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The Arab Spring and Poor Informal Settlements

This issue of the Bulletin takes stock of the new political situation that came about in 2011, a year which was marked by protests throughout the Arab World, fuelled by the excesses of an authoritarian model that relied on profits from real estate market and "big projects", and the unsatisfactory results of previous public action in favour of poor neighbourhoods. Such neighbourhoods, which were often informal at the outset, still greatly outnumber formal neighbourhoods and are poorly integrated within the cities and frequently vulnerable in many ways (suffering from threats of demolition, natural hazards, and a low quality urban environment). No study has demonstrated that the revolts originated primarily in these abandoned neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, last year's "Arab Spring" implicitly expressed the shortcomings of upgrading programmes (some of which had been running since the 1980s) whose urban integration, social and economic goals were too limited (Tunisia), which were occasionally too focused on experimental sites which were never replicated on a large scale (Egypt, Syria), or which concentrated too much on demolition and relocation far away (Morocco).

Now that a number of former leaders have fallen, do the new authorities, or those that are still in place that are struggling to survive (as in Syria), intend to rethink their urban policies, or will they continue as before? How have the events on the ground affected daily life? These questions were the subject of a seminar organized by the Research Department of the French Development Agency (AFD) and Sylvie Jaglin from LATTS (Laboratory for Techniques, Regional Planning and Society) on 9 December 2011, which is briefly described in this issue.

The articles published here give the impression that the context is right to rethink action towards this urban fabric. First, because there are more and more signs of a renewal of interest in the region on the part of the international development community which is waiting for a return to political stability. Second, because some progress has already been made with regard to informal settlements and in some cases what were formerly projects have evolved into massive slum clearance and rehabilitation programmes. Finally, because the Arab Spring has shaken things up and there have been recent calls for a new form of territorial equity from action groups working for informal neighbourhoods and made up of academics, consultancy firms and members of civil society.



*Imbaba in Cairo (800 000 inhabitants):
an informal city not without qualities."
Photo : Pierre-Arnaud Barthel*

Each country has seen an increase in informal construction during this period when political control is diminishing, the form of governments and parliaments is being remodelled, and, in some cases (such as Egypt), the police have been discredited. The urgent need for responses to micro-economic and employment issues, the priority that has been given to constitutional reform (particularly in Tunisia) may delay the development of new approaches. Morched Chabbi shows that it is necessary to rethink housing policy in Tunisia. Olivier Toutain paints a mixed picture of the "Cities without Slums" Programme. David Sims shows clearly that in Egypt building new developments to relocate people in unsuitable areas in the middle of the desert still remains a national priority. Valérie Clerc describes how, in contrast, the regime of Bashar Al Assad is attempting to carry through pilot rehabilitation projects and high-profile schemes as though the situation was quite normal.

Work is now in progress: it is to be hoped that urban policies with regard to informal settlements will become more inventive and feature genuine community-based urban projects and innovative packages that give priority to rehousing people in the same neighbourhood and freeing up land for facilities and jobs. There is also an urgent need for projects that involve more consultation with the population and that are supported by local government which, it is hoped, will acquire more expertise, resources and electoral legitimacy in the near future. Let us also hope that more land will become available for a new generation of housing programmes that are more open to mixity and social housing.

Pierre-Arnaud Barthel
Université Paris Est / LATTS
Institut Français d'Urbanisme

Tunisia: a revolution, in spite of the rehabilitation policy

Morched CHABBI

Town planner and sociologist consultant

Former president of the Tunisian Association of Town Planners, which was critical long before the «revolution», sociologist and consultant for over thirty years, Morched Chabbi recalls that both Bourguiba and Ben Ali regimes upgraded informal settlements in order to counter Islamist influence. He also gives us the latest news that reflect the limits of the action taken by the former regime, the instability of the current period and housing needs.

Although the Arab Spring began in Tunisia, unlike its neighbour Egypt, the country has been integrating informal settlements into its towns and cities for quite some time. The first urban programmes date back to the 1980s. Nevertheless, the revolution testifies to the frustration felt by young households in their search for decent housing. What has happened in the “gourbivilles” which were previously informal settlements and which have been transformed into formal areas? What possibilities exist for reframing housing policies?

