

# Les essentiels AMIS des AÎNÉS FRANCE



LA PARTICIPATION CITOYENNE DES AÎNÉS N°1



Coordonné par Pierre-Olivier Lefebvre et Angélique Philipona

# CIVIC PARTICIPATION & AGEING

First volume of a series of books coordinated by the Francophone Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities (RFVAA), this one begins with a quick reminder about the Age-Friendly Cities and Communities (AFCC) Process which enables us to relocate the area of “civic participation” within this process. Civic engagement is seen both as one of the eight themes of the program initiated by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and as one fundamental theme of the notion of co-construction. It can be defined as a major leverage to give a place to each generation in a society marked by important demographic changes.

Participation of the inhabitants is one of the major axes of the AFCC process which should be developed at each stage of the implementation. It is particularly important at the stage of the urban audit because it constitutes a pre-requirement in the engagement of any territories in this program. That’s why the second chapter aims to give details about this specific time, its issues and also its possible practical forms which can be diverse. To do that, the experience of four “Age-Friendly” territories is exposed, showing the flexibility of the process and the importance of the appropriation of this process by each decision maker involved, and this according to the specificities of the territory.

In the second part of this themat-

Written by **Pierre-Olivier Lefebvre**  
Executive Director

And by **Angélique Philipona**  
Development director,  
Doctoral Searcher in Sociology  
RFVAA



tic book, academics bring their views on the issues linked with civic participation of the retirees and on the place which is given to them in society in order to practice their “power of acting”. In this sense, Angélique Philipona offers a review of the consultation disposals which have been developed in France and whose evolution led to a transformation of the practices. Jean-Philippe Viriot-Durandal, Marion Scheider, Tabitha Oubda and Thibaud Moulart, members of the REIACTIS, offer a definition of social participation, highlighting in the same time the area of volunteering which is one the favourite social form of retirees. It is also reminded by Edith Gaillard who, in the same spirit of the reflections led by the research team of ECLIPS, evokes the strong engagement of older citizens in

the consultation disposal, including the AFCC program, and in the voluntary sector. By using the term “urban participative environments”, she highlights the place of the small daily acts accomplished by the elderly who contribute, along with more formal bodies, to give them a role and a social utility. More specifically, Anne Labit puts forward the example of the alternative forms of housing more and more chosen by retirees to express their solidarity and citizenship. Like that, she highlights the way, retirees, often supported by cities and communities, seize the problems to which they can be confronted to find concrete solutions to them. As an opening, the two last articles show an international vision of social participation. First, Thibault Moulart, Mario Paris, Marion Scheider,

Suzanne Garon and Jean-Philippe Viriot-Durandal, put in perspective the notion of participation initiated by the WHO while underlining the different implementations depending on the countries. The authors share their reflections about the concrete effect of the consultation on the processes of decision making. The risk is to use only direct consultation at the expense of other forms of civic participations. They also write about the very limited diversity of profiles of the engaged retirees. Finally, Geneviève Houioux' contribution, real return of experience, is the occasion of sharing the process of consultation led in partnership with the Local Consultative Councils of the Elderly by the Observatory of health of the Hainaut, in Belgium.

To complement these theoretical inputs, the third part of this book gathers the contributions of organisations which engage everyday to favour the participation of the elderly and their integration in society. It is the case of the Foundation of France which communicates on its longstanding engagement in order to enable retirees to remind citizen and actors in society until the end of their lives, in particular via the financing of actions in favour of the engagement of these latter in society.

Because it is aware of the necessity to imply the most affected people by this reflection and to place their speech at the heart of the debate, the RFVAA also wished to let the representative organisations of retirees expressing in this book. Each of them constitutes the image of an active and civic retirement, seizing the current societal problems and offering innovative and engaged answers. Moreover, the place of the trade unionism is reminded by the CFDT-Retraités, partner of

the RFVAA, which insists on the necessity to fight against the stigmatisation of retirees, reminding that they are, before all, adults and an important resource for society during all the time of their ageing. To show that, the National Union of the CPIE evokes the principles of action and the methods used by the CPIE to support the mobilisation and implication of older people. On its turn, the association ECTI shows the importance, for all one part of the public of retirees, to stay active and useful in the benefice of the whole society. To complement that, the association Old'Up asks again the place taken by each in society during their ageing and offer to imagine together answers to give in order to bring sense and utility to the life of retirees. To analyse this problematic of citizenship of the most fragile older people, the process Citoyennage (mix between the word citizen and age) enables older people to express, including the one living in institutes, at the heart of the debates. Under another form, this is also offered by the Federation of Cities and Councils of Wise which encourages the consultation of retirees by the regional authorities via the implementation of bodies of this type.

