Street Children in Tunisia

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Approach:

Street children represent a social phenomenon resulting, mainly, from a precarious economic situation. Poverty is a key factor. In this communication we will focus on two aspects of the issue:

1- the social phenomenon of street children

2- Current spatial solutions to the phenomenon in Tunisia
I- Street children as a social phenomenon

According to some specialists the number of street children amounts almost 10000 distributed over different regions in the country. Among them more than 3000 are in the capital Tunis.
Tunisia has:

• **A child protection code** established in 1995,
• **laws** that protect children's rights
• **Signature and commitment in various international conventions** dedicated to childhood
• **Institutions and structures** for childhood **protection** and **support**
Yet, according to the report on the analysis of Tunisian children's situation led in 2020 by UNICEF, Tunisian government and Tunisian civil society, 215,700 children aged between 5 and 17 years work in Tunisia, of whom 5.4% are aged between 5 and 12 years. 12.8% of children aged 13 to 15 are employed and 7.9% of them do hazardous work.

It should be noted that Article 53 of the Tunisian labor code stipulates that children under the age of 16 cannot be employed in all activities governed by this code.
Activities such as begging, washing car windows at traffic lights, selling bouquets of jasmine or flowers, paper handkerchiefs, or even collecting plastic bottles from garbage cans and public dumps are often practiced by street children.
Current spatial solutions to the phenomenon in Tunisia

In addition to associations that are part of civil society, only three types of government institutions in Tunisia are authorized to take care of street children. We present three of them which are supervised by these two ministries.

Ministry of Social Affairs
Ministry of Women, Children, and the Elderly
Centers for social guidance and orientation, under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs

Geographical coverage: Governorates of Tunis, Sousse and Sfax

These centers take care of several categories of underprivileged people or people in difficulty, including street children. They do not have a large capacity and offer stays that are limited in time (a few weeks at most). They provide orientation and temporary accommodation facilities for street children and try to place them in more permanent reception centers.
Example:
Center for guidance and social orientation in ZAHROUNI, Tunis

located in a popular neighborhood at a distance of 10 km from downtown, limited on the north side by a forest and on the south side by a residential area.

Children do not have specific spaces for them

Urban transect, by Ishraq Rouatbi
The space is not specifically designed to accommodate children.
Social Protection Centers for Children
under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs

Geographical coverage: Governorates of Tunis and Sidi Bouzid

Beneficiaries:
- Children in difficulty of both sexes or at risk aged between 6 and 18 years old and following a decision of the family judge or the delegates of the child protection.
- Children (particularly girls) born out of wedlock.
- Children (particularly girls) born into broken families.
- Children (particularly girls) living in families where one of the parents is violent.
Example:

Social Protection Center of the Childhood, Zahrouni, Tunis

Offers limited activities and not enough learning opportunities for children.
Integrated Youth and Children's Centers,
Under the supervision of Ministry of Family, Women, Children and the Elderly

These centers take care of children without support. There are 22 of them spread over 17 governorates of the country.

Beneficiaries:
- Children who live in one of the difficult situations mentioned in article 20 of the child protection code.
- Children aged between 6 and 18 yo
- Pursuing education or vocational training
- Be in good physical and mental health
- Be able to live with groups of children

They provide medical, psychological and educational care for these children.
Example:

Integrated youth and children Center, Le Bardo, Tunis

There is no green area. Children feel under pressure.

Children do not have specific area in the neighborhood.

Urban transect of Integrated youth and children Center, Le Bardo, Tunis by Ishraq Rouatbi
Conclusion:

The number of public institutions dedicated to take care of street children is insufficient. These institutions have a low capacity. They do not offer these children opportunity to integrate into society or to take charge of their lives and be autonomous at the age of 18 when the law obliges them to leave their institution.

Tunisian strategy of care for street children must change both in terms of its programs and spaces it offers. It must ensure social inclusion of these children during and after their care.

The question is:

How to ensure social inclusion of street children and in which way architecture may participate to that?
Study cases:

MADE IN THE STREETS SCHOOL

MITS is a non-profit organization founded by Charles and Darlene Clouston in 1995

accommodation Learning center Skills center

BAYTI ASSOCIATION

BAYTI is a non-governmental non-profit organization founded in 1994 after the alarming numbers that reached 30,000 children in 2013

recovery from the street educational follow-up Farming workshop
The term "social cohesion" means the presence of strong solidarity and social bonds in a group or an organization.

Social cohesion is about finding a balance between individuals by reducing inequalities without denying the specific needs of each.

Integration: reinventing society to enable people who are discriminated against to come closer and become part of society.

Inclusion: willingness to adapt to each other, that is, to change society so that it adapts to all instead of changing people so that they adapt to it.
“if we want to achieve a high level of social cohesion, it is obvious that we need an architectural response.”
Amin ISAA, he has been trained in the agricultural sector. He currently works at the farm

2007

Association

Handicaped children

Mohamed amine, the first success story of the farm

the official photographer

This association has succeeded in one way or another in

The socio-professional inclusion for these children
accommodation

gathering space
/kitchen dining area

pet therapy instructor

agriculture, horticulture

repairs and maintenance

processing of local products

from the farm

garden

playground

garden

Centre Snad
Habitation
Terre agricole
Extention of the entertainment area
Arts and crafts studio
Accessible rooftop
Accommodation
Entertainment area
Dining area/ kitchen
Playground
Training workshops
1. Transformation of local products
2. Repairs and maintenance
3. Zootherapy animator
4. Agriculture/horticulture
5. Dining area/kitchen
6. Entertainment area
7. Accommodation
8. Supervisor’s accommodation
9. Main courtyard

Ground floor plan

First floor plan
10. Extension of the entertainment area
11. Accessible rooftop
12. Handicrafts workshop
Bibliography:

- **Analysis reports and studies:**
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- **Architecture final thesis:**
  Isaq Rouatbi encadrée par Samia Gallouzi, De l’exclusion à l’inclusion, Un centre d’accueil pour les enfants de la rue, juillet 2021
  Ecole nationale d’architecture et d’urbanisme de Tunis, Université de Carthage.

- **Web-based documents**
  [https://nawaat.org/2016/05/10/les-enfants-mendiants-envahissent-les-rues-de-kasserine/](https://nawaat.org/2016/05/10/les-enfants-mendiants-envahissent-les-rues-de-kasserine/).
Thank you for your attention.
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