

Modernization of local communities in Algeria - a diagnostic study

عصرنة الجماعات المحلية في الجزائر - دراسة تشخيصية

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Abstract:

This research paper aims to diagnose the local electronic administration in Algeria and to stand on the extent of modernization and digitization of the local communities, which is considered the link between the citizen and the government, as the technological revolution has cast a shadow on all aspects of life, which necessitates changing the mechanisms of administrative work, tools for providing public service and the nature of communication with citizens and economic operators. To achieve the goal of the study, the analytical method was used by dissecting the studied phenomenon and linking its variables to draw conclusions.

The study concluded that the local administration, despite the efforts made, is still at the beginning of its path towards electronic transformation; its services are still characterized by bureaucracy in light of the fragility of adopting a decentralized system in the management of local regions, which would generalize general management rules over distinct regions socially, culturally, economically, and administratively.

Key words: e-administration, e-government, local communities, municipality, digitization.

ملخص:

تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى تشخيص الإدارة الإلكترونية المحلية في الجزائر والوقوف على مدى عصرنة ورقمنة الجماعات المحلية، والتي تعتبر همزة الوصل بين المواطن والحكومة، إذ ألقت الثورة التكنولوجية بظلالها على كافة مناحي الحياة، مما يجتّم تغيير آليات العمل الإداري وأدوات تقديم الخدمة العمومية وطبيعة التواصل مع المواطنين والمتعاملين الاقتصاديين. ولبلوغ هدف الدراسة تم الاستعانة بالمنهج التحليلي من خلال تشريح الظاهرة المدروسة والربط بين متغيراتها لاستخلاص النتائج.

خلصت الدراسة إلى أنّ الإدارة المحلية ورغم المجهودات المبذولة لا تزال في بداية طريقها نحو التحول الإلكتروني؛ ولا تزال خدماتها تنسم بالبيروقراطية في ظل هشاشة تبني النظام اللامركزي في تسيير الأقاليم المحلية، وهو ما من شأنه تعميم قواعد تسيير عامة على أقاليم متميزة اجتماعياً، ثقافياً، اقتصادياً، وإدارياً.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإدارة الإلكترونية، الحكومة الإلكترونية، الجماعات المحلية، البلدية، الرقمنة.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Public administration in Algeria - and in developing countries in general - has always faced many challenges related to the efficiency of administration and the deterioration of the relationship it has with the citizen, which imposes a tendency to reconsider the mechanisms and mechanics of public management, and focus on the principles of efficiency and effectiveness through modernization.

In this context, the electronic administration is considered one of the modern strategies to activate the public utility, upgrade its services, and bring the administration closer to the citizen. Perhaps the local government sector is one of the sectors most concerned with the electronic Algeria project, given the sluggishness of administrative work as a result of bureaucratic practices that are not appropriate for the era of technology and informatics that provide an integrated world of accurate solutions of high quality in providing services and completing transactions.

However, it is worth noting that the application of electronic administration, although in essence it aims to improve public service, upgrade its services and jump over bureaucratic barriers, may lead to greater flabbiness than the traditional pattern, conflicts in decision-making and heavier bureaucracy, and thus an inability to meet the needs in the field. If the appropriate climate is not available to ensure its success.

On this basis, we will review in this research the various aspects related to public service in local communities under electronic administration, and we will diagnose the reality of local governance and the embodiment of the concept of electronic municipality in Algeria.

2. LOCAL COMMUNITIES ACCORDING TO THE NEW PERSPECTIVE:

With the acceleration of technological development, which cast a shadow over all aspects of the life of individuals, and the increase in manifestations of globalization that changed the way people think and raised the ceiling of their aspirations through contact with the cultures of advanced societies and fascination with their refined experiences, as well as the rising voices of non-governmental organizations at home and abroad (human rights in particular), calling With the necessity of change and improvement and benefiting from what is available in the times in facilitating life conditions, the government responded to the inevitability of electronic transition and affirmed its readiness and intention to make a break with the remnants of bureaucratic management that burdened the citizen and increased his suffering.

The local administration is at the heart of this concern, as it is the main link and the most important mediating link between the state and the citizen, as the basis of its existence and the focus of its concern. The reasons for the government's concern for developing and modernizing the local administration are due to the fact that the latter is a flexible management style and system adopted by most of the developed countries of the world in which democratic systems are rooted.

