

# Administrative Decentralisation and the Economic Take-Off Stakes Towards a New Algeria

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## Abstract

Despite the Algerian state's adoption of an administrative decentralization system to achieve spatial governance, it still relies on the central financing of various public investments locally; however, the global economic changes that caused the fluctuation of fuel prices as the main wealth resource for the state, made the Algerian state think of activating the creation of wealth at local levels, by encouraging groups and accompanying them with bodies that provide incentives for investment and attract national and foreign private capital. The results achieved in the various regions, however, did not live up to the aspirations of the local communities, which calls for investigating the reasons for the failure to achieve local and national development in spite of the economic potential and human energies that abound in the various local areas. It has been proven that the defect lays in the centrality of decision making in most areas, and the limited legal space granted to local bodies, whether elected or appointed administrative ones, which limits the freedom of local initiative. In addition, there are problems of the inadequacy of the methods of managing the agencies accompanying investment at the local level and the instability of the legal system for investment. These problems hinder the process of economically launching a new Algeria which can only be realized by laying down the basic principles of domain governance in which effective mechanisms are taken into account to involve all actors in the development process and to enhance the spirit of belonging to the field, with each party bearing its responsibility at all stages of the process while recognizing the importance of the local economy and relying on the real requirements and foundations for economic take-off.

**key words:** Administrative decentralization, Spatial governance, , Local communities, Investment, economic take-off

## PREFACE

Algeria has adopted the administrative decentralisation in its administrative system since independence seeking to fulfil development through distributing administrative function among state centre and its regional and local levels from provinces and municipals. It has also set rules determining authorities to all bodies, those who are elected or those who are administratively appointed in all levels. The state has focused as well on centralised funding to most of developmental projects across the nation, and it is still seeking to fulfil a development that rises to the level of local communities' ambitions, whose demands have risen especially due to the improvement of the state's financial situation in previous stages. At the beginning of year 2014, where it has witnessed a decline in fuel prices be it the almost total source of Algeria's incomes, the central bodies responsible for conducting the state affairs resorted to new mechanisms to create wealth locally and urge the local bodies to work on exploiting all the local economic potentials to sustain growth on the local level.

Considering that the administrative decentralisation a system through which some state officials are authorised with the power of making decisions related to domestic matters under a discretion and based on what the rules determine without consulting the central trusteeship.

In this light and regarding the vast area of Algeria, the supreme bodies responsible for governing the national affair proceeded to a gradual interim administrative division to the point where the number of municipals reached 1541 on the national level approved since year 1984 and a number of 553 districts. The number of provinces moved as well in the same date from 48 to 58 provinces in year 2018.

The purpose of these procedures was to facilitate communication and promote direct dialogue between the state and the local groups and accompany it to provide public services and facilitate the individual and public life to all inhabitants across the country. Nevertheless, adopting administrative decentralisation keeps rising questions about the extent to which it can fulfil local spatial governance and making sure of the theoretical approaches of the administrative decentralisation

and the reality of local development, especially that Algeria is proceeding in the regional and neighbouring development counting on the local groups to achieve it and working on involving the economic and social actors in the developmental operation to secure its success. In spite of the succeeding decrees which aim to create real investments, the economic and developmental situations are still in their low levels. Is that due to the methods of functional distribution methods among the different administration levels? Is it due to legal authority area given to it? Is it due to the ineffectiveness of the updated services of development support, wealth creation, and economic take-off towards a new Algeria? This is the thing that made us research the error sources and suggest resolutions to improve the public service through spatial governance, through the effective performance of the administration functions in its decentralised frame and the possibility to rise the economic level and push it to the local and national development, and through recognising the real demands of the economic take-off towards a new Algeria according to what the ruling authority of Algeria is attempting to and the local communities are aspiring to.

### **The Parameters of Administrative Decentralisation within the Context of Spatial Governance**

The administrative decentralisation in Algeria is considered to be a comprehensive system in which a set of elements and components overlap, and under its frame a number of factors, data, and variables interact to form an integrated system of relations and different interactions which are related to managing the national public affair. They cannot be understood or reached except through standing and seeing the position of the administrative decentralisation in the spatial governance system in Algeria with the attempt of knowing the main obstacles of the decentralisation system 's contribution to spatial governance, the thing that can highlight the major problematics of this administrative system and its ability to make real economic take-off that works on creating wealth locally and rising the level of local development in Algeria.

