

City Development Strategy in Tunis, Tunisia

Tunisia is a middle-income country undergoing a process, initiated in the beginning of the 1990s, of integrating its economy into the regional and global systems. Tunisian cities have become the heart of development in the country, with two thirds of the national population of 10 million living in urban areas. The city of Tunis, with over 2 million inhabitants, is already the economic and political capital of Tunisia. It produces one quarter of the national wealth of Tunisia. Tunis has a central contribution to make to the country's economic and social growth, and the city aspires to also play a large and positive role in the region and globally.

| Tunis, Tunisia | | |
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| Background | Process | Outcomes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population 700,000 (1995), greater Tunis area 2 million Local economy- tourism, industry 37% of national income in greater Tunis area. High per capita income (\$3,000) slow-down in economy, rising unemployment (13%) major programme for informal housing upgradation The national plan (1997-2001) had a main theme, global upgrading 'mise à niveau' of the economy. The Tunis CDS was set within this framework to make Tunis a competitive Mediterranean metropolis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CDS begun in March 2002 Federation of Tunisian Municipalities (FNVT) and the city of Tunis bring together a diverse group of stakeholders. Strategic Vision – transforming Tunis to a competitive Mediterranean metropolis, focus on right to citizenship, develop historical and cultural identity, preserving natural environment, and strengthening local capacities Support of national government and private sector. No organized civil society groups exist in the city | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A 'Livre Blanc' prepared for municipal council Municipal council approves the strategic vision and priority action plans in November 2001 Investment package for the action plan to be ready by December 2001 National and local resources likely to be earmarked for implementation of the action plan |

However, despite its dominance of the national economy and best-educated workforce in the country, Tunis has not attracted its full share of foreign investment, which is more often attracted to neighbouring governorates where industrial areas are not saturated. High unemployment rates demonstrate that the work force, however skilled, is not adapted to the demands of a modern economy. 35% of the youth of Tunis, aged between 18 and 24, are unemployed. Poverty has become more urbanised, informal settlements continue to spread in the city and the efforts to upgrade this housing have not met the pace of its growth. Green space in the city is diminishing rapidly.

Local governments in the Tunisian context have seen increased decentralisation with the Local Authorities Law passed in 1975. There are now 259 municipalities in the country and all have greater scope and responsibilities, thanks also to new urban planning and land use code (1994). Training for local leaders and officials has been on the rise, as have better structures for municipal investment. But despite these positive changes, municipalities suffer from both a lack of financial and human resources and are not able to fully cope with the growing needs of the urban population. They have not been in a position to undertake activities or planning for the future, nor to exploit the opportunities of a regional or global nature. This has been compounded by the low contribution of NGOs in Tunisia, with few groups local development groups organised.

Tunis therefore presents a contrasting picture of a city with tremendous potential and resources facing growing economic and social challenges. The CDS process in Tunis proved to be an innovative initiative in participatory planning. Traditionally perceived as a national rather than local activity, the CDS mobilized many institutional stakeholders without a previous history of working together. The CDS focus was mainly on the economic development of Tunis, and this was due in part to the lack of organised groups of the poor to fully influence the process.

Three institutions took the lead in the Tunis CDS: the municipality of Tunis, the National Federation of Tunisian Cities (FVNT) and UMP Tunisia. Joint project teams were established to coordinate and monitor the process, and the Mayor of Tunis played a very important leadership role. Many technical departments of the municipality have begun to develop inter-sectoral activities as a result of the CDS process.

The CDS process in Tunis is not yet fully complete. Much has been achieved, however, in the process thus far. Six working groups, which included experts in the area, were established around the six thematic areas identified for the CDS process. These were economic development, environmental protection, transportation, municipal development and finance, urban and regional planning and communication. Working groups met regularly and brought together approximately 30 representatives of the city and ministerial departments as well as civil society, universities and the private sector. A monitoring committee and the municipal council acted as the two main consultation bodies for the work. The monitoring committee was an enlarged decision-making body, integrating input and feedback on general orientations from the main non-municipal actors of the city.