From Bourguiba to Ben Ali: integration

In 1956, the year of Tunisian independence, the public authorities were faced by the growth of slum districts. In 1960, the public authorities decided to demolish a large number of these informal districts and send those living in them back to their region of origin. In 1970, the World Bank, dominated by McNamara, laid down a principle that aimed to reduce urban poverty, based essentially on the creation of serviced plots with financial support from the bank. However, the proposal was not taken up by the Tunisian government whose

policy at the time was to give priority to the social integration of the middle classes by building residential developments that gave them priority access to housing. The first rehabilitation projects were completed after the 1978 riots, and in 1981 the Urban Rehabilitation and Renovation Agency (ARRU) was set up, with the task of providing services in a number of poor districts in various parts of the country.

When General Ben Ali came to power in 1987, the “National Programme for the Rehabilitation of Poor Neighbourhoods” (PNRQP) was launched, and covered 223 districts in 1990. However the elements which are normally carried out through rehabilitation projects were reduced by the large scale of the project. Funding was only provided for roads and sanitation, and housing improvements and urban development activities in the districts were discontinued. The government was the sole source of finance for the 1st project, and in order to make up for its lack of resources, the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th projects (2007-2013) received funding from the French Development Agency (AFD).

The insistence on social integration that marked out the

first project was therefore relaxed and the funding of the rehabilitation projects came to depend on subsidies (70%), loans (20%) and self-financing by the households (10%). Nevertheless, the rehabilitation programmes remained a constant drain on government resources and represented a total investment approximately 770 billion Dinars for more than a thousand districts, housing a third of Tunisia’s urban population. This seeming generosity on the part of the State was in fact intended to counter the strength of the Islamist movement which had largely taken over the poor neighbourhoods after the 1989 elections. The change in rehabilitation policies is therefore partly due to the socio-political situation in Tunisia.

The collapse of urban control

Urban action in Tunisia has its shortcomings. Most importantly, unofficial land developers, counting on the impact of news about the ARRU programmes, build irregular developments. However long it takes, the (future) inhabitants know their neighbourhood will one day be covered by a State rehabilitation project. The result is that urban sprawl

continues at a steady rate in the cities.

Since January 2011, the revolution has had many impacts on Tunisian towns and cities.

There has been an increase in the number of attacks and fires that target symbols of wealth near poor neighbourhoods. Some factories have been set on fire by groups of young unemployed who choose this way of settling their dispute with the bosses who refused to give them a job. Illegal land occupation has also been observed near poor neighbourhoods. In the Ettadhamen district, to the west of Greater Tunis, households from the area renting one or two rooms in a dwelling two-thirds occupied by the landlord built almost 60 casemates in a few hours. This situation lasted a year after which and the squatters were gradually moved back into their previous dwelling.

Last, the height of some buildings is being raised without planning permission. This has transformed most of the poor districts to the South, West and North of Greater Tunis. Dissolution of the 264 town councils and the replacement of the elected representatives by volunteers have reduced controls and made it possible for low income

groups to build illegal extensions to their houses (2 to 3 extra rooms) in order to sublet them to students or young households.

The impression that emerges from these events is that the rules of urban control have collapsed and the situation is out of control. This state of affairs, which was first observed in 2011, seems to be spreading inland in 2012, with a growing number of illegal occupations.

What does the future have in store?

As regards housing, an approach founded on assisting economically disadvantaged social groups would provide a way of developing social housing programmes that would genuinely match demand, because the current increase in “spontaneous” housing results from the lack of a social housing policy and contributes to urban sprawl.

A policy based on social development entails removing the difficulties experienced by low-income groups with regard to property ownership. The following measures must be introduced to achieve this: land reserves must be created in the outskirts of cities, the public supply of housing which evolve over time, financed by taxation on capital gains from property, must be diversified and there should be a supply of small developed building

plots (100 to 150m²). Last, bank financing systems that are appropriate for low income households should be put in place.

The new government must tackle these issues urgently...

Informal Cairo after the January Revolution: a new hope?

