



THE PARTICIPATORY APPROACH AND ITS ROLE IN THE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF MUNICIPALITIES (ANALYTICAL STUDY OF SUCCESSFUL MODELS)

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Abstract:

The participatory approach is a social communication process that empowers residents to initiate and make decisions regarding the identification and implementation of developmental activities and programmes concerning their future. This approach is linked to local development, and is most effective at enhancing citizen participation in public affairs at the local level. This raises questions about how local citizens can be involved and what mechanisms and methods can be used to apply it, given the failures of traditional democracy and parliamentary representation in a humanitarian context. The approach calls for participatory democracy to be activated in order to overcome the crises faced by regions at the local level. In this research paper, we analyse the concept of the participatory approach and its related concepts, foundations and steps. We also present the experiences of countries that have successfully improved the lives of their citizens in regions where the approach has been implemented.

Keywords: Participatory approach, participatory democracy, participatory budgeting, local development, Brazil, France, Germany.

INTRODUCTION:

Local community development is one of the major challenges facing governments, particularly given the growing population in local regions and the resulting increased demand for economic development, quality services and clean living environments. Consequently, research has begun into the most effective ways to achieve genuine regional and local development, and how to implement various programmes and strategies to achieve this. As academic research by thinkers often reflects or even precedes real conditions in local communities, discussions on local development have emerged. These discussions represent a process of change within general local policies that reflect the needs of local communities through their elected representatives. The aim is to encourage local citizens to participate in order to improve their living standards and optimise the use of local resources.

The concept of community development emerged in 1944 and integrated rural development in the mid-1970s, subsequently shaping the discourse of states and governments in their attempts to overcome crises in rural areas. International organisations have also focused on this through economic programmes aimed at developing specific regions within countries. Against this backdrop, the conversation has shifted from merely involving stakeholders to their genuine participation in the political and local developmental process, especially after the failures of traditional democracy in implementing projects and programmes at both general and local levels.

The participatory approach has emerged as a new mechanism for managing local communities and is considered crucial for achieving local development. While this approach is not a recent phenomenon, it has long been integral to local development. Some governments recognise that genuine local participation involving all stakeholders interested in local affairs — including local citizens, the private sector, civil society and governments — is essential for its realisation.

Subsequent discussions will focus on the levels, dimensions and steps of this approach, as well as its feasibility worldwide, in order to select the most effective models and experiences. Implementing these models in certain regions could significantly improve the lives of thousands of citizens who

aspire to local development, by establishing the optimal use of local resources and providing better support for poor and marginalised populations worldwide.

Problem statement:

To what extent does the participatory approach contribute to the economic empowerment of local communities?

Hypotheses:

1. The participatory approach contributes to the economic empowerment of local communities by involving citizens in the development process.
2. The participatory approach contributes to the economic empowerment of local communities by facilitating consultations, leveraging expertise, and taking steps to achieve optimal results.

Main and sub-questions:

What do we mean by the participatory approach as a concept, and what related concepts exist?

What is the foundation of the participatory approach, and what are its principles and methods of application?

- Where does empowerment appear in the participatory approach?

How can the local community implement the participatory approach?

Has the participatory approach proven effective in countries where it has been implemented?

Objectives:

Through this research paper, we aim to:

1. Define the concept of the participatory approach and related terms.
2. Analyse the evolution of the participatory approach in scientific and academic research.
3. Discuss the essential requirements for implementing the participatory approach.
4. Highlight the role of empowerment in determining the level of local community participation in local governance.
5. Present the foundations and mechanisms for applying the participatory approach in international models such as those in France, Germany and Brazil.

Methods used:

Descriptive and analytical method: This method characterises the study, enabling the description and analysis of the participatory approach concept in the first section and its application in countries such as France, Germany and Brazil in the second section.