### ***The Position of the Administrative Decentralisation in the Spatial Governance System***

The advancement and progress of domestic public affair is considered the main goal for which Algeria has adopted the system of administrative decentralisation, for whatever the material and human potentials of centralised administration are, it cannot satisfy the desires of local communities across the nation. In spite of the administrative decentralisation system' ability to liberate the centralised government from some obligations and duties in the Algerian experiment, it remains incomplete and requires support, back-up, and development through the rules that enable the local actors to activate the real mechanisms of producing wealth taking into consideration the local specificity, whether spatial or social ones, to freshen the local development activities via the good local governance sought by the current government through attempting to find a coordination framework among the different public administrations to all sectors concerned with the local economic dynamic. After the executive directorates had been created at the level of all provinces representing most of the ministries at the central level and which was assigned to execute and supervise the achievement of different developmental sectoral programs and prepare and follow-up the decentralised municipal developmental programs, and after making sure of its non-viability, disability to develop a real economic dynamic in different areas across the country, and inability to encourage the local investment, although it works under the supervision of the state governor who is considered the first responsible on the province owning all the authorities at the level of the province territory and has vast legal areas to push the local economy in accordance with the local specificity, the obtained investment results in the reality of most provinces do not amount to the ambition of the local communities and do not cover its economic and social demands and needs. Regarding the low level of the local development, the higher bodies responsible on public affairs governance created in year 2005 created the National Agency for Investment with branches in all provinces; however, it witnessed a lot of administrative obstacles, and in spite of the vast authorities given to the state governors, they were not able to control the investment because of their absolute administrative training. All of that pushed the higher authorities to adopt a new approach to administrate the investment, where they created unified offices to facilitate the investment operation for the private sector. Therefore, a unified office was created at the level of all the provinces with branches at the level of municipals that works on studying the private sector investment requests in all fields and has the purpose of facilitating the administrative procedures, the ones related to investment licence attainment requests or that which require real estate container to realise it. This procedure has contributed to a good extent in realising a lot of private investments, and the great obstacle remains to be the funding mechanisms from the part of banks, which own management autonomy far from the executive power which works on the logic of the most profitable projects, especially that its management policy determines a less percentage of profits in the industrial investment projects than that of business projects from one hand, and from the other hand, the recovery of funds deadlines are

shorter in the different business projects. It is this that made banks support the investment and importation sectors more than the industrial and agricultural sectors, the thing that made the national economy base itself almost fully on import, and exportation is limited to the raw state of gas and oil without refining and conversion, which necessitates the reconsideration of the banking system and redirecting it toward supporting transformational industrial production and local agricultural production to the different resources that Algeria is endowed with instead of supporting importation which is considered one of the main obstacles against the national production.

The central decision remains in control of the domestic decision despite the availability of local administrations representing the centralised administration of the state, not to mention constraining the local groups with rules that limit their freedom in exploiting the local natural and economic potentials, and which does not give it the needed legal area either in motivating the local or the foreign investment. The monopoly of the centralised administrations, which preserve its authority and keep monopolising the disposal of most resources and necessary tools for directing and managing the public domestic affair; the thing that indicates the presence of a contradiction between the revealed goals, ambitions, and objectives and the real practice of the local administration, whether on the level of legislative administrations or local groups.

### ***Obstacles of the Administrative Decentralisation Contribution in the Spatial Governance***

In spite of the state's adoption of the administrative decentralisation system, the local administration still suffers from difficulties and objective constraints related solely to the nature of the state regulation and its interest in the local spatial governance.

The Algerian state has preserved, since independence, its centralised system in management despite its decentralisation of administrative bodies. It preserved the administrative decision and kept it in the hands of the centralised state in its narrow conception, in other words, the group of organs and bodies that constitute it, especially the executive power ones. The central officials from the capital supervise all manifestations and aspects of public-provincial and local measure since it is taken care of by officials who directly undergo the centralised authority and are appointed by it and belong to it within a hierarchical gradual administrative frame. The real practice and experiment have revealed that despite the presence of many decentralised units throughout the Algerian history and despite appointing supervisors on it and electing parallel bodies to the appointed administrative bodies, both did not enjoy any deciding power or wide self-specialisations in all fields, instead, it was a form of channels that support the absolute centralisation and tools which are completely submitted to the centralised authority.

