

Local disparity and perspectives of territorial development in southeastern Tunisia



Résumé : En Tunisie, les déséquilibres régionaux ont été parmi les grandes révélations de la Révolution de janvier 2011, cette disparité est pas seulement entre les gouvernorats, mais elle s'observe aussi entre les délégations d'un même gouvernorat. Ce papier tente de mettre en évidence la disparité territoriale entre les délégations des gouvernorats de Sud-Est tunisien en calculant un indice de développement territorial. Ainsi, des recommandations seront proposées afin de réaliser un développement équitable.

Mots clés : disparité territoriale, indice de développement territorial, Sud-Est tunisien.

Abstract: For several decades, Tunisia has been treated as a single entity in national economic development. However, the experiences and problems vary considered by locale within the nation. For the south-east area of Tunisia, this work considers indicators of territorial disparities that may exist among subareas in this region.

Keywords: Territorial disparity, territorial development index, south-east Tunisia

INTRODUCTION

In Tunisia, the efforts made in terms of development are major. The different orientations are essentially aimed at integrating the entire population into the economic sphere in order to address global issues such as globalization and international competition. But despite these efforts, the fruits of development have been unevenly distributed across different parts of the country, and socio-economic growth has favored some governorates much more than others. This spatial inequality between regions is, in reality, the product of the concentration of services and the production apparatus with poor government governance. The regional imbalance in Tunisia between the governorates and the territorial disparity between the delegations were among the great revelations of the revolution of January 2011. Indeed, the popular uprising started from the disadvantaged Tunisian cities, first those of the Southwest to cities of the mining basin of Gafsa governorate between 2008 and 2010 and Ben guerdane in the

south-east in 2010. This paper tries to highlight the territorial development in the governorates of South-East Tunisia on the border with Libya. This work proposes to aggregate a set of regional development indicators in order to draw up a typology of the delegations as well as to calculate a territorial development index for each delegation and to discern any failures hindering their development. The index of territorial development makes it possible to draw up a typology of the regions according to their resemblance on the basis of the development indicators, which can give us a good illustration on the existence or the nonexistence of territorial disparities in the South-East of Tunisia .

REGIONAL DISPARITY IN TUNISIA

Tunisia is divided into 24 governorates and 268 delegations of areas and unequal populations. Since the number of governorates is high, the Tunisian state has decided to cut the Tunisian territory into six planning regions from the Sixth Development Plan (1982-1986) to optimize the execution of its policy. Regional development in Tunisia is one of the important and priority areas in the country's development program. In fact, the objectives of the State are directed towards the reduction of inequality and poverty between the regions by modernizing and improving basic infrastructure and by promoting human and natural resources at the regional level. But despite efforts to reduce poverty, it remains concentrated in the country's inland areas. Here we can ask the question of the relationship between the place of residence and the standard of living of households that has attracted the attention of economists. Indeed, according to Hauret (2005), we generally have two different ways of conceiving this relationship; for some economists, the standard of living of households determines their localities of residence. On the other hand, according to other economists, it is not the standard of living that influences the place of residence but rather the opposite. But, in reality, the links between poor people and places of residence are twofold. First, the installation and concentration of populations disadvantaged leads to the "impoverishment" of a neighborhood, both from an economic and social point of view. On the other hand, because it combines social

and economic difficulties, a poor neighborhood can itself become a potential factor of poverty for its occupants. Economists therefore share the idea that household poverty and standard of living are not randomly distributed in space. Rather, they are concentrated in contiguous areas characterized by similar attributes such as education level, household size, infrastructure, climatic conditions, and so on. In Tunisia, all development plans have incorporated, in their design, regional development strategies consisting mainly of reducing gaps between the different regions. As such, the notions of regional disparities, pockets of poverty, growing regions, depressed regions have been introduced; the design and introduction of development programs, reflecting a view of regional and multidimensional development, have been made (UN, 2004). The levels of performance of these different strategies vary considerably from one region to another, the disparities still persist and the differences widen further. The fruits of development have been unevenly distributed over the different regions of the country, and socio-economic growth has favored mainly the North-East governorates (Bécher et al, 2011b). This observation is made by the use of advanced statistical techniques for the exploration of multidimensional data. In theory, there are several methods for measuring regional disparity such as inequality indices, for example, the Gini coefficient, regional variations in GDP per capita (in other words, each region is considered as an individual), weighting of regions in according to their population or area. Thus, several techniques of data analysis make it possible to show the regional disparity. This is for example the analysis in principal components, the factorial analysis of correspondences (ACP and AFC). In our work, we use the XLSTAT software to calculate a territorial development index that concerns the delegations of the study area.

