



RESEARCH ARTICLE

GEO-ANALYSIS OF A TOURISTIC CITY IN PROGRESS: A CASE STUDY OF SOUSSE

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ABSTRACT

The city of Sousse, Capital of the region of Sahel, presents the kind of a seaside city in Tunisia, from its location on the Tunisian coastal line and beside its significant history. Indeed, the city of Sousse has seen the advent of several civilizations, which have contributed to its development and its enrichment. The city of Sousse has the advantage of having a temperate Mediterranean climate, an important cultural richness, a balanced economic development and a road and rail infrastructure facilitating access. The city forms an open door to the European markets and many countries in Africa and the Middle East. All these factors are able to contribute to the promotion of tourism.

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INTRODUCTION

Sousse the ancient "Hadrumetum" (the first known name of the city ascribed by the Phoenicians), Hannibal's maritime base, is a city enameled with various and precious relics worldwide known. Having the status of an honorary colony during the 1st century is deserved by the presence of the symbolic and prestigious construction from the Roman era (Arc de triumph, theater, amphitheater, etc. ...). During the Roman period, the city, as one of the main exporters of olive oil, had the privilege of delivering Rome daily. In 670, the city took its current name "Sousse" during the presence of Arab-Muslims. Through this Aghlabid period, the Muslims assured the city by fortifications "the Ribat". During this period, Sousse took the role of protecting the coast and the departure of the ships for the conquest of Sardinia (821), Malta, Sicily (827), and again Rome (846). The liveliest and the most frequent period is during the colonial period between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Here again the ruins of the war were accumulated, there too the port was rebuilt and modernized because Sousse at the time has a specialty, the "Halfa". Sousse and because of its situation it is the great exporter of the Tunisian "Halfa" in the colonial period that for the most part the foreign ships come to load on its quay.

It would not seem complete if it did not include a game reserve for fishing. Sousse has a small trawler that adds a significant contribution to the general prosperity. Today Sousse is a dynamic regional metropolis in constant expansion. Its demographic weight gives it the ranking of the third major city in the country with its territorial extent nearly 4516 hectares and its multiple functions. It is one of the few cities that feeds on the three main activities in Tunisia (tourism, industry, and agriculture), which it poses as one of the pillars of the national economy. Through this Article, the first section covers the natural diversity and geographical positioning of the region of Sousse. Then, through the second section, we focus on the historical passage of the city and the economic diversities of which tourism has a major importance.

Patrimonial diversity from a place open to the touristic activity

Geo demographics Situation

Sousse, the third largest city in the country, is a city on the coast of Tunisia, in a corridor that connects the north and south of the country. The governorate of Sousse covers 75km of the Mediterranean coast. Its historical and geographical affiliation to the Sahel (Sousse, Monastir, and Mahdia) gave it the name of the pearl of the Sahel because of its importance. It is surrounded by five governorates, the governorate of Nabeul to the north, the governorate of Kairouan and Zaghuan to the west, Monastir and Mahdia to the south as well as the

