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## Participatory public policies

### The experience of urban development Decentralization Support Project in Benin

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#### ABSTRACT

##### Context and background

Citizen participation is increasingly well understood around the world, and its practice is spreading. In fact, it became a pillar of well-functioning democracies in the 19th century. This makes it desirable, and even essential! It helps institutions build fruitful relationships with communities. These relationships enhance local quality of life because they explain decisions, which tend to be more sustainable and equitable.

It is for the Urban Development and Decentralization Support Project (PAURAD), and as with many urban development projects in Benin, a facet of a dialogue between institutions and communities that leads to decisions that create social and economic capital.

##### Goal and Objectives:

This research aims to analyze community participation in the implementation of the Urban Development and Decentralization Support Project (PAURAD) in Benin.

##### Methodology:

The present work is a mixed-methods research on community participation in the implementation of the Urban Development and Decentralization Support Project (PAURAD) in Benin. As such, it combines qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques in order to achieve its objectives. To this end, appropriate data collection methods were chosen, namely the document review, the (semi-directive) interview and the questionnaire; developed with their specific tools, namely the reading sheet, the guide and the questionnaire respectively. Sampling is determined by reasoned choice and simple random choice methods.

##### Results:

The participatory approach is a vector for nourishing and supporting the social demand which is then carried by the urban project management. Within the framework of PAURAD, it is tangible, but nevertheless limited to simple consultation meetings, organized from time to time during the project implementation process. In addition, it does little to promote community responsibility for the maintenance of future infrastructure and works to be put in place. There is also an urgent need to expand participation in decision-making in the various processes.

##### Keywords :

public policies, participation, decentralization, urban development

## Politiques publiques participatives

### Expérience des projets d'appui au développement urbain et à la décentralisation au Bénin

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#### Résumé :

La participation citoyenne est de mieux en mieux comprise dans le monde, et sa pratique se répand. De fait, elle est devenue un pilier du bon fonctionnement des démocraties au XIXe siècle. Ce qui la rend désirable, souhaitable et même essentielle ! Elle aide les institutions à nouer avec les communautés des relations fructueuses. Ces relations rehaussent la qualité de vie à l'échelle locale parce qu'elles expliquent les décisions, qui tendent ainsi à être plus durables et plus équitables.

Elle est pour le Projet d'Aménagement Urbain et d'Appui à la Décentralisation (PAURAD), et comme pour bon nombre de projets de développement urbain au Bénin une facette d'un dialogue entre les institutions et les communautés qui débouche sur des décisions créatrices de capital social et économique.

#### Mots clés :

*Politiques publiques, Participation,  
Décentralisation, Développement urbain*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Faced with the results requirements imposed by the government and partners and the demand for well-being expressed by the population, the administration's need for performance requires the design and implementation of projects and programs (Béhanzin, 2016). Project design, and even more so implementation, requires practical rigor and scientific knowledge, where improvisation, haste and isolated knowledge are to be avoided (Menye, 2009). The Ministry of the Living Environment and Sustainable Development, as the structure in charge of defining, monitoring the implementation and evaluation of State policy on the environment, climate change management, reforestation, protection of natural and forest resources, preservation of ecosystems, urban planning, and protection of banks and coastlines, must meet these expectations effectively. In other words, it must provide concrete solutions to multiple problems in communities that are different from one another in many ways. Hence the need first to define the problems, then to integrate them into its specifications and to refine, year after year, in conjunction with the local authorities, the solutions to be implemented according to the means and resources at its disposal and the specific characteristics of each community.

One of the solutions found, but probably the least known by the population, after many initiatives in the direction of urban development (PRGU, PGUD-1, PGUD-2, PAACO and PUGEMU among others) is the Urban Development and Decentralization Support Project (PAURAD). With a total amount of 40,100,000 SDR, or about 30,000,000 F CFA, this project is financed by the World Bank under the financing agreement No. 5274-BJ of October 9, 2013 and aims to improve the living conditions of the populations and strengthen the management capacities of the municipalities of the ten (10) beneficiary cities (Abomey, Abomey-Calavi, Bohicon, Comè, Cotonou, Lokossa, Kandi, Parakou, Porto Novo, Sèmè-Podji). More explicitly, the project aims, through the three components on which it is based, to: (i) strengthen the capacities of Benin's municipalities through the provision and management of basic urban services; (ii) fill the infrastructure gaps in Benin's urban centers; (iii) strengthen and consolidate the intergovernmental budgetary framework and thus lay the foundations for a full transfer of resources from central to local government. The PAURAD financing agreement comes into force on June 6, 2014 and is scheduled to close on June 20, 2020.

Although the project came into force on June 6, 2014, the actual start of activities did not take place until October 30, 2014 and implementation was not as easy as it seems. While it is true that a certain majority of the planned activities have already been implemented, it is also true that adjustments had to be made, activities had to be reviewed, stakeholders had to be added and taken into account; due to certain realities that were not fully taken into account during the development process of this project. In addition to all this, there were obviously difficulties in implementing certain procedures, which somewhat delayed the implementation of certain activities. The physical and financial execution rates of this project as of March 31, 2020, i.e. about three months before its provisional closure, are respectively 95% and 97.7% (ST-PAURAD, 2020). All things that are more indicative of the good practices and the (participatory) approach that characterized the management of this project.

Difficulties in implementation, especially at the level of development projects, are moreover globally linked to the way decisions are taken according to Gandhi quoted by Ky (2012), who said: "*Everything*

*you do for me without me, you do against me*". The consequence of keeping the population out of the decision-making process is that it does not feel part of the implementation and loses interest in the project to which it had initially given its support (Kodjo, 2019). For a population to be interested in an activity, it must necessarily be closely involved in identifying needs and setting priorities, finding solutions and making decisions (Agbandji, 2012). Ultimately, a participatory approach must be adopted at all levels of the process; participation taken according to IFAD (2001) as a shared perception and a factor of accountability leading to joint decision-making. It begins with consultation, goes through negotiation (of problems, solutions and approaches) to arrive at decisions and action; this development institution continues.

From all the above, the question that arises is what mechanism should be put in place to enable people to participate effectively in urban development projects and programs in Benin. To this end, the Urban Development and Decentralization Support Project (PAURAD) will be the subject of this research.

This research work is articulated in three parts. The first part deciphers the theoretical and empirical foundations of the research, while the second part explains the methodology adopted to achieve the expected results. The third part presents the main results obtained after processing and analyzing the data collected, and contributes to the evidence that underpins the discussion and underpins the recommendations made to the various stakeholders as a result of this work.

## **2. THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

### **2.1. Public Policies Versus Participation**

#### **2.1.1. Participation, a classic figure of public action**

The notion of participation is widely used in development actions and the results achieved are not always up to expectations (Leroy, 2009). Indeed, this sometimes leads to differences in understanding between the actors who use it in that each tends to give it content according to their objectives (Nouhouayi, 2010).