In the fourth part of this book, a space is left to Age-Friendly Cities and Communities to express thanks to several projects implemented in the cities in order to encourage the participation of the inhabitants of all ages in their territory. After the interview of the City of Saint-Etienne about the global strategy adopted by the municipality to encourage the largest possible participation to the life of the city, a certain number of returns on experience are offered. Like that, Dijon, Metz, Floirac,

Blagnac or Limonest expose the practical details of the functioning of their participative bodies following of the type of "Councils of Wise". To complement, the "return on experience" records of the cities of Besançon, Le Havre, Angers, Grenoble or Bruxelles offer a detailed return on innovative actions contributing to encourage the participation of the inhabitants to the life of the city.

Throughout time, the sociology of ages has seen its concepts increase in order to be able to better take into account the evolutions and social changes linked with the increase of the life expectancy, the societal evolutions, the changes of way of life and the diversification of the paths of life. It has been equipped with new tools and has abandoned its exclusive preoccupation of age to treat other questions such as intergenerational connections or isolation. Always in this sense, at the manner of Van de Velde, it is nowadays pertinent to campaign for "a political sociology of the age of the life" (Van de Velde, 2015). The sociology of the ages has matured and should now take into account not only the life conditions of older people but also their existence in democracy, that is to say the place which is given to their voice and how they are welcomed by the whole society. Despite of its non-exhaustiveness, we are now hoping nevertheless that this book will contribute to the development of Age-Friendly cities thanks to the different points of view they return.

# SENIORS 'CONSULTATION IN FRANCE

Social participation and civic engagement are two central themes in the “Age-Friendly Cities and Communities” Program initiated by the World Health Organisation (WHO). These two themes have also weight in the political choices made by high international authorities like the OECD or the European Commission (Durandal and Moulaert, 2014). Within the WHO program, these themes are seen as a guarantee of the cross-sector aspect of the program, as a tool at the service of the adaptation of society to the ageing and as an ambition in terms of integration of all the ages within the city.

When the WHO created the “Age-Friendly Cities and Communities” Program, it has been decided to structure it around eight main themes (1). One of the goals consisted then to move from “caring for” to “taking into account” seniors in society. In order to do that, the WHO suggested considering a more complete form of the ageing. The WHO has driven away from a vision exclusively centred on the socio-medical aspects of the ageing to go to a more global and integrating adaptation of society to the ageing of the population. That way, the base of the project aimed to make an inventory and to cate-

Written by **Angélique Philipona**  
Development director,  
Doctoral Searcher in Sociology  
RFVAA



gorise all the areas that should be integrated into a specific thinking and an organisation in order to create indulgent territories to people of all ages. In this way, “civic engagement and employment” which is one of the themes of the “Age-Friendly Cities and Communities” Program is described by the WHO as follow: “Older people are an asset to the community, and they continue contributing to their communities after retirement. An age-friendly city and community provides ample opportunities for older people to do so, be it through voluntary or paid employment,

and keeps them engaged in the political process.” (2).

But civic participation is not only a theme of the Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Program aimed to promote volunteering, employment and civic integration: it is also a fundamental tool to put into practice the process and one of the bases of this innovative program. Indeed, the necessity to appeal to older people is present at each step of the Age-Friendly Cities and Communities (AFCC) process: territory assessment, urban audit, action plan and monitoring

(1) Community and health care, Transportation, Housing, Social Participation, Outdoor spaces and buildings, Respect and social inclusion, Civic participation and employment, Communication and information.