Following the meetings of the working groups and various bodies over the course of the process, a diagnostic report on the status of development in the city of Tunis was developed and approved by the Steering Committee in July 2001. The preliminary strategy report that grew from this was also discussed and approved. This report covers development for the city until 2010. The two main outputs of the CDS process are the Strategic Plan (vision for the city) and the Action Plan. The Strategic Plan, or White Book, was completed in February 2002. This was discussed with the City Council and various stakeholders from public, private and NGO sectors in March 2002. It is a result of the consensus developed through the CDS process, and is the fruit of several months of consultation undertaken with the different groups of stakeholders and dozens of meetings headed by the Mayor of Tunis or his representatives (municipal advisors) held during 2001. The main actions and strategic projects of the action plan have been identified. The investment packages for the action plan are being developed and will be finalized by the end of June 2002.

Within the Strategic Plan, the vision for the city of Tunis was agreed. It translates into five “strategic choices” as follows:

1. Propelling Tunis to the rank of a competitive and attractive Mediterranean metropolis;
2. Transforming Tunis into a city for all where each can express their right to citizenship;
3. Developing the historical and cultural identity of Tunis;
4. Enhancing natural assets and preserving the environment, and;
5. Providing Tunis with enhanced capacities to plan and manage its development.

Each strategic choice was elaborated into a number of priority actions to realise the vision, and the relevant authorities are now considering the feasibility of these actions.

Many articles were published in the local written press on the process, the targets and the output of Tunis CDS. This communication process sets the stage for expanded consultations in the future, and for the debate to include the citizens of the city at large. Additional efforts are now required in order to mobilize economic actors and involve them in the process, especially the managers of services companies, industrials, hotel managers and traders. Plans are underway to target these stakeholders specifically.

In order to complete the CDS process, a series of activities and outputs were planned. The Strategic Plan was validated through a participatory seminar, and a media campaign was implemented to disseminate the plan and the Tunis CDS Process. Training is expected to be held for those involved in municipal services around the implementation of the plan. A Priority Action Plan (2002-2005) for the development of the city of Tunis will be developed in consultation with all institutional partners of the municipality and will stand as a

formal agreement between them. A Priority Plan of institutional development for the Municipality of Tunis will also be developed.

Evaluation and Lessons:

The CDS in Tunis has allowed a strategic debate that no single institution had managed to launch in the past, based on a holistic approach to the City. This broad participation and application, however innovative, has also been source of difficulties. There is no municipal tradition for inter-sectoral or integrated planning. The deeply sectoral working habits of the municipality meant that a tremendous amount of support was required through the process, mostly with the technical staff of the city, but also with municipal council members who were not familiar with such an approach.

There is no single institution responsible for "thinking" of the city development in Tunis. This makes partnership building a particularly lengthy process. Many of the thematic areas of the CDS are not dealt with by the municipality (although they fall within municipal prerogatives), and most of those areas concern a multiplicity of institutional partners with no tradition for cooperation. This process has been all the more difficult because of the broad scale, which goes beyond the city itself.

The CDS process has shown that there are almost no urban development associations in the capital city. This situation clearly puts a limit on civil society involvement for any consultation process, but also makes it rather difficult for municipal actors to find adequate partners to work with for the definition and implementation of local strategies. The CDS did highlight the high demand placed on this type of strategic planning from municipal institutions throughout the country. Formal requests for technical assistance in the CDS process have already been received from other cities.

The factions that have made the implementation of the Tunis CDS difficult could also prove to be a major obstacle for its implementation if a institutional development plan is not elaborated and measures are not taken regarding the development of planning and communication functions, the institutionalization of the relationships with the citizens and the establishment of an "urban workshop" that can function in an independent way.

It was difficult to involve businessmen in Tunis CDS, and a targeted strategy of these actors should be developed. In addition, the press broadcast data on Tunis CDS but without real added value. It would be useful to consider sensitizing the media on urban questions and challenges so their reporting would be more meaningful and could contribute to achieving the goals of the CDS.

This issue of gender was at the centre of the target "Tunis, city for all, men and women". The particular situation of poor women, in both the medina and the suburbs, has a major place in the action plan and in priority actions in the Medina and in Sejoumi zone. The differential practices (men and women) in public spaces, such as downtown streets and coffee shops, is also part of the debate. It is interesting to note that the CDS process sparked other activities which were not central but which show a positive understanding and involvement in participatory planning. For example, a group of about fifty women participating in the CDS process (elected and municipal leaders, city planners, architects and others) invaded coffee shops where usually few women are present. This practice was renewed once a week after Ramadan. Their slogan was "the re-appropriation of the City".