To address the problem statement and the proposed hypotheses, the following plan has been established:

Section One: The Participatory Approach (Analytical Study)

Subsection One: Definition of the Participatory Approach and Related Concepts

- Subsection Two: A historical overview of the participatory approach

Subsection Three: Types and requirements for implementing the Participatory Approach

- Subsection Four: Avenues for Participation

Section Two: The Participatory Approach and Economic Empowerment (A Review of International Experiences)

Subsection One: The Participatory Approach as a Term in Country Experiences

- Subsection Two: The French Model of the Participatory Approach

- Subsection Three: The German Model of the Participatory Approach

- Subsection Four: The Brazilian Model of Participatory Budgeting

CONCLUSION

Section One: The Participatory Approach - An Analytical Study

This section addresses all aspects of the participatory approach, including its implementation methods, levels of application and key actors.

Subsection One: Definition of the Participatory Approach and Related Concepts

The participatory approach is a complex concept that intersects with other concepts that will be discussed.

According to Pateman, the participatory approach fosters human development and enhances a sense of political efficacy, alleviating feelings of exclusion from centres of influence. It fosters collective interest in community issues and contributes to the formation of an active and informed citizenry that pays closer attention to governance matters. Opportunities for broader participation in work areas can lead to radical changes in national political contexts, suggesting that we can maintain a modern democratic theory free from dogmatic rigidity by centring the concept of participation¹.

The concept of the participatory approach is linked to the following terms:

- **Democracy (démocratie):** This term is composed of two Greek words: 'demos', meaning 'people', and 'kratos', meaning 'power', forming the rule or authority of the people ('demoskratos'), which is the source of authority². In its narrowest sense, democracy is defined as the ability of citizens to participate freely in the political decision-making processes of the state. In this sense, democracy implies that the people govern themselves through a government of their choosing, operating according to their will and oversight. Later, they have the right to mandate its continuation or select another government³.

- **Participation:**

The term 'participation' is derived from the French word 'participer', which consists of two parts: 'Part', meaning 'part', and 'Cipare', meaning 'to take'. Thus, participation literally means 'to take part', implying an active role⁴.

Participatory democracy:

Gabriel Almond argues that participatory democracy must consider the number of participants, the diversity of interests and choices, and the requirement for competencies. It must also consider the economic aspects of participation, such as how much time, energy and money individuals would spend if they were to engage in politics. Therefore, the delegation of authority to representatives through elections is a necessary means of participation⁵.

Participatory democracy aims to enhance active citizen participation in governance processes through various mechanisms, including direct discussions in stakeholder forums and public meetings⁶. It introduces the concepts of contributory and direct democracy. In contributory democracy, citizens provide effective proposals to authorities to achieve necessary outcomes with minimal material and moral costs. In direct democracy, citizens play a primary role in managing state affairs by proposing practical decisions⁷.

¹- Hnaach, Yamina, "The Problem of Institutionalizing Participatory Democracy in Local Communities in Algeria," Doctoral Thesis (Constantine 3 University: Faculty of Political Science, Department of Political Organization), 2019/2020, p. 49.

²- Al-Asqari, Zayneb, "Democracy in the Arab World: Reality and Prospects," *Master's Thesis in Philosophy*, (Oran University: Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Philosophy), 2009/2010, p. 12.

³- Mounir, Imad Din Mahmoud Ibrahim Ahmed, "The Philosophical and Historical Aspects of Democracy as Meaning and Content," Middle East Research Journal, No. 43, p. 209.

⁴- Al-Nadwi, Mohsen, Participatory Democracy: Concept - Origin - Mechanisms Tetouan, Morocco: Gulf Arab Press, 2018, p. 14.

⁵- Nougay, Nabil, Yousfi, Alaa El-Din, "Civil Society as a Mechanism to Activate Participatory Democracy and Achieve Local Development (An Algerian Model)," Legal Studies Journal, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2020, p. 399.

⁶- Qassem, Walid Hassan Rajab, "The Role of Participatory Democracy Mechanisms in Empowering Citizens: A Case Study of Brazil," Scientific Journal of the Faculty of Economic Studies and Political Science, Vol. 8, No. 15, January 2023, p. 391.

⁷- Barabih, Abdel Majid, "Participatory Democracy," Journal of Law, Society, and Authority, Special Issue, April 6, 2011, p. 106.

Participatory planning involves stakeholders exchanging ideas and compiling them to formulate an actionable work plan. This approach ensures the involvement of specialists while empowering stakeholders to maximise performance and improve planning outcomes¹.

