

FEMMEDINA

INCLUSIVE CITY PROGRAMME IN TUNIS

An assessment of women's participation in the Medina of Tunis



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report aims to assess the economic, political-institutional, social, and cultural aspects of women's participation in the Medina of Tunis, particularly in the districts of **Medina Centrale, Bab Souika, Bab Bhar, and Sidi el Bechir**. The key outcome of this report is to:

- › Understand the **key hindrances and enablers** of women's participation in the Medina and their underlying causes pertaining to national and city-level policies, as well as local cultural and communal factors.
- › Propose **policy and city planning recommendations** that can contribute to overcoming the key challenges faced by women in the Medina.
- › Identify and propose **spatial interventions** dedicated to women in selected public spaces in the Medina of Tunis in addition to specific programmatic interventions to activate these spaces to be more inclusive and conducive of women use.

In order to achieve these objectives, the research team adopted a participatory research process engaging women of different demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds through a mixed method approach for data collection including survey, key-informant interviews, life history interviews, interactive workshops, and co-design sessions.

Key hindrances and enablers of women's participation in the Medina

The Medina's women face multiple challenges hindering their social, political, cultural, and economic participation. Obstacles to women's effective engagement stem from the city's physical features, residents' cultural perceptions and social norms, local economic and social realities, and discriminatory legal frameworks and institutional practices. Below are the key identified factors influencing women's participation in communal life:

- › Despite efforts made by the Municipality to rehabilitate part of the historic city, women do not always feel safe in the Medina, especially in neighborhoods they are not familiar with. Incidents of theft, violence, and harassment exacerbate their feeling of insecurity, particularly at night. Women's mobility is reduced as a result, given that residents avoid leaving their houses whenever the Medina's streets are less crowded. Additionally, social stigma often influences the routes that women choose when moving around the city, as they might be socially sanctioned for passing by particular streets and locations.
- › While cultural institutions abound in the Medina of Tunis, women cannot always access those spaces. Cultural centers do not always offer programs and services aligning with women's needs, and cultural events organized in the neighborhood are not often tailored to the local context and to residents' interests. Moreover, the Medina's public spaces are rarely convenient and inviting for women as they are mostly appropriated by men and café users. Thus, women feel more comfortable meeting in enclosed and private spaces.
- › Tunisia has adopted progressive legal reforms aiming to bolster women's participation in politics and institutions. Nonetheless, women's participation in the political sphere remains limited, as it is often considered to be a mere formality to comply with the legal quota requirement. While few women achieve leadership positions in politics, highly critical public scrutiny cut their political careers short. However, women have higher chances of occupying leadership roles in civil society, and many younger women participate in the public sphere as volunteers and activists.
- › Even the most resourceful and hardworking of the Medina's women find difficulties accessing economic opportunities. Indeed, salaried employment opportunities are scarce for the Medina's women. Those who do find work face gender-based discrimination limiting their opportunities for

professional development. While entrepreneurship remains key for women to achieve economic independence, barriers related to the man-dominated market, the inadequacy of support opportunities, and the discriminatory cultural perceptions limit women's ability to start new ventures.

Recommendations

The proposed recommendations targeting local and national policy makers and key stakeholders aim to enhance women's social, cultural, political, institutional, and economic engaged, through a series of:

- › Policy Interventions on a national or local level including regulatory changes and reforms,
- › Programmatic Interventions including programs, activities, and events that could be implemented by local authorities, NGOs, and other institutions individually or through partnerships,
- › Spatial and urban Interventions in particular locations responding to the needs and interests of women in the Medina.

The proposed recommendations include:

- › Adopting a quota for women-led projects in public procurement.
- › Reviewing social assistance schemes to decenter the nuclear family as the basis for assistance.
- › Extending opening hours of cultural centers and public libraries in the Medina for women to use them in the afternoon and on weekends.
- › Enhancing and equipping public spaces to become safer for women and more enabling for their social engagement and participation.
- › Strengthening the role of cultural centers to better provide cultural opportunities for women through introducing new programs.
- › Establishing professional committees for women across different professions.
- › Offering adequate support services to women entrepreneurs, such as coaching, feasibility studies, and market linkages.
- › Mainstreaming municipal kindergartens offering reduced rates and on-site childcare services for employees.
- › Establishing a legal facility and support services for women to identify, document, and report discrimination in employment and workplace harassment, and to receive the necessary psychological support.
- › Introducing spaces and functions for women to spend time in open green spaces through designating areas that cater to their interests.
- › Conceiving spaces that encourage women to conduct multiple activities whether work-related or recreational within a safe environment.

Spatial interventions focus on reconfiguring and designing available public spaces within the Medina to account for women's identified needs. Each intervention is designed to match women's interests, and account for their suggestions, while connecting the intervention location to its surroundings.

SEC.1

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT OVERVIEW

FEMMEDINA - INCLUSIVE CITY PROGRAMME IN TUNIS

Despite persistent global efforts to advance gender equality, women in many cities still encounter a myriad of challenges on a daily basis that hinder their participation in city-life and mirror deeply-rooted gender-based structural inequalities. These challenges permeate women's lives, as they compromise their personal safety and mobility, hinder their social and political participation, and impede their access to economic opportunities, cultural activities, and urban services. In many cases, these challenges originate from discriminatory laws and regulations. However, gender-based discrimination still prevails in many countries that have adopted progressive legislations, as legal protections are rarely sufficient to eliminate inequalities in the street, at home, in the workplace, at school, and in the public sphere. Indeed, the challenges women face on a daily basis often stem as well from customs, attitudes, and economic and social structural injustices. In fact, the cultural and social roots of inequality lead to women experiencing gender-based discrimination differently. A woman's economic background, social status, level of educational attainment, and religious and ethnic attributes can further impede her effective participation in the social, cultural, economic, and political life within her city.

"It is imperative to accept diversity and deny all forms of violence. Leadership is key in giving women a greater space to adapt and learn lessons. The sky is the limit when women's capacities are reinforced."

Souad Abderrahim, Mayor of Tunis

Statement shared during the Femmedina project launch event, 3rd December 2020

Tunisia has mobilized efforts for achieving gender equality since its independence in 1956, and has thus become one of the most progressive countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in terms of women's rights. However, more than 60 years post-independence, Tunisia still has a long way to go to achieve gender parity in law. Moreover, cultural biases hinder the implementation of laws and regulations aimed at protecting women's rights, and exacerbate inequality by introducing additional obstacles for women's effective participation in communal life.

"Women's participation in decision-making processes is making cities around the world better for everyone, not just for women, and urban inclusiveness can be fostered through a rethinking of ways in which cities are planned and managed. Tunisia's legislation on women's rights is the most modern in the Arab world, and with Femmedina's gender-inclusive city planning approach Cities Alliance can further sustain the country's efforts towards women's empowerment."

Giulia Maci, Urban Specialist and Gender Focal Point at Cities Alliance

Statement shared during the Femmedina project launch event, 3rd December 2020

Zooming into the Medina of Tunis—the capital's historical core—the gender equality situation is not different. In fact, factors related to the particular cultural and urban context play a significant role in

aggravating obstacles to women's equal access. Given that the Medina is a densely populated, under-serviced area with a high rate of urban poverty, its women residents navigate additional hurdles in their daily lives. While some efforts have been made to revive the neighborhood through renovation and restoration, a lot still needs to be done in terms of making spaces more gender inclusive. Women's involvement in these processes of urban transformation is crucial. Given that Tunisia has adopted in its constitution and laws participatory planning mechanisms, and that Tunis' mayor – the first woman mayor of a capital city in the region – has put gender at the center of her mandate, the reality of the Medina's women is bound to change, as women hope to gain more power to influence urban plans and spatial interventions within their neighborhoods.

The **Femmedina**, inclusive city programme in Tunis, implemented by Cities Alliance and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), in cooperation with the Municipality of Tunis, aims to rethink the use of public spaces, create urban areas that are inclusive to women, and introduce a gender-sensitive approach to urban planning. As part of the programme's first phase, this report presents the results of a participatory evaluation of women's social, cultural, economic, political and institutional participation in the Medina. It presents policy, city planning, and programmatic recommendations to enhance women's engagement, and proposes a series of spatial interventions in selected public spaces in addition to programmatic interventions to activate these spaces to be more inclusive and conducive to women's use.

“USAID believes in the importance of human rights and the empowerment of women to ensure sustainable development—both factors are addressed by the project's aims. Making the Medina safer for women, who could then take advantage of the space as a business location, would lead to creating jobs and help consolidate democracy in Tunisia.”

Peter Riley, USAID Mission Director in Tunisia

Statement shared during the Femmedina project launch event, 3rd December 2020



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Participatory Process Approach

The participatory research and design process relied on a mixed method approach to engage women in the assessment's various phases, starting from identifying obstacles to women's participation, to developing recommendations, and proposing light spatial interventions. The data collection process relied on quantitative and qualitative tools including a desk review, a survey, life history interviews, key-informant interviews, interactive workshops, co-design sessions, and community mapping.

The adopted methodology is inspired from the Cities for Women framework, developed by Cities Alliance, where women actively participate in the analysis and improvement of their city. In total, 200 women participated in different phases of the research process, as action researchers. The research project also engaged 30 men as part of the sample, to collect their perspectives on women's issues in the Medina.

The study area covered in this assessment includes the **Medina Central, Bab Souika, Bab Bhar, and Sidi el Bechir** districts. It does not however reflect these districts' administrative boundaries, but rather the perceptive boundaries, as identified by the research team in the study's initial phases and shown in Map 1. The selected study area is believed to host residents sharing relatively similar socioeconomic and cultural realities, that differ from those of residents from nearby neighborhoods within the same administrative boundaries. Finally, the term *Medina Centrale* in this report is used to refer to the central district, while the term *The Medina* refers to the entire study area.

The launch of the Femmedina project took place during an online event held on December 3, 2020. Municipal officials, community members, women-led organizations and local and international experts contributed to a discussion around the plans for the rehabilitation and activation of public spaces in the historical city of Tunis.

Following this event, the Municipality set up a Steering Committee (COPIL) to ensure the validation of the stages/steps of the project. This Steering Committee included the:

- › Heads of the four districts,
- › Technical services (Municipality civil engineers and architects,
- › President of the commission for women, children, and the family,
- › President of the commission of the environment,
- › Elected municipal officials,
- › General secretary of the municipality
- › Chief of staff of the mayor of Tunis who chairs this steering committee.

This structure allowed a wider participation of the various local actors in the design and implementation of the project, guaranteeing full municipal ownership on the project and its long-term sustainability.

Women participated in this assessment first through a survey targeting a total sample of 100 women and 20 men. The survey collected residents' perceptions on the Medina's women's social, economic, cultural, political, and institutional participation. The sample was stratified based on participants' gender, neighborhoods of residence, with equal participants from each of the 4 neighborhoods, and age groups, to reflect the population's age structure. Other personal attributes, namely respondents' marital status and employment status were collected but not used to stratify the sample.

The survey was adapted from the Women's Engagement in Cities (WEC) Profile, developed by Cities Alliance, which aims at analyzing a city's level of gender responsiveness (cf. ANNEX 1 - WEC Profile). The survey collected quantitative data, and also gathered participants' perceptions, opinions, and experiences through open-ended fields. It allows respondents as well to associate their answers to particular locations, thus helping geolocate data and produce analytical maps reflecting women's participation spatially. In addition to providing a wealth of spatialized data, the survey was key to collecting stories from women's lived experiences in the city. The research team invited survey participants to take part in life history interviews and elaborate on their responses. Collected stories contributed to developing a contextualized understanding of women's engagement and use of public space, and to identifying women participants in the co-design workshops. This snowball sampling approach was complemented by data collectors' extensive field presence in the Medina.



Additionally, 15 interviews and meetings were conducted with key stakeholders to understand of women’s engagement from a policy and programmatic perspective. These included:

- › The Mayor of Tunis
- › The heads of districts of Medina Centrale, Bab Souika, Bab Bhar, and Sidi el Bechir
- › Municipal members and staff
- › National research institutes, including CAWTAR and CREDIF
- › Local organizations, namely l’Art Rue, the Red Crescent of Tunis, and Carthagina
- › Academics, including professors from the school of architecture and from the legal, political, and social studies departments.

Data collected from the survey and interviews were shared in an analysis and validation workshop, where key stakeholders analyzed the findings, shared information on existing interventions, and identified policy recommendations. The workshop was conducted over 2 days with the presence of 17 representatives (15 women and 2 men) from public authorities, municipal members, members

of local NGOs and institutions, and active women residing or owning businesses in the Medina. The diversity in participants’ backgrounds and professions allowed for a contextualized and deep understanding of current trends with regards to women’s participation, its barriers, and opportunities. Participants commented on the findings from the 4 thematic sections while supporting their arguments with examples from their own experiences and from women’s stories.

Building on earlier findings, the research team conducted 4 workshops with 26 women residing in the Medina from different socio-economic backgrounds, age groups, and neighborhoods of residence. These workshops aimed identifying key locations to co-design spatial interventions responding to challenges facing women in the city. At the same time, they produced data on women’s use of public spaces, and their safety perception in the identified locations, which informed additional interventions to activate the spaces and make them safer and more accessible.

Co-design workshops accommodated for women's needs to ensure effective participation. Workshops were conducted over a 3-hour period at a time and location that accounted for participants' preferences. Each workshop's flow was also adapted to women's interests and needs. In one workshop, a participant who had conducted a survey on her own to collect the opinions of women in her entourage shared the results as part of the session to inform the group's suggestions. Moreover, one workshop was planned to take place in a café, based on the request of a participating woman with a mobility-related disability. Other participants were reluctant to sit in a male-dominated public space. Facilitators therefore conducted 2 simultaneous workshops in different locations to accommodate for participants' needs and preferences. Finally, in the cases where participating women expressed discomfort with reading and writing, facilitators adapted the design to an all-oral format, to sustain their engagement in the workshop.

The research team employed a combination of tools in co-design workshops including group

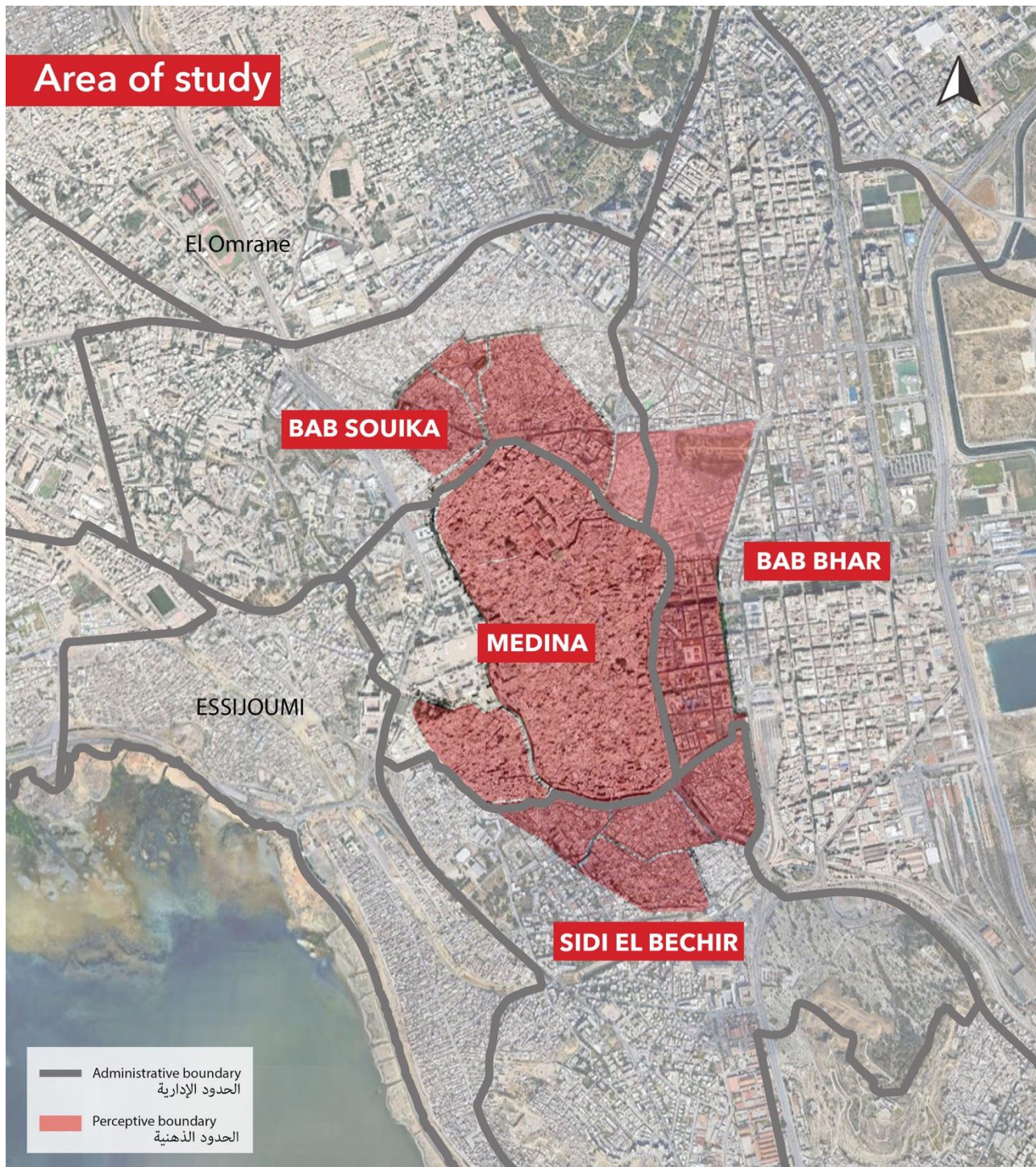
discussions, community mapping, co-design exercises, and neighborhood walks. Participants collectively sketched their daily itineraries, and marked important landmarks, which helped identify and understanding the specificities of their daily lives and their use of urban space. Co-design sessions built on the mapping exercise, as women identified key challenges and designed interventions to improve particular locations' accessibility, and create social, cultural, and economic opportunities for themselves in the city. Finally, participants led the research team on a neighborhood walk where they roamed different parts of the city while discussing their perceptions, feelings, experiences, and stories in the different spaces. The facilitators conducted a safety audit for particular locations where they probed about women's security concerns and recommendations to improve their sense of safety. The mixed approach and variety of used tools yielded rich data, including stories and recommendations, from a diverse group of women.



FEMMEDINA METHODOLOGY



Map 1- Administrative boundaries of the Medina and the neighborhoods included in the scope of the project



AN OVERVIEW OF GENDER AND THE URBAN CONTEXT OF THE MEDINA

Tunis was one of the most important cities in the Maghreb and Arab World from the 12th till the 16th century acting as a capital city for many dynasties.¹ The significance of Tunis as a city comes from its ancient core, the Medina which reached its current form during the times of the Ottoman empire. This part of the city was surrounded by a wall and it was only accessible through the city's gates (or *Bab*). Since the second half of the 19th century, the Medina of Tunis witnessed waves of population displacement and several physical transformations that profoundly changed its status.² Throughout the last century, the population of the Medina has been shifting, reflecting broader political and socioeconomic changes since the French protectorate, through the modernization era with Habib Bourguiba to Ben Ali's mandate until date, post the 2011-revolution. To understand the key aspects shaping the Medina's transformations, it is important to examine modes of urban governance, consider physical changes to the urban space, and account for key economic, cultural, and social activities taking place within the neighborhood.

Urban Governance and Policies

The municipality of Tunis is divided into 15 districts, only four of which are included in the research's study area, the Medina Centrale, Bab Bhar, Bab Souika and Sidi El Bechir. These districts constitute together the capital's old city that acted

as Tunis' center of power since its establishment as a permanent settlement in the form of a medieval Arab quarter until the development of a neighboring colonial European city. These districts' population accounts for 10% of the total population of Tunis³ thus making the Medina one of the capital's most densely populated areas.



The Medina's population consists of:
21,400 people in Medina Centrale
36,219 people in Bab Bhar
29,185 in Bab Souika, and
27,749 in Sidi el Bechir.

TUNIS: A travers le Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat 2014

Urban policies governing the Medina of Tunis have been changing over the years, with varying agendas. The early urban policies following independence focused on modernization, mainly on restoration and preservation of cultural heritage which was in line with the previous policies set during the French protectorate through the "Service des Antiquités" and later the National Heritage Institute (INAA). Given that this approach was not sufficient to deal with the growing socioeconomic challenges within the Medina, urban policies changed in the mid-1960s and

¹ Nardella, B., & Cidre, E. (2015). *Urban Heritage, Development and Sustainability* (1st ed., pp. 57-79).

² MANESH, Z., & KERIMPOUR, J. (2013). "Gentrification" as an effective force: Case study: Reconstruction plan of Hafisa Quarter (Medina of Tunisia)

³ TUNIS: A travers le Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat 2014. (2014). Retrieved from http://www.ins.tn/sites/default/files/1_TUNIS-1_0.pdf

started addressing economic development, in addition to heritage conservation. With the start of Ben Ali's mandate in the mid-1980s, urban policies affecting the Medina increasingly focused on combining heritage conservation, tourism, and economic growth. Additionally, new legislations tackling urban conservation and urban development—the "Code du Patrimoine" and "Code Urbain" respectively—were introduced in the 1990s⁴.

After the revolution, Tunisia started its transformation from a highly centralized state towards more decentralization, participation, and representative democracy. Consequently, post-revolution urban governance started shifting from a top-down approach towards more participation. These changes are evident in the new constitution of 2014 which clearly and explicitly emphasized decentralization as a direction expanding the mandate of local authorities (municipal councils) to plan and decide on development programs, projects, and budgets.⁵ In fact, article 139 of the constitution even mandated the practices of participation and open governance giving local communities and civil society a say in planning processes and development strategies. More importantly, the local governance law issued in 2018 clearly articulated the participatory mechanisms in local governance, as it emphasized in its fifth section the importance of citizen participation at the local governance level and specified its key guiding principles.⁶ This law mainstreams participation through delineating the processes for transparency, collecting local communities' feedback, and deliberating citizens' input in local governments' meetings. For instance, transparency measures are highly emphasized in the law with clear processes and steps to be taken with regards to publishing project proposals, expenditures, and budgets. Moreover, any decision that does not follow the legally-mandated guidelines for transparency and participation becomes by default, illegal.

Even though participatory governance has advanced since the 2011 revolution, as the principle of citizen participation was entrenched as a constitutional right and cascaded down to laws and regulations, some loopholes limit citizens'

interest in participating. For instance, ten citizens can apply for the local government to call for a referendum on a particular issue. However, passing the referendum requires two thirds of the council's approving votes, thus making the process challenging in cases where the council is not responsive to citizens' input and suggestions. Additionally, public consultation meetings are mentioned in the law not as a requirement but as an optional measure to be taken by the council.



"Local authorities shall adopt the mechanisms of participatory democracy and the principles of open governance to ensure the broadest participation of citizens and of civil society in the preparation of development programmes and land use planning, and follow up on their implementation, in conformity with the law."

Article 139 Tunisia, Constitution of Tunisia

Additionally, practical participatory measures are not always convenient and appropriate to actively engage citizens. For instance, the current legal framework provides the overarching approaches for citizen participation, but more work is required at the local level to make sure that engagement practices are effective. For instance, a municipal member noted that reaching out to women in participatory processes remains ineffective, as women often feel intimidated to take part in large consultation meetings. Building on this, it is essential that participatory mechanisms consider the needs, realities, and abilities of all groups, particularly women to ensure their engagement in urban governance.

⁴ Mahroug, & Belakehal. (2016). The evolution of heritage atmospheres in the medina of Tunis since the 19th century. Retrieved from <https://www.witpress.com/Secure/elibrary/papers/IHA16/IHA16014FU1.pdf>

⁵ Constitution de la République tunisienne [Tunisia], January 2014, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/54c25ac94.html> [accessed 30 April 2021]

⁶ Local Governance Law, 2018, retrieved from <https://www.jurisitetunisie.com/tunisie/codes/ccl/menua.html>



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Urban and Physical Transformations of the Medina

The Medina has witnessed over the past few decades successive waves of low-income rural-urban migration making it a transient urban neighborhood. The highly dynamic urban core of the city has thus undergone multiple transformations in its urban fabric and population.

The physical transformation of the Medina started in the late 1800's with the demolition of its walls and removal of its gates, marking its expansion outside the ancient walls. During the colonial era, the Medina started to lose its significance as the city grew further outside the walls towards the east, with the development of a colonial neighborhood, the *Nouvelle Ville*. The newly-developed neighborhood attracted many non-Tunisians during the French protectorate, as well as wealthy families who had resided in the Medina's neighborhoods for many generations. As the new part of the city gained influence, the Medina started witnessing deterioration in its built fabric and an increased level of poverty.

As multiple waves of *Beldis*—the long-established wealthy families of Tunis—left the Medina to the capital's Northern suburbs, migrants from rural areas replaced them in the neighborhood's empty buildings.⁷ This pattern of demographic change continued and intensified even after independence.⁸ Additionally, the urban decay and degradation of the neighborhood's physical fabric leads to a decline in the Medina's population, as it drives residents out of the neighborhood whenever they can afford to do so. A few years after settling, many migrants move on to other neighborhoods in the capital to be replaced by new rural migrants. The urban pressures of inflowing populations, the transient nature of the neighborhood, and the prevalence of squatting led to the rise of collective housing, under the *Ouakala* form.⁹ While *Ouakalas* originally referred to short-term room rentals to single men seeking work in the city, its current form allows for migrant

families to rent rooms for longer-term within patio houses. This housing mode is often the only affordable option to many low-income residents, especially divorced women and single mothers.

While the municipality and the Association Sauvergarde de la Medina (ASM) Tunis have led projects over the years to improve the quality of housing, issues related to land ownership, squatting, and the cost of renovation prohibit significant improvements to the conditions of many housing units. Living conditions vary nonetheless between different neighborhoods within the Medina. For instance, Bab Bhar and Medina Centrale were perceived as offering better living conditions than other neighborhoods, as they are relatively better serviced (cf. Map 2).

