

Anticipated and Regulated Contextual Determinants of Social Innovation in Rural Tourism: The Role of Public Authorities

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Citation : Sadqaoui, A., & Zahir, H. (2026). Anticipated and regulated contextual determinants of social innovation in rural tourism: The role of public authorities. *Annals of Health & Education Economics*, 1(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20580543>

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Abstract

This study analyzes the contextual determinants anticipated or regulated by public authorities in support of social innovation in rural tourism, using the theory of change as the central analytical framework. Applied to the Marrakech–Safi region—characterized by pronounced territorial disparities and growing environmental vulnerability—the analysis seeks to understand how public action integrates contextual constraints into the design and implementation of territorial policies. Based on a corpus of discourses collected through semi-structured interviews, the study adopts a lexicometric approach combining frequency distribution analysis, correspondence factor analysis, similarity analysis, and word cloud visualization. The results reveal a strong discursive emphasis on local activation dynamics, cooperation, and bottom-up social innovation, reflecting a territorialized orientation of public action. However, mechanisms of strategic anticipation and institutional regulation appear weakly formalized in the discourses, pointing to a partially articulated causal chain of change. Contextual determinants—particularly climatic, economic, and institutional factors—are more often recognized as constraints to be managed than as structuring parameters integrated upstream into public planning. This configuration highlights an imbalance between ex post adaptation and proactive anticipation, as well as a central challenge related to institutional learning. The study thus underscores the need to strengthen the articulation between territorial activation, adaptive regulation, and risk anticipation in order to sustainably support social innovation in rural tourism in the Marrakech–Safi region.

Keywords: social innovation; rural tourism; public action; contextual determinants; theory of change; Marrakech–Safi.

JEL classification : O35; R11; Z32; R58; Q54.

Introduction

Social innovation in rural tourism now occupies a growing place in territorial development strategies, particularly in regions characterized by strong economic, environmental, and institutional vulnerabilities. In the Marrakech–Safi region, marked both by a structuring tourism attractiveness and by rural areas facing isolation, climate pressure, and fragile resources, public action is called upon to play a central role in framing social innovation trajectories. However, the effectiveness of this action depends not only on the instruments implemented, but also on



the way public authorities anticipate and regulate the contextual determinants that condition the viability of local initiatives. In this regard, the theory of change offers a particularly relevant analytical framework, as it makes it possible to examine public policies through their initial assumptions, the intermediate mechanisms mobilized, and the expected outcomes. It invites territorial contexts to be considered not as mere backgrounds, but as constitutive components of the causal chains of change. Applied to rural tourism, this approach helps to better understand how climatic uncertainties, territorial imbalances, institutional constraints, and local social dynamics influence processes of social innovation, and to what extent public action succeeds in integrating these parameters into a coherent and sustainable logic.

It is within this perspective that the present study is situated, focusing on the analysis of contextual determinants anticipated or regulated by public authorities in support of social innovation in rural tourism in the Marrakech–Safi region. The objective is to examine how public discourses reflect the recognition, anticipation, and regulation of contextual constraints, and to assess the coherence of these representations in light of the principles of the theory of change. By mobilizing a lexicometric approach based on frequency distribution, correspondence factor analysis, similarity analysis, and word cloud visualization, the study seeks to identify dominant discursive structures, lines of tension, and imbalances in the formulation of public intervention mechanisms. This approach makes it possible to question the capacity of public authorities to make explicit the contextual assumptions underlying their policies, to articulate territorial activation with institutional regulation, and to integrate risk anticipation issues into rural tourism planning. By focusing on the Marrakech–Safi region, the study provides a contextualized insight into the specific challenges faced by public action and contributes to a better understanding of the conditions required to support sustainable social innovation trajectories in rural tourism territories.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Theory of Change and Anticipated or Regulated Contextual Determinants