(2) Description from the website of the WHO on the Global Age-friendly Cities and Communities Network <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/age-friendly-in-practice/civic-participation-and-employment/>

of the actions. In the frame of the AFCC process, older people are considered as participants in their own right to the project. This bottom-up way of work, promoted by the United Nations, aimed to make benefit the public policies from the “knowledge from usage” of older inhabitants. This “knowledge from usage” is the result of their own everyday life and their own perception of the city. Like that, the inhabitants occupy an essential place in the three-part work at the basis of the process as defined by the Francophone Network of Age-Friendly Cities (RFVAA) in France. The citizens are fully involved in a process of co-construction of indulgent territories to people of all ages along with representatives who are responsible for the choices and the implementation of a political program and professionals who are responsible for the technical implementation. Finally, civic participation of older people is also a social issue. Indeed, it is not only a theme and a tool at the service of the process but it must also be seen as a goal because it refers to the place of the elderly in society and so to the question of the “living together” between generations.

### “At all ages, building a society”: the issue of the participation and the citizenship for the elderly (3)

In 1972, Anne-Marie Guillemard elaborated a typology of retiree behaviours thanks to the definition of five life modes when you are retired:

Retirement-withdrawal which often corresponds to the physiologic needs (eating, sleeping and washing)

The third age retirement characterized by the leisure activities

The retirement-consumption marked by travels and family

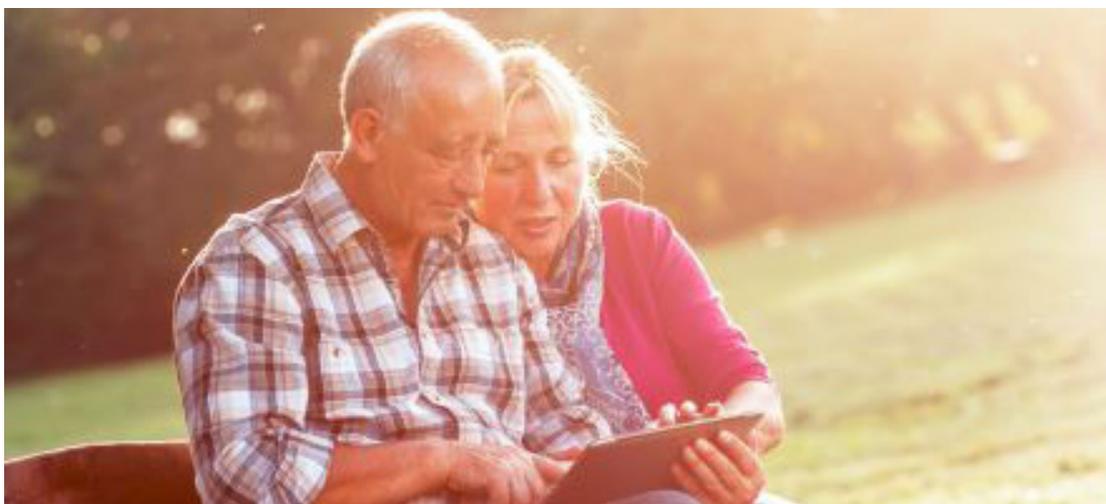
The retirement-claiming which is the one of the engagement in a activist cause about the place of retirees in society

The retirement-participation which marks the continuity with the will to be part of society.

In the time she wrote her book “The Retirement, a social death” (La Retraite une mort sociale), the retirement-withdrawal was the more represented type of retirement. But in 2002, the author herself came back on this analysis to rehabilitate the place of the retirement-participation among the 21th century retirees (Guillemard,

2009), whereas others go as far as saying that the “third age retirement” has almost disappeared in favour of new practices of engagement (Hugonot, 1989). More recently, the volunteering practice of older people has increased but its form has also changed because, now, they turn more and more often to activities of social or economic utility (Bresson, 2013). Civic participation can be defined as being “all the activities outside of home by which people voluntarily engage in the life of the community and of its organizations, community spaces, expression forms and events” (Bickel, 2014, p.2017). Civic participation can take several forms, reflecting like that the diversity of the sociological profiles of retirees and older people. To this definition, Viriot-Durandal and Guthleber add the notion of influence sometimes action on the process of social transformation which would be the result of the implication of retirees in the activities of social utility (Viriot-Durandal and Guthleben, 2009).

