

The experience of participatory democracy in Algeria as a modern management method for local development – an applied study**تجربة الديمقراطية التشاركية في الجزائر باعتبارها أسلوب إدارة حديث للتنمية المحلية – دراسة تطبيقية –****Dr . Boumediene Hocine ¹**¹Abou-Bekr Belkaid University – Tlemcen(Algeria),douaa55@yahoo.fr**Received:** 10/01/2022**Accepted:** 30/03/2022**Published:**31/03/2022**Abstract:**

Most countries have become committed ensuring the activation of participatory democracy, as a modern management method that includes all aspects of public life and issues of public development. Partnership between local authorities and citizens is based on ensuring the right to obtain information and strengthening the effectiveness and efficiency of public policies with the aim of improving the standard of living for individuals in various fields. This article discusses the following problematic : Is participatory democracy adopted in Algeria as a method for managing local development affairs? By giving a concept of participatory democracy, then analyzing its reality through legal texts, as well as through the Algerian experience of a sample of ten municipalities.

Keywords: participatory democracy, local development, civil society, local authorities.**JEL Classification Codes:** H00 ; H70**ملخص:**

أصبحت معظم دول العالم ملتزمة بضمان تفعيل الديمقراطية التشاركية ، كأسلوب إدارة حديث يشمل جميع نواحي الحياة العامة و قضايا الشأن العام التنموية ، و تقوم الشراكة بين السلطات المحلية و المواطنين عبر ضمان الحق في الحصول على المعلومات و تقوية فعالية و نجاعة السياسات العمومية بهدف تحسين مستوى المعيشة للأفراد في مختلف المجالات. هذه المقالة تناقش الإشكالية التالية : هل تم اعتماد الديمقراطية التشاركية في الجزائر كأسلوب لتسيير الشأن التنموي المحلي ؟ بإعطاء مفهوم للديمقراطية التشاركية ، ثم تحليل واقعها من خلال النصوص القانونية ، و كذا من خلال التجربة الجزائرية لعينة من عشر بلديات.

كلمات مفتاحية: الديمقراطية التشاركية، التنمية المحلية، المجتمع المدني، السلطات المحلية.**تصنيفات JEL :** H00 ; H70**INTRODUCTION:****Corresponding author:** Boumediene Hocine, e-mail: douaa55@yahoo.fr

Local development is considered as a type of global and sustainable development, as it seeks to promote and advance communities through the integration of roles between authorities and citizens, with the aim of improving the standard of living of individuals and raising the quality of their lives in various economic fields (Lift from productive capacity), social (education, health, social security, housing, water, sanitation, social structures, etc.), and political with the participation of citizens in local governance and decision-making.

It is through local development that the citizen feels the interest of the authorities and the role of the state in his life, therefore he realizes his sense of belonging to his community and country, as the first concerned whether with financing this development or as its main focus.

As a result of the many development powers of the local communities (municipal), the administrative machinery entrusted to them has grown, and leads to distortions and negative phenomena in their management, which have helped to bring about a new kind of management, especially in the 1960s, by which it will be possible to citizens can be involved in governance and decision-making at the local level, this type of governance is called "participatory democracy".

The modern participatory approach (citizen participation in local public affairs) has been adopted in many developed and developing countries alike with a view to improving living conditions and promoting local development in all its aspects.

In this article, we will try to discuss the following problematic : Is participatory democracy adopted in Algeria as a method for managing local development affairs?

The hypothesis adopted in the study is: Involving citizens in managing their local affairs will enhance local development

Our study was preceded by many studies, including:

1. The study of Boumediene Hocine and Oudjamaa Ibrahim, focused on the role of citizens in improving the performance of local public services through governance values.
2. The study of Mokhtari Iman and Tamrabet Iman, participatory democracy as a mechanism for local development in Algeria - the case study of the (CapDel) program - focused on highlighting participatory democracy mechanisms and the (CapDel) program, concluded that achieving development according to a participatory approach enshrines the principles of democracy and governance.
3. The study of Taouaoula Amina, programs to support the capacities of local actors (CapDel): A step toward participatory democracy and sustainable development, the study focused on clarifying the CapDel program with its objectives, procedures, time-scales, spatial scales and role in sustainable development.
4. The study of Shouikhi Samia and Kallash Kholood, The (CapDel) Program to Support the capacities of Local Development actors Study the case of the typical Ghazawet Municipality (Tlemcen Wilaya), this study highlighted the (CapDel) Program with the case study of the Ghazawet Municipality (Tlemcen Wilaya) as a model municipality the achievements of (CapDel) have been presented to the level to establish a participatory approach.