Within the theory of change, contextual determinants are understood as initial conditions that frame and constrain the scope and effectiveness of public policies. Weiss and Connell (1995) emphasize that any intervention is based on explicit or implicit assumptions regarding the economic, institutional, and social environment in which it is implemented, and that neglecting these parameters can weaken—or even invalidate—the causal chain of change. Applied to rural tourism, this perspective makes it possible to consider territorial contexts such as geographic isolation, climate vulnerability, infrastructural deficits, or seasonal dependence as structuring factors of social innovation. North (1990) shows that formal and informal institutions shape actors' behavior by defining specific rules of the game, which is particularly relevant in rural areas characterized by strong heterogeneity in administrative and economic capacities. In such contexts, public action cannot generate lasting transformation without an explicit consideration of the contextual constraints weighing on local initiatives. Moulaert et al. (2013) recall that social innovation is deeply territorialized and dependent on local configurations of resources, norms, and power relations. The theory of change thus makes it possible to integrate contextual determinants not as exogenous variables, but as constitutive elements of the transformation process. In rural tourism, this approach leads to an examination of public authorities' ability to design policies that are sensitive to territorial specificities, a prerequisite for supporting credible and sustainable social innovation trajectories.

The theory of change also assigns a central role to the anticipation of risks likely to affect transformation pathways. Martens (2011), drawing on a developmental evaluation approach, argues



that in complex and unstable environments, public policies should be conceived as adaptive processes rather than as rigid, linear plans. In rural tourism, uncertainties related to climate shocks, economic transformations, or demographic change represent major contextual determinants. Adger (2006) shows that territorial vulnerability results from the interaction between external shocks and local adaptive capacities. Public action is therefore expected to integrate these risks into territorial planning by developing mechanisms that foster anticipation and resilience. The theory of change allows these mechanisms to be interpreted as intermediate processes designed to secure the causal chain linking public inputs to expected social outcomes. In the field of social innovation, this anticipatory capacity is essential to enable local initiatives to adapt to contextual constraints rather than be undermined by them. Bowen et al. (2020) highlight that public policies incorporating adaptive approaches strengthen territories' ability to absorb shocks and sustain inclusive development trajectories. In rural tourism, social innovation thus depends heavily on the capacity of public action to anticipate and manage contextual risks in an integrated and evolving manner.

The regulation of contextual determinants represents a central lever of the theory of change as applied to public action. Jessop (2002) shows that the contemporary state increasingly acts as a regulator, seeking to coordinate complex systems rather than impose uniform solutions. In rural tourism, this regulation operates through normative frameworks, territorial governance arrangements, and coordination mechanisms between public institutions and local actors. Ostrom (2010) emphasizes that polycentric forms of governance enhance adaptation to specific contexts, particularly where resources and constraints vary significantly across territories. The theory of change makes it possible to identify these governance arrangements as mechanisms through which public action adjusts to contextual determinants. In the field of social innovation, regulation does not aim at standardizing practices, but at creating institutional conditions conducive to experimentation and collective learning. Torre and Wallet (2014), however, warn that poorly adapted regulatory frameworks may reinforce territorial asymmetries and hinder local innovation dynamics. An analysis grounded in the theory of change therefore calls into question the capacity of public authorities to tailor their regulatory instruments to rural realities. In rural tourism, social innovation depends on this delicate articulation between institutional frameworks, territorial governance, and contextual constraints.

Finally, the sustainable consideration of contextual determinants presupposes continuous institutional learning, a core dimension of the theory of change. Argyris and Schön (1997) demonstrate that public organizations only achieve lasting transformation when they integrate feedback mechanisms and critically reassess their frames of action. In rural tourism, contexts evolve rapidly under the effects of environmental change, social mobility, and economic restructuring, requiring constant policy adaptation. The theory of change identifies evaluation, monitoring, and learning as key mechanisms linking intermediate outcomes to future policy adjustments. Bowen et al. (2020) emphasize that resilience-oriented policies rely on institutional adaptive capacities and sustained dialogue with territories. In the field of social innovation, such learning makes it possible to move beyond rigid programming toward an evolutionary form of governance that is attentive to feedback from local actors. Moulaert et al. (2013) nevertheless point out that institutional frameworks often tend to stabilize at the expense of adaptability. From a theory of change perspective, the sustainability of social innovation in rural tourism therefore depends on public authorities' ability to learn from contextual dynamics, to adjust their instruments accordingly, and to integrate uncertainty as a structural component of the change process.