Nowadays, volunteering is one of the more attractive engagement forms to French retirees. Indeed,



(3) Theme of the Semaine Bleue (a week entirely devoted to elderly in France)

according to France Bénévolat figures in 2013, the over-65 group is the more engaged in volunteering activities. The rate of subscription to an association increases along with the age (33,7 % among people aged between 55 and 59, 37,4 % among people aged between 60 and 64, 44,3 % among people aged between 70 and 74). But this rate starts to decrease among people over 70 (41 % among people aged between 70 and 74, 34 % among people aged 75 and more). It can probably be explained by health problems which can appear when you grow older (4). Otherwise, 57 % of the presidents of associations are aged over 56 (5). These proportions are explained on one hand, by the raise of free time when you are retired (Bresson, 2013) and, on the other hand, by the will of retirees to engage and to contribute to social life in order to face up to the context of labour market exclusion and to get out of an unbalanced situation in which they would receive advantages without bringing anything in return (Guillemard, 2009). This will of the elderly to free themselves from a third age retirement in favour of a social utility retirement is at the origin of a new type of retirement described by Guillemard: the solidarity retirement (Guillemard, 2009). Like Reimat, we can only contest the too often conflation between retirees and inactive people by observing that retirees are, for most of them, fully invested and engaged from a social and civic point of view : “with the coming of the solidarity retirement, retirement is not this part of life after working life anymore. It becomes also the time of an age when working is replaced by a free activity. The

intricacy of social times has become also the rule for the third time of life” (Guillemard, 2009, p.65). More and more often, we notice the beneficence of the participation of the elderly for society, including in a certain number of reports such as Henri Théry’s one for the CESE in 2013 (Reimat, 2002).

Like that, beyond the participative systems established by the public policies and aimed to enable the citizens of all ages to express and be heard in a spirit of co-construction, older people themselves involve in the life of the city and participate to social life. During the Second World Assembly about the ageing which took place in Madrid in 2002, it was highlighted that older people come to “fill gaps that the government or the market cannot or does not want to fill in, bringing a precious knowledge, experiences and networks useful to several organizations which would work less well without their help” (United Nations, 2002, p.1). Volunteering is particularly profitable in the sense that it gives a “productive” character to the ageing of the population and that it has also a positive effect on older people themselves who stay active, involved in society and preserved from the loss of utility feeling (United Nations, 2002). Like that, when society excludes an important mass of individuals from the labour market, via their retirement, even early retirement, without giving the opportunity to involve in other activities, it deprives itself of a considerable contribution at all points of view (Hugonot, 1989).

Nowadays, the fact, that ageism (the discrimination founded on

age) is one of the forms of discrimination the most commonly accepted, contributes to show that society excludes the elderly. However, one of the major issues concerning the ageing of the population is to enable each individual, whatever generation from which he or she comes from, to find his or her place as citizen in the city. Even if public policies have a predominant role in this area, a certain number of retirees creates themselves an answer to this society which excludes them. Then, we speak of “empowerment” which is a concept largely developed in France by authors such as Marie-Hélène Bacqué or Jean-Philippe Viriot-Durandal. The empowerment, founded on the notion of power in the sense of Weber in 1971, is defined as being “the probability that a stakeholder is in position to impose his or her will in the frame of a social relationship” (Viriot-Durandal and Guthleben, 2009, p.238). Empowerment opposes the concept of withdrawal as it has been introduced by Brown. The concept of withdrawal corresponds to the fact that society relegates elderly citizens to a passive role that these latter did not choose. It makes reference to the influence that retirees can keep on the functioning of society and decision taking. Like that, empowerment indicates the way retirees can free themselves from social roles, in all autonomy, imposed to them by society in order to create new ones.