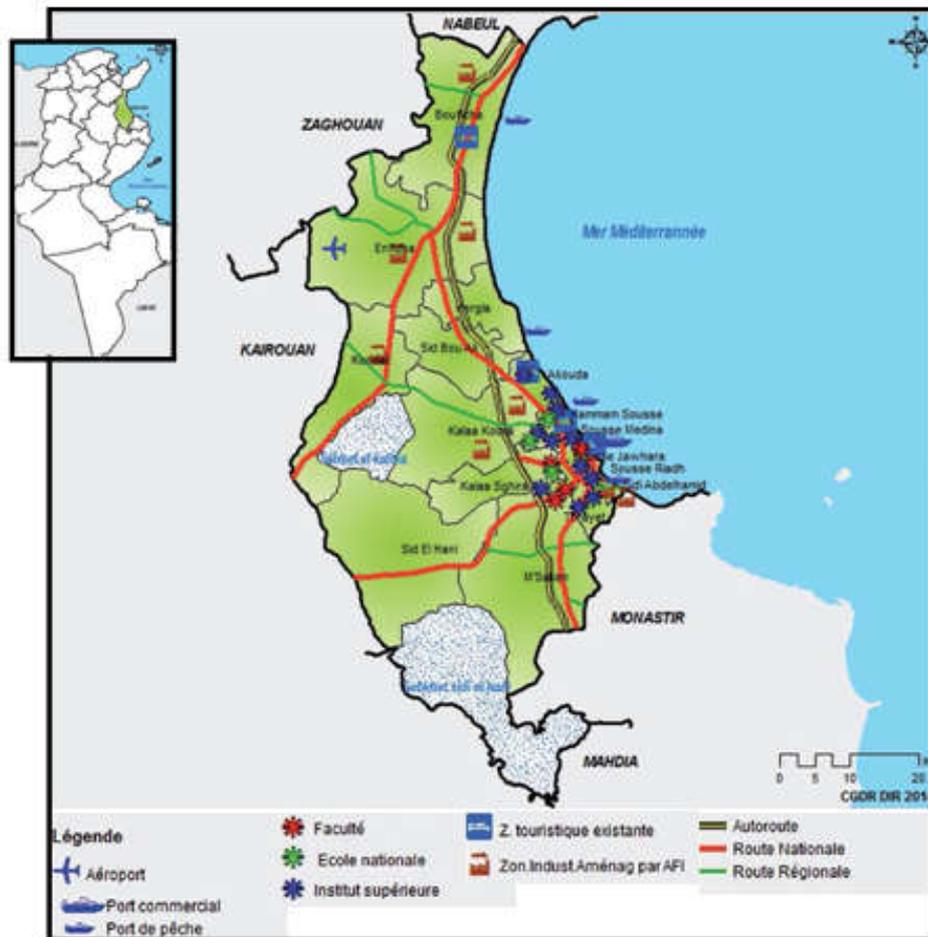
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Mediterranean to the east (See Fig.8).<sup>1</sup> Today, the Sahel region of which Sousse forms part is the second most populated region after capital, accounting for 13.3% of the country's total population. The governorate of Sousse covers 612,310 inhabitants in an area of 2669 km<sup>2</sup> while the city with 40% of the population is concentrated, covering 247,320 inhabitants. Following the job offer it has, the high level of equipment and the ease of services, Sousse is known for its dynamic demographic. It should be noted that the Tunisian coastline united 76% of the population of the country. In the 13 governorates on the coast, Sousse is the only governorate with an annual growth rate of 4.12%.

- The popular-class districts are medium-density areas.
- Low-density residential districts where we discover a variety number of villas.

### Natural Diversity

The Sahel territory and precisely Sousse are known by the different reliefs where 75% of the zone has low altitudes. The coastline is known by sandy beaches. The north of the region has a rugged relief that configures individualized masses, assembled by vast foothills under steep slopes.



Source : Elaboré à partir des cartes du Commissariat Général du Développement Régional

Figure 8. Map of the governorate of Sousse

Since the independence, following the movement of the rural population, the urban side has been concentrated in the city center, with urban sprawl on the outskirts (see fig.9). It is noted that the high density is concentrated in the center of the city with a density of 16,636 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>; the overall density reaches 3832 inhabitants per Km<sup>2</sup>. Far from the above figures of the city of Sousse the density of the governorate of Sousse is 219 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>. This difference in density is simply explained by the number of jobs available in the city center.<sup>2</sup> The urban diversity gives the city of Sousse a unique identity. The urban fabric of the city is based on three different zones:

- The city center is a densely populated area that covers the medina and the colonial city

The areas of Enfidha and Bouficha in the north of the region are perceived by an irregular littoral cord that extends to the delegation of Hergla, through a series of salt marshes. While the inner zone, which includes Sidi-Bouali, Msaken and Sidi-Elhani, took advantage of an anticlinorium axis<sup>3</sup>. The region is characterized by two types of bio-climates. A superior arid to mild winter that governs the interior area of the governorate and a semi-arid bioclimatic to warm winter subjected to the coastal zone. The pluviometermarks a low density. Generally, the rainy season begins in September and ends in January with an average of 60 rainy days per year. Precipitation ranges from 360 to 400mm. Sousse is known by a dense hydrological network subject to delegations located inside the governorate and of low density in the coastal zone. Given the need for water from hotels, agricultural projects and industry, the region has a

