

CORDOBA RESEARCH PAPERS

Evolving Political Participation and Civic Engagement of Moroccan Youth after the “Arab Spring”

October 2015

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NORTH AFRICA AND WEST ASIA IN TRANSFORMATION (NAWAT)

The NAWAT program was launched in 2010 within the framework of the so-called “Arab Spring” that led to new dynamics, new forms of political action and to a call for freedom, citizenship and democracy in the Middle East and North Africa region. Within this context, the interplay of religion and politics and the role of religiously inspired political actors are more critical than ever. In many countries of the region, disputes around religious and secular worldviews in politics are pervasive. The emergence of new political actors has a significant impact towards opportunities for peaceful transitions and pluralist societies or approaches leading to increased tensions.

Reinforcing mechanisms¹ for the transformation² of violent, or potentially violent, political conflicts with a religious dimension, the program's objective is to contribute to peaceful coexistence between groups with different worldviews. Jointly implemented by the CFG and the “Religion-Politics-Conflict” desk of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the program aims at enhancing the capacity and networks of conflict transformation actors, developing a common and collective understanding of conflicts and supporting local transformation initiatives.

¹ Conflict transformation mechanism = a structure or process within society for ensuring that change occurs, and that differences and conflicts are addressed in a non-violent manner. The concept of citizenship is instrumental for such mechanisms, encapsulating the principles of civic state (Dawla Madanyah) including political pluralism, inclusiveness and human rights, and implying that citizens are the basic political entity or building bloc of the civic state.

² Conflict Transformation = changing the way of dealing with conflicts by empowering parties and enhancing mutual recognition so as to minimize the use of violence. It involves dealing with direct and indirect/structural causes and aspects of conflict.

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INTRODUCTION

With the wave of social uprisings that spread through the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and other parts of the globe, youth have come to the forefront of media attention and have gained the sustained interest of decision-makers and analysts. While there is a general consensus that youth were the driving force behind the “Arab Spring” the image of these young men and women, who called for change and debunked regimes, remains elusive. Portrayed by the media and some analysts as yearning for freedom, more secular, politically-engaged and tech-savvy, these young people do not constitute a homogeneous cohort and the reality of their aspirations and positions is complex³. Compared to their elders, this generation is not less engaged in politics but expresses itself in more informal ways. Through the 2011 uprisings, which were in fact the culmination of previous protest movements⁴, they have experienced new forms of political expression and action. But the polarization that resulted from the emergence of new faith-based parties on the political scene, and the crackdown on these

same parties in Egypt, have led to confusion and disillusion in parts of civil society, and the youth in particular.

Four years after the upheaval, it is important to examine the changes in political attitudes and civic engagement of youth following the “Arab Spring” as compared to their (non-⁵ or more limited) past engagement. At least one of every five persons in the Arab region is between 15-24 years old and more than half the population is below the age of 25.⁶ While the youth are more educated, they are almost entirely excluded from participation. Beyond this mere demographic aspect, a clear lesson of the revolutions is that the aspirations of young men and women cannot be ignored any longer. While youth have demonstrated their potential for change and innovative ideas, these energies and capabilities can be diverted towards harmful and destructive actions if not channeled through enabling political and social environments. Thus political and social systems must be redesigned in a way that includes youth in decision-making processes and in reshaping their societies. This raises the question of youth attitudes and aspirations for political participation and civic engagement as well as

³ Hoffman, Michael and Jamal, Amaney (2012) “The Youth and the Arab Spring: cohort differences and similarities.” *Middle East Law and Governance*, No. 4. pp. 168-188.

⁴ The Arab Spring has been depicted by media and analysts as a ground-breaking moment that marked a “before” and “after” in youth political engagement. Rather than a rupture, it might also be considered as “navigation through evolving social and personal circumstances,” SAHWA (2014) “Contemporary Youth Research in Arab Mediterranean Countries: Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Research.”

<http://sahwa.eu/OUTPUTS/Publications/SAHWA-Concept-Paper-Contemporary-Youth-Research-in-Arab-Mediterranean-Countries-Mixing-Qualitative-and-Quantitative-Research>. (Accessed 8 October 2015).

⁵ It is important to make a distinction between “non-party participation” and political disengagement. Non-party participation is the youth conscious decision not to participate in the party system and electoral process, but political participation can manifest itself through unconventional or informal forms. In this regard, it does not mean political disengagement.

⁶ United Nations Economic and Social Committee for Western Asia and United Nations Programme on Youth (2011) “Regional Overview: youth in the Arab region”.

<http://social.un.org/youthyear/docs/Regional%20Overview%20Youth%20in%20the%20Arab%20Region-Western%20Asia.pdf>. (Accessed 8 October 2015).

their potential for constructive, non-violent and inclusive contribution to such systems.

MOROCCAN CONTEXT

In this context, sparks of the protests came to Morocco⁷, but young people then founded a movement which took a path different from other Arab countries, giving birth to different outcomes because of key variables and in particular the political regime's strategy in dealing with the 20 February Movement. On one hand it is true that Arab movements elsewhere, beginning in late 2010, had a role in the emergence of the 20 February Movement, but the Moroccan protest movement, on the other hand, was not just an imitation of what happened in other Arab countries. Besides, the contemporary history of Morocco has known the presence of protests by youth on more than one occasion since the first signs to form the so-called "national youth" in the thirties of the last century, which played an important role in resistance to colonial power. Then, in the sixties and seventies of the last century, a tide of Marxism affected a part of Morocco's educated youth, who copied its ideological concepts and forms of protest to achieve the dream of the revolution, following student events in France in 1968. The events of 23 – 25 March 1965 and subsequent events⁸ are examples of such protests. In this movement,

⁷ Calls for protests were first launched on Facebook; the founding announcement of the 'Freedom and Democracy Now' movement; the roadmap "20 February Movement... uprising for dignity", "20 February movement... the people want change", "Rally of 20 February 2011.. for Democracy, social justice", "Declaration of 20 February Youth".

⁸ El Ayadi, Mohammed (1999) "Les mouvements de la jeunesse au Maroc: l'émergence d'une nouvelle intelligentsia politique durant les années soixante et soixante-dix." *Emeutes et mouvements sociaux au Maghreb*. Éd Khartala. pp. 201-230.

the action of youth and student movements were the most important interfaces of work. It worked also through cultural and cinematographic clubs of young people. Within this tide, a part of the youth joined Marxist underground organisations, especially the "25 March" and "Ila al-Amam" (translated as "Forward") organizations. The Marxist tide has gone into significant decline among young Moroccans in the last decades. In the meantime, young people became significantly close to an Islamic orientation and, as an example of this new orientation, there has been a strong presence of Islamists in universities since the beginning of the nineties of the last century.

As a result of growing Islamic sentiment among young people on the one hand, the increasing proportion of young people in the population on the other hand, and the demographic increase of educated youth unemployment, young people have started initiating associations and engaging in forms of protest, as well as demanding jobs⁹. Under these circumstances, the state began to pay attention to youth issues. In this context, the National Council for Youth and Future was established in 1990, to prepare studies and reports on youth and, at the invitation of King Mohammed VI in 2000, to put young people at the heart of every integrated strategy of development. However, the terrorist events that took place in the city of Casablanca on 16 May 2003, regardless of the ambiguity surrounding these events, gave a strong indication that the Moroccan youth, socially outcast and politically excluded, are in danger of tending to violence, because most of those involved in those events were young people from the shanty neighbourhoods.

⁹ For example, in 1991 the National Association of unemployed graduates was founded, and later followed by other associations and groups.

Furthermore, repeated events of violence by young people on the one hand and rising unemployment on the other hand pushed the state to create programs for young people at the social and economic level and through institutions. In this context, centres for professional training and qualification have been initiated to help the youth, as well as government's initiatives to create jobs (2005-2011) by initiating a group of programmes, such as 'idmaj' (integrate), 't'ahil' (prepare) and 'moqawalati' (my enterprise)¹⁰. At a political level, there have been some actions to promote youth involvement in political parties and encourage them to participate in the elections.

Notwithstanding this, the impact of these programmes has remained limited. At the political level, young people largely abstained from the polls in the legislative elections of 2007, despite lowering the age of voting to 18 years from 20 in the past¹¹. At the social and economic level, the World Bank reported, on the basis of a poll completed in 2007 that 41% of Moroccan youth between 15 and 29 years are not part of the active population, and at the same time do not study. Comparatively, the percentage in the Arab world for the same population does not exceed 28%. Additionally, following research that was conducted during 2009 and 2010, this rate rose to 49%¹². It is important to

remember here that protests have grown significantly in Morocco since the beginning of 2007 due to the increase in prices, the cost of living and the high unemployment rate¹³. As an example, leading these protests were the city of Sefrou in September 2007, and Sidi Ifni in late May and the beginning of June 2008. These events have left many victims and detainees, most of whom were young¹⁴.

In the light of the above context, all the ingredients existed for Morocco to be part of the Arab Spring protests. In addition to the political, economic and social situation, the demographic reality also had an impact because between 2009 and 2010 Moroccan youth, aged between 15 and 20 years, represented 30% of the total population and 44% of the active population¹⁵. The 20 February Movement therefore did not create the protest, as demonstrations were growing before the existence of the movement, but later, in view of regional and local contexts, a mix of demographic and political, economic and social elements contributed largely to the development of the protests. It is hence possible to enumerate the elements of this development at the level of the organization of the protest, its nature and its targets. First, there was a transition from spontaneous demonstrations, as a reaction to a particular situation, to planned protest. Second, the

¹⁰ The 'idmaj' programme focuses on assistance to employment; 'ta'ahil' programme for diversifying career paths for diploma-holders; 'moqawalati' programme encourages entrepreneurship.

¹¹ 4th Amendment of the Law 64.02 Concerning the Modification and Completion of the Law 9.97 Concerning Elections Laws. The Official Gazette, 23 March 2003. No. 5093, p. 1001.

¹² World Bank (2012) Kingdom of Morocco: Promoting Youth Opportunities and Participation. p. 2

http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Morocco_2012_Youth_Report.pdf. (Accessed 8 October 2015).

¹³ Elatri, Abderrahim (2008) "Social Morocco in 2007: another year of managing the crisis and absorbing the anger." Report on Morocco's Situation 2007-2008. Dafater Wijhat Nadhar. (Arabic) pp. 145-167.

¹⁴ Most victims were young people because of their role as actors in those events, especially in the city of Sidi Ifni: the base of the events in which young people's protest started.

