التنمية المستدامة من خلال مشاركة المواطنين: الواقع والآفاق

Sustainable Development Through Citizens' Participation: Reality and Perspectives

Le Développement Durable à Travers la Participation Citoyenne: Réalité & Perspectives

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Abstract

The participation of all in sustainable development is a basic principle: sustainable development requires changes in behavior, awareness of everyone, participation of all in the decision-making process through participatory democracy. Sustainable development requires individual participation, through eco-responsible, responsible and sustainable behaviors in terms of production, consumption, choice of life, etc. It is also about informing and involving others in these changing attitudes. All the actors, the inhabitants, the associations, the companies and the elected officials must invest themselves in a citizen action, in order to reflect and to build the territory and their framework of life in a vision of sustainable development.This research paper focuses on citizen participation as a key mechanism for achieving sustainable development.

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Key words: participation - citizenship - sustainable development-referendum- access to justice- access to public information.

ملخص:

مشاركة الكل في التنمية المستدامة هو مبدأ أساسي: فالتنمية المستدامة تقتضي تغيير السلوكات، تحسيس الجميع ومساهمة الكل في مسار اتخاذ القرار من خلال الديمقراطية التشاركية. تتطلب التنمية المستدامة مشاركة فردية، من خلال سلوكيات مواطنة بيئية مسؤولة ومستدامة، من ناحية الإنتاج، الاستهلاك واختيار نمط المعيشة...الخ. كما يتعلق الأمر أيضا بإبلاغ وإقحام الآخرين في تغيير هذه المواقف. يتوجب على جميع الفواعل من سكان، جمعيات، مؤسسات وكذا مسؤولين منتخبين أن يستثمروا في نشاط المواطنة بغرض بناء محيطهم ونمط حياتهم في إطار رؤية للتنمية المستدامة. تركز هذه الورقة البحثية على مشاركة المواطنين كآلية أساسية لتحقيق التنمية المستدامة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مشاركة-مواطنة-تنمية مستدامة- الاستفتاء- الوصول للعدالة- الوصول للمعلومة العامة.

Introduction

The concept of sustainable development is not new. The need for sustainable forest management practices was recognized in Europe in the eighteenth century; sustainable development existed in the conservation philosophy of the Theodore Roosevelt Administration in the United States (1901-1909) and in its concern for rational use of natural resources. More recently, the United Nations has endorsed the Sustainable Development Goals to transform the world by 2030, encompassing economic development, social development, and environmental protection. Development is the goal of any policy. This is the concern of all governments, especially since it is now considered a fundamental human right.

But development is not reduced to the growth or progression of economic indicators; it is a global, economic, social, political and cultural process that tends to improve the well-being and quality of life of the entire population and the self-fulfillment of the individual. the basis of the

participation of all citizens in the development effort and the fair and equitable sharing of the resulting benefits.

In this research paper, we focus on the role of citizen participation in achieving sustainable development, following this plan:

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I-   The conceptual framework of sustainable development and citizen participation

Sustainable development is everyone's business. It is essential that the citizen is aware of the issues and sees himself as a full participant in this process. To be able to play this role, it must be trained - from an early age within the framework of our education system - and informed, that it must become aware of the importance of the interactions between the economic, social and economic domains. and the impact of his daily

actions. Its participation in decision-making processes concerning it must be strengthened, notably through public debate, to better understand the concepts we will begin first with sustainable development and then with citizenship.

I- A. Sustainable development

Sustainable development aims to bring together social aspects, environmental, economic and cultural aspects of development as a cross-cutting principle democracy and stakeholder participation. It refers to key societal and political issues: debate, democratically develop and implement a new model of development and therefore society[1], we will determine the definition of sustainable development and the emergence of the concept.

A.1. Definition of sustainable development

"*Sustainable development meets the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*"[2]. This is the definition given to this concept in *the Brundtland Report* in 1987. As the Swiss Sustainable Development Council (1997) points out, this consideration of needs' is based on an ethical basis only. What is a need? Or rather, where does the superfluous stop and where does the need begin? The question is delicate and leaves a clear ambiguity. It even implies another question, namely, who has the right to decide what a need is.