Finally, some researchers argue that the participatory approach differs from participatory democracy: the former is a method of addressing problems and managing projects, whereas the latter is a form of democracy. Another group considers the participatory approach to be an expression of participatory democracy.

Subsection Two: The Participatory Approach - A Historical Perspective on the Concept

The definition of the participatory approach cannot be fully understood without exploring the concept's historical context.

Examining the genealogy of the participatory approach in the social sciences leads us to conclude that participation lies at the heart of all significant policies, regardless of whether society is democratic or dictatorial. Participation is closely linked to democracy, and the advancement of democracy depends on the scope of participation. The concept of participation has evolved to encompass "participation" and "partnership", with the participatory process representing a new stage of maturity for the term "participation". The concept of partnership has emerged in response to the crises arising from traditional democratic practices². This elevates various political forces from the role of participants to that of essential partners in the political process. This transition shifts these forces from a passive position to one of initiative.

The participatory approach emphasises horizontal action over vertical structures. It emerged as an expression of a dynamic project open to members based on active engagement between civil society and political institutions. The participatory process allows for a variety of ideas, visions and interpretations, providing shared solutions to problems and creating new institutions that operate alongside the state. Based on these general perceptions, researchers have coined the term 'participatory democracy' to describe this new addition to the broader conceptual system of democracy.

Initial engagement with the concept of the participatory approach raises a question posed by Bratosin Stefan regarding the rationale for advocating for participatory democracy when the very essence of democracy implies participation. Why invite citizens to participate in governance when they are already part of it? This ambiguity clears up after understanding the reasons or circumstances that contributed to the emergence of this concept in the political arena and its utilization by researchers and political practitioners.

Thus, it can be said that the participatory approach emerged in response to the criticisms directed at various democratic forms. Notable contemporary figures in various social fields, such as Duverger, Robert Dahl, and Samuel Huntington, have strongly criticized traditional democracy, calling for necessary amendments to accommodate the new realities imposed by international and domestic conditions, as well as political, economic, and cultural disparities among states.

The theoretical critique of representative democracy (the phase preceding the participatory approach) began with John Dewey's writings. Dewey viewed democracy as a continuous process, not merely an act of voting for candidates every few years, followed by withdrawal from participation until the next election. This idea was later discussed by the English sociologist Anthony Giddens in his book *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*, in which he concluded that representative democracy leads to exclusion and marginalisation.

Robert Putnam also discussed elements influencing the effectiveness of the democratic process, resulting in calls to rethink representative democracy. He highlighted the issue of a crisis of trust

¹- Ahmed Ali Othman, "Participatory Planning as an Entry Point for Improving Social Services in Underprivileged Villages," *Social Work Journal*, available at: https://egjsw.journals.ekb.eg/article_173454_7f75ef07f25ff5db0e5fe2b1010f8425.pdf, accessed on: 7/02/2025.

²- Boudjalal, Omar, "Integrating the Participatory Approach to Promote Political Governance in Algeria: A Review of Reform Efforts 2011 - 2016," *Algerian Journal of Law and Political Science*, No. 2, December 2016, p. 182.

between the public and politicians. Representative democracy does not guarantee robust oversight of politicians' performance. Thus, the participatory approach brings together a group of actors – particularly informal ones, as termed by American researcher James Anderson – including citizens, political parties and interest groups. Participatory democracy aims to provide legal and political cover for all segments of society, enabling them to participate in decision-making and policy formulation¹.

Subsection Three: Types and Requirements for Implementing the Participatory Approach

Having analysed the concept of the participatory approach both terminologically and historically, it is important to consider the different types of this approach and the requirements for its implementation in local communities.

First: Types of the Participatory Approach

According to Morgane Leguenic, the participatory approach consists of the following types of participation:

Table 1: Types of the Participatory Approach and Methods of Support

Type	Method of participation
Negative Participation	Citizens participate to be informed about what has happened and what will happen.
Information Provision Participation	By providing answers to the posed questions.
Consultation Participation	When consulted, and their viewpoints are taken into account.
Material Benefit Participation	In providing a source of information.
Functional Participation	According to pre-defined activities, setting project strategies and plans.
Interactive Participation	In diagnosing situations that lead to action plans, and in forming or strengthening interest groups (local decisions) for the sustainability of activities.
Self- mobilization Active participation	By taking initiatives independently.

