



National Case Study

TUNISIA

Center of Arab Women for
Training and Research,
Tunis, Tunisia



Researching
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Towards a New Social Contract
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Abstract

Short description of the main points. Summarise related with clusters

This paper aims to reflect on the situation of young people in the post-revolutionary context. At the time of its revolution, Tunisia was marked by social movements. The “awakening of civil society” in the post-revolutionary period would become a leitmotif for the young people who were better equipped to invest in the public space and become aware of their importance as a pressure group that is increasingly called upon to position itself and play a role in the efforts made in the transition to democracy.

With the aim of approaching this issue, we have investigated the youth of three regions of Tunisia that represent the north, the southeast, and the southwest of the country: Cité Ibn Khaldoun, Gafsa and Djerba Island. We put together three groups of young people whose profiles would help us to understand the differential logics of young people positioning themselves in the public sphere in the post-revolutionary period. These three groups are: young activists, rappers and young people in the informal sector.

Introduction

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A. The fields of observation:

The areas of observation chosen are: Cité Ibn Khaldoun, Gafsa and Djerba Island. The choice of these areas is far from accidental. Indeed, in the case of Cité Ibn Khaldoun housing project, it is a geographical area that is representative of Greater Tunis, not least because a number of young people from this neighbourhood have attempted clandestine emigration. Furthermore, this “city” was built in the 1970s as part of a “*dégourbification*” clean-up policy put in place by the state that consisted of the transfer of a population from the Jbel Lahmar slum to higher quality environment (Ben Slimane, 1995, 266).

Cité Ibn Khaldoun I and VI are part of the upper El Omrane delegation that is dependent on the Tunis governorate. In 2014, upper El Omrane had 55,513 inhabitants, 27,767 of whom were men and 27,746 women. This takes in a certain number of neighbourhoods: Cité El Intilaka; El Nassim; upper El Omrane and Rommana. It is delimited by the municipality of Ariana to the north, the delegation of El Omrane to the south, the delegation of El Menzah to the east and the delegation of Ettahrir to the west. 13,490 young people, aged 15 to 29 make up 24.30% of the population: 6,791 of these were male (12.23%) and 6,699 female (12.07%).

It may be said that Gafsa is a “dissident”, “rebellious” area, characterised by the existence of several active opponents of the regime. The city is located in the mining basin and has been witness to several demonstrations and anti-establishment movements against the authoritarian regime. What is more, this region is agitated in the post-revolutionary era.

Gafsa is one of the governorates of Tunisia, located in the southwest of the country, close to the Algerian border. This governorate comprises 11 delegations, covering 7,807 km² and, in 2016, a total population of 337,297. According to data from the National Statistics Institute, this includes 76,913 young people, aged 15 to 29, 22.82% of the population: 31,804 of these are male (9.42%) and 45,109 females (13.39%).

The choice of Djerba Island is explained by the fact that there has been insufficient study of the island’s juvenile population, which is currently experiencing a significant migratory movement (the presence of a large number of Libyans). Indeed, “more than 70,000 Libyans have sought refuge in Tunisia since the start of the crisis in February, according to the

Ministry of the Interior, of whom it is likely that several thousand have gone to Djerba”.¹ Furthermore, Djerba Island is currently a transit area as a result of the Libya crisis. This island has for thousands of years hosted a diverse range of ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic groups. This diversity developed over history as several civilisations passed through the island.

Djerba is an island that is 514km² (25 kilometres by 20 and 150 kilometres of coasts) located in the southeast of Tunisia. In 2014, it had a population of 163,726 inhabitants, divided among three delegations that correspond to three municipalities with different responsibilities:

- Djerba-Houmt Souk: Houmt Souk is considered the “capital” of the island and has 42,992 inhabitants (the island’s total population is 75,904);
- Djerba-Midoun: Midoun is the closest place to the tourist activities and has 39,138 inhabitants (63,528 in the municipality as a whole);
- Djerba-Ajim: Ajim, lagging somewhat behind the island’s main dynamic, has 15,114 inhabitants (24,294 inhabitants in the municipality as a whole).

There are 38,975 young people aged 15 to 29 on the island, 23.80% of the population: 19,951 are male (12.18%) and 19,024 females (11.62%).

B. The groups of young people studied:

The three groups identified are the following:

- **Young rappers** who are beginning to enjoy a degree of social recognition after the revolution and who contribute to the development of social criticism in post-revolutionary Tunisia.
- **Young activists (unionists, young people in the political parties and in associations)** as a pressure group that presents itself as an important actor in the post-revolutionary context. Several of the young people are currently active in civil society.

Young people in the informal sector represent another social category worthy of study. The informal sector, which is increasingly developed in Tunisia as a result of the decline in the productive sector and rising unemployment, has affected various segments of commercial activity by taking advantage of its dysfunctions. According to Mondher Benarous, “This sector is still the main provider of jobs, which allows a little income and wealth to be created and provides the main opportunities for the integration of a very young population”.

¹ Cf. “Tunisie, les réfugiés libyens disputent l’île de Djerba aux touristes”, *Jeune Afrique*, published June 7th 2011, <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAWEB20110607163810/liby-tunisie-tourisme-mouammar-kadhafi-tunisie-tunisie-les-r-fugi-s-libyens-disputent-l-le-djerba-aux-touristes.html>; and “Djerba envahie de réfugiés libyens”, *La Presse*, published July 5th 2011, <http://danilette.over-blog.com/article-djerba-envahie-de-refugies-libyens-la-presse-de-tunisie-78650754.html>. See also: Nadia Ben Tamansourt, “Djerba: Les ressortissants libyens sont les bienvenus mais...”, *African Manager*, published August 21st 2014, <http://www.africanmanager.com/170802.html>.

Informal work among young people is ballooning, with growth in the number of workers and rapid extension across the different social strata. The expanded reproduction of informal activities in the market sector, in crafts, in agriculture and in transport means they occupy a distinctive position relative to the formal economy and officially regulated paid work. The aim is to get a sense of the subjective and social realities of young Tunisians in this sector.

