Background and Project Summary

Reflecting on post-Civil War Algiers' urban landscapes through the prism of past and present ideological and social conflicts, I intend to explore the intertwining of past civil war crisis with the actual social crisis, which might be as virulent as in neighboring Arab Spring movements, yet rampant and too distilled to bear the shape of urban riots. The women of Algiers, who have been both victims and fighters of these trends of violence and radicalization, need to be heard. My grandmother was one of these women. She was a rug maker who was a widower too soon after the war. She became a matriarch involved in everybody's strategies to survive, be it within our family, or with neighbors.

I argue that women possess 'ordinary knowledge' that can help ensure that policies proposed reflect local conditions and values, especially in the case of issues that concern broad public interest, such as housing, community and economic development and transportation improvements. This illustrates my main argument, similar to Muhammad Yunus' argument that women can be the key stakeholders in the chain to microcredit and combat against poverty. Women are in charge of so many important tasks locally, from handling the house to earning a steady income, to raising children. If their input is more taken into account, and if they are integrated more and more into civic participation that can be a strong element for peace keeping in the North African region.

Based on this belief, I want to launch a series of participatory workshops with women involved in peace keeping in the region. How? This summer, over the span of three weeks, I will organize seven workshops involving women from different ages (15-25, 35-45, 55-65), who participated one way or another to peace keeping during the Civil War of the 1990s, after the Civil concord of 1999, and recently, as trends of radicalization became stronger and stronger in the post-Arab Spring North African region. In order to recruit participants, I will first strongly mediatize this project via social media, which has become an unforeseen platform of information and organizing in Algeria over the past years. I will also issue a more formal open call targeted at local organizations, including women from a local high school, a regional Berber association, a church-based community organizing association, and the Mayor's office neighborhood antennas.

Implementation and Proposed Activities

The two neighborhoods in which I will anchor these workshops are: the historic district of the Casbah, and the popular neighborhood of Bab-el-Oued. They are both characterized by a very strong neighborhood culture, the important role women play in the everyday lives of all citizens, and the fact that they concentrated violence during conflicts that tore the city, and are still neighborhoods where radicalization trends are strong. Workshops will have the following goal: to collectively re-imagine aspects of the everyday functioning of these neighborhoods, through women's eyes, in order to guarantee long lasting peace. Each workshop will allow participants to collectively discuss propositions for the two neighborhoods, each time through a different lens, such as housing, public spaces, and community activities. Such propositions will be collected in a playful pedagogical way fostering free speech. As a trained urban planner with experience in participatory city planning, I will use my skills, techniques and expertise during the unfolding of these workshops. I am also fluent in French, Arabic and Darija, the local dialect.

I will hold these workshops in a community space located in my grandparents' house. To break the ice during each workshop, meals eaten together will be a central element of the workshops. This space has served several years in the past to organize sports and cultural activities for the women and children of the neighborhood. To assist me during the workshops, I will rely on the help of two childhood friends, Anys and Nesma Merhoum, who are respectively a trained architect and a political scientist focusing on gender issues. They are both equally anchored in the local association scene, have experience holding participatory workshops, and will also be involved in the long-term unfolding of this project. The phasing of the project
will be structured as follows. Full weekend days were selected to accommodate all women's weekly schedules, in order to give a chance to employees and students to be involved as well:

**Phase 1: July 30 to August 2/3:**
- Introducing the aim of the project to participants.
- Setting the subgroups of participants (45 total) who will take part in "Housing" workshops, "Public Space" workshops, and "Community Activity" workshops
- Launch of the two "Housing workshops" held during the weekend: 15 participants

**Phase 2: August 4 to August 9/10:**
- Summary and compilation of results collected during Workshops 1 and 2
- Launch of the two "Public Space" workshops held during the weekend: 15 participants

**Phase 3: August 11 to August 16/17:**
- Summary and compilation of results collected during Workshops 3 and 4
- Launch of the two "Community Activity" workshops during the weekend: 15 participants
- Final workshop opening to the larger local audience, discussing highlights of the workshops series and ways forward: families, friends and local neighborhood residents will be invited to this event, via the strong use of social media and word of mouth.

**Short-Term Goals**
The first aim of this project is to allow women involved in these two districts to share a safe space and talk about their hopes and wishes for the future of Algiers. This space would be their platform to share what their expectations of everyday city life should look like. The second aim is to allow for the transfer of knowledge and the tying of lasting collaborative ties among generations of women. The third aim is to underline through this constructive effort that the genealogy of violence can be overcome through inclusive dialogues, intergenerational exchange, and ways to allow underrepresented groups to express themselves.

**Long-Term Goals**
Beyond the Summer of 2018, I plan to make a long-lasting commitment to reiterating such thematic participatory workshops. Because the tracking of results is key to the evolution of this project, I will rely on a very solid set of commitment trackers measuring how these workshops are doing:
- **Summer 2017 commitment trackers:** I will evaluate the level of participation to this first set of workshops by collecting anonymous participant data features (demographic, socio-economic, income, level of education) to produce a short report in Fall 2018 underlining how to include more diverse profiles.
- **Subsequent commitment trackers of success:**
  - Work on strengthening ties made with the first round of participants who took part in the workshops, to recruit further participants; Create volunteering opportunities open to participants, in order to recruit workshop assistants for the subsequent editions;
  - Start an online crowdfunding, donation, and sponsorship campaign in 2019 to pay for expenses relying on the networks of the first edition participants; Channel this by applying for a nonprofit status. My two childhood friends, who will be assisting me this summer, will play a key role coordinating this initiative long-term with me
  - I am able to travel to Algiers once a year to visit friends and family. Given that my mother and I are the sole deciders on the management of my grandparents' community space, I will continue overseeing that participatory workshops be held there in subsequent editions.
  - Extension of scope: on a long-term basis, and based on the overall success of the first workshop editions, my intent is to extend these workshops, both thematically, and by including additional neighborhoods. I will also include an online platform that gathers results from all workshop editions.