Tunisia's Democratic Transition

Marginalised Youth Leaders amid a Political Polarisation

Tinna Rut B. Isebarn

Lokaverkefni til MA–gráðu í þróunarfræði

Félagsvísindasvið

HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

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Leiðbeinandi: Jónína Einarsdóttir

Félags- og mannvísindadeild

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Abstract

Tunisia was the first domino in the Arab Spring where people rose up against dictatorship. Despite facing major political, socioeconomic and security challenges, Tunisia is closer to a full democracy than any other Arab state – after adopting a new constitution and accomplishing democratic elections. Paradoxically, the youth voter turnout was described as 'alarmingly' low, considering the youth driven revolution. The objective of this thesis is to examine the perceptions of Tunisian youth leaders on the democratic transition. The thesis is based on fieldwork that took place in Tunisia in early 2015. Qualitative research was conducted, using participant observation and the voices of young members of parliament, board members of political parties and leaders of civil society were documented with semi-structured interviews.

The findings illustrate the deteriorating situation of marginalised youth, political distrust and the pre-revolution anticipations remain. Motivations to politicking vary from the hope of making a change, to desperation for jobs. This study highlights that being young in a power position does not necessarily induce real power. The youth leaders worry about Islamic extremism and the division of society as a consequence of 'too much freedom'. Although, another revolution is predicted, full democracy is an optimistic question of time. For democracy to flourish, the value of youth participation must be measured and their prospects are necessary.

Keywords: Revolution, Arab Spring, democracy, social exclusion, political participation, youth, elections, Islamism

Útdráttur

Túnis var fyrsti dómínó kubburinn sem féll í Arabíska vorinu þar sem fólk reis upp gegn einræði. Þrátt fyrir að standa frammi fyrir töluverðum pólitískum, félagslegum og efnahagslegum áskorunum sem og alvarlegum öryggisógnum, er Túnis nær fullu lýðræði en nokkurt annað Arabískt ríki – eftir að hafa samþykkt nýja stjórnarskrá og vel tekist að framkvæma lýðræðislegar kosningar. Dræm kosningaþátttaka ungs fólks hefur vakið áhyggjur, sem er þversagnarkennt þar sem byltingin var að mestu drifin áfram af ungu fólki. Meginmarkmið þessarar rannsóknar er að kanna viðhorf ungra Túníska leiðtoga til lýðræðisumskiptanna. Framkvæmd var eigindleg vettvangsrannsókn í Túnis snemma árs 2015 sem byggist á þátttökuathugun og var rödd ungra þingmanna, stjórnarmanna stjórnmálaflokka og leiðtoga borgarsamfélagsins skrásett með hálf-stöðluðum viðtölum.

Niðurstöður gefa til kynna versnandi stöðu jaðarsetts ungs fólks, pólitískt vantraust og óbreyttar væntingar. Hvati til stjórnmálaþáttöku er mismunandi, frá von um betra ástand til örvæntingafullrar vonar um atvinnu. Rannsóknin undirstrikar að raunverulegt vald er ekki sjálfsögð afleiðing af því að vera ungur í valdastöðu. Ungu leiðtogarnir hafa áhyggjur af Íslamskri ofsatrú og klofningi samfélagsins vegna ‘of mikils frelsis’. Þó að spáð sé fyrir um aðra byltingu er bjartsýni fyrir lýðræði og er fullmótun þess tímaspursmál. Til þess að lýðræði blómstri verður að mæla gildi stjórnmálaþátttöku ungs fólks og eru viðhorf þeirra því nauðsynleg.

Lykilorð: Bylting, Arabíska vorið, lýðræði, félagsleg útilokun, stjórnmálaþáttaka, æska, kosningar, Íslamismi

Forewords

This thesis represents 60 ECTS units and the completion of my Master of Arts in Development Studies from the University of Iceland. The research was supervised by Jónína Einarsdóttir, Professor of Anthropology at the Faculty of Social and Human Science, University of Iceland. She inspired me greatly as her student and I am forever thankful for her guidance and invaluable advice throughout the research process and writing.

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List of Acronyms

AU	African Union
CPR	Congrès pour la République (The Congress for the Republic)
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ELO	Explaining Liberalising Outcomes
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IPU	Inter-parliament Union
ISIE	Instance Supérieure Indépendante pour les Élections (The Independent High Electoral Commission)
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
MP	Member of Parliament
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHCHR	The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
RCD	Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique (The Constitutional Democratic Rally
UN	United Nations
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDI	United Nations Development Index
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UPL	Union Patriotique Libre (The Free Patriotic Union)
WB	World Bank

Introduction

The self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi on December 17, 2010 led to protests throughout Tunisia, and sparked the so-called 'Arab Spring'[1]. Tunisia was the first domino in a series of cascading events that inspired Egypt and swept through the Arab world where people rose up against their authoritarian rulers (Lynch, 2014). The root cause of the awakening can be identified in the conditions of many unemployed youth; fed up with political corruption, social problems and poor economy (Al-Momani, 2011). These popular uprisings are known as 'youth-driven revolutions', since numerous young citizens were at the forefront: taking over the streets with constant protests, demanding freedom, justice, and dignity (Hoffman & Jamal, 2012; Pace & Cavatorta, 2012). Early in 2011, nearly every country in the Arab world was affected by turbulent demonstrations calling for democracy. After unparalleled levels of social protest and armed conflict in some cases, the strict regimes called for an end. In some cases, regimes headed towards civil war, while others recovered rather quickly (Lynch, 2014).

Tunisia is regarded as the success story of the Arab Spring, after adopting a new constitution and accomplishing democratic elections (Karoud, 2015; Zoubir, 2015). However, the youth voter turnout was described as 'alarmingly' low and the media widely reported that young people generally boycotted the elections. This research is a response to the results of the low youth participation. Before I selected the topic, I had already worked in Tunisia. I had launched a children's rights project there and served as an international election observer in both the parliamentary elections in October 2014 and the presidential elections in November 2014. I observed young people almost absent from all polling stations that I visited and I found this to be a concern among Tunisian citizens. Since the idea to conduct this research arose on the day of the parliamentary elections my eyes were especially open while observing young people during the presidential elections. I had many conversations about what the results might mean for the democratisation of Tunisia and

[1] Here referred to as the 'Arab Spring' only due to simplification and the common use of this definition. I am however aware of the debate about how we should define the Arab uprisings since 2010 in the most relevant manner, specifically the objections to the use of 'Arab Spring' and Orientalists critical contributions to the understanding of the phenomenon - see for example, Shihade (2012).

people argued the empowerment and involvement of youth to be key for the nation's stabilisation.

I was taking my first steps in my career, advocating for human rights and development, focusing on youth and at the same time I was a part time MA student in development studies with a background in political science. This definition of me reflects the combination of my academic interests. Therefore, my curiosity and willingness to search for answers grew strong, as well as my desire to contribute to Tunisia's new born democracy. I was mainly thinking about why the majority of young people did not cast their vote, considering the paradoxical fact: that the revolution in 2011 was mainly driven by youth calling for change. However, I started thinking about the major societal change in a broader context and I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of it, beyond voting behaviour. Therefore, I decided to utilise my thesis to raise the voice of young Tunisian leaders by documenting their experiences in depth.

The objective of this thesis is to examine the perceptions of Tunisian youth leaders on the transition from autocracy to democracy in order to gain a contextual understanding of their involvement in the process. The three central questions underpinning this research are: How do they view the consequences of the revolution? What obstacles do they think stand in the way of young people participating in politics and casting their vote? What are their sentiments after the elections in 2014 and what is their future vision of Tunisia as a democratic state? The nature of the topic required a qualitative methodology. The research is based on fieldwork that took place in Tunisia, in March 2015 and consists of semi-structured interviews with young members of parliament, board members of political parties and leaders of civil society. Participant observation was also conducted, where I studied political conferences and cultural activities in three cities, but mostly in Tunis, the capital city.

The theoretical framework is discussed in chapter one and consists of the paradigm crisis of democratisation and authoritarian approaches, as well as political participation with a special focus on youth. The fieldwork setting is described in chapter two, with a focus on the modern political history of Tunisia and the youth population. Chapter three justifies the methodology of data collection and analysis and chapter four presents the research results. Finally, I discuss the results in a theoretical context in chapter five, before I conclude.

1. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I put forward the theoretical bases for analysing the democratic transition in Tunisia. I will discuss the paradigm crisis of democratisation and authoritarianism as well as political participation of youth.

1.1. The Paradigm Crisis

The fall of the dictatorship in North Africa led to new political struggles and deep concerns among both revolutionaries and international observers. The 'Arab Democratic Spring' was truly surprising for regimes, citizens, scholars and policymakers alike. For the past several decades, academic literature on North Africa focused on the resilience of entrenched authoritarianism. The region was considered caught in the 'Arab exceptionalism' culture that was untouched by the third wave of democratisation, but was unexpectedly in the spotlight of the international debates on democratisation. Like most of the regimes, most scholars were ill prepared for this tumult (Lynch, 2014; Pace & Cavatorta, 2012; Plaetzer, 2014). According to recent literature, *The Arab Uprisings Explained* (Brumberg, 2014, p. 2) it is stated that we 'cannot yet define and measure the political changes that have occurred' in the Arab world. From a purely theoretical point of view, the events have challenged former assumptions about the region heavily and Arab politics remain fully framed in contemporary theoretical perspective (Gause III, 2011; Pace & Cavatorta, 2012; Volpi, 2014). Thus, political change and stabilisation still remains highly uncertain (Brumberg, 2014).

In 2012, Pace and Cavatorta (2012) called for a review on how to explain and interpret Arab political events and the post-revolutionary phase. They offered the initial attempt to point out some theoretical problems to re-thinking existing frameworks and to provide deeper insight to understand the popular uprisings. The Arab uprisings brought the much-criticised democratisation studies and the transition paradigm that were dominating throughout the 1980s and 1990s, back on the agenda (Przeworski & Limongi, 1997).

Through the lens of democratisation, political events in the Arab world were explained according to the existence of a linear path from autocracy to democracy. In 2000s, the paradigm of 'authoritarian resilience' successfully challenged the lens of democratisation. According to authoritarianism, those events were better understood by examining how

authoritarian rule survived and the mechanisms that permitted its continuance (Valbjørn & Bank, 2010). Pace and Cavatorta (2012, p. 127) explained that those events resulted in a 'degree of soul-searching' with both democratisation and authoritarianism paradigms coming under scrutiny. Modified and illustrative models are necessary in order to understand, explain and interpret what happened, as well as ensuring that future trends are more clearly identified. Pace and Cavatorta argued that both paradigms need a revision in light of the shortcomings and called for more 'inter-paradigmatic exchanges'. Despite their rigidity, both paradigms still have much to contribute and should lead to a rethinking, rather than getting rid of them (Pace & Cavatorta, 2012).

Similarly, and more recently, Brumberg (2014) suggested that we need a more 'bounded approach' to understand and analyse the Arab spring. Since these political events shifted history and challenged assumptions that were widely accepted before the events occurred. Brumberg described this as a paradigm crisis among scholars similar to the one after the collapse of the Soviet Union for instance. Those momentous events have indeed inspired scholars to make use of grand theories of democratisation after a decade of work that explored authoritarianism. While Pace and Cavatorta (2012) suggested that these theories ought to be rethought due to 'potential unintended consequences' and new actors, Brumberg's (2014) bounded approach also took into account how political change in the Arab region is made by regional forces, such as identity conflicts and 'protection racket' politics, which are important factors that both paradigms have overlooked. The following sections explain the development of democratisation and authoritarianism within the study of Arab politics, with a specific consideration of suggested inter-paradigmatic exchanges, the bounded approach and additional factors.

1.1.1. Democratisation

The teleological assumptions of modernisation theory dominated the field of political science until 1970s. In the political arena, modernisation embraced the meaning of the 'spread of democracy' and the diminishing of conventional elites (Peet & Hartwick, 2009, p. 122). Modernisation was supposed to produce a process of a 'cultural secularisation' and the rising middle class was supposed to lead to a global democratisation (Brumberg, 2014). According to Peet and Hartwick (2009, p. 104), the theory basically stated: 'if you want to develop, be like us (the West)'. However, post-modernisation responded and assumed that the cultural landscape of the Arab world did not adapt political practices in a form of liberal

democracy easily (Hudson, 1977). The rise of Islamic politicking, and the failure to adapt a groundwork for democracy, were explained with religious factors, particularly the tendency to mix religion and politics. Some scholars believe that the blockade to secularisation was a hindrance for democracy, but others argued that Islam had a unique concept of democracy that could not be comprehended with a 'universal' standard (Esposito & Voll, 1996; Lewis, 1993). According to Brumberg (2014), those arguments propose that the global version of modernisation theory would most likely not be realised in the Muslim world because of religion and culture.

Modernisation theory is an insufficient tool to explain democratic transitions due to the culturalist shift. A similar trend occurred in the studies of Latin America (Wiarda, 1973) and provoked a comeback from Marxist scholars. They denied the explanation of autocracy with cultural factors and argued the global division of capitalist labour and exploitation. Their argument did not persuade culturalists, but they widened the concept by revealing an emerging consent concerning the complications of advancing democracy in developing countries. Furthermore, the political openings in Latin America, the historical fall of the Berlin wall and the democratisation in Eastern Europe required scholars to define the cultural aspect of the debate (Brumberg, 2014).

A successful response to the culturalist challenge was the transition paradigm that was born in the beginning of the 1990s. This paradigm demonstrates the capacity of leading politicians to negotiate out of conflicts. The origins of the idea can be traced to O'Donnell and his colleagues' efforts to explain why Latin America's authoritarian regimes adopted political openings (Brumberg, 2014; Pace & Cavatorta, 2012). O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead (1986) argued that these unpopular regimes were pursued to reclaim democratic legitimacy with market improvements. These kinds of initiatives seemed to shape the aftermath of political openings, by preventing mobilisation against unpopular regimes, which otherwise could occur. O'Donnell and his collaborators explained that social tensions could be reduced with political 'pacts', meaning that the opposition could secure the dominance of regimes to get formal political rights. Brumberg (2014) stated that this instrumentalist view offered the principal assumption for transition theory, with conceptual legitimacy. This view captured democratic institutions and rules as a mechanism to peacefully prevent socioeconomic struggles.

Another, closely related, and a prevailing assumption was concerned with the logic that would finally obligate both regime and opposition leaders to negotiate a 'pact'.

Following Przeworski's (1979) arguments, O'Donnell and his colleagues (1986) assumed that fragile democracies and powerful militaries would ultimately cause a 'stalemate' that forces regime and oppositions to adapt democracy as the 'second-best' option. Rustow (1970) set out the idea that a transitions paradigm embraces the notion that social or economic conflicts are not required to trigger a democratic transition. Other scholars later borrowed Rustow's idea, naming it a theory of 'democracy without democrats'.

The vision of O'Donnell and his contributors (1986) of transition can be summarised as the following: Transitions begin as a consequence of economic conflicts. In the beginning, choices of elites do not mirror a philosophical, social, nor economic interests. Instead, they choose to be better off using democratic practices to resolve conflict and prevent a 'stalemate'. Democracy is therefore a necessary 'second-best' option, but is unsatisfactory for a transition that requires political will, organisational skills, collective action and is dependant upon decisions of leaders. Their decisions and tactics are affected by fragile socioeconomic structures that sustained after the regime breakdown: That leads to the need of new defined democratic ground rules. The power of the ruling elite compels the opposition to support an agreement that safeguards the regime's interest. The revival of civil society supports the opposition that prevents the regime to limit the scope of transition that begins 'regime-controlled'. But democratisation requires mobilisation. The so called 'four player games' then appear as different steps of implicit and explicit harmonisation among the regime 'soft-liners' and 'hard-liners'. The regime needs hard-liners as a threat which helps the soft-liners in negotiations with the opposition. Correspondingly, the opposition determines the threat of the opposition radicals to influence the negotiations with the soft-liners. For the transition's progress, the opposition moderates and radicals require minimal agreement and a common aim and strategy. Because of the regime's skills or choices, transitions are uncertain. Political openings are unstable and will either return to dictatorship or develop towards democracy. While those factors may form a foundation for a political pact or a 'democracy without democrats', the elites' commitment is required. This commitment can grow logically or be learned through the continual practice of democratic politics. Eventually, without a common national identity, transitions are unlikely to succeed and a foundation for democracy will unlikely be established if negotiations are just formulas of 'sharing power' (Brumberg, 2014; O'Donnell et al., 1986).

Waterbury (1994) originally evaluated the relevance of transition theory to Arab politics. He rebounded the culturalist assumptions characteristic of orientalism, but shifted

away from the study of Islam to the role of a state ideology. He located the democratic development struggles in the 'mission-oriented' ideology of the Arab autocracy. He argued that this authoritarian ideology blocked the space for more pluralistic politics. Furthermore, he suggested that political logics could have roots in regional structures – that cannot be universal (Brumberg, 2014). In 2002, Carothers (2002) announced 'the end of the transition paradigm', describing it as a model that emphasised the short-term negotiations of the elite, without conceptualising political history, economic, social, institutional, and cultural factors. The democratisation paradigm remains a limited tool to tackle the challenge of theorising the Arab democratic spring and fails to explain new actors, culture, identity, ideology, social conflicts, local logics and other important underlying variables. The authoritarian regimes have not been developing according to the modal path proposed by democratisation and therefore scholars have searched for new analytical frameworks. (Brumberg, 2014; Pace & Cavatorta, 2012).

1.1.2. Authoritarianism

The same year that Carothers (2002) announced that the time of the transition paradigm was over, Levitisky and Way (2002, p. 51) suggested that it was time to stop emphasising 'transitions to democracy' and start focusing on 'specific types of regimes' and understand what they are. During the recent post-transitions phase, academic society has highlighted the importance of 'mixed regimes' and has produced various labels for the phenomenon[2].

The survival of the autocracies in the Arab world could be attributed to democratic, autocratic and pluralistic mechanisms that are mixed. Brumberg (2014) divided studies of semi-autocracies in two: 'formalist' and 'configurative' approaches. Formalistic approaches focus on theorising a wide range of elements. This approach highlights institutional factors, for example, the impact of electoral systems, institutional unity (or disunity) in regimes and oppositions and strategies used by regimes to avoid oppositional dissent. This approach became popular because it is believed to be important to look at the level of success or failure of autocracies to use economic reforms to negotiate (Brumberg, 2014). This approach is related to studies that emphasised how international political, social, and ideological links between local actors and global powers influence democratic actors, and resulted in a more

[2] Including: 'semi-authoritarianism', 'semidemocracy', 'virtual democracy', 'electoral democracy', 'pseudodemocracy', 'illiberal democracy', 'soft authoritarianism', 'electoral authoritarianism', 'authoritarian resilience', 'competitive authoritariansm' and more – see Levitsky and Way (2002, p. 51).

global perspective (Levitsky & Way, 2006). The aftermaths of political openings were captured by moving the lens from the 'study of transition' to the 'study of political change', a factor which the transition paradigm overlooked. For instance, 'electoral autocracy' studies captured a dynamic of change within systems that occurred when oppositions used electoral mechanisms and indirect pact making (Brumberg, 2014).

In the study, *Explaining Liberalizing Outcomes* (ELO), Howard and Roessler (2006) found that splits of regimes were required, but was not a sufficient condition for ELO, depending on the capability of leaders to unite the opposition while sustaining pressure regimes. With this study, they tested the conceptual challenge by connecting political actions and structural circumstances (Howard & Roessler, 2006). However, most post-transition studies used the 'formalist approach' without addressing deeper causes behind particular political choices, such as local and bounded logics or geographical regions (Brumberg, 2014).

Subsequently, 'configurative approaches' in studies of semi-autocracies pointed out a multidimensional set of institutional, economic, cultural and, ideological dimensions. Those studies were inspired by historical institutionalism and analysed those variables while considering specific regional areas during specific historical phases. The configurative approaches 'bounded' those variables in favour of more conceptual modest theories, avoiding universalism. But the problem with historically tracing the survival of regimes is that configurative approaches contain various path-dependent accounts. By depending on this approach, it can be argued that it gives little more than a vast 'storytelling' intuition. Those problems are balanced by deductive studies (such as ELO) that are universal or if the used variables matter for the outcomes. Specifically because evaluations of semi-autocracies tend to be shaped regional logics and rely on universal models at the same time (Brumberg, 2014). Brownlee (2009) modified the alignment of formalistic approaches. According to him, institutional disparities of electoral and dominating regimes showed no difference in their tendency for regime breakdown. He demonstrated that the crucial factor in forecasting whether elections would result in 'liberalising outcome' is the capacity of oppositions to build a broad coalition when the ruling party splits. Political parties that sustain effective coalitions, are the foundations of political stability and can push for elections when the ruling party splits (Brownlee, 2009). This study demonstrates the weaknesses of the formal institutional approach and seems to confirm that the space for negotiations depends on political parties. In Egypt (and many other countries), the ruling parties and the electoral

system are only segments in a complicated autocratic system that are not the most important ones. Instead of following one necessary, but inadequate explanation of surviving dictatorship, Brownlee (2009) undertook other factors to explain the trigger for political change.

Brumberg (2014) noted that a historical analysis is not conducted nor are the characteristics of political parties evaluated. Yet, since the mechanisms that ruling elites use to maintain authoritarian rule still function in many Arab countries, the studies of authoritarianism are still valid (Pace & Cavatorta, 2012). Also, the fall of presidents does not guarantee the end of an autocratic regime (Ottaway, 2011). However, the elites are products of a wider and a complex structure of local forces and their power is based on patronage politics. That is a mixture of identity politics and explicit and implicit power dynamics. Previous attempts that use global models to understand and explain Arab politics overlook the key drivers of the overall system (Brumberg, 2014).

1.1.3. Overlooked Factors

In addition to the theoretical issues mentioned above, the paradigms of democratisation and authoritarianism overlooked important factors, such as identity conflicts, 'protection racket' politics and other consequences. However, Waterbury's (1994) conceptualisation of political actors departed from the universal assumptions of transition theory according to Brumberg (2014). This modification towards more historical-institutional approach is central for transitions to succeed and structural, ideological, and institutional factors are practical. Those factors stem from the ability of autocracies to avoid economic crises and social struggles, using 'regime-led' and 'cultural-symbolic' strategies: that shift to identity conflicts. Such strategies were practised to gain trust from religious or ethnic minorities. The split between Islamist and secular, French speakers and Arabic speakers illustrate these conflicts. This reflects the case of Morocco, where the monarchs defended cultural rights of Berbers in order to enhance their legitimacy. This conceptualisation of identity politics locates culture, religion and ethnicity in the institutionalisation of identity splits used as strategies by autocracies to enhance their capacity. Those strategies can be in the form of preventing class conflict or focus on communal values and Islamic law. Also, it can be beneficial for vulnerable identity groups to rely on autocracies, but during a transition, their interest can be forgotten. Such fears among vulnerable identity groups are magnified on a symbolic or psychological level. The uprisings reveal how such fears and systematic manipulation have

complicated political change (Brumberg, 2014).