C. Sample

C.1. Focus Groups:

- The FG in Cité Ibn Khaldoun (April 5th 2015): 10 young people aged between 15 and 23 years old (7 boys and 3 girls);
- The FG in Gafsa (April 11th 2015): 9 young people aged between 20 and 26 years old (5 boys and 4 girls);
- The FG in Djerba (April 18th 2015): 12 young people aged between 16 and 25 years old (6 boys and 6 girls);
- The FG with stakeholders (May 14th 2015): 8 people aged between 24 and 62 years old (2 men and 6 women);

C.2. Life Stories:

- Cité Ibn Khaldoun (April-May 2015): Khouloud (student, 20 years old) and Wadji (unemployed, 23 years old);
- Gafsa (April-May 2015): Feirouz (student, 23 years old) and Aymen (student, 26 years old);
- Djerba (April-May 2015): Syrine (high school student, 19 years old) and Al'â (high school student, 19 years old).

C.3. Ethnographic Groups:

- Young people in the informal sector:
6 young people in the informal sector aged between 18 and 30 years old (4 boys and 2 girls).
- The young rappers:
7 young rappers aged between 20 and 24 years old (5 boys and 2 girls).
- The young activists:
7 activists aged between 16 and 29 years old (3 boys and 4 girls).

1. Knowledge building

Issues relating to young people's knowledge-building process have a central place in the ethnographic survey. In this first part of the report, the accent will be placed on the different sources of knowledge, their contents and the way young people employ them to affirm and develop their reflexivity in regard to their environment and their experiences. This

reflexivity is the source of the critical competence (Boltanski, 1995) conveyed by the subjects in regard to the norms and values imposed by society. For the sources of knowledge, family education, school education, professional training and education through peer groups (on the street, in cafes, clubs, etc.) will be considered. In terms of the content of these different types of knowledge, we wondered about their complementary nature, deferring or contradicting the values inculcated by these diverse socialisation bodies and their impact on the patterns of action implemented by the young people.

1.1. Family education

Throughout today's Maghreb, family structures are in full-blown transformation. According to Boucebcı (1993), what seems to characterise the current decades in the transitional Maghreb are sociocultural changes affecting domestic organisation: the place of the generations, the relations between them, as well as interfamily communication and dynamics. Assembling this body of work (the focus groups, life stories and the three ethnographic groups of young people, those from the informal sector, rappers and young activists) we note an evolving dynamic in a trajectory of both opening up and conservatism, combining old and new values (Ben Salem and Locoh, 2001). The analysis of the content allows us to understand both the place of the family in education and the break or continuity between expressly religious values and current social ones. It also sheds light on the link between the type of educational practices and young people's life plans.

For the young people in this investigation, the family remains a reference point and the source of most values. Young people think that the family, to varying degrees, still provides the right education. This unites the "respect for others" that is a recurring theme with "cleanliness": *being a clean person (honest)*. The family also provides an anchoring of safety and a supportive environment. Amine appreciates the spontaneous impulse of generosity shown by his parents in moments of joy, of mourning or at difficult times. Ali expresses a strong attachment to his parents and explains how the small sums of money that he makes are most often spent in the family (on, for example, interior fittings). Some, disappointed by their own friendships, end up admitting that their parents are still their best friends.

This good education is underpinned by religion, which organises relations and colours customs and traditions. According to Karim's description, religion is diffused through the harmony of social values, it is not an external content imposed on individuals. The family provides guidance that the young person ends up incorporating, "We show you what to do and the things to avoid! You will end up finding your own way ... knowing that God is good ... getting to know your duties ... prayer, fasting, reading the Koran ... even the dress code ..." Ayman's sister in Gafsa, holder of a diploma in tourism, declines offers to work in hotels for moral and religious reasons.

This state of affairs does not prevent ambivalence or even criticism of religious conservatism. For certain people and notably girls, family education is synonymous with obedience, if not blind submission, that in certain regards limits the impulse for emancipation and even personal aspirations. Very early on, young Khouloud realised the difficult line she would have to tread between submission and hope of a better life. The fear

of seeing his daughter “deviate” leads her father to forbid her from meeting up with friends, which, for periods, reduces her life to complete solitude. Her father did everything to impose the wearing of the veil, but she has resisted fiercely, not because it disgusts her but because she cannot abide the imposition.

In Djerba, conservatism and religiosity not only maintain an irrefutable place in domestic relations, they also reinforce Jewish, Sunni Muslim and Ibadi social groups.

The continuity observed in Djerba is qualified by the young people in Cité Ibn Khaldoun and the young people in the informal sector. Instead, they attest to a rupture between the education they receive from their parent and the imperatives of social life. There is a total separation between the values of the family and those of the street or the souk. The words used to characterise the last two places show a certain level of violence.

The young people in poor neighbourhoods such as (al Kabaria) Intilaqa tell us of parental education marked by violence. Mohamed was born in a difficult working-class neighbourhood. He describes the cruelty of the everyday landscape. His parents in permanent conflict, inflict the most brutal of experiences on their children: obscenities, insults, screams and abuse at home and on the street. Mohamed Ali has been beaten by his father since he was suspected of hanging out with the young offenders in the neighbourhood who take *zatla* and other pharmaceutical narcotics. At 18 years old, able to take his father’s violence no longer, he consumes and sells *zatla*, he self-harms and his first attempted theft, under the influence of drugs, ends in him being sent to prison.

In contrast to the upbringings provided by these young people’s parents in poor neighbourhoods, the parents of politically engaged young people represent a source of autonomy and encourage emancipation, self-expression and engagement. These parents of engaged young people are educated, especially the fathers. Most of these young people – whether they oppose or adhere to paternal ideologies – attribute to their parents a more or less important role in their initiation to public affairs. Aymen, son of a history and geography teacher, shows an interest in culture in general and politics in particular. Khawla also owes much of her interest in politics to her father, who is a diplomat. Fatma’s hairdresser father, who is well-informed and resolute in his democratic political positions, helped her awakening as a citizen. Wassim’s father, an academic, “discusses decisions, speaks about taboo subjects”. In regard to Eya, though her teacher parents are sensitive to Islam, they have given their children the framework and education that opens the way to autonomy. Finally, Oussama, whose father is a high school teacher, militant unionist and Arab nationalist, has absorbed some of this political and ideological culture.