STUDY ZONE

The study area is composed of three governorates (Gabes, Medenine and Tataouine) which are divided into 26 delegations (Figure 1). This zone is characterized by an arid climate marked by a low and irregular rainfall (50-200 mm / year)

with high temperatures. At the economic level, the region is characterized by the presence of (Bécher et al., 2011a):

- **An artisanal and industrial sector based on the exploitation of the oil resources of the extreme South and on the processing manufacturing units mainly in the building materials, textile and agro-food industries, and also the manufacturing sector. chemical industries in Gabes.**
- **A tourist branch with the tourist zone of Jerba-Zarzis which constitutes one of the main places of concentration of the tourist establishments of the country.**
- **An important activity of the fishing sector.**
- **An agricultural sector marked by olive growing.**
- **An informal trade with Libya.**

The South-East region is characterized by a high rate of unemployment compared to the national average estimated at 14.8% in 2014 (INS, 2015). Note here, the importance of the informal sector with Libya in reducing the number of unemployed in our region study. This trade has helped to improve the standard of living of several people in the border area with Libya where thousands of retailers, semi-wholesalers, etc. meet. The wholesalers of the South-East and especially of the city of Ben Guerdane supply several stores of the large Tunisian cities. According to Haddar (2013), the capital of a wholesaler was estimated at around 300 thousand dinars. Each employs about 5 people and makes a daily turnover of about 50 thousand dinars. The number of Ben Guerdane retailers is estimated at around 1,200 retailers. They play a big role in the distribution of products. Regarding the "fuel chain", it has about 1000 retailers. The carriers that deliver the imported goods to Ben Guerdane are estimated at about 600. Including a conveyor in addition to the driver, the sector creates about 1200 jobs. In addition to these, there are about 2,000 people working for them even crossing the border daily carrying small amounts of goods and fuel. These indicators show the importance of informal trade in the region and its role in job creation (Hadar, 2013).

Table 1. Unemployment rate in the governorates of Southeast Tunisia in 2014

Gouvernorat	Total	Masculin	Féminin
Gabes	18.8	12.1	36.1
Médenine	14.5	8.6	31.5
Tataouine	25.8	18.7	46
Tunisie	14.8	11.4	22.2

Regarding the rate of poverty, in 2015, it reached 21.7% in our region of study in the governorate of Medenine, 15.9% in the governorate of Gabes and 15% in the governorate of Tataouine, note that a disparity is noted between the regions of Tunisia go from 3.5% in the governorate of Tunis to 34.9% in the governorate of Kairouan (INS, 2016).

METHOD OF ANALYSIS ADOPTED

Development indicators enable decision-makers to monitor and evaluate the state of socio-economic development of any region. To this end, the method of calculating territorial development indicator will be used to answer this problem and show the disparity in development between the delegations of the governorates of Gabes, Medenine and Tataouine. Our study is based on the report of Robert Prescott-Allen: The Wollbeing of Nations (2001) and the report of the Ministry of Regional Development (2012). Our work will give an idea of the territorial disparity between the delegations of the governorates of South-East Tunisia. In fact, the territorial development index (TDI) is made up of three different indices, namely the employment index, the knowledge index and the living conditions index. To combine such disparate indicators, we must reduce all these indices to a common unit between 0 and 1, named score. This method is comparative standardization, the calculation of the sub-indices takes the following form (Antony and Visweswara Rao, 2007):

$$j = 1, 2, \dots .26$$

Hmin: the calculated minimum value of the
Hmax score: the maximum calculated value of the score

Hj: the value found

The synthetic indicator of territorial development is the simple average of the 13 variables previously standardized by this method, so the closer the IDT is to 1, the higher the level of development. The data come from regional indicators determined by the Office of the South Development (ODS) for the year 2014 for the governorates of Gabes, Medenine and Tataouine. These indicators are essentially social and reflect the standard of living of the population of the different regions (ODS, 2015).

