The Contribution of Social Innovation to Socio-Economic Development in Algeria

[1]Rahali Amina Souad, [2]Ferouani Belkacem

[1] Higher School of Management Tlemcen Algeria.
[2] Abou Bekr Belkaid University Tlemcen Algeria.
Corresponding Author Email: [1]souad_rahali@hotmail.fr, [2] ferouani-bel@yahoo.fr

Abstract— Social innovation is a concept that comprises the creation of innovative, sustainable solutions to instant social problems. Algeria is one of the country's suffering from the increase in social problems, namely poverty, injustice, vulnerability, fragility, underemployment, unemployment, social exclusion, etc. It should be noted that such social phenomena weigh heavily on its economy and their absorption remains difficult, hence the need to seek new alternatives to fill its needs. In this sense , social innovation is seen as a sustainable solution. The purpose of this paper is to conceptualize the concept of social innovation and investigate the contributions of social innovation to address the unmet social needs of disadvantaged individuals then to socio-economic development of the country.

This research aims to identify the internal and external factors which contribute to the spread of social innovations. We explore this question through a survey whose methodology adopted is qualitative. It is based on a longitudinal participant observation from three different projects. We collected primary and secondary data Through semi-structured interviews (documentary analysis, follow-up questions), that we analyzed according to a thematic method.

Index Terms—social, innovation, development, Algeria.

I. INTRODUCTION

Algeria currently suffers from serious problems at all levels: growing social inequalities, progressive reduction of State efforts in certain key social sectors such as education and health, increase in the cost of living...

In fact, the Algerian society faces significant social problems for which it has implemented few effective and lasting solutions. Faced with these difficulties, it seems necessary for the citizens to promote new forms of organization that are more innovative and supported by a particular local management. In this sense, through its entrepreneurial nature, social innovation seeks solutions to complex social problems. However, this is a relatively recent scientific concept, but one that has grown considerably over the last ten years.

Social innovation must be able to create social value, while innovating socially in order to meet unmet needs. It is described as hybrid because it combines its social dimension as well as its economic and participatory dimensions.

The objective of this research was to identify examples of social innovations in Algeria.

What forms do social innovations in Algeria take? and how do they contribute to the socio-economic development of the country.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the literature, social innovation emerged in the early 1970s as "new ways of doing things" with the explicit aim of meeting social needs [1]. Two fields of research have been explored to account for social innovation: firstly, social innovation in relation with technological innovation, and secondly, social innovation as a new process of social development. In the first case, social innovation is described as an effect of technological innovation that has consequences for relationships within a community or social organization. Taking into account the difficulty of isolating the social impact of technological transformations, both of technological and social innovation have been analysed side by side as simultaneous and mutually influencing processes.

In the second case, social innovation is studied from the perspective of social movements in response to the crisis of the welfare state. It is analysed as a result of the withdrawal of the State from various fields of social intervention, leaving room for new initiatives by civil society actors with the capacity, skills and authority necessary to develop new local services [2].

Social innovation has no official institutional definition at the international level and in Africa. In 2000, the LEED Forum on Social Innovations organized by the OECD, bringing together 11 organizations from six countries (excluding Africa), considered that social innovation refers to "the design and implementation of new solutions that imply conceptual, process, product or organizational change, which ultimately aim to improve the welfare and well-being of individuals and communities.". [3]. This approach highlights the purpose of social innovation as the search for new responses to social-environmental problems, by identifying and providing new services that improve living conditions.

It is aimed at improving human well-being. Social innovations are innovations that are social in both their ends and their means. These innovations are not only good for society but also enhance individuals' capacity to act.

They rely on the inventiveness of citizens, civil society organizations, local communities, businesses and public

servants and services. They are an opportunity both for the public sector and for the markets, so that the products and services better satisfy individual but also collective aspirations.

Social innovation also makes it possible to identify and implement new processes for integrating people into the labour market, new skills, jobs and forms of participation that help to improve their Economic and social integration.