All of this emphasise the distinction of the Algerian system with autonomising all the authorities and fields at the level of the centralised administration, the thing that made the matter of dividing powers with decentralised administrative units an unacceptable and unpalatable idea by the central officials, for they remained jealous for their fields and do not have the minimum degree of willingness to give it in, and even if the centralised administration gave some fields, it remains always in attempt of recovering them, which made the decentralised strategy suffer from the lack of real desire to distribute specialties and authorities, for the officials in centralised administrations have gotten used to interfere in all small and big matters of the administration they are responsible for. Therefore, they find in transferring a part of their power and field to local representatives a thing that detracts from their value and affects their characters and interests.

The main obstacle that opposes the administrative decentralisation and the achievement of spatial governance is the desire to monopolise power and the mentality that is based on the petrified centralisation practiced by the official of the nation's centralised administration, and that is due to the fear of losing the decision and therefore losing personal and group interests protected by this kind of power through legislating laws that make the matter returns in all cases to the centralised approval in all fields and making excuse with the inefficiency of local officials, whether the appointed or elected all together. What made the matter more complicated is the fear of local officials of assuming their responsibilities because of the legal frames which limit their legal freedom area from one side, and the strict control imposed on them by the central trusteeship from the other side.

All of that led to reduction in the real work of all local bodies at the level of the local groups on seriously seeking to create wealth locally to push the economic wheel, which remains a hostage to the laws that limit the freedom of the elected at the level of the local groups which requires the endorsement of the administrative trusteeship upon all of its decisions taken in the form of deliberations. Adding to this, the laws did not take into account the real involvement of all actors

at the local level, those who can exploit of the natural, economic, and human resources according to the specificities of every local group.

### **Local Spatial Governance Requirements from Administrative Decentralisation**

Algeria's orientation towards adopting a large regional and neighbouring development to achieve a good spatial governance through workshops to prepare new laws for regional groups with a full non-fragmented picture and prepare a project for the investment law require finding solid contexts to establish a decentralised system for a serious administration to achieve the effective spatial governance.

### **Features of the Decentralised Administration in the Horizon of the Expected Spatial Governance**

To achieve a self-standing, viable, and sustainable spatial governance enjoying a financial abundance, there are efforts from the part of centralised authority seeking the establishment of local democracy foundations, alleviating the centralisation, and granting some fields to local groups and involving the citizen in managing the domestic public affair, and with the aim of providing high quality services to all categories of the local communities, the state's central bodies adopted a discourse to relieve the pressure on the local representatives and grant them enough freedom area to liberate the initiative upon the local level. In this frame, workshops has been opened to fix the legislative system related to the municipal law and the province law and replace them with a regional groups law to extend the powers of the local officials, whether the elected ones or the appointed by the state's central authority, to create wealth locally and broaden the neighbouring regional development in order to get rid of marginalisation in shadow areas, which are not included in the developmental programs in the previous schemes and stages, and that is through attempting to create a legal frame ensuring harmony whether in powers between the locally elected and the administrative officials who directly represent the central authority or between different service and economic sector representatives taking into account the principle of responsible partnership to all the concerned categories of the local communities and involving it in a real picture in managing and arranging the domestic public matter through civil associations and not just the locally elected representatives, In addition to providing support with the necessary resources and means to bodies and regions which do not contain enough natural and economic resources to create a real local development with giving a great importance to the human resource at the local level and exploitation of the formative establishments to rise its level and support its skills in the different fields according the local specification.

### **Perspectives of Establishing the Desired Decentralisation System of the Good Spatial Governance**

Spatial governance in Algeria is considered as a desired goal from all the public local policies and as a promising future awaited by all the national components from politicians and academics, and even all the categories of the community. As it is one of the targeted results by the advanced regional and neighbouring policy and the large decentralisation. However, this desire cannot be achieved unless with rehabilitation of the administrative decentralisation style through a set of the necessary measurements to activate the real role of the administrative decentralisation in achieving spatial governance. From another side, the state's spatial governance performing new and start-up roles to participate the local partnership democracy support series is subject to necessary perspectives to achieve the neighbouring spatial governance though administrative decentralisation.