Contemporary societies, which are increasingly open and individualistic, value social capital, personal commitments and the mobilization of actors. Involvement in causes is positively connoted and often considered as one of the significant marks of modernity. The growing success of the notion of *participation* accompanies this trend towards the involvement of *civil society*. In all sectors (politics, economy, culture, environment, technology, etc.), direct participation in the choices affecting the future, at the local or national level, would be a proof of the maturity of our social systems. The participant, the participative individual would be the archetype of the informed actor, aware of the stakes and well integrated, while the mass of others, silent and passive, would embody the past (CAS, 2008). Citizen participation in public action in fact leads to a series of adjustments both within the public authorities and society itself. It creates a legitimate space for discussion of new actors and dictates common standards for dialogue (Bherer, 2011).

The theme of participation is nothing new: public action necessarily involves the meeting and collaboration of public authorities and social actors (CAS, 2008). In this way of thinking, citizen participation is both constant, everywhere and nowhere. While the resurgence of the theme is recent, as reflected in the proliferation of work on the phenomenon, it should not conceal the fact that many forms of public action *naturally* have a participatory dimension.

For Conac, Savonnet-Guyot and Conac (1985), to participate is to take part in something with others. Meister (1971), cited by Boukhari (1998), defines participation for this purpose as the voluntary organization of two or more individuals in a common activity from which they do not only intend to derive personal and immediate benefits. For Morin (2004), it is the use of personal resources to act with others. Participation depends on the action to be accomplished. Thus, in the field of sports, the effectiveness of participation is evoked by Pierre de Coubertin, father of the Olympic Games, through his famous phrase: *The important thing is not to win but to participate*. All in all, a twofold hypothesis of the notion of participation (Morin, 2004) allows us to distinguish: (i) upstream: the more motivated you are, the more you participate; (ii) downstream: the more you participate, the more satisfactory results you obtain.

Moreover, the essential characteristic of participation is the transition from individual to collective potential (Agbandji, 2015). We could therefore speak of public participation, electoral participation and social participation (Fortier, 2014). Public participation is the action of taking part in collective decisions within the government, a public institution or a civil society organization (Thibault, Lequin and Tremblay, 2000). Associated with representative democracy, electoral participation is the act of voting to determine a representative in elections, whether municipal, provincial, federal, associative or institutional (Sintomer, 2013). Social participation refers to the involvement of individuals in collective activities as part of their daily lives (Sainou et al., 2019).

Perceived as a development factor, participation in projects is only effective when the mobilization and commitment of the populations is spontaneous and the whole community is fully involved in the development process in the short, medium and long term, without external intervention (Kodjo, 2019). Participation can then, and rightly so, be considered as a guarantee of a project's success, ownership and sustainability. According to the ADB (2001), participation in development can be defined as *the process by which interested persons (stakeholders) jointly influence and control development initiatives, decisions and resources that concern them*. In practice, according to Diop (2004), this implies the adoption of measures for:

- i. identify the stakeholders concerned,
- ii. share information with them,
- iii. listen to their points of view,
- iv. Involve them in the development planning and decision-making process,
- v. contribute to the strengthening of their capacities, and finally,
- vi. give them the possibility to initiate, manage and control their own development.

Under these conditions, therefore, it can renew public policies in a bottom-up mode, relying on citizens' expertise and co-decision. It can also stimulate the dynamics of emancipation of people, especially those who are most precarious and far removed from the spoken word (Carrel, 2013).

By understanding participation in this way, it is possible to identify the classic forms it has taken through the many mechanisms that have been put in place. These classical forms are mainly related to economic and social democracy, whose objective *"is to perfect political democracy through the participation of economic and social forces in the governance of the economy at all levels"* (Jégouzo, 2006). Such formulas also show that, far from being opposed, representative democracy and participatory democracy go hand in hand. These classic figures are ultimately organized around



several themes: *involvement, negotiation, consultation, information, accountability, consultation, sharing, commitment, collaboration or simply human rights and democracy* (Vodounnon Totin, 2009). Each of these terms in its own way represents participation, which is increasingly seen as indispensable to the planning and financing of all types of development interventions (Yoda, 2004). The following table attempts to summarize what participation of the population consists of at each level of life in development projects.

| PHASES         | PUBLIC PARTICIPATION FOR :   |
|----------------|--|
| IDENTIFICATION | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify the problems to be solved</li> <li>- Identify the central problem to be solved</li> <li>- Describe the central idea</li> <li>- Reflect on, consider and propose solutions</li> </ul>   |
| INSTRUCTION    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analyze the project idea in detail (objectives, results, means, activities)</li> <li>- Analyze problems and treatment options</li> <li>- Make decisions on the need to continue</li> <li>- Develop a draft funding proposal</li> </ul>  |
| FINANCING      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Estimate the contributions of the target population (local resources)</li> <li>- Estimate the costs and means required</li> <li>- Develop a funding proposal</li> <li>- Sign the financing agreement</li> </ul>   |
| EXECUTION      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Respect the schedule established during the instruction</li> <li>- Fulfilling one's share of responsibility</li> <li>- Identify and reflect on the problems facing the normal course of business</li> <li>- Modify some objectives if necessary</li> <li>- Evaluate the general progress of the work</li> </ul> |
| EVALUATION     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Taking stock of achievements</li> <li>- Learning lessons for future projects</li> <li>- Analyze the impact of the project during the retrospective evaluation.</li> </ul>   |

**Table 1. Participation of the population throughout the project cycle**

### 2.1.2. Tools and methods for participatory design and management of development projects

The search for efficiency in the management of development projects and programs has led development institutions and organizations to design important participatory methods and tools. Indeed, not all these methods use the same tools and their objectives can be significantly different. The **logical framework** is recognized as the primary participatory and project management tool (Ky, 2012). Indeed, it has undergone several changes in that most organizations that have adopted it have invested in a more elaborate and broader methodology leading to the establishment of logical frameworks according to their respective requirements (Yoda, 2004). Logical framework development follows a procedure with well-developed rules called the **Logical Framework Approach (LFA)** that should not be confused with the logical framework that is the product of this approach. The LFA is a technique developed by USAID in the late 1960s that allows stakeholders to identify and analyze problems, and then define the objectives to be achieved and the activities to be undertaken to achieve them. It is used by planners to test the design of a draft project to ensure its relevance, feasibility, and sustainability (Béhanzin, 2016).

Aware of the fundamental weaknesses of the logical framework, the German Development Agency (GTZ) added an analysis phase to it at the beginning of the 1980s and introduced the interactive visual technique called Metaplan. The latter is a communication technique using different coloured cards, wall panels, etc. to visualize, analyze and memorize ideas and information emerging during

workshops (Tacka-Grah, 2010). This management method called **Project Planning by Objectives (PPO)** includes an analysis phase and a planning phase. The analysis phase focuses on analyzing participation, problems, objectives, and alternatives. The planning phase is devoted to: (i) determination of the intervention logic; (ii) formulation of hypotheses; (iii) definition of objectively verifiable indicators; (iv) identification of sources and means of verification; (v) retention of preconditions; (vi) development of a timetable.

The Project Cycle Management (PCM) approach is a methodological approach to the preparation, implementation and evaluation of projects and programs based on an approach involving the various project stakeholders. PCM provides a less rigid and less linear management framework (Stattner, 2013). Thus, the manager has room for manoeuvre during the cycle since he can intervene at any time to rectify the inadequacies of the formulation logic (objectives / activities / means / results), thanks to a continuous evaluation of the actions undertaken. Although the phases of the project cycle vary from one institution to another, it must be said that, in general, all project cycles within the framework of development cooperation consist of three main phases which are: a project preparation phase, a project implementation phase and a project evaluation phase (Codjo, 2008). Community participation is transversal to all these phases (Tacka-Grah, 2010).