The United Nations Commission defines social innovation as "new collaborative agreements with social and environmental benefits, such as energy cooperatives, repair cafés and eco-villages" [4]. This definition focuses on the collaborative dimension of social innovation to respond to social and environmental challenges.

Also, [5] show that there are two main approaches in literature to understand such social phenomenon: result-oriented and process-oriented approach. In the first case, the perspective is more normative. Social innovation is then conceptualized as a more effective, efficient and sustainable solution to a social problem than the existing alternatives, [6] . According to this current of thought, there are three criteria used to analyze a social innovation: originality (the solution must be new for the user, context or market), type of unmet social demand, and the purpose, which must be primarily social. The second perspective prioritizes the analysis of the process, i.e. how the innovation emerges, how it is adopted, and how it is disseminated. These two perspectives explain the reasons why the concepts of social innovation are so different. According to[7] , "social innovation is a term that almost everyone likes, but nobody is quite sure of what it means."

Social innovation describes the entire process by which new responses to social needs are developed in order to deliver better social outcomes. This process is composed of four main elements:
- Identification of new/unmet/inadequately met social needs;
- Development of new solutions in response to these social needs;
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of new solutions in meeting social needs;
- Scaling up of effective social innovations.

All the definitions above comes from a report which outlines the following three key approaches to social innovation:

- Social demand innovations which respond to social demands that are traditionally not addressed by the market or existing institutions and are directed towards vulnerable groups in society. They have developed new approaches to tackling problems affecting youth, migrants, the elderly, socially excluded etc.
- The societal challenge perspective focuses on innovations for society as a whole through the integration of the social, the economic and the environmental.

- The systemic change focus, the most ambitious of the three and to an extent encompassing the other two, is achieved through a process of organizational development and changes in relations between institutions and stakeholders.

There is a growing body of literature addressing social innovation, social entrepreneurship and social enterprise . [8].However, the literature does not offer a consensus on the implication of each concept, although they often seem an attempt to address intractable social issues [9] that call for novel approaches and solutions. Those social problems should be understood in the context of the Grand Challenges of the 21st century, an era of enormous societal change involving ageing of the population, phenomenon of mass urbanisation and social exclusion, high rates of unemployment, and environmental challenges. These challenges cross many boundaries: political, economic, technological and ecological [10], and solving those challenges requires designing innovative solutions, mobilising resources collectively and sharing ideas. As emphasised by[11] ,"problems have in part changed radically and intensified in conjunction with the drastic acceleration of change in the economy, society and culture, and awareness has clearly grown regarding the limited potential that technological innovations and established management and problem-solving routines have to resolve issues".

As [12] pointed out "in recent years, the emphasis has shifted towards recognition of the importance of social engagement in the pursuit of societal well-being. Changing contextual conditions, media coverage and public debate has raised public awareness about social and environmental issues and with the growing disparity between top income earners and the rest of the working population, the assumptions behind the drivers for economic prosperity are increasingly being called into question".

To overcome these problems or challenges and to understand the parallel rise of new kinds of social movements, social innovation and social entrepreneurship have been seen as having an important role in driving social change. Several authors (e.g.; [13],[14]; [15].[16]) have addressed issues around social change using concepts of social innovation and social entrepreneurship, despite the distinct intellectual heritages of their underpinning fields, namely innovation and entrepreneurship. This has muddied the use of these concepts, with people grappling to create knowledge about a phenomenon (co-ordinated social change from the grass roots to address pressing social problems) by applying a mix of different ideas and theories. This has undermined developing a shared knowledge base about the phenomenon and led to a situation of conceptual confusion. Addressing this conceptual confusion therefore demands reconciling the concepts of social innovation and social entrepreneurship and to better understand how they relate to each other and how they could be applied in parallel.

The term social entrepreneurship is used to describe the behaviors and attitudes of individuals involved in creating new ventures for social purposes, including the willingness to take risks and find creative ways of using underused assets. It is a field of action involving different kinds of actors, in which sociocultural and historical contexts emerge as key features, where individuals, the social entrepreneurs, construct outcomes, using entrepreneurial alertness and motivation, to solve societal problems.