The split between Islamists and secularists in Egypt weakened the opposition's ability to negotiate a pact with the strong military. In fact, the tension between the Muslim Brotherhood party and the military ended up with a military coup. Because of no politicised military to manipulate either Islamists or secularists in Tunisia – they were forced to negotiate. Brumberg explained the impact of identity conflicts to help to understand factors that the transition paradigm does not take into account. These factors are, however, a consequence of various institutional elements that can not be explained by identity conflicts alone (Brumberg, 2014).

Arab complex political systems are based on combined elements that do maintain autocracy. Ideologies and identity politics are elements that have structural importance by protecting particular groups that might otherwise be threatened by political change. This is how operations of former presidents of Tunisia and Egypt can be described as 'protection racket politics' (Brumberg borrowed the original idea of 'protection racket' from Charles Tilly (2004b)). The Arab uprisings unfolded in both liberalised and full autocracies and each state has promoted different trajectories. In liberalised autocracies, the governing elite remains in power by mixing institutional elements that are both formal and informal. Opposing groups are allowed to 'participate', but not to gain power that weakens the regime. Protection racket results in a process where all identity groups are forced to take part in political negotiations. The informal and diplomatic role of liberalised autocracies promotes the usage of a "divide-and-rule" strategy. Egypt's liberalised autocracy included opposition parties that were divided along religious, cultural, tribal, or ideological lines. The leaders of Morocco just reshaped the mechanisms of liberalised autocracy to sustain the protection racket game. By announcing regularly 'political change' is also a way of survival for regimes. This reflects the case of Egypt and Morocco, where the 'transitional phase' has been celebrated for years. In Libya and Tunisia, the regimes functioned through formal political mechanisms, which reproduced 'electoral victories' that indicated no tolerance of opposition. In Tunisia, the total dependence of secularists on the state for protection was secured through the regime. This was safeguarded by a powerful security apparatus, but the military did not play the negotiating role like in Egypt (Brumberg, 2014).

Egypt's destabilisation and that the authoritarian rule was said to be the most solid in Tunisia are attention-grabbing paths for analytical comparison and this exemplifies the inter-paradigm debate (Pace & Cavatorta, 2012). The dissimilar cases of 'failing' Egypt and

'succeeding' Tunisia, specifically regarding the role of the military, have therefore often been compared for a better understanding (Brumberg, 2014; Kienle, 2012; Mannheimer, 2014; Plaetzer, 2014). In Egypt, the military utilised the divisions between Islamists and secularists to reinforce its authority. This division would otherwise have complicated negotiations to move the transition forward. Instead, there was no pressure for the Muslim Brotherhood to negotiate with secularists and because of this particular form, a new constitution was accepted with minor conflicts. Consequently, the power of the military increased. This Egyptian experience revealed that these structures can endure and called for attention to explore how regimes change after autocratic collapse (Brumberg, 2014).

Dissimilarly, the case of Tunisia shows unpredictable possibilities that could arise from a system of total autocracy. Ben Ali's regime became dependent on a resilient one party rule, a week military and a reliable security apparatus. This model promoted legitimacy with political protection of secularists and economic improvements. Nevertheless, in the beginning of the revolution, the growing division of the secular elite was left isolated, the military refused to intervene and the regime faced a mass revolt. The old protection racket therefore collapsed in Tunisia (Brumberg, 2014). In contrast, the protection racket was effectively recharged in Egypt while Tunisia's military lacked the experience, tools and the willpower; so all partners were forced to negotiate. The Tunisian Islamist party, Ennahda, that had been excluded before from the political arena (in contrast with the Muslim Brotherhood), heavily supported this outcome in Tunisia (as is further explained in chapter 2). Salafists, however, challenged Ennahda to maintain its credibility among non-Islamists while trying to demonstrate its Islamic values. This challenge almost led to a collapse in 2012 during debates over the constitution (Brumberg, 2014; Marks, 2013). All parties were forced to negotiate in 2013 and this produced a constitution that provides true democratic rights. Those difficult negotiations resulted in a guide to a transition and scholars have predicted that Tunisia will get closer to a full democracy than any other Arab state (Brumberg, 2014; Mannheimer, 2014; Pace & Cavatorta, 2012).

Although it is early to derive firm lessons from the uprisings, this brief comparison shows that in any situation of regime change, both local and global logics must be considered. The global logic on the one hand, captured by the transition paradigm, is an institutional dynamic, that frames actions of political leaders, under structural conditions. On the other hand, the regional logic is a mixture of ideological, institutional and political forces as well as societal forms of 'unstructured mobilisation' that have shaped a unique system

over time (Brumberg, 2014; Pace & Cavatorta, 2012).

The two leading paradigms of democratisation and authoritarianism require re-thinking, particularly when it comes to forms of unstructured mobilisation and non-traditional, anarchical and horizontal actors – important factors that have been dismissed from available theoretical frameworks. For instance, aspects of guiding 'unintended consequences' have always been missing from authoritarianism (Cavatorta & Haugbølle, 2012). Pace and Cavatorta (2012) argued that due to the rigidity of those leading paradigms; 'forgotten' actors, networks and other social phenomena were missed out, that are in fact, central, to the uprisings; such as a new level of political consciousness, those who organized horizontally via social media, 'face-to-face' networks that occupied the main squares and opportunistic actors that took over the process. Underlying the protests, economic and political reasons which had been hidden from the public for a long time, drove young people, who were assumed to be de-politicised, to demand freedom, justice and dignity (Pace & Cavatorta, 2012). To understand those 'forgotten' actors, it is necessary to explore political participation.

1.2. Political Participation

Political participation is crucial to any democracy and has a substantial impact on levels of democratic quality (Fusco & Heathfield, 2015; Robertson, 2009). The study of political participation has been shaped over history along with the idea and development of democratic political systems. Van Deth (2014) has recently contributed significantly with his conceptual map of political participation, and he has offered today's most common understanding of political participation by identifying common characteristics:

> [P]olitical participation refers to people in their role as *citizens* and not, say, as politicians or civil servants…[It] is understood as an *activity* ('action')… [and] should be *voluntary* and not ordered by the ruling class or obliged under some law... [P]olitical participation concerns *government and politics* in a broad sense of these words ('political system') and is neither restricted to specific phases…nor to specific levels or areas (Van Deth, 2001, p. 5).

The meaning of the political participation concept itself is disputed. The voter turnout remains as the most important activity and weighs heavily in the study of political parties. However, the activities or actions that are undertaken by citizens to influence politics are multidimensional. Most typically, scholars tend to categorise types of political participation either as 'conventional' (duty citizenship) or 'unconventional' (engaged citizenship) participation. Traditionally, activities such as voting or party involvement are understood as

conventional, while demonstrating or occupying a building have been considered as unconventional (Dalton, 2008; Verba & Nie, 1987).

The persistent domination of this traditional distinction has been questioned. Norris (2003) is among the scholars that have argued how people prefer to interact with politics has changed considerably in recent decades. Those changes are noticeable in the forms of participation (repertoires), the associations through which people participate (agencies) and what citizens aim to influence (targets). Because of this change, the classic study of the concept, and the typical distinction between conventional and unconventional participation – is out of date. While considering how mainstream and widespread demonstrations have become, Norris questioned 'why should contacting an elected official about individual constituency service be regarded as "conventional", while contacting them with a collective petition is regarded as an act of "protest"?'(Norris, 2003, pp. 2–3). For Norris and others, the traditional distinction has become unclear. Before, unconventional political participation was seen to be practised by a group of few rebellious citizens against authorities (Norris, 2003). Dalton (2008) suggested a transformation in the whole idea of political citizenship: that the earlier model of 'duty citizens' is being replaced by the idea of 'engaged citizens'.

Unconventional activities in the form of protest, such as boycotts or demonstrations, have become dominant, potential targets vary and citizens increasingly aim to influence public opinion or behaviour politically (Barnes & Kaase, 1979; Norris, 2003). Howard (2003) agreed on the how diverse agencies of participation have become. He also mentioned how new technology has begun to offer opportunities for communication and organisation with political purpose. Hence, the way in which citizens are politically engaged has changed and varies, making it problematic to form one universal definition. The line between political society and civil society is therefore blurred (Howard, 2003).

1.2.1. Youth Participation

Before exploring young people as political actors, 'youth' must be defined. Murphy (2012) pointed out that scholars have given scant attention to the complexity of defining what aspects should be identified in order to comprehend the interests and identities that coheres 'youth' into a distinct subset. There is no legal definition of youth equivalent to the Convention of the Right of the Child (CRC)'s definition of a child. Therefore, youth can be caught up between childhood and adulthood or included in the same group as children that is more easily defined and have corresponding legal rights. Also, while protecting human

rights of adults, initiatives do not always address the specific needs of youth (UNESCO, n.d.). However, in line with the United Nations (UN), 'youth is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence'. The best way to define this group is with an age range and by considering education and employment, because a young person is usually leaving compulsory education and entering the job market (UNDESA, n.d., p. 1). Young people are therefore in between being recipients to becoming active citizens and both participants and contributors to society. For statistical accuracy, the UN defines youth: 'as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States' (UNDESA, n.d., p. 1). The UN recognises that the meaning of youth can be diverse and has different cultural understandings. The African Union (AU) for instance, defines youth as persons aged 15 to 35 years (UNDESA, n.d.). Since this study was conducted in North Africa, I acknowledged the broader definition of the AU.

Young people in particular and their participation in politics is getting increased scholarly attention. As mentioned above, citizens of established democracies are apparently ignoring conventional political participation. Apathy and increasing alienation from conventional political participation among young people is concerning. It is feared that young people are simply becoming disengaged and disconnected from representative democracy. Young people have become less interested in participating in the system of representative democracy and tend to prefer non-electoral forms of political engagement, such as participation in demonstrations, signing petitions, consumer boycotts and joining political online forums. Some observers have described this pattern as a 'crisis' of modern democracy (Kiisel, Leppik, & Seppel, 2015; Norris, 2003; Russell, 2005).

To examine this crisis, Norris (2003) proposed reasons for why we may be 'experiencing a generational shift from traditional politics of loyalties towards the contemporary politics of choice' (Norris, 2003, p. 2). Her study confirms that the youngest citizens are less likely to participate in conventional politics, suggesting a life-cycle effect. In contrast to the proposition of youth apathy, she also found that young people are more likely to engage in cause-oriented political action than other cohorts. According to Rossi (2009), it is not clear whether young people's propensity for new types of engagement is age-related: whether they will turn back to traditional forms of political participation as they get older, or whether we are witnessing a permanent transformation of political culture. Quintelier (2007) claimed that although life-cycle effects account for voter turnout, they only explain minor aspects of the broad meaning of political participation: younger people are

not less active, but just have different practices.

Research on established democracies, adds generalised value for comparison and contextual understanding, but could hardly be used to illuminate political participation in the Arab world. However, the Arab youth population appears to be more liberal and more supportive of secular politics, compared to other cohorts (Knickmeyer, 2011; Shenker et al., 2011). Auxiliary to such interpretations, Hoffman and Jamal (2012) have analysed the characteristics of Arab youth and compared them to older generations in the study *The Youth and the Arab Spring: Cohort Differences and Similarities*. They noted the complexity of the youth demography and found out several common insights about the nature of the Arab youth cohort: 'they are, on average, less religious, more educated, more likely to be unemployed, more likely to protest, and less likely to vote' (Hoffman & Jamal, 2012, p. 184). This finding suggests that it can be helpful to bear in mind some common patterns that have been seen in established democracies while studying youth participation in the Arab world.

Van Deth's (2014) characteristics of the concept in his conceptual map is a good option when it comes to understanding and interpreting youth political participation. It is more likely to take into account the changes in the nature of modern political participation, and the participation patterns of youth activities particularly – regardless of situation and geography. Besides, according to the UNDP's practice guide: *Enhancing youth political participation throughout the Electoral Cycle* (2012), both conventional and informal engagement is comprehended as political participation, and both are considered to be beneficial and should be supported for democracy to flourish. Real and meaningful youth participation strengthens democracy by ensuring that decisions have a basis in a larger proportion of the population (UNDP, 2012).

Ødegård (2010) argued that not all participation is positive. Youth representation can operate as an alibi for decision makers so they can say youth have been involved. Furthermore, the belief that getting involved will make a difference is central to further mobilisation of youth, but youth who participate with no real power find it demotivating. Ødegård's study (2010, p. 28) concluded that 'if individuals who the outset are highly motivated to participate in the political process experience that they are not heard, they can end up becoming cynical about politics'. Moreover, in the study *Modeling Democracy: Is Youth 'Participation' enough?* (2015), Fusco and Heathfield asserted that youth participation must focus on social justice and ensure that the choices and actions of young people contribute to human rights, equal opportunities and wellbeing. Fusco and Heathfield (2015,

p. 28) concluded that 'youth "participation" can never be enough, unless it is consistently framed within the critical delineating questions of: "Participation in what?" and "Participation for what purpose?"'. Accordingly, definitions of youth participation must be framed with considerations of challenges to injustice and the deep rooted forces that maintain the status quo (Fusco & Heathfield, 2015).

Since the Arab Spring, most young people remained politically active through social movements instead of political parties (UNDP, 2012). Since young people are generally not less active, but rather opt for different practices to participate politically, it is appropriate to address the theory of social movement.

1.2.2. Social Movement

The main elements of social movements can be divided in three according to Tilly (2004a). The first element is campaigns that are sustained and organised public efforts with collective entitlements. The second one is repertoires or the tactics and the third one is a combination of worthiness, unity, numbers, and environment. The key to any social movement is mobilising strategies that are collective through which actors mobilise collectively (Tilly, 2004a).

Generally, the form of youth participation has changed from long-term ideological loyalties to new forms of participation based on personal meaningful causes, which are much less stable, have horizontal structures and offer flexible forms of involvement (Rossi, 2009). Less formal, temporary and self-organised forms of participation, which serve the purpose of supporting and expressing political goals, seem to be especially attractive to young people. Movements that are based on such differ from structured social movements (such as women's rights or environmental movements) as they are considered as expressions of disappointment with the political or social order. These protest movements do not have a functional basis from the point of view of political integration (Kiisel et al., 2015).

Internet based civic and political engagement characterises the young generation and also shapes the general political culture. Intensive use of social networks moves young people towards political engagement (Kiisel et al., 2015). Stepanova (2011) suggests that the use of information communication technologies (ICTs) may be a new 'technical' foundation for bracing the phenomenon of mass, non-violent protest campaigns and encourages further empirical and analytical investigation. With this kind of political participation, scholars have

argued that the youth population has been 'awoken' and the popular uprisings have electrified this newfound youth momentum, since youth were once considered to be passive agents in the political arena (Khouri & Lopez, 2011).

According to Carty (2014), the Arab Spring changed the way collective behaviour and contentious politics is understood. Research on social movements usually relies on theories (such as political process, political mediation, and resource mobilisation) that focus on '"why" social movements emerge at the macro-level, or "how" they manifest themselves at the micro-level'. Existing frameworks are therefore challenged by new forms of digital technological activism (Carty, 2014, p. 53). Due to the outburst of collective behaviour and the significant role of new media platforms, Carty (2014) explains the need for an enlargement of the theoretical framework of social movement. The 'digital revolution' in North Africa has enlarged the platform of groups sharing information and organising demonstrations. The resources, organisational structures and processes of social movements, as well as the bases of communication that connect activists together have changed. Modern social movements rely much more on unstructured grassroots networks using internet based tools, such as ICTs (Carty, 2014).

Today, young activists receive information about mobilisations and politics through digital channels of technology. This in turn increases their probability of participation as they may not have received the information in other ways (Carty, 2014). Furthermore, instantaneous peer-to-peer sharing allows for the development of collective identity before protest activity on the streets begins and informational content through online activity is positively associated with increased political participation (Boulianne, 2009). New digital media allows activists to operate in ways that are less dependent on traditional and external resources such as professional leadership and mainstream media. Instead, they are supported by informal grassroot networks (Carty, 2014). New media technology shifts the way activists can share and consume information. This broadens the scope of public communication by allowing activists to reach critical mass in a quick way and without any cost. The creation of virtual public spheres, simplifies the development of social movements in spite of physical distance. This type of social movement leads to a new type of civil society based on the electronic grassroots democracy (Carty, 2014; Norris, 2003). Digital technology had an impact on social movement by addressing how fast ICTs can run activities, share information, facilitate recruitment and form a collective identity of grievances that lead to

actions, and can be used to force authorities to respond to protests (Carty, 2014; Stepanova, 2011).

The change in the nature of social movement and methods of political activities needs to be considered while exploring youth participation. Since traditional forms of political activities require resource demanding habits of political engagement they can result in less educated and socioeconomically less well-off youth being left out of democratic practices altogether. This can lead to an increase in the polarisation of young citizens and marginalisation along the lines of both political and civic participation (Kiisel et al., 2015; Marks, 2013).

1.2.3. Marginalisation

Recent debates on democratic transitions have focused on civil society and democracy in Tunisia being dependent upon a strong civil society. However, Plaetzer (2014) argues that the framework of civil society is incapable of capturing the uprisings and ignores the heavy socioeconomic forces and the role of non-institutionalised organisations. (Plaetzer, 2014). Furthermore, Beinin and Vairel (2011) stated that the spark of the revolution was not caused by the arising of civil society calling for political inclusion. Instead, the revolution was driven by the '"left behinds" of a development model that favours the North part of the country' aroused by 'a growing imbalance in the job market between the high demand for unskilled jobs in the textile and tourism sectors and the increasing supply of high school and university graduates' (Beinin & Vairel, 2011, p. 238). Therefore, the origins of the democratisation is a complex interplay between socioeconomic grievances and the political marginalisation of the populous 'left behinds' (Plaetzer, 2014). The successful mobilisation of disenfranchised youth also contributes greatly to the rising popularity of Salafism (Marks, 2013). Moreover, the World Bank (WB) (2014b) has presented 'youth exclusion' as a multidimensional concept embracing 'economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions'. In the post-revolution phase, 'youth' became a synonym for the 'marginalised', including unemployed graduates and other socioeconomic groups of youth, especially from marginalised regions (Paciello, Pepicelli, & Pioppi, 2016).

Therefore, the social exclusion theory of marginalisation suits the theoretical understanding of youth marginalisation in Tunisia. Although it is arguable that youth per se is a dimension of social exclusion. As we all go through 'youth-hood' making the transition to adulthood results in social membership. However, studying the exclusion of youth as a group

with a certain status is justified as age does serve as a base of social difference in Tunisia that hinders participation in society. Also, it is the linkage of youth with other aspects of hindrance (notably unemployment) that makes the framework of social exclusion suitable for understanding (Silver, 2007).

In simple words, 'marginalisation' is part of a process which excludes individuals or particular groups of people to the side-lines of political power. In this process, individuals and sometimes entire communities are systematically denied access to human rights, socioeconomic opportunities and other resources that are usually accessible to others. The exclusion can be connected to minority groups or an individual's social class, age, gender, language, race, religion and geography, etc. The marginalisation theory is used by neoclassical economics, Marxism and social exclusion theorists. Neoclassical economists trace marginalisation to cultural resistance, individualism and poverty. Marxists however, look at marginalisation as a structural phenomenon produced by capitalism. With influence from the Marxist approach, social exclusion theorists emphasise the consequence of social networks and symbolic restrictions. They argue that inequality, unemployment, poverty, social hierarchy and other forms of discrimination to be the roots of marginalisation (Jahan, 2016; Silver, 1994).

In the 'social exclusion framework' presented by Silver (2007, p. 15), social exclusion is a multidimensional conception of disadvantage, caused by various mechanisms that prevent youth from full participation in society. Social exclusion is a social relationship that has two parties: excluders and excluded or adults and youth in this case. At the micro level the exclusion mechanism can be rejection and at the macro level it can be denial of human rights. When studying social exclusion, both parties of the social relationship must be considered (Silver, 2007).

Social exclusion can be defined in many ways, reflecting ideological viewpoints of what it means to belong to a certain society. The definitions are therefore based on cultural meaning, national laws and socioeconomics. Hence, in order to apply the concept of social exclusion to young Tunisians this calls for a consideration of what it means to be a Tunisian citizen, Muslim, Arab and so on (Silver, 2007). Additionally, already marginalised youth may face 'double' or 'triple' exclusion due to family values, gender, geography, educational level, disability, etc. (NDI, n.d.). Silver (2007, p. 25) described this as 'cumulative continuity' that includes mechanisms of exclusion. Considering the double exclusion of young women for instance, the social change in Tunisia impacted women's rights that have been largely

beneficial (Khalil, 2014). Though women participated actively in the revolution, Khalil (2014) found they were almost absent from the politics throughout the main period of the transition. Debates about gender after the revolution were at times a serious threat to women's rights in new forms of gender based violence were evident (Khalil, 2014).

Silver (2007) noted many consequences of social exclusion, such as family and psychological outcomes – that can also be a dimension of exclusion. One of such dimensions is the norm of delayed marriage in the Muslim world. This norm is being debated in a political and economic context and has caused conflicts. The main cause of delayed marriage is financial restrictions. Economists have described this development as 'wait unemployment' among educated young people in search for jobs (Singerman, 2007). Many young people experience what Singerman (2007, p. 6) labelled as 'waithood' ('wait adulthood') while they remain single for a long period and try to save money for marriage. This 'waithood' makes young people dwell as adolescents and they are neither children nor adults. In this stage, young people stay financially dependent on their families for a longer time than previous generations. Also, they are forced to live by the rules of their parents and the dominant values of society. The 'waithood' is changing the tradition of marriage; new sexual norms and hidden and risky fields of dating are emerging. The 'waithood' also concerns the idea of identity; as authorities and the religious majority attempt to discipline young people with Islamic values and accuse them of adapting western ideas. Therefore, young people feel excluded from the conversation about potential solutions regarding their issues – making them disempowered and politically excluded. Young people struggle to educate themselves, find jobs, create a family; they are stuck in a 'waithood' and are politically excluded (Singerman, 2007).

