

Citizen Participation and Urban Governance: A Vital Partnership for Enhancing Quality of Life in Boumerdes city – algeria-

Fadila Sanjak ¹, Ouahiba Bouchama ²

¹High Normal School of Bouzareah (ENSB)

² High Normal School of Bouzareah (ENSB)

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Received: 30 Dec 2024

Revised: 12 Feb 2025

Accepted: 26 Feb 2025

The purpose of this article is to expose the shortcomings of Algeria's housing policy and to highlight the significance of urban improvement as a new approach. This approach aims to restore the city's role as a structuring unit for urban coherence and social cohesion. From this perspective, this work attempts to embody the principle of citizen participation in enhancing their places of residence. The Frantz Fanon housing estate in Boumerdes clearly exemplifies the deterioration of collective housing in Algeria and other developing countries. To achieve our objective, we conducted a household survey. The collected data was analyzed using statistical methods with SPSS25 software, and the results were presented graphically and cartographically. This simplified the findings, emphasized the problems, and helped in extracting solutions, all supported by Geographic Information Systems.

Keywords: Urban improvement, Boumerdes, Living environment, Governance, Citizen participation.

INTRODUCTION

The intervention process to improve the living environment isn't just about addressing the deterioration of facilities and buildings; it can also be an improvement stemming from changes in community characteristics, population cultures, and generational succession (Zayyanu , 2020). The emergence of the sustainable city project, which includes the concept of sustainable residential neighborhoods, considers all aspects of urban life without compromising environmental, economic, and social factors (Chauvet, 2007). This is seen as a mechanism for promoting human well-being, enabling people to enjoy a stable and secure life, and facilitating their access to the requirements of a decent life, such as health (Afri, 2023), a healthy environment, decent housing, and easy access to public benefits, entertainment, and culture. It also motivates them towards social integration and interaction and strengthens their ability to exercise their right to citizenship by participating in the management of their living spaces through dialogue and solidarity, ensuring the sustainability of urbanization.(Md. Al-Fahad, 2023)

Achieving a balance between developing new housing, preserving existing housing, and considering both citizen concerns and public interest requires effective and responsible state management and leadership at various levels. This is embodied in the principles of good governance as a new challenge in development policy in general, and sustainable development in particular, within the field of urbanization. The term "good governance" refers to the administration's concern for citizen requirements and its work for the public interest within a framework of transparency. This means good governance must not only consider the interests of current generations but also go beyond to preserve the interests of future generations.

Since the citizen is the ultimate goal of all development, it's crucial to involve them in development processes (Chiara, 2025), especially concerning their living environment and immediate surroundings. It's worth noting that no clear mechanism for this participation has been specified. In light of these observations, we question the reasons for the deterioration of living conditions in Algerian cities. How can the application of the principle of good

governance contribute to improving the urban living environment to ensure the sustainable development of the city?

PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY AREA

The Frantz Fanon housing estate, also known as the "800 Logements" (a common numerical designation for large housing projects in Algeria), was constructed between 1982 and 1986 on the western plateau of Boumerdes. Its development aimed to meet the growing housing demand in the capital and its neighboring cities. Spanning an area of 17.83 hectares, the estate was home to 5,717 residents in 2022, according to the Boumerdes municipal statistics service. It is situated on a hill bordered by two wadis (rivers): Oued Tatareg to the east and Oued Corso to the west. The prevailing climate in the estate and the broader region is Mediterranean, characterized by an average annual precipitation of 597 mm and an average temperature of 18.4°C.

