Tourists' walking rhythms: 'doing' the Tunis Medina, Tunisia

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary medina of Tunis is intimately connected to the various urban development stages of the city at large. Despite its UNESCO status and undisputable attractions, the medina is peripheral to Tunisian tourism development. Yet its maze of streets is walked on a daily basis by numerous tourists, who bring flair, choreographies and rhythms which also constitute the medina. While there are a growing number of studies focusing on tourists' movements, using technologies that allow for accurate mapping of timespace trajectories, I argue that we have much to learn from the embodied ways in which tourists move in an unknown terrain. Inspired by Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis, this paper explores tourists' rhythms and modes of walking, including their performances, body languages, stops and advances, and gaze interactions. Drawing on a combination of mobile methodologies, interviews and online comments, I argue that tourists engage in many different walking rhythms, which shift quickly according to the situation. It is the complex manner in which tourist bodies, rhythms and urban forms intersect within the contemporary city that contributes to the construction of the city itself.

Rythmes des touristes à pied: promenade dans la Medina à Tunis, en Tunisie

RÉSUMÉ

La médina contemporaine de Tunis est étroitement liée aux différentes étapes de l'ensemble du développement urbain de la ville. Malgré son statut d'UNESCO et ses attractions touristiques incontestables, la médina est secondaire par rapport au développement touristique tunisien. Pourtant, au quotidien, de nombreux touristes se promènent dans le dédale de ses ruelles et apportent une touche de style, des chorégraphies et des rythmes, qui eux aussi constituent la médina. Bien qu'il y ait un nombre croissant d'études qui se concentrent sur les mouvements des touristes, en utilisant des technologies qui permettent une cartographie exacte des trajectoires spatio-temporelles, je soutiens que nous avons beaucoup à apprendre des façons incarnées dont les touristes se déplacent sur un terrain inconnu. Inspiré de l'analyse du rythme de Lefebvre, cet article explore les rythmes et les modes de promenade des touristes, incluant leurs comportements, langage corporel, arrêts et progrès, ainsi que les

interactions de leurs regards. En m'appuyant sur un ensemble de méthodologies modernes, d'entretiens et de commentaires en ligne, je soutiens que les touristes pratiquent de nombreux rythmes de déambulations, qui changent vite selon la situation. C'est la façon complexe dont les corps des touristes, les rythmes et les formes urbaines se croisent dans une grande ville contemporaine qui contribue à la construction de la ville même.

Los ritmos de caminar de los turistas: 'haciendo' la Medina de Túnez, Túnez

RESUMEN

La medina de Túnez contemporánea está íntimamente conectada con las diferentes etapas de desarrollo urbano de la ciudad en general. A pesar de haber sido reconocida como patrimonio mundial por la UNESCO y de sus atractivos indiscutibles, la medina se mantiene periférica al desarrollo turístico de Túnez. Sin embargo, su laberinto de calles es transitado diariamente por numerosos turistas, que aportan estilo, coreografías y ritmos que también constituyen la medina. Si bien hay un número creciente de estudios que se centran en los movimientos de turistas, utilizando tecnologías que permiten obtener una cartografía precisa de las trayectorias de espacio y tiempo, se argumenta que tenemos mucho que aprender de las formas corporales en la que los turistas se mueven en un terreno desconocido. Inspirado por el análisis del ritmo de Lefebvre, este trabajo explora los ritmos y modos de caminar de los turistas, incluyendo sus actuaciones, lenguajes corporales, paradas y avances e interacciones de miradas. Sobre la base de una combinación de metodologías móviles, entrevistas y comentarios en línea, se argumenta que los turistas se involucran en muchos ritmos para caminar diferentes, que cambian rápidamente de acuerdo a la situación. Es la manera compleja en la que los cuerpos de los turistas, los ritmos y las formas urbanas se cruzan dentro de la ciudad contemporánea lo que contribuye a la construcción de la propia ciudad.

Viewed from a certain angle, the geography of the city merges with the equally indistinguishable geography of thought and its very (im)possibility. A *labyrinth* city, a *rhizome* city, the Medina is the perfect reflection of thoughts that are intertwined, step by step, as one follows its paths. (Bensmaïa, 2003, p. 30)

Introduction

On a sunny morning, a group of tourists just arrived from Palermo, Sicily, step off the MCS Preziosa, a luxurious resort-like cruise ship docked in the port of La Goullete, Tunisia. Having read a glossy coloured brochure which describes the medina as a 'colourful world (…) a lively district for shopping, Arabian style (…) a shopper's delight' (MSC Cruises, 2014), they make the 18-km journey to Tunis by taxi. Apparently prepared for an 'oriental' adventure – sunny hat on the head, sturdy shoes on, camera wrist straps in place – the medina is on the cruise shore excursions menu, one of the sights to be collected, firmly established as a 'must see' in their imagination. They are joined by many other western tourists coming from nearby resorts and hotels, and will literally bump into numerous others in the medina. As they ramble the 'exciting labyrinth laden with secrets, narrow alleyways, small shops, huge

mosques and palaces' (MSC Cruises, 2014), as they are confronted by the city fabric, they will also encounter sellers, guides and passing-by locals and, for some time during that day, multiple choreographies will blend in rhythmic and arrhythmic ensembles.

The movement of bodies in the city, their textures and empirical sensitivities, at times denoting fear, joy, determination, objectivity or aimless performance, will result in dynamic intersections that themselves constitute the city. As Sassen (1999) argued, cities are places where different temporalities of action come into friction. As a practice, walking involves various paces and rhythms, and has always been central to the production and experience of cities (Crang, 2001; de Certeau, 1984; Featherstone, 1998; Lefebvre, 2004; Wunderlich, 2008). At the same time, walking has long been one of the key ways in which tourists move through and negotiate space. Walking is a significant means by which tourism and tourism spaces are constructed (Edensor, 2010; Solnit, 2000), from the promenade anglaise to hiking trails and heritage sites.