The following chapter describes the fieldwork setting for this research that was conducted in Tunisia. In order to examine the perception of Tunisian youth leaders on the democratic transition, I provide a country overview of Tunisia: discuss the youth population, the revolution and the history of modern politics.

2. Setting: Tunisia

The smallest country in North Africa, Tunisia is situated on the northernmost tip of the continent, bordering the Mediterranean Sea to the north, between Algeria and Libya. The country occupies an area of 163.610 km^2, dominated by the Atlas Mountains in the north and the Sahara Desert in the south.

Tunisia is a country with a diverse character, influenced by African, European, and Arab cultures (Brown & Spilling, 2008). The ethnic base of the majority of modern Tunisians is a mix of Sunni Muslim Arab-Berber, who speak Tunisian Arabic (R. S. Simon, Laskier, & Reguer, 2003), which due to former status as a former French protectorate, is a mix of Arabic and French bilingual discourse (Poplack, Sayahi, Mourad, & Dion, 2015). *Habib Bourguiba*, the father of independent Tunisia and the country's first president, led the nationalist struggle that resulted in independence in 1956. Bourguiba was a French speaking, nationalist and secularist who sought to bring Tunisia towards European modernity. Despite his accomplishments in providing healthcare, education, and women's rights, his reign was inflexibly autocratic. Bourguiba established a strict one party rule and became president for life in 1975, a position he held until he was suddenly deposed in 1987 by his prime minister, *Zine El Abidine Ben Ali*. Since then, Ben Ali amended the constitution in such a way to remain in power, and this is partly why his 23 years of rule over Tunisia has been referred to as 'Bourguibism without Bourguiba' (Arieff, 2012; Gana, 2013).

The current population of Tunisia is estimated to be 11 million and the median age is 31.2 years old. According to UNDP's Human Development Report, Tunisia is ranked in 96th place (out of 188) as a country with 'high human development' and an index value of 0.721. Life expectancy is 74.8 years, expected years of schooling is 14.6 years and gross national income (GNI) per capita based on purchasing power parity (PPP) is 10.404 US dollars. The current unemployment rate is 17.6 per cent. Overall, the report indicated that Tunisia is among the wealthiest countries in Africa (UNDP, 2015). Tunisia has multiple strengths and economic potential, but for a more equal and inclusive society it is important to emphasise social and political stability, as well as domestic security (World Bank, 2015). The country is struggling with security issues and is listed with status of 'warning' on the Fragile States Index (FFP, 2015). Tunisia was hit by the global financial crisis and the Arab Spring froze

economic growth (World Bank, 2015). The rise of terrorism is exceptionally worrying and has further impacted the economy negatively, most notably affecting the tourism sector – the heart of the Tunisian economy (AfDP, OECD, & UNDP, 2015; OHCHR, 2015).

The WB (2015) recognised Tunisia's post-revolution achievements, including growth rates above regional average, progress in human development indicators and reduced poverty. However, Tunisia has failed to address deep-rooted unemployment that has worsened (World Bank, 2015). A study by OECD (2015) confirmed that tackling youth labour market challenges is urgent and it stated that the failure to tackle the long-standing structural obstacles that prevent youth from gaining access to jobs can undermine political support for stable transition (OECD, 2015).

2.1. The Youth Population

It is essential to comprehend demographic shapes and focus on how to frame the youth segment of Tunisia to 'understand who they were, what it was they wanted or their significance as a rising social and political force' (Murphy, 2012, p. 3). It is estimated that people under 30 years old make up 60 per cent of the population of North Africa and the youth demographic is expeditiously growing. Demographers have labelled this regional development as a 'youth bulge'. Globally, the region has the highest rates of unemployment and the rate for young people is four times as high (Knickmeyer, 2011).

The percentage of those between 15 and 29 years old, the period during which Arab youth begin entering the job market and considering marriage, makes up 29 per cent of the population of Tunisia (Gelvin, 2012; Grim & Karim, 2011). Unemployment is the heaviest feature that feeds increased frustration and anger among Tunisian youth. Among educated youth, unemployment has increased intensely: from 8.6 per cent in 1999 up to 19.0 per cent in 2007. Following the revolution, estimates showed more dramatic increases: 44.9 per cent in 2009 (Paciello, 2011). Currently, Tunisia has one of the highest rates of youth who are neither in education, training, or work (World Bank, 2014a). The current unemployment rate of youth between the age of 15-24 years old makes up 37.6 per cent (UNDP, 2015). Furthermore, one in four youths are neither in employment, nor in education or training – nearly twice the rate in most OECD countries. Some groups fare even worse, particularly those from the more deprived Centre West and Southern regions (up to 85 per cent), where half of all young women are without employment (OECD, 2015; World Bank, 2014b). However, these numbers miscalculate the level of youth unemployment, as they do not

cover those who have given up job searching, those who have entered an informal economy, those who only get part-time jobs and those who have chosen to migrate out of the country (Gelvin, 2012; Paciello, 2011). Additionally, even when youth are in employment, it is frequently in poor quality jobs: an estimated one in two employed young Tunisians work informally with almost no job security, and half of those working with contracts only have temporary ones (OECD, 2015).

The lack of good employment opportunities is closely associated with their financial situation and general well-being. According to OECD (2015), 34 per cent of Tunisian youth say that they find it difficult or very difficult to get by with their present income. This inability to cope financially translates into low levels of well-being: based on their self-reported life satisfaction, only 21 per cent can be considered to be 'thriving' (OECD, 2015).

As a result of the deterioration of the youth labour market, the number of young Tunisians that want to migrate out of the country has sharply increased. Search for better employment opportunities is the main driving force to migrate and Europe is currently the favourite destination; receiving 81 per cent of Tunisian migration flows. Current young Tunisian migrants show higher education levels than older generations. Between May 2011 and May 2012, around 51,000 Tunisians emigrated abroad and the majority of them are young men. Although women still comprise a small percentage and the general number of female migrants has increased in recent years, which goes in hand with the fact that Tunisian women have higher education levels, better access to the job market, and get married later (ILO, n.d.).

The number of young Tunisians is one of the highest among those joining conflicts abroad compared to other countries. OHCHR (2015) reported 4,000 Tunisians to be in Syria, more than 1,000 are in Libya and 200 have gone to Iraq. Most of them have joined ISIS or other extremist groups. According to the UN Working Group (2015) the motivational factors may be: 'religious and political ideologies, financial gains, economic and social conditions, sense of purpose, and sense of belonging'. Both local members of extremist groups and foreign terrorist groups have established themselves in Tunisia to facilitate recruitment, which is often a rapid process and is increasingly sophisticated. Through both direct and online recruitment, young people are exposed to extremism and encouraged to join usually by manipulating the socioeconomic, psychological and financial vulnerability of youth, which is fertile ground for recruitment. It is estimated that 625 foreign fighters have returned back to Tunisia. Some arrive secretly and declare themselves dead or conduct terrorist activities.

There are also cases of those who regretted their decision to join a conflict abroad, returning to Tunisia traumatised and isolated (OHCHR, 2015).

For Merone and Cavatorta (2012) the most surprising outcome of the Arab Spring was the emergence of Salafi movements in Tunisia. Marks (2013, p. 107) agreed and discussed the need of closer academic attention to the 'the Salafi problem'. Most Tunisian Salafis agree that the Salaf model must be practised as purely as possible and prefer sharia based state. Many Salafis depict sharia as a cure to Tunisia's socioeconomic illness. However, three general current stems exist today within the Tunisian Salafi movement: 'scientific Salafism', 'political Salafism', and 'jihadi Salafism'. Scientific Salafis are usually middle-aged or older individuals who adopt a more traditional approach and generally prefer not to engage in political activities. Political Salafis engaged with the Islamic political parties and believe that political participation in a political opening could help to attain a sharia-based state (Marks, 2013). Young Tunisian Salafis reject both formal party politics and the non-participation of scientific Salafism and they identify largely as jihadi Salafi. Accurately 'jihad' is understood as 'righteous struggle', but in the context of Tunisian Salafism, it is referred to as public protest, potentially violent. Jihadi Salafism can be described as a subculture that illustrates untraditional forms of political protest and lifestyle. They encompass the most rapidly growing Salafi movement in Tunisia today. This has caused a 'definite generational cleavage between them and the older generation' who identify as scientific and/or political Salafi according to Marks (2013, p. 109). The current youth force of jihadi Salafism is raising alarm as an international threat. The young jihadi Salafis go farther than other youth by almost entirely rejecting the political system and living by their own formed religious subculture. This threat has increased pressure on explanations. Lack of research makes it difficult to measure the size of the movement and its demography (Marks, 2013). However, Merone and Cavatorta (2012, p. 7) described the jihadi Salafism as a trend that is caused by marginalisation of youth, who 'lack the necessary skills to compete' in modern Tunisia. Moreover, Marks (2013) also stressed that Salafism thrives on socioeconomic marginalisation. The political engagement of young Tunisians is increasingly in the form of the rejection of the hierarchies of political parties in favour of self organised and unstructured forms of political activism. These new forms of youth activism in Tunisia range from extreme jihadi Salafi activism to youth friendly civil society movements (Marks, 2013).

Gelvin (2012) noted that frustrations about job or life prospects do not necessarily turn youth to rebellion. Nevertheless, this cohort, with these particular characteristics and

under such circumstances, is available to be mobilised for oppositional politics – making the regime particularly vulnerable to uprisings.

2.2. The Jasmine Revolution

On December 17th 2010, one young man changed the structure of the Arab world. The frequently marked defining point that began the wave of democratic protest was Mohammed Bouazizi's (26 year old man) protesting act. After his lifetime of struggling economic conditions and exposure to political corruption that took away the insufficient earnings he obtained to feed his family of eight – he, the breadwinner of the family, burned himself to death (De Soto, 2011). Bouazizi who was a college graduate with a computer science degree earned an income from selling vegetable and was therefore, at least, luckier than many. His livelihood was threatened when the police confiscated his unlicensed vegetables, slapped him and insulted his dead father in front of the market crowd. Humiliated and dejected, Bouazizi went to the governor's municipal building, but they refused to hear his complaint. Less than an hour after the confrontation with the police, Bouazizi poured fuel over himself and burned himself to death (Abouzeid, 2011; Carty, 2014).

This particular incident was part of a common pattern where people like Bouazizi were deprived of political agency. His action therefore symbolised the vexations and despair of many educated and unemployed Tunisian youth, struggling to make a living. Bouazizi's act, followed by the actions of a major number of Tunisian youth, who rose up against autocracy in 2011, was an inspiration to other movements across the Arab world. He was in the same situation like hundreds of educated, unemployed, desperate and downtrodden young people (Abouzeid, 2011; W. Davies, 2012).

It is important to understand suicide as a form of political action while examining the spark of the awakening, in relation to the role of youth and their motivation to push through political change. The consequences were beyond what could have been expected and Bouazizi certainly had a major political impact. From a theoretical perspective, the understanding of suicide as a political act can be traced to Durkheim's idea about suicide that can go beyond individual psychology with social effect (Pape, 2005). Motivations to commit suicide can be religious, sufferings and frustrations, ideological and social reasons or lack of belonging within a community (Kruglanski, Chen, Dechesne, Fishman, & Orehek,

2009). When the motivation is a sense of despair and the suicide is committed as a social or political act, it has been interpreted as unselfish and fatalistic, according to Pedahzur (2005).

Furthermore, by using the concepts of 'biopower', 'pragmatic act' and 'agency', Kassab (2012) identified a pattern: 'self-immolation is an extraordinary method of suicide that persons without agency use to securitize, and bring attention to, Structural Violence'. Kassab argued that Bouazizi's self-immolation was a pragmatic act; he controlled his death, escaping biopower, formulated by the regime for the purpose of gaining an agency needed to illustrate his plight to securitise the way structural violence controlled his life and limited his emancipation. This was a sensational form of suicide that awoke emotions and inspired resistance. Kassab explored the power of human emotions to change regimes and described 'how ordinary people influence international politics' (Kassab, 2012, p. 9), elements that dominant theories of International Relations have overlooked.

Self-immolation can be an extreme and public act of resistance that transfers a message of violence against the regime and their form of entrapment and that can be defined as biopower. Accordingly, biopower is the cause of Bouazizi's final act. This concept illustrates how self-immolation and other forms of suicide are used to escape structures of power that define the livelihood of individuals. Biopower defines human behaviour by declaring how to live. In Bouazizi's case, Biopower is the dire, immobile economic and political position he found himself. This biopower was the political apparatus set up by Ben Ali's regime, fertilised by corruption, authoritarianism and a fundamental lack of human liberty. Self-immolation presented him with a chance to reject this authoritarianism and while he could not control his own life, he was determined to define his own death. For people whose life has been defined for them, taking their own lives expresses resistance to reality. Death reinstates their power to be agents of their own destiny (Kassab, 2012).

As Bouazizi lit a match before he burned himself to death, he shouted his final words: 'How do you expect me to make a living?' (B. Simon, 2011). But why did the revolution spread so rapidly? Kassab's (2012) answer is: emotion, which is a necessary tool for those without a position of power to gain attention. Emotions are universal and this immaterial substance connects all human beings. By sacrificing himself, Bouazizi became a heroic symbol, the very expression and culture of freedom. Tunisia was transformed by his heart breaking act; emotional reactions generated solidarity and those in a similar position were affected profoundly and the rage spilled over borders. Here, emotions as an integral part of human social interaction had the power to change entire nations and construct the world. In

Tunisia and beyond, the pragmatic act of one individual, changed the face of the world through emotion (Kassab, 2012) and spread around with the help of modern technology.

According to Kassab (2012), the Arab revolutions were caused by emotional diffusion and raw human anger formed the uniting force that assembles oppressed youth populations. Nevertheless, methods of ICTs, such as Twitter and Facebook, transmitted the frustration and united people (Kassab, 2012). Fast Internet-based tools for information and communication have also become quite accessible and over 34 per cent of Tunisians have access to the Internet. The most active Internet users are urban and educated young people (Stepanova, 2011). Of those who participated in demonstrations, 94 per cent received information about the revolution from social media sides and 90 per cent said they used Facebook to organise protest or spread information about them (Huang, 2011). The passion lit by Bouazizi's flame, diffused naturally by human interaction and with the emergence of social networks and news media, the anger went viral, reached global media and played a central role in the revolutions (Kassab, 2012). With the help of social media, Bouazizi's story became influential and is now a part of Tunisian history and beyond (Mackey, 2011).

The most active internet users were central to the first anti-regime demonstrations that led to massive campaigns. Without the guidance of any formal structure, defined leadership nor the alignment with pre-existing political, ideological or civil society body – demonstrations originally started with a Facebook campaign (Arieff, 2012; Collins, 2011; Stepanova, 2011). It spawned numerous responses to protest against dictatorship and political corruption. The mass tide of protest underscored the powerful role of ICTs and social media networks, in the rapid collapse of the regime. The awakening pointed to a new phenomenon of mass political protest, accelerated by social media networks and their organisational and communicational facility (Stepanova, 2011).

The regime imposed a state of emergency. The police responded with harsh and violent crackdowns – which were recorded and shared instantly and fuelled the outrage. Over 200 people were killed and people were arrested protesters, such as journalists, opposition party members, and human rights advocates and some were abused during detention (Arieff, 2012; Carty, 2014). However, the effectiveness of ICTs was evident and they threatened the status quo when the regime started the counter-use of social media networks for propaganda purposes. The Tunisian authorities tried to block specific sites that coordinated protest actions (Stepanova, 2011). To avoid the constraints, young people distributed special memory sticks that allowed them anonymous access to the Internet and

to create hidden cyber communities. This highlighted the willingness of the young generation of Tunisia to object to the tyranny, as well as their exhaustion for their inability to express their political opinions openly. This frustration is said to be the reason why social media was such an important tool for young people. Perhaps because social media allows young people to overcome political repression, share their anger and unite (Shenker et al., 2011).

How the large and frustrated youth demography, the most active Internet users came together as political activists and used modern technology to capture and quickly transmit eyewitness accounts of domestic developments to the world was the method that was fundamental to the political changes: when it came to organising demonstrations and spreading information (Stepanova, 2011). After Bouazizi's act, video clips of the first protests were recorded on mobile phones and posted immediately on the Internet. The videos were shared widely on Facebook and 'Tunisia' showed up 329 million times on Twitter, reaching 26 million users. Eventually, the posts appeared as news stories on television. Clips of protests in towns across Tunisia began to appear online daily and Tunisians watched Bouazizi's funeral on Facebook. Less then a month later, on January 14th 2011, Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia and the regime collapsed (Arieff, 2012; Carty, 2014; Mackey, 2011).

2.3. From Autocracy to Islamism

During Ben Ali's rule, people were exposed to constant surveillance, harassment, and imprisonment. Corruption was widespread, torture was organised and freedom of association was mostly non-existent. The regime strictly controlled the media and manipulated the judicial system. Islamists played almost no political role in Tunisia, unlike other Arab countries. Ben Ali persuaded a brutal policy against the Islamist Ennahda party. Its members were charged of being involved in a violent movement, the party was demolished, many of its members were sent to exile or imprisoned and tortured. To justify his methods, Ben Ali used the 'Islamic threat' to assure national legitimacy and the support of the West. The electoral system also favoured Ben Ali's party: The Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD). Only selected parties were allowed to run for parliament and were granted a minority quota of seats for RCD to maintain majority. Despite an appearance of pluralism, the opposition parties had no impact in the legislative process (Paciello, 2011). The act of considerable welfare improvements, social policy was primarily a tool of legitimacy and power (Ben Romdhane, 2006). The combination of tyranny and socio-

economic improvements ensured adequate stability for the 23 years of Ben Ali's regime. The unsustainability of this 'Tunisian model' was revealed after the departure of Ben Ali, which left the country with difficult challenges that threatened the establishment of democracy (Paciello, 2011).

Continuing unrest characterised the early post-revolution phase, partially in response to the interim government's intention to maintain former members of RDC (Arieff, 2012; Murphy, 2013). An interim government was formed with the authorisation to lead the early phase of democratic establishment until the election of the Constituent Assembly. In this fragile environment, the opposition leaders from the last regime and civil society representatives were selected and lacked democratic legitimacy and political trust. After mass demonstrations, six ministers who served under Ben Ali announced their resignation (Paciello, 2011).

Beji Caid Essebsi headed the new interim government as Prime Minster and his appointment was seen as an improvement. He had served in various positions under Bourguiba and had distanced himself from Ben Ali, retiring from politics in 1994. Essebsi moved the transition in the right direction by embarking upon a wide range of reforms and building a national consensus. He issued an arrest warrant, charging Ben Ali for money laundering and drug trafficking, suspended Ben Ali's political police, released political prisoners, ended online and media restrictions, and took steps to obey international human rights treaties (Arieff, 2012; Carty, 2014; Paciello, 2011). However, the main players of the revolution, the youth, continued to demand a new, pure government – mistrusting the interim government of Essebsi, who is believed to belong to the old system (Paciello, 2011).

The Higher Commission for Political Reform was established to form a new electoral law that required ground-rules to elect a Constitutional Assembly with the role of preparing for elections and drafting a new constitution (Karoud, 2015; Murphy, 2013). The legal framework comprised of a Constituent Assembly of 217 members and seats spread across 33 constituencies. It intended to reverse political marginalisation of the south and for the first time, Tunisians abroad were able to vote. Besides, all lists were required a gender equality and to ensure at least one place for a person under 30 years of age (Murphy, 2013).

An independent electoral commission (ISIE) was established, endowed with obligations for organising and supervising the elections and ensuring the free, fair and transparent elections. Over 100 new legal parties joined the few Ben Ali's opposition parties. Murphy (2013) described the election discourse as somewhat unsophisticated and reduced to

disputes about whether or not Ennahda intended to shift the country into a new Islamic autocracy. Secularists fuelled fears that if Ennahda came into power, it would force women to wear hijab, ban beachwear and alcohol that ultimately would destroy tourism. However, Ennahda stated their commitment to pluralist democracy and maintaining women's rights. Surveys began to suggest that Ennahda would win up to 20 per cent of the vote and protests by Salafist groups grew and turned violent. Islamists claimed that the extreme secularists were using the media to 'impose' inappropriate culture for Muslims (Murphy, 2013). According to research, young people felt the discourse weight throughout the elections to be on 'women's rights', just used by political parties as one of their playing cards in their agenda, which included the youth card. They believed this discourse to be fake and an old propaganda method used by Ben Ali (British Council, 2013).

The elections for a Constitutional Assembly, held on 23 October 2011, were the official test for democratic development after the Arab Spring. The turnout rate was 52 per cent overall out of 86 per cent of registered voters (Murphy, 2013). Plausibly, the WB (2015) stressed the low youth participation to be a special concern. Only 48 per cent of youth 18-33 years old voted compared to 68 per cent of 48-63 year olds (Lefèvre, 2015). As the results came in, Ennahda had done considerably better than predicted, winning 41 per cent of the vote (89 seats) and was the largest block in the Assembly. Ennahda ran the most organised campaign and produced a comprehensive party policy with various commitments. Also, with a well-known history of political exclusion, the party was purely unconnected to Ben Ali's regime, they offered an appealing vision for the future and stated a political will to form a pluralist coalition government (Arieff, 2012; Murphy, 2013).

The socialist, pan-Arabic and secular Congress for the Republic (CPR) came second, winning 29 seats. Their leader, Moncef Marzouki, had spent years of exile and was willing to work with Ennahda (Murphy, 2013). An almost unknown party, Popular Petition, a conservative coalition, mysteriously came third in the polls with 26 seats. The secular Democratic Forum of Labour and Liberties (Ettakol) got 20 seats. The secular Progressive Democratic Party (PDP), an opposition party from Ben Ali's rule had done much worse than anticipated, winning only 16 seats. Though they had run an elitist and 'old-style' campaign and refused cooperation with Ennahda – appearing defensive of the extremist secularism of Ben Ali's regime (Arieff, 2012; Murphy, 2013). Additionally, 22 parties and independents won at least one seat each. Although the electoral law required gender equality, few parties listed women in top places, resulting in only 49 seats for women in the Assembly out of 217,

of whom the majority were Ennahda delegates (Arieff, 2012; British Council, 2013).