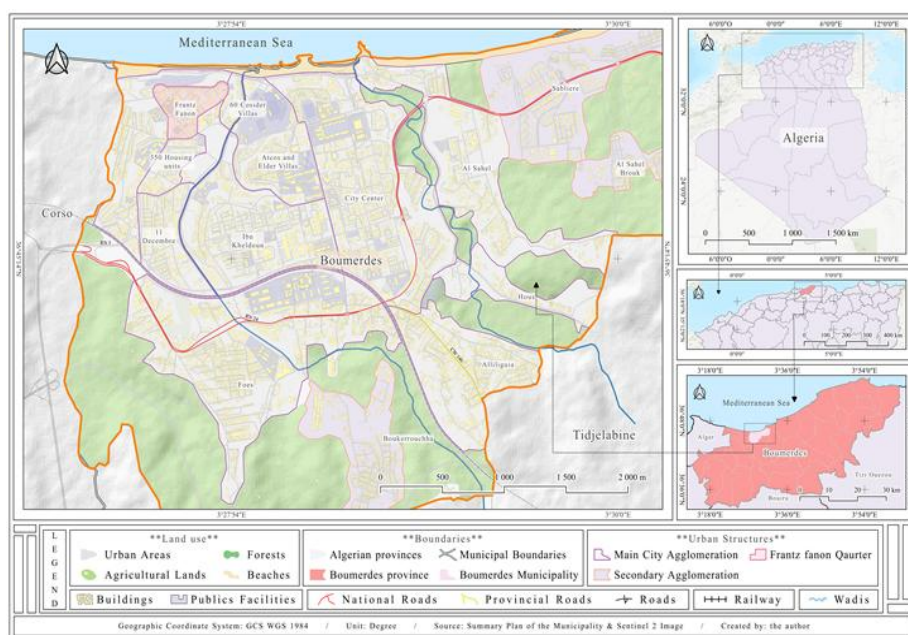


Figure 01: location of the study area

THE URBAN MORPHOLOGY OF THE CITY

Urban morphology is essential for understanding how spaces shape social interactions (Gabriela.2025) and residents' quality of life (Ascher, 2020). The Frantz Fanon estate features a single type of housing: collective housing, comprising 800 units. These are distributed across 64 buildings, including 6 towers (G+9) and 58 barres (G+4), resulting in a density of 44.86 dwellings per hectare. This density is low compared to the national standard of 80 dwellings per hectare for collective housing.



Figure 02 -03: photographs of the exterior of the buildings

The arrangement of blocks, a mix of barres and towers, shows no particular architectural ambition. In the name of industrialization, architectural quality was sacrificed to meet quantitative demands, resulting in a monotonous succession of parallelepiped and cubic forms.

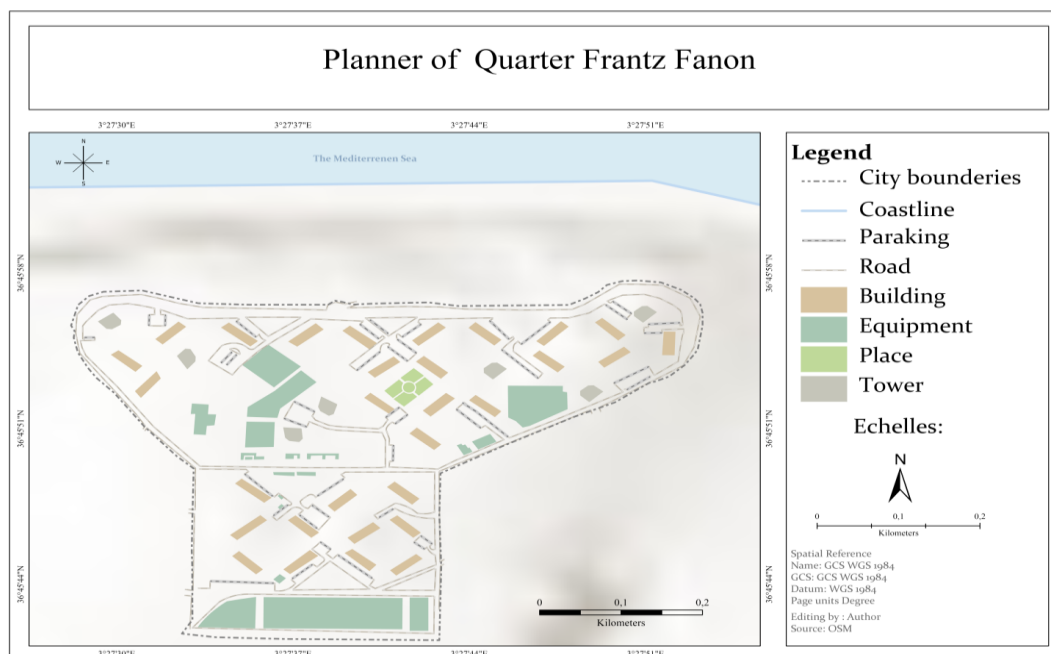


Figure 04: floor plan of the 800-unit housing estate

LITERATURE REVIEW

An analysis of the literature on governance and citizen participation reveals that participation is seen as a key element in effective and legitimate governance. It is often associated with notions of participatory democracy and good governance, where citizen involvement is seen as a means of improving decision-making, transparency and accountability. Since 1974, with the work of Howard Hallman (Howard 1974), via James DeFilippis in 2001; the counter-project is of a “pluralist-identitarian-minority” order. It is here that we come into contact with the question of cohesion and social justice, currently being redefined (Robert 2000).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Involving residents in the design of their living spaces allows for the integration of practical, cultural, and local aspects. It also empowers citizens, making them more inclined to take ownership of these spaces, ensuring their proper condition and use (Afri, 2023). To achieve our objectives, we'll employ the classic approach common in geographical studies: the descriptive-analytical approach. This involves describing the phenomenon and analyzing its causes and outcomes. We'll also use a quantitative approach to collect, sort, and analyze data systematically. For our research, we have relied on:

SAMPLING

To achieve our research goal of improving the living environment through governance, specifically from the perspective of citizen participation, we focused on a representative case study: the Frantz Fanon housing estate.