Today, middle- and upper-class inhabitants of the capital are increasingly reawakening their interest in the city's historical old town. Some private restoration projects have upgraded dilapidated buildings for commercial use. Old patio houses are being transformed into guest houses. Cafés, and restaurants are hosting tourists and the city's middle classes are opening businesses in the Medina. The Northern parts of the Medina Centrale host artistic and cultural activities, with cultural centers and events proliferating. Yearly festivals, such as the Festival de la Medina, Interference, and Dream City welcome visitors from all around the capital. This cultural transformation of some Medina neighborhoods is speculated to stimulate market forces and drive gentrification.¹⁰ Recently, Tunisian authorities proposed a draft regulation to simplify the process of demolishing homes susceptible to collapse. Critics worry that the regulation might favor property owners at the expense of city dwellers,¹¹ which would lead to more displacement of the Medina's population.

The deterioration of the urban fabric in the Medina also has implications on public spaces, particularly those within pedestrian areas in internal streets connecting different quarters. For instance, the Medina's urban morphology is characterized by intertwined residential and commercial units, which limits the use of public space to commercial purposes as shops and cafes overflow to nearby

⁷ João Sarmento (2017) Tourists' walking rhythms: 'doing' the Tunis Medina, Tunisia, *Social & Cultural Geography*, 18:3, 295-314, DOI: 10.1080/14649365.2016.1174283

⁸ Justin McGuinness (2000) Neighbourhood notes: texture and streetscape in the Médina of Tunis, *The Journal of North African Studies*, 5:4, 97-120, DOI:10.1080/13629380008718414

⁹ João Sarmento (2017) Tourists' walking rhythms: 'doing' the Tunis Medina, Tunisia, *Social & Cultural Geography*, 18:3, 295-314, DOI: 10.1080/14649365.2016.1174283

¹⁰ Justin McGuinness (2000) Neighbourhood notes: texture and streetscape in the Médina of Tunis, *The Journal of North African Studies*, 5:4, 97-120, DOI:10.1080/13629380008718414

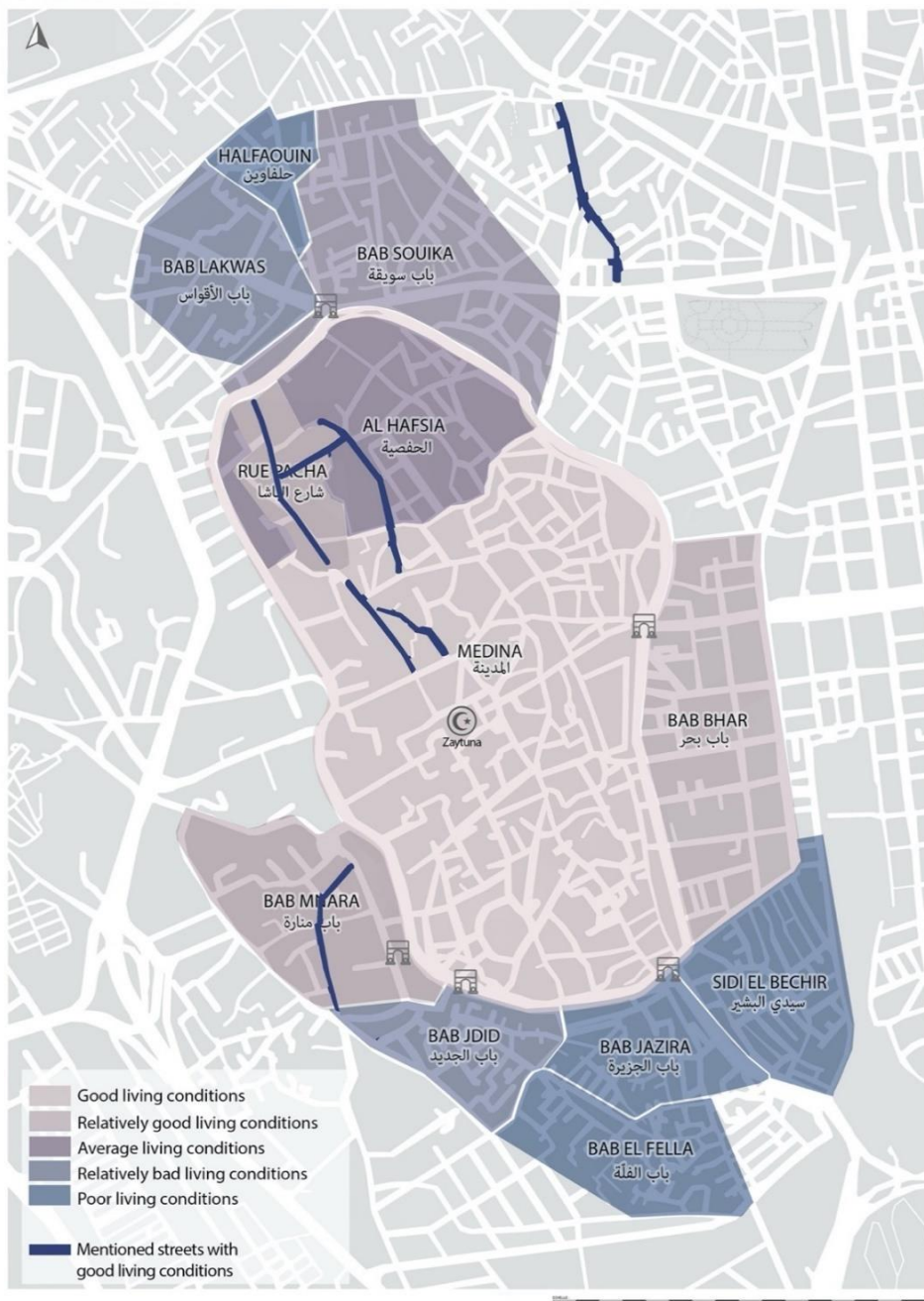
¹¹ Mersch, S. (2018). Urban development in Tunisia: Keeping the speculators out of Tunis. Retrieved from <https://en.qantara.de/content/urban-development-in-tunisia-keeping-the-speculators-out-of-tunis>

streets, thus reducing pedestrian mobility.¹² Moreover, residents of patio houses often consider narrow alleyways as extensions to their residential units that act as a buffer between the private and the public.¹³ They often annex these spaces to their homes and restrict their public use.

Despite the deterioration in its urban fabric, the Medina of Tunis remains a widely visited neighborhood, given its central location, the proliferation of its commercial activities, and its

proximity to the capital's centers of government. The Medina is well-connected to the rest of Tunis through some of the capital's key public transportation hubs, namely the Barcelone and Ali Belhouane stations that provide train, metro, and bus services. Nonetheless, access to the neighborhood by private car remains challenging given the constant congestion of roads surrounding it, and the insufficient parking spaces. Subsequently, taxis are often reluctant to venture into the congested roads around the Medina.

Map 2- Living conditions in the Medina



¹² El Ghali, A., & El Turki, Y. (2018). A study on urban security in the Medina of Tunis. Retrieved from https://www.dignity.dk/wp-content/uploads/publication_series_no21.pdf

¹³ Binous Jamila, Eckert Hedi. Morphologie urbaine. In: Cahiers de la Méditerranée, n°20-21, 1, 1980. Recherches d'ethnoscologie maghrébine. pp. 43-60; doi. Retrieved from https://www.persee.fr/doc/amed_0395-9317_1980_num_20_1_912

Participation and engagement of Women in Tunis

"All citizens, men and women, have equal rights and duties, and are equal before the law without any discrimination."

Article 21 of the Tunisian Constitution of 2014.¹⁸

The emancipation of women in Tunisia and the advanced status of equality in law for women, which stem from a set of historical, political, and social factors, are unique within the MENA region.¹⁴ The personal status code (CPS) of 1956 propelled gender equality and women's rights, as it improved women's position on issues related to marriage, divorce, inheritance, and other social matters.¹⁵ The implementation of the personal status code paved the way for the recognition of women as legally equal to men.¹⁶ For instance, further reforms took place between the 1970s and the 1990s, with a key highlight being women acquiring the right to pass their nationality to their children.¹⁷

Although women in Tunisia are considered to have equal rights under the constitution and the 1956 personal status code, they lag behind men in terms of their participation in politics and elected bodies. During Ben Ali's rule, women members of parliament were the ones who abided by the parameters of state-defined feminism that prohibited for example women from wearing veils in public spaces. Women in politics were always viewed as individuals who needed to be tutored and protected.¹⁹ Women's political participation has nonetheless taken a forefront position since the revolution of 2011, when women and girls from all generations revolted on the streets and



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¹⁴ Khedher, R. (2017). Tracing the Development of the Tunisian 1956 Code of Personal Status. Retrieved from <https://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1961&context=jiws>

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Khedher, R. (2017). Tracing the Development of the Tunisian 1956 Code of Personal Status. Retrieved from <https://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1961&context=jiws>

¹⁷ Dahlerup, D. (2012). Gender equality policy in Tunisia. Retrieved from

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2012/462502/IPOL-FEMM_NT\(2012\)462502_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2012/462502/IPOL-FEMM_NT(2012)462502_EN.pdf)

¹⁸ Tunisia - Personal Status Code of 1956. (2021). Retrieved from https://www.equalitynow.org/tunisia_personal_status_code_of_1956

¹⁹ Tamaru, N., Holt-Ivry, O. and O'reilly, M., 2018. Beyond Revolution: How Women Influenced Constitution Making In Tunisia: Case Study. Washington, DC: Inclusive Security.

made their voices heard.²⁰ The first post-revolution elections in 2011 resulted in a rate of 31% of women representation in parliament.²¹ This rate is the highest in the MENA region, along with Algeria.²² Moreover, the rights that women enjoyed were not only protected after the revolution, but also supported and progressed. A new law introduced a 50% quota of women in vertical and horizontal list representation for all elected bodies.²³ Seven years after the revolution, women won 47% of the 2018 local elections seats.²⁴ Unfortunately, the success of women's participation in politics that had been achieved after the revolution up until 2018 was not sustained in the parliamentary elections of 2019, as only 36% of registered voters were women, and 22% of parliamentary seats were won by women.²⁵

Moreover, women in Tunisia face multiple challenges hindering their economic participation. After the 2011 revolution, Tunisian women suffered from the country's economic recession. They were the primary social group to hold the unemployment burden because of their social positioning as caregivers rather than economic providers. In fact, gender norms and stereotypes limit women's access to paid employment and entrepreneurship. Overall, women only represent 26% of the labor force and 11.7% of entrepreneurs. Their low level of economic participation is further reflected in the minimal roles occupied by women in private sector leadership, wherein women manage or co-own only 2% of the country's companies.²⁶ Even though the labor law includes provisions protecting women in the workplace from discrimination and sexual harassment, these protections do not always guarantee a fair and safe work environment for women in practice.²⁷ Additionally, the legal framework for employment does not mandate

equal pay for work of equal value. In fact, men are paid 20 to 30% more than women for the same work.²⁸

Women in the Medina

The Medina's women face multiple challenges hindering their ability to play a significant active role in their neighborhoods, and to participate effectively in communal life. For instance, the Medina's women often suffer from dire economic and social conditions affecting their livelihoods. Many live in poverty with limited access to services, economic opportunities, and cultural activities. While the rate of unemployment in Tunisia is at 16.7%,²⁹ this number is even higher for the Medina's women as 18.5% of them are unemployed versus 11% of the Medina's men.³⁰ While economic recessions and other macroeconomic factors limit employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for all the Medina's residents, discrepancies in economic participation indicators between men and women demonstrate gender-based obstacles hindering women's economic engagement.

Women in the Medina also face multiple hurdles in terms of safety and mobility. The Medina's urban morphology makes the space mostly suitable for pedestrian access as residents perform most of their daily activities and commutes by foot. Although this has many advantages, it presents challenges to women who report that streets are unsafe in the evening, during weekends, and on vacations, as they become empty, and they are often badly lit at night, which exacerbates security risks. In fact, women are sometimes subjected to sexual harassment and thefts when walking in the

²⁰ BEARDSLEY, E. (2011). In Tunisia, Women Play Equal Role In Revolution. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2011/01/27/133248219/in-tunisia-women-play-equal-role-in-revolution>

²¹ Tamaru, N., Holt-Ivry, O. and O'Reilly, M., 2018. Beyond Revolution: How Women Influenced Constitution Making In Tunisia: Case Study. Washington, DC: Inclusive Security.

²² Dahlerup, D. (2012). Gender equality policy in Tunisia. Retrieved from [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2012/462502/IPOL-FEMM_NT\(2012\)462502_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2012/462502/IPOL-FEMM_NT(2012)462502_EN.pdf)

²³ Zaki, H. (2019). Why Did Women's Rights Expand in PostRevolutionary Tunisia?. Retrieved from <https://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/middle-east-briefs/pdfs/101-200/meb131.pdf>

²⁴ Historic leap in Tunisia: Women make up 47 per cent of local government. (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2018/8/feature-tunisia-women-in-local-elections>

²⁵ Gouvy, C. (2021). A decade after revolution, Tunisia's women face an uphill battle. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/1/17/a-decade-after-revolution-tunisia-women-face-an-uphill-battle>

²⁶ Counting on Women's Work Without Counting Women's Work. (2019). Retrieved from <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620811/rr-counting-womens-work-unpaid-care-mena-region-030619-en.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

²⁷ Tunisia Gender Justice & The Law. (2018). Retrieved from https://tunisia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Tunisia%20Country%20Assessment_English.pdf

²⁸ Cargnelutti, F. (2018). Tunisia's slow but steady march towards gender equality. Retrieved from <https://www.equaltimes.org/tunisia-s-slow-but-steady-march?lang=en#.YJQc-mYzY11>

²⁹ World Bank Datasets (2021), available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?locations=TN>

³⁰ National Office of Statistics (2014), Tunisian National Census

Medina.³¹ It is worth noting that the Tunisian parliament passed a law to protect women from physical, economic, sexual, and psychological violence in 2017, but the law has not yet yielded concrete results in terms of improving women's sense of safety in the Medina.

Although the Medina's women do participate in the city's political and cultural life through their presence in public spaces, these do not seem to be particularly secure and welcoming for them, as they are often dominated by men, and they lack

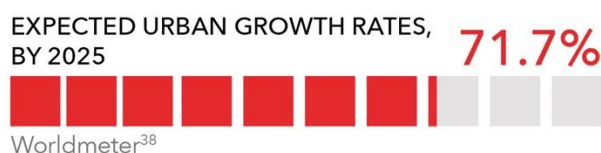
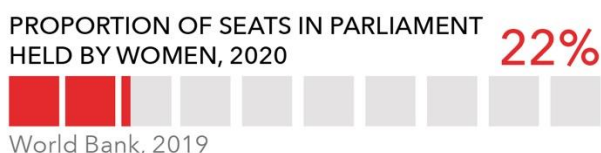
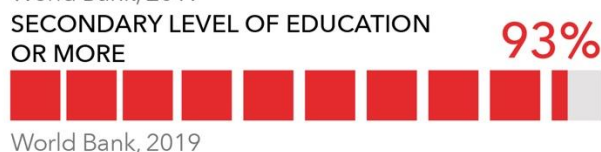
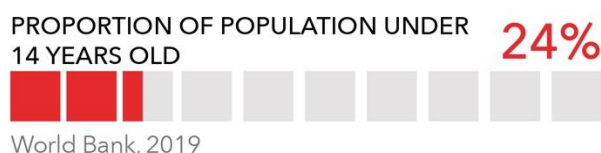
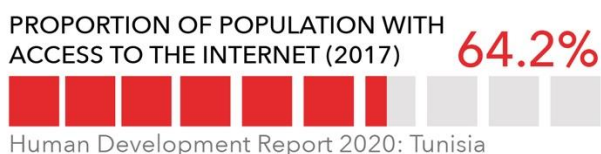
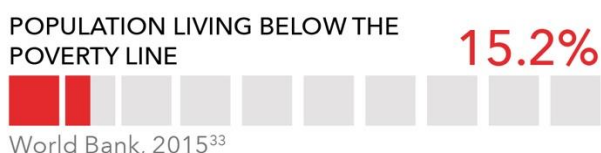
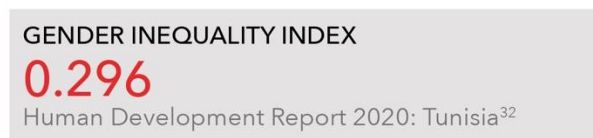
the appropriate infrastructure to accommodate for women's needs. Moreover, open public spaces that are often deserted during the night foster illegal activities which increases women's sense of insecurity. Given that safe and welcoming public spaces are key to women's equal participation in their communities' social, cultural, and political transformation, a lot needs to be done to restructure the Medina's public spaces and make them gender-inclusive by involving women in their urban renewal processes.



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³¹El Ghali, A., & El Turki, Y. (2018). A study on urban security in the Medina of Tunis. Retrieved from https://www.dignity.dk/wp-content/uploads/publication_series_no21.pdf

Dataset - Key National Statistics Relevant to Gender Equality



³² Human Development Reports. (2020). Retrieved from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/TUN>

³³ Tunisia | Data. (2019). Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/country/tunisia>

³⁴ Tunisia | Data. (2019). Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/country/tunisia>

³⁵ Historic leap in Tunisia: Women make up 47 per cent of local government. (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2018/8/feature-tunisian-women-in-local-elections>

³⁶ National population and employment survey. (2007). Retrieved from <http://www.ins.tn/>

³⁷ Tunisia - Enterprise Survey 2013. (2016). Retrieved from <https://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/2264>

³⁸ Tunisia Population (2021) - Worldometer. (2020). Retrieved from <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/tunisia-population/>

SEC.2

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION
IN THE MEDINA

This section of the report presents the synthesized data collected from the desk review, survey, interviews, and workshops conducted with women in the Medina. It explores the key findings on four levels of women's participation in the Medina:

- › Social Inclusion, Safety and Mobility,
- › Cultural Participation and Evaluation of Human Capital,
- › Political and Institutional Participation,
- › Economic Participation.

SOCIAL INCLUSION, SAFETY, AND MOBILITY

The diverse composition of the Medina's inhabitants enriches its urban space and creates an atmosphere of cultural and social exchange. This diversity can nonetheless pose difficulties, especially considering that migration patterns regularly change neighborhoods' populations thus weakening social ties, as residents no longer know their own neighbors. Additionally, factors related to the built environment, infrastructure, and modes of mobility influence women's ability to engage socially in their communities. The below section explores the key findings covering areas related to security, safety, mobility, and their impact on women's ability to build social networks.

Women do not feel safe in the Medina particularly at night.

Research participants, both men and women, considered the Medina to be rather unsafe for women. Incidents of robbery and assault were reported in all areas of the neighborhood. While theft incidents sometimes occurred during the day, most women thought the risk was highest at night, especially in the souks after the shops' closing hours. Consequently, the vast majority of women did not go out to the street past sunset.

While women often specified certain streets and neighborhoods that they considered unsafe, perceptions of insecurity diverged greatly. For example, many research participants thought that Sidi el Bechir, Bab el Fella, and Bab el Jazira were

unsafe (cf. Map 3), but the neighborhood's women did not share that perception.



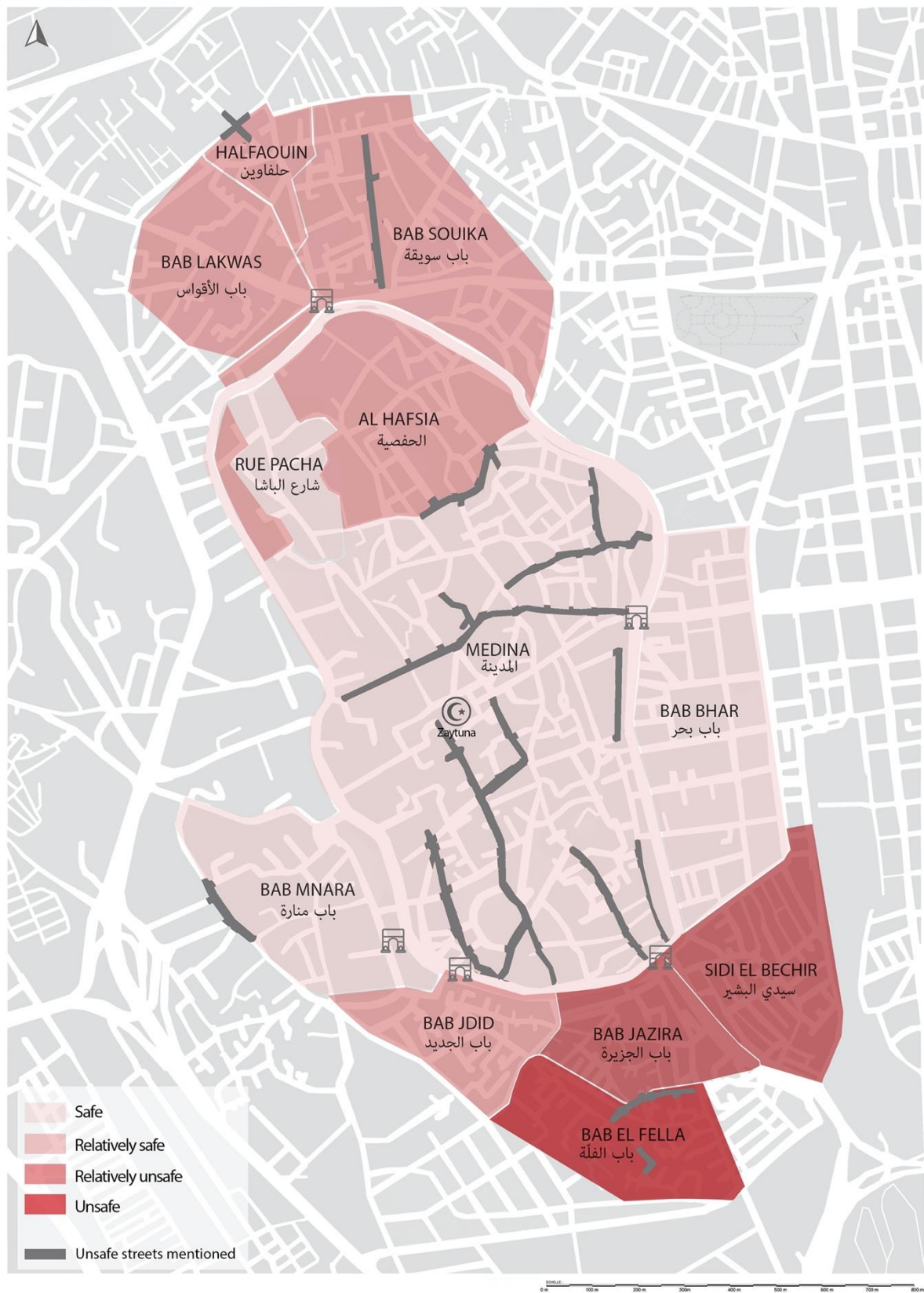
I go out to the streets whenever I want. We all know each other here and no one would dare say a word to me. But I wouldn't go anywhere outside my neighborhood, where people don't know me, at night.

Salma Resident of Sidi el Bechir

In fact, women's familiarity with a space affected their perception of safety, as they tended to feel safer in their own neighborhoods, and in areas they frequently visited, and less safe in faraway areas. Women argued that perpetrators of security incidents are more likely to be strangers to the neighborhood, and that thieves would not target those from their own area as a code of honor linked neighbors, or "*Ouled el Houma*" to one another.³⁹ However, patterns of migrations perpetually changing neighborhoods' populations challenged women's familiarity with their own neighborhoods, and therefore their sense of safety.

³⁹ Translates to "sons of the neighborhood".

Map 3- Women's safety in the Medina



Street conditions and incidents of violence and crime affect women's sense of safety in the Medina.

Architectural features of the Medina's old neighborhoods, characterized by patio houses, limit the interface between the domestic and the public spheres. For instance, patio houses rarely have windows looking onto adjacent streets which limits street dwellers' sense of safety. As a result, when a woman walks in a residential street, she is surrounded by windowless facades and closed doors, and can only rely on other passers-by to feel safe. Women therefore roam around when the souks are open, as the Medina's residents and visitors animate its streets, but avoid staying out late after the shops close down, or even on Sundays during the day as the absence of shopping activities leave the streets mostly empty. The temporal rhythms of commercial activity are therefore crucial to women's security. Street lighting is another key factor affecting women's perception of security. Women thought that streets such as Rue Pacha and Rue Hafsia are safe as they are well-lit at night. A municipal member confirmed the correlation between street lighting and security, when she argued that thieves and drug users kept on breaking light bulbs in unsafe streets right after the municipality repaired them to maintain control over those streets.



My daughter worked for 7 years in Bab Bhar. Her dad and I went to meet her every day after work to walk her home. We did not want her to be alone in those narrow and dark alleyways during the evening.

Mariam Resident of Hafsia

Moreover, previous occurrences of theft, drug use, and alcohol abuse incidents lead women to fear particular locations. Women often know of the secluded streets, open spaces, and dead ends where youth use drugs or consume alcohol at night. They avoid passing by these locations even during the day, as they perceive the users of those spaces as violent, and they fear fights erupting between them. Additionally, open public spaces

sometimes shelter homeless people whose presence increases women's sense of insecurity. As women accumulate stories of illegal activities occurring in a certain location, they tag it as insecure, and discourage others from visiting it. Public spaces often acquire a bad reputation over time, as women associate them with such incidents. When asked about spaces for meeting other women in public, they often preferred spending time in enclosed spaces in which undesirable activities could not occur.

The police's presence in the streets does not always improve women's sense of safety.

While some respondents reported that police presence was important, particularly in public spaces to reduce security risks, others argued that the police's effectiveness has deteriorated since the revolution, as resources allocated to the institution dwindled, reducing the police's authority and sense of motivation. For instance, women thought that police members were not responsive enough when they reported theft incidents, and some argued that a police member's proximity did not improve their personal sense of safety.

While some security cameras are present around the Medina, those are mostly operated by private owners to protect their properties. Women feel safer in areas covered by security cameras, and they often demanded more comprehensive camera-coverage, as they argued that those with criminal intentions developed a good knowledge of cameras' location, and now know how to avoid being captured.

While incidents of sexual harassment occur at times in the Medina, these remain rare given the strong social ties connecting neighbors.