The elections proved to be a remarkable democratic achievement. They were judged to be 'free and fair' by a range of international election observation missions (Arieff, 2012; Murphy, 2013). Within 10 months, the country shifted from brutal autocratic rule to democratic elections. Political power moved from narrow and urban elitism to a more inclusive and broader coalition (Murphy, 2013). Following the elections, Ennahda formed a coalition with CPR and Ettakol. The Assembly delegates elected Ettakol's leader, Mustapha Ben Jaafar, as president of the Assembly and the CPR leader, Marzouki as President of Tunisia. Marzouki assigned Ennahda's Leader, Hamadi Jebali, as Prime Minister – which is the most powerful position of those three (Arieff, 2012).

The rise of Ennahda, resulted in the challenge of severe political polarisation, a tension between Islamists and secularists, that has and continues to dominate the various stages of the transition (Karoud, 2015; Lefèvre, 2015). In the book *After the Arab Spring: How the Islamist Hijacked the Middle East Revolt*, Bradley (2012, p. 17) described this political transition as the 'death of Tunisia's secularism'. Reflecting an extensive study on the revolutionary promise and youth perceptions where young Tunisians still considered politics a restrictively elite domain. They felt '…persistently marginalised in the political process and viewed the older generation as reaping the benefits of the youth-driven revolution they hijacked and steered of course' (British Council, 2013, p. 7). Mirroring the first independent qualitative research after the revolution on public opinion of political issues: *Voices of a Revolution: Conversations with Tunisia's Youth* (Collins, 2011) also revealed that some youth denied there even was a revolution, the democratic transition was unclear to them and they felt excluded from the closed, elite-led process (British Council, 2013; Collins, 2011). Tunisian youth felt betrayed after paying for the revolution with their lives and the benefits were taken from them. The participants in the study thought youth leadership was limited by the older generations that only recruit youth to gain power. Furthermore, those young Tunisians believed there to be two conflicting forces: one that is trying to rebuild Tunisia from scratch and other that is just trying to dress the old regime in a new type of clothing. Moreover, the Islamism-secular polarisation discourse was observable in student politics and the participants in the study did not like how people had been divided in two categories. In the middle of this politically divided climate, young people opt for informal political participation within a civil society structure that has no structure (British Council, 2013).

2.4. Transition to Democracy

Throughout the stages of writing the constitution, Tunisia experienced sharp political and ideological conflicts. During this period, Tunisians experienced a setback in women's rights and feared that Islamists would base the laws on Sharia. Article 28 (the most debated one) of the first draft of the constitution stipulated that women are 'complementary to men' and the wording was believed to be Ennahda's attempt to destroy women's rights: to shift the secular strategy from women's empowerment to marginalising women (British Council, 2013). The UN (2012) Working Group on discrimination against women raised the concern and thousands of Tunisians filled the streets protesting, until a new version of the draft was released with no mention of women as 'complements of men' (British Council, 2013).

Continuing conflicts about the constitution got violent, deepened polarisation between the two opposing sides and divided the entire society. Tunisia came to a point where the democratic process was in danger as a result of constant disputes, political tension, social unrest, and even murders and the country was on the edge of a civil war – until civil society took over and launched a 'National Dialogue'. The effort was jointly guided by the Tunisian League for the Defence of Human Rights, Union of Industry, Commerce, and Handicrafts, the Labour Union, and the National Lawyers Association. The Dialogue called for the participation of all political parties to create and agree to a road map to produce a new constitution. After negotiations, supervised by the Dialogue, the government overcame all the obstacles and ratified the new constitution on 26 January 2014 (Karoud, 2015).

Notwithstanding the atmosphere of consensus that led to the ability to implement elections, it visibly showed the glaring polarisation that illustrates Tunisian politics (Karoud, 2015). The inability of the many small secular parties to cooperate and unite in one list evidently prevented secularists from being competitive (Murphy, 2013). The respond to the problem was however a greater threat of establishing a pluralist political system. Since 2012, Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes (Tunisia's Call) have been the two conflicting forces that dominate Tunisian politics. Nidaa Tounes is a combination of members of the former Constitutional Assembly, trade unionists, smaller leftists parties and civil society organisations (CSOs) (Karoud, 2015). Lead by Essebsi, Nidaa Tounes was established to unite secularists to a single platform to provide a realistic competitor to Ennahda (Lefèvre, 2015).

The 2014 elections were held between 26 October and 21 December and millions of Tunisians went to elect their lawmakers and the President of the Republic. The overall turnout in the legislative elections 27 October was 68.36 per cent of registered voters. Nidaa Tounes won 40 per cent and Ennahda got 32 per cent of the votes. Despite the overwhelming domination of the two conflicting forces, a number of smaller powers got seats in parliament. A coalition of leftist parties, the Popular Front attained 7 per cent of the seats. The Free Patriotic Union (UPL) obtained 7 per cent and the liberal Afek Tounes party, took 4 per cent of the seats (Karoud, 2015). The representation of women in parliament is now 31.3 per cent (IPU, 2015) and the percentage of young people under the age of 30 is 6.4 (IPU, 2016). However, In both rounds of the presidential elections, 60 per cent of the electorate voted and 27 candidates ran for the first round. In the second round, Essebsi of Nidaa Tounes won 56 per cent of votes and Marzouki of Ennahda lost with 44 per cent. The presidential elections demonstrated the deep political polarisation that has divided society in two throughout the transitional period. Essebsi, was supported by those that wanted to diminish the power Ennahda and he won most votes from the north as well as a majority of women. Marzouki, was supported by those against the return of the old regime and he won the majority of votes coming from the south and rural areas. This outcome crystallised the results of the parliamentary elections (Karoud, 2015).

The low youth participation is another key outcome of both elections. The youth turnout in 2011 was already much lower than expected, given their central role in the revolution. Figures suggest that 80 per cent of young Tunisians decided to boycott the 2014 elections, which means more than a half decrease compared to the youth participation in 2011. Many young people voted for Ennahda in 2011 but were subsequently disappointed with their performance and broken promises. The disconnection with youth grew greater when Ennahda voted against a proposed law for 'political exclusion' that was supposed to prevent former members of Ben Ali's regime (such as Essebsi) from power. Even though Ennahda's decision was based on a vision to save the country from turmoil, it was perceived as a betrayal of the revolution (British Council, 2013; Lefèvre, 2015).

Despite the low youth turnout, the elections were considered free and fair by election observers and the series of achievements through the overall process confirmed a peaceful transition, proving the possibility for a country like Tunisia to establish a democratic political system despite the Arab culture (Karoud, 2015). This was especially acknowledged globally when the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the National Dialogue 'for

decisive contribution to building a pluralistic democracy in Tunisia in the wake of the revolution' and forcing a peaceful political process by establishing an alternative that was instrumental in enabling the country to establish a constitution, guaranteeing fundamental rights (Nobel Prize, 2015).

As stated in to Nobel Prize announcement (2015), the prize was an encouragement to the citizens of Tunisia, who despite major social, economic and serious security challenges have laid the groundwork which is hoped to serve as an example for other countries to follow. However, the challenge of polarisation encompasses all groups of Tunisian society, in a situation of rising violence and religious extremism (Karoud, 2015; Nobel Prize, 2015). Since the revolution, the country has been facing growing terrorist threats. The emergency was evident after the shocking March 2015 attack on the Bardo museum, which occurred during fieldwork for this study. Three militants took hostages and 21 people, mostly Europeans were killed and around 50 were injured. Tunisia was hit by another shock in June 2015, when a gunman massacred 38 tourists on holiday in Sousse (Gartenstein-Ross & Moreng, 2015) These attacks, perpetrated by jihadists affiliated with ISIS who claimed responsibility, may signal a rising battle in Tunisia between ISIS and al-Qaida according to Gartenstein-Ross and Moreng (2015).

Another critical dilemma is the capability of the political elites to change the phenomenon of polarisation into a developer for triumphing the objectives of the revolution: 'freedom and dignity' or in other words: create jobs; respond to strikes; reduce the socioeconomic gap between social groups; implement effective counter-terrorism strategies and confirm reforms to judicial, educational and taxation systems. Continued polarisation can only waste the energy of the country's resources while politicians are disputing over the identity of society (Karoud, 2015; RCSS, 2015).

Tension has already been growing inside Nidaa Tounes since early 2015. In January this year (2016), 16 members of the parliamentary block of Nidaa Tounes resigned over a conflict concerning Essebsi's son, Hafedh Caid Essebsi. The conflict resulted in a deep split within the party after its secretary general and one of the founders of the party, Mohsen Mourzouk, publicly accused Essebsi's son of having carried out a coup. Mourzouk announced that he would form a new political movement (Amara, 2016). Mass resignations continued into protest against Essebsi's son being party chief, 28 MPs in total have resigned, including 42 board members of the party (Gall & Samti, 2016). The coalition still governs, but the opposition, Ennahda became the majority in parliament (Boukhayatia, 2016).

The disappointment after the 2011 elections and the power struggles within Nidaa Tounes are seemingly not helping Tunisia's current situation. At times, during the revolutionary urge, Tunisia's youth has become violent. For instance, a youth network established during the revolution to 'protect' neighbourhoods and who were supporters of Ennahda before the elections in 2011 has turned into a lobby-group pressuring and sometimes intimidating decision makers into 'fulfilling the demands of the revolution' (Lefèvre, 2015, p. 309). On top of a very unlikable political environment and like the youth turnout suggests, young people are very unsatisfied, with a 2014 Pew research Center poll showing that only 13 per cent were 'satisfied with the country's direction'. Moreover, 30 per cent believe that the system of government 'doesn't matter' and many feel that life was better during Ben Ali's rule (Zoubir, 2015). Furthermore, the key finding of an extensive study led by the WB (2014b) revealed that only 8.8 per cent of rural Tunisian youth trust the political system, compared to 31.1 per cent of urban youth. They also expressed little trust in the press and the police, but religious organisations received the highest trust from youth, or up to 80 per cent. The same study found that very few are active in civil society (only 3 per cent of rural youth) despite the rising CSOs in Tunisia. Also, very few engage in any form of political participation, except for protesting, paralleling the disconnection between the young people and the political domain (World Bank, 2014b).

According to Marks (2013), young Tunisians assert that political parties have failed to include youth in processes of decision-making. Across the political spectrum, from young leftist communities to young jihadi Salafis, they speak of betrayal and feel neglected by politicians. They are not only just frustrated with an older generation of political actors perceived as useless and neglectful, but also with the heavily centralised state power. The desperation and discontent that drove many young people to protest in the early weeks of the revolution are still present. However, I aim to examine how Tunisian youth leaders view the consequences of the revolution, youth participation and the future of Tunisia as a democratic state.

3. Methodology

This chapter maps out the methodological approach of this research. First, I describe the research methods used and the participant recruitment process. I lay out how the research was conducted; preparation, entering the field, collection of data and data analysis. I situated myself as a researcher in Tunisia and the main challenges I faced, such as language barriers and ethical considerations, are discussed.

3.1. Research Methods

The nature of the topic required qualitative research, which is normally used for providing an in-depth understanding of the topic that reflects the viewpoints of the study population. Qualitative research can be conducted to understand and explain people's views, opinions, behaviour, beliefs, and emotions from their perspective and to understand processes, such as how people make decisions. It can also be conducted to give a voice to issues of a certain group, which is what I aimed to do (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2010).

Political Ethnography

The ethnographic approach is the oldest of the qualitative methods and is the heart of social anthropology as an academic discipline. Traditionally, anthropologists studied foreign lands, but new forms of modern literature based on similar approaches emerged in the developed world later on (M. B. Davies, 2007). To understand ethnography Joseph, Mahler and Ayero (2007) adopted one simple and agreed-upon definition:

> [Ethnography is a] social research based on the close-up, on-the-ground observation of people and institutions in real time and space, in which the investigator embeds herself near (or within) the phenomenon so as to detect how and why agents on the scene act, think and feel the way they do (Wacquant, 2003, p. 5).

In recent years, some scholars of politics have adopted the ethnographic discipline. In *Political Ethnography*, Schatz (2009) highlighted the potential of political ethnography for the future and demonstrated how the discipline is uniquely suited to studying politics. According to him, ethnographic research should play a central role in the field by providing new angles to political opinion, causality, and power (Schatz, 2009). Although, the relevance of the ethnographic craft is increasing within sociology, Auyero and Joseph (2007) are

surprised that politics remain understudied by ethnographers. They believe that political parties, social movements, NGOs (Non-governmental Organisations) and other forms of political action have not been included on the agenda and it is time for politics to get ethnographic attention. Auyero and Joseph (2007) claimed that ethnography is exceptionally equipped to look microscopically at the practice of politics. By concentrating almost exclusively on quantitative methods, political researchers have overlooked a significant aspect of the details, complexities and hidden meanings: the on going reality of politics, pace of political action, texture of political life, and dilemmas of political actors. According to Auyero and Joseph (2007), the passion and scarifies of politics have been cast into the shadows by the domination of quantitative methods. They do not believe that ethnography is the only way of studying politics, but they think the ethnographic microscope serves to capture large-scale political transformations that have ground-level sources and effects (Joseph et al., 2007). Some scholars (Geertz, 1973; Joseph et al., 2007; Ortner, 2006) maintained that ethnography provides the 'thickest' form of political information.

I favoured ethnography to be the most relevant approach. Considering the nature of my topic and the purpose of my research; to go beyond statistics and provide contextual meaning – I felt the need to look at it with a microscope. My research is therefore based on ethnography and conceptualised within the epistemological assumption of constructivism and interpretive approach. When conducting ethnography, the researcher typically wishes to understand the economic, social and cultural context in the field he or she enters: a holistic picture of the community itself. The aim is to understand the world from the perspective of the study community and that is referred to as the 'insider' or 'emic' perspective of the interpretive approach (Hennink et al., 2010). Interpretivism recognises reality as socially constructed since experiences are subjective and appear within personal, social, cultural, and historical contexts (Snape & Spencer, 2003). In other words: no truth is waiting for us to discover, all meaning is constructed and individuals construct meaning differently (Crotty, 1998). Since I aimed to raise the voices of young Tunisians and address their issues, I needed their emic view on the research issue, which is referred to as 'Verstehen'. That means to understand the life of participants, from their perspective, in their context and using their own words (Snape & Spencer, 2003).

I did not have a theory to test. With knowledge on the subject, the data led me to the theories. This type of research does not start with a theory, it develops a theory or patterns of meaning (Creswell, 2012). However, Ethnographers often combine data obtained through

various methods (M. B. Davies, 2007). I used existing knowledge from academic journals and books as well as reports, websites and news articles. My personal contribution was obtained using the methods of participant observation, semi-structured interviews and informal conversations.

Interviews and Conversations

Interviews are the most popular form of data collection in sociology and Esterberg (2002) described interviewing as the heart of social research. The types of interviews vary according to the level of control applied by the researcher. They can be structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Esterberg, 2002). Fife (2005) described a semi-structured interview as an attempt to control what information is gathered without using closed-ended questions or forcing people to respond, rather than to initiate information. Generally, ethnographic researchers ask open-ended questions with semi-structured or unstructured methods to discuss specific topics in depth (Fife, 2005).

The primary method I used to collect data was audio-recorded, in-depth, semi-structured interviews, using the art of open-ended questions where the participant can interpret the question and take it anywhere he or she prefers (Fife, 2005). This method is used when the researcher seeks to capture individual voices, emphasising the purpose of capturing comprehensive insight into the subject from the view of the participant (Hennink et al., 2010). Since I aimed to make the voices of young Tunisians to be heard and to address their issues in their social context, I considered this method to be the most relevant for this study.

I was aware that semi-structured interviews would not work with every type of person in every research context and additionally interviewing young people would probably be more challenging. Fife (2005) proposed the best way to attempt to construct a standard interview schedule, which can then be modified as needed for each type of social group. Before I entered the field for collection, I had several Skype meetings with Tunisians that I know from my previous visits. They helped me to prepare my fieldwork and gave me feedback on my research tools. It is difficult to predict how participants will interpret the questions, especially when they speak another language (Hennink et al., 2010). Hence, I conducted three pilot interviews via Skype to make sure that my questions were relevant. After the pilot-test, I revised my interview guide since my pilot participants suggested other

questions that I had not considered and I rephrased some questions for easier understanding.

Esterberg (2002) pointed out that during the process of data gathering, researchers naturally ask questions about the on-going action and gather data informally. In my case, I had a number of such general conversations and I took written notes. Within an ethnographic fieldwork approach, methods are often combined (Hennink et al., 2010). Many researchers combine participant observation with in-depth interviews and during that process the researcher normally engages in informal conversations (Esterberg, 2002).

Participant Observation

According to Davies (2007), the researcher's awareness and understanding of the context of interviews needs to be developed on multiple levels. Researchers must have necessary knowledge of the underlying cultural meanings in the study community. For many ethnographers, this society is not their own and hence they usually require a period of participant observation before interviewing (C. A. Davies, 2007).

Historically, ethnography developed to understand people's views of life and their everyday experiences. To do this, participation observation is the core method (Crang & Cook, 2007). Crang and Cook (2007, p. 37) suggested that the best single phrase to describe participant observation is 'deep hanging out'. The participant observation method falls under interpretivism and can be defined as: 'the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the research setting' (Schensul, 1999, p. 91).

I used participant observation to gain a broader picture of my subject, to get in touch with potential interviewees and study their culture. I therefore participated in several activities and spent most of my time 'hanging out' with my participants, to gain more understanding of social norms and meanings. I also observed in order to provide context to my study: of the daily lives of my study population through observation of the social setting. However, the level of participation can vary between complete observation to complete invisibility. In other words, between 'going native' to using a hidden video camera (Hennink et al., 2010). I used mixed levels of participant observation; during data gathering, by 'hanging out' I was included as 'one of them' amongst a group of friends. I was a full participant in some cultural activities, but an observer only during formal events.

Recruitment of Participants

To fulfil its purpose, the research required a sample group of participants with certain characteristics, who are 'information-rich' and share a particular experience. Accordingly, I used the 'purposive' recruitment method, which means that I selected participants 'on purpose' by clearly defining the study population (Esterberg, 2002; Hennink et al., 2010).

The main characteristic that defines the study population is 'youth leadership'. My target group was young Tunisians in leading positions; in leading roles within political parties and/or leading members of the civil society. Those individuals were considered to be the most relevant for this study because of five main reasons:

1. They were the group most likely to benefit from this research and most willing to cooperate - as they are stakeholders;
2. Their probability to be directly or indirectly connected to the political arena;
3. Their shared experience of observing their society changing from dictatorship to democracy;
4. Their shared interest in politics and awareness of current affairs;
5. They were rich of information that was valuable for this study.

The purposive method of recruitment is also 'deliberate' and seeks a 'diverse range of participants, who can provide a variety of experiences on the study topic' (Hennink et al., 2010, p. 85). I ensured the diversity of my participants in five ways:

1. They originally came from different areas in Tunisia: Both urban and rural areas, from eight different cities/areas in total;
2. They work for/support different political parties/ideologies of thought/action: They have been/are associated with six different political parties. Some were not associated with any political party, but were active within civil society;
3. They had different leadership roles: Members of parliament, board members of political parties, leaders of youth councils, leaders of student unions and, leaders within NGOs. I included journalists who could also be defined as leading activists.
4. I selected them with a special consideration for gender balance: 14 participated in total, eight males and six females. It was challenging to get females to participate while males often asked to be interviewed.

5. Age diversity within the definition of youth (18-35): My youngest participant was 22 years old and the oldest one was 35. I tried to recruit younger participants without success.

Suitable recruitment strategies are influenced by the characteristics of the study population (Hennink et al., 2010). As described above, I was not entering my study community for the first time and I had already built a close relationship with people that fell under the definition of my study population. Therefore, the recruitment process went rather smoothly. I used the common ethnographic strategy of *gatekeeper* strategy to aid the recruitment process. Gatekeepers are frequently local leaders, knowledgeable about the characteristic of community members and are capable to encourage members of the study population to participate (Hennink et al., 2010). I requested a former colleague who is a local political youth leader that met the criteria to serve the role and he assisted me to recruit the majority of my participants.

Additionally, I used *formal networks* and *snowball recruitment* or *chain sampling* as sub-strategies. Using formal networks, essentially the researcher considers where the study population gathers to use forums or specific types of events to recruit (Hennink et al., 2010). In order to observe and recruit people from different areas, I attended a conference outside the capital where young people from different areas gathered. I also managed to get in touch with relevant people by using the snowball method which involves asking a participant to refer the researcher to another person that meets the criteria (Hennink et al., 2010). I used this strategy in order to get in touch with people from other political parties.

3.2. Data Collection

Through the experience of being an international election observer in October 2014 and November 2014 in Tunisia, I gained some context to the subject for the upcoming fieldwork. It was beneficial for this study having observed the social environment, the structure of the election procedure and most importantly the presence of youth and their role within the process. During the time as observer, I had many conversations with locals concerning my eventual research topic. I also did social networking and developed friendships with locals while I was there. Therefore, I can easily argue that I already obtained some description of the social setting before I travelled for the third time: for the actual data collection (Hennink et al., 2010).

I entered the field for data collection for the MA thesis in the beginning of March 2015 and I gathered data for almost a month. When I landed in Tunisia, I was well prepared and well connected with individuals who were more than willing to assist me. They had already done some pre-work, so I could start gathering data as soon as I arrived. The study was mostly undertaken in Tunis, the capital of Tunisia where I was based. I also travelled to two other cities where I did some interviews and wrote field notes.

According to Davies (2007), as an ethnographic researcher, the most important aspect that needs to be considered is how researchers present themselves. Silverman (2006) maintained that researchers can change the situation with their company and the decision of what role should be adopted is therefore important. The researcher has to achieve a great degree of closeness to the participants and should want to be accepted by them as somebody they are prepared to talk to openly about sensitive personal matters (M. B. Davies, 2007). Considering the nature of my target group; young people in leading positions, it was apparent to me that I had to focus on presenting myself as an equal to my participants and be professionally efficient at the same time. I found that my position of being their peer and a stakeholder of the same issue to be helpful, as I was able to demonstrate that I was somebody whom they could feel comfortable sharing their personal experiences with (M. B. Davies, 2007).

Silverman (2006, p. 84) also noted that '[y]our gender in relation to the gender of the people you are studying may turn out to be very important in relation to how you are defined and, therefore, what you find out'. I found it harder to recruit females to this study and it grabbed my attention when my assistant was scheduling an interview with a female and had to call her fiancée first to get his permission. Also, while interviewing a female once, she took my hand and moved herself closer to me while she was discussing gender based issues. Due to gender, I might have been able to recruit and gather information that I would otherwise not have gained.