Regularly, empowerment of the retirees comes forward collectively. Then, it corresponds to the fact that the individuals gather in order to assert common interests (Viriot-Durandal and Guthle-

(4) Source : CNRS-Matisse/centre of economy of the Sorbonne survey, 2005-2006

(5) Source : statistics on resources and way of life, INSEE 2006

ben, 2009). In France, retirees associations' representatives gather a too low number of members to really influence debates. In 2016, French Confederation of Retirees (6) (Confédération Française des Retraités) which is composed of the five largest federations of retirees associations, gather about 1,5 million of retirees which represents only 10 % of the French retirees. Moreover, most of these associations express their point of view only on the questions about health, dependence and retirement (Girardot and Song, 2015). However, retirees associations could make the choice to involve on loads of subjects concerning them, linked with the social environment and the built environment at the same time. That is the choice made by the CFDT-Retraité which involved, by joining the RFVAA, to campaign for a more global and interdisciplinary action in favour of age-friendly environments. It is also, for example, the case of the American association AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) which tackle the theme of ageing by the angle of the life path (Damon et al., 2007). This association gathers more than 40 millions of retired people and is often considered as the symbol of the grey power (7) (Guérin, 2007). According to Anne-Marie Guillemard, it would be more relevant if retirees organizations could "take into account all the obligations that constraint the public policies and defend in the same time the interest of the elderly to have a clear and balanced vision

of the intergenerational contract" (Guillemard, 2002, p.33). The idea of an influential participation is highlighted here. This influential participation is not seen as a claim anymore but as a co-construction including the principle of reality. Indeed, the collective mobilization does not always aim to take place in a ratio of power (aimed to make accept your claims). But, it is rather to become an essential stakeholder and to make admit your identity (Viriot-Durandal and Guthleben, 2009).

On the other hand, even if groups of interest of retirees and old people are rather weak in France, elderly people are very involved in the political area. Like that, on 1st January 2017, more than 63 % of mayors in France were over 60, and among them, about 500 were aged 80 and more (Ministry of Interior, 2014).

Lots of studies, such as the one of Hidalgo, Moreno-Jimenez and Quinonero in 2013, show that voluntary older people have a biggest self-esteem, declare being in better health and more satisfied by their life (Dansac, Lacombe and Vachée, 2015). But if social participation can favour the ageing in good health, lots of research articles show also that it is necessary to be already in a dynamic of ageing in good health to be able to enter any form of social and civic engagement. Guillemard confirms this theory by saying that the five models of retirement that she has developed depend on the resources collected along your all life: incomes, social relationships, health

state, and socioeconomic situation (Guillemard, 2009). Retirement is in reality other than "the time of consecration of social inequalities" (Guillemard, 2009, p.56) because the social determinisms exist only to reinforce the inequalities collected along your entire life in a stronger way when you are older. One of the issues for the public powers would not only consist in encouraging social participation of the elderly but also acting on the entire life in order to enable older individuals when they retire to own necessary goods and potentialities (Caradec, 2008). This is necessary to continue to participate socially, having like that a positive impact on their own ageing and remaining a resource for society in the same time.

### **Promoting civic rights of older people: a major issue for society**

Since several years, the process of decision making is marked by an ideological change in contemporary societies in the sense that some stakeholders or bodies develop consultation, exchanges and civic participation (Blondeaux and Sintomer, 2002). But if the function of the local representative is to "listen to the requests of all the citizens to find the more adapted answer on the territory of the city or elsewhere," (Berrat and Rosenberg, 1992, p.208), civic participation of the inhabitants seems before all to depend on the leadership and on the support of local policies as well as the history of the territory (Scheider and Moulaert, 2015).

---

(6) Génération Mouvement (Les aînés Ruraux), Le Groupement CNR-UFRB, La FNAR –Fédération Nationale des Associations de Retraités, L'UFR – Union Française des Retraités et La CNRPL – Confédération Nationale des Retraités des Professions Libérales

(7) The expression « grey power », initiated by Jean-Philippe Viriot-Durandal (Viriot-Durandal, 2002), designates the potential strength represented by retirees from an economic, social or political point of view, in particular due to their increasing number in society.