**Results-based management (RBM)** was introduced by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in the mid-1990s to more rigorously define the objectives pursued by development projects and programs, in concert with partners in the field and in Canada (Leroy, 2009). This method is based on a participatory approach that focuses an organization's or project's efforts on the expected results. It also contributes to a better assessment of the impact of aid and enables CIDA and many other development institutions to provide accurate and relevant information on the use of public funds. What distinguishes the results-based management approach from other management approaches is that only the results are actually important (Yoda, 2004). Every effort is made to achieve the expected results that have been set in a participatory manner (with the participation of all stakeholders). The achievement of these outcomes follows a certain sequence called the *results chain*.

In terms of participatory methods of project management, the best known is the **Accelerated Method of Participatory Research (MARP)**. It was developed in the field of rural development in the 1970s. It is one of the first formalized rapid diagnostic methods developed by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), by English experts, in particular Robert Chambers (Lazarev and Arab, 2000). For pedagogical purposes, practitioners have defined PRA as an intensive, iterative and rapid process of learning oriented towards knowledge of rural situations (Yoda, 2004). It relies on a multidisciplinary team. Particular emphasis is placed on valorizing the knowledge and know-how of local populations and combining it with modern scientific knowledge (Lavigne, Sellamma and Mathieu, 2004). According to Ky (2012), the success of such a method recommends the following principles: participation, multidisciplinary, valorization of traditional knowledge, learning process, iterative process, triangulation, flexibility, optimal ignorance, visualization, exploration and innovation. In order to promote the production and analysis of information, MARP has a "tool bag" for information collection and analysis. The choice of tools depends on the context.

Participatory methods, particularly PRA, have been refined according to contexts, fields, criticisms and technological means since their appearance in the 1970s (Yoda, 2004). Several other



participatory methods have emerged from these criticisms and are used by the various development institutions in place.

## 2.2. Urban projects: between innovation and tradition

### 2.2.1. In search of urban sustainability

By 2050, Africa is expected to have the fastest urban growth rate in the world (Béhanzin, 2019). By 2050, African cities are expected to be home to an additional 950 million people. Much of this growth is occurring in small and medium-size cities. While urbanization is traditionally explained by rural-urban migration, in some African countries it is precisely the low level of rural-urban migration that creates agglomerations. For example, in Niger, the population of villages is growing so fast that they are being transformed into cities (Bossard, 2018). This unbridled urbanization is **complex, plural and heterogeneous** (Ouédraogo, 2010) and makes all forecasts difficult. African urban agglomerations, most often developing without benefiting from policies or investments commensurate with these challenges. Yet if the stakes are grasped, they offer real opportunities for rationalizing public policies and encouraging prospects in terms of consumption and labor. Urban planning and management are therefore priority development issues (MCVDD, 2017). Understanding urbanization, its drivers, dynamics and impacts is therefore essential for designing targeted, inclusive and forward-looking local, national and continental policies.

Urban planning has constantly raised questions about its status (Pinson, 2018). But is it different for other disciplines, such as Auguste Comte's "social physics," which will become sociology while often merging with Marcel Mauss's anthropology, or by declining or subdividing itself, like many other disciplines, into urban sociology, housing, and now energy? Generally speaking, as a discipline (Rabinovich and Navez-Bouchanine, 2005), urban planning can be seen as an *attempt to organize a territory so that it can enable and support the establishment of a wide variety of activities present in a city and, more generally, the provision of a variety of common goods for citizens (security, hygiene, mobility)*. To achieve these goals and to order the city in a concordant manner, urban planning must be closely linked with various conventional regulatory tools, such as legislation or technical standards, which allow the alignment of human activities, without obscuring the sustainability aspect introduced since the 1992 Rio Earth Summit.

For nearly half a century, numerous and varied criticisms have been made of the usual modes of planning, intervention and management of urban space (Yemadjè, 2015). These criticisms are based on different theoretical, epistemological or ideological arguments, but have converged towards reformist trends in urban planning and the management of "urban projects". Most have done so in order to better integrate the social, economic and political data of the contexts of intervention and to involve a greater number of actors, especially those directly concerned, in the decision-making process (Chalas, 2004). The challenge is therefore for cities to conquer spaces of self-determination, which leads them to look at their own resources, beyond the economic forces that push them to do what the largest do (Emelianoff, 2004).

Criticism of earlier models led, as early as the 1970s, to important changes in the way urban development was conceived and promoted (Rabinovich and Navez-Bouchanine, 2005). Sustainable urban planning, as it is today's topical issue, immediately covers multiple dimensions: technical, economic, ecological, social and, more broadly, cultural (Gauthier, 2009). It is a matter of thinking and doing the city differently, of creating another model of urban planning and development, but also

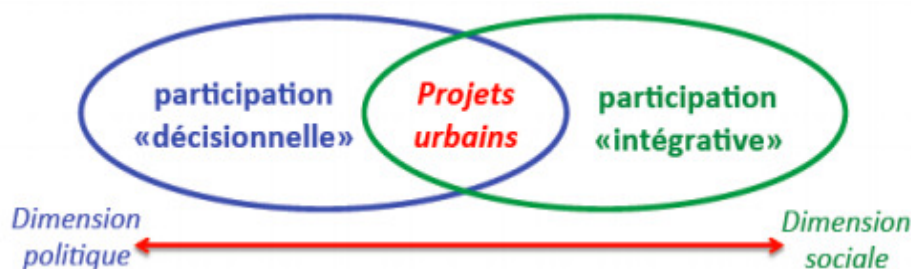
of inventing other lifestyles, ways of living, moving around, consuming... Far from being a procedure, sustainable urban planning is part of a process, a project and progress approach that re-interprets professional practices, political leaders and local actors, including inhabitants (Jegou, 2011). The learning of "**eco-responsible**" behaviors by city actors, and in particular the inhabitants, remains a key issue for a real control of resources and uses in cities (CERDD, 2020).

From this perspective, urban planning today aims to be a vector and a means of appropriating more sustainable lifestyles. The plans drawn up within urban planning, designed to reduce uncertainty, control and organize growth through an overall project, have given rise to practices based on strategic management and today fundamentally aim at sustainability. The sustainable city is a city that equips and maintains itself (Auby, 2013), but in a continuous and sustainable manner. This is why, in addition to feasibility studies for urban projects, environmental and social assessments are now required for all types of development initiatives, and even more so for urban development initiatives.

### 2.2.1. Citizen participation and urban governance: a challenge for urban projects

Urban action, because it concerns the inhabitants' living environment, is the subject of particular attention in terms of citizen participation (Guinand, 2014). It should be remembered that, like the urban project, participation is not a new concept. Conceptualized and put into practice since the 1960s, participation is still a vague notion in which illusions and highly contradictory practices are often diluted (Rabinovich, 2000). In 2002, the OECD described three essential levels of citizen involvement in a document on the role of citizens as partners of the state (and not as clients): (i) **Information** : a unidirectional relationship, from the organization to the citizen; (ii) **Consultation** : a bidirectional relationship in which citizens are invited to give their opinion; and (iii) **Participation** : a relationship in which citizens are genuinely involved in the decision-making process and even in the management of the organization.