2.1 THE CONCEPT OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION AND RELATED TERMS:

Local administration is an intellectual concept and a practical practice adopted by most democratic countries, both developed and developing, and it is the result of adopting a decentralization method in organization, and is based on the distribution of tasks, functions and specializations between the central authority and regional bodies composed of local entities in order to increase effectiveness and efficiency in providing services to citizens and respond to their

aspirations and achieve For citizenship and participatory governance and self-management of facilities in a manner that takes into account the specificities of local communities and respects their customs (bin Samsha, 2018, p. 152).

It has been defined in the dictionary of social sciences as allowing local political bodies to manage their affairs within their geographical area without returning to the central government for decision-making, through elected bodies managing these local units (Kalal, 2018). It is also seen as a kind of administrative and financial decentralization method, according to which the establishment of local units that enjoy financial autonomy and have the right to draw up their local policy and implement their plans at their own will (Mohie & Khalaf, 2018).

Although there are many definitions of the term local groups according to the viewpoints of researchers, each according to his angle of view based on the intellectual, legal and political philosophy of the state to which he belongs; However, they all agree that the local administration expresses that administrative organization of the territory of the state, according to which the central government resorts to distributing some administrative tasks and delegating its authority and assigning it to independent and elected local bodies within a specific geographical region, with the aforementioned bodies remaining under the control and authority of the central government. The designations of the local administration differ from one country to another, as there are those who termed it local groups, as is the case in Algeria, and the name later turned into regional groups, and was defined as geographical units of the state's territory in states, cities, and villages, that enjoy moral personality and financial independence, and their affairs are handled by independent bodies. Elected by appropriate methods and under the authority of the state (Bashir, 2016).

From an administrative perspective, local communities can be considered as a system consisting of local units with moral personality, resources, competencies, and capabilities. Its efficiency (the system) depends on the ability of its units to achieve the quality of the outputs based on the available inputs in light of environmental factors, such as the general political system and economic and social conditions (Zaghloul & Matali, 2018).

2.2 REASONS AND MOTIVES FOR THE SHIFT OF LOCAL GROUPS TOWARDS ELECTRONIC MANAGEMENT:

Similar to the various public and private bodies and institutions, and in line with the technological developments taking place in the world, the local communities seek to ride the wave of modernization by establishing the rules of electronic management and the transition to a new business model that responds to the requirements of the times. Below we review the most important reasons and motives that attribute this transformation:

- The constant and increasing pressure on the local administration due to the demographic growth to meet the needs of public services;
- The saturation of the local administration with negative bureaucracy, with various forms of underdevelopment, procrastination, nepotism, accumulation of files and disruption of the interests of the citizen, who has reached an advanced degree of despair and discontent as a result of these practices;
- The necessity of adapting the local administration to its surrounding environment, after applying the concepts of electronic management in other organizations, which imposes catching up;

- The need of local administration employees for technical and technical support and renewal of work means, and the adoption of information systems that achieve integration between the various departments and branches to reduce workloads, and facilitate correspondence and communication and achieve interaction between employees to share information and solve administrative problems away from the complexities of traditional methods that are characterized by slowness and stagnation, so electronic management Opening effective informal channels that contribute to qualifying employees and upgrading their level.
- Sectors of interest with the local administration were affected by the latter's backwardness, and customers were affected as a result of the aforementioned practices, which contributed to increasing pressure to find solutions.

In addition to the multiplicity of agencies providing local public services, and these services are irrationally dispersed between the various departments, which increases the suffering, as the completion of a simple transaction requires moving between several agencies, which requires re-engineering the integration between these parties and bridging the resulting gap for the aforementioned reasons. There are also general motives and reasons behind the transformation, which are the same justifications for the adoption of electronic management by other organizations, including technological development, globalization trends, popular pressure on the government, and others.

3. MODERNIZATION OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION IN ALGERIA:

Modernization expresses a comprehensive, integrated and continuous endeavor to include the administrative, economic, and political development of countries and regions, based on the strategies adopted and the means used over time. By defining the political and legal responsibilities of public authorities, and standing on their dealings with the public interest and their ability to manage effectively, and therefore we can say that modernizing local administration means keeping pace with technological development, in order to obtain a successful, fair and transparent administration that follows strategic steps (Dharifi & Samah, 0202).