In our work, we have abandoned the notion of need, too vague, in favor of more precise terms. to this concept a definition that summarizes its aims: "*Rethinking the new foundations of a planetary society that can guarantee our survival and our historical reproduction in a framework of harmony and reciprocity with the environment*"[3]. This definition shows that it is not enough to integrate the ecological aspect in the context of economic production, but that it is a question of rethinking the essential foundations of our society. In effect, individualistic values are lost in favor of historical reproduction, in other words, the survival of the human race. The planetary society project implies a global, systemic, non-geocentric view, which forces us to rethink notions such as solidarity, equity, sharing.

Harmony and reciprocity with the environment require the inclusion of ecological values in economic performance.

Nevertheless, this definition leaves only a glimpse of the respect of different cultures, as well as the importance of the relationship of ecological and social poles with the economy. Moreover, the definitions mentioned remain impersonal, the responsibility for the implementation of this process does not appear anywhere, nor the means of action to achieve it[4]. Finally, the very idea of process, that is to say, a project that takes place over time, as the term sustainable suggests, is also not highlighted. We have therefore sought to formulate a definition that highlights the main goals of sustainable development and is also easily accessible to the general public: "*We must see sustainable development as a process that is adaptable to different cultures, while maintaining a universal goal. protection of man and his environment for qualitative rather than quantitative purposes. It is a question of taking into account the ecological, social and economic implications which are inseparable from any action or human activity, whatever it is* "[5].

With this definition, we have highlighted the five points that seem to us essential to understand, or at least understand this concept:

1. a vision of globalization that is undertaken with respect for cultures,
2. the qualitative objectives which underlie the protection of man and his environment,
3. the interactions between the different domains economy-ecology-social development,
4. the notion of process which suggests the duration in time,
5. Active participation at all levels of decision-making, from the individual to governments, to international organizations, which appears through the phrase any action or activity.

A.2. The emergence of the concept of sustainable development

The term "*sustainable development*" comes from the translation of the English word "*sustainable development*" which does not have an exact match in French. The choice of the name of this concept is not unanimous. Other proposals had been mentioned, such as "*sustainable development*" or "*eco-development*". If the first leaves an impression of survival somewhat minimalist, the second remains too close to the term ecology. "*The term sustainable development was chosen because it did not explicitly refer to ecology or the environment. He scared less the traditional defenders of development than the word ecology horrified* "[6].

"Sustainable Development" received its first major international recognition in 1972 at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm (United Nations, 1972)[7]. Although it was not explicitly called "*sustainable development*", the idea, now considered fundamental for sustainable development, to share the view is that development and the environment, which previously had been treated separately were not mutually exclusive and could be managed in their mutual interest to create a sustainable society: "*economic growth was no longer to be feared; in fact, it was considered essential, provided it is sustainable* "[8].

For Lucie Sauvé, "*the concept is vague. (...) Sustainable development proposes the sustainability of development itself. But what development is it? There is room for various conceptions, the most common of which justifies the pursuit, or even globalization, of the same model of neoliberal development, the very one that causes problems, provided that technical corrections are made and that manages to avoid the boomerang effect of human misery* "[9].

If we share, to a certain extent, the criticisms made against this term, we also note that the choice of these terms has the advantage of suggesting, on the one hand, a dynamic to be redefined, the development, by essence, can not be static. On the other hand, the sustainable adjective with a particular emphasis on duration, it should allow not to stop to

palliative solutions which, if they are often necessary at first, can not be sufficient in the long term. Beyond these semantic debates, the fact remains that the concept itself stands out from a desire to find an international consensus allowing at the same time a viable, livable and equitable development of which we do not put the intrinsic value into question.

This concept is a response to the problems arising from the industrial boom that began in the eighteenth century, but whose perverse effects did not manifest themselves until after the Second World War. The explosion in demographic and economic growth that followed the latter led to the consumption of raw materials and energy. It has grown steadily during the second half of the twentieth century in the industrialized countries, resulting in ecological, social and economic imbalances that we do not develop in this work[10].

During the 1960s, a first warning signal was drawn against the widening gap between the industrialized countries and the still underdeveloped countries. Human misery, literacy, starvation and the accompanying epidemics blatantly appear in the eyes of the Western world.