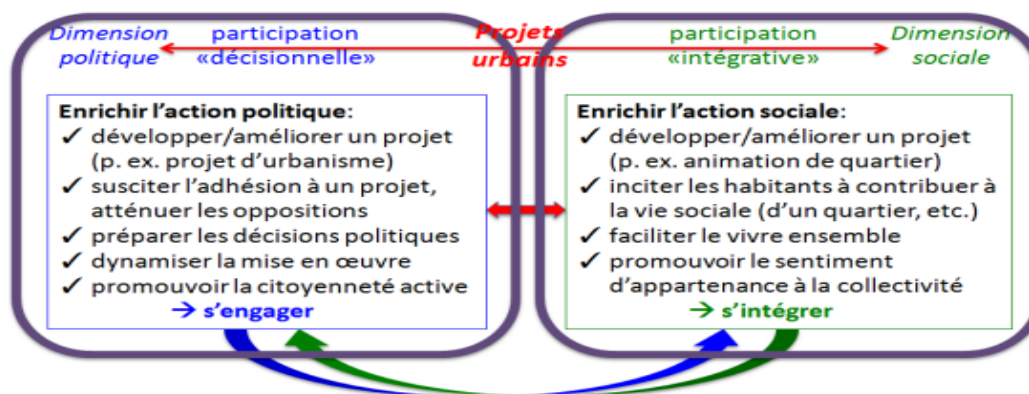
A generic definition of participation can be retained as the involvement of residents in public policies and, more specifically from an urban planning perspective, in the development and management of urban projects and spaces (Gauillier and Gardesse, 2016). In practice, this involvement of inhabitants does not follow a single model (Kodjo, 2019). The modalities and degrees of inhabitants' involvement vary considerably during the different phases of a process, as well as from one experience to another. However, it is easy to grasp this concept, and even easier when we talk about sustainable urban development based on these two components, especially the social and political ones (see figure below).



**Fig. 1. Dimensions of participation**

Both integrative participation and political participation allow for the creation of a space for speech and expression with distinct but complementary objectives. The figure below summarizes the

essential points of these two approaches.



**Fig. 2. Integrative participation Vs Decision-making participation**

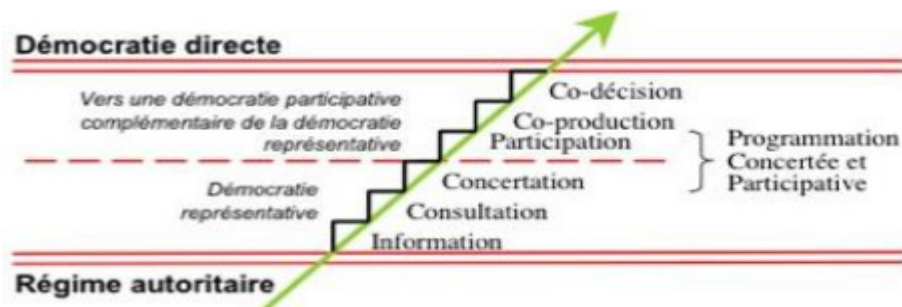
The question of the involvement of the inhabitants in development or construction projects seems in fact all the more unavoidable today as the areas of intervention are no longer virgin. They are already inhabited, "lived"; it is therefore difficult to envisage "rebuilding the city on the city" without taking into account the practices and social and spatial representations that have marked and still mark the identity of places (Zetlaoui-Leger, 2005). The idea that any intervention in the urban environment, whether it emanates from social movements or public authorities, must be associated with a multi-actor approach, and this at different scales (local, regional, national, international) appears to be indisputable (Rabinovich and Navez-Bouchanine, 2005). According to Hillenkamp (2007), participatory governance as a form of domination can make it possible to understand the historical changes and levels of observation of urban governance as a threat to democracy.

Public action and the renewal of scales imply a change in the operating modes of collective action in territorial governance (Tingbe-Azalou, 2010). Regulation calls for the objective of greater efficiency in public policies to better satisfy the general interest. Territorial regulation of public action integrating territorial governance is a dynamic mechanism, based on a learning process, involving a multiplicity of actors, not all of whom belong to the sphere of government (Danvidé, 2015). Regulatory approaches or strategies constitute a set of activities aimed at coordinating actions and projects in a delimited space called territory. In a participatory methodology, the communal development plan generally involves all the grassroots development actors by taking into account all the scales of territorial configuration from the villages to the communal level (Saïnou et al., 2015). It is important to go beyond this, i.e. to combine political and participatory democracy, think about the ownership of the various actors and contextualize the priorities of public action and the management of local public affairs.

The implementation of participation also requires innovative configurations according to the issues it is supposed to address (Guinand, 2014). These include finding ways to overcome obstacles to the smooth running of the process, in particular not to put people in a position where the mobilization of cultural and social references might be less obvious. For, these differences prove to be real obstacles to the process and generate real frustrations (Agbandji, 2015). In the possible modalities, it is possible, for example, to work with small homogeneous groups beforehand. The idea is not to use "expert" language but, on the contrary, to learn how to popularize. The objectives, expectations and advantages of implementing such an approach must also be explained in a very concrete manner. Depending on the context, one can also work in different languages with the help of translators in

order to make the stakes and needs regarding the need to mobilize around a given issue clear. It is necessary to be able to create bridges to take communities out of their sometimes autarkic way of functioning and link them to other fields, other ways of seeing the world, notably to question citizenship (Guinand, 2014).

Urban policy actors can today rely on work to define the different levels of participation and the different degrees of involvement of inhabitants, work that has been jointly carried out in recent years by researchers, associations and planning professionals, using the scale proposed in the late 1960s by American sociologist Sherry Arnstein (ADEME, 2017) as a basis. This approach has made it possible to clarify the meaning of the words most commonly used in urban planning regulations and practices around the world.



**Fig. 3. The different degrees of involvement of the inhabitants**

Among these different terms, those most commonly used during the 2000s were "consultation" and "participation" for approaches that in reality often involved information and consultation (Gaullier and Gardesse, 2016). All other things being equal, information and participation guarantee transparent management. Involvement at various levels, of all stakeholders, is a guarantee of the success of the development planning process, of the effectiveness of social dialogue (Danvidé, 2015) and therefore of inclusive and sustainable development (ADEME, 2017). Figure 4 presents the challenges of participation.