Parents and particularly mothers are greatly supportive of the young people in their artistic activities. Rap, theatre and graffiti are the activities in which they freely express their disconnections from the weight of tradition and can express their resistance to existing institutions. The two young girls (Amèni and Boutheina) and the five boys (Khaled, Saddem, Nader, Walid and Brahim) engage in somewhat solitary activities that have little support from social structures but about which the families and especially the mothers are sensitive, caring and encouraging even if the arts are not part of their heritage or cultural universe.

1.2.School education and socialisation through professional training

The fieldwork is interested, among other issues, in school education and professional training. Analysing the data sheds light on the sense that it is at school and during professional training that the groups of young people interviewed come together. Our interest in this subject fits with the perspective of Bernard Charlot (1997, 89-100) on the relationship with knowledge, understood in the sense of a relationship with the world that is constructed around “learning”.

The young people in the three studies, Cité Ibn Khaldoun, Gafsa and Djerba, underline the crisis of the educational system. In places, they describe the gap between the content taught at secondary school level and the demands of university. While in others, the young people spoke energetically about the difference between school and university careers and the demands of the labour market. Indeed, their statements systematically lead to the issue of employment as a natural result of their efforts and as a source of stability. Aymen (Gafsa) remarked in this sense that “there are fields that have no employment prospects ... most lead to unemployment. That’s why having a degree is no longer valuable. Of course for parents after years of study there is significant moral satisfaction, but what are you going to do with it?”

Teaching, education and training are all losing their value and lag behind the social reality. In analysing the Tunisian educational system, Riadh Zghal (2007, 56) claims that the connection “between a system of training, a system of research and a system of production is difficult to achieve”. According to the author, it is a challenge that Tunisia must overcome in order to provide economic and social development, but also to find a place in an environment that is moving towards globalisation. In this context, when some young people choose to finish their studies, they then turn towards a different professional field, as is the case of young Ramzi (Cité Ibn Khaldoun), who underlines: “I have a Master’s in Economics and Management and I work in the field of journalism, what is the relationship between the two fields? After the revolution I told myself it was necessary to do something, not to count on the state to hire me. I am passionate about the media, so I did some training in this field, which has helped me in journalism”. By contrast, other young people fall into despair and attempt to find a way out of their inactivity, like young Samir (Gafsa), who reports: “... since I got my diploma in 2011, I have not stopped looking for internships and professional training, I can’t sit in cafés with nothing to do any longer ... I am not use to this sterile rhythm. The only thing that we won in the revolution is community work ... I feel useful for something, I have something to do. That helps me forget the unemployment ...”

The failing educational system is proven to be the cause of young people’s precarious situation. And yet, the groups investigated show their determination to engage in the dynamic of change through various types of activity.

1.3.Education via peer groups (in the street, cafés, clubs ...)

Besides the family and school, other places of meeting and sociability have potential importance for the socialisation and knowledge production necessary to the processes of identity building implemented by the young people through interaction and the socio-

symbolic appropriation of the space (Parazelli, 2002). Analysing the body of work reveals that by investing in the extra-family and extra-school spaces, young people conduct identity recomposition through the development of socialisation practices with other young people in the quest for a degree of autonomy in relation to parental and school authority (though the family continues to be important in young people's lives). The family therefore finds itself in competition (or even rivalry) with the peer group, which exercises its socio-symbolic role in spaces as diverse as the street, cafés, youth centres and cultural centres, etc. In the interviews conducted in the three areas of investigation, the young people oppose the peer groups (the street and places of youth socialisation) with the family (the family home). We can, however, distinguish two different attitudes held by young people in regard to the peer group and life in society in general.

The discourse of certain young people values the ideal family (Lucchini, 1993, 228) and judges their peer group's way of life and values negatively (bad company, drug and alcohol consumption, style of dress, depravity, etc.). To this end, the peer group is the subject of critical judgement because it is thought that it leads young people into spaces "considered to be the places associated with society's "underground", counter-cultural and illicit activities" (Parazelli, 2000, 195). The statements made by Ramzi (Cité Ibn Khaldoun) are particularly illustrative in this regard. He affirms that: "The street undoes what parents have done. You learn reprehensible things there. It makes you lose what you've learned at home or at school, but that's relative!" Several interviews show that the young people are exposed to multiple risks in the street and in the spaces of sociability that escape family control (the café, university halls, the tourist area and so on). These interviews contain statements that reveal the dangerous potential effects of "bad company": deviation, *el hamla*; unhealthy habits, *el fassad* (Ahmed, Cité Ibn Khaldoun); and clandestine emigration, *el harqa* (Wejdi, Cité Ibn Khaldoun). In terms of clandestine emigration, Wejdi speaks of his misadventure in 2012: "It happens like this – you're at the café, you speak to your friends, you say you'd like to emigrate (*tahraq*), later on someone comes to find you, personally I was at home, someone came looking for me, I was asleep, I got dressed, I went with him to the café, at the time I had a little money, he said that there was a *harqa* being prepared, you needed two thousand dinars, we went to Sfax, we met the *harrâq* (the organiser of the operation), it needed to be prepared, prepare the fuel, the food ... we prepared the *gouna* (this word designates the place they gathered to watch the border guards, get the weather forecast etc.), at the time there was bad weather, we waited a week, but the police were watching and they attacked us! I still had my money. I hadn't yet given it to the *harrâq*".

From other young people interviewed, a critical discourse develops about the family. Their education was inadequate, in their opinion, and they emphasise the peer group's importance for the young person to acquire life experience and develop their personality and social skills. On this issue, Mohamed (Djerba) considers that: "society can teach you positive things, because when you're in a strict family, trapped within four walls, and then you go out, you're free! You don't know what to do! But when you are out in the world you come to learn what to do and what to avoid, in addition you will spontaneously learn the people you should hang out with...some friends have taught me things that I hadn't got from my family. Prayer, for example. My parents haven't told me I had to pray since I was six years old!" Ammar (Gafsa) has the same attitude as Mohamed on the subject of the "good intentions" of friends: "You can't learn to pray in the family, but a friend can start you off".

Both use moral arguments as a basis for justifying their favourable attitude to the peer group and express what they owe to the street and to society.