However, a true social innovation is systems-changing by developing novel solutions in border spanning learning communities to create social value and promote community development, challenging existing social institutions through collaborative action developing wider networks.

The elements that define the nature of social entrepreneurship are four: (1) Social mission and the creation of social value as a central element. (2) Motivation focused on the change of the structural conditions that generate the problem that wishes to address—visualized by the entrepreneur as an opportunity for social change. (3) Model for the generation of social and economic value. (4) Success based on indicators of social impact and not financial performance. These elements operate in a concentric way, where the social mission is at the center of the entrepreneurship and supports its raison d'être and evolves until reaching the generation of its success indicators.(Figure 1)
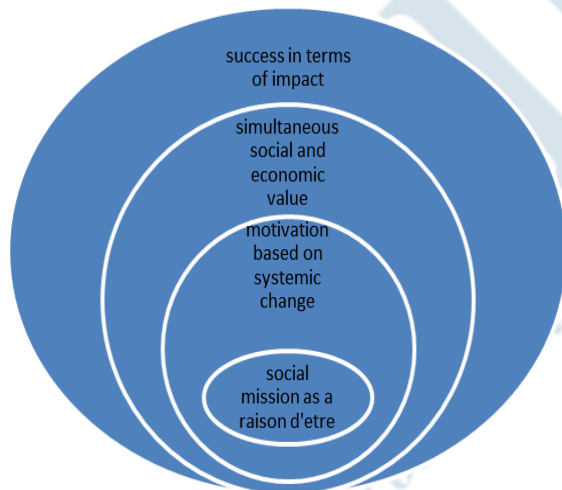

Fig 1: Elements of social entrepreneurship

Source: Luis PortalesSocial Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship Fundamentals, Concepts, and Tools,Palgrave edition,2019.

Therefore, one might say that the concept of social innovation is wider than the concepts of social entrepreneurship and a third concept, social enterprise. For [17]social enterprise although addressing social needs, "is a privately owned, profit-oriented venture which markets its own products and services, blending business interests with social ends" (p. 2). In this sense, a social enterprise is an organisational form trading in the market to achieve social aims[18].

[19] also argue that the concepts of social enterprise and social entrepreneurship and the concept of social innovation "are closely related to each other since a social entrepreneur can be a part of a social enterprise and, at the same time, can contribute to the promotion of social innovations". From this perspective, both social entrepreneurship and social enterprise are encompassed by social innovation, which operates at the inter-organisational and system levels [18].

III. SOCIAL INNOVATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE ALGERIAN CONTEXT

To explain the process that underpins social innovation in the Algerian context, we propose to define social innovation as "a process according to which several actors coordinate and organize locally to propose a new and effective solution to a social need that is poorly or not at all met for vulnerable people view to improving living conditions in a sustainable manner and to being disseminated in other territories." This process is based on multi-stakeholder cooperation and a sustainable economic model.

Therefore, social innovation provides a new response to:

-A societal problem: social innovation aims to respond to a social need for which there is no solution in the existing system or for which the system has many gaps and/or shortcomings;

-A target of vulnerable people: social innovation is aimed primarily at one (or more) group(s) in a situation of economic and/or social insecurity, with the aim of improving their living conditions and their integration into society in a sustainable way;

-An origin rooted in the territories: social innovation is the outcome of local collective intelligence. It is produced in response to "weak signals" identified in the field in contact with the public, and is implemented through the deployment of local resources;

-Multi-actor cooperation: social innovation is the concern of all operators, funders, supported persons and public actors. The participation and cooperation of actors, including users, is a success factor in addressing a societal problem.

These are supplemented by criteria that are desirable but not necessary:

-A readiness to be reproduced in different contexts, so that it can be replicated or scaled up;

-An efficient and sustainable economic model: Social innovation should be based on a viable economic model, but the stage of development and the economic and social contexts in which It is developed are key factors.