I-B. Citizenship and citizen participation

Citizen participation is closely linked to the concepts of sustainable development and democratic governance. The concept of good governance in itself bears the democratic essence through the mechanism of institutionalized citizen participation. The concept of "citizen participation" has gone through changing contexts, bringing different visions of citizen participation into different spaces of participation. Three components make consensus: political citizen participation in the electoral process, democratic debates in the public and social and civic space through action in social movements or associations[11]. In general, citizen participation is reflected, in practice, mainly by information, awareness raising, consultation, inquiry and consultation[12]. For non-elected citizens, participation in local life in their community allows them to be informed and to express themselves about the challenges facing the community,

determine the definition of citizenship and citizen participation then the emergence of the concept.

B.1. Definition of citizenship and citizen participation

The notion of citizenship traditionally refers to the membership of an individual in a political community defined in relation to the context of the nation-state. This citizenship implies both a sense of belonging to a national political community and a form of action with implications in terms of rights, duties, and responsibilities[13]. This being so, the notion of national citizenship is often controversial, with different interpretations, not only in divided societies but also in the case of the relationship of indigenous peoples and other cultural minorities with the state. In addition, citizenship rights are often denied to migrants, especially refugees. Any attempt to transpose the notion of citizenship at the global level is therefore problematic, in both its legal and psychosocial dimensions[14].

Citizenship is the state or the quality of citizen. It allows an individual to be recognized as a member of a society, a city in ancient times, or a state today, and to participate in political life.

Citizenship is "the legal status that allows an individual to become a citizen. Citizenship provides access to all political rights, while creating duties to participate in the civic life of a society or political community, as opposed to being a mere resident. In general, citizenship is linked to the right to vote. In a democratic society, citizenship is also one of the components of the social bond, including the equal rights associated with it[15].

As a first identification, propose two definitions, each referring to a meaning, or rather families of meanings, of citizenship. In a first sense, citizenship is a status granted to all those who are recognized members of a political community; this status, which defines the framework of formal equality for the individuals who possess them, confers upon them a set of rights and obligations in their relations with the political power of the community in question. In a second sense, it refers to the participation in the sovereign body politic (the demos of the Greeks) which deliberates and

decides the laws of the community. This strict sense - which refers to the political sphere, with its three legislative, executive, and judicial components - is often broadened to include also participation in the public civil sphere[16].

Citizen participation is the exercise and expression of citizenship through the practice of public participation, social participation and electoral participation[17].

social participation[18]refers to the voluntary involvement of individuals in collective activities. That is, participating in an activity by which an individual contributes, by giving free time to the community. Participation in political activities such as signing a petition or activism and supporting a political party is included. Voter turnout concerns participation in elections, this category may include voting as well as being a candidate[19].

Public participation[20] refers to the engagement of individuals in formal arrangements governed by clearly established rules and aimed at achieving an explicit goal. These devices can be structures or processes, permanent or punctual. They can be initiated by public institutions, be they federal, provincial, regional or municipal, or by private organizations, businesses or non-profit organizations (NPOs)[21].

B.2. The origin of the concept of citizenship

The term citizenship, the use of which has increased over the last thirty years, is closely linked to the process of democratization progressively put in place in Latin America[22], but also how to conceive this path towards democracy. two parallel movements are thus contrasted, each giving the concept of citizenship very different meanings.

This notion first became a reference common to all social movements that could assert themselves at the end of authoritarian regimes. The affirmation of this term of citizenship then assumes a double function. It advocates first of all for the development of a truly democratic

system, but also for the expansion of this democratic practice and the acquisition of rights to populations formerly excluded from any political recognition. This is to fight against the link between a hierarchical social system and political practice excluding[23].

The starting point of this conception of citizenship is summed up in the phrase "the right to have rights", the recourse to this notion of rights being one of the central elements of all these social movements whose demands may be specific (women's movements, environmentalist movements, ethnic minorities, etc.) The "right" of the citizen, is then more simply conceived in its legal form but it involves the construction of a new social contract. Citizen status is no longer confined to the relationship between a private individual and the state, but it engages all societal relations and imposes the constitution of a "public" dimension of society[24].