But in our study, we have tried to highlight participatory democracy as a modern way of managing local affairs and looking for its contribution to local development, basing on the

literature reached by developed countries in this field, and as Algeria is engaged in a typical experience for some municipalities.

In this study we relied on the analytical descriptive method to reach results and recommendations aimed at contributing to the promotion of this endeavor and clarifies its features, especially for a developing country, such as Algeria, which seeks to build its institutions according to the modern requirements of its citizens, and this study was carried out according to the following plan:

First: Introduction.

Second : The concept of participatory democracy.

Third: The relationship between the participatory democracy and development.

Fourth: The reality of participatory democracy in Algeria

Fifth: Conclusion and presentation of results.

1- The concept of participatory Democracy :

The concept of participatory democracy is centered on the need to involve citizens in local policy-making and public decision-making as financiers and beneficiaries, and thus is a mechanism for devoting citizenship and the common good. It is also a modern method of local governance adopted by many countries, both developed and developing, because it strengthens confidence among the various local actors and increases the sense of responsibility of citizens, so increasing the effectiveness of domestic public policies and improving the quality of citizens' lives.

Participatory democracy is based on specific objectives that can be general as they may be specific to each region, and mechanisms that allow it to be practiced between local actors.

1.1. Definition of participatory Democracy:

Participatory democracy can be defined as: "All procedures, tools, means and mechanisms that promote the direct integration of citizens into the management of public affairs" (Sandrine RUI 2013).

Participatory democracy is a process of collective decision making that combines elements from both direct and representative democracy: Citizens have the power to decide on policy proposals and politicians assume the role of policy implementation. (Aragones 2008)

It has also been defined as a dimension of local democracy as: "A pattern of government that places citizens' participation in the center of local public affairs"

It is also known as: "The institutional framework through which the exercise of citizenship, cooperation and consultation between various institutions and public interests can be achieved, on the one hand, and the associations of non-governmental organizations, individuals and groups, on the other. In order to improve the living conditions of the citizen, to defend his freedom and to enable him to enjoy his rights through participation, pluralism and good

governance, through which the foundations of a harmonious society in which all enjoy the noble elements of life are established."

There is increasing recognition that effective local democracy is a prerequisite for ensuring sustainable and equitable social and economic development. (International Institute for Democracy July 2015)

So participatory democracy can be seen as a modern collective management method, used especially in the conduct of local bodies, it spread at the beginning of the current century largely across the world. This approach is based on the involvement of citizens, civil society organizations, the media and other non-governmental actors with local authorities in the management of their affairs, expressing their opinions and the presentation of their needs. This will allow the drive to improve the efficiency of local public bodies, promote democratic governance and sustainable development (Boumediene 2013)

Thus, the way of participation in the management of citizens' affairs will improve their standard of living in all its economic, social, political and environmental aspects as those who have contributed to the setting of policies and the prioritization of development projects.

1.2. The relationship between representative and participatory democracy:

- Representative democracy is a form of democracy in which citizens express their will through their elected representatives who are empowered to represent them.
- Participatory democracy means the direct integration and participation of citizens and civil society organizations in public debate and in the course of public decision-making (Wan 2018). Participatory democracy is thus complementary to representative democracy.
- participatory democracy experiments should provide for the representative democracy to follow two criteria – transformation and impact – in order to scale up local preferences to the national level and make sure they influence policy outcomes. (Pogrebinschi 2013)
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1.3. Participatory democracy goals:

The goals of participatory democracy are the political and social goals in addition to the administrative goals (Boumahkak 2021); also it has several general objectives and can have specific goals for a region or society, among its most important general objectives there are the followings :

- To promote the participation and contribution of citizens and civil society in a significant manner in the effective and follow-up of local development programs with local authorities.
- Ensure the right of the citizen to information, consultation and participation in decision-making concerning his own matters and of the group that he is a member.
- Improve the quality of local affairs management, and improve the delivery of local public services based on the principle of "better management is closer management and management with."
- To promote sense of positive citizenship by making citizens part of the public decision, and it also leads to improved social cohesion as a form of collective responsibility exercise.