Life in society, according to several young people, is therefore the crucible in which their identity is forged and their knowledge is fed. Syrine (Djerba) affirms: “For life in society, the company of others is necessary, above all, because at you cannot learn everything at home ... When we are in company we learn things that we are going to pass on to our parents, above all when we sign up to associations or political parties ...” Contact with the peer group allows the young person to evolve, as Mehdi (Djerba) says: “For the young person, being in the street face-to-face with another young person is beneficial, because that is how you form a personality! As we receive an education for 30 years, when we meet other people, we change, it’s not essential to remain faithful to the same mentality received in the family”.

The testimonies show that the young person who is very attached to their family will be confronted by difficulties throughout their life, they will be an easy victim, a naive person. On this, Moa’taz (Cité Ibn Khaldoun) states: “There are young people who live the whole time in their family, they rarely go out, their parents are too afraid for them! It is true that they have everything, they are spoilt, but in the end these young people will be nothing later on! We can make them swallow anything, you can sell them something at five that is only worth two. On the street there are good and bad things! You learn how to live with others, if not the others will eat you. You have to know everything, the bad things ... you have to know them but you must keep away from them.” For Rayen, “Those who don’t go out and stay at home the whole time ... will be naïve, *bahloul* (stupid), even if they start going out on the street later on, they won’t be able to do anything!! They won’t be able to keep up on the street ... They’ll miss out on a lot of things! ”.

But the fact of recognising the importance of the street in the construction of identity does not prevent these young people from being careful where they go, because they are convinced that on the street there are risks (alcohol consumption, deviance, depravity). And they are equally aware of the distance between the values transmitted by their parents and the imperatives of social life.

On another level, the interviewees reveal another source of knowledge that is represented by youth centres and cultural centres. These institutions are educational entities that offer young people the possibility to access a wide range of recreational activities, training, raising awareness, and so on, and allow them to blossom, to express themselves, to develop their imagination. Though girls and boys do not take the same advantage of what is offered by these institutions because of the discrimination between the sexes (by the family) and parental control, the research reveals that several young people (Syrine, Mohamed, Al’â, Wajdi, Moa’taz) from the different regions studied have been given what they consider to be an interesting and constructive experience at youth centres. In these institutions, these young people have found a mixed space of artistic and physical expression, of civic and citizen participation, etc. But the majority of the interviews show that the young people are dealing with certain difficulties relating to the distortion between the family culture and the culture favoured by the youth centres. The statement given by Al’â, who takes dance classes, echoes this situation. He says “Here, before starting, parents meet the instructor, they give him their conditions, he is also Djerbian, he is strict, he always tells us during the sessions: you have to be disciplined, whoever wants to speak, or do whatever, had better do it outside the

room!” This indicates that to resolve this cognitive dissonance, the instructor feels obliged to reassure parents in order that they give their children – above all the girls – permission to practice dance in a mixed space. Al’â himself was obliged to dissemble to get his father’s consent to practise dance: “At the beginning I wanted to practise music, my father was against it, he found it *haram*, he told me it was a path that led nowhere! But I am always curious. I want to learn new things, I chose dance. I want to have an athletic body. I wanted to do break-dancing. He resisted a little, I told him that it’s about body language, keeping fit, he has a vague idea ...”

Of all the young people interviewed, it was Syrine who engaged most deeply with the activities offered by the youth centre. She got involved in theatre as well as signing up to the young people’s academy, which consists of forming a group in each youth centre of “young leaders”, who represent their region at various meetings, national and international. This academy gave her the opportunity to meet interesting people, to visit places, to travel and attend various discussions that have informed her on the issues of the day (women, the environment, terrorism and so on).

Certainly, capitalising on these different resources, which do not always run smoothly, allows the young person to position themselves in an environment that is not necessary permeable to a youth culture that is still perceived as a source of disorder.

2. Young people’s practices in the post-revolutionary context

In this second part of the report, we focus on the analysis of young people’s practices in the spheres of activity that we consider to be important in the post-revolutionary context. These practices are: professional (connected to the informal sector); cultural and artistic (especially theatre, rap, dance, photography and graffiti); and those relating to political and union involvement (based on the experiences of young people engaged in associations, political parties and unions). Our aim is to understand the positioning strategies deployed by young people in the economic, cultural and political domains.

2.1. Working practices

The study made by the young members of the UGTT (Tunisian General Labour Union) and the centre for workers’ solidarity relates to 1,128 people active in the informal sector (Trabelsi, 2013). This shows that the percentage active in the informal sector rose from 30% in 2010 to 38% of the BTT. The percentage of men is 66.2% against 33.7% of women. The dominant age of those in the informal sector is between 26 and 45 years old. The absence of security policies (“*vigilance sécuritaire*”), of a development policy and civil feeling are the reasons for this study.

The four young men in the informal sector work in trade (meat, vegetables, telephones and clothes) and the two young girls working in the artisan sector (clothes and traditional objects) belong to a type of actor we call the “small” informal in contrast to the “large” informal (formed of a minority of actors, but which generates activities involving millions of

euros). Our group is part of the majority “small” category, though some are linked to the “big” informal sector by participating in the illegal economy of products, services or illegal goods such as drugs or stolen goods.

In this ethnographic group we address the specificity of certain activities and how the young people view them, how they adapt to them and what alternatives they put forward, either in professional terms or regarding their regularisation. The professional activities are largely oriented towards the commercial sector. But at the outset we should remark that the artisanal trade, which generally has a family component, and the status of artisan working for themselves, is less perceived as informal.

The group of young people questioned entirely or partially avoid the public regulations without necessarily having the deliberate intention to do so. The young people define informal employment as a job without protection, without social security, without a written contract, without a payslip. “The life of vegetable sellers is difficult ... Pension funds and social security are inaccessible. When you are active in a sector that is so affected by precariousness and the fluctuations of the market, the only capital I have is the strength of my arms” Med Ali does not hide his worries about the coming years, when he is over fifty. Workplaces are characterised by precarious conditions: unsuitable premises without access to the main public services (water, electricity and sanitation – above all in the souks, which are the equivalent of markets); these spaces have no security. “The souk is a fairly violent territory governed by “laws” improvised by the balance of forces working there” (Ali). Remuneration may be very low (vegetable and telephone sellers): “After a long period of general crisis in the country the souk emerged unscathed ... I struggle to earn what I need to provide for the daily expenses of my small family” (Amine). Some businesses pay better and are more profitable (second-hand clothing and butchery), to the extent that the two young people would not be prepared to change their job for another.

