qualified elite able to contribute effectively to the management and sharing of roles with other parties.

To get closer to the nature of associations of the Moroccan civil society working in the social development field, we suggest a model of the associations which work in the non-formal education.

5.2 Association Ribat Al Fath: A Model of a Non-formal Education Association:

Since 1997, the Ministry of the National Education has embarked on the application of the non-formal education as a part of the public education system. For the establishment of this program, the Ministry has prepared a strategy specialized in the implementation of an education which takes into consideration the peculiarities of the target groups in ways and methods which differ from the formal education as the new approach is characterized by involving civil society associations and organizations. The program launched with the contribution of twenty one associations in 1997 to reach forty six associations in 2002. The total of the beneficiaries from this program, however, has amounted to 71257 beneficiaries by the year 2000.

Founded in 1986, the Ribat Al Fath Association for Sustainable Development (henceforth ARFDD⁴) is considered one of the associations which have contributed to the success of this program. Its most highlighted objectives manifest in raising awareness of national issues. The association has had its first experience in the field of literacy and adult education since 1990 as it became able to conclude a number of partnership agreements. In the context of its work in the fight against illiteracy, and according to the general statistics for 2000- 2001, the association has reached 3068 beneficiaries. As far as the hours of training are concerned, they have been fixed to six hours a week for literacy, two hours for religious and health awareness, one hour for legal awareness and one hour for craft training.

As for the level of difficulties which hinders the association in its role to contribute to the advancement of the non-formal education, they are:

- The lack of trained staff.
- The lack of training programs.
- Lack of financial resources.

Regarding the development of the performance of the associations contributing to the non-formal education in Morocco, the association suggests the following:

- ✓ Organizing formative training for the staff.
- ✓ Providing work spaces.
- ✓ Stimulating both the staff and the beneficiaries.
- ✓ The real involvement of the civil society in the development of the educational program.
- ✓ Increasing the financial resources.

5.3 From the aforementioned, we can draw a few conclusions:

Based on the aforementioned, Morocco has achieved a remarkable development in the dynamics of associative work as it is considered one of the leading countries in the South through its opening on the community's activities by virtue of the political transformation that the experience of power has known in the country in the early nineties as well as the maturity, the dynamism and the quality of social mobility with which a group of national cadres has been characterized. Therefore, the increase in social demands, the implicit or explicit objection to the state's monopoly on the management of many economic and social sectors, and the changes that have characterized the management of public policies are all favorable factors in the unique launching and the dynamics which the civil society has known in our country.

Therefore, the National Survey on the Values conducted in Morocco in 2005 has deduced the basic fact that the respondents' interest in the political work seems weak as opposed to their concern with the associative work for which they wish more and more.

Thus, based on the aforesaid, it appears that the advancement and contribution in the developmental projects cannot take place without the participation of the civil society. In fact, there exist no ways in proceeding on neither making that happen nor creating a state of strong mobilization of the total capacities and capabilities but through consolidating the citizenship values and promoting the democratic behavior within these associative structures and also by understanding the policy of independency and the lack of dependency to either some internal parties or to the funders on the grounds that these latter's interests and ends may conflict with the emancipation of an independent civil society.

This independence is only attainable through a freedom from the disabilities which are generated by the layout and structures of the political sphere with both its international and party dimensions and subjecting this independency itself to totalitarian demands, and in particular the work for the benefit of all tiers of society within an integrative and holistic vision and without prior political, ideological, factional or heuristic conditions.

⁴ Association Ribat Al Fath pour le Développement Durable.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, we have tried to trace the origins of the concept of civil society and its components as we have highlighted the stages of its development and its relationship to the state while at the same time concentrating on the need for openness to good governance.

What can be concluded from the follow up on the most important stages the Moroccan civil society has gone through is the necessity to create a national observatory for the civil society which would be interested in studying and monitoring the various aspects of success and incapability as well as effects of its work on the development. Thus, our proposal comes due to the leading roles expected of the civil society.

Therefore, our intention is an attempt to expand the circle of debate on a vital subject interesting all the stakeholders, university researchers as well as associative actors and officials to what the civil society has become in constituting a great interest and a growing role in the process of development.

References

Arabic-Language References

- إبراهيم، سعد الدين. (1995). المجتمع المدني و التحول الديمقراطي في الوطن العربي. مقدمة كتاب المجتمع المدني و التحول الديمقراطي في البحرين. القاهرة: مركز ابن خلدون للدراسات الإنمائية. ص: 5.
- الجابري، محمد عابد. (1988). المغرب المعاصر: الخصوصية والهوية الحداثية والتنمية. الطبعة الأولى الدار البيضاء: المركز الثقافي العربي. ص: 155.
- الغياط، محمد. (2004). دور جمعيات المجتمع المدني في التعليم غير النظامي بالمغرب. المغرب: طوب بريس - مجلة رقمية -
- الغيلاني، محمد. (2005). محنة المجتمع المدني مفارقات الوظيفة ورهانات الاستقلالية. الطبعة الأولى. عن سلسلة دفاتر وجهة نظر. العدد 6. ص: 85.
- بالقزيز، عبد الإله. (2001). في الديمقراطية والمجتمع المدني: مرآتي الواقع، مدائح الأسطورة. الطبعة الأولى. الدار البيضاء: إفريقيا الشرق. ص: 3-4.
- بوعشرين، توفيق. (2000). محنة المجتمع المدني بالمغرب والمفاهيم والسياقات وإشكالية التوظيف. القاهرة: مجلة وجهة نظر، العدد 7.
- غرامشي، أنطونيو. (1991). قضايا المجتمع المدني. دمشق: دار كنعان للدراسات والنشر.
- قرنفل، حسن. (1997). المجتمع المدني والنخبة السياسية. الطبعة الأولى. الدار البيضاء: إفريقيا الشرق. ص: 57.
- مرصد الانتقال الديمقراطي بالمغرب. (2005). محنة المجتمع المدني مفارقات الوظيفة ورهانات الاستقلالية. الطبعة الأولى. التحول الديمقراطي بالمغرب، التقرير السنوي 2004 منشورات منتدى المواطنة 2005.
- مزيان بالفيقي، عبد العزيز. و آخرون. (2006). المغرب الممكن إسهام في النقاش العام من أجل طموح مشترك. تقرير الخمسينية. الدار البيضاء: مطبعة دار النشر المغرب. ص: 48.

French-Language References

- Abdelmoumni, Fouad. (1999). « Opportunités de Développement des Associations au Maroc ». In L'action Associative au Maroc, 1999.
- Laroui, Abdallah. (1993). Les Origines Sociales et Culturelles du Nationalisme Marocain 1830 – 1912. Casablanca : Centre Culturel Arabe.
- Marx, Karl. et Engels, Friedrich. (1966). Manifeste du Parti Communiste. Intro, Dejean Brurat, Préparé par Michèle Tailleur, Paris : Editions Sociales.
- Touraine, Alain. (1994). Qu'est ce que la démocratie? Paris : Fayard.