Greening the Agriculture System: Morocco’s Political Failure in Building a Sustainable Model for Development

By Jihane Benamar
Mentored by Dr. Harry Verhoeven

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Chapter 1: Introduction
“African Independence launched into international politics a group of the world’s poorest, weakest and most artificial states,” noted Christopher Clapham.”¹ Despite the fact that, for more than five decades, Western aid agencies have been trying to improve and contribute to Africa’s post-colonial development, today’s development challenges in Africa remain eerily similar to those of the early 1960s. This failure is often attributed to the fact that these Western aid institutions were not sensitive to local realities. Rather, these institutions tried to impose what they saw as “good governance” modalities, such as privatization, deregulation, and welfare reforms. In response to decades of failure and “development in reverse,” new thinking about alternatives to Western-style development that harnesses local social, political, and economic realities as well as indigenous knowledge, has emerged. These alternatives aim at working with the grain of African societies to develop Africa from within, and not by transplanting externally-crafted development paradigms unto it. Nonetheless, the alternatives sought are far from coherent and similar.

As a result of these incoherencies and dissimilarities, today, social anthropologists and political economists continue to grapple with the same big questions. What is development? What could a sustainable development model look like in an African context? And why do many independent states still struggle with imagining a development paradigm that is independent of Western ideals and ideas? Development carries a positive connotation that implies lasting change, and it is in its name that former colonial powers, such as Great Britain and France, intervened in much of the world to “make-up” for the destructive reverberations of Western imperialism and colonial state policies.² Nonetheless, the institutional framework within which many western-crafted development models exist demonstrates a startling ignorance of the local realities of the places it is designed to help. As James Ferguson clearly

argues, this yields to the “unintended” consequence of strengthening self-serving elites and bureaucrats at the expense of locals.\(^3\) Logically following from this, development can no longer be understood in terms of providing aid, allowing for more adjustment loans, and catapulting “experts” on the ground; rather, it needs to become about thinking and acting differently.

States have different approaches to economic development; some focus on industrialization while others focus on high-value agricultural production. To determine successful growth-promoting strategies, key factors such as local knowledge, expertise, and aspirations, as well as prevailing social, political and economic realities, need to be taken into consideration. While there is a pre-established notion that development in the agricultural sector is a necessary precursor for industrialization, and that industrialization leads to further economic development, finding the balance between these two models of development – agricultural and industrial– according to a country’s realities and needs is crucial.\(^4\)

For example, for developing countries –largely dependent on agriculture– a special focus on industrialization, while neglecting rural zones, may lead to increased inequality. Furthermore, assuming that industrialization is the ultimate goal, developing countries need to ensure the flourishing of their agricultural sector to supply more labor to the non-agricultural sectors of the economy and produce food in abundance. This will prevent them from relying on other states for food imports and make them less susceptible to international food price volatilities and other exogenous shocks. The belief that industrialization is the road towards development is a widely held one, especially given the past experiences of modernized

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economies during the Industrial Revolution. However, experiences from African states have shown that this is not necessarily the case.\footnote{This dissertation’s theoretical framework is built on Africanist literature rather than Middle Eastern studies one because although North Africa is often grouped under the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) umbrella, in reality, there are a number of important reasons why this choice is a pertinent one. North Africa, and more specifically Morocco, has an important shared history with a number of sub-Saharan African states. For example, Morocco and Côte d’Ivoire share a common former colonial power: France; and as a result, have been subjected to similar colonial policies, especially in the agricultural sector. In fact, a central goal of French colonial policies was to exploit the abundant natural resources of its colonies (cocoa for Côte d’Ivoire and wheat for Morocco) not only for their use in the metropole, but also for their export in order to reap economic benefits and bolster France’s status as a world power. In reality, colonial legacy is the glue that strongly connects all of Africa. For example, Morocco was an active supporter of other African states’ struggle against colonialism, be it in the case of neighboring Algeria, to that of the southern tip of the continent, South Africa. Additionally, even in the post-colonial era, Morocco continued to share similar experiences with sub-Saharan Africa as it was also subjected to the western-style development paradigms implemented in Sub-Saharan Africa, such as the Structural Adjustment Programs in the 1980s and 90s. Lastly, and perhaps most obviously, Morocco’s physical location is in Africa, thus making it irrefutable that the country is indeed an integral part of Africa. Therefore, it is important to move beyond the tokenistic understanding of “North Africa” as part of “Africa” and engage in deeper conversations about the inherent and undeniable commonalities between the two, which can yield important academic findings in the ever-growing literature on development in Africa as a whole.}

\textit{The Moroccan Puzzle}

The Moroccan state was established by the Idrisid dynasty, which ruled from 788 to 974; succeeded by other important Islamic and Berber dynasties. The Alaouite dynasty, which has ruled Morocco for the past four centuries, claims direct descent from the Prophet Mohammed. This claim acts as a legitimizing force that influences Moroccans to revere the monarchy as an almost divine institution. This dynasty is most relevant to the scope of this dissertation because one of its member, King Moulay Abd El Hafid – considered by many the traitor who sold Morocco to the French and Spanish – signed the Treaty of Fez in 1912 abdicating Morocco’s sovereignty to western powers. France, who had already negotiated multiple accords with Spain, and the \textit{entente cordiale} with Britain in 1904, renounced all claims to Egypt for a free hand in Morocco. Thus, Morocco became a French protectorate on the 30th of March 1912, until 1956, when Morocco obtained independence after a national rebellion against French colonial rule.
Successively, King Mohamed V came back from exile in November 1995 and established the first national government from the existing political parties. Under Mohammed V, independence was asserted, and the regions, which were previously under French and Spanish domination, were reunited under a common Moroccan flag. His successor and elder son, Hassan II, extended Morocco’s interests to the rest of Africa and established strong relations with international powers such as the USA, China, Russia, amongst others. In 1971, a failed coup upset the stability of the country, and gave Hassan II the occasion to further solidify his power and reorient Morocco’s politics. Furthermore, Hassan II expanded the country’s trading relations and set up national plans to modernize agriculture.

The focus on agriculture as a modernizing agent was not coincidental. The Kingdom of Morocco has a distinguished geography amongst the other North African countries. The country is endowed with important mountain ranges (like the Atlas), extensive arable lands, and a full western exposure to the Atlantic Ocean. All these features had, and continue to have, a significant impact on the country’s agricultural development. In fact, modern irrigation and agricultural developments have taken place almost exclusively in the plains and plateaus that boarder the northern Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts – like Souss, Doukkala, and Gharb– where most of the country’s fertile soils, water resources, and agricultural population are located. This was the part of the country –known as bilad al-Makhzen– that had attracted the French at the turn of the century and the region most profoundly changed by French colonial policies, which continue to the present day.

Morocco’s landscapes are artifacts of its colonial legacy and therefore, agrarian Morocco can only be comprehended through an analysis of past colonial and subsequent government policies. Morocco’s agricultural development projects have essentially been an implementation of French colonial policies such as the “million-hectare” plan, which envisioned a complete harnessing of the country’s streams by the end of century. This plan is
also reflected in today’s irrigation programs. Thus, it is safe to say that present agricultural policy in Morocco started in the 1912 and took shape in the 1960s. The motto of it, as expressed by King Hassan II, has always been to “enrich the poor without impoverishing the rich.”

As such, this dissertation analyzes how Moroccan policy makers are adamant on continuity rather than change when it comes to theorizing new strategies of development aiming at modernizing agriculture and developing more sustainable modes of production. This will serve the objective of drawing broader conclusions on the effects of different western-conceived development paradigms on developing nations that are not moving beyond the ideological and epistemological straightjacket of their colonial legacies.

Why is agricultural development important for Morocco?

Prior to the 2011 Arab Spring, Morocco enjoyed an average GDP growth rate of 5% per annum for ten consecutive years. Furthermore, the poverty rate had decreased from 8.9% to about 4.2%. Yet, this upbeat macroeconomic bulletin did not reflect the deep malaise experienced by ordinary Moroccans. In fact, in 2011, Moroccan dissenters demanded more freedom, social justice, and an end to corruption. In spite of the protests, Morocco’s experience was significantly different from the other Arab Spring countries as these did not result in civil strife, revolutionary chaos, or an institutional breakdown. This is because the country’s monarch –Mohamed VI– in his capacity as King and “Commander of the faithful,” took actions to meet the demands of his people who wanted a gradual transition towards a more democratic system. Consequently, in July 2011, a new constitution was adopted, which enshrined more political and social rights and allowed for a more decentralized governance system with inclusive economic growth.

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Achieving (inclusive) economic growth is crucial for the success of Morocco’s bloodless political transformation. This is because, according to the World Bank, the country has a Gini coefficient of 40.9, which indicates inequality is a serious problem as compared to other emerging economies. Furthermore, poverty in rural areas is especially high where most people depend directly on agriculture as their only source of income. Morocco has 4 million people living on less than $1.90, and 75% of these are rural dwellers. They tend to live in regions with difficult geographic conditions that lack access to basic physical infrastructure to connect them to markets, as well as social infrastructure for human development. Nonetheless, agriculture is vital for Morocco since it accounts for 19% of its GDP and nearly 40% of jobs. Agricultural development should hence be a political priority for Morocco as it is important for increasing rural living standards and a crucial component for inclusive growth and lower inequality.

**Why the Plan Maroc Vert?**

Against this background, the Plan Maroc Vert (PMV) emerged from sequential agricultural reform failures -linked to Morocco’s colonial legacy- and the desire to strengthen the country’s economic growth. It was in April 2008, when King Mohamed VI appointed the new minister of agriculture, Aziz Akhannouch, that the Plan was revealed at the Salon International de l’Agriculture au Maroc (SIAM) in Meknes. The Plan’s ambitious goal was to make agriculture the main engine of growth and poverty reduction in Morocco by 2020. In addition to tackling poverty, the Plan envisioned to increase Morocco’s agricultural GDP from 70 billion to 100 billion Moroccan dirhams, thereby boosting exports, creating an anticipated 1.5 million jobs, and increasing rural incomes by two to threefold.

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To do so, the Plan Maroc Vert rests on two pillars; the first pillar aims at modernizing Morocco’s agriculture and at aggressively developing a high-value added agricultural sector. The second pillar aims at encouraging community-supported agriculture to combat poverty in rural areas. Overall, the project is quite ambitious, and started with a total investment of 147 billion dirhams, to develop 1506 projects, over the span of 12 years. Initially, Moroccan small-scale farmers and rural dwellers perceived the PMV as a breath of fresh air given Morocco’s stalled agricultural development since independence. The hope was that this would mark a fresh start and a genuinely pro-poor strategy to develop the nation’s resources and its people. However, as this dissertation will argue, behind the 2008 PowerPoint presentation façade was nothing but an ultra-productivist and elite-centered plan that is neither concerned with the rural poor, nor with sustainability.

This is clearly seen in the distinction between large-scale and small-scale farmers in the plan’s two pillars—, with technocratic values and objectives, and a complete disregard for Morocco’s ecological sustainability. In fact, the first version of the PMV, presented officially at the SIAM, did not mention the Plan’s policies for the preservation of the country’s scarce natural resources, such as water. This deliberate “mistake” firstly sheds light on Morocco’s productivist agricultural model, as defined by Lowe et al where productivism is “a commitment to an intensive industrially driven and expansionist agriculture with state support based primarily on output and increased productivity.” Secondly, it exposes the grim reality that sustainability is nothing more than a fashionable concept, but that it is considered extremely expensive to put into practice. Thirdly, it shows that the PMV is, in part, an outgrowth of the Green Revolution of the 1960-70s. This revolution caused many disillusionments and continues to be the driver behind technocratic agricultural plans that harm the environment,

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like the PMV. Consequently, given this productivist aspect of the Plan, it was no surprise to see discrepancies between the stated objectives and the realities on the ground once it was enacted. The Plan was handled like a business plan, which is hardly surprising since the brains behind it are far from agricultural experts, as will later be discussed.