The legal regulations on work do not apply in the informal sector. “The lawful and unlawful are the two norms that govern trade in the souk. Every day I have to choose between legal trade that is not very profitable and the temptation of the illegal... The souk is the place thieves come to sell their stolen goods. For be safe in this trade it is necessary to have connections with the police, who play their part here.” Police officers have their ways “of buying” a mobile, which Mohamed had expected to sell and earn a few dozen dinars, for a modest price. Once again, Mohamed has little choice. Either he negotiates with the agent, who certainly has the means to accuse him of buying stolen mobiles, or he hands over the device and gives it up as lost.

Ali mobilises the collusion between him and the bosses of the abattoir against the farmers who come every day from far away to sell their animals. This complicity, though advantageous, comes at a high price. Those who work at the abattoir maintain relations that last for generations.

Young people suffer from the absence or weakness of capital whether to maintain their activity or to launch a more structured project. They feel they have gained experience and knowledge of the job, but they are unable to improve their situation. “Med Ali unloads the boxes of vegetables and fruit from the trucks that arrive early in the morning. Not having the means to set up on his own, lacking money, he has ended up pulling a living together thanks to his friendly relations with the merchants, in the small part they grant him.” Amine has a

small van and a permit to transport goods in Greater Tunis. His mobile phone and the numerous relationships he has made are his sole and main capital”.

The low chances of securing loans inhibit their capacity for evolution “no ambition”, Ali says, “starting from this activity, you can go nowhere”. Work is Ali’s passion, he cannot stand being idle. He does not lack the imagination to earn money; gifted in trade, he has even sold quails to hotels. But there is no way for him to secure a bank loan as he doesn’t have the legal status to guarantee it.

The two girls, because of their status, but also because of family help, have been able to grow their activities and have projects sufficiently structured and legal to face the future. Salma works in her mother’s workshop, who remains she says “the boss”. She respects the timetable, and the relations with the workers. She has been able to build up a chain of suppliers and clients and take part in trade fairs. Over-confident in herself, Salma is nevertheless conscious of the vulnerability of her activity, which remains part of an unstable economic circuit. Abir, 18 years old (seamstress), trained for three years at the National Union of Tunisian Women, then at a private centre in Ariana. An internship in a private workshop allowed her to acquire significant, strong experience. Comparing herself with other professionals in the same sector, she has plans to establish herself in production and sees no obstacle to achieving it.

2.2. Cultural and artistic practices

The Tunisian youth is recognised as the lever of change since the social uprisings of 2011. Nevertheless, the political engagement of young people remains limited due to the lack of confidence in public and above all political institutions (World Bank Report, 2014, 9-22). Still, young people’s political disinterest is accompanied by their determination to join a dynamic of action. For them, cultural and artistic practices are alternative modes of engagement which they use to question dominant social norms (Greissler, 2014, 56) and give sense to their experiences.

The young people in Cité Ibn Khaldoun, Gafsa and Djerba tend to be drawn to an array of cultural and artistic activities: theatre, rap, dance, photography and graffiti. That is to say, like François Dubet (2008, 48), that “anomic conditions, frustrated behaviour and the mechanisms of stigmatisation explain, in very large part, the forms of action found”. These activities often take the form of an action based on a deliberate choice and a political position. In this sense, young people show their refusal of the passive posture, instead engaging in an activity that is at once engaged and emotional, and empowers their self-realisation. On the one hand, artistic activities are used by young people as a way of calling into question the processes of marginalisation. On the other, young people use it as a way of participating in public life.

Wajdi, a young man from Cité Ibn Khaldoun is committed to underground rap, which he considers a release for what is stifled within him. He speaks of his anger about those who govern, drugs, and the situation of his generation’s young people. In his songs he wants to say “why this youth injects himself, why this other takes *zatla* (a drug), etc. I don’t want to give lessons”, he says, “I address myself to power, tell them that they should get a move on

and change things, so that these young people don't have to turn to that." Young Wajdi gets involved in the protest with musical speech that tends to be politicised. This is also the path taken by Boutheina, a young rapper from Tunis, who started rapping with two young boys from her neighbourhood in Nabeul. The cultural centre in Nabeul, "Néapolis", has been a place for learning, rehearsal and shows. Boutheina distances herself from Tunisian rap, which she considers "very macho" because it focusses on working class neighbourhoods with problems, the consumption of *zatla* and young people's experiences of incarceration. For her, rap is "a cause" that can be political and dissenting or otherwise. She reports that in her music, "the subject of women dominates, I criticise women, because there are things to criticise, but I defend women too. For me, women should take advantage of their lives, they must live them, have fun ... there is a big problem in Tunisia: young women do their studies and then wait for a husband, that's terrible!"

A young graphic advertising student in Gafsa, Fairouz is involved in photographic art and is becoming a photography icon in her university. She reports that photography has become a passion for her. "Oh yes", she says, "it's my passion, like I want to buy professional equipment ... I want to have my own photo lab, and be known in that field."

In Djerba, young Al'â seems annoyed by a monotonous way of life that prompts him to invest in various activities. Between classes at high school and casual work at the souk on Sundays or with his father, Al'â has dance practice three times a week. This seems to bring him a great deal of pleasure: "Dance helps me develop, relieves stress, after training we feel at ease. Last Saturday, after training, I was truly happy ... I told the instructor. My classmate who goes with me has the same feeling". Alongside dance, Al'â is starting to do graffiti, which he discovered through his classmate and is quickly becoming an aficionado of this street art. His eagerness to learn more leads him to watch internet tutorials to master the techniques and bring colour to them.

The diversity of paths and artistic practices reveals these young people's dedication and multiple forms of engagement. It attests, furthermore, to the transformation of the forms of engagement and the development of new methods, which Elisabeth Greissler (2014) calls "alter-engagement". In addition, the passion of the young people interviewed leads them to invest more and to take advantage of the opportunities given to them.

