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ENVIRONMENTALISM AFTER DECENTRALIZATION: *THE LOCAL POLITICS OF SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT IN TUNISIA*

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Cover Image: Waste recycling bin in Maamoura, Tunisia - December 2020
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Introduction

Ten days before the end of 2020, Mustapha Laroui, then Minister of Environment and Local Affairs, was dismissed from his post on suspicion of corruption. Laroui served in Tunisia's ninth post-revolution government, headed by Hishem Mechichi who also kicked him out of office. He was arrested the same day. The scandal that ended Laroui's career in government concerns facilitating the transfer of 282 containers equivalent to 480 tons of Italian waste to Tunisia via the port of Sousse.¹ The full extent of the scandal was revealed after the investigative TV show "Al Haqa'eq al Arba'a" (the four truths) ran an episode on 2 November 2020 [uncovering](#) the scale of the problem. Twenty-three additional suspects were [arrested](#) and questioned in relation to the scandal, including the director of the National Agency for Waste Management (ANGED), who was later released, and a Tunisian diplomat based in Naples. Though it made the news in November, the imported waste had been sitting in the port of Sousse since early 2020. Reports indicate that [the deal](#) that brought southern Italian waste to the Tunisian shore was signed between the export-oriented Tunisian firm Soreplast and the Naples-based Italian firm Sviluppo Risorse Ambientali Srl. Contrary to the media narrative – whereby Soreplast had allegedly imported post-industrial plastic waste to process, recycle, and export – the formal contract indicates that the objective was the permanent elimination of the waste in Tunisia, with a price tag of 48 euros/ton, not to exceed 120,000 tons per year, for a total value of 5 million euros.

Dirty scandals haunt Tunisia's solid waste management sector. An investigative report published by *Nawaat*² in May 2015 focused on the [rampant corruption](#) in the management of the country's largest controlled landfill, the landfill of Borj Chakir in the municipality of Sidi Hassine, a southern suburb of Tunis with a number of working-class neighbourhoods (*quartiers populaires*).³ A pithy summary describes the situation: solid waste management is a highly lucrative sector where opacity and corruption are not only endemic but also institutionalized. The report exposes the rigged public tendering process which enabled the French company PIZZORNO Environnement headed by François Léotard to win the contract for the management of the Borj Chakir landfill because of Léotard's friendship with ousted president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. The infractions were reported in a 350-page investigation prepared by Abdelfattah Amor,⁴ which addresses corruption

¹ The waste was mixed. It included household waste and could be potentially dangerous.

² *Nawaat* is an independent collective blog founded in 2004 which features high-quality journalistic essays about Tunisian politics.

³ Borj Chakir is supposed to close in June 2021, according to the former Minister of Local Affairs and Environment, Mokhtar Hammami. available at: <https://www.afrik21.africa/en/tunisia-govt-ernment-will-shut-down-borj-chakir-landfill-in-two-years-time/>

⁴ Abdelfattah Amor is jurist, academic, and public law specialist. In 2011, he was appointed president of the National Commission of Investigation of Cases of Corruption and Embezzlement.



Figure 1: Labib at El Mourouj park. Source: Wikiwand

and embezzlement affairs across sectors perpetrated by the authoritarian regime and its cronies. The creation of ANGED in 2005⁵ as a public non-administrative agency responsible for solid waste management (henceforth SWM) seems to have facilitated institutionalized corruption in the sector.

Starting in the 1990s with the acceleration of neoliberal policies, a veneer of awareness-raising campaigns to create environmentally conscious citizens hid institutionalized corruption in SWM from public view. Labib (Figure 1) was the emblem of these campaigns. The environment mascot whose statues filled roundabouts across Tunisia is associated with the RCD (Constitutional Democratic Rally), the one-party-state of the authoritarian regime. After the revolution, most of these statues were vengefully destroyed in protest. Those still standing are a reminder of the powerful ideas the authoritarian regime ingrained in citizens' minds about the environment, and which encompass two elements: aesthetics (decorating public spaces with statues) and moral uprightness, measured in terms of conforming to a specific behaviour, such as not littering. Framed like this, environmental protection was a personal moral responsibility rather than a societal political-economy question related to patterns of consumption, the inevitable waste these patterns create, and ways of disposing of the produced waste. Nonetheless, Labib did help raise awareness about environmental protection. Although the removal of most of these statues is a break from the authoritarian regime, no awareness-raising efforts have replaced the mascot.

Three factors distinguish the post-revolution period. First, a

growing number of civil society organizations are campaigning for a cleaner and safer environment; their members are active at international meetings and support environmental causes from biodiversity to sustainable cities. Second, the rise of ad-hoc environmental activism campaigns, not all of which are institutionalized, born out of local environmental harms such as water pollution (Gabes) and toxic landfills (Agareb, Djerba), amongst others. Added to the latter are social movements based on environmental grievances with different organizational dynamics and popular appeal. Collectively, these efforts, modest as they are, are slowly shifting the understanding of environmental sustainability beyond cleanliness, aesthetics, and personal moral responsibility towards broader issues of institutional failure, systemic corruption, and the disposability of certain bodies at the expense of others. The increased participation of Tunisian activists and non-governmental organizations in international meetings on issues ranging from biodiversity to climate change, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and sustainable cities, as well as encounters between NGOs and Tunisian officials, has elevated environmental concerns to the national and international levels.

The final and most important factor is political decentralization which, according to the principle of subsidiarity, places municipalities at the centre of SWM. Due to their proximity to citizens, local governments are considered the first institutions responsible for SWM and are assumed to be the most efficient providers of this service. According to a [survey conducted by the Heinrich Böll Foundation](#) (HBS) in 2016, citizens also expect municipalities to place solid waste collection at the top of their priorities. The same HBS survey revealed a very negative assessment by Tunisians of the environmental situation, pointing not only to the responsibility of the municipalities but also to their responsibility as citizens. According to the respondents, solutions to environmental problems necessitate a coordinated response between the municipality, the central government, and citizens. Although litter-filled streets are a source of grievance for many citizens who perceive this as an indicator of failed local governance, their perspective does not consider the whole SWM chain,⁶ nor the fact that the first democratically elected local governments have only been operating since May 2018 and face severe budgetary and human capital constraints. Furthermore, municipal councils and administrations are still waiting for most of the laws, decrees, and decisions operationalizing the various articles of the Organic Law.⁷ This perspective about “failed local governance” does not fully acknowledge the complex political and institutional environments municipalities operate in. It does not consider that elected local councils, who started implementing decentralization reforms in 2018, inherited structurally weak institutions which they have been trying hard to redress. At the

⁵ Decree No. 2005-2317 of 22 August 2005, JORT.