¹⁵ World Bank (2012) p. 1.

nature of the protest mutated from a social one to a more general one with the raising of political slogans. Third, the social group or regional protest became a popular protest involving various regions and groups¹⁶. The trajectory and the outcome in Morocco were different from those of the other Arab countries, due to the difference in some ingredients and context as explained above. However, it cannot be denied that the 20 February Movement was the principal actor behind the constitutional and political changes in Morocco within the Arab Spring. Accordingly the 2011 Constitution, despite not reaching the level of a democratic constitution, as previously requested by the movement, improved on the 1996 Constitution in many aspects, both in form and content; the expansion of the powers of parliament and the government, expanding the field of rights and freedoms, the appointment of the prime minister from the winning party in the elections¹⁷.

What is more, the elections of 25 November 2011 were distinguished by developments at the level of organization¹⁸ and results¹⁹.

Further, for the first time in the history of Morocco, the Islamist Justice and Development Party was appointed to lead the government²⁰. These changes, regardless of the degree of acceptance or rejection by the youth, brought a series of developments related to young people. Indeed, the new Constitution forced the public authorities to take appropriate measures to expand and enlarge youth participation in the social, economic, cultural and political fields of the country's development, by helping them to integrate into active and civic life, and by facilitating their access to culture, science and technology, arts, sports and recreational activities, and finally by providing favourable conditions to benefit from their creative energies. To achieve these goals, the Constitution included a text calling for the creation of an Advisory council for youth and community work²¹. According to Chapter 170 of the Constitution, this Council will initiate the creation of a board for consulting in the fields of protection of young people and promotion of the development of community life. Its role is to conduct studies and follow up on any issues of concern. Furthermore, it

¹⁶ Manar, Mohammed Baske (2014) "The Movement of 20 February in Morocco: a review of the context, the trajectory and the outcome". *Troubled Democracy: Trajectory of the Arabic movement for democracy*. Lebanon: Centre for Arab Unity Studies. (Arabic) pp. 331-303.

¹⁷ Kingdom of Morocco, 2011 Constitution. <http://www.mcrp.gov.ma/Constitution.aspx>. (Accessed 12 June 2015).

¹⁸ The new House of Representatives consists of 395 members; an increase of 70 members. The number of elected in the national list nomination increased from 30 to 90, with 60 women and 30 members under the age of forty. In addition, citizens living abroad are allowed to vote in the ballot by proxy. See: Regulatory Law 27.11 Concerning the House of Representatives. The Official Gazette, 17 October 2011. No. 5987.

http://www.chambrederesrepresentants.ma/sites/default/files/bo_5992_fr_loi2711.pdf (Accessed 12 June 2015).

¹⁹ Justice and Development Party won an increase of 61 seats, compared to elections in 2007.

²⁰ On 29 November 2011, Abdelilah Benkirane, Secretary General of the Justice and Development Party, a party with an Islamic reference, was appointed as the head of the government. This was in accordance with the 47th Amendment of the Constitution, which obliges the King to appoint the Prime Minister from the political party that won the elections to the House of Representatives.

²¹ Kingdom of Morocco, Chapter 33 of the 2011 Constitution. <http://www.mcrp.gov.ma/Constitution.aspx>. (Accessed 12 June 2015).

is responsible for providing suggestions on any economic, social and cultural subject related directly to the situation of young people, such as community work and the development of young people's creative potential, to motivate them to engage in civic life. One of the first regulatory laws passed after the ratification of the Constitution, the Organic Law on Political Parties, stipulated that each political party has to expand and disseminate the participation of women and youth in the political development of the country, and required each political party to define in its statutes the proportion of young people involved in running the institutions of the party²². Although this latter requirement is not new, as it had already been stipulated in the former law²³, what is new is the greater force of a regulatory law compared to the former ordinary law.

In the elections of 25 November 2011, a portion of 30 people under the age of forty has been allocated at the level of the national list²⁴. Furthermore, the age to be nominated as a candidate has been reduced to match the voting age: 18 years²⁵. As for the

constitutional and political level, the matter of youth was present at the economic and social level in a range of programs and initiatives launched by some of the ministries. But, in Morocco, there continues to be a deep gap between what is stipulated, in the Constitution and laws or included in programs, and what exists in reality. Accordingly, four years after the ratification of the Constitution, the Advisory Council for Youth and Community Work is not created yet and many of the constitutional principles and goals for young people have not been applied. In addition, young candidates of less than 35 years represented only 27.09% of all nominations for the 2011 elections and only 9.6% of lists' agents²⁶. Finally, many of the economic and social programs and initiatives have known a limited application and only a small number of young people have benefited from them. Perhaps this is why the Ministry of Youth and Sports recognized in its "Integrated National Strategy for Youth (2015-2030)", prepared in 2014 with the partnership and support of some national and international institutions, the existence of imbalances in current youth policies²⁷.

²² Article 26 of Regulatory Law 29.11 on Political Parties. The Official Gazette, 24 October 2011. No. 5989, pp. 5172-5180. See: http://www.chambrederesrepresentants.ma/sites/default/files/bo_5992_fr_loi2911.pdf. (Accessed 12 June 2015).

²³ Article 22 of Law 36.04, 20 February 2006, which was abrogated by the new regulatory law.

²⁴ Since 2002, Morocco uses a system of voting by lists, instead of the previous one of voting for individuals. Candidates form lists to stand in local districts elections, in addition to a national district used initially for women then for women and youth starting from 25 November, 2011.

²⁵ The minimum age for nomination as electoral candidate was 23 years. It was reduced in the 2009 municipal elections to 21 years, then 18 years in the 2011 elections. Many political parties requested for it to be revised to 21.

²⁶ Kingdom of Morocco, National Human Rights Council. "The Legal Framework Governing the Legislative Elections: a preliminary analysis."

<http://www.cndh.org.ma/ar/ndw-shfy-ltqdymltqryr-lwly-llmjls-lwtnty-lhqwq-lnsn-hwl-mlhzth-llntkhbt-ltshryy-l-25-nwnbr-2011/ltr>. (Accessed 15 September 2015).

²⁷ This study identified the following challenges: absence of sectoral coordination between the various public parties intervening in youth matters; lack of attention to impoverished youth in fragile situations; limited partnership mechanisms between the public and private sectors in providing services to young people; insufficiency of financial and qualified human resources in youth organizations. Ministry for Youth and Sports (2014) Integrated National Strategy for Youth (2015-2030).

There is no doubt that this official recognition of the limitations of youth-oriented public policies, around four years after the start of the Arab Spring, will have a negative impact on political and civic participation.

1. RESEARCH PROBLEM FOR THIS STUDY

As has been confirmed in our analysis of the context at a theoretical level, the 20 February Movement created an important social dynamic. Moroccan political life was threatened by more regression, because of the growing phenomena of political indifference and the rejection of public participation by a broad part of Moroccan society - among young people in particular. The 20 February Movement, within the so-called Arab Spring, emerged with a hope for change, which has been absent for decades despite some limited opportunities. Now, more than four years after the start of the Moroccan movement, the relevance of this study comes from its role for measuring the sustainability of the societal dynamism created by the 20 February Movement through the following questions:

Is Moroccan youth currently participating in political and civic activities and what is the degree of this involvement? To what extent is there a break with the reality of marginalization and the political and social exclusion of young people who had suffered since before the Arab Spring? What are the factors that make groups of young people refuse to participate politically or to engage civically and how far do these groups aspire to violence and intolerance? What is the level

of self-confidence of youth today? Do some young people succeed in developing special skills for themselves? What are the obstacles blocking their access to these skills? What is the degree of young people's acceptance of difference whether it is religious, national or political? What do young people propose to achieve political participation and civic engagement? What are the skills and abilities they need to achieve effective participation, politically and civically? What are the required characteristics and conditions of participation, which can contribute to draw young people away from violence and intolerance in all its various forms?

From the context analysis and looking at young people's civic and political participation, the following issues of concern have been identified: youth in the MENA region are marginalized and excluded from the political space and decision-making processes; as a result of their civic engagement, some youth have developed social and political skills that are not acknowledged, valued and used for the benefit of their society; the polarization that resulted from the emergence of "new political actors"²⁸ has created some lines of tension and divisions among the youth.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to gain knowledge of:

- The reality of political participation and civic engagement among young Moroccan around four years after the launch of the so-called Arab Spring;

<http://delegation.mjs.gov.ma/errachidia/images/pdf/ab.pdf>. (Arabic) pp. 15-18. (Accessed 10 July 2015).

²⁸ Within the conceptual framework of the NAWAT program, "new political actors" are understood as "NEW POLITICAL PARTIES AND MOVEMENTS WITH RELIGIOUS REFERENCE".

- The obstacles and barriers that prevent political and civic participation among Moroccan youth;
- The relationship between weakness in political and civic participation and a tendency towards violence and intolerance;
- The skills and competencies needed by young people to achieve the development of their political and civil action peacefully and effectively.

3. DEFINITIONS OF SOME WORKING TERMS

DEFINITION OF YOUTH:

According to the United Nations' definition, 'youth' are *"those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States"*. While this definition would be convenient for statistical purposes, the researcher used a more flexible definition that takes into account national definitions and socio-cultural and contextual issues. Therefore, depending on local perceptions and needs the definition of youth could extend to those aged 25 – 30.²⁹

In Morocco, different definitions have been used, even within official circles, with regard to determining the period of age covered by "youth". On the one hand, at the time of determining the share allocated to them in the national list in the elections of November 25, 2011, it has been defined as being between 18 and 40 years. On the other hand, we find that the High Commission of Planning used the UN definition in its publication

²⁹ Maghreb Arab Union (2012) Study on the Situation of Maghreb Youth. (Arabic) p. 31 in Abou Hamdan, Majid Melhem (2011) "The Modalities of the Familial Socialization and its Relationship to the Extent of the Participation of Youth in Decision-making within the Family: a field study." Damascus University Journal, Vol. 27, Nos. 3 and 4. (Arabic) p. 373.

entitled: "Youth in Numbers" by asserting that reaching the age of adulthood cannot be completed before the age of 24 years. Since the first National Counselling initiative in 2001, the Ministry of Youth and Sports has been using a definition adopted by a group of countries that identifies youth as being between 15 and 29 years, and it used the same definition in its last report about "Developing Opportunities for Youth Participation" for the period 2009 -2010; but it has gone above the age of 29 years in its recent strategy especially in relation to disadvantaged groups³⁰. This is at the official level, but at the informal level there is a difference between researchers about the age for defining young people, and it is worth mentioning here that a majority of Moroccan youth organizations request extension of the age of youth to 35 years.