To grasp the walking rhythms of tourists visiting the medina of Tunis, Tunisia, this paper draws on Lefebvre's (2004) unfinished work on rhythmanalysis, with its emphasis on the relativity of rhythms, and the subtleties of regarding rhythm as a focus for analysis. In an attempt to complement some of Lefebvre's concepts, I also take on board de Certeau (1984) notions of strategies and tactics, which are useful to unravel some of the specific ways in which the medina is constructed. Strategies and tactics help us to think about tourist spaces and tourists' movements and pauses. Since the medina is a place almost exclusively visited on foot, understanding tourists' walking rhythms and their experience in what can, for them, be considered a novel and strange place of alleys and obscure streets is central to the under-standing of the medina itself. Thus, I also make use of Wunderlich (2008) descriptive cate-gories of different types of urban walking. In an attempt to bridge the abstraction of concepts and a more concrete analysis of the medina, I employ four main methods of data collection and experience, which are detailed further below. I follow tourists throughout the medina – a novel strategy which I call 'shadowing-at-a-distance' – observing their interactions and encounters; I contrast their rhythms with my own when we roam the alleyways and streets; I interview them informally at one of the medina's entrances; and I interlace these experiences and remarks with various comments about their visits left on Trip Advisor, an online forum for travellers. This combination of methods allows me to arrive at a more concrete rhyth-manalysis of the medina of Tunis, offering a new perspective on tourists' modes of walking and contingent urban choreographies, in a way that challenges rigid categories.

What follows is divided into four main sections. First I look at conceptual issues raised by Lefebvre in his quest to grasp rhythmanalysis; second I take a close look at the medina of Tunis and at the ways in which it has been constructed through time; third I proceed to explain the methodological strategies used to empirically analyse tourist rhythms in the medina; fourth I discuss and analyse the tourists' co-creation of the medina's daily rhythms and relate these back to Lefebvre's work.

Rhythmanalysis and tourist walking

There is a long history of work addressing body rhythms and walking in the city. In the 1960s, Time Geography attempted to escape 'the flat map with its static patterns and think in terms of a world on the move (…)' (Hägerstrand, 1982, p. 323), and to investigate the pulsing of the city and the flows of people through its networks. While this research dealt with people's

constraints and possibilities when moving, it focused on the measurable and the mappable, emphasizing a 'geography of traces of action' (Crang, 2001, p. 194). Its linear understanding of time, presenting people as unsensual and disembodied (Edensor, 2010) has echoes in contemporary research that attempts to track and map tourists' movements (see below).

Lefebvre's (2004, p. 28) discussion of the 'multiplicity of noises, murmurs, rhythms' from his apartment view at Rue Rambuteau, contrasts with the Lund School and time geographic perspectives, as for him 'no camera, no image or series of images can show these rhythms' (pp. 30, 31). In *Elements of Rhythmanalysis* (2004), Lefebvre attempted to develop an awareness and appreciation of rhythm, seeking to turn it into a general theory or even a science, in a quest to understand the everyday, as part of a project that started more than two decades earlier with the *Critique of Everyday Life*. Although criticized for not pointing to any clear method for its execution (Crang, 2001), Lefebvre not only developed the idea that (different) cities have different rhythms and distinct temporalities, but he also emphasized the notion that plural rhythms coexist in the city and structure everyday life (Crang, 2001). Furthermore, Lefebvre argued that rhythm, as a relational concept, involves an ensemble of time and space. Expressed slightly differently, rhythm implies a temporalized place, and calls for an attentive look at the particular properties of place. On the one hand, it all starts with the rhythmanalyst drawing 'on his [*sic*] breathing, the circulation of his blood, the beatings of his heart and the delivery of his speech as landmarks' (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 21). On the other hand, a rhythm is slow or lively only in relation to other rhythms. The conjunction of all these rhythms results in an unstable and dynamic polyrhythm ensemble, which is underlined by irreproducible cyclical (days, seasons, years) or linear repetitions (the noise of an engine, the blows of a hammer). Studying and understanding these ensembles, the interactions and interferences between rhythms, is the task of the rhythmanalyst.

Tourism involves a particular rhythmic way of being in the world, and tourists produce varied rhythms in urban space, orchestrating, adapting, blending their movements with pre-existing others, building transient and cyclical movements, and temporarily inhabiting fleeting identity formations in a particular time and place (Solnit, 2000). The figure of the tourist as a walker takes us back to Baudelaire's/Benjamin's *flâneur*, the observer and outsider who walks aimlessly, attempting to immerse 'himself' in the sensations of the city, alternating between crowded streets and quiet places so as to record notes and impressions, charting an ever-changing rhythm of involvement and detachment (see Featherstone, 1998).

Yet the flâneur is not common in the medina. Thus, I would also like to engage here with Wunderlich (2008) three different types of walking practices: 'purposive walking', which refers to a need, a task, a walking to or walking towards, performed at a rapid and constant pace; 'discursive walking', which, like urban roaming, is spontaneous, varying in pace and rhythm, and in which the route is more important than the destination; and 'conceptual walking', which is prepared and reflective, in which walking is more important than the journey. These three categories may help us to think about tourists in the medina, not only how they walk, move and engage with an unknown terrain, but also the extent to which they look for or avoid interaction and encounter.

Tourists move and walk in distinct fashions (Edensor, 2000, p. 338). Sometimes they do so independently, in more or less controlled places, such as theme parks, bazaars or festivals; other times tourists follow the rigid directions of tour guides (Edensor, 1998, 2000). While in the last decades, tourist mobilities have diversified significantly (Hop on – hop off bus systems, balloons and helicopters, cable cars, bicycles, tuk-tuks, amphibious buses, and so on),

allowing tourists to engage with urban space with varying degrees of detachment, walking is the only way to visit the medina of Tunis.

Yet walking, involving slower rhythms than those offered by many other modes of mobility, and encompassing direct contact with the crowd in unknown landscapes, requires certain skills. As Edensor (2000) emphasizes, places and obstacles encountered when walking may render space hostile. Knowing where to turn, which route to follow, how to circle obstacles, and so on, demands preparation and instinct. Walking the medina is as much linked to its morphology as to the ways in which tourists think and imagine this space. Thus, to grasp tourists' rhythms it is important to contextualize the medina of Tunis in the urban Arab world. This is to consider its development within the broader urban context, the tourism environments and contours or, in Lefebvre's words, its temporalized space. As Lefebvre (2004, p. 89) has remarked 'rhythm is always linked to such and such a place, to its place, be that the heart, the fluttering of the eyelids, the movement of a street or the tempo of a waltz'. This is the focus of the following section.

