Beyond the Democratic Success Story

An exploratory case study of citizens' expectations and experiences of Tunisian democratization

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Abstract

This study is an exploratory qualitative case study that seeks to capture nuanced and personal perspectives on the experiences of the Tunisian democratization process. The aim of this study is to examine what the expectations of the regime change was and how these expectations relate to the perceived reality. In doing so, it utilizes an theoretical framework based on elements from the works of Seymour Lipset *Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy (1959)* and Michael Bratton and Robert Mattes *Support for Democracy in Africa: Intrinsic or Instrumental (2001)*. The research design is of qualitative and explorative nature, where the primary data has been conducted through a field study in Sousse, Tunisia. The study finds that the main expectations of democratization can be understood by dividing citizens' expectations into two categories: Economic government performance and Political government performance. Furthermore it suggests that the Tunisian citizens' attached expectations to democracy are focused on political and material gains which implies that they have an instrumental support for democracy.

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1. Introduction

Democracy can mean a plethora of different things depending on who you ask, and the meanings and expectations attached to normative ideas of democracy can shape the process of democratization itself. This is most evident when revolution-spurred hopes for democracy are contrasted by the backdrop of the seemingly dismal reality of widespread unemployment and poverty. These phenomena of mismatches in reality versus expectations are common characteristics of young democracies who are still suffering from the growing pains that accompany the complex process of democratization. One such democracy is Tunisia, a small country in North Africa that has been experiencing a major political transition since the outbreak of the Arab Spring nearly ten years ago. The democratic shift brought on by the Arab Spring has consequently affected every single sphere of society, let alone the political arena. Measurements of the quality of democracies and support for democracy as a system have been widely researched (Bollén, 1990; Coppedge et al, 2011). However, these studies are often based on the assumption that democracy as a concept, and the expectations that accompany democracy, are understood the same across very different polities. These assumptions pose a problem particularly when analyzing new democracies due in part to the lack of material data on new democracies and in part to the shortage of studies focused on understanding the distortion that occurs on a personal level between citizens normative perceptions of what democracy should be and what they perceive their current reality to be (Heyne, 2016;2019).

1.1 Research aim and question

This study seeks to explore and gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of Tunisian citizen's experiences of the ongoing democratization as well as their expectations and satisfaction with the democratic process and what it has delivered. Furthermore, it aims to contribute to existing research on understandings of democracy and expectations attached to democratization processes, more specifically in the context of young democracies. Primary and secondary data will be analyzed by utilizing an analytical framework inspired by elements of study by Seymour Lipset - *Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy (1959)*, as well as the study by Michael Bratton and Robert Mattes *Support*

for Democracy in Africa: Intrinsic or Instrumental (2001). This study will exclusively focus on how the expectations and experiences of the Tunisian democratization can be understood from the citizens perspective. Hopefully, this will provide an insight into the lives of Tunisians in the context of a transitioning young democracy in a post-colonial setting, showing in-depth and personal perspectives on expectations and experiences of democratization.

Hence, the research question is as follows:

- *What were the citizens' expectations of the democratisation process in Tunisia and how do these relate to the perceived experiences?*

1.2 Significance

There is a rich body of quantitative and qualitative research on democratization, including studies on the requisites for democratization, quality of democratic systems, support for democracy and satisfaction with democratic regimes. However, there is surprisingly little qualitative research on citizen's expectations of democracy, experiences of the democratic process and the level of satisfaction with democratization, especially in the context of transitioning and young democracies. Therefore, this thesis aims to explore and study the Tunisian democratization from the citizen's perspective. Tunisia is an interesting case as it is the only country in the MENA region that peacefully managed to not only bring down the authoritarian regime, but also successfully begin its transition to a liberal democracy during the Arab spring (Freedom House, 2019). During the first years of transition to a democratic order, Tunisia's efforts have predominantly focused on addressing political challenges related to the polarization of politics around identity and religious issues and the rise in insecurity related to attacks by extremist groups. The performance of the country in this regard has been generally positive, as it has managed to consolidate democratic gains despite political challenges. However, Tunisia faces grave economic challenges, endemic corruption and security threats that remain obstacles to full democratic consolidation (Diwan, 2019, p. 2).

2. Background

2.1 The democratic exception in the MENA region

The Arab Spring erupted in Tunisia on December 17, 2010, when a policewoman confiscated the vegetable cart of a 26-year-old street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, in Sidi Bouzid, an in-land city south of Tunis. Bouazizi appealed to the provincial headquarters in Sidi Bouzid, where his case was rejected. A few hours later Bouazizi doused him-self with flammable liquid and set himself on fire in the middle of the streets. This incident sparked the revolution in Tunisia and became the catalyst for the Arab Spring that later spread to other North African and Middle Eastern countries (Abushouk, 2016, p. 53). Nine years after the revolution, The independent conservative law professor Kaïs Saïed won Tunisia's presidential election with 72.7 % of the votes against Nabil Karoui on October 13th 2019. As Tunisia's new leader, Saïd is now together with the unicameral 217-member national assembly facing several challenges such as rampant corruption, growing social and identity tensions, widespread unemployment, security issues and overall economic stagnation. (Brumberg and Ben Salem, 2020, p. 111.) Tunisia is considered the most clear-cut case of change after the Arab spring and furthermore the only country in the MENA region that succeeded in its democratic transition. However, most of the economic and social challenges that led to the uprisings during the Arab spring are still unmet, which is reflected in the growing social discontent.