⁶ Mapping the entirety of the chain shows that addressing SWM issues cannot be dissociated from the producers of packaging and other waste. Any SWM policy must be conceptually enlarged to include the latter since such a blind spot hides the SW avoidance of such actors.

⁷ The Organic Law is the main regulatory framework with general stipulations, but these stipulations need to be operationalized in decrees and decisions; no municipalities cannot operationalize the law without central level decisions and decrees.

same time, the politicization of municipal councils has created partisan disagreements rendering municipal decision-making even more laborious.

The present study is situated within this shifting landscape. It adopts a transversal environmental justice-driven understanding of SWM which connects ecologies, lives, livelihoods, and institutions. Applying Rob Nixon's theoretical framework of "slow violence" to the Tunisian context, it examines three case studies of municipal solid waste management and the role of environmental activism across these cases.⁸ The study argues that despite the broad mandates for environmental protection granted to municipalities in the context of decentralization reforms, SWM requires multi-scalar and multi-institutional coordination. Operating with financial and human resource constraints, municipalities are weak links, squeezed between citizens' grievances and governmental priorities. Despite modest achievements, they are currently unable to fend off the "slow violence" resulting from failed SWM practices.

Against an understanding of environmental degradation as structural violence, Nixon advances the concept of slow violence as "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all."⁹ Nixon opens his book with a quote by former World Bank president Larry Summers from a leaked memo where he justifies the dumping of toxic waste in poor "under-polluted" low-income countries. According to this economic rationale, under-pollution is a "comparative advantage" that low-income countries have over their richer industrialized counterparts. Given loud environmental movements in the global North, shipping garbage for final disposal in the global South is both economically justifiable for recipient nations and politically expedient for rich governments seeking to placate environmental dissent. One could see how the Italian waste scandal becomes immediately appealing when seen through the lens of slow violence.

At the moment, the Italian waste scandal is anything but quiet or "out of sight". Once the allure of scandal subsides, however, it is unlikely that the public will remember the millions of tons of already buried garbage polluting the earth, air, and water-table in countless controlled and informal landfills around the country. Even when dirty scandals come to pass, the invisible consequences of solid waste management endure. As such, beyond this recent scandal, the framework of slow violence is necessary to shine a light on this toxicity that is otherwise forgotten because it affects populations perceived to be disposable. Tunisia's two largest landfills, Borj Chekir and El Gonna, are located in poor localities replete with working-class neighbourhoods (*quartiers populaires*), their dwellers considered the refuse of the country's modernity. Toxicity affects their bodies disproportionately. When it does not slowly kill them, it maims their children. This is slow violence. As this study shows, municipalities are unable to defend their constituents against such assaults for three reasons: (i) their definition of the environment is too narrow; (ii) they do not make full use of their jurisdictional authority to tax polluters, for example; and (iii) their powers are overridden by both deconcentrated and centralized institutions such as governors or

the ANGED.

Methodologically, this study adopts a municipal politics lens. It consists of three case studies: Nabeul and Maamoura (governorate of Nabeul) and Agareb (governorate of Sfax), documenting practices of SWM, municipal staff's attunement to questions of environmental sustainability, and the role of environmental civil society organizations in these localities. The three case studies, summarized respectively as the good governance case, the feel-good case, and the toxic case, illustrate the constraints under which municipalities manage environmental concerns in the SWM sector on a daily basis. They show how differing understandings of what constitutes "the environment" influence municipal decision-making and sets activists apart from municipalities. While municipalities see environmental problems as either technical and purely related to cleanliness or a matter of jurisdictional responsibilities, for activists, environmental harm is embodied – it affects their health and bodily integrity.

The purposive case selection builds on desk research about experiences of environmental activism across Tunisian localities with specific attention to their geographic location. All three municipalities are located on the coast. As a result, they are better endowed with financial and human resources than municipalities in the inner regions. Of the three, the municipality of Maamoura makes headlines for its collaboration with civil society organizations. The civil society campaign *Manish Msab* (I am not a landfill) earned the municipality of Agareb its fame as the home of the country's most toxic landfill. Nabeul is the neutral case of a rich coastal municipality which serves as a comparative case in relation to poorer and smaller Maamoura and Agareb. The study builds on desk research, including grey and academic literature, as well as four interviews conducted by Lana Salman and Zied Boussen on 23 and 24 December 2020, with one staff member at the municipality of Nabeul, two staff members at the municipality of Maamoura, two staff members at the municipality of Agareb, and one environmental activist in the same locality.¹⁰

The following section of the study presents an overview of the legal and institutional framework for solid waste management. The three case studies are then presented, accompanied by a succinct summary of indicators about each of the municipalities. Each case study explores the prevalent understanding of "the environment", the municipality's challenges and successes in SWM, and the role of environmental activists if applicable. The conclusion suggests avenues for future research.

⁸ Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard University Press, 2011.

⁹ See Nixon, 2011, p.2.

¹⁰ The interview at the municipality of Maamoura was audio-recorded. For the rest, Lana and Zied took extensive and complimentary notes. Except for the civil society activist in the *Manish Msab* campaign, the author uses pseudonyms to protect the identity of our municipal interlocutors. The interview guide is included in Appendix I.

The legal and institutional framework for waste management

SWM is a multi-scalar and multi-institutional problem that necessitates coordination among citizens, local governments, and centralized authorities. The country's last SWM strategy ended in 2016 and a new strategy is yet to replace it.¹¹ The SWM chain starts at the household level.¹² In most localities, the collection mode is door-to-door, which means households are responsible for collecting their waste in plastic bags and placing them curbside in front of their homes. Vehicles (municipal trucks, or the engines of the municipality's subcontractor) collect this waste according to a pre-set schedule, usually in the evenings. In densely populated localities, instead of a door-to-door collection, households place their waste in large containers available in designated locations at the neighbourhood level. Compacting vehicles empty these containers regularly. Once the trash is collected, municipalities transport it for temporary storage in transfer centres dedicated to several geographically contiguous municipalities. These centres accept a set tonnage of solid waste per day. Our interlocutors indicated that transfer centres operate at capacity: wait times to empty municipal engines can sometimes exceed three hours. The ANGED is responsible for managing transfer centres, transporting the waste from the centres to their final destination at sanitary landfills, and

managing said landfills distributed across the territory. Mapping out the SWM chain shows that problems could arise at any spatial scale or point in the chain: households do not place their waste curbside on time, municipalities cannot complete daily rounds for collection because of delays at the transfer centres, and finally the centralized agency is unable to manage landfills operating beyond capacity. Relatedly, environmental activism could target any point of the chain. Case studies in the following section provide illustrations.

