



## Participatory Planning in the Medina

*Assessing the Impact of Community Workshops on Public Space Design and Usability in Burkina Faso*

**Aminata Ouédraogo<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Ki-Zerbo University, Ouagadougou

Correspondence: [aoudraogo@gmail.com](mailto:aoudraogo@gmail.com)

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### Author notes

*Aminata Ouédraogo is affiliated with Joseph Ki-Zerbo University, Ouagadougou and focuses on African Studies research in Africa.*

### ABSTRACT

Participatory planning is increasingly promoted as a means to create more equitable and usable public spaces in African cities. However, its practical application and tangible impacts in dense, informal urban neighbourhoods, such as the Medina of Tunis in Burkina Faso, remain critically under-examined. This perspective piece aims to critically assess the influence of structured community workshops on the final design and subsequent social usability of public spaces within this specific socio-cultural and urban context. The analysis synthesises direct observation of workshop processes and outcomes with post-implementation evaluation of designed spaces, drawing on field notes and spatial analysis. Workshops successfully shifted design priorities towards shaded seating and children's play areas, which constituted over 60% of final design elements. However, a key theme was the persistent marginalisation of youth and migrant vendor voices in final decision-making stages, limiting the inclusivity of outcomes. While participatory workshops can effectively translate some community needs into physical design, their capacity to foster genuinely inclusive governance and address deep-seated power dynamics is constrained without intentional structural adjustments. Integrate independent facilitation, implement tiered participation mechanisms for different demographic groups, and establish transparent feedback loops showing how community input directly influences final architectural plans. participatory planning, public space, urban design, community engagement, Burkina Faso, Sahel This perspective provides a novel critical framework linking the micro-processes of workshop facilitation to macro-outcomes in spatial justice, offering a transferable model for evaluating participatory planning in similar informal urban settings.

**Keywords:** *Participatory planning, Public space, Sahel, Community workshops, Urban informality, Social inclusion, Urban governance*

### Article Highlights

- Community workshops shifted 60% of final design elements toward shaded seating and children's play areas.
- Persistent marginalisation of youth and migrant vendor

### Core Limitation

Participatory workshops, while effective for translating specific needs into design, showed constrained capacity to address deep-seated power dynamics without intentional

<p>voices limited the inclusivity of outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The study links micro-processes of workshop facilitation to macro-outcomes in spatial justice.</li><li>• Findings advocate for tiered participation mechanisms and transparent feedback loops.</li></ul>	<p>structural adjustments to the planning process.</p> <p><i>This perspective offers a critical framework for evaluating participatory planning in informal urban settings.</i></p>
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