

Innovation and sustainability of territories, local institutions and cultural values promotion

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Summary: Often associated with uneven development, rapid economic growth requires the integration of cultural aspects into transformation processes, thereby contributing to more authentic, equitable development rooted in local specificities. Innovative collective dynamics offer numerous advantages for actors, institutions, and individuals. They are important factors in social, cultural, and economic development while encouraging citizen involvement and creativity in local development projects.

Promoting innovation and sustainable economic growth requires a holistic approach that considers both the formal and informal institutions present in a given territory. Aligning these institutions with cultural values can strengthen social cohesion and foster sustainable, inclusive economic development.

This contribution focuses on innovation as a lever for sustainable transformation. More specifically, it aims to understand the role of local institutions in promoting cultural values through innovation dynamics. We opted for a qualitative method, conducting semi-directive interviews with institutional players involved in the Fès-Meknès region, using NVIVO software.

The sole aim of this research is to open the debate on the need to intervene on endogenous factors, such as the cultural values that characterize each territory, to promote recognition of the role of the local in projects for sustainable regional transformation.

Keywords: Innovation - Cultural values - Local institutions - Regional development - Sustainable transformation

JEL: O3; R11; O17; Z1

Introduction

Cultural diversity is essential to achieving sustainable development. Indeed, culture has a significant impact on how citizens interact with their environment (Taneja and Webster, 2016). It is the cultural expression of a community that will provide reflections, perceptions and behaviors that align or not with the principles of sustainable development.

Cultural diversity encompasses diverse aspects such as knowledge, practices, and creativity. These elements play a crucial role, not only in terms of preserving the planet's resources, but also for the well-being of populations. In addition, cultural diversity fosters community

involvement in the development, implementation, and evaluation of solutions to social problems, especially in their diverse and complex aspects.

Respecting the diversity of individuals and cultures means engaging in conversations and discussions that promote tolerance and peace. These efforts are essential buffers against clashes between civilizations and tensions over identity. Safeguarding cultural diversity should not be seen as a secondary concern, overshadowed by the overriding importance of combating poverty or protecting biodiversity.

In this sense, the institutional environment should provide a stable, predictable framework for improving quality of life while preserving and enhancing cultural heritages. As Tremblay pointed out, "*institutions are an important explanatory factor for the economic and technological situations we observe*" (Tremblay, 2007, p. 4).

In support of this assertion, we note that this institutional framework has the capacity to influence technology and shape the innovation process within society (Tremblay, 2007). From this perspective, innovation is seen as a transformative agent for societies, social institutions, and cultures, playing a driving role in maintaining their vitality as well as an important factor in economic success (Chang, 2006, p. 64). The resulting question is: How can local institutions contribute to the preservation of cultural values in innovation processes while promoting sustainable transformation? This study is an attempt to answer this question.

Methodology

The present contribution attempts to explore, from an institutional perspective, the innovative dynamics linked to cultural values, applied to the Moroccan context, specifically in to the Fès-Meknès region.

In seeking to deepen and broaden our understanding of regional development and innovation processes, we opted for a qualitative approach, conducting semi-structured interviews with both formal and informal institutional actors. Nevertheless, the relevance of this combination can be debated when considering the nature of the institutions involved and their level of commitment, mainly influenced by the predominance of innovative practices.

This method offers respondents the opportunity to describe and develop their actions in relation to the processes examined (Saunders et al., 2009). Using the institutional profile approach, it becomes possible to incorporate the influences of various contexts, acting as determinants of social innovation.

From there, the interview sought to capture in depth their motivations, experience, expertise, and training and guided them towards a detailed description of their commitment to promoting cultural values in the innovation process.

Expected results:

The supposed originality of our article lies in the interdisciplinary approach it adopts. At the crossroads of institutional economics, development economics and regional economics, we anticipate that this study will achieve three results: Innovation becomes the central pillar of any change in the institutional structures that underpin sustainable regional transformation. Taking account of cultural values specific to the region leads to a revision of the concept of economic growth. The latter becomes a multidimensional process driven by the economic mentality of local institutions. The complementarity between formal and informal institutions

is essential for all transformations to be effective, particularly in reducing uncertainty and creating an environment of trust and peace.

These results present stimulating insights, paving the way for future research and creating fertile ground for new explorations.

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