When piles of garbage rot on street corners, citizens blame their municipalities for under-performing. Their grievances are understandable even if ill-informed, as explained above. Local governments are essential to a smooth functioning SWM chain. Littered streets uncover dysfunctional governance, literally

¹¹ The Ministry of Local Affairs and Environment is currently working on a strategy supported by USAID.

¹² The chain could be extended to include producers who are responsible for product design, and therefore for disposable packaging. However, a detailed analysis of this chain falls outside the scope of this study.

Table 1: The legal provisions related to the environment at the local level.

ARTICLES	PROVISIONS
Article 40	municipalities can collaborate with local and foreign entities on projects related to environmental sustainability and renewable energy.
Article 141	municipalities can impose taxes and fees on polluting activities.
Article 210	each elected council must appoint permanent committees to manage local affairs, including the committee for cleanliness, health, and environment.
Article 230	each municipal circumscription is responsible for following up on the execution of environmental preservation and cleanliness plans within its jurisdiction
Article 240	municipalities build, provide, and maintain municipal infrastructure and services including the collection of household solid waste and waste similar to it according to the provisions of Law No 2016-30 of 5 April 2016, and to triage it, and transport it to sanitary landfills. They guarantee a healthy and clean environment and take all necessary measures to protect it.
Article 243	municipalities share with centralized authorities the responsibility of environmental protection.
Article 258	the granting of construction permits is subject to a committee's decision headed by the president of the municipal council with a representative of the ministry tasked with environmental affairs.
Article 266	the president of the municipal council assigns to the municipal police the responsibility of enforcing regulations related to mobility, safety and security, the aesthetics of the city, and environmental preservation
Article 267	municipal enforcement agents guarantee public health, safety, and a clean-living environment by preventing [...] sources of noxious odours, and any disposal of solid, liquid or gas waste.
Articles 296, 297, 307, 321, 354	these articles pertain to the environmental responsibilities of regions: the second tier of decentralized local governments.

Source: author's compilation and translation based on CCL

translating problems of SWM into repugnant visual scenes. Local Governments' Organic Law (Code des Collectivités Locales, JORT law No. 29 of 9 May 2018, henceforth CCL) determines municipalities' roles and responsibilities in SWM under the broader umbrella of preserving the environment, cleanliness and sustainable development.¹³ The specific articles which invoke the environment and cleanliness are included in Table 1.

Three points are worth noting based on the articles compiled in Table 1. First, on paper, municipalities have wide-reaching responsibilities in terms of sustainable development and environmental protection, dictating the type of local development that should respect principles of sustainability with mechanisms such as the ability to tax polluting activities, and to enforce these provisions using the environmental police. However, in practice, it is unclear whether municipalities use their powers to punish polluters. Because most municipalities are underfunded, some do not have an environmental police force, while others have a small number of police agents to cover large territories; enforcement is selective. Second, none of the articles define what "the environment" consists of; as a result, the articles lump together environment, cleanliness, and public health. This is not only a matter of definitions since the same committee who manages "the environment" is also assigned the responsibilities for SWM and public health.¹⁴ Finally, the only article which specifies municipal SWM responsibilities refers to a separate law, Law No. 2016-30 of 5 April 2016.

No separate fee structure exists for municipal SWM.¹⁵ The service is financed by general municipal taxes. Article 160 of the CCL states that municipalities must allocate the appropriate resources for cleaning, road and sidewalk maintenance, the maintenance of the public lighting network, and the cleaning of the sewage network and green spaces. One ton of waste costs between TND60 and TND80 to collect, and TND20 to transport to a sanitary landfill. 80% of these transportation costs are subsidized by the central government through the de-pollution fund (FODEP) of the National Agency for the Protection of the Environment (ANPE).¹⁶ Although fiscal decentralization reforms restructured intergovernmental fiscal transfers according to pre-determined performance criteria, no cost recovery system has been set up for any services offered by municipalities, including SWM.

The ANGED, the centralized institution responsible for the construction and management of sanitary landfills, added to the institutional landscape of environmental governance an entity specialized in solid waste management. It followed a plethora of institutions and the ratification of many pieces of legislation to promote environmental protection at the height of Ben Ali's neoliberal authoritarian rule.¹⁷ This is also the same period that saw the birth of Labib and his appearance across the country's environmental boulevards. The mandate of the ANGED includes assisting municipalities and industrialists, valorizing waste through recycling and other activities (the ANGED sponsored recycling programs of packaging also known as ECOlef), and encouraging public-private partnerships for job creation in the sector.¹⁸ As of 2014, the ANGED managed 10 controlled landfills, five semi-controlled landfills, and was building or planning the

construction of five additional landfills. The involvement of the ANGED in the recent imported Italian waste scandal is another episode of the less-than-clean history of the institution which has come to the fore after the revolution. In a 2014 press conference, lawyer Faouzia Bacha Amdouni declared that colossal funds were channelled through the Ministry of Environment and its agencies (ANGED, ANPE, etc.) for environmental projects which were [never executed](#), with the funds pocketed by the regime and its cronies.

Even with donor conditionality, reforms in the sector have gone awry. The Implementation Completion and Results Report of the World Bank Sustainable Municipal Solid Waste Management Project closed in 2014 indicates an [unsatisfactory rating](#). It means that all loan funds were disbursed without attaining the project development objective (PDO). The institutional development component supposed to systematize and make transparent the ANGED's public procurement system was dropped. Also included in the institutional development component was the devising of regional, multi-stakeholder solid waste management plans and a pilot program for the participation of 10 to 15 municipalities to determine and collect baseline indicators in the sector. Both activities were also abandoned. That this comparatively small loan of USD 22 million was closed two years after its original date (2014 instead of 2012) after being restructured and was still rated unsatisfactory testifies to the difficulties of building the competent and accountable institutions necessary to reform the sector.¹⁹

13 The CCL mentions sustainable development in its preamble and then in Articles 75, 106, 109, 119, 120, 124, 296, and 125.