1.2. Contextual Determinants Anticipated or Regulated by Public Authorities

Trunfio and Campana (2019) show that identifying resources and opportunities related to social innovation in tourist destinations requires the involvement of a plurality of actors, among whom political and institutional actors occupy a structuring position. This openness to public actors implies that authorities must possess the capacity to anticipate local configurations and to establish frameworks conducive to collective mobilization around innovative projects. In this perspective, Malek and Costa (2015) emphasize that social innovation acts as a lever for integrating local communities into tourism planning and decision-making processes, which presupposes the existence of institutional arrangements supported or regulated by public action. Public authorities thus appear as key agents in transforming local relationships into sustainable participatory mechanisms. Nasution and Sirojuzilman (2023) extend this interpretation by showing that the development of agritourism clusters relies on targeted public interventions, such as financial incentives, adapted regulations, and infrastructure development. These interventions shape local economic spillovers and contribute to structuring a contextual environment favorable to social innovation in rural settings. Public authorities therefore play a central role in anticipating and regulating territorial conditions, by articulating actor inclusion, community participation, and economic instruments, in order to support social innovation dynamics tailored to the specificities of rural tourist territories.

Dargan and Shucksmith (2008) emphasize that public rural development programs, such as LEADER, are designed to act on contextual determinants by fostering social innovation through the strengthening of local ties and collective learning dynamics, rather than through purely technical innovations. This orientation implies a form of public action attentive to social relations and local capacities, understood as territorial resources. In a similar vein, Okech, Haghiri, and George (2012) show that rural tourism development depends closely on factors such as accessibility and infrastructure, while also highlighting that the lack of coordination between tourism policies and rural development policies constitutes a major constraint. Public authorities are thus required to regulate sectoral intervention frameworks in order to create coherent conditions conducive to social innovation. Moulaert et al. (2005) complement this perspective by positioning local and regional governance among the central domains of social innovation research. They highlight the role of networks and partnerships bringing together public authorities, businesses, and civil society in the development and implementation of social innovations. Social innovation in rural tourist contexts therefore rests on contextual determinants that are neither spontaneous nor automatic, but rather the result of public action capable of anticipating coordination needs, structuring actor networks, and regulating the institutional conditions necessary for the emergence of territorially anchored collective projects.

Tardif and Harrison (2005) include institutions, and particularly the state, among the central actors involved in social innovation processes, implying that public authorities directly influence development trajectories and the diffusion of social initiatives. This institutional presence constitutes a contextual determinant that shapes interactions among actors and conditions the recognition of innovative practices. Thuesen and Nielsen (2011) show that, within the LEADER framework, innovation is predominantly interpreted as social innovation, based on the creation of local alliances and the development of a culture of collective learning. Public action thus extends beyond financing, shaping the relational frameworks within which local actors cooperate. Dargan and Shucksmith (2008) reinforce this reading by arguing that innovation in rural contexts goes beyond the economic dimension, and that the LEADER approach contributes to transforming rural discourses while restructuring political agendas and established practices. Public authorities participate in regulating the contexts of social innovation by redefining political priorities and forms of collective action. Supporting social innovation in rural tourist areas there-



fore requires public action attentive to institutional, discursive, and relational dimensions, capable of framing local alliances and orienting learning dynamics toward shared territorial development trajectories.

Varley and Curtin (2006) refer to populist forms of collective action and state interventions as mechanisms capable of generating a “power to” renegotiate relations of domination, suggesting that the state can contribute to rebalancing social relations in rural territories. This regulatory capacity over social relations constitutes a contextual determinant favorable to social innovation. Neumeier (2012) highlights that social innovation emerges through co-evolutionary learning processes within hybrid networks associating human and non-human actors. This approach implies that public authorities can support social innovation by facilitating network structuring and accompanying collective learning dynamics, particularly within a neo-endogenous development logic. Cajaiba-Santana (2014) stresses that, because social innovations are oriented toward social practices, they depend on social structures that enable or constrain agents’ actions. For public authorities, this implies regulating institutional frameworks and social relations in order to enable collective action and the emergence of new collaborations. The contextual determinants of social innovation thus extend beyond material resources to include social and institutional configurations. Public authorities therefore appear as actors capable of anticipating and regulating the relational and organizational conditions necessary for the emergence of social innovations in rural tourist territories, by supporting actor networks and locally anchored collective practices.