A household survey was conducted on-site, reaching 25% of the households. We processed data from 200 households within the 800-unit estate. The survey was structured around three main components:

Socio-economic aspects: This section focused on the socio-economic profile of the households.

Neighborhood evaluation: This part was dedicated to assessing various elements of the neighborhood, including housing, facilities, and outdoor spaces.

Citizen input: The third component aimed to provide an open platform for citizens to offer their opinions and suggestions for appropriate urban and social improvements within their estate.

In addition to this field survey, it was crucial to gather data from relevant services, such as the Directorate of Urban Planning, Architecture, and Construction (DUAC) and the municipal technical services.

The questionnaires were processed using statistical methods with SPSS25 software.

Cartographic representation was explored using QGIS Desktop 3.38.2 for mapping.

LIKERT CALCULATION METHOD

In view of the survey, a questionnaire based on a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree and Strongly Agree) will be used to assess and test the level of citizen participation in urban governance and planning using the following criteria.

Table.01 citizen satisfaction scorecard.

	1. Totally disagree	2. At Disagree	3. In Accord	4. Absolutely Agreed
Urban planning				
1. A) Are there structures for the direct participation of civil society in urban planning, including in the design and drafting of contracts?	50	50	60	40
1. B) Are there structures in place to ensure that the company is regularly involved in the planning of urban areas, including in the design and drafting of contracts?	50	90	20	40
1. C) Are there structures for the democratic participation of civil society in urban planning, including in the design and drafting of contracts?	60	80	20	40
Decision-making on the city budget				
2. A) Are there structures for the direct participation of civil society in decision-making on the urban budget?	150	20	20	10
2. B) Are there structures in place for the regular participation of civil society in decision-making on the urban budget?	150	15	25	10
2. C) Are there structures in place for the democratic participation of civil society in the urban budget decision-making process?	50	50	40	60
Evaluation and feedback on urban management performance				
3. A) Are there structures in place for the direct participation of civil society in the evaluation of urban planning	90	30	50	30

performance?				
3. B) Are there structures for the regular participation of civil society in the evaluation of urban planning performance?	150	20	20	10
3. C) Are there structures in place for the democratic participation of civil society in the evaluation of urban planning performance ?	100	20	40	40
Participation of marginalised groups				
4. A) Do these structures allow and encourage the participation of different groups of women?	30	30	60	80
4. B) Do these structures allow and encourage the participation of young men and women aged between 15 and 24?	90	50	30	30
4. C) Do these structures enable and promote the participation of older men and women?	80	60	35	25
4. D) Structures that enable and promote the participation of low-income groups of women and men?	50	50	50	50
4. E) Do these structures enable and promote the participation of disabled women and men?	80	60	30	30
4. F) Do these structures allow and encourage the participation of children under 15?	100	70	30	00
5. A) Are these facilities open and accessible to all?	90	50	30	30
5. B) Are these structures transparent, with a clear process and monitoring?	90	50	30	30

RESEARCH RESULTS

The survey/questionnaire results provided valuable data that enriched and complemented our understanding study area (Bouchama & Lounes; 2024)

ANALYSIS OF THE POPULATION'S AGE AND SEX STRUCTURE WITHIN THE ESTATE

As of February 2022, the population of the Frantz Fanon estate was estimated at 5,171 inhabitants. The occupancy rate per dwelling (TOL) was 6.46 persons/dwelling, which is notably higher than the 5 persons/dwelling set by the Ministry of Housing in 2020 and the national average of 5.47 persons/dwelling.

The age and sex structure of the estate's population reveals a clear predominance of the 15-34 age group, which accounts for 46% of the surveyed households' population. This group shows a slight male dominance at 51.32%. The

second largest group is the 35-64 age category, representing 30% of the population, also with a male dominance of 52%. Conversely, female dominance is observed in the 0-14 age group (22% of the total population) and the over 65 age group. The latter is the smallest category, representing only 2% of the population, with females constituting a significant 63.33% within this specific age bracket.