These transformations of the practices which nowadays lead to a largest consultation of the inhabitants occur progressively. It occurs, at the same time, from the position of high international bodies about this subject such as the WHO, but also in order to recreate link between citizens and politics and to reintegrate the elderly to the life of the city. Since 1981, this will is illustrated by the creation of the National Comity of retired and older People (CNRPA) (Comité National des Retraités et Personnes Agées) which aims to encourage the participation of older citizens to define policies on a national scale. This marks the beginning of the institutionalization of the consultation of older people (Scheider and Moulaert, 2015). In 1983, it is the turn of the Departmental Comities of Retirees and Older People (CODERPA) (Comités Départementaux des Retraités et Personnes Agées) to be established as local intermediaries of the CNRPA: “As a consultative character, they constitute a place for dialogue, information and thinking. Within this space, the representatives of the retirees and older people participate to the creation and application of measures of all nature concerning them with professionals and major organizers in charge of the implementation of the actions in their favour in the department” (Gucher, 1998b, p.73-47). The Departmental Comities are held to appeal to CODERPA, particularly to elaborate gerontological schemes (Benoit, 2009). But quickly enough, the CODERPA are subject to criticisms and their utility is put into questions. According to the departments, their functioning and composition are largely varied. But the fact remains that everywhere, the

CODERPA are opened only to older people constituted in associations and that their composition strongly depends on the departmental decision-makers (Gucher, 1998b). These bodies, rather than welcoming all the inhabitants of the territory in all their diversity, only accept the closed circle of older people already “experts” belonging to a constituted group. In 2015, the law on adaption of the society to the ageing merges the CODERPA and the Departmental Consultative Council of the handicapped people (CDCPH) into Departmental Comities of civic rights and autonomy (CDCA). It is the same on the national scale; the CNRPA is replaced by the High Council of the Family, the childhood and the age (HCFEA). These different bodies aim to bring closer the consultative committees of older people and handicapped people around a question that can bring them closer: the question of the dependency. It can be interesting and less discriminating to think about this problematic without taking the age into account. But this raises the problem of the range of themes likely to be covered by this type of bodies.

The creation of the CODERPA aimed to encourage the partici-

pation of older people on a departmental scale. But in France the more succeeded attempts to integrate citizens to the process of decision making, have been made at the scale of the city (Blondiaux and Sintomer, 2002). To answer to the challenge of the ageing of the population and to enable older inhabitants to express themselves about the local services and arrangements, a lot of French cities are nowadays equipped with local participative bodies which can be find under the name of Council of Wise, Council of Seniors, Consultative Council of elderly, etc. These latter are inspired from the model of community development practiced in Canada (Dansac, Lacombe and Vachée, 2015). This model can be described as a global process in which the leaders of a local community gather to identify the needs they have to fill and the way to reach a common goal (Bourque and Favreau, 2003; Paris, Garon and Beaulieu, 2013). In Denmark, a Council of Seniors is implemented in all the communities and should be consulted before each decision making concerning older people since 1996 (Kamette, 2011). But, in France, the implementation of the councils of wise is not an obligation and has been let to the initiative of the muni-



cial councils. Its composition, functioning and their attributed missions are variable but it is always a consultative body and not a deciding one (Bresson, 2013).

In 2002, in the frame of a series of laws on decentralization, the Vaillant law institutes obligation for the cities of more than 80 000 inhabitants to equip itself of councils of districts, formalizing the practice of a certain number of cities (Blondiaux and Sintomer, 2002). That is the city council that determines the composition and the modalities of functioning of these consultative bodies. Because of their institutionalization, the councils of districts are now the more widespread participative bodies in French cities. They are recognized as ordinary forms of participation at a local scale in the associative, civic and local areas (Carrel and Talpin, 2012). It is noted that, within these councils of districts, older people are over represented. It can be explained, partly by the fact that free time favours logically the commitment. A study was led in 2007 by a research and study group called Trajectoires questioning to 800 districts councillors in Paris. This study shows that only 3 % of the districts councillors are under 30 whereas 42 % of them are over 60 (Bresson, 2013).

