

Shadow Areas: Challenges and Solutions

Fatiha CHAIB,

Hassiba Ben Bouali University, Chlef.

Yassamina KHERROUBI,

Hassiba Ben Bouali University, Chlef.

Kharroubi.yasmina@yahoo.com

Abstract:

The concept of "shadow areas," which refers to the phenomenon of poverty, marginalization, absence of social justice, and the disruption of development in some areas of the country (due to isolation and other factors), dominated the official political scene and government action in the field of local development for a period of nearly three years (2020–2022).

Keywords: shadow areas, poverty, isolation, remote areas.

Zones d'ombre : défis et solutions

Résumé :

Le concept de « zones d'ombre », qui désigne le phénomène de pauvreté, de marginalisation, d'absence de justice sociale et de perturbation du développement dans certaines régions du pays (en raison de l'isolement et d'autres facteurs), a dominé la scène politique officielle et l'action gouvernementale dans le domaine du développement local pendant près de trois ans (2020-2022).

Mots clés : zones d'ombre, pauvreté, isolement, régions éloignées.

Introduction

The term “shadow areas” received increasing attention from the President of the Republic, Mr. Abdelmadjid Tebboune, members of the government, and researchers at the national level after he assumed the presidency of the Republic, due to the difficult and miserable conditions experienced by the residents of shadow areas because of the lack of vital infrastructure in these regions and the absence of facilities and state services, despite the existence of some limited development programs within remote border municipalities and municipalities close to urban cities.

On this basis, the President of the Republic paid special attention to shadow areas by launching an urgent program specifically for them. All institutions were mobilized to serve this file, and officials were appointed at the district and municipal levels to supervise the shadow areas. Financial allocations were dedicated to implementing urgent projects to break the isolation of the population in remote, mountainous, and isolated areas, and efforts were made to ensure the widespread connection of these regions to electricity, gas, and water networks, as well as to provide health and education services, etc.

This study carries particular importance because the issue of shadow areas is considered one of the major challenges for the Algerian legislator since independence until today, due to the challenges and problems these areas face, especially in developmental fields.

The main objective of this topic is to focus on clarifying the general concept of shadow areas by providing an academic definition of what is meant by them, as a fundamental step toward achieving the second objective: highlighting the main problems hindering the measures taken for their development, along

with presenting a set of proposed solutions to address and minimize them.

From the above, we pose the following central question: What is meant by shadow areas?

To achieve the objective of the study and answer the proposed question, we adopted the descriptive method, which defines the general framework of the study through the following steps:

- Chapter One: The Concept of Shadow Areas
- Chapter Two: The Problems and Deficiencies Suffered by Shadow Areas and How to Address Them

1. The Concept of Shadow Areas

As mentioned earlier, the term “shadow” was not widely used in the past. It appeared prominently during a government council meeting in 2020, and thereafter it became a political, social, and economic term, widely used to describe focal points of underdevelopment across the country, referring to isolated areas deprived of development.

1.1. Definition of Shadow Areas

Shadow areas are defined as:

“Those isolated areas that lack the minimum conditions of life, such as the absence of electricity, gas, water networks, sanitation, public lighting, while lacking sports and health facilities, in addition to the remoteness of schools and health centers, leaving them in poverty and unemployment.”

They also refer to:

“Remote areas, also called poor regions, still covered by the shadow that has not lifted because they have been deprived of their right to local

development. This has created geographical zones with a significant population density that lack the necessary facilities and daily life requirements, producing harsh consequences for the inhabitants of these human spaces, making it truly necessary to place them under real care to remedy the delay they have suffered.”

In Algeria, this term was employed politically and in the media to draw attention to deprived regions (or focal points of underdevelopment). In a preliminary census (June 2020), their number was estimated at 15,044 shadow areas, i.e., an average of 10 per municipality (dividing 15,000 by the 1,541 municipalities), inhabited by about 8 million Algerians. According to Mr. Ibrahim Mourad, advisor to President Tebboune on shadow areas, their needs included: “opening paths leading to villages and hamlets, connecting to electricity and gas, ensuring health coverage which is sometimes almost non-existent, providing drinking water and sewage networks, improving schooling and school transport, and creating leisure facilities.”

Later, this figure was revised downward to 13,587 shadow areas (instead of 15,040 in the initial census), due to “scrutiny and review of classification criteria, including that areas with some deficiencies but close to cities are not considered shadow areas,” as declared by the President’s advisor on shadow areas.

1.2. Criteria Adopted in Classifying Shadow Areas

The census and classification of deprived areas as shadow areas considered the following criteria and guidelines:

- Verification and correction of proposed projects, both in number and subject, and ensuring objectivity by proposing only projects with real impact.
- Limiting the proposal of projects within the framework of urban improvement.