The medina of Tunis

It is not a surprise that the medina of Tunis conjures fear and creates anxiety among western tourists. 'The word "Arab City" evokes a multitude of images, preconceptions and stereotypes' (Elsheshtawy, 2008, p. 3). Despite its many variations, Bianca (2000) claimed there is a distinct urban tradition in the Middle East, around the Mediterranean and in the Balkans, sustained by the separation of public and private spaces and by the social value attached to privacy and safety. Historically, Arab-Islamic urban spaces were characterized by organic growth, the absence of geometric land division, as well as by formal open public spaces. While these conceptions may certainly be questioned as being part of Orientalist generalizations about the Arab city (Abu-Lughod, 1987), in the tourism industry there is a particular and established way of thinking the Islamic-Arab city which, as Timothy and Daher (2009) argue, is Orientalist in nature. Fashioned as unchanged since antiquity, with endless and confusing winding streets and cul-de-sacs, exotic, unknown and dangerous, this view intersects with Said's (1978, p. 201) argument of 'a fairly constant sense of confrontation felt by Westerners dealing with the East', and is connected to a wider image of the Arab world constructed in the western popular media. This image, as Aziz (2001, pp. 151, 152) describes, revolves around 'a palette consisting mostly of stereotypes of patriarchal oppression, harsh environments, religious fundamentalism, political unrest, cultural intolerance and irrational violence'.

Stambouli (1996) illustrated how the intense transformation of Tunis in previous decades made it obsolete to think of the city in its classical tripartite way. The medina (the old Arab, medieval quarter of the city, often walled); the European city or Ville Nouvelle (as in other North African cities, this refers to the modern city outside the medina, built in colonial times); and the *gourbiville* or *bidonville* (the informal city or shantytown), are no longer the only three elements of the city or metropolis. Particular Tunis' peripheries became the 'main theatre and the city region as its future horizon' (Stambouli, 1996, p. 55), and as in many other cities in the Middle East and North Africa, the medina lost its functional and symbolic centrality with the colonial encounter and with the construction of the Ville Nouvelle. These twin processes led to the departure of many wealthy families, who established themselves outside the historic city in newer villas or in peripheral areas of the city (McGuinness, 2000). From the 1930s a great influx of rural people occupied various empty buildings,

counterbalancing the significant numbers that had left the medina (25% by the country's independence in 1956). Of the 28,776 Europeans living in the medina in 1956, only 1280 were left 10 years later (Sebag, 1998). By 1968, two-thirds of the population was of rural origin (Stambouli, 1996), maintaining close links with their regions and traditional ways of life, as manifest in their clothing, food habits and dialect. Urban pressure led to the rise of collective housing, or oukalas, which accommodated 90% of the medina population by 1985. Eventually, the urban decay led to a population decline: from 168,000 in 1956, to 109,000 in 1995 and then to around 100,000 by the early 2000s (Yaiche, 2004).This profound transformation was accompanied by a degradation of the physical fabric and built heritage, which was considered to be in a bad state of conservation or almost in ruins (UNESCO, 2013). Yet, in 1979 a property of nearly 300 ha was inscribed in the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites, a classification which, together with the role of the *Association de Sauvegarde de la Médina* (ASM), promoted a few one-off operations, which attempted to reverse decline (Abdelkafi, 1989; McGuinness, 1997). Today, in tune with the geography of poverty of many other historic medinas (Daher, 2007), there is a large urban poor population living in the midst of areas of former historic splendour (Cernea, 2008, p. 133), areas which are still off-route to most tourists.

The touristic city also changed and a good example of that is the successful town of Sidi Bou Saïd, 17 km from the old city, but now part of Greater Tunis. Its development is based upon and linked to the very opposite characteristics that contribute to the recent decline to Tunis Medina. Sidi is an old settlement, which firstly grew as a holy site, and later, from the late nineteenth century, as a refuge for artists and intellectuals, a kind of Tunisian Montmartre, among whom were Paul Klee, Henri Matisse, Baron Rodolphe d'Erlanger and André Guide, and later Michel Foucault in the 1960s.[1] Located on a hill and having full open views of the Mediterranean – fitting with Lefebvre's (2004) description of the solar Mediterranean cities – it has an irregular medieval morphology but also wide streets with plenty of light. It 'recently' adopted a white wash and blue doors and windows style (from the original yellow or greenish), which became the idiosyncratic 'traditional' Tunisian. In the 1970s and 1980s, several wealthy families traded the medina for Sidi, and today the so-called 'charming fishing village' (MSC Cruises, 2014) is a highly successful and touristified space, with dozens of craft shops, fine restaurants and cafes, some boutique hotels, and a relaxed attitude towards the many tourists that arrive on organized tours.

The medina is made of various daily cyclical rhythms (Lefebvre, 2004). These are intimately connected to temporalities that depend on binaries such as day/night and the opening and closure of schools, mosques, businesses, various workshops and the administration (the *Hotêl de Ville* [Town Hall], as well as the government and some ministries are located in the Kasbah). Despite these rich rhythmic ensembles, to a large degree the medina's centrality has been lost[2] to Carthage, a suburb of Tunis where the presidential palace is located (Saidi, 2012); to Bardo, where the reinforced post-constitution National Assembly operates; and to avenue Habib Bourghiba, in the Ville Nouvelle, the heart of the revolution and demonstrations.

There is a certain authenticity which contributes to an inescapable unease of tourists. Unlike the Riad fever in Morocco (Lee, 2008), gentrification, as well as foreign-owned property, is almost unknown in the medina, and there is 'little evidence of the global dynamics that is currently characterizing many old towns of the Arab world' (Escher & Schepers, 2008, p. 130). Saidi (2012, p. 83) argues that particularly among the Tunisian elite there has been

a growing interest in the medina, but the examples of converting ageing palaces into art galleries, key salons, and small upscale boutique *maison d'hôtes* which provide safe harbours for tourists are just too few. The ASM refers to the district composed of the rue du Tribunal and end of rue du Pacha as a *quartier culturel*, while McGuinness (2000, p. 116) points to this 'chic urban enclave' as just one possible scenario. Sidi Ben Arous street, perhaps the most 'gentrified' street (including one boutique hotel which doubles as cafe and upmarket restaurant, one design handicraft shop and two other restaurants) is paradoxically absent in all official tourist routes.