As evoked by Pascale Boistard, Secretary of State to the Ministry of Older People and Autonomy, during the event on adaptation of the society to the ageing of the population on 4th October 2016 in the Elysée Palace, it is important that older inhabitants have

the opportunity to involve, not only as citizens in the processes of consultation and co-construction of public policies, but also to take part in the life of the city, thankw to the culture, leisure, use of transports, etc, as it is promoted by the RFVAA. Created in England at the end of the 19th century and appeared in France at the beginning of the 20th century, social centres are precisely structures which aim to enable the most fragile to continue to participate socially. The state of mind about the way of functioning of the social centres is based on the history of these structures. Indeed, social centres have been invented in a particular state of mind: the one to enable the workers inhabitants to organise locally in order to become actor of their everyday life contributing to “the amelioration of their life conditions, the development of the education and the cultural expression, the reinforcement of the solidarities, the prevention and reduction of the exclusions” (8). As a consequence, social centres are implemented at the heart of the district, both in the cities and rural areas. They welcome all the inhabitants and can offer extremely diverse services (insertion, culture, services ...). The activities of social centres are founded on the principle of global animation characterised by taking into account all the social issues linked to the local context. It is this requirement of global animation that makes social centres much more than only a coordinator of activities juxtaposed to each other, but really the catalyst of a local integrated dynamic. By their history and the objectives

determined by the Federation of Social and Sociocultural Centres in France (FCSF), social centres are not only places of cultural animation: “more than equipments, these are participative projects of development” (9). Indeed, in order to make social centres living, the inhabitants must be more than simple users of the services offered to them. They need to become actors in the functioning of the structure. That is why each centre is unique: it is the inhabitants who develop them and the characteristics of the territory on which it is implemented that shape it. The 1200 French centres members of the FCSF have all their own characteristics, but all of them answer to the three big values of the charter adopted by the FCSF: solidarity, human dignity and democracy. Social centres have the vocation to welcome all types of public, and this without distinction of neither ethnic belonging, religion, social situation ... nor age! In accordance with their history and with the characteristics of the territory on which they are implemented, these structures may need to welcome certain types of public in a special way. For example, people particularly in difficulty such as single-parent families, isolated or vulnerable older people, and migrants, etc. However, the objective is, by no means, to stigmatise these weakened populations but rather to preserve their dignity. For that, one of the goals of social centres consists in welcoming the largest number of people within diverse and varied activities. Like that, these centres have been the first local structures to include the retirees in their priority objectives.

---

(8) Data from the website of the Federation of Social and Sociocultural Centres in France

(9) Data from the website of the Federation of Social and Sociocultural Centres in France

Via the institutionalisation of the consultation of the inhabitants and the creation of bodies aimed to encourage the participation of the elderly, the goal is to improve the efficiency of the public policies but also to wonder about the place of the citizens in the processes of decision-making. For decades and still now, this is a fundamental objective to pursue, as Maryvonne Lyazid, deputy of the Rights Commissioners, reminds us: “I think that the future law on adaptation of society to the ageing of the population should reinforce the fact that older people are citizens who benefit from fundamental rights as any other citizen. We have to consider citizenship until the end of life. Willing to adapt the society to the ageing without doing it” is useless (CNSA, 2014, p.7). These places of consultation help to inform the citizens, provide them a place where they can be heard and express new ideas. But, even more, services need to explain, remove complexes and reformulate the chosen projects (Blondiaux, 2011). It is in this sense that we can consider when we evoke the words “participative democracy” that “the citizenship is valued here by speaking and the democracy by the transparency of the public action” (Blondiaux, 2011, p.46).

Nowadays, a large range of devices of participative democracy can be found. It can go from the participative budgets to the creation of bodies to consult inhabitants directly (Blondiau, 2001). The plurality of the forms that can be taken by these bodies in their composition, objectives, functioning, or themes, enables to go from a too procedural way of work to a better adaptation to the context and needs (Carrel and Talpin, 2012). However, a certain number of

questions merge about the role and the place of older inhabitants within these bodies: “is it possible today to consider retirees as social stakeholders? Are they in capacity to develop common strategies in anticipation of explicit or implicit objectives? Are they able to negotiate their place in the social space and to participate at the elaboration of the definition of the ageing?” (Gucher, 1998a, p.72). In other words, does the retiree involved in these devices of civic participation, intervene as a “user” of public services”, “expert” of everyday life” or “engaged citizen” (Bherer, 2011, p.122)? This point raises questions, even more when we know that the archetype of the retiree participating is often a man between 60 and 75, with a rather high socioeconomic level and being already involved in diverse bodies locally (Bresson, 2013). For example, the “inactive” (older people in situation of dependency, jobless people...) are weakly represented in the consultative bodies and in the place of decision making. So, the orientations are regularly decided according to the actives, their way of life and their needs (Viriot-Durandal



and Guthlenben, 2009).