DEFINITION OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION:

Political participation has several definitions, there are those linked to the granting of an opportunity for citizens to contribute to accomplishing the general objectives of the society, and determine the best means to generate them³¹, and there are those linked to influence the government's decisions³². Others added to that influencing the selection of the governors³³. Then there are those that asserted, in their definition of political

³⁰ Ministry for Youth and Sports (2014) p. 12.

³¹ Monji az-Zaidi (2008) Youth and education on citizenship values. Conference on Youth Issues in the Islamic World. Tunisia: 24-26 November 2008. (Arabic)

³² Huntington, Samuel P. and Nelson, Jon N. (1976) No Easy Choice: Political participation in developing countries. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. p. 3.

³³ Weiner, Myron (1971) "Political participation: Crises of the political process." Crises and Sequences in Political Development. USA: Princeton University Press. p. 164.

participation, the exclusion of violence, the adoption of dialogue³⁴ and to follow legitimate ways³⁵. Finally, there are those who make the civil actions at the heart of political participation³⁶. For the purpose of this research, 'political participation' refers to *"the activities of political parties, civil society organizations, social movements, and citizens that are aimed at effecting policy change whether formally or informally."*³⁷

In Morocco, it is noted that despite much talk about the political participation of young people, there is no specific definition of what that means. While the 1996 Constitution lacked a reference to the participation of young people, the 2011 Constitution enjoined the public authorities to take measures to enlarge and expand the participation of young people, but without limiting it to political participation by including participation in the social, economic, cultural and political development of the country³⁸. If

the previous law for political parties, which was issued in 2006, enjoined political parties to provide in their bylaws the proportion of women and young people to be involved in the management of its bodies³⁹, more significantly the 2011 regulatory law for political parties maintained this requirement by stipulating that each party has to work to expand and enlarge the participation of women and youth in the political development of the country⁴⁰. It seems by tracking the political discourse, both formal and informal, that the political participation of young people is mainly defined by young people's involvement in political parties, and enabling them to influence their decision, on the one hand, and on the other hand, youth participation in the elections, both as voters and candidates.

DEFINITION OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:

In this study, civic engagement is defined as belonging to civil society institutions and participation in civic activities carried out by non-governmental organizations and associations. Therefore, it seems necessary to briefly determine the purposes of civil society and non-governmental organizations and associations, taking into account the deep philosophical and operational problems that those concepts raise, especially the

³⁴ As described by Ralf Dahrendorf. In Boukhobza, Mohammed Elamrani (2002) "Political Participation in Light of the Political Changes in Morocco." Journal of Anfas Huquqiyya, Iss. 1. (Arabic) p. 113.

³⁵ Boukhobza, Mohammed Elamrani (2002) "Political Participation in Light of the Political Changes in Morocco." Journal of Anfas Huquqiyya, Iss. 1. (Arabic) p. 29.

³⁶ Braud, Philippe (2006) Sociologie Politique. Lebanon: Corporation of the University for Studies, Publishing and Distribution. (French) p. 301.

³⁷ Khatib, Lina (2013) "Political Participation and Democratic Transition in the Arab World." University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Law, Vol. 34, no. 2. p. 5.

<http://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1042&context=jil>. (Accessed 8 October 2015).

³⁸ Kingdom of Morocco, Chapter 33 of the 2011 Constitution.

<http://www.mcrp.gov.ma/Constitution.aspx>. (Accessed 10 July 2015).

³⁹ 22nd Amendment of the Regulatory Law No. 36.04 on Political Parties. The Official Gazette, 20 February 2006. No. 5397, p. 466. See:

<http://adala.justice.gov.ma/production/html/Ar/liens/..%5C85261.htm>. (Accessed 10 July 2015).

⁴⁰ 26th Amendment of Regulatory Law No. 29.11 on Political Parties. The Official Gazette, 24 October 2011. No. 5989. See:

<http://www.chambrederesrepresentants.ma/ar>. (Accessed July 10, 2015).

concept of civil society. The root of the concept of civil society returns to the philosophers of the social contract, who dealt with the coordination and cooperative relations between individuals as the founding relations for a society that maintains its stability. The concept then evolved significantly at the hands of Hegel, who differentiated between civil society: as a set of spontaneous interactions based on habits, customs and traditions, and the state: as a set of political and legal institutions in which the previous relationship networks take place⁴¹. Gramsci, who is credited with reviving the concept, defined civil society as the space containing organizations, trade unions, political parties, schools, universities, news media, public opinion and other bodies, all taking the form of a complex web of practices and social relations between individuals⁴². Mustafa Kamel Assayyed argues that the concept of civil society is used to indicate the presence of a large area of freedom of movement by social actors outside the control of the state. In that sense, it is represented by the many organizations and links held by individuals on a voluntary basis as an expression of the common good. Azmi Bshara links the concept of civil society with citizenship. He says in his research on the concept of civil society: "Translating 'civil society' in Arabic to 'mujtama' almuwatinine' (The society of citizens or citizens' society) would be better. It is true that this translation into Arabic, despite being more accurate than 'mujtama' madani', would produce a panic, but it is helpful to

remember the meaning of the Latin word and to keep this meaning present beside the meaning of the Arabic word: madani (civil), madaniyyah (civilisation), Madinah (city) and tamaddune (civility)"⁴³. Based on this, the acceptance of pluralism and difference of opinion are among the main features that should be at the base of civil society in any country⁴⁴.

Based on the previous definitions, distinctive elements of civil society can be identified as freedom of choice, volunteerism, institutionalization, independence and peace. But at a level of application, these elements confront several problems which there is not enough space in this research to discuss. The World Bank defined non-governmental organizations: the main components of civil society, as a set of independent institutions and groups that are completely (or to a large extent) independent from the government, and have primarily humanitarian or cooperative, rather than commercial, objectives.

In addition, associations are defined here as institutions acting on the basis of bylaws that define the areas of their activities and the conditions of membership. They are then, namely, voluntary organizations constituted by popular initiatives that adopt specific cultural, social, economic or political goals.

Morocco passed an advanced law about public liberties following independence, in the form of Royal Decrees concerning the constitution of associations, organisation of

⁴¹ Hilal, Ali Eddin, and Massad, Nevin (2000) Arab Political Systems: continuity and change issues. Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies. (Arabic) pp. 178-180.

⁴² Hassan, Ahmed Hussein (2000) Islamic Political Groups and Civil Society. Cairo: Cultural Publishing House. (Arabic) pp. 117-120.

⁴³ Bichara, Azmi (2012) Civil Society: critical studies. Beirut: Arabic Centre for Research and Studies. (Arabic) p. 87.

⁴⁴ Assayyed, Mustafa Kamel (1995) "Concept of Civil Society, Global Transformations and Studies of Political Science." Political Research Series. Cairo: Political Research and Studies Centre. (Arabic) pp. 15-18.

public rallies and journalism organisation, as stipulated in the law of 15 November 1958. But this law experienced regression in terms of its text and practice. Then the 2011 Constitution recognised some principles and requirements concerning associative work, among them the freedom of the civil society associations in their activities, their protection against dissociation or disbandment except by a judicial decision. Also these associations have the role of participating in an associative democracy by preparing decisions and proposals for elected bodies and public authorities, and by empowering and evaluating them. As an example, these associations have the right to present petitions to request a question to be addressed in the agenda of the local elected assemblies⁴⁵.

Based on these principles and constitutional requirements, a national dialogue on the subject of civil society was organised between 13 and 21 March 2014. The dialogue contained a series of consultation meetings and research conferences with the participation of about 10,000 associations, bodies and organisations. These activities came up with important conclusions⁴⁶, but obstacles prevented their application, particularly after the forced resignation of the minister who had sponsored the dialogue.

⁴⁵ Kingdom of Morocco, Chapter 12-15, 33, 139 and 145 of the 2011 Constitution.

<http://www.mcrp.gov.ma/Constitution.aspx>. (Accessed 13 July 2015).

⁴⁶ For the detailed report of the 2014 national dialogue: Civil Society and New Constitutional Roles, see:

<http://www.mcrpsc.gov.ma/FormSc/SCContexteDialogueNational.aspx>. (Accessed 9 July 2015).

4. FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive analytic method, which goes beyond describing the phenomenon and, by analysing it, uncovers and explains its causes. The goal is to establish conclusions and recommendations on how to develop programs and strategies, and how to launch initiatives with the aim of improving the situation. To ensure the reliability of the study results, we conducted two types of interviews: individual and collective. First, a number of national and local youth leaders in the political and civil spheres were interviewed individually. We used in-depth interviews with open-ended questions, designed in a particular order for that purpose (see Annex 1). Second, group interviews were conducted in the form of focus group discussions – which provide more details than those provided by field surveys. Focus groups do not only help to measure attitudes and opinions, but also to understand attitudes and opinions adopted by these persons, by finding out the reasons behind them. Focus groups facilitate interaction and hence allow the participants to re-evaluate their opinions and positions. The interaction gives them the opportunity to contribute with their suggestions and ideas on the subject of the debate. While the individual interviews were with youth leaders, the focus group debates involved randomly selected young people. The debate within these groups was based on a manual of instructions, some of which were indirect questions (see Annex 2), unlike the direct questions that were addressed to the youth leaders. Emphasis was on keeping a consistency between questions of the individual interviews and those of focus groups. In addition to the interviews, direct observations were conducted on activities and interactions of young people in political participation and civic engagement;

monitoring some of their initiatives and interactions, particularly in Internet-based social networks. Although this study takes into account some important statistical and

quantitative data, it does not base its importance on those elements, because the methodology adopted is a qualitative rather than a quantitative study.