- Focusing on projects that have a direct and rapid impact on citizens' lives, especially in remote areas, and speeding up their registration while taking into account cost elements, short implementation periods, and positive and direct effects on those areas. Examples include:
 - Capturing water sources, preparing them, and putting them at the service of citizens (as public fountains), building small reservoirs with distribution networks, and supplying them by tankers.
 - Sanitation (installing sewage networks with a treatment station maintained periodically).
 - Using solar energy (for household use or public lighting).
 - Supplying these areas with propane gas tanks.
 - Opening paths, among other operations that serve these areas and can be implemented in the same manner mentioned above, with the necessity of involving the technical services of the district.

By applying these guidelines and criteria, the deficiencies and needs of deprived regions were identified, through which they can be classified as shadow areas.

1.3. The Goal of Developing Shadow Areas

The state seeks to upgrade these areas through integrated development projects with social and economic dimensions, implemented on participatory bases aiming to achieve four strategic objectives:

- Ending the isolation of populations living in scattered and remote areas.
- Supplying residents with drinking water, electricity, and gas.

- Improving students' schooling conditions and providing services related to youth health and development.
- Diversifying the economic capacities of remote areas to provide jobs and employment opportunities.

The development of shadow areas aims to restore the value of rural areas, enabling them to fulfill their social and economic role and contribute to national and local income through wealth-producing activities. The state hopes that the countryside will witness reverse migration after reaching the required level of development.

2. The Problems and Deficiencies Suffered by Shadow Areas and How to Address Them

The shadow areas are characterized by the difficulty of their geographical scope, whether mountainous, desert, or semi-desert, marginal areas on the national borders or the borders between the provinces within the national territory. These areas suffer from all manifestations of misery, marginalization, and oppression due to the absence of the most basic conditions of natural life.

As a model of shadow areas in Algeria, we find the Algerian countryside, which has been suffering from marginalization and poverty since the colonial era, which made the independent Algerian state since its inception give utmost importance to the countryside, which is known as rural development, which is currently similar to the development of shadow areas. To confront these shortcomings, the state has taken a set of measures to address all the deficiencies suffered by the shadow areas, which will be discussed later.

2.1. Problems and deficiencies suffered by shadow areas

Most statistics indicate that more than 08 million Algerians out of a total population estimated at 45 million live in difficult liv-

ing conditions in poor areas in the countryside, border areas, and the outskirts of major cities. In this part of the study, we will try to identify the problems suffered by the residents of these areas.

2.1.1. Weak services in shadow areas:

The Algerian state failed in past eras to establish a regular and fair pattern of distribution of investments throughout the country, which resulted in the existence of many areas suffering from economic and social marginalization. This is evident when looking at indicators related to the level of services, facilities, health, and education, among others, where we find areas lacking necessary facilities in the field of health and experiencing weak educational opportunities, especially regarding university education. They also lack recreational spaces, electricity and gas networks, and road development, with many municipalities in complete isolation.

2.1.2. Low standard of living:

Shadow areas suffer from all the manifestations of misery that remote areas live in, as they suffer from fragility and their residents experience difficult and miserable living conditions due to the lack of vital infrastructure and the most basic necessities of life, and their citizens suffer from exclusion and marginalization.

2.1.3. Weak local resources:

Most shadow areas in Algeria suffer from weak collection of their local resources, as many municipalities located on the borders, for example, do not cover their local revenues to meet the needs of their local residents. The reasons for the weakness of local resources in shadow areas, especially the border ones,

are due to the weakness of the agricultural, industrial, and tourism structures.

2.1.4. High unemployment rate and increased migration rates:

The high unemployment rate in shadow areas has led to increased migration rates from these areas, depriving them of their high human potential and creating random communities within the major cities. Algeria has witnessed a wide spread of chaotic construction within major cities in recent years.

2.2. Measures taken regarding the problems suffered by shadow areas

To address the shortcomings of shadow areas, we note that there are a set of measures taken by the authorities, which are:

2.2.1. Promoting local development:

In order to promote local development, attention must be paid to the local economic aspect in order to provide revenues for the municipality through encouraging local investment, as the latter is the main driver of all economic activities.

2.2.2. Formation of provincial committees:

Provincial committees are formed at the level of the province and an urgent program is put in place to ensure the optimal care of the basic needs of the residents of these areas, in coordination with the joint ministerial committee formed to supervise the implementation of the shadow areas identification process and the implementation of its special urgent program. The provincial committee also creates committees at the district level to handle the implementation of operations related to shadow areas.