2.3. Political and union activities

Of the seven activists interviewed (three young boys and four girls aged between 20 and 30 years old) only Oussama (29 years old, computer scientist, member of the People's Movement party), Wassim (25 years old, management student, business management, active in civil society) and Aymen (26 years old, project director at "BBC Libya") participated in the movement that preceded the Tunisian revolution (December 2010 - January 2011). Before the outbreak of the events of December 2010, Wassim was engaged in the university union movement (UGET). He speaks of his experience of the social protests: "As a student, I gave up classes! The movement that was triggered in December excited us, we had contact with the regions. Personally I had personal relationships with the members of the PDP. We met in certain places close to the university of Tunis, or elsewhere. We discussed what had happened. The trouble at the end of December confused the police's work and they had

problems moving in a precise direction. We took advantage of these weaknesses to strengthen the links with the citizens. I went to the regions of Kef and Kasserine. I attended meetings. The police didn't even know that we were activists ...” He took photos and shared them on his Facebook account.

Oussama's socialisation in political life took place within his family: his father is a former opponent of Bourguiba and Ben Ali and the founder of the People's Movement party and his maternal uncle was a militant in the Islamic Tendency Movement. He was imprisoned and lost his job due to this political associations. In his father's family, certain relatives belong to the POCT (Worker's Party). Like Wassim, Oussama was engaged in the union at university. From the start of the revolutionary movement he was active, notably through Facebook. He had two Facebook accounts: the first was in his name, while the second, anonymous, was what he used to spread information and comment.

Aymen's political experiences began in 2009 with participation in the discussions between young people from the Arab world and the West. “We spoke”, he says, “of various subjects and at some point the exchange got political ... We said “in Iran it's like this ...” so as not to say “Tunisia” so nobody realised we were talking about Tunisia!” Aymen states that his political awareness began at university, and the activity on this blog increased his engagement. During the period leading up to the revolution he shared videos and information that he received from his friends in Sidi Bouzid (his town of birth).

For the other young people interviewed, the revolution was a decisive turning point. They began by following the events on Facebook, using pseudonyms to get instantaneous information. What should be underlined is the investment made by these young people in a new public space and alternative citizenship that has for some (Oussama, Wassim and Aymen) meant the prolongation of their militant action (political and union) and for the others (Fatma, Khawla, Eya and Nour) an initiation in political and union engagement. It is therefore interesting to examine the “biographical effects” of this engagement (Leclercq and Papis, 2011) and to focus on the different militant paths and trajectories of these young people.

The different accounts of the young people interviewed reveal that participation in the sit-in at the kasbah was a key moment in their political engagement. Fatma got involved in the union movement by joining the UGTT; Aymen and Nour have moved into community work; Oussame joined the political party founded by his father; Wassim was active in the “young revolutionaries”, a mobilisation movement; Eya, despite her young age, joined the Popular Front; and Khaoula joined Nidaa Tounes.

Several of the young people surveyed participated as observers in the 2011 or 2014 elections (Fatma, Syrine, Fairouz, etc.), or prepared the campaign's stages as a member of a political party (Oussama), or even raised awareness in the street, explaining the party's programme (Eya).

But what opportunities are offered to these young people in the economic, cultural and political fields to reinforce their engagement in an increasingly competitive context?

3. Opportunities and aspirations

This part will centre on the chances offered to young people in the economic, cultural and political fields, allowing them to enjoy their rights as full citizens.

3.1. Economic and professional opportunities

The informal sector carries out its activity outside public regulation, and the six young people do not have the deliberate will to escape it. If a straightforward contract could be made with the authorities and the applicable procedures fitted their situation, they would be prepared to register themselves and even pay taxes, “Second-hand clothes sellers insist that their activity is in line with the municipality, to whom each pays 50D each month”.

The interviewees’ aspirations for change contrast with their desires to continue in the informal sector or to leave it. Informal work brings high profits and offers autonomy that, as it saves them from the tyranny of having a boss, is even valued. Amine would like to continue in the transport of meat and make a career of and even a little capital out of it. For Sami, the discovery of the system that organises second-hand clothes sale tempts him to the point that he is thinking about going to Europe to set up a business. For this he is minded to finish the third course of studies to have the title of lawyer on his passport, so he would be able to move more freely. For the two young artisan girls their professional future is already laid out. Notwithstanding their young age they are aware that a great deal of patience is needed to fulfil some of their ambitions in the sector due to competition. They hope to have easy access to credit and better information on the market and a better flow path for their products. Those who do aspire to work outside the informal sector are the two itinerant traders in the souk. Though Ali has a level of studies that allows him to apply for the post of chauffeur at the Algerian embassy, with his incarceration for drugs and theft, Med Ali sees no such chance.

3.2. Cultural and artistic practices and the unleashing of citizens’ potential

The statements made by the young people interviewed reflect an aspiration for change and a remarkable determination to achieve it. They attest, furthermore, to possible opportunities and strategies that they would adopt to assert themselves on the scene. Syrine, a young girl from Djerba who is passionate about theatre, discovered this artistic tendency in a theatre club at school. The small comedy she participated in “toured all the primary schools in Djerba”, meaning she became known for the role she played. Despite her traditionalist environment, she has accumulated small successes from one year to the next, which led her to the theatre club set up in the youth centre in Djerba.. What triggered her theatrical orientation was her participation in a show on the Palestinian cause. “This show toured Djerba, we went to Medenine, I discovered in myself the capacity to perform, not only in comedies but also in dramas. The Palestinian cause must be spoken of in the theatre ... A elderly man in the audience, tears in his eyes, came up to me at the end of the show, embraced me and asked if I was Palestinian, I told him I was Tunisian, he struggled to believe me because he had watched the show with such emotion. Madame Safia told me

“you have a talent and you must not stop here ... I will encourage you”, and then, afterwards, I started to go to youth centres, cultural centres, every year there is something new, I take part in training courses in Djerba, I feel that I’ve evolved.”