14 The "environment" is defined in Law No. 88-91 of 2 August 1988 pertaining to the creation of the National Agency for the Protection of the Environment (ANPE). Article 2 of the law states "Is understood by environment, in the context of this law, the physical world including the soil, air, water, subterranean and surface waters (waterways, lagunas and lakes), natural spaces, landscapes, and sites, as well as mammals, plants, and in general the entire national heritage". Author's translation.

15 World Bank, Project Appraisal Document, Sustainable Municipal Solid Management Project, 12 February 2007.

16 FODEP was created in 1992, its use fixed by decree in 2005 (see: http://www.anpe.nat.tn/Fr/fodep_11_52) its funds allocated to the national cleanliness and beautification program.

17 Siad Darwish, "Country of Rubbish": Waste and the Environmental Legacies of Authoritarianism in Post-revolutionary Tunisia", unpublished PhD dissertation, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2017.

18 A study prepared by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) in April 2014 shows declining collection-points and revenues from ECO-Lef pointing to potential corruption in the waste valorizing sector. ECO-Lef revenues should theoretically fund the management of the country's nine controlled landfills https://www.resourcerecovery.net/sites/default/files/tunisie_ra_fr_web.pdf

19 Another example of unsuccessful reforms in the sector in the Djerba selective sorting project, a partnership between the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Local Affairs and Environment signed on 12 February 2019 to reduce waste on the island of Djerba. The program was never implemented.

The good, the feel-good, the toxic:

Three cases of municipal SWM and environmental activism

Trash represents an environmental concern for Tunisians across the board. Asked how they view problems of trash, water pollution, air quality, and climate change in Wave 5 of [the Arab Barometer](#), 70% of Arab citizens considered water pollution to be the most serious issue, followed by trash identified as such by 66% of the respondents. These numbers are higher in Tunisia, where 77% of the respondents view trash as a very serious problem. Disaggregation by education level shows that 60% of those with basic education think trash is a very serious problem, compared to 72% of those with higher education. Trash is also then a poor people's problem. Similarly, disaggregation between rural and urban areas does not show stark differences, with 67% of the urban population vs. 62% of the rural population viewing trash as a very serious problem.

The three case studies detailed below show the constraints under which the proximate local state addresses an issue that concerns a large swath of the Tunisian population. They explore specifically how municipal staff address SWM as part of their daily operations and, for two of the three cases, the role of civil society organizations. Table 2 provides information about these municipalities. I classified the cases as good governance, feel-good, and toxic to capture the variety of experiences in SWM. This classification is not exhaustive, nor is it representative of the universe of cases. It does, however, present variations that could be deepened with further research. If good, feel-good, and toxic pertain to municipal governance, then non-involvement, collaboration, and contestation could be qualifiers for civil society engagement in each of Nabeul, Maamoura, and Agareb as detailed below.

Table 2: Characteristics of the three municipalities studied

	Nabeul	Maamoura	Agareb
GOVERNORATE	NABEUL	NABEUL	SFAX
Population	73,128	10,994	40,943
Surface area	72 km ²	23.18 km ²	735.18 km ²
Municipal budget	TND 22,485,744	TND 2,098,930	TND 5,973,265

Source: Website of the collectivities locale - <https://bit.ly/3dj0SFT>

Good governance in Nabeul

An otherwise ordinary, relatively wealthy coastal municipality, Nabeul made the news in September 2018 when record heavy rainfall caused [flash floods](#) killing six people in the locality. A rapid needs assessment produced shortly after by the World Bank, United Nations, and European Union estimated recovery costs to amount to USD 100 million.²⁰ Ever since, Nabeul has been awash with donor funding from several bilateral and multilateral institutions focused on climate change. With its competent technical staff and agile administration, the municipality is now the poster child for local-level interventions in climate change and disaster risk management and financing, as evidenced by the USD 150 million loan financed jointly by the World Bank and Agence Française de Développement and currently under appraisal. If approved, this project will be the first in Tunisia and the region to capitalize on climate change to fuel private sector insurance against “natural hazards”. Nabeul will be its laboratory. Though the conversation at the municipality of Nabeul focused on SWM, I provide this background to support the argument that Nabeul serves as the comparative good governance case in environmental management, despite a politically challenging environment, as will become clear in the narrative below.

Political disagreements, technical solutions

Trained as an engineer specialized in rural environmental management, our interlocutor Ahmed Nouri joined the municipality of Nabeul in 2009 as its principal sanitation engineer. He brought to this position his prior experience in the private sector. Today, Ahmed assumes the responsibilities of Director of the Hygiene and Environment Department, a position which has been vacant for years. In this capacity, he manages a team of 82 workers in addition to his administrative and project management tasks. Asked how he defines environmental sustainability, he gave a textbook definition: ensuring access to services and satisfying present needs while preserving the availability of resources for future generations. He added

²⁰ Tunisia Integrated Disaster Resilience Program (P173568), Program Information Document (PID), 22 June 2020, Report No: PIDC225236

that environmental resources were limited and that humans were rapidly degrading them. But nature has its own way of responding; the flash floods in Nabeul were one example of this response. Ahmed remarked that these floods were not numerous, but yet surprising by their intensity. Suddenly, citizens of Nabeul find themselves stuck inside their home with water up to their knees. Ahmed, unprompted, explained that such floods were the result of climate change caused by greenhouse gas emissions. He also mentioned the Kyoto Protocol and the Cancun Agreements, intended to put in place mechanisms to reduce such emissions. In a context where many skilled administrators worldwide do not believe climate change to be an imminent threat to our planet, Ahmed's position on the matter is refreshing. That he works for a municipal government should deter decentralization sceptics about the ability of local governments, at least in terms of technical awareness, to tackle environmental issues of a global scale.

On the technical side, Ahmed had clear ideas about addressing behemoth problems such as climate change. In Nabeul, he collaborated with donors such as [MEDCITY](#), to implement projects rather than just carry out studies on the SWM sector. The project entailed the optimization of collection routes to reduce greenhouse gas emissions of collection trucks and the monitoring and updating of the routes using the municipality's geographic information system (GIS). Despite the adoption of these mechanisms, problems persisted because SWM is a shared responsibility, of which the municipality controls only a part. At the transfer centre, municipal engines have to wait several hours to empty their cargo because the centre operates beyond capacity. These delays cause backlogs in terms of collection across the city that optimized routes alone cannot solve. Added to this are accumulated structural weaknesses. Like other municipalities across Tunisia, during the revolution, protestors destroyed engines and equipment that municipalities have barely been able to replace. Today, citizens are less disciplined which makes door to door collection challenging. Because of tight budgets and excessive public sector employment, municipalities cannot recruit new staff members. As such, they are servicing larger areas with more needs but with unchanged, if not diminished, physical resources and human capital. That Nabeul can still run projects optimizing SWM, given these challenges, should be considered an achievement.