Source: Um Al-Saad Abdul Rahman Maki, 'The Role of the Participatory Approach in Local Decision-Making', Journal of Human and Natural Sciences, Vol. 2, No. 4, 2021, p. 363.

The table above explains the various types of participation and the methods by which they occur, whether negative, effective or otherwise.

Second: Requirements for Implementing the Participatory Approach

In order to implement the participatory approach at a local level, a number of conditions must be met that collectively contribute to its realisation. These include:

- Information/knowledge
- Awareness
- Problem identification/solution seeking
- Organisation and management of work/programming
- Objective training/generalisation

Self-evaluation of ongoing activities

Monitoring and evaluation of programmes.

Returning to the programming phase/self-promotion².

Subsection Three: Levels of the Participatory Approach in Local Decision-Making

¹- Boudjalal, Omar, Ibid. pp. 183-184.

²- Maki, Umm Al-Saad Abdul Rahman, Ibid, p. 363.

In this section, we aim to establish a direct link between the participatory approach and local communities by involving them in decision-making processes.

Participation in local work is important due to its multiple roles in enhancing the relationship between local authorities and community members and fostering their willingness and readiness to engage with and contribute to the development and improvement of the community effectively. Participation may be initiated by local authorities or decision-makers, or arise from increased awareness among individuals and associations. The various levels of participation are shown in the following table:¹

Table 2: Levels of community participation in local governance

Level of Participation	Providing information	Consultation	Involvement	Collaboration	Empowerment
Purpose	Providing citizens with information to help them understand the problem and discuss solutions and alternatives.	Obtaining feedback from citizens on alternatives and decisions.	Working directly with citizens to understand and consider their concerns.	Partnering with the public to develop alternatives and identify solutions.	Placing the decision-making power in the hands of the local community.
Message of the Local Authority to the Public	The authority will keep the public informed and provide them with information.	The authority will provide the public with information. Listening to their issues. Providing feedback on its impact on the decision.	The authority will provide the public with information, listen to their issues, and provide feedback on its impact on the decision.	It will reach out to the public for advice directly, seek creative solutions, and adopt their suggestions in the decision taken as much as possible.	The local authority places decision-making in the hands of the local community.

Source: Um Al-Saad Abdul Rahman Maki (previously cited, p. 364).

The table above illustrates the levels of local citizen participation in local governance, ranging from the provision of information, to consultation and involvement, to cooperation and, finally, empowerment.

‘Empowerment’ is a general process, even if implemented sectorally. It is also continuous rather than temporary, and is aimed at enabling all community groups and individuals to integrate and participate in development².

Subsection Four: Approaches to Local Community Participation

The participation of residents in managing their livelihoods depends on various actors, regions, formations, structures and cultures within four approaches.

First: The Approach of Local Participation and Struggle

During the 1970s, Marxist-inspired urban sociology evolved, with discourses on urban struggle emerging in social housing neighbourhoods. Some of these discourses became part of urban policy. The city was viewed as a spatial manifestation of economic and social power relations, resulting in

¹- Ibid, p. 363.

²- Al-Najjar, Baqar, “Empowerment and Sustainable Development: In Dialogue with the Concept,” Arab Journal of Sociology, Vol. 14, No. 27, January 2021, p. 28.

wealthy individuals residing in the city centre and impoverished communities inhabiting the suburbs, grappling with social issues. This produced numerous protests demanding improved living conditions for residents. The results of this local struggle included residents participating through various means, such as neighbourhood councils, committees and associations.

Second: the approach of participation and social relations

Unlike the previous approach, behavioural sociology does not focus on production, but rather views the city from a consumption perspective, examining the social performance of sensitive areas and how residents benefit from their city. This shifts the concept from demanding rights to a new vision within a genuine regional project in urban policy, fostering a sense of integration and belonging and encouraging participation in the development of the urban space.