| Enjeux politiques   | Enjeux sociaux   | Enjeux environnementaux ou de développement durable  | Enjeux d'efficience ou d'efficacité   |
|---|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (Re)instaurer une relation de confiance entre les citoyens et les élus.</li> <li>- Mieux construire la légitimité des décisions.</li> <li>- Clarifier et renforcer les responsabilités politiques.</li> <li>- Assurer une veille démocratique de l'action publique.</li> <li>- Contribuer à un dépassement constructif des oppositions et des conflits.</li> <li>- Faire de la définition de l'intérêt général une construction collective.</li> <li>- Définir collectivement des décisions favorisant des éco-responsabilités partagées.</li> <li>- Garantir une construction démocratique des actions en faveur de l'environnement.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (Re)socialiser les populations politiquement et socio-économiquement exclues.</li> <li>- Mieux prendre en compte les attentes des personnes socio-culturellement éloignées des espaces de la parole publique.</li> <li>- Rechercher des effets vertueux et interdépendants sur la cohésion sociale et sur l'action en faveur de l'environnement.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Faire des habitants les acteurs de la promotion et du développement de nouveaux modes d'habiter.</li> <li>- Répondre aux exigences d'un cadre réglementaire de plus en plus incitatif eu égard aux enjeux environnementaux.</li> <li>- Susciter des innovations dans la prise en charge d'un développement urbain durable.</li> <li>- Contribuer à l'élévation des niveaux d'ambitions en matière de développement urbain durable.</li> <li>- Faire émerger des nouvelles idées concourant à la durabilité des aménagements.</li> <li>- Favoriser une prise en charge à différentes échelles, des enjeux de développement durable.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Favoriser une "hybridation des savoirs".</li> <li>- Mieux construire de la connaissance.</li> <li>- Permettre une articulation entre les enjeux globaux et locaux du développement durable.</li> <li>- Savoir tisser des liens entre le passé et l'avenir, appréhender les attentes des habitants.</li> <li>- Stimuler les initiatives locales dans l'esprit du projet.</li> <li>- Eviter les remises en question tardives et coûteuses du projet.</li> <li>- Rechercher l'adéquation des dispositifs écotéchniques aux usages effectifs.</li> <li>- Favoriser une prise en charge dans toute leur transversalité, des enjeux de développement durable.</li> </ul> |

**Fig. 4. Participation at the heart of sustainable development issues**



### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present work is a mixed research on methods and tools that could be used to develop and manage quality urban development projects/programs with the overall objective of improving the positive impacts of sustainable development interventions. Thus, it combines different qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques.

In order to do so, appropriate data collection methods are chosen, namely documentary review, direct observation, interview (semi-structured) and questionnaire; developed with their specific tools which are respectively the reading sheet, the observation grid, the guide and the questionnaire. Sampling is determined by the methods of reasoned choice and simple random selection. A total of one hundred and seven (107) actors, including four (80) households in four of the ten cities targeted by the project, namely Abomey-Calavi, Cotonou, Porto Novo and Sèmè-Podji; six (06) municipal executives; eight (08) local elected officials; four (04) leaders of non-governmental organizations working in the environmental sector; two (02) members of the PAURAD Technical Secretariat; two (02) executives from the General Directorate of Urban Development of the Ministry of the Living Environment and Sustainable Development; two (02) academics; and three (03) managers of construction companies that participated in the implementation of infrastructure within the framework of the project are investigated according to specific criteria.

This research has lasted two months, including three days of preparatory surveys that have allowed to refine the tools and to ensure the logic of adhesion of the actors to be investigated.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.1. Sustainable Urban Development: Issues and Challenges in Benin

According to the 4th General Census of Population and Housing (RGPH4), Benin's population has 10,008,749 resident inhabitants, including 5,120,929 women, or 51.2% of the total population. This population has experienced an average annual growth of 3.5% between 2002-2013. Nearly 48% of this population is very young (less than 16 years old), and life expectancy at birth is 63.8 years in 2013 (Béhanzin, 2019). The average density is 87 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> in 2013 compared to 59 in 2002. In addition, the number of cities with more than 200,000 inhabitants increased from two (02) in 2002 to eight (08) in 2013 and the urbanization rate from 38.9% to 44.6% during these two reference years (MCVDD, 2017). Thus, the rural population accounts for about 55% of the total population and according to INSAE projections, Benin should become a predominantly urban country by 2025 and even reach an urbanization rate of 70% by 2042. The figure below shows the evolution of the urbanization rate in Benin.

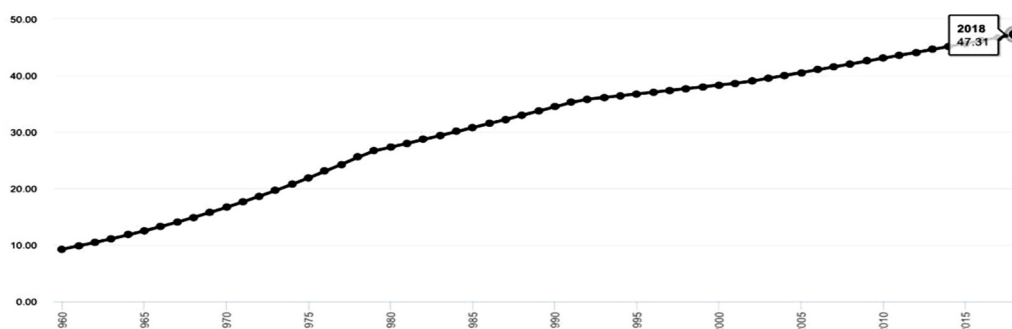
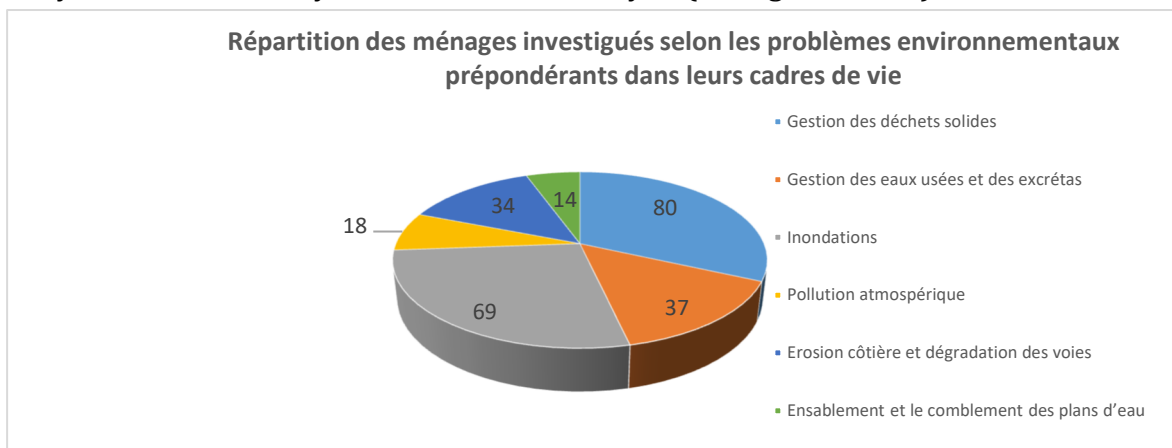


Fig. 5. Evolution of the urbanization rate in Benin



The trends observed following the census are: i) an increase in the urban population ii) an unevenly distributed population, with a very high concentration in the South. iii) higher population growth in areas with low urbanization (Donga, Alibori, Borgou) and less sustained in areas of high urban concentration (especially the Littoral).

This trend is not without consequences for the new social relationships and those of man with his environment; at least this is what should be retained from the major problems/difficulties identified as a corollary of urbanization by the households surveyed (see figure below).