For this research seventeen individuals, national and local, political and civic youth leaders from different urban areas, took part in individual interviews. Most of the youth leaders are from the Casablanca-Rabat axis, although this did not prevent us from interviewing some in other cities, mainly taking into account regional diversity, as illustrated in the following table:

TABLE 1: PARTICIPANTS IN THE INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Name	Occupation	City	Date of interview
Jamal Karimi Benchekroun	Secretary General of the Organization of Socialist Youth	Rabat (capital of Morocco. Located in the centre of the country, on the Atlantic coast)	04/06/2015
Mohammed ben Arabiyya	Member of the Executive Bureau of the Youth of the Istiqlal	Casablanca (largest city in Morocco. Located on the Atlantic coast, about 95 km south of Rabat)	01/06/2015
Amina Boughalbi	Member of Tali'a Youth, associative activist and known activist in the 20 February Movement	Rabat	19/09/2015
Mounir Eljouri	Leader of Justice and Spirituality Youth	Temara (small town close to Rabat)	05/06/2015
Oulehcene Noureddine	Local Secretary for Youth of Justice and Development	Tata (south-east of Morocco)	16/05/2015
Karim Elamim	Known activist in the 20 February Movement	Rabat	24/05/2015
Idriss Butarda	Activist in the 20 February Movement and former political prisoner	Rabat	24/05/2015
Mustafa Camry	Young leader of the Unified Socialist Party	Rabat	24/05/2015

Yahya ElBayyari	Former Local Secretary of the Moroccan Association of Human Rights	Mediek (or M'Diq, northern Morocco on the Mediterranean coast)	03/06/2015
Hicham Choladi	Secretary General of the Council of Youth Centre, Darb Gulf and Secretary General of Doha Association for Educational and Cultural Animation	Casablanca	04/06/2015
Khaled Benhomman	Member of a national group of the Organization of Moroccan Scouts	Nador (far north-east of Morocco)	18/05/2015
Hassan Bayan	Member of the Executive Bureau of the Moroccan Centre for Human Rights	Agadir (southern Morocco. Most of its population speaks Tamazight)	05/06/2015
Abdessamad Elmajouti	Activist in the Amazigh movement	Laroui (northern Morocco)	17/05/2015
Hicham Bensalek	A prominent activist in the 20 February Movement	Mediek	06/06/2015
Anass Edderkaoui	Member of the National Bureau of Ittihadi Youth	Settat (located between Marrakech and Casablanca)	22/05/2015
Hassan Alaoui	Deputy Regional Secretary of the branch of school youth	Tata	05/06/2015
Abderrahman Elmghazli	Member of youth supervising committee of the Preparatory Committee of the Omma Party	Casablanca	01/06/2015

The focus group discussions involved young people between the ages of 18 and 30 years, with between 7 and 13 participants in each group, and took into account diversity in terms of social belonging, academic level and gender. Hence, the discussion groups were established in multiple areas based on criteria, including regional diversity in respect to urban and rural participation, as the following table shows:

TABLE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF FOCUS GROUPS

Zone	Number of participants		Date
	Male	Female	
Casablanca (Hay Mohammadi and Sidi Moumen)	5	5	06/02/2015
Casablanca (Hay Elmaarif)	4	3	06/02/2015
Tangier	5	2	24/05/2015
Marrakech (a city in southern Morocco)	5	5	01/06/2015
Agadir (Azitzen - Bir Anzaran - Asekka)	6	4	08/06/2015
Kenitra (a city north of Rabat)	8	5	29/05/2015
Settat	7	2	20/05/2015
Benslimane and Jomo'at Melilla	8	5	01/06/2015
Mediek	4	3	22/05/2015
Agadir (Elhajb -Drarkah)	6	4	08/06/2015
Nador	4	5	19/05/2015
Total	62	43	
105			

5. OUTCOMES OF THE STUDY: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Proceeding from the issues that were discussed in the focus groups and in-depth interviews with youth leaders, the study brought to light a set of findings and recommendations. The discussions touched mainly on subjects such as youth participation in political and civil activities based on indicators like enrolment into political parties, participation in elections, enrolment in civil society associations, the use of social networks for political engagements and following peaceful civil behaviour for change. We have dedicated this section to describing and analysing the results, while conclusions and recommendations will be presented in the following section.

5.1. YOUTH AND POLITICAL PARTIES

According to earlier statistics for the Delegation of High Planning in Morocco, 70% of young people do not have confidence in the feasibility of political action, 5% believe in political work, and only 1% are engaged in political action from within political bodies⁴⁷. Five years after the start of the Arab Spring it appears that this situation, especially in some aspects, has not changed much. Through discussions in focus groups it became apparent that all the participants do not know for sure the exact number of political parties, but they know that there are many; estimates range between 24 and 42 political parties. They are mainly aware of five

political parties. Groups differed in identifying these political parties, but the Justice and Development and Al-Istiqlal parties came up more frequently than others. Besides, only 10 of the total 105 participants succeeded in identifying the political parties participating presently in the government. Even for those political parties known to the participants, through discussion, they seem unable to distinguish between their ideologies and programs, with the exception of some general distinctions, especially related to the Justice and Development party versus the Popular Forces Socialist Union party.

Only four out of the participants were found to belong to political parties, all of whom joined after 2010. The rest, who do not belong to any party, gave a variety of reasons for this, as presented below:

- Lack of trust in political parties;
- The absence of real democracy, both in the political sphere or within political parties;
- The absence of social conditions that support engagement in political parties;
- The absence of encouragement to get involved in political parties;
- The absence of enough time because they are busy studying;
- The absence of a desire for political work.

With the exception of Muhammad (20 years old from the city of M'diq), who said: "I reject absolutely belonging to any political party because I don't believe in the bureaucracy prevalent within political organizations", the participants expressed a willingness to join political parties if some of the difficulties and circumstances changed. Said, 25 years old from Jumu'at Melilla, says: "If there is a real democracy, affiliation is possible". A number of young people also expressed willingness to

⁴⁷ Belfellah, Youness (2 April 2015) "Moroccan Youth's Reluctance to Political Participation." Al-Araby al-Jadeed.

<http://www.alaraby.co.uk/opinion/2015/4/1/عزوف-الشباب-المغربي-عن-المشاركة-السياسية/> (Accessed 12 June 2015, Arabic).

belong to political parties after completing their education, getting a job and becoming stable socially.

The outputs of discussions confirmed the idea that rejecting membership in political parties is not a principled stand among young people, but due to either subjective or objective factors. Furthermore, we can explain the weakness in knowledge of these political parties (their number, positions, programs etc.) to a conscious and established attitude of refusal. Munir Eljourri, a leader of the youth of the Justice and Spirituality group, says: "young people's refusal of political activities is linked mainly to the structure of political parties in Morocco at several levels, including the absence of internal democracy at the level of parties, their strong dependence on the regime, the lack of responsiveness of their political theses to the vision of young people, the marginalization of youth and seeing them only as voting numbers." There are those who see in this reluctance a kind of rupture, which can lead to a new collision in Morocco. In this regard, the young journalist Mohammed Laabidi says: "a quick look at the discourse of Internet activists on social media networks is enough to see the extent of the gap between traditional political actors' intellectual affiliation on one hand, and the aspirations of the Moroccan youth movement on the other hand. The persistence of that gap and traditional practices would eventually lead to confrontation between components of Moroccan society."⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Laabidi, Mohammed (11 February 2015) "On the Anniversary of 20 February, What has been Accomplished?" Al-Araby al-Jadeed.

<http://www.alaraby.co.uk/opinion/2015/2/11/> في ذكرى 20 فبراير - ماذا تحقق (Accessed 14 September 2015, Arabic)

In addition to the problem of lack of trust - the greatest obstacle to young people's engagement in political parties - the majority of youth leaders asserted that there is a marked weakness in the ability of political parties to attract youth. In fact, among the 39 political parties only 16 have youth bodies, and of these only four parties have youth bodies that are active on a regular basis. There is also a marked weakness in respect for the youth within political parties. Karim Amim, a known activist in the 20 February Movement, says: "Right now, I have frozen my membership within the United Socialist Party that I belonged to after the decline of the 20 February Movement, and the reason is that political parties limit the ambition of young people". According to Karim, some youth enrolled in political parties (especially the PAM which worked hard in attracting them, using incitements) after the decline in the February 20 Movement, only to retreat from this party because of the marginalization and exclusion they experienced. The same is confirmed by other youth leaders. It is noted that, for some young people, belonging to political parties is not governed primarily by ideological and political considerations. This was seen in instances of young people switching between multiple political parties, ahead of regional elections on 4 September 2015.⁴⁹

The weakness of political affiliation is not limited only to Morocco, but is a phenomenon present in the other countries of the Arab World and touches all citizens. Based on the Arab Indicator 2014 published by Arab Centre for Research and Policies Studies, only

⁴⁹ Al-Achraf, Hassan (7 April 2015) "Morocco: The Youth are changing their Political Belonging." Al-Araby al-Jadeed.

<http://www.alaraby.co.uk/politics/2015/4/6/> المغرب - الشباب - يبدلون - انتماءاتهم الحزبية (Accessed 15 September 2015, Arabic)

13% are affiliated to political parties, while 51% do not either belong to any political party nor have any political party that represents them⁵⁰. The weakness of political affiliation among Moroccan youth is not limited to political reasons, but also to economic and social reasons - for some young people, these reasons have priority over political ones. Yassine, 25 years old from Casablanca, says: "when I find a stable job, I will think about being involved in politics". The same thought is shared by a group of young people in other regions and has been expressed in different terms. Most of the youth leaders went in the same direction, asserting that certain economic and social factors have a negative impact on political participation in general. According to Mohammed ben Arabiyya, member of the Executive Bureau of Youth of the Istiqlal party: "The 20 February Movement achieved a sharp increase of interest in political action, but the policy followed by the government, especially on employment, led to a decline". The same thing is confirmed by Jamal Karimi Benchekroun, Secretary General of the Socialist Youth party, who says: "Forms of poverty, crime, drugs, corruption and prostitution in the campus of the universities have affected interest in politics. In addition, modern technology provides a virtual world where youth find their pleasure instead of the real world".

5.2. YOUTH AND ELECTIONS

Of 105 participants in the focus groups, only 15 previously participated in an election campaign; 11 of them to gain a material benefit, usually ranging between 50 and 200

Moroccan Dirhams. In addition, five who have already participated in an election campaign, including three who were motivated by financial remuneration, have expressed their intention not to participate in the future because of greater awareness and lack of need for financial compensation. Most of those who did not participate explained this by a lack of trust in the electoral process, and by the failure of candidates to deliver on their promises. Abdul Rahim, 28 years old from Marrakech, says: "I do not participate in any electoral campaign because the candidates serve only their self-interests." Although expressed differently, these words were repeated in each discussion panel. Some young people expressed their desire to participate in the electoral campaign, either motivated by the will to experience the political field or for the financial benefit.

To summarize, the already vulnerable youth participation in electoral campaigns was not driven by faith in an electoral program, or conviction in the ideology of a particular party, but mostly due to a financial motive. This confirms the fiscal influence elections in Morocco on the one hand and, on the other hand, the effect of social and economic vulnerability on the choices and political convictions of young people. Hassan Nouredine, a local secretary of the Justice and Development youth body in Tata, says: "The observer of the reality of Moroccan youth today recognizes that a significant proportion experience emptiness at all levels. At the political level, we find that this segment has become a voting number in the electoral process, and the bridge which the lobbies of corruption cross to reach parliament."