To conclude, the dissertation will endeavor to shed light on the existing irreconcilable disjuncture in objectives between “planning” and “implementing” a sustainable development plan, using PMV as a case study. To do this, following this first introductory chapter, the second chapter will discuss the important theories that served as theoretical frameworks for this dissertation. Subsequently, the third chapter will outline the history of Morocco’s agricultural schemes pre, during, and post-independence to make sense of the emergence of the PMV in 2008. Chapter four is the empirical chapter of the dissertation, where the main argument is supported by findings in the form of data, official ministerial documentation, and semi-structured interviews. Finally, chapter five serves as the concluding chapter, which weaves together the theories and findings of this dissertation.
Methodology
The argument of this dissertation will be constructed using a combination of methods to analyze relevant data pertaining to the understanding of Morocco’s political failure in building a sustainable model of development. I will analyze quantitative data on Morocco’s spending on the Plan, as well as on international loans and investments by international organizations, such as the World Bank. Furthermore, I will analyze data pertaining to documented soil and water degradation values since the conception and implementation of the Plan, and these are made available to me by local scientists and experts in the field who have conducted these investigations themselves, in addition to publicly accessible reports made available by the agriculture ministry and its associated branches in French and Arabic. Lastly, I conducted several semi-structured interviews during my summer months of 2017 in Morocco. These were held with large-scale and small-scale farmers, beneficiaries of the program’s grants and concessions, as well as academics and experts in the field of agriculture and development, and members of the ministry branches created for the implementation and overseeing of the plan – such as l’ Agence pour le Development Agricole (ADA) – in addition to advisors to the minister of agriculture. These interviews were conducted face-to-face as well as over mediums such as Skype and Facetime due to some interviewees being unable to meet during my stay in Morocco. These interviews proved to be key to the development of the dissertation’s argument as they enabled me to establish the existing narrative around the Plan and reach my own conclusion on its effectiveness and failure. Interviews were conducted after receiving the Institutional Research Board (IRB) approval, certifying that the interviewees would not be exposed to more than minimal level risk.
Chapter 2: Literature Review
A conceptual framework for “Development”

What is development? Are there alternatives to development as we know it? Why has development proven to be an abstract concept in the context of Africa? And whose knowledge matters in the development discourse? While conceptions of development are intuitive to nations which have undergone the arduous process of developing, this concept is still abstract to states who struggle with devastating colonial legacies, failed institutions, scarcity of vital resources, and deep political divides. The historical experience of developed states frames the foundations for how development is achieved and what it looks like. Western states have become the benchmark against which Third World states are measured.\(^{11}\) However, it is necessary to engage in a more complex conversation about this abstract concept to not only further explore it, but also provide alternative understandings of the world and development. Failing to engage in such conversations yields to conventional ways of understanding, which are deeply insufficient and problematic for reasons the dissertation will subsequently outline.

The 2007-2008 financial crisis, which caused the collapse of financial institutions and a general contracting of economic activities all around the world, had important consequences for states in the “Third World.” In fact, slowed down trade and decreased credit availability led to increased poverty, unemployment, and a decline in economic growth that was already stagnant for many years (See table 1).\(^{12}\) This crisis, though it was not of the making of poor countries, hurt the poorest most painfully and is thus a great example of why we should engage in a process of rethinking development and not fall back on the conventional World Bank (WB) policies of boosting export competitiveness, particularly in the case of Africa. Although the WB, and other such international lending institutions were critical for the development and reconstruction of war-ravaged states –especially after the Second World War and the fall of the


Soviet Union—today, these institutions have not evolved in their understanding of development and continue to enforce neoliberal policies that damage the environment and enrich large transnational corporations at the expense of the locals.

For example, the World Bank was one of the fiercest supporters of the “Green Revolution,” discussed later in more details, which saw the mechanization of agriculture at the expense of the environment in the sixties and seventies. This phenomenon caused the marginalization of countless indigenous people, and exacerbated wealth disparity in developing countries. Today, the WB does not seem to remind itself of these consequences as it promotes the use of genetically modified crops in developing countries and works with governments to solidify patent laws granting corporations like Monsanto an unprecedented control over global food production.

Post the colonial era, former colonialist powers had the vision of replicating their development strategies in the now struggling “underdeveloped” nations. To replicate the seemingly successful model, there were some key features that had to be exported to the rest of the developing world. These features included industrialization, urbanization, the technicalization of agriculture, and the adoption of Western-style education and culture; also known as: modernity. These western-conceived methods of development were quite radical and left little room for critical discourse. This was quite explicitly seen in the 1951 United Nations report on the “Measures for the economic development of underdeveloped countries,” where clause 36 states that “ancient philosophies have to be scrapped; old social institutions have to disintegrate; bonds of caste, creed and race have to be burst; and large numbers of persons who cannot keep up with progress have to have their expectations of a comfortable life

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frustrated. Very few communities are willing to pay the full price of rapid economic progress.”16 This report was drafted by a group of “experts” appointed by the UN Secretary General, and essentially monopolized the discourse on the way to development.17

As a result of the ethnocentric ideas proposed by this report, much of the subsequent literature on development became centered on defining key features that could, in the words of Escobar “transform drastically two-thirds of the world in the pursuit of the goal of material prosperity and economic progress.”18 One can identify five features that became emblematic to the successful process towards full development. Firstly, the experience of a reduction in the number of people engaged in agriculture; secondly – and intuitively – a massive increase in urban population as people move from the countryside to the metropolis where economic activities are located; thirdly, a reduction in the size of the countryside as people that remain in the agricultural field only find it profitable to work land situated relatively closer to the big cities making transport easier and cheaper; fourthly, increased productivity in the agricultural sector which in turn drives the percentage of poverty in the rural areas down; and finally, an increase in overall agricultural production as food is necessary for growth and increased living standards, but also because there is a need to reduce food prices to account for the lower wages of factory workers in the cities.19

The colonialist dream turned out to be a nightmare. The strategies of development caused massive subsequent underdevelopment, impoverishment, and famines (see Graphs 1 & 2). This is because the fabric of indigenous societies in the Third World had been completely destroyed by colonial policies, and these strategies of development did not come to correct the

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17 Interestingly, none of the designated experts was from an African institution or of African origin unlike the other appointees who came from Chile, India, Lebanon, the US, and the UK.
harm colonial policies had caused, instead, they were blind to the failure of their approaches and unwilling to change for political and economic reasons.\textsuperscript{20}

\begin{center}
Graph 1: Total external debt (as percentage of GNP)\textsuperscript{21}
\end{center}

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Graph 2: Per Capita Food Production (1969-71 = 100)
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\textsuperscript{21} Source: Elbadawi, Ghura and Uwujaren, 1992. 
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Moreover, it became apparent that this conceptualization of development was not compatible with all emerging states. This is because the West had a different story of development, which stemmed from the mechanization of agriculture and the release of labor from the lands.\textsuperscript{22} A prime example of this, which Karl Polanyi calls the “great transformation,” is England between 1500 and 1800 and its Industrial Revolution.\textsuperscript{23} This first sequel to the process of globalization took place in England because, as Allen says, Britain “paid to invent it there.”\textsuperscript{24} The industrial revolution saw rapid urbanization, capital accumulation, and an increase in agricultural productivity with lower numbers of farmers, due to England’s breakthrough in technological improvements. A contemporary example of a great transformation is China, as discussed by McErlean and Wu, where the country’s rural population has decreased from representing 80% of the population share to just 50% in 20 years, yet agricultural output has increased thanks to government policies that facilitate labor mobility.\textsuperscript{25}

Therefore, this western-styled parochial understanding of development produced a discourse that rendered “development” an impossible task to achieve for many states in the early World War II period. Ultimately, in a Foucauldian sense, the discourse proposed and imposed by the West produced a permissible “mode of being and thinking while disqualifying and even making others impossible.”\textsuperscript{26} Consequently, the necessary intellectual endeavor to analyze the theoretical context within which development is associated is to single it out and separate ourselves from it, in order to perceive it in a new form, thereby generating a new, truly global and endogenous discourse on development.

\textsuperscript{22} Collier and Dercon, “African Agriculture in 50 Years.”
\textsuperscript{23} Polanyi, Karl. 2001. \textit{The great transformation: the political and economic origins of our time}. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
\textsuperscript{26} Escobar, “Encountering Development.”5.
During the post-World War II period, development theories emerged because of three primary factors. Firstly, the rise of the United States as the single most powerful state in the World; secondly, the rhetoric of the Soviet Union, which promised development for all through socialism, prompting the USA to contain it; and finally, the emergence of new states in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, out of colonial rule, who, by virtue of having been exploited for decades—if not centuries—were severely lagging behind in terms of economic growth, and political and social stability. For example, in 1960, the United States of America had the highest GDP per capita in the world at $2,881, whereas Nigeria—which gained its independence on the 1st of October of that same year—had a per capita GDP of $92.81. Thus, development and modernization theories were proposed precisely to tackle the issues of poverty in newly independent nations such as Nigeria, and prevent socialism from spreading across the globe. These theories regarded development as a process of successive stages of economic growth that all states should achieve. Furthermore, they equated development with aggregate economic growth, and suggested a combination of increased government spending and foreign aid as essential tools for developing states to progress along a linear economic trajectory that had been successfully pursued by their predecessors: the developed nations.

This notion of development closely associate with economic growth is inherited from icons of British liberalism, such as Adam Smith, who sought to explain the “Wealth of Nations” by highlighting the importance of production and trade as center-pieces of a successful capitalist economy; the ‘invisible hand’ was essential to improve the state of nations from “savage” ones of “hunters and fishers,” to “civilized and thriving nations.” This perception

of development also influenced major modernization theorists, such as Rostow, and important financial institutions, such as the WB and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the formulation of their theories and strategies—which will be subsequently explored—to promote development across Africa and Latin America.

Walt Whitman Rostow was an American economist and political theorist who served as special assistant of National Security affairs during the Kennedy (1961-63) and Johnson presidencies (1963-69). In 1960, he published his most influential work outlining his ideas on development titled “The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto,” where he argued that providing enough capital (K) to poor states would promote rapid economic growth and compel them to embrace capitalism instead of communism. This idea greatly influenced the US actions in Vietnam and continued to shape much of the West’s understanding of development. This Rostowian paradigm served as the backbone of much of the development economics that emerged in the 1960s-1980s to explain why former colonies remained poor and how they could come out of their poverty trap.\(^\text{30}\)

Rostow’s development paradigm assumes that all states go through a linear path in their quest for development.\(^\text{31}\) Rostow’s model is based on the key assumption that poor states are poor because of internal factors such as their lack of political and economic institutions, their traditionalist mindset, and the fact that they are not liberal democracies and do not regulate their market economy. Rostow posited that underdeveloped states had to give up their tribal mindset and adopt a Weberian bureaucratic system based on meritocracy, not patronage. For Rostow there are five key stages to achieving economic growth and escaping poverty. The first stage requires the transformation of a society’s mindset from a traditionalist one to a Western institutional one centered on banks, parliaments, and a constitution. The second is the pre-
condition for take-off where a developing country makes itself ready to receive external financial help. The third is take-off through the injection of K, which would be provided by financial institutions, such as the WB or the IMF, to make-up for the country’s K gap. The fourth stage is the drive to maturity where the developing country becomes reliant on its own generation of capital and has a functioning economy. This last step leads to the fifth and final stage which is the age of high mass consumption where sectors in the country’s economy produce durable consumer goods and services.32

Building on the ideas of Rostow but seeing the failure of past development paradigms, in 1989, a group of economists in Washington D.C. compiled a set of ten economic policy reforms suggesting developing states –particularly in Latin America– to adopt a market-based approach as it was seen as the most desirable approach to development. This policy report came to be known as the “Washington Consensus,” a term first coined by John Williamson.33 The “Washington Consensus” is particularly relevant because it served as the conceptual basis for the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) conceived by the Bretton Woods sisters in the 1980s and 1990s, targeting –for the most part– states in South America and Africa. These structural adjustments targeted post-independence governments which had failed to respond to the needs of their people, causing more impoverishment and growing debt commitments. Thus, –complicit– African governments yielded control of their economic decision-making in order to meet the criteria set by the WB and the IMF to enroll in the SAPs and receive funds.34 Under the auspices of these institutions, the structural adjustments pushed for austerity, and required African states to reduce domestic social spending on things such as healthcare, education, and

agricultural subsidies.\textsuperscript{35} Key actions of the SAPs were the privatization and marginalization of the state from several key sectors of the economy to bring down government deficits; the liberalization of the economy to allow price signals to work their magic and determine supply and demand (laissez-faire); and the opening up of African economies to the world, removing any trade barriers to foster foreign direct investment (FDI). These reforms inevitably led to the devaluation of local currencies to promote exports and therefore a reduction in real wages.