During the French protectorate (1881–1956), transport improvements (roads, railways, ports) allowed for smoother travel throughout the country. During the 1960s a more coherent tourism policy was directed at a mass market focused around the package tour concept (Poirier, 1995) aspiring to concentrate, invest and develop coastal cities like Hammamet, Sousse, Monastir and to a lesser extent Djerba (Bleasdale, 2006; Saidi, 2012). They all became part of the quintessential landscape of Mediterranean tourism (Obrador Pons, Crang, & Travlou, 2009). Tourism grew steadily from 46,110 tourists in 1961 to over a million in 1975 (Sebag, 1998). From the late 1980s throughout the 1990s there was an attempt to diversify tourism, and other regions were developed, such as Tozeur for 'Sahara tourism', new resorts in the north of the country, and golf and heritage tourism (Bleasdale, 2006). This move did not manage to balance the heavy tourism concentration on the already established coastal destinations. Despite the tourism growth of the last 10 years (Saidi, 2012), the 2011 Jasmine revolution brought considerable falls in tourism arrivals. At the same time, while Tunis remains the main entry point in the country, and retains numerous key tourist attractions – such as the UNESCO Carthage or the worldwide famous Bardo museum[3] – the city always remained peripheral to this tourism growth.

It is rather uncanny how 10 years ago, a totally new private development, undertaken by Société Poulina, created a collage medina south of Hammamet – in Yasmine Hammamet. Elements and motifs from the medinas of Tunis, Sousse, Kairouan, and other tourist places like Sidi Bou Said or Seville are here combined (see Barthel, 2004), producing an artificial and sanitized tourism space. Yet at the same time, the Tunis UNESCO medina is in severe need of physical and social restructuring. Hammamet's 278-ha development (almost the same size as Tunis Medina), comprises 4 km of coastline which reminds us that the great exhibitions are not over. The 1900 'Ville Arabe' of the Paris World Exhibition, Çelik (1992, p. 92) wrote,

> was an agglomeration of architecture from Tunisia: a replica of a fountain from the Rue Sadun in Tunis, a minaret from the Great Mosque of Sfax, a copy of the Mosque of Sidi-Maklouf from Kef, a zawiya (Sufi convent) from the Casbah Square in Tunis, the Bab al-Jadid gate from the walls of Tunis, and another old town gate from Soussa-all surrounding a large court (…) In sum, this village represented 'all the towns of Tunisia'.

The tourism model based on large resorts and on all inclusive packages, coupled with the growth of cruise tourism, means that the medina of Tunis is just one of the many quick tours/experiences squeezed in between sun bathing or other heritage attractions: 'one hour maximum, slotted between a morning at the Bardo Museum and an afternoon at Carthage' (McGuinness, 2000, p. 104). Visits are short and most tourists rush and zoom through shops and take quick snapshots. Others prefer to visit the recreated elements of Hammamet, a sanitized version of the dilapidated Tunis Medina, which provides an easier and friendlier experience.
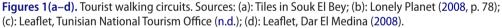
Shadowing, gazing and interviewing

Recent years have witnessed a significant growth in 'digital panopticon' methodologies, which use various technologies and instruments to track, map and measure people's time-space trajectories through streets and cities, often functioning as a kind of electronic stalking. From early remote observation with cameras (Hartmann, 1988), there is now sophisticated research that provides important insights into tourists' movement and walking, such as statistical data, pedestrian counts, movement cartography and the like (Grinberger, Shoval, & McKercher, 2014; McKercher & Lau, 2008; Shoval & Isaacson, 2007, 2010; Tchetchik, Fleischer, & Shoval, 2009). Despite the success and popularity of these approaches, this paper follows a distinct epistemological avenue, as it focuses on tourist rhythms in the medina of Tunis, and on tourists' sensual, emotional, and embodied engagements with space (Middleton, 2010). As Lefebvre (2004) argued, rhythm contains movement and gestures, and walking is here understood as an almost instinctively performed way of experiencing the city (Wunderlich, 2008), constitutive of David Seamon's (1980) 'place ballets'. This not only involves placing one foot after the other, but also encompasses other embodied practices, such as dressing behaviours and codes.

  With this in mind, I adopted various methodologies and strategies that fit in with the mobilities turn (Büscher, Urry, & Witchger, 2010; Cresswell, 2006; Sheller & Urry, 2004; Urry, 2007) and which focus on the fluid, the fleeting, and aim to develop new empirical sensitivities. As a rhythmanalyst, my strategies were both pre-planned as well as opportunistic. One of the main strategies used was a covert method of 'shadowing-at-a-distance' a form of non-participatory ethnographic observation. In contrast to many forms of observation in public spaces, 'shadowing-at-a-distance' does not depend upon the informed consent of tourists. In seeking to observe the behaviours and movements of tourists, while following a similar path to them through urban space, it respects privacy and does not involve any direct interaction. Although it is not possible to dogmatically state that no one felt they were being followed, all efforts were taken to follow tourists at a certain distance and on no occasion did I notice tourists' discomfort. However, as Lefebvre put it when observing daily life from his Parisian apartment (and he did not ask the consent of people he observed), the observer is implicated in whatever is being observed: 'to grasp a rhythm it is necessary to be grasped by it' (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 27). 'Shadowing-at-a-distance' allowed me to follow tourists' spatial itineraries, without precise tracking and itinerary mapping, and without tourists' consciousness of being part of a study, which could lead to reflexive behaviours. At the same time, the method enabled me to observe, from close range, tourists' detailed interactions with other people, with places, and with events, including particular and fleeting decision-making processes. To some extent this empirical approach follows early work by Goffman (1971) and Lefebvre (2004), as it regarded my own body, respiration, pulse, heartbeat, and so on, as one indication of other people's rhythms.

  During the month of May 2013, I used this method to follow 32 tourist parties (roughly 326 tourists). Starting from Place Bab Souika, the surroundings of Bab Mnara and Place de la Kashbah (Figure 1), was considered too time-consuming, due to the small numbers of tourists entering the medina through these gates. Tourists were instead followed from Place de la Victoire and their routes as well as their stops, interactions, and various behaviours (photo taking, looks, drawings, and so on) were recorded. 'Shadowing-at-a-distance' was aborted when tourists went into a restaurant, café or shop for more than 20 min. At times it