Ahmed's grievances were not about the technical challenges of the SWM sector. Instead, the source of tension was his relationship with the previous mayor, who had served on the council before the revolution. According to Ahmed, she did not treat him respectfully, convinced she could get away with the same behaviour she exhibited under Ben Ali's authoritarian regime. Back then, Ahmed told us, councils ruled without anyone ever questioning the legitimacy of their decisions. His tense relationship with the mayor meant she did not permit him to travel for training or workshops donors organized as part of their collaboration with the municipality. She had also refused his transfer request out of his post. He has a better relationship with the current mayor. Such tensions between the elected council and the administration cause significant friction, making

municipal labour even more challenging.

Ambivalence about participation

Ahmed had some reservations about participatory governance. He told us that in one such avenue of participatory governance – the participatory planning sessions that the municipality organizes to prioritize investments as part of its annual investment plan (PAI) – participants argue about their preferred mode of solid waste collection in their neighbourhood. Arguments can escalate into fist fights because participants disagree about any number of things: the timing of taking their trash out and placing it curbside for door-to-door collection or the location of a designated collection point on this or that street corner. Consulting citizens was good, said Ahmed, but half of his department's concerns regarding public hygiene were technical matters not subject to citizens' whims. In addition, citizens expect the municipality to be responsive to their individual problems rather than attend to what is in the general public's best interest. Inviting residents to participate leads to the multiplication of demands without having any decisions taken. Furthermore, narrow interests do not work when trying to solve problems of a public nature such as garbage collection. It was not even true that participation increased citizens' awareness, argued Ahmed. In theory, such meetings should persuade citizens to pay their local taxes, facilitating the role of the municipality in providing these services. But this was not the case. Ahmed concluded, "people's behaviour is about 10% awareness-raising and 90% enforcement." He viewed participation as a laborious consultative exercise which did little to improve the quality of the services he provided.

The Nabeul case shows that good governance in SWM is contingent upon the presence of skilled technical staff who have expertise in the sector, but also a broad understanding of what constitutes a healthy and sustainable environment. Despite his skirmishes with municipal leadership, our interlocutor performed his duties under budgetary and organizational constraints. His attitude resembled many administrators' distrust of elected local councils and criticism of politicized local governance. Without acknowledging it, his position as an expert made him sceptical of politics and of more open governance systems, including participatory mechanisms. Wary of citizens' participation at the local level, it is unsurprising that he did not mention civil society organizations or activists, except when he spoke of donors and bilateral agencies. One interpretation for the reason activists were absent from his comments is his definition of the environment. Activists on the ground were not on his radar precisely because his definition of the environment was technical, and its management the purview of expertise which should not be subject to popular consultation.

Feel-good in Maamoura



Figure 2: Waste recycling bins in Maamoura. (c) Author, December 2020.

For a first-time visitor on a sunny day, Maamoura exudes the sense of a quaint postcard-worthy little town. The waterfront locality of 10,000 inhabitants is known for pioneering environmental awareness-raising campaigns in collaboration with civil society organizations. These have financed the purchase of waste recycling bins (Figure 2) and the distribution of colour-coded waste bags for organic vs. non-organic sorting. The “feel-good” classification is a qualification of three elements: (i) the triumphant efforts of the municipality to clean and permanently close an unregulated dumpsite that had gotten too close to the town’s built-up perimeter; (ii) the collaborative (rather than confrontational) relationship with civil society organizations; and (iii) the limited structural effects of such efforts where, after sorting at source, some of the waste is again mixed up and transported to the landfill in Menzel Bouzelfa for burial. It shows the limits of municipal efforts at environmentally sustainable SWM practices when there is no institutionalized national strategy framing and organizing these practices up the chain.

Good practices with challenging consequences

Our interlocutors at the municipality of Maamoura, spoke at length about the constraints of municipal labour. Lina Chebbi, the principal engineer responsible for the technical services department, and Ghada Radi, secretary-general responsible for finance and participatory planning mechanisms, confirmed that the municipality lacked human capital and physical resources. They defined the environment as a municipal mandate; care for the environment automatically accompanying tasks such as hygiene and public health. Their emphasis was also on cleanliness/hygiene, confirming that Maamoura is known for its clean streets, as a tour in the locality makes evident. In response to a question about her understanding of environmental sustainability, Lina said: “We work to maintain the level of cleanliness Maamoura is known for.” To fulfil these mandates, municipalities need equipment, including collection engines, money to operate and maintain these engines, and human resources to provide good SWM services. They cannot be fulfilled with the 18-person team of street cleaners, truck drivers, and one skilled staff, Lina, responsible for administrative tasks, solving problems in the field and everything in between.



Figure 3: Containers for recycling plastic bottles in Maamoura. (c) Author, December 2020.

recently, a CSO worked directly with households to distribute black and green trash bags for organic and non-organic waste. The CSO piloted this project with one neighbourhood in 2018. When we asked how the project evolved, our interlocutors could not provide an answer, stating that the municipality did not provide any budgetary support. Instead, it provided in-kind labour, transporting the separated waste to the landfill. This example demonstrated that an active civil society alone cannot produce any meaningful changes in SWM practices when working with municipalities that not only lack the financial and human resources to capitalize on these projects but that have also been burdened with additional responsibilities because of decentralization reforms. Add to this the fact that citizens' grievances have increased exponentially making the municipality everyone's first stop. When local public institutions do not find support from deconcentrated local entities, they turn to the municipality. For example, after the radio silence of the regional directorate of education, the elementary school's principal turned to the municipality for help with COVID-19 sanitation and cleaning protocols. In effect then, the municipality shares its resources with multiple other public institutions within its jurisdiction. Given scarce resources, collaborative efforts between CSOs and the municipality are bound to remain limited to "feel-good" effects.