Unfortunately, as well-meaning as these measures might have been, they were not very successful. In fact, one of the most outspoken critics of the SAPs argues that they were a burden which contributed to the continent’s plight.\textsuperscript{36} Osabu-Kle identifies SAPs as “one sided adjustments,” not primarily concerned with “solutions to economic problems in Africa,” but with the power struggle between the Bretton Woods sisters and African leaders about “who gets what, when, and how.”\textsuperscript{37} Ultimately, for him, there was an inherent “political hypocrisy” in this discourse of structural adjustments as they overlooked “the fact that the equivalent of welfare and unemployment benefits in Africa is government subsidy and price control to enable the poorest person to get some daily bread, shelter, and clothing from the sweat of his or her own eyes. This may be contrasted with the poor in Western society who are fortunate enough to collect welfare checks and food stamps without a single drop of sweat.”\textsuperscript{38}

Osabu-Kle’s views are shared to some extent by other critics of structural adjustments. For example, Nicolas van de Walle argues that in Africa, the IMF, WB, and local elites were mutually complicit in not fully implementing and overlooking the adjustments programs. According to van de Walle, real structural adjustments never actually happened in the continent because these would have been suicidal for both the Bretton Woods sisters and the African

\textsuperscript{35} Monika Thiboutot, "Cures to Stalled Development: Causes And Solutions To Economic Crisis In Sub-Saharan Africa." (2006).
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid. 515.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid. 517.
elites.\textsuperscript{39} Both critics prove their point by indicating how, after decades of “structural adjustments,” the economic structures of African states have remained almost unchanged from what these had inherited from the colonial era (see table 1 & graphs 4&5).\textsuperscript{40}

Likewise, Graham Harrison, takes a radical stance towards any structural approach to development and rejects it, because according to him SAPs do not imbue Africans with agency to fight oppression and bring about change and development.\textsuperscript{41} Harrison provides a novel way of looking at development because he focuses on peasant politics. He asserts that “the most rewarding pathway in analyzing peasant politics is to concentrate on the ongoing dynamics of interaction between peasants and other social groups and pay attention to the ongoing battles within peasant society concerning the control of wealth, capital and power.”\textsuperscript{42} This understanding can explain why externally conceived and imposed structural adjustment programs have not yielded the promised transformation of developing states.

To conclude, after decades of dominating the development discourse, this narrow understanding of development came under attack from a number of perspectives because it clearly failed. For example, to illustrate the same imbalance of GDP growth mentioned earlier, in 2012, the US had a GDP per capita of almost $50,000, whereas Nigeria was still struggling with a GDP per capita of $1,555.\textsuperscript{43} The old discourse on development and modernization failed because it did not distinguish between states, regions, and structural conditions, and it completely ignored the historical experiences of the states it sought to “develop.” For these paradigms, tradition was simply and impediment to growth and was always discarded.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid. 40.
\textsuperscript{43} “Countries Compared by Economy GDP per Capita. International Statistics.” \url{http://www.nationmaster.com/country-info/stats/Economy/GDP-per-capita#2012}.
The Role of Agriculture in Development

From the previous section, it becomes evident that agriculture is central to any conception of ‘development’. This is because agriculture employs the majority of people in developing states. According to the World Bank, in 2016, 45.7% of the global population was employed or somehow involved in the agricultural sector.\textsuperscript{44} Furthermore, in a report published by the Food and Agriculture organization (FAO), in 2010, over 1 billion people were employed in the agricultural sector, representing 1 in 3 workers, and in sub-Saharan Africa, 60% of the entire workforce is still employed in agriculture.\textsuperscript{45} Given these staggering statistics, it is hardly surprising to see a strong correlation between the role of agriculture and development. In fact, the interdependence of these two processes can be dated back to the Industrial Revolution in England, as explained earlier, where development stemmed from the mechanization of agriculture and release of labor from the lands. As Theodore Schultz argues, “there is no longer any room for doubt whether agriculture can be a powerful engine of growth…Incentives to guide and reward farmers are a crucial component. Once there are investment opportunities and efficient incentives, farmers will turn sand into gold.”\textsuperscript{46}

That being said, states have experimented with different approaches to development through agriculture. Whereas some focus on industrialization and high-value agricultural production, others might find it more productive to focus on small-scale agricultural-led ecological farming strategy. To determine which growth-promoting strategy a country should focus on, there are several factors that need to be taken into consideration; these are local social, political, and economic realities that can either promote or hinder the process of development

\textsuperscript{45} "FAO Statistical Yearbook 2012 (part 1)." http://www.fao.org/docrep/015/i2490e/i2490e01b.pdf.
through agriculture. This is where the problem of relying on an obsolete development discourse emerges.

For example, the current discourse privileges cash crops to secure foreign exchange over food crops, and the mechanization of agriculture with the use of chemical inputs to increase agricultural yield at the expense of alternative agricultural systems promoting small, ecological farming. This is because there is an excessive focus on development through economic growth instead of looking at development through the articulation of internal markets to satisfy the needs of the local populations first. In fact, as Offenheiser and Holcombe explain, only when local populations become the actors who articulate what hinders them in their lives can development become about helping the people achieve the lives they deserve to live. This way, they write, development “assumes that those who are most directly affected know firsthand what institutional obstacles thwart their aspirations and who are the essential actors in deciding what to do about it. Rather than imposing cookie-cutter solutions, this strategy is anchored in the reality of the local context.”

Consequently, although agriculture is a precursor to development in developing states heavily reliant on it, development does not necessarily have to happen through the process of industrialization like in the West. On the contrary, for developing states–largely dependent on agrarianism– a special focus on industrialization, while neglecting agriculture, may lead to increased inequality. Moreover, it is argued that an agriculture-led strategy of economic growth offers African states a better chance at rapid development and poverty alleviation, because “given the huge heterogeneity in Africa, no single Asian-style green revolution is likely to

drive growth.” Furthermore, for agriculture in Africa to lead to poverty alleviation, it needs to be smallholder based; but, since most farmers in the continent are only endowed with low-resources, the state needs to be more proactive in providing forward and backward linkages to agriculture, investing in education, training programs, and infrastructure.

Assuming that industrialization is the ultimate goal, developing states need to ensure the flourishing of their agricultural sector to supply more labor to the non-agricultural sectors of the economy and produce food in abundance. This will prevent them from relying on other states for food imports and make them less susceptible to international food price volatilities and other exogenous shocks. Hence, although the belief that industrialization is key to development – especially given the experiences of developed economies during the Industrial Revolution, – experiences from African states have shown us that this is not necessarily the case. Additionally, even Latin American experiences point to the fact that industrialization for import-substitution is not a winning strategy. In fact, the proponent of this model of development, Raul Prebisch, thought that agricultural commodity prices would inevitably trend down relative to the prices of manufacture goods. Therefore, he suggested Latin American states quickly shift to the industrial sector. However, as the implementation of his strategy progressed, “more and more capital-intensive imports were displaced by domestic production… employment growth slowed, income distribution became more skewed, and the growth rate decelerated.” Therefore, in this dissertation, Morocco will serve as a case study for a broader debate on the efficacy of neoliberal restructuring and the limits of the western industrialization discourse in postcolonial nations.

To conclude, the current discourse on the role of agriculture in development assumes that “native” practices and people will be reformed involuntarily by the forces of

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industrialization if they want to keep up with the world. This neglect for smallholder-based agriculture is no doubt rooted in the widely held view that not only is agriculture backward, but that traditional agriculture is essentially obsolete.\textsuperscript{52} Furthermore, the current discourse on development still adopts the age-old rhetoric that developing states are inherently inferior and backward and will not experience the “true” development that developed states have and continue to experience.\textsuperscript{53}

\textit{Sustainability and the discourse on Development & Agriculture}

As the Green Revolution made its way from Mexico to the rest of the world from the 1940s onwards, a countermovement emerged called the Sustainable Agriculture Movement.\textsuperscript{54} This movement was a result of the realization that what was becoming a conventional industrial approach to agriculture would not be sustainable. Admittedly, the industrial strategies of specialization and standardization have yielded impressive results in terms of productivity and economic efficiency (see graph 6), but they have also created a type of agriculture that degrades natural resources, depletes human resources, and destroys economic opportunities.\textsuperscript{55} This is potentially detrimental to agrarian societies – such as the Moroccan one– in the long-run, because, without sustainability, these societies cannot maintain a minimal yield guaranteeing them financial and food security. Therefore, a sustainable development model is one that preserves harmony between agriculture and nature. This can be done by shifting to a knowledge society where the farmer is at the center of global food security, and instead of condemning the idiosyncratic character of local knowledge, promoting it. This is what James Scott calls


\textsuperscript{53} Escobar, “Encountering Development,” 54.

\textsuperscript{54} Vandana Shiva, \textit{The violence of the green revolution: Third world agriculture, ecology, and politics}. University Press of Kentucky, 2016.

“metis,” promoting a form of local phronesis to produce polices grounded in actual practice to ensure they fit the sociopolitical, and economic realities of the country in question.\textsuperscript{56}

Logically following from this, the question that arises is how can we shift to development fostered by a society that promotes local knowledge? And what would this look like in the case of Morocco? To answer this question I will look at Escobar’s unveiling of the foundations of an order of knowledge and a discourse about the Third World as underdeveloped, and I will map out the “invention of development” in Morocco’s context.\textsuperscript{57}

Similar to Ferguson’s deconstructionist approach in his book on development in Lesotho, I will provide an analysis of agricultural development programs implemented in Morocco under governmental sponsorship.\textsuperscript{58} Within this analysis, the dissertation will adopt a “systems of knowledge” approach questioning the knowledge system on which current “development” discourse rests, arguing that the latter is solely based on a modern Western approach. This knowledge system disqualifies other non-western understandings of development, which could be better tools in framing a sustainable system of development suitable for non-Western states. Thus, alternatives need to be sought, and these will (probably) not come from academic circles, World Bank offices, or old colonial institutions, as Escobar points out, but “from a new reading of popular practices and reappropriation by popular actors of the space of hegemonic sociocultural production.”\textsuperscript{59}

As will become clear throughout the dissertation, this kind of popular reappropriation is greatly needed in a country like Morocco, where underdevelopment is also partly due to past colonial policies from which government officials have not de-linked. In order to better understand the extent to which colonial policies can affect the development process of a

\textsuperscript{57} Escobar, “Encountering Development,” 11.
\textsuperscript{58} Ferguson, \textit{The Anti-Politics Machine}.
\textsuperscript{59} Escobar, “Encountering Development,” 3.
country, it is best to use Homi Bhabha’s definition of colonial discourse, which would suggest that Morocco is still suffering from a “form of governmentality – set by the French- that appropriates, directs and dominates the various spheres of activity.” By governmentality, I mean the manifestation of power of the French colonialists, who governed by directing the way their colonial subjects behaved and acted, and by heavily controlling all forms of disciplinary institutions to project their power and protect their interests. Thus, indirectly, Morocco – and many other former colonies – are still controlled by this kind of governmentality from which they have not delinked. And, unless a radical delinking from colonial policies happens, it is hard to envision a sustainable development model rooted in local knowledge.