Third: The Approach of Participation and Actor Performance

Institutional analysis and organizational sociology form the third approach to participation, which is a foundation of urban policy. It requires studying the relationships that characterize different segments of society, focusing on networks, alliances, confrontations, and negotiations, to reveal the true intentions of the actors and partners. From this perspective, resident participation in urban policy leads to the identification of their characteristics and social positions as individuals or groups, and thus understanding the extent of the project's impact on them at the individual or collective level¹.

Fourth: The Approach of Participation and Social Movement

This approach to participation in urban policy relies on the socio-political analysis of social movements because urban policy faces challenges from social groups and politically unstructured activists. There is often a confusion in presenting local issues with major issues, whether at the national or international level, such as the right to housing, the right to work, and human rights². Some propose using participatory methods alongside the concept of social simulation, which is based on three categories of expectation.

These categories vary according to the goals and expected benefits of participation, and include the quality of the simulation model itself, its suitability for a specific use, and support for participation³.

Section Two: The Participatory Approach and Economic Empowerment (A Review of Experiences)

This section discusses international experiences of applying the participatory approach, focusing on France, Germany and Brazil.

Subsection One: The Participatory Approach as a Term in Country Experiences

The challenges encountered in the essence of the participatory approach are reflected in the different terminology used by various countries for the same concept.

Participatory democracy has been implemented in several countries, where it is referred to as 'deliberative democracy' in Britain, 'local democracy' in Germany, 'semi-direct democracy' in Switzerland and 'neighbourly democracy' in France. The Swiss and French experiences are widely regarded as successful examples of activating local development through the involvement of all stakeholders. In Latin America, Venezuela is often cited as an example of this approach, as former president Hugo Chávez aimed to establish participatory democracy as a constitutional foundation to achieve social justice.

In Algeria, the participatory approach has been adopted due to shortcomings in the political development process over the last two decades, particularly with regard to the management of

¹- Makhlety, Ahmed, "The Role of Participatory Planning in Improving Urban Development: A Case Study of Bousaada City," Doctor of Science in Architectural Engineering (Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra: Faculty of Science and Technology, Department of Architectural Engineering), 2023, p. 91.

²- Makhlety, Ahmed, Ibid., p. 91.

³- Bots, Pieter, and Others, Participatory Approaches, United Kingdom: Bruce Edmonds Ruth Meyer, p. 199.



public affairs through representative democracy. This approach has shown signs of success in environments characterised by political stability, social unity and peaceful power transitions.

The implementation of participatory democracy and local governance varies according to countries' philosophical frameworks for managing local affairs. However, many of these frameworks converge on the concepts of public inquiries and local consultative referenda, as seen in France, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and Sweden. Public inquiries are a widely used consultative mechanism in these countries, particularly in urban and environmental contexts. Local authorities resort to them when proposing projects that may have environmental repercussions.

In most of these countries, municipal referenda are usually confined by law to matters pertaining to the community's self-governing authority. Generally, fundamental systems do not specify the scope of referenda, but certain topics are excluded, such as issues related to taxation, budgeting, and finance¹².

Subsection Two: The French Model of the Participatory Approach

France is considered the birthplace of democratic ideas and local development research. It is evident that the participatory approach in France has a distinct and unique character.

The concept of local development emerged in France in the mid-1960s and was utilised in regional planning procedures. The idea of local development in marginalised rural areas arose from efforts to preserve these lands by engaging local populations in setting specific goals. In 1970, a programme was launched to support development projects involving local stakeholders in rural areas, in line with the Rural Development Plan (PAR). The main objective was to foster a sense of community through consultation between elected officials, administrators, and social managers.

A new balance between the state and local authorities emerged in the 1980s due to a series of institutional reforms. In the 1990s, contracts were established with associations and unions, providing them with financial resources based on sector development and regional support documents. In 2007 and 2013, the state signed contracts with local actors to support community and park projects for better regional development.

In order to promote local development, the French state undertook the following actions:

- Enabling local stakeholders to contribute to the development of solutions tailored to the challenges of their regions (Dynamiques Territoriales programme).
- Ensured democratic access to culture (New Patrons programme).
- Enhanced population participation (Participatory Approaches programme).