The modernization of the local administration refers to the process of adapting the local public utility to changes in the internal and external environment, especially with regard to the development of information and communication technology. citizen and respond to his needs (Fartas, 2016, p. 313).

Users (citizens or economic dealers) have often suffered from the manifestations of bureaucracy rampant in local public service facilities - the municipality in particular, being the most popular destination - and these negative manifestations are manifested in the large number of documents that make up files, the complexity of procedures and the slow completion of transactions, not to mention the material errors that require Corrected by other bureaucratic procedures, which made the modernization of administration and the shift to digitization of the processes and activities that make up the public service an inevitable imperative in an era characterized by rapid acceleration and the predominance of technology and mechanism in its various aspects.

Perhaps the most important thing that accompanied the modernization of the local utility and the transition to electronic local administration, in light of the Electronic Algeria Project 2013, is the program for developing legislation, which includes the preparation of a framework law for electronic public services and the development of legislation, which was embodied in Law No.

15/04 of February 01, 2015 Determined the general rules related to electronic signature and authentication in preparation for its later adoption in electronic documents and documents.

At the level of the guardianship ministry (Ministry of the Interior, Local Communities and Urban Planning), this law was preceded by several regulatory texts aimed at coordinating efforts and preparing for the issuance of electronic documents, including: (Mellal, 2018, p. 23)

- Law 03/14 of February 24, 2014 related to travel bonds and documents, which stipulates the conditions and modalities for preparing, delivering and renewing travel bonds and documents. The aforementioned law came after the pressures exerted by the International Civil Aviation Organization on the countries of the world by giving them a specific deadline Before stopping dealing with classic passports, and imposing biometric electronic passports at the level of all airports in the world, to confront forgery of travel documents and to confront the phenomenon of terrorism.
- The law dated December 26, 2011 defines the technical specifications for the electronic biometric national passport.
- The decision dated October 17, 2010 specifies the technical specifications for the birth contract extract for the issuance of the national identification card and passport.
- Decision dated 22 Jumada al-Thani 1432 corresponding to May 25, 2011, relating to the application file for the national identification card and the electronic biometric passport.
- It was followed by many instructions and circulars related to organizational matters in preparation for the transfer of various services (identification card, passport, gray card, driver's license, Hajj file, building and demolition permit, etc.) related to the citizen from the interests of the department and the state to the municipality.

3.1 DIGITIZATION OF THE CIVIL STATUS AS THE FIRST STEPS OF MODERNIZATION IN THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION:

In implementation of the government action plan aimed at improving the performance of public administration and making it characterized by effectiveness and transparency, the Ministry of the Interior and Local Authorities has implemented several important projects in the field of modernizing the public utility using modern technological means. Civil status records at the national level, creating an automated national registry of civil status, and linking all municipalities and their administrative annexes, as well as diplomatic missions and consular departments, to it .(Ministry of Interior and Local Communities, 2016) This achievement enabled:

- Enabling the citizen to obtain all civil status documents in real time from any municipality or administrative attachment across the country;
- Enabling the Algerian community residing abroad to apply for a private birth contract via the Internet service;
- The establishment of the National Automated Vehicle Numbering Registry, which enabled citizens to obtain numbering cards for their vehicles in real time without moving to the registration state;
- Requesting a national identification card via the Internet, following up on the biometric passport, and following up on the stages of processing files.

3.2 APPROVING THE ELECTRONIC WINDOW FOR BIOMETRIC DOCUMENTS:

The first thing that the Ministry of the Interior, Local Communities and Urban Planning started in the framework of its endeavor to modernize the local administration by gradually moving from the stage of traditional management to the stage of electronic management, taking many measures aimed at eliminating bureaucracy and heading towards automatic processing of files to restore confidence between the citizen and the administration, and among these Procedures: The Ministry created the so-called electronic window for biometric documents (passport and national identification card) to be expanded later to include other documents such as the biometric driver's license and vehicle registration card. The procedure is a technical solution that works to receive requests for various biometric documents at the municipal level, and register them in real time in a central database by exploiting the direct link between the various relevant bodies such as municipalities, the automated national register of civil status, the database of biometric documents, and the National Center for Secured Documents and Documents. The working mechanism of the electronic window is to compare the database of biometric documents completed in advance with the data of the automated national registry of civil status automatically, which will allow real-time verification of the authenticity of the information of the document applicant. The procedure was approved at the end of 2017 in the municipalities of Algeria, to be circulated in 2019 to all homeland municipalities (Ministry of Interior and Local Communities M. , 2018). Thanks to this procedure, the following objectives will be achieved:

- Opening the way for gradual access to the world of electronic management.
- Improving reception conditions and the relationship between the administration and the citizen.
- Speed in studying and controlling data and processing files.
- Canceling the birth certificate No. 12, among the documents that make up the identification card application file
- nationality or passport.
- Exempting citizens from submitting documents whose data are in the database.
- Exempting the citizen from manually filling out the biometric document application form.
- Canceling the process of taking biometric data for citizens who already possess biometric documents.
- Reducing errors resulting from manual reservation of data by calling it directly from the database.

In this regard, citizens will be able to follow the path of their files deposited via the website of the Ministry of Interior and Local Authorities, and the procedure is among the applications that eliminate the bureaucratic path of processing the deposited files.

4. E-MUNICIPALITY:

In line with the requirements of the current era, it has become necessary for the municipalities to go beyond their traditional philosophy of producing and providing service, which allows them to expand their scope of services and shift to a broader field, which is developmental work, which requires the transformation of the municipality to work within the electronic system.

The e-Municipality is defined as "a system based on transforming the way the joint local authority operates through the effective and optimal use of information and communication technology in

order to improve the management of services and provide them better for beneficiaries to enhance the realization of good governance concepts." It is also a system for providing local administrative work using networks And applications of information systems by linking municipal bodies with each other, and providing services to citizens remotely. (Ministère De l'intérieur, 2018)

So, the concept of the electronic municipality is related to the extent of adopting and employing information and communication technology in the activities and operations of local public services. If this is its technical meaning, it also means an intellectual and philosophical shift from the traditional municipality as a local government institution authorized to provide rigid routine services, to the modern municipality as a service institution that interacts. It is with its surroundings and is governed by it. It derives its policy, ideas and vision from the citizen, as it is the center of its concern and the basis of its existence.

The importance of the electronic municipality is highlighted in the conformity of its vision with the conditions of distinction and progress of the modern world, which are mainly related to effectiveness, transparency, accountability and good governance, especially after the widespread manifestations of administrative and financial corruption and its wide spread in municipalities and their institutions, which is shown in the reports of experience and post-accounting. Therefore, the adoption of the electronic municipality is not only reform. For the traditional service and a shift in the means, it goes beyond it to represent realistic and preventive solutions from the spread of corruption, rationalizing management and achieving development in its broadest sense.

4.1 THE E-MUNICIPALITY PROJECT ACCORDING TO THE OFFICIAL PERSPECTIVE IN ALGERIA:

After a full ten years of crystallizing and approving the e-Algeria program, it resulted in the part related to the Ministry of Interior and local authorities in 2018, what is known as the e-municipality project, which is a comprehensive and integrated program that would move the municipality from a rigid administrative structure that provides routine services in a bureaucratic manner to a modern institution. Interacting within the electronic environment, and then to a smart institution in the next stage, if the project is properly implemented, of course.

4.1.1 THE CONCEPT OF THE E-MUNICIPALITY ACCORDING TO THE OFFICIAL PERSPECTIVE:

In its description of the municipality's modernization project, it was stated in the e-municipality project guide issued by the General Directorate of Modernization, affiliated to the Ministry of Interior and Local Collectives, that the new vision of the municipality of tomorrow will be the vision of the electronic municipality, a municipality that will move to the digital world, with non-material exchanges, gradually replacing paper dealings. .