Research participants rarely mentioned gender-based street harassment as a security concern preventing them from moving around the city. Men are often protective towards women from their neighborhood, or *bent el houma*, which limits the occurrence of street harassment.⁴⁰

Nonetheless, a few women mentioned being touched by strangers when walking in the souks during busy periods. Younger women also complained about the Medina being a space

⁴⁰El Ghali, A., & El Turki, Y. (2018). A study on urban security in the Medina of Tunis. Retrieved from https://www.dignity.dk/wp-content/uploads/publication_series_no21.pdf

where they could not dress as they pleased. They often receive undesired looks from men whenever they test the boundaries of the neighborhood's conservative dress code.



I was walking alone at night when I felt someone following me. I tried to project confidence, so I turned back and told the man behind me to back off. He recognized me as *bent el houma*, apologized and walked away.

Emna, Resident of Bab el Fella

Divorced women and single mothers may face stigmatization and discrimination in the Medina, but can also find a safe refuge in it.

The Medina's social life is regulated by a set of norms that often lead to discrimination against women, and stigmatization of particular groups, notably divorced women, single mothers, and members of the LGBTQ+ community. At the same time, some areas of the Medina are considered to be a shelter for those communities who find a welcoming environment that accepts difference, especially where civil society organizations are active and offer support.

Women's mobility in the Medina can be influenced by social stigma associated with certain routes.

Given that most of the Medina's streets are not wide enough for car traffic, most areas are only accessible by foot, with only 17% of households owning cars.⁴¹ Women tend to perform their daily activities on foot, and most do not mind walking to different neighborhoods, with safety being the only major concern hindering their mobility. For instance, women are inclined to take a longer path to avoid unsafe streets. Moreover, safety considerations limit the duration of women's movement around the city, thus restricting their mobility after sunset and on Sundays where pedestrian movement is almost nonexistent.

A few participants argued that social codes regulate women's mobility in the city. For instance, women are socially sanctioned if they use particular streets that are associated with sex work or drug use. Some women also reported avoiding public squares with men's cafés when walking around the city. Moreover, the Medina is less accessible for women with special needs, as it lacks the appropriate accommodations. The pedestrian-centric nature of mobility often entails that residents have to walk long distances to reach their destinations, which restricts the mobility of older women, those with special needs, and those with health problems.



I cannot walk without my clutches, so I find it difficult to go to certain places when the road is not cleared or has potholes.

Fatma, resident of Sidi el Bechir



KEY AREAS FOR INTERVENTIONS

- › Enhanced mobility and safer streets: road maintenance, cleanliness, appropriate lighting, and security measures
- › Safe and equipped public spaces: security measures, proper infrastructure and maintenance, equipped public spaces, activate spaces through programs and activities

⁴¹TUNIS: A travers le Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat 2014. (2014). Retrieved from http://www.ins.tn/sites/default/files/1_TUNIS-1_0.pdf



© Cities Alliance

Salma spends most of her time at home or commuting to Sidi Ashour where the cafés make her feel welcome as a woman. Even though the Medina has many cafes, she prefers to meet her friends outside of it, as she does not find any spaces within the neighborhood that are both safe and convenient for young people and women to hang out. Nonetheless, Salma aspires to spend more time in the Medina if it becomes livelier and more appropriate for women. For example, she would like to see more activities she could participate in in the Medina, and more lights to make women feel safer.

“I love the Medina in its good and bad aspects and will never forget my memories there. It is my family, and it is where everyone is welcoming and makes you feel safe and comfortable. Only if we work to make it better, safer, and more welcoming so all people, women, men, elderly, and children can enjoy it as our own without fear.”

Salma, 19 years old, resident of Medina Centrale

CULTURAL PARTICIPATION AND HUMAN CAPITAL

The women of Tunis are highly active in the city's cultural scene, as they contribute to both producing and consuming culture. The Medina offers multiple cultural opportunities to women and girls through many institutions including cultural centers, clubs, and music schools. To better understand women's level of participation in this arena, it is important to look into the enabling policy environment, the available cultural programs, and the urban challenges related to public spaces that limit women's ability to take on a more significant role in cultural life.

The policies and funding targeting cultural participation are not necessarily conducive for women's engagement.

The ministry of culture witnessed a significant turnover in ministerial appointments since the revolution, which made it harder to adopt a unified cultural orientation, define cultural strategies, and implement structural reforms, such as defining the legal status of an artist, or developing particular cultural industries.⁴² Additionally, a common perception relegating cultural issues to a secondary position, after more pressing economic and political problems, further hinders women's cultural participation.

Moreover, cultural policies are not always inclusive of people from different genders and social status. For instance, most survey respondents were not aware of existing cultural policies and funds dedicated to women. Those who were familiar with such policies thought that they are not necessarily effective, as they have yet to concretely improve women's cultural participation. Cultural funds are

often perceived as insufficient and of difficult accessibility. For instance, new artists feel that they do not benefit from such resources as they are usually distributed to established professionals and NGOs.



There are no capacity building workshops that enable women to succeed as artisans and become financially independent.

Workshop participant

Women find it difficult to access and use the cultural spaces available in the Medina.

The Municipality of Tunis considers culture as a social need and is thus keen to encourage the local art and creative scene. In fact, it collaborates with private and public partners and with civil society, to put in place a rich and diverse program within the city. For instance, the municipality restored several cultural centers and sponsored cultural activities such as the theatre troupe and the Municipal Theater. Moreover, municipal cultural institutions such as the Dar Ben Achour Library and the Bir El Hajar Cultural Center proliferate in the Medina.⁴³

⁴²Aboudi, B. (2015). Cultural Policy in the Arab Region Programme Al Mawred Al Thaqafy. Retrieved from https://www.culturalpolicies.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/tunisia_profile_summary_2014.pdf

⁴³ Cultural policy: valuing heritage for more sustainable development of Tunis | Good Practices. (2016). Retrieved from <http://obs.agenda21culture.net/en/good-practices/cultural-policy-valuing-heritage-more-sustainable-development-tunis>



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Nonetheless, research participants thought that many cultural activities stopped after the revolution, and that cultural centers and public libraries had limited accessibility, unsatisfactory maintenance, and services of deteriorating quality. The centers' gatekeepers were often cited as a key hindrance to access, as they held the power in deciding when and who is allowed to enter. As a result, women were often denied access and their visits stopped or became less frequent with time. Workshop participants also stated that these spaces do not adopt an inclusive policy that would encourage the participation of stigmatized groups such as divorced women, single mothers, and members of the LGBTQ+ community.



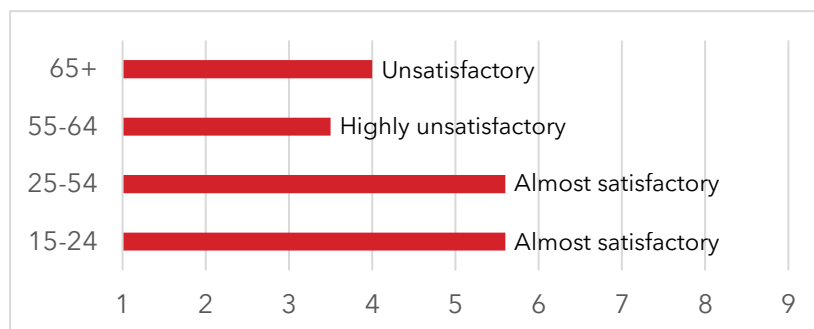
My friends and I tend to stay on the streets during our school break as the gatekeeper does not let us into the public library.

Teenage girl participant in the co-creation workshop

Moreover, public cultural institutions often lack regular programming and frequent events. Women also thought that events are not well-publicized as they are rarely aware of them. However, young women tend to know more about ongoing events as they have access to social media and therefore participate more. They also have access to information through NGOs and clubs they belong to. Indeed, events usually target younger women, which explains why older women rarely take part in cultural activities, as shown in the graph below.

FIGURE 1

Women's evaluation of their level of satisfaction of cultural activities disaggregated by age group



44 Justin McGuinness (2000). 'Neighborhood notes: texture and streetscape in the Medina of Tunis'. The journal of North African Studies. 5:4, p.97-120



Public libraries lack books that are interesting for us, and technological facilities to access publications for research.

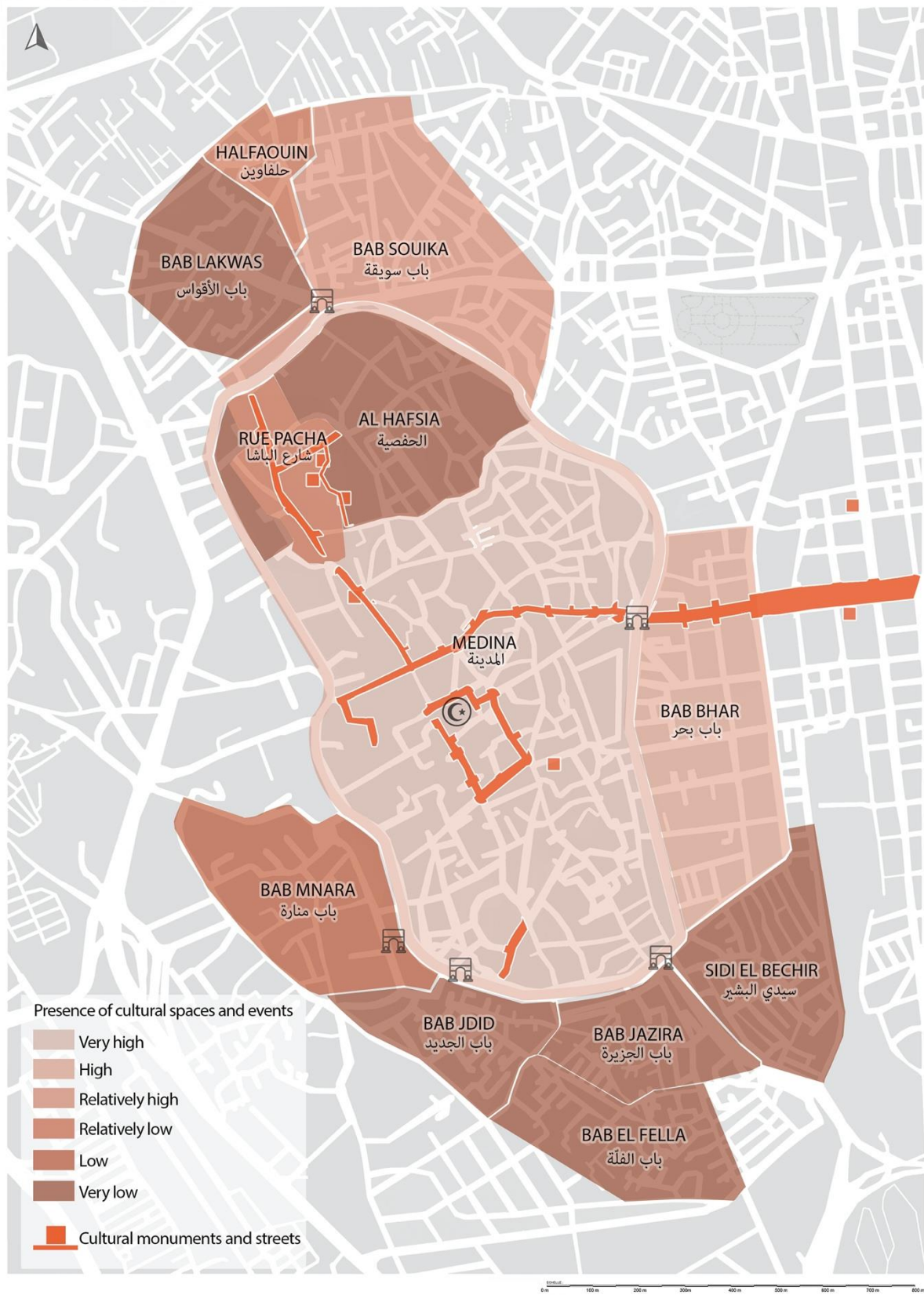
University student, co-creation workshop participant

Cultural events give women a sense of belonging to the neighborhood, but they are not always tailored to the local context.

Generally, women acknowledge the presence of cultural, social, and religious events and activities they can participate in, citing cinemas, theaters, exhibitions, and festivals. However, many reported that the frequency of these events has dramatically decreased due to the covid-19 pandemic.

The main neighborhoods where cultural activities take place are Bab Bhar, Medina Centrale and Bab Souika (cf. Map 4). Medina Centrale hosts most of the activities and festivals, where women's participation is higher. Bab Bhar is home to many theaters and cinemas which host regular events, and Bab Souika is particularly known for activities scheduled during the Holy month of Ramadan. NGOs and cultural initiatives also organize cultural events that attract residents from the capital's different neighborhoods. This is not always well-perceived by local residents who often think that these events do not necessarily fit their cultural context, and that they cater for the interests of a wealthier audience. It is notable that cultural events are viewed as a catalyst of the Medina's gentrification.⁴⁴

Map 4- Women's cultural, religious, and entertainment participation in the Medina



Opportunities for women to participate in social events and to create their own support networks outside of their family vary depending on women's social status and family background.

Survey respondents were mostly satisfied with the participation of women in social events and the possibilities to go out and create their own support systems outside of their family environment. Working women reported that they could create support networks through their professional connections. Similarly, young girls mentioned that having access to social media has increased their visibility and opportunities to connect with other like-minded individuals. These opportunities have allowed women to build and grow their social networks, especially after the revolution. Nonetheless, divorced, and single mothers do not have access to the same opportunities, as they are often stigmatized and do not have the time to engage in social activities, as their responsibility to provide and care for their families take up most of their energies.

Survey respondents mostly mentioned that socializing and networking opportunities for women depend on their families and social environment. For instance, women from conservative families have less opportunities to socialize and create networks outside of their family circles. Additionally, women argued that socializing is difficult when there are no

designated places for women to meet. Men for example can meet and network in several cafés whereas these places do not exist for women, especially in popular neighborhoods.

Moreover, social perceptions limit older women's opportunities to participate in cultural events and grow their social networks. For instance, a normative perception of women's role in the family dictates the need for their continuous engagement in care work within the household. Therefore, a woman who spends time outside of the house for purposes unrelated to working or caring for her family can be negatively perceived. While these traditional perceptions are not uniformly adopted by all of the Medina's residents, they tend to limit the opportunities for cultural participation for women from more conservative backgrounds.

Women feel more comfortable meeting in enclosed spaces, rather than in public ones.

Public spaces in the Medina are mostly dominated by men and often lack the appropriate infrastructure and safety measures to appeal to women users. Women reported that they needed to be in groups of three or more or with children to avoid unwanted attention and harassment. Older women, divorced women, and single mothers in particular do not feel comfortable in public spaces, as shown in the graphs below. Women older than 65 often reported not feeling comfortable to even just rest in a public space after a long walk.

FIGURE 2

Women's evaluation of their level of satisfaction in public spaces disaggregated by age group

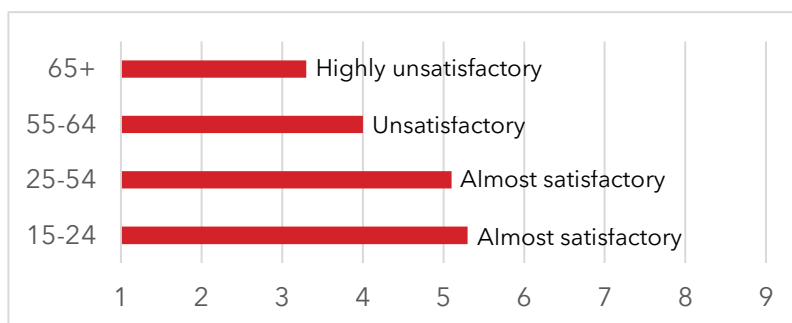
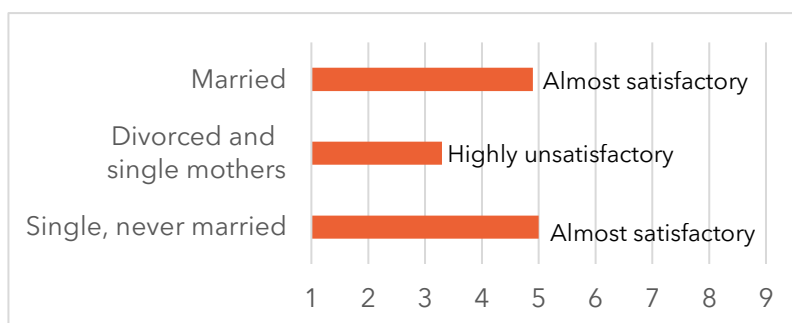


FIGURE 3

Women's evaluation of their level of satisfaction in public spaces disaggregated by marital status





My friends and I tried to go to the “Parc du Passage” once during our school break, and a strange man shouted that we shouldn’t be there and threatened to beat us if we didn’t leave the park. We never went back there since.

High-school student, co-creation workshop participant

Public spaces are usually hijacked by nearby cafés that consider them as an extension to their premises and render them unusable by women and other non-customer groups. Cafés are often full of men which instills discomfort among the women who wish to access these places or even just walk by them. The cafés that women consider to be more appropriate for them are often the ones that are more expensive, and that tourists and women from outside the Medina go to. These cafes are not usually affordable to the neighborhood’s residents.

Local women prefer not to spend time in their neighborhood’s public spaces and cafés and would rather go outside the Medina to go out and meet with friends and family. When asked about the places where women meet each other, respondents mentioned their houses, the souks, the hammam, the hairdresser, “decent” cafés, and other places outside the Medina. In addition to the safety concern, women explained that they are afraid to have their reputation affected if seen sitting in a public space or café.

This fear of losing social status stems from strictly enforced gender norms in some conservative communities in the Medina where women are sanctioned for any slight deviation from social expectations. Women feel the need to justify their presence in a public space by being part of an activity or a daily chore, such as shopping in the souks, or picking their children up from school.

However, these social codes are more loosely applied to women of younger age groups. Young girls in particular are trying to break the taboos and be part of activities that older women are not necessarily comfortable with. They spend time in cafés and sit in public spaces, but they still consider that a lot needs to be done for these spaces to be safe, comfortable, and conducive for women’s participation in communal life.



My friends and I like to spend time around the Medina during our school break. We do not need much; we are even happy to spend time sitting on the sidewalks.

High-school student participating in the co-creation workshop



KEY AREAS FOR INTERVENTIONS

- › Access to support and funding: tailored cultural programming and funding opportunities for local cultural activities and events
- › Promotion of cultural activities: proper information and communication sharing of cultural activities
- › Cultural centers and public spaces: accessible and equipped cultural centers, safe and accessible public spaces enabled to host cultural activities for women



© Amin Chouikh

Amna hesitates to go out in the Medina during her free time because she feels that the available spaces are not inviting for women and girls. She describes the current spaces in the Medina as occupied by men. Amna wants to stay in the Medina, but she would like to see more initiatives targeted towards women. For example, she would like to see more clean, green, and comfortable spaces where she could meet-up with her friends.

"The neighborhoods are suffocating. I don't feel I want to go out because there is nothing appealing, neither the green spaces nor the spaces for fun and leisure. Honestly, I still want to live in the Medina, but would love to have a small initiative for women, a club, for example where women can gather in a nice open space to learn and share and enjoy their time."

Amna, 15 years old, resident of Hafsia

POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL PARTICIPATION

Tunisia's constitution and legal frameworks guarantee equal participation for women in politics making it one of the most progressive countries in the MENA region at this level. Women's engagement in civil society organizations in the Medina is strong, as women find more opportunities, spaces, and support for active participation. However, levels of political participation are often intertwined with many other factors related to women's livelihoods, attitudes, and perceptions which directly and indirectly affect their ability to engage politically.

Women's participation in the political sphere remains limited and is often considered as a necessary formality to comply with legal quotas.

Despite the adoption of gender-parity as a constitutional principle and its translation into the electoral law in the form of legal quotas,⁴⁵ effective parity is still far from being achieved in parliament, local governments, and within political parties. For instance, the relatively high number of women candidates in elections does not necessarily reflect women's willingness to participate in politics, nor does it translate into a notable presence of women in political leadership positions.

According to some interviewees, men are not keen on engaging women in politics as they fear that competent women occupy high-level decision-making positions. Hence, men politicians often add women from their circles of friends and family to their electoral lists in order to align with the legally-mandated quota, without taking into consideration their qualifications and competence.

Respondents noted that effective parity is not

achieved through a mere implementation of the law and creating mixed electoral lists, but also through challenging cultural perceptions and practices prohibiting women from speaking their minds, and participating in shaping policies and decisions. Women often find that their opinions are not accounted for, and that final decisions are eventually taken by men.



Women often see examples of women in politics getting sidelined or treated disrespectfully, and this discourages many from venturing into the political sphere in the first place. Many were given false promises by political parties, and regret running for elections altogether.

Interviewee, member of the municipality

Nonetheless, participants argued that parity laws give many women access to the political scene. Their presence is a chance for them to observe, learn, and discover their capabilities to fight for an equal position in the political arena. A sustained presence of women in politics, and the accumulation of women's efforts would mainstream their leadership in politics with time.

⁴⁵ Zaki, H. (2019). Why Did Women's Rights Expand in PostRevolutionary Tunisia? Retrieved from <https://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/middle-east-briefs/pdfs/101-200/meb131.pdf>

Women in politics face tremendous resistance and criticism, and need to have a lot of resilience to continue in this path.

Both workshop and survey participants stated that sexist cultural perceptions perpetuate the idea that a woman cannot be a successful politician and that men are better qualified to manage public interests and take decisions related to the public sphere. Women planning to enter politics are often discouraged by their families and entourage, and find little support and solidarity from other women. They consequently have to work double or triple as hard as men to get into politics. Even then, they find that they are not trusted in their political positions and that they have little influence over decision-making processes. Women politicians often experience criticism from their men counterparts, which they have to overcome through persistence and determination. Additionally, women who do succeed in achieving high-level positions in politics live under highly critical public scrutiny.

Women often have short-lived political careers, as they try to make a difference during one mandate but do not continue to the next one, as the intensifying pressures often lead them out of the public sphere. For instance, a politician's husband can ask her to halt her successful political career and dedicate her time to her family. Additionally, the media's portrayal of women in the public eye reproduces sexist tropes focusing on a woman's appearance and social status rather than her views.

Opportunities, education, and habit often push women away from politics, especially when dire economic conditions shift their priorities towards securing their livelihoods.

Participants noted that when women are in an economically precarious position or when they are occupied with tending to their basic needs and those of their families, they do not have the opportunity nor the time to be actively involved in civil society and in politics.



Women are evaluated on their social behaviors and their moral views when they are in politics, while men politicians are only assessed based on their political activities. Women politicians need to meet higher standards and are harshly criticized for the slightest mistake or failure, whereas a man's political career can survive him serving an entire mandate without any real achievements.

Souad Abdel Rahim, Mayor of Tunis

A few participants also argued that women are not raised or used to discuss public matters when meeting other women, whereas men discuss politics in cafés and various events. However, women today are often hungry to learn. They do not have as many chances as men to meet and interact, so they will welcome any training courses or activities to learn and exchange with each other.

Women have more chances to occupy leadership roles in civil society than in institutional and formal politics.

Women are more present in leadership roles in civil society than in politics where the stakes are higher, and men are less accepting of successful women. Civil society organizations are also more open to having women leaders given their usual commitment to gender-equality principles. Participants in this assessment often believed that women have a major leadership role to play in civil society, and that the number of women with influence within civil society organizations is still insufficient. A few participants also noted that many women enter politics from civil society. Given that they are better received in that context, women can accumulate achievements in the public eye and then push their way into political positions.

Moreover, both workshop and survey participants stated that women are very active in civil society as

they have many ideas and high levels of motivation to improve their communities. For instance, most of the Medina’s young women serve as volunteers in associations and NGOs, despite some resistance from their families who are often unhappy when their daughters travel or stay out late due to meetings and volunteering activities. Some workshop participants thought that women are exploited in the public sphere as they often contribute their free labor as volunteers for years, but have very little room to impact decision-making and occupy leadership positions. Women’s participation in public life therefore decreases in relation to the level of decision-making power ascribed to the position they occupy, as shown in the graph below.

Women in leadership positions, whether in politics, civil society, or the private sector inspire the younger generation of the Medina’s women, and influence behaviors and attitudes towards women’s participation in the public sphere.

Successful women’s advocacy work depends on knowledge of legal frameworks, procedures, and implementation practices

Given that women’s equal participation depends on changes in cultural perceptions and attitudes, the role of women’s rights networks and advocacy groups is crucial. For instance, women respondents reported that they are often unaware of their rights, opportunities for participation, and

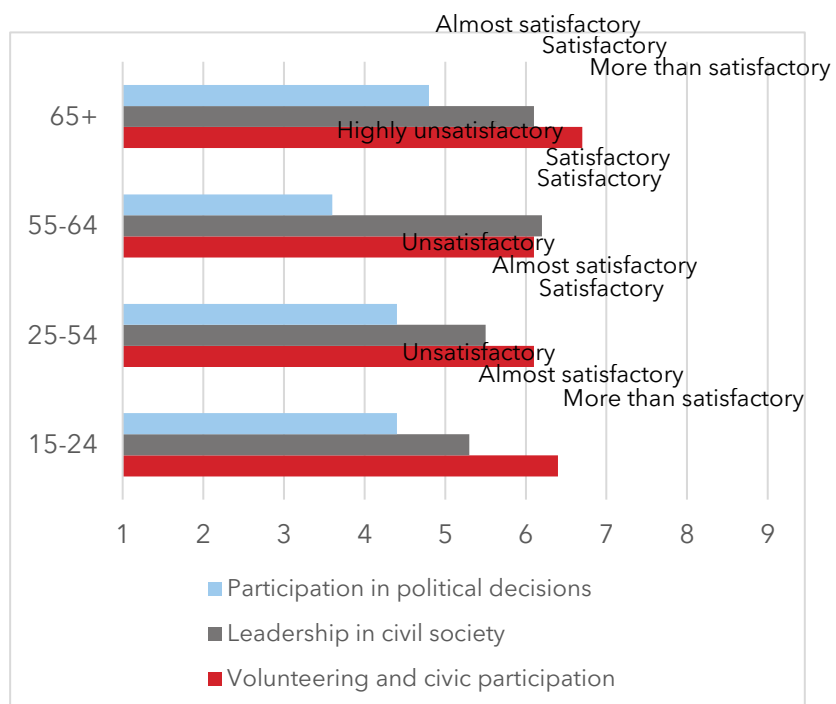
mechanisms to impact their communities. They have little access to information about the laws and regulations to advocate for their rights and to participate in decision-making processes. Participants in the assessment argued that women should be encouraged to express themselves, interact with other women, and learn about their rights to become more civically engaged and committed.