The required measurements to activate the administrative decentralisation in Algeria are not those procedures or the accustomed routinous reactions by the successive governments through allocating developmental programs financed by state treasury and executed by its local administrative organs which take care of all the procedures related to execute and realise the listed projects in the municipal development projects of that listed in sectoral which the different executive administrations at the level of the provinces are responsible on realising it, and that is without involving both the social and economic actors in choosing the type of projects or in its settlement locations. Since it did not prove its efficiency in meeting the demands of local communities, substantial reforms must be made, and perhaps the most significant of those reforms is the rehabilitation of decentralised government officials so it be a real centre to all the executive and local functions of the state inside the regional scope in which it practices its activity. Therefore, it is obligatory to work on strengthening the administration at the level of local authorities through expanding powers for the elected in the provincial and municipal boards from one side and reducing the control that inhibits the spirit of initiative among the local officials in addition to finding a legal frame that ensures harmonising between different sectors with real involvement to different activities of the local communities to promote its sense of belonging to the area, with assuming all its responsibilities in choosing the most effective developmental ways and decisions suitable to local specificity.

## **Mechanisms of Investment Promotion and Fortune Creation in Algeria**

Despite the state's inclusion of article 43 of 2016 constitution that urges encouraging the investment and enhancing the business climate, in addition to enacting law No. 09-16 related to promoting investment and after it enacting implementation decrees especially the executive ones No. 100-17 to 105-17 which aim in the all of its provisions at Algeria's orientation towards a special investment system with far reaching horizon in serving the investor and the local and national development, also on the local level, a number of bodies specialised in studying the feasibility of investment projects and determining exactly how much it respond to development demands and following it up in purpose of promoting it and developing it have been assigned. The single-window (guichet unique) was created under the executive decree No. 12-93 related to investment promotion then the assistance committee to determine location and promote investment and control property CALPIREF, then its regulating executive decree No. 319-94 in addition to the executive decree No. 356-06 created the single-window at the level of the province. The latter contains within it the local representatives of the investment development national agency, and they represent different sectors and actors of a good relationship with investment promotion and social and economic development, and they are particularly the representatives of the national centre for business register, taxes, state properties, customs, construction, regional environment and work planning, and the municipal popular assembly official whose circle contains the single-window. The regulating decree of the single-window had also contained a verdict under which the decentralised single-window manager was given the status of the direct and only interlocuter of the non-resident investor and ensured with receiving his investment projects licence and granting him the certificate of deposit to all authorised investments and the decision of advantage award.

The duties and authorities of the single-window as a local body are to achieve the general goal, which is promoting the investment and developing it, and that is demonstrated through representing the ministerial sectors and some bodies and actors related to real estate and investment field. For example, the representative of the national centre for business register in the province grants in the state delivers a certificate that enabled the investor to make the necessary arrangements denomination under temporary receipt enabling him to achieve his investment project, and the representative of tax administrations is committed to providing the fiscal data that enable the investors to prepare their projects and facilitating his transaction with tax administration. The representative of state property administration informs the investor about the public real estate offer and stating its legal status and value. The representative of construction helps the investor complete the specific arrangement related to obtain the construction license.

However, the legal provisions which regulated the single-window remained just words on paper, for its effect was frozen through issuing the executive decree No. 120-07 which necessitated in its seventh article to deposit the application targeted at the governor to benefit from the privilege at the level of the national investment development agency CALPIREF and not at the level of the single-window. The privilege licence transfer, then, is issued by a decision from the governor and not the national investment development agency, and this is the normal for structure duplication reality which is established for one single mission.

The national real estate mediation and control agency ANIREF was created as a controlling body to the exploitation and management operation of the real estate directed towards investment at the national level under the executive decree No. 120-07 of 23/04/2007, which was repealed under executive decree No. 20-10 of 12/01/2010. Following its duties, it established the localisation and investment promotion and real estate control assistant committee (CALPIREF), which watches over managing the interests of industry small and medium enterprises department and investment promotion at the level of every province.