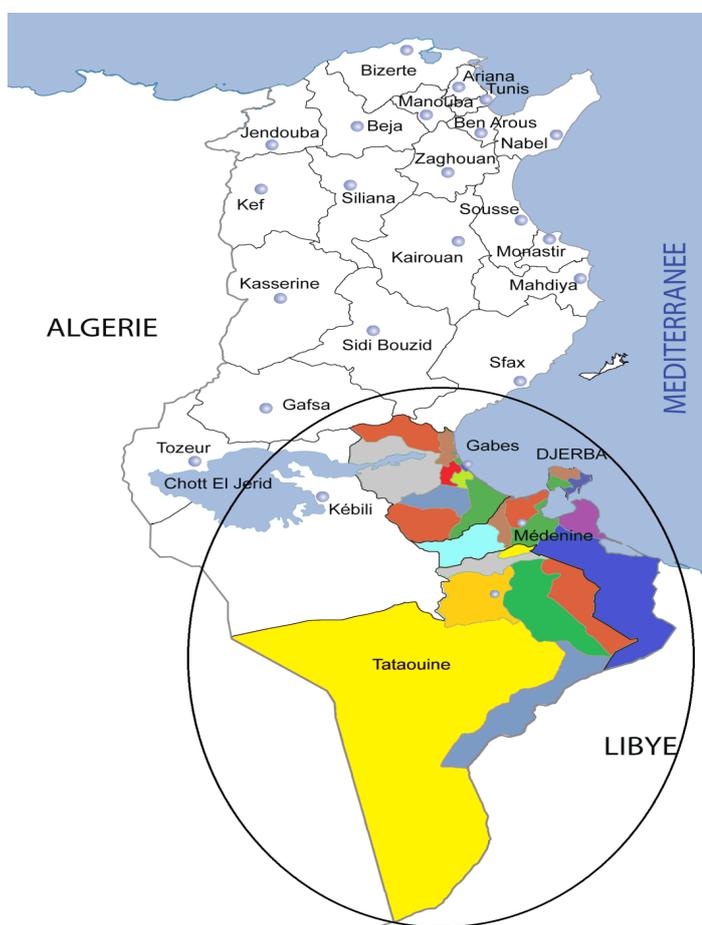
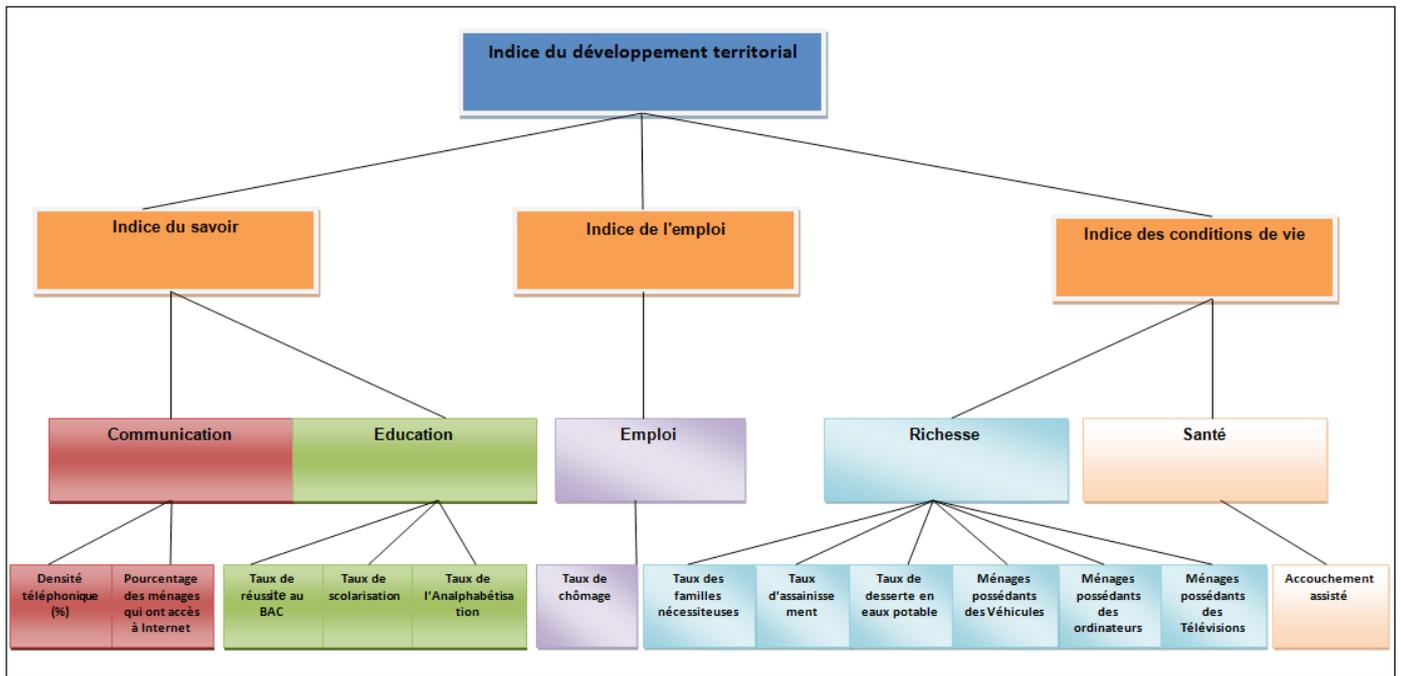