Ray (2006) argues that neo-endogenous development is based on valuing local context and opportunities rather than on the top-down application of general policies. This perspective implies that public authorities can act on a central contextual determinant by creating a political and institutional space that delegates responsibility to local communities and fosters bottom-up strategies. Apostolopoulos et al. (2020) show that multi-level governance and institutional frameworks directly influence the capacity of rural territories to support social innovation. They emphasize that structural and legislative barriers limit this capacity, pointing to the need for institutional reforms and improved coordination between local, regional, and national actors. McAreavey and McDonagh (2011) analyze European rural development programs such as LEADER and indicate that their effectiveness in fostering social innovation depends on participatory governance, capacity building, and a territorial approach. Public authorities thus play a structuring role in regulating institutional frameworks and governance arrangements. By anticipating multi-level constraints and adapting public instruments to local realities, they can create favorable conditions for social innovation in rural tourism, supporting collective initiatives aligned with territorial specificities and local actors’ capacities.

BEPA (2011) underlines that social innovation can emerge across all economic sectors, including the public and private sectors, implying that public authorities contribute to creating conditions conducive to its development. This institutional recognition positions public action as a lever for orienting social innovation dynamics, particularly in rural tourism contexts. Dro et al. (2011) define social innovation as new ideas that create innovative social relations or collaborations that more effectively address social needs, while highlighting the active support of public authorities through specific projects. This approach implies anticipatory regulation of institutional environments in order to encourage cooperation and networking among actors. Pol and Ville (2009), from a welfare economics perspective, consider that social innovation aims to improve quality of life, which relates directly to the mandate of public authorities in promoting collective well-being. This orientation implies that public authorities can act on contextual determinants such as legal frameworks, financial incentives, or training programs to support social innovation. Public action thus extends beyond a punctual facilitation role and contributes to structuring a normative and institutional environment favorable to social initiatives. In rural



tourism contexts, this involvement translates into the capacity of authorities to anticipate social needs, regulate the conditions for collaboration, and support projects aimed at sustainably improving the quality of life of local communities.

Jungsberg et al. (2020) highlight the importance of collaborative frameworks bringing together government entities, civil society, and the private sector in fostering cohesive networks in rural areas. These multi-actor approaches, often supported by public policies, imply that social innovation relies on contextual determinants linked to institutionalized cooperation. Bosworth et al. (2016) analyze public policies such as LEADER and show that they aim to empower local action through a neo-endogenous development logic. They suggest that public authorities can create mechanisms that delegate governance and funding to local partnerships, thereby fostering social innovations adapted to territorial contexts. Malek and Costa (2015) examine how social innovation enables the integration of local communities into tourism planning, emphasizing the role of participatory processes and new social connections, which can be facilitated or regulated by public interventions. Public authorities thus play a central role in structuring the collaborative frameworks required for social innovation. By promoting participation, delegating responsibilities, and encouraging cooperation among actors, they contribute to regulating institutional and relational contexts. In rural tourism, such regulation supports the emergence of collective projects grounded in local resources, shared governance, and strong territorial anchoring.

Neumeier (2012) emphasizes that social innovation in rural areas emerges from networks of actors with aligned interests and often requires an initial impulse, which may be external. Public authorities can intervene to catalyze innovation dynamics by facilitating institutional contexts favorable to perceived novelty and behavioral change. Bock (2016) stresses that social innovation in rural regions is driven by socially embedded actors, while noting that public authorities can encourage these dynamics by reconnecting rural territories to external networks and valorizing local resources within a neo-endogenous approach. Ray (2006) complements this perspective by showing that neo-endogenous rural development relies on increased local participation, supported by public policies aimed at maximizing local benefit retention and valorizing territorial resources. The contextual determinants of social innovation are thus closely linked to local actors' capacities and the institutional frameworks supporting their engagement. Public authorities appear as actors capable of anticipating the need for initial impulses, regulating participatory mechanisms, and supporting the structuring of local and external networks. In rural tourism contexts, such public action contributes to creating environments favorable to the emergence of social innovations rooted in territorial specificities and community dynamics.

Haven-Tang and Jones (2012) emphasize the importance of local leadership as a contextual determinant of rural tourism development, highlighting that public authorities can foster the emergence of leaders and support the creation of cooperation networks. Public action can anticipate the need for human and relational capacities required for social innovation. Novelli, Schmitz, and Spencer (2006) underline that networks and clusters are essential determinants of innovation in tourism and show that public authorities can promote these structures by facilitating collaboration among actors, thereby contributing to an environment conducive to social innovation. Rønningen (2010) identifies inter-firm cooperation as a key factor in innovation in rural tourism and demonstrates that public policies can encourage such cooperative arrangements to reduce coordination failures. Public authorities thus possess levers to anticipate and regulate contextual determinants related to relational capacities, leadership, and cooperation. By supporting networks, clusters, and forms of collective coordination, they contribute to structuring environments favorable to social innovation. In rural tourism, such public action supports collaborative dynamics capable of strengthening territorial cohesion, enhancing local actors' innovative capacity, and fostering socially embedded development trajectories.