This vision of citizenship beyond the mere relation to the state finds an illustration in the establishment of a system of participatory democracy, particularly through the Brazilian experience of participatory budget which is applied today in a hundred cities of the country[25].

Citizenship has a long history, and even prehistory. Many authors thus evoke Greece where citizenship meant belonging to the sovereign political body (the demos), which deliberates and establishes the laws governing the city; others or the same mention the Roman law in which citizenship referred to the existence of a set of rights and personal protections that the law was specifically intended to guarantee[26].

Born in the national context, the notion of citizenship was transposed in 1992 at the European level. Modeled on the traditional notion of citizenship, European citizenship is part of an essentially political dimension and is closely linked to nationality. But European social citizenship emerges before the introduction of citizenship of the Union, a community social status, nourished both by the principle of non-discrimination based on nationality and freedom of movement, is built around the worker . Then, backed by citizenship of the Union, social citizenship is redeployed; it thus aims to create a new area of solidarity between the citizens of the Union[27].

II- Citizen participation as a mechanism for sustainable development: modalities and challenges

There is no sustainable development without citizen participation. The participation and engagement of citizens and their stakeholders is necessary to define a shared vision of sustainable development and ensure its environmental, social and economic sustainability.

The challenge of a development model aimed at harmonizing the economy with social and environmental needs requires the active participation of citizens in public issues. Public participation in development decisions is essential for achieving sustainable and possible solutions. The modern democratic life requires an active role of the population and requires the participation of the members of the community. It should no longer be true that those who are governed act only to elect, and, regardless of the outcome, they are governed without the possibility of interaction with their representatives. It is time to add the idea of participation to the concept of representative democracy[28].

Participation transforms and energizes the democratic system by creating a permanent link between the governed and the rulers. The Joint Undertaking allows for more thoughtful decisions, better understanding of the issues of concern to a society, and enabling both parties to work together to find solutions. Public participation allows government actions to become transparent, effectively avoiding corrupt behavior. It also clarifies responsibilities and facilitates the possible application of sanctions for reprehensible behavior. In order to build a participatory democracy, it is necessary to provide citizens with an institutional framework for effective participation in public issues[29]. De nombreux documents internationaux ont souligné l'importance de la participation du public et la nécessité de l'institutionnaliser pour progresser vers le développement durable[30]. The basic principles of the Rio Declaration outline some basic building blocks that must be present in all participatory democracies. Therefore, to participate effectively, people must have:

A) Access to decision-making B) Access to public information C) Access to justice.

II- A. Access to decision-making processes

Democracy is indirect when people decide exclusively through their representatives in government bodies; whereas direct democracy is when all citizens are assembled to decide. This kind of democracy existed in some cities of ancient Greece[31].

Nowadays, as an important tool of democracy, we are confronted with the development of the concept of active citizenship and public participation in the decision-making process. That's why it's so important to work with citizens to be active in everyday life and to participate in governance. On the other hand, governments must be aware of sharing their responsibilities with citizens and inviting them to make decisions. Decision-making processes will likely lead to failure if citizen participation is not guaranteed[32].

Public participation before and after decision-making is fundamental to improving the quality of decisions that affect the quality of life. It is important for the authorities to be aware of the needs of citizens and to address technical issues that ensure citizen participation before making decisions. With prior participation in decision-making, the authorities can better take into account the opinion of the public when making decisions. After decision-making, the public can participate by controlling the means of enforcement and jointly managing the decision. Public participation consists of different civic action mechanisms within a democratic system. Citizens can participate in the following ways[33]:

- before the authorities take decisions: give advice, participate in consultations and promote projects.
- after the decisions have been taken, by acting in the execution of such decisions or by controlling their execution.

There are different forms and institutional mechanisms of participation. Each mechanism has its particular characteristics, strengths and weaknesses. It is difficult to say whether some forms of participation are better than others; in general, the viability and effectiveness of any form or mechanism depends on the political, social, economic and cultural

context in which they are developed[34]. In summary, some of the mechanisms for participation are: 1) public hearings, 2) participatory budget processes, 3) referendums.