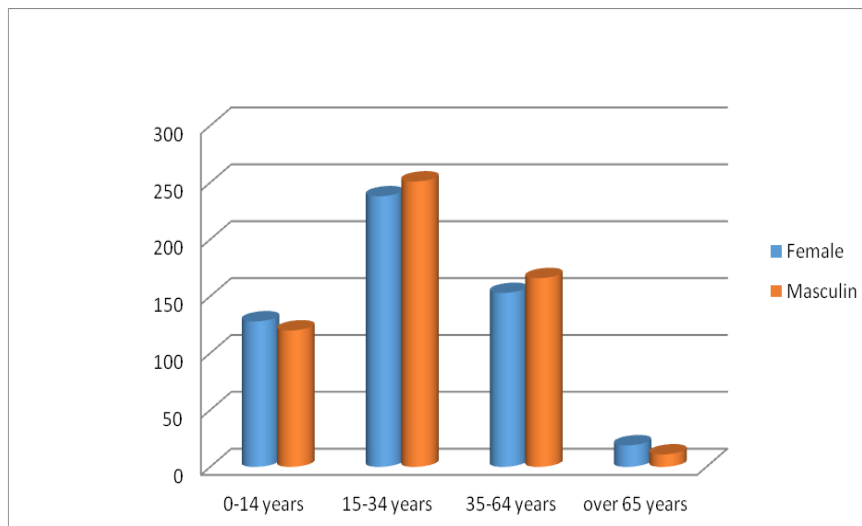


Figure 05: age and gender structure of the population

SOCIO-PROFESSIONAL CATEGORIES OF HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS

The socio-economic breakdown of the surveyed population reveals that 23% are actively employed. Education plays a significant role, with 34% of the population being students or currently in school.

Other notable categories include:

Individuals under 6 years old, homemakers, and people with disabilities, collectively making up 24% of the population.

Unemployed individuals account for 15% of the total surveyed.

Retirees represent 4%.

This data indicates a 20% unemployment rate within the surveyed group. This figure is considerably higher than the 10.64% unemployment rate reported for the wider municipality and well above the normal range of 4% to 9% for 2021 (according to the unemployment fund, 2021).

Here's a breakdown of the occupations held by the heads of households :

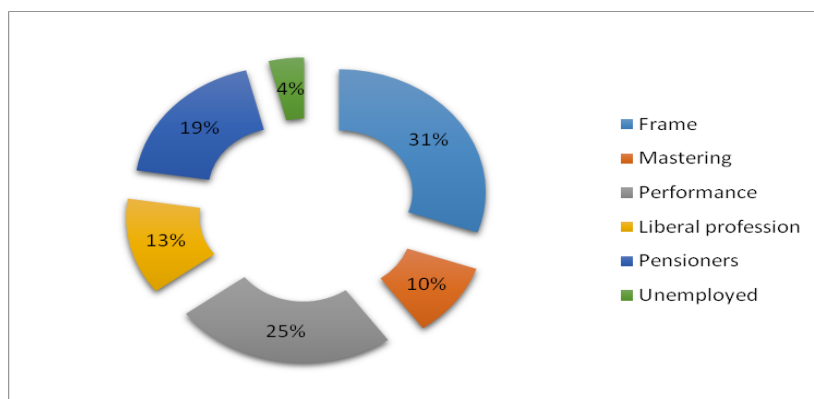


Figure 6: socio-professional categories of heads of household

This analysis reveals closely aligned rates among certain professional categories (Belhadi, 2002), such as Managers and Executive Staff, and Supervisory and Liberal Professions. Additionally, 19% are retirees. The lowest rate, at 4%, is for unemployed household heads.

It's clear that all socio-professional categories are represented in the Frantz Fanon cité, with similar proportions. This observation supports the idea that coexistence among different social strata has always been a feature of Algerian society.(Zitoun , 2010).

HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION: A DEEPER DIVE

To paint a more comprehensive picture of the economic well-being of these households, we conducted a detailed analysis of their monthly incomes.

Our findings reveal a varied landscape. A notable 28% of households opted not to disclose their monthly income, which might suggest a reluctance to share financial details or perhaps a reliance on informal income sources. (Beaujeu ,1989). Among the households that did provide this crucial information, 17% reported a monthly income of less than 18,000 Algerian Dinars (DA). This figure, falling below the average national income, could indicate a segment of the population facing significant economic challenges. The largest group, comprising 34% of households, reported a monthly income ranging from 18,000 DA to 36,000 DA. This suggests a substantial portion of the population falls within a middle-income bracket, potentially managing daily expenses but with limited disposable income for savings or larger investments.