<sup>1</sup> Hassen. L, (2011), La perle du sahel vers une perle méditerranéenne, p. 16

<sup>2</sup> Idem. P.22

<sup>3</sup>Schéma Directeur d'Aménagement de la Région Economique du Centre-Est / ATLAS CARTOGRAPHIQUE / DGAT

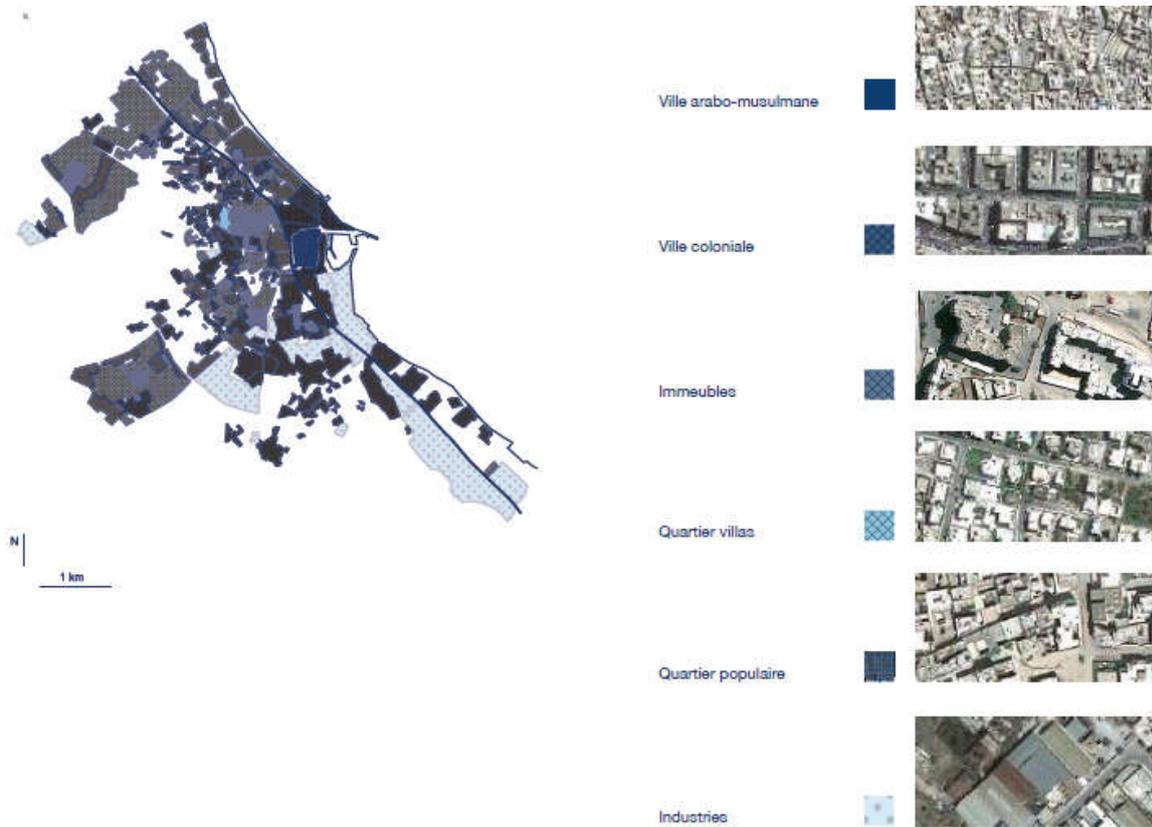
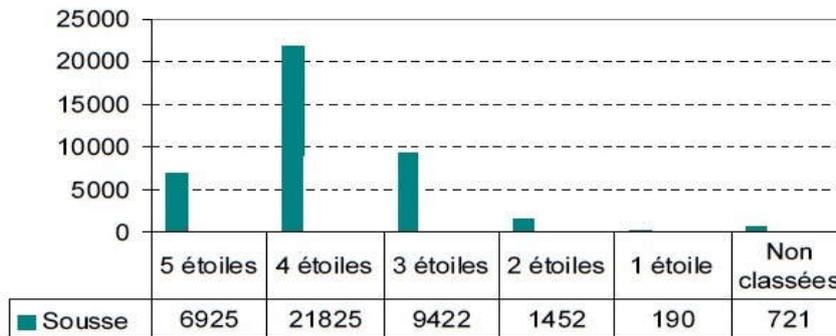