A-1. Public audience

The purpose of the public hearing is to promote and facilitate communication between government authorities and the public. Thus, the authorities take into account the information, opinions or objections expressed by the public at the time of the decision making, thus reinforcing the decision. From a legal point of view, public hearings are not binding. comments and remarks expressed by the public do not oblige the authorities to act in a specific way. In some cases, the authorities are obliged to justify their decisions and provide an explanation if they do not follow public opinion. Usually, a public hearing is a formal meeting between citizens and government authorities to discuss a particular topic or any other type of decision to be made by the government. These meetings take place during the decision-making process. In general, public hearings are held at the legislative and executive levels[35].

A-2. Participatory budgeting processes

One of the revolutionary processes of public participation is its participatory budget, which guarantees a public accountability instrument allowing citizens to participate in the development and control of the state budget used quite often in Europe, mainly at the municipal level. . Normally, in town halls of municipalities, authorities and the public meet to reach an agreement on how to transfer public priorities into public policy agendas[36].A participatory budget provides citizens with a mechanism to control or influence the government's use of public resources. Some of the key criteria identified for the implementation of the public participation tool are[37]:

- Citizen participation must be guaranteed, without the need to
belong to a particular organization or association.
- The process of participation must be open and deal with general

issues, ranging from how the state spends financial resources to different forms of financing expenditure.

- Public participation should also include management control and accountability.

- In principle, the opinions given in the participatory budget process are not binding.

A-3. Referendum

This type of public participation has a binding effect. Civil servants must be forced if citizens demand that the problem be solved by majority vote through a broad process of participation in decision-making[38]Government authorities must accept and implement citizens' decisions. A referendum is a widespread form of semi-direct democracy. Citizens vote for or against a proposal to establish a new standard or to amend or revoke an existing standard. It is important to distinguish this type of participation from those that are not binding, such as public hearings[39].Countries that use referendums establish the legal criteria, forms and subjects that may be involved in this type of participation on a case-by-case basis. In several countries of Central and Eastern Europe[40], public participation in environmental decision-making is based on the constitutional right to launch a referendum or legislative initiative[41].

II- B. Access to public information

The public should have access to meetings at the community level and notifications should be posted in accordance with the law before meetings. It is important to give citizens the opportunity to give their opinion on local decisions before they enter into force. Citizens need access to information to choose the most viable mechanism to deal with the problem. For this reason, most modern democracies have institutionalized mechanisms related to specific ways of accessing information[42].

The effectiveness of public participation is directly related to the information available. In many cases, public officials have deliberately neglected to engage the public by not informing the public about the decision-making process. Lack of information or misinformation greatly

affects the quality of public participation. The existence of tools for public participation and citizen control is not enough, citizens inquire about issues related to a problem to be solved, a project or a policy[43].

However, governments around the world have been criticized for creating a distance with citizens, for their lack of sensitivity to civic concerns, excluding them from governance. The government needs to become more transparent and accountable, including by encouraging the public media to take a closer look at the government's actions. In many cases, such tasks, public officials have deliberately neglected to engage the public by not informing them of the decision-making process[44].

To respond effectively to the needs of citizens, it is necessary to start listening to what citizens are saying and to recruit their help to develop effective policies and decisions. Free access to information is a right by which anyone can access the information sought. Free access to information allows anyone to access the documentation of public records, meeting records, correspondence, technical reports, scientific surveys or other documentation funded by public budgets. It also includes information on policies, programs, plans and projects; information on various decision-making petitions, opportunities to make oral or written submissions and advice from public and technical organizations[45].

The theoretical basis for freely accessing information depends on its public nature. It deals with relevant information about life and decisions affecting the community as a whole. In general, this right is based on access to information managed by the state. Access to information implies the right to choose documentation from the moment it exists as part of a registration[46]. That is, it allows anyone to select the document without any prior justification. A request is enough to receive the information. There are certain restrictions to the right of free access to information [47]:

- This right does not include preliminary versions of documents.
- This right is limited by the protection of other collective rights or values: protection of privacy, commercial and industrial confidentiality, national defense, international negotiation, etc.

