

Municipal administration and planning: the case of the *Plans de Développement Communal* in Niger, from 2004 up to the present

by Andrea Bassino

Tutor: Alfredo Mela

Co-tutor: Carlo Carozzi

Reference summary

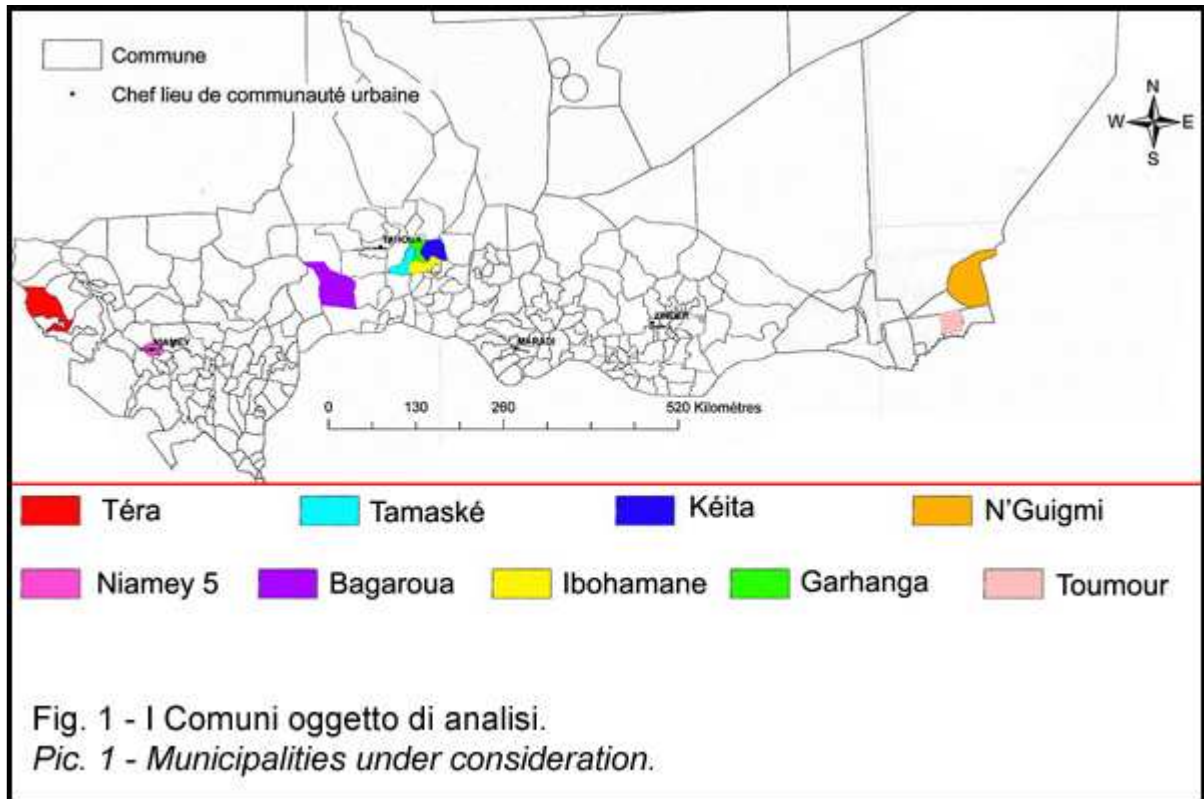
Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world, it has an area of 1,267,000 Km² and more than 10 million people. The major part of the population is rural: the urban rate, 17%, is lower than the average African sub-Saharan countries and that of the nations in the Sahel region. Because of almost no rainfall, the population is mostly positioned in the southern zone where it does rain and thus agriculture can exist. The administrative decentralization foresees that as an institutional system the subdivision of the territory is divided in Regions, Departments and Municipalities. Up to now only the Municipal administrations have been working and are the only ones that are dealing with local development. Municipalities- where the borders imitate the "canton" which are of colonial origin-are less and more widespread in the north compared to the south where the territory is more fragmented. The proportion of the population is the other way around: the smaller municipalities are the ones with more inhabitants.

The « Plan de Développement Communal » (PDC) in general

The PDC is not foreseen by law but is acted upon by international collaboration and is widespread in all the country. Its aim is to plan projects for the social and economical development within the municipality.