- The aim is also to spread confidence among citizens and local officials, and to reduce intolerance and prejudices, giving them room for discussion, consultation and dialog.
- It contribute to rationalizing public money spending by promoting the values of transparency, integrity and social accountability, and can reduce fraud and tax evasion due to the deepening of citizens' sense of responsibility.

1.4. Participatory democracy mechanisms:

The mechanisms used to establish a plurality of participatory democracy, different from region to another, due to the specificities of society and the age of experience, as well as the political will of the various actors in adopting this method, but some mechanisms through which participatory democracy is promoted can be presented, including:

- **Media:** Expanding the reach of citizens and communicating with them by local authorities in order to clarify and explain local public policies and involve them in their development is a necessary condition for the success of participatory democracy, and this is done by using all possible media, whether written (magazines and advertisements...), or audio-visual (such as radio, TV ...), or electronic (such as social media, mobile messages, etc.).
- **Transparency:** Transparency through institutions, processes and information being directly accessible to those concerned, and enough information is provided to understand and monitor them (Guthrie 2006). It means clear working procedures, the performance of local authorities and the availability of all information about them to the public, by disclosing information on the budget, development programs and public spending, as well as simplifying and unambiguous information, with laws to ensure free circulation of information. And raising citizens' awareness (Boumediene 2013) and understanding of the laws.
Thus, transparency contributes to the activation of citizens' participation and their access to local public decision-making.
- **Submission of petitions:** A written collective request containing demands, suggestions or clarifications from citizens that contribute to the improvement of decision-making by taking into account the concerns of citizens expressed collectively in the petition, and by including them in the parliamentary sessions of local authorities.
The purpose of the petition is not to achieve a general interest, and the demands, proposals or recommendations must be legitimate, be clearly released and be accompanied by a note indicating the reasons for their submission and the objectives intended, and also by a support regulation signed by the citizens supporting the petition (قسم الشؤون القانونية و العلاقات العامة 2017).
- **public survey :** A widely implemented consultative mechanism designed to ensure the informed and participation of citizens, taking into account the interests of others, and to obtain a collective opinion on a domestic public policy or process, which is taken into account by local authorities in making their decisions. In Belgium and specifically in

the Walloon region, sectoral draft schemes are subject to public inquiry, and German federal territory laws on duality also provide for this.

- **Formation of partnership bodies:** Participatory democracy is enshrined in many countries by organizing consultative or participatory procedures, especially at the district level; in Italy, the law obliges cities with a population of more than 100,000 to establish elected councils for districts. The District Boards of France, under the Act of 27 February 2002, are due in municipalities with a population of more than 80.000, are consulted on all issues and activities related to the district and the allocation of budgetary provisions.

Participatory democracy is also enshrined through the creation of consultative committees at the local level that are binding on some and non-binding on others, which are the most common so that these committees are defined as. A group of people entrusted with giving opinions on an issue or issue in partnership with civil society actors aimed at promoting citizen involvement in the management of the local public facility.

- **Public Council meetings:** Public meetings organized by local authorities with citizens to involve them in the development of local policies and to provide explanations on development projects, and then to gather citizens' proposals before making decisions, and this mechanism allows citizens to hold officials accountable for the conduct of local public policies. Such meetings could not be initiated by the citizens themselves.
- **Participatory budget:** A process that allows citizens to participate in the management of public funds, so that they can formulate projects according to their needs identified by them and are included in the municipal budget. This mechanism has adopted many cities across the world after it appeared for the first time in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 1989 . so the system of participatory budget referred as an example of participatory democracy because it reconciles direct democracy and representative democracy (Aragones 2008).
- **Popular consultation:** It is also a mechanism of participatory democracy that allows citizens to take an opinion on issues that concern the competence of local groups only, and this referendum can be initiated by voters to request opinion and included in the agenda of the deliberation Commission. Or, at the initiative of the municipal Council, at the request of a number of citizens.