To further focus on local development, the French Development Agency (AFD) was established. This public French institution implements state policies related to development and international solidarity, as well as issues concerning climate, biodiversity, peace, education, urban planning, health and governance. The AFD collaborates with over 115 countries worldwide and 19,000 public cooperation institutions among municipalities, bringing together all local organisations and civil society to realise local development³.

The law of 13 August 2004 expanded the consultative process to include all municipalities and public institutions in inter-municipal cooperation. It mandated consultations on decisions to be made by local authorities regarding matters within their jurisdiction. Furthermore, the July 2010 law specifies cases in which public inquiries must be conducted to broaden the scope of discussion and information, with non-binding results. Notably, France organised 233 local referendums between 1995 and 2009, which is a modest number given that there are 36,000 French municipalities. Most of these votes were advisory in nature.

¹- Bay, Ahmed, Hoshat, Raouf, "The Participatory Approach as a Tool for Activating Local Development in Algeria," *Algerian Journal of Security and Development*, No. 10, January 2017, p. 274.

²- Bouachria, Fadwa, "Development Councils as a Practical Mechanism for Realizing Participatory Democracy and Achieving Local Development: A Model from France," *Diaa Journal of Legal Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2023, p. 12.

³- Bouachria, Fadwa, *Ibid.*, pp. 12-14.

Furthermore, neighbourhood councils became mandatory in municipalities with populations exceeding 800,000 under the law of 27 February 2002. The mayor can consult the neighbourhood council on any issue related to the neighbourhood or city and involve it in formulating, implementing and evaluating activities related to the neighbourhood, especially those undertaken within urban policy. Local binding referenda are also organised in all local communities, including regions, departments and municipalities, upon proposal from the city's deliberative body¹.

Subsection Three: The German Model of the Participatory Approach

Germany is an exceptional case in Europe and worldwide in terms of economic leadership. However, its excellence is not confined to economics; it also excels in the local participatory approach.

In Germany, public councils for residents exist, particularly in Bavaria, and are convened at the initiative of the mayor or a portion of the local population. These councils enable officials to be held accountable for public policy. Many municipalities have amended their legal charters to gradually incorporate popular initiatives and binding referenda within specific conditions. In most regions, citizens can request the organisation of a municipal referendum, which is considered by the municipal council and decided upon at its discretion².

Subsection Four: The Brazilian Model of Participatory Budgeting

Brazil is a unique political and economic model: it is a democratic country and has one of the largest economies in Latin America. Its experience with participatory budgeting has inspired other countries around the world.

1. Definition of participatory budgeting:

A budget is initially defined as an approved document that estimates the necessary expenses to meet needs and the revenues required to cover those expenses over a defined period³. Participatory budgeting is defined as the mechanism through which citizens contribute to the decision-making process regarding how part or all of the available budget is spent. It thus embodies authentic participatory democracy, enabling residents to allocate funds based on their needs and aspirations, and ensuring that elected bodies implement their decisions⁴.

2. The Brazilian Experience in Participatory Budgeting:

Brazil's experience is unique in democratising local governance and consolidating democracy. This has been linked to two significant transformations in Brazil: the first was a qualitative leap in political life that accompanied the democratic transition at the end of the 1970s and the mid-1980s. The second was the enactment of legislation on participation and equality through the 1988 constitutional text, which was amended in 1994. This allowed for the development and expansion of forms of participation and citizenship. Porto Alegre is considered the first city in the world to adopt this mechanism, having started in the small city of Gravataí with a population of 230,000 in 1989.

In Porto Alegre, citizens participate in the making of public policies, which determine the city's public expenditure based on the principle of positive discrimination in favour of poorer areas through the redistribution of resources and public services⁵. A simple analysis shows that implementing participatory budgeting has improved conditions for the poor in Porto Alegre, as the

¹- Ben Yaza, Youssef, Khamila, Faisal, "Participatory Democracy as a Mechanism for Activating Governance at the Local Level," Human Sciences Journal of Um El Bouaghi University, Vol. 6, No. 1, June 2019, p. 43.

²- Ibid., p. 43.