Women reported a low level of trust in public authorities, and stated that their opinions and demands often remain unheard.

Women exhibited an attitude of distrust in public authorities, as they hold them responsible for the challenges they face in the Medina, and expect them to play a more effective role in addressing their problems. Participants often complained that the existing laws are not fully implemented, and often cited their personal experiences with public institutions as symptomatic of the broken communication between public authorities and citizens. For instance, they thought that public officials at welcome desks rarely provide the information and guidance they needed, and that their attitude is often dismissive and intimidating to women.

FIGURE 4

Women’s assessment of their levels of satisfaction in their political and civic participation by age group





An NGO working towards women’s economic empowerment initiated a cooperative market aiming to sell women’s products. While most women were reluctant to be the project’s official point of contact, one woman eventually volunteered to go to the public authority and officially register the cooperative. However, she backed down the moment a public servant asked her to provide additional official personal documents. The project eventually failed because no other woman accepted to follow through the bureaucratic process for lack of trust in public authorities.

Workshop participant

Despite a progressive local governance law fostering transparency and participation, women still thought that public authorities adopt a top-down approach to governing, and they felt excluded from decision-making processes. For instance, participants often stated that the government does not consult with women in public matters and in issues affecting them. If consultation sessions are organized, they are usually formal and intimidating, thus reducing women’s ability to engage, participate in public discussions, and make social, urban, and political demands. Additionally, participants stated that participatory processes do not always accommodate for their needs. For instance, some argued that they do not attend the municipality’s meetings because those are often schedule late at

night, which makes it difficult for them to participate. Some added that women do not always know their rights in accessing information and participating in decision-making, which further limits their ability to engage with institutions.

Women also thought that top political positions are held by men who are rarely concerned with women’s needs and suggestions, and do not take them into account. They argued that men in power rarely value a woman’s input regardless of her diligence and perseverance. The representation of women in political leadership would thus facilitate conveying women’s voices and concerns to those in power.

Participants in the assessment thought that work still needs to be done for participatory processes to effectively engage citizens, and women in particular.



I went multiple times to our elected official and asked him to have the municipality clean our neighborhood. He took action, and sent municipal staff to clear up the trash, which piled up again a few days down the line. I then made a petition, asked other women to sign it, and took it to the municipality but nothing changed. I feel that our voices and concerns remain unheard.

Emna, resident of Bab el Fella



KEY AREAS FOR INTERVENTIONS

- › Access to information: sufficient and well communicated sources of information; awareness on legal rights.
- › Advocacy support: political development opportunities; training and capacity building.
- › Promoting political participation: better implementation of parity laws, promotion of successful women’s experiences in politics.



© Belhadj

Leila ran three times for municipal elections.

On her first run, she was not ever pursuing a municipal position, but her name was added to the list just to achieve the 30% women quota. Even though she won a seat back then, the municipal council disregarded all of her suggestions.

After having moved to the UAE, and witnessing the 2011 revolution, Leila decided to come back to her country to run again, hoping to build a better Tunisia, and ultimately change the world. Unfortunately, her campaign did not grant her a seat.

The third time, Leila led a campaign in 2018 which was partly successful, as it won her, and two other candidates on her list, municipal seats. The seats were too few for her to realize her vision, but running for mayor would! As the cultural norms that once made it unacceptable for women to be mayors slowly change, Leila might be able to realize her ambition sometime soon.

"I am an entrepreneur; entrepreneurship is gender-blind, and it is a simple formula; you just work as hard as you can, sacrifice all you can, and after a lot of time you get lucky, and if you can persist through the pressures of people, money, and time, you can even become your own 'wasta'. In politics, the formula is gender-sensitive. Luck and wasta have nothing to do with achievements or hard work... at least in this part of the world!"

Leila, social entrepreneur

ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

Despite progressive regulations, women in the Medina face multiple barriers limiting their ability to be economically productive and independent. Similar to many low-income parts of the city, structural barriers hinder women's economic participation. For instance, some gaps in the legal framework impede women's ability to equally participate in the labor market as men. Many restrictions also persist due to discriminatory cultural norms. To explore women's economic participation, it is important to look at the different aspects of women's work, including paid employment, entrepreneurship, and unpaid domestic labor and care work.

The Medina's women are resourceful and hardworking. Yet, they find difficulties in attaining economic independence.

Many participants in the assessment thought that the barriers to their economic independence are structural, as high levels of poverty and unemployment in the Medina prevent most of its residents, whether men or women, from attaining economic independence. They nonetheless argued that gendered barriers compounded the difficulties for women to attain financial security. For instance, traditional gender roles limit women's economic engagement, as they are often left to handle domestic affairs and engage in unpaid work caring for their families while men spearhead their households' economic activities, and therefore control their income. A woman's economic independence therefore depends upon her ability to make an income herself.

While participants in the assessment often described the Medina's women as resourceful and hard-working, they thought that these qualities do not always translate into economic independence. For instance, more conservative husbands control their wives' mobility thus limiting their access to work opportunities, or even prohibit them from

working altogether. Even when a woman earns her own income or has personal assets, her family or husband can still control her spending, especially if she holds little power to influence financial decisions within the household. For instance, research participants argued that women have little power to influence their families' long-term and strategic spending decisions, such as those related to bigger expenses, including housing and business investments. The survey findings also show that women entrepreneurs and employees are significantly more satisfied with their decision-making power within the household than women who do not earn any income themselves.



Women in the Medina cannot save any money for their personal spending because their families will always claim those savings. I know of many women who hide their money at a friend's place to create safety nets for themselves.

Zainab, workshop participant

When women do engage in paid work, cultural perceptions limit their employment to low paid professions that are traditionally women-dominated, such as being teachers, nurses, tailors, or pastry-makers. Moreover, the current hire freeze in the public sector prevents women from accessing jobs in public institutions that implement the legally mandated labor policies protecting them against gender-based discrimination in the workplace. They therefore have to find employment in the largely informal private sector, where their livelihoods are precarious, and they face the risks of being fired upon getting pregnant, and receiving unequal pay in comparison to their men colleagues.

Divorced women and single mothers face particular hardships to attain economic independence, as they often find themselves simultaneously engaged in paid work and having to care for their families. Social stigma against these women also limits their job opportunities, and even their ability to find housing. Social assistance programs are designed based on a normative framework of the nuclear family, and therefore rarely account for divorced women and single mothers' specific needs. For instance, the absence of public childcare support targeting these women hinders their capacity to work.

In addition to the scarcity of jobs in the Medina, working women face gender-based discrimination limiting their professional development opportunities.

Even though the souks present a wide range of economic opportunities for the Medina's residents (cf. Map 5), they are primarily men-dominated and only offer opportunities for precarious short-term employment to women. In addition to working in the markets' shops, more educated women also find jobs working in private enterprises such as call centers in the downtown area in Bab Bhar. Workshop participants thought that cultural perceptions often lead women to adopt an attitude of self-sacrifice, and therefore accept discrimination in pay and harsher managerial attitudes when working in the private sector.



Some shop-owners prefer to hire women because they perceive them as less costly, and easier to manage than men.

Workshop participant

Those who try to challenge gender norms by studying mechanics or trying to work as artisans in men-dominated industries often fail to find opportunities to build their practical know-how, as workshop owners do not take them in as apprentices. In many cases, trade masters pass on their knowledge from father to son, and are willing to let their trade die rather than share their know-how with anyone who would not carry their name forward in the industry.



I cannot talk to passers-by during my working hours. My boss does not like it. I have to stand by the entrance and invite customers in, without engaging in conversation with anyone.

Takwa, clothes seller in Hafsia's Marché de frippes

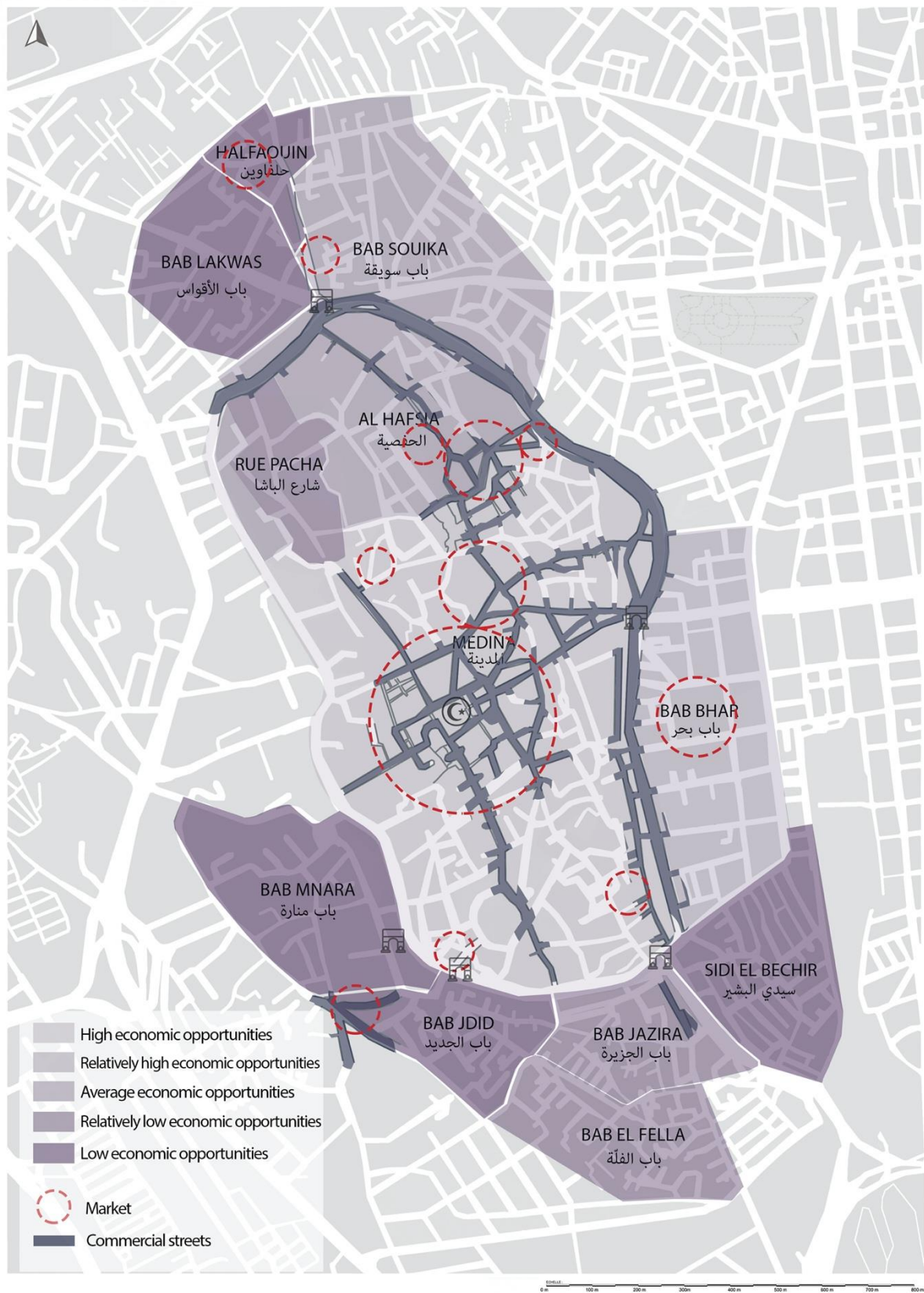
Married women and mothers face additional discrimination in employment that takes many forms. To start with, the legal framework establishes inequality between mothers and fathers, as the current law stipulates that mothers are entitled to a 1-month paid maternity leave in the private sector, and a 2-months leave in the public sector, with a possibility for a half-salary extension, while fathers only get a 48-hour paternity leave. Participants in the assessment thought that this discrimination reflects society's vision for the roles of fathers, who are merely expected to register their child and then go back to work as women carry the burdens of parenthood alone. Women also think that the Medina lacks the infrastructure to support working mothers, as the absence of affordable kindergartens and recreational spaces for children increases the load of care work on women.

Additionally, public institutions that hire a large number of mothers do not offer any childcare services to their employees. New mothers also report that they are only given a 2-hour leave for breastfeeding per day, which they often end-up not taking, because they have to submit paperwork to be granted the right to leave the office.



© Flickr, Michael Foley

Map 5- Women's economic opportunities in the Medina



Participants in the assessment added that discrimination against married women and mothers takes more subtle forms, especially in the public sector where the legal framework protecting women from discrimination is accounted for. For instance, once a woman gets married, her boss often thinks that she would prioritize her family over her job, so she is taken off important projects, and she is no longer sent on missions to other cities. Additionally, given that public sector promotions are at the discretion of one's boss, married women and mothers often have their careers set back due to their bosses assuming that their professional life would be less of a priority for them.



After years of hard work in the public sector, I finally got promoted. I told my boss that I was pregnant only after the promotion was made official, and he responded that he would not have approved it had he known that I was expecting. While this kind of discrimination is illegal, it still prevails in public institutions and limits women's abilities to grow professionally.

Sarah, workshop participant

Even though the 2017 law for the elimination of violence towards women legally protects employees from sexual harassment in the workplace, with criminal penalties for perpetrators, women still suffer from harassment, and have to accept it at the risk of losing their source of income. Participants in the assessment argued that harassment still prevails because women do not know their rights, and powerful men often intimidate victims into silence. In addition to the psychological damage of harassment, the practice hinders women's economic engagement, as surveyed unemployed women often cited friends' stories of harassment to explain their reluctance to enter the workforce.

Even though entrepreneurship is key to women's economic engagement, barriers related to the men-dominated market, the inadequacy of support, and cultural perceptions hinder women's ability to start and grow their businesses.

Entrepreneurship offers great opportunities for women to acquire their economic independence. For instance, survey respondents who are entrepreneurs are significantly more satisfied than any other group of women in their financial standing, their resilience facing crises, and their power to influence decisions within their families and in the public sphere. Entrepreneurship opportunities are not however equally accessible to all of the Medina's women, as only those from relatively better-off families have the safety nets and social networks allowing them to take risks and invest in a business venture.



My husband and I are both notary publics. We studied together, and opened our offices at the same time. Everyone, including my own family, preferred to go to him when they needed notary public services. One day, I removed the plate with my name from above my office door, and went back home crying. My mom saw me and told me that quitting was not an option for us, women of the Medina, as we need to make our own income to have a place in society, and we have to fight hard to achieve that. I had to struggle over the years to earn my clients' trust in ways my husband never had to.

Faiza, notary public in the Medina

Research participants noted that women's entrepreneurial ventures often remain small and informal, as gendered considerations limit their growth opportunities. Obstacles to women's entrepreneurship reside at various levels.

- › Women do not have many communal support opportunities that men benefit from, as their economic activity is often taken less seriously. For example, Medina-based men artisans develop their commercial networks to sell their products in touristic sites outside of the neighborhood, while women rarely have the opportunities to develop such business relationships. This disadvantage is a key barrier to women's entrepreneurship as networking can make or break a business venture within the context of cutthroat competition in the Medina's souks.
- › Women find difficulties in financing their businesses. While men can get family credits and loans from their social networks, while women rarely benefit from such opportunities.
- › Women also find it difficult to access other forms of financing, such as formal loans. While small loans are available, women rarely control their own assets, and therefore cannot use them as collateral. Moreover, obtaining loans require a lot of paperwork, high fees, and follow-up on a long bureaucratic process which hinder women's access to them. Moreover, many women do not have information about the availability of those loans, and the required documentation to obtain them.
- › Cultural perceptions and attitudes limit the profitability of women's businesses in subtle and indirect ways. For instance, a lack of trust taints business relationships with women, as traders do not always feel comfortable sealing deals with them, and many customers prefer using the services of men. Additionally, participants argued that women rarely have the courage to break gender norms and sell their products themselves in the market. While women often make products such as food and sweets at home, they rely on family members to market them, and often ask for low prices in comparison to their men competitors.

Training and business support opportunities are scarce and rarely meet women's needs.

While the Medina used to have many training centers run by the Union for Tunisian Women prior to the revolution, those closed down for lack of funding. Currently, women do not find accessible training opportunities to improve their employment prospects, learn new skills, and grow their businesses. Even though private institutions deliver some training programs, they require exorbitant fees, exceeding most women's means. NGOs and active associations also offer some ad-hoc training programs, but information about the programs is not well-circulated and the content does not always match women's needs. For instance, trainings targeting women often teach them pastry-making and tailoring, which limits the horizons for their economic engagement. In fact, women often need skills exceeding those on offer. For instance, younger women wanted trainings on communications and life skills. Entrepreneurs wanted to be trained on business skills, marketing, and social media. Moreover, training programs tend to be one-off events with little follow-up and coaching to make sure women practice the acquired skills in their daily lives.



I hired a woman as a tailor, and she always repeated the same patterns. I encouraged her to try new things, but she thought she couldn't do anything else, so I taught her how to look-up YouTube videos. Now, when I go to the workshop, she eagerly shows me her new designs. Women do not lack skills; they lack opportunities to learn.

Abir, artisan in the Medina



KEY AREAS FOR INTERVENTIONS

- › Equality in the workplace: parity measures in the private sector; access to childcare support
- › Networking opportunities; women professional development platforms; training
- › Support opportunities: women entrepreneurship support; facilitated financing; networking



© Red Crescent Medina

Faten spent her adolescence and youth in the Medina. She enjoyed the neighborhood as a place for work, leisure, and building social connections. She started her own workshop where she designed and tailored haute couture clothes, and worked alongside many Tunisian and non-Tunisian women. Faten stopped working later on and dedicated her time to her family. Today, she spends most of her time caring for her children, focusing on their education and wellbeing. She would like them to have spaces to play and take part in activities. Unfortunately, these spaces are difficult to find within the Medina.

"I was happy when I started living in Medina. It was close to everything, music schools, the theatre, and the markets. I sent my kids to do many activities such as music classes and clubs. Now I am not very comfortable, I feel it is not safe, as things have changed. We hear a lot of stories about drugs and harassment which make being on the streets uncomfortable, especially for children."

Faten, a resident of the Medina since 1970

SEC. 3

RECOMMENDATIONS

The implementation of the following recommendations is not entirely included within the scope of the Femmedina Programme and would require the engagement of multiple stakeholders such as public authorities and institutions, civil society organizations, as well as other organizations.

A few spatial interventions presented in the next section will be selected and adapted by the municipality of Tunis in the next phase of the project, where all purchases of materials and equipment will be done by the Cities Alliance within the Femmedina Programme while the installation will be handled by the municipality.




POLICY AND PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on the findings presented previously, this section explores and recommends potential interventions that respond to the key challenges facing women in the Medina. Moreover, these recommendations also come as a result of the multiple meetings and working sessions where women and key actors expressed recurrent recommendations which are included as well in the below set.

The multiple issues and challenges faced by women in Medina are rarely ones that can be dealt with through stand-alone or short-term interventions. For this reason, the recommendations below are categorized based on four criteria:

- › **Type of intervention:**
 - **Policy Interventions:** include interventions that require policy (national or local level) or regulatory changes and reforms. Policy interventions looks at a larger picture tackling economic, social, cultural, and spatial policies.
 - **Programmatic Interventions:** include suggestions for programs, activities and events that could be implemented by local authorities, NGOs, and other institutions individually or through partnerships.
 - **Spatial and urban Interventions:** include physical interventions in particular locations responding to the needs and interest of women in the Medina. These interventions are presented in detail in the next section "*Spatial interventions*"

- › **Thematic areas:** Economic, Political and Institutional, Social, and Cultural participation

- › **Timeframe for implementation:**
 - short  (less than 2 years),
 - medium  (3 to 5 years), or
 - long term  (more than 5 years)

- › **Approach to intervention:** the three approaches used in presenting the interventions are described as follows:



Impose

Interventions suggesting imposed measures whether through policy, regulations or practices that would protect women and limit the consequences of systemic challenges on their ability to participate



Incentivize

Interventions suggesting affirmative actions and incentives to provide women with equal opportunities to effectively participate at the different levels



Implement

Physical or programmatic interventions that provide women with the needed capabilities, spaces, and tools to better engage and participate

ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

POLICY



Issuing the necessary decrees for the implementation of the law on the Economie Sociale et Solidaire would provide an opportunity for women entrepreneurs to develop their businesses while driving positive change within their communities

While the law on social enterprises has been issued, it has not been implemented yet, so women entrepreneurs cannot benefit from the legally mandated support.



Extending parental leaves, making them equal in length for mothers and fathers, allocating breastfeeding time for new mothers, and introducing flexibility to allow for both parents to care for their newborn would contribute to alleviating the pressures of motherhood on women's careers.

Legal discrimination against women in the workplace persists with unequal maternity and paternity leaves. Breastfeeding breaks are short, and difficult to obtain.



Adopting a quota for women-led projects in public procurement would help redress some of the systemic injustices facing women in business.

Public procurement processes often favor men's businesses.

PROGRAMMATIC



Establishing professional committees for women across different professions.

Employed women need the support of other women to challenge systemic barriers to their professional development, and to advocate for gender-sensitive workplace policies and practices in the public and private sectors.



Facilitating the establishment of partnerships between universities and women entrepreneurs would allow for an exchange of know-how between young students with skills and little work experience, and entrepreneurs in need for particular competencies, such as marketing, digital skills, and design.

Students find little opportunities for internships to build their professional credentials, and entrepreneurs are in need for professional services that they cannot afford.



Offering adequate support services to women entrepreneurs, such as coaching, feasibility studies, and market linkages would help women initiate and grow their business ventures in the face of systemic barriers.

Women entrepreneurs do not find business support services targeting their needs.



Establishing a training center that addresses women's capacity building needs for economic participation would improve women's prospects. Training programs could address:

- › technical skills, such as ceramics, embroidery, making sweets, and beauty services,
- › soft and life skills such communications, interviews, CV writing, and digital skills,
- › and entrepreneurship business skills such as marketing, using social media, accounting, and applying for grants and microfinance loans.

Women employees and entrepreneurs have little opportunities to develop their skills and enhance their economic engagement.



Allocating a budget for the support of women entrepreneurs in the form of grants or micro-loans would help women start new entrepreneurial ventures and develop their existing businesses.

Women entrepreneurs often face many hurdles in growing their businesses, especially given the limited availability of financing opportunities.



Mainstreaming municipal kindergartens offering reduced rates and on-site childcare services for employees would help dismantle some barriers to mothers' professional development.

Motherhood often sets back women's careers, given that they receive little childcare support.



Establishing a legal facility and support services for women to identify, document, and report discrimination in employment and workplace harassment, and receive the necessary psychological support would help create a culture of accountability in employment and reduce discrimination incidents on the long-term.

Women often struggle with discrimination in employment and even suffer from workplace harassment.



Establishing spaces for women to sell their products and services and occupy a more visible position in the market would help them increase their profits and develop their business skills. This could be done through:

- › Subsidizing women entrepreneur's rental of exhibition spaces both inside and outside of the Medina,
- › Dedicating spaces in the Medina for women's businesses to sell their products and services,
- › Allocating a quota for women's businesses in municipal markets.

Women face many barriers to marketing and selling their own products, which limits their ability to profit from their own economic production activities.



Mapping out women's businesses in the Medina and facilitating the establishment of a women business owners alliance would highlight women's economic contributions and help them advocate for their rights and develop their business networks.

Women do not have the same opportunities for developing business linkages and building a customer base as men.



Sharing information about processes to operate formal businesses, and to access finance and business support services in a user-friendly way would encourage women to seek out public services.

Women are often intimidated by cumbersome bureaucratic processes in their interactions with public institutions.

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

POLICY



Reviewing social assistance schemes to decenter the nuclear family as the basis for assistance would lead to programs that better serve families headed by divorced women and single mothers.

Current social assistance schemes are designed to fit the needs of a family having two parents. They do not account for the specific needs of single women and non-traditional families.

PROGRAMMATIC



Establishing neighborhood groups working towards maintaining security in the Medina and supporting these initiatives by building individuals' and institutional capacities would improve women's safety and reinforce accountability in the streets.

Women often do not trust the police units in maintaining their safety, especially that the deployment of police members cannot cover all unsafe streets in the Medina, particularly at night.



Delivering training to the police units in the Medina to address issues related to women's security, and instituting a hotline at the municipality in coordination with the Ministry of Women and Family to deal with cases of gender-based violence and sexual harassment would increase women's sense of safety and counter the culture of impunity.

Women do not feel that police members are concerned about their security, and they do not refer to them in the cases where they experience violence.



Improving lighting in the Medina's streets and increasing the coverage of security cameras would improve women's sense of safety, especially during the night.

Women rarely leave their houses after sunset given their security concerns. They feel safer in well-lit areas, and in streets that are covered by security cameras.



Cleaning the Medina's streets, installing garbage bins, and setting a fixed schedule for trash pick-up would encourage women to use the urban space and spend time in it.

Women often think of public spaces as dirty and unsanitary. They often feel reluctant towards spending time outside and tend to prefer enclosed spaces.



Installing public toilets managed by the neighborhood's women would provide the women with a source of income and allow those visiting the Medina to stay longer in the neighborhood.

Women visiting the Medina do not find any public toilets, so they have to cut their shopping trips or cultural visits short. Moreover, municipality-run public toilets have a history of being badly maintained.



Establishing a free and safe public space for middle and high school girls to spend time during their daily school break would maintain girls' safety and provide them with a space to socialize and study together

Girls often spend their school break walking in the Medina's streets as they have no safe and enjoyable spaces to spend their time in.

CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

POLICY



Introducing governance models for cultural centers, public libraries, and municipal buildings that rely on partnerships between public institutions and the local community would help activate those spaces and promote the communal sense of ownership of these institutions.

While cultural centers and public libraries abound in the Medina, residents rarely know of them as they host events sporadically and often host visitors from outside the neighborhood.



Extending opening hours of cultural centers and public libraries in the Medina for women to use them in the afternoon and on weekends would provide spaces for women to be more engaged in social and cultural activities and take more initiatives to organize events.

Women do not find spaces to meet and organize cultural activities, as public spaces are men dominated and not equipped, and public centers close down early in the day and during weekends.