David Sims
Consultant

The Egyptian revolution was revealing frustration of the inhabitants of the abstract districts in Egypt, in particular those of the metropolitan region of Cairo (approximately 12 million people). A little over one year after the “revolution”, can one observe a renewal of interest and actions from the government? David Sims, an American expert who has been living in Cairo for more than thirty years, gives us his analysis of the situation.

Before January 2011, the phenomenon of informal areas of Greater Cairo, no matter how large, was very much a side issue as far as government policy and professional attitudes were concerned, and self-built informal housing was not at all considered part of the solution to the housing problem. Prevailing attitudes towards informal areas were full of mis-conceptions, prejudices, and, at best, patronizing attitudes. These attitudes were common among Egypt’s educated and middle classes, and they also prevailed among the main professional and

academic cadres. Of course there were exceptions, but for most architects and planners there was an undying faith in the new towns in the desert as the ultimate alternative to informal urban development, and such attitudes were maintained in spite of increasing evidence that the new towns, as attraction poles for the mass of urban Egyptians, were total failures. In the year that has lapsed since Hosni Mubarak stepped down as President, with its tempestuous cascade of political maneuvers and street protests, what has been happening in informal areas of Greater Cairo?

A boom of the informal construction

Probably the most striking physical result of the January Revolution has been the frenetic increase in informal housing construction across the city, mainly in and around informal settlements on the agricultural fringe. Field inspections by the author carried in the summer and fall of 2011 in peripheral informal areas of Greater Cairo confirm that there is wholesale new construction on what had been agricultural land. The reason is due to the disappearance of agents of the State meant to prohibit the

phenomenon. These agents had always been only partly effective, but now they are largely absent, and for a large segment of society the current situation presents a golden opportunity to begin construction.

There have been no studies of this accelerated informal housing construction around Cairo. However, anecdotal information and field observations show that most construction is the classic informal mode of reinforced concrete frame and red brick infill, small building footprints, and progressive, floor-by-floor and even room-by-room

construction. Absent from the current phenomenon are the one-off residential high-rises that had begun to appear in informal areas in the preceding ten years. Perhaps such speculative construction, spawned in a murky world of collusion between investors, lawyers, property agents and local officials, is just too risky in revolutionary Cairo. On the other hand, the individual informal owner-builder, who never relied on the State, avoided its bureaucracy at all costs and relied on personal and community ties, apparently feels no risk.

Spontaneous Popular Committees

Since the revolution there has been a certain increase in efforts to help people in the more deprived informal areas or 'slums' of Greater Cairo. A positive and welcome development in informal areas of Greater Cairo is the spontaneous appearance of popular committees (ligan sha'abiya). As occurred across Cairo, these committees initially performed neighborhood watch functions during the insecurities of the revolution. In many informal areas they have remained and expanded and metamorphosed. These organizations are truly grass roots. Many of these committees have started to engage in addressing community needs such as garbage collection, organization of traffic, protection of citizens and businesses, the reconciliation of disputes, social and health awareness, repair of utilities and securing of vacant land for service needs.

Several alliances have been formed among popular committees in different areas. One of them is the «Federation of Popular Committees in Informal Settlements» which was founded in February 2011. Some of the committees aim at recovering land in and close to informal areas which had been assigned to failed investors for use by needed community services, and others the rehabilitation of utilities and roads, and still others lobbying for the right to social and health insurance for all residents in informal settlements, particularly workers, craftsmen and unemployed. A wide range of youth, including non-politically affiliated, secular, leftist and Muslim Brotherhood, are involved with popular committees in many areas. The Salafists seem to be more reluctant to cooperate or engage with popular committees.

Governments and Foreign Donors: a new start?

As yet, post-revolutionary governments have continued the old regime's approach to informal areas – mainly pure neglect. In complete contrast, the State has been trumpeting a new social housing program which would be highly subsidized and which would be largely a repetition of earlier, Mubarak-era programs. On 11 April 2011, only six weeks after the fall of Mubarak, the Minister of International Cooperation sent out a proposal that called for building a colossal amount of low-cost housing – some one million units in five years,



The abstract one on the arable lands: an acceleration since the Revolution in Cairo. Photo : David Sims

at an estimated program cost of USD 16 billion. The new housing projects would be mostly in the new towns as well as in governorates, with perhaps half of the total in the Greater Cairo Region. The Minister called for international donors to contribute some 50 percent of total costs, equaling a total commitment over the life of the program of over USD 8 billion. In any event, the donors politely declined to participate. Even so, the new National Social Housing Program has remained a government priority, even though there is no significant source for the enormous funds required.