**Working towards a more Suitable Development Model**

Sustainability is most commonly defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs,” as per the Brundtland Commission in 1983. Nonetheless, the concept of “sustainability” has myriad meanings and interpretations. For example, in development prose, “sustainability” has become a versatile synonym for “good” practice. Additionally, it is described by Cornwall as a “buzzword” and by Howard as a “slippery value word,” reflecting the contested question of what sustainability means, and consequently of what sustainable development is. This is because sustainability cannot be taken as a whole, rather, it should be understood in terms of its cornerstones, which are social, political, and economic integrity. This argument

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will be anchored by drawing on Lélé’s theoretical argument about the malleability – and therefore vacuity - of the concept of “sustainable development,” and Bryant and Bailey’s idea of “politicized environment,” where they argue that it is not possible to consider environmental problems independent from the political and economic contexts in which they exist. These frameworks will reveal two important aspect of sustainability in the Green Morocco Plan (PMV) case. Firstly, that what poses as a strategy to protect the country’s natural resources is not necessarily understood or experienced as sustainable by local Moroccan communities. Secondly, that PMV has evident political and economic ties, and therefore must be understood in the political and economic contexts within which it exists.

Furthermore, although few dissent the fact that development should be sustainable, Castro points out that we must question the possibility of an “environmentally sustainable capitalist economy” where “economic growth relies upon the exploitation of natural and social capital and the avoidance of wealth redistribution;” this is precisely what this dissertation argues. This is because adopting a model of development based on sustainable capitalist economy counters the core objective of the PMV, which is to make agriculture the main engine of growth and poverty reduction. This is because it does not foster sustainability, cultural diversity, or equitable social development, and therefore does not help in the eradication of poverty. Therefore, the extent to which poor people gain from grandiose agricultural development plans is highly questionable.

65 Ibid.
**Illustrations**

Table 1: Financial Inflows and Export Earnings, 2007-2009 (current US $, millions)

<table>
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Source: calculated from data available from WTO, UNCTAD, Bank of International Settlements, IMF, World Bank, IIF

Graph 3: Rostow’s Linear Stages of Economic Development
Graph 4: Share of sub-Saharan Africa in the World GDP and exports, and evolution of commodity prices (%, 1960, 2013)

Graph 5: GDP per Capita in sub-Saharan Africa (1960-2013, constant 2005 PPP USD)

Graph 6: Changes in the proportion of GDP from Industry and Services, of the labor force working in Industry and Services and of the population in Urban areas, 1950-2005

Key: diamonds, % GDP from industry and services; squares, % labor force in industry and services; dashed lines, level of urbanization.
Source: Satterthwaite D.2007 The transition to a predominantly urban world and its underpinnings. London, UK: IIED.
Chapter 3: A Brief History
Land Laws in Morocco before the French Protectorate

Prior to 1912, all land in Morocco ultimately belonged to the Sultan, who was the representative of the nation as recognized by the Treaty of Madrid in 1880. This meant that for any Moroccan land to be sold to a European or any other foreigner/non-Muslim, the Sultan had to consent. Traditionally, land in Morocco was administered under a sharecropping system called “khammesat,” which implied that land proprietors made their lands, seeds, and tools available to rural dwellers, who provided their labor in exchange for 1/5th of the crop yield. This system gave stability to the labor market and it guaranteed poorer rural dwellers, who could not afford to own land, an income. More specifically, landownership was divided into five categories. The first and largest shares of land belonged to the Makhzen which was de facto property owned by the Sultan in his personal capacity, even if nominally it was state land. The second category of lands were the habous, belonging to the country’s religious foundations. The third category were called guich, and they belonged to the State; however, their use was granted to certain tribes in return for military services. Fourthly there were collective lands belonging to ordinary people; and finally, there were melk lands which belonged to specific individuals only, not to entire tribes. This type of shared ownership is important to understand as it would define the French protectorate’s land policies in Morocco after 1912.

Given the fact that every acre of land in Morocco was owned by someone, and that many of the lands had actually more than one claimant, there were no title deeds. This led many Moroccans to forge ownership documents and would incentivize them to later sell lands to the

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70 Ibid. 201.
French *colons* more than once. As the French Minister of Colonies, René Besnard, once said: “everybody from the Grand Vizir to the meanest tribesmen took advantage of the possibility of cheating the infidels.”\(^71\) Thus, one of the ways the French would seize Moroccan lands was by gradually introducing title deeds and *immatriculation* (registration) laws. Slowly but surely, French colons started claiming all categories of lands and appropriating them, under the pretext of making sense of the chaos that plagued the country.\(^72\)

Each aforementioned category of land was handled differently by the French *colons*. *Makhzen* lands were taken from the Sultan and his appointees who were found to have stolen them and included them in their private estates without permission.\(^73\) Of course, it just so happened that these lands were the country’s most fertile and suitable for agriculture. These lands were later used for the intensive cultivation of cereals – with the purpose of turning Morocco into France’s breadbasket – and were heavily exploited albeit being scarce in resources such as water. In fact, the French through they had discovered an African “Eldorado” as they saw Morocco as the colony with the most potential for development.\(^74\) Morocco was depicted as the former “granary of Rome,” and some reports produced by Frenchmen went as far as claiming that the country’s lands were “the most fertile in the world.”\(^75\) An example of such an exploited area was Râs-el-Ma in the northern Nador province. The *Habous* properties – those belonging to religious institutions – were amongst the most present in Morocco. In fact, the *habous* possessed one quarter of the country’s olive trees in *Jebel Zerhoun*, therefore, holding a huge asset that the French would not do without.\(^76\) The *Guich* lands – given by the *Makhzen* to selected tribesmen in return for military services – used their lands as cultivation

\(^{71}\) Ibid. 203
\(^{73}\) Ibid. 205.
\(^{75}\) Ibid.
\(^{76}\) Drainville. *A history of world order and resistance*. 206.
fields for the benefit of their tribes. However, when the French *colons* came, they argued that these tribes were no longer providing military services to the country, as France was at this point; therefore, they dispossessed the tribes of their lands and declared 1/5th of the *Guich’s* best lands theirs. Consequently, people living on these “were reduced from a proud tribe of independent shepherds to a miserable proletariat seeking unskilled jobs on the estates that they had once owned,” like the Beni Mtir.77 The *collective* lands—belonging to ordinary people—were available for everyone, but were usually left for the training of Moroccan troops to join the French army—like their Algerian counterparts, – rather than exploitation.78 Finally, the Melk lands—which belonged to certain individuals only, not to entire tribes—were simply taken away by “legal trickery, exploiting the ignorance and improvidence of the peasants,” at the hands of not only the colons, but also French appointed local rulers.79

*French-Africa’s Eldorado: the French “dream” of 1912-1956*

“Acquiring a colony and making a colonial venture profitable are two very different affairs.”80 This was true for every colony in Africa. As capitalism made its way and developed in the West in the 19th century, there was an ever-growing market for raw materials, food, and labor, and European colons entered Africa with the mindset of accumulating wealth through any means. However, what they failed to understand was that they lacked any knowledge about Africa. Thus, they failed to realize that their policies and presence would actually transform local political, social, and economic balances and lead to more instability and incurred economic “costs” than they had anticipated. In the case of French aspirations in Morocco, there was a sizable gap caused by the aforementioned “colonial dream,” and the ignorance of local...
political, economic, and especially environmental realities. In fact, “French colonization in Morocco and the protectorate’s first agricultural policy were based on legend rather than on sound economic logic.”\textsuperscript{81} The French saw Morocco not only as a country with a wide variety of natural beauty, but also with a diversity of resources to exploit. As such, French colons sought to develop Morocco’s export crops for use in the metropole.\textsuperscript{82} As the esteemed French navy lieutenant and Moroccan resident Ernest Vaffier-Pollet said in 1906, “the true fortune of Morocco resides in its agriculture. Through export of the fruit of its soil, Morocco will become rich.”\textsuperscript{83} This prediction soon became reality; however, it was not Morocco that would become rich, it was its colonizing power: France.\textsuperscript{84} France’s wealth increased exponentially since the establishment of its protectorate in Morocco (see graph 7 below). By 1950, Morocco had a GDP per capita of $1,611, whereas France had a GDP per capita of $5,221.\textsuperscript{85} Although Morocco was deficient in natural resources such as oil and minerals, its agricultural potential more than made up for these deficiencies.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
The French decided that Morocco’s fertile grounds and strategic geographical location would be most fit for the cultivation of cereals. Firstly, there was a belief that cereal cultivation had been the specialty of Moroccan agriculture since antiquity. Secondly, it was due to the historical role of wheat and barley in native agriculture. According to French Resident-General in Morocco Augustin Guillaume, “traditionally, Morocco was a country of sheep and goats, and grain monoculture.” The third reason is that some locations on the Atlantic coast of Morocco –like Chaouïa, Doukkala, and Abda– are endowed with black alluvial soils called tirs, which are known to be optimal for the production of wheat because they can retain enough moisture even during summer months. In fact, these soils were believed to be similar to the chernozem soils of the temperate grasslands of Ukraine and Russian steppes, which are globally

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important wheat producing regions. Fourthly, cereal cultivation was the most convenient and profitable colonization activity because it required little capital investment and guaranteed a quick and immediate return. Furthermore, this type of farming could be done through large land holdings requiring few Frenchmen on the ground. Finally, France had suffered from a disastrous wheat shortage during the first World War, and thus Morocco’s wheat could make up for that loss.

As such, it follows logically that French authorities sought to develop Morocco’s cereal production before turning to the cultivation of irrigated crops like fruits and vegetables. This “wheat policy” was implemented in 1915, under the guidance of the French Minister of Commerce Henri Cosnier. Cosnier went on a mission in North Africa and upon his return he made recommendations as to how best to implement this policy to benefit the metropole. The Cosnier Mission advised to:

1. Increase the prices of Morocco’s cereal crops
2. Create a system of subsidies for wheat cultivation
3. Encourage agricultural mechanization
4. Develop wheat production on all idle and new lands of the country
5. Advocate for large land holdings of 400-hectare farms

All these policies were later adopted by the protectorate administration and their impact remains strong till this day. The Cosnier Mission envisaged that these measures would facilitate the mechanization of agriculture, which would not only increase wheat yields but also enable the French to settle some of their migrants from the war-ravaged northern regions of France. Mechanization and modernization of agriculture were seen as essential because, as Augustin Guillaume suggested:

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90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.349.
92 Ibid.
The major enemy of North African farming is the variability of the rainfall. Usually there is one good year in every five. The harvest depends on the prompt arrival of the autumn rains and even more of the spring rains; it can also be virtually destroyed in a few days by the hot, dry wind from the interior known as the *Chergui*. The two remedies are power cultivation and irrigation. Only a tractor makes possible the summer plowing of earth hardened by drought—the method of dry-farming—and quick ploughing and sowing in the fall when the rains come late.93

The strategy proposed by Cosnier was inspired by the governor of Indochina Albert Sarraut, whose colonial policy in Indochina was that of emphasizing a strict division of labor. Sarraut believed that each colony should specialize in the production of specific primary materials for which it had a comparative advantage.94 For example, “Madagascar would produce meat and minerals; the Antilles, sugar and coffee; Indochina, cotton, rubber, and silk; and Equatorial Africa, oil, crops and wood.”95 Following this logic, Morocco was to specialize in the production of wheat.