Widespread unemployment, especially among the youth, is one of the most critical issues that Tunisia has had to deal with over the last decades (Amara and El Lahga, 2016, p.17). People take to the streets to protest as dissatisfaction among the people continues to rise, and if the politicians keep failing to make improvements the stability of this young democracy may be threatened. V-Dem's annual report (2018) shows that Tunisia was the only country in the world that transitioned from autocracy to become a liberal democracy from the year 2007 to the year 2017 (V-Dem annual report, 2018, p. 20) *see figure 1*. This makes Tunisia not only an exception in the MENA region but in the whole world. The rest of the world is pointing out Tunisia as a role model and refers to it as the "success story" of the Arab world.
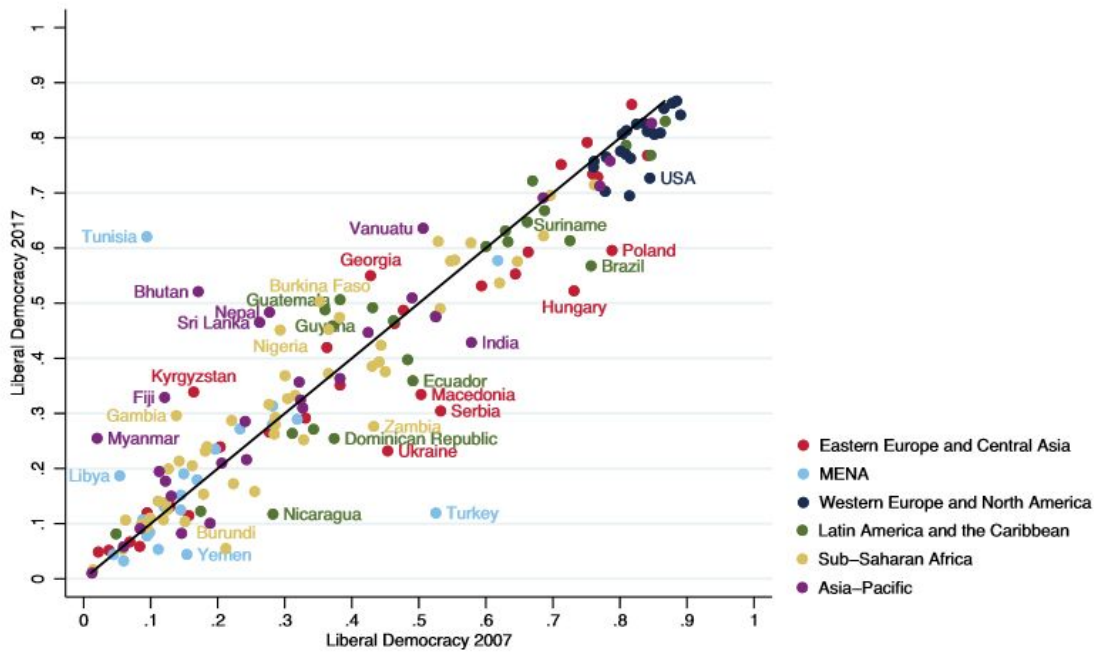
Figure 1. : Changes on the libral democracy index, 2007-2017 (V-dem annual report, 2018).

Some scholars argue that Tunisia has already succeeded in its transition to democracy even if the political institutions are not fully consolidated (Torelli et al, 2012, p. 140). On the other hand, several studies show that Tunisia might be stuck in a "transition-trap" and that further consolidation is crucial to secure the future of a sustained democratic Tunisia (Abushouk, 2016; Masoud 2018; Brumberg and Ben Salem, 2020). Nonetheless, despite political challenges, leaders in Tunisia have achieved a certain degree of success by entering into a political pact that has enabled them to move from authoritarianism to democracy. Moreover, they have made steady progress in establishing a liberal democratic government based on a sound degree of competition, inclusive suffrage in national elections, and a reasonable level of civil and political liberties (Abushouk, 2016, p. 62).

2.2 Economic stagnation in post-revolution Tunisia

Despite the impressive political development over the last 10 years in Tunisia, there are several necessary ingredients missing in order to develop a well-functioning economy. Tunisia's

endemic unemployment and social inequality are not only short term by-products of the economic chaos that generally follows political upheaval. There is another major aspect that should be emphasized. Many of these economic problems have deep structural roots in the growth-promotion strategies adopted after independence from France in 1956 (Diwan, 2019, p. 9). Tunisia's government remains under immense pressure both from the international community and the Tunisian people to boost its economy as well as make economic reforms and cut down on public spending. The Tunisian government is actively working on policies to boost employability as unemployment was one of the most pressing issues prior to the revolution and has become even more critical after. The most vulnerable people in Tunisia are the youth, with incredibly high youth unemployment (age 17-24) reaching 34,8 % in 2019. The World Bank Group (2019) and OECD (de la Maisonneuve, Larbi and Dridi 2018, p. 16) refers to the issue of youth unemployability in Tunisia as urgent and challenging. Secondly, studies suggest that the educational system needs to focus on producing skills rather than credentials in order for young people to be able to contribute to the creation of a dynamic private sector (Haouas et al, 2012, p. 395). Another aspect that relates to the possibilities of economic growth is that Tunisia lacks the energy resources that attract the attention and investment of external powers, that could potentially boost the economy after the revolution and during times of political transition. In addition, the unstable situation in neighbouring Libya further discourages potential investors from exploring financial possibilities and comparative advantages in Tunisia. (World Bank, 2017, p. 31).

2.3 Political barriers to further democratic consolidation

Despite the praise for the political progress from the rest of the world, the political instability in the country is a fact. In less than 10 years, Tunisia has had 9 governments (Afrobarometer, 2019). Another crucial aspect that further complicates the transition is the current political system that was put in place after the revolution. One could argue that Tunisia now, almost 10 years after the revolution, is struck in a political transition-trap. The original political pact that was formed and the compromises that were done, after the authoritarian regime fell, produced a consensus-based power-shared system.The constitution developed in 2014 laid out a system of

shared power meant to reassure all key social and identity groups that rivals would not be able to trample their interests. The pact enabled Tunisia to create the stability necessary at the time and furthermore complete the initial transition phase. Recent studies suggest that the democratization in Tunisia is stuck in a "transition trap" and need to go through a second transition in order to enable a complete democratic consolidation. In order for a "second transition" to take place the institutional, legal, economic, and ideological compromises that undergird the pact need to be replaced or at least modified. The pact that once enabled Tunisia to peacefully begin its transition now has become a huge obstacle for further democratization. (Brumberg and Ben Salem, 2020, p. 112)

3. Theoretical and analytical framework

3.1 Theoretical framework

3.1.1 Theories of democratization

Why and how do countries democratize? The causes, features and effects of different democratization processes has been discussed among scholars for decades. According to Huntington (1991) there have been three waves of democratization in the world.. The first wave started during the 19th century and was significantly slower and less widespread than the second wave that started after World War II ended. The third wave of democratization began in the 1970s in Southern Europe and was followed by parts of Latin America, Asia, Eastern Europe and Africa. The third wave of democracy is considered the largest and fastest one since it almost doubled the number of democratic governments in only 20 years (Huntington, 1991, p. 583-583). More recent studies have discussed whether the so-called Arab Spring can be classified as a part of Huntington's third wave, as the Arab Spring shares many similarities with the causes behind the third wave, or if it can be considered the start of a fourth wave of democratization, or even a false start to democracy (Larry Diamond, 2011; Abushouk, 2016, p. 43).