Figure 1. The Urban mosaic of the city Sousse



Source: Commissariat Régional au Tourisme, 2007

Figure 10. The Hotel Capacity in the region of the Sousse according to the category and the number of beds

shortage of water resources. Its major bioclimatic levels dominated by the upper arid to mild winter and a hot and humid summer. Temperatures are generally tolerable between an average of 11.8 ° C during winter and 27.6 ° C in summer. It is clear that this natural diversity provides an essential role in promoting the tourist sector of Sousse. Any form of visitor to interest enjoy natural features by exercising various activities that suits this area in summer.

**Historical and economical Formality of the region of Sousse**

**Historical Pathway**

Sousse, the city that dates back 3000 years, is a site rich in archaeological heritage that dates back to antiquity. Its archaeological museum is a witness of the different civilization throughout the buildings of Hadrumetum, the vast collection of Roman mosaics.

Hadrumetum, in the Sixth century of J.C., by the Phoenicians, the city is known by its commercial activity by exposing its local artisan goods against the agricultural products between the various counters exposed on the African coast. Later, in the 6th century, the Carthaginian Empire, including its Hadrumetum territory, became the third city after Carthage and Utica, taking advantage of its suitable site for a military base on a hill on the seashore. During the Third Punic War, Hadrumetum was disappointed on the part of the Carthaginian politicians, which made the city turn towards Rome in 146. This diversion towards the Roman Empire led the city to hold the status of which enabled it to manage its activities freely and by keeping its institutions. However, with the arrival of Caesar, the status was withdrawn following the disagreement with the new policy.<sup>4</sup> At the beginning of the 2nd century, under the Empire of Trajan, the city recorded a commercial wealth and a remarkable urban development.

<sup>4</sup>NéjiJalloul, Sousse, l'antique Hadrumetum, éd. Contraste, Sousse, 2006



Source : Elaboré à partir des cartes du Commissariat Général du Développement Régional

Figure 2. The touristic Map of Sousse

Its commercial port experienced an intense movement by exporting olive oil and cereals to Rome as the orient side. Luxurious monuments have appeared in the economic growth of the city. However, Hadrumetum saw its stop in the 3rd century following the failure of the Gordian revolt, the proconsul of Thyssdrus (El Jem), whose city proclaimed its support. However, the city has taken a new lease on Diocletian, which designated it the capital of Byzacène, a new province occupying the center of present-day Tunisia.<sup>5</sup> At the arrival of the Vandals, during the 5th century, a big part of the city was destroyed in order to put an end to the Roman presence. After the vandals did not survive for a long time before the presence of the Byzantines in the 6th century. Justinianopolis, in honor of the Emperor Justinian, becomes the new name of the city. Quickly the city became an important Byzantine base in the North African territory. The city took the current name, Sousse, during the conquest of the Arabs, directed by the conqueror Okba Ibn Nafaa during the end of the 7th century. Very quickly, Sousse took his esteem with the Aghlabids. In the 9th century, the city was rebuilt from the beginning, so it was endowed with constructions as well as the "Kasbah" and the fortress known by "Ribat" to be the showcase and main port of capital «Kairouan ». The port of Sousse witnessed the departure of the Arab conquests in Sicily. Later, the Nomads dominated the city for a few years during the 12th century. The Spanish signed an invasion in the 12th century. However, the city was taken over by the Turks who dominated the Islamic world at that time. During the Turkish period, Sousse lost its importance from the political turmoil and the failures of the rebels of which

Sousse is part. At the arrival of the French in 1881, the city counted almost only 8000 citizens. Little by little, the city resumed the race and became an important economic pole that was enriched by three key sectors of agriculture, industry and tourism.