Finally, 20% of households reported a monthly income exceeding 36,000 DA. This segment likely represents the more affluent households within the surveyed population, potentially enjoying greater financial stability and purchasing power

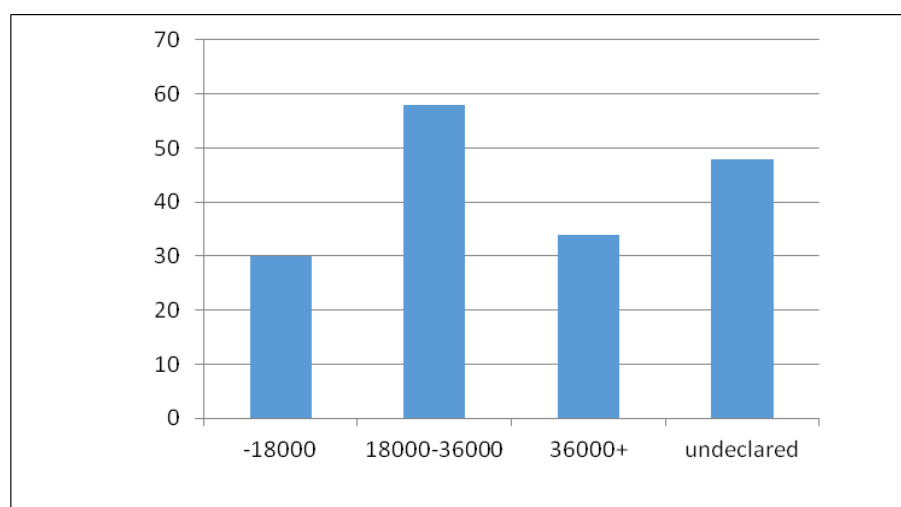


Figure 7: breakdown of households by monthly income

INCOME AND HOUSEHOLD INTENT TO REMAIN IN THE HOUSEHOLD

Our analysis reveals a significant trend: 49% of surveyed households do not intend to reside permanently in the cité. This inclination to leave is particularly pronounced among higher-income households, with 83.33% of those earning over 36,000 DA per month expressing a desire to move out.

This exodus of wealthier residents could intensify social segregation, negatively impacting the cité's quality and value, and diminishing residents' participation in its improvement. (Gobillon & Selod , 2004) note, the cumulative departure of affluent families towards wealthier neighborhoods can further isolate lower-income families. This trend ultimately leads to a loss of capital (land and buildings) that should ideally be utilized optimally and preserved for future generations.

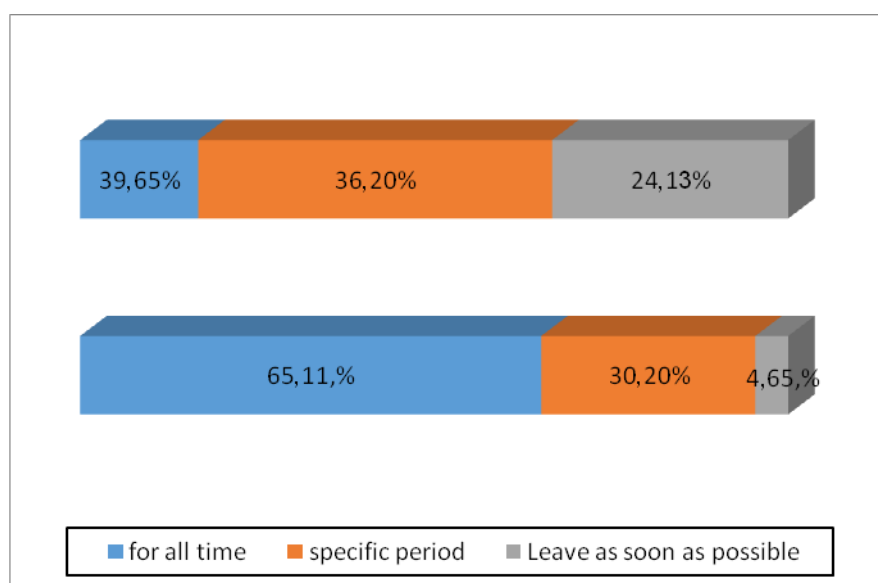


Figure 8: the influence of monthly income on people's desire to stay in the city

MATRIX OF LIKERT METHOD RESULTS

On the basis of the degree of citizen satisfaction grid, we have established a combination in the form of a matrix