Some of the most influential thinkers within modernization theory and mainstream scholarly works on democratization are theorists such as Lipset (1959;1994), Huntington (1965;1991), Rueschemeyer et. al (1992) and Dahl (1998;2005). What they all have in common is the claim that there is a strong correlation between economic growth and democracy. For instance, Dahl (1998) argues that market economies create favourable conditions for democratic institutions. Empirical evidence shows that there is a relationship between democratic regimes and high GDP per capita. However, the causal relationship between the two is still up to debate. Moreover, there is no consensus among scholars whether democracy is a product of economic growth or if the process of democratization itself fosters economic growth (Traversa 2014, p. 125). Another aspect of this correlation that is discussed by various scholars is related to timing, more specifically, when in the process of democratization the economic growth is of most importance. Some scholars argue that economic growth significantly increases the chances to attain

democracy (Przeworski et al. 2000, p. 191), while others argue that the more critical point comes later and that young democracies not only need to boost economic growth in order to initiate democratization, but to gain legitimacy and to fully consolidate and above all sustain the democratic regime (Rice and Ling, 2002, p. 320).

3.1.2 Expectations of democracy

Heyne (2016;2019) criticize how researchers analyse citizen satisfaction regarding the effectiveness of their national democracies and citizen support for specific democratic institutions. Furthermore, she argues that we should take a step back and study what democracy means to different people, both as individuals and collectively. Theoretically she defined expectations from democracy as a normative ideal of how a democracy should function. In addition she tests if and how citizens' expectations are influenced by the democratic context in their respective country. The study concludes that researchers should keep in mind that when we are asking citizens conception of democracy might differ systematically across countries and that further research needs to be done in order to determine which other factors influence individual expectations from democracy, and how these expectations affect patterns of support for democratic institutions (Heyne, 2019, p. 15). Finally, she argues that citizens' conceptualizations and expectations of democracy derive from the socio-economic conditions of the context as well as from experience or lack of experience with democracy. Her main critique against the existing research on citizens' support for democracy is that it builds on a premise that citizens of new and even established democracies share, with each other and with normative theory, a common view of the meaning of democracy. Moreover they conclude that there is a misconceptualization of democracy, namely that democracy inherently means an immediate and global improvement in citizens' material well-being.

3.1.3 Support for democracy

Bratton and Mattes (2001) presents a comparative study on citizens' attitudes towards democracy using survey data from Ghana, Zambia and South Africa. They argue that support for the democratic system in young democracies relies on government performance. Furthermore, they

seek to examine whether citizens' understanding and support of democracy is *intrinsic* or *instrumental,* or a combination or the two. An *intrinsic* support is focused on political freedoms and equal rights that democracy embodies, regime change is therefore valued as an end to itself. *Instrumental* support for democracy support which regime change is understood as a means to other ends, most commonly material ones such as the alleviation of poverty, the improvement of living standards and other economic gains. They argue that so far, new democratic regimes in Africa have been able to legitimate themselves by delivering political goods which means that citizens' support for democracy is intrinsic (Bratton and Mattes, 2001, p. 449). However, they acknowledge that support from citizens' in young democracies is most likely based on government-performance. Furthermore they divide regime performance into two different baskets of goods: *Economic Basket* and *Political Basket.* The economic basket includes consumable goods, jobs and basic social services while the political basket includes peace, security, political freedom, human dignity, civil liberties and equality before the law.

3.1.4 Legitimacy and economic development

Seymour Lipset (1959) presents two principal complex characteristics which are crucial for a sustained democratic society: legitimacy and economic development. Furthermore, Lipset claims that to attain legitimacy, what new democracies need above all is efficacy, particularly in the economic arena. If they can take the high road to economic development, they can keep their political houses in order. A number of other criteria are developed in two of Lipset's major studies: *Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy (1959)* and *The Social Requisites of Democracy Revisited (1994).* Lipset uses cultural and economic variables in order to explain the institutionalization of democracy - the democratization process, however, the two overarching key concepts of his theory is legitimacy and economic development. In contrast to an authoritarian regime, a democratic state's stability relies on the support from the masses as they cannot obtain and sustain power by using force. Lipset (1994) argues that legitimacy is obtained through continuous internal competitiveness and free and transparent elections. Moreover, legitimacy with a sustainable and continuous effect is gained when the state manages to accommodate the basic needs of the majority of the people in

the long run, as well as the key actors who are in a position of power such as military and economic leaders (Lipset, 1994, p. 9).

3.1.5 Postcolonial Critique

Edward Said's influential work *Orientalism (1978)* is often seen as the starting point of postcolonial knowledge in social sciences. The central message of Said's work is the need to decolonize knowledge concerning the non-Western world. Chandra (2013) developed a comprehensive postcolonial approach to political science, drawing on Said's Orientalism (1978) and other critical anti-colonial writings. Chandra highlights how latent assumptions and prejudices by mainstream western scholars perpetuate the colonial tendency to take the Euro American democratization experience as natural and universal in contrast to the inchoate articulations of modernity in the post-colonial world (Chandra, 2013, p. 491).

Koelble and Lipuma further problematize mainstream conceptualizations of democracy by stating that in most approaches to defining, conceptualizing and measuring democracy, the underlying assumptions are highly a-historical and a-cultural. They argue that the conventional paradigm and its definitions and measurements of democratic progress is insufficient and inappropriate in postcolonial settings. The article offers four arguments as to why democracy in the postcolony will not, and cannot, develop in a similar fashion to those in the North American and Western European settings. They suggest that citizens in the postcolonial societies, based on both their institutionalized and embodied histories, have evolved expectations about governance and governmentality that overlap with those of the western world, but also depart from them in significant ways (Koelble and Lipuma, 2008, p. 22). Furthermore, they emphasize that, democratizing democracy entails that the powerful western nations support people's efforts across the postcolony to define democracy on their own terms. The argument here is that these means of measuring democracy are epistemologically flawed because they fail to adequately grasp in which way democracy as a concept and form of governance becomes re-territorialized in local/national contexts (Koelble and Lipuma, 2008, p. 2-3). Moreover, a post-colonial

perspective, or lens can be applied and used as an approach when studying most phenomena within social sciences.

3.2 Analytical framework

Based on the studies discussed in the previous section this chapter will give a brief presentation of the framework that will be utilized to analyse the data further down in chapter 5. The frame of analysis is based on elements from two of the studies discussed above: *Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy (1959)* by Seymour Lipset as well as the *Support for Democracy in Africa: Intrinsic or Instrumental (2001)* by Michael Bratton and Robert Mattes. For the purpose of this study the analysis exclusively focuses on the two overarching criteria of Lipset's theory on democratization, namely 1. *Legitimacy* and 2. *Economic growth*. The reason for that is that this study seeks to capture the experience of the democratic process from the perspective of the citizens, therefore, broader criteria are most suitable to study in order to answer the research questions at hand. It is acknowledged that the other criteria are important in order to fully grasp the complexity of the Tunisian case, however that is beyond the scope of this thesis.