I attempted to get on with everyone as a sympathetic and non-judgmental listener, like Crang and Cook (2007) suggested. Furthermore, I also acknowledged the importance of recognising power relations between the researcher and the participants and how power dynamics can influence the outcome of research. In order to minimise power imbalances during the research process, I practised reflexivity to uncover the directions of power (Anyan, 2013). The development of trust between the researcher and the participant is often called developing a 'rapport'. Traditional interview literature suggests that researchers need

to develop enough rapport to get people to talk to them, but not so much that they actually develop friendships with the participants or disclose too much about themselves - to avoid bias. Logically, developing relationships across social boundaries is complex. If the researcher is similar to their participants in crucial ways this can be an important part of gaining access to them and presenting an appearance of similarity can aid the development of a rapport – as in my case (Esterberg, 2002). My assistant played an important role by providing me access to my study community, encouraging their participation, informing me about cultural norms and advocating for my research. He played a significant role in the creation of trust between the participants and myself.

According to Esterberg (2002), the researcher's quality shapes what can be seen in the field setting, personal qualities therefore play a big part in the research process and interpersonal skills are crucial to being a good interviewer. I was aware that people's reaction to me as a researcher would impact my research and therefore I focused on being friendly and open to meeting new people. Between interviews, I wrote field notes and I spent most of my time with locals. For example, I accepted all invitations that allowed me to participate in their lives in order to gain as much contextual understanding of their culture and social situation. I became integrated as a member of a group of young people that are active and involved in politics. I would 'hang out' with them as much as I could and I interviewed several of them. I travelled out of the city over a weekend to attend a youth conference with them. I travelled to another city where I was invited for dinner and I spent a whole day with a Tunisian family. This group of youth leaders also invited me with them to the theatre, I attended a football match with them, I celebrated the national day with them, I went with them to the city center on the World Down Syndrome Day and I attended all social gatherings they invited me to. However, I did not participate in the manifestations relating to the terrorist attack that occurred in Bardo while I was there. Considering the warnings to foreigners in the country, I did not risk going out in public and crowded areas.

My biggest challenge during the data collection was the language barrier and I was constantly asking for translation whilst 'hanging-out'. An in-depth interview typically last no longer than 90 minutes, considering how difficult it can be to remain focused during an intense interview (Hennink et al., 2010). Due to the language barrier, some of my interviews took more time. The shortest was around an hour, but the longest was around four hours. As a non-native ethnographic researcher, Chen (2011) argued my position to be weaker than the native speaking participant. The spoken language of the researcher and participant

affect the power dynamics in dialogues and the research as whole (Chen, 2011). In total, 14 participated in the study. I reached saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967): a point when the information starts to repeat itself, after 16 audio-recorded interviews and after speaking twice with two of my participants.

Since my language skills in participants' first and second language, Arabic and French is limited and English is their third language, I always had an interpreter with me. I gave my participants the option of speaking in the language they felt most comfortable with. Eight interviews were conducted in English, most of them without any support from the interpreter, but several of my participants used the interpreter to translate a few words. The other interviews were undertaken in either Arabic or French where I relied only on my interpreter's translation. It is essential to consider some of the implications and limitations of the process of translation and the use of an interpreter because some levels of meaning can be lost in translation. Although I shared the English language with some of my participants, it is easy to assume a congruence of meanings which do not necessarily exist. A language cannot be fully explicated in another, so much of what is taken for granted by a native speaker is omitted or explained so superficially as to 'appear meaningless' (C. A. Davies, 2007, p. 77). Researchers who work through interpreters thus 'add a second level – the translator's – of theoretical assumptions' which filter the voice of the participant according to Davies (2007, p. 113). Furthermore, researchers that use interpreters need to acknowledge their dependence on another person's words and perspective (C. A. Davies, 2007). Sometimes when I asked for further explanations of what my participant was trying to express, my interpreter explained without asking my participant for example. Generally during interviews, the main difficulties faced by the researcher, are either incomplete and/or incorrect answers which is an even bigger challenge when it comes to a language barrier (C. A. Davies, 2007).

However, Davies (2007) noted that experience in language learning can become important data, it helps to establish a rapport and provides a reason to interact with people. I started learning Arabic during my first visit to Tunisia as I was forced to learn the basics to communicate with the children that I was working with. During the actual data gathering, I got a more positive reaction from locals when I greeted them in Arabic and people appreciated my efforts. It made the environment more cheerful and people found it funny when I told them *rabi ykhalik* (god protects you), a phrase they often use as a way of expressing their appreciation – they became more friendly and open. I truly realised how

important it is to make an effort to learn the language to be 'let in' or to be accepted. Despite these positive aspects, I recognise all the complexities of languages as the main limitation of this study, which fairly calls into question the quality of my data.

3.3. Data Analysis

After having considered different approaches to analyse qualitative data, I decided to adopt the flexible principles and the guidelines of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) grounded theory. Silverman (2006) described the prominence of the approach as the most influential in ethnographic research. However, I followed the framework of the analytical cycle presented by Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2010), which acknowledges the cyclical nature of the qualitative research process and is based on the principles of grounded theory and an inductive approach. According to them, grounded theory is '…well suited to understanding human behaviour, and identifying social processes and cultural norms' (Hennink et al., 2010, p. 206). Grounded theory has two different approaches: Glaserian (etic) and Straussian (emic). The Straussian approach is based on constructivism, rooted in an interpretive tradition and is based on the emic position. By using this position, I created knowledge by using perspectives, values and understanding of the social realities of my participants (Taghipour, 2014). Although I emphasised the constructivist approach, I acknowledged the interplay between inductive and deductive reasoning whilst analysing the data (Hennink et al., 2010).

The methods I used for data analysis generated textual data in the form of written transcripts for grounded theory that focused on producing a word-for-word replica of an interview/discussion, including elements of speech that helped to interpret the meaning of what is said (Hennink et al., 2010). I used the research computer program Atlas.ti to manage and analyse my data systematically. I identified a broad range of issues, topics, ideas and opinions raised in the data. I categorised them with code names/definitions to label segments of text where the specific issue was discussed until I reached saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967); when no more relevant concepts could be identified. Finally, I conducted a macro-level analysis. I identified a linkage between codes across data and created code families. I merged the families under umbrellas of broader concepts until I noticed patterns that I could conceptualise to answer my research questions (Hennink et al., 2010).

3.4. Ethical Concerns

Qualitative research does unquestionably pose a risk of harm, such as psychological distress, especially when answering sensitive questions (Mutenherwa & Wassenaar, 2014). Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2010) suggested that researchers should develop their own sense of whether issues are ethical or not, using their own judgement and the three core ethical principles for the conduct of research: respect for persons, beneficence and justice - as articulated in the *Belmont Report*, embodying frameworks for evaluating research ethics (Hennink et al., 2010; Mutenherwa & Wassenaar, 2014). These induce important considerations of informed consent, self-determination, minimisation of harm, anonymity and confidentiality. Throughout the data collection I abided by my home university's Code of Research Ethics (Háskóli Íslands, 2014).

I acknowledged my ethical responsibility throughout the research process and I took the ethical issues and challenges I faced seriously. I provided the participants with information about the research in order for them to make a voluntary decision to participate. Before the participants agreed to participate they all received a short explanation about the research. Before each interview, I introduced myself and briefly explained the content of the research and its purpose. Then I handed out a written information to them with a broader description about the research, including that I would protect their identity.

I have done my best to avoid harming the participants or putting them in any kind of risk. I guaranteed anonymity and kept the data confidential at all times. I highlighted the participants' right to determine their own participation, including the right to refuse to participate at any time (Hennink et al., 2010). The written information stated that the participant was free to quit at any time and was not obligated to answer all of the questions. I gave all my participants my name and contact information, in case they decided that they did not want to be included in the results later during the research process. I then asked for their permission to use audio recording, and I explained how I intended to use the recording and that it would be destroyed after the data analysis. I offered the participants a translation if the written information in either Arabic or French to make sure that it was understandable to the participants before I began each interview.

The study population was always kept informed of my research purpose. For example, when I attended a conference, the first speaker who opened the conference gave

me a warm welcome, introduced me to everyone present, explained that I was observing for research, the purpose of the research, and that I would be sharing the results with them. I understood and I got the chance to thank them for inviting me. In this way, I managed to establish a rapport and ethically everyone present knew what I was doing and I was more than just accepted.

I concentrated on being culturally sensitive and showing respect and willingness to learn. During my time in the field, I developed close friendships with the participants and personal feelings and sensitive experiences were shared with me that did not necessarily relate to my subject directly, but I kept everything confidential. The subsequent closeness in the relationships between me and the participants demanded careful ethical consideration of 'doing no harm', by keeping the acquired information secured (Hennink et al., 2010). I am providing stories and information on political opinions, that some of my participants would not reveal openly. Those opinions are often very critical and against some political parties and/or the government. To protect my participants, I will not reveal where they come from and I use pseudonyms when I refer to them in the presentation of my results (Wiles, Crow, Heath, & Charles, 2008). During the data analysis, the consideration of ethical issues continue and researchers need to pay attention to ethical issues in making data anonymous prior to the analysis (Hennink et al., 2010). Before I present the results, it is important to note that I removed all information that might identify the participants, both directly and indirectly.

4. Results

The findings of the research are presented in this chapter and are based on field notes and interviews with my participants, who can all be defined as 'youth leaders'. The research was conducted in Tunisia, as already mentioned, and is based on a qualitative methodology. I acknowledge that the results reflect my interpretation of the described experience of my informants. These findings should not be used to generalise similar or different experiences. Notwithstanding, the results could apply to other circumstances.

The perceptions of Tunisian youth leaders on the democratic transition are the main theme of this study, whilst considering their position and participation in the process. The first section in this chapter is about their experience of the revolution. The second section examines their political involvement and the third section reflects on limitations to participate. The fourth section captures their views on the consequences of the revolution. The fifth section reflects their opinions on the democratic transition after the elections in 2014 and the final section considers solutions and future predictions

4.1. Experiencing the Revolution

In order to comprehend how the participants view the consequences of the revolution, this section describes how they experienced the uprising, their participation in the revolution, motivations to protest and what they expected after the revolution.

4.1.1. Protesting and Protecting

Most of the participants did not see the revolution coming. Some of them never even felt like Tunisia had any problems. Myriam said for example: 'I didn't know anything, my family is not a political family, we are just normal and we had no problems with Ben Ali'. Most of the youth leaders described themselves as being in total shock. Ahmed thinks it was hard to remember those days and when he thinks back in time he only sees people crying and yelling, beaten up and killed. 'I was scared and I cried for my country,' he explained.

The majority of the youth leaders who took part in this study participated directly in the revolution. The females participated less and more indirectly through the internet. Where Mohamed protested, he never saw women and said it was due to how violent and

dangerous it was. According to Mohamed, the majority were teenage boys ranging from 14 to 16 years of age, who accounted for around 60 or 70 per cent of all protesters in his neighbourhood.

Adel is an exception to the majority and did not support the revolution. He could not participate because his father was working with Ben Ali. However, the only thing that he was thinking about was to protect his house and family. Those who were not from the capital went back to their homes to stay with their families for safety reasons. Some of them described their roles to be protecting their homes and nearest neighbourhoods. Jasser described his role in the revolution to be protecting governmental institutions, because 'people were trying to burn them'. He did not care about the revolution, he was only thinking about how to protect his country. The youth leaders explained that Tunisians were not used to seeing this kind of chaos, with people fighting and stealing. Ahmed felt like his country was collapsing and did not care if the regime was breaking down or not. The only thing he cared about was that the country would recover and that it would be a safe place to live in again. The day before Ben Ali fled the country, there was no security and they experienced anarchy.

During the time they were trying to deal with all the chaos, they attended manifestations. Ali managed to explain in detail how he participated and supported the revolution:

> My first activity was to interact on Facebook, I used Facebook a lot. It was like a nightmare to follow the revolution on Facebook, watching all the videos with people protesting all over the country and people being killed. I started participating actively in demonstrations and I recorded and uploaded videos of protesters. I was yelling for hours…I even fought with the police.

While Ali fought directly with the police, Mohamed used stones to defend himself. Mohamed said that he did not fight with the police directly, because 'they had guns, teargas and stuff, so I just used stones as a weapon, like the Palestinians in Gaza'. Mohamed described his participation in the revolution like a 'war against the police'. People gathered in front of the police stations in all cities in Tunisia on the first day of the revolution, and so did he. The police stations were surrounded by people and Mohamed explained the reason to be 'because the police stations were like the symbol of the dictatorship'.

Several of the participants were the main organisers of the demonstrations, including Ahmed. In his first speech he emphasised that 'the old Tunisia is gone and we, the young people need to build a new one'. He underlined that the young people should have

something to say about the country they lived in and make decisions for themselves. Further he said 'I just wanted peace and freedom, and if I need to fight for it, I will do it and in a peaceful way'.

4.1.2. Motivations to Protest

The factors that drove my participants out to demonstrate varied from dissatisfaction with unemployment, exhaustion of Ben Ali's molesting rule, lack of freedom and access to basic needs. However, Ahmed for example had a special reason for his motivation that concerned his political participation before the revolution. He was active within Ben Ali's political party, as were some of my other participants. He was aware of the corruption and felt like he could not do anything about it. However, as soon as society started protesting against Ben Ali, Ahmed was out. The reason why he was so active protesting was because of his experience of working for Ben Ali's party. He felt like something new was coming, a change for the better and he wanted to be a part of it. However, Ahmed faced challenges because he used to belong to the old regime, therefore people did not trust him in the beginning. However, Ahmed described how he gained trust with his motivation to end the corruption that he witnessed himself while working for Ben Ali's party. There he saw how he did not want his country to be and he could finally expose all that in his speeches to the protesters.

In contrast, Mohamed expounded how his motivation to protest was driven by his anger because of all the murders of innocent people. He explained: 'Three days before the revolution the dictator made a speech and I was not satisfied with that speech. I wasn't because he was trying to calm us, saying like "It is going to be okay, we will open Facebook"'. They opened the access to Facebook two days before the revolution, so Tunisians could finally share their frustration online again and many people were satisfied with that. But Mohamed was not and he was angry that people were satisfied, because 'people were killed and they did not die for the sake of Facebook'.

4.1.3. Expectations

Most of my participants linked their expectations of the revolution with disappointment. But, when I asked Hanna she simply responded: 'I just wanted democracy and after that I believe we can manage the rest'. Jamel however had various expectations, such as defined political and economic improvements within three years after the revolution, as presented by Marzouki. Jamel also expected that the interim government would be selected by the general public, not by the old regime. Habib was very disappointed after the elections in

2011. He wanted to have seen more parties taking seats in parliament and said 'I just wanted all the parties to have something to say and I did not expect the political arena to be like this, carried out by the Islamists'. When I asked Adel about his expectations he only said that he had feared that the Islamic party would win the elections in 2011 and that the country would not stabilise.

In Ahmed's opinion the old regime had some advantages. 'Ben Ali did some wrong things, but he also did good things. I was expecting to keep the good things, but to change the bad things of the old regime' he said, since the issue with the old regime was that there was only one political party. Therefore, Ahmed was expecting democracy, freedom of speech, liberty to establish political parties, a new constitution that fits for modern Tunisia and a new well-functioning social system. Habib expected young people to benefit from the revolution and was disappointed because the situation of young people is worse now than before the revolution. 'We didn't get what we wanted; jobs and to be a part of the political arena,' Habib voiced. With liberty and democracy, Ali was expecting to be living like the young people of Europe. He was expecting more social balance between classes and improvements for the poor people living in the rural areas. 'The coast region is the part of the country that the ex-regime wanted to show to the world, but the internal regions are still forgotten,' Ali asserted.

Some of the young leaders described their expectations more personally and Rima simply expected 'a better life'. Likewise, Ibrahim is single, educated, unemployed and still lives with his parents. In fact, Ibrahim has been searching for a job since he graduated, for six years. 'What I expected was not be where I am...still in the same situation and volunteering with youth movements,' Ibrahim stated. He is still fighting for what he fought for in the revolution - to get a decent job. Jihed has also struggled to find a job. Unlike Ibrahim, he could not finish his studies due to financial reasons. Now he dreams of getting a job to save money in order to complete his studies and he claims to be searching everywhere. Jihed would take any job and he thinks he was stupid to actually expect that he would get a job after the Arab Spring. He further claimed 'look, if I would have a job and if the Islamic regime wouldn't still be in power, I would not be here, volunteering for Nidaa Tounes'.

4.2. Political Involvement

This section describes how the youth leaders got involved in politics and their motivations to participate. Student politics are linked to party politics in Tunisia and therefore I also explain

how the revolution changed the landscape of student politics, but first I discuss political interest and forms of youth participation in general.

4.2.1. Political Interests

The participants in this study were chosen because of their political involvement as youth leaders. This means that they belong to the first category of Tunisian youth identified by Habib, who identified youth into three groups. First, there are people like himself who believe that they can make a change. Second, people who want to leave the country and third, problematic extremists who do not care about anything. The extremists do not respect the law, are drunk all the time, misuse drugs, do 'sexual things' as he phrased it and are involved in Islamic terrorist groups. Habib wanted to address this to make me understand the political interest of Tunisian youth, because there are young Tunisians hoping for improvements and then there are young people who do not care about how the country is governed - which is a social issue driven from their poor economic situation.

The motivation of a few of the participants to engage in politics is based on a personal hope for a better life – the same motivation as protesters had in the revolution. Jihed's involvement is for example only based on hope for a job. He believes participation in politics might be the only way to push the government to create jobs. However, those who were considerably involved in politics before the revolution had been encouraged by their family members who were already involved. Kerym for instance decided that he wanted to become a politician when he was in high school. His family was loyal to Ben Ali's party, so he started volunteering there when he was a teenager. In the beginning of his twenties, he was in a high position within the party, that young people were rarely found in. However, as for the rest of my participants, they became involved with increased awareness and interest in politics after the revolution.

Mohamed was not interested in politics at all, but after the revolution he got very interested like most Tunisians. 'It is normal because we couldn't talk about politics before and now everyone is talking about democracy,' Mohamed stated. Myriam's increased awareness and interest changed her life and pointed her in the right direction. She explained that she used to be 'pretty normal' and studied what her parents told her to. Myriam liked her field of study to begin with, but after the revolution she became more aware of her society and wanted know everything about it. She got involved in civil society, became interested in politics and started practicing journalism, reporting on political issues. Myriam

wanted to take part in building a new Tunisia, although she does not want to be directly involved in politics; she only wants to monitor, be aware and inform the public. Ali got interested when he started monitoring the news every day. He learned from the newspapers, became knowledgeable and now participates in political debates with confidence. Jihed however became active when the Islamic party was in power because he was against their political views. 'They brought darkness over the country, without a future,' Jihed claimed. Thus, he started listening to people talking about politics, got interested and attended political events to learn more.

4.2.2. Forms of Participation

The youth leaders engage in various political activities. They organise meetings and conferences and run campaigns. They work to recruit others, train new young members, teach the ideologies and the programmes of their parties, have political debates and try to influence decisions. Some of them volunteered to train and give advice to candidates running for parliament and worked in the organisational aspect of new parties.

According to the participants, most Tunisian youth are involved in political life through Facebook, they participate in political discussions and some are active through 'cultural and musical politics'. Jasser said, 'before the revolution young people used to talk about football when they were having their coffee. Now they talk about politics'. However, he only hears them criticising and not trying to change their situation, and thus he thinks they are not really 'active'. Myriam also wanted to make it clear that young people are often indirectly involved. Mohamed for instance considers himself to be politically active, but indirectly, because he does not support any political party. Mohamed explained that he would never be involved in a political party because people's hate for politics is increasing. 'People would hate me and I would get a stamp, like a "he is with them" kind of stamp,' Mohamed stated. However, he reads a lot about politics, watches it on TV and follows it on social media and he is mostly active on Facebook, as well as within civil society.

The majority of the participants are formally engaged and stated that they want to become politicians. A few of my participants that were politically active before the revolution were involved in student politics and I will therefore reflect on their experiences.

4.2.3. Student Politics

Ahmed was elected to represent his student union within the National University council for several years until the revolution started. Habib was also elected to sit in the student union

where he started to understand politics. He got very interested and was later elected to sit in the national council. Even though Habib managed to accomplish many things, the problem was that the council was controlled by Ben Ali's party and he constantly disagreed with the system. The student unions had a political surveillance officer monitoring their work and documenting reports about their activities. Habib further described when he once got in trouble:

> They recognised me for talking against the policy of the party and gave me a warning to be suspended. [Once] I started talking about political issues and the family of Ben Ali. They silenced me, took over the meeting and told us 'your role here is to work for student affairs' and that we couldn't discuss politics.

After Habib got his warning, he was told to be quiet and they watched him at all times. He got angry and more ambitious to work harder in favour of students. Habib also started reading political philosophy and listening to forbidden music, like Tunisian rappers such as Balti, who was sent to jail for criticising Ben Ali. Habib and his friends used to listen to Balti in secrecy before the revolution and he knew something was about to happen. He described how Balti's music worked like a fuel for the revolution when people started sharing his music videos on Facebook.

After the revolution university students had a conflict between leftist and Islamic movements running for seats in the National Council. Ahmed claimed it was like a 'copy paste' of the Tunisian parliament. Ahmed did not find himself in either of these movements, so he and his friends founded a new one. They came up with the idea only three days before the elections and they ran for the National Council in many universities under the slogan 'the path of making things right'. They brought a new positive feeling among students nation-wide, many voted for them and they ended up winning the majority of seats. When their victory was certain, everyone on the streets started singing the national independence song in several cities in Tunisia. This meant a lot for them, they felt the liberty to do what they wanted after being forced to represent Ben Ali's party for years. Ahmed said he finally got the opportunity to initiate something real and that he truly believed in. He described this political student movement to be untraditional and they became like a family. It became the main stakeholder for students, offered financial support and organised various activities for students ranging from entertainment to politics. It also functioned as a network to share information and ideas between students from different universities.

Jasser was also a member of a student union and established a movement with his friends where he served as the president. He felt lucky and focused on how his involvement

in student politics opened doors for him to the formal political arena. People started to come to him for advice and encouraged him to be involved in political parties.

4.2.4. Party Politics

After the revolution, Kerym participated in the establishment of a political party - 'The Initiative'. Many people wanted to stay out of politics and did not want him to be involved either because people from the ex-regime were associated with the party. However, they did not succeed in the legislative elections in 2011. After the elections, Kerym talked to the president of the party because he wanted to do some projects. 'The president told me things like "you should be on TV, you should get to the next step as a politician" only to keep me and my followers,' Kerym argued. He felt the aim of the party was no different than the ex-regime: just to gain power, govern and remain in power. After the elections in 2011, Tunisians were 'still standing on the same spot and people still wanted to kill each other', said Kerym. He and his friends disagreed with the president of the party because they wanted to move forward and do something constructive.