Table.02 matrix of likert

	1. Totally disagree	2. At disagreement	3. In Accord	4. Absolutely Agreed	Satisfaction value
Urban planning	26,67	36,67	16,67	20	0,8
Decision-making on the city budget	58,33	14,17	14,17	13,33	0,53
Evaluation and feedback on urban management performance	56,67	11,67	18,33	13,33	0,53
Participation of marginalised groups	37,14	26,43	18,93	17,50	0,7

The value of the criteria score : $(C_1+C_2+C_3+C_4)/4 = (0.8+0.53+0.53+0.7)/4$

$$= 0.64$$

RESEARCH DISCUSSION

EVALUATING QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE CITY

Community participation promotes an alignment between achievements and the real needs of the population, thereby eliminating issues of discrepancy.(Comlan, 2019).Community participation is crucial for ensuring that new developments truly meet residents' needs, thereby preventing discrepancies and fostering a better quality of life. To analyze this quality of life, we focused on the residents' own perceptions (Mebirouk, 2019), which can help us gain a

converging evaluation of housing conditions and various components of the cité. The following table summarizes their ratings:

Table 3: building maintenance ratings

Building Condition	Average Citizen Rating (out of 5)
Aesthetics of the facade	1.76
Maintenance of the facade	1.49
Condition of joints	1.63
Roof waterproofing	2.00
Condition of the staircase	2.24
Condition of the entrance	2.00
Condition of technical installations	2.64

Table 3 clearly indicates a general dissatisfaction among residents regarding the condition of their buildings. Nearly all elements of building maintenance, such as facade aesthetics (1.76/5), facade maintenance (1.49/5), and joint conditions (1.63/5), received scores well below the midpoint of 2.5, highlighting significant areas for improvement. The only exception was the condition of technical installations (2.64/5), which, while still only average, suggests a slightly more positive perception in this area compared to others. This overall low scoring reflects a widespread need for better upkeep and renovation of the residential structures within the houshold Beyond individual buildings, Table 4 provides insights into residents' satisfaction with broader aspects of the city.

Table 4: residents satisfaction with broader aspects of the city.

Elements of the City	Evaluation (/5)
Site within the urban fabric	3.4
Road access	3.8
Internal roads	3.64
Parking	3.32
Commercial facilities	3.44
Health facilities	3.0
School facilities	3.7

Elements of the City	Evaluation (/5)
Green spaces	1.54
Playgrounds	1.47
Sports / Leisure	1.6
Social life	2.2
Cultural life	1.27
Cité environment	2.57
Cité reputation	2.62

The data from Table 4 unmistakably shows a high level of dissatisfaction with the households' outdoor spaces. Residents rated playgrounds (1.47/5), green spaces (1.54/5), and sports/leisure facilities (1.6/5) very poorly. This suggests a critical lack of well-maintained and accessible recreational areas, which are vital for community well-being and engagement. Similarly, cultural life (1.27/5) and social life (2.2/5) also received low scores, indicating a need for more vibrant community activities and spaces that foster social interaction.

While satisfaction with the overall environment (2.57/5) and the cité's reputation (2.62/5) is only moderate, residents expressed more positive, though still not fully satisfied, views on other elements. These include the cité's site within the urban fabric (3.4/5), road access (3.8/5), internal roads (3.64/5), parking (3.32/5), commercial facilities (3.44/5), health facilities (3.0/5), and school facilities (3.7/5). While these scores are above the midpoint, they still suggest room for improvement to achieve complete resident satisfaction.

Overall, the survey highlights a significant disparity between residents' (Clémence, 2007). satisfaction with essential infrastructure and services versus their profound dissatisfaction with recreational spaces and community-building opportunities.

RESIDENTS' SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

The various proposals put forth by residents can be grouped into eight key areas:

80% of suggestions concern hygiene in common areas and outdoor spaces.

60% highlight issues with waterproofing and the deterioration of building paint.

53% focus on resolving problems with the water supply (AEP) and sanitation network, specifically eliminating repetitive pipe bursts.

34% of suggestions call for treating outdoor spaces to eliminate dust.

23% of surveyed households propose the creation of attractive facilities for young people (e.g., sports fields/halls, cultural centers).

43% point out the need to resolve transportation problems (e.g., improving bus stops and organizing bus schedules).

17% of surveyed households emphasize the importance of security within the residential complex.