FIGURE 1. Location of the study area.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The territorial development index

The examination of the synthetic indicator clearly shows the territorial disparity between the delegations of the study area. The analysis shows that an effort should be made especially for the access of households to basic services, in the disadvantaged delegations that are inland regions that suffer from lack of good governance that is shown by the lack of infrastructure in order to attract investors, and the absence of a coherent long-term development policy on the one hand, and their weak integration into the regional and national fabric on the other (Figure 3).

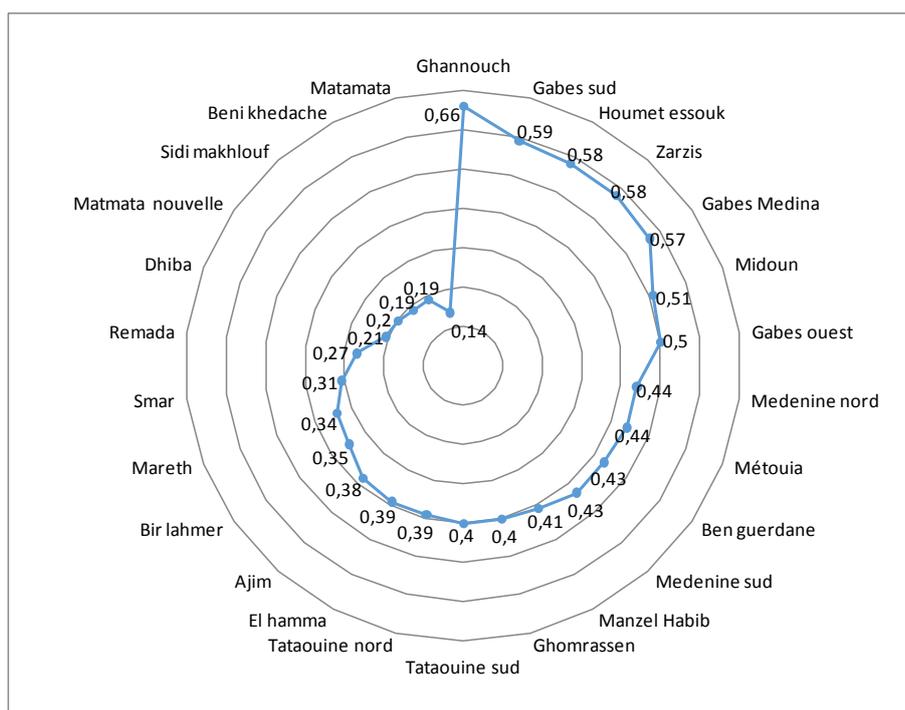


FIGURE 3 Barometer of territorial development in the governorates of South-East Tunisia.

The results review allows us to rank delegations based on these data. We note that the most disadvantaged region is Matmata with a territorial development index in 2014 of 0.14. Thus, Ghannouche is the most developed delegation in the study area with a territorial development index of 0.66, in this context, it should be noted that these two delegations belong to the same governorate which is Gabes, which shows well development gap in this governorate (Table 2).

Table 2. The ranking of delegations according to the territorial development indicator

Délégations	Indice du développement territorial	Rang
Ghannouch	0,66	1
Gabes sud	0,59	2
Houmet essouk	0,58	3
Zarzis	0,58	4
Gabes Medina	0,57	5
Midoun	0,51	6
Gabes ouest	0,50	7
Medenine nord	0,44	8
Métouia	0,44	9
Ben guerdane	0,43	10
Medenine sud	0,43	11
Manzel Habib	0,41	12
Ghomrassen	0,40	13
Tataouine sud	0,40	14
Tataouine nord	0,39	15
El hamma	0,39	16
Ajim	0,38	17
Bir lahmer	0,35	18
Mareth	0,34	19
Smar	0,31	20
Remada	0,27	21
Dhiba	0,21	22
Matmata nouvelle	0,20	23
Sidi makhlouf	0,19	24
Beni khedache	0,19	25
Matamata	0,14	26

Source : Author's own study

Thematic indicators of territorial development

In this part, we will analyze the level of territorial development by fields. Regarding the index of knowing the delegation of Gabes-sud is at the forefront. Regarding the employment index Ghanouche is the delegation with the largest index. For the living condition index, Gabes-Sud, Gabes Medina and Metouia are the delegations marked by the highest standard of living compared to other delegations in the study area (Figure 4).