Suitably, Essebsi started contacting youth leaders around Tunisia. Kerym and his friends agreed to meet with Essebsi to hear him out. They were sceptical at first but Essebsi listened to their ideas and goals. They ended up with an agreement and established Nidaa Tounes in their region. Nevertheless, the problem was that is was like a 'crime' the support Nidaa Tounes to begin with because people thought the party belonged to politicians from the old regime, Kerym explained. Therefore, they were taking a risk and Kerym felt like he was going to die. Jasser also had a chance to meet Essebsi to discuss the situation of youth, Essebsi liked their ideas and they decided to establish Nidaa Tounes in Jasser's region as well. He was a part of the work from the beginning and is still very much involved. Jasser described how the death of the politician Mohammed Al-Brahimi reactivated mass protest. Al-Brahimi was the leader of the Popular Movement and was killed for opposing the Islamic party. Since this 'political disaster' Jasser said he became very committed to Nidaa Tounes, especially after being one of the main organisers of the protest against the killing of Al-Brahimi.

Habib was in a group of young people who established a political party after the revolution. They adopted the ideology of Bourguiba that formed the base of the party. 'There were many groups with different ideas and everyone was trying to convince

everyone; it was so hard,' Habib explained. Together with other parties they ran for parliament in 2011 as 'The Republic Alliance'. Ibrahim was also inspired by Bourguiba and worked with the 'Association of Bourguibism'. They organised the first meeting they had with Essebsi before they established Nidaa Tounes in his region. 'I am a huge fan of Essebsi and I want to be like him. People love him and listen to him,' Ibrahim stated. Likewise, Hanna was among the organisers of the first meeting when Essebsi came to her region. After the meeting she became involved within Nidaa Tounes because she had trust in Essebsi and the party's policy.

Because of how unpopular the Islamic government was, Sarah was convinced that Essebsi's party could save the country from poverty, corruption and terrorism. She decided to join because she was impressed by their policy of not excluding the old party of Ben Ali. In Sarah's opinion, those that committed a crime during Ben Ali's regime should be punished, but she does not think people should be excluded just because they worked for him. 'Even though I was against Ben Ali's party, I agreed with that vision of Nidaa Tounes. Because if we exclude them, of course that would be the vision of society,' Sarah claimed. She highlighted that they should learn from what happened in Iraq where the Ba'ath Party officially ruled before the innovation. All the members of the Ba'ath party were banned from the government and other public institutions, causing unhappiness and demonstrations. Sarah elucidated that 'they blocked many experienced people from participating in the new government. Normal reaction of society is to hate when we exclude social groups like this'. Nidaa Tounes impressed her because they are learning from the experiences of other countries. Sarah is thinking about the future and argued, 'If we exclude someone now, they will be our enemy in the future. So let's be in harmony, which is the idea of Nidaa Tounes'. Due to belief in the idea of Nidaa Tounes, Sarah wanted to run for parliament. Her relatives encouraged her and supported her to make it happen. Especially because her village has never been represented in the parliament. She did not run a campaign, she just travelled around the rural areas 'because they are forgotten' she said and felt she could not go there and tell them who to vote for. 'People are exploited and nobody cares. I realised that there are promises, but no practice,' Sarah voiced.

The youth leaders who support other political parties joined them in 2011 and have stayed in the same party ever since. The UPL supporters joined because they liked the program of the party and the Ennahda supporters joined because their political opinions reflect the ideology of their policy. Some ran for parliament, but not everyone succeeded.

However, Ali became involved in party politics later than my other participants. He voted for Nidaa Tounes hoping to get rid of the Islamists because he thinks they made so many mistakes. Ali said 'it was like another dictatorship' and he joined Nidaa Tounes because he believes it to be democratic and that it could change the political picture of Tunisia. He wanted to see the Arab Spring be successful in Tunisia and accomplish democracy. Hence, Ali got involved 'to get rid of the leftovers' of the dictatorship. Now Ali aims to be a politician representing his region in parliament. However, it is not as easy as it sounds to reach power in Tunisia. Therefore, It is important to consider what hinders young people from participating in politics.

4.3. Obstacles to Participate

I identified five aspects that hinder the participants from full participation in politics. In this section I provide a gender perspective as well as discussing the aspects of financial issues, the generational wall, biased media and lack of capacity.

4.3.1. Gender Perspective

When I visited Tunisia for the first time I often saw boys playing football and men sitting outside the coffee houses, smoking shisha. Women and girls were not visible in such activities. I have always been a football fan so I was eager to see Club African Tunis play, the strongest Tunisian football team. One of my Tunisian friends took me to see a match where I was more focused on observing the masculine dynamics of the audience than enjoying the football. I think I saw one woman in the crowd, so I was not the only one among all those men who smoked like chimneys and shouted 'your mother is a whore' every time the opposing goalkeeper got the ball.

I had launched a children's rights project in Tunisia before conducting this research. By attending the match and experiencing the culture of sport, I was able to put my struggles for an approval for boys and girls to play football together into a wider context. The orphanage center told me that 'girls don't play football'. The aim of the project was to include girls into the game and we organised a football tournament where gender within teams were irrelevant. In light of the recent elections, we introduced the children to democracy by making 'voting for the captain in secrecy' an important component of the tournament. We encouraged girls especially to run for captain. When one got elected, one teenage boy got upset saying 'I don't want a girl to be our captain'.

Tunisia has a strong national football team and football is the most popular sport in Tunisia. Like coffee, football is an important part of Tunisian culture. Tunisian women are excluded from those two popular cultural fields. Since females 'don't play football' and are banned from all the 'men's coffees' that are everywhere around the country. This gender based exclusion from popular cultures may hinder women's political participation because men often meet 'at the coffee' to discuss politics and the popularity of football can be used to gain political power[3]. Football stadiums may also serve as a space for political purposes. Jihed for example said, 'I was a member of an "ultra-gang" that cheers for a football team. We had no place to express ourselves before the revolution, only at the stadium'. Like in the revolution, they often lost control and fought with the police at the stadium. 'During the revolution I was protesting outside of the stadium for the first time,' Jihed stated. In his opinion the revolution did not begin with Bouazizi's act, it began with 'the public of football'.

I interviewed a few of the participants at a men's coffee. When I commented on me being a woman they said I should not worry, because I am European. Ironically, I happened to be sitting at a men's coffee on the International Women's Day. Out of curiosity, I asked them if something was happening or if they normally celebrated the day. One of them answered: 'I don't care about women's rights'. However, I was sometimes tempted to ask further about gender issues when my participants initiated the topic. A female MP argued 'we are living in a male society'. When describing her past experience of volunteering for a political party, she asserted:

> I was neglected as a girl. If they had a meeting, they did not invite me. I just heard that from my father. So I felt like I should be away from politics. I had my ideas [and] I just wanted to keep [them] for myself.

Moreover, many people were standing against Sarah during her electoral campaign because she is a girl. She heard people saying things like 'she is just a girl… She can't do anything'. But many others, especially her relatives believed in her and supported her. Hanna considers herself to be a powerful women's rights activist. She volunteers in a women's committee where she advocates and tries to raise public awareness. According to Hanna, society perceives her activism negatively and she receives more negative comments than positive. 'People start to hate me, even women. I don't know why, maybe they feel threatened...they

[3] Since the UPL party was funded by the president of Club African Tunis.

are not used to girls like me, they are scared of what I am doing and they try to push me out,' Hanna voiced.

In contrast, Rima and Myriam said they have never faced limitations as women. 'It is the opposite, they are gentlemen and they encourage me,' Rima claimed. My female participants' experiences in politics are therefore dissimilar, as are the overall views of my participants. Referring to the new electoral law that ensures gender equality on the candidate lists, Ahmed and Myriam think women do not need to fight anymore because they have the same legal opportunities, they just need to be encouraged to participate. However, Myriam explained there is a difference between the participation of women in different parties, the amount of women varies. Also, there are not many women in the government, but they are very visible within CSOs. Although Ahmed wants to see more gender balance in the government, he is happy that the government now has the highest ever number of women in parliament. Ahmed and Jasser think women should be more involved in politics and they encourage them. 'We have some examples where women have problems with their husbands regarding their political involvement and I help them to find solutions,' said Ahmed.

I found the participants to be proud of the freedom of Tunisian women and they tended to compare themselves to their neighbouring countries. 'We have really strong women in Tunisia that have been very involved in political campaigns,' Jasser asserted. Myriam claimed that Tunisian women work hard to contribute to society and to improve themselves when it comes to politics. Rima thinks women became more visible within the political arena after the revolution and are as important as men. She said 'we are the first Arab country to acknowledge women's rights. The first female pilot in the Arab world is Tunisian. I think we are doing better than other countries' and Myriam concurred.

However, Rima and Myriam agreed that the political arena is more open to men because women face various limitations when it comes to accessing the political domain. Rima mentioned aspects such as time, pregnancy, children and family. Then she explained 'because it is a part of Tunisian culture that women should be at home, so that is the biggest problem for women. If a woman doesn't want a normal life with children and family, they do practise politics'. Women have their legal rights now, but they are less visible in politics due to lack of motivation in Jamel's opinion. He maintained 'we used to have a female minister in the ex-government and she did well I think' and they think about this issue within Ennahda.

Sarah thinks the reason why only one woman out of 27 candidates ran for presidency is because of lack of confidence and for social reasons. 'They don't have time for politics, they work and after that they take care of their home and family,' Sarah argued. Jasser thinks women do not have the courage to practise their rights fully. He claimed that it is normal and understandable that women do not seek presidency because it is a new culture to them and, they lack experience and training. Due to this, Rima thinks women are not prepared and cannot even imagine that they can actually be a presidential candidate because before only men could be. According to Hanna, a woman cannot be president, although she is powerful, she can only be the wife of the president. Hanna explained by saying 'the problem is women. It is not because they don't want to, it is because they cannot, they have no experience. They need training and more academic knowledge'. Ibrahim said women are far away from becoming the president of Tunisia because so many of them voted for Essebsi instead of the one female candidate.

Rima mentioned that two other women wanted to run but their candidature was not accepted because they did not manage to collect enough signatures. Jasser also mentioned the criteria of collecting ten thousand signatures or an approval from 10 members of parliament to be eligible as a restriction. He also asserted that a presidential candidate needs to be in a good financial situation. That is also an essential limitation for youth participation in politics, among other limitations.

4.3.2. Financial Issues

'To succeed in politics, you need money' said Ahmed and claimed that if he had money he would be a politician by now. Ahmed believes that there are many qualified young people out there that could be in the role of MP and serve greatly. He explained that the problem is so much bigger: 'even if you are a genius, you will never succeed' without access to resources such as wide a network, connections with the right people, preferably a respectful family name and of course money. Some might never even have a chance. This is not only about ambition and qualifications, it should be in Ahmed's opinion, but it is not. He explained that young people are usually unemployed, thus they do not have any work experience and then it is even harder for them to become politicians. Also, without a job, they do not have any money. Young people are more likely to be in a poor financial situation and they cannot participate. Ahmed believes the main reason why young people do not reach power positions is lack of money.

According to Kerym, there are ‘big families’ in Tunisia that are very politically involved and it is easy for them because they have money. ‘We can probably call that lobbying,’ Kerym maintained. Those families are preventing others from taking the lead, like young leaders with potential. Kerym said ‘I am there all the time, then rich people suddenly appear before elections and they become candidates on the list. This happens within all political parties’. In every region, the rich people become like ‘the father or the mother’ or very influential leaders that dominate within the party. Those people get the top seats on the lists to run for parliament and this is affecting Kerym directly as he was nominated to be a candidate on the list in the last elections. ‘The party tried to get another person who is more powerful than me. They chose him instead of me. He had the money and some good connections,’ Kerym explained.

Ahmed asserted that the poor financial situation of youth was the factor that hindered young people the most. Because of culture and religion, young people in love that want children and a normal family life cannot. In Tunisia, it is not legal to form a family if you are not married. ‘It is very expensive to get married, if you don’t have money, you cannot get married,’ Ahmed stated. Moreover, young people feel useless and while looking at the future without any access to the political arena it is hopeless to be optimistic in Ahmed’s opinion. He also pointed out that there are no laws to ensure that people from all economic classes have access to the political domain. Ahmed described this ‘like a wall between youth and the political arena. You can’t break the wall unless you have money or a good family name’.

Rima maintained that young people would be willing to participate in politics if they were encouraged more and if political parties would create more space for young people to be involved in decision making. However, she thinks the problem is the financial situation of political parties. The bigger parties can help young people to participate, but the smaller ones cannot because of lack of resources. This is not about ambition of the political parties, it is also about what they can offer.

One young female MP thinks she is not rich enough to be a MP. She comes from a poor family and faced financial problems during her campaign. During the parliamentary elections all her relatives supported her financially because they wanted her to succeed. After that the support started dwindling and during the presidential campaign, the support was gone. She further described:

> I struggle as a young woman… Those famous politicians that get all the attention are like an elite. They have more political power than me because they have more experience. They have financial power, I don't. They can go everywhere they want. If there is problem somewhere, they can make a show.

Furthermore, she is not able to attend all meetings because she has no transportation. 'What can I do when I finish late? I don't have a car and nobody cares,' said the MP. For her to be able to speak for youth she believes she has to visit villages and observe, speak to them directly and document their needs. She thinks if she had a car and would get financial support she would be able to do her job. She said 'I know I am capable of many good things. I am not afraid and I hate being a hypocrite. All the politicians are hypocrites'. The MP highlighted that she is not in this for money, she sits in the parliament because she has experienced the feeling of poverty and felt the need of doing something.

Habib wants to create a new generation of leaders. It is not easy to launch such a project because in his opinion 'young people have something that blocks them from politics and that is money. They don't even have money to drink coffee'. That is why he also works on other projects, to fund his political activities. Habib also stated that 'people won't listen or talk to you if you don't have any money'.

4.3.3. Generational Wall

Habib asserted that there are many organisations in Tunisia that want to create a new generation of leaders and they do not succeed. He explained the reason to be:

> Because we already have leaders that are always blocking others. They have the money and they want to lead. Therefore, young people won't reach power positions…[T]he current old leaders are afraid to give power to young people because they think they might lose power.

Habib wants to work against this issue and said this should not be about money. Ali argued that everybody knows that the old politicians have money and therefore they have power. Also, young people have ideas for solutions, but they do not have any money. The reason why there are few young people in power is because the old people are excluding youth from politics, in Ibrahim's opinion. He has heard many young people talking about this and they agree. Jihed used to be a party member of his regional office, but he had constant conflicts with the older people because they were trying to control him. They wanted him to accept things that he would not and they did not listen to his opinions. Jihed did not feel he belonged there so he quit, but continued to be active on Facebook - the only place he could say what he wanted.

Kerym sounded fed up when he said that 'old people should leave the work of politics to young people, because they have had enough power and we have had enough of them'. He thinks that young people can do better than the old leaders because they know better what they want and what they need. Ahmed thinks that young people should be more involved in decision making, but he thinks the old generation thinks differently and looks at youth 'from the outside'. He argued 'when young people are active in politics, the old generation looks at it as a phenomenon of "adolescents politics" like we call it in Arabic. Because of this attitude, we are not on the same page'. Ahmed also explained that it is considered to be unusual when young people practise formal politics and society has not accepted that yet because of the new democratic culture. People often think that individuals that engage in politics should be knowledgeable, experienced and responsible and that young people are not. Therefore, young people are not taken seriously, even though they are educated, have been in university for many years and have been practicing politics there. Young people are interested in making their society better, but they are normally not interested in participating formally. Ahmed believes that the reason is the huge gap between generations which he described as being very complicated. 'I think young people would be more involved in politics if we just face the problem between generations. If we manage to solve it we can start working together and both generations need to cooperate,' Ahmed voiced. Furthermore, one MP talked about 'double standards' among MP's and said older and experienced MP's get privileged treatment. During the Bardo attack for instance, the security only ensured the safety of the ministers and this young MP had to go and look for a taxi in all the chaos.

Sarah thinks the inclusion of youth should be a responsibility of political parties, they feel excluded and they are waiting to be included. She was unhappy after the elections because they were 'forgotten', their work was not appreciated, nobody thanked them for running the campaign and acknowledged their hard work that made the party succeed. Sarah said that 'the young people ran the campaign for nothing'. According to her, young people feel like the old politicians took all the credit. The young people were the ones that made everything happen on Facebook and went everywhere to spread the word about Nidaa Tounes. According to Sarah, the work of the young people is the reason that Essebsi got elected as a president and they did not ask for anything in return. They just thought that after the presidential elections they could continue to build the bases of the party and be engaged in the work. Many of the participants spoke about how vigorous young people

were during the electoral campaigns and after the elections they felt like they had been used. Because of this issue many young people have left their regional offices according to Jihed.

During the electoral campaign, some of the youth leaders said the politicians used the word 'youth' as a slogan copiously while debating - as a political tool to enrich the power of their speech. 'They use it as a strategy to reach their personal goals, to gain power. For me, this is political manipulation,' Kerym asserted. There are two factors that are causing problems in Jihed's opinion. Firstly, politicians do what they want and are using youth to get more votes without giving them any role or real power. Secondly, there are young people that are letting the old people decide for them, because that is what they are used to.

The youth leaders described the gap between generations to be a social problem that the young people defined in their program. Some of them have been organising meetings with decision makers to suggest to them to change the electoral law in order to ensure that at least 35 per cent of young people are on the candidate lists. Young people try to come of with solutions, but Kerym reasoned that the people in power neither look at their program nor consider their ideas. Their suggestion did not go through even though it was 'supported' and they held a press conference. Speaking about the press, I also identified the problem of the media to be a limitation which is closely related to financial and generational issues.

4.3.4. Biased Media

To attract youth to the formal political level and encourage them to participate, the youth leaders say it is all about the media and as soon as the media starts to care about youth, everything will change. The media is one of the reasons why young people are out of political life. While watching politics on TV, Ali only sees politicians who are lying. 'I see that they are not for the people and they cannot understand poor people, because they are all rich,' Ali argued. According to Jihed, young people see only old people when they are watching politics on TV and therefore they do not see themselves in politics.

There are 86 members in the parliamentary block of Nidaa Tounes and only 'the ones that are famous want to show off' and those people never give the others a chance to express their opinions stated one young MP. They had an extraordinary parliamentary session after the Bardo attack because people were waiting for a statement from the

governing party. The MP said that everyone was shocked when the president of the block decided to take the ten minutes to speak by himself and spoke only for four minutes. The MP asserted that no one else could speak and the president of the block said 'nothing important'. The journalists run towards those who are known when they finish parliamentary sessions but nobody interviews the young ones. That is because journalists only want to talk to famous people and they always have the same faces on TV. The MP feels like nobody cares about this problem within the party and like they do not understand that they need to work together. Instead of being in a 'fame competition', the MP noted that they could help others to become recognised. The MP said 'I don't need to be like them, but I want to speak for my party and I want people to listen to me also because I want to show them other sides'. Due to this problem, this young MP does not feel capable of being the voice of youth.

Ibrahim thinks that the media has a responsibility to provide young people with the information they need in order for real democracy to thrive. According to him, the media is part of the problem, but they are not working to solve the problem. They are not developing in parallel with the democratisation of society and they still need to pay them to come to events. The youth leaders find it undemocratic how the private channels are taking political sides, either with the Islamic party or the left wing parties. As a result, Ibrahim does not think the media provides impartial information for youth to be able to form political opinions. Hanna also thinks the media is preventing the achievement of democracy. Furthermore, they are not reporting on youth related issues and on the rare occasions that they do report on youth problems, they do not give the issue much time. However, political training also seems to be a secondary problem and I identified lack of capacity under the umbrella of limitations for young people to participate in politics.

4.3.5. Lack of Capacity

The youth leaders spoke about the lack of knowledge and skills of youth that hinders their ability to develop their political opinions, participate in political debates and put ideas into practice. One participant never doubts oneself as an MP, but feels helpless and needs more support. The MP does not have an advisor, only a father when needing advice. This MP is in a need of training when it comes to consultations about legislations and political speech. The administration of Nidaa Tounes promised training and parliamentary exchanges with other countries, but they never received any. The MP said there are individuals in the

financial commission who are not specialised in finance or economics. They will not be able to give valuable input to the commission if they do not have any knowledge about the subject, which is a problem within the parliament. Ennahda has experts and they are teaching each other. They are looking after their young candidates and give them consultations. The MP's of Nidaa Tounes are finding themselves asking Ennahda about legislation. One of them said: 'we are the majority. I should not need to be asking Ennahda's experts, the administration of my party is supposed to provide us with training like they promised'.

One young MP talked about limitations when it comes to decision making:

> If I raise an issue, the older members seem to take me seriously, hear me out. We have had meetings where everyone can express their ideas. Some ideas are against what they say. In the end, they decide for themselves… So even though I am in power I don't have any real power when it comes to making decisions.

Furthermore, the lack of information flow within the party has also been hindering young MPs and one finds it embarrassing to be the last one to hear the latest news or gets the information from the opposition. This MP asserted 'my problem is basically that they are taking decisions without informing me, they have done that many times'. One participant complained about lack of transparency within the parliament as a whole and the dysfunctional organisational structure of the party. According to their laws, information should be transferred to all MPs' which is not followed.

More generally, Rima thinks many young people are very capable of leading, but too many are lacking experience and could not take the responsibility when it comes to making important decisions that affect other people. 'People like power and want to be important, but you cannot engage in politics without being responsible,' Rima maintained. She thinks that many young people do not understand the seriousness and the responsibility of politicians in a country like Tunisia. Yet many of the youth leaders said that the most important thing is to give young people training so they can practise their rights and be full participants in politics. Rima called for more democratic emphasis on the educational system and wants to add democracy into all aspects of their culture. Jamel thinks that there is a need for ethical training for young people to teach them about the difference between right and wrong.

A few of my participants were already in the middle of the process of creating action plans for projects on democratic education. They had requested funding from ministries without any positive response. They wanted to launch such projects because they think

young people do not understand their responsibilities nor the benefits of living in a democratic society. They wish to create something to respond to this problem and give adolescents training to prepare this generation for their democratic life and teach students about the importance of democracy and participation in civil society. Ahmed is afraid that young people will not practise their right to vote because they do not have the knowledge. That is why he thinks they should work more with the younger ones and teach them how to vote and the importance of voting. 'No organisation nor the government has tried to come up with similar solutions and nothing has been or will be implemented soon,' Ahmed maintained. Jasser wants to make politicians understand that they want to cooperate and they want students to understand that there are people within the party that are concerned about their issues. He explained that this is because 'we don't want our young citizens to join ISIS or flee to Italy. We want young Tunisians to feel happy, satisfied and positive in their country'.