The assistance committee, which meets once in a month with the possibility of holding exceptional meetings to decide about the applications no later than 30 days, was established. It records its decisions within official reports signed by the present members. Its chairman issues the decision of allocating and appointing the location of the investment project. It commits every 6 months to prepare a report on its activity about the real estate offer available in the province and sends it to the minister of internal affairs and local authorities, and it sends a copy of it to the ministers responsible on national property and investment promotion. The name of the committee reveals to us the main tasks for which it was created and which is mentioned in details in article 2 of the previously mentioned executive decree No. 20-10. These tasks depend originally on the committee having a real estate supply bank across the province's territory provided with data given by state property and industry departments and the bodies charged with the province's real estate. This is

what allows it to make settlement sites determining operations and promoting the projects and controlling the real estate within the provisions established in order No. 04-08 and the executive decree No. 20-10

After 10 years of the committee's function and the practical difficulties that challenged its members to realise the tasks given to them and prevented the local investment promotion, attention was directed within the frame of managing and supporting and following-up the latter towards abolishing the committee to prevent inflation in state bodies and dispute over powers.

The regulating rules of the national investment development agency's authorities were amended, and the decentralised single-window was kept as a representative of the agency at the local level with restructuring it and distributing it upon significant four centres regarding the tasks it is charged with.

Despite that the main goals of the new investment system are approximating the investor with the public administration through its active representatives at the level of the four centres by promoting dialogue between the administration and the investors and the contribution to extending the procedures and accelerating in establishing the investment projects through purposeful attraction operations that work on persuading project owners to establish local projects of a specific nature and harmonising with the specificities and needs of the territory and the available resources in it, and regarding the importance of investment attraction operation locally in broadening the investment base and regarding the difficulty of the operation, a centre for fulfilling procedures charged with establishment and achievement procedures of projects was created. Its regulating executive decree included a verdict under which it gave to the centre the status of the direct interlocuter with the investors who desire to establish institutions and achieve projects. On the basis of this status, it was configured in a way that avoids complication and tardiness in procedures during depositing the investment licence requests and every request that appears to be necessary to following-up the project achievement.

In terms of administrative regulation, it is consisted of the chairman and the concerned agency agents who are specialised in recording the investments and reporting registration certificates. They are charged as well with studying investment certificate amendment requests and its related deadlines extension requests.

From the above, it is clear that the accompanying bodies of the investment operation are unstable, and its regulating rules are unstable as well, the thing that requires searching for practical mechanisms to achieve a real economic take-off that ensures establishing both local and national development.

### **Requirements of Economic Take-Off Towards a New Algeria**

In order to realise a real economic take-off, there must be a political will with a clear goal strategy which works on exploiting all the financial and human potentials in addition to outlining an effective and stabilised political system that ensures the real involvement of all the actors in the developmental operation.

#### **a- The Importance of Economy and its Role in the Social Construction**

Economy is the main engine of the social and spatial development, and that is through the real configuration to the area by providing a fostering and encouraging environment to the progress and development which ensures the achievement of a total development touching all social categories.

#### **b- Economic Take-Off Conditions**

In order to achieve a real economic take-off, centralised bodies responsible on managing the state affairs must work on providing a number of conditions, mainly:

- Establishing social-political and structural-economic bodies directed towards economic development
- Rising the average of production and productive investment so it can transcend the average of demographic growth at least with 5%
- Creating industries that stimulate the material and human latent capacities of the community through harnessing all what that requires and creating competitive mechanisms through creating and offering motivations to different economic actors
- Reforming the financial and banking system to support the real investment which produces wealth and motivate it instead of supporting importation.

### **c- Economic Take-Off Manifestations**

Economic take-off is expected when it involves the following manifestations:

- When all the public and private sectors are leading to economic development with a clear strategy determining the roles of all actors and to all economic sectors
- When the average of the per capita income is high
- Consideration of the principles related economy (value of work, performance, perfection, production)
- Poor and low percentage of unemployment and rise in the percentage of private and public sector employees
- Availability of the administrative, technical, and legal frames to harmonise between the different economic sectors
- Exploitation of the natural and economic resources available according to the particularity of all areas and regions.
- The best employment of capacities and human resources