2.2.3. *Recording all deficiencies:*

All the deficiencies suffered by the shadow areas and the registered needs in terms of basic services such as city gas and electricity, road networks, sewage channels, school meals, and transportation in these areas are recorded, along with providing the financial evaluation and preparing the detailed technical cards for each registered operation.

Conclusion:

The concept of shadow areas has topped the highest levels of the state through presidential and governmental discourse, so that speeches are delivered about it, seminars are held about it, policies are set for it, significant financial envelopes are allocated to it, and various media are mobilized to cover events related to it, to the extent that an ordinary observer might think that the matter relates to a newly emerging or newly discovered phenomenon, and that solving it enjoys the highest degrees of importance for the highest public authorities within the framework of what is known as building the “new Algeria,” which gives it a special character that distinguishes it from other developmental phenomena, while at the same time raising a questioning inquiry about the justifications, origins, and backgrounds of this attention and the use of political discourse for mobilization around it.

It can be said that the urgent program for the development of shadow areas represents an overcoming of the failures of local development policy in Algeria, given the failure of the various policies compared to the level of attention and expenditure allocated by the center to this type of public policy, and at

the same time, it is a strategy to achieve comprehensive and balanced national development.

Through our discussion of the concept of shadow areas, we reached the following results and recommendations:

Results:

- Local development programs in their three forms (PCD; PSD; FCCT+) contribute to achieving a set of necessary projects in the shadow areas of the Hammadiyah municipality, which guarantee the minimum standard of living for the citizen and meet his living necessities of drinking, education, transportation, lighting, sanitation, electricity, and gas.
- The reality of development in Algeria confirms the existence of general problems and economic and social imbalances in shadow areas.
- We note that despite the existence of these programs, projects, and bodies for a considerable period of time, local development has not been achieved, and the best evidence of this is the increasing statistics of shadow areas.

Recommendations:

- Directing development towards productive sectors such as encouraging agriculture, livestock breeding, and traditional industries.
- Seeking the help of local or foreign experts for proper planning.
- Activating the participation of civil society in local development through project proposals and monitoring.
- Working to create a suitable environment for investment and expand its scope by increasing the number of economic projects.

- Working on properly implementing development projects by activating the role of oversight while respecting the specified time for their completion.

References (Translated to English):

- 1) Ahmed Saleh Al-Sibaa, & Ramzi Al-Abbasi. (2023). Adoption of agricultural entrepreneurship in the shadow areas of Algeria: An exploratory study of the opinions of a sample of university students in the shadow areas of Annaba Province. *Journal of Administrative and Financial Sciences*, 7(1), 27.
- 2) Ben Houkou, Ghania. (2024). Shadow areas in Algeria. *Journal of Strategy and Development*, 14(1), 114–115.
- 3) Bouguhafa, Rachida, & Ben Toumi, Reda. (2023). Local communities and their role in achieving sustainable development in the shadow areas of Algeria: A case study of Sidi Mohamed Ben Ali Municipality, Relizane Province, and Ouled Derradj Municipality, M'sila Province. *Journal of Constitutional Law and Political Institutions*, 7(1), 152.
- 4) Bouguhafa, Rachida, & Ben Toumi, Reda. (2023). [Same reference as above], p. 153.
- 5) Bouguhafa, Rachida, & Ben Toumi, Reda. (2023). [Same reference as above], pp. 165–166.
- 6) Bouskraine, Fatima Al-Zahraa. (2022). Development of shadow areas in Algeria. *Journal of Constitutional Law and Constitutional Institutions*, 6(2), 267–268.
- 7) Haidouche, Warda, & Bessa, Sami. (2021). The nature of shadow areas and a reading of the status of the emer-

- gency program dedicated to shadow areas. *Journal of Global Politics*, 5(1), 11.
- 8) Haidouche, Warda, & Bessa, Sami. (2021). [Same reference as above], p. 12.
 - 9) Ichaasi, Mohamed. (2023). Internal political shadow areas and Algeria's international obligations. *Journal of Constitutional Law and Political Institutions*, 7(1), 177-178.
 - 10) Oqaaq, Mohamed, & Qarti, Al-Yashi. (2024). The role of local communities in achieving local development in Algeria's shadow areas: A case study of Aflou Municipality, Laghouat Province. *Journal of Legal and Economic Research*, 7(2), 267.
 - 11) Oqaaq, Mohamed, & Qarti, Al-Yashi. (2024). [Same reference as above], p. 268.
 - 12) Same reference [Unspecified citation], p. 268.
 - 13) Ghania Ben Harkou. (2024). [Same reference as above], p. 115.