When questioned about the nature of elections soon to be held in Morocco most participants answered, correctly, that they are local elections. They were however

⁵⁰ Arab Centre for Research and Policies Studies (2014) Arab Opinion Index. p. 169, in Ministry for Youth and Sports (2014).

unable to accurately distinguish between legislative and local elections, except some general statements such as: that legislative elections take place at the national level, and local are at the local level. Most participants spoke only about municipal elections, without reference to the prefectural, provincial and regional elections⁵¹. This confirms once again the weakness of political guidance among the youth.

More than one-third of the participants confirmed that they registered the electoral registers, and about half of those enrolled did so via the Internet. The reasons behind this are summarized in the following quotes.

- “Registration on the electoral roll is a right and a national duty”;
- “So nobody can use my vote”;
- “I could get my administrative papers from the administration;”
- “To get a financial benefit when voting;”

Besides this, reasons not to register on the electoral roll are based on a lack of confidence in the electoral process. Sanaa, from Casablanca, says: “Elections are only for the sake of appearance. Winners are already defined”. A group of young men disagree with Sanaa’s statement; nevertheless they defend their position of not registering because of lack of trust in the political parties and the absence of a suitable candidate. There are young people who do not see any usefulness in the election; Mohammed, 26 years from the city of Settat, says: “I don’t know why we waste money and time with the parties in the elections, and His Majesty the King is the only one who does all the reforms”. Other

unregistered young people expressed their desire to register in the future, if they are sure that their voice will have an impact. In contrast, some of those already enrolled say that they do not intend to vote; others say that they will go but submit a void vote. While most who are registered on the electoral rolls remain undecided, whether to vote or not, debates in most sessions showed that young people know the importance of the elections in the consolidation of democracy, in theory, but they are not satisfied with how the elections are held in Morocco. Salah, 21 years from Tangier, says in response to someone who tries to persuade him to participate in the elections: “See! They bargain from now on the next election.” This suggests that some, especially well-educated, youth believe in the importance of the elections but do not participate because of practices and imbalances associated with either the nature of the political system, or the nature of the electoral process. This is a common attitude among young people in the Arab world, and more particularly in the Maghreb region. A recent survey in Algeria confirmed that there is a positive attitude among university graduates to participating in the presidential elections, and a political awareness of its importance as a democratic tool, but that this did not translate into actual participation because of a loss of confidence in the forgery and lack of credibility of the political discourse⁵².

According to the official statistics of the Moroccan Interior Ministry, the number of registered persons on the electoral roll in April 15, 2015 reached 14,303,140 – a modest figure in comparison with the

⁵¹ Series of electoral matters is expected to kick off in September 2015 related the collective elections (municipalities, prefectures, provinces and regions).

⁵² Bacha, Abdel-Halim Mahour (2015) “University Youth Trends towards Participation in the Presidential Elections in Algeria.” Arab Policies, no. 13. (Arabic) p. 106.

number of those who have the right to vote in the whole population⁵³. Some estimates indicate that more than 10 million citizens, who have the right to vote, are not registered on the electoral register, although the proportion of people between 18 and 24 years constitutes only 7% of total voters⁵⁴, which forecasts the weakness in the active participation of young people in the regional elections to be organized in September 2015⁵⁵.

5.3. YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE 20 FEBRUARY MOVEMENT

Most of the participants in the discussion panels had heard of the 20 February Movement, and most of them knew its founding date, but a limited number took part in their demonstrations. Through the debate, the reasons that lie behind non-participation vary in different degrees as follows:

- Fear of the public intervention forces;
- Lack of conviction in the movement;

⁵³ According to the census carried out by the High Commission for Planning, the number of legal residents in Morocco reached 33,848,242 in 2014, among them 33,762,036 nationals and 86,206 foreigners.

⁵⁴ Kingdom of Morocco, General Electoral Regulations.

https://www.listeselectorales.ma/statistiques_TA.html (Accessed 20 June 2015).

⁵⁵ Morocco has a voluntary registration system (*inscription volontaire*), which requires that the individual applies to the competent administrative authority for the inclusion of his name on the electoral roll. Automatic registration (*inscription automatique*), of anyone who fulfils the conditions, is not used. This means that the rate of participation is calculated on the number of people registered on the electoral roll, which remains very small compared to the number of citizens who have the right to vote.

- Young age at the time;
- Lack of knowledge about the demands of the movement;
- Because it is a banned movement;
- Lack of desire;
- Preoccupation with studies;
- Distant location of the demonstrations;
- The existence of atheists in the movement.

Sohaila, 21 years old from Nador, says: "the culture of the region does not allow women to participate". Three other women in the panel endorsed this view. Those women who did participate said they were motivated to do so in order to make changes happen. With regard to the aftermath of the 20 February Movement, most participants said that they were not aware of its current situation; some said that the movement had become an association and, to a lesser extent, others believed that it had become a political party.

There was consensus among youth leaders that the Arab Spring and the 20 February Movement in Morocco have had a positive impact on young people's interest in political activities. Khaled Benhomman, member of a national task force in the Organization of Moroccan Scouts, says: "The Arab Spring certainly precipitated the youth revolution and raised youth interest in politics". Abdessamad Elmjouti, Amazigh movement activist and vice president of the Tamazgha Association, says: "The Democratic Movement had a positive effect by promoting the political awareness of young people, through discussions about wealth and values ..."

Mustafa Camry, a young leader in the Unified Socialist Party, sees that young people's interest in politics did not begin with the Arab Spring, but that this was an opportunity to show it clearly. Indeed, "youth has always

been interested in politics, and an example is the role of the youth in the Sidi Ifni uprising; also young people had a role in monitoring the elections in 2007 and 2009". The same thing has been asserted by other leaders, especially those who do not belong to political parties. As an example, the young leader Mounir Eljoury says: "Young people were never absent from politics, but reluctant to work in political groups because of the absence of frameworks for political exercise that can integrate their arguments and their political vision as they wish and to their satisfaction. These frameworks are absent at the level of political positions and direction, interior democracy and administration, and finally the position of youth inside the existing parties." Hassan Bayan, Member of the Executive Bureau of the Moroccan Centre for Human Rights, says: "No one denies that the events of the Arab Spring had a positive impact on the reconciliation of young people with political action, after rejecting it for many years. In fact the youth only reject parties that consider them as a voting reservoir, and use them only as a decoration for their structures, while marginalizing them in fear of competition with their traditional elites, with regard to positions of responsibility and authority in the party".

Nevertheless, it was observed that most of the youth leaders who mentioned increasing political interest did not much discuss the development of political action, which is still limited - especially with regard to the aftermath of the February 20 Movement. On this matter, the young leader Jamal Karimi Benchekroun says: "young people who work well in the virtual world, did not have a plan to bring this effort into effect in the real world." In addition to the increase in political interest, the 20 February Movement had other benefits such as: a range of skills developed by young people. It was notable

that even those who did not get involved in the movement acknowledged the existence of these advantages:

- Breaking the barrier of fear among young people participating in the movement;
- Engaging in political debate without red lines;
- Learning some ABCs about leadership and organization;
- Acquiring the elementary principles of political dialogue;
- Achieving acquaintance and coordination between youth belonging to different ideological and political tendencies;
- Acquiring courage and capacity to express political positions;
- Gaining a measure of persuasive and communicative ability;
- Innovating in some of the arts; particularly poetry, song and theatre;
- Creating new forms of learning and training.

Hicham Choladi, Secretary General of the Council of Darb Ghallef's youth centre, says: "Even after the demise of the 20 February Movement, young people have excelled in creating other forms to express their opinion on many issues: the "Mahgor" theatre (The scorned theatre), which is a series of plays performed in the open air and public squares discusses issues in the news. There is the initiative "Agi Naqrao" (let's read) which is an invitation to read and exchange books in the public squares." Karim, a young leader of the 20 February Movement, says: "When did we have philosophy discussed in the street? Then we had achieved that through the "Philosophy in the street" sessions which have been organized in Casablanca, Rabat, Kenitra, Marrakesh and Agadir." These were the most important gains and skills developed by young Moroccans during the

Arab Spring movement. But the degree that young people benefitted from them differs depending on: their degree of involvement in the movement, on the one hand, and their individual ability and willingness, on the other hand. In all circumstances these gains and skills, according to youth leaders, still need support and expanding in the circle of young people who are capable in them.

Notwithstanding the political interest and awareness among young people realized by the 20 February Movement, according to youth leaders it did not transform into well-founded and continuous political action. There are those who adopt the view that: "parties landing within the movement did not transfer organizational effectiveness and the ability to mobilize to the movement, as happened in the experiences of other countries, but instead transferred to the movement: on the one hand, internal problems such as the absence of democracy from several parties and, on the other hand, conflicts existing between themselves"⁵⁶. With the exception of street demonstrations that have put pressure on the political system to make some changes, many of the Movement's youth, especially those without political affiliation now live in despair; many of the demands of the 20 February Movement have not been realized, and the authoritarian regime has returned. There are young people who are today in prison, not as political prisoners, but just as ordinary offenders⁵⁷. After Justice and Spirituality withdrew from the 20 February Movement the latter declined significantly and few young people

continued attending its activities, which became limited to certain occasions. According to the young leader Mustafa Camry, other youth threw themselves into the arms of some parties of the "Mekhzen" for the sake of personal interests, but soon withdrew after they realised that "these parties did not fulfil their promises to them". Other youth preferred to focus on their personal future, keeping their participation only in the virtual world or in some cultural activities or associative work.

5.4. YOUTH AND ASSOCIATIVE WORK

In the outcome of the focus groups, it was found that the number of those involved in civil society associations is double those involved in political parties - without denying the general weaknesses of youth involvement in associative work. This situation is not limited to youth, but includes all citizens and is a source of similarity among Arab countries. According to the Arab Indicator 2014: 87% said that they are not affiliated to any association, union or cultural club⁵⁸. With regard to some young people's preference for associative work, in comparison to work within political parties, discussions show that one of the main reasons is the negative representations of politics and political action. Politics is associated with deception and double-dealing, politics is difficult and has its masters, while associative work remains a voluntary and charitable work that is seen positively. Indeed, some youth leaders explain this position by the positive perception citizens still have of associations in contrast to the negative image they have of the parties. Furthermore, associations have a diversity commensurate with the different

⁵⁶ El-Khodairi, Mohammed (2012) "The Moroccan 20 February Movement: when youth revolt, the Islamists rule". *Bidayat Journal*, no. 2. (Arabic) p. 21.