Publishing the Ministry of Culture's budgets on support offered to artists and artisans, sharing information about available resources and funds, and allocating a quota of provided support to women artists and artisans would activate women's role in the cultural sector and build their trust in the Ministry's programs.

Women artists and artisans do not know of the support that is available to them, or do not trust the Ministry's means of distributing grants.

PROGRAMMATIC



(1) Equipping the Medina's cultural centers, public libraries, and open spaces, and (2) organizing activities and events (such as reading groups, painting sessions, cinema clubs, thematic discussions, public lectures, dance classes, and sexual education awareness sessions) on a regular basis would enhance women's cultural participation and provide them with opportunities to meet other women and strengthen social bonds within their neighborhoods.

Women find few opportunities to meet other women and to participate in cultural events, which are only organized on an irregular basis.



Establishing a collective network of women artists and artisans to collaborate together and organize training and events would enhance these women's networks and support their contribution to the Medina's cultural life.

While men have master artisan collectives, women are left out of major networks, and they rarely find support or opportunities to collaborate with other artisans and artists.



Instituting a cultural trail that highlights women's historical participation in the Medina, as well as success stories of influential women and their current economic, social, cultural, and political participation in the city's life would valorize the neighborhood's women contributions and inspire a younger generation of girls and young women to follow suit.

Women's participation in the Medina often remains hidden behind closed doors with little publicization of success stories.



Installing an outdoor gym for women and scheduling sports classes and walking circuits would allow women to do sports, socialize with other women, and develop a sense of ownership of the urban space.

Women do not have any safe recreational open spaces where they can exercise with other women, or with their children.



(1) **Installing bulletin boards around the Medina to regularly inform residents of training programs, public debates, and cultural events, and (2) setting-up a social media account publishing the same information** would help convey announcements to a large section of women residents who are not aware of activities being implemented.

Women rarely have information about programs and events happening in the Medina. While older women rarely have smartphones, younger ones rely on digital media to access information, hence the importance of using both digital and traditional means of communication.



(1) **Organizing street festivals and competitions (2) and dedicating specific locations to exhibit women's art and culinary production and offer them economic opportunities to market their products** would highlight women's skills, provide with economic opportunities, and valorize their contribution to cultural life in the city

Women's cultural and culinary contributions are often undervalued. Women also have limited opportunities to market their products and share them with the public.

POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL PARTICIPATION

POLICY



Implementing gender-sensitive budgeting in the municipality and imposing a quota for women to participate in approving municipal budgets would bolster women's participation in local governance.

Women rarely participate in legally mandated municipal public consultation and budget approvals.

PROGRAMMATIC



Instituting women-friendly communication channels between citizens and elected officials such as municipal council members, and targeting women in the Medina to participate in discussions about public affairs would encourage women's political participation, help convey their concerns to officials, and contribute to rebuilding their trust in public authorities.

Women are often uninterested in public affairs as they do not find spaces to influence decision-making. They also distrust public authorities and think that their concerns remain unaccounted for.



(1) **Organizing citizen watch groups for women to visit public institutions and control the quality of offered services, (2) establishing timely and effective complaint mechanisms in those institutions as stipulated in the Local Authorities Code of 2018, (3) and training public institutions to effectively operate those mechanisms** would contribute to adjusting public services to meet citizens' needs, and be more gender sensitive.

Public services and public servants rarely accommodate for women's needs, as communication tends to be one-way, without any room for feedback.



Delivering trainings and sharing information about mechanisms for accessing information and participating in local and municipal decision-making would introduce women to their legal rights and enhance their participation in local governance.

Even though the legal framework allows all citizens to access information and participate in decision-making, the municipality is perceived by many women as scarcely accessible.



Training public officials, including municipal council members on transparency, participation, and community engagement would help them foster a relationship of trust with women in their constituency.

Women feel disconnected from local authorities and from officials who represent them. While the legal framework on transparency and participation is well-developed, the implementation of legally mandated processes is not gender-sensitive and often does not account for women's specific needs.



Activating the welcome desk at the entrance of public institutions (such as the municipality, the business registry, and cultural centers) and training welcome staff on sharing information, engaging citizens, and dealing with complaints would encourage the Medina's women to visit those institutions and seek out their services.

Women feel intimidated by public institutions, and often do not have any information about available services, and means of requesting them. Additionally, the attitude of doormen in public institutions such as public libraries and cultural centers is not welcoming towards visitors, which prevents women from using those spaces.



Training local civil society organizations of the Medina on advocacy, and gender issues would promote women's participation in local governance and public affairs.

Women often volunteer in civil society organizations to serve their communities, but rarely to participate in advocacy activities.



Organizing a monthly meet-up and thematic discussion at the municipality for women in the Medina to debate on public matters would encourage women to participate in politics and to develop a sense of ownership of public institutions.

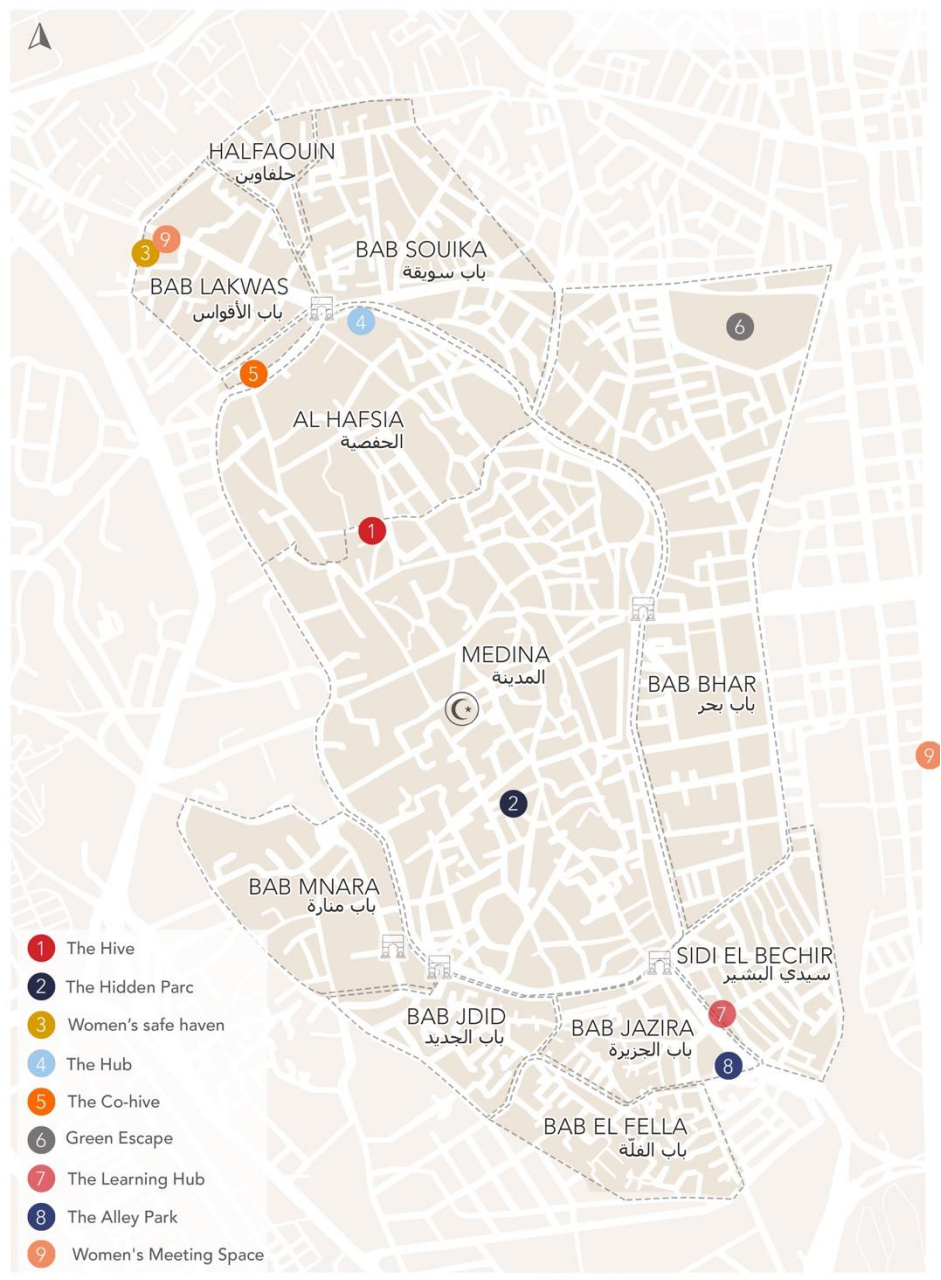
Women do not have spaces to discuss their problems. They often feel disenchanting by politics, and intimidated by public institutions.

SPATIAL INTERVENTIONS

The assessment findings and the above recommendations informed the design of several spatial interventions around the 4 districts, Medina Centrale, Bab Souika, Sidi el Bechir, and Bab Bhar. The following section introduces the neighborhoods, through a zoom-in describing the opportunities and obstacles for women's effective participation at the social, economic, political, and cultural levels. It also proposes a number of spatial interventions around the four neighborhoods. These are:

1. 'The Hive' in the Hafsia
2. 'The Hidden Park' in Tourbet el Bey
3. 'A Women's Safe Haven' in Bab Souika
4. 'The Hub' in Place Bab Souika
5. 'The Co-Hive' in Bab Souika
6. 'The Green Escape' in the Parc du Passage in Bab Bhar
7. 'The Learning Hub' in Sidi el Bechir,
8. 'The Alley Park' in Sidi el Bechir,
9. "Women's Meeting Spaces" in Bab Bhar and Bab Souika,
10. A cultural heritage trail highlighting the role of women in the Medina.

The map shows the locations of these interventions, and the following sections highlight the rationale behind each spatial intervention, the suggested plan and design, the needed resources, and the programmatic interventions to activate the spaces.



MEDINA CENTRALE

The Medina Centrale constitutes the heart of the Medina where the main services, the famous souks, and the cultural centers are located. The district is highly affected by patterns of migration, whereby the neighborhood's residents leave it upon achieving social mobility, to be replaced by incoming rural migrants. Moreover, projects of rehabilitation and reconstruction of the Hafsia district and Pasha street have improved housing conditions and revalued the neighborhood, but also catalyzed gentrification.⁴⁶

Demographics and human capital

The Medina Centrale constitutes the smallest division of Tunis, with an area of 1,501 Km² and an estimated population of 21,400. The urban decay of many housing units is leading to the decline of the resident population.⁴⁷ The district has a high poverty rate at 6.6% compared to an average of 4.6% in the capital city.⁴⁸ It also has high rates of illiteracy, which reached 18.7% for women and 9.15% for men in 2014.⁴⁹

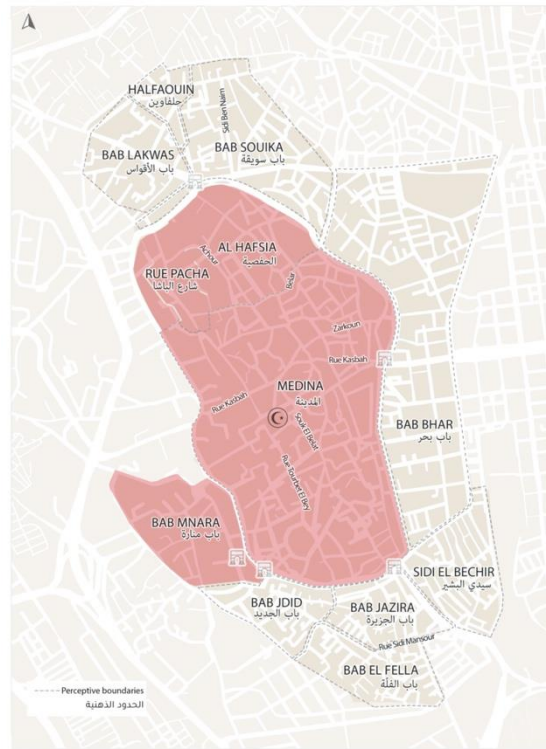
Economic opportunities

The Medina Centrale offers a myriad of economic opportunities to its residents, as it hosts famous souks that are visited by local residents, foreigners, and tourists, as well as many cultural and touristic activities. However, the number of registered businesses in the private sector has decreased by 11.4% from 2009 to 2019, showing that a state of economic recession has hit the district.⁵⁰

Moreover, the women and men do not have the same economic opportunities in the Medina Centrale, as women's unemployment rate is twice as high as that of men, and only 32.83% of the district's women are economically active.⁵¹ Additionally, women's productive labor often remains unaccounted for as they tend to help their husband in artisan work from home, while men sell the merchandise in the souks.

Women in the city

The Medina Centrale is regularly visited by women who want to access nearby services, go shopping in the souks, and attend cultural events and social activities. The neighborhood's local women are not as keen to spend time in public spaces, as they consider them to be overcrowded by men. Despite new mixed cafés opening around Rue Pacha, women from the district think that these are mostly touristic and unaffordable to them. The neighborhood's women prefer to meet in cafés outside the Medina. They would rather meet other women while doing activities, as they requested better access to cultural activities, training venues, sports centers, and open green spaces.



⁴⁶ Stambouli, F. (1996). Tunis city in transition. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/095624789600800117>

⁴⁷ TUNIS: A travers le Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat 2014. (2014). Retrieved from http://www.ins.tn/sites/default/files/1_TUNIS-1_0.pdf

⁴⁸ National Office of Statistics and World Bank (2020), Carte de la pauvreté en Tunisie

⁴⁹ TUNIS: A travers le Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat 2014. (2014). Retrieved from http://www.ins.tn/sites/default/files/1_TUNIS-1_0.pdf

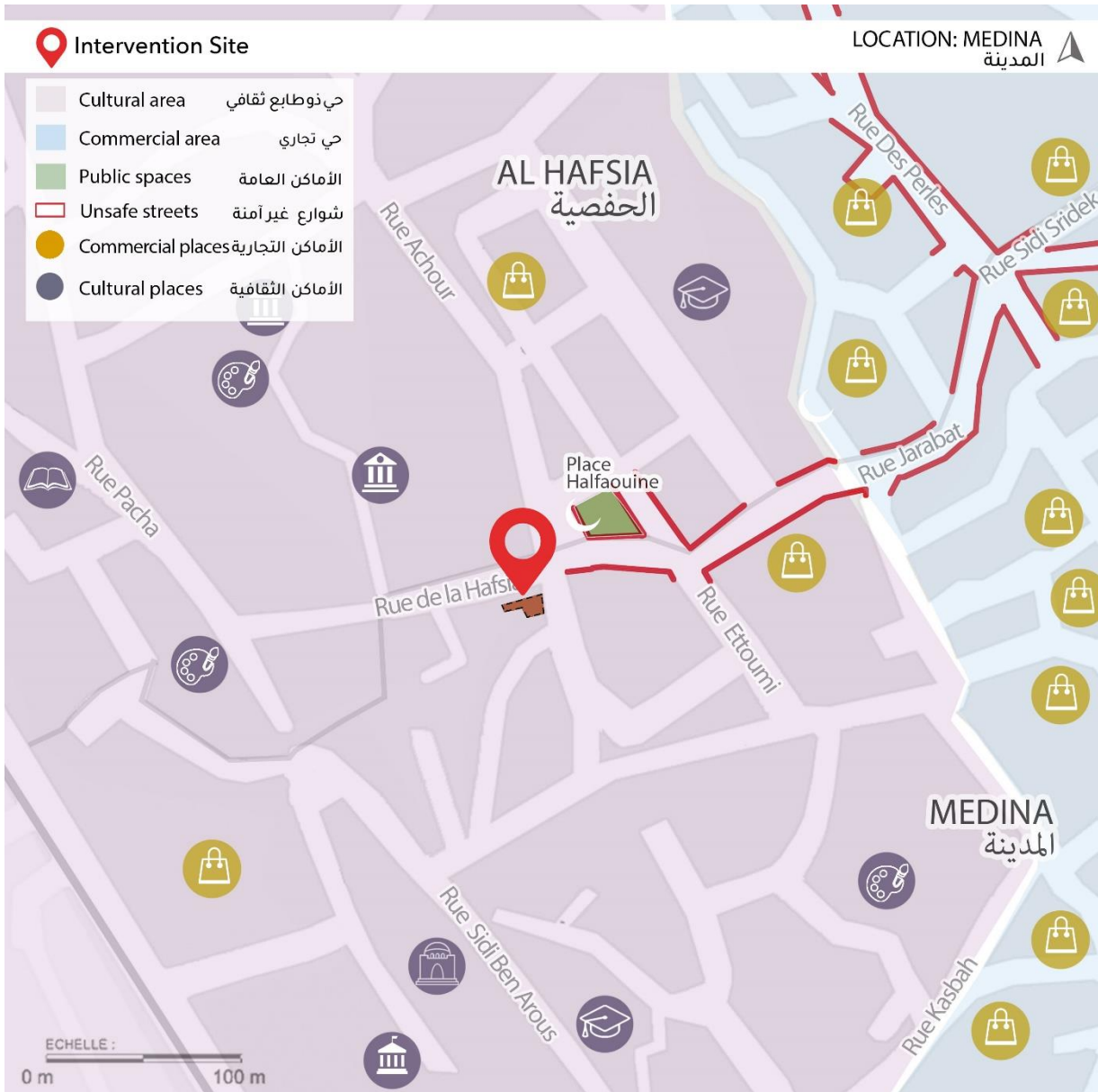
⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Ibid

Intervention 1 - The Hive

Intervention site

The intervention site is on the side-road off Rue de la Hafsia that links Rue Pacha to the Hafsia neighborhood. The surrounding area is considered as a cultural quarter since it hosts many cultural centers and institutions such as Dar Larsam, the Kheireddine palace, and the Bir El Hajjar cultural center. Moreover, the intervention location is close to the Hafsia market that welcomes shoppers from all of the city of Tunis. Finally, the site is close to several schools, including a middle-school in Hafsia, and a high-school on rue Pacha. Women consider the neighborhood where the intervention site is located to be safe. Some even confirmed feeling comfortable walking around the area during the night given that the Rue de la Hafsia street is well-lit and wide. The site is enclosed within a few residential buildings and is close to commercial and cultural areas which makes it accessible to both residents of the area, and outside visitors. The land is owned by the municipality, and the site is currently used as a parking lot.



User target groups

- › Primary target group: Girls, teenagers and young adults residing in the neighborhood, to be used for recreational activities
- › Secondary target group: Students looking for a place to meet or study during the school break, or after school.
- › Tertiary target group: Visitors of the Hafsia market and nearby cultural center, particularly women who need a comfortable place to rest.

Rationale

Public spaces for women in the Medina are rare given the stigma and social pressure associated with being present in public space. The site itself is located in a relatively secluded street still within reach to residential, commercial, and cultural areas. This intervention aims to create a work and leisure hub for young women to have their own space to work, study, and relax in a quiet environment away from the existing cafés dominated by men.



Enabling the space to host women

The intervention aims to conceive a space that encourages young women to spend time in a public space, organize cultural activities, study during the school break, or take a rest while shopping in the Hafsia market. The choice of this space is mainly based on its location, given its centrality, and the level of safety that women enjoy within it.

The proposed intervention will activate this space to serve women through the following:

- › A recreational garden with vegetation, trees, and shading to and create a calm ambiance for women to relax and socialize
- › A working space that provides women a flexible area to work outdoors and to meet for cultural activities.
- › A focus space that allows women a more secluded area to study, learn, and work in a quiet space.
- › Vending area that gives women from the neighborhood opportunities to sell their homemade food (or coffee), and women visiting the Hafsia market to rest in the neighborhood

Needed resources:

- › Seating (couches or chairs), tables and shading devices (pergolas/fabric stretched)
- › Vegetation (vertical gardens, flowerpots and trees that act as buffers between zones)
- › Murals, swings (at the entrance of the site), equipment for women to sell their products
- › Appropriate light fixtures (hanging / fixed)
- › Garbage bins

Programmatic interventions

To ensure a proper and convenient use by women, the space will also be activated through the following programmatic interventions which will be conducted by the municipality, governmental and non-governmental organizations and other entities working along the same agenda of women empowerment:

- › Organize a neighborhood women group/collective to be responsible for running this public space with the support and needed resources from the municipality, and to ensure the safety of the space.
- › Conduct frequent temporary markets that promote women-owned businesses, handcrafts and products
- › Conduct cultural events for women through nearby cultural institutions such as art exhibits, concerts, book clubs, and painting lessons in the location
- › Restrict vendors in the space to women, to encourage women to visit and limit its appropriation by men in the neighborhood.
- › Conduct women-related activities sponsored or organized by the municipality in the space whenever possible to encourage women to visit and appropriate it in different way.



Before



After



Before



After

Intervention 2 - The Hidden Park

Intervention site

The intervention site is in an economically vibrant neighborhood with multiple cultural attractions. The site is located near Rue Tresor and Rue Tourbet el Bey, which is a key road connecting the North to the Medina Centrale to its South. Despite its proximity to lively souks during the day, this site becomes totally vacant during the night making it an unsafe place from women.

Women perceive the Tourbet el Bey neighborhood to be relatively unsafe given the low density of pedestrian movement in its streets. Nonetheless, the intervention site's proximity to nearby markets results in passers-by often being around. The site is triangular with a central triangular garden. Currently cars park on the sides of this site blocking/hindering easy access and sight of this space.

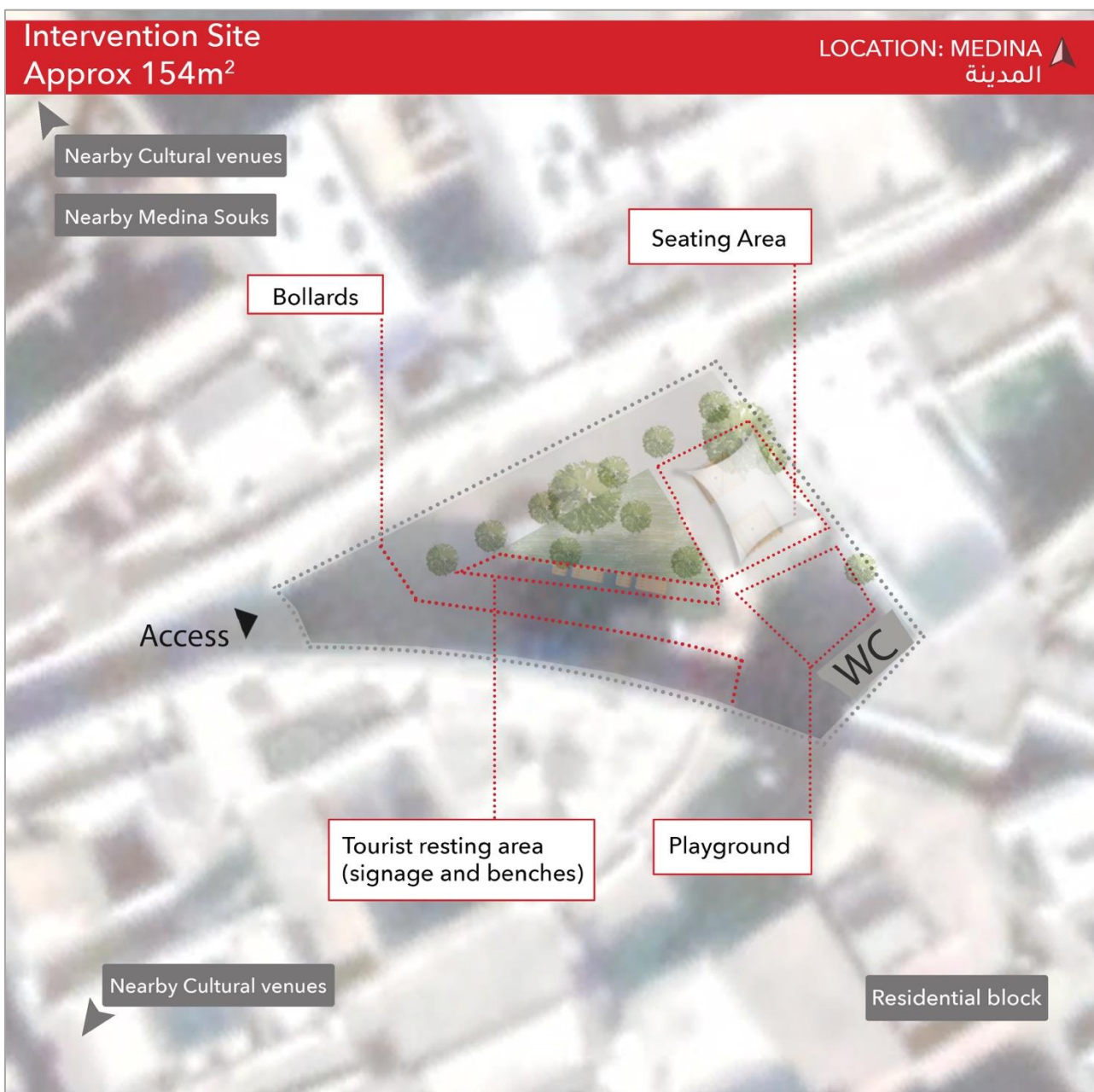


User target groups

- › Primary target group: Temporary visitors and passers-by
- › Secondary target group: Women and children from nearby neighborhoods

Rationale

This micro green space is an available resource open to everyone in the medina. However, it is not used as often by people, due to its hidden location and lack of furniture. The proposed intervention encourages women to be a part of this space through activities that cater to them and their families. It also serves tourists, as it provides a resting area and a green spot for recreational activities. This intervention is in line with the proposed "cultural trail" intervention as it is one of the informative stops along this trail providing information and insights about the history of the Medina. This set of interventions on this site will activate it to become more welcoming for different user groups particularly women residing in the neighborhood.



Enabling the space to host women

The site itself is a small, enclosed space, along a pedestrian and cultural path, thus creating the perfect environment for a stop during a walk. The space will include a space for kids, thus encouraging women to use this space. Also, since the site is along the proposed trail (cf. Intervention 10 - Cultural Heritage Trail) display signs will inform users about the history of the region, in particular the stories of the women of the medina.

