

Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC)

The Role of Think Tanks in Developing Countries : Challenges and Solutions

The case study of the Royal Institute for Strategic Studies (IRES)-Morocco

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The context of IRES establishment



An international environment highly determinant for the country's future :

- ✓ opportunities, calling for anticipation and deliberate actions
- ✓ uncertainties and threats urging for greater awareness and premonition strategies

A multi-transitional domestic environment :

- ✓ need to sustain recent achievements and to set up long term objectives

Development of future thinking :

- ✓ setting up of long term sectoral and territorial visions since 1998
- ✓ drawing between 2004 and 2006 the achievements of a half century of Morocco's human development
- ✓ development of economic intelligence, encouragement of public research and emergence of private think tanks

The IRES as an appropriate answer :

- to develop strategic analysis and foresight thoughts to support decision-making
- to enable Morocco to get hold of strategic intelligence tools so as to identify major signals and trends taking place at the domestic and international level

IRES positioning and ambitions



The IRES is an institute :

- whose task is to carry out operational studies and strategic analysis on which it is entrusted by The Sovereign
- that contributes to support strategic decision-making
- with an extensive field of intervention and large time horizon that goes beyond cyclical issues
- able to apprehend complexity and make better use of interdisciplinary approaches.
- holding an intellectual independence in terms of research findings and recommendations



The IRES is not :

- an establishment under government guidance
- an institute of strategic planning
- an academic research institute
- a sectoral-based strategic analysis institute
- a center of analysis dedicated to the development of foresight concepts and methods
- a monopoly of strategic thoughts
- a public sector consulting entity whose activity is limited to the organization of large forums or public debates



The IRES' activities are globally articulated around four missions :

Two principal missions

Two secondary missions

1

IRES. THINK THANK

- Examination of issues deemed strategic for the country (society, environmental changes, impacts of globalization,...)

2

IRES. MONITORING

- Observation and strategic Monitoring

3

IRES. FORUM

- Intellectual diplomacy
- Center of debate and thoughts
- Dissemination of strategic thoughts across different level

4

IRES. INCUBATOR

- A gateway to higher positions within the public sector



Leading research networks at the national level

- **Externalisation of some part of IRES production, requiring thus a good expertise in projects management :**
 - ✓ mastering of problematic issues and elaboration of concise terms of reference
 - ✓ mentoring and constitution of multidisciplinary teams
 - ✓ synthesis works and elaboration of strategic orientation papers
- **Quality control and mastering of research programs**

Flexible and proactive structure

- **Project-based structure :**
 - ✓ based upon clusters of competencies taking into account the necessity to accumulate knowledge and consolidate achievements (monitoring system)
- **Modern :**
 - ✓ thinking public and acting private
 - ✓ based on diversified teams of academicians & practitioners to deliver practical solutions

Development of foresight thoughts

- « A philosophy of change, a tool to investigate possible ways and to build a targeted future*»
- An attitude favouring collective intelligence and cross-sectional approach
- Enabling to capture complexity and taking into account interdependencies

Strategic choices that aim at optimizing resources and maximizing IRES added-value

*Source : Mémento de prospective 2008, Fabienne Goux Baudiment, proGective



1

IRES positioning and its main consequences

Advantages of IRES positioning :

- handling of long term prospects; with an extensive field of studies dealing with cross-sectional issues
- Independence with regard to the political parties and the public administration
- better access to sources of information and easier mobilization of competencies
- much less funding constraints

Conversely, IRES has to face some challenges :

- meeting requirements of high quality standards for an emerging institute
- high expectations of public authorities with view to the complexity of covered issues
- dual mission, challenge to manage two parallel systems of communication; one opened to the public at large, while the second is confidential



Research programs and the issue of research profiles

Research programs :

- carrying out successfully the strategic monitoring system in the short term and making operational the foresight information system
- achieving best current research programs particularly those related to societal issues

Resources :

IRES missions require a diversified competencies and judicious merging of academic researchers and practitioners :

- availability of high qualified profiles in various domains of social sciences
- difficult to get hold of interdisciplinary competencies and talented prospectivists
- barrier of language skills, as many qualified researchers have in general either Arabic and/or French academic backgrounds, with only few Anglophone researchers

Information & data :

- unavailability of quantitative and qualitative data on some specific topics

Culture :

- setting up of a specific culture based upon the quaternary management



Structure specifics and managerial issues

Advantages :

- project based structure, through permanent and ad-hoc clusters of competencies

Challenges :

- difficulty to instate this type of structure within the public sector (cultural bias)
- setting up of a specific culture based upon the promotion of foresight thoughts and its diffusion both internally and externally
- staff motivation to produce high quality and innovative work whereas IRES's remuneration grid is much less attractive in comparison to reward system prevailing in the private sector
- setting up of an internal performance evaluation system

Fostering partnerships: a valuable solution



IRES would like to develop partnerships with think tanks :

1

whose missions are dedicated to support top level decision-making

2

whose current programs and domains of interest are similar to IRES

3

with a large experience in order to enhance IRES capacity building through accumulation of knowledge and know-how transfer

4

having particular interest in areas related to Euro-Mediterranean issues, Arab world and emerging countries

IRES seeks worldwide partnerships

- ✓ because key issues have regional and global dimension (climate changes)
- ✓ or because these issues are viewed as priorities for other countries (social link)

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ATTENTION**