In contrast to government inaction, following the January Revolution international donors have increased their interest in informal areas of Greater Cairo. A number of aid agencies have expanded their activities or are in the process of project formulation. The most prominent of these are sponsored by GIZ, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, AFD and EIB. It should be pointed out, however, that it is not clear that all of the preparatory activities will lead to concrete projects, given the current atmosphere of government suspicion towards foreign activities

in Egypt and the particular bureaucratic conditions that donors stipulate.

Conclusion

To summarize, since the Revolution informal areas of Greater Cairo have seen a much accelerated pace of construction and the appearance of popular committees and more community solidarity and action. But has anyone in the transitional government, or even in the concerned professions and in universities taken notice? Have the needs to upgrade these neighborhoods and improve the lives of the millions upon millions of inhabitants been at least articulated, as social justice and other values of the revolution would dictate? To date there has been an almost deafening silence. There is an initiative currently being prepared by the World Bank to mobilize all parties to look seriously at a comprehensive upgrading program for informal areas of Greater Cairo. However, it remains to be seen if this initiative will succeed in awakening the interests of the incoming elected government, given the difficult financial position the country finds itself in.

“Zones of collective illegality” in Syria: defying a regime

Valérie CLERC

Consultant and researcher at the French Institute for the Near East (IFPO)

Valérie Clerc describes in Syria how the frameworks set up in the years 2000 are coping and how the regime continues to act in favour of informal settlements, even though it seems to have taken a long time to find ways of calming discontent...

Syria has no Tahrir Square that symbolizes revolt but a multiplicity of demonstrations in villages and urban and suburban districts, with the noteworthy exception of Alep and the centre of Damascus. However, although some districts are showing their frustration with the urban development strategies implemented by the Bachar el-Assaad regime, which has been unable to do away with informal settlements, and illegal areas are associated with opposition to the authorities, the maps showing the demonstrations and the informal settlements are far from coinciding. What is specific about the case of Syria is that in the years 2000 the regime had begun to rethink its ways of dealing with informal settlements. In view of this, what are the reasons behind the rebellion and the severity of the crackdown ?

Reframing policies prior to 2011

In 2004, the informal districts of Damascus, or “zones of collective illegality” (moukhalafat al-jamia) as they are known, were home to about 40% of the capital’s population, i.e. about 1.3 million of the total

of 3 million. These districts mainly sprang up in the 1970s and 1980s because the urban planning system was unable to cope with rapid urbanization caused by high demographic growth, the rural exodus and the influx of waves of displaced persons and refugees as a result of regional conflicts.

Since the beginning of the years 2000, the informal settlements have been at the heart of urban policy. When Syria began to open up more rapidly economically in the year 2000, and after the adoption of the “social market economy” in 2005, new urban policies have been introduced with the two-fold goals of achieving liberalization and maintaining social protection.

The Ministry of Local Administration, which is responsible for urban planning, after enacting a series of laws that provided the necessary instruments, set up The Informal Settlements Upgrading Rehabilitation National Programme which was to be implemented with support from the French Development Agency and the European Investment Bank (EIB). In particular, the Municipal Administration Modernization - MAM



View of the Qassioun Mount in Damas: a consolidated informal district. Photo : Valérie Clerc

- programme (2005-2008), which received financial backing from the European Union, engaged researchers of international repute who were unanimously in favour of upgrading measures. It provided a framework for developing projects for districts in six Syrian cities, including two in Damascus (Mont Qassioun, West of Street 30). The Sustainable Urban Development Programme - UDP (2007-2010), managed by the Alep and Damascus Governorates with support from the German Development Agency (GIZ), is in a similar vein. Last, in collaboration with the Rif Damascus Governorate, a programme to improve ten large suburban informal settlements has been set up with assistance from the World Bank

and Cities Alliance. The implementation of these policies has not been well coordinated by the various local administrations and governments. In 2010, no start had been made on any of the projects covered by these programmes.