The proposed intervention will activate this space to serve women and tourists through the following:

- › A recreational garden with vegetation, trees, and shading to create a calm ambiance for women to relax and socialize
- › A seating area (4/5 urban benches) serving as a resting space for tourists during their tour of the city
- › Signs that tell the story of the women of the medina
- › A children's playgrounds (simple items)
- › A paved pedestrian path (to limit car parking)
- › Floor marking and bollards (space reserved for pedestrians that prevent cars from entering the space)
- › Install lighting on the walls
- › Free and limited wifi option to be used by passersby and residents of the neighborhood

Needed resources:

- › **Urban furniture:** fixed tables and benches, shading devices (pergolas/fabric stretched), fixed playground equipment, and display stands
- › **Groundwork and signage:** vegetation (flowerpots and trees), floor paint and appropriate paving (kids' area), painted groundwork and signage (to define functions and guide tourists), announcement boards to create space to promote local activities and events
- › **Basics:** display signs, bins, bollards (along the site to prevent cars parking in the site), and appropriate light fixtures (hanging / fixed)

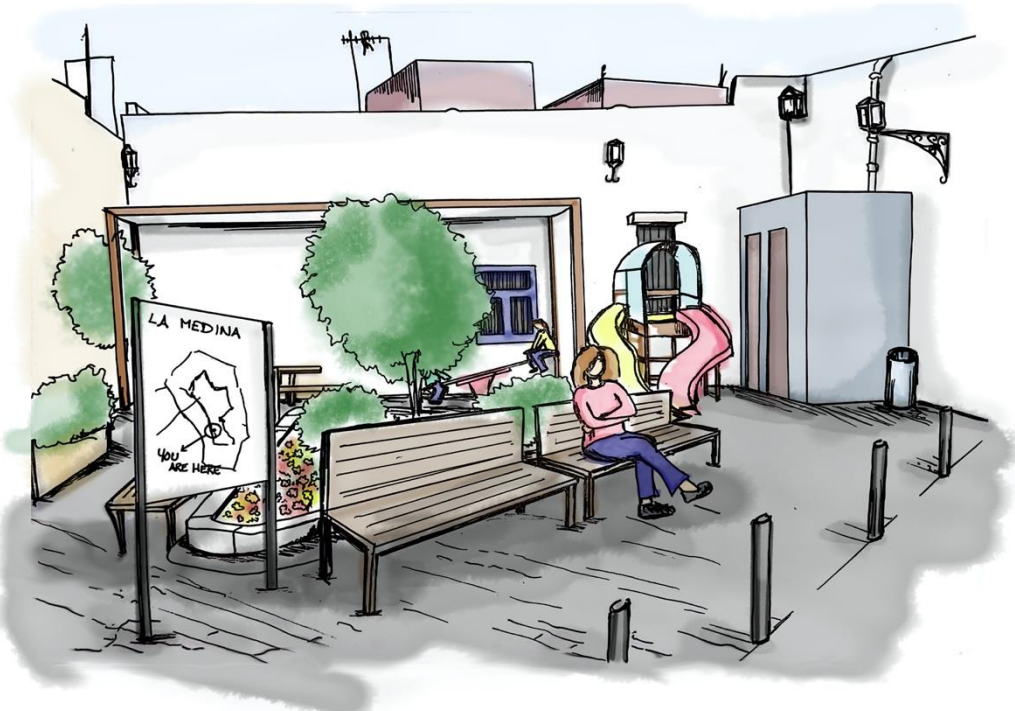
Programmatic interventions

The key programmatic intervention in this site is its inclusion in the cultural trail and making it a spot for temporary users to rest and get information about the Medina. This could be done through:

- › Listing the spot on any promotional material as a an "information spot"
- › Providing free WIFI which can be used as a reward system in return of promotional activity such as liking or sharing content and rating and reviewing services and place



Before



After

BAB SOUIKA

Once an iconic neighborhood for *Beldi* families living in the Medina of Tunis, Bab Souika no longer hosts many families from the capital's upper and upper middle classes. Patterns of migration have changed its demographics, as it increasingly hosted those migrating from other parts of Tunis. The neighborhood maintains nonetheless a distinctive character, as it hosts cultural activities especially during Ramadan.

Demographics and human capital

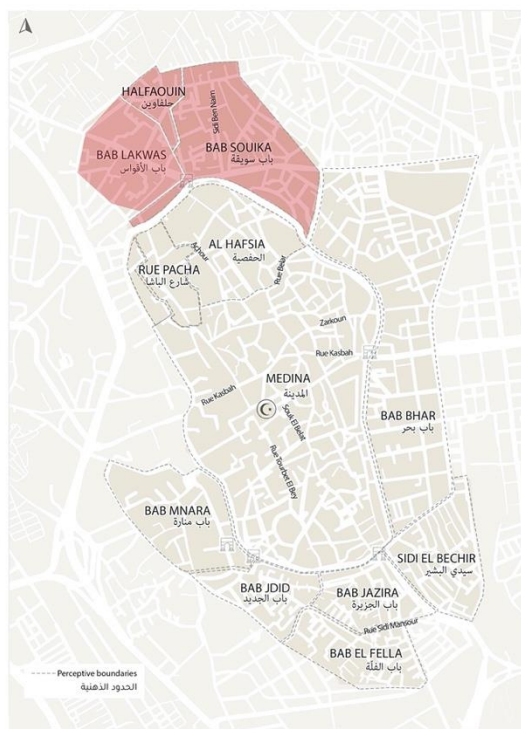
The National Census of 2014 estimated the population of Bab Souika at 29,185. It is notable that the neighborhood's population is declining, given its bad housing conditions and the high renovation costs. The neighborhood has the highest rate of school dropouts in Tunis, with 6.2% of students leaving their education at the primary or secondary level.⁵² Moreover, the illiteracy rate for women in the neighborhood is high at 18.67%, versus an average of 15.66% for the capital.⁵³

Economic opportunities

The neighborhood's role in connecting large sections of the capital to the administrative center of al Kasbah leads to heavy traffic across its streets. Bab Souika also hosts several commercial areas including the Halfaouin market for fresh produce which welcomes shoppers from all around the capital. Even though the neighborhood's commercial character offers entrepreneurial opportunities to its residents, indicators show a stagnation in its economic activity.⁵⁴ Economic participation for women still lags behind that of men, with only 34.93% of women being economically active, versus 64.61% of men⁵⁵

Women in the city

Women mostly use Bab Souika's public spaces to go somewhere or to shop. They rarely meet and spend time in the neighborhood's streets. While cafés are abundant in the neighborhood, these are mainly restricted to men. Women from the neighborhood expressed their desire to have green public spaces where they could spend time and take their kids out. Moreover, the neighborhood's women residents often indicated feeling safe in Bab Souika, but some feared security incidents such as thefts, drug dealing, and drug use in a few streets. These security concerns limited women's movement especially at night.



⁵² National Office of Statistics and World Bank (2020), Carte de la pauvreté en Tunisie

⁵³TUNIS: A travers le Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat 2014. (2014). Retrieved from http://www.ins.tn/sites/default/files/1_TUNIS-1_0.pdf

⁵⁴ Répertoire National des Entreprises (2019)

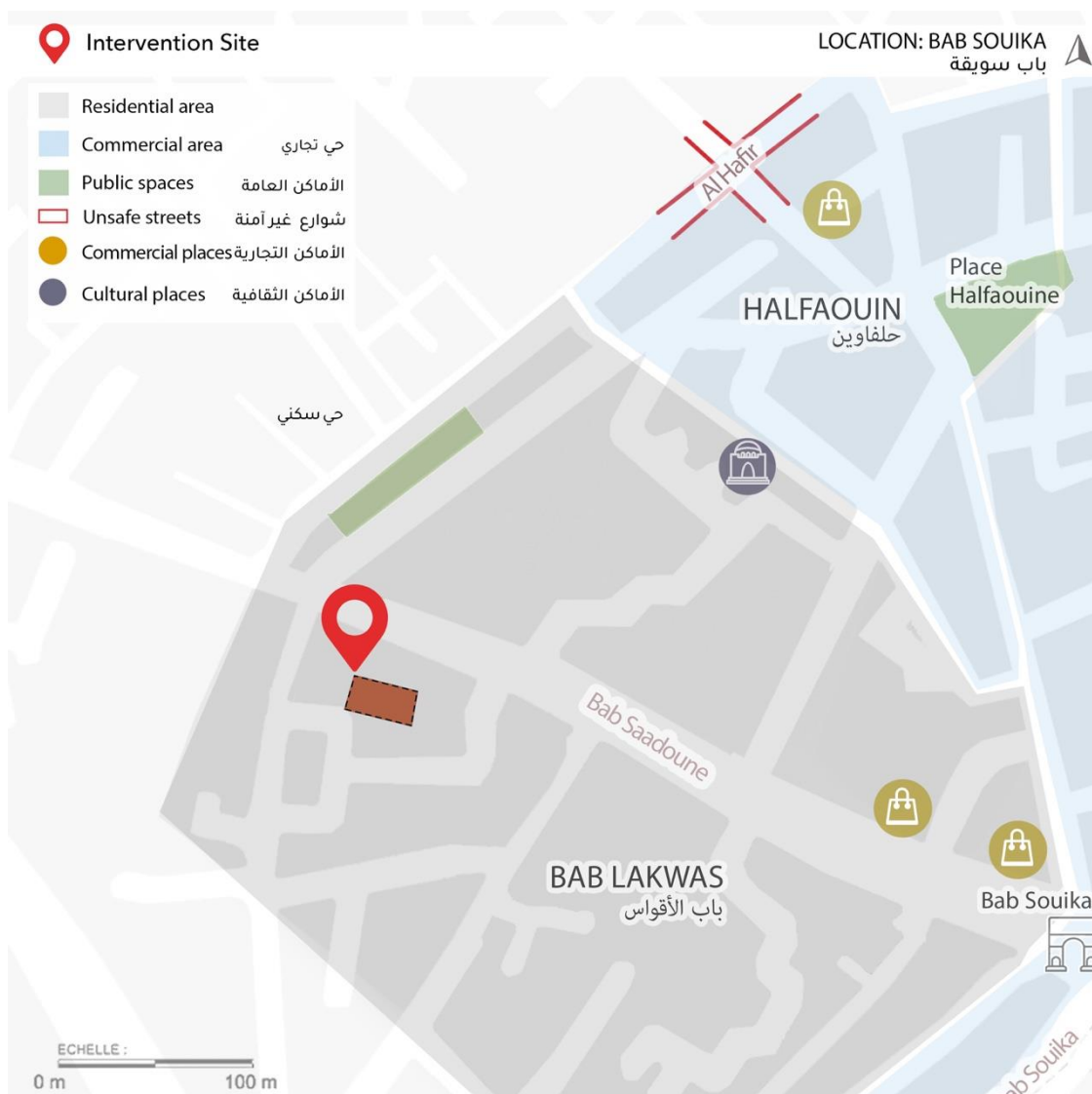
⁵⁵TUNIS: A travers le Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat 2014. (2014). Retrieved from http://www.ins.tn/sites/default/files/1_TUNIS-1_0.pdf

Intervention 3 – Women’s Safe Haven

Intervention site

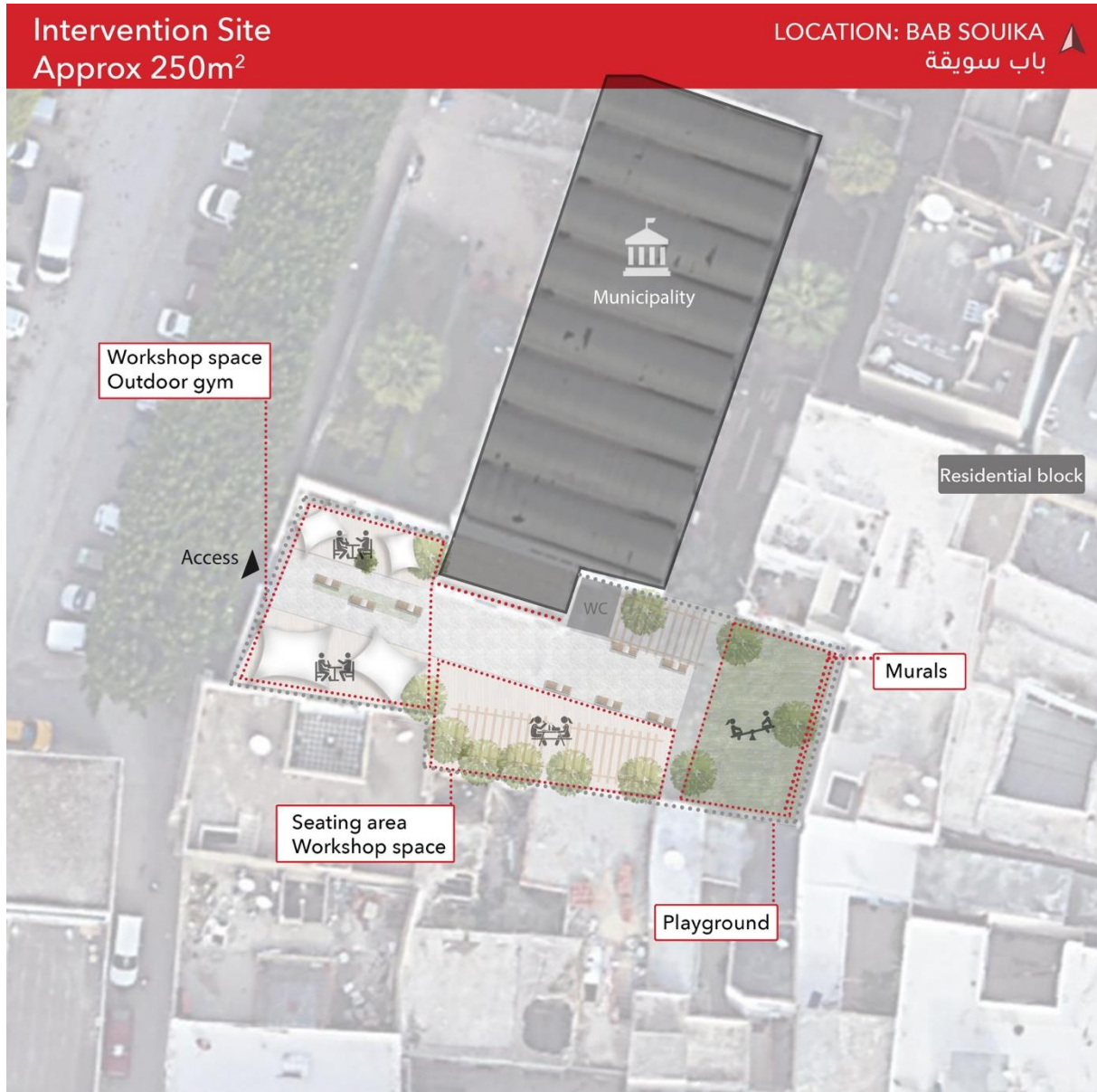
The intervention site is in a busy neighborhood, adjacent to the Rue Bab Saadoun, a major road connecting Tunis’ downtown to the Kasba neighborhood. Situated close to commercial and residential areas, the intervention site’s central location is apparent due to its contiguity to the Bab Souika municipal building. Women indicated that the neighborhood was fairly safe, as they did not fear walking on any of the nearby streets.

Located next to a municipal building, the intervention site is easily accessible to a large number of women who pass by the location on a daily basis, and it is also likely to be perceived as secure given its proximity to a governmental building. While being easily accessible, the site is not exposed to the public, as it’s on a municipality-owned land that is enclosed by different buildings, and opens-up to a secondary street with minimal vehicular traffic. This site is currently abandoned, and only accessible through the municipal building.



User target groups

- › Primary target group: Women and children residing in the neighborhood to be used for recreational activities
- › Secondary target group: Temporary visitor of the surrounding markets and passersby from the adjacent neighborhoods, particularly women shoppers who do not feel welcome in the neighborhood's men-dominated cafés.



Rationale

Public spaces in the Medina are generally perceived as spaces for men to meet and are avoided by women. Women fear the stigma and social pressure associated with being present in public space, and they often find these spaces to be unaccommodating of their needs, or unsafe. This intervention aims to create a women-only green open space that allows them to meet, do sports, work on projects together, and take their children out to play.

Enabling the space to host women

The intervention aims to conceive a space that encourages women to conduct multiple activities whether work-related or simply recreational within a safe space. Since women are the main caretakers of children, this space is expected to be children friendly.

The choice of this space is based on its location which can first, provide a safe and secure environment due to its proximity to the municipality, and second, be appropriated by women given its current status as an unused space. The proposed intervention will activate this space to serve women through the following:

- › The space is enclosed by walls and vegetation, and is to be accessible through a gate, ensuring further privacy and security.
- › The site will be divided into a covered/shaded flexible working area, a platformed shaded space for an outdoor sports or recreational activities, and outdoor gathering space, and a play area for their children.
- › The space will include a seating area, tables and shading devices (or even pergolas), vegetation, a gardening unit, fixed playground equipment, platform and outdoor gym equipment, murals along walls, a public restroom, and appropriate lighting for afternoon and early night hours.
- › An exhibition space for women and their products.

Needed resources:

- › Fixed benches, tables, and chairs
- › Gardening tools, playground,
- › Shading devices,
- › Exhibition tents
- › Lighting on walls
- › Green spots
- › Outdoor basic workout equipment
- › Garbage bins.

Programmatic interventions

To ensure a proper and convenient use by women, the space will also be activated through the following programmatic interventions which will be conducted by the municipality, governmental and non-governmental organizations and other entities working along the same agenda of women empowerment:

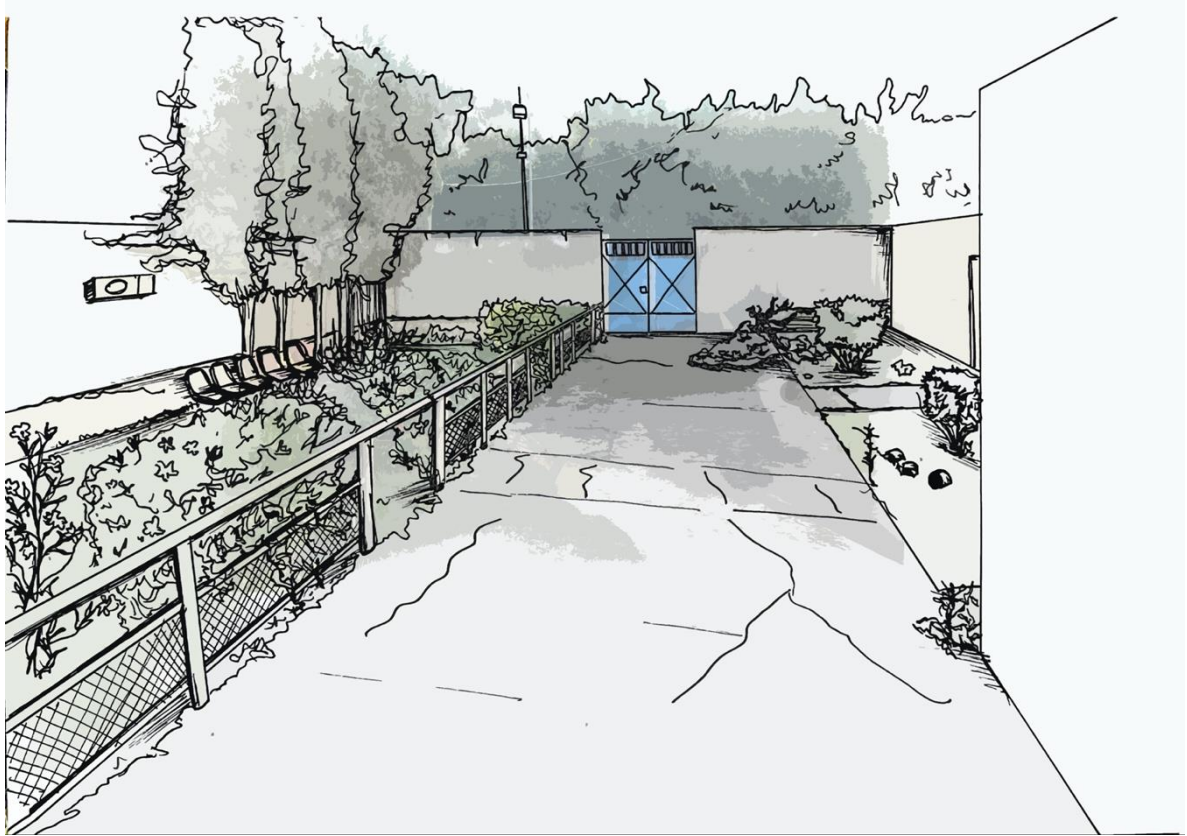
- › Invite NGOs providing vocational training and support to women to use the space as an outdoor workshop space (whenever possible).
- › Organize group fitness classes for women in the space.
- › Conduct frequent temporary markets that promote women-owned businesses, handcrafts, and products
- › Encourage schools in the surrounding to use the space for children's recreational activities, or after-school and extracurricular activities.
- › Encourage NGOs working with children to conduct their activities in this space
- › Restrict vendors in the space to women, to encourage women to visit and limit its appropriation by men in the neighborhood.
- › Ensure the safety of the space through having women inspectors/guards present in the space during the day
- › Limit opening hours to daytime and ensure that the space is locked during nighttime to restrict any unwanted activities (drug use, harassment) and thus avoid the space being stigmatized.



Before



After



Before



After

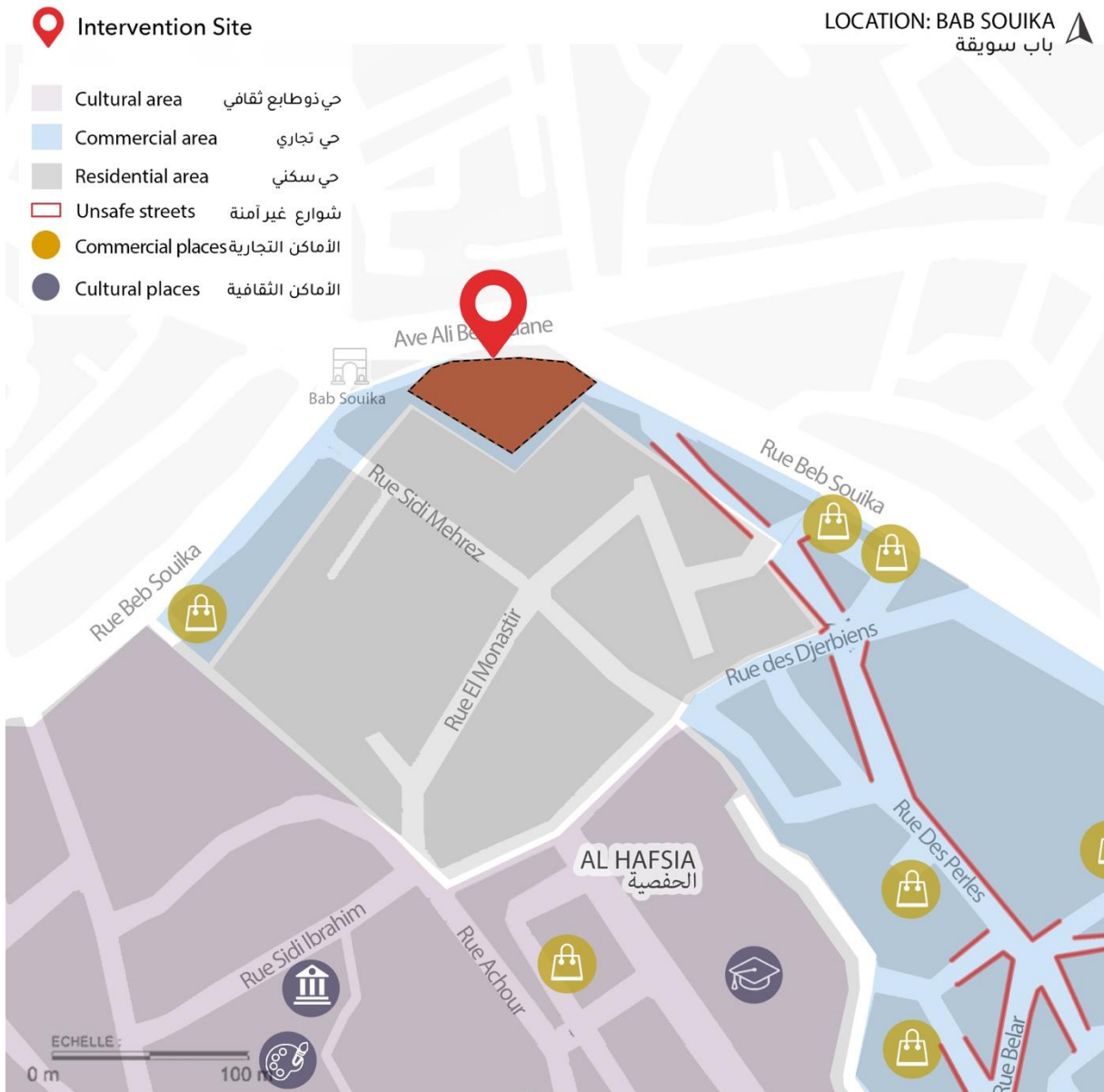
Intervention 4 - The Hub

Intervention site

The site is Place Bab Souika.