³- Boudjalal, Ahmed, "Finances of Local Communities - State Budget," Studies Journal, Vol. 7, No. 2, June 2016, p. 225.

⁴- Boualam Allah, Youssef, Imar, Mohand Amer, "The Mechanism of Participatory Budgeting and Its Contribution to Environmental Protection through Institutionalizing Participatory Democracy," Journal of Scientific Research in Environmental Legislation, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2021, p. 348.

⁵- Hnaach, Yamina, Kbeish, Abdel Karim, "The Role of Civil Society in Activating Participatory Democracy: Participatory Budgeting as a Mechanism," Studies and Research Journal, Vol. 11, No. 2, June 2019, p. 175.

percentage of the total budget allocated for investment increased from 2% in 1989 to 20% in 1994. Tax revenues also increased, reflecting the government's growing legitimacy. Investment in poorer areas also surpassed that in wealthier regions. The proportion of individuals with access to clean water rose from 75% in 1988 to 98% in 2001, while the percentage of individuals benefiting from sanitation services increased from 46% to 98%.

Support for the poor improved significantly: assistance was provided to approximately 1,714 families between 1986 and 1988, rising to 28,862 families between 1995 and 1992. Housing conditions for the poor improved between 1989 and 1996, benefiting over 27,000 families living in informal settlements. Between 1989 and 2000, 11,513 housing units were built, compared to just 901 between 1986 and 1988¹.

CONCLUSION:

The following hypotheses have been proven at the end of our research paper:

The participatory approach contributes to the economic empowerment of local communities by involving citizens in the development process. This involvement lends legitimacy to local projects and gains the acceptance of citizens, as discussions around these projects have proven effective.

We have also demonstrated that the participatory approach aids economic empowerment by facilitating consultations, leveraging expertise and implementing steps to achieve optimal results. A sound participatory approach requires open participation from experienced stakeholders to contribute to the development of local economic plans that enhance the community's economic standing.

The following results were reached:

- There is an ongoing academic debate about the concept of the participatory approach. Some view it as an expression of participatory democracy, while others see it as distinct. The participatory approach reflects the methodology used, whereas participatory democracy denotes a governing style. Therefore, both concepts should be re-evaluated and discussed academically.

The participatory approach is one of the strategies that support the local economy of communities. It embodies a collection of ideas and programmes from various local stakeholders, as well as the government.

The participatory approach ensures the involvement of local citizens in all stages of developing economic plans for the community, thereby gaining their trust and support for projects and facilitating the later monitoring of their implementation.

The adoption of the participatory approach at the local level aims to provide solutions that align with the capabilities of local communities, enabling citizens to participate directly in the economic, social and environmental planning of their city. This came after many representative democracies failed to do so, overlooking the vital role of local citizens in the economic process.

International experience of the participatory approach shows that it has evolved over time. Thus, its success is linked to a country's experience, cultural and political history, and social characteristics rather than merely transferring the model.

The French experience with the participatory approach is somewhat unique, having undergone extensive phases of seeking ways to achieve local development since the mid-1960s.

The French experience of the participatory approach is somewhat unique. Since the mid-1960s, it has undergone extensive phases of seeking ways to achieve local development. However, further local support is required to study its implementation in practice.

Participatory budgeting is one of the most prominent mechanisms of the participatory approach. It has been used in Brazil for over 40 years and has been adopted by around 1,500 cities worldwide. Porto Alegre's local government has successfully transformed the city and improved the lives of its citizens, making it a worthy subject of study and exploration.

¹- Qassem, Walid Hassan Rajab, "The Role of Participatory Democracy Mechanisms in Empowering Citizens: A Case Study of Brazil," Scientific Journal of the Faculty of Economic Studies and Political Science, Vol. 8, No. 15, January 2023, p. 407.

At its core, participatory budgeting reflects citizens' involvement in allocating public funds and requires several principles for implementation. The first principle addresses the budgetary aspect, focusing on resource scarcity. The second principle pertains to the local dimension, emphasising the participation of local citizens. The third principle involves a repeated process characterised by regular meetings. The fourth principle necessitates the inclusion of public consultations. Lastly, there must be a mechanism for accountability.

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