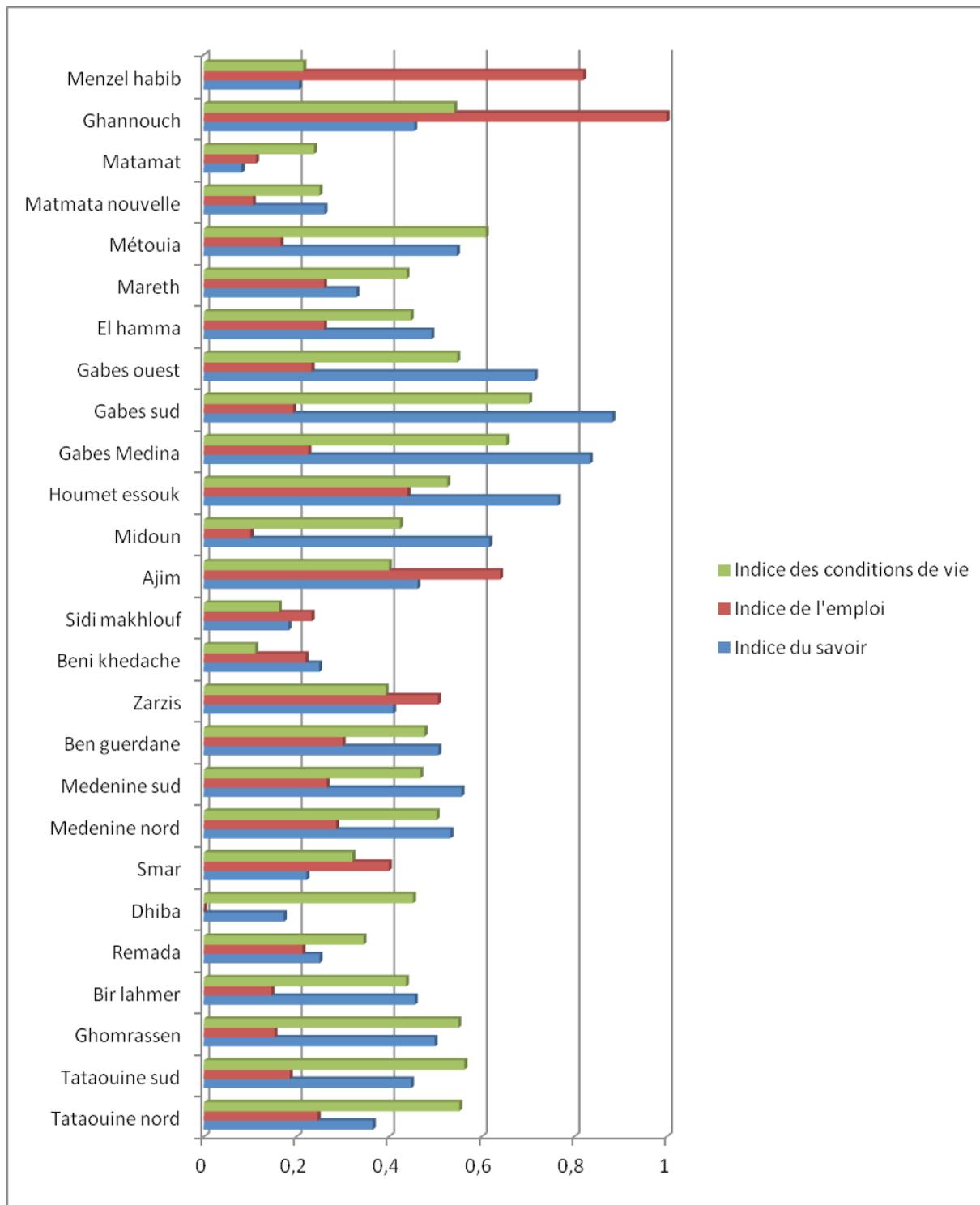


FIGURE 4 Thematic Indicators of Territorial Development of South-East Tunisian Delegations.

Discussion

According to the table of the territorial development indicator, three groups of delegations can be distinguished: delegations with a low level of socio-economic development, delegations with medium territorial development and the most developed delegations (Figure 5).