2. Study Objective and Population

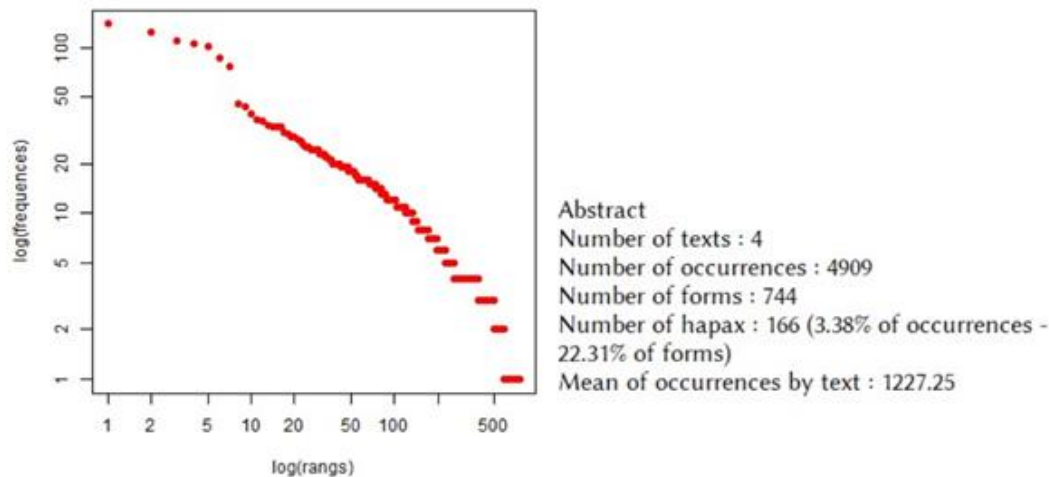
The sample for this study is a purposive sample composed of four institutional actors directly involved in the territorial and tourism regulation of the Marrakech-Safi region, namely the Regional Delegate of Tourism of Marrakech, the Provincial Delegate of Tourism of Safi, the Governor of Al Haouz Province, and the Provincial Delegate of Tourism of Essaouira. The selection of these respondents is justified by their strategic position in the design, coordination, and implementation of public action related to rural tourism and social innovation. This sample does not aim at statistical representativeness, but rather at institutional relevance, insofar as it brings together public officials with direct knowledge of territorial constraints, regulatory arrangements, and local dynamics specific to rural tourism areas. It is therefore consistent with a qualitative approach aligned with the objective of the study, which is to analyze public discourses on the contextual determinants anticipated or regulated by public authorities. The selected corpus is thus made up of four institutional discourses, which corresponds to the methodological structure announced in the study, based on a corpus of four texts subjected to lexicometric analysis.

3. Methods

3.1. Frequency Distribution

This study, devoted to the contextual determinants anticipated or regulated by public authorities, is explicitly grounded in the theory of change, which is mobilized as an analytical framework for examining the initial conditions shaping social innovation in rural tourism contexts. From this perspective, contextual determinants are not treated as peripheral variables, but rather as constitutive parameters of the causal chain linking public action to the expected social transformations. The objective is to analyze how public policies recognize, anticipate, and frame structural uncertainties—whether climatic, economic, institutional, or territorial—that may affect the viability of local initiatives. The interview guide was designed to highlight the mechanisms of anticipation, regulation, and adjustment mobilized by public authorities in response to these constraints. In line with the theory of change, the effectiveness of public action depends on the coherence between the contextual assumptions formulated upstream and the instruments actually deployed. Lexicometric analysis thus makes it possible to capture how these issues are articulated in discourse, by revealing the dominant registers associated with risk, adaptation, and territorial resilience. It therefore provides insight into the capacity of public action to sustainably integrate contextual determinants into the design of policies that support social innovation in rural tourism settings.

