

## Citizen Participation and Sense of Community in the Development of the Permanent Conservation Project Plan

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### Abstract

Algeria is a country known for its diversity. Indeed, each of its regions stands out for its urban landscape, heritage, customs and traditions. The urban landscape of the Souf region is exceptional. This one is known for the originality of its architecture. Its two old districts "Messaaba and Acheche" having the status of safeguarded sector since the year 2013, were endowed with a project of elaboration of the permanent plan of safeguarding. The citizen is a key element in this project because it is the element that makes this heritage live. Therefore, citizen dialogue must be at the heart of the project process. To facilitate the consultation process and win public confidence for its full support to projects, it is necessary to establish a collaborative approach and establish mechanisms connecting the project. The effectiveness of its participation depends on individual differences. These variables could be demographic (age groups, educational level, economic context ... etc), personality, or sense of community. The purpose of this article is to examine sense of community level that influences the process of participation of citizens concerned by the elaboration of the permanent safeguarding plan project, through a survey that was initiated with the inhabitants of two old districts "Messaaba and Acheche" to the city of El Oued.

**Keywords:** permanent safeguarding plan, citizen participation, sense of community

### 1. Introduction

The role of the citizen in society is not limited to the exercise of the right to vote. Being a citizen means participating collectively in all decisions that affect community life.

In accordance with Algerian legislation "citizens are involved in programs related to the management of their living environment. Thus they are permanently informed about the situation of their city, its evolution and its prospects"<sup>1</sup>.

Indeed, their participation in the functioning of society becomes a primordial step. Projects with strong community participation have many benefits. They are less expensive, so easier to implement. In addition, they better meet the needs of the population, and they enhance the value and empowerment of individuals.

Citizen participation is also the mechanism for active community involvement in the decision-making process of working in partnership and representation in community structures (Chapman & Kirk, 2001). It should be noted that citizen participation often means the participation of individuals or community structures (Chapman & Kirk, 2001). It should be noted that citizen participation often means the participation of individuals or communities with the government.<sup>2</sup>

In each community, citizens stand out with unique characteristics (various factors related to the characteristics of the inhabitants of a particular environment, such as age groups, level of ability, socio-economic background, level of education,

<sup>1</sup>Art1&17 Loi n° 2006-06 du 21 Moharram 1427 correspondant au 20 février 2006 portant loi d'orientation de la ville, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Sense of Community and Participation for Tourism Development FariborzAref Life Science Journal, Volume 8, Issue 1, 2011

and sense of community) (Moos 1979, P.530). The influence of citizen characteristics in a community on citizen participation differs from the influence of these characteristics at the individual level.

The purpose of this article is to examine sense of community level that influences the process of participation of citizens who are concerned by the project of elaboration of the permanent safeguarding plan through a survey that was initiated with the inhabitants of two old districts "Messaaba and Acheche"

## 2. Safeguarded sectors and permanent plans of protection

According to the Malraux law of 4 August, 1962, a safeguarded sector is a protection measure relating to a "sector of historical, aesthetic character or nature justifying conservation, restoration and enhancement of all or part of 'a set of buildings'".

The safeguarded sector is a regulatory approach that specifies two main objectives:

- Avoid the disappearance or irreversible damage to historic districts establishing legal protection measure
- Promote the restoration and enhancement of the entire heritage while allowing its evolution.<sup>1</sup>

In a safeguarded sector, the programs and the intervention and development measures are framed by a plan of safeguarding and enhancement.

Since 2003, Algeria has put in place a law (98-04) on the protection of cultural heritage and its executive decree (03-324 of 5/10/2003), which are applicable for the protection and implementation of value of historic sites through PPSMVSS.<sup>2</sup>

The permanent safeguarding plan is a new protection measure that has taken a prominent place in Algerian policy as part of stopping the deterioration of real estate. Its objective is the programming and implementation of conservation, restoration and recovery operations.

## 3. Citizen participation and sense of community

The concept of " sense of community " is used to describe the feelings of belonging of different types of communities<sup>3</sup>. It means a feeling of belonging felt by members, feeling that they matter for one another, and for the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met by their commitment to be together (McMillan, 1976).

McMillan and Chavis (1986) proposed a four-dimensional community-mindset model, including the following components: Belonging, Influence, Integration and Needs Satisfaction, and Shared Emotional Relationship.

The first element is belonging. It is the feeling of belonging or sharing of a feeling of personal connection.

The second element is influence. The feeling of importing, of making a difference for a group and for the group to import to its members.

The third element is strengthening: integration and meeting needs. This is the feeling that the resources received through their membership in the group will satisfy the needs of members.