What impact have the “events” had?

The start of the events on 15 March 2011 was marked by a massive increase in illegal construction, in the form of numerous construction projects without planning permission in formal zones and a large rise in building in informal districts. Based on photos and field visits, officials have estimated that the increase in Damascus was of the order of 10% after a few months. This

estimate is consistent with cement sales in April 2011 which increased by 115% compared to March. During a crisis, households tend to invest in property, which is seen as a safe investment. The State has attempted to limit these activities by asking the General Cement Authority to demand proof of planning permission from its clients prior to any purchase, but the prevailing trend remains.

In January 2011, during and after the revolts in Tunisia and Egypt, the Damascus Governorate has highlighted the social dimension of the Master Plan for the city that is currently being developed. In the case of informal settlements, the political discourse is marked by greater economic realism and, above all, greater social acceptability, which has led to large-scale plans for rehabilitation and urban renewal. This is consistent with the measures that were adopted in mid-February 2011 to avoid

unrest, such as a reduction in taxation on essential food items, an increase in fuel oil subsidies and the recruitment of 67,000 civil servants.

In spite of this, the events have had the immediate effect of slowing, and even freezing, a number of international aid programmes. Ongoing projects have been continued, but planned European funding (EIB/AFD) for the "West of Street 30" project has been frozen and some projects that were being planned, such as EIB and AFD financial support for the national policy to rehabilitate informal settlements, have not been approved. In addition, a number of European and American experts left the country in the spring of 2011- those from the GIZ in April, and those working for the MAM programme in May. They were followed by foreign experts working for the Syrian government, for example those employed by Khatib & Alami, the Le-

banese consulting company in charge of the Damascus Master Plan.

Business as Usual?

The national policy to rehabilitate informal settlements, which was delayed for a time by the change of prime minister, finally got under way in December 2011 with the creation of a public body and a fund for the development and rehabilitation of spontaneous settlements. Since then, the Regional Planning Commission has been asked to identify the different types of districts and pilot projects are under consideration. Urban renovation policy is also making progress, and a second series of building plots has been offered to investors, which encourages them to build rented dwellings. The press mentions that work has restarted on two major projects: the Emaar Properties Eighth Gate in June 2011, and the billion Euro Majid al-Futtaim Properties Fes-

tival City project in August 2011. The government even organized the 7th Tourist Investment Forum in December 2011, proposing forty projects to investors, which allowed the Ministry of Tourism to create the impression of a healthy economy in the midst of the turmoil. Last, development of the Damascus and Rif Damascus Master Plans is continuing. In October 2011, the call for tenders for projects for the informal settlements of Qassioun, Tabbaleh and King Faisal, was re-issued, and there is question of designing a pilot project for the rehabilitation of Mount Qassioun.

To conclude, in spite of the fact that national policies in favour of informal settlements have been continued, and even strengthened, the boom in illegal construction under cover of the events no doubt bears witness, as in other countries, to the inadequacy of the public response to housing demand. ■

Morocco, slum clearance and the "Arab Spring"

Olivier TOUTAIN
Consultant

Since 2003, Morocco has been running a large-scale programme known as "Cities without Slums" that has involved 324,000 households (i.e. 1.6 million people) in more than 1000 areas in 85 towns and cities, almost one-third of which are located in Casablanca. Was the "Arab Spring" less extreme in Morocco mainly due to this large-scale urban programme? With GRET, Olivier Toutain is carrying out an AFD-funded study to appraise the programme and draws somewhat mixed conclusions.

Although the 20 February Movement, the "Moroccan take" on the Arab Spring, made a strong mark on 2011, protests failed

to reach the levels they did in other countries in the region. The mass demonstrations that have recently marked in the Kingdom expressed deep ten-

sions arising from unemployment and the difficult living conditions experienced by the population which is predominantly young and without

prospects. A closer look at these events shows that the demands chiefly related to jobs, social justice, corruption, etc., overshadowing issues such as access to social services and housing, in contrast with the situation in neighbouring Algeria.