Unfortunately, in 1930, a severe “farm crisis” began. That year there was a sizeable surplus of wheat on the international markets, and France itself had an exceptionally good harvest. Therefore, Morocco’s wheat exports to France declined due to a domestic glut, and Morocco’s wheat prices took a hit. This meant less revenues for Moroccan farmers solely dependent on wheat production and less profit for the colons, who were investing in the mechanization of agriculture. Morocco’s surplus wheat could not even be sold on international markets because it was not competitive enough as production costs were very high due to the costly price supports recommended by Cosnier. By 1931, it was evident that the “wheat policy” was a catastrophic failure and there was a radical shift towards irrigated agriculture.

95 Ibid.
Irrigated production meant a focus on vegetables, such as tomatoes, who reached maturation in Morocco up to a month before those in France and that could therefore be exported to lower tomato prices in the metropole. However, it soon became evident that vegetables could only be developed on a limited scale. At this point, fruit crops, such as oranges, “captured the imagination of the settlers.”\textsuperscript{96} Thus, a new agricultural policy emerged—“California Policy,” based on the building of dams and the export of citrus fruits. The policy was modelled on California’s irrigation agriculture and on American methods of soil conservation.\textsuperscript{97} Subsequently, this policy became the backbone of Morocco’s watercourses development plan to ensure “not a drop of water would flow to the sea.”\textsuperscript{98} This particular plan for the development of irrigation was called “la politique des grands barrages,” the country’s first real irrigation development plan. Numerous large dams were erected—with a loan of more than 400 million francs from France: the Beth and Nfis dams, the Mellah dam, and the Kasbah Tadla dam.\textsuperscript{99} The goal was to provide irrigation for some quarter-million hectares of land. French colonists were particularly fond of this plan because it would resolve the shortage of land problem as it would increase the productive capacity of any land in the country. Moreover, it would justify colonization and make more land available to this end. As will be argued later, this particular policy later become a central pillar to the development of independent Morocco.

Unfortunately, the 1930s was not a decade of particular economic prosperity; on the contrary, it is a decade marked by the worst economic downturn in the history of the industrialized world: The Great Depression. Thus, “la politique des grands barrages” was brought to a standstill. Dam projects were allocated on an ad hoc basis, without a clear strategy of which crops were to be developed for exports; for example, “there was no attempt to

\textsuperscript{96} Ibid. 360.
\textsuperscript{97} Interview with Najib Akesbi in Rabat, December, 2017. Author’s translation from French.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid. 53.
prioritize projects, or to coordinate construction of canal networks with dam construction.”

Thus, the plan raised concerns about the suitability of using scarce water resources for the cultivation of low-value crops, and the spending of too much money on a project that was not see as beneficial to the average Moroccan farmer. Overall, the California Policy left a legacy of irrigated lands and class structure with divisions between the affluent rural elite—which were later able to migrate to the cities– and the larger and poorer rural dwellers.

By way of an intermediate conclusion it is worth highlighting that the colonial agricultural policies discussed here continue to shape the ways in which experts and policy-makers think about Moroccan agriculture. As a 1989 report from the World Bank rightly observes:

The roots of the Kingdom of Morocco’s agricultural policies can be traced back to the protectorate period, which lasted from 1912 to independence in 1956. Economic patterns established by the French who controlled most of the country and exerted a strong influence on the evolution of contemporary Moroccan society. By 1930, French settlers owned over a million hectares of the best agricultural land in the country where they established large-scale, modern, and mostly irrigated farms producing largely for markets in France.  

This dissertation will show in its subsequent sections that the French formula of development through industrial progress, agricultural modernization, social organization, and political stability failed to materialize. This failure was not, as General Guillaume suggested, because “in Morocco rural modernization is more often a matter of social education than a technical problem.” Rather, it was due to the fact that the French did not consider the socio-economic,

100 Ibid.
political, and environmental realities of Morocco while implementing their American inspired plans and Western-style development policies.\textsuperscript{102}

\textit{The Post-Colonial Period: 1956 to the Present}

Since gaining independence in 1956, Morocco, a “stellar student of development policy trends,” has always implemented development policies and adopted the recommendations of the WB, IMF, and several development agencies such as the United Nations Development Program and the Peace Corps.\textsuperscript{103} Nonetheless, today, in spite or because of this tendency, Morocco still suffers from high rates of illiteracy, unemployment, and poverty. In fact, illiteracy stands at 32.2\%, however, amongst the nomad population, it is at 81.9\%;\textsuperscript{104} unemployment stands at 10.6\%;\textsuperscript{105} and the poverty rate – as of 2014 (defined here as a person living under $ 1.90– is at 4.2\% in urban areas and 19\% in rural ones).\textsuperscript{106}

Similar to other newly independent states (like India, Brazil, and Chile), Morocco adopted strategies of import-substitution and modernization. This meant the nationalization of resources, industry, and financial institutions to promote local businesses, goods, and expand the public sector.\textsuperscript{107} However, Morocco’s development strategies were exclusionary because they divided the country into “useful” areas and “non-useful” ones, and by that logic, the state concentrated its financial resources only in the areas it deemed most “useful.” In the 1960s, this strategy became known as “Le Maroc Utile”, an economic and political cartography which

\textsuperscript{102} Gen. Guillaume, Augustin. "The French Accomplishment in Morocco."
\textsuperscript{104} "Morocco’s Nomad Population: 82\% Illiteracy rate." The Moroccan Times. September 27, 2016. http://themoroccantimes.com/2016/09/20812/moroccos-nomad-population-82-illiteracy-rate. (this is a non-profit news Magazine that aims to objectively report Moroccan and international news and it is the second most-read English news outlet in Morocco)
\textsuperscript{105} “Morocco Unemployment Rate 1999-2018 | Data | Chart | Calendar | Forecast.” Trading Economics. https://tradingeconomics.com/morocco/unemployment-rate. (data is based on official sources, not third-party data providers, and facts are regularly checked for inconsistencies.)
\textsuperscript{106} Akhil Reddy, "Morocco Poverty Rate."
(a non-profit organization working on making poverty a focus of U.S. foreign policy.)
carved out the country’s littoral cities from the rest.\textsuperscript{108} This development strategy was inherited by Moroccan policymakers from the French colonialists, who favored the development of urban areas and big agribusinesses in the most fertile areas of the country—which are located in the central north—because developing these would not only modernize Morocco for the colonialists who lived there, but it would also fulfill their objective of turning the country into France’s “breadbasket.”

As a result of this strategy, territories in the Atlas Mountains, the far east, and the Rif Mountains were “cast as backward, resistant to development, and irrelevant to the nation’s future, as were the Berber tribes that lived there because they were seen as “useless.”\textsuperscript{109} Thus, these areas remained marginalized, and lacked the most basic infrastructure and services. In fact, the status of these areas has not changed, and it is therefore not surprising to witness deep political turmoil in the Riffian city of Al Hoceima, where a fishmonger was crushed to death by local security forces in October 2017. Similar to Tunisia’s Mohammed Bouazizi, the death of Mohcine Fikri sparked nationwide protests, and gave rise to a movement called “Hirak,” which symbolizes the deep resentment the poor Northern Rif region feels towards the Moroccan government, given the fact that it has been neglected and marginalized for decades.

A similar predicament is true for the Souss region, a band of steppes between the chains of the Atlas Mountains, which has been marginalized during the colonial period and ever since independence. In fact, this region has been “sidelined in a policy framework that dismissed the subsistence agriculture of the kingdom’s Amazigh heartlands and its rural peasantry”\textsuperscript{110} because Souss did not break into smaller regions following the colonial period, and its inhabitants always sought to challenge the authority of the monarchy.\textsuperscript{111} Thus, since the reign


\textsuperscript{109} Ibid. 118.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{111} Driss Maghraoui, ed. Revisiting the colonial past in Morocco. Routledge, 2013.
of King Mohammed V and his son Hassan II, Soussi civil liberties were heavily curtailed, especially during the “Moroccanization” period. Beginning in 1973, all privately owned companies were forced to cede their shares to the Moroccan state, colonial lands were transferred and redistributed to state-owned companies, such as SIGER, ONA, SNI, as well as to handpicked private contractors; and the state had preponderance over all economically profitable sectors of the country. These sectors included the phosphates, cement, sugar, textiles, and dairy.\footnote{White. “On the Outside of Europe Looking In.” 130.}

By the early 1980s, it became evident that this strategy of “Moroccanization” was failing. In fact, there was a severe crisis in Morocco’s economy, phosphate prices fell drastically, import costs increased, and in 1981 there was a drought that caused a fall in agricultural production by 23% from which Moroccan farmers could not recover.\footnote{Ibid. 131.} Morocco was suffering from a growing structural budget deficit. As a result of this, between 1982-2003, the country experienced its first set of Structural Adjustment Programs administered by the WB and the IMF with 15 structural adjustment loans, as well as the Paris Club offering the state 6 debt restructuring agreements.\footnote{Jane Harrigan, C. Wang, and H. El-Said, (2005) ‘The Politics of IMF and World Bank Lending: Will it Backfire in the Middle East and North Africa?’ In: Paloni, A and Zanardi, M, (eds.), IMF, World Bank and Policy Reform. London: Routledge. 79.} The primary reason for this “generosity” from more than one Western donor institution at the same time was that Morocco was regarded as a pro-Western state (along with Tunisia) in a not-so-friendly MENA neighborhood.\footnote{Ibid.} The policies presented required Morocco to: devalue its currency, making exports even more expensive than they already were; promote exports to earn foreign currency; liberalize its economy; adopt austerity measures with a sharp reduction in subsidies, which were vital to the agricultural sector; curb inflation by hiking up interest rates; and privatizing state-led sectors. The results of these measures were disastrous, and after only two weeks of their adoption, 400 people were

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{White} White. “On the Outside of Europe Looking In.” 130.
\bibitem{Ibid_1} Ibid. 131.
\bibitem{Ibid} Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
killed by the state during protests, and more than 9000 were imprisoned. Nonetheless, the government continued with the adjustment measures well into the 1990s by pursuing export-oriented trade with Europe, abolishing price controls, and shifting agricultural incentives.

In hindsight, these reforms have not led Morocco to develop autonomously but have left it at the mercy of its trading agreements with the European Union (EU), its largest trading partner. The EU receives more than two-thirds of Morocco’s total exports; the relationship between the two trading partners is deeply unequal and hence often fraught with conflict because it is Morocco that has been losing ground since the implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in 1962. The CAP was devastating for Morocco because it distorted its trade with Europe as the subsidies provided to European farmers under this new policy made foreign imports less competitive. The CAP stimulated higher agricultural production in Europe, and lower consumption of imported agricultural products. Thus, given Morocco’s position on the periphery of the European economic space and its reliance on this block for most of its trade, its revenue choices became constrained.

Morocco will have to choose whether it wants to continue with the policies brought by the WB and IMF to liberalize its economy and promote free trade or revert back to protecting its local farmers and agricultural sector. Interestingly, in the 1960-70s, prior to undertaking its first SAP, Morocco had deferred the opening of its economy because of internal opposition, the regime’s instability following the 1971 and 1972 coups d’état, and the “Moroccanization” project which protected local producers and farmers from external competition. However, since the first SAP, Morocco has been on a path of liberalization that has not necessarily been beneficial to all factions of society, most notably not to the greatest faction which is that of the poor rural farmers.