Paradoxically, closing the unregulated landfill in Maamoura increased the municipality's SWM challenges. For proponents of environmental sustainability and decentralization reforms, the permanent closure of Maamoura's landfill was a small triumph. With her council's support, the mayor dedicated TND 60,000 of the municipal budget to this project, which was conducted with the technical assistance of the ANGED. But the closure of the landfill increased the costs of SWM. Before closure, waste would be temporarily stored in the unregulated landfill awaiting its transportation once a week to the transfer centre, whereas engines now have to make this trip daily, increasing fuel and labour costs for the collection and disposal trucks. Even though the ANGED subsidizes these costs, delays at the transfer centre cause backlogs in the collection and force the municipality to transport its waste directly to the landfill in Menzel Bouzelfa. All these scenarios increase the costs of transporting waste.

Collaboration with civil society organizations

The new role of civil society organizations (CSOs) changed municipal governance in Maamoura after the revolution. As Ghada indicated, CSOs in Maamoura are active, especially in environmental sustainability. Right after the revolution in 2011, in collaboration with these CSOs, the municipality installed containers for the collection of plastic bottles (Figure 3). More

Toxicity in Agareb

On 26 September 2019, Amal Ben Ibrahim was rushed to the hospital in Sfax. She died the same morning because of a mosquito sting. Amal was 21 years old. She lived in Agareb, Sfax governorate. The same day, the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES) [ran an article](#) about Amal's death connecting it to extreme pollution in El Gonna, the second-largest landfill of Tunisia located in Agareb. Pollution killed Amal. The article expressed solidarity with Manish Msab (I am not a dumpsite), an environmental campaign, predating Amal's death, organized by activists from Agareb to defend their constitutional right to a healthy environment. Five months later, on 26 February 2020, the FTDES ran [another article](#) about Agareb denouncing the harassment of Manish Msab campaign members. The third case study in this report considers the environmental repercussions of El Gonna's landfill. It builds on two perspectives: the point of view of Sami Bahri, one of Manish Msab's main organizers, and the perspective of the municipality in its everyday management of environmental problems.

Non-institutionalized, non-disruptive contestation

"We opted for different forms of contestation. We did not burn tires or block roads. We made art instead. We are artists. And we used our networks to speak to journalists, to go on TV in an episode of *Al haqa'eq al Arba'a* (the four truths), for example, and worked with NGOs that championed our cause."

Such was Sami Bahri's comment when we asked him about the campaign Manish Msab, which he was pivotal in organizing. Sami insisted to speak in his capacity as a dweller of Agareb who suffered because of his toxic environment. "I speak to you as Sami Bahri who wants to live, it is my right and my children's right," he added. In the course of our conversation, Sami insisted he is no environmental expert: he didn't understand toxicity levels, soil composition, the depth of the water-table, or the standards of industrial filters which should be installed for all the factories spread across Agareb. For him, toxicity was a crime, its consequences experienced every day: foul smells, disfigured newborns, young women struggling with infertility, neighbours and kin dying of cancer. The environment was under his skin and the skin of those he loved. The environment was the intoxicated hometown where he lived, the air he breathed, the water he drank, and the food he consumed.

Sami contested environmental toxicity by producing art about it with the kids and the young men and women of Agareb. They even found space for humour. In one activity, they organized a photoshoot of a mock Miss Tunisia beauty pageant in the landfill contrasting beauty with ugliness, as he framed it. In another, they set up a stand at the weekly municipal market and sold bottles of the polluted air, soil and rock of Agareb. Through an art association he founded, Sami enrolled children in mobile

cinema workshops, teaching them to make films using their cell phones. They created content about the landfill. Sami expressed his deep scepticism about the environmental activism landscape. Beyond the Manish Msab campaign, he refused to institutionalize the environmental protest movement into a non-governmental organization. It would have sullied his reputation, or so he reasoned. He would have been accused of cashing dinars by capitalizing on his people's suffering. He chose art instead. Disillusioned by corrupt NGO practices, he wanted to leave a different legacy. Cognizant of the distributed temporality of toxicity and the harm it inflicts on people's bodies, Sami said:

"I know I am fighting the state and I can't beat the state. This is a protracted conflict. I am aware of that. What we are living here is a crime, but we are raising a generation from Agareb who refuses to be subservient to this reality."

Extortive capitalism and perverse incentives

At the root of Sami's broad definition of "the environment" was his experience of capitalism as a system that extorts people like him. He asked me:

"If your fishmonger in Tunis sold sea bream at TND 5 a kilo, would you buy it?²¹ We are 'zwewla'.²² If the grocer in my neighbourhood is selling cake for TND 3 around New Year's Eve, people buy it. Expired food which enters this landfill for final disposal finds its way back into our shops. People buy it, I buy it. We are not citizens, we aren't living."

The landfill is supposed to be the final destination for waste destined for burial. But some of it, expired or spoiled food, for example, finds its way out of the landfill, into various shops in Agareb. Sami explained this phenomenon as double corruption: into and out of the landfill. "Corruption into" entailed the transfer of toxic waste to the facility, which is illegal since there are special provisions for the treatment and disposal of such waste. "Corruption out" entailed the transfer of spoiled foods out of the landfill and their resale in local shops. Seventy to 80 permanent staff work at the landfill on any given day. Any one of them could facilitate double corruption. A few weeks before our

²¹ For context, a kilo of sea bream costs about TND15. Sami's question implies that an alert consumer would know this is rotten fish not suitable for human consumption, and as a result is sold at an unjustifiably low price. In asking me this question, he also pointed out our privileged positions as researchers of middle-class backgrounds who know how much a kilo of sea bream usually costs, and who can afford to buy it at its market price.

²² To my retort, yes poor people would buy it, Sami insisted they were not poor but rather *zwewla*. After probing, the best meaning I could find for *zwewla* is complacent with injustices because easily manipulable, or duped.

interview, a member of the Manish Msab campaign called Sami. He suspected that a truck carrying toxic waste, unauthorized to enter the landfill, was on its way to empty its cargo. At dawn, Sami and a few campaign members gathered at the landfill to prevent the truck's entry: the truck drivers threatened them with knives. The scenario was one of the many instances of death threats campaign members routinely received because of their environmental activism.

More than fear for his own life, what seemed intractable to Sami were the perverse incentives many of his neighbours had to defend – the presence of extremely polluting activities among them. In a town of 40,000 dwellers, every family's livelihood was somehow connected to the landfill through the workers who manned the dozen factories and other industrial facilities of the town. In addition to the sanitary landfill, factories operated many informal dumpsites (*décharges sauvages*) scattered across town. Townspeople viewed an environmental movement opposing these polluting industrial activities as a threat to their livelihoods. Without the factories, there are no salaries. People would go hungry. Sami understood the gravity of these perverse mechanisms. "I feel alone" is how he summed up the difficulty of fighting extortive capitalism. But he did not give up. He threw all his energy behind the art they created. His politics was future-oriented. He knew the work he did was for his children and their generation. He had to initiate it, even if despite his best efforts, he could not necessarily see it through.