2.The relationship of participatory democracy and local development:

Participatory democracy has become a management style that allows citizens to participate in the development of local policies and public decision-making, and also keeps track of the performance of local public authorities by incorporating universal values into governance: Participation, social accountability, transparency and integrity, This leads to a higher performance of public service delivery (Boumediene 2013) and to the promotion of local development, including the improvement of the quality of life of citizens in all its dimensions, whether economic, social, political or environmental. The relationship can be further clarified by defining local development and sustainable development as it is closely related to participatory democracy.

2.1. Definition of local development:

Development is promoted by the security of property rights, rule of law, low corruption and so on, the effects of observable institutional arrangements, such as presidentialism vs. parliamentarism, electoral systems, federalism, or judicial independence (Przeworski 2006). The United Nations defined local development as "those processes through which government and citizen efforts are combined to increase and improve the economic, social and cultural conditions in society that lead to national development".

It was also defined as "a process in which the community is involved in shaping its own environment, with the aim of improving the quality of life of citizens, and this approach does not require integration between economic, social, cultural, political and environmental elements. With an emphasis on the economic component as a priority for all to raise the quality of their lives,"

Democracy allows individuals to be public persons, to make their claims and their views known to others, to participate in the making of collective decisions.

2.2. Citizen participation and local development:

Local development is based on some of principles, including:

- Citizens' participation in the development process by mobilizing their energies, which leads to improve the quality of their lives at all levels.
- Adaptation of development efforts to the basic requirements of society, by prioritizing, and this can only be done with the participation of citizens in arranging their priorities

Therefore, through the definition of local development, it is clear that development efforts lead to improving the standard of living of citizens at the level of all fields: economic, social, cultural, political and environmental, and this goal can only be achieved with the participation of citizens in making development policies and making project decisions. development, in addition to mobilizing their energies through dialogue and consultation to arrange their development priorities.

All this can only be in accordance with the modern method of managing public affairs, which is participatory democracy, which is actually a tool whose main goal is to improve the quality of life of the citizen, and this is what Algeria seeks for it to keep pace with the advanced countries in this regard, by dedicating the method of Participatory democracy in legal texts, and the start of its practical experience at the level of a group of model municipalities.

3. Participatory democracy in Algeria:

We must point out that there are experiences of many countries, whether developed or developing, that have reached high levels of citizen involvement in managing local development affairs. As for Algeria, we will first learn about participatory democracy through legal texts, and Secondly we will learn about the practical reality of this new method of local management. .

3.1. Participatory democracy through the constitution:

Algeria's 2016 constitution stipulates in its preamble in this regard the following: "...and intends to build with this constitution institutions, the basis of which is the participation of every Algerian man and woman in the conduct of public affairs...".

Article 15 of it also explicitly defines the term participatory democracy at the local level, as follows: "The state is based on the principles of democratic organization, separation of powers and social justice. The elected council is the framework in which the people express their will and monitors the work of public authorities. The state encourages participatory democracy at the local community level.

As for Article 17 of the Constitution, it referred to the participation of citizens in the management of local affairs, which reads: "The elected council represents the basis of decentralization, and the place for citizens' participation in the conduct of public affairs."

3.2. Participatory democracy through municipal law 11/10:

Part Three of Section One of the Municipal Law 11/10 is devoted to the participation of citizens, as Article 11 of it states: "The municipality constitutes the institutional framework for the practice of democracy at the local level and neighborhood management.

The Municipal People's Assembly takes all measures to inform citizens of their affairs and consult them about options and priorities for preparation and economic, social and cultural development according to the conditions specified in this law.

In this regard, it is possible to use, in particular, the available media and media.

The Municipal People's Council may also present a presentation on its annual activities to the citizens.

As for Article 12 of the same law, it also stipulates: "The Municipal People's Council shall ensure the development of an appropriate framework for local initiatives aimed at motivating citizens and urging them to participate in settling their problems and improving their living conditions."

Article 13 of this law also grants the possibility of consulting with the president of the Municipal People's Council: "The president of the Municipal People's Council may, whenever the affairs of the municipality so require, seek the assistance of an advisory capacity, every local figure, every expert and/or every representative of a legally approved local association... "

It is noticeable from the texts of these articles in the Municipal Law that they did not explicitly refer to participatory democracy, even though the constitution explicitly affirmed it in Article 15.