**Fig. 6. Prevailing environmental problems in cities**

From this graphical representation (Figure 6), it appears that the problems of waste management (100%), flooding (86%), sewage and excreta management (46%), coastal erosion and road degradation (42%) are the most prevalent in these communities; and therefore more globally if we look at the first strong trends in problems of sanitation of the living environment. According to Behanzin (2019), the presence of large piles of rubbish in the middle of the city, in empty spaces, secondary streets, swamps, runoff water is the source of many diseases such as malaria, gastroenteritis, cholera, dysentery, intestinal parasitosis, bilharziasis, yellow fever, eye infections, salmonellosis, murine typhus, histoplasmosis and leptospirosis. This is corroborated by the health statistics presented by the Ministry of Health for the year 2019, which are as follows, with regard to the conditions encountered in consultation and hospitalization for the whole according to sex in descending order in 2019.

| Affections                            | Masculin         |              | Féminin          |              | Total            |              |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|
|                                       | Nbre de cas      | %            | Nbre de cas      | %            | Nbre de cas      | %            |
| Paludisme                             | 1 259 019        | 47,3         | 1 460 589        | 44,1         | 2 719 608        | 45,5         |
| Infections respiratoires aiguës       | 347 095          | 13,0         | 361 818          | 10,9         | 708 913          | 11,9         |
| Autres affections gastro-intestinales | 139 025          | 5,2          | 168 506          | 5,1          | 307 531          | 5,1          |
| Traumatismes                          | 132 344          | 5,0          | 77 300           | 2,3          | 209 644          | 3,5          |
| Anémie                                | 76 689           | 2,9          | 80 436           | 2,4          | 157 125          | 2,6          |
| Diarrhées                             | 65 733           | 2,5          | 64 958           | 2,0          | 130 691          | 2,2          |
| Autres affections dermatologiques     | 39 741           | 1,5          | 41 432           | 1,3          | 81 173           | 1,4          |
| Hypertension artérielle               | 25 595           | 1,0          | 47 649           | 1,4          | 73 244           | 1,2          |
| Douleurs abdominales basses           | 8 653            | 0,3          | 60 560           | 1,8          | 69 213           | 1,2          |
| Affections ostéo-articulaires         | 18 944           | 0,7          | 25 253           | 0,8          | 44 197           | 0,7          |
| Reste des affections                  | 551 141          | 20,7         | 924 007          | 27,9         | 1 475 148        | 24,7         |
| <b>Total</b>                          | <b>2 663 979</b> | <b>100,0</b> | <b>3 312 508</b> | <b>100,0</b> | <b>5 976 487</b> | <b>100,0</b> |

**Fig. 7. Distribution of conditions encountered in consultation and hospitalization for the whole by sex in decreasing order in 2019**

Malaria, acute respiratory infections and other gastrointestinal diseases are the most common,

accounting for more than 60% of the cumulative number of illnesses encountered in consultation and hospitalization.

In addition to all this, according to one of the academics who investigated other no less significant realities, the consequences of the uncontrolled urbanization of the cities are added.

*« Such urbanization generates significant pressure on the demand for social services and basic infrastructure, pressure on urban job markets, land speculation, environmental degradation, the development of poverty and violence, the lack of decent housing, the increase in health problems due to pollution and massive waste production. »*

In this regard, several challenges were identified by the resource persons investigated to lead Benin's cities, and in particular those taken into account by PAURAD towards the status of sustainable cities. The sustainable city is, paradoxically, difficult to define because it is more of a project than a theory. However, the three principles highlighted by Gaudillière (2005) can be used as a basis for attempting to clarify a few principles:

- The sustainable city is a "city capable of sustaining itself over time" thanks to a critical distance from the present. C. Emelianoff thus emphasizes the city's capacity to redefine itself.
- The sustainable city is a city that offers a quality of life everywhere and less differentials between living environments. One of the principles of this city's constitution is functional diversity (as opposed to the separation of functions advocated by the urban planning of the 1960s), the emergence of new proximities and the reduction of constrained mobility.
- The sustainable city is a city that reappropriates a collective political project.

The sustainable city is thus a city that brings into play an environmental, economic and social project (Gnele, 2010). These are the three pillars of sustainable development. However, the organization of urban life also introduces a significant political dimension, since local governance is also part of the challenges of the sustainable city. This is why the neighbourhood is often presented as the relevant scale for thinking about the sustainable city. It allows people to speak out, debate and get to know each other. And so, according to a local elected official in the municipality of Abomey-Calavi :

*« Fostering sustainable urban development in Benin requires the effective participation of grassroots actors in the various decision-making and action processes, particularly those related to the development of policy and strategy documents (CDP and SDAC in this case) and the implementation of various development projects and programs. It also calls for the strengthening of the technical and managerial capacities of the communes to face the challenges and stakes of development. »*

As for the program officer of the NGO ADeSE-BENIN, he adds an equally important detail to what was said above:

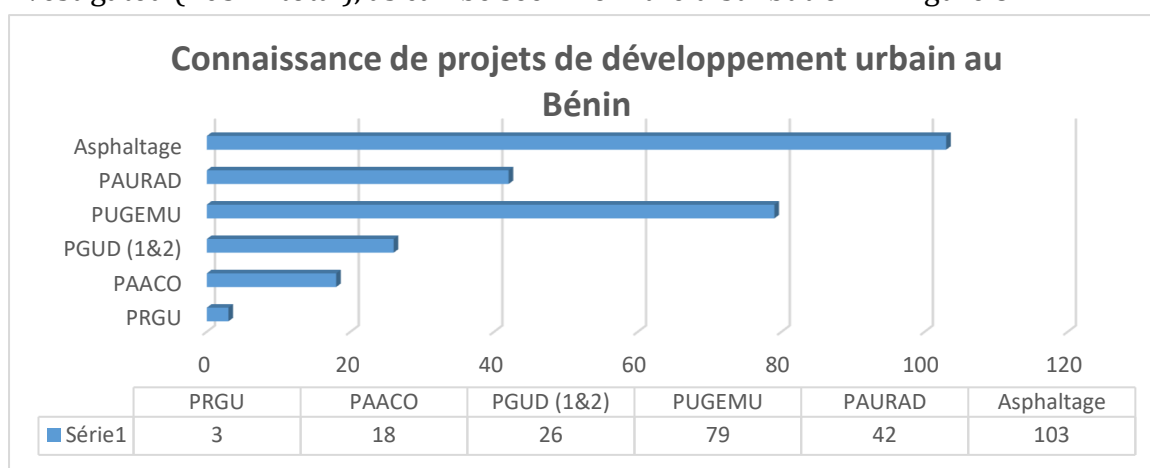
*« Beyond the taking and popularization of texts and guidelines governing concerns related to the environment and land use planning, it is necessary to operationalize the Strategic Plan for the Development of the Agricultural Sector (PSDSA) and the National Plan for Agricultural Investment and Food and Nutritional Security (PNIASAN) with the overall objective of improving the performance of Beninese agriculture, to make it capable of ensuring sustainable food sovereignty of the population, and thus limit rural exodus. »*

And so, all the objectives of the sustainable city in question are summarized in the definition that E. Howard quoted by Jégou (2011) gives of the garden city in 1919: "A garden city is a city designed to ensure in good conditions the life and work of its inhabitants. It is just the right size to allow the full development of this social life. Howard's model is a completed example of this symbiosis between city and nature (Holz, 2004). Nature protects the city from itself. It cannot do this without citizens, without their involvement in all phases of public action. Participation is not an end in itself; it is a means, whose scope is decisive, to better build the city of tomorrow.