The last element is the shared emotional relationship, commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, commonplaces, time and similar experiences together<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Korti Rafika, Sassi Boudemagh Souad "Managerial approach in the elaboration of a permanent safeguarding plan "Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, Volume 225, 14 July 2016, Pages 34-46.

<sup>2</sup>Le manuel de réhabilitation comme outil de conservation dans le cadre du plan permanent de sauvegarde de la casbah d'Alger, Amina Abdessamed-Foufa. P1

<sup>3</sup>Elvira Cicognani & Claudia Pirini & Corey Keyes & Mohsen Joshano & Reza Rostami & Masoud Nosratabadi "Social Participation, Sense of Community and Social Well Being: A Study on American, Italian and Iranian University Students" Publié le: 29 November 2007 Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2007

<sup>4</sup>David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis George Peabody College of Vanderbilt University "Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory" Journal of Community Psychology Volume 14, January 1986

Social participation (civic or citizen) has been defined as "a process in which individuals take part in decision making in the institutions, programs and environments that affect them" (Heller 1984, p. 339).

It plays an important role in various areas including: work organization, medical and environmental programs, urban planning, rehabilitation and political participation<sup>1</sup>. Citizen and user participation is an important concept and strategy for planners, designers, community organizers and government representatives.

It has been proposed as an important technique to improve the quality of the residential environment and the satisfaction of residents as well as to have positive psychological effects.

According to some authors, sense of community can be considered as a catalyst for social involvement and participation in the community (eg, Chavis and Wandersman 1990, Davidson and Cotter 1986, Perkins et al 1990), Hughey and others. (1999) argue that participation increases sense of community. Citizen participation offers young people the opportunity to strengthen social bonds with people other than their families in different social contexts and through this, helps them to acquire a sense of connectivity and belonging as well as to strengthen their identity and their identification processes (Cotterell1996).<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. Method and case study

##### 4.1. Case study

The two old districts of "Messaaba and Acheche", located in the heart of the city of El-Oued, which is the first core of the city with an estimated area of 29.47 hectares. It is known for its business movement that attracts a large number of visitors every day from all countries.

**Table n ° 01: The study sample in relation to the population of the city**

	Size of the study area(H)	Population (N)	Population (%)	Trade (N)
El-Oued city	77.20	155525	20.71 of El-Oued city population	2 665
Aacheche	<b>17.1</b>	<b>1096</b>	0.70 of the population of El-Oued main district	200
Messaaba	<b>11.2</b>	<b>1552</b>	1.00 of the population of El-Oued main district	150
Echantillon	28.3	266	10.00 of Aacheche/ Messaaba population	35

Source: Urban Planning Department of El Oued& author 2017

##### 4.2. Sample and procedure

Data were collected during the month of March 2017; the target population for the survey was the citizens of both old Messaaba neighborhoods and Acheche older than 18 years. Surveys were undertaken to obtain in-depth information from a variety of participants who are directly involved in the drafting of the permanent safeguarding plan, and each respondent had an equal chance of being selected.

The study area was divided into two regions, each investigator was assigned to a zone and a target of completing 38 questionnaires each day over a seven day period. This gave 271 completed questionnaires.

<sup>1</sup>Abraham Wandersman Department of Psychology, University of South Carolina & Paul Florin Department of Psychology, University of Rhode Island Handbook of Community Psychology. Edited by Julian Rappaport and Edward Seidmen/Klewer academic/Plenum publishers, New York 2000, P247-248)

<sup>2</sup> Cicognani&ClaudiaPirini&Corey Keyes &Mohsen Joshani&RezaRostami&MasoudNosratabadi "Social Participation, Sense of Community and Social Well Being: A Study on American, Italian and Iranian University Students" Publié le: 29 November 2007 Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2007

A trained interviewer approached respondents; questions were directly asked and the answers were recorded. The questionnaires were anonymous, completion required approximately 15 minutes.

### 4.3. Survey

4.4. Data were collected through a survey questionnaire designed to assess the dimensions of the satisfaction of needs of group membership, influence and emotional relationship as defined in the model of McMillan and Chavis (1986). The sense of community measure used in this study was a scale of 12 items.

In accordance with the recommendations of the sense of community literature (Peterson, Speer and Hughey, 2006), only positively written points were included in the SOC scale. Some of the questionnaire items for this survey were measured using Likert's four-choice answer scale: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The response format for other items was a yes / no or a response to strict choices.

A pre-test of research instrument was conducted to examine its relevance and reliability.