Is it time for Morocco to revert back to a similar system of “Moroccanization”? Or is neoliberalism the only means to development? It seems that with the conception of the Plan Maroc Vert, the country’s first ratified agricultural development program since independence, neoliberal development policies remain dominant. In fact, this Plan is modelled on the aforementioned European CAP introduced in 1962, which announced a number of agricultural subsidies not taking into account the environmental impacts these would cause.\textsuperscript{118} The PMV is a perfect embodiment of the CAP’s first objective, which is to “increase agricultural productivity by promoting technical progress and by ensuring the rational development of agricultural production and the optimum utilization of the factors of production, in particular labor.”\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{118} Interview with Najib Akesbi in Rabat, December, 2017. Author’s translation from French. 
Chapter 4: The Empirics
“Urban” Vs. “Rural” Dualism and the PMV

After independence, the Moroccan government sought to implement agricultural strategies centered around the preferred development policy of import-substitution, a path well-trodden by many other developing states such as India. These were aimed at ensuring food security and were buttressed by the building of large dams across the country, the modernization and intensification of agriculture through mechanization, state provision of subsidies and other such incentives, and the “Moroccanization” of colonial lands. This also entailed the creation of agrarian reform cooperatives, the establishment of supervision structures for the agricultural sector, and the reform of the agricultural credit system. Despite these policies, the agricultural sector in Morocco continues to be marked by shortcomings in output.\(^{120}\) These limitations are due to dysfunctions of past agricultural policies as well as to the social and territorial imbalances that continue to further hamper the development of the sector.

A key characteristic that hinders the development of Moroccan agriculture is the fact that it remains afflicted by French-established dualism between the “urban” and “rural” elites, as Mamdani explained, and this dualism is reflected in Morocco’s agrarian structure imbalances.\(^{121}\) In fact, Morocco has a “small” productive and competitive agricultural sector, and an extensive “traditional” underdeveloped and marginalized agricultural sector.\(^{122}\) This causes inequality between urban elites and rural dwellers to keep growing, and negatively contributes to poverty reduction amongst rural peasants, which stands at a staggering 19%, with 39.32% of the Moroccan population (roughly 36 million) being rural.\(^{123}\) In fact, public

\(^{120}\) Interview with Wafaa Jamali, secretary of the Minister of Agriculture, in Rabat, July, 2017.
\(^{122}\) Interview with Omar a traditionalist farm owner, Rabat, August, 2017. Author’s translation from Moroccan dialect.
policies pursued are skewed towards the “urban” dwellers, who are favored in many facets of life including their ability to access basic services such as healthcare and education. Alas, poverty remains associated with the “rural” world. It is with this background in mind that the Plan Maroc Vert was conceived in 2008. In fact, the PMV came to address the aforementioned constraints of the sector in order to make agriculture the single most important factor rendering Morocco North Africa’s embodiment of a successful free market economy.

The PMV aims to achieve a balanced development of the agricultural sector by stabilizing the “urban” and “rural” populations and creating a development strategy that rests on two pillars. The first pillar is concerned with “the development of accelerated agriculture with high-added value and high productivity…And the triggering of a new wave of massive investments around new players with outstanding managerial capabilities, streamlining of industry structures, and pooling resources around private Economic Interest Groups (GIE privés).”124 This pillar aims at increasing Moroccan agricultural exports and making Morocco an important player in international trade. The second pillar is concerned with “the development of solidary small-scale agriculture to fight poverty, and the integration of this type of agriculture into a broad rural strategy aimed at developing alternative sources of income.”125 Furthermore, this pillar also encourages the valorization of local products to support farmers whose products do not, and cannot, make it to the world market.

It should be noted too, that all these objectives are stated on the Ministry of Agriculture’s web page, as well as on other affiliated institutions’ information pages, but that there is no formal document outlining the Plan Maroc Vert. The PMV was presented as a PowerPoint and has remained nothing more than a few bullet-points. Thus, a significant task

of this chapter will be to unpack the message behind the bullet-points, and critically analyze the plan’s stated objectives. Lastly, as will be discussed in further details later, the very first PowerPoint of the PMV, which was officially presented at the SIAM in 2008, made no reference to “sustainability” and how the concept would factor in the plan’s objectives and execution.126

The Ratification of the Plan

In April 2008, the newly appointed minister of agriculture, Aziz Akhannouch, embodied the country’s hope for a development plan that works in favor of all. Akhannouch is the mastermind behind the American consulting firm McKinsey’s drafted PMV, which he confidently presented to King Mohammed VI at the Maroc SIAM in Meknes. The Plan’s main goal is to make agriculture the main engine of growth and poverty reduction in Morocco by 2020. In addition to tackling the country’s poverty, the Plan envisions to increase Morocco’s agricultural GDP from 70 billion to 100 billion Moroccan dirhams (MAD), the creation of 1.5 million jobs in the sector, and an increase of rural agricultural incomes by two to threefold.127

The Plan rests on two pillars; firstly, modernizing Morocco’s agriculture and aggressively developing a high-value added agricultural sector. This pillar mainly targets large-scale farmers and encourages private actors to create and coordinate an agricultural high value chain. The second pillar aims to encourage community-supported agriculture to combat poverty in rural areas. Morocco’s non-accessible agricultural areas, such as mountains, oases, and plains in semi-arid areas, contribute greatly to the country’s agricultural GDP and agricultural yield but are very underdeveloped and poor because they are hard to access and cultivate. Through community-supported agriculture, this pillar encourages the formation of economic interest groups between rural farmers producing similar crops. Overall, the project

127 Interview with Wafaa Jamali, secretary of the Minister of Agriculture, in Rabat, July, 2017.
is ambitious, starting with a total investment of 147 billion MAD, to develop 1506 projects, over the span of 12 years.\textsuperscript{128}

Although the project seems promising and, as stated earlier, is quite ambitious, it raises important questions. Given the apparent centrality of rural development, what does the PMV tell us about the efficacy of neoliberal restructuring and the limits of the western industrialization discourse in postcolonial nations? Where does “sustainability” fit in according to the Plan? And, what does the structure and method of implementation of the PMV tell us about the knowledge system which Morocco adopts, and on which the current global “development” discourse rests? These are some of the question this section will attempt to answer using the PMV as a case study.

\textit{Mapping the “invention of development”: Past state-sponsored development Plans}

The Moroccan government opted for decentralized development management when it was first concocting its first development plans from the period of 1960-1972.\textsuperscript{129} This strategy was similar to that adopted in Tanzania in 1972, whereby the government attempted to consolidate the population into the socialist Ujamaa system of village cooperatives to ensure equality of access to resources, such as electricity and education, to the greatest number of people. This period saw the ratification of three plans, the first one from 1960-1964, the second from 1965-1967, and the third from 1968-1972.\textsuperscript{130} The policies of these plans were all geared towards achieving import-substitution and achieving food security.

The first of these development plans was especially significant because it was the first time Morocco had adhered to a concrete set of rules for development since its independence in

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{130} Interview with Mr. Marghi, former secretary at the ministry of agriculture, in Rabat, July, 2017.
1956. This Plan symbolized Morocco’s “real” economic independence. The number one priority of the plan was to develop Morocco’s industrial sector in order to produce high-added value goods and increase exports.131

The second Plan was important because it finally recuperated all colonial agricultural lands from the hands of former French colonial officers and put them under the auspices of the Moroccan state or its cronies. In fact, interestingly enough, Morocco was the only former French North African colony to retain a foreign colonization sector until 1967. The lands in Morocco’s provinces were recuperated as follows: in 1963 Rharb Tadia; 1964, Fes and El Jadida; 1965, Oujda, Taza, Meknes, Casablanca; and by 1966-67, Safi, Marrakech, Agadir.132 The recuperation of lands was actually a big burden for the Moroccan government because it now had to account for the agricultural production of 226, 400 ha of land area, whereas before it only had 46, 000 to worry about.133

The third and final Plan was known as “programme d’irrigation” and linked to the country’s “politique des barrages,” where 41% of state budgets were dedicated, yearly, to the construction of new dams.134 Unfortunately, on the whole, these plans were not as successful because of accumulated financial deficits, inadequate overseeing institutions, and patrimonialism. Alas, like Albert Waterson, WB adviser to member countries on development planning organizations said about Morocco, the besetting problem in the country “was the lack of basic agreement about what the national interest requires and the consequent absence of a consistent development policy.”135

The second significant period for development in Morocco was between 1973-1982,

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133 Ibid.
when, overwhelmed with “excess” agricultural land, King Hassan II pushes for “Moroccanization.” This phenomenon saw the transferring of agricultural lands and non-Moroccan owned enterprises to political loyalists. This, coupled with increased global phosphate prices, made access to financial resources an easy task for the Moroccan government. In turn, the latter allocated greater funds to the development of the agricultural sector.

The third significant plan for development in Morocco was between 1983-1994. This period was most importantly marked by the two World Bank administered structural adjustments (the first in 1989, and the second in 1993), which completely changed the conception of development in Morocco.¹³⁶ Morocco’s agricultural policy changed from being interventionist, with heavy state involvement, to self-sufficient, with a greater role played by the market forces. Since 1994, this process of liberalization has continued and the PMV can be seen as a refined version of the SAPs proposed by the WB. Furthermore, liberalization also affected Morocco’s bilateral trading agreements, where there was an excessive liberalization of agricultural prices with, for example, the United States, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, and the EU in 2012.¹³⁷ This trading liberalization is particularly important because it is the driving force behind the PMV’s first pillar, which aims at modernizing and intensifying agriculture to boost exports.

Looking at these policies through the systems of knowledge approach, one can see how today’s understanding of development is contingent upon “modern” Western development styles and disqualifies non-western forms of knowledge. This myth of normalcy of a unique

successful development approach holds back developing countries, such as Morocco, from developing a locally-crafted Plan more suitable for the country’s economic, social, and political realities.