The process of elaboration of the PDC has two phases of planning: the diagnostic phase(which the population takes part in) and the decision-making phase(managed by the administrators).

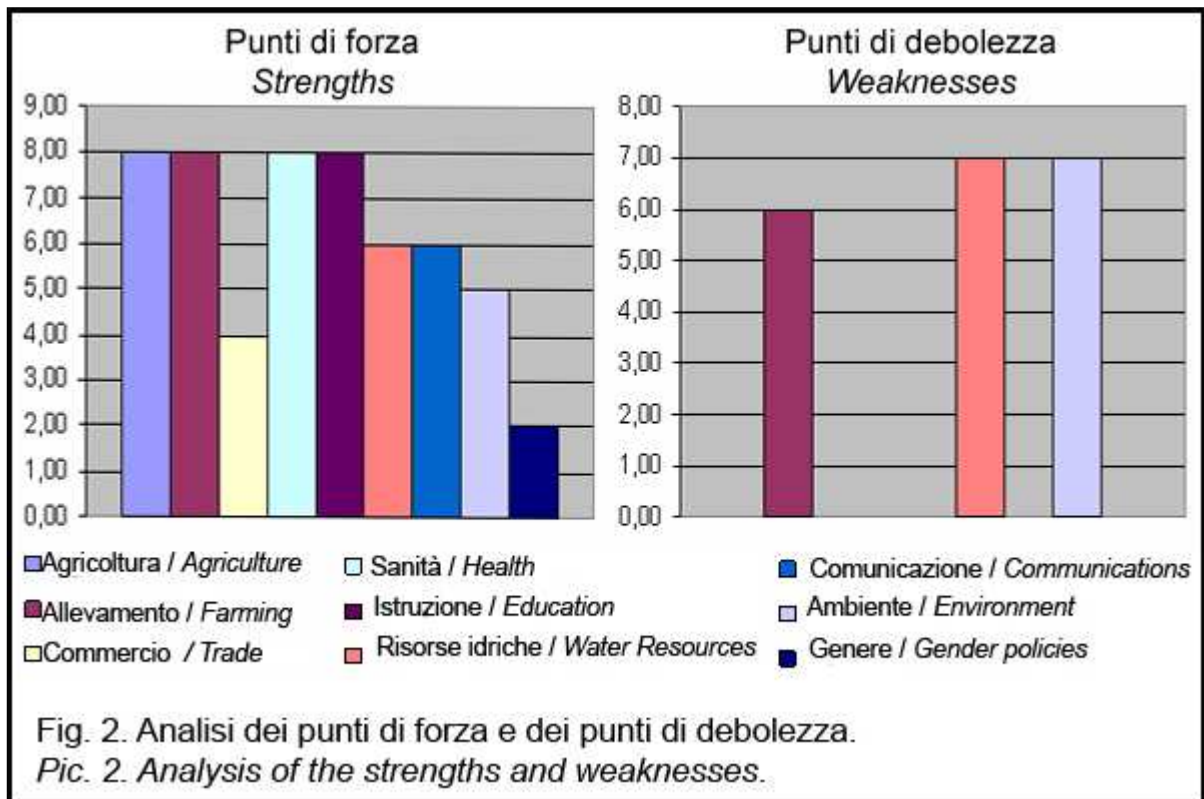
Case Studies



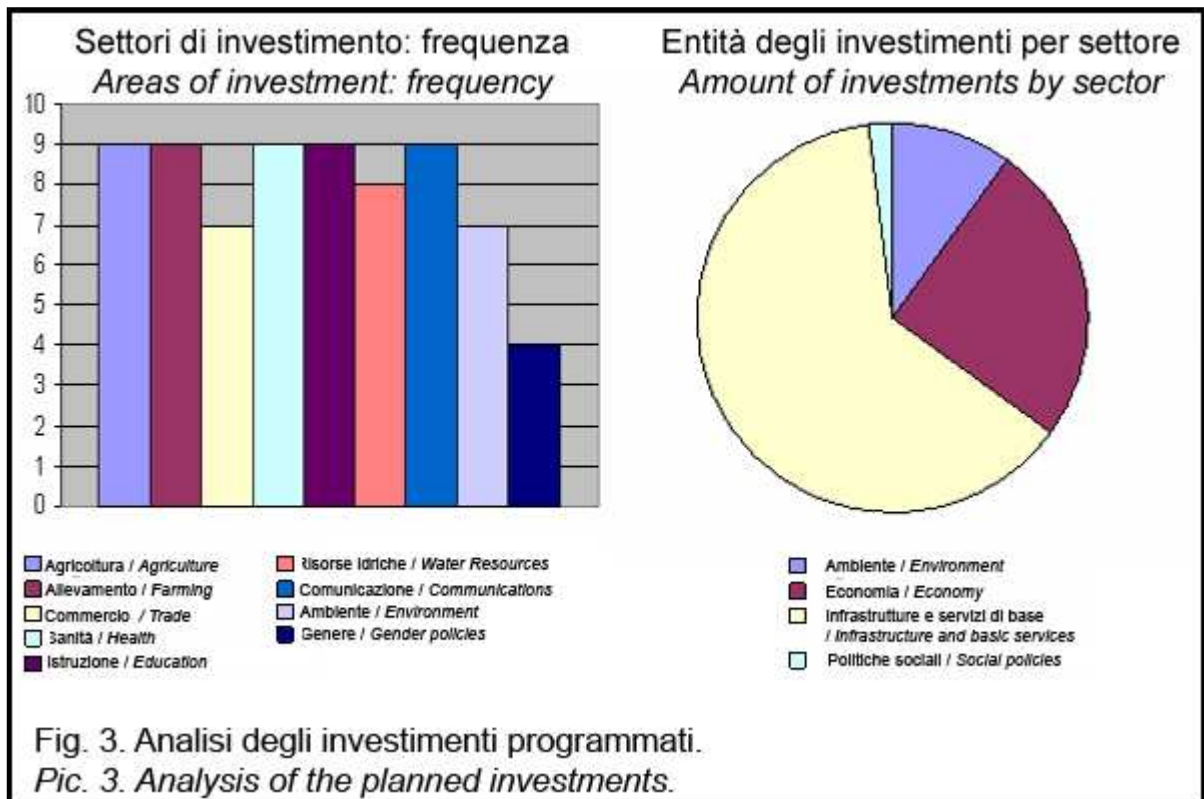
The thesis analyzes 9 PDC chosen for their different geographical and ethno-social situation and because it represents the three types of municipalities foreseen by law. They were analyzed taking in consideration the completeness and the level of investigation and therefore studying their contents.

The part that is the most lacking is the diagnostic, however the plans have a good level of completeness. The most recent plans are the ones that are most complete, this shows us that with practice improvement can be made in the elaboration of data. The organization is often incomplete. It is known that some plans are based on previous documents instead of using real on field diagnosis.

In the participating diagnosis, which is the heart of the process of elaboration, the population defines the strong and the weak points of the community and the territory in which they live in and these will be the basis for planning interventions.



The major flaws that have been singled out are the economy (agriculture), the services and basic infrastructure. The strong points, a very small percentage, are in the fields that are considered in deficit: this means that extreme importance in these sectors should be put on the population.



Quantitatively the major economic effort is put on providing services and agriculture; only 1% is reserved for politics and strengthening municipalities' abilities.

Conclusion

The strong points of this tool: the participating and the operative traits and the improvement of the mutual knowledge between administrators and those who are being administered to; weaknesses: the approximation of the diagnosis in the municipalities, the limited involvement of the administrators in the process of forming the plans/projects (ONG are the ones who elaborate plans on commission), the scarce or no circulation of the plan so it is impossible for the administrators to attract financial backers.

All this highlights the need of a stronger institution to overcome the dilemma with which the extreme restriction of local finances (high level of tax evasion), the high rate of illiteracy among administrators, and relations that are often in conflict with the chieftaincy.

Other aspects to face, as pointed out by the same administrators, are: the lacking knowledge of the territory, the improvement of the participating system and decision-making; the lack of guidelines for superior command (departmental planning is not yet active); to reopen expired plans.

For further information, e-mail:

Andrea Bassino: andreabassino@libero.it