The elements used from Bratton and Mattes (2001) study are *1. Economic government performance* and *2. Political government performance.* Since, the research question of this study seeks to explore what the citizens' expectations and experiences of democratization are, these elements are relevant and applicable to answer the question. In doing so, the analysis will study what expectations citizens' have had on government performance, by dividing the expectations into economic and political baskets. The literature presented above indicates that citizens' satisfaction and support for democracy in young democracies is based on the government's ability to meet the citizens' expectations.

3.2.1 Legitimacy and economic development

In political science, legitimacy is the right and acceptance of an authority, usually a governing law or a regime. According to Lipset (1959) the stability of a given democratic system depends

not only on the system's efficiency in economic growth but also upon the effectiveness and legitimacy of the political system. By effectiveness is meant the actual performance of a political system, the extent to which it satisfies the basic functions of government as defined by the expectations of most members of a society (Lipset, 1959). These processes of the two key concepts are closely intertwined and related to each other. The analysis will seek to gain understanding of the citizens' experiences in relation to the two overarching requistities developed by Lipset.

3.2.2 Political and economic government performance

These themes set out to discuss which types of expectations of government performance that are attached to the support for democracy in Tunisia. Furthermore it seeks to examine whether the citizens are satisfied with the way elected regimes operate in practice in relation to the expressed expectations An intrinsic support for democracy implies that citizens' expectations of what democracy is focused on political and civil liberties. Furthermore intrinsic support is a commitment to democracy 'for better or worse'; as such, it has the potential to sustain a fragile political regime even in the face of economic downturn or social upheaval (Bratton and Mattes, 2001, p. 448) On the contrary, If the expectations attached to the democratization process are focused Economic government performance it consequently means that the citizens have an Instrumental support for democracy , which means it comes with conditions. In short, the expectations on democratization are focused on economic and material improvements. This type of support for democracy may easily be withdrawn if the government fails to deliver material. This section sets out to discuss which types of expectations of government performance that are attached to the support for democracy in Tunisia. Furthermore it seeks to examine whether the citizens are satisfied with the way elected regimes operate in practice.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research design

This study is a qualitative case study and of exploratory nature which allowed the reasoning of the research process and more specifically data collection to be as inductive as possible. In short, the theoretical ideas essentially emerged from the data, instead of vice versa (Bryman, 2012, p. 387). While there are extensive amounts of studies on democratization on a global scale as well as recent studies on the Tunisian case, there is very limited research on the phenomenon from the perspective of the citizens. The only existing data on the citizens' experience of democratization are opinion polls and surveys carried out by the Tunisian National Institute of statistics (INS), Afro Barometer and Arab Barometer. The latter two will be analyzed as secondary sources will serve as a complement to my primary data. This study seeks to capture nuanced personal experiences, hence, the purpose of the study is not to generalize, but rather to understand that the answers from the participants are unique for this study.

4.2 The Field Study

The primary material in this thesis has been conducted through a minor field study (MFS) funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). The field study was conducted between January 28th and March 18th in Sousse, Tunisia. The initial plan was to stay at least two more weeks but unfortunately I had to end the study prematurely and return back to Sweden, due to the drastic escalation of the global outbreak of the virus Covid-19. I returned from the field with 7 semi-structured in-depth interviews, 3 focus group discussions and numerous field notes on observations from seminars, workshops and informal discussions.

4.2.1 Sampling and accessing participants

The chosen sampling strategy was snowball sampling which is a sampling technique that starts with the researcher initially sampling one or a small group of participants relevant to the research questions, and then asking them if they know others that would be suitable for the study, the next participant will suggest others and so on (Bryman, 2012, p. 424). In the case of

this study it meant that my key informant got me in contact with the first participant who then helped me arrange the first interview with the Dean at the faculty of advanced business studies at the University of Sousse. He initially served as my contact person. He then helped me arrange a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) at the university with a small group of students after I interviewed him. One participant from the first FGD then served as the next respondent in a semi structured in-depth interview, that person then recommended me to the next respondent that could be suitable for the study, and so on. The main criticism towards snowball sampling is that this does not lead to a random sample of respondents and will most likely not be very representative (Bryman, 2012, p. 205; Scheyvens, 2014, p. 45). However, the purpose of this study is not to give representation to the whole Tunisian population.

4.2.2 Triangulation of sources

Triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Patton, 2014, p. 134). In order to increase the internal validity of the case study, the material in the thesis consists of both primary sources conducted during my field study in Tunisia as well as secondary sources, namely opinion polls and other quantitative studies retrieved from Afrobarometer (2018), Arab Barometer (2018;2019), OECD and World Bank. In practice it is a method which enables you to both capture structural aspects of the research problem as well as the personal experiences of involved individuals. The secondary data used in this study is conducted from reliable and recognized sources which will increase both the reliability and internal validity of the case study (Flick, 2018, p. 45).

4.2.3 Semi-structured interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD's) and observations

The degree of structure in the data collection was unstructured and semi-structured interviews as I wanted to address and identify some of the key concepts that are related to the research topic. Fortunately, all interviewees agreed to have the interviews recorded, additionally, notes were taken on non-verbal communication. A crucial part of my methodological reflections even before arriving to the field was to be flexible and adaptable to the situation in order to be as open as

possible for potential changes. However, As Bryman (2008, p. 86) warns, having a very open approach without clear questions can result in collecting lots of data without a clear sense of what to ask the interviewees. Therefore I started with the analysis process already after the first interview in order to address some of the key concepts and main concerns expressed by the interviewees. To the benefit of my study, the frustration over the prevailing socio-economic situation was brought up in almost every conversation I had, which is in line with my prior knowledge and confirms that it is one of the most challenging issues in the country.

The semi structured and unstructured interviews on an individual level were supplemented and complemented by focus group discussions (FGDs) that typically emphasize a specific theme or topic that is explored in depth. The researcher is invariably interested in the ways in which individuals discuss a certain issue as members of a group, rather than simply as individuals. The design and structure of these group interviews was an attempt to retain its simplicity and clarity, therefore the participants were divided into groups of six and very few questions were asked (Bryman, 2012, p. 501;) The first of the FDGs was held at the University of Sousse, the second one was held during a workshop arranged by OECD and the Tunisian ministry of youth. The third one was held at Daar Chabab (youth house) in Kalaa Kbira, Sousse.