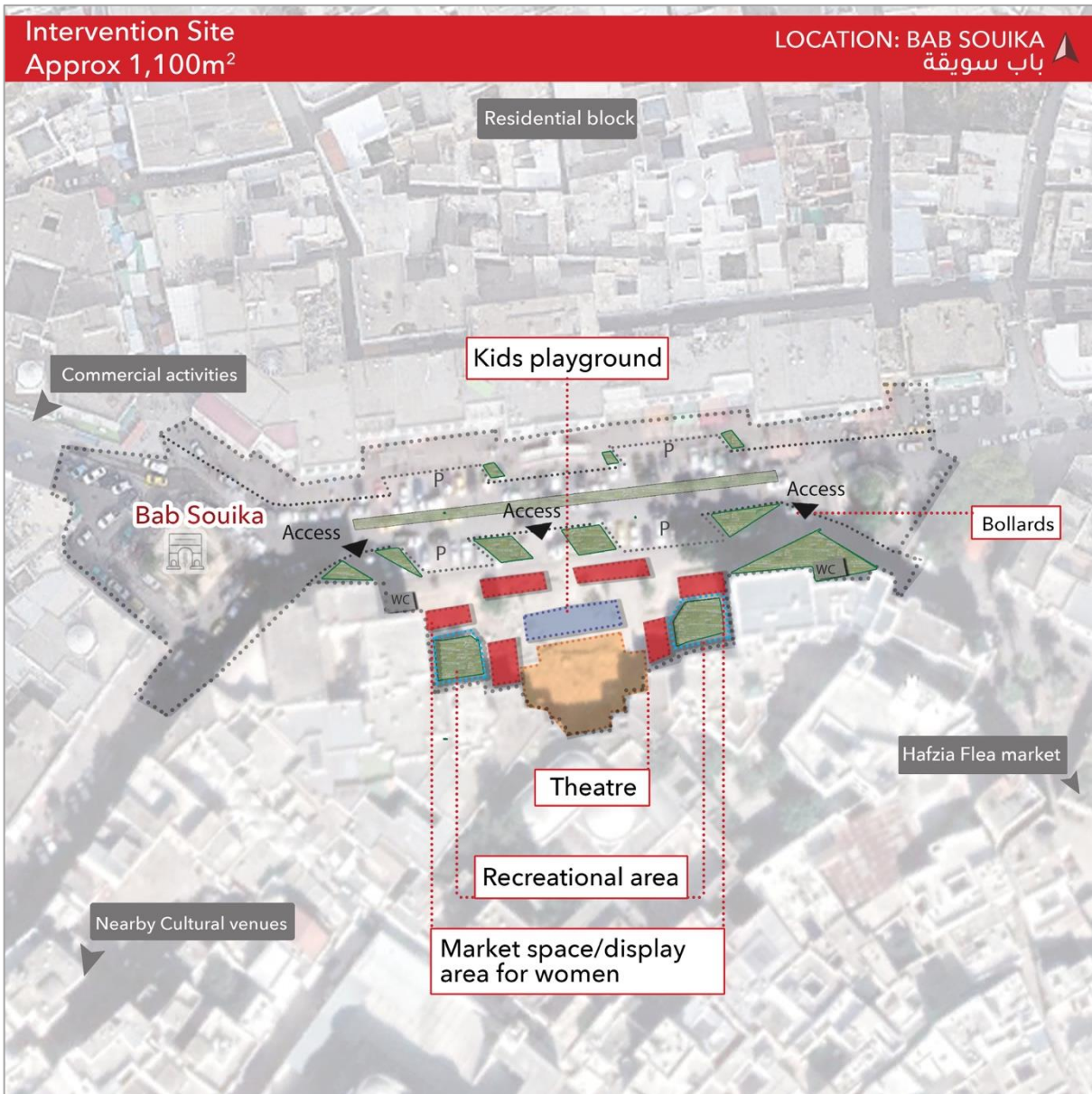
The site itself is located at the gate (Bab) of the medina, a once historic node acting as a public hub within reach of residential, commercial, and cultural streets. The municipality has recently renovated the site making it more conducive to be daily used by different groups. However, the suggested intervention complimented the efforts exerted by the municipality and focuses more on women as a key user group,

The intervention site is easily accessible to a large number of people who pass by the location on a daily basis, and it is also likely to be perceived as secure given the heavy flow of traffic and pedestrians passing by. It is located in proximity to a police station, to the flea market of Hafsia, the commercial streets of Bab Souika, and the cultural scene from the Rue Pacha area.



User target groups

- › Primary target group: Everyone, the space is used as a family hub for women and children from all neighborhoods for recreational and commercial activities.
- › Secondary target group: Temporary visitors and passersby (tourists) from the adjacent neighborhoods.



Rationale

Public spaces for women in the Medina are rare given the stigma and social pressure associated with being present in public space, as they are perceived as spaces for men. This intervention aims to create a more inclusive space for women, accommodating their needs in order to meet, display and sell their work, and socialize in an area that usually is dominated by men. The site is currently being renovated to include an outdoor theatre, thus amplifying its cultural character. The proposed intervention encourages women to contribute to the economic, social, and cultural life in the city through activities that cater to them and their families.

Enabling the space to host women

The intervention aims to transform the space into one that empowers women through an artisanal market dedicated to displaying their work. This intervention could complement the role of Intervention 7 – Learning Hub where women can exhibit their work produced within the workshops. It conceives a space that encourages women to conduct multiple activities whether work-related or simply recreational within a safe space. Since women are the main caretakers of children, this space is expected to be children friendly. The choice of this space is mainly based on its central location and its cultural impact. The area could act as a tourist destination, as part of the trail (cf. Intervention 10 - Cultural Heritage Trail) and this would further put women's work on display not just on a local level.

The proposed intervention will activate this space to serve women through the following:

- › Bollards to define the space's edge and limit parking to prevent cars from parking on the site.
- › A street median that divides the street into two-ways to slow traffic down and make the area safer for pedestrians.
- › A shaded market space/ display area for women to show their handmade and homemade artisanal work and food, especially those who have been training in the Learning Hub (see intervention below).
- › A children playground buffered by the markets to protect children from the street
- › Seating areas between the markets for women to gather, socialize, and rest after shopping while still able to monitor their children in the playground
- › Vegetation and trees to create shaded spaces and bound the area's limits
- › Public restrooms and vending area near the theatre area
- › Flexible infrastructure for the theatre performances (props, lighting, etc.)
- › Appropriate lighting, bins, signage, and display for tourists to learn more about the area (could be through QR codes painted on the ground)

Needed resources:

- › **Urban furniture:** flexible tables and benches, shading devices (pergolas/fabric stretched), fixed playground equipment, and display stands
- › **Groundwork and signage:** vegetation (flowerpots and trees), floor paint and appropriate paving (kids' area), painted groundwork and signage (to define functions and guide tourists)
- › **Basics:** public restrooms, display panels, bins, and equipment (for food vending or for exhibitions and events), speakers, bollards (along the site to prevent cars parking in the site) and appropriate light fixtures (hanging / fixed).



Before



After

Programmatic interventions

To ensure a proper and convenient use by women, the space will also be activated through the following programmatic interventions which will be conducted by the municipality, governmental and non-governmental organizations and other entities working along the same agenda of women empowerment:

- › Organize temporary markets that promote women-owned businesses, handcrafts, and products. Restrict vendors in the space to women, to encourage women to visit and limit its appropriation by men.
- › Connect this space to the Learning Hub, a training center in Sidi el Bechir
- › Include this space as one of the attractions during the Medina's festivals where women from the neighborhood can exhibit their products, art and other work.
- › Organize cultural and recreational events on the site (movie nights, theater, dance shows, fairs, flower markets)



Before



After

Intervention 5 - The Co-Hive

Intervention site

The site is located at the intersection of the cultural quarter of 'Hafsia' and the residential area 'Bab Lakwas'. It is along 'Rue Bab Souika' and near 'Rue Pacha', which are major roads in the Medina.

The site is a small rectangular park that already includes benches and vegetations. Yet, the site is not being used due to the lack of gates or closure.

User target groups

- › Primary target group: Women, kids, and teenagers (due to proximity of a high school)
- › Second target group: passersby



Intervention Site
Approx 317m²

LOCATION: MEDINA
المدينة



Rationale

Public spaces in the Medina are generally perceived as spaces for men to meet and are avoided by women. Women fear the stigma and social pressure associated with being present in public space, and they often find these spaces to be unaccommodating of their needs, or unsafe. Students also often find themselves lacking a space to relax in or study while waiting on their classes to resume for the day. This intervention aims to create a women-friendly and student-friendly open space that allows them to work, socialize, and take children out to play.

Enabling the space to host women

The intervention aims to conceive a space that encourages women, teenagers, and children to conduct multiple activities whether work-related or simply recreational within a safe space. The choice of this space is based on its location which can first, be easy to access due to its visibility along the street, its proximity to both the cultural quarter and the residential area and be appropriated by women given its current status as an unused space.

The proposed intervention will activate this space to serve women through the following:

- › Enclose the space by introducing a barrier of vegetation (through shrubs in large pots) and identifying one access point to ensure privacy and security, while also reducing the noise and exhaust created by vehicles along the street.
- › Rearrange the site to be divided into a covered/shaded flexible space, which can be defined and separated by age group through groundwork and vegetation (playground for children near the recreational and working space for women, and a separate space for teenagers).
- › Introduce groundwork through tiling or paint to reflect the user age group and make them feel more comfortable in the space.
- › Equip the site with tools that encourage these users to appropriate their respective spaces and express themselves through art and nature (through gardening or painting etc.)
- › Provide the possibility for this space to display and exhibit work by locals and users of this space.
- › Introduce a seating area, tables, and shading devices (or even pergolas), vegetation, fixed playground equipment, murals along walls, a public restroom, and appropriate lighting for afternoon and early night hours.

Needed resources:

- › **Urban furniture:** flexible tables and benches, shading devices (pergolas/fabric stretched), fixed playground equipment, art tools, and display stands
- › **Groundwork and signage:** vegetation (flowerpots and trees), floor paint and appropriate tiling (kids' area) and walkways, painted groundwork, and signage (to define functions and guide tourists)
- › **Basics:** display panels, extra bins, speakers, and appropriate light fixtures (fixed on wall)



Before



After

Programmatic interventions

To ensure a proper and convenient use by women, the space will also be activated through the following programmatic interventions which will be conducted by the municipality, governmental and non-governmental organizations and other entities working along the same agenda of women empowerment:

- › Conduct women-related activities sponsored or organized by the municipality in the space whenever possible to encourage women to visit and appropriate it in different ways.
- › Ensure the safety of the space through having women inspectors/guards present in the space during the day.
- › Invite NGOs providing vocational training and support to women to use the space as an outdoor workshop space (whenever possible).
- › Conduct frequent temporary markets that promote women-owned businesses, handcrafts, and products
- › Include this space as one of the attractions during the festivals where women from the neighborhood can exhibit their products, art, and other work.
- › Restrict vendors in the space to women, to encourage women to visit and limit its appropriation by men in the neighborhood.



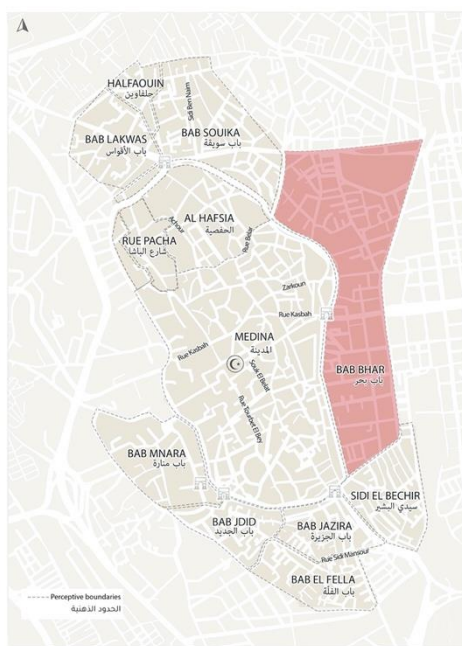
Before



After

BAB BHAR

Bab Bhar or “gate of the sea” district is located to the East of the Medina Centrale. Its gate is also known as “Porte de France” and marks the separation between the old Medina and the new city with European architecture built during the French colonial era. Bab Bhar is the economic and administrative center of the governorate of Tunis, where embassies and business headquarters are located. It is also home to several historical, political, and cultural places such as Avenue Habib Bourguiba, Independence Square, the municipal theater, and the Parc du Passage.



Demographics and human capital

The National Census of 2014 estimated the population of the Bab Bhar district at 36,210.⁵⁶ It is overall considered to have better socio-economic conditions than other neighborhoods in the Medina as the poverty rate is low at 1.6% compared to the capital's average.⁵⁷ Moreover, the illiteracy rate for women in the neighborhood is relatively low at 9.85%, versus an average of 15.66% for the whole of Tunis.⁵⁸

Economic opportunities

Bab Bhar offers a myriad of economic and entrepreneurial opportunities to its residents. The neighborhood hosts 33,458 businesses, the highest between the study area's four districts. This number has increased by 32.6% from 2009 till 2019,⁵⁹ showing a high degree of economic prosperity in the district. In fact, women's economic participation in Bab Bhar is better than in other neighborhoods. The percentage of economically active women is at 40.54%, and the unemployment rate is comparatively low, at 13.43%.⁶⁰ Despite the predominantly commercial nature of the neighborhood, the trade sector only employs a small percentage of Bab Bhar's active women, as those mostly work in the education, health, and services sectors.⁶¹

Women in the city

Bab Bhar is a go-to place for women who want to meet outside of the Medina. They do not mind sitting in the district's cafés and restaurants. Women also visit the district for its theaters and cinemas, and to attend cultural events. Moreover, women from various areas expressed interest in spending time in the Parc du Passage, also known as “Jardin Habib-Thameur”, but they were reluctant to do so as they feel uncomfortable there. The park is unwelcoming for women because it is mostly occupied by men, and the roads leading to it are considered unsafe.

While women think that Bab Bhar is a safe space for them, they carefully choose their routes when commuting between the district and the rest of the Medina, as many of those are not secure.

⁵⁶TUNIS: A travers le Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat 2014. (2014). Retrieved from http://www.ins.tn/sites/default/files/1_TUNIS-1_0.pdf

⁵⁷ National Office of Statistics and World Bank (2020), Carte de la pauvreté en Tunisie

⁵⁸TUNIS: A travers le Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat 2014. (2014). Retrieved from http://www.ins.tn/sites/default/files/1_TUNIS-1_0.pdf

⁵⁹ Répertoire National des Entreprises (2019)

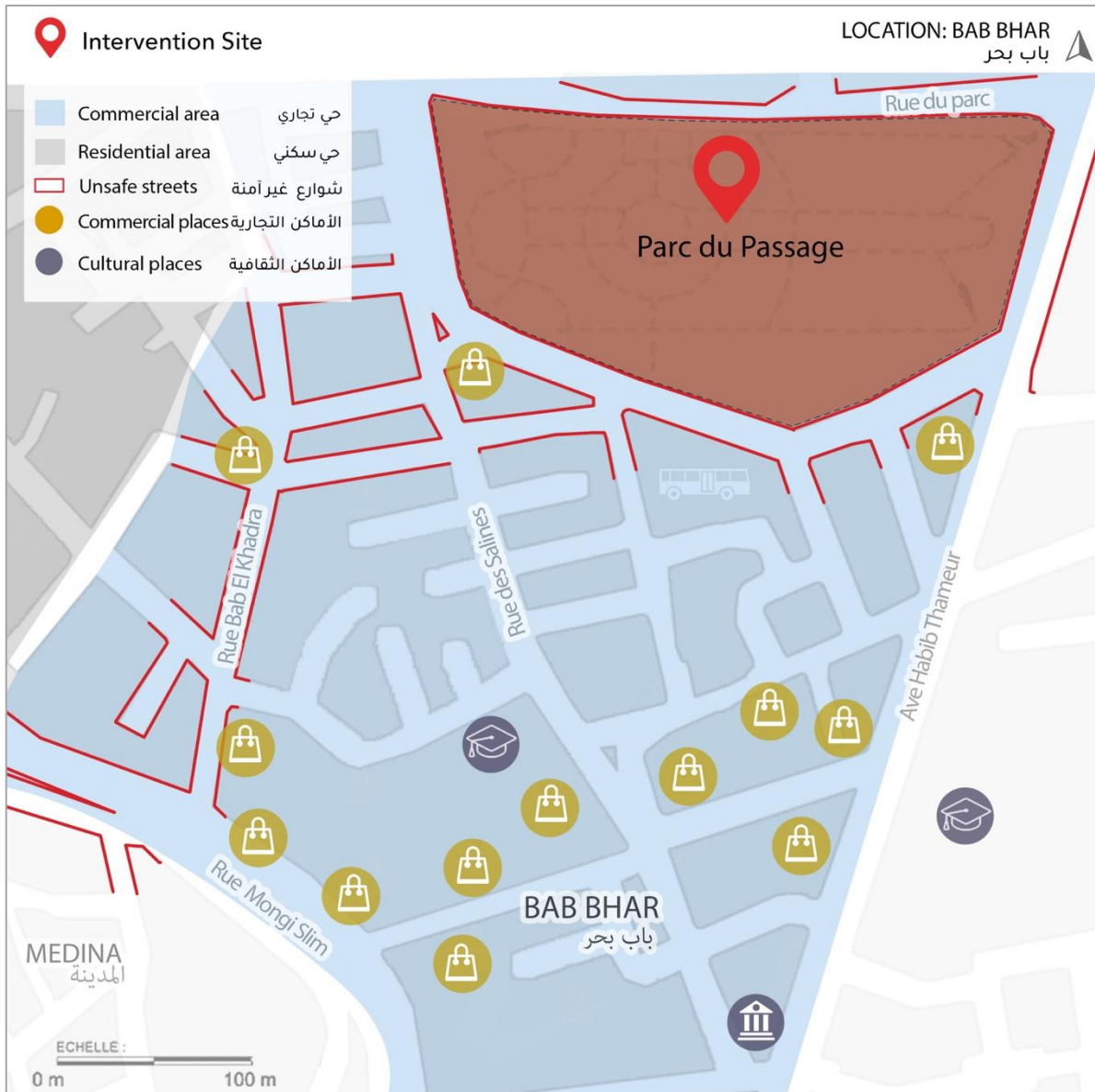
⁶⁰TUNIS: A travers le Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat 2014. (2014). Retrieved from http://www.ins.tn/sites/default/files/1_TUNIS-1_0.pdf

Intervention 6 - Green Escape

Intervention site

The intervention site is in a busy neighborhood, adjacent to major communication hubs. Situated close to commercial and residential areas, the intervention site's central location is near a Metro and a bus station. Even though a police patrol is always positioned next to one of the entrances, women indicated that the neighborhood is not safe, as they did feared walking on the nearby streets especially during the night.

Located next to a metro station (the Republic Station or Passage), and a bus stop, the intervention site is easily accessible to a large number of people who pass by the location on a daily basis. The site is open to the public with the presence of multiple entrances from the northern, western, and southern sides. The site has been newly renovated and presents a well-designed space. Yet, the surrounding and the park itself have a previous reputation of being dangerous for women. Women thought that the proximity of bars and dark and empty public spaces attracts drunks, drug users, and thieves.



Enabling the space to host women

The intervention aims to introduce spaces and functions encouraging women to spend time in the park through designating areas for them that cater to their needs. The site itself is a large enclosed public park with lush vegetation, acting as a sanctuary amidst a dense city. It thus creates the perfect environment for recreation, and an opportunity to introduce different functions, activities, and semi-private women-focused spaces that cater to women's needs without feeling scrutinized. The proposed intervention will activate this space to serve women through the following:

- › Recreational gardens as women-designated spaces with vegetation, trees, and shading to and create a calm ambiance for women to relax and socialize, which can also be used as event spaces for women
- › A shaded working space that provides women a flexible area to work outdoors and to meet for cultural activities
- › An outdoor library with a children's learning area that is appropriately shaded and well-lit to create a different learning and reading experience
- › An outdoor gym buffered by vegetation to give women a sense of privacy during their workouts
- › A walking/ running trail
- › Additional children playgrounds surrounding women-designated spaces
- › An administrative structure that maintains supervision within the park and includes a small first-aid clinic
- › Security desks at entrances to ensure people do not block out the park entrances, and proper parking along the premises
- › Ensure the accessibility to the park is safe, clean, and monitored to encourage women to visit the park
- › Introduce signage and accessible infrastructure (for wheelchairs and baby strollers etc.)

Needed resources:

- › **Urban furniture:** Outdoor gym equipment, tables and benches, shading devices (pergolas/fabric stretched), playground equipment, outdoor library equipment (bookshelves, reading books, and shading structure), working and display stands
- › **Groundwork:** vegetation (greening), floor paint and appropriate paving (for bike and running track)
- › **Basics:** bins, equipment (for food vending or for exhibitions and events), appropriate lighting for afternoon and early night hours, administrative structure, and women safety poles.
- › **Trail:** 'Stop for the trail' and appropriate signage throughout the park.



Before



After

Programmatic Interventions

To ensure a proper and convenient use by women, the space will also be activated through the following programmatic interventions which will be conducted by the municipality, governmental and non-governmental organizations and other entities working along the same agenda of women empowerment:

- › Organize group fitness classes for women in the space.
- › Conduct frequent temporary markets that promote women-owned businesses, handcrafts, and products
- › Include this space as one of the attractions during the festivals where women from the neighborhood can exhibit their products, art and other work.
- › Introduces days for multiple events (movie nights, cultural events, fairs, gardening day, flower market, sports day, etc.)
- › Conduct women-related activities sponsored or organized by the municipality in the space whenever possible to encourage women to visit and appropriate it in different ways.
- › Limit opening hours to daytime and ensure that the space is locked during nighttime to restrict any unwanted activities (drug use, harassment) and thus avoid the space being stigmatized.
- › Introduced awareness workshop for men and self-defense workshop for women



Before



After

SIDI EL BECHIR

Sidi el Bechir is located to the South of the Medina Centrale and is bordered by Bab Bhar to the east. This neighborhood includes the sub-districts of Sidi el Bechir and Bab el Fella, among others.

Demographics and human capital

The National Census of 2014 estimated the population of Sidi el Bechir at 27,749.⁶² Sidi el Bechir's level of poverty is slightly less than the capital's average, with 4.2% of its residents living in poverty.⁶³ The neighborhood has a relatively average rate of school dropouts in Tunis, with 4.3% of students leaving their education at the primary or secondary level.⁶⁴ However, the illiteracy rate for women in the neighborhood is above average at 17.37%, versus 15.66% for the capital.⁶⁵

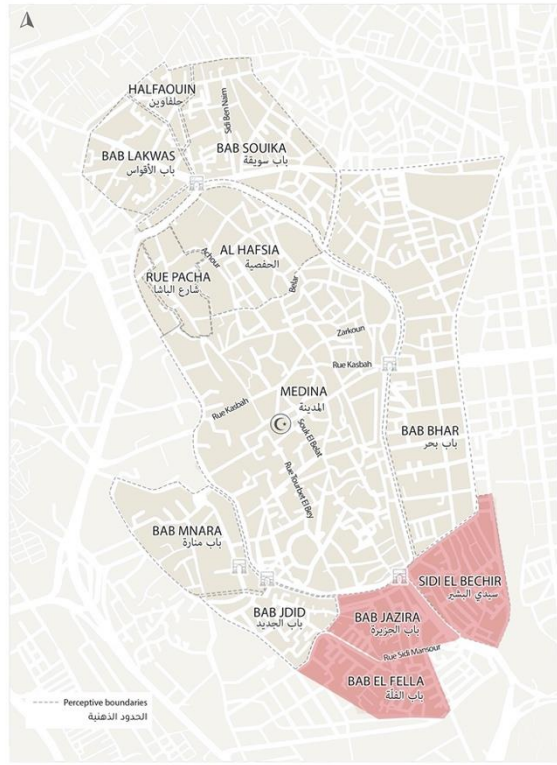
Economic opportunities

Sidi el Bechir is the district with the least economic activity, with only 243 registered private businesses in 2019. However, the neighborhood witnessed the highest increase in the number of registered private businesses by 63% since 2009, compared to the overall 32% increase in the capital.⁶⁶ Women's economic participation in Sidi el Bechir is at 32.31%, which is less than average compared to the other neighborhoods, while men are twice more active with a participation rate of 61.51%. Unemployment rates are also high for both women and men at 19.59% and 12.93% respectively.⁶⁷ Economically active women are mostly employed in the education, health, and services sectors (69.92%).

Women in the city

Sidi el Bechir is considered as the most unsafe district in the Medina. Women from other neighborhoods preferred not to venture into the Southern part of the city. Nonetheless, women from the district feel comfortable and safe in the area, as they know its residents well. Women residing in Sidi el Bechir were mostly unsatisfied with their neighborhood's cleanliness, public infrastructure, and public spaces.

Women in Sidi el Bechir were mostly keen on developing their skills and improving their economic opportunities. They also were unaware of or dissatisfied with the cultural activities, and centers in the neighborhood. However, they did not mind walking to Medina Centrale to go shopping or to attend trainings and cultural events.



⁶²TUNIS: A travers le Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat 2014. (2014). Retrieved from http://www.ins.tn/sites/default/files/1_TUNIS-1_0.pdf

⁶³ National Office of Statistics and World Bank (2020), Carte de la pauvreté en Tunisie

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵TUNIS: A travers le Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat 2014. (2014). Retrieved from http://www.ins.tn/sites/default/files/1_TUNIS-1_0.pdf

⁶⁶ Répertoire National des Entreprises (2019)

⁶⁷TUNIS: A travers le Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat 2014. (2014). Retrieved from http://www.ins.tn/sites/default/files/1_TUNIS-1_0.pdf

Intervention 7 - Learning Hub

Intervention site

The site itself is currently a vacant ground floor in a building falling between two neighborhoods, the busy commercial area of Bab Jazira and the quieter residential area of Sidi El Bechir. The building is along a very busy street (Rue Sidi El Bechir), with a number of street markets and is close to the Bab Fella market. The ground floors of the adjacent buildings host some associations and NGOs making this site a convenient spot for networking, knowledge exchange and learning.

This site is not being used which creates an ideal space to introduce new functions especially as a training center.



User target groups

- › Primary target group: Women only

Rationale

Considering that women in public spaces are often socially stigmatized, women tend to prefer enclosed spaces that give them a sense of privacy and security. For this reason, reusing some buildings as spaces for women in the form of training centers allows women the privacy of socializing, learning, and being productive without the pressure of being exposed. Additionally, and building on the previously mentioned recommendation (see Recommendations section), this space could also be used by women collectives, women business owners' association or any other activities that allow women better economic independence. Hence, this space can provide women an opportunity to develop different skills to improve their economic participation.

Enabling the space to host women

The intervention aims to transform the space into a training center that allows women to use it to enhance their skills, produce artisanal work to sell and display in the existing souks. The choice of this space is mainly based on its location, given its proximity to existing cultural landmarks and streets, its location within an isolated residential community, as well as its availability. The intervention itself would also establish a network of economic and cultural relationships, linking the southern part of the medina to the center and north of the medina. The intervention will include:

- › Introduce a curriculum for young women that allows them to learn new languages, hospitality skills, and build knowledge on the history of the medina in order to become certified tour guides, which in turn, strengthens their attachment to their home, increases their skill set, and introduces a new source of income.
- › Recreational gardens as women-designated spaces with vegetation, trees, and shading to and create a calm ambiance for women to relax and socialize, which can also be used as event spaces for women.