Figure 1. Distribution of Lexical Frequencies – Public Discourse on the Contextual Framing of Social Innovation in Rural Tourism



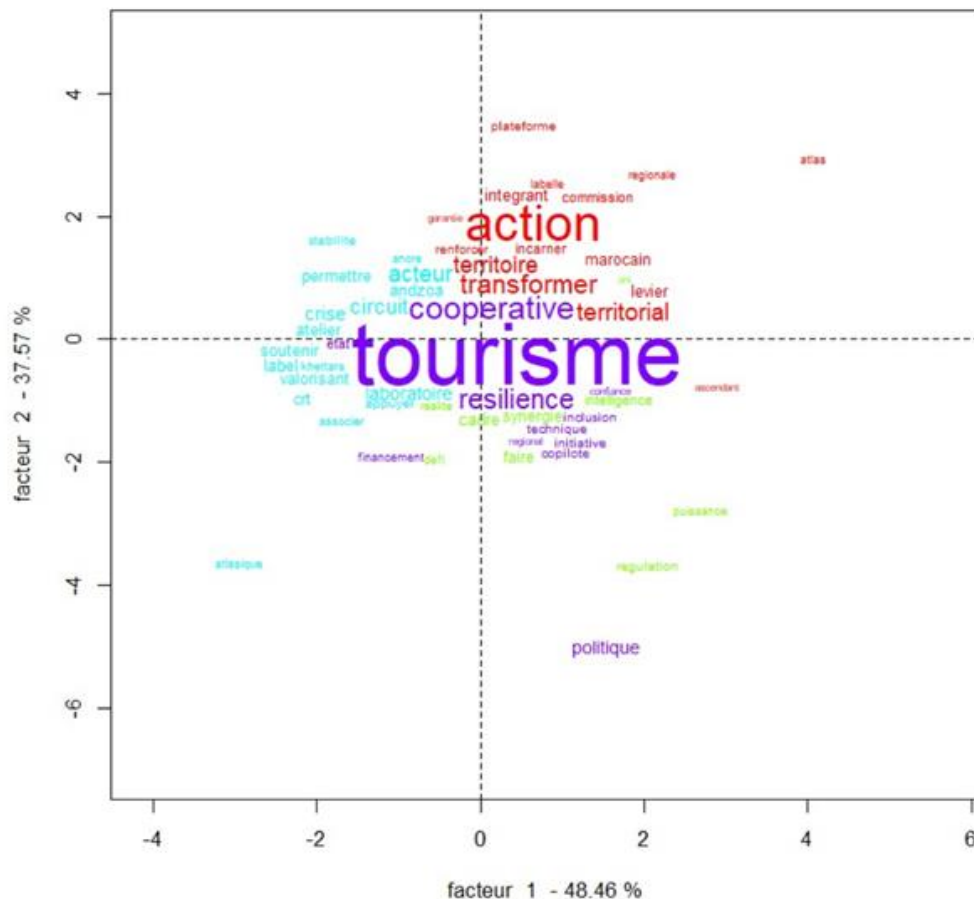
The figure showing the distribution of lexical frequencies reflects the statistical structuring of the corpus analyzed in this study. Composed of four texts totaling 4,909 occurrences and 744 distinct forms, the corpus exhibits a relatively concentrated lexical organization, characteristic of a discourse structured around a limited number of central notions. The hapax rate reaches 166 forms, representing 22.31% of the forms but only 3.38% of total occurrences, indicating a moderate level of lexical diversity consistent with a stabilized discursive framing. The Zipf curve highlights a strong hierarchy of frequencies, showing that a small number of dominant terms organize the argumentation around contextual determinants, public regulation, and territorial adaptive capacities. This configuration suggests a relative convergence of discourses regarding the importance of environmental and institutional constraints shaping public action. At the same time, the presence of a low-frequency lexical core also reveals the expression of contextual specificities linked to particular territories or experiences mentioned. Lexicometric analysis thus constitutes an essential intermediate step, preparing the ground for factorial and similarity analyses aimed at identifying lines of tension and structural differentiations in the way public action addresses the contextual determinants of social innovation in rural tourism contexts.