Figures 1(a–d). Tourist walking circuits. Sources: (a): Tiles in Souk El Bey; (b): Lonely Planet (2008, p. 78); (c): Leaflet, Tunisian National Tourism Office (n.d.); (d): Leaflet, Dar El Medina (2008).
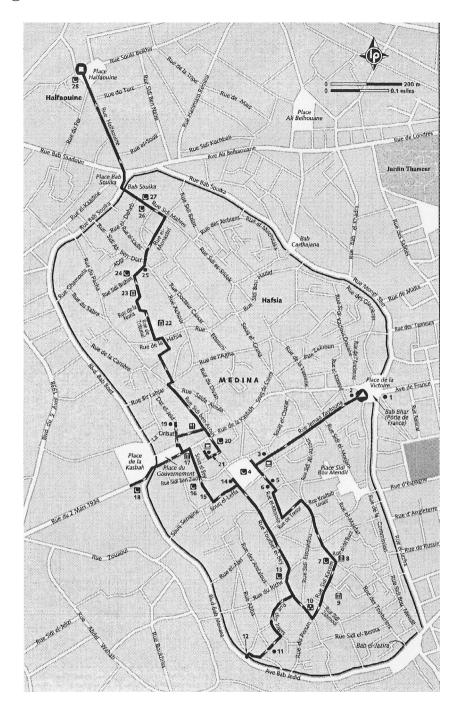
was possible to resume the interaction at a later stage. Whereas on many occasions it was possible to establish the origin of the tourists, their age group, whether they were accompanied by a guide, etc., the approach adopted here did not seek to gather more precise data. 'Shadowing-at-a-distance' is a time-consuming method, the advantage of which is to observe without being seen and without changing tourists' behaviour. In the narrow lanes of the medina, where GPS does not work (2013), other observation methods would prove difficult.

Shadowing-at-a-distance was complemented by several short semi-directed interviews with different tourists. This was also a time-consuming method, as the advantage of my Mediterranean or even North African physiognomy in passing unnoticed while following tourists turned into a disadvantage when attempting to interview them. Most of the time I was mistaken for someone who was harassing tourists, pressing them to purchase certain goods. At these moments I had to compete with numerous sellers and the initial approach was challenging. Most interviews were conducted in Place the France as tourists were leaving the medina, and ranged from a few minutes (when tourists were in a rush) through, to about 20 min in duration.
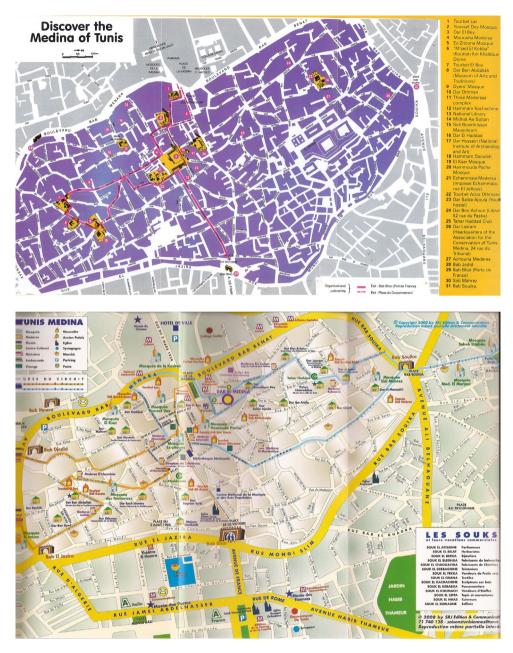
Figures 1(a–d). (*Continued*).

The interviews were complemented by the analysis of tourists' comments on Trip Advisor, an online travel review forum (see Ayeh, Au, and Law (2013) for an account of the credibility of user generated content). From a total of 431 available comments under 'Medina of Tunis', 279 were analysed (comments in languages other than English, French, Spanish and

Discover the Medina of Tunis

1 Tourbet Laz
2 Youssef Dey Mosque
3 Dar El Bey
4 Mouradia Medersa
5 Ez-Zitouna Mosque
6 "M'sed El Kobba" (Kouttab Ibn Khaldoun Dome)
7 Tourbet El Bey
8 Dar Ben Abdallah (Museum of Arts and Traditions)
9 Dyers' Mosque
10 Dar Othman
11 Three Medersas complex
12 Hammam Kachachine
13 National Library
14 Midhat As-Sultan
15 Sidi Boukhrissan Mausoleum
16 Dar El Haddad
17 Dar Hussein (National Institute of Archaeolog and Art)
18 Hammam Daouleti
19 El Ksar Mosque
20 Hammouda Pacha Mosque
21 Echammaia Medersa (Impasse Echammaia, rue El Jellou)
22 Tourbet Aziza Othmana
23 Dar Saida Ajoula (Youth hostel)
24 Dar Ben Achour (Librar 52 rue du Pasha)
25 Tahar Haddad Club
26 Dar Lasram (Headquarters of the Association for the Conservation of Tunis Medina, 24 rue du Tribunal)
27 Achouria Medersa
28 Bab Jedid
29 Bab Bhar (Porte de France)
30 Sidi Mahrez
31 Bab Souika.

Organised and cultural trip
— Exit - Bab Bhar (Port de France)
--- Exit - Place du Gouvernement

TUNIS MEDINA

Mosquée · Mausolée
Medersa · Ancien Palais
Musée · Eglise
Centre Culturel · Synagogue
Ministère · Marché
Ambassade · Parking
Change · Poste

LES SOUKS et leurs vocations commerciales

SOUK EL ATTARINE — Parfumeurs
SOUK EL BELAT — Herboristes
SOUK EL BERKA — Bijoutiers
SOUK EL BLEGHJIA — Fabricants de babouche
SOUK EL CHAOUACHIA — Fabricants de Chéchias
SOUK EL DEBBAGHINE — Teinturiers
SOUK EL FEKKA — Vendeurs de Fruits sec
SOUK EL GRANA — Textiles
SOUK EL KACHACHINE — Sculpteurs sur bois
SOUK EL KEBABJIA — Passementiers
SOUK EL KOUMACH — Vendeurs d'Etoffes
SOUK EL LEFFA — Tapis et couvertures
SOUK EL NHAS — Cuivreurs
SOUK EL SERRAJINE — Selliers

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Figures 1(a–d). (*Continued*).

Portuguese were excluded). The 279 comments were posted between May 2008 and May 2014 by variety of tourists (in groups, independent travelers, different nationalities, etc.), and ranged from a few lines to half an A4 page in length. Rather than analysing the frequency of comments or seeking to review them by nationality or type of tourists, or to analyse experiences related to shopping, bargaining and prices, the approach taken was to look for any indication of walking practices and body cues in the medina. In what follows, relevant online comments are reported by indicating the year in which they were posted online.