4.3 Data Analysis

The aim for the research process is to be iterative, that is, that I as a researcher move back and forth between data collection and analysis (Mason, 2002; O'Leary, 2010 in Scheyvens, 2014, p. 76). The analytical process is based on the four-step data analysis stages presented by Scheyvens (2014): data collection, data organisation, data coding (deconstruction) and developing theory (reconstruction). One of the challenges that I faced at an early stage in the data organisation process was regarding language use and transcription. Only a few (3-4) of the recorded interviews were held entirely in English and could, therefore, easily transcribed but the rest of the interviews are in a mix of English, French and Tunisian dialect. This is inevitable as that is how people communicate in Tunisia, mixing French and Tunisian in almost every sentence. Since transcribing should be done word by word exactly how it is said, as well as the pauses and

other non-verbal aspects, I realised that it would not just be extremely time consuming but almost impossible to effectively organise and code the interviews, if they were transcribed word by word in three different languages. Another issue is that there is no written language of the Tunisian dialect, so I would, therefore, have to do it in Arabic. However, this would not only increase the risk of losing important information significantly, I would in addition have to use a translator as I can neither read nor write standard Arabic which would be both costly and time consuming. However, I got help from an native Tunisian who works professionally in all three languages to go over the interview material, in order to reduce the risk of misinterpretations before I started the analysis. I decided that the best way to organise, code and analyze my data to minimize the risk of losing important information would be to do it by myself rather than use a data analysis software such as Nvivo for instance (Creswell, 2014, p. 245). Since the theoretical understandings are based on how the participants understand and feel in the social world, the analysis followed an abductive reasoning (Bryman 2012, p. 403).

4.4 Ethical considerations, Positionality and Reflexivity

All the respondents were asked for consent and informed about the purpose and intended use of the research. In addition, all respondents were informed that if wanted, they would be given access to a summary of the findings of the study once concluded (Banks & Scheyvens 2014, p. 165). Their right to confidentiality and anonymity was explained, furthermore they could choose not to answer the questions they did not feel comfortable in answering. I had to think extra carefully about the relationship between me, the researcher, and the interviewee as the relationship could be asymmetrical and exploitative. (England. 1994; Sultana, 2007). Reflexivity involves reflection on the self (the researcher), the process, and representation. Extra emphasis was also put on critically examining power relation and politics in the research process and the researcher's accountability in the data collection and interpretation (Sultana, 2007). One aspect of my positionality as a researcher in the field that was evidently central in every social context I entered in Tunisia, was my complex biography. I am ethnically half Swedish and half Tunisian, however, I identify predominantly as Swedish culturally and Swedish is my native tongue. Both Miraftab (2004) and Sultana (2007) describe this interesting but also challenging positionality

that I was experiencing in Tunisia. I am simultaneously being an insider, outsider, both and neither, depending on where I am and whom I am talking to. In lines with Miraftab (2004), I found that the participants' initial assessment of my positionality as 'in-between', eases the field dynamics and 'invites' me to talk about issues. It fosters a mutual interest in the interview process and allows its personal and intrusive aspects to be reciprocal. In many ways, I have been able to mobilise this to my advantage, especially in regards to getting access to interview officials and other elites that otherwise can be incredibly difficult to get a hold of as an outsider. However, this "in-between" status has made it difficult for me to find my place in the field and sometimes I could not fulfill the expectations of what the "daughter of an expatriate" should be like, which negatively affected the dynamics between me as a researcher and the respondents.

4.5 Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. Firstly, the issue of objectivity and value-free research in social sciences is a complex yet important topic that can be discussed from a number of angels. If our values make us biased researchers, it will possibly contribute to a subjective perception of the findings from the research, which could consequently result in a report that is based on a misperception of reality. In lines with Chambers (1981) I believe that it is inevitable for us as social scientists to be influenced by our own views about our place in the world. Even when acknowledging this we would have to change the construct of how we are viewing and understanding the world, in order to eliminate these biases. Another possible limitation to this study concerns external validity and generalizability. Qualitative case studies are criticized for lacking external validity as the results often are very context-specific therefore cannot be generalized. However, empirical and theoretical contributions can to some extent be transferable and applicable to other situations and contexts (Punch, 2005, p. 146). Since there are other countries and regions sharing similar circumstances and attributes and facing similar issues it can be of great interest to learn and gain insights from this study. Another limitation that this study has is related to representation. For instance, this study was carried out in the city of Sousse, located in the region of Sahel which furthermore is the "wealthiest" region in Tunisia (United nations economic commission for Africa, 2016, p. 16*).*

It is important to keep in mind that one of the most pressing issues Tunisia is facing is region inequalities, which implies that citizens' socio-economic situations differ a lot across regions, moreover, the inequalities are most prevalent between coastal and inland regions. Hence, the results of this study will not be representative for the Tunisian society as a whole. However, as explained earlier, as an explorative case study, it seeks to offer personal perspectives by Tunisian people in the context of the ongoing democratization, rather than capture the structural patterns on a national level. However, some of the participants in this study originally come from small towns in poorer regions, and have come to Sousse to study or work. Thus, they come from various socioeconomic backgrounds and have had different access to opportunity. Lastly, the field study was cut short due to the global outbreak of the virus Covid-19, hence I had to return back to Sweden abruptly, before all the scheduled interviews were conducted. Fortunately, I had already conducted most of the interviews and reached saturation somewhat. The pandemic has worsened the already pressing socio-economic situation in Tunisia further, which means that the concerns expressed by the interviewees might have been affected due to this drastic change in their everyday lives.

5. Analysis and Results

This chapter will present analysis and results, using the theoretical and analytical framework discussed and developed in chapter 3. The purpose of this study is to explore and gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of Tunisian citizen's experiences of the ongoing democratization, as well as their expectations and satisfaction with the democratic process and what it has delivered. More specifically this chapter sets out to discuss and answer the following research question: *What were the citizens' expectations of the democratisation process in Tunisia and how do these relate to the perceived experiences?*

The structure of the analysis is based on the key concepts that derive from the work of Seymour Martin Lipset - *Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy (1959)* categorized into two themes: a) Economic growth and b) Legitimacy. The other key concepts derive from work by Michael Bratton and Robert Mattes - *Support for Democracy in Africa: Intrinsic or Instrumental? (2001)* and will be categorized into two themes: c) Political government performance d) Economic government performance. Since this is a qualitative study, the answers are going to be nuanced and reflect upon personal experiences and perspectives, and do not represent the entire Tunisian community. In addition, the secondary data will add another dimension to the analysis as it captures structural aspects of the research problem.