Fostering social innovation and change in Algeria is challenging. Organizations dedicated to promoting social innovation are quite few. For instance, the Algerian Center for Social Entrepreneurship facilitates social innovation through finding entrepreneurial solutions to social issues in Algeria.

The Algerian Center for Social Entrepreneurship was created in 2016 with the aim of promoting social

entrepreneurship, federating and supporting Algerian social entrepreneurs in the creation and development of sustainable businesses. Today ACSE is a pioneer in Social entrepreneurship, supporting innovative solutions for social and environmental issues in Algeria. In order to attaint these goals, ACSE launched in 2018 the first Algerian incubator of social enterprises, allowing young entrepreneurs to make positive social impacts on their country. Through its incubator, the Algerian Center for Social Entrepreneurship sets up two incubation cohorts per year; its activities help support and strengthen the entrepreneurial skills of young project leaders.

Under the Center's guidance, several social startups work on tackling specific societal issues (like poverty) and improving livelihoods of disadvantaged people. In fact, social entrepreneurship is one of the best examples of social innovation in practice. The work that social startups do often aligns with the work of numerous NGOs and foundations, however it is innovation that gives entrepreneurs the edge. Startups have the potential to create numerous jobs in local communities and actively participate in the local economy. There are many ways how socially innovative solutions can improve lives in Algeria and around the world. Social innovation can open borders, bring tolerance and acceptance of new ways and methods. Most importantly innovation can act as a driver of social change. Social innovation will not entirely solve all social issues that exist in Algeria, but it can certainly facilitate the process. In the end, innovation is not just a tool, it is a way of thinking, a philosophy, perhaps, the new philosophy of the XXI century.

In parallel, the economy of Algeria expanded by 1.4% in 2018, up from 4.1% in 2016 with growth driven mainly by the recovering oil and gas sector.

Algeria has enormous possibilities to boost its economic growth, including huge foreign-exchange reserves derived from oil and gas. A development strategy targeting stronger, sustained growth would create more jobs, especially for young people, and alleviate the housing shortage the country is facing. The national strategic option is therefore to revitalise the process intended to diversify the economy starting with the non-oil sector while deepening the reforms needed for the structural transformation of the economy.

Alongside the Algerian classic economic sectors, an alternative sector has been developing in the country — that of the social and solidarity economy — types of activities founded on the principles of common good, participatory management and a mix of private and public, that can take various organizational forms: grassroot organizations, cooperatives, mutual-benefit corporations, foundations and businesses providing social and/or solidarity-based services.

The social and solidarity economy is gradually developing in the country as a result of growing awareness that a sustainable and inclusive economy puts people and environmental protection first.

To support this trend, while also addressing youth unemployment, UNDP brought together some thirty stakeholders from the social and solidarity economy to jointly develop a national charter and delineate the functioning of the sector.

In parallel, UNDP implements pilot projects around the country led by young people and women in this sector, helping them create small businesses with strong social and/or environmental impact, training them, and providing selected project owners with grants to help them start businesses.

IV. EMPIRICAL PART: CASE STUDIES

A. Research methodology

Through semi-structured interviews with the founders of three projects as well as other means (documentary analysis, follow-up questions), we collected primary and secondary data that we analyzed according to a thematic method, in order to understand the contribution of Social Innovation to socio-economic development in Algeria.

Data collection was primarily carried out using qualitative methods including organizational document reviews, primary interviews and participant observations. Field visits were conducted for each of the 3 selected projects.

Some of the analytical case questions are :

-Why is this project a good example of a social innovation?
-What are the key innovative core components within this case that have potential to be replicated, transferred or scaled?
-What are the outcomes of this project?
-How has the project achieved actions in improving well-beings?
-How has the local environment responded/ supported this project?
-Is there any public policy framework to support social innovation ?

Project one: the city of Ksar Tafilelt (the first ecological city)

Located in the south of the country, in the wilaya of Ghardaia,Ksar Tafilet is the first Algerian 'eco-citizen' city. The project won the National Energy Globe Award 2020 as well as the 'sustainable city' prize at COP 22.