Strategies for walking in the medina

In *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), Certeau distinguished between strategies, which are urban disciplinary structures that form the basis for generating relationships, and tactics, as freedoms constructed by the everyday walker which depend on the 'art of timing', and which require a person to be 'on the watch for opportunities that must be "seized on the wing"' (p. xix). Although Certeau outlined a rigid dichotomy between 'strategies' and 'tactics' and between 'official' and 'the everyday', these concepts are a useful resource for thinking about the ways in which several tourism entities attempt to regulate and channel tourist flows in a city, and the various ways in which tourists use tactics to elude what they perceive as difficulties.

A brief analysis of the daytrip programmes offered by major tour operators (First Choice, Thomson, ClubMed) reveals that many excursions to Tunis exclude the medina. Those excursions which do not take in the medina typically combine other attractions (Carthage or Sidi Bou Said). A common daytrip for a tourist on a cruise (stopping 8–12 h at La Goullete[4]) may also include a visit to the medina. Some tourists travel independently from their resorts in the *zones touristiques* (Hammamet especially) or from the cruise ship to visit the medina, but again combine this visit with other sites in the city at large. Independent tourists who are on a more flexible and open agenda may spend more time in the medina.

Following Certeau, marked tourist routes can be understood as strategies which attempt to regulate, discipline and channel tourists. These graphic representations of the city, sometimes accompanied by textual descriptions and/or by physical signposting, suggest particular ways of seeing the city, emphasizing certain angles, views and smells, while discarding others, often memorializing certain valuable buildings while neglecting others. They may influence tourists to follow a pre-determined path, encouraging them to visit particular sites and often in a specific order.

Four common tourist routes were identified (Figures 1(a)–(d)): one, promoted by the municipality, is painted on tiles at two locations of the medina (rue des Libraires and Souk El Bey) and three were printed and suggested by different entities (the well-known guide *The Lonely Planet Tunisia*, now in its 4th edition[5]; the Tunisian National Tourism Office, easily accessible at places such as the airport or the tourism office; and the Hotel Dar El Medina). A quick analysis of these routes reveals interesting ideas. Firstly, the route represented on tiles, with two circuits (cultural and commercial), only reproduces the central part of the medina, therefore not encouraging visitors to explore other less central parts of the medina. Secondly, the route proposed by the Tunisian National Tourist Office duplicates the one just described (only a very small section is different at El Ariane street), despite reproducing on paper the whole of the medina and including a few sites which are not on the tourist routes. It is the only route that indicates Place de la Kasbah as the starting point. Thirdly, both the Lonely Planet guide and Dar El Medina propose more comprehensive routes, which include four and six gates of the medina, respectively, and which guide visitors through some less touristified streets. Fourthly, all routes include Zitouna street, leaving out Kasbah street. As Saidi (2012, p. 83) argues, this is 'the main circuit that is most frequented by tourists'. Paradoxically, the streets of Sidi Ben Arous and its continuation to Rue du Pacha or Dar El Jeld, which are increasingly commodified (see Escher & Schepers, 2008), are not included in any of the official routes proposed.

'Twist, duck, bend and turn sharply': walking, sensing and tactics

Place de la Victoire is the most important gateway to the medina (Figure 2). Some guides who accompany groups from the resorts leave tourists here to stroll independently; other groups walk the length of avenue Bourguiba where buses park. It is one of the key sites from which to gaze and photograph. Most tourists photograph the square, the arch and adjacent buildings, especially the former British Embassy which played part in the well-known Hollywood film *The English Patient*. Key to these disciplined rituals (Edensor, 2000) are the tourists themselves: some make selfies, others ask someone to take a picture of them, 'institutionally' framed by the square (Albers & James, 1988; Edensor, 1998).

Ingold (2008, p. 124) argued that 'all forms of walking (…) are invariably constrained and enabled by a range of factors, including the characteristics of the terrain moved across, and the particular regulatory regimes that overtly or more subtly coerce normative modes of movement'. With almost no exception, all the groups I observed followed the crowd and did not venture into any of the perpendicular alleys or streets until the Mosque. de Certeau (1984) had already considered a structural view of urban space and walking, in which spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities and interdictions that the walker moves and actualizes, increasing the number of possibilities and restrictions. In Zeituna street, these restrictions seem to coincide with the street itself. Most of the tourist parties (25) made a relatively short trip inside the medina (<1 h), and most (27) walked up Zeituna street (in conformity with Saidi's, 2012 analysis). These patterns of movement occurred either because the guide led them through this street, or because it was the street facing Place de la Victoire (the interviews with other tourists confirmed this idea) or even because it was marked in most maps and guides as the street to 'do'.

Most tourist parties under 4–5 people looked tense and entered the medina at a sturdy pace, engaging in 'purposive walking' (Wunderlich, 2008) in a *vivace* movement as Lefebvre (2004) put it. It was as if they were aiming for a specific destination, attempting to ignore vendors' frequent interactions. This was a common tactic, in line with the advice of an

Figure 2. Exploring the medina of Tunis. Source: Author, Place de France, 27 May 2013 (mobile phone photograph).

experienced tourist in Trip Advisor: 'Just walk purposefully, smile and decline any invitation to enter' (2008). Not many tourists had a guidebook or map in view, but most had a camera or mobile phone, to which they held firmly. Apart from large groups (more than 8–9 people), only a few people did not fit into this profile. Yet, when talking to tourists, many argued that visiting the medina brought them closer to the scents, sounds and people of Tunisia. They contrasted the Medina to other tourist spaces in which they moved, which were to a certain extent insulated, pre-arranged and regulated: the resort, the hotel, the restaurant, the beach, the bus, the entertainment show, and so on. At times groups and some individual tourists who interacted with people looked serenely at shops and objects, entered and discussed prices and bought a few items. Although many tourists prefer rambling and meandering, none mentioned a desire for impromptu vivid encounters or the preconceived notion of making new friends. Very few mentioned that they had allowed themselves to be drawn in by the attractions of the terrain in a Debordian dérive.