### **d- Requirements of the Economic Take-Off at the Local and National Level**

To achieve an effective economic take-off, the following must be provided:

- The solid and insightful political will with the update, and that is through making the decision in a real and forward-looking picture
- Creating a base for social and economic data at the level of every municipal to provide the information and make it accessible by experts and different economic actors in order to encourage the investment
- Finding mechanisms to create a harmony and integration between the three main components (public authority, economic experts, scientists, and actors)
- Making sure of ensuring the logistic chains (supply chain, productive chain, distribution chain)
- Making sure of training and qualifying the labor force and developing its skills
- Manufacturing the national and local raw materials and the best exploitation of all the natural, economic, and human resources (education establishments, the pre-fabricated infrastructure, the geostrategic location, the area, the youth percentage, the frameworks, the existing deactivated bodies, the stable security...)
- Working on providing legislative and institutional stabilisation
- Digitising the administration and all the sectors to establish transparency and facilitating the frame of different transactions
- Taking more care of the middle class to maintain the economic and social balance
- Activating the economic role to the municipal through promoting local wealth creation mechanisms
- Helping and associating municipals in achieving the projects which produce wealth
- Reconsidering the legal provisions through allocating a separate article to the municipal's economic side
- Establishing a training program to all the actors and those responsible on the program of valuing the productive assets of financial resources of the local groups
- Reforming the local finance and collection with what conform with the modern economic rules
- Granting larger power to the elected local boards to engage into the investment field with facilitating the operation of loan granting to municipals
- Alleviating the legal procedures of endorsing the deliberations of the elected local boards by the trusteeship
- Reconsidering the overlap found among some decrees and laws related to deliberation endorsement
- Helping and motivating the local community with the political organisation and up-bringing to take the responsibility

- Digitising the local administration to establish transparency in management and providing the information to all the local actors and national and foreign private investors.
- Reconsidering the administrative division of the municipals with respecting the social specificity of the local communities and the local economic and natural potentials
- Outlining a policy with legislations that allow the electronic transaction to the different operators, whether the society members or the different economic interventionists
- Establishing consultative bodies to the local elected bodies composed of specialised experts
- Reforming the laws which criminalise the voters to give them a freedom area to initiate with leaving the political evaluation to the elected.
- Reconsidering the powers of the municipal's financial controller according to the requirements and specificities of the local necessity
- Establishing regional economic groupings in a vertical picture between the coastal provinces, the Hauts Plateaux provinces, and the desert provinces to open maritime and territorial accesses in both directions (North-South, South-North)
- Enhancing the taxation power of the local boards and involving them in the planning, supervision, and achievement in order to improve the local financial revenues
- Establishing a legal frame that ensures the real transaction between local groups and the different university laboratories to activate the local development through supporting the home-grown ideas
- Supporting the emerging institutions through granting it the percentage of public transactions at the local level
- Reconsidering the laws related to civil society organisation to really involve it into the local developmental decision through effective proposals

## **CONCLUSION**

Development achievement is accomplished through the strong governance of all the regional energies and potentials. That will not be achieved unless an administrative system enabling all the actors to perform their role properly is provided. The decentralised administrative system adopted by Algeria has proved its inability to exploit the great human and natural resources that Algeria is endowed with and employ it in a way that lifts the level of development to the ambitions of local communities. In spite of the decentralised administrative structure in which powers have been granted to local authorities and its accompanying different decentralised administrations, the legal obstacles which limit the necessary freedom of the local bodies to take the local developmental decision freely and which obliges it to return in all cases to the central bodies for approval or rejection in addition to the tight control imposed on the local elected bodies from the administrative trusteeship, the thing that prevented the freedom of the local initiative to development and wealth creation, in addition to the instability of the legal system of the bodies responsible on supporting the investment which the encouraging thing to bring foreign and national investors.

It is that which requires reconsidering the legal system and the administrative structure and adapt it according to what the modern methods require to encourage investment climate and public service providing mechanisms which focuses mainly on principles of modern spatial governance that depends on the real involvement to all the local actors and according to the local field specificity with regulating stable rules putting responsibility upon all the involved sides in the developmental operation and the capable of creating a real economic take-off according to the modern visions that is based upon scientific and technical grounds respecting the local specificity and deal with it within its general, national, and international frame.

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