## 4.2. The Urban Development and Decentralization Support Project (PAURAD): Why, How, And After?

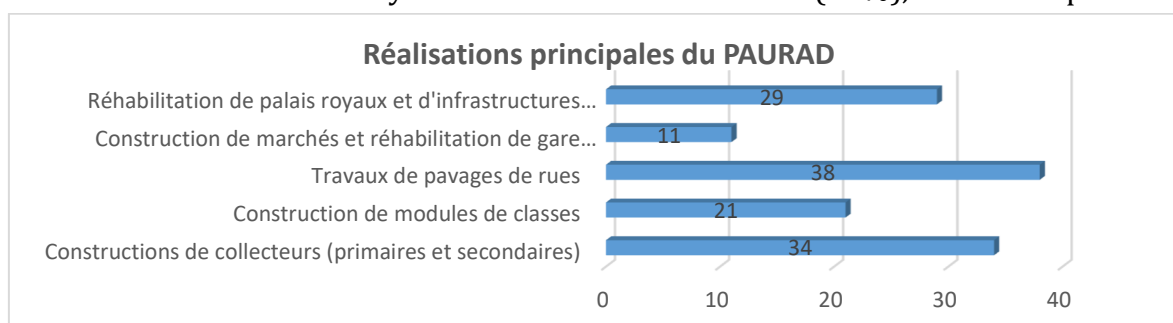
In addition to the actions carried out by the central government and local authorities within the framework of Public Investment Programs, development partners are supporting Benin through several projects/programs to improve the urban environment, including : (i) the Support Program for the Cotonou Urban Area (PAACO: financed by the French Development Agency for an amount of 13 million Euros); (ii) the Decentralized Urban Management Program (PGUD executed in two phases for an amount of 42 billion FCFA); (iii) the Emergency Program for Urban Environmental Management (PUGEMU : financed by the World Bank in the aftermath of the unprecedented floods of 2010 for an amount of 54 billion FCFA); (iv) the Urban Development and Decentralization Support Program (PAURAD: financed by the World Bank for an amount of US\$ 60 million over a period of five years). To all this, one should add one of the flagship projects of the government's action program (PAG 2016-2021); the primary, secondary and tertiary road development project "Projet Asphaltage" whose overall objective is to increase and modernize the stock of urban roads in Cotonou, Porto-Novo, Parakou, Abomey-Calavi, Seme-Podji, Abomey, Bohicon, Natitingou and Lokossa.

Among the various development initiatives mentioned above, very few are known by the non-state actors investigated (103 in total), as can be seen from the distribution in Figure 8.



**Fig. 8. Distribution of conditions encountered in consultation and hospitalization for the whole by sex in decreasing order in 2019**

Figure 8 shows that 41% of respondents are aware of PAURAD, while 59% have never heard of it. Asphalt paving (100%) and PUGEMU (77%) are the most well known urban development projects in Benin; this is mainly due to the high level of communication surrounding their implementation. In terms of achievements known by actors familiar with PAURAD (59%), we note in particular :



**Fig. 9. Knowledge of the achievements of PAURAD**

Globally, the achievements of PAURAD are known by the actors. As for their participation in the management of this project, only the institutional actors have been able to really express their opinion. A local elected official from Agblangandan in the commune of Sèmè-Podji expressed himself in the following terms:

*« We, as representatives of the populations, had been involved in the implementation of this project, we are also a member of a local committee set up by the project to collect our opinions and suggestions. As for the formulation phase of this project, I did not personally participate, but I believe that the communal authorities were involved, and that they had their say, on behalf of all of us. »*

As if to reinforce the idea that local committees have been set up, one of the PAURAD's technical secretariat executives reminds us of the institutional framework set up to ensure the management of the project:

*« Everything is done within the framework of the PAURAD in the most participatory way possible. The project is placed under the supervision of the MCVDD. The execution of the project is ensured by a delegated project management agency (AGETUR). The institutional mechanism of the project includes the Interministerial Monitoring Committee (CIS), the PAURAD Technical Secretariat (ST/PAURAD) which is the project management unit and the Local Monitoring Committees (CLS) installed in each commune. Each has its say, the overall objective being to facilitate access to urban services and to improve urban management in certain cities. »*

In addition, with regard to the project formulation phase, an official from the technical services of the Cotonou City Council stated that they were actively involved, in that they were invited each time by the Ministry of the Living Environment and Sustainable Development to the methodological framing sessions of the technical and feasibility studies carried out by consulting firms within the framework of the project and the validation of the various reports.

Also, an NGO leader from the municipality of Porto-Novo presents an equally interesting aspect of participation in the following terms:

*« I was lucky enough to have attended a presentation on the progress of the project once during a reporting session organized by the Porto-Novo town hall. And I have good memories of it, because there were a lot of good questions about the content, which allowed us to find solutions together to remove the bottlenecks there were. Participating means first and foremost having the right information. »*

It is also important to remember after exchange with ST-PAURAD stakeholders that the management approach adopted in the framework of this project is RBM (Results-Based Management) while the tool used is the logical framework, and its matrix was widely accessible to all stakeholders.

The table below presents some of the project's achievements in the cities.



Storm drain in Sèmè-Podji (PK10)



Classroom modules at Tchicomey (Lokossa)





Hotel Guédevy-Palais de Justice roadway (Abomey)



Sheds Market Nima Parakou



Collector on the river Kefferi (Kandi)



Collector leading into the retention basin in Tokpota (Porto-Novo)

### Plate 1: Some achievements of PAURAD in the cities

Faced with these different achievements, opinions are divided, particularly with regard to the households surveyed. Some, like a resident of the Sènadé neighborhood in Cotonou and an executive from the technical services of the municipality of Abomey-Calavi, respectively, are happy to praise the investment made and the numerous benefits for the lives of the residents.

*« The paving of the road has substantially reduced on the one hand the dust that was permanently absorbed here in Senadé especially in August with strong winds and on the other hand the disappointment of flooding. It has also helped to boost my small business of various products. My store is now on the side of a road where a lot of people pass by every day. »*

*« Beyond its definite impact on the long-term local development of the communities, this project has also enabled the creation of around 100 direct local jobs during the construction phase of the various infrastructures, whether road or community-based. »*

Others, however, while recognizing the benefits inherent in the implementation of this project, feel that something else more meaningful could have been done, or more could have been achieved. An inhabitant of PK10 in the commune of Sèmè-Podji expressed himself as follows:

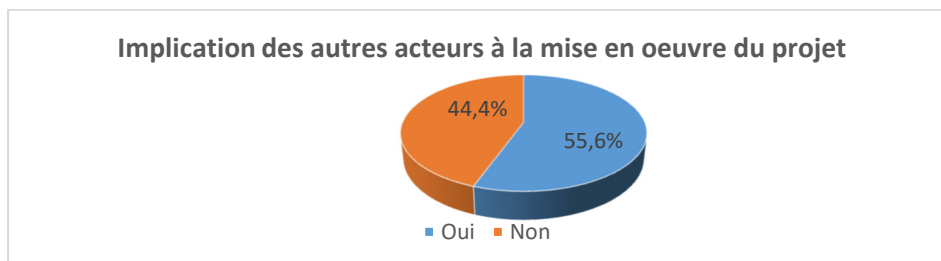
*« I think that what is being done in this project is already not bad. But I think that beyond the infrastructure, especially the cobblestones, that it would take to really develop our area, and drive out poverty, build businesses, industries. With these more substantial investments, the joy of the unemployed youth who served during the construction would not be short lived. »*