After reaching the Mosque, tourists' movement became a little more unpredictable, and did not follow a particular dominant pattern. The steps on Rue des Libraires were often used to pause, relax and gaze at the crowd. One tourist, walking alone, spent some time sketching the area. Most made a few more selfies or photographed each other, with the mosque for background and whenever possible catching some of the people passing by. Groups often leaned towards the camera screen and commented on the shot, especially if a veiled woman or an old man was captured. At this site the tiled route map was only used by group guides (three guides in four used it) or by locals who attempted some interaction with the tourists. Occasionally locals managed to convince tourists to follow them to some back alleys and shops. Afterwards, tourists walked the various adjacent streets that include a combination of people and shops, before making their way back to Place de La Victoire, normally following the same route. Tourist guides made short non-stopping itineraries through small lanes with groups of 15–40 tourists, and took parties to roof-terraces. Many tourists referred to these vantage points as perfect places from which to gaze at the daily life of the medina, observing others without being seen. The tourists drank tea or coffee at western prices, but for many with whom I spoke these visits were often a source of stress, as they were pressed into buying. A minority of small parties sat quietly for some time in small cafes in the covert bazaar; others had lunch in small restaurants. Tight schedules imposed fast rhythms for tourists, who then had to race between sites, and sellers, who knew they only had fleeting moments to do business. On several occasions tourists hesitantly ventured into narrow alleys with no people or shops, only to reticently return after a few metres. Cul-de-sacs are not signposted and disorientation was feared. Pleasurable walking, understood in the romantic and poetic sense of wandering unconsciously (Solnit, 2000), seemed to be absent.

The very few groups that did not fit into this dominant pattern ventured into the medina through various narrow lanes. I managed to follow three of these parties for 3–4 h (I stopped 'Shadowing-at-a-distance' a fourth group who entered a restaurant for more than 20 min, although our paths crossed again after about 2 h). Despite visiting the gate at Place de la Kasbah (north side), only one party (a young couple) exited the medina through a gate other than the entry point (Place Bab Souika). Judging by the conversations with various tourists in the Place de France and the comments posted on Trip Advisor, it was precisely those tourists that ventured into the nooks and crannies of the medina that reported being more satisfied with the experience: 'we spent 5 h there just wandering (…)' (2012);[6] 'just to wander and 'get lost' on purpose'. These individuals spoke of shopkeepers who had 'internalised the

'official route' and even 'gently told us that we were going the 'wrong direction', but did not bother us as we thanked them for the information and kept going' (2012). These individuals also drew a distinction between what they understood as tourist and local spaces: 'It's important to explore beyond the tourist section. The streets on the left cater to tourists and the streets to the right cater to natives (…) tourists will not be hassled by vendors in the markets that cater to natives' (2010). For these tourists, and in a similar vein to Edensor's (1998) findings in Agra, the medina with all its idiosyncrasies, experiences and novelty, made an exciting experience, distinctive from other enclave environments they experienced. They also walked at a much slower pace: 'try exploring slowly the area to the right (north) of the rue de la Kasbah, or that to the left (south) of the rue de la Grande Mosquée (2009); '(…) a taste for a slow pace is essential' (2012).

Goffman's (1971, p. 14) analysis of walking as a visual activity is useful here. In the crowded streets tourists tended to feel uneasy. In Goffman's terms, they 'twist, duck, bend and turn sharply', avoiding touching and bumping into other people, in a 'step-and-slide' choreography. Face-to-face interaction between unacquainted persons seems not to work, and for some tourists these choreographies were just too complex: 'the crowds were so thick in some places that we just had to go along with the flow' (2012). Apprehensively, walking was about touching and feeling the environment with the whole body (Rodaway, 1994). While stress, anxiety and fear led to quick movement and fast pace, as if tourists were running away from what they came to see, the juxtaposition of the daily rhythms of those working in the medina and hectically walking or passing with carts, bicycles and even motorcycles, produced a varied polyrhythmic ensemble of beats. Men in suits walked by, not in a rush, but determined, knowing where to step; children from a nearby school chased a football. I would not go as far as Lefebvre in his digression on seeking the secret of rhythms around the Mediterranean, but as these multiple temporalities collided (Crang, 2001), the emerging ensemble could be the start point for an analysis of shared rhythms in North Africa and Middle East medinas.

Often, tourists avoided looking at objects, since they had quickly learnt that any prolonged look would cause vendors to react and to engage in an interaction. As one explained, '[y]ou can't even look at merchandise without the risk of being hassled into buying stuff you don't really want or need' (2013). Yet, their attempts were often in vain, as vendors typically had considerable lengthy experience and were able to detect even the most disguised look. The slightest move – such as Lefebvre's fluttering rhythm of the eyelids – provoked a reaction. When targeted, tourists' tactics ranged from a few defensive footsteps and raised hands, to struggles to avoid confrontation and physical proximity, and even rushing up or down the main streets or running a dozen metres. Vendors may also chase down tourists and fleeting choreographies emerged, contributing to a particular theatricality that constituted the polyrhythmic city. Wunderlich's 'discursive walk' could quickly become a 'purposive walk' and even transform into a sort of 'panic/escape' walk, moving from *adagio* to *vivo* in just a few seconds. From observation and conversations with tourists, various finales also occurred. On one side of the spectrum, distressed tourists swore they would not come back, while on the other end, tourists laughed together about these adventurous and fleeting moments and continued their journeys. Their tourist performances were certainly an interactive and contingent process, always re-enacted under different conditions (Edensor & Holloway, 2008).

Quite a few tourists mentioned being 'dragged' into shops and noted the importance of resisting 'being dragged'. These tactics of resistance, which some described as stressful, often derived from a fear of being cheated or of ending up buying something they did not want.

In various comments in Trip Advisor, particular tactics were shared: 'wear sunglasses so shop sellers don't know if you are looking at them' (2012); 'if you want to appreciate the medina, walk like the mules, always ahead and looking at the ceiling' (2013). This is in line with Edensor's (1998) observations of some tourists in Agra, for whom physical contact, the appeals to inspect goods, and so on, resulted in panic. During the interviews at Place de France, I came across many fearful tourists. They have been influenced by a long tradition of ideas claiming and preserving the view that a medina is like a living 'oriental' museum; entering it is like stepping back in time (Bleasdale, 2006; Daher, 2007; Porter, 2000). In fact, many tourists who are dropped off in Place de France, after the routine photographs, prefer to have a crêpe or cappuccino in a café along the *nouvele ville* avenue Bourgiba, gazing at the passing people, rather than 'doing' the 'gloomy, treacherous medina', as one tourist put it.