⁵⁷ Today there are about 20 prisoners formerly active in the 20 February Movement, but the official charges are all for non-political crimes.

⁵⁸ Arab Centre for Research and Policies Studies (2014) p. 163 in Ministry for Youth and Sports (2014).

inclinations of young people. Mohammed ben Arabiyya, a young leader, says: "the youth of the eighties is not the youth of today, who tend more towards entertainment and enjoyment, and this is provided by associations more than by the political parties. The activities of the latter are often only attended by devoted followers. Consequently, we have become forced to use entertainment to bring partisan young people into party and electoral activities". Furthermore, it is important to note that the period of youth is marked by a tendency toward self-affirmation, and that work through associations allows for greater visibility and self-esteem for young people. In other words, the obstacles facing young people within the political parties are almost absent within some small local associations. What helps to speed up self-actualisation within an association is the limited number of members, compared with those involved in a large political party. In a study prepared by the Ministry of Social Development, Family and Solidarity, about Moroccan associations in 2011, it appears that each association can engage an average of 48 volunteers and 108 members and target about 156 beneficiaries⁵⁹.

Recent decades have seen a noticeable increase in the number of associations in Morocco. A study by the Interior Ministry indicated that the diverse associative network has evolved quickly since the nineties, after the launch of the National Initiative for Human Development⁶⁰,

recording an increase from about 4,000 to more than 116,800 associations currently. According to the same study, 93% of associations have a local coverage, 24% are active in the social field, 21% in environment and ecological development and 19% in sports and entertainment⁶¹. However, there are still some difficulties for young people who are interested in the establishment of associations. In this regard, the launcher of a well-known YouTube channels called "*mchiti b'iîd*" (you went far) says: "Although the right to set up association is guaranteed by law, the mechanisms of founding them are still subject to the mood of the ministry of interior and old authoritarian machinery. There are many associations that are still waiting for the legal registration although they meet all the legal requirements."⁶²

Some youth leaders have already confirmed the positive role played by the National Initiative for Human Development in the stimulation of associative work, but recorded at the same time the appearance of corruption and false practices. Some young people spoke of the creation of fake associations for obtaining an allocation from the National Initiative for Human Development financing. The Youth Leadership then recorded important points

urban neighbourhoods and penurious rural communities.

⁶¹ Al Quds (28 December 2015) "As many as 116,000 civil society organisations."

<http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=271337>. (Accessed 22 June 2015, Arabic)

⁶² Mahfoud, Hamza (18 February 2015) "Moroccan Youth Movement: from streets of protest to civil society." Al-Araby al-Jadeed.

<http://www.alaraby.co.uk/supplements/2015/2/18/الحراك-الشبابي-المغربي-من-شوارع-الاحتجاج-إلى-المجتمع-المدني>. (Accessed 14 September 2015, Arabic).

⁵⁹ Hajewi, Mohammed (2011) "A Study on Associations." Gateway to Moroccan Civil Society.

<http://maroc-civil.ma/archives/460>. (Accessed 22 June 2015).

⁶⁰ The National Initiative for Human Development is an initiative launched by the King in 2005 for addressing social deficits in poor

about associative work in Morocco, summarized as follows:

- The largest number of associations, and the most important among them are concentrated in three regions in Morocco, which are the Souss-Massa-Daraa region, Rabat-Sale-Zemmour-Za'ayr region and the Greater Casablanca region;
- Those who benefit from associations are often limited to the educated youth;
- There is a deficit of human and financial resources available to the associations;
- Few associations are active and have an impact compared to the vast number of existing associations;
- There are restrictions on some associations belonging to the opponents of the political regime, as is the case of some associations that have some members of the Justice and Spirituality group;
- There is a weakness in networking and linking relationships with other civic actors at the national and local level;
- Lack of political and financial independence of many associations;
- Bureaucracy rules in many associations and there is a lack of transparency;
- Multiple official custodians for associative work.

Some official and unofficial studies and reports have already pointed to some of these defects⁶³. As an illustration: the 2012

World Bank report recorded the lack of resources experienced by associations, as well as the inefficiency of these associations. In the city of Chefchaouen, for instance, there are more than 200 associations, but only 8 associations are active on a regular basis⁶⁴. With regard to associative networking (creating associative networks), a study by the Ministry of Social Development, the Family and Solidarity, referred to above, recorded that only 20% of the 1,254 associations under study belong to national associative networks and only 4% of associations belong to international associative networks. There is no doubt that these deficiencies contribute significantly to the reluctance of young people to engage in associations.

In Morocco, the Youth Centres are considered the main space for associations to operate and organize their cultural activities and entertainment for young people. In the debate about the importance of the role of youth centres, most of the participants in the focus groups confirmed their importance as follows:

- Youth centres play a role in training and culture;
- They participate in the social integration of young people;
- They have a role in self-actualisation and the development of personal skills;

<http://maroc-civil.ma/archives/460>. (Accessed 25 June 2015, Arabic);

Institute IPADE "Associations and Non governmental Organizations in Northern Morocco: empowering civil society in Tangier, Tetouen, Chefchaouen and Al-Hoceima."

http://www.iecah.org/web/images/stories/publicaciones/libros/descargas/resume_executif_arab_e.pdf. (Accessed 25 June 2015, Arabic)

⁶⁴ World Bank (2012) p. 62.

⁶³ See the following citations: Ministry of Relations with Parliament and Civil Society (2014) National Dialogue Activities Report on Civil Society and Constitutional New Roles. www.mcrp.gov.ma. (Accessed 25 June 2015). (Arabic); Ministry of Social Development, the Family and Solidarity (2011) "About Moroccan Associations,"

- They have recreational and sports role;
- They play a role in the discovery of talents and aptitudes.

Despite the awareness of the importance of the role of youth centres, it was observed through panel discussions that only a limited number of young people attend them on a regular basis. Others confirmed not having visited youth centres, except on some occasions. One-third of the participants said that they had never visited a youth centre. They attributed the reasons mainly to preoccupation with their studies or because they did not receive any invitation to attend a youth centre. After the debate, some of those who said they were unaware of centres' importance said they would visit one and have a look to its programs. Other young people complained of the lack of centres in their neighbourhoods.

The number of Moroccan youth centres does not exceed 500, while the number of rural and urban communities surpasses 1500 municipalities⁶⁵. According to the young leader Hicham Choladi: "Currently, the number of youth centres does not exceed one for every 38,400 young men, and this is a big deficiency". In spite of their problems, these centres played a prominent role throughout the seventies and eighties, contributing to the formation of a generation with a critical national spirit. The government pursued more recently a new policy of transforming youth centres into professional and vocational training centres, in line with prioritizing for-profit projects. All this was at the expense of associations that found themselves suffering restrictions, whereby

even the lucky ones do not exceed a share of three hours per week for their activities⁶⁶.

According to the youth leaders, the Arab Spring has had a limited positive impact on engagement of young people in associations; often after the decline in the 20 February Movement. Associative engagement represented one of the alternatives chosen by some young people, especially associations active in the field of human rights. It is important to note that some young 20 February Movement activists have founded a human rights association in Casablanca⁶⁷. Along a similar vein, Mehdi Bushoy, deputy coordinator of the "Institute Prometheus" for democracy and human rights, considered his association as a "continuation of the dynamics of 20 February in its civil side, such as a range of other initiatives founded by 20 February youth"⁶⁸. Other important civil initiatives are: "Youth Association for Youth", and "Young Women for Democracy" and "Democratic Breaths Movement."

5.5. YOUTH AND INFLUENCING POLITICAL DECISIONS

Some youth leaders see that young people have an impact on political decisions through the Internet, particularly through social networking sites, perhaps because of the high rate of Internet use compared to other Arab countries. According to the Arab Indicator 2014, 58% of Moroccan responders use the Internet; Morocco is one of the Arab countries that has seen "Facebook" political interaction increase in 2014⁶⁹. As an

⁶⁵ Burqan, Rachid (2014) "The Role of Youth in Morocco between Infrastructure Weakness and the Need for Employment." *Al-Ofoq Addemocracy*, No. 3-4. (Arabic). p. 65.

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 67.

⁶⁷ The Moroccan Federation for Human Rights.

⁶⁸ Mahfoud, Hamza (2015).

⁶⁹ Arab Centre for Research and Policies Studies (2014) p. 160.

example, they point to the case of the Spanish sex-offender Daniel Galvan, who was incarcerated for raping 11 Moroccan minors and was released from prison following an amnesty from the King. A youth media campaign against the amnesty appeared on Facebook pages, and after organised sit-ins, the Royal Palace issued a statement that the King had not been aware of the vile crimes for which the offender was imprisoned, and that the King would not have pardoned him had he known the gravity of the crime. An investigation was opened into the matter, and resulted in the dismissal of the director of the General Commission for the Management of the Prisons and Reintegration. Another example is when a number of ministers were dismissed after a youth-organized media campaign against them⁷⁰. Yet another example is the cancellation of Shimon Peres' visit to Morocco, after young people organized a Facebook campaign against it. According to Amina Boghalba, leader in the youth avant-garde movement, young people's responsiveness to social networking sites played an important role in blocking the adoption of the "Digital Code" (law on Internet use), which was intended to limit youth movement in the virtual world. Informational campaigns are the product of an individual youth's initiative or an organized, collaborative youth initiative. In most cases, the initiative does not remain limited to youth participation or to social networks, but spreads with the help of other

media (an example is the "*Oustadi Rak Aziz*" campaign seen below). Sometimes these campaigns are assisted by demonstrations and protests, as in the examples of mobilisation against Galvan or Peres. But the virtual protests do not reach the public space unless other social groups join the campaign; such as human right groups, or groups working on international Islamic and Arabic political questions.

According to the youth leader Jamal Karimi Benchekroun, proof of the impact of social networking sites is that various political actors are now using them. In this regard, Hicham Choladi says: "Many of today's Moroccan movement activists are journalists and contributors to many websites, and some have created special programmes transmitted via the Internet and watched by tens of thousands, such as Tsoulisme program on YouTube"⁷¹. This was confirmed when young people harvested most Internet-related awards, as in the "Maroc Web Awards", contest established in 2007; which aims to promote a spirit of competition and innovation in young people⁷². But according to Hicham Bensalek, an activist in the 20 February Movement, "The impact of Internet social sites, used by young people, on political decisions, remains limited". Similarly, the youth leader Anass Derkaoui says: "Yes, relatively, the use of modern technological means by young people does on political decisions". In the opinion of the young leader Abdelhafid Elmajouti: "This means - social

⁷⁰ Those ministers who have been dismissed from the government of Mr. Benkirane after organizing internet campaigns against them: Mohammed Ozine, Minister of Youth, Sports; Abdeladhim El-Guerrouj, Minister of Public Service; Lehbib Choubani, Minister in charge of relations with parliament and civil society; Somayya Benkhaldoun, Delegate Minister to the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and Staff Training.