In parallel, photography has marked Fairouz’s path. She had the chance to participate in the international photo exhibition in Algtâr, a small town in the Gafsa governorate, after her photos were selected by the jury. This participation allowed her to meet other young photographers from Egypt, Algeria and Morocco and thereby discover other tastes and aesthetics. Fairouz soon benefitted from attending a second event – photography training following an exhibition. As a result of the visit of a French photographer who was leading a project in Gafsa, she was selected with a group of young people to compare photos of places taken in the colonial era with photos of the same places taken now. The photos, old and new, were put together in an exhibition in Gafsa and another in Sfax. Expressing herself about this participation, Fairouz reports that “It was extraordinary. The exhibition was in the market place in Gafsa, the governor gave the order to prepare the square and the director of the Maison de France in Sfax was there along with the national television station. The exhibition was funded by the Institut Français in Tunis ... It was good ... We received a certificate of participation and later we were invited to attend the exhibition in Sfax. We were well received. It was a beautiful experience.”

Nader, a rapper from Tunis, has been involved in rap since a young age. In his music he combines what he calls “commercial” and “dirty” rap, which he uses depending on the kind of event, the location and the audience. His varied musical production, videos and participation in various cultural events allows Nader to make himself known and establish himself on the Tunisian rap scene. He has, thus, managed to secure a professional activity card that brings him institutional and artistic recognition. Convinced that rap is focussed on the description of disastrous situations and is thus related to grief and sadness, he aspires to modify that musical language and bring an element of joy to it. To this end, Nader says: “I prepare different kinds of tracks ... I have observed that Tunisians are sad, they need us to give them joy. Until now, rap has been sadness, we need joyful tracks ...”

The statements collected clearly show the young people’s drive and the dynamic towards self-affirmation. They aspire and act in an unwelcoming political setting and a fairly traditionalist sociocultural context.

3.3. Political opportunities

In terms of the political opportunities (Revillard, 2003) offered to young activists and their aspirations, we can distinguish three conditions that are propitious for young people to engage as citizens.

1- *The revolutionary context* as a trigger, characterised by the liberalisation of potentialities and the democratisation of the country. This situation allowed young people to exercise their freedom and to experience their citizenship as subjects invested with “power to act” (Proulx, 2013, 151). The participation of various young people interviewed in the demonstrations, at the sit-ins and in the protest movement has formed a rite of initiation (even a biographical bifurcation) of definite interest.

2- *The emergence of an alternative public space and citizenship* provided by the internet has provided a new space for expression and political and citizen action. This new form of citizen participation on the web (internet activism) must not be presented as the antilogy of organised or even institutionalised militancy on the field of action. Quite the contrary, this new public space, open to all potentialities, has brought about the reconciliation of young people with politics, by creating new, web-based spaces of expression and engagement.

3- *The post-revolutionary context* that has given young people the possibility to exercise democracy (involvement to varying degrees in the electoral process) and to access new spaces of engagement (internet radio, an increasingly dynamic civil society open to different potentialities, a cyberspace favourable to the citizen's power to act). The different experiences of the young people interviewed allow us to discover the new opportunities offered to young people in a transitional context. We limit ourselves to presenting a few examples as illustration.

Fatma is deeply involved in union work, judging political work to be difficult and demanding. In the UGTT she found an institution that guaranteed her the framework, training and support she needed. She had the chance to be a member of the Tunisie Télécom call centre union and, of a sit-in that lasted 59 days, she was among the first agents involved in organising the mobilisation, which led to significant achievements. Her engagement in this structure has given her the opportunity to go on work placements in Tunisia and abroad, and thereby complete her skills in communication and negotiation. Fatma defends the presence of women and young people at the heart of union work, considering that the UGTT offers the framework and the means necessary for these stakeholders to train and evolve.

Passionate about the media, Wassim, for his part, has created an information page, *Tunisie-Face*, that specialises in social information and attempts to take advantage of a series of relationships with young journalists. Currently, Wassim leads an observatory that is working on the media's relationship with press ethics. This observatory is a personal initiative, it no longer has legal status, as Wassim has judged it useful to place his activity within the framework of an association.

Oussama's profile gives voice of the pattern of rejuvenation and renewal of the political parties who find themselves obliged to enact a profound change in their style of governance in guaranteeing the representativeness of young people in their different bodies and organisational authorities. At a personal level, having an Arab nationalist ideological sensibility, Oussama has taken advantage of his party's opening up to the political formations of the Arab world (in Lebanon, in Algeria and so on). He has, thus, benefited from several placements abroad. Nevertheless, Oussama, like other young people interviewed, is aware of the crisis in political work, in particular given the disaffection of young people towards the parties. He considers, thus, that the crisis in political work requires that higher value be given to community work, which, facing dangers such as terrorism, is called upon to protect the social fabric and to raise the awareness of young people.

Aymen has demonstrated a capacity to employ his linguistic and cultural skills (mastery of the English language) to engage in community work at international level.

Young people are thus increasingly called to position themselves on the sociopolitical scene, which offers favourable conditions for citizen engagement and political, union and community participation.

4. Representation

In this final part of the report, we are going to question the representation of young people in the knowledge-producing institutions, which was the subject of discussion in the focus groups, the ethnographic groups and the life stories. That means school, family, culture, religion and politics. We will also focus attention on the representations of self and of others.

4.1. Representations of school and family

Those parents who attended the focus group of public stakeholders, researchers, teachers and specialists in different disciplines believed that school remains the main site of socialisation. Nevertheless, “Public school no longer transmits a lot, no longer prepares for social life ... the low level of students is a real concern...” Young parents bring up the question of fraud in exams and the weakness of the evaluation system. For them, school is bringing about the failure of an education system that is no longer able to put forward a social model that encourages identification. The young people from Cité Ibn Khaldoun speak of teaching in crisis “a diploma no longer guarantees a job, and in schools disorder reigns ... schools fail to teach, to socialise and to train.... What happens in class is totally different to what we see in the school yard ...”

In Gafsa, we lament the particular conditions in the rural regions: “Low level of the teachers teaching in this region ... no reform can bear fruit”. Nostalgia is expressed with respect to the old generation, “The CAPES generation, recruited after the revolution itself, needs training”, private lessons at secondary school cancel out the efforts to reform. The diploma no longer has a symbolic role. The system is also failing to teach religious education, which leaves the vulnerable at risk from fundamentalist discourse. The young people of Djerba have no illusions about their professional prospects. In particular, they cite the crisis in language learning, which should be a means of transferring knowledge and culture and broadening their horizons.