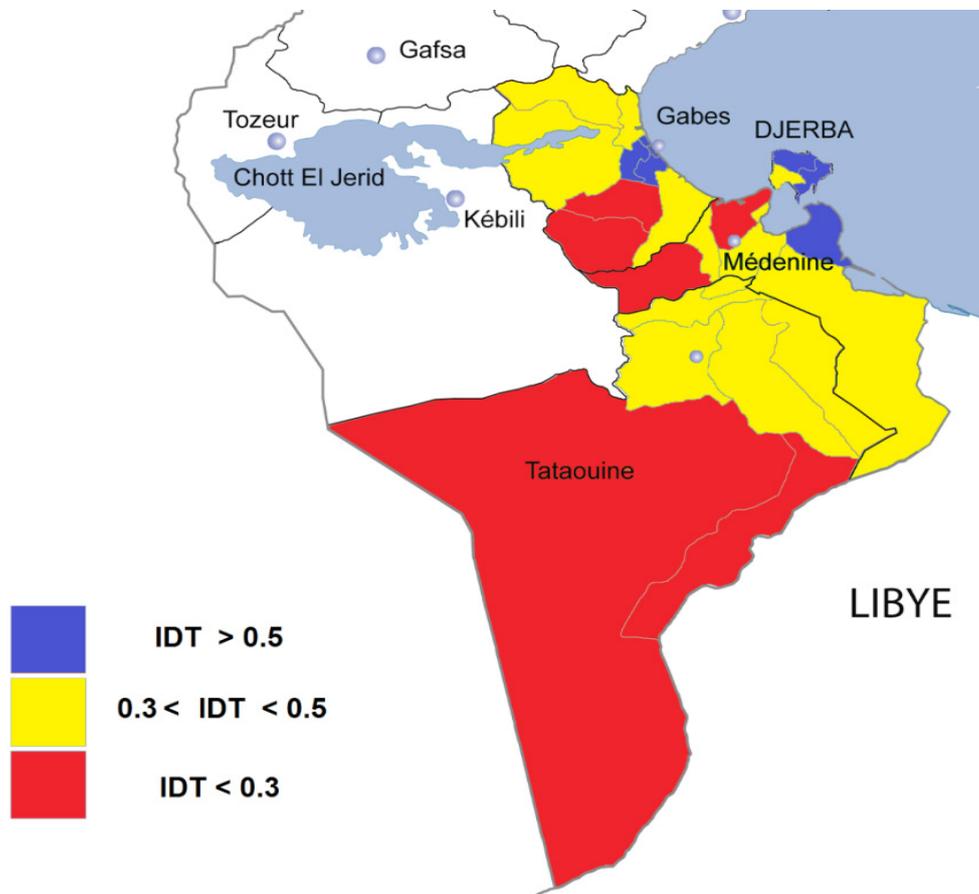


FIGURE 5. Map of territorial disparity of South-East Tunisian delegations.

Regions with a low level of socio-economic development

The economic growth experienced in the Southeast for several years has resulted in a spatial imbalance between the coastline and the interior of this area. Indeed, the “disadvantaged” delegations constituted by BeniKhedache, SidiMakhlouf, Matmata, New Matmata, Remada and Dhiba are characterized by aridity with excessive exploitation of natural resources. They have maintained a predominantly rural structure, with a lack of performance in terms of human development.

Regions with medium socio-economic development

This group is made up of four delegations from the governorate of Medenine (North Medenine, South Medenine, Ben Guerdane and Ajim), five delegations from the Tataouine governorate (BirLahmer, South Tataouine, Tataouine North, Ghomrasen and Smar), and four delegations from the governorate of Gabes (Mareth, Elhamma, Metouia, Manzel Habib). These regions are marked by a predominantly urban population. In these regions, economic development is still limited due to the absence of a

significant industrial environment, lack of local investment funds and additional and cost of transportation for the flow of production. Note that this region of the Southeast is known for its long tradition of immigration especially to France and Libya. Thus, the local population of this area took advantage of the geographical proximity of the Libyan border to create an economic dynamic based on what is called "souk Libya", marked by the informal trade. This trade, despite its disadvantages affecting the national economy, has led to the improvement of the standard of living and the fixing of the population in the South-East zone.