⁷¹ "Tsoulisme" YouTube episodes are available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEwbXiQvKuc>

⁷² Maalaynayne, Ahmed (19 March 2015) "Maroc Web Awards: the largest gathering of Moroccans cyber activists." Al-Araby al-Jadeed.

<http://www.alaraby.co.uk/medianews/2015/3/9>
جوائز المغرب- للإنترنت- أضخم- تجمع- للناشطين- الإلكترونيين- المغاربة.
(Accessed 14 September 2015, Arabic)

sites - remain useless with respect to affecting large issues and major policies". The young leader Mounir Eljoury says: "I think that social networking sites represent an index that decision-makers take into account in some way, but I do not think they dramatically affect their decisions, in particular when it comes to major issues at the core of political change". According to Eljoury: "The regime shows responsiveness to marginal issues as a means of marketing a communicative and interactive image with regard to youth demands".

While the majority of youth leaders emphasize the impact of social networking sites on political decision-making, with different evaluations of the degree of this effect, Abderrahim Almaghazili, a young leader of the Movement for the Nation, did not see any political impact of social sites, but believes in contrast that Facebook is just "a spying tool". After further discussion, it appears that this position is based on a personal experience: he was dismissed from his employment due to his participation in a campaign on Facebook to release a leader of the Movement for the Nation who had been detained.

All youth leaders acknowledged the role played by modern technological media during the Moroccan movement, and not only in the light of what has happened in other Arab countries, but also in non-Arab countries. From the demonstrators in Cairo's Tahrir Square, to the furious popular protest movement in Spain, to the "Occupy Wall Street" movement, to the huge crowds of protesters on the election in Moscow. In all these cases, the Internet had a very important role: through Facebook and Twitter, along with e-mail, text messaging, instant messaging programs and Google Earth. The authoritarian regime of Myanmar was able to restraint the Saffron Revolution

only through completely shutting down the Internet network inside its borders⁷³.

Panel discussions showed that all except one participant have Facebook accounts (and some who have more than one account) and that the average amount of time young people spend on the Internet is about four hours. Those who follow political news, who are few, affirmed that their first source is the Internet. But in discussion in the focus groups, it seems that in contrast to what youth leaders said, young people do not perceive their influence on political decisions through social networking sites; most showed pessimism in regard to influencing political decision-making in the future, in contrast with optimism, despite apparent difficulties, with respect to matters like finishing their studies, having employment, getting married and having a family.

Panel discussions also revealed that most of the participants neither participated in nor attended any dialogue sessions with political officials. Besides, most of the leaders stressed that institutional dialogue is weak and sporadic. This dialogue has a very weak effect on political decision-making. For youth leaders, the reasons behind the weakness of this dialogue lie in:

- The absence of a mechanism to ensure the dialogue is planned and embraced;
- Lack of will among the political rulers to have serious dialogue with young people;
- The unwillingness of the state to legitimize any youth movement which is not under their control;
- Lack of trust in state institutions among Moroccan youth;

⁷³ Gore, Al (2015) The Future: Six Drivers of Global Change. Sabsabah World of Knowledge. (Arabic translation by Adnan Georges). p. 94 - 95.

- Lack of awareness of the importance of responding to the expectations of young people;
- The existence of traditional elite that is not favourable to alternating political power or to renewing itself.

It was noted that, from time to time, young people have had some influence on political decisions through peaceful public protests, like recently on 9 June 2015, when protests against leaked exam papers resulted in the re-examination of mathematics at the national level. It was also witnessed that some young people are trying to influence the political decisions through some initiatives in the real world, not only the virtual world; like the initiative of the Parallel Government of Young People, which was founded in 2012, and renewed its range in 2015, presented a set of proposals related to the Advisory Council for Youth and Associative Work, and encouraged youth employment and entrepreneurship⁷⁴. But the youth leader Amina Boghalba believes that this initiative is similar to the opposition, and that it should have been called the Parliament of Young People instead.

5.6. YOUTH AND VIOLENCE

Most youth leaders confirmed that Moroccan youth remain vulnerable to attraction to violent tendencies, despite all the characteristics of Moroccan society compared to other Arab societies⁷⁵. Yahya ElBayyari,

former Secretary General of the M'diq branch of the Moroccan Association for Human Rights says: "Moroccan youth are threatened, to a great extent, by the influence of violent tendencies in the understanding and application of religion because of the absence of a real democratic climate, the spread of unemployment, the dropout rate, the spread of a social culture supportive of violence and the lack of acceptance of others". Hassan Nouredine, a young leader, says: "When a young person finds himself at the horns of a dilemma, between marginalization and exclusion on the one side, and drugs on the other, he remains vulnerable to tendencies of violence in all its forms." Anas Derkaoui, a leader of the Ittihadyya Youth, explains this by saying: "Discrediting political action, parties and elections threatens Moroccan youth with a move towards extremism, because the death of politics leads to violence". According to Hicham Choladi: "This reality – tendencies toward violence – is confirmed by the proportion of Moroccan young people who migrated to Syria". Furthermore, Karim Elamim, an activist in the 20 February Movement, says "The youth are not only threatened, but a lot of them are already infected with violence, and as an example look at the violence that occurs in the stadiums, universities and high schools".

These answers and others illustrate that there is a relationship between the obstruction of political participation and civic engagement, and the slide into violent choices. This is clearly confirmed by the young Mustafa Camry: "There is a great relationship: when the doors of peaceful change are closed, there will be a slide into violence and this danger rises when there is

⁷⁴ Sellam, Fatima (9 June 2015) "Three years of the Parallel Government of Young People in Morocco." Al-Araby al-Jadeed.

<http://www.alaraby.co.uk/society/2015/6/9/3-سنوات-على-حكومة-الشباب-الموازية-في-المغرب> (Accessed 14 September 2015, Arabic)

⁷⁵ Moroccan society is distinct from some other Arab societies in that there are no sectarian

groups and no denominations of extremist schools of jurisprudence, although there are some Salafi tendencies.

no hope in a better future". Again, according to Mustafa Camry, three activists of the 20 February Movement joined ISIS/ISIL and one of them, according to what was published by some media, became a leader"⁷⁶. Nevertheless, the reasons behind orientations towards violence cannot be reduced to a deficiency in political participation and civic engagement. It was also observed that most youth leaders did not consider religion to be the main factor in extremist choices, nor the only reason for the violent tendencies of some young people. This was the conclusion of field research into the socio-demographic characteristics of young people from northern Morocco who chose to fight in Syria and Iraq. It stressed that material factors (self-actualisation, the search for heroism and adventure, luxury etc.) are the main reasons, rather than religious factors (jihad, support for the oppressed etc.) which remain secondary causes⁷⁷. Nevertheless, some hard-line choices, rejecting peaceful political action, impact youth tendencies toward violence as a way to bring about political change. That is the reason for repeated calls, by some Salafi

youth, to engage in political parties and participate in elections, on the grounds that it is considered an important immunization against resorting to violence. Abdelouahab Rafiqi (Abu Hafs), a Salafist detained in the aftermath of the events of 16 May in Casablanca, and a member of the Renaissance and Virtue Party⁷⁸, said: "I call on all young Salafis to participate strongly in political action because empty chair politics, or engagement in processes that increase tension and convulsions in the country, are not in the interest of any party"⁷⁹.

Morocco has recently witnessed an apparent growth of violence in universities and schools, even though there were also some worthy youth initiatives to reject violence. As an illustration, the "My Dear Teacher" initiative (in Arabic: *Oustadi Rak Aziz*) was led by young people on Facebook in defence of teachers and as a rejection of the verbal and physical violence they suffer. This initiative has received a remarkable response, as the following table shows:

⁷⁶ When Mustafa Camry was asked about the media that published this news, he said that he did not remember the name. However a November 2014 field study by the Northern (Moroccan) Observatory for Human Rights, to understand the socio-demographic specifications of that region's young people who migrated to Syria and Iraq, confirmed that a portion were members of the 20 February Movement. Source:

<http://fr.slideshare.net/mahlamed/ss-42041938>. (Accessed 25 June 2015).

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ The Renaissance and Virtue Party (Annahdah wal-fadilah) is an Islamist party that split from the Justice and Development party. It did not win any seats in the last elections. In 2013, some Salafi movement leaders, who were detained in the aftermath of the events of 16 May 2003, joined the party.

⁷⁹ See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rqE_3BFmZ4. (Accessed 25 June 2015).

TABLE: INFORMATION ON THE “MY DEAR TEACHER” FACEBOOK PAGE

Date of creation	March 1 st , 2015
Number of cities and villages in Morocco following the page	More than 60 towns and villages
Number of countries following the page	45
Number of educational institutions participating in the page	230 schools
Number of media following the page	18 (radio stations, newspapers, websites)
Total number of private messages received	460 messages

Most youth leaders stressed that Moroccan youth avoid any religious, ethnic or sectarian divisions, but remain threatened by some issues that can be activated at any moment, like the Amazigh issue and also, as mentioned by some leaders, the threat of conflict between Islamists and secularists. All these issues may have a negative impact on the coexistence of Moroccan youth. Many studies consider estrangement as a motive for intolerance and violence, and so the relationship of youth to society was a subject of discussion in the focus groups. As an outcome, most participants expressed dissatisfaction with society. They feel that society does not understand them and does not appreciate them enough. This position is serious: it means that intolerance is a motive tendencies towards violence. However, most of the youth leaders confirmed that the Moroccan youth is open to other Arab and Western youth, and that new media greatly assists this openness. The same was confirmed by participants in the panel discussions, who confirmed that religious and sectarian differences do not affect their relationship with others, except for some who evidently fear a Shiite threat. The most

repeated three basic determinants of relationships with others were: understanding, exchanged benefit and respect.