Unsanitary housing and slums are nevertheless very much present in Morocco and social housing is in very short supply. The growth of slums stop-



*District of rehousing from a shantytown
in Ain El Aouda in the governorate of Skhirat Témara.
Photo : Olivier TOUTAIN*

ped for a time, when it gave way to the construction of “informal housing”, but it began once again during the years of drought. The 2003 terrorist attacks in Casablanca led to the reintroduction of strong public regulation and the provision of unprecedented resources. This culminated in 2005, immediately after the King Mohammed VI’s accession to the throne, with the launching of the “Cities without Slums Programme” which set out to eliminate slums from the Nation’s urban areas.

A mixed verdict

Since its launch, the Cities without Slums programme can boast some impressive results in terms of figures: more than 174,000 unsanitary dwellings have disappeared from Morocco’s cities and their suburbs, and 46 towns and cities have been pronounced “slum free”. In spite of these results,

the outcome in social terms has been much more mixed.

A 2008 economic and social impact study¹ of the Cities without Slums Programme, shows, over and above its physical achievements, the changes that have affected residents and how the programme has helped improve their living conditions. The first impact study² pointed up several important factors. In spite of an indubitable improvement in their housing conditions, most households are faced with situations that interfere with their daily lives, social ties and ability to integrate within their new district. These difficulties are due to the remoteness and physical isolation of certain residential sites, unfinished works, the general lack of social and community facilities (less than half the planned public facilities had been built at the time of the survey) and appropriate

public services. The problems are even greater at the most socially sensitive sites (where there is a high concentration of population, poor households and youth unemployment and where social diversity is low, etc.). Some Cities without Slums projects, such as those in Agadir, are intended ultimately to house a population of 100,000, of which a third will be from cleared slums.

A programme that reflects the “Arab Spring”

At the time of the first survey, only slightly more than half the households were living in their plot of land and many others were in a transitional position or waiting. In addition, in spite of the large amounts of public funding that had been made available, a considerable proportion of households had been unable to pay for their dwelling as a result of extreme hardship (household heads with health problems, widowed or divorced single women...) or because of litigation or disputes between family members or the households sharing a plot. The last group of households become impoverished after they have moved into their new home, even though the “associated third parties” financing experiment in Casablanca³ shows that solutions exist (two families living on the same plot receive help from a third in return for part of the building).

Ultimately, this appraisal casts doubt on the social sustainability and economic efficiency of the operations. It shows how difficult it is to approach the issue of slum clearance solely from the standpoint of housing

and access to basic services – even though these are extremely important – without linking it to the other dimensions (social, economic and urban) which affect the living conditions of households.

The Cities without Slums Programme aside, at a more general level, the issue in Morocco is to eradicate unsanitary or insecure housing and provide access to decent homes. Recent informal housing demolition projects⁴ in Agadir, which has been awarded “slum-free” status, shows that urban housing remains an important issue, particularly for deprived social groups. After the Arab Spring and the slackening of control on the ground, just when the capital city of Souss was clearing its last slums, it has been forced to cope with the large-scale reappearance of informal housing. The return of informal housing highlights how difficult it is for the public authorities to satisfy demand from new households, which is still very strong in Morocco, particularly among those that are unable to obtain to regular housing. To meet this challenge, policies other than massive destruction will be needed in the future. Otherwise, there is a real danger that unrest and social demands will become more serious and that protest movements and even violence will increase in the districts and among the social groups that have decided to demand their rights.

1. Conducted by the GRET-AREA group
 2. At the time of writing, the results of the second survey are not yet available.
 3. For example, the Essalam Al Loghlam project in Casablanca rehoused the inhabitants of the “Karian Thomas” slum where the suicide bombers responsible for the 2003 terrorist attacks were born.
 4. Demolition carried out in early 2012.