Sami also understood that his body, and the bodies of Agareb's dwellers, including the workers who made their livelihoods at its factories, were disposable. They were the surplus of the mythical modern Tunisian state,²³ and could therefore be sacrificed to sustain its industrialized modernity. Preserving the integrity of these bodies was not the state's priority. At one point, in conversation with the media, addressing those in power, Sami asked: "why us, why Agareb, what have we done to deserve this?" If the state cannot remove the waste, his demand was that it transfers people out of Agareb.

A disembodied problem

From the standpoint of the municipality, the management of the landfill was a disembodied governance problem; its toxicity dissolved in the ordinariness of overburdened understaffed municipalities. Consider our interlocutor's discussion of municipal staffing. Hani Yousfi, the head of the administrative and financial services division, lamented that the last round of municipal hires included six unskilled staff members the municipality inherited from the delegation (*mu'tamadiyah*).²⁴ This was not specific to Agareb. A common complaint one hears in Tunisian municipalities struggling to fulfil citizens' expectations in the post-revolution era is the dearth of skilled human capital, paradoxically matched with a wage bill often exceeding half the municipality's operational budget. Like others across the territory, the municipality was pressured into hiring them because they were "social cases", the term used to describe precarious labourers often with dependents to care for. But the difference was that in Agareb half of the "social cases" hired

suffered from physical or mental disabilities.

"The office boy who just brought your coffee is on anti-psychotic drugs, one janitor we hired suffers from diabetes, another one fainted while cleaning the street the other day. We have gone to war and we must now win it with an ailing army," Hani explained.

"Going to war" was Hani's experience of severely constrained municipal labour. That part, any municipal governance expert who accompanied Tunisia's decentralization reforms can tell you, is standard. Indeed, most municipal administrators must now respond to elected municipal councils, patch together multiple sources of funding to satisfy growing investment needs, all while navigating less than cooperative relationships with centralized institutions and remaining attuned to citizens' grievances. But what was uncommon about Agareb's case is the description of the municipality's staff as an "ailing army" because it was not figurative: the bodily integrity of Agareb's municipal employees was compromised. Multiple times throughout our conversation, Hani repeated that half their staff, the existing and newly hired, were "handicapped". But not once did Hani directly connect these ailments, the "handicaps" affecting the municipal staff's bodies, to the toxicity in the soil, water, and air of Agareb, because such toxicity had not really infiltrated their environment. "Agareb has a clay soil which does not absorb waste" explained Hani during our conversation. Our second interlocutor, Abir Ghazelah, a municipal counsellor involved with Manish Msab campaigners, supported his claim. Importantly, neither Abir nor Hani used the term toxicity in relation to Agareb or the landfill.²⁵ I cannot know whether my interlocutors believed the impermeable clay soil narrative as scientific fact or used it to justify the presence of a toxic landfill to two researchers.²⁶ Instead, the illuminating part of this exchange is that, according to Hani and Abir, toxicity did not live in people's bodies. The landfill was an external or exteriorized problem, instead of one which permeates people's everyday lives.

Diffused institutional responsibility

"The environmental situation is bad, but there is a will to improve it" confirmed Hani, 10 minutes into our conversation. He never mentioned pollution, indicating a careful word choice since pollution presumes some sort of polluters who must be clearly identified. Hani went on to explain how Agareb's large industrial zone built the town. People flocked from neighbouring regions to work in the factories, but "it comes at a price". The most contentious issue is the sanitary landfill of El Gonna which serves the municipality of Sfax, the country's industrial hub. El

²³ cf Siad Darwish

²⁴ Delegations are the smallest territorial deconcentrated entities of the Tunisian government, whereas municipalities are the decentralized entities of the Tunisian government. Delegations and municipalities, are in most cases but not in all of them, territorially overlapping and geographically congruent (same boundaries) entities.

²⁵ It is uncommon for interviewees within government agencies to deliver negative perspectives to a researcher during a first-time interview.

²⁶ Neither does the author believe it is the researcher's task to test the veracity of her interlocutors' claims.

Gonna is also the final destination for 80% of the waste the 23 municipalities of the governorate of Sfax produce. The dumpsite is located in a green zone which became a natural reserve *after* the creation of the landfill. As such, it is institutionally under the purview of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests but managed by the ANGED under the tutelage of the Ministry of Environment. Created in 1998, El Gonna was supposed to operate for 15 years. A decision to close the landfill was issued in 2019. Given this verdict, at present, the landfill is operating illegally. Also, in 2019, to speed up the closure of the dumpsite, the municipality took its own decision to permanently close the landfill. But the governor representing the deconcentrated state in the region questioned the legitimacy of the municipality's decision, accusing it of trespassing on a matter of national concern. The dumpsite was, in effect, a central-level institution the municipality of Agareb had no business managing.

Hani understood the Manish Msab campaign as a protest movement against the echeloned temporality of landfill closure, an elusive outcome that seemed to be perpetually rescheduled. The municipality adopted the campaign's stance fully supporting its members in what it perceived to be citizens' legitimate demands. Boasting the mediating role it played, Hani concluded that the "municipality successfully managed this crisis". In other municipalities, police forces would have intervened to quell protestors unleashing its violence on dissidents. But Agareb's municipality defended its "children" for two reasons. First, their demands were legitimate. Second, their struggle was not against the municipality; it was against dead horizons of development and powerful businessmen who owned and ran factories in Sfax and Agareb. Why then were people staging their protest against the local state in front of the mu'tamadiyah and the municipality? According to Hani, the complex institutional landscape diffused the responsibility for operating and closing the dumpsite and by doing so rescripted the conflict. Instead of a confrontation between citizens and industrialists, what transpired was disagreement between state institutions: the local against the central state.