At the time, Algeria was facing a housing crisis that left many families unable to afford housing. With the purpose of building a city with affordable housing and which would respect the environment and the cultural heritage of the region, the organisation bought 22.5 hectares of rocky land from the Algerian state at a very cheap price. The project offers zero-interest mortgages,

This new Ksar, which obeys the requirements of sustainable development, constitutes a fine example of bioclimatic construction assimilating educational architecture and ecological principles and must be a model to be followed in Algeria to preserve the environment and fight

against pollution, estimated for his part the Austrian diplomat, Franz Bachleitner.

The Ksar in question is made with local materials by also applying the standards of economical water management, recycling of wastewater and recovery of household waste

In 2017, the founder created the Amidoul Foundation, a charitable organisation whose purpose is to provide support for the maintenance of common areas of the city, to promote environmental, social and ecological guidelines, and to encourage any collective or individual action aimed at improving the quality of life of its inhabitants.

Project two: "Support for the social reintegration of prisoners" - reintegration path for imprisoned women

In support of the justice reform process, initiated by the Algerian State since 1999, the PNUD (United Nations development Program) supports the General Directorate of Penitentiary Administration and Reintegration (DGAPR) in its work of taking charge of imprisoned during and after their incarceration, in order to improve their social reintegration and better respond to their concerns and expectations.

The "Support for the social reintegration of prisoners" project, which began in 2014, prioritized a more human approach to social reintegration, placing the needs of detained people in the center of the solutions. It relied on the reinforcement of the psychological care of detained individuals via the assessment and orientation services and paid particular attention to the most vulnerable groups of imprisoned, in particular women. It also strengthened the role of civil society organizations in taking charge of the reintegration of detained individuals through a more effective partnership with the external services dependent on the DGAPR. Finally, it made it possible to share the Algerian experience of reintegration at the regional level.

As part of this project, individual treatment programs for detained individuals have been developed and relevant staff has been trained for their implementation.

All Algerian penitentiary establishments are therefore now equipped with manuals for psychological treatment programs for women, minors, drug addicts, violent and repeat offenders, and all women and minor prisoners are already benefiting from these new therapies. . Similarly, a multi-family therapy program was implemented in 3 pilot establishments and 23 psychologists were trained in its use. Following the

implementation of the therapy program dedicated to violence, there was a 97% reduction in aggressive behavior among inmates.

Civil society has also seen its role in supporting social reintegration considerably strengthened.

The project has energized and supported the partnership with civil society organizations around reintegration through significant capacity building dedicated to the volunteers of the associations and the personal of the external services dependent on the DGAPR. In addition, thanks to the platform developed by the project and implemented at the level of the 32 external services, 11,000 detained and 210 associations are listed and taken care of more quickly and more efficiently.

In 2021, more than 6,000 women detained were taken care of in collaboration with CSOs for assistance with social reintegration through professional reintegration, the acquisition of housing….

Project 3: Focus on the CapDel program: In Djanet, civil society wants to contribute to local development.

In the pilot municipality of Djanet, CapDeL has supported and financed 4 associative projects, in order to enable civil society to strengthen its capacities and contribute to the process of integrated, inclusive and sustainable local development.

The "Yanboue el Hanane" association, with its flagship project "Assadakan", aims to preserve and promote the traditional "targui" carpet, as a tool for local development, while supporting the empowerment of young women in the Djanet region, by allowing them to access a thousand-year-old traditional know-how and make it a source of sustainable income for their families.