5% of households advocate for the beautification of building facades (e.g., resolving the issue of chaotically distributed satellite dishes, unifying balcony types).

Evaluation of Proposed Improvements for Residents

Table. 05: evaluation of our proposals for urban improvement by residents

Proposal	Evaluation
Illumination of Public Paths	2.52
Improvement of Sidewalks	2.96
Improvement of Pedestrian Walkways	3.16
Improvement of Waste Collection Points	3.87
Construction of Parking Lots	1.90
Construction of a Multi-purpose Hall for Residents	3.42
Creation of Two New Buildings in the City Center in Place	3.92
Relocating the Health Center from the Ground Floor of a	3.74
Construction of Commercial Premises and Workshops on	3.93
Development of Open Spaces into Green Areas and	4.13
Creation of Other Facilities	3.20

Based on this table, it is evident that all our proposals were accepted by the residents, with the exception of the "Construction of Parking Lots," which received a low score of 1.9/5.

The citizen participation strategy for improving the living environment is based on three main axes:

- 1st Axis: Evaluation by residents of various elements within the city, with the following results:

- * Residents' dissatisfaction regarding the built environment, which was evaluated at 1.96/5.
- * Residents' dissatisfaction regarding outdoor spaces, evaluated between 1.47/5 and 1.6/5.

- 2nd Axis: Focus on residents' suggestions, which indicate:

- * 80% of proposals concerned hygiene in common areas and outdoor spaces.
- * 60% highlighted issues with waterproofing and the deterioration of building paint.
- * 53% emphasized resolving problems with the water supply (AEP) and sanitation network.
- * 43% pointed out the need to resolve transportation problems.
- * 34% of suggestions called for the treatment of outdoor spaces.

- 3rd Axis: Evaluation of our urban improvement proposals by residents.

- * The overall evaluation was 3.33/5, indicating that all our proposals were accepted by the citizens.

Interpreting the results of the Likert method

According to the value obtained from the diagram above, the general opinion of the citizens who participated was that they were not satisfied with their level of participation in decision-making in their administrative territory.

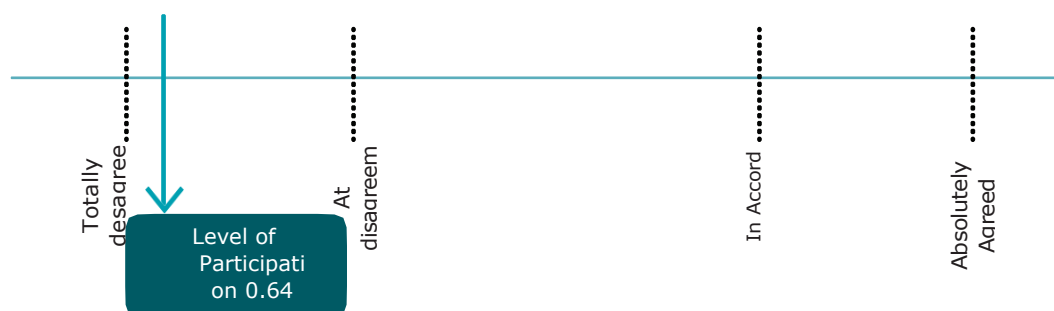


Figure 9: level of participation

According to the evaluation grid representing the level of public participation in the urban planning and management process. (Habitat III, 2015). It is clear that citizen participation is far from being achieved, which urges local authorities and associations to take the process of participatory urban planning more seriously. Legislative texts and more appropriate administrative mechanisms must be put in place.

CONCLUSION

The effectiveness of urban living environment improvement programs demands good governance. This, in turn, requires collaboration among the various urban stakeholders: residents, local authorities, funders, and implementation and control companies. Citizen participation does not exist without actual or potential action by the state. This action is intrinsically capable of modifying spatial behaviour. It presupposes a degree of power, intentionality and the deployment of a strategy to achieve this objective. This approach saves time and resources. Furthermore, it is essential to establish a sustainable maintenance system that develops in response to encountered problems, unforeseen cases, the necessity of executive work, and the specific conditions of each situation. Similarly, a flexible plan that can change and evolve based on obtained results should be implemented. This enables the continuous evolution and revision of results at each planning stage to ensure appropriate outcomes.

This necessitates the establishment of:

Tools that ensure good governance and local management.

A legal framework governing intervention contracts, the roles of different stakeholders, and the financial contributions of the parties involved.

Civic and cultural awareness on the part of residents. This also requires the planner to engage in continuous work and maintain a retrospective view of past events, the current state, and the future, in order to ensure the improvement of the urban living environment and, consequently, its sustainable development.