- In the case of a court proceeding, restrictions on public access to information are determined to ensure due process.
- In general, legislation that institutionalizes and regulates access to information establishes a detailed regime of exceptions.

II- C. Access to justice

Access to justice is one of the ways in which citizens can enforce legislation. Although participation has social, cultural and other effects, we will only discuss the legal effects of public participation. Citizens are required to use all areas of law to increase their participation to the extent that public opinion on important issues increases the transparency necessary to ensure the exercise of a balanced power directed towards civic concerns[48].

In this way, individuals can take legal action or initiate an administrative procedure to defend their right. Legal capacity is the ability of a person to demonstrate a sufficient legal interest in a case to enable him to take the case to court. When defending individual rights, such as the right to life, dignity, liberty, property, etc., the individual must prove that his or her value or good (life, dignity, freedom, property, etc.) is threatened or damaged. In this sense, the individual is considered to have a just and sufficient reason to defend his right.

In the case of the defense of third generation rights (such as the right to a healthy environment, the right to peace, the right to non-discrimination, etc.), it is necessary to revise the traditional criteria of legal recourse , namely those granted to private individuals. Without redefining these legal rights, a judge, for example, who is confronted with a citizen's request to preserve a native forest, may reject the case because the citizen can not demonstrate an exclusive and immediate individual interest that brings a valid reason to save the forest. forest. These third-generation rights are characterized, in some respects, by their collective nature[49].Thus, in the case of environmental rights, people do not have individual, immediate or exclusive interests in the environment; the relationship of people to the environment they wish to protect is one of co-ownership[50].

This means that individuals have only one part of environmental law that is non-exclusive and identical to the rights and interests of other members of the community. These are called collective rights. Given this collective nature, access to justice is complicated in terms of the environment. Faced with this legal dilemma of environmental law, various judicial mechanisms have been put in place.

C-1. Action of public interest

An action of public interest is a type of legal action that legally recognizes all residents of the state defending certain rights or collective interests, such as the protection of the environment, the protection of the national heritage, etc. In this way, it is necessary to: prove that personal and direct interests in the property are exempted from the application for legal protection. Legislation in different countries presents various methods of public interest action for the legal protection of the rights of the common good[51].

C-2. Legal status of government agencies

Traditionally, the state assumed the role of defending and protecting the broader interests of society through public servants, such as the long-time attorney general and, more recently, the mediator[52]. At present, legislation in different countries has broadened the scope of powers and responsibilities of these sectors to protect the public good, such as the right to a healthy environment, consumer rights, and so on.

C-3. Legal status of non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

A several number of States recognize the right of action of non-governmental organizations or associations whose objectives are to protect and conserve the environment. In some cases, the legislation differs with respect to formal requests from NGOs to act as authorized applicants[53].Argentina, Spain, Brazil, Germany and others are among the states that recognize the legality of organizations defending collective

rights. As mentioned briefly above, these judicial mechanisms differ from country to country. Below, we will highlight some country-specific mechanisms and describe how different countries have defined the legal status of individuals and NGOs with respect to the right to a clean and healthy environment[54].

Conclusion

As briefly discussed in this paper, it is important to ensure public participation as an important tool for promoting sustainable development. The three main components were mentioned as important for enhancing citizen participation, such as access to decision-making, information and justice. It is important to develop and support the institutional structures, policies and procedures that promote and facilitate, within all levels of government and civil society, the interaction in sustainable development decisions and encourage change within communities. existing institutions in order to lay the groundwork for a direct dialogue with long innovative solutions. If necessary, institutions should strengthen and develop management mechanisms to broaden and integrate participatory practices and techniques into project design, implementation and evaluation.

Efforts should be made to give mass communications an effective role in communication between governments and all sectors of civil society. Meaningful public participation in sustainable development decision-making depends on laws and regulations that ensure timely access to relevant information, decision-making and the justice system. That is why it is so important to ensure the implementation of legal and regulatory frameworks that ensure the participation of citizens in decisions on sustainable development.

To ensure public participation, it is also important to create, strengthen and support formal and informal public participation opportunities and mechanisms in which sustainable development activities are discussed and decided upon. These mechanisms should also ensure that the results of the participatory process are communicated to all stakeholders.

Notes

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