The contrast between high rates of dissatisfaction with society, versus openness to others across the Internet, emphasizes the problem of relationships between the real and virtual worlds. In this sense, the virtual world is not a complement to reality, but rather an opportunity for young people to flee from their reality, to escape from their weakness and avoid taking responsibility. Consequently, initiatives in the virtual world, however significant, may not change the real world much, because this latter is solid, stubborn and complex, and to be changed it needs young people to be self-confident and assertively present in the public space. To form such young people, the gap between the frustrating and locked real world and the unlimited openness of the virtual world needs to be reduced. In that sense, both political and civil forces of society have to embrace young people, through programs and projects to raise their education and consciousness.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The importance of this study comes from its methodological approach: a multidimensional theoretical framework, mixing historical and demographic sciences on the one hand, and political and social sciences on the other hand. Additionally, local and national levels have both been taken into account. The study was also conducted at a critical time; the time elapsed since the so-called “Arab Spring” began allows us to measure the extent of the continuation of the Moroccan youth’s interest in public affairs, as captured by the 20 February Movement. The Moroccan government under the leadership of the Justice and Development Party, that was supposed to lead a new founding political phase, is today at the end of its first mandate. Under the 2011 Constitution, the second legislative elections are expected to take place in 2016, which means that now is the time for the Government to be held accountable to their policies for youth, and to discuss the effects of those policies on political participation and civic engagement. The study also comes ahead of local elections to be held in the month of September, making it the chance to measure the interest of young people in this election as a way of assessing their political participation. What remains the most important characteristic of this study is that it is one of the first field studies addressing the problem of political participation and civic engagement among Moroccan youth, and measuring changes in participation and involvement about four years after of the emergence of the 20 February Movement.

The outcome of the study can be presented as follows:

1. The “Arab Spring” contributed to the growth of political interest among young Moroccans, but did not translate into the foundation of organized, durable political acts because of certain factors including: the lack of significant changes in the framework of traditional political channels that they originally rose up against. Moreover, political interest remained confined to certain groups of young people, and did not develop into a matter of general interest.
2. The weakness of political participation and civic engagement among the youth is not due to a principled position that rejects such participation, but is due to several difficulties and obstacles. The absence of trust in political parties, and the loss or absence of perceived value of political process are the main obstacles. The study confirmed that the institutions of civil society constitute a greater attraction for young people, compared with the political institutions.
3. The study revealed some kind of influence, albeit relative, on political decision-making, through electronic media and public protests, though the degree of awareness of this effect is not among all young people.
4. Obstacles to political participation and civic engagement among young Moroccans are not linked to religious or sectarian considerations. These obstructions are, rather related to political, economic and social problems. Among these is the absence of democracy in the political public sphere in general, and at the level of political and civic bodies in particular. The lack of social stability, and problems associated with poverty and unemployment, constitute an important obstacle to political and civic participation. Moroccan youth are influenced by patterns in political culture that seems necessary to be changed in order to achieve fundamental changes in the regime on one hand , but on the other hand, the political and civil forces have the duty of educating and organising the youth.
5. Recourse to violence of all kinds is one of the basic threats to young people. The lack of participation and engagement, and the obstruction of political and civic channels that allow peaceful and effective participation for young people, remain the main reasons for this. It is

important to mention other motives linked to economic, social, educational and psychological aspects.

Young people also need to develop a wide range of skills and competencies in order to enhance their political participation and civic engagement, and to enable them to stay away from the path to violence. The main needs revealed by the study are: an increased ability to listen to and accept others' points of view in order to work together for the common good; increased legal and political knowledge; strong skills in project management and leadership; communicative and influencing skills; mastery of the culture of peaceful and legal protests; stronger mastery of foreign languages. Taking into account the practical purpose of this study, the outcome of the focus group discussions and the interviews helped to identify key issues where initiatives to support youth political participation and civic engagement are needed.

The following recommendations and suggestions are directed to the appropriated bodies.

RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO THE GOVERNMENT:

- Undertake fundamental democratic reforms in order to give credibility to constitutional and political institutions and to allow a wider participation of the population;
- Apply decentralization as it allows greater local participation, which may provide more opportunities for young people;
- Create executive and legislative mechanisms to expand political and civic participation opportunities for young people;
- Apply the constitutional principles relating to youth that are provided for by the Constitution of 2011⁸⁰. In particular, create the Advisory Council for Youth and Associative Work mentioned by the Constitution;
- Provide youth institutions with human and financial resources, focus more attention on youth issues and review public policies accordingly;
- Apply an integrated youth policy rather than fragmented sectoral approaches;
- Reduce the manifestations and causes of marginalization as well as social and political exclusion of young people; Give youth and associations equal opportunities for access to public media,
- Simplify the legal rules concerning the creation of associations;

RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO MINISTRY OF EDUCATION:

- Provide support to moderate preachers who reject violence, and religious associations which have clear peaceful options to educate young people on spirituality and religion

⁸⁰ In Chapter 33 of the 2011 Constitution, as explained above, we can read: "It is incumbent on the public powers to take all the appropriate measures with a view to: stimulate and make general the participation of youth in the social, economic, cultural and political life of the country; to aid the young to establish themselves in [an] active and associative life and to give assistance to them in the difficulty of scholarly, social or professional adaptation; to facilitate the access of the youth to culture, to science, to technology, to art, to sports and to leisure, all in creation of propitious conditions for the full deployment of their creative and innovative potential in all these domains. With a view to realising these aims, a Consultative Council of Youth and of Associative Action [Conseil consultative de la jeunesse et de l'action associative], is created." (translation by Jefri J. Ruchti)

- Create national and local institutions to educate young people and integrate them;
- Develop a civic culture in educational institutions through projects and programs; this may be done in partnership with civil society organizations;
- Give attention to the cultural interests of young people and support their creativity in art and literature, with respect for national and religious identity, as a means to achieve psychological balance among young people;

RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO POLITICAL PARTIES:

- Apply the principles of the regulatory law for political parties, issued in 2011 related to the empowerment of young people within the political parties;

RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS:

- Encourage young people to participate in training sessions on political practices, democracy, human rights and self-development;
- Create training programs for associative actors, especially in the management and communication fields;
- Engage supporters of sports teams in programs and training courses to enhance their cultural and civil conduct;
- Develop mechanisms and channels to contribute to the reduction of student conflicts within universities and organize campaigns against violence in schools and high schools;
- Develop channels for the exchange of experiences at the level of the Arab and Islamic World related to the political and civic rehabilitation of young people;
- Organize meetings between young people and successful personalities to present their experiences;
- Raise awareness of the issues that youth's needs in villages and shanty towns.
- Raise awareness of the issues that young people with special needs or disability are facing.
- Create spaces for youth dialogue;
- Cross-cutting recommendations:
 - Encourage associations to network and establish relationships with other institutions, especially regarding youth issues;
 - Activate or enhance cooperation and coordination between youth governmental institutions and civil society institutions;
 - Spread the culture of acceptance of diversity among young people;
 - Establish the true values of real citizenship and education on respect for human rights among young people;
 - Encourage young people to express freely their views and their ideas, and give them the opportunity to participate in making their own decisions, whether inside the family or at the level of community institutions;

ANNEX 1: LIST OF QUESTIONS ADDRESSED TO YOUTH LEADERS

1. What is your general assessment of the status of Moroccan youth now?
2. How was the Moroccan youth interest in politics and political action and associative work before 2010?
3. Did the events of the Arab Spring have a positive or a negative impact on the Moroccan youth interest in politics and political and associative work? How is that?
4. Youth participation in political and civic activities currently is strong, medium or weak? Why do you think so?
5. Regardless of the degree of this participation, what are the most important political and civic activities involving young people?
6. Does the lack of participation come from an initial rejection and lack of faith in political action at all? Or does it come from fortuitous causes? What are the most important of these reasons?
7. Does religious affiliation (Islam, Christianity etc.) have an impact on political participation and civic engagement among Moroccan youth? Or there is not any relationship to that?
8. Does sectarian affiliation (Salafi, Shiite etc.) have an impact on political participation and civic engagement among Moroccan youth? Or there is not any relationship to that?
9. Do you consider that the activities done by some young people, such as using the internet and social sites, have an impact on political decision-making?
10. Is there a dialogue between young people and officials?
11. What are the reasons for the absence or weakness of this dialogue?
12. Have young people developed, especially in the last four years, their skills and abilities to make their voices heard by the decision-makers and political influencers? What are the most important of these competencies and capabilities?
13. What are the skills needed by young people to express their concerns and issues in a peaceful and effective way?
14. To what extent do the Moroccan youth remain threatened by non-peaceful means and engaging in acts of violence?
15. Is there a relationship between weak and limited political participation and civic engagement and tendencies for non-peaceful means and engagement in acts of violence by some Moroccan youth?
16. Do you see that Moroccan youth is threatened by religious, ethnic or sectarian divisions?
17. Do you see that Moroccan youth is open to Arab youth?
18. Do you see that Moroccan youth is open to Western youth?
19. What are your suggestions to protect the Moroccan youth from violent options?
20. What are your suggestions for promoting political participation and civic engagement among Moroccan youth?

ANNEX 2: AXES AND ELEMENTS OF DISCUSSIONS WITHIN FOCUS GROUPS

FIRST: YOUNG PEOPLE AND POLITICAL PARTIES

- How many political parties do we have currently?
- What are the political parties that you know?
- What are the political parties that are participating in the government?
- Belonging to political parties
- What are the reasons for not belonging to political parties?

SECOND: YOUTH AND ELECTIONS

- Participation in election campaigns
- What are the reasons not to participate in these campaigns?
- Elections to be held soon in Morocco
- What is the difference between the legislative and local elections?
- Registration on the electoral roll
- Elections and Democracy

THIRD: THE YOUTH AND THE FEBRUARY 20 MOVEMENT

- Have you heard the February 20 Movement?
- Founding date of the movement?
- Participation in their demonstrations (Why not participating? Why participating?)

FOURTH: YOUNG PEOPLE AND ASSOCIATIVE WORK

- Enrolment in civil society associations
- Attending Youth Centres
- Awareness of the importance of the role of youth

FIFTH: YOUNG PEOPLE AND INFLUENCE IN POLITICAL DECISIONS

- Political News (degrees of following it, source)
- Youth relationship with social networking sites
- Feeling about the political influence of social sites
- Attendance in political dialogues
- Public protests

SIXTH: YOUNG PEOPLE AND SOCIETY

- Young people's satisfaction with society
- The extent of understanding of society about young people

- Feeling about society's appreciation for young people

SEVENTH: YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE OTHER

- The impact of religious and sectarian differences on the relationship with one another,
- Core determinants of the relationship with the other.

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