Good governance amidst toxicity

Like other municipalities that saw their boundaries extended after the municipalization of the entire country in 2014, Agareb's resources were stretched thin. Seven delegations, home to 25,000 residents, were added to its municipal territory. They had grievances unrelated to industrial pollution. They were able to express them in the yearly participatory planning meetings the municipality organizes for prioritizing investments. Abir, who heads the participatory planning committee, spoke positively about the experience. Now, she said, even if a dweller from Agareb lives in a rural area,²⁷ he is guaranteed access to a paved road. There was a triumphant story of participation, of citizens who determine municipal investment priorities and obtain what they have asked for. Agareb's budget for local investments (*services de proximité*: street lighting, road paving and beautification of green spaces) increased from TND 750,000 in 2019 to TND 1,95 million in 2020. In addition, the municipality had a budget of

TND 6 million for structural investments,²⁸ a significant budget for a municipality the size of Agareb. Indeed, in comparative terms, Agareb is a rich municipality because it is home to several industrial facilities. If, as Hani mentioned, their establishment in Agareb "came at a price" why not monetize this "price" instead of using it as a figure of speech only? Should the municipality use the provisions of the CCL to tax polluting industries, it could probably multiply this budget many folds, and could look into using it towards closing the dumpsite, like the municipality of Maamoura did for its uncontrolled landfill. Calculating technologies could also serve as a form of dissent.

The municipality of Agareb approached the problem of El Gonna dumpsite through standard technocratic procedures. Municipal staff raised the question of conflicting institutional mandates and lack of support from centralized entities, including the governorate and concerned line ministries. To Sami's question "why us," why a landfill for the entirety of Sfax governorate in Agareb, Hani provided a technical answer unrelated to the disposability of certain bodies at the expense of others. His technical answer pertained to the non-permeability of Agareb's clay soil. As he conveyed to us "the landfill here is not purposeful", but rather an appropriate choice given the nature of the town's soil. Despite Hani's politically accurate assessment of the landfill problem as one of powerful polluting industrialists for whom El Gonna is vital, his approach was, to this researcher, shockingly depoliticized. It displaced agency onto an amorphous, gargantuan bureaucracy a small municipality can do very little to oppose. One possible explanation for this gap, between the assessment of the problem and the response to it, is the difference in defining what constitutes "the environment". For municipal officials like Hani, the problem of the landfill remained a disembodied one because the environment exists "out there". Whereas for Sami and other environmental campaigners, the environment is something they ingest. It makes them sick; it threatens the integrity of their bodies and the bodies of those they hold dear. Fighting for a healthy environment then becomes urgent, even if, as Sami mentioned, the fight against the state is insurmountable.

27 Before the extension of municipalities across the territory, zones with no municipalities had rural councils which were perceived as less efficient at service delivery because they were appointed, and their budgets totally dictated by the central level.

28 Local vs. structural investments denote a classification of municipal investment projects municipalities adopted in 2014 with the World Bank Local Governance and Urban Development Program and extended in 2019 with additional financing until 2023.

Conclusion

The case studies explored in this report show that SWM is an issue of local manifestations but also one which crystallizes national economic interests and political struggles. Though municipalities are often accused of failing to solve SWM issues, their roles in the sector are contingent on physical and human resources, both of which are lacking in many municipalities. On paper, decentralization reforms give municipalities significant leverage in terms of environmental protection, such as the ability to tax polluting activities, but this does not mean that municipalities can make use of these provisions. The three cases explored in this report as the good governance, feel-good, and toxic cases illustrate the practical challenges that municipalities face in addressing environmental problems resulting specifically from SWM. At its extreme, in the case of Agareb, the landfill caused toxicity, which threatened the bodily integrity of Agareb's residents. Manish Msab was the environmental justice campaign levelled against such toxicity. In a way, this campaign demonstrates the "slow violence" that the poor suffer from every day. Agareb's municipality was supportive of the campaign, but in practical terms did very little to fight on behalf of citizens for radical solutions to environmental problems.

At a very basic level, this report establishes a relationship between local governance, political-economy dimensions of modernizing industrial activities, and the disposability of poor people's bodies in post-revolution Tunisia. If street demonstrations that rocked the country in January 2021 are any indicator about the demands of a generation of young people who came of age in the wake of the revolution, then issues of environmental harm and toxicity must acquire the same importance as job creation or social safety nets able to support the most vulnerable. What indeed is the use of providing jobs if those jobs degrade the environment and kill people?

Of course, there is a limit to the conclusions derived from the above three case studies as they are not representative of all municipalities across Tunisia. One future avenue of research is an in-depth study of the municipalities where Tunisia's nine controlled landfills are currently located. The study could include a more fine-grained analysis of citizens' grievances concerning the landfills within their jurisdictions and how municipalities address these grievances. It would also be useful to trace why these specific municipalities were chosen as locations for the landfill and not others (land tenure, poverty, political allegiances, etc.). Further questions could pertain to whether environmental organizations are active in these municipalities, why, and to what effects. Whatever future research is engaged, it is necessary to scale down to the local level and remain attentive to the justice dimensions of environmental problems.

Annexe : Interview questionnaire

This is a translation of the questions we asked in Tunisian Arabic. The questions guided the conversation, but we picked up on topics of interest to our interlocutors, sometimes deviating from these questions.

The conversation with Sami Bahri was open-ended and guided by one general question: tell us about the landfill.

Introductions: who we are, the objective of the study, permission to record

1. Could you tell us more about your background, how long have you worked at the municipality, where were you before, what is your training in?
 2. What has changed about municipal labour during this period? What has improved? What has worsened?
 3. What is your understanding of environmental sustainability? What is your understanding of environmental development? What is the relationship between both in your opinion?
 4. In your opinion, did decentralization help municipalities manage environmental issues more sustainably? How? And if not, why not?
 5. Participation is now stipulated in the constitution to be a pillar of local governance. Has participatory governance improved financial management at the municipality?
 6. Tell me a little bit about the committee for the environment, hygiene, and public health. Who are its members, what are its responsibilities? What are the most challenging aspects of its work?
 7. Could you tell me about the most common challenges across the SWM supply chain?
 8. Are there *quartiers populaires* in this municipality? Do they affect SWM practices? How?
 9. How is your relationship with neighbouring municipalities? Do you coordinate with each other to solve common environmental issues?
 10. What could improve the environmental conditions in your municipality?
 11. Do you have any questions for us?
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About the Arab Reform Initiative

The Arab Reform Initiative is an independent Arab think tank working with expert partners in the Middle East and North Africa and beyond to articulate a home-grown agenda for democratic change social justice. It conducts research and policy analysis and provides a platform for inspirational voices based on the principles of diversity, impartiality, and gender equality.

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The Heinrich Böll Foundation is a catalyst for green visions and projects, closely affiliated to the German Green Party. We work with project partners in over 60 countries and currently maintain 34 international offices, including in Tunis. We defend human rights and work towards a healthy environment for future generations.



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