Parents in the large cities are the most alarmed; young people in the interior regions are sceptical about the reforms and their results. The youngest school and high school students are in crisis with their educational institutions, and their parents are confused by schools that they do not recognise and adolescents who no longer resemble them at all.

4.2. Representations of self and culture (gender/intergeneration)

The experience of the young people surveyed seems remarkably rich. However, the representations of self and of youth in the group are shown to be restricted by intergenerational relations that are, at the least, conflicting. The young people we met point

out their absence from decision-making mechanisms. Far from being disengaged themselves, it is, according to the statements collected, an act of marginalisation enacted by the old against the young. Indeed, the political scene is filled with people who belong to another time. In this regard, Syrine and Mohamed from Djerba are concerned about the absence of young people from the political scene and lament the relentless presence of the old in positions of responsibility. Samir and Tiber from Gafsa agree on the exclusion of young people from the political class and underline that they do not seek to open up the debates on young people. The average age of the political class is indeed high. In Tunisia, we cannot point to a single young person in a position of responsibility.

The cultural development of young people appears, for its part, to encourage identity construction. Young Syrine (Djerba) conceives it as a means of fighting against despair. She hopes to see parents become aware of the role youth centres can play in developing their children, because it is sad to see these institutions deserted and young people incapable of envisaging their future slipping into the abyss. Saddam (Gafsa) has his own way of political engagement and fights daily to impose an image that the environment is reluctant to grant him, that of “engaged artist”. Indeed, Saddam believes he is able to affect the mentalities of those around him with rap, which he sees “as a means” to transmit a message and prompt others to reflect, even to mobilise themselves. His quest for recognition only makes his engagement grow in an artistic endeavour that is in fashion since the social uprisings in Tunisia.

However, cultural activities remain marked by the gender distinctions that respect socioculturally constructed masculine and feminine norms (Octobre, 2014). This is particularly apparent in the discourses of young female and male rappers. Rap is perceived as a typically masculine activity. This masculinity defines itself by the audacious use of coarse spoken language and sharp, “violent” gestures that are necessary for this musical style. In this context, Brahim, a young rapper from Tunis made these remarks when speaking of girls who rap: “It’s not for them. Can you imagine an American star, J.Lopez, singing with henna on her feet? It’s already hard enough for us boys to sing, we exhaust ourselves in writing. The girls I’ve heard sing I didn’t like. There are no girls who sing well, they prance around holding the microphone, I don’t know how ...” Rap and femininity seem incompatible. Though Tunisia is characterised by a significant advance in terms of equality between the sexes, radicalisation in the representation of femininity and masculinity remains in force.

Furthermore, the visibility of female rappers in the media is fairly limited compared to males. The Tunisian media itself seem to be riddled with gendered representations that impede the visibility of women. On this matter, Boutheina reports that “often the head of music in a media organisation is a boy and my songs speak, in the main, about women. That doesn’t interest them. Maybe if the boss was a girl, she would have taken my song. When Kafon suggests a song to him, he takes it immediately, without thinking.” Gendered social relations seem to remain in effect in the media. The different media processes, like advertising (Aouadi, 2012), contribute to the reproduction of gender stereotypes and their interiorisation.

4.3. Representations of religion and politics

What stands out in the analysis of the testimonies of the young people interviewed about religion is first the necessity of not confusing one part of religious practice (in this case prayer) with Salafism (Rayen, Cité Ibn Khaldoun) and, on the other hand, Salafism with jihadism (Moa'taz, Cité Ibn Khaldoun). Other young people made a distinction between religion and religious extremism (represented by Daesh) (Karim, Gafsa). These nuances refer to the foundations (Gurvitch) of the religious phenomenon that emerge from the discourses of the young people interviewed. It is as if the young people were keen to find any way to “protect” (and even advocate) a moderate Islam that differs, in their eyes, from religious extremism. We find this with Oussama (a young activist), who makes the distinction between his adherence to Islam as a religion and his opposition to political Islam.

While the young people from Gafsa say that their parents are supple in terms of religion, at the same time those from Djerba highlighted the weight of religion at the level of their daily life and their representations. In fact, several young people declared that the family obliged them to observe religious duty (Al'â, Djerba) and that religion was taboo in the family and at school “religion is a taboo subject at our house, you listen and obey, you do not argue! Even at high school, the religious education teacher asks you to learn and not argue ...” (Donia, Djerba). Furthermore, the young people in Djerba did not fail to mention the problems and conflicts between the Ibadis and the Malekites.

What about the representation of young people in politics?

The reading of the data collected reveals disenchantment with regard to politics. Several expressions put forward by our interviewees describe young people's loss of confidence in politics. The rhetoric of non-credibility recurs relatively frequently in the discourse on political life in the transitional context. This rhetoric is built around observations of the ambiguity of politics, as may be seen through the statements made by Moa'taz (Cité Ibn Khaldoun): “I don't understand anything in politics, we live, we may say, in a desert, we follow a path whose end we ignore”. Also they described the hypocrisy of the political world, as Samir (Gafsa) says: “Now, politics is lies, personal interests ... not to speak of promises. They are all liars ... Though I have my ideological orientation ... believe me they are all liars. The experience of 2008 taught us, trained us. The people you see on the TV, the political men ... we need to start over”. On another level, the young people consider that “our politics” is dictated from abroad (Aymen, Gafsa; Wajdi, Cité Ibn Khaldoun). These different representations of politics express young people's disinterest in a politics they consider to be “a headache” (Mohamed, Djerba).

5. Conclusion

Seen from the outside, from a contemporary point of view, the family may be thought to be a group template, totalitarian, a pressure group, but it is also an environment of support and reinforcement. The young people in the three areas surveyed, Tunis, Gafsa and Djerba show a marked attachment to the family, which remains their affective and social reference point and economic support. The situations of young people in the informal sector confirms this support. Indeed, informal professional activity dominates in the absence of security vigilance, of development policies and civic feeling.

The young people in the three areas surveyed, Tunis, Gafsa and Djerba showed notable enthusiasm. They engage in a panoply of civil activities (cultural and artistic, such as theatre, rap, photography; community and union politics), and they take action for self-realisation and to participate in social change. This citizen engagement certainly results from individual motivations. But it also reflects the youth's bypassing of the political "process", because they are frequently mobilised to protest against politics.

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Researching
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