3.3. The practical reality of participatory democracy:

Within the framework of the major reforms carried out by Algeria and after the 2016 constitution stipulates the strengthening of participatory democracy at the local level, the Ministry of Interior and Local Authorities, in cooperation with the European Union and the United Nations Development Program (PNUD), has activated the program "Supporting the capacities of local development actors" In the acronym "CapDel", on January 16, 2017, for a period of four (04) years, funded by the three participating parties, with an amount exceeding 10 million euros.

This program has entered into force at the beginning of the year 2017, and includes ten (10) model municipalities across the country, which are: the municipality of Ghazaouet (Tlemcen Wilaya), the municipality of Ouled Ben Abdelkader (Chlef Wilaya), the municipality of Tizirt

(Tizi Ouzou Wilaya), the municipality of Beni Maouche (Bejaia Wilaya), Djamilia Municipality (Sétif Wilaya), El Kharroub Municipality (Constantine Wilaya), Babar Municipality (Khanchla Wilaya), Massad Municipality (Djelfa Wilaya), Timimoun Municipality (Adrar Wilaya), Djanet Municipality (Illizi Wilaya).

This program includes four axes:

- ✓ Strengthening strategic municipal planning, especially with regard to creating jobs and sustainable incomes.
- ✓ Involvement of local actors in local development based on participatory management.
- ✓ Modernization and simplification of administrative public services at the local level.
- ✓ Local economic development and diversification of the economy.
- ✓ Multi-sectoral management of major environmental risks at the local level.

This program also aims to support and activate the capacities of local development actors, including citizens, civil society, private individuals and local authorities, especially women and youth.

As for the actors in local development, the program defined them as all citizens who have a relationship with local development, in particular:

- ✓ Local authorities and local elected officials.
- ✓ Citizens or the local community, especially women and youth
- ✓ Local civil society organizations and neighborhood committees
- ✓ Economic actors, including institutions, investors, traders, and others

The program has already been launched through several sessions for citizens and local actors at the level of model municipalities, in which local issues were addressed, represented in:

- ✓ Diagnose and raise the current local situation of the municipality, with the participation of all stakeholders.
- ✓ Assessment and completion of a map of the capabilities of civil society organizations in the model municipalities.
- ✓ Activating local development support projects.
- ✓ Updating the management of municipal plans for development (PCD).
- ✓ Implementation of a training scheme for the benefit of local actors on good governance.
- ✓ Financing development projects for the benefit of civil society organizations as a partner in local development, from which the model municipalities benefited from participatory democracy.
- ✓ Establishing local advisory councils at the level of model municipalities as bodies of dialogue, citizenship and regional consultation with the elected and local authorities.

Conclusion:

By trying to answer the previous problematic : Is participatory democracy adopted in Algeria as a method for managing local affairs? It turns out that:

Participatory democracy expresses the intensification of efforts between local actors, and works to enhance consultation, dialogue and mobilization for issues of public interest, and works to devote citizenship and leads to strengthening trust between local authorities and citizens, in addition to raising the sense of responsibility among citizens Thus, local public policies become more effective because they are determined by community members and allow them to arrange local development projects according to their priorities, which leads to improving the quality of life, especially in the most marginalized areas and for the most disadvantaged groups.

As for participatory democracy at the level of Algeria, it is noted that it has been stipulated in the constitution and municipal law in theory, but in practice it is still being tested at the level of ten municipalities in an attempt to catch up with developed countries in this field, including neighboring countries (such as Morocco and Tunisia).

From this study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Participatory democracy contributes to promoting local development and improving the lives of citizens.
- Participatory democracy raised the status of the citizen by involving him in the management of local public affairs.
- Participatory democracy works to rationalize public money and mobilize resources.
- Strengthening participatory democracy contributes to raising the sense of citizenship and the sense of responsibility of the citizen.
- Participatory democracy complements representative democracy.
- The participatory democracy in Algeria is still being tested.
- Although the constitution provided for participatory democracy, the municipal law did not keep pace with this provision.
- Through the municipal law, the participation of citizens is considered formal, although a chapter has been devoted to it.
- The municipal law did not require consultation, but rather made it within the limits of possible and not for all citizens.

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