Since its launch, with the support of CapDeL, 67 young women from the ksours of Djanet have been trained in carpet weaving, while 25 others have acquired marketing techniques thanks to a trainer mobilized from the wilaya of Tamanrasset. The young animators of the association proudly exhibited the products of their work, within the workshop installed at the headquarters of their association, at the house of traditional arts of Djanet. Encouraged by the promising results and the momentum created around the traditional

Targui carpet, and thanks to networking with other associations, local workshops have been implemented in the ksours and neighborhoods of the immense territory of the commune of Djanet, in order to give more learners the chance to acquire a trade. A partnership with the vocational training sector has also enabled beneficiaries to obtain a recognized diploma which will facilitate the issue of a craftswoman's card and access to financing within the framework of the aid system for micro-enterprises. These trainings have changed their life, they will allow them to have incomes, because the Assadakan carpet is in demand everywhere, even in Libya, Mali and Niger

After the description of the projects, here are the main data analysis results:
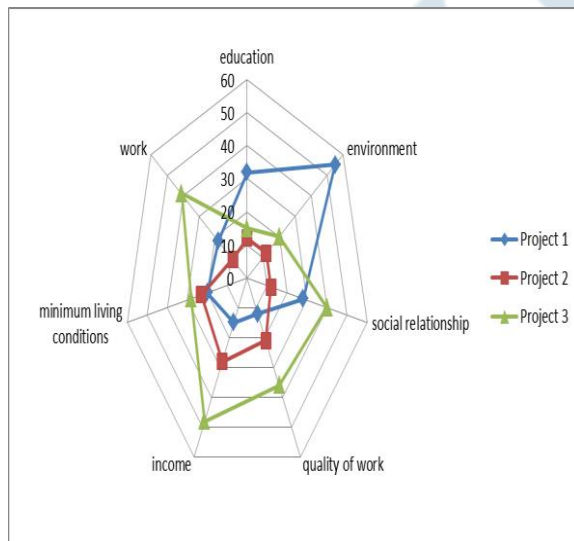

Fig 2: Dimensions of socio-economic development for each project

Source: established by authors

The protection of the environment is an important aspect of the development that Algeria can achieve (Project 1)through Social Innovation or rather the extension of it towards what we call Social Eco-Innovation. Algeria has been well engaged in this process since the 2010 Charter on the Environment and Sustainable Development. The Project 2 is still in maturation phase. However, the third project of hand crafts generates satisfying incomes to the members and therefore many work opportunities for the local society.

Fig 3: Internal factors at the project leader level for each project

Internal factors at the project leader level	Project 1	Project 2	Project 3
The skills & know-how	XXX	X	XXX
The level of knowledge of social innovation;	X	X	X
The individual aspirations and motivations	XX	XXX	XXX
The material and financial resources	XX	X	X
Their network and relationships with other innovation actors	XX	X	XX

Source: established by authors

Fig 4: external factors at the level of the environment in which the organization operates for each project

External factors at the level of the environment in which the organization operates	Project 1	Project 2	Project 3
The institutional framework	XXX	XX	XX
The public policy framework	XXX	XXX	XXX
Access to funding	X	X	X
Access to markets	X	X	X
Human capital	XXX	X	XXX
The adoption of social innovation	XX	X	X
Access to infrastructure	X	X	X
culture	X	X	XX

Source: established by authors

The skills, knowledge and know-how of the individual/members are mainly found in Project 1 and 3, this refers to the high contribution of traditional society in the territorial development.

The individual aspirations and motivations of the project leader(s) are also important, they lead them to address a societal issue in order to make a contribution and provide a solution on their own scale.

Also, according to our study there is an important recognition of social innovation in the country's legal system; as well as the establishment and coordination of dedicated

support policies.

However, both of the three projects suffer from the absence of solidarity finance mechanisms and instruments to support actors in the development of social innovation;

In term of culture, there is an insufficient information about social innovation in society, but also within the system of values and beliefs related to the openness necessary for change, as well as collaborative skills. This also includes the lack of promotion of social innovation through competitions or annual events.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper was an opportunity to know the role that Social Innovation plays in socio-economic development in Algeria. As the existing literature on this topic is very limited, we tried to enrich the repertoire of research on Social Innovation in the Algerian context and will undoubtedly serve the various scientific and professional communities interested in this field in Algeria.

Through examples of three innovative projects , it seems that social Innovation, has a real contribution to socio-economic development in Algeria. Its contribution to meeting social needs not covered by the market and/or the State, the challenges it faces, as well as its impact on its target individuals and on society as a whole, are very important.

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