Declaration on sustainable urban development adopted in Strasbourg on 10 November 2011 by the countries of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)

The Ministers of the member states of the UfM adopted a declaration on sustainable urban development in Strasbourg on 10 November 2011. This declaration puts the city back at the centre its region, sets out principles that are shared by the member countries (need for an integrated global strategy and governance that is closer to the grassroots and more participative, recognition of the role of the private sector and major donors, the need for cooperation between countries, cities and practitioners...) and takes formal note of consensus around topics such as adaptation to climate change, access to water and sanitation, affordable energy efficiency, adaptation to natural and technological hazards and cross-border cooperation. It calls for the development of a sustainable urban strategy around the Mediterranean

based on the development of common standards, support for the initiatives of major donors with a view to creating tangible projects, an advisability study for an urban agency and the creation of a list of the top urban innovation projects. The work of implementation is already under way, with assistance from the UfM General Secretariat. Two meetings that will bring together countries and stakeholders were held in March and May to give substance to these recommendations.

Colas DURLEMAN

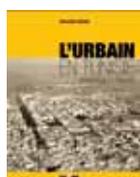
Project leader

Area-based action, Directorate for Housing, Urban Planning and the Landscape, Ministry of Equipment, Transport and Housing



This issue is financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the French Development Agency

Publications



• *L'urbain en Tunisie*
Morched Chabbi
Processus et projets,
Tunis, Nirvana,
2012

Nirvana, a Tunis-based publishing house, has recently published this roundup of the urban planner and sociologist Morched Chabbi's work over the last thirty years under the title "L'urbain en Tunisie. Processus et projets" ("The urban reality in Tunisia. Processes and projects"). This publication is an authoritative source of information about Tunisian urban planning. In particular it provides a detailed analysis of the policies that have been implemented to deal with informal areas since the 1970s and shows the role they have played in legitimizing the Bourguiba and the Ben Ali regimes in turn.



• *Syrie, l'État de barbarie*
Michel Seurat (pref. Gilles Kepel et Olivier Mongin)
Syrie, l'État de barbarie republishes some seminal writings by Michel Seurat that were originally published in collections that are now out of print.

These studies of clans, towns and cities, Alawi and Islamist urban militia and the Muslim Brotherhood, provide some essential keys for understanding the issues and divisions of today at a time when the Arab world has embarked on one of the most important phases of upheaval in its history.

Series: Proche-Orient Paris, PUF, 2012. 288 pages, 15 x 21.7 cm, paperback.

• *Coopération décentralisée et intercommunalités (35 p.)*
MAEE / CNCD
2012

Produced by a working group in which the «Club International» played an active part, this handbook is a substantial update of the previous version that dates back to 2004. After a survey of the issues relating to decentralized development aid, it gives a handy description of the legal and regulatory framework and goes on to provide practical assistance for those setting up a decentralized development aid programme.

This compact publication comes with a useful webography but further information is nevertheless still available at: <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/enjeux-internationaux/cooperation-decentralisee/>

In brief

Document collection

The Centre for Documentary Resources on Housing Planning and Nature (CRDALN) at the Ministry of the Environment, Sustainable Development, Transport and Leisure (MEDDTL) has a collection of more than 100,000 volumes and subscribes to 800 periodicals.

Since 2009 it has added water, biodiversity, landscapes, raw materials to the areas it covers and, since 2011, raw materials on cities in developing and emerging countries that were managed before by ISTD.

The **database** provides online access to announcements and documents: <http://portail.documentation.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/crdaln/index.xsp>

The conditions of public access to the library are given at: <http://www.cdu.urbanisme.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/accueil-en-bibliotheque-r194.html>

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Contact : crdaln.sg@developpement-durable.gouv.fr

The Director-General of UNESCO appeals for protection of Syria's cultural heritage (30 March 2012). <http://whc.unesco.org/fr/actualites/862>

Publication Manager:
Yves Dauge, maire-adjoint de Chinon

Editor-in-Chief:
Olivier Mourareau,
Association des professionnels de
l'urbain ADP-Villes en développement

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This edition was carried out with the collaboration of Pierre-Arnaud Barthel, Université Paris-13, LATTS, French Institut of town planning.

Technical secretariat of the PFVT :

Editor:
Irène Salenson
Editorial Secretary:
Lorba Drewry

Translation :
Kevin Riley

Printed by
Imprimerie Centrale de Lens

ISSN 1151 – 1672

Subscription: 4 n^{os} per year : 20 euros

Technical secretariat of
The French Alliance for Cities and
Territorial Development
French Development Agency
5, rue Roland Barthes
75012 PARIS
pfvt@afd.fr