Regions with acceptable socio-economic development

This group is made up of two delegations from the island of Djerba (Midoune and Houmetessouk), Zarzis, Gabes Medina, Gabes West, Gabes South and Ghanouche. In Djerba and Zarzis, tourism is the main economic sector. Thus, the island of Djerba has become a tourist pole of international renown. The Tunisian state was the initial actor by its investments and its fiscal and financial advantages granted to the tourist establishments. Thus, the presence of the international airport "Djerba-Zarzis" and road infrastructure has helped to make it a major tourist center and generator of economic growth for the region. This tourism sector has created thousands of direct jobs in the Djerba-Zarzis area. Indirect employment is mainly related to the construction of hotel complexes, services, crafts, transport, etc., but this is always linked to the stability of the tourism sector. As for the delegation of Zarzis, next to the tourist sector, it is known by its fishing port and trade and by the free zone established a few years ago. In addition, because of its favorable coastal climate, the olive tree occupies a special place with an area of 61500 ha, or 33% of the olive growing area of the governorate of Medenine. The city of Gabes (which is divided into four delegations) is marked by the existence of one of the largest industrial zones in Tunisia, which creates thousands of jobs and has led to an economic dynamic in the region. This despite its drawbacks mainly related to pollution. Gabes has now become a university hub and the existence of an international port drives trade with several countries.

Proposed solutions for a fair local development

Historically, Tunisia has experienced economic growth accompanied by an improvement, to varying degrees, in the living conditions of the

population. But this improvement has often been accompanied by a growing spatial polarization and by the aggravation of certain differences. The fruits of development have been unequally distributed across different parts of the country. In this context, the South-East governorates present themselves as regions that have not benefited much from the country's development. Thus an inequality between their delegations is noticed. The territorial disparity in the same region fosters a feeling of injustice that generates several political, economic and social problems, as is the case in our region of study, which after the Revolution witnessed several demonstrations, clashes, sit-ins and social tensions in several delegations. The reduction of territorial disparities requires improving the basic infrastructure with a redefinition of the role of economic spaces and regional redistribution in both rural and urban areas. The challenge today is, therefore, the improvement of living conditions. For that, it is necessary to improve the local governance by strengthening the role of the citizen, and to innovate in the methods of evaluation of the projects of development, and this by the application of the decentralization which is shown by the transfer of the power of the State to legal entities of public law distinct from him. This decentralization will aim for greater equality of rights and greater collective solidarity between developed and disadvantaged regions. The analysis of the situation of the South-East delegations, using the SWOT¹ technique, allows us to summarize the state of development of the region (Table 3):

¹ The term SWOT is an acronym derived from English: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats.

Table 3. SWOT Analysis of the Southeast Region

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of a real agricultural exploitation potential • Existence of two airports (one is international), two international ports and two border posts with Libya: RasJedir (Medenine) and Dhiba (Tataouine) • First-class geographical position as access to Libya, disposing the region of an important strategic economic space • Existence of several tourist regions • Existence of a very important fishing sector • Existence of several natural resources • Very dynamic civil societies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult climate and low level of precipitation • Difficult security situation that may affect any development plan in the region • Low level of valorisation of agricultural products and absolute dominance of the olive tree despite other potentialities. • Low road infrastructure • Existence of several land problems • Administrative heaviness
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important economic space justifying substantial investments for the sectors: agricultural, tourist, industrial and commercial. • Local, regional and external market requesting local agricultural products (especially olive, livestock ...). • Configuration adapted to the setting up of a logistics and agribusiness platform. • A very important Libyan market. • PREDD • 2016-2020 Development Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the salinity of the aquifers and the unsustainability of their exploitation • Advanced desert • Disinterestedness of youth in agriculture • Increase in illegal immigration • Lengthening the situation of insecurity and instability in Libya. • Number of tourists who visit the region

In Tunisia, and despite the fact that a number of arid and difficult areas have embarked on a process called "territorial development", this type of development has not managed to set up a real development process that ensures both a certain increase in the value of production (creation of wealth), a better satisfaction of the needs of the populations and a real development of the agricultural and industrial sector.

These areas are not lacking resources but they exploit them poorly. Admittedly, it is in these areas that the poverty of today and tomorrow is rife if an adequate development process is not taken into account, but it is also, areas well placed to invent and mobilize resources valuables. The ultimate purpose of development policies is to use a set of universally recognized processes for improving living conditions and individual and collective potentials, namely health, nutrition, education, safety and respect for the environment, and future generations. Other indicators strongly correlated with the level of development are to be taken into consideration, such as poverty rates, urbanization, housing, household equipment in durable goods, electricity, drinking water network, workforce enrollment, demographic dependence and the contribution of the secondary and tertiary sectors to GDP formation. Thus, and in order to achieve results in improving the standard of living in the South-East, it is recommended to make the most of the strengths of the region taking into account its opportunities, so that regional policies must adopt:

- **The shift from Objective Management of Programs (GPO) to Results Based Management (RBM),**
- **Innovation in evaluation methods for sustainability projects and programs,**
- **Strengthening the role of citizens and civil society in defining, implementing and evaluating public policies,**
- **Strengthening good governance of the administrative management of projects.**
- **The implementation of a participatory planning and evaluation approach to public policies.**

The situation of territorial disparity in the South-East, which continues today, requires rethinking the actions of development programs at the level of these regions with good governance. Inland areas in Southeast Asia suffer from a lack of connectivity and are poorly equipped with basic services and public transport. One solution would be to move towards regional autonomy in fact the Southeast is home to the largest oil and gas operations in the country in the governorate of Tataouine. Thus, granting autonomy to this region would allow a more equitable redistribution of wealth and a more effective participation in the decision-making process. But first, it is essential to reform justice and restore the rule of law, fight corruption and introduce good governance practices within state institutions. The issue of territorial governance thus raises the question of the centrality of the state, of democracy and of citizenship, from the point of view of identifying spaces for debate and political participation (Joye and Leresche, 1997). The notion of governance can represent ways of organizing the interactions between territories and actors according to a certain conception of sustainability. Local governance involves a set of institutions and actors that do not all belong to the sphere of government. Borders and responsibilities are less clear in the area of social and economic action. It reflects an interdependence between the powers of institutions associated with collective action. It involves networks of autonomous actors. It assumes that it is possible to act without relying on the power or authority of the state (Padioleau, 2004). Thus, this local governance is not a decision-making process, but a style of conduct that can take different forms: consensus, contract, evaluation and arbitration.

Poor governance combined with a lack of regional

development vision are at the heart of the problem and are the main causes of the failure of the policy, to consider that there was indeed such a regional and territorial development policy in the South-East. This calls for a more inclusive process of reforms that can lead to economic change with wider participation in decision-making, short-term adjustment measures, and long-term development strategies in which their implementation must require visionary and transparent behavior, a learning attitude and sound decision-making with the participation of the different stakeholders: state, civil society and citizens.

Conclusion

Currently, Tunisia is experiencing an unprecedented crisis initiated by the country's interior regions that have yet benefited from many development programs that claimed to develop, but, the finding has shown that the results are mixed not to say meager. The reasons are mainly related to the fact that these policies have always been guided by a dependency ratio of the hinterland facing coastal areas. Another reason is that regional development policies have been guided by strong centralization in management and decision-making (Zouaghi and Dorothee, 2011). In the South-East, the territorial disparity between the delegations necessitates a rethinking of development programs and projects at the level of these regions. This requires a new spatial distribution between regions, as well as addressing zone by zone, following a participatory approach, problems and socio-political failures to draw the appropriate conclusions and development perspectives. Hence, the need to apply planning policies of disadvantaged territories that act a posteriori to correct these socio-spatial inequalities. It is necessary to have a vision of regional development which considers in priority the real needs of each delegation. Thus, a new approach is needed to eradicate poverty by restructuring and streamlining social programs - which are not effective - to better target beneficiaries (compensation, social assistance and regional development programs). This approach would strengthen economic empowerment and the exit of affected families from poverty, as well as the fight against certain social phenomena. This requires the involvement of all components of civil society in all South-East Delegations, to develop their own ideas, to highlight the specificities of each region and to identify the means likely to boost development action in the region.

Regarding the unemployment problem affecting young people in the study area, it is clear that governments following the January 2011 Revolution can not afford to solve this problem. To this end, it is advisable to implement a common approach between the State, the private sector and the social partners with a view to achieving inclusive and equitable global development in South East positive discrimination zones, which requires appropriate intervention mechanisms and mechanisms for the creation of high employability enterprises in order to reduce the social crisis in these regions. It is business and the private and public sector that create jobs. However, currently, several companies have closed and foreign investors are hesitant to invest. In the same context, the decision to increase some wages under popular pressure is tantamount to deepening the public deficit and further unbalancing the labor market. A viable solution, in this context, is to ask public creditors, not to cancel the public debt, but to dedicate the service of this debt to the financing of regional projects. Thus, the government has the arguments to defend this proposal and it will restore hope to the people of these regions by a radical transformation of the economic and social conditions of the country. On the other hand, in a context of global recession and also following the "wildcat" strikes and sit-ins that marked Tunisia after the revolution, several products and major projects financed by foreign direct investment were affected and find themselves in crisis. In order to limit the negative effects of endogenous and exogenous crises on the pace of growth, on exports and on employment, a set of measures should be taken by the State in order to allow the economy to resist changes in the world economic situation, which has direct and indirect effects on the improvement of the standard of living of the populations of South-East Tunisia.

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