**Breaking down the Plan Maroc Vert**

**The finances**

As mentioned earlier, the PMV rests on two pillars. Pillar I focuses on the development of a modern, high value-added agriculture with a central role played by the private sector. Pillar II focuses on small-scale collective agriculture and the improvement of rural incomes. Following is an illustration of the number of projects projected for each pillar, and the value of investments for each:\textsuperscript{138}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pillar I</th>
<th>Pillar II</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Projects</td>
<td>961</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>1506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investments in billions of Moroccan dirhams (MAD)</td>
<td>121,25</td>
<td>19,25</td>
<td>140,50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of which the state finances</td>
<td>23,69</td>
<td>13,47</td>
<td>68,60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of targeted farmers</td>
<td>560,000</td>
<td>840,000</td>
<td>1,400,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apart from the Moroccan state, other financial investments have been secured from private national and international donors through the establishment of long-term partnerships. These include Attijariwafa Bank (also Morocco’s leading bank, part of the King’s holding company SNI) with 25 billion MAD; the French Banque Populaire Groupe with 20 billion MAD; Crédit Agricole with 20 billion MAD; the French Development Agency with 50 million euros; and the International Fund for Agricultural Development with 80 million dollars.\textsuperscript{139}

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.
It is important to note, however, that many small-scale farmers do not reap the benefits of this money directly. In fact, part of the plan is to have “middle-men” tasked with visiting small-scale farmers, proposing the Plan’s financing schemes, and persuading these farmers to sign contracts with the state, which will subsequently allow them to have better equipment, bigger plots of land, more access to water, for free (in most cases). These middle-men receive from the state a percentage of the total value of the contract they sign with the farmer. The resulting scenario one where these middle-men persuade a farmer to sign the contract, the farmer, who in most cases is illiterate is glad to hear that he will be receiving aid from the government for free and therefore signs without understanding the terms and conditions. The middle-man takes advantage of the farmer’s illiteracy and provides him with over-priced machinery. This way, he is able to justify a higher commission from the state. Clearly, this is a problematic and dysfunctional system for a poor country like Morocco where a dirham can only be spent once, making the concept of opportunity cost very real. Furthermore, this system encourages looting and advantages dishonest middle-men, while hurting the Moroccan treasury. Lastly, it results in poorer outcomes than forecasted, with wasted national and international aid.\textsuperscript{140}

Just how corrupt and disorganized the PMV is becomes evident through the testimony of an anonymous ex-employee of Capgemini, the French consulting firm, as he tells me:

Say a cattle farmer is advised to get vaccine shots for his cows. These are 100% subsidized by the state. A state representative comes to him (a middle-man) and tells him that each shot costs 140 MAD but that this cost is entirely covered by the state, he just has to sign and will be delivered the vaccines in no time. The cattle farmer signs but does not realize that the real price of a shot is 70 MAD. So, he orders 200 of these

\textsuperscript{140} Interview with Najib Akesbi in Rabat, December, 2017. Author’s translation from French.
vaccine shots for a total of 28,000 MAD. The actual price of 200 shots would have been 14,000, but the middle-men put down the farmer requested 400 shots, not 200. This justifies the doubling of the price. The state blindly pays off these middle-men and keeps on awarding them contracts to lure more farmers into the PMV, and in the mean time they make enormous profits at the expense of the treasury of the country. And the cycle goes on.  

The institutional framework

The PMV proposes “aggregation” as the best mechanism to ensure agricultural efficiency, increased output and employment. This system is centered around integrating small-scale scattered farmers called “aggregators” with a state-sponsored actor called the “aggregator,” also known as the “middle-man.” This system assumes that in Morocco’s agricultural system, all parties should and want to work towards achieving a common goal: increasing agriculture to export and increase their profits. Can we really assume that all Moroccan farmers are homines economici? Although, in theory, this is a voluntary partnership, when small-scale farmers are given no alternative other than joining this partnership it cannot really be considered “voluntary.” In fact, Kasim, a small farmer in the region of Salé-Rabat said:

“I do not really get along well with the aggregator in my area nor do I want to export my oranges and tomatoes. But, my machinery is very outdated and my land risks being taken away from me if I do not modernize and increase my output. The only way I can do that is by accepting this partnership so the state can finance everything on my behalf.”

141 Interview with anonymous ex-Capgemini employee, Rabat, August 2017. Author’s translation from French.
142 Interview with Mr. Kasim a native of the region of Rabat-Salé and small-scale farm owner, Rhemna, August, 2017. Author’s translation from Moroccan dialect.
It should also be noted that in this “relationship”, the aggregator is the actor with strong managerial, financial, and technical abilities as compared to the aggregated farmers.

Thus, there is clearly a power structure being imposed, much like it was during the colonial era, where the French administrators always had an edge over local Moroccan farmers. Furthermore, this system is similar to the Rostowian modernization paradigm as it indirectly forces local small-scale farmers to give up their traditionalist mindset of subsistence farming and adopt a productivist mindset geared towards achieving mass consumption. What the model fails to understand, however, is that local customs, community dynamics and perceived economic realities shape the farmer’s ideas and choices. Therefore, if a farmer feels the need to hide away some of his wheat in the traditional *matmoras* there must be an underlying reason, which should not be overlooked, but instead addressed. In fact, many farmers in Morocco feel the need to under-report the amounts of wheat they harvest in order to keep some aside not only as a financial asset (as wheat is scarce and valuable), but also as a source of food security.\(^{143}\)

**The ambiguities**

There are a number of ambiguities that exist within the Plan, ranging from the terminology used, to the origins of the ideas it expresses, to the identities of its very developers. Starting with the terminology, the Ministry of Agriculture describes the PMV as a “roadmap for the implementation of a strategy reflecting consultation with all stakeholders…this establishes a plan that clarifies priorities and reforms to be undertaken.”\(^{144}\) The problem is that the Plan was never based on a strategy of consultation. In fact, the Ministry prides itself on


having paid huge amounts to McKinsey & Co who draft the plan for them. The only “Morocco element” in the drafting of the plan was the data provided by the Ministry to McKinsey (in two weeks only) for their graphs, charts, and predictions. This was frustrating to many local agricultural experts, and small and large scale farmers who felt left out during the drafting of the Plan, and later complained about it not being “Moroccan” enough, and not addressing the real issues the country’s agricultural sector struggles with.

For example, Najib Akesbi, a Professor at the Institut Agronomique et Vétérinaire Hassan II, told me:

When Akhannouch became minister of Agriculture, there were dozens of locally crafted development plans waiting to be ratified. Yet, he decided to contact McKinsey. He was lucky to find money from a donation made by Japan to the Ministry of Agriculture and used it to employ McKinsey to draft a development strategy. As you see, this is a plan conceived “hors-sol” not even in consultation with people from the ministry of agriculture, let alone actual experts from universities or other relevant institutions! This has produced a plan that is unrealistic. Quite clearly, the people that drafted this plan know nothing about Moroccan agriculture. This is not an insult. It’s a fact.

Another issue with the terminology of the Plan’s document is that it uses the term “colossal” to describe the extent to which the Plan can impact Moroccan agriculture, and the extent to which the results of the Plan will have outstanding outcomes for the sector and the country as a whole. For example, the Plan’s PowerPoint document says “if the right financial, institutional and managerial resources are activated, and the appropriate reforms undertaken,

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145 Interview with Wafaa Jamali in Rabat, July, 2017. Author’s translation from French.
146 Interview with Najib Akesbi in Rabat, December, 2017. Author’s translation from French.
147 Like Najib Akesbi, Driss Benayta, Kasim (small-scale farmer in the Rabat-Salé region), and Noureddine (large-scale farmer in Moulay Idriss Zerhoun)
148 Interview with Najib Akesbi in Rabat, December, 2017. Author’s translation from French.
the estimated impacts of the Plan are colossal.” Such terms that conjure grandiosity are not foreign to anyone familiar with other development models conceived by ex-colonial powers.

For example, in Morocco’s case, France attempted to model the country’s agriculture on that of California, the aforementioned “California Policy.” Additionally, the document fails to acknowledge the fact that “agriculture” is not a sector like any other in Morocco. In fact, agriculture in Morocco is not primarily viewed as an economic activity, rather, it represents a way of life. Morocco is first and foremost an agrarian society, and historically, agriculture is embedded in social and cultural codes, as well as in any Moroccan peasant’s relationship with the environment. For example, farmer Abdellah said “I am a farmer by choice. My soul gets inspired when I touch the soil and water and when I plant seeds and watch them grow.”

Thus, the framing of the Plan as having a “colossal” impact needs to emphasize who will be affected by it. As of now, it seems that the objective of the Plan is to lure in as many investors as possible to Morocco. But, what is in store for half of the country’s population who has strong rural ties?

The PMV claims to want to “stabilize” the rural population in order to reduce poverty and ensure food security. This seems to be hinting at a bifurcated development plan between rural Morocco and urban Morocco. In a sense, stabilizing rural populations would disincentivize them from looking for new opportunities in the cities, and deepen the already existing divide between the “urban” and the “rural.” Although, historically, successful leaps towards urbanization have involved the transfer of human capital from the countryside to the cities (like in Britain during the Industrial Revolution), this model might not necessary work.
for everyone. Nonetheless, creating artificial barriers to prevent rural exodus of people in search of new opportunities is also not a winning strategy. The point is that a successful development plan does not have to be an either/or scenario like it has historically been portrayed to be. Ultimately, one needs to think whether getting rid of a dualistic approach to agriculture, which reduces it to “modern” vs. “rural”, can actually yield a more suitable approach to development.

No Rain, No Gain

The PMV failed to take into consideration the most important factor that affects Moroccan agriculture: rain. In reality, the centrality of rain to Morocco’s agriculture has been greatly overlooked by previous plans too. Although, as discussed earlier, there were important projects for dam constructions, these are only able to irrigate a very small percentage of the total arable surface. Perfectly aware of this, no other plan, including PMV, has reflected the policy makers’ understanding that there are limits to how much the environment can be controlled. This is something that locals understand very well. For example, as Mrs. Oumkeltoum, a native of the region of Rehamna told me:

To be very honest, irrigation is still not widespread in Morocco except for privately owned farms by “les grands de ce monde.” All big agricultural regions, such as, Doukkala, Shawiya, Saïss are regions that require rain. When it doesn’t rain, there is no harvest, it’s as simple as that. Actually, another vital region for wheat production that is heavily reliant on rain is Rehamna, known to Moroccans as the “grenier du Maroc.” If you ask me what the PMV has done for these regions, I’ll
have to say nothing much. To this day, in these regions where there is no irrigation, no rain is no gain.”

In fact, the key contributor to Morocco’s economy is its wheat harvest because it is directly correlated to the growth rate of the entire economy. For example, graph 8 shows Morocco’s GDP growth from 2010-2020, and one can notice that the lowest growth was in 2016, when the country experienced a catastrophic drought that whipped out half of the wheat harvest (see graph 8). In reality, people and policy makers alike know there is a problem, and this awareness dates back to the colonial era where, for example, Théodore Steeg, French governor of Morocco from 1925-28, said “au Maroc, gouverner c’est pleuvoir.” The issue is that little is being done to overcome it, and policy makers keep telling themselves that somehow they can overcome the issue without addressing the elephant in the room: environmental constraints.

**Graph 8:**

152 Interview with Mrs. Oumkeltoum a native of the region of Rehamna and small-scale farm owner, Rhemna, August, 2017. Author’s translation from Moroccan dialect.
Najib Akesbi, Professor at the Institut Agronomique et Vétérinaire Hassan II in Rabat, stresses the fact that Morocco is a country with a predominantly barren terrain despite what the state wants Moroccans to believe. Today, only 15% of the country’s agricultural land is irrigated and the rest is at the mercy of rainfall. Nonetheless, the PMV stresses the importance of producing citrus fruits and vegetables, which consume vast amounts of Morocco’s poor water reserves and do not constitute the primary source of food for most Moroccans as compared to wheat based foods. This sheds light on the objectives of the PMV, which are not geared towards responding to local needs, rather, to producing goods that have a higher added-value and thus higher export prices. In reality, the PMV never came to tackle Moroccan agriculture’s dependency on rainfall for the simple reason that this problem did not feature in the heads of those who designed it. Today, Morocco continues to produce export crops that do not meet domestic demands and consume large amounts of valuable water.

*Simply a Business Plan?*

As of 2016, it was evident that the PMV was handled like a business plan, which is hardly surprising since the agriculture minister, Aziz Akhannouch, is a self-made billionaire, not an agriculture expert, and far from an environmentalist. His visions are known to be outright neoliberal, as he believes the only solution to dealing with the world’s food and population crisis is through “trade, investment, aid, and partnership.” Akhannouch prides himself on his self-made fortune and flaunts his western diploma and few years spent in North America to legitimize his decisions for the country. In fact, people within the agricultural sector, such as Bouchaïd El Haddaj, director of the National Federation for Wheat and Vegetable Traders, said

156 Interview with Najib Akesbi in Rabat, December, 2017.
157 Ibid.
158 Ibid.
“Aziz Akhannouch, the minister of Agriculture is an extremely wealthy businessman. He studied in the United States and manages his ministry American-style: objectives, evaluations, corrections.” Others, like Akesbi, are not so impressed by him. For example, Akesbi says “one day he (Akhannouch) arrives at a ministry he knows nothing about, he is told the King has requested a development plan, he says, ‘very well, let’s call a consultancy firm to help.’ In the end, he (Akhannouch) behaved like a businessman. Clearly, this is someone that had no connection to, or knowledge about, agriculture, let alone Moroccan agriculture!”