The Ministry has been involved in this endeavor and is committed to the process of modernizing municipalities, which will be achieved in the first quarter of 2018, starting with a model municipality as a first experiment, in preparation for adopting the project at the national level. The latter is an opportunity for the state and local authorities not only to respond better to the aspirations of citizens but also for the economic development of the country (ideal utilization of human and material resources, saving time and rationalizing expenditures). The advantages of the project will be transitive by eliminating distances, increasing the speed of completing transactions, completing and delivering services, and breaking isolation. The same electronic services will be available at the

headquarters of local facilities (municipalities) or via the Internet with a single interface through the so-called single window, and this contributes to the promotion of public service. rationalization of public spending and support for local development. The electronic municipality project aims to achieve the following:

- improving the life of the citizen;
- Improving the relationship between the municipality and citizens and restoring confidence in the administration;
- Upgrading the municipality and promoting it to the ranks of modern institutions, to make it an essential lever for economic and social development;
- strengthening human resource management;
- Building a solid foundation for the adoption of e-governance and e-government;

4.2 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE E-MUNICIPALITY PROJECT AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION STAGES:

The implementation and demarcation of the electronic municipality project on the ground goes through three sequential and integrated stages, which we explain as follows:

- The first phase, the project deals with the municipality and the promotion of its internal services through the automation of activities and operations and the transition to the automated management of the various departments that make up the public utility. launching the single window with the aim of providing quality services to citizens at the municipal level;
- The second phase, the project will link the municipality, the department, the state, the central directorates of the Ministry of Interior and the local authorities, each according to its specialization and what is concerned with it.
- The third stage will be concerned with the integration of services and setting up the virtual one-stop-shop service space for providing local public services via the Internet, or what is called the service portal (portail), and launching mobile applications, which is the integration stage. This approved model will also be circulated at the national level, thus establishing e-government in its broadest sense.

Returning to the first phase, which was circulated at the national level, and in parallel with preparing the central database at the ministry level, modernizing local networks, and providing the necessary equipment at all levels, several information systems were developed and put into service, including the following:

- The Single Window: It is a single interface for the citizen that includes all services. It aims to improve the quality and performance of the municipal service through speed and reliability of processing, access to information and services, transparency, security, continuity and flexibility with a focus on the citizen.
- Follow-up and control of budget preparation:
- Monitoring the implementation of the budget
- Create an administrative account for the municipality

- An information system to run the Department of Hygiene, Prevention and the Environment
- Local property management system
- The management system of the Department of Urban Planning, Roads and Green Spaces.
- Association management system.
- Automated media management system and its accessories.
- The system for managing the departments of social affairs.
- Dispute management system.
- The system for conducting the sessions of the Municipal People's Assembly.

With regard to participatory democracy, and to stimulate the participation of citizens and encourage their participation in the management of their municipality, it was planned to establish an online service platform that includes various information such as deliberations of associations, deliberations of the municipal council, and the results of meetings (holidays, distribution of housing), markets, consultations, etc., and allows interaction through presentation and publication. Their opinion about the functioning of their municipalities and express their possible needs and proposals.

4.3 The future vision of the electronic municipality project:

After the establishment of the electronic municipality, the long-term vision will focus mainly on the two elements of data and the citizen to build the smart municipality, and to reach that, we must go beyond the electronic society stage and reach an interactive citizen. A smart municipality is basically a connected and effective municipality, flexible and close to the citizen, that enhances the quality of life for all actors, whether citizens, employees, visitors, or economic operators.

Building a smart municipality necessarily means giving greater importance to the citizen, to technology that is the means of its establishment, and to data, in order to build a new society, in which everyone will be partners in building the municipality of tomorrow.

5. CONCLUSION:

There is no doubt that the technological revolution has cast a shadow over all aspects of life, causing a change in administrative work mechanisms, tools for providing public service, and the nature of communication with users, as an inevitable response to the aspirations of citizens and customers alike, which led us to review concepts related to local public service. Under the electronic administration; We also presented a diagnosis of the administrative apparatus of the local authorities in Algeria and the criticisms directed at it in light of the inevitability of adopting electronic administration, including the fragility of adopting a decentralized system in the management of local regions, which would generalize general management rules to distinct regions socially, culturally, economically, and administratively.

Finally, and as a result of what has been mentioned, the implementation of the national strategy for the transition to electronic administration in local communities has known several imbalances and gaps that prevented compliance with the terms of the e-Algeria project, which was evident in the local administration being hostage to many challenges and its failure to perform its tasks in an ideal way and achieve its goals in The shadow of what is known as the digital world.

Perhaps the time has come to evaluate the experience and correct the deviations by drawing up a new strategy based on a serious and comprehensive study that takes into account all aspects that would affect the process, as it is no longer possible to follow the same path according to a blurry vision that lacks planning, objectivity and accuracy.

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