## 5. Results and discussions

The results are organized to explore the sense of community level of Messaaba and Acheche citizens, which influences their participation. The variables are divided into four categories: Belonging, Influence, Integration and Need Satisfaction, and Shared Emotional Relationship.

Table n ° 02 Meeting the needs of inhabitants in neighborhoods

		Responses		Percentage of observations
		N	Percentage	
Integration and satisfaction of needs	Do you have property in this neighborhood	106	21.3%	47.3%
	I can satisfy all my needs in this neighborhood	200	40.2%	89.3%
	This neighborhood offers me many opportunities to live	192	38.6%	85.7%
Total		498	100.0%	222.3%

Source : author, 2017

Table 3 shows the result of the first "satisfaction of needs" measurement scale through three questions. We find that 47.3% of the inhabitants own property in the study area, and that 89.3% of the inhabitants can find satisfaction for all their needs. Similarly 85.7% say that these neighborhoods offer many opportunities to live comfortably (work, study ...), the two old neighborhoods are known by their commercial movements, where is located the largest market in the region providing most needs residents (food products, equipment, clothing ... etc.), and all public facilities (schools, hospitals, administrations ... etc.), are very close. This explains the results of the survey.

Table n°03 Sense of belonging to their neighborhoods

		Responses		Percentage of observations
		N	Percentage	
Belonging	I feel safe in this neighborhood	199	25.5%	85.8%
	I feel like I belong to this neighborhood	226	29.0%	97.4%
	It will be very difficult to move to another place	163	20.9%	70.3%
	I am proud of this neighborhood	191	24.5%	82.3%
Total		779	100.0%	335.8%

Source : author, 2017

**Table n ° 04 The Emotional connection shared by the inhabitants**

		Réponses		Pourcentage d'observations
		N	Pourcentage	
shared emotional connection	I love this neighborhood	227	34.3%	93.0%
	I have a lot of memories in this neighborhood	214	28.9%	87.7%
	I get on well with my neighbors	222	36.8%	96.5%
Total		265	100.0%	277.2%

Source : author, 2017

Tables 4 and 5 present the results of the second and third scale of "Belonging" and "Shared Emotional connection" across seven questions, with the results indicating that most residents have a great feeling. 85.8% say they feel safe, and 97.4% of residents feel attached to neighborhoods, so more than 80% are proud to be part of this neighborhood community. In the third table, we observe that over 90% of citizens love their neighborhood, so more than 95% express their sense of agreement with their entourage.

The Aachech and Messaaba are the oldest neighborhoods in the city where most of their citizens are born and enlarged, and have many memories, they are distinguished by their kindness, and their generosity and attachment to each other, so these are the factors which explain the result of two tables.

**Table n ° 05 Influence of the inhabitants on their neighborhoods**

		Responses		Pourcentage of observations
		N	Pourcentage	
influence	I participate in many activities related to the neighborhood	161	56.3%	69.4%
	my opinion has an impact on participation in cases concerning this neighborhood	125	43.7%	53.9%
Total		286	100.0%	123.3%

Source : author, 2017

Table 6 shows the result of the last measurement scale "Influence" through two affirmations; we note that 69.4% of citizens confirm that they have participated in activities related to their neighborhoods and almost 54% think that their opinions attract the attention of those in charge and could influence its decisions.

The results explain that the inhabitants are interested in Aachech and Messaaba and this appears in the participation in the several activities that aim at improving their neighborhoods, two factors can intervene: a higher level of consciousness that forces them more to participate and a greater solidarity.

## 6. Conclusion

The objective of this study was to examine the sense of community of Acheche and Messaaba citizens, located in the town of El Oued, to determine the effectiveness of their participation in the project of developing the permanent safeguarding plan of the two old districts. Sense of community provides a sense of responsibility for others and a willingness to share and interact. We can say that sense of community influences the ability of local citizens to participate in activities that affect their community. Clearly, community spirit plays an influential role in the successful development of the Permanent Safeguarding Plan project.

According to the results, the citizens of two old neighborhoods show a great sense of belonging and responsibility towards their community. They fit well into their surroundings. They love and respect each other, because they born and have grown up where they have lived for several decades. They have memories of their childhood. so the inhabitants of Aacheche

and Messaaba are sociable and prefer living together they are very attached to their midst point where they refuse to move, to conclude, we can say that both Old neighborhoods have a strong social character and a high sense of community, all of which help to improve the participatory process.

Lastly, we must consider sense of community as an important factor in fostering the understanding and co-operation of the inhabitants.

The results of this research could be used as guidelines in community studies and citizen participation.

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