In a word, the sustainability aspect should be integrated into the various development projects that are formulated; and thus take into account the social, economic and environmental dimensions in the short, medium and long term. The novelty brought by sustainability is its understanding of spatial scales, renewing the look towards the global, regional and local scales, as well as highlighting the participation of city dwellers in the shaping of their city (Jégou, 2011). The Johannesburg conference reiterated the need for participatory governance, in which civil societies take part in the decision-making processes concerning sustainable development policies. This principle aims at "implementing transparent, pluralist information, consultation, public debate and conflict



management processes, integrating all the actors concerned at all levels of decision making, from local to international" (Nicolas, 2006).

Citizen participation has therefore taken place at almost all levels of the project implementation process, but what about the participation of other actors (executives from sectoral ministries and municipalities in particular) in the implementation of the project? The answers to this question are hardly unanimous, as shown in the distribution in Figure 10, and justify the delays observed in the implementation of certain activities.



**Fig. 10. Involvement of institutional actors in the implementation of PAURAD**

It emerges from this distribution that only 55.6% of the actors surveyed believe that there was a synergy of actions between the other actors for the implementation of the project. The contrary choice of the remaining 44.6% is in fact supported by the difficulties encountered during implementation and are the cause of the delay observed in implementation. For example, according to one of the persons investigated, the rehabilitation work on the Kpengla Palace and the Adomou Temple in the city of Abomey experienced an unspeakable delay due to difficulties in implementing procurement procedures. As of March 25, 2019, i.e. more than four years before the start of the PAURAD, the said works had not yet begun, continues the interested party.

Moreover, this lack of symbiosis was felt when the construction of two modules of three classrooms in the EPP Zogbadjè and subject of the CSC\_AC lot awarded in 2015 to the COTRAG/SGA-BTP consortium had to be reviewed. Indeed, the needs for classrooms in this school were met on the proposal of the same elected officials who proposed it within the framework of the PAURAD through a project financed by the Support Fund for the Development of Communes (FADEC). It is in May 2017 that the EPP GODOMEY TOGOU DO was identified to receive the two modules of three classrooms.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

By subscribing to Agenda 21 at the end of the Rio Summit in 1992, then by ratifying the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1994, Benin officially adhered to the principle of sustainable development which combines environmental, economic and social issues. It also relies on the participation of citizens in the definition and implementation of public policies (ADEME, 2017). The Rio Declaration on Environment and Sustainable Development, adopted in June 1992, states in its paragraph 10 that "the best way to deal with environmental issues is to ensure the participation of all citizens". It is for this reason that within the framework of the Urban Development and Decentralization Support Program (PAURAD), the Ministry of the Living Environment and Sustainable Development (MCVDD) has adopted a participatory approach, reconciling the know-how and experience of different actors.

The expectations of the territories involved in this research are high, which offers the opportunity to systematize and support the participation of the inhabitants for the benefit of "sustainable" development, overcoming the few limitations observed in public action within the framework of the

## PAURAD.

From the various investigations, and even if the expectations of the communities visited are not yet fully met, as approaches and/or practices to be implemented to induce the improvement of the quality of interventions in favor of development in general and more specifically urban development, we can retain the following:

- Going beyond consultation, aiming in a word and by all means towards consultation.
- Involve the inhabitants in the strategic choices, they can in fact, in view of their mastery of the different realities in place, contribute to reflections on the long term and on vast scales of planning.
- Broaden the scope and scale of consultation: it is important not only to involve them in the design of public spaces or in aspects related to housing, hygiene and sanitation management or other services, but also to involve them in programming, in the preparation of urban development master plans or municipal development plans, in the design of housing and public facilities, and even in the choice of demolition or the conservation of housing estates.
- Relying on technological developments: exchange tools have been invented and deployed, thanks to the boom in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), and arenas for debate are multiplying. These new tools can be used for communication as much as for a real involvement of the inhabitants in the definition of actions and decisions. Participatory approaches must now be supported by interactive devices in the most upstream phases of projects, i.e. when the universe of possibilities is still very open, and in the downstream phases a posteriori, in particular to check the adequacy between the environmental performances pursued and those actually achieved under conditions of current use.
- Mobilize the population in its diversity: everyone agrees that the level of information is not sufficient to generate a desire for involvement on the part of the youngest populations, women, inhabitants from disadvantaged social strata and working people (executives from the public and private sectors). Ensuring the diversity of participation groups requires real know-how, requiring to propose times and forms of consultation adapted to solicit and involve beyond the representatives of the associations most concerned, local residents, residents - and/or the noisiest, i.e. those most likely to hinder the progress of the project. Broadening the audience is a guarantee of success, in that it gives legitimacy to the voice of the local population.

That said, participation cannot be limited to simple consultation meetings, organized from time to time during the process, as is the case in the PAURAD framework. Rather, it must result in the collective mastery of social, economic, technological and environmental options in order to find long-term solutions to the concerns of the populations. This collective control should also be based on two essential values, namely participation and responsibility. In addition, it will be necessary to promote not only citizen participation, but also, and above all, participation among the actors in the public policy implementation system.

Ultimately, the participatory approach constitutes a vector to nourish and support the social demand that is then carried by the urban contracting authority. Thanks to their knowledge of their environment and their skills in using it, the inhabitants allow a better consideration of the local context in which the project is carried out and of the real needs of the users. By participating, the inhabitants help to better consider the social dimension of a project and, very concretely, are in a position to warn about such and such a problem. Organizing the conditions for real participation by

the inhabitants means above all recognizing their legitimacy to express themselves on public projects that concern them. And it is indeed this approach that guarantees that the results of development projects and programs will be achieved.

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## **8. AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION**

Précieux BEHANZIN is the research protocol investigator and conducted with Georges DOSSOU and Raymond DOSSOU-VOU the bibliographic review. The collection tools were developed by Jadix SAÏNOU, who conducted the field phase with Casilda DOSSOU YOVO. The structuring of the article according to the standards required by the review was carried out by Précieux BEHANZIN. The proofreading was carried out by all the authors, in order to guarantee the quality of the document submitted.

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## 10. KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Citizen participation:** It can be defined as a process of compulsory or voluntary engagement of ordinary people, acting alone or within an organisation, to influence a decision on significant choices that will affect their community. This participation may or may not take place within an institutionalised framework and may be organised at the initiative of members of civil society (class action, demonstration, citizens' committees) or decision-makers (referendum, parliamentary commission, mediation).

**Sustainable city:** is simply a city that initiates one or more sustainable development dynamics. It is first and foremost a framework in which collective projects that integrate social, environmental and economic issues take on meaning.

**Project:** is a set of activities organised in phases or stages and forming the management unit for achieving an objective.