3.2. Correspondence Factor Analysis

The graph resulting from the correspondence factor analysis makes it possible to identify the dominant lexical structures in discourses addressing the contextual determinants framed by public action in support of social innovation in rural tourism. The first factorial axis, which alone explains 48.46% of total inertia, is structured around highly contributive terms such as “tourism,” “action,” “cooperative,” “territory,” and “transform.” This lexical concentration on the main axis reflects a dominant representation of social innovation as a process of territorial transformation, driven by public action and relayed through collective arrangements. From a theory of change perspective, this axis refers to the intermediate mechanisms activated to address the contextual constraints specific to rural territories, particularly isolation, economic vulnerability, and sectoral dependence. The proximity of terms such as “resilience,” “inclusion,” “synergy,” or “intelligence” indicates that risk anticipation and adaptation to contextual shocks occupy a central place in the analyzed discourses. This structuring suggests that public authorities are perceived as actors capable of integrating contextual determinants within a proactive logic oriented toward strengthening local capacities. The correspondence factor analysis thus highlights

strong discursive coherence around territorial transformation as a core objective of public action in the field of social innovation in rural tourism.

Figure 2. Correspondence Factor Analysis – Lexicon of Contextual Mechanisms Framed by Public Action in Innovative Rural Tourism



The second factorial axis, which explains 37.57% of total inertia, reveals a more contrasted structuring of discourses related to institutional framing and regulatory functions. Terms such as “regulation,” “policy,” “power,” or “challenge” appear distant from the central lexical core, particularly in the lower-right quadrant of the factorial plane, indicating a weaker contribution to the dominant structuring of the discourse. This lexical dispersion reflects a limited articulation between the political and normative dimensions of public action and the territorial dynamics emphasized elsewhere. From a theory of change perspective, this marginalization raises questions about the robustness of the contextual assumptions embedded in public policies, insofar as regulation constitutes a key lever for securing the causal chains of change. The distance of terms associated with institutional framing suggests that mechanisms of adjustment, steering, and anticipation of contextual constraints are only weakly articulated in the discourses. This factorial configuration thus reveals an imbalance between the valorization of local initiatives and the formalization of public regulatory instruments. It highlights a central challenge for public action in rural tourism contexts: strengthening the explicit integration of political and normative dimensions in order to better frame, anticipate, and regulate the contextual determinants of social innovation.



However, the structure of the graph also reveals imbalances in the articulation of contextual dimensions. Several terms associated with anticipation and regulation appear weakly connected to the central cores. Lexical units such as “instance,” “programme,” “strategic,” or “justice” display a limited degree of connectivity, often below three direct links, and are located at the periphery of the graph. Similarly, terms related to “emergency,” “adaptation,” or “regulation” are scattered across different segments, without strong convergence toward the “governance” or “public action” poles. This fragmentation suggests a weak discursive integration of the formal instruments used to steer contextual determinants. Moreover, the cluster associated with “inclusion,” “female,” and “cooperative practices” forms a coherent but relatively isolated set, indicating that these dimensions are addressed as specific issues rather than as transversal levers. From a theory of change perspective, this configuration reflects a partially articulated causal chain, in which contextual conditions are acknowledged but insufficiently connected to mechanisms of regulation and anticipation. The similarity analysis thus highlights a central challenge for public action: strengthening coherence between governance, regulation, and social innovation in order to ensure a more integrated and adaptive contextual framework for rural tourism.

3.4. Lexical Cloud

The lexical cloud highlights a highly hierarchical structuring of public discourse related to the contextual determinants of social innovation in rural tourism. The terms “tourism” and “rural” emerge as the most frequent and central lexical units, occupying a dominant position both in size and in density of occurrences. Around this main core gravitate highly visible concepts such as “innovation,” “social,” “public,” and “action,” reflecting a representation of contextual governance largely articulated around territorial public policies. The frequent co-occurrence of “public” and “innovation” suggests that public authorities are perceived not only as regulatory actors, but also as drivers of transformation. Terms related to environmental challenges, notably “resilience,” “climate,” “crisis,” “adaptation,” and “sustainable,” display intermediate but recurring frequencies, indicating a gradual integration of climate constraints into public policy instruments. The lexicon also reveals a strong territorial anchoring, with repeated occurrences of “local,” “territory,” “framework,” “fund,” and “instrument,” which refer to mechanisms of contextual adjustment. By contrast, strategic notions such as “anticipation,” “foresight,” or “scenario” appear weakly represented, with marginal occurrences, suggesting a limited discursive formalization of anticipatory and forward-looking dimensions within public action in support of innovative rural tourism.



public policy instruments, and anticipatory mechanisms in order to strengthen the coherence of public action in rural tourism contexts.