Just like the flâneur, who sought to move through the crowds with a sense of invisibility, but who ended up being spotted by 'cab-drivers, office messengers, newspaper sellers, flower girls, the prostitutes and homeless, who worked and lived on the streets' (Featherstone, 1998, p. 913), tourists' bodies are conspicuous. Even in May, many tourists sweat perceptibly in the crowds, despite the shady streets. Their skin, eye and hair colour, their obvious outfits, hats, caps, cameras and maps, backpacks (often held it in front) and purses, their language, all seem to denounce them. Walking is inseparable from clothing and footwear, and it frequently involves dressing codes and notions of comfort, mobility and speed. Many tourists mentioned that they dressed differently to 'do' the medina. This was not only a matter of comfortable shoes for walking – 'Make sure you wear flat shoes: the walkways are made of uneven stone, and even with flat shoes, you have to be careful where you are walking' (2010) – but also of having appropriate clothes, such as hillwalking shorts and zipped pants. All together, this attire supported a greater sense of independence and self-assurance, so that tourists could 'battle' against the 'unknown challenges' of the physicality and dangers of the medina. Anticipating visits to conservative sites, many tourists carried scarves, pareos or shawls in their bags (to which they held tightly). Yet for others this was a remote cultural game. Several female tourists (notably Russian), made strong dress code 'transgressions', considering the relatively traditional medina. While some change their beach slippers to running shoes (as there are various uneven slabs, dirt and water), many did not, and instead stayed in high heels, enduring what Certeau acknowledged as bodily experiences of pain, when they struggled to beat the uneven and steep slope of Zeituna street. Many tourists were aware of cultural differences that they wanted to respect, but this was not the case for all. As one individual expressed it, 'if you don't want to attract unwanted attention, then cover up, from your wrists to your ankles. I didn't have any problems but the only other Europeans I saw in Tunis attracted a lot of attention since they were in beachwear. It's the equivalent of turning up on Oxford St in your bikini' (2013).

The medina is mostly experienced by tourists during the day, from Monday to Saturday, with a different pattern on Friday. Nocturnal rhythms are unknown to most tourists, and those who have experienced them talk of fear, danger and uncomfortable movements: 'The Medina is completely different at night. It's not well lit and it's very dangerous. With all the shops closed, it looks completely different and can be slightly easier to get lost. Be on your guard. This is the one place I've visited where I wished I had a whistle' (2013). None of the people I interviewed had experienced the medina at night, and I also did not follow any tourists after dark. There is a need to continue to excavate and examine these temporal variations in the rhythms and use of urban spaces (Lefebvre, 2004).

Conclusion

Despite its physical and social dilapidation, and being peripheral to tourism both nationally and in Tunis itself, the medina attracts numerous visitors who walk its streets as part of a collection of signs (Urry & Larson, 2011). Although the medina is far from being a 'museumified' heritage city, or the 'orientalised' open-air museum that many tourists imagine, to a large degree its functioning and atmosphere depend on the presence of tourists, and on their choreographies and rhythms. In comparison to the successful Sidi Bou Said, the medina is labyrinthine and rhizome-like (Bensmaïa, 2003). It is signposted in different ways from western cities or even from the 'tourist friendly' yet anaesthetized Yasmin Hammamet. The complex genealogy of the Arab-Islamic city in western minds results in geographical imaginations connected with danger and unpredictability, and these both limit tourists' experiences and condition their performances. Most tourists seem not to look for encounters, but for bargains, as consumption is central to Tunisian tourism and to visiting the medina (Bleasdale, 2006). Tourism strategies and tourists' time pressures reinforce this way of seeing. Encouraging tourists to visit a wider range of sites or to enter through other gates (perhaps with a multi-site ticket similar to that used in Carthage or Kairouan) would likely disrupt the choreographies and rhythms described here.

Although quantitative studies that map and accurately track the movements of tourists in the medina would have value, it is important to explore in detail how tourist bodies circulate, and how they are part of the ensemble of rhythms in the city. I have not engaged with Lefebvre's work that relates walking rhythms to our own internal polyrhythmic nature, in terms of the perpetual cadence of internal organs and functions. In Lefebvre's (2004, p. 89) proposition, rhythms should not be measured as the speed of a moving object on its trajectory, since a 'rhythm is only slow or fast in relation to other rhythms with which it finds itself associated in a more or less vast unity'. The medina is almost exclusively visited on foot, and tourists move slowly when compared to the speeds of inbound flights or bus excursions. Yet walking in the medina entails a subjective feeling of rushing, as people, objects, words and sounds all move rapidly. Tourists describe themselves as attentive to all moves and looks, as they glimpse danger in every corner.

Tourists' movements are often random and improvised (Edensor, 2000), but as I followed tourists weaving paths through the lanes of the medina, negotiating obstacles, coping with hassle, touts and vendors, remaining alert to motorcycles and carts, and being aware of the pavement, I encountered some patterns. Most tourists followed the main route, the one with more people and more shops. Here they followed the flow of others, as doing so apparently felt safer. This is how one 'does' the medina. But at the same time, tourists appeared to feel very uneasy when walking in the crowd. Behavioural codes and rules that normally worked at home did not seem to work in the medina. Bumping into others occurred frequently but was unwelcome. Most groups moved in an orderly and regulated manner, and I observed relatively few improvisational pedestrian rhythms. The medina harbours different types of walking practices and engagement. The field practices used in this study suggest that independent tourists or small groups adopt one of two strategies: either walking fast, without stopping much and avoiding eye contact, or wandering quietly and almost aimlessly, looking with interest to people and objects for sale.

Although Wunderlich (2008) categories are useful here, when applied to tourists in the medina they appear too rigid. Except for tourists in organized groups, which move fast and

at the pace of the tour leader, most tourists employed more than one type of walking rhythm when visiting the medina. Very often tourists interchanged 'purposive walking' when fearful with 'discursive walking' when relaxing a little, and vice versa. Walking the medina involves rich, dynamic and contingent choreographies that challenge rigid categories.

Notes

1. To a smaller degree than Morocco and Algeria, Tunisia became a popular destination for artist travellers (Benjamin, 2003), and in the late nineteenth century, after a certain popularization of Carthaginian heritage with Flaubert's novel *Salammbô* (1862), artists like Victor Prouvé or Paul Klee, made trips to Tunisia in search of the Orient, new lifestyles, landscapes and colours (see Benjamin, 2003, p. 138). Study trips to El Jem were frequent.
2. On this topic see also Escher and Schepers (2008, p. 139), who argue that 'The Medina is preserved, shaped and promoted as a symbol of national identity'.
3. Reopened in 2012 after a 10 million euro facelift funded by the World Bank.
4. In 2012, 582,601 tourists arrived at La Goulette, a number on the rise (cruise industry news, accessed March 2014 http://www.cruiseindustrynews.com).
5. The 5th and last edition does not include this map but only a textual description of it.
6. All used quotes are from Trip Advisor. Here, only the year is mentioned as not always the author's name is known.

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