### Economic Diversity

Since 1956, the year of the country's independence, the city experienced an economic situation following the transition phase. Agriculture, fishing, trade, and crafts are the major functions that present the socio-economic fabric of that time. However, the Sahel population has had a hard time recovering from these activities in the face of rising living standards. Over time, the country has drawn up development plans to overcome this crisis and create an economic balance. Other activities have been introduced while tourism and education, including Sousse and the Sahel are among the major areas that have benefited. At the beginning of this transition, the country has to work hard to educate the people so that it is ready to support and develop the Tunisian economy through a high intellectual level. Behind the region of Tunis and Sfax, Sousse became the third university pole. The central university then named the University of Sousse hosts a number equal to 40 000 students per year in respect of 18 institutions of higher education of which the faculty of medicine, the school of the engineers, the Higher Institute of Agriculture Of Chott-Meriem are part of this cluster. Alongside the universities, the Sousse region contains 168 vocational training centers, 86% of which are private. These centers help train technicians for access to industries according to different specialties such as mechanics, electricity, electronics and industrial computing; other specialty are

<sup>5</sup> Ben Said, H. Chaouache, H. Zormai, A. et El Fani, A. (1985). À la recherche du sousse d'Antan. Tunis, Tunisia ; Al Asria ; p.20

offered such as the business, management, textile, Health and tourism departments.

Its geographic position remains one of the main reasons that seduces investors to take advantage of the location. Sousse, this crossroads that brings together all four sides of the country, as well as direct access to the Mediterranean, allows investors to connect the region between the interior and exterior areas of the country whose international import-export trade has become an activity known by this region. At the medicine sector, the region has a developed level in front of sophisticated skills and equipment known. Followed by two public medicine universities, the region has 5 constituency hospitals in the governorate's inner areas, one sports medicine center and another for magnetic resonance detection. Without forgetting the number of private clinics that evolve each year.<sup>6</sup> The industrial sector forms a rich tissue. With the installation of 541 companies, 60% of which are totally exporting. Their activities are divided into different sectors. The textile industry is the dominant activity that covers 35.6% of the total, followed by the electromechanical industries with a rate of 15.6%, and then the agro-food comes next with a rate of 15.1%. The governorate has nine industrial zones, which are shared between the north, and the south with a total area of 256 hectares, the industrial zone of Enfidha, with 50 hectares of area, is located in the north, forms the largest zone. While the south covers the industrial zone of Sidi-Abdel Hamid, which lies within the limits with the governorate of Monastir. The Sousse region also marks the presence of foreign investors in 390 enterprises divided between the tourism. Concerning the touristic sector, the city has experienced a potential development.

This sector even had an influence on the urban landscape of the region. It has built a second tourist center after Djerba and before Hammamet in 129 hotels, with a capacity of 44868 beds (21% of the country's capacity). The 4 and 5 star hotels exceed half of the capacity (Kantaoui and Yasmine-Hammamet), 58 classified restaurants, 30 apart hotels, 2 eco-villages, 3 casinos, thalassotherapy centers and a golf course (see figures 10 and 11). In 2014, the city marked a figure of 1373 thousand arrivals per year, ie 7973 thousand nights with an average stay of 6 nights per client. This sector offers 20400 jobs, which provides for a large number of employees of the regional population.

## Conclusion

It is clear that the city of Sousse forms an enriched site for the tourism sector. The variety of activities, which it holds such as the agriculture activities, the industrial sector, the health institutions, the hotels infrastructures, and its geographic location on the coastline, gives to the tourism a great opportunity to be sufficient and durable. Then it offers several type of products to their touristic clients as the agro-tourism, health tourism, and seaside tourism.

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<sup>6</sup>H, B. (2012, Avril 24). Tunisie : Sousse - Le secteur de la santé en pleine mutation. *La Presse*. Retrieved from <http://www.lapresse.tn>