4. Discussion

The results obtained in the Marrakech–Safi region highlight a structuring of public discourse that is strongly oriented toward territorial activation, to the detriment of an explicit formalization of mechanisms for contextual anticipation and regulation. Lexicometric analysis shows that central terms associated with “tourism,” “rural,” “social innovation,” and “public action” largely dominate representations, reflecting a conception of public intervention focused on the valorization of local initiatives and cooperative dynamics. From a theory of change perspective, this configuration reveals a partially stabilized causal chain, in which public inputs are primarily associated with intermediate mechanisms of territorial facilitation, actor support, and the strengthening of local capacities. However, in a territory such as Marrakech–Safi—characterized by strong spatial disparities between integrated tourist zones, enclaved rural areas, and territories exposed to climate vulnerability—the relative absence of terms related to strategic anticipation limits the robustness of this causal chain. Climatic, hydric, and socio-economic risks, although present in the lexicon, appear more as acknowledged constraints than as parameters fully integrated into public planning. This trend suggests that regional public action prioritizes a logic of *ex post* adaptation, grounded in local resilience, rather than a structured anticipation of contextual shocks. Within the framework of the theory of change, such an orientation weakens the capacity of public policies to durably secure trajectories of social innovation in rural tourism.

Moreover, the results reveal a marked imbalance between the recognition of bottom-up social dynamics and the formalization of institutional instruments of regulation in the Marrakech–Safi region. Factorial and similarity analyses show that terms related to “governance,” “regulation,” or “policy instruments” occupy a peripheral position in the discourse, while references to cooperation, inclusion, and community initiatives are strongly valorized. This configuration reflects a model of public action in which the state and territorial authorities act primarily as facilitators, leaving substantial space for local self-organization. While this approach promotes territorial appropriation of social innovation projects, it nonetheless raises questions about the capacity of regional institutions to frame contextual determinants in a coherent and anticipatory manner. In a territory confronted with pressures on natural resources, seasonal tourism intensity, and unequal access to public support mechanisms, the absence of a clear articulation between governance, regulation, and social innovation limits the transformative scope of public action. According to the theory of change, policy effectiveness depends on the ability to continuously adjust public instruments based on feedback from the field. The findings therefore suggest that, in the Marrakech–Safi region, the main challenge lies in strengthening institutional learning, in order to better integrate contextual determinants as structuring levers rather than as peripheral constraints of rural tourism development.

Conclusion

This study, devoted to the contextual determinants anticipated or regulated by public authorities, highlights a specific configuration of public action in support of social innovation in rural tourism in the Marrakech–Safi region. The findings show that territorial policies place a central emphasis on the activation of local dynamics, cooperation, and the valorization of social initiatives, reflecting a clearly territorialized orientation of public intervention. From a theory of change perspective, this orientation reveals a causal chain in which intermediate mechanisms rely primarily on strengthening local capacities, mobilizing actors, and anchoring projects ter-



ritorially. However, lexicometric and factorial analyses also indicate that contextual determinants, although acknowledged, remain insufficiently integrated as structuring parameters upstream of public planning. Climatic, hydric, economic, and institutional risks specific to Marrakech–Safi appear more as constraints to be managed than as central hypotheses guiding policy design. This configuration suggests the predominance of ex post adaptive logics, grounded in local resilience, at the expense of systematic strategic anticipation. Yet, in a territory marked by strong spatial disparities and growing environmental vulnerability, the robustness of the causal chain of change depends on the ability of public authorities to integrate these contextual determinants from the policy formulation stage in support of innovative rural tourism.

Moreover, the conclusion highlights a major institutional challenge related to regulation and public learning in the Marrakech–Safi region. The results reveal an imbalance between the discursive valorization of bottom-up social innovation and the formalization of instruments for governance, regulation, and contextual anticipation. From the perspective of the theory of change, this dissociation weakens the durability of transformation trajectories by limiting the capacity of public action to adjust its instruments in response to evolving territorial contexts. Social innovation in rural tourism cannot produce lasting effects without an institutional framework capable of coordinating actors, securing resources, and regulating structural uncertainties. The conclusion thus emphasizes that the main challenge for regional public authorities lies in strengthening institutional learning, understood as the ability to draw lessons from local experiences, integrate feedback, and adjust intervention frameworks accordingly. In a context such as Marrakech–Safi, the future effectiveness of public action will depend on its capacity to more closely articulate territorial activation, adaptive regulation, and anticipation of contextual determinants, in order to consolidate the causal chains of change and support genuinely transformative social innovation in rural tourism.

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