4.4. Consequences of the Revolution

Most of the participants discussed the positive consequences of the revolution briefly and they often ended up linking them with negative side effects. This section gives a brief overview of the positive and negative consequences they considered. I discuss freedom of speech, Islamic extremism and suicide trends which were the deepest concerns that the participants shared, in more detail.

4.4.1. Positives and Negatives

The youth leaders spoke about how people are more divided today than before the revolution. Jamel feels like people are now either positioned at the extreme right wing or extreme left. 'The revolution is the cause of all of our problems' stated one of the youth leaders. Political, economic, social and security issues among others were mentioned as negative consequences of the revolution. The participants said the economic situation got worse after the revolution, the gap between the rich and the poor is getting wider and the economic status of people is very different between areas. Many of them complained about the rising prices and Habib thought it was worrying that people cannot buy food. Jasser was scared after the revolution, he described 'trash was everywhere, it was not a healthy country anymore, it was nothing like before'. The participants also raised concerns of terrorism, unemployment, deteriorating education quality, rising use of drugs among youth, increasing

environmental challenges, capital flight and illegal migration. For Jihad, the only advantage of the revolution is that now he is freer; he thinks everything else is negative, but Jamel thinks the revolution resulted in more pros than cons.

Overall, the youth leaders spoke about modern democracy, freedom of speech, justice and social liberty as the main positive consequences of the revolution. For Habib, the revolution opened up a space for new opportunities and finally made it possible to make his dream come true – to launch political projects. Jasser highlighted that now they can think about developing regions that used to be ignored and there are possibilities to find solutions. Myriam likewise stated 'the revolution opened our eyes to new problems'. As a journalist she saw the benefits of being able to travel around, observe and write about those that are struggling. She said that the revolution revealed many problems and since they have been identified, there are opportunities to improve them. Myriam gave an insightful metaphor:

> Tunisia is like a book. You don't know anything about the contents of the book and you need to open the book to understand it. The revolution gave us the courage to open this book and to learn the secrets of our country.

4.4.2. Freedom of Speech

During the time of Ben Ali's regime, people were afraid, even of saying his name. Ahmed explained that they now face 'new' social issues that they could not talk about before - issues caused by the revolution. Sarah astutely explained that 'during the days of dictatorship, people were kept silenced. They could see, but not speak. So, that is why everything was "alright". Poverty was there, but nobody spoke about the poor. Illiteracy was there, but nobody knew'. Myriam was also surprised when she discovered the poor living conditions of people in the rural areas. According to Sarah, they thought the proportion of people living in poverty was around one per cent and now they know that half of society is poor. They also thought all Tunisians were educated, but after the revolution it became apparent that this was not the case. Myriam mentioned other problems, such as human rights issues, inequality and racism.

Sarah explained that with freedom of expression, all groups in society became activate. Everyone wanted to speak and express their feelings, including children. She gave an example of this changed attitude: a student was misbehaving, the teacher slapped him but the student slapped back. Sarah said this would never have happened before the revolution. Since nobody is afraid anymore, it affected behaviour which is noticeable among

students, many of whom have no respect for their teachers. According to Sarah, they developed the attitude of 'what can you do to me? Nothing, I am free'. In Sarah's opinion, this is all about mentality and the word 'freedom' created this issue.

Sarah thinks Tunisians do not understand that with freedom comes a responsibility. She thinks they swapped freedom with respect and humility. According to Jasser, Tunisians are misunderstanding the meaning of freedom and are using it in a negative way. He thinks Tunisians are becoming lazy in the name of freedom and are not going out to look for jobs. Ahmed complained about 'too much freedom' that is causing conflict. People are misusing their freedom and refuse to respect rules and follow the laws. Rima also thinks Tunisians do not have any limits and they can not handle the size of liberty. She was more concerned about freedom in relation to security though and considered terrorism to be the biggest negative aftershock. Ahmed agreed and thinks the lack of understanding of freedom is the cause of serious security issues.

Freedom of speech fostered awareness not only in regards to the real situation in Tunisia or 'the truth' like Sarah phrased it, but also when it comes to human rights. According to Ahmed, all sectors of society have specific demands that are leading to strikes. Sarah agreed and asserted 'everyone wants a good salary. There have been strikes in Tunisia since the revolution until now'. Because of all this pressure from different sectors asking for more, some of the participants fear that the government will not handle the issue. Sarah construed that the continuous strikes were the biggest challenge to the government because it is impossible to respond to workers' demands. Ahmed thinks people are not giving the government enough time and they can not afford all of this. People are demanding too much considering this sensitive period. Sarah gave an example of those working in factories: During Ben Ali's regime, they were silent and thanked god for a job, everything was 'alright'. After the revolution they wanted more and started complaining about their poor working conditions - they got an idea and everyone began to follow. 'This is only about asking and taking, they do nothing for their country in return,' Sarah voiced. Now she thinks this is part of Tunisian culture and described it like a 'fashion trend'. Sarah thinks the situation is particularly complex to deal with, because in parallel to increased awareness about workers rights, people are forming unions. Consequently, this seemingly positive development which resulted from the revolution is just worsening the situation.

While I was gathering data in Tunisia, teachers happened to be on strike. Ahmed said the teachers were not considering the priorities of society as a whole. He thinks they were

asking for an unrealistic amount considering the government's budget. Ahmed believed they could improve the educational system for the same amount and thinks they should rather develop the infrastructure of schools and ensure basic needs are met, since some students around the country do not have access to water. Sarah was particularly angry because the teachers began their strike the same day that four policemen lost their lives in a terrorist attack in Kasserine. In Sarah's opinion, it was arrogant to demand a higher salary while the policemen scarified their lives for their country. Many teachers are suffering and Sarah understands their huge responsibility, but when the strike began teachers lost respect.

The increased awareness after gaining the freedom of speech arguably granted Tunisians 'too much freedom' – resulting in the disrespecting of rules, through to security threats. Hence, the phenomenon of religious extremism came up to the surface.

4.4.3. Islamic Extremism

According to Jihed, there are Tunisians that want to live their lives like normal citizens on the one hand, but on the other hand there are people who want to live in an Islamic way. Not the Islamic way he accepts though, he called it the 'Sharia way'. Because they had to recognise everything after the revolution, Ahmed believed that the revolution created a totally new societal issue of religious extremism: Islamist groups that want to adopt Sharia laws and commit terrorist activities. Prior to the revolution, they rarely saw women wearing burqas and men with beards for instance, but these became common and Ahmed said it was weird and shocking to them. Once when Jasser was standing at the metro station with his female friend, someone approached her saying: 'cover yourself before you go out of the house'. This was a new culture for them and Jasser became scared of the current situation.

In a relation to the Islamic-secular debate, Sarah said she believes in humanity, love and tolerance before religion, because we are all human above everything else. She added: 'We can be different in so many ways, but we are Tunisians after all and we need to serve the interest of our country as whole'. Ahmed shared a similar belief:

> There must be a space between religion and politics. When it comes to politics now, religion is not the problem. There are politicians that speak in the name of Islam within the parliament. If you understand our religion, Islam is about peace. The problem are the extremist that use our religion to justify violence and spread their virus.

Ali thinks it is ironic that everyone says that they have built a democracy in Tunisia while they have extremists that are using terrorism to practise politics. At the moment, Sarah thinks they should focus on saving the country from terrorism before they become

another Syria. Ahmed explained that four policemen were killed in a terrorist attack by an al-Qaeda linked Tunisian terrorist group near to the Algerian borders recently and that this was not the first time something like this had happened. During my fieldwork the Bardo attack occurred and Adel was worried how the attack would negatively affect the economy, especially tourism and the general reputation of Tunisia. He described the attack as being 'like a black spot on our country and it is not even our fault'. Adel was there, working that day and he said it was terrible, people were running everywhere and there were so many policemen. One young MP believed that the stability of Tunisia was dependent on the stability of Libya and Egypt. The MP was aware of how the economy relates to security and referred to the minister of finance who said the country would lose millions after the Bordo attack. The week before the attack, there were no available rooms at the hotel that the MP normally stays at, because it was full of tourists. Then the MP thought: 'fine, at least we have tourists'. After arriving back to the hotel from parliament on the day of the attack, he cried when all the tourists were leaving; 'They were afraid and left...I blame the Islamic State'. However, the MP attended a parliamentary meeting after the Bardo attack and there he stated 'violence comes from suffering and despair. If we want to fight against terrorism, we have to fight against poverty first, because poverty is the cause of terrorism'. However, Ali thought the last terrorist attack in Bardo was expected because there is a strong conflict of opinions.

After the revolution, Ahmed described how extremists started targeting youth through social networks, a tool they used to mess with the minds of young people and recruit them. Ali maintained that those that brought terrorism to Tunisia were spreading their ideology around like a virus, especially among the poor youth. He explained that the terrorists were brainwashing them and convincing them to join. Habib further described the issue and how this new ideology captured the minds of vulnerable youth while there was no government. Many young people joined terrorist groups because they had neither ambition nor hope. Owing to a lack of education, they believe they are practising Islam correctly. The terrorists also empower them by granting them a new vision to the world and offer them some kind of purpose in life. Habib believes it is easy to convince vulnerable youth. If there would have been some organisations to protect young people during the fragile time after the revolution, Habib asserted that Tunisians would not be dealing with all this mess now. Sarah agreed and said 'we failed to prevent our youth from going to Syria and fighting; the Salafi Jihadists are dangerous, because they are trying to exploit the desperation of youth'.

Then she asked: ‘what can a 20 year old boy from a poor family do if he leaves school?’ and answered by saying: ‘Nothing. He is empty, so they target him and tell him that he is going to go to heaven’. According to Sarah, this is not about wanting to fight, rather, people are dying from poverty. Maybe they will get money, but they are pessimistic, they have nothing to do and hate their lives. She also explained that they have no cultural spaces for youth and no means of entertainment. They have the internet and if they have some pocket money they can hang out at ‘the coffee’ all day. Sarah claimed that this was the reason why all those young men are always at ‘the coffee’, gossiping about girls, since they have nothing else to do because they are suffering from emptiness. Ali also described similar reasons for how aggressively Libyan militants manage to recruit Tunisians that travel to fight for ISIS. Sarah knows many personally that have gone and Kerym also told me about his best friend who went to school in another region of Tunisia: ‘He came back with a beard, totally brainwashed, went off to Libya and we never heard from him again’.

While protesting against young people joining terrorist groups, Ali was beaten by the police. ‘Ben Ali never did something terrible like that,’ Ali argued. The situation is exceptionally difficult because there is no functional national security and Ali claimed that the police are corrupt. ‘One of the policeman in my city was found to be helping the terrorists for money,’ said Ali. Habib was shocked when the police fired rubber bullets and live ammunition into the air at peaceful protesters, because this was happening after the revolution. It was an action of the Islamic government and how they handled manifestations. Habib showed me brutal YouTube videos of such actions and how horribly people got injured.

The youth leaders spoke about how extremist groups use religion to glorify death and that young people, especially from the poorest regions do not value life. Ali said for instance that ‘they think they will find Paradise’ when referring to those joining ISIS. Sarah further described their view of life: ‘they are like “okay, I am going to die, I will be a martyr” and if not they still feel like life and death is just equal’. Ali claimed that young people become extremists if they do not find solutions to their problems and if they do not have anything to say about their own destiny. ‘They think they will reach their objectives in Paradise and that is the solution to their problems,’ said Ali.

4.4.4. Suicide Trends

The glorification of death and suicides appears to be an emerging trend after the revolution. A few youth leaders raised their concerns about the situation of children. Anissa spoke about all the barefoot girls in the rural areas that left school because their mothers have so many other children and due to poverty they have to stay home to help their mothers. They see the news on the television about the situation of these children and Anissa was frustrated because nobody is responding. She said:

> I found a twelve years old girl from the countryside working in other people's houses, cleaning and cooking. She is being physically exploited, some of them are being sexually abused. Those girls are the ones that are most likely at risk of being raped and who cares? Nobody.

According to Jihed, children around the age of ten are taking their lives in his region. He believes it is due to poverty, hard living conditions and because the schools are too far away from their homes. Experts are investigating the issue, but the reasons for this trend are still uncertain and the parents have no explanations. Regionally, people are very concerned but only the local media is reporting on the issue, so the general public is not aware. He said the government has neither found a solution nor is responding to this. According to Jihad, there is a centre for vulnerable children in his region, but the administration is corrupt. If they receive donations, the children do not benefit. Jihad thinks that the children in his region are not being taken care of and that is why they are taking their lives. He explained:

> Last time this happened was only 10 days ago. There have been 15 incidents that I know of since the revolution. Most of them are girls, the youngest one was only six years old...We found three girls that hanged themselves together in the same tree this year.

Jihed said that one of those girls left a message to her mother saying that she hated life and that she was fed up of seeing her mother cleaning other people's houses to feed her, so she decided to kill herself. Moreover, he mentioned that suicides became periodic among adults after the revolution. He talked about how Bouazizi's suicide was worshipped and that this may explain the trend.

I was invited to the National Theatre of Tunisia to see a solo act by one of the most famous Tunisian comedians, Hedi Ouled Baballah. The one who was sentenced to jail in 2008 for imitating Ben Ali. After the show I was able to put the Tunisian culture after the revolution in a clearer context. The play was about a man who had nothing after the revolution and wanted to die. The whole play was about this man trying to commit suicide, but could not due to all the problems of the society. The gas at the gas station

was finished, he could not afford a rope, but after stealing it, all the trees were dried up and broke. After all possible attempts, he went to the president and begged him to let him die. In the end, the president did not listen and all the audience stood up laughing and applauding.

I have now outlined how the youth leaders view the consequences of the revolution, which contextualises the following coverage of youth perceptions after the elections and future visions.

4.5. After the 2014 Elections

This section explains how the participants viewed the electoral process and the outcome of the elections in 2014. I also present the reasons that the participants gave for election boycotting and discuss concerns of power tensions within the ruling party, Nidaa Tounes.

4.5.1. About the Outcome

Sarah was afraid after the elections because she felt like the country was divided into the North and South. She said the thing that mattered the most to her was 'for Tunisia to be united, everyone, all the political parties, even our enemies'. Sarah thinks they need to find a way to work together during this sensitive period. Despite their differences, they need to fight against terrorism, ignorance and the division of society.

Overall, most of the youth leaders were adequately satisfied with the outcome of the elections. However, Jihed wanted Nidaa Tounes or other parties to get more seats to get rid of Ennahda. He was also hoping that smaller parties would get seats for more diversity. One Ennahda supporter was unsatisfied because of the two party domination. The majority of my participants were unhappy that Nidaa Tounes and Ennahda took all the seats since it is like the other parties do not exist in the parliament. They think this two party domination is dividing society. Myriam spoke about the many parties they have and she said the future of Tunisia should not be with the right or left. 'We need to mix everything to puzzle the country together. This is what we should try to do and we don't see this in the parliament now,' Myriam voiced.

Ahmed believed that the election process was democratic and stated 'it was transparent, security was high, people went to vote, they trusted the system and could choose what they wanted'. My participants thought that the ISIE did better now in 2014 compared to the elections in 2011 because they had the experience and they were more

organised. They saw many improvements and Ali described the elections to be 'on the level of world democracy'. However, Jamel thought that they could make democratic improvements in 'the section of frauds' and when it came to the freedom of the press. Ahmed talked about the problem of underrepresentation of young people and women. Habib believed that people did not understand the idea of democracy and were voting without considering the candidates on the lists and the programs of the parties.

Jasser maintained that the government has the capacity to succeed even though the Islamists left the country in a very bad situation. The majority of participants believed that if people let the government work, they would succeed. Adel thinks most young people think they will and Kerym concurred 'because Essebsi has the vision'. However, Myriam had a different story and talked about the problem of continuing political mistrust. She said 'when young people look at the leaders in this government, they see the leaders from the last regime' that are still lying to them and 'they give youth reason to hate their country even more'. Rima was not ready to give her judgment and said 'we are just at the beginning. I think their main challenges are financial ones and to ensure national security'. The youth leaders spoke about how the success of the government is dependent on investing in youth. Habib said that young people have the same demands and the same expectations now as they had during the revolution. Nothing has changed and the economic situation is worse.

4.5.2. Election Boycott

All the participants voted in 2014, except for two. Kerym would not risk his job to vote and Rima could not afford to travel back to her home city where she was registered. However, Rima said she knew a bunch of young people that voted in the presidential elections, but in the second round most of her friends did not vote because they did not like either of the two candidates. Ahmed expressed that 'in Arabic we say that young people are still virgins when it comes to politics. They need to lose their virginity'. He thinks that many of them did not vote because of the dictatorship. Young people did not participate in politics during Ben Ali's rule because of fear and injustice. They were scared of Ben Ali's regime and Ahmed thinks this might be a continuing norm.

Hanna identified two categories of youth that did not vote: youth that are not democratically educated and do not care about anything political, and those who boycotted the elections in order to show objection, anger, and dissatisfaction. The other participants agreed on the reason for election boycott to be based on lack of political trust and they

gave various explanations for mistrust. Before the elections in 2014, young people from different parties jointly fought for the inclusion of more young people on the candidate lists without success. Myriam said that that young people do not feel responsible for voting because they know that if they vote, nothing changes. The reason is also because they think the elections in 2011 were fake and that everything was prepared. According to Ibrahim, young people still do not trust politicians, not even the ones that are supporting the parties.

In short, there are five reasons the participants gave for political mistrust that correlate with the obstacles to participate described above. First, they mentioned *disappointment* and how the political situation that developed after the revolution was not what young people had in mind. They considered that it was useless to vote because they were disappointed before and they thought they would be disappointed again. Hanna said they were fed up and many were so angry after the 2011 elections, that they did not want to vote anymore. Secondly, young Tunisians were also disappointed because of the *complicated party politics*. Myriam explained that 'when you watch TV in Tunisia, you see left parties and Islamic parties. But, young people are like "no, we are not like that"'. There are so many young Tunisians that are not left or right, they are just Tunisians that want to build their country with democracy. The third reason for political mistrust is *the power of the last regime*. The old regime is still controlling, to the disapproval of young people. Myriam claimed 'we agree, we cannot kill those people, but we don't want them ruling again'. Young people can feel the power of the last regime rising again and they fear this. There are many Tunisians who could contribute a lot as ministers and 'we don't need the people from the last regime to sit in our parliament now, in 2015,' said Myriam. The fourth reason is *broken promises*. Ahmed argued that political parties do not convince young people after they broke their promise of providing jobs. Politicians talk nonstop without thinking about what they are actually promising. 'When politicians say that they are going to do something, they need to do it' said Jihed and drew a cigarette out of a packet and continued 'if I tell you that I am going to give you this cigarette, then I should give it to you'. According to Hanna, young Tunisians hate politicians for doing nothing for them. Jamel thinks the politicians were unrealistic because of the economic situation in Tunisia and therefore they could not fulfill their promises. Lastly, the fifth reason is *manipulation and discrimination*. They feel being used, unwelcome and positioned outside of the political realm as already described.

According to the youth leaders, mistrust is the most weighted reason for boycotting the elections. However, Hanna also identified a group of youth that 'don't care'. Many young people are not thinking about what is happening and they do not care. Habib said for instance, 'they care about their coffee and think about their pocket money to pay for their coffee, that's all. They don't think about politics, they are busy loving themselves, they are selfish'. Rima concurred and said that young people often say 'this is not my problem'. She thinks they are not being responsible. Ahmed tried to encourage young people to vote and most of them just said 'no, I don't care about them, I just want a better life'. The reason is because they want their situation to be taken seriously. Young people often say that they do not want to participate in this, they neither care what politicians say nor about the elections because they believe everything will be the same anyway. Jasser similarly got responses such as 'I always get disappointed. Why should I vote, it's pointless'. He thinks that they do not know how important it is to vote for Tunisia to achieve democracy. Jasser's friend said to him: 'why would I vote? What am I going to gain from it?'

One young MP claimed that young people think all politicians are liars who only think about themselves. This MP struggles with all the dissatisfaction and receives messages on Facebook such as 'we supported you before you got the chair, then you forgot us'. The MP said 'what can I do? The country is facing so many problems. They blame me for having fun in Tunis. I feel like I am alone and they have no idea about how I struggle'. Anissa thinks young Tunisians expect everything to be ready for them and they do not look at the problems to be a joint project to solve. She suggested for some young unemployed people in her region to create an agricultural project and one of them responded 'Me? I cannot work in agriculture'. Hence, this is a problem of mentality before everything and the same applies to voting behaviour according to Sarah. 'Before a political revolution, we needed a revolution in our minds,' Sarah asserted. Most young people do not support any party, they only protest. Myriam suggested to a group of young people to establish something organised and constructive, but they said 'no, we will not. We are disappointed and we trust no one'. Rima claimed that young people are not political and do not care about the societal problems they are facing. Rima said 'they don't have those ideas in their minds, they just want to have fun' or marry an Italian to go and live in Europe. According to Sarah, they have no ambitious spirit and they need to be encouraged, otherwise the situation will remain the same.

Some of the youth leaders think the media is the most important factor when it comes to voting and practicing politics. They are not voting because they do not see themselves or their issues on TV. The politicians usually speak negatively about youth participation. They blame youth for the situation of youth and accuse them for being absent in the elections without trying to understand why. Anissa argued that young people just get angrier and this negative media coverage is not encouraging them to vote. She thinks it would be helpful to also speak about those who ran the campaign for them and saying something positive about youth. The youth leaders also complained about power tensions within political parties to be a reason for political mistrust, which is discussed separately.

4.5.3. Power Tensions

During the fieldwork, there was a tension within Nidaa Tounes that many of the participants mentioned. 'The problem that we are facing now within the party is about the old people. The young people do not share those problems,' Jihed stated. He thinks that the leaders of the party should have those problems for themselves. According to Sarah, the party has no time for youth or anything. They only have time for disputes. One young MP said that many people find that Nidaa Tounes is divided in two blocks, the son of the president and his followers versus the rest. She does not belong to either of those blocks and she just wants to play an arbitrary role to find peace between them because she is concerned about the future of the party. There are a few individuals within the party that created a crisis because they did not get ministries.