5.1 Economic Development and Legitimacy

Seymour Lipset (1959) presents two principal complex and intertwined characteristics which are crucial for a sustained democratic society: legitimacy and economic development.

5.1.1 Economic development

Lipset claims that to attain legitimacy, what new democracies need above all is efficacy, particularly in the economic arena. If they can take the high road to economic development, they can keep their political houses in order. Furthermore he argues that if a regime fails to create

economic growth and deliver political improvements it will run the risk of losing it's legitimacy as a system. The literature presented earlier in this thesis shows that Tunisia's economy is in a critical condition and that it is under immense pressure to boost its economy (Diwan, 2019). Secondary data shows that Tunisians are deeply frustrated by economic conditions in their country. Only 7% rate the economy as good or very good, which is twenty points lower than in the months after the 2011 revolution and seven points lower than in 2016 (Afrobarometer, 2019). Public opinion surveys by Afrobarometer shows that they are aware of the critical economic situation in the country. It furthermore shows that the citizens' view of the country's economy has worsened over time. Moreover, the data from the in-depth interviews, informal discussions and the FGDs verifies the deep concern about the country's economic condition. Almost every person I had a chance to talk to brought up and emphasized their concerns of the economy.

> *"The country's biggest challenge now is to repay the International Monetary Fund debts, because this problem block any investment that country want to do, if you want to make in the investment you need money but you can't borrow money because you already borrow ones from the international monetary fund and you have to pay, generally borrowing money is not a solution and Tunisia didn't want to do that anymore and that's also a big challenge."* - (Respondent 6 - Male, 37 years old, working in a shop, Sahoul, Sousse).

The respondent believes that Tunisia cannot invest in the country's development as it has debts from the IMF.

> *"The economy of the country is worse than ever. The politicians keep promising us that it will get better. It has been almost 10 years since the revolution and Tunisia is getting worse and worse and there is nothing we can do about it. They keep taking more loans but Tunisia is slowly dying in front of our eyes".* - (FGD 2 - 6 participants - during workshop, Sousse).

The participant's quote above not only shows a negative view on the economy of the country but also reflects a frustration and expresses a hopelessness towards the constantly worsening perceived state of the economy.

5.1.2 Legitimacy

According to Seymour Lipset (1959), legitimacy with a sustainable and continuous effect is gained when the state manages to accommodate the basic needs of the majority of the people in the long run. He also states that transparency and accountability in the political system is of great importance. In addition, he argues that the most efficient way to gain legitimacy for a young democracy is to separate the old regime from the new regime.

Secondary data shows that 20% of Tunisians trust the government while 14% trust the parliament. Trust in political parties is even lower at 9%. In 2011, 62 % of Tunisians trusted the government, meaning there has been a 42-point decline in the years since. During the same period, trust in the parliament has fallen by 17 points. Moreover, those who are in the ages of 18-29 are half as likely to trust the government as those who are 60 and above (14% vs. 27%). The trend is similar for the parliament, with youth being 13 points less likely to have confidence in the legislature than those over 60 years old (Arabbarometer, 2019).

The data retrieved from Arabbarometer (2019) shows that there is a lack of trust in the Tunisian political institutions. These findings are alarming in relation to Lipset´s criteria democratization as this data suggests that there is an evident crisis of legitimacy. Moreover, it shows that there has been a sharp decrease in trust both the parliament and the government. This shows that despite being the product of democratic elections there is a widespread dissatisfaction with the regime. One of the respondents in the interview expressed distrust in the parliament and described the political system as "corrupt". This statement supports the findings of the secondary data above.

"Democracy is also used in dirty methods in Parliament. You vote for decisions in my favour, I vote for decisions in your favour. Otherwise, I will not vote for a project, even if it is for the public good. In Tunisia this is how our democracy works really, the political system is corrupt." – (FGD 3) in youth house (Daar Chabeb, Kalaa Kbrira, Sousse)

The Focus Group Discussion included respondents in the age range 16-24 years old in a "Youth house" in the outskirts of Sousse, a poor with widespread youth unemployment. All participants in this discussion had a very negative view of the regime.

"I don't think that democracy works as it should in Tunisia for two reasons :
First one is that people didn't really know the meaning of what democracy is, because it is something that is difficult to grasp. The second, it is true that we changed the system with the revolution in 2011, but nothing else has changed. Before 2011, you can't talk or give your opinion, now you wanna talk?okay talk as much as you want, but no one will hear you. Why do we have a democratic government when they do not listen to our needs?" - (Respondent 4 - Female, 23 years old, Kalaa Kbira, Sousse).

The respondent's quote illustrates how, despite gains in form of political freedoms the regime has not taken actions to meet the demand of the people. Furthermore she questions the legitimacy of the government as it has not effectively managed to do what it is put into place to do. If confidence in democratic institutions continues to decrease more, the young democratic regime risks becoming illegitimate.

5.2 Intrinsic and instrumental support for democracy

In seeking to understand whether citizens' support for democracy is intrinsic or instrumental Bratton and Mattes (2001) divide regime performance into two different baskets of goods and services: *Economic Basket* and *Political Basket.* The economic basket includes consumable goods, jobs and basic social services while the political basket includes peace, security, political freedom, human dignity, civil liberties and equality before the law.

In regards to the primary data both economic and political government performance was brought up as important freedoms, goods and services that democratization should deliver in every in-depth interview and discussed in all three of the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The respondents list both economic and political improvements as expectations of democracy.

> *"There are a lot of aspects that democracy must deliver, but for me, the most important ones are political freedom and overall economic improvement and raised living standards for the people."* - (Respondent 7- male, 23 years old, Sidi el Hani)

In one of the FGDs at the University of Sousse, with students pursuing their master's degree, they discussed how both political and economic improvements are requisites for creating a purposeful life:

> *"Without fair and free elections, we as citizens will not get our voices heard and we will not be able to change the society we live in. In order to change things we have to have the freedom to say what we want. In the same way economic aspects such as good living standards, opportunities, jobs and poverty alleviation are necessities, otherwise we will be stuck and cannot have a decent life. Both economic and political rights are important but in different ways, otherwise it will be impossible to live a life with dignity and purpose. "* - (FGD 1, 6 participants, Sahloul, Sousse).