The public action is too often perceived as accessible only by the elite. The ordinary citizen thinks he could not influence it (Bherer, 2011). The public participation still raises a certain number of questions linked to its impact on public policies or on its democratic characteristics, for example, because of the composition of its bodies which have difficulties to integrate marginalised groups or people no involved elsewhere.

On this subject, Carrel and Talpin highlight the fact that the participants to the councils of districts establish special links with the representatives and see themselves as a device for the partisan politics whereas it is not the objective. These citizens are less and less ordinary and can be led to a confusion of the roles. This can alter the principles of the participation as an inhabitant. Indeed, in these conditions, it is not the political representative who comes to meet the inhabitants with a spirit of consultation and call to users’ knowledge anymore. But it is rather the inhabitants or citizens who would be “pulled off” in a way to this status of non-expert and promoted to a middle status. (Carrel and Talpin, 2012).

Another aspect linked to the participative democracy in the area of the ageing make also react a certain number of stakeholders. It is the capacity of older people to assert a constructive and representative point of view about the public policies implemented in the area of ageing. Like that, Hugonot wonder: “I am not sure that “retirees and older people” are the best ones, unlike some ideas exposed in certain speeches, to know what it is necessary to im-

plement in the frame of a public policy about ageing. Being old is not enough to know the ageing. Indeed, ageing can take several aspects and states” (Hugonot, 1989, p.79). According to Gucher, it is particularly difficult to create consultative bodies composed of older people to cover questions about ageing because the age is not necessarily a criterion according to which we identify ourselves to a group. By the way, we can wonder about the pertinence to constitute such groups which lay only on the chronological age but which gather very different individuals in terms of way of life, social and cultural characteristics. It exists an important which is spread by the disposals itself and the conception that older have about of their own ageing. The risk is that the inhabitants who do not feel concerned by the effects of the ageing, express in the name of the “others”. That questions the objectives of these disposals (Scheider and Moulaert, 2015). Nevertheless, we cannot deny that inhabitants have “user knowledge” about their life territory and that they are the only ones to be able to express directly the difficulties they meet. Mrs B., retiree aged 87, quoted by Charlotte Mémin in 2001 in her book *Understanding older people (Comprendre la personne âgée)*, express this idea of a collected knowledge simply by the fact of living everyday the fact of being old: “the doctors, the families and all the others know lots of things thanks to their cleverness and sometimes to their heart. But, the great age, we are living it from the inside. We are feeling it, and feeling is a lot more than knowing” (Balard, 2011). In reality, the capacity of older people to give their point of view to the building of the public po-

licies depend on the objectives which have been decided, on the role attributed to the consulted retiree and on the frame defined for these consultations. If the objective is that the consulted retirees contribute directly to the building of the public policies, it is more pertinent to appeal to “expert” inhabitants: representative of retirees, individuals being already familiar with the disposals and the public action, etc. In this case, the consulted retirees would express not only as inhabitants but as “experts”, “regulars”, “informed audience”, representing a certain part of the population and expressing them in the name of “others”. On the contrary, making the choice to imply “non-expert” inhabitants in this type of disposals, these latter would express in their own name but it would be necessary to transform their speech and the needs they express in political and technical elements linked with an integrated vision of the territory. In this second case, it is fundamental to enable a sufficiently large diversity of inhabitants to have access to consultative bodies such as social centres which welcome everyday fragile public from all socioeconomic areas.

To enlighten these questions, the city of Dijon decided to create an Observatory of the Age, body of reflection and consultation gathering different groups: inhabitants old or not, selected by random draw following an appeal to application, experts, academics, professionals, representative of retirees and local representatives. Like that, the objective is to create a dialog and a global reflection on how to build a city indulgent towards all ages. The gathering of several generations contribute to avoid that a body uniquely composed of se-

niors think on its own about subjects that could concern the whole population (Bresson, 2013).