Ibrahim was sad because of this conflict since it leading the party in the wrong direction and prevents them to focus on what matters. Because of a few selfish individuals that want more power everything could be destroyed. One MP was also sad because these individuals are 'spoiling things' for those that are 'faithful, sincere and clean', many like herself, who are working in politics for the first time. In the MP's opinion, people that come in with no experience in politics are more sincere. She thinks it is terrible that the people from the old regime are fighting for more power and that they can easily solve the problem by excluding three men from the old regime. She does not trust them because:

> They are just looking for praise. One of them wants to be a minister and is only thinking about getting there. It is all about fame. I thought that people were coming here to work and be faithful to the promises they made, but they come here and act like celebrities. They don't care about the general public, the party, the function of the government or the future of the state.

The MP said that their friends from the party decided to put them on the list and she thinks that was a mistake. People did not vote for them because they wanted them, they voted them because they wanted Nidaa Tounes. Jihed thinks this leadership crisis is normal and the ones that are within the party for personal reasons should be out of the party. Hanna also maintained that they needed to see who were with the party and who were not and now that has become apparent.

Now, the main problem is that those troublemakers talk about the party's internal affairs on TV. The MP pointed out that all the parties are having many problems, but they never present their internal conflicts on TV until they resolve their problems. She said 'if Nidaa Tounes has an internal problem now, you see it on TV after an hour and you see news headlines such as "The Nidaa Tounes Scandal"'. The MP thinks they must keep their internal affairs within the party until they find solutions because they are not showing people any progress by attacking each other on the news. She fears that now they are not only dealing with distrust of those attacking each other, but also the public starts to distrust the government. Now people are saying that 'Nidaa Tounes is always having conflicts, Ennahda is better than that,' said the MP.

A MP believes that Ennahda is based on extremism and it was the primary cause of terrorism and all the misery in the country. People voted for Nidaa Tounes hoping to get rid of Ennahda. 'There is no room for mistakes. If there is a split within the party, the government will fall and the Islamist will take over,' the MP argued. This problem might prevent them from fulfilling their promises and she is concerned because she is responsible for her region, which will blame her. 'Even though I am in legislative power, I don't feel I can do anything,' the MP asserted.

4.6. The Future

I asked the participants how they thought youth participation in politics could be increased and they came up with various suggestions. In this section I provide some of their solutions for improvements and lastly I present their future predictions for Tunisia as a democratic state.

4.6.1. Solutions

Most of the participants spoke about the increasing youth participation in political processes as a priority matter for Tunisia to thrive and they gave ideas for improvements.

Myriam thinks that politicians should let young people participate in projects on job creation. Young people see job opportunities and the government is not working to create them. They have many abandoned state land that could be divided and lent to youth investors believe the land will be beneficial for the future. Jasser believes that when young people see their ideas being transformed into laws it might encourage them to participate. He also thinks that young people are going to be more involved in the municipal elections because it is more related to them. Hence, the government needs to focus on what affects them directly and that is how they can gain youth's trust. Hanna thinks the activities used to recruit youth must be entertaining so they will understand that politics can be enjoyable. Rima thinks the political parties should remunerate young people for their work because they are always volunteering and should get at least a small budget for the work.

The youth leaders said that they are all learning about political life and they can see there is a number of young people that have ambition and many are capable of making a difference. Jamel claimed that young people participate in all of Ennahda's activities and they are offering fresh, creative ideas, which he thinks the executive should listen to. Jamel thinks all political parties should utilise the enthusiastic spirit of youth and that it would be a waste if their ideas are not heard. Habib argued that 'all the problems in Tunisia are youth problems' and for solutions a space must be made for young people to reach power positions. To increase youth participation in elections, Adel thinks they need more young candidates on all lists running for parliament. Also, the programme of the parties must include youth concerns. According to Anissa, young people are the most important thing for the future of political parties because nothing can be done without the youth. 'If you work for them and with them, you will gain them and they will support you until the end,' said Sarah. Ibrahim had radical ideas and wants to establish a new party that would consist of youth only and be based on the idea of peer-to-peer education. He thinks if the leaders of the party are young, others would be more willing to cooperate and share their opinions. The plan is to make youth vote for youth and he thinks this would be a good method to get people to both participate and vote.

I got the opportunity to witness the participants elaborate their ideas for solutions formally and put them into practice. I attended a conference where I observed a new youth initiative. The young people wanted to coordinate their actions and institutionalise

their work in order for them to be able to focus on youth concerns and raise their issues, as well as play a role in the political life and thus they created their own space.

4.6.2. Predictions

The youth leaders were generally optimistic about the future. They have taken the first step, but to reach full democracy they need high security and economic stability. Jasser thinks they need more international support because Tunisia cannot fight terrorism alone and if they get investors to create jobs for youth, then Tunisia will stabilise and achieve democracy. In his opinion they have reached 50 per cent of their transition and he is sure that the other 50 per cent is yet to come. However, my participants compared their path towards democracy to their neighbouring countries. They believed they were in a good position after the Arab Spring and going in the right direction.

Most of the participants spoke about the future of Tunisia as a democratic state to be a question of time. There are young people in the parliament now who Jihed believes in and maybe after several months, when they have done something, he will be happy. Some of the youth leaders are concerned about how much people are impatiently demanding and they think the main challenge of the government is timing. The youth leaders think it is going to take years to build a new country. 'We will be good after 30 years, but we don't have a vision about the future. Everybody knows that after any revolution in any country, is takes time to succeed,' said Ali. Jamel also claimed that 'revolutions take years to succeed and there will be another one, I mean another revolution in our minds'. If they believe there was a 'power to the people' kind of revolution in Tunisia, Myriam thinks they would be able to destroy everything and build again. 'That is not what happened in Tunisia,' Myriam stated.

According to Myriam, there are many questions about what really happened in Tunisia. She asked 'was it a real revolution or was it something different?' Now when Myriam looks at all the youth movements, she sees that people did not like what happened and the situation is getting worse. She said 'believe me, it is like the beginning. The political parties don't give youth anything, they just think about themselves. So young people talk a lot now. It is like a glow that will turn into a fire'. When that happens, Myriam thinks it will be worse than the revolution because young people will never leave the streets if they will not be able destroy everything and build it again. She

believes that the revolution was just the first step and she is not exactly sure about the form of the second step, but she is sure it is coming.

5. Discussion

The objective of this thesis is to examine the perceptions of Tunisian youth leaders on the democratic transition. The findings indicate that the revolution was unexpected and shocking, and supported by most. The findings illustrate a deteriorating situation for youth, nonetheless their anticipations before the revolution remain. The youth leaders worry about Islamic extremism and the division of society as a consequence of 'too much freedom'. Their political interest, awareness and involvement increased after the revolution, but they face obstacles, feel manipulated by politicians and are mostly excluded from the political arena. Motivations to participate in politics also vary from the hope to make a change to desperation for jobs. This study highlights that being young in a power position does not necessarily induce real power. Political polarisation, power tensions within political parties, broken promises and the power of the last regime has led to election boycotting and political distrust. The youth leaders are full of ideas for solutions that are ignored and they have started to take matters into their own hands. Although, another revolution is predicted, full democracy is an optimistic question of time.

Pace and Cavatorta (2012) discussed 'forgotten actors' and unstructured mobilisation that democratisation and authoritarianism overlooked. The findings of this study clearly demonstrate the importance of understanding how young people managed to push through political change and the motives behind it. Carty (2014) relevantly called for an expansion of the social movement theory due to the emergence of ICTs as a powerful political tool. Attempts have been made to explain the root cause of the revolution, the driving force behind it and why Tunisia is on the right path towards democracy. However, while other countries headed towards civil war, the Tunisian revolution was mostly peaceful although it got violent at times. In this context, it is important to note that the direct participation of youth leaders in the revolution did not only consist of a 'war against the police', but this study exposed that they also showed responsibility as caring citizens. They protected governmental institutions and emphasised peaceful demonstrations. According to O'Donnell and his colleagues (1986), political openings are unstable and will return to autocracy or advance to democracy. Democratisation requires mobilisation and the civil society prevents

the regime to limit the scope of transitions (O'Donnell et al., 1986). The pressure from leading youth and their role in the process of transition must be acknowledged as an aspect of Tunisia's successful and peaceful transition.

The youth leaders worry about 'new societal issues', which all came up to the surface with freedom of speech. Those issues include 'too much freedom' that is causing changed behaviour among children and youth and widespread strikes, which they described as a 'fashion trend'. They also expressed the need for a 'revolution of mentality' because of the lack of understanding that 'with freedom comes a responsibility'. Freedom of speech allowed the rise of Islamic extremism – a new ideology that is dividing the society and is creating a new culture. It brought terrorism to Tunisia and is sending young Tunisians to fight in foreign conflicts. This can be explained by the history of Tunisia and Paciello's (2011) description of how Ben Ali excluded Islamists from the political arena and enforced a brutal policy against them. With freedom of speech, Salafi movements arose after decades of oppression. Yet, explanations for the overwhelming rise of young jihadi Salfis remains unexplained according to Marks (2013), who stresses that Salafism thrives in socioeconomic marginalisation, which is confirmed by the youth leaders.

The findings of this study illustrate a deteriorating socioeconomic situation for youth and for some youth leaders, their situation is worse now than before the revolution – as is also reflected in OECD (2015) and WB (2014b) data. This is worrying, considering that some of the young leaders get engaged in politics after years of unemployment in the hope of getting a decent job. Those individuals stated that they would not be volunteering with a youth movement if they would have a job. This suggests a desperate option with limited choices and a 'temporary participation' in the stage of what Singerman (2007) has defined as a 'waithood'. This outcome indicates that young people do not only have different practices of politics described by Quintelier (2007), but may have different motives to influence political decisions that are based on temporary and personal interest and which may not be based on the goal of contributing to society. This questions the culture of politics and underlines Norris's (2003) argument about the 'generational shift' from traditional politics towards politics of choice that we may be experiencing. However, other participants get engaged in politics believing that they can make a positive societal change. Those individuals often referred to their family connections and were encouraged by their parents to participate in politics. This suggests a family based elite pattern and an influence of socioeconomic status of political engagement, resulting in varied motivations and goals.

The disappointment after the elections in 2011 is clear and the anticipations felt before the revolution still remain. Mark (2013) explained that young Tunisians felt betrayed, were excluded from decision-making processes and were frustrated with the older politicians who they perceived as neglectful. The findings of this study indicate that the opinions of young leaders have changed little after the elections in 2014, although the electoral law does ensure the inclusion of youth and the number of young members of parliament has increased. The youth leaders who were involved in politics before the revolution participated in student politics or within political parties that their family members were engaged in. For others, their political interest, awareness and involvement increased after the revolution.

All participants spoke about obstacles that they face to full participation. The social exclusion framework presented by Silver (2007) is well suited to understand the obstacles that the leaders described themselves to be facing. What does it for instance mean to be a female politician in Tunisia? Females are excluded from i.e. men's coffees and football stadiums, two dominating cultural fields and common platforms for exchanging political opinions. One MP was entirely excluded from meetings within her political party due to gender, and she felt neglected as a girl. In contrast, other females did not claim to face any limitations to participate in politics due to gender and compared Tunisia to other Arab states in a relation to women's rights. This tendency is understandable, considering Bourguiba's western adoption of culture and Ben Ali's secularism and women's empowerment emphasises – making Tunisia a unique Arab exception. Although the majority of the youth leaders spoke about Tunisian women to be free and legally equal to men, Khalil (2014) found women to be absent from public debate and after the revolution women's rights were threatened through forms of political exclusion and discourse violence.

With the female 'double' or even 'triple' exclusion in mind or the 'cumulative continuity' described by Silver (2007), the youth leaders face various hindrances to full participation in politics that are interconnected, including financial issues, the generational wall, biased media and a lack of capacity. Obstacles can be caused not only by poor economic situations, but also by leftovers of the dictatorship, the ruling elite that still remains, as well as systematic cultural dogmas or prejudices against young people. One of the participants described for instance how the older generations view youth participation in politics as a phenomenon of 'adolescent politics'. This is causing a gap between generations, as older people do not take young people seriously. The findings of this study show that

young MPs are facing the same obstacles. They are not capable of showing up when needed due to financial restrictions, are excluded from the media, do not have the appropriate knowledge and training and face 'double standards' due to their age and lack of experience. One of them stated that being in power is not real power when it comes to decision making. Although young MPs do contribute to meetings and come up with ideas, ultimately the older members make the decisions. This outcome reflects Ødegård (2010), who argued that 'not all participation is positive' when youth representation is used as an alibi for decision makers so they can say youth have been involved.

The findings of this study indicate intentional manipulation of youth. The word 'youth' was used as a slogan while debating in campaigns as a political strategy to gain power. Nidaa Tounes' recruitment of youth was systematic. According to the youth leaders, the success of the party in 2014 was a result of all the campaign work of youth that in the end received no power and no credit. According to Fusco and Heathfield (2015), youth participation must be framed with considerations of challenges to injustice and the deep rooted forces that maintain the status quo.

Ødegård (2010) argued that youth can get cynical about politics if their work is not valued and he offered this suggestion as an explanation for political distrust and non-participation. However, the youth leaders themselves described the reasons why young people boycotted the elections in 2014 to be due to political distrust. They listed interconnected reasons that I categorised into 'disappointment', 'broken promises' and 'manipulation and discrimination'. Those are elements that young people also complained about in studies undertaken after the elections in 2011, indicating unchanged youth opinions (British Council, 2013; Collins, 2011).

The youth leaders who participated in this study repeatedly complained about the remaining power of the last regime, which they believe contributed to political distrust and election boycotting. According to Brumberg (2014), authoritarianism is helpful after moving the focus from the 'study of transition' to the 'study of political change', linking structural conditions and political action. It can be argued that despite the changed political system, autocratic rituals still exist within the culture of modern Tunisian politics. Because of the survival of autocracy and the mix of autocratic and democratic mechanisms, post-transition theories help to understand 'hybrid regimes' (Brumberg, 2014). My findings reflect the outcome of a previous study that was conducted by the British Council (2013) between the 2011 and 2014 elections. During that time young people believed in two conflicting forces:

one that is trying to rebuild Tunisia from scratch and other that is just trying to dress the old regime in a new type of clothing. One of my participants for example declared his reason for being involved in a political party was only to 'get rid of the leftovers' of the dictatorship. Despite the political change, the same old elite is still dominating and the outcome shows that the media is not developing in parallel to the democratisation, which is preventing political progress. One youth leader questioned if there even was a revolution, meaning a 'power to the people' kind of revolution and forecasted another revolution if they were not able to 'destroy everything and build again'.

According to Pace and Cavatorta (2012), mechanisms used by elites to maintain autocracy are still running successfully, making authoritarianism still valid. The findings give examples of how the members of the elite are placed in top seats on candidate lists running for parliament, ensuring their power. This is not only causing political distrust, but also power tensions within the ruling party of Nidaa Tounes. Five months after the parliamentary elections, the leaders of Nidaa Tounes were still disputing about minister positions, resulting in a party split in April 2016. Only the future will reveal the outcome or consequences of this sensitive political situation. Although this situation might by now have affected the opinions of the political leaders: the majority were satisfied with the outcome of the elections in 2014 and believed the government to have the capacity to succeed.

Logically, the minority of the participants who were unhappy with the outcome of the parliamentary elections were the few Ennahda supporters. The reasons did not concern the number of seats Ennahda obtained, instead it was due to the two party domination. As Lefébre (2015) addressed, the rise of Ennahda in 2011 resulted in severe political polarisation and a tension between Islamists and secularists, which is a continuing challenge. According to O'Donnell and his colleagues (1986), transitions are unlikely to succeed without a common national identity. However, I identified 'complicated party politics' as a reason for both election boycotting spawned by disappointment and political distrust. Although one young Secularist was unhappy about the amount of seats Ennahda won, he mostly referred to the need of pluralism and more diversity in the parliament. The majority raised their concerns on the electoral results as being the 'non-existence' of other parties and they claimed that the two party domination is dividing society. Karoud (2015) described how the battle between Essebsi of Nidaa Tounes and Marzouki of Ennahda reflected the depth of the political polarisation that split society during the presidential elections in 2014. These candidates are also both members of the last regime, which is another reason why young

people tended to ignore the second round of the presidential elections. The youth leaders spoke about how young people do not see themselves in this secular and Islamic division. Some protested that this division was like a 'copy paste' in student politics – with a considerable effort on recruitment to a new unified student movement. They rather spoke about unity and the collaboration of all groups of society. This was evident to me in the field, where I witnessed the close friendships between young people that support different parties and are working together on youth affairs.

The above discussion is only limited to the opinions of the participants of this study and the category of youth that boycotted the elections in order to show objection, anger, and dissatisfaction. Others were described as young people who 'do not care' and therefore they did bother to show up at the polls. This indication might reflect a study which showed that 30 per cent of young Tunisians believe that the government 'doesn't matter' (Zoubir, 2015). The youth leaders who participated in this study mentioned various reasons for election boycotting which are also directly linked with the obstacles young people face to participate in politics, e.g. lack of capacity. The new culture of democracy was also often mentioned and one participant described the common phrase that young Tunisians needed to lose their 'virginity' when it came to politics.

Pace and Cavatorta (2012) have described how young people were assumed to be de-politicised, however the revolution refuted that assumption, as did their continuing campaign work. Furthermore, the findings of this study show a true enthusiasm among the youth leaders. Although they were excluded from the elite-led transition process and are still left out in decision-making processes, youth leaders have made efforts that have been ignored. They are full of ideas for solutions and are making collective attempts to influence decision-makers. For instance, I witnessed how young people established a youth initiative to coordinate their actions and institutionalise their work. This suggests that platforms of pre-revolution unstructured mobilisation of civil society and social movements can develop and become stable and structured. According to Kiisel, Leppik and Seppel (2015), young people tend to engage in less formal, temporary, or self-organised forms of participation – which is not an appropriate description of the youth leaders as political actors.

Since the majority of the participants engage in both formal and informal political activities, I adapted the broad identification of political participation outlined by Van Deth (2014) to understand them as political actors. Also because the youth leaders asserted that there is a diverse group of Tunisian youth that must be considered when exploring youth

political participation; how they are active in different ways and are using diverse methods. Considering youth as a marginalised group, might for that reason mean approaching the political arena in a different way and for different reasons – therefore a wide understanding of political participation is necessary. The youth leaders, for example, identified groups of youth who want to make change, others who want to migrate out of the country, young people who just want a decent job and a normal life and lastly, a group of youth who join terrorist groups mainly out of desperation and emptiness as described above.

The youth leaders all raised their concerns about young people who join terrorist groups who are being 'brainwashed' by extremists that could be placed under 'unintended consequences', one of the overlooked factors of democratisation and authoritarianism, identified by Cavatorta and Haugbølle (2012). The concerns of the youth leaders did not only consist of the phenomenon of foreign fighters, terrorism, a new Salafi culture and an ideology that is spreading around like a 'virus' – but also the glorification of death. The leaders spoke about how young people do not value life and one stated that if they have nothing to say about their own destiny, they become extremists and think their solution is to reach their objectives in Paradise. This mirrors Kassab's (2012) concept of Bouazizi's deprivation of political agency. His protesting act of self-immolation to control his death, escaping 'biopower' for the purpose of gaining an agency to securitise the way structural violence controlled his life and limited his emancipation. This concept illustrates how suicide is used to escape structures of power that define the livelihood of individuals. Moreover, the leaders spoke about a changed behaviour among adolescents and children after the revolution. One described a tragic trend of suicides among children as young as six years old in his rural hometown. In that context he illustrated how Bouazizi's act was worshipped after the revolution – when this trend began. After my visit to the National Theatre of Tunisia, I also discovered that suicides are even portrayed in the field of art in Tunisia and have culturally become a humorous phenomenon.

The findings show that ethnography is well suited to look microscopically at political details, the dilemmas of young people as political actors, their passion and sacrifices like Auyero and Joseph (2007) suggested. This study also gives a thicker form of political information and reveals the emotions that lie behind the voter turnout data. However, this study is limited to a small number of a specific groups of youth leaders and due to ethics, valuable information to produce patterns of meaning might have been left out. Also, the

literature is only limited to knowledge that has been produced in the English language, as well as the general language barrier between researcher and participants.

For Tunisia's new born democracy to flourish, the value of youth participation must be measured, therefore the prospects of youth are necessary. In order to ensure inclusive and meaningful participation of youth, I believe it is vital to consider Fusco and Heathfield's (2015) questions of 'participation in what?' and 'participation for what purpose?'

Conclusions

Overall, this thesis aimed to examine the perceptions of Tunisian youth leaders in the transition from autocracy towards democracy. To fulfil its purpose, I have presented the existing theoretical frameworks with a special focus on youth participation. I have described the setting and the methodological road I took towards the results of my qualitative research. The youth leaders expressed the need for a 'revolution of mentality' and worry about 'new societal issues' that came up to the surface after the revolution. Those issues include 'too much freedom', changed behaviour, glorification of death and widespread strikes. A consequence of freedom of speech is the rise of Islamic extremism – a new ideology that is dividing society, has created a new culture, has brought terrorism to Tunisia and is targeting vulnerable youth that are increasingly joining foreign conflicts.

The findings indicate intentional manipulation of youth. The word 'youth' is used as a political tool and political parties use young people to run campaigns. The findings also illustrate a deteriorating socioeconomic situation of youth. Motivations to participate in politics also vary from the hope to make a change to desperation for jobs. The youth leaders do not relate to the political polarisation and rather opt for collective actions. They are making considerable efforts to contribute to society, but they face various hindrances that are interconnected, including gender inequality, financial issues, generational wall, biased media and lack of capacity. The ruling elite and systematic cultural dogmas or prejudice against young people are obstacles to youth participation. Young MPs are facing the same obstacles, thus being young in a power position does not always translate into real power when it comes to decision-making. The main reason why young people boycotted the elections in 2014 was political distrust caused by interconnected factors, including two party domination, disappointment, broken promises, manipulation and discrimination. The youth leaders repeatedly complained about the remaining power of the last regime. Despite a changed political system, autocratic rituals still exist within the culture of Tunisian politics.

The suicide trend and changed behaviour of adolescents and children needs further research on how the societal shift has affected young Tunisians. Despite this alarming trend and unchanged anticipations of the young leaders throughout the process of transition,

most of them felt optimistic about the future of Tunisia as a democratic state. Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the UN, stated: 'No one is born a good citizen, no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth' (UN, 1998). The role of leading youth must be acknowledged as an aspect of Tunisia's success and for Tunisia to move forward, their continuing efforts need to be embraced.

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