5.2.1 Political government performance

Having an intrinsic support for democracy implies that you support democracy "for better or for worse", hence the political improvements are prioritized as democracy is seen as a means to an end itself. Political government performance includes the delivering of civil and political rights and freedoms. It implies being free within society from oppressive restrictions imposed by authority on one's way of life, based on one's political views or way of living life. Civil liberties include but are not limited to freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, right to privacy, freedom of speech and equal treatment under the law.

Secondary data shows that about half (52%) of Tunisians say the country enjoys greater freedom of expression, association, opposition, and media than it did a few years ago (Afrobarometer, 2018). This perceived gains expressed in the secondary data does not really reflect the expected reality, considering that Tunisia has gone from an authoritarian regime to a liberal democracy over the last 10 years as presented in a democracy index by V-dem (2018) earlier in this thesis. One would expect that the majority of Tunisians would express that they enjoy greater civil and political freedoms.

Two respondents expressed their expectations of democratization solely related to political gains.

> *"For me, Democracy means political rights and "rule by the people". Which means that any decision that takes place in the country, whether it is political, social, economic or cultural, must be shared with the people, either directly or through people authorized by the people. And then everyone should respect these decisions, even if you are not happy with it yourself."* - (Respondent 7, male, 23 years old, Student, Sidi el Hani)

> *"Democracy can and should deliver only political improvements such as freedom of expression and free and fair elections"* - (Respondent 1, female, 52 years old, teaches at the university, Sahoul, Sousse).

Moreover one respondent says that the government performance has met the political aspect of his expectations but not the social and political elements of the expectations.

> *"The slogan of the revolution was "employment, dignity and freedom". For me freedoms should include both political, social and economic freedoms. The only thing out of these three that the government has managed to achieve after 9 years is perhaps freedom. I would argue that the only freedom we have gained since Ben Ali, is political freedom..[...]. "* - (Respondent 2 - male, 47 years old, unemployed, Sousse)

5.2.2 Economic government performance

Having an instrumental support for democracy implies that you view democracy as a means to other ends, mainly material and economic improvement, such as economic assets, jobs, decent salaries and an array of basic social services.

Secondary data shows that Tunisians identified management of the economy (58%) and Unemployment (37%) as their top priorities that the government should address (Afrobaramoter, 2018). Moreover, ratings of government performance are overall very low, especially on economic indicators. Only 17% say that the government is doing a good job addressing unemployment, 13% says they are doing a good job in limiting inequality, while only 10% say the government is effectively controlling inflation (Arabbarometer, 2019). The primary data verifies that economic government performance and the delivering of jobs and decent salaries is a top priority. One respondent explains how the political government performance and gains related to political gains cannot compensate for the lack of economic performance and proviso

> *"[...] I would argue that the only thing we have gained since Ben Ali, is political freedom. But what is it really worth? I do not care if I can vote for whoever I want. That is worth nothing if I cannot feed my children. I am tired of hearing the government and the rest of the world telling us to be patient, telling us that political transition and democratisation takes time"* - (Respondent 2 - male, 47 years old, unemployed, Sousse)

Another respondent expressed how having a job still means that life is very difficult in Tunisia and that inflation is a pressing issue.

> *"The main challenges that the government should address are almost all related to economics. Living standards were low in Tunisia even before the revolution, with many unemployed people and low minimum wages for the people who were lucky to have a job. After the revolution life in Tunisia has become even more costly, which means that even if I have "a good job" my salary is so low that I cannot even move out of my parents*

house. So, you can only imagine how difficult life is for all the unemployed people in our country" - (Respondent , 27 years, pharmacist, Khezema, Sousse)

5.3 Additional findings

As this is an exploratory study and the interviews were designed in an unstructured and semi structured manner some additional interesting and important findings emerged. One of them related to the issue of peace and security, which both can be considered requisites for a stable society and further development and consolidation. One respondent expressed an alarming concern related to the government's inability to provide security for the Tunisian individuals and society as a whole.

> *"The people were hoping for an improvement in the situation after the revolution. But, on the contrary, many of the problems and concerns worsened for the citizens, we have suffered more than before. We even miss the days before the revolution to the rule of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, even if it was horrible. At least at that time we were blessed with safety and had security, but now we have suffered from terrorism of all kinds. Tunisia has become not only free for the people but for the bandits too"* - (Respondent 3 - 25 years old, Male, works in agriculture, Sidi El Hani)

Even though the respondent acknowledges that the authoritarian regime that ruled before the revolution was awful, he suggests that it was better than the current one. In this finding it is evident that the respondent prioritizes security above political freedom.

The second additional finding relates to Tunisians' expectations and concerns of the future. Secondary data shows that only 30% of Tunisians expect the economy to improve in the coming years, compared to 78% in 2011. In addition, youth and those who are better educated, are especially likely to have lost hope in the country's future. Only 27% of those ages 18-29 expect improvement compared to 41 % of those who are 60 years old and above (Arabbarometer, 2019).

Along the same lines many of the respondents in the in-depth interviews expressed a concern about the future of Tunisia's economy and lack of opportunity for young people.

> *"There is no future for young people in Tunisia, it does not matter if you invest in education and work hard, the opportunities are very limited. If you are lucky you can move away from this misery and create a better life in Europe"* - (FGD 1, 6 participants, at the University, Sousse).

The third and last finding is of great importance as it relates to the support for democracy as a system. Secondary data from Afrobarometer (2018) shows that Popular support for democracy over any other political system continues to decline, dropping to 46% compared to 71% in 2013. The proportions of Tunisians who reject authoritarian alternatives to democratic governance have also decreased. Three of the respondents express concerns that are in line with the figures presented in Afrobarometer's report.

> *" Democracy is, according to me, not the solution for increasing living standards here, if this all is democracy can do it is not enough"*- (Respondent 7, male, 27 years, pharmacist, Khezema, Sousse)

> *"...Maybe democracy works in other countries but I do not believe that it is the best system for the Tunisian society. I do not want the old regime back, but I also do not want this, there must be an alternative"*- (Respondent 6, female, 23 years old, unemployed, Kalaa Kbira)

> *"...If the politicians have not made any progress in 10 years I think it is evidence enough that democracy is not suitable here."*- (Respondent 2, male, 47 years old, unemployed, Sahoul, Sousse).

This suggests that the respondent does not think democracy is the solution to improvement of living standards for the Tunsian citizens. The answers developed by the respondents displayed frustration, hopelessness and longing for an alternative type regime, instead of the democratic.