To effectively identify urban economic development opportunities and anticipate future challenges, it's crucial to foster inclusive participation and collaboration with all stakeholders. This includes empowering civil society, women, and organizations representing youth and people with disabilities to contribute their unique perspectives

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our thanks to the management of the housing and equipment department of the wilaya of Boumerdes, and our deepest respect to the Fronz fanon neighbourhood association.

REFERENCES

- [1] Afri A., 2023. Social diversity in urban diversity through housing: the case of AZZABA, doctoral thesis in urban planning, Saleh Bounider University.
- [2] Ascher, F., 2020. Individual, hypermodernity, megacities – Grande Arche de la Défense. Watchbook UMR AUSser, 5(2), 35-45
- [3] Beaujeu, G. J., 1989. "Urban geography", OPU Alger, 118-158
- [4] Belhadi A., 2002. The actors and the space Some key issues, The actors and the space, 8(2), 25-35

- [5] Benjelloul, M., 2022. Communicating across regions in Tunisia: challenges in the emergence of new regional governance .In book: Public and regional communication in the Maghreb Publisher: l'Harmattan 33-46
- [6] Bouchama, O., Lounes, A., 2024. Evaluation and valorization of peri-urban wasteland in algeria using database indices, Carpathian Journal of Earth and Environmental Sciences , 19(2), 279 – 288
- [7] Chauvet,V., 2007. Une dynamique d'apprentissage organisationnel dans les PME technologiques : un soutien à l'innovation. Vie & sciences de l'entreprise, 17(3), 61-77
- [8] Comlan, M, O., 2019. Forms and Practices of Community Participation in Development Projects in the Municipality of GOGOUNOU in Benin, imo-irikisi, new series, the journal of humanists in Benin, 4(1) , 45-63
- [9] Clémence, C., 2007. Sustainable neighbourhoods: an example of an integrated and participatory approach, Committee 21 – Angenius, 8(1) , 25-38
- [10] Gabriela, P, A., Natasya, S., Jawoto, S, S., 2025. unveiling studentification: reshaping urban landscapes and cultural identities in peri-urban regions, Journal of urban and regional Analysis, 17(1) ,53-71
- [11] Eustache T, K., Nirmala Do., 2025. Navigating through the Dynamic Landscape of Public Administration Governance through Innovative Adaptation and Resilience Practices and Strategies in Africa. Journal of Information Systems Engineering and Management. 10(7). 203-228
- [12] Gobillon, S., 2004. The spatial determinants of unemployment in Île-de-France. Report by the Economic Analysis Council entitled 'Urban Segregation and Social Integration, 112-125
- [13] James, D., 2001. The Myth of Social Capital in Community Development, Housing Policy Debate, 12 (4), 781-806
- [14] Habitat, III., 2015. Issue papers –gouvernance urbaine ; New Yourk, 26-47
- [15] Howard, H., 1974. Neighborhood Government in Metropolitan Settings, Londres, Sage.112-125
- [16] Md, Al-fahad, B & Md, Ashraful, I., 2023. "Assessment Of Service Quality Of Urban Local Government In Bangladesh: The Case Of Pabna Municipality," Theoretical and Empirical Researches in Urban Management, Research Centre in Public Administration and Public Services, Bucharest, Romania, 18(1), 85-105.
- [17] Mebirouk, H., 2019. Urban improvement, a multifaceted approach to improving quality of life. What effects does this have on the population and living environment in the collective housing complexes of Annaba, 212–236
- [18] Robert, A., Anna, B., 2000. « Urban Citizenship », Engin I. Isin (ed.), Democracy, Citizenship and the Global City, Londres, Routledge 243-256
- [19] Zayyanu, A., 2020. Improving the Quality of Life of Urban Communities in Developing Countries, 111-134
- [20] Zebiri, H., 2013. « Urban and architectural visual pollution: the case of traditional housing, suburban housing and collective housing in Constantine. Doctoral thesis in urban planning and architecture, University of Constantine III
- [21] Zitoun, M, S., 2020. Participatory experiences in Algeria: revealing citizens' expectations , insaniyat, 4(2) , 212-233
- [22] Chiara Mazzoleni., 2025. La rielaborazione delle utopie bioregionaliste e comunitarie nella prospettiva territorialista di Alberto Magnaghi in "ARCHIVIO DI STUDI URBANI E REGIONALI" 142/2025, pp 47-69, DOI: 10.3280/ASUR2025-