Consequently, as a result of his policies, Morocco’s large farming conglomerates have been found to profit the most from this Plan, as they are able to mechanize their farming methods and benefit from the country’s extensive trading agreements. However, poor rural dwellers are either struggling to make ends meet, due to the competitive prices of goods produced at lower costs by the big farms or have given up their lands in return for meager compensations and moved to the big cities in search for new opportunities. In fact, large modern farms earn nine times more than family-owned ones. Unfortunately, with rampant levels of unemployment, low-skilled rural migrants rarely find jobs and are forced to settle in the ever-expanding city slums. Overall, although Morocco might be considered the “stellar student of development policy trends,” it is not exactly a posterchild for successful neoliberal development policies.

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161 Interview with Najib Akesbi in Rabat, December, 2017. Author’s translation from French.
Where does sustainability fit in the PMV?

A productivist model

The first version of the PMV, officially presented at the SIAM in 2008 had no mention of the Plan’s concern with the question of natural resource preservation and the environment.\textsuperscript{164} The Plan rested on 6 dimensions, which were: agriculture as engine of growth; differentiated strategies according to the targeted social fabric; aggregation; investments as key to success; 1500 development projects; and promotion of all sectors of the economy. It was only two years after its launching date, in 2010, following widespread criticisms about the lack of awareness on environmental issues, that the ministry added a seventh dimension named “preservation of natural resources.”\textsuperscript{165} This speaks volumes about the Plan’s since it portrays it as the true productivist model that it is.

The PMV centers on the idea that productivity is the purpose of human organization, and subsequently, that the greater the productive output the better regardless of the planet’s limits to growth and scarcity of natural resources. The PMV model is a perfect embodiment of the CAP’s first objective, which is to “increase agricultural productivity by promoting technical progress and by ensuring the rational development of agricultural production and the optimum utilization of the factors of production, in particular labor.”\textsuperscript{166}

As previously mentioned, in 1962, the EU introduced its CAP to stimulate European agricultural output (through subsidies), reduce the consumption of imports, and make European goods more competitive on international markets. Although it can be argued that the CAP in Europe did yield improved production outputs; one cannot deny the catastrophic impact it had on the environment. These explain why, in 1992, the EU’s Commission for Agricultural and Rural Development

\textsuperscript{165} Interview with Najib Akesbi in Rabat, December, 2017. Author’s translation from French.
\textsuperscript{166} Ackrill, Kay, and Morgan. The Common Agricultural Policy and Its Reform. 19.
integrated environmental conditionality into the CAP’s pillars. Nonetheless, the PMV does not reflect any particular awareness about the EU’s initial mistake in disregarding the environment as an essential pillar in development as the Plan stays true to a purely productivist model. The thinking behind it is simple: “I till the land and benefit from the returns.”

Nevertheless, the environmental consequences of this model were quick to surface. People working within the system, tasked with putting into action the Plan say that the PMV has taken a number of environmental considerations, amongst which, the most important one is the introduction of micro-irrigation. Indeed, the PMV put in place a considerable micro-irrigation program to extend this practice to 550,000 ha of land, however, all costs are 100% subsidized and financed by the state. For example, for farmers with less than 5 ha of land, the cost is free, and for farmers owning more than 5 ha, the subsidy covers 80% or more of the total cost.

This generosity is quite problematic because it has come to the attention of researchers that in some regions of the country, like Meknes/Fes in the Saïss plain, everyone has turned to cultivating crops that consume large amounts of water. This is the example of how a perfectly “environmental-friendly” agricultural practice can lead to perverse outcomes. By having access to free water, following a utilitarian logic, it only makes sense to consume it by harvesting crops with higher added value i.e. fruits and vegetables. For example, Noureddine, a farmer with 500 ha of land in Moulay Idriss Zerhoun recently got his equipment and decided to shift his agricultural production towards harvesting olive trees in order to make olive oil for export. The issue is that when everyone in a region harvests the same water-intensive crops, there is a growing pressure on the water table. The result is an ecological catastrophe.

167 European Parliament. “Food Crisis: How do we feed the world now and in 2050?”
168 Interview with Najib Akesbi in Rabat, December, 2017. Author’s translation from French.
169 Repeated by Jamali, Felloun, and Marghi.
170 Interview with Noureddine, large-scale farmer in Moulay Driss Zerhoun, June, 2017.
**What about Food Security?**

In terms of food security, the PMV has not accomplished much, if anything at all. The plan set production goals that are not in tandem with local needs. This has resulted in output intended for local consumption to lag behind, as output intended for external markets to continue growing. For instance, from 2008-2013, there was a sustained regression in Surface Agricole Utile (SAU) for wheat, the country’s most consumed crop, but a sustained increase in mandarin production. So much so, that in the past few years, Moroccan markets were overflowed with mandarins, leading their prices to fall, and to some farmers feeding the fruit to their cattle.\(^{171}\)

For example, below is a table (3) showing urban/rural differences in child nutrition in 2011:\(^{172}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 2011</th>
<th>Stunting %</th>
<th>Underweight %</th>
<th>Wasting %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio Urban/Rural</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This again serves to show the productivist model of the PMV, which is not focused on the wellbeing of the people. Since the ratification of the PMV, the gap between imports and exports in % of GDP has widened (see graph 9 below), with the country having less self-sufficiency in the production of crops such as wheat. In fact, the import of wheat covers 40-60% of total demand.\(^{173}\)

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\(^{171}\) Interview with Najib Akesbi in Rabat, December, 2017. Author’s translation from French.


\(^{173}\) Ibid.
In the end, growth that should have come from a supposed increase in exports is ever more hampered by imports. Thus, in Morocco, there is a pressing need to rethink consumption and production patterns and ensuring they feature in a plan truly conceived to develop the country by formulating policies reflecting the needs and aspiration of the local population. Furthermore, it is also apparent that the plan has an issue with the valorization of water and does not provide a sustainable development model that seeks to preserve Morocco’s natural resources and a harmony between agriculture and nature. This is, as discussed earlier, due to the fact that the mindset of the elites who conceived it has not yet shifted to an understanding that a knowledge society, where the farmer is at the center of global food security, is actually more sustainable and development-friendly.
Chapter 5: Conclusion
This dissertation only scratched the surface of the troubling continuity of unsuccessful development models in Morocco, and in Africa at large. As I have argued, the actions of Western institutions cannot be labelled as, and were far from, cynical. Instead, their objectives were, to a certain extent, geared towards improving the human condition in developing states. Nonetheless, they have gone awry for various reasons- and left Moroccans with the task of picking up the pieces. It is time to look for new paradigms of development better suited to the environment they are designed to help. The institutional frameworks within which many of these western-crafted development models exist demonstrate a startling ignorance of the local realities of the places they are designed to help. As evidenced in the dissertation, imposing western-conceived paradigms of development, and ignoring local knowledge causes more “underdevelopment” than “development.” Certainly, in the case of Morocco. Thus, alternatives need to challenge some of the unquestioned assumptions of paradigms, such as the Rostowian one, and propose new ones.

In fact, it is crucial to reassess our understanding of Africa as an autonomous and able actor in the international system. The African state as traditionalist, authoritarian, fiscally incompetent, corrupt, violent, and weak has been, and continues to be, the starting presumption and ending analysis of much scholarly debate. However, beneath this surface, albeit thick, is a state that is deeply traumatized by its colonial and post-colonial experiences, and a host to more than 1.2 billion individuals with unique ideas, lives, aspirations, dreams, and cultures. Thus, sticking to a simplistic, “one size fits all” development model limited to engrossing the African state as a singular unit of analysis strips Africans of their agency as able actors in the process of their own development. If one looks at Africa from a more thoughtful and neutral perspective, it becomes evident that African societies are complicated systems (just like all other societies), therefore, prospects for progress can sometimes appear grim. Nonetheless, it
is undeniable that Africa is progressing. Thus, it is crucial to rid ourselves of all “tortured misconceptions of Africa,” and recognize positive trends.\textsuperscript{174}

One important argument this dissertation put forth is that there is a big disconnect between what policy-makers think is a “good” policy, and what the average Moroccan citizen thinks is a “good” policy. This stems from a lack of communication between the different factions of society and the fact that the average citizen is not considered “expert” enough to value his/her opinion. As James Scott expressively puts it, the failures of development plans (like the PMV) occur because “the progenitors of such plans regarded themselves as far smarter and farseeing than they really were and, at the same time, regarded their subjects as far more stupid and incompetent than they really were.”\textsuperscript{175}

Observing the evidence from Morocco, the fact that the PMV is a technocratic plan sheds light on the true objectives of Moroccan elites and policy-makers: production and profit-maximization; not development. This is very problematic because in a sector like agriculture, no knowledge matters more than that of a local farmer who knows his land, or an agronomist whose expertise is studying the growth of food, for example. Thus, the mindset of the elites who conceive development models, such as the PMV, has to shift to an understanding that a knowledge society, where the farmer is at the center of global food security, is actually more sustainable and development-friendly. Furthermore, this evidence also shows that there is a serious lack of rigorous impact evaluations from the “elites,” which prevents any improvements from taking place, and subsequently hampers development.

In the case of Morocco, the PMV lumps together more than 30 million people, assuming they are individuals with similar priorities, consumption and purchasing patterns, amongst other things. This idea of “one size fits all,” common between western-stylized development

\textsuperscript{174} Miguel, Edward, and William R. Easterly. \textit{Africa's turn?} Mit Press, 2009. x.

\textsuperscript{175} Scott. \textit{Seeing like a State}. 34.
plans for developing countries is extremely simplistic and perpetuates past failures. In fact, a large section of the Plan revolves around the idea of “succès à dupliquer,” which argues that Moroccan farmers should look outwards, towards Western countries that export similar goods and adopt their “innovative” strategies in the agricultural sector. This could be called wishful thinking, or simply ignorance of those who have never been actively involved in farming. This is because, in practice, farmers never adopt a new and innovative technique unless they have seen that it is suitable to their particular conditions, about which they know best. Lastly, the PMV has contributed to the creation of a type of agriculture that degrades natural resources, depletes human resources, and destroys economic opportunities. This has proven to be harmful to the agrarian Moroccan society because, without sustainability, it cannot maintain a minimal yield guaranteeing it financial and food security. Not only does the PMV not address sustainability in any great depth, but it also discards the issue of food security completely.

Consequently, it is not surprising to see continuity rather than change in the Plan Maroc Vert, which is a modern-day representation of the Rostowian paradigm and the SAPs. In fact, the PMV also advocates for the privatization and marginalization of the state from several key sectors of the economy to bring down government deficits; the liberalization of the economy to allow price signals to work their magic and determine supply and demand (laissez-faire); and the opening up of Morocco’s economy to the world, removing any trade barriers to foster FDI. As such, the dissertation questioned the knowledge system on which the current “development” discourse rests in Morocco and argued that the latter is primarily based on a modern Western approach. Unfortunately, this approach disqualifies any other non-western understanding of development, which could actually provide a better development framework suitable for Morocco, and other African states at large.

Despite Morocco’s failure in building a sustainable model for development thus far, I am hopeful that, one day, with “a little more ‘reverence for life,’ a little less straightjacketing
of the future, a little more allowance for the unexpected, and a little less wishful thinking,”
Morocco will become its own example of development. And, that Moroccans, as well as their
African compeers, will be able to look inwards for success stories and not always outwards.176

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