To sum up this chapter, this study finds that the main expectations of democratization can be understood by dividing citizens' expectations into two categories: Economic government performance and Political government performance. The first and most evident finding is that all of the respondents thought both political freedom and economic improvement was of great importance. However, the study finds that respondents prioritize the aspect differently. The second finding shows that the overall satisfaction with the government performance is very low and that there is a growing frustration among the respondents. The analysis shows that the citizens' perceived experiences of political government performance somewhat correspond to the expectations they had on the democratization process. However, there seems to be a mismatch between the expectations on economic government performance and their perceived reality. None of the respondents said that their expectations of economic government performance has been met, neither during the democratic transition or as of today, almost 10 years after the revolution. Furthermore, the data suggests that the citizens' support for democracy is more of an instrumental understanding than an intrinsic as they view democratization as a means to improving material living standards and overall economic growth. When studying the citizens' experiences in regards to the aspects of economic development and political legitimacy neither of them seems to be stable. Thus, Tunisia's democratization process does not seem to be going in the right direction when applying Lipset's criteria for democratization.

In addition, the analysis shows that there is at least one important expectation attached to democratization that the framework derived from the studies by Lipset (1959) and Bratton and Mattes (2001) fail to address, namely: peace and security. An important question that arises from these findings of this study is what possible implications the mismatch between the expectations and experiences of democratization might have on the citizens' support for democracy.

7. Conclusion

This study attempts to answer the following research question: *What were the citizens' expectations of the democratisation process in Tunisia and how do these relate to the perceived experiences?* This study concludes that the Tunisian regime fails to meet the needs and demands of the people. Despite that Tunisian politicians have managed to establish a complex and rather well developed political structure, the primary data verifies what the secondary illustrate, that the Tunisian politicians have failed to meet the citizens' expectations of democratization. Furthermore the study identified different expectations attached to the democratization process in this young democracy, mainly related to economic and political gains. Moreover, the analysis shows that the Tunisian case fails to fulfill the social requisites criteria presented by Lipset (1959). Moreover, the analysis shows that even if the expectations on political gains and freedoms are somewhat met, it cannot compensate for the lack of economic government performance. In relation to the framework developed by Bratton and Mattes (2001) the study shows that the citizens in Tunisia seem to have more of an instrumental support for democracy, as they view democracy as a means to other ends, rather than regime change. In short, Tunisians prioritize economic and material improvements above political ones.

Suggestions for further research based on this study relates other types of expectations attached to democratization in the context of young democracies. The first suggestion is to look if there is a regional difference (coastal vs. in-land) regarding expectations on democratization. Secondly, another interesting aspect would be to study if there are differences in expectations between men and women. A final suggestion for further research that has been brought up by respondents in this study relates to issues of security. The alarming concerns expressed by some of the respondents show that security as an expectation should be taken seriously. When citizens' express nostalgic longing for the authoritarian regime the risk for the democratic process to fail increases.

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9. Appendices

9.1 Interview list

In-depth interviews

	Date	Location	Occupation	Gender	Recorded	Age
Interview 1	6/2-2020	Sahoul, Sousse	Teacher	F	**Yes**	52
Interview 2	7/2-2020	Sahoul, Sousse	Unemployed	M	**Yes**	47
Interview 3	9/2-2020	Sidi el Hani	Works in agriculture	M	**Yes**	25
Interview 4	13/2-2020	Kalaa Kbira, Sousse	Unemployed graduate	F	**Yes**	23
Interview 5	17/2-2020	Khezema, Sousse	Pharmacist	M	**Yes**	27
Interview 6	23/2-2020	Sahloul, Sousse	Working in a shop	M	**Yes**	37
Interview 7	27/2 - 2020	Sidi el Hani	Student	M	**Yes**	23

Focus Group Discussions:

	Date	Location	Participants	Gender	Recorded	Age
FGD 1	14/2-2020	Sousse (University)	**6**	4 -F 2-M	**Yes**	Early 20s
FGD 2	20/2-2020	Sousse (workshop by OECD)	**6**	3-F 3-M	**Yes**	18-30 years old
FGD 3	2/3-2020	Kalaa Kbira (Youth house)	**6**	2-F 4-M	**Yes**	17-23 years old

9.2 Interview guide

The respondents were free to answer the questions in the language they felt most comfortable in, either English or French. (the ones that did not feel comfortable in either of these two languages could answer in Arabic (Tunisian dialect).

In-depth interviews:

English:

1. How old are you? What are you doing (e.g. studying, working, unemployed)?
2. What were the main (social, political and economic) problems and challenges in Tunisia before the revolution in 2011?
3. What are the main (social, political and economic) challenges that Tunisia as a country is facing according to you now (after the revolution)?
4. Has the living standards of people generally improved, worsened or remained the same? Please elaborate on why you think it has improved, worsened or remained the same.
5. What does democracy mean to you? Please elaborate as much as you can.

6. What should democracy deliver according to you? (e.g. political freedom, eliminate corruption, economic improvements etc). If there are several aspects, which one is most important?

7. Do you think democracy works as it should in Tunisia? has the expectations of the revolution and democratisation been met, If not, why do you think that is?

8. If there is anything you want to add you can do that below. Feel free to add anything that you think is of importance.

Français:

1. Vous avez quelle age? Que faites-vous (par exemple étudier, travailler, chômeur etc)?

2. Quels ont été les principaux problèmes et défis (sociaux, politiques et économiques) en Tunisie avant la révolution de 2011 ?

3. Quels sont les principaux défis (sociaux, politiques et économiques) auxquels la Tunisie en tant que pays est confrontée aujourd'hui selon vous (9 ans après la révolution) ?

4. Le niveau de vie des personnes en Tunisie s'est-il généralement amélioré, aggravé ou est-il resté le même ? S'il vous plaît élaborer sur les raisons pour lesquelles vous pensez qu'il s'est amélioré, aggravé ou est resté le même.

5.   Qu'est-ce que la démocratie signifie pour vous ? S'il vous plaît élaborer autant que vous le pouvez.

6. Que devrait apporter la démocratie selon vous? (par exemple, la liberté politique, éliminer la récurrence, les améliorations économiques, la liberté d'expression. S'il y a plusieurs aspects, lequel est le plus important?

7. Pensez-vous que la démocratie fonctionne comme elle le devrait en Tunisie? Sinon, pourquoi pas?

8. Si vous souhaitez ajouter quelque chose, vous pouvez le faire ci-dessous. N'hésitez pas à ajouter tout ce qui vous semble important.

Focus Group Discussions:

Given topics to discuss:

1. Democracy

2. Revolution

3. Expectations vs. Reality

4. Inequalities

5. Unemployment

6. Education