The proposed intervention will activate this space to serve women through the following:

- › Establishing classrooms for women, including auditoriums or multipurpose conference rooms for lectures and discussions, and audiovisual rooms (lessons on languages and histories to become tour guides). These spaces could be divided for different schedules, ensuring that even teenage girls who are still in school can register and take a few lessons.
- › Introduce computer training rooms, equipped with computer workstations and internet access
- › Dry laboratories, such as machine-based equipment rooms for artisanal work training (ceramics room for pottery, or tapestry room hosting tapestry equipment, or even printing rooms for different media-based projects)
- › Storage spaces (closets, shelves, or lockers)
- › A display area that encourages women to exhibit their work to empower them and increase their confidence in their acquired skills
- › Restrooms and a small lounge/ breakroom area
- › Learning room or study area for those who want to spend more time researching or studying
- › Administration for women to register, and to ensure the space is monitored

Needed resources:

- › seating (couches or chairs), tables and workstations (for the computer lab and for whatever other skill the training center would like to add to its curriculum such as sewing machines, ceramics spin tables and ovens, leather-making equipment, tapestry equipment etc.),
- › children play equipment,

- › desks and chairs for classrooms/ conference rooms/ study area, bookshelves,
- › vegetation and benches if an outdoor space is available, display panels (outdoor signage), restrooms, appropriate couches for a lounge area, appropriate light fixtures (hanging / fixed), and bins



Before



After

Programmatic Interventions

To ensure a proper and convenient use by women, the space will also be activated through the following programmatic interventions which will be conducted by the municipality, governmental and non-governmental organizations and other entities working along the same agenda of women empowerment:

- › Invite NGOs providing vocational training and support to women to use the space as an outdoor workshop space (whenever possible).
- › Ensure the safety of the space through having women inspectors/guards present in the space during the day
- › Invite local historians, planners, and archeologists to organize and conduct training for women tour guides and get their practical training on the heritage trail (see Cultural Heritage Trail intervention)
- › Encourage local organizations to conduct awareness activities in the space
- › Introduce aesthetics and cosmetics courses (manicures, pedicures etc...) and provide their respective equipment.
- › Host skills training workshops including languages, handcrafts, and other local artisanal activities



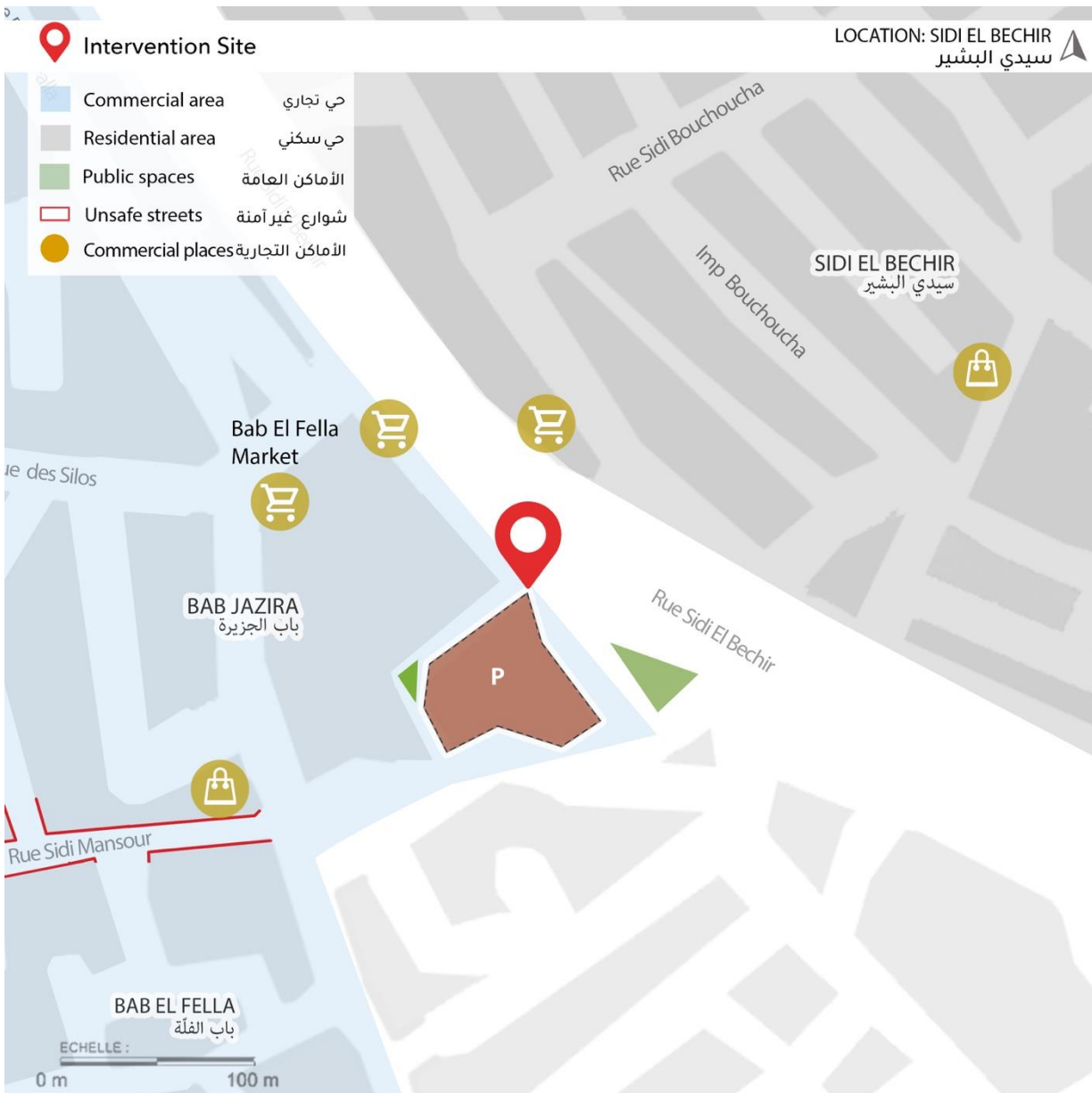
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Intervention 8 - The Alley Park

Intervention site

The intervention site is in the busy commercial neighborhood of Sidi el Bechir. The intervention site is a parking lot adjacent to the busy highway of Rue Sidi el Bechir.

Previously, the space was perceived as an unsafe space that was generally not used by local residents, with a reputation of being a spot for illegal activities. Recently, the municipality transformed the space into a public parking lot to cater for the adjacent busy commercial areas. This space is surrounded by a small unused park to its eastern side and a pedestrian path on its western/northern sides.



User target groups

- › Primary target group: women and children from nearby neighborhoods.
- › Secondary target group: passersby



Rationale

Sidi El Bechir lacks public spaces and centers for women to meet and is considered as one of the most underserved neighborhoods in the Medina. This intervention aims to create a green enclave near the markets, in a space within a newly transformed parking, to provide a safe and recreational space for women and children.

Enabling the space to host women

The site's area itself is large enough to accommodate a small park though minor reconfigurations while maintaining its function as a parking lot. The intervention proposes a reorganization of the uses to include an enclaved garden on the western side. It also suggests adding sidewalks and rest stops as buffers between the parking and the vehicular streets. The intervention aims to introduce outdoor spaces that encourage women to spend time outdoors in an environment that makes them feel safer.

The proposed intervention will activate this space to serve women through the following:

- › Separate the enclosed park from the parking space by a 1.5 meters wall in addition to trees and vegetation in planters. This space is child-friendly, including a playground for children, a small community garden for women, and an appropriate fixed seating area.
- › Define the entrance of the space by groundwork outside the site that leads to the gate of the park, to ensure it can be closed and monitored.
- › Remove existing walls surrounding the parking and replace them by a pedestrian pathway in the form of a sidewalk to improve visibility and perception of safety towards the site.
- › Install appropriate lighting, vegetation, signage, concrete furniture, and bollards to discourage cars from parking on these sidewalks, as well as ramps to ensure accessibility for strollers and wheelchairs.
- › Keep a larger section of this pedestrian space (width of approximately 5.5 m) to the east of the parking, facing the existing vehicular road.
- › Introduce ground marks for car parking spaces, entry and exit points of the parking space to ensure a facilitated vehicular mobility in and out of it.



Before



After

Needed resources:

- › Fixed benches
- › Vegetation and trees
- › Gardening equipment and planters (for the community garden space)
- › Fixed playground equipment
- › Appropriate lighting for afternoon and early night hours
- › Wall construction materials (for planters and garden enclosure)
- › Appropriate signage
- › Sidewalk construction material
- › Groundwork (greening, floor paint and appropriate paving if necessary)

Programmatic interventions

- › Ensure the safety of the space through having women inspectors/guards present in the space during the day
- › Limit opening hours to daytime and ensure that the space is locked during nighttime to restrict any unwanted activities (drug use, harassment) and thus avoid the space being stigmatized.



Before



After

Intervention 9 – Women’s Meeting Space

Rationale

Women in the Medina tend to prefer meeting in enclosed spaces as they give them a sense of privacy and security and helps avoid the social stigmas faced in public spaces. In line with their agenda to increase the engagement and participation of women in the Medina of Tunis, the municipalities of Bab Bhar and Bab Souika offered to provide spaces within their premises to be designated for women activities and programs. These spaces can offer women in the Medina the opportunity to be in close proximity to the municipality, where they can get access to larger support for their initiatives. On the other hand, these municipalities can be in close contact with women’s issues and activities and aware of their priorities, needs, and challenges to better engage and consult them in local development matters. These two spaces are relatively similar in their dimensions and available furniture. They are currently not equipped and used only on an ad-hoc basis.

The two spaces can be described as follows:

- › Bab Bhar Municipality: located in downtown of Tunis, a vibrant commercial and cultural area that is frequently visited by women. The area is believed to be pretty safe and accessible to women from different parts and neighborhoods of the Medina.
- › Bab Souika Municipality: located in a busy neighborhood, adjacent to the Rue Bab Saadoun, a major road connecting Tunis’ downtown to the Kasba neighborhood. It is in close proximity to commercial and residential areas. Women indicated that the neighborhood was fairly safe, as they did not fear walking on any of the nearby streets. The municipality is located next to the “Safe Haven” intervention, which can offer an outdoors space to be used for programs and activities to complement those within the premises of this intervention (Women’s Meeting Space).

Enabling the space to host women

The intervention aims to transform the space into a multifunctional space that allows women to use it for different types of activities, whether learning, workshops, exhibitions, trainings or other group events to enhances their skills or produce artisanal work to sell and display in the existing souks. The two rooms will be remodeled to accommodate different spaces divided for multiple uses. This will include a co-working space, flexible lounge/seating area, conference-like room space and a workshop area. The furniture in these spaces will be versatile and stackable for better use of space and to facilitate multiple activities and maximum use by women.

Needed resources:

- › Professional projector
- › Projection Screen
- › Wireless laser presenter
- › Laptops
- › Colored printers
- › Flipchart, white board, and their accessories
- › Air conditioners

Programmatic Interventions

To activate these two spaces and to better cater to women's interests and needs, a series of programmatic interventions will be conducted by the municipality, possibly in partnership with governmental and non-governmental organizations and other entities working along the same agenda of women empowerment:

- › Host and conduct women capacity building and awareness sessions
- › Open up the space for women to use to start up their micro and small businesses
- › Encourage cultural organizations and initiatives to conduct activities, exhibitions and installations to attract local women and girls
- › Conduct public consultation meetings catering for women to collect input about municipality projects and initiatives and thus increase their participation



Before



After

Intervention 10 – Cultural Heritage Trail

Rationale

Similar to different cultural trails around the world and even in the Medina itself, this cultural heritage trail takes visitors on a journey, highlighting not only the existing cultural and historic structures that the Medina is known for, but also showing the contribution of women to the Medina's history, its current cultural life, and its economy. For instance, the trail that extends over 3.6 kilometers passes by multiple stops in the Medina highlight their skills, culture, and talents.

As a preliminary trail, the path was designed as a circuit,

- › Starting from point A (the Bab Bhar gate), moving on towards point B, the first part of the path takes visitors through the heart of the Medina's historic and economic hub, as they pass through its crowded souks into the Tourbet el Bey neighborhood.
- › Point B, on Sidi Ben Arous street, marks the starting point of an artistic and cultural path that passes by cultural centers, libraries, palaces and museums. Souk el Chawachin, which hosts a tribute to the skilled women working behind the scene to produce the chachia cultural artifact lies along the trail.
- › The third section of the trail starts at Place Bab Souika, which will include a theatre, a playground, and a market area for women, as described in The Hub intervention above. Passing by the women exhibiting their products will incite visitors to support their businesses. The trail then carries on through a commercial path, through the Hafsia markets, to get to point D, the Parc de passage, an oasis in the middle of a bustling city, and then back to point A through the busy markets of Bab Bhar.

The stops along the trail will highlight:

- › Women's contributions to the Medina, as a set of touristic and cultural sites are marked on the map to convey the stories of women who contributed to the city's architecture, and to its cultural, economic, social, and political life. Each site would tell the story of a woman through an information board fixed in the public space.
- › Women-friendly spaces, or the interventions to be implemented as part of the Femmedina project, for visitors to use.
- › Women's businesses, as a QR code on the cultural heritage map shows women-owned and managed businesses in the Medina. The online map can be regularly updated to add new businesses.

The trail passes by streets that are generally of interest to tourists, and by others that are uncommon for visitors to pass by, in order to activate the spaces that women perceive as empty and unsafe by increasing their use.

The trail would require:

- › Ground signs to mark paths
- › Vegetation (wherever needed)
- › Street lighting and road maintenance (whenever needed)
- › Informative historical briefs and stories on fixed boards telling the story of a particular location (with QR codes for podcasts on The Medina's stories.

Programmatic interventions

The trail will require multiple interventions to attract both visitors and locals in the Medina and tell the stories of women's contributions to the urban space. Aside from the physical interventions, the cultural trail will require continuous coordination and partnerships to be built between individual women, collectives, business owners, NGOs, and local government. In order to activate this trail as a key attraction, it is important to explore some of the following programmatic interventions:

- › Start a tour guide training program, to be hosted in one of the neighboring women's centers, that trains women on how to be tour guides, teach them about the history of the Medina, and familiarizes them with the trail, its landmarks, spaces, and historical sites. This training program can allow women in the Medina and its neighborhoods to take part in touristic tours which can provide them with income as well as exposure and visibility.
- › Implement a recurrent mapping of women's businesses in the Medina, and set-up a mechanism for women entrepreneurs to submit their businesses to be added to the online women's businesses map.
- › Connect with women business owners around the trail, inform them about this intervention and hand them maps to give away in their shops in order to promote the trail.
- › Start a podcast, produced by women, in Arabic, French, and English that narrates the stories of different spaces in the Medina (landmarks, personal stories, history, etc.). This podcast can be accessible for tourists and visitors through a QR code printed on information boards which links to the podcast platform.



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Cultural trail



Main points of attraction along the trail

● Main Stops ■ Souks

Departure



Women in the Medina's history and culture

- 1 Princess Atf, founder of the Al Haoua Mosque
- 2 Aziza Othmana, the Medina's first social entrepreneur
- 3 Saida Mannoubia, an early feminist icon
- 4 Lalla Kalthoum, the fierce princess
- 5 Sayyida Aajoula, the Sufi Saint
- 6 Women in the chachia trade
- 7 Bab Bnet
- 8 Souk el Nisa

Women-Owned business



Scan this QR code for a list of women's businesses in the Medina

To read the stories of women in the Medina's history, turn the page

Women Friendly Spaces

- 9 Hidden Park
- 10 Place du Gouvernement
- 11 "The Hive" : Work Hub for Women
- 12 "The Co-hive" : Women and Student Park
- 13 "The Hub" : Cultural and Commercial Park
- 14 Green Escape : Parc de Passage Habib Thameur



Kiosks

Souks

- 15 Souk El Shaweshin
- 16 Souk El Berka
- 17 Souk El Attarine
- 18 Souk Turc
- 19 Souk El Grana
- 20 Hafsia Flea Market
- 21 Bab Bhar Central market



WOMEN IN THE MEDINA'S HISTORY AND CULTURE

1 Princess Atf, founder of the Al Haoua Mosque



Born in the city of Galicia in Spain, Princess Atf was brought to Tunis as a prisoner, and offered to the Hafsid Sultan Abu Zakariya Yahya as a gift. She converted to Islam and married the Sultan who had founded the Hafsid dynasty that ruled Tunisia, Western Libya, and Eastern Algeria between 1229 and 1574. The Hafsids' first princess played a crucial role in developing the Medina's urban character, as she built Al Haoua Mosque (or mosque of the wind) along with its El Medrasa el Tawfikia in 1252. The mosque was named for its cool weather given its elevated position on a hill. Al Haoua mosque, which exemplifies the architecture of the 13th century Medina, was renovated in the 18th and 20th century and is currently open to visitors in Maakal el Zaim square.

2 Aziza Othmana, the Medina's first social entrepreneur

Aziza Othmana was a Tunisian princess born in 1606 in a family of military leaders. She was privileged, compared to Tunisia women of the time, to receive formal education in humanities, civics and the Quran. Othmana was socially engaged and known for being a compassionate and generous princess. At a young age, Othmana challenged social norms especially when she freed her slaves and later established a fund to support them. Throughout her life, she funded charitable projects, such as bailing prisoners, and buying slaves only to free them. She also contributed to improving the urban space, as she installed lighting in the Medina's streets.

Aziza Othmana dedicated her wealth in her will to the Medina's residents, whereby she allocated all revenues from her properties to benefit the community. Her most celebrated deed remains financing a hospital serving the Medina, which was later renamed the Aziza Othmana Hospital in 1960. Some would argue that she was Tunis' first social entrepreneur Dar Othman, the palace in which she grew up, is open to visitors.



Aziza Othmana Hospital

Dar Othman

3 Saida Mannoubia, an early feminist icon

Aisha Manoubia, also known as Saida Manoubia, was born in 1180 to a conservative rural family. Her father taught her religious studies which she was keenly interested in. Aisha fled her parents' house after she became aware of plans to marry her off to a relative. She moved to Tunis and started sewing there to support herself financially.

Saida Manoubia pursued her studies in Sufism in the Medina, even though education was only allowed to foreign and royal women at the time, and she thus paved the way for a subsequent generation of Tunisian women who followed a similar path. She also challenged other social norms, as she left her home unaccompanied and engaged in discussions with men. While more conservative clerics originally shunned her, she soon gained prominence within scholarly circles, as she was granted access to men-only prayer spaces, and eventually became a Sufi saint.

Saida Manoubia was also known for her social engagement. She helped women in her community both spiritually and financially, and advocated for their rights. Given her bold unprecedented actions for a woman in 12th century Tunisia, she gained a reputation for being a revolutionary woman, and a feminist icon.

After her death, several locations were named after her, including a neighborhood in the western suburbs of Tunis and one of the Medina's old souks.



4 Lalla Kalthoum, the fierce princess

The legend tells the story of a fierce princess who saved her beloved husband from death! In 1839, Princess Lalla Kalthoum, the daughter of Moustapha Bey, was married to Moustapha Khaznadar, the then minister of Finance, who later became the Grand Vizir of Tunis.. Khaznadar surprised the Medina's residents during Eid when he offered his wife, Lalla Kalthoum, a carriage, making her the first woman to own one.

When the grand vizir fell out with the monarch Sadok Bey, the latter sent soldiers to execute him. Princess Lalla Kalthoum hid her husband in her private chambers and uncovered her hair, as it was forbidden for men to be in the presence of a princess with uncovered hair. She then called on her neighbors to force the army out of her Halfaouine palace. Following the incident, Sadok Bey rescinded his execution order, and banished the vizir instead.

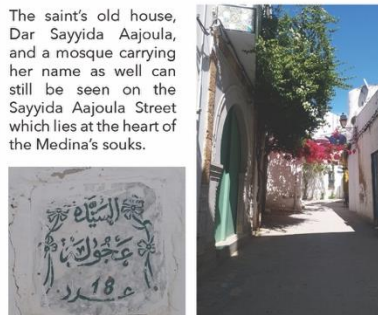
After Lalla Kalthoum died, she was buried in the princesses' room of the Royal Mausoleum of Tourbet el Bey. Being of non-royal descent, her husband Khaznadar was buried next to the window outside her burial room



5 Sayyida Aajoula, the Sufi Saint

Very few streets in the Medina carry the names of women, and the Sayyida Aajoula Street is one of those. Born under the name Hawaa Bent Abd el Rahman el Qabsi, Sayyida Aajoula was one of the city's Sufi saints. She lived between the 15th and 16th century and was venerated by the Medina's residents as a holy figure. The saint gained her nickname, Aajoula, which literally translates to "in a hurry" in Arabic, because pious residents rushed to run their errands early on the days where they planned to visit her and ask for her blessings.

The saint's old house, Dar Sayyida Aajoula, and a mosque carrying her name as well can still be seen on the Sayyida Aajoula Street which lies at the heart of the Medina's souks.



6 Women in the chachia trade

The chachia, a little red hat popular in North Africa, was once a great source of wealth for the Medina. The traditional hat is exported to neighboring countries, including Libya, Algeria, Morocco, and Nigeria. Women artisans play a crucial role in making chachias, doing crochet for long hours in their houses. While their work is central to preserving the Medina's cultural heritage, they rarely take a forefront role in selling their artisanal products. Their husbands and fathers run the shops in the prestigious souk el chawachin on Ben Arous Street, and stamp the hats with their own names as brands.



8 Souk El Nisa

The women's market, was a souk dedicated to women who used to buy and sell women's clothing and products. The souk's specialization disappeared with time, as products of interest to women can now be found all over the souks.



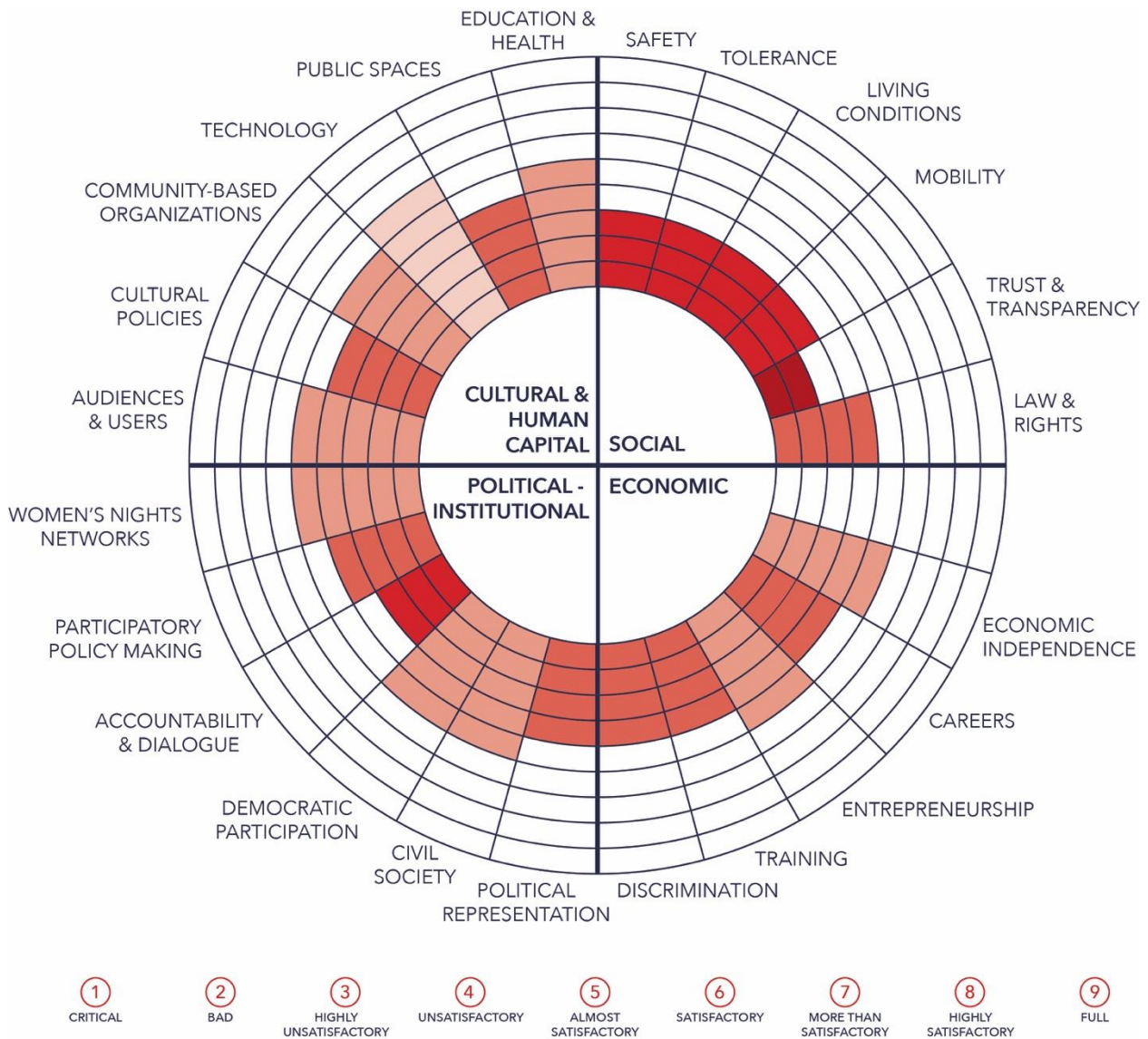
7 Bab Bnet

The Girls' Gate, was one of the Medina's five gates during the 13th century. It was named after a palace built in the area to house three princesses whose father, Abu Zakariya Yahya, had just died.



ANNEX 1 – WEC Profile

The Women’s Engagement in Cities (WEC) Profile, developed by Cities Alliance, was used as a tool to assess the level of gender responsiveness and engagement of women in the Medina at four main dimensions: economic, political and institutional, cultural and human capital, and social. Each dimension encompasses different aspects of urban life and participation. The corresponding questions were adapted to the local context of Tunis. Women were asked through the survey to evaluate their level of satisfaction in women’s engagement within each aspect on a scale from 1 (critical) to 9 (full). The results are shown in the diagram below:





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